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Congregation of the Mission

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**TEMPO FORTE CIRCULAR**

(13-18 June 2008)

Rome, 26 June 2008

*To the members of the Congregation of the Mission*

Dear Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

On 13-19 June the General Council and I met for our second *tempo forte* of this year. I have included some of the more significant matters that we discussed in that meeting.

1. Father Dan Borlik and Father Manny Ginete presented the **final report of the Task Force on Ongoing Formation**. The Council and I have made a decision to publish that report together with the letter of the Superior General that was written after the Visitors' Meeting in Mexico. It is our hope that this material will help to encourage the provinces to create or to improve upon existing programs of permanent formation. The publication, too, will be a significant piece of information to be used in preparation for the General Assembly 2010.
2. The General Council and I met with the members of the **Preparatory Commission for the General Assembly 2010**. After a week of much work they have prepared a packet that will be sent to the Visitors to assist in the development of the Domestic and Provincial Assemblies.
3. We had a report from Father Jozef Kapusciak, the Coordinator of the Executive Committee for the **celebration of the anniversaries of the deaths of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac**. Subcommissions are being established in order to assure the good execution of this celebration. As stated previously, Father Kapusciak is assisted by Father Manuel Ginete and Sister Palmarita Guida. There are five committees that will help to develop the celebration: Heritage, Celebration, Financial, Projects and Secretariat. It is our hope that on 15 March we will be able to celebrate the anniversary of St. Louise in Paris, France and on 27 September also in 2010, the anniversary of St. Vincent de Paul in Rome, Italy. You will be receiving periodic information from the Executive Committee.

4. **New members of the Curia** will be arriving in September. Father Mario Grossi from the Province of Turin will act as administrator of the house, assuming the role of Superior and local econome. Brother Milton de Jesus Pereira, of the Province of Rio de Janeiro, and Father Luis Antonio Molerés of the Province of Saragoza, who will be secretary and translator.
5. The Vincentian Institute of DePaul University will undertake a project of digital reproduction of the publications of the General Curia.
6. We received a report from Father Giuseppe Guerra relating to his roles as **Procurator and Postulator General**. Most likely our next beatification will be that of the venerable Father Salvatore Micalizzi of Naples some time during 2009. I encourage you check out the website of the Postulator General [www.vincenziani.com/santi.htm](http://www.vincenziani.com/santi.htm).
7. We treated economic questions beginning with the **Mission Award**. Eight projects were submitted and we selected five. On the feast of St. Justin de Jacobis the projects which have won will be announced with a brief write-up on each.  
 Included in the economic report was also the distribution of the Mission Fund for 2009. From the **Mission Distribution Fund** we are able to help requests from the CM bishops working in Mission territories. Money was distributed to our three international missions of El Alto, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. We also distributed funds to help run the Vincentian Conferences of APVC, CLAPVI and COVIAM. We were able to assist with funds 24 Provinces or Regions of Provinces who without this help would not be able to carry out their missions.  
 Father Gouldrick also shared with us a summary of the meeting of the Curia **Financial Committee** that held their meeting 19-20 May. The members of that Committee are Bernard Meade, Province of Ireland; Philippe Lamblin, Province of Paris; Tom Stehlik, Province of US South; Santiago Ascarate, Province of Saragoza; and Mr. Tom Beck, Province of US Midwest.
8. We received the quarterly report from Brother Peter Campbell, the Director of the **Vincentian Solidarity Office**. Since the last *tempo forte* meeting they have accepted four new Vincentian Solidarity Office projects and they were able to fund seven Vincentian Solidarity Fund micro-project grants. Peter also included an update on the merger of the International Development Office with the VSO, having had a number of

meetings with key people in order to prepare a report for the Superior General in the *tempo forte* meeting in October. For the different activities of the Vincentian Solidarity Office, you can check out their website at [www.famvin.org/vso](http://www.famvin.org/vso).

9. There were several reports on the **Vincentian Family**. The Superior General has accepted the resignation of Father Benjamin Romo, coordinator of the AMM International. Father Benjamin has a new assignment in the Province of Mexico among some of the poorest of our brothers and sisters, making the fulfillment of his responsibilities at the international level of the AMM quite impossible. As Superior General and Director General of the Association of the Miraculous Medal, I want to thank Father Romo for his generous years of service, not only as coordinator but as one of the main promoters of the development of the AMM at the international level. We have initiated a process for selecting a new coordinator. This branch of our family is celebrating its jubilee year from July 8, 2008 through November 20, 2009.

We received a report from Father Manny Ginete, delegate for the Vincentian Family. Father Ginete reported on the Vincentian Family Gathering that was held in New Orleans in April as well as his visit to the Vincentian Family in Taiwan in May. Manny also participated in the forums of summer formation programs organized by the presidents of three schools in the Philippines at Adams University in Manila, Sacred Heart College of the Daughters of Charity in Lucena City, and the University of Santa Isabel of the Daughters of Charity in Naga City. Father Ginete also gave a talk to the OMI sessions for lay partners held here in Rome in June sharing with them some of our experience in working with the laity in the Vincentian Family. He gave a brief report on the meeting of the executive coordinators of the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the deaths of St. Louise and St. Vincent.

Father Ginete's visits until the end of 2008, among other places, will be to the Vincentian Youth Gathering and the World Youth Day taking place in Australia. While conducting a retreat for the CMs in Kenya he will also visit the Vincentian Family there in August. He will make a visit to the Vincentian Family in Peru in September as well as to the Vincentian Family in Poland the same month. Sister Maria Pilar, the Executive Secretary of the Vincentian Family office will participate in the Vincentian Family Central America meeting in Honduras in October. Through the work of Father Ginete, we, the members of the General Council, and myself as Superior General, are continually trying to

encourage the members of the Congregation of the Mission to fulfill our responsibility in accompanying our lay brothers and sisters. One comment from a confrere that Father Ginete heard along the way was very telling: "When the lay Vincentians get into the act, things really begin to happen." Let us all work together with the poor so as to continue to give honor and glory to our God in the Vincentian fashion.

10. We received a report from the coordinator of the **Committee for Promoting Systemic Change**, Father Robert Maloney. The biggest news piece is that we hope that the book *Seeds of Hope: Stories of Systemic Change* will be published in both English and Spanish in time for the feast of St. Vincent de Paul. In preparation for that celebration, we continue to be encouraged to use the five simple processes that were developed to help us understand the spirituality of systemic change. The materials are readily available on the famvin website.
11. From the Directors of the **CIF program**, Father Hugh O'Donnell, Father Juan Julian Catalan and Father Jose Carlos Fonsatti, we received an evaluation of the Vincentian Heritage program that was held in April and May. The report was very positive and for the first time in the history of the program three lay members of the Vincentian Family participated: Bill and Mary Jaster who are coordinators of the Denver Vincentian Volunteers, and Mary O'Broin who is the coordinator of the popular mission teams for Ireland. Our hope in the future is to continue to invite select members of our lay branches to participate in these Vincentian Heritage programs, although our main focus will continue to be the Congregation of the Mission. The interchange between the confreres and the laity in this past experience was rated very positively. CIF is in the final preparation of the Servant Leadership workshop in June and July; and at this date 35 participants are signed up. We also worked out the details of a workshop for Brothers in the Congregation of the Mission which will be developed and held in the Center for International Formation sometime in the near future.
12. We received a report from the **Director of Communications** for the Congregation of the Mission, Father Julio Suescun giving us an update on Nuncia, Vincentiana, the famvin and cmglobal websites. Father Suescun is grateful to a number of the confreres who support his work through their translation capabilities. Because translation is one of our most difficult roles to fulfill, we ask confreres who have the possibilities of doing translation, please to contact us at the General Curia.

13. We received a report from Father Joe Foley, our **NGO representative to the United Nations**. Joe began his report with a quote, “The Lord’s Prayer highlights that having enough to eat is, and has always been, central to the Christian idea of a world shaped by justice and mercy. If God’s will was done, no one would go hungry.” taken from Sushant Agrawal, Director of the Church’s Auxiliary for Social Action in India. Joe’s report highlighted some reflections on the Vatican Forum on Catholic-inspired NGOs that was held in November 2007 in Rome as well as his work in the planning Committee for the Paris Conference on Reaffirming Human Rights, the Universal Declaration at 60. Joe joined this planning group to facilitate the desires of the Brothers of Charity who want to speak to mental health as a human right issue. Joe also reported on the food and agricultural conference that was held in Rome on the theme of hunger and the upcoming migration conference in Manila. I would like to take a quote from Joe’s conclusion; he says that “the more I get to know our community, the more proud I am of who we are and what we do. I see us doing many of things that the social teaching is pointing to, with faith and courage. However I often think that this social dimension of the gospel is not sufficiently explicit in our formation and ongoing formation processes.” Take these closing lines of Joe as a way of encouraging ourselves to be evermore attentive to the signs of the times and responding to them as our charism indicates.
14. Among other things, John Freund report on the famvin website states that Vincentian-related videos found on youtube, whether created by famvin or others, are being consolidating, into a new channel <http://www.youtube.com/famvinglobal>. As an aid to promoting awareness of significant events, famvin English has added an interactive calendar that allows all to post notices of their upcoming regional or international activities. [http://famvin.org/wiki/VincentWiki:Current events](http://famvin.org/wiki/VincentWiki:Current%20events). The news portion of the famvin site in English continues popularizing systemic change with the recent second series of 20 articles from the Commission on Promoting Systemic Change. We have expressed our concern that while the English site is well developed, many of the materials are unable to be utilized by the Spanish and French websites. The major problem there is no access to a team of translators, a story that we have heard often and lament, but at this point in time, there is little that we can do to change that reality.

The different reports that come in from each of the **Conferences of Visitors** were distributed to the members of the Council and

made available for further comment. Our first point of business was the desire to have a follow-up meeting with the Presidents of the conferences which we will be able to realize some time next year.

15. From the Conference of Visitors of **CEVIM** we received their final document of a meeting that was held in Rome for formators. One of their recommendations is that it is time to begin the revision of our two Ratios, of the Internal Seminary and the Major Seminary. Another point that was highlighted was the importance of learning other languages, among other reasons to help promote interprovincial collaboration. We also received the minutes of the Conference of Visitors that was held in Krakow in April which the General Assistant, José María Nieto attended. One of the translators was Father Claudio Santangelo, Secretary General. Two of the more important needs of Europe is the call to support the Vice-Province of Saints Cyril and Methodius and the sustaining of the mission of Albania. The Provinces of CEVIM would also like to continue reflection on the theme of how to have a more active missionary presence in Turkey, Romania and Greece. CEVIM, in this session, elected a new leadership for the next three year: President, Brian Moore of the Province of Ireland, Vice President Father Nicola Albanesi of the Province of Rome, and Father Antoine Nakad of the Province of the Orient as a member of the permanent council until the next conference meeting which will be held, God willing, in April 2008 in Beirut, Lebanon.

From **CLAPVI** we received a working document which was a follow-up to the Brothers' meeting in Santo Domingo in October 2007. CLAPVI's next General Assembly will be held in Argentina from 16-22 October 2008. The Province of Argentine will be celebrating the opening of its jubilee on the occasion of their 150 years presence in Argentine, Paraguay and Uruguay.

The Superior General and his Council have approved a nomination of Father Andy Bellisario as president of the **NCV** for an additional one-year term.

At this time, the Superior General and his Council continue to support the movement toward the reconfiguration of Provinces of the West, South and Midwest. The Superior General continues to support and encourage as well the efforts of the New England Province and the Eastern Province in their move toward possible reconfiguration. Another point discussed was a reexamination of the structure of the NCV as it reduces from five provinces to

three in 2010. The Superior General and his Council provided thoughts for the reflection of the Visitors on this matter.

In the reconfiguration of the provinces west of the Mississippi in the United States, they have chosen, after consultation, a new name for the province: Congregation of the Mission Western Province. The foundation date for the new province has been set for 25 January 2010 at which the Superior General will be present to inaugurate the new province. The Superior General wishes to thank the members of these provinces for their participation in this most difficult but important process of reconfiguration which he continues to hold up as a model to other provinces that need to move in the same direction, doing so for the best interests of those whom we serve in the mission.

16. We received from the **international mission** of El Alto, their community and apostolic project as well as a preliminary project on lay Vincentian volunteers for the mission in El Alto.

From the international mission of Papua New Guinea we had a brief report concerning candidates they have recruited from Papua New Guinea for the Congregation of the Mission and who will begin their process of formation under the guidance of the Province of Australia. The international mission in Papua New Guinea is also awaiting visas for two members of the Congregation of the Mission, Father Vladimir from Poland and Father Justin from Nigeria.

From the Solomon Islands, a letter was received from the Superior Greg Walsh, petitioning for more formators for the seminary, a subject that will be taken up in the Mission Appeal Letter in October. The seminary in the Solomon Islands awaits the return of Father Flaviano Caintic who has been recovering in his home province of the Philippines after heart surgery.

The Superior General and the Council also received a report from the Visitor of Poland, Father Arkadiusz Zakreta, of his most recent visit to Kazakhstan where the Congregation has been invited to establish a new mission. The Province of Poland will send in their first missionary in July with the hope of establishing a community later on. Kazakhstan is a large country, nine times larger than Poland itself, with a variable climate. The summer can be 40°C and in the winter as much as -40°C. Kazakhstan is a Muslim country, the second largest population being orthodox, and other religions including Catholics a very small minority. Congratulations to the province of Poland for yet another effort to spread the gospel in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul.

17. The Council reviewed **requests for missions**, the first coming from the Conference of Bishops of the Antilles. They are asking for support in their regional seminary of St. John Vianney and the Ugandan Martyrs which is located in Trinidad. At present the seminary has only two full-time resident staff members and they are looking for personnel including teachers in philosophy, theology and liturgy, a resource person for developing a strategic plan, a spiritual director and in general they hope to strengthen the residential and formation staff. This will be further developed in the Mission Appeal in October, but if there is anyone who might be inclined to support this formation request, the language is English.

We also received a request from the Archbishop of Cochabamba for missionaries to participate in a parish there which has at present a lay team of Vincentian missionaries as well as the Daughters of Charity.

Another mission request comes from the Archbishop of Santiago, Cuba, asking for more missionaries to help support our three confreres who are presently working in his diocese. It is a vast mission territory which our confreres are ever trying to expand and yet for reasons of human energy and limitations they need reinforcements. This will be further developed as well in the Mission Appeal in October.

This is all the business that was treated. As I close I encourage you all to be creatively faithful to the Mission.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General

# Presentation

by Julio Suescun Olcoz, C.M.  
*Editor of "Vincentiana"*

On May 17, 1658, exactly the same date on which this presentation is being written, but 350 years earlier, St. Vincent passed out the book of the Common Rules to the missionaries. Surely we have read about the scene many times and it still moves us to see the missionaries standing in line to receive the book of the Rules, kissing it devotedly, kissing St. Vincent's hand, listening to him give some words of encouragement and returning to their places with their hearts full of joy, thankfulness and good purposes of fidelity. The kneeling Fr. Almeras asked St. Vincent to bless the community which knelt down with him. St. Vincent, also on his knees, asked the Lord's blessing on the Rules and for the missionaries the grace of faithfully observing them.

VINCENTIANA does not intend only to remember a date, as important as it might be, but to invite today's missionaries to discover, through a careful and devout reading of the Rules, the values which, for many years, have sustained the Congregation of the Mission in its response to the Lord's call to give itself to evangelizing the poor.

When we speak about persistence, we are not referring to any juridical value that the Common Rules might have. They have none. The Assembly of 1980 decreed, and the subsequent Assemblies have confirmed, that the Constitutions, Statutes and Decrees constitute the only current proper law. No juridical value remains, then, for the Common Rules. Nevertheless, the same Constitutions and Statutes point out that the *spirit of Christ with which the Congregation needs to be filled in order to achieve the end which has been proposed, shines above all through the evangelical teachings as they are explained in the Common Rules* (C 4). In their inspired letters, *the spirit of the Founder* can still be found (C 34), the authentic inspiration of our fidelity. Towards the rules, then, we missionaries of today should put on the same attitudes of cordial respect and courageous fidelity which St. Vincent recommended (CR XII, 13).

More than a nostalgic remembrance, VINCENTIANA wishes to stimulate a gratitude to God for the values which St. Vincent

expressed in the Common Rules and which have inspired and formed the missionary personality of the Congregation since its foundation. Just as St. Vincent pointed out that the Rules were being lived even before they were written down, we could also say today that, although the letter no longer has a value, they persist in the fidelity of the missionaries who live the spirit of the Founder.

VINCENTIANA thought that it should begin this little homage to the Common Rules, which this number wishes to be, by commenting on the cover of the original edition, on which St. Vincent tried to engrave the foundations of his spirituality in the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Eucharist, sustained in life's daily events, in the Family of Nazareth where the Incarnate Word wished to live obediently under the watchful eye of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Next will come putting on the spirit of Jesus which is the first task we have as missionaries and the three Evangelical Counsels as the arms we have to use to continue the mission of Christ. As for the rest, there was no more room, except for the new pulpit from which a great number of missionaries are called to preach today: sickness. In coming numbers VINCENTIANA intends to continue highlighting other values of the Common Rules which persist in the missionaries.

The Common Rules were not born all of a sudden. They are the written expression of a desire for fidelity which was strengthened, as St. Vincent said, over the course of almost thirty years. That is the result of the comparative study of the three codices in which the Primitive Rule of the Congregation of the Mission have come down to us.

Rome, May 17 2008

350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the handing out of the Common Rules to the missionaries by St. Vincent de Paul at St. Lazare

# The Theological Foundation of Vincentian Spirituality in the Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission

by Bernard Jean Koch, C.M.

## 1. In the Common Rules

*According to the Bull which established our Congregation, we are bound to honor in a special way the Most Holy Trinity and the Incarnation, mysteries beyond words. We should therefore try to carry this out most faithfully and, if possible, in every way, but especially in these three ways, etc. (Common Rules X, 2).*

*There can be no better way of paying the best honor possible to these mysteries than proper devotion to, and use of, the Blessed Eucharist, sacrament and sacrifice. It includes, as it were, all the other mysteries of faith and, by itself, leads those who receive Communion respectfully or celebrate Mass properly, to holiness and ultimately to everlasting glory. In this way God, Unity and Trinity, and the Incarnate Word, are paid the greatest honor, etc. (Common Rules X, 3).*

*Because this Bull also expressly recommends it, and for other reasons as well, we should likewise have special devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. Confreres, therefore, both individually and collectively, should, with God's help, try to carry this out perfectly, etc. (Common Rules X, 4).*

## 2. A first question

A first question may be asked: do the *Rules* or *Customs* or *Constitutions* of some religious Orders or other institutes mention the great mysteries of the Faith, Trinity, Incarnation, Eucharist, as the fundamental principles of the spiritual life? Or is it rare, or even proper just to Monsieur Vincent?

The number of these Institutes is vast. Here is rapid analysis of some of them:

Saint PACHOMIUS died in 346, and only some fragments remain that allow us to perceive that later versions, such as the one that Saint Jerome worked on, are reliable. They regulate common life and prayer, but there is nothing about theology.

Saint BASIL, 330-379, wrote two *Rules*. In the Long Rule, Chapter 6, 1<sup>1</sup> possibly inspired CR II, 2, of Vincent: "This is what we must follow if we renounce ourselves and carry the Cross of Christ... to prepare oneself to suffer death for Christ," and apparently nothing else, not even in the Short Rule. His *Ascetical Constitutions* begin in this way: "Each action and each word of our Savior Jesus Christ is the rule of piety and virtue."<sup>2</sup> Is Vincent's expression "Jesus, who began to do and then to teach" possibly an echo of this? But there is never any mention of the Holy Trinity. Certainly, he composed many theological works and produced a great deepening in the theology of the Holy Spirit, but he never mentioned this in his *Rules*.

Saint AUGUSTINE, died in 430, left us a *Rule*, his Letter 211, written to religious women, and paragraphs five to ten are an adaptation of a Rule for monks.<sup>3</sup> It begins, 1-4, with an exhortation to unity following divisions in the community, and continues by directives on the common life, virtues, prayer, obedience, the behavior of superiors, but there is no theological paragraph. It is true that Saint Augustine would preach to them. Only God knows with what depth he preached and wrote of the Trinity, but this does not appear in this letter.

The *Rule* of Saint BENEDICT, who lived circa 480-547, is certainly the best known. The introduction is an invitation to listen to the voice of the Lord. The remainder, after norms for virtue and piety, based on numerous citations from Holy Scripture, is a set of rules for organization of common life, the Divine Office, and various questions of administration. There is no reference to the Holy Trinity or to the Incarnation.

We can also consult the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, which had various later revisions. The first ones were written by Saint IGNATIUS, but the last and definitive version received certain modifications by other members toward the end of his life.<sup>4</sup>

As to the Oratory of Jesus, in France, in whose beginnings Monsieur Vincent played a part from the end of November 1611 to

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<sup>1</sup> MIGNE Greek, 31, 925A.

<sup>2</sup> MIGNE Greek, 31, 1325A.

<sup>3</sup> MIGNE Latin, 33, 960 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Available in French in an edition by Père Courel, 2 vols., Desclée de Brouwer, *Christus* no. 23 and 24; Spanish, among other editions, in *Obras*, manual edition, BAC, pp. 433-695, with all the versions of the particular rules.

his arrival at the parish of Clichy during 1612, BÉRULLE wrote a large number of small spiritual and theological works. His huge *Discours de l'Etat et des grandeurs de Jésus* has many pages on the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Eucharist, the Virgin Mary, Mother of God. He also wrote a *Rule for the Institution of the Oratory at its beginning*, which contains, like the others, an order of the day, rules for common life, exercises of piety, beginning with acts of adoration, offering, and intention toward Jesus Christ our Savior, and to honor the Blessed Virgin, particularly as Mother of God. This seems new and probably inspired Monsieur Vincent to some extent, since he gave his Congregation nearly exactly the same order of the day and of the week, and many practices of common life.

It seems clear that Monsieur Vincent is the only one, on the one hand, to put these four points at the head of the “Spiritual practices to be observed in the Congregation,” and on the other hand, to put the Incarnation, rather than “Our Lord Jesus Christ,” as central. He used only one word, of course, but the word is there, and if he did not write treatises about these practices, he gave conferences on them.

On the one hand, it is important to name the **Most Holy Trinity**, the fundamental truth of Christianity, which is not done by other Rules; and on the other hand, to describe the **Incarnation**, rather than **Jesus Christ**, is very significant, I would even say, typical, of the apostolic concerns of Monsieur Vincent. **Jesus Christ** designates certainly the person of Jesus, true man and true God, but in some way it is static, and his work of salvation is only hinted at, while to mention the **Incarnation** is something dynamic, showing not only the human-divine person of the Savior, but the movement of the Son of God sent by the Father to take on human nature. It also shows **his mission**, for since at least the time of Saint AUGUSTINE it has been recognized that the missions are not only from God to human beings, but from the Father to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Saint Vincent commented on the truths at length during his Conferences

Unfortunately, all his conferences were not written down by his listeners at the beginning; it is only starting with 1645 that notes are more than two pages in length, and the most complete and faithful are those taken down by Brother Ducournau, beginning in 1656.

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<sup>5</sup> Saint AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, Bk. II, sect. II, art. IV, 6 to V, 10, and Saint THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, Pars Prima, Quaestio 43, 8 Articles.

Worse, at the time of the sack of Saint Lazare on 13 July 1789, at the beginning of the Revolution, the day before the taking of the Bastille, everything was destroyed, from top to bottom; files and books were tossed out of the windows, along with a huge number of documents, particularly loose pages which were lost. Only some collection of copies could be gathered up again from the materials lying about.

Vincent's biography by Abelly gives us a large number of extracts from conferences whose originals disappeared on 13 July 1789, but they are not dated. In addition, Monsieur Vincent often referred to these mysteries in the thousands of talks on other subjects.

Finally, we can also know the subjects he treated, thanks to two confreres who wrote down at least the titles during the last ten years of his life, and Pierre Coste brought together the two lists at the end of the complete conferences that have come down to us. The results are:

He spoke of the **Holy Trinity** on 24 May 1652, 23 May 1655, 25 May 1657, 14 June 1658. In addition, he mentioned it in passing in various talks, even during one of the Council meetings with the Daughters of Charity.

Conferences on the Holy Spirit took place to prepare for Pentecost: 26 May 1651, 17 May 1652, in 1655, 2 June 1656, 18 May 1657. He mentioned the Holy Spirit on many other occasions, and he directed a prayer to the Holy Spirit at the close of many of his letters.

His treatment of the **Incarnation** was to celebrate Christmas: 24 December 1650, 22 December 1651, 18 December 1654, 22 December 1656.

He spoke of the **Eucharist** either for the feast of Corpus Christi, or on other occasions: on frequent communion, around 1648, for Corpus Christi, 31 May 1652, on Mass and communion 28 June 1652, June 1653, 23 February, and 2 March 1657, 2 June 1657, 13 June 1659, 2 May 1660.

He apparently did not have a conference on the **Virgin Mary**, but he spoke about her relatively often, and very often with the Daughters of Charity.

The depth of what he said in two or three sentences, and what others wrote in several pages, makes us realize not only that he had studied and taught, but especially that he must have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, since theologians propose very profound analyses, but they are rather technical and intellectual. Vincent, on the other hand, was more living and animated.

#### 4. The Holy Trinity

The few texts that have come down to us allow us to think that Saint Vincent had the magnificent pages of Saint AUGUSTINE and Saint THOMAS concerning the relations among the divine Persons, the “processions,” their circulation of love, for which theologians have used, without translating it, the lovely image of Saint John of Damascus, “the chorus of the round dance,” *perichoresis* in Greek, and “circumincession” for the Latins, both strange words to designate a dynamic and poetic life. Saint THOMAS, however, fortunately used the simple word “circulation.”<sup>6</sup>

For Saint THOMAS, our God, infinitely perfect, is certainly unchangeable, but he is not immobile or inactive or solitary. He is constantly at work, as Jesus said in John 5:17, and unceasingly creates other beings; and the Father sends the Son and the Spirit, the divine Missions. Monsieur Vincent, a Molinist concerning predestination, is Thomist for the rest, and he was able to speak in a few sentences about the relations among the divine Persons and their activities, what Saint THOMAS took the two first articles in Question I of the *Quaestiones Disputatae De Potentia* to say.

God is active in Himself, by that which the first Creeds called processions, the Son proceeds from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as from a single source. Procession bespeaks motion, *procedere* in Latin, that is, to walk ahead, to advance. And the procession of the Son by the Father is a generation. He is engendered. In the case of the Holy Spirit, it is a “spiration.” And this movement also comes in return, as in a dialogue without time, eternal. The Son is eternally engendered while breathing out the Spirit with the Father, which is return of love.

The only passage that has come down to us was said to the Daughters of Charity on 28 November 1649, in the conference on the reasons for working to earn a part of their livelihood:<sup>7</sup>

*... that God himself works incessantly, has worked incessantly, and will work incessantly.*

*He works from all eternity within himself by the eternal generation of His Son, whom He will never cease to beget. The Father and the Son have never stopped loving each other, and this mutual love has eternally produced the Holy Spirit, by whom all graces have been, are, and will be distributed to us.*

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Quaestiones Disputatae De Potentia*, Question 9, article 9.

<sup>7</sup> SV IX, 489-490, conf. 42.

Vincent continues concerning the work of Creation:

*God also works incessantly from outside himself in the creation and preservation of this great universe, in the movements of the heavens, in the influences of the stars, in the productions of land and sea, in the nature of the atmosphere, in the regulation of the seasons, and in all that beautiful order we observe in nature, which would be destroyed and return to nothingness if God was not constantly guiding it.*

*In addition to this general work, He toils with each individual: with the craftsman in his shop, with the woman in her household, with the ant and the bee to do their collecting, and He does so constantly and continually.*

*And why does He labor? For us, dear Sisters, only for us, to preserve our lives and to procure for us everything we need. Eh quoi! if a God, Emperor of the entire world, has never for a single moment stopped working interiorly and exteriorly ever since the world has been the world, and even in the lowliest of earth's productions, with which He cooperates, how much more reasonable that we, who are His creatures, should work, as He has said, in the sweat of our brow!*

Vincent passes very quickly not to the work of Creation, but to the **presence of the Trinity in creatures**, especially by grace, by his indwelling in the hearts of the baptized, which should imitate according to their nature the union of the three Persons.

The first passage that we have on this aspect comes from a Daughter of Charity, which shows us that they had well interiorized the teachings of Monsieur Vincent. It was on 26 April 1643, in a conference on unity:<sup>8</sup>

*“Union,” said another Sister, “is the image of the Most Blessed Trinity which is composed of three Divine Persons, united by love. If we are closely united, we will all be of one will and in complete harmony. Disunion, on the contrary, would give us a picture of hell, where the demons live in perpetual discord and hatred.”*

Another time, during the Council meeting of the Sisters, Saint Louise had suggested that the Sisters mutually help one another. Vincent then began a lengthy exposé that was simultaneously both theological and practical, which was certainly not easy for everyone to follow. Nevertheless, it was one of the Sisters who took notes, on 19 June 1647:<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> SV IX, 98, conf. 14.

<sup>9</sup> SV XIII, 633-634, doc. 159.

*For a long time I have been hoping — and I really do wish — that our Sisters would reach such a degree of respect among themselves that persons outside the Community would never know which one is the Sister Servant; for, Sisters, since God is but One in Himself, and in God there are three Persons, without the Father being greater than the Son or the Son being greater than the Holy Spirit, it should be the same for Daughters of Charity. They should be the image of the Most Holy Trinity; and even though they are several, they should form but one heart and one mind. Among the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, even though their operations are diverse and attributed to each one in particular, they are related to one another, without implying that to attribute wisdom to the Son and goodness to the Holy Spirit deprives the Father of these two attributes, or that the Third Person lacks the power of the Father or the wisdom of the Son. In like manner, among the Daughters of Charity the Sister who is with those who are poor must be in close contact with the Sister who looks after the children, and vice-versa.*

*Furthermore, I wish that, in this respect, our Sisters might conform themselves to the Most Holy Trinity so that, as the Father gives Himself entirely to the Son, and the Son entirely to the Father from whom proceeds the Holy Spirit, likewise the Sisters might be totally one for the other to produce the works of charity attributed to the Holy Spirit, in order to have a kinship with the Most Holy Trinity. For Sisters, you can see that the person who says charity says God. You are Daughters of Charity; therefore, as far as possible, you should conform yourselves to the image of God. This is the goal of all Communities that aspire to perfection.*

The creative action of the Holy Trinity is also Providence, but even more, God is love, and love tends to spread out, to diffuse itself. The Trinity associates its creatures, especially human beings, in the activity of Providence. This is a genuine spirituality of the management of material goods that Vincent is teaching, something rare or absent in spiritual authors. The references are these: 28 April 1638, to Antoine Portail,<sup>10</sup> in 1656, Advice to Antoine Durand,<sup>11</sup> to the Daughters of Charity, 11 November 1657,<sup>12</sup> and 21 February 1659.<sup>13</sup>

We cite only the clearest passage, spoken to the Missioners, on 13 December 1658:<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> SV I, 475, letter 322.

<sup>11</sup> SV I, 350, letter 242.

<sup>12</sup> SV X, 332, conf. 85.

<sup>13</sup> SV XII, 142, conf. 198.

<sup>14</sup> SV XII, 110-111, conf. 196.

*O my God! necessity obliges us to possess those perishable goods and to preserve for the Company what Our Lord has bestowed on it, but we should apply ourselves to this in the manner in which God applies Himself to the production and conservation of temporal things for the adornment of the world and the nourishment of His creatures in such wise that He takes care to provide for even an insect; neither does this interfere with His interior operations by which the Son is begotten and from which the Holy Spirit proceeds. And these latter operations in no way involve the omission of the former.<sup>15</sup> As, then, it is God's good pleasure to provide plants, animals, and men with food, those who hold office in this little universe of the Company should likewise provide for the needs of the individuals who compose it. It certainly must be done, O my God. Otherwise, all that Your Providence has given for their maintenance would perish, Your service would cease, and we could no longer go and preach the Gospel gratuitously to the poor.*

This inter-Trinitarian activity of the Persons is completed by the **Creation** of other beings than God, the **Divine Missions**, as the prologue to Saint John teaches: the Word was God, and through him all things were made. Besides creation, the Word was sent to restore humanity degraded by sin; this is the **Incarnation**, which will be mentioned below.

Before that, however, we will content ourselves with two passages on the Mission of the Holy Spirit. On 30 July 1651 he wrote to Anne Hardemont, Sister Servant at Hennebont:<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Saint THOMAS AQUINAS taught this explicitly in the *Quæstiones Disputatæ De Veritate*, question 2, article 2, ad 2. *Deus maxime ad essentiam suam redit quia omnibus providens ac per hoc in omnia quodam modo exiens et procedens, in se ipso fixus et immistus ceteris permanet.*

God returns in his essence, since being complete Providence for all beings, and thus going out and proceeding in a certain way in all things, he rests stable in himself and intimately linked to others.

The profound reason for this is given in the *Quæstiones Disputatæ, De Potentia*, q. 2, art. 6: in God, the unique and simple being, there are no truly distinct powers (the power of engendering the Persons and the power of creating), and so they are not separable, distinguished only by different acts. The Persons, on the other hand, do not make three gods, but they are truly distinct, since they are not powers but relations. This is why the Persons are coeternal, although creation is not eternal.

Once again, we can understand that Vincent was a penetrating and informed theologian.

Of course, this thought is found very likely in many other ancient authors.

<sup>16</sup> SV IV, 235-236, letter 1389.

*In a word, live together as having but one heart and one soul so that by this union of spirit you may be a true image of the unity of God, since your number represents the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity.*

*I pray for this to **the Holy Spirit, who is the union of the Father and the Son, that He may be yours likewise** and give you profound peace in the midst of contradictions and difficulties, which can only be frequent among the poor.*

He often recalled the Holy Spirit in his letters in the form of brief invocations. Besides the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in the soul, he recalled also that of the Holy Spirit. In his Conferences, he moved very easily from “the spirit of Our Lord,” in the sense of “mentality,” to the Spirit as a Person. Finally, on other occasions he joins the two points, as in this text to the confreres, 13 December 1658, where he moves from the simple “state of sanctifying grace,” to what we call the mystical life, the action of God in us.

He commented on articles 2 and 3 of the first chapter of the Common Rules, concerning the members of the Company and their work:<sup>17</sup>

*The rule then says that, to do this, as well as to tend to our own perfection, we must clothe ourselves with the Spirit of Jesus Christ.... This means that if we are to be perfect and help the people fruitfully, if we are to serve ecclesiastics well... of ourselves we can do nothing. We must be filled and animated with this Spirit of Jesus Christ.*

*To understand this clearly, it is essential to know that His Spirit is poured forth into all Christians who live according to the rules of the Christian religion....*

*But what is this spirit thus diffused? When we say that the Spirit of Our Lord is in such a person or in such actions, what do we mean? Is it that the Holy Spirit in Person is poured forth upon them? Yes, the Holy Spirit, in Person is poured forth into the souls of the just and abides personally in them. When it is said that the Holy Spirit is in anyone, we mean that the Holy Spirit, abiding in such a person, bestows on him the same inclinations and the same dispositions as Jesus Christ had on earth, and causes him to act in the same way. I do not say with equal perfection, but according to the measure of the gifts of this Divine Spirit.*

Finally, Monsieur Vincent was able to present in a living and profoundly theological way the traditional doctrine according to

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<sup>17</sup> SV XII, 107-108, conf. 196.

which the **Trinity dwells in the soul that lives by grace**. We have only one passage from Monsieur Vincent; it is very strong and dynamic for him, expressed in such clear terms that we feel that Vincent did not repeat something he had read, but he communicated the inspirations he had received. He was speaking to his confreres on one Pentecost (undated):<sup>18</sup>

*If we love Our Lord, we will be loved by His Father, which is as much as to say that His Father will wish us well, and will do that in two ways: first, He will take pleasure in us, as a father with his child; second, He will give us His graces of faith, hope, and charity by the outpouring of His Holy Spirit, who will dwell in our souls, just as He gave it today to the Apostles and enabled them to perform the miracles they did.*

*The second advantage of loving Our Lord is that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit come into the soul that loves Our Lord, and this comes about: (1) through the enlightenment of our understanding; (2) through the interior intuitions He gives us of Their love by inspirations, the sacraments, etc.*

*The third effect of Our Lord's love is that not only God the Father loves these souls, and the Persons of the Blessed Trinity come into them, but They also remain in them. Therefore, the soul of the person who loves Our Lord is the dwelling place of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the place where the Father perpetually begets His Son and the Holy Spirit constantly proceeds from the Father and the Son.*

Do we not understand that this was not presented as a simple unmoving presence, but that it was truly the interior operations of the Trinity, the processions and the relations of persons, that make the sort of heaven from which the Trinity reaches out to each one's soul in a state of grace, and that "charity" is truly this heaven?

## 5. The Incarnation

We no longer have the pre-Christmas conferences, but there are some expressions in his letters near this feast, as well as many other elevations in prayer.

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<sup>18</sup> SV XI, 44, conf. 26.

### 5.1. The sending of the Son by the Father

On 23 May 1655, speaking of obedience to the Sisters, he contemplates the sending, the Mission of the Son by the Father, **from the bosom of the Trinity**:<sup>19</sup>

*When the Eternal Father willed to send His Son on earth, He put before Him all the things He would have to do and suffer. You know the life of Our Lord and how filled with suffering it was. His Father said to Him, "I will allow you to be despised and rejected by everyone; I will let Herod make you flee from the time you are a baby; I will permit that you be considered a madman and receive curses for your miracles; in short, I will allow all creatures to rebel against you.*

*That's what the Eternal Father set before His Son, who replied, Father, "I will do whatever you command me." This shows us that we should obey in all things generally.*

### 5.2. Love and self-abasement

Regarding **the earthly aspect of the Incarnation**, he offers us several considerations.

First, **self-abasement** as Saint Paul presents this to the Philipians, 2:5-11. Following on Bérulle, Vincent loves to meditate on the annihilation of the Son of God. Three days before Christmas, 1656, Monsieur Vincent concludes a letter to a confrere in these terms:<sup>20</sup>

*We have no news except that of the coming Mystery, which will show us the Savior of the world annihilated, as it were, under the form of a child. I hope we will be together at the foot of His crib to ask Him to draw us with Him into His lowly state.*

These terms, abasement, annihilation, occur often in his writings concerning Jesus and as a model for us. But they do not always have a somber or narrow cast to them. Very often Monsieur Vincent shows the great strength of love that moved God to this undertaking; we should also be united.

On New Year's Day 1644, during a conference on unity, one Sister got up to speak, and made the connection between **love and self-abasement**:<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> SV X, 85-86, conf. 67.

<sup>20</sup> SV VI, 150, letter 2182.

<sup>21</sup> SV IX, 144, conf. 17.

*The first reason is that God has loved us so much and with so cordial a love that He willed to deliver himself up for us, and humbled himself to the point of making himself like a sinner.*

We have a draft of a talk in which, during 1645, Vincent comforted a dying student:<sup>22</sup>

*This Lover of our hearts, seeing that sin had unfortunately ruined and effaced the resemblance, determined to break all the laws of nature in order to repair this havoc and did so with this wonderful additional favor that, not content with implanting in us a resemblance and mark of His Divinity, He even decided, with the same intention that we should love Him, to make Himself like unto us and even to clothe Himself with our human nature.*

### **5.3. This heart of the Son of God...**

The expression “Sacred Heart” was not used in Saint Vincent’s time, although there was, when he arrived at Châtillon les Dombes in 1617, a painting of the Sacred Heart on the altar of the side chapel of the Rosary (Notarial inventory). It said simply: “The heart of Jesus.” We read this ardent expression in his conference to the confreres, 22 August 1655:<sup>23</sup>

*Well now, let us ask God to give the Company this spirit, this heart, this heart which will make us go everywhere, this Heart of the Son of God, the Heart of Our Lord, the Heart of Our Lord, the Heart of Our Lord, which will dispose us to go as He went and as He would have gone if His Eternal Wisdom had deemed it fitting to labor for the conversion of those poor nations.*

*He sent His Apostles to do that; He sends us, like them, to bear this divine fire everywhere, everywhere. Ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo nisi ut accendatur to bear this divine fire everywhere, this fire of love, of the fear of God, throughout the whole world: to Barbary, to the Indies, to Japan.*

During a conference or in the middle of a letter, he would let slip some emotional expressions on Christ that are even more revealing since he never intended to write works of mysticism. We cite only one passage on the great love of Jesus for us, in the conference to his confreres, 13 December 1658:<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> SV XI, 145-147, conf. 102.

<sup>23</sup> SV XI, 291, conf. 135.

<sup>24</sup> SV XII, 109, conf. 196.

*And His love, what was it? Oh! what love! O my Savior, what love did you not bear Your Father? Could He have a greater love of Him, Brothers, than to annihilate Himself for the Father? For Saint Paul, speaking of the birth of the Son of God on earth, says that He annihilated Himself. Could He manifest a greater love than by dying for love in the way in which He died? O love of my Savior! O love! thou art incomparably greater than the Angels could, or ever will, comprehend.*

*His humiliations were only love, His labors only love, His prayers only love, and all His interior and exterior operations were only reiterated acts of His love. His love gave Him a great contempt for the world, contempt for the spirit of the world, contempt for its goods, contempt for its pleasures, contempt for its honors.*

*That is a description of the Spirit of Our Lord with which we should be clothed and, in one word, it is always to have a great esteem and a great love of God. He was so filled with it that He never did anything of Himself or to satisfy Himself; *Quae placita sunt ei facio semper*. I always do the Will of my Father. I always perform the actions and works that are pleasing to Him. And as it is by the Will of the Father that the Eternal Son despised the world, its goods, pleasures, and honors, so too it is by despising them as He did that we shall enter into His Spirit.*

It would also be good to reread the beautiful passage on charity, in his conference of 30 May, 1659 to his Missioners. We will recall only one sentence:<sup>25</sup>

*O Savior! O fount of love! Humbled even unto us and even unto an infamous punishment, who loved his neighbor more than you did? You came to lay yourself open to all our miseries, to take the form of a sinner, to lead a life of suffering, and to endure a disgraceful death for our sakes; is there love like to this?... But who could love with such surpassing love?*

#### **5.4. At the moment of his coming upon earth**

It is noteworthy that Vincent de Paul, following the Fathers of the Church and Bérulle, did not regard the Incarnation only at the time of Christmas, but he reread his birth as taking place all during his life and at his Passion; this is already the spirituality of the Sisters of Gethsemane.

But Vincent also meditated about **the moment of his coming upon earth, in the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation**. On 26 Sep-

<sup>25</sup> SV XII, 264, conf. 207.

tember 1659, in a conference to his confreres on the Divine Office and the importance of praise, he insisted on the meaning of adoration, the recognition of the greatness of God, the virtue of religion, one of the marks of the French School of spirituality:<sup>26</sup>

*Do you know, Brothers, that the first act of religion is to praise God? Let us go further and say: praise even precedes sacrifice. A maxim says: prius est esse quam operari. A thing must exist before it operates. It must be in being before being sustained: prius est esse quam sustentari. We must recognize the essence and existence of God and have some knowledge of His perfections before offering sacrifices to Him. That is natural for, I ask you, to whom do you offer gifts? To the great, to princes and Kings. It is to them you render homage.*

*This is so true that God observed this order in the Incarnation. When the angel went to salute the Blessed Virgin, he began by acknowledging that she was replenished with the graces of Heaven: ... He recognized the fact then, and praised her as being full of grace.*

*And then what did he do? He made her the beautiful gift of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. The Holy Spirit, within her virginal womb formed a body. God created a soul, united it to this body. And immediately the Word united Himself to this soul and body by a wonderful union. And, in this manner, the Holy Spirit wrought the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation. Praise preceded sacrifice.*

We can also meditate with him on the Passion during the course of a conference to the Missioners on meekness, 28 March 1659:<sup>27</sup>

*Let us reflect on this, Gentlemen. We shall find extraordinary acts of meekness surpassing the human understanding; and let us consider how He preserves this meekness throughout.*

### **5.5. He insists that we live in Jesus**

We should recall at least what he wrote on 1 May 1635 to his first companion in the Mission, Antoine Portail, on the occasion of a failed mission:<sup>28</sup>

*Remember, Monsieur, we live in Jesus Christ through the death of Jesus Christ, and we must die in Jesus Christ through the life of*

<sup>26</sup> SV XII, 326-327, conf. 213.

<sup>27</sup> SV XII, 192-194, conf. 202.

<sup>28</sup> SV I, 295, letter 197.

*Jesus Christ, and our life must be hidden in Jesus Christ and filled with Jesus Christ, and in order to die as Jesus Christ, we must live as Jesus Christ. Now, once these foundations have been laid, let us give ourselves up to contempt, to shame, to ignominy, and let us disclaim the honors people pay us, the good reputation and the applause they give us, and let us do nothing which has not that end in view. Let us work humbly and respectfully.... We do not believe a man because he is very learned but because we consider him good and love him.*

We conclude with the fact that **our faith in the Incarnation should pour itself out in prayer**. Do we think about this every time we recite the Angelus, if we still recite it? Monsieur Vincent urged the Daughters of Charity to pay attention to it:<sup>29</sup>

*This is a prayer, Sisters, that's said to thank God for coming into the world to become incarnate to save us.... That's the meaning of the Angelus. Make the intention of thanking God for this great mystery every time you hear the bell ring.*

## 6. He left us beautiful meditations on the Eucharist

We will be content only with the little summary of the Common Rules, X, 3:

*There can be no better way of paying the best honor possible to these mysteries than proper devotion to, and use of, the Blessed Eucharist, sacrament and sacrifice. It includes, as it were, all the other mysteries of faith and, by itself, leads those who receive Communion respectfully or celebrate Mass properly, to holiness and ultimately to everlasting glory. In this way God, Unity and Trinity, and the Incarnate Word, are paid the greatest honor.*

*For these reasons, nothing should be more important to us than showing due honor to this sacrament and sacrifice. We are also to make a great effort to get everyone else to pay it similar honor and reverence. We should try, to the best of our ability, to achieve this by preventing, as far as we can, any lack of reverence in word or act, and by carefully teaching others what to believe about so great a mystery, and how they should honor it.*

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<sup>29</sup> SV X, 570, conf. 102.

## 7. He exhorts us to venerate the Virgin Mary

He recommended to his Missioners the attachment to the Virgin Mary, just after the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Holy Eucharist, in Common Rules, X, 4:

*Because this Bull also expressly recommends it, and for other reasons as well, we should likewise have special devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. Confreres, therefore, both individually and collectively, should, with God's help, try to carry this out perfectly: (1) by specially honoring every day this preeminent Mother of Christ, who is also our Mother; (2) by putting into practice, as far as possible, the same virtues as she did, particularly humility and chastity; (3) by enthusiastically encouraging others, whenever opportunity and means permit, to show her the greatest reverence and always to serve her loyally.*

He often meditated on the virtues of Our Lady.

He certainly commented on **the Magnificat**, since what follows is not just a simple detached fragment, but rather the echo of more developed outpourings. On 24 July 1655, he had a very original and dynamic way of paraphrasing the canticle:<sup>30</sup>

*May the divine Goodness be pleased to give... a big heart, vast and ample! Magnificat anima mea Dominum! Our soul must magnify, must amplify God and, to that end, may God amplify our soul, may He give us the breadth of mind enough to see and truly recognize the greatness, the plenitude of the goodness and power of God...; such an amplitude of will as to make us embrace every opportunity of producing the glory of God. Yes, the Congregation of the Mission can do all things because we have within us the germ of the omnipotence of Jesus Christ.*

There was no obligation of saying the rosary for the Missioners, since they have the Breviary, but he put it in the rule of the Daughters of Charity. The rosary began slowly, beginning with the Fathers of the Desert, for those who did not know how to read, and who recited the 150 Hail Mary's in the place of the 150 Psalms that the others would recite daily. Later, according to Saint Dominic, the meditation on the mysteries was added. For the missionaries to Madagascar, in 1650, Saint Vincent obtained various faculties, including number 23, of reciting the rosary or other prayers if they could not bring along the Breviary (which was a large and heavy

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<sup>30</sup> SV XI, 203-204, conf. 125.

book).<sup>31</sup> This clarifies what he explained to the Sisters on 8 December 1658, concerning the deep value of the rosary:<sup>32</sup>

*Now, you know how important it is to pray it well because, of all prayers, it is the only one — I mean the Pater Noster — that Our Lord taught His Apostles; at least it is the principal prayer that makes up the Rosary. “When you pray,” He said to them, “say, Our Father, who art in heaven, etc.” Let us imagine, Sisters, that He is here among us and is telling us to do the same.*

*The other prayer that makes up the Rosary is the Ave Maria, which was composed by the Holy Spirit. The angel began it by greeting the Blessed Virgin, and Saint Elizabeth composed part of it when she was visited by her cousin; the Church added the rest. So this prayer was inspired by the Holy Spirit.*

*Accordingly, Sisters, the Rosary is a very efficacious prayer when it is well said.... And this is the means by which we see so many holy souls come together to praise God and the Blessed Virgin.*

*That, then, is how you will pray your Rosary, dear Sisters; but be very careful to do it well; it is your breviary.*

We conclude with a sentence from the **consecration of the Daughters of Charity to the Blessed Virgin**, 8 August 1655, with a remarkably modern formula:<sup>33</sup>

*Holy Virgin, you who speak for those who have no tongue and who can not speak for themselves, these good Sisters and I entreat you to assist this Little Company.*

Translation: JOHN EARL RYBOLT, C.M.

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<sup>31</sup> SV XIII, 321, doc. 101.

<sup>32</sup> SV X, 620-621, conf. 107.

<sup>33</sup> SV X, 105, conf. 69.

# “Put on the Spirit of Jesus Christ” in the Thought of Saint Vincent

by Erminio Antonello, C.M.

For Saint Vincent, the Christological theme of adherence to Christ expresses the heart of the charitable and missionary vocation of priests of the mission. The meeting and the relationship with Christ is the linchpin, “the rule.”<sup>1</sup>

“The purpose of the Company is to imitate our Lord, as much as poor and weak persons can. What does it say? That it has proposed to comply with him in its actions, its jobs and its purposes. How a person can represent another, without the same traits, lineaments, proportions, ways, looks? He cannot. Therefore, if we propose to make ourselves as *similar to the divine model* and our hearts feel this desire and this holy affection, we must, I say, *try to conform our thoughts, our works and our intentions to his.*”<sup>2</sup>

The Common Rules trace the lines of an educational process that leads us to conform ourselves to the humanity of Christ and that Saint Vincent summed up in the phrase “put on Christ.” But before going into this topic, we must take a moment to dwell on the symbolic language to which the image of “putting on Jesus Christ” leads, because this expression, used by Saint Vincent little more than a dozen times, is a religious symbol of great power. He borrows it from St. Paul (Gal 3:27), but the theme is rooted in an anthropological background, which is reflected in the Bible.

## 1. The metaphor of dress in the language of scripture

Dress in our culture has two meanings: to protect oneself from the cold or as a meaningful ornament of the body. In either case, it expresses an outward appearance of self-respect. But the person is not

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<sup>1</sup> COSTE SV XII, 130.

<sup>2</sup> COSTE SV XII, 75.

his clothes. It also repeats in proverbs of popular wisdom: "Clothes do not make the man! Clothes are not the medicine!" Not so in biblical literature. Clothes are a symbol, not just an instrument. Applied to the divine, they express coming into contact with God. The principal text in this regard is from St. Paul: "All of you in fact are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, because you have been baptized into Christ, *you have put on Christ*" (Gal 3:26-27). This signifies the experience of full belonging and is wrapped in intimacy. And the power of symbol assures the expression of this experience.

This is possible because the ancient world in general, and that of the bible in particular, has attributed meaning to dress and a particularly intense lived experience. The nakedness of the body is a shame that must be covered (Gen 9:22), and God himself cares to dress his creatures after their sin, thus showing his tenderness as a mother who worries over her child: "Then the Lord God made man and woman garments and *he dressed them*" (Gen 3:21). Being naked is like being abandoned (cf. Lk 8:27). Jesus himself has this experience on the cross: covered with a royal cloak for a joke and then, his garments removed, He died stripped (cf. Mk 15:20-24). And in this nakedness is vividly expressed the experience of abandonment and loneliness. Certainly the body is more than dress (Mt 6:25), but dress is one of the vital needs of the person as are food and shelter (1 Tim 6:8). Dress expresses the person and reveals what is most at the heart of the wearer: when Samuel offers David his cloak he vows his service and gives him his spirit (1 Sam 18:4), when Elisha gives the mantle to Elijah, it is because he wants him to inherit his prophetic power (2 Re 3:12 ff.). It is always in this perspective that we must understand the miraculous power of the dress of Jesus (Mt 9:21; 14:36) or of the Apostle Paul (Acts 19:12). Clothes also recall the experience of the last times, since man will be clothed "in garments of salvation" (Is 61:10) as the prodigal son is given the "most beautiful dress" (Lk 15:22) or as a wedding dress for those who participate in the messianic wedding (Mt 22:12), or even as the robes of Jesus that blazed in the transfiguration or the white robes of the angels on Easter morning.

With all this wealth of symbols, when we speak of "putting on Christ" we are not faced with simple pictorial images for effect, but we find ourselves within a symbolic experience that expresses the religiosity of the believer who adheres closely to Christ. The relationship with him cannot remain at the level of simple approach but is part of his own person: it wraps it, gives it shape, defines it, clothes it. But not in the gnostic or docetic sense of simple "outer coating," but in the full sense of the term "clothed" in the traditional and biblical meaning of the term.

## 2. Clothed in Christ: a grand affair!

The metaphor of dress recalls, as we have seen, a statement of the intimacy with the divine. And St. Vincent notes that prior to our being “clothed in Christ,” it is He who is clothed in our humanity. He goes before us and creates a condition of reciprocity: the believer is involved in the prior history with which God binds himself in love to our humanity. And God who clothes his divinity in our humanity, lays the foundations for which we can clothe our humanity in his divinity.

When this great God created us with the plan to require of us that duty of loving Him as this honorable tribute, He willed to place in us the seed of love, which is our resemblance to Him, so that we may not excuse ourselves, saying that we do not have the means to pay it. This lover of our hearts, seeing that sin had unfortunately spoiled and obliterated this resemblance, willed to break all the laws of nature in order to repair this damage, but with such a marvellous benefit that He was not content with placing in us the resemblance and mark of His divinity, but even willed, by the same plan that we should love Him, *to clothe himself with our very humanity*.<sup>3</sup>

Since Christ is clothed in our humanity, He has given us, as a gift, to be able to enter into relationship with Him and clothed us in Him. Consequently, the experience of our Christian faith comes not from a consciousness that produces its object, but rather receives a “form,” namely the shape of the humanity of Christ. Without him the conscious believer remains naked and stripped: would face itself without adequate content. The putting on of Christ, therefore, indicates a process of assimilation and enveloping intimacy with the Lord Jesus. This is the central theme and is insistent in the thought of St. Vincent:

The rule said that... we have to take the spirit of Jesus Christ. O Savior! Oh, gentlemen! *That is a great affair to put on the spirit of Jesus Christ!* This means that for us to assist people and to serve the church, we must work to imitate the perfection of Jesus Christ and try to achieve it for by ourselves we can do nothing. *You must be filled and enlivened by this spirit of Jesus Christ.* To hear this, you must know that his spirit is within all Christians who live according to the rules of Christianity; and their actions and their works are permeated with the spirit of

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<sup>3</sup> COSTE (English) VP XI, 131.

God, so that God has raised the Company, as you well see, to act likewise. The company has always had a love for the maxims of Christianity and desired to put the spirit of the Gospel, to live and to operate as well as our Lord lived and to put this spirit in all the company and in each missionary, in all his works in general, and each in particular.<sup>4</sup>

The missionary, just as all Christians, reaches the completion of himself depending on whether he remains in relationship to Jesus Christ, since man is not explained by himself and needs to receive the human characteristics of Jesus in order to become himself. The missionary, the man, must put on Christ “voilà a grand affair.” But how?

The world influences the heart of man and is marked by sin and therefore does not have Christ as its proper reference, does not lead to truth: “The doctrine of the world is always flawed;” — St. Vincent repeats with conviction — “The doctrine of the world never gives what it promises.”<sup>5</sup> The possibility for man for self-actualization then consists in making its “contours” set in the humanity of Jesus. This possibility, however, is neither cosmetic nor in the hands of man himself. To put on the spirit of Christ it is not enough to want to or to copy the traits of His human person. It is rather a work from above, St. Vincent teaches. The Holy Spirit creates the link between us and Christ, between our humanity and his, realizing a common objective with him, or as the Pauline image, “writing Christ in our hearts” (cf. 2 Cor 3:3).

But what is this spirit that is widespread? — St. Vincent asks — When one says: The spirit of our Lord is in such person or in such actions, what does this mean? Does the Holy Spirit even give it to them? Yes, the Holy Spirit, as a person, is living in the just and lives in them personally. *When we say that the Holy Spirit works to someone, it means that the Spirit residing in that person, give him the same inclinations and provisions that Jesus Christ had on earth, and they act together; I am not an equal perfection, but dependent upon the divine gifts of the Spirit.*<sup>6</sup>

When a missionary acts in communion with Christ, animated by his Spirit, then it is not just him who acts. He draws energy from grace, without which evangelization and charitable activities would

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<sup>4</sup> COSTE SV XII, 107-108.

<sup>5</sup> COSTE SV XII, 115

<sup>6</sup> COSTE SV XII, 108

be simple activities of man, not supernatural and divine actions. And then the true spiritual commitment of the missionary allows himself to be filled by Christ, allowing the Holy Spirit to transcribe in his freedom the human contours traced in the evangelical maxims. This is the way of becoming according to the truth that is Christ. Similar realization of the supernatural in us needs to be revived if the Company is to come to life again. The risk of being uncritically invaded by a culture of hermeneutics that slips into a docetic or gnostic mentality is not only at the entrance but, in my opinion, widely penetrates the fabric of daily life. This produces a decline of apostolic zeal that is reduced to activism and moralism without soul. Saint Vincent, however, as it appears from the texts, is firmly anchored in a vision of life in which the divine and the supernatural are not vague spiritual thoughts or intentions, but the environment created by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

### 3. A significant text

The most significant text in this regard is the recommendation made by Saint Vincent to Antonio Durand, a young missionary only twenty-seven years old, recently designated as the superior of the Seminary of Agde.

There is certainly nothing human in that, Monsieur; it is not the work of man, it is the work of God, *grande opus*. It is the continuation of the ministry of Jesus Christ; consequently, all human diligence can do here is to spoil everything, if God does not take a hand in it. No, Monsieur, neither philosophy, nor theology, nor discourses can act in souls; *Jesus Christ must be involved in this with us, or we with Him, so that we may speak as He did and in his Spirit, as He himself was in His Father, and preached the doctrine He had taught Him; those are the words of Holy Scripture.*<sup>7</sup>

The missionary and his ministries continue their work of Christ to form apostles and disciples, and therefore must assume the same energy as Jesus. It must be an assimilation into him, so that Jesus is to act in his words and his actions. This realism, typical of the faith operating in the thought of Saint Vincent, is the polar opposite of rationalism, even theological, which burdens our age. For the latter kind of thought, the relationship to Christ is *mediated* by thought

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<sup>7</sup> COSTE (English) VP XI, 310-311.

rather than from conformation to his spirit in life. Not so in Saint Vincent. He describes the task of putting on the spirit of Christ as stripping ourselves, thus making room for our Lord, which is to take the place left free by our ego. This is a profound reformulation of personal conscience, whose self-consciousness is shaped by the presence of Christ in us.

So, Monsieur, you must empty yourself in order to clothe yourself with Jesus Christ. You know that ordinary causes produce the effects of their nature: a sheep produces a sheep etc., and a human another human; likewise, if the man who directs and forms others and speaks to them is animated with only a human spirit, those who see him, listen to him and strive to imitate him will become totally human: no matter what he says and does. He will appear with only the appearance of virtue, and not the substance; he will communicate to them the spirit with which he himself is animated, as we see that masters impress their maxims and ways of acting firmly on the minds of their disciples. On the contrary, if a superior is filled with God and with the maxims of Our Lord, all his words will be efficacious; virtue will go out of him that will edify others, and all his actions will be so many beneficial instructions that will bring about good in those who are aware of them.<sup>8</sup>

In order for this configuration to Christ, involving the human reality of the missionary, to shine out from his being and his doing, he must live in a state of “great communication” with Our Lord, or through that fine-tuning that the Holy Spirit produces in him and that is obtained through prayer.

To reach that point, Monsieur, *Our Lord himself has to imprint firmly on you His stamp and His character.* For, just as we see wild stock, on which a seedling has been grafted, bear the fruits of the nature of this same seedling, we, too, wretched creatures, even though we are only flesh, hay, and thorns, yet if Our Lord imprints His Spirit and grace, *uniting us to Him like the vine branches to the vine stock, we do the same as He did on earth* — I mean we carry out divine actions, and like Saint Paul, filled with this Spirit, birthed children to Our Lord. Something important to which you must faithfully devote yourself is to be *closely united with Our Lord in meditation*; that is the reservoir where you will find the instructions you need to carry out the ministry you are going to have. When you have a doubt, turn to

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, 311.

God and say to Him, 'Lord who are the Father of Lights, teach me what I must do on this occasion.'<sup>9</sup>

The insistence of St. Vincent on the type of relationship to have with Christ is in the *order of personalized spirituality with Him* rather than in imitation of Him, interpreted as meaning a weak copy of a model. And even if, in the language of the time the term "imitation of Christ" was widely used, Vincent prefers the term "follow Christ"<sup>10</sup> and, when using the term "imitation," intends it in the strong sense of unity with Christ and not simply copying or repetition of his way of doing. It is no coincidence in the language of Saint Vincent and is significant that the act of leaving penetrates the "spirit of our Lord," as when, for example, he invites Saint Louise to go to visit the Charity or Father Portail in his preaching, to be in unity of spirit with the Lord:

Go to Communion — he told Saint Louise — the day of your departure to honor the charity of Our Lord, and the same journeys that He undertook with this same charity, and the difficulties, contradictions, weariness, and labours that He endured in them. May He be pleased to bless your journey, giving you His spirit and the grace to act in this same spirit, and to bear your troubles in the way He bore His.<sup>11</sup> I pray Our Lord — he said to Father Portail — to grant you a generous share in His spirit and guidance for that purpose. Courage, just undertake this holy work in that spirit, Monsieur. To that end, honor the prudence, foresight, meekness, and exactitude of Our Lord.<sup>12</sup>

The reference to the spirit of our Lord places the thought of Saint Vincent outside of a moralistic orientation because his spirituality is not focused on repetition of what Jesus was and did, but on entering

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, 311-312.

<sup>10</sup> Lacking more complete research, the term, *suite de Notre Seigneur o de Jesus Christ oppure suivre Notre Seigneur or Jesus Charist o ses maximes*, in the letters of Saint Vincent, is found a number of times, (54 volte) with respect to *imiter* or *ressembler Jesus Christ* (45 volte): COSTE I, 388; II, 781; III, 526, 629; VI 224; V, 615, 633; VII, 38, 112, 169, 317, 573; IX, 88, 171, 177, 213, 314, 345, 436, 440, 485; X, 141, 146-148, 153-155; X, 218, 221, 224, 276, 291, 199, 365, 411; XI, 1, 137, 278; XII, 19, 83, 88, 127, 157, 164, 177, 213, 215-216, 223, 227, 299, 416, 427, 443; XIII, 75. While the term *suivre* refers only to Jesus, the term *imitare* refers to saints, to blood, to examples of nature and of brothers and sisters. (The research has been made on French text. Nota from translator).

<sup>11</sup> COSTE (English) VP I, 65.

<sup>12</sup> COSTE (English) VP I, 178.

into relationship with him in the present and acting in communion with him. The mere repetition would be an abstraction contrary to the spirit of Christ who is Risen, that animates history. Here are some examples:

Who will be able to imitate you (Jesus)? But who could only talk about this virtue (humility)? Lord, *give us the grace to talk about you yourself; words of men strike the ear and cannot penetrate inside*, but one of yours said to the ear of our hearts will make us forgo the empty reputation by which the world loses most of the credit for its actions. The result is many are good in appearance, but they are filled with the smoke of self-esteem, because they have neither weight nor consistency, but dissipate as a vapor.<sup>13</sup> When you see a Sister practicing some virtue and doing it with reference to Our Lord, we say of her that she is living by the Spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>14</sup>

The emphasis on the relationship with Christ avoids therefore, the moralistic reduction (or Pelagian, to use the language of Augustine) in the understanding of the relationship with Jesus Christ, as warned H.U. Von Balthassar: “*We must raise a dam against the tendency to slide into an unrestrainable trend at the idea of following as imitation of a religious moral model.*”<sup>15</sup> It would be insufficient to speak of the imitation of Jesus without first making the spiritual assimilation to his way of being. For Saint Vincent Jesus is not a model, but a living Presence, a person with whom to enter into this relationship in the present. So the relationship with Christ, — and for Saint Vincent is always an emotional relationship — is a personal one, so that “he (Jesus) gives us his character and... infuses the vigor of his spirit.”

#### **4. Entering into relationship with Christ through prayer, the source of the mission**

In the assimilation of the spirit of Christ we find the essential call of prayer. In prayer, in fact, the missionary, bringing the attention of the heart to the mysteries of Jesus’ life, remains moved by the benevolence of God to free the creature and becomes receptive of his grace. When the prayer is done well — not so much in search of beautiful thoughts or reasoning, but in establishing an emotional

<sup>13</sup> COSTE SC XII, 201.

<sup>14</sup> COSTE (English) VP X, 434.

<sup>15</sup> H.U. VON BALTHASSAR, *Gloria*, VII, *Nuovo Patto*, p. 175.

relationship with the Lord's presence<sup>16</sup> — the missionary is led to transform his own attitudes and works, because human nature is brought to imitate what it sees and admires. Thus the exchange between us and Jesus, grace with which we are clothed in Him, leaving him penetrates us. Our thoughts are *His* thoughts. Our activities and our affections are illuminated by Him and transfigured in Him. In fact what we think or say or do, is nothing but a "little fire." Where there is the spirit of our Lord everything becomes bright as the sunlight, which not only illuminates but is also fruitful and transforming.

Notice the difference there is between the light of the fire and that of the sun: during the night our fire gives us light, and by means of its glow we see things, but only dimly, perceiving only the surface, and this glow goes no further. The sun, however, fills and vivifies everything by his light; it does not reveal only the exterior of things but, by some secret power, penetrates within, causing them to act, even making them fruitful and fertile, according to the characteristics of their nature. Now, the thoughts and reflections that come from our understanding are only sparks that show just a little of the outside of objects and produce nothing more; but the light of grace, which the Sun of Justice spreads in our souls, reveals and penetrates to the very depths and most intimate part of our heart, which they stir up and prompt to produce marvellous things. So then we have to ask God to be Himself the one to enlighten and inspire us with what is pleasing to Him. All those lofty, much sought-after considerations are not meditation; rather they are sometimes offshoots of pride; and it is the same for those who dwell on them and take pleasure in them, like a preacher who shows off in his fine discourses and becomes self-satisfied in seeing his audience pleased with what he churns out for them. In that, it would be obvious that it is not the Holy Spirit but rather the spirit of arrogance enlightening his understanding and producing all those beautiful thoughts, or to put in better, it would be the devil exciting him and causing him to speak like that.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> "My brothers, I remark that, in all prayers which you make, each tries hard to bring a quantity of reasons and reasons on reasons, it attracts attention. But you do not have affections. Reasoning is something, but it is still not enough; something else is needed: the will has to act, and not only understanding, because all our reasons are without fruit if we do not have affections": COSTE (English) VP I, 183-184; cf. COSTE (English) VP I, 92.

<sup>17</sup> COSTE (English) VP XI, 77.

The commitment to assimilation in Christ in prayer reaches its full results in the new self-awareness of the missionary who learns to *live in relationship with Christ* according to the expression of Gal 2:20, which is particularly dear to the heart of Saint Vincent: “*It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*”<sup>18</sup>

We are your children, who throw ourselves into your arms to emulate your practices; give us your grace. As we cannot do it of ourselves, it is you that we ask, it is from you that we hope for it, but with confidence, and a great desire to follow you. O Lord, please give this spirit to the company that works to be still more pleasing to your eyes, you fill it to become more like you, and this affection already makes it live your life, so that everyone can say with Saint Paul: *I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me* (Gal 2:20). O blessed Company! O bless us all! If we strive for it it will inevitably occur. Oh! What a delight to verify in us these words: *I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me!* We no longer live a human life, we live a divine life, and we will live, my brothers, if our hearts and our actions are filled with the intention to do the will of God. But if there are those who can say that they are already there, as it is true, others may say, like me: “Am I not unhappy to see my brothers live the life of Jesus Christ, and be pleasing to the eyes of his eternal Father, and I live in a sensual and animal life, and deserve to be dismissed from their conversation as the object of the displeasure of God.” May it please His goodness that this feeling enters into the soul, as ashamed of our cowardice, we redouble our steps to reach the most advanced way of perfection! God we do this through your grace!<sup>19</sup>

From the existential reference to Christ, life draws its proper contours. The criteria of thought and action, sensitivity, and opinion about behavior, receive the imprint of communion with Christ. This is a global relationship, inclusive, able to interpret all aspects of existence. Starting from this spiritual shrine of human interiority the mission is born and renewed.

It should be noted that our time no longer agrees with the Christian event on the grounds of the faith tradition because it has lost the sense of history, having cut bridges with the past. Nor is it any longer cause for adherence to Christianity, theory or a detailed and complete concept of life. What still affects humans of our time is

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<sup>18</sup> COSTE (English) VP X, 274; XII, 165, 225.

<sup>19</sup> COSTE SV XII, 164-165.

the encounter with a certain type of human presence, full of message and meaning: a person who has become fully “human” thanks to the mysterious reality of the Lord in his conscience. These are the people “clothed in Christ,” the true source of evangelization.

## 5. The love of the Father: contained in the spirit of Christ

The figure of the missionary then assumes the role of disciple of Christ, whose identity consists in being *connected* to Christ in an existential way. The formula of Vincentian thought is simple: we can act like Jesus if we enter into His spirit.

*Let us enter His spirit (Our Lord's) to come into its operations.*

This is not just to do good, it must be done according to the example of Our Lord.... This is not to fast, to make the rules, to care for God; it is necessary to do it according to his spirit, ie with perfection, and with the purpose and circumstances that he himself has made. Prudence consists in judging and acting as the eternal Wisdom judged and acted.<sup>20</sup>

But having said that, everything has not been said, as we need to understand in what the spirit of Christ consists. Here Saint Vincent points out that Jesus has transferred his obedient humanity and transcended the divine condition of “being the Son of the Father.” So Jesus during his earthly life, shows again that the human is fulfilled in developing a relationship of dependency with the free fatherhood of God. It must be said that in his preaching, Jesus is very intent on showing how man fulfils himself through a relationship with the source of being; a relationship that cannot be of fear, but of love, of belonging that is not oppressive but free. Love binds Jesus to the Father and we are pulled into this love of God the Father who as Saint Vincent says, does not neglect even a microscopic animal (“*a ciron*”)<sup>21</sup> so concerned is he about all his creation, and us in the first place. This is the heart of the humanity of Christ, the point of reference on which we try to conduct our lives.

But what is the spirit of our Lord? It is a spirit of perfect charity, filled with a wonderful esteem of divinity and with an infinite desire to honor it with dignity, knowledge of the Father, to admire and exalt him continuously.... Is there a more highly regarded one than the Son, who is equal to the Father and yet

<sup>20</sup> COSTE SV XII, 179.

<sup>21</sup> COSTE SV XII, 111.

recognizes the Father as the author and sole principle of all the good that is in him? And his love, what was it? Oh! What love! O my Savior, what love have you not brought to your Father! Could it have been greater, my brothers, than to be shattered for him? For St. Paul, speaking of the birth of the Son of God on earth, said he was devastated. In truth, what could be greater than dying for love in the manner he died?... His humiliation was for love, his work was for love, his sufferings were for love, his prayers were for love, and all his internal and external works were only repeated acts of his love. His love gave him a great contempt for the world, disregard for the spirit of the world, contempt of property, contempt and disregard for pleasures and honours. *This is a description of the spirit of our Lord, which we must bear, which is, in a word, always to have a great esteem and a great love for God.*<sup>22</sup>

To “put on Jesus then” means to make our humanity similar to his humanity, living in accordance with the Father in loving dependence. In his passionate belonging to the Father, in fact, Jesus also shows intimate human dignity. If human beings are cared for in a relationship of love with which the Father loves him, then his person is founded on and will live in an attitude of deep and deep-felt gratitude. He will recognize all the things that happen as a sign of God’s love and, above all, will show it to the poor in his ministry.

## 6. Assimilation of the spirit of Jesus in the practice of virtue

The assimilation of the humanity of Christ which is fully conformed to the Father, comes not only through contemplation and prayer but also through the practice of the virtues that Jesus showed in his humanity.

... the esteem and love of God, conformity to his holy will, and contempt of the world and ourselves, that we must imitate in Jesus Christ to have his spirit could not be better shown than by the practice of virtues that have shown out in particular in our Lord living on earth, namely those included in its maxims, in its poverty, chastity and obedience, in its charity to the sick, and so on. so that if we are to imitate our Lord in the practice of all this, whether other rules cover it, we must hope *that we will bear his spirit.*<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> COSTE SV XII, 109.

<sup>23</sup> COSTE SV XII, 112.

This is a defining feature of the concrete guidance of the doctrine of Saint Vincent. The gospel virtues are the works that Jesus fulfilled and that the missionary is called to do, for by unity *with* Christ he acts *as* Christ. The imitation is a consequence of having personalized his interior life with Jesus. So that the missionary lives in remembrance of and in company with Christ, it is necessary, first of all, that he strip himself. This thought of Saint Vincent is mandatory. Unless there is an emptiness in oneself, God cannot enter in: "As soon as we empty ourselves, God will fill us with Himself, for he cannot endure emptiness."<sup>24</sup>

The reason for the emptiness is not in itself ascetic in nature, but Christological<sup>25</sup> in nature, namely it draws its reason from the fact that His Son, coming into the world has entered a condition of *kenosis*, self-renunciation of His divine condition. This is the way of being that man is called to model himself on. The entry of the eternal Word of God into human frailty, temporality, decline and death leads the believer to understand that the first step to take is to imitate the Lord in this descent. If he does not enter into this situation, this man has the illusion of being able to stand before God on an equal footing, in a pharisaical manner while he is indebted to Him for everything. It was not necessary that Jesus choose the human form in order to come into the world; the choice and the practice is to trace out for man the path to enter into the relationship with God. That comes not by the efforts of an ascetic commitment that deceives one so that one can put himself before God with the accounts equal, but in the condition of those offered by poverty to the love of the Father who gave His Son for us. Hence the importance in the thought of Saint Vincent to participate in humility in the action of the Spirit, that is to be clothed in Christ through the virtue of humility, which Saint Vincent considered the cornerstone of all virtues.<sup>26</sup>

He gives us the grace to participate in his humility and to come to the practice of it, like him, which was by continually exercising it. Happy would we be if we could each say what St. Paul said of Our Lord humiliated: *Humiliavit semetipsum, formam servi accipiens!* (LAN 2, 8) Eternal Father, who wanted your son to be clothed in our flesh, to be like us *in similitudi-*

<sup>24</sup> COSTE (English) VP XI, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. COSTE SV XII, 199-201.

<sup>26</sup> "... humility. Eh! My God! my brothers, why shall we not put it first, but always first, in our heart and in our examens, knowing *that it is the foundation of all other virtues?*" COSTE SV XII, 205.

*nem hominum factus and habitu inventus ut homo (LAN 2, 7) clothe us in his humility, so that we are like him.*<sup>27</sup>

The serene awareness of our poverty and the courage to imitate Jesus in the humiliations of life attract the grace of God, as the valleys “which attracts to them all the essence of the mountains.”<sup>28</sup> We must be aware of this condition: “We are beggars; let us become such towards God. We are poor and weak, we need God everywhere.”<sup>29</sup> “We must stand before God as a poor man who discovers his ulcer, and who, by this means entices the passerby more powerfully to be good to him than if he argued with him of his necessity.”<sup>30</sup> The awareness of their poverty is the key that opens the heart of God. The evangelical condition to which Jesus refers adults who want to enter the Kingdom: in their calls “to assume — as notes H.U. Von Balthassar — improbable readiness to receive their children, whose state lies with those who give themselves for love.”<sup>31</sup>

Humility is a state that predisposes one to the achievement of union with Christ. However, its implementation asks one to be a little rough with oneself. And here Saint Vincent notes that it is necessary to pass through the acceptance of humiliation. And so we must combine humility with mortification. Man carries within himself the passions that lead him to put himself at the center of his feelings, his thinking and his action. To achieve this it is necessary to give oneself over to the virtues which bring about that lowering: mortification, abasement, humiliation. St. Vincent refers to this several times, but expresses it in a particularly effective way in a conference on mortification:

Saint Paul said that through baptism we are clothed in Jesus Christ: You who are baptized in Jesus Christ, you are bearing Jesus Christ; *quicumque in Christo baptizati estis, Christum induistis* (Gal 3:26). What do we do when we create in us mortification, patience, humility, and so on? We will establish Jesus Christ in us, and those who work in all the Christian virtues can say, as St. Paul: *Vivo ego, not jam ego, vivit vero in me Christus* (Gal 2:20), which is no longer I who live but Jesus Christ is living in me.

Please God give us the grace to make us like a good winegrower who carries a knife with which he cuts everything he finds

<sup>27</sup> COSTE SV XII, 200-201.

<sup>28</sup> COSTE (English) VP XI, 2.

<sup>29</sup> COSTE SV XII, 145.

<sup>30</sup> COSTE (English) VP IV, 390.

<sup>31</sup> H.U. VON BALTHASSAR, *Gloria*, VII *Nuovo Patto*, p. 471.

detrimental to his vineyard! And because the vine buds more than he wants and it buds uselessly, he always has the knife ready at hand to remove all these superfluities as soon as they are seen, so that the strong sap of the vine climbs to all the branches which bear the fruit. So we must immediately *cut with the knife of mortification bad products of a spoiled nature*, which never tires of pushing branches of its corruption; so it is with Jesus Christ, who is compared to the vine and we are compared to the branches, we grow extensively in the practice of holy virtues.

This man is a good winegrower, because he always works on his grapevines; and we will be as good disciples, if we mortify our senses continually, if we work to suppress our passions, to submit our judgement, to regulate our will and all this in ways that we have said. *We will then have the consolation to say: I remain of the old Adam but I do my best to make myself something new.*<sup>32</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

The great number of texts cited shows that the metaphor of “putting on Christ” refers to a *singular Christological concentration* in the thought and in the spiritual practice of Saint Vincent. And this brings up, in a proper hermeneutics of his thought, the need for faith in Christ as energy that moves the missionary in the mission and in charity.

The reference to faith compels a renunciation of a weak interpretation of the relationship with Christ, as if it were simply reproducing a copy. For Saint Vincent, however, the relationship to Christ is the principle of *personalization of the human missionary* in the supernatural through the action of the Spirit. This reference inclines us to look at the interpretation in ontological order as foundation where the moral order of the subject must obey.

This introduces a critical thinking of our time posited on the idea that the subject bears in itself a guarantee of the truth of its effectiveness. With neither faith nor charity he would conform himself to the source: the charity in fact if not gushing out by a reference to Christ would remain a good, a commendable action, the object of admiration, but it would hardly have the strength to be a *principle of life*. It cannot invoke the formula that had much favor

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<sup>32</sup> COSTE SV XII, 224-225; cf. COSTE SV XI, 94-95.

in the Christian sphere: “Love alone is credible.”<sup>33</sup> It is not decisive. It is just introductory. It expresses the ineffectiveness of all that remains outside of love, but cannot guarantee the effectiveness of love. Charity to the brothers must be married to the love of Christ, otherwise it dries up. And also it is necessary to draw on faith in Christ in order to reproduce his love in the evangelization of the poor.

Translation: Sister MARY HALE, D.C.

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<sup>33</sup> Title of the volume: *Love Alone is Credible*; by H.U. VON BALTHASSAR, Ed. Seuil, 1965.

# The Three Evangelical Counsels in the Common Rules

by Jaime Corera Andía, C.M.

## *The state of the issue*

The word “vows” is never mentioned in the text of the Common Rules (CR). This omission is deliberate, simply because, as St. Vincent says, “communities like ours never mention them in their common rules.”<sup>1</sup> The vows and their juridical aspects, particularly the vow of poverty, are treated thoroughly in earlier documents by the pontifical authority, the Diocese of Paris, or those of the Congregation of the Mission.

This makes one characteristic about the text of the CR very clear. They are not a juridical document, but above all, they are written as a manual that defines the spiritual character of the Congregation, so to speak. While a number of the chapters are of a disciplinary style, there is no juridical character in any of the norms.

The treatment of poverty, chastity, and obedience in the CR, is predominately spiritual-ascetical but in no way juridical, an aspect that would be inevitable if the CR were to treat the vows. For this reason, although they do not employ the term anywhere, the CR use the title of “the evangelical counsels” and not the three “vows” which are used in the monastic tradition and that of religious congregations in the Catholic Church.

The CR never mention *stability*, as a vow nor as a counsel, although St. Vincent, who spoke many times to his missionaries, without a doubt saw that the CR are written for men who remain in the CM for life in response to the call of God, a call which is not temporal, but rather, of a stable or permanent character.

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<sup>1</sup> SV XII, 367.

### ***The structure of Chapters III, IV, and V***

These three chapters that deal with the Evangelical Counsels have the same structure as is found elsewhere, except for chapter II. Here the title “Gospel teaching” is used and in practically all 18 paragraphs where Jesus Christ is evoked. All of the other chapters propose Jesus Christ as the model for the themes treated in the first paragraph, and then proceed to unpack different aspects of the content in the remaining paragraphs of each chapter.

This is done as well in Chapters III, IV and V that deal with poverty, chastity and obedience. Chapter III is made up of 9 paragraphs, which propose Jesus Christ in the example of poverty; Chapter IV presents Jesus Christ in 1° as our model of chastity, with four paragraphs that follow, but chapter V, the longest of the three chapters, presents Jesus Christ as the model of obedience followed by 15 paragraphs.

The structure of the chapters, which we can call “internal,” is similar and simple in nature. By internal structure we find the content in the three chapters as follows:

#### **Jesus Christ model of the missionary**

- Of poverty: 1 paragraph (chapter 3, 1°)
- Of chastity: 1 paragraph (chapter 4, 1°)
- Of obedience: 1 paragraph (chapter 5, 1°)

#### **Relating the Counsels to the Mission**

- Poverty: 1, 2
- Chastity: 1, 4
- Obedience: 1

#### **Counsels and Common Life**

- Poverty: 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
- Chastity: 4
- Obedience: 5, 6, 8, 9, 13

(All of the paragraphs in chapter V refer to common life, but always through intervention of the superior. The same could be said of the paragraphs that deal with poverty, except 7° of chapter III)

#### **Ascetic Content**

- Poverty: 1, 2, 7, 10
- Chastity: 1, 2, 3, 5
- Obedience: none (but see the note at the end of this section)

**“Disciplinary” Content**

- Poverty: 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9
- Chastity: 4 (?)
- Obedience: all paragraphs<sup>2</sup>

(The 16 paragraphs on obedience could also have been included in the previous section on asceticism, as a great ascetic capacity is required to live the spiritual life as described in the paragraphs on discipline. This pertains to the references on discipline in the other 2 chapters as well. When we speak of “content” or “style” or “character” of discipline we are referring to the style as written in the concrete paragraph, not the intention of the editor, which of course he had in mind. Apart from the disciplinary aspect of content is a true sense of the virtue of obedience. However, beginning with the rules of Pacomio, it is not always easy to discover the “spiritual” intention of the different norms which are written behind the façade of discipline. The same could be said of some of the norms of the CR. Take, for example, (perhaps the extreme situation) how it was considered very important to the vow of obedience in following Christ for an assistant brother to request permission of the Superior General to learn to read and write. This surprising norm is even more so when one considers that the Superior General who wrote it held the brothers in very high esteem, to the point as to have them as his personal secretaries. Nevertheless, in the past, this norm of the CR was read over and over for centuries, creating a less than flattering vision commonly held about brothers which was not that of our founder, expressed clearly in the passage cited in note 2)

This simple classification of content within the internal structure of the CR is helpful to highlight some interesting facts:

- Explicit references of the content to the gospel and following-imitating Christ are infrequent in the chapters about the evangelical counsels (in reality they are very rare in all of the other chapters, except in chapter II, as was said above).
- Also rarely mentioned is the explicit relationship between the counsels and the missionary vocation.
- At first glance, numerous references of the relationship between the counsels and common life stand out. This impression is rather deceiving. However, in almost all of the paragraphs that mention some aspect of common life in relationship to a specific counsel, they are made to call upon the intervention of the superior (as was referred to above) and not specifically to address common life.
- That content which we have classified as ascetic — chapter IV, which deals with chastity — is the richest, with four of the five paragraphs dedicated to it.

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<sup>2</sup> SV III, 319; SV XI, 109.

- The chapter on obedience does not have any paragraphs which could be said to be purely ascetic. While all of the paragraphs in this chapter are of a highly ascetic quality, as stated above, they appear as disciplinary norms in the CR, structured as disciplinary norms. This means a member of the CM could follow most of the norms found in this chapter and never really have a true “spirit” of obedience; it would be sufficient to be a disciplined man. Discipline, as such, is not to be scorned in any way, but it lacks the same inspiring principles or the same demands as that of the virtue of obedience.
- Disciplinary content, which is found rarely if ever in the chapter on chastity, is found predominately in those chapters which refer to poverty and obedience.

What is the cause of this apparent anomaly? The overly clear and almost scathing predominance of the disciplinary norms, on this theme called the evangelical counsels, in the Rules written by a profoundly spiritual man as Vincent de Paul? This question brings up a problem which has been known for many years, that is, the dependence of these Rules on previous religious institutions.

### ***The sources of inspiration of the CR of the Congregation of the Mission***

So as to better understand what is about to be said, we will affirm from the beginning that the CR of the Congregation of the Mission could only have been written by a man such as Vincent de Paul (though it be told that after many years of collaboration with many members of his congregation).<sup>3</sup> This means that the CR taken together reflect very well the true spiritual style of their author. Although it will be easy to recognize some of the sources that inspired their writing, including in some cases even the literary wording, the final product as a whole belongs entirely to him. So much so that Vincent de Paul could say, in spite of what will be said later, that “our Rules are not taken from any order in the Church.”<sup>4</sup>

It is relatively easy to recognize the dependence of some of these sources, most especially in the field of the norms which are of a disciplinary character. Coste has pointed out one concrete source: the

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<sup>3</sup> SV II, 138; SV VI, 366; SV XIII, 291; SV XIII, 356.

<sup>4</sup> SV XII, 373.

Rules that St. Ignatius gave to the Society of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> Here the dependencies are numerous, especially those which refer to obedience. What Coste did not realize is that many of the norms in the SJ are also taken from previous Rules,<sup>6</sup> making it difficult to ascertain the exact source from which Vincent borrowed our very own.

In the oldest monastic Rule that is known, that of Saint Pacomio, founder of the Cenobitic life, ideas and norms are found that have inspired a variety of Rules for centuries (those of St. Basil, St. Benedict...) to the point of not knowing which filters have led to the CR of the Congregation of the Mission. We can point out some ideas in the Rule of St. Pacomio which appear in our Common Rules. Among the evangelical counsels, we can point out those which refer to poverty and obedience, which by their nature easily lend to norms which are expressed as the disciplinary type as needed in the every day living out of common life:

- The abbot is the only distributor of necessary things.
- One can not own anything without the permission of the abbot.
- Conform yourself to what you have been given; do not give anything away without permission.
- Do not lock your cell door.
- Do not move anything from one house to another without permission.
- Only the Superior can reprimand somebody.
- Do not enter the work area of another without permission.
- Do not eat outside of the indicated schedule without permission.
- Do not enter the room of another without knocking.<sup>7</sup>

Aside from the rules above, St. Vincent also availed himself of other sources, not as easy to identify, except in the case of the ideas taken from the Rule of Perfection of St. Benit of Canfield, making his own changes and adaptations,<sup>8</sup> regarding the diverse aspects of

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<sup>5</sup> P. COSTE, *Le Grand Saint de Grand Siècle*, Paris, 1932, t. II, p. 13; *The Great Saint of the Great Century*, CEME, Salamanca, 1990, vol. II, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Obras completas de san Ignacio de Loyola*, BAC, Madrid, 1952, p. 566.

<sup>7</sup> The rule of St. Pacomio can be found easily on the internet through a good search engine. It is enough to write in the search word "Rule of St. Pacomio." The rule has four parts. All of the above is found in the first part.

<sup>8</sup> The author who has explained this complex relationship between Canfield's book and the vision of St. Vincent is A. ORCAJO in *Espiritualidad y selección de escritos*, BAC, Madrid, pp. 102-104.

following the will of God. See chapter II and III in the CR for some of the ideas that are known with surety to have been inspired by reading the book of Canfield, which Vincent did assiduously for many years.<sup>9</sup>

### *The beginning of interpreting the 3 evangelical counsels*

Before going into detail of the 3 counsels, such as in the last paragraph on the teachings of Jesus Christ written in chapter II, the CR mention for the first time the 3 counsels, describing them as “weapons” which Christ used to complete his mission on earth (*reestablish the reign of his Father*). These same weapons are to be employed by the missionary today to fulfill the same mission.

This idea is key to understanding the true place that the evangelical councils have in the vision of St. Vincent and the spirituality which was inspired by him. In that vision the evangelical counsels are not mainly a way to grow in holiness, nor are they a way to imitate-follow Jesus Christ, both of which have been a part of the long tradition of religious orders whose fundamentals legitimate a life of the evangelic counsels. Although Vincent de Paul clearly admitted both ideas in his vision of the counsels-vows, he does not consider them as decisive or definitive for his own vision. In the counsels-vows there exists a value that is predominately functional or instrumental, that is, they are ordered to an end, which is to fulfill the same mission as that of Jesus Christ. Aided by the evangelical counsels, the Congregation of the Mission seeks to imitate Jesus Christ the missionary. The mission of Jesus Christ is fulfilled with the same arms which Jesus Christ used: poverty, chastity, and obedience.<sup>10</sup>

It is necessary to read all of paragraph 18 of chapter II before reading the next 3 chapters, and to read it as the key to understanding them well. Not to do so is to run the risk of having a vision of these three which belongs to religious orders that considers the counsels above all as the means for personal sanctification. Without excluding this aspect, but also without considering it as fundamental, the vision which St. Vincent lays out in the CR and in his teaching of the evangelical counsels and the vows are above all the means to fulfill the very mission of the Congregation: My Savior,

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<sup>9</sup> The ideas closer to those expressions of St. Vincent used in the CR and conferences are found in chapters 5, 6, and 8 of the first part of the work cited of Canfield. *La Règle de perfection* published in Paris in 1609, and the latin version in 1610, also in Paris. It was later reedited many times.

<sup>10</sup> SV XII, 376.

you have waited 1600 years to create a Company who has for its express profession to continue the mission that the Father had entrusted to you here on earth, using the same means that you used, giving yourself to: poverty, chastity, and obedience.

This matter has been the frequent cause of confusion in the CM regarding the fundamental theme of our spirituality. The reader who seeks inspiration from the CR as to how to apply the counsels to his own life but limits his reading to the very wording of the CR of these 3 chapters, will be rather confused in as much as any clear reference between the counsels and the mission of his life. That necessary reference is only found in paragraph 18 of the previous chapter, as we have said, a paragraph outside of the chapters that expressly treat the evangelical counsels.

But the main reason for the confusion about the counsels-vows in the Congregation of the Mission, which has often been taught to younger generations, is due to the uncritical assimilation of ideas written by religious about their own vision of the consecrated life. Their vision is not the same as the vision of St. Vincent nor should it be that which belongs to any congregation, masculine nor feminine founded by St. Vincent de Paul.

### *Analysis of each of the 3 Counsels*

#### **POVERTY**

The first paragraph in chapter III expounds, as said above, on the example of the poverty of Jesus Christ, namely, that none of his closest disciples owned any personal property, and as such, were free from the desire of riches, a stumbling block for everyone. Members of the Congregation of the Mission, in their imitation of Jesus Christ, should cultivate the virtue of poverty that is to be an inexpugnable bulwark to guarantee their perpetual conservation.

However, in spite of what this paragraph appears to say, poverty in the Congregation of the Mission has never been constituted in such a way that its members could not own personal property. In fact there is one whole Statute about Poverty with a pontifical referendum which expressly permits ownership, although it is true that it places drastic restrictions on our possible uses of such properties. Here the kind of poverty that St. Vincent wished was not so much to own nothing, as was the case of Jesus Christ, but to submit all of one's possessions to a detailed discipline of permission that legitimize their spiritual use.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> SV XIII, 407.

We believe that without doing injustice, it can be affirmed that in the history of the Congregation of the Mission, the form of poverty defined in the Statute has been used with relative ease against the intention of the founder<sup>12</sup> by regular and extended practices, even with all the necessary permissions yet where both the spirit and poverty itself are clearly absent. For the reader who perhaps is upset by what we are saying or to whom such claim seems unjust, or who refuses to believe, or thinks that such situations of this kind are generalized, we recommend that the decrees of the general assemblies and the circulars of the superiors general of the XVIII and XIX centuries be read. Here the reader will find this theme taken up more than any other throughout the two centuries, and reports of constant deficiencies in living the vow of poverty, in particular in regard to the use of personal goods.

This fact presents a problem that the Congregation of the Mission will have to face one day. One claim more or less generalized against the Fundamental Statute of Poverty is that the true sense or meaning of poverty is being lost or perhaps is already lost, or that the demands of the Statute have become incompatible with the realities of modern society. In the case that the meaning of poverty has been lost, recognition is required that the Statute must be profoundly revised so that maintaining the true spirit of poverty and the profound intention of St. Vincent with all of its demands not be rendered a practical impossibility.

In light of what has been said above about the counsels as the means for the mission, it is quite the paradox that paragraph 2 of chapter III is formulated in a way that seems to say the contrary, affirming that it is precisely the very style of the ministries of the Congregation that keep it from practicing true poverty.

In spite of this paradox, the affirmation of St. Vincent is inserted into the long history of experience of religious orders, which have encountered the same problem, as seen in a paradigmatic way in the life of St. Francis of Assisi and the order he founded. To live in common, while at the same time, lack all possessions seems to be mutually exclusive. There have been many attempts to resolve this apparent paradox (follow Jesus Christ in his poverty and at the same time have personal property) in the same way that St. Vincent suggests: "Observe the Lord's poverty of spirit affectively, and as far

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<sup>12</sup> "The use of those goods (personal property) is not for the individual; he has no need of them, as the Company cares for those needs", SV XII, 383; "Although some may have possessions, they are not for personal use, although they continue to be the owners of their funds", SV XI, 224.

as possible effectively as well” or rather, appeal to the poverty of spirit while living very soberly. These are the keys to resolving the problem. Nevertheless, in the history of religious orders, frequently when that desire to appeal to the “spirit” has been tested, it has not been sufficient to keep communities away from riches and the accumulation of goods, and only sparingly does the spirit of Jesus Christ, the very one of whom it is said that we want to imitate in his poverty, shine through.

Number three contains a definition of poverty common in all kinds of community life in the church at the time, a definition traditionally also, in the Common Rules; based on the example of the first Christian community of Jerusalem: “*As with the first Christians, all things will be in common for us.*”

The eight paragraphs which comprise the rest of chapter III expressly point to St. Vincent, as in paragraph 2, that missionaries live poverty both affectively and effectively. This is their intention. As pointed out above, the eight paragraphs are more disciplinary in nature than they are spiritual.

## **CHASTITY**

Missionary chastity is also based, as the first paragraph states, on the example of the chastity of Jesus Christ. Two aspects that are pointed out as exemplar from the chaste life of Jesus Christ are that he was born of a virgin mother and that he was never accused of any vices to the contrary. This, however, is all that the CR say about the chastity of Jesus Christ as an example for the missionary, who should be warned, will encounter threats to his chastity precisely due to his missionary work.

All that follows in the remaining 4 paragraphs of chapter IV pertain to what the Constitutions classify as an “asceticism supported by the experience of the Church” (Const. n. 30), a discreet way of referring to what St. Vincent and many of his predecessors, beginning with Pacomio, have not failed to mention in a direct and frank way (not unlike in many cases St. Jerome, in a markedly rude manner),<sup>13</sup> a way that perhaps may seem crude to some readers today: care in dealing with women, strict control over the senses, due care to avoid the excesses of food and drink, care to make sure that nobody in the Congregation be accused of any contrary vices, to pay

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<sup>13</sup> The formation plan proposed for a life of virginity by St. Jerome for the virgin Eustoquio includes exhortations of chastity with precise details that “would make a legionnaire blush”; in *Histoire de la spiritualité chrétienne*, by LOUIS BOUYER and other authors, Aubier, Paris, 1966, vol. I, p. 550.

close attention so as to avoid dangerous temptations against chastity (various examples of modesty should be noted here, which are given in chapter VII, for example paragraphs 3, 6 and 7).

Later we will speak again about how to better understand the thinking of St. Vincent regarding the evangelical counsels, without limiting our thinking to what is written in the CR. Here it is necessary to read some of his conferences and a good number of his letters. As they pertain to chastity, there are many ideas that seem to have nothing in common with chapter IV of the CR. As was said earlier, what the CR say about chastity as a whole serve to inspire members of the CM only minimally, if not poorly. More importantly, this theme does not expressly look at chastity in regard to the missionary and his mission, except to warn him, with certain realism, that, as was noted above, dedication to the mission can create potential problems with regard to living chastely. Such a lack of missionary perspective could cause a wary missionary to come to think that chastity is merely a personal matter, only a question of morals and conscience that has little to do with his missionary vocation.

## **OBEDIENCE**

This chapter also comes up short in as much as offering an inspiring vision in regard to the obedience of Jesus Christ. Paragraph 1 of Chapter V points out Jesus' obedience to his parents and to those both good and bad in authority. Nothing is said here of Jesus Christ's obedience to the Father, which in reality is the fundamental cause of human redemption (see Hebrews 10:5-10) and the ultimate model of all obedience inspired by Jesus Christ.

The same paragraph enumerates the different persons to whom a missionary owes his obedience, all of whom in this case, belong to the ecclesiastic hierarchy. Note that, except for the Pope, the vow of obedience that the missionary makes does not oblige him to any of the persons cited: bishops, pastors. This is another sign that Vincent de Paul is not thinking of the vows when writing these 3 chapters, as the missionary does not profess vows of obedience to bishops and pastors. Obedience to these persons is purely of an evangelical character, not professed in any vow expressly or silently.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 of chapter V list persons in the Congregation whom the missionary is to obey as well as the kind of obedience owed to each. Paragraph 2 has a series of expressions (as the norm of obedience to the bell in paragraph 3) which can be found one by one in many of the previous Rules of St. Vincent:

- A kind of blind obedience.
- Submission to good judgment.
- Believe that what the superior orders is always best.
- Surrender to the decisions of the superior as a file in the hands of a carpenter.

All of these different ways of speaking about obedience have been simply put aside in the actual Constitutions. Without a doubt the reason has to do with what the Conciliar document about the renewal of religious life set forth — “adapt the old rules to the true physical and psychological conditions of the members,” of the religious institutes (*Perfectae caritatis*, n. 3). One must sincerely admit that certain ways of speaking in the past are no longer compatible for a (healthy) perception today. Not that today what is desired is an obedience which is more comfortable or less demanding than in the past. (See what will be suggested about a way to present the Constitutions and the theme of the evangelical counsels).

Again it is important to point out how other teachings of St. Vincent in both conferences and letters, as well as his manner of exercising authority and demanding obedience complete, often correcting what the CR say. So much so that by reading only chapter V one would expect a very deficient image, a false one at that, as to how Vincent de Paul expected his missionaries to practice obedience. Unfortunately, this has not been kept in mind throughout the history of the Congregation of the Mission. Teaching obedience to younger generations, as well as the exercise of authority, has been based solely on what is written in chapter V of the CR.

We cannot but point out one more time that the rest of chapter V taken together presents an excessively disciplinary and detailed image of obedience in the Congregation. Furthermore, obedience is only spoken about as it pertains to those who lack authority. The hypothetic reader who lacks caution could get the impression that according to the CR persons with authority in the Congregation of the Mission are above the law and not subject to common obedience.

## **STABILITY**

As was pointed out above, stability is not expressly mentioned in the CR, although it is supposed. As was mentioned above, St. Vincent spoke frequently about stability, never thinking of it in a static way, such as “to be” in the Congregation of the Mission, but rather with a more dynamic meaning to persevere all of one’s life in the Congregation dedicated to the end of following Jesus Christ in the evangelization of the poor and its related works. In the footnote we

find a reference that helps to make clear this point.<sup>14</sup> Note that the conference cited in the note takes place early after our foundation, and Vincent de Paul indicates that from the beginning he was clear about what he referred to as stability of the missionary.

### ***Expanding the content of the CR***

It is well known, and has been for a long time, that for many years Vincent de Paul went back and forth and often changed his mind about the vows. To try to better understand the matter, it is important not to look only at a few isolated statements about them, or they could be grossly misunderstood. For a clear understanding of the vows it is necessary to be attentive to this matter. For example, late in his life Vincent employs expressions which had for centuries been used by religious. For example, a little less than a year before he died, he speaks of the vows in the Congregation as “a new baptism”<sup>15</sup> or “perfect holocaust.”<sup>16</sup>

However, one should not let these expressions lead to the conclusion that Vincent had in mind for us a vision like that of religious. That was not “en absolute” and within the same conference cited in two previous footnotes, other dominant expressions were used to reflect the character of the functional-instrumental “arms” which we see when studying the evangelical counsels in the CR. For example, “Have we renounced everything to *be missionaries*?”<sup>17</sup> Or also “we are consecrated to *continue the mission* of his Son and the apostles.”<sup>18</sup> In this way his vision can be summarized saying that, “although we have vows, the Congregation of the Mission is not a religion.”<sup>19</sup>

It is this very point that Vincent de Paul has the conviction that the vows-counsels of the Congregation are the arms which have a predominately functional character, which he said not only help us to fight against vices that are within us (affirmation of course of an aspect that is shared by religious) but that because of them we are better able to combat the same vices in others,<sup>20</sup> an expression which leaves no doubt about the real vision that Vincent de Paul had about

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<sup>14</sup> SV XI, 107-109.

<sup>15</sup> SV XII, 371.

<sup>16</sup> SV XII, 371.

<sup>17</sup> SV XII, 370.

<sup>18</sup> SV XII, 372.

<sup>19</sup> SV XII, 372.

<sup>20</sup> SV XII, 366.

the place of the virtues-counsels in the missionary vocation of the Congregation.

Ten months before he died, Vincent de Paul dedicated a series of conferences, which would be his last, to explain to his community the content of the three chapters in the CR on the evangelical counsels and the pontifical document “Ex commiss nobis,” which approved the vows of the CM in 1656 and the later “Alias Nos” of 1659, which explained one aspect of poverty, that of personal goods. In those conferences, Vincent elaborated in detail about that which is very condensed in the CR, adding some evangelical-theological ideas, which as has been said, are very scarce in the CR.<sup>21</sup> Truthfully, reference to the theme in these conferences are brief but reading them gives one a better idea of the thinking of St. Vincent on this theme. In the conferences Vincent develops his ideas without distinguishing between the vows and their corresponding virtues, but reveals that most importantly his men, who take the vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience, really become poor, chaste, and obedient so as to be free from anything that binds them, and dedicate their lives to the mission.

Regarding obedience, here it is noted that in reading Chapter V of the CR one could get the impression that those of authority are not under the demands of common obedience. It is necessary to read what is written apart from the CR, for example, the admirable advice of St. Vincent to Antonio Durand, a young missionary, 27 years of age, named superior of the diocesan seminary, on the exercise of authority.<sup>22</sup> In this letter we find Vincent de Paul at his best, who through his own experience and with help from the Holy Spirit shows us the teachings of Jesus Christ.

### ***The Common Rules for Today***

The Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission are to be a vignette of the very Rule of the Congregation of the Mission.<sup>23</sup> They are not to be kept in a museum as archeological treasures of centuries of old, that have added to the life of the Congregation, in the same way as the CR which come directly from St. Vincent. In fact, the Assembly which made this point has asked that the text of the CR be included in the volume of the New Constitutions, with a

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<sup>21</sup> SV XII, 365-433.

<sup>22</sup> SV XI, 342 ss.

<sup>23</sup> XXXVI General Assembly 1980, decree 1.

clear intention that the CR continue to be read in our time and for years to come.

But the Constitutions are the attempt to modernize not only the “Rule” but all aspects of life in the Congregation of the Mission, including the theme of the evangelical counsels and the vows in chapter III.

The way to treat the counsels-vows in the Constitutions differs in the CR in some aspects. The Constitutions mention the vows and point out their purpose so as to distinguish the other aspects of the corresponding counsels, aspects that the missionary should have, but which are not necessarily objects of the vows.<sup>24</sup> Another important difference is the express inclusion of the vow-counsel of stability in the last paragraph, 39, in the cited chapter. Logic would require the vow of stability to appear first, since it gives meaning to the other three. Also important are the theological foundations, in comparison, which are scarce.

Our theme has been widely treated here and more said would be to surpass the focus of this article that the title suggests. As mentioned above, the intention of the Congregation of the Mission is to live the evangelical counsels-vows in a way that the Constitutions call us, keeping in mind that which St. Vincent has to say about them in the CR and other places like the Conferences and Letters.

Translation: THOMAS J. STEHLIK, C.M.

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<sup>24</sup> It is well known that the concrete determination of the content of each of the vows did not come from the Assembly that elaborated on the vows in the Constitutions of 1980, but rather the Superior General and his Counsel in fulfilling the recommendations of the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, See: MIGUEL PÉREZ FLORES, *De las Constituciones de 1980 a las de 1984*, in *Anales de la Congregación de la Misión y de las Hijas de la Caridad*, Madrid, 1984, pp. 102 ss. That which pertains to the vows is found on pp. 111-115.

# Matters Concerning the Sick

## Chapter VI of the Common Rules

by Vicente de Dios Toribio, C.M.

Is what Chapter VI of the Common Rules says about the sick still valid today? And the attention given to the sick (numbers 1 and 2) and their participation in the mission (number 3)? Of course it is still valid. The advances in medical science and health care ministry have developed so much in recent times that our saints Vincent and Louise, so fond of medical advice and of prescriptions, would be astounded, wherever they may be. But what our saint says in chapter VI belongs, in essence, to every age: that we must care for the sick and that the sick should take advantage of this opportunity for the evangelization of the poor.

### I

**The care of the sick.** This was one of St. Vincent's most explicit obsessions: concern for the health of the missionaries, of the Daughters of Charity, and of the poor who were assisted by both communities. He was also concerned about the health of St. Louise, as was she about his health. This theme has been amply developed by various Vincentian authors. For example, in Vincentian Week VI in Salamanca in 1977, there are two studies which have yet to be surpassed: one by André Dodin, C.M., "Vincent de Paul and the Sick," and the other by Margaret Flynn, D.C., "Louise de Marillac and the Sick." At any rate, it is still legitimate for us to continue reading and admiring the work of our saint and to highlight his most important thoughts on the matter.

Among *the Conferences* of St. Vincent there is only one dedicated to "the good use of sickness" (conference 107 in the Spanish edition: Vol. XI-3, p. 344). There is also a rather extensive extract of a conference on "the usefulness and the good use of illness" (conference 203: Vol. XI-4, p. 760). And two other conferences also

reference the theme: “Care of the Sick” (p. 848) and “Illness and Convalescence” (p. 860). There is not much here and almost all has to do with the “good use” of sickness, both for the sanctification of the sick confrere as well as for evangelization. *The Letters* are much more effusive and numerous in both aspects: the care of the sick and the good use of illness.

As we read these letters we can ask ourselves if there was any other matter that concerned our saint more than the health of his missionaries. Of course, in St. Vincent, the starting point of everything was the evangelization of the poor. Let us look at some of Vincent’s most urgent and moving thoughts on the topic (only a few of them):

He asks Father Pierre du Chesne to care for Father Dufestel, a sick member of his community: *“I am writing to him and asking him to do all he can and to spare nothing for his medical care. I entreat you, Monsieur, to be sure that he does so and, for that purpose, see that the doctor visits him every day and that he lacks no remedy or nourishment. Oh! how I hope the Company will provide for his needs with a holy extravagance! I would be delighted if word were sent to me from somewhere that someone in the Company had sold chalices for that purpose”* (Letter 366 English edition). He writes to Father Blatiron: *“In the name of God, Monsieur, take care of your poor life. Be content with consuming it little by little for Divine Love. It is not your own; it belongs to the Author of life, for love of whom you must preserve it until He asks it of you, unless an opportunity arises to offer it...”* (Letter 538). To a Priest of the Mission he writes: *“Have no fear that you are in any way a burden on the Company because of your infirmities. Rest assured that you will never be so for that reason because, by the grace of God, the Company does not find those who are ill a burden; on the contrary, it is a blessing for it to have them”* (Letter 2394). To Sister Francoise Menage, D.C.: *“The practice of charity, when necessary, such as assisting the suffering members of O[ur] L[ord], is to be preferred to all other exercises”*; and to Sister Nicole Haran: *“You are right in having no scruple about missing Mass to assist the poor, for God prefers mercy to sacrifice”* (Letters 2397, 2512 and 2788). I have selected these four texts of St. Vincent with ideas which he reiterates in his correspondence: the idea of selling the chalices, the concept of health which comes from God, the idea of illness as a blessing for the community, and that of charity toward the sick which is the most eminent and important virtue.

Sometimes in that era of war and plagues, illness was widespread in the community: *“[there are so many sick] the fact is that we are*

*at the end of our tether*" (Letter 1565). And here he goes into details: *"We still have more than twenty sick and convalescent men here. These illnesses bring people to death's door, and recovery is very slow and difficult. Besides that, almost all those who were working in Étampes fell sick there. We had to send three or four replacements for them and two men to have them taken to a nearby castle and look after them. In addition, we have six or seven other workers scattered here and there in that diocese, seeking out parishes without priests to prepare the sick poor in them for death or to live a good life"* (Letter 1559).

This "end of the tether" that our saint refers to, was especially true of the house in Genoa. The plague was present in many cities. Where there were missionaries, they did not hesitate to give themselves to the service of those who were affected. Or else the missionaries were willing to serve, as in Rome, where there was only a slight outbreak of the plague (Letters 2099 and 2087). Genoa was where the plague attacked with all its fury. It was said that each week four to five thousand people died. The missionaries' service to that community was generous, but it also proved fatal. Of the nine priests in the community, only two survived. St. Vincent's reaction was so admirable that even now it moves us to hear what he said in St. Lazare during a repetition of prayer: *"Oh Savior, Jesus, what a great loss and affliction! Now is when we have to resign ourselves to the will of God. Or if not, what else could we do but mourn and be sad uselessly for the loss of these persons so zealous for the glory of God? With this resignation, after having given way to some tears for the depth of feeling at this separation, let us lift ourselves up to God, praise Him and bless Him for all of these losses that have occurred because His most holy will has so disposed it. But, fathers and brothers, can we say that we have lost those whom God has taken to Himself? No, we have not lost them. We must believe that the ashes of these good missionaries will serve as seed to produce others. Be assured that God will not withdraw from this company the graces that He has given it, but rather He will give them to those who have sufficient zeal to go and take their place"* (Spanish edition, Vol. XI-3, pp. 304-305, in the note). His letters to Jean Martin, and Blatiron, or to Father Almerás, or to the missionaries in Poland are especially expressive of his concern for the sick.

And since we are dealing with the sick poor, we must above all look to the Rules of the Confraternity of Charity of the women of Chatillon-les-Dombes (November of 1617, Spanish edition, Vol. X, p. 578).

## II

**Illness as “a pulpit”.** This comparison is made by St. Vincent himself in the Common Rules (VI, 3) and, although the pulpits in use in Vincent’s day survive only as relics of past times, the sense of the pulpit has survived in this case with all its meaning. The Common Rules say that the sick:

- are not there only “to be cured”;
- but rather to “preach, at least with their example, as if in a pulpit, the Christian virtues... to grow in virtue”;
- and “to be, to those who assist them and visit them, like the sweet aroma of Christ...”

The expression is rather short, but it tells the sick that they have a spiritual task with regard to themselves as well as the task of edifying others.

Let us look at the only **Conference** of St. Vincent that has been preserved on the theme of “the good use of illness” (June 26, 1658). It is a conference which is simple and familiar. He arrived late for it, but when he begins to speak he details his thoughts quite well:

- all that happens comes from God: death, life, health, illness, and is always for our good and our salvation;
- I repeat once again that the sick are a blessing for the house and for the Company, which is certain by the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ willed this state of affliction, and that he accepted it for Himself...;
- and here St. Vincent lashes out against those “fickle spirits” who want to change houses, go from one place to another (damsels and misses he calls them) under whatever pretext, for example, that of a better climate, at times, “*only because they have had a slight illness!...*” “*To take such exaggerated care of ourselves, to be crushed by the slightest pain that we have to suffer, Oh Savior, this is what we must avoid*”;
- as a contrast to this he mentions Father Pille, Father Senaux, and Brother Anthony as examples of the good use of illness, and he does it with patience and affection;
- “*we can and must use the temporal remedies that are prescribed to us to alleviate and cure our sickness; to do this is also to honor God, who has created the plants and has given to each one its virtue*”;

- and, according to custom, the saint could not finish without asking forgiveness for the scandal that he has caused “*by the bad use of his small aches.*”

The **extract** of a conference (203) revolves around the conviction that it is in illness “*where one discovers what one has and what one is; illness is the probe with which we can penetrate and measure with great surety the depths of each one’s virtue....*”

The references in **the Letters** are quite plentiful. It is not difficult to find them, but it is difficult to put them in order. In the previous section we have spoken of the Christian vision of illness (sent by God, a divine state, a blessing for others). The sick person must be conscious of all this during his illness, and above all as death approaches. An example of this is St. Vincent himself: “*I fell seriously ill two or three days ago, which has made me think about death. By the grace of God, I adore His Will and acquiesce in it with all my heart*” (Letter 195). But, as on so many other occasions, the saint also desires common sense. To a person who thought too much about death, he says that “*the thought of death is good and our Lord has counseled and recommended it; but it must be moderated and it is neither necessary nor convenient that that person have it always in his spirit; it is enough to think about it two or three times a day, but without spending much time on it, and if he feels upset and worried, then he should not even think of it, but rather should go about his business in peace*” (Spanish edition, Vol. VIII, Letter 3282. Mission et Charite, Letter 143). He writes that Father John de la Salle “*had always feared death, but as he saw from the start that he was contemplating it with delight, he told me that he was going to die with pleasure because, he said, he had heard me say that at the end God takes away the fear of death from those who have feared it during their life and who have practiced charity towards the poor*” (Letter 405). In another letter he writes to St. Louise: “*I am also very worried about your sick Sisters and earnestly ask God to sanctify and glorify them. Moreover, the death of so many martyrs was the seed of Christianity; I hope it will be the same with regard to your Sisters. God has instituted and guided this Little Company; let us allow Him to act and let us adore His divine and loving guidance*” (Letter 1405). The second biographer of the saint (PIERRE COLLET, *La Vie de Saint Vincent de Paul*, 1748, II, p. 173 [169]) tells us that St. Vincent, speaking about a priest, once told two clerics that “*he had always had a great fear of death, but, as he saw it approach, without any fear, and even with joy, he told me that he was sure that he was going to die because he had heard me say that God takes away the fear of death in their last hour,*

for those who have loved and served the poor and who in life were tormented by the thought of death". Surely the saint was thinking of Father John de la Salle.

### III

There are many Vincentian accents on the topic of illness that we have not considered. An idea that St. Vincent developed several times rather extensively was this: "... *When one has experienced in oneself weaknesses and tribulations, one is more sensitive to those of others. Those who have suffered the loss of their possessions, their health and their honor, are much better disposed to console people who are experiencing the same afflictions and pains, than those who have no knowledge of what this is.... You know now that our Lord desired to experience in Himself all manner of suffering...*" (Spanish edition, Vol. XI-4, pp. 716-717). This gives us reason to think that he and St. Louise, both chronically ill, were especially gifted with sensitivity to console the sick.

But, let us first enter a little into the world of the poor who were assisted by them as well as by their disciples. We know, for example, how they dedicated the missionaries and the Daughters of Charity to the help of the poor who were victims of war in Lorraine, in Champagne and in Picardy, as well as in Paris: "*With the help of Our Lord, we have undertaken the assistance of the poor people in Lorraine and have sent Messieurs Bécu and Rondet, and Brothers Guillard, Aulent, Baptiste, and Bourdet there, two to each town: Toul, Metz, Verdun, and Nancy. I hope to provide them with two thousand livres a month*" (Letter 376). Later on Vincent enumerates the good works that are being done in Paris: "*(1) the daily distribution of soup to nearly fifteen thousand poor persons, both the bashful poor and the refugees; (2) about eight hundred refugee girls have been placed in private houses, where they are taken care of and instructed. You can imagine how much harm would have been done if they had been left wandering around. We have a hundred of them in one house in the Faubourg Saint-Denis; (3) we are going to rescue from the same danger the nuns from the country, whom the armies have thrown into Paris.... Lastly, people are sending here to us poor pastors, curates, and other priests from rural areas who have left their parishes to flee to this city.... The poor Daughters of Charity are more involved than we in the corporal assistance of the poor*" (Letters 1511 and 1512).

To conclude let us fix our gaze on the two founders, Vincent and Louise, who lived to contemplate the poor, especially the sick. If, as the saint says, experiencing illness sensitizes one to be able to

connect with the sick, then they, who were quite sick themselves, were certainly able to connect with them. Of course it is clear that this was not the only motive, nor even the primary one. The principal motive was the identification of Christ with the poor, of which they never lost sight, the reality of the Mystical Body of Christ. And so Louise asks Vincent's forgiveness: "*Please pardon the liberty I have taken, Most Honored Father, in sending you this Jesus crowned with thorns. The very thought that you were suffering so much gave me the idea that nothing could be of greater comfort to you than this example*" (Letter 3060). We all know to some degree how both saints were adorned with the sufferings of illness, and so we will continue by being brief.

With regard to St. Vincent, there was a marked contrast between his robust constitution and his countless physical problems. Beginning with the arrow wound he received at twenty-five (Letter 1), and continuing with fevers of all types, and falling off horses or from the carriage which he called his "shame", swollen and ulcerated legs, kidney stones and urinary retention, purges and blood-letting, the use of a walking stick and crutches, he eventually became a shut-in in his room where to move about he had to use a rope tied to a beam: "*My legs are getting worse every day and refuse to support me any longer*" (Letter 3154). "*As for myself, I am quite well, except for my legs, which no longer allow me to say Holy Mass and oblige me to remain seated all day long*" (Letter 3091).

With regard to St. Louise, St. Vincent himself gives us details in his letter to Father Blatiron: "*[I] think that in this you are almost like Mademoiselle Le Gras, whom I consider as dead, according to nature, for ten years now. To see her, one would say she has just stepped out of the tomb because her body is so frail and her face so pale. However, God knows the strength of spirit she possesses*" (Letter 1002).

Both saints possessed an abundance of strength of spirit. And so it was that both gave up their souls to the Lord in 1660, Louise six months before Vincent. In care of the sick, one of the most obvious activities is seeking the proper remedies. And in this regard, the mutual concern of Louise and Vincent still moves us, although, centuries later, it also makes us smile. They offered their prescriptions and remedies to all, but especially to each other. Their correspondence reads like a prescription manual, that above all, shows that they were up to date. The remedies that Louise proposes to Vincent are more numerous than those which he offers to her, and she explains them like an expert nurse. Here is one example: "*I think the pain in your leg will subside when you have been purged. Let me tell you about a method I was taught, which produces no upset. Take some*

*senna, the weight of an écu, infused for about an hour in a pint of ordinary bouillon, the first from the pot, drawn when it is at a full boil. Drink it at the beginning of the meal, or eat some soup after taking this small dose, good and hot, by itself. Repeated for two or three days, this will have the same effect as a strong purgative but will not leave you feeling washed out. If you find it does you some good, continuing it once or twice a week will bring some relief to those poor legs of yours. I almost forgot to mention that this does not interfere with taking bouillon in the morning or having dinner at the first table” (Letter 2754).*

Vincent answers her in the next letter and tells her of the results of taking her remedy (Letter 2755). He writes Louise about another of her prescriptions: *“My little cold is better, thank God, and I am taking good care of myself. I do not leave my room, I take extra rest every morning, I eat whatever is given me, and every night I have taken a kind of julep that Brother Alexandre gives me. As for my cold, it is only half as bad as what I was suffering and is gradually disappearing, so there is no need to think about the tea. If, by chance, my slight illness should get worse, I would use it. I ask Mademoiselle in her charity to be at peace in this regard, and I thank her for this” (Letter 2173).* Vincent also liked to offer remedies like the one he recommended to Monsieur de Comet in his first letter: the means of curing kidney stones that his owner, the Spagirite physician, had given to him, and with which Vincent *“saw him work miracles everyday.”* Vincent prefers easy homemade remedies. Nonetheless in 1648, he refused to have a young pigeon killed so that its hot blood might be applied to one of his eyes in order to heal it. That does not mean that St. Vincent was a vegetarian, for he ordered Brother Aubin, the cook in Turin, to: *“Continue to prepare chicken broth to nourish and sustain him [Father Martin] in his exhaustion” (Letter 2912).* Likewise he asked the Duchess of Aiguillon for *“a deer’s foot, which has the power to cure epilepsy” (cf. DODIN, op. cit., p. 49).*

Many prescriptions, and many of the remedies, make us smile. We are far removed from that world, but we are also overwhelmed with abusive commercials for medicines in all the mass media. We see that man, knowing that he cannot escape death, does all in his power to postpone it. He also tries, thanks be to God, to instill both life and death with meaning and, God willing, with faith. Here is where Chapter VI of the Common Rules remains valid. It begins with Christ, who heals and is incarnated in the sick; and so we must look at them as we would look at Christ himself. It calls for the Congregation to take special care in visiting and assisting the sick, both corporally and spiritually, those in the house as well as others,

especially on the missions and with the Confraternity of Charity. And it asks that the sick not only be cured, but that they also preach with their example from the pulpit of their sickbed, to evangelize and to grow strong in virtue. All this remains valid. Then it was called Charity toward the Sick. Today it is called Health Care Ministry.

Translation: GILBERT ROLAND WALKER, C.M.

# The Primitive Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission

by John Earl Rybolt, C.M.

## I. Introduction

Saint Vincent opens his definitive publication of the Common Rules with an affirmation that there were other rules in existence before those finally distributed to the Congregation in 1658.

*It is now about thirty-three years since our Congregation was founded, but I have not had our Rules printed for you before now. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, I wanted to take our Savior as a model. He put things into practice before He made them part of His teaching. Secondly, delaying their printing has avoided many problems which most certainly would have arisen if these Rules or Constitutions had been published too soon.... It has also made it possible for the Congregation gradually and smoothly to get used to living the Rules before having them in print. You will not find anything in them which you have not been doing for a long time, and I must say how pleased I am that you do live by them and that they have enabled you all to help one another.<sup>1</sup>*

Recent discoveries of three old texts have brought to light the early rules that were the basis of the Common Rules. The first text, the oldest, judging from the archaic spelling of the French, was found among the documents formerly in Constantinople (Istanbul), in the house of Saint Benoît.<sup>2</sup> This foundation had been staffed by members of the Congregation from 1783, succeeding the Jesuits there. I was led to examine these archives since I suspected that such an old house might have materials unknown elsewhere, possibly going back to Saint Vincent himself. This hunch was at least partially proven to be true.

The second text is in the provincial archives of the Congregation of the Mission, Madrid. Unlike the other two texts studied in this

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<sup>1</sup> *Règles Communes*, entête de Saint Vincent de Paul.

<sup>2</sup> Archives of the Congregation of the Mission, Paris (ACM Paris) Constantinople, St. Benoît, Carton VIII, B, 3.

presentation, this one is dated, to 1699. It was written by Jean-Claude Paris (1669-1755), who for some reason wrote out the title page in Italian, transcribing his name as Jouanni Claodii Parigi.<sup>3</sup> How it arrived in Madrid is unknown. I have a copy in my files.

The third text is found in the departmental archives of the Aube, in Troyes, which made it available to me. The first one to note it was Joseph Guichard, who painstakingly examined the printed lists of the holding of French departmental archives and arranged his materials in a typed version kept at the archives of the Congregation of the Mission in Paris. I discovered this reference while studying Guichard's materials. The Congregation had a foundation in Troyes from 1637 until the Revolution, at which time the archives of the house were seized by the State. This is probably the reason for the presence of this manuscript in the departmental archives. The spelling in the document is more modern in comparison with the Constantinople text, but otherwise it is nearly the same.<sup>4</sup>

There are certainly other texts remaining in various archives, such as in the Bibliothèque municipale de Bordeaux (Mériadeck) but only these three are examined here because of their representative nature.

The reason for publishing these early rules is to have yet another unknown (or in fact unrecognized) text by Vincent de Paul in print. The value of this one is that it shows how his ideas developed over the years, from the beginnings of the Congregation to the final publication of the Common Rules in 1658.

## II. Identification

The distinctive mark of the three early texts is their title, "Règlement pour la Congrégation de la Mission," or "Rule for the Congregation of the Mission." This title is important, since it contrasts with a similar version of the rules found in the standard rules of the internal seminary faithfully copied by generations of novices (or seminarists). An Italian version dated 1831 calls this compilation "Summary of the Rules,"<sup>5</sup> and the official version published under Antoine Fiat in 1888 omits the traditional title and gives it a more descriptive one, but one that is finally less accurate: "Pars Prior ea complectens quae missionarios universim

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<sup>3</sup> It has the identification number of "1 Re. 1, N.I."

<sup>4</sup> Archives départementales de l'Aube, 5 G 39, 22 pages, paper.

<sup>5</sup> "Regole e Practiche," ms. novitiate rules in De Andreis Rosati Memorial Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois, Perryville papers, p. 5.

attingunt.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, as part of the rules of the Internal Seminary, there appeared, in the first part, those matters which deal with Missioners in general. The editors mistakenly believed that the rules to follow, which they had taken “ex antiquissimis Codicibus, quibus a temporibus S. Vincentii usque ad finem saeculi XVIII usi sunt Missionarii” [from the earliest manuscripts, which the Missioners used from the time of Saint Vincent until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century], were only a summary of the Common Rules, not a preliminary, or “primitive,” version of the same. The translators of the French text into Latin in 1888 took some liberties in translation, probably in an attempt to bring the rules up to date.<sup>7</sup>

The Constantinople (C) text is in a small unbound and unnumbered paper notebook, 15 × 20 cm (approximately 6 × 8 inches). The rules are written in French, in ink and in one hand, on six pages numbering approximately thirty lines. The rest of the notebook contains materials useful for the Internal Seminary (Novitiate) of the Congregation, such as the rules, customs and practices, methods for confession, hearing Mass, the particular and general examens, and the like. The Madrid (M) text is about the same size as the C version, with the rules in French, in ink and in one hand. The rules cover about six pages, also numbering approximately thirty lines. The entire notebook, with the rules of the Internal Seminary, contains sixty-one pages. The Troyes (T) text is a somewhat larger notebook, bound in paper, marked “Séminaire.” The rules in question, also in French and written in ink, are the work of one scribe. They open the booklet and fill about four pages of around forty lines each. The rest of T, like C and M, consists of materials for the Internal Seminary. In all the texts, the “Advice” given by Saint Vincent during the retreats of 1632 and 1635 appear next, followed by rules for the Internal Seminary,<sup>8</sup> in much the same way as followed by later publications as well as the Latin version published in 1888.

With the exception of the Madrid text, neither booklet is dated or has the name of the scribe or the owner of the booklet. Clearly, however, these were copied by students of the Internal Seminary

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<sup>6</sup> *Regulae Seminarii Interni Congregationis Missionis. Monita ad Curatores.* Paris, 1888.

<sup>7</sup> For two examples among many, Rule 3: “N’aspirer a aucun benefice” (Not to aspire to any benefice) became: “Ad nullum beneficium aut dignitatem ecclesiasticam aspirare” (Not to aspire to any benefice or ecclesiastical dignity). Rule 5: “Obeir au superieur” (to obey the superior) became: “Superioribus... obedire” (to obey the superiors).

<sup>8</sup> “Recueil des maximes, règles, pratiques, usages et coutumes qui composent le Règlement du séminaire interne de la Congrégation de la Mission,” ms. notebook, dated 1819, in ACM Paris.

(which one is unknown) for their own use. In all likelihood they found their way into the archives of the houses of Constantinople and Troyes at some period thanks to the confrere who wrote them and left them behind, either at his death or departure from the house. The T manuscript, in addition, has some notes in another hand, consisting of single letters and numbers, which seem to be references to other texts, but not to the Common Rules. They appear here only in footnotes to the text.

The importance of proper identification of these rules will be seen through a comparison between the text of the Primitive Common Rules and that of the official Common Rules. The Primitive Common Rules encapsulate Vincent's original inspiration for his confreres. He often referred in his letters to rules ("the little rules"), which he cited in a general way, and a more thorough study than the one offered here will easily show that he followed his early ideas throughout his life, with only a few exceptions.

For the moment, there is no way to date the earliest composition of these rules, but indications appear in the saint's correspondence concerning the "little rules" as he often called them.<sup>9</sup> An Order of Day for missions was in existence in 1632, as is reflected in the "Advice" given by the founder during the retreat of that year.<sup>10</sup> In 1635 he wrote that "we have not yet drawn up our rules,"<sup>11</sup> but this may refer to the whole complex of common and particular rules. These primitive common rules must have been existence as early as 1637 when the first Internal Seminary began in Paris. Another early witness is the description that Vincent made of the Order of Day in his important letter to Jeanne de Chantal from 1639.<sup>12</sup> The centrality of these rules for Vincentian life is demonstrated by the fact that they are the first rules given in the notebooks destined for incoming candidates. In addition, the Primitive Rules seem to be derived principally from the experience of Saint-Lazare. For example, the regular mention of "the superior" undoubtedly refers to Saint Vincent himself, as it does in the rules of the Sisters. By contrast, however, the earliest text we have of the rules of the Internal Seminary, edited by Vincent de Paul himself and dated 1652, does not contain the Primitive Common Rules.<sup>13</sup> It would, therefore, be

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<sup>9</sup> See for example COSTE, vol. I, letters 30, p. 66, 1628; 91, p. 139, about 1631; 142, p. 204, July 1633, 365, p. 528, 1838.

<sup>10</sup> Conference 83; COSTE, vol. 11, p. 100.

<sup>11</sup> Letter 195, p. 291 (English p. 273).

<sup>12</sup> Letter 383, from Troyes, July 14, 1639.

<sup>13</sup> "Règles du Séminaire interne, qui remonte à 1652," ms., six notebooks, ACM Paris.

easy to conclude that these primitive rules were still the rules of the Congregation in that year and available to everyone, since the official Common Rules would be published only six years in the future. Because they were still the rules currently being observed, they would not need to be added to the individual notebooks copied by the seminary students.

One element of the Primitive Common Rules may seem to speak against their antiquity, the Order of Day. On first reading, it might appear that this section was designed only for the Internal Seminary, inasmuch as it is very static and idealized. The only activity alluded to, apart from prayer, is study. This focus, however, changes in the last article, which offers a schedule for those giving missions. Also, there is no difference mentioned between the activities of priests and brothers. Although it is well known that Saint Vincent held other exercises, such as repetition of prayer and weekly conferences, these are not reflected in this daily schedule, possibly because this schedule was early and gave only a general summary. Certainly, he himself did not observe it in all its particulars, given his numerous meetings, conferences, correspondence and other administrative duties. As a careful examination of the dates of his various letters and other activities shows, he seems also to have taken a day off on Thursdays, but the schedule makes no distinction among any of the days of the week or even the feasts or seasons of the year, apart from prescribing an annual retreat. There are occasional references elsewhere, however, to a weekly walk which does not appear here. Possibly this was a development from this generalized schedule.<sup>14</sup>

The editors of the 1888 Internal Seminary rules must have been confused by the summary nature of the final article of the Order of Day, since they published it only in a footnote and inserted a more precise text in its place. This will be found in the notes to article XVI.

Another indication of the antiquity of these rules is that they and the earliest rules of the Daughters of Charity follow the same format. That is, the Primitive Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission consist of thirty-three specific articles followed by an Order of Day in sixteen articles. In the case of the rules of the Sisters, there are forty-three articles, but developed at much greater length than those for the Missioners. Then follows an order of day in twenty-seven articles, also more developed than the one for the

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<sup>14</sup> These differences would be codified in the Customs Book (Coutumier) drawn up for Saint Lazare and other houses.

priests and brothers of the Mission.<sup>15</sup> This very development from the almost laconic style of the Primitive Rules to the early version of the Common Rules of the Sisters shows how the Founder worked on his ideas. His tendency to elaborate on them, can be appreciated even in Rule 32, which begins to sound more like the exhortations found in the Common Rules.

Since Vincent de Paul died before publishing the Common and Particular Rules of the Sisters, his many conferences to the Daughters of Charity deal with the early form of their rules in forty-three articles. The official "Common Rules" of the Sisters were finally published in a significantly revised version by René Alméras in 1672. By contrast, Vincent's conferences to his confreres dealt with the actual text of the Common Rules that he published in 1658 and not with the Primitive Rules being transcribed here.

### III. Publication

This publication of the text of the Primitive Common Rules (part IV) is offered with the original spelling in French of the C manuscript since it appears to be the oldest.<sup>16</sup> At the period of writing, most likely the late seventeenth century, spelling, the use of accents, capitalization, abbreviations and punctuation had not been standardized. The M text is dated 1699, and its spelling falls between the styles of the other two versions. The T manuscript, judging from its spelling and style of handwriting, dates from the eighteenth century. In those few places where M or T differs substantially from C, these variations are mentioned. Some explanations of them are offered in the notes where they occur. In addition, it should be remarked that errors could easily creep into the text, especially because directors of the internal seminary would not normally check the accuracy of the work of their novices.

Following that text, in part V, I have presented in parallel columns the Primitive Common Rules and the essential parts of the official Common Rules of 1658 that quote the earlier text. It will become evident that Vincent generally followed the text of his Primitive Common Rules but generally offered a richer and more satisfying text in his official Common Rules, one more clearly developed in

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<sup>15</sup> For the English publication of these texts, see PIERRE COSTE, *Vincent De Paul. Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. and trans. Marie Poole et al., Hyde Park, NY, 2003, vol. 13b, pp. 147-169.

<sup>16</sup> The author is grateful for the help given by Fr. Bernard Koch, C.M., in deciphering difficult portions of the text.

spiritual and theological terms. I leave it to others to draw out more comparisons and to shed a better light on these texts. The official Common Rules, it should be noted, were written first in French and later translated into Latin, probably by someone other than the Founder. The French text sounds like Vincent himself, whereas the Latin translation is dry and occasionally misses the sense of the original. The French text of the Common Rules used here is that published also in 1658 for the use of the brothers, both clerical and lay. The modern French text follows this one closely, but has some changes required for modern readers.<sup>17</sup>

The most obvious difference between the Primitive Common Rules and the Common Rules of 1658 is the omission of the Order of Day. In many cases, Vincent moved the rules out of this section into one of the chapters of the later work. But he apparently also felt that he could simply require that “the timetable which is customary in the Congregation is to be strictly followed by everyone, whether at home or on missions, particularly as regards the times for getting up and going to bed, prayer, the Divine Office, and meals.”<sup>18</sup>

Other differences will be noted in the omission of certain points which for various reasons he did not maintain. Rule 30: “Not to go to the garden outside the hours of recreation without permission.” This might have been applicable only for the huge property of Saint-Lazare and hence would be meaningless in smaller houses. The other noteworthy omission is Rule 4: “To spend the whole time of one’s life in the exercises of the Mission.” Since the development of the vow of stability took such a long time to concretize, it was undoubtedly thought better to omit any treatment of it here, particularly since the Common Rules of 1658 did not mention vows, only virtues.

By contrast, some of the primitive rules were clarified and made more demanding, such as the decision that the superior would designate a traveling companion (Rules 7 and 8).

Various smaller changes have their own interest. In rule 28, the exception about taking breakfast, which was never regarded as a meal and consequently was not begun with the prayers before meals, was not included in the Common Rules. It is possible that the custom had become generalized by 1658. The freedom to take a brief walk

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<sup>17</sup> The text of the Common Rules in “Codex Sarzana” does not contain these points of rule, which points likewise to the fact that they were omitted early on. For that text, see the author’s “Codex Sarzana,” *Vincentiana* 35: 3-4 (1991), 307-406.

<sup>18</sup> Chapter X, article 18.

with an extern in the courtyard did not find its way from Rule 29 into the Common Rules either.

In the Order of Day, Rule 2, “to be fully clothed,” was softened to “decently clothed,” probably in view of the obvious necessity of sometimes leaving one’s room for “satisfying our necessities” before being fully clothed.<sup>19</sup> The omission from Rule 4 of the obligation of celebrating the Little Hours in common was probably due to the impracticality of scheduling this along with the need to celebrate Mass and provide altar servers from among the students.

Besides the differences in wording or omissions of certain sections, one will easily recognize that many important additions were made to the Common Rules that did not appear in the Primitive Rules. These surely must have come from Vincent’s experience of the life of his confreres. His assertion that “you will not find anything in them which you have not been doing for a long time,” is not completely justified.

Part VI presents an English translation of the Primitive Common Rules alone. These can easily be compared to the Common Rules of 1658 by referring to the numbers of chapter and article appearing in the table of comparisons.

Part VII presents brief analysis of the order within the rules themselves. They move from short and generic and to long and specific.

#### IV. Text

##### REGLEMENT POUR LA CONGREGATION DE LA MISSION

Premierement Le principal<sup>20</sup> du Missionnaire doit estre de travailler a sa propre perfection 2<sup>mt</sup> au salut des pauvres gens des champs 3<sup>mt</sup> a l’advancement de lestat ecclesiastique en la vertu.

2<sup>e</sup> Vivre en pauvreté, et en commun.

3<sup>e</sup> N’aspirer a aucun benefice.

4<sup>e</sup> Employer tout le temps de sa vie aux exercices de la Mission.

5<sup>e</sup> Obéir au superieur, et a tous ceux qu’il aura commis pour le représenter tant a la ville qu’aux champs.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, neither of the versions of the Common Rules specifies details of clothing.

<sup>20</sup> Although “principal” is a noun, translation requires the addition of another term to complete the sense. The 1888 version translates: “Praecipua Missionariorum **cura** est.”

<sup>21</sup> T: “p.5.a.5.6.a.1.”

- 6<sup>e</sup> User de toutes les precautions imaginables pour conserver la pureté interieure, et exterieure.
- 7<sup>e</sup> Ne sortir jamais de la maison sans la permission du superieur, ou de celuy qui le represente; ny sans dire les lieux ou l'on va et les affaires qu'on y a; et au retour se représenter a luy pour luy rendre compte de son voyage.<sup>22</sup>
- 8<sup>e</sup> L'on ira dehors que deux a deux, et celuy qui servira de compagnon donnera le devant a l'autre,<sup>23</sup> et le laissera parler.
- 9<sup>e</sup> Ne jamais manger aux maisons externes de la ville, ny des champs, ny faire manger personne a la maison sans permission expresse du superieur.
- 10<sup>e</sup> On mettra les lettres qu'on escrira avant de les cacheter, entre les mains du superieur pour les envoyer, ou les retenir selon qu'il trouvera a propos, sans jamais en escrire autrement, ny ouvrir celles qu'on aura receu, sans les avoir fait voir auparavant au dit superieur.<sup>24</sup>
- 11<sup>e</sup> Faire les exercices spirituels tous les ans une fois.<sup>25</sup>
- 12<sup>e</sup> Rendre compte de temps en temps de sa conscience au superieur,<sup>26</sup> ou a tel qu'il députera.
- 13<sup>e</sup> Dire tous les vendredys sa coulpe au superieur ou a celuy qui le represente a la ville ou aux champs en presence des autres. Et escouter volontiers les advertissements qui [*seront donnés; et faire de bon cœur les paenitences qui seront ordonnées* (T, M)]<sup>27</sup> [*seront ordonnés*].<sup>28</sup>
- 14<sup>e</sup> Suivre les advis de celuy que le superieur deputera pour les choses spirituelles, et se confesser a luy deux fois toutes les semaines sçavoir le mercredy, et le samedy apres l'office du matin.
- 15<sup>e</sup> S'entreavertir charitablement les uns les autres de ses manquements, et recevoir avec humilité les advertissements qui nous seront donnés.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>22</sup> T: "8.a.4."

<sup>23</sup> M: "à son compagnon."

<sup>24</sup> T: "Cassianus instit. lib. 4 cap.," a reference to *De institutis coenobiorum* by John Cassian.

<sup>25</sup> M: The order of the three following rules is 12, 13, 11, in comparison with C.

<sup>26</sup> M: "Luy rendre compte de temps en temps de sa conscience."

<sup>27</sup> The Troyes text makes more sense, and is explained as a haplography, that is, the eye of the copyist inadvertently skipped from one phrase, *seront donnés*, to a similar phrase in the following line, *seront ordonnés*, thereby omitting several words in between.

<sup>28</sup> T: "p.8.a.5."

<sup>29</sup> T: "p.5.n.7.8.p.7.a.18.p.8.a.7."

- 16° Donner avis au superieur des manquements qu'on aura remarqué parmi les autres, et trouver bon qu'on l'advertisse des nostres.
- 17° Se porter un grand respect les uns les autres et vivre neantmoins d'une maniere toutte cordiale ensemble sans jamais se tutoyer, ny toucher par familiarité.<sup>30</sup>
- 18° Ne point louer ceux qui preschent, catechisent confessent, ou reussissent dans les emplois exterieurs, mais ceux qui sont fort vertueux et interieurs.<sup>31</sup>
- 19° Esviter esgallement les amitiés particulieres et les aversions.<sup>32</sup>
- 20° Ne point parler de la conduite, ny des affaires de la maison, ny de celles du temps.
- 21° Ne parler jamais mal de personne, et principalement du Superieur.
- 22° Garder fidellement silence du depuis [*Garder le silence depuis* (T, M)]<sup>33</sup> les prieres du soir jusques au landemain incontinent apres [*le* (T)] disné<sup>34</sup> et depuis la fin de la recreation jusques apres le souper.<sup>35</sup>
- 23° Ne point visiter ses compagnons en leur chambres, ny s'entretenir ensemble hors les heures de recreation.
- 24° On fera tousiours lecture a table, tant a la mission,<sup>36</sup> qu'à la maison.<sup>37</sup>
- 25° Ne manger a la maison les vendredys au soir que d'une sorte de mets, qui sera des legumes, pruneaux ou herbages pour honorer la passion de nostre seigneur.
- 26° Tous les exercices de la mission<sup>38</sup> se feront gratis.
- 27° Ne rien prendre des externes, ny donner<sup>39</sup> sans la permission du superieur.

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<sup>30</sup> T: "5.a.6."

<sup>31</sup> T: "p.6.n.7.p.5.n.9."

<sup>32</sup> M: "et aversions."

<sup>33</sup> A simpler expression in T.

<sup>34</sup> M: "incontinent diné."

<sup>35</sup> T: "p.8.n.4."

<sup>36</sup> M: "tant à la maison qu'à la mission," a more logical word order.

<sup>37</sup> T: "Cassianus instit. lib. 4, cap. 17, à Cappadocis rixantibus... dicit."

The reference is to the origin of reading at table, which Cassian attributed to monks in Cappadocia, not so much as a spiritual exercise but to put an end to useless discussions or quarreling.

<sup>38</sup> M: "de la maison," clearly an error in transcription for "de la mission."

<sup>39</sup> M: "ny rien prendre sans la permission," perhaps another haplography.

- 28<sup>e</sup> Ne boire ny manger hors le repas, ceux la neantmoins, qui auront besoin de desieuner pourront prendre un morceau de pain, et un doigt de vin.
- 29<sup>e</sup> Ne parler aux externes sans permission et ne jamais les mener en sa chambre, ny s'entretenir, dans le cloestre ne faire plus dun tour ou deux.<sup>40</sup>
- 30<sup>e</sup> N'aller<sup>41</sup> au jardin hors les heures de recreation sans permission.
- 31<sup>e</sup> A l'arrivée, et a la sortié de la mission recevoir la benediction de Messieurs les curéz et en leur absence de messieurs les [*leurs* (T, M)] vicaires, et ne rien faire d'importance sans leur permission, et leur communiquer [*sans leur communiquer* (T, M)], comme letablissement de la charité, la communion des enfans, la procession, l'administration des sacrements aux malades et se bien garder et bien faire contre leur gré.
- 32<sup>e</sup> Estre fort circonspect a proposer les difficultez qu'on aura trouvez en confession, en sorte qu'on ne puisse entendre de qui on parle. La compagnié doit faire en ce point une attention sans<sup>42</sup> pareille et pour mortifier la trop grande affection<sup>43</sup> qu'on a de dire ce qu'on a trouvé de nouveau. Lon ne proposera aucune difficulté sur les cas qu'on aura rencontrez que par ladvis du superieur.<sup>44</sup>
- 33<sup>e</sup> Nul ne s'appliquera aux visites des malades ny aux accommodements que par l'ordre du Superieur.

### EMPLOY DE LA JOURNÉE

- Premierement Se lever a quattres heures, et faire le signe de la croix, et dire *benedicta sit sancta atque individua trinitas nunc et semper, et per infinita secula seculorum. Amen. Sancta Dei genetrix sit nobis auxiliatrix. Amen.*
- 2<sup>e</sup> Employer une demie heure a s'habiller, faire son lict et satisfaire a ses necessitez. Ne point sortir de la chambre sans estre entierement habillé.
- 3<sup>e</sup> Durant ce temps<sup>45</sup> garder le silence marcher sans bruit, faire ses actions avec un esprit tranquille et recueilly se ressouvenant que bientost on doit entrer en oraison.

<sup>40</sup> T: "8.a.6."

<sup>41</sup> M: "N'aller jamais."

<sup>42</sup> M: "attention non pareille."

<sup>43</sup> M: "mortifier l'affection trop grande qu'on a."

<sup>44</sup> T: "p.6.n.13."

<sup>45</sup> M: "ce temps la."

- 4<sup>e</sup> Donner une heure de temps a l'oraison au lieu destiné, et au sortir d'icelle dire prime, tierce, sexte, [*et* (T, M)] nonne en commun.
- 5<sup>e</sup> Celebrer ou ouir la Sainte Messe a son tour.
- 6<sup>e</sup> Estant de retour en sa chambre flechir les genoux ce qu'il faut observer toutes les fois qu'on y entre et qu'on en sort<sup>46</sup> pour offrir a J.Ch. ce qu'on va faire [*desirant que ce soit* (T)]<sup>47</sup> pour accomplir la volonté de Dieu et nous avancer en son amour.
- 7<sup>e</sup> Lire un chapitre du nouveau testament teste nuë et a genoux avec trois acts. 1<sup>e</sup> adorer les veritez qui y sont contenuës. 2<sup>e</sup> Entrer dans les sentiments avec les quelles nostre Seigneur les a prononcéz. 3<sup>e</sup> Se resoudre a pratiquer les conseils qui y sont contenus et puis s'occuper<sup>48</sup> a l'estude ou autre exercice qui nous aura esté marqué<sup>49</sup> par le superieur.
- 8<sup>e</sup><sup>50</sup> Immediatement devant disner faire un examen<sup>51</sup> particulier touchant la vertu qu'on s'est propose d'acquérir ou le vice qu'on veut extirper.<sup>52</sup>
- 9<sup>e</sup> Disner a unze heures, et apres faire une heure de recreation en forme de conference gayement et modestement.
- 10<sup>e</sup> Apres la recreation se rentrer dans sa chambre, et s'employer [*s'addonner* (T)] a lestudes comme au matin.
- 11<sup>e</sup><sup>53</sup> A deux heures dire vespres et Complies en commun puis employer un quart d'heure<sup>54</sup> a la lecture spirituelle.
- 12<sup>e</sup> A cinq heures dire matines, et laudes.
- 13<sup>e</sup> A six heures et demie l'examen particulier, le souper et la recreation.
- 14<sup>e</sup> A huict heures et un quart faire l'examen general avec les prieres ordinaires et la lecture du suiet de l'oraison pour le landemain matin.

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<sup>46</sup> M: "toutes les fois que l'on en sort, ou qu'on y entre."

<sup>47</sup> Possibly a clarification of an obscure text. M: "pour offrir ce que l'on va faire desirant accomplir."

<sup>48</sup> M: "s'appliquer."

<sup>49</sup> M: "à autres exercices qui nous auront esté marqués."

<sup>50</sup> M: Perhaps by accident, the copyist omitted numbering this rule, and then numbered as 8 what in the other texts is 9, and so on to the end.

<sup>51</sup> M: "faire l'examen."

<sup>52</sup> T: "infra p. 18."

<sup>53</sup> M: The copyist has switched the order of this rule and the next.

<sup>54</sup> M: "employer un quart à la lecture."

- 15° A neuf heures se coucher se recommandant a la tres sainte trinite, et a la sainte Vierge, afinq' nos premieres, et dernieres pensez<sup>55</sup> soient adresséz à Dieu et a sa sainte Mere.
- 16° On observera le mesme ordre aux missions excepté qu'on<sup>56</sup> ira a six heures a leglize pour en sortir a unze, qu'on y retournera a deux pour en sortir a cinq', et qu'on dira vespres et complies a une heure, et matines et laudes a cinq heures.<sup>57</sup>

## V. Comparison of Texts

Règlement pour la Congrégation de la Mission	Règles Communes, 1658
Premièrement Le principal du Missionnaire doit être de travailler à sa propre perfection; 2 <sup>m</sup> au salut des pauvres gens des champs; 3 <sup>m</sup> à l'avancement de l'état ecclésiastique en la vertu.	C'est pourquoi sa fin est: 1° de travailler à sa propre perfection, en faisant son possible pour pratiquer les vertus que ce souverain Maître a daigné nous enseigner, de parole et d'exemple; 2° de prêcher l'évangile aux pauvres, particulièrement à ceux de la campagne; 3° d'aider les ecclésiastiques à acquérir les sciences et les vertus nécessaires à leur état. (I, 1)
2° Vivre en pauvreté, et en commun.	chacun tâchera, selon son petit pouvoir, de l'imiter en la pratique de cette vertu [pauvreté] (III, 1)
3° N'aspirer à aucun bénéfice.	il n'aspirera pas même à aucun bénéfice (III, 10)
4° Employer tout le temps de sa vie aux exercices de la Mission.	—

<sup>55</sup> M: "afin que nos dernieres prieres et pensées."

<sup>56</sup> M: The copyist mistakenly writes: "L'on observera... que l'on ira."

<sup>57</sup> The 1888 publication of the Internal Seminary rules has substituted the following for article XVI: "In Missionibus, ea quae sequuntur inviolabiliter observare: 1° Horâ quartâ surgere et nonâ cubitum ire. 2° Orationi mentali vacare. 3° Horas canonicas in communi recitare. 4° Horâ statuta Sacrum celebrare. 5° Ab ecclesia non egredi sine Superioris facultate, causam egressûs illi exponendo. 6° Lectionem libri spiritualis ad mensam non omittere. 7° Quâlibet feriâ sexta capitulum celebrare" (p. 18).

<b>Règlement pour la Congrégation de la Mission</b>	<b>Règles Communes, 1658</b>
5° Obéir au supérieur, et à tous ceux qu'il aura commis pour le représenter tant à la ville qu'aux champs.	nous obéirons exactement à nos Supérieurs, et à chacun d'iceux, (V, 1)
6° User de toutes les précautions imaginables pour conserver la pureté intérieure et extérieure.	c'est pourquoi chacun apportera de son côté tout le soin, la diligence et la précaution possible pour conserver entièrement cette chasteté, tant à l'égard du corps, qu'à l'égard de l'âme. (IV, 1)
7° Ne sortir jamais de la maison sans la permission du supérieur, ou de celui qui le représente; ni sans dire les lieux où l'on va et les affaires qu'on y a; et au retour se représenter à lui pour lui rendre compte de son voyage.	Personne ne sortira de la maison, sinon comme, quand, et avec qui le Supérieur le jugera à propos, auquel il appartiendra de nommer le compagnon, s'il n'a député quelque autre pour le faire. (IX, 11)
8° L'on ira dehors que deux à deux, et celui qui servira de compagnon donnera le devant à l'autre, et le laissera parler.	et celui qui aura été donné pour compagnon donnera le devant à l'autre et le laissera parler. (IX, 11)
9° Ne jamais manger aux maisons externes de la ville, ni des champs, ni faire manger personne à la maison sans permission expresse du supérieur.	Nul n'invitera à manger ou boire aucun externe, sans la même permission du Supérieur. (IX, 6)
10° On mettra les lettres qu'on écrira avant de les cacheter, entre les mains du supérieur pour les envoyer, ou les retenir selon qu'il trouvera à propos, sans jamais en écrire autrement, ni ouvrir celles qu'on aura reçues, sans les avoir fait voir auparavant au dit supérieur.	nul n'écrira, ni n'enverra, ni n'ouvrira des lettres sans la permission du Supérieur, entre les mains duquel chacun remettra celles qu'il aura écrites, pour les envoyer ou les retenir comme bon lui semblera. (V, 11)
11° Faire les exercices spirituels tous les ans une fois.	Ceux qui sont déjà entrés feront les mêmes Exercices avec une autre confession depuis la dernière géné-

<b>Règlement pour la Congrégation de la Mission</b>	<b>Règles Communes, 1658</b>
	rale, les séminaristes tous les six mois, et les autres tous les ans. (X, 10)
12° Rendre compte de temps en temps de sa conscience au supérieur, ou à tel qu'il députera.	C'est pourquoi, tous et un chacun feront, avec toute la sincérité et dévotion qu'ils pourront et en la manière dont on a accoutumé d'user en la Congrégation, leur communication intérieure au Supérieur, ou à quelque autre qu'il aura député pour cela, (X, 11)
13° Dire tous les vendredis sa coulpe au supérieur ou à celui qui le représente à la ville ou aux champs en présence des autres. Et écouter volontiers les avertissements qui seront ordonnés.	tous les vendredis chacun dira, en présence des autres, sa coulpe au Supérieur ou à celui qui le représentera, et cela tant à la maison qu'aux missions, et recevra de bon cœur les avertissements et les pénitences qui lui seront donnés. (X, 13)
14° Suivre les avis de celui que le supérieur députera pour les choses spirituelles, et se confesser à lui deux fois toutes les semaines, savoir le mercredi, et le samedi après l'office du matin.	et afin que le tout se fasse avec ordre, les prêtres se confesseront deux fois, ou du moins une fois, toutes les semaines, à un des confesseurs de la maison, à ce député, et non à d'autres, sans la permission du Supérieur, (X, 6)
15° S'entreavertir charitablement les uns les autres de ses manquements, et recevoir avec humilité les avertissements qui nous seront donnés.	On gardera aussi la sainte pratique de demander au Chapitre d'y être averti publiquement de nos défauts, et pour lors, chacun sera soigneux de faire cet avertissement en esprit d'humilité et de charité. (X, 13)
16° Donner avis au supérieur des manquements qu'on aura remarqué parmi les autres, et trouver bon qu'on l'avertisse des nôtres.	dès que quelqu'un aura des pensées suspectes d'illusion[s], ou quelque peine intérieure, ou tentation notable, il s'en découvrira, le plus tôt qu'il pourra, au Supérieur ou au directeur à ce député, afin qu'il y apporte le remède convenable; lequel chacun recevra et agréera comme

<b>Règlement pour la Congrégation de la Mission</b>	<b>Règles Communes, 1658</b>
	venant de la main de Dieu, et s'y soumettra avec confiance et respect. (II, 16)
17° Se porter un grand respect les uns les autres et vivre néanmoins d'une manière toute cordiale ensemble sans jamais se tutoyer, ni toucher par familiarité.	tous agiront les uns avec les autres dans un grand respect, (VIII, 2); Tous se donneront de garde de se toucher l'un l'autre, (VII, 3)
18° Ne point louer ceux qui prêchent, catéchisent, confessent, ou réussissent dans les emplois extérieurs, mais ceux qui sont fort vertueux et intérieurs.	personne ne louera les Nôtres, particulièrement en leur présence, pour les rares talents naturels ou acquis, principalement pour les prédications qu'ils auraient faites éloquemment, et avec applaudissement des hommes; (XII, 4)
19° Eviter également les amitiés particulières et les aversions.	ils fuiront pourtant diligemment les amitiés particulières, aussi bien que les aversions: (VIII, 2)
20° Ne point parler de la conduite, ni des affaires de la maison, ni de celles du temps.	Nul ne rapportera légèrement ou inutilement aux externes ce qu'on a fait, ou ce qu'on doit faire en la maison, ni ne s'entretiendra avec eux des choses dont il ne nous est pas permis de parler entre nous, particulièrement de celles qui regardent l'Etat ou le gouvernement du royaume. (IX, 9)
21° Ne parler jamais mal de personne, et principalement du Supérieur.	Personne ne touchera tant soit peu la réputation des autres, particulièrement des Supérieurs, (VIII, 11)
22° Garder fidèlement silence du depuis les prières du soir jusques au lendemain incontinent après dîner et depuis la fin de la récréation jusques après le souper	pour cela, chez nous, le silence se gardera, hors les heures de récréation; (VIII, 4)

<b>Règlement pour la Congrégation de la Mission</b>	<b>Règles Communes, 1658</b>
23° Ne point visiter ses compagnons en leurs chambres, ni s'entretenir ensemble hors les heures de récréation.	Nul n'entrera dans la chambre d'un autre, s'il n'a permission générale ou particulière du Supérieur, (V, 13)
24° On fera toujours lecture à table, tant à la mission, qu'à la maison.	on fera toujours la lecture spirituelle dans toutes nos maisons, même dans les missions, durant tout le temps du repas. (X, 19)
25° Ne manger à la maison les vendredis au soir que d'une sorte de mets, qui sera des légumes, pruneaux ou herbages pour honorer la passion de notre seigneur.	Pour honorer en quelque façon la Passion de Jésus-Christ, chacun se contentera, le vendredi de chaque semaine, en la réfection du soir, d'un seul mets, qui sera d'herbes ou légumes, si ce n'est lorsqu'on est en mission ou en voyage. (X, 16)
26° Tous les exercices de la mission se feront gratis.	mais nous y ferons toutes nos fonctions gratuitement (XI, 7)
27° Ne rien prendre des externes, ni donner sans la permission du supérieur.	Personne... ne donnera, ne recevra, ne prêtera, n'empruntera ni ne demandera rien d'ailleurs, sans la licence du Supérieur. (III, 5)
28° Ne boire ni manger hors le repas, ceux la néanmoins, qui auront besoin de déjeuner pourront prendre un morceau de pain, et un doigt de vin.	personne ne boira ni ne mangera hors les heures accoutumées, sans licence du Supérieur. (V, 12)
29° Ne parler aux externes sans permission et ne jamais les mener en sa chambre, ni s'entretenir, dans le cloître ne faire plus d'un tour ou deux.	Personne ne parlera dans la maison aux externes ni ne les fera parler a d'autres des Nôtres, sans la permission du Supérieur. (IX, 5)
30° N'aller au jardin hors les heures de récréation sans permission.	—
31° A l'arrivée, et à la sortie de la mission recevoir la bénédiction de Messieurs les curés et en leur absence de messieurs les vicaires, et ne rien faire d'importance	A l'arrivée et à la sortie de la mission, ils demanderont la bénédiction à Messieurs les Pasteurs et, en leur absence, à Messieurs les Vicaires ; et ne feront rien d'importance sans le

<b>Règlement pour la Congrégation de la Mission</b>	<b>Règles Communes, 1658</b>
sans leur permission, et leur communiquer, comme l'établissement de la charité, la communion des enfants, la procession, l'administration des sacrements aux malades et se bien garder et bien faire contre leur gré.	leur avoir communiqué auparavant ; et se garderont bien de rien entreprendre contre leur gré. (XI, 6)
32° Etre fort circonspect à proposer les difficultés qu'on aura trouvez en confession, en sorte qu'on ne puisse entendre de qui on parle. La compagnie doit faire en ce point une attention sans pareille et pour mortifier la trop grande affection qu'on a de dire ce qu'on a trouvé de nouveau. L'on ne proposera aucune difficulté sur les cas qu'on aura rencontrez que par l'avis du supérieur.	On usera de grande prudence et circonspection à proposer les doutes sur les cas de conscience, qui se présentent en confession ; en sorte qu'on ne puisse jamais conjecturer qui est la personne dont il s'agit. Et pour obvier aux maux qui en pourraient arriver, personne ne proposera les doutes touchant aucun cas de conscience un peu considérable, qu'on aura rencontré en confession, qu'auparavant on n'ait demandé au directeur de la mission s'il trouve bon qu'on les [= le] propose. (XI, 9)
33° Nul ne s'appliquera aux visites des malades ni aux accommodements que par l'ordre du Supérieur.	néanmoins, afin que la charité soit bien ordonnée par l'obéissance, personne n'entreprendra ces sortes d'œuvres de miséricorde, sans la licence du Supérieur. (XI, 8)

<b>Emploi de la Journée</b>	<b>Règles Communes, 1658</b>
Premièrement Se lever à quatre heures, et faire le signe de la croix, et dire <i>benedicta sit sancta atque individua trinitas nunc et semper, et per infinita secula seculorum. Amen. Sancta Dei genetrix sit nobis auxiliatrix. Amen.</i>	= X, 18
2° Employer une demie heure à s'habiller, faire son lit et satisfaire à ses nécessités. Ne point sortir de la chambre sans être entièrement habillé.	Personne ne sortira de sa chambre sans être décentement vêtu. (VII, 6)

Emploi de la Journée	Règles Communes, 1658
3 <sup>e</sup> Durant ce temps garder le silence marcher sans bruit, faire ses actions avec un esprit tranquille et recueilli se ressouvénant que bientôt on doit entrer en oraison.	Pour mieux observer le silence, chacun fera attention le plus qu'il pourra, à ne faire du bruit dans sa chambre, ou allant et venant par la maison (VIII, 6)
4 <sup>e</sup> Donner une heure de temps à l'oraison au lieu destiné, et au sortir d'icelle dire prime, tierce, sexte, nonne en commun.	tous et un chacun feront soigneusement tous les jours une heure d'oraison mentale, et, selon la coutume de la Congrégation, en commun et au lieu à ce destiné. (X, 7)
5 <sup>e</sup> Célébrer ou ouïr la Sainte Messe à son tour.	et célébreront la sainte Messe tous les jours, si quelque chose ne les en empêche; et tous les autres qui ne sont pas prêtres..., entendront tous les jours la sainte Messe. (X, 6)
6 <sup>e</sup> Etant de retour en sa chambre fléchir les genoux ce qu'il faut observer toutes les fois qu'on y entre et qu'on en sort pour offrir à J.Ch. ce qu'on va faire pour accomplir la volonté de Dieu et nous avancer en son amour.	s'agenouiller en entrant et en sortant des chambres de la maison, pour invoquer Dieu avant notre action, et lui en rendre grâces après qu'elle est faite. (X, 20)
7 <sup>e</sup> Lire un chapitre du nouveau testament teste nue et à genoux avec trois actes. 1 <sup>er</sup> adorer les vérités qui y sont contenues. 2 <sup>e</sup> Entrer dans les sentiments avec les quelles notre Seigneur les a prononcés. 3 <sup>e</sup> Se résoudre à pratiquer les conseils qui y sont contenus et puis s'occuper à l'étude ou autre exercice qui nous aura été marqué par le supérieur.	Outre cela, les prêtres et tous les clercs liront un chapitre du Nouveau Testament, et respecteront ce livre comme la règle de la perfection chrétienne et pour en profiter davantage, cette lecture se fera à genoux, et tête nue, faisant du moins à la fin les trois actes suivants, dont le premier sera d'adorer les vérités contenues dans ce même chapitre; le second, de s'exciter à entrer dans les sentiments, dans lesquels Notre-Seigneur ou les Saints les ont prononcées; le troisième, de se résoudre à la pratique des conseils ou préceptes qui y sont contenus, et à l'imitation des exemples de vertus qu'on y trouve. (X, 8)

Emploi de la Journée	Règles Communes, 1658
8° Immédiatement devant dîner faire un examen particulier touchant la vertu qu'on s'est proposé d'acquérir ou le vice qu'on veut extirper.	tous et un chacun feront tous les jours deux sortes d'examen de conscience, l'un particulier, qui se fera courtement avant le dîner et le souper, sur quelque vertu à acquérir, ou sur quelque vice à déraciner (X, 9)
9° Dîner à onze heures, et après faire une heure de récréation en forme de conférence gaiement et modestement.	De plus, tous garderont exactement l'ordre de la journée, qu'on a accoutumé d'observer en la Congrégation, soit dans la maison, soit dans les missions, particulièrement à l'égard des heures du lever et du coucher, de l'oraison, de l'office divin et des repas. (X, 18)
10° Apres la récréation se rentrer dans sa chambre, et s'employer à l'étude comme au matin.	= X, 18
11° A deux heures dire Vêpres et Complies en commun puis employer un quart d'heure à la lecture spirituelle	= X, 18
12° A cinq heures dire matines, et laudes.	= X, 18
13° A six heures et demi l'examen particulier, le souper et la récréation.	= X, 18
14° A huit heures et un quart faire l'examen général avec les prières ordinaires et la lecture du sujet de l'oraison pour le lendemain matin.	= X, 18
15° A neuf heures se coucher se recommandant à la très sainte trinité, et à la sainte Vierge, afin que nos premières, et dernières pensées soient adressées à Dieu et à sa sainte Mère.	= X, 18

Emploi de la Journée	Règles Communes, 1658
16 <sup>e</sup> On observera le même ordre aux missions excepté qu'on ira à six heures à l'église pour en sortir à onze, qu'on y retournera à deux pour en sortir à cinq, et qu'on dira vêpres et complies à une heure, et matines et laudes à cinq heures.	= X, 18

## VI. English Translation

### RULE FOR THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

First, the main [duty] of the Missioner should be to work for his own perfection; second, for the salvation of the poor country people; third, for the advancement in virtue of the clerical state.

2. To live in poverty, and in common.
3. Not to aspire to any benefice.
4. To spend the whole time of one's life in the exercises of the Mission.
5. To obey the superior and all those he will have appointed to represent him, both in town and in the country.
6. To use all imaginable precautions to maintain intact both interior and exterior purity.
7. Not to leave the house without the permission of the superior or of the person who represents him; nor without mentioning the places where one is going and the business that one has there; and on returning, to speak to him to render an account of his trip.
8. We will go outside only two by two, and the one who is the companion will let the other go first and will let him speak.
9. Never to eat in houses out in town, nor in the country, nor to bring anyone to eat in the house without the express permission of the superior.
10. We will hand over the letters we write to the superior before sealing them, for him to send them or to keep them back as he deems fit, without ever writing in any other way, nor opening those we will have received without first showing them to the superior.
11. To make a retreat once a year.

12. From time to time to make an account of our conscience to the superior, or to the person he designates.
13. Every Friday, to admit one's faults to the superior or to the one who represents him, both in town and in the country, in the presence of the others. And to listen willingly to the notices [*that will be given, and to readily perform the penances that*] will be ordered.
14. To follow the advice of the one whom the superior will designate for spiritual matters, and to go to confession to him twice every week, namely on Wednesday and Saturday after Matins.
15. To charitably mention to one other his defects, and to receive humbly the admonitions that will be given us.
16. To inform the superior of the defects noted in others, and to be willing to have our own made known to us.
17. To have a great respect for each other, and nevertheless to live in a very cordial manner, but without ever speaking familiarly with each other, nor touching each other through familiarity.<sup>58</sup>
18. Never to praise those who preach, catechize, hear confession, or succeed in public duties, except for those who are very virtuous and interior men.
19. In like manner, to avoid both particular friendship and particular aversions.
20. Never to speak of the governance or the affairs of the house, nor those of the world.
21. Never to speak ill of anyone, and principally of the superior.
22. To faithfully keep silence after evening prayer until the following day immediately after dinner and from the end of recreation until after supper.
23. Not to visit our confreres in their rooms, nor to gather together outside the hours of recreation.
24. We will always have reading at table, both on the mission and in the house.
25. On Friday evenings at home, we will eat only one kind of dish, which will be vegetables, prunes or greens, to honor the passion of Our Lord.
26. All the exercises of a mission will be given freely.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> *Se tutoyer* refers to an informal form of address in French, using *tu* in place of the formal *vous*.

<sup>59</sup> The text is ambiguous, since it may refer to a parish or popular mission, or to the works of the (Congregation of the) Mission in general. Since Vincent insisted on payment for his confreres working in seminaries and parishes, it is

27. Not to receive anything from externs, nor give them anything without the superior's permission.
28. Not to eat or drink outside of meals; however, those who need to breakfast may take a piece of bread and one finger of wine.
29. Not to speak to externs without permission, and never to bring them to our room, nor to entertain them; in the cloister<sup>60</sup> [courtyard] to make no more than one or two rounds.
30. Not to go to the garden without permission outside the hours for recreation.
31. When arriving and leaving a mission, to receive the blessing of the pastors, or in their absence, of their associates; and to do nothing of importance without their permission, and [without] telling them, such as the establishment of the [Confraternity of] Charity, the communion of the children, the procession, the administration of the sacraments to the sick; and to be careful of doing anything against their wishes.
32. To be very prudent in proposing the difficulties that one encounters in confession, such that no one will know who is being mentioned. The Company should pay unparalleled attention to this point, and to mortify the overly large pleasure that one has in passing on something novel. We will propose no difficulty concerning the cases we encounter without the advice of the superior.
33. No one will start to visit the sick or become involved in reconciliations without the order of the superior.

#### ORDER OF DAY

1. To rise at 4:00, and make the sign of the cross and say *benedicta sit sancta atque individua trinitas nunc et semper, et per infinita secula seculorum. Amen. Sancta Dei genetrix sit nobis auxiliatrix. Amen.*
2. To spend a half hour in dressing, making the bed and satisfying our necessities. Never to leave the room without being completely clothed.

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clear that the text refers only to the popular mission. Besides, he often mentioned the motives for doing so.

<sup>60</sup> This term could be taken literally for houses, like Saint Lazare and Saint Méen, that had monastic cloister walks, but in general it refers to a courtyard surrounded by buildings.

3. During this time, to maintain silence, to walk without making noise, to perform our actions in a tranquil and recollected spirit, remembering that soon we will have to enter into meditation.
4. To spend an hour in meditation in the designated place, and afterwards, to say Prime, Terce, Sext and None in common.
5. To celebrate or hear Holy Mass in turn.
6. When returning to our room, to kneel, and to do this every time we enter or leave the room, to offer to Jesus Christ what we are about to do [*desiring that it be*] to accomplish the will of God and to advance in his love.
7. To read a chapter of New Testament, with head uncovered and kneeling, with three acts: 1) to adore the truths contained therein; 2) to enter into the sentiments with which our Lord pronounced them; 3) to resolve to practice the advice given there; and then to work at study or another exercise assigned us by the superior.
8. Immediately before dinner to make a particular examination concerning the virtue that we have decided to acquire or the vice that we wish to root out.
9. To dine at 11:00, and afterward to spend an hour in recreation in the form of conversation, happily and modestly.
10. After recreation, to return to our room and work at study, as during the morning.
11. At 2:00, to say Vespers and Compline in common, and then to spend a quarter of an hour in spiritual reading.
12. At 5:00 to say Matins and Lauds.
13. At 6:30, the particular examen, supper and recreation.
14. At 8:15, to make a general examen with the ordinary prayers and the reading of the topic for meditation for the following morning.
15. At 9:00, to go to bed, recommending ourselves to the Most Holy Trinity, to the Blessed Virgin, so that our first and last thoughts [of the day] may be addressed to God and to his holy Mother.
16. We will observe the same schedule on the missions, except that we will go at 6:00 to the church and leave at 11:00, and return at 2:00 and leave at 5:00; we will say Vespers and Compline at 1:00 and Matins and Lauds at 5:00.

## VII. Organization

A brief analysis of the rules will show, I believe, some development within the rules themselves. I can imagine that the founder sat down and put his ideas on paper at various stages. The rules have a certain inner relation to each other, but it is not always easy to perceive how they developed.

Rules 1 to 6 deal with the purpose of the Congregation and the virtues of poverty, stability, obedience and chastity. He nowhere makes mention of vows. These rules are the briefest in expression but the most general.

Rules 7 to 10 treat of relations with those outside the house, and govern travel, the use of a companion and eating outside the house. Rule 10 deals with letter writing.

Rules 11 to 16 are about spiritual practices: annual retreat, communication, chapter of faults, confession and admonitions.

Rules 17 to 25, forming the longest section, discuss community life in various aspects, both positive and negative. Rule 25, the Friday meal, may belong either in this section or in the following.

Rules 26 to 30 are heterogeneous and might well belong elsewhere in the text. Nevertheless they found their way here, probably since they were developments or afterthoughts: gratuity of missions, management of finances, eating between meals, speaking with externs, and walking in the garden.

Rules 31 to 33 deal with missions and are the longest and most developed in the sense of including motives and theological observations. These are the most like the final articles that compose the Primitive Common Rules.

## VIII. Conclusion

It is hoped that this presentation of the recovered Primitive Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission will offer some more context to the official Common Rules that the entire Congregation treasures. The Common Rules of 1658 are mentioned in several places in the present Constitutions and Statutes<sup>61</sup> and are printed in the same volume. The analysis of the Primitive Common Rules shows us that Vincent de Paul worked on them over many years and developed his ideas based on every-day experiences.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Introduction*, C. 4, C. 34, S. 17.

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, letter 496, 14 November 1640; letter 639, 30 January 1642 (where "common rules" as an expression first occurs).

Toward the end of his life, while he and Louise de Marillac were developing the Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity, we can see that their rules were longer, richer and more theologically developed than his initial composition for his confreres, in other words, he, Louise and others must have sought to give them more substance. Finally, with the publication of the Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission in 1658, we see him at the height of his spiritual and theological reflection on the life of a Missioner. This development from original insight through experience to theological reflection and prayer is what has made the Common Rules the spiritual classic that they are.