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Saint Vincent de Paul and Human Formation

by
Jaime Corera, C.M.

Vincent de Paul became involved in human formation at an early age, when he was around sixteen (if we accepted Abelly's chronology), in the house and as the tutor of M. de Comet's children. 1 It seems to have been this M. de Comet who suggested an ecclesiastical career for the young Vincent. A few years later, as a theology student at Toulouse, he again undertook a similar activity, this time on his own initiative, in a small institution that seems to have been a kind of boarding house for boys. In both cases, especially the second, the reason that led him to engage in this type of educational activity at so early an age was the need for financial means to pursue his own education. In both cases the young Vincent's work as educator was favorably received by the children's parents, as Abelly himself attests. The academic degrees that he received in 1604 could have been for the young Vincent -- he was then twenty-three or twenty-four -- the beginning of an academic career, if that had formed a part of his plans for his future or had been permitted by his financial situation. His ambitions, however, had a different aim. But these, very much against his expectations, led him by strange routes and no less strange adventures to Bordeaux, Marseilles, Tunisia, Avignon, Rome, and finally to Paris -- not to Paris proper, the City

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of Light, but to one of its shabbiest slums, where he found
himself unemployed and penniless at twenty-eight years of
age, eight years after his ordination.

At thirty-two, in Clichy, a small hamlet not far from the
walls of Paris, Vincent once again undertook his work as
educator, a work he had completely forgotten in the previous
eight years. Although his stay at Clichy was of short duration,
a little over a year, it seems that Vincent had time enough to
gather around him a small group of young men with aspira-
tions to the priesthood, among whom we find Antoine Portail.
In this case there were no motivating financial reasons.
Except for the case of Portail, of whom more later, we know
little about the possible success of his formational activity.

Vincent took leave of his first short pastoral experience at
Clichy to dedicate himself once more to the education of
children, this time in the Gondi mansion, a house of a far
higher class than that of his first patron, M. de Comet. His
dedication to the task was exemplary; his success, this time,
rather mediocre. If we consider the case of the youngest of the
three Gondi brothers, the future and notorious Cardinal de
Retz -- just born when Vincent entered the Gondi house and
only four years of age when Vincent left the house to flee to
Chatillon -- we might say that in this case the educational
efforts of Saint Vincent were an unmitigated failure. About
twenty years later the young Gondi came again under Saint
Vincent's influence, but matters did not improve thereby. Nor
could they improve. In his Memoirs, Cardinal de Retz makes it
abundantly clear that, being destined without a vocation to a
clerical life, he submitted very much against his will to the
formation programs of Saint Lazare. Saint Vincent always felt
a very remarkable affection for this extraordinary cardinal. To
assuage criticism current among the devout, Vincent used to
say that although the cardinal was certainly not overly pious,
he was not far from the kingdom of God. The exemplary
behavior of the cardinal during the last years of his life can
perhaps be seen as the delayed flowering of the seeds of Christian education planted in his soul by Saint Vincent in the early days of the cardinal’s childhood and youth.

The First Formational Activities

All these aspects we have seen so far belong to the prehistory, so to speak, of Saint Vincent’s true life, which really begins in 1617 at Chatillon, at thirty-seven years of age. This is the Saint Vincent we will try to describe in the present study. We begin with a quotation from Abelly which we present as the key to our vision of Saint Vincent’s stature as educator.

Vincent de Paul, though endowed generously with doctrine, could have taken as his own the Apostle’s motto and could have said with him, Nothing have I valued as highly as the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and of Jesus Christ crucified.\(^2\) This was for him the most important science and the highest wisdom. This was the book he kept always open before the eyes of his spirit and from which he drew a higher knowledge and brighter lights than he could have drawn from other sciences, though good and holy, that he had acquired in the course of his studies.\(^3\)

From the age of thirty-seven until his death at eighty, this was the wellspring of all his knowledge and the soul of his educator’s soul. Hundreds of missionaries, sisters, priests, and laymen received the same nourishment at his hands. The history of the following centuries down to this day speaks eloquently of his success as educator. Let us now go on to limn his portrait in this respect.

\(^2\)1 Corinthians 2:2.
On 4 September 1626, three diocesan priests, in addition to Saint Vincent, signed the document which, in our view, must be considered as the foundational fact of the Congregation of the Mission, the so-called Act of Association. Father Jean de la Salle was twenty-eight at the time of the signing, Father François du Coudray forty (six years younger than Vincent himself), and Portail thirty-six. The three, then, were adults when in the text of the Act they promised and bound themselves to carry out the ends of the new foundation and to obey Saint Vincent and the rules to be redacted in the future. All three had had previous pastoral experience of missionary work in Saint Vincent’s company. The youngest of the three, La Salle, died thirteen years after the date of the Act but in that short time showed himself to be, in Saint Vincent’s opinion, a great missionary, dedicated to missions and retreats to ordinands. In addition, La Salle was the first director of the internal seminary (novitiate) founded at Saint Lazare in 1637. The other two enjoyed longer lives, Portail in particular until a few month’s before the founder’s death in 1660. We will now follow in some detail the evolution of these two men as missionaries in order to discover some of the ideas and aspects of Saint Vincent’s practice in the formation of his missionaries.

Antoine Portail

We begin with Portail. Portail could be described as a timid man, a silent type, not very dynamic in temperament, a character quite dependent on Saint Vincent, whom Portail

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5Coste, CED, 12:293.
aspired to imitate, especially in his virtue of humility, as Collet says in his usual way. In a letter to Saint Louise written from Rome in 1647, Portail said that "I have become worse for having stayed for so long away from our beloved father, but I feel consolation in the hope of having the honor of soon going back to him and of being received charitably as a prodigal son." In sum, his psychological makeup was that of strong dependence, something that seems out of place in the companion of a person as dynamic as Saint Vincent for the demanding life of itinerant missionary work. In spite of all this, Portail became "a real treasure for the Congregation and for Saint Vincent, whose right arm he was in everything he undertook." Portail was, in effect, the founder's first assistant, often delegated by Saint Vincent for canonical visitations of communities in France and Italy, and appointed by him as director of the Sisters of Charity.

Portail was a man with a solid ecclesiastical formation. He was, in addition, a skillful writer. To him is due a resume of mission sermons which was in use for many years after his own and the founder's death, as well as a translation of the famous book of meditations by de Busee, which was in use in several parts of the world until just a few years ago. Writing in the solitude of his room suited him well, but preaching from the pulpit went well beyond the powers of his profound timidity. When he dared to enter the pulpit in 1630, eight years after his ordination, Saint Vincent could not help

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7 Notices sur les prêtres, clercs et frères défants de la Congrégation de la Mission (Paris 1881), 1:58.
8Ibid., 1:9.
9Coste, CED, 12:292.
celebrating the event with a certain glee. "Blessed be God because you have finally mounted the pulpit ... You’ve started late, but it was the same with Saint Charles [Borromeo]." It does not appear, however, that Saint Vincent would expect that fact to be the beginning of a brilliant career as a preacher, for a few lines later in the same letter he prays to God to grant Portail the grace -- of which Portail had written in a previous letter -- of "being exemplary... in the virtues of modesty, kindliness, and deference in conversation." In all these virtues, Portail indeed became a model in the Community. His first mission took place only five years after his first sermon. He was not the person in the forefront nor the preacher of the big sermons. These fell to Antoine Lucas, a brilliant preacher, while to Portail fell the more modest catechetical instructions. He was not, however, or at least so it seemed to him, very successful in the task, for Saint Vincent felt obliged to write him a letter to cheer him up. "It is good for you to feel humiliated... That is the way the Lord leads those he wants to use in his service... How greatly humiliated was he himself from the very beginning of his mission."

Since Portail was in fact rather lacking in the qualities required for an active missionary life -- qualities with which Vincent himself was generously endowed -- Portail became, under the founder’s direction, his right arm for many other tasks required for the good functioning of the two newly-born communities. In 1631, only six years after the founding of the Congregation of the Mission, Portail appears as the superior of a community of two, of which the other member was the vigorous and dynamic Father Lucas. There is a letter of Saint

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10Ibid., 1:88.
11Ibid., 1:294.
12Ibid.
Vincent to Portail, which is not easy to interpret, in which we read that Portail was a man of zeal and of virtue, and observant of the rules. He had a companion over whom he had authority, who for some reason or another (possibly because of his vivacité\textsuperscript{13}), did not quite fit the mold of what Portail thought should be the behavior of a missionary. Portail, a timid man, possibly made use of his authority as superior in a rather authoritarian manner (a kind of compensatory reaction well known in psychology), a fact that complicated rather than resolved the problem. The solution suggested by Saint Vincent followed in Father Portail’s education.

As you are the older of the two, the second in the Community, and the superior, tolerate everything! I say it again: everything, from our good Father Lucas. I say it once more: everything, so that yielding in your authority you may gain him by charity. Endure his temperament. Do not contradict him at first but later admonish him with cordiality and humility.\textsuperscript{14}

It would seem that Portail learned this lesson quickly and permanently, for in spite of having intervened in later years as Saint Vincent’s delegate in various thorny situations in several communities, he was liked and accepted among the members of the Congregation. He was also very popular and well liked among the Daughters of Charity, and this was due as much to his spirit of sacrifice in his work on their behalf as to his readiness to yield to the opinions of Saint Louise, the foundress, who in her relations with Portail dared press her views a little more strongly than she did with Saint Vincent when her opinions and his did not entirely agree.

\textsuperscript{13}See Notices, 1:135.
\textsuperscript{14}Coste, CED, 1:112-13.
Francois Du Coudray

Saint Vincent followed quite a different line of formation in regard to the other co-founder of the Congregation, Father Francois Du Coudray, who also rendered important services to it. Among them should be mentioned the difficult and long negotiations he undertook as Saint Vincent’s representative in Rome to obtain the papal approval of the Congregation of the Mission in 1633. Saint Vincent made mention of this fact in a letter to Portail informing him of Du Coudray’s death.

God has deemed it good to take Father Du Coudray.... You well know how much obliged the Community is towards him. I commend him to your prayers and those of the Community in a special way. I do not know the circumstances of his death.\(^{15}\)

It is surprising to find this dry tone, this lack of laudatory words in regard to a man of merit who was, in addition, one of the members who gave birth to the Congregation. Du Coudray’s death took place in 1649. No mention is made of him in letters or conferences in the following years.

It would seem that there was a desire to draw a heavy veil over his memory. Three years before Du Coudray’s death, Saint Vincent had given serious consideration to dismissing him from the Congregation.\(^{16}\) Du Coudray, however, was a brilliant man, and that is undoubtedly the reason why Saint Vincent chose him to get the approval of the Congregation of the Mission in Rome. He was, in addition, a very active missionary, a responsible man entrusted with the establishment of several new houses, with the distribution of war relief

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\(^{15}\)Ibid., 3:418.

\(^{16}\)Ibid., 3:97.
in Lorraine, as well as with the first steps in establishing the Congregation of the Mission in North Africa. The assembly of 1642 appointed him as a member of the commission charged with redacting the rules of the Congregation. Du Coudray came to the Community endowed with academic degrees that attested to brilliant studies in Scripture at the Sorbonne. In sum, we are dealing with a personality complete in every way. Saint Vincent addressed him firmly but with a great deal of deference. Once, in a long letter (which is worth reading in its entirety), Saint Vincent tried, with all sorts of explanations and excuses, to dispel from Du Coudray’s mind the suspicion that Saint Vincent had some sort of hard feelings towards him.\(^\text{17}\) As in the case of Father Lucas, and possibly for the same reason of vivacity of temperament, Saint Vincent advised Portail, who had previously consulted Saint Vincent on the case, to treat Du Coudray without fear, certainly, but with meekness and humility.\(^\text{18}\) Du Coudray seemed to be inclined to act as superior on his own account, deviating from what was usual and customary in the Community. The correspondence between Saint Vincent and Portail makes it plain that the former found in Du Coudray a strong personality, with opinions and ways of acting that were very much his own. Saint Vincent tried to lead him to the right path, not through imposition, but by persuasion. He does not appear, however, to have been very successful in this task.

It was not, however, this aspect that nearly removed Du Coudray from the Congregation, but his theological and scripture studies. Once the papal approval was obtained, Du Coudray wanted to stay on in Rome “to work on the transla-

\(^{17}\)Ibid., 1:283-85.
\(^{18}\)Ibid., 2:620; 3:70.
tion of the Syriac Bible into Latin." Saint Vincent refused the needed permission and showed by the excited tone of his letter that this was a question on which he could not yield. Like any other member of the Congregation, and indeed like the Congregation as a whole, "you [Du Coudray] who have been chosen from all eternity by the providence of God to be our [that is, the poor's] second redeemer, have pity on us... for want of your help we will certainly be damned." Du Coudray had to return to Paris and, as far as we know, give up his translation project. Years later he showed up in a letter of Saint Vincent's as being under suspicion of holding unorthodox opinions that Saint Vincent attributed to "his curiosity about the Hebrew languages and some rabbis have led him to these extravagances that he upholds." This was the reason that inclined Saint Vincent toward the thought of dismissing Du Coudray from the Congregation. He did not, however, carry out this thought, but when a little over two years later Du Coudray passed away, his memory received from Saint Vincent's pen only the terse and concise obituary mentioned above.

Portail and Du Coudray -- two men quite different in capacities and character who were the recipients of divergent educational styles on the part of Saint Vincent, with quite diverse results. Given the limitations of his human qualities, Portail could hardly have become the type of dynamic missionary that Saint Vincent himself was and that he often described so eloquently in letters and conferences. But Saint Vincent, by expanding his qualities and his limitations to the maximum, made of him one of the key fixtures in the func-

19Ibid., 1:251.
20Ibid., 1:252.
21Ibid., 3:97.
tioning of the two dynamic communities so recently founded. As for Du Coudray, who in intellectual power and human capacity was one of the most brilliant members among the first generation of missionaries, Saint Vincent was not able or else (we express this opinion with a certain hesitation, but it seems so to us) did not know how to direct him so that Du Coudray could enrich the first years of the history of the Congregation with the creative potentialities with which Saint Vincent himself was not endowed, even though he was so creative in so many other ways.

Saint Vincent was a leader with a very rich and very creative personality. He was also a great educator, as we will see later. Du Coudray’s case seems to suggest, however, that he was not so successful in the formation of men with personalities almost as strong as his own. We refer to the formation of leaders inside his own Congregation. Outside of it he was certainly a good educator of leaders among the sisters, among the secular clergy (as, for example, the many high quality bishops who emerged from the Tuesday Conferences), and among the laity. True, he did form leaders among the members of his Congregation, but as destined for the world outside, as shepherds and directors of the people of God in the image of the priest portrayed by the Council of Trent.

We have chosen these two cases only as examples of Saint Vincent’s flexibility in adapting his ways of formation to different types of missionaries. It would be worthwhile to make a more detailed study of several other cases, but such a study would go well beyond the limits imposed on this work. We will now try to sum up what we think was Saint Vincent’s thinking and practice in the field of missionary formation.

First of all, one who seeks to form others should be well formed himself.

To that end [that is, to form seminarians well in a solid piety], we must be the first to be filled with it, for it would be almost useless to give them instruction and not
example. . . . We must possess this spirit with which we want them to be animated, for no one gives what he does not have. Let us ask for it from our Lord and let us give ourselves to him so that we may learn to conform our conduct and actions to him.\textsuperscript{22}

This is possible only when the educator has learned the fundamental science of his own life in the open book which is Jesus Christ, according to Abelly’s graphic expression which he applied to Saint Vincent, as we have seen. The life and everyday activity of a missionary constitute a very complex whole of realities that must center, especially if he seeks to form missionaries, on an axis that will provide meaning and sense to everything he does. That axis is Jesus Christ, contemplated from the perspective of his mission to the world as evangelizer of the poor, so that the formation of clerics, whether they belong to the Congregation or not, should be seen from that perspective, because

our main obligation is to the instruction of the rural people, so that the service we render to the clerical state is subordinated to it \([\text{n’en est que l’accessoire}]\).\textsuperscript{23} That is the reason for our contributing to form good clerics. . . . not to set aside the missions, but in order to conserve the fruits we get through them. . . . The seminarians will learn better the ecclesiastical functions. . . . if they see our men’s dedication to the evangelization of the poor.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., 4:597; 6:61.
\textsuperscript{23}See ibid., 11:133.
\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., 4:42-43.
The Formation of the Clergy

Saint Vincent never forgot this aspect in his relations with the secular clergy. Although the Tuesday Conferences gathered the most select members of the Parisian clergy, Saint Vincent was successful in instilling in them a profound feeling for pastoral dedication to the poor. The celebrated sermon by Bossuet (one of the most "aristocratic" members of the Conferences) about the eminent dignity of the poor is a text undoubtedly inspired by the spirit of Saint Vincent. The statutes of the Conferences declared plainly in the very first article, "They have as their end to honor the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, his eternal priesthood, his holy family, and his love towards the poor."  

His deep conviction about the greatness of the priesthood (for the priest’s life prolongs the mission of Christ) led Saint Vincent to an attitude of authentic humility. The greatness of the task of missionary formation goes well beyond the insignificance of the educator. It is not just that he is not worthy to form priests, he is not worthy to be one himself. Because "if I had known what the priesthood is when I ventured to enter into that state... I would rather have chosen tilling the land than commit myself to such a tremendous state." Only he who knows himself to be unworthy can be God’s instrument in forming men who will carry on his son’s mission. The only motive that justifies dedication to such a task is the will of God who "has led the Congregation to this work, we have not chosen it ourselves. He demands from us, however, a serious

26See, for example, ibid., 13:85.
27Ibid., 5:568.
dedication, humble, devout, and constant, so that we live up to the excellence of this enterprise.”

All these reasons should lead the educator to consider himself to be in a state of permanent formation, as we say today. This idea was very vivid in Saint Vincent’s mind from the very beginning of the Congregation, and even before it came into existence, for it was stated plainly in the contract of foundation signed by Saint Vincent and Gondi. This was, in fact, one of his permanent concerns in regard to the secular priests -- the Tuesday Conferences were nothing else than a program of ongoing formation -- but more so in regard to the members of his Congregation. On 5 August 1659, a year before his death, he established at Saint Lazare, ”so that all can be well instructed as to how to act in seminaries,” an impressive formation program for the priests, which included ”instructions” about moral theology, catechism, preaching, controversy, and the administration of sacraments. He did not include chant and rubrics because ”I am afraid we will not have enough time.” Anticipating possible objections from mature missionaries, he added, ”Although we might perhaps know all these things, it is good to freshen them up in our memory. Besides we may know well all the things we must know.”

Saint Vincent wanted the Congregation of the Mission to form a type of missionary suitable for all kinds of work in the Community, in particular for two so disparate works as the

28Ibid., 13:84
29Ibid., 13:201.
30Ibid., 13:201.
31Ibid., 12:290.
32Ibid., 12:293.
33Ibid., 8:278.
formation of clerics and the rural missions. In these times of ours, which call for specialization, that aim seems to us unreachable in practice and not very suitable even in theory. But it would seem that many missionaries of his own time saw the problem in the same way, for Saint Vincent had continually to fight the tendency of some members of the Congregation to specialize in one of the two ministries. It is not easy to know whether he was totally successful. It would seem he was not, for only two years before his death he kept insisting on the same idea in the conference on the end of the Congregation. Saint Vincent wanted well prepared men, real professionals for the several functions required by the Congregation’s work, but, as we saw in the case of Du Coudray, he was rather against his missionaries’ dedicating their time to other kinds of knowledge with little or no relation to the works of the Community. This firm attitude was made plain many times throughout his life, and it found a concise expression in the text of the Common Rules, "All, but in particular the students, will watch carefully lest their hearts be invaded by an uncontrolled desire for knowledge. They will not, however, cease to dedicate themselves assiduously to the studies needed for the right performance of the works which are proper for a missionary." 

**Saint Vincent and Learning**

Let us allow ourselves a small digression in order to make a brief reference to the subsequent history of the Congregation. Outside its walls an image became popular of Saint Vincent as

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34Ibid., 12:85.
a person really good and kindly, but rather ignorant. Bremond attributed this fact to Saint Vincent himself who, as is well known, very often alluded to his ignorance and lack of instruction.36 Another fact that contributed to this image was the Jansenist legend, which arose in a special way from the Abbe de Saint-Cyran’s violent diatribe against his former friend, Saint Vincent. It is easy to conclude (as does Bremond) that this false image was later interjected into the Community by the Congregation itself. But in this case there was no excuse for maintaining the false image, for the Congregation had at hand Saint Vincent’s letters and conferences, which prove to satiety that its founder, even if he was not a first rate specialist in any of the ecclesiastical or profane sciences of his time, was nonetheless a man endowed with an above average knowledge in both fields. But if in the life of the Community, there floats suspended in the air a nebulous image of a founder who, on the one hand, was not himself very much of a knowledgeable man, and, on the other hand, was not very intent that his missionaries acquire ideas that were not strictly necessary for performing modest chores in the clerical world, then it will be easy to slide into the aberrant conclusion that in order to instruct simple people, the catechism is all that a good missionary needs to know. We can be sure that Saint Vincent would have been totally flabbergasted by this opinion, which we have heard in the Community more than once.

In his life of Saint Vincent, Father Pierre Coste wanted to make this point quite clear in order, no doubt, to do away with the false image he knew to be current among his confreres.

Although Saint Vincent’s type of mind was practical, he had the highest esteem of knowledge and learned men. His diplomas of bachelor of theology and licentiate in canon law, his close relations with doctors of the Sorbonne, and of the College of Navarre, such as André Duval, Nicholas Cornet, and John Coqueret, and still more his writings against the errors of his time, clearly prove this fact, against which Jansenist calumnies will ever prove unavailing.37

We can only wish the same fate to the ambiguities on this point that may still remain inside his own Congregation.

Saint Vincent, said Coste, had a type of mind that leaned toward the practical. He admired Adrien Bourdoise’s type of seminary formation established at Saint Nicholas-du-Chardonnet, a formation plan directed toward forming pastors, not doctors. That same idea animated his own formation program. For that reason he preferred the students to receive their theoretical studies (la scholastique) in some university center, while at home they were provided with the knowledge demanded by a practical pastoral life.38 The same idea was behind his insistence that the seminary professor impart his teaching based on a good, well known manual, and avoid teaching by dictation or by notes prepared by the professor himself.39 By that he also wanted to achieve that the teaching

38Coste, CED, 13:185.
39Ibid., 2:212.
be not only fully orthodox, but that it reflect the opinions accepted by the majority of the doctors, and so avoid carefully any kind of doctrinal novelty, which would only feed curiosity and put in danger the necessary uniformity.\(^{40}\)

The same reasons moved him to insist that controverted opinions be avoided. Saint Vincent's opposition to the Jansenist novelties is well known. He did not, however, want the missionaries to waste their time preaching against them. After several fruitless admonitions, Father Jean-Baptiste Gilles, who repeatedly spoke against the Jansenists in his retreats to ordinands, was transferred to another house.\(^{41}\) The professor who replaced him at Saint Lazare, Father Gabriel Damiens, who showed in contrast a marked inclination toward the Jansenist doctrines, was also withdrawn from teaching.\(^{42}\)

The formation program, more practical than theoretical, was complemented by the exercise of ministerial functions in the field. That is why, in spite of the fact that from the time of its founding the Congregation of the Mission carefully avoided pastoral work in the cities, Saint Vincent was very much in favor of having seminaries established in conjunction with parishes, so that the future priests could gradually be trained in pastoral work, in the style of Bourdoise's seminary.\(^{43}\) For the same reason, he would send seminarians to work in the rural missions. The number of educators in the seminaries of Saint Vincent's time were rather small, from three to five missionaries, but invariably Saint Vincent took pains to insure that the small formation team was formed by a wise

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\(^{41}\) *Coste, CED*, 3:328.


mixture of men of a pastoral temperament with men of a more academic bent.\textsuperscript{44}

It would have been worthwhile to study Saint Vincent’s activities in the formation of other types of people -- sisters, priests, laymen -- but this would have also gone beyond the limits of this essay.

In conclusion, let us recall an idea mentioned above, which is the key not only to Saint Vincent’s thinking and practice as an educator, but as a person, as saint, as founder, and as historical figure. His rich and complex personality had a center point around which everything turned in his life. This center point was the figure of Jesus Christ, evangelizer of the poor. "Our formation, in a continuous process, should be directed to the end that the members, animated with the spirit of St. Vincent, emerge ready to carry on the mission of the Congregation," say the Constitutions, number 115 [Chapter VI, 1, 77, .1 in English version]. Today the teaching and educating techniques and means may be quite different from those of Saint Vincent’s times, as are the times, the poor, and the face of the church. Educating in a Vincentian manner cannot, however, have any other center point but that of Saint Vincent, if we want to be faithful to his spirit.

\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., 4:43.
Give me a man of prayer and he will be capable of doing all things.

_Saint Vincent de Paul_

You are quite right not to have any scruples about missing Mass to attend to the poor, for God loves mercy better than sacrifice.

_Saint Vincent de Paul_

The Judge will show mercy in proportion as we show it.

_Mother Seton_