Beginning with the original contract establishing the Community, 17 April 1625, Vincentians have worked in parishes. At first they merely assisted diocesan pastors, but with the foundation at Toul in 1635, the first outside of Paris, they assumed local pastorates. Saint Vincent himself had been the pastor of Clichy-la-Garenne near Paris (1612-1625), and briefly (1617) of Buenans and Chatillon-les-Dombes in the diocese of Lyons. Later, as superior general, he accepted eight parish foundations for his community. He did so with some misgiving, however, fearing the abandonment of the country poor. A letter of 1653 presents at least part of his outlook:

...parishes are not our affair. We have very few, as you know, and those that we have have been given to us against our will, or by our founders or by their lordships the bishops, whom we cannot refuse in order not to be on bad terms with them, and perhaps the one in Brial is the last that we will ever accept, because the further along we go, the more we find ourselves embarrassed by such matters.¹

In the same spirit, the early assemblies of the Community insisted that parishes formed an exception to its usual works. The assembly of 1724 states what other Vincentian documents often said:

Parishes should not ordinarily be accepted, but they may be accepted on the rare occasions when the superior general ... [and] his consultants judge it expedient in the Lord.²
Beginnings to 1830

The founding document of the Community’s mission in the United States signed by Bishop Louis Dubourg, Fathers Domenico Sicardi and Felix De Andreis, spells out their attitude toward parishes in the new world, an attitude differing in some respects from that of the 1724 assembly. The principal purpose of the American mission was “to found a seminary as soon as possible.” In addition, parishes would be founded, but the personnel in those parishes “can, and ought mutually to assist each other, and should unite their efforts, as necessity may require, or according to the suggestions of the superior, in giving retreats, missions, etc.” The signers further determined that when enough priests had been prepared by the confreres in their seminary, the missionaries dispersed in the parishes would withdraw from them and restrict themselves to the usual functions of the Community, especially parish missions.

In 1816, upon their arrival at Saint Thomas near Bardstown, Kentucky, De Andreis and his companions began to help in the local church as their knowledge of English allowed. In this work they gave missions, encountered local Indians, preached, and catechized the area. In April and May of 1817 Rosati in company with the Sulpician Guy Ignatius Chabrat went as far as Vincennes to give missions to French-speaking Catholics. The confreres returned as pastors to Saint Thomas for three years, 1842-1845, in an ill-fated attempt to staff the old seminary.

Beginnings: Missouri, Illinois, Arkansas

The first group of confreres entered what was then the Territory of Missouri in October 1817 to prepare for Bishop Dubourg’s arrival. De Andreis and Brother Martin Blanka remained for a couple of months in Sainte Genevieve, the village nearest the Barrens. Their stay made this parish, which the Community would staff again, in one sense the first Vincentian parish in the United States. Early in 1818 De Andreis moved to Saint Louis with Dubourg and made his home at the rickety church grandly styled a cathedral. De Andreis established the first novitiate of the Community there 3 December 1818, once the candidates had
completed their move from Kentucky to Missouri, and the confreres continued to live at the cathedral through the episcopacy of Dubourg's successor, Joseph Rosati, until about 1836. De Andreis himself continued to work in Saint Louis until his death, 15 October 1820. He took a special interest in local Indians, and occasionally taught in the Saint Louis College, begun by Dubourg in the fall of 1818. In addition, Father Charles Acquaroni visited the parishes of Saint Charles and Dardenne (Saint Peter) in that first year, 1818, and continued as the first resident pastor at Portage des Sioux (Saint Francis) from 1818 to 1822, works he undertook on his own, to De Andreis's consternation. As foreseen in the original contract, the need for clergy was so great that the first novices, even though they had not completed their required one-year novitiate, also left Saint Louis. Fathers Andrew Ferrari (in July 1819) and Francis Dahmen (in February 1820 and again in the summer of 1821) went to Vincennes, Indiana, and remained there, ministering to scattered communities and building log chapels until 6 November 1821. Father Joseph Tichitoli, the first confrere ordained a priest in the United States, moved to Donaldsonville, Louisiana beginning in mid-1819 to regain his health.

Saint Mary's of the Barrens, the oldest continuing house of the Community in the United States, began as the missionaries went there at the invitation of the people to minister in their parish and to found a seminary. As early as August 1806, the Catholics at the Barrens Settlement (also called Bois Brulé or Tucker's Settlement, and Perryville after 1831) had written to Father Stephen Badin asking for a pastor and promising to furnish 200 acres for his support. He was unable to assist them at the time, but these English Catholics from Maryland continued to seek spiritual help. Father Joseph Mary Dunand, a Trappist and missionary, ministered to them occasionally, and repeatedly urged them to contact Bishop Dubourg with their offer of land, this time for a seminary in return for clergy to live in their midst. The pioneers finished their church under the title of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in 1813 and received in turn two temporary pastors of the diocesan clergy, Charles de la Croix and Secundo Valezano, shortly before the expected arrival of the Vincentians. The confreres often expressed edification at the strong faith of their people, who were known to kneel in the muddy roads whenever a priest passed and to ask his blessing. They also hoped soon to shore up and enlarge the poorly made church, "a sort of cabin or hut made out of tree trunks tied
together alternatively,” according to the description relayed by the Vincentian vicar general Antonio Baccari in 1823. By 1827 the present church began, built on the model of the chapel within the provincial house on Monte Citorio in Rome, and Bishop Rosati consecrated it 29 October 1837, the first non-cathedral west of the Mississippi to be so honored. The pastors of the Barrens were also the superiors of the Community in the earliest days, namely Fathers Rosati, John Baptist Tornatore, and John Timon.

From the Barrens the confreres fanned out to evangelize and visit the Catholics, many of whom had not seen a priest for decades. They first visited and gave a parish mission in Saint John the Baptist in New Madrid, Missouri. From 1821 to 1832, and 1836-1837 the confreres continued to minister there, and in 1846 or 1847 briefly located there Father Louis ScafI, a former missionary in Turkey and Persia. Sainte Genevieve (1822-1849) itself became a major Vincentian center with many of the parishes in Southeast Missouri founded and visited from it. Saint Michael in Frederick-town (1827-1842) began as a mission of Sainte Genevieve, its first pastor being Anthony Potini; older records refer to its original location at Mine la Motte.

The parish of Saint Joachim at Old Mines, Missouri, (1821-1841) became, like Sainte Genevieve, a center of Vincentian activity. Several parishes and their own missions received regular visits from Old Mines: Saint Stephen in Richwoods; Saint James, Potosi; Saint John the Baptist, Vallee's Mines; Saint Gregory, Grande Riviere; Meramac and Bourbeuse. The first pastor of Old Mines, appointed 25 July 1828, was John Boullier, who used his inheritance to build the church and rectory. John Timon founded Saint James in Mine-a-Breton now forming a single town with Potosi, and confreres served there from 1825 to 1832. It became a parish in 1829, with Boullier as its first official pastor. Timon agreed with Rosati to give Old Mines to the diocese in keeping with the Community's general policy of stationing at least three men in one parish—an unrealistic expectation at Old Mines.

Missouri missions either founded or visited by the Vincentians from Sainte Genevieve were Saint Matthew (later called Saint Philomena, now Saint Agnes) at Establishment Creek (Bloomsdale) about 1837; Saint Joseph, Zell (earlier Nouvelle Alsace, or Establishment,) from about 1837, with a Vincentian pastor 1845-1848; Saint Anne at Petit Canada (French Village), from about 1828; Saint Philomena (later Saint Anthony and now Saints Philip and
James), at Riviere aux Vases, 1842-1848; and other small mission stations at Valle's Mines and New Bourbon. Priests from the Barrens visited Kaskaskia and Chester, Illinois as early as 1824, and afterwards as needed. After Vincentian withdrawal from Sainte Genevieve, the title to the property remained in Vincentian hands through some oversight. It passed from John Timon to the oldest bishop of Timon's ecclesiastical province, John Loughlin of Brooklyn. In the 1890s Archbishop John Kain of Saint Louis spent both time and money verifying that the true title belonged to his archdiocese.

In addition to these Missouri towns, Vincentians helped out in Illinois. Bishop Rosati had intended to send his confères north to evangelize the Indians around Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, but Bishop Dubourg's incessant calls for men for Louisiana precluded this. Rosati, however, continued to send confères to help in Illinois, which, until 1834, formed part of his diocese. From 1834, when the diocese of Vincennes was established, he cared for the western half of the state, a burden that fell to the new diocese of Chicago in 1843. In the earliest period, Illinois had at most two or three resident priests. The easiest land route between the Barrens and Saint Louis ran through Illinois, so the bishop urged his men on their trips to Saint Louis to visit the scattered congregations. Settlements such as O'Hara (O'Harasburg, now Ruma), Harrisonville, English Settlement (Prairie du Long, now Hecker), Beardstown, Jacksonville, and Shelbyville were sites of Vincentian visits. The priests offered more regular help in Saint Anne at Fort de Chartres and Saint Joseph in Prairie du Rocher, parishes at that time already more than one hundred years old, and in Kaskaskia, the oldest in the state.

The territory of Arkansas also fell within the borders of Rosati's diocese, and he occasionally sent his confères on missionary visits there through 1830. These included a well documented trip made by Father John Mary Odin and the student John Timon in the fall of 1824. After a mission in New Madrid, they continued on to visit the settlers as well as the Indians forcibly moved there by the federal government. Aside from a visit by Fathers John Brands and Francis Simonin to the Osages of Missouri in 1837, lack of resources prevented further trips to Arkansas, or any meaningful outreach to Native Americans by the confères until the next century.
Lower Louisiana, and New Orleans in particular, had a reputation for laxity in religion, and moved one discouraged confrere to write, "this city, this sewer of all vice and refuge of all that is worst on earth." Yet it too, quickly became a center of Vincentian mission activity, as Dubourg had originally planned. In addition to the help that Tichitoli was offering in Donaldsonville, confreres soon came at the bishop's invitation to Thibodaux (1822-1826), Opelousas (1824-1833), and to Donaldsonville once again (1827). The foundation at Saint Charles in Grand Coteau, 1822, was accompanied by an offer of property for a college. The widowed Mrs. Charles Smith deeded her land, slaves and personal property to Father Francis Cellini for that purpose. In view of Cellini's domination over her affairs, Dubourg became entangled in negotiations about the ownership of the property, and Mrs. Smith rescinded her gift. With threats on his life, Cellini soon left, but other confreres remained there until the arrival of the Jesuits in 1837.

Two men in poor health, Philip Borgna and Bernard Permoli, were stationed at the cathedral of New Orleans until about 1834. Andrew Ferrari, a member of De Andreis's original band of novices, joined Borgna and Permoli in October 1821, in hopes of bettering his health weakened up to then in Vincennes. His zeal for the sick exposed him to yellow fever. He became infected and died 2 November 1822, the second to die on the American mission. In the pre-Civil War years, several other young confreres, particularly Bishop Leon DeNeckere, C.M., joined Ferrari in death from yellow fever while at work in Louisiana and Texas.

Father Antonio Baccari, the Italian vicar general, believed it necessary to justify parish work by American Vincentians in his official circular letter of 1822 by appealing to a request from the bishop:

Because of the small number of parish priests, his excellency is forced to send our confreres to different places to take care of the parishes.... The works of our confreres are excessive and with the support of the Lord all those young Missionaries are performing miracles of zeal."

This justification could not preclude the loss of some of these confreres to the Community, once they had to live apart from it.
1830 to the Division of the Province, 1888

The year 1830 signaled a change in the operation of the Vincentian mission. Father Dominique Salhorgne, the superior general, appointed a replacement for Bishop Rosati, who had succeeded De Andreis as superior on the latter's death in 1820. One of four Vincentian members from the same family, John Baptist Tornatore was, according to Salhorgne's letter, to take care that the missionaries, even those dispersed in parishes, should follow all the rules of the Community, be able to make their retreats annually at the Barrens, and do all their works as best they could in community.

The period 1830 to 1888 marked an era of expansion in the United States Vincentian mission. Many vocations came to the Community, chiefly from Europe, and as a result, more priests and brothers became available to staff the parishes that developed in view of rapidly increasing immigration. The missionaries had so many parishes that Father John Timon, the first provincial, wanted to restrict them in favor of seminaries. Father Jean-Baptiste Nozo, the superior general, urged Timon to do so only after mature reflection, since a province having seminaries alone might excessively restrict the talents of some confreres.

Western Foundations

The first major foundation after the Barrens, and thus the second canonical house in America, was Saint Vincent de Paul in Cape Girardeau, beginning in 1836. Some time before, in 1832, John Timon had celebrated the first mass in the town secretly for fear of Protestant bigotry. Missionaries from the Barrens then visited the entire region occasionally, but by 1836 enough Catholics had moved there from the Barrens and elsewhere to warrant having a resident pastor. The first was John Mary Odin, but John Boullier followed by John Brands in 1838 assumed the pastorate and oversaw the parish's early development. The parishioners soon built a church and opened a school for boys (1838), as well as an academy for girls run by the Sisters of Loretto. These sisters previously lived at the Bethlehem Convent close to the seminary at the Barrens. From 1838 to the mid 1840s at least, the missionaries
moved out from Cape Girardeau visiting Tywappity Bottom (Saint Francis de Sales, Texas Bend), where they had a farm, along with Commerce and Saint Henry in Charleston in 1839. Saint Lawrence in nearby Jackson received visits from the Barrens and then from Cape Girardeau Vincentians until 1880. The parish of Saint Mary in Benton, now Saint Denis, began in 1840 and continued in Vincentian hands until 1846, when it was relocated to New Hamburg. Vincentians helped there occasionally.

With the outbreak of the Civil War the college at Cape Girardeau declined in enrollment since the town lay on the southern border of the Union. As early as 1858 newly arrived Germans requested of Archbishop Peter Richard Kenrick of Saint Louis a church for themselves in Cape Girardeau. German-born Father Aloysius Meyer then helped to organize Saint Mary’s parish in 1868. It received a diocesan pastor almost immediately afterward. Meyer, nominated in 1881 as bishop of Galveston (an office he declined), left Cape Girardeau to direct Saint Vincent’s College in Los Angeles and Kenrick Seminary in Saint Louis. The original Saint Vincent’s Church in Cape Girardeau, destroyed by a tornado in 1850, was rebuilt and dedicated by 1853. It served Cape Catholics until 1961. By that time the city had grown, parishioners lived elsewhere, and the old church was too near Saint Mary’s Church. As a result the parish decided to build a new church bearing the traditional name of Saint Vincent. After its completion in 1976, the Midwest Province gave the Old Saint Vincent’s, attached to nearby Saint Mary’s in 1977, to the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau.

A further foundation made from Cape Girardeau was Saint Athanasius, (now Saint Patrick), Cairo, Illinois. By 1838 enough Catholics lived there to support a parish and Rosati asked the Vincentians to found a parish, since they had already visited the region occasionally. Michael Collins was its first pastor, but made his home in Cape Girardeau. He remained as pastor until 1842 when the people virtually abandoned the town owing to poor economic conditions. The Cape Girardeau Vincentians, however, continued ministrations in and around Cairo and nearby Thebes until after the Civil War. A final foundation was Chaffee, Missouri, where Archbishop John Glennon asked the Vincentians to send a resident pastor. Father Francis Feely organized Saint Ambrose parish in 1907, and celebrated the first mass there on New Year’s Day, 1908. Vincentians helped until the archbishop appointed a diocesan pastor the same year.
The next major foundation in the West after Cape Girardeau took place at La Salle, Illinois, beginning in 1838. Thomas Shaw, C.M., chronicled its early history in *Story of the LaSalle Mission*, published in 1907. Many Irish Catholics as well as Germans and Canadians had requested Bishop Rosati of Saint Louis, in whose diocese La Salle lay, to send missionaries to them. Rosati in turn sent John Timon to review the situation, and afterwards asked the Community to send men to help these “canallers” and railroad workers. The first pastor was the Italian John Blaise Raho, appointed the first superior the following year. A major early achievement was his foundation of the Confraternity of Charity after the model proposed by Saint Vincent—an event virtually unique in American Vincentian parishes. The priests of the La Salle mission worked heroically amid privations and suffering from harsh weather to evangelize and establish the church scattered over more than eighteen thousand square miles in central Illinois. A simple chronological listing of the parishes or mission stations that they visited (some of them private homes or rented rooms) will have to suffice to illustrate the scope of their work. This list is probably incomplete, yet it demonstrates the pastoral concern of the La Salle missionaries, exercised until diocesan clergy could assume the parishes.

Lacon (Immaculate Conception, 1838-1846, and its mission, Crow Meadows)
Saint Augustine (Saint Augustine, 1838-1843)
Marseilles (Saint Lazarus, later Saint Joseph, 1838-1841)
Nauvoo (1838-?)
Lincoln (Saint Patrick, 1838-1840)
Meredosia (1838)
Centerville (1838)
Virginia (Annunciation, 1838-about 1842)
Beardstown (Saint Alexius, 1838-1842?)
Utica (Saint Mary, 1839-1846)
Kickapoo (Saint Patrick, 1839-1845)
Peoria (Saint Philomena, 1839-1845)
Ottawa (Holy Trinity, later Saint Columba, 1839-1844)
Black Partridge (Saint Raphael, now Lourdes, Saint Mary, 1839-1845)
Peru (Saint Joseph, 1839-1859)
Troy Grove (Peterstown, Saints Peter and Paul, 1839-1846)
Jacksonville (Our Saviour, 1839-1842?)
La Salle Prairie (Mooney Settlement, 1839-1845)
Pekin (Saint Stephen, 1839-1844)
Pleasant Grove (1839)
Shelbyville (1839?)
Rock River (1839-?)
Rockford (1839-?)
Freeport (1839-?)
Oregon City (Saint Mary, 1840-1860)
Palestine Grove (about 1840)
Wyoming (about 1841)
Dayton (1841-1842?)
Hennepin (Saint Patrick, 1842-1846)
Fountain Green (Saint Simon, about 1843)
Walnut Creek (about 1843)
Knoxville (about 1843)
Canton (Saint Mary, about 1843)
Bureau (about 1843)
Arlington (Saint Patrick, 1843?-1848)
Sandy Hill (Saint Michael, 1846-1854)
Dixon (visited 1839; Saint Patrick, 1846-1854)
Eagletown (Big Vermillion, Vermillionville, or Lostlands, Annunciation, 1849 to 1856)
Henry (visited 1839; Saint Mary, 1850-1851)
Amboy (Saint Patrick, 1853)
Bloomington (visited 1839; Holy Trinity, 1853)
Leonore (Saints Peter and Paul, 1853)
Perkins Grove (1854-1856?)
Sheffield (Saint Patrick, 1854-1856)
Clinton (Saint John, 1854)
Mendota (Holy Cross, 1855-1856)
Princeton (Saint Louis, 1856)
Tiskilwa (Saint Mary, 1865)

La Salle's Church of the Holy Cross, later called Saint Patrick, therefore became the center of a strong Catholic community in central Illinois, and gave many confreres and Daughters of Charity (at La Salle from 1854) to the Double Family of Saint Vincent. The present church was opened 1 June 1851. Christian Brothers taught
in the boys school 1862-1876. The Community gave the parish of Saint Patrick to the diocese of Peoria in 1982 after a period of some friction involving the bishop, the Vincentians, and the people of Saint Hyacinth parish, which the bishop had joined to Saint Patrick in 1980.

It appeared for a while that the mission of Saint John the Baptist in Springfield, Illinois would rival Saint Patrick's in its missionary outreach. Bishop Kenrick of Saint Louis asked Timon to send a pastor to this thousand square mile region, which the confreres from La Salle had already visited. Father Bartholomew Rollando arrived there in July of 1842. He visited several missions, more than fifteen according to his count, in the period 1842 to the beginning of 1844, when the diocesan clergy of the newly established diocese of Chicago assumed direction of the parish.

**Growth in Louisiana**

The mission in Louisiana continued to flourish in this early period of the nineteenth century. The two parishes of the Ascension in Donaldsonville and Assumption in Lafourche (now Plattenville), on the Bayou Lafourche, both began in 1838. Vincentians served the Donaldsonville parish, established in 1772, from 1838 until its 100th anniversary (1872), when, because of a lack of personnel, the province gave it and its mission, Saint Anne, to the care of the archdiocese of New Orleans. In addition, the Donaldsonville priests at various periods helped at New River, Cornerview (Sacred Heart, and Nativity chapel), French Settlement (Saint Vincent Ferrer, later Saint Joseph,) and visited private homes on surrounding plantations where they also instructed and baptized the slaves. Pastors were able to secure the help of the Mother Seton Sisters of Charity in the parish beginning in 1845, where the Daughters continue to work.

At Lafourche, near the parish church of the Assumption, the Community began its second seminary, also in 1838. Joseph Tichitoli had served in the Assumption parish in the early 1820s, and Bishop Dubourg had been planning for a seminary there even before the death of De Andreis in 1820. These initial attempts opened the way for Vincentian service in the following decade. Besides staffing the seminary, the parish confreres oversaw a
parochial school, and served as pastors for, or occasionally visited, many stations in their area: Bayou Sara (Our Lady of Mount Carmel), Belle Riviere (Sacred Heart), Canal (Immaculate Conception), Feliciana (Saint Francisville, now Our Lady of Mount Carmel), Pierre Part (Saint Joseph), Point Coupee (Saint Francis), and Saint Bernard (1836-1845). In the same period the Community served temporarily in New Iberia (Saint Peter, 1839) and Edgard (Saint John the Baptist, 1846-1847). The longest lasting of the missions from Lafourche was Saint Elizabeth at Paincourtville, just across the bayou. Father Anthony Andrieu founded that parish in 1839. The Community left in 1857, after rebuilding the church destroyed by a storm in March 1854. With the accidental burning of the seminary in 1855, many of the activities at Lafourche ceased and the Community left permanently in 1857. Both Paincourtville and Lafourche were given up to provide enough confreres to staff Saint Joseph in New Orleans.

Because of a shortage of diocesan clergy Father Timon agreed to supply Vincentians for the parish of Saint Francis at Natchitoches, a town of nearly 2000 persons. In addition, he judged that this parish would offer a vast field for both Spanish- and French-speaking Vincentians, and would be the key to Texas, shortly to be assigned to the Community by the Holy See. As a result Joachim Alabau, a Spanish Vincentian, assumed the pastorate. Alabau's successor, Joseph Giustiniani, also visited occasionally the scattered Catholic communities in Nacogdoches and along the Neches and Sabine rivers in Texas before they developed into true parishes. Confreres remained in Natchitoches from 1840 to 1850, and attended several nearby stations (mainly Campti, Ile Brevelle, Cloutierville, occasionally the old mission of San Miguel de Los Adayes, as well as Canal, Bayou Pierre, Bayou Scie, eventually locations in the newly established civil parishes of Caddo, Claiborne and Sabine, and probably others on the northern border of the state). Joseph Giustiniani served as pastor of Saint Francis (now Saint Francis Xavier Cathedral) in Alexandria, Louisiana. The Community gave up both Natchitoches and Alexandria since few Vincentians were available at the time.

With the withdrawal of the Vincentians from other Louisiana parishes, Bishop Anthony Blanc asked for confreres to found the parish of Saint Stephen in New Orleans. In 1849, Father Hippolyte Gandolfo moved from Sainte Genevieve, Missouri, and in that year
began the parish in a new part of the city of New Orleans. Because of Saint Stephen's convenient location, the students from the Bayou Lafourche seminary, recently burned to the ground, transferred to Saint Stephen's in 1858. The present church building, where the Community continues to serve, began during the pastorate of Anthony Verrina in 1868. His reputation was for a time memorialized in the parish's Verrina High School, run by the Brothers of Mary from 1914 to 1925. The Daughters of Charity also work in this parish. Christian Brothers, too, taught in Saint Vincent's Academy, 1860-1875, leaving in the disastrous Reconstruction period. To accommodate German-speaking Catholics living nearby, Father Aloysius Meyer organized a congregation and built Saint Henry's Church in 1856. The Community withdrew in 1871, giving its care to the Redemptorists. Since Saint Henry's lay quite close to Saint Stephen's Church, the confreres later felt compelled to protest its erection into a territorial parish. "Chapelle de la Famille" (Family Chapel), a small chapel for blacks located two blocks from Saint Stephen's, also briefly received help from the confreres of that parish (1873-1875).

The second major parish in New Orleans, Saint Joseph, began under diocesan clergy in 1844. It came to the Vincentians 11 December 1858 at the request of the archbishop, who was anxious to provide help to the Daughters at Charity Hospital. Its first pastor, John Hayden, had just returned from Paris as English language secretary to the superior general. Hayden would serve as provincial from 1868 until his unexpected death in Cape Girardeau in 1872. The great yellow fever epidemic of 1878 claimed the lives of three confreres and seven Daughters who had spent themselves ministering to the sick in New Orleans. As at Saint Stephen's, Christian Brothers taught from 1859 to 1900 in the parish school, a source of many Vincentian vocations. Vincentians at Saint Joseph's continue as hospital chaplains. The present enormous building was regarded as the largest Catholic church in the South.

**Mississippi**

Bishop Dubourg had once decided to offer the confreres the Indian missions in Mississippi, while restricting those in Missouri to
the Jesuits. For reasons that are unclear, this Mississippi Indian mission never took place. In 1841, the state became a diocese, and John Joseph Chanche, a French Sulpician, became bishop of Natchez. Father Blaise Raho, who had run afoul of Archbishop Kenrick of Saint Louis and consequently had to leave his diocese, offered his services to Chanche in the summer of 1847. The bishop appointed Raho his vicar general the following spring, and he administered the diocese during Chanche's yearlong absence in Europe. He remained there at least until the bishop's death in 1852, and later accompanied Bishop Thaddeus Amat, C.M., to California. Apart from Raho's personal effort, the confreres had no parishes in Mississippi until the foundation of Saint Thomas in Long Beach.

*Developments in Missouri*

Vincentians served at the cathedral in Saint Louis until the end of Bishop Rosati's period, but the first canonical house of the Community founded in the city was Saint Vincent de Paul Church, begun in 1844. It sought to serve the needs of the city's rapidly growing south side. The architect for the church was Meriwether Lewis Clark, son of William Clark who explored the Missouri River with Meriwether Lewis. Bishop Kenrick, Rosati's successor, moved the diocesan seminary to the rectory adjoining the church, and it continued in those quarters until 1848. In 1862, the provincial moved the central house of the American province from Perryville to Saint Louis, (the novitiate and scholasticate of the Community moving with it). This combined operation used the facilities of the former diocesan seminary, and remained there until after the Civil War in 1868. The first group of the Ladies of Charity in the United States originated at Saint Vincent's parish under the leadership of Father Urban Gagnepain, 8 December 1857. Schools for boys and girls began in 1844. Christian Brothers taught in the boys school from 1851 to 1912, continuing a relationship between the two communities begun in 1818. Three brothers had come with DuBourg's band that year, lived at the Barrens, and briefly took on a parish school in Sainte Genevieve, 1819-1822. Irish-German conflicts, traditional in Saint Louis, led the community to attempt to station a German speaking confrere at the parish regularly, and
the Christian Brothers did likewise. By 1891, the parish had two priests for the Germans and two schools in which both German and English were taught. The parish, with many changes in prosperity and numbers of parishioners, continues to the present. In addition to their other work, for the period 1960 to 1968 the pastors of Saint Vincent served as the administrators of the nearby Saint Raymond Church for Lebanese Catholics of the Maronite rite.

Saint Vincent's in Saint Louis had no missions, but confreres from Saint Louis served in Cahokia, Illinois, just across the Mississippi. Father Peter Doutreluingne was pastor at Holy Family from December 1830 to 1836, and again from 1857 to 1871. By 1835 he was visiting Belleville and Saint Thomas in Millstadt, as well as French Village. He helped build Saint Philip in this last settlement (near East Saint Louis), and he also founded Immaculate Conception in Centreville, a neighboring community. Vincentian pastors ministered there from its founding in 1858 to 1878.

Though the province founded no houses near Perryville in this period, 1830-1888, several new missions began or at least received help from the Barrens. The oldest, Saint Joseph at Apple Creek, near the large Shawnee Indian village where the confreres hoped to work, dates from the 1820s. The church began in a large hog pen, cleaned out by the confreres. They alternated with a few diocesan pastors until 1857. Another was the little settlement of New Tennessee, now Saint Catherine of Alexandria in Coffman. Meeting first in a private home, the local Catholics built a small chapel used until 1919. A few of these missions have completely disappeared: Baily's Landing, Brazeau, Brown's Settlement, Pratte's Landing, and Saint Vitalis at Vitale's Landing, visited at least through the 1830s and '40s. Most of these were private homes or other buildings, visited monthly at most by the confreres. Old records and a map of 1849 mention two more, also no longer extant: Saint Peter's at the home of Aquila Hagan near Brewer, and Saint Robert's on the Robert Manning property near Highland. Vincentians visited the congregation of Saint Maurus in Biehle from the 1850s to the 1870s. Saint Mary's, at Saint Mary's Landing (many believe it was so named because this little settlement was the most convenient northerly river port for the Perryville seminary, but the name antedates the seminary) began under Vincentian pastors in 1854, and continued there until 1871.

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The parish of Saint Boniface in Perryville, established for German Catholics in the town by Aloysius Meyer, began in 1856, but for many years had diocesan pastors. Vincentians resumed the pastorate in May 1947, with the expectation that there would ultimately be a single parish in Perryville. This took place in 1963 with the building of the new Saint Vincent's parish, combining the congregations at the seminary church (Assumption) and at Saint Boniface. The confreres of the parish also care for Saint Vincent High School. Another mission was Saint James at Crosstown beginning in the Civil War period and continuing to the present. The church there was built in 1884 and restored after a fire in 1926. Vincentians also served at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in the village of Claryville (or West Chester) beginning in 1873 until 1883. Mississippi River floods later destroyed much of the area, and regular services were discontinued in 1963. Lastly, Holy Innocents in Silver Lake (now Saint Rose of Lima) received the services of the Barrens from its beginnings in 1865 to 1885 and again from 1947 to the present.

The Texas Mission

Father Ralph Bayard in his *Lone-Star Vanguard, The Catholic Re-Occupation of Texas (1838-1848)* has ably and in great detail described the Vincentian mission first in the Republic (1836-1845) and then the State of Texas. Bishop Anthony Blanc of New Orleans received the original request from the Holy See, and he passed it on to the Community. Bayard next relates how the missionaries under the leadership of Timon, the first priest from the United States to enter Texas, began the mission there, and saw it raised to a prefecture and then vicariate under Father (later Bishop) Odin. Life on the frontier was precarious, and the missionaries suffered greatly from lack of food and water, bad roads, and marauding Comanches. Odin, in fact, reported soon after his arrival that he killed an Indian in self-defense. The confreres, including Brother Raymond Sala, engaged primarily in evangelization, adapting themselves to increasing numbers of immigrants, particularly Germans. At the same time, they gradually established several parishes: Galveston, eventually the see city (1847) of the largest territorial diocese in the world; Saint Vincent de Paul
Chapel in Houston, built in 1842 and served by Father (later Archbishop) John Lynch (at least 1847-1848); San Fernando at San Antonio, beginning in 1840; and Saint Mary in Victoria, 1840-1847, these last two now cathedrals of their respective dioceses. Several of the old Spanish missions near San Antonio were also served by the clergy of San Fernando parish. One confrere served Saint Elizabeth's parish in 1845 assisted by Anthony Andrieu, who ran a tiny diocesan seminary. In Lavaca and Brushy (now Yoakum,) Timon and Odin encountered several of their parishioners who had moved from the Barrens beginning about 1833. They were busy constructing a wooden church under the protection of Mary, in memory of their Missouri parish. Odin regretted his inability to station confreres there, however, but they visited there as occasions arose. One of them, Father Eudaldo Estany, a Catalan like most of the other confreres from Spain in the United States at that period, had accompanied Odin to Texas, and made lengthy mission rounds to visit both the Spanish-speaking Tejanos and the Indians then in Texas. Owing to the small number of Vincentian personnel, as well as disagreements between the provincial, Father Mariano Maller, and Bishop Odin, the Community withdrew from the Texas mission in the 1850s. The principal source of friction seems to have been Odin's invitation to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate to come to Texas to found a seminary. When the superior general confirmed the departure of the confreres, Odin was both surprised and upset since he believed that he had been acting in the best interests of his diocese. Vincentians re-entered the state of Texas in 1902 as hospital chaplains, and in 1905 as educators, with the foundation of Holy Trinity Church and College in Dallas.

Eastern Foundations

The movement east started with the invitation from Bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick to the confreres to staff his seminary of Saint Charles in Philadelphia, beginning in 1841. The seminary professors there also staffed several missions in Pennsylvania. Saint Mary in Ivy Mills, originally a vacation retreat for the seminarians, began in 1842 and continued to about 1856. The Community supplied pastors to visit the congregation that met in the Willcox family home there. An extensive correspondence between the
confreres and the family attests to their good personal relationships. They also cared for Hamilton Village (West Philadelphia), Kellyville, Concord, Chester, and in particular, Nicetown, at the time a suburb of Philadelphia. They also visited the New Jersey congregations of Burlington, Camden, Pleasant Mills, Port Elizabeth and Salem as time allowed.

The pastor of Saint Stephen in Nicetown, Michael Domenec, had taught at Saint Charles Seminary from 1841. Bishop Kenrick asked him to take over a new development, nearby Germantown. Despite bitter opposition from the Know-Nothing party, the confreres began Saint Vincent, Price Street, in 1849, and the church opened in 1851 (the date used for its official founding.) In 1860, the year after the church building was completed, Domenec became bishop of Pittsburgh (later Allegheny), an act which, in the mind of the Community at the time, made him no longer a Vincentian. Domenec sought to protect his personal position and to secure a home for himself in his old age, and so took the charter of incorporation and the trustee book of the parish with him to Pittsburgh. Friendly persuasion triumphed, and this brief tempest ceased in a couple of years. This active parish boasted of schools, parish hall, athletics and many public service organizations. Here too, Christian Brothers taught in the parish school, 1896-1927. In addition, many vocations to the Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity, as well as the brothers, came from the parish and its schools. The Community continues to serve Saint Vincent, its oldest foundation in Philadelphia.

Although the confreres withdrew both from Nicetown and the Philadelphia seminary in 1853, the importance of Germantown continues, since Saint Vincent's Seminary is the central house of the Eastern Province of the United States and for many years functioned as the Community's seminary for the entire United States. The other Vincentian-staffed churches in Germantown are Immaculate Conception (begun in 1875 in the seminary chapel and divided from Saint Vincent's in 1901), and Our Lady of the Rosary for Italian-speaking Catholics. "The Immaculate" attained independent parish status in 1910, and its present large church dates from 1930. Our Lady of the Rosary began officially in 1915, although services for Italian Catholics in the neighborhood dated from 1902. Since the number of parishioners, now no longer Italians, kept declining and its school had closed, a provincial assembly recommended that it be suppressed, and the archdiocese did so in 1973.
(Saint Catherine of Siena in Germantown, a parish for blacks, is treated below.)

Shortly after the founding of the house in Germantown, the Community reached out into neighboring Maryland. Archbishop Samuel Eccleston asked for confreres to found a parish in the northern part of Baltimore, and Mariano Maller, the provincial, agreed when the confreres withdrew from the Texas mission. In agreeing to come, the Community was returning to the site of its landfall in the United States under Felix De Andreis in 1816. Father Marc Anthony, the founding pastor, began the parish of the Immaculate Conception in a small church. A second and larger began in 1854 under its first pastor, Joseph De Marchi, and was completed in 1857. Generous contributions from the estates of its second pastor, Joseph Giustiniani, a confrere from a noble Italian family, financed its construction. Immaculate Conception enjoyed the reputation as one of the most beautiful churches in the United States at its time, and was probably the first parish under that title in the nation. Two parish schools, for boys and girls, dated from 1863, were combined in 1907, and eventually ceased operation in 1945. Christian Brothers staffed the boys school from 1869 to 1907. The present smaller church building dates from 1972 replacing the earlier one. William Slattery, the future superior general, came from this parish.

At the time of the union between the Sisters of Charity founded by Mother Seton and the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, a Vincentian became their director. In 1852 Eccleston asked the Community to take Saint Joseph's Church in Emmitsburg to enable the director to remain near the motherhouse of the sisters. Maller, the first pastor, had moved to a small house, dubbed Little Saint Lazare, on Toll Gate Hill outside of town on Christmas Eve, 1849. The confreres continue to serve in both of these Maryland parishes.

After the founding of the Seminary of Our Lady of the Angels at Niagara Falls, New York, Bishop Timon occasionally entrusted local parishes to the confreres until diocesan clergy assumed them. Old records list the following: Lewiston, Saint Peter (1858-1862); Youngstown, Saint Bernard (1858-1862); Niagara Falls, Saint Mary of the Cataract (1859-1862); Niagara Falls, Sacred Heart, (1859-1869); Suspension Bridge, Saint William (later Saint Raphael), (1859-1871?). The confreres of the seminary and college have continued to help out regularly at these and other parishes as needed.
Thaddeus Armat, formerly the rector of Saint Charles Seminary in Philadelphia, became the bishop of Monterey, California, in 1854. In 1863 he asked for his Vincentian confreres to help the Daughters of Charity and also to open a minor seminary. Father John Blaise Raho had already been pastor of the only church in Los Angeles, Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles, (1856-1862), and Armat's vicar-general. Three confreres in poor health, John Asmuth (the superior), Michael Rubi and John Beakey, set out on the long sea journey to the west coast, but on their arrival they differed with Bishop Amat's ideas about their work and refused to continue. They also reported to their provincial, Father Stephen Vincent Ryan, that Los Angeles held little promise, and he suggested they go north toward more populous areas, accessible by rail. When Rubi informed Bishop Eugene O'Connell, vicar-apostolic of Marysville, California, of their availability, the bishop offered them Carson City, Nevada, together with its missions of Empire, Washoe and Ophir. Rubi and Beakey accepted the challenge and worked there from 20 August 1864 to mid-1865. They built a primitive combined church and rectory, and even opened a small school. O'Connell then considered offering them Virginia City with the possibility of opening a school, but unspecified difficulties between Rubi and the bishop caused them to leave after less than a year, and to return to Amat's diocese.

Although the plans for Amat's minor seminary failed, the confreres opened Saint Vincent's College near the town's only church. Their move to a new location in 1887 enabled them to begin Saint Vincent de Paul parish, where they celebrated the inaugural mass on the anniversary of the Community's foundation, 25 January 1887. Owing to misunderstandings with Bishop Francis Mora, a one-time Vincentian novice, about the status of the college chapel, the provincial council had actually decided in 1876 "to wind it up as soon as possible," leaving the diocese, a decision never implemented. When the Community closed Saint Vincent's College in 1911, the buildings became the home for the parish school. At the same time, confreres in the province discussed leaving the parish as well. Instead new plans took shape and, beginning in 1923, the parish built a large and sumptuous church through the conditional and reluctant generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Edward L. Doheny. Saint Vincent's was completed in 1925, and
subsequent benefactions from the Dohenys continue to maintain the building and grounds of the parish. In gratitude, the Community made them affiliates of the Congregation, to share its prayers and spiritual benefits. The parish also cares for El Santo Niño Community Center with its small chapel for the Spanish-speaking. The confreres began weekend service there in 1945. In recent years, the parish has developed a significant ministry to hispanics, who form 90% of its members.

Brooklyn and Chicago

Two other parishes, at first connected with colleges, as Los Angeles was, began in the years leading up to the division of the province in 1888. The first was Saint John the Baptist parish in Brooklyn, New York, originally called Saint Mary’s, Queen of the Isles and soon renamed in honor of the bishop. Edward Smith began the parish in 1868, and its large church was dedicated in 1894. Bishop John Loughlin had hoped the confreres would open a separate seminary for his diocese. This happened in 1891 and the confreres staffed it until 1932. Saint John’s College opened in the same building in 1870, and grew into the present Saint John’s University, Jamaica, New York. Vincentians continue at Saint John’s, on Lewis Avenue in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area, where the parish has undergone significant changes in view of the poverty of the area. It now ministers to a predominantly hispanic population.

Twenty-five years separated the founding of Saint John’s from the first parish offered in the state of New York. Bishop John Hughes of New York about 1843 promised the Community that a parish would be joined with his diocesan seminary to help support the confreres. When they left the seminary, they also declined the bishop’s offer of another parish in Williamsburg.

Saint Vincent’s parish, Chicago, began in a similar fashion under the same pastor, Edward Smith. Bishop Thomas Foley of Chicago invited the Vincentians to take charge of a new area in the north side of the city, and the parish began there in 1875. Though plagued in the early days by large debts caused by the cost of the property and the building, and nearly forced to close, Saint Vincent’s continued to grow. Plans for a college began only twenty years after the foundation of the parish, and developed into today’s DePaul University. The present large parish church, begun in 1892, continues to serve the neighborhood and the university. Smith died
of cancer 24 September 1896, and his funeral was the first mass celebrated in the as yet unfinished, bare church, whose construction he had overseen. He had planned to celebrate its opening mass himself.

Parish Life

For practically forty years, from 1859-1899, the only major foundations made by the Community were those that became educational institutions and seminaries: Los Angeles, Brooklyn, Chicago and Kenrick Seminary in Saint Louis. A few small parishes began, as will appear later. Some instability and great debts marked the period. The provincial, James Rolando, (1873-1879) proved weak and hesitant and a poor financial manager.

With the division of the province, 4 September 1888, the Eastern Province retained the parishes in Germantown, Brooklyn, Baltimore, and Emmitsburg. The Western Province had Chicago, La Salle, Saint Louis, New Orleans, Perryville, Cape Girardeau and Los Angeles. In addition both provinces inherited traditional Community devotions, and maintained many of them at least until the 1960s. At the beginning of the American mission, the early Italian confreres brought their traditional Christmas Novena. De Andreis and his novices celebrated it as early as 1818. Father Jean-Baptiste Etienne, the superior general, took the lead in promoting many devotions typical of nineteenth century piety. He propagated the Miraculous Medal, as well as the green and blue scapulars—signs of special devotion to Mary—and, from 1846, the red scapular ("Scapular of the Passion of Jesus Christ and of the Compassion of his Immaculate Mother" or "and of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary"). The green and red scapulars were associated originally with the Daughters of Charity. In parish churches, missionaries often erected a large cross to commemorate the mission. A special altar of the Passion, usually with a statue of Christ comforted by an angel in the garden of Gethsemane, distinguished most Vincentian churches. The general assembly of 1867 had called for this practice at Etienne’s initiative, and from that time, these special altars were modeled on a central shrine in the main chapel of the Paris motherhouse. This shrine was associated with the “Archconfraternity of the Holy Agony of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” established in France in 1862 through the piety of Father
Antoine Nicolle, C.M. Its members were to support the Pope through prayers for peace and for the dying. A special medal was also struck for the use of its members, and the confreres often saw to its founding in parishes where they gave missions. The “Water of Saint Vincent for the Sick” enjoyed a brief popularity beginning in the 1880s. This water was blessed with an invocation of Saint Vincent and touched with a relic or medal, drunk by or sprinkled on the sick. It continues to be dispensed from the Central Shrine in Germantown. Lastly, in this same period, the Community’s roster of beatified members grew, with parish celebrations marking each addition, such as that of the martyred John Gabriel Perboyre in 1889.

Official Views

Antoine Fiat, superior general, published in 1889 the first manual for Vincentian pastors, the Directory of Parishes. The introduction states: “The little company has always regarded the direction of parishes as a secondary work.” He returned to this theme often, particularly in his annual circular letters (1881, 1890, 1892). Yet, the Community retained several parishes, with the largest number being in the United States. By 1911 Fiat addressed a special letter to his American confreres, challenging the Western Province to review its commitment to parishes:

Your works, gentlemen and my dear brothers, are especially parishes, thirteen out of fifteen houses. The first and principal works of the Institute, the missions and seminaries, do not occupy among you the place which is due them.

Following the directives of the 1890 General Assembly, Fiat asked the provinces not so much to give up their parishes as to have parish priests themselves give missions on occasion, and to set aside enough personnel to conduct popular missions. In 1915 the next superior general, Emile Villette, wrote to Patrick McHale, provincial of the Eastern Province, to refuse offers of any more parishes since missions were the principal work of the Community. Later still, François Verdier (the first superior general to visit the United States) commented on the numerous American Vincentian parishes in his 1923 circular letter, following his visit. To those surprised by the large number of parishes he wrote:
it suffices to recall the special conditions of church organization in the United States: the great desire, the principal care of the bishops is to multiply parish centers and to establish schools there; everything else is subordinated to that, and only on this indispensable condition do they allow the admission of religious into their dioceses.15

The official view of parishes had begun to change.

From the Division of the Province (1888) to World War II

Eastern Province Foundations

The founding of the Alabama missions, a work similar to the central Illinois missions in the previous century, stands out as a great success story in Vincentian parochial ministry. The appointment of Rosati in 1822 as vicar apostolic of Mississippi and Alabama, an appointment later rescinded at his urging, foreshadowed this foundation. Bishop Edward Allen of Mobile, formerly rector of Mount Saint Mary’s Seminary, Emmitsburg, Maryland, knew the confreres and Daughters of Charity from Emmitsburg. It seems only natural that he might invite them to his diocese. He began his requests for confreres to staff the eastern section of Alabama in 1902 and received a positive response in 1910. The work began that year under Father Thomas McDonald, regarded as a great pulpit orator, who was placed in charge of ten counties covering six thousand square miles. The missioners choose Opelika because of its atmosphere and because it was a railroad center for the south. In rapid succession other missions opened up from Saint Mary (earlier Saint Clement) in Opelika: Saint Patrick in Phenix City (1911); Saint Michael, originally Sacred Heart, in the college town of Auburn (1912); the small mission of Saint Vincent in Salem (1914-1951); Holy Family in Lanett (1915), with its mission (Immaculate Conception) at Roanoke. The Vincentians stationed there carried on parish work, preaching missions throughout the Southeast, and Newman Club work at Auburn. In addition to the regular parishes, the confreres at various periods attended several mission stations, whose names are simply listed here: Blanton, Camp Hill, Cusseta, Dadeville, East Tallassee, Fort Mitchell, Fredonia, Girard, Goodwater, Hatchuchubee, Hurtsboro, LaFayette, LaGrange,
ALABAMA

[Map of Alabama showing major cities and military bases]
Loachapoka, Milstead, Pittsview, Seale, Tuskegee, West Point, West Tallassee.

During the often disappointing early years, the confreres generally saw only minimal results from their zeal. A near-fatal beating at the hands of local bullies was one man's reward as he was making an evening sick call. One of his attackers, a renegade Catholic, was struck by a passing train shortly after, and his victim was called to his hospital room to administer the sacraments. Another confrere was shot at during mass, and still another had to celebrate mass to the harassing accompaniment of band music played near the doors of the church. Yet they received encouragement from women religious, volunteers and benefactors, many of them from the north. The zeal of the priests and sisters during the deadly influenza epidemic of 1918 greatly softened local opposition to their efforts.

In 1918 Father Thomas Judge established the settlement of Holy Trinity, a few miles from Phenix City. This property became a center for the two separate religious communities which he founded to foster and train lay apostles: the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity for men, and a community of sisters, the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity. These communities, begun largely with volunteers who joined Judge in his work in Alabama, continue to work there and elsewhere.

With the influx of a new population after World War II, two new parishes opened in 1948, Saint John the Apostle (Saint Thomas before 1959) in Alexander City, and Saint Vincent de Paul in Tallassee, where the missionaries had celebrated mass intermittently since 1913, but ceased owing to local bigotry. Today, solid Catholic communities with resident priests attest to more than 75 years of missionary labor.

In 1915 the Eastern Province opened two new parishes in Pennsylvania, Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Roseto and Saint Vincent (now Our Lady of Good Counsel) in nearby Bangor. The archbishop of Philadelphia, Edmond Prendergast, had been anxious to establish missions for the Italian immigrants in the Slate Belt area of Pennsylvania. Roseto had had a diocesan pastor from 1897 to 1911. From 1915, Father James Lavezzari, an Italian from the province of Turin on loan to the Eastern Province, staffed Mount Carmel with an American confrere. They regularly attended several missions which had been taken on until these could be given to the archdiocese: West Bangor (Saint Roch, 1920-1929), Pen Argyl
(Saint Elizabeth, 1919-1929), Wind Gap (Saint Joseph, 1923-1929), and Martin's Creek (Saint Rocco, 1918-1937). The province was later able to provide Italian-speaking confreres, without having to rely on the province of Turin. A large elementary school and regional high school (the latter now run by the diocese) are also attached to this parish. The confreres began the parish in Bangor to take care of Irish Catholics who had previously gone to Roseto. This parish dedicated its first church in 1918, under its founder Joseph McKey, who raised much of the money for it by his own letters, missions, retreats and lectures. The confreres at Bangor also care for the mission at Portland. They continued in other nearby missions until diocesan pastors gradually assumed them.

In the 1920s and 1930s the province expanded its work in Baltimore and Niagara Falls and moved into three other dioceses. Archbishop Michael Curley of Baltimore asked the confreres to extend their long-standing work to the Ashburton-Liberty Heights district, a new area of the city, and the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes began 25 January 1924, under Father George McKinney. This small middle-class parish, now largely black, had a parish school staffed by the Daughters until 1973. Michael Gallagher, the bishop of Detroit, requested the province to open a parish in Jackson, Michigan. Queen of the Miraculous Medal parish, the first parish ever to bear that title, opened in 1931 under Father Arthur Keegan. A resident confrere specially designated for the purpose serves as chaplain for the State Prison of Southern Michigan, the largest walled prison in the United States, with a population of over 5000 men. From 1934 to 1938 a mission band also made its headquarters in Jackson. A mission in Concord, Saint Catherine Laboure (dependent on Jackson), began in 1953. The Community kept Concord until 1984 when the diocese of Lansing accepted it back. The mission band from Jackson later transferred to Groveport, Ohio, in the diocese of Columbus, where Bishop James Hartley, an alumnus of the seminary at Niagara, had invited the confreres to found Saint Vincent's parish in 1932. Father Charles McKenzie was the first pastor. The confreres remained there until 1982.

Lastly, in the diocese of Buffalo, the Community undertook in 1934 the administration of Our Lady of Lebanon in Niagara Falls. Though a parish of Maronite rite since 1914, the province assumed control because of the lack of Maronite clergy. It became a territorial parish of the Latin rite in 1953, but remained nominally
Father James Salway visits parishioners near Phenix City, Alabama
Maronite. The diocese of Buffalo received official control over the parish only about 1979, when the Maronite bishop relinquished it.

**Western Province Foundations**

The many parish foundations in the Western Province characterized the period before World War II. The two parishes begun in the state of Missouri both had seminary connections. Bishop John Joseph Hogan of Kansas City, an alumnus of the seminary at Cape Girardeau, invited the province to take a parish in 1887, and Saint Vincent's parish officially began 24 May 1888. The Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary joined in the school and the high school, Saint Vincent's Academy (1900-1943). Since the population had changed, the character of Saint Vincent's also changed and the Community left the parish 1 July 1975, when the diocese joined it to two other parishes in the area. Saint John's Seminary, the minor seminary for the diocese of Kansas City and founded in 1928, continued under Vincentian direction until 1983. With its closing the province was able to assign two men temporarily to Immaculate Conception, Poteau, Oklahoma, on the invitation of the bishop of Tulsa. Because his diocese could not supply enough priests, the Daughters of Charity had worked with the diocesan pastor to develop parish life in the nearly twenty-five hundred square miles served by Poteau and its neighboring communities of Spiro (Saint Elizabeth Seton), Stigler (Saint Joseph), and McCurtain (Sacred Heart).

Saint Bridget's in Saint Louis, founded by diocesan clergy in 1853, came to the Community in 1928. A tornado had destroyed the diocesan minor seminary in September 1927 and Archbishop Glennon asked the Community to staff both the parish and the minor seminary, then temporarily located on Saint Bridget's grounds. The new preparatory seminary opened in September 1931 in Webster Groves and in the following year the province left Saint Bridget's.

The Community assumed the direction of two small parishes in California after the division of the province in 1888. The first, Saint Mary of the Assumption in Whittier, began in 1893 under diocesan clergy. In 1896, confreres who lived at Saint Vincent's College in Los Angeles began to care for the parish, which grew to an official Vincentian house in 1899. The confreres left the parish in 1922, and
the diocese gave it over to the Redemptorists, who still have charge of it. The second parish was Saint Vincent de Paul in San Diego. In 1911, when the province departed from Saint Vincent's College in Los Angeles, the provincial council began to look for other opportunities in California. Bishop Thomas Conaty had from at least 1910 asked for Vincentians in San Diego and offered this new parish in 1913. Frederick Roberts was the founding pastor. The Community remained in San Diego only until 1922, the same time it left Whittier. Apart from severe financial burdens, the main reason for leaving was that one or two confreres living alone would find it impossible to observe the traditional Vincentian community life and to provide for missions, as the provincial had originally hoped.

When Joseph Glass, pastor of Saint Vincent in Los Angeles, became bishop of Salt Lake City (1915-1926), he sought and received help for his priest-poor diocese from the Community. One or two confreres occasionally helped the bishop, but the Community made no official foundations in Utah.

The work of the Community in Texas resumed in 1902 after a lapse of nearly fifty years, with the help given to the Daughters of Charity at their hospital in Sherman. From 1910, Father Francis Lynn and others also cared for the mission of Saint Michael in McKinney, as well as helping out in many other small congregations as the need arose. When the Daughters withdrew from the hospital in 1950, the confreres gave the parish over to the diocese.

The bishop of Dallas, Edward Dunne, had been a priest of the diocese of Chicago when Saint Vincent's College opened there. Early in the 1900s he asked for the Vincentians to build a college for men, as well as a parish, in his diocese; Holy Trinity College (later University of Dallas) opened in 1907, along with the Holy Trinity Church in the suburb of Oaklawn. The Dallas Vincentians also cared for several mission parishes, often traveling many miles on weekends to reach them. Thomas Powers, president of the University of Dallas in 1923, organized and built the parish of Saint Cecilia in Grand Prairie (now called Immaculate Conception). He also rebuilt Saint Rita in Handley, and visited Saint William in Arlington, a mission of Handley. Other university confreres served as pastors or assistants of Saint Elizabeth mission in Bonham; Saint Luke in Irving; Saint Anthony in Longview with its mission, Saint Peter in Mineola; Lady of Lourdes in Mineral Wells; Sacred Heart mission in Rowlett; Saint John in Terrell; Immaculate Conception
in Tyler; Saint Stephen in Weatherford; and Saint Anthony in Wylie, with its mission, Saint Paul, in Saint Paul. As these parishes became established, the Dallas Vincentians withdrew and diocesan clergy took over all the parishes except Holy Trinity. The future superior general, James W. Richardson, grew up in the Dallas parish.

In 1907 Bishop Dunne asked the Community to found a new parish in Fort Worth. In response, Father Fiat, the superior general, stated that he preferred having a house for missionaries if that were possible. They could direct parish missions from this center. Though available personnel for missions was lacking, the Community nevertheless began Saint Mary of the Assumption in 1909, its first pastor being Edward Park. The Laneri College, really a high school and junior college, formed part of the parish beginning in 1921, although the Brothers of Mary operated it separately from the parish. Just after the University of Dallas closed, in the fall of 1928, the community also left Fort Worth and the parish (with Laneri College) went to the care of Benedictines. Insufficient Vincentian personnel to staff both the parish and the high school (in the absence of the brothers who had recently withdrawn) had brought about their departure.

During this same period of college openings, the province in April 1906 responded to an invitation from Bishop Thomas Bonacum of Lincoln, Nebraska—another alumnus of Cape Girardeau—to help him out of his financial difficulties. The Community would buy Saint Theresa Pro-Cathedral, open a college and station a mission band there. Francis McCabe was nominated as pastor and was officially listed as such in the diocese until 1911, even though he never assumed his office. The community rescinded its agreement since the title to the land was unclear. Further, the death of Bonacum, 4 February 1911, precluded the province’s assumption of the parish, and thereby freed the community from yet another severe financial entanglement.

In 1913 and 1914 the entire community of eight Spanish confreres, five priests and three brothers, was expelled from the seminary in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, on account of that nation’s anti-clerical revolutionary government. Together with others of their countrymen, they took refuge with the Dallas Vincentians, and began to look for new assignments. Some returned home to Mexico or Spain, or went to missions in Cuba or Puerto Rico, while others remained in the United States. One,
Cesareo Gutierrez, began to care for neglected Mexican Catholics in and around Amarillo beginning in late 1914, and continued in the parish of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe in Amarillo until 1923. At the same time, Manuel de Francisco, another emigre, opened up a parish of the same name in Dallas, and taught at the University of Dallas. This church opened in a rented store building, and eventually came to serve all hispanics in the city. Spanish Carmelites assumed responsibility for the parish in 1926. A third confrere, Ricardo Atanes moved to the parish of San José in Fort Worth in 1916. It had been founded in 1909 as a national church within the boundaries of All Saints parish. In June 1926, Bishop Lynch obtained the services of the Claretians, who continue to staff the parish. Father Atanes returned to Spain where he met, at age 61, a brutal torture and death in the civil war. Father Gutierrez continued his ministry to Mexican Catholics in the dioceses of Amarillo and Santa Fe until his retirement to his native country. Father de Francisco turned to teaching at Saint Thomas Seminary in Denver, where he died in 1947.

Longer lasting Texas parish assignments were Sacred Heart Church in Canadian and Holy Souls in Pampa. The parish in Canadian, in the Amarillo diocese, had previously been a mission parish attended by clergy from Oklahoma. Vincentians helped in Canadian at different periods (1915-1916, 1918-1919, 1941-1946, 1948, 1955-1965, 1968-1985). The parish of Holy Souls in Pampa, which began in 1927, came to the Community at the request of Bishop Robert Lucey. Father William Stack assumed the pastorate in 1940. From 1952, Sacred Heart in Canadian was a mission of Pampa. In 1960, when Holy Souls completed a new church at a new location, Bishop John Morkovsky suggested changing its name to Saint Vincent de Paul in honor the tercentenary of Saint Vincent's death. After a period of some disagreement with the bishop of Amarillo, the confreres withdrew from both Pampa and Canadian in 1985.

Similar to the situation of McKinney, where the confreres were both hospital chaplains and pastors, was Saint Mary's Church in Perico, a mission of Saint Anthony in Dalhart, likewise in the Amarillo diocese. Vincentian chaplains served at the Loretto Hospital in Dalhart from 1936 to 1948. These same confreres had charge of Saint Mary's as well as, occasionally, Saint Anthony's and other missions in Channing and Dumas during this entire period.
The Mexican-American parish of Sacred Heart in Cotulla, where the young Lyndon Johnson once taught school, was accepted by the Community in 1942 under Michael Ries. Nearly abandoned by the diocesan clergy for many years in view of its remoteness, the parish had no resident pastor until 1933. Ries developed a summer school religion class and a released time program for high school religious instructions, gaining him national attention. This parish had missions at Fowlerton (Saint Joseph, later Immaculate Heart of Mary), Millett (Our Lady of Guadalupe), and Los Angeles (Saint Emily).

The Community returned to the archdiocese of San Antonio after nearly a hundred-year absence to assume the care of Saint John's Seminary in 1941. The ten priests assigned there helped in various parishes and army camps, and gradually took over two small missions, Sacred Heart at Von Ormy (1941-1949), and Our Lady of Mount Carmel (in Spanish, El Carmen) in Losoya (1941-1948). In addition, the small congregation of Saint Andrew at Lytle (also known as Coal Mine) depended for a time on Von Ormy. Father John Bagen served there from 1945 to 1949, when, with a new church, that mission was attended by diocesan pastors from Devine. All three missions had significant Spanish-speaking populations.

In 1956 the confreres also received the pastoral charge of Saint Leo's parish, when Archbishop Robert Lucey acceded to Father Stakelum's request for a city parish in his diocese in addition to remote Cotulla. The first pastor was Oscar Huber, who later as pastor of Holy Trinity in Dallas was summoned to anoint the assassinated president, John F. Kennedy. Saint Leo's began in 1919 under the diocesan clergy, who also visited the old mission of Losoya. This mission dates from 1813, and its records exist from 1855, in the time of Bishop Odin. The Vincentians, already at Losoya from 1941 to 1948, assumed it again in 1956 when the province took over Saint Leo. In June 1983, the Southern Province withdrew from Saint Leo, citing a shortage a manpower to staff this large and active parish.

The parish of Saint Thomas in Long Beach, Mississippi, began in 1905. One year before, a former student at the community's seminary in New Orleans, Thomas Heslin, the bishop of Natchez, had offered a place to the Community for a summer house, retirement center, parish, and mission center. The original pastor, Dennis Hurley, first built a vacation chapel, which the confreres named
after the bishop, and then Saint Thomas Villa, a forty room summer home. The confreres were required to vacation there, but disliked the location. The building burned to the ground in 1908. The connection between the fire and the discontented priests and brothers led to many amusing speculations. The Long Beach Vincentians served two small missions (Saint James, Mississippi City, and Sacred Heart, Wiggins, 1917-1923), and continue to minister to Catholics on the Gulf Coast.

In the Perryville area several small parishes grew up in the period from 1888 to World War II. The first was Brewer, begun as a mission in 1907 under the title of Saint Vincent de Paul. The parish began in 1910. It received a resident pastor in 1956 when the new church was completed, with the title of Christ the Savior. The mission of Saint Joseph in Highland began around 1910 as a mission of Biehle. Near Brewer is the small community of Lithium, so called for its medicinal chalybeate springs. The archbishop of Saint Louis gave its parish, Saint John the Baptist (formerly Saint Theresa, now through some confusion Saint John the Evangelist), to the care of the province in 1951 and later attached it to the parish of Brewer. This mission parish closed at the end of 1985. Lastly, in 1966 the two parishes at Belgique (Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, formerly Immaculate Conception in Bois Brulé Bottom, a Vincentian mission station from 1826 at least, at Allen’s Landing) and Sereno (Our Lady of Victory) came under the Community’s care as a single canonical parish with a resident pastor.

**Black Parishes**

Traditional Vincentian service to the poor has been exercised in several parishes established for black Catholics, and two early attempts are worthy of note. First, Bishop Rosati, early in his career in Saint Louis, set aside a special parish church for blacks in the city, but it was handled by his diocesan clergy. Second, before the first true parish was established, Father Alexius Mandine inaugurated a special (and segregated) chapel for blacks in Saint Stephen’s parish, New Orleans (Chapelle de la Famille, 1873-1875). Some years after, around 1900, a special parish school, “Saint Stephen Colored School for Boys and Girls,” began under Father Patrick V. Judge. A fire in 1910 occasioned its closing.
The earliest parish was Saint Katherine in New Orleans. Archbishop Francis Janssens, acting against the public and vigorous objections of some blacks who feared segregation from white Catholics, hoped that a separate parish would allow them to develop their own leadership. As it happened, both sides were correct. In 1895, when Saint Katherine opened as the first Catholic church in the city for blacks, the Vincentians received the pastoral charge of all black Catholics. Father Charles Remillon, and later Father Ambrose Vautier, both natives of France, cared for the many French-speaking blacks. Mother Katharine Drexel funded the renovation of the deserted and dilapidated Saint Joseph Church and her patron saint's name was given to the parish and parochial school. The Vincentians remained there until 1964, when the province sold the property to the archdiocese as a site for a medical school (a parking garage was the actual result).

Mother Katharine was also responsible for the financing of the parish buildings of Saint Catherine of Siena Church in Germantown, Pennsylvania. In 1904 black Catholics in Germantown, most of them from Maryland, began to work toward their own parish in North Philadelphia with the encouragement of the confreres. By 1914 the church was ready for use, and Jeremiah Hartnett was the first pastor, continuing until 1932. Mother Katharine's Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament taught in the school from 1916 until 1972. In that same year, following the recommendation of the provincial assembly, this parish became a mission of Saint Vincent in Germantown and the school closed.

Three other parishes originally set aside for blacks date from some decades later. Saint Mary (later Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, now again with its original title) in Greensboro, North Carolina, began in 1928 under the Josephite Community. The Daughters of Charity had taught in the parish school from the beginning. Because of their presence the province sent Gerard Murphy as pastor in 1939 at the request of Bishop Eugene McGuinness of Raleigh. Saint Mary's was racially integrated officially around 1975. The confreres of Greensboro also carried on Newman Club work in three local colleges and inaugurated the small mission of Saint Catherine Laboure in Reidsville (1953-1957). The second black parish was in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, where black Catholics asked for their own parish. This resulted in Holy Family Church, begun in 1940 under Father Willis Darling on property donated by the family of Brother Clarence Seyer. Darling
opened a school and regularly held summer schools. The parish closed in 1960, to bring an end to segregation in Catholic parishes—the same reason for the closing of Saint Katherine in New Orleans. The third parish was a mission of Saint Michael’s parish in Auburn, Alabama. In 1953, the confreres opened for Auburn’s black Catholics, Immaculate Heart of Mary Mission, called Saint Martin de Porres since 1961. No longer used as a church, the building serves now as a social service center in the neighborhood.

From World War II until 1975

This period of nearly thirty years can well be called an era of expansion since several new establishments began in both the Eastern and Western provinces.

Eastern Expansion

Saint Vincent himself had considered sending confreres to Canada, was well informed of conditions there, and aided missionaries of other communities working in Canada. He, however, had to confine his foreign mission efforts elsewhere. In 1841, the bishop of Montreal requested both confreres and Daughters for his diocese, and the superiors general later received requests from elsewhere in Canada, all of which they turned down for lack of personnel. More importantly, in 1859 the bishop of Toronto tried to interest Fathers Ryan and John Lynch in accepting a parish in his see city. Probably as a result of the successful clergy retreats he preached, Lynch became the first archbishop of Toronto (1859-1888). No records exist to show that he ever enlisted the help of his American confreres. Decades after these initiatives, the first Canadian Community parish, Immaculate Heart of Mary in Toronto, opened in 1951. It had previously been Saint Mary’s Mission House, begun in the spring of 1933 under Father John Long with the expectation that the confreres would also serve in some capacity in the diocesan seminary. As the Catholic population in the Toronto area grew, the confreres responded positively to Cardinal James McGuigan’s request to add parish duties to their mission work. Louis Fey was its first pastor.
A second parish in Toronto, Our Lady Help of Christians, serves the Slovenian community. Confreres from Yugoslavia arrived, beginning in 1949, but were attached to the Eastern Province mission house temporarily. By 1960 they were able to establish an independent community house dependent on the Province of Yugoslavia.

Near the seminary and university at Niagara lies the Tuscarora Indian reservation. Responding to an invitation from the bishop dating back to 1911, seminarians and faculty members worked on the reservation for several years. In 1952 Father Robert Arway, a seminary faculty member, established Holy Family Mission for the Native American population. In 1962, after the seminary moved to Albany, the diocese assigned the mission to the Barnabite community.

Vincentian presence in Florida was presaged by a missionary trip of Philip Borgna in 1821 undertaken at the behest of Bishop Dubourg, and mainly of a fact-finding nature. The small Catholic colony at Pensacola begged Dubourg to allow Borgna to stay, but he returned to his regular assignment in New Orleans. The Eastern Province had, since 1959, worked in the archdiocese of Miami in the diocesan seminaries. In 1962, at the invitation of Bishop Coleman Carroll, Saint Vincent de Paul parish opened, with the added hope of being a source of Vincentian vocations. Contrary to the American pattern of church, school, rectory and convenst, it has no school or convent but helped by Spanish-speaking Daughters of Charity it serves the needs of a large Hispanic population.

Western Expansion

Western Province confreres opened several establishments from 1950 to 1964. Although the Community began them for various reasons, official records indicate that the province had determined to accept parishes in areas where it already had other institutions principally to serve as a source of vocations. Experience would later show that this strategy did not succeed, but this idea and others designed to improve the parish apostolate were regularly discussed at the annual Parish Priests Meetings, beginning in 1953 and continuing through the 1970s.

In 1950 the province opened Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal
Parish, Montebello, California. It has developed into a large parish with Hispanic, Anglo and now Asian-American ministry. Its first pastor was Marshall Winne, former provincial of the Western Province. In 1952 Most Precious Blood parish in Denver opened under Father John Donohoe. Bishop Nicholas Matz had asked the confreres at Saint Thomas Seminary to operate a quasi-parish for the Catholics in the neighborhood, admitting them to Mass and celebrating the other sacraments for them until the Community could staff a parish. They did so, and Bishop J. Henry Tihen had invited the confreres to begin a formal parish as early as 1921, but the province had never accepted probably owing to lack of manpower. The Daughters of Charity worked with the Vincentians in the parish school.

The province hoped for another source of vocations in the opening of Saint Catherine Laboure on Sappington Road in suburban Saint Louis. It began in 1953 after a request from Archbishop Joseph Ritter, under Wendelin Dunker. Here also the Daughters of Charity staffed the school. In the next two years two parishes opened in California. Archbishop John Mitty of San Francisco had requested the Vincentians to accept two places in his diocese, one rural and one inner city. The provincial, James Stakelum, had also been searching for new outlets for the province. The rural parish was Sacred Heart in Patterson, established around 1917. It came to the Community in 1954. The priests of the Patterson parish had one mission, Immaculate Heart of Mary at Crows Landing. People of Portuguese, Italian, and, more recently, Mexican background in addition to Anglos, attend the parish. The inner city parish was Saint Charles Borromeo in San Francisco, dating from 1887. It came under Vincentian pastors in June 1955, the first being Vincent Walsh. The province maintained this parish until 1975, when the new Province of the West gave it to the Spanish Vincentians from the Zaragoza Province. The province next opened Saint Vincent de Paul Church in 1957 in Glendale, a newly-built section of Phoenix. The Community had already been staffing the diocesan minor seminary in Tucson. The Daughters of Charity arrived in 1959 to open the parish grade school.

In the South two parishes began in this period. The first was Saint Louise de Marillac (originally called Saint John Vianney), asked for by the province when Saint Katherine's in New Orleans closed. In 1964, Archbishop John Cody offered the parish located in Arabi, a developing suburb in the New Orleans area, and
changed its title when the Daughters of Charity came to staff the school. The first pastor was Thomas Wesner. The Community handed over the care of this parish to the archdiocese of New Orleans in June 1979 to respond to priorities in poor and missionary areas in the recently-established Southern Province, and because its manpower was limited. In the same year, 1964, the second parish began, Saint Philip Neri in Houston, Texas. As in many other cities of this period, the neighborhood around Saint Philip's was growing rapidly when the confreres began their ministry there. Gradually the parish came to have principally black Catholics, and the Southern Province believed itself unprepared to undertake a ministry to them. As a result the Community left in 1979, and the archdiocese gave the parish to black Benedictines.

Status of Parishes in Official Documents

During this period of post-war expansion, the international Community re-examined its commitments systematically. As soon as possible after World War II, Father William Slattery, the new superior general, together with his council began to plan for the revision of the constitutions of the Community. Drafts were prepared in 1947 for the general assembly of the following year and Pope Pius XII approved the constitutions in 1953. In these constitutions, the first complete revision since the time of Saint Vincent, parishes found no place among the works of the Community. Missions formed the first and most important work. The text treated parishes only under the heading of organization, appointment of pastors, and management of finances (as in articles 275-278). The constitutions placed them only under the heading, "to carry on other works suitable and conformable to the aforesaid functions" (article 3, section 1).17 Despite this apparent lack of recognition in the constitutions, the superior general ordered the publication of a "Directory of Parishes," containing rules to be followed by pastors in those parishes given to the Vincentians. In the United States, too, parishes continued to grow and prosper in this era of expansion.
1975 marks the year of the establishment of the five provinces of the United States: New England (formerly the Polish or Utica Vice-Province) with some territory taken from the Eastern Province; and the Western Province divided into three: the provinces of the Midwest, South, and West.

**Province of New England**

The Province of New England took its origin in invitations to Polish Vincentians in February 1903 to staff Saint Josaphat in Milwaukee. Three priests and a brother received their appointments but the death of Archbishop Frederick Katzer intervened, and his successor gave the parish to the Conventual Franciscans. Later in the same year the confreres received an invitation to preach a mission at Saint Casimir in Brooklyn. During the course of the mission, word came from Bishop Michael Tierney that they should go afterwards to assume the pastorate of the recently-founded (1900) Saint Stanislaus parish, New Haven, in the diocese of Hartford, Connecticut. The confreres would also be able to preach missions in his diocese. This first house began 1 January 1904. On 16 July of the next year Bishop Tierney erected a second Polish parish and the province accepted Saint Michael in Derby, Connecticut, to become its central house and mission center. The work there began under Father George Glogowski, an expert linguist, and the real founder and superior of the Polish mission in the United States. In later years, the confreres also served as chaplains to the Polish Felician Sisters in nearby Enfield, Connecticut.

The educational work of the province began at Saint Mary in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, in 1906, with the founding of the parish. Father Benedict Tomiak, a former Vincentian brother in Poland, donated ground there for the new parish, which eventually took over a former protestant church adjacent to the property. Saint Mary's also had a high school for Polish people but it lasted only briefly (until 1907). The confreres at Saint Mary's went to Swedesburg beginning in 1907, where there was also a Polish school, and to Bridgeport, but they lived apart and community life was impossible. At that point, Tsar Nicholas II altered conditions
in his Polish-speaking domains, thereby allowing more missionaries
to function there. As a result, the province decided to withdraw
some confreres from the United States who returned home to
concentrate their efforts in Poland. The tsar changed his mind
within two years. The confreres then had to leave, and so resumed
their American venture. Responding to the invitation of Andrew
Ignasiak, a diocesan priest from Erie, the provincial superiors
agreed to give a mission there and shortly thereafter set about
beginning a high school and college. Saint John Kanty College
opened in September 1912.

The next foundation was Saint Hedwig in Philadelphia, which
the province staffed from 1907 to 1922. As the population moved
away, the confreres withdrew, and in 1922 the province turned to the
large parish of Saint Stanislaus in the Greenpoint area of Brooklyn,
New York, which it continues to serve. The year 1925 saw the
opening of another Connecticut location divided from Derby, Saint
Joseph in Ansonia, still staffed by the province. It should also be
noted that the early parish foundations, New Haven, Derby,
Brooklyn and Ansonia, all built parish elementary schools which
continue to function. After its foundation in 1975, the new province
accepted the parish of Saints Cyril and Methodius, located in
Lisbon Falls, Maine. This parish, originally established for Slovaks,
had been run by diocesan clergy and later by Conventual Francis-
cans. Saint Peter’s in Concord, New Hampshire, formally estab-
lished in 1946, came to the confreres 1 February 1983. One member
of the house serves as pastor, and the others administer and teach
in Bishop Brady High School, close to Saint Peter’s.

The original Polish Province suffered much during its existence,
but owed its first missionaries to Saint Vincent himself. After the
disastrous partition of Poland, the province was re-established in
1866. By 1903, the young province was once again able to send out
missionaries to Brazil as well as to the United States. Throughout
its history the Polish vice-province generally carried on its mission
with few members, demonstrating the Vincentian spirit of doing
much with few resources. Yet the American Polish mission grew
strong enough that during the visitation of 1920, the provincial of
Poland decided to appoint Paul Waszko as his vice-provincial. With
some increase of vocations in the 1950s and 1960s, the vice-province
then sought to open new houses, but could not since they would
conflict with the territory of the Eastern Province. Proposals for
establishing an independent province were made officially in 1964.
These conversations continued until 23 April 1975, when Henry Sawicki became the first provincial of the New England Province. The Province of Poland continues to supply confireres regularly to help its American daughter province.

Province of the West

The Province of the West opened its first parish, Saint Vincent de Paul, Huntington Beach, California, in the new diocese of Orange. Father Jerome Herff was the founding pastor. This parish, in a growing section of Huntington Beach, began in 1977 as many parishes did—in rented quarters. In 1981 it moved into a parish hall with a large room available for mass.

Southern Province

The Southern Province, too, undertook several new assignments. With the departure of the confireres from Saint Philip Neri in Houston, the province in 1979 began to staff two parishes in Mississippi, Saint Stephen parish in Magee (founded in 1968, with a mission at Raleigh) and Saint Michael in Paulding (founded much earlier, in 1849, with a mission at Quitman). The province withdrew from Paulding in 1985. The Community began to serve in several small parishes beginning at the same time in the state of Texas as manpower became available, such as when the minor seminary at Beaumont closed. The confireres came to Holy Family Church in Sweetwater in 1980 along with its mission, Our Mother of Mercy, in Merkel. The former is principally English-speaking, the latter Spanish-speaking. The province assumed these parishes and missions in areas that would otherwise remain without resident clergy. On this same basis the province assigned individual confireres to Saint Mary in Bremond (1980), Sacred Heart in Memphis (1982), Saint Hyacinth in Deer Park (1983), Our Lady of Guadalupe, Snyder (1985), and Saint Ann in Stamford (1986.) One confirere began the DePaul Mission Project of evangelization ministries (1984-1986). Centered at Saint Patrick, Shamrock, Texas, the work undertook the preparation of the local laity to become pastorally self-nurturing. Missions served were Our Mother of Mercy,
Beginning about the first of 1985, the province also embarked on an undertaking that falls between missions and parish work, and marked a return to a site of earlier Vincentian labors. Three confreres have set out to evangelize the unchurched in rural southern Arkansas, an area which is missionary, economically poor, and has a significant number of blacks. The confreres live apart in Fordyce (Saint Anthony), Stamps (Saint Vincent de Paul), and Star City (Saint Justin), three already established locations, but meet regularly to coordinate their work and to support one another. A fourth confrere began to minister at Immaculate Heart of Mary in Magnolia, in 1987.

Province of the Midwest

The Midwest Province, as a result of its assembly of 1979, sought out a parish in a poor, rural area. The site for this new ministry was Saint Theresa in Dixon, Missouri, beginning in 1982. The province also assigned individual confreres to Saint Ann in Malden, Missouri (1976-1983), Saint Henry in Charleston, Missouri (1981-1983), Saint Patrick in Cairo, Illinois (1984-) and Saint Denis in Benton, Missouri (1984-). In returning to Charleston, the Community resumed service of a location that it had served in 1839 as a mission from Saint Vincent's in Cape Girardeau. Both the Benton and Cairo parishes had Vincentian founders.

With available manpower, the province offered its help to Bishop Arthur Tafoya of Pueblo, Colorado, in keeping with principles for the allocation of its resources to areas of great need, lack of clergy, and the presence of the poor. The bishop assigned the parishes of Saint Margaret Mary in Cortez (with the mission of Saint Jude at Dove Creek,) and Saint Rita in Mancos (with missions of Our Lady of Victory in Dolores and Immaculate Conception, Rico), beginning in 1986. The confreres formed a pastoral team unifying the two main parishes, which they call the Montelores Catholic Community. The area is rich in local history, and embraces Mesa Verde National Park, where they offer mass in the summer tourist season. They also visit Towaoc on the Ute Indian reservation as needed.

On the same basis and still in the Pueblo diocese, in August of 1987 two confreres began their service at Saint Peter in Rocky Ford,
and its missions, Saint Joseph the Worker at Manzanola, and Saint Peter in Ordway.

Lastly, a largely Spanish-speaking parish in Chicago, Saint Fidelis, came to the Midwest Province in the fall of 1987. Typically for Chicago, mass is also celebrated in Polish for older parishioners and others.

Other Provinces Working in the United States

In addition to the five American provinces, several other provinces have made foundations in the United States. Confreres from two Spanish provinces, Barcelona and Madrid (now also Zaragoza), from three Italian provinces (Naples, Turin, Rome), and from Portugal and Mexico have attended to the religious needs of their fellow citizens in the United States. Their availability, in addition to the prevailing Irish-German or French ethnic background of most confreres, explains the general absence of American Vincentians from “national parishes” catering to specific ethnic groups. The New England province constitutes a notable exception.

Spanish Missionaries

The largest group of parishes has been served by the Spanish confreres. The first wave of Spanish confreres had come in the middle of the nineteenth century, and included Bishops Amat and Domenec in their number. Vincentians from the Barcelona province accepted an invitation from Bishop Charles McDonnell of Brooklyn and founded Our Lady of Pilar in 1916. They continued at this first foundation until 1934 when the parish ceased as a result of urban renewal projects. Missioners from there staffed Saint Bernard in 1934 and in 1935 began their ministry in Saint Peter's, also in Brooklyn. Owing to changing population patterns and their close proximity, the parish church of Saint Peter's (with the title of Our Lady of Pilar remaining) was joined to Saint Paul's in 1975, the oldest parish in uninterrupted service in New York state.

The second principal establishment was Our Lady of Monserrate. Archbishop Thomas Molloy of Brooklyn asked in 1954 for another Spanish-speaking chapel in his diocese and the confreres
from Pilar undertook this new mission, principally for Puerto Ricans in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. As with Our Lady of Pilar the parish of Saint Ambrose was joined to Monserrate in 1978 to form one parish with two churches.

A third work, the Cursillo Center, although not a parish, began in late 1962. Confreres of the house conduct retreats (Cursillos de Cristiandad) for men and women. A significant hispanic youth movement (Jornadas de Vida Cristiana/Journeys of Christian Life) has spread widely from the Center, beginning in 1967.

In addition to its parish work in Brooklyn, the Province of Barcelona also staffed Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal in Philadelphia for the service of all the Spanish-speaking in that city. This work began in 1909, located in an unpretentious row house. A Spanish Daughter of Charity, Maria de Jesus Quintana, paid for the “Spanish Chapel” (La Milagrosa) out of her family inheritance. Two of its pastors, Juan Sastre and Antonio Capdevila, became vicars-apostolic of San Pedro Sula in Honduras, another mission of the Barcelona province. As happened elsewhere, changing patterns of settlement caused the Community to leave in 1978.

Father Gabriel Ginard, a member of the Madrid Province, came to the United States in 1923, and taught first at the seminary in Germantown, and then in Brooklyn. While there the assistant pastor of Saint Gregory’s, a diocesan parish in New York City, asked him to give conferences in Spanish to members of his parish. This initiative broadened quickly to embrace Sunday mass and then the celebration of special feasts. Cardinal Hayes gave the needed permission for this work. The arrival of two more confreres from Spain early in 1927, and the purchase of an old synagogue, helped Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal (La Milagrosa) in New York City to take more permanent shape. The parish closed 31 August 1978 since the Spanish-speakers had moved to other locations. In the same years (1927-1978) the Spanish confreres staffed Saint Teresa of Avila (formerly Saint Elizabeth). In 1930 they opened a second house in New York City, the Holy Agony Church (Santo Cristo de la Agonia)—commemorating the traditional Vincentian devotion—and founded as a hispanic national parish. With the division of the province of Madrid in 1969, these parishes became part of the new province of Zaragoza. Through this entire period, and usually on an individual basis, confreres worked with Spanish-speaking Catholics and lived apart in various diocesan parishes. A brief attempt to minister to hispanics was made at Saint Patrick’s
parish in Denver in late 1973, but local conditions thwarted a permanent establishment. Recently they have also helped with Mexican migrant workers in the diocese of Saginaw, Michigan. The work of the province had developed enough that, in 1935, during the tumult leading to the Spanish Civil War, the American mission became a vice-province. This arrangement lasted until 1950.

The work of the Spanish confreres in California began in 1938 when they accepted the parish of Our Lady of the Rosary of Talpa in Los Angeles (with its mission, La Purisima Chapel). Many Mexican exiles and immigrants had moved to this area, bringing with them their devotion to the Mexican shrine at Talpa. Daughters of Charity joined the Spanish confreres in the school at this parish. A second foundation opened in 1961, Our Lady of Sorrows (Dolores Mission) in Los Angeles. The Community maintained Dolores until 1966, when they exchanged it for Guardian Angel parish in Pacoima. Nevertheless, since Guardian Angel parish had a broader ethnic makeup than simply Spanish-speaking, the Community left Pacoima in 1973 and moved to Saint Elizabeth (Santa Isabel) in Los Angeles, a parish serving Spanish-speaking since 1915. As mentioned above, the Spanish confreres also staff Saint Charles Borromeo parish in San Francisco, previously a house of the Western Province. From time to time individual confreres have also assisted temporarily in California diocesan parishes which had numbers of Spanish speakers.

In the late 1960s, as English-speaking Spanish confreres began to withdraw from the Philippines, the provincial of Madrid assigned them to work for Cubans in Miami. In response to the invitation of Bishop Charles McLaughlin of Saint Petersburg, the confreres moved from Miami to Fort Myers, and in 1980 opened Jesus the Worker mission principally to work in various migrant camps. In September 1986 they formed a parish, Saint Vincent de Paul, offered them by Bishop John Nevins of the new diocese of Venice. The confreres staff one other mission chapel, Saint Joseph and, until January 1987, went to the migrant camp at Bonita Springs. The parish cares principally for Anglos and provides the confreres with the resources to work for the migrants from Mexico and Central America who attend the mission chapels and even other parishes in the area. The Florida parish is the only remaining work of Madrid in the United States.
The first confreres to serve in the United States were mainly Italians. Once American-born Vincentians became numerous enough, the Italian provinces no longer provided confreres for the specifically American works. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, confreres from the three Italian provinces, Rome, Turin, and Naples, started another work of ministry to Italian migrants. A mission band from the Province of Rome began to give missions in the fall of 1895 to the Italians in the Brooklyn area, and set up an informal house that grew into a mission chapel by 1899. Three years later, Bishop Charles McDonnell of Brooklyn erected the mission into a parish. Roman Vincentians operated Our Lady of Peace until 1906. They left because of disagreements with the bishop about which province should assume responsibility for the parish: Rome, their choice, or the Eastern Province, the bishop's preference. Since neither province had any men to give to the work, the bishop assigned the parish to Italian Franciscans who continue to staff it.

In 1920 the Province of Turin sent a confrere, Domenico Nepote, to Saint Mary in Old Forge, Pennsylvania, in the diocese of Scranton. This Italian national parish, founded by diocesan clergy in 1896, remained under the direction of the Vincentians until the death of its pastor, James Lavezzari, 22 January 1942. In addition to his parish duties, he also served Italian immigrants elsewhere in the diocese, which had few Italian-speaking clergy of its own. The Turin province also supplied a confrere for the mission at Roseto, Pennsylvania, which eventually went to the Eastern Province. The parish of Our Lady of Pompei in Baltimore took the opposite course, that is, Archbishop Curley asked for Eastern Province Vincentians to staff this parish beginning in 1922. In 1928, members of the Province of Naples assumed responsibility for the parish. Luigi Scialdone, the first native Italian pastor and a former China missionary, guided the work for many years, and developed both a parish grade school and high school. Confreres from the Naples province also conducted retreats and missions for Italians elsewhere in the country, and continue in Baltimore.
Portuguese and Mexican Houses

The year 1968 saw the arrival of confreres from two other provinces, Portugal and Mexico. Calls had come from American confreres to have missionaries from Portugal as far back as 1911, but it was in November of 1968 that, at the request of Bishop James Connolly of Fall River, Massachusetts, Portuguese Vincentians opened a mission center there for their countrymen. This center served also as a source of funds for the home province. As many as seven confreres lived and worked in bilingual parishes, particularly in New Bedford and Fall River. In 1969, one of them established Our Lady of Fatima parish, Waterbury, Connecticut, in the archdiocese of Hartford. Mexican Vincentians took Saint Joan of Arc parish, one of three newly-established parishes in Weslaco, Texas, in order to minister to Spanish-speaking Catholics in that border area. The parish began in 1921 and had grown to such an extent that by 1968 the bishop of Brownsville was able to divide it into three, with the original location going to the confreres. In 1987, diocesan clergy took over the parish from the Community.

Conclusion

This review of Vincentian parish ministry strikes one with the large number of locations served by the Community. Many of these had only a brief history, but others have had a long and stable one. Invitations from bishops occasioned the largest number of these assignments, as they did in the time of Saint Vincent, and the American Vincentians accepted them, despite the disapproval of the international Community. A few parishes also developed to serve specific ethnic groups living within already established parishes (Germans, Poles, Italians, blacks). Occasionally the provinces sought out houses in various dioceses, with only modest success, such as in Boston and Cleveland. Many of these parishes were often intermingled with other apostolates (some of which disappeared later), and the confreres generally helped out in religious or secular institutions in need of their help, such as convents, hospitals and prisons. Also, the holiness of life and dedication of the confreres to all aspects of parish ministry helped overcome problems as they arose. The Vincentian tendency to make do, operating out of a poverty of resources, characterized several of the parishes. As times
changed and the church grew, so did the parishes. Many came to have the full “plant” in the American sense: church, rectory, school, convent, and sometimes other buildings, complemented with a large staff.

The ownership and management of parishes, as well as their inner workings remains a subject to be explored. At present, it can be said that in the early days the Community held legal title to its parishes, whereas in the last hundred years the dioceses themselves have retained ownership and simply entrusted the parishes to the Community. In recent years, individual provinces have gradually relinquished ownership to the dioceses. Apart from a few instances in Louisiana during Rosati’s administration, little evidence exists of problems between Vincentian pastors and lay trustees, although many pastors had to struggle to secure enough funds to provide for the necessities of life. In the period before 1888, at least, the Community had to rely on what little it could raise in the parishes, as from pew rentals and collections. Significant help came from the Association de la Propagation de la Foi, organized in 1822, and based in Lyons. It was established in some measure at Dubourg's urging, and the members gave substantial sums to his Louisiana missions. Help also arrived from other European benefactors, as well as from mass stipends. These appear, in fact, to have been a continuing and major source of income.

Parish organizations and activities, too, have received almost no attention in this review, yet all the parishes had them. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and the Ladies of Charity, both inaugurated in the United States by Vincentians, existed in many parishes, as did the Children of Mary in schools run by the Daughters of Charity. The number of confraternities, clubs and societies, with their processions and feast days, dramatic presentations, fairs, bazaars, athletic events, dinners and outings must have been enormous. Beginning mainly after 1880, the number of these societies peaked in the 1920s, and developed a strong sense of belonging in at least a certain portion of the parishioners. Vincentian parishes had to turn to self-help measures like these, since American Catholics in general were poor. As the social and economic status of their parishioners improved, the confreres, especially in more recent decades, decided either to turn over wealthier parishes to the dioceses, or to emphasize direct and indirect care for the poor, following the charism of Saint Vincent de Paul. This witness continues wherever Vincentians are stationed.
As the Community’s experience of parishes has grown, so its official attitude has changed. The new constitutions, published in an interim version in 1969, revised in 1974 and 1980, and definitively approved by the Holy See in 1984, show a shift of attention toward the parish apostolate in the Community’s official documents. In contrast to the 1954 constitutions, the statutes appended to the constitutions explicitly included parishes (Article 10) as works of the Community, so long as they generally serve the materially poor or are annexed to seminaries. The 1969 trial version did not mention apostolates in any great detail, being content with general norms. The declarations of the 1974 general assembly sought to remedy that lack somewhat, and included the justification for parishes that “we should strive to establish a continual mission in Vincentian parishes for the building up of small Christian Communities.” This remarkable statement bridges the gap between the original intention of Saint Vincent to preach missions and the modern reality of many parishes staffed by Vincentians. Although that sentence found no place in the constitutions of 1984, the assembly of 1980 added another justification for parishes, namely the small number of priests in an area. The idea of local adaptation within a general framework and the spirit of the Vincentian Community also characterizes the approach of the constitutions to parishes. With this, one can see a return to the original conditions agreed to Dubourg, Sicardi and De Andreis in 1815.

ENDNOTES

3. See contract, in Appendix A.
4. See contract, in Appendix A.
5. Dubourg's college served both lay and ecclesiastical students, and included among its professors Felix De Andreis, Joseph Rosati and Andrew Ferrari. Among its students (who also taught) were two future Vincentian bishops: Leo DeNeckere and John Timon. William B. Faherty, S.J., *Better the Dream*, Saint Louis, 1968, pp. 8-11.


10. See p. 273.

11. “Register of the Deliberations of the Council of the Province”, November 30, 1876, p. 46. (Underlining in the original.) Original manuscript, covering 1863-1929, in the provincial offices, Germantown, Philadelphia, PA.

12. The motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity in Emmitsburg, Maryland, continues to promote several of these devotions, and makes available red and green scapulars, as well as information about the Holy Agony.


14. Circular Letter of 30 August 1911. Paris. “Aux Missionnaires de la Province occidentale des États-Unis de l'Amérique du Nord,” p. 2. His reckoning of the number of houses with parishes was correct, but he omitted mention of the other works also carried on by many houses.


16. His cause for beatification has been introduced, along with other Spanish confreres martyred in the Civil War.


18. The official Latin text is found in *Vincentiana* 18 (1974) 293, paragraph 37.