II.
AD CLERI DISCIPLINAM:
THE VINCENTIAN SEMINARY APOSTOLATE
IN THE UNITED STATES

by
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The seminary apostolate first brought the Vincentian Community to the United States, and this apostolate remained one of its principal works until recent times. The Vincentians were also one of the few communities that came to the United States for the explicit purpose of establishing a diocesan seminary.

The Vincentian Tradition

It is commonly believed that seminaries as they are known today originated with the Council of Trent. This is only partly true. The famous decree on the erection of seminaries (Session 23, chapter 28) inspired many bishops and reformers to undertake some form of clerical formation, but it provided very little in the way of guidelines or practical suggestions. Most efforts to found seminaries along the model given by Trent were failures. Modern seminaries grew up in seventeenth century France and took their origins from ordination retreats, such as that devised by Saint Vincent de Paul for the Diocese of Beauvais, in which candidates for orders were given rudimentary training in the essentials of their ministry. Prior to the French Revolution seminaries were rarely self-contained academic institutions. They presupposed that academic education was received elsewhere, and they concentrated on such matters as the administration of the sacraments, ceremonies, plain-chant, and other things necessary for the practical exercise of priestly ministry. Soon, however, programs of spiritual formation were added.
Understandably, the courses were often short and the faculties small. A sojourn in a seminary could be as brief as six months or as long as three years. Seminaries directed by the Vincentians were often mission houses, and during vacation periods both faculty and students would go on the missions.

In the United States seminaries grew out of this French tradition, as it was embodied in the work of the Vincentians and Sulpicians. The latter community had founded the first American seminary at Baltimore in 1791, was involved in the foundation of the seminary at Mount Saint Mary's near Emmitsburg, Maryland, and conducted Saint Thomas Seminary at Bardstown, Kentucky. Despite many similarities the Vincentian and Sulpician approaches to priestly formation had notable differences. The Sulpicians had seminary work as their sole apostolate, while the Vincentians were also involved in missions and to a high degree in the United States, in parishes. In the early period, as they had in France the Vincentians tended to conduct seminaries jointly with mission houses. In some of these the students would go on the missions with the faculty. The Sulpicians, on the other hand, rarely had apostolic experiences for their students, but they also tended to exercise more leadership on a national level and to have a stronger intellectual tradition. Sulpician formation also called for the directors and faculty to live together with the seminarians on a one-to-one approach. It has been said, with a great deal of exaggeration, that Vincentian formation produced pastors, Sulpician formation produced bishops. Also, in contrast with the Sulpicians, the European Vincentians in the United States americanized more rapidly, and the personnel became native much earlier.

Throughout most of the nineteenth century American seminaries were the result of an attempt to adapt a European system to an alien, and in some ways, a frontier situation. This often meant a mixed college-seminary format, one which had two parallel programs and in which the older seminarians, as a necessary economy measure, taught in the college. Another result was a high degree of institutional instability—that is, seminaries with such short lifespans that they sometimes came and went so quickly as to leave almost no trace. After 1840 the proprietary seminary, one in which the bishop exercised control, even though he did not always support it financially, became dominant.

During this period there was little or no consistency in American seminaries. Most programs consisted of three years of theology and
were often perfunctory. Students entered the program at any time during the school year. Vincentian seminaries had small faculties, usually two or three priests and two lay brothers (one of whom was the cook). The present system did not begin to emerge until the end of the century, especially after the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884. Until the present century there was almost no direction or legislation from Rome. The French Vincentians had drawn up directoires for both major and minor seminaries, and these were generally followed by the American Vincentians until the end of the nineteenth century. One of their boasts, in fact, was that their seminaries were directed exactly like those in France. This situation appears to have changed at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.

Financial support of these institutions was usually precarious. The bishops lacked resources and the Vincentians were often burdened with the necessity of providing financial help. Contributing to this was the fact that in the majority of cases the Vincentian Community owned the land and buildings of the diocesan seminaries that it conducted. One means of supporting seminaries was to have them operated in conjunction with farms. This more than the desire for isolation brought many seminaries to the rural areas. Other things being equal, the nineteenth century Vincentian outlook seems to have favored locating seminaries in or near cities. The coadjutor brothers contributed their work as farmers, craftsmen, and cooks. Other means of income were tuition and donations and, in the southern and border states, the labor of slaves.

Little is known about teaching methods and textbooks in the earlier Vincentian-directed seminaries. The texts, which were often chosen by the provincial and his council, were uniform for the province. Since the different branches of theology were not clearly delineated or classified, a popular text, such as the Institutiones Theologicae of Jean-Baptiste Bouvier (1783-1854), often covered all branches of theology. The program of spiritual exercises and the rules followed Vincentian practice very closely.
The First Foundations

Saint Mary's of the Barrens, 1818-1844

It can truthfully be said that the first Vincentian-directed seminary in the United States originated in Rome in 1815. As soon as the first group of missionaries and students had been gathered together, they began to hold classes and follow a program of spiritual exercises. Both the ship that they took from Bordeaux to Baltimore and the flatboat that they took from Pittsburgh to Louisville resembled floating monasteries. The two year long stay at Bardstown further strengthened this seminary identity. When the group arrived at what is now Perry County, Missouri, they already constituted a functioning institution of priestly formation.

It had been Bishop Dubourg's original intention to found a seminary in lower Louisiana. When he decided to locate his see in the city of Saint Louis, he also changed the location of the seminary to Missouri or the upper Louisiana Territory. When a group of Catholics at the Barrens settlement, about eighty miles south of Saint Louis, offered him 640 acres of land for the seminary in return for the ministrations of its priests, the location was changed again.

When the first Vincentians arrived at the Barrens in October 1818, they found little in readiness. There was a small log cabin that served as the parish church for them to use, but most had to live with the local residents while a temporary log cabin was made ready as the seminary. A more permanent building, combining college and church, was not completed until 1820. Life was harsh, and even the timely arrival of a pasta-making machine from Italy did not entirely dispel homesickness for the old country.

Saint Mary's Seminary, as it was named, was first of all a diocesan seminary for the Louisiana Territory, but it also served as a Vincentian house of formation—although the novitiate remained in Saint Louis under the personal direction of Felix De Andreis. After his death in 1820 it was transferred to the Barrens where it remained until 1841. A lay college was soon added both to serve the local population and to provide financial support for the seminary. De Andreis was the first superior, although he never actually visited the Barrens. Joseph Rosati acted in his stead and after De Andreis' death became superior in his own right. He continued in that office
even after becoming a bishop, and under his leadership the foundation began to grow. On 28 November 1822 the state legislature incorporated Saint Mary’s, effective the following 1 January. This was the first such incorporation west of the Mississippi. On 13 December 1830 it empowered the seminary to grant higher degrees, also effective the following 1 January. The seminary administration had asked for the authority to grant such degrees in the hope that it might thus be eligible for some of the funds that the state legislature disbursed to public education.

Among the notable priest alumni in the early years were Michael Portier, the future bishop of Mobile, Alabama; Irenee Saint-Cyr, who founded the first permanent Catholic church in Chicago; John Mary Odin; and John Timon. Another early alumnus was John Hayden, who later served with distinction as the first Vincentian pastor of Saint Joseph’s church in New Orleans, English-speaking secretary to the superior general, and provincial of the American province.

Because of the burden of his many offices, especially that of coadjutor bishop of Saint Louis, Rosati sought to be relieved of the office of superior. In 1830 Father John Baptist Tornatore, former professor of dogmatic theology at the college of the Propaganda in Rome, succeeded him. As was mentioned in chapter I, Tornatore was rigid and severe and was hampered by his unfamiliarity with English. Under him the dissatisfaction that had been building up for some time broke to the surface. A prolonged period of turmoil followed, most of which proved harmful to the seminary and its personnel. A semblance of order was not restored until after Tornatore left office.

Saint Mary’s functioned as a diocesan seminary from 1818 until 1842. During that time, as has been indicated in chapter I, there were other problems besides the brothers’ discontent that not only hindered its work but also threatened its very existence. The college mingled Vincentian seminarians, diocesan seminarians, and lay students, a difficulty intensified by the use of seminary students as teachers. The Vincentian superiors in Paris viewed the college as a non-Vincentian work and in 1835 issued an edict that suppressed it. The order was eventually rescinded, but the problem of mingling the students remained.

One result of this was an ambivalent attitude on the part of the Vincentian authorities toward the mixed seminary-college format. During the provincialate of John Timon such a format was usually
avoided and where encountered, as in New York, Bardstown, or Cincinnati, the experience was an unhappy one. After 1850, however, the attitude seems to have softened, and many later establishments, such as Niagara University, Saint John’s University in Brooklyn, DePaul University in Chicago, and Saint Vincent’s College in Los Angeles, were founded with the mixed format in mind.

The Age of Expansion and Retrenchment: 1838-1888

With the erection of an independent American province in 1835 and the appointment of John Timon as its first provincial, the seminary apostolate underwent rapid expansion. In addition to Timon’s own leadership and the repute that it brought to the Vincentians, there were other factors that played important roles. The superior general and his council encouraged seminaries as being more in accord with traditional Vincentian apostolates than were the parishes that had been accepted up to that time. There was also an increase of available personnel caused by political and religious turmoil in Europe, especially in Spain, which was torn by dynastic and church-state conflicts. These exiles included men of talent and leadership. In addition, the bishops of the United States, almost as a whole, began to turn to the Vincentians to direct their seminaries.

Between 1818 and 1838 the only seminary directed by the Vincentians was Saint Mary’s of the Barrens. Between 1838 and 1842 the diocesan seminaries of New Orleans and Philadelphia were added. The *annus mirabilis* was 1842 when Timon was offered the direction of seminaries in New York, Cincinnati, Bardstown (Kentucky), Richmond, Emmitsburg (Maryland) and Vincennes (Indiana). He was overwhelmed by the number of requests and wrote to the vicar general in Paris, Father Antoine Poussou, “Thus, Most Honored Father, God is calling us to the direction of all the seminaries in this country except two.” And a few days later he added, “The Bishops of this country, as if by a preconcerted move, are offering us their seminaries.” Not all of these offers were accepted, as will be seen. When they were, Timon said that he would guarantee by contract that if the bishops did not live up to their obligations, the Vincentians would be able to withdraw easily and honorably. In practice, however, he did not always do so.
This rapid expansion of the seminary apostolate did not go without criticism. Timon found it necessary to defend himself against the charge of moving too fast that was leveled by Poussou. Eventually Poussou ordered him to accept no more seminaries and Timon said that he would obey. The Paris authorities also believed that the Vincentians were being spread too thinly through a large number of houses and wanted some of the establishments consolidated.

The Upper Mississippi Valley

The Vincentian general assembly of 1835 had decreed both that the lay college at the Barrens be suppressed and that the diocese of Saint Louis pay tuition for its seminarians there. Bishop Rosati had established the lay college as a means of supporting the seminary, and he was always defensive about it. In 1838, in apparent retaliation for this double blow, he attempted to remove the diocesan seminary to Saint Louis. He purchased land and began construction of a residence, but a combination of circumstances, including financial straits, his own ill-health, and his prolonged absence in Europe frustrated the design. The project was suspended in late 1840.

In 1842 Bishop Peter Richard Kenrick, administering the see of Saint Louis in Rosati’s absence, moved the diocesan seminary to a new location in that city. He offered this institution, referred to as a petit séminaire (meaning small in size, not a minor seminary), to Timon who answered that when he was sure that it would be for the good of religion and the glory of God he would accept it. Timon must have decided that this was the case because he accepted the new establishment which opened with a faculty of three Vincentian priests, two brothers, and five students. Thaddeus Amat was the first superior. Because the building was cramped and uncomfortable, the seminary was moved across the street in 1844 to the old Soulard mansion near the newly-established Saint Vincent’s Church, where it remained for four years.

The seminary encountered many problems. The Soulard mansion belonged to the Vincentians, and the principal cost of support for the operation fell on the Community. There were dissensions within the faculty and between faculty and students. The latter had easy access to diocesan priests and brought their complaints to them
and, apparently, had the ear of the bishop. The result was that the authority of the superior and the directors was undermined. In 1848 Kenrick removed his seminarians from the Vincentian house and relocated them in Carondelet, a suburb to the south of the city. The reason was Kenrick’s discontent with some of the confreres teaching at Saint Vincent’s, especially Blaise Raho, and his desire to have greater control over the formation of his students. The parting was probably mutual for there is at least one indication that the Vincentians asked Kenrick to remove his students.

The Carondelet seminary came to an end in 1858. Oddly enough, the Vincentians had resumed direction the previous year. Why they did so is not clear. Stephen Vincent Ryan, the provincial at that time, gave a cryptic explanation, “Suffice it to say that we were compelled to do so by circumstances and that the Divine Master seemed to be asking us for some efforts on our part to support a seminary that was on the point of dissolution.” Two Theological education for the ecclesiastical province of Saint Louis now moved to the Vincentian establishment at Saint Vincent’s College in Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

Saint Vincent’s College, Cape Girardeau

Saint Vincent’s had been founded in stages between 1838 and 1843. Its original purpose had been to siphon off lay students from Saint Mary’s in Perry County and thus relieve the concern of those who did not approve mixing them with seminarians. On 22 October 1838 Saint Vincent’s Male Academy was opened by Father John Brands. In May 1841 the Vincentian novices, who had been at both the Barrens and Assumption Seminary in Louisiana, were transferred to a building on the academy grounds, the former home of the Spanish commandant of the Cape Girardeau district, with Father Hector Figari as superior and Father Thaddeus Amat as director of novices. Steps were then taken to establish a full college, and Saint Vincent’s College was incorporated by the state of Missouri in February 1843, the date that is commonly given for its beginning as a college. In the following year the lay collegians from Saint Mary’s moved to Saint Vincent’s, and the novices were sent to Saint Louis. Figari stayed on as president of the college, and Father John McGerry, a former diocesan priest who had been pres-
ident of Mount Saint Mary's in Emmitsburg (1828-1830), became the prefect of students.

Although Saint Vincent's had been established as a lay college, already in 1853 Bishop Timon had begun to send his seminarians there. Thus the old problem of mingling lay and clerical students was resurrected. In 1858, with the imminent demise of the Carondelet seminary, the Second Provincial Council of Saint Louis decided, by way of experiment, to make Saint Vincent's the provincial seminary. In the following year most of the lay students were sent away and, theoretically at least, it became entirely a theological school.

The beginnings of the seminary program were not auspicious. The faculty was young and inexperienced. The opening was darkened by the accidental drowning of two students a week before the beginning of the first term. The outbreak of the Civil War caused enrollment to decline drastically. Although no major battles were fought in the Cape Girardeau area, there were enough military maneuvers to cause concern. Generally the faculty supported the union and the students were divided. Many southern students transferred to the seminary at Bouligny, Louisiana. By 1864 enrollment had fallen off sharply. One of the faculty members, Father Abram J. Ryan, the famed "Poet-Priest of the South," who left the college and the Vincentian Community, was a notable apologist for the Confederacy.

After the war some of the faculty were arrested and indicted for refusing to take the loyalty oath demanded by Missouri's postwar constitution of all ministers of religion. The cases were eventually dismissed.

The college had only a small enrollment after the war and was further hurt by poor administration and an excessively strict discipline imposed by the superior and prefect of discipline. Bishop Kenrick began to send his students, especially the German ones, to other seminaries, such as Milwaukee and the newly opened North American College in Rome. Other bishops followed suit. It finally became necessary to reopen the "classical" or lay student program at Saint Vincent's in 1866, especially after a fire destroyed the secular college building at Saint Mary's in Perryville.

Very quickly the lay students outnumbered the ecclesiastical ones. In 1877 there were eight seminarians and 100 college students. The college continued to be plagued by debts, though not so badly as other houses in the province. It also continued to be hurt by the
common belief that it was in an unhealthy climate, where pneumonia and a chest inflammation locally called "winter fever" were rampant. By 1883 Saint Vincent's had lost all semblance of a seminary, and the Vincentian provincial, Thomas Smith, determined to return it to seminary status. Non-clerical students, however, did remain and it became virtually two institutions.

Saint Mary's of the Barrens after 1844

After the transfer of its lay students to Cape Girardeau in 1844, Saint Mary's Seminary in Perry County continued to function as a Vincentian house of formation and as a diocesan seminary for students from outside Saint Louis. In 1853 the novices were brought back from Saint Louis. It is clear that by mid-century lay students were again being accepted at the seminary. In 1856 Father John Masnou wrote that though the Barrens had the name of being a petit séminaire, it was actually a college. He added that most of the students had not the least intention of entering the clerical state. A further difficulty was that bishops were prejudiced against it, believing that the location was unhealthy, that the Vincentians recruited for their community from among the diocesan students, and that the academic program was superficial.

The Civil War did not appreciably affect the Perry County area, although passions ran high between the pro-union Germans and the pro-southern English Presbyterians. The student body at the seminary was divided along sectional lines, and at one point the superior had to give them a severe warning against the singing of patriotic songs. One military maneuver in the area by federal troops permitted the soldiers to liberate some of the seminary's cattle and horses.

In 1862 the provincial, Stephen Vincent Ryan, removed the Vincentian formation program to Saint Louis. The reasons given for the transfer were the isolation of the locale, the difficulty of access, and the prevalence of malaria, which endangered the lives of so many students and novices. Many years later he wrote:

Many thought the location of the mother-house at the Barrens a mistake, even with the free grant of upwards of six hundred acres of land, because of its backward inland situation, so difficult of access, its bad and at times almost impassable roads, making travel on
horseback the only possible means of locomotion... I confess that I was one of those who believed that if a tithe of the energy expended, of the men and means employed in Perry County, Mo., had been utilized in some growing centre of population and enterprise, better results would have been obtained.³

After 1866, when the lay college building at the Barrens burned down, no more lay boarding students were received. They either remained as day students or transferred to Cape Girardeau. Two years later both the novitiate and scholasticate were transferred from Saint Louis to Germantown, a suburb of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The reasons given for this move were the growth of the city of Saint Louis around the novitiate and the long distance from the sites of future parish mission activities. At that time the locale at Germantown was very much in the country.

From 1866 to 1886 Saint Mary's of the Barrens functioned as a parish and a working farm. For six months of each year the priests directed a small academy for local boys in order to fulfill the terms of the original donation and the charter of incorporation. In 1877 the former provincial, Mariano Maller, visited the Barrens while on a special visitation of the American Province and described the melancholy impression that it left on him.

It would be impossible to describe what I found there last November when I saw the Barrens after an absence of more than twenty-seven years. It was there, thirty-seven years ago, that I first began active duty. At that time [it was] so happy, so populous, so lively; now so dreary, so lonely, so quiet. A profound sadness came over my whole soul, and I asked myself what sin had thus deserved such desolation? Isolation, of course, malaria and everything that is said to justify what has been done did not satisfy me, and there sprang unbidden to my thoughts the words of our Lord, Omne regnum, etc.⁴

The debts of the house were somewhere between $21,000 and $42,000, though it was difficult to be certain because the books were so badly kept. "For some years the house has been going downhill because of the negligence or incompetence of the superiors and treasurers. They have been changed often but without improving the situation."⁵
Despite a great deal of negotiation about opening a seminary in Louisiana during Bishop Dubourg's time, nothing came of it until 1838. In that year Bishop Anthony Blanc of New Orleans contacted Timon about the possibility of the Vincentians' directing a diocesan seminary for him. Timon was interested. Within a matter of weeks he accepted, partly because the bishop had suggested several very favorable financial arrangements. Included in these were two parishes, the Assumption at Lafourche and Ascension at Donaldsonville (the parish church in which Joseph Rosati received episcopal ordination). In a delphic statement, Timon also mentioned that "the other community is no longer in the New Orleans area." This may refer to the Jesuits, who had considered using Donaldsonville as a site for a college. Another stipulation was that the Vincentians would own the land and buildings of the seminary and that Vincentian students could also attend.

Blanc had already secured property for the new establishment in 1837. It had been donated by a Religious of the Sacred Heart on condition that it always be used as a house of instruction. It was located within the limits of Assumption parish on the Bayou Lafourche (modern Plattenville). Bonaventure Armengol, a Spaniard, was chosen as the first superior, partly because of the need for a priest to minister to the large number of Spanish-speaking people in the area. He went there in the spring of 1838 to supervise construction of the seminary building. In the fall of that year, joined now by Father Peter Chandy and Brother Martin Blanka, he opened the seminary with three students. By November Thaddeus Amat had joined them. The seminary building was not yet completed and it was necessary for them to take over a former school for black girls that had been directed by the Sisters of Mount Carmel. The founder of that order, Father Charles de Saint-Aubin, had been the previous pastor of the Assumption parish, and his financial incompetence left numerous problems for the new superior and pastor. Armengol acted as the pastor of the parish, assisted by the seminary faculty and was also diocesan vicar general in the area for certain specified cases. On 11 December 1838 the title of the property was formally transferred to the Vincentian
Community in the name of Father John Boullier, the seminary treasurer. There had been some difficulties at the last minute when the bishop changed his mind and demanded that the property be in his name, but these were resolved.

The construction of the seminary building went slowly. Bishop Blanc, who seems to have been a generous man, spent considerable sums of his own money on it. There were innumerable problems with the contractors and delays of various sorts. The building was finally completed in March 1839. Although it was officially named the Seminary of Saint Vincent de Paul, it was more popularly known as Assumption Seminary, from the nearby parish. Its beginnings were lowly. It opened with a debt of $790, but its real property, including slaves, was worth some $10,000. There were three slaves. Blanc had sent his personal servant Andrew to help, and the Vincentians had purchased two more, Isaac and Marianne, from Saint-Aubin. By the beginning of 1839 there were four diocesan and four Vincentian students, but the outlook for what was then the smallest seminary in the United States was hopeful.

The classes in scripture and church history were taught only once a week, one on Sunday, the other on Thursday. Classes in plainchant were held three times a week, and there were classes on ceremonies on Tuesdays and Saturdays. All other classes met once a week except those that were considered most important. These would meet five times a week. Armengol wavered between using Bouvier or Kenrick’s *Theologia Moralis* as a text, and there is no record of his decision. It was probably in favor of the former because Kenrick’s text was not much used in the United States.

Initially Blanc was happy with the work of the Vincentians. Timon marveled that Armengol seemed able to find money at will—an opinion that he would soon revise. In 1842 Timon was able to report that on a visitation he had found all going well at the seminary and that the bishop was happy with the Vincentians, especially Armengol.

The contentment with Armengol did not last long. He was financially irresponsible and went on a spree of slave buying for which he was rebuked by Timon. The provincial concluded that Armengol was not equipped to be superior and planned to replace him with Masnou. Before that could be done, Armengol tried to move the seminary to Donaldsonville without having secured permission from either Timon or Blanc. His financial misjudgments were bad enough that Timon could call the news from Louisiana “afflicting.”
Armengol left the seminary in 1844 and was sent by the superior general to help found the first Vincentian establishments in Mexico. Timon wrote to Father Sturchi, the Italian assistant general, "With all his piety I have never been able to understand him in his trust in lay persons and in the financial ability with which he credits himself." He wrote this, Timon added, "as a warning for the good of the Congregation in Mexico." 7

Masnou took over in June 1844. Both he and the faculty were convinced that the seminary should be moved to New Orleans because it would be less expensive, easier to reach, and it would be away from the lingering embarrassment caused by Armengol’s business deals. Timon agreed with this but at the time did not see how it could be done. In 1850 Blanc indicated that he too wanted the seminary closer to the city, and the Vincentians agreed with him. Mariano Maller, the provincial at that time, gave his permission for the change. The new seminary was to belong to the Vincentians and it was to be built on land that had been purchased two years before for a church (the present Saint Stephen’s). The land in Lafourche was to be sold with the permission of the original donor in the hope that it would realize some ten or twelve thousand dollars. The bishop urged the Vincentians to press ahead with the construction of the church, but Maller, with a European Vincentian’s distaste for debts, wanted to move more slowly. For reasons now unknown the change of locale was not made. In 1853 the seminary was still in Lafourche, and Anthony Penco, the provincial, could write that all was going well there and that the bishop and vicar general were very happy with it.

During its existence Assumption Seminary trained about thirty diocesan priests and an unknown number of Vincentians. One of its most famous alumni was Father Adrien Rouquette, a priest-poet and missionary to the Indians, who was also the first native Louisianan born after the American purchase to be ordained to the priesthood. He wrote that "the seminary is for me, so to speak, a little paradise" and composed a well-known poem about Corpus Christi, La Fête-Dieu au Séminaire. 8

Masnou remained as superior until 1852 when he was replaced by Father Anthony Andrieu. On 28 February 1855 the seminary building burned to the ground because of the accidental imprudence of a coadjutor brother who afterwards went mad. The faculty and students evacuated to New Orleans. The archbishop and the Vincentians were now faced with the task of replacing the
In January 1856, a little less than a year later, the ecclesiastical province of New Orleans, which had been erected on 19 July 1850, held its first provincial council. The question of the new seminary was raised, with Masnou, acting as temporary provincial while Penco was in Europe, as a participant. Before he could make any suggestions, two other priests outlined a plan for operating the new seminary, a plan that was almost identical with the mode of operation in France. Masnou, however, soon found himself in sharp disagreement with the archbishop because Blanc wanted the title to the seminary property to be in the name of the archdiocese. To the archbishop's surprise, Masnou was adamant that the Vincentians would never operate a seminary without owning the property. After two weeks of negotiation, an agreement was reached whereby the Vincentians would build the seminary at their own expense on their property in suburban Bouligny (later Jefferson City, now the area around Saint Stephen's parish). The archbishop also agreed to let them take up a collection in the archdiocese.

It was also agreed that when the seminary was completed, the Vincentians would give up the parish in Donaldsonville. The archbishop felt that the Donaldsonville property should revert to him. Masnou did not want to press the point but believed that the Vincentians should get some return on the $10,000 that had been spent on improvements, most of which had been destroyed by fire. So Blanc permitted the Vincentians to sell the property and use the money to build the seminary. They were to repay him whenever they could.

The superior of the new seminary, Father John Delcros, was charged with the construction of the building. His efforts were successful, and it opened in conjunction with Saint Stephen's parish in the fall of 1858. Tragically, Delcros did not live to see this for he was killed in a steamboat explosion on the Mississippi on 13 June of that same year. His successor, Father James Buysch, fared little better for he died suddenly on 8 January 1859. It has been erroneously asserted that the Bouligny seminary (as it was commonly called, though its true name was Saint Vincent's Theological Seminary) never received any students. In fact, from 1859 to 1866 ordinations for the Archdiocese of New Orleans were held regularly in Saint Stephen's church with Father Anthony Verrina, Buysch's successor, and other Vincentians as the attending priests. Vincentian students and novices also attended.
The Bouligny seminary functioned from 1858 until 1867, though it is not known for sure how many students it had. Two alumni became bishops: Thomas Heslin of Natchez and John A. Forest of San Antonio. It was closed by Archbishop John Mary Odin, C.M., in 1867 because of financial problems, apparently caused by Reconstruction. There may have been an effort later in that year to reopen it, but again the financial question forestalled it. The cost of supporting an individual student was close to $300 a year, and the archdiocese could not afford it. Other efforts to found and sustain an archdiocesan seminary will be mentioned later.

The East

Emmitsburg, Maryland

With so many seminaries being offered, it was impossible for Timon to accept them all. One that was refused was Mount Saint Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

During a trip that he made to Emmitsburg to visit the Sisters of Charity, Timon met Samuel Eccleston, the Sulpician archbishop of Baltimore, who offered him Mount Saint Mary's Seminary and also the direction of the Sisters. The Sulpician superior general supported the second part of the offer because the direction of nuns was not a Sulpician apostolate. One Vincentian, Philip Borgna, was already at the Mount, but he wanted to return to Italy to make a kind of second novitiate. Eccleston did not want him to go unless there was assurance that an equally good Vincentian would replace him. Timon told the archbishop that he would never accept a seminary that was part of a college, as was Mount Saint Mary's, and that he did not want the two mixed. He also said that he would not accept the direction of the sisters unless, after the manner of the Daughters of Charity, they gave up their tuitioned schools (except the boarding school at the motherhouse) and would be willing to work with the sick, orphans, etc. Eccleston agreed to let Timon suppress the lay college at Mount Saint Mary's and turn it into a Vincentian novitiate. He also offered him the title to the land and the buildings. The offer was not accepted, probably because of the school's heavy indebtedness and uncertain future.
New York

An offer that was accepted, and that proved to be a frustrating experience for the Vincentians, came from the diocese of New York. The first seminary for that diocese was founded at Lafargeville, New York, in 1838 together with a lay college. Named in honor of Saint John the Baptist, it was moved to Rose Hill in 1840, and at that time Bishop John Hughes asked the Vincentians to take charge of both the college and the seminary. For some time the superior general and his council had wanted the American province to have a seminary in New York. The bishop, wrote Timon, “desires with a passion” that the Vincentians take his seminary. He even promised to separate the seminary from the college within a year. Hughes indicated a desire to keep the seminary purely ecclesiastical, but it was not something that he lived up to in practice. In June Timon notified Hughes of his acceptance, according to the conditions that they had agreed on, among which without doubt was the provision that the seminary and the college should be separated. In July a provisional contract was signed, and Timon expressed his hope of having the Vincentians in the seminary by the following October.

One of its early superiors was Anthony Penco, who was later provincial and whom John Mary Odin described as “naturally timid” but with good qualities. The seminary followed the rules and customs of Vincentian-directed seminaries in France. The original Vincentian faculty consisted of two priests and two brothers. Penco arrived at the seminary in September 1842 and found some twenty seminarians, most of them good students and well disposed. He himself had to teach theology, although he confessed that he did not know it well. He was to have greater problems than that during his stay in New York.

A major difficulty was that the seminarians, in a situation reminiscent of Saint Mary's of the Barrens, were also required to teach in the college that was associated with the seminary, a college that was the forerunner of the present Fordham University. According to Penco, many of the diocesan clergy were opposed to the Vincentians' directing the seminary. There were also problems with the bishop who was slow in separating the seminary from the college. Suddenly, in January 1843, he announced that the seminary would be transferred to a new location. The site chosen was regarded by all as unhealthy, and students and faculty alike were
uneasy about it. In addition Penco did not like the idea of moving in the middle of the school year (May), and he strongly suspected that about a dozen of the seminarians would be kept at the college as teachers. While he favored the separation he felt that this was not the way to do it. Penco eventually managed to dissuade Hughes from the move.

The difficulty of trying to direct a seminary whose students taught in a college came home fully to Penco in July 1843. He was obliged to suspend the classes in theology because the diocesan priest who was the president of the college had appointed nine of the fourteen theologians to give examinations in the college. He had the right to demand such services of students who were not paying for their board. Penco did not put up a fight because it would have been imprudent and useless, he said, all the more so since the bishop had already decided against him. On another occasion two theologians refused to miss class in order to accompany the college students on a walk. The president punished them, and the bishop refused to intervene. Penco himself was in a quandary. At times he believed that the situation was incompatible with his self-respect, at others that he should be more patient.

While Timon was attending the Vincentian general assembly of 1843, Hughes was also in Europe, and the two had a meeting at the Vincentian motherhouse in Paris. Timon spoke strongly about the need to separate the seminary from the college and the bishop agreed. The transfer of the seminary was accomplished in January 1844, with Bloomingdale as the new site. As Penco had feared, the college president kept eleven of the sixteen seminarians at Rose Hill to teach and work in the college where they were to be taught theology by two of its faculty members. "We parted with the gentlemen of the college on not very good terms." The two groups had differing interpretations of the agreement under which the Vincentians had come. "At the college they don't like the Lazarists at all." One ray of hope, however, was that Hughes had promised to change the situation. Penco also pointed out that a deep rivalry was growing between the two institutions.

Both Penco and Mariano Maller, who was in Philadelphia, wrote to Timon that Hughes was being besieged by those who opposed the separation. Maller concluded that the ideas of the Vincentians and the bishop about the direction of seminaries did not coincide. As a result he saw no chance of success for the Vincentian direction of the seminary. "Had we been rightly informed, had we foreseen
what was to come when he offered us the direction of his seminary, we should never have accepted it." He accused Hughes of not keeping his word.

The priests who had been trained under the old system joined with the college president to persuade Hughes that the older structure worked better and was cheaper. The bishop gave in and backed down on his agreement with the Vincentians. Penco pointed out that this move effectively excluded the Vincentians from the administration of the seminary. He also remarked that the ideas of the bishop and the Vincentians did not coincide and that those who had the prelate's ear were hostile to the Vincentians. "Nevertheless the way in which we find ourselves on the outside is certainly quite unforeseen and I would say even disagreeable." Saying that it would take a year to reunite the college and seminary, Hughes asked the Vincentians to stay on for that length of time. Timon refused and ordered his men out by July 1844. According to Penco, they "refused to continue in the direction of the Seminary in the circumstances in which the bishop has placed it." Penco added his hope that this departure would teach the Vincentians prudence for the future, but he was also understandably discouraged by the whole dismal affair. In laborious English he wrote to Timon from New York:

I cannot but think that the Sem.y of N. York is now really destroyed by the scheme of his maternal Establishment; the substantial is surrendered for the accidental, there is a plan for a building but none for the manner and means of training the future seminarians; and if there was one in our poor services, which at least would have been permanent and systematic, that is done away with the greatest indifference. Alas! I can scarcely believe myself.

Even more fractured English Father Angelo Gandolfo, one of the faculty members, wrote, "Here I see that the Bishop is not in hurry for fixing on a good foot his seminary." Timon hoped to use the personnel from New York to staff the seminary in Vincennes that had just been offered by Bishop Celestine de la Hailandière, but the superior general refused permission for it. Hughes must have felt some remorse for what had happened because almost immediately he tried to offer the Vincentians the church of the Nativity, one of the best parishes in New York City.
Philadelphia

If New York had been an unhappy experience, Philadelphia was little better. In 1840 Francis Patrick Kenrick, the bishop of Philadelphia and brother of the future bishop of Saint Louis, invited the American province to accept the direction of Saint Charles Seminary. He had known the Vincentian Community at Monte Citorio in Rome where he had been a student at the Propaganda. At the time the Vincentians assumed direction there were thirty-one seminarians in attendance, mostly Irish. Seventeen were studying theology, four philosophy, six rhetoric and humanities, and four Latin grammar. Annual tuition was $125, and in the beginning there was a severe shortage of money caused by the failure of contributions to arrive from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Lyons. During the Vincentian administration there were two superiors, Mariano Maller (1841-1847) and Thaddeus Amat, (1848-1852). Maller, who arrived in July 1841, found the seminary very edifying and wrote that the situation was better than at the Barrens because there was no mixing of lay and clerical students.

One immediate result of the Vincentian presence was that many students were attracted to the Congregation of the Mission and wished to join it. In the beginning only one was accepted and that because he was in danger of death. Another student who eventually joined the Vincentians was Stephen Vincent Ryan, later provincial and Timon's successor as bishop of Buffalo. In addition to the seminary Kenrick had indicated his intention of giving the Vincentians a house in Philadelphia to serve as a minor seminary, mission house, or novitiate. Timon was partial to the idea of a novitiate.

Initially all went well in Philadelphia, and Timon could write that the Vincentians had won the hearts of all. Maller did not like the arrangement at the seminary, which was so plagued by financial difficulties that the Vincentians had to aid it with their own money, but agreed that nothing could be done about it. By 1844 there were three priests on the faculty: Maller, Alexander Frasi, and Thomas Burke. The latter was treasurer and also had a small rural parish which he tended on weekends. Frasi taught dogmatic theology. In 1844 Maller wrote to Paris that "it is very difficult to tell you anything of interest, you know the monotony of a seminary." Six months later he had all the excitement he needed when the nativist or Philadelphia Bible riots broke out. As Catholic churches and
convents were burned, he wrote “They would kill us all if they could.”

Maller’s task at the seminary was complicated by difficulties with his faculty, especially Frasi. Just what they were is not clear. Penco, hearing about this in New York wrote, “What misfortune to be ourselves the cause of our losses!” He added that only “quiet and patient” men should be sent to the seminaries. “A sem.y is a slow and tiresome working, to which nothing is more obnoxious than a dashing or irregular excitement or a want of friendly and conciliatory manners.” Maller was also bothered by Kenrick’s persistent efforts to make him vicar general of the diocese. This and chronic depression caused him to ask to be relieved of the job but without initial success. “It is now bordering on six years since I have not enjoyed one day of perfect peace and tranquility of mind.”

Another crisis occurred in 1846 when Kenrick established a house of the Religious of the Sacred Heart in close proximity to the seminary. The Vincentians were appalled at the fact that there would be some eighty young ladies living near the seminarians. They feared, just two years after the nativist riots, what the local non-Catholics would say. The issue, however, ran deeper and involved Kenrick’s impulsive and autocratic personality. It was explained to Timon by Father Michael Domenec:

But what I wish to observe to you, dear Father, is that in case that we were to remain here (which I think to be very uncertain) we must remain in a better footing, that is, the existence of our congregation must be valid and permanent and not depending from the caprice and waning will of a changeable man, no matter how high and virtuous he may be.

Maller wrote in a similar vein. He had discussed with the bishop the inadvisability of locating the convent so near the seminary. When first informed of it, he had told Kenrick that the Vincentians could not remain in the seminary under such conditions. The bishop was offended and answered him “in harsh and reproachful lenguage [sic].” When Maller informed him that he did not know what the provincial or superior general would do, Kenrick answered, “Whatever Mr. Timon or the Sup. Gen. may say, I will not be forced to do anything against my dignity.” Maller was convinced that the bishop would not change his mind.
I left the Bp's house with the impressions that we might begin to prepare our trunks [sic]. In fact we have no security here for us and moreover it is plain that before long we will be obliged to take the decisive step, wherefore it appears to me that this would be the best moment... The question is more important than what it appears at first... but the question turns on this: whether we must continue to be exposed, to be subjected to the alternative of leaving or accommodating ourselves to whatever it may please the Bp to do in good or in bad faith and whenever it may please him. This is the question to be solved. Remember also that the present as well as some past experience shows that no reliance [sic] can be placed in the best heart's intentions, most sincere affection for our Cong., n or even the fairest promises when they are mere promises. *Facta probant, verba volant* [deeds have meaning, words are fleeting] ought to be our motto.\(^{22}\)

Somehow the matter was papered over and the Vincentians remained in Philadelphia—temporarily.

There were recurring difficulties over matters of administration and finance. Timon even used his own personal money to help the seminary. In 1847 Timon appointed Amat as superior and called Maller back to Saint Louis. At the same time he observed that Kenrick was becoming less generous to the seminary and that he did not like what he was seeing in the bishop's attitude. The Vincentians, he said, were on the point of leaving. They remained, however, and under Amat there was a period of expansion both of the physical plant and of the enrollment. In 1852, however, the same year in which Saint John N. Neumann became bishop of Philadelphia, Amat was made bishop of Monterey, California. Penco, the provincial, could not think of any suitable replacement and decided that he could only let the seminary suffer until he could find a competent rector. The Vincentians held on for another year, but in 1853 Penco resolved that they would have to withdraw because of the province's desperate shortage of manpower. In addition, "the position of our confrères in Philadelphia has become so painful and so precarious that on the advice of all my consultors, I have decided to notify the bishop of that city that at the end of July we will have to give up the direction of his seminary and leave Philadelphia."\(^{23}\) Unfortunately, Penco was too prudent to commit all the reasons to paper. Stephen Vincent Ryan later quoted Bishop Neumann as saying that he prayed for the return of the Vincentians to his seminary.
Two other nineteenth century establishments were even more transitory, those of Bardstown and Cincinnati.

The Ohio Valley

Bardstown, Kentucky

In 1839 the bishop of Bardstown, Benedict Joseph Flaget, and his coadjutor, Guy Chabrat, using Bishop Rosati as an intermediary, offered Timon the direction of Saint Joseph's College with a seminary to follow. The college had originally been offered to the French Jesuits in 1831, but they had gone to Saint Mary's in nearby Lebanon instead. In 1839 the college was being directed by diocesan priests and had 150 students and no debts. The bishops believed that two priests would be enough at the beginning, one who knew English and one who knew French, Spanish, and Italian. Flaget suggested that the change be made in July 1840.

Timon thought that it would be better to accept the seminary first, since it was more in accord with the end of the Congregation of the Mission. "I am afraid of colleges."24 Also there were few Vincentians who were interested in that sort of work. Rosati, on the other hand, was in favor of accepting it. Timon informed Paris that if the province did so, there would be need for at least five or six more Vincentians from Europe.

The negotiations dragged on. Timon objected to the fact that Flaget wanted to divide the seminary in order to give one part of it to another community and to the fact that the seminary would be united with the college. The experience of the American Vincentians with colleges cum seminaries had thus far been an unhappy one, and Timon was reluctant to become involved. Finally, in 1842, Flaget decided to give it to the Vincentians alone. In that year there were only eight seminarians, all of them in theology under the direction of one priest. Flaget and Chabrat played on emotions by saying that this would be a way to repay the hospitality shown to the first Vincentians when they arrived at Saint Thomas in 1816. Timon believed that the seminary could be staffed with two priests and two brothers.

The first superior was Father Peter Chandy, who also acted as pastor of the local parish which was immediately adjacent to the
seminary. Both were located in a rural settlement called Saint Thomas. The first evidence of his presence there, the baptismal records, dates from Christmas day 1842. There were never more than a few Vincentians at the seminary, and it is difficult to identify them for sure. One, Father Joseph De Marchi, apparently found life at Saint Thomas too difficult for he left without permission. Timon sympathized with him but would not allow him to return. Instead he sent Tornatore from the Barrens to Saint Thomas. Timon’s experience with Tornatore, who was a persistent critic of his, was that he worked well in small groups but was a source of division in larger houses. As he wrote to the superior general, “by his knowledge and piety [Tornatore] will not fail to do good there while the college and novitiate [at the Barrens] will be freed from the trouble his false judgment and restless spirit do not fail to produce.”

From the beginning there were difficulties with Chabrat. He wanted to establish a school adjacent to the seminary with diocesan priests as the faculty but with Chandy acting as superior of both it and the seminary. Chandy opposed the idea, as did Timon. After the latter had written a rather strong refusal, Chandy noted that the bishop’s attitude was even colder than usual. Chandy mentioned that if Timon kept on refusing, Chabrat would probably view the Vincentians in the same way that he did the Jesuits. Shortly thereafter two diocesan priests took up residence at the seminary. Since they had nothing to do, they created a problem for the seminary administration. Chabrat had stopped sending money to the seminary, but Chandy refused to ask him for any, tartly citing the Latin proverb, “cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator” (“the traveler with an empty purse sings in front of the highwayman.”) Chandy reminded Timon how these events demonstrated the need for clear and determined arrangements before a seminary was accepted.

Although the bishops said that they were happy with the work of the Vincentians, there were few students—only nine in 1845. There were difficulties from other quarters also. The French Jesuits, who directed Saint Mary’s College in Lebanon, Kentucky, from 1831 to 1846, had for some time had their eyes on the seminary property, which was about three miles from theirs. By 1845 their college was heavily in debt, about 150,000 francs ($30,000) and on the verge of bankruptcy. The Jesuits asked Flaget to give them land or a location at Saint Thomas with full title and the bishop agreed. The Jesuit provincial, however, on a visitation from France, countermanded the request. In 1846 the Jesuits went to New York to
inaugurate Fordham University. With the Jesuits out of the picture a group of diocesan priests offered to take over the college on the same condition but with all titles remaining with the bishop. Another condition was that until all debts were paid, the seminarians were to be attached to the college in order to teach in it. Chabrat claimed that he had no choice but to agree. Timon found the reasoning unconvincing and withdrew the Vincentians from the establishment in late 1845. They had been there only three years. He promised, however, that if conditions were changed, the Vincentians would be willing to return. Tornatore, together with Brothers Joseph Cesare and Louis Locatelli, left almost immediately. Chandy, according to the baptismal records and his own testimony, remained until December.

The incident left ill feelings. In 1846 Maller, at the seminary in Philadelphia, urged Timon to establish another house in that city lest a future bishop prove to be as fickle as those in Kentucky. Timon sent to one of the assistants general “the letter, which the Bishop caused his Vicar General to write ... See with what 'sang froid' the existence of a community, invited so earnestly, is sacrificed with the same breath that praises it; but God be praised in all.”

Cincinnati

A similar situation was encountered in Cincinnati. For some years the bishop, John B. Purcell, had been trying with uneven success to stabilize priestly formation for his diocese. In 1840 he separated the college and seminary programs and moved the seminary to a location near Fayetteville in Brown County, Ohio. It was given the name of Saint Francis Xavier. In May 1842 it had only ten students. In that year Purcell asked the Vincentians to assume direction of it, promising that they would have title to the seminary. Timon hesitated at first. He informed Purcell that he preferred a location nearer to Cincinnati and that the amount of the property was secondary. He also said, contrary to the more ordinary custom of the nineteenth century Vincentians, that it was not necessary for the Community to own the property. He stipulated, however, that he did not want the seminary united with a college. He may also have been justifiably wary of Purcell.
In 1842 Timon accepted the seminary. Fathers James Burlando and Charles Boglioli, together with some unidentified brothers, took charge of twelve students, plus four or five others who taught in a college that, it appears, may have been associated with the seminary. Burlando, who was only twenty-eight years old, was not only the superior but also a professor, the infirmanian, and even the cook when the brother was ill.

There were difficulties from the beginning, primarily because the Vincentians and the bishop had differing ideas as to how the seminary should be administered. Purcell tended to interfere and tried to run the seminary personally, regarding the Vincentians as employees rather than administrators. Burlando and Purcell did not get along. In 1843 Timon wrote that while the Vincentians had done much good in reforming the seminary, he himself still regarded it as rather uncertain. In the following year he complained that the bishop was not fulfilling his contract. Timon wrote him a rather sharp letter that brought some improvement. The Vincentians wanted the seminary moved into the city, but news of the nativist riots in Philadelphia caused them to think better of it.

In 1845 Purcell unilaterally transferred the seminary to Cincinnati. Burlando went to see him and came away with the conclusion that the bishop was not really interested in the future of his seminary. "He hates, as it were, to hear anything concerning the wants of the seminary."28 His only interest was in bringing the seminarians and faculty (but not the brothers) to their new residence. He claimed that the present seminary was costing him too much money. Purcell had a poor opinion of religious, Burlando wrote, because of his conflicts with the Jesuits and Dominicans and did not want to yield to a community in any way. Burlando suggested to Timon that the Vincentians leave immediately, pleading a shortage of personnel. Timon agreed and informed the bishop, who professed surprise. Boglioli left immediately and Burlando a week later, both before the end of the academic year. Purcell immediately drafted two diocesan priests to take over the seminary.

Later that year Timon had a meeting with Purcell in Cincinnati. "The bishop spoke to me about the departure of our confreres. He regrets it very much and he was angry but I think that after my explanations he blames himself more than us."29 In later years Purcell tried to enlist the Sulpicians, the Jesuits, and the Vincentians again but without success. Finally he declared that it was
better to have diocesan priests train diocesan seminarians.

Boglioli went on to teach in other Vincentian seminaries, including the one in Philadelphia. His last ten years were spent at Saint Joseph’s parish in New Orleans, where his dedication to the sick and dying, especially those afflicted with Hansen’s disease (leprosy), caused him to be called the “Father Damien of Louisiana.” He contracted the disease, of which he died in 1884.

Other seminaries

In 1843 Timon turned down the offer of a seminary in Mobile, Alabama. In the following year the bishop of Nashville, Richard P. Miles, O.P., offered his seminary to the Vincentians, but Timon, following directions from Paris, refused. In that same year, Michael O’Connor, bishop of Pittsburgh, made a similar offer, but Timon refused because it was a question of a petit séminaire and one that was located in the country. When the bishop offered him a grand séminaire in the city, Timon decided to accept it if he could borrow a priest from the Irish Vincentians, who had just recently united with the worldwide Vincentian Community. When he was unable to get a man he had to turn down the offer. In that same year he also turned down Vincennes and Emmitsburg. In 1847 he was offered the seminary at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada, but refused it. In 1863 Michael Domenec, the bishop of Pittsburgh, renewed the offer of the seminary to the Vincentians, but it was not accepted.

In 1856 Timon, then bishop of Buffalo, suggested to Bishop O’Connor of Pittsburgh that the Vincentians should direct the proposed North American College in Rome. O’Connor proposed that they should have charge of the general direction and ceremonies, but that the students should attend the Roman universities. Timon, for his part, wanted the Vincentians to do all the teaching at the North American but also believed that they should accept it, no matter what. Nothing ever came of these proposals.

In 1851, John Mary Odin, bishop of Galveston, asked his confreres to begin a college and seminary in his city. There were already other Vincentians in the diocese. In 1850 Father John Brands (the first native of Holland to enter the Congregation of the Mission) and Richard Hennesy were with Odin at the cathedral in Galveston, and in the following year Fathers Mark Anthony and Michael Calvo were located in San Antonio. There are indications
that the Galveston cathedral had some sort of seminary attached to it, but the matter is not clear. Maller, the provincial, had a strong disagreement with Odin, calling his proposal "a project that goes beyond what can be considered folly." 30 He did not say why, but it may have been the result of the manpower shortage. Shortly thereafter, he recalled all the Vincentians from Texas. The offer of a seminary in Galveston was renewed in 1883 but not accepted. It was not until 1951 that the Vincentians undertook the direction of the Galveston seminary.

In 1871 the seminary at Dubuque, Iowa, was offered to the Community, but it was not accepted.

Retrenchment

According to a commonly accepted story, one that was given credence by Stephen Vincent Ryan, the principal reason why the Vincentians were unable to continue these seminaries was lack of personnel. Between 1847 and 1855 the American Province suffered substantial losses. These included both those who were called to the episcopate and those who returned to Spain after the restoration of peace. The rapid turnover of provincials after Timon contributed to a general instability in the province. Also, Timon's expansionistic policies had dangerously overextended the personnel of the province. While the decline in personnel obviously had a strong impact, it is clear from all the foregoing that the principal reason for the Vincentians' leaving these seminaries was disagreement with the bishops. In the majority of cases the bishops either acted arbitrarily or failed to live up to their commitments. The latter was especially true in the case of uniting seminaries with colleges. This was not prompted by any great regard for education but rather by a desire to save money, especially by using the seminarians as teachers. The Vincentians had had an unhappy experience with such a practice in their own seminaries and found it equally unworkable in others.

Niagara

The retrenchment was not absolute, nor were all the seminaries relinquished. One of the most notable and successful was the Seminary of Our Lady of Angels near Niagara Falls, New York.
The founder of the seminary was Father John Lynch. Speaking at its silver jubilee celebration in 1881, Lynch, at that time archbishop of Toronto, said that as a child in Ireland he had been given a picture of Niagara Falls that instilled a lifelong desire to minister to any Catholics in the region. After serving on the missions in Texas with Odin and as president of Saint Vincent’s College in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, he went to Buffalo to give a retreat to the clergy of Timon’s diocese and was told by Masnou to stay and start a seminary. On 17 November 1856 it opened in the city of Niagara in a former orphanage with a faculty of two, Lynch and John Monaghan, and a student body of six. Shortly after, Lynch purchased a farm on Monteagle Ridge, near Niagara Falls, although at the time he had not the slightest idea where he would get the money for it. The new foundation was to be both a seminary and lay college, the latter being the ancestor of the modern Niagara University. In 1857 it moved to its present location, with an enlarged student body of twenty-four. It was on the brink of perishing for lack of funds when a Brooklyn priest, Father John Maginnis, called on Bishop Timon to ask his advice on where to donate $10,000 that was in his possession. Timon quickly directed him to the seminary which was saved by the timely gift. Maginnis joined the seminary faculty and died there in 1861 of pneumonia contracted while preparing mortar for the construction of the seminary buildings. In 1859 Lynch was named coadjutor bishop of Toronto and so had to leave the seminary and college to which he was so devoted. On 5 December 1864 the seminary building burned to the ground with the loss of life of one student who attempted to save the sacred vessels in the chapel. It was rebuilt by donations from alumni and friends, including $1000 from Pope Pius IX. In 1883, at the suggestion of Stephen Vincent Ryan, who had succeeded Timon as bishop of Buffalo, the college was erected into a university.

There are several stories as to how the seminary came to be called Our Lady of Angels. One is that the name was given to the area by Fathers Lasalle and Hennepin when they passed through in 1676. There is, however, no documentary evidence of this. Another is that it was given the name by Bishop Joseph Rosati who, during a stay in France, had heard of a miraculous cure of Saint John Vianney by the Blessed Virgin. Another is that the name was suggested by Pius IX after the fire of 1864. In actual fact the original name given to the seminary was Saint Mary’s. The name of
Our Lady of Angels was first used in 1857. Hence there is no certainty as to how the name originated. Among the notable episcopal alumni of Niagara were James Hartley of Columbus, Ohio, Thomas Lillis of Kansas City, Missouri, and James Quigley of Chicago, Illinois.

Los Angeles

In 1863 Bishop Thaddeus Amat, C.M., of Monterey-Los Angeles asked the Community to send some Vincentians to his diocese to be spiritual directors for the Daughters of Charity and to open a minor seminary. Three Vincentians were sent: Father John Asmuth, the superior, and Fathers Michael Rubi and John Beakey. On their arrival in Los Angeles they had a disagreement with Amat over the question of property. They then accepted an offer to staff a parish in Carson City, Nevada, but by 1865 they had returned to Los Angeles, where they were joined by Father James MacGill.

On 9 May 1865 Amat and Asmuth signed a contract by which the Vincentians were given property for a minor seminary. The bishop agreed to pay charges for six students, and the Vincentians were allowed to solicit funds in the diocese, a permission that was renewed on 13 June of that year. The contract also stipulated that the bishop could later erect a seminary at a different location so that seminarians and secular students would not be mixed in the same institution. Hence it seems that from the beginning, the new establishment was viewed as receiving both lay students and seminarians, exactly the type of situation the Vincentians previously tried to avoid. On 29 July 1866 the cornerstone was laid “for the college seminary, under the direction of the secular priests of the Congregation of the Mission, to the Most High God, in honor of Saint Vincent de Paul.”

The minor seminary did not last, though the reasons are not now known. Saint Vincent’s College became exclusively a lay school and remained one through almost half a century of existence.

From the Division of the Province to World War II
1888 - 1939

The division of the American Province in 1888 came at a time when there were many important developments in the American...
seminary system. Some of these were inspired by Pope Leo XIII's reforms of education. In 1879 he issued the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* which called for the renewal and revitalization of Thomistic studies. An instruction of 1881 sought to shake the Roman universities out of their torpor and to make the Eternal City a center for clerical education. All of this was indicative of an increased Roman direction of seminaries throughout the world, a trend that has continued during the twentieth century. In 1882 Father Antoine Fiat, the superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, wrote a circular to the worldwide Community, encouraging the provinces to send suitable candidates to Rome for higher degrees. Referring to the previous general assembly, he wrote that it

fully approved and encouraged the already established practice of sending to Rome some of our young men, after their promotion to the priesthood, so that they can complete their studies there and receive academic degrees. It hopes that their humility will not suffer any harm and that the memory of that of Saint Vincent will always keep them in the modesty that suits his disciples.\(^{32}\)

In line with a growing tendency in the church Fiat's letter also decreed that the studies of Vincentian scholastics should not be less than six years, that is, two of philosophy and four of theology. In 1884 the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore regularized the structure of the American major seminary by mandating the same schedule.

The two American provinces responded somewhat slowly, as manpower needs permitted. In the West the response was slower than in the East because the provincial, Thomas Smith, saw no real need for graduate education. Inevitably, however, the program of professional training for those engaged in the seminary apostolate got underway.

The last half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth saw this apostolate continued but in a diminished form. One reason for this was the different directions taken by the two provinces after the division of 1888. The Eastern Province remained strongly committed to the parish missions as its principal work. In the west, the missions tended to die out and there was a strong move toward lay colleges, such as DePaul (1898) and Dallas (1906), together with a commitment to a college in Fort Worth, Texas, and negotiations for one in Lincoln, Nebraska. The latter two never became formal provincial apostolates. The personnel of the Western
Province was very young in age and believed that the future lay in more visible apostolates, such as education. An additional obstacle faced by both provinces was the fact that the first Apostolic Delegate to the United States (1893-1896), Cardinal Francesco Satolli, believed that diocesan seminaries should be directed by diocesan priests, an idea that he actively propagated.

The Eastern Province

In 1908 there was some hope that the Eastern Province might take over direction of a seminary in Cleveland, Ohio, but the project never materialized. A proposed seminary in Puerto Rico met the same fate (1923) because the provincial believed that it would be impossible without the help of the Spanish provinces—and this was not available.

Vincentian Formation

As has been mentioned, the novitiate and scholasticate of the American province were transferred to Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1868 and housed in what came to be called Saint Vincent’s Seminary. After the division of the provinces, Saint Vincent’s remained the novitiate and scholasticate for the Eastern Province. In 1873 the Province opened a boys academy at Germantown that was later (1882) converted into an apostolic school, popularly called Gentilly after its counterpart in the province of Paris. In either 1874 or 1881 (there is no certainty about the date), the Province bought a house and large tract of land in Bordentown, New Jersey. The estate purchased was known as Bonaparte Park, because it had been the home of Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon’s brother and former king of Naples and Spain, who lived in exile at Bordentown after his brother’s downfall. The Province used it primarily as a summer house for scholastics and novices.

In 1900 the novitiate was transferred to Bordentown, and incorporated as the “Congregation of the Mission of Saint Vincent de Paul in Bordentown, N.J.” The papers of incorporation gave the purpose of the house as novitiate, mission center, retreat house, and summer home—it was also used as a house of penance for erring confreres. The scholasticate and apostolic school remained at
Saint Joseph's College Chapel, Princeton, New Jersey
Germantown. In 1911 the province was forced to sell the Bordentown property because of financial difficulties, and the novitiate returned to Germantown.*

In the following year a farm was purchased near Kingston, New Jersey, with the idea of moving the novitiate there temporarily, pending the completion of a new novitiate building in Germantown. In June 1912 some forty-five students and novices arrived at the new settlement, which served as a vacation site for the students. There the group lived in tents and did all their washing in a nearby canal. In late August the students returned to Germantown. Though some of the novices were able to move into a converted farm house, others lived in tents for an entire year. Fortunately, there was a mild winter. Why the provincial authorities felt it necessary to put the novices through that particular adventure is not clear. In September 1913 the novices returned to Germantown. By that time the provincial authorities had decided to retain the novitiate at Germantown and transfer the apostolic school to the Kingston site.

In 1913 the charter of the Bordentown house was changed to fit the new situation. It was incorporated as "the Congregation of the Mission of Saint Vincent de Paul in Princeton, New Jersey" (1 April 1913), whose purpose was "to conduct a school and institution of learning near Princeton for the purpose of educating young men for the priesthood of the Catholic Church. In the summer of 1914 a new building was ready for occupancy and was used by the novices for their summer home. In late August the apostolic school was set up there, and it became Saint Joseph's College, more often associated with the city of Princeton than with Kingston. The college's date of origin is usually given as 1912, the first year of Vincentian occupancy of the site. From 1924 to 1938 it was an eight year institution, granting the A.B. degree.

The scholasticate remained at Germantown until 1939, but the facilities were seriously overtaxed. In 1935 the Province made plans to relieve the situation by building a new novitiate. Father Joseph A. Skelly, director of the Central Association of the Miraculous Medal, began a search for a new site and eventually settled on a

*Bonaparte Park became a seminary again in 1947 when the Divine Word Fathers established a house of formation there.
location near Northampton, Pennsylvania. The plans for a novitiate were soon changed when the provincial authorities decided that the location would be better suited to a scholasticate. They believed that the rural seclusion would be good for the students and they also wanted the faculty and students to live in different buildings, or at least different wings. It was there that Mary Immaculate Seminary was constructed, mostly with funds provided by Skelly and the Central Association. Skelly was responsible for the extensive art work in the seminary, including a number of statues carved in place out of solid granite blocks. It opened in 1939 with Father Daniel Leary as the first rector and superior.

Brooklyn

From 1891 until 1930 the diocesan seminary for Brooklyn was Saint John’s Seminary, an offshoot of Saint John’s University. Both were conducted by the Vincentians. John Loughlin, the first bishop of Brooklyn (1853-1891), was an admirer of the Vincentians and numbered some of them among his close friends. It was he who invited them to open Saint John the Baptist College, later Saint John’s University in Brooklyn in 1870. He promised that a diocesan seminary would eventually be constructed and entrusted to the Vincentians. Until 1891 the Brooklyn seminarians attended various seminaries, including Our Lady of the Angels in Niagara. Between 1862 and 1891 the Niagara seminary trained sixty-two priests for Brooklyn, more than any other seminary. In the period from 1870 to 1891 a large proportion of students from Saint John’s College (later university) entered the priesthood. In 1891 a contract was entered into with Father James MacGill, the provincial of the Eastern Province. It stipulated that the Vincentians “would keep in the seminary a full and competent staff of professors capable of meeting all the requirements of the institution and maintaining good and proper discipline.” It opened on Lewis Avenue in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn on 21 September 1891. The seminary building belonged to the diocese, but the land on which it stood was the property of the Vincentians.

The seminary eventually proved to be too small. In 1927, of 250 candidates for the diocese, only seventy could be accommodated in Saint John’s, the rest being dispersed in various seminaries throughout the country. In addition the neighborhood had become
crowded, and the buildings were old. As early as 1926 Bishop Thomas Molloy had begun thinking about the need for a new establishment. He wrote to Cardinal Gaetano Bisleti, Prefect of the Congregation of Seminaries, that he felt it imperative that his students be trained within the diocese. He also stated his belief that the seminary would function better if the rector and some of the faculty were diocesan priests who "would be better integrated with diocesan policy." The diocesan clergy would thus feel more identification with the seminary and less that it was something "foreign to the life of the diocese." He concluded "I would very happily leave the spiritual direction of the seminary to the Fathers of the Mission as well as a representation on the faculty as long as the other positions remained with the secular clergy."

In January 1927 Molloy informed Father John J. Cloonan, the president of Saint John's, that he intended to construct a new seminary, but he said nothing about Vincentian participation in it. Worried by this omission, Cloonan forwarded the message to the provincial, Father Frederick J. Maune. Cloonan observed that the bishop would be acting within his rights but insisted that the Vincentians would remain only if they retained control of the seminary. "Loss of control of the seminary is undeserved and unnecessary." Maune agreed and wrote a strongly worded letter to the bishop, saying "the irreducible minimum which would satisfy us and which, salva reverentia [with all due respect], we feel constrained to insist on is the rectorship, the spiritual direction and some of the chairs or professorships."

The provincial and his council also sent a complete report on their position to the Vincentian superiors in Paris. Maune and his consultors reaffirmed their belief in the need to build a new seminary and their conviction that after thirty-five years of total direction, including discipline, spirituality, and finances, the Vincentian Community should retain direction of the new seminary. The bishop had assured them that he found nothing lacking in the Vincentian administration. His sole reason for seeking the change was his desire "to have the seminary more completely and more directly under his personal control." They accepted the bishop's assurances that he was seeking the best interests of his seminary while creating the least possible difficulty for the Vincentians. "A similar offer in the administration of a seminary with which we have never had any connection could be considered an honor and a tribute of homage in favor of the Community, but in the present
case in a seminary of which we have had the complete administra-
tion for so many years, the proposal would imply the admission of
failure or incompetence." A carefully selected Vincentian rector,
they concluded, could fulfill the bishop’s wishes as well as a
diocesan priest. The only recourse was for the Vincentians to with-
draw. The superior general and his council agreed (13 February
1927).

The matter was complicated when Father William Barr, the prov-
incial of the Western Province, began circulating a conversation that
he had had with Cardinal Bisleti, in which the latter had stated that
the Vincentians no longer had the Brooklyn seminary. This, of
course, upset the Eastern Province authorities, who believed that
the matter was still under negotiation.

On 17 November 1927 Molloy announced that he had purchased
a site at Huntington, Long Island, for the new seminary. It was
completed and opened in 1930 but with the issue of administration
still unresolved. In 1931 a diocesan rector was appointed, and thus
the Vincentian connection was officially terminated. During the
thirty-nine years of Vincentian direction, Saint John the Baptist
seminary had 666 seminarians, almost all of whom were ordained
for the diocese of Brooklyn.

The Brooklyn establishment was the only diocesan seminary that
was undertaken by the Eastern Province between 1888 and 1930.
The emphasis within the province lay more with the home and
foreign missions. In addition the two universities at Niagara and
Brooklyn, together with a preparatory high school in the latter city,
demanded a large percentage of provincial personnel.

When in October 1932 Neil McNeil, the archbishop of Toronto
(1912-1934), asked the Eastern Province’s permission to erect a
mission house in his see, he asked that they also supply two men
to act as spiritual directors for his archdiocesan seminary. Father
Slattery, the provincial, agreed, but after McNeil’s death, his
successor withdrew the offer.
The Western Province

Saint Louis

As has been mentioned, from the 1860s students for the diocese of Saint Louis studied at different seminaries, principally Saint Francis in Milwaukee and the North American College in Rome. Although in the 1880s Saint Vincent's College in Cape Girardeau had again begun to function as a seminary, it had few students. The Milwaukee seminary was the only one of any note situated in the area covered by the boundaries of the Vincentian Western Province. It was also a center of German influence. "It is and always has been as German as though it were located in Germany," wrote one observer. Hence it was a favorite of the German-speaking priests of Saint Louis, who constituted the majority of the clergy in that diocese. Reluctant to give up this source of German recruitment, they opposed any plans for a local seminary.

In 1893, because of his advancing age, Archbishop Kenrick was given John J. Kain as his coadjutor with right of succession. In 1895 Kain was made administrator, and Kenrick was never again active as the ordinary. He was determined to have his own seminary, however, and he succeeded in doing so before receiving his coadjutor. In 1889 he negotiated with the Jesuits at Saint Louis University about sending the philosophers and theologians there but nothing came of it. In late 1890 he indicated his intention of purchasing a building for his seminary from the Visitation nuns at 19th and Cass Avenue in Saint Louis and did so in the following year. He intended to give the direction of it to the Sulpicians because he believed that the newly formed Western Province did not have the personnel to supply an adequate faculty. In view of the long history of the Vincentians in the archdiocese, this would have been a rather insulting vote of no-confidence. Father Philip Brady, the vicar general for the English-speaking priests and an alumnus of Saint Vincent's College in Cape Girardeau, and some of the leading priests of the archdiocese were concerned about this and made representations to Father Thomas Smith, who had remained provincial of the Western Province after the division of 1888. Brady and other priests promised to use their influence, if the province showed any willingness to assume the charge. The provincial council decided that a "reasonable effort" should be made.
In December 1891 Smith reported that negotiations with the archbishop were progressing well and on 6 January 1892 the provincial council voted to accept the seminary, a move that was somewhat premature in view of the fact that the offer to the Sulpicians had not been withdrawn and was still under consideration by them. Five days later Smith enlisted the aid of Cardinal James Gibbons, archbishop of Baltimore and dean of the American hierarchy, with whom he had been corresponding over attempts by the German clergy of Saint Louis to erect a national church within the boundaries of Saint Vincent's parish. He wrote Gibbons that the Vincentians had been directing the seminaries of the archdiocese of Saint Louis from the beginning and "in such circumstances to have the Sulpician Fathers come to St. Louis to supersede us as it were in this work in which we have been engaged for fifty years would involve a great disgrace." He called it a "condemnation of our past work" and said that if the Sulpicians knew of this, they would not accept the offer. He asked Gibbons "to add another favor to the many for which we are already indebted to you by getting the Sulpician Fathers to refuse the offer of the St. Louis Seminary."36

Gibbons acceded to the request, and contacted Father Alphonse Magnien, the Sulpician superior. Magnien quickly informed Smith that the Sulpicians would refuse the seminary. Apparently Magnien had intended to write a rather strong letter to Kenrick but Smith dissuaded him. "It might sour the good old Archbishop against us as he does not wish to be interfered with in his plans. Let us leave him in peace the short time he has to live."37

On 12 July 1892 a contract was signed between Kenrick and the province by which the Vincentians assumed direction of the new Kenrick Seminary. The archbishop turned over both land and buildings to the Vincentians for a token payment of $1.00. Though it was not specified in the contract, this meant that the Vincentians were to assume the cost of the required changes and refurbishing. "It is the greatest, most magnificent donation that has ever been made in this country by a bishop to a religious congregation," was one description of it at the time.38

The contract stipulated that the building was to be used exclusively as a diocesan seminary. The Vincentians were obligated "at all times, to provide a capable and efficient body of Professors and Teachers for said Seminary, and to provide the means for an education preparatory to the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church
equal, in all respects, to that in such institutions of the first class in the United States.” The contract would be voided if the Vincents were to leave the diocese of Saint Louis, use the building for any purpose other than a seminary, or “fail to furnish the proper Professors and Teachers for said Diocesan Seminary, and to maintain the same in all respects as a first-class Diocesan Ecclesiastical Seminary should be maintained.”

The province was in no condition to finance the many needed repairs to the building, and so the archbishop allowed the Vincents to have a fund drive in Saint Louis. In the fall of 1892 Smith appointed Father Francis Nugent, the superior of Saint Vincent’s College in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, as the fund raiser. He was later assisted by Father Peter Vincent Byrne, his assistant superior. Both men had been vocal advocates of a seminary and educational apostolate for the Western Province and equally vocal critics of the shortcomings of Vincentian academic formation. Nugent estimated that it would take between thirty and forty thousand dollars to redo the buildings. In general “this very difficult and disagreeable task,” as he called the drive, was successful, although the eventual renovations left the seminary with a debt of $10,000, a debt that was the responsibility of the Vincentian Community.

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The news of the new foundation caused both joy and apprehension in the province. The apprehension arose from a number of sources. It was widely believed that the new seminary, which was expected to draw students from a large number of dioceses, would be one of the most important in the country and that the community that directed it, if it did so successfully, could look forward to invitations from other bishops. In a letter to the superior general at the time that the seminary opened, Father Nugent, who was also a provincial consultor, referred to it as one of the most important Vincentian works in the country. It was this belief that the success or failure of the Vincentian administration of Kenrick Seminary would determine the province’s direction for years that caused alarm in many quarters. There was a great deal of criticism of the academic program at the Barrens for its failure adequately to prepare the young Vincentians for their apostolates, especially educational ones.

The decision to give the seminary to the Vincents was not universally popular in Saint Louis. One diocesan pastor wrote to Magnien to express his “deep regret that the Sulpicians have found it impossible to establish themselves in this city and I assure you
that I voice in this the sentiments of all who have the welfare of our diocese at heart." He informed Magnien that the "Visitation Academy has been handed over to the Lazarists, in spite of the fact that for nearly half a century they have given every sign of inability to turn out anything better than ignorant money-gatherers."41

On 15 January, just a week after the seminary had been awarded to the Vincentians, the provincial and his council pondered the matter of finding a faculty. It was decided to choose "the most competent and send them to the college at Cape Girardeau to prepare themselves for a year at least before entering upon their duties in the Grand Seminary."42 It is not clear whether this was done, but Smith, having won his victory, promptly grew indifferent to the seminary. In line with his view that any Vincentian could be a seminary professor, he appointed an obviously second-rate faculty. Smith claimed that he had not urged that the opening of the seminary be set for September 1893, despite the wide publicity given that date during the fund drive, and in a fit of pique disclaimed all responsibility for the institution. In addition, despite intense urgings from all sides, Smith had not contacted the neighboring bishops to recruit students for Kenrick. When he did so at the last minute, most were already committed to other seminaries.

Numerous letters of complaint from Nugent, Byrne, Thomas Weldon and others began to pour into the superior general, pointing out the disgrace and misfortune that could befall the province if the situation at Kenrick was not immediately rectified. In particular, there were requests that some qualified professors be sent from France. Six months before the opening, Byrne wrote to the superior general to emphasize the importance of the new seminary and that success would help the Community in the west whereas failure would disgrace it forever. The province, he pointed out, had committed itself to providing a good faculty, but Smith's proposed appointments were anything but that. Nugent wrote to Fiat just one month after the seminary opened that the classes in moral theology and scripture were poorly taught. "The eyes of the Bishop and Clergy are turned critically on the seminary."43 Nugent's feeling that the performance of the Vincentians was being closely monitored was widely shared, and it was probably accurate. Even Cardinal Gibbons wrote to the first rector about the necessity of directing the seminary in a manner worthy of the confidence that had been placed in the Vincentians.
The first rector, Father Aloysius Meyer, was a native of Baden, Germany, a fact that may have placated some of the Saint Louis clergy. He came to Kenrick from Saint Vincent's College in Los Angeles. He had had extensive experience on the missions, in parishes, and in college education, but not in major seminaries. He approached his new responsibilities in a state verging on panic. To Fiat he lamented, "You have sent me here to be in charge of a work for which I am not capable. I was not educated to direct a major seminary."44

From the beginning, Meyer complained, people were saying that the Vincentians did not have the manpower to operate the seminary. He foresaw the community's reputation as being lost, it was a solemn moment, "and the visitor refuses to understand it."45 He asked Fiat for a German and Italian confrere, because only two of his faculty were worthwhile teachers. The superior general invited him to come to Paris to make a personal report, but Meyer declined. The appointment of an additional faculty member mollified him a bit.

Kenrick Seminary concluded its first year with a student body of forty-seven. By 1900 it had 103. Surprisingly, in light of papal and Vincentian documents and the Third Council of Baltimore, there were only three years of theology. The fourth was not added until 1904. Externally the seminary appeared to be prospering. Kenrick was succeeded as archbishop by John J. Kain, who adopted a conciliatory attitude toward the Vincentians. The pressure, however, was still felt.

Kenrick Seminary was not blessed in its first superiors. Meyer lasted a little over a year. On 10 December 1894, during a special visitation, the superior general's commissary, Father Malachy O'Callaghan, an Irishman, removed him from office and appointed Peter Vincent Byrne in his stead. Byrne was an intelligent man who had some farseeing ideas about the need for academic preparation for the younger Vincentians, but he was an inept administrator. He tried, for example, to enforce a rule of strict separation between faculty and students. The two had no contact whatever outside of class. Smith smarted under the circumstances of Byrne's appointment and waited for the first reasonable opportunity to remove him.

Byrne lasted two and a half years and was followed by Nugent, who held the office from 27 May 1897 until 1903. He was described by Charles Souvay as being of above-average intelligence but of a
domineering personality. He had turned down the bishopric of Galveston, and James Blenk, later archbishop of New Orleans, had made strenuous efforts to have him named bishop of Puerto Rico after the American annexation of that island. He does not, however, seem to have been a particularly good administrator. He was responsible for securing the incorporation of the seminary (24 June 1898) as "The Saint Louis Roman Catholic Theological Seminary."

His successor, Father William Musson, an indolent and mediocre man, was superior from 26 August 1903 to 1906. He was succeeded by Father Michael S. Ryan who quickly established good relations with the archbishop of Saint Louis, John J. Glennon. He also had good rapport with many of the diocesan priests and was widely sought as a speaker and retreat master. Though capable and intelligent, he was of a highly autocratic disposition. He dispensed with house councils and had faculty meetings only two or three times a year, when there was question of conferring orders. When Ryan departed on a trip to Europe, Father John Kearney, who taught in the preparatory department, caused some consternation by reminding him, "Remember the law of the sea: women and children first."46 Because of his personality, the enrollment at Kenrick declined in three years from 125 to 84. Younger priests in the archdiocese no longer encouraged students to go to the seminary because of the bad food, the deplorable condition of the buildings, and the superior. Because of him also, the archdiocese of New Orleans stopped sending students to Kenrick in 1909. Nonetheless, he stayed on to complete twenty full years as rector.

In 1913 a new seminary was built in Saint Louis County in an unincorporated area named Glennon Park, and it was there that Ryan governed until 1926. In contrast with the situation of the older seminary, the title to the new Kenrick Seminary and its lands was retained by the archdiocese of Saint Louis. The Vincentians sold the old seminary back to the archdiocese for $1.00. The land and building were then resold in order to help defray the cost of the new seminary. In the course of its existence Kenrick has produced forty-one bishops and one cardinal.

In 1900 the archdiocese expanded its seminary system by removing the minor seminary from Saint Vincent's in Cape Girardeau to Kenrick. This too was entrusted to the Vincentian Community but over the opposition of the German clergy who felt that their interests were being neglected. It functioned as the
"preparatory department" of Kenrick and all the years of priestly formation were now in one institution.

When the new Kenrick opened in 1913, the preparatory department was moved to a location on Washington Boulevard in downtown Saint Louis, still under the administration of the Vincentians. On 29 September 1927 the building was badly damaged by a tornado, and the students were temporarily located at Saint Bridget's parish. In 1931 the Saint Louis Preparatory Seminary, which accepted both boarding and non-boarding students, was opened in Saint Louis County on grounds near Kenrick. The first two years of high school remained in Saint Louis, at the Washington Boulevard location, and were called the Cathedral Latin School. It was under the direction of diocesan priests and remained in existence until 1947, when all the years of high school were united at the Saint Louis Preparatory Seminary. In 1957 a new preparatory seminary was built on the same land, which was now a part of Shrewsbury, Missouri. It was commonly known as Prep South, to distinguish it from a second preparatory seminary directed by diocesan priests in northern Saint Louis County. The former preparatory seminary building became Cardinal Glennon College.

In 1986 the archdiocese of Saint Louis decided to move the Kenrick Seminary from its old building to Cardinal Glennon College. Both the collegiate and theological students live in the college building, but the collegians take classes at Saint Louis University. At the same time it was decided that the two preparatory seminaries would be amalgamated, at which time the Vincentian Community gave up the office of rector.

Saint Vincent's College, Cape Girardeau

The foundation of Kenrick Seminary sounded the death knell of Saint Vincent's College as a theological school. Most of the clerical students quickly went to Saint Louis. An attempt was made to turn Saint Vincent's into a minor seminary, but this was also undermined when the minor seminary was opened in conjunction with Kenrick in 1900. Saint Vincent's struggled along with a few lay students, and the province seriously considered selling the property. In 1910 it became an apostolic school for candidates for the Western Province, a status that it held until 1979 when, because of dwindling enrollment, it became a center for evangelization. Its
students were henceforward sent to Saint Vincent's Seminary in Lemont, Illinois.

New Orleans

In 1870, three years after the Bouligny Seminary closed, the archdiocese of New Orleans opened another major seminary, this time with a staff of diocesan priests. It lasted until 1881 when it was closed because of the precarious financial situation of the archdiocese under Archbishop Napoleon J. Perché. In 1889 Archbishop Francis Janssens persuaded the Benedictines from Saint Meinrad's Abbey in Indiana to establish an abbey and minor seminary at Saint Benedict, Louisiana. Both the abbey and the seminary continue in existence to the present day.

The original building of the Bouligny Seminary remained and was used as a school at Saint Stephen's parish. Thirty-three years after the original closing, the Vincentians returned to begin the seminary anew, this time under the direction of the Western Province.

On the feast of Saint Vincent de Paul, 19 July 1899, Archbishop Placide Louis Chapelle had dinner with the Vincentians at Saint Stephen's and suggested that the seminary be reopened. Father Smith accepted the offer and the Saint Louis Diocesan Seminary opened at Saint Stephen's in September 1900 with Father Louis P. Landry as pastor and superior and Musson as director of the seminary. The tuition for students was $200 a year. By coincidence, Father Anthony Verrina, the last superior of the Bouligny Seminary, had been moved from the parish only the year before.

The situation was reminiscent of the earlier nineteenth century seminaries. There was a faculty of three (four, if Landry be included) and a student body of five, which by December increased to eight. Other students entered during the course of the year, sometimes being dropped at the door by their sponsoring priests. Some Vincentians also attended, as they had done at the old Assumption Seminary. The old building had been refurbished, and the seminary was located on the third floor. Parochial and seminary personnel were intermixed, and so were their functions. During the first year of operation the student body reached a total of thirteen, of whom seven were eventually dropped. In addition to New Orleans, students came from Mississippi, Oklahoma, Texas (San
Antonio) and Alabama (Mobile). The largest student body at any
time was seventeen in 1904-1905. The faculty reached a high of
seven in 1902-1903 and a low of four in 1904-1905 and 1906-1907.
The faculty members taught a large variety of classes (though at
one time Father John Lesage taught all the philosophy) and most
examinations were oral. The grading system, which was the same
one used in most American seminaries, was by Roman numerals:

I = Optimus; II = Laudabilis; III = Mediocris; IV = Minus
sufficiens; V = Insufficiens. The seminarians were also graded on
mores (conduct) and industria (diligence, application).

The order of the day was typical of nineteenth century seminaries
directed by the Vincentians.

5:00 A.M.  Rise
5:20  Prayers and meditation
5:50  Mass and Litany
6:25  Old Testament reading and study
7:00  Breakfast
7:20  Recreation
7:45  Study
9:00  Class: dogma, philosophy
10:00  Study
11:00  Class: homiletics, natural philosophy
11:45  New Testament reading and examen
12:00  Dinner and recreation
1:30 P.M.  Study
3:30  Class: moral theology, philosophy
4:30  Recreation
5:00  Visit to the Blessed Sacrament
5:15  Study
5:45  Class: church history, canon law
6:25  Spiritual reading

This is where the schedule ended.

In 1905 Father Ambrose Vautier, a French-born missioner who
had been sent to teach at the seminary, wrote some interesting
observations on the difference between American and French
seminaries. The office of director, as distinct from superior, was one
of these. The director gave permissions to the students and presided
at exercises. All other faculty members were simple teachers. The
director was somewhat like the student director at Saint-Lazare, the
Vincentian Motherhouse in Paris, except that the students were allowed to go to other faculty members for confession. The seminarians had recreation by themselves. They went to communion once a week and to confession every one or two weeks. In the refectory there was *Deo Gratias* (i.e., talking at table rather than reading) on Sundays, Wednesdays, and other special occasions. The students were also allowed to attend Mardi Gras. The *Directoire de Grands Séminaires*, which earlier Vincentians had prided themselves on following, was now a dead letter in the United States.

Saint Louis Seminary never proved successful, though some of its alumni did become bishops, such as Jules Jeanmard of Lafayette, Louisiana; John Laval, auxiliary bishop of New Orleans; Anthony Pellicer of San Antonio; and Gustave Rouxel, auxiliary of New Orleans. New Orleans received large numbers of priests from France without having to pay for their education, and so there was little incentive for recruiting a native clergy. The French-speaking clergy did not support the seminary because they preferred to reinforce their ranks from the mother country. The small number of students (there were only eight in 1907) and the disproportionate number of faculty needed to form them determined the Western Province to suspend the seminary in 1907, with little hope that it would reopen.

The students were sent to Kenrick but withdrawn in 1909 and sent to Baltimore because of dissatisfaction with the rector and the lack of discipline. The name of the seminary was retained in the Vincentian personnel catalogues until 1923, when the present major seminary of the archdiocese, Notre Dame, was opened. In anticipation of that event, the provincial, Father Thomas Finney, and his council had declared that the province was willing to accept it if offered. No invitation ever came. Archbishop John W. Shaw offered it first to the Sulpicians, but they declined because of a lack of personnel. It was then confided to the Marists, without any contact ever having been made with the Vincentians. In the spring of 1922 Shaw told Ryan that "Your community has had charge of the seminary several times. I thought that it would be good to have some variety." The real reason was different and had been expressed by Shaw to Archbishop Glennon in Washington, D.C., some fifteen months previously. Shaw was concerned about the lack of discipline at Kenrick, especially the freedom with which the students went out at night, and feared the introduction of such lax
policies into his own seminary. Many Vincentians were highly critical of what they considered to be the archbishop's ingratitude. Souvay felt otherwise and wrote to the superior general, "I find it totally natural that we have been shunted aside; and I must say in conscience I cannot keep from thinking that the Congregation received there a just retribution for what happens here."48

Denver

The first attempts by the diocese of Denver, Colorado, to found a seminary failed because of financial difficulties. It was not until the early twentieth century that Bishop Nicholas C. Matz and the Vincentians of the Western Province were able to establish one on a permanent footing.

In the summer of 1906 Father Thomas Shaw, a personal friend of Matz, arrived in Denver to explore the possibility of opening a Vincentian house which could function as both a vacation villa and a residence for the confreres suffering from tuberculosis. The bishop suggested that instead the province should establish a seminary that would receive both diocesan and Vincentian seminarians. He offered some property in Morrison, and in July 1906 a delegation consisting of Nugent and Musson, then rector of Kenrick Seminary, was sent out to evaluate it. After considerable discussion and negotiation, they decided instead on a plot of land in the southeast section of the city. In December the Western Province agreed to spend $50,000 on the building. Musson and Byrne were to approve the plans. Because of the province's already heavy indebtedness at DePaul University and the newly founded University of Dallas, it was decided that as much of the money as possible should be borrowed on the land. Final arrangements with the provincial of the Western Province, Father Thomas Finney, were completed in early 1907.

The original intention had been that it should be called Saint Vincent's and eventually consist of a major and minor seminary. Neither of these intentions was realized. Bishop Matz wanted it called Saint Thomas after the Bardstown seminary as a mark of respect for his close friend William Howlett, a Bardstown alumnus who had written a history of his alma mater. In the spring of 1907, Father John Martin and four Vincentian students arrived, set up a temporary residence in a couple of houses that belonged to the
family of the Fathers Murtaugh, and began classes. “The St. Thomas Theological Seminary of Denver, Colorado,” was incorporated the following September. The building was designed by Father Nicholas Steines, who was both an architect and engineer. It was, however, another year before it was ready for occupancy and in the meantime a house was rented to accommodate the students. In May 1908 two Vincentians, Robert Henessey and Francis MacManaman, were ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Matz. Prior to the opening of Saint Thomas in September 1907, Father Martin was transferred to Chicago to replace Byrne at DePaul, and Father Thomas Levan became the rector. In 1911 he was succeeded by Father John Cronin.

Both the buildings and the land of the seminary belonged to the Vincentian Community which had total financial responsibility. In its first years Saint Thomas was part of a heavy drain on the financially troubled Western Province. In 1908 the seminary had a debt of $85,000, of which $15,000 had been borrowed from the province to pay for the land. The other $70,000 was for the construction of the building and had been borrowed from other sources. In May 1918, when the province was struggling with the threat of bankruptcy, it was decided to approach Bishop J. Henry Tihen to take over the seminary, with the Vincentians remaining as teachers, or else getting another community to take it over. Cronin encouraged Finney to come to Denver to present the proposal personally, but nothing is known of the outcome. The idea was discussed again in 1920 but also without any concrete results.

By the mid-1920s the original seminary structure, now known as the “Old Red Brick” building, had become inadequate to the enrollment. In 1924 Father William P. Barr was appointed to begin a fund drive in Denver for the construction of a new building. Father William M. Brennan worked with him and the drive was oversubscribed, no small accomplishment in a city where the Ku Klux Klan was strong. According to the Saint Louis Globe Democrat (8 July 1932), Barr raised $750,000. The drive was successful enough that in 1926 a philosophy and administration building, with an imposing 128 foot tower, was completed and dedicated. The chapel was built in 1931. In its long history Saint Thomas Seminary has formed priests for some sixty dioceses and religious communities and has had over eleven hundred priest alumni, including five bishops. Perhaps its most famous faculty member was Father John Vidal,
who held the office of director of students for some forty-four years.

Preparatory Seminaries

This same period saw the Western Province move seriously into a relatively new apostolate, the high school seminary. Aside from its own apostolic schools, the only such institution that the province directed was the Saint Louis Preparatory Seminary. In strict terminology, a preparatory seminary was one in which the majority of candidates were day students, whereas a minor seminary was one in which the majority were boarders. While the Vincentians directed both kinds, the general tendency, with special prodding from Rome, was in the direction of minor seminaries.

When Saint Vincent's College was founded in Los Angeles in 1865, the original intention had been that it should be a seminary. This did not work out, and Los Angeles did not have its own seminary until 1926. In that year it opened a preparatory seminary called Los Angeles College, which was entrusted to the direction of the Western Province. Father Marshall Winne, later provincial, was the first rector.

The other preparatory seminary was located in Kansas City, Missouri. This diocese had had some form of seminary since the year 1883 when Bishop John J. Hogan appointed a priest to give Latin classes at his cathedral. This Latin school concept lasted until the early twentieth century. In 1904 a diocesan seminary was formally incorporated and its establishment announced in the following year. It was not until 1906, however, that classes were actually begun in a parochial school. In 1910 the seminarians were transferred to LaSalle Academy, where they received their education from the Christian Brothers. Four years later they were transferred again, this time to Rockhurst College, where they were educated by the Jesuits.

In 1927 Bishop Thomas F. Lillis, an alumnus of Our Lady of Angels in Niagara Falls, purchased a tract of land for an independent preparatory seminary. He invited the Western Province to assume direction of it, and the offer was accepted. Classes were begun in 1928 in a local parochial school because the seminary building was not yet completed. Father Timothy Flavin was the first rector and superior. The new building, then known as Saint John’s
Diocesan Seminary, opened in 1930. It closed in 1983 because of low enrollment but throughout its existence it was under the continuous direction of the Vincentian Community. Its alumni included one cardinal, three other bishops, and nine Vincentian priests.

A World War and a Council
1939 - 1987

The time span from the outbreak of World War II to the late fifties saw a rapid expansion of the seminary apostolate in both provinces. The post-war period witnessed a number of important changes in that work. Most significant among these was the move toward accreditation of high schools and colleges by state and regional agencies, a move that was sparked in part by the postwar G. I. Bill. A special impact on seminaries came from Pope Pius XII's Apostolic Exhortation *Menti Nostrae* of 23 September 1950 which, among other things, mandated that the education received by seminarians should not be inferior to what they would receive in comparable schools elsewhere. These factors in turn gave impulse to a move away from the 6-6 system of seminary education, i.e., high school and junior college as one unit and the years of philosophy and theology as another, a system that despite its rather recent origins had come to be considered traditional. It began to be replaced by the 4-4-4 system that was more in keeping with mainstream American education. The college years of priestly formation now became united in one independent college seminary—for example, in Saint Louis in 1957 with the opening of Cardinal Glennon College and in Los Angeles in 1961 with the inauguration of Saint John's College. This in turn demanded a more extensive academic preparation for the Vincentians who would teach in these institutions and led to more structured provincial programs for graduate education.

The same postwar period also saw rapidly expanding enrollments and the construction of new seminaries throughout the country. In 1950 the Western Province, under its provincial, Father James Stakelum, made a policy decision to accept any seminaries offered to it for direction provided that the conditions were acceptable. This led to a period of expansion. It also involved over-extension of existing manpower and resources. All of this was brought to a halt
by the turmoil that followed the Second Vatican Council, the strains caused by renewal and the various reactions to it, and the worldwide student discontent that characterized the sixties and early seventies. All of these factors had an impact on the Vincentian seminary apostolate. Enrollments fell dramatically, and many seminaries had to be closed, with the high school seminary being the first to suffer. It was a time of enforced retrenchment.

The reforms of Vatican II had other impacts on seminaries, impacts that were on the one hand beneficial and progressive, on the other confusing and divisive. The renewal began in optimism and under the control and direction of higher authority. There followed a period of experimentation and then turmoil. Experimentation with a few specified structures opened the way for questioning all of them. The old order came under attack as students demanded more openness, more consultation, and the abolition of whatever they considered to be "irrelevant" to their needs and those of the time. They wanted immediate change and were increasingly bold in agitating for it. Seminary faculties were often split between those who favored these immediate changes and those who resisted them or wanted to move more gradually. Seminary differed from seminary in response to the many challenges. The response was dictated by the outlooks of seminarians and faculties, the attitudes of the local ordinaries, and other local conditions. As a result, despite the fact of direction by a single community, or even a single province of the community, Vincentian-directed seminaries were not uniform in their approach to aggiornamento.

In the aftermath of Vatican II the model of priesthood was no longer as clear as it had been. The entire concept of authority in the church and its exercise underwent a profound change. Seminaries hired lay, non-Catholic, and women faculty. Increasing numbers of diocesan priests took over both teaching and administrative positions. Seminary programs were opened to lay persons for various ministries and forms of Christian service. Spiritual formation programs lost the monastic coloring that they had had for so long. No longer isolated in the seminary, the students were more and more affected by the changes and turmoil in the world at large. They were freer to leave the seminary grounds, at first for apostolic experiences, and then as a general rule.

Although it is difficult to assess the effect of the division of provinces in 1975 on the Vincentian seminary apostolate, it would seem to have been negative and probably hastened the decline of Vincen-
tian direction of diocesan seminaries. This was especially so in the Southern and Western provinces. This was undoubtedly due in part to the fewer qualified or interested personnel in smaller provinces and a consequent search for other apostolates.

The Western Province

Texas

The Vincentian seminary apostolate came to Texas in 1941. In that year Archbishop Robert Lucey of San Antonio asked the Vincentians to take over Saint John’s Seminary which until then had been directed by diocesan priests. It was widely believed at that time and later that the archbishop had been compelled to do this by the apostolic delegate because of the bad academic and formational condition of the seminary. Saint John’s was distinctive in that it consisted of a total system of priestly formation, from high school through theology, on one campus. Because of increasing enrollment the archdiocese purchased the campus of the old Trinity University and transferred the theology department there in 1952. At that time it was renamed Assumption Seminary. The replacement of diocesan priests in the seminary by Vincentians caused strained relations with some of the local clergy. This, together with a shortage of personnel, caused the Vincentians to withdraw from the seminaries in 1967-1968.

The second Texas seminary was in the diocese of Galveston-Houston. In 1901 Bishop Nicholas Gallagher bought the Sylvan Beach Hotel on the Gulf coast at La Porte, Texas, and turned it into a diocesan seminary called Saint Mary’s. He gave the direction of it to the Basilian Fathers who remained there until 1911 when the diocesan clergy took it over. They remained in charge for the next forty years. In 1951 Bishop Wendelin J. Nold, concerned about both the academic and formational level of the seminary, asked the Western Province to assume direction of it. Father William Barr, the former provincial, was the first rector (1951-1955). A few years later a new seminary was built in Houston. The college program was expanded from three to four years and in the 1960s the school of theology became affiliated with the theology program of Saint Thomas University. It also became a fully accredited institution.
After the division of provinces in 1975, the Southern Province continued to administer it until 1982 when declining personnel and new apostolates caused it to withdraw.

Los Angeles

By the late 1940s the Los Angeles College, the preparatory seminary for the archdiocese of Los Angeles, had become overcrowded and the Vincentian administration agitated for the building of a new seminary. There was a long delay, attributed by some to the reluctance of the predominantly Irish clergy to encourage native vocations. It was, wrote Father Robert T. Brown, the rector, a plot “to keep the boats moving between here and Dublin.” Eventually, however, a new minor seminary called Our Lady, Queen of Angels was built in San Fernando and opened in 1953. The Vincentians continued to administer it until 1974, when differences with the archdiocese over the appointment of a diocesan priest rector caused them to withdraw.

As early as 1927 John J. Cantwell, bishop of Los Angeles-San Diego announced his intention of building a new major seminary on land donated by Juan Camarillo (1867-1936), about forty miles north of Los Angeles. Only after ten years, however, did the project begin to be realized. Undoubtedly the Depression, together with difficulty of having a fund drive follow so closely on that for the preparatory seminary, caused the delay. The original intention had been to call the seminary San Juan in honor of the donor, but it was eventually called Saint John's in honor of the ordinary.

Though it seemed logical that the Vincentians, who directed the preparatory seminary, should also take over the new establishment, Cantwell took his time in making the commitment. When the plans for the new seminary were drawn up, he had them approved by his vicar general and by Father Francis Corcoran, the rector of the preparatory seminary. Cantwell also dropped a number of other tantalizing hints. He told Corcoran that the seminary would be ready by Christmas 1938 and that he would need “help” from the Vincentians. A little later a prominent monsignor informed Corcoran that the Vincentians would have the new establishment. The suspense was ended in 1938, and Father William Barr, during his brief second term as provincial, was able to announce that the
faculty for the new seminary should be ready by September 1939. In November 1939 Barr was appointed the first rector. Saint John's Seminary received students from a variety of dioceses. In the 1940s, one of these, San Diego, withdrew its students when the canon law professor at the seminary successfully defended a pastor against the bishop of San Diego in an ecclesiastical trial. In 1961 a new college division was opened on the same property and called Saint John's College. Father William Kenneally, the rector of Saint John's Seminary, was also rector of the college until 1966, when Father Louis Franz was named rector of the independent seminary college.

In 1966-1967 the Los Angeles vice-province faced a major crisis at the Camarillo seminaries. Kenrick Seminary in Saint Louis had undertaken a substantial restructuring of its program as a means of bringing it into line with aggiornamento. The changes were featured in an article in the Saint Louis archdiocesan newspaper, an article that was reprinted in some other Catholic papers throughout the country. Cardinal Francis Spellman, the archbishop of New York, informed Cardinal James McIntyre of Los Angeles of the article. At the same time Archbishop Joseph McGucken of San Francisco in some unknown fashion obtained copies of the galley proofs of Father Stafford Poole's book Seminary in Crisis and informed Cardinal McIntyre of it. Shortly before that Father Poole had been denounced to the Congregation of Seminaries and Universities by the apostolic delegate, Archbishop Egidio Vagnozzi, for an article written for Commonweal. Cardinal McIntyre feared a major shift in policy by the priests who had charge of his three archdiocesan seminaries. Not content with preventing this, he put pressure on both the Los Angeles vice-provincial and the provincial of the Western Province to guarantee that all Vincentian-directed seminaries would be administered like those in Los Angeles. It was a demand that could not be fulfilled, but after extended negotiations, the provinces and the archdiocese arrived at a mutually satisfactory solution. The incident left ill feelings, and for many years the Los Angeles seminaries labored under the stereotype of being reactionary and repressive. The crisis was concomitant with a move to make the Los Angeles vice-province an independent province, a step that some viewed as essential to continued Vincentian direction of the Los Angeles seminaries.

In 1984, because of a lack of personnel among the Vincentians, the office of rector of the seminary college passed to the
archdiocese. In September 1985 Roger Mahony, an alumnus of the Los Angeles seminary system, was named archbishop. He quickly established the autonomy of the three seminaries by making them distinct corporations. Since 1939 the theologate has had ten bishop alumni. In 1987, because of a lack of personnel, the Vincentian Community yielded the office of rector to the archdiocese.

Oklahoma

Another move to the southwest occurred in 1946 when the Vincentians assumed direction of a minor seminary for the diocese of Oklahoma City. Called Saint Francis, it was located in the town of Bethany, Oklahoma, and was housed in a former home for the aged that so resembled a motel that many believed that it had actually been one. It opened in September 1946 with about twenty-five students. Father Donald McNeil was the first rector. The diocese eventually constructed a new seminary building, but at that time (1958) the Vincentians withdrew because of policy differences with the diocese and a lack of personnel.

Arizona

In 1956 the Western Province took over the direction of a minor seminary in Tucson, called Regina Cleri, with Father William Mahoney as the first rector. This remained under Vincentian direction until 1975 when declining enrollment caused it to be closed.

Other seminaries suffered a similar fate. Saint John’s in Kansas City was closed in 1983. At Denver, where a new theology building had been built in 1956, the college division was phased out, beginning in 1980.

The Eastern Province

Florida

In 1959 Bishop Coleman Carroll of Miami asked the Eastern Province to undertake the direction of a minor seminary in his
diocese. He had approached the Sulpician Community first, but they turned down the offer. Called Saint John Vianney Seminary, it opened in 1959 with Father John Young, as the first rector. In the beginning it was a four year high school seminary, but in the two succeeding years the freshman and sophomore years of college were added. The province continued the direction of the seminary until 1975 when a shortage of personnel caused it to withdraw.

At the time that Saint John Vianney opened, Bishop Carroll proposed to the provincial of the Eastern Province, Father Sylvester Taggart, that the Vincentians also conduct a major seminary for his diocese. It was agreed that the seminary, to be called Saint Vincent de Paul and located at Boynton Beach, should be constructed, owned, and operated by the Vincentians. It opened in 1963 with two years of philosophy, with a year of theology being added during each of the subsequent four years. Father Carey Leonard was the first rector. It remained under Vincentian direction until 1971 when the personnel shortage caused the Vincentians to withdraw. The buildings and grounds were then sold to the archdiocese of Miami, which continues to conduct the seminary with a combination of diocesan and religious priests.

**Niagara**

In 1961 the seminary of Our Lady of the Angels transferred from Niagara to Albany, New York, with Father William Gormley as the rector. The Eastern Province purchased the land and built the buildings. It still retained, however, its academic connections with Niagara University. It closed in 1972 because of difficulties in obtaining qualified personnel for the faculty, thus ending a diocesan seminary program that had lasted 116 years.

**Vincentian Houses of Formation**

In addition to diocesan seminaries, the Vincentian apostolate of priestly formation included its own members. Mention has already been made of some of these houses of formation.

In the Western Province apostolic schools (i.e., minor seminaries for candidates for the Vincentian Community) were opened at Montebello, California (1954), Lemont, Illinois (1955), and Beau-
mont, Texas (1962). Those in Texas and California were founded in anticipation of a future division of provinces. The seminary at Beaumont closed in 1980 because of declining enrollment. Saint Vincent's College in Cape Girardeau, which in 1910 had become an apostolic school, ended its long history as an educational institution in 1979 when it was converted into a center for evangelization. In 1985 the Western Province decided that Saint Vincent's Seminary in Montebello would be converted into an evangelization center in the following year. The seminary is now known as the DePaul Center. The Western Province novitiate was opened at Saint Mary's Seminary, Santa Barbara, California, in 1964 and remained there until 1978 when a change of formation policies caused a temporary hiatus. Saint Mary's became a retreat house. The novitiate program for the three provinces of the western region was reopened at Damascus House in New Orleans in 1982. In 1964 the theology department was moved from the Barrens to the newly constructed DeAndreis Institute of Theology in Lemont, Illinois, where it remained for twenty years. In 1984 the program was moved to DeAndreis House, a Vincentian residence on the campus of Saint Thomas Seminary in Denver. The students for the three western provinces now take their theology at Saint Thomas. Finally, in 1985, Saint Mary's of the Barrens, the first seminary founded by the Vincentians in the United States, suspended operation as a seminary for the second time in its history. The three provinces of the western region turned to local residential centers for the collegiate formation of their students: Amat House in Los Angeles (Western Province); Saint Lazare in Saint Louis (Midwestern Province); and Timon House in Houston (Southern Province).

In the Eastern Province Saint Joseph's Seminary continues in operation at Princeton and now receives some diocesan students in addition to Vincentian candidates. The collegiate program was relocated in 1970 to a Vincentian residence in Niagara Falls, New York, with the students attending classes at Niagara University. Fifteen years later it was moved again, this time to a residence in Ozone Park, New York, with the name of Vincentian House. The students attend classes at Saint John's University in nearby Jamaica. Mary Immaculate Seminary began to receive students from the Allentown diocese in 1969. In subsequent years students from other local dioceses and from the Barnabite Fathers were also admitted. The seminary was granted full membership in the Asso-
ciation of Theological Schools in 1971, with an accredited two degree program.

In 1956 the novitiate was moved from Germantown to Ridgefield, Connecticut, with Father Charles O'Connor as superior and Father John Conway as the director of novices. The Ridgefield house was closed in 1967, and the novitiate transferred to Northampton for one year. In the following year it was returned to Saint Vincent's Seminary in Germantown, where it remains today.

From after World War II until recent times, both provinces received students, in varying numbers and at different times, from Spain, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Guatemala, Chile, Panama, El Salvador, Italy, Yugoslavia, Australia and Ethiopia in preparation for work in various mission fields. The two provinces accepted full financial responsibility for the education of all these guest students.

Summary

Some common threads run through the history of the Vincentian seminary apostolate in the United States and give it a certain consistency. These seminaries were built on an old tradition that was more or less common to the worldwide community. In the nineteenth century these traditions and systems had been regularized in the various directoires that were considered normative for all seminaries directed by the Congregation of the Mission. The French seminary was the model, and for the better part of the last century the Vincentian boast was that the American seminaries were conducted like those in France. Though local variations were inevitable, this uniformity embraced the order of the day, the methods of teaching, the seminary rule (most often based on the Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission), the formularies of prayers (also adapted from Vincentian usage), and the program of spiritual exercises. The greatest variation from the French model probably came with the growth of the office of the director of students and the specialized position of the spiritual director. The latter owed a great deal to the Code of Canon Law of 1918. Although the directoires had largely become a dead letter by the beginning of this century, the basic tradition and approach to priestly formation remained intact until after the Second Vatican Council.
Although this uniformity and continuity were notable, the seminary apostolate was probably more remarkable for the instability and short lifespan of the individual institutions. With some notable exceptions, such as the Barrens, Saint Louis, Niagara, and Denver, the majority of seminaries did not last long, at least as Vincentian apostolates. In this they were no different from the overall seminary picture in the United States over the past century and a half. Such institutional instability has been one of the marked characteristics of American seminaries in general. The reasons are many and varied. In the Vincentian experience it is clear that differences between the bishops and the Vincentian superiors were a paramount factor. In far too many cases the bishops failed to live up to contracts or placed conditions that were unacceptable. Perhaps the heart of the problem was to be found in a diocesan seminary's being directed by a group that was fundamentally independent of the local ordinary, a situation that had built-in tensions. The Vincentians, as they demonstrated many times, had the freedom to leave when it was impossible to continue in a certain situation. On a more positive note, this meant that they could bring professionalism, a lifelong dedication, and a wider, more international outlook to the seminary apostolate. It was not a mere way-station to a higher position.

There were also some qualitative variations, though these are more difficult to evaluate. Surely, however, the move of the American bishops in the 1840s toward entrusting their seminaries to the American Province must have reflected a respect for the Vincentian Community. And the personnel at that time did contain some extraordinary men: Timon, S. V. Ryan, Amat, Lynch, Maller, Odin, to name a few. After that, however, and especially in the later nineteenth century, it is possible to see a decline. The low point probably came, more for the Western Province than for the Eastern, in the three decades from 1890 to 1920. Provincial leadership was feeble, and the frenzied concern about the possible failure of Kenrick Seminary reflected a genuine problem.

Generally speaking, it can be said that the Vincentian Community in its seminary apostolate tried to do too much with too little. Again, this is probably truer of the Western Province than of the Eastern. In the years after 1888 the latter tended to keep its houses more consolidated and to branch out with greater care. The west, on the other hand, was more reckless in its expansion. There seems to be no record of any seminary that was ever satisfied with
the number and quality of its personnel. It must be admitted that a large number of the seminaries seemed too often to have been borderline cases, both financially and administratively.

In the light of present knowledge, it is difficult to assess the full impact of Vincentian seminaries on the American Church in general. In view of the large numbers of alumni who went forth from these seminaries, many of which were located in important centers, the influence must have been considerable. From these seminaries went thousands of priests and bishops to minister to the church throughout the United States. On the other hand, the Vincentians themselves showed relatively little leadership on the national level in advancing seminary education or facing contemporary needs. That, for the most part, was left to the Sulpicians and to diocesan priests. The consensus of those who have written on seminaries and the American priesthood is that the Vincentian impact was not intellectual and may in fact have been anti-intellectual. The emphasis was far more on the practical and the pastoral, an emphasis that was dictated by the needs of the American church and the specialized mission of the seminaries themselves.

As of this writing, it would be rash to prophesy the future of the Vincentian seminary apostolate, the original work that brought the Vincentian Community to the United States. The most recent stage in American Vincentian history has been characterized by a move away from this traditional work, a move that has been hastened by the decline of seminaries themselves and, in the western region, by the balkanization of provinces. Though the future may be uncertain, the past can be seen as a major, if occasionally flawed, contribution to the Catholic Church in the United States.

ENDNOTES

1. Timon to Poussou, 28 May 1842; Timon to unidentified, probably Etienne, 30 May 1842, DRMA, Timon Papers, vol. 3.
5. Ibid., f. 23.
6. Timon to Etienne, 23 February 1838; Timon to Nozo, 12 March 1838, DRMA, Timon Papers, vol. 1.
7. Timon to Sturchi, 23 October 1844, DRMA, Timon Papers, vol. 4.
10. Penco to Timon, 14 January 1844 and 1 February 1844, DRMA, Notre Dame Papers, reel 3.
11. Penco to Timon, 1 February 1844, DRMA, Notre Dame Papers, reel 3.
13. Penco to Etienne, 29 June 1844, DRMA, Penco Papers, vol. 1.
14. Penco to Timon, 30 July 1844, DRMA, Notre Dame Papers, reel 3.
15. Ibid.
17. Maller to Etienne, 2 January 1844, DRMA, Maller Papers, vol. 1.
18. Maller to Etienne, 22 July 1844, DRMA, Maller Papers, vol. 1.
19. Penco to Timon, 30 July 1844, DRMA, Notre Dame Papers, reel 3.
21. Domenec to Timon, 1 April 1846, DRMA, Notre Dame Papers, reel 4.
22. Maller to Timon, 1 April 1846, DRMA, Notre Dame Papers, reel 4.
23. Penco to Etienne, 16 May 1853, DRMA, Penco Papers, vol. 2.
24. Timon to Etienne, 14 December 1839, DRMA, Timon Papers, vol. 2.
25. Timon to Etienne, 23 May 1844, DRMA, Timon Papers, vol. 4.
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28. Burlando to Timon, 3 April 1845, DRMA, Notre Dame Papers, reel 4.
29. Timon to Etienne, 4 November 1845, DRMA, Timon Papers, vol. 5.
30. Maller to unidentified, 22 February 1851, DRMA, Maller Papers, vol. 2.
31. AALA, "Libro primero de gobierno," 53.
32. Circulaires de M. A. Fiat aux Missionnaires, 1876 à [1914] (undated, no place), 20 October 1890. DRMA, uncatalogued.


35. F. V. Nugent to Fiat, 28 March 1893, GCUSA, series B, roll 4, item 381.

36. Smith to Gibbons, 11 January 1892, AAB.

37. Smith to Gibbons, 20 January 1892; Smith to Magnien, 20 January 1892, AAB.

38. Meyer to Fiat, 3 September 1893, GCUSA, series B, roll 4, item 383.

39. DRMA, Smith Papers.

40. Nugent to Fiat, 28 March 1893, GCUSA, series B, roll 4, item 381.

41. J. T. Foley to Magnien, 28 July 1892, AAB.

42. Provincial Council Minutes, Western Province, 15 January 1892.


44. Meyer to Fiat, 13 August 1893, GCUSA, series B, roll 4, item 382.

45. Ibid. Emphasis in original.

46. Souvay Diary, 1911-1926, 14 June (no year), Kenrick Seminary Archives.

47. Souvay to Verdier, 22 June 1922, AGC, Maison: Kenrick.

48. Ibid.

49. Communication in possession of author.