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Vincent de Paul and Judas Iscariot

JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M., PH.D.

BIO

REV. JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M., Ph.D., completed his seminary studies at the Vincentian seminary in Perryville, Missouri, and at De Andreis Seminary in Lemont, Illinois. He received a Doctorate in biblical studies from Saint Louis University. He has taught in Vincentian seminaries in Saint Louis, Lemont, and Denver. He worked for the provincial of the Midwest Province from 1979 to 1981. He joined the board of trustees of DePaul University in 1981 and is currently a life trustee. He also served as a delegate from the Midwest Province to the international general assemblies of the Congregation in 1980, 1986, and 1998, and managed the archives of the province from 1980 to 1989. Father Rybolt also served as the director of the International Formation Center, a program for ongoing Vincentian education and formation in Paris, France. Currently, he is serving as a Vincentian Scholar-in-Residence at DePaul University. Since 1979 he has been involved in the Vincentian Studies Institute, which he headed from 1982 to 1991. His many publications have covered fields of interest in language, biblical studies, and history, particularly Vincentian history, and he has recently completed work on the multi-volume series *The Vincentians: A General History of the Congregation of the Mission.*
It seems strange to link Vincent de Paul and the apostle Judas, “the most wicked man in the world.” Nonetheless, Vincent mentioned Judas more than fifty times in his writings, especially in his conferences to both the Daughters of Charity and the members of the Congregation of the Mission. Despite this, the saint’s major biographers have neglected this theme, rarely citing mentions of Judas.

A close reading of Vincent’s treatment of Judas highlights aspects of the saint’s theology, exegesis, and instructional methods. He must have reflected on this crucial biblical figure, and he then laid out the results of his thinking for the sisters and his confreres. As will be seen, he used Judas as an example—a bad example—in the classical sense of the rhetorical exemplum. Such an example was to reveal truth through illustrative instances. Reflection on it was to generate enlightenment and persuade a change of behavior for the better.

Vincent also used the figure of Judas when counseling Louise de Marillac. Early in their relationship, she was worried and felt guilty about her son. Vincent then recalled two Old Testament figures (Abraham and Isaac) whose sons Ishmael and Esau had conflicts with their fathers. Judas, too, an apostle, had conflicts with Jesus. Vincent’s conclusion for her was that the faults of children are not always imputed to their parents; consequently, she should be at peace.

In addition to using Judas as an example, in 1659 Vincent used him to refer to his own life, through which we gain an insight into his spirituality. He wrote to Antoine Durand, “I conclude by recommending myself to your prayers, which I ask you to offer so that God will pardon me the incomparable faults I commit every day in the position I hold—I who am the most unworthy of all men and worse than Judas was toward Our Lord.” Although Vincent regularly prepared for death, he undoubtedly feared it and the judgment to follow. Such reviewing of faults and imperfections was the life of a saint.

One year before, in 1658, he spoke in a similar fashion. Louise, with the three officers of the Company, recounted an exceptionally revealing event that occurred during a council meeting. In Vincent’s presence, the sisters thanked God for preserving him after a serious accident when he fell from his carriage, and for the lesson they learned about how important

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2 Judas citations are found in twenty-six conferences to the sisters, and seven to the Missioners.


Vincent’s guidance, concern, and instruction had been for them. The revealing aspect comes, although Vincent did not mention Judas, when “he began to speak in terms of very great disregard for himself, saying, ‘I’m a miserable sinner who only spoils everything.’” Louise wrote that “he became very quiet, and his silence and recollection made us clearly understand that we had greatly embarrassed him.”

Positive aspects

Judas began well but ended badly. Vincent employed this insight several times, as when he wrote to Etienne Blatiron in a letter of spiritual counsel: “Always remember that in the spiritual life little account is taken of the beginnings. People attach importance to the progress and the end. Judas had begun well, but he finished badly; and Saint Paul finished well, although he had begun badly. Perfection consists in a constant perseverance to acquire the virtues.”

Vincent recalled that Judas must have received great graces, living with the Lord and even working miracles: “Isn’t that what happened to Judas? Like all the other Apostles, Judas had received Our Lord’s grace; he had been called to be an Apostle; he had preached, worked miracles, had the honor of following the Son of God, and had assisted at the institution of the

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7 Letter 490, “To Etienne Blatiron, in Alet,” 9 October 1640, Ibid., 2:146; see also conference 54, “Fidelity To God,” 3 June 1653, Ibid., 9:492.
most august Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ."

In addition, Judas “merited to be chosen from among all the Apostles to be the steward of his Master’s household; he persevered for a time.”

Vincent must have surprised one of his Missioners with the same example. That priest appeared complacent over the success of his missions. Vincent warned, “Judas had received greater graces than you, that those graces had produced more results than yours, and that, in spite of that, he was lost.”

He used the same argument concerning handling money; those who did so were to be fearful of the danger they ran. He told the sisters, “Each of you can say to herself, ‘Is my calling better than that of Judas?’ Alas, no, since Our Lord Himself called him! ‘Am I more in God’s grace than Judas was?’ Alas, it would be great temerity to think so!”

Although Judas betrayed Jesus, the account of the Savior’s relationship with his apostle points out the differences between them. In Jn 12:6, Judas is mentioned as a thief. Vincent’s view was that Jesus could have sent him away because of that, but he did not. The reason why, Vincent said, was that Judas was the “principal instrument of his Passion,” which could not be canceled. Vincent noted, “Our Lord admonished Judas only in the presence of the other Apostles. Even then He did so in veiled terms, saying that one of those who puts his hand in the dish would betray Him [Mk 14:20].”

Vincent also contrasted the gentleness of Jesus with the vicious betrayal of Judas. Jesus, he said, served the poor and sinners with gentleness. This was to be another example for the sisters: “He intended us to serve poor persons with gentleness and cordiality. He gave us outstanding examples of this in several circumstances of His life, both with the sick who were brought to Him to be healed, and with sinners and those who persecuted Him, like Judas who betrayed Him, and the high priest’s servant who struck Him.”

In a similar account given to his confreres, Vincent expanded the gospel account of the betrayal of Judas (Mt 26:50) by adding imaginative expressions. The following is one example:

9 Conference 54, “Fidelity to God,” Ibid., 9:492.
O my dear confreres, if the Son of God seemed so kind in His conversation, how much greater does His gentleness appear in His Passion, to the point that no angry word escaped Him against the deicides who covered Him with insults and spittle and laughed at His sufferings. “Friend,” He said to Judas, who handed Him over to His enemies. Oh, what a friend! He saw him coming a hundred paces away, then twenty paces; but even more, He had seen this traitor every day since his conception, and He goes to meet him with this gentle word, “Friend.”

Vincent’s goal was to encourage the confreres’ gentleness. In the same gentle spirit, Vincent comforted René Alméras by reporting what he was doing for an unnamed confrere in some trouble: “We are applying remedies to the sore, using various plasters of gentleness, threats, prayers, and admonitions. ... Our Lord did not send Saint Peter away for having denied Him several times, nor even Judas, although he was to die in his sin.” Despite the apostles’ murmuring and quarreling, and their abandonment of him, Jesus bore with them gently. Vincent concluded this section by exclaiming: “After such an example, what Missioner wouldn’t be willing to work to acquire this virtue?”

Another case of imaginative expressions is the following, where Vincent invented words for Judas and the high priests: “[Judas] even went off to the houses of outsiders to speak against Our Lord. He said He [Jesus] wasn’t the Son of God, which convinced the high priests that He was seducing the people. ‘Quoi!’ they could say, ‘Here’s a man who converses with Him, who is one of His disciples, and he’s telling us this. If it weren’t so, he wouldn’t be saying it.’

**Negative aspects**

For Vincent, one of the three great sins that characterized Judas concerned his unworthy reception of Communion at the Last Supper. Vincent said, “Look what happened to Judas. He received Communion without this preparation because he had made up his mind to betray Our Lord. And what happened to him? Something dreadful, Sisters. The devil entered into him.” In a later conference, Vincent continued:

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18 Conference 91, “Relations with Outsiders, Murmuring, Detraction,” 30 December 1657, Ibid., 10:349; see also conference 132, “Poverty,” 13 August 1655, Ibid., 11:225: “He [Judas] passed Him off as an imposter, a seducer, a magician.”
He made a bad Communion, and what followed? He lost his vocation at once, withdrew from the holy company of the Apostles to which he belonged, went and sold his Master and, in the end, damned himself forever. ...

... Could the devil conceive anything more sacrilegious and abominable than what Judas did after receiving Communion unworthily? To rebel against God after receiving such extraordinary graces! It seems that only the devil is capable of that. And Judas did this after receiving Communion! Abomination of abominations! To desert the side of God, to rebel against Him, to sell and betray Him!20

Clearly, the powerful and pointed lesson for the sisters was that they should never receive Communion unworthily.

Avarice was the second great sin of Judas. Vincent commented, “As soon as avarice has its clutches on a soul, good-bye to all virtue! Judas, ... who like the other Apostles, was destined for great sanctity, became a demon through avarice.”21

In another conference, Vincent linked an unworthy Communion with envy as the third of Judas’s great sins: “Judas ... had committed other crimes against the Son of God. He had conceived envy in his heart against Him, which had no effect; and as soon as he had received Communion, the devil took possession of his heart and involved him in his

abominable undertakings.” The biblical text does not support this directly, since it was envy that brought the chief priests to hand over Jesus. Nevertheless, some commentators have concluded that this was also Judas’s motivation.

Vincent also linked Judas’s envy with his having a grudge against Jesus and others. In the following citation, Vincent again filled in the biblical account with imaginative details: “For that’s what Judas did: ... he went to the Jews to accuse Our Lord and said to them, ‘He does this, He does that,’ whispering now to one, now to another, because he had a grudge against the Son of God and what He was doing.” This insight is possibly gleaned from Judas’s rejection of Mary Magdalen’s exorbitant use of expensive perfumed oil to anoint Jesus: “Judas had a grudge not only against Our Lord but against the Apostles, Mary Magdalen, and the whole Catholic religion, which he wanted to destroy.” Vincent applied this example to a sister who found fault with everything; “like a Judas,” he said, “she goes around whispering now to one, now to another.” Speaking to anyone encountering such a sister, he instructed, “Make the Sign of the Cross when you see her; she’s a Judas.”

Vincent’s psychological insights and expertise are evident in several of his conferences that mention Judas. For example, Vincent said, “Saint Gregory and the other saints reflected in fear on that appalling fall of accursed Judas. Let’s consider a little with them by what rationale that vile sin made him do it, in order to make him fall into the most horrible [crime] of all.” Vincent explained Judas’s thinking as follows:

This is how [Judas] began: the thought occurred to him, “I don’t know whether this Company will last; it doesn’t seem very likely; so, I have to put something by for myself. At least if it should decline, I’ll have something to provide for my needs. ...”

... But he didn’t stop at that. He went off to find the High Priests, who he knew resented Our Lord, and spoke so badly of Him that they took Judas to be one of His enemies. This encouraged them to tempt him to sell his Master, which he did, settling the price with them on the spot.

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24 Ibid., 10:97; see also conference 83, “Management of the Property of the Poor,” Ibid., 10:246, mentioning Mary Magdalen.
Vincent continued by spelling out the devil’s tempting suggestions concerning money: “The devil won’t fail to try to take you by surprise. If you listen to him, he’ll say to you, ‘Ah, Sister! Isn’t it a good thing to have something? How do you know what will happen?’ That’s what the devil will say to you, for that’s what he said to Judas.”

In another conference, he linked poor psychological results (no consolation in prayer, no peace of mind) with murmuring: “You’ll be punished by God. Why? Because you’re a Korah, Dathan, or Abiram—or rather a Judas—who finds fault with everything. That’s why there’s no consolation in prayer, no love for God or for the poor, and no peace of mind.”

In speaking to his confreres, Vincent reviewed the same temptations and their consequences. He said that temptations started with “small pleasures, then greater ones; then, like Judas, we must have possessions; all sorts of artifices are used—justly and unjustly—like Judas, who sold his Master; in the end, this viper becomes so furious that it bursts the entrails of the one who raised and hatched it in its womb.” Vincent mentioned Judas’s gruesome death several more times. For example, Vincent said, “In punishment for his infidelity, God permitted that he should hang himself and burst open in the middle,” and “hanging there, he burst asunder and spewed forth his accursed insides, where the desire for possessions had made him conceive so many crimes. In the end, he went to hell.”

Amid all this, Vincent still had a somewhat kindly approach to Judas. Vincent found that the betrayer had, without stating it exactly, blasphemed against the Holy Spirit (Mk 3:29): “He went off and, tormented by remorse for his crime, the wretch believed that His Master was not kind enough to pardon him. O gentle Savior! O God of mercy! That’s despair. He hanged himself by his own hand.” In other words, if Judas had believed that Jesus could pardon him, he would not have despaired.

Moral lessons
The examples that Vincent derived from the New Testament accounts of Judas are rich in their diversity.

Perseverance
He advised Marc Coglée that “in two or three cases, the community should be told of the fault of an individual: ... When the fault is so deeply ingrained in the guilty party that a private admonition is judged ineffective.”

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28 Conference 91, “Relations with Outsiders,” Ibid., 10:350; he cites Nm 16.
accepting or rejecting candidates for the Congregation. Vincent replied, “What Community
does not refuse applicants who do not have the requisite qualities or does not send away
those who do not behave properly? … The Son of God did not accept into His Company
all those who presented themselves. … And if He did not send Judas away, it was because
he was to be the principal instrument of His Passion.”33 He also reminded the sisters that
“accidents sometimes happen in Companies, and God allows them; don’t be surprised at
that, Sisters. There were faults and failings in the company of the Apostles; Judas sold his
good Master and Saint Peter denied Him.”34

Vincent found a negative lesson in Judas concerning perseverance in one’s vocation.
He warned the sisters: “But beware, I repeat, beware of being unfaithful to [vocation]! What
a misfortune! … The example of Judas and of many others should be a powerful motive to
incite us to perseverance. Thank God, Sisters, for having been chosen for such a perfect
vocation.”35 He linked perseverance with keeping the rules, especially poverty: “Oh, the
happy state of a soul who observes her vows, especially poverty, without neglecting anything
that concerns the other ones! So, dear Sisters, as long as you keep this Rule God will bless
you; but if you fail to do it, you won’t stop at that because this failure to observe it will cause
you to fall into the unhappy state of Judas. And if a Sister should be so despicable as to take

34 Conference 119, “The Virtues of Louise De Marillac,” 24 July 1660, Ibid., 10:590; see also document 177, “Council of
35 Conference 16, “The Foundlings,” 7 December 1643, Ibid., 9:114; see also conference 32, “Perseverance in Our
Vocation,” 22 September 1647, Ibid., 9:280: “Judas … thought he’d do better in another way of life.”
anything belonging to the poor, you can rest assured, Sisters, that she wouldn’t be able to persevere in her vocation.”

Is it I, Lord?

The founder personalized the reaction of the apostles at the Last Supper by asking the sisters to pose the same question: Is it I, Lord? Vincent used this to draw out several lessons. One dealt with trust in Providence: “So, ask yourselves whether or not you’re the one, like the Apostles when Judas had decided to deliver his Master to death. *Numquid ego sum, Domine?* Is it I, Lord? Judas was well aware that he was that miserable wretch, but the Apostles didn’t know it. So, they were afraid; but you have no reason to be afraid when you say, ‘Is it I?’ because it’s not a question of putting Our Lord to death; on the contrary, it’s to render Him service. Let confidence drive out fear then.”

In a second version of the same question, he wanted the sisters to take responsibility for anything that went wrong in the Company. The lesson was probably not to impute guilt everywhere but rather to acknowledge that each member was responsible for the common good. Still, comparing individuals to Judas was oppressive. Vincent said, “If anything goes wrong, a Sister should say, ‘It’s my fault.’ That’s what Judas said, Sisters: *Numquid ego sum?* Am I not this wicked person? So, you can say with Judas, ‘Am I not the one who is preventing the Company from making progress?’ Sisters, it takes only one person to keep the entire Company from advancing in virtue.”

The third version must also have been quite oppressive for his hearers, as it dealt with observing the rules. Guilt and apprehension must have been palpable as Vincent spoke.

The Son of God, speaking of Judas, said, “Ah, the poor, despicable man! It would have been better had he never been born!” [Mt 26:24] In like manner, Sisters, I say it would be better had such a sort of Sister never existed or entered the Company than for her to behave in it in such a way. ...

What grounds for fear and sadness! I’m sure that each Sister must be saying to herself what the traitor Judas said, along with the other Apostles, on the night

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he was to betray his Master, *Numquid ego sum, Domine?* Is it I of whom You are speaking? There are a few, so it is said, who are restive under obedience, who don’t follow the spirit of the Rules, and who do as they please. *Mon Dieu!* Is it not I?  

*Unworthy Communion*

The sisters must have been equally disturbed by Vincent’s theological commentary on making a bad communion, a theme he repeated several times, as mentioned above. In the following citation, in which a sister responds to his questioning, Vincent was following the traditional teaching about making a sinful Communion.

“And what harm, Sister, comes to a person who makes a bad Communion?” The Sister replied that such a person would lose the merit of all her other Communions and might even lose her vocation. “Stop there for a minute, Sister. Our Sister has mentioned two or three great evils, which should be weighed and considered attentively. The person who makes a bad Communion, she says, will lose the fruit and merit of all her past Communions; she’ll lose the merit of all those she will subsequently make, if she doesn’t do penance; she’ll lose all the good she’s ever done and could do. All that will count for nothing for her and, worst of all, she’ll lose her vocation.”  

*Murmuring*

Another repeated theme was murmuring. Vincent cited Judas in a lesson against it for his confreres. The apostles’ murmuring was counteracted by the Savior’s gentleness and forbearance. Vincent said, “O Savior, isn’t Your forbearance with Your Apostles, who murmured among themselves and fought over the first places, a beautiful example for us? Ah, brothers, what forbearance in Our Lord, who saw that they were going to abandon Him, that the first among them was going to deny Him, and that the unfortunate Judas was going to betray Him!”

Vincent also condemned Judas’s murmuring and applied these instances to the sisters. Judas’s murmuring against Mary Magdalen’s waste of ointment was the cause of his downfall, and it could bring about a similar fall among the sisters. A sister given to murmuring was like “a Judas who want[ed] to ruin [their] Company.” He warned, “Do your utmost to avoid her. If she tries to detain you, pretend you have something to do

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and leave her. Don’t listen to this serpent; she’s a Judas. For that’s what Judas did: he murmured.”

Murmuring against superiors or the Rules was equally reprehensible: “That wicked man reached that extreme only after he had begun to murmur against Our Lord. Bear in mind, Sisters, that when any of you murmurs against Superiors or the Rules in presence of her Sisters, that’s the beginning of the work of Judas. But as soon as a Sister does it with outsiders, she’s an absolute Judas.”

Changes

Vincent was unafraid to make changes in his two communities, in his other works, and even in the French Church and society. However, when private individuals tried to change the order of life, this resembled the acts of Judas. Perhaps without thinking about it, Vincent seemed to associate himself with God, who used him, Vincent, to establish his communities. His recommendation “never to change anything” should not be taken as a universal principle of Vincentian life.

When it’s Superiors who think it advisable to make a change, you must believe that it’s God; God, who used them to establish the Order, uses them again when changes are to be made. That’s why you must never criticize. But if a private

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individual tries to interfere and to change something, you mustn’t tolerate it! Judas’s malady began with that: he wanted to change Our Lord’s maxims for the use of the money entrusted to him. There’s no need to say anything more to persuade you to take the resolution never to change anything. If someone suggests a change to you, don’t listen to him.\footnote{Conference 59, “The Preservation of the Company,” 25 May 1654, Ibid., 9:546.}

He stigmatized gossiping and rumormongering, especially about changing established order, comparing this to the destructive work of Judas. “‘Someone is saying such and such,’ or ‘Why this?’ ‘Why that?’ … Lastly, to try to change the order established in the Company is to want to ruin it. You can see what such a person deserves!”\footnote{Conference 70, “Explanation,” Ibid., 10:97–98.}

\textit{Finances}

Although Vincent claimed that (as far as he knew) no sister had kept for herself anything that belonged to the Community or to the poor, the issue must have loomed large in his thinking. He returned to it more than once and compared the hypothetical unfortunate sister to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11), as well as to Judas, each of whom were punished with death. His message was gently given—he seemed to struggle to be clear and nonjudgmental—but it was direct and pointed.

It’s also against poverty to keep anything that belongs either to the Community or to the poor. \textit{O Sauveur!} What a great evil! If there were anyone in the Company who might be so unfortunate—which I find hard to believe—but if there were such a one, she’d be worse than Ananias and Sapphira, for they kept back what had belonged to them, but to keep the property of persons who are poor is to act like Judas. … He kept the alms he had been given to distribute to the poor. Sisters, I’ve already said that if there were such a Sister—something I find hard to believe; no, by the grace of God, I’ve never yet heard that anyone kept something back for herself; at least as far as I can recall—but if that were the case, we could easily say that she’d be an Ananias or a Judas.\footnote{Conference 76, “Poverty,” 20 August 1656, Ibid., 10:173.}

As noted above, Vincent did not mind drawing out theological conclusions not strictly found in the Scriptures. In this case, he charged Judas with keeping for himself the property of the poor, a Vincentian reading of Jn 12:6, which calls Judas a thief. A slightly
modified condemnation was leveled against any sister who kept something for herself in time of need. She had an excuse, unlike Judas, but it was a dangerous one: “You also have avarice, which is opposed to holy poverty. If a Daughter of Charity were infected with this vice, then good-bye to her vocation; there’s no need to say any more about it; it’s all over. The desire to have something for yourself in case of need, or to keep something or other in reserve, Sisters, is to mistrust God’s Providence and care. As soon as avarice has its clutches on a soul, good-bye to all virtue! Judas ... became a demon through avarice.”

He repeated his lesson in a later conference and expanded his reference to both men and women responsible for money:

Dear Sisters, there’s nothing else I can say to you about this except that those of you who handle money are in danger of becoming Judases. ...

... You see the danger involved in handling money. I say this for all sorts of persons without exception, both men and women. A Sister who handles money is in great danger of losing her vocation if she’s not exact to such a degree that not even a double remains in her hands to be kept for herself; for, as soon as she keeps back a single sou, you can say that she’s going to lose her vocation. The thought will occur to her as it did to Judas, “How do I know whether this Company will survive? I have to put something aside for myself.”

Bad advice in temptation

In one conference, Vincent spoke about seeking advice or spiritual counsel: “What should Judas have done when he was tempted against Our Lord? If he had confided in his good Master, he’d never have gone so far as to sell Him; but he turned to the high priests, who gave him very bad advice.” He urged the sisters, his hearers, to turn to the Lord and not do what Judas did: “Don’t ever go to outsiders because that would cause your ruin.” Vincent then continued his practice of embroidering the biblical account. He developed a text for Judas and the Jewish crowd:

“It’s true that I’m one of the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, but I have to say that I’m very sorry to have followed Him. I thought He was the Messiah, but now I’m afraid He’s only a deceiver.” He wasn’t satisfied with saying that to the people,

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48 Conference 40, “Love of Our Vocation,” Ibid., 9:362; see also a similar expression in conference 31, “Holy Communion,” 18 August 1647, Ibid., 9:267: “This is how vocations are lost, Sisters, and is the reason why the unfortunate Judas was abandoned to the demon, who enticed him.”

but he even went to the high priests to tell them Our Lord was an impostor and that he thought that removing him from the world would be a good deed. ... ... It was because of that the people cried out ... “His disciple has said it; He deserves to die.”

Vincent’s lesson was that “if [persons living in community] go to anyone except their Superiors for the purpose of mentioning their difficulties, they’ll ruin others and be damned themselves in the end.” If taken too literally, the lesson might have turned the Daughters of Charity into a cult, whose members had little freedom of conscience and action. On the other hand, Vincent’s constant call was for attachment to the Lord alone, as mediated through his representatives. Vincent understood the lives of the clergy and urged his confreres: “Now, in order not to fall into the misfortune of Saul [1 Sm 13:8, 15:11] or Judas, you must be inseparably attached to Our Lord and say often, raising your heart and mind to Him, ‘O Lord, do not allow me, in trying to save others, to be unfortunately lost myself; be my Shepherd, and do not deny me the graces you impart to others through my instrumentality and the functions of my ministry.’”

**Elections**

Vincent commonly referred to Judas in connection with community elections, mainly
for the Daughters of Charity. The biblical text Acts 1:15–26 relates the time of prayer, followed by a large meeting of the faithful presided over by Peter. Two names were proposed, prayer followed, the votes were counted, and Matthias was chosen to replace the faithless Judas. Vincent perhaps confused the text on one occasion by counting Paul as the replacement: “By the mercy of God, his place didn’t remain vacant, and God called Saint Paul from the Gentile world in which he was plunged to make him a worthy vessel of election.” He also confused the text somewhat by restricting the attendance at their meeting to the apostles only: “When Judas had committed the abominable sin of betraying and selling his good Master, and then fell into a state of despair, the eleven Apostles met to elect someone else to take his place.” Both of these lapses, if that is what they were, appear corrected in other texts. Mathias would replace Judas, and both apostles and disciples were summoned to elect another.

In the case of the election of someone to replace Louise de Marillac, Vincent followed the scriptural model by beginning with prayer: “In the first place, Sisters, pray fervently. Let all your prayers be to ask God for that. When the Apostles wanted to choose someone to replace Judas, they prayed and said, ‘Show us, Lord, the one You have chosen.’ Or sus, dear Sisters, pray fervently, then, that God will give you a good Superioress.”

**Conclusion**

An examination of Vincent’s use of the figure of Judas Iscariot has shown several examples of the saint’s theology and exegesis. He comes across as hard and restrictive in some areas, but his kindly and forgiving spirit is also evident as he wrestles with the presence of evil in the world. This examination of his writings and conferences also shows his freedom of expression in making the biblical text real and personal.

It is unclear why he referred so often to Judas in instructing the Daughters of Charity as opposed to his conferences to his confreres. Perhaps his conferences to the Missioners are simply lacking; if more were uncovered, possibly more references to Judas would appear. However, the more likely reason is that these references were simply his habit. Although they are strong and even threatening, they probably had a salutary effect on his hearers.

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Vincent de Paul with bible. Latin reads: God is charity.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
http://stvincentimages.ctcis.cti.depaul.edu:8181/
“Judas the Iscariot: And It Was Night.”
Painting by Christopher Williams (1873-1934).
Aberystwyth University School of Art Museum and Galleries, United Kingdom
“Last Supper.”

Painting by Pieter Pourbus (1523-1584). Oil on oak panel, 1548.
Judas is depicted fleeing with purse in hand as a monstrous figure enters in his direction.

Groeninge Museum, Bruges, Belgium
"Vaux Passional."
Detail of illuminated manuscript, ca. 1503.
Mary Magdalen anoints Christ’s feet, Judas standing at left.
National Library of Wales.
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Etching of a priest kissing the altar; Jesus betrayed by the kiss of Judas above.

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*Etching of a priest kissing the altar; Jesus betrayed by the kiss of Judas above.*

*Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online*