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Vincentian Education: A Survey of its History (revised)

by

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Introduction

The Congregation of the Mission (the Vincentians) has always been conflicted about its works of education. Its official name, Congregation of the Mission, bespeaks its purpose: missions, and Saint Vincent de Paul, its founder, always called its members Missioners. By this title, he was referring to the preaching of a series of sermons and catechetical instructions for the benefit of the rural poor. Over its history, however, the Congregation became heavily, even primarily, involved in education, mainly in seminaries. This study surveys the history of Vincentian education efforts, moving from seminaries to primary and secondary education, and then to modern university education. The challenge has always been to remain faithful to the inspiration of Vincent de Paul, on which basis the Church approved its establishment.

The Value of Education

Vincent de Paul himself was an educated man. He earned a degree in theology from the University of Toulouse, a recognition enabling him to teach in that prestigious institution. Whether he did so or not is unknown. Later, he was granted a degree in canon law from the University of Paris, the Sorbonne. Whether he actually worked for this degree is unknown (it could have been granted by some sort of dispensation or favor), but his skill in the law is evident in his writing and behaviors.

For the rural poor to whom he was increasingly drawn, he followed a theological opinion that stressed instruction for the salvation of their souls. The lack of education in religious matters was most on his mind when he and his followers went out to preach in neglected country parishes. His method was not to found schools, however, but to concentrate on preaching and the catechism to give the unlettered peasants the theological knowledge he believed they needed. It undoubtedly never occurred to him that in centuries to come his followers would both continue his preaching mission and add to it a formation in the arts and sciences, as well as in the professions. He would have blessed their efforts.

His educational work, if we can call it that, was more practical. For example, to help the needy he was not overly interested in distributing cash to them. His attention went rather to the provision of tools for artisans, seed for farmers and the like. Had he been faced with modern systems of education, these practical initiatives of his would have found many new applications in the educational field. His interest, in other words, was person-oriented in all areas of life.

He did not neglect primary education, however, confiding freely to the Daughters of Charity the impetus they needed to teach young girls, particularly in the villages. Their

“Particular Rules for the Sister who teaches school,” whether his work alone or written in collaboration, as with Louise de Marillac, testifies to his interests. He also supported with his own funds the poor children, both boys and girls, of the parish of St. Laurent, adjoining Saint Lazare. This began in 1639; it is unknown how long this continued.¹

Reform of the Clergy

A term that is not often associated with Vincent is “reform,” but it was one of his chief motivations. He was, after all, living in the period following the reforming Council of Trent (1545-1563) and was imbued with its concerns. In the first years following the foundation of the Congregation in 1625, he often engaged in discussions about the sad state of the Church. One of the bishops to whom he spoke, and who had already begun the charitable work of the Confraternities of Charity, was the bishop of Beauvais, Augustin Potier. Vincent’s perspective was that change could come only from the bottom up, with a young clergy well trained in the spiritual ideals of priesthood. One day in July of 1628, while the bishop and Vincent were traveling together in the bishop’s carriage, he became transfixed with this issue. He resolved to invite candidates for priesthood into his episcopal palace in Beauvais for several days in a kind of workshop on the duties of priesthood. Vincent’s response was: “Oh, Your Excellency, surely this is a thought come from God. This is an excellent means for bringing order, step by step, to all the clergy of your diocese.”²

The bishop then had the inspiration of inviting Vincent to Beauvais to conduct this workshop, and he reflected: “I was more convinced that God wished this service of me, asked for by the mouth of a bishop, than if it had been delivered by an angel from heaven.” This dramatic moment marked the beginning of all Vincentian educational efforts.

The next step, taken certainly without realizing the consequences, was the foundation in 1641 of a seminary in Annecy, a city in Savoy. This was the first Vincentian seminary, in which candidates for the priesthood received spiritual and pastoral formation, to be followed in later seminaries by increasingly developed academic formation. To keep contact with the foundation charter obliging the Congregation to give missions (“The principal purpose and special goal of this Congregation and its members is, by the grace of God, along with their own salvation, to dedicate themselves to the salvation of those who live on the estates, in the countryside, on farms, in hamlets, and in insignificant places,”³) the seminary directors normally sent seminarians to accompany the Missioners during their work and to help them with some of their tasks, particularly catechism lessons for the children.

One other point that would have significance in later Vincentian life was an insistence on the practical outcome of these parish missions. The preachers were required to foster “the establishment of what are known as Confraternities of Charity to aid the sick poor.”⁴ These were composed of charitable parishioners dedicated to the relief of poverty in their own parishes.

These principles, then, would mark subsequent Vincentian education: an emphasis on evangelization, attention to the poor and neglected, charity in action, and the empowerment of co-workers. These characteristics, in fact, had been evident in Vincent's own ministry.

Seminaries, major and minor

During the seventeenth century, the Congregation of the Mission became increasingly involved in seminary education. From the death of the founder in 1660 to the end of the century, the Congregation staffed thirty-four seminaries, twenty-seven in France and seven in Poland.⁵ In the next century, the work broadened further, both in numbers of seminaries and in their scope. A distinction had been made even in Vincent's time between seminaries properly so-called (of various types), and preparatory institutions. These came to be called minor seminaries, which enrolled boys often at a young age, taught them the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic, plus Latin and religion. The problem always was the small number of those who continued to ordination, usually about five percent of those who entered, along with the large financial and personnel investment these schools entailed.

An important seminary, with a history dating back to 1751, is the Collegio Alberoni. Located in Piacenza in northern Italy, it took its name from Cardinal Giulio Alberoni. He was determined to provide the best possible education to seminary students, and he invited the Vincentians to staff it. He had the foresight to endow his foundation with significant land holdings, so much so that the Alberoni continues to draw on that income to maintain itself. It became famous for its science department, which included astronomical observatory and, more recently, a seismograph. In its history, it became the object of desire on the part of various governments, but it has remained almost continuously in Vincentian hands.

By the time of the French Revolution, 1789, the Congregation of the Mission in France, deeply involved in seminary education, staffed a total of forty-eight major seminaries, of which twenty-one additionally gave parish missions; there were also fourteen minor seminaries.⁶ Other congregations also staffed seminaries in France, notably the Society of Saint Sulpice (Sulpicians), and the Oratory of France. It became clear that while the Sulpicians and Oratorians offered a high level of academic preparation ("seminaries for bishops" some said), the Vincentians emphasized spiritual and pastoral preparation ("seminaries for pastors"). The Vincentians, too, offered a high level of academic preparation and many renowned scholars developed out of this system, such as Pierre Collet and François-Florentin Brunet, both men of encyclopedic knowledge and a large published output.

International efforts

The Jesuits, members of the Society of Jesus, had through patient development covered France with a series of secondary schools, *collèges*, whose aim had been to prepare

an educated and convinced Catholic elite for the nation. Following their suppression in 1773, the Jesuit works passed to others.

Civil and religious authorities in the Palatinate, a German-speaking state bordering France, began to look for professors to replace the Society of Jesus in the University of Heidelberg, as well as in their former secondary schools (*gymnasia*) in Mannheim, Heidelberg, and Neustadt an der Haardt (today's Neustadt an der Weinstraße). The impulse to recruit the Vincentians came from two French priests, François Joseph Terrasse Desbillons, a former Jesuit, and Nicolas Maillot de la Treille, a royal counselor, who must have known the Congregation from its seminary work. Negotiations began in 1781 and various political and ecclesiastical problems were soon overcome, thanks mainly to the Prince Elector Carl IV Theodor. Therefore, on 7 November 1781 the Congregation took over the property of the Jesuits in Heidelberg and elsewhere.

One of the glories of the University in Heidelberg was its astronomical observatory. When the Vincentians arrived, one of the new staff was Jérôme Christof. This young Vincentian was sent to Heidelberg while still a student to finish his studies in mathematics. Another was a remarkable Luxembourger, Peter Ungeschick, also a professor of mathematics. His studies in Paris were interrupted by the Revolution, and he fell victim to disease shortly after.

The presence of Vincentians at Heidelberg, Mannheim and elsewhere was only brief, since the chaos of the French Revolution reached into the Palatinate. The history of these Vincentians is murky, but their principal works seem to have ceased by 1796.

More significantly for the Vincentians, the Jesuit missions in China and the Ottoman Empire were entrusted, in 1782 and 1783 respectively, to the Congregation of the Mission through the action of the Holy See and the support of the French government. The institution of schools in the Middle East, however, was principally a Vincentian undertaking. French government support was of the highest importance, since these schools used French as the medium of instruction, and they gradually developed a curriculum matching the French model. This had the added value of giving students from the Middle East access to French university education. Faculty members, too, could be more easily recruited from the French mainland, without the need of devoting themselves to mastering such languages as Turkish, Greek, and Arabic.

Before the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1914, the Vincentians were staffing secondary schools in Constantinople and Smyrna (Turkey), Santorini and Thessalonica (Greece), Antoura (Lebanon), Alexandria (Egypt) and Damascus (Syria). Most of these institutions had a primary division, and the Vincentians were also responsible in a general way for many primary schools in Lebanon. The French government supported these Vincentian schools with regular annual subsidies and salaries and also supported numerous schools run by the restored Jesuits, Christian Brothers, Franciscans, Capuchins, Dominicans, and others run by the Maronite and Greek Catholic communities.⁷ By 1914, however, the subsidies gradually ceased.

One result of the education received in these schools was the rise of living standards among the graduates. In fact, Saint Joseph in Antoura has become one of the premier schools of Lebanon, the alma mater of many leaders in government and business in that country. Since Antoura has accepted students of all faiths, it has become a model for the interaction of Christians (Catholics of various rites, and Orthodox), Muslims (Sunni, Shia and others), and Druses. Social acceptance of Christians, not only in fairly liberal Lebanon but elsewhere, also rose. One point with another long-term effect has been the founding of schools for girls, particularly in Damascus. This was a shock to many traditional families, but consistent with Vincentian practice both before and after.

Schooling in the China missions, by contrast, was at first limited to elementary schools or to seminaries. Later on regular secondary schools developed, principally in the large centers and associated with minor seminaries. The European missionary model was finding a fertile field in China, with one or more secondary school in each of the Chinese vicariates under Vincentian direction by about 1900.

Revolution and after

Following the French Revolution, beginning in Paris in 1789, all religious corporations in France were suppressed. This meant that the Congregation of the Mission lost everything: houses, properties, works, and investments. Its members were faced with several possibilities for survival, such as flight and exile, abandonment of their vocation, whether temporarily or permanently, or underground ministry. Napoleon Bonaparte understood that he had to acknowledge the presence of the Church in France if the nation was to emerge from the chaos of revolution, and this resulted in the Concordat of 1801 between himself and Pius VII, designed to regulate Church-State relations in the future.

Napoleon believed strongly in centralized authority and took it upon himself to reshape religious life in France. For him, the Congregation of the Mission could be reestablished, but its work would be limited to foreign missions. The French vicar general and his confreres were glad to have at least this minimal recognition but, despite the emperor's original plans, the Vincentians soon turned to other works. The principal reason here was the dearth of educational institutions under Catholic auspices, and the French bishops were insistent in their invitations to religious communities to open seminaries and secondary schools, even with a skeletal staff. Some of the Missioners had survived the late stages of the revolutionary period by serving in places where they had been before 1789 (such as Sarlat, Vannes and Montauban), and it was thus easy to conceive of re-founding the same establishments following the Concordat.

An important development in the post-revolutionary period, as the Congregation was recovering its former vigor, was the decision to staff secondary schools with no seminary connections. The Jesuits, after all, had them and they were lucrative and successful. Besides, they were a source of vocations for the Society of Jesus. The question was then whether the Vincentians might not take the same path. In those early days, since the government of the Congregation was weak and unorganized, these decisions were taken with great lack of attention to consequences.

Three schools in particular, at Montdidier, Roye and Montolieu, became important in the life of the Congregation in France during the early post-revolutionary period. At first, many of the professors had been seminary professors before the Revolution. This changed as vocations started to flow in. It must be said, however, that each of these schools faced serious problems in staffing and financial stability. Montdidier was the most successful in that it was able to send on its alumni to higher education or to the professions, including the military and the government. But there was no principled attention to the poor, since nearly everyone in those days could qualify as poor. The most abandoned, besides, would not even meet the necessary prerequisites of completing an elementary education. Gradually their position improved, but both Roye and Montolieu had to be closed for the traditional reasons of insufficient men and money.

International missions

Besides the schools mentioned above as existing in the Middle East, others began in mission territories newly opened in the Congregation.

The first of these was Saint Mary's of the Barrens, Perryville, Missouri. The Vincentians came to the United States in 1816 principally to staff a seminary for the Louisiana Purchase. Their founding contract also stipulated the giving of parish missions as in Europe. The only problem here was that there were very few parishes, and the greater need was for a well prepared clergy. The strain on the Congregation was great in its first years, since many of its members had to live apart from one another temporarily (community life is a requirement for Vincentians), and those who lived on their own in the poor but developing parishes scattered along the Mississippi River found it difficult to return to living in common.

A further strain was the situation of the seminary. The settlers in the Upper Mississippi Valley found it odd that their sons could get at the Barrens a clerical education but not a basic education. That too changed, since non-seminarians were gradually admitted, welcome because many could pay, whereas the seminarians were supported (although badly) by their bishops. The central government of the Congregation in Paris found this mixing of seminary and lay education too difficult to conceptualize and ordered the closure of the lay "college" at Saint Mary's. The decision was reversed some time later and the two institutions operated side-by-side for some time until the growth of the student body allowed the building of a separate school. Saint Vincent's College, in Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

Another early institution was at Caraça, Brazil. This school opened in 1821, following a similar trajectory: opening as a seminary but quickly taking non-clerical students. As elsewhere, the faculty also gave parish missions. The school had a brilliant career, with many graduates advancing to higher studies and the professions. Another school opened at Campobello in 1852. As in the Ottoman Empire, the poor families in the Brazilian Empire, as it was then, were able to better their position through the education

offered by the Vincentians at these two schools. In later years, other schools also began, such as Petropolis (1890).

In both these early missions, the United States and Brazil, the Vincentians supplied what was being called for most insistently by the bishops and the Catholic people, namely education, particularly for their sons. This development would be followed, almost unreflectively, in several other Vincentian missions. In many countries, the Vincentians arrived to staff a seminary, but general education was a more immediate priority. In Mexico, *colegios* were founded in Guanajuato (1861-1887) and Tlalpan-Tacubaya (1900-1935). In Argentina, the Vincentians began San Luis College in 1872, at the very beginning of its presence in the country. The Vincentians in Australia, although arriving much later, followed the same lines. Their secondary school, Saint Stanislaus in Bathurst, grew from a small institution to a major boys' school, situated not in a large city, but catering largely to students from rural areas. Since 1888 it has provided leadership in many fields, just as its sister institutions elsewhere have done. The condition for the Vincentians to enter Venezuela in the twentieth century was to open secondary schools.

Other secondary schools began in Europe during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Italy, there were eight; in Spain, ten; Ireland had three and England one; Portugal had two, and Germany, one.

In keeping with the missionary model then in vogue, the Vincentians opened a secondary school for Armenians in Tabriz, Persia, in 1900.

All in all, this large total of Vincentian educational institutions is impressive for its quantity and large geographical spread.

Educational Quality

It is difficult to assess the quality of education received more than a century ago. The recollections of students are often colored by the excitement of a young life, but such memoirs as we have generally praise the Vincentians especially for the individual attention they gave to the students. Although some professors were young and inexperienced, and others performed at a minimal level, the majority imparted a good education, especially as seen by the accomplishments of the graduates and the numbers who were moved to join their former professors in community as Vincentians, despite the poverty and austerity they experienced.

One indication of educational quality is the multiplicity of printing presses. Attention to the printed word, whether in books, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers or simple prayer cards, was a large emphasis in Vincentian education and general mission work. The Lazarist Press in Beijing had a long and influential history, although it was not connected with schools. Its output in various European and Oriental languages, including Chinese, was greatly admired. The press in Persia did a lot to support the work of evangelization among the Christian people in the neglected northwest of what is now Iran. Another was in Ethiopia, one of the first in the country. The Saint-Benoît publications in

Constantinople supported the educational work of the Vincentians and, in general, had a far-flung influence throughout the Middle East. The press in Monastir (now called Bitola, in North Macedonia) had the special purpose of producing works in Bulgarian. Several others could be mentioned, such as those in the Americas. In Europe, too, the more established provinces also were responsible for numerous publications and in some cases continue their work today.

Another indication of quality is the libraries of these institutions. Even the smallest and most remote schools developed good libraries. Even after some closures, their holdings often remain, a silent witness to the varied interests of generations of scholars.

Colleges and Universities

University-level education is a modern development in Vincentian life, although its roots reach back to the nineteenth century. Further, Vincentian universities developed first in the United States, given the nation's openness to tertiary education, one without burdensome conditions. This is the principal reason keeping Vincentian universities from developing in other more traditionally Vincentian areas, such as France, Italy, Poland and Spain.

The American universities all began with the modest goals of being secondary schools or minor seminaries.⁸ Then, with the growth of the American population and the consequent access to greater financial resources, these five schools increased their outreach. The oldest of these is Niagara University, beginning in 1856. It opened as a seminary (Our Lady of the Angels, Niagara Falls, New York), but soon had a college division, with a state charter granted in 1863. In 1865 another institution began at the other end of the country, in Los Angeles, California. Its purpose, like Niagara's, was to be simultaneously a seminary and a college. It was unsuccessful as a seminary, but the college division grew. Typically for Vincentian institutions, it was open to students of all classes and backgrounds, but, despite many changes of management and direction, it closed in 1911 amid much controversy. The Jesuits assumed its charter, reversing in some respects the experience of the Congregation in the eighteenth century, and Saint Vincent's College became Loyola University (now Loyola-Marymount).

Much more successful was the College of Saint John the Baptist in Brooklyn, New York, which opened in 1870. Although it was not planned strictly as a seminary, the bishop of Brooklyn held out hopes to the Vincentians that it might become a source of priesthood candidates for them and others. It grew rapidly and moved to a new location where, as Saint John's University, it now stands.

DePaul University, Chicago, also began as a secondary school in the hopes of providing preparation for priesthood candidates. Saint Vincent's College, as it was then known, opened in 1898. It took on a special identity through a conscious imitation of Cardinal Newman's *The Idea of a University*, as well as the charter modeled on that of the new University of Chicago. This meant offering traditional liberal arts as well as professional programs, with early lay involvement on its board of trustees. As with other

Vincentian schools, it allowed students of all backgrounds to enter, whether Catholic or not, and it welcomed students from struggling families.

The fifth, and least successful, of these Vincentian endeavors in the United States, was the University of Dallas. The bishop of Dallas, backed by extravagant promises of Catholic businessmen in Texas, founded Holy Trinity College in 1907. The enormous school building was for most of its existence the home only of the high school division. The change of name to University of Dallas did not lift it out of its financial and administrative difficulties, and no amount of gyrations could save it from closing in 1929. Its name and charter continue, however, in a different institution in the Dallas area.

Changing Perspectives

As mentioned above, the Congregation of the Mission had to struggle with fulfilling its stated purpose in the Church, to give parish missions. This became overwhelmed in practice by works of education. The same was also true, to an even greater extent, concerning parish work. The time for resolving the conflicts in perspective was initiated with the Church's publication of the Code of Canon Law (1917). Henceforth, all Church bodies were to conform their practices to this first-ever comprehensive statement of its law.

The Congregation of the Mission began this work of adjustment but found itself restricted in several ways. In the first place tensions existed between the French government and the Holy See. These were resolved only after the First World War. Secondly, following the war, the reconstruction of shattered economies in Europe plus the worldwide financial depression inhibited a thoroughgoing revision of Vincentian community law and practices. When the opportunity finally arrived after the Second World War, the Congregation was able for the first time to formulate its position.

As regards Vincentian education, as far back as 1849 the General Assembly, the Congregation's highest deliberative body, went on record to answer the question of whether the direction of lay colleges was opposed to the purpose of the Congregation. The answer was nuanced: "The assembly declares that that work is not opposed to this purpose, although it is always to be placed after missions and seminaries. Besides, it declares that that work is very much conformable to this purpose in the foreign missions, where the Christian education of youth is the most efficacious method of propagating the faith, and which has been frequently and highly commended by the Holy See."⁹

The assembly of 1947 did not adopt the same open perspective, but the final version of the Constitutions, published in 1954, stated that the general purpose of the Congregation was, "3° to carry on works of charity and education." This was explicitated in a later article of the same Constitutions: "192. Since there are also other works, besides the missions, which the Congregation carries on as its purpose, . . . which are in conformity with it, as the ministry of instructing young people in Christian precepts and doctrine in our Colleges, etc. . . ." It will be noted that the mention of the foreign missions present in the 1849 decree had disappeared. Those Constitutions, the first in the Congregation's long history, had only a short life. The reason was that the Second Vatican Council issued a call for congregations

to again review their principles and practices in the light of the decrees issued by the Council. Out of this mandate came the following paragraph in the draft Constitutions of 1968: "Conscious of the great importance of education, we shall engage in the work of teaching and educating where the need exists."¹⁰

When the time came at the General Assembly of 1980 to decide on the final version of these Constitutions, the Congregation urged the Vincentian universities refocus their attention on their mission. This was found in Statute 29: "*Recognizing the great importance of education for both youth and adults, members should take up this work of teaching and educating where it is needed to achieve the purpose of the Congregation. -- Schools, colleges, and universities should, according to local circumstances, admit, and promote the development of the poor. All the students, however, should be imbued with a sensitivity for the poor, according to the spirit of our Founder, while the confreres affirm the value of Christian education and provide a Christian social formation.*"¹¹ This far-reaching statement came out of a proposal during the assembly of 1980 that, if approved, would have led to the abandonment of the universities. Instead, the members of the assembly became convinced of the utility of these and similar institutions for carrying out the mission of the Congregation.

The result has been that alumni of the three American Vincentian universities, Niagara University, Saint John's University and DePaul University, in improving their own personal situation, have also come away with a Vincentian sensitivity for the poor. Indeed, new methods are constantly being developed to train faculty and administration in the Vincentian charism, and many ongoing programs exist in each institution to recruit students from financially strapped families who have never had any university education, and then to support them through their years of education until their graduation and even afterward. The values at the core of Vincentian education have, in summary, been described as being holistic, integrated, creative, flexible, excellent, person-oriented, collaborative, and focused.¹²

The Vincentian faculty members of these universities also underwent significant personal development, a profound conversion in the time of the many changes in Church and society, particularly following the Second Vatican Council and the new constitutions of the Congregation.¹³

The seminaries, too, were encouraged to update their perspective in a similar way. "*C. 15. The formation of clerics in seminaries, a work of the Congregation from its beginnings, is to be effectively renewed where needed. In addition, members should afford spiritual assistance to priests both in the work of their ongoing formation and in promoting their pastoral zeal. They should work to encourage in them the desire of fulfilling the Church's option for the poor.*"¹⁴

In other words, the Constitutions summoned both the major educational activities of the Congregation to focus on their special and distinctive Vincentian characteristic, a practical sensitivity for those living in poverty.

This new direction in Vincentian ministry also exhibited new urgency in numerous other ways besides higher education. A huge number of endeavors, many designed to relieve poverty, have grown up in Vincentian-sponsored works, such as groups working on literacy, economics, job skills, hygiene, and issues concerning women and families. Vincentian patronage extends to all sorts of social action and awareness, networking, sponsorship of credit unions, voter information groups and the like. All this runs counter to the Congregation's hesitation, anchored in the Common Rules of Saint Vincent, about becoming involved in politics.¹⁵ In the nineteenth century, his concern was broadened to including a ban on reading newspapers, participation in political parties, even voting in civil elections. The perspective was that any bleed-through of the secular onto the sacred would harm the realm of the sacred. Saint Vincent's often-cited remark that the Missioners were "Carthusians at home, and apostles abroad"¹⁶ meant for later generations that the members lived like hermits at home, devoted solely to prayer and study in preparation for their apostolic work on the missions. While Vincent's formulation is interesting, it cannot be generalized to cover all situations of Vincentian life. It certainly does not represent today's reality.

Vincentian Formation

One aspect easily overlooked is the formation that the members of the Congregation provide for their own members. In the past, many of these seminaries, at the college and graduate level (or "philosophy" and "theology" in common parlance), were set up exclusively for members of the Congregation. In recent years many of these schools broadened their outreach to include members of other Vincentian provinces, diocesan or religious students and, keeping up an old tradition, lay students. It was normally in these institutions that the leaders of the Congregation were formed, including eventual faculty and administrators for the Vincentian universities. In some provinces, by contrast, the "seminary" title is given only to residences whose students receive their academic and/or pastoral training at other institutions.

All these institutions are governed by *Ratio Formationis*, or "Program for Vincentian Formation in the Major Seminary of the Congregation of the Mission." Published in 1988, it sets out the specific goals of Vincentian formation. Most importantly here is article 7, which concludes: "According to the spirit of St. Vincent and the tradition of the Congregation, our formation is directed especially toward evangelization and the exercise of charity and promotion of justice toward the poor."¹⁷ The revised document, *Ratio Formationis*, issued in 2014, repeats this sentence almost verbatim.¹⁸ Out of this context, then, one can expect that future leaders in Vincentian institutions of all sorts, particularly in higher education, will be imbued with the spirit of the Congregation.

Other Colleges and Universities

The Irish Vincentian experience of providing higher education followed a pattern similar to that of their American confreres: beginning with secondary schools and then developing university-level programs and institutions. Castleknock College, Dublin, began as Saint Vincent's Ecclesiastical Seminary in 1835 and gradually opened its doors to accept

non-seminary students and finally dropped the clerical program altogether. Castleknock did develop a university program in the last decade of the century, but this was phased out with the development of a state-supported national Catholic university.

Two other institutions, Saint Patrick's College, Drumcondra (1883), and Saint Mary's College, Hammersmith, near London (1899), were explicitly university level, though with the specific purpose of teacher training. They developed further programs throughout their history. Saint Patrick's was folded into Dublin City University in 2016. St. Mary's, under Vincentian leadership until 1992, moved to Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, opening in 1927. It gained university status in 2014.

Finally, All Hallows College, Drumcondra, came to the Congregation in 1892 as a mission seminary. In recent years, its focus changed into a lay training institution, offering third-level programs.¹⁹ It closed, however, in 2016, joining its sister institution in Drumcondra as incorporated into Dublin City University.

In comparison with the American Vincentian universities, Adamson University in Manila, Philippines, followed a much different historical development. It had been founded as a professional school for industrial chemistry and engineering in 1932 and, after the Second World War, entered into various relationships with the Philippine Vincentian province. This culminated in the transfer of the property in 1964. Since then, Adamson University has grown to be a major institution, one of the top twenty in the Philippines.

DePaul College, Jaro, Iloilo City, is another Filipino institution which, like the much larger Adamson University, began life as a private school that came to the Vincentians in 1960. It took its new name in 1961 and continues to have both secondary and upper level students. Both Adamson and DePaul College have been regarded by the Philippine province as important for being "effective means for human development in a developing nation."²⁰

In addition to the two above-mentioned institutions, we should mention the recently inaugurated (17 November 2002) Universidad de Santa Isabel, Naga City, Philippines. Founded in 1867 as Colegio de Santa Isabel and committed to the Daughters of Charity, it continues now as the first university sponsored by the Sisters. In addition, the Sisters in the Philippines, as well as in other parts of the world, have an extensive series of secondary schools (*colegios*), all inspired by the Vincentian charism.

The Daughters of Charity in the United States also had institutions of higher education: Saint Joseph's College, Emmitsburg, Maryland; and Marillac College, Saint Louis, Missouri. Saint Joseph's continued Saint Elizabeth Seton's original free school, receiving a charter in 1902 to grant degrees. It was one of the first four-year liberal arts colleges for women in the United States, continuing its service until 1973.²¹ Marillac College had a special mission, the higher education of religious sisters. "Marillac College was conceived as a true service to the poor by providing for them well-qualified nurses, teachers, and social workers."²² Unique in America, it served Sisters from many

congregations, with a faculty and student body drawn from around forty communities from 1955 until its closure in 1974.

Although not related legally to the Congregation of the Mission or to the Daughters of Charity, today several other congregations with Vincentian roots sponsor colleges or universities. On the same high professional level should also be mentioned the nursing schools and other educational endeavors of the hospital systems run by the Daughters of Charity and by their sisters in the larger Vincentian family. All these institutions too share the same charism, and work for poverty eradication through their efforts and vast influence.

Conclusion

Despite the struggles over the Congregation's self-understanding, its work of education has continued to be a major commitment for the Vincentians. What was accepted only grudgingly, through a series of reflections based on the experience of the Church and of the Congregation, has now been embraced as one of the premier ways to, in the words of the Constitutions, to "promote the development of the poor." This perspective, encouraged by the Church's preferential option for the poor, will undoubtedly continue to be the "value-added" component to higher education in the Vincentian tradition.

¹ Joseph Guichard, C.M., Notes & Documents, T. VIII, p. 397; typed, in the archives of the Mission, Paris.

² *Vincent de Paul. Correspondence. Conferences. Documents* (CCD). Trans. Marie Poole, et al., Hyde Park, N.Y., 2003; document 149b, vol. 13b, pp. 169-177.

³ CCD, document 84a: Urban VIII, “*Salvatoris Nostri*, Bull of Erection of the Congregation of the Mission,” vol. 13a, pp. 298-300.

⁴ “*Salvatoris nostri*,” p. 299.

⁵ Luigi Mezzadri, *The Vincentians. A General History of the Congregation of the Mission*, Hyde Park, New York, 2009, vol. 1, p. 181.

⁶ Mezzadri, *The Vincentians*, vol. 2, (Hyde Park, N.Y. 2013), pp. 172-73. There were also three seminaries with special purposes (such as the preparation of navy chaplains), five with only a brief life, and seven that had been planned but never opened.

⁷ Jérôme Bocquet, “Le Collège Saint-Vincent des Pères Lazaristes de Damas. L’Enseignement français en Syrie (1864-1967),” Thesis, Université de Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris, 2002, pp. 86-87.

⁸ For further details, see Stafford Poole, “The Educational Apostolate: Colleges, Universities, and Secondary Schools,” in John E. Rybolt, ed., *The American Vincentians*, Brooklyn, NY, 1988, pp. 291-346.

⁹ *Collectio Completa Decretorum Conventuum Generalium Congregationis Missionis*. Paris, 1882, p. 22, decree 65.

¹⁰ *Schemata Constitutionum ac Statutorum Congregationis Missionis*, Rome, 1968, art. 111.

¹¹ *Constitutiones et Statuta Congregationis Missionis*, Rome, 1980; reprinted in *Vincentiana* 14 : 4-5 (July-Oct 1980) 195-250; in the official 1984 version, this became Statute 11, §§1,3.

¹² Louise Sullivan, *The Core Values of Vincentian Education*, Niagara University, 1997; reprinted Chicago, 1997, p. 43.

¹³ Dennis H. Holtschneider, Edward R. Udovic, *The Vincentian Higher Education Apostolate in the United States*, Chicago, 2001.

¹⁴ *Constitutiones Congregationis Missionis*, Rome, 1984.

¹⁵ Ch. 8, art. 15.--Disagreements and wars can take place between Christian rulers, and on such occasions no one should reveal a preference for either side. This is following the example of Christ, who did not want to adjudicate in a quarrel between brothers or decide about the rights of rulers. All He said was to give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and so forth.

Ch. 8, art. 16.--Each one should keep well away from discussions about national or international affairs and other political matters, especially with regard to war and current disputes between rulers and other similar rumors in the world. And each one should take care, as far as possible, not to write anything about all this.

Ch. 9, art. 9.--No one should irresponsibly or pointlessly mention to non-confreres what has been, or is going to be, done in the house, nor should we discuss with them any matters which are not allowed in or our conversation, especially concerning the state or kingdom.

¹⁶ Abelly, *Life*, bk. 1, chap. 22, p. 124.

¹⁷ The whole document appears in *Vincentiana* 32:2 (March-April 1988) 155-181.

¹⁸ “Ratio Formationis,” *Vincentiana* 58:4 (October-December 2014) 74/382.

¹⁹ James H. Murphy, ed., *Nos Autem. Castleknock College and its Contribution*, Dublin, 1995.

²⁰ Rolando S. Dela Goza, and Jesus Ma. Cavanna, *Vincentians in the Philippines. 1862-1982*, Manila, 1985, p. 437, citing provincial norms from 1977-1978.

²¹ Daniel Hannefin, *Daughters of the Church. A Popular History of the Daughters of Charity in the United States. 1809-1987*. Brooklyn, N.Y., 1989, p. 158.

²² Hannefin, *Daughters*, p. 241.