Parish missions in rural districts of France were the original apostolate of the Congregation of the Mission and the work that gave rise to its existence. Although missions had existed in some form since the Middle Ages, the modern parish version took definitive shape in the seventeenth century. Prior to that time, especially in the cities, missions had been associated with seasonal sermons, such as those of Advent and Lent, and hence their purpose had been primarily penitential. Saint Vincent de Paul simplified and systematized the parish mission. With him it became fundamentally catechetical in nature, an attempt to bring knowledge of basic Christian truths to the dechristianized parts of France, that is, the rural areas. Vincentian missions were a systematic intervention in the life of a parish in order to ground the people thoroughly in their commitment to the gospel, primarily through instruction, secondarily through exhortations to receive the sacraments. A general confession of one's sins was the first step in Christian renewal. The main thrust of a Vincentian mission, however, was an orderly catechesis that led to fuller participation in the sacramental and community life of the local church.

This thrust caused the missions to be quite lengthy. They generally lasted from four to six weeks, but could run as long as three months. The local clergy were often included in the missions, both as collaborators and as persons who themselves needed to be catechized. The concrete results of the missions were reckoned by the number of confessions and communions and the foundation of a
Confraternity of Charity, an organization of laypersons dedicated to serving the sick and poor. Missions usually ended with a solemn procession to which the local clergy and often the bishop were invited. In the early days of the Vincentian Community the mission teams frequently operated out of seminaries. Prior to the French Revolution, most Vincentian-directed seminaries were not the full, self-contained educational institutions that they are today. The faculties were small and the programs relatively short. During the free periods the faculty would go on the missions, often accompanied by some of their students. The mission season lasted from October to May, a time when most of the rural people were free from agricultural duties and were able to attend. Following a rule established by Saint Vincent, the missioners avoided the cities, especially diocesan centers. The presumption was that these received sufficient care from an abundance of diocesan and religious priests. The Vincentian community concentrated on the neglected country areas. Because of the widespread poverty in these regions, Saint Vincent determined that all missions were to be given free of charge.

Such was the missionary tradition that the Vincentians brought with them to the United States. There were, however, adjustments and adaptations that the North American environment made necessary and these will be discussed throughout the following narrative.

**An Improvised Apostolate: Parish Missions to 1872**

When Bishop Louis William Dubourg invited the Italian Vincentians to establish themselves in his diocese of Louisiana, he had in mind that they would staff a seminary and attend to the pastoral care of his spiritually neglected flock. The Vincentians, for their part, included in the contract that they would work in Dubourg's diocese "agreeably to the functions of their Institute," which meant that at some time they would undertake home missions. They stipulated, moreover, that whenever the Community accepted a parish, the confreres were first to give the people a formal mission "according to our rules, and custom." Such agreements, made thousands of miles from the actual scene of endeavor, are apt to be unrealistic, and this one proved no exception. The handful of Vincentians who ventured to America had more than enough pastoral work to do without taking on an extensive program of
parish missions. During the early years, mission work consisted of tours to the religiously bereft whom the Vincentians instructed and assisted. Even though the Community soon accepted the care of a few parishes and a host of mission stations, no evidence exists to indicate that the confreres fulfilled their hope of missionizing their parishioners before accepting their charge. A consistent parish mission apostolate remained more or less a dream for some decades.

The first Vincentian mission was preached by Father Joseph Rosati in Vincennes, Indiana, in May 1817. He had come to the city from Bardstown, Kentucky, where he and his confreres were sojourning while still en route to Missouri. The mission, which was to be the first and last for seven years, ran for two weeks. After the Vincentians arrived at the Barrens, they devoted their attention to the establishment of Saint Mary's Seminary, and all mission activity ceased until 1824. In that year a Catholic layman, who lived about twenty-five miles from Little Rock in the Arkansas Territory, offered Rosati, then auxiliary bishop of Louisiana, land on which to build a church that would serve the nearly one thousand Creole Catholics in the area. The bishop sent Father John Mary Odin and the Reverend Deacon John Timon to investigate the situation. They set out on 8 September, and on their way south gave a mission in New Madrid, Missouri. The two then proceeded to their destination, performing what Timon later described as “a continual mission among a population that had never seen a priest.” Besides visiting the Catholics who had summoned them, they pushed on to the Post of Arkansas. Once arrived, the missioners made contact with the Quapaw Indians who seemed well disposed toward the Catholic faith. During this tour, the two Vincentians ministered to both Catholics and Protestants, “rehabilitating” marriages, baptizing both adults and children (over two hundred in all), hearing confessions, and giving communion. Some people had not received the sacraments in forty years. Odin and Timon returned to the seminary in late October.

In the spring of 1826 Odin went back to New Madrid with Father Leo De Neckere. They planned to revitalize Catholic life there by giving a long mission. The area had a Catholic population of about twenty-four families. Formerly, the settlement had had a Catholic church, but it had been destroyed by an overflow of the Mississippi River and the parishioners never bothered to rebuild it. Upon reaching the city, the two priests rented a house that was to
serve as both a meeting hall and church. They taught catechism twice a day and they preached two sermons on Sundays and holy days. During their stay the missioners heard many confessions and on Ascension Thursday they administered first Holy Communion to fifteen children. The number would have been greater had not bad weather made roads impassable for many other would-be communicants. When the two priests finally returned to the Barrens, they left behind a Catholic community renewed in faith and firmly committed to reconstruct its church in the hope of obtaining a resident priest. In the fall of 1826 and again in the following year both Odin and Timon returned to the faithful at New Madrid.

In 1826 the mission apostolate enjoyed a brief but intense period of activity at papal impetus. After the Jubilee Year of 1825 in Rome, Pope Leo XII extended the privilege to all other countries. In June 1826 Bishop Rosati promulgated the jubilee and, like other bishops in the Midwest, decreed that wherever possible a week-long mission be conducted in each of the major churches in the diocese. In July he sent Father Philip Borgna to give the mission at Donaldsonville, Louisiana; in October he sent both Odin and Timon to preach the mission at New Madrid; and in November he sent Timon to do the same first at the cathedral in Saint Louis and later elsewhere in Illinois. Rosati himself preached the mission in the church at the Barrens in December.

If Rosati’s week typified these missions, their schedule was fairly light. The exercises took place only on alternate days: Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and the final Sunday. The mission exercises, moreover, were confined to the mornings. Since the mission took place in December, it is doubtful that farm duties necessitated such a truncated schedule. Perhaps it was used because of the distance that people had to travel. The seminary priests heard confessions during the early hours, and at 10:00 A.M. the bishop gave a sermon or instruction followed by mass at which he gave another sermon or instruction. After mass, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, the litany of the saints recited, and benediction given. The sermons were penitential rather than catechetical in nature and they covered such topics as grace and the call to repentance, the ways of determining whether past confessions were good or bad, general confession and its usefulness, mortal sin, universal judgment, the pains of hell, divine mercy, and perseverance. The heavy emphasis on sin and repentance was in keeping with the holy year
theme of renewal, and because of that this mission differed from the traditional Vincentian model. A considerable number of parishioners went to confession. The mission so kindled their piety that Rosati marveled at it: "such was their fervor that a great many remained during the whole night of Saturday to Sunday at the doors of the church fasting up to eight or even twelve o'clock that they might receive holy communion." 3

Vincentians gave very few missions during the next fourteen years. They were kept quite busy with seminary and parochial duties, nor did they receive encouragement or requests for missions from the secular clergy or even from their episcopal confrere, Bishop Rosati of Saint Louis. Timon, after becoming the first provincial of the newly formed American Province, repeatedly tried to impress upon the bishop the advantage and the possibility of giving missions, but received little support. During the late 1830s, a time when mission activity was quickening throughout the country, Vincentians participated only slightly. They preached a handful of missions at various locations in Missouri: Cape Girardeau (1835), Valle's Mines (1837), and Sainte Genevieve (1838). Not until 1839 did a flurry of mission activity take place.

It began in January of that year when Bishop Anthony Blanc in New Orleans asked Timon, who was passing through on his way north, to preach a mission to the pastorless Catholics in Natchez, Mississippi. Timon agreed and spent nearly two weeks ministering to the people of that town. When he arrived in Saint Louis, he found that Bishop Matthias Loras of Dubuque, Iowa, had been forced to winter there. Loras suggested to Timon that together they give missions in the locale. The bishop preached to the French-speaking and the priest to the English-speaking in Saint Louis, Carondelet, Florissant, and Saint Charles. Each day they gave two sermons, one during the day and the other at the evening service, which was always well attended. The success of these missions encouraged diocesan priests in Kaskaskia, Illinois, and Prairie du Rocher, Illinois, to give missions to their own flocks. Timon wrote to the superior general that this work was now held in high regard and had, at long last, received the needed impetus. People were talking about having yearly missions, and Timon expressed the hope that "we will soon be able to have our priests leave the parishes in order to occupy them in this work of salvation." 4

This hope went unfulfilled during his tenure of office. For the next year or so, missions continued on a sporadic basis, and Timon
himself was involved in most of them. In November 1839 he and Odin preached one at the Barrens that lasted two weeks. In the following year the provincial gave two more, one at a French settlement on the banks of the Ouachita River in Louisiana and the other at a hospital (probably Mullanphy in Saint Louis) run by the Sisters of Charity. In 1841 the mission effort came to a halt because ecclesiastical duties called Timon away on travel, first to Texas as prefect apostolic and later to Paris as provincial. He did not return to the province until January 1842 when once again the missions resumed. Timon spearheaded this effort until his appointment as bishop of Buffalo in 1847. “During these years (1842-1847),” he later recalled, “the Visitor [provincial] and others of his Congregation had given many Missions in Philadelphia, and other cities, and in many country places.” Little evidence has survived to support this generalization. In 1842 Timon preached a two-week mission in New York City and another in Pittsburgh. Two other Vincentians went to northern Missouri where they gave one that lasted three months. In 1843 Timon conducted a mission in Vicksburg, Mississippi, while Bonaventure Armengol and John Boullier did the same in Donaldsonville, Louisiana. Two years later the provincial again went south where he preached a mission in Alexandria, Louisiana, gave two retreats in New Orleans, and concluded with another mission in Mobile, Alabama. John Francis McGerry, who between 1845 and 1847 was stationed in Louisiana, reported that in addition to his other duties, he gave many missions. The real extent of the apostolate, however, remains unknown. In fact, throughout the 1840s the Community invested its resources in an increasing number of seminaries.

Meanwhile, the Redemptorists and the Jesuits had begun to undertake the work of missions in earnest. During the 1840s these two communities preached approximately seventy missions, more than three times the known total for the previous decade. In 1851 the Redemptorists established their first mission band which preached 188 missions throughout the next ten years. In 1856 the Passionist Fathers, too, joined the work. With the mission apostolate growing up all around them, Vincentians would have to struggle to gain a place for themselves in that endeavor which was the first end of the Congregation.

Father Mariano Maller, who succeeded Timon as provincial, blended his predecessor’s dream for the missions with the boosterism that was prevalent in the American Church of that time.
This latter was a religious version of manifest destiny, and was characterized by high hopes that the nation would become Catholic and that a Catholic America would transform worldwide civilization. About 1849 Maller, Thaddeus Amat, and John Lynch expressed to the superior general, Father Jean-Baptiste Etienne, their thoughts on the subject. In a report on the status of the American Province, they told of their hopes for the conversion of America, something that would bring great glory to the Church not only because of the population and size of the country but also because of its resources and the activity of its people. They believed that parish missions offered the best means for achieving this end. Many bishops thought the same and were asking the Vincentians to undertake this work. In order to do this, the province first had to restrict its apostolates to those that were proper to the Congregation, and then train upcoming members to fulfill those functions. More immediately, the province needed “capable subjects.” Men it had aplenty, but “few of them [were] good enough to edify or uphold regularity.” Maller asked Etienne to send some good confreres and to recall certain ones who were “greatly injurious to the mission and hinder the return to order.”6 If the superior general answered this call for more men (most of whom, even by the reckoning of this report, were destined for seminaries), few of them were assigned to give parish missions, which continued on a sporadic basis. A firm commitment to this apostolate did not occur until the provincialate of Stephen Vincent Ryan (1857-1868).

Shortly before taking office, Ryan, who was then superior of Saint Vincent’s College in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, gave an indication of his feeling about parish missions. In 1857 he wrote to Etienne that Father John Lynch had just completed in Rochester, New York, a mission which “worked more good...than all of us were able to do in seven years at the college.”7 Ryan then expressed his own desire to preach missions. As provincial, he remained deeply interested in this work and was personally involved in a great number of missions, especially when other confreres were unavailable. Although educational and parochial duties still demanded the attention of the Community, Ryan was able to write to Etienne in 1861 that “up to now the number of missions as a rule that we have given has been relatively rather large.”8

Ryan’s own mission schedule gives a good idea of the arduous life of a missioner at that time. In April 1860 the pastor of Holy Name church in Chicago, Illinois, invited the Community to give
a mission. Ryan and two other confreres preached one that lasted over two weeks. The church was filled at every service as people came from all parts of the city "to hear the word of God, to weep, to confess their sins, and to receive their divine Master in the sacrament of his love." The priests heard confessions from five in the morning until midnight, a common occurrence in all missions. At the close of this mission, Ryan went immediately to give another by himself at Bloomington, Illinois. He had intended it to last only a week, but so many people came for it by rail that he had to extend the mission and call in help from the Community house at La Salle, Illinois. While in Bloomington, Ryan received an invitation from the pastor at Freeport, Illinois, to give a mission at his parish. Provincial duties precluded the immediate fulfillment of this request, but in August Ryan and two other Vincentians preached a mission there that lasted only a week because of the small size of the congregation. In the fall, the provincial with the help of the newly ordained Abram J. Ryan gave three more back to back missions, the first at Saint Joseph, Missouri, for two weeks; the second at Peoria, Illinois, for three; and the last at Janesville, Wisconsin, for two. The daily schedule of missions at this time was much more demanding than that followed by Rosati in 1826. The missioners said two masses each day, one at five in the morning for laborers and another at eight for householders. A catechetical instruction followed each mass. At three in the afternoon the confreres led people in the stations of the cross and then gave a catechism lesson to children at four o'clock. The evening exercise consisted of the recitation of the rosary, a sermon, and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The missioners then heard confessions until retiring, not infrequently at eleven or later. Although the early part of the day appears to have been free, it was spent in preparing sermons and hearing confessions. So numerous were the latter that missioners often had to rely on secular priests for help. During a mission in Chicago in 1859, Father Michael O'Reilly complained that the greatest difficulty lay in the fact that only fourteen priests heard confessions, although there were penitents enough to occupy twenty. During a four-week mission in Rochester, fifteen priests heard confessions. Even with a large number of confessors the work of reconciliation was time-consuming. In regard to the Rochester mission, Ryan, who led it, complained that it was only "by skillful maneuvering and much strategy [that] we could get through our [divine] office and midnight more than once found me half asleep
trying to finish the office of the day.” He repeated the complaint at a mission in Lawrence, Massachusetts, where “we scarcely had time to take our meals and recite our office.” The exhausting pace of mission life would be a refrain echoed by many a Vincentian.

Ryan frequently commented on the emotional reactions of the people. In regard to the mission at Holy Name church in Chicago, for example, he observed that “all came to hear the word of God, to weep, and to confess their sins.” At the conclusion of the mission in Saint Joseph, Missouri, “there was not a dry eye in the church.” This indicates that Vincentian missioners, or at least Ryan, preached in the evangelical style characteristic of the nineteenth century revivalists, Catholic and Protestant alike. They sought to stir feelings and move their hearers to conversion of heart. Jay Dolan, the historian of Catholic revivalism, has observed that “this is what the revival was about. It was designed to excite, to shock, the religious sensibilities of people. . . . Some theatrics were necessary since revivalism thrived on dramatic, evangelical preaching.”

Vincentian missions, however, lacked some of the dramatic elements employed by other communities, such things as the erection of a mission cross, elaborate processions, or special ceremonies to drive home a sermon point. The Redemptorists, for example, created a funereal atmosphere for the sermon on death by setting up a catafalque surrounded by candles. Dramatics such as these were not part of the Vincentian tradition.

Even though Ryan had given the province its first serious commitment to parish missions, he experienced one of the same difficulties as his predecessors: personnel problems. These took various forms. One of the more unusual was the case of Edward Hennessy. In the early years of the Ryan administration Hennessy had become greatly attached to mission work, so much so that he could hardly force himself to attend to his other duties. He had been sent to the seminary at Niagara Falls, New York, to replace John Lynch, who had become coadjutor bishop of Toronto, Canada. Rather than take care of the seminary, Hennessy was off giving missions everywhere. Bishop John Timon, C.M., of Buffalo wrote to Ryan and expressed fear that the seminary was being neglected, thereby injuring a true interest of the Community. Ryan tried to rein in his errant subject by telling him that he needed the provincial’s permission to give missions. Hennessy replied frankly that he needed no one’s permission to fulfill the purpose of the Congregation of the Mission. Worse still, he claimed that his
conscience would not permit him to counsel anyone to join the American Province because it was so devoid of the spirit of the Community toward the work of missions. Ryan was beside himself. He asked the superior general's advice on how to handle this situation, all the while protesting that the province was giving as many missions as its means would permit. Although the reply of the general is unknown, Hennessy remained at Niagara Falls, and Ryan continued to send him on missions.

Most of Ryan's personnel problems ran truer to form. During his administration, the Vincentians who preached missions drew double duty: they had full-time assignments in parochial or educational ministries, and went on the missions when they could. This probably accounted for the many missions in which Ryan took part, because he, as provincial, was freer than other confreres. In 1865 he found himself in a real crisis. For the coming autumn he had promised several missions, enough to occupy three or four confreres for two or three months, but he had no men to spare. Not only that, he needed men to staff the Niagara Falls seminary which, after having burned down in December 1864, was now rebuilt and ready to reopen. Feeling the pinch keenly, Ryan asked Etienne to allow the ordination of a twenty-year-old student then studying at the mother house in Paris, and send him to the United States so that he could help ease the difficulty. The superior general refused, and Ryan replied simply that he would make do.

Better organization of the mission effort certainly would have eased these problems. Ryan had hoped to achieve this at some time by the appointment of a mission band. Two episcopal confreres, Timon and Michael Domenec of Pittsburgh, also sought greater organization, at least at the diocesan level. Timon had been so impressed by the mission work of the Vincentians in his diocese that he was determined to establish a regular system of parish missions within his jurisdiction. Bishop Domenec wanted the Community both to take over the formation of the clergy and to preach missions in his diocese. To this end, he offered to give the province his seminary, debt free, and planned to create a bourse for missions whether or not the Community accepted the seminary.

None of these plans materialized, and the final months of Ryan's tenure of office found him willing to continue the work as it had been done. He felt that the time was not yet ripe for greater effort or organization. In a circular letter written on the occasion of moving the provincial house from Saint Louis to Philadelphia,
Ryan acknowledged the great strides that the province had made in mission work, yet added that to date "our missions have been but essays, and so far Divine Providence does not seem to have given us the means to engage continuously in this chief work of our Institute." Looking toward the future, he noted that the missioners of the province were maturing and gaining both experience and practice. The Community, moreover, had acquired several central locations which would serve as bases of operation for the future mission apostolate. In the meantime, Ryan counseled patience:

We must not however forestall Providence, anticipate the designs of God, or precipitate the march of events; premature births are most sickly abortions; the fruit must ripen on the trees, the grain grow to maturity in the harvest field before the well stocked garners can yield a wholesome, seasonable and steady supply to the hungry and expected populations.\(^{14}\)

Ryan reminded the province that, while the confreres educated themselves for the future work of the missions, good was being done in seminaries and parishes.

In March 1868 Ryan was elected to the bishopric of Buffalo, and two months later John Hayden replaced him as provincial. During his tragically short tenure of office Hayden continued the policy of giving as many missions as personnel would permit. In the spring of 1870, however, he had to suspend the work because the province was preparing to open Saint John's College in Brooklyn, New York. He had assigned all available Vincentians to positions in the forthcoming institution, and they needed time to prepare for their new teaching duties. Hayden hoped that the interruption of the missions would not last long and, in fact, after a recess of a year and a half the preaching of missions resumed in October 1871.

The Organization of the Apostolate

Hayden died unexpectedly in November 1872, and events quickly followed that put the mission apostolate on secure and permanent footing. In February 1873 James Rolando became provincial. Two months later a provincial assembly gathered at Germantown, Pennsylvania, and mandated the creation of a
mission band. In July Rolando, fulfilling the injunction of the assembly, appointed a band of three men: James MacGill (superior), John Koop, and Thomas O’Donoghue. Their headquarters were to be the central house in Germantown.

During the band’s first four years Vincentians preached fifty-eight missions, most of them in the East with a scattered few in Illinois, Missouri, and Louisiana. The majority of missions lasted two weeks. Of the remainder, only a few exceeded two weeks and the rest lasted only one. The records for the first three of these years are quite detailed and indicate that the apostolate, if judged by the number who approached the sacraments, was very successful. There were 128,000 communions in forty-one missions. Despite the fact that most of the missions during this three-year period took place in the East, the band logged 19,838 railroad miles. The apostolate was off to a healthy start.

The distance that separated the band from the midwestern reaches of the province soon brought home the need for more missioners in that area. Prior to the commencement of the 1876 mission season, Rolando wrote to Thomas Burke, superior of Saint Vincent’s church in Saint Louis, to inform him of two requests for missions in Illinois. The band was fully booked and could not be sent west. While Rolando bemoaned the fact that the province did not have a second band in that region, he sought to make do with a temporary solution. He offered to send a man to Saint Louis for two or three weeks so that Burke and another confrere from the parish could give the missions in Illinois. Whether or not this plan was carried out, the incident points to a growing awareness of the need for missioners in the West.

The matter was brought up again in 1877 when Father Maller, the former provincial and then secretary to the superior general, made a visitation of the province. In July he attended a meeting of the provincial council and “warmly urged the necessity of establishing another band of missionaries.” In a report to the superior general he went even further, suggesting that the province could use bands in the Midwest, the South, and even in California. Despite Maller’s recommendations, a second band was not appointed until 1879 when Father Thomas Smith, Rolando’s successor, selected Patrick O’Regan, Thomas Abbott, and Felix Guidry.
to give missions in the West with Saint Vincent’s church in Chicago as their base.

The early 1880s were busy years for the missioners. Smith absented himself from provincial administration for months at a time in order to help preach missions. In 1882 the province had as many as four bands that worked separately or together, depending on the size of the parish and the number of priests required for the mission. Within two years, however, the demand for missions had subsided, and the number of bands returned to two. By 1886 Smith had so reorganized the apostolate that he no longer had to help on the missions. In that year he moved the western band from Chicago to La Salle; he kept the original band at the provincial house; and he stationed a third at Niagara Falls. In 1887 he accepted a parish in Kansas City, Missouri, in the hope that a house there would facilitate the spread of missions farther into the West. All of this greatly pleased the superior general, Father Antoine Fiat, an ardent supporter of parish missions. He encouraged Smith to foster the work: “I could not be happier at the fact that you are increasing the number of missionaries giving missions. Believe as an article of faith that God will bless your province in the measure that you develop the capital work of the missions.”

The province had been doing just that. Between 1873 and 1880 the various bands had given ninety-six missions, and from the latter year until the province was divided in 1888 the eastern band alone preached another ninety-eight. These great strides, however, must be kept in perspective. American Vincentians were relative newcomers to the mission field. Other communities had considerably outperformed them. For instance, between 1860 and 1890 the Redemptorists had preached 3955 missions. During the same time, the Paulists, a much smaller community than the Redemptorists, had conducted 1111 missions. The Jesuits, in the years with available statistics, managed an annual median of 131 in the East alone. Vincentians, indeed, had come a long way, but there was much farther that they could go.

Between 1873 and 1888, the mission season began on the first Sunday of September and concluded on the last one in June. The bands were booked one and sometimes two years in advance. The length of missions and the number of priests involved varied according to the size of parishes: larger ones (15,000 people) might
get a four-week mission with six priests whereas smaller ones (3000 people) might receive a mission of eight to ten days with a corresponding number of missioners. Vincentians, if left to themselves, would have liked all their missions to last at least three weeks and ideally four. This would have been in keeping with the Congregation's tradition of giving long, catechetical missions, but it ran counter to the dominant American custom of shorter, penitential ones. Vincentians discovered that the matter was really out of their hands. A pastor who contracted for a mission determined not only its length but also the number of missioners involved. If the Community balked at the conditions, the pastor simply invited another community and never again sought the services of the Congregation.

At times the Vincentians followed a native mission custom that was rapidly gaining acceptance, namely, that of dividing a parish into homogeneous groups and devoting a separate week of the mission to each. The confreres first did this in the spring of 1876 at Saint Columbkille's church in Chicago where they preached the first week of the mission to the women and the second to the men. Thomas O'Donoghue noted, without explanation, that this had been done "from necessity." Vincentian missioners, like their counterparts in other communities, probably found that this arrangement enabled them to overcome the difficulty posed by churches that were too small to hold all the parishioners at once. It also made it possible for them to spread out the confessions and to tailor sermons to the special needs of each group.

The daily schedule of the mission was quite full and differed little from what it had been in Stephen Ryan's era. Excluding the times of prayer, it resembled the order followed by missioners of all communities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:00 A.M.</td>
<td>rise</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:20</td>
<td>prayer and meditation</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:00</td>
<td>mass, twenty minute instruction, and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>confessions until breakfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>mass, thirty minute instruction, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>confessions until examination of conscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45</td>
<td>examination of conscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 P.M.</td>
<td>dinner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1:30 conclusion of recreation
3:00 vespers and compline
3:15 confessions until examination of conscience
5:45 examination of conscience
6:00 supper
7:30 ten minute instruction, rosary, sermon, benediction, and confessions
10:00 retire

The confreres still depended on diocesan and religious priests to help with the numerous confessions. Even so, they found it difficult to fulfill the pious exercises of the Community and to recite the divine office. In 1880, because of the grinding schedule of confessions, Smith asked Fiat to dispense those on missions from the obligation of office, but he refused.

In a mission of two weeks, Vincentians devoted the first to repentance. They roused the people to turn from sin and prepared them for confessions, which began on Tuesday. The evening sermons of this week covered topics that were standard fare in all missions, Vincentian or otherwise: salvation (Sunday), mortal sin (Monday), death and judgment (Tuesday), hell (Wednesday), delay of repentance (Thursday), and the mercy of God (Friday). The instructions given at masses during the first few days were catechetical and focused on the sacrament of penance and the need to make a general confession (Monday), the examination of conscience (Tuesday), and contrition and absolution (Wednesday). Throughout the remainder of the week the instructions dealt with the reception of communion.

The second week of the mission aimed at fostering Catholic life. Sermons took on a pastoral and catechetical tone. They treated such subjects as the duties of parents (Sunday morning), the Church or Real Presence (Sunday evening), cursing (Monday), drunkenness (Tuesday), impurity (Wednesday), the Blessed Virgin Mary (Thursday), the passion of Jesus or his love (Friday), and heaven (the final Sunday morning). The instructions throughout this week dealt with the various commandments. There was no evening service on Saturdays, but missioners gave an instruction after each of the masses and heard confessions throughout the day.

The American milieu challenged Vincentians to reexamine their traditional understanding of who were the poor to be missionized.
Because the United States had no class of people that could properly be called peasants, and because the poor who needed religious ministry were concentrated in the cities, Vincentian missioners directed their efforts toward urban workers and immigrants. This ran counter to the time-honored custom of giving missions to the rural poor, and so American missioners felt obliged to defend, or at least to explain, their peculiar circumstances to the superior general in France. In a letter to Father Fiat, Thomas Shaw exaggerated the differences between the American and European scenes:

Shall it surprise you M[ost]. H[onored]. F[ather]. to be told—that the far, far greater number of 60,000,000 population of the United States, are not given to tilling the ground & to a pastoral life—that the poor are engaged in mining, in factories, in a thousand & one distinct employments, which Commerce creates—and that as a rule the poor crowd our cities and towns. Do not, M.H.F. for a moment imagine that cities all the world over are like your Paris, and Lyons and Bordeaux—centres where the poor as a class: “have no local habitation and a name”; where cathedral and parish churches are made up of intellectual and wealthy classes. Reasonable [sic], therefore, our missionaries of France are not found preaching missions in the large cities. They go after the poor—to the country districts; so do we. But we also go, where the poor as a class live: in the great centres of trade.\\n
Most of these urban poor were Irish immigrants, but the Germans, the Poles, and the Italians were also included.

These, however, were not all. The Civil War had set free a new group of poor people. In 1865 Father James Duncan wrote from New Orleans to the generalate in Paris that “there is still a class of persons to whom we have not given satisfaction. These are the Blacks.” He found it distressing that many of them, who formerly had been Catholics, were becoming Protestants. He thought that the Church should take steps to save them because “before God, certainly, these poor negroes, ignorant and stupid as they often are, have souls as precious as ours and more in danger of being lost.”19

In a small way, Vincentian missioners made a contribution to the salvation of these people.

Twice in the 1870s the new band preached missions at Saint Augustine’s church, a parish for blacks in Washington, D.C. The first of these took place in November 1873, and Joseph Alizeri described the black people who made it as “the most polished, the
best instructed in America.” They were moved, he said, at finding
white priests who were interested in them “and the Protestants were
surprised to see the noble devotion of our confreres toward this
poor people, so recently given their freedom without, however,
being given the full esteem and honor that are due to free men.”

During this mission fifteen hundred people approached the sacra­
ments. Three years later the band returned to Saint Augustine’s and
achieved even greater success. Alizeri contrasted this second mission
with the first. He noted that in the former one a large number of
people had not given themselves over to the grace of God. This had

because the devil, being the same color and knowing enough
theology to undo it, claimed to have over these people the title of
color in the external forum and, what is worse and also true, in the
internal forum; but he had to deal with three Lazarists: they quickly
removed from him his title in the internal forum, hoping that the
other would be taken away on the day of universal resurrection.

During this second mission two thousand persons received the
sacraments, five hundred more than at the first.

The wretched condition of blacks in America led Alizeri to
suggest to the superior general that

since we do not have in this nation poor country people properly so­
called, who are to be the dearest object of our apostolic feelings, the
blacks should take their place in our hearts. Without doubt, our
Holy Founder would have a very special affection for them. Also,
without doubt, he loves to see his sons occupied in a special way with
the salvation of those poor souls.

Indeed, great was the need for priests committed to black ministry
and Alizeri’s suggestion was in keeping with the spirit of the
Congregation, but nothing ever came of it. The two missions at
Saint Augustine’s church were apparently the only ones that
Vincentians gave to blacks prior to the division of the province.

The tradition of giving missions to the rural poor was not the
only custom that Vincentian missioners had to adjust to the Amer­
ican situation. They also had to adapt the Community’s rule about
giving missions gratis, a practice that had originated with Saint
Vincent. Even before the formation of the band, pastors had made
donations to Vincentian missioners. In October 1871 the provincial
council decided that the proceeds should go to the provincial house in Germantown. After the formation of the first band, the province had to devise a way of defraying the considerable traveling expenses. In 1874 the provincial council resolved to assess a minimum fee of $100 for each priest engaged in a mission. Only needy parishes were to be excepted, and the missioners themselves were to determine which qualified. The assessment soon became unnecessary because, it was discovered, bishops and pastors had an understanding that the parish was to bear all expenses. In addition to defraying these, pastors often took up a special collection and offered all or part of it to the Community.

The fact that American Vincentians received money for missions caused the superior general, Father Fiat, to fear that his subjects were determining the length of their stay by the amount offered. Although Father Smith assured him that the pastor of the parish set the length of the mission, the provincial found the allegation so unsettling that he sent a circular letter to the missioners reminding them “to receive with thanks what is offered. We stipulate for no sum. We take what is given and so approach as near as we can the ‘gratuite’ [free of charge] of the Rule.” Smith sent a copy of the letter to the superior general, but it did not entirely allay his fear. Fiat remained concerned about the fact that parishes defrayed mission expenses and even made gratuitous offerings to the Community out of the mission collection. In 1884 he sent Father Thomas MacNamara, an Irish Vincentian, to investigate these and other matters. MacNamara reported that according to the information he received, “our missions are regarded as more disinterested than those of other missionary Bodies in the States, who have the habit of stipulating for a certain payment for each Missioner over and above their expenses, in view of the general wants of their institutes.” Smith had told him that the province either would continue to give missions as it had been or abandon them altogether, for it had no foundations or resources to fund them. This apparently eased the general’s concern, and the practice of accepting both expense money and voluntary offerings continued. The latter, however, did not always go to support the mission bands. In 1886 the provincial council determined that the offerings made to the La Salle band were to go to the apostolic school at the Barrens, and those made to the Niagara Falls band were to go to Germantown to pay the principal on a loan made in support of the Niagara house.
Not all difficulties had to do with adjusting European practice to the American milieu. The personnel problem continued to beset the apostolate, but it now involved the quality rather than the quantity of the men assigned. In 1885, for example, Smith called a confrere from New Orleans to Germantown where he was to do some mission work or perhaps teach a little in the seminary. The very indefiniteness of the appointment indicated some difficulty with the man who, in fact, did no more than say mass for the Little Sisters of the Poor during his year-long stay at the provincial house. In 1886 Smith decided to send him to Niagara Falls where, if need be, he might help on the mission band; but Patrick O'Regan, the mission director, refused to take him under any circumstances. Smith finally overruled O'Regan, and the man in question joined the confreres at Niagara. Within two years, however, he was back at the provincial house.

Problems with alcoholism were more common. To be sure, other apostolates suffered the same difficulty, but the impact of a drinker or two was felt more keenly by a small mission band than it was by a college or seminary faculty of ten or more. The first sign of trouble came in 1886 when Father Smith decided to assign to the mission apostolate a priest with an all too apparent drinking problem. The provincial council strongly objected, but Smith would brook no opposition and the man went to the band. Nor was he the only drinker in that company. In the summer of 1888 the provincial transferred two Niagara missioners to the Germantown band. He then removed the band from the seminary and relocated it at the parish house with the warning that “strick [sic] and kind means are to be used to prevent anything in the way of drink.” At least prior to the division of the province no evidence indicates that alcohol abuse had interrupted the good order of a mission, but this would not long be the case.

The Critical Years: The 1890s

In September 1888 the superior general divided the American Province into the Eastern and Western Provinces. Technically speaking, the division gave the East two mission bands, Germantown and Niagara Falls, and the West one, La Salle. Practically speaking, however, the Niagara band existed only on paper because the missioners were occupied in teaching at the seminary and the
college. Any missions they gave were occasional. Both new prov-
inces, therefore, had nearly an equal number of men in the mission
field, four in the East and three in the West. Yet the quality of these
men left something to be desired.

In January 1889 Father James MacGill, the eastern provincial,
received complaints about the imprudent conduct and drunkenness
of a Vincentian during a mission at Tonawanda, New York. The
offender soon requested dismissal from the Congregation and the
provincial council concurred. The superior general, however, did
not agree and prevailed upon the man to stay in the Community.
Even so, MacGill thought it best to remove him from the band but
was unable to do so because another missioner had committed an
unnamed fault that required his immediate withdrawal from the
apostolate. To remove both men would have decimated the band.
Within a week of this last incident, a Brooklyn pastor brought to
MacGill’s attention the serious indiscretion of another missioner. In
this case the provincial council determined that the offender should
never be allowed to return to that city.

The mission apostolate also suffered repercussions from
personnel problems outside the band. These ranged the spectrum
from grave public scandal to general laxity among the confreres. In
1889 and again in 1891 two Vincentians, one in Brooklyn and the
other in Philadelphia, became notorious through their intimacy
with women. Although both were dismissed from the Congrega-
tion, their behavior probably contributed to an ebb in the mission
apostolate in those cities. Not all deportment was so flagrant. In
November 1890 James Sullivan at Germantown wrote to the supe-
rior general and alleged that the confreres as a whole, and even
some in provincial administration, were wanting in the spirit of
their state through laziness and lax observance of the rule. As
evidence, he pointed to the languishing state of missions in the
province. Within recent memory, noted Sullivan, the demand for
missions in the cities of New York, Brooklyn, and Philadelphia had
sufficed to keep five or six missioners fully occupied. Now, he
claimed, Vincentians gave scarcely a mission in any of these places.
In 1892 Thomas O’Donoghue wrote to the general in a similar vein.
As a former missioner, he was saddened to see that the apostolate
had fallen on hard times. He asserted that the decline had come
about because the confreres in parishes and colleges did not care
about the missions, nor did the men of the province as a group “im-
press the public as missionaries, sons of St. Vincent, but only as
ordinary priests, because the regularity, uniformity, and religious serenity of priests of the mission do not appear in us.” By 1895 even MacGill had to admit that the band of missioners was neither numerous nor strong. He, however, blamed this on the division of the province, which necessitated his assigning the best confreres to the colleges in Niagara Falls and Brooklyn. He hoped that he would soon be able to rectify this situation by strengthening the band.

Mission statistics fit like bookends around this period of relaxed behavior, and indicate that the apostolate did fall into a slump. The eastern band, in its first season after the division of the province, preached thirty missions. It gave twelve more during the first three months of the subsequent season. If this figure is extrapolated to cover the rest of the year, then the band was on a trajectory that may have led to as many as thirty-six missions. In 1890 the record fell silent for five years, the very time when conduct in the province was at a low. Figures resumed in 1895 and the number of missions was down to twenty-two. There is no way of knowing whether the number had sunk below this during the intervening years or whether the decline had been gradual. The statistics, however, do lend support to the allegations made by Sullivan and O'Donoghue.

The Western Province, too, had personnel problems both on and off the band, but these did not immediately come to light. The number of missions held steady during the first season, and in 1889 the western provincial, Father Thomas Smith, added a fourth missioner to the band. All, however, was not well. Missions began to wane and criticism arose from within the band itself. In 1894 one of the missioners, Thomas Weldon, wrote to Father Fiat and catalogued all the personality problems that beset the work in the West. Most of these revolved around Thomas Shaw, who was director of the band and pastor of the parish at La Salle. Weldon said that Shaw, in filling both offices, was “endeavoring ‘to carry water on both shoulders,’” with the consequence that neither job was well served. The idleness of the band during Lent of that year, the first time such a thing had happened, argued the case. “We have comparatively no mission work,” lamented Weldon. “We are not wanted, though Pastors want missions, & this for two reasons known to me and others, which are a matter of common talk among the clergy.” Pastors objected that Shaw came to open a mission and then left a young Vincentian, unknown to them, to close it, or the director would send a young confrere to open a mission with the promise that he, Shaw, would follow to carry it
out. Bishops and priests alike found this practice obnoxious.

Weldon brought forth another matter which, he said, should have been remedied years before. That was the confessional manner of James Devine who treated penitents with “bitter, unjust severity... driving poor sinners from the tribunal of penance in despair.” Weldon considered Devine “a good, pious and even learned Priest,” and admitted that “were [Devine] more moderate and meek in pulpit & confessional, there would be no better missioner.” Yet his severity in these very places had led the provincial, in 1891, to decide upon his removal from the band, but Shaw had objected, and Devine remained. Weldon and other missioners had continued to complain about this situation but to no avail. It had come to such a point that pastors now refused Devine by name. Bishop Henry Cosgrove of Davenport, Iowa, had forbidden Devine to preach anywhere in his diocese and, in arranging for an upcoming mission, had specified, “anyone but Fr. Devine.”

In addition to Devine the band had another missioner whom Weldon described as at times “non compos mentis [not of sound mind]” and a man “who cannot carry on an ordinary conversation or argument coherently, and is unreliable generally.” Weldon declared that this confrere should never be allowed to preach, something he recently proved at the church in La Salle where he gave an instruction on mixed marriages that was “ridiculous, incorrect, and almost scandalous.” Yet this confrere, Weldon noted, was to accompany Shaw on the forthcoming mission in Davenport.

Father Fiat did not act immediately upon these denunciations. In fact, several years elapsed during which he received even more complaints about the missions in particular and the province in general. Finally, in 1898 he wrote to William Barnwell, a provincial consultor, and related to him the many allegations that had been made against western Vincentians and even against the provincial. Fiat considered the information exaggerated, but he wanted Barnwell’s assessment of it. With reference to parish missions, the general had been told that, “for want of following the rules, the missionaries have lost all the missions and are going to lose the only major seminary [Kenrick in Saint Louis] they have because of the scandal they give and because the young missionaries spend their time visiting.” The scandals in question were public drunkenness and the loose morals of several confreres.

Barnwell either denied or explained away most of the allegations except those dealing with the missions. He admitted that the prov-
ince had only a few scheduled for the coming year, but he said that this came about because the present condition of the province did not allow it to maintain a strong and able band. The best missioners, like O'Regan, Weldon, Peter Byrne, and James Murtaugh, had been reassigned to more pressing duties. Devine had (at last) been removed for his severity in the confessional, and so the band consisted of Shaw, John Murray, and John Nichols. Shaw continued to be director, but Barnwell did not think he had "the order, foresight, and discretion to lead the mission." Nor did Barnwell consider either of Shaw's companions able to replace him, for neither was a fit leader and "they talk[ed] imprudently, especially Mr. Nichols."31 He said that the provincial, Father Smith, hoped to appoint a better director as soon as possible. This, however, was not to happen for several years.

Throughout the 1890s the mission apostolates of both provinces struggled with differing success. As mentioned above, the number of missions in the East had declined from thirty in 1889 to twenty-two in 1895. In that year the province strengthened its band by adding four men, but the number of missions continued to slip until it hit a low of eighteen in 1898. Thereafter a steady surge brought new life to the apostolate so that at the close of the 1900 season the band had preached twenty-eight missions, two short of the 1889 mark. The western record, on the other hand, showed an uneven decline. In 1889 the band had given twenty missions, but between 1893 and 1895 (two and a half seasons) it preached a total of only thirty-two or an average of nearly thirteen per season. Not only had the number of missions declined, but by 1896 the band membership had also dwindled to two. In that year the band conducted nineteen missions, but only nine in the next. In 1898 it received a third confrere and carried out eleven missions; it was able to raise that number to sixteen in the following season. Father Shaw, despite the provincial's hope to replace him, remained director of the band through 1902. In that year there were again two missioners, "a number," in Shaw's words, "quite sufficient. Of late we have not been busy. Like soldiers we try to be ever ready."32 The two preached only eleven missions. The western apostolate languished while that of the East had regained strength.
Expansion in the East

Early in the new century the Eastern Province sought to expand its mission work. In June 1902 Archbishop John Williams of Boston assured Father MacGill that the province could erect a mission house in his archdiocese. The provincial favored the idea because New England had already proven a fruitful mission field, and the Vincentians to be stationed there could also minister to the Daughters of Charity in the area. For an unknown reason the door to Boston closed within a year, but another soon opened in southwestern Massachusetts.

Bishop Thomas Beaven of Springfield invited the province to open a mission house and an apostolic school in his diocese. He wanted the missioners to be in place by Easter of 1903, but the sites proposed for the house, Shrewsbury and Worcester, proved unsuitable and the selection of a new location dragged on through the summer. The province finally decided on Springfield itself because it was a rail center. In July MacGill purchased for $40,000 a comfortable house on about eight acres of land and there he stationed six missioners under the direction of Perry Conroy. This brought the total number of missioners in the province to ten, six at Saint Vincent’s Mission House in Springfield and four at Germantown. By October 1903 both bands were booked solidly for the next two years.

Even as MacGill was erecting the Springfield house, Dennis Downing, the senior missioner in the province, complained to Fiat that justice was not being done to the apostolate. Though Downing admitted that he had been quite successful in booking missions and that the band was already committed for the next two years, he claimed, “I could easily procure engagements for twice the number of missionaries now employed . . . we had to refuse several applications for missions because we have not enough missionaries on the band.” Downing gently criticized the aged MacGill for this situation because he neither inclined the confreres to nor trained them for this work. For the good of the province as a whole, the missioner asked Fiat to send a commissary to make a visitation of the province.

Fiat sent Father Constant Demion who arrived in the province just after the Springfield house opened. He reported from Germantown that the missioners were indeed quite overwhelmed by the
amount of work. They could not do it all and even had to turn down requests for missions. To improve the situation, Demion made a rather unusual suggestion based on the advice of MacGill and all the missioners with whom he had spoken. The commissary described for Fiat the territory that comprised New England. Overstating the case, he alleged, “all that is called New England speaks more French than English and most of the parishes are French, or the preaching in them is only in French,—but our missionaries speak only English and they are unable to give missions in French within this vast province.” Demion asked the general to send five or six young Vincentians from France to give missions in this region. After visiting the Springfield house itself, the commissary was more convinced than ever of the advantage of this, and even Bishop Dennis Bradley of Manchester, New Hampshire, expressed the desire of having French Vincentians settle in his diocese. Demion further recommended replacing Conroy, the Springfield mission director, with Thomas O’Donoghue because the latter “speaks French very correctly.” None of these recommendations was acted upon.

Still, the mission apostolate in the East continued to grow, and the men involved in it asked the provincial to assign even more to the work. In 1905 MacGill saw a way of killing two birds with one stone. The college at Niagara Falls had recently built a gymnasium which had placed the house in debt. In order to increase its revenue and strengthen mission work at the same time, MacGill appointed a third band of missioners and placed it there. Even with this, the apostolate proved so overwhelming that within two years the province had to call upon the superior general for help. In 1907 Father Patrick McHale, the assistant provincial acting in the name of the aged MacGill, told Fiat that the missioners were booked for three years and still could not keep up with the requests. He offered a variation on the Demion plan. He asked the general to send three or four French Vincentians to teach in the colleges of the province, thereby freeing American confreres to join the mission bands. Fiat apparently sent one man, and this allowed MacGill to add another missioner to the Niagara band.

This was not enough. Thomas McDonald, the missioner in charge of scheduling, wrote a letter of complaint to Fiat. The province, he said, was “badly in need of missionaries” with the consequence that he had “to refuse many missions and the missionaries [were] overtaxed.” He blamed the situation on the education
apostolate of the province. Colleges, he claimed, devoured most of the personnel in a work that was “devoid of results proportionate to the labor.” The province neglected the missions in the allocation of personnel because the provincial council had no member with mission experience, and hence had no one to represent the needs of that apostolate. Moreover, the formation program of the province so neglected the training necessary for mission work that no one ordained within the past ten or twelve years came out of the seminary able to preach “even a passable mission sermon.” Father Fiat relayed these complaints to McHale who countered,

It is precisely the work of the missions which is more progressive in our province. The confreres engaged in missions are among our better professors, but these great sacrifices have been made lest the missions suffer. It is the colleges rather than the missions that suffer. Neither McHale nor McDonald was entirely correct. To judge by the investment of personnel, colleges appeared to be the chief apostolate of the province. On the other hand, within the first seven years of the century MacGill had created two new mission bands and had continually added to their numbers.

Early in 1908 MacGill and the council looked west to Ohio in order to expand mission work. Bishop Ignatius Horstmann of Cleveland had, in 1907, offered the province a parish in Marathon, but the council had declined. Now came a report from Father Thomas Judge that a small parish in Berea, Ohio, would be given to the province for the asking. This time the council favored acceptance because the house could also serve as the center for a small mission band. MacGill approached Horstmann with the request, but the bishop refused to give the parish to the province. After Horstmann’s death in May 1908, MacGill renewed the request to the administrator of the diocese. The latter declined to take any action in view of the expected appointment of the new bishop. With that the province let the matter drop and the move to Ohio was delayed for several decades.

In November 1909 McHale succeeded MacGill as provincial of the East. This change of the guard occurred at a time when the mission apostolate was fairly well established. The province had eighteen men in three bands: four men at Niagara Falls and seven each at Germantown and Springfield. During the 1909 season the
three groups preached a total of ninety missions in twenty dioceses, forty of the missions by the Germantown band alone. McHale was pleased with the flourishing state of the apostolate and pledged that he would even extend it. This he did in 1910 when he sent missioners south, something the province had wanted to do for some time.

As far back as 1902 the provincial council had considered opening a mission house in the diocese of Mobile, Alabama, but nothing had come of it. Several years later Father McDonald had pleaded with MacGill to erect a center there, but at the time the province could spare no men and was also $400,000 in debt. In January 1910 Bishop Edward Allen of Mobile invited the Community to care for the scattered faithful in his diocese and also to give missions. This proposal, even though it meant financial hardship for the province, appealed to McHale because the missioners would be serving the rural poor. In requesting permission to erect the house, McHale told Fiat, “we have priests with enough apostolic temper for this work and we would try to find the money for it. It is a matter of souls to save and to evangelize as our first confreres have done.”38 Fiat approved the plan, and in the summer of 1910 the province opened Saint Mary’s Mission in Opelika, Alabama. Two confreres were assigned to the house and they worked as much with Protestants as with Catholics. In fact, their first missions were to those of other faiths. The Catholic Missionary Union in Washington, D.C., had granted them $500 to conduct fifteen of these. The number of missions given to Catholics is unknown, but it was probably small because the confreres had more than enough to keep them busy tending the flock dispersed throughout the area.

By 1913 the mission apostolate of the Eastern Province was impressive. There were twenty-two missioners in five houses: the Germantown seminary, the Price Street church in Germantown, Niagara Falls, Opelika, and Springfield. These five bands preached over a hundred missions per year in almost every part of the province from Canada to the Gulf Coast. The province added even more missioners in 1915 when, at the request of Archbishop Edmund Prendergast of Philadelphia, it accepted the adjacent parishes at Bangor and Roseto, Pennsylvania. The house at Bangor soon became the residence of another two-man band.
Struggle and Decline in the West

While the Eastern Province spent the first decade and a half of the new century building a vibrant mission apostolate, matters proved otherwise in the West. Although the Western Province tried to breathe new life into its mission work, it never enjoyed the success of the East. In the spring of 1903 Father Smith, the western provincial, at last appointed a new mission director in place of Shaw. The position went to Francis Nugent, a very able preacher who had zeal for the missions and was capable of training young men for the work. He headed a band of five that was stationed at Saint Vincent’s church in Saint Louis. Several former missioners (Shaw and James Hennelly, both at La Salle, and Devine at the Barrens) occasionally gave missions on a personal basis. Even so, the revitalization of the work was quite modest. When Father Demion, the extraordinary commissary for Fiat, visited the province in the summer, he became convinced that more must be done for the missions. On the other hand, he was forced to admit that “it seems very difficult to me to do much worthwhile at present, and I believe that Mr. Smith has done for the missions all he could regarding personnel.”39 To help remedy the situation, Demion made the same recommendation that he had for the Eastern Province. He suggested that Fiat supply the West with missioners from France, a highly unusual request given the absence of French-speaking people except in Louisiana. In 1904 Fiat did send one French confere, Ambrose Vautier, who came not upon Demion’s recommendation but at the request of Father Barnwell, then provincial, for a French-speaking theology professor to teach at Saint Louis Seminary in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The accomplishments of the band’s first season (1903-1904) were inauspicious, only sixteen missions. The number in each succeeding year of the decade, however, was nearly double that. Between September 1903 and June 1910 the band preached 199 missions and gave 162 retreats, an average of better than twenty-eight missions and twenty-three retreats per year. In 1907 it received help from an independent source. In that year the seminary in New Orleans closed and Vautier was freed from teaching. He remained in the city, first at Saint Stephen’s parish and then from 1908 onward at Saint Katherine’s, a black parish that was largely French-speaking. He had long been distressed by the spiritual destitution of French
people in Louisiana and had encouraged the provincial to assign one or two confreres to preach missions to them. When nothing happened, Vautier himself became a one-man band, giving ninety-five missions and forty retreats in New Orleans and the surrounding countryside between 1906 and 1920. Because he did all this on his own, none of his missions was reckoned in the above figures for the band (1903-1910).

Even though the number of missions indicated that the apostolate was much livelier than in the 1890s, the West still lagged woefully behind the East. This was a constant sore point with Fiat. He was concerned about the heavy involvement of the Western Province in non-Vincentian works, namely, parishes and colleges. At the turn of the century the province had ten of the former and two of the latter. In 1905 Bishop Edward Dunne of Dallas, Texas, invited the province to establish another college and parish in his diocese. When Barnwell laid this proposal before Fiat, it evoked a mission-minded rebuke:

You have already...colleges and very many parishes, all absorbing many missionaries and the work of the missions, which is our first work, is poorly represented in your province.

If then this good bishop of Dallas calls you before all [else] for the missions, this would be perfect. If he accepts you for the missions with a parish, accept; and if you are not able to have either the parish or the missions without the college, transeat [let it pass].

As it turned out, the province got the college and the parish without the missions, the very thing that Fiat did not want to happen.

Two years later Dunne wanted the province to take a parish at Fort Worth, Texas, with the understanding that a college for boys would later be added. Again, Fiat showed concern about the sorry state of missions in the West, but his reply this time had an air of resignation about it:

As for the house at Fort Worth, I certainly would want you to be able to have missions there rather than a college. The missions are the first work of the Congregation and ought to be preferred to all the rest. You already have several colleges. Nevertheless, if the bishop absolutely wishes a college, accept it, laying down conditions for the future with regard to the missions.
Unlike the situation in Dallas, the province ended up with the parish alone. Laneri College was later annexed to it, but the Vincentians never taught there. The superior general, however, did not let up. When Thomas Finney, Barnwell’s successor as provincial, sent Fiat the personnel list for 1908, the general found the number of confreres consoling but added, “I fear that the colleges are taking up too many workers to the detriment of the missions which are our first and most important work. I beg you to remember about this in the placement of your workers. It is for the missions that we have been created and sent into the world.”

While the province was investing money and personnel in college work, it had not entirely forgotten the missions and several times had tried, unsuccessfully, to expand that apostolate. In 1904 Thomas Heslin, the Vincentian-trained bishop of Natchez, Mississippi, invited the province to establish on the Gulf Coast a small parish which was also to serve as a mission center. Not for these reasons alone did Father Smith want to accept the offer. He thought the house would also make a nice vacation resort for seminary and college professors. Fiat gave permission for the project, and a parish was erected at Long Beach, Mississippi. What passed for a mission apostolate, however, was apparently pastoral care for migrant workers. Each year Father James Helinski, the pastor, ministered to Polish laborers who came from Baltimore in September to work until May in the coastal oyster beds. No evidence indicates that he preached formal missions. In 1911 he was replaced by Father Charles Alton. In the same year Bishop Edward Gunn, Heslin’s successor, asked Alton to undertake missions to non-Catholics, but it is unknown if he did so.

In 1905 Bishop Thomas Bonacum of Lincoln, Nebraska, who had been educated by Vincentians in New Orleans, offered to give the province his old cathedral if the Congregation would continue to use it as a parish church and establish there at once a small mission band. For its part, the province had to promise to erect a college within five years. Barnwell and his council liked everything about the proposal except the college, but Bonacum insisted on that. Fiat gave consent to the plan, but it never materialized because Barnwell died, and Finney, his successor, broke the contract. He did so because the province was unable to get clear title to the land, an issue that called into question the forthrightness and simplicity of Bonacum. The bishop took the matter to the Holy See, and the affair dragged on until 1911 when Bonacum died. The new bishop,
J. Henry Tihen, was happy to let the matter die with him.

The final attempt at western mission expansion was linked intimately with the closing of Saint Vincent’s College in Los Angeles, California, something that would cause bitter recriminations. In 1910 the college faced conditions that required the province to decide about its future. Educational developments and the growth of the city demanded change. To meet the former, the college had to expand its curriculum; to meet the latter, it had to relocate. Bishop Thomas Conaty of Los Angeles, moreover, was anxious to have the college upgraded to the status of a university.

Father Joseph Glass, the college president, had ideas of his own about the future of the institution. He reported to Fiat that most of the confreres in the house disliked college work and did not believe it to be a true apostolate of the Congregation. They felt inadequately prepared for the job and soon tired of it. Despite this, the province remained committed to college education while it “let our real work—the Missions and Seminaries—suffer.” Glass expressed his sincere belief “that, in the eyes of the Church of Western America, the Community has lost its character—that it is no longer chiefly for the missions and the seminaries.” He recommended that the province let the Jesuits take over Saint Vincent’s College, thereby freeing the Vincentians to establish a mission house at the college parish. Father Patrick McDonnell, one of Glass’ house consultors, had written to Fiat in a similar vein. For reasons to be discussed later, both men came under a cloud of suspicion in this matter.

Father Finney, the provincial, agreed completely with Glass’s assessment. In a letter to Fiat he confessed that although the work of giving missions gratis to the country poor was “very dear to our heart,” the province was unable to do so because its personnel was committed to college work, “an occupation... foreign to our profession.” To correct this situation, he recommended that the province tell Bishop Conaty that it had neither the means nor the desire to develop Saint Vincent’s College and that the Jesuits should take over higher education in Los Angeles. The province could then sell the college and use the money to establish and endow mission houses from which it would carry out the apostolate gratuitously. Finney believed that he could implement such a plan within two years. The tone of the letter, especially as it dealt with the missions, was a bit manipulative. One might suspect that the provincial was playing on Fiat’s sympathy for that apostolate in order to gain his
support for closing the college, and Finney had reason enough to
do this. The province had three colleges, each of them deeply in
debt. Personnel, moreover, was stretched so thin that seminary
students from the Barrens had to be employed at DePaul University
in Chicago.

Fiat himself may have suspected manipulation on Finney's part,
for he gave the provincial a cautious reply:

The missions are the first work of the company and the most impor-
tant.... I cannot then disapprove of a measure that tends notably
to further and to honor this work in your province. Nevertheless, for
this particular case of Los Angeles I suspend my formal approbation
until your council has formed an opinion independently from mine,
which you will communicate to them only after their deliberation.45

Finney was unable to gather the council together, and so he sought
advice from his consultors individually. All but one gave unquali-
fied approval. The dissenter was the mission director, Francis
Nugent, who said that he would support the plan only if all the
colleges were closed simultaneously.

Nugent explained his position in a letter to the superior general.
He complained that the province had committed too many men to
college work and not enough to the mission field. He affirmed the
need for more intense mission work in the province but refused to
endorse Finney's proposal. After rehearsing the sad financial condi-
tion of the three colleges, Nugent refused to single out Saint
Vincent's for such drastic action. He would favor closing it only as
part of a plan to withdraw from all college work. To close this
school alone, however, and for the reasons given by Glass and
Finney, would disgrace the Congregation. Nugent claimed that the
provincial and Glass wanted to abandon Saint Vincent's only
because banks had refused to lend it the money necessary for
expansion, without which Vincentians could not best the Jesuits
who were undertaking higher education in Los Angeles.

Early in 1911 Glass announced that the Vincentians would with-
draw from Saint Vincent's College at the end of the academic year.
With that, he began to consider how his faculty might be converted
to a mission band. In his estimation, none of the professors would
make a suitable missioner without extensive training.

In our house here, most of our confreres have been occupied in
teaching.... In a busy house like ours, this means that these

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confreres have had little or no time for the study of theology, moral, dogmatic, ascetical or pastoral. Their thoughts have not been concerning mission work, as there has never seemed to be much likelihood of employment in that line. Aside from a few of them, they have not done much preaching, and what talking they have done, has not been of the kind suitable to missions. In other words, we have had no experience and no training for mission work, and consequently, we are unprepared for giving successful missions. 46

He recommended to Finney an exchange program with the East. Accordingly, the Western Province would send four or five priests to be assigned on eastern mission bands so that they could learn the missioner’s craft. In return, the Eastern Province would send four or five seasoned missioners to begin the apostolate in California. This proposal indicates that Glass was serious about undertaking mission work in the West. That Finney let the suggestion drop without reply raises doubt about his own intentions in that regard.

The announcement of the Vincentians’ withdrawal from the college brought bitter denunciations against Glass. The most severe indictment came from William Ponet, an alumnus and the college treasurer, who wrote a forty page letter to Fiat. He accused Glass of secretly negotiating the withdrawal from the college. Neither the house council nor the board of trustees had been consulted. His most serious charge, however, dealt with money. Ponet accused both Glass and McDonnell (the previous treasurer) of mixing indiscriminately their personal funds with those of the college and of using both for private speculation in land, stocks, and other investments. On becoming treasurer, Ponet had been unable to distinguish college money from personal money, nor would Glass and McDonnell ever cooperate in sorting it out. Ponet summed up the situation by stating his conviction that Glass had “become disgusted with his work, the financial burden brought about by his own speculation, and, now, under the plea, very catchy indeed, of the missions and parish work, urges upon you [Fiat] and the Community the closing of this dear old spot we have had for so many years.” 47 Five days after Ponet wrote the letter, Glass demanded his removal from the college. Finney obliged and sent Ponet to Chicago where he began preparing for mission work.

In March 1911 Nugent notified Fiat of the stir caused by the withdrawal from Saint Vincent’s. He observed that although most
of the province was agitated by it, the severest criticisms had little to do with the closing itself but dealt with what occasioned it:

There is a strong conviction with some who ought to know, that the superior [Glass] of Los Angeles initiated this scheme to cover up the great waste of money & the very large debt which accumulated during his administration, & that he used the plea of the missions, & the accumulation of a mission fund from the sale of the property, merely to secure the approval of the Visitor [provincial] & the Superior General.

These were hard words, but Nugent confessed his belief in their truth. He concluded with the comment, "many facts occurring in the past seven years would convince any reasonable man that the finances of that house were 'crooked.' "

Fiat responded by sending an Irish Vincentian, Joseph Walshe, as extraordinary commissary to investigate the events that surrounded the closing of Saint Vincent's, the status of the other colleges, and the situation of the missions. Walshe visited the province in the summer of 1911 and reported that college work, to the great detriment of the missions, had devoured much of the province's personnel. He noted that Finney and most of the confreres recognized this and wanted to devote more men to evangelization, but Walshe failed to see how withdrawing from Saint Vincent's would immediately effect this. Most of the professors were destined, not for the missions, but for DePaul University in Chicago so that the seminary students on the faculty there could resume their own educations. The earliest that the mission band might hope to gain personnel, said Walshe, would be after the ordinations in 1912. As for the mission burse, there would be none because the money from the sale of the college just covered its debt of $428,000. Walshe observed that many confreres blamed Glass for closing the college, but the Irishman dismissed these allegations as "due to... ignorance of the circumstances."

As in most cases, truth was to be found on all sides. The confreres really did not know all the circumstances of the closing of Saint Vincent's. Some may have known of the need for curriculum expansion and the relocation of the school, but it seems that most were ignorant of Bishop Conaty's great design to have the college become a university. The province had neither the men nor the money to make this dream a reality. Walshe, on the other hand,
too glibly dismissed the charges against Glass, who cannot be absolved altogether for his part in the closing. Because the financial records of the college are not extant (some have claimed they were destroyed), history will never know the extent of Glass' responsibility for the accumulation of the school's debt. Charges, however, of negligence, financial mismanagement, and even shady dealing on the part of Glass came from several confreres who had served under him at the college, two of them as treasurers. It seems entirely probable that in matters of money Glass had a rather elastic conscience.

When the province terminated Saint Vincent's, Bishop Conaty offered the Vincentians a new parish in San Diego. Because the provincial council was divided over the issue of acceptance, Fiat instructed Finney to decline the offer, at least until Conaty "confides the missions to you and the means to carry them out gratuitously as the constitutions require." Shortly thereafter, the general, who apparently had not yet received the Walshe report, pressed Finney to make good his promise that the men and money gained from the closing of the college be applied to evangelization. "What," he asked the provincial, "is becoming of the house at Los Angeles? Are you going to set up another house? What superior will you have for giving a good start to the missions?" The news about missions, either in San Diego or Los Angeles, was not good. With regard to the former, the provincial had no hope that Conaty "would set up a mission house and sustain the missions [there]. The parishes themselves procure their missionaries independently from the bishop, and consequently they are able to invite whatever religious community they please to give a mission." The prospects in Los Angeles were equally unpromising. Finney reported that he had been forced to reassign the confreres of Saint Vincent's College to the schools in Chicago and Dallas so that clerical students on those faculties could return to their theological studies. At least for the present, said Finney, there would be no mission house in Los Angeles. In fact, the city did not get one until the 1970s.

From 1911 until 1914 the western mission band consisted of four confreres, and not one of them had come from the faculty of Saint Vincent's. Three of them were, according to Nugent, "young men without training and without any special ability," which forced him to conclude, "we have no one really suitable for the work." Nugent remained the director of the band, but ill health and his duties as pastor kept him from preaching any missions. Still, with occasional help from other confreres, the band conducted 108 missions in three
seasons, forty-one of them in the 1914 season alone. Rather than a sign of life, this burst of activity resembled the bright explosion that precedes the death of a star. In 1915 the personnel of the band changed dramatically. The province assigned three of the missioners to other apostolates; the fourth it teamed with John Murray, a former band member who had been removed from the work because of his harshness in the pulpit and confessional. The pair preached eight missions and then withdrew from the field entirely. From 1915 until 1923 mission work as a formal apostolate vanished from the West.

The sudden disappearance of western missions is best explained by two related developments: the institutional growth of the province and the uneven increase in personnel. Between 1900 and 1915 the province underwent remarkable institutional expansion. It opened six new houses: Saint Louis Seminary in New Orleans (1900-1907 when it closed); Saint Thomas parish in Long Beach (1904); Holy Trinity College and parish in Dallas (1905); Saint Thomas Seminary in Denver, Colorado (1907); Saint Mary's parish in Fort Worth (1909); and the Preparatory Seminary in Saint Louis (1915). Of these houses, only Long Beach had been designated as a mission center, but to no effect. This meant that the province had followed a line of institutional development that took it further and further away from the mission apostolate. The latter inevitably felt the squeeze when vocations to the Community failed to keep up with the multiplication of houses.

Although the pool of manpower in the West steadily increased, the rate of growth was uneven and never kept pace with institutional expansion. In 1890 the province had forty-eight priests; in 1900 it had sixty-five (+37 percent); by 1910 the number rose to 111 (+70 percent); and in 1920 there were 126 (+13 percent). Even though the period of greatest increase (1900-1910) coincided with the heaviest proliferation of houses, personnel was stretched so thin that in 1910 seminary students had to help staff the colleges in Chicago and Dallas. Closing the college in Los Angeles in 1911 temporarily eased the situation but offered no lasting relief because the growth of manpower slackened considerably during that decade. In 1915 two events took place: in May of that year the western mission band was dissolved, and in the fall the province opened the Preparatory Seminary in Saint Louis. The one did not flow directly from the other, but there was a real connection between the two and it was symbolic that the events coincided. For
fifteen years the province had committed itself to a direction that led it away from the parish missions, thereby making a stepchild of that apostolate. The province’s manifold institutions demanded much in the way of manpower, and when the personnel situation became critical, the province simply eased the stepchild out of the home.

Missions for the Twentieth Century

Between 1888 and 1915 the style of Vincentian missions continued to develop. Although a few changes were striking, most were slight. The area tampered with the least was the order of the day, which remained as follows: mass and a short instruction at five in the morning; a second mass and longer instruction at eight; confessions throughout the day; and at seven-thirty in the evening a short instruction followed by the recitation of the rosary, a sermon, and confessions till bed. Until 1906 the stations of the cross were conducted at three in the afternoon, but sometime after that the practice disappeared from use, at least in the West.

A noteworthy adjustment involved the composition of the mission season. It still began in September and ran through June, but by 1906 it was no longer continuous. No missions were preached between Christmas and Lent because the bitterness of winter weather made the cost of heating churches prohibitive and kept people at home. Missioners filled the winter break by giving retreats to communities of sisters. Vincentians in the West were the first to report that they followed this practice, but in 1910 Father Nugent noted that seasons of this sort had become “almost a universal custom in this country.”

After 1888 the length of missions became much more regular. In the East, the majority of them lasted two weeks and some lasted four; in the West, fully seventy percent ran for only one week and the rest for two. By the turn of the century Father Fiat had grown concerned about the great number of week-long missions in the West. Father Shaw tried to set the general’s mind at ease by explaining that the circumstances of country life (few parishioners, the distance that separated them from their church, the bad condition of roads) made short missions necessary. It is difficult to see how this explanation would have applied to all places and times, but Fiat let the matter drop and the practice continued until 1915.
Fiat did not know that after 1900 even the longest missions were little more than back to back, week-long retreats because by that time Vincentians routinely followed the American custom of dividing the congregation into homogeneous groups. In an immense parish where the church could not hold all the parishioners at once, the confreres preached four separate week-long missions: the first to the married women, the second to the married men, the third to single women, and the last to single men. Missioners had early learned the advantage of preaching to the women first, for once these had been inspired with grace and zeal, they goaded their menfolks to participate in the second week of the mission.

Vincentian missions continued to combine both penitential and catechetical aspects, but a significant shift in attitude had taken place. No longer was catechesis the chief end. Penitence had usurped its place. Francis X. McCabe, a member of the western band, made this clear in his “Mission Outline”:

> It has always seemed to me, and I received it from older confreres, that the greatest good to be attained by the missions is to be found through the work of the priest in the confessional. The sermons and instructions are, indeed, of the utmost importance in the work, but they must never be made the end of the mission work. They are but the means to an end, and that end is stirring up the faith in the minds and hearts of all those making the mission so that they will approach worthily and even more worthily the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist.\(^5\)

The mission sermons and catechetical instructions of McCabe’s time covered, with some exceptions, the same topics that had been the grist of missions in the 1870s and 1880s. The schedule of their presentation, however, had to be adjusted because those earlier missions had been preached to the entire congregation over a period of two weeks, while these of the twentieth century were preached in week-long segments to homogeneous parts of the congregation. Instead of repeating the same instruction at both morning masses, as had been done in the 1880s, missioners now spoke on a different topic at each liturgy. At the 5:00 A.M. mass they gave the series of instructions that had belonged in the first week of an 1880s-style mission; at the eight o’clock mass they talked on subjects that corresponded with the second week of the old style. In this way the missioners covered two weeks of instruction in one, the only problem being that a parishioner had to attend both masses to get
the full treatment. In keeping with the old style, the first three evening sermons dealt with salvation, mortal sin, and death and judgment. The new style, however, dropped the sermons on hell and the delay of repentance, and replaced them with talks on vocations in life, the power of the confessional (the men's week), and sins of the tongue (the women's week). A noteworthy alteration in the modern mission was the nearly total avoidance of matters sexual. These had previously been the subject of an entire sermon in the second week, but now they failed to appear even in the instructions on the commandments because missioners skipped both the sixth and the ninth. The only reference to purity came in the sermon on sins of the tongue in the week for women and the sermon on the power of the confessional in the week for men.

As the style of the mission changed, so too did the manner of preaching. In the nineteenth century missioners had larded their sermons with pious stories and copious examples; they had scared their listeners with the sensational and had astonished them with the spectacular. By the turn of the century, the taste of congregations had changed and, according to Thomas McDonald of the eastern band, preachers now had to address people who were critical, hard to please, and who wanted "the real goods." "[In order] to hold their attention and produce a salutary impression on their spirits," said McDonald, "the missionary must spend all that he possesses in learning, understanding, and memory, and also make a great effort with his voice."56 He held that, if a missioner were to preach in the old style, his efforts "would produce, if not contempt, at least a smile." The norm of eloquence had changed and the eloquent missioner of the twentieth century must present his pearls of thought on the golden thread of logic, if he wishes to receive the price of conviction for them. . . . The word of God, reason, authority, those are the stamps that give value to the coin of missionary speech. They must ever be the sources of our power in preaching. And the less ornament we throw about our truths, the more beautiful they will appear, for no garb is so becoming to truth as simplicity. Ornate preaching is a waste of time with us, for our lives are continuously ground [sic] by the practical and matter-of-fact.57

If McDonald saw the old eloquence replaced by learning and reason, McCabe saw it replaced by zeal and love. He believed that for mission sermons to have any effect,
they must be the product of hearts and souls filled with zeal, faith, love, and self-sacrifice. One must consume himself and speak from the heart with a zeal that knows no bounds, if he is to reach the hearts of those to whom he speaks. He must be a lion in the pulpit and in the confessional a lamb, if he would reap a harvest of souls in the mission.

On the practical level, McCabe advised missioners to be strict in limiting the evening instruction to ten minutes and added, "one can readily see, therefore, that it must be packed with substance and shorn of all the trimmings."58 The new style of preaching apparently had its effect. McDonald reported that parishioners, who in one way or another systematically avoided Sunday sermons because of their poor quality, came to the missions and listened attentively to instructions that were plain and to the point.

Even though missioners had to preach on set topics, they enjoyed the freedom of tailoring these to the needs of the people and the times. Vincentians in the West, for instance, were greatly concerned about marital matters. Between 1890 and 1910 the number of single men in the country grew from nine million to thirteen, and the number of single women went from nearly seven million to almost ten. In addition, the number of divorces steadily increased while the birthrate was in constant decline. Father Nugent considered these the great evils that faced American society and reported to Fiat that the western band always spoke against them. Nugent was particularly concerned about the large number of unmarried men. He noted that during a 1904 mission in San Francisco more than a thousand such men, most of them unemployed sailors and miners, attended each evening service. These people, he claimed, led a life contrary to nature and often culpable. They took no pleasure in having a home of their own or in family ties, and it followed that, when sickness or old age came upon them, they were in misery. Nugent warned that this class of people "grows constantly and forebodes no good for the country."59 As a matter of fact, even though the number of single people grew higher in absolute terms, their percentage of the total population steadily declined.

In the East, marital concerns were overshadowed by problems that stemmed from immigration. Between 1901 and 1914 America absorbed the greatest number of immigrants in its history. In those years a staggering 12,928,000 foreigners, most of them from central and southern Europe, arrived on the shores of the country. Because many of them later returned to their homelands, the net figure for
the period was 7,188,000, still a handsome number. Father McDonald was alarmed both at the irreligiousness of the immigrants and at the prevalence among them of such un-American ideas as socialism and anarchism. He felt that nothing short of a thoroughgoing catechesis would suffice to bring the newcomers back to the practice of the faith. In 1907 he painted a bleak picture of the situation:

Nothing is more necessary than to explain the great truths of religion and the sacraments instituted by Our Lord, above all for us who are obliged to struggle against the religious hatred of the crowds of immigrants, ignorant and imbued with subversive doctrines, who arrive each year from the Old World. Nothing does so much harm to religion, nothing scandalizes Americans so much as the irreligion and the absence of religious practice in these individuals coming from Catholic countries. They arrive by the hundreds of thousands, having only one purpose: to procure enough to live on; most of them completely escape the ministry of the priest; all that can be done is look after the children, trying to preserve them from the fatal influences to which they are subject.60

Two years later McDonald returned to this theme, but by then saving even the children seemed hopeless. He remarked that immigrant parents who once had the faith now reared their offspring in ignorance of religion. When the young grew up, they left home "practically infidels or agnostics at best." This greatly altered the work of the mission. In times past the missioner could presume understanding and belief on the part of his hearers; now he had to preach "as if no one believed or understood." As McDonald expressed it to Fiat, "the work of a Missionary [now] is to show people how religion is practical every minute of the day, how it gives the best value to life, how natural and profitable and inviting it is. That it is the strength of home and state and the measure of character."61

Without knowing it, McDonald may have been caught in a conflict of cultures. Recent studies of the Italian Catholic immigrants of that period indicate that they had a folk piety born of a peasant lifestyle and that this was coupled with an indifference to and a distrust of the institutional church. This predisposed immigrant Italian Catholics to avoid church life in America, and all the more so because that church was dominated by the Irish and was, therefore, somewhat ethnic in tone. What was true of Italian immi-
grants may have been true of other ethnic groups of Catholics. This may have accounted for the great shift in emphasis in the missions of eastern Vincentians.

Missioners in the East were not concerned solely with the spiritual lives of the immigrants. They were equally concerned about their temporal welfare, and not just the newcomers’ alone but also that of American-born citizens who shared the same social and economic lot. In this, missioners resembled many of their countrymen during the Progressive Era. In the first decade and a half of this century the economic gap widened between capital and labor. Large corporations grew both in size and in power, and the cost of living steadily increased. At the same time, small businessmen found it difficult to survive economically and the wages of non-union workingmen (the vast majority) lagged woefully behind rising prices. Because many city and state governments were in league with big business, they were unresponsive to the needs of the common man. An increased number of strikes indicated the unrest of labor. So did the formation of the Socialist Party of America in 1901 and the much more radical and violent Industrial Workers of the World in 1905. These conditions gave rise to a middle and upper middle class reform movement that sought better government and the improvement of the marketplace through government intervention.

In commenting on this scene, McDonald noted that the missioner, like all other clergymen in America, took no side in politics but he was expected to denounce bad political principles and corrupt political leaders. It was his duty to teach the people to foster the common good through a conscientious use of the vote. Missioners had to take special care to do this for the poor and the laboring classes who were easily led astray by immigrant demagogues who had come to America ostensibly in search of liberty but who actually taught license. McDonald alleged that the majority of immigrants were infected with socialism and anarchism and that they practiced no religion at all, even though most of them had come from Catholic countries. He characterized their leaders as “hybreds [sic] of tyranny and anarchy, the pioneers of theory, pirates of justice and social economy.” Missioners feared the detrimental effect that such immigrants might have on simple Catholic laborers who constantly rubbed shoulders with them in the working place. To counteract this, “every successful Missionary amongst men to-day must impress them with the fact that he is
deeply interested in their temporal and social welfare as well as their eternal happiness."\(^{62}\)

The Internationalization of the Mission Effort

Missioners in the East were not left to their own resources in dealing with immigrants; they received help from outside the country as well. In 1896 Father Assunto Faiticher of the Roman Province came to Brooklyn where he spent a year and a half giving missions to his countrymen. Bishop Charles McDonnell of that diocese was quite impressed by the priest's work and very pleased to have him. When Faiticher returned to Italy in the summer of 1897, the bishop asked the Roman provincial to send him back together with another Italian confere so that the two might set up a mission house. Not only did McDonnell pursue this matter on his own, he also had the superior of the college in Brooklyn, Jeremiah Hartnett, write the superior general requesting that he encourage the Roman provincial in this regard. Hartnett wrote to Fiat but asked the general to take the mission house directly under his own care rather than place it under the jurisdiction of either the Roman or eastern provincial. Although Hartnett hinted that Fiat understood the reasons for this suggestion, these are a matter of conjecture today.

In the fall of 1898 Faiticher returned to Brooklyn with two Italian confreres, Roberto Bianchi (the superior) and Umberto Rocchi. The three set up an informal house out of which they carried on mission work. Because of Bianchi's advanced age, most of the work fell to Faiticher and Rocchi who were kept so busy that they were seldom at home. Italian immigrants, as mentioned above, had a biased attitude toward the institutional church, but this was not the only thing that kept them away from it. The great majority of them were men who had come to this country solely to make money and return home, a desire that totally absorbed their attention. Consequently, prior to giving a mission the two Italian priests had to spend an entire week going through the neighborhood to hunt out their countrymen and urge them to attend. Faiticher and Rocchi did much good, to McDonnell's great pleasure, and they continued the mission apostolate for several years. By 1901, however, they apparently adopted a more sedentary existence, turning their house into a chapel where they said Mass, heard confessions, and administered
the sacraments to the well-disposed. In 1902 Bishop McDonnell put the confreres in charge of Our Lady of Peace parish where they continued until 1906 when they were recalled to Italy.

Like the Roman Vincentians, Polish confreres also came from abroad to work among their countrymen. Their experience differed from that of the Italians because the Polish effort developed into a lasting commitment. In 1903 Archbishop Frederick Katzer of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, offered the Province of Cracow a parish and rectory to serve as a center for missions not only in his archdiocese but elsewhere. The provincial agreed and selected men for the work, but before they could be sent, Katzer died and the plan fell through. Later in the year the provincial received a request from Brazil for a series of missions to be given in Polish. He sent the band of confreres that had been destined originally for Milwaukee. On the way to Brazil, the missioners stopped in the United States and went no farther. Bishop Michael Tierney of Hartford, Connecticut, offered these Vincentians a parish in New Haven on the condition that they give missions in Polish throughout his diocese. The province accepted. Within a few months the confreres had booked so many missions that they asked for more men. At the time none were forthcoming because the province was strapped for personnel.

Soon thereafter the Polish mission effort in America quickened. In July 1904 Archbishop Patrick Ryan of Philadelphia invited the Polish Vincentians to establish a mission house in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania. The province agreed and set up both a parish and mission center in 1905. Later in the same year Bishop Tierney offered the confreres in his diocese a second parish, this one at Derby, and it too became a base for missions. From these three houses the Polish confreres carried on a vigorous mission apostolate.

In 1910 the provincial of Cracow, Gaspard Slominski, made a visitation of his American subjects. As a result, he decided to withdraw the confreres from Conshohocken, sell the house, and use the money to open a school for Polish boys in Erie, Pennsylvania. Fiat approved the plan and the school was established. Within a few years the provincial stationed a band of missioners at Erie. When he visited the house in 1920, he reported that the missioners were "constantly and overly busy in the work. When missionaries in America work as they ought to work, especially in the Polish parishes, they totally exhaust themselves."

Slominski noted that
Polish missioners experienced the same difficulty that afflicted their American confreres: the disruption of community life because they could not follow the regular order of the day, nor could they return home between missions.

In 1922 the vice-provincial of the Polish Vincentians, Father Paul Waszko, instructed one of the missioners, Anthony Mazurkiewicz, to find a location for a mission house in New York City. He received help from the eastern confreres at Saint John's University in Brooklyn, particularly Father John O'Byrne who was a confidant of the local bishop, Thomas Molloy. Through O'Byrne's good offices, the latter offered the Polish confreres Saint Stanislaus Kostka parish in Brooklyn with the option of opening a mission house in the diocese. They accepted the parish and selected Mazurkiewicz to be temporary administrator. He immediately set about locating a house for the missions. Early in 1923 he found in Whitestone (borough of Queens) a suitable building which the Community purchased. In March Waszko stationed a three-man band there. Within three years the confreres preached thirty missions, and the number grew rapidly thereafter. In 1927 alone they gave thirty more.

During the Great Depression Polish missions, like those of all Vincentians, went into a slump. Pastors were afraid to have one preached because the parish might not be able to bear the expense. In order to expand the mission field, Polish confreres gave missions in Havana, Cuba. Even so, by 1937 the Whitestone house was down to eleven missions. The apostolate, however, soon began to recover. In 1941 it became necessary to build a new and larger mission residence in Whitestone. The confreres purchased additional property that expanded their holdings to include an entire city block. They then constructed a forty by sixty foot, three story edifice that accommodated twelve missioners.

Just as Polish and Italian Vincentians came to the aid of their countrymen in America, so too confreres from the Eastern Province ministered to Americans living abroad. When President Theodore Roosevelt undertook construction of the Panama Canal in 1904, many workmen from the United States joined their European and Caribbean island counterparts in the big ditch. French and Latin American Vincentians served as chaplains to the work crews, but because of the language barrier they were able to do little for the North Americans. In November 1909 Father Fernand Allot, a French confrere on his way home from the Canal Zone, stopped
at the provincial house in Philadelphia and asked Father McHale to send one of his men to Panama in the coming January to conduct a mission in English. The provincial gladly obliged and sent Thomas McDonald who preached the first such mission in the Zone.

In the fall of 1910 Allot returned to Philadelphia and asked McHale if the province would take over the mission station at Empire, about ten miles northwest of Panama City. He invited the provincial to come down and make an investigation tour, during which he could also give six missions to the Americans. This McHale did in the spring of 1911. In a report to Fiat, the provincial claimed that the Canal Zone had greater need of French and Spanish Vincentians than it had of Americans, and so the provincial refused to accept the Empire house. For the next two years, however, McHale sent confreres to give missions in Panama. In August 1913 Fiat warmly urged the province to assume pastoral care of the whole Canal Zone and two months later Bishop Guillermo Rojas y Arrieta, C.M., of Panama made the same appeal. McHale and his council finally agreed. What had begun as a parish mission apostolate became a permanent foreign mission. Parish missions, however, did not cease with the change of status. In 1915 McHale preached two while making a visitation of the Zone, and by 1918 the confreres were giving annual missions at the six army posts there.

**Deepening the Commitment in the East**

In 1921 the Eastern Province had twenty-two missioners in six centers, and they preached a total of 143 missions in that season. Mission figures for the rest of the decade are sporadic but suggest some slackening in the apostolate. For example, in 1921 the Niagara Falls band preached twenty-eight missions; at the next reporting in 1927 the number was down to eighteen. Similarly, the two preachers at Bangor conducted twenty-two missions in 1921, nineteen in 1925, fourteen in 1927, and thirteen in 1929, an overall decline of 40 percent. The band at the Germantown seminary also showed a slight decline. In 1921 it had preached twenty-four missions and in 1925 it gave twenty-two. Only the Opelika house showed a steady increase throughout the 1920s. The confreres there conducted eight

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missions in 1921, sixteen in 1925, and eighteen in 1928. In general, it is difficult to understand why this ebb took place.

The case of the Springfield house is instructive because the reason for the decline in missions seems apparent. In 1921 the New England band preached thirty-eight missions. Two years later Father Frederick Maune, the provincial, visited the house and reported "an unexpected apathy in what concerns the work of soliciting...missions." He blamed this on the superior, Edward Walsh, who, Maune said, seemed "to guide himself by the proverb: 'All things come to him who waits.'"64 Given the rivalry that existed among missionary communities, the provincial strongly urged Walsh to regain lost ground. The admonition apparently had little effect because in 1925 the Springfield band preached twenty-nine missions, down 24 percent from the 1921 figure. In July 1926 Maune replaced Walsh with John Brady, but this did not immediately stem the downward trend. During the 1926 season, one no doubt arranged by Walsh the previous year, the band preached only twenty-five missions. By 1928 the change of superiors had brought about the desired effect. When Maune visited Springfield in that year, he reported:

The state of this house is sufficient to soften the blows of pessimism toward which I was inclined. The confreres live here and form, so to speak, a compact body which applies itself as one to the exacting and at times overtaxing work of the missions. The young men work elbow to elbow and loyally with the superior.65

In 1929 Brady had increased the number of missions to thirty-seven, one short of the 1921 mark.

By 1930 the eastern mission apostolate seemed to be recovering from the slump of the 1920s. The houses at Germantown, Niagara Falls, Opelika, and Springfield operated at full tilt. The only exception to the resurgence was the house at Bangor which had suffered steady decline throughout the decade. The renewed vigor of the eastern effort may have been short-lived because hard times in the early years of the depression forced the cancellations of numerous missions. The province was undaunted by all this and even deepened its commitment to the apostolate by opening three new mission centers during the darkest years of the economic crisis.

In the spring of 1932 James Hartley, the Vincentian-educated bishop of Columbus, Ohio, invited the province to take charge of
a small parish in Groveport and to use it as a mission center. Father Maune accepted the offer, and the province purchased thirty-two acres of land on which it began construction of the edifice. Without waiting for completion of the residence, Maune appointed a new mission band of five men who remained stationed in existing houses, but who operated in the Ohio region. In February 1933 the Groveport house was finished and in March the band took up residence. It soon developed a rewarding apostolate in which it averaged forty to fifty missions, retreats, and triduums each year.

Not long after the move to Ohio, the province received a request to extend its mission work northward, across the Canadian border. In the fall of 1932 Archbishop Neil McNeil of Toronto asked the Community to erect a mission center in his archdiocese. McNeil wanted the house to be located near Saint Augustine's Theological Seminary so that the Vincentians would be able to give spiritual direction to the students. Father William Slattery, the new provincial, liked the idea because the mission field in Canada was reported to be fertile and offered abundant opportunities for preaching to the country poor. The province responded to McNeil's summons and bought a ramshackle farm house on five acres of land in the village of Birchcliffe just outside Toronto. Six months were spent refurbishing the building, and in September 1933 a band of three missioners was stationed there. In the first year the confreres preached eight missions, a number they raised to thirty by 1936. Vincentians never acted as spiritual directors at the seminary because McNeil died in 1934 and his successor would not entrust this care to them.

In February 1934 the province received a request to found yet another mission house, this one in the western reaches of the territory. Bishop Michael Gallagher of Detroit, Michigan, wanted the Vincentians to establish a small parish and mission center at Jackson so that people in the surrounding area would have the occasional opportunity to confess their sins to priests other than their pastors. Slattery favored acceptance for several reasons. First, as a rail center, Jackson was an ideal location for a mission band. In addition, the population of the region consisted mostly of the working class and poor people, and so the confreres in parochial work would serve the kind of people close to the heart of Saint Vincent. Besides ministering to the laity, the priests could also care for the spiritual needs of the Daughters of Charity in the area. The one drawback to the plan was finances. The diocese had no money
to construct a parish, and so a loan of $150,000 would have to be secured. Slattery told the superior general that the province had money enough to build the facility, but the provincial council thought it best to keep Vincentian funds out of diocesan affairs. The general, agreeing that the loan was a diocesan matter, granted Slattery permission for the project. In the summer of 1934 the province opened Queen of the Miraculous Medal parish in Jackson, and there it stationed a mission band. The Vincentians at the parish had both a chaplaincy at Mercy Hospital and spiritual charge of the Catholic inmates at the State Prison of Southern Michigan. They initiated this last duty with a two week mission for the prisoners.

For the next twenty years eight bands in as many centers (the two Germantown bands were combined) carried on the eastern mission apostolate. The average mission still lasted two weeks and the practice of dividing these between men and women continued. The content of the mission, however, had changed some since the turn of the century. The penitential aspect had come to dominate the evening service. Five of the seven sermons brought home traditional penitential themes: salvation, mortal sin, death and judgment, mercy and delay, and perseverance. Instruction on how to make a good confession, previously given at morning masses, replaced the catechetical instructions of Monday and Tuesday evenings. Not only did the call to repentance permeate the evenings, it also reached down into the mornings. Sermons at the first three masses were the harbingers of their nighttime counterparts. At these liturgies preachers spoke on salvation, sin, and confession. As the penitential nature of the mission hardened, the catechetical aspect became more diffuse and selective. Although Vincentian missioners still gave sacramental instructions on the mass, holy communion, and extreme unction (for the women only), they had discarded a point by point treatment of the commandments. This gave way to talks on purity, sins of the tongue, the precepts of the Church, and theft and restitution (for the men only). The remaining instructions dealt with practices devotional and otherwise: prayer, the rosary, the Miraculous Medal, scapulars and societies, and the mission collection. The combination of catechetical eclecticism and a sharpened focus on penitence marked a significant shift from traditional mission practice in the Congregation, but it was quite in keeping with the style of American missions in general.
Trifling with Missions in the West

The mission apostolate of the Western Province went into eclipse after 1915. In that year its mission band ceased to exist. Only Ambrose Vautier, the French confrere and assistant pastor of Saint Katherine’s parish in New Orleans, carried on the work. He continued to preach missions to the French-speaking in and around the Crescent City until 1920 when his superior, John McWilliams, had the provincial order him to stop and devote his full attention to parish duties. After the demise of the western band, missioners from the East several times crossed provincial boundaries. In 1917 the Eastern Province formed an *ad hoc* band to preach missions in the archdiocese of San Francisco and in the diocese of Salt Lake City which was then in the hands of Bishop Joseph Glass, C.M., the former president of Saint Vincent’s College in Los Angeles. In 1922, after Vautier had been confined to parochial work, the Eastern Province sent a band to New Orleans where it conducted three missions, one of them in Vautier’s own parish! In the following year another eastern band returned to Salt Lake City.

More than once Vautier brought this situation to the attention of the superior general, François Verdier. In 1920 he complained that the Western Province had never put the effort into mission work that the Eastern Province had. He told the general that his predecessor, Father Fiat, had time and again insisted that the West expand its mission work, but the province had continued to invest its personnel in the University of Dallas and in DePaul University at Chicago. As a matter of fact, in the year of Vautier’s writing, the province had forty-three men (34 percent of its manpower) in those two schools; the remainder staffed five seminaries and fifteen parishes. Two years later this same condition caused Vautier to lament, “for all practical purposes, the missions no longer exist. One is either a professor or a parish priest. The better missionaries have recently become superiors of houses... Actually, there is no longer any mission band.”

Father Charles Souvay, professor of Scripture at Kenrick Seminary and later superior general, was similarly distressed by the state of the missions. In 1922 he wrote to Verdier that although parish missions had flourished in the province during the first decade of the century, this had long since ceased to be the case. “How has it come to pass,” he wrote, “that, in the course of the last
ten years, they have fallen into absolute ruins without even leaving a memory of their former splendor? It is no more and no less than the story of a 'sabotage'...” Without offering evidence, Souvay accused Glass of being the saboteur and linked the extinction of the missions with Glass' closing of Saint Vincent's College in Los Angeles. With regard to the latter, Souvay poignantly commented:

... when one thinks that our college of Los Angeles was closed under the pretext of giving ourselves entirely to the missions, and how it was cried from the rooftops that the confreres retired from there would now go to reinforcing the missions, whereas, in fact, not one was applied to the missions, there was truly something to bring tears to the eyes.67

Souvay was too categorical in identifying Glass as the sole culprit in the disappearance of western missions. Responsibility for that must be shared by the provincial administrations that held power from 1900 to 1915. These, as already seen, pursued a policy of expansion that proved disastrous as far as parish missions were concerned. Souvay's remarks, however, indicated the depth of feeling that still existed in the province over the closing of Saint Vincent's and the sad state of the missions in the West.

In the fall of 1922 Father Verdier made a personal visitation of the province, the first such by a superior general. On 20 October he met at Kenrick Seminary with the provincial and his council. Verdier made special mention of the missions. He told the provincial and council that this apostolate ought to be the first work of the province and viewed as a source of vocations. Father Thomas Finney, the provincial, took this admonition to heart and in 1923 made a very modest restoration of the missions by appointing a two-man band under Francis McCabe. This greatly cheered Vautier who reported to the general that the missions were to take new life in the West. The reality, however, did not measure up to expectation. McCabe soon underwent two surgeries that completely removed him from service. In effect, the band was composed of one man, Stephen Paul Hueber, who in two years preached seven missions, five of them alone and two with the help of another confrere. In 1925 Vautier expressed his dashed hopes for a missions revival. He informed the superior general that
nothing had really changed: "The work of the missions in the western province is always at a standstill—operarii autem pauci [laborers, however, are few (Matt. 9:37)]. The reason for it is the number of confreres that our universities of Dallas and Chicago (see the catalogue) absorb." The work of the missions had, indeed, ground to a halt. Hueber preached but one in 1926.

In that year the provincial administration changed hands in rapid succession. Finney left office, and Verdier appointed Michael Ryan to fill the vacancy. For reasons of health, Ryan refused the assignment, and so the general named William Barr as provincial. Barr, who had read Ryan's letter of appointment, gathered that Verdier's view of the province was too rosy. Shortly after taking office, Barr wrote to Patrick McHale, the English-speaking assistant in Paris, and asked him to inform the superior general of the widespread enervation among the confreres. Like Vautier and Souvay before him, Barr pinpointed the difficulty as the elimination of the missions from the apostolic life of the province. This, he claimed, had totally demoralized the confreres:

One must be blind who does not recognize that there is a great lack of "morale." It is all related to the fact that men feel—and I think they have a right to feel—that we have been trifling with the first end of the Congregation. You are not unaware that for the past twelve years there has been, for all practical purposes, no mission band in this province. I am not censuring anyone, I am merely stating a fact—which has had a devastating effect on the temper of the confreres. Until it becomes manifest that the whole thing is not a "joke"—and that is the cynical light in which very many look upon things—until something is done to show that our title of "missioners" is not an empty title, all effort to bring about a spirit of regularity must be futile. From this you will infer that it is my intention to restore the missions as speedily as possible. A plea to take up this work was the note sounded by many of the confreres in their messages of congratulation [on Barr's appointment as provincial], and this speaks well for them.

The restoration of the missions was apparently more difficult than Barr imagined. In 1927 Hueber preached only one mission. In 1928 he was still the only man officially assigned to the apostolate. In
that year he gave six missions, four by himself and two with the help of Leo Sweeny.

After 1929 details about the western mission apostolate become sketchy. It is certain, however, that the province maintained a weak but constant presence in that field down to World War II. Figures are available for the decade 1929-1939 and show that western confreres preached a total of eighty-two missions during that time, an average of about eight per year. In 1934 the mission band consisted of Frederick Coupal (a very gifted preacher) and John Overberg. Occasionally, they were helped by Hueber, Edmond Cannon, and William Stack. During that year the two regular missioners were fully occupied in an apostolate described by Timothy Flavin, the provincial, as "small but developing." Flavin himself tried to further the work. In keeping with tradition, he sought to steer the apostolate toward rural areas. He offered the services of the mission band to the Catholic Church Extension Society and to Bishop Francis Tief of Concordia, Kansas. “I feel,” Flavin wrote to the superior general, “that searching around, in time God will open the way if it is His Will to lead us into that work [the missions].” Whether or not the offer was accepted by Tief or the Extension Society, mission records indicate that the provincial had some success in directing the efforts of the band toward rural parishes. Of the eighty-two missions preached between 1929 and 1939, two-thirds took place in outlying districts.

In the summer of 1934, ill health forced Overberg to retire from active mission work. He was then appointed director of the band (largely a desk job) and made pastor of Saint Vincent’s parish in Saint Louis, the house where Flavin hoped to station the missioners. If the band ever resided there, the arrangement did not last more than a few years. In 1939 Coupal suggested that the province locate its mission base in Kansas City. He asked Father Marshall Winne, who succeeded Flavin as provincial, to buy the Flater house on Paseo Boulevard and place the band there. The provincial council accepted the proposal, but Winne himself seems to have feared that an independent mission center might encourage Coupal’s free-wheeling style. In an attempt to keep a tight rein on him, the provincial made Overberg, then pastor at Saint Vincent’s parish in Kansas City, superior of the missioners. The new band consisted of seven men. They lived for one year at the parish and then took up residence in the Flater house. At least one confrere, and perhaps more, did not like working with Coupal. By 1942 the
band was down to five members, and Coupal and Joseph Daspit were the only originals left. The situation must have been troublesome because early in the following year the provincial council, using the Second World War as an excuse, disbanded the missioners and sold the Flater house. It did so, adding the pregnant comment, “having a separate house for the missionaries was not satisfactory.”

During Coupal's time the style of preaching in the West underwent a change. Drama finally found a home in the Vincentian mission. In the sermon on death, Coupal caressed and spoke to an imaginary skull held in his hand, and at the appropriate moment he hurled the bony specter at the congregation. In order to dramatize the life of the soul, Daspit lit a candle to represent the state of grace, blew it out to signify the death of sin, and then entered the confessional where he rekindled the flame. Such methods flowed naturally from the increasingly penitential character of the mission, but they represented a departure from the Vincentian tradition.

In 1945 the Western Province decided to let the field of parish missions lie fallow while through the preaching of the Miraculous Medal novena it cultivated the seed ground of Marian devotion. By the late 1940s, however, the Vincentians on the novena band had discovered that the province could not entirely ignore the missions. A considerable number of small rural parishes had not had one for ten or twenty years, and they keenly felt the need for this service. During the 1949 novena season, the band planned to take time out between stints of Miraculous Medal work and preach missions in country places. In fact, the band carried on this dual apostolate for nearly a decade. Between 1949 and 1957 the “Medal Missionaries” offered pastors their choice of a solemn novena, an eight day mission, or a three day retreat. Father Bernard Degan, who served on the band for eight of these years, estimated that about 25 percent of the work consisted in missions and triduums. In conducting a mission, the medal preacher simply skipped the novena prayers and trimmed his novena sermons of most Marian references.

This manifold work of the novena band came to a halt in 1957. Early that year James Stakelum, the provincial, and Preston Murphy, the novena band director, locked in a power struggle over the reorganization of the apostolate. The affair ended with the virtual dissolution of the band. When a new one was appointed, it was attached to the Eastern Province as part of a nationwide, bi-
provincial novena effort coordinated in New York City. As went the western novena band, so went the western missions. In the spring of 1957 Stakelum invited eastern missioners to perform services in several parishes run by confreres of his own province, and he even urged the East to take over the missions throughout the whole territory of the West.

In 1958 two regions of the Western Province became vice-provinces with a limited amount of autonomy. A modest but abortive attempt at reviving missions as a separate, if part-time, apostolate occurred in one of these new infrastructures. Early in the 1960s James Richardson, vice-provincial of Los Angeles, tried to establish gratuitous missions in rural districts. As the site of this new effort, he selected the diocese of Salt Lake City and assigned two confreres to this work which was to be done during summer vacations. During their first year in Utah, they preached six week-long missions, one in Salt Lake City and the rest in outlying areas. The following summer they were joined by a third conferee. During this season, they made a study of the diocese to determine which parishes had not had a mission within the past five years. They sent the list to Bishop Joseph Lennox Federal of Salt Lake City and offered to give free missions in those places in the following summer. Federal never responded, and with that the mission program ended.

The Contemporary Scene

At the time of the Second Vatican Council, the Eastern Province still had a flourishing and consistent mission apostolate. Six bands operated out of regional centers: Saint John's University in Brooklyn and the mission houses at Germantown, Groveport, Opelika, Springfield, and Toronto. All, however, was not well in the apostolate and even before the Vatican Council there were indications that the heyday of missions was about to end. In 1959 the directors of the six bands met and discussed the problems facing the apostolate. The issue of mission attendance caused great concern. If slackened lay support threatened the apostolate before the council, an even greater problem confronted it afterward.
Vatican II, with its updating of Catholic life, created a generation gap within the Community. Young priests did not want to preach mission sermons of the old style, and the older confreres were unwilling to change. As a result, young Vincentians refused appointments to the mission band. The combined effect of declining personnel and slackening attendance sent the eastern mission apostolate into a slump that by 1984 had reduced it to a state of virtual non-existence. The province still had about ten men divided among several bands, but most of their work consisted in Miraculous Medal novenas. In 1985 the province sent a confere to Australia to study the new mission methods of Vincentians there. Upon his return, he and another formed a two-man team that conducts missions out of a residence in Queens, New York. In 1986 the Eastern Province further strengthened its mission effort with the establishment of a bi-lingual team, stationed in Brooklyn and Germantown, that preaches in Spanish and English.

In the early 1960s the mission effort of the Polish Vincentians saw a brief period of expansion. The confreres determined to celebrate the tercentenary of Saint Vincent’s death (1960) by enlarging the Whitestone house and by erecting an additional mission residence elsewhere. A priest in the diocese of Syracuse invited them to establish the new foundation in Utica, New York. They accepted the offer and purchased a farm in Marcy, a little more than five miles northwest of Utica. Because the house was unready for occupancy, the first missioners resided in an abandoned convent in Utica itself, where they continued to live for nearly three years. During that time, the Community decided to give up the Marcy property because it was deemed unsuitable and the title to it had come into question. The confreres purchased new land in Deerfield near Utica and built a motel-style complex which was dedicated and opened on the feast of Saint Vincent, 19 July 1963. The new residence brought the number of Polish mission bands to three: Utica, Whitestone, and Erie.

With the change in Catholic life after the Second Vatican Council, the mission work of Polish Vincentians fell on hard times. The penitential mission lost popular appeal, and the three bands had less and less to do. By the mid-seventies, the mission apostolate had ceased altogether at Erie. In 1972 the confreres of Whitestone, although they still preached occasional missions and novenas, began an active ministry of pastoral assistance to numerous parishes in the New York area. Like Whitestone, the mission effort
of the Utica house gradually fell off. By 1985 most of the missioners had grown elderly and worked sporadically.

While missions dwindled throughout the East in the wake of Vatican II, the Western Province tried to breathe new life into the apostolate. In 1974 the provincial appointed a two-man mission team in Saint Louis. It operated out of the city until 1979 when the minor seminary in Cape Girardeau closed. That facility was then turned into an evangelization center and the team was stationed there. By 1983 its membership had expanded to include three priests and a Daughter of Charity. During that year they gave ten missions. In the fall of 1983 the province opened a formal mission house in Kansas City and relocated the band there. Like the Eastern Province, the Midwest Province sent a confrere to study the modern approach of Vincentian missioners in Australia. In 1986 the province formed another band located at Springfield, Missouri. The ministry of this team is aimed at awakening and supporting the Christian life of individuals and families in parishes of southern Illinois and Missouri, and northern Arkansas.

In 1975 two new provinces, the Southern and the West, were split off from the Midwest. Both provinces quickly established small mission teams which tried to develop a style suited to modern needs. In the South, experimentation first centered on the structure of the mission. The confreres held exercises in the morning for the elderly and followed this at noon with a sack lunch gathering for businessmen. The day concluded with an evening mission service complete with Eucharistic liturgy. Attendance at the missions was generally fair and best in small towns, but it was nothing like the halcyon days. More recently, the southern effort has concentrated on the content of the mission. In view of the hunger for scripture and spirituality, biblical missions and retreats are featured. In 1984 the province organized a mobile mission team to preach to the Spanish-speaking in south Texas. Two years later, a confrere was assigned to work with a lay couple in giving missions that have a charismatic flavor.

The Province of the West also experimented with updating the apostolate. During the late 1970s, Vincentians developed a mission whose object was to help a pastor and his people establish a parish council, set parish goals, and motivate the congregation to carry them out. In places where a council already existed, the mission was to reinforce the goals of the council at the congregational level. As personnel on the mission team changed, so too did the mission
objective. Since 1982 the apostolate has focused on small rural parishes. Missions last six days and aim at catechizing the people and motivating them to put their faith into action in the communal life of the parish. In 1986 the province turned the former Saint Vincent's Seminary in Montebello, California, into DePaul Center, a combination of mission residence, retreat house, and institute for Vincentian spirituality.

Conclusions

Throughout much of the Congregation's history in the United States the parish mission apostolate found itself in a backseat. Necessity assigned it that place. The Catholic Church was a new and growing institution within a new and growing nation. During much of the nineteenth century the American Church had greater need for the normal structures of church life (parishes, schools, and seminaries) than it had for a revitalization of the faith through parish missions. Thus, Bishop Louis Dubourg invited the Congregation, not to preach missions, but establish a seminary and a parish in his diocese. The pressing demand for the structures of Catholic life dictated the apostolic decisions of the Vincentian Community down to the 1870s. During that time personnel was committed to parochial and professorial offices. That the early Vincentians preached any missions at all gave testimony to their deep dedication to the original work of the Congregation. This dedication finally bore fruit in 1873 when the first mission band was appointed.

After the division of the American Province in 1888, the Eastern Province chose to expand carefully and deliberately in the area of parish missions, a direction it continued to follow down through the 1930s. The Western Province, on the other hand, pursued a policy (if one can call it that) of expansion that tended to dissipate both the personnel and the finances of the province. This proved quite detrimental to the work of the missions. Regional differences best explain the divergent paths taken by the two provinces. In the East the Church was older and better endowed both with priests and with institutions than the Church in the West where the faith was still spreading and dioceses always needed more clergy and more structure. As a result, the Eastern Province was seldom asked to establish or take over an institution. This left it free to develop
missions. Whenever the province did accept a parish, it also stationed a mission band there. Circumstances in the West made it difficult for the Community to follow the same tack. Almost by necessity, the Western Province placed itself at the service of the bishops. In so doing, it established five parishes, four seminaries, and one college between 1888 and 1915. Because the province failed both to check this rapid expansion and to make an effective decision in favor of the missions, it crippled and eventually killed that work within its borders.

The Catholic college was one institution that particularly irritated Vincentian missioners in both provinces. According to them, Vincent de Paul had founded the Community to preach missions and to form the clergy, not to conduct schools of higher education. By 1910, however, the provinces had five colleges between them. Missioners objected, with more reason in the West than in the East, that the parish mission apostolate, the first work of the Congregation, was being neglected because of the college apostolate which was not a work of the Congregation at all. As the Eastern Province gradually built a sturdy mission program, this criticism died out among its preachers. Missioners in the West, however, continued to voice this complaint until the late 1920s when the University of Dallas was closed.

Allocation of personnel was a corollary to the issue of institutional growth. Mission work had to compete for manpower with the other apostolates of the Community. First and foremost, this rivalry involved numbers. If the missions were to survive and to grow, then the provinces had to increase the personnel assigned to that task. After 1888 the Eastern Province made deliberate decisions to foster the apostolate, and so it built more centers and assigned more preachers. That was not the case in the West. The mission apostolate there fought a losing battle. It rarely gained in numbers and eventually disappeared.

The allocation of personnel, however, included more than simply figures. It also embraced the quality of those assigned. In this regard the mission apostolates of both provinces suffered in varying degrees. Between 1888 and 1910 the eastern and western bands were assigned a number of men who were unqualified or unfit for the work. As missioners themselves were wont to complain, the colleges and the seminaries got the best confreres. By 1910 the Eastern Province had overcome this difficulty, but matters were otherwise in the West. There, provincials continued to staff the missions with, if not
the troublesome, at least the green and those best termed as "characters." To be sure, even in the worst of times the missions had good men, and often a majority of them. Yet the unsuitable confreres hindered the apostolate because they were much more difficult to counterbalance in a work with few laborers than in a work with many. So long as provincials continued to assign such confreres to the missions, they indicated (even to the missioners themselves) that the apostolate had a secondary and even tertiary status among the works of the province.

As for the missions themselves, American Vincentians had to adapt traditional Community practice to the situation that existed in the United States. This adaptation concerned two matters: first, the locale of the mission and, second, the style of the mission. The first was easily accomplished. By custom the Congregation preached its missions to the poor in rural areas. This practice was well suited to the Catholic portions of Europe where peasant farming still predominated. In America, however, the Catholic population tended to concentrate in the cities, and Vincentian missioners, if they were to preach to the poor, had to conduct missions in urban areas as well as the countryside. Although this adjustment of the mission site initially caused concern at the generalate in Paris, American confreres successfully defended the practice as a necessary accommodation to the American scene.

Such harmonization did not always work in the best interest of Vincentian mission customs. This was particularly true with regard to style. The domestication of the Vincentian practice led to a break in continuity with European tradition. By time-honored usage, Vincentian missions aimed at catechesis and lasted from one to three months. Yet other missionary communities in consort with the American milieu had bred an entirely different sort of mission: the Catholic revival meeting which was penitential and lasted only a short time, even a week. Early Vincentians adjusted to this situation by developing a program of catechesis that lasted two weeks and began with a call to repentance. By the turn of the century this accommodation had been brought up short by another American custom: the division of the congregation into homogeneous groups (married women, married men, single women, and single men). This meant that the mission became no more than a series of back to back week-long retreats. Vincentian missioners then had to compress into one week the catechesis that had previously been given in two. Through the twentieth century the Vincentian mission
changed even further. The penitential aspect assumed the dominant position and the catechesis became weak and diffuse. Thus, within a century and a half the traditional style of the Congregation had undergone a complete transformation. The atmosphere of the post conciliar era proved un congenial for this type of mission and the apostolate waned.

Even though the penitential mission fell into disrepute after Vatican II, the apostolate received a fillip. The council called each religious community to rededicate itself to the spirit of its founder. For the Congregation of the Mission this was a summons to reconsecrate itself to the work of parish missions: "Evangelizare pauperibus misit me [he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor (Lk 4:18)]." This emphasis was included in the new 1980 Constitutions (approved by the Holy See in 1984) and was echoed by the meeting of Vincentian provincials worldwide, held in Bogota, Colombia, in 1983. The foregoing clearly indicates that the American provinces have heeded these injunctions and are trying to develop a style of mission that is faithful to tradition and that also meets the needs of the time.

ENDNOTES

1. Rules to Be Observed for the Establishment of the Missionaries of S.V. of Paul in the Diocese of Louisiana, North-America, 17 November 1815, DRMA, corporation file. See also Appendix A.
2. John Timon, Barrens Memoir (1861), 5, DRMA, provincial papers.
5. Timon, Barrens Memoir, 52, DRMA, provincial papers.
8. Ryan to Etienne, 1 February 1861, Annales 26 (1861): 553.
9. Ibid., 556.
14. Circular from Ryan, 13 January 1868, DRMA, provincial papers.
16. Antoine Fiat to Thomas Smith, 6 July 1886, DRMA, provincial papers. Emphasis in original.
17. Thomas O'Donoghue, *Diary*, n.d., n.m. 1876, copy in DRMA, personnel files.
18. Thomas Shaw to Fiat, 1 April 1886, GCUSA, series C, reel 3, item 69.
20. Joseph Alizeri to Eugène Boré, 23 December 1874, *Annales* 40 (1875): 136-37. Although this letter is dated 1874, the mission actually took place a year earlier (see Registre des Missions pour l'année 1873, GCUSA, series C, reel 3, item 17).
21. Alizeri to Boré, 28 April 1877, GCUSA, series C, reel 3, item 49.
24. Thomas MacNamara to Fiat, 20 September 1884, GCUSA, series B, roll 5, item 587.
25. Minutes of the Provincial Council, 17 August 1888, Germantown provincialate.
27. Thomas Weldon to Fiat, 15 February 1894, GCUSA, series B, roll 3, item 225.
30. Fiat to William Barnwell, 1 April 1898, DRMA, provincial papers.
32. Shaw to Fiat, 4 December 1902, GCUSA, series B, roll 3, item 234.
33. Dennis Downing to Fiat, 29 March 1903, GCUSA, series C, reel 3, item 295.
34. Rapport sur les besoins généraux et particuliers de la province orientale des Etats-Unis d'Amérique présenté par M. Demion, Commissaire extraordinaire à M. A. Fiat Supérieur Général à la suite d'une visite, à chacune des Maisons de cette Province en aout & septembre 1903, GCUSA, series B, roll 5, item 594.
35. Rapport sur la Visite de la Maison de Germantown (Pen-sylvania [sic]) faite par M. C. Demion Commissaire extraordinaire du 5 au 11 octobre 1903, GCUSA, series B, roll 5, item 595; Hulett Piper to Demion, 4 November 1903, ibid., series C, reel 3, item 485.
36. Thomas McDonald to Fiat, 13 October 1907, GCUSA, series A, roll 1, item 28.
37. Patrick McHale to Fiat, 18 November 1907, GCUSA, series A, roll 1, item 32.
38. McHale to Fiat, 9 March 1910, GCUSA, series A, roll 1, item 70.
39. Rapport sur les besoins généraux et particuliers de la province occi-dentale des Etats-Unis d'Amérique (Visiteur M. Smith) présenté par M. C. Demion, Commissaire extraordinaire à M. Fiat Supérieur Général à la suite d'une visite à chacune des Maisons de cette prov-ince en août & septembre 1903, 8 octobre 1903, GCUSA, series B, roll 5, item 602.
40. Fiat to Barnwell, 7 August 1905, DRMA, provincial papers.
41. Fiat to Finney, 18 October 1907, DRMA, provincial papers.
42. Fiat to Finney, 1 May 1908, DRMA, provincial papers.
44. Thomas Finney to Fiat, 18 April 1910, GCUSA, series B, roll 3, item 257. Although this predates Glass' letter to Fiat, all the corre-spondence relating to this matter clearly indicates that Glass, McDonnell, and Finney had agreed upon the plan.
45. Fiat to Finney, 2 May 1910, DRMA, provincial papers.
46. Glass to Finney, 11 January 1911, DRMA, Finney papers.
47. William Ponet to Fiat, 19 February 1911, GCUSA, series B, roll 3, item 261. Many of these same allegations were made by Hugh O'Connor, who had also been treasurer of the college. One of the more startling examples of Glass's questionable financial dealing was recounted, in greater or lesser detail, by three different confrères: Ponet, O'Connor, and John J. Martin. While O'Connor was stationed at Saint Vincent's, he became acquainted with a local bank manager. In 1906 Glass used O'Connor's friendly relationship with this banker in order to secure a loan of $20,000 for six months so that the college could invest in property at 14th and Main Streets. The bank even received a note of endorsement from the College Board of Trustees. The manager did not understand why Saint Vincent's was interested in the land, but granted the loan out of friendship for O'Connor. During the financial panic of 1907-1908, it came out that Glass had purchased the property for himself, not the college. In 1908 he needed money for another investment, and so he used the property at 14th and Main as collateral to take out another loan. In order to secure this one, he had
to co-sign the name of Charles Conroy, a wealthy young professor at Saint Vincent's. In fact, the papers were drafted in a way that made Conroy the principal party. All correspondence regarding the loan was addressed to him. Glass, who regularly sorted the college mail, always intercepted the bills for interest (6 percent per annum due quarterly, which he had Ponet pay out of the house coffer), and so Conroy was kept in the dark. One day when Glass was away, another confere distributed the mail. Conroy, much to his surprise, received a bill for interest on a loan that he had never taken out. He rushed to the holder of the note and discovered that Glass had arranged the whole thing. When the young professor confronted the college president, Glass gave assurance that it was only a matter of form, and that Conroy would lose nothing. This apparently satisfied the young man, who kept quiet about the affair (Ponet to Fiat, 19 February 1911, GCUSA, series B, roll 3, item 261; O'Connor to same, undated [1915], ibid., item 270; Martin to O'Connor, 19 May 1915, ibid., enclosure to item 270). Martin claimed that both Finney and McHale, whom Fiat had sent in 1909 as extraordinary commissary to province, had been told of this matter, "but as usual it did no good" (Martin to O'Connor, 19 May 1915, ibid., enclosure to item 270). O'Connor alleged that Bishop Conaty had demanded that McDonnell be sacked from the office of college treasurer "because he [had] manipulated the books to cover their [his and Glass's] tracks. These books and records have been since disposed of" (O'Connor to Fiat, undated [1915], ibid., item 270).

49. Joseph Walshe, Province occidentale des Etats-Unis Rapport de Visite, 8 août 1911, AGC, Etats-Unis Occidentaux.
50. Fiat to Finney, 8 September 1911, DRMA, provincial papers.
51. Fiat to Finney, 24 September 1911, DRMA, provincial papers.
52. Finney to Fiat, 29 September 1911, copy, DRMA, provincial papers.
53. Nugent to Fiat, 8 September 1910, GCUSA, series B, roll 4, item 452. Although this letter is dated 1910, the same three young Vincentians served on the band through 1914.
55. Francis X. McCabe, "Mission Outline according to the Traditional Vincentian Method," DRMA, provincial papers.
56. McDonald to Fiat, 13 October 1907, Annales 73 (1908): 96.
57. McDonald to Fiat, 7 November 1908, GCUSA, series C, roll 3, item 490.
60. McDonald to Fiat, 13 October 1907, Annales 73 (1908): 97.
61. McDonald to Fiat, 7 November 1909, GCUSA, series C, reel 3, item 508.
62. McDonald to Fiat, 7 November 1908, GCUSA, series C, reel 3, item 490.
63. Maison d’Erie, Pa., Visite faite 25 juin—2 juillet 1920, AGC, Utica, Vice-Province Polonais des Etats-Unis, visites canoniques.
64. Frederick Maune to François Verdier, 30 October 1923, AGC, Etats-Unis Orientaux, visites canoniques.
65. Maune to Verdier, 9 February 1928, AGC, Etats-Unis Orientaux, visites canoniques.
66. Vautier to Verdier, 3 June 1922, GCUSA, series B, roll 4, item 275.
67. Souvay to Verdier, 29 January 1922, AGC, Etats-Unis Occidentaux, maison Kenrick.
68. Vautier to Verdier, 29 January 1925, GCUSA, series B, roll 4, item 283. Vautier feared that the superior general had not received this letter, and so he wrote again in April. He made the same claim with the addition: “The personnel of the missions is obviously insufficient” (same to same, 14 April 1925, ibid, item 284).
69. William Barr to McHale, 17 May 1926, AGC, Etats-Unis Occidentaux.
70. Timothy Flavin to Souvay, 16 March 1934, AGC, Etats-Unis Occidentaux.
71. Flavin to Souvay, 21 May 1934, AGC, Etats-Unis Occidentaux.
72. Minutes of the Provincial Council, 8 April 1943, Saint Louis provincialate.