The growth and maturing of the Church in missionary lands has traditionally been measured in many ways: for example by the number of converts, or baptisms, the number of churches built or charitable and educational institutions established, financial self-sufficiency, growth in native vocations, or the establishment of a native hierarchy. Yet the most revealing sign of the coming of age of a missionary church appears when the Church first takes the step of sending forth from its shores and resources its own missionary sons and daughters to preach the gospel in other lands.

From the earliest days of the establishment of the American republic, Rome and the various European churches considered the vast expanse of the territory of the United States, with its rapidly growing population supplemented by a constant flow of European immigrants, as a prime missionary territory of the Universal Church. Classified by Rome as a missionary territory throughout the nineteenth century, the United States depended heavily upon the Church in Europe for a seemingly unending flow of priests, brothers, and sisters, as well as a substantial financial backing—a wide ranging support consistently provided through the years with an unfailing generosity.

When the initial band of Vincentian missionaries to the United States left Italy in 1815, under the leadership of the Venerable Felix DeAndreis, they were but the first wave of Vincentians from all over Europe who volunteered to establish the works of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States and throughout the New World. Reading the list of these early Vincentian pioneers one easily recog-
nizes among them French, Italian, German, Irish, Belgian, and Spanish names. The Church and the Community in the United States grew phenomenally during the course of the nineteenth century. By the beginning of the new century both were approaching a level of maturity and stability that demanded of them a response to the new challenge of a missionary outreach to other lands.

In 1889, on the occasion of the centennial observance of the establishment of the American hierarchy, Herbert Vaughan, the bishop of Salford, England, and an avid promoter of the foreign missions, wrote to Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore these challenging words:

Can you expect that the second century of your existence will be as blessed and magnificent in its religious history as your infancy has been if you do not send forth your heroic missioners to bear the torch of faith into those dark regions which are now possessed by the enemy of man's salvation?!

Nineteen years later Saint Pius X, in his Apostolic Letter, Sapienti Consilio, removed the Church in the United States from the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. This action meant that in the eyes of Rome, the Church in the United States would now no longer be treated as a dependent missionary territory, but rather treated as a young, vital, church of which much could be expected in the years to come. Already we find that in the first years of the new century funds and personnel flowed from the Church in this country to the mission areas of the rest of the world. The American Vincentian provinces emerged to play their part in this movement.

In the year 1888, seventy years after the coming of De Andreis and little more than fifty years after its establishment by Paris as an independent province, the superior general, Antoine Fiat, divided the Province of the United States into two separate provinces, Eastern and Western. From that point, the two provinces grew steadily in personnel and in the scope of their respective apostolic endeavors. The Eastern Province, initially more cautious in terms of finances and the commitment of personnel than the Western Province, quickly established itself more firmly after the division. Thus in the years just prior to World War I, even though the Western Province grew larger in terms of manpower and the
number of established houses than the East, it was the Eastern Province which first had sufficient available resources to enter the new foreign missionary field.²

The Call South: To Panama and the Canal

The Early Years: 1914-1932

The scene of the first foreign mission of the North American Vincentians was the Central American nation of Panama. In establishing this mission the confreres followed a model which would govern the beginning of most of their missionary endeavors: they came to a missionary territory already the beneficiary of Vincentian labors; and they came in response to an invitation from the local bishop, himself a Vincentian. In the case of Panama, Vincentians of several different nationalities, who belonged to what was then called the Province of the Pacific, had been working in this area since 1875.

The republic of Panama, long a province of Colombia, had after years of bitter civil war won its independence in 1903. Panama, however, did not attain its independence without the help of the United States which had the ulterior motive of the building and the ultimate control of the long proposed interoceanic canal through Panamanian territory. With the coming of Panamanian independence the United States quickly negotiated and signed a treaty with the Frenchman Philippe Bunau-Varilla who was recognized as signing for Panama, even though the official Panamanian delegation had not yet arrived. Bunau-Varilla instead of representing Panama, in reality represented those business concerns interested in selling the remaining assets of the French company that had originally tried to build the canal. In an age of imperialism such foreign policy initiatives were often taken toward weak third world nations by the Great Powers, including the United States. Unfortunately the age of imperialism continued far into the century as, from the time of the signing of the original treaty on, there was periodic intervention by the United States in the internal affairs of Panama. The position of the United States towards Panama was, for many years, consistently supported by the ruling Panamanian oligarchy, who often requested United States intervention.
The Hays-Bunau-Varilla treaty of 1903 gave the United States effective control over the region of the site of the planned canal. As actual construction of the canal got underway, the area was flooded with over 40,000 foreign workers, many of whom were English-speaking and Catholic.

The bishop of Panama, Francisco Xavier Junguito, S.J., (1901-1911) previously faced with the task of rebuilding the Church in the face of hostile liberal governments and the aftermath of a destructive civil war, now had the further challenge of meeting the spiritual needs of the foreign workers under his ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the new United States Canal Zone. Throughout the more than seventy years of complete American administrative control the Canal Zone itself always remained under Panamanian ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The French and Latin American Vincentians, already laboring in the area, found their efforts to minister to these English-speaking workers seriously hampered by their inability to speak their language.

In 1909, Fernand Allot, one of the French confreres working in the area of the canal missions appealed to Patrick McHale, the provincial of the Eastern Province, for an American confrere to give a mission to the English-speaking laborers of the canal work camps in January 1910. Father McHale approved this request and subsequently assigned the first North American Vincentian to work in the foreign missions: Thomas McDonald, a veteran of the province's parish mission apostolate in the southern United States. McDonald preached the mission at the Gorgona mission station as requested, and in the following year McHale himself traveled to Panama to give a series of missions. In 1912 and 1913 the missions continued with other confreres. At this time the province began to consider the possibility of a more permanent missionary commitment to Panama.

In 1911 Bishop Junguito died, to be succeeded in the following year by Guillermo Rojas (1912-1933), a Vincentian from Costa Rica. Bishop Rojas who had served as a missionary in Central America for over twenty years before coming to Panama in 1910, brought to his episcopal assignment a firm determination to improve conditions throughout his diocese. He naturally turned to his own Community for assistance. In 1913 Bishop Rojas formally offered the Canal Zone to the Eastern Province as a mission territory. After a survey of the area and its needs by McDonald and Father Joseph McKey, the province formally accepted the offer, beginning a
commitment to the Panamanian Church which continues to the present day.

With the completion of the Canal in 1914, the United States quickly established what amounted to a colony, with an American way of life, within the borders of the Canal Zone. Father McDonald approached the new mission in this area with a clear set of priorities, including, first of all, establishing the church's undisputed legal title to its property in the Zone. Another goal aimed at the ouster of the ineffective and often scandalous transient priests whose presence the bishop reluctantly tolerated before the arrival of the Americans. The newly-founded city of Balboa within the Zone became the headquarters for the province's mission. McDonald used the successful missionary methods of the Alabama missions: a central community house for a team of priests who would then travel out to established mission stations along the route of the canal. A second confere, James Hafner, soon joined McDonald in Panama working in the Atlantic side of the Zone at Saint Joseph's Church in Cristóbal. In the following year Father Peter Burns arrived to begin his long career serving the Panamanian mission.

For pastoral purposes the Canal Zone missionaries divided the area into three general regions; the Pacific side, the Gatun Lake area, and the Atlantic side. In each of these regions attempts were made to establish mission stations to serve the local population. McDonald took charge of the activities of the mission in the Pacific side of the Zone but his work soon spread to the central lake region where for the first time he encountered the problems caused by the official policies of racial segregation in the areas under United States control.

From the time that the North Americans took over control of the Canal Zone the "Jim Crow" segregation laws of the United States were introduced and rigorously enforced not only against the black West Indian workers but also the native Panamanians. Two standards of housing and pay were established that symbolized this segregation. The American and European workers were paid in gold and lived in the best sections of the Zone. The West Indians and native Panamanians were paid in silver and were forced to live in segregated areas in sub-standard housing. This distinction between "gold" and "silver" would represent the reality of officially sponsored segregation in the Canal Zone throughout much of its history.
The scope of the mission soon expanded to the far western Panamanian province of Bocas del Toro, located four hundred miles west of the Zone. This rural agricultural area was the site of the vast banana plantations of the powerful and influential United Fruit Company with its many resident American employees. German Vincentians from Costa Rica ministered to the Catholics among the workers, but because of the entry of the United States and Panama into the war against Germany in 1917, the German priests could no longer cross the frontier into Panama. At Bishop Rojas’s request, Father Robert Schickling, from the Canal Zone mission, was assigned to Almirante in Bocas del Toro province. What had originally been intended as a temporary assignment became in 1920 a permanent one when the Americans received complete charge of the area. The headquarters of the Bocas mission was established on the island of Bocas del Toro fourteen miles from the mainland. In addition to the mission station at Almirante, there were mission stations established at Baseline and Guabito. In light of this expansion into Panamanian territory the focus of the mission necessarily widened to include, for the first time, the Panamanians, Jamaicans, and Indians who also resided in the area.

In these early years Thomas McDonald struggled in vain to maintain racial integration in the mission chapels in the Zone. Eventually however, the conditions grew so intolerable that the West Indian blacks themselves petitioned in 1921 for their own separate church. Bishop Rojas agreed and in 1925 established Saint Vincent de Paul parish in Panama City just inside Panamanian territory, as a separate black parish. The bishop turned once again to the Americans for assistance, and two confreres, Charles Stouter and William O’Neill, received assignments to the new parish.

During the 1920s the local Church in Panama and the Eastern Province’s missions in Balboa-Panama City, Cristóbal-Colón, and Bocas del Toro grew side by side. In 1925, Rome raised the diocese of Panama to the status of an archdiocese, and Bishop Rojas became archbishop. At the same time the Holy See established the vicariate apostolic of Darién in the eastern part of the country which included the area of the mission around Colón.

Thomas McDonald remained superior of the mission until 1927 when he was succeeded by another veteran missionary, Peter Burns, who in turn remained as superior until 1934. Burns proved to be a key figure in the first era of the mission’s development. During his years of leadership he supervised the construction of no less
Admission Day, Panama Novitiate, Boquerón, 11 March 1986
than seven churches and several schools. During these years the number of American missionaries in Panama increased. The Canal Zone mission, begun with only two priests in 1914, by 1920 increased to seven priests and by 1934 to fifteen priests. This increased commitment is even more notable in light of the fact that in 1920 the province accepted an additional mission in China, so that from that year to 1949 the province divided its available personnel for the foreign missions between China and Panama.

The death of Archbishop Rojas in 1933 serves as an appropriate point to assess the first twenty years of the American Panamanian mission. In balance the province found distinct advantages to the Panama mission which made it relatively easy to staff and maintain. First of all, the confreres stationed in Panama were fairly close to home and thus could be easily replaced as the need arose. Secondly the missionaries did not even need to know Spanish for their work in Panama since so much of their ministry at this time was spent with the English-speaking.

The mission to Panama, despite a slowly growing outreach to Panamanians, Indians, and black West Indians, remained in this early period, and for some time to come, essentially pastoral ministry to Americans living in a United States colony. Given the location and circumstances of the primary Canal Zone Mission, the commitment on the part of the province and of the missionaries themselves differed greatly from that which would soon be required for the China mission. The American identity of the parishes and mission stations served by the confreres were such that they were in most ways indistinguishable from an average parish in the United States. The confreres sent on mission to Panama had relatively little difficulty in adjusting to a situation which did not differ much from that which they left behind. Throughout these years, succeeding provincials of the Eastern Province usually relied on the proven personnel combination of a mission leadership consisting of experienced missionaries aided by young newly-ordained assistants, routinely assigned on a short-term (usually three years) basis.

The Middle Years: 1933-1963

In the Panamanian mission, the years from 1933 to 1945, the period of world economic depression and then war, were a time of quiet maintenance. The international conditions during these years,
which so directly involved the United States, precluded any increase in the province’s commitment although the province maintained previous levels of support and missionary policy. In 1943, Archbishop Maiztegui of Panama died and was succeeded by his auxiliary bishop, a Dutch Vincentian of the Central American Province, Francisco Beckmann. The twenty years of Archbishop Beckmann’s leadership would mark an era of notable expansion and progress for the Church in Panama, and correspondingly of the province’s mission there.

Leadership of the province’s mission in these years changed hands rather frequently. Joseph McKey followed Peter Burns as superior of the mission in 1934. Robert Gillard became superior in 1936, John Hild followed in 1940. Raymond Machate replaced him in 1946 and led the mission until the early 1950s.

The missionary experience during the post war years in Panama differed significantly from earlier times. The new global realities accompanying the Cold War and the atomic era were soon felt even in Panama. Some of these emerging trends included a growing Marxist influence and overt political activity, the strong emergence of Panamanian nationalism, and the growing urbanization and economic development of the country. All of these factors contributed to call forth from the Panamanian church and the American missionaries the development of a new missiology, a new sense of purpose and direction, a responsiveness to emerging needs, in short an even deeper level of commitment.

Archbishop Beckmann relied heavily on the Eastern Province to help him meet the needs of the Panamanian church as they developed during this period. The archbishop continually turned to the province for additional personnel and financial assistance. The province, in these years under the leadership of William Slattery, Daniel Leary, and Sylvester Taggart, responded quickly and generously to the appeals. The post war years saw a great period of growth and expansion within the Eastern Province itself. More men became available for service in Panama due to a notable increase in vocations, and the availability of some of the veterans of the Kanchow mission in China.

During these years the level of activity within the Canal Zone remained relatively stable. Confreres served over 3,000 parishioners at Saint Mary’s Church in Balboa, and Sacred Heart Church in Ancon, as well as the 18,000 largely West Indian parishioners at Saint Vincent’s Church in Panama City. In addition the confreres
visited numerous mission chapels, and served as chaplains to several hospitals, asylums, and even a prison. A new parish was founded at Margarita in 1950.

The greatest expansion in Vincentian activity in these years came in the provinces of Bocas del Toro and Chiriquí. In Bocas del Toro the port of Almirante grew tremendously as a result of post war prosperity and now was assigned a resident pastor in the person of Father Stephen Strouse. The town of Changuinola also received a permanent pastor. The Cricamola mission to the Guaymi Indians was established by Father Robert Doherty at this time.

As the province of Chiriquí grew in economic importance as the breadbasket of Panama, Archbishop Beckmann asked the province to help meet the region’s religious needs, especially in the District of Barú. In 1948 Father Joseph McNichol was assigned to Puerto Armuelles as pastor of San Antonio parish, and the Vincentian presence in this area began. Confreres went out from Puerto Armuelles to serve throughout the Barú district especially in the agricultural zones of Blanco, Corredor, and Laurel.

In 1951 Archbishop Beckmann again appealed for help in yet another district of Chiriquí province, Bugaba. Once again the province responded and the confreres led by Father Edward Gomez arrived to work in the province’s district center at La Concepción. Following the usual pattern, once confreres had established a local headquarters they spread out to serve mission stations throughout the far flung region. In 1953 when the Holy See established the new diocese of David embracing the provinces of Chiriquí and Bocas del Toro, the first bishop, Tomas Clavel selected Gomez as his vicar general. During these years Gomez worked tirelessly to organize the new diocese and provide for its financial stability. In 1957 Fathers James Gleason and Gomez were awarded the Order of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa by the government of Panama in recognition of their ministry in the area of the diocese of David. In the following year Gomez was forced to flee the country by striking students who resented his involvement in Panamanian politics.

The capital of Chiriquí province at David was the site of further missionary labors beginning in 1951. In that year, again at the request of Archbishop Beckmann, the province provided confreres to found a prep school to provide a Catholic education for boys in the area. Father John Cusack, an experienced educator from St. John’s Preparatory School in Brooklyn, was sent to found the school. This school developed into the Colegio San Vicente de Paúl.
Through the years a new campus was built to house the school and the province continually provided generous subsidies and the personnel necessary to run the school. This support continued until 1968. This house later became the headquarters for all Vincentian activities in the province.

In light of the rapid expansion of Vincentian works in Panama during the late 1940s and early 1950s, Daniel Leary, the provincial at the time, commissioned Father Joseph Konen, a veteran China missionary, who was now the superior of the Panama mission, to undertake an extensive survey of the mission. On the basis of this report, Leary established four separate canonical houses with local superiors in 1955. The four new houses were located at Balboa on the Pacific side of the Zone, Cristóbal on the Atlantic side of the Zone, Almirante in Bocas del Toro Province, and David in Chiriquí Province.

By 1955 the Eastern Province had increased its commitment to the Panamanian missions from a pre-war maximum of fifteen priests to more than thirty priests, a number which represented approximately ten percent of the province's personnel resources at the time, a level of commitment which would remain constant throughout this era. In the extent of its commitment to its mission in Latin America the Eastern Province was in the vanguard of a developing interest on the part of the Universal Church to the evangelistic needs of South America. In 1961 the Holy See issued a call for substantial personnel commitments from religious communities in the United States to the Latin American missions. Rome requested that each province of religious consider gradually committing ten percent of its membership in the coming ten year period, 1961 to 1971, to the evangelization of Latin America.

The focus and philosophy of the mission changed significantly during these years. Previous attitudes based on an American cultural missionary horizon began to evolve into a much greater appreciation of the depth of Panamanian culture, society, and religious experience. The mission still retained significant elements of an English-speaking focus, especially to the Americans in the Canal Zone, as well as to the West Indian blacks, yet this became less and less the main focus of the mission.

During this period, the attitude of viewing the mission as a short-term assignment which required little adjustment or change from life and ministry in the United States came to be considered a long-term vocation which required of the missionary a much greater level
Father Frederick McGuire inspects Japanese bombing of Nancheng, Kiangsi Province, China, 1942
of personal conversion rooted in an immersion in the language, culture, and religious experiences of the Panamanian peoples. The province seriously experimented with several methods of preparing confreres not only linguistically, but culturally for their work in Panama. In short, Vincentians in post war Panama discovered that missionary work did not just mean "donning a white cassock." By 1963 the Eastern Province's missionaries could reflect on twenty years of challenge and growth. The province's mission had matured in the post war era and had a new sense about it. The mission had expanded in every conceivable way since 1943. Now over thirty confreres worked in the mission, the majority of whom spoke fluent Spanish. In addition to the four canonically established houses, the confreres had built dozens of churches and mission stations. The missionaries sponsored ten Catholic primary schools and seven secondary schools. The first Panamanian Vincentian vocations received their formation in the province's seminaries in the United States. The diocesan structure of the Panamanian church was expanded by Rome several times during this era so that by 1963 Panama consisted of one archdiocese, three suffragan sees, a vicariate apostolic, and a prelature nullius.* The death of Archbishop Beckmann in Rome during the Second Vatican Council in 1963 marked the end of one era for the Panamanian church and the Vincentian mission, and saw the first glimpses of a new era which would dawn not only in Panama but throughout the Universal Church as the result of the Second Vatican Council.

The Years after the Council: 1963-1987

In the more than twenty years since the end of the Second Vatican Council, an era of continuous change and even turmoil throughout the Church, a time often characterized by a certain amount of confusion and the loss of a sense of purpose, the Eastern Province persevered in its commitment to supporting the mission in Panama. Throughout these years the tests of the depth of such a commitment—the assignment of personnel, and the

*A territory that belongs to no diocese but is directly subject to Rome. Such prelatures are particularly common in Latin America.
maintenance of an adequate level of financial support—continued to constitute the province's stance towards the mission. The Panamanian mission in turn, with a vision of the realities of the present and the challenges and possibilities of the future, continued to respond to a basic mandate of the Council, that of confronting the "signs of the times" within Panama and the Panamanian Church.

This most recent period of the mission's history can be described overall as one of an increasing nationalization of the mission. As the primary political trend within the Republic of Panama during this era has been the development of Panamanian nationalism culminating in the Panama Canal Treaty of 1977, the primary trend within the province's mission has been an attempt to become as fully as possible a distinctly Panamanian mission.

Years of heightened nationalistic tension between the United States and Panama over the 1903 Canal Treaty erupted in a serious crisis in 1964 when both countries broke off diplomatic relations with each other, and anti-American riots spread throughout Panama, threatening the safety of the confreres. In many areas the confreres and their property became targets for attacks by the rioters. Friendly Panamanian supporters of the missionaries successfully defended both the missionaries and mission property. Diplomatic relations were eventually restored between Panama and the United States, though Panamanian resolve to regain control of the Zone continued to grow. The rise of Panamanian nationalism in the political sphere was paralleled by a growing nationalistic feeling within the Panamanian church. The confreres in the missions were greatly affected by both of these trends.

During the last twenty years, the mission has continued to evolve in response to the changing needs and conditions of the church in Panama. In 1964 the confreres withdrew from Bocas del Toro province, turning it over to a group of Spanish Recollect Augustinians. In 1973 the areas of Chiriquí province cared for by the confreres in Concepción and Puerto Armuelles were expanded to include additional neighboring districts. The province of Chiriquí, especially in the districts of Alanje, Barú, Boquerón, Bugaba, and Renacimiento, and the area of the old Canal Zone would thus be the focus of the confreres' work from the 1960s to the present time.

The major internal development during these years that has been instrumental in maintaining a firm sense of purpose and direction within the mission is the "Panama Commission," first established
in 1968 by the provincial of the Eastern Province, Father James Collins. This commission gives the mission a formal means of consultative input to the provincial and his consultors with regard to decisions directly affecting the life and direction of the Panamanian mission. This commission is composed of six missionaries: one representative of each of the five canonical houses in Panama, and a president or coordinator of the group who represents all the members of the mission. The Panama Commission has proved to be a valuable tool in the mission's present era of development, and in its present relationship as a dependent mission to the Eastern Province.

At the core of the new missiology as it evolved in Panama in the post-Vatican II era has been a widely expanded vision and experience of team ministry. This experience of team ministry has in turn laid the foundation for the accompanying development of the comunidades de base (base communities). These groups attempt to form strong local faith communities that are self-directive and self-sustaining, and that rely on a limited number of priests not primarily for day to day leadership but for sacramental ministry and spiritual animation. In Panama the confreres began by joining with sisters from various communities and lay leaders from local areas to divide the responsibilities of the mission. The confreres divided the mission territories and assigned them to members of the team, either on an apostolate or a geographical basis. The confreres in the mission have been blessed over the years with the assistance of able co-workers. In the early years of the development of the local communities the confreres and sisters spent much time in careful and intensive training of core groups of lay leaders. Since 1976 much of this training has taken place at the Hector Gallego Center for Christian Formation founded in Volcán by Father Allan McLellan. In recent years as these lay leaders became active, they assumed increasing responsibility for the Church in their home areas.

In the area of the former Canal Zone, in the cities of Balboa and Colón, where throughout this period about half of the almost thirty American confreres worked, the missionaries also evolved with the changing needs of the large, primarily urban, areas entrusted to their care. The confreres employed many of the same pastoral approaches used by the missionaries in the provinces, and with much the same success. Without doubt the greatest change in the mission within the territory of the former Zone came with the
departure of most of the American citizens who lived in the area when it was controlled by the United States. With the departures of these Americans and their replacement by Panamanians, the English speaking areas of the mission have significantly decreased over the last ten years.

The year 1975 marked the centennial of the arrival of the first Vincentian who worked in the area that is now the Republic of Panama.* Since the goal of every mission is to grow to the point of a recognized juridical maturity, the confreres responded to an increasing movement and sentiment toward the step by step establishment of an independent Panamanian province. The attempts of the confreres of the mission to develop team ministry and lay leadership, their cooperation and support for the vision of the future developed by the Panamanian hierarchy, and the mission's growing Panamanian identity have during this period implicitly set the stage for such a development. In the past such a possibility had been put aside as premature, both from the standpoints of finance and personnel, yet developments since 1980 seem to indicate that these barriers may not remain indefinitely.

One of the most important signs of the possibility of an independent Panamanian Province came in 1978 with an attempt by the confreres in Panama to begin a concerted Vincentian vocation effort. This vocation effort yielded fruit in just a few years' time. In consultation with the provincials Fathers John Nugent, Gerard Mahoney, and the Eastern Province's Formation Committee, the mission established three levels of formation programs: a house of studies and discernment for college age students known as the Centro Paulino, located in Panama City, the Noviciado de San Vicente de Paúl in Boquerón; and Tlalpan in Mexico City as the site of theological formation. Thus within the period of five years, the Eastern Province and the Panamanian mission have set the groundwork, programs, and rationale for the formation of Panamanian confreres within a Central American context. Most importantly for the future, however, is the fact that the mission and these programs have been blessed with vocations.

Whether an independent Panamanian Province can be financially self-sustaining remains an open question, yet with such voca-

*Father Felipe González, a Peruvian who arrived to work with the Daughters of Charity, and who died in Panama in 1890.
tional progress it would seem that in the end financial considerations may eventually give way, as indeed they did in the case of the development of the original province of the United States. This would allow the Eastern Province’s more than seventy years of dedication to the Church in Panama to come to completion in the replacement of a dependent American mission with an independent Panamanian Province.

The Call East to China

The Early Years: 1920-1938

As the mission in Panama continued to flourish during the 1920s and afterwards, half a world away in the vast expanses of China, the second foreign mission of the Eastern Province and the first foreign mission of the Western Province began to establish themselves.

China was by no means a new mission territory for the Congregation of the Mission. The Vincentian presence in China can be traced back to the arrival in 1699 of a missionary group comprised of members of several religious orders and sponsored directly by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. The Vincentians Ludovico Appiani and Johann Mullener joined this group. This first Vincentian presence in China lasted only fifty-eight years. In 1710 a third Vincentian, Teodorico Pedrini joined Appiani and Mullener. The first two Chinese Vincentians, Paul Sou and Stephen Siu later augmented this group. Working under difficult conditions these Vincentian pioneers each spent many years in prison, house arrest, or exile. Since Paris sent no further reinforcements, the Vincentian presence in China temporarily lapsed when the last of this pioneer group died in 1757.

The Congregation returned to China in 1785 when, at the request of the French government, Pope Pius VI entrusted them with the former Jesuit missions there following the suppression in 1773 of the Society of Jesus. The heroic work of the martyrs Francis Regis Clet, and John Gabriel Perboyre in the first half of the nineteenth century gives evidence of a renewed interest and Vincentian commitment to the Church in China. Throughout the nineteenth century increasing numbers of confreres from several different
European countries including France, Poland, Holland, and Italy attempted to establish a secure foothold in China. By the early 1920s, at the time of the foundation of the American missions, the Community’s long commitment to China had borne real fruit. At this time there were two independent Chinese provinces with a combined total of over 270 priests and brothers, including eleven bishops. Although most of these missionaries and all of the bishops were Europeans there were also more than ninety native Chinese priests.

World War I took a devastating toll on a whole generation of French manpower and the French provinces found that they could no longer staff their missions at previous levels. Both Paris and the Holy See at this time revealed the high hopes and confidence that they had in the American provinces by calling upon them to take up some of the responsibilities of the Congregation in China. In 1920, on an official visitation to Germantown, Patrick McHale now an assistant general of the Congregation, announced that the Eastern Province had agreed to a request from Paris to enter the Chinese missions by accepting the recently erected vicariate of Kanchow as a mission of the province.

Father Frederick Maune, the provincial of the Eastern Province, called for volunteers and from the large number of respondents chose the following confreres to form the pioneer mission band: Fathers John O’Shea (named superior), Daniel McGillicuddy, Francis Meade, Thomas Crossley, and Leon Cahill. Interestingly enough, in addition to these five priests, four theology students were also assigned to continue their studies on site in China to eventually be ordained there for service in the new mission. The four student missionaries were Francis Stauble, John McLaughlin, John Colbert, and George Erbe. The rather unusual and daring experiment of sending students to the missions to complete their theological education and be ordained on site was not to be repeated. The difficulties surrounding the establishment of an adequate formation and educational program according to American standards proved insurmountable in China. This first band of missionaries arrived in China on 5 August 1921, inaugurating what was to be a thirty year American Vincentian commitment to the missions of mainland China.

Before entering into a full account of the establishment and development of the American Vincentian missions in China, it is first necessary to place missionary work in China in some sort of
CHINA

Area Shown
realistic perspective. For much of modern Christian missionary history, both Catholic and Protestant, China served as an almost mystical focal point, drawing extensive missionary attention and fervor. China's non-Christian, non-Western culture, and the sheer magnitude of the evangelistic challenge of "saving" hundreds of millions of souls, proved irresistible to many Christian denominations. It is easy to look at the statistics of Christian growth in China during this era and come away with the initial but very much mistaken impression that Christianity was finally making a major impact on China. The statistics in themselves do record impressive gains, yet in China all such progress needed to be measured against the vast surrounding population which remained untouched or resistant. For all the years of intense missionary labors in China, the Church had only begun to scratch the surface of the total Chinese world. When the Eastern Vincentians arrived in southeastern China in their newly assigned vicariate of Kanchow in southern Kiangsi province with an area of 15,000 square miles, they found a population estimated to be 4,000,000, of whom only 8000 were Catholics.

When the Western Province arrived a few years later in the vicariate of Yukiang, located north and east of Kanchow in eastern Kiangsi province, they found a similar situation: a vicariate of 17,000 square miles with a population estimated to 8,000,000, of whom only 30,000 were Catholics.

The men who volunteered for the China mission often paid a high personal price. Besides the great distance and long ocean journey which separated them from home, the China missionaries found themselves immersed in a non-Christian, non-Western, and in some ways an anti-Western society with ancient thought patterns and customary ways of doing things, all of which differed radically from their own culture and experience. The hard work and the primitive conditions prevalent in China took a fierce toll on the health and lives of the missionaries, some of whom returned to the United States broken in physical or mental health, while others died in the prime of their lives.* In addition, in order to be effective in their ministry, missionaries to China often had to learn the local

*The confreres who died while working in China were Bartholomew Randolph, who died 3 September 1922 at age 55; George Erbe, 12 August 1934 at age 46; Bishop Edward Sheehan, 8 September 1933 at age 45; and Bishop Paul Misner, 2 November 1938 at age 47.
dialects of the area in which they labored, an arduous task given the complexity of the Chinese languages. The missionaries to China also dealt with the chaotic political conditions present in China throughout this period, contending alternately and often simultaneously with local warlords, roving bandits, hostile communist revolutionaries, troublesome Chinese government and military officials, Japanese invaders, and the warfare that was constantly going on during this period among some or all of these groups.

In 1920, the same year that the Eastern Province had agreed to enter China, the superior general also asked the Western Province to consider such a move. The province declined his request at that time, citing a serious financial crisis and a chronic personnel shortage. Paris, for its part, refused to accept this answer as final. During the next two years through a continuing correspondence with the motherhouse, as well as personal visits by two assistants general, Patrick McHale and Emile Cazot, the offer was kept open. In the fall of 1922, the superior general, Francois Verdier, visited the United States and made it clear that he and his council expected the Western Province to begin a missionary presence in China as soon as possible with as many confreres as possible.

The provincial of the Western Province, Father Thomas Finney, together with his council, accepted the mission in the spirit of obedience and called upon the province for volunteers. The response to the call on the part of the confreres was enthusiastic and widespread. From the many who volunteered they chose three confreres to form the pioneer missionary band: Fathers John Lavelle, Edward Sheehan, and Paul Misner.

From the start of their work in China the superior general explained to both provinces that it was expected that the full jurisdiction over the vicariates in which the Americans would be working would be turned over to them, and that their commitment to these missions would require an ongoing provision of missionaries and financial support from the home provinces for many years. On this basis, yet not without some understandable fears and concerns about the future, the American Vincentian missionary presence in China began.

Once in China, working alongside and learning from the veteran European missionaries, both American missionary groups quickly settled into a routine of intensive pastoral activity: working in parishes, visiting widely scattered and remote mission stations, establishing schools, teaching in minor and major seminaries,
working closely with the Daughters of Charity, as well as acclimating themselves to the unfamiliar Chinese environment and languages. In these early years some definite tension existed among the groups of veteran European and neophyte American missionaries, but this diminished gradually as the Americans acquired experience and self-confidence. In addition, the continuing assignment of missionaries from the United States proved the seriousness and the extent of the American commitment and presence.

In Kanchow the early years of the mission proved to be extremely difficult. Besides the normal struggles of adjustment the confreres found themselves working in an area which was the site of almost constant warfare among the various groups competing for control of China. In 1922, shortly after arriving in China to supervise the education of the American students in the mission, Bartholomew Randolph died, becoming the first American missionary to die in China. Three of the four American students who had come to China were ordained during these early years and immediately took their places in the work of the mission. In 1924, the provincial of the Eastern Province, Frederick Maune, made the trip to China for an extensive visitation. By 1928, the Eastern Province had committed fourteen confreres to the China mission, and accordingly the American role in the mission increased greatly. In 1928, Bishop Paul Dumond, the vicar apostolic of Kanchow and a Swiss Vincentian, requested from Rome the appointment of an American coadjutor. John O'Shea, the superior of the Eastern Province's mission was appointed by the Holy See and consecrated at Kanchow on 1 May 1928 by bishops who were all European Vincentians: Paul Dumond, Jean Louis Clerc-Renaud, and Louis Fatiguet. The appointment of Bishop O'Shea as coadjutor signaled that preparations were proceeding for transferring the administration of the vicariate into American hands. This change of administration finally took place three years later in 1931 when Bishop Dumond was transferred to the See of Nanchang and Rome named Bishop O'Shea as the vicar apostolic of Kanchow.

After the elevation of John O'Shea to the episcopacy, leadership of the Vincentian mission in Kanchow fell to Daniel McGillicuddy who served from 1930 to 1936. From 1936 to 1945 Lawrence Curtis was the superior of the mission to be succeeded by Joseph Gately who then led the mission until the end of its existence.
From the years 1926 to 1934 communist troops often fought in the area of the vicariate of Kanchow. During this time they occupied large areas of the vicariate where they continually battled with government troops and terrified the countryside. It should be noted that the communists were fiercely anti-missionary and always considered missions and missionaries as choice targets for their attacks, particularly since such missions were composed of foreigners.

The personal dangers often faced by the missionaries were illustrated in 1929 when Edward Young of the Kanchow vicariate was captured by the communist forces operating in the area around his mission. These insurgents sent Bishop O'Shea a note listing the demands for Young's release, a $20,000 ransom, the closing of the mission, and the departure of Young from the country. When his captors told him of their demands, much to their confusion and consternation he laughed in their faces, knowing the impossibility of such demands even being considered. Before Bishop O'Shea could reply to the ransom demands, the communist forces fled with their captive to the mountains. Young eventually did escape, but not without narrowly avoiding execution.

In March of 1930 for a tense six day period, the communist rebel forces laid siege to the city of Kanchow, being thwarted at that time by the city's massive walls. In 1932 the Red forces returned with an estimated 60,000 troops and laid siege to the city once again, this time for a period of thirty-two days. Trapped within the beleagured city were Bishop O'Shea, five American Vincentians, four Chinese priests, a group of Chinese Sisters of Saint Anne (known as the Mou-Mous), the orphans they cared for, and the students of the city's minor seminary. An estimated 4500 government troops within the city held the attackers off. Although the mission sustained some physical damage, no casualties resulted. Finally, three divisions of government troops arrived and attacked the communists from the rear, forcing them to abandon their siege and to retreat. The city found itself saved in the proverbial nick of time, since it was later discovered that the communists had mined the walls in preparation for blowing them up. The vicariate was not finally cleared of the communist forces until 1934. As Bishop O'Shea surveyed his battered vicariate he found destruction everywhere. Almost all the progress of recent years had been wiped out. Much of the mission needed to be rebuilt.
Chinese Boy, Model for Vincentian Foreign Mission Society Advertisements, about 1935
Conditions in the vicariate of Yukiang were less severe than those of Kanchow during this period, but in their own ways proved troublesome and difficult for the confreres there. Within a year after his arrival, illness forced the return of John Lavelle to the United States. The two remaining missionaries, Sheehan and Misner, split up, Edward Sheehan assisting at the parish at Poyang, with Misner appointed as director of the seminary at Kienchang. In 1923 three additional recently-ordained confreres arrived from Saint Louis. By 1925, however, Father Sheehan found it necessary to return to the United States to plead for both added personnel and increased financial support from the province. He returned with two additional confreres. In March of 1928 Father James Lewis of the mission at Kingtehchen was viciously attacked by a roving group of government soldiers within the mission compound itself and severely wounded. The nature of his wounds and generally declining health brought on by the difficult living conditions forced Lewis to return to the United States to recuperate.

The year 1928 proved to be a turning point for the Western Province's mission in Yukiang. Early in that year it was rumored in China that Edward Sheehan was to be made a bishop in preparation for the full American administration of the vicariate. Yet, in November of that year Sheehan received a disturbing cable from the provincial, Father William Barr, informing him that the province had been "relieved" of its China responsibilities and that as soon as arrangements could be made the missionaries would be summoned back home. As much as Sheehan wanted to avoid being made a bishop, he was appalled by the apparent decision to abandon the mission. Sheehan sent cables of protest to Barr and to the superior general in Paris and waited for an answer or some further clarification from the provincial. The basis for Barr's withdrawal order was his conviction that, as his predecessor and his council had feared, the province could not possibly afford to support the mission properly because of its continuing problems with finances and lack of personnel at home. There also seems to have been some resentment on the part of the province to the criticism and opposition of the veteran French missionaries toward their American confreres. Sheehan finally received word about the fate of the mission; he would succeed Bishop Clerc-Renaud, and the American Vincentians from the Western Province would formally take over the full administration of the vicariate. In addition, all confreres who were willing to continue working within the vicariate,
regardless of their province of origin, were to become members of the Western Province. One can only imagine the flurry of high level discussion and communications among Saint Louis, China, Paris, and Rome which finally resolved the controversy. Bishop Sheehan was consecrated by his predecessor Bishop Clerc-Renaud on 14 July 1929 in the chapel of the Daughters of Charity in Poyang.

The new bishop faced two immediate problems as he took charge of the vicariate: a shortage of priests, and the continuing occupation of mission residences by soldiers of the Chinese government. The shortage of priests was at least temporarily relieved in early 1930 when Sheehan received word from Barr that told him of additional personnel from the province. The second problem proved to be much more difficult. Through four frustrating years Sheehan waged a constant campaign with both the American and Chinese governments, trying to enlist their aid in forcing the ouster of government soldiers from all of the illegally occupied mission properties. Frustrated with government double talk and inaction, the bishop would often take the situation into his own hands and personally try to convince the soldiers to leave. By May 1933 the last of the troops had finally departed, but Sheehan did not enjoy the fruits of his hard work, for on 8 September 1933, he died of pneumonia in Saint Louis Hospital in Nanchang.

Paul Misner, a former seminary professor and the last of the pioneer group, who succeeded Sheehan as superior of the Vincentsians, also succeeded him as the vicar apostolic of Yukiang. Misner was consecrated on 25 March 1934 by his confrere, Bishop O'Shea of Kanchow. In the meantime, during the late 1920s and early 1930s, there was a gradual increase in the number of American missionaries. By the time of Misner's consecration there were fourteen American confreres from the Western Province working in Yukiang. Misner, who felt himself unqualified for the job, accepted his episcopal appointment reluctantly. As bishop, he faced the ongoing problems of inadequate personnel, precarious finances, an often lukewarm attitude on the part of the provincial towards the mission, the activities of bandits, soldiers, and the Japanese, as well as a certain lack of cooperation among the missionaries themselves. Misner's experiences as bishop only increased his feelings of inadequacy and in 1938 he wrote to the provincial Father Marshall Winne, expressing his desire to resign. Within a month he died of a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of forty-seven.
Bishop John O'Shea, C. M.
The War Years: 1937-1945

As if the conditions in China were not bad enough, they worsened with the invasion launched by the Japanese in 1937. At first the Kanchow and Yukiang areas did not directly experience the effects of the fighting, but the invasion caused working conditions in the mission to worsen. Yet, at least until the declaration of war between the United States and Japan following the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, the confreres as citizens of a neutral country were personally safe from attack. They often painted large American flags on the roofs of mission buildings to protect them from Japanese air raids, but after the declaration of war not even the missionaries' personal safety was assured, and in fact was often in danger.

After the death of Bishop Misner in 1938 Father Charles Quinn the pro-vicar administered the vicariate with Father Stephen Dunker serving as superior of the Vincentian missionaries. Because of the outbreak of the Second World War it would take two years for Rome to name a successor to Misner. The successor chosen by Rome was Quinn himself, who at the age of thirty-four was consecrated by Bishop O'Shea in the city of Yukiang at the pro-cathedral on 3 October 1940. During 1939 and 1940, almost as if sensing that this might be the last opportunity to give increased aid to the vicariate, Father Marshall Winne assigned eight additional missionaries.

With the declaration of war between the United States and Japan, Bishop Quinn and the confreres in the Yukiang vicariate bore their own share of troubles with the Japanese, being forced for a time in 1942 to flee to the mountains away from the oncoming invaders. When the missionaries returned to their areas they found the results of Japanese atrocities. The children and old people who had been unable to flee to the mountains were murdered, as was an Italian confrere Humberto Verdini. In the spring of 1942 the missionaries were able to aid two air crews forced down in the vicariate while returning from General Jimmy Doolittle's bombing attack on Tokyo.

The hardest hit of the American missions was once again Kanchow. The Japanese invaders were particularly attracted by the nearby American air bases and the fierce bombing and fighting caused great destruction and loss of life throughout the vicariate. The Japanese attacked in force in 1944 and overran the entire area.
The American confreres evacuated with the 14th United States Army Air Corps. Bishop O'Shea sent most of the confreres back to the United States for safety's sake, although he and four other priests remained as chaplains in Kunming with the air corps. There they would remain until the end of the war made it once again safe to return to Kanchow.

At the end of the war both vicariates had the experience of surveying the human and material wreckage wrought in the missions by the war knowing the great task of rebuilding that lay ahead.

_The Communist Revolution: The Final Years 1945-1951_

At the end of the Second World War Bishop O'Shea and the few priests who had remained with him returned to their vicariate. Many of the priests who had been forced to return to the United States during the war now returned to China, accompanied by new recruits, raising the number of missionaries to twenty-two. In the Yukiang mission the confreres and Bishop Quinn also welcomed additional men from the States, bringing the number of missionaries to twenty-six. In 1946 the Holy See erected the vicariates of Kanchow and Yukiang as dioceses, with Bishops O'Shea and Quinn named as the first ordinaries. The confreres in both dioceses turned to the task of rebuilding after the ravages of war, not knowing at the time that their years in China were numbered, for no sooner had one war ended than another began. The communist forces under Mao Tse-Tung and the nationalist forces under Chiang Kai-Shek resumed their long and bitter battle for the ultimate control of China.

In the post war years the China missions focused their efforts on relief and reconstruction. Frederick McGuire of the Eastern Province distinguished himself with his relief work under the auspices of the Catholic Welfare Committee in Shanghai. The severe material destruction and the chaotic social and economic conditions resulting from years of continuous warfare wiped out most of the progress of previous years and created new problems as well. Yet in the face of these conditions the American provinces developed a renewed sense of commitment to the China mission, as evidenced by a post war increase in both personnel and financial assistance.
The work of recovery and reconstruction in the missions in China came to a halt in 1949 when the communist forces finally defeated the nationalists and took control of the country. The focus for the missions in the next two years would be one of mere survival in the face of an increasingly hostile government. At first the communist takeover seemed to have little impact on the missions. The new government imposed few restrictions and even allowed some mission schools to reopen, yet this all proved to be the eye of the hurricane. Once they consolidated their position throughout the country, the new Chinese government began a well-planned and systematic campaign to destroy the foreign missions in the country as part of a wider plan to create an independent national People's Patriotic Church with no ties to the Holy See.

As the communist plan unfolded, regulations and restrictions on the missionaries and their activities, such as housing, supplies, and traveling became more stringent. Missionaries needed passes for any travel. The government confiscated mission equipment and even personal belongings of the missionaries. Before long government harassment turned into open persecution. House arrests of the missionaries became common, as did imprisonment, repeated questioning by authorities, and public trials. One by one or in small groups the missionaries were expelled from China.

All the foreign priests of the Yukiang mission had been expelled by the end of 1951, Bishop Charles Quinn, Fathers Thomas Smith, and Robert Kraff being the last to leave. The missions of the other provinces in China such as that of the Polish confreres in the diocese of Shuntehfu suffered the same fate as those of the Americans. Several confreres of the American Polish Vice-Province served in this mission, and after their expulsion from the mainland many of the missionaries including Bishop Ignacy Krause found refuge in the United States. In Kanchow, as the expulsions continued, the government imprisoned Bishop O'Shea early in 1952, and in September of that year after months of harsh imprisonment finally expelled him. For the first time in thirty-one years John O'Shea set foot outside China never to return. Joseph Hill of the Kanchow mission, the last American Vincentian to leave, reached safety in Hong Kong in January 1953. The communist government worked swiftly; in a matter of a few years it expelled more than 5000 missionaries. The Chinese government completely destroyed the foreign missions in the country and placed the Church in China at their mercy. The ultimate fate of most of the Chinese confreres left
behind in the country is to this day unknown. When Joseph Hill walked across the border into Hong Kong, thirty years of American Vincentian commitment to mainland China came to a sad and tragic end.

The Mission in the Far-East continues In Taiwan: 1951-1987

The Pioneer Years: 1951-1963

By 1951, when it became evident that even the few remaining missionaries in China would eventually be expelled by the new Chinese government, Father Paul Lloyd, who was then the Director of the Vincentian Foreign Mission Society for the Western Province, visited the island of Taiwan to survey its suitability as a temporary mission for the expelled Chinese missionaries of the province. As a result of this visit, Father James Stakelum, the Western provincial, accepted an invitation from the Prefect Apostolic, a Spanish Dominican, Monsignor Jose Arregui, for the confreres to work among the Mandarin-speaking refugees in the south-central section of the island. In January, 1952, the first two confreres arrived to begin work in Taiwan, both of them veterans of the Yukiang mission, Leo Fox and Harold Guyot.

With the fall of China in 1949 the nationalist government under Chiang Kai-Shek, together with an estimated 2,000,000 refugees, fled the mainland for the offshore island of Taiwan. As can easily be imagined, such an influx of large numbers of refugees to a relatively small and unprepared environment in a short period of time, created a host of material and spiritual problems on the island, problems which became the immediate focus of the Vincentians' work.

The first period of the Western Province's mission in Taiwan is best understood within the context of the conditions and assumptions upon which the mission was originally entered into. As already mentioned, the province first viewed Taiwan as being a temporary apostolate. Although the mainland had fallen, the fiercely anti-communist nationalist Chinese and Americans believed that at some point the communist government would be overthrown and the old missions on the mainland would be reopened. The focus of the province's commitment to the Taiwan missions in
this era was thus always with one eye trained on the mainland, and the other looking to the immediate needs of the refugees now in exile in Taiwan.

While waiting for the hoped for downfall of Mao's government, the confreres began to expand the mission and establish the necessary structures for effective evangelization in Taiwan. As in similar mass refugee situations, there were the immediate and pressing needs for food, medical attention and other relief assistance; the confreres worked diligently to attend to them. Spiritual needs increasingly became the focus of the early missionaries as the ranks of the small groups of mainland Catholic refugees soon began to be swelled by a remarkable number of conversions. To accommodate this growth the number of confreres working in the mission grew from two in 1952 to twelve by 1960. The exiled Bishop Quinn came to the mission from the United States in 1955 to resume his work, a labor cut short by his premature death on 12 March 1960. In addition in this period and throughout the history of the mission several confreres of different nationalities who had worked on the mainland joined the American effort in Taiwan.

Two centers for American missionary activity developed in Taiwan in this period: the first was Tainan where Leo Fox, the superior of the mission, was stationed; the second was Kaohsiung where Thomas Smith headquartered. Moving out from the central mission stations, the confreres established a series of widely scattered mission stations, which in time usually developed into regular parishes. The mission also served the needs of American servicemen and their families at this time.

The first phase of the Taiwan mission ended with the death of Leo Fox on 21 March 1963. The confreres at that time could look back on ten years of solid progress and growth. Material and economic conditions on the island had improved dramatically. The church in Taiwan had also grown and had quickly developed parochial, charitable, educational, health care, and diocesan institutions, all of which the confreres were involved in at some point within their respective areas.

*The Middle Years: 1963-1980*

After 1963 the mission entered what would prove to be a crucial phase in its history. During the 1960s only two newly ordained
confreres were added to the mission. Financial aid to the mission from the Western Province also shrank during this period. Within the mission itself in this era a certain lack of unity existed between the confreres working out of Tainan and those confreres working out of Kaohsiung. There seems in all of this to have been some confusion as to the nature of the province's commitment to the mission itself. By the late 1960s it became increasingly clear even to the most optimistic that the fall of the communist government was not an imminent or even a remote possibility, and that the original temporary objectives of the mission in Taiwan no longer reflected the missionaries' own experience of being drawn into an identification with, and a service to the developing Church in Taiwan. What was needed was a definite commitment on the part of the province to the mission that had developed in Taiwan, rather than to an imagined temporary mission to China-in-exile, which happened to be located on the island of Taiwan.

During the time of Father James Fischer's term as provincial from 1961 to 1971, the province seriously examined its commitment in Taiwan and considered the options of phasing the work out, keeping the status quo, or expanding and developing. Expansion and development were ruled out because of the perennial shortage of personnel and funds. Yet, although there would be no expansion, the province did at this time clearly state its commitment to the existence of the apostolate in Taiwan. The province decided to maintain the status quo of the mission with the then existing levels of personnel and apostolic activities. This arrangement remained the shape of the commitment of the province to the confreres in Taiwan throughout the 1970s. During this time the confreres working in the mission continued their normal routine of maintaining their pastoral and parochial presence in Taiwan. Also some of the confreres began to study the Taiwanese language to enable them to minister to the native Taiwanese as well as the Mainland Chinese. In 1970 Paul Liang who had joined the Community after his ordination became the first local vocation for the mission. He was followed in 1984 by John Wang, the first ordinand of the mission. During the 1970s for the first time in almost ten years the mission received additional assistance from the province with the assignment of three newly ordained confreres, as well as the coming of the first two brothers, Stephen Gallegos and Mark Argus for service in the mission.
Bishop Charles Quinn, C. M.
The most recent developments with regard to the mission in Taiwan have centered around attempts, beginning in the early 1980s, to develop a pastoral plan and focus for all the Vincentian missions throughout the country: a plan whose aim was the eventual erection of an independent province which would effectively unite the three separate national groups of confreres working throughout Taiwan: the Dutch, the Chinese, and the Americans. Preliminary talks began in earnest in Rome in 1980 during the General Assembly in discussions among the three provincials of these national groups and the superior general Father Richard McCullen. In 1984, in an attempt to bring a greater level of unity, direction and local control to the American mission, Hugh O'Donnell, the Midwest provincial, appointed Father Edward Gallagher as regional superior. The discussions and negotiations preliminary to unification continued among the Dutch, Chinese, and American confreres themselves. During a visitation to Taiwan on 15 January 1987 Father McCullen accompanied by Father Jean Gaziello, the assistant general for the foreign missions, erected a new Province of China. The new province resulted from the suppression of the old Chinese provinces on the mainland, and the unification of all the national groups of confreres working in Taiwan, as well as any of the Chinese confreres who may still be alive on the mainland. The superior general named Edward Gallagher as the first provincial of the new province. With this action the sixty-five years of the American mission to the Chinese came to an end in the midst of a new beginning in the continuation of the centuries old Vincentian evangelization mission among the Chinese.

Mission Procures

Shanghai, Hong Kong

The missions of the Congregation within China, like those of many other communities, centralized their various operations in the country through a Mission Procure. From 1802 to 1857 the Vincentian center was located in Canton moving from there to the city of Shanghai. The Procure provided a link with the home country,
handled finances, shipping, documents, and provided a place for relaxation and recuperation when needed. In 1950, the Procure moved to Hong Kong. Juridically part of the General Curia, its members were provided by the Western (Midwest) Province. The confreres have also engaged in parochial and other pastoral services in Hong Kong, and keep informed about ecclesiastical matters in the Peoples' Republic of China. Among other responsibilities, the members of the Procure assisted the Community in helping to arrange the various indemnification payments made by the Japanese and Chinese governments as a result of war damages and confiscations.

New Missions in the Third World: 1975-1987

In 1975 the superior general, Father James Richardson, formally divided the Western Province of the United States into three independent provinces: the Province of the West, the Southern Province, and the Province of the Midwest. Given the pressing evangelistic needs of the third world churches, it was not long before each of these provinces was approached by Richardson with a request to begin new missions in these areas of the world. Once again, in spite of growing personnel shortages within the American provinces themselves, the provinces responded to the appeals.

Burundi: 1979-1985

Father Richardson asked the Province of the West in 1979 to establish a mission in the African nation of Burundi. Soon after the province formally accepted the mission, the first two confreres departed for Paris for language studies, and from there traveled to Burundi. The confreres assigned to this mission were James McOwen and Clayton Kilburn. They were followed two years later by Bernard Quinn. The confreres were able to establish themselves in the country and were closely associated with the Daughters of Charity already working there. From the beginning the work of this mission was seriously hampered by the internal political conditions of the country, which made permission for missionaries to enter the country extremely difficult to obtain and working conditions within the country tense and restrictive. By 1985 the illness of McOwen,
and the increasing hostility of the government towards the other two missionaries led to their departure from Burundi. There seems to be little hope that the present government of Burundi will soon allow any further missionaries to enter the country, especially in light of what appears to be its determination to rid the country of all foreign missionaries.


In 1980, Father Richardson forwarded to Father Hugh O'Donnell a request from Bishop Charles Cavallera, I.M.C., of Marsabit, Kenya, for confreres to undertake the direction of a seminary he intended to found in Maralal. The seminary would train young men in their own home tribal areas within the diocese. The province accepted this mission, and in December 1980 the first three confreres left for Africa: Father Patrick O'Brien who was named superior of the mission, Father James Richardson (the superior general-emeritus), and Brother Paul Joseph. The seminary, designed to educate seminarians at all levels of formation, has grown steadily in the first years of its existence. After three years Brother Paul Joseph returned to the United States to be replaced by Father Theodore Wiesner. During the last several years a number of confreres from the province have traveled to Kenya to teach in Good Shepherd Seminary on a short term basis. In 1985 the province extended its formal commitment to the mission for an additional ten years and planned to send a fourth confrere. In January of 1987 the first of the tribal vocations at the seminary was ordained to the priesthood, and Father Richardson returned to the United States. Little more than four months after the joy of the seminary's first ordination tragedy struck the mission with the sudden death from hepatitis at age 52 of Theodore Wiesner on 27 May. Wiesner, long a leader in the province's seminary apostolate, was buried at his request in Kenya in the land and among the people that he had served.

Guatemala: 1980-1987

Also in 1980, five years after its establishment, the Southern Province began to consider opening a foreign mission. The province
originally considered the possibility of working in the nation of Haiti in conjunction with the Daughters of Charity already there, but decided that a Spanish speaking mission would better fit the province's identity and present mission within the area of the southern United States. In addition the province hoped to find a needy area which would be located relatively close to the United States so that the mission and missionaries would continue to be an integral part of the province, and the province for its part could be integrated as much as possible with the mission. Thus the scope of the search narrowed to Latin America.

At this time the apostolic administrator of Petén in Guatemala, Monsignor Jorge Avila, C.M., approached Father Richardson asking for assistance to meet the urgent needs of his vicariate. Father Richardson in turn recommended the Southern Province for this mission. Father Louis Franz, the provincial, visited Guatemala in January 1980, and the province in its next assembly accepted the invitation to work in the parish of San Benito de Palermo in San Benito, El Petén. The first two confreres assigned to this mission were Father Daniel Borlik and Brother James Steinbach. They were joined two years later by John Cawley and then in 1985 by Miles Heinen. Since the foundation of this work the province's vision that it would remain an integral part of the province has largely succeeded, as confreres from throughout the South have taken an active interest in the mission, visiting and working there for short periods of time as their own work in the United States allowed.

In 1987 the Province of the West in a desire to maintain a missionary presence in the Third World, especially in an Hispanic context, entered into an agreement with the Southern Province to help staff and maintain the mission in Guatemala.

The work of the confreres in Guatemala has developed along much the same line as the contemporary Panamanian mission, being rooted in a commitment to the concepts of team ministry and the development of strong local faith communities.
Other Missionary Endeavors

Individual Confreres serving in Missions

Throughout the missionary history of the Congregation, besides the official acceptance by provinces of missionary responsibilities, there has been a strong tradition of individual confreres responding to missionary appeals for specific needs throughout the world. In the early days of the mission in the United States several of the confreres who worked in this country later moved on to work in other needy mission areas of the world. In this century many confreres have generously responded to appeals and volunteered for missionary work. Members from the Eastern Province have worked on the missions in Madagascar, Iran, Vietnam, Indonesia, Ecuador and Bolivia; Western Province confreres ministered in Chile from 1964, with two of them, Raymond Ruiz and Robert Schwane, serving as provincial; also confreres have worked at various times in Puerto Rico and the Philippines.

Conclusion

In the short seventy-three year history of the American Vincentian missionary effort abroad, in such diverse places as Panama, China, Taiwan, Kenya, Burundi, and Guatemala, confreres from the American provinces have labored with dedication and distinction in a faithful response to the Gospel command and their Vincentian charism to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ to all the nations. Little could that first band of missionaries who came to the United States in 1816 have imagined that the tiny mission which they struggled to establish would one day grow to be five independent provinces which were themselves capable of great evangelistic efforts throughout the rest of the world.

2. The comparative personnel statistics for the year 1914 when the Eastern Province first began its missionary outreach are as follows: houses, 10; priests, 103; brothers, 13; students, 34; novices, 30. In 1914 the Western Province consisted of 16 houses; priests, 124; brothers, 12; students, 29; novices, 8. Source: *Catalogue des Maisons et du Personnel de la Congrégation de la Mission*. Paris, 1914.