What Would Vincent Do? Vincentian Higher Education and Poverty Reduction

Marco Tavanti, DePaul University
Craig Mousin, DePaul University

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/marcotavanti/13/
What Would Vincent Do? Vincentian Higher Education And Poverty Reduction
WHAT WOULD VINCENT DO?
VINCENTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION & POVERTY REDUCTION

Marco Tavanti, Ph.D., and Reverend Craig B. Mousin, Editors

Special Issue of the Vincentian Heritage
Volume 28, Number 2, 2008

St. Vincent’s Circle. DePaul University, Lincoln Park campus.
Sculpture by Margaret Beaudette, S.C.
Image Collection of the Vincentian Studies Institute
# Table of Contents

## Foreword:
*Vincentian Higher Education and Poverty Reduction*
Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., Ed.D. ................................................... 9

## Contributors to this Issue ............................................................... 13

## Preface:
*What Would Vincent do Today to Overcome Poverty?*
Marco Tavanti, Ph.D., and Reverend Craig B. Mousin ...................... 25

## Vincentian Perspectives on Education, Social Engagement and Poverty Reduction

### The Most Important Question
Rev. Craig B. Mousin .............................................................................. 31

### Vincentian Education:
*A Survey of its History*
John E. Rybolt, C.M., Ph.D. .................................................................... 51

### “Our good will and honest efforts.”
*Vincentian Perspectives on Poverty Reduction Efforts*
Edward R. Udovic, C.M., Ph.D. ............................................................ 69

### Toward a Vincentian Culture in Higher Education
Margaret John Kelly, D.C. ........................................................................ 79

### Education with a Heart
Gregorio L. Bañaga, Jr., C.M., Ph.D. ...................................................... 95

### Developing Vincentian Leaders through Service Learning
Marilynn P. Fleckenstein, Ph.D. ............................................................ 107
Untangling the Ivy: Discovering Vincentian Service Learning at DePaul University
Howard Rosing, Ph.D. ................................................................. 219

What Would Saint Vincent de Paul Do About Today's Global Poverty?
Personalism vs. Paternalism: Social Work's Role Within a Vincentian Institution
Troy Harden .................................................................................. 239

Law School Programs that Reduce Poverty:
The Example of the Chiapas Human Rights Practicum
Leonard L. Cavise, J.D. .................................................................. 247

What Would Vincent Study Abroad? Option for the Poor and Systemic Change for the Development of Socially Responsible Leaders
Marco Tavanti, Ph.D., and Heather Evans, M.S. .............................. 261

Meeting Saint Vincent’s Challenge in Providing Assistance to the Foreign-Born Poor:
Applying the Lessons to the Asylum and Immigration Law Clinic
Sioban Albiol .................................................................................. 273

Vincentian Responses to Poverty through Service, Spiritual Growth and Social Change

Committed to Poverty Reduction and Spiritual Growth:
Vincentian Communities of Reflection, Action, and Solidarity
Karl Nass and Siobhan O’Donoghue .............................................. 295

Poverty Reduction Initiatives at the Universidad de Santa Isabel:
Vincentian Seeds of Hope
Maria Asuncion G. Evidente, D.C., Nenette L. Abrigo, Ph.D., and Virginia C. Reyes, Ph.D. .............................................................. 119

Poverty Reduction — A Vincentian Initiative in Higher Education:
The All Hallows Experience
Dorrie Balfe, O.P., MA, and John Joe Spring, MA, Dip.Th. ............. 127

The Academic Social Responsibility for Poverty Reduction and Systemic Change

Saint Vincent de Paul and the Mission of the Institute for Business and Professional Ethics: Why Companies Should Care About Poverty
Patricia H. Werhane, Laura P. Hartman and Scott P. Kelley, Ph.D. .................................................................................. 141

Subsidiarity and Global Poverty:
Development from Below Upwards
Scott P. Kelley, Ph.D. ...................................................................... 151

In Service of Whom?: The Impact of Vincentian Universities’ Institutional Investment Practices on Global Poverty
Charles R. Strain ........................................................................... 167

Vincentian University Partnerships for Urban Poverty Reduction
Marco Tavanti, Ph.D., Merlinda A. Palencia and Margaret Guzzaldo .................................................................................. 183

Vincentian University Practices on Teaching as Service and Learning

Undergraduate Program in Eastern Africa for Adults Serving the Poor
Susanne M. Dumbleton, Ph.D. ......................................................... 205

Poverty in New Orleans:
Before and After Katrina
Gloria Simo, Ph.D. .......................................................................... 307

Saint Vincent de Paul’s Response to Poverty of Spirit
Yvonne Pratt-Johnson, Ed.D. ........................................................... 319

Saint Vincent and Saint Louise, Catholic to the Core:
Spiritual Praxis as the Foundation for Social Change
Pauline Villapando ......................................................................... 329
I simply cannot imagine any place I would rather spend my life than inside a university. Welcoming and meeting some of the finest minds and practitioners of our time onto campus. Discussing the issues of our day with individuals who have made those concerns their life’s work. Delighting in undergraduates’ idealism and their discovery of complexity. Inhabiting quiet corners for study, or contemplation of art, or music, or theatre. Attempting to honor in practice the privilege and improvisation of good teaching. Even engaging in passionate disagreements, wherein the only recognized hierarchy is that of a compelling idea.

There is a bit of pretension, to be sure, and conversation is sometimes sacrificed to more immediately satisfying ideological grandstanding, but even these moments are occasion for quiet smiles and recognition of a shared humanity. At the end of the day, I know of no corner of our good earth that is more fertile with possibility. Ideas take shape and then spread, influence and sometimes even undermine the society around them. New generations meet the thinking of generations long before them, worlds wildly different than their own. The disciplined observation of scholars and the sheer ambition of their projects are open-handedly shared with academic colleagues throughout the world. Students are brought into this life of love — for there is no other word for it. One cannot study the world or dedicate one’s life to educating the next generation without love.

At a Vincentian university there is an additional, particularly lovely, idealism rooted in the care of two seventeenth-century saints for the poor around them.

Vincent de Paul and his life-long collaborator Louise de Marillac brought people together, both informally and organizationally, so that the poor would be assisted. The simplicity of their purpose met with the still extraordinary ingenuity and complexity of their response. The legal, political, social, ecclesial, and economic forces all had to be understood, engaged, and ultimately managed so that the work could succeed. Thousands of letters remain from both founders, coordinating their works and collaborators, raising money,
filing and fighting law suits, begging the wealthy, employing the royal court, fighting political enemies, building consistency in services throughout multiple countries — and perhaps most important of all, attending to the spirits of all who were served and serving. For there was nothing ultimately more important to Saint Vincent and Saint Louise than the salvation of those for whom and with whom they worked.

This little book brings together these two compelling worlds. The essays, written by faculty and professional staff working at Vincentian universities, are hesitant, searching, proud, prodding, and of necessity incomplete. And yet they are idealistic in the finest sense of the term.

These are the reports of scholars who are attempting to apply their knowledge, research expertise, educational skills, and their students’ labor to the needs of the poor in our own time and place. The danger, of course, is well-intentioned amateurism or encouragements to action without actual action. But notably little of that exists on these pages. Rather, there is a desire to share what they have learned with their colleagues, all so that Vincent and Louise’s work might expand and our universities might be a true resource for the poor.

The world has changed since these two saints looked upon its needs. Louise and Vincent created a succession of local works where there were none. Today there are extensive public and private programs to address poverty, and there is an understanding of the economic and social forces that both create and ameliorate it. There are advances in health, communication, agriculture, logistics, materials-science, water purification, the productive use of capital, and so much more that can be put to good use in ways Louise or Vincent could never have imagined. It is in universities that much of this expertise resides.

For Vincentian universities, the first and foremost activity will always be the education of the poor — finding ways to fund and deliver higher education to first-generation, immigrant, and working-class individuals. Yet, when scholars assemble to accomplish this worthy task, the valuable knowledge they bring and the community they form create the possibility of a broader response to the poverty that still afflicts our world. At Vincentian universities this is fundamentally a religious task, though not always a confessional one, coming from the deeply held convictions of our faculty, staff, and students that God would have the world different from what it is. Their discovery and conviction, like that of Vincent and Louise, is that it is a blessing to know, educate, and work on behalf of the poor.

The authors remind us that solutions may take better hold when the complexity of poverty is acknowledged and the interlocking issues that the poor must negotiate are teased apart and addressed. Solutions may be more effective if they engage the current economic and political systems. The poor may be better served when these social systems find reformers and collaborators, rather than the formation of another partially funded, understaffed program. These are but a few of the observations our authors explore. In the end, their intent is both modest and generous: to share with one another first efforts and ideas so that the potential of our academic communities may be realized and the poor assisted.

DePaul University, Chicago
15 March 2008
Feast of St. Louise de Marillac
Contributors to this Issue

NENETTE L. ABRIGO, Ph.D., is the dean of the Graduate School of Universidad de Sta. Isabel. She holds a doctorate and a master’s degree in mathematics education. She is also the learning center coordinator of the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU). She is an active member of the Mathematics Society of the Philippines and has presented a paper at one of its national assemblies. Her involvement includes membership in the National Research Council of the Philippines and the Philippine Association for Graduate Education. She is working on a joint research project with UPOU on blended learning.

SIOBAN ALBIOL joined DePaul College of Law in 2001 as the Asylum and Immigration Coordinator and Clinical Instructor. Ms. Albiol teaches law students in a yearlong clinic focused on representation of asylum-seekers and immigration remedies. Through the clinic, Ms. Albiol also provides technical assistance, training, and support to a network of community-based organizations providing immigration services. Prior to joining DePaul, Ms. Albiol served as staff attorney, managing attorney, and associate director of the agency now known as the National Immigrant Justice Center where she represented immigrants and refugees in administrative proceedings and federal litigation, trained immigrant advocates, directed the detention project and citizenship project, and developed community outreach initiatives. Ms. Albiol previously chaired the Chicago Bar Association Immigration and Nationality Law Committee, and currently serves on the Executive Board of the Chicago Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

SISTER DORRIE BALFE, O.P., MA, a member of the Dominican Order, Sister Dorrie spent twenty-seven years in education ministry in apartheid South Africa. During this time she was chairperson of the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission in Port Elizabeth which was actively involved in the pro-democracy campaigns of the 1970s and 80s. As an educator she took an active role in the campaign for non-racial education and served as principal of one of the first ‘Open Schools’ in Port Elizabeth. On returning to Ireland in 1989 she joined the staff at All Hallows College where she became a lecturer in pastoral and liberation theology and social analysis. Since 1990 she has served as Director of the Pastoral Department and is program director for a number of undergraduate and postgraduate courses including the Social Justice and Public Policy program.
HEATHER EVANS, M.S., is a research analyst with the YMCA of the USA. She graduated from DePaul University with a Master’s degree in Public Service Management and a graduate certificate in Women’s and Gender Studies. In 2006, she traveled to Dublin, Ireland, and in 2007 to Chiapas, Mexico, as part of her graduate studies. In Chiapas, she participated in the First Internacional Conference on Sustainable Development — Desarrollo Sostenible en Chiapas: Desafío de Diálogo y Colaboración. Heather is on the Board of Directors of the Chicago Chapter of the Younger Women’s Task Force, a member of the Chicago Foundation for Women — Young Women’s Leadership Council and a member of the United Nations Association of the USA. Heather is researching the impact of international exposure and its connection to the development of culturally competent youth leaders.

SISTER MARIA ASUNCION G. EVIDENTE, D.C., is currently president of the Universidad de Sta. Isabel, Naga City, Philippines, a university owned and managed by the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. She holds a Doctorate in Educational Management and is a lecturer on Vincentian Philosophy and Pedagogy of Education at the graduate school of the university. A trustee of the educational boards of several Daughters of Charity schools in the country, she sits as a member of the D.C.—Saint Louise de Marillac Educational System Circle of Presidents.

MARILYN P. FLECKENSTEIN, Ph.D., is Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of Philosophy at Niagara University. She received a Ph.D. in Philosophy from The Catholic University of America. Her research over the last ten years has focused on business ethics. She has published extensively in this area and edits *The Journal of Business Ethics* each year. Within business ethics, she is particularly interested in the application of Catholic social thought to management ethics. She has presented papers on this topic at conferences in India, Mexico, Rome, and Antwerp. In 1994, she became the founding director of the service-learning program at Niagara University. This project focuses on incorporating a service-learning experience into academic courses. The program has grown over the years from engaging 200 NU students to over 2,300 participating in 2006-2007. She has done over twenty-five workshops on integrating service into the curriculum at colleges and universities all over the country, and in January 2007 did a series of workshops at Vincentian universities in the Philippines.

REVEREND GREGORIO L. BAÑAGA, JR., C.M., Ph.D., is President of Adamson University, Manila, Philippines. Previously, he was the Vice President for Student Affairs from 2000 to 2001 and Vice President for Administration from 2002-2003. Before working in Adamson, he was involved in the Movement for a Better World, an international non-governmental organization. Today, he is also active in the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines as its Vice President and sits as President of the South Manila Inter-Institutional Consortium, an association of universities. Outside the university circle, he has delivered lectures to various religious and secular organizations and is an active member of the Management Association of the Philippines. Father Gregg obtained his doctoral degree in Organizational Behavior from The Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio.

LEONARD L. CAVISE, J.D., came to DePaul after years of practicing law, primarily criminal defense. His political involvement began in Mississippi in 1969, working for the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. He was very active in the anti-war movement and in the National Lawyers Guild. He lived for one year in South Dakota, defending American Indians charged with felonies arising out of the siege of Wounded Knee in 1973. He also participated in the leadership trials in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He then moved to Chicago where he worked in prison legal services and as a community-based public defender. After three years at the Chicago-Kent College of Law, he arrived at DePaul in 1983. His involvement in Latin American issues dates back to 1976, teaching trial advocacy and related courses to lawyers from throughout Central America, Venezuela, and Brazil. He first visited Chiapas in January, 1994, a few weeks after the Zapatista uprising. At DePaul, he is also the Director of the Center for Public Interest Law and teaches criminal law, criminal procedure and evidence.

SUSANNE M. DUMBLETON, Ph.D., is professor of literature and writing at DePaul University School for New Learning, a college for adults. As dean for over eleven years, she supported initiatives on service learning, community outreach, technology, and international study. In the past four years she became personally engaged in building the partnership between DePaul and Tangaza College in Nairobi, Kenya, to enable more adults to complete undergraduate studies. Interested in leadership as a phenomenon, Prof. Dumbleton is currently working on a book on the life and work of three of the world’s most important leaders for social justice: Prof. Wangari Maathai, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and Sister Helen Prejean.
LAURA P. HARTMAN is a Professor of Business Ethics and Legal Studies in the Management Department in DePaul’s College of Commerce, and also serves as Research Director of DePaul’s Institute for Business and Professional Ethics. She has served as the Gourlay Professor at the Melbourne Business School/Trinity College at the University of Melbourne (2007-2008), and as an invited professor at several European universities. Prof. Hartman’s academic scholarship focuses on the alleviation of global poverty through profitable corporate partnerships, as well as the ethics of the employment relationship with a primary emphasis on global labor conditions and standards, corporate governance and corporate culture, and the impact of technology on the employment relationship. She has been published in numerous journals. Her research and consulting efforts have garnered national media attention by publications such as *Fortune Small Business* where she was named one of the “Top 10 Minds for Small Business.” She has also written or co-written a number of texts, including *Effective & Ethical Practices in Global Corporations*, *Rising Above Sweatshops: Innovative Management Approaches to Global Labor Challenges*, *Employment Law for Business*, and *Perspectives in Business Ethics*.

REVEREND DENNIS H. HOLTSCHNEIDER, C.M., Ed.D., became DePaul University’s eleventh president in 2004. Since his inauguration, he has led the successful completion of the university’s prior strategic plan and creation of its current six-year plan, VISION twenty12. Previously, he was an administrator with St. John’s University in Queens, N.Y., from 1996 to 1999, first as assistant dean of Notre Dame College, then as associate dean of the university’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, before moving on to become executive vice president and chief operating officer at Niagara University in Niagara Falls, N.Y., from 2000 to 2004, where he directed the university’s strategic planning efforts and daily operations of the campus. Father Holtschneider has led two national studies examining trends in governance and leadership in American Catholic colleges and universities. He is a member of the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, which promotes excellence and best practices in management, finances, and human resource development of the Catholic Church in the U.S. In addition, he currently serves as a trustee of Niagara University and the Chicago History Museum. He is the author and co-author of one book and numerous articles on U.S. higher education and Catholic higher education, as well as a frequent consultant and speaker on these topics.

MARGARET GUZZALDO serves as communications coordinator with International Teams, a global faith-based missions organization. Ms. Guzzaldo is a Master’s candidate in the International Public Service program of the DePaul University School of Public Service. She received her bachelor’s degree from New York University with magna cum laude honors.

TROY HARDEN, MSW, LCSW, has over twenty years experience serving in social service and community settings, and currently serves as an Assistant Professor within Chicago State University’s Master of Social Work Program. He has served as clinician, administrator, educator, and community practitioner concerning community mental health issues in diverse settings. He has a specific interest in developing cross-cultural initiatives that support similar and diverse community needs. He was adjunct faculty in Psychology and Sociology at DePaul University, where he has taught courses in Human Development, the Psychology of African Americans, Community Technology issues, Substance Abuse, Addiction and Recovery, and Community Service and Social Justice since 1998, and helped found DePaul University’s Master of Social Work Program. He is a graduate of Loyola University Chicago’s Master of Social Work program.

G. GREGORY GAY III, C.M., resides in Rome since his election in 2004 as Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity. In addition to his responsibilities with the Vincentian Family, he is also an elected member of the Executive Council of the Union of Superiors General representing Societies of Apostolic Life. After his ordination in 1980 he ministered as a formator, professor, and chaplain at Niagara University, New York. Following that service, Father spent fifteen years in Panama working first in missionary parishes and formation. He then served as Visitor of the Province of Central America for the next five years and at the same time as President of the Conference of Religious in Guatemala. As Superior General, Father Gay travels the world animating the Vincentian priests and brothers and visiting their works and those of the Daughters of Charity, Ladies of Charity, Vincentian Marian Youth, and Societies of Saint Vincent de Paul as well as other members of the Vincentian Family.

REVEREND DENNIS H. HOLTSCHNEIDER, C.M., Ed.D., became DePaul University’s eleventh president in 2004. Since his inauguration, he has led the successful completion of the university’s prior strategic plan and creation of its current six-year plan, VISION twenty12. Previously, he was an administrator with St. John’s University in Queens, N.Y., from 1996 to 1999, first as assistant dean of Notre Dame College, then as associate dean of the university’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, before moving on to become executive vice president and chief operating officer at Niagara University in Niagara Falls, N.Y., from 2000 to 2004, where he directed the university’s strategic planning efforts and daily operations of the campus. Father Holtschneider has led two national studies examining trends in governance and leadership in American Catholic colleges and universities. He is a member of the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, which promotes excellence and best practices in management, finances, and human resource development of the Catholic Church in the U.S. In addition, he currently serves as a trustee of Niagara University and the Chicago History Museum. He is the author and co-author of one book and numerous articles on U.S. higher education and Catholic higher education, as well as a frequent consultant and speaker on these topics.

LAURA P. HARTMAN is a Professor of Business Ethics and Legal Studies in the Management Department in DePaul’s College of Commerce, and also serves as Research Director of DePaul’s Institute for Business and Professional Ethics. She has served as the Gourlay Professor at the Melbourne Business School/Trinity College at the University of Melbourne (2007-2008), and as an invited professor at several European universities. Prof. Hartman’s academic scholarship focuses on the alleviation of global poverty through profitable corporate partnerships, as well as the ethics of the employment relationship with a primary emphasis on global labor conditions and standards, corporate governance and corporate culture, and the impact of technology on the employment relationship. She has been published in numerous journals. Her research and consulting efforts have garnered national media attention by publications such as *Fortune Small Business* where she was named one of the “Top 10 Minds for Small Business.” She has also written or co-written a number of texts, including *Effective & Ethical Practices in Global Corporations*, *Rising Above Sweatshops: Innovative Management Approaches to Global Labor Challenges*, *Employment Law for Business*, and *Perspectives in Business Ethics*. 

MARGARET GUZZALDO serves as communications coordinator with International Teams, a global faith-based missions organization. Ms. Guzzaldo is a Master’s candidate in the International Public Service program of the DePaul University School of Public Service. She received her bachelor’s degree from New York University with magna cum laude honors.

TROY HARDEN, MSW, LCSW, has over twenty years experience serving in social service and community settings, and currently serves as an Assistant Professor within Chicago State University’s Master of Social Work Program. He has served as clinician, administrator, educator, and community practitioner concerning community mental health issues in diverse settings. He has a specific interest in developing cross-cultural initiatives that support similar and diverse community needs. He was adjunct faculty in Psychology and Sociology at DePaul University, where he has taught courses in Human Development, the Psychology of African Americans, Community Technology issues, Substance Abuse, Addiction and Recovery, and Community Service and Social Justice since 1998, and helped found DePaul University’s Master of Social Work Program. He is a graduate of Loyola University Chicago’s Master of Social Work program.

LAURA P. HARTMAN is a Professor of Business Ethics and Legal Studies in the Management Department in DePaul’s College of Commerce, and also serves as Research Director of DePaul’s Institute for Business and Professional Ethics. She has served as the Gourlay Professor at the Melbourne Business School/Trinity College at the University of Melbourne (2007-2008), and as an invited professor at several European universities. Prof. Hartman’s academic scholarship focuses on the alleviation of global poverty through profitable corporate partnerships, as well as the ethics of the employment relationship with a primary emphasis on global labor conditions and standards, corporate governance and corporate culture, and the impact of technology on the employment relationship. She has been published in numerous journals. Her research and consulting efforts have garnered national media attention by publications such as *Fortune Small Business* where she was named one of the “Top 10 Minds for Small Business.” She has also written or co-written a number of texts, including *Effective & Ethical Practices in Global Corporations*, *Rising Above Sweatshops: Innovative Management Approaches to Global Labor Challenges*, *Employment Law for Business*, and *Perspectives in Business Ethics*.
REVEREND CRAIG B. MOUSIN, has been the University Ombudsman at DePaul University since 2001. He received his B.S. cum laude from Johns Hopkins University, his J.D. with honors from the University of Illinois, and his M. Div. from Chicago Theological Seminary. He joined the College of Law faculty in 1990, and served as the Executive Director of the Center for Church/State Studies until 2003, and co-director from 2004 to 2007. He co-founded and continues to co-direct the Center’s Interfaith Family Mediation Program, and helped found DePaul’s Asylum and Immigration Legal Clinic. He has also taught Immigration Law and Policy as an adjunct law professor at the University Of Illinois College Of Law. Reverend Mousin began practicing labor law at Seyfarth, Shaw, Fairweather & Geraldson in 1978. In 1984, he founded and directed the Midwest Immigrant Rights Center (now the National Immigrant Justice Center), a provider of legal assistance to refugees. He also directed legal services for Travelers & Immigrants Aid between 1986 and 1990. Reverend Mousin was ordained by the United Church of Christ in 1989. He has served as an Associate Pastor at Wellington Avenue U.C.C., was one of the founding pastors of the DePaul Ecumenical Gathering (1996-2001), and now serves on the Board of Directors of the Chicago Theological Seminary. In addition, he is a board member of Eco-Justice Collaboratives and serves on the Leadership Council of the National Immigrant Justice Center.

KARL NASS is the Project Manager for DePaul’s Faith and Civic Engagement project. He also is a visiting faculty member in DePaul’s School for New Learning, teaching the course “Spirituality and Homelessness: A Service Learning Externship.” Karl completed his Master’s in City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania in 1998, and he earned his Bachelor’s of Arts in Economics from the University of Notre Dame in 1993. He engaged in post-graduate service with the Holy Cross Brothers in Santiago, Chile, from 1994-1996 while in graduate school at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. He was the Director of the Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development at the University Of Pennsylvania from 1998-1999. Subsequently, he was a Jesuit formation candidate at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School from 1999-2000. He currently lives in the Brighton Park neighborhood in Chicago with his wife, Maggie, and family.

SCOTT P. KELLEY, Ph.D., is Assistant Vice-President for Vincentian Scholarship in the Office of Mission and Values at DePaul University. Previously, he was a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Religious Studies Department and Research Fellow for the Institute of Business and Professional Ethics. He received a Ph.D. in Theological Ethics from Loyola University Chicago in 2006. Prior to that, he taught English in Tokyo, Japan, and was a volunteer in Pohnpei, Micronesia, with Jesuit Volunteers: International. He is currently co-authoring a book titled Alleviating Poverty through Profitable Partnerships, and has written articles on the for-profit contribution to the alleviation of poverty, including “The End of Foreign Aid as We Know It: The Profitable Alleviation of Poverty in a Globalized Economy,” in Alleviating Poverty through Business Strategy. His research interests include global poverty alleviation strategies, Vincentian Heritage, and moral discernment.

SISTER MARGARET JOHN KELLY, D.C., has held teaching and administrative roles at St. Joseph College, Mount St. Mary’s College, St. John’s University N.Y., and Laboure College, Boston, where she served as president from 1972-1980. She served as Vice-president of Mission for the Catholic Health Association of the United States from 1980-1984, and in leadership of the Northeast Province of the Daughters of Charity from 1984 to 1993. She is now the Executive Director of the Vincentian Center for Church and Society and the Vincentian Chair of Social Justice at St. John’s. A lecturer, writer, and consultant on Vincentian issues, higher education and health care, Sister is also a resource for mission-oriented governance in the not-for-profit sector and has served as a board member for a range of systems and institutions. She serves as a trustee of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, the Catholic Health System of Long Island, and The Health System of the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm.
VIRGINIA C. REYES, Ph.D., is the director of the Marketing and Linkages Office of Universidad de Santa Isabel. She holds a doctorate in Behavioral Management and has special training in business application programs. She is an active member of the Philippine Computer Society, Philippine Council of Managers, and an officer of the Bicol Information Technology Society. She is an associate member of the National Research Council of the Philippines and is currently involved in joint research projects on e-readiness and distance education.

HOWARD ROSING, Ph.D., is Executive Director of the Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning, a lecturer in Community Service Studies, and an adjunct faculty member in Anthropology at DePaul University. His research focuses on food access, migration, and economic restructuring in the Caribbean and Chicago, community-based research methods, and the service learning pedagogy. He is co-editor of Pedagogies of Praxis: Course-based Action Research in the Social Sciences and, in collaboration with DePaul students and social science faculty, he is currently completing a research project on food access in the Humboldt Park neighborhood of Chicago. Dr. Rosing teaches courses on the history of community service, the cultural politics of food, and applied research.

REVEREND JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M., Ph.D., completed his seminary studies at the Vincentian seminary in Perryville, Missouri, and at De Andreis Seminary in Lemont, Illinois. He received a doctorate in biblical studies from Saint Louis University. He has taught in Vincentian seminaries in Saint Louis, Lemont, and Denver. He worked for the provincial of the Midwest Province from 1979 to 1981. He joined the board of trustees of DePaul University in 1981 and is currently a life trustee. He also served as a delegate from the Midwest Province to the international general assemblies of the Congregation in 1980, 1986, and 1998, and managed the archives of the province from 1980 to 1989. Reverend Rybolt also served as the director of the International Formation Center, a program for ongoing Vincentian education and formation in Paris, France. Currently, he is serving as a Vincentian Scholar in Residence at DePaul University. Since 1979 he has been involved in the Vincentian Studies Institute, which he headed from 1982 to 1991. His publications have covered fields of interest in language, biblical studies, and history, particularly Vincentian history.

SIOBHAN O’DONOGHUE, an English native, came to DePaul University in 1999 with an M. Div. and M.S.W. from Loyola University, Chicago. In her role as Associate Director for Community Service, she provides comprehensive leadership for University Ministry’s commitment to and involvement in community service, including: DePaul Community Service Association, Service Immersion Trips, and Service Days at DePaul. She also oversees University Ministry’s Vincentians in Action Program; a values-based developmental leadership framework rooted in faith and action. Prior to her work at DePaul, Siobhan served as a Jesuit and Pallottine Volunteer in the U.S. working with individuals who were homeless. She is the former President of a Saint Vincent de Paul Society conference in England.

MERLINDA A. PALENCIA is chairperson of the Chemical Engineering department at Adamson University in Manila. Prior to her academic appointment, she served as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) implementer of Pasay City and on U.N. Habitat-funded development programs geared towards the attainment of the MDGs in the city. Her professional background includes serving as a senior technical researcher at the Center of Research and Communication — now known as the University of Asia and the Pacific — for four years. She collaborated in the creation of the Vincentian Center for Social Responsibility and is pursing her Ph.D. in Management at Adamson.

YVONNE PRATT-JOHNSON, Ed.D., is a Professor of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages in the School of Education at St. John’s University, where she prepares both pre- and in-service teachers to instruct linguistically and culturally diverse students. She has taught English as a second language in a variety of educational settings for over thirty years. Johnson has received several grants and through her research – presented at local, national, and international conferences – and through publications and professional development workshops, she has raised awareness of the special needs of second language learners and English Creole-speaking populations in U.S. schools. At St. John’s University, Dr. Pratt-Johnson is a member of the Vincentian Mission Certificate Program, where she serves the poor in a variety of ways. For the past ten years she has been a consultant to the New York City Board of Education, leading workshops and seminars for teachers and administrators. More recently, she was appointed to the New York State Education Department in the Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies, where she will work for the education of dialect-different students from the English-speaking Caribbean.
ANNALISA SACCÀ, Ph.D., is professor of Italian Language and Literature at St. John’s University, Director of the Center for Global Development, Chair of the Steering Committee for the Master in Global Development and Social Justice, and Adviser for the Holy See at the United Nations. Among her publications are: a book on Italian Post-Modern Literature *Significando Simulacri*; the work of a mystic poet, *Dolore tra cristalli di F.Rielo*, traduzione di Annalisa Saccà con testo spagnolo a fronte; of an artist, *Saggi critici di C.E. Oppo*, con note e commenti di Annalisa Saccà; and of a poet, *Contenuti Latenti di E. Nasso*, con presentazione e nota di A. Saccà. She writes poetry and has published: *Il tempo del grano; Nominare Delfi*; and *Dove non è mai sera*. She is a Vincentian Fellow and has received several awards, including the Premio Montepulciano, 1991; the Ellis Island Congressional Medal of Honor, 1992; the Sessantennale Sabaudia, 1994; and Fiore di roccia, in 1999. Dearest to her heart, though, are the Founder’s Week Award for the commitment to living out the Vincentian mission, and her membership in the Academy of Parnassos in Athens, Greece, where she has been invited to give lectures.

GLORIA SIMO, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the School of Public Service at DePaul University, and is the Assistant Director of the Chaddick Institute of Metropolitan Development at DePaul. Dr. Simo has directed the efforts of SPS and Chaddick in New Orleans. She earned her Ph.D. in Political Science, with concentrations in Public Administration, Public Policy and Urban Management, as well as an MPA, at Northern Illinois University, and a B.A. from Elmhurst College, with double majors in Urban Studies and Psychology. She has fifteen years of teaching experience at the graduate and undergraduate levels. In addition to her academic experience, Dr. Simo has more than eighteen years of experience in the field of housing and community development. She has served as a volunteer at the Oak Park Housing Center — a center for fair housing in Oak Park, Illinois — Marion Park — a low-income housing project in Wheaton, Illinois — and helped to establish Faith House (now known as Bridge Communities) — a Continuum of Care Program for the homeless in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. Her professional work experience includes a position as field representative for the DuPage County Housing Authority and a number of consulting or strategic planning projects for the City of Little Rock Department of Housing.

JOHN JOE SPRING, MA, Dip.Th., was ordained in All Hallows in 1974 for the Diocese of Salford, England. Following seven years in parish ministry in Salford he became Director of the Catholic Missionary Society in London, prior to joining the staff at All Hallows in 1989. As a member of the College staff his responsibilities have included Directorship of the Lay Ministry Program, and of the Pastoral Education Programs at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. These programs involved Field Placement Supervision, Pastoral Reflection, and Social Analysis. He was instrumental in designing and directing the program of Social Justice and Public Policy, which is the subject of his article. Currently he is Vice President of the College and serves on its Board of Governors.

CHARLES R. STRAIN is Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of Religious Studies at DePaul University, Chicago. His scholarship focuses on a comparative religious ethics approach to issues of social justice. He coauthored *Polity and Praxis: A Program for an American Practical Theology* with Dennis McCann, which provides the theoretical framework grounding the application of Catholic social teachings to issues like socially responsible investment. Prof. Strain also edited *Prophetic Visions and Economic Realities*, which focused on the U.S. Bishops’ pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All* from standpoints of different religious denominations. Recent publications have examined the role of service learning in students’ moral development, and on comparing the contributions to human rights and social justice of Catholic social teachings and those of Socially Engaged Buddhism. In his administrative role he has been instrumental in the development of DePaul’s Community-based Service Learning Program, on the development of minors in Community Service Studies and Peace, Conflict Resolution and Social Justice.

MARCO TAVANTI, Ph.D., is a professor of sustainable development and leadership ethics at the Public Services Graduate School at DePaul University in Chicago. He is the Wicklander Fellow at the Institute for Business and Professional Ethics and Research Director of the Hay Leadership Project. He coordinates DePaul University’s relations with the United Nations, and also a collaborative project with the Growing Sustainable Business of the United Nations Development Program office for implementing the Millennium Development Goals. He has worked in various development projects in East Africa and Latin America. Originally from Europe, Dr. Tavanti has lectured at various universities in the Philippines, Mozambique, Brazil, Mexico, Italy, and the Unites States.
REVEREND EDWARD R. UDOVIC, C.M., Ph.D., is a Vincentian priest from the Midwest Province of the Congregation of the Mission. Ordained in 1984, he has a Doctorate in Church History from the Catholic University of America. He presently serves as the Secretary, Senior Executive for University Mission, and Vice President for Teaching and Learning Resources at DePaul University in Chicago, the largest Catholic University in the United States. He is also an associate professor in the Department of History. He has written extensively in the area of Vincentian history, and has given presentations throughout the United States and internationally on Vincentian history, spirituality, and leadership.

PAULINE VILLAPANDO received her B.A. in Communications from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and a Masters in Pastoral Ministry from the University of Dayton. She is currently the Vincent & Louise House Coordinator at DePaul University. She also teaches a course in Catholic social teaching reflection for the Steans Center, a community-based service-learning department. She has presented at two service-learning conferences on the Catholic Schools Initiative program and the Vincentians In Action model of reflection, and is also a regular presenter of the “Reflective Practices” workshop for the Student Leadership Institute. In addition, she has served as a staff mentor on six service immersion trips sponsored by University Ministry. She continues to volunteer regularly at the Lincoln Park Community Shelter and Saint Vincent’s soup kitchen. Before coming to DePaul, Pauline was a high school youth minister, volunteered regularly at the Las Vegas Catholic Worker, and joined in several protests and prayer vigils at the Nevada Test Site. She attributes much of her formation in service and justice to her experiences and relationships at the Catholic Worker.

PATRICIA H. WERHANE is the Wicklander Chair of Business Ethics and the Executive Director of the Institute for Business and Professional Ethics at DePaul University, with a joint appointment as the Ruffin Professor of Business Ethics and Senior Fellow at the Olsson Center for Applied Ethics in the Darden School at the University of Virginia. Prof. Werhane has published numerous articles and is the author or editor of twenty-two books. She is the founder and former Editor-in-Chief of Business Ethics Quarterly, the journal of the Society for Business Ethics, and she is an Academic Advisor to the Business Roundtable Institute for Corporate Ethics. Her forthcoming book, co-authored with Laura Hartman, Dennis Moberg, and Scott Kelley, is Alleviating Poverty Through Profitable Partnerships: Globalization, Markets, And Economic Well-Being.

— Preface —

What Would Vincent do Today to Overcome Poverty?

By MARCO TAVANTI, PH.D., AND REVEREND CRAIG B. MOUSIN, J.D.

Editors and Symposium Codirectors

How would Vincent de Paul address the issues of poverty in the twenty-first century? Are Vincentian institutions of higher education implementing their missions to educate women and men for service? How do they use their assets to foster teaching, research, and service in keeping with Vincent’s leadership in marshaling resources to reduce poverty? These questions inspired the Vincentian Poverty Reduction Symposium of 24 April 2007, and the articles included in this volume of the Vincentian Heritage. In collaboration with Sister Margaret Kelly, D.C., of St. John’s University and Dr. Marilyn Fleckenstein of Niagara University, faculty and staff members from these two Vincentian institutions and DePaul University shared their best practices and aspirations for the amelioration of poverty’s burdens. Reverend Norberto Carcellar, C.M., a Vincentian committed to poverty alleviation and systemic change, who works with the homeless people and scavengers of Payatas, metro Manila, in the Philippines, presented the symposium’s keynote talk. Later in 2007, the Opus Prize Foundation recognized Father Norberto and his work with the Homeless People’s Federation of the Philippines as exemplary in the struggle for poverty elimination, systemic change, and social entrepreneurship. With Father Norberto also representing Vincentian Philippine universities and colleges, the symposium aimed to stimulate conversation on the roles and responsibilities of Vincentian academic institutions in the struggle against poverty. By way of videoconferencing, panelists and members of the audience exchanged ideas on the means by which Vincentian universities can educate students for service in the Vincentian tradition. This publication includes and expands on those ideas.

We know of Vincent de Paul’s and Louise de Marillac’s goals and means from the voluminous correspondence they shared during their years of collaboration to aid the poor of France in the 1600s. Through their work, many innovative programs spread not only through France, but through other parts of Europe and in Madagascar as well. Frederick Ozanam told his fellow founders of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society that we would do well to invoke and imitate Vincent. He added, “We are reading at present at our
meetings the life of St. Vincent de Paul, in order better to penetrate ourselves with his maxims and traditions. A patron saint should not be a signboard to a society, like a St. Denis or St. Nicholas over the door of a tavern... We owe him consequently the twofold homage of imitation and invocation.”¹

Thus, in addition to the one-day symposium, we solicited academic articles and experiential reflections from faculty and staff at the five major Vincentian academic institutions worldwide: DePaul University, St. John’s University, Niagara University, Adamson University, Santa Isabella University and All Hallows College. You will find their responses in this volume. The Vincentian legacy encouraged collaboration between our faculties, staffs, administrators, students, and alumni to replicate ideas and share strategies while fulfilling the mission of our Vincentian academic institutions. We are convinced that working to reduce poverty is integral to our Vincentian values, Vincentian education, and Vincentian leadership. After all, Vincent de Paul cannot be defined simply as a good leader, educator, or saint without considering his total dedication to faith in God and service to the poor.

These articles illuminate many inspiring practices at Vincentian academic institutions on three continents. They picture leaders, programs, and institutions that view their educational missions in solidarity with economically and socially disadvantaged people and communities. These reflections and examples go well beyond encouraging service to the poor. They speak of systemic changes to fight poverty through resource allocation, strategic implementations of programs, and the promotion of university/community partnerships to reduce the local and global consequences of poverty.

We could not take this modest step without the support and encouragement of many. We thank each of these Vincentian institutions for encouraging their faculty and staff to see their vocation in light of service to the poor. We are also grateful to the Vincentian Endowment Fund (VEF) and its board for the grant that enabled us to host this symposium and to publish these papers in the Vincentian Heritage. Special thanks go to Avery Buffa for his administration of the grant that ensured Father Norberto’s travel to Chicago and his presentation, as well as the program itself. We also appreciate the assistance Alice Farrell similarly provided.

The Vincentian Endowment Fund provides a concrete example of how Vincentian universities support their mission statements. Founded in 1992, it sponsors an annual grant cycle through which any faculty member, staff member, or student at DePaul can seek funding for a community service project that will further the university’s mission.² Significantly, thirteen of the DePaul authors in this issue of Vincentian Heritage received VEF grants to support either the work they describe in their articles or other projects related to that work. In these pages, one will also see how Niagara University, through its Niagara University Community Action Program (NUCAP), provides its students with assistance in service-based learning. Support for Vincentian Service Fellows also inspires student leadership at St. John’s University. Santa Isabella deems itself a “university of the poor,” and therefore its programs must make higher education accessible to those who would otherwise be denied it. These examples, and others described in these articles, demonstrate how Vincentian institutions advance their mission to serve the poor.

We also share our great appreciation for the information services staff at DePaul, including Nicola Foggi, Cornell Lambert, and Martin Williams, student workers Brad Petrik and Tim Boonprasarn, as well as Herm Platt at Niagara University and Luis Ramos at St. John’s University, who handled

¹ Kathleen O’Meara, Frédéric Ozanam, Professor at the Sorbonne. His Life and Works (New York: Christian Press Association Publishing Co., 1879), 113-14, quoting a letter from Ozanam.

² For more information on the Vincentian Endowment Fund, see: http://mission.depaul.edu/vef/index.asp.
the videoconferencing at our symposium. Their expertise enabled our participants to communicate not just through the written word but in real-time conversation.

We are grateful for the copyediting of Renaldo Migaldi, whose keen eye and sensitivity helped provide this issue of Vincentian Heritage with a consistent style. Likewise, we would have been lost without the organizational skill of Andrea Pope, who helped coordinate the collection of these articles. We are especially thankful to Nathaniel Michaud, director of publications for the Vincentian Studies Institute, for his direction and wise counsel in finalizing all of these articles for publication. The Vincentian Studies Institute also deserves our deep appreciation for dedicating an entire issue of Vincentian Heritage to the cause of poverty reduction.

Finally, we stand in humble awe of all who have gathered during the last four centuries to provide witness to the efficacy of doing and teaching — the commands of Saint Vincent de Paul for all Vincentians who, through their work, add to his legacy of ennobling the God-given dignity of all we meet.

Our final hope with this publication is to stimulate interest, initiatives, and collaborations among our Vincentian institutions for tackling the multifaceted realities of poverty in our neighborhoods, our countries, and our world. As the programs described in these pages grow, may they also encourage others to develop innovative ideas about how Vincentian higher education can inculcate service learning, teach students about the dignity and resources of the poor, and increase awareness of systemic change, social responsibility, social entrepreneurship, and social justice.
The Most Important Question

BY
REVEREND CRAIG B. MOUSIN
DePaul University Ombudsperson

Saint Vincent de Paul has inspired individuals and educational institutions to seek pragmatic means to ease the pain of poverty over the last four hundred years. Vincent constantly educated new leaders throughout his lifetime, and the Vincentians have gone on to establish universities, colleges, and seminaries around the world to increase access to education as one means of addressing poverty. But do universities established in the name of Vincent have other means and responsibilities to address poverty besides education? How are faculty, staff, and students achieving those ends in the twenty-first century? Could we invite other faculty, staff, and students to offer new courses on poverty, inspire new research, and develop effective service projects? To address these questions, a call for papers was sent out to all Vincentian institutions of higher education requesting staff and faculty to participate in a symposium in the spring of 2007, responding to the question of "What would Saint Vincent de Paul do about today's global poverty." This journal includes the work of those who chose to answer through teaching, research, and publication or through the administration of an institution that names poverty reduction as an integral part of its mission. These articles address the particularity of a mission-driven educational endeavor that seeks both to increase access to education and to employ its pedagogy in the service of the poor. The invitation can be made given the way in which Vincentians have described their call since Saint Vincent founded the Congregation of the Mission. Indeed, Gregory Gay, C.M., reminds us that our invitation was not a new one, for it was in keeping with: "Saint Vincent's way: approaching all those who can contribute and inviting them to this precious task of helping the poor."\(^1\)

Critics charge, however, that persons of faith or faith-based institutions cannot reduce poverty. Seeking to trump Christians on their own terms, they recall that even Jesus promised that "the poor will always be with you."\(^2\) Religious leaders have often sided with those in power, disclaiming

---

2 Matthew 26:11 (RSV).
while asserting that no human endeavor would ever achieve that goal. Subsequently, Christian realists commended attempts to alleviate poverty while asserting that no human endeavor would ever achieve that goal. Others have suggested that institutions of higher learning follow a misguided mission of simply bestowing privileges upon graduates and advancing their social status to the detriment of those left behind. Gregorio Bañaga, C.M., asserts, for example, that Catholic education in the Philippines “has been criticized for creating a new kind of elite.”

Dennis McCann suggests DePaul’s initial outreach to immigrant families actually aimed to pacify “Chicago’s immigrant communities,” and that it’s conservative Catholic curriculum supported Chicago’s elite by educating in a way that was “officially anti-Marxist, anti-socialist, and keenly sensitive to the potential excesses of popular democracy.” More recently, Peter Sacks argues, “colleges, once seen as beacons of egalitarian hope, are becoming bastions of wealth and privilege that perpetuate inequality.”

The problem is greater than that of simply providing higher education. Inequality between the rich and the poor, staggering in Vincent’s time and in Paris in the early nineteenth century, continues to challenge all who share a vision of the common good. The divide between rich and poor in the United States expands while social mobility — the great safety valve of American society that permitted generations to escape poverty — has not kept pace with the growing chasm between rich and poor. Moreover, although traditionally higher education has been one catalyst for escaping poverty, recent changes have shown that “increasingly, more educated workers are riding the economic roller coaster once reserved for the working poor.”

Robert Franklin argues that society today sustains itself through a myth of “normative inequality.” According to Franklin, this myth encourages loyalty to a government and society that sustains these “dramatic disparities in wealth and power.” Do institutions of higher education live by the same myth? Or can they make a difference while scrambling to raise funds to support and increase student services? Does the myth of normative inequality shake universities or can they simultaneously cultivate leaders for social justice and offer innovative programs that impact lives burdened by poverty? Specifically, does this myth undermine Vincentian efforts to inculcate students, faculty, and staff with the aspirations to truly reduce poverty?

Based on their founding principles and mission statements, Vincentian institutions rebut the critics, claiming that within the larger mission of education, they have a primary goal of seeking the reduction of poverty. All the universities represented by authors in this journal find within their mission the goal of reducing poverty and educating those whom society would otherwise neglect. Adamson University seeks socially disadvantaged students and educates them “to become agents of change.” All Hallows College inculcates “in each self-sacrifice, a pastoral concern for people, and a firm faith in a God of love.” DePaul University describes its mission as including “a special concern for the deprived members of society,” and “service to others.” Universidade Santa Isabel produces “socially oriented research,” and empowers learners to

---

3 Edward R. Udovic, C.M., “‘What about the Poor?’ Nineteenth-Century Paris and the Revival of Vincentian Charity,” Vincentian Heritage 14:1 (1993): 76, quoting the pastoral letter of the archbishop of Bourges, Cardinal Jacques Marie Celestin Du Pont, “…There will always be inequalities of rank and fortune in society, or society itself would cease to exist…. Consequently there will always be those with great needs and sufferings.”

4 Frederick Ozanam wrote, “the same authority which tells us that we shall always have the poor amongst us is the same that commands to do all we can that there may cease to be any….” in Kathleen O’Meara, Frederic Ozanam, Professor at the Sorbonne. His Life and Works (New York: Christian Press Assoc. Publishing Co.), 177, citing De l’Aumône, ivid. Mélanges, i., 398.


10 Hacker, Great Risk, 28.


12 Ibid.


engage in community service.\textsuperscript{16} Niagara University sets forth to “teach students about the challenges and causes of poverty” while supporting “service learning activities where our students reach out with compassion to serve people’s basic needs.”\textsuperscript{17} In Vincent’s name, St. John’s University strives “to provide excellent education for all people, especially those lacking economic, physical, or social advantages,” while it searches for “the causes of poverty and social injustice and [encourages] solutions which are adaptable, effective, and concrete.”\textsuperscript{18} The Vincentian legacy suggests no less.

Those who claim the Vincentian mantle, moreover, feed off challenges to live up to the words that define the Vincentian tradition. Edward R. Udovic, C.M., names the moment in January 1617 when Saint Vincent responded to Madame de Gondi with the “Vincentian question” of “What must be done?” as being the genesis of all things Vincentian that since have dedicated lives and institutional resources to serving the poor.\textsuperscript{19} Educating men and women to address the issues of poverty through the Congregation of the Mission or the Daughters of Charity became one institutional response to Madame de Gondi’s question. John E. Rybolt, C.M., chronicles the development of the Vincentian educational mission, from the initial efforts to prepare clergy to contemporary efforts to increase access to education for those who face the many barriers caused by poverty.\textsuperscript{20} As Vincentian education expanded to the United States, Vincentian universities reshaped their mission in response to contemporary challenges.\textsuperscript{21}

In addition to providing access to higher education, including the development of programs by students and faculty, the Vincentian legacy has revealed imaginative responses to poverty. The Saint Vincent de Paul Society, the lay ministry program dedicated to expanding charitable resources, has grown from seven members in 1833 to over 700,000 members in 141 countries.\textsuperscript{22} Frederick Ozanam, a principal founder of the Society, responded to critics who claimed the Roman Catholic Church had not lived up to its principles. When only eighteen, he penned a widely-read response to Saint-Simon’s challenges that the Church only promised peace in heaven, but failed to address the needs of the poor.\textsuperscript{23} Saint-Simon argued that the state would best assist the poor through seizing inheritances of the rich, thus reducing the responsibility of the Church.\textsuperscript{24} Parker Thomas Moon posits that Ozanam’s entire life “might be regarded as a reply to Saint-Simon’s challenge, and a not wholly unconscious reply.”\textsuperscript{25}

Ozanam’s academic career dovetailed with a great debate among French Catholics about the Church’s response to the poor, its relationship to government, and liberty. He taught at a time when many in the academy openly scorned the Catholic Church and faith in general to the point that Pope
Gregory XVI contended that “Academies and schools resound’ with open war on the Catholic faith.”26 Ozanam saw his role as that of a defender of the faith and welcomed the full academic debate at the university. Called the “most consistent apostle of Social Catholicism” during the mid-nineteenth century, Ozanam’s university lectures and writings not only educated his students, but later found approval in the Social Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.27

Significantly, Ozanam’s role as the principal founder of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society also arose from the question of a skeptic he encountered as a student. During a meeting of a student debating society, Ozanam was stung by the criticism of Jean Broet, a follower of Saint-Simon, who asked, “You boast of being Catholic, what do you do? Where are the works that prove your faith?”28 After defending the Church in the meeting, Ozanam later echoed Madame de Gondi’s “Vincentian question” when he inquired of friends, “What must we do to live our Catholicism? …Let us no longer talk so much about charity. Let us put into practice and go out to assist those who are poor.”29 Shortly thereafter, on 23 April 1833, he and six other members gathered at the home of Emmanuel Bailly, a former professor of Philosophy, not just to debate history, literature, or the poverty in Paris, but to find out what has since become the Saint Vincent de Paul Society.30 Only one of the students was older than twenty.31

Broet’s question had challenged Ozanam to ponder whether a group of students could focus on providing charity to the poor. As Baunard suggests, “their zeal was altogether directed toward the visitation of the poor.”32

Throughout his life, Ozanam also raised the question, not just as a personal one, but as a social one:

The problem that divides men in our day is no longer a problem of political structure; it is a social problem; it has to do with what is preferred, the spirit of self-interest or the spirit of sacrifice, whether society will be only a great exploitation to the profit of the strongest or a consecration of each individual for the good of all and especially for the protection of the weak.33

Ozanam’s academic work and his initiative in building the Society revealed how he responded to this question, which is no less pertinent to students and faculty today.34 Where else but in the university may the tools of research and debate address the most fundamental questions of the day? The question is not just a religious one, but one for all who are privileged to be a part of any university dedicated to increasing knowledge and furthering human capacity. For example, University of California, Berkeley, Professor David Romer asserted: “Surely the most important societal question economics can help answer is why so many people are crushingly poor and what can be done about it.”35

The university mission statements noted above suggest that Vincentian institutions claim a particularly specific responsibility to answer this question.36 It also remains critical to recognize that the changes in the world

---

29 Ibid., 203.
30 Ibid., 208.
since the days of Vincent and Ozanam necessitate that a mission based on a Catholic priest from the 1600s, and the founder of a Catholic lay volunteer organization in the 1800s, now be inclusive enough to serve many who may not be Catholic or Christian. What can be culled from Vincent and those who followed that provide particular substance for this mission without reducing it to generalities lacking in power and vision?

Of critical importance is how Vincent understood his faith in relation to the individuals he assisted. Two of his traits provide guidance: human dignity and human response. For Vincent, every individual was blessed with God-given dignity. Thomas McKenna, C.M., named as Vincent’s core elements his belief in God and the dignity of each person merged with the recognition of God’s presence within. To place such an emphasis on human dignity eliminates human barriers and helps explain Vincent’s amazing ability to treat each individual he encountered as an equal, regardless of his or her status within society.

Emphasizing human dignity leads to additional consequences. McKenna notes that education nourishes the fullness of human life, and therefore, “if we believe in the God-given dignity of people, of course we would look to educate its students and cultivate their capacity for life-long learning, to foster independent and original research, and to bring the benefits of discovery to the world,” available at: http://webapps.jhu.edu/jhuniverse/information_about_hopkins/about_jhu/mission_statement/index.cfm (accessed on 5 August 2008). Other religious universities may also call upon their tradition to address these problems. See, e.g., William Quigley, “Seven Principles For Catholic Law Schools Serious About a Preferential Option for the Poor,” 1 Saint Thomas Law Journal 128 (2003). Vincentian institutions, however, clearly focus on issues of poverty based on their legacy as part of their teaching, research, and service. The symposium sought to investigate and report on particular Vincentian historical and spiritual resources.

Vincent’s inherent belief in the dignity of all people also finds support in the biblical source that human beings were created in God’s image. André LaCocque asserts that the Hebrew text in the Genesis story reveals the biblical belief that we “are all humans without distinction or discrimination — thus making all human differences such as ones based on nationality meaningless (note omitted). Under this understanding of the Genesis story, being created in the image of God establishes a “fundamental human equality.” André LaCocque, The Trial of Innocence, Adam, Eve, and the Yahwist (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2006), 33. See also, Craig B. Mousin, “Vincentian Leadership — Advocating for Justice,” Vincentian Heritage 23-25:2, 26:1 (2005): 243, 256-60 (Vincent’s reliance on the biblical concept of the Jubilee year stresses the dignity of all humans and provides a universal way for non-Christians to share in the Vincentian mission). Vincent’s emphasis on human dignity also finds support in contemporary secular understandings: See, e.g., The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly resolution 217A(III) of 10 December 1948), available at: http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html (accessed on 29 September 2008). “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.”

kindly on the chance to nourish that dignity by educating it.” This Vincentian endeavor leads to DePaul’s mission, noting therefore that “the DePaul community is above all characterized by ennobling the God-given dignity of each person.” Ozanam urged his companions to observe “mutual charity to all,” when they met with the indigent to carry out the work of the Society.

But mission statements can fossilize on bookshelves without daily implementation; Vincent clearly stated that words without action fail. He wrote to Saint Louise, “Nevertheless, in order to become soundly virtuous, it is advisable to make good practical resolutions concerning particular acts of the virtues and to be faithful in carrying them out afterwards. Without doing that, one is often virtuous only in one’s imagination.” Corroborating Vincent’s emphasis on action, Warren Dicharry, C.M., stressed that Vincent cites the

Ozanam’s crypt. The mural above depicts Ozanam as the Good Samaritan helping Jesus. 
Photo courtesy of the author


38 Vincent’s inherent belief in the dignity of all people also finds support in the biblical source that human beings were created in God’s image. André LaCocque asserts that the Hebrew text in the Genesis story reveals the biblical belief that we “are all humans without distinction or discrimination — thus making all human differences such as ones based on nationality meaningless (note omitted). Under this understanding of the Genesis story, being created in the image of God establishes a “fundamental human equality.” André LaCocque, The Trial of Innocence, Adam, Eve, and the Yahwist (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2006), 33. See also, Craig B. Mousin, “Vincentian Leadership — Advocating for Justice,” Vincentian Heritage 23-25:2, 26:1 (2005): 243, 256-60 (Vincent’s reliance on the biblical concept of the Jubilee year stresses the dignity of all humans and provides a universal way for non-Christians to share in the Vincentian mission). Vincent’s emphasis on human dignity also finds support in contemporary secular understandings: See, e.g., The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly resolution 217A(III) of 10 December 1948), available at: http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html (accessed on 29 September 2008). “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.”


40 Ibid., 211.

41 Mission of DePaul University.

42 O’Meara, Professor at the Sorbonne, 115.

same biblical reference in opening the first and last chapters of the Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission: “teach” and “do.” For Ozanam, the parable of the Good Samaritan inspired students to “dare... to approach this great sick one,” thus actively progressing beyond mere dialogue.

Inheritors of that tradition, Vincentian universities include social engagement as part of their mission. Questions still challenge the implementation of that vision. Richard Meister notes that DePaul frequently must question how a Vincentian university can seek new ways to serve the poor. Dennis McCann concurs that DePaul’s Vincentian mission challenges the university to confront how best to engage in public service for the common good. Indeed, if the question is not addressed, followers within this tradition who name human dignity as being essential to their call may fall prey to mere imagined virtue. The issue of dignity challenges all today. Whether efforts to work with the poor of Payatas, Quezon City, Philippines, the homeless and refugees in Chicago, New York City, or Niagara Falls, or the indigenous people in Chiapas to name just a few, these articles seek to shed light on some of the ways in which faculty, students, and staff address those concerns.

But the first question could also be posed: why universities? Should not their first mission be that of educating students? Vincent understood that success in developing programs to alleviate the suffering of the poor would only be theirs if he educated the clergy to enable the reforms he sought. Necessarily this led him to build schools and seminaries. For him, educating the clergy was the place for proper formation and understanding. For Ozanam and his friends, the Saint Vincent de Paul Society provided the opportunity to enhance the dignity of the poor while humanizing the dignity of students.

Indeed, the Society offers a powerful exemplar of how higher education provides fertile soil for community work toward poverty reduction. Given the Society’s history, Ozanam’s words provide a particularly helpful description of university faculty, staff, and students dedicating their talents to serving the poor. The many programs described in this journal owe a debt to Ozanam and his colleagues for pioneering how the resources of youth, imagination, and academic discourse can unite under the umbrella of academic freedom, and reveal how universities can respond to the Vincentian question. As a scholar, teacher, and servant of the poor, Frederick Ozanam has prefigured our response, whether in teaching, scholarship, or service. For example, Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., in his foreword, highlights the university resources of imagination and service that work together to seek reduction in poverty at home and throughout the world. Similarly, in describing the history of Adamson University’s commitment to the Vincentian legacy, Gregorio L. Bañaga, C.M., emphasizes Adamson’s three-fold emphasis of education of the poor, education with the poor, and education for the poor, ensuring that all involved become advocates of an “education for social transformation.” Maria Asuncion G. Evidente, D.C., Nenette Abrigo, and Virginia Reyes describe how the only Vincentian university administrated by the Daughters of Charity, the Universidad de Santa Isabel, has cultivated many new approaches to education in its goal to build a university of the poor — a “leaven for social transformation.” They highlight the diverse programs that must be established to reach that goal, including thrift savings and loan programs that go beyond simply providing financial aid to extending loans for business development and housing. These different models confirm what Gregory Gay reminds us: that “the Vincentian Family subscribes to the idea that education is always towards justice and solidarity, towards the liberation of the poor.” Indeed, these articles highlight how prescient Ozanam was in understanding how those involved in higher education can collaborate in seeking to reduce poverty and its consequences.

### I. Teaching and Learning

First, Ozanam was above all an educator. He earned doctorates in law and literature, eventually obtaining a chair as Professor of Foreign Literature at the University of the Sorbonne in 1844, in addition to teaching law at the University of Lyons and evening school at Stanislas College in Paris.

Second, for Ozanam, the university prepared students to address the

---

46 Richard Meister, “DePaul University, Catholic, Vincentian and Urban,” in Centennial Essays: See also, Udovic, Vincentian Question.
47 McCann, “Foundling University,” 65; see also, Udovic, “What about the Poor?” (the question must be asked anew each day).
48 Louise Sullivan, D.C., The Core Values of Vincentian Education (Niagara University, N.Y.: Niagara University, 1994), 25. See also, Rybolt, “Vincentian Education.”
51 Bañaga, “Heart.”
critical social question of poverty with confidence and an inquiring mind. To his cousin, Ernest Falconnet, Ozanam wrote, “Let us begin with strong study, in depth, on the matter most agreeable to our inclinations....”55 He believed education provided the locus both for the investigation of poverty’s causes and for its remedy: “through education rather than through legislation.”56 His teaching cultivated more effective advocates for justice. Ozanam saw his scholarship as a means of addressing the fundamental questions of his day. He thrived amidst the discourse of academic life, and saw it as a way to teach young students to not abdicate the field, but to use academic debate to understand the truths he knew his faith had taught him. In another letter to Falconnet he wrote, “Even more useful than this is to show the student youth that it is possible to be Catholic and have common sense, to love religion and liberty, and finally to draw it out of indifference to religion and get it used to grave and serious discussions.”57

Third, Ozanam knew from personal experience that naïve university students would need outstanding teachers to ensure that their interaction with the poor did not do more harm than good; best intentions frequently fail if inspired students simply leave the campus to work with the poor with no understanding of, or sensitivity to, the humanity of each person they engage. His elite urban university students knew little of how the inhabitants of Sister Rosalie Rendu’s district lived or even survived. The Society’s initial efforts succeeded only through the patience and teaching of Sister Rosalie. She, who lived her life with the ones she served, was trusted by the Mouffetard district’s inhabitants, and her skillful instructions to Ozanam and his friends converted their good intentions to successful mutual encounters.58

Several symposium articles relate to how the education of students provides the primary means of addressing poverty. Annalisa Saccà reminds us of the many ways in which a professor can integrate concern and commitment with working with the poor in the classroom.59 Dorrie Balfe, O.P., and John Joe Spring, Dip.Th., relate how the changing demographics of the students at All Hallows College, and the changing context of those the university has served encouraged exploration of new ways of addressing poverty and service, resulting in a new Masters Program in Social Justice and Public Policy.60

Rather than just institutions of higher education for the elite, Ozanam argued the need for a variety of schools including adult night schools, schools for apprentices, academies of arts and trades, and public libraries.61 DePaul’s School for New Learning (SNL) has offered new opportunities for adult students seeking a college degree. Former Dean Susanne Dumbleton explores how the SNL model for adult students addressed issues of poverty in Kenya.62 She celebrates how the adult education model engages “superb individuals committed to lives of powerful service” and permits them to continue their work in the community while enhancing their skills through their coursework.63 Yvonne Pratt-Johnson writes of teaching immigrant mothers whose visible poverty of the spirit challenges traditional understandings of education and necessitates research into how best to teach with compassion and implement new ideas in the classroom.64

56 Baunard, Correspondence, 277, citing a 24 September 1849 letter to M. Foisett describing Ozanam’s article in The New Era.
58 Sullivan, Rendu, 206.
60 Dorrie Balfe, O.P., and John Joe Spring, Dip.Th., “Poverty Reduction — A Vincentian

The church in Paris where Sister Rosalie had her ministry.

Photo courtesy of the author
Ozanam also recognized the benefits of sending well-educated alumni out to change the world and address these preeminent social questions of poverty in their work. In a letter to Mademoiselle Soulacroix, an educator in Paris, he asks:

How can there not be given some hope to such a strength of association, exerted mainly in the large cities, in every law school, in every enlightened home, upon a generation called to fill a variety of offices and influential posts? And if formerly immorality befell the upper classes, the academies, the judiciary, the military chiefs, the politicians, among the middle class and the people, can we not believe with too much madness that divine Providence calls us to the moral rehabilitation of our country.…65

Under Sioban Albiol’s leadership, the DePaul College of Law’s Asylum and Immigration Clinic prepares law students through their representation of refugees seeking asylum before United States courts, where they learn not only to be zealous advocates, but also engaged citizens working with clients and communities to understand the causes of poverty and the consequences of injustice.66 Similarly, Leonard L. Cavise has developed DePaul’s Chiapas Human Rights Practicum as a summer-long program where law students observe the work of human rights workers in Chiapas, Mexico. Cavise’s students learn from exposure to a society where war and poverty have all too often led to impunity for human rights violators; with the goal that this experience will “transform their world view sufficiently to persuade them to continue working in human rights or public service.”67 Similarly, Marco Tavanti and Heather Evans offer DePaul’s School of Public Service students a “life-changing” experience working and studying with citizens of Chiapas, after which they return committed to “socially responsible personal and professional lives” without forgetting what studying abroad has taught them about influencing domestic political and social decisions that also impact people in Chiapas.68

Another key to Ozanam’s success was that the college students did not initially treat the poor simply as recipients of donations from the privileged. Sister Rosalie had taught them how to meet the poor. Recognizing Vincent’s and Ozanam’s admonitions not to just provide charity, but to ennoble each person’s dignity, Troy Harden seeks first to teach his students how to engage a community with dignity and respect. Otherwise, no amount of communication or good will can avoid the pitfalls paved by privilege and power.69

II. Scholarship, Research, and/or Other Creative Activities

After the excesses and responses to the French Revolution, nineteenth-century Parisian academic life was the scene of a debate over the Catholic Church’s relationship to the government and the beginnings of the many challenges that modernity would place on university and church.70 Ozanam flourished in the debate and positioned himself as one of the Catholic social liberals who sought freedom of religion from the state, but dedication to the faith through personal response. His friends and admirers encouraged his leadership role in both public debate and written jousting. As an academic, however, he knew the necessity of preparation and saw his study of history and literature as one way to document the persuasiveness of his position. He urged friends and students to engage in study and research so as to be better prepared for the debates within the university. “Happy are those whose life can be consecrated to the research of truth, good, and beauty,” he wrote to his friend Louis Janmot.71 Yet Ozanam was no idealist. This same proclamation followed his warning to Janmot that the great social question dividing those with “too much” from the “great many others who do not have enough, who have nothing” would lead to a terrible “menacing confrontation” that would necessitate persons like them to mediate to “deaden the shock,” if not prevent violence.72 Ozanam praised students who “consecrate their reflections and researches to this high mission.”73

The research of Edward R. Udovic, C.M., demonstrates how important it is for those claiming the mantle of Vincentian service to understand Vincent’s concern for mutuality when seeking to serve the poor.74 Udovic’s article of

72 Ibid., 96-7.
73 “Letter to Ernest Falconnet,” 10 February 1832, Ibid., 17-8.
74 Edward R. Udovic, C.M., “‘Our good will and honest efforts.’ Vincentian Perspectives on
fers Vincentian templates to ensure that our actions seek justice instead of self-delusion. In addressing the diverse ways in which the Congregation of the Mission has provided education to the poor and those serving the poor over the last four centuries, John E. Rybolt, C.M., highlights the foundation of all contemporary educational endeavors to reduce poverty while yoking all those with the name Vincentian in this concerted effort. Likewise, Margaret John Kelly, D.C., relies on research at St. John’s University to posit five themes for inculcating a culture of Vincentian service in a university environment.

Our authors similarly reveal how academic research can further the cause of poverty reduction. Following Hurricane Katrina’s tragedy, Gloria Simo explains how research expands our understanding of poverty as something beyond mere lack of income. By investigating and reporting on the contributing correlates of poverty such as health, housing, education, race, and gender, Simo elicits pragmatic and successful responses to Katrina. Patricia Werhane, Laura Hartman, and Scott Kelley reveal how the innovative research of DePaul’s Institute for Business and Professional Ethics changes the questions asked about effective means to reduce poverty. Recognizing that poverty’s global reach can overwhelm even the best intentioned non-governmental organizations, Werhane, Hartman, and Kelley direct the Institute’s research to find new resources by “inspiring companies to alleviate poverty through for-profit initiatives.” Recognizing the power of capital, Charles Strain calls upon Catholic social teaching to focus on the university’s relatively vast resources when compared to the poor of the world. By raising the institutional question, Strain explores how institutions could allocate their resources “as responsible investor” and “as responsible citizen” to become more engaged in addressing poverty issues. Similarly, Scott Kelley calls upon Catholic social teaching on subsidiarity to suggest new approaches for escaping poverty. Research furthers the Vincentian mission and provides, in part, the foundation for meaningful service.

III. Service

Ozanam simultaneously emphasized the benefits of doing more than research, being what David Gregory calls “that rarest of intellectuals: one who served — directly and personally, and throughout his entire adult life — the immediate needs of the poor. The poor were not an abstraction; they were, and are, his brothers in Christ.” Jean Guitton also concludes that Ozanam consistently served two fronts, the academic and “that of social aid,” emphasizing that work for charity “surrounds all justice, and it is daily, effective and concrete.”

Ozanam understood how efforts on the second front to ameliorate the burdens of poverty contributed to a university education. He argued:

The knowledge of social well-being and of reform is to be learned, not from books, nor from the public platform, but in climbing the stairs to the poor man’s garret, sitting by his bedside, feeling the same cold that pierces him, sharing the secret of his lonely heart and troubled mind. When the conditions of the poor have been examined, in school, at work, in hospital, in the city, in the country, everywhere that God has placed them, it is then and then only, that we know the elements of that formidable problem, that we begin to grasp it and may hope to solve it.

With service complementing classroom studies, Ozanam expected education to interpret what was causing the poor to grow by the thousands in Paris or wherever a Saint Vincent de Paul Society took root. Combining both types of education also developed leadership skills that students would employ as they entered their careers after graduation. Schimberg relates that Ozanam considered the Society “the best possible training place for young Catholics.”

Even today, Vincentian universities continue to promote the educational benefit of service. In his keynote speech at the symposium, Norberto Carcellar, C.M., explained how the students and faculty of Adamson University work with those who live in the garbage dumps of Payatas, Quezon City, Philippines, encouraging the development of resources within the community and building strong organizations. Howard Rosing addresses the theme

Poverty Reduction Efforts,” in this volume of Vincentian Heritage (2008).

75 John Rybolt, “Vincentian Education.”


81 Gregory, “Good Society,” 47.

82 Jean Guitton, “The Saintliness of Ozanam,” in Hess, Frédéric Ozanam, 78.

83 Frederick Ozanam, New Era, as quoted in Baunard, Correspondence, 279.

84 Schimberg, Great Friend, 150.

85 Father Carcellar has since been awarded the 2007 Opus Prize for his work. For a review of that work, see: http://www.opusprize.org/winners/07_Carcellar.cfm (accessed on 25 September 2008).
of community service incorporated in the academic enterprise by describing the development of DePaul’s Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning, and the educational and management theories that make its work distinctive.\footnote{Howard Rosing, “Untangling the Ivy: Discovering Vincentian Service Learning at DePaul University,” in this volume of Vincentian Heritage (2008).} The Steans Center exemplifies how working with community-based organizations can educate students about poverty while providing the assistance of individuals like Sister Rosalie, who work and live in the community and understand the mutuality necessary for such service. Similarly, Marilynn Fleckenstein reports how Niagara University developed its service-learning programs, inculcating Vincentian principles through faculty and students as the economic distress in the city of Niagara Falls, and in the rust belt in general, forced the university to ask the question of who was its neighbor.\footnote{Marilynn P. Fleckenstein, “Developing Vincentian Leaders through Service Learning,” in this volume of Vincentian Heritage (2008).} Marco Tavanti, Merlinda Palencia, and Margaret Guzzaldo report on the power of new synergies that occur when the global reach of the Vincentian community collaborates in the service of the poor. Linking a partnership between Adamson and DePaul with organizations such as the Homeless People Federation of the Philippines, the Payatas Popular Organizations, and the Vincentian Center for Social Responsibility in the Philippines, these authors honor Vincent’s legacy by showing how the community can share resources and imagination to engage students in concrete and effective responses.\footnote{Marco Tavanti, Merlinda Palencia, and Margaret Guzzaldo, “Vincentian University Partnerships for Urban Poverty Reduction,” in this volume of Vincentian Heritage (2008).}

The forces that cause poverty also weaken those who are dedicated to reducing its tragic consequences. Vincent knew that; Ozanam understood that. Compounding the unintended consequences of trying to “do good,” the overwhelming poverty in our world can quickly deaden the enthusiasm and optimism of students often living on their own far from family and locally known sources of support. Although youthful idealism may easily turn into jaded skepticism, Ozanam preached that negative outcomes could be mitigated through faith and support within a community. With perhaps a hierarchical view that represented his humble perspective, he believed that students, too inexperienced to engage the powers of society, could start their education through charity. When only twenty-one, he wrote to Falconnet:

> But, we others, we are too young to intervene in the social struggle. Should we remain inactive therefore in the midst of a suffering and groaning world? No, there is a preparatory path open to us: before taking action for the public good we can take action for the good of individuals; before regenerating France, we can solace poor persons. I would further wish that all young people might unite in head and heart in some charitable work and that there be formed through the whole country a vast generous association for the relief of the common people.\footnote{“Letter to Ernest Falconnet,” 21 July 1834, Dirvin, Life in Letters, 47.}

Working through the Society, Ozanam envisioned that a community of support could safely enrich the urban university experience and diminish student frustration and fear. Noting the vulnerability of the young student arrivals, he wrote: “It is important then to form an association of mutual encouragement for young Catholic people where one finds friendship, support, and example… where the elders receive the new pilgrims from the province and give them a bit of moral hospitality.”\footnote{“Letter to Léonce Curnier,” 23 February 1835, Dirvin, Life in Letters, 47.} Thus, their weekly meetings provided the opportunity to share ideas, modify approaches to their ministry, and seek ways to orient new students.

Students today face similar challenges. Karl Nass and Siobhan O’Donoghue recount how student leaders committed to working with the poor at DePaul University have developed communities of reflection through the Vincentians in Action program. Stressing weekly community reflection, they, like Ozanam, have seen the benefit of gathering in community to discuss their faith and work together.\footnote{Karl Nass and Siobhan O’Donoghue, “Committed to Poverty Reduction and Spiritual Growth: Vincentian Communities of Reflection, Action, and Solidarity,” in this volume of Vincentian Heritage (2008).} Ozanam has been described as having been totally centered in prayer, a key component in his ability to manage so many different parts of his work and life.\footnote{See, generally, David Gregory, “What Would Ozanam Do?,” forthcoming, Vincentian Heritage.} Likewise, Pauline Villapando recognizes the power of prayer and community at the Vincent and Louise House at DePaul as being components necessary for “putting love into action.”\footnote{Pauline Villapando, “Saint Vincent and Saint Louise, Catholic to the Core: Spiritual Praxis as the Foundation for Social Change,” in this volume of Vincentian Heritage (2008).}

The hospitality of the Vincent and Louise House enables students to learn the skills needed for a life of social engagement for justice and peace.

Contemporary myths of normative inequality deaden the sense of concern that poverty undermines the common good, or that a common good may not even exist. The papers and work of the students and faculty who have shared their work in this journal serve as an antidote to such estrangement.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{“Letter to Léonce Curnier,” 23 February 1835, Ibid., 21.}
  \item Pauline Villapando, “Saint Vincent and Saint Louise, Catholic to the Core: Spiritual Praxis as the Foundation for Social Change,” in this volume of Vincentian Heritage (2008).
\end{itemize}
Moreover, they reveal truths that Vincent, Louise, Frederick, Rosalie, and all those in this tradition have understood about addressing poverty. These pioneers never expected their work to end poverty. Yet their belief in the dignity of each person calls all Vincentian universities to serve the poor despite a culture whose myths perpetuate an acceptance of poverty and drive ever-widening chasms between those who have and those struggling to earn their daily bread. The testimony of the articles that follow celebrates the hope of students’ transformation when sharing the blessing of service and the possibilities of partnerships with others. They are a response to Vincent’s call to “teach and do,” and also to the most important question for all: what must be done? What must be done to address the poverty that shackles the God-given dignity of each person? Should this symposium prove successful, Vincentian faculty, students, and administrators will accept the invitation to seek new responses to this most important question.

Vincentian Education: A Survey of its History

By

JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M., PH.D.
Vincentian Scholar in Residence, DePaul University

Introduction

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

The Value of Education

Vincent de Paul was himself an educated man. He earned a degree in theology from the University of Toulouse, which enabled 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. The lack of education in religious matters was most on his mind when he and his followers went out to preach in abandoned country parishes. His method was not to found schools, however, but to concentrate on preaching and the catechism to give unlettered peasants the theological knowledge he believed they needed in order to be saved. 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, in helping 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. To be sure, had he been faced with our modern systems of education, these practical initiatives would have found many new applications in the educational field. His interest, in other words, was person-oriented in all areas of life.

Reform of the Clergy

A term 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 Council of Trent (1545-1563) and was imbued with its concerns about reform. 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, 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 Vincent was traveling with him in his carriage, the bishop 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.”

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 its 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”), the seminary directors normally sent seminarians to accompany the Missioners during their work and 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.” These were composed of charitable parishioners dedicated to the relief of poverty in their own parishes.

These principles, then, would mark subsequent Vincentian education: emphasis on evangelization, attention to the poor and neglected, charity in action, and the empowerment of coworkers. 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.

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. The latter came to be called minor seminaries, which enrolled boys often at a young age and taught them the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic plus Latin and religion. The problem always was the small number of those who continued on 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 his seminary. 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 an astronomical observatory and, more recently, a seismograph. In its history it became the object of various governments’ desire, but it has remained almost continuously in Vincentian hands.

By 1789, the time of the French Revolution, the Congregation of the Mission in France was deeply involved in seminary education with a total of

3 Ibid., 299.
forty-eight major seminaries — of which twenty-one additionally gave parish missions — plus fourteen minor seminaries. 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 also 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 large written 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 provide the nation with an educated and convinced Catholic elite. Following their suppression in 1773, their task passed on to others.

Civil and religious authorities in the Palatinate, a German-speaking state on the French border, 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 of Heidelberg was its astronomical observatory. When the Vincentians arrived, one of the new staff was Jérôme Christof, who had been sent to Heidelberg while still a student to finish his studies in mathematics. Another was a remarkable Luxemburger, Peter Ungeschick, also a professor of mathematics. His later 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 language of instruction and 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 their having to master 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 Thessalonika (Greece), Antoua (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. By 1914, however, the subsidies had gradually ceased.

One result of the education received in these schools was the rise of living standards among the graduates. Social acceptance of Christians, not only in fairly liberal Lebanon but elsewhere, also rose. In fact, Collège Saint Joseph in Antoua has become one of the premier schools of Lebanon, the alma mater of many leaders in government and business in that country. Since Antoua has accepted students of all faiths, it has become a model for the interaction of Christians (Catholics of various rites, Orthodox), Muslims (Sunni, Shia and others), and Druze. The founding of schools for girls, particularly in Damascus, has also had long-term effects. It 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. Regular secondary schools developed later, principally in the large centers and associated with minor seminaries. The European missionary model was finding a fertile field in China, with one secondary school or more in each of the Chinese vicariates under Vincentian direction by about 1900.

---

5 Mezzadri, Storia, 2:232-35. There were also three seminaries with special purposes (such as the preparation of navy chaplains), five with only a brief life, and seven planned but never opened.

International missions

Besides the schools in the Middle East mentioned above, others began in mission territories newly opened by the Congregation. The first of these schools was Saint Mary’s of the Barrens Seminary, Perryville, Missouri. The Vincentians came to the United States in 1816 principally to staff a seminary for the Louisiana Purchase, and 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 a clerical education at the Barrens but not a basic one. Non-seminarians were gradually admitted, however; they were welcome because many of them could pay, whereas the seminarians were supported (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 the separate Saint Vincent’s College in Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

Another early institution at Caraça, Brazil, opened in 1821, and followed
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 much to support the work of evangelization among the Christian people in the neglected northwest of what is now Iran. Another, in Ethiopia, was one of the first in the country. The Saint-Benoît publications in Constantinople supported the educational work of Vincentians and had far-flung influence throughout the Middle East. The press in Monastir (now called Bitola, in Macedonia) had the special purpose of producing works in Bulgarian. Many other presses could be mentioned, such as those in the Americas, and in Europe where the more established provinces were responsible for numerous publications and in some cases continue this work today.

Another indication of the quality of these institutions is their libraries. Even the smallest and most remote schools developed fine libraries. While some of these libraries have since closed their holdings often remain available in archives, 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 go back to the nineteenth century. Vincentian universities developed first in the United States as a result of the country’s lack of tight restrictions on tertiary education. Such restrictions are the principal factor keeping Vincentian universities from developing in other more traditionally Vincentian areas such as France, Italy, Poland, and Spain.
The five American universities all began with the modest goal of being secondary schools or minor seminaries. Then, with the growth of the American population and the consequent access to greater financial resources, these schools increased their outreach. The oldest is Niagara University, which opened in 1856 as Our Lady of the Angels Seminary, in Niagara Falls, New York, but soon had a college division with a state charter granted in 1863. In 1865 another institution, Saint Vincent’s College, opened in Los Angeles, California. Its purpose, like Niagara’s, was to be both 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 was closed in 1911 amid much controversy. Its charter was then assumed by the Jesuits, reversing in some respects the eighteenth century-experience of the Congregation, and Saint Vincent’s became Loyola University (now Loyola Marymount University).

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 hope 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 St. John’s University, it now stands.

DePaul University, in 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 through its charter, which was modeled on that of the recently-founded 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.

The fifth, and least successful, of these Vincentian endeavors in the United States was the University of Dallas. The bishop of Dallas, relying on the extravagant promises of Catholic businessmen in Texas, founded Holy Trinity College in 1907. The enormous school building was the home only of the high school division for most of its existence. 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: parish missions, which had been overwhelmed in practice by works of education. The same was also true to an even greater extent concerning parish work. A resolution to this conflict 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, which 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 to formulate its position for the first time.

On the subject of Vincentian education, as far back as 1849 the General Assembly, the Congregation’s highest deliberative body, went on record in answer to 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.”

The assembly of 1947 did not adopt the same open perspective, but the version of the Constitutions that was published in 1954 stated that the general purpose of the Congregation was, “3° to carry on works of charity and education.” This was explicated 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 has disappeared. These Constitutions, the first in the Congregation’s history, did not have a long 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 it had issued. 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.”

When the time came at the General Assembly of 1980 to decide on the final version of these Constitutions, the Congregation urged Vincentian universities to 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.

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, St. 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 poor students, particularly those from families who have never had any university education, and 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.

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 own...
In other words, the Constitutions summoned the major educators of the Congregation to focus on their special and distinctive Vincentian characteristic, a practical sensitivity for the poor.

This new direction in Vincentian ministry also exhibited new urgency in 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. This runs counter to the Congregation’s hesitation, anchored in the Common Rules of Saint Vincent, about becoming involved in politics. In the nineteenth century, the policy was broadened to include a ban on reading newspapers, participation in political parties, even voting in civil elections. The perspective was that any bleeding of the secular into the sacred would harm the realm of the sacred. Saint Vincent’s oft-cited remark that the Missioners were “Carthusians at home, and apostles abroad” 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 easily overlooked aspect of Vincentian life is the formation that members of the Congregation provide for their own. In the past, many of these seminaries, at the college and graduate level (or “philosophy” and “theology” in common parlance), were set aside exclusively for Congregation members. In recent years, however, many of them have 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 Congregation leaders 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 the *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 important 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.”

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**

In comparison to the American Vincentian universities, Adamson University in Manila, the Philippines, followed a much different historical path. 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, the university has grown to be a major institution, one of the top twenty in the Philippines.

---


14 Chapter 8, article 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.”

Chapter 8, article 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.”

Chapter 9, article 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.”


DePaul College 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 teach both secondary and upper level students. Both Adamson and DePaul College are regarded by the Philippine province as important for being “effective means for human development in a developing nation.”

In addition to the two above-mentioned institutions, we should mention the recently inaugurated (17 November 2002) Universidad de Santa Isabel, Naga City, the 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 opened institutions of higher education, Saint Joseph’s College, in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and Marillac College, in 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. 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.” Unique in America, it served sisters from many congregations, with a faculty and student body drawn from some forty communities between 1955 and its closure in 1974.

Although not related legally to the Congregation of the Mission or to the Daughters of Charity, several other congregations with Vincentian roots sponsor colleges or universities today. 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 Congregation’s struggles over its own self-understanding, its work in education has continued to be a major commitment for the Vincentians. What was accepted only grudgingly has now, through a series of reflections based on Church and Congregation experience, been embraced as one of the premier ways to — in the words of the Constitutions — “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.

---

“Our good will and honest efforts.”¹

Vincentian Perspectives on Poverty Reduction Efforts

By
EDWARD R. UDOVIC, C.M., PH.D.
Senior Executive for University Mission, DePaul University

Introduction

If you were to have asked Saint Vincent de Paul what motivated him to serve those in need with such tireless devotion, he would have replied without a moment’s hesitation that his sole motivation was his desire to imitate Jesus Christ in doing God’s will in all things, at all times, in all places, and towards all people. “May His Will be done always in us, and in all that concerns us.”²

Vincent de Paul believed God revealed that it was His will, and thus the standard and obligation of justice, that every poor person whom you providentially encountered was first to be recognized and embraced as being a brother or sister in Christ, and then served as Christ himself would have served them with an abiding love, respect, and efficacy.³

Everywhere that Vincent turned in the crowded streets of Paris, or in the rural countryside, he saw unprecedented numbers of people who were suffering from the effects of multiple and interlinked forms of poverty. He ‘saw’ these people because he was looking for them with a keen, if not preferential, eye. We cannot take this ‘seeing’ of Vincent for granted, for it was a defining act of personal holiness emerging from a profound conversion experience.⁴

Everyone in his society could have looked around and ‘seen’ people who were poor in the same way that Vincent ‘saw’ them; but not everyone

⁴ Contemporary Vincentian scholarship makes it very difficult to hold to traditional Vincentian mythology about Vincent’s service to the poor emerging from a vow made to God as a result of his alleged, “Temptation against Faith.” See, Stafford Poole, C.M., and Douglas Slawson, “A New Look At An Old Temptation: Saint Vincent de Paul’s Temptation against Faith and Resolution to Serve the Poor,” Vincentian Heritage 11:2 (1990): 125-42.
did. Very often people in Vincent’s age – and indeed the government itself – unjustly treated poor people at best as problems, and at worst as threats to the peace and stability of the state.5

Vincent also observed that Christ’s service was always impelled by a sense of urgency that reflected the urgency of observable human need, as measured by the scope of observable human suffering, moving a human heart to action out of the selfless love that is authentic charity.6

It is not by mere coincidence that Louise de Marillac chose the motto “Caritas Christi Urget Nos,” with the editorial addition of “the charity of Jesus Christ crucified urges us” to guide the efforts of the Daughters of Charity.7

What does God ask of us?

Vincent believed that God never required any response from us that (with the assistance of his grace) was “unreasonable.”8 In fact Vincent was very specific about what he believed God did require of us in general, and specifically with regards to our poverty reduction efforts, “our good will and honest efforts.”9

Vincent once noted that “God asks first for your heart, and only then for your work.”10 What he meant by this was the insight – based on his own experience – that a person could consistently perform Christ-like actions only after first freely accepting the gift of faith and desiring to conform oneself into being Christ-like, in this case like Christ the Evangelizer of the Poor.11

Vincent famously observed that a core set of five virtues, or values, needed to be personally and corporately appropriated – through one’s best efforts – by anyone who wished to serve like Christ.12 In the past I have referred to these traditional Vincentian “virtues” or values as the Vincentian “transcendental imperatives”: be humble, be meek, be mortified, be zealous, and be simple. However, I prefer to use what I consider to be their more compelling contemporary translations: be realistic, be approachable, be self-disciplined, be hard-working, and be honest.13

In order to serve as Christ served, we must be honest – which means we must fearlessly seek the truth wherever it is to be found, recognize the truth when we find it, witness to the truth by our words, and live the truth to the best of our ability by our actions as they relate to our own selves, our neighbors, our world, and our God.

Vincent testified that “simplicity” – or as I have translated it, “honesty” – was the virtue that he valued most. He went so far as to describe it as his “gospel.”14 The transparent strength of this value, in the end, determines the relative strength and effectiveness of the other values.

To serve as Christ served, we must be approachable – which means we must make ourselves personally available in relationships that are authentic and thus inviting, inclusive, accepting, and loving.

To serve as Christ served, we must be self-disciplined – which means we must always creatively balance the inherent tensions between pessimism and optimism knowing full well what we and other human beings are capable of, and not capable, and gratefully relying on God’s grace and providence as the sustaining force of our lives, and indeed of all salvation history.

To serve as Christ served, we must be hard working. There is always much to be done in the Kingdom of God, and what remains to be done is not easily accomplished without laboring “with the strength of our arms, and the sweat of our brows.”15

“What must be done?”

Vincent’s own vocation, and thus the Vincentian age, dawned with a simple but haunting question. In January 1617, Madame de Gondi turned to her faith-

6 See, for example, the Letter of Vincent de Paul to Antoine Fleury, in Saintes, 6 November 1658, CCD, 7:356.
8 Letter of Vincent de Paul to Jacques Pesnelle, Superior, in Genoa, 13 August 1660, CCD, 8:442.
11 Way of Work, 22-23.
12 For a discussion of the “Five Characteristic Virtues,” see Ibid., 37-69.
ful chaplain Vincent de Paul and asked the question, “What must be done?”

What she meant by this question was: What must be done about the deplorable conditions you and I have witnessed, and which we know are at odds with the good news of the kingdom of God as proclaimed by Jesus Christ? What must I do? What must you do? What must we do? The “must” found at the heart of this question makes the question, and its answer, a call to action and a matter of unavoidable responsibility and conscience.

We have already seen that for Vincent de Paul, what “must” be done at any given point in salvation history is always God’s will, and God’s revealed will is that people in need must always be recognized, respected, and well-served. The conjunction of a personal faith commitment to do God’s sovereign will as described above, and a personal recognition of the existential opportunities, with God’s grace, to fulfill this commitment, explains Vincent’s insistence on discerning and following the dictates of divine providence rather than the dangerous alternative of trusting in one’s own, or society’s, standards of self-sufficient judgment and action.

The prayerful discernment that is necessary to guide Vincentian service seeks to discern God’s providential will revealed in the people, places, and events that surround us. In answering the question “What must be done?” Vincentian discernment first seeks to determine what could be done, leading to a judgment about what should be done, leading to a decision about what must be done, leading finally to action. Guiding this discernment is a commitment in the end to carefully choose a course of action that is within our


18 See, for example, the Letter of Vincent de Paul to Bernard Codoing, Superior, in Rome, 16 March 1644, CCD, 2:499:

Grace has its moments. Let us abandon ourselves to the Providence of God and be on our guard against anticipating it. If Our Lord is pleased to give me any consolation in our vocation, it is this: I think it seems to me that we have tried to follow Divine Providence in all things and to put our feet only in the place it has marked out for us. See also, the Letter of Vincent de Paul to Guillaume Desdames, Superior, in Warsaw, 25 April 1659, Ibid., 7:531.

God’s works are not governed according to our views and wishes… The spirit of the world is restless and tries to do everything. Let us leave it as it is. We do not want to choose our own ways but to walk in those it will please God to set down for us… He wants nothing more. If He desires results, they are His and not ours. Let us open wide our hearts and wills in His presence, not deciding to do this or that until God has spoken.

19 See undated Letter of Vincent de Paul to a priest of the Mission, Ibid., 5:462. “All that remains now is for you to make a firm resolution and put your hand seriously to the work.”

power and has the highest chances of success, given what is at stake.

Vincentian poverty reduction efforts

For Vincent, the first moral obligation we have towards those in need is to organize and provide the triage services required to feed the hungry, house the homeless, rescue abandoned infants, provide health care for the abandoned sick, and provide needed spiritual consolation and healing to accompany proffered physical and material consolations.

Vincent realized that the sheer numbers of people in need of triage services warranted a response that had to be institutionalized to endure. These institutionalized responses required resources, organization, rules, planning, assessment, and trained personnel. Vincent’s brilliance as an organizer and as a manager of people and resources is demonstrated through his groundbreaking institutionalization of charity.

The need for service to be efficacious is expressed in Vincent’s quotation, “On your part, do purely and simply whatever depends on you to make things


21 For Vincent de Paul, the material and spiritual consolations given to people who were poor were in the end a matter of life and death. See, for example, his comment in an extract from a Conference, “Sur La Mission Donnée à Folleville: En 1617,” CCD, 11:4.

22 For the genius of Vincent de Paul’s institutionalization of charity see, for example, the numerous examples in the two volumes of documents in CCD, 13a and 13b.
go well.” This efficacy demands a careful balancing of humanism and professionalism in one’s service in which neither goal is ever achieved at the expense of the other – which is to say at the expense of the people being served.

From this perspective, each act of charity rendered under these triage conditions is a morally necessary and endlessly repeatable act of poverty reduction, albeit a short-term or even momentary one. These types of triage services, whether rendered to a single individual or countless thousands, are always the beginning point of Vincentian service and the touchstone of Vincentian poverty reduction efforts, but they must and do lead elsewhere.

As Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, and those first-generation members of the Confraternities of Charity, Ladies of Charity, Congregation of the Mission, and Daughters of Charity organized to provide the services described above at the scale they were needed, they all understood the underlying political, economic, social, religious, cultural, and personal factors that combined to create the poverty, and the scale of poverty, that afflicted those who stood before them and countless others yet uncounted and unseen.

In our own post-modern information age, in the midst of the growth of globalism, environmental change, and the terrifying threat of terrorism in all its forms, contemporary Vincentian poverty reduction efforts require an ongoing study of how this age is creating and supporting traditional and new forms of poverty, as well as a knowledge of exactly who is paying its increasingly high and deadly price, and how, where, and why that price is being paid around the world.

An understanding of the ways in which poverty is created and sustained is the key to developing ‘ingenious’ or ‘inventive’ proposals to achieve its avoidance or reduction. There is an obvious and important role to be played by Vincentian colleges and universities.

Whether in the seventeenth or twenty-first centuries, Vincentians have understood that some form of organized local, national, and international political advocacy for specific systemic poverty reduction efforts has to be incorporated into their efforts. Vincentians also understand that in the absence of these efforts, there is little hope of stemming an inevitable and exponential increase in the number of people who are poor, the depth of their poverty, and thus the depth of their suffering.

Utopia vs. the Kingdom of God

On this basis, Vincentian poverty reduction efforts in any age can never be aimed at achieving some socioeconomic, geopolitical, or ideologically based model of a just and perfect society. The tragic and bloody fates of these misconceived utopian dreams litter the pages of human history.

Rather, Vincentian poverty reduction efforts are zealous, grace-assisted, intelligent, loving, pragmatic, ongoing, reasonable attempts to live in the kingdom of God that exists here and now within the ultimate mystery of the ‘already but not yet.’ In this kingdom where God’s will is sovereign, we are called to formulate and pursue strategic efforts of triaged and systemic poverty reduction that push and pull us and our world out of any complacent acceptance of an unjust and sinful status quo imposed upon our brothers and sisters who are poor. Vincentian efforts framed in this way do lead “gradually and almost imperceptibly” to their goal: the measurable reduction or containment of poverty in our world.

Prayer and Vincentian poverty reduction efforts

The activist nature of Vincentian poverty reduction efforts belies the nature of these efforts as Vincentian prayer. Since, according to Vincent, our efforts “must be firm in the end and gentle in the means” and be guided by a faith-filled and grace-assisted discernment, they do shape a unique form of Vincentian prayer expressing confidence and trust in God’s providence.

This is not to say that all Vincentian prayer is expressed in action. We do have the words of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac that guide and inspire us still. We also have the words that capture the memory, and history, day with structured, institutionalized solutions (e.g., through the societies he founded), he was, nonetheless, like most of his contemporaries largely unaware of what today we might call ‘sinful social structures.’ For the most part he accepted the existing political and social order as it was…. Still, within that context, he saw the need for political action as he addressed the needs of the poor and used his influence in court and on the Council of Concience to that end.

As for the rest, Monsieur, regardless of its sources, and no matter what may happen, do not allow yourself to be upset, but, disregarding all that, remain at peace. You will suffer no harm from it, if God does not will it; and if He does, it will be for the good, for to those who serve Him all things work together for good.

27 See, for example, the Letter of Vincent de Paul to Louis Rivot, Superior, in Saintes, 17 September 1656, CCD, 6:97.


29 See, for example, the Letter of Vincent de Paul to Louis Rivet, Superior, in Genoa, 13 June 1659, CCD, 7:612.

30 Letter of Vincent de Paul to Pierre Cabel, Superior, in Sedan, 16 November 1657, CCD, 6:97.
of past Vincentian efforts across four centuries. Words are sometimes inadequate as prayer, but sometimes they are more than adequate.

One such prayer, filled with words that reflect the Vincentian faith and experience of poverty reduction efforts, was written not by Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, or anyone who consciously identified themselves by the adjective “Vincentian.” Rather they are words composed by the late Bishop Kenneth Untener of Saginaw, Michigan, and offered as “a prayer remembering Archbishop Oscar Romero.” They are words that, whatever their original context or purpose, prayerfully remind us of the faith that underlies the contemporary Vincentian question, “What must be done to reduce poverty in our world?” as well as its answer.

The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime only a fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God’s work.
Nothing that we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No program accomplishes the church’s mission.
No set of strategic goals and objectives includes everything.
That is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water the seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces the effects far beyond our capabilities.
We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation realizing that.
This enables us to do something, and to do it well.
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest.

31 “Oscar A. Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, in El Salvador, was assassinated, 24 March 1980, while celebrating Mass in the chapel of a cancer hospital where he lived. He had always been close to his people, preached a prophetic gospel, denouncing the injustice in his country and supporting the development of popular and mass organizations. He became the voice of the Salvadoran people when all other channels of expression had been crushed by repression. The following prayer was composed by Bishop Kenneth Untener of Saginaw (Michigan), drafted for a homily by Cardinal John Dearden in November 1979 for a celebration of departed priests. As a reflection on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Bishop Romero, Bishop Untener included in a reflection book a passage titled ‘The mystery of the Romero Prayer.’ The mystery is that the words of the prayer are attributed to Oscar Romero, but they were never spoken by him.” See, http://www.xaviermissionaries.org/m_Life/NL_Archives/2003_Lett/Romero_Prayer.htm
At the dawn of the new millennium, the dire situation of many member nations motivated the United Nations to adopt as one of its eight millennium development goals the plan to “eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.” Current statistics sadly suggest that this laudable goal will fall very short of the recently established benchmark to “reduce by half the population of people living on less than a dollar a day” by 2015. The harsh reality of so many persons living at a subhuman standard is a call to galvanize commitment and mobilize resources on behalf of the poor at the individual and institutional levels and in the local, national, and global arenas. Vincentian higher education, with its assets of intellectual capital and sponsorship by a 400-year-old organization recognized for its action for the poor, can find here a special opportunity to extend the tradition and enliven the culture.

Such a contribution begins with reflection on our origins and our current institutional mission statements. There are three very basic questions which each individual, but also every responsible institution, must ask on a regular basis. Where did we come from? Where are we now? Where must we go? These are questions of existence but also of culture, as they probe both identity and authenticity. Vincent de Paul — knowing that institutions, like persons, must always be in process — frequently reflected on the institutions.
and congregations he had founded, always attributing the inspiration to God. Speaking to the first Daughters of Charity about their company he said, “As it was not then what it is now, there is reason to believe that it is still not what it will be when God has perfected it as he wants it. Don’t think that companies are formed all at once.”

With Vincent as our inspiration and guide in this privileged time of universal attention to poverty, it is very appropriate for those of us in Vincentian universities to reflect on the qualifier “Vincentian” — our distinctiveness within the higher education community. This is not a new exercise. Indeed, the Documents of Vatican II: 1962-65 and John Paul II’s 1990 apostolic constitution, “Ex Corde Ecclesiae” stimulated much discussion and some controversy on Vincentian and Catholic identity within the Congregation of the Mission and the Vincentian universities. Vatican II challenged each congregation to capture its distinctiveness, its original “charism,” and to view this timeless mission in the context “of our times,” the present world culture and societal needs.

References

5  Pierre Coste, C.M., Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents, ed. and trans. by Jacqueline Kilari, D.C., Marie Poole, D.C., et al, Vols. 1-10, 13a&b (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 1985-2005), Conference 24 to the Daughters, 13 February 1646, 9:194. Hereinafter cited as CCD. Vincent frequently reminded the Daughters, that it was not he, nor Mademoiselle Le Gras, nor Father Portail who had the inspiration for their company, only God.

6  Documents of Vatican Council II, ed. by Austin Flannery (New York: Costello, 1975), http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_councila/index.htm. In “The Church in the Modern World,” Council Fathers introduced a new way for the Church and its members to engage the world. “At all times, the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in light of the Gospel.” 4. In “The Renewal of Religious Life” the Fathers stressed the importance of the charism of each founder and stated: “The up-to-date renewal of religious life comprises both a constant return to the sources of the whole Christian life and to the primitive inspiration of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time.... The spirit and aims of each founder should be faithfully accepted and retained, as indeed should each institute’s sound traditions, for all of these constitute the patrimony of an institute,” 2. The decree on “The Apostolate of the Laity” fleshed out some of the underlying principles of the roles and responsibilities of the laity articulated in other Council documents.

7  The Apostolic Constitution, “Ex Corde Ecclesiae,” was promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1990, www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul-ii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_opc_1508199. It is an affirmation of the Catholic university as “an incomparable center of creativity and dissemination of knowledge for the good of humanity.” One of his challenges resonated with those in Vincentian institutions. Catholic universities “will be particularly attentive to the poorest and to those who suffer economic, social, cultural or religious injustice. This responsibility begins within the academic community, but it also finds application beyond it,” 40. The pope also offered reflections on the relationship of faith and reason, and faith and culture. He encouraged social responsibility and intercultural dialogues to respond to and learn from an emerging global society. He also presented a range of norms and practices to advance the university in its mission and relationship to the Church. One of these, the mandate for teachers of Catholic theology, has received the greatest attention.

Vincentian Culture: A Reality and Its Elements

The title of this article, “Toward a Vincentian Culture in Higher Education,” signals three convictions that are fundamental to the work of the universities if they are to be instruments for poverty eradication and the advancement of the vision and tradition. First, there is a distinctive Vincentian culture. Vincent not only clearly articulated the purpose and structure of each of his many organizational creations, but he also provided a rule of life, established methods and quality indicators for service, and described the spirit which should animate these endeavors. He called the Daughters to live in humility, simplicity, and charity and the Vincentian priests and brothers to model simplicity, humility, zeal, mortification, and meekness. Second, the Vincentian culture is dynamic and has been built on a set of core beliefs, values, and the lived experience of almost 400 years. Universal in its stress on responding to human need with respect, compassion, creativity, and zeal, the culture can accommodate differing situations, services, and historical times, as well as different faiths. Third, culture is transmitted principally through example and behavior, individual and corporate, rather than through theory and documents. Saint Louise de Marillac, Vincent’s collaborator, captured this crisply in her advice to a superior: “We must learn to ask and not command; to lead by example rather than by precept.”

While the heroes and heroines...
of the past, beginning with Vincent and Louise, and moving through a large
cadre of role models, offer inspiration, the responsibility for passing on the
Vincentian culture lies now with each current member of the university com-
munity, from the youngest freshman to the most senior professor or seasoned
administrator, as well as with scores of other workers within the institution.

An interesting experiment to gain insight into current perceptions of
Vincentian culture is to pose the following question to individuals or groups
within our institutional communities: “If Vincent de Paul, by some great sus-
pension of the laws of time and space, were to come to this Vincentian univer-
sity this afternoon, where would he feel most comfortable, most at home?”
The responses are remarkably consistent but they also suggest a need for
deeper understanding and more creative applications. Extroverts generally
answer very quickly with: “Of course the church or the chapel because he
was a holy, religious man, a saint.” A few votes will be cast for the classroom
because, “Vincent was a born teacher and enjoyed engaging in dialogue and
giving conferences.” Several respondents will place Vincent in the student
union or the residence halls because, “he understood how important contact
with youth is and knew that today’s students are tomorrow’s leaders.” Then
inevitably a very reflective professor, student, administrator, or staff member
will say that because Vincent knew who he was, understood his 17th-century
world and knew where he was going, he would be at home and comfortable
everywhere in this 21st-century university.

![Vincent de Paul the scholar.
Period painting.
Courtesy of the author](image)

That is a commentary on Vincent, who was comfortable in his own skin,
and knew who he was and what he needed to be, as well as where that iden-
tity and culture would take him. So must all of us who assume responsibility
for handing on the mantle of the man who reminded us that charity does
embrace justice and that unjust structures and systems must be redesigned.10
He also advised us that “It is not enough to do good, it must be done well.”11

References to quality as a justice obligation, and to the detailed directives
which guided the catechists, missioners, teachers, and visiting nurses —
indeed, members of all his organizations — suggest that Vincent would be
quite at home with our contemporary emphasis on assessment and account-
ability in higher education.

The task of each member of the contemporary Vincentian university then
is to get in touch with Vincent, his values and vision, his wisdom and example
— in short, the culture he initiated and entrusted to successive generations, the
number of whom he could not have imagined. The challenge is to infuse that
inherited culture into the contemporary institution in response to the current
needs of society, especially those persons who are poor or marginalized.

A consideration of Vincentian culture leads us to consider institutional
integrity. Do we speak with Vincent’s voice? Do we act in the manner Vincent
modeled? Do we choose according to his value system? An honest, self-re-
reflective, authentic culture is concerned with the identity communicated to and
perceived by our various publics. An institution’s culture becomes its identity
as recognized by outsiders, and experienced by insiders. Its integrity is its
culture lived faithfully. Thus our Vincentian cultural integrity is critical if we
are to avoid the damning judgment contained in a popular saying: “What you
do is speaking so loudly, I cannot hear what you are saying” (in your mission
statement, website, brochures, or your on-hold telephone message).

Culture then is the way a group of individuals, a corporate body, or an
institution values and behaves. Culture motivates action and gives an in-
stitution a distinctive character and style, whether it be a baseball team, a
hotel chain, or a university. In the university an authentic culture permeates
personnel policies, faculty and student recruitment, financial aid decisions,
management styles, programs, activities, curricula, research, pedagogy, cri-
teria for honors and incentives — and of course ambience, so critical in our
contemporary visual culture.

Culture is not like a garment which can be taken on or off with ease. It is
more like a second skin that grows and protects the organism, almost imperce-
ptibly, as individuals appropriate values and internalize principles. In addition
to an integrated belief system, which for Vincent included a personal God, the

10 CCD, Letter 2546, 7:115.
11 Ibid., 12:201.
dignity of each person, and society’s responsibility to respond to needs within the human family, a culture also offers role models, past and present, who live the core values. The Vincentian family has a multitude of such “giants” in its catalog of saints as well as within its current personnel pool. A culture also encourages stories and rituals which enflesh the legacy and enliven the tradition. A culture serves as a spiraling, dynamic connector within time: “Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past.” It is Vincent who inspires and directs us as the culture weaves its way through time and across many landscapes.

Images and Descriptions of Vincentian Culture in Higher Education

To concretize this concept of institutional culture, several metaphors have been proposed. Some compare culture to DNA because it is the task of successive generations within an institution to pass down the genetic code to the next. Others prefer the metaphor of a spine because culture is to an organization what the spine is to the human body, offering structure and support to the entire organism and protecting the central nerve network. Others equate culture to a glue which bonds the organization and provides cohesion. Still others describe culture as the oxygen that gives life to the organization, respirations drawing from and giving back to the environment. Influenced by our technological age, a few even describe organizational culture as being like the operating system of a computer, supporting and unifying the various functions and hosting a multiplicity of programs.

Educators around the world have described Vincentian culture in the service of higher education with different emphases but with great consistency as well. Some focus on basic components of culture while others stress the desired outcomes of this cultural acquisition. While the following brief statements greatly summarize, and thus do injustice to, the author’s serious and lengthy reflections on Vincentian higher education, each still offers valuable insight into the lived Vincentian culture.

12 The canonized members of the Congregation of the Mission include Vincent de Paul, Francis Regis Clet, Justin de Jacobis, and John Gabriel Perboyre. The beatified members include Ghebre Michael, Louis Joseph Francois, his companion-martyrs from the Revolution (John Henry Gruyer, John Charles Carron, Nicholas Colin and Peter Rene Roguet), and Mark Anthony Durando. The canonized members of the Daughters of Charity include Louise de Marillac and Catherine Labouré, as well as Elizabeth Ann Seton, Foundress of the Sisters of Charity in the U.S. The beatified members include Marie Ann Vaillot and Odile Baumgarten, martyred in Angers; Mary Magdalene Fontaine and her companion-martyrs (Mary Frances Lanel, Therese Magdalene Fantou, and Jean Gerard), martyred in Arras; and Rosalie Rendu. Three other Daughters (Marta Wiecka of Ukraine, Lindalva Justo de Oliveira of Brazil and Giuseppina Nicoli of Italy) were beatified recently.


15 Thomas F. McKenna, C.M., People of the Scarred Coin, Vincentian Chair of Social Justice Address, St. John’s University, January 2002, at http://vincentcenter.org/ress/mckenna.html. The address: http://www.vincentcenter.org/Chair.html offers a link to all the Chair lectures from 1995-2006.


18 William and Mary Pat Cannon Hay Vincent DePaul Leadership Project, DePaul University, at http://leadership.depaul.edu.

Reverend Robert Maloney, C.M., former Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, sees the Vincentian culture in the university as being marked by global vision, excellent organization, collaboration, insistence on concern for the poor, and high competence in researching and solving issues of poverty.

Reverend Thomas McKenna, C.M., Provincial of the Eastern Province and former theologian at St. John’s University, stresses Vincentian higher education’s great potential for liberation of the human. This freedom enables all persons to be viewed as one family under God; it encourages inclusiveness, mutuality and solidarity. Borrowing Vincent’s own image of the reversed coin, which allows one to see Christ revealed in the other despite human limitations and vagaries, Reverend McKenna notes that Vincentian education should lead students to cultivate a “radar for the poor” and a realistic, mutually respectful attitude in both serving and being served.

Reverend Donald Harrington, C.M., President of St. John’s University, stressed the Vincentian tradition of offering the opportunity for an excellent education to the disadvantaged, in the hope that these students and graduates will become committed to life-long service with special concern for the poor and neglected.

Reverend Dennis Holtschneider, C.M., President of DePaul University, and Reverend Edward Udovic, C.M., Senior Executive for Mission at DePaul University, collaborated on an article about the Vincentian Higher Education Apostolate in which they offered six constituent elements for distinctiveness. These are educating the poor and their children, focusing on first-generation college students, presenting the Roman Catholic tradition, instilling in students Vincent’s “affective and effective love of poor persons,” researching poverty, and sharing university resources in collaboration with other agencies.

DePaul, building on its strong business and community service programs, has developed a challenging matrix of qualities and competencies that comprise a Vincentian leadership model suitable for many venues.
Reverend Gregory Bañaga, C.M., President of Adamson University in the Philippines, offered in his inaugural address an interesting paradigm based on experiential poverty. For him, Vincentian higher education is “of the poor, from the poor, and for the poor.” Education of the poor assures accessibility, education from the poor adopts the perspective of the poor, education with the poor provides proximity to and solidarity with the poor, and education for the poor is transformative of society.

Reverend Daniel Pilario, C.M., a Vincentian theologian who works from the margins of society in the Philippines, takes a prophetic view of Vincentian culture and utilizes Reverend McKenna’s image of a radar that both identifies and responds to the poor. He claims that Vincentian higher education must “make the poor visible,” and affirms the need to be present to and stand with them.

Santa Isabel University, operated by the Daughters of Charity in the Philippines, adopts an outcomes approach for the student and the institution. For them, Vincentian education focuses on poverty and has two results: first, it forms the integrated person who will build a faith community oriented to becoming a church of the poor; second, it will discover new knowledge and new ways of improving the well-being of the socially disadvantaged. It appears that in assessing their effectiveness, the university gives priority to graduates’ happiness and community leadership oriented to the poor, rather than to the typical success indicators of prestige, position, or possessions.

In a similar way, several research fellows at the Vincentian Center at St. John’s tore a leaf from the Jesuits’ book, and their mission of producing “men and women for others,” and adapted it to the Vincentian culture. The purpose thus became “forming men and women in and for service to the poor” or “developing men and women for justice and peace, builders of solidarity.” Guided by these purpose statements, Vincentian efforts in service and justice would be compassionate and not confrontational, gentle not strident, humble not self-righteous, evidence-based not ideological, and action-oriented not rhetorical.

These various approaches, admittedly greatly summarized here, prove that at the core of the Vincentian culture are beliefs about God, the dignity of the human person, the humanizing effect of education, the advancement of the common good, the value of direct experience with poor people, the creation of Gospel communities, advocacy for the marginalized, and responsibility for the vulnerable and needy. This last belief may cause concern in some academics that a Vincentian cultural focus could pre-empt academic rigor or subvert the educational enterprise in favor of moral formation or instruction in social responsibility. My personal experience, though, as well as that of many faculty from diverse disciplines, confirms that the academy’s acceptance of the responsibility to deal directly with poverty and its effects provides an integrated, interdisciplinary academic focus, gives distinctive character to a quality education, and unifies core competencies in learning and service. It taps into many of the motivations which drew persons to the “knowledge profession” and responds to their inclinations toward students. Indeed this book itself, with its diverse range of authors and disciplines, offers further testimony!

History has documented that Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, despite Vincent’s protestations to the contrary, were at the core brilliant intellectuals and effective communicators as well as creative collaborators and ingenious organizers. Four centuries of history and research reveal that the superlatives are justified and do not flirt with hagiography. Both Vincent and Louise served the poor and their congregations as educators, formators and leaders, blending their academic work with human development of minds and hearts, unifying the Word and their work. Their strength was not just in their brilliance, virtue, and teaching skills but also in the manner in which they brought members of all levels of society together around a critical social issue (this included the intellectual and social elites of a highly stratified social and economic era). Today, despite great emphasis on human rights and democracy, we experience growing wealth disparities and deep resentments at the consequences of those disparities. In the U.S., economic segregation is a reality and it has a troubling racial component. The Vincentian culture, marked by mutuality, human dignity, respect, and concern for the common good, has much to offer on current issues of sustainable development, participation, entitlements, interdependence, and solidarity as they are studied from national and global perspectives. These are critical issues in the eradication of poverty, and they form an appropriate agenda for Vincentian academics from many disciplines.

Recognizing that the Vincentian culture is an asset within our universities, and that we are in a privileged place and time to exert influence, it seems appropriate to identify some specific Vincentian themes we may want to focus
on as we join forces to reduce poverty and its effects. What specific aspects of the Vincentian culture call us in this globalized, technological, politically conflicted, socially divided, humanity-challenged and opportunity-rich century?

Themes for Vincentian Cultural Emphasis in the 21st Century

Five themes seem to emerge under the impulse to relate Vincentian cultural continuity to our own times. These five have been selected because they embody the essentials of academic programming and can be adopted and adapted across university disciplines and personnel. Vincent liked to offer catalogs in threes or fives, so in fidelity to that practice, five will be proposed here. They are: transcendence and prayer, integral development, imagination, stewardship, and learning communities of service. These will be very briefly presented here in the hope that specialists in these areas will provide conceptual development and more thoughtful applications.

Transcendence and Prayer. The desire for transcendence and the belief in a personal God are central to Vincentian thinking and acting. Encouragement of the search for transcendence in its many forms, and prayer, as well as theological and religious study, must hold a privileged place in a Vincentian university. Vincent was fond of reminding his communities that persons of prayer are capable of anything. He also warned that “God wants first the heart and then the work.”

He stressed the need for action to be infused by contemplation because prayer reveals the reality of each person’s inherent dignity, the meaning of being part of the human family, and the need to search out God’s will in the ordinary and extraordinary events and persons of daily life. Prayer, formal and informal, individual and communal, needs to be included and respected as part of the institutional culture. This is not only because of the many personal benefits derived from prayer and meditation, but also because they can contribute greatly to community-building. As secularism, neo-atheism, and religious extremism are on the rise, reflections on the meaning of transcendence and shared experiences of prayer can offer counter-influences and unify our diverse university communities. It is interesting but also somewhat puzzling that prayer and transcendence are not generally identified by Catholic institutions in their lists of core values as they are in other faith-based organizations. Perhaps their centrality is assumed, but we all know that what is assumed sometimes becomes overlooked, distorted, or even neutralized.

Imagination. A Vincentian education, concerned as it should be with working for justice and peace, must encourage and foster imagination. Imagination is the tool and playground of hope as well as of social transformation. It is the stuff of which integral development and holistic formation are woven, but it is also Vincent’s modus operandi. His creation of the Daughters of Charity as vowed women who functioned outside the cloister was revolutionary, and highly imaginative. His innovative responses to a range of human needs encompassing all age groups are well documented as a victory of imagination and trust in Providence over reasoned practicality. Vincent’s imagination allowed him to change the face of France and the Church through his political acumen, reliable research and planning, innovative organizational structures, and creative financing. Only a fertile and Christian imagination could have conceived of bridging classes to the advantage of the poor and forming organizations built on the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity — 20th-century concepts not in Vincent’s lexicon but in his practice. Today, global issues of poverty, trade, trafficking, terrorism, health services, water, and food security call for creative ideas and reforms which may well have their start in academe. If Vincentian higher education is to be faithful to its culture, it must discover ways to humanize technology; it must create structures that will eradicate poverty and advance justice. Cultivation of the imagination must be a high academic priority. Faculty must also develop imaginative pedagogies across disciplines, as did Vincent DePaul himself.

Integral Development. Vincentian programs, academic and otherwise, need to advance a holistic, integral development not only of students but also of the entire university community. All, from the youngest student to the most senior administrator, are in process along the human continuum of lifelong development, as are nations around the world. Integral or authentic development — terminology now used in Catholic social thought — suggests


25 Vincent learned from the failed experiment of Saint Francis de Sales in seeking to have the Daughters of Charity as vowed women who functioned outside the cloister while still retaining customs of their enclosed communities. Vincent was able to gain approval for the first Congregation formed to serve the poor outside convent walls by using language purged of the traditional concepts of enclosure, and more appropriate for engagement with the world. For example, he suggested they alter their vocabulary to use terms like ‘dress’ instead of ‘habit,’ ‘parish church’ instead of ‘convent chapel,’ and ‘annual promises’ rather than ‘perpetual vows.’


27 Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004). The compendium offers this observation on integral or authentic development: “The human person must always be understood in his unrepeatable and inviolable uniqueness...the primary commitment of each person toward the other, and particularly of institutions and leaders (political and social), must be for the promotion and integral development of the person,” 131. “The social order and its development must invariably work to the benefit of the human person, since the order of things is to be subordinate to the order of persons and not the other way around,” 133.
comprehensive, holistic, and sustainable advancement within personal, interpersonal, communal, and global contexts. Integral development, according to Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin, who spent years serving on the Vatican Peace and Justice Commission and at the United Nations, calls for immediate “investing in the full capacities of others, especially of the poor” in a way that will benefit the individual and common good. This echoes Vincent’s approach to ministry. He was a people developer, program creator, process facilitator, and social advocate who kept the origin and destiny of the human person always in focus. Competition and egoism had no place in his very practical and other-oriented efforts to develop people and systems.

José María Roman, in his comprehensive biography of the saint, describes Vincent’s social initiatives, many of which still have 21st-century parallels at home and abroad. Vincent distributed seeds and farming implements to refugees of the many civil wars that marked his era, so that the displaced could become independent, maintain their dignity, and contribute to society. The early Daughters, led by Louise, held literacy classes for young girls in hopes of increasing opportunity. In their nascent technical schools they taught young women the skills of knitting and sewing not only to produce revenue, but also to develop their independence. Together, Vincent and Louise introduced craft communities and housing for the elderly where needy artisans could use their talents to teach others, all toward the end of increasing confidence, independence and interdependence.

Vincent could and did take firm stands when necessary to protect the rights of poor people and to release them from unjust constraints. For example, he refused to let his priests cooperate with public officials who sought to move the homeless and derelicts from the streets of Paris and into institutions — a controversial strategy recently employed in the U.S. Vincent, after a great deal of prayer and consultation, determined that the policy had grown from a correlative development of one’s conscience, caring for the body without caring for the spirit — and, conversely, in focusing on the spirit without reasonable regard to bodily needs. He understood the human person as an individual child of God with inherent dignity, born into a relational, responsible society. Because faculty have a sustained relationship with students, they have a unique role in fostering this integral (body, mind, and spirit) development of their students.

Through research, especially that of an interdisciplinary nature, faculty can find ways to support and advance integral development of persons in new, broader venues. Vincentian universities need to be involved in education for survival literacy (language, financial, legal, mathematical, aesthetic), crafting of legislation, affordable and safe housing, protection of the environment, justice in the marketplace and workplace, advocacy for the exploited and disabled, and a host of other major needs. The needs and interests of the poor and disenfranchised are many and present a long and diverse research agenda.

**Stewardship.** Concern about stewardship is growing at an accelerated rate and is apparent in demands for transparency in business’s relationship to the intergenerational responsibility for the earth’s resources. Increasing emphasis on social responsibility and accountability offers a counter-influence to the materialism and consumerism in first-world nations that also impacts other nations, especially their poor.

The founding of the first Confraternity of Charity at Châtillon in 1617 provides a lesson in Vincentian stewardship as well as a model for collaborative service and effective management. This seminal event is reported by Vincent himself, and compellingly described in Roman. Vincent, informed by a member of the congregation that an entire family was ill and in desperate need of help, gave a sermon which motivated his parishioners at Sunday Mass to such a degree that the family received more help that day than they could possibly use. When Vincent visited the family later in the afternoon, he saw the potential for waste of food and parishioners’ time, as well as the redundancy of effort and inadequacy of planning. Building on the goodness of his people and

---

28 Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin, in a question/answer session, after an address given at a side-event sponsored by the Holy See Mission at the United Nations, “Economics are not to be separated from Human Realities,” October 2005.
exerting considerable leadership, he developed an organizational plan that divided the labor of caring for the family for a given period and assured ongoing structured help for them. Roman reports that Vincent preached the sermon on Sunday, wrote the rule on Monday, and initiated the first Confraternity of Charity on Wednesday. This then served as the model for many such parish groups which subsequently dotted France and attracted the rich and poor to service. As noted above, Vincent valued, designed and facilitated structures which allowed persons to recognize, develop and use their own talents and material resources in the service of charity. He believed that talents are not given for personal satisfaction or advancement, but are on loan from God to be used for the benefit of others, and ultimately must be accounted for. He understood well the lessons of Matthew 25 on the parable of the talents and the Last Judgment. The success of Vincent’s stewardship is demonstrated by his original organizations, so solidly conceived that they have expanded for almost 400 years and now embrace the world and inspire many other foundations and congregations, lay and religious. Vincent believed that the use of personal talents in service was a lifelong obligation. When old and feeble, he said simply, “If I can’t preach every day, I will preach twice a week. If I can’t be heard from a distance, I will speak to the poor in a small group.”

Finally, Vincent cautioned against beginning a work without planning for sustainability, knowing that to start and then stop a service for the poor can leave them in an even more precarious position.

A Learning Community of Service. In “Ex Corde Ecclesiae,” John Paul II commented that “service to others for the promotion of social justice is of particular importance for each Catholic university, to be shared by its teachers and developed in its students.” Service, embedded in Vincentian culture, needs to be perceived and lived first as an attitude toward need and needy persons, and then as action. It also assumes prayer and preparation of a developmental program before action. Service is a necessary part of each student’s experience through volunteerism and learning, but it also offers opportunity for the entire university community, and yields many benefits of community-building as well as the development of confidence, compassion, and competence in service to poor persons.

It is important to acknowledge that service activities within a Vincentian school are not automatically “Vincentian.” A servant attitude is essential. Vincentian service is based on the dignity of each person and membership in the human family under God. Conviction on these points is essential if benefit is to be gained by the served and the serving, and if there is to be a mutually transformative effect produced by each service encounter.

Too often, service is limited to “what” is done and lacks a clear delineation of “the why” and “the how” of Vincentian distinctiveness. A professor recently cautioned that service in our universities can become legitimized egoism. This can occur when the “I feel good” or “I am glad I am who I am” effect prevails over the awareness that service is not about the “I” of the encounter but about the “we” of humanity. There is a distinctly Vincentian way of serving with humility and simplicity as well as charity and zeal for the other’s good. Authentic Vincentian service grows out of prayer, is built on respect for the dignity of the human person, deepens one’s sense of stewardship, and, as cited above, always uses a developmental approach in its goals and methods. Band-aid solutions and practices that encourage long-term dependence are not Vincentian.

Questions of value surface when the categories of service within the university are considered. Direct hands-on physical service is essential and generally preferred, but service of the mind (use of intellectual capital) and spirit (religious leadership) must also be recognized and valued. There is a tendency to elevate giving food and building houses over the type of service unique to the intellectual life which is the major resource of the university. Vincent’s service on the Council of Conscience, his careful assessment of human societal needs before planning action, his convening of church personnel for spiritual formation and governance education, his response to the Jansenist heresy, and his frequent engagements in counseling, consulting, and spiritual direction have their parallels in the work of many professors and administrators within our Vincentian universities. It is important that the specialized knowledge and skills of our various disciplines be recognized as a genuine resource in providing critical services to and for the poor of the world.

Blessed Frederick Ozanam (1813-1853), professor of both Law and Italian literature and a founder of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, can serve as a role model in this regard. Frederick visited the needy in their homes and in 1833, while a student at the Sorbonne, he established the Society. His stellar academic career in both law and literature brought him much recognition. In his writings he laid out philosophical, political, and social observations which are now
It is hoped that these reflections have affirmed the value of our dynamic Vincentian culture as it responds to the challenges and opportunities of each time and place, and have shown that this culture is learned, internalized, and transmitted principally through an authentic, faithful living out of the Vincentian vision. It is also hoped that the treasure-trove of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences found within our institutions will be directed to the eradication of poverty and the development of global peace and harmony. May Vincent guide us and bless us with knowledge, wisdom, prudence, generosity, and zeal to be worthy contributors to the Vincentian culture, interpreting the signs of our times in the interest of our brothers and sisters — especially those who suffer from poverty, oppression, and dehumanization.

It’s a shame to be poor. It really is, because people look at you differently. Before their eyes, you are poor and have little chance of improving your lot in life because you are lazy, without ambition and lack the determination to escape from poverty. You are not resourceful. When you find yourself side-by-side with the wealthy, you feel so insignificant for unlike them, you have no power and capacity to buy anything at will. THAT’S WHY I FEEL ASHAMED; IT’S REALLY HARD TO BE POOR.

Gerry Cortez, thirty-five years old, a contractual employee providing janitorial services in our university, expressed with a tinge of embarrassment and apprehension how shamefully difficult it is to be poor. To him and many, many others, it is indeed a shame.

The Poor in the Philippine Context

Why are the poor seen in this way? Even the use of the term “poor” is today discouraged. Social development workers try to correct the notion of poverty by referring to poor people not as “poor” but rather in more politically correct parlance, such as “socially disadvantaged” or “underprivileged,” as if these terms somehow soften the negative impact. Many other names are given to the poor, such as the Hebrew anawim — as used in old scriptures when referring to suffering and powerless people — or “marginalized.” If those on the margins constitute the majority of our people, then the
private school system to preserve their privilege and access to the colonial bureaucracy.” 3 Reverend Jimmy A. Belita, C.M., my predecessor, wrote while citing Foley that:

...Philippine education has been suffering from a perennial problem, ever since colonizers, both Spanish and American, brought about an elitist form of education. In the time of the Spaniards, education was channeled through the Church who reserved her best schools for the rich... even her schools that were founded for the poor eventually became schools for the rich.4

For educators, and there are many of us here today, the questions that remain unanswered are: What has my school done to address the poverty situation? Where have we succeeded and where have we failed? What has gone wrong with Catholic education? If education is a way out of poverty, then why do our people remain poor? Do our students see poverty as a problem that requires a solution, or as an opportunity for personal gain? When they graduate, do they become part of the elite that perpetuates poverty, or do they work for the transformation of society?

Catholic Education and Poverty

Catholic education, particularly in the Philippines, has been criticized for being privileged and for creating a new kind of elite. According to the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines:

Many affluent Filipinos have a cultural fixation towards elitism in education. Such elitism not only waters down education to a status symbol, but tends to produce in well-to-do students not only a feeling that they are a people apart, but also a misguided priority that education is merely a tool to gain privileges and advance one’s social class. Because high standards of education require high financial support, Catholic schools may find it impossible to express the Christian love of preference for the poor.2

Douglas Foley stressed that the “Filipino elite developed their own

Adamson University’s History

Adamson University was established in 1932 by an immigrant Greek who saw the need for technical skills to fuel a young nation’s major leap towards industrialization. The Adamson School of Industrial Chemistry, as the university was originally named, provided the pioneering impetus for the opening of technical schools that would educate middle and lower-middle-class students who could not afford the sectarian schools that catered to more privileged members of Philippine society.

The school prepared future technicians to run the industries owned by graduates of other schools. It had students coming from unheard-of barrios in Luzon and the Visayas and even as far as Jolo in Sulu — sons and daughters of the working and peasant class who dreamed of better lives as professional engineers, chemists, pharmacists, teachers, and small-scale businessmen, not as soil tillers or tenants of the hacenderos.

Mr. George Lucas Adamson somehow knew that from the ranks of the poor would spring forth the working class, the backbone of the middle class that would move the country towards economic growth and development. With the help of two cousins, he steered the university toward becoming a center of technical and scientific expertise, and he provided an environment that upheld professionalism and excellence. He emphasized social responsibility, technical education, respect for the balance of natural resources, short courses to help clientele upgrade their social status, and maintenance for their key clients from the poor and working classes.

When the Vincentians took over Adamson University from the Adamson family in 1964, the move did not come as a surprise. After having been the tenants of the Vincentians in the San Marcelino property just after World War II, the Adamsons offered the university to the priests as new laws in the Philippines required all schools to be fully owned by Filipino nationals.

Many people have wondered how the Vincentians — also known as the Congregation of the Mission, known mostly for their popular missions and for their education of clergy — ever became involved in education. Having come to the Philippines in 1862, they established what were known as colegio-seminarios (college-seminaries) in the dioceses of Manila, Vigan, Naga, San Pablo in Laguna, Jaro in Iloilo, Cebu, Jagna in Bohol, Calbayog in Samar, and Tacloban in Leyte. Noted graduates included Cardinal Rufino Jiao Santos, Cardinal Jaime Lachica Sin, and Cardinal Julio Rosales. There were also some students of the colegio-seminarios who did not become clergy: noted national leaders such as President Sergio Osmeña; Sister Graciano Lopez Jaena, founder of La Solidaridad; Jose Maria Panganiban, the brilliant propagandist of Rizal’s time; Ramon Avancena, former chief justice of the Supreme Court; and many other senators and provincial governors.

Adamsons and Vincentians: Two Streams Joining to Form a River

As the Vincentians took over the reins of the university, they brought with them their heritage of compassionate service to the poor, their core values anchored in the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, their solid experience in education, their deeply spiritual and holistic approach to the development of the human person, and even their strong sense of nationalism. The two traditions of the Adamsons and the Vincentians are likened to two separate streams that joined together to form a mighty river, converging towards many commonalities such as the clients they serve, their awareness of every individual’s social responsibility, and their continuous striving for excellence in functional and practical education.

The confluence of these streams of influence has brought Adamson its share of glory and fame in academic excellence, professionalism, service to the poor, and developmental impact in society. This glorious heritage is what we are called to build on and bring forward with renewed commitment and bold creativity.

At this point I invite you to reflect with me on how we can further sharpen the vision and mission of Adamson University by making higher education accessible to the poor.

Vincentian Education in the Philippines: From Servant University to Education with a Heart

It was the third university president, Reverend Rolando Dela Goza, C.M., who conceptualized Adamson’s role as a “servant university.” Father Dela Goza expounded on his concept of “servant university” in his investiture speech in November 1986, when he declared:

Adamson University, drawing inspiration from the Gospel, should conform to the image of the Human Person, Jesus Christ, the model Servant, in order to counteract some of [our society’s] ills. We see from the evangelical perspective how Christ, our Lord and Savior, modeled the role of Servant, ministering to the needs of the people, especially the poor. His words and actions consistently showed that


It has often been said that education is a way out of poverty, but we say that education brings us into the heart of poverty, for the dynamic of Vincentian education puts the poor right at the center of our mission. This is based on the philosophy that Vincentian education is:

- “of the poor,” meaning that it provides the poor accessibility to education;
- “from the poor,” meaning that the perspective of education is taken from where the poor stand;
- “with the poor,” meaning that we are in solidarity with those who have less; and
- “for the poor,” meaning that education is transformational and promotes advocacy, and we orient our students to have preferential treatment for the poor.

Like any institution of higher learning, Adamson offers a wide range of educational programs and services aimed at producing professionals who are competent and qualified in their own fields of discipline. Like other Catholic schools, we pursue truth and knowledge under the guiding light of sacred scriptures and the teachings of the Catholic faith. What makes Adamson University unique is the Vincentian character imprinted in its programs, services, and culture that are all inspired by the life and works of Saint Vincent de Paul, its patron saint.

**Education of the Poor**

Saint Vincent de Paul, who lived in the seventeenth century, is known worldwide for having dedicated his life to the poor and needy. While he did not establish any school other than seminaries during his lifetime, the example of his life and unique spiritual perspective can serve to guide our educational philosophy and process.

While Vincent welcomed all kinds of people and interacted with them, he had a special preference and concern for the poor. He saw Christ in every person he met but he treated the poor with special respect, thereby helping them to feel their human dignity and bringing home the message that although poverty was dehumanizing, it was nothing to be ashamed of.

While the doors of this university are open to everyone, the socially disadvantaged, the children of the working class, and those in the margins of society occupy a special place within our walls. We want to be known as a university where the poor can find opportunities to break the vicious cycle of poverty and indignity to which they are subjected. We do this by keeping our tuition fees affordable and providing a host of scholarships. To date,
critical assimilation of culture, and a comprehensive synthesis
of faith and life. Student involvement in outreach programs
for the poor will provide the occasion for fostering talent
sharing, while processing and concretizing value formation.
Imbued with the missionary spirit, they stand to learn and
receive much by reaching out to the poor and the needy.9

In terms of research, we have to have a strong bias towards poverty is-

issues: causes, supportive societal structures, underlying attitudes, and short-
term and long-term solutions to this menace of society. Research must be
relevant and pragmatic and must impact the world of the poor — and not
only for publication purposes. Moreover, while we believe knowledge can
be discovered in isolation, the Vincentian approach leans toward the dis-
covery of knowledge by dialogue with grassroots and marginalized peo-
ple. In this way, the school develops a “conscience” and becomes a credible
institution.10

Education from the Perspective of the Poor

Vincent de Paul was the son of peasants and was deeply immersed
in the world of the poor. His approach to life and service was to start where
the people were. “In a strange sort of way,” Reverend Jimmy Belita, C.M.,
writes, “the poor do service to a school by being critical of its institutional-
ism and business policies.”8 Quoting the Latin American theologian Jon
Sobrino, Father Belita continues: “[T]he university should see the world from
the point of view of the poor if it wants to be a truly liberating and empower-
ing form of education.” It is quite clear that this proposition runs counter to
an education detached from real-life situations and influenced by powerful
people who tilt our society’s balance of power in their own favor.

Our students, especially the poor, are the starting point of our educa-
tional mission. The delivery of educational programs and services starts
from them and revolves around them. We consider their gifts, needs, and
circumstances, and devise ways in which we can facilitate their growth and
development in the discovery, sharing, and use of knowledge and skills. To
do this we have to immerse ourselves in the lives of the poor and make that
experience the point of departure for our educational process. Today the
technical term to describe this process is “dialogue of life.” In the words of
the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines:

There should be a periodic and systematic exposure of ad-
ministrators, faculty, staff and students to the context of the
poor and the needy. Such a process of contextualization will
help engender the development of a love of preference for the
poor and of a missionary spirit in every sector of the school
community. Those in the teaching profession in particular

8 Belita, Teaching and Being, 90.

9 Second Plenary Council, no. 642.
10 Belita, Teaching and Being, 90.
Let the Vincentian mission... be a collaborative effort. Let it mobilize the efforts not just of the members of the Congregation of the Mission, but of all the lay administrators, faculty members and staff who labor in this great university. Let them feel a part of this mission... If there was anything Vincent de Paul knew how to do, it was to draw everyone into his captivating vision of life. At his one side was the queen of France, Anne; at his other side was a peasant girl who did not know how to read or write, Marguerite Naseau. He energized rich and poor, men and women of every rank in society, because he shared his vision with them.”

Education for the Poor

Vincent de Paul had a heart for the poor, but did not romanticize them. He assisted them in their needs, but saw to it that those who were able went to serve the poor themselves. Our educational process intends to help our students become not only competent professionals and compassionate Christians but people committed to personal, institutional, and social transformation for the poor.

In the commencement speech delivered by our alumnus, Jose Roland Moya, during graduation ceremonies last October, he shared a story about his fellow alumni, Dennis Afinidad and Maricel Mendoza, whom he met during a NAMFREL (National Movement for Free Elections) visit in the hills of Tanay during the 1998 elections. Dennis and Maricel, a married couple, were both active in church work and NAMFREL and had foiled a cheating attempt during that election without regard for the danger involved. Their volunteerism and bravery continue to inspire many young people to get involved in social transformation.

The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines muses that:

Let the Vincentian mission... be a collaborative effort. Let it mobilize the efforts not just of the members of the Congregation of the Mission, but of all the lay administrators, faculty members and staff who labor in this great university. Let them feel a part of this mission... If there was anything Vincent de Paul knew how to do, it was to draw everyone into his captivating vision of life. At his one side was the queen of France, Anne; at his other side was a peasant girl who did not know how to read or write, Marguerite Naseau. He energized rich and poor, men and women of every rank in society, because he shared his vision with them.”

Education for the Poor

Vincent de Paul had a heart for the poor, but did not romanticize them. He assisted them in their needs, but saw to it that those who were able went to serve the poor themselves. Our educational process intends to help our students become not only competent professionals and compassionate Christians but people committed to personal, institutional, and social transformation for the poor.

In the commencement speech delivered by our alumnus, Jose Roland Moya, during graduation ceremonies last October, he shared a story about his fellow alumni, Dennis Afinidad and Maricel Mendoza, whom he met during a NAMFREL (National Movement for Free Elections) visit in the hills of Tanay during the 1998 elections. Dennis and Maricel, a married couple, were both active in church work and NAMFREL and had foiled a cheating attempt during that election without regard for the danger involved. Their volunteerism and bravery continue to inspire many young people to get involved in social transformation.

The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines muses that:

We must sadly admit, however, that many of the graduates of our schools... do not seem to have sufficiently assimilated Christian values in such a way as to renew their Christian living... Many seem to look at Catholic education simply as a passport to better opportunities for earning a living, rather than as a grace to live better human and Christian lives, entailing a serious responsibility to build a better world. Many graduates of Catholic schools have been successful economically and politically but they have also contributed to the dismal economic and political imbalances existing in our country.

As Vincentian educators, we are advocates of education for social transformation. Our intent is to educate students who will be agents of change and catalysts in the transformation of society — not to create a class apart nor to perpetuate the vicious cycles that marginalize the poor. This implies that we should further enhance our processes and services, especially community service, to create a mentality and culture of social responsibility in academe. Our approach is to make volunteerism and service to others an integral component of academic disciplines. To the many unsung heroes out there, and to those who share our vision of social transformation and can complement our efforts for empowering those in the margins of society, we open up the human and material resources of the university. Our alumni, heeding this call, have become our partners in this endeavor.

Lourdes Supetran, an alumna from our Chemistry department, together with her husband, built ACS Manufacturing Corporation, which produces several popular household brands like Star Wax, Pride Powder Detergent, Smart Dishwashing Detergent, and Unique Toothpaste. ACS Manufacturing is listed among the top 1,000 corporations in the country. Mrs. Supetran explains that she did not participate in the commencement exercises after her studies because she did not have the means. Today, she serves her alma mater by employing many Adamson University graduates in her company and by providing scholarship grants to deserving chemistry students. She also served as president of the Alumni Association for two years.

Education with a Heart

“Those who have less in life must have more of your heart,” asserted Reverend Daniel Franklin Pilario, C.M., the dean of our School of Theology, during his Baccalaureate Mass homily last October. But before we even engage in the task and mission of education, we have to look into our motives, as these determine and influence how we give of ourselves and the kind of work we do for others. For Christian and Vincentian educators this is an invitation to put ourselves wholeheartedly behind the vocation. There is no room for halfheartedness — only for single-minded devotion. One hopes that our example will inspire the youth under our care to also give

---

13 Second Plenary Council, no. 627.
Developing Vincentian Leaders through Service Learning

By

Marilynn P. Fleckenspiel, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Niagara University

In a talk at Niagara University, 18 October 1993, the Very Reverend Robert P. Maloney, C.M., said:

I hope that every student who graduates from Niagara has a deep sense of the poor. This is a Vincentian university. The name Vincent de Paul means, almost everywhere in the world, “one who loves the poor.” Put aside your prejudices about the poor. Learn to know them face to face. The poorest of the poor here in the United States, and in fact throughout the world, “one who loves the poor.” Put aside your prejudices about the poor. Learn to know them face to face. The poorest of the poor here in the United States, and in fact throughout the world, are little children, the elderly, women… break through any fears that might hold you back; have some concrete contact with the poor during your time here at Niagara. If you do, not only will you touch their lives, but they will change your lives too.1

Journeying towards the Future

The story of Adamson does not end here. Like a mighty river it continues to swell and flow, cutting through rocks and dead branches along its path, forging new streamlets that will later become new rivers. I wish to thank all those who made Adamson University what it is today — from those who envisioned it to those who developed it and brought it to greatness. The past has not been without challenges. Still, the future is replete with them and difficulties can be daunting.

Adamson is nearly seventy-five years old. We will be celebrating our diamond jubilee in 2007. This can be a curse, considering all the baggage that we have accumulated from our past — the innate resistance to change, the reluctance to move outside our comfort zones, and inertia born out of complacency and cynicism. Or we face an opportunity — to dig deeper, to leverage on what we have built and the reputation we have made for ourselves.

It is not coincidental that this ceremony is held inside this historic church — the first in the Philippines to be built using reinforced concrete — and preceded by the celebration of the Eucharist. It is meant to remind us that the God who inspired Saint Vincent de Paul more than three hundred years ago with a mission of serving the poor will also be behind us as we continue our mission of touching lives and forming character in the youth entrusted to our care. “What God has done for us in the past is so great,” Saint Vincent wrote, “that we can look to the future with hope and confidence.”

Gerry Cortez, nais kong malaman mo na mayroon kang karapatang magkaroon ng edukasyon at dignidad bilang tao at hindi kailangan ikahiya ang pagiging mahirap.

Gerry Cortez, let me assure you that it’s your right to have an education and to have dignity as a person; and that you must not feel ashamed of being poor.

May God, who inspired us in the beginning, continue to guide us and bring success to the work of our hands.

---

However, regulations for the disposal of chemical wastes became more stringent during the 1970s and 1980s. These regulations prohibited the discharge of wastes into the Niagara River. As a result, the industry began to move out and relocate. The city lost population to the point that in the 2000 census less than 60,000 inhabitants remained. Niagara Falls is the largest urban area in Niagara County, which is located in western New York State, on the Canadian border, and within a hundred-mile radius of such major cities as Buffalo, Rochester, and Toronto. The county has a land area of 1,354 square kilometers and a population (2000) of 219,846, including 8.84 percent minorities — primarily African Americans and Native Americans. In 2000, 71.4 percent of the county’s population lived in urban areas and 28.5 percent in rural areas.

Niagara Falls has become a city populated disproportionately by low-income people. The two largest population groups are aging, southern, and eastern European ethnic whites, and a slightly younger group of low-income minorities. In 2000, 20.4 percent of the city’s population was over the age of sixty, while the city also accounted for 80 percent of Niagara County’s African American population. Niagara County likewise has a high percentage of people living below the poverty line; 13.5 percent of the families with children under the age of eighteen, 10.6 percent of individuals between eighteen and sixty-five years of age, and 9 percent of individuals over the age of sixty-five have annual incomes below the poverty line.

In 1965 a group of Niagara University students and two faculty, one a Vincentian priest, founded the Niagara University Community Action Program (NUCAP) as a student-run organization funded by student government. These students and faculty were motivated by a desire to contribute their talents to the betterment of the local community, which even in 1965 was beginning to feel the impact of a changing economy. The faculty moderators of NUCAP established relationships with community agencies and schools throughout Niagara County. Within a few years, NUCAP had grown and was placing two to three hundred students each year in service sites. Campus Ministry assumed responsibility for administering the program and the moderator was a staff member within their structure. As economic conditions within the Niagara Falls and Niagara County areas deteriorated, the service that Niagara University students provided increased.

By the middle of the 1980s it was obvious that the city was in trouble. The downtown area had been bulldozed in the name of urban renewal. Unfortunately no new businesses took the place of the ones that had left. Along with these developments, faculty were faced with an increasingly apathetic student population quite different from the activist students of the 1960s, and they were struggling with the question of how to best improve the learning environment. However, there was also a lively discussion among faculty — especially those in the social sciences, Religious Studies, and Philosophy — about the nature of Vincentian education. While it is certainly important that students know the face of the poor, higher education has another aim: to allow students to explore the systemic causes of poverty and begin to develop and encourage short and long-term solutions. With this in mind, some faculty began to develop curriculum that attempted to address the needs of the community within the academic content. This endeavor is one aspect of “Vincentian education (which) is... viewed as central to the Vincentian mission of service to the Poor. As such it strives to integrate this vision into the educational process and to keep the primacy of it alive among all those who share in this common mission.”

Faculty were, in fact, developing service-learning pedagogy without knowing the term. These classes were very well received, and faculty found that the atmosphere in the classroom was dramatically changed, with students beginning to ask the correct questions and becoming more interested in their academic work. They

---

3 Louise Sullivan, D.C., The Core Values of Vincentian Education (Niagara University, 1994).
began to see that what they were learning in the classroom did have practical implications and impacts for the broader community.

The work of faculty in integrating service with academic content continued to grow. Increasingly the moderator of NUCAP was pressed into service to identify new community sites and projects for faculty. In 1989, Reverend Brian O’Connell, C.M., assumed the presidency of Niagara University. Reverend O’Connell was convinced that, like Saint Vincent who “marshaled all the resources he could find in the service of the poor,” Niagara University must do likewise, making the university’s resources more accessible to the needy local community. An opportunity to expand and enhance the service-learning initiative presented itself when in 1994, the Corporation for National Service, a federal government agency, announced that grants would be available for colleges and universities to develop and implement service-learning programs. Niagara University received one of the original sixty-four grants, totaling approximately $190,000 over a three-year period. Learn and Serve Niagara came into existence in the fall of 1994.

Service learning involves active learning where students are able to reflect upon the experience of performing community service work within the structured context of course content. Students develop research, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills and come to appreciate the larger social, ethical, and environmental implications of knowledge. Service learning enriches content areas by fostering social responsibility and intellectual and ethical reasoning. Additionally, as stated in its mission statement, Niagara University is a Vincentian institution with the goal of instilling in students a lifelong commitment to the poor. A Vincentian graduate ought to have the ability to assume a leadership role on the community as well. The Vincentian leader is one who truly respects Saint Vincent’s commitment to the poor, speaking and acting in a way that expresses a commitment to making the world a place where the poor are assisted and poverty alleviated.

Students are made aware of the Vincentian character of Niagara in a number of ways. In the description of the university it is stated clearly that Niagara is a Catholic and Vincentian university. These descriptive terms are referred to in presentations during the orientation process and restated in speeches given by the university president and other senior administrators. Additionally, a part of the first year seminar that every student is required to take is devoted to the life and work of Saint Vincent de Paul and the way in which his vision of service to the poor is made visible at Niagara University. In Religious Studies classes such as Introduction to Christianity, in Philosophy classes such as Ethics, and in other classes such as Sociology and Social Work, the importance of service is highlighted. Faculty, administrators, and staff take seriously the mission work of the university, modeling through their participation in service-related activities that this is a work for the entire community.

In this tradition, thousands of Niagara University students have participated in the projects sponsored through Learn & Serve Niagara. In 1999, all of the service-learning projects and service conducted through the Student Government were combined under its umbrella. This reorganization included NUCAP. Throughout its thirty-three year history, NUCAP has been at the forefront in the development of Vincentian student leadership. It is a student-run organization with a staff moderator, led by a board consisting of six to twelve students selected by the students themselves from among those who have been actively involved in its service activities. The board is responsible for scheduling and implementing twelve to fifteen service activities per semester. Students plan these activities, which traditionally involve inviting the community’s young people to campus to swim, roller skate, and ice skate; visiting nursing homes; participating in community clean-ups and blood drives; and sponsoring events for developmentally disabled adults. The students are responsible for every aspect of each event.

What has been impressive is the way in which this board comes together as an entity that models Vincentian values. Traditionally its members are those who consistently participate in service activities and are enthusiastic about them. They come from every college and major in the university. Among the board members, friendships gradually develop that transcend the four years they spend at Niagara University. These students model the importance of service and participate in multiple service activities. For example, this January three NUCAP board members are in Panama, working with the Vincentian community there in a number of service venues. Through a partnership with Campus Ministry, other Vincentian student leaders participate regularly in immersion experiences, during the January or Easter breaks in areas such as Philadelphia, Brooklyn, or — most recently — in the Gulf South in the aftermath of Katrina. These board members have credited their NUCAP experience with helping them develop leadership skills that they have carried into their careers. The bond to NUCAP continues for years after graduation, with alumni returning for reunions and visiting the office.

If the spirit of Saint Vincent is to continue in Vincentian institutions of higher education, these institutions must strive to create a culture in which living embodiments of the mission are visible, striving to teach, primarily

---


by example, the culture’s values to new members of the community. This becomes increasingly important as religious members of the community decrease in number. Vincentian leaders must embody the core values of the founding community, being living symbols of the mission in addition to speaking and writing about it.⁶

Some examples of the outstanding leaders produced by this program will provide evidence of the effectiveness of incorporating service into the academic curriculum.

In the mid-1990s, a young woman enrolled at Niagara University. She came from a very privileged family. Her father was the general manager of one of the major sports teams in Buffalo. The young woman, named Jen, declared a major in Communication Studies with her sights set on joining the communication department of her father’s team. During her first semester, through her Religious Studies class, she participated in a NUCAP event and she encountered some children who were attending the after-school program at the Center for Joy, an inner-city center for children and parents. Jen began to help out in the program, tutoring the children three afternoons a week.

During the Christmas season, the city of Niagara Falls sponsored a Festival of Lights, decorating the downtown area with holiday exhibits. A highlight of the festival was a parade that took place the weekend after Thanksgiving. The Center for Joy invited local children to attend the parade and many Niagara University students, including Jen, volunteered to accompany them. One little girl, Misty, arrived to participate, and Jen noticed that she had no winter boots or mittens; she wore a light summer-weight dress and a thread-bare coat. Horrified, since she had never encountered such a child, Jen offered to give Misty her gloves. Misty suggested that they each wear one glove and hold hands to keep their other hands warm. This experience had a profound effect on Jen, who continued to volunteer at the Center for Joy and ultimately joined its board of directors, taking a major role in planning its events. Jen and Misty enjoyed a close personal relationship, with their families playing an active role in each other’s lives. Jen’s career plans were also altered; she abandoned her earlier ideas about her future and chose instead to pursue a career in the volunteer management arena, where she is still employed today. Unfortunately Misty’s story does not have a happy ending: several years ago, she and some friends were playing in a derelict neighborhood playground when a decaying swing set toppled and killed her. One now sees many individuals in that community wearing lapel pins shaped as mittens to honor Misty and her friend Jen, and to remind people of the community’s terrible needs.

The Eastern Province Vincentians provide some scholarship funds for students who do substantial service during their time at Niagara University. Several of these Vincentian Scholars have developed and led very impressive service initiatives. One was a Theater Studies major who tutored in an after-school program at another inner-city center, the Francis Center, which is sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Penance and Christian Charity. The children there were impressed that she could sing, dance, and act and were constantly asking her questions about the experience of appearing on stage. Partnering with the Sisters on the center’s staff, she put together a plan to incorporate singing, dancing, and acting into the schedule of the after-school program. Her curriculum used these disciplines to help improve the children’s literacy and mathematical skills. Obviously, also providing a great deal of fun for the children. After, this particular student graduated, other theater students continued the tradition at the center.

The list of special projects developed and led by Niagara students is lengthy, but I will add a few more here. One young woman participated in service learning through her major in Social Work. In her course work she became interested in exploring opportunities to help children in Africa. She searched the Internet and found an organization called Invisible Children. “Motivated by the unseen war in Northern Uganda, Invisible Children was created by three young filmmakers with a singular mission: To use the power of stories to change lives around the world.”⁷ This student was so moved by the stories she read that she organized a student group on campus, which to date has raised several thousand dollars to support the activities of the parent group in Uganda.

These experiences with service learning extend well beyond graduation. Michael J. Delaney, a 1983 graduate of Niagara University, was presented with the Perboyre Medal — named for Saint John Gabriel Perboyre, C.M., a Vincentian priest martyred in China in 1840, which recognizes extraordinary contributions and service to the global society after the examples of the gospels, Saint Vincent de Paul and Perboyre — at the convocation celebrating Vincentian Heritage Week last fall. Mr. Delaney was awarded the medal in recognition for his work as director of humanitarian assistance for Oxfam America. During his time as a student at Niagara University he was a Vincentian seminarian and an active participant in the activities of NUCAP, as well as an enthusiastic rugby player. In his speech at the convocation he said:

As I look back and reflect on my life, the decision that has had the most impact and changed me was the one to join


⁷ Available online at: http://www.invisiblechildren.com/about/
to, the values expressed in the mission statement. They become powerful role models for students and the newer members of the university community, in that they enthusiastically relate their experiences and help facilitate their work. Faculty regularly participates in service-learning activity with students, thus enhancing the experience and acting as an excellent on-site resource to help students process what they encounter. Coaches of the sixteen Division I athletic teams have worked side-by-side with their players to mentor elementary and secondary students; last Christmas, each team aided a local family with food and gifts. Students enrolled in the ROTC program have also put together a project to visit hospitalized veterans on a regular basis. Hospitality students and their professor provide services for the residents of the Ronald McDonald House connected with Roswell Park Cancer Center. Students, faculty, and staff also routinely help with the building of houses through Habitat for Humanity. This passion and spirit is infectious.

As Sister Nora Gatto, D.C., executive director of University Mission and Ministry, said about Niagara’s mission in a recent article: “It’s a powerful force that blows through campus and catches everything in its path.”

That powerful force infected NU’s director of sponsored research, Adrienne Leibowitz, who applied for one of the newly established Research and Project Awards to Address Poverty. These grants were created jointly by the Reverend Joseph L. Lévesque, C.M., president of Niagara University, and the Eastern Province Vincentian Community. These awards are designed to support research and/or direct service projects that broaden the understanding of poverty. Ms. Leibowitz received a $3,000 grant that enabled her to spend three weeks in the African country of Malawi at the Malawi Children’s Village, a community-based organization that serves AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children, and also to work with Orphan Support Africa, a group that supports existing community-based organizations throughout Malawi and Tanzania. During her time in Africa, Ms. Leibowitz put her expertise to work providing strategic planning support, technical assistance, and direct service to children. Since her return she has continued to be involved with the organization, and recently accepted a leadership position on the board of directors of the Malawi Children’s Village Foundation.

As Sister Nora Gatto, D.C., executive director of University Mission and Ministry, said about Niagara’s mission in a recent article: “It’s a powerful force that blows through campus and catches everything in its path.”

That powerful force infected NU’s director of sponsored research, Adrienne Leibowitz, who applied for one of the newly established Research and Project Awards to Address Poverty. These grants were created jointly by the Reverend Joseph L. Lévesque, C.M., president of Niagara University, and the Eastern Province Vincentian Community. These awards are designed to support research and/or direct service projects that broaden the understanding of poverty. Ms. Leibowitz received a $3,000 grant that enabled her to spend three weeks in the African country of Malawi at the Malawi Children’s Village, a community-based organization that serves AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children, and also to work with Orphan Support Africa, a group that supports existing community-based organizations throughout Malawi and Tanzania. During her time in Africa, Ms. Leibowitz put her expertise to work providing strategic planning support, technical assistance, and direct service to children. Since her return she has continued to be involved with the organization, and recently accepted a leadership position on the board of directors of the Malawi Children’s Village Foundation.

Another example is that of Niagara University’s assistant director of admissions, Maria Torres. After earning a Master’s degree in school counseling last May, she celebrated the accomplishment by serving with forty-seven other volunteers at the Somos Amigos Medical Missions’ clinic in the Dominican Republic. This mission brings medical and dental care to people living in underdeveloped countries. Ms. Torres met the organization’s

---

director, Frank Brightwell, by chance when he was attending an event at the university. At the clinic she worked thirteen to fourteen-hour days, primarily as a translator enabling non-Spanish-speaking medical professionals to communicate with local inhabitants. She, like Adrienne Leibowitz, describes her experiences as life-altering. “What is important is not materialistic or money,” she notes. “It is becoming one with others, becoming one with your communities and getting involved, being open to sharing your gifts and talents with others. Doing that, and making a difference, is a start to making the world better.”

While I have singled out several examples of projects and of individuals who have taken the Niagara University mission to heart, there is a broader question about the role of engaging students in service learning: What does it add to the entire educational experience? Recent research suggests that students who engage in well-integrated academic service-learning gain a new perspective on social problems. Faculty and students alike report that the experience has presented them with new questions, such as those about the systemic causes of poverty. For example, I was speaking with a student recently who had been looking at the issue of hunger. She mentioned rather incredulously that she had never asked why institutions such as soup kitchens were needed. Students also appear to become more involved with issues of social justice, and this opens an opportunity for faculty to introduce them to the rich tradition of Catholic social thought. They talk freely about the transformational value of the service-learning experience. Research and reports from faculty on campus support the contention that students actually learn this material better through the service-learning experience than in a classroom. Every spring, for example, students in a tax accounting class complete tax returns for elderly and disabled people in the local community, and their professor reports an improvement in their comprehension and retention of knowledge.

Many factors have come together to develop the ethos of service that one experiences on the campus of Niagara University today. It is not possible to point to the introduction of service learning as the sole contributor to the development of this spirit. Service learning is but one vehicle through which the university’s mission is communicated from one member of the community to another. More is involved, however the constant mention of the mission in classrooms, and in public remarks by administrators and faculty, in encouraging members of the community to engage in service, keep the mission at the forefront of university life. Students, faculty, and staff seek out opportunities to develop and lead service activities. Faculty regularly report that students encourage them to incorporate a service-learning component into their courses. For example, a student in a logistics class approached the faculty member about bringing fair-trade coffee and other products to the university. The students then put their new skills to work in arranging for the transportation and importation of these products, which they then sold on campus.

In reading and studying the life and writings of Saint Vincent de Paul, it is seen that he gathered people together to study and reflect on their obligation to aid the more unfortunate members of society — but also that he required what was learned be put into action in venturing out two-by-two to serve the poor. The parallel can be seen here at Niagara University. Students, faculty, and staff study, reflect and serve together, and then go out to serve the greater community.

10 Ibid.
Poverty Reduction Initiatives at the Universidad de Santa Isabel: Vincentian Seeds of Hope

By

MARIA ASUNCION G. EVIDENTE, D.C., President
NENETTE L. ABRIGO, Ph.D., Dean of Graduate School
VIRGINIA C. REYES, Ph.D., Director of Marketing and Linkages Office
Universidad de Santa Isabel

The Universidad de Santa Isabel (USI), the only Vincentian University managed by the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, was founded on 5 November 1868, by the most Reverend Bishop Francisco C. Gainza, O.P., in the city of Naga of the Archdiocese of Caceres, the Philippines. This century-old institution has preserved its distinct Vincentian and Marian character while remaining a quality center of learning in the country.

Anticipating its 140th year of educational service to the nation and to the world, Santa Isabel remains steadfast in its vision: “A Catholic Vincentian educational institution pursuing excellence in its programs and services, and forming competent graduates who are agents of social transformation.” Written in documents and in the hearts of its academic community is the University Mission: “To form Catholic Vincentian learners capable of responding to the needs of the changing times through quality and relevant instruction, productive and socially-oriented research and empowering community service.” Thus, USI envisions itself as becoming a lead Catholic university in the region, forming Filipino Christian laity, who can dynamically respond to the calls of the Church and the changing environment, while making quality education relevant and accessible to more deserving and qualified but disadvantaged students.

A university-wide survey revealed that of its total student population, 32 percent live below the poverty line, 48 percent belong to the middle-income bracket, and only 20 percent belong to the high-income group. These figures prompted the administration to collaborate with academic and non-academic sectors of the university in initiating projects for poverty reduction, keeping the dream alive of becoming a university for the poor led through the spirit of Vincentian leadership. The administration believes that service to the less privileged will keep its mission burning. USI has indeed broken new ground through various initiatives meant to concretize its mission of
becoming a university for the poor, an institution for social transformation. These initiatives, however modest and small, are seeds of hope which, when properly nurtured, will yield large Vincentian harvests.

The USI Saint Louise de Marillac Alternative College (SLMAC)

Anchored by the core value of advocacy for the poor who are in search of a better quality of life, USI opened the Saint Louise de Marillac Alternative College (SLMAC), which provides access to quality education for the poor and marginalized youth of Philippine society. To accomplish its mission and realize its vision, the SLMAC has the following objectives:

- Produce socially responsible entrepreneurs through hands-on training, skills development, and value formation.
- Provide a venue for practical application of entrepreneurial skills.
- Offer seminars, workshops, training, and short courses that will develop students' creativity and innovation.
- Promote the Catholic Vincentian values of honesty, integrity, self-reliance, community orientation, and interpersonal skills necessary in the world of business.
- Train lecturers who will transmit their knowledge and skills and achieve a multiplier effect in carrying out the objectives of the SLMAC.
- Establish linkages with other educational and business entities for an enriched curricula and business socialization.

The SLMAC provides a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Entrepreneurship — a four-year course that may be completed in a period of five years since classes are held only in the evenings. The class schedule is specially designed for working students who want to finish a college degree. Tuition fees are based on a sliding scale; students are categorized into Category A, B, or C depending on their family income. The SLMAC started in school year 2005-2006 with twenty-eight students. Now in its third year of operation, the college has a total of 180 students and is looking forward to its first set of graduates in 2009.

Students at SLMAC believe that enrolment in the program is a means by which to access a quality Vincentian education in hopes that it will improve their economic situation. The program also helps them to obtain financial assistance to establish their own small businesses and apply theories learned in the classroom. The students’ earnest desire to alleviate their own poverty is seen as a catalyst for producing economic self-sufficiency and an end to the cycle of poverty.

Tipid Savings (Thrift Savings) at Universidad de Santa Isabel

The Tipid Savings, a thrift saving program conceptualized by the USI finance office in response to the pressing financial needs of its personnel, was launched primarily to help students, faculty, academic personnel, and maintenance staff. Through this project, the school provides a setting for personnel and students to save money out of their salaries and allowances. It concretizes the principle of self-help and provides an avenue for appreciating the importance of personal finance and the value of saving money, fostering hopes of uplifting the economic lot of its members by regulating spending. Membership is voluntary, and an initial deposit of one hundred pesos is the only requisite. The program is open to all students and USI personnel including their children studying at USI. Tipid Savings provides a monthly interest rate of between six and eight percent depending on the return on investment (ROI) of its portfolio. It also extends credit in the form of loans for housing (P50,000–P100,000), business (P20,000–P50,000), fishing and farming (P20,000), school-related expenses (P80,000), as well as personal loans, calamity loans, and loans for rice, groceries, laptops and appliances. These are payable through salary deduction within a period of one to two years, and interest is deducted upon release of the loan.

Tipid Savings Membership Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member D.C. Institutions</th>
<th>No. of Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USI</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSH</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLMS–PILI</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>591</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beneficiaries of housing loans, which constitute the majority of Tipid Savings loan recipients, include members of the USI family struggling to provide a safe place for their families to dwell. These are faculty members, academic staff, and maintenance staff, many of whom were left homeless due to natural calamities. These loan recipients have since experienced improvements in their families’ living conditions.

As revealed in a recent survey, start-up business loan recipients experienced an increase in their average income as a result of loans accorded by the program. Children of USI members are also benefiting from educational loans. The program has had tremendous effects on the members’ savings behavior. Despite meager salaries, records show that they have managed to save between three to fifteen percent of their income.

The USI Communion of Gifts

The USI Communion of Gifts is another project initiated by the finance office to complement the USI Tipid Savings program. Anchored by the value of collaboration among different sectors of USI in the spirit of mutuality, participation, and gratitude to God, this program provides an avenue for personnel to experience the joy of sharing — for “no one is so poor that she/he cannot share and no one is so rich that she/he cannot receive.” The contributing members are USI administrators, faculty, and other personnel, who have an amount regularly deducted from their salaries which is then matched by the university. These funds go to the Communion of Gifts Fund intended for student scholarships in the university’s Higher Education Department. The scholarships benefit poor but deserving students; any student whose annual family income is less than P100,000 is eligible to apply.
is important to me. I hope in the future to be able to lend a helping hand to others in need.” — Maura, 20

“Truly the USI Communion of Gifts program is a great blessing enabling us to better ourselves professionally in the global world. With gratitude in my heart I desire God’s manifold blessings on all those who have so unselfishly contributed to this great cause.” — Anna, 18

“I wish to convey my most profound and sincere thanks to the USI Communion of Gifts program for the valuable assistance given to us young people to enable us to go to school and become productive citizens of our community.” — Roland, 22

“I wish to convey my gratitude to the USI Communion of Gifts program for its help in preparing me for the future. I will exert all efforts to succeed in making things better for myself so the opportunity accorded will not have been in vain.” — Rica, 20

These comments show the program’s potential to change the lives of students in a meaningful way.

Building Community through Unified Efforts and Holistic Approach in Implementing Community Extension Services (BUHAI-CES)

The USI BUHAI-CES program envisions the development of people’s life in the community through the sharing of expertise and resources of different university departments and sectors, and is centered on the principle of “sharing my life so that others may enjoy life.” Its objectives are as follows:

• To unify the efforts of different colleges, departments, and sectors in conducting community extension activities.
• To increase the level of volunteerism among members of the university.
• To holistically improve the quality of life of the community to be served.

Community Organizing and Basic Ecclesial Community Formation (BUHAI-KAPATIRAN)

The BUHAI-KAPATIRAN is a component of the USI-CES program that focuses on values development and organizing families into basic ecclesial communities. As a response to needs expressed by these families, the following projects/activities are being implemented:

• Basic ecclesial community formation.
• Support-a-Grandparent program (formerly Adopt-a-Granny).
• Values and spiritual formation.

BUHAI-KAMALAYAN (Community Education and Social Advocacy)

The BUHAI-KAMALAYAN is a CES program component that provides community support for education in citizenship and social advocacy. This helps people to become aware of their rights and responsibilities as Filipino citizens, and to work towards making their community socially responsive. The following are projects and activities of this component:

• Functional literacy project.
• Pre-school project (Saint Louise de Marillac Learning Center).
• Accreditation and equivalency project.
• Responsible citizenship seminars (voter’s education, tax education, women in development).
• Advocacy campaign.

BUHAI-KAKAYAHAN (Capability and Livelihood Development)

The Buhai-Kakayahan provides opportunity for communities to increase their income by engaging in economic activities. Beneficiaries receive training in enterprise and technology development, and are provided with soft loans for their enterprise start-ups. Support is provided to beneficiaries to ensure the sustainability of their projects (e.g. organizing into business cooperatives or associations), and training includes disaster management and other relevant skills. The program includes the following projects and activities:

• Capability building project.
• Skills and enterprise development training.
• Micro-financing and livelihood project (Buhay-Puhunan Project).
• Market assistance.

BUHAI-KALUSUGAN (Health and Nutrition)

This program includes the following projects and activities:

• Medical-dental and surgical mission.
• Feeding project.
• Mothers’ class and health teaching.

BUHAI-KALIKASAN (Ecology)

This program focuses on activities that regenerate or rehabilitate the environment. It includes:
Poverty Reduction —
A Vincentian Initiative in Higher Education: The All Hallows Experience

By
DORRISI BALE, O.P., MA
Director, Social Justice and Public Policy Program
AND
JOHN JESPRING, MA, Dip.Th.
Vice President, All Hallows College

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to reflect on the experience of addressing poverty reduction in a higher educational environment under a Vincentian administration. All Hallows College, situated in North City Dublin, is such a college. Founded in 1842, the College has been under Vincentian administration since 1892. Though not Vincentians, both authors of this article have been members of the staff at All Hallows for the past eighteen years. It is in that context that we have experienced the Vincentian charism in action.

Our approach here is to set the historical context out of which the present commitment to poverty reduction has grown, to track key moments of change in the past and to describe how a new postgraduate program in Social Justice and Public Policy is addressing such a key moment at present. We believe that this program is rooted in the College’s Vincentian heritage, that it reflects priorities from the current All Hallows strategic plan and that it addresses educationally important issues at a time when the prevailing ‘Celtic Tiger’ economy is leaving many people so badly behind. For example a recent Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI) socio-economic review entitled Addressing Inequality, with findings based on relative poverty, claims the following:

Despite the advances in employment and economic growth achieved over the last few years, the phenomenon of poverty remains large. While there has been some progress in recent years, its continued existence remains as one of the country’s major failures… most weekly social assistance rates paid to single people are €24.07 below the poverty line…. From CSO (Central Statistics Office) we can calculate the numbers of people in Ireland who have been in poverty for the years

Other projects and activities

The university has partnered with Couples for Christ in the Gawad Kalinga housing project for poor families in which volunteers help in the construction of houses, values formation for chosen beneficiaries, and eventually in the generation livelihoods.

The university also extends its volunteerism activities to Anislag Vincentian Village, a housing project initiated by the Daughters of Charity at Daraga, Albay, to provide shelter to the displaced residents of Barangay Malobago, which was affected by the landslide caused by super-typhoon Reming in November 2006. Relief goods distribution is the university’s immediate response whenever there are disasters in the region. USI also provides rehabilitation activities such as reconstruction of homes, livelihood support, disaster trainings, and psycho-social activities for victims.

It is hoped that with these modest but well-tried practices and initiatives, the university can provide the type of relevant and responsive Vincentian education that is geared towards total human development and social transformation in a third-world setting.

- Reforestation/tree planting activities.
- Salvar-Salog/Banao project (Save the Naga River/Bato Lake).

The university has partnered with Couples for Christ in the Gawad Kalinga housing project for poor families in which volunteers help in the construction of houses, values formation for chosen beneficiaries, and eventually in the generation livelihoods. The university also extends its volunteerism activities to Anislag Vincentian Village, a housing project initiated by the Daughters of Charity at Daraga, Albay, to provide shelter to the displaced residents of Barangay Malobago, which was affected by the landslide caused by super-typhoon Reming in November 2006. Relief goods distribution is the university’s immediate response whenever there are disasters in the region. USI also provides rehabilitation activities such as reconstruction of homes, livelihood support, disaster trainings, and psycho-social activities for victims.

It is hoped that with these modest but well-tried practices and initiatives, the university can provide the type of relevant and responsive Vincentian education that is geared towards total human development and social transformation in a third-world setting.
of young seminarians and priests who were deeply influenced at this time by the rapidly expanding European missionary movement which had arisen in response to the needs of the “foreign missions.”

Although the founding and administration of the College for the first fifty years of its existence was a diocesan initiative, the Vincentian influence was strongly present right from the outset. During their student years, Father Hand and a number of his fellow students had become deeply impressed by the Vincentian charism and had in 1838 attached themselves to the recently established Vincentian community at Saint Peter’s, Phibsboro. It was while living and working with this community that Father Hand gave shape and, eventually, substance to his cherished dream of establishing an Irish movement for the ‘Propagation of the Faith.’

From its beginnings All Hallows College, has been outward looking. Its founding purpose was to train priests for mission abroad. Within three years of the founding of the College poverty directed its course in a spectacular way as Ireland experienced the Great Famine — or, as it is often called the “Great Hunger” — which lasted between 1845 and 1849. The potato blight, which hit the country over five successive growing seasons, struck at the staple diet of an impoverished eight million Irish. Although much is unrecorded, it is estimated that one million people, about twelve percent of the population, died in the famine and another million, at least, emigrated to Great Britain, the United States, Canada, and Australia. It was in this dark hour of Ireland’s history that the thrust of the All Hallows missionary identity focused on ministering to those driven from the country by poverty. This

The Celtic Tiger economy has not raised all boats, and this is a unique opportunity for educationalists to review their educational outreach. It is not the first time that the College was faced with such a challenge.

The All Hallows story is a fascinating one. At key moments in the history of the College “two roads diverged in a yellow wood….” Each time that has happened, the road taken, while steeped in Vincentian tradition, has opened up new vistas and at times called for a redefinition of the College mission. At these key stages courageous leadership dared untraveled roads. As will be seen, the influence of the Vincentian charism, with emphasis on pastoral care, pastoral formation, hospitality, and service to the poor is clearly discernible at every turn.

**Founding Years**

All Hallows College was founded in 1842 by a Maynooth-trained diocesan priest from County Meath, Father John Hand. He was one of a number

---


---

### Table 3.3: The numbers of people below relative income poverty lines in Ireland, 1994-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of persons in poverty</th>
<th>Population of Ireland</th>
<th>Numbers in poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994 15.6</td>
<td>3,585,900</td>
<td>559,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998 19.8</td>
<td>3,703,000</td>
<td>733,194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 21.9</td>
<td>3,847,200</td>
<td>824,537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003 19.7</td>
<td>3,978,900</td>
<td>783,843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 19.4</td>
<td>4,043,800</td>
<td>784,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 18.5</td>
<td>4,130,700</td>
<td>764,179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
shift was largely a response to constant appeals by bishops in various parts of the English-speaking world whose Catholic populations were increased by post-famine emigration.

The early 1890s was a fascinating period in the history of All Hallows. It was marked by turmoil at a time when throughout Europe conflict brewed about suitable models of seminary training. The All Hallows enterprise was affected by this controversy. Divisions among the staff spilled over into the student body and eventually would involve the then archbishop of Dublin — Dr. William Joseph Walsh, the Congregation of Propaganda in Rome, and even Pope Leo XIII himself.3

With no resolution in sight, the Irish bishops finally turned to the Vincentian congregation to take over the administration of All Hallows College. From 1892 until the present the direction and management of the College has been under Vincentian leadership.

The Seminary under Vincentian Administration from 1892

In 1892 the Vincentians, under the leadership of Father James Moore, were brought in to heal the divisions of the previous five years — a task they accomplished with amazing success. The Vincentian focus on pastoral formation, hospitality, and compassion was ideally suited to healing the rift of the previous five years and continuing the outward-looking vision of John Hand. For about eighty years that charism influenced the training of pastors who would minister abroad — many in areas of great poverty and deprivation. The College archives contain numerous stories of extraordinary courage and zeal. Vivid accounts of pastoral commitment abound. For the next sixty years, under the able leadership of such men as Father Moore, Father Tom O’Donnell, Father William Purcell, and Father Tom Fagan, there was in the College a steady development of a distinctly pastoral approach to priestly formation.

During the 1960s and 70s the College was blessed with the leadership of Father Tom Lane, C.M., whose familiarity with and commitment to the theology of the Second Vatican Council gave direction and thrust to the College in these years of change and development. From the 1960s to the 1980s, pastoral and theological training of seminarians remained the main focus of the College’s mission. Every year young men went out from All Hallows to the English-speaking world, and regularly men of all ages returned to celebrate milestones in their ministry and to keep the College in touch with pastoral work worldwide. Yet things were changing in the country.

3 In this regard see Kevin Condon, C.M., The Missionary College of All Hallows, 1842-1991 (Dublin: 1986), 167-190.

From the 1980s: Extending the Mission

By the 1980s it was becoming apparent that this annual supply of candidates for ordained ministry in All Hallows was in terminal decline. The choice facing the College leadership was whether to close down or to open up to new demands. Writing from a 2007 Irish church perspective, it might seem that opting to include “lay ministry” training would have been an obvious move. In 1982, however, the idea of opening seminary theology courses to lay people was innovative. The challenge was to reinterpret the College motto, “Go teach all nations,” in a new context. Again Vincentian leadership, in the person of Father Kevin Rafferty, rose to the challenge and had the courage to open up the seminary just when other colleges were responding to the drop in priestly vocations by closing down.

In an increasingly secularized Ireland, the home mission was also demanding attention. All Hallows’ response was to develop courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level consistent with its pastoral and missionary tradition but also recognizing the call to mission of all the baptized. This was a significant shift as it necessitated a broadening of the popular understanding of the word ‘mission.’ Although the notion of ‘the home mission’ was not a new one theologically, its radical implications for pastoral formation were only beginning to be appreciated.

Initially the deacons’ program, which had been given a more pastoral focus in the early 1980s, was expanded to include women religious and lay people. In 1985 a highly successful part-time Lay Ministry program was launched. In 1988 an undergraduate Theology Program was opened up to lay people. A new All Hallows was being born.

Throughout the 1990s several postgraduate courses were developed. The emphasis on pastoral leadership, pastoral care, and human development continued and most of the early students envisaged a future in pastoral ministry. Research programs and taught programs in Leadership and Pastoral Care, in Holistic Development for Pastoral Ministry, and in Management for Community and Voluntary Services were developed.

Whereas the two pastoral programs spring directly from the College’s traditional focus on ministry, albeit of a more inclusive nature, the Management for Community and Voluntary Services degree broke new ground in attempting to bring the influence of Gospel values to bear directly on the workplace. By the beginning of the new millennium, All Hallows had established itself as a respected institute of pastoral ministry training.

During the 1990s a very positive experience was the link to Dublin City University (DCU).4 There are some significant points of congruence between

4 During the 1990s All Hallows College began to forge formal links with Dublin City
the strategic plan of the University and that of the College. Part of DCU’s mission as stated in its strategic plan for 2001-2005, is “to foster creativity and to spearhead change for the benefit of society.” This mission direction of the University is apparent in DCU’s emphasis on the theme of ethics across the curriculum, and particularly in its outreach to the more disadvantaged areas in North City Dublin. The aspirations underlying DCU’s structure for development in certain thematic areas, notably that of social development and world order, fit well with the aspirations of All Hallows, as does the University’s plan to “provide a framework for engaging more directly with decision-makers in government, industry and the community, and so influence change in society.”

All Hallows’ strategic plan for 2005-2010 identifies the College’s mission as that of providing “a learning community committed to the mission of Jesus Christ and to the development of people for ministry.” The vision is expanded in terms of the following directions and priorities:

- To be a community of education in theology and related disciplines.
- To offer formation and support for pastoral leadership and promote the development of collaborative ministry.
- To be a community committed to prayer and worship.
- To work for justice with particular attention to the poor and powerless.
- To foster an environment of hospitality and welcome.
- To promote imaginative responses to the searching of young people in their faith journey.
- To cultivate a climate of creative and artistic expression.

One can readily see many aspects of the Vincentian charism reflected in these commitments, but for the purposes of this article we will focus on our commitment “to work for justice with particular attention to the poor and powerless.”

**Discerning Vincentian Influence on Core Content**

As we look back through the All Hallows story it is noticeable that at each new stage of development signs of the charism of Saint Vincent de Paul are clearly in evidence. All the programs of the College have a discernible justice component. At undergraduate level, Moral Theology includes courses on justice, peace and ecology. Pastoral Theology requires students to undertake a pastoral placement in some area of social engagement. This involves weekly visits to prisons, homeless centers, Saint Vincent de Paul units, AIDS centers, etc. Weekly reflection groups process these experiences and all undergraduate students learn the basics of social analysis to enable them to begin to critique society in a structural way. The emphasis is on helping students to develop congruence between their espoused and their operational theology.

**Postgraduate Program in Social Justice and Public Policy, 2005**

At the beginning of the new millennium a young Vincentian, Dan O’Connell, became a member of the College staff. Prior to joining the staff he had worked as parish priest of Dublin’s ‘Travelling people.’ He had also undertaken a significant internship program organized by the Justice Commission of the Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI). Coming from that particular background and training in social analysis his tendency was to apply the analytical questions, “Who benefits? Who pays?” not only to the broader social context but also to the College’s educational task. Soon he had initiated among the staff and students focused conversations which had us talking to each other about education in a more socially critical way. The context of Irish society was changing and educational institutes could not avoid focused social critique.

Our students, both religious and lay, had proven that they had the educational expertise and skills to minister pastorally. However, new needs were emerging in Celtic Tiger Ireland; it had the fastest growing economy in Europe, but not all boats were rising. In fact the gap between rich and poor was widening, not lessening.

The fact that Dublin-based Vincentians were very involved with the Traveling community resulted in some members of the community becoming students of the College. Two such students, Nell McDonagh and Kathleen McDonagh (not relatives), made a significant impact by focusing attention on Travelers issues for staff and students alike.

These various influences had us asking, “Is pastoral care enough as a response to the inequality that is growing in our society?” It was becoming clear that within the theological institutes there were no accredited programs...
preparing students to engage specifically with issues of public policy. The justice desk of CORI had for some years pioneered a non-accredited internship course in Social Analysis and Public Policy. Was it time for All Hallows to design a Master’s Program specifically for people working in other areas where policy was an issue? Over the years, students had come to see a pattern of systemic failure in relation to vulnerable people and groups. In pastoral reflection sessions the need for a more constructive response to injustice than merely railing against systems was becoming apparent. New initiatives were being called for. If, as an educational establishment, we were to contribute to preventing the widening economic gap in society, we would need to develop courses with a greater focus on policy formation and systems analysis. This led to the development of a new venture at All Hallows: a two year Master’s program in Social Justice and Public Policy. This began in 2005, and the first cohort of students graduated in October 2007.

Again the Vincentian charism and the wise leadership of the current president, Father Mark Noonan, is steering the College through a new phase in its development by forging closer links with DCU and by overseeing the development of new outreaches, notably the Social Justice and Public Policy program, a key strength of which is its formal link to the CORI Justice Commission. The decision was taken by the College administration and by CORI that we would jointly design, deliver, and administer this program. All Hallows brought to the relationship more than 150 years’ experience of theological, pastoral, and academic training as well as its expertise in designing, administering, and delivering successful academic programs in conjunction with DCU. The CORI Justice Commission specializes in areas of public policy, enabling and empowerment, spirituality, advocacy, and communication. In recent years it has played a key role in the Irish government’s social partnership strategy, and has had a widely acknowledged influence on government social policy.

The natural alliance between All Hallows and the CORI mission is clearly expressed in the stated aim of the joint program:

> to provide an understanding of and a capacity to engage with the overarching and theoretical frameworks that

underpin public policy development today. It will provide skills in areas such as advocacy, community organizing and networking, media engagement, communication in the public forum, as well as in the capacity to critique public policy from a values perspective. It will help students to understand the interplay of values and public policy so that they have the capacity to judge what is ethical or unethical and can appreciate and promote a human rights and civil society agenda in a dedicated and practical manner.9

Having completed the first two-year cycle of the program it is clear that students have been given the education and practical expertise to analyze the needs of society, especially those of people and communities experiencing social disadvantage. It is heartening to see them grow in their capacity to critique, plan, act, and evaluate on the basis of their analysis to the advantage of a growing multicultural Irish society.

One of the strengths of this program is the fact that it is offered to people actively working in the area of social justice and public policy. Current students work in organizations dealing with such issues as drug addiction, disability rights, Saint Vincent de Paul initiatives, child protection, family support, travellers’ welfare, social housing, and community development. Their workplace is their placement and each student is expected to initiate a goal specific to public policy and to bring it to actualization over the two years. There is a constant emphasis on integrating theory and practice. One of the modules, entitled “The Prophetic Tradition,” introduces students to significant prophetic voices in the Hebrew and Christian traditions, as well as in Islam, in literature, and in Christian feminism. Students keep a journal after these sessions. This provides material for reflection on the personal value systems out of which they are operating in their advocacy work and in their critique of structures. This is, we believe, a very important focus in any training for work in the area of social justice. In postmodern society where individualism reigns supreme there is always the danger that the very advocates of liberation will, when successful, end up perpetuating systems of injustice.

Albert Nolan, in his latest work: *Jesus Today: A Spirituality of Radical Freedom*, puts it thus:

> In many of the struggles for justice... what more and more people are discovering is that without personal liberation

---

8 CORI’s Justice Commission is an extremely influential body. It has campaigned tirelessly for over twenty-five years on behalf of those who are economically disadvantaged. One of its key strengths has been the continuity of service of Father Seán Healy and Sister Brigid Reynolds. The Commission has played an active role in securing social partnership status for the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland. They negotiate with government on behalf of the disadvantaged sectors in advance of the annual national budget, and they are tireless in their critique of unjust policies. We are very fortunate to have them both on the Program Board directing the Social Justice and Public Policy program.

9 Program aims as outlined in the joint program’s promotional literature.
or inner freedom, our hard-won social freedoms are undermined and perverted by selfish individualism. If the people who have been socially liberated are not also liberated from their own egos, their personal selfishness, they are in danger of repeating — in another form — the very oppression and cruelty against which they have fought.  

Transformative Education in a Vincentian Context?

The invitation to address the experience of educational initiatives with a specific poverty reduction agenda in a Vincentian context is a challenging one, if for no other reason than that it brings so many strands together. In terms of education many writers would claim a reflecting rather than a transforming societal role, a view which can lead us to settle for the inevitability of structural inequality. An educational philosophy guided by economic and industrial needs is likely to perpetuate rather than challenge societal inequalities.

However, an educational program inspired by the Vincentian charism of concern for those at the margins will always find itself at variance with this analysis. It will find itself more comfortable with the assertion that education at its best is transformative. For those who espouse this view the enormous challenge is to bring to the educational task the unambiguous Gospel focus on the Anawim, the best wisdom of a liberating educational method (c.f. Paulo Freire), the social teaching of the Church, and the prophetic wisdom of all the great religious traditions as well as contemporary insights into education. Though many current educational perspectives, particularly those heavily influenced by market and economic reality, will be suspicious of transformation as an educational aim, most will acknowledge the role of education in poverty reduction.

The Vincentian witness of outreach to the poor is powerfully evident worldwide in the work of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in terms of immediate relief and assistance. In Dublin the Daughters of Charity, in particular, have an impressive record of social and community engagement in tackling structures of injustice. In Vincentian schools throughout the country pupils are exposed to initiatives such as Vincent de Paul groups, Drop the Debt Campaigns, street collections for the homeless, etc.

Until recently, however, there was not in Ireland an accredited postgraduate program designed to train people working in the area of social justice to understand and engage with public policy from a value-based perspective for the purposes of transformation. We believe that the All Hallows Master’s program in Social Justice and Public Policy is such a program. In our experience it is a significant response to the particular challenges presented by Celtic Tiger Ireland. Our students are well equipped to focus on policy in their workplace, to develop liberative policies, to critique unjust ones, and to become leaders of society.

Conclusion

The authors of this article recognize the challenge of balancing the tensions which exist among educational, justice, and values imperatives. Unlike with our traditional theological and pastoral programs, participants of this program come with a range of perspectives. One cannot, for example, presume on a faith or Church background. This challenged us, particularly when delivering such modules as “The Prophetic Tradition,” which we were always confident was an important focus of the program. During the accreditation process there was the issue of convincing university authorities of the value of a reflective component coming from our faith tradition. We needed to assure them that there were in fact no hidden agendas. Initially we also encountered a suspicion on the part of some students about the motivation behind the inclusion of this module. Whereas they related readily to theories of justice, human rights, social policy, advocacy, etc. — modules with immediate and obvious significance for their work — some struggled to appreciate the need for a more reflective component, and for many the social teaching of the Church was a revelation. However, it must also be acknowledged that many of the students welcomed the opportunity for reflection.

11 Cf. Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, among others.
12 The Saint Vincent’s Trust offers a very relevant citizen’s education program aimed at educating people on the margins of society to exercise their voice by voting.
and were deeply appreciative of the social gospel.

The fact that alienation from the Church is a feature of modern Ireland challenges us to find ways to allow the prophetic voices within and beyond our faith tradition to be heard. This program has often forced its designers beyond familiar comfort zones. At the end of two years we can, however, appreciate the fact that for students and staff this has been a rich experience. Pope John Paul II claims that “The split between the Gospel and Culture is without doubt the drama of our time.” In offering this program, All Hallows is once again facing a new cultural reality and attempting to transform that “split” into an opportunity for creative dialogue. We believe that this indeed is transformative and transforming education.

Though this new program may represent an educational ‘branching out’ of the College’s Vincentian Mission, there is also a sense in which we arrive back at the place from which we began. Who knows whether we, in some future work on education and poverty reduction in a Vincentian context, in the words of Robert Frost:

shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and [we],
[we] took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
Saint Vincent de Paul and the Mission of the
Institute for Business and Professional Ethics:
Why Companies Should Care About Poverty

By

PATRICIA H. WERHANE, Wicklander Chair of Business Ethics
LAURA P. HARTMAN, Research Director, Institute for Business and Professional Ethics
SCOTT P. KELLEY, PH.D., AVP for Vincentian Scholarship, Mission and Values
DePaul University

“If we can find approaches that meet the needs of the poor in ways that generate profits for business and votes for politicians, we will have found a sustainable way to reduce inequity in the world.”

Bill Gates, commencement address at Harvard University, 2007

In 1985 Brother Leo Ryan, C.S.V., then dean of the College of Commerce at DePaul University, started the Institute for Business and Professional Ethics, an interdisciplinary center jointly supported by the College of Commerce and the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at DePaul. The Institute has an active corporate board, an executive director, two associate directors, senior visiting Wicklander Fellows, and assistants. Its original mission was and still is, “To encourage ethical deliberation among decision makers by stirring the moral conscience, encouraging moral imagination, and developing models for moral decision-making in business.”

The IBPE pursues various venues to support that mission. These include Wicklander research fellowships for DePaul Faculty, outreach programs on applied ethics for students and the community, the tri-annual Vincentian Conference in Business Ethics, coordination of undergraduate business ethics courses, sponsorship of lectures and student symposia, undergraduate scholarships, and various research projects in the broad area of business ethics and corporate responsibility.

Beginning in 2004, the Institute, at the prompting of its board, began to develop a value proposition and a strategic plan. To initiate these projects it did a benchmark study of United States academic centers and institutes of business ethics, discovering that today there are literally several hundred
such institutes and centers across the country. With two or three exceptions, the various centers and institutes had similar titles and missions, including DePaul’s. Thus in 2006 the Institute worked to distinguish itself from other institutes and centers of business ethics while further aligning its mission with that of DePaul University, addressing social issues and focusing on the underserved. This initiative was further promoted by DePaul’s new strategic plan, Vision 2012. As a result, the IBPE enhanced its mission to include becoming a catalyst aimed to inspire companies to address poverty reduction both globally and locally through for-profit initiatives.

There are many dimensions to realizing this mission including teaching, research, and community outreach, and the Institute is just beginning this lifetime set of projects. The connections between IBPE’s revised mission and Saint Vincent’s legacy run much deeper than a general orientation to address social issues or alleviate poverty. Saint Vincent’s legacy provides a fruitful resource for thinking about how the poor are best served – especially his profound commitment to human dignity and his ability to allocate limited resources to meet real needs in a sustainable fashion. As an academic endeavor, however, the IBPE realized that first it needed to develop strong philosophical arguments justifying and supporting this goal. With that in mind we have developed a series of thought-provoking papers, and here we summarize some of this thinking.

Contemporary literature on poverty often begins with a discussion of the common good. But what is the meaning of “common good” across economic, cultural, and religious difference? If Saint Vincent’s commitment to serve the poor is to transcend its historical and religious context, it must have a “vernacular spirituality,” a common starting-point or conceptual framework that is accessible to a culturally and religiously diverse audience. Saint Vincent’s “informal path to holiness” merits significant attention in today’s diverse world in which global poverty persists. With this in mind, we contend that the common good, as a positive idea, does not meet the criteria of accessibility and is not an effective starting point. To the contrary, a focus on common “bads” is more within the domain of possibility. Our aim is to identify those conditions that preclude individuals and groups from living decently and even beginning to realize their potential. Our focus on the particular needs of the most deprived members of society rather than the abstract conditions of an ideal society, mirrors what is often referred to as “Vincentian Personalism.”

Traditional approaches to poverty alleviation focus almost exclusively on public sector projects and pure philanthropy rather than commerce, a profit-maximizing shareholder perspective. What might be called a “public goods” bias has trapped many into imagining that global poverty is endemic and unsolvable given the long history of failed attempts. As a result, a lack of innovative thinking constrains the evolution of practices that might otherwise have allowed considerable improvement of living conditions in countless communities.

The particular evils of economic distress cannot be reduced merely by public works or philanthropy but, counter-intuitively, and not impossibly, through commerce. So we shall begin from another perspective. Even if a diverse community cannot be clear about the common good, it can assume that there are some commonly agreed upon “bads.” These might include murder, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, harm to children, and so on. At least one other “bad” would be an absence of the satisfaction of minimum basic needs, however those are socially defined. So the lack of food, shelter, education, access to worship, ability to move through the community or enjoy opportunities afforded some members of that community, are all candidates for creating conditions that violate most standards of human dignity. In other words, abject poverty, locally defined, would be considered bad. These “bads” are the focal point of this essay. We contend that reducing poverty is a moral and economic imperative not merely for those in poverty but also for those who are wealthy. However, many commonly accepted solutions to abject poverty through public or philanthropic endeavors, for example, have often failed. We propose another mental model: profitable initiatives aimed at creating new markets, encouraging micro-entrepreneurial ventures, and providing living wage jobs in economically distressed communities. Such initiatives reduce poverty by serving unmet needs, helping to create a sense of dignity and self-respect for those now engaged in these projects, and expanding global economic well-being for future generations.

To shake loose from learned and traditional mental models concerning poverty and poverty alleviation, at least four insights are essential for...
Vincent’s firmly held belief that the poor have much to teach the wealthy.

With regard to the second insight, poverty alleviation (or the economic development that leads to that consequence) can be an evolving, dynamic, bottom-up process that requires frequent evaluation, modification, and adjustment. An example of bottom-up thinking is demonstrated by KickStart, a non-profit organization that designs and sells low-tech farming equipment like the MoneyMaker irrigation pump, which has helped many small farmers transition from subsistence farming into commercial enterprise. These small, affordable pumps make an impressive contribution to poverty alleviation. Felix Mururi, for example, is married with three children and lives in Kenya. He left his rural home for work in the slums of Nairobi, to little avail, earning $40 month. Mururi discovered, however, that in the city he could make more money as a farmer and he decided to rent a plot of land and save money for the $33 manually operated water pump. The increased yield from his single plot was so profitable, though, that Felix and his family now rent six plots, making a $580 profit on two of them alone. They now plan to rent and irrigate another acre and eventually buy a house.

Third, poverty is often the result of systematic patterns of exclusion. Without access to a timely, transparent, and structured system, the poor do not participate in the formal system that recognizes property rights. As a result, they are more vulnerable and more susceptible to exploitation. Muhammad Yunus discovered this problem with the poor women of Jobra, Bangladesh, who were systematically excluded from the formal banking sector and thus were unable to secure even the smallest loans to help with their micro-businesses.

Our fourth insight contradicts many deeply held beliefs. For some, profit is a suspicious partner in poverty alleviation efforts. The socially conscious are often skeptical of business interests, considering well-publicized patterns of exploitation such as sweatshops. From a business perspective, poverty alleviation is often seen as tangential to core interests, and to the core competencies that increase revenue. Behind such skepticism, lies a counterintuitive question about the potential of the market to respond to these fundamental human needs.

In support of the first insight, Albina Ruiz’s project, Ciudad Saludable, demonstrates the profound creativity and initiative to be found among the poor. Using garbage to create jobs and clean the local environment in Lima, Peru, Ruiz is an entrepreneur in the truest sense of the term. Garbage has become an increasing problem in Lima, where 1.6 million people produce nearly 600 metric tons of garbage daily. Since the municipal authorities can process only half that much, garbage lines the streets, fills vacant lots, and clogs rivers, creating a significant health menace. Poor families scavenge through the trash to eke out a living. Trained in industrial engineering, Ruiz began to organize the community to create a positive alternative, knowing that the municipal authorities were unable or unwilling to address the problem. In collaboration with community members she encouraged micro-entrepreneurs to collect and process the garbage. For a collection fee of around $1.50, which many are eager to pay for the service, Ciudad Saludable converts garbage into compost and other useful materials, creating jobs in the process. Ruiz’s story was featured on a PBS documentary about social entrepreneurs titled “The New Heroes.” It reiterates two important messages in poverty alleviation that Saint Vincent understood well: successful solutions can come from the poor themselves, and government is not always the best institution for addressing “public goods” like garbage disposal. Her discovery echoes Saint Vincent’s firmly held belief that the poor have much to teach the wealthy.

With regard to the second insight, poverty alleviation (or the economic development that leads to that consequence) can be an evolving, dynamic, bottom-up process that requires frequent evaluation, modification, and adjustment. An example of bottom-up thinking is demonstrated by KickStart, a non-profit organization that designs and sells low-tech farming equipment like the MoneyMaker irrigation pump, which has helped many small farmers transition from subsistence farming into commercial enterprise. These small, affordable pumps make an impressive contribution to poverty alleviation. Felix Mururi, for example, is married with three children and lives in Kenya. He left his rural home for work in the slums of Nairobi, to little avail, earning $40 month. Mururi discovered, however, that in the city he could make more money as a farmer and he decided to rent a plot of land and save money for the $33 manually operated water pump. The increased yield from his single plot was so profitable, though, that Felix and his family now rent six plots, making a $580 profit on two of them alone. They now plan to rent and irrigate another acre and eventually buy a house. For Mururi, increased access to water did not come from the public development of infrastructure, but from a simple $33 pump.

Third, poverty is often the result of systematic patterns of exclusion. Without access to a timely, transparent, and structured system, the poor do not participate in the formal system that recognizes property rights. As a result, they are more vulnerable and more susceptible to exploitation. Muhammad Yunus discovered this problem with the poor women of Jobra, Bangladesh, who were systematically excluded from the formal banking sector and thus were unable to secure even the smallest loans to help with their micro-businesses.

Our fourth insight contradicts many deeply held beliefs. For some, profit is a suspicious partner in poverty alleviation efforts. The socially conscious are often skeptical of business interests, considering well-publicized patterns of exploitation such as sweatshops. From a business perspective, poverty alleviation is often seen as tangential to core interests, and to the core competencies that increase revenue. Behind such skepticism, lies a counterintuitive question about the potential of the market to respond to these fundamental human needs.

---

Today, many in the business community use a systems approach in talking about global corporate responsibility to the ecosystem, which is expanding to include the human element in a concerted effort to critique companies that use sweatshop labor. But the business community has thought far less about its responsibility to improve the conditions of those who are not recognized as primary stakeholders. This is shortsighted for at least four reasons.

First, the manner in which one operates within any community affects that community, positively or negatively. Second, there are enormous untapped markets at the base of the pyramid, as C.K. Prahalad and Stuart Hart have argued. Third, if there is a positive value to economic well-being (and, surely, living in abject poverty, however culturally defined, is a social evil) and in the economic growth needed to achieve it, then the potential market at the base of the pyramid is large. If companies are able to provide that market with affordable goods and entrepreneurial opportunities, both they and the poor can prosper. There is an important caveat to this claim, however. Unless these companies also provide living-wage work, there will be no new market development, since there will be no increase in customer purchasing power. Creating new markets and new consumers should, however, be sufficient motivation for global companies trying to survive, grow, and expand. Fourth, if companies recognize the value in creating new markets and consumers, they will be encouraged to remain vested in them for the long-term and therefore be appropriate and effective partners in creating sustainable solutions to the challenges presented by global poverty. Thus corporate and community interests can come together. Our argument is a mandate not for more corporate philanthropy, but for the coming together of corporate interests, their core ideologies linked to their core competencies while serving unanswered community needs.

There are a number of corporate initiatives focusing on profitable ventures with economically poor populations. For example, lack of access to clean water in many regions of sub-Saharan Africa is one of the greatest challenges to socio-economic development. Safe drinking water is in great demand for the more than one billion people at the base of the pyramid. The World Health Organization estimates that 2.2 million children die each year because of diarrheal diseases, which could easily be prevented by access to safe drinking water. While large-scale infrastructure projects may be important in the long-term, the demand for immediate relief persists. Since it is the small, home-based water purification systems that have drastically cut deaths caused by diarrhea, Procter & Gamble designed PuR, a cost-effective water purification system that removes dirt and disease-causing pathogens from drinking water. Although Procter & Gamble provides PuR at cost through its Children’s Safe Drinking Water philanthropic outreach, and uses the non-profit Population Services International for marketing, the local distributors must make a profit for sustainability and access. As local distributors have learned, consumers do not value free give-aways. Procter & Gamble’s involvement is not merely altruistic; with a positive brand image, new products for a billion potential consumers, and a proven high-volume, low-margin business model, it stands to increase its profit margins considerably.

Cemex, a leading Mexican manufacturer of cement, is an example of a firm that seized an opportunity to create a new market for itself, and happened to help a particular low-income community build homes in the process. It is a prime model of a profitable partnership wherein all stakeholders are committed to the success of the venture through vested self-interest towards common and valuable ends.

About 2.5 million impoverished residents of Guadalajara, Mexico, live in extremely crowded and unfinished housing surrounding the city. These conditions encouraged Cemex to establish Patrimonio Hoy, a for-profit project that supports low income families (households with incomes of less than $5 per day) in financing the building or expansion of their homes. “Imagine one room with ten persons living together, yelling and fighting all day long,” says Israel Moreno, director and founder of the effort. “So the children are propelled out into the streets at a young age. What do they learn in the streets?

---


Vicious delinquency, theft and prostitution. If the first thing in your life is contact with the street, your future will be the street, with its related risks.”

After careful study of the microlending methods of the Grameen Bank, Cemex realized that since it could take an average of thirteen years to finish building a small home, homeowners were discouraged by a lack of funding opportunities. “Their mental model is ‘we cannot do it, we cannot have a better life. This is my life, this has been my parents’ life, and this will be my children’s life,’” says Moreno. He and Cemex instituted savings groups of three “partners,” each with well-established rules to assist the partners to participate in the borrowing process; and Cemex advanced credit to the group on the basis of their degree of participation.

In line with the profitable partnerships concept, Cemex does not compete for partners’ purchases based on price. Instead, partners receive benefits of membership such as technical assistance, educational programs, guaranteed quality materials and delivery, guaranteed price freezes on materials, and free storage of materials, among others. “I prefer to invest in helping our partners discover ways to live a better life,” Moreno said. “I think that is a more responsible and intelligent way of doing business.”

As a primary consequence of the project, Cemex gains a foothold in a large and growing market segment – growth it could not achieve if it remained locked in a traditional mindset. According to Cemex’s own forecasts, the world demand for cement through 2010 is expected to expand by four percent annually in developing countries, as opposed to only one percent annually in developed countries. These growth statistics have supported expansion of the Patrimonio Hoy program at a current rate of 2,000 new households per month, serving a total of 150,000 families in forty-five townships, and unquestionably impacting Cemex in ways that outright philanthropic donations could not. The rate of cement used by low-income homebuilders has tripled, increasing from 2,300 pounds consumed once every four years, on average, to the same amount being consumed in fifteen months. By 2005 Cemex reported a profit of $1.5 million and anticipated expansion into Colombia, Venezuela, Egypt and the Philippines. Moreover, when combined with additional funding from Mexico’s development ministry, SEDESOL, the program was able to triple the number of people served and significantly increase their home equity as a consequence of partner participation.

Stunningly, Cemex also reports an additional payoff not normally anticipated by multinationals when investing in developing economies. While traditional models prepare for instability of these markets based on security concerns or dependable individual finances, Cemex has actually found that its low-income market is far more reliable in times of economic fluctuation. When balanced in quantity against high-cost developed markets, low-income developing markets could therefore serve as extraordinary leverage against losses during periods of economic flux.

Our conclusion is that the goal of sustainable poverty reduction can be achieved only with substantive contributions of businesses and the creation of public/private partnerships, as well as with government and international organizational support. Poverty alleviation can be a profitable endeavor both for companies and for the poor when it links new market development with job creation and new product branding, rather than remaining on the fringe of corporate social responsibility in the form of philanthropic contributions. Whether there is a “fortune” at the base of the pyramid, or only sustainable profits, is inconsequential. That there are profits in markets previously overlooked and ignored is of great consequence to both poverty alleviation efforts and to the sustainable development of global companies in the new flat world of the twenty-first century.

With the aim of inspiring companies to alleviate poverty through for-profit initiatives, the IBPE has developed a number of opportunities to critically examine successful cases through the Vincentian Colleges International Conference on Business Ethics, panel discussions, and workshops. Through the Abbott Laboratories-Funded Lecture Series the IBPE has forged relationships with leading figures in the base-of-the-pyramid approach, including Stuart Hart and William Easterly. Its new mission seems much closer to Saint Vincent’s legacy than traditional corporate philanthropy, since it requires “a gentleness receptive to the poor man’s miseries.” Since aid, philanthropic or otherwise, does not often respond to the poor man’s miseries effectively or efficiently, there exists a ‘service gap,’ an unmet need, a new market. By reconfiguring the needs of the poor as a new market opportunity, business can serve it best by allocating resources in accord with its core competencies. As it is commonly believed the poor have no money, they are not viewed as consumers and their needs are not viewed as a market. C.K.

15 Maria Letelier and Charles Spinosa, “The For-Profit Development Business: Good
Prahalad argues that when business chooses to serve their needs as a distinct market, it offers them the dignity of choice and an access to technology that goes a long way in addressing real needs.18

Serving the four billion people who live on less than two dollars per day is simultaneously a moral, economic, strategic, and environmental imperative for business. The base-of-the-pyramid approach to poverty alleviation truly does see the poor as “lords and masters,” and not as objects of philanthropic outreach.

---

Sachs believes the primary responsibility for ending global poverty belongs to wealthy nations who could effectively end it by 2025, with relatively small investment in foreign aid. William Easterly, to the contrary, believes that the ambitions of wealthy nations are a residue of the colonial mentality and that effective economic development must emerge from poor communities. The Sachs—Easterly debate is much more than a strategic disagreement over public policy; it engages some very basic questions concerning both social responsibility and theory. The debate over global poverty becomes particularly acute among those cognizant of their own relative privilege in the global economy. As such, critical reflection on values must complement reflection on effective policy and strategy.

Although a host of interested parties, including global institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, wealthy philanthropists, development economists, non-profits, and entertainers — all desire to end world poverty through foreign aid, William Easterly seems at times to be a lone critic crying in the wilderness. On the surface it seems morally repugnant for anyone to critique the generous efforts of those living at the top of the economic pyramid to assist the four billion who live on less than $2 a day. Jeffrey Sachs, and many others, believe that foreign aid and philanthropy can be effective when planned properly. In contrast, William Easterly is highly skeptical of foreign aid and poorly planned philanthropy. The simmering debate between the two has significant implications and is worthy of close attention.4

If the purpose of aid and philanthropy is to alleviate the effects of global poverty and not merely to assuage the guilt of privilege, there are some very critical questions concerning what can and ought to be done. Wasting resources through indiscriminate aid efforts may be foolish or imprudent, but indirectly supporting corrupt or oppressive governments through the reckless distribution of resources is as morally problematic as ignoring global poverty altogether, if not more so.

The End of Poverty

In The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time, Sachs makes a compelling case for increasing foreign aid. He begins by painting a global portrait of poverty and the world’s 6.6 billion inhabitants: 40 percent of humanity is made up of the extreme poor, the one billion who fight for survival on a daily basis, and the poor, another 1.5 billion who live slightly above subsistence level. While half of the world is experiencing economic growth, extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa has risen since 1981.5 Many of the world’s 6.6 billion live in a “poverty trap,” conditions that preclude economic development ranging from physical geography to geopolitics.6

The core of Sachs’ prognosis is targeted investments backed by aid from donor countries. Since the poor operate in a poverty trap where the ratio of capital per person falls from generation to generation, “the poor do not have the ability — by themselves — to get out of the mess.” Because the poor are unable to overcome the poverty trap, donor countries must take steps to establish or reestablish a healthy economy.7 Donor-backed investments that correct particular deficiencies will raise the level of capital per person, effectively ending the poverty trap.

Sachs finds three primary sources of obligation for the United States, as a wealthy donor nation, to increase its contribution of GNP from the 2004 rate of 0.14 percent ($15 billion) to 0.7 percent ($75 billion) in Official Development Assistance to those in the poverty trap: one, the U.S. has publicly promised as much, yet has failed to deliver; two, such minimal investment when compared to military spending (thirty times more or $450 billion in 2004) better serves an “enlightened globalization” than does foreign policy focused exclusively on military power; and three, the wealthy have an implied moral obligation to contribute to those unable to secure their own economic welfare.8 I will not address the first two obligations on moral terms since failing to live up to a public commitment is a basic matter of integrity, and since “enlightened globalization” carries no special moral obligation other than rational self-interest.

Sachs’ implied moral argument is noteworthy. If one assumes his descriptive account of the poverty trap is correct, then donor assistance at some reasonable percent of GNP is a morally responsible course of action. Peter Singer makes a similar argument by considering the gravity of extreme poverty and the relatively small contribution required to correct it. It would be a violation of a basic duty of care not to contribute even though the problem may appear to be outside one’s immediate sphere of concern.9 Such small


5 Sachs, End of Poverty, 19-21.

6 Ibid., 56-66.

7 Ibid., 56.

8 Ibid., 218-19, 329, 358.

passion did not bring these results for needy people.” 11 His critique is not decades and extreme poverty still persists, that “so much well-meaning com-

approach.  He argues that in addition to the tragedy of global poverty, there is the tragedy that the West has spent $2.3 trillion in aid over the last five

Easterly, “Authors Analyze.”

The White Man’s Burden

In The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good, William Easterly takes a very different approach. He argues that in addition to the tragedy of global poverty, there is the tragedy that the West has spent $2.3 trillion in aid over the last five decades and extreme poverty still persists, that “so much well-meaning compassion did not bring these results for needy people.”11 His critique is not simply that money has been wasted which could have been used more productively, but that big Western plans are a residue of colonialism, are often counter-productive, and usually exacerbate the effects of extreme poverty. Easterly distinguishes “planners,” who articulate grand visions but do not effectively implement them, from “searchers,” who seek successful answers to individual problems through trial and error, recognizing that global poverty is not a monolithic problem with a single scientific solution.12 Easterly sees Sachs as a planner with a big plan, although Sachs denies the charge.13

Searchers have no grand plan and focus exclusively on small, pragmatic results. Looking for workable solutions to particular problems and often operating below the level of national policy, searchers are “the social entrepre-

neurs and nongovernmental organizations trying to achieve modest goals one at a time, like making micro-loans to village entrepreneurs or distributing mosquito nets to eliminate malaria in the African country of Malawi.”14

Easterly is critical of planners because he is sensitive to the way Western policies are often a guise for political self-interest, and foreign aid often ends up in the pockets of corrupt governments. The recent stagnation of the poorest countries has more to do with awful government than with a poverty trap.15 Countries which receive high amounts of aid are no more likely to grow economically than countries that receive low amounts of aid.16

Easterly’s prognosis envisions “piecemeal” solutions from the bottom up. Considering that no one can fully grasp the complexity of extreme poverty, and that there is no single recipe for economic development, “only a confusing welter of bottom-up social institutions and norms essential for markets” will work; “Western outsiders and Planners don’t have a clue how to create these norms and institutions.”17 While the market can address many of the problems of development, there also needs to be norms that curb exclusive self-interest and avarice. What those norms are precisely, and how they evolve, are the particularities searchers must address.

Easterly is critical of the effects of foreign aid. Not only is it often ineffective and inefficient, it can even exacerbate the effects of corruption by benefitting political insiders who oppose democratic reform. High aid revenues make national governments worse, even causing setbacks to democracy in the last third of the twentieth century. Conversely, bad governments can sabotage well-intentioned aid programs through various failures of implement-

Ibid., 51.

Easterly, The White Man’s Burden, 43.

Ibid., 147-48.

Ibid., 281.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.
a half century ago. Easterly’s critique is an attempt to create the intellectual free space within which sustainable solutions are most likely to emerge.

But in addition to social analysis, poverty studies at Catholic, Vincentian Universities must also be conscious of underlying values and social theories that are part and parcel of such an endeavor. An approach that is faithful to a Catholic, Vincentian heritage adds another obligation to poverty reduction: the obligation to engage and dialogue with the poor in a spirit of equality. So a particular challenge emerges: how can one approach the problem of global poverty in a way that is attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible, yet respects the dignity, autonomy, and creativity of those living in extreme poverty?

**Subsidiarity in Catholic social teaching**

The principle of subsidiarity in Catholic social teaching provides a framework for addressing many of the moral questions broached by the Sachs—Easterly debate. As a principle it is general in approach rather than particular, but it is not a blueprint for social life or a utopian social engineering project. Rather, it provides categories for identifying those conditions that are necessary for human flourishing and those that frustrate the dynamism of the creative process. Therefore it has both a positive pole and a negative pole. The principle of subsidiarity helps moral discernment navigate a complex matrix of obligations.

The first formal articulation of the subsidiarity principle occurs in Pope Pius XI’s *Quadragesimo Anno*, written in 1931. Its underlying themes, however, are implicit in Catholic social teaching well beforehand. In section 79, Pius XI uses the phrase *subsidiarii officii principium* (“principle of subsidiary function”) to describe the proper relationship between higher and lower orders of society. The Latin term *subsidium* carried no negative connotation originally, but was used by Cicero, Ovid, and Caesar, as a military term referring to the way a second line of defense functioned as a backup to aid the front line. 21

The general arguments articulated in *Quadragesimo Anno* have a strong correlation to the federalism of Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, supporting Pius XI’s claim that it is “a fundamental principle of social philosophy.” 22 Although the logic of subsidiarity has substantive antecedents and parallels in secular social philosophy, especially during the formation of the European Union, I will omit them here both for the sake of brevity and because the origin of the principle itself comes from Catholic social teaching. 23

Although other sources, especially papal encyclicals, offer more thorough and nuanced examinations, the most concise expression of the principle can be found in sections 1883 to 1885 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 24 The *Catechism* identifies three distinct but interrelated spheres of attention that, taken together, comprise the principle of subsidiarity: non-arrogation, empowerment, and collaborative pluralism.

**Non-Arrogation**

The principle of non-arrogation expresses the negative or prohibitive function of subsidiarity. Section 1883 identifies concern over “excessive intervention” by the state, which threatens both personal freedom and initiative. Papal concern over state encroachment into areas beyond its competence and responsibility extends to the very beginning of Catholic social teaching. 25 Letters from the Pre-Leonine period popes (1740-1877), for example, express concern over state encroachment on Church affairs and government oppression of citizens. Papal fears emerged prior to the French Revolution when Roman Catholic rulers developed national, state-controlled Church structures and expelled the Society of Jesus in a number of European countries. From expropriation of Church property to the active destruction of long-standing institutions of charity, the designs of the state afforded little room for the Church or true freedom for private citizens.

Such anti-clerical stances also were held by socialists similarly charged with property theft and usurping the powers and responsibilities of the Church. 26 Leonine letters (1878-1958) shared many of the concerns of their predecessors, but the experience of communist states and fascist totalitarianism exacerbated them. Pius XI used the term “collective terrorism” to refer to the suppression of worker associations and other practices of state encroachment. In economic matters, the popes also expressed concern over “artificial

---

22. Ibid., 9-10.
25. Most Catholic scholars assume Catholic social teaching begins in 1891 with the letters of Pope Leo XIII, but Michael Schuck takes a different approach in, *That They Be One: The Social Teaching of the Papal Encyclicals 1740-1989* (Washington, DC: 1991), hereinafter referred to as *Encyclicals*. He argues that Catholic social teaching is best viewed as part of a longer trajectory that begins in 1740 and has three distinct phases: Pre-Leonine (1740-1877), Leonine (1878-1958), and Post-Leonine (1959-1989). Within Schuck’s broader historical context, including the pressing socio-political concerns facing the papacy in each period, the roots of subsidiarity are more clearly evident.
26. Ibid., 4-8.
trade barriers” and overtaxing among other things.\footnote{Ibid., 49-52.}

Papal concerns over state encroachment are more than a simple plea for religious freedom. State interference in the internal life of communities of lower order is problematic because it takes on tasks and functions \textit{better served} by those lower communities, and because it \textit{usurps} power and responsibility from them.\footnote{Richard R. Gaillardetz, “The Ecclesiological Foundations of Modern Catholic Social Teaching,” in \textit{Modern Catholic Social Teaching}, ed. Kenneth R. Himes (Washington, DC: 2005), 92 (hereinafter, CST). See also, Stephen J. Pope, “Natural Law in Catholic Social Teachings,” \textit{Ibid.}, 50.} Such actions tear at the cooperative and collaborative nature of the common good. When the state arrogates power and responsibility from lower communities, it deprives individuals of a central meaning of their work, that of “contributing to the well-being of the larger community.”\footnote{U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, \textit{Economic Justice For All} (Washington, DC: 1997), section 97 (hereinafter \textit{EJFA}).} Section 1885 expresses this concern by stating that subsidiarity is opposed to “all forms of collectivism.” Following Daniel Finn’s interpretation of \textit{Centesimus Annus}, the negative aspect of subsidiarity is best described as non-arrogation, where the higher authority should not usurp the power, responsibility, or meaning of the individual’s or intermediary institution’s contribution to the common good. The state should undertake “only those initiatives which exceed the capacities of individuals or private groups acting independently.”\footnote{Daniel Finn, “Commentary on \textit{Centesimus annus} (On the Hundredth Anniversary of \textit{Rerum Novarum}),” in CST, 449.}

\textbf{Empowerment}

The positive functions of subsidiarity are twofold, expressed as the principles of empowerment and collaborative pluralism. Section 1884 of the \textit{Catechism} uses a theological model for empowerment: “God has not willed to reserve to himself all exercise of power” and therefore “entrusts to every creature the functions it is capable of performing, according to the capacities of its own nature.”\footnote{\textit{EJFA}, section 124 (italics added).} Empowerment is the obverse of arrogation, where government positively creates favorable conditions leading to “abundant opportunities for employment and sources of wealth.”\footnote{(Italics added.)} Since positive development can, and most often does, occur from the bottom up, the state should support lower communities “in case of need” and help to “co-ordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society.”\footnote{Ibid., 49-52.} Thus government has a positive moral responsibility to safeguard human rights and to ensure that the minimum conditions of human dignity are met for all.\footnote{Schuck, \textit{Encyclicals}, 85.} Ensuring such conditions does not mean that the state must be the sole or primary actor in securing them.

Leonine-period popes (1878-1958) argue that states have a special obligation to oversee “the interests of the poor,” which includes housing, clothing, health care, and employment.\footnote{Ibid., 18.} The term social justice, first introduced by Pius XI, suggests that the state has a positive obligation “to assist” (in the original, Latin sense of subsidiarity) and not simply to arrest its practices of arrogation. Alongside papal concern over the state’s political power, there is also concern over “mistaken notions of amoral economic laws and narrow self-interest.”\footnote{John A. Coleman, “The Future of Catholic Social Thought,” in CST, 528.} Somewhere between state encroachment and “laissez faire et laissez passer” economics lies the positive but limited role of the state. What positive actions the state undertakes are varied and contextual, so long as the interests of the poor are being served.

\textbf{Collaborative Pluralism}

The second positive function of subsidiarity is to foster the creative activity that flourishes in multiple facets of personal and social life. Section 1885 of the \textit{Catechism} describes the positive function of subsidiarity as that which “harmonizes the relationships between individuals and societies.” John Coleman argues that subsidiarity is “fundamentally, a plea for pluralism,” where pluralism is inherently participatory and collaborative.\footnote{Ibid., 18.} The history of subsidiarity includes the growing recognition of the importance of intermediary institutions in any social theory that is excessively collectivist or individualistic.\footnote{Marvin L. Mich, “Commentary on \textit{Mater et magistra} (Christianity and Social Progress),” in CST, 207.}

In post-Leonine thought (1959-1989), all three principles of subsidiarity are evident: the state has authority and positive responsibility to intervene for the sake of the common good in the interest of the poor, but it must refrain from inordinate intervention and must seek to establish just and equitable distribution of goods through collaborative pluralism.\footnote{Schuck, \textit{Encyclicals}, 149.}
Antoine Frederick Ozanam’s Legacy

Not only is Frederick Ozanam a model of faith for lay Catholics who work at a university, he is also a model for scholars who wish to pursue their intellectual life in service of the poor. Ozanam was a formidable intellectual: by the age of 26, he received doctorates in law and literature from the University of Paris. As a founder of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in 1833, when he was only twenty years old, he was also deeply committed to addressing the poverty he encountered personally. By drawing on the Catholic natural law tradition in light of his own experience, he pioneered the concept of natural wage, which eventually became the conceptual foundation for minimum wage law and the Fair Labor Standards Act, enacted during the New Deal.43 Three aspects of his legacy are particularly relevant for a discussion of approaches to poverty studies at a Catholic, Vincentian University: personal transformation, insights that come from personal transformation, and the praxis-oriented implications of subsidiarity.

Encountering the Poor

The most striking principle of the St. Vincent de Paul Society that Ozanam helped create is the insistence on direct, personal interaction with...
the poor, as opposed to the “bureaucratic and anonymous administration of programs,” an insistence that members must personally visit those they were assisting.\textsuperscript{44} Personal encounter is part of a transformative process, bringing ultimate meaning to one’s work and providing a context for encountering “the suffering Christ.”\textsuperscript{45} While the Society’s ethos is clearly Christocentric, there is an important philosophical insight to the principle of encounter; namely, that work acquires a fuller sense of meaning and purpose when it serves marginal members of society. Work on behalf of the poor, in this context, is as much about addressing the longing for one’s work to have a deep sense of social meaning, as it is about service. Ozanam and his friends frequently brought wood and coal to the poor because the vision of “regenerating France” seemed remote, distant, and utopian. He did not have the generalized goal of eradicating poverty, but merely sought to ameliorate the suffering of individuals.\textsuperscript{46} Because his own sense of meaning was tied directly to the suffering of the poor, Ozanam had a unique perspective that shaped his fight against structural injustice. Although he possessed an intellectual commitment to the Catholic conception of the common good, it was his personal encounter with the poor that shaped his struggle against structural injustice on behalf of the poor. Thus, personal encounter was a methodological commitment as well.

Being With the Poor: A Necessary Perspective

France was divided during Ozanam’s day. Most French Catholic elites did not align themselves with the poor masses, but rather with the royalists. Ozanam believed the poor were the true allies of the Church, and that the middle class had betrayed the working class in the Revolution of 1830.\textsuperscript{47} Because of his personal encounter with the poor, he argued that natural wage “does not depend on any particular mechanical, quantitative formula,” but rather on the dynamic needs of the poor: housing, education, and food. Work, Ozanam believed, was the fundamental way one applied their abilities to the satisfaction of basic needs. The natural wage, he found, was perhaps the most crucial instrument for combating poverty. Since work empowered the poor to meet their own needs, Ozanam strongly supported workers’ rights to form unions.\textsuperscript{48}

Because of his encounters with the poor, and the insights he derived as the result, Ozanam enjoyed a nuanced social theory: beginning with the family, the individual exercised duties and responsibilities, subordinating self-interest for the greater good of various social corporations. His commitment to private property did not align with socialism, yet his belief in social corporations opposed the greed of laisser-faire individualism.\textsuperscript{49}

Unfortunately, Ozanam did not live to witness the number of people and events that his work helped to inspire. He did not read the first great social encyclical Rerum Novarum in 1891, a foundational document for Catholic social teaching. He never met Peter Maurin or Dorothy Day, who founded the Catholic Worker movement in New York in the 1930s. Ozanam’s legacy, however, need not be limited to natural wage struggles; in fact, some of today’s most innovative approaches to poverty alleviation echo his approach.

Contemporary Approaches to Poverty Alleviation

The work of Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank is one of the best illustrations of an approach to poverty alleviation faithful to the legacy of Frederick Ozanam. Opting for “the worm’s eye view” as opposed to the “bird’s eye view,” Yunus grew tired of teaching grand economic theory while one of Bangladesh’s worst famines in recent history left many starving in the streets. Through extended conversations with the poor women of Jobra, Yunus discovered the effects of exclusive banking practices that posed a formidable obstacle to their economic welfare, and he developed a way to lend small amounts of money to women who had no formal collateral. Since its inception, microfinance as an alternative to formal banking has contributed significantly to alleviating the effects of extreme poverty. Yunus discovered that lending to women predominantly was the best way to empower the family.\textsuperscript{50} His Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 attests to the value and popularity of such an approach. More important than its popularity, however, is the basic insight that microfinance itself emerged from Yunus’ personal encounter with the poor. There was little, if anything, in “grand economic theory” that equipped him to address such a basic obstacle. He did not bother with the best conceptual categories to quantify poverty on a global scale — he merely listened to the women of Jobra. Ozanam and Yunus both ventured beyond the halls of the university to work with the poor and to give meaning to their intellectual endeavors.

The failure of the World Water Corporation’s efforts and the success of KickStart, a non-profit organization that designs and sells low-tech farming

\textsuperscript{44} Gregory, “Ozanam,” 11.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 22-25.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{50} Muhammad Yunus, Banker to the Poor: Micro-Lending and the Battle Against World Poverty (New York: 2003). It is important to note that there are some vocal critics of microfinance. See, for example, Aneel Karnani, “Microfinance misses its mark,” in Stanford Social Innovation Review, summer 2007.
the economic well-being of small farmers and environmental sustainability through a network of industry experts, all of whom are concerned with the cultivation and marketing of cocoa. Membership ranges from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to members of the World Cocoa Foundation, including the Hershey Company, Nestle Products, and Kraft Foods. Since cocoa is the most important tree-based commodity in West Africa, it provides a livelihood for millions of small-scale family farmers. Deforestation, fungal diseases, and insects, however, destroyed a third of the annual crop, and significant inefficiencies in the market system hampered the livelihood of small farmers. Not only did STCP improve the quality and availability of cocoa beans through shade-crop biodiversity methods, it also raised the living standards of small family farmers through a more equitable trade climate. It wasn’t until 1998 that cocoa producers finally began to realize some potentially catastrophic consequences when a research paper identified major problems within the cocoa supply chain. After extensive studies, USAID launched the pilot phase of STCP to initiate a collaborative approach to address common concerns. By focusing on farmer education and by linking farmers to markets through producer organizations, STCP has created viable solutions to some of the problems that dogged the industry previously.

While the particular examples I have outlined are by no means the only approaches to poverty reduction, they are approaches that have strong parallels to Frederick Ozanam and the principle of subsidiarity. Because global poverty has received increasing attention since the MDGs of 2000, many have envisioned a world without poverty in the not-so-distant future. Many believe that achieving this goal is predominantly a matter of increasing Official Development Assistance from donor countries; however, William Easterly is highly skeptical. Searchers, he argues, serve the poor better than planners. Beyond the scholarly debate over efficacy, the principle of subsidiarity and the legacy Frederick Ozanam suggest that personal encounter, collaborative pluralism among various intermediary institutions, and a limited role of state all contribute to the primacy of a “bottom up” approach. Therefore, the Catholic, Vincentian heritage suggests that not all approaches to poverty studies are equal.

Collaboration and pluralism are foundational for empowering individuals and intermediary institutions. Successful efforts at poverty alleviation consistently attest to the importance of both principles. Take, for example, the Sustainable Tree Crops Programs Alliance (STCP). The Alliance improves

Foot-pump irrigation system designed by KickStart and made available to farmers in Kenya. Public Domain

Foot-pump irrigation system designed by KickStart and made available to farmers in Kenya. Public Domain

164


In Service of Whom?:
The Impact of Vincentian Universities’ Institutional Investment Practices on Global Poverty

By

CHARLES R. STRAIN
Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, DePaul University

More than one billion people live on less than one dollar per day. Adding those who live on less than two dollars per day brings the figure to approximately three billion. These human beings live in what is termed “absolute poverty” — that is to say, they are not “scraping by,” but living in imminent danger of death. This is not an overstatement. In the fifteen years immediately following the end of the Cold War when, arguably, the immense resources that the U.S. alone directs to warfare could have been redeployed to attack global poverty, “[s]ome 18 million people have died prematurely each year from poverty-related causes, accounting for fully one third of all human deaths.”

Thomas Pogge’s conclusion places these figures in stark perspective: “This 15-year death toll of 270 million is considerably larger than the 200-million death toll from all the wars, civil wars, genocides and other government repression of the entire 20th century combined.”

About 1 billion of the desperately poor are children. Thirty thousand children under five years of age will die today from malnourishment or

1 The figures of $1 and $2 per day are calculated in terms of “purchasing power parity,” pegged to what $1 and $2 would buy in the U.S. in 1993. See Anup Shah, “Causes of Poverty: Poverty Facts and Stats,” at http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Facts.asp (accessed 17 July 2007), for documentation of these and other statistics related to global poverty. There has been a large debate regarding the World Bank’s claim that the numbers of poor people living on $1 per day have declined by 400 million over the period of 1981-2001. But even the World Bank figures indicate that if the $2 per day figure is chosen, the number of desperately poor people worldwide has increased during this same period. For a balanced assessment of the debate, see Ingrid Robeyns, “Assessing Global Poverty and Inequality: Income, Resources and Capabilities,” in Global Institutions and Responsibilities, Christian Barry and Thomas Pogge, eds. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 31.
3 Ibid. See also Thomas Pogge, World Poverty and Human Rights (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002).
Vincentian universities claim to be in service to the poor, yet it seems safe to assume that, short of a major change in the organization of the human community, not a single one of these billion children will graduate from a Vincentian university. What, then, is the role of a Vincentian university confronted with this brutal reality?

Biblical and Catholic social teachings present a clear norm for evaluating it: “God has a special care and predilection for poor people.” The Psalms and all the literature of the Hebrew Bible constantly maintain that God hears the cries of poor people. “Blessed are you poor,” Luke’s Jesus proclaims, “for yours is the Kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20). God will protect poor people even though no one else seems concerned about them. “Even though no one else seems concerned about them. To the misery of poor people we add the salt of our obliviousness. “The ultimate injustice,” declared the U.S. Catholic bishops in their pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, “is for a person or group to be treated actively or abandoned passively as if they were nonmembers of the human race.”

While Vincentian universities in the U.S. have adopted the rhetoric of their founder, the truth is that as social institutions they conform in their business practices to the economic system that, in its prevailing form of globalization, arguably exacerbates the condition of poor people or, at the very least, has not decisively altered it. A critique of the gap between rhetoric and practice in Vincentian universities, however, can easily become merely another rhetorical exercise. It is of little use apart from a careful social and ethical analysis that examines the multiple roles of the university within a global society.

Our first instinct is to treat our universities as *educational institutions*. We are justly proud of our commitments to educating first-generation college students, a diverse student body, and a greater percentage of Pell Grant recipients than other colleges of our type. Resisting the cult of prestige that ends up reinforcing social and economic inequalities is a hallmark of Vincentian universities. We can also claim that various curricula prepare our students for lives of social responsibility. But I wish to examine our universities as educational institutions, that is, not in terms of their core mission but in terms of the business practices that establish and preserve them within a defined economic system.

The lens through which I wish to view these universities as social institutions is that of Catholic social teachings (CST) with their emphasis upon a preferential option for the poor. Charles Curran, in his historical analysis of CST, sees a gradual evolution toward what he calls a “relational/responsibility model” in contrast to earlier combinations of deontological and teleological models. In the new model, CST’s consistent emphasis upon the social nature of the human person is interpreted not on the basis of static, organic metaphors of society with their tilt toward hierarchical relationships, but on the basis of a dynamic understanding of “the human person in multiple relationships with God, neighbor, world, and self and acting responsibly within these relationships” with the tilt toward freedom, equality, and participation. Curran points, in fact, to American education as exemplifying the relational understanding of the human person.

---

5 Shah, “Causes of Poverty.”
7 Ibid.
9 For the claim that structures governing the global economy have been established to further the interests of rich nations while, in fact, fostering growing inequality, see Pogge (2002, 2005) *inter alia.* Given such examples, it seems at best naïve, and at worst willfully blind, to think that the neoliberal form of economic globalization left unimpeded will overcome poverty. In fact, between 1973 and 1992 the wealth gap between the wealthiest and the poorest countries has increased from 44 to 1 to 72 to 1 (Shah). Clearly, the prevailing global economic system, functionally speaking, pursues a preferential option for the wealthy few. On the inclination of all social institutions to pursue egoistic and thereby irresponsible ends, see Reinhold Niebuhr’s classic treatment in *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1960).

Let me be clear: In challenging the prevailing form of economic globalization, I am not attacking capitalism as such, nor the principle of private, for-profit enterprise. By focusing on socially responsible investment, in fact, I am concentrating upon a reform of the capitalist system using the means of capital. I do challenge the neoliberal model of globalization as inherently skewed to the benefit of the rich. This challenge arises not only out of my research and ethical reflection, but out of twelve years of experience studying at first hand the workings of the *maquiladora* industry on the U.S./Mexico border.

11 Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching*, 80-81, 151-152.
12 Ibid., 135.
The principle of solidarity becomes the new way of understanding both the relative autonomy of each of our universities’ multiple relationships and the expansion of ethical responsibility beyond the limited boundaries of the campus walls. “[W]hat we nowadays call the principle of solidarity…,” argued Pope John Paul II in Centesimus annus, “is clearly seen to be one of the fundamental principles of the Christian view of social and political organization.”13

The traditional principle of subsidiarity, for its part, recognizes the importance of multiple institutional agents within society. The state is neither omniscient nor solely responsible for achieving the common good both at home and abroad.14 In a healthy, pluralistic society with many different kinds of institutions, power is distributed widely and exercised through many different types of relationships. Given the high degree of freedom that institutions enjoy in our society to enter into and shape relationships within the framework of prevailing laws, the principle of subsidiarity rightly holds them accountable for how those relationships affect the common good.

The three principles — solidarity, subsidiarity, and a preferential option for the poor — provide a framework within which to evaluate the day-to-day practices of Vincentian institutions. Viewing universities as social institutions from a relational model, I see four types of relationships:

- university as internal community
- university as contractual partner
- university as responsible investor
- university as responsible citizen

DePaul University’s mission statement not only describes its self-understanding as a community of learners, but also explicitly views its connection with the larger human community in relational/responsibility terms.

As an urban university, DePaul is deeply involved in the life of a community that is rapidly becoming global, and is interconnected with it. DePaul both draws from the cultural and professional riches of this community and responds to its needs through educational and public service programs, by providing leadership in various professions, the performing arts and civic endeavors, and in assisting the community in finding solutions to its problems (DePaul University, “DePaul’s Mission,” 3, at http://www.depaul.edu/about/mission/index.asp [accessed on 14 July 2007]).

Viewed in ethical terms, this statement emphasizes a principle of reciprocity as well as solidarity. However, it focuses almost exclusively on the university’s role as an educational institution and does not address its impact as a well-resourced, social institution.


David Hollenbach, S.J., draws out the implications of the principle of solidarity for Catholic colleges and universities, but he concentrates solely on their role as educational institutions. See “Strength in Mission through Solidarity: Catholic Higher Education in a Divided World,” Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education 23/2 (Summer 2003): 5-14.

14 Curran, Catholic Social Teaching, 141-42.

In this article I will concentrate on the last two types of relationship. A good deal of ethical reflection has been focused in Vincentian universities on business procedures as they affect the internal community — manifest, for example, in discussions concerning a “living wage.” To be sure, new issues will arise. For example, as universities increasingly rely on market benchmarks in setting salary rates to stay competitive, it will become very important to keep in mind that our society at large is characterized by increasing income inequality. Solidarity would seem to require that Vincentian universities resist this widening of the income gap and maintain a much more compressed salary range. Likewise, in terms of contractual partnerships, ethical discussion at Vincentian universities, as elsewhere, has led to the development of licensee codes of conduct. More recently, the discussion has expanded to consider the adoption of vendor codes of conduct. Certainly CST maintains that contractual relationships are subject to norms that go well beyond commutative justice (fair exchange) to include the norms of solidarity and a preferential option for the poor.15

University as Responsible Investor

To my knowledge, much less ethical reflection in Vincentian universities in the U.S. has been focused on the remaining two types of relationships: The university as responsible investor and the university as responsible citizen. A paradigm shift in the consciousness prevailing within Vincentian institutions will be necessary to frame this discussion. From the point of view of the world’s poor, Vincentian universities in the U.S. are wealthy institutions. In resources and revenue they are closer to Saint Vincent’s Bourbon benefactors than to his initial followers. A paradigm shift is in order because for much of its history, DePaul University, at least, lived hand-to-mouth. Now, with annual revenues from tuition and other sources over 400 million dollars, DePaul University, to follow this example, earns more than the gross domestic product (GDP) of East Timor, a nation of nearly one million people, and numerous other countries besides. While we, at DePaul, may lament our degree of tuition dependence, a 300 million dollar endowment, when compared to the resources at the disposal of many poor nations, is a powerful investment tool.

The U.S. Catholic Bishops, in their pastoral letter, Economic Justice for All, are quite clear about how such tools are to be used. “The investment of wealth, talent, and human energy should be specially directed to benefit those who are poor.”16 Investments are a form of agency; they empower

15 Ibid., 191.

16 Conference of Bishops, Economic Justice, #92.
corporations to act in certain ways which may promote the economic well-being of all or exacerbate the persisting levels of poverty. As such, investment practices have moral implications. According to stakeholder theory, investors not only have rights to a share in a corporation’s profits, but they also, in the post-Enron era, are responsible for how those profits are produced.

To take responsibility for one’s actions, as an individual or as an institution, is to become an authentic moral agent.

Drawing heavily on Economic Justice for All, the U.S. Catholic bishops in November 2003 went one step further, issuing a set of guidelines for investments consistent with CST. Quoting their earlier pastoral letter, they insisted that “all the moral principles that govern the just operation of any economic endeavor apply to the Church and its agencies and institutions; indeed the Church should be exemplary.” The range of issues detailed in these guidelines was comprehensive. Beyond the issues connected with protecting human life, the bishops also focused on promoting human rights, including sufficient wages and decent working conditions, opposition to racial and gender discrimination, access to pharmaceuticals, prohibition of the manufacture and sale of indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction and antipersonnel landmines, support for fair labor standards and affordable housing, protecting the environment and encouraging corporate responsibility.

On the face of it, the bishops’ ethical argument would seem to violate the fiduciary responsibility of boards of trustees as commonly understood — that is, to ensure that the investments of Vincentian universities maximally benefit those institutions, securing both their present and future well-being. However, this conflict between the principles of CST and the responsibilities of the universities’ boards can be reconciled through what has been called “socially responsible investment” (SRI).

SRI emerged as an investment strategy in the late 1960s during the Vietnam War and specifically focused on divestment in corporations like Dow Chemical, which produced napalm and Agent Orange. Impelled by the actions of churches and college students, SRI gained momentum as part of the anti-apartheid movement in the late 1970s. Since then, however, it has moved decisively away from single-issue advocacy to a more constructive engagement with capital markets using three basic tools:

- shareholder advocacy
- social screens
- community investment

With these tools SRI seeks a reasonable rate of return on investments. By 2005, $2.29 trillion in assets were invested in the U.S. alone using one or more of these approaches.

---

17 The percentage of people who are poor in the U.S. has fluctuated between 12 and 14 percent for the last 30 years while the raw numbers have steadily increased. In 2005 it stood at 13.3 percent. This has occurred during a period in which the wealth generated (GDP) has grown enormously. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the current economic system is not structured to alleviate poverty and that unacceptable levels of poverty will persist indefinitely unless these structures are altered. For the most current data on poverty in the United States, see U.S. Census Bureau, “Income, Earnings and Poverty Data from the 2004 American Community Survey,” American Community Survey Report (August 2006), accessed at http://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/acs-01.pdf.

18 Russell Sparkes, Socially Responsible Investment: A Global Revolution (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd., 2002), 41-42.

19 Conference of Bishops, Economic Justice, #347.
Traditionally, social screens regarding investments have ruled out arms industries and “sin stocks” (e.g., tobacco, alcohol, gambling — a Vincentian analysis might argue that these industries disproportionately hurt the poor). But as investments have multiplied, the screens have become much more varied.

Currently, socially screened pools of assets tend to be defined by the application of some combination of environmental, social, and governance (‘ESG’) factors. Examples of ESG issues include the near consensus emerging about the link between human activity and climate change (environmental), concern over investments related to the crisis in Darfur (social), and perceptions of disproportionate executive pay (governance).26

While some have discounted the impact of negative social screens on corporate behavior, Duke’s guidelines emphasize the symbolic value of these actions. Even small socially responsible actions can have a ripple effect. Moreover, the role of social screening of investments as part of the anti-apartheid movement clearly counters this skepticism. From the standpoint of the relational/responsibility model of moral agency, a stronger argument can be made: We are, whether as individuals or institutions, a network of relationships. In solidarity with whom and for whose benefit do these relationships place us?

Among Catholic universities, Boston College is a leader. It has had a socially responsible investment policy in place for more than fifteen years. The college’s statement is broad in scope:

Boston College is a Catholic and Jesuit institution of higher education. In the management of its investments, Boston College reflects the ethical, social, and moral principles inherent in its traditions. In particular, the University is firmly committed to the promotion of the dignity of the individual, personal freedom, and social justice.

The Board of Trustees desires that Boston College investments be handled in accordance with these principles so that gains from investments will not be derived from fraud, abusive power, greed, or injustice, especially through discrimination by reasons of race, sex, age, or religion.

23 See www.sriendowment.org/schools.html for eleven examples of such committees, their structures, procedures, and actions.
25 Ibid.
26 TIAA-CREF, “Socially Screened Investing,” 2; see also Sparkes, Socially Responsible Investment, 21.
A constant attempt will be made to apply these principles to the university’s investment practices. This means that investments held by the University will be examined periodically to ascertain whether the firms involved engage in practices or procedures opposed to the ethical, social, and moral principles deriving from Boston College’s heritage. It also means that the University will not undertake new investments in companies that affront these principles.27

Not only has the policy been applied, but students and administrators have engaged in vigorous debate over how well the social screens are working. Most recently, the debate has centered on whether or not firms that have invested in Sudan, and thereby abetted “state sponsored terrorism,” may have slipped through the screens.28 In quite impressive ways, this debate unites the educational mission of Boston College and its social commitment as a Catholic and Jesuit institution.

As the demand for more ethically sophisticated screens has grown, so has the demand for high performance on investments. SRI fund managers have responded by developing funds that are matched to the performance of such benchmarks as the Standard and Poor’s 500 and developed to minimize the risks entailed when certain categories of stocks are excluded.29 In fact the Domini Social Equity Institutional Fund has out performed the S&P 500 in the period 1991-2001 by creating an 18.9 percent return versus a 17.4 percent overall return.30 In the period between January 2001 and January 2007, TIAA-CREF reports that its Institutional Social Choice Equity Fund outperformed its benchmarks by more than .75 percent per year.31 Clearly, fiduciary and ethical responsibilities do not represent exclusive options. A recent article in The Chronicle of Higher Education pushes this claim a step further when it asserts that “a growing body of research by academic, corporate, and nonprofit organizations has found that companies with sound environmental practices and diverse work forces are outperforming companies that do not emphasize those goals.”32

If, as Russell Sparkes argues, one out of every eight dollars invested under professional management in the U.S. is connected somehow to SRI, the universities that publicly proclaim a preferential option for the poor must, as wealthy investors, walk the talk.33 With more than 230 mutual funds for institutional investors to choose from and with financial advisors able to develop customized investment strategies,34 it is no longer defensible to claim a lack of effective means toward this ethically justified end.

Those universities looking for investment funds that explicitly reflect CST may have recourse to the Christian Brothers Investment Services (CBIS), which celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2006. CBIS invests over 4.3 billion dollars in assets of more than 1000 Catholic institutions in the U.S.,35 and favors a three-pronged approach to socially responsible investment. It stresses active engagement in a dialogue with a firm regarding its business practices. Only if the firm is unwilling to engage in such a dialogue will it shift to filing shareholder resolutions and voting proxies at shareholder meetings. CBIS recognizes that such dialogues take time. “Yet,” it insists, “this form of engagement offers the best way for SRI investors to fundamentally change the way a corporation does its business.”36 In 2006, CBIS was involved in thirty-six such dialogues on issues including human rights and vendor standards, global warming, environmental justice, diversity in the workplace, fairness in global finance, violence in the media and acc-

27 Boston College, “Policies and Procedures Manual: Investment Policy” (1 July 1990 rev.) at http://www.bc.edu/offices/policies/meta-elements/doc/policies/rev/polrev5-100-020 (accessed 29 October 2007). As part of its leadership role, Boston College sponsors the Center for Corporate Citizenship. As part of its programming, the Center houses the Institute for Responsible Investment, which does research on SRI. More information online at www.bccc.met/responsibleinvestment. An example of a Catholic university with a much more limited Responsible Investment, which does research on SRI. More information online at www.bccc.met/responsibleinvestment. An example of a Catholic university with a much more limited Responsible Investment, which does research on SRI. More information online at www.bccc.met/responsibleinvestment. An example of a Catholic university with a much more limited Responsible Investment, which does research on SRI. More information online at www.bccc.met/responsibleinvestment. An example of a Catholic university with a much more limited Responsible Investment, which does research on SRI. More information online at www.bccc.met/responsibleinvestment. An example of a Catholic university with a much more limited


29 Sparkes, Socially Responsible Investment, 29.

30 Ibid., 257-58.


33 The Social Investment Forum estimates one out of every ten dollars invested is involved in SRI.

34 Harrington, “Socially Responsible Investing,” 2, 8.

35 As far as I have been able to determine, religious orders are prominent in CBIS’ portfolio of Catholic institutions, with some dioceses and health care institutions also participating. While CBIS does not publish a list of investors on its web site, Catholic colleges and universities appear to be notable by their absence.

cess to medicines. CBIS pointed to its dialogue with Sears, Roebuck and Company, as one strong sign of the effectiveness of this approach:

Our multi-year engagement with retailer Sears reached a new milestone of progress last summer when the company created a set of guidelines that will help vendors improve working conditions at the factories that make products sold at Sears and Kmart stores. Sears’ new guidelines raise the minimum age of workers, limit the hours worked, and add stricter and more specific language to prevent human rights abuses. CBIS and our dialogue partners provided advice and direction throughout the policy development process.

University as Responsible Citizen

Many forms of social responsibility could be clustered under the heading of university as responsible citizen, but let us keep our focus on the university as a wealthy investor and how that affects poor people. It seems obvious, for example, that screening out investments in the arms industry, which has fueled disastrous decades of civil war in some poor countries, is one way to ensure that investment decisions do not exacerbate poverty. It is less clear, however, that socially screened investments have a direct effect on alleviating poverty. The responsible corporations that the institution does invest in do not necessarily serve to empower the poor. The third tool of SRI — community investing — is a different matter.

Community Investing directs capital from investors and lenders to communities that are underserved by traditional financial services. It provides access to credit, equity, capital, and basic banking products that these communities would otherwise lack. In the U.S. and around the world, community investing makes it possible for local organizations to provide financial services to low-income individuals and to supply capital for small businesses and vital community services, such as affordable housing, child care, and healthcare.

The Social Investment Forum (SIF) has developed a “1% or More Campaign” to encourage individuals and institutions to pick up this tool and use it.

We are familiar with the success of Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank with microfinancing as a form of community investing. There are banks in the U.S. as well whose missions accord with SIF’s definition. In fact, one of the pioneers of community investment in this country is Chicago-based ShoreBank. ShoreBank Corporation, founded in 1973, describes itself as “America’s first community development and environmental bank holding company.” Its mission statement is a bold departure from the narrow norms governing most for-profit institutions:

We strive to meet three objectives simultaneously: building wealth for all in economically, integrated communities, promoting environmental health, and operating profitably. We do not accept the world as it is — we recognize value where others may not. We create practical new tools that increase economic equity and produce a healthier environment.

ShoreBank reported $2.1 billion in assets in 2006, with $433 million invested in that year alone in environmental and community development loans. It financed 52,000 affordable housing units and made $129 million in loans to small businesses while supporting faith-based and nonprofit organizations with $71 million in loans. Through ShoreBank International it provided training services and technical assistance “to financial institutions in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and South America.” Given this track record, ShoreBank Corporation could be seen as putting into practice the three principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, and a preferential option for the poor in ways from which Vincentian universities as social institutions involved in a myriad variety of business relationships could well learn.

In January 2007, TIAA-CREF announced that it had made a $22 million investment in ShoreBank and ShoreBank Pacific as part of a “global microfinance investment program.” TIAA-CREF indicated that many of its clients seek investments “that offer competitive returns that are also socially responsible” and credited ShoreBank for “stimulating economic growth and community development and

catalyzing positive social change.” As with the case of socially screened investments, it can no longer be argued that community investment somehow jeopardizes the fiduciary responsibilities of those who manage universities’ investments. One study of 107 community development financial institutions indicated that they had “a better payback rate than commercial banks” and a default rate of about one-half that of all commercial banks. The “1% or More Community Investment Program” would appear to involve little financial risk to a Vincentian institution. Yet, as in the case of DePaul University, a $3 million investment in environmental and community development projects, primarily in the Chicago metropolitan area but also globally, through an institution like ShoreBank would have a direct positive impact on poor people.

Evan S. Dobelle, former president of Trinity College, which invested $6 million of its endowment in community-development financial institutions, has pointed out the contradiction of universities that teach students “the lessons of citizenship” while sitting atop endowments that in many cases are in the hundreds of millions… arguing that to draw down these resources for civic purpose would undermine their long-term institutional viability.” The image that comes to mind is that of a dragon in its lair jealously guarding its pile of gold. Imagine, on the contrary, a Vincentian university that exercises a prudently preferential investment option for the poor in its own surrounding community and beyond. How might that social and financial commitment affect its educational mission to prepare all students to be socially responsible leaders?

CST and the Preferential Option for the Poor in Theological Perspective

Given the enormity of global poverty and the increasing inequality fostered by the prevailing form of economic globalization, the recommendations I have made for socially responsible investing must seem akin to fighting a wildfire with a few buckets of water. Yet CST sees human actions, whether by individuals or institutions, as rooted in hope. For the Christian that hope, in turn, is grounded in a Trinitarian vision of a gracious creator, a redeemer who “united himself in some fashion with every human being” and a spirit whose action “fills the earth.” Faced with the myriad variety of social institutions, each one complex in its own right, CST’s consistent emphasis upon the human community as one family must seem utterly naïve. We are called, as institutions as well as individuals, to live in solidarity. The world’s poor are affected by our institutional practices, and we can never anticipate what the ultimate ripple effect of even the most hesitant of steps based on solidarity with the world’s poor will be. Nonetheless, we are called to act.

45 The focus of this section of the paper is on ShoreBank because of its pioneering role in the area of community development banking and because of its birth and early development in Chicago, which is where DePaul University is also located. Community development banks represent only one option for universities seeking to invest in the well-being of their communities. Community investment portfolios represent another option. “With this option investors can purchase a larger pool of CDFI investments through intermediaries and reach a number of different types of programs at once…. Two examples of pooled approaches include the Calvert Community Investment Program and the National Federation of Community Development Credit Union’s Nominee Deposit Program.” Camis, et al, “Investing in Michigan’s Future,” 9.
46 Ibid., 2.
Vincentian University Partnerships for Urban Poverty Reduction

By

MARCO TAVANTI, PH.D., Director DePaul Manila Study Abroad Program
MERLINDA A. PALENCA, Chairperson Chemical Engineering Department, Adamson University
MARGARET GUZZALDO, Graduate Student, DePaul University School of Public Service

Vincentian universities can play an important role in ongoing global efforts to alleviate poverty and eliminate extreme poverty. This article suggests how the partnership between DePaul University and Adamson University reflects the values of Academic Social Responsibility and serves as a concrete response to the complex challenges of poverty reduction worldwide. In harmony with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, which promote global partnerships to halve poverty by 2015 and end extreme poverty by 2025, the authors argue that academic and intersectoral partnership is an essential responsibility and strategy for tackling the multifaceted crisis of global poverty.

Vincentian Mission and Urban Poverty

DePaul University in Chicago and Adamson University in Manila share a Catholic Vincentian mission in higher education, which translates into the provision of affordable quality education with a special concern for the “deprived members of society”1 and the “socially disadvantaged.”2 What does the “urban” dimension mean in an increasingly globalized society? How can an “urban” university contribute solutions to the growing challenges of urban poverty in our cities and in the world? Like other Vincentian universities and colleges, DePaul and Adamson recognize that the fulfillment of their institutional values requires a commitment to public service, service learning, social justice, social transformation, and to the education of socially responsible leaders.3

3 From DePaul University’s website, About DePaul, available at: www.depaul.edu/about;
Urban and rural poverty and development are intrinsically linked. This was clearly understood by Saint Vincent de Paul, who first founded the Congregation of the Mission in 1625 to provide spiritual assistance to “neglected, abandoned rural poor” in the lands of the Gondis. In 1633, with the acquisition of the priory of Saint-Lazare just outside the walls of Paris, Vincent saw the possibility to respond effectively and sustainably to the growing needs of the urban poor through the foundation of the Daughters of Charity with Louise de Marillac. Vincent realized that the voluntarism of the Confraternities of the urban poor through the foundation of the Daughters of Charity with Louise de Marillac was very important, but not enough to address the real needs of the urban poor. Dedicated individuals, working in partnership with other confraternities and managed by a capable and sustainable administration, emerged as Vincent’s visionary leadership for poverty reduction.

Today, the challenges in urban poverty are no less demanding. Urban poverty is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon, and it is also an unacceptable human condition. According to the United Nations Population Fund, 2008 is the year in which “the world reaches an invisible but momentous milestone: For the first time in history, more than half its human population, 3.3 billion people, will be living in urban areas.” As the trends of urban population growth continue, it is expected that by 2030 the number of people living in cities will swell to almost 5 billion. Many of the new urbanites will be poor. This is particularly visible in Asian and African cities, where the urban population will double between 2000 and 2030. That is, the accumulated urban growth of these two regions during the whole span of history will now double within a single generation. By 2030, the towns and cities of the developing world will compose 81 percent of urban humanity.

According to the United Nations Slum Dwellers Taskforce, one in six people living in urban areas worldwide is already a slum dweller — and that number will double in the next thirty years. Unless global policy and action changes course, 1.5 billion urban residents worldwide will become slum dwellers by the year 2020. Most of these individuals will live in developing regions and lack a political voice, decent housing, sanitation, access to water, schools, health care, and a safe and dependable way of getting to work.

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established by the United Nations at the 2000 Millennium Summit range from halving extreme poverty by 2015 to developing global intersectoral partnerships for development. The MDGs serve as a blueprint for poverty reduction and they have galvanized unprecedented efforts among academic institutions, public administrations, businesses, and civil society organizations to meet the needs of the world’s poorest. Academic institutions are contributing to this effort in a variety of ways: teaching about the MDGs in the classroom, promoting research for sustainable development, participating in the end-of-poverty and other millennium campaigns, and joining the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC). The partnership between DePaul and Adamson is a concrete contribution to the realization of the MDGs, particularly through its focus on addressing the needs of slum dwellers in metro Manila with concrete, sustainable, and policy-oriented solutions.

Vincentian University Partnerships for Poverty Reduction

On 24 April 2007, DePaul, St. John’s University, and Niagara University collaborated with Adamson on a symposium for Vincentian poverty reduction. Reflections and actions in relation to poverty had long been a constant feature in the Vincentian tradition. The DePaul University-Adamson partnership is a reminder that academic institutions could make a difference in alleviating urban poverty through international, academic, and community-based partnerships.


Ibid., 102.


Ibid.


The MDGs include eight goals, eighteen targets and forty-eight indicators. The goals are: Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education; Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women; Goal 4: Reduce child mortality; Goal 5: Improve maternal health; Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability; Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development. In a single package, the MDGs synthesize many of the most important commitments made separately at the international conferences and summits of the 1990s and recognize explicitly the interdependence between growth, poverty reduction, and sustainable development. See www.un.org/millenniumgoals/ and www.undp.org/mdg/.

Drawing on its ten years of relations with the United Nations, DePaul is currently the only Vincentian higher education institution that is part of the United Nations Global Compact Academic Network, see www.unglobalcompact.org/ParticipantsAndStakeholders/academic_participation.html (accessed December 2007).
poverty has been recognized as best practice by the Commission on Systemic Change, headed by Reverend Robert Maloney, C.M., and more recently by the awarding of the prestigious Opus Prize to Father Carcellar, representing the HPFP in its work with micro-savings and urban slums upgrading.\textsuperscript{12}

The partnerships that have emerged from these conversations aim to increase the organizational capacity of local POs among slum dwellers in Payatas, Sucat, and the relocation sites of Bocaue, Cabuyao, and Marilao. The latter three communities began as informal settlements along the north and south railroad systems of metro Manila. Members of these communities survived on income from established livelihoods such as motorcycle taxi driving and tailoring, yet day-to-day living conditions were precarious. These slum dwellers were displaced from their settlements to make way for the rehabilitation of the train systems of northern and southern Luzon.\textsuperscript{13}

The North Rail Relocation program alone transferred some 38,206 families to new living sites.

Under the leadership of Reverend Afiliano “Nonong” Fajardo, C.M., director of the Integrated Community Extension Services (ICES) at Adamson, administrators, faculty, and students committed to pilot a university-wide partnership with SouthVille 1, one of the relocation sites in Cabuyao, Laguna. After a training session on Vincentian leadership and poverty reduction given by DePaul’s faculty in the summer of 2007, Adamson founded the Vincentian Center for Social Responsibility (VCSR) to promote new livelihood programs for the empowerment of squatter citizens. The VCSR is spearheading an ambitious plan to engage academia through targeted projects in community

\textsuperscript{12} The product of a partnership among the Catholic University of America, the University of Notre Dame, Marquette University, and the University of San Francisco, the Opus Prize is a one million dollar faith-based humanitarian award and two $100,000 awards given annually to recognize unsung heroes working on the frontlines of today’s most persistent social problems. The final recipient of the top prize is also a member of the Vincentian Family. Brother Constant Goetschalckx, F.C., founder and director of the AHADI International Institute, Tanzania, leads this organization with a Swahili name that means “working toward the fulfillment of a promise.” AHADI educates refugees from the war-torn countries of Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi by providing post-secondary training via a distance-learning program and instruction for 26,000 students per year studying for their high school diplomas. See www.opusprize.org.

\textsuperscript{13} The Rail Linkage Project, envisioned to be a key development project for the central and southern Luzon region of the Philippines, aims to modernize the existing lines of the Philippine National Railways and provide efficient means of transportation to and from metro Manila and the provinces of northern and southern Luzon. The government under President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo identified the National Housing Authority as the lead agency for supervising and coordinating the relocation and resettlement of informal occupants. The project included the provision of housing sites for informal dwellers under a lending program. Nevertheless the relocation is causing enormous difficulties in resettlement, financial sustainability, and social cohesion in the new regions on the outskirts of metro Manila. See www.nha.gov.ph/pages/rail.php (accessed December 2007).
partnership, service learning, value-leadership development, and participatory action research for poverty reduction and sustainable development. During the December 2007 study abroad program of DePaul’s graduate students from the School of Public Service, Adamson launched the Piso Mula Sa Puso (Peso from the Heart), a support fund for the new livelihood program of the relocation site of Cabuyao.

Community leaders know that a key strategy for improving their livelihood is micro-savings that involves the entire community, and that perhaps can be matched by the cooperation of Adamson. DePaul has been invited to participate in this initiative through a “Dollar from the Heart” matching program, to sustain these initiatives until these communities achieve their own economic sustainability. The initial objective of the partnership is to increase the leadership and organizational capacity of the POs in these sites through trainings in participatory poverty assessments, empowerment assessments, and appreciative inquiry. This partnership can potentially produce best practices that can be extended to other schools and universities and be further institutionalized. The key organizations involved in this partnership include DePaul, Adamson, the Homeless People Federation of the Philippines, the Payatas Popular Organizations, and the Vincentian Center for Social Responsibility.

DePaul University, Chicago:

In connection with its strategic plan Vision Twenty12, DePaul has formed a task force of faculty and administrators concerned with local and global poverty reduction. Related to these efforts, the DePaul Institute for Business and Professional Ethics refocused its mission on creating business partnerships for poverty reduction. DePaul’s service-learning collaboration with Adamson began in 2004 after Reverend Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., then recently elected president of DePaul, visited Adamson and the Payatas organizations in Manila. Reverend Father Gregg L. Bañaga, Jr., C.M., president of Adamson, asked Father Holtschneider for assistance in Adamson’s ongoing effort to build the academic relevance and community effectiveness of its service learning initiatives headed by the Integrated Community

14 Community leaders in the relocation sites and informal settlement know that micro-savings, not microfinance, is the solution to escaping the vicious circles of poverty. Although microfinance in the model of the Grameen Bank or Kiva is essential in poverty reduction, it may not be the best solution in extreme poverty conditions where financial support needs to go hand-in-hand with social development. Micro-savings, as it involves the active participation and sacrifice of individuals in the communities, presents the most effective strategy for empowering slum dwellers. See Norberto Carcellar, “Meet the Philippines Homeless People Federation: Vincentian Missionaries Social Development Foundation Incorporated (VMSDFI),” Environment & Urbanization 13:2 (October 2001).

Extension Service. Dr. Laurie Worrall, representing DePaul’s Steans Center for Community Based Service Learning, and Dr. Marilynn Fleckenstein, representing Niagara University’s Learn and Serve Niagara program, offered their assistance and expertise in service learning and community engagement. The Steans Center at DePaul has developed numerous best practices related to the integration of academic and educational purposes with service to community needs. More recently, in collaboration with the Study Abroad Office and the International Program Office, the Steans Center has projected its expertise into intercultural and international contexts. Dr. Marco Tavanti, Wicklender Faculty Fellow and research director of the DePaul Hay Leadership Project, continued and expanded the partnership by including graduate students from DePaul’s School of Public Service. The graduate students applied their knowledge of needs assessment and organizational development to create a collaborative interchange with faculty and administrators at Adamson and with community leaders from the POs of the selected sites.

Adamson University, Manila:

Adamson is the third largest Vincentian institution of higher education, after DePaul in Chicago and St. John’s in New York. These universities, along with Niagara in New York, All Hallows College in Dublin, and Santa Isabel University in Naga City, share similar missions and values to make a difference in society, particularly for people living in poverty. Under the leadership and vision of its president, Father Bañaga, Adamson has focused on international partnerships, academic collaborations, and community outreach. In recent years it has also invested in the connection between “leadership education” and “community service.” This connection, highlighted by community partnerships and community-engaged teaching and research, emerged clearly during Adamson’s Grand Academic Conference, “Harnessing Advances in Science and Technology for Poverty Reduction,” on 30-31 August 2007, on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the university’s foundation.

Homeless People’s Federation of the Philippines:

Formally established in 1998, the HPFP originated from the work on poverty reduction of the VMSDFI, which since 1992 has implemented some of the best practices in poverty alleviation among scavengers and those living in extreme marginalization in the Payatas area of metro Manila. Today the HPFP convenes poor community organizations from across the Philippines,

15 Adamson University, Grand Academic Conference: “Harnessing Advances in Science and Technology for Poverty Reduction,” held at the Waterfront Manila Pavilion Hotel, 30-31 August 2007.
seeking to find solutions to the lack of access to secure land, infrastructure, housing, health, welfare, income, and affordable credit. The HPFP is a member of Slum/Shack Dwellers International, an international people’s organization comprised of urban poor and homeless groups from eleven countries; The HPFP organization, which has approximately 50,000 members, represents a fundamental connection in this intersectoral partnership as it facilitates effective dialogue between grassroots organizations (e.g., POs of Payatas) and intergovernmental organizations (e.g., agencies and programs of the United Nations). Father Carcellar and several other Vincentians have been serving in this organization providing assistance with planning, fundraising, and developing international networks. Their international networks with sister organizations in slum areas of other metropolises in Kenya, Brazil, India, and South Africa, among others, represent a potential for future international partnerships in other countries.

Payatas People’s Organizations:
The Payatas Dumpsite in Quezon City is the main destination for solid waste collected in metro Manila. Payatas’ forerunner, Smokey Mountain, was notorious for the inhumane work conditions of the scavengers, many of them children. Payatas’ reputation worsened when a “trash slide” occurred in the year 2000 and many scavengers were buried under the waste; it too is known mostly for the deplorable working conditions of the scavengers. The work of the Vincentians has been instrumental for transforming these infernal landscapes into some of the best practices in poverty reduction through self-help groups and POs. Most members of the Payatas POs are scavengers who earn their living collecting recyclable materials on the dump site. They are among Manila’s lowest-income residents, but not the worst off. The recycling they perform allows them to provide for their families. Several POs emerged from the implementation of micro-savings programs and community loans. The Lupang Pangako Urban Poor Association is the oldest popular association with a relationship to the HPFP and the VMSDFI. The POs in Payatas sustain social and community cohesion and activism for self-help groups, grassroots networks, and public policy initiatives that improve the quality of life for slum dwellers. Activities focus on women’s and children’s issues (maternal and infant care, child worker rehabilitation, and people with disabilities), health and well-being (elderly care, community health care, social health insurance), self-help promotion (microfinance, waste pickers development, land and shelter), and post-relocation expansion in sites outside of the garbage dump site. Reverend Aldrin Suan, C.M., a Vincentian pastor of Payatas, believes, along with various leaders of Payatas POs, that change is primarily a community-based effort and that the real results of today’s work will be visible in the next generation. When visitors come to Payatas, they learn from the practical and effective experience of those living in poverty. They also learn that, before attempting to “do something for the poor,” it would be best to ask them how and to actively involve them in the process, as no one else knows their conditions, people, and potential as they do.

Vincentian Center for Social Responsibility: Directed by Father Fajardo, Father Nonong is also the director of Adamson University’s Integrated Community Extension Services (ICES) and coordinator of the Manila Archdiocese Housing Ministry. His leadership, vision, and position are instrumental for engaging the Adamson university academic community not only at the neighborhood level (barangay) in outreach activities, but more directly in the ideas of urban poverty reduction and nation building.

18 Carcellar, “Meet the Philippines Homeless.”
19 Based on a conversation between Dr. Marco Tavanti and Father Norberto Carcellar, Rome, 28 February 2006.
20 Father Nonong is also the director of Adamson University’s Integrated Community Extension Services (ICES) and coordinator of the Manila Archdiocese Housing Ministry. His leadership, vision, and position are instrumental for engaging the Adamson university academic community not only at the neighborhood level (barangay) in outreach activities, but more directly in the ideas of urban poverty reduction and nation building.
the VCSR emerged from Adamson’s preexisting ICES program, which coordinates the university’s community-based outreach, service learning, and enacts the university’s commitment to help alleviate poverty in depressed areas of metro Manila. The VCSR also catalyzed the commitment that emerged from Dr. Tavanti’s training program in Vincentian Leadership and Poverty Reduction at Adamson (1-10 August 2007) and the Adamson Grand Academic Conference “Harnessing the Advances of Science and Technology for Poverty Reduction” (30-31 August 2007). The VCSR represents a significant upgrade in university/community relations. Symbolically called ICES Version 9.27 (the feast day of Saint Vincent de Paul), the upgrade includes the following transitions:

- from the ICES process to the involvement of the entire university community (institutional commitment)
- from program-centered to community-initiated planning (community participatory approach)
- from a requirement-led to a community-sustainable planning (with an emphasis not just on learning but on impact)
- from a university-focused engagement to a citywide and national issue-based engagement (policy orientation and government partnership)
- from an academic and research-based interface to an NGO, PO, and community organization interface (focus on Community Organization Participatory Action Research, or COPAR)
- from exposure to knowledge formation through effective, professional, and result-based experiences.

The VCSR proved instrumental in preparing the community profiles that emerged from an intense training of Adamson and volunteers for community-based poverty and needs assessments. The instrument used in the survey is the household profile questionnaire, also known as the Community-Based Monitoring System.22 This instrument is often used to influence policy through needs assessments and impact analysis of poverty reduction strategies papers, and it links to the ongoing monitoring of the MDGs at the national level.23 The partnership of Vincentian universities with community organizations recognizes the fundamental Vincentian value that poor people can forge their own change and influence policy.24 The participatory methods of these poverty reduction initiatives acknowledge how POs, even in the midst of extreme poverty, also possess valuable resources that these partnerships can advance. This is not a new concept in poverty reduction and development studies. The World Bank, along with development NGOs and field researchers, has learned the importance and effectiveness of listening to “the voice of the poor.”25 Although the level of participation may be interpreted at different levels, the Vincentian values behind these partnerships serve to enhance the level of engagement from community consultation and representation to community empowerment and organizational capacity development.

In preparation for its second stage of collaboration with DePaul in December 2007, the VCSR capitalized on its trusted relations with community leaders and trained both community and Adamson volunteers for targeted needs assessments in five preselected sites. Under the direction of Dr. Tavanti, the participating graduate students of DePaul’s School of Public Service offered technical assistance on applied research methods and tools to be used by Adamson and community leaders involved in the partnership.

The community profiles developed for the informal settlements of Payatas and Sucat and the relocation sites of Bocaue, Cabuyao, and Marilao generated important data on income distribution, occupation of employed heads of households, skills of employable household members, and training needs.27 Even in its initial stages, the data suggests that the depth of urban

---


22 The CBMS is currently being implemented in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Pakistan, Philippines, Nepal, Vietnam, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Benin, Ghana, India, Laos, and Indonesia. “In general, the assessment aims to provide the national and local governments with up-to-date information for policymaking and program implementation. The CBMS work involves the design, pilot-test and implementation of a methodology for data collection and data processing, validation and utilization of CBMS data for needs identification as well as for the design and monitoring of program interventions at all geopolitical levels.” Celia Reyes, “Overview of the Community Based Monitoring System, Micro Impact of Micro Economics and Adjustment Policies Programme,” (2005).

23 On the importance of linking MDGs to PRSPs for poverty reduction see http://go.worldbank.org/5UYR73KD30.


25 At the turn of the new millennium, the World Bank collected the voices of more than sixty thousand poor women and men from sixty countries in an unprecedented effort to understand poverty from the perspective of the poor themselves. Voices of the Poor, as this participatory research initiative is called, chronicles the struggles and aspirations of poor people striving for a life of dignity. The World Bank Voice of the Poor Project, at: http://go.worldbank.org/H1N8746X10 (accessed December 2007).


27 Data forms a plan for policy actions managed by the National Housing Authority (NHA).
poverty in slum areas and relocation sites has been underestimated. At the same time, the VCSR’s appreciative inquiry approach and value-centered leadership development assessments suggest that the potentials and internal strategies for urban poverty reduction have also been underestimated. Based on these initial assessments, the VCSR has developed a plan to deliver training and certificate programs to residents of the relocation site of Cabuyao. The VCSR’s partnership with DePaul, which could possibly extend to other Vincentian universities, could help in increasing international support for technical, financial, and leadership development.

Academic Social Responsibility

During the inauguration of the VCSR on 28 September 2007, Philippine Vice President Noli De Castro congratulated Adamson and the Vincentian community for their leadership and efforts in the creation of the center as an instrument for engaging academia more directly in community building:

The Center is a great idea whose time has come. It is high time that we introduce to students a concept of brotherhood that is not based on exclusivity. It is high time that we include action and community involvement in the concept of higher learning… Education is about molding better people and contributing to building a better world.

The analysis of academic practices in the promotion of socially responsible leaders, programs, and initiatives suggests the concept of academic social responsibility (ASR), which is becoming more central among academic institutions and university-based initiatives concerned with reducing poverty.

The essential characteristic of socially responsible universities is their commitment to prioritize ethical principles in four ways: by providing valuable, affordable and accessible education; by encouraging socially engaged teaching, scholarship, and service; by signaling institutional commitment; and by fostering academic and intersectoral partnerships.

I. Providing Value-accessible Education

Education is one of the most important contributions to poverty reduction. Quality, accessible, ethically grounded education equips people with the skills and networks to lift themselves out of poverty. In the current global economy a university degree greatly enhances one’s employability and resilience. Administrators of Vincentian higher education institutions recognize this first key function of academic social responsibility as a central element in poverty reduction and a fulfillment of their Vincentian and Catholic mission. Father Holtschneider, and Reverend Edward R. Udovic, C.M., introduce it at the beginning of their document on the Vincentian Higher Education Apostolate in the United States:

In an audience held on 29 January 2001, Pope John Paul II observed, “education is a central element of the Church’s ‘Option for the Poor.’” The Eastern (Philadelphia) and Midwestern (Saint Louis) provinces of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States (the Vincentians) believe this wholeheartedly, and have made a significant investment in this apostolate for almost 200 years. Today, in the United States, a college degree is the single most effective way to lift a person out of poverty.

Although not necessarily founded with the intent to directly educate the poor, today Vincentian universities investing in mission and service-oriented programs, in the words of Father Udovic, “effectively address the contemporary challenges facing our brothers and sisters who are poor.”

28 At this stage it is premature to draw analysis and conclusions. Nevertheless, initial observations confirm what literature on urban poverty reduction and squatters upgrading suggests in terms of underestimation of aggregated statistics for urban population’s access to basic services (education, health, transportation, etc.), the presence of allowances in certain urban areas (Makati City), and the lack of job opportunities in relocation sites. It also shows that urban poverty is much more than lack of economic support (often addressed through microcredit, job creation and entrepreneurship). The VCSR study illustrates that extreme urban poverty reduction also needs to address discrimination, leadership development and values formation. See Diana Mitlin and David Satterthwaite, eds., Empowering Squatter Citizen: Local Government, Civil Society and Urban Poverty Reduction (Earthscan, 2004).


II. Encouraging Social Engagement

Social engagement through service learning, action research, and community-based partnerships helps university students, faculty, staff, and administrators shed the “ivory tower” paradigm and turn universities toward the service of societal needs. Through community-engaged teaching, applied research, and social service opportunities, Vincentian universities develop socially responsible students, faculty, staff, and administrators. However, just preparing and approving academic programs according to the mission of the university may not guarantee the education of socially responsible leaders or foster programs that benefit disadvantaged populations.

Perhaps public service, social engagement, and poverty reduction should be considered more prominently in decisions concerning curricula approval, support for research, hiring, tenure, and promotions. DePaul promotes socially engaged programs through specific grants such as the Vincentian Endowment Fund (VEF) and service learning programs such as the Irvin W. Steans Center for Community Based Service Learning & Community Service Studies (CBSL). These programs encourage students, faculty, and staff to discover creative means of teaching and research, and to organize events and service opportunities that address poverty reduction. University Ministry initiatives such as the DePaul Community Service Association (DCSA) and the Nogales, Chiapas, and El Salvador study abroad program offer many opportunities for students and faculty to witness poverty first-hand through trips into marginalized neighborhoods, poor areas, and developing countries.

Vincentian universities encourage their faculty to conduct research and teach on issues concerning local, national, and global poverty. These activities could inspire further action if institutional funds, academic recognitions, and course requirements were oriented toward civil engagement, social responsibility, and poverty reduction. To make this happen, a new kind of university must evolve in which community/university engagement is the rule rather than the exception. It requires an internal transformation of academia in which experiential and service learning, participatory action research, and local/international public services are more strongly recognized in faculty and student evaluations.

III. Signaling Institutional Commitment

Vincentian academic institutions can better demonstrate their organization’s mission and values by investing their resources in social responsibility and poverty reduction. In line with their educational mission, these institutions serve as examples to internal and external constituencies by making such investments. DePaul’s Vision Twenty12 reflects this institutional commitment through a university-wide effort to provide accessible quality education preparing women and men to be ethically and socially engaged leaders for an increasingly globalized world. Institutional strategic plans also orient the organizational mission toward concrete goals and trajectories through which whole institutions can be transformed. Vincentian universities offer considerable resources to local, national, and international agencies and community groups with complementary goals. But sporadic or individual commitments of people and programs may not be enough to convey the values of social responsibility or to tackle the complexity of poverty.

---

33 The William and Mary Pat Gannon Hay – Vincent de Paul Leadership Project at DePaul University has been collecting various examples of engaged leadership practices across Vincentian universities, see http://leadership.depaul.edu. Marco Tavanti, “Engaged Vincentian Leadership: The Values and Competencies that Inspire Leaders to Serve in the Footsteps of St. Vincent de Paul,” Journal for College & Character 8:1 (November 2006).

34 Bill Gates’ remarks at the Harvard University commencement on 7 June 2007 suggest a similar recommendation. “Let me make a request of the deans and the professors — the intellectual leaders here at Harvard: As you hire new faculty, award tenure, review curriculum, and determine degree requirements, please ask yourselves: Should our best minds be dedicated to solving our biggest problems? Should Harvard encourage its faculty to take on the world’s worst inequities? Should Harvard students learn about the depth of global poverty… the prevalence of world hunger… the scarcity of clean water… the girls kept out of school… the children who die from diseases we can cure? Should the world’s most privileged people learn about the lives of the world’s least privileged? These are not rhetorical questions — you will answer with your policies.” Bill Gates, Harvard University Commencement Address, 2007.

35 The Vincentian Endowment Fund seeks to assist the university in developing its understanding of how, as an institution of higher education informed by the vision of Vincent de Paul, it is to be Catholic as it enters its second century. The VEF supports appropriate grant projects that directly enhance the identity of DePaul University as a Catholic, Vincentian, and urban university with special attention to the Catholic and Vincentian aspects of this identity. See http://mission.depaul.edu/vef/.

36 The Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning provides DePaul students with educational opportunities grounded in Vincentian community values. The center seeks to develop mutually beneficial relationships with community organizations in order to develop a sense of social agency in our students through enrollment in its courses, community internships, and placements, as well as community-based student employment. At: http://cbsl.depaul.edu/.

37 Holtschneider and Udovic, Vincentian Higher Education Apostolate.


40 Holtschneider and Udovic, Vincentian Higher Education Apostolate.
Institutional support may not be the only solution, but it is essential to making a difference.41

Adamson demonstrates one example of institutional commitment through the establishment of its VCSR and the Piso Mula Sa Puso (Peso from the Heart) initiative. Another example is DePaul’s effort to make ethics and social responsibility the center of its curricula and teaching activities. Emerging from the Vision Twenty12 commitment, the Ethics Across the Curricula (EAC) initiative, spearheaded by Dr. Patricia H. Werhane, director of the DePaul Institute for Business and Professional Ethics, aims to promote a common ethical language inspired by the principles and values of Saint Vincent de Paul. To encourage dialogue based on the Catholic and Vincentian tradition and build a shared foundation for teaching ethics across colleges and disciplines at DePaul, the EAC-Ethics 101 Booklet was developed. This piece highlights the Four-S Principles of Vincentian Ethics: solidarity, synchronicity, subsidiarity, and sustainability.42

The first Vincentian ethical principle of solidarity suggests that Vincent’s preferential option for the poor is both a humanistic and faith-based perspective. For Vincent, the poor are “our lords and masters” and “the place where we meet Christ and find salvation.” In other words, the principle suggests that solidarity for poverty reduction is a must for Vincentian leaders. The second principle of synchronicity is inspired by the notion that Vincent knew organized charity would be ineffective unless diverse people, organizations, and institutions worked together.43 The quality of service depends on the leader’s vision and faith in divine providence and on his or her ability to engage people to cooperate. The third principle of subsidiarity summarizes Vincent’s emphasis on the dignity of the human individual, which transpires from his personal dedication to the poor and his managerial style. Central leadership authority in organizations should perform only those tasks that cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level. Institutions are ethically called to create the social conditions necessary to the full development of the individual, such as the right to work, decent housing, health care, etc. This principle summarizes Vincent’s conviction that organizations, including the Catholic Church, should be at the service of the human person.44 The fourth principle of sustainability refers to Vincent’s commitment not only to serving the poor directly, but also to creating and managing capable and sustained institutions to serve them. The sustainability of a project is therefore integral to Vincentian leadership ethics. Vincent’s phrase, “It is not enough to do good, it must be done well” can be translated here as “It is not enough to develop servant leaders unless we also engage in the development of servant structures.”45


42 Ethics across the Curricula-Ethics 101 Booklet — Ethics Common Language was developed by a subcommittee of the Ethics across the Curricula Committee in response to Vision Twenty12, Objective 1e. The booklet was the work of Patricia Werhane, Andrew Gold, Karyn Holm, Scott Paeth, Marco Tavanti, and David Wellman using a number of external sources as well.

43 Bernard Pujo suggests that Vincent’s initial idea of having men and women working together on the Confraternities of Charity was later abandoned to create independent but collaborating institutions for the sake of the mission. He also suggests that Vincent’s ability to mobilize solidarity and engage people in the mission was largely due to his charm and ability to establish friendships. Pujo, The Trailblazer, 102, and 106.

44 In Catholic social teaching “subsidiarity” sometimes refers to decentralizing decision-making authority and responsibility to subsidiary groups whenever it serves the common good. In a more secular modern context it is associated with the concepts of participatory democracy and limited government. At DePaul the concept often referred to as “personalism” is a reflection of the subsidiary principle.

45 Sustainability is a central concept in poverty reduction and organizational development. In business it is related to the concept of “triple bottom line,” seeking a balanced approach to profit that would benefit financial, societal, and environmental sustainability. See John Elkington,
IV. Fostering Academic and Intersectoral Partnerships

Universities can reduce poverty most powerfully through partnerships and dialogue.\(^46\) Collaboration is fundamental to enhancing an institution’s academic reputation, but developing and nurturing local, regional, national, and international links can also reduce poverty. Academic institutions that are committed to global citizenship, social responsibility and/or poverty reduction should pay particular attention to their selection of partners and scope of partnerships. This not only benefits the university but also has value for the partnering academic institutions, community organizations, stakeholders and other collaborators. The eradication of hunger and extreme poverty cannot be accomplished by a single institution, country, or sector. It requires forming coalitions and partnerships for the promotion of sustainable development and poverty reduction. Established academic institutions are particularly responsible for helping younger universities or educational organizations in developing countries and marginalized communities.

The UNGC has recognized the potential contributions that academic institutions can offer in this way.\(^47\) The recently created Global Compact Academic Council, in which DePaul is a member among 150 other academic institutions worldwide, identifies academic partnerships with the UNGC on the following premises: (1) helping to educate leaders to promote business engagement and the advancement of human rights, labor rights, environmental rights, and the UNGC’s anticorruption principles; and 2) alignment of the UNGC mission with academic institutions for education on social responsibility, multidisciplinary research for societal change, dissemination of corporate citizenship values, technical support for new solutions, and lending capacity for educational infrastructures and local networks.\(^48\) In the same way that the UNGC seeks to promote responsible corporate citizenship so that business can be part of the solution to the challenges of globalization, the concept of academic social responsibility calls and enables academia to employ its privileged neutrality and broad network for the benefit of the world’s most impoverished and at risk citizens.

Father Maloney, former superior general of the Congregation of the Mission and current chair of the International Think Tank on Poverty Eradication and Systemic Change, recognizes the important role of academia in serving the poor and fighting poverty. He reminds St. John’s University and other Vincentian academic institutions that their central mission and institutional efforts should be directed toward: (1) creating a global worldview, recognizing poverty and its reduction at the local, national, and international levels; (2) using the university’s resources in teaching, research, and institutional networking to promote analysis and action regarding the root causes of poverty; (3) promoting a university-wide effort to combine creativity, visions, and resources toward the eradication of poverty; and (4) fighting poverty by working for justice, “teaching spirituality of justice, a philosophy of justice, a law of justice, an economics of justice, a liberal education (a freedom) founded on justice.”\(^49\)

Universities are in a unique position to engage businesses, governments, and civil society in working together to alleviate poverty and effect positive social change. As impartial mediators and facilitators they can bring about partnerships for poverty reduction and the still-possible achievement of the MDGs by 2015. Academia occupies Alan Fowler’s “fourth position” central to facilitating dialogue and collaboration for the common good.\(^50\)

Partnerships for Poverty Reduction

In September of 2000, world leaders met at the Millennium Summit held at the United Nations in New York and committed to achieving the eight MDGs by 2015. They embraced a vision for a world that is devoid of poverty, ensures gender equality, offers universal access to primary education, sustains environmental resources, provides treatment for fatal diseases that are prevalent among the world’s poorest, and develops a global partnership for development.\(^51\)


\(^{50}\) The concept of the “fourth position” has been applied by Alan Fowler in the study of the mediating role of NGOs in international development. Alan Fowler, “NGO Futures: Beyond Aid. NGO Values and the Fourth Position,” Third World Quarterly 21:4 (2000): 589-603.

with those institutions whose mission is specifically connected to poverty reduction, sustainable development, or social responsibility, has the potential to make a major contribution to ongoing global and intersectoral efforts.

The educational development of socially responsible leaders can be achieved only in synchronicity with a commitment to academic social responsibility. The partnership between Adamson and DePaul demonstrates the potential for other Vincentian academic partnerships to benefit the urban poor and marginalized sectors of our global societies.

Urban poverty today is scarcely different from how Charles Dickens portrayed the socioeconomic conditions of pre-revolutionary France: It is the best of times, and the worst of times. The informal settlements of Manila, like the marginalized neighborhoods of Chicago, exemplify the global urban landscape of extremes between poverty and exclusion on one side and wealth and power on the other. This landscape is not so different from the Paris that Vincent saw in the seventeenth century. Today we look at his example for inspiration to not only pay attention to the poor but also to persuade people of different classes and sectors to work together to alleviate poverty, and from his moral mandate to serve the poor by delivering them quality services for the construction of a better world.

Reducing poverty and sustaining development are among the most complex challenges of the twenty-first century. No single initiative, institution, or sector will be able to change the economic, social, political and moral implications of world poverty and inequality. The MDGs are a helpful blueprint, but they will remain unattainable dreams unless we implement effective intersectoral and community-based partnerships. The academic sector, beginning

53 The 2005 Summit process changed dramatically on 17 August with the submission by the United States of 750 alterations to a thirty-nine-page text of proposed reforms. Among the sought-for changes were a U.N. Secretariat with more decision-making capability and the removal of all fourteen references to the eight MDGs. Jonas Hagen, 2005 World Summit, at: http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2005/issue3/0305p5.html.
55 “To protect the Congregation’s assets, [Vincent] sometimes even had to do battle against the royal power. The king, who was always short of money, and now and then, he wanted to sell certain domains, dependencies of Saint-Lazare, over which the Crown believed it had rights.” Pujo, The Trailblazer, 109.

57 Paraphrased from Charles Dickens, Hablot Knight Browne, and Frederick Barnard, A Tale of Two Cities, Great Illustrated Classics (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1942)
Apologia

Fresh from an assignment in Nairobi, I find in my mail an invitation to reflect on work in which I have been immersed — launching an undergraduate degree program for Catholic sisters, brothers, and laypersons engaged in social service work in Africa. I am pleased. I would love to write about the seventeen students who brought such energy and enthusiasm, warm spirits, and generous aspirations to the classroom I have just left. Who could resist the opportunity to speak of the fine faculty we have engaged, the vigorous program we have designed, and the effective leaders we have in place? I might even be able to exclaim about the beauty of Kenya.

But the closing sentence of the invitation brings me up short. The article is intended for a special issue of Vincentian Heritage, on poverty reduction and higher education. I am not competent to write such a piece. I have no effective comprehension of poverty reduction in its formal definition — of economic systems and their essential interaction with geography, climatology, hydrology, history, political infrastructure, international relations, cultural assumptions, environmental science, engineering, epidemiology, human health, or the score of other factors integrated into the creation and reduction of poverty. I know what we are doing is addressing the plight of the poor, not working a scale definable as poverty reduction.

The students whom our new program serves are superb individuals committed to lives of powerful service. They work in emergency housing, HIV/AIDS-based health care, and personal hygiene. They struggle to make sure people get clean water and food. They bring schooling to children otherwise ignored, and design training programs for widows and poor mothers who need sources of income. They help individuals think about ways to improve the lives of their neighbors. They provide loving care for children orphaned or abandoned. They work to meet subsistence needs of great numbers of people, in numbers that seem not to diminish in spite of all they accomplish.

The courses they take with us focus on spirituality, leadership, and management. On completing their studies, they expect to be more effective in
the projects for which they are responsible, and will be able to lead and manage within their religious or service communities. But poverty reduction is not specifically on their minds, and it has not been a conscious aim of our program design. Indeed, some critics imply that well-intentioned, necessary social ministry activities — micro-approaches to poverty alleviation, so to speak — can actually exacerbate or extend deeply entrenched poverty by enabling governments and communities to escape the pressing need to build long-term solutions. That is not an argument which makes much impact on those in the social services, confronted daily by individuals in dire need.

Poverty Reduction

The problem of reducing poverty is formidable, especially in the area where we have begun to work — sub-Saharan Africa, the region in the world most affected by low income. The most recent data from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) lists the five nations we are serving — Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Eritrea — as among the poorest places in the world. Of the 177 nations for which data of the Human Development Index (HDI) are available, Ethiopia ranks 170, Tanzania 162, Eritrea 157, Uganda 145, and Kenya, our host nation, 152. The HDI is a composite of data describing three major qualities of life: (1) living a long and healthy life; (2) being educated; and (3) having a decent standard of living. In Kenya, life expectancy is only 47.5 years-of-age, adult literacy is 73.6 percent, school enrollment is 60 percent, and the GDP per capita is $1,140. Thirty-nine percent of people are without access to an improved water source. Unemployment is 40 percent, and ranks as high as 60 percent among youth.

Most compelling are the data which indicate that these numbers have been stagnant from about 1990. The data are common to other nations in sub-Saharan Africa and defy trends in virtually all other parts of the world. As I prepare to send this article to the editor, good and bad news fills the press. A World Bank report is announced that this trend may show its first change — welcome news if it proves accurate: Economic growth for Kenya will exceed 5 percent again this year. On the other hand, the highly competitive 2007 presidential election in Kenya has resulted in allegations of fraud which have led to a violent response, effectively shutting down the country for at least two weeks and disrupting functional government for at least three months. As is often the case, the poorest areas of the country have suffered the most damage, and the vast majority of the estimated 250,000 persons burned or beaten out of their homes and businesses are the nation’s poorest — residents of slums in the cities and in the impoverished edges of tiny rural villages. Images of rampaging young men, a demographic group trapped in unemployment and frustration, fill the press. The Economist reports that the economy lost a precious one billion dollars in the first ten days of violence. There are now an estimated 300,000 internal refugees to be cared for immediately. Although the international humanitarian relief organizations are rallying, governments are threatening to cut off ongoing financial aid until order has been restored. If allegations that candidates promised land and money to their constituents prove to be true, it will confirm the observation that poverty is a major cause of the violence — as well as a consequence.

Context

In this context, the challenge to write about Vincentian higher education and poverty reduction is sobering, even as it is compelling. While I have heard intensely argued debates about aid to Africa, I have never before felt competent to assess, much less develop, a cogent point of view. Now, to address the question I must also confront the question whether what we have designed is sufficient. If we do adopt a goal of poverty reduction, are there elements we should reconsider so that our students graduate prepared to have broader impact? How can we be sure we do not inadvertently exacerbate poverty and its impact?

---


Formal Economic Considerations

The question becomes: What role, if any, can higher education — especially Vincentian higher education — play in poverty reduction, especially in sub-Saharan Africa?

As economists make clear, the situation is complex and likely to remain so for a while. In “Poverty Reduction in Africa,” Paul Collier and those he consults are not optimistic in the short run. He argues that Africa is experiencing what any region would, given its circumstances.

- Ready solutions simply are not available.
- There is not sufficient income to solve poverty by redistributing wealth.6
- There are no obvious new markets.
- Intense new competition has emerged from Asia to draw off global opportunities just at the moment when Africa could have leapt forward.
- The sum of current physical, human, and political geography prevents the economies of Africa from growing for a sustained period at a necessary rate.
- No current economic approach has proven effective on a scale sufficient to make a difference.7

His well-reasoned analysis removes the element of human blame from the equation. The problem does not lie in the people of Africa. The distribution of population and natural resources in eastern Africa is such that well-intentioned but insufficiently planned or inadequately resourced approaches bring scant benefit, even while they exhaust good will. Meanwhile, widely publicized humanitarian aid efforts directed toward emergency or short-term goals bring frustration. Though these programs were never intended to bring about long-term improvement, those not directly involved — including the media — are nonetheless disappointed when they do not see systemic change.

Unintended Consequences

As an educator I am, of course, convinced that education is always a benefit to individuals. I have learned, however, that glibness is harmful. Education does not immediately lead to opportunity in regions beset by multiple economic and social problems. In developing nations, advanced education, can be a liability to individuals if educators do not attend carefully to the graduates’ context. In Kenya, for example, unemployment is so widespread and seemingly so intractable that degree-holders can be at a subtle disadvantage. Having raised their skills and expectations, they languish as employers find them overqualified, and shrink as neighbors consider them intimidating.9 Senator Barack Obama writes poignantly of the tragic unhappiness of his Harvard-educated father, unwelcome in his place of birth because he cannot put his exceptional education to meaningful use.10 Current unrest among educated but underemployed youth in developing nations underscores the need to link educational programs to meaningful employment and appropriate compensation.11

Student Aspirations

As I noted earlier, our students in Kenya are remarkable people, each dedicated to alleviating the impact of poverty on individuals. There are, for example, two Salesian Brothers whose mission is to make a home for boys who otherwise would be on the streets. One lay student has begun a school for HIV-positive children and a women’s cooperative in the Korogohio slum. A sister is to learn how to make community projects financially sustainable. Another student is a member of administration police, charged with learning how to reduce violence and improve relationships between the Samburu people and government officials. A Scholastic Brother is studying negotiation skills so he can reduce violence among youth gangs. An Assumption Sister of Nairobi is laying groundwork for a center for renewal to reduce burnout among women in religious life.

Higher Education and Poverty Reduction

In what way can individuals committed to alleviating the impact of poverty learn also to address the causes? In what way can we help them translate their knowledge and skill on service to effect systemic change as well? To what extent is this consistent with the mission of liberal arts universities in the U.S., and, in particular, DePaul University’s School for New Learning (SNL), the home of the program under consideration?

American liberal arts education considers awareness of the problem

6 Collier, “Poverty,” 16763.
7 Collier, “Poverty,” 16768.
8 Collier, “Poverty,” 16767.
9 Sister Loretta Brennan and Dr. Oscar Mapopa, 14 November 2007, narrated stories of persons they know. One felt a need to hide in the house once he had returned with his degree, because he could not get a job and was ashamed. A second felt compelled to be seen reading all day.
of poverty as part of its norms. The four aims defined by the American Association of Colleges and Universities\textsuperscript{12} are:

- preparing all students for an era of greater expectations;
- educating students for a world lived in common;
- making excellence inclusive;
- taking responsibility for the quality of every student’s liberal education.

That is, students are to graduate knowledgeable about and responsible for the world in which they will live. These aims do not specify active redress for poverty or social injustice.

DePaul University, within this liberal arts tradition is more specific, focusing on persons in critical circumstances, but once again in service, not reform (italics mine):

Motivated by the example of St. Vincent de Paul, who instilled a love of God by leading his contemporaries in serving urgent human needs, the DePaul community is above all characterized by ennobling the God-given dignity of each person. This religious personalism is manifested by the members of the DePaul community in a sensitivity to and care for the needs of each other and of those served, with a special concern for the deprived members of society. DePaul University emphasizes the development of a full range of human capabilities and appreciation of higher education as a means to engage cultural, social, religious, and ethical values in service to others.

Similarly, the School for New Learning, focuses on expanding access, but also on contributing to improve social justice (italics mine):

The School for New Learning deliberately works to shape a more just, livable world, to ensure that those who have historically been ignored, excluded, marginalized, oppressed, and economically disenfranchised benefit from the many learning opportunities available through the School for New Learning and beyond.

\textsuperscript{12} The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantage of a liberal education to all students, regardless of their academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915 by college presidents, AAC&U now represents the entire spectrum of American colleges and universities — large and small, public and private, two-year and four-year. AAC&U comprises more than 1,100 accredited colleges and universities that collectively educate more than five million students every year.

**What Vincentian Higher Education Can Do**

Within this context, what are the ways in which Vincentian higher education can assist in poverty reduction as well as the alleviation of suffering? I suggest four:

- **Informing career preparation with poverty elimination awareness.** Through directly teaching the complexity of poverty while positioning students to engage with poor people, Vincentian universities can enable graduates consciously to prepare for careers in which they can influence government and the private sector to seek optimal approaches to poverty reduction. They can also educate students to avoid exacerbating poverty.

- **Empowering leaders.** Through providing targeted access to education for adults in developing nations, Vincentian universities can improve the knowledge and skill of those already in leadership and management positions, increasing their chances of success in their projects or work.

- **Expanding access for the poor.** Through partnering with colleges and universities in areas experiencing extreme poverty, Vincentian universities can expand educational opportunities to persons otherwise excluded, using intelligent and sensitive design to be sure the partnership contributes to solutions and avoids creating additional problems.

- **Conducting research on poverty and poverty reduction.** Vincentian universities can assess underlying factors, inform debate, and advise on workable solutions, thus counteracting the damage done by biased approaches, shallow analyses, and self-serving promotions.
The DePaul-Tangaza Partnership

The partnership DePaul is forging with Tangaza College in Nairobi, Kenya, is dedicated primarily to the first three roles mentioned above. Let me describe the program, articulate our goals within the context of these roles, and give a preliminary assessment of our success to date.

Tangaza College was founded in 1985 by twenty-one orders of Catholic religious to provide education for their members. It is a constituent college of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), also located in Nairobi, which serves dioceses in Kenya, Tanzania, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Uganda. The majority of Tangaza’s current students are young men preparing for the priesthood, but an additional 25 percent are made up of professed sisters and brothers from international and African communities who are preparing to be formatters and leaders within their community. A third group is comprised of laypersons preparing to teach children and young people, or to serve in church-related missions. The sisters, brothers, and laypersons all engage directly in service to the poor — in schools, hospitals, orphanages, and scores of community organizations that have been started to serve those in poverty. They have studied in a two-year diploma program within two institutes — the Institute for Spirituality and Religious Formation (ISRF), and the Institute for Social Ministry in Mission (ISMM).

The founder of ISRF, Sister Loretta Brennan, C.S.B., wanted her students — all of them over 24 years of age — to be able to continue their education and earn a bachelor’s degree. She was confident that if more practicing sisters, brothers, and lay persons were able to complete their undergraduate educations, the projects they lead would have more chance of success. She found a perfect partner in the DePaul University School for New Learning (SNL). DePaul already had a relationship with Tangaza College. The Midwest Province (U.S.A.) of the Congregation of the Mission was one of the founding members; the Reverend John Richardson, C.M., chancellor of DePaul, was on the Tangaza Board of Trustees, and some faculty and staff at both institutions had begun exchange work and special projects.


14 The institutes include Christ the Teacher Institute of Education (CTIE), Institute for Youth Ministry, Institute for Social Communication, Institute for Spirituality and Religious Formation (ISRF), Institute for Social Ministry in Mission (ISMM), and Maryknoll Institute for African Studies.

The School for New Learning exists specifically for persons who are well launched on their work lives. Founded in 1972, it has the specific commandment to open access to higher education to persons otherwise excluded. In the memo through which Reverend Richardson paved the way for the school, he noted the need for these opportunities (italics mine):

The developments in Western society during recent years have demonstrated a number of limitations and inequities inherent in traditional higher education: too often curricula are unresponsive to new social and personal needs, too slow to change in needed ways; too often the student with well-defined personal and career goals and interests is required to complete a curriculum which appears largely irrelevant to him simply to acquire academic credentials; too often higher education is practically limited to the young and the socio-economically able; too often traditional concepts of higher education seem to force the student to choose between the excessive specificity of vocational education and the frequently excessive generality of the liberal arts curriculum. These deficiencies in contemporary higher education strongly argue a need for a middle course, an alternative to the existing extremes... Programs, schools, and colleges are needed to provide educational opportunities specifically relevant to current social problems and capable of rapid adaptation to changing social requirements.

15 Letter from DePaul University Vice President, Reverend John Richardson, C.M., to President, Reverend John Cortelyou, C.M., 17 February 1972.


17 Almost 7,000 persons have graduated and report high levels of satisfaction and achievement.
The Partnership and Poverty Reduction

The program is good. The students are articulate, motivated, thoughtful, and capable. The faculty are skilled and determined. But it is not currently configured to address poverty reduction. In the context of the four qualities I have laid out, there are areas we might change to make this possible:

1. Informing career preparation with poverty reduction awareness.

Through teaching about the complexity of poverty and enabling students to engage with poor people, Vincentian universities can avoid contributing to conditions leading to poverty and prepare students for careers in which they can influence the government and private sector to seek optimal approaches to poverty reduction.

We expect students of this program at Tangaza College to graduate well informed about the issues besetting the people they serve, and capable of learning more on their own. The focus is sharp. Because the School for New Learning expects students to develop knowledge and skills transferable to other contexts, we can customize the content of our courses to meet the existing situation. Thus, we enable students in Kenya to meet their science requirements with study of issues severely impacting eastern Africa: health care, particularly HIV/AIDS; and the environment, including water.

Social science requirements are similarly focused on Kenya. Students learn about the impact of globalization on the region, consider and assess social justice issues, and analyze the various forms of government to which African nations are turning.

Humanities requirements include vital skills: critical thinking, textual analysis, comparing ethical systems, and utilizing human creativity to solve problems.

The focus is Leadership and management, with particular emphasis on NGO work. Students learn about religious-based and nonprofit organizations, and about leadership styles. They must develop their skills in writing, research, collaboration, quantitative reasoning and financial management, information technology, and human resource management. All students must complete and analyze a service project connected to their ongoing work, and a major leadership/management project that will be critiqued externally.

This review leads to the conclusion that the program does sensitize students to issues and resource allocation and encourages them to think about solutions. However, as noted earlier, it does not challenge them to consider solutions at the macro level. We could make the program more effective in poverty reduction by integrating macro analysis into virtually all elements and by asking students to consider their own efforts from a systemic perspective, even as they work to ease individual suffering. Because the program requires considerable self-awareness, we could introduce such changes with relative ease.

2. Empowering leaders.

By providing targeted education for adults in developing nations, Vincentian universities can improve the skill of those currently in leadership and management positions and increase their chances of success in their projects or work.

All the students in our Bachelor of Arts program at Tangaza College are adults who are or will be responsible for relief services programs. Virtually all of them report frustration at seeing their projects, and those of scores of NGOs, flounder. They want to know why, and they want to learn to do the work more effectively. We can ask students to consider the impact of their work in a larger context. If we are successful, they should be able to contribute to the success of projects and communities. Moreover, because our students are already employed, they will not be pressing the job market. Indeed, if they learn what they seek to know, they may even be in positions to hire other people.

We at DePaul have also come to understand what it means to be thoughtful colleagues in Kenya. As was noted earlier, Kenya has an unemployment rate of 40 percent. Among those who cannot find sufficient employment are persons qualified to teach at the college level. With an embarrassment of riches of doctorally trained academics and doctoral candidates, Kenya offers excellent colleagues. DePaul and Tangaza decided to collaborate on recruiting and training the faculty — using as many from Kenya as is possible while ensuring appropriate oversight in Chicago. We have designed the program to have a director and a team of faculty and staff in Chicago responsible for initiating the curriculum, keeping the program up-to-date, and working as

19 Dr. Oscar Mapopa, in conversation with Sister Loretta Brennan, 14 November 2007.
a bridge between Chicago-based and Nairobi-based faculty. In Nairobi we have a coordinator, an assistant coordinator, and a team of part-time faculty to do administrative work, advising of students, and much teaching. Each term, a member of the Chicago-based team — a full-time DePaul faculty member — is on campus in Nairobi for at least three weeks to attend to the program in person — meeting extensively with the on-site coordinator and assistant coordinator, team-teaching in one class, talking with faculty responsible for other classes, interviewing students, reviewing student work, and offering a guest lecture. Each student is developing a portfolio of work that will be co-assessed by faculty in Chicago and Nairobi. We believe it is appropriate to refrain from importing workers and imposing them in a situation where skilled staff is already present and available.

3. Expanding Access to the Poor.
Through partnering with colleges and universities in areas experiencing extreme poverty, Vincentian universities can expand educational opportunities to persons otherwise excluded — using intelligent and sensitive design to be sure the partnership contributes to solutions and avoids creating additional problems.

Many of the students who have enrolled in this program would not in any other way be able to complete their undergraduate educations in Kenya or their home countries (ten students are from Kenya, two from Togo, two from South Africa, two from Tanzania; and one is from Uganda). Many come from rural areas where there is scant preparation for college admission exams. Most had no idea they would ever be able to attend a university. Many did not prepare for or take exams at the end of secondary school.

So, in terms of expanding access, our program at Tangaza College is presently doing so at the micro level. One of our funders — the Hilton Foundation — has challenged us to become a model, to inspire other universities to build programs for adults. If this program is a success and we are able to tell others about it, we will be more in line with goal of systemic improvement.

Through research into poverty, Vincentian universities can assess underlying factors, inform debate, and advise on workable solutions — counteracting the damage done by biased approaches, shallow analyses, and self-serving promotions.

This is not an area to which we have yet paid deliberate attention. But it is clear that if we want to reduce poverty rather than just ease its effect on individuals, we must watch for opportunities to commission or participate in appropriate research.

Conclusion

The extent of human suffering in sub-Saharan Africa in 2008 demands the attention of millions of people. Vincentian universities can contribute meaningfully to poverty alleviation and poverty reduction by providing thoughtful education for career advancement; by empowering leaders through knowledge; by expanding access to education for the poor; and by conducting research on poverty and poverty reduction. All approaches must include attention to macro issues as well as micro issues.

The DePaul University / Tangaza College program, which aims to educate current and future leadership of Catholic organizations dedicated to relieving the impact of poverty, is off to a good start, especially in empowering students to lead programs of social service. An analysis of the program indicates that it would be possible to improve the potential of its graduates to participate in poverty reduction if it were to:

- Routinely expect students to identify the causes of the poverty-induced problems they are addressing, with an eye to suggesting systemic change, and
- Support research on the causes of impoverishing conditions and advanced long-range solutions.
Untangling the Ivy: Discovering Vincentian Service Learning at DePaul University

By

Howard Rosing, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning, DePaul University

Vincent was not content to organize fund drives and the distribution of aid. He wanted to be on the spot in order to take part in projects and evaluate their usefulness.¹

This article examines the concept of service learning as it has been implemented in practice during the past decade at DePaul University in Chicago. Rather than offering an article on pedagogy, I outline a set of key approaches that continue to guide the integration of community-based practice into the university’s curriculum.

A unique university in that it is the largest Catholic institution of higher learning in the United States, DePaul is comprised of diverse students, faculty, and staff of all faiths, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. The university’s student body frequently ranks among the most diverse in the country.² Students are strongly encouraged to engage in service through multiple curricular and co-curricular programs that have resulted in thriving relationships between DePaul and community organizations throughout Chicago and internationally. The goal of integrating service learning into the curriculum enhances learning in a manner consistent with the university’s mission of serving the underserved.

DePaul identifies as Catholic, Vincentian, and urban and strives to model its curricular and co-curricular programs and university policies after the work of the seventeenth-century priest Vincent de Paul. Its senior administrators support the promotion of service-learning as an effort to integrate Vincentian values of service directly into the curriculum throughout all disciplines, departments, schools, and colleges. The intent of this article is to offer a guiding framework within which the university has implemented service

¹ Bernard Pujo, Vincent de Paul: The Trailblazer (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 196.
learning during the past decade. In this regard, I propose that DePaul's service-learning model is relevant to the structure and organization of a faith-based, mission-driven university highly dependent on annual tuition revenues, to the present-day social, political and economic context of U.S. cities like Chicago, and to the rigorous academic goals embedded in the learning objectives of courses throughout the academy. Most importantly, the practice of service learning at DePaul reflects the values exemplified by the life of Vincent de Paul — an observation that explains why the pedagogy has been widely supported by DePaul administrators and faculty. Though it may be fruitless to make a direct comparison between present-day academic-based service learning — a twentieth-century movement in higher education — and the life's work of Vincent de Paul, my hope is that some of the ideals expressed in this article shed light on how service learning has become an emerging practice of Vincentian values in higher education.

The article is divided into four sections, each exploring a guiding approach to the implementation of service learning at DePaul. Section one briefly describes the Steans Center, the unit at DePaul that is charged with supporting faculty, students, and community organizations in carrying out service learning in the classroom and community. This section outlines a self-reflexive and self-critical managerial and operational philosophy that calls upon the Center’s staff to engage periodically in open discussion about potential contradictions within hierarchical institutions like DePaul that also proclaim a mission of respect for the human dignity of all. I argue that staff of service and justice-oriented programs at such institutions have a particular responsibility to reflect upon their own capacity to produce the same forms of inequity that they seek to resolve. The second section describes the Steans Center’s effort to develop a model approach of external collaboration with community-based organizations. I address the Center’s concern with the historical tendency of higher education institutions to treat low-income, exploited, oppressed, and/or underserved communities and groups as laboratories for personal scholarship and ultimately institutional prestige, rather than as collaborators in responding to underlying social, economic, and political injustice. The third section describes DePaul’s Community Service Studies Minor program and outlines how the use of critical pedagogy in the classroom and the application of concepts derived from critical race theory provide an underlying approach to the foundation course in the minor. The concluding section summarizes reasons why the above-mentioned approaches to integrating service learning into the university’s curriculum are highly compatible with DePaul’s Vincentian mission.

“Walking Embodiments of the Mission”

Large American universities, like corporations, preserve certain elements of the socially, economically, and politically stratified society that existed for western Europeans during the time of Vincent de Paul. Like Vincent himself, mid-level administrators at DePaul University are in the position of negotiating resources within an institutional hierarchy to support structured community service activities which impact those in surrounding communities who have less wherewithal. The university has been very supportive in this regard; hundreds of thousands of dollars are put forth each year in the name of co-curricular and curriculum-based service activities. The Steans Center emerged as a product of such funding in 1998. Initially opened as the Office for Community-based Service Learning, the program set forth on a mission of integrating service learning into the university’s curriculum. DePaul has a more than one-hundred-year history of educating those who have been historically excluded from higher education. Though its mission explicitly encourages service and social justice, it operates as any hierarchical institution whose personnel structures reflect the rigid system of labor stratification predominant throughout the U.S. economy. Like all institutions driven partially by an interest in social equity, DePaul must negotiate ways to maintain the human dignity of all its employees in an economic system that lends itself well to neglecting such values. This section addresses how the Steans Center seeks to make respect for human dignity a central part of the everyday working relationships of its staff. I will argue that in order for the Center to create experiential learning opportunities that instill in students service and leadership values exemplified by the life’s work of Vincent de Paul, in order for the Center to create genuine and mutually beneficial community partnerships that show respect for underserved communities as intellectual spaces, center staff must seek to overcome the inherent tensions of institutional hierarchy and emphasize the equal worth and dignity of all those involved — regardless of their academic degree or administrative rank — in supporting service learning practice.

The Office for Community-based Service Learning (CbSL) initially offered a handful of courses that fulfilled an experiential learning requirement within the university’s Liberal Studies Program. The Office was renamed the Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning in 2001 after receiving a generous endowment from the Steans Family. The endowment led the university to allocate considerable resources towards the goal of promoting and supporting service learning within the curriculum. The majority of these resources go to pay salaries of staff and students who build relationships with...
The mission of the Steans Center is to provide educational opportunities grounded in community development. Staff is to link these learning objectives to student meeting specific learning objectives. Therefore, the challenge of the Center’s course development staff is to communicate with faculty members about the requirement for departments to teach with service learning as pedagogy. The Center’s mission reflects that of the university’s in that it supports social equality both in terms of supporting access to educational resources for underserved groups and in addressing the interests of low-income communities surrounding the university. Also, as a unit of the larger university, the Center operates as a values-driven hierarchical institution with internal political and ideological tensions and contradictions. As the message of social justice has become institutionalized in the workplace, daily office discourses, and the general social fabric of the Center, these tensions and contradictions have become more evident. The organizational structure of the Center mirrors that of the broader institution in that it employs specific titles linked to levels of accountability that include allocation of budgets and supervision of staff. Service learning, like any other initiative at DePaul, is supported by a system of resource allocation that is linked to material interests competing for portions of a budget primarily fueled by student tuition dollars. This is a system that yields positions of power and authority over hiring, staffing, and funding of programs. Given this structure, the Center must continuously be aware that it contains the same tendency to produce social inequality and challenges to human dignity as exists in the local and global political economy.

Though the Center is structured in a hierarchical model, it is by name “community-based” and is driven by faculty who develop and implement curriculum that incorporates service learning. The faculty determine whether or not to integrate service learning into their courses and, in essence, they determine the success of the Center. DePaul has no university-wide requirement for departments to teach with service learning as pedagogy. The Center’s course development staff communicate with faculty members about their particular teaching and scholarly interests and about the issues and communities they are interested in supporting. Faculty members have to believe that service projects can add value to their courses and lead students toward meeting specific learning objectives. Therefore, the challenge of the Center’s community development staff is to link these learning objectives to student projects and service defined by community partners, and then support students as they engage in the work. The preparatory and logistical tasks needed to support service learning at the level reached by DePaul require multiple full-time and part-time professional staff members and numerous student workers. Much of the staff works on building relationships with community organizations to assist the latter in determining service tasks and projects so that they can work with students. This support ensures that students can be successful, and thus that the faculty remain supportive of the pedagogy.

The success of the Steans Center has largely resulted from the ability of staff to work cooperatively as a team within the hierarchical organizational structure of both the Center and university. Over the years this has not been a straightforward, uncomplicated process. The same tensions stemming from systems of accountability that exist within the institution at large — largely the result of differences in power to manage budgets, conduct performance appraisals, and influence salary levels — also exist at the Center. Achieving a team-oriented working environment that resolves some of these tensions for the larger goal of student learning and support of community organizations is a continuous work in progress. Given the highly detailed nature of administering a large service-learning program, an organizational culture that empowers staff to share ideas about programs, procedures, processes, and policies is essential to the Center’s success. In particular, the complex social relations amongst the course development staff of the Center, coupled with highly attentive and supportive administrative staff and responsible student workers, permits the center to successfully administer more than seventy-five courses per term and coordinate as many as 1,200 students per quarter.

In essence, the way staff members relate to one another, regardless of their relationship to the institutional hierarchy, must reflect the values prescribed by the university’s mission. Staff must respect one another and each other’s roles in day-to-day operations if the Center is to instill such values in students through service-learning projects.

These positive internal working relations require that all Center staff are supported in their responsibilities. That is, they must be given the freedom to do their work in a way that is meaningful to them and, most importantly, sensitive to the workload of others. They need to realize that errors in their work have consequences for other staff members and eventually for students at service sites and faculty in the classroom. Respect for fellow workers and an understanding that all roles are equally and inextricably linked to one another are vital to the work, but have not always been fully practiced. The Center strives for these ideals and reflects upon them at staff meetings and retreats.

The Center’s method incorporates critique of elite institutional structures that have led to many of the problems faced by those the Center seeks to
support in the community. Such a critique does not simply serve a utilitarian purpose of creating a successful service-learning center that supports a positive public image of the university as non-elitist, civically engaged, and community-oriented. Vincentian priest, professor, and scholar of education Anthony Dosen, C.M., notes that there is something unique about a Vincentian university among faith-based higher education institutions: “Vincentian administrators must challenge their collaborators not merely to be good at their respective tasks.” In modeling their practice after Vincent de Paul, he argues, “the task of Vincentian administrators is not merely to provide professional development to their colleagues, but the possibility for personal transformation.”

As a group, the French clergy of the 17th century were an unimpressive lot. Scandalous might prove a better word to describe their behavior. They were interested in holding places of honor in court and collecting their benefices, but not performing their sacred responsibilities.

Support of staff and respect for their individual skills and talents by those in leadership positions is therefore essential, but at a Vincentian institution it is clearly not enough. To address the apparent contradiction between a tendency toward academic elitism — court honor and benefices — within higher education and a mission that more or less calls for all students, staff, and faculty to actively participate in efforts to create social justice in the world, requires that units such as the Steans Center reflect on their own potential to create the oppression that, in theory, service learning pedagogy seeks to expose to students.

In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Paulo Freire developed a similar form of self-reflection in the notion of “conscientisation” (conscientização), a concept involving development of critical consciousness through the practice of reflection and action (praxis) that leads people to work for social change.

People, as beings “in a situation,” find themselves rooted in temporal-spatial conditions which mark them and which they also mark. They will tend to reflect on their own “situationality” to the extent that they are challenged by it to act upon it. Human beings are because they are in a situation. And they will be more the more they not only critically reflect upon their existence but critically act upon it. Reflection upon situationality is reflection about the very condition of existence: critical thinking by means of which people discover each other to be “in a situation.” Only as this situation ceases to present itself as a dense, enveloping reality or a tormenting blind alley, and they can come to perceive it as an objective-problematic situation — only then can commitment exist. Humankind emerge from their submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled. Intervention in reality — historical awareness itself — thus represents a step forward from emergence, and results from the conscientização of the situation. Conscientização is the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence.

“Conscientisation” emerges from an educational practice that illuminates social, economic and political conditions “in a situation.” The result is deeper awareness of the nature of inequality and oppression in a given context, including within institutions like DePaul that hold to a mission that calls for a direct response to inequality. This deeper awareness, according to Freire, is the basis for active intervention — an intervention, I would add, that begins at home. As DePaul staff who are fully aware of, and passionate about, the institution’s mission to promote social justice, Steans Center employees remain highly aware of the Center’s capacity to create oppressive policies and behaviors from within, while simultaneously purporting to confront such practices through service-learning in the community.

The danger of hierarchical institutions, however necessary they may be, is that they produce power relations that can challenge human dignity. DePaul is increasingly aware of this danger and has created multiple programs and policies that seek to address internally produced social inequality. For example, the university maintains a well-supported Office of Institutional Diversity, an ombudsman’s office, and an Office of Mission and Values. Furthermore, a

6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 49.
human dignity website provides a direct resource for those who seek help in responding to biased and hateful acts on campus. Nonetheless, there are also the everyday social and power relations in departments and classrooms that are not overtly meant to direct harm toward someone, but end up doing so regardless. This level of interaction necessitates an everyday consciousness of how intradepartmental and interpersonal relations impact people. It requires recognition that the Vincentian principle of respect for human dignity is not situational or reserved for serving the underserved, but continuously at play in all our daily interactions regardless of our level of authority.

In the 2005 *Vincentian Heritage* journal, the president of DePaul University noted:

> The Presidents, VP’s, deans, department chairs and others must know, but more importantly, must embody the institution’s values. This is quite serious. If they are not walking embodiments of the mission, they should be replaced.9

Being a “walking embodiment of the mission” and respecting the dignity of others takes commitment to continuous reflection on organizational structures, daily interactions, and interpersonal relations within the workplace. In developing a service-learning practice that reflects Vincentian values, the Steans Center’s initial task is to reflect regularly on how internal relations can produce the same oppressive forces that we seek to teach students to oppose as they discover the value of learning through service.

“Community as an Intellectual Space”

Internal cooperation, respect for how one’s work impacts others, and team building are essential for development of a service-learning practice that remains consistent with DePaul’s mission. This includes awareness of the paradox of working within a hierarchical structure while respecting the interconnectedness and equality of each staff member’s responsibilities. In this section, I suggest that understanding this paradox is essential as we engage in partnerships with understaffed and financially insecure community-based organizations. Implementing service learning as a central component of the university’s mission rides not only on the ability to transform how staff relate to one another, but also on how they engage with external communities in a respectful and reciprocal manner.

Dewey’s student Robert Park developed a foundation for the study of society that became the theoretical basis of the Chicago School of Sociology. Dewey was also a friend and colleague of Jane Addams, who founded Hull House on Chicago’s southwest side. Hull House, which is widely considered to be the most successful settlement house in the U.S., provided an inlet for University of Chicago researchers to conduct urban and community studies on poverty and immigrants, among other issues. The survey and mapping methods and, more importantly, the way communities and groups were conceptualized and framed as objects of study were indeed groundbreaking for the field of sociology. Nevertheless, over time the paradigm left a pessimistic social residue in the community that continues to be articulated to this day as skepticism from community leaders about being studied.

Given its ancestral roots, service learning can, perhaps erroneously, be conceived by community groups as simply another tool for universities to “use” their communities for building academic careers and prestige. One could make a fairly strong argument that such an agenda — even if accomplished indirectly — is not very representative of Vincentian values. Indeed, according to Dosen, rather than seeking material gain or status through engagement with underserved communities, the modern-day “Vincentian School” calls on practitioners to draw upon the model of Vincent de Paul’s penchant for collaboration and cooperation with the poor as a means for personally transforming students, teachers, and administrators to recognize their own spiritual poverty through service. Developing empathy among students through service learning is not enough in this regard. As I shall argue in more detail, given past engagements between Chicago universities (including DePaul) and their low-income and marginalized neighbors, Vincentian service learning demands a healthy dose of humility.

The Vincentian model of service learning that the Steans Center seeks to develop is not the norm for university/community relations in Chicago. Low-income and other marginalized groups in the city have seen community researchers — sometimes disguised as people doing service or participatory research projects — come and go almost in parallel to the coming and going of government assistance programs (this, of course, is not a coincidence). The experience at the Steans Center is that the privilege and egoism that are often built into the community studies model of urban research have produced unresolved discontent with universities on the part of community leaders and organizations. That is not to say that such groups do not want the assistance of universities. In fact, the Center has found a strong interest among organizations in collaborating with DePaul students, faculty, and staff. This is largely because many of the site contacts were derived from well-developed relationships by DePaul’s Egan Urban Center (a community-oriented research center) and University Ministry, and through relationships accrued by the Steans Center’s community development staff who were active at the community level. Nonetheless, the organizations have little patience for academic egoism on the part of students or faculty. This is exemplified by the occasional need to remove students from sites because of a presumption that the site was there to serve their course requirement rather than to collaborate in an educational process resulting in positive social change and self-transformation.

A need for a critical perspective on university-led service-learning initiatives in Chicago was clear to Steans Center staff early on in the Center’s development. In 2002, the Center organized a meeting of community partners in the university library. The purpose of the meeting was to listen to community leaders’ interests and to establish more concrete partnerships for service-learning courses. During the opening conversation, a community leader from the Humboldt Park neighborhood, a largely Puerto Rican community, reminded DePaul staff and faculty that the university was once situated in a predominantly Puerto Rican and working-class neighborhood. He recalled how DePaul purchased property around the university, thereby contributing to the impending gentrification that eventually displaced the community west into the West town and Humboldt Park neighborhoods. He then stated that his community was not asking for help from DePaul, but rather that it was “imperative” that the university find ways to collaboratively assist organizations in his neighborhood. DePaul was reminded of the privileged quality that universities carry into communities they strive to serve — a quality that often carries the presumption that knowledge comes from the academy and is only later introduced to the community through public policy.

Universities have a very well-known history of being considered, or considering themselves, as the most important producers of knowledge — knowledge which is then purveyed to students who implant their learning in the world through practice. This perspective is perhaps why integrating service as a means to learn from communities often receives pushback from traditional academic administrators who perceive the professor as the sole expert who teaches students to bank knowledge and develop methods of analysis for assessment later on an exam. In other words, the classroom is viewed as a sacred space that should not be contaminated by lightweight

---

“political” ideas that students can learn from engaging with those in the community who are perceived as less educated. For those who adhere to this viewpoint, it is even more problematic that service learning requires a portion of learning to take place off campus in communities where students are told they can play an active role in supporting positive social change. This is viewed as a precarious break from the revered belief that learning must take place through a purely objective lens, one that separates students from the bias of ideological and political persuasion. Community organizations, at least in Chicago, have a long animated history of grounding their work in political and ideological beliefs about social justice. Though university researchers have historically ventured out to study urban communities and groups, the knowledge they produced often remains within the academy as an artifact of a professed scientific process.

Staff of the Steans Center have learned that developing partnerships with community organizations for service learning involves recognizing the value of local knowledge and respecting community partners as purveyors of that knowledge. That is, community organizations are understood as being equal to or, in some cases, more important than texts as part of the learning process. This idea is shocking to some faculty, students, and administrators who are not fully convinced that the community is a space overflowing with knowledge. Instead, the low-income neighborhoods where students have historically studied the causes of poverty are to be understood academically with standards that limit community engagement to the structures of rigid social-scientific inquiry. Service learning, at least at DePaul, does not lend itself well to such structures. As a pedagogy, it breaks from traditional models since the instructor acknowledges that there may be local knowledge brought into the classroom which contradicts his or her understanding of the literature and/or perspective of well-respected scholars. The seasoned service-learning instructor knows that such challenges are valuable teaching tools because they prompt students to think critically about the diverse ways in which knowledge is produced.

Each June a conference in the Humboldt Park neighborhood sponsored by the Puerto Rican Cultural Center recognizes the importance of community-derived knowledge. The title of the conference, Community as an Intellectual Space, acknowledges that the academy is not necessarily the center of knowledge production and that there are intellectual discourses that emerge from the experiences of oppressed and exploited groups. Moreover, such groups apply this knowledge to the formation and maintenance of community organizations (e.g., alternative schools, business development networks, community health programs, political groups) that become assets in neighborhoods that are typically viewed by outsiders as “blighted” and in need of “urban renewal.”

There is nothing new about the idea that communities are a space for knowledge production. Anthropologists have long recognized the importance of intellectual communities that exist outside the Western academic canon. The conference moves beyond this notion by asserting that community-based knowledge is not only important in itself, but can also lead to active responses to social inequity. Whereas in the past the academy appropriated community-produced knowledge — though not acknowledging it as such — for its own benefit, the notion of “community as an intellectual space” supports a Freirian conscientisation process wherein people employ their own knowledge in the community to become active and engage in efforts to promote social justice.

As the Steans Center developed partnerships for service learning over the past decade, it increasingly learned of the importance of how its partners use their knowledge base to educate DePaul students. In response, the Center has funded the training of staff and faculty in the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model developed by Kretzmann and McKnight at Northwestern University. These authors challenge the way low-income neighborhoods have been traditionally portrayed by policy makers, urban planners, and service providers as “deficient neighborhoods populated by needy and problematic and deficient people.” This is a perception that neighborhood residents are waiting for universities to arrive with resources to lend themselves well to such structures. As a pedagogy, it breaks from traditional models since the instructor acknowledges that there may be local knowledge brought into the classroom which contradicts his or her understanding of the literature and/or perspective of well-respected scholars. The seasoned service-learning instructor knows that such challenges are valuable teaching tools because they prompt students to think critically about the diverse ways in which knowledge is produced.

Each June a conference in the Humboldt Park neighborhood sponsored by the Puerto Rican Cultural Center recognizes the importance of community-derived knowledge. The title of the conference, Community as an Intellectual Space, acknowledges that the academy is not necessarily the center of knowledge production and that there are intellectual discourses that emerge from the experiences of oppressed and exploited groups. Moreover, such groups apply this knowledge to the formation and maintenance of community organizations (e.g., alternative schools, business development networks, community health programs, political groups) that become assets in neighborhoods that are typically viewed by outsiders as “blighted” and in need of “urban renewal.”

17 Thanks to both Dr. Jody Kretzmann at Northwestern University and Dr. Michael Bennett of DePaul’s Egan Urban Center for facilitating these workshops.
to mend their social wounds. From the privileged vantage point of the university, it is easy for some to accept this perception — especially students, faculty, and staff who have never experienced material poverty, social stigmatization, or political oppression in their lives. The goal in these trainings has been to help staff and faculty educate service-learning students to think differently about the neighborhoods and organizations they visit for their courses. As students begin to see assets in these spaces rather than blight, it becomes easier to see how community-derived knowledge lies at the base of such assets. This compels service-learning students not only to challenge stereotypes about groups they serve, but to learn to more fully respect the individual dignity of each member of the group. This idea seems quintessentially Vincentian in that there is the potential for students and their instructors to be personally transformed by the realization that they can learn from those often falsely perceived as lacking knowledge.

Unlearning Service

As I initiated a two-year research project in the Dominican Republic in 1999, a fellow anthropologist offered a suggestion on how to engage potential research participants. He said the first step toward successful community-based research was to “check your ego at the door to the community.” The advice was more than simply a tip on how to gain entry into an exploited and oppressed group in order to extract data. It was a caution to respect such communities as knowledge-producing entities.

Upon returning to the academy to teach the history of community service at DePaul, I was dissatisfied with the existing literature on the topic. Most scholarship on community service presumed that its origins lay in the benevolent acts of Euro-American historical figures who inspired a culture of service in the U.S. and elsewhere.19 I assigned these articles to students to have them critically analyze the presumption that the history of service was of outsiders going into communities to serve the less fortunate “others” of society. This struck me as a continuance of the Western colonial approach to development: that is, contrasting the saviors with those in need of being saved, the civilized with the primitive, the First World from the Third World, the developed with the less developed, the social worker with the client, and ultimately the volunteer with the recipient of charity. In all cases it is presumed that the former has the knowledge to solve the latter’s problems. Moreover, this dichotomous view of the world presumes that the structural roots of a group’s problems are somehow inherent to the group rather than derived from the colonial process itself. The volunteer in this approach enters the community with his or her ego intact (e.g., “I have arrived to do these tasks to help you; what you already know is irrelevant.”).

As the Steans Center developed the Community Service Studies minor, a core component of the curriculum was critical analysis of community service and volunteerism. As the primary instructor for the foundation course in this program since 2001, I have had the responsibility of establishing this approach in the curriculum. The course — CSS 201, Perspectives on Community Service — is one of three foundation courses of a six-course minor (remaining courses are electives). Each fall and spring term, this course is offered to community service studies minors and to students seeking to fulfill their experiential learning requirement in the Liberal Studies program. The course addresses a number of topics including early twentieth-century social reform movements, conceptualizing “the poor,” paternalism in community service, the origins of community service in the United States, critiques of charity and volunteerism, community service in the context of urban gentrification, privilege and community service, the nonprofit sector and the structure of nonprofit organizations, international community service/activism, and faith and community service. As a service-learning course, students work at community organizations dealing with issues such as education, homelessness, literacy, and community health. In the syllabus and repeatedly throughout the term, students are told that their grade will be significantly higher if they integrate their experiences at the organizations with concepts and theories from readings, films, and class discussions. Students are also told that the primary question they will need to answer is whether their service is contributing to resolving the social issues focused on by their organization. I ask them to think critically about the role of community service in efforts to produce systemic social change.

On the first day of class, I explain that I will argue throughout the quarter that community service will have little impact on solving the broader issues (e.g., homelessness and education access) that their organizations are working on; that at maximum their service may help people for the eight to nine weeks required to serve for the course. This argument is developed in subsequent class sessions and in reading assignments that show a rise in social inequalities, decline of the social welfare state, and a parallel increase in volunteerism. We then proceed through much of the first half of the quarter developing a critique of community service and volunteerism within the context of reduced government spending on social programs and increased rhetoric on the importance of service and civic engagement.20 Students are asked to explore the challenge of engaging in service alone without an

19 Morton and Saltmarsh, “Addams, Day, and Dewey.”

At mid-quarter, the course builds off previous topics and delves into a deeper critical analysis of the social organization of community service in practice. Students read literature that introduces the concept of unearned privilege, derived from scholarship on critical race theory. This concept generally refers to the unearned advantages of having white skin or, for example, being male that are not enjoyed by people of color or women. Furthermore, recipients of such privilege are not generally aware of its presence and typically do not consider themselves to be racist or sexist. In the classroom and in a writing assignment, I pose questions about race, class, and gender impact the role of the volunteer and whether everyone served by their organizations has an equal chance to reach, at minimum, financial stability in the economy. I ask students to try and come to a consensus on whether certain people have a default advantage in society because of their physical appearance or gender. They almost always come to consensus agreement with this premise, but one or two students usually argue that their immigrant grandparents came to the U.S. and “they made it; why couldn’t others [code for people of color]?”. The in-class debate invariably begins and the diversity of DePaul’s student body emerges from the unspoken depths of students’ thoughts. Slavery, Jim Crow laws, ghettoization, racial profiling, racial disparities in incarceration rates, employment and housing discrimination, and lower expectations placed upon students of color by school teachers are all topics that frequently seep into the discussion. We engage in a debate about why most low-income neighborhoods in Chicago, where students primarily do their service, are largely inhabited by people of color.

In my reading of the life of Vincent de Paul, the above issues had minimal relevance within the impoverished parishes of seventeenth-century France. They are highly relevant, however, for twenty-first-century students at an urban university in Chicago. In CSS 201, students are placed in an unavoidably uncomfortable position to debate the practice of community service as it intersects with unearned privilege — a concept the majority of the class eventually accepts. Before the end of the debate, one or two remain troubled by this idea and respond aggressively to their interlocutors with arguments that reflect a belief in supporting a meritocracy and the capacity of all people in the U.S. to succeed independently. The notion of equal opportunity for all, regardless of the historical barriers placed on certain groups, is held out by these students as intrinsic to U.S. society. In contrast, a few students, and especially those from low-income neighborhoods in Chicago, are visibly troubled by these comments. Unearned privilege in the context of community service becomes self-evident to them though, like all students in the class, they generally began the term with the idea that service was an act of “giving back.” The volunteer’s background and relative accessibility to resources were detached from the origins of the challenges faced by those being served.

CSS 201 seeks to unravel the traditional dualism between volunteers and less privileged “others” through challenging students to acknowledge that there is a historical material relationship between the former and the latter. Those students who are able to critically reflect on the privilege of service begin to rethink their own role in society and acknowledge their own complicity in the making of challenges faced by those they seek to serve. For those students who face such challenges themselves at home, this framework typically sheds new light on their responsibility to work in their own community and demand changes in policies that perpetuate poverty and hinder the community’s ability to determine its future. At minimum, a healthy critique of the twenty-first-century practice of community service has the potential to encourage humility in students as they begin to see that they have little chance of impacting the broader issues of poverty unless they use their own privilege to take a larger leadership role — as in the case of Vincent de Paul — in promoting social change.

Discovering Vincentian Service Learning at DePaul University

This article seeks to examine the development of service learning by outlining a set of key approaches that guide the integration of the pedagogy into the curriculum at DePaul University. As a mission-driven effort dating back to the late 1990s, the introduction of service learning has brought to light new ways of thinking about the university’s role in educating students and engaging with surrounding communities. Service learning is understood as a central component in the university’s strategic plan to enhance the institution’s academic reputation and graduate socially responsible, ethically-minded students who think of service and civic engagement as important parts of their lives. In contributing to the achievement of these goals, the Steans Center must incessantly reflect on its own internal structures and behaviors. Does it reproduce the same oppressive forces that it seeks to eliminate? This is a question it continuously addresses by remaining cognizant of its capacity.

---
21 For example, see the compilation of writings titled Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement, Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Garry Peller, and Kendall Thomas, eds. (New York: New Press, 1995).
23 Pujo, Vincent de Paul.
separated the academy from directly addressing — as opposed to simply objectifying — critical social issues at the community level. This separation, one might contend, has a role in legitimizing the unearned privilege associated with myths of meritocracy and equal opportunity for all in the United States. Done well, service learning exposes structural barriers — racism, classism, sexism — to increased social equality. A positive side effect of the pedagogy is that students begin to think more critically about the origins of these barriers as they exist in their academic disciplines, workplaces, and personal lives. Most importantly, they begin to understand the limitations of community service in resolving systemic social issues, and that structural change requires deeper involvement in politics and policy making. As this message is repeated throughout the curriculum and thus seeps into the educational fabric of the institution, the pedagogy has the tremendous potential to transform the university into a more effective producer of social change rather than simply a credential-bestowing educator of those who can afford it. I would argue that DePaul’s rapidly growing service learning initiative is already very much in sync with this ideal.

How Center staff relate to one another has a direct practical impact on their potential to develop successful relationships with community organizations that serve both their interests and the interests of faculty and students in DePaul courses. Successful service learning emerges from the Center’s efforts to engage with these organizations in a way that recognizes the damaging effect of past academic approaches to community engagement and the role of the community in educating DePaul students. This means acknowledging that these organizations are assets in their communities, and repeatedly reminding them that the university’s effort is not to appropriate their knowledge for the sake of teaching or research. Rather, the goal is to develop collaborative partnerships in which students learn and community organizations benefit from projects that the organizations themselves define. The Center sees this goal as both an important “best practice” in service-learning course development and, as I have argued, one that is highly compatible with the university’s mission.

The Vincentian Family has a long history of transforming higher education through creating schools and universities to educate those historically excluded from such institutions and also through engaging its students in direct service and advocacy with underserved and oppressed groups. During the early nineteenth century French scholar and founder of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, Frederick Ozanam, provided an early Vincentian model of linking college students to service and making it meaningful to their academic pursuits. At the beginning of the twenty-first century DePaul has taken up service learning at a critical time in its history. The university’s timely and serious institutionalization of the pedagogy has contributed to development of a national and perhaps global movement to integrate civic engagement initiatives more deeply into higher education curricula.

If this movement among universities and colleges continues to be taken seriously, service learning can be a shot of humility into the core of an academic world that is increasingly oriented toward commodification of education. The cure is hopefully to untangle the ivy that has historically

What Would Saint Vincent de Paul Do About Today’s Global Poverty?

Personalism vs. Paternalism: Social Work’s Role Within a Vincentian Institution of Higher Education in Creating University/Community Bridging Opportunities to Assist in the Eradication of Poverty

By
TROY HARDEN
Field Education Coordinator, DePaul University Master of Social Work Program

This paper will explore and compare concepts associated with DePaul University’s mission and values statement and the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics in order to develop and sustain community/university partnerships that work towards poverty eradication. In the city of Chicago, many people are affected and made vulnerable by the circumstance of poverty. Living in poverty, however, means different things to different people. Social work can and must bring attention to and address the many levels of vulnerability that poor people are experiencing in the world.

Introduction

If someone is new to the city of Chicago, or has been segregated for much of their lives from the rich diversity of this multicultural city, they are likely to be warned of neighborhoods that “you just shouldn’t go into.” Terms such as “west side” or “south side” take on special meanings that are reinforced as one drives in certain directions and across Mason-Dixon-like lines in the city. Whereas the physical boundaries of race and class are sometimes less than clear, the displacement of former residents is made evident by new signs of privilege (e.g., Starbucks, new schools, and “green spaces”) and other hallmarks of neighborhood change. Sadly, these boundaries have been internalized within ourselves too, segregating our compassion for those who have the least from our own desires to seek comfort and success.

DePaul University has lived within and around these boundaries since its inception as an institution designed in part to educate first-generation college students within the urban center of Chicago. DePaul makes its presence seen and felt in a number of ways, from the number of its graduates who currently live and work within the city (Chicago’s current mayor, Richard M.
Daley, is a graduate of its law school, and Commonwealth Edison Chairman and CEO Frank Clark received his Bachelor of Arts degree there), to the number of its students who perform community service in Chicago neighborhoods (over 3,000 students during the 2006-2007 academic year alone). In developing a social work program, DePaul has committed itself to engaging the community and reaching out to those most vulnerable in Chicago. DePaul’s connection to urban life and to Vincentian values ties its mission to a preferential option for the poor. This article explores how DePaul’s mission and values accord with the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics in our effort to develop and sustain community/university partnerships that work towards the eradication of poverty.

Introducing Saint Vincent

I work and teach within DePaul’s Masters of Social Work program. It is a new program here at the university, and I was a part of its inception. I originally came to DePaul in 1998 not as a social work educator but as a social work practitioner, helping develop a component of its community mental health center, the Urban Systems of Care program (USC). The USC was a state-funded program designed to offer mental health services for children and families living in Chicago’s public housing — primarily within the Cabrini-Green and Lathrop Homes housing developments — and to address the stigma associated with mental illness and mental health services within communities of color and among those in poverty. We sought to challenge the current mental health system by addressing the process by which children are labeled with potentially discriminating diagnoses early in life and then begin a slow process of becoming institutionalized within the larger mental health system.

My first task within the Cabrini-Green housing development was to meet with community elders, leaders, the resident management corporation (RMC), and the leadership advisory councils (LAC), as well as other existing social service and nonprofit agencies. This is an important show of respect, one that many who work in institutions of higher education overlook. The first question I was asked by the president of the LAC was, “Isn’t DePaul attempting to build over our property?” Of course I had no answer. I assured them that this was news to me, but that I would find out what was going on. Apparently, there had been some talk at one point that DePaul was looking to build a soccer field or the like near the “white” buildings of Cabrini-Green. Members of the DePaul administration confirmed that the rumor had been true but that the plan had been abandoned some years before. However, the communal and the institutional memory of the plan were still very present.

One of the last remaining “white” buildings of the Cabrini-Green housing development. Over the last decade most have been demolished to make way for development and gentrification. Public Domain

Mindy Thompson Fullilove called the phenomenon of residential displacement and its resulting impact on the residents of many low-income communities “root shock.” In a book of the same name she describes the trauma associated with displacement, and the ways in which people’s emotional lives are often neglected when events like the tearing down of public housing occur. Although the soccer field at Cabrini-Green was never built, the memory, fear, and trauma associated with its construction remained. This is an example of how large institutions, regardless of their history, can develop a reputation. My work was to help build a relationship with the community, which meant that we had to work on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. It meant explaining mental health to people at schools, community meetings, youth celebrations, and the like, and it also meant attending tenant meetings that looked at addressing university policies associated with impending community displacement.

An organization I am familiar with that recently started working on Chicago’s south side began by setting up an “outreach” center without ever attempting to reach out to community leaders. This resulted in mistrust among community residents, and in the end the results of the program failed to match exteriors of the Cabrini buildings, named for Frances Cabrini and located south of Division Street, were built of brick and red in color. Hence many residents, and even outsiders, often referred to the Cabrini buildings as the “reds” and the Green homes as the “whites.”

1 For more information concerning DePaul University’s Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning, see Howard Rosing, Ph.D., “Untangling the Ivy: Discovering Vincentian Service Learning at DePaul University,” published in this same issue of *Vincentian Heritage*.

2 The “white” buildings within the Cabrini-Green housing development, named for William Green and located north of Division Street, appeared white due to their concrete exteriors. The
the organization’s admirable intentions. A mission to go out and do good, became, as Ivan Illich puts it, “a road to hell paved with good intentions.”

When students from the university enter a relationship with the community, the notions of power and privilege often interact. For community organizations — many of which are vulnerable to the problems of budget cuts by federal and local governments, lack of programming creativity due to funding restraints, and the need to develop and maintain relationships with various economic and social sources — the university is often seen as a potential resource and a willing ally to their plight. However, institutions of higher learning have often exploited community interests, using community participants as research subjects with little return, displacing them via land grabs into economically depressed areas, and offering service and volunteerism that impose values from outside of the community based on perceptions of the community-as-deficit.

This relationship, based on power and privilege, can be difficult to negotiate, and a community voice that declares its own needs in opposition to those of the university becomes more important to understand. Many academics approach the community with projects and ideas without asking first what its needs are. One professor, who happened to be white and had been monitoring literature in her discipline, offered that she wanted “to help poor people.” In her course proposal she equated the black community in Chicago with poor people, using the two terms interchangeably in her rhetoric. For her, “poor” and “black” had become synonymous in spite of large African-American communities within Chicago that were predominantly middle-class, not to mention the presence of middle-class and economically wealthy African-Americans throughout the city and within her workplace. Well-meaning professors commit gaffes like this frequently.

It is important to be clear that being black or Latino does not equate with being poor, and that being poor does not mean you are a person of color. The dynamic that often occurs is one in which race defines the perception associated with class and terms like black, Latino, and poor become synonymous. We cannot be afraid to look at these two issues in this dynamic of poverty: that of class and that of race and ethnicity.

In my experience one of two things occurs when we discuss the issue of race as it relates to poverty. One is the claim that “it’s about poverty, not about race” — a discourse which emphasizes the class issue and minimizes race. Our country’s greatest sin, or greatest wounding, involved the issue of race. In Chicago and throughout the U.S. today, blacks and Latinos make up the largest percentage of people on the margins. The other problem with this perspective is how other groups are labeled and defined as “privileged,” as in the idea of Asians being the “model minority” within our culture, or the denial of actual privileges that do exist among us. Education about cross-cultural relations and historical oppression becomes important. University personnel should seek the history of the communities they enter from multiple sources including academic sources, print media, and experienced community workers.

Abram and Cruse offer an approach that may be helpful in addressing how to integrate faculty and students within diverse communities in respectful, learning-centered ways. Borrowing the concept of “reverse mission” from theological and mission studies, they suggest moving away from the traditional mission model of teaching, preaching, and converting in communities different from one’s own. They instead offer that the “conversion” should occur within the individual and reflect an intellectual and moral commitment to human solidarity and equality and justice. This approach, a shift more philosophical than religious, can be an entry point for many faculty and students to enter the field.

University administrators depend upon faculty to challenge students concerning their privilege and dominant group ideology. Students often encounter little challenge to dominant ideology, and may not be challenged by community-based organizational representatives. To introduce DePaul into the communities of Chicago in many ways means to introduce Saint Vincent there. The danger is that Vincentian personalism could turn into Vincentian paternalism, wherein the compassion and integrity of Saint Vincent is replaced by notions of “saving” the noble savage without the humility and respect to listen to, learn from, and work with the community.

In this regard, the university can become an “educational partner.” When I worked in DePaul’s Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning, charged with making connections between Chicago communities and our students, we felt that the idea of educational partnership was critical to our work. Here, Saint Vincent’s question and answer concerning human dignity becomes relevant: “Why help this disheveled old man?” — “Because you’ve seen through the other side of the coin.” Thomas McKenna, C.M., suggests here that we can benefit from an exchange with another as well as the other person can from us, that “other side of the coin.”


6  “Vincentian personalism” as described in DePaul University’s mission statement is “ennobling the God-given dignity of each person.” For further explanation of this term, see DePaul University’s Mission Statement at www.mission.depaul.edu.

condescension or belittlement, but instead an understanding of the need to build relationships across culture, to learn with instead of learning apart, to learn from instead of learning about. In seeing from the other side, we find that our pasts and our present are inextricably linked together.

So my work as an administrator, educator, community organizer, and clinician is to be clear about my own privileges, education, and lens as a community member from a historically marginalized group. I have to be conscious of the letters associated with my name — MSW/LCSW, etc. — and of the fact that DePaul University and Saint Vincent are also “at my back.”

I heard someone say once that it is my responsibility to let the community know that I have not left them — not theirs to figure it out. This can come via entering the relationship with humility, respect, and a genuine desire to “learn from” rather than just “learn about.” If DePaul seeks to “contribute to the societal, economic, cultural, and ethical quality of life in the [Chicagoland] metropolitan area and beyond,” then we must understand that what is in the best interest of the community may not always be in the best interest of DePaul.

Yet what is in the best interest of the community will often be in the best interest of DePaul. It is normally our role to put students first, but when the discussion turns to mission this can change. Thinking of education as a service to the greater good is in the best interest of everyone, not just students who go on to graduate school or enjoy campus life the most. Manley, Buffa, Dube, and Reed, in describing the Black Metropolis project and model at DePaul, offer that community service must move from the “soup kitchen” model, to learning opportunities that integrate community institutions, community residents, university personnel, and students in mutually beneficial partnerships. This offers students a richer learning experience, and demonstrates how “collaborating with various community actors can foster, augment, and sustain a relationship of reciprocity between university and community agents.”

Mission Aligned

We started the Master of Social Work program at DePaul thinking about these issues and communal responses to ending poverty, motivated by a commitment to social justice and to creating engaged faculty who could teach theory and also practice social work — leaders who would understand happenings on the ground and what was in the “air.” In today’s world, so many people affected by poverty go under the radar of society. People on the margins, voiceless at times, but never without resilience, make up a huge percentage of the world’s population. Living in poverty means different things to different people; social work can and must address the many levels of discomfort people are experiencing. We wanted our program to offer students the chance to “get their hands dirty,” ready to do anything necessary to aid others, as well as lead.

DePaul University was founded on the premise that all people have dignity and deserve respect and opportunity. Its mission has much in common with the aims of professional social work. Through working directly with people and within organizations, professional social work is dedicated to “…enhanc[ing] human well-being and help[ing] meet the basic human needs of all people.”

The profession’s central tenets center on service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. It is a service profession and, as such, is dedicated to extending opportunities to all, advocating for the voiceless, and working towards improving society. Likewise, DePaul University’s mission is “manifested by the members of the DePaul community in a sensitivity to and care for the needs of each other and of those served, with a special concern for the deprived members of society.”

The MSW Degree Program’s purpose is further stated in its operational mission statement:

- The DePaul University MSW Degree Program trains ethical and competent leaders in the social work profession.
- The DePaul University MSW Degree Program models and prepares students to work collaboratively in partnership with individuals, organizations, and communities working towards mutually-defined goals.
- The DePaul University MSW Degree Program promotes social and economic justice through its emphasis on community practice, empowerment, social development, and collaboration.
- The DePaul University MSW Degree Program models an inclusive context for learning and an appreciation of human rights and diversity in all of its operations.

The mission of DePaul University’s MSW Program is to support a pragmatic approach to eradicating poverty, emphasizing human rights and

11 Ibid.
12 Board of Trustees, DePaul University.
focusing on community and social development, teaching students to work with vulnerable populations to promote service and social justice. This mission fits well with Saint Vincent’s pragmatic approach.

One student offers us an example of the type of person who embodies this program. Marcus, a Native American, came to our program from Utah after having seen our website and read about the mission of DePaul. An MSW student has to do two internships for a combined total of 1,120 hours in order to graduate. This process is viewed as the heart of social work: students engage directly within communities, and they merge classroom knowledge with practical experience. Marcus spent his first year at the American Indian Center, getting to know Chicago’s Native American population and working with youth and seniors as a group counselor and case manager. Next year he will work with children and families at the Saint Vincent DePaul Center, and later take the benefit of his experience back to his reservation in Utah, where he will assist in the development of a similar community-based agency.

So what would Saint Vincent do about today’s poverty? Much like him, we want our students to be agents of change — compassionate, yet pragmatic and schooled in the nuances of effecting change, including economic development and community collaboration.

The purpose of the program is to expose students to the poverty and conflict of Chiapas with the hope that the exposure will transform their world view sufficiently to persuade them to continue working in human rights or public service. With proper support and opportunities, those students could choose a professional path that would significantly contribute to the reduction of poverty in this and other countries.

The Traditional Law School Experience Does Not Encourage Public Service

Some background on the standard law school experience might be

---


---
helpful in understanding the need for more programs like the Chiapas Human Rights Practicum. There are few courses like “Law and the U.S. Role in the Developing World” or “The Waning of the Rule of Law” — and where they do exist, they are usually taught seminar-style for small groups of self-selected students.

Most law schools sponsor clinical or extern programs which are largely public-interest. There is also the occasional course in poverty law or civil rights, or more specifically tailored public-interest courses addressing subjects like affordable housing, child protection or consumer protection. Those are typically higher level courses that reach a smaller number of students, largely because poverty-oriented courses are not tested on the bar exam. There may also be specialized programs, like DePaul’s Center for Public Interest Law, which attempt to create a community within the law school so that progressive or well-intentioned students do not feel completely marginalized. Finally, many schools offer experiential options like the Chiapas program, Hurricane Katrina immersion programs, or community-based volunteer programs.

Otherwise, as law school professors, we are left only to squeeze notions of social justice and equality within the interstices of a traditional curriculum.

Many altruistic students entering law school with lofty dreams of public service find themselves beaten down by a constant diet of arid legal doctrine and the reluctance of mainstream faculty to include issues of the poor in their syllabi. Most faculty teach that “thinking like a lawyer” means to be critical and impersonal and to avoid subscribing to any particular value system. There is no “right” answer, the orthodoxy goes, and most positions are “arguable.” The political connotations of a result, the values behind it, are separated from their social context. This sort of unhappiness may affect public-interest oriented students more deeply than others because the public-interest student typically finds little succor or shelter in the typical business-oriented law school program. Law students also feel they have less time to think about their idealism when faced with the harsh realities of school, grades, the bar exam, and the job search. In the absence of value-based teaching or course content, and with few courses in the mainstream curriculum that even approach their values or interests, students often find that their positive motivations shift toward externally imposed values and motives. Their grades may suffer because thinking “like a lawyer” discourages them from thinking as they ordinarily would and suppresses their socially-minded instincts. On the other hand, they may also be very successful academically, which can lead to tempting offers of high salaries from big firms that could turn them away from the public-interest passion that brought them to law school.

History of the Chiapas Human Rights Practicum

Events in Chiapas captured my attention when conflict exploded in January

...who people are, how they live, how they struggle, how they suffer, how they interact with others, how others interact with them, and how they relate to conventional governmental and corporate power need not be taken into account in any sustained and serious way in training lawyers. Generic legal education teaches law students to approach practice as if all people and all social life were homogeneous.6

This approach to legal education causes substantial distress7 in many students who find themselves, as one put it, “the walking wounded: demoralized, dispirited, and profoundly disengaged from the law school experience.”8 To succeed, a student must suppress emotions or any sense of justice in favor of an “objective” and “reasonable” evaluation of cold facts separated from their social context. This sort of unhappiness may affect public-interest students more deeply than others because the public-interest student typically finds little succor or shelter in the typical business-oriented law school program. Law students also feel they have less time to think about their idealism when faced with the harsh realities of school, grades, the bar exam, and the job search. In the absence of value-based teaching or course content, and with few courses in the mainstream curriculum that even approach their values or interests, students often find that their positive motivations shift toward externally imposed values and motives. Their grades may suffer because thinking “like a lawyer” discourages them from thinking as they ordinarily would and suppresses their socially-minded instincts. On the other hand, they may also be very successful academically, which can lead to tempting offers of high salaries from big firms that could turn them away from the public-interest passion that brought them to law school.

6 Ibid., 307.
7 Lawrence Krieger, “Institutional Denial About the Dark Side of Law School, and Fresh Empirical Guidance for Constructively Breaking the Silence,” 52 Journal of Legal Education 114 (2002) [citations omitted]: commenting that anxiety, hostility, depression, and other symptoms among law students are eight to fifteen times that of the general population.
11 Harris and Shultz, “Critique of Pure Reason,” at 1773. In addition, Stover’s study also concluded that students who express commitment to the public interest drops by about 50 percent from the time of entry into law school to graduation year. Stover, Making It and Breaking It, 45-46.
12 The top ten percent are usually invited to join the Law Review, from which the top firms usually recruit. With starting salaries at the top firms reaching $160,000 in 2007, and with average student debt now topping $100,000 for law school alone, the temptations are strong indeed.
1994 with the armed uprising of the Zapatistas and their temporary conquest of four towns, including the regional state capital. Subcomandante Marcos became, almost overnight, a hero to the indigenous poor of Chiapas and leftists around the world. I first visited Chiapas in late January 1994 as part of a delegation of North Americans seeking to observe the human rights situation and report on it.13

Chiapas is the southernmost state in Mexico, bordering on Guatemala. It is the second richest biosphere in the western hemisphere. Its resources include hydroelectric energy, wood, pharmaceuticals, petroleum, and water.14 Its population is overwhelmingly indigenous and overwhelmingly poor.15 The indigenous speak any one of fifty-seven different languages16 and 36.5 percent do not speak Spanish.17 The figures on education, health services, infant and maternal mortality, and the other key social indices are on a par with the poorest countries of the world. Migration to the United States has increased dramatically since the onset of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in January, 1994,18 which forced Mexico to import heavily subsidized U.S. corn and many other products to the detriment of Mexican farmers.19 American companies are heavily invested in Chiapas, draining its natural resources and displacing thousands of Chiapaneco campesinos from their homelands.20

Chiapas is also a laboratory for the investigation of human rights violations such as arbitrary detention and torture, violence against women, misuse of the justice system, development of paramilitary organizations, repression, community displacement, and, of course corruption. In short, the neoliberal model of economic domination by multinational companies and the abandonment by the Mexican government of whatever limited role it may have had in the advancement of social programs finds one of its greatest successes to date in Chiapas.21

What makes Chiapas a particularly attractive destination for a study-abroad program is that the contradictions between the poor and those who would exploit them are blatant and impossible to avoid or dismiss.22 Even the most naive or uninterested observer cannot help but see the disparities, discrimination, and maltreatment while profits are narrowly distributed to a privileged few. Chiapas is an economic, social, political, and sometimes military battleground in high relief.

It was not until 1998 that I learned of a funding opportunity which allowed me to take law students to Chiapas for the first time in May, 1999. After two weeks of introductory classes in the safety of Merida, a lovely colonial city in the Yucatan, my assistant and I took fourteen students to Chiapas.

18 Migration to the United States from Chiapas has now reached close to 50,000 persons annually. See www.sipaz.org/data.
19 The Zapatista uprising was, in fact, timed to coincide with the effective date of the NAFTA accords.
20 Some of the principal exploiters are Coca-Cola, Monsanto, and Ford Motor Company. Coca-Cola is accused of taking water previously belonging to ejidos — the collective community — and converting it for commercial use. In so doing, the accusation continues, the company contaminates the remaining water. Mexico consumes more Coca-Cola than any other country in the world. Ford Motor Company participates in “carbon capture,” by which the company “adopts” a forest, in this case the Lacandon jungle, to absorb emitted carbon and convert it into oxygen. The company is also urging the development of ecotourism and research projects in the Lacandon — all of which negatively affect indigenous communities already there. Monsanto produces genetically modified seeds for corn, cotton, tomato, and soy at a production center in the Chiapas’ Montes Azules region. They then copyright and market the seeds throughout the world. The unregulated dissemination of “transgenics” has been repeatedly detected throughout Chiapas. See Annual Report for 2005, CIEPAC at www.ciepac.org.
22 Leading more than one student to remark that Chiapas is “so different that it’s like another world.”
for just a week. In those days there were blockades everywhere, and people doing human-rights work spoke in whispers. Our first meeting with Chiapanecos, an hour after getting off the plane, was under a tree away from all buildings and traffic. Two hours later we were visiting Zapatistas incarcerated in the nearby prison.

Since that first program, restricted to Spanish-speaking students who spent just one week on the dusty back roads of Chiapas, we evolved into a three-week stay in Chiapas where everyone did some actual work in human-rights offices. In 2007 the program was opened to non-Spanish speakers for the first time, everyone spent ten days in Chiapas and some would stay for the summer. This summer’s program was the eighth running of what is now called the Chiapas Human Rights Practicum.

The Importance of the Exposure to Poverty

It was always understood, by me at least, that the Chiapas experience would be of much more value to our students than to our hosts. In spite of the shortness of our stay, DePaul students have written articles about Chiapas, delivered a report to the United Nations, spoken at many events, and generally tried to educate their fellow law students and all Americans about a reality seldom seen. A few students have been able to continue, from a distance, concrete casework begun in Chiapas. A few others have developed friendships in Chiapas that have lasted. In addition, a modest financial contribution is made in the name of DePaul University to the offices where the students work, and people who meet with us are generally paid a small honorarium. Nonetheless, many students have commented that they felt they were taking more from Chiapas than they were giving.

The purpose of the program is to expose the students to poverty, transform their understanding of the root causes, nurture their commitment to change, and do this all so well that the university will institutionalize the program. Not many students have seen the kind of overwhelming poverty that hits the visitor to Chiapas, where it is common to see people living under tarps, in garbage dumps, and without water, electricity, sewage systems, schools, clinics, or anything else that most of us take for granted. For most law students it is a completely alien experience to see these conditions up close and, in some cases, to actually spend considerable time in these resource-deprived communities.

The program focuses on interacting with Chiapanecos so that the impact on students is far more than visual. The students come to understand something about the obstacles to decent living: the complete lack of financial support from government, the lack of infrastructure, the lack of training or education, and of course the unresponsiveness of the legal system. The meagerness of the peoples’ material lives has always caused strong reactions in the students as they listened to the stories of hardship, deprivation, and disaster told with equanimity and without rancor. The issue is whether they can understand why so many live in poverty while so few live well.

Students learn that a few families own an enormous percentage of the land, and that unemployment statistics hovering around 50 percent do not even count the chronically unemployed. Seventy percent of the people live below the poverty line. Almost 80 percent have no electricity or drinking water. Fully 85 percent have no drainage facilities and 80 percent have mud floors. The leading cause of death is poverty-related, and 54 percent suffer from malnutrition. Over 1.5 million people in the state have no access to medical services. When students find out that corn farmers by the thousands in Mexico have been undersold by the heavily subsidized and usually genetically modified corn from the U.S., they come to understand why so many thousands of people whom we call aliens seek to come to the U.S. for the privilege of working our lowest-paid jobs. They come to understand how the Chiapanecos are being used as the cheapest of labor, and how goods and resources produced in the communities of Chiapas are mostly for the great cities abroad. As one student put it: “We live so well because they live so badly.” At the workshop of some indigenous women weavers, one student commented that because the weavers’ work is for export, we consumers are complicit in westernizing their way of life, westernizing their artistry, and subliminally saying that their way is no longer viable. Are those volunteers who help teach the women marketing and bookkeeping skills, management techniques, and business organization undermining the traditional lifestyle? Experiences like these begin the transformation process.

The Process of Transformation

Most of the students come from middle-class homes, and often from relatively traditional parents who may dream of having a wealthy, influential lawyer in the family. The pressures on those students are both strong and sublime. The conditions in Chiapas may change their perception of reality.

23 Ejidos, or communities, control less and less land in Chiapas since a constitutional “reform,” passed in anticipation of the onset of NAFTA, allows ejido land to be alienated. Ejido land almost invariably consists of small subsistence plots which do not ordinarily have the capacity to produce more than necessary to feed the community. Since NAFTA, commercial growers have purchased enormous amounts of land which they then convert to their own commercial uses, forcing the indigenous to either leave the land or to work it for the benefit of the large grower.

24 Most statistics are thoroughly documented in Marcos, Ya Basta! Ten Years of the Zapatista Uprising (AK Press, 2004).

25 Henriques and Patel, NAFTA, Corn and Mexico’s Agricultural Liberalization (2004 Report, Interhemispheric Resource Center), americas.irc-online.reports
The question is whether, ultimately, they will apply their Chiapas experience to their own lives. The goal is not only to transform the students’ views about Chiapas, but also to transform their overall worldview so that the Chiapas experience can be transposed onto their American reality.

Part of that transformative process can easily be seen as the students question their role in society and their goals as lawyers. A few of their comments might be illustrative. One student said: “Coming here and learning about this helps me to use my voice. It doesn’t totally resolve the conflict within myself, but seeing this helps me figure it out.” Another student commented: “Biopiracy makes my blood boil. That medicine they are making from these herbs will only be sold in the U.S. and Western Europe. How can we live well in our culture and still respect other countries?” Another student, after a visit to a child-care center in Chiapas: “We are looking for something that fulfills us. I want my eyes to shine as brightly as [the child care worker’s] did.” In the child care center: “It makes me wonder how we raise our children.” And finally, a general comment on our hosts: “They found how to serve the world within their world. We have to find how to do it in ours.”

Another part of the process is seen when the student draws connections between similar realities: Chiapas and Chicago. I am reminded of the student who commented that, in Chiapas, he felt like a “walking privilege” wherever he went. I took that to mean that as we traveled throughout Chiapas, giving groups money and sometimes food, we must not forget that we have the privilege of the powerful who can dispense resources and then leave. He went on to say, however, that he felt the same way in the criminal courts of Chicago. “I’m privileged there too. My clients are people of color and mostly poor. I am the hero — being a helper is a power.” Another student drew the connection to the American urban poor: “People here are fighting for rights to the land. It’s exactly the same back home where people are being kicked out of public housing.” On the sense of community: “I have a community just like they do here, but I am not doing much for them. We are not carrying our little brothers and sisters on our back. The rich in the U.S. have less community than the poor.” Another picked up on that thought: “There is no consideration of community by policy-makers. We are digging ourselves a hole. Lack of community makes social change so much more difficult.”

By the end of the trip the students feel, as one put it, “very stretched out.” Others commented: “This trip just connected all the dots for me.” Another student: “This is one of those experiences that will not hit until later. We have learned lessons about home that we don’t know yet.” Another: “My first year made me forget why I was in law school. This trip reminded me.” And finally one said: “Make sure we tell this story.”

When the reality is overwhelming and when the reasons for it are obvious, there is no rationale behind which the students can hide. There is no alternative but to start thinking systematically. What historical events have led to this situation? Why is there no respect for indigenous culture? How can a country as rich as Mexico let its resources be expropriated by the country to the north while most Mexican people have so little?

This analysis makes the students move away from known and safe ideas. It helps them understand that some problems may call for radical solutions. As public-interest lawyers, they will see that any extreme views may make them unpopular with judges and fellow members of the bar. Law schools train students to think of themselves as part of the system, part of the confraternity that can make justice work. Public-interest lawyers learn not to accept rules or laws that make no sense for the poor, and to develop a sense of challenge to the inequities of the legal system. Accepting the law as it is makes one a less effective advocate and will do nothing to reduce poverty.

After seeing a group of indigenous women talk together before answering each question, after meeting with a group of women lawyers whose job

---

26 The term is commonly used to describe the exploitation of the biodiversity of a region.


28 See Julie A. Su, “Making the Invisible Visible: The Garment Industry’s Dirty Laundry,” 1 Journal of Gender, Race & Justice 408 (1998). “I am convinced that we succeeded... because we would not accept procedures that made no sense either in our hearts or to our minds. It was an important lesson that our formal education might, at times, actually make us less effective advocates for the causes we believe in and for the people we care about.”
titles are nonexistent (“We are all directors”), after seeing time and time again that the Zapatistas make decisions only after community process, the students also come to understand that lawyers are not necessarily the leaders or the deciders but sometimes just the implementers. They understand that lawyers not only must work with the community they represent, but also take leadership from that community. Hopefully, the Chiapas students are learning to distinguish political from legal decisions and to understand the importance of adopting a legal strategy that mirrors the community’s political goals. The notion of “community-based” lawyering must take root in immigration, economic development, and other kinds of lawyering that serve the poor.

The best way to instill these notions in the law student is to connect them to the community through clinics and volunteer programs, and also to bring the community into the law school. In my experience, law students love hearing from people who are not lawyers as much as they like hearing from those who are. Community groups associated with the homeless, the ex-offenders, the public housing residents, the victims of domestic violence, and so many others should be included in as many law school programs as possible. The more students hear of real-life social issues, the better they will feel about making a public-service career choice.

Another part of the challenge is to change the students’ case-specific approach to social problems to a cause-specific approach. What legal work will advance the community or social goal? Law school teaches almost exclusively the importance of winning the particular case, to the detriment of the long-term strategies.29 This is not to suggest that individuals should be sacrificed to the greater good, but simply that law students should begin thinking in more general or systematic terms. Students need to think of “development” in a context that is global or regional, not just local, and to think of “human rights,” not just individual rights.

We also need to teach the importance of working with other social-service professionals in an interdisciplinary approach. The lawyer needs to understand deference to the expert judgment of the cooperating professionals, thereby relieving the lawyer of power that is probably undeserved. Understanding that these are complex and interconnected issues is key, and making those connections leads to a wider understanding of the issues.

How to sustain the Returning Student’s Interest in Public Service

The natural first step in the nurturing process is to draw out the Chiapas experience so that students can deepen their understanding. Having visited the area, they should be encouraged to devise follow-up projects or reports that not only will help them to know better what they have seen, but may also help them to continue relationships with groups there. One year, DePaul students translated a funding proposal for a group of indigenous women weavers, put it into a format more familiar to American funders, and then helped market the idea to philanthropic organizations here. Another year, a group of students wrote an in-depth Chiapas report for a legal magazine, while others presented a report to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees on displacement communities in Chiapas. This year, as a first project, students wrote a series of brief stories for a law school newsletter. They have followed up by raising funds for the construction of community buildings in poor communities we visited. Others have organized a one-day conference on sustainable development, inviting several Chiapanecos to participate. Perhaps our greatest achievement was to have the archbishop of Chiapas, Don Samuel Ruiz Garcia, an icon in Mexico and the former mediator of the Chiapas conflict, invited to DePaul for a three-day visit. In helping Chiapas-program veterans to educate others about Chiapas, there is hopefully a residual effect of helping them to understand the role of lawyer as teacher, organizer and, in this case, reporter. Modest ambitions will lead to something of impact that will stamp the experience more deeply in the students’ consciousness.

On a more long-term basis, the law school experience can be adjusted. A natural sequel for the Chiapas student, for example, would be a formal or volunteer program, offering the chance to work in the Chicago immigrant community where one sees first-hand the end of the migration line. Also impressive are the various hurricane relief efforts which show students how failed infrastructure, lack of a social-service network, and racial discrimination exist here in the U.S. just as in Chiapas. Our ability to maintain their interest may affect fundamental career decisions.

Law schools also must develop curricula and classroom materials that teach about poverty. We need courses that force students to ask themselves: how does this law help disadvantaged communities? We must help students see their legal work as “justice work,” meaning that the result of the case studied is meaningless until its application is understood. This approach helps them analyze what kind of work can directly or indirectly address some aspect of the overall problem.

The curriculum also needs more “law and society” courses that expose students to the ways in which non-lawyers view the law. Programs should be created that cooperate with other schools in the university, particularly those teaching social work or working for economic reform. Students themselves should be turned into advocates for change in law school, demanding

The question becomes how to place those students in jobs working for the poor without requiring them to take vows of poverty. Public-interest lawyers who work for poverty agencies such as legal aid are paid far less than similarly-situated colleagues in commercial firms. Given the typical graduate’s overwhelming law-school and undergraduate debt, the temptation to enter the corporate legal world is strong. Congress has most recently reacted to this problem with the passage of a loan forgiveness program that, after ten years of public-interest service, will wipe out any remaining debt. Various governmental agencies operate their own internal loan forgiveness programs. Law schools, as well, need to pursue the creation or expansion of loan forgiveness as a primary goal of their fund-raising campaigns. At DePaul, reunion classes are urged to consider loan forgiveness program contributions for their class gift. A special faculty, staff, and student committee should be created to publicize and solicit donations for the program. There are any number of fund-raising possibilities which, if successful, could result in a yearly contribution to each public-service lawyer/alumnus in need.

Public service must also be high on the agenda of other law school programs. There may be other centers or programs that should develop the public-service aspects of their offerings. The law school administration needs also to have public service integrated into its programs. For example, the career services/placement office should be encouraged to focus as much on public service as it does on corporate or business law. Communication centers within the law school should feature public-service events as prominently as their other events. Graduation planners should consider a distinguished public servant as the principal speaker. The possibilities are as varied as they are numerous.

Law school’s also need to expand their institutional commitment to continue and expand programs like Chiapas. At DePaul the undergraduate school places particular emphasis on “community-based service learning,” and that commitment needs to extend much more substantially to the College more courses relevant to social issues and seeking to expand clinical programs oriented toward the public interest.

In a non-curricular vein, much isolation can be alleviated by creating a community within the law school and the university in which Chiapas-program veterans, and their public-spirited colleagues, do not feel marginalized. At DePaul, for example, there is the Center for Public Interest Law, whose broad action program of conferences, speakers’ panels, receptions, volunteer programs, and the like helps law students build a strong foundation with each other and offers them a place to not only critique law school but also share ideas and plans. Students may also learn to work collectively on their projects and, beyond that, to connect with social movements outside the school. As one Chiapas veteran put it: “This program is part of my community. Your thoughts connect me to you. You need community to get through law school.”

What Institutional Changes Will Help Nurture the Students’ Commitment to Fight Poverty?

The ultimate desired outcome of the Chiapas program is to reduce poverty. In this context, the principal strategy is to encourage and enable all its students to pursue a legal career committed to the service of the poor and underprivileged. Lawyers can be a very potent ally in helping the poor to gain control of the forces which oppress them and begin serious work to end poverty.

Law students today graduate with debt for law school alone averaging between $80,000 and $100,000, depending on a number of variables. It is not at all rare for a student to graduate with close to $200,000 in debt from both law school and undergraduate school. The median entry level salary for civil legal services jobs is $36,000. On a ten-year repayment schedule, debt payments in this situation will total more than $1,000 per month, leaving just over $1,000 for living expenses. The first year associate at a big firm will typically be paid more for the first-year than a legal-services lawyer at the top of the pay scale. “Financing the Future: Responses to the Rising Debt of Law Students,” Report by Equal Justice Works (2006). At: www.equaljusticeworks.org .


Law schools in numerous states operate state loan forgiveness programs. See www.abanet.org/legalservices/LRAP.

The Steans Center for Community-Based Service Learning. See cbsl.depaul.edu .
What Would Vincent Study Abroad?
Option for the Poor and Systemic Change for the Development of Socially Responsible Leaders

By
MARCO TAVANTI, PH.D.
Director of Chiapas Sustainable Development Program
AND
HEATHER EVANS, M.S.
Alumna, DePaul University School of Public Service Chiapas Program

This article considers the value and practices of the DePaul University School of Public Service (SPS) Chiapas Program in light of the Vincentian values of experiential learning, systemic change, and the option for the poor. The authors argue that service to community, along with exposure to poverty and promotion of social justice, should be the distinguishing marks of Vincentian study-abroad programs.

“Let us, my sisters, cherish the poor as our masters, since Our Lord is in them, and they are in Our Lord. Let us work with a new love in the service of the poor, looking for the most destitute and abandoned among them. Let us recognize that before God they are our lords and masters, and we are unworthy to render them our small services.” — Saint Vincent de Paul

“Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand.” — Confucius

Chiapas, the southernmost state of Mexico, is a rich land inhabited by poor people.1 It is a unique and challenging context for learning about poverty, diversity, and social justice, and this is probably one of the main reasons why numerous academic institutions have programs in its highlands and forest.2

1 Thomas Benjamin, A Rich Land, a Poor People: Politics and Society in Modern Chiapas (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).
2 DePaul University has two academic programs in Chiapas: The Law School Chiapas Practicum focuses on human rights, and the Public Service Study Abroad Program focuses on sustainable development and the role of nongovernmental organizations. The Harvard Chiapas
This program was truly something that I believe will help form some of my future decisions and direction. I have learned the importance of remaining open and preparing ourselves well. I came to know a world I didn’t know existed. I was educated on topics I believe are relevant to everyone in the world (though many choose not to acknowledge this). I was inspired both by the people I met in Chiapas and by the people from DePaul. I was consistently challenged in every way imaginable and in a way that would be impossible not to have an impact.

The Chiapas experience has changed my view of what Mexico is about. All areas of injustice come into view here, whether social, political, or economic, but the fight of the people is very inspiring and allowed me to really see a many-sided reality — one with no easy answers.

This trip opened my eyes and allowed me to see the intersections between the government, private, and public sectors that we hear so much about in our classes. I would say that this program is nothing like anything else I have ever experienced in my life.

Having spent two semesters in Mexico as an undergrad, I thought I knew the culture and the people well. The Chiapas Program opened my eyes to a part of Mexico that I’d never seen — and probably couldn’t have seen if I’d visited the region on my own.


3 This, and the following students’ comments cited in this article, comes from the 2006 and 2007 Chiapas Program Evaluations. Students fill out course evaluations anonymously at the end of each immersion.

In the post-September 11 climate, study-abroad programs have increasingly been framed as important forms of experiential learning for recognizing cultural diversity and international inequalities. DePaul’s School of Public Service (formerly the Management of Public Service Program) has been a leader in promoting short-term study abroad programs to educate young professionals in the values of Vincentian leadership and the paradigms of global citizenship. The general invitation to “learn outside the country” is accompanied by an emphasis on applied research and organizational management for nonprofit and public service. In line with the values


5 One of the best introductions to the concepts and practices of global citizenship is Nigel Dower and John Williams, Global Citizenship a Critical Reader (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002).
of experiential education, the goal of this study abroad program is not only to increase knowledge and skills but to challenge and transform cultural attitudes, learn from context, and engage in professional collaborations and constructive dialogues for social change.

**Impact Analysis of the Program**

Numerous study-abroad programs have demonstrated how the benefits of experience, immersion, and cross-cultural contacts are beneficial to students and their value-based leadership development; but mere assertions of the pedagogical advantages are not enough. Most programs evaluate students’ level of satisfaction and learning, but very few attempt to analyze the impact on social context, their leadership, and professional development. What are the assessment criteria and best practices indicators that lead SPS Chiapas Program students to characterize it as “an excellent program” and a “life-changing experience”? Systemic Change:

Unlike numerous Chiapas programs that expose their participants to only one side of the multifaceted reality of the struggle in Chiapas, the SPS Program purposely exposes students to a diversity of organizations and perspectives. This makes awareness of context the first step toward systemic change. The notion of systemic change alludes to a system-wide alternation in which one part represents and has the potential to transform a whole system. The Vincentian Commission for Systemic Change, headed by Reverend Robert P. Maloney, C.M., identifies it as a fundamental component in the Vincentian way of serving the poor while seeking to transform the root causes of poverty. According to the commission, three elements characterize a “Vincentian way” of effectively reducing poverty and promoting systemic change: 1) helping the poor to identify needs, planning, implementation, and evaluation; 2) maintaining an holistic vision of human, spiritual, psychological, and material needs; and 3) emphasizing self-help groups and sustainable development programs. The SPS Chiapas Program teaches students a Vincentian perspective by exposing them to the Zapatistas’ effective strategies of fostering change through encounters and campaigns for indigenous people and international civil society.
ganizations which have emerged from the pastoral work of the diocese. Many of these students revisit their understanding and experience of faith by listening to the testimonies of progressive pastoral workers committed to the cause of the poor. They meet with survivors of the 1997 Acteal massacre who, in spite of their sufferings were able to reorganize themselves, demand justice, and create fair-trade coffee cooperatives. Although every participant comes with their own unique background and sensitivity to people in poverty, the Chiapas Program challenges them to see, meet, and experience poverty first-hand. To further emphasize the pedagogical and Vincentian value of visiting the poor, the currently-in-development undergraduate program in Chiapas will include service-learning immersion with the Daughters of Charity who run the San Carlos Hospital in Ocosingo, in the Lacandon forest of Chiapas.

Indigenous Knowledge:
A local coordinator, in dialogue with the instructor, works to develop the program’s initiatives and itinerary for each year. This is essential in facilitating the beneficial impact of this short-term program. The SPS Chiapas Program does more than focus on experiential learning; it involves students in the activities of Chiapan nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), indigenous organizations, and Mexican academic institutions. The NGO panels, along with symposiums and conferences promoted by DePaul in collaboration with other Chiapas-based universities, expose students to the intellectual world of Chiapas. The carefully planned partnerships and collaborations aim to facilitate dialogue between NGOs, universities, and indigenous community organizations. Service-learning and community partnerships, two highly respected values and practices in Vincentian higher education, are relatively new concepts among Mexican institutions that have not perceived education and research in a collaborative and action-oriented way. While competition and lack of collaboration is also visible among Catholic and Vincentian universities in the U.S., the open wounds of the conflict in Chiapas make it especially difficult to create a culture of academic dialogue and community collaboration. DePaul University promoted the First International Conference on Development on 28 March 2007, in collaboration with Universidad de la Tierra (UNI-TEERRA-CIDESI), Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas (UNACH), Universidad Nacional

Option for the Poor:
Vincent de Paul reflected the evangelical option for the poor by founding institutions and charities dedicated to poverty alleviation. According to Gustavo Gutierrez, options for the poor are probably the single most important contribution of the Latin-American church to the world. In Chiapas, it translated into the San Cristobal de Las Casas Diocese’s clear pastoral choice to work for and with the impoverished and marginalized indigenous communities of the highlands and Lacandon forest. Under the leadership of Monsignor Samuel Ruiz Garcías (now bishop emeritus of Chiapas), what had once been a conservative colonial church became a beacon of hope and prophesy in the defense of indigenous rights which had been initiated 500 years earlier in those very same lands by Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas. The SPS Chiapas Program participants get to know indigenous and human rights or-

19 Bartolomé de las Casas and Stafford Poole, C.M., In Defense of the Indians; the Defense of the Most Reverend Lord, Don Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, of the Order of Preachers, Late Bishop of Chiapas, Against the Persecutors and Slanderers of the Peoples of the New World Discovered Across the Seas (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974).

20 The Maya Vinic Fair Trade Coffee Cooperative, created a year after the Acteal massacre, received the prestigious 2001 French Government Human Rights Award for responding to violence by seeking a positive nonviolent solution.
21 The Daughters of Charity’s health service to the indigenous poor in Chiapas, who were also members or sympathizers of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), the armed but mostly nonviolent segment of the Zapatista movement, made them a target of counterinsurgency operations following the 1994 uprising.
Autónoma de México in Chiapas (UNAM-PROIMMSE), and the Universidad Intercultural de Chiapas (UNICH). The success that emerged from the active participation of more than 200 academics, NGO leaders, Zapatista leaders, and representatives of civil-society organizations was largely due to the respected work of our Chiapas coordinator, Marina Patricia Jiménez.22

Local/Global Connections:

Chiapas is a unique place for the study of globalization from above (represented in large part by the effects of free-trade economies) and from below (represented by international civil society). It also provides an excellent context for understanding border issues, cultural diversity, and indigenous rights. The connections between Chicago and Chiapas are numerous, and the SPS Chiapas Program allows participants to recognize the many Chicago-based organizations that have ties to Chiapas. They are also exposed to many Chicago-based Mexican organizations that have projects in Chiapas, members who immigrated from Chiapas, or those that simply sympathize with the struggle of its indigenous people. Mexican-American students, in particular, realize the many parallels that exist between the discrimination against Mexican people in the U.S. and that against indigenous people in Mexico. Discovering the indigenous face of Mexico in Chiapas helps one to appreciate the diversity of immigrant communities in the United States, and their struggles. The Chicago-Chiapas connections are also important for answering the fundamental question that emerges after every study-abroad program: Now what? TSPS alumni have attempted to answer this question by forming ChiapanECHO, a student nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion of fair trade. In 2004 ChiapanECHO organized the Another World Conference at DePaul, which hosted leaders of indigenous organizations and their participation of more than 200 academics, NGO leaders, Zapatista leaders, and representatives of civil-society organizations was largely due to the respected work of our Chiapas coordinator, Marina Patricia Jiménez.22

In 2006 — many more than in previous years.25 The number of students receiving academic credit for their study abroad grew more than 150 percent from fewer than 90,000 students in 1995 and 1996.26 Although more students have chosen nontraditional destinations in recent years, the large majority of study-abroad destinations are still in European countries. In Education Abroad is Not Enough, Karen Jenkins and James Skelly are critical not only of the relatively low rates of study abroad, but also of the types of such programs that predominate in U.S. higher education.27 An intentional focus on teaching social justice, along with a direct experience to poverty, is essential for developing global citizens who can promote democracy and peace with justice and dignity.28 In other words, if study-abroad programs, especially those in Vincentian institutions of higher education, are to be effective in developing socially responsible leaders for an increasingly globalized society, they need to focus more explicitly on exposing students to local and global poverty, along with promising alternatives for social justice and systemic change. The objectives of study abroad should therefore be not only to increase students’ knowledge and skills, but also to develop their

22  Invited participants to the 22 October 2004 conference included women leaders from Kinal Antzetik A.C. (Tierra de Mujeres), an indigenous organization with strong ties with Mayaworks, a Chicago-based organization in partnership with DePaul University’s Steans Center for Community-Based Service Learning and Community Service Studies.

23  Invited participants to the 22 October 2004 conference included women leaders from Kinal Antzetik A.C. (Tierra de Mujeres), an indigenous organization with strong ties with Mayaworks, a Chicago-based organization in partnership with DePaul University’s Steans Center for Community-Based Service Learning and Community Service Studies.


26  Ibid.


28  “Democracia, justicia y libertad” and “Paz, justicia y dignidad” are respectively the mottos of the Zapatistas and the civil-society organization Las Abejas.
personal values in alignment with their professional career choices.

Exposure to poverty, reflection of systems, and active involvement in societal change are some of the essential ingredients for developing socially responsible leaders.29 Paulo Freire’s well-known pedagogical advocacy of critical thinking about reality reminds us how study-abroad programs could be designed as effective experiential learning opportunities to bring about systemic change.30 The SPS Chiapas Program reflects both Freire’s innovative insights into the pedagogy of liberation and Antonio Gramsci’s analysis of the intersection of culture with politico-economic systems.31 Systemic political, economic, and social change requires pedagogical steps for raising awareness while exploring new paradigms and attempting to adapt them into specific contexts. According to Thomas Maak and Nicola M. Pless, the development of responsible leaders requires the integration of individual, interpersonal, organizational, and societal values.32 The SPS Chiapas Program helps to achieve this through intense international exposure to poverty, along with an exploration of systemic change.

In March 2004, while meeting with the ski-masked Zapatistas of the Caracol of Roberto Barrios, DePaul University students learned something very important. After describing the growing poverty levels in their communities and the reasons for their resistance, they asked us ‘not to leave them alone.’ These simple and clear words helped the students realize their own social responsibility and the implications that their decisions in Chicago had for the life and struggle of the indigenous people of Chiapas. They realized that the best way for them to help the poor of Chiapas was to commit to socially responsible personal and professional lives as global citizens. They discovered something similar to what Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, the notorious defender of the “indios” and the first Bishop of Chiapas, realized five centuries before: that to defend the rights of indigenous people in the New World, his main work was to be found back in his motherland of Spain.33 Just as Fray Bartolomé stayed in Chiapas only about six months, our students stay only about ten days — but we realize how political and economic decisions in the United States affect the life of indigenous people there. Much as Saint Vincent de Paul, who always supported foreign missions yet spent almost all his life in Paris and France, reminds us of the importance of thinking globally and acting locally, the growing interconnections of our flattening world suggest that study-abroad programs, and experiential international and professional service learning programs, should invite participants to think and act both locally and globally.

Mural symbolizing indigenous knowledge in an autonomous Zapatista school in the Highlands of Chiapas, Mexico.

Photo courtesy of Marco Tacanti, Ph.D.


33 Bartolomé de Las Casas and Consuelo Varela, Breveísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1999), 248.
Meeting Saint Vincent’s Challenge in Providing Assistance to the Foreign-Born Poor: Applying the Lessons to the Asylum and Immigration Law Clinic

By
SIOBAN ALBIOL
Clinical Instructor, DePaul University College of Law

Introduction
Following Saint Vincent’s example, Frederick Ozanam, one of the founders of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, announced in the prospectus for a new journal to be launched in 1848 that the society’s purpose was in part to demand protection of “the peoples who have lost their nationality by unjust conquests which time cannot rectify, and those other peoples which, following our own example from afar, aspire to achieve their own political and moral emancipation.”1 The situation of persons who have been forced from their home countries through economic or political conquest also confronts our local and national communities today. In Illinois alone, there are over 1.7 million foreign-born persons.2 The Asylum and Immigration Law Clinic at the DePaul College of Law seeks to respond to the call for protection of indigent refugees and immigrants. We work with low-income asylum seekers and documented and undocumented immigrants in a time of heated debate over the value of immigration. In doing so, we are challenged and guided by Saint Vincent’s model as a servant of the poor.

A Brief Background on United States Immigration Law
United States immigration laws govern the process for the admission of noncitizens, and their rights and responsibilities once admitted to the United States. Our nationality laws provide the rules by which a person can gain full membership or citizenship. Economic interests and family reunification principles historically have been central in determining which groups are eligible for admission to the United States. Humanitarian considerations — for persons displaced by persecution, war, civil strife, or natural disaster — also

play a role in determining who is granted admission. U.S. laws preclude from membership individuals with characteristics deemed undesirable by Congress, including the infirm, the impoverished, the deceptive, the criminal, and those who threaten security.\(^3\)

The phenomenon of migration has met with polarized, even visceral reactions within our national community for over a century. Domestic immigration policy has reflected our own anxieties over economic circumstances, our need for labor, our safety, our dislike of human frailty, our intolerance for human diversity, and on occasion our charity for those who need refuge. Sometimes we have responded with an open door, and at other times we have provided very narrow passage. Periods of immigration growth\(^4\) with little regulation have been bookended by periods of severe restriction based on qualitative characteristics\(^5\) of would-be immigrants, the national origin\(^6\) of those immigrants, our country’s own economic distress,\(^7\) and even concern over the number of foreigners admitted.\(^8\)

The past two decades have witnessed a rise in immigration policy discussions focused on the undocumented immigrant. The different “solutions” to the “problem” have ranged from intensified prosecution of violators of immigration status to earned citizenship for those who have fallen out of lawful status. In 1986 the Immigration Reform Control Act (IRCA)\(^9\) attempted to embrace both solutions at once. It imposed sanctions on employers who hired undocumented workers but also provided a path to lawful permanent residence for undocumented individuals who could demonstrate that they had resided in the United States since before 1982 or engaged in agricultural work. Under this legalization program, immigrants had to demonstrate that they possessed no undesirable characteristics and had sufficient knowledge of English, civics, and history. “Amnesty” for immigrants out of status was enacted hand-in-hand with punitive and pecuniary sanctions for employers who hired noncitizens ineligible to work in the United States.

After this significant new legislation, the immigration “reform” laws that followed in 1996 included additional conditions and restrictions for those who had not gained full citizenship. Today, immigrant families continue to suffer blows from the 1996 legislation.\(^10\) Family members are required to submit contracts, or “affidavits of support,” to show they would be financially responsible for supporting relatives — a particular burden for the working poor. U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents face separation from their immigrant family members if they cannot show the ability to provide a dollar-specific amount of income. This requirement has seemed particularly punitive given that use

---

\(^3\) Laws have prohibited paupers and the infirm from admission since colonial times. Exclusion of prostitutes and certain criminals followed. The Act of 1882 barred “lunatics,” “idiots,” and those likely to become a public charge. Richard Boswell, *Essentials of Immigration Law* (Washington, DC: American Immigration Lawyers Association, 2006), Chapter 1, 22 Stat. 214. “In 1891 a general immigration law was passed which provided for the exclusion of ‘paupers’ and all ‘aliens’ who had entered illegally. A 1903 law added ‘anarchists’ and others to the list of excludables and in 1907 the list was expanded to include, among others, persons suffering from mental or physical conditions that might affect their ability to live a normal life.” *Immigration Law and Defense* § 2.2, National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild (West, 2007) [footnotes omitted]. The early 1900s saw several pieces of legislation barring anarchists, subversives, and communists. These preclusions still exist under our current law in the form of health-related, public charges, and security grounds of inadmissibility found at 8 U.S.C. 1152(a). For an introduction to the history of immigration laws, see Boswell, *Immigration Law*; see also, *Immigration Law and Defense*, 3d, Chapter 2, National Immigration Project.

\(^4\) For the first one hundred years, for example, migration to the United States was largely unrestricted. In the mid-1800s, immigration increased again with the growing number of jobs and need for cheap labor. See *Immigration Law and Defense* § 2.2. More recently, in 1986 Congress provided avenues to legal status for undocumented immigrants who likely had no other way of lawful admission. Pub. L. 99-603, 100 Stat. 3359 (5 November 1986).

\(^5\) Ibid. In the early 1900s additional bars excluded workers based on ideological grounds, including “anarchists, or persons who believed in or advocated the overthrow by force or violence of the government of the United States or of all government or of all forms of law.” In the years that followed, communists were added to the list of “subversives” prohibited from residing in the United States. See *Kleindienst v. Mandel*, 408 U.S. 753, 92 S.Ct. 2576, 33 L.Ed. 2d 683 (1972), citing the Act of 3 March 1875, 18 Stat. 477 (barring convicts and prostitutes); the Act of 3 August 1882, 22 Stat. 214; the Act of 3 March 1903, 32 Stat. 1213 (barring anarchists); the Act of 16 October 1918, 40 Stat. 1012 (barring subversives); Title II of the Alien Registration Act of 1940, 54 Stat. 671 (membership or affiliation with organizations advocating violent overthrow of the U.S. government); the Internal Security Act of 1950, 64 Stat. 987 (eliminating the requirement that an individual finding be made with respect to members of the Communist Party to determine classification as a person who did in fact advocate violent overthrow of the government).


\(^7\) For example, “concerns that cheap foreign labor would depress the U.S. labor market led to Contract Labor Laws’ enacted in 1885 and 1887 and excluded cheap foreign labor to avoid depressing the U.S. labor market.” Gerald P. Seipp, *Waivers of Inadmissibility – From Basic Principles to Advanced Practice Considerations* (West, August 2003), Part I, 03-08 Immigr. Briefings 1.


of public benefits by poor immigrants has been significantly less than that by natives. New regulations amending affidavit-of-support requirements have recently become more restrictive. Sponsoring family members can no longer be credited for work done without valid work authorization, even though they may have paid income and social security taxes on these earnings. Even when they submit accurate documentation of income and have demonstrated an ability and willingness to work, they often meet with bureaucratic requirements requesting additional documents and proof, thus delaying their family members from immigrating to join them in the United States. Enhanced financial requirements have made it difficult for the working poor to obtain status. In addition, immigrant families suffer long periods of separation. Immigrant family members who have been in the United States for some time without lawful immigration status may face “temporary” bars from returning to the United States for either three or ten years, or may even be separated permanently from their United States citizen or lawful-permanent-resident spouses, parents, or children. Immigrants who have made missteps in the process face serious if not irreversible consequences.

Since the 1996 “reforms,” the tragedies of 11 September 2001, have resulted in further dramatic changes in U.S. immigration law including new federal legislation, policies, and regulations; changes to agency structures and personnel; and additional local immigration initiatives that further complicate the path to full citizenship. The immigration policy continually grows more restrictive.

---

11 “While the current debate suggests that immigrants are inclined to welfare dependency, immigrants who are poor remain substantially less likely to use welfare than natives (16 percent versus 25 percent).” Michael E. Fix, Jeffrey S. Passel, Wendy Zimmerman, *The Use of SSI and Other Welfare Programs by Immigrants* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute), Testimony before the House Committee on Ways and Means, 23 May 1996, available at http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?id=900227; See also “Not Getting What They Paid For” citing to the 2002 *Urban Institute Study* by Michael Fix & Jeffrey Passel, “The Scope and Impact of Welfare Reform’s Immigrant Provisions” (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, January 2002). “There were substantial declines between 1994 and 1999 in legal immigrants’ use of all major benefit programs: TANF (-60 percent), food stamps (-48 percent), SSI (-32 percent), and Medicaid (-15 percent).” The report found that in comparison to their “citizen counterparts” in 1999, “low-income, working-age noncitizens had substantially larger declines in Medicaid use rates” and “low-income legal immigrant families with children had lower use rates for TANF and food stamps.”

12 8 CFR 213a.1.

13 For example, the Homeland Security Act (HSA) abolished the INS and replaced it with separate agencies: the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS), the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP). The USA PATRIOT Act changed the practice of immigration law by providing for information-sharing among various federal and state law-enforcement agencies and the legacy INS. The REAL ID Act, which was passed on 6 May 2005, will affect burdens of proof for individuals filing asylum applications and seeking to defend themselves from deportation.

---

Fresh in the memories of those who debate the future of the twelve million noncitizen families, workers, and neighbors living in our midst are the IRCA reforms of 1986, in which an estimated three million individuals gained legal status. “Amnesty” engenders a hostile response amongst opponents, but supporters of future legalization also critique the 1986 laws and regulations. However, there are still the estimated twelve million undocumented persons living in the United States, and almost 34 million foreign-born. Significant also since the 1986 legalization is the increased disparity between the poverty rates of foreign-born and native populations. By 2001, 16.1 percent of the foreign-born, including 20.6 percent of Latin Americans, lived in poverty compared to 11.1 percent of natives.

A significant number of undocumented immigrants who stand to benefit from a proposed legalization program, or temporary worker program, are individuals of limited means. The now-quieted debate over a comprehensive immigration reform package has corresponded with stepped up immigration and customs enforcement measures targeting the undocumented and other immigration law violators. The failure of immigration reform is painfully apparent in the consequences of enforcement in which citizens are arrested, detained, and separated from their families. The Department of Homeland Security has sent a clear message that its focus will continue to be on enforcement over adjudications. It places a high priority on raids, and...
subjects many individuals to prosecution without access to legal advice.

Other state and local initiatives further attack the dignity of immigrants seeking a better life in our communities. Anti-immigrant ordinances and local law enforcement partnerships with federal immigration officials create an inhospitable environment for immigrants seeking assistance. Several communities served by the Legal Resource Project of the Asylum and Immigration Clinic are particularly vulnerable to enforcement policies and related misinformation. For example, the Waukegan area is particularly affected by anti-immigrant ordinances. The experience of the 1986 legalization program under IRCA provides an indication of the service delivery challenges to be faced by community-based organizations. Further complicating the application process are additional penalties for those with prior immigration infractions, added by the immigration "reform" legislation of 1996 and subsequent Immigration and Nationality Act amendments.

Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic social teaching further informs the current debate over domestic immigration policies. As presented in the pastoral letter on migration from the Catholic bishops of Mexico and the United States, an examination of Catholic social teaching identifies challenges and calls for a pastoral response to minister to migrants.

[The] Catholic Church has historically held a strong interest in immigration and how public policy affects immigrants seeking a new life in the United States. Based on Scriptural and Catholic social teachings, as well as her own experience as an immigrant Church in the United States, the Catholic Church is compelled to raise her voice on behalf of those who are marginalized and whose God-given rights are not respected.

With regard to the immigration reform debate:

The Church believes that current immigration laws and policies have often led to the undermining of immigrants' human dignity and have kept families apart. The existing immigration system has resulted in a growing number of persons in this country in an unauthorized capacity, living in the shadows as they toil in jobs that would otherwise go unfilled. Close family members of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents must wait years for a visa to be reunited. And, our nation’s border enforcement strategies have been ineffective and have led to the death of thousands of migrants.

The Church has a responsibility to shine the message of God on this issue and help to build bridges between all parties so
that an immigration system can be created that is just for all and serves the common good, including the legitimate security concerns of our nation.\textsuperscript{27}

Turning to Pope John Paul II’s 1995 World Migration Day message, U.S. Catholic bishops affirmed that:

In the Church no one is a stranger, and the Church is not foreign to anyone, anywhere. As a sacrament of unity and thus a sign and a binding force for the whole human race, the Church is the place where illegal immigrants are also recognized and accepted as brothers and sisters. It is the task of the various Dioceses to actively ensure that these people, who are obliged to live outside the safety net of civil society, may find a sense of brotherhood in the Christian community. Solidarity means taking responsibility for those in trouble.\textsuperscript{28}

\textbf{Saint Vincent de Paul’s Experience of Immigration}

Saint Vincent de Paul must have felt the blessing and the pain of migration in his own life. Like so many economic refugees, at some personal cost to himself and his family\textsuperscript{29} he left his home in order to pursue educational opportunity and economic security that could not be found in his place of birth.\textsuperscript{30} The land where he was born would have provided a bare existence.\textsuperscript{31} He may have also experienced the injustices and suffering of forced migration. While there is some debate over the authenticity of his account of being sold into slavery, his letters acutely portray the religious oppression, isolation, and longing for home experienced by many refugees.\textsuperscript{32}

Saint Vincent’s empathy for and solidarity with the migrant are readily seen in his works. Within the missions were many foreigners committed to being servants for the poor; Saint Vincent’s concern for the poor was not limited by geographical boundaries. His challenge for the missions was to go into the country, into remote locations. As he wrote, “My brothers, who would then have thought that God intended, by means of the Company of the Mission, to bring about all the good which by the grace of God we now see it doing? Ah! Who knew that he meant to make use of it to seek out on farms, even in remotest Barbary, those poor Christian slaves, to rescue them, if not indeed from hell at least from purgatory? And who knew that it was his will to make use of it in many other places, as we see he does?”\textsuperscript{33}

The missions ultimately extended to Ireland, Poland, Tunis, Algiers, Madagascar, Quebec, the Indies, Indochina, and Persia.\textsuperscript{34} Neither national boundaries nor circumstances of birth restricted Saint Vincent’s charity. The missions provided care for refugees, as did the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul later, under Frederick Ozanam.\textsuperscript{35} They also cared for foundlings of unknown birth.\textsuperscript{36}

Saint Vincent too must have felt keenly the pains of being separated from family, since he established a postal service between slaves in Tunis and Algiers and their families. Family members could go to Vincentians anywhere in France in order to get word to their loved ones abroad.\textsuperscript{37}

“\textit{Here’s another way the rich are different from the poor. They have lawyers.}”\textsuperscript{38}

At the time Saint Vincent was beginning religious life, the spiritual lives of both rich and poor suffered from Church corruption and a lack of trained clergy. The rich, however, had some control over which individuals would ultimately hold religious office. “Abbeys, priories and canonries represented a source of opulence and honors which parents coveted and sought for their children... The ecclesiastical or religious state offered to youths of good family an excellent opening, a secure livelihood and, to crown all, one that

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
  \item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc. and Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, \textit{Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope} (USCCB, 22 January 2003).
  \item \textsuperscript{29} His father’s selling of two oxen to finance Saint Vincent’s studies is recounted by several authors. See Paul Theodore Maynard, \textit{Apostle of Charity, The Life of Saint Vincent de Paul} (New York: The Dial Press, 1939), 31, 34; Jean Calvet, \textit{Saint Vincent de Paul}, trans. Lancelot C. Sheppard (New York: David McKay Company), 18.
  \item \textsuperscript{30} Pope Leo XIII, “...who would exchange his country for a foreign land if his own afforded him the means of living a decent and happy life,” \textit{Rerum Novarum} [On Capital and Labor] (15 May 1891), no. 47, Available at Vatican website, quoted in “Justice for Immigrants.”
  \item \textsuperscript{31} See Maynard, \textit{Apostle of Charity}, Igino Giordani, \textit{Saint Vincent de Paul Servant of the Poor} (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1961), 7-12.
  \item \textsuperscript{32} See Maynard, \textit{Apostle of Charity}, 39-50.
  \item \textsuperscript{34} Mary Purcell, \textit{The World of Monsieur Vincent} (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1963), 190-203.
  \item \textsuperscript{35} Ozanam: Husband, Father, Champion of Truth and Justice, Lover of the Poor, Founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, eds. Amin A. de Tarrazi and Ronald Ransom, C.M. (Strasbourg: Editions du Signe, 1997), 24.
  \item \textsuperscript{36} See Calvet, \textit{Saint Vincent}, 154.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Purcell, \textit{World of Monsieur Vincent}, 200.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
witnessed the inability of parish priests to provide poor peasants with absolution. Saint Vincent explained how this had led to his mission of performing sermons on proper confession and instituting reforms in the education and training of clergy. His description of Madame de Gondi’s experience is illustrative of how institutions, including religious institutions, work differently for poor people. Madame de Gondi had been moved because of the “peril in which her poor country subjects stood with regard to their salvation, for want of having made a good general confession.”

As Vincent stated in his letter to Francis du Coudray in 1631: “You must make it understood that the poor are being damned for want of knowing the things necessary for salvation, and for lack of confession. If His Holiness were aware of this necessity, he would have no rest until he had done all he could to set things right. It is the knowledge we had of this situation that brought about the establishment of the Company, so as to remedy it in some way.”

For the country poor of Madame de Gondi’s day, the parish priests controlled access to redemption. Without a system that ensured access for them, the poor stood in peril. They had no remedy if they had violated God’s law. Much as institutions of Saint Vincent’s day worked differently for the poor and others living on the margins of society than it did for the rich, the law also works differently for poor people today. Like those country curés, lawyers possess the office that can provide full access to protection. Lawyers with licenses to practice possess the keys to the kingdom, while poor persons living in poor communities have limited access. Saint Vincent calls us to go into those places where the poor are, to serve.

Attorneys need some reminder of the duty that comes with their position. The American Bar Association’s Model Rules of Professional Responsibility prescribe the conduct of lawyers and remind them of the responsibility they hold.

40 Ibid., 49.
41 Ibid., 52.
42 See “Repetition of Prayer,” *Rules, Conferences and Writings*, 123-125. “Vincent provides the first recorded explanation of the origin of the Congregation of the Mission. In doing so he speaks directly of the role of Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, Madame de Gondi. Focusing on that lady’s experience of priests poorly trained in their sacramental duties, Vincent tells how it led to his first ‘mission’ sermon, as well as the second end of the Congregation: the proper formation and education of the clergy.”
43 Ibid.
45 “The second thing which the rule directs us to do is to instruct people in country places; we are called to do this. Yes our Lord asks us to preach the Gospel to the poor.” *Conferences of Vincent de Paul*, 6 December 1658, in *Rules, Conferences and Writings*, p. 140.
46 See “Preamble: A Lawyer’s Responsibilities” from the *American Bar Association’s Model Rules of Professional Conduct* (2002). “[1] A lawyer, as a member of the legal profession, is a
The practice of law is a public trust. Lawyers are the trustees of the system by which citizens resolve disputes among themselves, punish and deter crime, and determine their relative rights and responsibilities toward each other and their government. Lawyers therefore are responsible... for assuring access to that system through the availability of competent legal counsel... Basic rights have little meaning without access to the judicial system which vindicates them.

It is the responsibility of those licensed as officers of the court to use their training, experience and skills to provide services in the public interest for which compensation may not be available...

Legal services are not a commodity. Rather, they are the result of the efforts, training, judgment and experience of the members of a learned profession.47

And from the American Bar Association’s Model Rules of Professional Conduct:

[6] As a public citizen, a lawyer should seek improvement of the law, access to the legal system, the administration of justice and the quality of service rendered by the legal profession... legal institutions in a constitutional democracy depend on popular participation and support to maintain their authority. A lawyer should be mindful of deficiencies in the administration of justice and of the fact that the poor, and sometimes persons who are not poor, cannot afford adequate legal assistance. Therefore, all lawyers should devote professional time and resources and use civic influence to ensure equal access to our system of justice for all those who because of economic or social barriers cannot afford or secure adequate legal counsel.48

Notwithstanding the lawyer’s obligation as a member of the profession representative of clients, an officer of the legal system and a public citizen having special responsibility for the quality of justice.”

47 From the preamble of the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct.

48 “A Lawyer’s Responsibilities.”

to direct resources to service of the poor, significant gaps remain. It should be understood that while free legal representation is guaranteed in criminal cases, there is no guarantee of legal assistance in civil cases, which often implicate significant rights such as shelter, medical treatment, employment, child custody, and — in the case of immigration — residence in or permanent banishment from the United States.49

A recent study of the legal needs of Illinois residents illustrates that the “legal aid safety net designed to ensure that all Illinois residents have access to the protections offered by our legal system is clearly inadequate to meet the challenge.”50 The majority of legal problems examined in the study involved critical threats to the ability of individuals and families to meet basic human needs: stable family relationships, economic solvency, access to shelter, medical care, and subsistence income.51 Immigration status implicates each one of these needs — family reunification, authorization for work, access to housing, health care, and public benefits. The most common difficulty encountered in the study was the attempt to resolve the problem without professional legal help. For those with immigration legal issues, the most reported problem was in applying for a particular immigration status (59.5 percent compared with other categories of immigration problems).52 Charitable institutions, private foundations, and donors are often left to fill the gap.

“Let us do the good that presents itself.”53

The DePaul College of Law’s Legal Clinic has represented low-income persons for more than thirty years. Since 1991, College of Law faculty and students have provided representation to low-income refugees fleeing persecution in their home countries, and in 1996 the Asylum Law Clinic was formed. In 1999, funders, informed by members of community organizations about the clinic’s work, approached it to explore a pilot program aimed at expanding legal services for indigent immigrants and refugees while maximizing resources for educating students. The program then began thanks to the generosity of those funders, who recognized the need and importance of en-

49 See Gideon v. Wainwright, 372 U.S. 335 (1963), providing the right to counsel in criminal proceedings for the indigent. Gideon was followed by Lassiter v. Department of Social Services, 425 U.S. 18 (1981), limiting the right to appointed counsel for the indigent in civil cases (involving termination of parental rights).


51 Ibid., 14.

52 Ibid., 26.

suring that immigrants and refugees would not be denied high-quality legal services on the basis of their economic or geographic disadvantages. In 1999 the clinic established a program that provided technical assistance to nonprofit community-based organizations serving immigrants and refugees. When the program began in 1999, the renamed Asylum and Immigration Law Clinic partnered with four agencies to provide training, advice, and support in meeting the legal needs of immigrants, most of whom were working poor. Since then, it has continued to grow its Legal Resources Project for Immigrant Service Providers, expanding its reach by 500 percent. The clinic now partners with twenty-four agencies in Cook and the collar counties.

The Wealth and Poverty of Community-Based Organizations and the University

Community-based organizations located throughout the Chicago metropolitan area are essential to delivering legal services and information to low-income immigrants and refugees. They are located in the communities where immigrants live, work, and go to school. Their consistent presence provides immediate awareness of the issues confronting the community, and this serves to build trust. In this way, CBOs share in their community’s richness.

However, CBOs meet with significant challenges in delivering the range and depth of legal services that their clients require. They lack funding, legal resources, online assistance, regular legal training, and professional development. Although CBOs serve low-income groups and only charge nominal fees for their services, they face pressure to generate funds to keep their doors open. Because complex cases — those most in need of assistance and representation — consume more staff time and resources and require significant legal expertise, CBOs may favor simple cases. High case loads limit their range and the depth of their services. The current immigration reform climate of constantly changing regulations and policies exacerbates the demand on these CBOs, and the need for their services continues to grow.

54 Conversation with Craig B. Mousin, university ombudsman and cofounder of the Asylum and Immigration Law Clinic at DePaul College of Law and of the Legal Resources Project for Immigrant Service Providers.

55 Attempting to resolve legal problems without professional help is in fact the most common problem encountered among Illinois’ low-income population. See Illinois Legal Needs Study II (February 2005), p. 14. The majority of the legal problems in the survey involved critical threats to people’s ability to meet basic human needs: stable family relationships, economic solvency, access to shelter, medical care, and subsistence income. Ibid. Immigration status is relevant to each one of these needs (family reunification, authorization for work, access to housing, health care, and public benefits). For those with immigration legal issues, the most reported problem was in applying for a particular immigration status (59.5 percent, compared with other categories of immigration problems). See p. 26.

in the face of restrictive government measures. Department of Homeland Security raids and other enforcement actions, coupled with constantly shifting immigration reform discussions, interpose challenges for CBOs, which must counter disinformation about changes in law and policy with community education and outreach. They must anticipate and respond to the needs of noncitizens who are affected by enforcement measures, and must reach and inform immigrants about their rights if they are arrested in raids.

In the clinic, faculty and students form bonds within CBOs, whose staff members are welcomed to DePaul, invited to participate in educational workshops, and encouraged to share their experiences and expertise with faculty and students in class. Likewise, clinic faculty, staff, and students have worked in the community and spent time there. The students participate in summer externships at partner organizations where they take part in community education, outreach, and naturalization workshops. Likewise, faculty and staff offer presentations to the community, and meet with clients and CBO staff for case consultations and to identify community concerns and resource needs.

The clinic has built relationships with the community. Its location, on the eleventh floor of a downtown Chicago building, may lack the richness of a neighborhood. Yet, as part of DePaul University it has access to a wealth of resources that would be unfathomable to a typical social service provider, and through the Legal Resource Project it shares these resources with the community. The clinic was able to work with the university’s technology department to use Blackboard, an electronic course-management system that incorporates web pages, e-mail, discussion boards, chat rooms, small group areas, document sharing, and more to disseminate information on immigration practice and encourage communication among partners. This marked one of the first times the use of this electronic resource had been extended beyond the university community.

The clinic, with the support of the university’s Steans Center for Community-Based Service Learning, has also trained, supervised, and

56 See White House Office Communications announcement of 10 August 2007. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez announced a series of immigration-related measures, including the training of local law enforcement personnel to address immigration violations, the publishing of new social security no-match regulations impacting from 1.4 to 8 million workers, reduction in the number of acceptable documents that can be used to show eligibility for employment, an increase in employer sanctions, and assurance that undocumented persons do not receive SSA credit for their work. In addition, the U.S. CIS recently announced that lawful permanent residents with unexpired documents will have to obtain new proof of legal status.

57 See Howard Rosing, Ph.D., “Untangling the Ivy: Discovering Vincentian Service Learning and DePaul University,” in this issue of Vincentian Heritage.
placed undergraduate and law students in summer externships at partner CBOs during the summer. The only attorney at one Chicago-area CBO, who serves thousands of clients each year, has stated that the organization simply could not have done the work they hoped to do without the assistance of students.

One student reflected on the disparity between the resources she had access to and those available to the organization. She had met with a DePaul librarian who familiarized her with Hein Online, an electronic index including full-text law reviews and journals, and consequently she was able to easily research an issue for a client. This student, unlike the attorney at the CBO, had few case assignments and was able to leave the office to travel to the library. The online resources were easily available to her, while the organization truly in need of online research had no such access. Because a clinic can access such resources, it is uniquely positioned to support the work of CBOs, help them to respond to complex legal questions and larger service delivery issues, and also increase the depth and breadth of client representation.

In the clinic we employ some of the strategies successfully used by Saint Vincent in serving the poor. We can leverage the resources of institutions, private donors, and connections with the larger legal community to help immigrant communities. Further, the impact of the project continues beyond the clinic. Many of our students go on to careers in public interest, working for legal aid agencies dedicated to assisting the poor and ensuring that they receive better services.

However, the work of our Legal Resources Project and of the clinic in general presents our faculty, staff, and students with several challenges in observing Vincent’s instructions for working with the poor. Some of these challenges seem to come from the nature of immigration laws themselves, some perhaps from the way we subscribe to the legal process, and others from our own ideas of the position held by lawyers and our lack of awareness of the extent of poverty.

For many of the clients we work with in the immigration clinic, immigration status will only come through revealing their greatest pain; immigration and refugee law require it. The graver the injury — persecution, domestic violence, family separation — the greater the likelihood of success. For those who have violated either immigration or criminal laws and seek to cure their mistake, we demand remorse. Proper investigation into whether a client can obtain lawful residency status in light of a relatively new provision of law which grants nonimmigrant visas for victims of certain crimes — particularly, those who have suffered substantial harm and who are willing to aid law enforcement in the prosecution of the crime. The client had been in an abusive relationship and had eventually obtained an order of protection. She reported that although the abuser had never engaged in physical violence toward her, he had threatened, controlled, and demeaned her. The client also said she was certain that if she had remained with him, he would have become violent, so she left with her children before he had the opportunity to cause her physical harm. Because the abuser had never physically assaulted her, the case presented challenges in establishing that she was the victim of a type of crime — the law protects victims of mostly violent crimes — that would qualify her for the visa. From the client’s perspective, it almost seemed that she was being dismissed because she had not remained with the abuser until problems escalated. Ironically, in this context, immigration laws can be viewed as denying protection to the empowered and rewarding the

The local public aid office notified Mrs. G that she received an overpayment of benefits and has to pay the money back. Some months earlier she received a $592 settlement from a car accident and used most of the money to pay medical bills, but now she is presented with two equally unattractive options for how to defend herself against the demand for repayment. At the actual hearing, and to the surprise of the lawyer and hearing officer, Mrs. G presents her own defense. She shows the hearing officer the Sunday shoes she purchased for her children with the small amount of money left over from the settlement. Then follows an examination of how the administrative hearing process is used as a vehicle for subordination of speech, and in particular what roles race, class, and gender play in shaping such subordinate speech. The legal aid lawyer adds her own critique of the role she played in events.

This article generates classroom discussion that is particularly insightful about the work we do, how we navigate the structures presented by law, and how the client is viewed by us and by the legal system. Students discuss whether they are persuaded by the author’s analysis, they are challenged to examine parallels they see between this story and their own work in the clinic, and also to examine — in the context of representing asylum-seekers and immigrants — whether the client’s voice is subordinated or has meaningful opportunity to be heard.

Recently, students in the clinic reflected on one of our own clients in this context. We were examining the question of whether the client might be able to obtain lawful residency status in light of a relatively new provision of law which grants nonimmigrant visas for victims of certain crimes — particularly, those who have suffered substantial harm and who are willing to aid law enforcement in the prosecution of the crime. The client had been in an abusive relationship and had eventually obtained an order of protection. She reported that although the abuser had never engaged in physical violence toward her, he had threatened, controlled, and demeaned her. The client also said she was certain that if she had remained with him, he would have become violent, so she left with her children before he had the opportunity to cause her physical harm. Because the abuser had never physically assaulted her, the case presented challenges in establishing that she was the victim of a type of crime — the law protects victims of mostly violent crimes — that would qualify her for the visa. From the client’s perspective, it almost seemed that she was being dismissed because she had not remained with the abuser until problems escalated. Ironically, in this context, immigration laws can be viewed as denying protection to the empowered and rewarding the

How we see our roles as attorneys and future attorneys may serve to further subordinate clients. In the clinic, students are called to reflect on barriers to the attorney/client relationship. Students are assigned to read The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down, by Anne Fadiman, which examines the true story of an epileptic child, an ethnic Hmong of Laotian refugee parents. The cultural, language, and status barriers to an effective doctor/patient relationship are exposed. In the book, one of the doctors responsible for the child’s care becomes frustrated with the parent’s lack of compliance with the medical regimen prescribed for the child. The roles, as he sees them, are that the doctor is to prescribe treatment and the family is to follow the rules. In the clinic we examine whether this is the approach we sometimes take as attorneys: that our job is to identify the legal remedy available to the client and the client’s role is to comply with what we ask for in order to pursue the remedy.

Saint Vincent’s view centered on recognizing the dignity of the poor and marginalized. He provided rules to guide the servants of the poor and infirm — rules for how they should prepare for their work with the poor, and for how they should treat the sick. The legal construct in which we operate, and our views of the role of the attorney, challenge us to remember what it means to serve the poor, to see the barriers that deny them access to legal protection, and to examine whether our own actions strengthen or challenge those barriers. In working with CBOs to serve the poor, those same barriers challenge us to grow as lawyers — not just in competence but also in our views of justice as we seek a more just application of laws.

In assisting clients with their immigration cases, we may sometimes lack understanding or lose patience when they are late or skip appointments, or when phone calls or letters go unanswered for a time. It is important for us to understand the client’s circumstances and how different they may be from our own — the cost of coming to a client-attorney meeting where the travel expense constitutes a significant portion of a client’s weekly earnings, the difficulty of traveling to a downtown appointment from a neighborhood not serviced regularly by public transportation, the lack of resources needed to pay a phone bill or maintain a residence. Often the family may be struggling with the financial challenges of survival on an income at or below federal poverty income guidelines.59 Vincent, having experienced and embraced poverty, was keenly aware of the difficult conditions in which the poor lived, and he recognized that if the hearts and souls of the poor were to be won, “there must be a soul worth saving” — the individual’s material as well as spiritual needs must be addressed.

In our work with low-income immigrants and refugees, we hope that through helping them improve their immigration status we might also improve their security, safety, and material circumstances. If, with our assistance, a client is able to obtain work authorization and access to a valid Social Security number, he or she might also have a wider choice of housing, schools, and — rather than being relegated to industries that are notorious for lack of workplace safety protections, substandard wages, and deplorable conditions — employment opportunity.61 Moving from undocumented to documented status has also been shown to lead to improved skills and earning power.62 Documented status allows immigrants to fully access federal benefits programs that they already support financially through income and Social Security taxes regardless of their immigration status.63 In contrast, a “shadow population of illegal migrants… raises the specter of a permanent caste of undocumented resident aliens, encouraged to remain here as a source of cheap labor, but nevertheless denied the benefits that our society makes available to citizens and lawful residents. The existence of such an underclass presents most difficult problems for a nation that prides itself on adherence to principles of equality under the law.”64 While the holding of Plyer v. Doe no longer allows for tolerance of this underclass in the context of public education for undocumented children, the nation continues to tolerate a class of undocumented persons existing in these shadows without protections. As a client expressed it: “I am a ghost.” While a client may personally find it painful to relate the history of what brought her to the United States or the reasons she seeks to remain, through the telling she and her story are made visible and her human experience dignified.

59 Violence Against Women Act amendments enacted on 9 January 2006, expand benefits for survivors of domestic violence, victims of crimes, and trafficking and provide for additional work benefits for certain nonimmigrant survivors of domestic violence. However, the absence of implementing regulations means these provisions remain open to interpretation and are a source of confusion and sometimes misinformation in immigrant communities.

60 The federal poverty income guideline for 2008 for a family of four is $21,200. Federal Register: 23 January 2008 (Volume 73, Number 15), 3971-3972.
The tired, the poor, and the tempest-tossed⁶⁵ have all found refuge and charity through the work of Saint Vincent de Paul.⁶⁶ While the promise of light and hope for the exiled on our shores is fading, the influence of humility and charity persists, and with it a promise to recognize the dignity of the foreign-born poor.

---

⁶⁵ From the poem, “The New Colossus” by Emma Lazarus.
⁶⁶ “Today there are over forty thousand Daughters of Charity scattered over five continents. Wars, riots, prisons, epidemics, refugee camps, shanty towns, the aged, the orphaned, the abandoned, the poor, the sick, the insane, the sinful, pagan and uncivilized peoples — all have known the Sister in the white head-dress and deep blue habit.” Purcell, World of Monsieur Vincent, 134.
Committed to Poverty Reduction and Spiritual Growth: Vincentian Communities of Reflection, Action, and Solidarity

By Karl Nass
Project Manager, Faith and Civic Engagement
And Siobhan O'Donochue
Associate Director for Community Service
DePaul University

This article explores the history, structure, and practices of Vincentians in Action (VIA), a values-based developmental leadership framework rooted in faith and action. VIA strives to cultivate the Vincentian values of poverty reduction and spiritual growth within a culturally and religiously diverse group of university student leaders. This model is grounded on the understanding that working to reduce poverty from the VIA perspective is about community service and working to bring about systemic change; and that at its very core, it is also a spiritual undertaking which ultimately leads one on a quest to be in solidarity with the poor.

Introduction

Vincentians in Action is a Vincentian values-based developmental leadership model for students engaged in ongoing service and justice work at DePaul University. It provides an interfaith, reflective framework in which to promote, enhance and integrate the values of service, spirituality, community, and civic engagement on behalf of the poor and marginalized. The VIA model emerged five years ago as a pedagogy to develop the leadership skills of student coordinators of the DePaul Community Service Association (DCSA) in University Ministry. Today more than 480 students representing seven curricular and co-curricular DePaul communities are afforded the opportunity to participate.

History

In 2002 the VIA model was piloted as a developmental leadership framework for addressing the formative needs of eighteen student coordinators of DCSA who were engaged in weekly community service and ongoing social
Saint Vincent de Paul was a man of deep faith who sought to discern the will of God and “find pragmatic solutions to the overwhelming needs of the poor in his era.” He demonstrated a preferential love for the poor and “stressed a broad concept of evangelization, including human promotion and liberation from human bondage, or what Vincent calls ‘serving the poor both corporally and spiritually.’” Saint Vincent’s life, therefore, seemed to be an obvious narrative for DePaul students to consider seeking to integrate the values of spirituality, community, and poverty reduction in their lives. Through looking at the lived experience of Saint Vincent, students could thus explore what wisdom his life of committed service might offer to their own experience as leaders in service and justice work. Through examining his legacy, it soon became increasingly evident how the Vincentian values of community, spirituality, and poverty reduction — which Vincent exhibited in his life through standing in solidarity with the poor — continue to ground many students’ experience at DePaul today. Indeed, as clarity began to emerge from the discernment process it seemed that the majority of students involved in service and justice at DePaul, whether or not they identified with a religious faith or spiritual tradition, could relate their involvement at some level to the narrative of Saint Vincent de Paul.

In order to develop the content of the VIA curriculum the obvious first step was to identify the needs of student leaders and examine these in light of the core Vincentian values of community, spirituality, and service to the poor. As a result, key knowledge, skills, and values were identified and developed into a core curriculum. This core curriculum has given DePaul students a Vincentian language to begin to reflect upon how to address global and local poverty issues today. Based upon ongoing needs assessments and yearly evaluations, the curriculum continues to be shaped by University Ministry staff and student leaders.

It was at this juncture in the discernment process that a Vincentian priest from Colombia, Guillermo Campuzano, C.M., became involved in helping University Ministry develop a pedagogy based upon Vincentian values and his lived experience in solidarity with the poor in Latin America. Through conversations, meetings, and presentations he shared his discernment principles, which are rooted in the Gospel, Vincentian spirituality, and a lived option for the poor. Campuzano also introduced staff and student leaders to books, literature, and people steeped in the Vincentian tradition. Together the DCSA Senior Coordinators and University Ministry staff began to develop a

---

1. Louise Sullivan, D.C., The Core Values of Vincentian Education (Chicago: DePaul University, 1997).
of Student Affairs encourages the integration of faith, leadership, and civic engagement in the DePaul student experience. Finally, DePaul’s historical commitment to both enhance its Catholic identity and to be a pluralistic and diverse community provided this VIA interfaith reflective framework with a rich, challenging, and appropriate context in which to grow. VIA emerged as a means to enhance a Vincentian way of education: “As a Catholic university, DePaul fosters a community that knows that our diverse beliefs and values help our community to recognize and serve the common good inside and outside the university.”

Structure

Once the core components of the VIA curriculum had been identified, University Ministry staff and student leaders instituted a structure and format for DCSA to participate in VIA. They chose DCSA because of the existing structure of the community, which would potentially correspond well to the VIA experiences. While originally there were eighteen student coordinators, today there are thirty-five to forty DCSA student leaders who each receive a Saint Vincent de Paul scholarship of $500 to lead their respective service and justice groups. Each DCSA coordinator commits to recruiting DePaul student members (the DCSA community now consists of more than 550 members each week) and facilitating a weekly service experience with a local community partner in Chicago’s south and west-side neighborhoods. The DePaul coordinators travel with their volunteers to their sites. After the

Several key institutional factors supported the emergence of VIA. Without these, it would not have been possible for VIA to develop. First, DePaul University has ten learning goals. Three of these goals highlight the development of service-oriented, socially responsible values and an ethical framework; knowledge and respect for individuals and groups who are different from us; and self-reflection and life skills. These learning goals support a nurturing environment for VIA to flourish. Second, DePaul’s Division

4 For more information about the curriculum, please e-mail FACE@depaul.edu.
service experience, they facilitate a reflection session with their volunteers. Additionally, the coordinators meet as a group on a weekly basis for a VIA experience: ninety minutes to engage in prayer, interfaith dialogue, critical reflection, and community building. These meetings are led by a team of senior VIA student leaders who partner with University Ministry staff to plan the meetings and discuss how to integrate a designated Vincentian value from the VIA curriculum. Often the format of the meetings will incorporate some of the following components: use of multimedia, lectures, small-group work, literature and research reviews, guest presenters, and interactive reflection exercises. Community building is always modeled and emphasized by the student facilitators of the meetings through the sharing of prayer, food, retreats, social gatherings, and more.

At DCSA’s weekly VIA gatherings Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist student leaders, as well as students from other spiritual backgrounds and those who describe themselves as seekers, take turns beginning the meeting with a prayer and a communal sharing of food. After eating and socializing, a “check-in” follows in which all the students reflect upon their service experience and assess their overall progress. The meeting continues with any business updates and “shout-outs” — announcements about faith, service, or justice opportunities happening that week at DePaul or in greater Chicago. Finally, the meeting ends with a forty-five-minute VIA portion that includes reflection and interfaith dialogue, highlighting themes experienced of Wiesner’s three ways. This portion is led by a senior VIA student leader.

What began five years ago as a weekly DCSA student experience with VIA has grown today to encompass more than 480 students participating in small and large VIA communities through weekly, monthly, or intensive service immersion experiences. These DePaul students encounter VIA through their experiences with the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, DePaul Community Service Association, Political-Activist VIA Engagement, the Steans Center for Community based Service Learning Catholic Schools Initiative course, Alternative Spring and Winter Break Service Immersions, and the DePaul Leadership Scholars program. In the autumn of 2007 a cadre of young DePaul alumni who were involved with VIA as undergraduates created a monthly VIA space for dozens of alumni in the Chicagoland area. Today University Ministry student leaders and staff are increasing the integration of VIA into other curricular and co-curricular community contexts.

VIA Themes: Addressing Poverty Awareness and Reduction

VIA underscores the belief that the concrete work of reducing poverty is inextricably linked to understanding the causes of poverty. It strives to create an awareness of the structural causes of poverty and to offer students an opportunity to understand and respond to the reality of poverty through themes derived from the Wiesner-framed ways of Appreciation, Dialogue, and Solidarity. Core VIA themes include:

**Way of Appreciation**
- What Is Prayer?
- Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac
- Reflective Practice and Facilitation Techniques
- Human Dignity
- Compassion
- Humility and Servant Leadership

**Way of Dialogue**
- Social Analysis: Finding Meaning Beneath the Data
- Simplicity; Simple Living; Stewardship
- Praxis: Integrating Dialogue and Action/Conscientization
- Suffering
- Responding to Misunderstanding

**Way of Solidarity**
- Finding Oneself in Solidarity
- Being vs. Doing
- Forgiveness and Love
- Community and Civic Responsibility

Additional VIA themes that address poverty reduction through the promotion of awareness and action have been created and led by student leaders in the last five years. These themes include Social Problems and Justice Efforts in Africa, Black Liberation Theology, The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Praxis — Integrating Dialogue and Action, Response and Action to Hurricane Katrina, Homelessness Activism, Vincentian Values in Social Justice, Race and Privilege, Agribusiness and Small Farms, and The Story of the Coalition of Immokolee Workers.

Our work with outcomes begins with the Vincentian values of community, spirituality, and service to the poor. Saint Vincent de Paul organized his life around these core Christian values. Through his lifelong commitment to such values, he was able to reach out and care for the poorest of the poor and to raise awareness about poverty issues in seventeenth-century France. In modern-day Chicago, through the framework of VIA, student leaders gather on a weekly basis to reflect upon what motivated and inspired Saint Vincent and the women and men of the Vincentian family to serve people who lived...
on the margins of their time, and to examine what sustained their efforts. Through this exploration, students make connections to their own service engagement. VIA thus provides a framework for students to identify and examine the core values that motivate them to engage in service, social responsibility, and a lived option for the poor.

One intended outcome is that from being encouraged to examine the connection between these rich dimensions in their lives, students will continue an integrated commitment to spiritual growth, service, and social justice long after graduation. Another goal is that students will be able to reflect upon how they create meaning in their lives and where they find a sense of purpose, with an appreciation for the Vincentian calling to reduce poverty in our world. Furthermore, the VIA program is intended to help students develop sound group facilitation skills, gain an appreciation for multi-faith prayer, and cultivate an ability to reflect upon their own life purpose and meaning throughout their lifelong journeys.

**DePaul VIA Graduates: Life Choices Committed to Faith and Action**

For five years the VIA framework has been utilized in multiple curricular and co-curricular settings at DePaul. For each of the last five years, at least one of two graduating seniors who have received the Saint Vincent de Paul Leadership Award — the highest recognition that DePaul bestows upon a student — have also been VIA student leaders. Now young alumni of DePaul, these awardees — whose accomplishments are noted below — have chosen paths in life that exemplify spiritual growth and a dedication to reducing poverty in our world.

Having finished a postgraduate volunteer commitment with the L’Arche community of disabled adults, Scott Jeanson is now in medical school and desires to work with impoverished populations upon graduation. On completing an eighteen-month service commitment in Duran, Ecuador, with Rostro de Cristo, Meredith Dean was hired by the Illinois Hunger Coalition to coordinate outreach in public schools. Initially serving with the Vincentian Service Corps, Jason Gill continued with full-time volunteer service, teaching with the Inner-City Teaching Corps in a south Chicago elementary school. Jason recently completed graduate studies focusing on the theology of economics. Additional VIA graduates include Salvador Venegas, who helped open a Chicago Public School in the Little Village neighborhood in Chicago and continues to work as a teacher and administrator; Jenan Mohajir, recently recognized by DePaul’s University Ministry with the Young Alumni Award for her ongoing service to an Islamic educational foundation and professional work, who engages religiously diverse young people in dialogue and service-learning as a staff member at the Interfaith Youth Core; Eitan Gordon, who served as the president of Hillel at DePaul; and Ben Meyer, who finished a postgraduate volunteer commitment with Boys’ Hope and is currently attending law school with an interest in pursuing legal work as an advocate for the poor and marginalized.

**VIA Experiential Reflection: Addressing Poverty Reduction and Spiritual Growth**

VIA is grounded in a Vincentian spirituality, described by Campuzano in the following way: “We are offering three things that are essential to our humanity: spirituality, community life and community service through solidarity. These are not only goals for human life but are essentially the way of fulfillment for human life. This is a countercultural offer of finding meaning for new generations.”

VIA themes challenge students to reflect upon their role in the world, and upon their sense of purpose as socially responsible leaders and global citizens. VIA allows a safe space for students to reflect upon their experiences of working with the poor and the difficulties and personal struggles they encounter when confronted face-to-face with the harsh reality of poverty.

During the Way of Dialogue, one of the VIA themes which students are often invited to consider is when working with the poor and striving to bring about poverty reduction, how do they deal with the suffering they encounter both personally and in the lives of those whom they are serving? In recent years, this theme has been addressed by two guest speakers in very different contexts. The first guest speaker, Siobhan O’Donoghue, the associate director of community service in University Ministry, spoke from a Catholic perspective and based her talk on the theology of Saint Louise de Marillac. The second guest speaker was Gihad Ali, graduate intern for Muslim student life in University Ministry, who shared her experience, within the context of her Muslim faith, of the suffering she witnessed and experienced in Palestine and upon the death of her mother.

During Siobhan’s presentation, students were invited to reflect upon the theology of Saint Louise de Marillac — particularly upon Louise’s understanding of the words of Christ as he was being crucified: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Such discussion prompted several students who had recently returned from service trips to share their thoughts about their growing sense of isolation, anger, and frustration as they became increasingly aware of the structural causes of poverty. Part of this struggle they attributed to being forced to come to terms with their own privilege

---

and complicity in oppression. In identifying and naming the alienation they experienced through their attempts to bring about a more just world, the students reflected upon how, on their return to their homes, they had felt misunderstood and estranged by their peers and family who failed to understand their impassioned desires and renewed sense of urgency to earnestly work for the reduction of poverty and violence in our world.

At this juncture, Siobhan was able to validate the students’ experience by referencing the pain Saint Vincent had himself experienced after his return from his successful sermon in Folleville, and his subsequent preaching trips to the surrounding rural villages. “It was painful for Vincent, after these intensely experienced weeks, to return to the Paris mansion of the Gondis. The magnificent surroundings of a house devoted to show, worldliness, and parties were stifling for Vincent now.”

According to Wiesner, such experiences are an inevitable part of the struggle involved in working to alleviate poverty. Once we begin to become aware of the systemic nature of poverty, as Wiesner states, some of us:

...also become engaged in the struggle for social change. This usually leads to involvement in such things as protests, boycotts, demonstrations, actions of resistance, even civil disobedience, arrest, imprisonment. We often become part of what is sometimes called a resistance community, a network of persons with similar ideals and goals. As a result of this involvement, we experience the fact that others — friends, relatives, family, members of our family simply do not comprehend what we are about. We feel misunderstood, alienated, criticized, even persecuted.

Understanding that students sometimes experience these struggles of alienation because of their deepened involvement in social-change work, the VIA process provides an ongoing safe space for students to share and support one another.

Poignantly framing her discussion within the context of her Muslim faith, Gihad Ali also led students through a powerful examination of alienation, suffering, and privilege. In connecting her own experience of witnessing the oppression of the Palestinian people in occupied Palestine to her own inner pain in losing her mother to cancer, Gihad spoke from her heart of the difficulties she had faced in her own quest for justice. Gihad thus alerted her peers to the reality that as they seek to examine and critique the root causes of oppression and address the inequitable structures that keep those on the margins, students will need to be willing to come to terms with the poverty that exists in their own lives. As Gihad so eloquently made clear, the journey to poverty reduction in our world will also inevitably entail having to identify, wrestle with, and eventually acknowledge one’s own inner poverty, in addition to the poverty students see in the lives of “the other” and in the world around them.

Gihad then invited the students to confront their privilege to see how it affected them in their quest for justice and identity. Gihad explained how it was difficult for her to accept her privilege and that she was conscious of “abusing” it. Eventually she had to come to terms with the fact that it was this very privilege that she needed to “use” (not “abuse”). Her privilege allowed her to help those who had been oppressed by the very same system and structure that had given her privilege and yet oppressed her in other ways. Gihad’s VIA presentation illuminated how this journey calls us to embrace our own privilege and weakness and to use it as a way of connecting with the oppressed and suffering. As Gihad conveyed, this self-examination is often a difficult and painful process, yet it is in using our privilege to work against systems of injustice that we can find hope.

Through a community such as VIA, students can learn to share their vulnerabilities with one another and gain strength from a cohesive sense of communal support. Consequently, community members can validate, normalize, and help one another overcome the alienation they may sometimes encounter when working toward the reduction of poverty.

---

Poverty in New Orleans: Before and After Katrina

By

GLORIA SIMO, Ph.D.
Assistant Director, Chaddick Institute of Metropolitan Development,
DePaul University

On 29 August 2005, Hurricane Katrina inflicted massive damage on the states of Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi. While the physical damage in all these areas was indescribable, the effects were exacerbated in the city of New Orleans as the levee system was breached at multiple locations, causing massive flooding in many neighborhoods, from the poorer black neighborhoods in Mid-City and the Lower Ninth Ward to the middle-class white neighborhood of Lakeview, forcing many residents of these communities from their homes. On 30 August, the United States of America awoke to media coverage of the increasing damage in New Orleans on national television, with floodwaters covering the city and American citizens stranded on the rooftops of their homes and inside the Superdome.

These dire circumstances continued to deteriorate as local, state, and federal agencies left many residents to fend for themselves. The faces depicted in national media coverage looked increasingly desperate each day while news coverage continued into the following weekend. As that weekend wore on, viewers from around the world could not believe what they were seeing: that these horrendous conditions could exist in the United States. It also became increasingly clear that a disproportionate number of people victimized by Katrina had been extremely disadvantaged even before the storm, and had lost what little they possessed to the raging floodwaters. Questions then arose as to why government response to the storm was so slow and insufficient. Critics began to speculate that government officials were hoping to change the demographic characteristics of pre-Katrina New Orleans by giving the poor and disenfranchised no other alternative but to leave the only homes they had ever known and move to another region of the state or country, thus dispersing the poverty and misery to someplace — anywhere — else. In fact, that is what occurred in many neighborhoods.

According to a June 2006 Brookings report, the largest population losses in hurricane-impacted areas of the Gulf Coast were in the New Orleans metro area and in Orleans parish, which incorporates most of the city. According to this report, the current population of this area is more white, less poor,
became: What does this mean to the poor, disabled, and elderly whose food stamps or Social Security were spent earlier in the month, who also need medication that their Medicare and Medicaid will not allow them to stock up on, and who do not have cars to fill up with gas — even if they had the money for gas — but would instead need to take public transportation, which might not even be available? These are the people, the poor and near-poor, who live clustered in areas most vulnerable to severe weather conditions.

These same factors also played a role in evacuation when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. Jane Daugherty, a four-time winner of the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award for her coverage of the disadvantaged, discusses the faces of poverty in New Orleans after Katrina.\(^1\) She confirms that the poor had no choice but to stay put as they could not afford to leave, mainly because they could not afford the necessary supplies. She also points out that poverty is not the only issue, and that other demographics contributed to the problem. Daugherty characterizes two specific groups most gravely affected in the aftermath of Katrina in New Orleans: the “elderly person, who lives alone and spends almost every dollar of their Social Security check on housing, prescriptions and food,” and the “single mother with a couple of preschool children who takes the bus to work, gets food stamps to help feed her kids, and whose medical care is paid by Medicaid (if she qualifies) because her job at Wal-Mart or McDonald’s doesn’t include health care benefits.”\(^2\)

Another author also points out that the majority of poor residents who were trapped in the Superdome for days without food and water were African-American, and claims that this was why it took so long for the news media to report on the deplorable conditions and the extreme need for help.\(^3\) So it was not just poverty itself (as defined only by income levels) but also many of the factors often associated with poverty that either kept the citizens of New Orleans from evacuating or made them more anxious to return to their homes and what was left of their belongings. Some of these factors — such as race, gender, and age — are commonly understood as leading to poverty in the U.S., while others — such as health, housing, education, jobs, and income — are the outcomes of poverty. This article focuses on how all of these problems need to be addressed in the spirit of Saint Vincent DePaul, not only to make progress in New Orleans, but also to show how these issues

\(^1\) Jane Daugherty, “Remembering Those Who Are Usually Forgotten,” in What Katrina Revealed, Nieman Reports (Spring 2006), at http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/06-1NR-spring/p06-0601-daugherty.html.

\(^2\) Daugherty, “Remembering.”

\(^3\) Claudia Meléndez Salinas, “When the Role Race Plays in Societal Gaps is Unspoken,” in What Katrina Revealed, Nieman Reports (Spring 2006), at http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/06-1NRspring/NR06-01_Katrina_eMprint.pdf.
can be addressed in other impoverished communities and have a long-term impact on poverty conditions.

This article applies these principles to a particular neighborhood in New Orleans known as Tulane/Canal in the larger Mid-City community and reflects on the work of faculty, staff, and students from the School of Public Service (SPS) and the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development at DePaul University, and its effects on poverty conditions that existed in that neighborhood after Katrina. The article also examines the demographic landscape of New Orleans in relation to relevant literature on the politics of poverty, race, and gender, discusses how we define poverty in the U.S., and examines the other factors of poverty which apply in this context. Finally it examines the role that faculty and students of SPS and Chaddick played in serving these poor residents of New Orleans, fulfilling their Vincentian mission.

The Case: Tulane/Canal and Mid-City

The conditions outlined above were especially evident in the Tulane/Canal neighborhood located less than half a mile away from the Superdome, and just outside the historic French Quarter and the central business district, where post-Katrina flood waters ranged from three to more than seven feet deep. This neighborhood also houses the regional medical center, including several major hospitals, but it was also marked by widely recognized characteristics of poverty pre-Katrina. These indicators included the Iberville public housing project and a population that was 50.8 percent African-American, with a median annual household income of $6,875 and an individual poverty rate of 54 percent at the time of the 2000 U.S. census, five years prior to Katrina. Forces were at work even then to improve the plight of these poverty-stricken residents, but when they were finally allowed to return to their homes after Katrina they found that they needed even more assistance: many of their homes were badly damaged or totally destroyed, medical facilities were closed down, and government agencies and private developers were seeking to change the demographics of their neighborhood so that they could no longer afford to live there.

A focal point of hope for this neighborhood’s poor residents, both before and after the storm, has been Saint Joseph Roman Catholic Church located in the heart of Mid-City. Reverend Perry Henry, C.M., pastor of St. Joseph, and Sister Vera Butler, P.B.V.M., Executive Director of the Tulane/Canal Neighborhood Development Corporation (T/CNDC), provide leadership and hope to the community on a daily basis. Less than a month after Katrina struck, Father Henry, a former trustee of DePaul University, contacted Reverend Dennis Holtzschneider, C.M., president of DePaul, to request technical assistance from the university in the areas of urban and strategic planning, and community development for the Tulane/Canal neighborhood.

St. Joseph is a central partner of many New Orleans nonprofits including Lantern Light — a ministry of the Presentation Sisters, led by Sister Vera, that serves the homeless in the neighborhood — and is also a founding member of the Tulane/Canal Neighborhood Development Corporation (T/CNDC), which has historically spearheaded affordable housing, economic development, and social service initiatives throughout the surrounding community. But Hurricane Katrina had exacerbated existing challenges for St. Joseph and the T/CNDC, requiring a more comprehensive planning and development initiative.

The DePaul SPS/Chaddick team was particularly well-suited to complete this work, based on their knowledge and experience with nonprofit and public organizations and their ability to create collaborative partnerships. After meeting with the university’s executive leadership, SPS faculty proposed to assemble and dispatch a team of students to the New Orleans area to provide the requested assistance. As a part of Vincentian-led DePaul, SPS is firmly rooted in a service-learning ethic, and this project served to further instill these values in participating students in accordance with SPS’s stated mission:

We educate women and men to become effective public service leaders in the global community guided by the values of St. Vincent DePaul....

And these Vincentian values are the foundation for carrying out the broader university mission:

In meeting its public service responsibility, the university encourages faculty, staff, and students to apply specialized expertise in ways that contribute to the societal, economic, cultural, and ethical quality of life in the metropolitan area and beyond. When appropriate, DePaul develops service partnerships with other institutions and agencies.

The SPS/Chaddick faculty, staff, and students who have traveled to New Orleans on this mission followed Saint Vincent’s example to serve urgent human needs and recognize the God-given dignity of each person.

Following the initial trip in December of 2005, the SPS/Chaddick team prepared a strategic plan that identified a number of other services that parishioners of St. Joseph and residents of the neighborhood needed — especially

---

4 School of Public Service at DePaul University, Strategic Plan 2004-05, at http://www.publicservice.depaul.edu/mps/about/MPS_Strategic_Plan0405.pdf.
those which would help to serve and advocate for the poor. Father Henry and SPS faculty and students presented this plan to other neighborhood groups and used it as the basis for establishing the Mid-City Collaborative, expanding the geographic area it would serve. Since the plan’s adoption in March of 2006, the Mid-City Collaborative provided the impetus for the Rebuild Center, a community center built on the grounds of St. Joseph Church, dedicated in August of 2007 on the second anniversary of Katrina. Numerous trips have been made by SPS students and faculty since December of 2005 to evaluate and make recommendations to improve the services provided at the Rebuild Center and to write a new strategic plan for the Rebuild Center itself.

Definitions and Correlates of Poverty

Knowing the degree to which poverty existed in the Tulane/Canal neighborhood even before Katrina allows a greater understanding of the forces that residents were up against and the kind of assistance they needed. The formal definition of poverty in the U.S. is based on income and the degree to which individuals and families fall at or below the poverty income threshold. For 2007, the poverty guidelines as defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services are as follows:

Table 1. 2007 HHS Poverty Guidelines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons in family or household</th>
<th>48 contiguous states and D.C.</th>
<th>Alaska</th>
<th>Hawaii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10,210</td>
<td>12,770</td>
<td>11,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>13,690</td>
<td>17,120</td>
<td>15,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>17,170</td>
<td>21,470</td>
<td>19,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>20,650</td>
<td>25,820</td>
<td>23,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>24,130</td>
<td>30,170</td>
<td>27,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>27,610</td>
<td>34,520</td>
<td>31,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>31,090</td>
<td>38,870</td>
<td>35,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>34,570</td>
<td>43,220</td>
<td>39,750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each additional person, add: 3,480 4,350 4,000


As this table shows, the poverty threshold for one person in forty-eight states (including Louisiana) is $10,218 annually — but as already indicated, the household income in Tulane/Canal prior to Katrina was only $6,875. This figure is well below the threshold for one person and less than 50 percent of the guideline amount ($13,690) for a two-person household. In fact, many neighborhoods in New Orleans were staggeringly impoverished before the storm, as shown in Figure A, prepared by the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center (GNOCDC) in 2004, prior to Katrina.

Figure A. Percentage of people living on income below twice the poverty threshold, by census block in Orleans Parish.

Other Poverty Factors

While many accept these income levels as the primary criteria for defining poverty in the U.S., others claim that U.S. poverty does not really exist in comparison to other (poorer) nations, while still others argue that the threshold of poverty is actually set too low and should be based on other factors besides income levels. They also believe that the gap between higher and lower incomes in the U.S. is increasing, and that families of all backgrounds and income levels are falling farther and farther behind financially.

Seeing the Poor as Individuals

Jason Johnson suggests that the ability to identify poverty conditions and
provide the full range of services needed by the poor comes from telling and listening to individual stories from people of all racial, ethnic, religious, and demographic backgrounds. Johnson suggests that policymakers and donors must realize that the poor are not just out-of-work welfare mothers but also parents who work hard, commute long distances to their jobs, and need day care — or who work split shifts to avoid having to pay for day care. Still they do not make enough money to obtain decent housing, adequate health care, or a good education for themselves and their children. Thus, although they work and may earn income above poverty guidelines, they are still poor.

These authors also provide evidence that race, gender, age, and education all play a role in determining how much income an individual or family earns, and thus further determine whether that individual or family can be identified as poor. But studies also show the extent to which those most likely to be poor actually receive goods and services that help them to improve their quality of life, such as improved housing, health care, and physical safety, and including survival in emergency circumstances. Daugherty, like Johnson, sees the value of providing personalized stories of individuals living in poverty as such stories make these people more real, and more likely to elicit a measure of response from private citizens and nonprofit and public organizations. Responses to the depth and breadth of these poverty conditions, especially in New Orleans after Katrina, needed to provide coordinated assistance from many sectors. This is where and how the response from SPS began.

Data

The first SPS/Chaddick Team spent eight days in New Orleans in December of 2005. Subsequent trips were made by SPS faculty and students in February, March, June, and December of 2006, September, October and November of 2007 and April, September and October of 2008. The initial field trip centered on broad input and inclusion of stakeholders, a comprehensive needs assessment, and exploration of collaborative relationships. Researchers spent time surveying the affected areas in the Tulane/Canal neighborhood and documenting areas of particular concern. The rest of their time was spent meeting with stakeholder groups and collecting data from their members.

Secondary quantitative data provided a demographic context for understanding the needs of Tulane/Canal residents and a comparison between the Tulane/Canal neighborhood and the city of New Orleans as a whole at the time of the 2000 U.S. Census.

Table 2 shows the central census tract of the Tulane/Canal neighborhood (Census Tract 60, U.S. Census Bureau 2000) as a subsection of Orleans parish. Census Tract 60 compares to Orleans parish in terms of higher poverty rates (54 percent of individuals and 45.8 percent of families with median income at $5,904 per capita and $6,875 per household), lower median age (25.8), and a higher proportion of females (60.8 percent). Although the neighborhood has a larger proportion of white residents (32.5 percent) than the parish as a whole (28.1 percent), it is still predominantly non-white (67.5% percent). Homeownership rates (11.8 percent) and median housing values ($44,500, 51 percent of the average home value for Orleans parish) are well below that of other parish residents. Clearly the neighborhood already had significant initial challenges and poverty indicators prior to Hurricane Katrina.

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Designation</th>
<th>New Orleans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tulane/Canal (Census Tract 60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population size</td>
<td>1,326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Male</td>
<td>39.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Female</td>
<td>60.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Caucasian</td>
<td>32.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African-American</td>
<td>50.80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
from participant observations of the Bring Back New Orleans Commission (BBNOC), as well as various nonprofit organizations, public and nonprofit collaboratives, focus groups, individual interviews with government officials, and representatives of nonprofit agencies.

The Strategic Plan: Evidence of a Variety of Needs

As a result of this data collection the SPS/Chaddick team identified eight major areas of need in the Tulane/Canal or Mid-City neighborhood. This basically corroborated the categories identified by Father Perry and Sister Vera, except that the researchers focused more on housing, health, and human services and less on economic development because they determined these were greater needs. They specified these needs in the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan, initially prepared for St. Joseph Church but ultimately adopted for the newly formed Mid-City Collaborative. The first three goals are organizational, the next three call for the provision of services to the community’s poor, and the last two are administrative. Broadly these goals are:

- **Organization:** clarify organizational identity and affiliations.
- **Staffing and volunteers:** recruit, retain, and build number and capacity of paid staff and volunteers.
- **Networking/partnerships:** maximize potential networking and partnership opportunities with public (government), nonprofit, and private-sector organizations.
- **Housing:** support for community members in all degrees of housing need, including homelessness, affordable rental housing and homeownership.
- **Community health services and referrals for physical and mental health needs.
- **Community social services referrals and the establishment of a one-stop advocacy center to provide residents and/or homeless with appropriate services or referrals.
- **Professional reports, documents and services:** identify and clarify needs for consultant and other professional services, and appropriate experts to provide them.
- **Physical and social inventory:** determine the need for a detailed land-use and social-data framework for the neighborhood to advance the position of the Mid-City Collaborative in the broader community.

The goals of the strategic plan confirm that the correlates of poverty found in the literature and discussed in this paper indeed existed in Tulane/Canal and Mid-City both before and after Katrina. The data also indicate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Hispanic or Latino</th>
<th>1.20%</th>
<th>3.10%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income and Poverty</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median household</td>
<td>$6,875</td>
<td>$27,133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median family</td>
<td>$17,014</td>
<td>$32,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median per capita</td>
<td>$5,904</td>
<td>$17,258</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Families in poverty</th>
<th>45.80%</th>
<th>23.70%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Individuals in poverty</th>
<th>54.00%</th>
<th>27.90%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Owner occupied</td>
<td>11.80%</td>
<td>46.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Renter occupied</td>
<td>88.30%</td>
<td>42.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median housing value</td>
<td>$44,500</td>
<td>$87,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Primary qualitative data was collected by the SPS/Chaddick team after consultation with Father Perry and Sister Vera, who worked with the research team before their arrival in New Orleans to identify the primary issues that they believed needed to be addressed in the recovery of Tulane/Canal. These issues were initially identified as housing, health care, and economic development — further evidence that problems associated with this degree of poverty are multidimensional. The research team then compiled a list of organizations present in New Orleans prior to Katrina that provided services to address these problems. The original team identified 205 government and nonprofit organizations. Of these 205, they targeted sixty-eight that they believed were related to the mission of the T/CNDC — thirty that dealt with housing, twenty-three involved with health and human services, and fifteen related to economic development. Team members were able to meet with representatives and attend meetings in thirty-nine of these sixty-eight targeted organizations during their time on the ground in New Orleans. Data came
that these needs must all be addressed simultaneously if poverty is to be alleviated so that the neighborhood can move forward in the long term.

The Rebuild Center has been established to meet many of the goals of the Mid-City Collaborative’s Strategic Plan, especially in regard to providing services to the poor. Although at this writing the center has only been in operation for one year, its principals share a strong sense that it will help alleviate the negative effects of Katrina and poverty in New Orleans, not only in the short term but in the long term as well. Although many organizational partners have taken on the responsibility of actually delivering needed services, the role of the SPS/Chaddick teams in identifying these needs and proposing remedies was a major building block to serving the poor of Tulane/Canal and Mid-City.

Most importantly, the Vincentian values on which the Rebuild Center was founded are sure to play a major role in its success. For as the plan was formulated with attention to “the societal, economic, cultural and ethical quality of life” of the Mid-City neighborhood in New Orleans, the plan also specifies that each individual served through the center be recognized for his or her inherent value, and treated with dignity and respect.

Rebuild Center mural overlooking New Orleans.

Photo courtesy of the author

Saint Vincent de Paul’s Response to Poverty of Spirit

By

YVONNE PRATT-JOHNSON, ED.D.
Professor, School of Education, St. John’s University

Poverty of spirit involves much more than a lack of material possessions or even power. Rather, it encompasses such elements as human weakness, dependence, and defenselessness. This article examines the concept of poverty of spirit, and discusses how my own personal and professional callings and experiences have led me to try to emulate the model of Saint Vincent de Paul in dealing with the poor. Also, how have Vincentian values been incorporated in the classroom, and how have others been touched by the example of Saint Vincent in the process?

Introduction

On joining the faculty at St. John’s University, established by the Vincentians in 1870, I received an orientation on Saint Vincent de Paul. Through additional research I gradually learned more about this humble servant, who was persistent and passionate in his mission to attend to the needs of the poor at all levels. Unlike many people in his time and in the present, Saint Vincent did not view the poor with disdain and fear; neither did he see them as inferior, to be avoided and overlooked. Instead, he loved the poor and valued them, and ultimately his compassion moved him to take action. Through his life Saint Vincent modeled a simple yet compelling message: that we should reach out and help the poor, the needy, and those in jeopardy. So strong was his compassion for the poor that he saw Jesus Christ in each of their faces.1

Saint Vincent inspired others to share in his mission. In 1617 he founded the Ladies of Charity, a community of women who agreed to band together and work diligently for the poor. Then, in 1633, he and a widow, Louise de Marillac, established the Daughters of Charity to serve the poor. It has been said of Saint Vincent that he “…had the reputation of doing wonders wherever he went, and in his wake he brought together people of good will, drawn into action by his example, working to comfort the miserable who suf-

pered in body and soul.”

I am left to reflect, how have I been inspired by the vision of Saint Vincent to passionately and enthusiastically cultivate his spirit and pursue his mission through my own work with the poor, and through my professional mission in the classroom? To answer this I will address poverty of the human spirit and discuss what Saint Vincent’s life and works have to say, and further describe how I dealt with this particular form of poverty in my university classes, research, and personal service.

Poverty of the Human Spirit

When the word poverty comes to mind, one typically thinks of the financial inability to secure basic necessities, be they food, clothing, or shelter. Emaciated children in immediate need of food and medical care are images frequently seen on television that shape our understanding of global poverty. While Saint Vincent’s goals and works addressed this form of poverty, however, there is another type to which he also gave much attention: poverty of the human spirit.

Poverty of spirit is granted a wide variety of definitions and applications in Holy Scripture. The first of the eight beatitudes given in the Sermon on the Mount, “blessed are the poor in spirit,” presents a glimpse of a form of poverty not necessarily connected to material possessions. Here “poor” is linked to “spirit,” implying such meanings as destitution, oppression, defenslessness, affliction, misery, selfishness, indifference, weakness, dependence and social inferiority. Thus, those who are poor in spirit can span the entire socioeconomic spectrum.

At least three groups can be identified as falling within this type of poverty. In the first group are people who recognize their utter helplessness in what life has dealt them. The words “the poor” in this context might conjure a graphic image of persons crouching or cowering in helplessness. A second comprises individuals who may not be materially poor and may not have suffered disasters — people who may even enjoy the blessings of the privileged. They have become poor in spirit even while maintaining material wealth. Sad and unforeseeable life circumstances have befallen them, causing them to lose hope, sometimes even in spite of their monetary advantages.

In the third group are those who intentionally care little about other human beings. They make choices that serve only their individual needs and not the common good. They may be haughty, self-assertive, or indifferent. They may feel they owe no one anything and take a nonchalant or “hands-off” approach to helping others, living only to please themselves. Since they did not create the misery in the world, they feel no responsibility for eliminating it. These people are also poor in human spirit. They are impoverished, even in the midst of their material success and blessings. They may be likened to the rich man who passed by the injured man on the street (Luke 10:25-37), or to the self-reliant Pharisee (Luke 18:10-14). Saint Vincent vehemently speaks out against these kinds of people: “He who allows himself to be ruled or guided by the lower and animal part of his nature, deserves to be called a beast rather than a man.”

However, for the purposes of this article, the phrase poverty of the human spirit will be used to describe the wretched condition of those whose pride and souls have been devastated by their material circumstances or living conditions. These individuals may or may not have brought their suffering on themselves. In either case, society sends them a clear message that they are outcasts, thus stripping them of their human dignity. The resulting poverty of spirit may manifest itself in a lack of such vital elements as self-confidence, self-esteem, or inner strength. There are also emotional and psychological struggles that result from the inability to change one’s destiny.

The poor in spirit may reside in a perpetual state of despair, surrounded by constant hardships, sometimes even including starvation and disease. These individuals were not forgotten by Saint Vincent. He realized that although poverty can take many forms, each form needed to be recognized and addressed — and he was responsive to all kinds of poverty.

A person who is spiritually impoverished has a self-characterization marked by desperation and feelings of insignificance. The look can often be seen in the faces of immigrants who feel isolated and hopeless, of the elderly who live in nursing facilities, and of others who simply lack that spiritual star to guide them through life. Following the example of Saint Vincent, one is compelled to act. “Blessed are the poor” is a call to action.

Personal Service

Service to the elderly

In my experience working with people who are poor in spirit, the words of Saint Vincent have always steered me in the right direction and helped

---

4 Ritenbaugh, “Beatitudes.”
6 Pujo, Vincent de Paul, 251.
He knew that understanding people meant listening to them as well as taking note of their external needs. I attempt to follow this example by listening to the elderly as they recount the stories of their lives and reminisce from their wheelchairs or beds. I often sit attentively on the edge of my seat (just as I believe Saint Vincent would have done), learn about them as individuals, and relish the rays of light that emanate from their faces as they talk. I draw strength from the fountain of wisdom that reposes within their souls. In these moments I become their student and they my teachers — or, as Saint Vincent put it, they become “our lords and masters.” He bestowed such regal titles on the frail and fragile because he believed that they are special people who should be attended to and served.

Saint Vincent was about restoring hope and offering new life to others, irrespective of age. When I visit my elderly “teachers” I often ask questions so that our encounters become conversations rather than mere monologues. Having others listen to their stories means a lot to these men and women; it energizes, restores hope, and makes them happy that others find value in their lives. In my service to the elderly, I endeavor to give purpose to those who are poor in spirit, to enhance their sense of self-worth and to give them back hope and joy of life.

Parents of immigrant children

Imagine what it must be like to pick up your family, leave the only life you have known, and come to a new country where everything is foreign: the people, the language, and the culture. Immigrants of all ages come to the United States knowing that to advance socioeconomically they will have to learn English. Yet this is no easy task, especially for older learners, who find themselves lost in a sea of unfamiliar sounds and new expressions. Adding to the complexity of the linguistic challenge, many immigrants are non-literate in their own languages and have been relegated to low-status jobs in their native countries. As a result, they are not only poor materially but also exhibit signs of dependence, fragility, and distress or poverty of spirit. Living in a new country does not automatically alleviate this problem since they typically have to start their working lives anew despite the language barrier.

Some immigrant parents are fortunate to find jobs as low-paid workers in factories, restaurants, or hotels. They may have to work several jobs to survive. Their responsibilities consume a great deal of time and energy, both physical and emotional, and their problems may seem insurmountable. In some cases
they have no voice and must depend on others to advocate for them."13

Many immigrant mothers stay at home to care for their families, but
some seek opportunities to learn English through free programs while their
children are at school. I volunteer my services in such a community-outreach
program, teaching forty immigrant parents who seek to learn English so that
t hey can assist their children with homework and communicate with their
children’s teachers. Ninety percent of the parents are from Mexico or South
America and are non-literate. Many have school-aged children, while others
bring their preschoolers to class because they cannot afford a babysitter. As a
result, our class is also a nursery in which babies are breastfed and their
diapers quietly changed in a designated corner.

When these young immigrant parents enter the classroom, one senses
the poverty of spirit in their faces and in the way that they walk and talk.
They are uncertain and tentative. Can they learn English, even though all
odds seem to be against them? They look to me, the instructor, to make a
difference in their lives. Here I am reminded of Saint Vincent’s commitment
“to deal kindly with all... to take care of the poor, console them, help them,
support their cause... to be stirred by our neighbors’ worries and distress.”14

As a result, my English classes are lively. I instruct my students in ways
that take into consideration their skills and abilities, and I create a bond with
them by allowing them to share their stories. I use my imperfect Spanish to
show them that I myself am not perfect, that I too make mistakes. I create a
classroom in which acceptance, acknowledgement, and approval reign. The
students are allowed to cry, laugh, and talk about their experiences. After
class I make myself available for any questions they may have. The questions
are not always class-related; they may concern such issues as immigration,
jobs, and children. As Saint Vincent went above and beyond his assigned du-
ties, responding to each individual’s needs, I am compelled to do the same.
Saint Vincent’s example tells us that if we want to serve those who are poor
in spirit, what matters most is time spent with them, living close to them.15

Research

My experience in training teachers has led to my research focus on teach-
er sensitivity and methods of educating teachers on second language learn-
ers. This focus is consistent with, and grounded in, the Vincentian mission
of meeting the emotional and psychological needs of immigrant children
before trying to meet their linguistic needs.16 It is also reflected in DePaul
University’s core belief that “respect for the individual, service to the needy,
human solidarity, and adherence to the belief that giving of one’s self helps
make the world a better place.”17

Through articles, conference presentations, and workshops at home and
abroad, I bring issues of teacher sensitivity to the forefront in order to pro-
mote greater insight and understanding among educators who teach cultur-
ally and linguistically diverse students. Hopefully, my research will lead to
the advancement of institutional sensitivity and to the promotion of spiritual
wealth for students and teachers.

In the Classroom

Because immigrant children have not mastered the English language at
the time they enroll in school, they often feel helpless and vulnerable in the
classroom. Many of their parents experience similar feelings, since their own
lack of English language skills prevents them from helping with homework,
communicating with teachers, and otherwise participating in their children’s
education.

As a Professor of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
(TESOL), this is where I interject Vincentian goals and values into my own
classes. Such values as respect, human dignity, sensitivity, and social respon-
sibility easily find a place in pedagogy and in the TESOL curriculum. Not only
do my students learn about the importance of instructing their immigrant stu-
dents effectively, but they also see what caring involves. I do this through
readings and discussions of immigrant case studies, and by assigning projects
in which students are asked, for example, to interview people who work with
immigrants in various educational settings. Sometimes students are also as-
signed works of fiction that help sensitize them as teachers in training or as in-
service teachers. At times I even integrate children’s literature into my classes
when I believe that it will encourage linguistic and cultural sensitivity.18

Gradually, my students begin to realize that teaching is not only about
grades. Just as Saint Vincent cared about the whole person, my students
learn that each immigrant student must be seen holistically as a whole being.
For example, one of my students, upon learning that her student lived with
her eighty-three-year-old grandmother who knew no English, committed

13 Yvonne Pratt-Johnson, “Jill of All Trades,” in A. Blumenthal, ed., Perspectives on Community
14 Jones, “Vincent de Paul.”
15 Wilson, Life of St. Vincent, 210-19.
16 Hugh F. O’Donnell, C.M., “Vincent de Paul: His Way and Life,” in Frances Ryan, D.C., and John E.
Rybolt, C.M., eds., Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac: Rules, Conferences, and Writings (New York
17 St. John’s University Website: http://www.stjohns.edu/about/vincentian.
18 Yvonne Pratt-Johnson, “Preparing Students for Linguistic and Cultural Sensitivity,” Teacher Trainer
Journal 21:3 (Autumn 2007), 14-16.
Throughout his life, Saint Vincent exemplified the importance of sharing the lives and experiences of those to whom we minister. It is my desire that my students will not only remember Vincentian principles but apply them enthusiastically and responsibly in their own classrooms.

In some of my classes, students are asked to keep journals to monitor their own growth and reflect on issues that emerge as the semester progresses. At the end of the semester I collect the journals and read them to see whether the students’ attitudes have changed. Are my students leaving with more enlightened perspectives? Are they more aware of teacher sensitivity? Are they willing to model Vincentian values in their own classrooms? These are some comments from three students’ journal entries:

In class we were asked to think about our views on error correction… A person learning a new language is in a very special situation. Each person is different, and each person has to be treated differently… I think it’s all about being aware of what the person is going through and being sensitive to their specific needs.

It became crystal clear to me in our class discussion today that people who are not in a position of power do not get respect. I never thought about it before. I never had to. So, I thought about my immigrant students and their parents and figured out why they do not get much respect in my school by teachers, staff, and administrators. Because they do not know English, they are voiceless. I realize now that I need to become the voice of my students and their parents.

As teachers work to continuously affirm students’ languages in the classroom, we, teachers, not only foster the construction of their knowledge, but we also give ourselves the chance to learn about each individual student that sits before us in the classroom, allowing us to also learn from them so that learning truly does become an experience that calls on human collaboration. I will remember this in the classroom.

It is apparent that by the end of the course my students have evolved and developed into more sensitive teachers. For example, when they explain their views on error correction that people who are not in a position of power do not get respect. I never thought about it before. I never had to. So, I thought about my immigrant students and their parents and figured out why they do not get much respect in my school by teachers, staff, and administrators. Because they do not know English, they are voiceless. I realize now that I need to become the voice of my students and their parents.

As teachers work to continuously affirm students’ languages in the classroom, we, teachers, not only foster the construction of their knowledge, but we also give ourselves the chance to learn about each individual student that sits before us in the classroom, allowing us to also learn from them so that learning truly does become an experience that calls on human collaboration. I will remember this in the classroom.

It is apparent that by the end of the course my students have evolved and developed into more sensitive teachers. For example, when they explain their views on error correction that people who are not in a position of power do not get respect. I never thought about it before. I never had to. So, I thought about my immigrant students and their parents and figured out why they do not get much respect in my school by teachers, staff, and administrators. Because they do not know English, they are voiceless. I realize now that I need to become the voice of my students and their parents.

As teachers work to continuously affirm students’ languages in the classroom, we, teachers, not only foster the construction of their knowledge, but we also give ourselves the chance to learn about each individual student that sits before us in the classroom, allowing us to also learn from them so that learning truly does become an experience that calls on human collaboration. I will remember this in the classroom.
such forums, it is clear that the Vincentian seeds planted in my classroom have taken root. Time will reveal what those seeds will yield and how they will touch these young people’s lives and the lives of their students. When conducting professional development workshops and observing classrooms throughout New York City, I often stumble across my former students and am delighted to see them demonstrating Vincentian ways of caring and showing empathy in their work. Saint Vincent has placed his imprint in their classrooms.

Conclusion

Many people in our world suffer from poverty of spirit. Their hearts and their lives are broken. They are of different ages, different socioeconomic positions, and different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These people cross our paths all the time, yet we may not recognize them because they are materially wealthy and well dressed, and may even wear broad smiles. On the surface everything may appear fine, but on the inside are spirits that have been ravished by circumstance. They may have been ignored and disregarded.

In responding to this form of poverty we are sharing a vision of Saint Vincent de Paul, who reminds us that these people, though poor in spirit, are also a part of the body and kingdom of Christ. Our service to these people must reflect this important fact. As we serve the poor in spirit, whether in eldercare facilities or in educational institutions, we are reminded to embrace the little people, the marginal, the hurting, and the lonely. They are to be elevated. In so doing, we address a form of poverty less obvious, but ultimately just as dangerous, as material destitution. Let us, then, address it with guidance from our own hearts and from the spirit of Saint Vincent, who taught that “true charity does not consist only of distributing alms, but of helping the abject to regain their dignity and independence.”

19  Pujo, Vincent de Paul, 251.

Saint Vincent and Saint Louise, Catholic to the Core: Spiritual Praxis as the Foundation for Social Change

By

PAULINE VILLAPANDO

PROGRAM COORDINATOR, VINCENT AND LOUISE HOUSE, DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

“As a Vincent and Louise House volunteer, I come this year to give witness to the core Gospel message: to love one another. In this spirit, I dedicate myself to the task of putting LOVE INTO ACTION. Following the example of Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac, my challenge this year will be to grow in faith, service, intentional community, social justice, and stewardship through praxis.”

Every first Friday of September, these words echo radiantly from the second floor of the small chapel room at 1022 West Belden in Chicago. It is the last scene of a five-day orientation into the values and lifestyle that make up the Vincent and Louise House community, a residential faith formation program on DePaul University’s Lincoln Park campus. Each year ten newly selected DePaul students sign onto a covenant that professes the statements above, which usher in further commitments to engage more fully in the Christian faith, community service, social justice, and stewardship through praxis.

Every first Friday of September, these words echo radiantly from the second floor of the small chapel room at 1022 West Belden in Chicago. It is the last scene of a five-day orientation into the values and lifestyle that make up the Vincent and Louise House community, a residential faith formation program on DePaul University’s Lincoln Park campus. Each year ten newly selected DePaul students sign onto a covenant that professes the statements above, which usher in further commitments to engage more fully in the Christian faith, community service, social justice, and stewardship through praxis.

With much hope and anticipation, mixed in with a bit of fear and anxiety, they enter into the mystery that is the V&L House experience.

The relationships between these ten students — who are oftentimes strangers from the beginning — are a welcomed form of companionship, and at times a necessary challenge for the growth and transformation that are desired outcomes of this journey. Just like the founding religious order that started DePaul University, the V&L’ers are also a community within a community, “gathered together for the sake of the mission.” Rooted in the lives and charism of those for whom the house is named, these students participate in weekly service, deepen their awareness of various justice issues, work at being better stewards of their resources, and most importantly, reflect theologically on...
As the years passed, the activism within DePaul's Amate house grew while the spiritual component dwindled, losing much of the Catholic identity in which it was founded. After several conversations within committees consisting of faculty and staff, however, the Office of Mission and Values responded by providing a majority of funding for full-housing scholarships. This financial support helped to strengthen and refocus the mission of the house by reclaiming its Catholic identity and infusing more Vincentian and Daughters of Charity (D.C.) resources to serve as the backbone of formation for the students. Out of the ashes of a frail program grew the newly renamed Vincent and Louise House in the fall of 2005. Many of its responsibilities remain the same. However, there is now increased exposure and partnership with Vincentian and D.C. communities throughout Chicago.

The V&L House model functions on a combination of certain programmatic expectations, as well as commitments deepened through community choices. In the following paragraphs I will reference pieces of the V&L covenant to explain further how the House mission is incarnated through these expectations and community actions.

Community service: "I will devote my time, energy, and care to help make life better for the people I encounter at my service site. I will accompany society’s powerless and marginalized on their walk through life."2 Every student in the house participates in a minimum of six community service hours each week at a Vincentian or D.C. service site. This year, the students have one common site at which they are expected to do a minimum of two service hours. The program staff and I made the decision to try something new in order to connect the students more deeply to our place of worship and have them contribute more directly to the parish outreach program. The soup kitchen, conveniently housed at the Saint Vincent de Paul Church, has proven to be one of the most favored experiences of every student in the house this year. The direct encounters with people who are homeless, or who are too poor to afford both rent and food, have changed the way all the students perceive and interact with people on the streets of Chicago. Our reflections and informal conversations are filled with stories of people at the soup kitchen, whom the students now see as integral members of the Lincoln Park community. New ways of relating with people from different socioeconomic circumstances are beginning to take root in their hearts and minds. Moreover, the continued connection with Vincentian and D.C. communities through this partnership also adds an element of Vincentian formation. Each academic quarter, the students also have dinner with a different Vincentian and D.C. community within Chicago. The hope is that through these

---

2 V&L House Covenant.
intentional relationships, the women and men who most deeply embody the Vincentian charism will serve as mentors and models of the Catholic and Christian call to serve and work for justice.

Spirituality: “I will welcome this year as an opportunity to explore my faith in prayer, reflection, and worship. I will remain open to different expressions of faith and to the way in which the Spirit is inviting us to grow and learn together.” The V&L students are also held accountable to the faith journey through spiritual companionship with Vincentian priests, Daughters of Charity, or lay people within the Vincentian family who have significantly been formed within the charism of the order. As their conversations with these people continue throughout the year, it becomes quite evident to students that affiliation to the Christian religious tradition does not necessarily translate into one specific form of spirituality. While their prayer styles and other spiritual practices may run the gamut, the students do commit to attending weekly Sunday night mass and hosting two house masses per quarter. These forms of communal worship serve as a reminder to the students, and as an acknowledgment to the DePaul community, that faith and action on behalf of the poor are inseparable. These events also help convey the values of the House to the larger DePaul community through conversations about the mission. Throughout the years, V&L’ers have chosen to attend services of other denominations and religious traditions as a way of deepening their own engagement in matters of faith. They have also attended Lenten or Pentecost services crafted by Amate House volunteers to develop their knowledge, awareness of, and desire to change structures of injustice in society. I will work to promote change in our society toward equality, fairness and equitable distribution of resources and power.”

The diversity of personalities and interests among house members leads to a multiplicity of causes being discussed and challenged. Several students are heavily involved in immigration issues, environmental issues, and the crisis in Darfur. In years past, other students have helped organize the DePaul contingent of the Stations of the Cross portrays the Passion of Jesus Christ through contemporary injustices that plague the human family.

Social Justice: “I will take part in the process of ‘conscience-ization,’ developing my knowledge, awareness of, and desire to change structures of injustice in society. I will work to promote change in our society toward equality, fairness and equitable distribution of resources and power.”

The diversity of personalities and interests among house members leads to a multiplicity of causes being discussed and challenged. Several students are heavily involved in immigration issues, environmental issues, and the crisis in Darfur. In years past, other students have helped organize the DePaul contingent to protest the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia. They have also taken time during community nights to write various governmental representatives on issues ranging from homelessness in the United States to the global food crisis and issues relating to HIV and AIDS. Interestingly, these commitments to a myriad of justice issues sometimes provoke ideological and political contention amongst House members. Issues of war and militarism, or of abortion and women’s rights, have been the subjects of some lively conversations. This seeming challenge, however, is also one of the beautiful and enriching aspects of community. The students, and myself, learn about the necessity of respectful dialogue and of valuing ideological and political diversity. Oftentimes it is through these conversations and their experience at service sites that the students learn which issues they are truly passionate about and are willing to commit to in the long run. Benefitting from its privileged central location on DePaul’s Lincoln Park campus, the House has been a convenient meeting space for various service groups to host discussions or show documentary films on various local and global justice issues. This leads to the last piece of the covenant.

Stewardship: “I will use the resources that God has provided in a way that creates right relationship. In solidarity with the poor, I will live simply and mindfully.” Not only do the V&L’ers share their house space with other campus service groups, but they have also hosted several service immersion groups from different universities. Welcoming “the stranger” with hospitality and providing free room and board for several days is one action that the students see as part of their commitment to stewardship. While this aspect of the community may not directly affect poverty reduction, it provides a safe and inviting space for peers to reflect and discern their own call to work for justice.

Furthermore, a recurring theme in our lessons and conversations at the House is the notion of our Christian faith calling us to be countercultural. While this is certainly manifested through the choice of living in an intentional community, the V&L’ers also live this out in other creative actions they have chosen to take on throughout the years. A few examples are a commitment to recycling, bringing reusable bags to the grocery and bringing Tupperware and traveling coffee mugs out to restaurants so as to lessen environmental impact, limiting showers to thirty-five minutes per week to be mindful of water usage, and cooking simple meals of beans and rice once a week while educating dinner guests about global poverty. All these actions are rooted in an understanding of Christian discipleship as it relates to hospitality, care of the earth, and solidarity with people whom society has marginalized.

Just as Vincent and Louise addressed global poverty by organizing and forming clergy and young women throughout France to serve the poor as a
faith-filled response to the crises of their time, the V&L program intellectually, affectively, and spiritually seeks to transform students so as to reshape their worldview and the way in which they understand their own particular vocation. Ultimately, the V&L program is designed to holistically transform the hearts and minds of young adults for this mission. The following are brief testimonials from two former House members.

Nora Vail is a senior majoring in Political Science. She writes:

I find V&L is having a huge impact on my future plans. More short-term, I plan to apply to do Amate House again when I graduate next year. I feel a call to do a year of full-time service, and I know I already love the Amate House program and would like to serve the marginalized communities of Chicago. After that, I will possibly get a graduate degree. I’m not sure what...maybe social work, maybe law. I just know that whatever I end up doing in the future it will entail service to the poor.

Jackie Lorens is a junior majoring in Political Science and minoring in Journalism. She writes:

Living in the Vincent and Louise House has made me a lot more socially conscious and aware of the various issues marginalized groups face every day. Not only am I aware of injustice occurring throughout the world, but I am also aware of the constant disparity within our own neighborhood and what must be done to empower the marginalized. I have realized that each and every person, no matter their socioeconomic class, race, ethnicity, or religious background, has the inherent right to their human dignity, and the greatest injustice of all would be to take that dignity away from them. This program has really helped me grow into a more socially conscious person, a strong advocate for the poor and the marginalized, and an activist for life.

It would be a fallacy to dismiss the importance that the Catholic faith played in Vincent and Louise’s approach to combating poverty both materially and spiritually. Sister Louise Sullivan, D.C., sheds light on Vincent’s zealousness in being a witness to other priests regarding their calling as pastoral shepherds to the flock in Châtillon. She writes, “Once again we find the formation of the clergy at the root of Vincent’s vocation and of his great works.”

She goes on to quote Vincent’s own words: “...in the plentitude of time [God] called upon us to contribute to the formation of good priests, to provide good pastors for the parishes, and to show them what they must know and practice.” From this methodology, four other avenues of Vincentian faith formation came to fruition: retreats for ordinands, the Tuesday Conferences, spiritual retreats, and seminaries. The priests certainly understood the significance of integrated learning, for it is what gave them direction and purpose in fulfilling their vocational mission. The importance of theological instruction and its integration into practical life experience was likewise not foreign to Vincent and Louise, who constantly sought out educational opportunities for the poor. This was quite evident when Louise began working with Confraternities to educate poor country girls who, as a result of their training and formation, were then able to serve their own neighbors.

Continuing this trajectory of education in the Catholic faith and virtues integral to praxis, the V&L’ers constantly are given opportunities to engage in theological reflection during community nights and retreats. During these events, students are drawn into discussion through storytelling, media, songs, poems, Catholic social teaching documents, scripture, and other relevant texts. Their analysis of the V&L covenant is further developed on an academic level through a mandatory winter-quarter course, “God, Justice and Redemptive Action,” which is taught by the associate director of the community service area in University Ministry. This education, in turn, serves a vocational purpose within a larger context. V&L alumnus, Josh Grode, who is currently serving two years in Nicaragua as a Jesuit Volunteer, provides an example. He writes, “The best part of the program was the class associated with it. That has been the biggest catalyst for change in my life. I learned so much. It may be the most positive class I took in college. Also, through my experience in the house I have come to realize that I would like a career in the education (student services) or nonprofit sector. It really was a life-changing and life-forming experience. I am so blessed to have gotten the opportunity, not only to do good work for others, but also to experience a transformation in my own life.”

The constant engagement in theological praxis certainly leads students to a more intricate view of service by unraveling its ties to systemic injustices, personal responsibility, and ruminations about God’s presence amid the multiplicity of human experience. The outcomes of the course, retreats, and community night discussions, lead to an environment in which students can

7 Ibid., 36.
In this same spirit, I eagerly invite students into an experience of religious tradition and an intimate encounter with Christ that has relevance to poverty, war, homelessness, environmental destruction, and other issues that affect the human family in our time. Here in Chicago, one connects students to Christ by having them serve and work with undocumented immigrants, homeless people, children whose parents are struggling on less than a livable wage, and senior citizens who are strapped for medical and housing resources, just to name a few. This is where my work and vocation intersect with DePaul’s mission: Catholic, Vincentian, and Urban.

More specifically, my work is tied to the Vincentian values that influence our mission as a whole in University Ministry: we are people of prayer and action. These values are quite evident at our staff meetings, student programs, retreats, and special university-wide events like New Student Service Day and Vincentian Service Day. The formal prayers with which we open these events then guide and inform the way in which we live out the foundational value of human dignity. In fact, Vincent understood social action itself as a form of prayer — a response to God’s love. As university ministers, we strive to transform individual lives through this form of Vincentian personalism while building community and forming students, staff, and faculty to reflect and act on behalf of the spiritually and materially poor. We provide numerous service opportunities in which hearts are broken and transformed to see the world in a different way, so that faith, from a variety of religious perspectives and traditions, means far more than merely an individual’s personal relationship to God. This faith incorporates the core values of service, justice, and solidarity with the poor into non-negotiable spiritual practice.

The Reverend Edward R. Udovic, C.M., writes about how Saint Vincent’s Catholic faith influenced his view of France’s bustling cities. He writes:

His keen eyesight unfailingly found what he was looking for: countless poor people who were more likely than not forgotten, marginalized, and even despised and feared by the world that surrounded them. As Vincent de Paul walked through these streets, everywhere he looked he saw homeless people and beseeching beggars. He saw hungry people. He saw children and elderly men and women who were neglected. He saw sick people without health care. He saw refugees from warfare. He saw people who were spiritually abandoned and without hope. In these people he found those whom he had been looking for: his brothers and sisters in Christ. Vincent de Paul was profoundly dissatisfied with what he saw because he knew it was at odds with his
ideal vision of the “good news” of the Kingdom of God as proclaimed by Jesus Christ to the poor; a place where each human being created in the image and likeness of God possessed an inestimable dignity and value as a person.²

It is this dissatisfaction that stirs and reawakens students to a more integrated understanding of their role in the world, and how the values of a religious tradition might shape their view of personal vocation. Rebecca Ickes, a sophomore art major, reaffirms the progression of faith she experienced after a year of V&L when she writes:

I have learned a lot about what it means to be Catholic in seeing the various ways my housemates live out their Catholic faith. Our house is a small example of how inclusive the Catholic tradition really is. Also, this year has really strengthened my faith by tying my “Jesus and me” relationship of attending church and praying privately to the greater relationships between myself and others. I’ve learned there is no way I can have a balanced private faith life. It’s all about our relationships with others! I have relearned the connection between my Catholic faith and our call to serve others and work for social justice. I have learned what the phrase “God is love” truly means. My faith relationship has only just begun to change and grow.

It is no surprise that DePaul is home to people of many faiths, including agnostic seekers. The common thread that binds us is membership in the Vincentian family — whether explicitly and proudly proclaimed, or as a lowest common denominator among all who attend or work for DePaul. Either way, the Vincentian mission permeates and gives meaning to the culture at this university. It is a mission centered on the scriptural reference read aloud by Jesus when he first began his ministry, as recounted in the Gospel of Luke:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, 
because he has anointed me 
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives


There is no doubt that the good news continues to be fulfilled in the students’ community life, in their classroom curiosity, in the beauty of liturgy at their night mass, and in their encounters with the urban poor. As chosen members of this intimate group formed by, and called more deeply into, the Christian mission, the V&L’ers take their stand among other laypeople, vowed religious, and saints immersed in the language and community practices outlined by Vincent and Louise.

While it is not necessary for everyone to partake in an intense year-long formation program in order to grow in Christ-centered values, the V&L House exemplifies the power of community accountability and intentional choices to grow in a faith that is rooted in service and justice. Formation within a particular community is an essential component to every Christian narrative that contains the theme of being sent on a mission. Through which communities are you being spiritually fed and formed? Do their practices consistently engage you in relationships with people who are poor and marginalized? Does your community welcome the challenge of a variety of voices adding an enriched perspective to the whole group? While the work of service and justice can certainly lead to moments of desolation and frustration, the Christian faith and community can provide life-giving hope during these times of struggle.

The foundation built more than 400 years ago by a Catholic priest and a faith-inspired laywoman still has astounding relevance and meaning to our contemporary endeavors in a broken world. This is made evident by the V&L students who are eager to learn about and encounter a loving and universal God through life-changing relationships within a community of believers committed to serving the spiritually and materially poor. The V&L House is centered on one’s continued search for God and oneself, which is deeply intertwined with the rest of the world. It is about helping students see life through a particular faith-based lens and giving them the motivation, language, and support to take action. As is evidenced by many of the V&L alumni, the year-long formation that students receive in the House is one that can either move them toward a life rooted in social responsibility or fuel the activism that is already present. The many relationships and experiences they encounter throughout the year can deepen their compassion and commitment to the poor, deconstruct judgments and stereotypes, introduce creative ways to live more simply, and raise critical questions about mainstream societal values. This condensed period of teaching and training in a set of Christ-centered values promotes social engagement, for one cannot be
I am a professor of Languages and Literature, specifically Italian — but mostly, and metaphorically speaking, I am a contrabandist. That is, in my classes I contraband life. I shall explain what I mean by “contrabanding life,” but let me first tell how I became a contrabandist.

Ever since I can remember, I wanted to be a teacher. At fifteen, as a member of the Azione Cattolica (Catholic Action, an organization which involved people at a very young age) I was teaching religion to the nine and ten-year-olds in the parish of my town — Latina, Italy — and had become very good friends with some Salesian missionaries who inspired me to action. And at sixteen, like many girls of my age, I dreamed of going to Africa as a missionary to change the world. Instead I came to America as an immigrant — my father who had left seven years before us, had finally received the necessary papers — and I cried for one year.

In Italy I had studied English in my “liceo classico” and was well ahead in school, having started at the age of five and skipped the fourth grade. But in New York’s Pier 52 on a beautiful October day, as the porters moved our trunks from our ship, the Raffaello, and screamed at me — “Watch, watch!” — I could neither understand anything nor figure out why they were talking about watches.

I was surrounded by a wall. I could not understand anyone, nor could they understand my broken British English exacerbated by a heavy Italian accent. So I kept a dictionary with me at all times, particularly when watching cartoons on television, trying to make sense of what I was hearing. One month after my arrival in the United States, something happened that changed my life.

I was on a bus going to school when somebody turned to me and said, “What a beautiful day it is today, right?”

I answered, “Right.”

I had understood. For the first time, I had understood a full sentence in English. My God, I could communicate. I was not alone anymore. The barrier around me had suddenly disappeared. I felt myself again part of
the human family, and I cried. It was at that moment I decided that “under-
standing others” would be my field of academic specialization — even if it
meant giving up my earlier love of the field of philosophy. I began studying
languages and literature — including English literature, surprising my pro-
fessors who, given my accent, always thought I had registered in the wrong
class — and my earlier studies in Latin and ancient Greek were certainly a
help. I thought that since I was living in the city of New York, filled with
so many languages and cultures, it was appropriate for me to promote the
study of these languages as a bridge to reach other human beings.

I started teaching in college in blue jeans, and many of my students were
older than me. Quite soon I realized, however, that teaching Italian language
and literature was not enough; the students needed more from me. I had to
go beyond; I had to be creative to bring about a fresh way of learning. That
is when I started to become a contrabandist: Italian language would be the
vehicle, the goods, through which I would contraband something I thought
more important: a culture of awareness.

A culture of awareness meant to me a culture of closeness. And how do
you get close to someone, if not by speaking to them to discover their world?
After all, each one of us carries with us a world that wants to be discovered
and shared. And in order to enter this world we need a key, which is lan-
guage. So I would use the study of language to educate my students’ hearts
and minds, and also to empower them.

During religious instruction in my early youth I had heard of San
Vincenzo dei Paoli, as we call him in Italy, and his love and care for the poor.
Later I got to know him better through the Vincentian Center at St. John’s.
But a few months ago I met him in the pages of his correspondence. It is one
thing to hear people talk about Monsieur Vincent, but it is another to come
into direct contact with him through his words. I was interested in his mis-
sions abroad, and the more I read the more I realized that in my teaching and
my service to the university, I had been following Vincent’s path.

After all, he too was a contrabandist. He contrabanded the word of God
to the poor by helping them first with their basic needs, since he understood
poverty as something not just physical but spiritual. He promoted a culture
of closeness, not just at home but particularly in his missions abroad, where
often his missionaries worked undercover and died. He was indeed the
best at contrabandizing what has become my mission today: empowerment
through education.

Vincent repeatedly said that the goals of “the small company” were
to serve the poor and train seminarians. To do this, he empowered people
who in turn learned how to empower others. His affective/effective model
of empowerment — based on the values of respect, compassionate service,
simplicity, inventiveness, and advocacy for the poor — may be the only one
that can still work today. This is because the alternative, a model of secular
reasoning that excludes the divine from public awareness, is turning out to
be a failure, as religious and moral traditions are intrinsic to human nature.
Moreover, Vincent’s model is not outdated because today’s social framework
is comparable to his own time, considering the presence of political instabil-
ity, religious struggles, cross-cultural differences, poverty, and disease.

So we actually can say that if Vincent were able to take a look at our modern
society, and particularly at the issue of global poverty, he would act as he did
in his own time, using the same measures and strategies. In his fund-raising
activities, promotional enterprises, training and field work, setting up of mis-
sions, acquisition of embassies, and facilitation of ransom payments to Turkish
pirates, Vincent exemplified the practical visionary who had learned how to put
to people to work in restoring the dignity and faith of the disadvantaged.

Furthermore, there is little difference between Vincent’s creative enter-
prises and the methods advocated by modern economists to combat poverty
and promote human development — from Amartya Sen’s promotion of ade-
quate food distribution systems and understanding of cross-cultural differ-
cences, to Stefano Zamagni’s call to invest in human capital and education.

Vincent’s empowerment of people can be summarized in one of his sen-
tences: “Totum opus nostrum in operatione consistit” (All our work is based
on action). Better yet, consider the sentence in context:

These days there are many people who seem to be virtu-
ous, and indeed they are so, but they are inclined to lead
a quiet, easy life rather than one of solid and active com-
mitment. The Church is like an immense harvest that needs
laborers, but laborers who are willing to work. There is
nothing more true to the spirit of the Gospel than gather-
ing light and strength in prayer, and then going out to share
this spiritual food with others. This is what our Lord did,
and the Apostles followed his example. To do this, we must
combine the role of Martha and Mary; we have to imitate the
dove which takes only half of its food and feeds the rest into
the beaks of its young. This is how we shall act, and prove
our love for God through our labors. Totum opus nostrum
in operatione consistit.1

Vincent’s practical words in this letter are indeed applicable today to the issue of global poverty. If you lack the personnel who speak the language, use the local manpower and train it. Is this not what many NGOs are currently doing in developing countries?

Certainly the key word for Vincent remains training — or, as he says, “a sound preparation.” From the example of Jesus training his disciples, Vincent stressed this “preparation” as key to his entire mission. Knowledge of the language or dialects of a country was good for the initial approach to the poor, but to get truly close to them one needed to learn “the language of the heart.” Probably one of Vincent’s favorite topics in his Tuesday Conferences, this “language” encouraged simple, straightforward speech that poor people could understand — quite revolutionary, one might think, considering the tendency of that time toward complex and ornate speech. Vincent called it “le petit method,” an act of humility toward the poor people he had come to love and to serve. This “petit method,” whose requirements are expounded in the Vincentian values, is what I understand Vincent to be all about, and again it is also part of what I have called “a culture of awareness.” It is what I try to uphold everyday in my classroom, because it is a language that seeks continually God’s face in the other’s.

For many years, as my students have been required to sit in a semicircle and look at each other when they talk (surely uncomfortable for many of them during the first few days), I make them seek each other’s faces. “You must always go into the detail,” said Vincent. The face is the detail. To look at the other’s face is to establish a relationship of non-indifference that is not cognitive but ethical. And if we really think about it, I tell my students, our own face also belongs to the other. As much as it is dear to us, we cannot see it, and certainly the distortion of the mirror does not do the job. We rely on others to name it. Faces meet in dialogue before words. To look at a person’s face is to keep them at a close range. Vincent’s exhortation was to keep the poor at a close range where we would recognize them as our brothers and sisters, carrying the divine.

If my classroom is the best environment to test Vincent’s affective love — that is, the “language of the heart” — through active participation and through writing projects I published in the Italian journal Parola Mia, then my networking at the university and projects abroad are, I humbly believe, examples of Vincentian affective love.

The issue of poverty reduction is on everybody’s mind today, from the United Nations Millennium goals to various initiatives by private corporations. The commitment to help is there and the finances are there. The problem...
missionary, and the secretary general and treasurer of Caritas of Rome. Riccardo and I had been talking for several months about training and educating the young to be future leaders able to serve globally. But it was on that day, as we sipped our espresso, that the conversation turned into a vision. Caritas would provide the financing, St. John’s the professors, and we would try to change the world with a new Master’s degree, which we envisioned to be the Master of the Catholic Church (and these are the exact words I told Benedict XVI when we inaugurated our Master in Global Development and Social Justice last year in Rome).

The idea was to use my university’s information technology resources to teach the bulk of the courses via distance learning to fifteen students from all over the world. They would receive a full scholarship and spend the first and last summer of the program in Italy, where they would meet all their professors and take their first two courses (taught by external professors chosen by Caritas) and their final capstone seminar (taught by Riccardo), with all expenses paid by the sponsors. Furthermore, the Master would not be in the hands of an individual, but would be run by a steering committee with

From the beginning, Frates encountered difficulties ranging from cultural misunderstandings to an inability to follow through with the work. In servicing local communities we had to rely on local help, and our most difficult task was that of training these people. How I wished that some Vincentians were present in the area! Finally, though, we found a well-trained local nonprofit group whom we engaged to work for our organization.

The issue of training people who want to help the poor was the topic of a conversation between me and my dearest friend, Riccardo Colasanti, two years ago on a particularly cold winter’s afternoon in a bar in Piazza San Silvestro, Rome. Riccardo is to me what Saint Francis of Sales was to Vincent: my inspiration, my call to action. Originally a medical doctor, he is today an Idente

4 The Idente is a group of missionaries who work in twenty-seven countries, dedicated to promoting Catholic teaching in parishes, schools, and universities. Their founder, mystic poet and philosopher Fernando Rielo, is well known for his “genetic concept of the principle of relation,” through which he discusses the nature of “being” going beyond the Parmenidean concept of “being is being.” “Being,” for Rielo, is always “being +” where the “+” denotes the relationship of being with the other, who actually defines one and gives one reason for one’s destiny and life. Thus, we might add, human nature is relational and the expression of this relationality generates a culture of solidarity as Vincent meant it.
share their culture and their food, their stories and their worlds. The course included a service learning component in which we worked in Paestum with the priest of a poor parish. We painted the church inside and outside while locals would come with espresso coffee and cookies to warm us. We laughed a lot, learned a lot, and also shed some tears as parishioners applauded us during Sunday’s mass when we donated to the church a picture of the Virgin Mary, Saint Ann, and Saint Joachim painted by our own students. Their faces and their stories are still with us today in the photographs taken by the students and hung on the walls of our university for everyone to see.

Many photographs also hang in my own department and tell their own stories. I particularly like the ones taken during my summer study abroad program in Rome. They are pictures of students laughing, eating gelato, showing their artworks in my friend’s gallery, but also working. I have included a service component in my program and, thanks to Caritas and the Comunità di Sant’Egidio, we work every summer in a soup kitchen and get to see the faces of the poor. This is important because by seeing them again, students are reminded of their needs, which is the first step toward poverty reduction.

Furthermore, I have created a new three-credit course entitled “International Internship” in which students can work in any field of their choice. In Rome I have placed them everywhere, in the Italian Parliament (tied to an international leadership certificate from the Government and Politics department), in the Olympic Stadium in the Foro Italico, at the Italian broadcasting network RAI, in four-star hotels, in law and marketing firms, and at the Rome zoo. Many choose service for their internship, so they work in poor parishes, on the outskirts of Rome, in Caritas clinics for immigrants,
in the Caritas offices in the Laterano for special projects dealing with the poor, or with the Sisters of Charity.

In this internship they keep a diary and share with me their thoughts and reactions. Nobody returns to New York the same. This is the promise I make before we leave, and one I always keep. As Vincent could not be the same after meeting the poor in the estate of Marguerite De Silly, so we are transformed when we meet our brothers in need, no matter where we are, in any part of the world.

Again, I shall never stop repeating that in order to move to action — to poverty reduction, in this case — we first need to be aware of what we are facing. A culture of awareness is, as I have said, a culture of closeness. Professors have the responsibility to educate students to understand closeness by promoting “the language of the heart” — that is, the Vincentian values — not because they are Christian values but because they are genetically (as Rielo would put it) inherent to our being human.

In the poem “First of All Man” from The Last Letter to my Son, the Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet writes:

One doesn’t live on this earth
as a stranger or as a tourist in nature.
Live in this world as in your father’s home.
Believe in the wheat, in the land, in the sea,
but first of all, believe in man.
Love the clouds, the cars, the books,
but first of all, love man.
Feel the sadness of the tree branch dying, of the star fading,
of the wounded animal gasping,
but first of all, feel the sadness and pain of man.5

This is what the Vincentian spirit is all about: feeling the sadness and pain of man, and taking action.

---

5 Not available in English; loosely translated from the Italian, found online at: http://www.esoteria.org/documenti/massime/hikmet.html
particularly when it comes to scientific assessment of the conditions of poverty. This collaboration is further enhanced when, within Vincentian branches and educational communities, we are able to engage other persons and entities in the objective of poverty reduction. There is so much need for this in view of the social, cultural, and religious complexity of the world of the poor.

The Vincentian Family subscribes to the idea that education is always towards justice and solidarity, towards the liberation of the poor. I personally want to invite the confreres of the Congregation of the Mission and all Vincentian academic communities throughout the world to refocus their energies and dedication toward that which is most important to us: evangelization of the poor. As spelled out today in our world, working toward poverty alleviation — authentic service of the poor through the promotion of systemic change — will help the poor to live in freedom from the oppressive structures that keep them from recognizing their dignity as God’s sons and daughters. To achieve this goal, I want to encourage all those involved in Vincentian education not only to continue the initial dialog many of them have already begun, but to deepen that dialog in enacting the cooperative initiative between universities and other members of the Vincentian Family at large.

I have put much energy into the promotion of systemic change as a concrete way of living out our Vincentian charism today. It is an authentic way for us to live that which motivates us, the charity of Christ.

Commitment of the Vincentian Family to Education

It is very inspiring to note the commitment of many branches within the Vincentian Family towards education in its diverse forms. Whether it is the AIC in their non-formal education programs in Africa; the Daughters of Charity in their established schools in Brazil, Spain, and the Philippines; the Sisters of Charity at various noted schools in the United States; or the Vincentian universities at Niagara Falls, New York, Chicago, and Manila — all these are testaments to the conviction we share in the Vincentian Family of education as a most necessary means of promoting the development and empowerment of the poor in our day.

In a world of growing expertise and global networking, our Vincentian Family can ill afford to forget the benefits of partnership and collaboration, ultimately to be directed towards the “formation of the heart” — that is, “they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others.” More than just the instruction of professional and scientific knowledge, educators aim at converting the heart so students are able to feel with the poor, understand their predicament, and do all that is possible not only to eliminate the causes of poverty but also to help the poor emerge into a more respectable and dignified life.

“Basically, a school is called to be a living witness of the love of God among us. It can, moreover, become a means through which it is possible to discern, in the light of the Gospel, what is positive in the world, what needs to be transformed and what injustices must be overcome.” This is Vincentian education at its very best — moving from affective love of the poor to effective love through actions involving the participation of the poor themselves.

Formation of the heart is only possible when we treat the subjects of our classes and investigations not simply as data and facts but as persons, images of a loving God. Saint Vincent’s secret in his dealings with all kinds of people — whether the poor in far-flung villages or priest-retreatants in the seminaries, or even the people of the royal court — lay in his profound respect of the image of God which he recognized in each of them. No less a vision than this ought to characterize higher education in a Vincentian setting.

Helping the poor is more concrete than poverty reduction. Our mission is always a personal mission, directed towards the person and not some abstract reality. Poverty for Saint Vincent always had a face — and in faith he saw in the face of the poor the face of God himself.

3 Ibid., no. 25.
4 Ibid., no. 46.
The Vincentian Studies Institute publishes semi-annual issues of *Vincentian Heritage* on matters of Vincentian interest and makes them available to members of the Vincentian Family of Saint Vincent de Paul in the United States.

Subscriptions by persons other than the above are available at the rate of $22.00 a year domestic, and $30.00 for international delivery.

Individual copies of previously published issues may be obtained at $12.00 per copy.

In addition to the subscription fee, the Institute also welcomes contributions in support of its ideals and works in the area of research and pertinent publications.

Make checks payable to the VINCENTIAN STUDIES INSTITUTE.

Subscription fees and requests for back issues (or contributions) should be sent to:

Mr. Nathaniel Michaud  
Vincentian Studies Institute  
2350 North Kenmore Avenue  
Office 412  
Chicago, IL 60614  
nmichaud@depaul.edu

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

☐ New  ☐ Gift  ☐ Renewal