SAINT
VINCENT DE PAUL
CORRESPONDENCE
VOLUME I
Reproduction of a painting which had once belonged to Queen Anne of Austria and then to the Hôtel des Invalides. It is now in the possession of the Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission, 95 rue de Sèvres, Paris. In the opinion of experts, this portrait was painted in the time of Saint Vincent de Paul by an artist who had the Saint before him.
SAINT
VINCENT DE PAUL
CORRESPONDENCE
CONFERENCES, DOCUMENTS
I
CORRESPONDENCE
VOLUME I (1607 - 1639)
NEWLY TRANSLATED, EDITED, AND ANNOTATED
FROM THE 1920 EDITION
OF
PIERRE COSTE, C.M.
TO

VERY REVEREND JAMES W. RICHARDSON, C.M.

WHO AS SUPERIOR GENERAL

OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

AND

OF THE COMPANY OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

INITIATED AND ENCOURAGED

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION
OF FATHER COSTE'S WORK

Some three years before the death of Saint Vincent, on the 15th of August 1657, Brother Ducournau, who had been Saint Vincent's faithful and hardworking secretary for close on twenty years, wrote a short memorandum on the importance of preserving in writing what he calls "the holy discourses of Monsieur Vincent." Brother Ducournau was looking to the future and he set out not only arguments for but the rebuttals of the arguments against preserving what Saint Vincent had said.

"It is important, it would seem, for the Company in the future to possess an exact collection of the holy discourses of M. Vincent and to preserve them, for the following reasons:

1st. The best bequest of fathers is the good advice and instructions they leave their children.

2nd. In the world, men take great care to have an inventory made out, and possession taken, of a perishable heritage.

3rd. . . . those who waste a splendid, entailed estate do an irreparable injury to their successors.

4th. If the works he has accomplished are works of God, as they seem to be, God must have
bestowed His Spirit on them in order to accomplish and maintain them; consequently, the advice and instruction employed to that end should be regarded as divine, and collected as a heavenly manna, whose various flavors attracted so many different sorts of persons of both sexes and of every rank in life, who have associated themselves in various ways, on behalf of so many different enterprises, and who have been supported by his guidance. . . ." (Chollier: Ms. account of Brother Ducournau, pp. 151 ff.)

Brother Ducournau must be vigorously clapping his hands — if applause is allowed in heaven — to manifest his approval and satisfaction at the work which has been done in publishing in the English language an official translation of the entire works of Saint Vincent. Congratulations are certainly in order to a host of people who over the years have asked for and encouraged the publication of these volumes. Our most generous tribute of praise and gratitude must be offered to those who have laboured to present us with this English translation of “the holy discourses of M. Vincent.”

It is now some sixty years since Father Pierre Coste, C.M., critically edited the correspondence, conferences, and writings of Saint Vincent. It was Father Coste, too, who has written the three volume definitive biography of the Saint. Happily this biography has been translated into English by Father Joseph Leonard, C.M., who also succeeded in publishing a translation of the Conferences to the Daughters of Charity, as well as a volume of letters from the Saint’s correspondence. To date, however, we in the English-speaking world have been without an official translation of the entirety of what Father Coste edited. This void, and it has been a keenly felt one, is now being filled. Hopefully within the next four years or so, all Saint Vincent’s writings will be available to us in English. The work will go
even beyond that of Father Coste, for the volumes which are presently being prepared will contain some material of Saint Vincent which has come to light during the past forty years and was unavailable to Father Coste — furthermore, the original footnotes of the French edition have been revised and supplemented.

The Editorial Board has made a wise decision in commencing the project of translation with Saint Vincent's correspondence. His correspondence fills eight volumes of Father Coste's French edition. In these volumes, dare I say it, one finds Saint Vincent at his best. Someone once observed that it is better to write for oneself and have no public, than to write for the public and have no self. Saint Vincent certainly did not write for the public. He wrote to individuals, addressing himself to their particular queries and needs. He wrote, as he counseled us to do, with God alone in view. For that reason, the letters of Saint Vincent are particularly valuable in revealing to us the depth of his insight into the human condition, the length of his patience, and the breadth of his love.

"Ignorance of the Scriptures means ignorance of Christ" observed Saint Jerome. It could be said that to be unacquainted with the writings of Saint Vincent is to miss knowing him deeply. The writings of Saint Vincent are like a deep mine from which we can quarry strong rocks of wisdom upon which we can build our own lives and the lives of the poor of Jesus Christ. Let me echo that voice which Saint Augustine mysteriously heard saying: "Take up and read . . . take up and read."

RICHARD McCULLEN, C.M.
Superior General

Rome, 9 November 1983
LETTER FROM FATHER VERDIER  
Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission  
To Pierre Coste, C.M.

Paris, February 17, 1920

Father and very dear Confrere,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You undertook and have just brought to a successful conclusion a fine and carefully done work which is destined to make Saint Vincent de Paul better known through the publication of his letters.

The first printed collection, going back to 1880, is nearly out of print; in addition, it has many gaps. Yours, which is more complete, will contain several hundred letters, unpublished or only partially known, which had escaped the research of your predecessor. You have added, and the innovation is fitting, letters received by the Saint.

Having recalled that immediately after his death the number of his letters was estimated at about 30,000, and that in the eighteenth century Collet had been able to consult almost 7,000, the editor of 1880 adds, not without some sadness: "Today we have only 2,500 of them; the others, alas! are lost forever or buried in private archives. However incomplete this collection may be when compared to what has perished, no means of enriching it have been neglected, and there is very little chance of adding to it hereafter in any appreciable way."

You were unwilling to make this resignation your own; and if it is true that fortune favors the daring, it is no less true that Providence rewards the persevering. You are an encouraging example of this fact. You searched diligently, for a long time and everywhere, even as far as America, and made invaluable discoveries; invaluable because of the great number of new letters, invaluable because of the intrinsic worth of many of them. These discoveries allowed you to complete letters of which we possessed only a part, to date others more accurately, and to correct the names of certain recipients which were doubtful until now or at times incorrect.

You knew how to seek and to find; you knew how to read so as to restore to us the text of Saint Vincent in its perfect integrity. It is truly the Saint still speaking and still repeating to us what he wished to say to his
correspondents in the way and with the forms and expressions with which he wished to say it.

It gives me great pleasure to thank you for this work. The better great men are known, the more they are appreciated; and if they are truly great men, they are loved even more. Saint Vincent has a conspicuous place among these truly great men: the Church recognizes him and proclaims him one of her heroes; and his country, too, counts him among those of her children who bring her the most honor.

The reading of his letters, in which he paints his own portrait, will make him better known and, consequently, better loved. By knowing him better and loving him more, your readers, or rather his, will feel themselves grow better, not to mention the special pleasure that will be experienced by those lovers of things of the spirit, connoisseurs of the history and customs of the epoch in which the Saint lived.

Not only will the children of Saint Vincent de Paul's spiritual family, the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity, be in a position to enjoy this interest in edification and erudition; the great associations which lay claim to his name, the Ladies of Charity, the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul, and still others, less known but no less attached to his name and his spirit, will likewise be able to relish it.

Finally, the literary public itself will have every facility for becoming more intimately acquainted with this great man and this great Saint. Your work, in fact, while it brings about a happy contradiction to the preceding editor's discouraged regrets concerning the number of letters, also satisfies his desire to make this treasure public. "Such a work," he says speaking of his collection, "if it were made available to the public, could not fail to arouse the interest of its readers to whom it would offer a considerable number of documents as precious as they are edifying and almost all unpublished."

This wish is now fulfilled and well fulfilled, thanks to your publication. All that remains is for me to wish your work the widest distribution, a wish that I make wholeheartedly as I await with entire confidence its realization.

Believe me always, Father and very dear Confrere, most devotedly yours in Our Lord.

F. VERDIER, C.M.
Superior General
INTRODUCTION TO THE FRENCH EDITION

Saint Vincent de Paul was a man of action. He also wrote a great deal. A man of action is, perforce, a man of relationships, and the more numerous the relationships are, the more abundant is the correspondence necessary to maintain them.

It is estimated that more than thirty thousand letters were penned by the Saint or his secretaries. According to Collet, there were still six or seven thousand of them in 1748. After more than three centuries, this treasure has been considerably impoverished. We would not be able to publish even eighteen hundred of them today if we were to adhere to letters for which we have the complete text.

Of all Vincent de Paul's correspondents, none was in more regular contact with him than Louise de Marillac. This collection contains about 400 letters from the Saint to his devout collaborator. The most favored after her is Firmin Get, Superior of the house in Marseilles, to whom 150 letters were written. Jean Martin, Superior in Turin, received about 130; Edmond Jolly, Superior in Rome, almost 120; Charles Ozenne, Superior in Warsaw, about 100; and

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1Pierre Collet, *La vie de saint Vincent de Paul* (2 vols., Nancy: A. Leseure, 1748), 1, p.IV. Pierre Collet was born August 31, 1693, in Ternay (Vendôme). He entered the Congregation of the Mission September 6, 1717, probably as an ordained priest, and pronounced vows September 7, 1719. He died October 6, 1770.
Etienne Blatiron, Superior in Genoa, almost 80. Then come in order of number Bernard Codoing, Brother Jean Parre, Antoine Portail, Louis Rivet, Jacques Pesnelle, Marc Coglée, all members of the Congregation of the Mission. For several years the Saint made it a rule to write every week to the Superiors of the houses in Marseilles, Rome, Genoa, Turin, Warsaw, and others; he was faithful to this even when he had nothing to say. Therefore, in many cases, the dates of the letters we still have allow us to guess, almost with certainty, the dates of those that are lost.

Except when illness prevented him from doing so, Vincent de Paul never stopped writing in his own hand to Louise de Marillac. Until 1645 he took care of all his correspondence himself. That year, overwhelmed with work, he took as his secretary his compatriot, Brother Bertrand Ducournau, who was educated, wrote well, loved the work, and joined boundless dedication to unerring judgment. The following year Brother Louis Robineau was appointed sec-
ond secretary. The extant letters are almost all in the handwriting of Saint Vincent or of these two Brothers. The transcription of Circular Letters was entrusted to temporary secretaries.

The Saint sometimes says that he is dictating his letters. Was he in the habit of doing this, and did the word "dictate" have in his mind the absolute meaning we give it today? One cannot help but notice a considerable difference between the style of the letters written by his own hand and those simply bearing his signature. The former are more concise, more virile, more lively; they have more the stamp of the superior who holds authority and is conscious of his responsibility. We perceive more clearly in these letters the language of a man who speaks in his own name, and they are more interesting to read.

Once his letter was finished, Saint Vincent would reread it, make the corrections he thought necessary, sign it, and add whatever he had forgotten in a postscript. Then he folded it and applied the seal that can be seen at the beginning of this volume. The seal pictured the Savior evangelizing the poor. Around it, the words *Superior Generalis Congreg. Missionis* indicated on the outside the source of the letter.

His many occupations left the Saint little time for his correspondence, so we find him making use even of free moments spent outside his house. He himself says in one of his letters that he was writing it out in the street. He often

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November 1, 1650. For thirty years he fulfilled the functions of secretary in the service of Saint Vincent and wrote for the author of the Saint's biography some notes which we still have. (Cf. vol. IV, no. 1527.)

6 See the letters of June 21, 1653, to Emerand Bajoue (vol. IV, no. 1633); of August 10, 1657, to Edmond Jolly (vol. VI, no. 2333); and of August 24, 1659, to François Feydin (vol. VIII, no. 2948).

7 See the letters of June 30, 1656, to Jean Martin (vol. V, no. 2089); and of October 25, 1658 (vol. VII, no. 2693), and June 26, 1654, to Firmin Get (vol. V, no. 1756).

8 Letter of July 28, 1651, to Jean Martin (vol. IV, no. 1388).
took time from his rest, and sometimes, overcome by fatigue, he would fall asleep while he was writing; the handwriting of several letters clearly shows the influence of sleep.\(^9\)

Before 1639, the date always follows the signature except when there is no room at the bottom of the page;\(^{10}\) from 1640 on, it is always put at the top.\(^{11}\) Letters to Louise de Marillac are dated only when she is traveling or when the Saint himself is away from Paris. When the date is missing, it is often replaced by the day of the week.

The letters to the Missionaries and to the Sisters all begin with this greeting: "The grace of Our Lord be with you forever," a quite sincere expression of the most intimate desire of his heart. Certain feast days suggested a different form at times: "May the Holy Passion of Our Savior urge us to do and to bear everything for His love!"\(^{12}\) or: "May the devotion of Our Lord's disciples assembled to pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit be impressed upon your heart forever!"\(^{13}\)

Saint Vincent appears to us in his letters as his biographers describe him: simple; good; humble; wise; practical; not losing sight of the most minute details of a business matter; his eyes always raised to God, his rule and his guide; grateful for benefits received; and full of respect for people holding high positions.

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\(^9\) For example, the letter of March 15, 1638, to Lambert aux Couteaux (vol. I, no. 316).

\(^{10}\) This is the case with regard to the letter of November 2, 1636, to Saint Louise (vol. I, no. 248); of February 21, 1638, to Antoine Lucas (vol. I, no. 307); of February 20, and March 15 and 22, 1638, to Lambert aux Couteaux (vol. I, nos. 306, 316, and 320); and of June 2, 1638, to Jean Bécu (vol. I, no. 326). The copyists have almost always placed the date and the day of the week at the head of the letter.

\(^{11}\) From July 1639 to January 1, 1640, the Saint varies; at times the old habit prevails.

\(^{12}\) Letters of April 11, 1659, to Guillaume Desdames and Edmond Jolly (vol. VII, nos. 2810 and 2811).

\(^{13}\) Letter of May 24, 1637, to Saint Louise (vol. I, no. 267).
He goes straight to the point except when he has a reproach to make, for then he begins by humiliating himself.

When he quotes Scripture, most often from memory, we must not look for completely faithful reproductions of the sacred text.

He knew how to give his sentences an original twist, for example: "M. Alméras no longer has a fever, nor have I any news to give you."\textsuperscript{14} Or he sets aside the serious tone to say a pleasant word: "I am indeed consoled," he writes to the Superior in Turin, "that Brother Desmortiers has made such progress in the language that he is able to say: Signor, si."\textsuperscript{15} After telling about the shipwreck of a vessel carrying some Missionaries who were being sent to Madagascar, the Saint adds that, having gotten into a small boat with provisions for three or four days, they arrived at Saint-Jean-de-Luz after two long weeks "in good health and with a good appetite."\textsuperscript{16}

Although Saint Vincent was not much given to distractions, we find a few in his correspondence. One of his letters to Pierre Escart, Priest of the Mission, ends with the words, "who am, in His love, Madame, your most humble servant."\textsuperscript{17} This title of Madame he absentmindedly gives to Mademoiselle Le Gras on two occasions.\textsuperscript{18} Two letters were left unfinished without the Saint’s noticing it.\textsuperscript{19} Here and there we find words repeated, left out,\textsuperscript{20} or obviously incor-

\textsuperscript{14}Letter of June 19, 1654, to Thomas Berthe (vol. V, no. 1752). See also the letters of August 14, 1638, to Robert de Sergis (vol. I, no 339); and of December 1, 1646, to Antoine Portail (vol. III, no. 899).

\textsuperscript{15}Letter of June 22, 1657, to Jean Martin (vol. VI, no. 2290).

\textsuperscript{16}Letter of January 9, 1660, to Guillaume Desdames (vol. VIII, no. 3063).

\textsuperscript{17}Letter of August 26, 1640 (vol. II, no. 476).

\textsuperscript{18}Vol. I, nos. 49 and 151.

\textsuperscript{19}Letters of September 17, 1647, to Mathurin Gentil (vol. III, no. 985) and of June 13, 1654, to Marc Coglée (vol. V, no. 1751).

\textsuperscript{20}Letters of December 1654 (vol. V, no. 1819) and of August 1, 1659 (vol. VIII, no. 2927), to Jean Martin and of March 1659 to Saint Louise (vol. VII, no. 2791).
rect. We have had to rectify several inaccurate dates in the originals. With regard to these distractions, which can easily be counted they are so rare, we must take the secretaries into account.

The letters of Saint Vincent merit publication as historical documents to provide information on the life of this great man who unquestionably holds first place in the history of charity, and must be ranked foremost among reformers of the French clergy. They also merit it because of their literary value, which places their author among the fine prose writers of the French language in the seventeenth century.

We still possess the originals of a good number of his letters, the majority divided into five collections or files.

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Files of the Mission. — The Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission possesses 305 originals, 36 rough drafts, 10 facsimiles, and 42 copies from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was much richer before the Revolution. The looting of Saint-Lazare in 1789, the dissolution of the Congregation in 1792, and gifts given too frequently have contributed to its impoverishment. All these letters, with the exception of seventeen, were published in 1880 along with the other letters of the Saint by the Secretary General of the

21Letters of May 13, 1639, to Robert de Sergis (vol. I, no. 377); of November 13, 1640, to Jacques Tholard (vol. II, no. 495); of November 20, 1644, to Guillaume Delville (vol. II, no. 733); of February 14, 1648, to Antoine Portail (vol. III, no. 1016); of March 22, 1652, to Lambert aux Couteaux (vol. IV, no. 1473); of June 13, 1654, to Marc Coglée (vol. V, no. 1751); and of February 5, 1660, to Jean Martin (vol. VIII, no. 3075).

22Letters of May 1, 1633 (vol. I, no. 137), and December 12, 1639 (vol. I, no. 411), to Saint Louise; of March 22, 1652, to Lambert aux Couteaux (vol. IV, no. 1473); of October 10, 1657, to Jacques Chiroye (vol. VI, no. 2408); and of September 12, 1659, to Guillaume Desdames (vol. VIII, no. 2980).

23Three hundred forty-seven if we add the forty-two letters from the Hains file which will be mentioned further on.
Congregation of the Mission, Father Jean-Baptiste Pémartin.

Files of the Daughters of Charity. — The collection preserved at the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity is made up almost entirely of letters to Louise de Marillac and to the first Sisters of the Company. It comprises 275 originals, of which 22 eluded Father Pémartin's research.

Files of Turin. — The Turin files were created at the time of the Revolution. The letters composing them were brought from Paris to the house of the Priests of the Mission in Turin by Carlo-Domenico Siccardi, Assistant of the Congregation, who had been entrusted with depositing them in a safe place. There are 346 of them: 324 originals, 11 rough drafts, and 11 copies from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Twenty-four are unpublished. We find in this collection almost all the letters to Jean Martin.

Files of Cracow. — On December 5, 1904, the originals of 167 letters addressed to the first Missionaries of Poland were brought to Father Józef Kiedrowski, Visitor of the Province of Poland and Superior of the house in Cracow. There were 150 of them from Saint Vincent, 1 from the Queen of Poland, 2 from René Alméras, 2 from Edmond Jolly, 2 from Jean Dehorgny, 2 from Thomas Berthe, etc. It is thought that these documents belonged to the Warsaw house before the dispersion of 1864, and that a Priest of the Mission had placed them in safekeeping with a Catholic family. Father Pémartin was familiar with all but five of these letters.

Files of the Hains family. — At the time of the dispersion of religious Congregations at the end of the eighteenth century, Jean-Baptiste Moissonnier, Superior of the house in

Marseilles, took with him the letters of Saint Vincent preserved in the archives of that house. After his death (January 17, 1813), these letters went to M. Nodet, his heir, father-in-law of M. Hains, a merchant in Marseilles, who had 57 of them in 1886. The latter's daughter, a Daughter of Charity in Neuilly-sur-Seine, still had 42 of them until recently. She has just parted with them generously in order to give them to the Superior General of the Priests of the Mission. In the beginning, the files contained more than 150 letters. The ones that are left are almost all addressed to Firmin Get. Four of them are missing in the collection published in 1880.

The originals placed on sale by the Charavay firm of Paris would form an important collection by themselves alone if they were gathered together, because there are about ninety of them. We were able to copy some of them on the premises before they were sold, or trace them to collectors. The majority of these letters are known to us only through copies, through the work of Father Pémartin, or through the concise information given in catalogues.

The Sainte-Geneviève Library would have furnished us with ten originals if an unscrupulous hand had not gone off with them. There are at least copies of them left, all transcribed — except for the letter to the Abbot of Grandmont — by Father Prévot, who wrote on the back of folio 2: "These letters from Blessed Vincent, written for the most part to the archivist of the Congregation of Sainte-Geneviève, are in a folio volume entitled on the back: Lettres de prélats depuis l'an 1653 jusqu'en 1660. The volume is bound with green sheepskin and contains some letters prior to 1653." The volume is still extant, but without the letters in question. Four of the originals have since been put up for sale by M. Charavay.

25Ms. 2555.
The old collections of Saint Vincent's letters have been of great use to us. We find in them a number of letters for which we no longer have the originals. Let us review the principal ones.

At the time of the process of beatification of Saint Vincent, several sessions were dedicated, as is customary, to the examination of his writings. The tribunal had 344 letters reviewed and kept 32, probably the most important, in order to add them to the dossier of the process. These 32 originals, all in the Saint's own handwriting, belonged to the house of Saint-Lazare. Experts were called in to ascertain their authenticity. A sworn copyist transcribed them into the volume of the official written records of the sessions. The copy was compared to the original and the slight deviations that were discovered were noted in the margin. Therefore, these are authentic copies, of the same value as the originals. It is still possible today to see the perfect conformity of those letters whose originals have not been lost. Among these letters, 5 are unpublished; 20 were known to us only by fragments, which had usually been altered; and the other 7 give us a more authentic text than that published in 1880.

The Archives of the Mission possess two old registers of copies, which we shall call, in order to distinguish them, Register 1 and Register 2. Register 1 is bound with boards and measures 340 by 220 millimeters. These Italian words written on the first page tell us the number of letters it contained when it was complete: Copie di lettere n° cento settantotto-178-scritte da San Vincenzo di Paoli portate da Parigi l'anno 1792. The disappearance of the last page or pages has reduced the number to 174. The 175th letter begins at the end of the seventy-second page and was continued on the seventy-third, which we no longer have.

A portrait of Saint Vincent, beneath which are written the
words: Sanctus Vincentius a Paulo, Congregationis Missionis et Puellarum Charitatis fundator, was added at the beginning of the collection. The manuscript itself could well belong to the seventeenth century. The writing, though not beautiful, is legible. The letters are given in their entirety. The designations: "signed, not signed, holograph, hand-written rough draft," indicate that the copyist had before him the original documents themselves or copies of them. No letters to the Priests of the Mission are found in this collection. Four are addressed to the Queen of France, 3 to the Queen of Poland, 2 to the Pope, 2 to Mazarin, 1 to the Nuncio, 9 to cardinals, 23 to bishops, 7 to the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, 1 to Turenne, 1 to Louise de Marillac, 5 to Daughters of Charity, 11 to Mademoiselle du Fay, 11 to Visitation nuns, 2 to Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, 2 to Louis de Chandenier, etc. As far as can be judged from the 13 letters of the Register whose originals have come down to us, we can rely completely on the accuracy of the text. All but one of the letters in this collection appeared in 1880.

In the manuscript life of René Alméras, Saint Vincent's successor, we read: "It is impossible to express the care he took to follow step by step the mind of this first Superior. Not satisfied with having brought to light his life, in which the qualities of his direction are described, he felt it his duty to search further among his letters where he has, as it were, engraved his spirit, his maxims, and his character on an infinity of subjects while speaking to all sorts of people. To this end, he had excerpts taken from them and had them bound in thirteen or fourteen quires. . . . And in order that those who would succeed him in the direction of the Company might also profit from these same letters and more easily draw from them the instructions they would need, a few months before his death²⁶ he had them arranged accord-

²⁶September 22, 1672.
These excerpts were classified under fifteen headings:

1. Institution, perfection, government and works of the Congregation of the Mission in general
2. Orders and advices given to Visitors and Superiors
3. Admonitions, words of encouragement, and congratulations to individuals
4. Missions in Christian countries and among unbelievers
5. Seminaries and other functions of the Institute
6. Practice of certain virtues
7. Deceased members of the Company
8. Letters of consolation to lay people who were undergoing a trial
9. Gratitude to friends and benefactors
10. Advice given and good works suggested even to distinguished people of rank
11. Various business affairs
12. Struggle against Jansenism
13. Assistance of the poor
14. Direction of the Daughters of Charity
15. Direction of the Visitation nuns

Volume I is the only one we have. It covers merely the first three parts of this vast program. We shall call it Regis-
ter 2. It is 370 millimeters high and 270 millimeters wide. It contains 350 pages and gives us 549 fragments, or rather 548, because one of them is a duplication. More than 100 of these fragments are from letters whose entire text we have elsewhere. With the exception of about 20, all are excerpts from letters addressed to members of the Congregation of the Mission. The handwriting is beautiful, regular, and can be read quite easily. The copyist never writes the word Monsieur at the beginning of the letters, nor the initial greeting customary with the Saint. He did not feel obliged
to copy the original in a servile way. Ordinarily he arranges the first sentence of his excerpts in such a way as to remove any dependence on the part he omits. He modernizes the vocabulary and does away with lengthy sentences. However, his modifications are not of great consequence and, on the whole, his text is indeed that of the original. So that some idea of this may be grasped, here, from letter 91, is the passage he altered the most:

Text of Register 2. — He did me the honor of telling me that he had consulted his religious about our manner of acting in choir, the housing and furniture, and the board that those who would wish to live with us would pay. Now, with regard to this last point, which is that each religious would pay only two hundred livres board, I shall tell you, Monsieur, that I accept this most willingly, although having calculated the expense on the present cost of living, it will cost us more, and although the board payments even for the students are eighty écus.

Real text. — The above-mentioned Prior did me the honor of telling me yesterday evening that he had consulted his religious about our manner of acting in choir, the housing and furniture, and the board that those who would wish to live with us would pay. Now, with regard to the last difficulty, which is that each religious would pay only two hundred livres board, I accept this most willingly, although I have calculated the expense exactly from what it has cost us at present and it will cost us more, and although even the students are paying ninety écus.

However insignificant these changes may be, it is to be regretted that the copyist made them. His excuse is that he was living in the seventeenth century which did not have, like the twentieth, a concern for meticulous accuracy. The

27 Letter to Guillaume de Lestocq, Pastor of Saint-Laurent.
majority of his contemporaries proved less scrupulous than he. We are borrowing eight unpublished fragments from Register 2.

Manuscript 1292 of the Municipal Library of Avignon is described as follows in the catalogue: “Eighteenth century, paper, 94 pages, 262 by 190 millimeters, bound in chamois leather.” The title is: Lettres choisies du Vénérable Vincent de Paul, instituteur et premier Supérieur Général de la ... Congrégation de la Mission. These letters, or rather these excerpts from letters, 99 in all, to which are added as a supplement 10 other fragments, are arranged in 8 groups according to the instruction they contain:

1. Trust in God and abandonment to Providence
2. Perseverance in one’s vocation
3. Regularity and perfection
4. Care of health and charity towards the neighbor
5. Care of the sick, mutual support and union
6. Courage to overcome one’s own inclinations for the glory of God
7. Trust in God and mistrust of self
8. Prayer, gratitude

Almost all the fragments of the Avignon manuscript are in Register 2 and are found there with the same variants. Of the three fragments that are the exception, two are known from other sources. Therefore, we shall borrow from this manuscript only one excerpt, which has already been published in the 1880 collection.28

The Avignon manuscript represents a collection of manuscripts in fairly general use in the houses of the Priests

28This excerpt, no. 968 (vol. III), is taken from a manuscript entitled: Lettres choisies du Bienh. Vincent de Paul, instituteur et premier supérieur général de la congrégation de la Mission. This anthology, compiled between 1729 and 1737, is found at the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity. It is from the same family as the Avignon manuscript, reproduces all the letters in the same order, and adds a ninth section containing nineteen letters, all related to the direction of the Daughters of Charity.
of the Mission before 1792. We still have two other examples of it left.

One of them is manuscript 20 of the Chamber of Deputies: eighteenth century, paper, 143 pages, 200 by 145 millimeters, bound in sheepskin. It has the same title, the same divisions, the same grouping of the letters, reduced here to 75. In addition, we find in it a copy of the alleged death sentence passed against Our Lord by Pilate and a supplement of 23 fragments, all relating to the Company of the Daughters of Charity, which are found only in this manuscript. Of these fragments, 5 have remained unpublished.

The other manuscript is at the Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission. It is bound in boards, belongs to the second half of the eighteenth century, and contains 74 fragments on 122 pages. It measures 217 by 150 millimeters. It stops at the sixth part, of which it gives only one letter, or rather, letter fragment. In short, it is an incomplete copy of the Avignon manuscript and has nothing special to offer.

Manuscript 869 of the Lyons Library bears the title: *Livre contenant l'abrége de la vie des prêtres, clercs et frères de la Congrégation de la Mission qui ont vécu et qui sont morts dans la pratique des vertus convenables à leur vocation*. In this collection, wherein we find the full-length accounts about René Alméras, Edmond Jolly, and Jean-Baptiste Anselme, Priests of the Mission, a place was assigned to the correspondence of Saint Vincent. The *Extraits des lettres de saint Vincent* go from folio 168 to folio 196. They contain the eulogy of recently deceased Missionaries. Some of these fragments have not yet been published. They can also be found in the Library of the Calvet Museum in Avignon, in the Delandine manuscript 774, which reproduces the entire contents of the Lyons manuscript and several additional documents. Both manuscripts are from the eighteenth century. The one in Lyons is bound in parchment and consists of 286 pages measuring 260 by 90 millimeters.
The departmental archives of Vaucluse possess a quarto register of 37 pages, classified D 274, which contains 42 excerpts from letters of Saint Vincent, letters addressed for the most part to Superiors in Rome. This manuscript contains nothing that we do not know from other sources.

The Marseilles manuscript, as we call it because of its title: *Extraits des lettres de saint Vincent de Paul déposées dans les archives de la Mission de France à Marseille*, belongs to the Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission. It is a simple notebook of 17 pages on which have been transcribed in roughly chronological order, probably shortly after the publication of Father Pémartin’s work, 64 generally short fragments of letters addressed mainly to Firmin Get. It was impossible for us to locate the document that the copyist had in hand. The conformity of the verified text with excerpts of letters for which we possess the original guarantees its overall accuracy. Twenty of these fragments will be published here for the first time.

The Daughters of Charity of the parish of Saint-Paul in Paris possessed until 1814 a folio collection of eighty-eight pages written in the second half of the seventeenth century. It was entitled: *Extraits de Lettres de feu Monsieur Vincent et feu Mademoiselle Le Gras*. The letters of the Saint are represented by more than one hundred fragments, those of his spiritual daughter by only seven. The handwriting is not always the same; on page seven, we recognize that of Julienne Loret, one of the Foundress’ principal collaborators. The excerpts are separated quite often by a small blank space or by a mere indentation. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish one from the other, and it could be that at one time or another, for lack of sufficient information, we have attached to one and the same letter extracts from different letters, or vice versa. In 1814 the manuscript was given to Dominique-François Hanon, Vicar General of the Congregation of the Mission. It has since gone to enrich the
archives of the Sisters' Motherhouse. We shall borrow from it about forty excerpts.

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In addition to the manuscript collections, there are printed ones and the old works that made extensive use of the Saint's correspondence. It is fitting to rank in first place the *Vie du Vénérable Serviteur de Dieu Vincent de Paul* by Louis Abelly. A great number of Saint Vincent's letters are quoted or merely referred to by this first of his biographers. A few more than two hundred of them are mentioned, among which about one hundred appear in Father Pémartin's collection. Like most writers of his time, Abelly did not scruple touching up the texts he quoted under pretext of improving their style or making them clearer. Because the thought was respected, it was considered quite natural to remove the imperfections of an expression. Unfortunately, poor taste often rendered the expression more defective instead of improving it, and the thought, said to be untouched, suffered at times from these changes.

Abelly replaces words, inserts brief commentaries, and modifies sentence constructions. Beneath his pen "reputation" becomes "repute"; "good men," "respectable men"; "you have a thousand reasons," "you have every reason"; "merry fellows," "those who would be too free"; and "devout," "flourishing in godliness."
Abelly likes to emphasize the pious tone of the Saint’s expressions. Thus he writes: “these holy days” instead of “these days”;35 “the most Blessed Sacrament” instead of “the Blessed Sacrament.”36

Saint Vincent’s conciseness sometimes seems to him an obstacle to clarity; Abelly remedies this by lengthening the sentence. Here are a few examples:

Real text. — “Oh surely, that is an illusion!”37
Abelly. — “Oh! surely, if you were to think that way, you would be greatly mistaken and it would be sheer illusion.”38

Real text. — “They will go to judgment day with their heads held high.”39
Abelly. — “But with what holy confidence they will appear on judgment day after having performed so many holy works of charity!”40

Real text. — “Have pity on us.”41
Abelly. — “Therefore, have pity on us and come take us by the hand to draw us out of the evil state in which we are.”42

Often enough the language of Vincent de Paul is more clever, more lively, more French than that attributed to him by his biographer. The Saint writes to Louise de Marillac: “Oh! what a tree you have appeared to be today in God’s sight since you have borne such a fruit!”43 We do not understand why Abelly substituted for those words the following: “Oh! how you have appeared today in God’s sight like a beautiful tree, since, through His grace, you have borne

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35Abelly, op. cit., vol. I, chap. XXIV, p. 113 and no. 138 to Saint Louise.
37No. 69.
39No. 354.
41Letter of July 25, 1634, to François du Coudray, no. 177.
43No. 27.
such a fruit!"\textsuperscript{44} Saint Vincent continues: "May you be forever a beautiful tree of life bringing forth fruits of love!" Is that not better than: "I entreat Him, through His infinite goodness, to make of you forever a veritable tree of life which will produce fruits of true charity!" We read in a letter to François du Coudray: "Is everyone in good health? Is each one in good spirits?"\textsuperscript{45} Abelly preferred: "Is each one in good health and quite content?\textsuperscript{46}

Some textual changes result from mistakes in reading. It is doubtless because he was not able to decipher Saint Vincent's handwriting that the first biographer read \textit{songez} [dream] for \textit{soyez} [be].\textsuperscript{47}

Among the thirty fragments, approximately, whose texts we have been able to check, there is not one given to us completely intact. Several are even almost unrecognizable\textsuperscript{48} because they have undergone so many modifications.

In his \textit{Vie de saint Vincent de Paul}, Pierre Collet also makes frequent use of the Saint's writings. He cites or makes reference to more than 250 letters. His quotations, less frequent and generally less extensive than those of Abelly, are almost all found in the first biographer, often enough with the same alterations.\textsuperscript{49} When he has recourse directly to the original, it is not for the purpose of quoting it verbatim. Nevertheless, he is perhaps less free with the text than Abelly.

In 1834, Gossin, a lawyer at the royal court of Paris,

\textsuperscript{44}Abelly, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. I, chap. XXIII, p. 105.
\textsuperscript{45}Letter of September 15, 1628, no. 30.
\textsuperscript{46}Abelly, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. II, chap. I, sect. I, par. 4, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., vol. I, chap. XXIV, p. 113, and no. 71.
published from the originals, in a book entitled *Saint Vincent de Paul peint par ses écrits*,\(^5\) seventy-six letters of the Saint — the majority addressed to Louise de Marillac — and one petition to the Parlement. He retains the original spelling, places the dated letters in chronological order, and gives the names of those who own the manuscripts he used. Although quite incomplete, this work would be excellent if the author had been better able to read Saint Vincent's handwriting. The proper names in particular are completely changed. Who would recognize Goussault, Laurent, Souscarrières, de Herse, Mussot, Romilly, Fortia, de Brou, Pascal, Pillé, and d'Authier in the names Toustain, Lunveni, Souharries, Bierse, Mussut, Clomilly, Foren, Bron, Fasral, Filé and Autin? Who would not be surprised to read in the Saint's correspondence sentences such as this: *Faites ... bien entendre ... à votre tour que je suis en témoin de Notre-Seigneur* [Make it quite clear in your turn that I am like a witness of Our Lord]?\(^51\) Replace *tour* with *coeur*, *témoin* with *l'amour*, and you will have what the Saint wrote [Make it quite clear to your heart that I am, in the love of Our Lord ... ]. However numerous these reading errors may be, it is almost always easy for anyone who is familiar with Saint Vincent's style and history to reconstruct the true text. Gossin has done a fine and useful piece of work. Our collection is indebted to him for several letters which we have not found anywhere else.

Scarcely had he been elected Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission than Father Jean-Baptiste Etienne realized that it was his duty to place at the disposition of the Missionaries and the Daughters of Charity the conferences and writings of Saint Vincent, so that, better instructed by this reading of their Holy Founder's teachings,
they might be filled more perfectly with his spirit and conform their behavior more closely to his. In 1844 he had facsimiles made of a quarto collection of 585 pages: *Collection des conférences de saint Vincent, de plusieurs de ses lettres et de quelques conférences de M. Alméras*. All of these letters except one were selected from the Saint’s correspondence with his Missionaries. There are seventy-one of them, arranged in no particular order. More often than not, they are only excerpts.

The following year, 126 letters, more or less complete, appeared in a work published in Paris under the title: *Conférences spirituelles tenues pour les Filles de la Charité par saint Vincent de Paul.*

This publication was followed ten years later by the *Recueil des diverses Exhortations et Lettres de saint Vincent aux Missionnaires*, which contains facsimiles of nearly seven hundred letters or letter fragments. Here again the editor was not guided by any historical concern: no notes, no chronological order, a text quite frequently altered and therefore flawed, at times composite letters which appear unified but in reality are composed of sentences taken from different letters. A collection of this kind serves its purpose, but it could not be sufficient. The letters of Saint Vincent are not only food for piety; they are also historical documents. Scholars were praying for a comprehensive compilation of complete letters, faithfully reproduced and classified in the only order suitable to history — chronological order.

A compatriot of the Saint, Father Jean-Baptiste Pémartin, Secretary General of the Congregation of the Mission, resolved to undertake this work himself in spite of the numerous demands of his office. He collected 2039 letters which

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52Paris.

53We say 2039 letters, although the last one is numbered 2078, because the editor mixes in with the Saint’s letters eight documents which are not his (5, 7, 286, 341, 945, 1014, 1370, 1947); he repeats twelve letters (compare 186 plus 187 and 864, 334 and 492, 469 and 480, 671
fill four octavo volumes printed in Paris in 1880 by Pillet et Dumoulin.

The *Lettres de saint Vincent de Paul* enjoyed a well-deserved success among this great Saint's two religious families for whom the work was exclusively intended. It became known and desired by others, and it was in response to the many requests addressed to him that Father Pêmartin chose 860 letters from among those he had just published and made them available to the public in 1882.¹⁴

The 1880 work presupposes considerable research and indicates significant progress over previous collections. Nonetheless, it exhibits many lacunae and a great many inaccuracies.

The discovery of new documents makes it possible today to complete or correct letters taken from less complete or less reliable sources. The dates attributed by Father Pêmartin to the undated letters of Saint Vincent are more often than not incorrect. In our time, it is required, and rightly so, that the dates, words, and sentences added by the editor to incomplete texts taken from documents damaged by moths, humidity, or a tear be placed in brackets. In the 1880 collection nothing distinguishes them.

and 1966, 375 and 922, 179 and 932, 83 and 1130, 1467 and 1936, 722 and 1994, 659 and 1995, 472 and 2065, 1213 and 1240; and with fragments of sixteen others he makes thirty-four distinct letters (348, 350 and 351 belong to one and the same letter; likewise 46 and 117, 172 and 173, 24 and 322, 357 and 359, 389 and 390, 186 and 187, 704 and 713, 170 and 769, 845 and 1010, 677, 876 and 877, 1347 and 1589, 958 and 1049, 1023 and 1026, 1046 and 1047, 1999 and 2001). Let us add that the petition published by Father Pêmartin as no. 825 was disclaimed by Saint Vincent, and for that reason should not appear among his letters.

The editor did well not to insert in his collection the letter that Canon Maynard (*Saint Vincent de Paul* [3rd ed., Paris, 1886], vol. I, p. 83) attributes without grounds to the Saint who has recently left Clichy to enter the De Gondi Family: "I departed sadly from my little church of Clichy, my eyes bathed with tears," the holy priest is supposed to have written, "and I blessed the men and women who came to me and whom I had so loved. My poor were there, too, and they broke my heart. I arrived in Paris with my scant furnishings and went to the house of M. de Bérulle."¹⁵ The style of this excerpt is far from resembling that of Saint Vincent. Moreover, Maynard, who is the only one to bring it to our attention, gives no reference for it whatever.

The annotation is not plentiful enough. The reader would like to know whether the text followed by the editor is an original, a draft, or a copy; and, when it is an original, whether the writing is the Saint's or that of his secretaries. It would be desirable to tell him, by indicating crossed-out words or by giving different drafts when any can be found, through what successive stages the Saint's thought or expression has passed. A word of explanation concerning the events or the individuals mentioned in the letters would help him to be better acquainted with the milieu in which Saint Vincent de Paul lived and, at times, to better understand the meaning of his sentence.

The 1880 collection would have profited by being conceived according to a more comprehensive plan. There are letters of Saint Vincent whose text we do not know, but Abelly, Collet, or others give us a summary of their contents; why not mention them? Why not accompany the letters he wrote by those he received? The latter shed light on the former.

Finally, research patiently pursued has brought about fruitful discoveries. Father Pémartin wrote in his preface: "However incomplete this collection may be when compared to what has perished, no means of enriching it have been neglected, and there is very little chance of adding to it hereafter in any appreciable way." A rash statement, for it is already possible to add several hundred unpublished letters to his collection.

A supplement to Saint Vincent's letters published in 1888 contains more than one hundred new ones.55 A few un-

55Lettres et Conférences de saint Vincent de Paul (Supplément), Paris. The first letter in the Supplément is numbered 2079; the last is 3136. Nevertheless, we fall short of having 1057 letters. The editor absentmindedly passes from number 2099 to number 3000. Let us add that six documents are not letters (2128, 3005, 3046, 3065, 3107, 3131); twelve letters are already found in the 1880 collection (cf. 2082 and 132, 2084 and 231, 2094 and 1627, 2091 and 116, 3018 and 46 plus 117, 3042 and 840, 3035 and 450, 3054 and 952, 3077 and 133, 3089 and
published letters, most often copied from the originals, appeared around 1889 in a facsimile collection composed exclusively of letters from the Saint to Louise de Marillac, about 318 in number. Excerpts from letters, all taken from Father Pémartin's work and relating to the Foundress or the Sisters’ works, are added as an appendix. Sister de Geoffre, a Daughter of Charity to whom this work was entrusted, worked at it intelligently and with a will, and it is but just to say that she accomplished it successfully.

After forty years, it seems the time has come to take up again the work of Father Pémartin in order to give it broader scope, more order, greater accuracy, and to adjust it to the requirements of modern criticism.

Keeping the spelling of the documents would have presented, it seems to us, more drawbacks than advantages. We have preferred to modernize it so as to facilitate the reading of the work for the public and to avoid the variety of spellings that exist between the letters written by Saint Vincent and by his secretaries, and between the originals and copies of them. About half the letters which form this collection are taken from copyists from the end of the seventeenth century or later. Why should we retain their spelling which is neither that of the original nor our own? For reasons of uniformity and clarity, the most recent editors of Bossuet's correspondence were led to lay aside the great orator's spelling; we shall imitate them.

The letters of Saint Vincent will be followed by his conferences, and the conferences by the principal documents relating to his life and his institutions. The work we are undertaking is considerable. We hope that it will be of
assistance: first of all, to scholars who will find in these pages a great deal of new information; to the Saint's future biographers whom it will spare long and often futile research; and finally, to our readers, for Saint Vincent is one of those men whom we esteem and love more when we know them more intimately. Now, when we esteem him and love him, do we not already feel drawn to imitate him?

PIERRE COSTE, C.M.
INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

In mid-December of 1973, Father James W. Richardson, C.M., the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, met with the Provincial Superiors or Visitors of the Congregation's Provinces in the United States and requested a new and complete translation into English of all the extant works of Saint Vincent, which, in effect, meant the translation into modern American English of the fourteen-volume work of Pierre Coste, C.M., *Saint Vincent de Paul, Correspondance, Entretiens, Documents* and a collection of 144 letters and two conference outlines unknown to Coste and published by André Dodin, C.M., in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20. Selected letters of Saint Vincent and his conferences to both the Daughters of Charity and the Priests of the Mission had been made available in English through the labors of Father Joseph Leonard, C.M., but the English-speaking world still awaited access to the entire wealth of material found in Coste's work.

In requesting this translation, Father Richardson was following a long-standing tradition of concern on the part of

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Vincentian Superiors to place the writings of their Holy Founder at the disposition of all the Missionaries and the Daughters of Charity so that "they might be filled more perfectly with his spirit and conform their behavior more closely to his." It is hoped that the translation of this work, "rich in teaching, sparkling with humor, and without a single banal line — a unique thing in a collection of this kind"\(^2\) — will now afford the English-speaking segment of the Double Family\(^3\) a broader and deeper understanding of the genius of Saint Vincent de Paul and will also be a means of introducing him to others who remain unaware of his spirituality and manifold works of charity.

The ultimate implementation of the Translation Project, as the undertaking became known, was entrusted to Father Cecil Parres, C.M., with Father Joseph I. Dirvin, C.M., designated as Editor-in-Chief. The provinces of the Daughters of Charity were immediately invited to participate in the work and Sister Eleanor McNabb, D.C., joined Fathers Parres and Dirvin to form the first Publishing Board. This group ably laid the groundwork and oversaw the first steps of the infant project, from the organization of the technical details to the gathering of funds. In 1975, Father James R. King, C.M., was appointed Executive Assistant to Father Dirvin and has, since that time, contributed a variety of expertise to the work.

From 1974 to 1980, the translation, as projected in its initial stages, underwent several changes both with regard to the scope of the endeavor and the method of accomplishing it. The initiators of the work envisaged only a simple render-

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\(^3\)The two Communities founded by Saint Vincent de Paul: the Priests of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul.
ing into English of Coste's work and that of Dodin. They intended an entirely fresh edition translated from the original with no dependence on any previous publication. Volunteer translators recruited from the Double Family were to produce an exact translation of the original with a special review board checking the translation for accuracy. Editorial teams would then couch the text in modern American English while striving to preserve the style and flavor of the original correspondent. The Editorial Board directing the project would make the final review and determination of the manuscript for publication.

In 1976, after two years of organizing, recruiting volunteer translators and editors, and establishing a sufficient financial footing, the Editorial Board decided to publish first of all the work of Dodin, *Mission et Charité*. Several reasons prompted this decision: 1.) the material had not been previously translated; 2.) the volume was short and could be done more quickly than the others; 3.) the amount assigned to any one translator would be small; 4.) it was hoped that participants in the project might feel a sense of achievement in the early stages of the work; and 5.) it was hoped that the appearance of this first volume would encourage interest in the project among members of the Double Family of Saint Vincent. Therefore, in the Fall of 1976, about forty translators throughout the United States received as their first assignment several letters from *Mission et Charité* and the work began in earnest. The publication date set for this section was 1977.

Meanwhile, comments, suggestions, and events were paving the way for major changes in the original plan. The advisability of translating the more than fifty-year old Coste edition without updating the scholarship was called into question. Writings found even more recently than those published in *Mission et Charité* had come to light as well as more complete or more correct versions of letters already
appearing in Coste. It was suggested that the letters appearing in Dodin’s work be placed chronologically within the existing volumes of Coste and not be isolated in a separate volume. At the same time, Sister Helen Marie Law, D.C., had been invited to join the Project. By July of 1976, Sister had already translated on her own the majority of Coste’s first eight volumes and the question arose of how best to use her work.

Each of these elements was discussed and carefully considered. As early as May 1976, steps were taken to obtain editors capable of updating the scholarship of the Coste edition. In October 1977, a Priest of the Mission, Father John W. Carven, agreed to serve in this capacity and in May 1978 he was specifically assigned to the work.

At a meeting on March 26, 1977, the Editorial Board agreed, as part of the general editing process, to follow the recommendation concerning the insertion of Dodin’s material within the chronology of Coste’s volumes. However, the members still felt that there were advantages to publishing an inexpensive but attractive translation of the Dodin volume. It was not until October of the same year that the focus shifted to publishing several of Coste’s volumes, primarily because of the great cost reduction, and no further mention was made of printing Mission et Charité as an isolated volume.

Although the original conception of the project envisioned a totally new translation done by recruited volunteers, the Editorial Board decided in 1977 to use Sister Helen Marie Law’s work as the basic translation for Coste’s volumes. Her work was judged highly accurate, although

*Sister Helen Marie Law, having previously translated into English the letters of Saint Louise de Marillac, brought a certain expertise to the translation of Saint Vincent’s writings. Her great contribution to the study of Saint Vincent was brought to an end by her untimely death on July 3, 1978.
certainly susceptible to editing. Use would also be made, especially to clarify difficult passages, of the translation of Father Joseph Leonard, C.M. The Board then decided to enlist the services of a full-time French-language scholar to review and, where necessary, to emend Sister’s entire work. In 1978, a Daughter of Charity, Sister John Marie Poole, was assigned to carry out this service, part-time at first and then full time.

By October 1977, the concept of the simple translation had expanded to the creation of a totally new edition based on a thorough revision of Sister Helen Marie Law’s translation. The work would represent as complete a canon as possible of Saint Vincent’s writings and, for that purpose, a serious effort would be made to seek out unpublished documents from any source available. The material found in Mission et Charité and the Annales, as well as any new items discovered would be inserted chronologically within the volumes of Coste. And, finally, a history scholar would update all the information contained in the footnotes and final index. Two further decisions in 1980 provided each volume with a biographical index which incorporated terms and places, thereby making each volume self-contained.

Optimism seemed in order as the project proceeded through 1978 and into 1979 with one person working full time on the translation and another, on a part-time basis, reviewing the footnotes. However, the euphoria was short-lived: as 1979 moved into 1980, neither member of the work force was able to devote full-time attention to the project. This lack of consistent application to the task, the consequent slowdown of the work, and the enormity of the undertaking as envisioned in 1977 brought about a revision of the project goals. On May 13, 1980, the Vincentian Provincials altered the 1977 decision and decided to follow through with a full English translation of only the letters, that is, of the first eight volumes of Coste including the new material
found in Dodin and other sources and with updated annotation. Upon completion of the letters, a further determination would be made concerning the six remaining volumes.

In 1980, Father Carven and Sister John Marie Poole, who had been working on the translation since 1978, were both assigned full time to the project. Once again the work progressed and the prospects for publication appeared hopeful. During the next four years, the project passed through various high and low periods. An unforeseen change of personnel slowed down the work considerably, as did the necessity of fully developing and refining the detailed aspects of the editing process, which at this point in time had never gone beyond the first check for accuracy.

Now, at last, in 1985, we are able to offer the first volume of this new edition of Saint Vincent’s letters to the English-speaking world. To the 416 letters which appeared in Coste’s original volume I, we have added twenty-six letters, three of which have never before been published.5 Twenty-four letters from Mission et Charité have been inserted: nineteen are completely new to the volume6 and the other five provide more complete and/or more correct versions of letters already in Coste.7 Three letters, also new to volume I, have been drawn from Coste’s supplements in volumes VIII8 and XIII,9 which also offered more complete and correct versions of three other letters.10 One letter was discovered in the Annales11 and another12 in an article concerning the adoption of an Apostolic Visitor in the Visitation

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5Nos. 115a, 156a, 377a.
6Nos. 39a, 45a, 45b, 55a, 55b, 57a, 102a, 163a, 188a, 260a, 260b, 260c, 297a, 322a, 362a, 365a, 374a, 392a, 414a.
7Nos. 47, 65, 83, 413, 414.
8No. 47a.
9Nos. 253a and 383a.
10Nos. 169-170, 247, 348.
11No. 94a.
12No. 388a.
Community. Research to date has uncovered ten more unpublished letters and approximately seven documents which will be inserted chronologically in the appropriate volumes in addition to the remaining 117 items in Mission et Charité and the other twenty-six letters published by Coste in his supplements. It is hoped that still more of Saint Vincent's writings will be found as work on the project progresses so that the present edition will truly represent the most complete collection of the Saint's work ever published.

Besides the letters newly inserted in volume I, seventeen letters have been relocated within the volume, due to corrections given by Coste himself in his volumes VIII and XIII or due to discoveries permitting more accurate dating. In such cases, the original number of the letter has been left with the title of the letter and an indication has been given as to its new placement. The citation found at the new location gives the rationale for the change that has been made.

In placing new letters within the volume or changing the placement of letters we have relied on Coste's corrections given in volumes VIII and XIII, the listings found in the Annales, the dates on recently discovered letters or, in the absence of a date, on internal evidence. To facilitate research in Coste's work, we have chosen to keep the letter numbers of the original volumes and to indicate material newly added or relocated within each volume by adding a, b, c, etc., to the number of the preceding item. We have also decided to adhere to the span of years assigned by Coste for each volume.

In some cases, the finding of an original has enabled us to join fragments formerly considered separate letters. Such combined letters have been assigned a single number fol-

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13Nos. 60a, 74a, 156a, 198a-g, 296a, 207a-c, 277a, 290a, 344a.
followed by a letter to differentiate the whole from the segments as published in the original Coste volume. Where variations of a single letter exist, only the most correct version has been included in the volume. Likewise, although Coste chose to publish letters originally written in Latin both in that language and in French, the present edition bears only the English translation of the original Latin.

Three different types of letters are presented in these volumes: letters *from* Saint Vincent, letters *to* Saint Vincent and, at times, mere summaries of letters where the existence of a letter is known but no text is available. The letters written by Saint Vincent appear in regular type, while those addressed to him are printed in italics. Smaller type has been used to differentiate the summaries.

As Coste states in his introduction, almost all the letters we now possess are either in Saint Vincent's handwriting or in that of one of his secretaries. The term *original autograph* found in the citation of a letter indicates that the manuscript was written entirely in the Saint's hand. If the citation uses the term *signed letter*, the manuscript was written by a secretary and signed by the Saint. For some letters only a facsimile, a handwritten copy, a photocopy, or a photograph is known. Such indications are given in the citation of the letters for which this information is available.

The citations usually state as well the actual location of the manuscript or copy used for the present edition. Great care has been taken to verify these locations where possible. Letters drawn from other publications and those belonging to special collections, private or museum, have not been checked due to the near impossibility of such a task. However, an attempt has been made to verify all letters belonging to private houses of the Daughters of Charity, the Priests of the Mission, other religious houses, churches, and various religious institutions. In volume I, the whereabouts of fifty-nine letters have been checked and the citations corrected
where necessary. As a rule, no explanation has been given concerning these changes — the present location has merely been inserted. In the process of checking these locations and in the search for unpublished letters, we have at times been fortunate enough to locate the originals of letters for which only copies were known formerly. In these instances as well no mention has been made of the correction — the citation simply states that the manuscript is an original.

We have updated as well the department names given in the footnotes. Several departments have had name changes since the time of Coste, while two others have been subdivided.15

Although the project has undergone many delays, each has contributed in some way to the overall quality of the work. The appearance, in 1983, of the revised edition of Saint Louise de Marillac’s writings16 has permitted us to check her letters to Saint Vincent and her spiritual writings for any corrections which may have come to light. We have also adjusted all the footnote references to the appropriate indication as given in the new edition.

In any work of translation the question of style invariably arises, so it was not strange that we should be faced with the problem. Should we smooth out clumsy or elliptical phrasing in the interest of producing a more “readable” translation or should we preserve the roughness and stylistic crudities of the original in order to reflect the flavor and spontaneous quality of Saint Vincent’s expression, supplying explanations where needed to make the sense clear? As

15Department is the term used to designate each of the principal divisions of French territory. It denotes a geographical area similar to that of the American state. In the names of several departments, the word maritime, indicating near the sea, has replaced the word inférieure of the same meaning: Charente-Maritime, Seine-Maritime, Alpes-Maritime. In 1964, the Department of Seine was subdivided into Hauts-de-Seine, Paris, Seine-Saint-Denis, and Val-de-Marne; Seine-et-Oise became Essonne, Val-d’Oise, and Yvelines.

16Sainte Louise de Marillac. Écrits Spirituels (Tours: Mame, 1983).
our response to this question, we have attempted to make our translation as "readable" as possible while adhering closely to the style of each correspondent. For that purpose we have made an effort to give as literal a meaning as we could to the expressions used, while still adapting them to modern terminology. We have tried to reproduce even the grammatical constructions used by each correspondent unless the true meaning of the sentence would suffer thereby. Very long sentences have been shortened and short phrases joined together to render thoughts more readily intelligible, though still preserving the sense of the original. The vocabulary and expression has deliberately been kept simple. Saint Vincent's love for and practice of simplicity are no secret to anyone familiar with his life; therefore, it was judged fitting to follow his own simplicity in the choice of words and style unless he himself opted for more elegant forms.

To retain the French atmosphere of the work we have left certain terms and expressions in the original French. General terms of greeting such as Monsieur, Madame, etc., have not been translated, nor have we attempted an English version for expressions such as O mon Dieu!, O Jésus! Landholding titles which often form part of a proper name — Comte, Duc, Marquis — have also been left in French. Other titles have been translated by the closest English equivalent possible. Proper names are given in the original language unless there is a familiar English form. This holds true for both people and places. Therefore, Sainte Jeanne-Françoise Frémiot de Chantal has been rendered as Saint Jane Frances Frémiot de Chantal, whereas Pierre Séguier remains in French. For places, Brittany is used instead of Bretagne, while Granada, Villeneuve, and similar names remain in the original language. Proper foreign names within the text of the manuscripts have been left as written by the correspondents. However, the footnotes and index
present the name in its original language form — Alessandro Bichi for Alexandre Bichi; Giovanni Francesco Guidi di Bagno for Jean-François Bagni.

An attempt has been made to standardize name variations appearing in the original manuscripts: Gondi is always used in this edition although the form Gondy is often seen in the manuscripts. We have, however, left the variations Pollalion and Poulaillon. Although the correct spelling is the former, Saint Vincent always wrote the latter.

We have also standardized the various forms of the phrase used by Saint Vincent after his signature: unworthy priest of the Congregation of the Mission. Throughout this edition the abbreviation i.s.C.M. (indignus sacerdos Congregationis Missionis) has been used.

The word fille, meaning girl, daughter, young woman, appears in many of the manuscripts. In the seventeenth century, this word also denoted a woman religious or nun. We have tried to adjust the meaning of fille to the context of the various letters and have sometimes rendered the word as Sister rather than Daughter when referring to a member of Saint Louise's nascent community.

Monetary terms — livre, écu, etc. — have not been translated for it would be difficult to assign them an equivalent value in modern currency. Several other words and phrases have likewise been left in French — Parlement, Chambre des Comptes, collège — since English has no corresponding institution. These terms have been explained in footnotes. For other words of foreign origin used in English and found in English dictionaries no explanation has been given, for example, faubourg.

Saint Vincent often makes use of scriptural references which, however, are not always direct quotes. Where he has done so, the translation has been adjusted to flow with the meaning of the sentence. The scriptural quotations given in the footnotes are usually taken from the New American
Bible, unless a passage cannot be found in that edition or a more suitable rendering of the phrase is found elsewhere. In such instances, the Douay-Rheims Bible has been used. In the case of the psalms, both versions have been cited because of the variations.

Coste almost always refers to Vincent de Paul as Saint Vincent or the Saint. In the present edition we have added this title to the names of Louise de Marillac and any other individual who has been canonized since Coste’s time.

Generally speaking, in the titles of the letters, Coste gave the location of the addressee only when he was sure of it and when the locality was outside the then city of Paris. We have continued this practice and have attempted to make it more consistent. We have also followed Coste’s custom of placing within brackets dates that are uncertain or conjectural. Brackets have also been used to indicate words either missing from the manuscript or inserted by the editors.

The capitalization forms of the original manuscripts have been adjusted to American usage as has the punctuation. Number forms — words versus figures — follow common American practice as well.

In addition to our goal of producing a smooth English translation which is faithful insofar as possible to the meaning and style of the original French, we have also purposed to present a work which is interesting and informative with regard to Saint Vincent, his correspondents, and his times. Both the scholar who may wish to use this work as a research tool and the ordinary reader who may be unfamiliar with the Double Family and the religio-political history of the period have been kept in mind. A great effort has been made to update, correct, and amplify Coste’s footnote material. Irrelevant notes have been eliminated and new annotation added whenever this has been deemed necessary or helpful. In the case of new matter, no indication has been
given to distinguish Coste's footnotes from the annotation added by our editor.

A biographical sketch of each personage has been supplied throughout the work the first time that he or she appears in a volume. To facilitate reference to this data and also to the explanations of terms and places given throughout the text an index has been added to each book. The index indicates the number of the letter to which the reader should refer for the information sought. A general index will also be provided as an appendix to the entire work.

All references in the indices and the footnotes have been given by citing the volume and the number of the item rather than the page. Since Coste's volume span and his numbering of items have been retained, this practice should facilitate research in both his edition and the present translation.

In order to enjoy these volumes more thoroughly, the reader would do well to keep in mind that, as now, so then, one correspondent did not spell out to the other details that were already known and understood by both. Reading these letters at a distance of some three hundred years will often arouse a curiosity which in many cases must remain unsatisfied. The allusions made will not always be clear, nor can they be. However, a familiarity beforehand with the life of Saint Vincent will greatly aid one's knowledge and understanding of the situations mentioned and the people involved. The three-volume definitive biography written by Coste provides extensive information, but many shorter versions of the Saint's life can be found. Placed against such a background, these writings take on still more a life of their own and make the Saint vividly present once again. The

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twinkle in his eyes and the smile or tenderness in his voice seep through the words and we meet the delightful, charming man known to his contemporaries. The severe, ascetic Saint takes on a new personality and somehow becomes more human.

This man of myriad occupations and enormous correspondence writes to Saint Louise and understandably so: "Last night I found this letter that I thought I had sent to you; I wrote it three days ago." And to one of his Missionaries, Robert de Sergis, he says: "I received your letter four days ago, but I lost it and cannot remember everything you wrote."

Women of our day will delight in hearing him tell Saint Louise: "Experience has shown that it is absolutely necessary for the women not to depend on the men in this situation, especially for the money;" and then ask, surely with a little bit of mischievousness: "Well now, is that not a consolation to you, Mademoiselle? After that, will you say that you are of no use to the world?"

The warmth and tenderness of his expression often take us by surprise. Saint Louise, his Missionaries, the friends who both supported him and enjoyed his spiritual guidance were often the recipients of his affectionate words. "You know how much my heart treasures your own . . . ," he writes to one of his Missionaries. And, to Saint Louise, both tenderly and teasingly he remarks: "I am not asking you to remember me in your prayers, because I have no doubt that, after little Le Gras, you put me in first place."

Saint Vincent writes as though he enjoys the task, giving unusual twists to his phrases and adapting his usual closing

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18No. 276.
19No. 377.
20No. 42.
21No. 365.
22No. 266.
in an astonishing variety of forms: "I have never been more busy or more your servant, in the love of Our Lord." 23

The lyrical beauty of some passages changes his prose into exquisite poetry and we question our vision of a rough Gascon peasant: "Surely, Mademoiselle, a truly humble spirit humbles itself as much amid honors as amid insults, acting like the honeybee which makes its honey equally as well from the dew that falls on the wormwood as from that which falls on the rose." 24

Let us not fail to seek the man beyond these words, the man of compassion, warmth, humor, savoir faire, authority, and, most of all, the mystic whose sanctity was carved amid the bustle and involvement of very human situations. He will give us hope that we, too, can find holiness in an ordinary, busy life. May this personal acquaintance with the real Vincent de Paul lead us to encounter the dynamic force behind his life, Jesus Christ, Who, for him, was all things.

23No. 357.
24No. 58.
1. - TO MONSIEUR DE COMET, IN DAX

Monsieur,

One might have thought two years ago, judging by the appearance of the favorable progress of my affairs that, contrary to my deserts, fortune was endeavoring only to make me more en-

Letter 1. - The original autograph letter, written in a fine, compact hand, covers three pages. Its history is well worth knowing. Along with the original of the letter that follows, it passed from the hands of M. de Comet to those of Catherine de Comet, wife of Jean de Saint-Martin. Their son, Saint-Martin d'Agès, found them in 1658 as he was going through the family papers. Pleased with his discovery, he took them to Canon de Saint-Martin, his uncle, a close friend of the Saint. The good canon thought that Monsieur Vincent would be very pleased to read these pages and immediately had a copy made for his illustrious friend. The copies did not remain in Vincent's hands for long. After reading them, he burned them. By lifting the veil hiding two years of his youth, at once the most tragic and the most glorious, the revelation of these documents was of a nature to wound his deep humility. His letter of thanks was also one of supplication in which he begged M. de Saint-Martin to send him the originals. Brother Ducournau, his secretary, who was doing the writing, warned the Canon of Dax of the danger threatening the precious manuscripts if they were to fall into the Saint's hands. He advised him to send them to Jean Watebled, Superior of the Collège des Bons-Enfants, which he did. (Abelly, op. cit., vol. I, chap. IV, p. 17.)

Jean Watebled shared the letters with Antoine Portail, René Alméras, Thomas Berthe, Jean Dehorgny, Brother Ducournau, and probably others studied them. No need to describe their astonishment and joy; these pages were a revelation for them. This was in August 1658. Brother Ducournau hastened to thank Canon de Saint-Martin, and the Saint waited a long time for the originals he had requested. On March 18, 1660, feeling that his end was near, he renewed his plea in a letter which we shall publish further on.

The two letters to M. de Comet remained in the archives of Saint-Lazare until 1789 or 1791. They were either stolen at the time of the looting or confiscated two years later with the rest of the estate. How did the first of these letters come into the hands of Pelletier de Saint-Fargeau, and then become the property of his colleague, Carnot? We have no idea. On January 31, 1854, it appeared in a sale of autographs along with a few other letters of Saint Vincent and several outlines of sermons and speeches for the meetings of the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu.
vied than imitated; but alas! it was only to make of me an example of her vicissitudes and inconstancy, changing her favor into disfavor and her good luck into misfortune.

You may have heard, Monsieur, since you are well acquainted with my affairs, how I found, on my return from Bordeaux, a will drawn up in my favor by a good old woman from Toulouse. Her property consisted of some furniture and some land that the bipartite court of Castres had awarded to her in place of three or four hundred écus owed to her by a wicked rogue. In order to obtain part of it, I set out for the place to sell the goods, as was recommended by my best friends and by my need for money to meet the debts I had contracted and the great expense I foresaw as proper for me to make in the pursuit of the affair that my temerity does not allow me to mention.

On my arrival, I found out that the fox had left the locality because the good woman had a warrant out for his arrest for the

\[\text{In May of that same year, it is listed in one of Laverdet's catalogues as coming from the collection of M. de la Bousse-Rochefort and priced at five hundred francs. Laverdet exchanged it for some manuscripts of Montesquieu. Shortly afterwards we find it in Fontenay-le-Comte, in the autograph collection of Madame Joseph Fillon. Benjamin Fillon gave it to the Daughters of Charity working in the hospital of Fontenay, where it remained for many years, carefully preserved in an expensive album. When the hospital closed in 1979, the letter was added to the collection of the Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, 140 rue du Bac, Paris. Abelly did not reproduce it in its entirety; he omitted passages that seemed to him unworthy of a saint, among others, those which might have given rise to the suspicion that Saint Vincent believed in alchemy. Firmin Joussemet, Madame Fillon's nephew, published it in its unabridged form in 1856 in the Revue des provinces de l'Ouest. The recipient of the letter was M. de Comet the younger. (Cf. Abelly, op. cit., vol. I, chap. IV, P. 14.) We are using Comet and not Commet to conform to the spelling used by the Saint and by the members of the Comet family.}

\[\text{At that time Saint Vincent was successfully directing a well-attended boarding school in Toulouse.}

\[\text{lt has been conjectured that the Due d'Epernon, Jean-Louis de Nogaret de la Valette (1554-1642), Governor of Provence, and then of Guyenne (1622), had called the Saint to his house to offer him a bishopric. (Cf. Collet, op. cit., p. 15.)}

\[\text{Court divisions established by the pacificatory edict of 1576 in the Parlement of Paris and in that of Toulouse with residence in Castres for the purpose of judging cases in which Protestants were concerned. These courts were made up of an equal number of Catholics and Protestants.}

\[\text{Throughout this edition the various denominations of foreign money have been left in the French since no adequate, unchanging value in modern currency can be assigned. One écu equals three livres; one thousand livres could support two priests and one brother for a year.}

\[\text{Might this be the bishopric offered by the Due d'Epernon?}
same debt. I was informed that he was doing very well in Marseilles and had considerable means. Whereupon my attorney decided (as indeed was also dictated by the nature of the affair) that I should proceed to Marseilles. He thought that, once I had him arrested, I would be able to get two or three hundred écus from him. Since I had no money at all to carry out this plan, I sold the horse I had hired in Toulouse. I intended to pay for it on my return, which misfortune delayed so long that I am in great disgrace for having left my affairs in such disorder. I would never have done so had the Lord given me as much success in my undertaking as appearances led me to expect.

I set out, therefore, on this advice, caught my man in Marseilles, had him arrested, and agreed to three hundred écus, which he gave me in cash. Just as I was about to leave by land, I was persuaded by a gentleman with whom I had lodged to go with him by boat as far as Narbonne since the weather was so favorable. I did this in order to get there sooner and to save money, or, to be more exact, so as never to get there and to lose everything.

The wind was as favorable as was necessary to take us to Narbonne that same day, which meant covering fifty leagues, if God had not allowed three Turkish brigantines to bear down upon us. They were sailing along the coast of the Gulf of Lion in order to seize the ships coming from Beaucaire where there was a fair considered to be one of the finest in Christendom. They attacked

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6The Saint wrote content (pleased), but the spelling matters little; we think that comptant (cash) corresponds better to his thought.
7One league equals about two and a half miles or four kilometers.
8Brigantines at that time were small, decked ships rigged with only one sail and having eight to sixteen benches, each for a single oarsman. The oars were wide and flat.
9Beaucaire was the central market for goods coming from the East. The fair opened each year on July 22 and brought to that city countless boats from Marseilles, Cette, Aigues-Mortes and elsewhere. At the time of their departure, the boats that were headed for the open sea formed their own escort or had themselves accompanied by galleys for protection in case of attack. The pirates from the East and from Barbary lay in wait for them, posted on watch all along the coast, not far from the mouths of the Rhone. (Cf. Théodore Fassin, Essai historique et juridique sur la foire de Beaucaire [Aix: B. Niel, 1900]; Abel Boutin, Les traités de paix et de commerce de la France avec la Barbarie, 1515-1830 [Paris: Pedone, 1902].)
us so violently that two or three of our men were killed and all the rest wounded, including myself. I received an arrow wound that will serve me as a clock for the rest of my life.\textsuperscript{10} We were forced to surrender to those criminals worse than tigers whose first bursts of rage caused them to hack our pilot into a hundred thousand pieces because they had lost one of their leaders in addition to four or five of their galley slaves whom our men had killed.

Once that was done, they chained us, after crudely dressing our wounds, and continued their course, committing a thousand robberies. However, they allowed those who surrendered without fighting to go free after they had robbed them. And finally, at the end of seven or eight days, laden with booty, they set sail for Barbary, a lair and den of thieves, though the Grand Turk\textsuperscript{11} does not admit it. On arriving there, they put us up for sale with a report of our capture, which they said had been made on a Spanish ship because, without that lie, we would have been released by the consul whom the King maintains there to assure free trade for the French.\textsuperscript{12}

Their procedure for selling us was thus: after stripping us naked, they gave each of us a pair of pants, a linen jacket, and a small cap, and walked us up and down through the city of Tunis where they had purposely come to sell us. When they had had us make five or six rounds through the city with a chain around our neck, they took us back to the boat so that the merchants could come and see who could eat well and who could not, so as to show that our wounds were not mortal. That being done, they brought us back to the square where the merchants came to examine us just as one does when buying a horse or an ox. They made us open our mouths in order to look over our teeth; felt our ribs; probed our wounds; and made us walk, trot, and run; then carry loads and

\textsuperscript{10}The Saint suffered from his wound whenever the weather changed.
\textsuperscript{11}The Emperor of the Ottoman Empire who resided in Turkey and ruled the farflung areas of the Empire through Beys.
\textsuperscript{12}The Capitulations of 1535, 1569, 1581 and 1604 stipulated that the Barbary pirates would respect the freedom of French trade.
wrestle to judge each one's strength; and a thousand other kinds of brutalities. 13

I was sold to a fisherman who was soon obliged to get rid of me because I found nothing so repugnant as the sea; then by the fisherman to an old man, a Spagirite doctor, 14 a master at drawing out quintessences, a most benevolent and amenable man. From what he told me, he had worked for fifty years in his quest for the philosophers' stone. He had searched for the stone in vain, but was quite successful with another kind of transmutation of metals. In proof of this, I often saw him melt together equal parts of gold and silver, place them in thin sheets, and then put on a layer of some powders, then another layer of the sheets, and then another layer of the powders. He would put them in a crucible or goldsmith's melting vessel, keep it on the fire for twenty-four hours, and then open it to find that the silver had become gold. More often still, he would congeal or fix mercury into fine silver and sell it in order to give alms to the poor. My job was to maintain the fire in ten or

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13 This description corresponds almost word for word with those left by other freed slaves. Abel Boutin summarizes their testimony as follows: "All morning long the captives were on exhibition. According to eye witnesses, this was the most painful time of their captivity. Completely naked, under the burning rays of a tropical sun, they had to submit to all kinds of handling by the buyers, who examined them as is done with cattle or horses in our modern markets. They inspected their frame and the quality of their muscles. They tested their strength. They made them walk, run and jump. They looked at their teeth, the palms of their hands, . . ." (Boutin, op. cit., p. 162.)

In Algiers, the sale was made through the intermediary of dealers who went around the market one after another, passing in front of the arcade. They enumerated the qualities, real or false, of the captives . . . and ended their harangue with the price desired: so many piastres. The buyers present would bid higher and the slave was awarded to the last and highest bidder. But there were also slaves who were defective, sickly, puny, or old, who could not have attracted a buyer if they had been placed on sale individually. Therefore, a batch of slaves was made up, half robust, half puny, and the whole group was awarded according to the usual procedure. (Ibid., p. 166.)

Pierre Dan calculated at seven thousand the number of Christian captives in the regency of Tunis alone in the early years of the seventeenth century. The master had the power of life and death over his slave. He could keep him, set him free, or resell him. The slave was his chattel. (Cf. Pierre Dan, Histoire de Barbarie et de ses corsaires [2nd ed., Paris: P. Rocolet, 1649], p. 285.)

14 The Spagirite physicians explained the organic changes of the human body in health and in sickness as the chemists of their day explained those of the inorganic realm. Paracelsus was the founder and head of this school in the sixteenth century.
twelve furnaces; doing so, thank God, was as much a pleasure as it was an affliction for me. He loved me dearly, and took great delight in speaking to me about alchemy and even more about his law, putting forth all his efforts to win me over to it, promising me copious wealth and all his knowledge.

God always kept alive in me the conviction that I would be freed because of my unceasing prayers to Him and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, through whose sole intercession I firmly believe I was delivered. The hope and firm belief, therefore, that I had of seeing you again, Monsieur, made me persistent in asking him to teach me how to cure gravel, for which I used to see him working miracles every day. This he did; indeed, he had me prepare and administer the ingredients. Oh! how many times I have wished since then that I had been a slave before the death of your late brother and commaecenas\(^\text{15}\) in doing good for me,\(^\text{16}\) and that I had had the secret I am sending you.\(^\text{17}\) I beg you to accept it with as much pleasure as my belief is firm that, if I had known what I am sending you, death would not already have triumphed over him (at

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\(^{15}\) Maecenas, a favorite of Augustus, was in his time the protector of literary men, especially of Virgil and Horace.

\(^{16}\) M. de Comet the elder, an advocate of the Presidial Court of Dax and a judge of Pouy, together with his brother, deserves the credit for discerning the capabilities of the young Vincent. Up to the day of his departure for the University of Toulouse, the latter allowed himself to be guided by the Comets who, in order to increase his slim resources, entrusted to him a tutorship in their own family. It must not be said, however, as did the Jansenist Martin de Barcos, that Saint Vincent de Paul entered Holy Orders without a vocation so as not to upset his two benefactors. (Cf. Martin de Barcos, Défense de feu Monsieur Vincent de Paul . . . contre les faus discours du livre de sa vie publiée par M. Abelly, ancien évêque de Rodez, et contre les impositions de quelques autres écrits sur ce sujet [n.p., 1666], p. 87.)

\(^{17}\) We read in an old, undated, manuscript notebook, preserved at the hospice of Marans (Charente-Maritime): “Saint Vincent de Paul’s remedy for gravel. Take two ounces of Venetian turpentine; two ounces of white turpeth; half an ounce each of mastic, galanga, clove, cubed cinnamon; one ounce of ground aloes-wood. Mix it all together with half a pound of white honey and a pint of very strong brandy. Let it stand for some time and then distill it. One should take one-fourth tablespoon in the morning, fasting, and be careful to fill it up with borage or bugloss water, taking it as many times as one desires because it cannot be detrimental; on the contrary, it is very good for one’s health, especially for the kidneys. Therefore, there is no reason to follow any other diet, except that no food should be taken for an hour afterwards; and one may carry on one’s ordinary tasks. Experience will prove this. The great servant of God learned this in Barbary when he was a captive.”
least by that means), although it is said that man's days are numbered before God. That is true, but it is not because God had calculated his days to be a certain number, but the number was calculated before God because it came about that way; or, to speak more clearly, he did not die when he did because God had anticipated it that way or had calculated the number of his days to be so many, but he had anticipated it that way and the number of his days was known to be so many, because he died when he did.

I was, therefore, with this old man from the month of September 1605 until the following August when he was seized and taken away to the Grand Sultan to work for him, but in vain; he died of grief on the way. He left me to one of his nephews, a real anthropomorphist, who sold me again soon after his uncle's death, because he heard that M. de Brèves, the Kings' Ambassador in Turkey, was coming with valid and explicit letters patent from the Grand Turk to reclaim the Christian slaves.

A renegade from Nice in Savoy, hostile by nature, bought me...
and took me to his temat; 23 that is what they call the land that one holds as a sharecropper of the Grand Lord, because the people own nothing; everything belongs to the Sultan. This man's temat was in the mountains, where the country is extremely hot and forsaken. One of the three wives that he had (she was like a Greek-Christian, but schismatic) possessed a fine mind and became very fond of me; and nearer the end, another of them, a native Turk, who served God's immense mercy as an instrument in recalling her husband from apostasy and restoring him to the bosom of the Church, brought about my deliverance from slavery. As she was interested in knowing our way of life, she used to come to see me every day in the fields where I was digging. At the end, she ordered me to sing praises to my God. The memory of the Quomodo cantabimus in terra aliena of the children of Israel, captives in Babylon, made me begin, with tears in my eyes, the psalm 24 Super flumina Babylonis, and then the Salve, Regina and several other hymns. The pleasure she received from these was as great as her admiration of them. She did not fail to tell her husband in the evening that he had been wrong to give up his religion, which she considered exceedingly good because of what I had told her about our God and some praises I had sung to Him in her presence. She said that these latter gave her such divine pleasure that she did not believe the paradise of her fathers, which she was awaiting, was as glorious or accompanied by so much joy as the pleasure she felt while I was praising my God. She concluded that there was something marvelous about it.

This other Caiphas or Balaam's ass, by her words, caused her husband to tell me the very next day that our escaping to France depended only upon an opportunity, 25 but that he would remedy

Mohammed had more freedom than the others and were treated less harshly. The most formidable captains spoken of in the history of Barbary piracy were almost all renegades. Once they had made their fortune, they enjoyed it peacefully in sumptuous palaces.

23 A Turkish word.

24 Ps. 137: 1-4. "By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept... How could we sing a song of the Lord in a foreign land?" (NAB)

25 It was impossible to escape by land because the regency of Tunis was surrounded by
matters so well within a short time that God would be praised by it. A few days became ten months, during which he kept alive in me these vain but finally realized hopes. At the end of that time, we escaped in a little skiff and made our way, on June 28, to Aigues-Mortes and soon after to Avignon, where the Vice-Legate received the renegade publicly, with tears in his eyes and his voice broken by sobs, in the church of Saint-Pierre, to the honor of God and the edification of the congregation. The above-mentioned prelate has kept us both with him in order to take us to Rome. He is going there just as soon as his successor to the three-year term of office — which he completed on the feast of Saint John — has arrived. He has promised the penitent that he would have him admitted into the austere convent of the Fate ben fratelli, to which he has vowed himself, and see that I was provided with some good benefice. He does me the honor of loving me very much and treating me with affection because of a few alchemy secrets that I have taught him. He values these more, he says, than if I had given him a mountain of gold, because he has worked on them his whole lifetime and desires no other satisfaction. This same Bishop, since he knows that I am a churchman, has ordered me to send for my letters of ordination, assuring me that he will help me and provide me with a very good benefice. I was at a loss to find a trustworthy man to do this, when a friend of mine from the household of this same Bishop recommended to me

Deserts infested by wild beasts. By sea, flight was perilous, since the coasts were under constant surveillance. When escaping renegades were caught, they paid for their daring attempt with their lives.

26A little town in Gard situated on the bank of a large pond about five miles from the sea, to which it is joined by a canal built under Louis XV.

27Pietro Francesco Montorio was born in March 1558 in Narni. He was made Bishop of Nicastro in 1593, Vice-Legate of Avignon in 1604, Nuncio to Cologne in 1621, and died in Rome in June 1643.

28The vice-legates of Avignon were appointed for three years.

29The successor of Pietro Francesco Montorio was Giuseppi Ferreri, Archbishop of Urbino.

30Do good, brothers, a popular name given to a hospital run by the Brothers of Saint John of God.

31Abelly does not give the rest of the letter.

32I had given him a mountain of gold.
Monsieur Canterelle, the bearer of this letter, who was going to Toulouse. I asked him to take the trouble of riding as far as Dax to deliver this letter to you and to obtain the above-mentioned papers and the ones I received in Toulouse as a Bachelor of Theology. I entreat you to give them to him. I am sending you a voucher for them for that purpose. The said Monsieur Canterelle is of the household and has been expressly ordered by the Bishop to carry out his commission faithfully and to send the papers to me in Rome, if indeed we have set out.

I brought from Turkey two stones that nature has faceted like diamonds. I am sending one of them to you. May your pleasure in accepting it equal my feeling of unworthiness in offering it to you.

It is impossible, Monsieur, for you and my relatives not to have been slandered by my creditors on my account. I would already have partly satisfied them with one hundred or one hundred twenty écus given me by our penitent, had I not been advised by my best friends to keep them until my return from Rome so as to avoid the mishaps that might be mine for want of money (although I eat at the Bishop's table and enjoy his favor), but I think that all this disgrace will turn to good.

I am writing to Monsieur D'Arnaudin and to my mother. I beg you to have my letters sent to them by a man whom Monsieur Canterelle will pay. If, by chance, my mother has withdrawn the letters, they are filed as a measure of precaution with Monsieur Rabel. I have nothing else to say except that, entreatying you to

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33 They found in the Saint's room after his death his Bachelor of Theology papers received at the University of Toulouse, and those of the Licentiate in Canon Law which had been conferred upon him by the University of Paris. (Deposition of Brother Chollier at the process of beatification; cf. Summarium ex processu ne perseam probationes auctoritate apostolica fabricato, p. 5.) Vincent de Paul never gives himself any other titles. Those who attribute to him a Licentiate in Theology (Abelly, op. cit., vol. III, chap. XIII, p. 199) or a Doctorate in the same field (Gallia Christiana; vol. II, col. 1413) are certainly mistaken.

34 Probably Pierre Darnaudin, a notary.

35 Pierre Rabel or Ravel was, we believe, Episcopal Secretary. We find him named in a 1603 document as the representative appointed by the Bishop of Dax to transact business with the notary Bayle. (Unclassified archives of the civil seneschal of Dax.)
continue your holy affection for me, I remain, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

DEPAUL

Avignon, July 24, 1607

Addressed: Monsieur de Comet, advocate at the Presidial Court of Dax, in Dax

2. - TO MONSIEUR DE COMET, IN DAX

Monsieur,

I have written to you twice by the mail service from Spain which goes to Paris and Bayonne. I addressed my letters to Monsieur de la Lande1 in order to have them forwarded to the King's procurator who I recall is a relative. I did not know cui altari vovere vota mea2 in order to have news of you, when God, Who, etiamsi differat, non auferit tamen spei effectus,3 caused me to

36 The first three letters of Saint Vincent are signed Depaul; the following ones, Vincent Depaul, or for short, V.D., sometimes, V.D.P. Never in the Saint's hand do we find de Paul in two words, although his contemporaries separated the two syllables of his name in that way. In the parish registers of his native village and the surrounding localities and at the bottom of notarized family documents we find both spellings. However, this question is not important. The particle is not considered a sign of nobility by any genealogist, and rightly so. A mere perusal of the old Catholicity registers of Pouy would convince anyone of this; nearly all the peasants have a de in front of their name. The reason for this lies in the fact that, at least in that part of the Landes, many people's names were originally names of places. We find in Pouy two spots which were formerly called Paul and still are today: a house situated in the neighborhood of Buglose, and a stream that crosses the road about halfway between Buglose and the Berceau. It is fairly probable that the Saint's distant relatives had lived either in that house or on the banks of that stream. They were from Paul (de Paul) and they kept that name.

Letter 2. - Archives of the Mission (Paris), original autograph letter. We have already given the history of the original of this letter in the citation for letter no. 1.

1Very probably Bertrand de Lalande, Councillor of the King and Lieutenant General of the Presidial of Dax. By his marriage to Jeanne de Parage, Dame d'Escanebaque, he became the founder of the De Lalande family, Seigneurs d'Escanebaque in Sabres (Landes).

2Whom to ask.

3Although He may delay, nevertheless, does not remove the fulfillment or our hope.
meet this venerable Father who was just about to leave. Through him, I hope to enjoy the benefit of which I have been deprived by the perfidiousness of those to whom one entrusts letters.

This benefit is nothing else, Monsieur, than a renewed assurance of your good health and that of your whole family whom I pray the Lord to gladden with the abundance of His grace. I thanked you in my preceding letters for the paternal care you so kindly take of me and my affairs. I asked God, as I am still doing and shall do all my life, to please grant me the means of repaying you by my service, which you secured at the price of all the good that a father can do for his own son.

I am very sorry that I can write to you only very briefly about the state of my affairs because of the hasty departure of the ill-mannered sailors with whom the venerable Father is leaving. From what he told me, he is not going to Dax, but rather to Béarn. He told me that Father Antoine Pontanus, who has always been a good friend of mine, is preaching there. I am addressing my letters to him as to someone from whom I may expect a favor. I am asking him to be so kind as to forward this letter to you and to send back to me, if he has an opportunity — as Father told me he would have — the answer that I hope you will be pleased to write me.

In a word, then, this is the state of my affairs. I am in this city of Rome, where I am continuing my studies, maintained by the former Vice-Legate of Avignon. He honors me with his affection and his desire for my advancement, because I have shown him some unusually marvelous things I learned while I was the slave of that old Turk to whom, as I wrote you, I had been sold. Among these marvels is the beginning — not the total perfection — of the mirror of Archimedes and an artificial spring that makes a death's head talk, which the scoundrel used to use to deceive the people by telling them that his god Mohammed communicated his will to

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*This word is repeated in the original.

²Pietro Francesco Montorio.
him by means of that head. I learned from him a thousand other wonderful geometrical things of which the said Bishop is so jealous that he does not even want me to stop and talk to anyone for fear that I might teach them to him. He wants to have for himself alone the reputation of knowing these things which he enjoys showing now and then to His Holiness 6 and the cardinals. This affection and benevolence of his ensure for me, as he has also promised me, the means of an honorable retirement by obtaining for me, with that end in view, a suitable benefice in France. That is why I greatly need a copy of my letters of ordination, signed and sealed by the Bishop of Dax, 7 together with a letter of recommendation from the said Bishop. He could compile it by means of a brief inquiry among some of our friends as to the fact that I have always been considered a good-living man, together with all the other little formalities required for this purpose. The above-mentioned Bishop is urging me every day to get this letter of reference. That is why, Monsieur, I most humbly entreat you to be

6 Paul V (1605-1621).
7 The copy sent to the Saint at his request began thus: “Extract from the fourth register of the Ecclesiastical Insertions of the diocese of Acqs (d’Acqs).” Then came the text of the letters of ordination followed by: “In the year sixteen hundred four and on the twentieth day of the present month of October, all the above-mentioned letters of ordination to the priesthood were inserted and registered in the fourth register of the Ecclesiastical Insertions of the diocese of Acqs at the request of the said Vincent de Paul named herein. And on the fifteenth day of the present month of May, sixteen hundred eight, the entire text was carefully and duly extracted, certified and verified with the said fourth register of the Insertions, at the request of (the place for the name was left blank) his brother, in the name of and at the request of the said Vincent de Paul, to be used as he sees fit. Drawn up at d’Acqs on the day and in the year mentioned above by me, De Luc, registrar.” The attestation, in Latin, of Jean-Jacques Dusault, Bishop of Dax, completed the document: “Jean-Jacques Dusault, by the grace of God and the favor of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Dax, to all who read the present letter, greetings in the Lord. We make it known and we attest that the above-mentioned letter of all the orders and the missorial of Master Vincent de Paul, priest of our diocese, inscribed and entered in the register of ecclesiastical insertions of our said diocese, inserted from a true original, were extracted thence as we attest by the tenor of these presents. In faith thereof, we have ordered that the said certificatory letter be validated by our sign and seal and by the sign of our secretary. Given at Dax on the seventeenth day of the month of May in the year of Our Lord one thousand six hundred eight. J.-J. Dusault, Bishop of Dax. By order of the aforesaid My Lord the Most Reverend Bishop. Duclos, Secretary.” (Arch. of the Priests of the Mission, eighteenth century copy.)
so good as to do for me once again the kindness of picking up another certification of my letters, and of helping me to obtain the character reference from the said Bishop of Dax in the form stated above, sending it to me by way of the above-mentioned Father Pontanus. I would have sent you some money for this purpose were it not for my fear that the money might cause the letter to be lost. That is why I am asking you to arrange with my mother to furnish what is necessary. I think that three or four écus will be needed. I have already given two as a suitable offering to this religious who has promised me that he would hand them over to the above-mentioned Father Antoine so that he might forward them for that purpose. If that will do, please accept them; if not, I promise that I shall send you what has been supplied in the course of four or five months by a letter of exchange, together with what I owe in Toulouse. I am determined to discharge my debts since God has been pleased to give me legitimate means. I am writing to Monsieur Dussin, my uncle, asking him kindly to assist me in this affair.

I received, from the person who went to visit you for me, the Bachelor’s certificate which you so kindly sent me, together with a copy of my papers. The latter were judged invalid because they had not been authorized by the signature and seal of the said Bishop of Dax.

There is nothing new that I can write to you about except for the conversion of three Tartar families who came to this city to become Christians — His Holiness received them with tears in his eyes — and the conversion to Catholicism of a bishop who was an ambassador for the schismatic Greeks.

Haste obliges me to conclude this letter — badly blotted right here — with my humble prayer that you will excuse my excessive

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8Vincent de Paul had lost his father in 1598. (Abelly, op. cit., vol. I, chap. III, p. 12.)
9Antoine Pontanus.
10Probably Dominique Dusin, who was or later became Pastor of Pouy. (Collet, op. cit., vol. I, p. 109.)
importunity and believe that I shall hasten my return as much as I can, so that I may come and acquit myself of the service I owe you. Until then, I remain, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

DEPAUL

Rome, February 28, 1608

Addressed: Monsieur de Comet, advocate at the Presidial Court of Dax, in Dax

3. - TO HIS MOTHER, IN POUY

February 17, 1610

Mother,

The assurance that Monsieur de Saint-Martin has given me with regard to your good health has gladdened me, as much as the prolonged sojourn which I must necessarily make in this city in order to regain my chances for advancement (which my disasters took from me) grieves me, because I cannot come to render you the services I owe you. But I have such trust in God's grace, that He will bless my efforts and will soon give me the means of an honorable retirement so that I may spend the rest of my days near

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Letter 3. - Reg. I, p. 1. The copyist notes that the original was written entirely in the Saint's hand.

1Saint-Vincent-de-Paul (Landes). Saint Vincent was born in this little village about eight kilometers from Dax. A large complex of buildings now occupies the place where he came into the world.

2Probably Jean de Saint-Martin, husband of Catherine de Comet, brother of Canon de Saint-Martin, and judge of Pouy. M. de Comet the younger apparently had died before 1610.

3According to Abelly (op. cit., vol. I, chap. V, beginning, p. 20), Saint Vincent came to Paris from Rome around the end of 1608 as an envoy from Cardinal d'Ossat to Henri IV. No document of the period mentions this secret mission, and it is certain that Cardinal d'Ossat had nothing to do with it, since he had died on March 13, 1604.

4On May 17, 1610, Saint Vincent was given the benefice that he was expecting, the Abbey of Saint-Léonard de Chaulmes in the diocese of Saintes (Charente-Maritime). (Cf. vol. XIII, no. 9.)
you. I spoke of the state of my affairs to Monsieur de Saint-Martin who told me that he wished to continue the benevolence and affection which Monsieur de Comet so kindly manifested for us. I asked him to tell you all about it.

I should very much like to know how things are at home, and whether all my brothers and sisters and our other relatives and friends are well, and especially whether my brother Gayon is married and to whom. Also, how is everything with my sister Marie, at Paillole? Is she still alive and sharing the house with her brother-in-law Bertrand? As for my other sister, I imagine she cannot but be well-off, so long as God is pleased to give her a companion. I should also like my brother to have one of my nephews study. My misfortunes and the little service that I have as yet been able to render at home may make him unwilling to do so, but let him reflect that the present misfortune presupposes good luck in the future.

That is all, Mother, that I can tell you at present, except that I entreat you to offer my humble respects to all my brothers and

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How greatly this language differs from that which Saint Vincent will use later when he has had more contact with souls, seen their needs, felt their sufferings, and heard their appeals.

We know from Abelly (op. cit., vol. II, chap. II, beginning, p. 7) that Vincent de Paul was the third child in a family of four boys and two girls. In a notarized document dated September 4, 1626, signed Vincent Depaul, mention is made of "Bernard and Gayon Depaul, brothers of the said Sieur Vincent Depaul," the latter "his second brother," of "Marie [Marie-Claudine] Depaul, his sister, wife of Grégoire," and of another "Marie Depaul, his sister," widow of "Jehan de Paillole." A document dated May 12, 1631, published in the Revue de Gascogne (1905, pp. 354-357), mentions "Pierre Depaul, called De Leschine," son of "the late Jehan Depaul." If we compare a letter from M. Lostalot, dated September 25, 1682 (Arch. of the Priests of the Mission), with the registers of Catholicity, we are led to conclude that Pierre de Paul was the Saint's nephew and, consequently, that his father was Vincent's brother. Jean was not mentioned in the 1626 document because he had already died. Jean, Bernard, Gayon, Marie, and another Marie; such then were the names of Saint Vincent's brothers and sisters, but there is nothing to tell us in what order to place them.

Paillole was the name of the house in which the Saint's sister lived. The house was near the church, where another house bearing the same name now stands.

One of Saint Vincent's nephews studied and became a priest. In fact, in a register of the prebendaries of Capbreton (Landes) we read: "M. François Depaul, priest, prebendary of Capbreton in the place of M. Jean de Ponteils, died on June 8, 1678. He was a native of Pouy near d'Acqs, and a nephew of M. Vincent, priest, Founder of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission." (Archives of M. l'abbé Gabarra, Pastor of Capbreton.)
sisters and to all our other relatives and friends. I pray to God unceasingly for your health and for the prosperity of the family, as one who is and who shall be for you, Mother, a most humble, most obedient, and helpful son and servant.

DEPAUL

I entreat you to offer my humble respects to all my brothers and sisters and to all our relatives and friends, especially to Bétan.

4.- TO EDMOND MAULJEAN, VICAR GENERAL OF SENS

June 20, 1616

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

We sometimes meet good people who wish to make a general confession, and because we very often encounter reserved cases and find it difficult to send them away, I thought of entreating you most humbly to grant me permission to absolve them from the said reserved cases. I assure you that I shall in no way abuse this, and that I shall be all my life, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Letter 4. - Reg. I, f° 1. The copyist notes that the original was written entirely in the Saint's own handwriting.

1 Born in the diocese of Châlons, died March 1, 1617. Vincent de Paul, tutor to the children of Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, General of the Galleys and Comte de Joigny, often had occasion to go with them to this city situated in the diocese of Sens.

2 Reservation of sins is the limitation by a competent superior of an inferior's power of absolution so that the latter cannot absolve certain sins because of the lack of jurisdiction.
5. - EDMOND MAULJEAN TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

I have such great assurance of your competence, prudence, capability, and other merits that I most willingly grant you what you ask. May God give you the grace to acquit yourself worthily of it, as I trust you shall.

In token of the above, I have signed this note for you on the twentieth day of June, 1616.

Mauljean

6. - TO PHILIPPE-EMMANUEL DE GONDI, IN PROVENCE

[August or September 1617]

Saint Vincent writes from Châtillon-les-Dombes that, not having the requisite qualities to be a tutor in a family of such high nobility as that of the De Gondis, he has secretly left Paris, strongly determined to devote himself to parish ministry in the place where he is.

Letter 5. - Reg. I, f° 1. Edmond Mauljean wrote his reply following Vincent de Paul's request.

1Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, General of the Galleys of France, was the father of the second Cardinal de Retz, Jean-François-Paul de Gondi, who distinguished himself by his intrigues during the Fronde. When he became a widower, he entered the Oratorian Fathers and spent the rest of his life in the practice of Christian and religious virtues. He died in Joigny on June 29, 1662. The Congregation of the Mission, the Oratory, and Carmel honor him as one of their outstanding benefactors. Remarks on his life can be read in: R. P. Ingold, Bibliothèque oratorienne (Paris: Poussielgue, 1882-1883), vol. I, pp. 421-448; and in: Louis Batterel, Mémoires domestiques pour servir à l'histoire de l'oratoire (Paris: Ficard, 1902-1905), vol. I, pp. 322-361.

2Abelly tells us that the General of the Galleys received Vincent de Paul's letter at the end of August or during the first two weeks of September.

3Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne (Ain), in the diocese of Belley.
Monsieur,

I was not mistaken when I feared losing your assistance, as I mentioned to you so many times, since I have indeed lost it. My anguish over this would be unbearable without a very special grace from God which I do not deserve. If it were only for a time, I would not be so upset; but when I think of all the occasions on which I shall need to be assisted by direction and counsel, either in death or in life, my grief begins anew. Consider then whether my mind and body can bear this grief for long. I am not able to seek nor receive assistance elsewhere, because you are well aware that I am not free to reveal the needs of my soul to many people.

Monsieur de Bérulle promised me that he would write to you, and I am calling upon God and the Holy Virgin to give you back to our home for the salvation of our whole family and of many others towards whom you will be able to exercise your charity. I entreat you once again to practice it towards us for the love you bear Our Lord, to Whose goodness I entrust myself on this occasion, although with a great fear of not being able to persevere.


1François-Marguerite de Silly, wife of Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, was born in 1580 of Antoine de Silly, Comte de Rochepot, Baron de Montmirail, Ambassador to Spain, and of Marie de Lannoy. Shortly after Saint Vincent entered her house as her children’s tutor, she entrusted to him the direction of her soul. The Saint’s influence was not long in making itself felt. The devout woman formed the habit of visiting and serving the sick, and of distributing abundant alms to the poor. She had missions given on her estates and joined the Confraternity of Charity in Montmirail. She died on June 23, 1625, after having her saintly director named head of the Collège des Bons-Enfants, and having provided him with the means of establishing the Congregation of the Mission by a gift of forty-five thousand livres. (Cf. Abelly, *op. cit.*, vol. I, chaps. VII-XVIII; Hilarion de Coste, *Les éloges et vies des reynes, princesses, dames et demoiselles illustres en piété, courage et doctrine* [Paris: S. Cramoisy, 1639], vol. II, pp. 389 ff.; Régis de Chantelauze, *Saint Vincent de Paul et les Gondi* [Paris: E. Plon, 1882].)

2Madame de Gondi received the letter in which her husband apprised her of Saint Vincent’s decision on September 14; it was after that letter that she wrote hers.

3Pierre de Bérulle was born in the Château de Cérilly (Yonne), near Troyes, on February 4, 1575. Shortly after his priestly ordination, which took place in 1599, he was named Chaplain of the King. His talent for debate enabled him to bring back to the bosom of the Church several prominent people, among others the Comte de Laval, the Baron de Salignac, and a presiding justice of the Parlement of Paris. The King, Louis XIII, entrusted him with the honorable mission of conducting to England Henriette-Marie of France, daughter of Henri IV, who was going to marry the Prince of Wales, the future Charles I of England. With the help of Michel
If you refuse me after that, I shall hold you responsible before God for whatever happens to me, and for all the good that I shall fail to do for want of being helped. You are putting me in danger of being very frequently deprived of the sacraments in various places because of the great difficulties which may befall me there and the few people who are capable of assisting me. You know very well that the General has the same desire as I, which God alone is giving him by His mercy. Do not resist the good that you can do by assisting in his salvation, since he is destined one day to assist in that of many others. I know that, since my life serves only to offend God, it is not dangerous to place it in peril, but my soul should be assisted at death. Remember the apprehension in which you saw me during my last illness in a village; I risk falling into a worse state. The mere fear of that would do me so much harm that, were it not for my former excellent health, I think it might possibly cause my death.

8. - TO MADAME DE GONDI

[September or October 1617]

Vincent de Paul consoles and encourages Mme de Gondi, while exhorting her to be submissive to the good pleasure of God.

De Marillac, Keeper of the Seals, and of Madame Acarie, he established the Carmelites in France in 1603; and in 1611, he founded the Congregation of the Oratory of which he became the first Superior. His influence over the clergy was considerable. He gathered around him the most virtuous and eminent priests of Paris. It was to his house that Saint Vincent, after his arrival in the city, went to seek help and advice. Pierre de Bérulle looked askance at the birth of the Congregation of the Mission and even tried to prevent its approbation in the Curia of Rome. He was made a cardinal and died a year later on October 2, 1629. (Cf. vol. 11, no. 677.)


1This letter is the reply to the preceding one.
2Saint Vincent's response did not discourage Madame de Gondi. She had her children, the chief officers of her house, Father de Bérulle, Henri de Gondi, the first Cardinal de Retz and the Bishop of Paris, doctors and religious, in short, anyone who might exercise any influence over her saintly director, write to him. The intervention of Father Bence, the Superior of the Oratory in Lyons, was the most efficacious of all—the Saint promised him that he would go to Paris to seek advice from his friends.
9. - PHILIPPE-EMMANUEL DE GONDI TO SAINT VINCENT

October 15, 1617

Two days ago I received the letter you wrote me from Lyons, in which I learned of the decision you have made to take a little trip to Paris at the end of November, which makes me extremely happy. I hope that I will see you there at that time, and that you will grant to my prayers and to the advice of all your good friends the favor which I desire of you.

I shall say no more to you about this, since you have seen the letter that I wrote to my wife. I merely entreat you to bear in mind that God seems to wish the father and his children to be upright people by means of you.

10. - TO CHARLES DU FRESNE*
SECRETARY OF PHILIPPE-EMMANUEL DE GONDI

[October 1617]2

Saint Vincent informs his friend that he hopes to take a trip to Paris in two months. There, according to the enlightenment that God gives him, he will make a final decision concerning his return to Châtillon-les-Dombes or to the De Gondi family.3

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*Sieur de Villeneuve, former secretary of Queen Marguerite de Valois. After the death of this princess, he entered the house of Emmanuel de Gondi, for whom he was secretary, then intendant. (Cf. Abelly, op. cit., vol. I, chap. V, p. 21.) He was one of the closest friends of Saint Vincent.

1This letter was written on very nearly the same date as the preceding one.
2It was upon this latter course that Vincent de Paul decided, after consulting Father de Bérulle and other enlightened individuals. He arrived in Paris on December 23, and the next day he resumed his post in the De Gondi family.
Vincent de Paul, head of the Collège des Bons-Enfants,² near the Porte Saint-Victor,³ humbly makes this petition, stating that the buildings of the above-mentioned collège are in a state of great ruin because of their antiquity. To avoid their complete collapse, some work must be done quickly on the chapel and the collège building where a great number of extensive repairs are needed.⁴ In view of this, Monsieur, in order to be more sure of the repairs necessary for the said collège, would you please give orders for it to be visited and gone over by two sworn master masons or other

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¹Nicolas de Bailleul, Seigneur de Vattetot-sur-Mer and Seigneur de Soisy-sur-Mer, Provost of Tradesmen from 1622 to 1628, then President à mortier, Superintendent of Finances, and Minister of State. He died August 20, 1652, in his sixty-sixth year. The Provost of Tradesmen was the chief officer of the municipal administration of Paris; he was appointed by the King.

²On March 1, 1624, Jean-François de Gondi, Archbishop of Paris, had turned over to Saint Vincent the direction of the College des Bons-Enfants so that he might have a place to lodge the priests wishing to join him in giving missions in the country. This Collège, nearly three centuries old, was one of the oldest of the University, almost abandoned, and in a pitiable state of decay. It occupied an area of about sixteen acres. It was not a teaching center but simply a hostel in which students, whether foundation scholars (e.g. Pluyette scholarship fund) or paying boarders, were provided with shelter and sleeping quarters. The Saint waited until after the death of Madame de Gondi to go and live there. In the beginning, he had two assistants: Antoine Portail, who remained faithful to him until his death, and another priest whose name is unknown, but who is certainly not Adrien Gambart, as has been mistakenly supposed, since Adrien Gambart was ordained a priest only in 1633. (Cf. Missionnaire paroissial, vol. 89 in Collection intégral et universelle des Orateurs chrétiens [100 vols., Paris: Migne, 1844-1892].) When the Missionaries went to the country, which used to happen often, they entrusted the keys to a neighbor.

³There was another College des Bons-Enfants in the vicinity of the Louvre, in the faubourg Saint-Honoré. The one where Saint Vincent lived, near the Porte Saint-Victor, was on the spot occupied today by the house at 2 rue des Ecoles.

⁴The report of the experts, dated July 27, gives us an idea of the condition of the buildings. "It was evident that the main portion of the wing to the left of the entrance, the largest of all, was not being used because of its delapidated condition, and it was judged necessary to raze it and rebuild it from top to bottom. The others all needed considerable repairs, not only with respect to the roofing, wainscoting, sustaining walls, doors, and casements, most of which were worthless, but also on the main walls, the cesspools, the floors, and the staircases." (Cf. Réflexions sur les différents comptes du collège des Bons-Enfants en réponse aux observations du sieur Reboul, archiviste du collège Louis-le-Grand sur le même objet, Arch. Nat. H 3288.)
such men whom you might choose to appoint. They will draw up their report with regard to carrying out these repairs and ordering what is proper, and you will be acting with justice.\(^5\)

**Addressed:** The Provost of Paris or the Civil Lieutenant, guardian of University privileges

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**12. - TO SAINT LOUISE DE MARILLAC\(^1\)**

October 30, 1626

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

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\(^1\)Vincent de Paul received the authorization to make the renovations considered urgent by the experts, and to borrow for that purpose, if need be, by mortgaging the collège property. For lack of funds, he contented himself with the repairs that were absolutely indispensable; the rest were put off until later. (Cf. Réflexions sur les différents comptes du collège des Bons-Enfants.)

**Letter 12. -** Saint Paul manuscript, p. 2.

Saint Louise de Marillac was born in Paris on August 12, 1591. Her father was Louis de Marillac, brother of the devout Michel de Marillac, Keeper of the Seals (1626-1630), and the Marshal de Marillac, renowned for his misfortunes and tragic death. She was the widow of Antoine Le Gras, secretary of Queen Marie de Médicis. She had married him February 5, 1613, and lost him December 21, 1625. They had a son, Michel, who at the time of this letter had just turned thirteen. The devout widow had placed her entire confidence in her spiritual director, Vincent de Paul, and found it hard to bear with his long absences. The holy director employed her in his charitable works. The day was coming when he would make her his collaborator in the creation and organization of the Confraternities of Charity. The life of Louise de Marillac, whom the Church beatified on May 9, 1920, has been written by Gobillon (1676), the Comtesse de Richemont (1883), Comte de Lambel, Monsignor Baunard (1898), and Emmanuel de Broglie (1911). Her letters and other writings were copied and partially published in the work entitled: *Louise de Marillac, veuve de M. Le Gras. Sa vie, ses vertus, son esprit* (4 vols., Bruges, 1886). Louise de Marillac was canonized on March 11, 1934, and on February 10, 1960, she was named patroness of all those who devote themselves to Christian social work. Therefore, in this English edition of the letters of Saint Vincent, Saint has been added to her name in Coste’s titles of letters and in the footnotes. To the above bibliography should be added: Bishop Jean Calvet, *Louise de Marillac. A Portrait*, translated by G. F. Pullen (1959); Joseph I. Dirvin, *Louise de Marillac* (1970); the compilation by an anonymous editor: *Louise de Marillac, ses écrits* (1961); and the revised edition of this work, entitled: *Sainte Louise de Marillac. Écrits spirituels* (1983).

The title of Madame was formerly reserved to the wives of knights. The spouses of simple squires, regardless of their husbands’ degree of nobility, had right only to the title of
I received your letter here in Loisy-en-Brie,² twenty-eight leagues from Paris, where we are giving a mission.³ I did not notify you of my departure because it was a little sooner than I had expected and I was reluctant to upset you by letting you know about it. Well now! Our Lord will use this little mortification to advantage if He wishes, and He Himself will act as your director. Yes, He will surely do so, and in such a way that He will lead you to see that it is He Himself. Be then His dear daughter — quite humble, submissive, and full of confidence — and always wait patiently for the manifestation of His holy and adorable Will.

In this place where we are, one-third of the inhabitants are heretics. Please pray for us; we need it, especially myself.

I am not answering all your letters because I am no longer in a situation where I can do what you request.

13. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY¹

[October or November 1626]³

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Your letter arrived after I had left Paris and was forwarded to me

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²A small place in Marne.

³At that time, Saint Vincent’s associates in his mission work were Antoine Portail, Louis Callon, François du Coudray, and Jean de la Salle. One of these Missionaries was with him in Loisy.

Letter 13. - Reg. I, f° 4 v°. The copyist notes that the original was in Saint Vincent’s own handwriting.

¹A woman of eminent piety, entirely devoted to Saint Vincent, whom she assisted with her wealth. If a troublesome infirmity — one of her legs was two or three times larger than the other — had not prevented her, she would have taken a much more active role in the Saint’s work. Her paternal uncle, René Hennequin, had married Marie de Marillac, Saint Louise’s aunt.

²A comparison of this letter with no. 12 convinces us that the two were written within a few days of each other, perhaps on the same day.
here in Loisy-en-Brie, where we are trying to work among a great number of people of the religion.\textsuperscript{3} We need prayers in order to strengthen the Catholics who remain; we hope for nothing from the others, because they are not in circumstances in which they can avail themselves of our preaching.

Moreover, I gave you no notice of my departure. Will you not forgive me for that? But tell me please, how did your heart take it? Did it not give mine a severe scolding? Well now, I hope they will be reconciled within the one which encompasses them, which is Our Lord's.

I am not giving you an answer concerning your proposal about returning to Paris, because I imagine that you have already done so. With regard to the matter you wish to share with me, as you so kindly told me in your letter, please let it wait for my return. If the decision is urgent, do what Our Lord Himself advises you; if not, please wait for my return, as I said.

\textit{Mon Dieu!} how different your director's daughters are: one full of respect for the defense of the Church, and the other fully confident that she is right about the Poissy\textsuperscript{4} affair! Have courage! Our Lord is honored equally by both of them from what I see of your community, to whose Mother\textsuperscript{5} I send my regards.

Meanwhile, remain quite cheerful, Mademoiselle, I beg of you.

\textsuperscript{3}Huguenots.

\textsuperscript{4}The Dominican nuns had a famous boarding school in Poissy (Yvelines). Saint Louise had spent some time there in her youth under the direction of her father's first cousin, who composed several bits of poetry, and of the Prioress, Jeanne de Gondi. Louise de Gondi, the latter's niece, had succeeded her. This election was contested for a long time, although its validity had been recognized by the King, by Father Siccus, General of the Dominicans, and by the Pope himself. In 1625, Father Siccus drew up new statutes which he had approved by the Holy See. Article 5 stated "that Mother Louise de Gondi, the present Prioress, is to remain in office, according to the apostolic concession granted her; but should she resign or die, a new prioress is to be elected by the Sisters with active voice, according to the statutes and rules of the Council of Trent, and of our constitutions and general chapters. This prioress, thus elected and confirmed by the provincial, is to have a true three-year term. This should be henceforth and perpetually observed with regard to the election and term of office of the prioresses." This document did not silence the protesters. Interesting details concerning this affair can be found in the Bibl. Nat., Joly de Fleury collection, 1475.

\textsuperscript{5}Louise de Gondi. She resigned the office of prioress in 1660, and died on August 29, 1661.
To this end, honor the holy tranquillity of Our Lord's soul, and trust fully that He will direct your dear heart by the holy love of His own. In this love, I am your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

14. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

I hope you will forgive the liberty I am taking of expressing to you my spirit's impatience, as much with regard to the long time you have been away in the past as concerning my apprehension about the future, and about not knowing the place to which you are going after the one where you are now. It is true, Father, that thinking about the reason which takes you away brings some mitigation to my suffering, but, in my idleness, that does not keep the days from sometimes seeming like months. I wish, however, to await God's time with tranquillity, and to recognize that my unworthiness is delaying it.

I have been well aware that Mademoiselle du Fay, over and above her wont, is a little anxious at heart. We spent Pentecost together. After the service, she would have liked to have been free to speak to me openly, but we remained in the expectation and desire of doing God's Will.

The work you gave me is completed. If the members of Jesus need it and if it is your pleasure, Father, that I send it, I shall not fail to do so. I did not want to do that without your order.

At last, most honored Father, after a little anxiety, my son is at the collège and, thanks be to God, he is very happy and in good health. If this continues, I am greatly in favor of it.¹

¹Michel Le Gras, born October 19, 1613, intended to embrace the ecclesiastical state. To encourage the vocation of her son, Saint Louise had placed him in the seminary of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, the college spoken of here, which had been founded and was directed by the austere and virtuous Adrien Bourdoise. Michel, however, caused his mother a great deal of anxiety by the instability of his character. He ultimately abandoned the cassock at the age of twenty-seven (1640). After ten years of wavering, on January 18, 1650, he married Demoiselle Gabrielle Le Clerc in the Church of Saint-Sauveur. Saint Vincent witnessed the marriage contract.
Father, allow me to trouble you once again about a young woman, twenty-eight [years] of age, whom they wish to bring from Burgundy in order to entrust her to me. She is intelligent and virtuous, from what they tell me. However, before her, the good blind girl from Les Vertus\(^2\) told me that her companion, who is twenty-two [years] old, might perhaps come to our house. She has been under the direction of the Fathers of the Oratory for four years and is a genuine country girl. I am not sure that she wants to come; nevertheless, she has given me evidence of some desire to do so. I most humbly entreat you, Father, to let me know what I should do about this. The person who is going to Burgundy is supposed to leave on Monday and, since I was expecting you to return this week, I promised her an answer.

For a month now, our good God has allowed my soul more feeling for Him than usual; but I still have my imperfections. When I no longer hinder the effect of the prayers which I hope you are saying for me, I think that I shall grow better.

These past few days, I have really wished that you would remember to offer me to God and to ask Him for the grace of accomplishing entirely His holy Will in me, notwithstanding the opposition of my wretchedness. Therefore, Father, I present you this plea in all humility and ask your pardon for bothering you so much, for I am, by the goodness of God, Monsieur, your most grateful servant and unworthy daughter.

L. de Marillac

June 5, 1627

15. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 1627]\(^1\)

I thank you, Mademoiselle, for notifying me of good Mademoiselle du Fay’s donation. Please keep it until you need it, unless she thinks it should be set aside and reserved for going to win over poor souls to God in the regions of Poitou and the

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\(^2\)A locality included today in the commune of Aubervilliers (Seine-Saint-Denis).

Letter 15. - Saint Paul manuscript, p. 77.

\(^1\)It seems that this letter ought to be placed near the one that follows.
Cévennes. If that is not her intention and she wishes it to be used for the poor of this area, be so kind as to forward it to me and send three shirts to Mademoiselle Lamy\(^2\) in Gentilly\(^3\) for the Charity\(^4\) of that place.

I am writing to you at about midnight and am a little tired. Forgive my heart if it is not a little more expansive in this letter. Be faithful to your faithful lover who is Our Lord. Also be very simple and humble. And I shall be, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother . . . .

16. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Verneuil,\(^1\) October 8, 1627

Mademoiselle,

Since, therefore, your good lady wishes that her present material donation not hinder a spiritual one in the future, and that we distribute what she gave you\(^2\) right now, I beg you to send us by M. du Coudray,\(^3\) the bearer of this letter, the sum of fifty livres.

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\(^2\)Catherine Vigor, wife of Antoine Lamy, Auditor in the Chambre des Comptes [sovereign court for the examination, registration, and auditing of taxes], was president of the Confraternity of Charity in Gentilly. Antoine Lamy and his wife founded a mission in that locality and also in Ferreux on December 30, 1634.

\(^3\)A district situated at the gates of Paris.

\(^4\)The Confraternities of Charity, or more simply, the Charities, were composed of volunteer women and girls, who joined together in order to come to the assistance of the needy. Begun in Châtillon-les-Dombes (Ain) in 1617, this organization responded so well to the needs of the population that Vincent de Paul set it up on the De Gondi estates in Villepreux, Folleville, Joigny, Montmirail, and everywhere he went to give missions. The regulations varied a little according to the localities. From this work was born the Company of the Daughters of Charity. In some places, the Charities of women were complemented by Charities of men.


\(^1\)Near Creil, in Oise.

\(^2\)Donation which Mademoiselle du Fay had given Saint Louise.

\(^3\)Subsequently, we shall meet the name of François du Coudray quite often. He was born in 1586 in the city of Amiens, was ordained a priest in September 1618, and in March 1626 he was received into the Congregation of the Mission, of which the only other members were as yet
Kindly assure her for me that Our Lord Himself will return good measure to her, and that I have begun to make practical use of four of them since I have been here to bring about the foundation of the Charity which is being set up here. We find great temporal needs joined to spiritual ones, because of the large number of Huguenots there are—rich people—using a few comforts given to the poor to corrupt them, thus doing unspeakable harm. Please send us also four shirts, and convey our most humble respects to your good lady. Kindly assure your own heart that, provided it honors the holy tranquillity of that of Our Lord in His love, it will be pleasing to Him. I am, in this same love....

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, rue Saint-Victor, at the house in which M. Tiron Saint-Priest§ used to live

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Saint Vincent and Antoine Portail. He was gifted with extraordinary intelligence and knew Hebrew well enough to be judged capable of doing a new translation of the Bible.

It was he whom the Saint chose to go to Rome to negotiate the approbation of the nascent Congregation. He remained there from 1613 to 1635. We find him next in Paris; from there he went into various areas to relieve the poor, to assist soldiers, or to give missions. In 1638, the Saint confided to him the direction of the house of Toul, which he retained until 1641. He was recalled to Saint-Lazare in 1641, spent part of the year 1643 in Marseilles evangelizing the galley slaves and founding a house in that city, and in 1644 he took over the direction of the house in La Rose (Lot-et-Garonne).

Unfortunately, his vast erudition was not accompanied by sufficiently solid theological knowledge. He maintained some unorthodox opinions and persevered in them despite the admonitions given him. The measures that Saint Vincent was obliged to take to prevent him from spreading his errors darkened the last years of his life. In 1646, he went from the La Rose house to Richelieu. There he ended his days in February 1649, in his sixty-third year.

§M. Pemartin felt that he could dispense with repeating the closing and signature at the end of each letter.

§This address is taken from the Histoire de Mademoiselle Le Gras by the Comtesse de Richemont, Paris, 1883, p. 46, n. 2.
17. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Thank you a thousand million times for the splendid gift you sent us, Mademoiselle. I beg God to be your sole reward and to make me worthy of meriting the same through the services I am obliged to render you.

I returned last night from our mission in good health and I very much hope that you are feeling well, too. As soon as I have taken care of a few little matters that are on my mind, I shall come to thank you for the many, many fruits of your generosity. I beg you to continue it for me, Mademoiselle, and to believe that my heart receives an inexpressible consolation in the confidence that it is one with yours and that of Our Lord, and that they form but one love in that of the same Lord and His holy Mother.

18. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Blessed be God, Mademoiselle, that you are feeling better! You will be most welcome to communicate tomorrow at Monsieur de la Salle's! Mass. I am obliged to say mine in the morning because of a priests' meeting taking place here tomorrow morning which


Letter 18. - Autograph letter. According to Coste, the original was at the Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity in Naples. The present location of the letter is unknown.

Jean de la Salle, whom Saint Vincent calls a "great missionary" and whom the Bishop of Beauvais considered the "most gifted expositor" he had ever known (Conference of Saint Vincent, August 5, 1659 - cf. vol. XII, no. 210), was born in Seux (Somme), September 10, 1598, and offered his services to Saint Vincent in April 1626. In 1631, he was preaching in Champagne; in 1634, 1635, and 1636, he was working in Gironde and the surrounding areas. When the internal seminary of Saint-Lazare opened in June 1637, he was entrusted with its direction. The following year he returned to his missions, after which he was engaged in the ordinands' retreats until the end of his life. He died October 9, 1639, much regretted by Saint Vincent, who lost in him one of his best workers.
will last until noon. I am not so much afraid of the chapel now as in the summer. If Mademoiselle Guérin wishes to come, she will be most welcome — before I leave. I shall let you know about that.

As for the money from Mademoiselle du Fay's Charity, I gladly approve the use you wish to make of it, and I am also pleased with the decision those good young women have made to put everything in common. I shall not fail tomorrow at Mass, miserable sinner that I am, to offer them to Our Lord, in Whose love I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

19. - SAINT JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL TO SAINT VINCENT

November 1627

So there you are, my very dear Father, occupied with your work in the province of Lyons and, consequently, here we are, deprived of seeing you for a long time. But in what God does, there is no fault to be found; rather, He is to be blessed for everything, as I am doing, my very dear Father, for the freedom you give me to continue my trust in you and to bother you. I shall do so quite simply.

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2The work of the spiritual conferences was not definitely organized until later, in 1633. We may believe, however, that from time to time conferences were given before that date in the Collège des Bons-Enfants. We know that many priests, attracted by Bourdoise and Le Feron, used to meet there to converse even before Saint Vincent took possession of the buildings. (Cf. P. Schoenher, Histoire du Séminaire de Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet [2 vols., Paris: Desclée, 1909-1911], vol. 1, p. 97.)

3Wife of Gilles Guérin, Councillor of the King and Auditor of Accounts. She lived on the rue Saint-Victor, quite near the Collège des Bons-Enfants.

4Probably the members of the Charity.


1In November 1627, Saint Jane Frances was on her way to Orléans; she arrived in Paris in January and did not leave until May. Jane Frances (Jeanne-Françoise) Frémiot, born in Dijon on January 23, 1572, had four children from her marriage with the Baron de Chantal. Widowed very young, she placed herself under the guidance of Saint Francis de Sales, and
Well, I have made four days of retreat, and no more, because of several business matters that came up unexpectedly. I saw the need I have to work at humility and tolerance of my neighbor, virtues that I had taken last year and that Our Lord has given me the grace to practice a little. But He is the One Who did everything and Who will do so again, if He chooses, since He gives me so many opportunities.

As for my state, it seems to me that I am simply awaiting what God will be pleased to do with me. I have no desires nor plans. Nothing is keeping me from allowing God to act. I do not yet see it, but it seems to me that this is what is in the depths of my soul. I have neither opinion nor feeling with regard to the future, but, at present, I am doing what I think it is necessary to do, without thinking any further.

Often, everything is stirred up in the inferior part, causing me to suffer a great deal. And there I am, knowing that with patience I shall possess my soul. Moreover, I have many difficulties on account of my office, because my spirit greatly detests action, and when I force myself to act in a case of necessity, my body and spirit are left disconsolate. My imagination, on the other hand, gives me a lot of trouble during all my exercises, and with rather great annoyance. Our Lord is also permitting me to have a number of difficulties exteriorly, so that nothing in this life is pleasing to me except the Will of God alone which wishes me to be here. May God be merciful to me, which I beg you to earnestly ask of Him. I shall not fail to pray to Him, as I am doing with all my heart, that He will strengthen you for the responsibility He has given you.

with him established the Order of the Visitation. The foundation of the first monastery in Paris drew her to that city where she remained from 1619 to 1622. There she became acquainted with Saint Vincent whom she requested of Jean-François de Gondi (Archbishop of Paris) as Superior of her daughters. Until her death in Moulins, December 13, 1641, on her return from a trip to Paris, she kept in close contact with this holy priest whom she liked to consult for her spiritual direction and with regard to the business affairs of her community. (Cf. Henri de Maupas du Tour, La Vie de la Vénérable Mère Jeanne-Françoise Frémion [new ed., Paris: Siméon Piget, 1653].)
**20. - A PRIEST TO SAINT VINCENT**

December 1627

I am back from a long journey through four provinces. I have already told you about the good reputation being spread, through the provinces where I have been, by the implantation of your holy Company which is working for the instruction and improvement of the rural poor. Truly, I do not believe that there is anything in the Church of God more edifying or more worthy of those who bear the mark and order of Jesus Christ. We must beg God to infuse His spirit of perseverance into a project which is so advantageous for the good of souls, to which so few of those who are dedicated to the service of God apply themselves as they ought.

**21. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT**

Monsieur,

About three weeks ago, while I was at Mademoiselle du Fay's house, I found an opportunity to write to you, but I am afraid that my letters have been lost. The main topic was some advice that I was asking you with regard to my son. But now, Monsieur, I am no longer in the same position: for, whether God does not wish him to make a decision right now about becoming a priest, or whether the world is standing in the way, his fervor is much diminished. Seeing such a great change of mind in him, I spoke freely about it to the Mother Superior.¹ She advised me to place him merely as a boarder with those good clergymen,² for reasons which I shall tell you if God gives me the grace of seeing your return, of which I have great need.

I have certainly never felt your absence more keenly, because of the needs I have had since you left. In this I must admit my weakness, assuring you, Father, that if God gives me the grace to recall the past, I

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¹A "very well known" priest, says Abelly.


²Probably Mother Louise de Gondi, Prioress of the Dominican Nuns in Poissy, with whom Mademoiselle du Fay seems to have had a place to live.

³At the seminary of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.
shall have no reason to boast. I ask strength from the help of your prayers, for the love of God, and I thank you most humbly for the trouble you took to write me and for the expressions of the honor of your remembrance. I do not deserve it, and God is very good to put up with me. Now, my dearest Father, offer my will to the Divine Mercy, for I wish to be converted and to call myself truly, Monsieur, your most humble servant and unworthy daughter in Our Lord.

L. de Marillac

January 13, 1628

Mademoiselle du Fay is still ill in body and has been in bed almost continually for two weeks; without a fever, however. She is most eager for your return.

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

22. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I do not know how I had imagined these past few days that you were ill, and so I kept on thinking of you in that condition. But, may God be blessed that your letter assured me of the contrary!

What shall I say to you now about your son, except that, just as we were not to put too much trust in the affection he used to have for the community,1 we must also not be troubled about the different feeling he has now. Leave him alone then, and surrender him completely to what Our Lord wills or does not will. It rests with Him alone to direct these tender souls. He is also more interested in this than you, because he belongs more to Him than to you.

Letter 22. - The original autograph letter was formerly at the house of the Daughters of Charity, 15 rue des Bernardins, Paris. They received it from M. Duby, a former Pastor of the parish. It had probably belonged at one time to the monks of Saint-Victor Abbey. The letter is now in the Archives of the Mission, 95 rue de Sevres, Paris.

1The seminary of Saint Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.
When I have the pleasure of seeing you, or more time than at present to write to you, I shall tell you the thought that came to me one day and which I shared with Madame de Chantal concerning this matter. It consoled her and, by the mercy of God, freed her from a sorrow similar to that which you may be suffering. Until we next see each other then. And if your other difficulty troubles you, write to me about it and I shall answer you.

Meanwhile, get ready to do an act of charity for two poor girls whom we have decided should leave here. We shall send them to you from here in a week's time and ask you to direct them to some good woman who can find them work as servants, unless you know some upright lady who may need them.

We shall still have work here for about six weeks; after that I shall give you and Mademoiselle du Fay all my attention. I greet her with the fullness of my heart and pray God that I may find you in good health. I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Joigny, January 17, 1628

23. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!
I sent one of the girls about whom I spoke to you to our good

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2Celse-Bénigne, the son of Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, died fighting the English on the Ile de Ré, July 22, 1627. All his life, he was a worry to his mother, especially because of his passion for duels.


1See no. 22.
Mademoiselle du Fay because she has confidence in her; the other
one stayed in Joigny and has gone into service. Perhaps the said
lady will think it proper for her to stay with you for a few days
while she is waiting. If so, I have no doubt that you will agree and
that you will recognize the confidence with which I act towards
you.

I am not saying anything to you concerning the matter about
which you wrote to me, because I hope to see you towards the end
of this month and talk about it face to face.

What might you say, my dear daughter, about the task that fell
to me during our mission on one of Monsieur de Vincy’s estates?
Indeed, while hearing the confessions of these good people, I
seem to see before me their good Mademoiselle, whom they love
so much. As I was not expecting to be able to write to you, I asked
her, in the letter that I wrote to her, to ask you to send us a dozen
shirts of all kinds. Please do so, therefore, Mademoiselle, and be
quite cheerful in the disposition of willing everything that God
wills. And because it is His good pleasure that we remain always
in the holy joy of His love, let us remain in it and attach ourselves
to it inseparably in this world, so that we may be one day but one
in Him, in Whose love I am, Mademoiselle, your most humble
and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Villecien, February 9, 1628

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2Antoine Hennequin, Sieur de Vincy, priest brother of Mademoiselle du Fay, died in 1645,
after being received into the Congregation of the Mission. He was a great friend of Saint
Vincent.
3Mademoiselle du Fay.
4The Saint was thinking no doubt about the anxiety Saint Louise was experiencing with
regard to her son’s vocation. “Be cheerful,” is the advice he never ceases to give her.
5A small place near Joigny.
Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever! These few lines will be to thank you for having taken that good young woman into your home, for the twelve shirts that you sent me, and to tell you [that I am going] to go away, and will be back in a week, God willing, and then we shall talk about everything. However, I am telling your heart in advance that I praise God because it has freed itself from the excessive attachment it had to the little one, and because you have made it correspond to reason. There is no danger [now], unless you act [according to] its inclination and have him enter the clerical state. God grant that this be for His glory and the salvation of souls and may He give you a share in the holy tranquillity of His spirit. I am, in His love, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Paris

25. - COMMANDER DE SILERY TO SAINT VINCENT

(Now 60a.)
To our most Holy Father the Pope,

Vincent de Paul, Superior of the Priests of the Mission founded in Paris, Master Louis Callon, Doctor of the Sorbonne, Antoine Portail, François du Coudray, Jean de la Salle, Jean

Letter 26. - Autograph letter. Archives of the Propaganda, III, Lettere di Francia, Avignone, Switzerland, 1628, no 130, p. 31. Coste published the Latin original. This document was discovered after patient research by Father Jean Parrang, C.M. It is on parchment in very beautiful handwriting and covers five pages. The Apostolic Nuncio in France sent and endorsed this request to the Cardinal-Prefect of the Propaganda on June 21, 1628. On July 23, he sent Bishop Ingoli, Secretary of the same Congregation, two letters from the King—one to the Pope, the other to the Ambassador of France, M. de Béthune—in support of the request presented by Saint Vincent, and he urged that it be adopted. These recommendations came to naught. At a meeting held in the presence of the Pope on August 22, 1628, the petition was rejected by the Propaganda because of the unfavorable report given by Cardinal Bentivoglio. At most, they appeared disposed to authorize, for France alone, a society of twenty to twenty-five priests, which would bear neither the title of congregation nor that of confraternity, and would be dependent upon the bishops.

1According to Father Placide Gallemant (La vie du vénérable prêtre de J.-C. M. Jacques Gallemant [Paris: C. Couterot, 1653], p. 231), Louis Callon, Doctor of the Sorbonne, was one of those men "in whom holiness, learning, zeal, and simplicity were beautifully allied." To these gifts were added those of fortune, for his parents had left him fifty to sixty thousand livres, a large sum for that period. In July 1626, he left the pastorate of Aumale, his native place, to enter the Congregation of the Mission. After a rather short stay at the Collège des Bons-Enfants, he returned to Aumale with the consent of Saint Vincent who continued to regard him as one of his own men. The good he did in Aumale was considerable. He established a college in his paternal home, bought a house for a girls' school, assisted the parish church, the hospital, and the convent for penitent religious. The Feuillants [a branch of Cistercians] of Rouen and other communities likewise benefited from his generosity. On August 23, 1629, he gave Saint Vincent four thousand livres to establish missions which were to be given every two years by two priests of the Congregation in the dioceses of Rouen, and more particularly in the deanery of Aumale. He himself preached in the dioceses of Rouen, Paris, Meaux, Chartres, and Senlis. In the midst of his labors, he found time to write various works of piety, among others a Traité pour la préparation à la sainte communion (Rouen: Laur-Maurry, n.d.), and Le catechisme de la chasteté honorable (Paris: Thierry, 1639). Conscious that his end was near, he left Rouen to go to die at Saint-Lazare, but his illness prevented him from getting beyond Vernon, where he died August 26, 1647, in the convent of the religious of the Third Order of Saint Francis. Father Placide Gallemant, his friend, dedicated a few pages to him in his biography of Jacques Gallemant. (Op. cit., pp. 319-328.)

2Antoine Portail, born in Beaurevoir on November 22, 1590, came to Paris to study at the Sorbonne. He made the acquaintance of Saint Vincent there around 1612 and became devoted to him. From the day of his ordination (1622) to that of his death (1660), he was the Saint's
Bécu, Antoine Lucas, Joseph Brunet, and Jean Dehorgny from the dioceses of Dax, Rouen, Arles, Amiens, Paris, Clermont, and Noyon humbly submit this petition presenting for consideration the following facts:

auxiliary. Vincent employed him first in the service of the galley slaves, received him before any other into his new Congregation, initiated him into the ministry of the missions and the work with the ordinands, chose him as first Assistant in 1642, and entrusted to him the direction of the Daughters of Charity. Antoine Portail left Paris in 1646 to make visitations in the houses of his Congregation. He began in the West of France, then went south, crossed into Italy, and did not return to Saint-Lazare until September 1649. Except for a fairly long absence in 1655, he hardly ever left the Motherhouse again. We are indebted to him for a new edition of the Méditations of Busée, which he revised and expanded considerably. He died on February 14, 1660, after an illness of nine days. 

Jean Becu was from Braches (Somme), where he was born on April 24, 1592. He was ordained a priest in September 1616, and in September 1626 came to join the first companions of Saint Vincent. Two of his brothers, Benoît and Hubert, followed him into the Congregation, the latter as a lay brother, and one of his sisters became a Daughter of Charity. He was Superior of the house in Toul from 1642 to 1646. Returning to Paris, he spent the rest of his life there. He died January 19, 1667, having been Vice-Visitor, then Visitor of the Province of France. 

Antoine Lucas, born in Paris, January 20, 1600, had pursued higher studies at the Sorbonne. He entered the Congregation of the Mission in December 1626, and was ordained a priest in September 1628. His zeal, his talent for preaching, and his skill in debate made him much appreciated by Father de Condren and by Jean-Jacques Olier, who one day asked Saint Vincent for him for his personal instruction and for the conversion of a heretic. Antoine Lucas was in the house of La Rose in 1645, directed the house in Le Mans from 1647 to 1651, and was then placed in Sedan. He died in November 1656, a victim of his zeal among the plague-stricken. 

Jean-Joseph Brunet was born in Riom in 1597, joined the companions of Saint Vincent in 1627, gave missions in Bordelais, and was stationed in Alet, Genoa, and Marseilles, where he died August 6, 1649, a victim of his dedication to the plague-stricken. 

Jean Dehorgny, from Estrees-Saint-Denis (Oise), entered the Congregation of the Mission in August 1627, and was ordained a priest April 22, 1628. In 1632, when Saint Vincent went to live at Saint-Lazare, Jean Dehorgny took over the direction of the Collège des Bons-Enfants, which he retained until 1635 and took up again from 1638 to 1643 and from 1654 to 1659. He was Assistant to the Superior General from 1642 to 1644, and again from 1654 to 1667; Superior of the house in Rome from 1644 to 1647 and from 1651 to 1653; and Director of the Daughters of Charity from 1660 to 1667. In 1640, 1641, 1643, 1644, 1659, and 1660, he visited several houses of the Company and reestablished good order wherever necessary. His sympathy for Jansenist ideas merited for us two beautiful letters from Saint Vincent, who had the joy of seeing him return to sounder beliefs. He lived until July 7, 1667. Still extant are twenty-three of his conferences to the Daughters of Charity and several letters. 

Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, Comte de Joigny, Marquis des Iles d’Or, knight of the two orders,7 Councillor of the King, captain of fifty men-at-arms, Lieutenant General for the King of France in the seas of the Levant, Intendant General of the Royal Galleys, recently received into the Congregation of the Oratory of Jesus in the said city of Paris, and the late Dame Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, his wife and Baronne de Montmirail, Trosnay, and other places, together with the above-mentioned Vincent de Paul, at that time their chaplain and confessor of the said Dame, had given serious thought for some years to the fact that while the inhabitants of the cities are sufficiently provided with every spiritual assistance by distinguished doctors and good religious living everywhere in these cities, the people of the countryside, oppressed by ignorance and poverty, are deprived of this same assistance so abundant in the cities and, therefore, these people remain ignorant of the mysteries of faith necessary for salvation even to their old age. Thus they often die miserably in the sins of their youth because they are ashamed to confess them to their pastors or curates, whom they know and with whom they are familiar. In view of this, the above-mentioned couple thought that some remedy for such an urgent evil could be found in the benefit of the missions which were then given in the towns and villages of their estates by the petitioner Vincent de Paul and other approved ecclesiastics known for their doctrine and moral integrity, with the authority of the Most Reverend local Bishops.

The success of these missions was so great that, when they heard of and personally witnessed the profit and the increase to the glory of almighty God which resulted from them, on account of the fact that many towns and entire villages gladly made general confessions of their whole life, amending their lives and practicing greater virtue, and that even some heretics were converted and received into the holy Roman Church, the above-mentioned noble couple decided to perpetuate this holy work of the missions. They

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7 The Orders of Saint-Michel and of the Saint-Esprit.
did this in the year of Our Lord one thousand six hundred twenty-five, when they gave, by way of an alms, the sum of forty-five thousand francs for the support and nourishment of a few priests who, having first left all the benefices and offices which they held in the cities and having given up even the hope of acquiring them in the future, had decided to live together in community and willed to devote themselves entirely to the salvation of the poor country people under the direction of the said petitioner Vincent de Paul.

Once this foundation had been approved and confirmed by the Most Reverend Archbishop of Paris, this Vincent de Paul, appointed Superior by the same Archbishop, associated to himself and brought together the above-mentioned priests. In order to devote themselves more easily and effectively to the salvation of the poor country people, these priests left the benefices which some of them were enjoying and others the offices which detained them in the cities. They came together and formed a society in which they live under the title and by the name of Priests of the Mission or Missionaries. They live under the direction and correction of this Vincent de Paul, devoting themselves entirely to the salvation of people dwelling in the country. For this purpose they go from town to town, passing from village to village, preaching sermons and exhortations to the people. They teach everyone, both publicly and privately, the catechism and the mysteries of faith necessary for salvation, of which most of the people are completely ignorant. They prepare them for general confessions of their whole life and hear them. They convert heretics, bring lawsuits and quarrels to an end, appease enmities and hatreds, and establish the Confraternity of Charity where it is necessary for the corporal and spiritual relief of the sick poor. With the help of God, they are now carrying out all these pious works, not only in the villages and towns belonging to the noble founders — places

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All the signers of this petition were priests except Antoine Lucas, who became one three months later.
which they must visit every five years and perform the aforesaid ministries — but they have also labored successfully in many other parts and dioceses of this Kingdom of France, as in the Archdiocese of Sens and in the dioceses of Châlons, in Champagne, of Troyes, Soissons, Beauvais, Amiens, and Chartres, always to the great satisfaction of the Most Reverend Archbishops and Bishops of these places, bringing about the salvation of the poor and the incredible edification of all. They always undertake all these holy works at the expense of the said Congregation, which does not receive or expect any temporal payment or compensation for its work.

For these reasons, Most Holy Father, and because the perpetuity of this holy work can contribute so much to the salvation and conversion of the people, may it please Your Holiness to approve and confirm this Congregation. And insofar as necessary, may you be pleased to establish it anew, to extend your blessing upon it, and to appoint the above-mentioned Vincent founder and Superior General of these priests, and also of any others who wish to join their society, as well as of those who are necessary for the domestic employments9 of this Congregation called of the Mission, who might wish to live together devoutly in the society and offer and give service to the Most High in a spirit of humility and in the pursuit of a holy life. Their first and foremost purpose will be to strive for their own perfection and to devote themselves entirely to the country people.

May Your Holiness deign to grant to this same Vincent, whom

9These words refer to coadjutor brothers. The only brothers in the Company at that time were Jean and Hector Jourdain.

Jean Jourdain, born in Gallius-la-Queue in 1587, was the first coadjutor brother in the Congregation of the Mission, which he entered on February 13, 1627. He was equerry and majordomo at the home of the Marquise de Maignelay, Marguerite de Gondi, when Saint Vincent was chaplain to the De Gondis, and the two had begun to get acquainted at that time. Of a lively temperament, Brother Jean Jourdain was inclined to give admonitions at every turn, but he quickly repented and those whom he had offended saw him on his knees before them a moment later. He died April 25, 1657. (Notices, 1st series, vol. 1, pp. 373-375.)

Hector Jourdain, a native of Amiens, was about thirty years of age when he entered the Congregation of the Mission in September 1627. (Notices, 1st series, vol. 1, p. 493.)
the Archbishop of Paris has already chosen for this work and whom the founders earnestly desired, the permission, power, and full and entire authority to establish the aforesaid Congregation of this kind in the city of Paris, as well as in all other cities, towns, estates, and places to which the local Bishops might call him, and there only. And finally, in view of securing the good order and direction of the persons and the spiritual and temporal goods of this same Congregation or the congregations which will be established in this same manner, with regard to the reception and admission, number, age, and qualifications of those to be received and admitted into the Congregation, their instruction and discipline, the exercise and the manner and form of divine offices, prayers, meditations, and other suffrages to be recited, and other matters useful and necessary for these congregations, authorization is also asked to make, issue, and impose on these congregations any statutes, ordinances, and other regulations which are licit and proper, and in no way contrary to the sacred canons, apostolic constitutions, and decrees of the Council of Trent, subsequently to be approved and confirmed by the Holy Apostolic See, and to be obeyed and observed by the Superior of these congregations, the priests, officials, ministers, and coadjutor brothers, with the addition of penalties. And once they have been made, issued, and imposed, whenever it shall be seen by the nature and change of circumstances and times that such is required, authorization is asked to correct, limit, change, and alter them, and even to make and impose entirely new norms to be obeyed and observed. By the same authority, may he be commissioned and appointed to do and to transact all and each one of the other things which the founders and other Superiors, even Superiors General of similar Congregations or of any approved Orders

10At that time, the Congregation of the Mission had no establishment except the Collège des Bons-Enfants.

11Throughout this petition, congregation(s) refers to houses of the Congregation of Priests of the Mission which might be established in other cities.
may usually do or transact, either by law or custom, by privilege, or in any other way.

May it please Your Holiness to approve and confirm by the same authority and for always that all other congregations erected canonically in imitation of the above-mentioned by the Congregation of Paris and by the said Superior General, in whatever place that might be, shall henceforth depend on them in all things, after they have been erected by the said authority.

May it also please Your Holiness to exempt the Superior, priests, and all the members of this Congregation from the jurisdiction of their Ordinaries, and to make them dependent upon the Holy Apostolic See, in such a way, however, that these individuals shall be obliged, in what concerns the missions, to obey the Most Reverend Bishops and Ordinaries of their residence, and to go wherever and to whomever they send them without any excuse or pretext, except in case of illness or excessive fatigue resulting from previous work and necessitating some rest in order to recover their strength.

Finally, may these congregations henceforth, after they have been established and erected in the way stated above, be permitted to accept for their endowment and for the support of the said Vincent, of any other Superior General, and of the priests who are living in them at any given time, and for the discharge of the burdens incumbent upon them, all things in general and in particular, goods, fruits, income, and legacies, both those already given to the said congregations, as well as those to be given in the future either by the said founders Seigneur de Gondi and Dame Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, or by any other of the faithful as bequest, gift, or grant of any kind. Thus, may the said Vincent, or any other Superior General, or the priests of the congregations living at any given time, in the name of the said congregations, be permitted, either by themselves or through one or several other members, to appropriate freely and keep permanently the corporal, real, and actual possession of all these things. May they also demand, collect, and claim their fruits, yield, income, rights, revenues, and proceeds of any kind, and use them for the benefit
of the said congregations, applying them even in perpetuity to
them, without being obliged to ask permission of the local Ordin-
ary or of anyone else.

And in order to increase the devotion of the faithful, to procure
the salvation of souls, and in order that the faithful might be
couraged to take part in the exercises given by the members of
this Institute, the said petitioners implore Your Holiness to be
pleased to grant them all the faculties ordinarily granted to re-
ligious and to secular priests whom Your Holiness sends on
mission to pagan lands, namely:

The apostolic faculty to preach, catechize, hear confessions,
establish the Confraternity of Charity in every place, always,
however, with the approval of the Most Reverend Bishop;

The power to absolve from all ecclesiastical censures and to
dispense from occult irregularities, to commute vows, and to
absolve from all cases reserved to Your Holiness, even those
contained in the Bull *In Coena Domini*;

Also the permission for the said Missionaries to read books by
heretics, to absolve from heresy, and to grant a plenary indulgence
to all who make general confessions to the same Missionaries or
other priests chosen by them for the missions;

To hold the Forty Hours’ devotion in places where they consider
it useful, and to grant a plenary indulgence to all who go to
confession and Communion during that time;

To celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on portable altars; to
celebrate Mass even before dawn and after noon;

To reduce and remit the restitutions due for having incurred
simony;

To bless church vestments.

L. CALLON, F. DU COUDRAY, A. PORTAIL, J. DE LA SALLE, J.
BECU, A. LUCAS, J. BRUNET, J. DEHORGNY, VINCENT DEPAUL.12

12The personnel of the nascent Congregation also included Jacques Régnier, received in
August 1627, and ordained a priest in 1631; two coadjutor brothers; and perhaps Robert de
Sergis, received in June 1628. Jacques Régnier did not sign the petition, most likely because he
was not yet a priest or close to becoming one.
27. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Well yes, dear lady, I do consent. Why not, since Our Lord has given you this holy thought? Go to Communion tomorrow, then, and prepare yourself for the salutary review you have in mind; after that, you will begin the retreat you have arranged. I could not tell you how ardently my heart desires to see yours in order to know how this has come about in it, but I am quite willing to mortify myself for the love of God, in which love alone I desire yours to be immersed.

Now then, I imagine that the words of today’s Gospel1 touched you deeply; they are so impelling to the heart that loves with a perfect love. Oh! what a tree you have appeared to be today in God’s sight, since you have borne such a fruit! May you be forever a beautiful tree of life bringing forth fruits of love, and I, in that same love, your servant.

V. D.

Letter 27. - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter. This letter was reproduced in its entirety by Abelly, who prefaced it with these words: "This faithful servant of Jesus Christ was strongly urged during her prayer to devote herself to the service of the poor. When she asked Saint Vincent's advice, he gave her this response." (Op. cit., vol. I, chap. XXIII, p. 105.)

Monsignor Baunard (Louis Baunard, La Vénérable Louise de Marillac [Paris: C. Poussetgue, 1898], p. 43, n. 1) thinks that Abelly was mistaken. According to him, the letter was probably only a simple encouragement to make a retreat that was to be accompanied by a general confession. We are inclined to agree with Abelly. Had Saint Louise been animated only by the desire to make a retreat and a review of her life, Saint Vincent would not have replied to her: "I could not tell you how ardently my heart desires to see yours in order to know how this has come about in it" and "Oh! what a tree you have appeared to be today in God's sight, since you have borne such a fruit!" There seems to be question of a serious decision that Saint Louise had just made. Abelly's explanation is more natural and is the one we are adopting.

1This letter was written on the seventh Sunday after Pentecost, for it was on that day that the Gospel of the good and the bad tree was read at Mass. On the other hand, it could be conjectured that Saint Louise took the resolution of consecrating herself to the service of the poor before she offered her services to Saint Vincent to go and visit the Confraternities of Charity, consequently, before May 6, 1629. These two remarks lead us to believe that the above letter might well belong to July 30, 1628.
To our most Holy Father the Pope,

Vincent de Paul, Superior of the Priests of the Mission founded in Paris, Master Louis Callon, Doctor of the Sorbonne, Antoine Portail, François du Coudray, Jean de la Salle, Jean Bécu, Antoine Lucas, Joseph Brunet, and Jean Dehorgny from the dioceses of Dax, Rouen, Arles, Amiens, Paris, Clermont, and Noyon humbly submit this petition presenting for consideration the following facts:

Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, Comte de Joigny, Marquis des Iles d'Or, knight of the two orders, Councillor of the King, captain of fifty men-at-arms, Lieutenant General for the King of France in the seas of the Levant, Intendant General of the Royal Galleys, recently received into the Congregation of the Oratory of Jesus in the said city of Paris, and the late Dame Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, his wife and Baronne de Montmirail, Trosnay, and other places, together with the above-mentioned Vincent de Paul, at that time their chaplain and confessor of the said Dame, had given serious thought for some years to the fact that while the inhabitants of the cities are sufficiently provided with every spiritual assistance by distinguished doctors and good re-

Letter 28. - Signed letter. Archives of the Propaganda, III, Lettere di Francia, Avignone e Suizzer, 1628, no. 130, p. 36, former 60. Coste published the Latin original. Again we owe the discovery of this document to Father Jean Parrang, C.M. While his first petition was being studied by Rome, Saint Vincent, perhaps on the advice of some learned individuals and friends, revised it and corrected it. Except for two additions, which we shall point out when they come up, the new text differs from the preceding one only by some modifications of pure form. The Nuncio sent it to the Cardinal-Prefect of the Propaganda on August 15, 1628, along with a letter of recommendation. The reasons given by this Congregation on August 22 for the rejection of the preceding request affected this one as well. Thus Saint Vincent was not surprised to learn that it had been rejected in turn. According to a notation, the decision was handed down on September 25. If the minutes of the meeting held that day do not make any mention of this, it is probably because there was no deliberation on the matter, since the second petition was virtually turned down on the grounds of the decision against the first one. Saint Vincent was not a man to be discouraged. He waited, reflected, prepared another petition (no. 94a), had influential people take action, and finally, on January 12, 1633, obtained everything that he desired. (Cf. vol. XIII, no. 81.)
igious living everywhere in these cities, the people of the coun-
tryside, oppressed by ignorance and poverty, are deprived of this
same assistance so abundant in the cities, and, therefore, these
people remain ignorant of the mysteries of faith necessary for
salvation even to their old age. Thus, they often die miserably in
the sins of their youth because they are ashamed to confess them
to their pastors or curates, whom they know and with whom they
are familiar. In view of this, the above-mentioned couple thought
that some remedy for such an enormous evil could be found if the
missions given at that time in the towns and villages of their
estates by the said Vincent and other ecclesiastics known for their
integrity and doctrine should be continued, with the good pleasure
and permission of the Most Reverend local Bishops.

The success of these missions was so great that, having heard of
and personally witnessed the fruit and the increase to the glory of
almighty God resulting from the fact that many towns and entire
villages gladly made general confessions of their whole life,
amending their lives and practicing greater virtue afterwards, and
that even some heretics were converted, the above-mentioned
nobles Emmanuel and Françoise, wishing to perpetuate this holy
work of the missions, gave as an alms forty-five thousand francs
in the year of Our Lord one thousand six hundred twenty-five for
the support and nourishment of a few priests who, having left the
positions and ecclesiastical offices which they had held in the
cities, and having given up even the hope of acquiring them in the
future, willed to live together in community and devote
themselves entirely to the salvation of the poor country people
under the direction of the said petitioner Vincent de Paul.

Once this foundation had been approved and confirmed by the
Most Reverend Archbishop of Paris, this Vincent de Paul, ap-
pointed Superior by the same Archbishop, associated to himself
and joined together the above-mentioned priests who, in order that
they might be able to devote themselves more easily and effect-
tively to the spiritual welfare of those living in the country, first
renounced the benefices which some of them were enjoying and other offices which detained them in the cities. They came together in a society of priests called of the Mission or of the Missionaries. They live under the direction of this Vincent de Paul and devote themselves entirely to the salvation of people living in the country. For this purpose, they go from town to town, passing from village to village, preaching sermons and exhortations to the people. They teach everyone, catechizing them both publicly and privately, about the mysteries of faith necessary for salvation, of which most of the people are completely ignorant. They prepare them for general confessions of their whole life and hear them. They convert heretics, bring lawsuits to an end, appease hatreds, reconcile quarrels and enmities, and establish the Confraternity of Charity where it is necessary for the corporal and spiritual relief of the sick poor. With the help of God, they are now carrying out all these pious works successfully not only in villages and towns belonging to the above-mentioned founders — places which they must visit every five years and perform the aforesaid ministries — but also in many other parts of this Kingdom of France, as in the Archdioceses of Paris and Sens, in the dioceses of Châlons, in Champagne, of Troyes, Soissons, Beauvais, Amiens, and Chartres, always to the great satisfaction of the Archbishops and Bishops of these places, bringing about the salvation of the poor people and the unbelievable satisfaction of all. They always undertake all these holy works at the expense of the said Congregation, which does not receive or expect any temporal payment or compensation for its work.

For these reasons, Most Holy Father, and because the perpetuity of this holy work appears to contribute so much to the salvation and conversion of the people, may it please Your Holiness to approve and confirm this Congregation. And, insofar as necessary, may you be pleased to establish it anew, to extend your blessing upon it, and to appoint the above-mentioned Vincent founder and Superior General of these priests, and also of any
others who wish to join their society, as well as of those who are necessary for the domestic employments\textsuperscript{1} of this Congregation called \textit{of the Mission}, who might wish to live together devoutly in the society and offer and give service to the Most High in a spirit of humility and in the pursuit of a holy life. Their first and foremost purpose shall be to strive for their own perfection and to devote themselves entirely to the salvation of the country people. They shall go from village to village, preaching, catechizing, and exhorting them to unburden their consciences of the sins of their entire life, hearing general confessions of penitents, instructing children for the worthy reception of their first Holy Communion, and setting up the Confraternity of Charity for the relief of the sick poor, all this free of charge, receiving no gifts either directly or indirectly.\textsuperscript{2}

May Your Holiness deign to grant to this same Vincent, whom the Archbishop of Paris has already chosen for the work and whom the founders earnestly desired, the permission, power, and full and entire authority to establish this Congregation in the city of Paris, as well as in all other cities, towns, estates, and places to which the local Bishops might call him, and there only. And finally, in view of securing the good order and direction of the persons and the spiritual and temporal goods of this same Congregation or the congregations which will be established in this same manner,\textsuperscript{3} with regard to the reception and admission, number, age, and qualifications of those to be received and admitted into the Congregation, their instruction and discipline, the exercises and the manner and form of divine offices, prayers, meditations, and other suffrages to be recited, and other matters useful and necessary for these congregations, authorization is also asked to make, issue, and impose on these congregations any

\textsuperscript{1}Coadjutor brothers.

\textsuperscript{2}This last sentence is missing in the June petition.

\textsuperscript{3}Throughout this petition, congregation(s) refers to houses of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission which might be established in other cities.
statutes, ordinances, and other regulations which are licit and proper and in no way contrary to the sacred canons, apostolic constitutions, and decrees of the Council of Trent, subsequently to be approved and confirmed by the Holy Apostolic See and to be obeyed and observed by the Superior of these congregations, the priests, officials, ministers, and coadjutor brothers, with the addition of penalties. And once they have been made, issued, and imposed, whenever it shall be seen by the nature and change of circumstances and times that such is required, authorization is asked to correct, limit, change, and alter them, and even to make and impose entirely new norms to be obeyed and observed. By the same authority, may he be commissioned and appointed to do and to transact all and each one of the other things which the founders and other Superiors, even General Superiors of similar Congregations or of any approved Orders may usually do or transact, either by law or custom, by privilege, or in any other way.

May it please Your Holiness to approve and confirm by the same authority and for always that all other congregations erected canonically in imitation of the above-mentioned by the Congregation of Paris and by the said Superior General, in whatever place that might be, shall henceforth depend on them in all things, after they have been erected by the said authority.

May it also please Your Holiness to exempt the Superior, priests, and all the members of this Congregation from the jurisdiction of their Ordinaries, and to make them dependent upon the Holy Apostolic See, in such a way, however, that these individuals shall be obliged, in what concerns the missions, to obey the Most Reverend Bishops and Ordinaries of their residence, and to go wherever and to whomever they send them, without any excuse or pretext, except in case of illness or excessive fatigue resulting from previous work and necessitating some rest in order to recover their strength. However, the choice of the priests to be sent shall be left to the Superior of the house; and to the Superior General shall be reserved the power of appointing and removing superiors and officials of the said Congregation and also of the other con-
gregations to be erected in the future, of dismissing from the congregations those who are unsuitable, likewise of transferring the said priests and others from one house to another, and of recalling them, wherever or in whichever house they may be, if the mandate of Your Holiness for some mission, or some necessity may require it.  

Finally, may these congregations henceforth, after they have been established and erected in the way stated above, be permitted to accept for their endowment and for the support of the said Vincent, of any other Superior General, and of the priests who are living in them at any given time, and for the discharge of the burdens incumbent upon them, all things in general and in particular, goods, fruits, income, and legacies, both those already given to the said congregations, as well as those to be given in the future either by the said founders Seigneur de Gondi and Dame Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, or by any other of the faithful as bequest, gift, or grant of any kind. Thus, may the said Vincent or any other Superior General, or the priests of the congregations living at any given time, in the name of the said congregations, be permitted, either by themselves or through one or several other members, to appropriate freely and keep permanently the corporeal, real, and actual possession of all these things. May they also demand, collect, and claim their fruits, yield, income, rights, revenues, and proceeds of any kind, and use them for the benefit of the said congregations, applying them even in perpetuity to them, without being obliged to ask permission of the local Ordinary or of anyone else.

And in order to increase the devotion of the faithful, to procure the salvation of souls, and in order that the faithful might be encouraged to take part in the exercises given by the members of this Institute, the said petitioners implore Your Holiness to be pleased to grant them all the faculties ordinarily granted to re-

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4This passage, starting with However, the choice, is peculiar to this second petition and is very likely the only reason for its existence since the other changes are all of minor importance.
religious and to secular priests whom Your Holiness sends on mission to pagan lands, namely:

The apostolic faculty to preach, catechize, hear confessions, establish the Confraternity of Charity in every place, always, however, with the approval of the Most Reverend Bishop;

To absolve from all ecclesiastical censures and to dispense from occult irregularities, to commute vows, and to absolve from all cases reserved to Your Holiness, even those contained in the Bull *In Coena Domini*;

To debate with heretics, to absolve converts from heresy, to read their books, and to grant a plenary indulgence to all who make a general confession, not only to the Missionaries but also to the priests chosen by them for the missions in case of necessity;

To hold the Forty Hours' devotion in places where they consider it useful, and to grant a plenary indulgence to all who go to confession and Communion during that time;

To celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on portable altars; to celebrate Mass even before dawn and after noon;

To reduce and remit the restitutions due for having incurred simony;

To bless church vestments.


Given in Paris, at the Collège des Bons-Enfants, on the first day of August, in the year of Our Lord one thousand six hundred twenty-eight.
You are wrong, my dear daughter, in thinking that I was of the opinion that you should not accept the young lady’s suggestion, because I have not given it a thought. And I have not given it a thought, because I am sure that you wish and do not wish what God wishes and does not wish, and that you are disposed to want and not want only what we tell you that God seems to want and not want. Therefore, confess your fault with regard to that thought and never let it enter your mind in the future.

Try to live content among your reasons for discontent and always honor the inactivity and unknown condition of the Son of God. That is your center and what He asks of you for the present and for the future, forever. If His Divine Majesty does not let you know, in a way that cannot be mistaken, that He wants something else of you, do not think about or let your mind become engrossed in that other matter. Leave it to me; I shall think about it enough for both of us.

But let us go on to little brother Michel. That certainly concerns me, my dear daughter. I sympathize with his sufferings and those which you also have because of your love for him. Oh, well! everything is for the best.

What shall I tell you now about the one whom your heart loves so dearly in Our Lord? He is a little better, I think, but still suffering somewhat from his slight chills. Moreover, people are suggesting to him and urging him to go to Forges² and to leave

Letter 29. - Archives of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, original autograph letter.

¹We see from the content of the letter that Saint Louise had not yet decided upon her vocation and that the Congregation of the Mission was just beginning.

²Forges-les-Eaux is a town situated six leagues from Neufchâtel (Seine-Maritime). This locality possesses three mineral iron springs which are said to be quite stimulative and efficacious in cases of abdominal obstructions and dropsy. Louis XIII, Queen Anne of Austria, and Cardinal Richelieu went there in 1632. (Cf. M. Emile Magne, “Une station thermale au dix-septième: Forges-les-Eaux,” Revue hebdomadaire [August 20, 1910], pp. 350-372.)
tomorrow. The doctor recommends it, unless an opportunity to go by carriage — which is being offered — comes about another way. Assuredly, my dear daughter, and this weighs upon me more than I could tell you, so much has to be done for a poor carcass. But if I do not do it, our men\textsuperscript{3} will complain about me. They are strongly urging me to do this, because they have been told that the mineral waters did me some good in past years when I had similar illnesses. I have finally decided to offer no resistance just as I think our blessed Father\textsuperscript{4} would do. If I leave, therefore, I am telling you adieu, my dear daughter, and I commend myself to your good prayers. I enjoin you to remain in the state mentioned above. Please do not tell this to anyone, because I do not know if the affair will turn out well. My heart could not hide it from yours, anymore than from our Mother’s at Sainte-Marie\textsuperscript{5} and Mademoiselle du Fay’s.

\textsuperscript{3}The Priests of the Mission.

\textsuperscript{4}Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, was born August 21, 1567, in Thorens, near Annecy, and died in Lyons, December 28, 1622. He honored —aint Vincent with his friendship. "Many times I have had the honor of enjoying the close friendship of Francis de Sales," said the holy priest at the beatification process of his illustrious friend on April 17, 1628. Saint Vincent spoke of the Bishop of Geneva only in terms of admiration. He considered him worthy of the honors reserved to the saints. On his part, Saint Francis de Sales, according to Coqueret, a Doctor of the Sorbonne, used to say that "he did not know a more worthy or more saintly priest than M. Vincent." (Postulatory letter from the Bishop of Tulle, March 21, 1706.) Also, when it came to appointing a superior for the convent of the Visitation in Paris, his choice fell upon Vincent de Paul.

\textsuperscript{5}It was on the advice of the Cardinal of Savoy, while they were both in Paris, that Saint Francis de Sales established a convent of the Visitation in that city. At his request, Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, occupied at that time with the foundation in Bourges, came to Paris on April 6, 1619, with three of her daughters. The Bishop of Geneva himself installed them on May 1 in a rented house in the faubourg Saint-Marc; then, in the month of August, in more spacious quarters in the faubourg Saint-Michel. The community was moved in 1621 from the faubourg Saint-Michel to the Hôtel du Petit-Bourbon on the rue de la Cerisaie, which Saint Jane Frances had bought; and in 1628, from the Hôtel du Petit-Bourbon to the Hôtel du Cosse, rue Saint-Antoine. There, Commander Noël Bruhart de Sillery had a magnificent chapel built at his expense, and personally laid the foundation stone on October 31, 1632. (Cf. Fondation du premier monastere de la visitation Sainte-Marie de Paris, a manuscript preserved at the Visitation of Angers; Histoire chronologique des fondations de tout l'ordre de la Visitation de Sainte-Marie. Bibl. Maz., ms. 2430; Félibien, Histoire de la ville de Paris, Paris, 1725, 5 vols., vol. III, p. 1312.)

In 1629, the first monastery was headed by Hélène-Engélèque Lhuillier, born in 1592, daughter of François, Seigneur d’Interville, and Anne Brachet, Dame de Frouville. Married in
Well now, I have said enough to my daughter. I must conclude by telling her that my heart will have a very fond remembrance of hers in that of Our Lord and solely for that of Our Lord, in Whose love and in that of His holy Mother I am her most humble servant.

30. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

We arrived in this city three days ago, in good health, thank God. Yesterday, the examination of the ordinands began, and it will continue today, which is Friday, and tomorrow, so that next Sunday we can begin the retreat, the initial idea for which God gave to the Bishop of Beauvais. The schedule calls for the said

Letter 30. - Collection for the process of beatification.

1It was in July 1628, says Abeléy (op. cit., vol. 1, chap. XXV, p. 117), in the course of a journey, after a conversation with Saint Vincent, that the Bishop of Beauvais decided to receive the ordinands into his home in the month of September to have them given the instruction necessary for their new state and to teach them the virtues they were to practice. The Saint prepared a written rule and came to get everything ready about two weeks before the ordination. Such was the origin of the ordinands' retreats which were to attract Bossuet, Commander de Sillery, and so many illustrious people of rank to Saint-Lazare.

2Augustin Potier, Seigneur de Blancmesnil, consecrated in Rome on September 17, 1617, renewed his diocese with the help of Saint Vincent and Adrien Bourdoise. He summoned the Ursulines to Beauvais and Clermont, had missions given in which he himself took part, established a seminary in his episcopal palace, and multiplied the Confraternities of Charity. He became Grand Almoner of the Queen, and was a member of the Council of Conscience. Named Prime Minister at the death of Louis XIII, he was going to receive the cardinal's hat.