Preparatory Studies: Community Life of CM, 1977
Community life
in the time of St. Vincent
and in the present.
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II. COMMUNITY LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL AND PRESENT DAY THEOLOGY.

A. Community Life and the Gospel

1. Evangelical Radicalism

Each member of an ecclesial community is in it by the requirements of his Baptism. He has entered it guided by the ideal of a radical living of the Gospel. The pursuit of Christ is active in each person who feels the call to community life. Now then, in an impartial reading of the Gospel we discover that the demands of this and the pursuit of Christ are radical. The Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5: 1-16), the passage about the rich young man (Mt 19: 16-29), the conditions for following Christ (Lk 14: 26-27; 9: 23-24), the diversity of eunuch (Mt 19: 10-12), as well as the passage in Matthew 5: 29-30, are only so many other demonstrations of the radical demands of the Gospel of Jesus. Nevertheless, this evangelical radicalism cannot be deduced from this or that text or passage taken literally and in an isolated sense. Rather, it springs forth within the context of the Gospel. Taken in its global content, the Gospel of Jesus is radical; that is its demands are radical. Jesus requires that we opt for him. The kingdom of God preached by Jesus places us in the jaws of this option. The alternative is clear: God in his Lordship or the World in its Lordship.

Jesus wishes to wrench us out of our ordinary preoccupations and be preferred over and against the realities and the persons to whom our hearts cling, at least when we wish to give ourselves entirely to the Gospel. This choice obliges one to take certain decisions which rend the heart of man in its very depths. (Tillard, El proyecto de vida de los Religiosos, Madrid, 1974, p. 182.)

Only in the context of this evangelical radicalism can one comprehend the communal life which we have chosen. The requirements of the Gospel and of the Kingdom of God preached by Jesus illuminate community life, provided that we have entered into it, guided by the ideal of the most radical following of Jesus.

2. The "koinonia" of the Primitive Community

From long ago, the monastic and religious tradition has reflected on the primitive Christian community described in the Acts of the Apostles (2: 42-47; 4: 32-35; 5: 12-16), as the ideal of community life. The pentecostal community is structured, according to Tillard, around two points:

a. Fellowship-koinonia- with the Lord. This fellowship is realized through listening to his word which comes from his direct witnesses and is nourished by his mysterious presence in the midst of those gathered together in his name.

b. The service of the Gospel should be carried out through the testimony of the community, by the proclamation of the Good News that is in a special way entrusted to some of them.
If we analyze those passages in the Acts of the Apostles in which the life of the primitive community is portrayed for us we find some elements that are applicable to any Christian community. On the one hand, a community spiritual life which was concretized in the listening to the word in prayer and in liturgy. "They were constant in listening to the teaching of the Apostles and in the community of life, in the breaking of the bread and the prayers." (2: 42). In this way the presence of the Lord was affirmed within the community. On the other hand, this presence of the Lord impelled them to a true communion and fraternity among their members. This fraternity is translated by the word koinonia, which in Greek meant "participation, unity, intercommunication, and association." This koinonia was concretized from the material point of view in the distribution of goods. "They sold their possessions and goods and distributed them among everyone according to each one's necessity (2: 45; 4: 34-35). From the interior viewpoint this fellowship was realized by means of the formula "one common heart and one common soul (4, 32). "

Leaving aside argued exegetical questions and the idealization of the accounts in the Acts of the Apostles, Christian koinonia, such as is deduced from a theological reading of the previously cited texts, contains among other things the following elements:

a. The origin of Christian koinonia is profound adherence to Christ. The unconditional acceptance of Jesus in faith, which is the work of the Spirit constitutes the fundamental element of Christian koinonia.

b. This element of faith, which is adherence to Christ, leads to a profound interior communion. One common heart and one common soul. Unanimity and solidarity. Faith in the resurrected Christ unites us and links us. We all participate in one supreme and indivisible value which has its origin in the Spirit of God. Because of this, that interior union is only perceptible by the light of faith.

c. This interior fellowship is externally translated in the holding of a common stake and in the sharing of material goods. If we share all that we have with others it is because Christ has gathered us together and made us one fellowship.

d. Koinonia is modeled on, and acquires form or shape in fraternity. This fraternity has its origin in the mystery of the saving God. Christ reconciled us with God and with our fellow man. Having realized this reconciliation we acquire the potential of loving God and our Brother. But, since sin and egoism are an existential fact in man, brotherhood requires a continuous and unceasing labor of reconciliation with God and with our brothers.
3. The Vincentian Community in the Light of the Gospel

The members of the Vincentian Community belong to it because they have decided to live the Gospel and evangelical Koinonia in its entirety. The goal then and the ideal of our community will always be the requirements of the word of Jesus. For this reason, evangelical radicalism and Christian koinonia must be converted into the internal law of the Vincentian Community if it wishes to be authentic. There must be operative within it a kind of institutionalization of the Gospel and koinonia. To this end our Vincentian communities must put into practice adequate measures such as the early Christian communities did. Such measures are: the communal celebration of the Eucharist, the celebration of Common prayer, the continuous exercise of communitarian witness and harmonious living together in community, etc.

B. COMMUNITY IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN ECCLESIOLOGY

We know that community or communal life is a basic and fundamental fact in the life of the Congregation of the Mission. For this reason, we propose to clarify this fact in the light of contemporaneous ecclesiology.

1. The Community of Faith

The Vincentian Community uniquely encounters its meaning if it is constructed within the context of the ecclesial community. Assuming that it is rooted in the Christian being of its members, it is before all a Christian community. The basic and fundamental element of the ecclesial community is its character of mystery. In it, it is God who summons together. Therefore, the Vincentian community, as a Christian group within the ecclesial community, is a gathering of persons called by God. The person who forms part of the community is there in the name of the Lord Jesus and through the power of his Spirit. It is a gathering of persons called forth by the One who is capable of doing it. The Lord is he who has gathered them together.

From this point of view there exists a bonding element which is the presence of the Lord. This presence constitutes a kind of pre-eminence which impels us to all others. The presence of he who has called us together presides in the Vincentian community and this presiding give foundation to the community.

This means in other words that the community is a faith event. And this is the fundamental dimension which lends to the true ecclesial comprehension of the Vincentian Community. Once this perspective of faith is destroyed the nuclear element of communal life is lost.

From this viewpoint we can drain off this nucleus of conclusions:

a. The Vincentian community, like any other Christian community, is not an operation of natural relationships. It is not a group of friends who understand one another and therefore have decided to form a community. Although natural affinity is important, and therefore can't be excluded notwithstanding, it is not the decisive factor which determines what the essence of the community is.
"We don't choose our brothers in community. It is God himself by means of that call of the Holy Spirit which we denominate as vocation who gives them to us and gives us to them (Tillard, op. cit. p. 267).

b. The fact that the community is an assembly of those called forth does not impede nor exclude the personal decision to become a member of the community. Not only does it not impede it but it requires it. Every act of faith is a response to a call and a gift from God. Without this answer or personal decision, the historic and human character of the community would be destroyed.

c. The community is not a simple human group that obeys the laws of group sociology and psychology. Neither Sociology nor Psychology by themselves can explain the framework of Christian community. But neither does it exclude the Psychological or sociological interpretation of community. Entirely to the contrary, the human basis of its members constitutes the substratum upon which the Christian and Vincentian community is mounted. Thus a true human maturity is required to live in community. But community is not reduced to that, but rather supposes the faith event, the call of the Spirit by which we mutually accept one another as brothers.

d. Community requires therefore a maturity of faith on the individual level as well as the collective level. It is the absolutely necessary point of departure for forming community.

2. Fraternal Community

Those gathered together in community are linked to one another in Jesus Christ. We are dealing with a unity made manifest through the ecclesial image of the body of Christ. Unity with Christ in the vertical sense and with the members among themselves in the horizontal sense. It is therefore a community of love. His law is evangelical brotherhood.

Now then, the center of Christian community so outlines is the Lord's Supper. St. Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, does it not mean a sharing in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though we are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. (1 Corinthians 10: 16-17.)

Community of love requires that the center and the axis be the Lord's Supper. Otherwise, there will be no Christian community. The Eucharist is the source of love and brotherhood. It deepens the bonds of charity between the members of the community. On the one hand, the Eucharist is a manifestation of the fact that love and fraternity exist in the community. The Lord's Supper celebrated in community is a requirement which springs necessarily from true brotherhood among members.
2.1 The community of the first three missionaries, 1625.

There remains little extant testimony as regards this first community experience. St. Vincent aludes to it in the lecture of May 17, 1658 concerning the observance of Holy Rules, giving as a reason for the origin of our missions:

"And for it (the Mission) he gave us the College des Bons Enfants where P. Portail and I took refuge; we took with us a good priest to whom we delivered fifty escudos annually. The three of us went about preaching from town to town and holding missions...this is what we did, while God was doing that which he had forseen from all eternity. He gave his blessing on our works and upon seeing it being carried out he sent to join us some ecclesiastics and asked us to receive them." (XII, 7-8).

The reference is simple and short, but sufficient enough to highlight the following:

a. The apostolic vocation of the community.
b. The recruitment of later vocations due to the development of the work.
c. The payment of 50 escudos to a good priest who lived with them still does not correspond to all of the prescriptions of the Foundation Contract which ordered what they live from a common purse. It is evident that the first steps of the nascent community had to be somewhat informal.

2.2 The act of association of the first missionaries, 4 September, 1626.

The four missionaries along with St. Vincent signed the act of association. It is a true work contract in which the missionary team commits itself to faithfully keep the regulation living in common. The drafting of the act, signed in the presence of notaries, is an almost textual copy of the principal points of the Foundation Contract. As a consequence, the above enumerated ideas stand out:

a. The right which falls to St. Vincent to choose any churchman who should deliver themselves to the service of the missions (XIII, 204).
b. Association with the community after a time of testing: "we after having tried for a sufficient time" (XIII, 204). Notice in this brief clause the germinal seed of the intern seminary which will later be institutionalised in the Congregation of the Mission.
c. Apostolic purpose of the community: "to exert ourselves for the salvation of said poor people of the country" (XIII, 204).
d. To live in common under the obedience of the superior: "in order to live together after the fashion of a congregation..."(XIII, 204).
3. The Charismatic Community

As can be deduced from Pauline theology, every Christian community has a Charismatic structure. Although the term "charism" is highly abused today, the consequence has been excessively trivialized. It's content, when correctly understood, has theological and ecclesial meaning.

The charism does not have to be regarded as an extraordinary, miraculous, or a sensational phenomenon. If this were so, properly considered, charisms would be the expulsion of demons, miracles, etc. While charisms of this sort do arise, and in fact arose in the primitive Church, "extrordinariness of character" is not essential to a charism. To the contrary, a charism must be considered as an ordinary phenomenon, in the entire Christian community.

It would have to be described in this fashion:

a. A charism is not the same as an aptitude of talent, as for example, the aptitude of studying mathematics or music. It is rather a gratuitous vocation to serve others and is not for the person himself. It is a service whose purpose is to edify and to benefit the community.

b. A charism is a gift from the Spirit which blows when and how it wills. That is to say, it is the manifestation, the concretization, and the individualization of the power of grace which overtakes man to lead him to serve. This revelation of grace is made manifest to us through and by means of the Spirit: "It is a Revelation from the Spirit" (1 Cor 12,11). Charisms then are pure gifts from God.

c. The most important charism is charity (1 Cor 13, 4-8).

d. In view of what was previously said, we can venture a definition of a charism: "A call from God, directed to an individual in service of the Church which enables one for that service" (H. Kung, The Church).

There exist some principles which rule the charismatic structure of the Christian and Ecclesial community:

1) Variety of Charisms. A charism is not given through an ordination or through a post within the community. A charism cannot be institutionalized. Uniformity as such is opposed to the wealth of charisms which appear in the Pauline letters (1 Cor 12:28; Rom 12: 6-8; Eph 4:11).
2) **The Universality of Charisms.** The charism is not limited to one sector of the ecclesial community. Each person has his own charism (1 Cor 7:1, 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10).

3) **There is a Hierarchical Ordering of charisms.** (1 Cor 12:28-31).

4) Charisms in their variety and universality are at the service of the building up of community (1 Cor 14:12; Eph 4:12). No one can appropriate them to himself and make use of them to ends other than those which are for the building up of community.

5) All charisms are subject to a law, of liberty and of love. Charity permeates and informs all of them; otherwise they would be dead.

Perceiving this charismatic structure within the Christian and Vincentian community is fundamental, if we wish our community to function as a Christian community. For this three attitudes are required:

* **An Attitude of Faith.** Capable of seeing in man a revelation and manifestation of the Spirit.
* **Brotherly Attitude**, in community relations, personal prejudices which rise from personal contempt must not have first place.
* **A Democratic Attitude.** The primordial attitude in the community is not the established order, imposed from above, which would smother the manifestations of the Spirit.

4. **Apostolic Community**

The assembly of those called forth, which is community, exists for some purpose. Community in and of itself is not a value except when it is conceived of in terms of an activity. Now then, this activity is determined by the aim of the community of the mission, that is the evangelization of the poor. The members of the community are not gathered together in order to develop their personal talents as men, rather to advance those capabilities toward the end for which they are gathered together, towards a special purpose within the Church.

This is deduced from the fact that the Ecclesial community does not identify itself with the Kingdom of God and from the fact that the community and the Church are in service of the Kingdom. Thus every Christian community has its unique purpose... as service to the establishment of the Kingdom of God in this world. The communical is diaconal with respect to man, the world, and the Kingdom.
5. **Eschatological Community**

The Eschatological Community is a consequence of the aforementioned: every community is in the service of the Kingdom. This is an eschatological reality, that is, a future reality which happens at the end of time. But at the same time it is already erupted in this world, and in the present has already been inaugurated. It is between the "already" and the "not yet".

Thus the ecclesial community and every Christian community cannot be constituted in terms of itself but must be considered as something transitory and of an intermediate time.

This excludes the following from the Vincentian Community:

* that the primary element be its own growth.

* institutional triumphalism, as a human and social reality.

* On the contrary, the primary element in it is its mission in the Church, its service to man and to the Kingdom of God.
III. THE VINCENTIAN COMMUNITY ACCORDING TO ITS ORIGINS

A. The Community According to the Foundational Texts.

St. Vincent de Paul's allusions to community life are constant and precise. They refer to all aspects of community life. There scarcely remain loose ends to tie up. All along his earthly itinerary and as the community's own experiences were maturing they become clearer and more revealing. As a result the evolutionary process of St Vincent de Paul's thought regarding community matters does not fundamentally differ from one period of time to another. It is a logical consequence of the imperatives of the time which oblige revisions, corrections, etc. until arriving at the most perfect statement. Upon the death of St. Vincent de Paul, we found ourselves with a community just as it had been conceived by the Founder, with faults and deficiencies, but with a style of life approved and defined by the Holy See.

This present study of the life of the community in the time of St. Vincent begins from the year 1625. Although the preceding years, above all starting from 1617 had no community life the intervening years were exceedingly rich in experiences for St. Vincent, for example, the knowledge that he had of the oratory community (1611-1612) and his short stay in Chatillon-des-Doomes (1617), served the Founder in clarifying ideas and positions towards the founding of the congregation of the mission. Above all his roles as teacher and missionary in the lands of the Gondi, uncovered for Vincent de Paul his vocation as Founder against his will and his first decisions. Later, he will admit to the missionaries that it was God who was author of the company; in other words it was the cry of the abandoned poor.

1. The Charter of Foundation of the Congregation of the Mission (17 April, 1627)


A detailed analysis of the foundational charter of the Congregation of the Mission signed by F.M. de Gondi, F.M. de Silly and Vincent de Paul are not in themselves enough to be familiar with the Congregation neither in its origins nor in its continuing development, Indubitably but indubitably offer a real basis from which to judge the Spirit, the nature and works which identify the missionary community of St. Vincent in the church. These are the most outstanding notes:

1.1 The community of apostolic priority for the service of the "poor people of the country who live alone as though abandoned" (XIII, 197-198). Historically, farmworkers were those who gave birth to the first missionary community which was lodged, as we will see later, in the College des Bons Enfants. He had already had experience of the spiritual and material abandonment of the farmworkers: "for some years." St. Vincent will resort to this experience as many times as necessary in order to obtain the approval of Rome.
1.2 Community assures the evangelization of the poor people
Community is formed in order to assure evangelization.
It is a "pious association of a few churchmen of known
document, piety, and ability." The Brother Coadjutors
had still not been conceived of.

1.3 Community whose regulation stipulate:
   a. Spiritually, total availability for work among the
      poor in the countryside: "To apply oneself purely
      and entirely for the salvation of poor people."
      (XIII, 197). To which end the renunciation of
      ecclesiastical ranks and benefits is required (XIII,
      200).
   b. Disciplinarily, to live in common: "They will live in
      common." (XIII, 200)
      They will do it under the orders of a superior who
      will be Vincent de Paul, and after his death, under
      another one chosen by a majority of votes (XIII,200).
      The name of the Community will be: The Company,
      Congregation or Confraternity of Fathers or Priests
      of the Mission (XIII, 201).
   c. Economically, to live from a common purse: "depending
      on their common purse." The 45,000 pounds delivered
      to Vincent de Paul by the founders had to serve
      the nascent community for "their entertainment, clothing,
      nourishment, and other necessities (XIII, 199).
      Incoming revenues should be added to the common funds;
      from these goods the community would be managed.
      These funds allow the mission to be free: "to distribute
      freely the gifts which they had received from the hand
      of a generous God." (XIII, 198).

2. The Community in College des Bons Enfants until acquisition of
   the Prior _ of St. Lazarus_ 1625-1632_

Months before the signing of the Contract of Foundation, the first
community, composed of three members among them Vincent de Paul, had
the College des Bons Enfants. Although St. Vincent was the "principal"
of the College, in order to fulfill the clause of the contract which
required immediate spiritual assistance to the Gondi family he could not
meet with his mission companion until the death of Margarita de Silly,
wife of Felipe M. de Gondi (23 June, 1625). Having obtained the permission
of Felipe M. de Gondi, Vincent de Paul abandons his old residence and
runs to join his companions (from October to December, 1625).

The community is marching forward and is able to fulfill all that
which is stipulated in the contract referring to the common life, at
home as well as out in the missions. But, let us see step by step
how events took place:
e. The acceptance of a rule, (XIII, 204-205). The success of rules which were being written in agreement with the works of the community gave origin to the Rules and Constitutions of the Congregation. On the same day and before the same notaries Vincent de Paul donated his goods to his relatives (XIII, 61-63). The intention of the founder in taking the initiative in this decision must be sought in the purpose of remaining more available for the postolic works of the community.

2.3 Letter directed to Pope Urban VIII for the community, 1 August, 1626.
Two scarce years had passed since the signing of the Act of association by the first missionaries and already by 1628 there were nine priests and two Brothers Coadjutors. It seemed now to be a sufficient number to ask Rome for approval of the Congregation. The approval of the Archbishop of Paris had been obtained the 24th of April, 1626, as also that of the King in May of 1627. All that remained was to obtain the approval of the Pope.

Previous to the Letter of August 1, 1628, the community had written another in June of the same year, Identical petitions; they only differed in that the second payed closer attention to the drafting of the Latin text. Both of them reveal to us the life and aims of the community, always based on the Foundation Contract of 1625. As a consequence they insist on the main points, although a new contingent enriches the community and other problems of community government to the fore in contact with pastoral-Diocesan life.

a. Life in common and apostolic purpose: "simul habitare, necnon in congregacione vivere salutique pauperis populi rusticani ex professo incumbere veillent" (I, 53).

b. Composition of the community of priests and laymen who live the common life in imitation of religious: "necnon et aliorum ad societatem eorum promoveri cupidium et religiosorum ad familiaria officia necessariorum dictae Congregationis Missionis nuncupatae, qui simul et societate religiose vivere" (I, 47).

c. Full powers to correct... and amend the rules when such should need doing (I, 48).

d. Immunity from Bishops, for the internal matters of the community, and integration of missionary pastoral life under the obedience of Bishops (I, 49).

Although the petition was rejected by the Propaganda (22 August, 1628) (XIII, 225) according to the expressed terms, and it was judged as "ut in simplicibus Missionis terminis permaneant," nevertheless, the Founder's mind remained rather clear and he and the community did not lose the hope of obtaining the approval of Rome for a work which had been born among the poor and for their good.

The protests of the Cures of Paris (4 December, 1630) (XIII, 227-232)
only served to clarify and reaffirm the community in its total availability in its service to the Diocese without receiving any recompense whatever for their works.

In the letter directed to Urban VIII, no mention is made of the work performed by the ordinands; This new line of work for the missionaries had not appeared. In September of this same year, 1628, Vincent de Paul begins to preach to the ordinands in Beauvais. This means that in the posterior documents there will appear next to the missions the work of the ordinands and seminaries.

Nevertheless, the basic work of the Congregation of the Mission continues to be mission work. During the summer months the community lives at College des Bons Enfants as at a Carthusian monastery. (I, 122) which makes them long for the experience of the missions, due to the solitude.

2.4 The letter of St. Vincent to Francisco du Coudray, in Rome, 1631.

The denial on the part of the Propaganda and the opposition of the parish priests in Paris provided St. Vincent with an extremely rich experience which he took advantage of in order to send Francisco du Coudray directly to Rome, with the purpose of negotiating the matters of the Company. Francisco du Coudray left for Rome in May, 1631. On January 12, 1633 the Congregation of the Mission was officially recognized. This historically important letter signals the five fundamental maxims of the Congregation, drawn from the previous documents. In so far as it concerns our study, it is necessary to remember the following two points:

a. The necessity of living in congregation in order to assure the success of the mission: "It is necessary to live in common." (I, 115).

b. The recognition of a superior who is charged with the direction of the company, or in other words who is immune: "That the Superior of the Company may have entire supervision of the latter." (I, 115-116).

3. The community in the Priory of St. Lazarus until the death of the Founder, 1632-1660.

From the beginning of this period, the longest and the richest in written documents, it is good to notice that in our judgement the acceptance of the Abbey of St. Lazarus did not deter St. Vincent from his original idea of determining a missionary community. Despite the fears in the aquisition of said priory, it is that he decided to accept it, counseled by good friends. The reason that he took not to fall into the temptation of being religious were evident. On the one hand, a style of life similiar to that of religious had to be accepted, on the other hand, impossible to avoid, from the very moment of the beginning the obligation to live in common according to the norms was imposed upon them. The acceptance of the Abbey contributed in the last analysis to fixing the community molds without hardening them.
St. Vincent was sufficiently flexible enough as to change the forms and the norms so that they might contribute toward redirecting the community to the essential element: The Love of Christ.

Also in this period we should point out the advances that were realized in community life and their principal manifestations:

3.1 The bull establishing the Company
12 January, 1633
The year in which the community enters St. Lazarus approval for the company arrives from Rome. The Bull gathers together and approves all of the experiences dating from 1625. community becomes organised; few forms will at this time be introduced into the community; it will only have to plead the case for those already existing forms:

a. Apostolic community. The apostolate is ne particular purpose of the Institute: "cum propria salute, in eorum salutem incumbere qui in villis, pagis, terris, locis et oppidid himilioribus commorantur," (XIII, 260).

b. Community autonomy and insertion into the Diocesan pastoral situation (XIII, 260-261).

c. The composition of community: "dicta congregatio laicis, clericis et presbyteris constat." (XIII, 261).

d. The requirement to receive into the house the ordinands before their reception of Holy Orders (XIII, 262)

e. A year of testing before being admitted into the Congregation: et anno probationis exacto, si idonei iudicati fuerint, et anumum habeant toto vitae suae tempore in dicta congregatione permanendi..." (XIII, 261).

The internal seminary was institutionalised in 1637. Two years later, in 1639, (if we accept the information which St Vincent gives to St. Chantal) two years of testing in the Company were carried out: "L'ont fait deux ans de seminaire, qui est a dire, de noviciat." (I, 569). The two years of internal seminary are urged in previous documents. This practice seemed to remain in effect until the assembly of 1968.

St. Vincent's letter to St. Chantal is historically important as well as the historic account of Delville (of Annales, t.79, 1914), pp. 308-319), because they fill us in concerning the ordinary life of the missionaries, from the beginning of the day to the late afternoon and the practices to which they dedicated themselves: prayer, chapters, study, etc...

3.2 The first two assemblies, 1642 and 1651, respectively.
St. Vincent does not call the first assembly together until nine years after the approval of the C.M. The main points of study which the assembly members concerned themselves with were contained in the Rule of Institution of the Company.
The second assembly insists on the very same themes:

a. Writing and drafting the Common Rules and Constitutions so that they may serve the whole Congregation for ever (XIII, 291). The Rules were approved in the second assembly. (XIII, 357-359). They were delivered to the missionaries later, in 1658).

b. The election of the Superior General: falls to St. Vincent de Paul (XIII, 296).

c. Agreement concerning a second time of probation according to the circumstances (XIII, 295).

d. Agreement over dividing the C.M. into provinces. (XIII, 295).

e. The use of vows in the Company (XIII, 335). As a matter of fact private vows were taken in the company starting from 1627. All of these measures and some others require one to consider the religious molds into which the Congregation was falling as time went on in order to assure its survival and its work.

3.3 The Brief "ex commissa nobis" 22 September, 1655

After lengthy discussion concerning the agreement with or opposition to vows in the C.M. a brief arrives from Rome agreeing with the Institute concerning simple vows in order for dedication of oneself for evangelization of poor farm workers. Furthermore, in order to avoid all fear of falling into the religious state, the secular character of the C.M. is insisted upon.

a. "Tenore praesentium confirmamus et aprobamus cum emmisione votorum simplicium castitatis, paupertatis, et obedientiae, necnon stabilitatis in dicta congregatione ad effectum se, toto vitae tempore, saluti pauperum rusticanorum applicandi, post biennium probationis faciendae." (XIII, 381).

b. "...utque dicta congregatio non ceseatur proterea in numero Ordinis religiosorum, sed sit de corpore cleri saecularis." (XIII, 382).

3.4 The delivery and explanation of the Rules, May 17, 1658

From this date until his death, two long years away, St. Vincent de Paul attempts to communicate to the missionaries his spiritual, apostolic, and community experience using all possible means. Nevertheless, there exists some difference between the doctrine which the Founder espouses based on the Rules and the existing practice in the community. This is an easy conclusion to arrive at after a careful reading of the lectures, information, chapters and letters that Coste gathers together. On top of all the prescriptions and disciplinary norms, "Christ is the Rule of the Company."
In a special way the second chapter of the Rules sums up the spirit with which the missionaries must be filled. In order to understand St. Vincent's greatness of heart on one hand and the disciplines imposed on the community on the other hand, one must take into account the historic circumstances in which the community came to life, circumstances which are not always well interpreted by the Founder's successors in the C.M. For example the uniformity demanded by the Rules (chapter II, 11; III, 7; VII, 4-5; XII, 7), was exagerratedly recommended and required by the Superior General Joly (circul. Sup. Gen. I, 137), Bonnet (I, 369-70), Jacquier (II, 37-9), Etienne (III, 174-5), and Bore (III, 497), etc...

3.5 The fundamental statute concerning the vow of poverty and the C.M. 12 August, 1959.

The right which attends to the members of the C.M. concerning the own ership of unmovable goods does not deprive them of the obligation to live from the common purse. The community is limited to the use of fruits proceeding from said goods according to the permission of the Superior (XIII, 407). This is the last document which was received from Rome during St. Vincent's lifetime. The Congregation was organized and on its way. The community lived in agreement with the Rule, as Dellville affirms: "et quoi qui'ils vivent fort regulierment, ils ne sont pourtant pas religieux." (Annales, t.79, 1914, 309). Notwithstanding one problem still remained to be resolved at the death of the Superior General of the C.M., Vincent de Paul; authority and time in office of the Superior General of the Congregation and of his assistants. Finally, the function of Assemblies. All of this was foresen and refined in the "Constitutiones Selectae" for the Congregation of Clement X, 2 June, 1670. (cf. A.A.S. in grat. C.M., p. 33-8).

4. Conclusions

Upon the death of St. Vincent de Paul (27 September, 1660) the Founder and first Superior General of the C.M., the community offered this reflection on itself:

a. The C.M. is above all an apostolic community. It was born and called to the needs of the poor people of the countryside. A little later, other works besides mission work were added to the missionary task: Galley slaves, ordinands, seminaries, missions among infidels.

b. The C.M. lives the common life at home as well as in the missionas determined by particular regulations and the Rules and Constitutions. This common life includes:
prayer and meditation in common for the space of one hour, plus the praying of the Breviary.
*a common pur je with the prohibition of receiving any gain for work realised. The community was supported by endowments.
*Work in common: missions, seminaries, parishes, but not with too much emphasis which would not allow for isolated cases of missionaries working alone. (The abuses which were later introduced and which obliged the Superior Generals to take severe measures were not born strictly from this situation of missionaries living alone; the Superior Generals themselves granted some exceptions according to the case.)

c. The C.M. works in the common pastoral life of the Diocese under the obedience of Bishops and Priests in whose parishes they carry out apostolic work.

d. The C.M. is composed of priests, clerics, and brothers all of whom have different functions. It is not an order or religious Congregation. Life according to the rule and simple private vows which the missionaries make are directed toward the evangelization of the poor.

e. The C.M. requires two years of testing of candidates who come to the community before he becomes associated. After 1655, they make their vows.

f. C.M. requires from missionaries total and entire availability.

g. The C.M. confesses that Christ the Evangelizer is the Rule of the Company and professes to live in simplicity, humility, meekness, mortification, and zeal for the salvation of souls.

B. The Community in the Common Rule

In this section we treat of a reading of the Common Rules from the sociological point of view. Other perspectives, for example the theological, would doubtless be more to the heart of the matter, possibly of greater interest. But, even a theological reading of the rules would have to take into account if it wished to be thorough and convincing the modest findings of other disciplines such as history, sociology, etc.

The text of the Rules seems to reflect the Community life as lived then rather faithfully in agreement with the very affirmation of St. Vincent himself in the prologue: "nihil...in vlos animadvertetis, quod non iandum...in usu habuetis. What the Saint does not say and thus the limited values of the Rules as a point of information is that these Rules reflect the entire wealth of the life of the community at the time of the Founder. Here we are studying the Common Rules as an ideal definition which one presupposes reflects in some way the real community life of the Missionaries.
Most of the ideas and norms contained in the Rule refer to the local community, to its members, and its behavior within and without the community. There are thus few ideas that refer to relationships with other communities (IX, 16), and even to the relationship with supra-community authorities of the Congregation itself: with the Superior General (V, 2), with the Visitor (V, 3), and with the Congregation in General (XII, 10).

1. The Institutional Level

The local community of the Congregation of the Mission appears in the text of the Common Rules as a strongly placed reality of cohesive community life. The institutional mechanisms are fundamentally three. We shall enumerate them in the order in which they appear in the Rule:

* The Superior-subject reference (appears explicitly in 63 articles)
* Uniformity (II, 1 and in other passages more or less explicitly)
* Community of Goods (chapter III)

The choice of these three institutional axes and only these three is not in an arbitrary fashion. To these alone is attributed in the text of the Rules the function of community cohesion. As far as other aspects which the theological, ecclesiastical outlook of today tends to attribute a high degree of functionality for intra-community cohesion is concerned, (prayer, Eucharist, celibacy,..) the Rules totally ignore it as we will see in greater detail throughout this section. Now let us proceed to analyse one by one the three axis which appear in the text of the Rule as mechanisms of institutionalization of common life.

1.1 The First institutional mechanism: the subject-Superior relationship.

In the text of the common rules, the institutionalization of the local community lies basically in the superior-subject relationship. From among the 142 articles of the rules the figure of the Superior has a basic element of institutional control, appearing in no less than 63 articles; or, put differently in 44% of the total number of articles. It should not be surprising in the light of this to note that in Chapter five, expressly treating obedience, the figure of the Superior appears in fifteen out of sixteen articles. The Common Rules define with complete precision the hierarchy of precision (V, 1-3), which is expressed in the hierarchically ordered actions of greeting and respect (VIII, 3).

The topic of supervision by the Superior covers the entire range of the life of the members of the community, including aspects of conscience and of spiritual life. Furthermore:

the Superior defines what is commanded and what is prohibited. (II, 3; § 1). Although it is not expressly stated it is sup-
posed that his competence become developed within the limits defined by Superior precedence: The law of God, the law of the Church, the law or the Constitutions. There is even expression of limits of obedience to the Superior-General: in omnibus ubi peccatum no apparat (V, 2). The article (V, 3) extends by implication the same limits to the authority of the Visitor and the local Superior. The superintendence of the Superior appears in relation to:

a. The order of daily life, an order which depends exclusively upon the local superior's decision (V, 5).
   * eating outside the appointed hout (V, 12)
   * entering another's room (V, 13)
   * speaking with seminarians (VII, 5)
   * writing and receiving letters (V, 11; IX, 7)
   * seeing doctors, taking medicines (VI, 4)
   * bringing in outsiders (V, 14; IX, 5-6)
   * going outside the house (IX, 11-15)

This last point (going outside the house) appears in every text of the Rule as the most minutely regulated aspect of the behavior of the missionaries. None less than five articles refer to this. An equally minute regulation applies to the use of material goods.

b. The distribution of work (II, 10)
   Helping any confrere (V, 8-10) (XI, 2-4, 8-11).

In V, 10 a curious word appears (praefectus) which is nowhere defined in the Rule. Neither, as far as we know, is it defined in any other part of the Law of the Congregation (it is not in any of the rule of offices). It refers to a type of intermediate authority which while under the local Superior is delegated by him for some sector (loci) of activities of the house. The fact of this intermediate authority in a community has very ancient origins since it comes from nothing less than the Constitution of St. Pacomius (Fifth Century). Even in this Rule (that is, in its Latin translations) the term is "paepositus." The monastery of St. Pacomius is made of a group of buildings, each one of which lodges the monks who work on the same task. Heading each group is a chairman with authority delegated from the Abbott. It seems obvious to suppose that St. Vincent when he wrote V, 10 was thinking about the complex quasi-monastic structure of St. Lazarus. It is obvious that this norm would make little or no sense in relation to houses made up of two or three mobile missionaries or residents in a rented house or something similar, such as was St. Vincent's case in his first years of missionary experience.

c. The distribution of economic goods (III, 3-6, 9)
Although it is explicitly stated that "all things are held in common" (III, 3), the authority of the Superior is so General that in spite of the idea of him as a pure and simple administrator, who is seen as a proprietary figure who acts according to his will. This impression is reinforced if one observes that the Rules do not allow for even the most minimal provision for checks on the conduct of the Superior. Therefore, in the text of the Rules it appears as a point of discretion. It would be fitting and interesting to investigate whether it has always been this way historically in the consciences of Superiors and in the practical life.

d. Topics of Conscience and of Spiritual Life:

* Problems of Conscience and Temptations (II, 16-17; VIII, 6; X, 11)
* Dangers against chastity (IV, 4)
* Helping the discourages (XII, 4)
* Aid against vanity and ambition (XII, 4.9)
* The scope of Penance (X, 13; XII, 14)
* Mortifications (X, 15)
* Adding acts of piety to those foreseen in the Rules (X, 21)
* Choosing Books for Spiritual reading (X, 8)

Here something immediately catches their eye—in precisely the same chapter which wishes to present a resume of the evangelical teachings adopted for missionaries (chapter 2 De Documentis Evangelicis) one encounters a norm (art. 17) which neglects the explicit teachings of Jesus Christ (Mt 18. 15-17), in reference to fraternal correction. Is it true that in the Vincentian community only the Superior is the brother of his brothers in community?

In II, 16; IV, 4; VIII, 8; X, 8.15.21 there appears the figure of the Director, a figure that also is not defined in any place. He always appears in contexts which pertain to problems of conscience and ordering the spiritual life. He does not possess an authority delegated by the Superior; he seems to enjoy an autonomous authority equivalent to that of the Superior but only in regard to those indicated aspects of conscience and of spirit. We cannot here elaborate the details or a question that is essentially historical in a short sociological study such as this. However, it would be interesting to bring into focus the place which the Common Rules occupy in the long evolution which, starting from the Rule of Benedict in which the Abbot
is Superior and the Spiritual Father at the same time (cf. The Rule of St. Benedict, prologue, art 61, Chapter II), has come down to us today in the form of a rather precise demarcation of government on the one hand (Superior) and spiritual counseling on the other hand (Spiritual Director). Common Rules clearly reflect a state of ecclesiastical religious thought characterized strongly by ambiguity.

In conjunction, the participation which is allotted for the subject in the Common Rule is one of clear dependence. Further, in chapter VIII, 12.13 there is summary prohibition of concern for things that pertain to the administration of the house (even speaking about them). V, 5 suggests timidly a line of participation which apart from this is limited to the right of suggesting (significant) something to the Superior of the subject has something to propose concerning the domestic order. Here it would be interesting to elaborate a somewhat historic study concerning the process of evolution in the participation of the members of the community. The Rule of St. Benedict, the first rule of common life in the West, opens very promising avenues for participation (concerning the election of the Abbot, LXIV, 1; concerning daily life, III, 1-9), avenues which in general terms were progressively "democratizing" during the medieval centuries.

Such an expert in these matters as Leo Moulin sees in the Constitutions of the great monastic and mendicant orders a model from which the great documents of history (eg the Magna Carta in the 13th century and even the electory probe of the French Revolution) learned democratic procedures; documents that have inspired the democratic evolution of Europe (cf. Lomde Vivant des Religieux, Calman-Levy, Paris, 1964. pp 186 ff). Within the framework of this evolution, the few centuries preceding the middle ages mark a very clear regression which seems to begin with the strongly authoritarian character of religious authority as it is defined in the constitutinal documents of the Company of Jesus. These in turn appear clearly indebted to the absolutist political philosophy of their time. Let us reread chapter V, II of the Common Rules, substituting Louis XIV for the Superior General (it is he who said, "el Estado soy yo") would not such an enforcer of the power (V, 2) see the ideal definition of the relation of subjects to authority?

1.2 According to the Institutional Mechanism: Uniformity

II, 11 introduces uniformity as a maintainer of good community order and of the holy union. The little clause "quod fierit poterit" leaves a little door open for agility and variety in a text which is presented by contrast, with profiles of marked rigidity. The-functional elements of uniformity.

The same article enumerates almost all aspects of missionary life which most decisively contribute to uniformity: uniformity in the material aspects of eating, dressing, and sleeping; uniformity as regards direction, teaching, preaching; uniformity in spiritual practices. The faithful keeping of the Rule
is presented expressly as the best guarantee of community uniformity. In X, 6 a rule is presented which within today's perspective can only be seen as rigid in relation to the celebration of the Mass and the reception of the Eucharist and penance. The quest for uniformity went even as far as to suggest topics for conversation, which must deal precisely with aspects of intra-community life (VIII, 7-8).

b. Dysfunctional elements
The common Rules also carefully regulate the entrance of any extraneous elements into the community which could create dangerous dysfunctions discordant with the sought after uniformity. Cutie influence is recognised as inevitable since this community is not cloistered but apostolic whose members see themselves as obliged by reason of their work to deal with people of all kinds. (VIII, 7-8). What follows, then, is to try to diminish the dysfunctional impact which such an ingestion of such elements could produce in the intra-community uniformity. And thus, leaving the house (IX, 11-15), the introduction of outsiders into the house (7, 14), (IX, 5-6), speaking with them about domestic subjects (IX, 9) is regulated with utter care. It is also demanded to avoid topics of conversation foreign to the missionary life, topics which could cause division as the first Christians were divided (VIII, 15-16). There is equally an attempt to regulate relationships with relatives (II, 9).

The wording in this last number cited still remains rather curious. The reasons cited for the regulation of conduct with relatives are a strict spiritual character. In the aforementioned article there is no allusion to the dysfunctionality that dealing with relatives can create in relation to the uniformity of the internal life of the community; we are well aware however, by means of his own biographical allusions, of St Vincent's strong experience of dysfunctionality that his relationship with his relatives created for him in the first years of his missionary experience, and even later.

Finally, in the only reference to inter-communitarian relationships which is found in the entire text of the Common Rule, it is requested that a traveling missionary lodge in a house of the Congregation if there is one, and there be submitted in total obedience to the corresponding Superior (IX, 16).

1.3 The Third Institutional Mechanism: Community of Goods
Material Goods are expressly defined as goods of all the members of the community (III, 3). Community of Goods is so radical that, in order to avoid even the appearance of personal property (quod propietatem vel minimam re-doleat) it is carried even to the extremely realistic small detail of prohibiting personal keys (III, 8). Personal keys, in effect the same thing as the famous mud wall of Proudhon against private property function
like locks to a private piece of the material world, exclusively by the one with the key.

The distribution of material goods is under the exclusive competence of the Superior (III,3), who will distribute them "prout cuique opus erit." With great justification there has been talk although long before there existed organised political communism, of the practice of a radically true communism within the setting of religious communities. A totally literal translation of the phrase "prout cuique opus erit" is found in Marx's distributive principle: To each according to his needs. Oddly enough even in Marx's theory such a distributive principle would function like one of the institutional mechanisms of the communist society of the future.

The criteria for justifying communality of goods (or more precisely: the non-ownership by the person) i.s found exclusively in the Gospel (III,j). The poor mode of life, as a consequence of non-ownership, is also found justified in the evangelical criteria (III,3). (Simuli inopiae gradu) and in the social criteria: the material life of missionaries must be "tamquam pauperi accommodata." Excepting for an error or an omission, this is, in the entirety of the text of the Common Rules, the only explicit admission of extra-evangelical and extra-trinitarian realities as a criterion for shaping the life of the missionaries.

2. The Spiritual-Evangelical Level

At the beginning of this section we indicated the ambiguities and conflicts of the CommonsRules. St Vincent mixes with total carelessness ideas which define institutional aspects (even some of juridical "stricto sensu") with ideas of the more vital character that refer to the "moral tone" that must rule in this institution, referring more to its structure as a social group. It must be affirmed nevertheless that these are second, ideas of a more spiritual evangelical sort which reflect more faithfully the evangelical personality of the Common Rule. This affirmation is not made on the text of the Rule themselves and is therefore marginal to the conclusions of this study. As for the ideas of the more institutional nature that have already been studied, in which Vincent shows little originality, it appears for the most part to be a rather good reflection of the legislative tradition of clerical and even monastic religious orders. To offer a minimal but significant example, the norm which requires obedience to the Bill as though to the voice of Christ (V,3) is found literally in nonetheless than the monastic writings of Cassian (section V).
The tone which must predominate in the relationship of the Vincentian community is purposefully defined by the brief but very suggestive formulation: Harmonious cohabitation among the members of the community must be "in morem carorum amicorum" that is, in the manner of friends who love one another and who utter sincerities (VIII, 2).

In order that there be no doubts that this loving one another must have the entire depth of true Christian charity, in II, 12 there is enumerated a series of statements with evidence from Pauline and evangelical roots. It is worth mentioning them:

* doing unto others what we wish them to do to us
* agreeing with others, and testing everything in the Spirit of the Lord
* putting up with one another without complaint
* weeping with those who weep; rejoicing with those who rejoice.
* treating one another respectfully; greeting one another with cordial warmth (VII, 3)
* behaving with others attentively and in the attitude of service with the whole heart
* becoming all things to all men

Similar ideas appear scattered here and there, sometimes hidden in texts of an institutional nature, as for example when St Vincent when speaking of poverty suggests that everyone deal to one another joyously so that they will accept whatever is worthy in the house (III, 7), as could be expected in a family from a father or from an older brother; another example occurs when Vincent while speaking about silence lets slip a reference to things motivated entirely out of love (such as when someone needs something in the dining room VII, 14), or motivated by the fraternal discretion that carefully avoids noise that could bother others (VIII, 6). There are instances in the Rule in which the Vincentian "spirit" brushes the limits of sublime expression (in relation to this see paragraph concerning treatment of the sick within the community VI, 1-3). Throughout the prose one proceeds to see how the author feels deeply moved entirely at ease on grounds that he is very much at home.

From the point of view which we are using (VIII) which describes in full detail (beginning with art 7) the mode of living and conversing is an inexhaustable mine. A simple exposition of the ideas contained therein would turn out fine more eloquently than any commentary. From the entire complex of ideas, one gathers an 'image of a community
which knows how in its dealings to maintain a high level of cordiality, acceptance, and mutual tolerance:

* Interesting and agreeable good humor (hilaritate), simple conversation (Modestiam) (art 7).

* Avoiding all turseness and a disputatious spirit: concerning even the opinion of others. Never showing offence or bearing a grudge. Never hurting anyone. Daily living together bears the danger of transgressing certain aspects of intimate behavior which others hold nevertheless a right to:
  - and so one must keep proper secrets (10)
  - one should not injure the reputation of anyone or criticise what is done in other houses (11)
  - warnings to others must be done in a true spirit of charity and humility (X,13)
  - one should not praise nor reproach anyone for his work but should speak well of his brothers in community with sobriety and simplicity.

* Defending with moderation and with graciousness attacks against those things referring to the vocation. (art 8).

After all that has been said, it is well to add a few lines concerning aspects which would within the theological outlook of today be more relevant for the life in common, aspects which St Vincent did not take into account in writing the Common Rules. As to whether he could or could not have taken certain aspects into account given the mentality of his time is a question which more properly pertains to an expert in the history of the Church and in theory of religious life, something that this paper can in no way do. Even so, the opinion could be ventured that he could take them into account since he evidently did so outside of the texts of the Common Rules. As an abundant example, in the lectures to the missionaries and perhaps even more so in the lectures to the Sisters. What happened (and this is a fact that seems a bit mysterious), is that St Vincent overlooked these aspects (or rather decided not to include them for reasons which escape us today) when he wrote the texts of the rules. We are speaking then of omissions in the text of the Common Rules of elements that today seem very relevant to the life of the community.

The articles which refer to chatity (IV, 7) do not make the least mention of its connection to community life, except in the practical details already mentioned of reminding the superior of the dangers that come up in concrete ministry.
It is even more surprising that there is no mention what-so-ever of the community value of prayer, moreso when it is realized that there is express mention of other values of prayer that today seem so central to us. Neither do the community values of prayer appear central to the evangelical teachings. Pious acts, as the rules say (X,1) are very efficacious for the keeping of the Rule and for personal perfection. It does say that mental prayer must be done in community (X, 7), although no mention is made of the possible community value of such a practice. Nothing is said concerning the community importance of spiritual conferences (X, 12), although it must be supposed that by their very structure they must be held in common (and besides we know that in practice at St. Lazarus and in the practice of the Sisters they enjoyed a high index of community participation). Neither is there any hint of the possible community value of praying the Divine Office, although it is also explicitly said that it must be held in common (X,5).

Finally, we indicate two omissions which today would much more clearly stand out. Neither in relation to the Eucharist (X,3) nor in relation to the reading of the Word (X, 8) is there any mention of their possible community value.

3. Summary and Conclusions

From the institutional point of view the text of the Common Rule presents us with a view of the community with the following characteristics. The subject-superior relationship constitutes the principle axis of community cohesion, in relationship in which the function of supervision takes precedence over any other aspect; and the active participation of the subject is reduced almost wholly into declaring problems of conscience in asking for permission. The superior's range of supervision which is not moderated by any type of active participation on the part of the subjects, covers all aspects of the life of the latter: the schedule, the distribution of work and economic goods, the relationships with outsiders, problems of conscience, and spiritual life in general. Thus, in resume it can be affirmed that the authority of the Superior, and it appears in the Rule, within the limits defined by the phrase "ubi peccatum ret," is absolute. The limitations defined by the range of "peccatum" and the setting of its authority within the limits of the laws of the church and the Rules (which does not depend on it) prevent this absolute authority from falling into the temptation of being a despot.

The second axis of cohesion is constituted by the definition of uniformity, a uniformity that also aspires to touch all aspects of the life of the initiates: manner of behaving, manner of living, spiritual practices, the manner of instructing, the way of thinking. The small differences that can arise as regards the way of thinking are intended to be neutralized by two mechanisms of integration: ascetical considerations which seek to soften the differences which
spring from a diversity of opinions, and a careful avoidance of topics of conversation that can result in conflicts (the actions of other communities, the actions of superiors, politics). Equally regulated with great acre are all contacts with persons whose relationship with the community could cause disturbances with its ordinary progress (relations with seminarians, visits to and with externs, relations with relatives).

The third axis of cohesion is based on common ownership of material goods. Since the concrete use of these goods could create in practice dangerous dysfunctions a mechanism of distribution is provided for, which also depends entirely on the Superior, so that the necessary use of material goods does not produce elements of disservice in the function of the community.

Apart from the institutional elements which predominate very heavily in the whole text, Common Rules offer a series of very rich suggestions concerning fraternal and evangelical values with an eye to the good functioning of community life. The genuine and original charismatic spirit of their author explodes in these suggestions with full force. It would be intriguing to attempt to delineate exactly what it is in the Common Rules that must be attributed to the traditional religious-charismatic spirit, unconsciously reflecting juridico-ecclesiastical conditionings and even political influences of the first half of the seventeenth century, and what of them can be attributed to the genuine experience of the Founder. To sum up, what would be desired is that the second aspect had clearly predominated over the text of the second aspect in the Rules. A pre-eminence such as this would have undoubtedly more exactly reflected the powerful evangelical personality the author of the Common Rules or Constitutions of the C.M.
IV. THE APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY IN TODAY'S WORLD

A. Problems and Tensions facing the Community Today

1. The new social setting of its members. Men of today are not like those of yesterday. The community, if it wished to be up to date, will have to make the necessary adaptations so that the typical man of today who lives in community feels at home.

2. The man of today will not easily accept for example, the sacred world of traditional times (the customs, ideas...) In every instance it will be necessary to rationalize and justify a custom or a point of view inherited from the past that is wished to be maintained.

3. Because of his psychological structure, the man of today will resist in accepting certain forms of dependence that seem infantile for him (asking permission...).

4. The present means of true cohabitation requires the range of qualities:

   * a sincere expression of emotions which excludes forms of domination. When authority intervenes affectionality is diminished.
   * mutual help, tolerance, equality based on brotherhood
   * motivation: the most egalitarian possible participation in decisions in every case which define march forward in the community
   * pluralism of forms of life moderated by necessary community.
   * intense community prayer (in the spirit of today's ecclesiology).
   * real poverty: moderation of the ownership and use of material goods
   * the integration of candidates into the life of the C.M.(which goes against RC VIII,5).
   * moderated by the real cohabitation with other apostolic groups creates secular people....

B. Problems and Tensions facing the Apostolic Community of Today

1. A certain degree of tension between the demands on the common life and those of the work will always be inevitable. Some reasons for this are: a spirit of tolerance and help, a high degree of affectionateness.

2. Growing contact with outside professionals and collaboration with them (priests, professors, lay people, sisters...).
3. The work required of missionaries in other institutions (work programs in Dioceses, teaching centers).

4. Necessity for a true permanent formation to the end of not allowing one to lose sight of the world which must be evangelized; formation in secular disciplines.

5. A true involvement in the world which is proper for the C.M.: for the poor. This will carry as a consequence the onslaught of an infinity of aspects of present community life which are characterised by a very strong petty Bourgeois shading.

C. Forecasts and Suggestions for the Future

1. Constitutioanal legislation for the C.M. General. Above all the institutional purpose of the order must be presented very clearly so that it is unique among all the communities in the world. The present formulation (C.N. 1969, #5 and note) is totally noxious, in virtue of its ambiguities. In the study about the purpose of the C.M. which the commission presents an attempt is made to eliminate such ambiguity.

2. To legislate principles which must regulate the relation between the provinces and houses and between one another as regards the central government. The sense of the universal community must be maintained at all costs. A few points of legislation are suggested:

* the submission of community plans to the provincial authority
* the submission of provincial plans to the general authority.
* the promotion of information on all levels
* collaboration between communities and provinces in the apostolate and other aspects: formation, economy, etc...
* as radical a participation as is possible
* a firmly decided will to promote participation on all levels
* a tolerance as pluralism in forms of work, of education and of life, fully within the framework defined by the institutional goal.
* explicit tolerance for extreme and rare cases as regards forms of work which are doubtfully Vincentian (such as a personal vocation to be an Astronomer...); a tolerance concerning socio-political ideas.
* self legislation in detail on the local level, in the spirit of self motivation, but with frequent revision of the agreed upon matter so as not to fall too heavily under the sway of concrete forms of life.
* (cont,) Approval by the provincial authorities of the agreed upon materials. The same thing applies to the province-general government relations. The sociological need of a rather strong institutionalization in order to maintain community cohesion must be recognized. And it must also deal with details of the forms of the concrete life of the community if a cohesive group is desired. But the members involved must be ones who posethe details.

* Planning on a level that includes all interested persons (also Superiors); trimually on the provincial level, sextennially on the general level.

* The necessity for maintaining the material cohabitation of the community in so far as work permits. The material cohabitation of the community must not be allowed to be totally destroyed by work requirements except in extreme cases and cases of limited time (such as studies...) To habitually live alone, even out of a need to evangelize, (eg. in missions...), is an abomination which goes directly against the Vincentian communitarian vocation. Neither must the demands of material cohabitation be allowed to obstruct the necessary flexibility for the apostolate. Finding the correct balance in every concrete case will be the prudent thing to do. Of course material living together does not make the community, but without material cohabitation the community is not worth anything.

* De.tailing the competencies of the various levels. (province, house, superior, intermediate posts), according to the principle of susidiarity.

3. The Community Project
In order to put into practice these principles enunciated on the local level is well introduced. The subject of community project. When speaking of community project it is meant to refer to diverse forms: general community project; provincial and local community project. Here we are referring fundamentally to the local community project.

a. The origin of the community project
1. It can be said that it has its beginnings in a fuller vision of local community life.
If we look at the common rules as they have been seen previously of the tradition of the C.M. and in the Constitutions of 1934, the figure of the Superior is the unique means of cohesion and the unique source of responsibilities within the community. One gets the feeling that this figure is the summation of, the all in all of the local community.

Since Vatican II and the 1968-1969 Constitutions, a new mentality arises in most of the C.M.; another concept of local community begins to be held: the local community is constituted by all members, without the figure of the superior being divested of the importance that he really has. He is seen in another way, as animator of the community.

The local community project attempts to carry out in practice this mentality and the following points are urged:

* the dignity of the human person
* co-responsibility and co-participation
* subsidiarity
* the principle of equality of all the members of C.M.
* the unity required within a healthy diversity and pluralism

2. The local community project originates also as a means of resolving the new problems which have come to light in a process of evolution of the local community.

It is absolutely necessary that all members of the community come together in a common and daily task with the existence of greater liberty and participation; it is completely normal that differences arise more strongly and make the necessary unity for acting more difficult. One cannot live in community without basic harmony and unity.

It is advisable to give greater emphasis to the communitarian group by virtue of the fact that the Superior's role has been lessened, as can easily be attested to. The whole problem of obedience that exists at the present moment is a tangible sign of this affirmation.

b. The concrete realization of the community project

Each local community must democratically elaborate its community project. This will embrace the following levels:

* The life of prayer
* permamnent, ongoing formation
* work
* exchange of good on the community and provincial levels
* Evaluation of Vincentian and Evangelical witness in the area in which it is inserted.
c. **Goals of the Community Project**

1. To seek cohesion among all members of the community.
   If the community project is carried out democratically, a point of personal compromise of each and every member of the community will be arrived at in all its tasks.

2. To determine the diverse forms of action that lead to the full realization of the community in its social, religious, and interpersonal plains.

3. Growing deeper in the values that integrate our lives. Only in this continuous deepening is the full realization that fulfills the person found. This deepening must be regarded in a double dimension:
   * the personal level: When life takes upon itself its own tasks and chores, it makes sense and is worth living. If this is done in further depth and penetrates all the levels of a person, then life is brought to full power and is fully realized.
   * the community level: the person has delivered himself up to the community. The community is responsible for bringing the realization of each and every one of its members to fullness. Therefore the community must be aware of:
     * its members aspirations
     * the paths it opens to them
     * the aids it must provide

4. Growing deeper in the values proper to C.M.

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**Sources of Inspiration for the Community Project**

For the purpose of the concrete realization of the local community project the following sources of inspiration must be recognized:

1. Above all, the Gospel. Only evangelical radicalism will be able to give meaning to the life of the community.

2. The Vincentian Inspiration, the Vincentian Spirit. This does not refer to materially repeating what was done in other periods but rather to translating the present and the now into the Vincentian intuition and inspiration.

3. The challenge of field work. The community is inserted in a determined field and cannot turn its back on the social setting in which it is immersed.

4. The possible charismatic stimuli of the members of the Community.
e. Basic attitudes needed for realizing the community project

It was previously explained that this is a local community on a human level of faith and material, apostolic and spiritual interests. The ideal is to be living and true community. More concretely stated, one can say:

1. A true interest in forming community
2. Mutual acceptance and fraternity
3. Corresponsibility and a spirit of service
4. A critical capacity on the personal and community level
5. There must always exist a nucleus of intimacy within the community.
6. A sense of openness to all exterior realities.

f. Finally, a periodic evaluation of this project on the personal as well as the community level is indispensable in order to confront problems and in order to be effective.
PROPOSALS

Extracted from the paper on: Community Life In the Time of St. Vincent and at the Present.

and offered for the reflection of all the confreres, in light of the General Assembly of 1960, Their object is an improved version of the Constitutions.

The propositions which we are presenting are intended to be realized on the local community level while at the same time taking into account community with the Providence and the Universal Congregation.

1. Are YOU IN AGREEMENT ON EACH OF THESE PROPOSALS?

2. IF NOT, WHY NOT?

CALLED BY THE LORD JESUS

It is clear that the Vincentian Community is a faith community. It is God who calls the community together. This calling from God is the point of departure for all Christian understanding of community and of every attempt to make community:

I. FIRST PROPOSITION

THE PRIEST AND THE BROTHER OF THE MISSION FORM PART OF THE VINCENTIAN COMMUNITY BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN CALLED BY THE LORD. THEY ARE THERE IN HIS NAME AND BY THE POWER OF HIS SPIRIT. THE VINCENTIAN COMMUNITY IS, THEREFORE, AN ASSEMBLY OF PERSONS GATHERED IN THE LORD. HIS MYSTERIOUS PRESENCE PRESIDES OVER AND GIVES FOUNDATION TO THE COMMUNITY. THIS CALL REQUIRES A HUMAN RESPONSE FROM THE PERSON CALLED.

Do you agree with the content of this proposition and that it should be included in the Constitution?

GUIDED BY THE GOSPEL AND THE EXAMPLE OF THE PRIMITIVE COMMUNITY.

The demands of the Gospel are radical. Jesus requires that we opt for Him. The evangelical radicalism was put into practice for the first time by the primitive community, as it appears in the Acts of the Apostles.
II. SECOND PROPOSITION

THE VINCENTIAN COMMUNITY HOLDS AS AN IDEAL "KOINONIA" OF THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. THIS "KOINONIA" IS NOT ONLY POSITED IN COMMUNION AND SHARING OF GOOD, BUT ABOVE ALL MEANS COMMUNION AND PARTICIPATION OF ALL IN FAITH IN ONE PERSON: JESUS.

THE COMMUNITY AS SEEN IN ITS ORIGINS

We cannot prescind with the foundational documents in order to understand the Vincentian community. From this, we deduce:

III. THIRD PROPOSITION


IV. FOURTH PROPOSITION

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE AIM OF THE C.M. MOST EFFICIENTLY, THE C.M. REQUIRES LIFE IN COMMON: "VIVRONT EN COMM (XIII, 200)." THIS LIFE IN COMMON IS COMPOSED OF THREE ELEMENTS: PRAYER IN COMMUNITY; COMMUNITY OF GOODS; AND COMMUNITY OF FRATERNAL RELATIONSHIPS.

V. FIFTH PROPOSITION

IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS END, THE COMMUNITY REQUIRES FROM EACH OF ITS MEMBERS D'FULL AVAILABILITY FOR THE WORK OF THE EVANGELIZATION OF THE POOR: "S'APPLIQUER ENTIEREMENT ET PUREMENT AU SALUT DU PAUVRE PEUPLE. (XIII, 197)."

CONSISTENT WITH PRESENT THEOLOGY

The Theology of the present day provides us with a more profound understanding of community; From such we deduce:

VI. SIXTH PROPOSITION


VII. SEVENTH PROPOSITION

EVERY VINCENTIAN COMMUNITY IS CHARISMATIC. IT DRAW FROM A PLURALITY OF CHARISMS THAT GOD CONCEDES TO WHOM HE WILLS AND HOW HE WILLS WHICH THE COMMUNITY MUST CULTIVATE FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE COMMON GOOD.
IN AGREEMENT WITH THE "SIGNS OF THE TIMES"

We cannot prescind with the modern mentality in order to understand community. While in past times the hierarchy was the supreme value, today there is a tendency to emphasize democratic values. From this we deduce:

VIII. EIGHTH PROPOSITION


IX. NINTH PROPOSITION


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