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**JEAN-BAPTISTE ÉTIENNE AND
THE VINCENTIAN REVIVAL**

BY
EDWARD R. UDOVIC, C.M.

Acknowledgments

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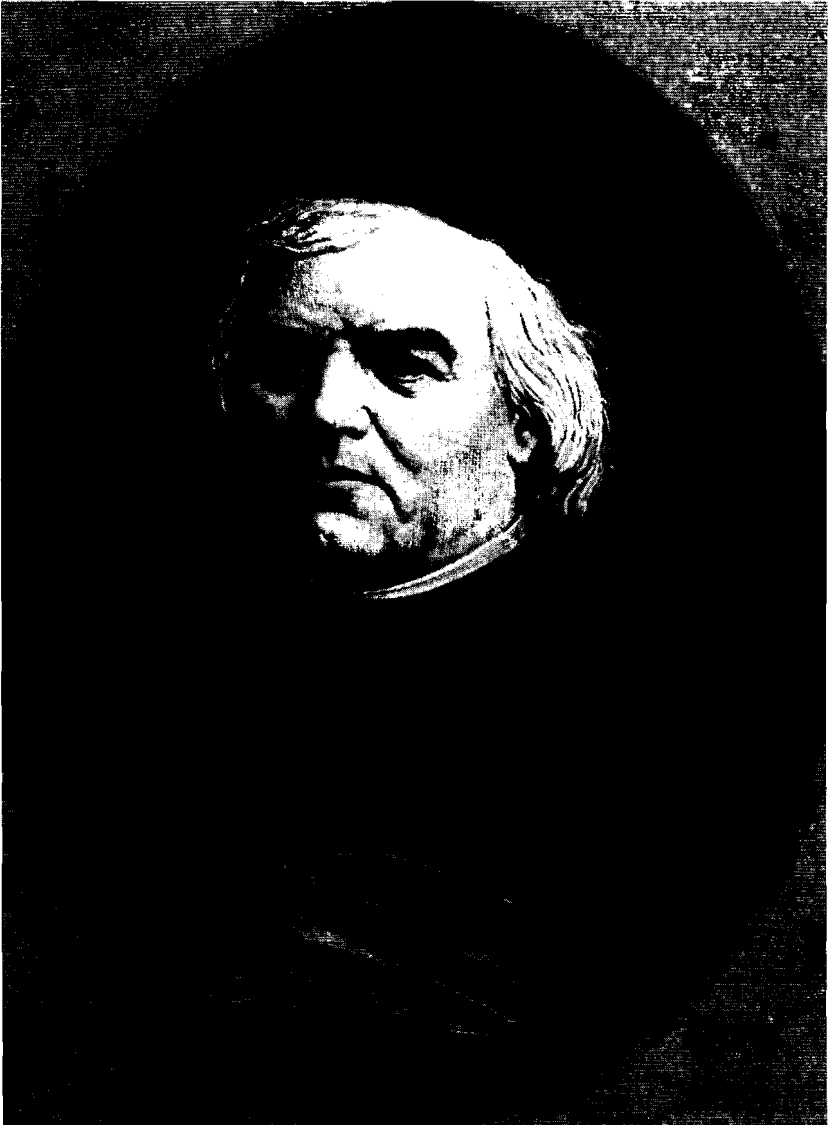
Table of Contents

Preface by Robert P. Maloney, C.M.	x
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 The Congregation of the Mission and the French Revolution	7
The Congregation of the Mission and the Ancien Régime	
An Ongoing Gallican Domination and the “vice of nationalism”	
A Century of Nationalistic Troubles	
The Eighteenth-Century Decline in the Congregation’s Vitality	
Chapter 2 Jean-Baptiste Étienne	51
A Seminarian from Metz	
Napoleon and God’s “merciful plan for reconstruction”	
Italian Resistance: Carlo Domenico Sicardi	
Dominique Hanon: A Very Brief Respite	
Chapter 3 Restoration, Dissolution, Restoration, and Schism	81
Napoleon and the Daughters of Charity	
The Napoleonic Dissolution	
The Bourbon Restoration	
The Governmental Schism Continues	
Chapter 4 The End of the Schism	111
Étienne as a Young Lazarist	
The End of the Governmental Schism: 1825-1827	
The Negotiations	
Unity Restored?	
Chapter 5 The Generalates of Dominique Salhorgne and Jean-Baptiste Nozo	143
The Threat of Suppression	
Relics, Apparitions, and the Fall of the Bourbons	
The General Assembly of 1835	
Étienne and Algeria	
Nozo and “the most disastrous measures”	
Chapter 6 The Resignation of Jean-Baptiste Nozo	179
“We await the events destined for us by Providence without the least inquietude.”	
The charges against Nozo: “The facts speak for themselves.”	
The Holy See and the Nozo controversy	

Chapter 7 The Succession Crisis of 1842-1843	215
“This affair is grave.”	
“M. Nozo’s resignation did not end these affairs.”	
A summons to Rome: “A trap set by the authors of the intrigue.”	
Showdown in Rome: “The powers of Hell attacked with ferocity.”	
Lessons Learned: “The spirit of Saint Vincent hovered over the waters.”	
Chapter 8 The Étienne Era	253
“The dawn of a new era soon was revealed everywhere.”	
Étienne versus the Spanish: “It is a question of life or death.”	
Vatican I: “A great event is taking place.”	
Monsieur Étienne: “He is a Gallican . . . He does not love the Pope.”	
Chapter 9 The Legacy of Jean-Baptiste Étienne	297
“Quelle puissance et quelle autorité! . . . très catholique et très française.”	
Étienne: “The timid and obscure successor of Saint Vincent.”	
Étienne: “I find myself facing death.”	
Conclusion	
Bibliography	331
Index	339

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACGR	Archives of the General Curia of the Congregation of the Mission, Rome
ACMM	Archives of the Congregation of the Mission, Madrid
ACLR	Archives of the Collegio Leoniano, Rome
ACMP	Archives of the Congregation of the Mission, Paris
AMAE	Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris
AN	Archives Nationales, Paris
APGP	Archives of the Procurator General of the Congregation of the Mission, Paris
APGR	Archives of the Procurator General of the Congregation of the Mission, Rome
ASV	Secret Vatican Archives, The Vatican
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
DRMA	DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives, Perryville, Missouri



Jean-Baptiste Étienne

*In Memory of Very Rev. J. B. Étienne
Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Sisters of
Charity.*

by
Abram J. Ryan
(1870)

*A shadow slept folded in vestments,
The dream of a smile on its face,
Dim, soft as the gleam after sunset
That hangs like a halo of grace
Where the daylight hath died in the valley,
And the twilight hath taken its place.
A shadow! but still on the mortal
There rested the tremulous trace
Of the joy of a spirit immortal,
Passed up to its God in His grace.*

*A shadow! hast seen in the summer
A cloud wear the smile of the sun?
On the shadow of death there is flashing
The glory of noble deeds done;
On the face of the dead there is glowing
The light of a holy race run;
And the smile of the face is reflecting.
The gleam of the crown he has won.
Still, shadow! sleep on in the vestments
Unstained by the priest who has gone.*

*And thro' all the nations the children
Of Vincent de Paul wail his loss;
But the glory that crowns him in heaven
Illumines the gloom of their cross.
They send to the shadow the tribute
Of tears, from the fountains of love,
And they send from their altars sweet prayers
To the throne of their Father above.*

*Yea! sorrow weeps over the shadow,
But faith looks aloft to the skies;
And hope, like a rainbow, is flashing
O'er the tears that rain down from their eyes.
They murmur on earth "De Profundis,"
The low chant is mingled with sighs;
"Laudate" rings out through the heavens
The dead priest hath won his faith's prize.*

*His children in sorrow will honor
His grave; every tear is a gem,
And their prayers round his brow in the heavens
Will brighten his fair diadem.
I kneel at this grave and remember,
In love, I am still one of them.*

PREFACE

BY

ROBERT P. MALONEY, C.M.

There are painful moments in our personal lives that we would sometimes like to forget. We rarely succeed, however, in doing so. Nor is it healthy to block out the dark days of the past completely. We can learn and grow from them.

That is the case too with institutions. Each has its history, with bright moments and dark ones. If we fail to examine our institutional history or ignore its lessons, we run the risk of repeating its mistakes.

I am very grateful to Father Edward Udovic for illuminating one of the darkest periods in the history of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity, a period out of which—we might say from a theological perspective—darkness gave way to light, death gave way to life. Has the Vincentian Family ever known a more troubled time than the years that followed the sack of Saint Lazare on the eve of the French Revolution? The Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity were soon suppressed in France. Its members were dispersed. A number of Vincentians and Daughters suffered martyrdom; others, exile. Some remained faithful to their vows; others abandoned their companies. Tensions among Vincentians in Italy and France, in the turbulent nationalistic context of the times, produced a divided rule which withstood many attempts at reconciliation and reunification. Vicars general, with separate jurisdictions, simultaneously exercised authority for nearly three decades. Then only shortly after the Congregation began to reexperience a united government under a single superior general, the scandal surrounding Jean-Baptiste Nozo occurred, leading to the intervention of the Holy See and Nozo's clouded departure from office and from the Congregation. With great lucidity and detail, Father Udovic analyzes these events and the sometimes ambiguous role of Nozo's successor, Jean-Baptiste Étienne.

Father Étienne became a hero in the Vincentian Family, many regarding him as its “second founder.” During his generalate, the Congregation witnessed a remarkable revival, rapid growth, and missionary expansion. The Daughters of Charity likewise experienced an explosive increase in numbers and vitality. Father Étienne’s later account of these years is, at least in part, a rewriting and reinterpretation of what happened. Father Udovic sifts through the data to analyze Étienne’s actual contribution during the period, and his strengths and weaknesses.

Whatever Jean-Baptiste Étienne’s faults may have been—and it is evident from Father Udovic’s work and other recent studies that they were significant—there is no doubt that the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity flourished under his government. Both companies had been weakened, scattered, and divided at the beginning of his long generalate. Thirty-one years later, at his death, they were vibrant apostolic societies, unified in life and ministry as evangelizers and servants of the poor.

Étienne had a positive relationship with some of the great heroes of the Vincentian Family: John Gabriel Perboyre, Catherine Labouré, Frédéric Ozanam, Rosalie Rendu. But he had sharp conflicts with others: he clashed with Justin de Jacobis, now canonized, and he cut off from the Congregation (and even from its prayers for deceased members) several Vincentians who became bishops without his approval, including John Timon, first bishop of Buffalo, and John Lynch, first archbishop of Toronto, as well as Buenaventura Codina, bishop of the Canary Islands, whose cause of beatification was recently introduced.

In many ways Étienne is hard for us to understand today. He was tough, wily, authoritarian. Yet it is clear that providence used him to guide the Vincentian Family through a very difficult period that gradually became one of intense growth. I am very grateful to Father Udovic for helping us grow in insight into this complex man’s thought and actions.

INTRODUCTION

The figure of Jean-Baptiste Étienne (1801-1874) dominates the postrevolutionary, pre-Vatican II, history of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity. Excepting their founder, Saint Vincent de Paul (1581-1660), no other person so determinatively shaped such a significant portion of the communities' history. Thus, Étienne's traditional, if controversial, title as their "second founder" seems to be fitting.

For the final years of the Ancien Régime, Saint Vincent's communities operated within the altar and throne polities of Catholic Europe, especially Bourbon France. The French Revolution and its aftermath swept them away along with the other ecclesiastical institutions of the Ancien Régime. After the 1801 concordat, the communities reestablished a legal foothold in France within the new order. This classic Gallican relationship with the government remained surprisingly unchanged through the First Empire, the Bourbon Restoration, the July Revolution, Louis-Philippe, the revolution of 1848, the Second Republic, Napoleon III, and into the Third Republic.

Amid the handful of men's communities afforded legal recognition in anticlerical France and the greater number of women's communities afforded such recognition, the Lazarists and Daughters of Charity stood highest in governmental favor. The advantages provided by this relationship, the rapid growth of the French provinces, and a *de facto* French dominance of the communities' leadership, enabled the French Lazarists and Daughters of Charity to reassert control over the foreign provinces and missions of their now far-flung communities. This constitutive Gallicanism proved problematic with respect to the Holy See, urged on by intransigent conservative, ultramontane, and legitimist elements of the French Church. Throughout his career, Étienne tried to maintain a balance between being Gallican enough to satisfy the French government while being just ultramontane enough to satisfy the papacy and like-minded French Catholic constituencies. He always was able to satisfy the French government, which meant that he could rarely satisfy Rome and its allies. French domination also proved problematic for many of the Congregation's other nationalities, notably the Italians and Spaniards.

During Étienne's lifetime and his long generalate (1843-1874), the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity experienced the century's struggles between the forces of democratic, liberal, "chaos" and conservative, hierarchical, "order." Étienne envisioned a worldwide "reconciliation" of democracy with Catholicism on the basis of shared conservative principles according to a French model. Internally, Étienne resolved intense struggles unambiguously in favor of the principle of "order."

According to Étienne, the Double Family (as the two communities are known) underwent a "rebirth" rather than a "restoration." This distinction was an important one. The communities were not "restored" as they had existed before the French Revolution. Étienne saw their previous existence in the later years of the Ancien Régime as having been far from the ideal envisioned by Saint Vincent. Instead, he believed that the communities providentially emerged from destruction to be "recreated" or "reborn" to a new existence, in a new century, with new worldwide destinies.

The communities were "reborn" only when a new generation of Lazarists and sisters (Étienne's own generation) successfully recaptured the communities' lost "primitive spirit." According to Étienne, the evidence of this achievement was the Double Family's vocational explosion and breathless international expansion that became apparent by mid-century. Étienne concluded that because of their fidelity, the achievements of the contemporary communities surpassed even those of Saint Vincent's lifetime.

As secretary general, procurator general, and then as superior general, Jean-Baptiste Étienne played an irreducible role in these events. His greatest strengths were an instinctive sense for correctly reading the "signs of the times," a commitment to the evangelization and service of the poor, knowing best how to achieve uniformity, and how to take full advantage of its benefits. His greatest weaknesses were his French nationalism, his narrow authoritarian horizons, his paternalism, and the almost unlimited price he was willing to pay to achieve absolute obedience, order, and uniformity within the Double Family.

Étienne believed that the success of this rebirth was "the work of God alone." In his mind these events led to a divinely-ordained triumph. Naturally, from a faith perspective it would be unthinkable to question the results of God's will accomplished in history. In this

regard, Étienne quoted Saint Vincent who had always spoken of the Congregation's foundation in this way: "Can you say that something was the result of human effort if no one foresaw, willed or purposely sought after this end?" By cloaking the story of the "rebirth" with a providential cover, and by insisting that he could take no credit for its success, Étienne hoped to preclude any questioning of the very human means he had foreseen, willed and purposely sought after to accomplish what not all of his contemporaries would agree were "divine" ends.

Throughout his generalate, Étienne consistently interpreted and reacted to contemporary events in light of his highly idiosyncratic perspectives. He finally compiled these interpretations into a classic creation myth retelling, for the sake of future generations, the story of the Congregation's rebirth and new life. He entitled this work, *Notice sur le rétablissement de la Congrégation de la Mission après la révolution de 1789*. Étienne's mythic leadership shaped the Double Family throughout the rest of the nineteenth and far into the twentieth centuries.

In the absence of any other critical efforts, Étienne's myths have stood for the last one hundred and twenty six years as the only substantive accounts of the Congregation's revival. The present study is an attempt to recover this history, in part through the deconstruction of Étienne's central creation myth, and in part through research-based narrative construction. The resulting work examines within the context of contemporary events, secular and religious forces, and internal struggles, how Étienne's leadership shaped the rebirth and new existence of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity.

It is not surprising that in a community that has had little tradition of historical scholarship that there have been no previous studies of Étienne or of this period in the Double Family's history. The 1881 biography of Étienne by Edouard Rosset, C.M., while valuable, does not stand as a critical contribution. Presently, the superior general of the Congregation of the Mission has commissioned the first comprehensive multi-volume history of the community. However, to this date only one volume of the projected five volume work has been completed. No critical study of the Daughters of Charity, which is arguably the most important apostolic women's congregation in the Church's history, is contemplated.

It is also surprising, given the unique role of Étienne, the Lazarists, and the Daughters of Charity in nineteenth-century French history, that they also have received almost no attention from outside scholars. It is hoped that the present study will represent a modest contribution to both Vincentian historiography and the historiography of nineteenth-century religious history. While a paucity of critical studies of Étienne and nineteenth-century Vincentian history exists, abundant resources are available on the general history of the era. Besides these secondary sources, a wealth of mostly untouched primary source materials exist in the various provincial and general archives of the Congregation of the Mission, the Holy See, Propaganda Fide, the French National Archives, the archives of the French Foreign Ministry and elsewhere. Many of these resources were consulted for this work.

This study begins with an introductory chapter that spans the period from the sack of Saint-Lazare in 1789 to the communities' legal dissolution in August 1792. The chapter also provides a brief review of the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission and its history under the Ancien Régime. Special attention is given here to the community's struggles with nationalism and absolutism and its eighteenth-century decline.

The second chapter introduces the figure of Jean-Baptiste Étienne, and examines his *Notice* as a creation myth. The chapter also traces the Congregation's history from its 1792 dissolution to its 1804 Napoleonic restoration. The next chapter reviews the events of the Napoleonic period, the second suppression in 1809, the Bourbon restoration in 1816, and the confirmation of the governmental schism.

The fourth chapter details the period from Étienne's entrance into the community and includes the end of the governmental schism, the papal appointment of Pierre de Wailly as superior general in 1827, and the 1829 election of Dominique Salhorgne as superior general. Salhorgne's election marked the restoration of full constitutional government in the Congregation for the first time since the revolution. This was the period when the newly-ordained Étienne rose quickly to the highest levels of community government.

The fifth chapter reviews the period from Salhorgne's election in 1829 through the scandal-ridden administration of his successor, Jean-Baptiste Nozo, from 1835 to 1841. The next chapter examines the controversy surrounding the community's 1841 sexennial assembly

that elected Antoine Poussou as vicar general in preparation for a showdown over Nozo's leadership. Chapter seven examines the events of 1842-1843 that led to Nozo's forced resignation from the generalate, an Italian-French succession struggle, and the planned election of a new general. Throughout these chapters Étienne's leadership is highlighted.

The eighth chapter begins with Étienne's election to the generalate in 1843 and briefly examines the accomplishments and defects of his administration. A final chapter looks at Étienne at the end of his life and offers a retrospective to his career.

An underlying premise to this study is that the rebirth and restoration of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity during the nineteenth century reveals the scope of the task that confronts the members of these same communities as the dust continues to settle from the revolution that was the Second Vatican Council.

Chapter 1

The Congregation of the Mission and the French Revolution

At the dawn of the French Revolution, a seminal act of violence took place in Paris beginning in the early hours of 14 July 1789. Three days earlier, on 11 July, Louis XVI had dismissed his popular finance minister, Jacques Necker, and appointed several conservative ministers. By noon the next day, word of the king's actions reached the capital. The atmosphere in Paris grew tense. Rumors spread that the king was planning to use foreign mercenary troops to disband the National Assembly.¹ During these next tumultuous days, royal and municipal authority in the city all but disappeared. The opposition party that had formed around the duke of Orleans, now played a leading role in the unfolding of events.²

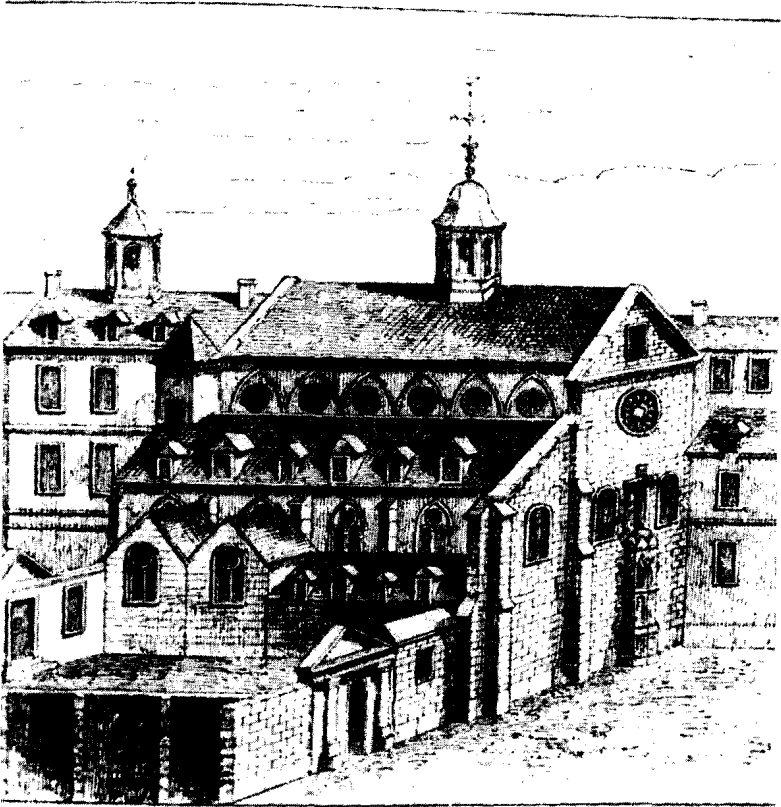
The afternoon and evening of 13 July saw sporadic violence throughout the city. At 2:30 A.M., on 14 July, "a furious band armed with rifles, swords, and torches" massed in the narrow streets of the faubourg Saint-Denis.³ This group, which included members of the Gardes Françaises, attacked the main gates of the clos Saint-Lazare.⁴

¹The National Constituent Assembly (June 1789-30 September 1791) was the national legislative body during the first period of the Revolution. See *Historical Dictionary of the French Revolution, 1789-1799*, Samuel F. Scott, ed., 2 vols. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985), 268-70.

²George F. E. Rudé, *The Crowd and the French Revolution* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1967), 51. See also Darrin M. McMahon, "The birthplace of the Revolution: Public Space and Political Community in the Palais-Royal of Louis-Philippe-Joseph d'Orleans, 1781-1789," *French History* 10, no. 1 (1996): 1-29. The duke of Orleans, head of the collateral branch of the Bourbons, joined the revolution and took the name of Philippe Égalité (Philip Equality). He later voted to depose and behead his cousin, Louis XVI.

³Jean-Félix-Joseph Cayla de la Garde, C.M., "Circulaire IV: Pillage de Saint-Lazare," in *Recueil des Principales Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux de la Congrégation de la Mission*, 3 vols. (Paris: Congrégation de la Mission: 1876-79), 2: 222.

⁴The Gardes Françaises were royal troops stationed in Paris. Many went over to the revolutionary cause influenced "by public agitation and liberal expenditure by the Palais-Royal." See Rudé, *The Crowd*, 51.



VUE DE L'ANCIENNE ÉGLISE DE SAINT-LAZARE

*Saint-Lazare, second mother house of the
Congregation of the Mission, Paris, France.*

This was a vast enclosed complex of buildings and property that served as the mother house of the Congregation of the Mission. Its members were known popularly as the "Lazarists."⁵

The gates held against the assault for a quarter of an hour.⁶ This delay allowed time for raising the alarm within. The four hundred hastily roused inhabitants thus had a head start on their escapes.⁷ They left with little more than the clothes on their backs. As the intruders streamed through the gates they shouted, "Bread! Bread!"⁸ The house procurator, Christophe-Simon Rouyet, and the superior general, Félix Cayla de la Garde were there to meet them.⁹ The two Lazarists offered food and money. However, these gestures did not distract the intruders. Rouyet and Cayla de la Garde then joined the other Lazarists who already had fled.

The party of the Palais-Royal orchestrated this first phase of Saint-Lazare's sacking.¹⁰ The justification they gave, "under the pretext of the national interest,"¹¹ was the search for grain, weapons, and money.¹²

⁵ The priory of Saint-Lazare possessed a long history stretching back at least to the ninth century. Originally founded as a leprosarium far outside the medieval city walls, it fell under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Paris. Over the centuries, as one of the premier ecclesiastical seigneuries in the Paris region, the priory received many royal favors including the right to administer "high, middle, and lower justice." In 1515, the bishop of Paris, Étienne de Ponchier, entrusted the priory to the Canons Regular of Saint Victor who followed the rule of Saint Augustine. By 1630 no lepers were in residence and the number of monks had dwindled to nine. The prior, Adrien Le Bon, arranged to turn the property over to Vincent de Paul and the newly founded Congregation of the Mission. On 8 January 1632, Vincent transferred the mother house of his congregation from the Collège-des-Bons-Enfants, near Saint Victor's gate, to the priory of Saint-Lazare. See Jean Parrang, C.M., "Saint-Lazare," *Petites Annales de S. Vincent de Paul*, 4 (1903): 13-30. See also, Simone Zurawski, "Saint-Lazare in the Ancien Régime: From Saint Vincent de Paul to the French Revolution," *Vincentian Heritage* 14 (1993): 15-36.

⁶ Not surprisingly, the details and the chronology of the various accounts of Saint-Lazare's sack do not always agree. For a brief sampling of these accounts See Gabriel Perboyre, C.M., "Disaster at Saint-Lazare," *Annals of the Congregation of the Mission*, English edition, 14 (1907): 258-91.

⁷ According to Antoine-Adrien Lamourette, "The household of Saint-Lazare ordinarily was composed of some four hundred persons. Of this number, two hundred were ecclesiastics—priests, novices, or students in philosophy or theology; eighty were lay brothers, and the remainder pensioners." Cited *ibid.*, 276-77.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 258.

⁹ Jean-Joseph-Félix Cayla de la Garde (1734-1800) was the tenth superior general of the Congregation of the Mission. He was elected in 1788 to replace the late Antoine Jacquier. For a short biographical sketch see *Circulaires*, 2: 192-203. Until 1968, the superiors general served for life.

¹⁰ Rudé, *The Crowd*, 50.

¹¹ Cayla de la Garde, *Circulaires*, 2: 222.

¹² A contemporary account noted that "These Fathers of suffering humanity were subject to the audacious and infernal calumny of being called grain hoarders." See Pierre d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire de la persécution française*, (Rome: 1797), 257, cited in Gabriel Perboyre, C.M., "La Congrégation de la Mission pendant la Révolution d'après l'abbé d'Auribeau," *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission*, 74 (1909): 367.

Although the group found no weapons, they did find large stores of grain. They loaded the confiscated goods onto fifty-two waiting wagons and transported them to the city's central market.¹³

The organized band efficiently finished its work after several hours and then departed the now defenseless complex. The destruction and looting that followed were the work of a mob consisting of as many as 4,000 "common people."¹⁴ These were the poor laborers and tradespeople who lived in the neighborhood surrounding Saint-Lazare.¹⁵ They all would have been well acquainted with the institution and their neighbors the Lazarists.¹⁶

The mob had free reign of Saint-Lazare until late in the afternoon of 14 July. At this point, the city's hastily organized citizens' militia restored order.¹⁷ The looters had pillaged each of the complex's buildings. A contemporary account described what happened.

The noise of destruction could be heard everywhere. All the window panes, sashes, doors, cupboards, tables, chairs, beds, and mantelpieces were reduced to rubble by these madmen. Simultaneously, thieves of all ages and both sexes plundered the rooms. They carried off, with inconceivable avidity, all the furniture and everything else in sight. They entered every room, pilfering even objects of the smallest value. Not a piece of clothing, of bed or table linen, not a kitchen utensil or other household article escaped the insatiable rapacity of this ferocious multitude. They were not satisfied simply stealing everything that they could carry. They went farther, and in their destructive fury they made the whole house uninhabitable. They threw beds, chairs, and tables into the courtyards. They ruined mattresses, defaced woodwork, even shattered the cornices of the walls...Nothing was left intact. They subjected everything to their fury.¹⁸

¹³ Cited in Rudé, *The Crowd*, 52.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Of the thousands who participated in the destruction of Saint-Lazare only about fifty were arrested. The government brought criminal charges against thirty-seven people. For a descriptive breakdown of the sex and trades of these rioters see *ibid.*

¹⁶ Saint-Lazare was the primary source of charity for this crowded and poor faubourg of Paris. In a letter to the *Journal of Paris* in July 1789, the commander of the citizens' militia for the area gave the following testimony: "Moreover, I must here render public testimony to the love of the priests of the Congregation of the Mission for their fellow-citizens, whose respect and esteem they always have merited. The entire parish of Saint-Laurent knows that every day, Saint Lazare has distributed bread and soup to more than eight hundred persons. From Easter until the sad epoch of 13 July, they fed two or three hundred daily. These are the same men whom the populace calumniates, but whom Paris and the whole nation revere." Cited in Perboyre, *Annals*, 14 (1907): 264.

¹⁷ At the beginning of the sack, some neighborhood residents ran to the nearby barracks of the Gardes Françaises and asked them to intervene. The troops refused. They said that the situation was a police matter. Another detachment actually passed by the enclosure during the sack, but they too refused to act. *Ibid.*, 269-70.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 282.



*Diorama of Saint-Lazare, Richardson Library,
DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.*

The mob also invaded the attached fields and gardens. They destroyed crops, killed livestock, and set fire to the farm buildings.

It was a small group of these same looters, however, who reverently carried the large silver casket containing Saint Vincent de Paul's relics to safety. The reliquary found a haven at a nearby parish church.¹⁹ A Lazarist also removed the reserved sacrament and the sacred vessels to the same church.²⁰ Outside the chapel many other sacred pictures, relics, and statuary, were not spared from destruction or theft.²¹

Directly across from Saint-Lazare stood the complex of buildings that comprised the mother house of the Company of the Daughters of Charity.²² The location of these sisters and their headquarters in close

¹⁹ The church of Saint-Laurent.

²⁰ Stafford Poole, C.M., citing contemporary letters from Philippe-Bernard Adam, C.M., to Louis Jouselme, C.M., the procurator of the house at Lyon. The originals of these letters are in the Archives du Rhone, Fonds Lazaristes, Carton 28. *A History of the Congregation of the Mission: 1625-1843* (Santa Barbara: Congregation of the Mission, 1972), 350.

²¹ This included the room where the relics of Saint Vincent's personal possessions were kept. The missionaries later recovered many of these items from the piles of debris strewn in Saint-Lazare's courtyards. See Perboyre, *Annals*, 14 (1907): 284.

²² The Daughters of Charity began as a simple "confraternity" of uncloistered, non-religious, "lay" sisters who came from the ranks of the "good country girls." They desired to live some form of community life that would allow them to respond effectively to the urgent charitable needs of the most abandoned of the sick and poor. For more information on their foundation by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac see Pierre Coste, C.M., *Life and Works of Saint Vincent de Paul*, trans. Joseph Leonard, C.M., 3 vols. (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1987), 1: 177-231, 336-48. See also Joseph I. Dirvin, C.M., *Louise de Marillac* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux, 1970).

proximity to Saint-Lazare was not a mere coincidence. From its foundation in 1633 by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, the Daughters of Charity had enjoyed an indirect but special relationship with the Congregation of the Mission through the person of its superior general. With his election, the Lazarists' superior general also automatically became the superior general of the Daughters of Charity.²³ Although the two communities were juridically separate, they were spiritually linked in the person of Saint Vincent's successor. Together, they thought of themselves as constituting the "Double Family of Saint Vincent."

At this time, residing in the mother house were the superioress general and her council, fifty other sisters, and fifty aged and infirm sisters. The house also contained ninety-eight young seminary sisters (the equivalent of novices) between the ages of sixteen and twenty.²⁴ Awakened by the rioting, these sisters watched with horror what was taking place across the street.

At 5:30 A.M., a Lazarist arrived to celebrate mass for the sisters. He was unable to leave afterward because of the dangerous conditions. At 7:00 A.M., some looters arrived carrying an aged and infirm Lazarist to safety. This group reportedly told the sisters that they had nothing to fear from them, "because we have not been paid for you, but for Saint-Lazare."²⁵

Later that morning, a larger group of "brigands" demanded to be admitted to search for grain and flour. The superioress general and the seminary directress accompanied the intruders. After finding no great hidden stores, this delegation departed. In the afternoon, the sisters endured yet another search of their buildings. Later that night, forty troops from the national guard finally arrived to protect the complex.²⁶

²³ Louise de Marillac's great concern was that without a juridical dependency on the superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity would fall under the jurisdiction of local bishops. These bishops had a tendency to frown upon the concept of uncloistered women, and she feared they would intervene to restrict their mission of direct service to the poor. For more information on the relationship between the superior general of the Congregation and the Daughters of Charity see Miguel Pérez-Flores, C.M., "The Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity," *Vincentian Heritage*, 5 (1984): 1-41, and Luis Huerga, C.M. *Una institución singular: el superior general de la Congregación de la Misión y de las Hijas de la Caridad* (Salamanca: CEME, 1974).

²⁴ Alfred Milon, C.M., "Histoire des Filles de la Charité," *Annales*, 92 (1927): 47.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Cayla de la Garde called on the Congregation's other houses to make all possible sacrifices. He hoped that these might provide enough resources so that the mother house could "by practicing the most austere frugalities continue to exist, while preparing for the eventual resumption of all its activities."²⁸ That hoped-for day would never come.

Félix Cayla de la Garde served as a clerical delegate in the National Assembly. He thus witnessed the rapidity with which legislation destroyed the Ancien Régime's Church and state polities. Over the next six months, "the thousand-year edifice of the Gallican church would come crashing down, wall after wall. The national assemblies of the clergy were destroyed, and with them the entire system of benefices and tithes."²⁹ The Assembly next suppressed the religious orders.³⁰ Because of their secular status, the Lazarists and Daughters of Charity temporarily escaped dissolution.

In his circular letter written at the beginning of 1790, Cayla de la Garde reflected on the events of the previous six months. "Placed as a witness in the middle of the most disastrous revolution, and almost having been a victim to popular fury, I again sigh at the remembrance of the past while realizing that our future prospects are not very consoling."³¹ The superior general did take consolation, however, from the conduct of those who were sharing with him the uncertainties and the hardships amid Saint-Lazare's ruins.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Adrien Dansette, *Histoire Religieuse de la France Contemporaine*, 2 vols. (Paris: Flammarion, 1948), 1: 74-75.

³⁰ The Assembly outlawed monastic vows on 28 October 1789 and suppressed the kingdom's religious orders on 13 February 1790. *Ibid.*, 1: 48.

³¹ Cayla de la Garde, *Circulaires*, 2: 223-24.

In the midst of the greatest privations and bloody outrages, not one word of complaint has come from them. They have lost without regret what they had possessed without affection. Consoled by their consciences and by their Lord, they pay no attention to the public's unjust judgments and their insane rhetoric. They respond to curses with blessings, to persecution with invincible patience, and to injuries by increasing their prayers...Our misfortunes also have produced precious advantages; piety has been reborn, and zeal is increasing. I have seen a holy desire for the good come into being. This has given me the most gratifying hopes. Our house is smaller in terms of the number of its subjects, but it has grown noticeably in its spirit. In this it should be a model...My joy would be perfect if our misfortunes would produce the same effect in all our houses, and our temporal losses should become the source of our renewal.³²

Seeing all this, the Lazarists knew that the Congregation's legal existence also was in peril.³³

Cayla de la Garde admitted that he "did not yet know with perfect certainty what will be our fate."³⁴ He hoped that the Congregation could hold itself together against the ravages of "the trouble, the inquietude, the spirit of independence, and the weakening of discipline."³⁵ If the community could do this and continue zealously with its works, he thought that it might still "merit public confidence" and survive.³⁶

³² *Ibid.*

³³ When the clergy of Paris elected their six delegates to the Estates General, Cayla de la Garde was the first alternate. When one of the delegates resigned at the time the Estates became the National Assembly, Cayla de la Garde took his place. He spoke in the Assembly to oppose the spoliation of Church properties and the suppression of the religious orders. He remained a delegate until 4 January 1791, when he refused to swear the required oath supporting the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. He then was expelled from the Assembly. See Gabriel Perboyre, C.M., "The Congregation of the Mission during the Revolution: 1788-1800," *Annals*, 14 (1907): 411-13.

³⁴ Cayla de la Garde, *Circulaires*, 2: 224.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Following the prohibition of Pius VI, the Lazarists almost unanimously refused to take the required oath supporting the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.³⁷ The establishment of a Constitutional Church caused a national schism between the juring and nonjuring clergy. Constitutional priests came forward to take over the parishes of Paris.³⁸ The “good priests and fervent Catholics” began celebrating mass in the chapels of institutions including Saint-Lazare.³⁹ The Lazarists thus identified themselves as enemies of the Revolution and helped seal their fate.

In his circular letter of 1 January 1791, Cayla de la Garde betrayed the terrible strain he felt in holding the community together. “I have been asked about the possibility of the Congregation’s total destruction a thousand times...I would not be honest if I did not tell you that we are in a critical position. Our alarm is not groundless...Everyone is writing me asking desperately for news. I cannot find fault with such an understandable response, but it must be kept within bounds. Trust that I am always watching out for your interests. I am using every means possible to prevent the misfortunes that even the thought of fills me with bitterness. I will keep you informed.”⁴⁰ According to the superior general, his last hope was that “our tears will touch the God of Saint Vincent de Paul, and he will come to our aid.”⁴¹ Cayla de la Garde told his confreres, “Whatever our fears, and whatever the probability of our suppression, our obligations do not change. We will be missionaries until the last moment. Because we are missionaries, we must continue to observe our Rules and not put them aside.”⁴² The general encouraged superiors to “redouble their zeal and vigilance in maintaining order and discipline in their houses.”⁴³

³⁷ The Civil Constitution of the Clergy was adopted by the National Assembly on 12 July 1790. Its purpose was to reorganize and restructure the Catholic Church in France. It was called a civil constitution because its authors insisted that it affected only the temporal status of the clergy and not the Church’s spiritual dimension, which was in the care of the papacy. The Civil Constitution’s supporters insisted that they had simply suppressed the flagrant abuses and inequities of Church under the Ancien Régime, thus making possible one that was administratively effective and morally and spiritually regenerated. Its opponents replied that the Civil Constitution went beyond legal reforms to usurp powers that belonged to the pope. See *Historical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, 1: 190-92.

³⁸ Jean-Jacques Dubois, who was a member of the Congregation before the Revolution and later pastor of Sainte-Marguerite in Paris, testified that only eighteen of the community’s 508 priests took the oath supporting the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Cited in Perboyre, “The Congregation of the Mission during the Revolution,” 370.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Perboyre citing Pierre d’Esmivy d’Auribeau.

⁴⁰ Cayla de la Garde, *Circulaires*, 2: 229.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2: 230.

⁴³ *Ibid.*



M^r. Cayla, Jean Félix
V.^o Supérieur
Élu le 2 Juin 1788. Mor. le 12 Février 1800

*Jean-Félix Cayla de la Garde, C.M., superior general
of the Congregation of the Mission, 1788-1800*

At the beginning of 1792, Cayla de la Garde reported that conditions had worsened. The government had confiscated most of the Congregation's houses and properties. The displaced priests and brothers had gathered in the few remaining community houses. They found themselves continually harassed. Since the government forbade them from exercising any ministry, they had no means of support. Some families disowned their relatives who were nonjuring Lazarists. Given the situation, there was little left for Cayla de la Garde to say. "Our misfortunes are aggravated by our fear, that unfortunately is very well founded. We must expect our suppression. Only the hand of the all-powerful...can stay the blow that now menaces us. I must express my thanks to the confreres of foreign countries who have so often written me expressing their sorrow at our troubles. They most kindly have invited me to take refuge with them. I do not know the fate to which Providence has destined me, but I will never cease to watch over the Congregation's interests."⁴⁴

On 6 April 1792, the members of the National Assembly heard a motion to suppress the secular communities of priests and sisters. After months of debate, the Assembly finally approved the measure on 18 August. The first article of the decree read: "All congregations known in France under the title of Secular Ecclesiastical Congregations, such as the priests of...the Mission of France or of Saint-Lazare...and generally all religious corporations and secular congregations of men or women, ecclesiastics or laymen, even those devoted solely to the service of the hospitals and care of the sick, under whatever name existing in France, whether they comprise one house or several houses; moreover all societies, confraternities,...and all other associations of piety or charity, are extinct and suppressed from the date of publication of the present decree."⁴⁵ Later that same day, officials from the Comité de Faubourg Poissonnière entered Saint-Lazare. They sealed the archives and the other rooms of the house. The inventory ordered by the Assembly's decree then took place. Earlier in the month, anticipating the coming suppression, workers

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2: 236-37.

⁴⁵ *Actes du Gouvernement Français concernant la Congrégation de la Mission dite de Saint-Lazare, fondée par Saint Vincent de Paul: Supplément* (Paris: Maison-Mère de la Congrégation de la Mission, 1902), 4-10.

had begun transforming the complex's main buildings into a prison.⁴⁶

The decree of suppression had stipulated that the members of the communities should vacate their houses no later than the first of October. However, on 26 August, the local revolutionary committee ordered the community of Saint-Lazare to leave the following day. The officials told them, however, that if it were absolutely necessary they "could temporarily occupy designated quarters."⁴⁷

On 1 September, a small group of Lazarists gathered in the mother house chapel. With the permission of Monsieur Devitry of the "Commune de Paris, Commission de l'administration des biens nationaux, Bureau de liquidation," they removed the relics of Saint Vincent's bones from their silver casket. The officials then inventoried and confiscated the reliquary. The missionaries placed the saint's relics in an oak box. This box remained safely hidden during the revolutionary period.⁴⁸

On the following day, the September massacres began in Paris. The slaughter started with those priests and religious interned at the convent of the Discalced Carmelites. On the morning of 3 September, at the Congregation's seminary of Saint-Firmin [the old Collège-des-Bons-Enfants], more than sixty priests died. Included in this number were several Lazarists.⁴⁹ On the day that the massacres began the superior general went into hiding. When it was safe, he left Paris never to return. Cayla de la Garde fled to Amiens, remaining there for several months.

By 4 October 1792, officials had inventoried and confiscated the remaining movable possessions of Saint-Lazare. The last of the ex-missionaries departed. The Congregation of the Mission thus ceased to exist in the kingdom where it had been founded.⁵⁰

⁴⁶Perboyre, "The Congregation of the Mission during the Revolution," 424. The AN possesses the records of these and subsequent alterations to the Saint-Lazare prison. See for example, AN.F16.597. For the history of Saint-Lazare as a prison see Leon Bizard and Jeanne Chapon, *Histoire de la prison de Saint-Lazare du moyen age à nos jours* (Paris: E. du Boucard, 1925) and Stafford Poole, C.M., "Saint Lazare as a Prison," *Vincentian Heritage* 8, no. 2 (1987): 127-40.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 430.

⁴⁸This account is found in *Mandement de Monseigneur l'archevêque de Paris, ... de la Translation solennelle du Corps de Saint Vincent de Paul, et qui publie les Procès-Verbaux dressés à l'occasion de cette Solennité* (Paris: Adrien Le Clere, 1830), 14-15.

⁴⁹For an account of the Lazarists who were martyred during the French Revolution see Félix Cayla de la Garde, "Notes sur les Missionnaires victimes de la Révolution," *Circulaires: Pièces Justificatives*, 2: 601-24.

⁵⁰The Daughters of Charity left their mother house on the 23 August. They were not able to recover the relics of Louise de Marillac until 1797. They purchased them from the new owner of their former property who was about to tear the buildings down.

The Congregation of the Mission and the Ancien Régime

Vincent de Paul founded the Congregation of the Mission in 1625.⁵¹ He created an apostolic community to evangelize the spiritually abandoned among the great masses of the French provinces' rural poor.⁵² This systematic evangelization took place by means of lengthy parish-based catechetical and sacramental missions. Highly mobile teams of experienced missionaries conducted these missions.⁵³

Vincent de Paul quickly discovered that the quality of the poorly-trained diocesan clergy hampered the long-term success of this parochial evangelization. These same conditions among the clergy also hampered the French Church's long-delayed Tridentine renewal. In response to episcopal requests, the Congregation expanded its primitive mission to include the formation and spiritual renewal of the diocesan clergy.⁵⁴ This mission used the following means: the reform of preaching,⁵⁵ ordination retreats, continuing education conferences, support groups, and eventually the direction of Tridentine-style diocesan seminaries scattered throughout the kingdom.⁵⁶

Largely because of the strong prejudice against religious orders, the Congregation took shape as an innovative form of apostolic com-

⁵¹ For a survey of Church history in this era of the Ancien Régime see *History of the Church*, Hubert Jedin and John Dolan, eds. (New York: Crossroads, 1981), vol. 6 "The Church in the Age of Absolutism and Enlightenment."

⁵² The Congregation's *Common Rules* (1658) define the "whole purpose" of the Congregation as "to have a genuine commitment to grow in holiness, patterning ourselves as far as possible, on the virtues which the great Master himself graciously taught us in what he said and did; to preach the good news of salvation to poor people, especially in rural areas; to help seminarians and priests to grow in knowledge and virtue, so that they can be effective in their ministry." See chapter 1, §1, 105-06, "Common Rules," in *Constitutions and Statutes of the Congregation of the Mission* (Philadelphia: Congregation of the Mission, 1989).

⁵³ For a description of these country missions in the Congregation's early history see Luigi Mezzadri, C.M., and José María Román, C.M., "Las misiones populares," in *Historia de la Congregación de la Misión (I) desde la fundación hasta el fin del siglo XVII (1627-1697)* (Madrid: Editorial La Milagrosa, 1992), 157-90.

⁵⁴ For more information on the life and times of Vincent de Paul, the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission, and its history during the lifetime of its founder see Coste, *Life and Times*, throughout. See also Douglas Slawson, "Vincent de Paul's discernment of his own vocation and that of the Congregation of the Mission," *Vincentian Heritage* 10 (1989): 1-25 and Mezzadri-Román, *Historia*, 1-65.

⁵⁵ For a discussion of Vincent's role in the reform of preaching see Joseph M. Connors, S.V.D., "The Vincentian Homiletic Tradition," *Vincentian Heritage* 4 (1983): 3-39.

⁵⁶ For Vincent's own description of the Congregation's primitive apostolates see Pierre Coste, C.M., "Conférence du 6 décembre 1658, Sur la fin de la Congrégation de la Misión," *Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondance, Entretiens, Documents*. 14 vols. (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1920-26), 12: 73-94.

munity life.⁵⁷ The community consisted of secular priests⁵⁸ and laymen (lay-brothers) who took simple private vows.⁵⁹ As finally approved by Rome,⁶⁰ the Congregation enjoyed pontifical exemption in all matters that dealt with its internal life and governance.⁶¹ However, in the exercise of its external ministries, the community recognized the jurisdiction of diocesan authorities. The Congregation limited itself to exercising its evangelistic mission in country parishes. It would not accept any benefices that had a cure of souls attached.⁶² The community also offered all its ministries freely, without receiving any compensation.⁶³

Within its first few years, the territorial focus and the legal authorization for exercising the Congregation's "mission" expanded rapidly. The community's first authorization limited it to the extensive provincial lands belonging to its noble lay patrons.⁶⁴ Then, the archbishop of

⁵⁷One source of the French "general scorn" toward the religious orders was their pontifical exemption from episcopal authority. Another was that they were considered to be unwelcome ultramontane enclaves within the Gallican church. The French unfavorably judged their spiritualities as "charismatic mysticism in which sensibility predominates over reason, and the heart commands the mind." Gallican sensibilities judged their prayer as "redundant lyricism, with a tendency to pious exaggeration, garish manifestations, and formulas of edification." The French found it particularly objectionable that these orders "obeyed a superior who resided in Rome, and who ordinarily was Italian." They also did not like the fact that they always had many foreign students studying in their houses in Paris. See Georges Aimé-Martimort, *Le Gallicanisme de Bossuet* (Paris: Cerf, 1953), 113.

⁵⁸Alexander VII defined this secular identity in his brief entitled *Ex comissa nobis* of 22 September 1655. See *Acta Apostolica: Bullæ, Brevia, et Rescripta in gratiam Congregationis Missionis* (Parisii: Georges Chamerot, 1876), 17.

⁵⁹The decision for the members of the Congregation to take vows, even private and simple ones, was very controversial among the first missionaries. For the details of this controversy see Coste, *Life and Times*, 1: 479-89. Along with the three traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, the members of the Congregation were to take a fourth vow of "stability." This vow promised a lifelong personal commitment to the Congregation and to its evangelistic mission.

⁶⁰Urban VIII approved the new congregation in the bull *Salvatoris Nostri* of 12 January 1633. Its understanding of the nature and meaning of its vows was approved by Alexander VII in the bulls *Ex comissa nobis* and *Alias nos supplicationes* of 22 September 1655 and 12 August 1659, respectively. *Acta Apostolica*, 3, 11, 16, 23.

⁶¹Urban VIII granted the Congregation, in perpetuity, all the canonical rights and privileges enjoyed by religious orders. See *Collectio Privilegiorum et Indulgentiarum quæ S. Sedes Congregationi Missionis benigne concessit* (Parisii: In Domo Primaria Congregationis Missionis, 1900), 10.

⁶²In 1627, the pastors of the Parisian parishes expressed their opposition to the Congregation's approval. This was done "for the sake of the peace and tranquility of the Church and the State." They demanded "sure guarantees...that the new congregation would not pose a threat to their rights, privileges, and authority." The Congregation made these guarantees. For the text of the protest lodged by Étienne le Tonnelier the syndic for the Parisian pastors see Coste, *CED*, 13: 227-32.

⁶³For an account of Vincent's use of endowments to finance the Congregation's various works see José María Román, C.M., "Las Fundaciones de San Vicente," *Vincentiana* 18 (1984): 457-86.

⁶⁴The contract of 1625 that founded the Congregation of the Mission was made with the influential Gondi family. This devout family wished to provide for the spiritual welfare of the people who lived in the villages that dotted their vast provincial lands. Vincent de Paul had been chaplain to this family. He had a long and close association with Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, the General of the Galleys, and his pious wife Marguerite. Vincent always considered the Gondi's as the true "founders of the Congregation." For more information on his relationship with this family and how it led to the foundation of the Congregation see Coste, *Life and Times*, 1: 60-71, 95-131, 144-59. For the text of the foundation contract see Coste, *CED*, 13: 197-202.

Paris authorized its activities in his jurisdiction.⁶⁵ Finally, national legal recognition enabled it to function in all "other places of the kingdom of France that are subject to the Most Christian King's rule."⁶⁶ This expansion took place before 1628 when the community first sought papal approval and contained only a handful of members.⁶⁷

A natural element of the Congregation's *modus vivendi* was a reverence for the king's sacred person. One means of expressing this reverence, as modeled by Saint Vincent, was by an exemplary obedience to royal authority.⁶⁸ From the very beginning, under Louis XIII and Anne of Austria's regency, the Congregation enjoyed the favor of the Bourbons.⁶⁹ When the young Louis XIV reconfirmed the community's possession of Saint-Lazare he stated what would be the consistent royal attitude toward the Congregation until the collapse of the Ancien Régime.

We are fully informed of the probity, capacity, life, and good morals of the priests of the Congregation of the Mission. We also are aware of the great, good, and notable services that they have continually rendered to the Church and public by the instructions that they give to young ecclesiastics in seminaries, ecclesiastical retreats, and ordination retreats. We also have noted the blessings that God gives to their country missions and their foreign missions of the Indies. We know that they employ and consume their own goods and revenues, their health, and their life without receiving any salary. They hope for no other recompense, other than that which comes from God. We therefore desire to assure and perpetuate the continuation of these holy exercises, so useful and so necessary to the Church and to the public. We thus testify to our

⁶⁵For a survey of the texts of the civil and canonical approvals received by the Congregation during this formative period see Coste, *CED*, 13: 202-67. It also is of interest to note that during the lifetime of Vincent the bishopric and archbishopric of Paris were held successively by members of the Gondì family. This connection was to the Congregation's great benefit.

⁶⁶Vincent de Paul to Urban VIII, 1 August 1628, Coste, *CED*, 1: 59.

⁶⁷Vincent de Paul to Urban VIII, 1 August 1628, *ibid.*, 1: 47-53.

⁶⁸In his 1664 biography of Vincent de Paul, Louis Abelly described the saint's reverence for the king and his loyalty to the crown at great length. See, for example, book 2, chapter 13: "Monsieur Vincent's service to the King in the Council of His Majesty and elsewhere during the time of the Queen Mother's Regency." See also sections 9-12 of this chapter which are entitled: "Various other activities of Monsieur Vincent while on the Council of the King," "Monsieur Vincent always preserved an inviolable fidelity to the king and a constant devotion to his service, even during the most perilous and difficult times," "Monsieur Vincent served the King with an entire disregard for all personal self-interest," and "Monsieur Vincent's prudence and circumspection in his service to the King." Louis Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant of God: Vincent de Paul*, trans. William Quinn, F.S.C., 3 vols. (New York: New City Press, 1992), 2: 372-400.

⁶⁹One proof of this royal favor is the fact that crown entrusted the Congregation with the coveted royal parishes at Versailles, Fontainebleau, Rochefort, Les Invalides, and Sedan, as well as the chapel at the palace of Versailles. Although it was against the Congregation's Rules to accept this type of benefice, it accepted these parishes in obedience to royal commands. See *Actes du Gouvernement Français concernant la Congrégation de la Mission dite de Saint-Lazare fondée par Saint Vincent de Paul* (Paris: Congrégation de la Mission, 1901), x.

well beloved, the said Vincent de Paul, superior general, and the other priests of the said Congregation of the Mission, the intent that we have of maintaining, conserving, and augmenting the graces and privileges accorded and conceded by us in favor of their said Congregation.⁷⁰

Between 1627 and 1789, the crown recognized the Congregation's various works and institutions in a series of more than 120 patent letters.⁷¹ In return for this favor, the crown expected that the Congregation would be an obedient "tool" in supporting its policies. The Bourbons would find no reason for dissatisfaction with the Lazarists' corporate response in this regard.

In the mid-seventeenth century, the Congregation of the Mission established its initial relations with the Holy See within the parameters of the French religious *modus vivendi*. Vincent de Paul contributed his own reverence for the Roman pontiff. He also insisted on an unquestioning obedience to the Holy See's and Roman Curia's authority.⁷² Vincent stated his relative ultramontanism unambiguously in the Congregation's *Common Rules*.⁷³ The chapter dealing with obedience notes, "We will in the first place faithfully and sincerely render reverence and obedience to our Most Holy Father the pope."⁷⁴ Later, in a conference that he gave commenting on this provision, the founder explained:

⁷⁰ "Lettres patentes de Louis XIV, confirmant et approuvant l'union et incorporation de Saint-Lazare à la Congrégation de la Mission," *ibid.*, 32.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, ix.

⁷² Vincent de Paul's respect for the Roman Curia was uncharacteristic in terms of his times.

⁷³ Ultramontanism is an ecclesiological movement emphasizing papal authority, Roman centralization, and uniformity in the Church. The conciliar movements, beginning in the fifteenth century, heightened the debate over the nature and extent of papal prerogatives. During the succeeding centuries, with the growth of nationalism, absolutism, and alternative ecclesiologies, such as Gallicanism, strong and effective opposition to ultramontanism emerged among the Catholic European monarchies. During the nineteenth century ultramontane ecclesiology finally became dominant within Catholicism, leading to a great exaltation of the person and power of the Roman Pontiff and the authoritarian, centralizing tendencies of the Roman Curia.

⁷⁴ *Common Rules*, chapter 5, §1, 122.

Our Holy Father the Pope, is the Common Father of all Christians, the Church's visible head, the vicar of Jesus Christ, and the successor of Saint Peter. We owe him our obedience. Part of our mission is to instruct the people, by our own example, in the obedience that they too owe to the universal pastor of our souls. We also honor God when we promptly obey and faithfully receive what comes from his authority. It is to him, in the person of Saint Peter, that our Lord said, "feed my lambs, pasture my sheep," and to whom the Savior gave the Church's keys. He is above all others. We must also see Our Lord in his person.⁷⁵

After Vincent's death in 1660, given the changing nature of the national relationship with the papacy beginning under Louis XIV, the Congregation in France redefined its papal allegiance more narrowly. This shift mirrored the recast national-absolutist-Gallican *modus vivendi*. Naturally, this changed prioritization occurred at the cost of papal displeasure. This stance was also problematic to the Congregation's non-French provinces and the rulers of other European Catholic kingdoms where the community functioned.

However, one cannot imagine the reverse situation taking place, namely the Congregation in France risking royal and parliamentary displeasure by stating an ultramontane preference for supporting papal authority against specific Gallican interests.⁷⁶ This would have been a violation of the national religious status quo. In this situation, Rome could have done little to protect the French Lazarists against the consequences of the crown and parlement's wrath.⁷⁷ The unenviable experiences of the French Jesuits during the middle of the eighteenth century provided evidence of this reality.

An Ongoing Gallican Domination and the "vice of nationalism"⁷⁸

Between 1625 and 1670, the contemporary forces of absolutism, Gallicanism, and nationalism shaped efforts to establish the

⁷⁵ Vincent de Paul, "Conférence du 19 décembre 1659, De L'Obéissance," Coste, *CED*, 12: 430.

⁷⁶ The parlement of Paris was a powerful institution in the France of the Ancien Régime and served as the equivalent of a supreme court. Although there were several provincial parlements, the most important in the kingdom was that of Paris. The parlement had the power to register the king's edicts and letters-patent. This registration gave them legal force. The parlement examined these royal acts to judge their conformity with principles of law, justice, and the traditional interests of the kingdom. If the parlement withheld registration the king could overcome this act with a personal order.

⁷⁷ See Mezzadri-Román, "Con el papa o con el rey," in *Historia*, 1: 135-50.

⁷⁸ Jean Bonnet, *Circulaires*, 1: 317.

Congregation's internal *modus vivendi*.⁷⁹ During the first years of the Congregation's existence Vincent de Paul, as founder and first superior general, governed on the basis of a simple organizational structure. Initial royal and episcopal approvals ratified this arrangement.⁸⁰ The Congregation's growth required that the community eventually define the elements of its identity to form the basis for its definitive approvals by the Holy See and the crown.

In 1632, Vincent de Paul requested papal approval both of the Congregation's mission and a basic set of six constitutional "ordinances."⁸¹ The founder also asked the pope to "grant apostolic recognition, and allow the superior general of the aforesaid Congregation and his successors, for the greater progress of this Congregation, to enact any other statutes, beyond the aforesaid ordinances... May they also be allowed, according to the nature of the circumstances and times, and as often as it will be appropriate, to change, alter, modify, limit, and correct them, and have the power to issue new norms freely and unrestrictedly, provided the aforesaid statutes, their changes, alterations, modifications, limitations, corrections, and the new norms are first approved by the Ordinary."⁸² In 1633, Urban VIII's bull of foundation, *Salvatoris Nostri*, approved this open-ended request.⁸³

Over the next several decades, work slowly advanced on a comprehensive set of rules and constitutions. The Congregation's proto-

⁷⁹ Gallicanism was an ecclesiology, with roots already in the thirteenth century, that claimed for France the right to resist all but very restricted forms of papal intervention within its jurisdiction. The French kings had controlled the papacy in Avignon from 1303 to 1377. The subsequent Great Western Schism (1378-1417) was concluded only when the Council of Constance (1414-1417) declared the supremacy of the general councils over popes and removed the three papal claimants. These events encouraged the French church to resist papal interventions. The state courts (*parlements*), basing themselves on the royal ordinance, the "Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges" (1438), interpreted this right of resistance rigorously.

The faculty of the University of Paris defended a more moderate version of Gallicanism even after the Council of Trent (1545-1563), and under Louis XIV this version was formulated in the four articles of the "Declaration of 1682" of the Assembly of the Clergy of France: (1) rejection of the extreme parliamentary position that denied any papal intervention in temporal matters; (2) admission of papal authority but only subject to conciliar supremacy; (3) demands that popes respect the ancient canons and customs of the French church; (4) admission of papal supremacy in matters of faith but denial of papal infallibility apart from the consent of the universal Church.

Gallicanism never proposed schism from the Roman See. Gallicanism became obsolete with the French Revolution, but the restoration of the monarchy in France in the nineteenth century revived its influence until the secular democracy and the conciliar definition of papal infallibility at Vatican I (1870) removed its influence.

Benedict M. Ashley, "Gallicanism," *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, Richard P. McBrien, ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1995), 553.

⁸⁰ For a survey of these texts see Coste, *CED*, 1: 115; 13: 200-75.

⁸¹ Vincent de Paul to Urban VIII, January 1632, Coste, *CED*, 1: 144.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Acta Apostolica*, 8.

assemblies in 1642 and 1651 refined draft documents.⁸⁴ Thirty-three years elapsed, however, between the Congregation's foundation and the founder's 1658 promulgation⁸⁵ of the *Common Rules* or *Common Constitutions*.⁸⁶ These *Common Rules* addressed only those matters that were the "common" concern of all the Congregation's members.⁸⁷

At Vincent's death, many aspects of the community's juridical structure remained unsettled.⁸⁸ Vincent's successor, René Alméras, guided the constitutional era to a close. He did this in a flurry of activity designed to preserve the Congregation's "primitive spirit."⁸⁹ Under Alméras' leadership the first two general assemblies finished work on what became known as the *Grand Constitutions*.⁹⁰ The 1668 general assembly gave final approval to this document.⁹¹ This assem-

⁸⁴For an account of the long process of formation of the Congregation's various constitutional documents see Coste, *Life and Times*, 1: 469-76 and Mezzadri-Román, *Historia*, 1: 38-41. For minutes of the 1642 and 1651 assemblies see Coste, *CED*, 13: 287-97, 326-32.

⁸⁵In his letter promulgating the *Common Rules*, Vincent explained the long delay:

Here at long last, my dear brothers, are the Rules, or Common Constitutions of our Congregation. You have been very anxious to have them and have had to wait a long time for them. It is now about thirty-three years since our Congregation was founded, but I have not had our Rules printed for you before now. There were two reasons for this. Firstly [*sic*], I wanted to take our Savior as a model. He put things into practice before he made them part of his teaching. Secondly, delaying their printing has avoided many problems which almost certainly would have arisen if these Rules had been published too soon. There could have been problems about living up to them later on, as they might have seemed too difficult or not so relevant. With the help of God's grace, delaying like this has saved us from such a risk. It has also made it possible for the Congregation to gradually and smoothly get used to living the Rules before having them in print. You will not find anything in them which you have not been doing for a long time already.

Common Rules, 101-02.

⁸⁶Saint Vincent spent much of his remaining time and energy in providing an extensive and invaluable commentary on the provisions of the *Common Rules*. For the texts of these classic spiritual conferences see Coste, *CED*, 12: 70-286, 298-433.

⁸⁷In the earliest surviving draft of the community's constitutions, the so-called *Codex Sarzana* (1655), the various elements dealing with the community's identity, spirit, and governance are all combined in one lengthy document. For the Latin text see "Codex Sarzana," ed. John Rybolt, C.M., *Vincentiana* 33 (1991): 307-406.

⁸⁸For an account of the Congregation at the founder's death see Mezzadri-Román, *Historia*, 1: 86-89.

⁸⁹For a survey of the other actions Alméras took during his generalate to define and preserve the community's primitive spirit see *Circulaires*, 1: 30-113. See in particular, "Moyens de conserver l'esprit primitif de la Congrégation proposés en l'Assemblée Générale de l'année 1668," *ibid.*, 1: 97. Alméras served as the Congregation's second superior general from his election in January 1661 to his death on 22 September 1672. For a brief biographical sketch see *Circulaires*, 1: 28-30.

⁹⁰For the text of this document which remained authoritative until the adoption of the Congregation's 1954 Constitutions see *Collectio Bullarum, Constitutionum, ac Decretorum quae Congregationis Administrationem spectant* (Paris: Maison-Mère, 1847), 1-125.

⁹¹Generally speaking, the Constitutions provided for a very hierarchical authority structure centered in on the person of a powerful superior general who was elected for life. While the authority of general assemblies was superior to that of the general, these meetings were at most held only every six to twelve years. See Maria Chiara Cervini, C.M., "Il Governo della Congregazione della Missione di S. Vincenzo de Paoli," *Annali della Missione* 104 (1994): 3-60.

bly also voted to submit a “selection” of twenty key provisions for the Holy See’s approval. These articles dealt with the office of the superior general, the community’s general administration and governance, and the respective roles of the Congregation’s general, provincial, and domestic assemblies.⁹² Soon after the assembly ended, Alméras submitted the *Select Constitutions* for Roman approval.⁹³ A consistory of cardinals amended and approved them. Clement X added his ratification on 2 June 1670 in the bull, *Ex injuncto nobis*.⁹⁴

The process of constitutional formation was in every respect a Gallican affair. Although the Congregation had small numbers of Italian, Polish, and Irish missionaries, and a handful of foundations in these countries, most of the Congregation’s members and its houses were French. Correspondingly, the community’s entire leadership, including the first superiors of the foreign European missions and provinces founded in this era, were also French.

At the end of 1642, Vincent de Paul had considered a proposal to move the community’s headquarters to Rome.⁹⁵ The founder even considered going there to investigate the ramifications of such a decision. The French Lazarist who made this proposal, Bernard Codoing, thought that this move would ensure papal favor and preserve unity among the community’s emerging national groups. After more than a year of consideration this proposal, which Vincent described as “beset with very serious difficulties,” was quietly dropped.⁹⁶ Vincent did not reveal exactly what these “serious difficulties” might entail. However, they could only have involved the perceived impossibility of disengaging the community from its already deep Gallican roots. Moving the generalate to Rome could not have been done while still preserving the necessary favor of the crown, the Gallican church, the parlements, and the kingdom itself.

⁹² In the community’s bull of foundation, Urban VIII delegated authority to the archbishop of Paris “to approve and confirm in the name of the Holy See the rules and constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission and thus confer on them the strength of inviolable apostolic solidity.” See *Acta Apostolica*, 8. The second general assembly was concerned that this papal delegation might lead a future superior general to seek changes in the constitutions simply by appealing to the authority of the archbishop of Paris. In order to guard against this possibility, and in order to give “greater solidity” to the most important elements of the Constitutions, the assembly resolved to submit these sections to the Holy See for its approval. See explanatory note in *De Conventibus tum Generali, tum Sexennali in Congregatione Missionis* (Parisiis: Congregationis Missionis, 1917), 73.

⁹³ *Constitutiones*, 126-40.

⁹⁴ *Acta Apostolica*, 33-38.

⁹⁵ Vincent de Paul to Bernard Codoing, 25 December 1642, Coste, *CED*, 2: 324. Bernard Codoing was the French superior of the community’s house in Rome.

⁹⁶ Vincent de Paul to Bernard Codoing, 10 July 1643, *ibid.*, 2: 409.

While it was not clear, at this point, how extensively the Congregation might eventually expand outside France, it was certain that its future would remain inexorably tied primarily to France, and thus its Gallican identity. Vincent de Paul was aware of the dangers posed by the emergence of nationalistic feelings and divisions within the community. In the *Common Rules*, several provisions suggest means to keep these problems from arising.⁹⁷

Vincent de Paul believed that the need for the Congregation's apostolates, its respect for the Roman pontiff and the authority of the Holy See, its secular identity, and its constitutional provisions requiring an unquestioning obedience to all civil and religious authorities, would enable it to operate within any other national *modus vivendi* in Catholic Europe.⁹⁸ The founder presumed that foreign foundations and provinces would be willing and able to maintain an identification with the forms of community life, ministry, and devotion as they existed in France, particularly at the mother house of Saint-Lazare.⁹⁹ This presumption proved very difficult to maintain during the Congregation's development within very different eighteenth-century realities.

The new century was an age of "dynastic Catholic nationalism."¹⁰⁰ European Catholic monarchs would not accept the independent presence of any of the supranational congregations or orders in their realms.¹⁰¹ These rulers required these groups to have a nationalistic identity, culture, and governance that always took precedence over

⁹⁷ For example in chapter 8, §14-16, which reads:

No one shall speak against other countries or provinces since much harm is wont to follow from such action... In public conflicts and wars which arise between Christian rulers, no one shall show a preference for one side or another, in imitation of Christ who was unwilling to arbitrate between brothers involved in litigation, or to pass judgment on the rights of civil rulers. He would only say that what belongs to Caesar should be given to Caesar, and so forth... Everyone shall hold aloof from conversations about war and the disputes of contemporary civil leaders, and other such talk of the world. No one shall as far as possible, even write about these things.

⁹⁸ Indeed, this was the founder's experience as the Congregation expanded into Poland and Italy during his lifetime.

⁹⁹ According to Vincent, the statement "This is the way that it is done at Saint-Lazare" was to serve as the ultimate reference point for all the judgments concerning lived uniformity to the primitive spirit of the rules and constitutions. These were to be practiced in the same manner by every confrere, in every house, in every province, and in every nation throughout the Congregation. See, for example, Vincent de Paul, "Répétition d'Oraison du 28 juillet 1655, Sur la Génuflexion," Coste, *CED*, 11: 206.

¹⁰⁰ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Spain and Portugal*, 2 vols. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 1: 218.

¹⁰¹ For a survey of this history see Jedin, *Church*, 6: 329-582.

any conflicting demands posed by their supranational ecclesial identity.¹⁰²

In the eighteenth century, as the Congregation expanded into other countries in Catholic Europe, it experienced internal nationalistic divisions. Many non-French provinces resented the centralized authority of the community's French superiors, its Gallican ecclesiology and corporate culture, and its identity as a French national institution. All this happened at a time when Catholic Europe resisted any form of French dominance.

It was the Roman province in the Papal States that first questioned the predominant position of the French.¹⁰³ The Spanish and Portuguese provinces in turn came into existence via the Roman province during the first half of the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁴ Thus, these Roman/French antagonisms also shaped the Congregation's prerevolutionary history in Spain and Portugal.

A Century of Nationalistic Troubles

An early sign of problems between the French and the Romans came at the general assembly of 1685. At this gathering, the Romans demanded that the fourth assistant general allowed by the community's Constitutions would be an Italian.¹⁰⁵ Given the heightened Gallican atmosphere of the time in France, the superior general Edme Jolly had opposed this concession fearful of Louis XIV's reaction.¹⁰⁶ When the Romans threatened to appeal to the Holy See, the French reluctantly agreed.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² During this era it was common for these Catholic monarchs to insist that the various international religious orders and congregations in their realms be governed either by a national superior independent of the order's general, or even that they be declared to be independent entities.

¹⁰³ In 1631, Vincent sent a representative to reside in Rome in order to guide the Congregation's approval through the Roman Curia. This soon led to the establishment of the works of the community there and eventually throughout the Italian peninsula. By 1642, the community in Italy had expanded to the point that the houses there were formed into a separate Roman province, the first one established outside France. For a history of the Congregation in Italy see Salvatore Stella, C.M., *La Congregazione della Missione in Italia* (Parigi: Congregazione della Missione, 1883).

¹⁰⁴ For a history of the Congregation of the Mission in Spain see Benito Paradelo, C.M., *Resumen Histórico de la Congregación de la Misión en España desde 1704 a 1868* (Madrid: Hernández y Galo Sáez, 1923) and José Herrera, C.M., *Historia de la Congregación de la Misión* (Madrid: Editorial La Milagrosa, 1949). For a history of the Congregation in Portugal see Emil Miel, C.M., "Origine de la Congrégation de la Mission en Portugal," *Annales*, 45-49 (1880-1883).

¹⁰⁵ Up to this point the Congregation had operated with three assistants general.

¹⁰⁶ Edme Jolly was the Congregation's third superior general. He served from his election in 1673 to his death in 1697. For a short biographical sketch see *Circulaires*, 1: 123-26.

¹⁰⁷ Luigi Mezzadri, C.M. "Gallicanesimo e vita religiosa: La Congregazione della Missione e la crisi della 'Nazionalità' (1607-1711), *Divus Thomas* 76 (1973): 66.

In 1697, before the opening of the general assembly convoked to elect a successor to Jolly the delegates heard a stunning announcement. Louis XIV sent the archbishop of Paris, Louis de Noailles, to tell the Lazarists that he was vetoing the leading candidate in the upcoming election. The vetoed confrere was Maurice Faure, then the pastor of the royal parish at Fontainebleau. The official reason given for the exclusion was that Faure was a native of Savoy.¹⁰⁸ Through the influence of Madame de Maintenon, Faure and several delegates obtained an audience with the king.¹⁰⁹ Despite their appeal, the royal veto stood. In addition, the king declared that he would never allow the election of a non-Frenchman as the Congregation's superior general.¹¹⁰

When the time came for the delegates to certify the fulfillment of the constitutional requirements for a legitimate assembly, the Roman

¹⁰⁸Savoy had not yet been incorporated into France. At the time, relations between the House of Savoy and Louis XIV were strained. Louis XIV told Faure that there was nothing personal about his veto but that it was required as a matter of state policy. However, there is also some evidence that Faure's exclusion was the result of intrigue by influential figures at court who favored the election of François Hébert. Hébert was the pastor at Versailles. These figures supposedly used Faure's Savoyard birth as an excuse to prevent his election. In his letter convoking the general assembly, Faure had mentioned the constitutional provisions forbidding electoral intrigues. He also included a copy of a papal brief which he had solicited which reaffirmed this ban. Hébert would later become the first bishop in the Congregation's history. See Claude-Joseph Lacour, C.M., "Histoire Générale de la Congrégation de la Mission," *Annales*, 44 (1878): 534-35. The manuscript of this eighteenth-century history can be found in the archives of the General Curia of the Congregation in Rome and in the archives of the Maison-Mère, Paris. There are several significant omissions between the manuscript version of this history, and its published serial form in the *Annales*.

¹⁰⁹Françoise d'Aubigné, the marquise de Maintenon, was the favorite mistress and later the morganatic wife of Louis XIV. She was a great benefactress of the Congregation.

¹¹⁰*Circulaires*, 1: 208. According to Lacour, at the audience, Louis XIV replied that "he had known Faure at Fontainebleau and that he had been very content with him there. But that in this case, it was a question of protecting his royal prerogatives." *Histoire Générale*, 292, AGCR. Later the king would explain to his ambassador in Rome that,

Since the congregation of the priests of the Mission has its principal establishments in France and few houses in foreign countries, the election of a superior general, has always gone to one of His Majesty's French subjects. After the death of M. Jolly, the superior general...His Majesty felt that such a situation demanded new precautions to prevent the accustomed usage from being interrupted and a foreigner's being elected superior general of a congregation of priests to whom he entrusts the care of the parishes and chapels in the places where he makes his principal residence and who, in addition, have the majority of their houses in his kingdom. Thus, when the time of election came, the priests of the Mission were informed that His Majesty had good reason to expect that they would not only choose the worthiest candidate but also that they would be sure not to elect a foreigner.

"Instruction donnée par le Roi à M. Le prince de Monaco, 29 janvier 1699," *Correspondance Politique: Romc*, 399: 8. AMAE



*M^r. Jolly. Edmond
 III^e. Supérieur
 Élu le 5 Janvier 1673 - Mort. le 26 Mars 1697*

*Edme Jolly, C.M., superior general of the
 Congregation of the Mission, 1673-1697*

and Polish delegates entered a solemn protest.¹¹¹ They said that the assembly was not legitimate since it lacked freedom in the general's election. The French delegates argued against this position. They observed that the royal veto was no different from the *ius exclusivæ* enjoyed by several Catholic monarchs at papal elections. This was a relevant argument since at the time, these kings exercised their veto frequently enough.¹¹²

According to the French delegates although the royal veto may have been regrettable, strictly speaking, it was only "the accidental exclusion of an otherwise eligible candidate."¹¹³ In short, the French argument was that "one cannot disobey the king."¹¹⁴ The king had told the assembly whom they could not elect but did not dictate whom they must elect. Under these circumstances, the French held that the royal veto did not entail any disqualifying physical or moral violence. Therefore, any subsequent election of an otherwise qualified Frenchman as superior general would be valid.¹¹⁵

Facing both an implacable royal veto and the assembly's French majority, the Roman and Polish delegates settled for the adoption of a declaration reasserting the constitutional principle of the freedom of election.¹¹⁶ The five dissenting delegates then withdrew their protest. They said that they were doing so "out of charity, for the sake of peace, and for the common good of our Congregation."¹¹⁷

The general assembly went on, with considerable difficulty, to

¹¹¹ In 1651, at the invitation of the French-born Queen Louise-Marie Gonzague, Vincent sent the first Lazarists to Poland to establish the works of the community at Warsaw. An independent and successful Polish province came in 1687. However, during the course of the eighteenth century, with the devastating series of partitions of the kingdom of Poland among Austria, Prussia, and Russia, the Polish province found its various houses divided between three separate national jurisdictions. It then entered into a long period of great hardships, persecution, and decline. See Gabriel Perboyre, C.M., "Pologne," vol. 1 in *Mémoires de la Congrégation de la Mission*, 12 vols. (Paris: Congrégation de la Mission, 1863).

¹¹² For example, in the conclave of 1669, which eventually elected Clement X, France and Spain each vetoed two candidates.

¹¹³ Lacour, "Histoire Générale," *Annales*, 45 (1879): 292-93.

¹¹⁴ This phrase is found in the manuscript of Lacour's history. This is one of the items that was omitted from the later published version of the manuscript appearing in the *Annales*.

¹¹⁵ "Conventus generalis estne legitimus, non obstante Regis Gallia declaratione alienigenas a generalatu excludente?" *Collectio Decretorum*, 185-86.

¹¹⁶ Of the twenty-five delegates to this sixth general assembly, twenty were French. See *Circulaires*, 1: 209. The Polish and Roman delegates who entered the protest included the Italian assistant general, Tommaso Robioli; the visitor of the province of Poland, Bartholomew Tarlo; the visitor of the Roman province, Pietro Francesco Giordanini; and two of the other Roman delegates, Giacomo Ridolfi and Giovanni Maino.

¹¹⁷ *Collectio Decretorum*, 185-86.

elect Nicolas Pierron¹¹⁸ as the new superior general.¹¹⁹ The Roman and Polish delegates signed the attestation of the new general's election and the assembly's acta.¹²⁰ After they returned home, however, "inquietude" about the validity of the election prevailed among many in the Roman and Polish provinces.¹²¹ The visitors of these provinces sent a memorial to the Holy See. This appeal expressed their lingering doubts about Pierron's election.

In September 1698, Pierron sent two representatives to Rome.¹²² Their mission was to present his case and ask the Holy See for a ruling on his election's validity.¹²³ Louis XIV instructed his ambassador in Rome to uphold the French position.¹²⁴ In the following year, in the so-called "Brief of Pacification," Innocent XII confirmed Pierron's election.¹²⁵ The pontiff also reconfirmed the "inviolable" provisions of the community's constitutions concerning the free election, irrespective of nationality, of an otherwise qualified candidate for superior general.¹²⁶

Relations between the French general and the two Italian provinces

¹¹⁸The assembly found itself deadlocked between two French candidates. Eventually, the choice had to be made by arbitration. Nicolas Pierron won by one vote. Pierron was the last superior general to have entered the Congregation (1657) during the lifetime of Saint Vincent. For a short biographical sketch of Pierron see *Circulaires*, 1: 208-10.

¹¹⁹The assembly demonstrated its high regard for Maurice Faure by electing him as the first assistant general and admonitor to the superior general.

¹²⁰Lacour, "Histoire Générale," *Annales*, 45 (1879): 294.

¹²¹Stella, *Italia*, 101.

¹²²Pietro Terrarosa, the Italian who had been elected as an assistant general by the general assembly declined to depart from Italy for Paris to take up his duties since he had doubts about the validity of the general's election. See N. Pierron to P. Terrarosa, 3 December 1697 and 26 March 1698 in *Lettere dei superiori generali*, 19 vols. 1: 61-64, 79. ACLR.

¹²³See Pierron, *Circulaires*, 1: 217. In his letter to the pope, Pierron argued for the validity of his election on the basis that the assembly's freedom had not been violated; "Ante diem electionis pluries ac multum discussa et cum omni libertate a Conventu Generali definita, mihi, quantumvis reluctanti imo et flenti . . . onus Superioris Generalis communibus ac liberis omnino votis idem conventus imposuerat." See Pierron's letter of 15 September 1698, *Lettere di particolari*, ASV, 87: 313. The pope who was quoted as having told a cardinal that "the French have behaved badly in this matter," in turn referred the question to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

¹²⁴The full text of the king's instructions on this occasion can be found in AMAE, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 399: 8-10. Luigi Mezzadri points out that on the basis of this instruction the crown's understanding of the Congregation is clear, "it is a French institute which by way of exception happens to have some houses established outside of France." Mezzadri, *Gallicanesimo*, 68.

¹²⁵Pierron's leading opponents wrote letters of submission. Terrarosa then finally left to take up his duties as assistant general in Paris. Lacour, "Histoire Générale," *Annales*, 45 (1879): 437.

¹²⁶The briefs in question were *Quanti Congregationem* of 17 March 1699 and *Nuper Nos* of 21 March 1699. *Acta Apostolica*, 71-74. At the time of Pierron's successor's election, Clement XI confirmed this constitutional reservation (*ibid.*, 84). Also at Pierron's resignation in 1703, the general received a personal assurance from Louis XIV that assemblies would henceforth enjoy this electoral freedom. Lacour, *Histoire Générale*, 437.

worsened in the opening years of the eighteenth century.¹²⁷ Pierron tried to end the Italian nationalism that he believed would “change the nature and order of our Institute.”¹²⁸

The superior general stationed French missionaries at the house of Monte Citorio in Rome.¹²⁹ One of these priests was to serve as his representative to the Holy See. He was to head off any Roman attempts to outflank Paris by appeals made directly to the Roman Curia.¹³⁰ The French representatives were also to keep a close watch on what went on at Monte Citorio, and in the Roman province, and report to the general.¹³¹ The Roman visitor, Pietro Francesco Giordanini, whom Pierron held responsible for “ruining the spirit of our Congregation in Italy,” resigned in protest.¹³²

Pierron’s actions polarized Roman attitudes and stiffened their resistance. Giovanni Battista Vacca, the superior of the house at Ferrara, wrote to Pierron in protest: “The Frenchmen are odious to most of the laity. These people are more inclined to favor the imperial cause [this was during the war of the Spanish Succession].¹³³ My personal opinion and that of those who wish us well is that it is not prudent in these times to send a French missionary to transact business in Rome.”¹³⁴ Pierron, who had his own connections at the papal court, refused to

¹²⁷ With respect to the Italian-French antagonisms, it should be noted that the Italians were not united in their opposition to the French. They were generally split into, *filofrancesi* and *antifrancesi* factions. These divisions often made for great internecine battles within the Italian provinces themselves, particularly at the provincial assemblies which were held in preparation for general assemblies. See Poole, *History*, 165, and Mezzadri, *Gallicanesimo*, 72-74.

¹²⁸ Mezzadri, *Gallicanesimo*, 72-74.

¹²⁹ In 1642, after years of searching for a suitable Roman house, the Congregation purchased, with the substantial financial assistance of Richelieu’s niece the Duchess d’Aiguillon, the former palace of Cardinal Nicolas Bagni at Monte Citorio. This house continued uninterruptedly as the headquarters of the Roman province until 1870. At this time, the Italian government confiscated most of it for use by the Chamber of Deputies. In 1913, the government confiscated the remaining portions of the complex still in community hands.

¹³⁰ The two Frenchmen sent by Pierron were René Divers and Antoine Philopald. In 1725, Philopald was among the forty-one confreres (including the first assistant general) who were expelled from the Congregation for their refusal to accept the anti-Jansenist bull, *Unigenitus*. See *Collectio Decretorum*, 90, 130-35.

¹³¹ Throughout these controversies, both sides were kept informed about the activities of the other. The *filofrancesi* and the general’s agents in Rome kept him informed on the activities of the *antifrancesi*. The *antifrancesi* were not above intercepting the general’s confidential letters to his Roman agents.

¹³² *Lettere*, 1: 103, ACLR. In order to try to remove Giordanini from the volatile Roman scene, Pierron offered him the vacant position as Italian assistant general. Giordanini declined saying that he “had no intention of doing perpetual penance in Paris.” Mezzadri, *Gallicanesimo*, 73. Pierron considered appointing a Frenchman as the new visitor. See N. Pierron to J.B. Anselmi, 14 November 1701, *Lettere*, 1: 175, ACLR.

¹³³ The War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) was a general European conflict arising from the disputed succession to the Spanish throne after the death of the last Spanish Habsburg, Charles II. Eventually, Louis XIV’s grandson was confirmed as Philip V, thus establishing the Spanish Bourbon ruling house.

¹³⁴ G.B. Vacca to N. Pierron, 20 March 1702, *Lettere*, 1: 227, ACCR.



M^r Pierron, Nicolas.
N^e Supérieur
Élu le 7 Août, 1697. Mort. le 27 Août, 1703

*Nicolas Pierron, C.M., superior general of
 Congregation of the Mission, 1697-1703*

remove or limit the activities of his agents. He insisted that the pope approved of their presence and activities.¹³⁵

The elderly Pierron, who had accepted his election with great reluctance, was by now in declining health. He had decided to ask the sexennial assembly, scheduled for 1703, to elect a vicar general to assist him.¹³⁶ The Romans and the Poles maneuvered to increase their influence in this election. Pierron then issued another circular informing the Congregation of his intention to resign. This move automatically transformed the sexennial assembly into a general assembly.¹³⁷

The Roman provincial assembly met to elect its delegates and formulate its proposals for the general assembly. Under the leadership of the former visitor, Giordanini, the *antifrancesi* carried the day.¹³⁸ The province's proposals revealed their determination to challenge the Congregation's Gallican ethos at the coming assembly. The provincial assembly instructed its delegates to insist that the French support the general assembly's electoral freedom despite any possible pressure from the crown. The Romans also proposed a series of changes in the community's constitutions. They designed these to temper the Gallican constitutional absolutism, and thus the French stranglehold over the life of the international community.¹³⁹ The Romans proposed to limit the number of French assistants general to no more than two. They proposed that the superior general delegate responsibility for overseeing the governance of the provinces among the various assistants general.¹⁴⁰ The Romans also wanted an additional Italian province.¹⁴¹ They demanded that all officials of their houses be Italians. Finally,

¹³⁵ Poole, *History*, 164.

¹³⁶ The community's constitutions provided for a sexennial assembly of the Congregation and a general assembly every twelve years or upon the death of a general. A sexennial assembly could be transformed into a general assembly if the delegates thought there were issues facing the Congregation which warranted such a transformation.

¹³⁷ The community's constitutions provided that at a sexennial assembly there would be one delegate from each province, whereas at a general assembly each province was represented by its visitor and two elected delegates. In the case of the scheduled sexennial assembly of 1703, the Italians and Poles succeeded in convincing the Holy See to issue a brief superseding the constitutions and giving them the right for this one time to send two delegates to the sexennial assembly. For the text of this brief dated 10 April 1703 and entitled *Cum sicut*, see *Acta Apostolica*, 78-79. This move would have increased the relative power of these two provinces against the five French provinces. Warned of this request Pierron, on 2 April, announced his decision to resign and convoke a general assembly. For the text of Pierron's resignation letter see Stella, *Italia*, 130.

¹³⁸ In preparation for the general assembly each province held a provincial assembly which in turn was prepared for by assemblies in each canonical house.

¹³⁹ Mezzadri, *Gallicanesimo*, 77.

¹⁴⁰ Under the community's constitutions, the assistants general played a purely consultative role to the superior general and had no direct relations with the provinces.

¹⁴¹ At this point, there were twelve houses in the "Roman" province spread across several Italian states.

they wanted the superior general to refrain from sending any more French missionaries in any capacity to Italy. Taken together, these proposals were an unmistakable challenge to the French.¹⁴² Pierron, whose own sources had kept him informed of the assembly's deliberations, felt dismay at this further evidence of Roman nationalism.¹⁴³ The French tried ahead of time to prevent a divisive general assembly.¹⁴⁴

The election of the new general proved to be a peaceful process. As demanded by the Roman and Polish provinces, the assembly reasserted the constitutional principle of its electoral freedom.¹⁴⁵ This was a moot point, since the king already had assured Pierron that he would not exercise his veto.¹⁴⁶ On the third ballot, François Watel received the necessary votes and became superior general.¹⁴⁷ The French-controlled assembly then voted down the Roman postulatium. This revealed what would be a consistent French attitude of intransigence toward even the possibility of the slightest constitutional changes. Only one point from the Roman reform agenda was successful; the approval, in principle, of the province's division into two provinces. The assembly left it to the superior general's discretion when to carry out this decision.

In 1704, Watel announced the division of the Roman province. He created a second province headquartered in Turin. In the same letter, however, he also announced that he was creating an additional province in France, the province of Picardy.¹⁴⁸ This action negated the gain made by the Italians. With the addition of another province, the French delegates at a general assembly would

¹⁴² The minutes of this provincial assembly can be found in *Provinciae Romanæ Conventus ac Visitatorum Decreta*, ACLR.

¹⁴³ Mezzadri, *Gallicanesimo*, 79.

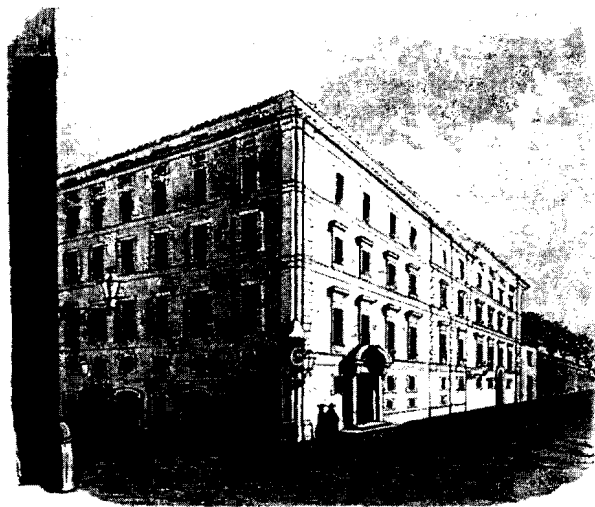
¹⁴⁴ Throughout this struggle both sides had their supporters within the Roman Curia, and both sides appealed to the Holy See to support their position. During the assembly the nuncio in Paris, Francesco Antonio Gualtieri, monitored the proceedings. See G. Appiani to Cardinal Paolucci, 13 August 1703, ASV, *Lettere di particolari*, 94-96, 173-74.

¹⁴⁵ See Conv. gen. VII, sess. 2, anno 1703, *Collectio Decretorum*, 166. The Holy See confirmed this decree again in 1704. See *Acta Apostolica*, 84.

¹⁴⁶ Lacour, "Histoire Générale," *Annales*, 66 (1901): 436. By now it was also clear, however, that as long as the French controlled the majority of votes in the general assemblies there was an implicit guarantee of always having a French general.

¹⁴⁷ François Watel was the Congregation's fifth superior general. He served until his death in 1710. For a brief biographical sketch see *Circulaires*, 1: 233. His epitaph was a fitting one, "difficillimis temporibus Congregationem in fide et unitate servavit" (Stella, *Italia*, 171).

¹⁴⁸ Watel, *Circulaires*, 1: 241-42.



Monte Citorio, headquarters of the Roman province of the Congregation of the Mission, as it appeared in early nineteenth century.

still outnumber the non-French by more than two-to-one.¹⁴⁹

Watel thus chose to begin his generalate with a strong counterattack. He instructed his agents to head off the “predictable offensive” of the disappointed Roman missionaries.¹⁵⁰ The superior general knew he could remove the leaders of the Roman opposition from all positions of authority. He went as far as to consider establishing a French-controlled internal seminary at Turin. Watel also considered appointing Frenchmen as superiors of Italian houses, including that of Monte Citorio, and sending additional French missionaries to Italy.¹⁵¹

If the French accused the Romans of being guilty of the vice of nationalism and upsetting the Congregation’s peace, the Romans re-

¹⁴⁹ In his manuscript, Lacour had this to say with respect to the division of the Roman province: “The general did not think that he could refuse to divide the province, but he feared that with the multiplication of foreign provinces that the number of foreigners having a deliberative voice in the assemblies could eventually equal or even surpass those of the French and that this would be the cause of difficulty. He therefore created another French province.” (*Histoire Générale*, 334, ACGR). It should also be noted that the French majorities in the general assemblies were supplemented by the votes of the vicar general, three of the assistants general, the secretary and procurator general (these last two were appointed by the superior general and were also always French), all of whom were voting members *ex officio* of an assembly. This automatically added an additional five to six votes to the margin of the French majority.

¹⁵⁰ Mezzadri, *Gallicanesimo*, 81.

¹⁵¹ Mezzadri points out that in Watel’s mind these were the means of returning to the “perfect harmony” between the Romans and French that supposedly characterized the primitive era of the community’s history (*ibid.*, 82).

turned the same charge against the Gallicanism of the French. What the French defined as the virtue of preserving the sacred deposit of the Congregation's "primitive spirit," the Romans and the other "foreign" provinces viewed as the vice of French nationalism. They felt that Gallicanism wrapped itself around them like a constitutional straight-jacket and distorted the Congregation's true "primitive spirit."

Since the French used the constitutions to sustain the Congregation's Gallicanism, the Italians first had tried to use constitutional means to effect change. However, when this strategy failed, they sought the support of apostolic authority to temper the unbridled Gallicanism of the French. Throughout these nationalistic controversies, the Holy See faced French superiors general supported by the French crown. The king always demanded that Rome uphold the status quo of the Congregation's constitutional authority, thus tacitly maintaining French domination and the Congregation's Gallican identity. The Holy See also faced vocal ultramontane Romans who usually demanded more support than it could provide, even if it may have wanted to do so.¹⁵²

Rome always had to be concerned with maintaining the best possible relations with the French crown. As a matter of policy, therefore, it tried to maintain unity and peace in the Congregation of the Mission. This policy required turning away direct Roman challenges to Gallican constitutional authority. Given its limited maneuverability, the papacy could only sternly warn the French Lazarists of the untoward consequences of their Gallicanism, while unconvincingly threatening future punitive action if conditions did not improve.

Moving beyond its circumscribed role as a mediator of the Roman-French antagonisms, the Holy See did at times take actions that purposely subverted the superior general's authority. Such actions indirectly supported the Roman position without, however, risking the intervention of the French crown. The Holy See did this, for example, by establishing the Congregation's first Spanish house at Barcelona.¹⁵³ It also mandated the employment of Italian missionaries at Propaganda Fide's college in Avignon,¹⁵⁴ and at the Academy of

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ See Paradela, *Resumen Histórico*, 26-27.

¹⁵⁴ In 1704, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide informed the superior general of its intention to confide the direction of the college at Avignon, which was under its jurisdiction, to missionaries of its own choosing from the Roman province. Watel instructed the Roman visitor that he was not to accept this establishment except under conditions which would be acceptable to Paris. The conditions proved not to be acceptable to Watel. He felt that they were incompatible with his authority and with the Congregation's constitutions. Eventually, it took an order from the pope to induce him to drop his opposition. For a brief sketch of the history of this institution see Stella, *Italia*, 161-66 and Mezzadri, *Gallicanesimo*, 85.

Noble Ecclesiastics in Rome.¹⁵⁵

In 1705, the visitor of the Roman province, Lazzaro Maria Figari, escalated the Roman-French conflict. He sent a letter to all the Italian houses asking support for an appeal to the Holy See to end the problems with the French. His solution was a division of the Congregation along national lines. This proposal occasioned a flood of correspondence both pro and con to the Cardinal Secretary of State.¹⁵⁶ The pro-French visitor of Lombardy, Giuseppe Seghino, wrote to the pope in the following vein:

With tears in my eyes and bitterness in my heart, I throw myself at the feet of your Holiness humbly begging you to be compassionate toward our poor Congregation. A fierce tempest disturbs us at this time. We are in danger of shipwreck on a sea of unfortunate dissensions and discords. Our ultramontanes are the cause of these. As your Holiness knows, these men have exasperated the house at Rome and the province. They now seek to be separated from their head who, they claim, does not exercise a salutary influence on its members. Nevertheless, if this should happen...I do not think that our little boat will be any more calm or find itself resting in a secure port. I have reason to fear stronger tempests from the violence of the winds that are rising...I foresee grave disorders and great prejudice to God's glory and the good of the people, if the discord that exists between us and the ultramontanes does not stop.¹⁵⁷

The key argument offered by the *antifrancesi* to justify the nationalistic division of the Congregation was the dependence of its govern-

¹⁵⁵ In 1702, Nicholas Pierron had accepted the administration of the Academy of Noble Ecclesiastics in Rome without, apparently, knowing fully the conditions that had been established by the cardinal founder. Under these conditions, the superior general would have no control over its personnel nor have a right of visitation. Pierron soon regretted his action. He and his French successors found that they had very little room to maneuver. The irregular, extra-constitutional state of this foundation would also cause problems in the future. See Poole, *History*, 141-43.

¹⁵⁶ Evidence suggests that this proposal had widespread support among the Italian missionaries. For example out of the nineteen superiors of the houses in Italy only three were opposed to the proposed division. Mezzadri, *Gallicanesimo*, 85.

¹⁵⁷ "Imprimé Italien concernant les supérieurs général, c.m. et Italie, depuis l'assemblée générale de 1685 jusqu'à 5 mars 1843," *Étienne, Écrits et Documents*, C 40, bas 3, Dossier, B-14, ACMP.



M^r Watel, François.
V^e Supérieur
Élu le 11 Août, 1703 — Mort le 3 Octobre 1710

*François Watel, C.M., superior general of the
 Congregation of the Mission. 1703-1710*

ment on the French crown.¹⁵⁸ The Romans deplored this situation from an ultramontane perspective. They claimed that the community's dependence on the French crown was at the expense of its proper dependence on the Holy See. According to the *antifrancesi*, consequences of this Gallican dependence included the overwhelming preponderance of Frenchmen in the curia at the mother house, the use of French as the official language of the community's assemblies, and the difficulties experienced in establishing and maintaining the community in countries that were hostile to the French and French influence. In their view, the cumulative effects of years of dissension within the Congregation now made any reconciliation between the French and the Italians highly unlikely.¹⁵⁹

The *antifrancesi* requested the Holy See to approve the establishment of an independent vicar general elected by the Italian provinces.¹⁶⁰ This vicar general would reside in Rome and govern the Italian peninsula, Spain, and any other future houses or provinces established outside France. The vicar general would have four elected assistants. This temporary solution was to continue until such time as the superior general moved his seat to Rome. With the general's arrival in Rome, the office of the Italian vicar general would cease. The French provinces could then, in turn, be given a vicar general.

Figari informed the superior general of this proposal. Watel tried to delay matters long enough to counterattack. As always, the first line of defense was the crown. Upon learning of this proposal, Louis XIV

¹⁵⁸ In 1707, during the War of the Spanish Succession, the Habsburg claimant Charles III issued the following decree affecting the Lazarists under his jurisdiction in Naples and Spain.

But having been informed that the superior general of the said Congregation [the Lazarists] not only is always French but that he even resides continually at the court of Paris, to which the subjects have to gather for its general congregations. . . and that on the said superior general depends completely the entire government, not only of all the provinces, but even of all the houses and individuals of the provinces, both superiors and subjects, with whom there runs a continuous dependence and communication in each and every single matter, and it being our experience that the Politician of that court [Louis XIV] makes use of everything ecclesiastical for his purposes. . . . Desiring to obviate the great and irreparable harm which could result to our royal service by not avoiding the said communication, declaring the above-mentioned decree and using our royal and supreme authority, by the tenor of these present letters, we order and command that no superior or subject or person who lives or resides or will live or reside in any of the houses whatsoever of the said Congregation, founded or to be founded in Spain, Italy, or other parts of our dominions, ought or is able to have dependence, mediate or immediate, on the French superior general who has resided or will reside in Paris or any other place.

Although this prohibition would be rescinded later in the century, even other Italians were not permitted to work in the kingdom of Naples. In 1788, Ferdinand IV again forbade the Lazarists from communicating with their foreign superiors. See Poole, *History*, 150, 218.

¹⁵⁹ Mezzadri, *Gallicanesimo*, 86.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

instructed his ambassador to Rome, Cardinal Emmanuel de la Tour d'Auvergne de Bouillon, to intervene immediately. The cardinal told the Holy See that "if Italian religious could not be subject to a French superior general, then it would be equally impossible for any French religious to be subject to an Italian superior general."¹⁶¹ Again, the crown's intervention was decisive.

A special committee of cardinals ruled that the reasons given by the Italian provinces were not sufficient to justify such a drastic separation.¹⁶² Clement XI confirmed this judgment and denied the request. He also took the opportunity, however, to issue a warning to Watel in the following letter.

Everyone desires the peace and tranquility of your Congregation. According to information we have received, you now enjoy this state. This has not, as you might think, been established or secured by the decree recently issued by the cardinals appointed for this purpose. Rather, it will happen with God's help, by your moderate, prudent, and truly paternal administration in a spirit of meekness. In the future, you must have the intention of conducting yourself toward your Italian brothers so that there may not be the occasion, or even the suggestion of an occasion of complaint. If this is not done, you will see that the disturbances caused by past disagreements will reach such a pitch that, as is clearly to be feared, "your last state will be worse than your first."¹⁶³ If it reaches this point, We may finally have to judge as necessary, that plan for changing your government which up to now We have not considered opportune. Therefore, We have decided first to exhort you by these Our present letters and even seriously to warn you that, after you have removed from your midst all those things that can in any way give occasion for offense, you use such moderation in exercising your authority that your Italian confreres in particular may find in you not someone "lording it over the clergy"¹⁶⁴ and exulting in an apparent victory but someone who desires peace,

¹⁶¹ *Imprimé Italien*, 13, ACMP.

¹⁶² The text of the cardinals' recommendation is short and to the point:

The Sacred Congregation consisting of the Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lords, the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, Carpinei, Marescotti, Panciatici, Spada, and Casoni, specially appointed by our Most Holy Father, after having received information from the parties themselves and having discussed the matter at length have decided and declared that there is no reason for division and that the constitutions should be observed in their clear meaning, which indeed is that the superior general is to make use of the advice and service of an Italian assistant in all the affairs of the Congregation in that same way that he makes use of the advice and service of the other assistants and that he admit and house him, together with the others, in his place of residence, and that he treat the rest of his subjects in a loving and charitable way. (*Acta Apostolica*, 86-87.)

¹⁶³ 2 Peter 2: 20.

¹⁶⁴ 1 Peter 5: 3.

loves charity, and in a word, is a Father, which is a title of love rather than of power.¹⁶⁵

The pontiff commanded Watel to recall the two controversial Frenchmen from Monte Citorio. If necessary, he also was to replace the leadership of the Italian houses and provinces with "men of such character that they will be welcome rather than unwelcome to those whom they must rule. These men are to be prudent lovers of brotherhood, and therefore quite suitable for smoothing over what is left of disagreement and for cultivating every kind of peace."¹⁶⁶ However, these appointments were not to be made without prior papal approval.

This appeal for the reestablishment of "peace and tranquility" between the warring national parties revealed an impasse in the Congregation's life. Despite papal hopes and exhortations, the divisive substance and memories of the French-Italian antagonisms remained. This situation adversely affected the Congregation's long-term unity. Throughout the remainder of the century, the antagonisms continued to erupt as the pattern of unresolved nationalistic issues reasserted itself.

The Eighteenth-Century Decline in the Congregation's Vitality

Nationalistic divisions were one factor contributing to the Congregation's decline during the eighteenth century, especially in France. This was a decline that the Congregation sensed as it was happening, that troubled many of its members, and that it seemed powerless to stop. The community itself described this decline as a "relaxation" or as a "falling away from" the Congregation's "primitive spirit." They felt it resulted from accommodations made to the prevailing "worldly spirit" and values of the Age of Reason.¹⁶⁷

Vincent de Paul's teaching was unequivocal: if the Congregation lived "according to the maxims of Our Lord," it would be building upon a rock-solid foundation. In these circumstances the community would "continually grow in virtue...while making great progress in its perfection, in its service to the Church, and in its service to the people."¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in Stella, *Italia*, 139-40.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ See, for example, Pierron, *Circulaires*, 1: 213.

¹⁶⁸ See Vincent's conference of 14 February 1659 entitled, "Des Maximes Évangéliques," Coste, *CED*, 12: 114-29.

However, if the Congregation followed the “maxims of the world” it would foolishly build its foundation on sand “inviting its...fall and ruin.”¹⁶⁹

After the founder’s death, the community confirmed that “the spirit of simplicity, humility, meekness, mortification, and zeal for souls that Vincent received from Our Lord and which he so desired to be maintained among us...is to be maintained by the observance of the rules that he has given us. The success of our work will be assured if we exercise them in the same spirit, with the same zeal, and with the same purity of intention with which he practiced them himself.”¹⁷⁰ This spirit was a “sacred deposit” and a legacy to be transmitted with God’s grace “entirely and without alteration” by each succeeding generation of missionaries.¹⁷¹ Lazarists who were without this spirit “would only have the outward appearance, the name, and the dress of missionaries. While in reality, they would be lifeless bodies without souls who would soon begin to undergo corruption; spreading the odor of death everywhere around them.”¹⁷²

“For the sake of the company’s spiritual advancement,”¹⁷³ it was the primary task of each general assembly “to examine if our Congregation has fallen, or if it is in danger of falling away from its primitive spirit, and in what ways.”¹⁷⁴ Once an assembly had determined the nature of the failings that had “crept into” the Congregation, it was up to it to legislate what were the best means to correct these faults. The assembly then issued reform decrees with the “ardent desire that all the Company’s houses would observe them faithfully.”¹⁷⁵

As early as the general assembly of 1703, the delegates voiced “many complaints that among many confreres, especially the young, it appears that the ‘primitive spirit’ has greatly weakened. This has taken place to the extent that some of these missionaries are not content merely with not following the usages and practices introduced in the time of our venerable father, Monsieur Vincent, but even seem to have scorn for them.”¹⁷⁶

During the eighteenth century succeeding general assemblies and superiors general noted with alarm and frustration that despite their repeated directives “some members” and “some houses” were stray-

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Jacquier, *Circulaires*, 2: 10.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 2: 12.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Jolly, *Circulaires*, 1: 130.

¹⁷⁴ Pierron, *Circulaires*, 1: 213.

¹⁷⁵ Jolly, *Circulaires*, 1: 189.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

ing farther and farther away from an "exact observance" of the primitive spirit. The deepening of this dilemma was evident in 1736 when the new general Jean Couty¹⁷⁷ detailed the pattern of abuses noted by the recent general assembly.¹⁷⁸ The most troubling of these abuses, as far as the general and the assembly were concerned, was a failure "in some houses" to observe the Congregation's prescribed spiritual exercises. As the assembly noted, "This abuse has the most dangerous consequences since it is the source of all other abuses such as immortification, laziness, dissipation,...and a spirit of independence and indocility."¹⁷⁹

According to Couty, there were "some missionaries" who spent much of their time and energy in "frequent and useless social relations" with "lay people" and "persons of the opposite sex."¹⁸⁰ These missionaries had begun "to neglect the exercises of the regular life that we have professed...by speaking, acting, dressing, and thinking like men of the world while forgetting the Gospel's teachings."¹⁸¹ He went on to ask, "Should not our life be holy, innocent, and totally different from that of the world? . . .What a disaster it would be for us, if after we have renounced this world's vanities by our entrance into the Congregation, we should by our behavior still give others good reason to believe that the world still lives in our hearts, and that we are searching to please it and conform ourselves to its spirit!"¹⁸² The assembly feared that this "relaxation" would spread. The general reminded everyone that "our rules, our obligations, the sanctity of our calling, and the excellence of our ministry demand that we reform ourselves incessantly."¹⁸³

Despite this clarion call to reform, twenty-six years later in 1762 the perception was that conditions had worsened. The newly-elected superior general, Antoine Jacquier, in reporting the directives of the thirteenth general assembly sounded a decidedly apocalyptic note.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁷ Jean Couty was the Congregation's seventh superior general. He served from his election in 1736 to his death in 1746. For a short biographical sketch see *Circulaires*, 1: 437-39.

¹⁷⁸ Couty, *Circulaires*, 1: 443-49. It is interesting to note that Couty's circular distinguished between the assembly's decrees that were directed toward the Polish province, the Italian provinces, and the French provinces. The bulk of his circular was concerned with the abuses noted by the assembly as specifically existing in the French provinces.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1: 445.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1: 446.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 1: 448.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1: 449.

¹⁸⁴ Antoine Jacquier was the Congregation's ninth superior general. He served from his election in 1762, to his death in 1787. For a short biographical sketch see *Circulaires*, 2: 1-9.

"The seduction of the bad example that has become general in society...seems to conform to Jesus Christ's prediction about the end of time...The danger is too great not to alarm us...One cannot fail to see how the spirit of worldliness, vanity, liberty and sensuality has redoubled its efforts among us to weaken the spirit of our vocation. So, we must redouble our efforts to conserve it...and use advice, prayers, exhortations, threats, and any other means that zeal may suggest to stop the progress of this relaxation."¹⁸⁵

According to the assembly, in some houses "the bad example of superiors and the bad will of inferiors" had created a situation in which these members no longer "had any desire for devotion, for emulation of virtue, nor zeal for personal perfection."¹⁸⁶ In these houses, missionaries conducted the apostolate "without grace, without unction, and consequently without fruit."¹⁸⁷ These men were guilty of a "habitual criminality" leading them to scorn the community's rules and traditions. As a result, their "frequent irregularities cause them to commit grave faults that stain their character, dishonor their vocation...and place them on the road to perdition."¹⁸⁸

Twenty-six years later, in September 1788, the already numbered days of the Ancien Régime and of the Congregation were drawing to their close. It was now less than a year before the sack of Saint-Lazare. Another newly-elected superior general, Félix Cayla de la Garde, wrote an extraordinary circular. In this letter he shared his, and the recent assembly's, views about the state of the Congregation.

Regarding his late predecessor, the new general praised his personal example and virtue. However, he went on to comment, "We must be honest about our faults. The Congregation which grew greatly under his leadership appears, despite his zealous efforts, still to have fallen away from its spirit. How often must not his soul have groaned in sorrow over the abuses that he could not correct!"¹⁸⁹ The new general went on to observe,

Thus, I have begun in difficult times. On one side, I see the immense needs of an abundant harvest with few laborers. If I feel consolation at seeing the regular and edifying conduct of many missionaries there are also a great many, who for me are the source of great pain and sorrow. Alas, you can imagine my feel-

¹⁸⁵ Jacquier, *Circulaires*, 2: 11.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 2: 13.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 2: 12.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 2: 14.

¹⁸⁹ Cayla de la Garde, *Circulaires*, 2: 204.

ings when I learned that some houses hardly practice any of the Congregation's spiritual exercises. These are houses where the superior is as relaxed as his subjects. He is more culpable than they by having first given the example of irregularity. Other houses contain members who live in idleness. They love to go out in the world and take part in its pleasures. Houses exist where the spirit of worldliness, insubordination, the love of leisure, of comfort, and of the good things of life, have made rapid progress and overtaken everyone with their ravages! Having seen this sad spectacle, I sought consolation by sharing my sorrow with the members of the general assembly. They have shared my pain, and they have shown the greatest zeal to reform these abuses.¹⁹⁰

The abuses addressed by the sixteenth general assembly's reform directives were wide-ranging. They included such matters as the insufficient screening, formation, education, and supervision of young missionaries, the neglect and decline of the parish mission apostolate, the need for reforms in the seminary apostolate, the presence of a spirit of insubordination, the failure by the visitors to conduct the required visitations of their houses, and their failure to report regularly to the superior general, local superiors who were either too harsh or too lax, financial irregularities, problematic visits by women to houses or to individual's rooms, the use of gold watches, wigs, silver shoe buckles, silk cinctures, card playing and other violations of the vow of poverty, the collapse of the spiritual life in many houses, and the lack of religious instruction of lay brothers and domestics.¹⁹¹

On each of these points, the general assembly directed the superior general to take firm steps to end these abuses. One example of the assembly's directives, as related by the general, was as follows.

The assembly spoke forcefully against the intolerable relaxation that has befallen many houses with respect to the exercise of prayer, spiritual conferences, and annual retreats. It has charged me very expressly to remedy these abuses by all the means that God has made available to me. I hold nothing closer to my heart than this point. I will not have a moment's peace until I see that all these exercises are again taking place in all our houses. I do not consider any sacrifice too great for me to make in order to ensure that this will happen. Fidelity to this essential duty depends in great part on superiors. I have observed that in those houses where superiors give constant personal examples in this matter everything takes place with edification according to the rule. On the contrary, in

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2: 204-05.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 2: 206-08.

those houses where the superior is the first to dispense himself from these exercises, everything degenerates and weakens. I entreat superiors immediately to reestablish the practice of common prayer. I will tolerate no disobedience on this point!¹⁹²

On his own behalf, Cayla de la Garde also stated his view of the task that lay ahead of him. "Charged by my position to execute these directives I will do so zealously. I am not inclined to outbursts or using violent means, but I am also not inclined to tolerate relaxation and irregularity. Charity inspires these changes, and I will first attempt to use all possible means of persuasion. However, if in the end these are insufficient, would you blame me, for the sake of my own conscience and the Congregation's honor, if I do not have recourse to means that will be more efficacious? . . . I will follow this course of action."¹⁹³

The comprehensive reform agenda of the 1788 general assembly, and the personal determination of Cayla de la Garde to dedicate his generalate to the renewal of the Congregation's primitive spirit simply came too late. This decline was not unique to the Congregation but was part of a much larger decline in the vitality, viability, and credibility of the religious and civil polities that comprised the Ancien Régime.¹⁹⁴

As Adrien Dansette has observed, "the union of altar and throne had outworn its good qualities, and only its weaknesses and vices remained apparent. The Church, the papacy, and the civil authority bobbed around like corks as they were carried away by the currents of the times toward the destruction of the revolutionary maelstrom."¹⁹⁵

The "revolutionary maelstrom" that would destroy the Ancien Régime would also destroy the Congregation of the Mission, at least as it had existed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At its restoration and refounding during the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Congregation faced the task of recapturing its "primitive spirit" and redefining itself in a way that would allow it again to become a vital religious force in France and in the postrevolutionary world. Not unexpectedly, the Congregation would have to deal not only with the new challenges of the nineteenth century but the legacies, both positive and negative of its past.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 2: 207.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ Dansette, *Histoire Religieuse*, 1: 18.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1: 37.

Chapter 2

Jean-Baptiste Étienne A Seminarian from Metz

On 29 September 1820, a seminarian from the diocese of Metz arrived in Paris. The young man's name was Jean-Baptiste Étienne. When he arrived at ninety-five rue de Sèvres he found himself standing before the "new" Saint-Lazare, the mother house of the Congregation of the Mission.¹ This dilapidated building was a far cry from the grand Ancien Régime headquarters, the remnants of which still stood at the other end of the city.² In the same way, the reestablished Congregation of the Mission was then but a shadow of what it had been before the revolution.

Étienne entered the internal seminary (novitiate) on 4 October. At the time, no one could have predicted that this new seminarian would one day be elected as the Congregation's fourteenth superior general; let alone that he would preside over the mid-nineteenth-century refoundation, explosive growth, and breathless international expan-

¹ Jean-Baptiste Étienne was born on 10 August 1801. His birthplace was the town of Longeville, located a short distance from Metz in the department of Moselle. He was one of six children (three boys and three girls) of Charles Étienne and Anne-Marguérite Geoffroy. For more information on Étienne's family background and his early years before entering the Congregation see *Étienne: Biographie*, C 40, II 2, W, 1-7, ACMP. See also Edouard Rosset, C.M., *Vie de M. Jean-Baptiste Étienne* (Paris: Congrégation de la Mission, 1881).

² Article three of the 1804 decree reestablishing the Congregation provided that the government would assign the community a suitable building in Paris as its headquarters (*Actes du Gouvernement*, 75-76). It would take thirteen years and repeated requests from the French Lazarists before the government finally found a building that was inexpensive and had no other possible public use. During the Napoleonic era, the government first promised the Congregation that it would erect a new parish and assign it to the community. Later, it promised the church of Saint-Louis and its adjoining buildings that formerly had belonged to the Jesuits (AN.F4.1562.46). Next, the government promised a house on the rue du Vieux-Colombier that the Daughters of Charity were occupying (See AN.F4.1562.84). After the Bourbon Restoration, the Congregation requested the crown to restore the remaining buildings comprising the original Saint-Lazare. These were not yet alienated. See, for example, the letter of Jean-Jacques Dubois to Louis XVIII of 9 October 1816, (AN.F19.6240.60. Because of its utility as a prison, the government declined to return the buildings to the Lazarists. Finally in 1817, the government purchased the old hôtel des Lorges on the rue de Sèvres to provide a mother house for the newly restored Congregation (*Actes du Gouvernement*, 121-22). In subsequent years, the government also authorized the purchase of adjacent land tracts on both the rue de Sèvres and the rue du Cherche-Midi. These provided room for even further expansion (*ibid.*, 137). For a brief description of the buildings of the new Saint-Lazare as they appeared when Étienne entered the Congregation see Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 17.

sion of the Double Family of Saint Vincent.³

Fifty years later in 1870, in his twenty-seventh year as superior general, Étienne celebrated the golden anniversary of his vocation.⁴ On New Year's Day the first assistant general, Eugène Vicart, addressed Étienne at a community gathering: "We are fond of regarding you as our second founder. If ever anyone contests this title, if one day, the Company should forget what you have done for it, the stones themselves will cry out and rightly accuse us of ingratitude."⁵ At the time, Étienne said he sensed "that the end of my earthly career is not far away."⁶ He felt "an obligation to posterity" to publish what he described as a *précis historique*. This document would recount the "difficulties of all kinds and the diverse and extraordinary phases" that had led to what he variously described as the "new existence," the "reestablishment," the "restoration," the "new creation," or the "second creation" of the Congregation. These events transformed the community within a single generation (Étienne's own) from its postrevolutionary "ruins" to a "spectacle of edification for the whole world."⁷

Was anyone better qualified than Étienne to record the details of "the special heavenly intervention" that had revealed "the particular and merciful designs of providence" upon the community? He never tired of pointing out that he had lived at the mother house for his entire community life. Étienne also noted that it had been his "exceptional personal destiny and providential mission to have...been a witness and usually a participant" in the "often painful" but "grand enterprise" of the "restoration."⁸

³ Étienne arrived in Paris with the required exeat signed by the bishop of Metz, Gaspar-Jean-André-Joseph Jauffret. He also carried a testimony of good conduct signed on 27 September, by the pastor of the parish at Gouiville where he had spent the summer. After two years in the internal seminary, Étienne pronounced his vows on 28 October 1822. He was ordained to the priesthood on 24 September 1825 by the archbishop of Paris, Hyacinth-Louis de Quélen. For the originals of these and other personal documents see *Étienne: Biographie*, ACMP.

⁴ Étienne's Vincentian vocation resulted from his contact with the Daughters of Charity at the Hospice des Bons-Secours in Metz. He was hospitalized there once as a seminarian. With the sisters' encouragement, and after having read Collet's biography of Saint Vincent, "the decisive blow was struck." Étienne resolved to enter the Congregation. See Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 7-8. From the time of Saint Vincent until the Revolution, the Congregation administered the seminary of the diocese of Metz, and the Daughters of Charity staffed several institutions there. For more information on the work of the Double Family in Metz and in Lorraine see Joseph Girard, C.M., *Saint Vincent de Paul son oeuvre et son influence en Lorraine* (Metz: Curé de Saint-Simon, 1955).

⁵ Amédée Allou, C.M., "Précis de l'histoire de la Congrégation de la Mission depuis sa fondation jusqu'à la mort de M. Étienne en 1874," *Annales* 90 (1925): 182.

⁶ Jean-Baptiste Étienne, C.M., *Notice sur le rétablissement de la Congrégation de la Mission après la Révolution de 1789* (Paris: Congrégation de la Mission, 1870), 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

Despite the “repeated requests of many confreres,” Étienne said he had long hesitated over whether he should publish such a history. He feared that if he did, “someone might erroneously attribute to me some role in this grand providential work.” When Étienne finally decided to write, he said he would avoid this misconception by demonstrating how “the Company’s second creation,” like its first under Saint Vincent, was “the work of God alone.”

Étienne never doubted that the events he had witnessed were “a providential mystery” that he described as being “impossible for me to explain from any human point of view.”⁹ Thus, his explanation for “the glory of this truly miraculous operation” was a mythic one.¹⁰ In this regard, he quoted Saint Vincent, who had always spoken of the Congregation’s foundation in this way: “Can you say that something was the result of human effort if no one foresaw, willed, or purposely sought after this end? ‘By the Lord has this been done, and it is marvelous in our eyes.’”¹¹

Étienne admitted that some superficial similarities existed between the man chosen by God and given the mission to found the Double Family and the man chosen by God and given the mission to restore it. He noted, for example, that both he and Saint Vincent were from “humble and obscure villages,” and both he and the founder “had never had any doubts about God’s designs upon us.”¹² He saw an irreducible difference, however, between Saint Vincent and himself: Vincent had been a saint, while he most assuredly was not. The founder had “possessed an ensemble of personal virtues and qualities, a profound knowledge, and a powerful genius,” Étienne freely admitted that he possessed none of these.

These differences of sanctity and talent between Étienne and Saint Vincent were what made the Double Family’s “second creation” “even more marvelous than the first.”¹³ After all, God had brought about the new creation using a frail human instrument who was obviously quite inferior to the saint whom he had used in the first instance.

Étienne began his creation myth at the point when the community took possession of the new Saint-Lazare on 9 November 1817. This was the place that he described as “the birthplace of Saint Vincent’s

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹¹ “Extrait d’entretien: Sur la formation du clergé,” Coste, *CED*, 11: 7, citing Psalm 118: 23.

¹² Étienne, *Notice*, 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*

new family," its "stable at Bethlehem."¹⁴ The small community living at the mother house when Étienne arrived included fourteen old men who were "the venerable debris of the ancient edifice built by the Founder's hands."¹⁵

Étienne testified that it was from "these venerable Missionaries...that I first learned the details of the Company's reestablishment in the years before I entered its midst."¹⁶ These missionaries had proved themselves worthy "through their personal virtues, their constancy in enduring the privations and sufferings of exile, and their devotion to the Congregation."¹⁷ "God in his eternal wisdom chose"¹⁸ these missionaries "to be the links that would join the new generations of Missionaries to the Congregation's primitive era." They were "the foundation stones for the new edifice."¹⁹

The Bourbon restoration of the Congregation's legal existence came in February 1816.²⁰ Soon after this, the community's French vicar general, Dominique Hanon²¹ issued a circular letter addressed to "all our former confreres [in France] who have remained faithful to their sacred state and have told us of their desire to help reestablish the beautiful work of Saint Vincent de Paul."²²

Étienne estimated that at the time, "several hundred" former Lazarists held posts among the diocesan clergy. The number who rejoined the Congregation in France was much less than one hundred. The decision of so many not to return, according to Étienne, "was not something the community should have regretted." He observed, "Undoubtedly their spirit and their habits would have been an obstacle to

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁰ From the time they first petitioned Louis XVIII for their restoration, the French Lazarists prided themselves on his description of them as "the priests of the Bourbons." See for example the memo of April 1825 (unsigned but in Étienne's handwriting) entitled, *Note relative à la demande d'une maison, faite par les Prêtres de la Congrégation de la Mission de St. Lazare*, ACMP. For proof of Louis XVIII's personal appreciation see BN, Fr. Nouv. Acq. 21798.2.4. *Recueil de documents originaux minutes et copies, relatifs à la Congrégation des Lazaristes: 1825-27*. In this account of a meeting of the Council of State, Louis supported the request made by the Lazarists for the return of old Saint-Lazare. The king noted appreciatively that the Lazarists had taught him as a child at Versailles, that a Lazarist had accompanied his wife in her exile from France, and that the community had suffered during the revolutionary era for its loyalty. The community's attachment and undying loyalty to the Bourbons would be jettisoned immediately, and forgotten, after the July revolution of 1830.

²¹ For a short biographical sketch of Hanon see *Circulaires*, 2: 280-82.

²² Hanon, *Circulaires*, 2: 290-91. Hanon requested these former missionaries to tell him how soon he could expect each of them to rejoin, what functions they had performed before the revolution, what ministries they had performed since the adoption of the 1801 Concordat, the places where they had ministered, and the type of work they might prefer on their return.

the reestablishment of primitive regularity." In saying this, Étienne was repeating the judgments made by "the nucleus of those Missionaries who had been faithful to the grace of their vocation."²³

Étienne recalled another lesson that he had learned from these missionaries: "If during the revolution, the Congregation shared the fate of the other religious institutions, this was because like them it had fallen into relaxation, irregularity, and had forgotten the end of the Institute." He quoted one of the survivors whom he had heard say, "Blessed Revolution, which in despoiling us of all our possessions has reestablished us along the path of our duty."²⁴

Étienne described the French Revolution as having "destroyed the old world, burying all traditions, social norms, and overthrowing its monarchies, in order to establish a new world that was under the empire of democracy." Amid this "frightening tempest...one bright light shone in the darkness...one name did not fall into the abyss which the rest of society had fallen." This name was that of Vincent de Paul.²⁵

At the height of the revolutionary terror, "the National Convention seemed determined to efface the entire history of France." However, according to Étienne, its members stopped when they came to the figure of Saint Vincent, and "they instead bowed their heads in respect." The Convention ordered that the saint's statue be placed in the Pantheon.²⁶ From this gesture, Étienne drew his own mythic conclusions: "Was this not an indication of the great charitable mission that democracy had opened to the Double Family in the interest of religion? Was this not the first dawning ray of a prosperous new day lying just beyond a vast and brilliant horizon? Subsequent events confirmed this interpretation."²⁷

To make sense of "this interpretation," it should be remembered that Étienne's career and his creation myth were built upon a Vincentian-centric world view. In April 1864, Étienne traveled to Vincent de Paul's birthplace outside Dax. The trip's purpose was the dedication of a new shrine-complex erected in the saint's honor.²⁸ Étienne gave an address on this occasion that is a precursor of his later

²³ Étienne, *Notice*, 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Secularized at the time of the French Revolution, the church of Sainte-Geneviève was rededicated for civil use as the Pantheon to commemorate the memory of great Frenchmen.

²⁷ Étienne, *Notice*, 3.

²⁸ See Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 158-62, 264-69.

*précis historique.*²⁹

Étienne described Vincent de Paul in the same terms as God had described Saint Paul when he said: "This man is the instrument [*vase d'élection*] I have chosen to bring my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel."³⁰ Étienne said that in the person of Vincent de Paul, and in his "providential earthly mission" were to be found "the revelation of one of the most magnificent expressions of divine grace."³¹ Étienne explained that the Lord gives each age the "extraordinary saint" it requires.³² He claimed that whether one considered the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, or even future centuries, Vincent de Paul was just such a saint. Succeeding ages all recognized him as a "prodigy of charity."³³ He "justly merited" the titles of "the restorer of religion, the apostle of charity...the apostle of modern times...and the savior of the fatherland."³⁴

Étienne described the conditions that Vincent had encountered in seventeenth-century France. "With the end of feudalism, the wars of religion, and the political struggles...a new era had opened and society was suffering from the birth of a new order that was establishing itself upon the ruins of the old one. As in all eras of social transformation, disorder appeared everywhere. All kinds of calamities afflicted the people....In a word, the old social edifice was collapsing and leading to disorder and anarchy."³⁵ God brought forth Vincent de Paul to save and regenerate France. This saint's "powerful and salutary influence dissipated the darkness enveloping the social body, renewed its vital life forces, and directed it toward its new and grand destinies."³⁶

According to Étienne, Vincent met the charitable challenges underlying the chaos of his age through the establishment of a "magnificent system of public charity." This system "addressed all humanity's miseries and misfortunes, from those of the abandoned infant to those of the elderly approaching their deaths."³⁷ Étienne then issued a challenge to his listeners. "Consult history; look to the record of the

²⁹Jean-Baptiste Étienne, *Discours prononcé par M. Étienne supérieur général des prêtres de la Mission et des Filles de la Charité, à l'inauguration du monument érigé sur le lieu de la naissance de saint Vincent de Paul; le 24 avril 1864* (Paris: Congrégation de la Mission, 1864), *Étienne: Écrits et Documents*, C 40, bas #3, Dossier A-8, ACMP.

³⁰Acts of the Apostles 9: 15b.

³¹Étienne, *Discours*, 5.

³²*Ibid.*, 5-6.

³³*Ibid.*, 5.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 12.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 6.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 7, 12.

³⁷*Ibid.*

centuries that preceded his era. You will find none of these marvelous and eminently Christian institutions that are the honor of our country. If I am not mistaken, history will only tell you of noble inspirations that remained only these. It will tell you of generous attempts to build a dike against an ever increasing flood of suffering and miseries that desolated the people. However, these attempts all were destined to remain unsuccessful."³⁸ What the rich and powerful were unable to do was done with a "prodigious success" by a "poor priest who was without fortune or support." This priest "had a marvelous talent to touch other people's hearts, to move them to follow him in his attempts to help the poor." According to Étienne, these charitable works "arose in the capital as if by magic and soon spread throughout the provinces." This proved that Vincent "seemed to possess in his heart the secrets of divine mercy, and in his hands the power of God himself."³⁹

Continuing his analysis of seventeenth-century France, Étienne noted the existence of "other wounds tormenting the fatherland, wounds that also were difficult to heal."⁴⁰ He explained that Saint Vincent saw a cause and effect relationship between the troubles afflicting French society and the "ruin and desolation" of the French Church.⁴¹ The Church's troubles, in turn, resulted from the deplorable state of its clergy. The first step in the Church's mission to restore "peace, concord, and progress" to French society thus had to be "the reformation of its clergy."⁴²

According to Étienne, France also owed the restoration of "an enlightened and wise clerical discipline" to Vincent de Paul. This restoration came about through his "strong and complete organization of our seminaries, spiritual retreats, and ecclesiastical conferences." Soon after these measures were in place, "legions of priests formed at this school and animated with his spirit spread throughout our provinces dissipating ignorance, reforming morals, and devoting themselves to the people's regeneration." These reforms made the French clergy what Étienne claimed it remained in the nineteenth century, "the Catholic world's premiere and most influential."⁴³

This brought Étienne to the point where he introduced the central mythic theme that he would repeat six years later: "In the midst of

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴¹ Coste, *CED*, 11: 308-10. See also *ibid.*, 7: 463, 12: 86.

⁴² Étienne, *Discours*, 11.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

these gloomy shadows that covered our bleeding country, a single ray of light and hope appeared. The name of Saint Vincent de Paul was acclaimed in the middle of these scenes of disorder and anarchy. Just as in the past, 'the spirit of God hovered over the waters'⁴⁴ of the chaos from which the primitive world would be born; the spirit of Vincent de Paul hovered over the abyss of calamities from which would arise a new France, and following that a new world."⁴⁵ These considerations caused Étienne to expound on the significance of the statue of Saint Vincent that the Convention had ordered to be erected in the Pantheon: "Oh, the profound riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How incomprehensible and admirable are his counsels!...It was not without a merciful purpose that this blessed name received the homages of these workers of hell. It was not without a purpose that you, O God, imprinted this name of hope over this work of destruction. This was a symbol of the plan that you already had traced for the reconstruction of the overthrown edifice!"⁴⁶

Napoleon and God's "merciful plan for reconstruction"

According to Étienne, as the five years of revolutionary terror passed and calm finally settled over France, everyone felt "a need for order."⁴⁷ At the Consulate's head was a man who "though he was young, possessed an incomparable military talent that had brought him glory in the Republic's defense...and who had a personal determination that no obstacle could stop."⁴⁸ This was a "man whose military talents were rooted in a superior human spirit capable of formulating grand ideas."⁴⁹ This man of destiny and "genius," as anyone could easily have guessed, was Napoleon Bonaparte. In Étienne's view, Bonaparte sought "absolute power" so he could "undertake the task of averting the revolutionary chariot from its disastrous course and force it again to follow the right road of order and reason." In addition, he wanted to give "democratic ideas a direction that would reestablish social order in the postrevolutionary era, ideas that all the nations of Europe and the entire world subse-

⁴⁴ Genesis 1: 2.

⁴⁵ Étienne, *Discours*, 15.

⁴⁶ Romans 11: 33. *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Étienne, *Notice*, 8.

⁴⁸ With a coup d'état on 9 November 1799 (18 Brumaire), Bonaparte abolished the Directory and established the Consulate, with himself as "First Consul."

⁴⁹ Étienne, *Notice*, 8.

quently adopted."⁵⁰

Napoleon's destiny was to serve as the "dawning light promising a bright new day filled with hope for the transformation of France and for its future."⁵¹ God used Napoleon's genius to reopen "the original pure source of the waters of Charity."⁵² These waters "were then channeled to flow into the river of democracy to sweeten its bitterness, to cleanse it of its pestilential elements, and thus to transform it into a source of health and life for all people."⁵³ Étienne was right about one thing in his interpretation of Napoleon; the emperor did intend to restore French Catholicism and the Double Family. Bonaparte had the "twin aims of reestablishing religious peace and making the Church serve the State."⁵⁴ This restoration recognized the utility of the Church, the Lazarists, and the Daughters of Charity as "docile administrative tools." These tools would help him achieve his goals throughout the empire. Napoleon remarked, "You will see what use I shall be able to make of the clergy."⁵⁵

As John Carven, C.M. has pointed out, "Just as the Church in France was dependent on the Emperor as a result of the Concordat and the Organic Articles, so too the Lazarists found themselves intimately related to and dependent on the Emperor for their reestablishment and the various aspects of their history between 1804 and 1809."⁵⁶

According to Étienne, Bonaparte began the fulfillment of his great religious destiny in the year 1800. It was then that he approved the reestablishment of the Daughters of Charity. This took place even before he had arranged for the reestablishment of relations with the Holy See through the 1801 Concordat.⁵⁷ The sisters established their

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Étienne, *Discours*, 16.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Étienne, *Notice*, 8.

⁵⁴ Dansette, *Histoire Religieuse*, 1: 136.

⁵⁵ Quoted *ibid.*, 1: 142-43.

⁵⁶ John W. Carven, C.M., *Napoleon and the Lazarists* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974).

⁵⁷ The decree of 22 December 1800 was issued by the Minister of the Interior, Jean-Antoine Chaptal, and justified the reestablishment with the following considerations:

Considering that the assistance needed by the sick can only be assiduously administered by persons who are vowed to hospital service and directed with enthusiasm by charity. Considering that among all the hospitals in the Republic those which are administered with the greatest care, intelligence, and economy are those which are staffed by the former members of this sublime institution which had for its sole end the practice without limits of all acts of charity. Considering that there are only a few living former members of this precious association, who are now growing older, we fear the extinction of an institution which is such an honor to humanity. Considering that the skills and virtues necessary to serve the poor must be inspired by example and taught by practical daily lessons....It is therefore ordered.

headquarters in Paris, in a house provided by the government on the rue du Vieux-Colombier. They also received an annual subsidy of 25,000 francs. On 16 October 1802 Bonaparte, as First Consul, extended the original ministerial decree reestablishing the sisters. The sisters were placed under the jurisdiction of the local bishops. They also were forbidden to correspond with any foreign superiors. With the sisters' legal reestablishment, for the first time, some hope existed for the Lazarists' reestablishment. In his compressed mythic account Étienne made tremendous historical leaps from the act restoring the Daughters of Charity in 1800, to the 1801 Concordat, to the Congregation's restoration, and to Napoleon's coronation in December of 1804. For example, in describing the journey of Pius VII to Paris, Étienne leapt directly to the incorrect statement that the pope "already had solicited and obtained the restoration of Saint Vincent's work...that had taken place by virtue of the decree of 27 May 1804."⁵⁸ The May decree did restore the Congregation, but this action was not the result of any request or activity by the Holy See. Such leaps by Étienne necessarily left great gaps. Filling these and other gaps in his *Notice* will show the entire course of events around which, or in spite of which, he formed his creation myth.

In September 1792, the Congregation's destiny in France seemed settled. After fleeing Paris the superior general, Félix Cayla de la Garde, eventually had found refuge in Flanders. For many months thereafter, there was no news of his whereabouts or of his fate. The missionaries and the Daughters of Charity outside France were without a general superior. Given this extraordinary breakdown of the Congregation's government, Pius VI intervened in June 1793. The pontiff named Benedetto Fenaja, the visitor of the Roman Province, as vicar apostolic of the Congregation.⁵⁹

Within a month of the papal action, a letter from Cayla de la Garde, dated 24 July and written from Ieper, finally reached Rome. This was the first indication that anyone had received that the superior general was even still alive. Fenaja wrote to the general urging him to take refuge in Italy. Apparently, the superior general never received this letter. On 13 September, Fenaja received another letter from Cayla de la Garde, who was then in Tournai. The general said that he had read about the papal action naming him (Fenaja) as vicar apostolic. He welcomed this move though he acknowledged he still

⁵⁸ Étienne, *Notice*, 3. Étienne had also stated this in his 1864 speech. See *Discours*, 16.

⁵⁹ See *Acta Apostolica*, 173-74.

was unaware of its exact terms. Cayla de la Garde promised to decide about coming to Italy by the end of September.⁶⁰

At the beginning of December 1793, Fenaja received another letter from the general written from Mannheim in the Palatinate. Cayla de la Garde said that he felt able to resume his authority as of the new year. Accordingly, Fenaja requested the Holy See to end his commission.⁶¹ On 1 January 1794, Cayla de la Garde issued his first circular letter in two years. He explained optimistically that “my new location affords me all the faculties that I need to again undertake the Congregation’s government.”⁶² In March, however, the Holy See “invited” the general to take up residence in Rome.⁶³ When he finally arrived, he lived at the church of San Andrea across from the papal Quirinal palace.⁶⁴

From his Roman exile Cayla de la Garde governed, or tried to govern, the remnants of the Congregation outside France. This task was virtually impossible because of the Napoleonic invasions of Italy and Spain, the declaration of the various Italian republics including that of Rome, the final partition of Poland, persecution in Prussia, and persecution in the French missions abroad.⁶⁵ Having witnessed the Congregation’s destruction in many parts of Europe, and its threatened destruction elsewhere, Cayla de la Garde died in Rome on 12 February 1800.

On the following day François-Florentin Brunet, who was the first assistant and the only assistant residing with the general, called a meeting

⁶⁰ Stella, *Italia*, 398.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 400.

⁶² Cayla de la Garde, *Circulaires*, 2: 245. The superior general chose the wording of the circular letter very carefully. There was some level of tension and misunderstanding over the issue. For example, Cayla de la Garde thanked the pope effusively for his “tender solicitude” in naming a vicar apostolic to govern the Congregation until the superior general was “again free to take up his responsibilities.” Fenaja also was thanked effusively for having “fulfilled the wishes of His Holiness.” Cayla de la Garde even noted that if it had not been for his own “rigorous sense of duty,” he would have had no qualms in allowing Fenaja to continue. Having said this, the general then noted, “I have written to M. Fenaja asking him to write to you on his part in order to avoid the least shadow of misunderstanding, so that the business of the Congregation can return to normal and suffer no disruption from the new order of things.”

⁶³ In his first circular issued from Rome on 1 January 1795, the superior general had this to say about the papal invitation: “It has been a long time since our Holy Father the Pope first invited me to accept asylum in his States. Until now the circumstances did not permit me to profit from an offer which was both honorable and attractive.” See *ibid.*, 2: 248.

⁶⁴ Not surprisingly, when Cayla de la Garde finally settled in Rome he looked for a location other than that of the Roman province’s headquarters of Monte Citorio to establish his residence. This was regarded as a snub by the local Lazarists.

⁶⁵ In his circular of 1 January 1798, the superior general reflected on the events that were then unfolding in Europe: “I had hoped at least to be able to tell you that the present day promised, if not happier times then, at least the dawn of a future that would be less disastrous. This false hope has been dissipated like a dream. We are again experiencing new horrors. The hand of the Lord has struck us hard again. The Church’s suffering has reached an alarming point. The Congregation’s losses have multiplied, and we can foresee no other remedy than the Lord’s infinite mercies.” See Cayla de la Garde, *Circulaires*, 2: 263.

at the Roman provincial house at Monte Citorio.⁶⁶ Brunet informed the gathered priests that Cayla de la Garde's written nomination of a vicar general could not be found. He claimed that according to the *Constitutiones Selectae*, he as the first assistant now rightfully succeeded as vicar general.⁶⁷ Brunet said he would hold this office until a general assembly elected a new superior general.⁶⁸ Much to Brunet's surprise, his claim met significant opposition. The resistance was led by the superior of Monte Citorio, Leonardo Ippoliti. The Romans gave two reasons for their stance: the first was their claim that the constitutions had no provisions that applied to the extraordinary circumstances that the Congregation then was experiencing;⁶⁹ secondly, they cited a decree of Pius VI depriving French religious of their active and passive voices in the houses where they were living in exile.⁷⁰ Brunet appealed to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars for recognition. Benedetto Fenaja lent his support to the Frenchman's cause. Brunet also appealed to the French Cardinal, Jean-Siffrein Maury, who was living in exile in Rome.⁷¹ He told the prelate that the Roman opposition desired "to remove the French entirely from the Congregation's government."⁷² On 17 May 1800, the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars recognized Brunet as vicar general. The pope confirmed this decision.⁷³ Brunet named Carlo Domenico Sicardi and Fenaja as his assistants.⁷⁴ A month later, Cayla de la Garde's nomination of Brunet as vicar general was found.⁷⁵ The old antagonisms between the Romans and the French proved again not to be far from the surface. Meanwhile, however, events were beginning to take place in France that absorbed the full attention of Brunet and the other French Lazarists.

With the reestablishment of the Daughters of Charity, the government agreed to the appointment of two former Lazarists to serve as chaplains at their mother house in Paris. One of these chaplains, Claude-Joseph Placiard, together with another former Lazarist, Jean-

⁶⁶Of the other three prerevolutionary assistants general, Edward Ferris had returned to his native Ireland, Alexis Pertuisot had died in Paris in 1798, and the Italian assistant, Carlo Domenico Sicardi, was living in his home region of Piedmont.

⁶⁷CS, 132-33.

⁶⁸For a brief biographical sketch of Brunet see *Circulaires*, 2: 268-70.

⁶⁹*Constitutiones*, 24.

⁷⁰Stella, *Italia*, 469.

⁷¹Maury had been a clerical delegate to the Estates General where he emerged as a conservative spokesman. He opposed the secularization of the Church's goods and the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Maury later became a strong supporter of Napoleon and his religious policies.

⁷²Brunet to Maury, 22 February 1800, *Dossier: Brunet*, Casier 38, H 1°, 150, ACOMP.

⁷³For text see *Circulaires*, 2: 623.

⁷⁴For a brief biographical sketch of Sicardi see *Circulaires*, 2: 306-07.

⁷⁵Stella, *Italia*, 469.

Jacques Dubois, began to work for the Congregation's legal restoration. Placiard and Dubois had an ally in their friend Joseph-Marie Portalis, who was Napoleon's Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs.⁷⁶ Also giving his support to this effort was the abbé Paul d'Astros, who was Portalis' nephew and aide.⁷⁷

Those who were working for the Congregation's reestablishment agreed on a common strategy. The justification that they presented to the emperor for the Lazarists' restoration was their utility to the state both as directors of the Daughters of Charity, and as missionaries preserving French influence in the Levant and China.⁷⁸ In a letter addressed to the archbishop of Paris on 28 August 1802, Napoleon acknowledged these overtures. "Let me respond to the different requests concerning the Sisters of Charity. My intention is to restore all their previous prerogatives to these good daughters so that they can continue to do their good work....I have also read with the greatest attention the note that you have sent me concerning the mission in China. I understand its importance. I would like you to report on the location and activities of our missionaries and make suggestions about what can be done to make their zeal useful to Religion and the State."⁷⁹

This news reached Brunet in Rome, though he read more into Bonaparte's initial reactions than was there. For example, he informed a correspondent in the Roman Curia that "Napoleon sees no obstacle in having the Daughters of Charity reestablished 'entirely on their ancient foundations including their direction by the Lazarists.'" He also quoted Bonaparte as having said, "if nothing about the Institute of the Lazarists conflicts with existing laws, he would gladly agree to

⁷⁶ *Actes du Gouvernement*, xi.

⁷⁷ D'Astros (1772-1851) helped negotiate the 1801 concordat with the Holy See. He also edited the Imperial Catechism but fell afoul of Napoleon and was imprisoned from 1810 to 1814. He became bishop of Bayonne in 1820, archbishop of Toulouse in 1830, and a cardinal in 1850. See *Grand Larousse Encyclopédique*, 1: 675.

⁷⁸ According to Gabriel Perboyre, C.M., a mythic obsession for Étienne was that the 1780s substitution of French Lazarists in the former French Jesuit missions in China and the Levant and the survival of these missions throughout the revolutionary period was part of God's providential planning. In Étienne's mind, these missions which the Congregation had only accepted with great reluctance under Antoine Jacquier, proved to be not only the foundation for the Congregation's restoration but also its great nineteenth-century missionary destinies. See Gabriel Perboyre, C.M., undated and unpublished 13 pg. ms. in ACMP entitled, *Notes sur la notice ou mémoire de M. Étienne publié le 4 août 1870 relatif au rétablissement de la Congrégation de la Mission en France*. Perboyre, who died in 1880, was the foremost Vincentian historian of the nineteenth century. For a history of the China missions in this period see Octave Ferreux, C.M., "Histoire de la Congrégation de la Mission en Chine: 1699-1950," *Annales* 127 (1963): 80-93. For the history of the Levantine missions in this period see Pierre Corckett, C.M., *Les Lazaristes et les Filles de la Charité au Proche-Orient* (Beyrouth: Congrégation de la Mission, 1983), 47-74.

⁷⁹ *La Correspondance de Napoléon I* (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1861), 8: 10.



M.^r Fenaja, Benoît.
Vicaire apostolique.
Nommé le 25 Juin 1793 jusqu'au 1.^{er} Janvier 1795.

Benedetto G. Fenaja, C.M., Italian vicar apostolic, 1793-1795

their reestablishment, especially because of his interest in the overseas missions."⁸⁰ The abbé d'Astros requested a report from Brunet on the Lazarists.

The vicar general responded immediately. He pointed out that the Daughters of Charity "could not long conserve their uniform spirit that makes them so precious to suffering humanity" unless they were again subject to their natural guide: the superior general of the Lazarists.⁸¹ He reminded the government of the past services of the Lazarists in the foreign missions and noted that "foreigners who well understand the advantages of having missionaries in these areas are eagerly awaiting the opportunity to fill these positions with their own subjects."⁸² The vicar general pointed out that "meanwhile, the position of the general of the Lazarists remains vacant, and it cannot be much longer before it is filled. If the Lazarists remain without a house in France, it will be impossible that the next general will be French."⁸³

Bonaparte directed Portalis to study the question of the foreign missions. On 7 November 1802, the minister submitted a report concluding that "the government must continue to support and encourage the foreign missions."⁸⁴ He pointed out that before the Revolution the government had confided the care of the foreign missions primarily to the Lazarists and the Society of the Foreign Missions of France. He further reported that while "these establishments had disappeared with all the other ecclesiastical corporations...happily some of those who had been members and/or leaders had survived."⁸⁵

Portalis then presented a plan for the Lazarists' restoration. The plan's author was Jean-Jacques Dubois. Dubois suggested that in order to safeguard the French missions the government name him "Agent Général des Missions de saint Vincent de Paul." His responsibility would be "to watch over the missionaries' interests and to assure the necessary means for their success." He cited two specific tasks he would undertake. The first would be "to forward to the missionaries, especially those in China, the latest European discoveries in the sciences and the arts." He correctly observed that "This information alone can secure French influence and

⁸⁰ Letter of Brunet cited in *Actes du Gouvernement*, xii.

⁸¹ *Projet de mémoire envoyé de Rome par M. Brunet à M. Placiard, pour être présenté au Ministre des Cultes en 1802, à fin de obtenir le rétablissement des Prêtres séculiers connus sous le nom de Lazaristes*, Serie II, "Vicaires-Généraux, registre intitulé, "Extraits, minutes, ou précis, 1800-1809," 17, ACMP.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Rapports de Portalis, Conseiller d'État chargé de toutes les affaires concernant les cultes, sur les missions étrangères, et projets d'arrêtés concernant le rétablissement des Lazaristes*, AN.F4.1044.4.24-25.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

the influence of French missionaries in the vast Chinese empire." His second task would be to recruit missionaries to replace those who had died over the previous ten years. Dubois recommended that the government provide free passage for mail and missionaries. He also noted the need for a house in Paris to serve as a headquarters and as a place to train young missionaries. Portalis pointed out the moderate nature of these requests and how economical they would be to carry out.⁸⁶

In a report given to Bonaparte on 24 December 1802,⁸⁷ Portalis noted that it was the "ambition" of the Roman Congregation of Propaganda Fide "to govern and exclusively direct the foreign missions."⁸⁸ The minister also pointed out that "the French missionaries who belonged to the Congregation of Saint Vincent de Paul had in the past never depended on Propaganda for anything other than their purely spiritual powers."⁸⁹ For all the rest, they had "remained under the eyes and under the hand of their sovereign."⁹⁰ Portalis raised the specter of English and Portuguese attempts to undermine the influence of the French missionaries, and thus of France, in China. Brunet, who was following the situation closely, believed that some form of restoration was imminent. He unrealistically hoped to depart for France by Easter of 1803.⁹¹ On 18 March 1803, Portalis submitted another report to Bonaparte. "I have already had the honor of presenting to you a report on the institution of the secular priests, called of the Mission or Lazarists...and you have recognized the possible utility of this establishment for the Government, Religion, and Commerce. I will now, Citizen First Consul, tell you of some recent developments and propose the possible means for reorganizing this Institution to serve the foreign missions."⁹²

What is striking in this report is the presumption that the question was now no longer whether the government would restore the Lazarists but rather under what conditions and at what costs.⁹³ On 7 April 1803,

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ At the end of November, the Lazarist superior of the Levantine missions, Pierre-François Viguier returned to Paris as Brunet's representative. He was to help lobby for the Congregation's restoration.

⁸⁸ *Rapport (du 3 nivôse an XI, 24 décembre 1802) présenté au premier Consul par le Conseiller d'État chargé de toutes les affaires concernant les Cultes, sur les missions étrangères*, AN.F4.1044.3.34.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Brunet to M. Vicherat, 19 March 1803, quoted in *Actes du Gouvernement*, xv.

⁹² *Rapport présenté au Gouvernement de la République par le Conseiller d'État chargé de toutes les affaires concernant les Cultes*, AN.F4.1044.3.66-67.

⁹³ There is an interesting paragraph in Portalis's report which indicates that a question had been raised whether the reestablishment of the Lazarists also meant the recognition of some of their other prerevolutionary ministries. Portalis clearly states, "In the past the missionaries were employed in the interior of France to preach, teach, and encourage the practice of penitence. There is no question of reestablishing this part of their ministry. . ." Ibid.

Bonaparte forwarded Portalis's report to the Ministry of the Interior. He requested that the minister give his own recommendations "as soon as possible."⁹⁴ At this point, progress on the question ground almost to a complete halt. Meanwhile, Bonaparte's uncle, Cardinal Joseph Fesch, went to Rome as ambassador. Fesch met with Brunet and promised his support. However, he also cautioned that as long as the war with England continued there would be no hope for either a restoration or monetary assistance.

At the end of 1803, the Council of State received two recommendations regarding the Lazarists.⁹⁵ Both agreed that "the secular priests known under the name of Missionaries or Lazarists will continue to administer the missions outside France."⁹⁶ One proposal came from Portalis and the other from the Interior ministry. Despite these two positive recommendations, the council took no action because of the English war.

Pierre Viguiet was now Brunet's agent in negotiating with the government to restore the Lazarists.⁹⁷ In April 1804, he tried a desperate measure to "accelerate the decisive moment." He applied to the foreign ministry, asking for a passport that would allow his departure to Rome.⁹⁸ The reasons he gave for wanting to leave France were his inability to support himself and his desire "to find among the Priests of the Mission an assured existence and occupations relative to my state."⁹⁹ Viguiet felt that if the government refused his request this would at least be an indication that it "sincerely desired our eventual reestablishment."¹⁰⁰

Viguiet's request had to be approved by the Minister of Cults. The Comte d'Hauterive of the ministry told Viguiet that Talleyrand, the foreign minister, favored the immediate reestablishment of the

⁹⁴ *Actes du Gouvernement*, xvi. That same fall, Portalis presented an emergency request to Napoleon to approve funds to support the Lazarist missionaries at Aleppo (Syria). Portalis noted, "Since circumstances have forced you, Citizen First Consul, to suspend the implementation of the measures that I have had the honor to propose to you for the reestablishment of the foreign missions, and while awaiting the first opportunity to again take up this project...I have the honor or proposing to you that...the missionaries at Aleppo be accorded 2,000 francs for their most urgent needs." Significantly, Bonaparte responded by approving the request and even doubling the amount to be granted. See AN.F4.607.60.

⁹⁵ The Council of State was a high administrative advisory council dating from Napoleon I and maintained through the Restoration and July Monarchy. See *Historical Dictionary of France from the 1815 Restoration to the Second Empire*, Edgar Leon Newman, ed., 2 vols. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1987), 1: 268-70.

⁹⁶ *Actes du Gouvernement*, xvi.

⁹⁷ Brunet opposed Dubois's attempts to position himself at the head of a restoration.

⁹⁸ Viguiet to M. Pein, 30 April 1804. This letter was attached to the report presented to the Council of State by Portalis for the restoration of the Lazarists. See *Actes du Gouvernement*, 75.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Viguiet to M. l'abbé Jauffret, 27 February 1805, *Vicaires Généraux*, 23, ACMP.

Lazarists.¹⁰¹ Viguier decided upon a change in strategy: he would request either a passport to Rome, a subsidy that would allow him to remain in Paris, or an act of reestablishment. On 30 April 1804, he submitted these choices to Portalis. On 9 May, Portalis forwarded the request to Bonaparte for his urgent consideration.

This behind-the-scenes-maneuvering did have the desired effect of bringing the negotiations to a head. The Council of State agreed to confide the French foreign missions to "one secular association," the Lazarists.¹⁰² On 22 May 1804, it approved the terms of the restoration. Five days later, Napoleon signed the decree.¹⁰³ Two days after this, Viguier met with Pein de Villefranche of the Ministry of Cults. He then learned that he would receive a copy of the reestablishment decree. After quickly consulting with the other Lazarists in Paris, he told the government that the Congregation would accept its terms. Brunet had already given Viguier authority to accept whatever terms the government eventually might offer.¹⁰⁴

When Viguier saw the terms of the restoration, he realized that they would be problematic. He also realized that the community had no choice but to accept them and hope that it could work out any difficulties.¹⁰⁵ The biggest problem posed by the decree was that it did not restore the Congregation by name. It merely stated that "An association of secular priests, who, under the title of priests of the Foreign Missions, will administer the missions outside France."¹⁰⁶ This wording is different from that found in the drafts of the decree that had specified: "The secular priests known under the name of Missionaries or Lazarists will administer the missions outside France."¹⁰⁷ Étienne correctly observed that "There was nothing in the decree that suggested it applied to the Congregation of the Mission...it could only infer its legal existence through subsequent governmental acts invoking the decree."¹⁰⁸ He had

¹⁰¹ *Actes du Gouvernement*, xviii.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* Alexandre de Lanautte, Comte d'Hauterive

¹⁰³ The Senate proclaimed Napoleon as Emperor of the French on 18 May 1804.

¹⁰⁴ *Actes du Gouvernement*, xviii.

¹⁰⁵ One difficulty had to do with the decree's second article that stated: "The Emperor will name the director of the Foreign Missions." The French Lazarists knew that this provision was in violation of the constitutions and would never be acceptable to the foreign provinces or to the Holy See. However, the government assured Viguier that "The nomination of your Director by the Emperor should be understood in the sense that His Majesty would confirm the choice of a director made by the Missionaries themselves." This interpretation proved to be valid, as the emperor subsequently confirmed the next three vicars general selected by the French. See *ibid.*, xvii, 76.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁰⁸ Étienne, *Notice*, 9. Étienne inaccurately quoted the text of the decree in this way: "There will be a Society of Priests, charged with preparing and furnishing Missionaries to serve the French Missions of the Levant and China."

a plausible explanation for this omission: "During this epoch a revolutionary and antireligious spirit still dominated many men in the government. The very words 'Mission' or 'Congregation' alarmed them, and if these words had appeared in the decree it would have encountered an invincible opposition.¹⁰⁹ It was therefore necessary to dissimulate by using terms that they would accept."¹¹⁰

Italian Resistance: Carlo Domenico Sicardi

Whatever the government's reasons, many former French Lazarists questioned whether the ancient Congregation was restored. The foreign provinces, especially the Italians, asked the same question. No such doubt, however, existed in the minds of the French Lazarists who had negotiated the restoration. These men received assurances that the government's intention was a restoration.

In July 1804, Brunet reported his recall by the French government.¹¹¹ He put his affairs in order and prepared for the end of his long exile. His decision to leave Rome caused consternation among the Roman Lazarists.¹¹² His Italian assistants, Carlo Domenico Sicardi and Benedetto Fenaja, refused to accompany him to Paris. They also refused to resign so that he could appoint new assistants. Since Brunet could not govern without them, an impasse occurred. The vicar general proposed that he inform the visitors that in the event they could not communicate with him in Paris they would have delegated authority. They then could deal with any situation that normally required action by the superior or vicar general. The Romans, however, began to work toward a very different settlement from the one Brunet envisioned.

On 31 October 1804, Brunet departed for Paris in a coach provided by Cardinal Fesch.¹¹³ He was making his final preparations to leave when the Roman Lazarists led by Sicardi made their move. They secretly approached the Holy See, charging that Brunet could not govern the international community from Paris.¹¹⁴ On the day before

¹⁰⁹ At this time, a strong Jacobin sentiment existed among some members of the Council of State. These members opposed Napoleon's reconciliation with the papacy and his favor toward the Catholic Church. See Dansette, *Histoire Religieuse*, 1: 205.

¹¹⁰ Étienne, *Notice*, 9.

¹¹¹ Brunet to Jean-Claude Vicherat, C.M., 4 July 1804, *M. Brunet: Vicaire Général (1800-07)*, Casier 38, H 1°, 379, ACMP.

¹¹² Stella, *Italia*, 470.

¹¹³ For more information see André Latreille, *Napoléon et le Saint-Siège (1801-1808), l'ambassade du Cardinal Fesch à Rome* (Paris: Libraire Félix Alcan, 1955).

¹¹⁴ See letter of 21 October, from Sicardi to Fenaja. *Brunet*, 381, ACMP. At this point Fenaja, whose influence at the Vatican was great, was also an archbishop and the pope's vice regent for Rome.

Brunet left Rome, the Holy See issued the brief *Cum uti accepimus*.¹¹⁵ This act limited Brunet's jurisdiction as vicar general to the Daughters of Charity, the Congregation in France, and the French foreign missions.¹¹⁶ The pope named Sicardi vicar general for the Congregation outside France. Brunet would not learn of this action until after he had arrived back in France. On 25 November, Sicardi issued a circular letter to the visitors informing them of his appointment.¹¹⁷ He issued another circular on New Year's day 1805 in which he claimed that the Congregation as restored in France, for the sole purpose of serving the foreign missions, could not be considered as the true Congregation of the Mission.¹¹⁸ Schism between the French and the non-French provinces was now a fact.

While visiting France, Pius VII took the opportunity to successfully lobby Napoleon on behalf of the French Lazarists.¹¹⁹ He asked that they be allowed to resume their former ministries of rural missions and the direction of diocesan seminaries.¹²⁰ By March 1805, the climate in France had changed sufficiently¹²¹ so that official documents could again refer to the community as the Lazarists.¹²²

On 21 June, Brunet wrote to the Holy See asking for the restoration of his jurisdiction. He contested the Roman claim that he had left Italy without making adequate provisions for the Congregation's governance.¹²³ Brunet asked for permission to name new assistants who would reside with him in Paris. He also asked for the extraordinary faculty of naming his successor as vicar general. To placate the Italians, Brunet said that he

¹¹⁵ Upon arriving in Paris, Brunet took up residence with the Daughters of Charity at their temporary mother house on the rue du Vieux-Colombier in the parish of Saint-Sulpice. The French vicars general continued to reside there until the Napoleonic suppression.

¹¹⁶ *Acta Apostolica*, 175-76.

¹¹⁷ Sicardi, *Circulaires*, 2: 307-08.

¹¹⁸ *Brunet*, 392, ACMP.

¹¹⁹ Pius VII was unable to obtain from Napoleon the suppression of the Organic Articles attached to the 1801 Concordat, the abolition of the divorce law, the obligatory observance of Sunday, the restoration of the religious orders, or the restitution of the annexed papal lands in France. What he was able to obtain in negotiations with the new emperor were the submission of the constitutional bishops, the authorization of the missionary congregations and the socially useful sisters, the restoration of the Gregorian calendar, and the subsequent expansion of the budget of the Ministry of Cults from 1,200,000 francs to 17,000,000. See Dansette, *Histoire Religieuse*, 1: 208.

¹²⁰ *Actes du Gouvernement*, xx.

¹²¹ This reflects the success of Napoleon's plan to unite altar and empire and thus to strengthen France through "the fusion of parties and the reconciliation of the Revolution with religion." As the emperor pointed out to the Council of State, "anything which tends to render sacred the one who governs is of great advantage." Cited by Dansette, *Histoire Religieuse*, 1: 205.

¹²² For example, on 27 March 1805, Cardinal Fesch appointed "M. Brunet, vicaire-général des Prêtres Lazaristes" to his advisory council as Grand Aumônier de l'Empire. See "Arreté du cardinal Fesch: création d'un conseil de la Grand Aumônrière," *Brunet*, 395, ACMP.

¹²³ Brunet pointed out that the brief had been issued before he even had left Rome. He also claimed that the Italians had known and previously agreed to his plan to delegate authority to the visitors.

would be willing to have Sicardi serve as pro-vicar general, but only under his direct authority. He cautioned the Holy See that the division threatened the Congregation's reestablishment in France.¹²⁴

Brunet's letter accompanied a memorandum from Cardinal Fesch to the papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Ercole Consalvi. Fesch certified that the "Congregation of the Mission has been completely reestablished as it existed before the Revolution."¹²⁵ At this time, Fesch also entered the fray supporting the French Lazarists and Brunet.

This is not an affair that solely concerns M. Brunet. This issue is important to the French government, and to the future of the foreign missions. The undersigned states that...the French government will never allow the Congregation to be reestablished fully in France except on the basis that it existed before the revolution. The consequence of Rome's making any changes will be to paralyze the congregation from accomplishing its mission. Rome, by removing the head of this mission from France, has changed its primitive rules, and thus has changed the nature of the institution itself. This must affect how the government views the Congregation. In the second place, this change has prevented the unity of action by which the Congregation of the Mission of Saint Vincent de Paul will again flourish. How can the French superior function effectively when he has jurisdiction only over the missionaries of this Empire and its foreign missions? How can the missionaries of this Empire be united with the missionaries of Italy and Spain since these groups recognize two different heads? It necessarily follows that the Court of Rome must reattach to the Mission of France, which is the principal and mother of all the missions in other countries, the general power that is its due. These reasons, and many others that cannot be ignored, have convinced the undersigned that His Holiness should favorably consider the request of M. Brunet and recognize his rights. This act will greatly encourage the restored community in Paris to concentrate all its efforts to make an institution flourish that is so honorable and so useful to the universal Church.¹²⁶

Later in September, at the request of Fesch, Bonaparte issued the required confirmation of Brunet as "Superior of the Mission, known under the title of Saint-Lazare."¹²⁷

The barrage of letters between Paris and Rome continued through the fall of 1805. In November, the Holy See took a half-step toward meeting the French demands when it conceded to Brunet the title of

¹²⁴ 21 June 1805, "Mémoire de M. Brunet au Pape," *Brunet*, 408, ACMP.

¹²⁵ *Actes du Gouvernement*, xxii.

¹²⁶ Cardinal Fesch to Cardinal Consalvi, 21 June 1805, *Brunet*, 407, ACMP.

¹²⁷ *Actes du Gouvernement*, 84-85.

vicar general and the right to choose new assistants. It did not, however, concede him the right to name a successor. Sicardi was to continue as pro-vicar general in Rome, nominally under Brunet's authority. The French Lazarists and Cardinal Fesch expressed their dissatisfaction with this settlement.

On 22 November, Fesch wrote a letter to Consalvi again attacking Sicardi's persistent contention that the French restoration was dubious.¹²⁸ He argued that the government was doing all that it could to restore the Congregation as it had existed before the revolution. Fesch again requested that the Holy See do its part by recognizing Brunet's full authority as vicar general. This recognition would anticipate the speedy convocation of a general assembly, and the return to the community's regular constitutional government.¹²⁹ In the minds of the French Lazarists and the imperial government, the return to regular constitutional government meant a return to Gallican control over the international Congregation.¹³⁰

Over the next several years, since it played a useful part in carrying out Napoleon's religious policies, the Congregation enjoyed the government's full support. During these years, the government tried repeatedly, if unsuccessfully, to find an appropriate building in Paris to serve as the community's new mother house,¹³¹ it supported the Lazarist missions in China, in the Levant, and in Algeria,¹³² it ap-

¹²⁸ Cardinal Fesch to Brunet, 23 November 1805, communicating the response he received from Cardinal Consalvi, and his subsequent reply, *Brunet*, 440, 461, *ACMP*.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* 125.

¹³⁰ On 26 March 1805, Portalis, wrote to the emperor concerning placing the newly restored communities under the direction of the Grand Aumônier de l'Empire:

Your Majesty is about to reestablish the Society of Foreign Missions and of the Holy Spirit. By a previous decree, you already have reestablished the priests known under the name of the Lazarists. It is important that these diverse establishments be directed in a regular manner, to enable them to be able worthily to fulfill their functions. In previous times, a superior general governed the affairs of these groups, and this superior was a Frenchman. Since the Revolution, foreign superiors living in Rome have taken control over those matters relating to the missions. It is in the interests of the government that things return to their previous state and that our missions be directed by a national superior.

AN.F4.964.64.

¹³¹ See for example, "15 mars 1805-Décret de Napoléon I, maintenant le lycée Charlemagne dans la maison des Jésuits et demandant un rapport sur le transfert du séminaires des Lazaristes aux Minimes," *Actes du Gouvernement*, 88-90.

¹³² See for example, "28 mars 1805-Décision de Napoléon I approuvant l'envoi en Chine de trois Missionnaires Lazaristes," *ibid.*, 83-84, "31 juillet 1806-Décision de Napoléon I, accordant un secours à la Mission d'Alger," *ibid.*, 93, "12 juillet 1808-Décret de Napoléon I, fixant des Indemnités des allocations aux missions...des Lazaristes dans le Levant," *ibid.*, 103-04.

proved funds for the offering of parochial missions,¹³³ it authorized the Congregation to accept the administration of several colleges and seminaries,¹³⁴ it encouraged the French bishops to allow former Lazarists who were incardinated in their dioceses to return, it allowed the Congregation to receive donations and legacies,¹³⁵ and it provided an annual subsidy of 15,000 francs.¹³⁶

Just as importantly, the government's support of the Lazarists extended to the French-controlled areas of Italy,¹³⁷ Spain, and Portugal.¹³⁸ During 1806, Napoleon put the Lazarist houses at Piacenza, Genoa, and Savona under French protection.¹³⁹ The government's position was that all Lazarist houses in imperial territories that were under the jurisdiction of the French vicar general would be considered as French houses.¹⁴⁰ It became difficult for Sicardi and the Italians to maintain that the Congregation did not really exist in France. Yet, despite this overwhelming evidence, and undoubtedly because of it, the Italians and the Holy See continued to resist the return of Gallican domination. This resistance by Rome was part of its general resistance to

¹³³ In March 1806, the Lazarists were preaching parish missions in the diocese of Poitiers. Gaspard Jauffret, Fesch's vicar general, wrote to Brunet:

You have shown zeal in fulfilling the wish of His Majesty, expressed to you by His Excellency the Minister of Cults, that your Company send missionaries to the diocese of Poitiers. This zeal and devotion will not be forgotten. We have taken care to inform His Excellency of this, and he certainly will express the same sentiments to His Majesty.

Now it is important that each of these respectable Missionaries be penetrated with the two essential objects of this mission. Their first object is to convert souls; the second, which is inseparable from the first, must be to destroy the prejudices that certain deceitful ecclesiastics have planted in the spirit of the people against the present pope and against our Emperor and King.

It can be said that your Company will be represented in this diocese by those whom you will send, and thus its spirit will be judged. In fulfillment of such a mission, there is nothing that is more important than that they bring a spirit of peace, mildness, conciliation, and the clear message to the people of respecting, cherishing, and loving the Government and the person of the Emperor Napoleon, and the authority of Pius VII...I will not end without observing that above all it is necessary for the missionaries to realize that not even their least words will escape public notice, and thus this will be a precious opportunity for such zealous Missionaries to express their gratitude toward the person of the Emperor who has reestablished your Company, and toward the Pope who requested this reestablishment.

"Extraits, minutes ou précis, 1800-09," 28, ACMP.

¹³⁴ These institutions were located at Amiens, Poitiers, Meximieux, Valfleury, Saint-Brieuc, Carcassonne, Vannes, Sarlat, Albi, Saint-Méen, and Bayeux. See *Actes du Gouvernement*, xxvi.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

¹³⁶ This was the sum provided for by article 9 of the restoration decree. *Ibid.*, 76.

¹³⁷ See for example, letter of 17 March 1808, from Cardinal Fesch to the French Administrator General of the Kingdom of Etruria in Italy ordering the protection of the Lazarist Missionaries. See *Dossier de M. Hanon*, Casier 38, H 5°, ACMP.

¹³⁸ See for example, M. De Voisins to Hanon, 7 March 1808, promising protection for the Lazarists' houses in Portugal. *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Actes du Gouvernement*, 88, 94-95.

¹⁴⁰ Bigot de Préameneu, Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, to Dominique Hanon, vicar general, 15 February 1809. See *Hanon*, ACMP.

Napoleonic policies.

In his *Notice*, Étienne gave the most abbreviated account possible of the Italian-French schism in the century's opening years. His version, for example, did not mention papal support of the Italian Lazarists' resistance to restoring Gallican domination. He simply said that during this era the Holy See had reserved to itself the confirmation of the vicars general. This reservation was to last until the Congregation resumed its "normal state."¹⁴¹ Étienne did go into more detail in describing the "intrigue the Italian Missionaries had hatched in Rome with the goal of installing...the seat of our two families in this capital of the world." According to Étienne, Sicardi led this new phase of an intrigue that the Italians "had pursued for over a century, and which providence had always prevented from being successful."¹⁴²

On 13 May 1806, the Holy See issued yet another brief regarding the schism.¹⁴³ This document was only a temporary measure designed to restore some order while preparing for the long-awaited convocation of a general assembly. The pope recognized Brunet as vicar general. He granted him the faculty, for six months, of choosing his successor in case of his death. Sicardi was to serve in Rome as pro-vicar general. In this position, however, he would be subject to Brunet's authority.

Brunet also was to name four assistants. These nominations were subject to papal approval. The vicar general named Sicardi, Fenaja, and the Frenchmen Pierre Claude and Claude-Joseph Placiard. Sicardi immediately came forward with his own interpretation of the decree. He claimed that the Holy See's only intention had been to confirm Brunet's title as vicar general, but that as pro-vicar he was still to exercise the authority of this office.¹⁴⁴ Sicardi appealed to Rome to confirm his interpretation. In August 1806, he wrote a circular letter defending his interpretation of the May brief. He claimed that any acts of Brunet contrary to this understanding were null.¹⁴⁵

On 1 September, Brunet wrote to Sicardi demanding that he comply with the true terms of the May brief. The French vicar general prohibited the assistants Sicardi had chosen from exercising

¹⁴¹ Étienne, *Notice*, 10.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Acta Apostolica*, 176-78.

¹⁴⁴ Sicardi to an unknown correspondent, letter after May 1806, *Brunet*, 486, ACMP.

¹⁴⁵ "Protestations de M. Sicardi contre les prétentions de M. Brunet, qui s'arrogé les fonctions de vicaire général," *ibid.*, 500.

their offices.¹⁴⁶ A few days later in Rome, Cardinal Consalvi issued a letter supporting Sicardi's interpretation. However, by the time this news reached Paris, Brunet was dead.¹⁴⁷

As allowed by the May papal brief, Brunet left a sealed nomination of his successor as vicar general. After his death, the missionaries in Paris opened this letter. Brunet had named Claude-Joseph Placiard.¹⁴⁸ The French Lazarists subsequently nominated Placiard to serve as vicar general. Placiard wrote the government and the Holy See with the news and asked for their confirmation.¹⁴⁹ Within a matter of days he had received the emperor's consent;¹⁵⁰ papal approval was much slower in coming.

In Rome, Sicardi was lobbying to prevent any limitation of his powers by a papal confirmation of Placiard.¹⁵¹ In early December, Placiard wrote to Cardinal Caraffa reporting on the state of the Congregation, and the favor being shown to it throughout the empire. He repeated his request that the Holy See recognize him as vicar general.¹⁵² At the conclusion of his memorandum Placiard commented:

The perceived inconveniences in the prolongation of the vicariate general of the Congregation of the Mission for a Frenchman are nothing compared with those that would inevitably follow from the establishment of a new order of governance. The undersigned protests that while he will do nothing to invite governmental intervention, given the present state of ecclesiastical affairs, the Emperor of the French, the king of Italy, will not consent to having the missionaries residing in his imperial territories come under the jurisdiction of a vicar or pro-vicar general who also does not reside in these same territories. As soon as it would come to his attention that this was the case, our houses that he has so far protected would perish.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ Brunet to Sicardi, 1 September 1806, *ibid.*, 507.

¹⁴⁷ Cardinal Consalvi to Brunet, 6 September 1806, *ibid.*, 516.

¹⁴⁸ For a short biographical sketch of Placiard see *Circulaires*, 2: 272-73.

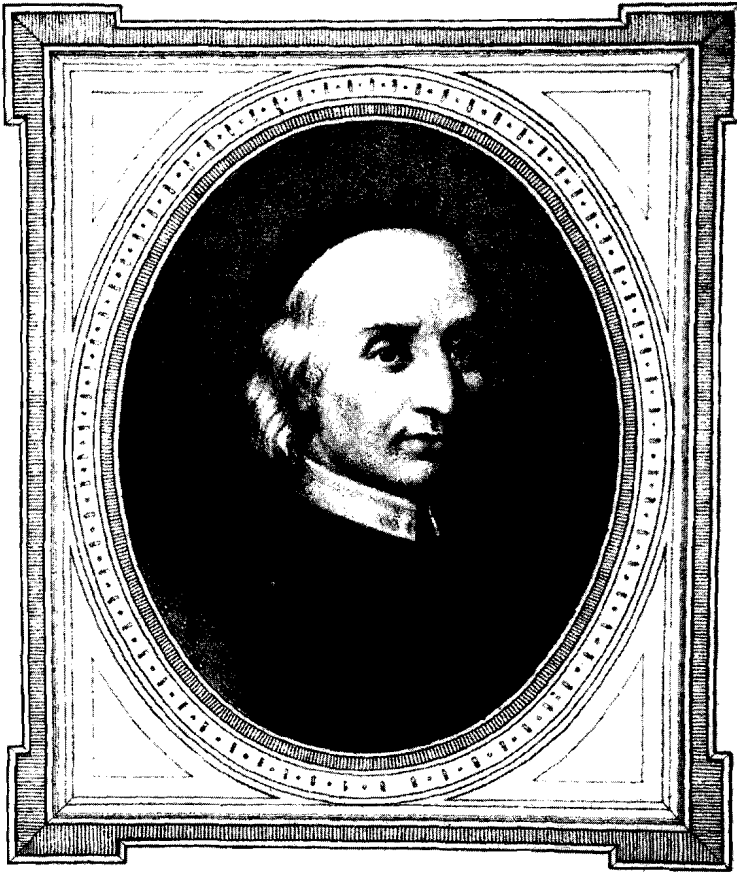
¹⁴⁹ Placiard to Pius VII, 18 September 1806 and 19 September to the Minister of Cults. *Dossier: Placiard*, Casier 38, H 2°, ACMP.

¹⁵⁰ *Actes du Gouvernement*, 94.

¹⁵¹ Sicardi to Pius VII, 19 November 1806. Sicardi asked that Placiard be named vicar general for only six months and only for the Daughters of Charity and the foreign missions. Sicardi also recommended against Placiard's being given the faculty to name his successor. *Placiard*, ACMP. See also Carven, *Napoleon*, 137.

¹⁵² Placiard to Cardinal Caraffa, 5 December 1806, *ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*



M. Sicardi, Dominique
Nommé Vicaire Général
30 Octobre 1804. Mort 13 Juin 1819.

Carlo Domenico Sicardi, C.M., Italian vicar general, 1804-1806,
 1817-1819; pro-vicar 1806-1807; first assistant, 1817-1819

On that same day, Placiard also wrote to Sicardi appealing for his support in unifying the Congregation.¹⁵⁴ Placiard's letters to Rome did not arrive before the issuance of the brief *Accepimus Nuper* on 9 December 1806.¹⁵⁵ The terms of this brief confirmed the status quo of the schism and represented another victory for Sicardi and the Italians.

Early in 1807, Placiard appealed to the pope and to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars to end the schism.¹⁵⁶ He again warned Rome of the consequences of its support for Sicardi.

The Emperor of the French has protected the houses of the Congregation of the Mission in the former republic of Genoa, in the kingdom of Italy, and in the former duchy of Parma. He has done so only because of their connection with a Congregation which according to its constitutions has always had its headquarters in Paris. M. Sicardi's pretensions could cause the suppression of the Italian houses that previously have escaped this fate. I have accepted the office of vicar general only at the insistence of my confreres, and because a refusal on my part would have destroyed our hopes of resuming all our former ministries throughout the French empire. I will be forced to submit my resignation if I cannot fulfill this mission, and there can be no doubt that I must do so if M. Sicardi usurps my jurisdiction. Naturally, the French government will wish to know the reason for my resignation, and then M. Sicardi will only have himself to blame for the consequences of the discontent that he has caused by his pretensions.¹⁵⁷

Sicardi, who learned of Placiard's correspondence, opposed the restoration of the French vicar general's authority. He denied that the Italians were the cause of the schism, or that they had any desire to move the Congregation's headquarters to Rome.¹⁵⁸ Several months later, Sicardi wrote to the visitors of the provinces of Spain and Portugal. He complained that he had received no correspondence from them although by virtue of the papal briefs they were under his jurisdiction.¹⁵⁹

On 19 June 1807, the Holy See issued yet another brief entitled, *Qua Semper Voluntate*. This document superseded all previous briefs

¹⁵⁴ Placiard to Sicardi, 5 December 1806, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Acta Apostolica*, 178-80.

¹⁵⁶ Placiard to Cardinal Caraffa and to Pius VII, 5 January 1807, *Placiard*, ACMP.

¹⁵⁷ Placiard to Cardinal Caraffa, 5 January, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Sicardi to Pius VII, memorandum of January or February 1807, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Sicardi to the visitors of the provinces of Spain and Portugal, 29 April 1807, *ibid.*

issued during the controversy.¹⁶⁰ The brief recognized Placiard's authority as vicar general of the entire Congregation. Placiard could choose his own assistants and name his successor. The pope also ordered that Sicardi serve as first assistant but dispensed him from residing in Paris. On 10 July, Placiard sent Sicardi a copy of the brief and informed him whom he had named as the other assistants.

Placiard and the French hoped that the June brief would bring an end to the schism. In August, however, Placiard received a letter from Sicardi telling him that "Without a doubt, you still cannot exercise any jurisdiction in the Congregation."¹⁶¹ Sicardi also sent a copy of the papal brief to the visitors, accompanied by a letter defending his interpretation.¹⁶² He rejected Placiard's authority on the basis of a passing phrase in the brief referring to the needed reestablishment of a Parisian mother house. Sicardi claimed that Placiard could not exercise his jurisdiction as vicar general "until the Congregation's affairs are settled."¹⁶³ In Sicardi's view, this meant that the French needed to be in actual possession of a new house in Paris. Secondly, the French also had to restore the full observance "of the community exercises as they previously were observed."¹⁶⁴ Until then, Sicardi vowed to continue to exercise jurisdiction over the Congregation as first assistant. Étienne described Sicardi's activities as representing "new chicaneries."¹⁶⁵

Placiard continued the duel of competing circulars with a letter he issued on 9 September 1807. He claimed again that the pope had granted him full authority as vicar general. Not only that, but he claimed an extraordinary permission to exercise the authority of the superior general until the general assembly's convocation. He quoted Cardinal Caraffa as saying that it was the Holy See's desire that the Congregation return to the state in which it had existed before the revolution.¹⁶⁶

Sicardi was desperate to maintain his authority, and the Italian position. He continued to grasp at this last weak straw. The Italian position, however, became untenable. The visitor of Spain wrote to Placiard submitting to his authority. On 16 September 1807, Placiard unexpectedly died.

¹⁶⁰ *Acta Apostolica*, 180-83.

¹⁶¹ Sicardi to Placiard, 9 August 1806, *Placiard*, ACMP.

¹⁶² Circular letter of Sicardi, dated 15 August 1806, *ibid.*

¹⁶³ Circular letter of Sicardi, dated 2 September 1807, *ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Étienne, *Notice*, 12.

¹⁶⁶ Cardinal Caraffa to Placiard, 24 June 1807, *Placiard*, ACMP.

Dominique Hanon: A Very Brief Respite

On 24 September 1807, the Lazarists who resided in Paris gathered to nominate a new vicar general since Placiard had not chosen one before his untimely death. They selected Dominique-François Hanon, the superior of the seminary at Amiens.¹⁶⁷ The French wrote to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars asking for papal confirmation of Hanon's nomination. They also stated their opposition to any consideration of Sicardi's again serving as pro-vicar.¹⁶⁸

On 14 October 1807, with a swiftness completely uncharacteristic of Rome, the Holy See recognized Hanon as "vicar general of the entire Congregation of the Mission." The brief also granted him "all the rights, privileges, and faculties afforded to the vicar general by the constitutions of the said Congregation, whether those concerning the vicars general or the superiors general."¹⁶⁹ In addition, Hanon could name his successor and exercise his authority without waiting for the acquisition of a new mother house.

Sicardi and the Italians recognized their defeat. At this time, French troops were occupying the various states of central Italy and were closing in on Rome. Undoubtedly, this situation helped convince the Holy See to drop its support of Sicardi.¹⁷⁰ On 14 January 1808, Sicardi wrote to Hanon admitting defeat. "The Sovereign Pontiff's brief makes it clear that you are named, approved, and confirmed as the vicar general of the entire Congregation of the Mission with all requisite powers, and without any limitations....I thank God for this."¹⁷¹

On 7 January 1808, Napoleon confirmed Hanon as "Superior of the Mission known under the title of Saint-Lazare."¹⁷² Now that he was in undisputed control, the new vicar general turned his attention to the Congregation's "effective reestablishment...as it existed before the revolution."¹⁷³ In a circular letter to all French missionaries and former members, Hanon reviewed the events that had led to his being chosen and recognized as vicar general. He informed them that finally "All the Missionaries outside France are now reunited in their depen-

¹⁶⁷ For a brief biographical sketch of Hanon see *Circulaires*, 2: 279-81.

¹⁶⁸ M. Claude to the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, September 1807, Hanon, ACMP.

¹⁶⁹ *Acta Apostolica*, 183-85.

¹⁷⁰ *Stella, Italia*, 464.

¹⁷¹ Sicardi to Hanon, 14 January 1808, Hanon, ACMP.

¹⁷² *Actes du Gouvernement*, 101.

¹⁷³ Hanon, *Circulaires*, 2: 282.

dance on a single head residing in Paris."¹⁷⁴ Hanon acknowledged, however, that an even more difficult task faced him, "that of reuniting all the confreres who are presently dispersed throughout the French empire."¹⁷⁵

In the years since 1804, only a handful of former French Lazarists had chosen, or were able, to return to the restored Congregation. Some still doubted whether the restored Congregation was the same Congregation that had existed before the Revolution. Others accepted the Congregation's reestablishment but doubted whether the community existed on a firm enough basis to justify the risks that they would have to take to return.

After reviewing the Government's actions favoring the community, Hanon concluded, "Thus it is beyond doubt, and all confreres should believe as I myself believe...that it is not a new body, but our Congregation of the Mission...which the Government had the intention of reestablishing by virtue of its decrees and the assistance it has given us."¹⁷⁶ Hanon candidly admitted that the Congregation was not yet "effectively reestablished." He held out the hope that given the emperor's favor that day was not far away. Meanwhile, he pledged to work for the Congregation's complete restoration "as soon as possible."¹⁷⁷

Throughout 1808 and into 1809 Hanon worked feverishly, and with initial success, to solidify the restoration. He sought government protection of Lazarist interests in Italy and negotiated to obtain a new mother house in Paris. Hanon recognized the importance of the community's missionary mandate. He therefore sought to expand the missions in Barbary, the Levant, the Isles of Réunion and France, the Ottoman Empire, and Persia. Unfortunately, it would not be long before the emperor's favor, upon which everything depended, was lost.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 2: 283.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 2: 284.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 3

Restoration, Dissolution, Restoration, and Schism Napoleon and the Daughters of Charity

On 13 February 1806, Napoleon wrote Pius VII, "In the temporal sphere your Holiness will have for me the regard that I have for him in the spiritual. Your Holiness is the sovereign of Rome, but I am the Emperor and all my enemies must be his."¹ The pope, however, refused to support the emperor's anti-English foreign policy. He also wanted to safeguard the sovereignty of the Papal States. These positions caused relations between the Holy See and the emperor to worsen. On 17 May 1809, these relations collapsed as the empire annexed the Papal States. Several months later, the French took the pope into custody, beginning a five-year incarceration.

Simultaneously, because of the British sea blockade, the foreign missions played less of a factor in the emperor's plans. Because of these developments, the Lazarists' utility became more tenuous. Fatally, Napoleon also came to doubt their loyalty. The most important factor, however, in the Congregation's and Hanon's fall from favor, concerned a struggle over the control of the Daughters of Charity. By 1809, 1,653 sisters were serving in 274 houses scattered throughout France.² After the restoration of 1804, the French vicar general again exercised his authority as the sisters' ecclesiastical superior. The restoration of this authority, however, was not acceptable to all the sisters. In his *Notice*, Étienne described the situation in this way: "Another intrigue was hatched in Paris. This had the goal of removing the Company of the Daughters of Charity from the authority of the superior general of the Congregation of the Mission and to place them instead under the authority of the archdiocese of Paris. The idea behind this schism was not new. The Daughters of Charity who had reestablished the Company in 1800 were the ones who had conceived this plan. These sisters were inclined to novelty, and they were inspired by a love of independence."³

On at least three occasions between 1800 and 1807, the government requested that the community submit a copy of its constitutions. Sisters

¹ Quoted in Dansette, *Histoire Religieuse*, 1: 154-55.

² AN.F4.1048.

³ Étienne, *Notice*, 12.

working in the administration of the mother house submitted versions omitting mention of the constitutional dependence on the Lazarist superior general. For example, the version submitted in October 1807 stated: "The Sisters of Charity do not form a religious body but a Company of Daughters occupied with the care of the sick and the instruction of the poor. They are submissive to an ecclesiastical superior chosen by them and approved by the Archbishop of Paris and a Superioress General."⁴ By contrast, the authentic rule said the following: "The Company of the Daughters of Charity is not erected as a religious order but only as a community of young women who work toward Christian perfection and are obedient, according to their Institute, to the bishops and the Superior General of their Company [the Lazarist superior general] and the one among them who is elected superioress."⁵

According to Étienne, the desire of some sisters to break ties with their rightful superior found support from the vicars general of the then vacant see of Paris.⁶ These men "were quick to support a project that could only help to extend their own authority and influence."⁷ The vicars general also presumed that this plan "was agreeable to the emperor's mother who was the protectress of the Company of the Daughters of Charity, and who under this title felt justified in interfering in its governance."⁸ Again, however, Étienne's version is a biased, compressed, chronologically distorted, careless version of the actual course of events.⁹

Napoleon had an obsession for order, uniformity, and centralization. He also was abysmally ignorant of religious issues. In 1807, he formulated a plan to bring the governmentally approved communities of sisters into one group organized under the common title "sis-

⁴ Gabriel Perboyre, C.M., *Histoire de la Compagnie des Filles de la Charité sous M. Hanon, Vicaire-Général*, 73. For more information on this era see also "Filles de la Charité, Documents Diverses: 1807-1825: Période critique au temps des vicaires-généraux. Schismes," C 196, 1°, ACMP, and "Sur le schisme des Filles de la Charité," C 197, 2°, ACMP.

⁵ The sisters also elected a superioress general. Hanon, *Circulaires*, 2: 184.

⁶ The archbishop of Paris, Jean-Baptiste du Belloy, had died on 6 June 1808. In his struggles with Napoleon, Pius VII used one of the few weapons available to him which was to refuse to give canonical institution to new French bishops. After Du Belloy's death, the emperor named his uncle Cardinal Fesch and then Cardinal Maury to the vacant see. Neither of these prelates ever took canonical possession of the archdiocese. The see remained vacant until 1817. For details of this phase of the struggle between the emperor and Pius VII see Dansette, *Histoire Religieuse*, 2: 218-31.

⁷ Étienne, *Notice*, 12

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ The role of Napoleon's mother, Laetitia Bonaparte, as the patroness of all French sisters dated from 1805. There is no evidence that this position was anything but purely honorific or that "Madame-Mère" ever tried to exercise any jurisdiction over the Daughters of Charity. Hanon did not mention the emperor's mother as in any way involved in the controversy. See G. Canton, "Napoléon et l'abbé Hanon, supérieur des missions étrangères et des soeurs de saint-Vincent de Paul," *Revue Historique* 111 (1909): 92



M^r Placiard, Claude-Joseph.
Vicair général.
Né 1806 — Décédé 1807.

Claude-Joseph Placiard, C.M., French vicar general, 1806-1807

ters of charity." In each diocese, these sisters were to come under the authority of the bishop. At the emperor's direction, a "general chapter of the sisters of charity and other establishments dedicated to the service of the poor" met in Paris in November and December 1807.¹⁰

As the government prepared to settle the status of the Daughters of Charity, Hanon continued to work for the Lazarists' full restoration. On 28 May 1808, for example, he wrote to the Minister of Cults, "The Congregation of Saint-Lazare has been reestablished by various imperial decrees for the work of the foreign missions. These missions are important for religion, commerce, the sciences, and the honor of France. The community has endured obstacle after obstacle, and suffered blows and losses over which its superior has no control. Its complete ruin soon is approaching, unless Your Excellency deigns to support it with your powerful protection."¹¹ Hanon requested protection for all Lazarist houses, especially in conquered territories,¹² more funds for the foreign missions that were "falling apart,"¹³ the selection of the long-promised new mother house in Paris, and the return of the Congregation's prerevolutionary properties that the government had not yet alienated.¹⁴ Hanon also petitioned for the Congregation's affiliation with the Imperial University. This move would give its educational efforts in seminaries and colleges official status.¹⁵

As 1809 dawned, storm clouds were on the horizon. In his New Year's circular, Hanon made no mention of any approaching difficul-

¹⁰ See also "Adresse à Sa Majesté l'Empereur et Roi par les députés au Chapitre Général des Soeurs de la Charité, 2 décembre 1807," "Rapport fait par M. Guieu, Secrétaire des commandements de Madame et membre de la Cour de Cassation, au Chapitre Général des Soeurs de la Charité, Hospitaliers, etc.," and "Rapport de Madame Mère sur le Chapitre Général des Soeurs de la Charité." AN.F19.6247.

¹¹ AN.F19.6239.2.61.

¹² When the French invaded Italy, Spain, and Portugal they legislated the suppression of the religious orders. French local officials often tried to apply these new regulations to Lazarist houses. Hanon successfully claimed government protection of these houses on the basis of the Congregation's legal standing in France, and their dependence on a French superior in Paris. See, for example, the letter of 31 August 1808, from Hanon to Cardinal Fesch with regard to the Lazarist house in Florence. Hanon, ACMP. Hanon also successfully appealed for draft exemptions for Lazarist seminarians in imperial territories in Italy. See, for example, "28 janvier 1808-Décision de Napoléon I exemptant du service militaire quatre étudiants du séminaire de la Mission de Saint-Lazare de Gênes," *Actes du Gouvernement*, 101-02.

¹³ Much of Hanon's activity during this period involved giving the government extensive information on the state of the foreign missions. See, for example, the letter of 21 November 1808, from Hanon to Cardinal Fesch in which Hanon gives news of the mission in Persia, gives his views on how best to organize the foreign missions administered by the Congregation, and reminds the cardinal that the missionaries in Algeria had not received any funds from the government for the last two years. Hanon, ACMP.

¹⁴ AN.F19.6239.2.61.

¹⁵ Hanon to the Grand Master of the Imperial University, memorandum of 8 November 1808, Hanon, ACMP. Hanon also appealed to the Minister of Cults to support his request. No action was taken by the university.

ties. He did, however, send a confidential letter to each visitor along with the public circular. In this letter Hanon said,

The most important of my duties...is to see to the conservation of our dear Congregation and consequently to foresee and prevent anything that could destroy it. It is not that I see anything happening or that we have anything to fear, right now. To the contrary, divine providence has blessed us richly with favors that have not been accorded to other of the former ecclesiastical and religious corporations....On the other hand, given the times in which we live, anything is possible. We must continue with prudence and caution....Our essential task is always to preserve the authority of our superiors and to preserve the centers out of which they exercise their authority. In accord with the brief that confirmed my possession of the vicariate general, I have the right of designating my successor. I will fulfill this duty with God's help. For the same reason, it is necessary to see to it that our provinces, which are like branches on a tree, can continue to exist in other lands even if they are separated from the trunk of the mother house.¹⁶

Hanon envisioned a scenario in which the Congregation's central authority again disappeared or relations with Paris proved impossible because of actions taken by a "political power."¹⁷ Under these conditions the visitors would have the delegation, for the duration of the crisis, to exercise the authority of the superiors and vicars general.¹⁸ Hanon also wrote to Sicardi asking him to obtain papal approval for this plan.¹⁹ This approval came on 16 April 1809.²⁰

In his letter to the visitors, Hanon had played down the seriousness of the situation. The true extent of his fears at this time appears, however, in a letter written to Cardinal Fesch at the end of January. Hanon acknowledged that given the emperor's imminent return to Paris, the details of the Sisters of Charity's reorganization would soon be settled on a basis that threatened not only his authority as vicar general but the very existence of the communities. He described them as perhaps now facing "their last moments in France."²¹ Hanon explained to Fesch that the Daughters of Charity's dependence on the Lazarist superior general dated from their foundation. He noted that the Holy See had sanctioned this dependence, and no one had ever before questioned it. Thus, the plan to place the sisters

¹⁶ Hanon, *Circulaires*, 2: 288-89.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Hanon to Sicardi, 9 January 1809, Hanon, ACMP.

²⁰ *Acta Apostolica*, 233.

²¹ Hanon to Cardinal Fesch, January 1809, AN.F19.6240.210.

under the authority of the bishops was incompatible with their papally approved constitutional structure. Hanon also told Fesch that if the government went through with its plans his only alternative would then be to offer his resignation to the pope. He predicted that if the pope accepted his resignation as superior of the Daughters whether absolutely, partially, or only regarding the sisters in France the consequences would be the same: "France would no longer be the central point of our relations with Lazarists and sisters of other countries."²² All the scenarios painted by Hanon had the same result, chaos and disunity within the double family, and an end to their utility. He closed by asking Fesch to intervene so that "things would be left as Saint Vincent had arranged them."²³

However, things were not to be left as Saint Vincent had arranged them. On 18 February 1809, the emperor issued a decree requiring all groups of sisters to submit their rule for governmental approval in light of the new regulations. The deadline for this action was 1 January 1810. The penalty for the failure to comply was legal dissolution.²⁴ Article seventeen of the decree declared that each house of sisters, including each "headquarters," was under the authority of the local bishop. This provision was exactly what Hanon and the sisters who supported his authority feared most. The Daughters of Charity split into two factions, the "Vincentines" who accepted the traditional governing structure and Hanon's authority, and the "Jalabertines" who wanted independence from the Lazarists.²⁵

On 6 May 1809, after some negotiations, Cardinal Fesch sent the sisters the government-approved version of their new rule.²⁶ The most important provisions included:

Article two: The Company is not erected as a religious order, but only as a Congregation of Daughters who are obedient, according to their rules, to the archbishop of Paris or his delegate. The archbishop serves as superior general of the entire Company. The sisters are also obedient to the one among them who through election serves as superioress and also to the other community officers.

Article fourteen: Together with the archbishop's delegate, the superioress will be responsible for the direction of the entire Com-

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Jean-Marie Planchet, C.M., undated manuscript, "Le Calvaire des Vicaires Généraux ou Un Double Schisme," 22, ACMP.

²⁵ The Jalabertines were named after M. Jalabert who was one of the vicars general of Paris. He was at the forefront of the attempt to gain control over the sisters (Planchet, *Schisme*, 24).

²⁶ At this point, the emperor had named Cardinal Fesch as the archbishop of Paris. Pius VII refused him canonical institution. Fesch also was unwilling to give up the see of Lyons which he then held. Under the circumstances, the cathedral chapter of Paris continued to administer the archdiocese.



*M. Hanon, Dominique-François.
Vicaire général
Elu 1807 — Décédé 1816.*

Dominique Hanon, C.M., French vicar general, 1807-1816

pany. She will serve as the soul of the Company's body.

Article sixteen: The sisters stationed in the departments will be obedient to their bishops concerning the interior discipline of their establishments. They will be subject to spiritual visitations by them.

Article seventeen: Nevertheless, the interior rule followed in each establishment must conform to that practiced in the mother house.²⁷

For a brief time it looked as if a compromise was possible. The vicars general named Hanon as their delegate over the Daughters.²⁸ Almost immediately, however, this arrangement began to fall apart.²⁹ Within a month, Jalabert was writing to the Minister of Cults complaining about Hanon, "It is clear to me that M. Hanon is too full of himself and his domination. I believe that given his false interpretation of his delegation, we must issue a new ordinance that is more explicit and precise. If this is done with firmness, perhaps we can avoid the necessity of a more severe action."³⁰ Hanon continued to defend the historicity and necessity of the connection between the Daughters of Charity and the Lazarist superior general. The vicars general stepped up their attack. Hanon meanwhile appealed to the Council of State. He attacked the "usurpations" of the vicars general.³¹

On 1 July 1809, Jalabert wrote to Cardinal Fesch, claiming that the original confirmation of the Daughters of Charity by Cardinal de Retz had specified their dependence on the archbishop of Paris. He claimed that the jurisdiction of the Lazarist superior general "came much later, and is consequently quite recent in origin."³² The vicars general dismissed the sister who had been serving as superioress general because she supported Hanon's position.³³ They appointed a superioress who supported the new rules.³⁴ These actions deepened the schism within the community. Both sides recruited as many adherents as possible, while appealing to the government against the opposing side.³⁵

²⁷ Cardinal Fesch to Sister (Beaudoin?), 6 May 1809, AN.F19.6240.233.

²⁸ Hanon to Cardinal Fesch, 19 May 1809, informing him that he will accept the delegation with respect to the Daughters. AN.F19.6240.230. See also the 26 May 1809, from the vicars general of Paris to Hanon, naming him as delegate. AN.F19.6240.242.

²⁹ Planchet, *Schisme*, 24.

³⁰ Jalabert to the Minister of Cults, 19 June 1809, AN.F19.6240.246.

³¹ Planchet, *Schisme*, 24.

³² Jalabert to Cardinal Fesch, 1 July 1809, AN.F19.6240.249.

³³ Planchet, *Schisme*, 25.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

³⁵ See, for example, AN.F7.7935.



*Napoleon as Emperor. Portrait by Jacques-Louis David.
Corbis Bettmann*

The Napoleonic dissolution

The continuing struggle forced Hanon to become more outspoken and ultramontane in his rhetoric. He wrote,

Even the temporal authority's suppression of the Congregation of the Mission cannot stop the superior general from exercising his responsibilities regarding the Daughters of Charity. The civil authority has the legal right not to recognize the superior general of the Congregation of the Mission throughout the French Empire. However, it cannot deprive him of the rights granted to him by the Sovereign Pontiff. Only the ecclesiastical power can deprive him of a jurisdiction that is totally spiritual. As long as it is the Sovereign Pontiff's will, he will always remain as superior of the Daughters of Charity.³⁶

Hanon held that if any sister submitted to the authority of a local bishop, she no longer was a true Daughter of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul.³⁷

Hanon's ultramontane defense of his authority came as the emperor was holding the pope captive and imprisoning many other ecclesiastics throughout the empire because of their opposition to his policies.³⁸ Hanon would soon share this fate.³⁹ During July 1809, the government ordered Hanon's arrest. He underwent nineteen days of questioning.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, events were unfolding toward drastic government action against the Lazarists.

In early September, Félix-Julien Bigot de Préameneu requested the emperor to approve a new grant for the Lazarists' Levantine missions.⁴¹ The emperor refused this request. He scrawled the sentence, "I no longer desire any missions," across the paper.⁴² At the end of September, the Minister of Cults submitted a report to the emperor on the foreign missions. The document had taken more than a year to compile.⁴³ He also submitted "a proposal for a decree of revocation" as the emperor had requested earlier in the month. Préameneu observed that even an increase of government support could not guar-

³⁶ Hanon, quoted in Girard, *Saint Vincent de Paul*, 188.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.

³⁸ See Dansette, *Histoire Religieuse*, 1: 157-67.

³⁹ One of these was Benedetto Fenaja, the Italian Lazarist, who had played a role in the Italian-French schism and served as the pope's vice regent for Rome. Fenaja died in Paris in 1812, during his imprisonment.

⁴⁰ Hanon to M. Rauzan, 14 August 1809, *Hanon*, ACMP.

⁴¹ Félix-Julien Bigot de Préameneu served under Napoleon I as Minister of Cults from 1808 to 1814. See *Historical Dictionary of Napoleonic France, 1799-1815*, Owen Connelly, ed., 2 vols. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985), 1: 70-71.

⁴² This detail appeared in the speech given by Jean Feutrier, Bishop of Beauvais and the *Ministre des Affaires Ecclésiastiques*, during a 1829 debate over the Lazarists' legal status in the Chamber of Deputies. See *Actes du Gouvernement*, 204.

⁴³ "Tableau Général des Missions Françaises servies par les trois Congrégations de Missionnaires, dont le chief-lieu est à Paris," AN.F4.1047.3.50.

antee that the foreign missionaries “would not sell themselves for English gold and become our enemies’ spies and partisans.”⁴⁴ Nevertheless, he recommended that the government consider maintaining its support of the Lazarists.⁴⁵

On 26 September, in a fit of anger, Napoleon revoked the decree of “7 Prairial, An XII.” Article two of this new decree read: “We also revoke all our previous decrees concerning the establishment, or confirmation, of congregations of priests dedicated to the foreign missions, and in particular the decree...with respect to the establishment of an association of secular priests who, under the title of Priests of the Foreign Missions, administer the foreign missions.”⁴⁶ Inexplicably, however, the emperor added a note directing that the decree “should neither be published nor printed.”⁴⁷ Not even a plea from Cardinal Fesch could change the emperor’s mind about the suppression.⁴⁸ On 6 October 1809, Hanon received the order from the Prefect of the Seine for the Congregation to disband.⁴⁹ On 29 October, the police arrested Hanon at his rented quarters on the rue du Cherche-Midi.

In his *Notice*, Étienne presented a very different version of the events leading up to the Congregation’s Napoleonic dissolution. He blamed the suppression entirely on Hanon’s attempts to preserve his authority over the Daughters of Charity against the “pretensions of

⁴⁴Bigot de Préameneu, Minister of Cults, to Napoléon, undated, AN.F4.1047.3.49.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶AN.F4.2545.75. See also *Actes du Gouvernement*, 106-11. The editor of the *Actes du Gouvernement* notes that “The signature on the decree carries evidence of imperial anger. While all the rest of the Emperor’s signatures on documents signed that day are written in a normal hand, his signature on this decree was written with heavy strokes of the pen that caused the ink to blot,” xxiii. The decree also “forbade missions within the country” and specifically dissolved the three groups in Genoa which had been established for this purpose. The Minister of Police had urged this action because of the alleged subversive activities of some preachers. Cardinal Fesch thought that given the shortage of priests, this action was disastrous for the French Church. He counseled that it would be better to deal individually with *hommes irréfléchis ou maleveillants*. AN.F4.1046.3.⁵⁹

⁴⁷This act would be of crucial importance in the Lazarists’ Bourbon restoration. In order for an imperial decree to have legal force it was necessary that it be published in the *Bulletin des Lois*. Since this was not the case here, Napoleon’s suppression was administrative and personal rather than legal and public. The immediate effect, however, with respect to the Lazarists was their suppression.

⁴⁸AN.F4.1046.3.59.

⁴⁹Nicolas Frochot, the Prefect of the Department of the Seine, to Hanon, 6 October.

In light of orders that I have received, I have the honor of informing you that the decrees that permitted the reestablishment of the foreign missions are revoked...Consequently, those establishments that are organized on the basis of these decrees are dissolved and are no longer in existence. I invite you to conform to the decision taken by His Majesty the Emperor on this matter by ceasing your functions as a missionary and as superior of the Mission of Saint-Lazare. You also are no longer permitted to reside among the Sisters of Charity. I also request, Monsieur, that you inform all persons attached to the missions who are subordinate to you that they are no longer authorized to live in community and that they must disperse without delay.

the vicars general of Paris." According to the account given in the *Notice*, Hanon had proved that the claims of the vicars general over the Daughters were "without a solid foundation." In response to Hanon's defense, the "unreasonable intrigue that had tried every means possible to attain its ends decided now to employ an extreme means."⁵⁰ According to Étienne, "the emperor and the Council of State had recognized M. Hanon's authority as vicar general." However, since an integral part of his responsibilities was to be the sisters' superior, the leaders of the "intrigue" saw no other way to attain their goal than to seek the Congregation's suppression. If the Congregation no longer existed, the vicars general of Paris reasoned that they would be "free to exercise their authority over the Company of the Daughters of Charity." Thus, according to Étienne's view, it was these "agents of intrigue" who turned the emperor against the Congregation. Their conspiracy brought him to the point where he finally said, "I no longer desire the Mission," and consented to a decree of suppression.⁵¹

Again, Étienne's mythic version only superficially resembles the unfolding of events. By virtue of the February 1809 decree, the government had separated the Daughters from their dependence on the superior of the Congregation of the Mission. The temporary experiment of having Hanon serve as the delegate of the vicars general failed. The result was a schism among the sisters. In theory, the removal of the sisters from Hanon's jurisdiction need not have affected the Congregation's legal existence. However, Hanon's continued ultramontane opposition to the government's policies provoked the emperor. Napoleon's anger and dissatisfaction with the Lazarists, combined with his anger and dissatisfaction with the interior and foreign missions provoked him to his drastic actions. No evidence supports Étienne's claim that the vicars general of Paris played a role in the Congregation's suppression.

Another point on which Étienne reveals his Vincentian-centric myth-making, concerns his claim that Napoleon had declared, with sole reference to the Congregation of the Mission, "I no longer desire the Mission."⁵² His misquotation made it appear as if the vicars general had maneuvered the emperor into dissolving the Congregation.⁵³ However,

⁵⁰ Étienne, *Notice*, 13.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ In 1829, Étienne had rallied parliamentary efforts to defend the legality of the Lazarists' Bourbon restoration. He was fully aware of the historical arguments used in the course of the debates. His use of this quotation in this way contradicts the facts as presented in these debates. See *Actes du Gouvernement*, quoting from *Archives Parlementaires de 1787 à 1860. Deuxième série (1800 à 1860)*, LVII (Paris 1884): 268-89. "Chambre des Députés, Présidence de M. Royer-Collard. Séance du samedi 7 mars 1829. Discussion sur l'existence légale des Lazaristes." See also Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 42-54.

the emperor's actual words were, "I no longer desire the missions." This phrase clearly referred to the foreign and interior missions and the approved congregations that conducted them. Étienne also does not mention that the suppression decree concerned not only the Congregation of the Mission but the other approved missionary groups as well.

According to Étienne, the Congregation's suppression did not have the immediate results desired by the vicars general. Hanon still contended that since he held his position by virtue of papal authority, the government could not unilaterally destroy his jurisdiction. In light of this position, his opponents realized that "the only way they would be victorious would be by arranging his [Hanon's] exile from Paris and from France."⁵⁴ The records of Hanon's interrogations after his October arrest show that the government suspected him of disloyalty. Police suspicions went beyond his role in the schism among the Daughters of Charity.⁵⁵ Given his international contacts with Lazarists and Daughters of Charity, the government suspected him of "perhaps being a redoubtable agent of opposition and a dangerous agitator."⁵⁶ The police therefore conducted a careful review of his confiscated correspondence. They concluded that "nothing indicates that Hanon has been involved in political matters."⁵⁷ Interestingly, they also concluded that the Lazarists seemed to hold not only "a correct attitude with respect to relations with Rome but also were very mistrustful of the English."⁵⁸ The police did conclude, however, that Hanon's correspondence with the rebellious Daughters of Charity was "overall written in a very bad spirit... It is very reprehensible, and one could even say it was seditious."⁵⁹

Hanon incorrectly believed that his struggle was with the vicars general and not the government. However, the government, which had issued the legislation upon which the vicars general based their claims, saw Hanon's opposition as something that "was not just between him and the archdiocese of Paris but as part of the imperial struggle against the papacy."⁶⁰

On 19 November 1809, the authorities released Hanon. The government placed him under police surveillance and sentenced him to

⁵⁴ Étienne, *Notice*, 13.

⁵⁵ During his incarceration, his jailers questioned Hanon on 29 and 30 October and then again on 11 November. AN.F7.7935.

⁵⁶ Canton, *Abbé Hanon*, 95.

⁵⁷ AN.F7.7935.

⁵⁸ Canton, *Abbé Hanon*, 96.

⁵⁹ AN.F7.7935.

⁶⁰ Canton, *Abbé Hanon*, 99.

internal exile at his birthplace.⁶¹ Earlier on 8 November, the government issued a decree suppressing the office of superior general of the Daughters of Charity.⁶² Of the 1,653 sisters in France, 560 protested individually or collectively against this modification of their rule. Ninety-three of the 274 houses broke off relations with the new superioress general.⁶³

The quarrels among the sisters continued unabated. In February 1811, Napoleon ordered Hanon's arrest and imprisonment. While in custody, the police questioned him about his continuing relations with the dissident Daughters of Charity. They asked him to explain again the basis for his claims to jurisdiction over the community. Finally, they were interested in finding out what he planned to do after his release. On 19 April, however, the Emperor ordered that "the minister of Police imprison him [Hanon] at Fenestrelle,⁶⁴ and that he remain there until the issuance of further orders."⁶⁵ Because of his unrepentant ultramontanism and his "obstinate character,"⁶⁶ Hanon's imprisonment ended only with Napoleon's fall in 1814.⁶⁷

With respect to Hanon's imprisonment Étienne commented, "Thus M. Sicardi arrived at the fulfillment of the plan he had pursued for such a long time. Using the pretext that it was impossible for M. Hanon to govern the Congregation, he obtained from the Sovereign Pontiff the powers of vicar general of the entire Congregation."⁶⁸ The Holy See had agreed previously, at Hanon's request and with Sicardi's support, to delegate extraordinary powers to the provincial visitors.

⁶¹ Saint-Pol in the department of Pas-de-Calais.

⁶² Planchet, *Schisme*, 33.

⁶³ AN.F4.1048.

⁶⁴ The Fenestrelle prison was located at Savona in Italy. Many of the emperor's ecclesiastical opponents were imprisoned here during this period, for example, Cardinal Bartolomeo Pacca.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Canton, *Abbé Hanon*, 319.

⁶⁶ Comment made by the Minister of Cults to Anne Savary the Minister of Police, quoted *ibid.*, 324.

⁶⁷ In 1812, Hanon asked the police officials to forward his resignation as vicar general to the pope. The police refused, because Hanon's request presumed that his authority came from the papacy and not the government. Hanon's letter to the pope read in part,

At the request of my confreres who gathered in Paris in October 1807, Your Holiness deigned to name me as superior of the two congregations instituted by Saint Vincent de Paul, namely, the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity. You also deigned to invest me with all the ecclesiastical and spiritual powers that were necessary for me to govern what had been confided to my care. By a series of unfortunate circumstances that would be inconvenient to inform you of in detail, I find myself far from these two families. I am no longer able to govern them nor exercise in their regard the powers that I received from Your Holiness. The obstacles that I have encountered are of such a nature that they are beyond my power to do anything about.

Ibid., 323.

⁶⁸ Étienne, *Notice*, 13.

However, Sicardi now seized the opportunity provided by the dissolution to concentrate power in his hands again. At some point, he apparently persuaded the Holy See, *ad tempus*, to appoint him as vicar general for Spain and Italy.⁶⁹ Sicardi could have exercised this office only for a short time, if at all.

On 25 April 1810, Napoleon suppressed all religious communities within the empire's boundaries. The previous imperial protection afforded to Lazarist houses outside France was withdrawn. Until the end of French rule in Italy, Monte Citorio was the only Lazarist house that survived unscathed "by a disposition of divine providence."⁷⁰ Early in 1814, as the allied troops closed in on France, the government transferred Hanon to a prison in Bourges. The victorious allies entered Paris on 10 April 1814, and the emperor abdicated. Hanon made his way back to Paris. Without an income and without resources, he initially lived at the sisters' Hospital for Incurable Women. This was a house belonging to the "true Daughters of Charity."⁷¹ Hanon was not welcome at the Daughters' mother house on the rue du Vieux-Colombier. The sisters who had rejected his authority still controlled this establishment.

On 26 April 1814, Hanon wrote to Cardinal Bartolomeo Pacca in Rome.⁷² He asked the cardinal's assistance in petitioning the Holy See to seek the Double Family's restoration.⁷³ Hanon wanted to resign, and he hoped that someone else would agree to lead the restoration effort.⁷⁴ However, only a handful of former Lazarists were in Paris, and none of them was willing or able to take on the burden. Hanon had to continue in office.⁷⁵ At the beginning of May, Louis XVIII entered the capital. In June, Hanon met with Alexandre-Angélique de Talleyrand-Périgord, the archbishop of Reims, who was serving as the restored king's Grand-Aumônier. At the archbishop's urging, Hanon presented his first re-

⁶⁹ Stella, *Italia*, 530.

⁷⁰ Sicardi, *Circulaires*, 2: 328.

⁷¹ Perboyre, *Vicaires Généraux*, 386.

⁷² Pacca had been imprisoned with Hanon at Fenestrelle.

⁷³ Hanon to Cardinal Pacca, 26 April 1814, *Hanon*, ACMP.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Hanon to Sicardi, May 1814, *ibid.*

⁷⁵ See, for example, Jean-Mathurin Legall to Hanon, 19 August 1814, *ibid.*

quest to the Bourbon government for the Lazarists' restoration.⁷⁶

Hanon felt frustrated by the difficulties facing his efforts in France. Under the circumstances, he felt that had no choice but to recognize Sicardi's authority over the Congregation outside the kingdom. "I submit, as I have in every circumstance and instance, to the dispositions made in your favor by the Sovereign Pontiff's authority. Given the present circumstances, I find them to be wise and useful to the Congregation. A thousand more means are available to you than are available to me to govern our houses in Spain and Italy."⁷⁷ The confreres at Savona have written to me requesting that I appoint a superior. Under the circumstances, I have referred them to you."⁷⁸ Étienne, of course, does not mention this telling concession by Hanon.

The Bourbon Restoration

In January 1815, Hanon rented a large apartment in Paris near the church of Saint-Sulpice. He wrote to Sicardi that he hoped after the winter several others would join him there to work toward a restoration. Until then, he acknowledged they somehow would have to support themselves from their personal savings and resources.⁷⁹ With his attention focused on affairs in France he first moved, with papal support, to end the schism within the Daughters of Charity.⁸⁰

On 1 January, Hanon wrote a circular to the sisters detailing the Holy See's position on reestablishing peace. He also noted, "In a letter

⁷⁶ Hanon to Louis XVIII, petition of 10 June 1814, for the reestablishment of the Congregation, *Hanon*, ACMP. The petition read in part:

The general proscription of 1792 enveloped the priests of the Congregation of the Mission, also known as the Lazarists. In 1804, at the request of the Sovereign Pontiff they were reestablished. They were again suppressed in 1809, and with their suppression the foreign and national missions which are so necessary and so honorable to France were also destroyed. Filled with the desire to consecrate itself again to the salvation of the people and to be of service to Your Majesty, they await with confidence the moment when in your elevated wisdom you will be pleased to recall them and designate their works, the destinations where they will go, and the means that will assure the solidity of their reestablishment. In order that they may be found ready to receive immediately the first orders that you give them, and to avoid all obstacles which may keep them from so responding, they solicit from your goodness provisional permission either to reunite immediately in Paris or a decree from Your Majesty explicitly stating that the Congregation of the Mission called of Saint-Lazare is reestablished in the state that it was found before 1789.

⁷⁷ Because communication with Hanon was impossible, on 26 September 1812 the papal nuncio to Portugal, Monsignor Vincenzo Macchi, named the provincial visitor of Portugal, Antonio Martins y Silva, as the Congregation's vicar apostolic in that kingdom. The nuncio commissioned Martins to govern the Congregation with full authority until the regular election of a superior general. See *Circulaires*, 2: 635.

⁷⁸ Hanon to Sicardi, 6 December 1814, *Hanon*, ACMP.

⁷⁹ Hanon to Sicardi, 15 January 1815, *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Hanon also wrote to Sicardi asking for his help in Rome to promote a settlement of the Daughters' schism. Planchet, *Schisme*, 49.

from Rome dated 13 August, we learned that the Sovereign Pontiff has taken an interest in the preservation and tranquillity of the Sisters of Charity. We also learned that he has agreed, in principle, that the Congregation should be reestablished upon its primitive constitutions."⁸¹ The Holy See ruled that the sister who had been serving as the superioress general had been doing so under civil and not canonical authority. Hanon concluded, "Consequently the Sisters who, during the last three years have refused to acknowledge her title as contrary to the rules of Saint Vincent, have surely suffered for justice sake and the legitimate defense of their state."⁸²

Hanon also mentioned a letter he received from Sicardi. "This worthy Missionary writes...that the Holy Father has spoken to him twice about our affairs and that he knows very well who it is that has excited this insubordination among you. He considers those who have separated from the establishment founded by Saint Vincent as rebels....He has promised to support what you and I desire...Our correspondent adds, that with a little patience, you will again see all the Daughters of Charity reunited under the same government and authority."⁸³ The imperial government had expelled many sisters who had opposed its policies.⁸⁴ Hanon now invited these sisters to rejoin the community. They would join "those who have not laid aside your costume or abandoned your ministry with the poor. Those sisters who have preserved these without adopting novelties and without taking any part in the agitations around them. They have always observed their vows, and preserved the sentiments transmitted to you by your excellent mothers."⁸⁵ Hanon thus welcomed back the exiled sisters and recognized the fidelity of those who had never accepted the government imposed regime.

The vicar general realized that with the schism's end, all groups would have to live together. Therefore he also said, "Let there be an absolute silence and general forgetfulness of the past. Show the same justice, regard, affection, and kindness to all sisters without exception, whatever may have

⁸¹ Hanon, *Circulars of the Superiors General of the Congregation of the Mission to the Daughters of Charity* (Emmitsburg: St. Joseph's Provincial House, 1895), 2: 12.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 2: 81.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ At the height of the schism under Napoleon, the Minister of Cults wrote to the French bishops, "There are sisters who feel that they are free to remain in the Congregation even though they do not recognize the authority of their superioress. They even have declared themselves to be disobedient; not only must they withdraw their opposition, but if they cannot be recalled to their duty they must be publicly and shamefully dismissed from the Congregation." Quoted in Planchet, *Schisme*, 38.

⁸⁵ Hanon, *Circulars*, 2: 82.

been their previous sentiments, language and conduct."⁸⁶

On 24 February 1815, Hanon sent another circular letter to the French houses. He enclosed a copy of the long-awaited papal brief. The document began by stating,

It has been made known to Us that for several years dissensions and disputes have existed among the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. We also have learned that they still exist among the sisters like gangrene, because of the iniquity of these deplorable times. We would seek in vain for terms to express the profound sorrow that Our paternal heart has experienced in this regard. This is because of the particular affection We feel for this Institute, which is as commendable for its eminent sanctity as it is by its utility. These flames of discord have caused great evils and seem to threaten its entire destruction....Now, many letters have been addressed to Us that are full of humble supplications and ardent desires that We remedy these evils by an apostolic decision. We have, without delay, examined the whole affair with great care, exactitude, and diligence....After having left nothing undone to discover the truth, behold, at last, the most prompt and efficacious means that We think can be taken to reestablish peace and to destroy all that remains of these dissensions.⁸⁷

Pius VII named Paul David d'Astros, the vicar general of the still vacant archdiocese of Paris, as "Apostolic Visitor" of the French Daughters of Charity.⁸⁸ D'Astros was to supervise the regular election of a new superioress general. The pope ordered that this was to be done "while respecting the rights of M. Hanon....He is to assist at the assembly and fulfill all the functions assigned to him in the statutes."⁸⁹ Étienne speaks of these events in this way: "To end the deadly schism...Pius VII, by a brief, reestablished M. Hanon in his rights. So that the archdiocese of Paris could expiate its ambitious pretensions, the pope ordered M. d'Astros a grand vicar of this diocese...to promulgate this brief in the community chapel in M. Hanon's presence."⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 2: 87.

⁸⁸ Rome also told D'Astros that "In all things he [Hanon] will advise you, so that through your cooperation all the dispersed sisters may be brought back into the family. All hearts will then be reunited by the bonds of peace and charity, and everything will be reestablished in the ancient good order and unity." Hanon, *Circulars*, 2: 88.

⁸⁹ For the text of the papal decree see Hanon, *Circulars*, 2: 86-88. According to the statutes of the Daughters of Charity, the role of the superior general in the superioress general's election was to preside at the assembly, to propose the two sisters to whom the votes are to be given, to receive the votes, to proclaim the new superioress general, to confirm the election, to draw up a legal record of it, and to sign it. See note *ibid.*, 1: 88, 92.

⁹⁰ Étienne, *Notice*, 14.

Étienne blamed the schism on the “intrigues” of the Parisian vicars general. He thus ignored the roles played by Napoleon and the imperial government in the entire affair.⁹¹ The text of the papal decree, however, does not blame the schism on the vicars general. A footnote stated that “the late government’s impiety, schismatic spirit, and despotism were the cause of these troubles and divisions.”⁹²

On 12 March 1815, the sisters gathered in Paris. In Hanon’s presence they elected a new superioress general, ending the schism.⁹³ Several weeks later, the sisters transferred their mother house a short distance from the rue du Vieux-Colombier. The government provided them with a new building on the nearby rue du Bac.⁹⁴ Hanon resumed his duties with respect to the sisters,⁹⁵ including the approbation of their annual vows.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Throughout his career, Étienne always took great care to insure that the government could never accuse the Congregation of any disloyalty. Writing in 1870, at the height of Napoleon III’s Second Empire, Étienne was an ardent imperialist and admirer of Napoleon I.

⁹² Hanon, *Circulars*, 2: 88.

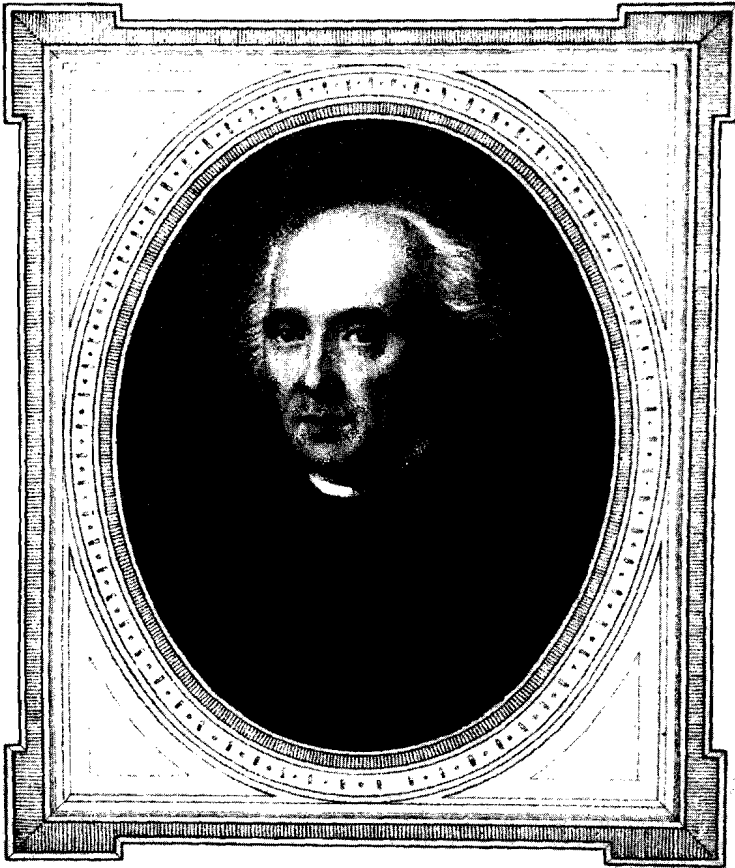
⁹³ Napoleon reentered France on 1 March. News of this did not reach Paris until 5 March. Louis XVIII fled the capital on 20 March. During the “Hundred Days,” Hanon went into hiding to avoid arrest. Louis XVIII reentered the capital on 20 July. See G. de Bertier de Sauvigny, *Le Restauration* (Paris: Flammarion, 1955).

⁹⁴ The sisters transferred the relics of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac to their new headquarters.

⁹⁵ The canonical restoration of the Lazarist superior’s authority over the Daughters of Charity in France did not immediately heal their divisions. In his *Notice*, Étienne recalled how those Daughters who had contributed to the Congregation’s restoration were opposed and punished “by the sisters who then governed their Company...since the spirit of the Maison-Mère was not yet what it would later become.” *Notice*, 16. The new superioress general elected in 1815 was a “Jalabertiste.” At the end of 1815, Hanon wrote to Cardinal Pacca: “I am obliged to report to Your Eminence that the superioress general and three or four of the sisters who unfortunately head the community with her are always opinionated and disrespectful of authority. They have sustained the abuses and the disorders in the community and have sought to cause problems for the sisters who wish to reenter.” In January 1816, Hanon had a showdown with the leadership of the sisters. He went to great lengths to gather together the documentary evidence that would remind them that the supreme authority in the Company of the Daughters of Charity resided in the superior general of the Congregation of the Mission and not in the superioress general. He also sternly reminded them that their vows and constitutions originated with Saint Vincent himself and were not a product of a later time. See Planchet, *Schisme*, 53. The divisions within the sisters would continue on for many years.

⁹⁶ According to the Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity the sisters renew their simple private vows annually after receiving permission from the superior general. In 1815, as Hanon tried to regularize the renewal of vows he noted,

The two families of Saint Vincent have never recognized any other [formula for the holy vows] for you, my very dear Sisters, than that which expresses obedience to the venerable superior general of the Congregation of the Mission. It is only five years since the second formula was given, [the one imposed by the government]... What bitter fruits are enclosed in it! For from this period, scandals and troubles have displayed themselves. It was on this occasion that your worthy superioress... was constrained to abandon her charge and to flee, that I was exiled and cast into prison, that so many of your Companions were denounced, chased from the Hospitals, forcibly deprived of the holy habit, debarred from all functions towards the unfortunate, and pursued from place to place with fury, a prey to misery and sufferings under which many succumbed. These facts are recent, they are public, known by you and all France... Let us say, my Sisters, as in the Gospel, the tree is known by its fruits, this formula of 1810, is judged by its consequences, as also by the principles and spirit which dictated and approved of it... Let us speak of it no more.



*M. Verbert, Marie-Charles-Emmanuel.
Vicaire général.
Elu 1816 - Décédé 1819.*

Charles E. Verbert, C.M., French vicar general, 1816-1819

On 19 July, the feast of Saint Vincent, Hanon presided over the feast day activities at the new mother house.⁹⁷ Nine or ten former missionaries who lived in Paris and the surrounding area joined him for the celebration.

On the eve of the “100 Days” interregnum, Louis XVIII restored the legal status of the Foreign Mission priests of the rue du Bac.⁹⁸ On 28 August 1815, Hanon wrote again to the Minister of Cults requesting the reestablishment of the Congregation of the Mission, as it had existed before the revolution. He also asked for the confirmation of its right to take possession of the Daughters’ former house on the rue du Vieux-Colombier as the Congregation’s new mother house.⁹⁹ Finally, on 3 February 1816, Louis XVIII issued an ordinance applying his decree of 2 March 1815 to the Lazarists and the Spiritans.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the government reestablished the Lazarists based on the terms of the 1804 Napoleonic decree. On 16 March, Hanon issued a circular informing the former Lazarists in France of the “precious news that a royal ordinance has reestablished our dear Congregation of the Mission.”¹⁰¹

Hanon immediately began laying plans for the future. “For our part we will neglect nothing in preparing for the prompt reunion of our confreres, the formation of a new internal seminary, and the

⁹⁷In his *Notice*, Étienne took care to comment with regard to the role played by another Lazarist in the schism of the Daughters of Charity,

I cannot help but mention that there was a poignant pain in this situation which tried the heart of M. Hanon during his captivity. He saw a false brother accept from the archdiocese the powers of director of the Daughters of Charity and undertake their direction. This was M. Viguier, who previously had been a missionary in Constantinople, and who had returned to France... His culpable weakness was expiated by the feelings of repulsion and scorn that were felt towards him by most Daughters of Charity who were horrified at his defection. After the reestablishment of legitimate authority, he retired and lived with his sister who was the sister servant of the Daughters of Charity in the parish of Saint-Sulpice.

Notice, 14.

Étienne failed to mention the fact that Viguier had played a crucial role in the 1804 restoration of the Congregation, that Hanon had also initially accepted the position as the vicars general delegate over the Daughters, and that after the Restoration Viguier served as secretary general of the Congregation in France until his death in 1821. Planchet also has an interesting account of Viguier’s service as the vicars’ general delegate over the Daughters. See *Schisme*, 30.

⁹⁸One possible explanation of why the Congregation was not reestablished at the same time as the rue du Bac missionaries might have been the fact that the Lazarists were divided among themselves. Evidence suggests a split between Hanon and Dubois. See, for example, the 6 December 1814, from Hanon to Sicardi, *Hanon*, ACMP. Here, Hanon speaks about Dubois’s “intrigues.” See also *ibid.*, the memo of February 1815 from Dubois to Louis XVIII, giving his views on the state of the Congregation and its proposed reestablishment. In an attempt to settle the disagreements between them, Hanon invited Dubois to officiate at the July feast day celebrations at the Daughters’ new mother house. Dubois declined the offer and was not present. Dubois never returned to the Congregation. See Perboyre, *Vicaires Généraux*, 395.

⁹⁹See Hanon to Louis XVIII, memo of 28 August 1815, with respect to the reestablishment of the Congregation of the Mission, *Hanon*, ACMP.

¹⁰⁰AN.Fla.96.1806. See also *Actes du Gouvernement*, 112. Two months later the king also authorized an annual subsidy of 4,000 francs. *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁰¹Hanon, *Circulaires*, 2: 290.

reconstitution of the Company's general government."¹⁰² He noted that while the last missionary in Barbary had died, the other foreign missions in China and the Levant were still in existence. These missions would need immediate assistance. Regarding France, the vicar general noted "The seminaries, the missions, the direction of our sisters, pastoral ministry, all our former and ordinary functions can from this moment provide a rich field of labor for your zeal and your love for the salvation of souls."¹⁰³ Hanon urged his correspondants not to wait for the Congregation's "effective reestablishment" but to return immediately to help in the effort. He promised that he would contact each person to propose a place and a work that would "conform to your talents and preferences."¹⁰⁴ However, little more than a month later on 24 April, Hanon who had been in poor health for some time died.¹⁰⁵

The vicar general's death brought the newly-restored Congregation in France into yet another period of crisis and confusion. Hanon had named Jean-Mathurin Legall, the superior of the seminary at Vannes, as his vicar general. Legall refused to accept the position. Under the circumstances Pierre Claude, Hanon's first assistant, temporarily assumed authority. Despite its legal restoration, the community still did not possess a regular canonical structure. Also, few former Lazarists had responded to Hanon's impassioned call to return. It would not be until July that Claude would issue a letter of convocation for the election of a new vicar general.¹⁰⁶

In his circular Claude noted,

There is no member of our Congregation, not filled with the spirit of our Holy Founder, who does not long for our reestablishment. The time has arrived for our desires to be fulfilled. The Holy See and the king, whom God in his mercy has given us, favor our wishes and have assured us of their powerful protection....The first thing that we must do is to choose a head noted for his love of his vocation, and his zeal for the good of the Church.... Already our confreres of Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Poland have a vicar general named by the pope. The King's intention is that we give

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 2: 291.

¹⁰⁴ Approximately seventy former Lazarists responded to Hanon's appeal to rejoin the community. See Perboyre, *Vicaires-Généraux*, 399.

¹⁰⁵ In his March circular, Hanon had explained that the reasons for the delay in writing the circular announcing the royal reestablishment were his "indispositions and a serious illness." *Circulaires*, 2: 290. In his *Notice Étienne*, with characteristic imprecision, gave Hanon's age at death as being forty-nine. Being born on 3 July 1757, however, Hanon was fifty-eight at the time of his death.

¹⁰⁶ Claude, *Circulaires*, 2: 292.

ourselves, as head, a provisory vicar general.¹⁰⁷

Claude recalled that only a handful of missionaries had nominated Hanon. He wanted the upcoming election to be more representative. He therefore urged the priests scattered in the provinces to elect delegates and give them the means to come to Paris for the election. Failing this, these deputies were to submit their nominations in writing. The assembly was to meet on 12 August. The meeting place was the rectory of Sainte-Marguerite in the faubourg Saint-Antoine. This was the residence of Jean-Jacques Dubois, who had put it at the service of the Congregation.¹⁰⁸

This assembly nominated Marie-Charles-Emmanuel Verbert, not as vicar general but as superior general.¹⁰⁹ At the time, Verbert had not even rejoined the Congregation. He was teaching theology at the University of Aix in Provence.¹¹⁰ Accepting his election with some reluctance, it would take him two months to arrange his affairs and travel to Paris to take up his duties.¹¹¹ In his first circular issued on 6 October 1816, he repeated Hanon's appeal for his former compatriots living in France to return to the Congregation. "Hasten to gather around me. Let us leave our captivity behind and reenter upon the soil of our fathers. Let us reconstruct the temple that their presence sanctified and that impious hands reduced to a heap of ruins. Let us reunite around the king who loves us and has called Saint Vincent de Paul the saint of the Bourbons and us the Missionaries of the Bourbons. He supports our reunion, and awaits the moment when he can show us his paternal and royal favor."¹¹²

The next request for Louis XVIII to show his "paternal and royal favor" toward the Congregation came with the negotiations for the grant of a new mother house. The 1816 assembly had authorized Jean-Jacques Dubois to persuade the government to find a suitable house. Dubois wrote to Louis XVIII in early October. He asked that old Saint-Lazare be ceded back to the Congregation. The community was willing, temporarily, to share the vast old complex with its prisoners. As Dubois noted, "We believe that the house of Saint-Lazare is the only house available which offers the double advantage of being

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ For a brief biographical sketch of Verbert see *ibid.*, 294-96.

¹¹⁰ The assembly also decided that if Verbert should decline his election, the runner-up, Jean Compans, would be presented to the Holy See for confirmation. See Perbyore, *Vicaires-Généraux*, 418.

¹¹¹ For text of the letter from Claude to Verbert informing him of his election see *Circulaires*, 2: 640.

¹¹² Verbert, *Circulaires*, 2: 298.

economical for the government to dispose of and provides the space the Congregations needs so that it can promptly return to the exercise of all their honorable ministries.”¹¹³ The king was inclined at first to grant the request.¹¹⁴ However, the opposition of the prefect of Police, the prefect of the department of the Seine, and the Ministry of the Interior was enough to prevent the Lazarists from again taking possession of old Saint-Lazare.¹¹⁵

After long negotiations, the government offered to purchase the hôtel des Lorges located at ninety-five rue de Sèvres.¹¹⁶ On 10 July 1817, the Congregation accepted this offer.¹¹⁷ The community took possession of the property on 9 November 1817, though the royal ordinance authorizing its purchase did not come until 3 December.¹¹⁸ The low price paid by the government reflected the property’s state of ruin. After years of waiting, however, the Congregation was willing to take whatever the government would give it. Individual Daughters of Charity and Lazarists contributed their personal resources to make the new mother house livable.¹¹⁹ The first residents included thirteen priests, eight novices, two brothers, and two domestics.

The Governmental Schism Continues

Six months after his election, Verbert still had received no acknowledgment from the Holy See concerning his nomination as superior general. Writing to Rome in early March, he said that he was willing to allow Sicardi to continue to possess the title of vicar general and exercise jurisdiction, until his (Sicardi’s) death, over the provinces

¹¹³ Jean-Jacques Dubois, Curé de Ste. Marguerite, Agent Général de la Congrégation de la Mission, to Louis XVIII, memo of 9 October 1816, AN.F19.6240.60.

¹¹⁴ At the meeting of the Council of State at which the Lazarists’ request was considered, Louis XVIII said that he desired “that the Lazarists among whom he had been raised should be given their ancient house.” The king pointed out that the Lazarists had been the pastors at Versailles, that one of them had accompanied his wife in exile, and that they had suffered for their loyalty to the king. A member of the council replied, “Sire, if Your Majesty so orders it will be done, but may I be permitted to point out that this resolution to reestablish the Lazarists in their ancient house will cost the government a million-and-a-half francs” [the cost of another prison]. The king responded at this point, “Oh, I am not rich enough to make this sacrifice. I therefore direct the Prefect of the Seine to find them a house.” “Recueil de documents originaux minutes et copies, relatifs à la Congrégation des Lazaristes (1825-27) XIXe siècle,” BN, *Nouvelle Acquisitions Françaises*, 21798.1.

¹¹⁵ Memorandum of October 1816, from the “préfecture de police, 2^e division, 3^eme bureau, No. 71965, Préfet de Police, Comte Angles à son Ex. le Ministre de l’Intérieur,” AN.F19.6240.61.

¹¹⁶ “Établissement des Lazaristes (210 pieces), 1817 negotiations pour la maison-mère,” AN.F19.6239.4.

¹¹⁷ Joseph Boullangier, procurator general of the Lazarists to Msgr. [?], 20 July 1817, AN.F19.6239.4.38.

¹¹⁸ *Actes du Gouvernement*, 115-16.

¹¹⁹ Étienne, *Notice*, 15.

of Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Poland.¹²⁰ The papal brief finally arrived in July 1817. Verbert learned that Sicardi and the Italians had outmaneuvered him as they had his predecessors. The Holy See recognized Verbert as vicar general only for the Congregation in France and for the Daughters of Charity in France and elsewhere.¹²¹ Rome thus reestablished the status quo of 1805, when Sicardi had first received recognition as vicar general.

Verbert, who realized that Rome had taken his request for confirmation as superior general rather than as vicar general very badly, wrote to Cardinal Consalvi to justify himself. He denied that his request had been "motivated by any pride or ambition."¹²² He noted that since conditions still did not allow the convocation of a general assembly, the French had asked for papal approval of his election as superior general to end "this division of authority and lack of unity." Verbert expressed the French opinion that if the division was "perpetuated habitually, that in the future it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to restore unity." He closed by saying, "I rely totally on the wisdom of your Eminence to decide whether my request was well founded."¹²³

On 1 January 1818, the aged Sicardi issued a circular informing the Congregation that with the Holy See's permission he was naming Francesco Antonio Baccari as pro-vicar general.¹²⁴ In May, Sicardi wrote to Verbert responding to his plea to end the schism, "Regarding the office of vicar general of the Missionaries in France that you exercise and that of superior general that you have spoken to me about, let me say in all simplicity that I am responsible for arranging things in the way in which they have been decided. I personally have written to and spoken with the pope, and I am content with the outcome. Allow the Lord to assist you and give you the courage to put in good order that which providence has given you."¹²⁵

Slowly, the French began to reestablish the Congregation in their country. Some former members were still trickling back as they could detach themselves from their responsibilities among the diocesan clergy. In 1818-1819, the first aspirants entered the new internal seminary at rue de Sèvres. Pierre Le Go returned to the Congregation to

¹²⁰ Sicardi was then eighty-seven years of age.

¹²¹ The brief was dated 16 July and was entitled *Habita ratione* (*Acta Apostolica*, 186).

¹²² Letter from Verbert to Cardinal Consalvi quoted by Perboyre, *Vicaires-Généraux*, 430-31.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Sicardi, *Circulaires*, 2: 337-38.

¹²⁵ Sicardi to Verbert, 2 May 1818, quoted in Perboyre, *Vicaires-Généraux*, 432.

serve as the seminary's first postrevolutionary director.

During the winter of 1818-1819 Verbert fell dangerously ill. The French were concerned because he had not yet received the faculty of naming his successor. They successfully petitioned the Holy See for this permission. In case of Verbert's death, the brief authorized them to nominate a new vicar general for confirmation by the Holy See.¹²⁶ The brief was dated 21 March. Verbert died on 4 March.¹²⁷ Again, the French confreres gathered in Paris to elect a vicar general.¹²⁸ At the assembly held on 13 May, the twenty-one missionaries present elected Charles-Vincent de Paul Boujard as vicar general.¹²⁹

Étienne in his *Notice* gives the following account of Boujard's election without any further comment.

An assembly composed of those Missionaries who resided in Paris, and many others who came from various other parts of France, proceeded to the choice of the confrere who would succeed M. Verbert. The votes were cast in favor of M. Boujard....Rome ratified his election, and he received his brief of nomination dated 10 August 1820. However, he only had the power to govern the members of the Congregation in France and the Daughters of Charity in France and Switzerland. All the foreign provinces were administered by another vicar general appointed by Rome. This was M. Baccari, who also governed the Daughters of Charity in Spain and Poland.¹³⁰

There was much more that went on, however, concerning Boujard's appointment than Étienne admitted. The bitter schism between the Italians and the French continued.

For some reason, the French had written to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide asking permission for Verbert to name his successor. The Cardinal Prefect of this Congregation issued the requested brief.¹³¹ After Boujard's election Joseph Boullangier, the French procurator general, wrote to the pope and to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. He asked for confirmation of Boujard's election as vicar general for France, the foreign missions, and as superior general of the Daughters of Charity.¹³²

¹²⁶ *Acta Apostolica*, 234.

¹²⁷ Sicardi died on 13 June and was succeeded automatically by Antonio Baccari.

¹²⁸ Boujard, *Circulaires*, 2: 300-01.

¹²⁹ For a brief biographical sketch of Boujard see *Circulaires*, 2: 299-300.

¹³⁰ Étienne, *Notice*, 15-16.

¹³¹ *Acta Apostolica*, 234.

¹³² Perboyre, *Vicaires-Généraux*, 558.



*M.^r Baccari, Antoine.
Nommé Vicaire Général
en 1819 jusqu'au 16 Janvier 1827.*

Antonio Baccari, C.M., Italian vicar general, 1819-1827

Meanwhile, in Rome, Baccari learned of Verbert's death only by accident. He was unaware of the permission from Propaganda Fide, authorizing the French to nominate a successor to Verbert. Baccari took matters in his own hands and approached the Holy See to ask how the next French vicar general should be chosen. This situation illustrates the fact that at this stage of the schism there was a complete lack of communication between the French and Italians.

After his audience with Pius VII, Baccari wrote to the French instructing them on how to proceed in the nomination of a new vicar general. He sent this letter on the same date that the French missionaries were gathering in Paris. The letter still had not reached Paris when Boullangier wrote to the Holy See asking for Boujard's confirmation.¹³³ When the French did not respond to this initial letter, Baccari wrote again instructing them to propose two or three names for the Holy See's consideration. In July, the French received a letter from Propaganda. The Congregation noted that it had learned of Verbert's death and wondered why it had not received a request for his successor's confirmation. Boullangier wrote back informing Propaganda that the matter now rested with the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. To counteract Baccari's influence in Rome, the French enlisted the aid of Joachim Isoard, the French auditor at the Sacred Rota. The rest of 1819 and the first eight months of 1820 passed without any news. The decision finally came on 10 August 1820. The terms again represented a French defeat.¹³⁴ Boujard found his jurisdiction limited to the Lazarists and Daughters of Charity in France and the Levantine missions. The Holy See denied him the faculty of naming his successor and stated its intention to name a superior general. The new superior general would reside in Rome and govern the Double Family outside France.¹³⁵

¹³³ In his letter, Baccari informed the French of the displeasure of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars because of their appeals to Propaganda Fide. He told them that they were to transmit the names of candidates for the position to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Finally, he told them not to ask that the vicar general be named as superior general of the Daughters of Charity since the king of Spain had requested that the Daughters in his kingdom be placed under the jurisdiction of the Roman vicar general and since the Russian emperor had forbade the sisters in Poland to have any dealings with their foreign superiors. Perboyre, *Vicaires-Généraux*, 558.

¹³⁴ *Acta Apostolica*, 187.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

Boujard wrote to the papal nuncio in Paris protesting the papal brief's terms. He claimed that they "destroyed the essence of the Congregation of the Mission whose superior general has always resided in France and whose mother house has always been in Paris."¹³⁶ Boujard pointed out that the 1817 brief confirming Verbert as vicar general had promised the French that "the Congregation of the Mission would be reestablished under its ancient form."¹³⁷ Boujard also predicted that this action would keep former members from rejoining the Congregation, would cause others to leave, and would trouble, divide, and quickly ruin the Daughters of Charity. However, the most important objection raised by Boujard was that "The government, and above all the king of France, will not permit these changes."¹³⁸

On 25 January 1821, Boujard and Boullangier had an audience in Paris with the nuncio, Vincenzo Macchi. According to Boujard, the nuncio informed them that the Holy See would soon confirm Boujard as vicar general.¹³⁹ The nuncio told the Frenchmen that "The pope had no intention of appointing a superior general in Rome and that the seat of the superior general would remain in Paris."¹⁴⁰ Macchi also told them that it was the Holy See's decision, "until a new order of things can be established to maintain the status quo."¹⁴¹ This meant the continued existence of two vicars general.¹⁴² For the moment, this status quo satisfied both the French and the Italians, even though it meant the continuation of the schism.

It was at the height of this controversy that Jean-Baptiste Étienne arrived at the mother house to begin his long career in the Congregation of the Mission. Étienne's biographer, Edouard Rosset had this to say about the arrival of Étienne and another seminarian from Metz:

¹³⁶ "Réponse à été remise à Mgr. le nonce du Pape, le 23 novembre 1820," *Dossier: Boujard*, Casier 38, bas 3°, ACMP.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Acta Apostolica*, 188.

¹⁴⁰ In a subsequent letter to Boujard, the nuncio claimed that the Holy See never had the intention of establishing a superior general in Rome. According to the nuncio, what the brief had meant was that the Italian missionaries were to be allowed to elect a new vicar general to replace Baccari who had long requested permission to resign. This explanation rings hollow since Baccari remained as Italian vicar general until the end of the schism six years later. Macchi to Boujard, 25 February 1821, *Boujard*, ACMP.

¹⁴¹ Cardinal Consalvi told Monsignor Isoard that "the actions taken were only temporary and at a more favorable time the Holy See would take other actions that would be advantageous to an institute that the Holy See has always regarded with special favor." Cardinal Consalvi to Monsignor Isoard, 12 November 1820, *Boujard*, ACMP. These actions would include the convocation of a general assembly, the regular election of a superior general, and the return of constitutional government.

¹⁴² "Visite de M.M. Boujard et Boullangier chez Mgr. Le Nonce du Pape, le 25 janvier 1821," *Boujard*, ACMP.

When they entered this house they were very disappointed by what they saw. They had expected to find a community that was numerous and prosperous. They found practically nothing. This unexpected sight was a rude trial for them, and their resolution was shaken. Nevertheless, they made the retreat that ordinarily precedes admission and during these days consecrated to prayer they overcame this very human initial reaction...They encouraged each other and decided to remain....Thus, in the silence of a retreat God prepared the man destined by providence to overcome these disasters.¹⁴³

¹⁴³Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 21-22.

Chapter 4

The End of the Schism

Étienne as a Young Lazarist

Beginning his life in the internal seminary, Étienne fell under the direction of Pierre Le Go.¹ This priest had only recently returned to the community from the diocesan clergy of Le Mans.² Rosset gives this judgment concerning Le Go: "He was formed at old Saint-Lazare in all our holy state's virtues. During the days of persecution and exile, he faithfully conserved the Little Company's spirit. No one could better have inspired the mother house's new generations in the esteem and practice of these virtues."³ According to Rosset, Le Go "promptly discerned the merit" of the seminarian from Metz.⁴ He "spared no effort to develop the rare qualities that he had noticed." These qualities included "a solid piety, a sweet gravity, the greatest facility in adapting himself to the exigencies of community life, and a fidelity to all the community's rules, which he kept perfectly."⁵

Étienne's talents attracted favorable attention from the small community living at the mother house, including the vicar general, Charles Boujard. From his earliest days in the community, Étienne was a favorite. His elders saw him as a "young man destined for great things, who one day will undoubtedly render the Congregation eminent services."⁶ Étienne would always speak with great respect of "these venerable ancient Missionaries, whom I was honored to be the student of and from whom I received the most benevolent affection."⁷

These senior confreres regaled Étienne with vivid, if highly subjective, remembrances of the prerevolutionary community. He heard of the "ancien régime's splendors and abuses. He learned of Saint-

¹ From the time of Saint Vincent until the Second Vatican Council, the length of the novitiate, or "internal seminary," in the Congregation of the Mission was two years. The first year was reserved exclusively for community formation. During the second year, the "novices" continued their studies.

² For an obituary of Pierre Le Go see *Relations Abrégées*, 1: 548-66. It is interesting to note that Le Go had entered the community in Paris just before the revolution, and had taken vows only eight months before the Congregation's dissolution. Le Go would have been a novice at the old Saint-Lazare at the time of its sacking. His experiences as a Lazarist were thus only four years as a novice and student.

³ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 23.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁷ Étienne, *Notice*, 4.

Lazare's traditions and misfortunes."⁸ According to his biographer, it was through these accounts that Étienne's "precocious intelligence" discerned important lessons for the future, "as he discovered in the unfolding of events divine providence's secret actions and hidden designs."⁹

As a seminarian and young priest, Étienne's education took place in the traditions and attitudes of the Restoration's ecclesiastical culture. This milieu looked to the restoration of the altar and throne's prerevolutionary relationship. Étienne and most of his clerical contemporaries received an archaic and superficial education. Lammenais for his part observed, "Never have the clergy, taken as a whole, been as ignorant as they are today."¹⁰ The contemporary clergy possessed a strong faith, a devotional piety, and a rigid, authoritarian, traditionalist philosophy.¹¹ Adrien Dansette has described these "rigorous notions" in the following way:

Although they might have been relatively uneducated, the clergy did possess a political and social doctrine that supported their ideology. Developed during the time of the Empire by the laymen, Joseph de Maistre and Louis de Bonald,¹² this philosophy was not widely propagated until after the re-establishment of the throne. Essentially counter-revolutionary, it interpreted the events of the revolution and Empire in light of traditional ideas. It opposed reason to tradition, the individual to society, and placed God at the summit of the human edifice. Only historical reality, and not human intelligence, is capable of discovering the truth; and this truth reveals that the human being not only has rights with respect to society but duties as well. This foundational truth is transmitted under God's hierarchical authority to the sovereign and to the head of the family.¹³

The restored Congregation had intimate ties to the royal government because of its legal existence. Thus, the French Lazarists were supporters of the era's traditionalism and revived Gallicanism.¹⁴ The confreres would have enthusiastically echoed a popular royalist chant: "Vive la France! Vive le roi! Toujours en France, les Bourbons et la

⁸ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 26.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Quoted in Dansette, *Histoire Religieuse*, 1: 175.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1: 241-42.

¹² See, for example, Louis de Bonald, *Législation primitive, considérée dans les derniers temps par les seules lumières de la raison, suivie de divers traités et discours politiques*, volume 2 in *Oeuvres de M. de Bonald* (Paris: Adrien Le Clerc, 1829).

¹³ Dansette, *Histoire Religieuse*, 1: 243-44.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1: 241-43.

Foi!"¹⁵

The archbishop of Paris, Hyacinth Louis de Quélen, ordained Étienne in his private chapel on 27 September 1825. Even before his ordination, because of the acute shortage of priests, Étienne taught dogmatic theology, chant, and rubrics to the younger seminarians at the mother house. Immediately after his ordination he became secretary to the vicar general, procurator of the house of Saint-Lazare, and prefect of the community chapel. During his entire community life, Étienne would know no other assignment than at the mother house and no other position than a position of leadership.

Rosset spoke about the beginning of Étienne's public career in this way: "The time had arrived for him to enter the active life. Provided with a solid education and formed in all the Company's virtues, he left the solitude of the seminary to begin the career of good works that God had opened before him... From now on no important matter took place at Saint-Lazare, or in the entire Congregation, in which he did not play a key role."¹⁶

A concern of the young Lazarist was to expand the cramped mother house. His highest priority was to provide it, for the first time, with an appropriate chapel. The community appealed to the government for financial assistance. Étienne met with the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, Denis Frayssinous.¹⁷ Again, the Lazarists' loyalty, utility, and service to the government did not go unrewarded. Even in his old age, Étienne never tired of repeating what the minister had said to him during their interview:

I greatly respect your Congregation. Do you know why? I previously had no contact with it, but I have closely studied the history of the religious orders. As a result of this study, I have concluded that today it is your Congregation that is best prepared for the future; this is because its spirit is the only one that has adapted itself to the times in which we live. I want to do all that I can to support it. I want to see it grow and better organize itself so that it can respond effectively to the needs of our age. If the government is wise, it will confer on it all the religious responsibilities that depend on it.¹⁸

¹⁵ Bertier De Sauvigny, *La Restauration*, 322.

¹⁶ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 29.

¹⁷ Denis-Luc-Antoine Frayssinous, titular Bishop of Hermopolis, Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs and of Public Instruction (1824-1828). See Owen Connelly, ed., *Historical Dictionary of France from the 1815 Restoration to the Second Empire* (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1987), 2: 478-80.

¹⁸ Étienne, *Notice*, 18.

Under Frayssinous' urging, in spite of tight budgetary restrictions, the king and the government agreed to provide the necessary 200,000 francs.¹⁹ The ordinance directed that the adjoining property on the rue de Sèvres, "will be given over to the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint-Lazare in order to assist in the establishment of this Congregation."²⁰ Less than two months later, the community laid the cornerstone for their chapel. The new chapel was dedicated on 1 November 1827.

The End of the Governmental Schism: 1825-1827

As a novice and seminarian, Étienne also learned of the antagonisms and schism between the French and their confreres in the foreign provinces, especially the Italians. He would only have recently arrived in Paris, when the dispute over the terms of Boujard's succession as vicar general and the papal confirmation of the continuing schism took place. In the early 1820s, the French and the Italians had little if any contact. However, as the decade wore on there was growing dissatisfaction over the continuing separation.

The newly-ordained Étienne, as secretary to the elderly vicar general, took part in "the important negotiations that had for their goal the nomination of a superior general."²¹ Rosset summarized the thought of both sides regarding the schism:

The Congregation, deprived of its head for more than twenty-seven years and divided into two jurisdictions, ardently wanted to end this sad division. It wanted to reunite all the provinces under only one superior. Both Rome and Paris agreed on this point, but they continued to disagree on the conditions and means. Where would the assembly that would choose the new superior general take place? Where would the general ultimately reside? These questions remained divisive, and seemed impossible to reconcile.²²

In Paris, the community had planned that the chapel's dedication would culminate with the translation of Saint Vincent's relics to their new resting place. However, Boujard decided to delay the translation to

¹⁹ "14 juin 1826-Ordonnance de Charles X, autorisant le préfet de la Seine à acquérir la maison, située rue de Sèvres, 93, pour la Congrégation de la Mission," *Actes du Gouvernement*, 120-21. The king paid one half of this sum out of his own budget, the Ministry of Marine and Colonies paid one fourth, and the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs paid the other one fourth.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

²¹ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 32.

²² *Ibid.*, 33.

await the production of a magnificent silver reliquary. Archbishop de Quélen had promised to donate the reliquary in the name of the archdiocese of Paris. This delayed the ceremony until the spring of 1830.

According to Étienne, "It was undoubtedly providential that our holy founder's body did not enter our new mother house while internal divisions existed in the Company. It awaited the Congregation's restoration on its ancient foundation, and reestablishment in its normal state."²³ As far as Étienne, the French Lazarists, and the French government were concerned, this meant reunification under a French superior general who would continue to reside in Paris. The Italians wanted the schism to end by the papal appointment of a superior general. They hoped that the new general would not be French and would reside in Rome.²⁴

The first crack in the logjam between the French and the Italians came early in 1825. Francesco Antonio Baccari wrote to Boujard suggesting that the time had come to end the schism. He proposed that the Holy See convoke a general assembly to elect a superior general. Baccari said that he was willing to attend the assembly either as a simple delegate or even not to attend the gathering at all. The implication was that he would be willing to resign as vicar general.²⁵ When Boujard failed to reply, Baccari wrote again in April suggesting that the pope could break the impasse by appointing a new general.²⁶ Simultaneously, Boujard received a letter from the Holy See that said,

The missionaries of Saint Vincent de Paul [outside France] desire reunification with their French confreres. This disunion has been harmful to the cause of the faith. M. [Giuseppe] Baldeschi, a member of the Congregation who is presently in the service of His Holiness and who does not wish this scandalous schism to continue any longer, has petitioned the pope to intervene in this affair and bring it to an end.²⁷ The pope has kindly responded to this request saying that he desires a formal proposal on this subject. Consequently, the vicar general on behalf of all the French priests is to submit a request for this reunion to His Holiness. To avoid continuing disputes, they are to ask His Holiness if he would, by virtue of a papal brief, choose a superior general to govern the entire Congregation. M. Baldeschi has

²³ Étienne, *Notice*, 19.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Baccari to Boujard, 13 January 1825, *Boujard: Vicaire Général 1819-27*, ACMP.

²⁶ Baccari to Boujard, 3 April 1825, *ibid.*

²⁷ Giuseppe Baldeschi, C.M., (1791-1849) was master of ceremonies to Leo XII and then to the Vatican Basilica. He lived in the Quirinal palace. For a short biographical notice see Edouard Rosset, C.M., *Notices Bibliographiques sur les écrivains de la Congrégation de la Mission* (Angoulême: J. B. Baillarger, 1878), 7.

said that His Holiness is disposed to reestablish the general in France and to restore all things on their ancient bases. Therefore, the Missionaries are to send His Holiness the necessary supplication.²⁸

Boujard wrote for advice to Joachim d'Isoard, now the Dean of the Sacred Rota. D'Isoard was a strong ally in the Vatican's corridors. The Frenchman replied in October, suggesting that the time for favorable papal action had arrived.²⁹ To pave the way for the Lazarists' reunion, the pope made it known that he would welcome the resignation of both vicars general. Baccari had already stated his willingness to resign. Boujard, however, refused to consider such a move. Étienne commented, concerning Boujard, that "although blessed with many excellent qualities his great weakness was his attachment to power."³⁰ According to Étienne's account, Rome sent a representative to Paris to speak with the vicar general. This was M. de Sambucy from the French embassy to the Holy See. Sambucy insisted on the need to end "the abnormal state of affairs in the Congregation." He supposedly led Boujard "to believe that it was the intention of the Holy Father to name him as superior general."³¹ Thinking his appointment as superior general was secure, Boujard hopefully would then resign.

In January 1826, Boujard received a summons from the nuncio in Paris, Antonio Macchi. Boujard brought Étienne to this meeting. The nuncio began by asking the vicar general if he favored the restoration of governmental unity. Boujard replied that he wanted unity as much as his foreign brothers did, whenever the timing was right. The nuncio then asked Boujard if he knew that the opinion in Rome was that a "coldness and antagonism" existed between the French and the Italians. Boujard characterized this as an "unjust imputation," and expressed the desire that the Italians match the attachment that the French felt for them. The nuncio directed Boujard to prepare a report on the state of the Congregation in France, an explanation of the events that had led to the schism, and suggestions for means to restore unity.³² The nuncio also told Boujard that Rome was considering naming a "foreigner" as superior general. The next day, Boujard sent Étienne to the nunciature with a memorandum opposing these proposals.³³

²⁸ Undated manuscript, *Boujard*, ACMP. See also Perboyre, *Vicaires Généraux*, 567.

²⁹ Isoard to Boujard, 12 October 1825, *Boujard*, ACMP.

³⁰ Étienne, *Notice*, 20.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Early in the discussions, it was apparent that given the disorganized state of the Congregation it would not be possible to convoke a general assembly for the election of a superior general. Therefore, the only way to rectify the situation was for the Holy See to take action. See Perboyre, *Vicaires Généraux*, 570.

³³ Boujard to Macchi, note of 20 January 1826, *Boujard*, ACMP.

The vicar general immediately reported these conversations to Frayssinous and forwarded copies of these memoranda.³⁴ In both cases, Étienne drafted the documents. In his *Notice*, Étienne recalled that after he had written the required memorandum Boujard signed it and sent him to deliver it to the nuncio. Étienne said that "All this was done in the greatest secrecy and without informing any of the Missionaries at the mother house. At this time, the vicar general had no assistants or councilors to help in the company's administration."³⁵ Étienne recalled that after delivering the memorandum to the nuncio,

He engaged me in a conversation about the choice of a superior general. He spoke at length about the small number of French confreres and the impossibility of finding among them a man capable of filling this important post. The nuncio told me that the pope had decided not to name Monsieur Boujard. I realized that his goal was to persuade me that under the circumstances the pope would have to look for someone outside France. All I said was that while we may have not been rich as to the numbers of our subjects, despite this poverty it would not be impossible to find among us a Missionary capable of governing. Our conversation ended on these terms.³⁶

In his *Note sur la Congrégation de la Mission de St. Vincent de Paul, dite Lazaristes*, submitted to the nuncio, Étienne traced the Congregation's establishment in France under Saint Vincent and its foreign expansion.³⁷ He recalled that "The Missionaries in all these countries were under obedience to Saint Vincent de Paul who resided in Paris."³⁸ Étienne went on to point out that "from Saint Vincent's time until the French Revolution all his successors [as superior general] were French, resided like him in France, and preserved their authority over the Lazarist Missionaries everywhere. Thus, the headquarters in Paris gave birth to all the foreign foundations."³⁹

According to Étienne, during the reign of Louis XIV and then during the French Revolution, the Italian missionaries had tried to have the Congregation's headquarters transferred to Rome under an

³⁴ Boujard to Frayssinous, 24 January 1826, *ibid.*

³⁵ It seems extraordinary that Boujard would take into his confidence, and rely solely upon, a newly-ordained priest and not consult with any senior missionaries. Boujard's administration as vicar general appears to have been somewhat lax. For example, he did not issue annual circular letters.

³⁶ Étienne, *Notice*, 20-21. Again, it seems extraordinary that the nuncio would take into his confidence a young priest, whose position was only that of a secretary to the vicar general.

³⁷ Étienne incorrectly claimed that the Congregation had been founded in Spain and Portugal during the lifetime of Saint Vincent. "Note sur la Congrégation de la Mission de St. Vincent de Paul, dite Lazaristes (remite au Nonce)," undated, unsigned, memo in Étienne's handwriting, *Boujard*, ACMF.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Italian superior general.⁴⁰ These attempts, however, “had been unsuccessful because of the opposition of the French government and the French Lazarists.” He pointed out that the chaos of the revolutionary era had not allowed the convocation of a regular general assembly to elect a superior general. The Holy See, therefore, had named vicars general to govern the Congregation’s two halves until an assembly could be convoked. Now that the Church was at peace, “His Holiness wants to reunite the Congregation of the Mission under one head residing in Paris.”⁴¹ Étienne noted that some in Rome remained unconvinced that “this head must be French.” They were considering appointing “a foreign Missionary as superior general.”⁴²

In his memorandum Étienne concluded, “The needs of the Congregation of Saint-Lazare demand that its government always remain the same, which is to say, that its superior general must be French and must reside in Paris.”⁴³ The reasons that he gave were,

1. The Bull of Urban VIII approved the Congregation of Saint Lazare as a French Congregation. Louis XIII confirmed this by his Letters Patent. The community is universally recognized as having been born in France, as always having had a French superior general, and as having its headquarters in Paris. It is natural that a Frenchman govern such a Congregation.
2. In the past, when a superior general has been elected the choice has always been made from among the French Lazarists. Any other choice would lead to grave problems and division.⁴⁴
3. Since the administration of the Congregation of the Mission is united with the administration of the Company of Daughters of Charity, the superior general serves as head of both groups. This Company of the Daughters of Charity is composed of around 4,000 members distributed in 308 establishments. Since it is entirely French, it demands a French superior.⁴⁵ It is easy to imagine the unfortunate results of nominating a foreign superior for this community.
4. If it should happen that the superior general of the Congregation of the Lazarists is a foreigner, nothing could stop him from taking as his assis-

⁴⁰ Étienne is referring here to the eighteenth-century nationalistic antagonisms between the French and the Italians which were of course not limited to the Louis XIV’s reign.

⁴¹ Étienne, *Note*, ACOMP.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.* A version of this memorandum as forwarded to the government, can be found in the BN, *Nouvelles acquisitions françaises*, 21798.15.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Some revealing differences in detail and wording appear between the memorandum submitted by Étienne to the nuncio and the memorandum submitted to the government. One difference appears at this point. In the document sent to the government Étienne stated that “the declaration of Louis XIV on this subject was that the election of a foreign Lazarist was in opposition to the kingdom’s laws.” Étienne is referring to Louis XIV’s veto of Maurice Faure in the 1697 election.

⁴⁵ On this point, Étienne stated a downright falsehood. Daughters of Charity did exist outside France in Italy, Spain, and Poland. In these countries, rule by a French superior was problematic.

tants foreigners like himself.⁴⁶ Also, nothing could prevent him from putting foreigners at the head of the Lazarist houses in France. Thus, insensibly, the Congregation of the Mission in France would cease to be French. 5. Today, the Congregation of the Lazarists owes its legal existence in France to a royal ordinance dated 3 February 1816. This ordinance reestablished the Congregation on the basis that it had existed before the revolution. Legally speaking, if it had a foreign administration it would lose its legal existence.⁴⁷

Étienne ended by saying, "It is to prevent the effects [of the appointment of a foreign superior] that the French Lazarists have commissioned me to address Your Excellency with this exposé of the principal reasons that require that their Congregation remain as it has always existed, which is to say having a French superior general residing in Paris. They request that Your Excellency consider these points and support them with your authority."⁴⁸ The government needed little urging to take up the French Lazarists' cause. According to Étienne's *Notice*, it was Monsignor d'Isoard who warned Frayssinous of the Roman plan "to have the pope name a non-French superior general who would reside in the capital of the Catholic world."⁴⁹ With this advance knowledge, Charles X⁵⁰ "immediately ordered his ambassador to the Holy See to express his veto."⁵¹ Following this action, the government negotiated with the Holy See to resolve the issue. Étienne said that the community had no role in these negotiations. When the French cause was victorious, Étienne claimed, "Thus, without any intervention on our part, providence stopped all the schismatic intrigues of the Italian Missionaries. Providence overcame their efforts with a result that was totally opposite of what they wanted. They had been confident of

⁴⁶ Again on this point, Étienne was being less than honest. According to the Constitutions of the Congregation, the general assembly elected the assistants general. A superior general could appoint an assistant general between meetings of general assemblies given the death or resignation of an elected assistant. In this case, the general had to consult the visitors of the European provinces, and the next general assembly would have to confirm the appointed assistant in office.

⁴⁷ In his governmental memorandum, Étienne is more explicit on this point:

It was M. Hanon, a French Lazarist (who while serving as vicar general under papal authority and approved in this position by the government) solicited and obtained from His Majesty Louis XVIII, a royal ordinance dated 3 February 1816. This act reestablished the Congregation of Saint-Lazare as it existed before the Revolution. Also, this act reestablished this Congregation as a French Congregation. In the eyes of the government it would evidently cease to be French if a foreign superior governed it. Under these circumstances, the community would lose its legal existence, a legal existence upon which depends its possession of its headquarters, its resources, and its ability to fulfill its functions in France. It would find itself deprived of all these inestimable advantages without which it would be nothing, and it could never regain them because of the law adopted by the two legislative bodies in 1825 regarding the religious communities.

See also, "24 mai 1825-Loi relative à l'autorisation et à l'existence légale des congrégations et communautés religieuses de femmes," *Actes du Gouvernement*, 14-15.

⁴⁸ BN.21798.

⁴⁹ Étienne, *Notice*, 19.

⁵⁰ In 1824, Charles X succeeded his brother Louis XVIII.

⁵¹ Étienne, *Notice*, 20.

victory, but because of the government's intervention, which we did not request, their success was changed into confusion."⁵²

Undoubtedly, D'Isoard did warn the French government of the plans under discussion at the Vatican. However, Boujard and Étienne also gave the government details of the Roman proposal after their January interviews with the nuncio. Étienne's memorandum besides attacking the Holy See's plan, also requested government intervention. Available documents also show Étienne's contention that the French Lazarists had nothing to do with the government's activities was false.⁵³ Throughout the negotiations, Étienne and the Lazarists in Paris fed the government information, positioning themselves to insure the Italians' defeat.

The Negotiations⁵⁴

On 11 March 1826, Ange-Hyacinth-Maxence, Baron de Damas, the French Foreign Minister, wrote to the French ambassador in Rome, Mathieu-Felicité the duke de Montmorency-Laval, concerning the Lazarist dispute.⁵⁵ Damas related that he had received a dispatch from Monsignor Frayssinous dated 4 March. The Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs warned him that the pope appeared to have the intention of naming a superior general for the Lazarists and "that this dignity would be conferred upon a foreigner. Further, this new head of the Congregation would not reside in Paris."⁵⁶ Damas observed,

France has incontestable precedents to support the position that the superior general of the Lazarists cannot be chosen except from

⁵² Ibid., 21. Étienne claimed that "It is only just to say that the Italian Missionaries engaged in this intrigue were very small in number. The immense majority of their confreres disavowed their actions." Whenever there was any conflict between Paris and other national provinces of the Congregation, Étienne would claim that the trouble was caused only by a small number of disgruntled confreres and that the vast majority of the province's members did not support the dissidents. The strength and success of the nationalistic opposition to the French and Étienne throughout this era, however, belie his claim. Ibid., 22.

⁵³ For example, in Bishop Frayssinous's memorandum to Charles X concerning the brief of Leo XII nominating the new superior general he said, "but since there were strong reasons to suspect that the choice of His Holiness was going to fall upon a foreigner, the French Lazarists asked for the government's intervention with the Holy See to obtain the nomination of a French superior general." BN.21798.54.

⁵⁴ In his memorandum to Charles X, Frayssinous states the reasons for governmental intervention in internal Lazarist affairs: "The government of the king, jealous to conserve for France the right it had always enjoyed and wanting to prevent the grave consequences that would have resulted from the nomination of a foreigner was eager to support the views of the French Lazarists. The Minister of Foreign Affairs began negotiations with the Court of Rome by way of Your Majesty's ambassador there." Ibid.

⁵⁵ Baron de Damas to Mathieu-Felicité, Duke de Montmorency-Laval, dispatch of 11 March 1826, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 960: 139, AMAE. Ange-Hyacinth-Maxence, Baron de Damas (1785-1862), foreign minister under Charles X (1824-1828). See *Historical Dictionary of France from the 1815 Restoration to the Second Empire*, 1: 287-88.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

among the French ecclesiastics who belong to this Congregation. This community was born in France. It has always named a superior from among the French Lazarists. Paris has always been the place of his residence. The election of a foreign superior would cause inconveniences that are easy to foresee. A foreigner would bring other foreigners with him. He could place these foreigners as the heads of all the Congregation's French establishments. Thus, these foundations that from their origin have been entirely French would cease to be so. As you know, this is already the case in the establishments that the French Lazarists have founded in the Levant. These missions have almost as many Italians and native missionaries as Frenchmen. The royal government believes in the importance of conserving the national character of these missions and is very interested in the means to insure the proper subjects to serve them. The nomination of a foreign superior general would not be in line with this policy, as everyone agrees.⁵⁷

The ambassador received instructions to ask at the Holy See if such an appointment was under consideration. If such a plan was being considered, he was to "demand in the name of His Majesty's government and by virtue of a right consecrated by precedent, that the chief superior of the Congregation must be chosen from among the French Lazarists."⁵⁸

On 5 April 1826, Montmorency wrote to Baron de Damas telling him that on the previous day he had met with the pope. At the end of the audience, the ambassador raised the issue of the Lazarists' superior general. Montmorency wondered aloud to the pontiff if a good reason existed for not choosing, as was customary, "an ecclesiastic who was a subject of the King."⁵⁹ The ambassador told the pope that a rumor was circulating that he intended to appoint a foreigner. Leo XII replied that he had thought that "a precedent already existed for a foreigner to occupy the position of superior general."⁶⁰ The ambassador commented that he had informed the pontiff to the contrary and that he had "agreed with our position."⁶¹

On 24 April 1826, Damas wrote to Montmorency saying, "The dispositions that His Holiness has manifested about the future nomination of a superior general of the Lazarists could not be more satisfying. You have successfully defended the right we have that this dignity must go to a Frenchman. I have asked the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs to inform

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ This is a rather surprising misconception on the pontiff's part. Perhaps, Leo XII was thinking about the Italian vicars general whom the papacy had appointed since the beginning of the century.

⁶⁰ Montmorency to Damas, 5 April 1826, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 960: 183, AMAE.

⁶¹ Ibid.

me concerning which subjects may be worthy of presenting to His Holiness. I will have the honor of forwarding these recommendations to you."⁶² Before this letter could reach Montmorency, he had written to Damas. The ambassador reported that after his papal audience the Cardinal Secretary of State, Giulio della Somaglia, had asked him to submit a memorandum "giving the reasons for the legitimacy of our claims."⁶³ Montmorency noted that he had presented this memorandum based on the information contained in the March dispatch. The ambassador concluded, "The dispositions that I have recognized in the Holy Father and in his Minister give me the confidence to say that the final decision of the Holy See cannot but be favorable to us."⁶⁴

A few weeks later, on 13 May 1826, Montmorency reported to Damas that "the Holy Father has agreed to the nomination of a Frenchman as the Lazarists' superior general."⁶⁵ The ambassador had some surprising news, however, for the pope already had a particular Frenchman in mind. The Holy See favored the appointment of Théodore Bricet. Bricet was then the superior of the Lazarist Levantine missions headquartered at the college of Saint-Benoît in Constantinople.⁶⁶ A month later, the chargé d'affaires of the French embassy in Rome received a letter from Paris informing him that the testimonies gathered concerning Bricet were all favorable.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the government judged that his continued presence in the Levant was necessary to watch over French interests.⁶⁸ Therefore, the government had looked elsewhere among the Lazarists in France for someone qualified to become superior general. Their choice was Pierre de Wailly, then the

⁶²Damas to Montmorency, 26 April 1826, *ibid.*, 960: 209-10.

⁶³Montmorency to Damas, 27 April 1826, *ibid.*, 960: 222.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵Montmorency to Damas, 13 May 1826, *ibid.*, 960: 265.

⁶⁶For a lengthy biographical notice of Bricet see *Relations Abrégées*, 2: 98-225. In 1822, the Congregation of Propaganda Fide had named Bricet prefect apostolic at Constantinople. He held this post until his departure from the region in 1838. Undoubtedly, it was on the basis of this contact that the Congregation recommended Bricet to the Cardinal Secretary of State.

⁶⁷In 1832, a fellow missionary in Constantinople wrote this description of Bricet:

The venerable M. Bricet, our prefect apostolic, does immense good here. A week does not pass that he does not gather many heretics to instruct them in the truths of the faith. Above all, he has the confidence of the Armenians. Over the last four years, he has reconciled more than one hundred of them to the Church. His great charity toward the poor has made everyone venerate him as another Saint Vincent de Paul. Although his health is very delicate, he sustains an unbelievable level of activity, and this activity is entirely dedicated to good works. He shows a tenderness and paternal care for the foundlings whose mothers abandon them at the door of our church, as they are in France. He raises these children at the mission's expense. Even the heretics cannot stop rendering homage to his zeal and his charity. Pray God to conserve our venerable superior, who is the soul of our college and our mission.

M. Moitrelle, missionary and director of Saint-Benoît's college in Constantinople to Jean-Baptiste Étienne, procurator-general of the Congrégation de Saint-Lazare, letter in *Annales*, 1 (1834): 128-29.

⁶⁸Damas to M. Artaud, 12 June 1826, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 960: 327, AMAE.

superior of the Lazarist-run diocesan seminary at Amiens.⁶⁹

According to Étienne's account, Frayssinous, "a devoted protector of the Congregation," had consulted his friend Cousergues about an acceptable candidate for superior general.⁷⁰ Cousergues, who was familiar with the Lazarists in Amiens, warmly recommended De Wailly.⁷¹ Frayssinous then submitted his own recommendation of De Wailly to the Foreign Minister. The Foreign Ministry instructed the chargé d'affaires in Rome to inform the Holy See that the French government preferred the nomination of De Wailly over Bricet.⁷²

Negotiations continued throughout the summer of 1826. The pope assured the French that "the king would see on this occasion how much the Holy See wishes to respond favorably to His Majesty's desires."⁷³ Although it had agreed in principle to De Wailly's appointment and the superior general's continued residence in Paris, Rome was concerned that these actions still would not guarantee the Congregation's unity. The Holy See acknowledged that the Roman Missionaries "were accustomed to their independence."⁷⁴ Cardinal Della Somaglia told the French chargé d'affaires in an audience of 11 August 1826,

Have no fear, it has been a long time since there has been a superior general. This Congregation is in a state of anarchy. We want everything to go well. We do not want any resistance or disobedience. We have the best of intentions. Just a little while longer, and we will have everything arranged... The pope has said that we should build a strong edifice. He has given his approval. What you have asked for, he has agreed to provide. Just a little more time is needed so that all the missionaries in France and Italy agree, and they achieve a most desirable unity.⁷⁵

Artaud ended his account of the audience by saying, "I could add nothing to such a wise policy."⁷⁶ At this point, it was the French Lazarists who tried to delay the appointment. The Cardinal Secretary of State had asked the Lazarists in Paris their reaction to the proposed nomination of De Wailly. Joseph Boullangier, the procurator general, responded. He requested a year's delay in the appointment.⁷⁷

⁶⁹ For a short biographical sketch of De Wailly (1759-1828) see *Circulaires*, 2: 410-11.

⁷⁰ Cousergues was then the vicar general of Amiens, and the administrator of the diocese of Beauvais.

⁷¹ Étienne, *Notice*, 21.

⁷² Damas to Artaud, 12 June 1826, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 960: 327, AMAE.

⁷³ Artaud to Damas, 18 July 1826, *ibid.*, 961: 50-52.

⁷⁴ Damas to Artaud, 4 August 1826, *ibid.*, 961: 92.

⁷⁵ Artaud to Damas, 11 August 1826, *ibid.*, 961: 107.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ For a brief biographical sketch of Boullangier see *Relations Abrégées*, 1: 122-40.

Boullangier praised Boujard's attachment to the Congregation, his services as vicar general, and the personal sacrifices that he had made on the community's behalf. He pointed out that the building program at the mother house that was then underway, despite royal generosity, still needed substantial funds to be completed. Boujard had already given the community 60,000 francs from his own funds to purchase a country home at Gentilly. Boullangier observed that Boujard also had made other sacrifices, "and was disposed to continue to do so."⁷⁸

Boullangier suggested that if Boujard remained as vicar general until the end of the summer of 1827, he would then have presided over the completion of the new chapel, the planned translation of Saint Vincent's relics and the election of a new superioress general for the Daughters of Charity. He concluded with the observation that

I believe that we can regard it certain that if the above events take place during the coming year, then Monsieur Boujard will ask on his own to have a successor. In any event, setting him aside then will be easier. Subsequently, the election or the nomination by the Supreme Pontiff of a superior general for our entire Congregation can take place with the least amount of commotion and with the greatest amount of satisfaction for all concerned, the priests of the Congregation and the Daughters of Charity. This would not be the case if he leaves under the present circumstances.⁷⁹

Artaud admitted that the "government may not have weighed sufficiently all the difficulties that could arise in Paris" nor allowed for the "extreme delicacy" of Boujard's feelings. Nevertheless, he recommended that the government continue to solicit the immediate appointment of De Wailly. Artaud believed that this was the most favorable time to confirm this appointment with the Cardinal Secretary of State and the pope. Delay would not only cause more difficulties among the Lazarists in Paris, but the Roman Missionaries undoubtedly would use this as a pretext to preserve their independence.⁸⁰

Leo XII asked the French government to give an official reaction to Boullangier's request. This move delayed De Wailly's appointment.⁸¹ In November, Damas wrote to Montmorency repeating that the appointment of Pierre de Wailly as superior general was more important than preserving Boujard's delicate feelings. The Foreign Minister also pointed

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Artaud to Damas, 13 September 1826, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 961: 187-90, AMAE. Attached was a copy of Boullangier's "Réflexions."

⁸⁰ Ibid., 961: 187.

⁸¹ Artaud to Damas, 15 September 1826, *ibid.*, 961: 193.

out that it was possible that the Holy See was taking advantage of these objections to delay a nomination that it really did not support. Damas instructed Montmorency, "consequently you must insist on the prompt expedition of the bull appointing Monsieur de Wailly as superior general of the Congregation of Saint Lazare. You are to tell the pope that the King awaits this new testimony of friendship, and that he will be displeased if the nomination meets with new delays."⁸²

Finally on 17 January 1827, Montmorency reported to Damas that he had received a copy of the papal bull appointing De Wailly. The ambassador also related that, as was customary, he had gone to the undersecretary of Briefs to obtain an official copy for the government. According to the ambassador, when he examined the brief he had been shocked to discover that it did not contain all the wording that the government expected. Montmorency reported that he had required the undersecretary, in his presence, to amend the official text. This amendment specified that the Lazarist superior general had to be a subject of the king.⁸³ The ambassador also directed the official to amend the Holy See's copy in his presence.⁸⁴ The brief arrived in Paris on 31 January 1827.

After receiving the papal brief, Damas wrote to Frayssinous. He expressed his satisfaction with the document's contents and wording. He noted "that there was nothing in its terms that violated the government's rights nor anything against the principles of French legislation."⁸⁵ Damas noted with pleasure that the brief confirmed that the superior general had to be a Frenchman, that the Congregation's seat of government should be Paris, and that the administration of the Daughters of Charity was attached to that of the Congregation of the Mission. These terms marked a complete victory for the French Lazarists and the government.

Damas then referred to Boullangier's request for the government to give special consideration to Boujard. According to Damas, now that the Holy See had confirmed De Wailly's nomination, the government conceivably could delay its own approval. This move would allow

⁸² Damas to Montmorency, 10 November 1826, *ibid.*, 961: 265.

⁸³ Étienne incorrectly claimed that "great care had been taken to see that the following points were inserted in the text of the papal brief: 1. That it was for this occasion only that the Sovereign Pontiff was making this nomination. 2. That the title of superior of the Company of the Daughters of Charity, inherent in the office of the superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, made his residence in Paris a necessity." The first of these claims is true, in that this wording is found in the papal decree. However, this is not the point that the French ambassador testified that he ordered inserted. In addition, the text of the papal decree stated the French government's position that the French nature of both communities demanded that their joint superior general be a Frenchman, and that he reside in France. Étienne, *Notice*, 21.

⁸⁴ Montmorency to Damas, 17 January 1827, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 962: 26, AMAE.

⁸⁵ Damas to Frayssinous, 1 February 1827, BN.21798.46.

Boujard the satisfaction of presiding over the translation of Saint Vincent's relics and the upcoming election of the new superioress general. The Foreign Minister commented,

It is up to you to judge whether allowing this ecclesiastic some particular marks of favor to relieve the painful blow of being relieved of his functions is possible or advantageous. The recommendation of the Parisian house to the Holy See leads us to believe that these marks of condescendence and regard for such a venerable figure can only have a good effect. They truly could be of advantage to Monsieur de Wailly by contributing to his nomination's favorable reception by the Congregation that he must administer. I will say nothing else, but I leave these reflections to your discernment to make whatever decision you believe appropriate.⁸⁶

On 8 February, Damas wrote to Montmorency congratulating him on his caution in first examining the text of the brief before accepting it on the government's behalf. The Foreign Minister interpreted the omission of the phrase acknowledging that the Lazarist general had to be a French subject as a purposeful act of bad faith by the Holy See. He described this as an "inconceivable and unjustifiable chicanery."⁸⁷ For the Foreign Minister, this action again proved the necessity of the "measures of surveillance and precaution that France has long observed regarding the acts emanating from the Court of Rome."⁸⁸ Damas reported that he was now forwarding the brief to the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs. It would be his responsibility to submit it to the Council of State for approval and then see to its execution.⁸⁹ The minutes of the Congregation's general council simply say that although Rome had issued the brief on 16 January "various events would intervene to prevent its promulgation until July of the same year."⁹⁰

On 16 February, Frayssinous submitted a report to Charles X. He recommended the delay of De Wailly's nomination. He based this recommendation on "various circumstances but principally that more time would give the respectable vicar general, who presently governs this Congregation, the opportunity to finish the enterprises that he

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Damas to Montmorency, 8 February 1827, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 962: 54-55, AMAE.

⁸⁸ Ibid. The Foreign Minister was referring here to the Gallican requirement that acts of the Holy See be approved and registered by the Council of State before they could be promulgated within the kingdom.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ *Minutes of the General Council of the Congregation of the Mission*, 1: 1, ACGR.

happily has begun for the Lazarists and the Daughters of Charity."⁹¹

Étienne's *Notice* gives the following account of the events following the issuance of the papal brief. According to Étienne, Boujard still believed that the Holy See intended to appoint him as superior general. He was dismayed when he secretly learned of the brief's contents. Supposedly, Boujard told the news of the unexpected papal appointment only to Joseph Boullangier. Étienne's assessment of Boullangier was a harsh one: "He had a weak character and little capacity."⁹² Boullangier contacted Frayssinous to request that he delay sending the brief to the Council of State for registration and promulgation. Boullangier hoped that this would gain enough time to allow the aged Boujard to decide of his own accord "to surrender his authority to the new superior general." Frayssinous, because he believed that this request came on behalf of all the members of the community, then was supposed to have agreed to the delay.⁹³

Again, as to chronology and accuracy, Étienne's account is not satisfactory. The inner circle of Lazarists at the mother house had participated in the negotiations for the nomination of a new superior general. Boullangier originally had asked the Holy See to extend Boujard's mandate as vicar general. The government had opposed this concession. However, once the Holy See named De Wailly on the conditions demanded by the French, the government was willing to delay Boujard's departure until the summer of 1827.

Étienne said at this point, the Roman vicar general [Francesco Antonio Baccari], sent a circular letter to the provinces under his jurisdiction.⁹⁴ He announced that he had resigned, and that from now on all provinces should contact the new papally-appointed superior general in Paris.⁹⁵ However, De Wailly had not received any official notification of his nomination, and he naturally refused to exercise any acts of jurisdiction. Thus, according to Étienne, "The Congregation found itself without a head, and Monsieur Boujard found himself without any authority."⁹⁶ Given that this situation "could only have the gravest consequences,"

⁹¹ Frayssinous to Charles X, 16 February 1827, AN. F19.686.73.

⁹² Étienne, *Notice*, 22.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Baccari, circular 10 February 1827, *Boujard*, ACMP.

⁹⁵ Étienne, *Notice*, 22.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* The text of the papal decree had said, "Finally, in virtue of holy obedience, We enjoin all the Congregation's members to recognize the authority of the one on whom We have conferred this charge. We desire that from the moment when this decree is made known, the two actual vicars general lose their rights, and neither can exercise a general authority over all the Congregation." For the text of the papal decree *Anteactae temporum*, see *Acta Apostolica*, 191-92.

the senior confreres at the mother house met. They sent a representative to Frayssinous to inform him of the impasse. According to Étienne, "The Minister understood the importance of the present situation and realized that he had received false information from Monsieur Boullangier."⁹⁷ Frayssinous then sent the brief to the Council of State and the king for promulgation.⁹⁸

At the Council of State meeting held on 28 June 1827, the members approved the brief nominating Pierre de Wailly as superior general. Charles X gave his assent on 1 July.⁹⁹ On 2 July, Frayssinous conveyed the news to De Wailly:

Monsieur l'abbé, I have the honor of transmitting to you a brief issued from Rome on 16 January 1827 by which His Holiness, upon presentation of the King, has named you superior general of the Congregation of the priests of the Mission of Saint Lazare... No one rejoices more than I, Monsieur, of the choice to call you to the head of a Congregation that by the good that it has done since its foundation, and the many services that it has performed to the present time for religion and society, has merited the special attention and favor of His Majesty's government. The personal qualities that distinguish you, your proven zeal, and the wisdom that is the result of your many years of experience, more than justify the testimony of the great confidence by which the Sovereign Pontiff and the King have honored you.¹⁰⁰

Just as these events were taking place in France, Francesco Antonio Baccari, who still had not received word of the resolution of this long-delayed affair, issued his last circular letter as vicar general. Speaking of the long period that had elapsed since his last letter Baccari commented,

Since last year, and especially during the first four months of this year, I believed that the present Sovereign Pontiff had sent a brief to Paris to be put into effect. The purpose of this brief was to select one of our venerable confreres as superior general of the entire

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ For Frayssinous's memoranda to the king and Council of State see "Ministère des Affaires Ecclésiastiques et de l'Instruction publique: Note sur la Congrégation des Lazaristes," and "2^e note sur les Lazaristes au sujet du bref qui nomme un supérieur général," BN.21798.52.65.

⁹⁹ "1^{er} juillet 1827-Ordonnance de Charles X concernant le nomination de M. De Wailly supérieur général de la Congrégation de la Mission," *Actes du Gouvernement*, 122-25. Article two of the decree reads: "We receive the said brief without approving the clauses, formulas, and expressions which are or could be construed to be contrary to the constitutional charter, to the laws of this kingdom, and to the franchises, liberties, and maxims of the Gallican Church."

¹⁰⁰ Frayssinous to De Wailly, 2 July 1827, quoted in *Actes du Gouvernement*, 124.

Congregation. His Holiness, in the year previously, had in his wisdom decided that the Congregation should be united under one head. Alas! I have been misled! Up to the present moment the reason for the delay in the resolution of the entire affair is not clear, and no one knows the reason. We hope that this situation will soon end with the publication of the said brief and the revelation of the new superior general's name.¹⁰¹

When De Wailly received official word¹⁰² of his appointment his first reaction was to decline.¹⁰³

According to Étienne, "Monsieur De Wailly could not decide whether to accept a charge that his age of sixty-eight, and his failing health, made him believe was beyond his physical capacity."¹⁰⁴ De Wailly had all but resolved to ask the pontiff to appoint someone else. However, as he later related, "All the confreres whom I consulted declared that after having considered the question prayerfully before God, they remained convinced that divine providence was calling me to this redoubtable dignity and that I was conscience-bound to accept. They said that my refusal would create great obstacles to the reestablishment of our Congregation."¹⁰⁵ De Wailly accepted his nomination, and departed for Paris. He arrived at the mother house for his installation on 5 July.

Unity Restored?

In his *Notice*, Étienne pointed out that De Wailly's apprehensions as to the insufficiency of his health proved true since he died a little over a year later on 23 October 1828. Yet this short time was enough to restore Congregational unity and constitutional government for the first time since 1792. As authorized by the papal brief, De Wailly named his assistants. He also named the twenty-seven year old Étienne as secretary general and procurator general, the two highest appointed positions in the Community.¹⁰⁶ Étienne held both positions until his election as gen-

¹⁰¹ Baccari, *Circulaires*, 2: 407.

¹⁰² According to a note in Étienne's handwriting, dated 1828, as soon as Rome sent the brief naming De Wailly, Baccari had written both to Boujard and to De Wailly informing them unofficially of its contents. Note sur M. Baccari, prêtre de la Mission, Visiteur, de la Province de Rome, *M. De Wailly, 1827-28*, C 39, ACMP.

¹⁰³ De Wailly, *Circulaires*, 2: 413.

¹⁰⁴ Étienne, *Notice*, 23.

¹⁰⁵ De Wailly, *Circulaires*, 2: 413-14.

¹⁰⁶ The general council minutes contain a verbatim report on the conference held on 19 August 1827 at the mother house. At this meeting, De Wailly named the members of the General Council and administration. See *General Council Minutes*, 1: 7, ACGR.

eral in 1843.

For his French assistants, De Wailly named Pierre Le Go, Joseph Boullangier, and Dominique Salthorgne. As for naming the fourth assistant “who according to custom must be Italian,” De Wailly said that he was delaying until he had the necessary information to appoint a qualified Italian missionary. Beneath this statement, however, was another emerging controversy with Baccari, the Italians, and the Holy See. Meanwhile, De Wailly began his administration over the Congregation in France and elsewhere.¹⁰⁷ On 27 August 1827, the general council met for the first time since the Revolution.¹⁰⁸

The hopes that the French had that the papal nomination of De Wailly would bring an end to the governmental schism and to the Italian-French antagonisms quickly dissipated. In August 1827, Baccari wrote to the superior general asking to be relieved of his office as visitor of the Roman province: “It is absolutely necessary that you consider choosing with great care a visitor for this province. It is morally, or better yet physically, impossible for me to continue to fulfill this office. I am in my eighty-first year. I am tired and infirm. How can I, at this advanced age and with my illnesses, continue to carry the burdens of this office and visit the houses?”¹⁰⁹ De Wailly at first demurred from accepting the resignation. However, when Baccari insisted, the general named Filippo Girodi, superior of the seminary at Piacenza.¹¹⁰ Girodi declined to accept.

Meanwhile, in a letter dated 17 September, Baccari informed De Wailly that the pope had refused to allow him to lay down the office of visitor under any circumstances. In the future, he could only do so with the Holy See’s permission.¹¹¹ Baccari informed Girodi of the papal decision. This move threw the French into confusion. De Wailly and his council could not understand this papal intervention. They were also suspicious that Baccari did not cite “any official and authentic brief to support this extraordinary pontifical action.”¹¹² To the French, since the superior general had accepted Baccari’s resignation he no longer could exercise any authority as visitor. De Wailly wrote to Baccari concerning the irregularity of his position.¹¹³

The superior general and his council also received another dis-

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, the letters of De Wailly concerning serious divisions within the province of Portugal. *Lettres Importantes aux missionnaires 1^o de M. Pierre De Wailly, Supér. Gal*, ACMP.

¹⁰⁸ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 12, ACGR.

¹⁰⁹ Étienne, *Note: Baccari*, ACMP.

¹¹⁰ De Wailly to Girodi, 16 October 1827, *Lettres Importantes: De Wailly*, ACMP.

¹¹¹ Étienne, *Note: Baccari*, ACMP.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ De Wailly to Baccari, 10 November 1827, *Lettres Importantes: De Wailly*, ACMP.

turbing report. They heard that Baccari was claiming that not only had the Holy See upheld his position as visitor but that it had gone beyond this to appoint him as "vicar general, or pro-vicar general, or procurator general."¹¹⁴ This position gave him authority "to handle affairs of the Congregation in Rome and the necessary powers to administer the provinces outside France." When De Wailly asked the general council for its advice on how to act they advised him to undertake "a confidential correspondence with someone residing in Rome." By this means he could "determine the facts of the situation and then act accordingly."¹¹⁵

In the minutes of a later council meeting, Étienne gave a different version of events.

The council considered taking measures to stop an appointment that was unheard of and appeared to be the result of secret activities. After serious reflection, however, they decided to await in silence whatever notification would come. They believed that the Court of Rome would make no decision on this matter without serious reflection. The Council also believed that the Holy See would not proceed to make a nomination that so disregarded the provisions of our Constitutions, without first consulting the superior general. They therefore decided not to take any action.¹¹⁶

Baccari "was very angered" at the letter the general had written him. He replied that "he would have read the letter to the pope if he had not feared it would offend him."¹¹⁷ Baccari also pointedly told De Wailly that "The Sovereign Pontiff is not obliged to manifest his will to subordinates...and that no one has the right to demand a written notification of his nominations."¹¹⁸ However, Baccari told De Wailly that he could expect to receive some official notification from the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

At the beginning of 1828, De Wailly wrote the annual New Year's circular letter. He sent the document directly to the Roman province's local superiors instead of to Baccari whom he no longer recognized as visitor. Étienne, as secretary general, wrote a note to accompany the circular explaining the French position.¹¹⁹ Later in January, Baccari wrote to De Wailly informing him that soon he would receive a letter from the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. According to Baccari,

¹¹⁴ *General Council Minutes*, meeting of 26 November 1827, 1: 20, ACGR.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Meeting of 9 May 1828, *ibid.*, 1: 29.

¹¹⁷ Étienne, *Note: Baccari*, ACMP.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Lettres Importantes: De Wailly*, 7, ACMP.

this letter would be “written on the Sovereign Pontiff’s orders, and it will not only confirm me in the office of visitor but also as commissary to handle the affairs of the entire Congregation.”¹²⁰

On 21 January, the nuncio transmitted this unwelcome news to De Wailly.¹²¹ The pope had confirmed Baccari in the offices of visitor and as “commissary general for the entire Congregation before the Holy See.”¹²² This Roman action stunned De Wailly and his council.¹²³ The superior general and the council first interpreted this new position of a “commissary general” to be analogous to the position of procurator general at the Holy See. In the past, the superior general had appointed someone to this position “to take care of all the Congregation’s business with the Holy See.”¹²⁴ In this case, however, the procurator possessed no authority to deal independently with Rome, but acted only on the general’s instructions. De Wailly and his council concluded that “although Monsieur Baccari was blameworthy for having solicited from pontifical authority a nomination that belonged to the superior general to make, it was necessary to submit respectfully to the Sovereign Pontiff’s will and reestablish relations with the visitor named by His Holiness.”¹²⁵ The assumption that the general and his council had made that “the Sovereign Pontiff would not destroy with one hand what he had raised up with the other” [referring to the restored governmental unity of the Congregation] proved to be incorrect.¹²⁶

Word reached Paris that Baccari also was saying that “The Sovereign pontiff had given him all the powers of the superior general but that he would only exercise them secretly for the sake of peace.”¹²⁷ Baccari also supposedly said that he would only exercise his authority “for the good of the Congregation and that he would take care to inform him [the superior general] of all his actions.”¹²⁸ Baccari made several decisions that heightened the concern of the French. Accord-

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ The Congregation of Bishops and Regulars issued the rescript containing the papal nomination of Baccari as “Commissarius Generalis” on 7 October 1828. For the text of this decree see Stella, *Italia*, 542-43.

¹²² *General Council Minutes*, meeting of 9 May 1828, 1: 30, ACGR.

¹²³ There was also some confusion among the Italian provinces as to Baccari’s role and authority as commissary general and how this would affect their relations with the superior general in Paris. See Stella, *Italia*, 543-44.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *General Council Minutes*, meeting of 9 May 1828, 1: 30, ACGR.

¹²⁶ Étienne, *Note: Baccari*, ACMP.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* See also, Stella, *Italia*, 544.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*



M.^r De Wailly, Pierre
XI.^e Supérieur

Élu le 2 Juillet 1827. Mort le 23 Octobre 1828

*Pierre de Wailly, C.M., superior general of the
 Congregation of the Mission, 1827-1828*

ing to the Congregation's constitutions, it was up to the superior general with the consent of his council, and only for grave reasons, to dismiss members from the Congregation. Baccari dismissed two Italian missionaries and simply informed the superior general of his actions. He claimed that he had acted under "apostolic authority."¹²⁹ Baccari disallowed De Wailly's appointments of two local superiors in the Roman province, again based on his "apostolic authority."¹³⁰ During this time, the Holy See asked Baccari and the Roman province to establish a house at the Papal States' port of Civitavecchia. This foundation was to care for prisoners condemned to the galleys. Baccari established this house and assigned missionaries from the Italian provinces to staff it. Again, Baccari merely informed De Wailly of an accomplished fact.¹³¹

In the eyes of the French, these actions proved that Baccari was exercising the powers of the superior general. They believed that this situation again created a governmental split in the Congregation.¹³² Étienne noted, "It follows [from this situation] that the superior general no longer had any guarantee of the execution of his orders." Baccari could always justify his own actions "by virtue of apostolic authority."¹³³

The explanation that emerged for the granting of Baccari's extended powers by the Holy See concerned the missionaries in Russian-controlled Poland. Baccari had reported to the Holy See that the missionaries in Poland "were not able nor willing to depend directly on a superior general who was French."¹³⁴ Étienne noted, however, that the superior general had received a letter from the Poles. They acknowledged that they were forbidden from directly depending on a French superior general. However, they said they could be under the authority of a procurator general appointed by him who would reside in Rome, as before the revolution.¹³⁵ De Wailly had been considering making this appointment when he was upstaged by Baccari. The French position was that while Baccari possessed apostolic authority to represent the Polish province, he did not have this authority for the

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ *General Council Minutes*, meeting of 9 May 1828, 1: 30, ACGR.

¹³² Étienne noted that, "The general believed that it was his duty to inform his council of Monsieur Baccari's conduct in an important matter concerning essential articles of the Company's Constitutions. He directed that this account be entered in the council's register as a formal protest against Monsieur Baccari's conduct." *General Council Minutes*, meeting of 15 May 1828, 1: 31, ACGR.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Étienne, *Note: Baccari*, ACMP, 82

¹³⁵ Ibid.

other provinces who still owed obedience to the superior general.¹³⁶

The standoff between De Wailly and Baccari continued until the former's death on 23 October 1828. Before his illness, De Wailly had considered the question of whom to nominate to serve as vicar general upon his death. His sudden final illness made him unable to fulfill this duty in writing. However, he told Pierre Le Go and Étienne that his choice was the first assistant, Dominique Salhorgne.¹³⁷ The Congregation's constitutions required the convocation of a general assembly within six months of a superior general's death. Salhorgne and the general council set 2 March 1829 as the date for the general assembly's opening. On 29 October 1828, Étienne forwarded the letters convoking the assembly to the provinces.¹³⁸ When Baccari received this notice, he immediately went to the Holy See. He requested the assembly's postponement until May because of the difficulties of winter travel. After receiving papal approval of this request Baccari wrote to Salhorgne to inform him of this fait accompli.¹³⁹

Baccari's end-run in Rome again surprised the French. The constitutions already gave the vicar general authority to delay the general assembly's convocation "for grave reasons." Baccari, instead of asking Salhorgne, had gone over his head for the sake of invoking papal authority.¹⁴⁰ Salhorgne wrote to Baccari asking that he send a copy of

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ For a short biographical sketch of Salhorgne see *Circulaires*, 2: 425-27. In his *Notice*, Étienne gives an interesting account of Salhorgne's return to the community. This reveals something of the internal politics among the French Lazarists in this period. According to Étienne, Salhorgne did not return until after Pierre de Wailly's installation as superior general. He had been working in the diocese of Tours and was vicar general and a canon of the cathedral. As much as he loved his work in the diocese, "his love for the Congregation was greater than all these considerations." He applied to Charles Boujard to rejoin the community. Boujard refused "under the pretext that his advanced age would not permit him to render any services to the Congregation." Étienne claimed that this was only a "pretext" since Salhorgne had a pension that would have provided for his support. According to Étienne, "The true reasons for his refusal I am obliged to say, was his [Boujard's] fear that if a Missionary of such merit and reputation was present at the mother house, he would become a likely candidate for the office of superior general." To eliminate Salhorgne from the picture, Boujard not only refused to readmit him to the Congregation but sent him a dispensation for his vows, a dispensation Salhorgne had neither requested nor wanted. Étienne who served as Boujard's secretary, secretly informed the senior missionaries living at the mother house of Boujard's action. These missionaries "were profoundly afflicted" by Boujard's unconstitutional actions and directed Étienne to write to Salhorgne expressing their opinion that Boujard's action was "radically null" and advising him to wait patiently for the appointment of the new superior general. Salhorgne took their advice and when De Wailly's appointment became public wrote to him asking for permission to return. De Wailly not only immediately invited him to return but named him his first assistant. In his *Notice* Étienne lavishly praises Salhorgne's virtues. He said "All my life I have thanked the Lord for having giving me the grace to have lived and worked with him. The beautiful qualities of his spirit and heart taught me lessons I have never forgotten." Étienne, *Notice*, 23-25.

¹³⁸ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 34, ACGR. See also, Salhorgne, *Circulaires*, 2: 122-23.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

the Holy See's rescript authorizing the prorogation, so that he could inform the visitors and their provinces of this delay.¹⁴¹

The seventeenth general assembly opened at the mother house on 15 May 1829.¹⁴² This was the first assembly held in more than forty years.¹⁴³ Étienne gives this romantic description of the gathered delegates: "The assembly presented a most venerable spectacle. All those who took part were old men. They were burdened by their years and whitened by the tribulations of exile and long years of ministry."¹⁴⁴ This gathering of the debris of the Company's ancient edifice was particularly touching since these confreres became the foundation stones of the new company. They were reminiscent of the ancients of Israel returning from the Babylonian captivity to rebuild the Lord's temple ruined by the furor of barbarian peoples."¹⁴⁵

According to Étienne, "Among these venerable old men, it was difficult to find someone who could carry the weight of the generalate."¹⁴⁶ Salhorgne also appreciated this fact.¹⁴⁷ He feared that, under the circumstances, his own election was likely. Before the assembly, he confidentially wrote to the Holy See.¹⁴⁸ Salhorgne asked for a rescript allowing the assembly to elect someone who did not yet meet the constitutional requirement of having had vows for at least twelve years.¹⁴⁹

Étienne said that Salhorgne requested this rescript to ensure that someone else would be elected as superior general.¹⁵⁰ As the assembly prepared for the election, Salhorgne produced

¹⁴¹ *General Council Minutes*, meeting of 30 November 1828, 1: 35, ACGR. Étienne also recorded that "The council judges that in this circumstance Monsieur Baccari is guilty of violating the rules prescribed in our Constitutions and directs that this statement be recorded in the minutes of this meeting as a formal protest against his actions." The general council also recorded another formal protest again Baccari's actions at the meeting of 16 March 1829, 1: 40. See also, Salhorgne, *Circulaires*, 2: 123-24.

¹⁴² *Acta XVII Conventus Generalis*, 1829, 777-92, ACGR.

¹⁴³ For a list of the assembly delegates see *Circulaires*, 2: 427. All the Congregation's provinces were represented except Poland and Naples. The Russian government had forbidden the Poles from attending. The Neapolitans absented themselves without giving a reason.

¹⁴⁴ This is yet another important inaccuracy on Étienne's part. Of the twenty-four delegates to the 1829 general assembly, fourteen entered the Congregation before the Revolution, and ten afterward. *Circulaires*, 2: 427.

¹⁴⁵ Étienne, *Notice*, 25.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ The minutes for the general council meetings during this period record no discussion of this move by Salhorgne.

¹⁴⁹ Étienne, *Notice*, 25. There were approximately six French delegates to the assembly who fell into this category. Given Salhorgne's close working relationship with Étienne it is reasonable to assume that if he did not have Étienne specifically in mind, he was thinking at least of someone among the young French priests like him. The most likely French candidate besides Étienne was Ferdinand Joseph Bailly. He was the superior of the seminary at Amiens and the visitor of the province of Picardy. Bailly had taken vows in 1819 and thus was ineligible for election under the regular constitutional requirements.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

the rescript that he had received through the nuncio in Paris.¹⁵¹ According to Étienne, "Providence had plans that differed from his [Salhorgne's], and he did not obtain the result that he wanted. The assembly voted to observe the constitutions."¹⁵² Unfortunately, the minutes composed by Étienne as the assembly's secretary give an account that contradicts the one he gave later in his *Notice*. At the assembly's third session, held on 17 May, Salhorgne told the delegates about the pontifical rescript. He asked them to vote on whether the assembly should accept the dispensation. The minutes record that the vote was thirteen to eleven in favor of acceptance.¹⁵³ According to the assembly's minutes, on the first ballot, Salhorgne received eight votes, Ferdinand Bailly received seven votes, Pierre Le Go received six votes, with the remaining three votes spread among three other confreres. On the second ballot, only Salhorgne, Bailly, and Le Go were eligible to receive votes. At this point, the minutes record that Salhorgne beseeched the delegates not to vote for him.¹⁵⁴ On the second ballot, fourteen of the twenty-four delegates voted for Salhorgne electing him as superior general.¹⁵⁵

Again, Étienne's version of these events is all but unrecognizable in comparison to the official account. In Étienne's version, after the assembly had declined to accept the papal dispensation it immediately went on to the election. He claimed that as the officials began counting the votes aloud Salhorgne, seeing that each ballot was naming him, got up and ordered that the counting stop. He then supposedly produced a copy of the dismissal previously sent to him by Boujard. Salhorgne claimed that this act had removed him from the Congregation, and made him ineligible for election.¹⁵⁶ According to Étienne, "The effect produced by this incident was exactly the opposite of what he [Salhorgne] had hoped. It permitted us to learn the details surrounding this dismissal by Monsieur Boujard. This revelation only served to give new luster to his humility and to increase the veneration that he inspired in all the assembly members. The ballot counting continued. The result was that Monsieur Salhorgne received an immense majority of votes and won the election. This decision greatly pleased the members of Saint Vincent's Double Family."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ *Acta XVII*, 781, ACGR.

¹⁵² Étienne, *Notice*, 26.

¹⁵³ *Acta XVII*, 783, ACGR.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Étienne, *Notice*, 25-26.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

Étienne's version of the election strains credulity beyond the breaking point. If Salhorgne's original dismissal by Boujard was valid, then Salhorgne could not have legitimately functioned as a first assistant under De Wailly. His appointment as vicar general would also have been invalid. In addition, any actions taken by him as vicar general would have been invalid, including the general assembly's convocation. If Salhorgne believed all along that Boujard's action had been valid, he could not in conscience have acted as if it were invalid only until it was a question of his election as superior general. The proper time for Salhorgne to have revealed his dismissal would have been long before the balloting began. The assembly's minutes record no hint of such a dramatic scene. The only thing they note is Salhorgne's impassioned plea before the second ballot that the electors not vote for him. Finally, Salhorgne's election was not by an "immense majority" as Étienne claimed.¹⁵⁸

In the *Notice*, Étienne next turned his attention to Francesco Antonio Baccari. "Monsieur Baccari, the former Roman vicar general, was present at the assembly. The papal bull naming Monsieur de Wailly as superior general had deprived him of his authority. However, he had taken measures to assure the revival of his intrigues and pretensions. He arranged for the pope to name him as the Congregation's commissary general. Coming from the Holy See, this decision established a rival authority to that of the superior general, it interfered in his administration and caused new complications."¹⁵⁹ According to Étienne, the assembly "had the wisdom to elect him [Baccari] as the Italian assistant. His election required him to reside in Paris and to participate in the company's administration. Most importantly this move kept him far from the center of Italian intrigue and paralyzed the authority conferred upon him under the title of commissary general."¹⁶⁰

In this instance, Étienne's account is accurate. At the assembly's sixth session on 12 May, the delegates did elect Baccari as the Italian assistant general.¹⁶¹ Étienne also is correct when he claimed that his election had "greatly disconcerted" Baccari because he could not de-

¹⁵⁸ There can be no doubt as to Salhorgne's extreme reluctance to accept his election as superior general. In his circular letter announcing his election he commented, "It is with a feeling of profound sadness that I write to you about the results [of the election]. Despite my prayers and my repeated requests, despite my advanced age and my infirmities, the community has placed this burden on my shoulders. Only my fear of resisting God's will, has kept me from refusing." Salhorgne, *Circulaires*, 2: 430.

¹⁵⁹ Étienne, *Notice*, 26.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Acta XVII*, 784, ACCG.

cline it. The Italian claimed that he would need papal permission to take up this new post. The assembly directed that the general ask the Holy See to grant this permission. Baccari took the prescribed oath as an assistant conditionally.¹⁶²

Not surprisingly, Baccari's service as an assistant in Paris did not last long. The General Council minutes record his presence at the meetings held during May and June of 1829 but none after these dates.¹⁶³ Étienne notes that Baccari soon "expressed his desire to return to Rome under the pretext that the French climate was harmful to his health."¹⁶⁴ The condition under which Salhorgne and the council agreed to accept Baccari's resignation as an assistant was that he also resign as commissary general.¹⁶⁵ Baccari agreed and returned to Rome as visitor of that province.¹⁶⁶

Again, however, the French mistakenly thought that the struggles with Baccari were finally over. In a papal audience on 8 December 1829, Baccari told the pope that the good of the Congregation required that he serve as its commissary general. The pope referred the matter to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. The French denied that Baccari's services were needed. They said that to place him in this position "would be a mortal blow to the community's unity."¹⁶⁷

Salhorgne told the Holy See that the best way to handle the Congregation's affairs in Rome would be by means of a French procurator general appointed by the superior general. The French also reminded the Holy See that Baccari had resigned both the offices of assistant general and commissary general in July.¹⁶⁸ Salhorgne went on the counterattack. He not only opposed Baccari's reappointment as commissary general, but also requested that the Holy See allow his replacement as visitor of the Roman province.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 42-44, ACGR.

¹⁶⁴ Étienne, *Notice*, 26.

¹⁶⁵ "28 mars 1820, Note du supérieur général de la Congrégation de la Mission à son Excellence le Nonce du Pape." *Lettres importantes: Salhorgne*, ACMP.

¹⁶⁶ Although Étienne claimed that this agreement had been reached in the general council there is no mention of this decision in its minutes. Salhorgne never officially announced the departure of Baccari nor did he choose another Italian confrere to serve as an assistant. This post remained vacant until the 1835 general assembly.

¹⁶⁷ *Salhorgne: Nonce*, ACMP.

¹⁶⁸ For good measure, the French included a signed copy of Baccari's resignation. Ibid.

Monsieur Baccari feels the great burdens of his age and infirmities. He is no longer in a state where he can fulfill his duties as visitor despite his zeal and good will which he always preserves. We have received reliable reports from our confreres in Rome and in the province. These inform us that during the last several years a deplorable and increasing relaxation in regularity has led to a general malaise. This situation demands a new visitor who can repair the gaps of the past, provide for the needs of the present, and prevent these problems in the future. Until now the superior general has refrained from taking this measure out of respect for the Holy Father...who established Monsieur Baccari in his office as visitor.¹⁶⁹

The nuncio forwarded the superior general's request to the Cardinal Secretary of State, Giuseppe Albani. The cardinal consulted with the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. In April, Cardinal Albani wrote to the nuncio in Paris that the pope had decided that it was no longer necessary for there to be a commissary general. He had concluded that such an appointment would be "prejudicial to the perfect unity of this family."¹⁷⁰ Cardinal Albani made a point of saying that Baccari had served as commissary general "at the express wish of Pope Leo XII and not out of any personal ambition or request on his part."¹⁷¹ Regarding Salhorgne's request that a new visitor replace Baccari because of his age and infirmities, the Secretary of State reported that the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars had paid a visit to Monte Citorio. He wanted to observe first-hand the state of Baccari's health and his administration as visitor. The Cardinal reported that "Monsieur Baccari is still vigorous enough in body and spirit to fulfill the office of visitor. The complaints registered against him in Paris have come from only two or three discontented Italian confreres. He [Baccari] had previously taken rigorous measures against these men to maintain their observance of the rule." Cardinal Albani ended by noting that "The Holy Father has approved the details of this report." Baccari continued as visitor of the Roman province until his death, at age eighty-seven in 1834. With this papal decision, another fragile truce between the French and Italians came into being.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

In his *Notice*, Étienne did not mention the continuing difficulties with Baccari after his resignation and departure from Paris. However, he did have this to say about the return to united government under Dominique Salhorgne.

Thus ended a long crisis that had lasted for almost half a century. During this time the Congregation experienced material destruction. It also felt the threat of a spiritual destruction. Thus, the Company, which had been shaken to its foundations, found itself again established on the same foundation and in the same condition in which its Holy Founder had established it. Thus, providence manifested its special protection of Saint Vincent's work by appeasing the storm that could have engulfed it in a lamentable shipwreck. Providence guided it instead to triumph over all the efforts of men and of hell. Finally, the community found itself healed of its cruel wounds that blind and unnatural children had inflicted upon the mother who had carried them within her, and had nourished them with the milk of her teachings.¹⁷²

¹⁷² Étienne, *Notice*, 25-26.

Chapter 5

The Generalates of Dominique Salhorgne and Jean-Baptiste Nozo The Threat of Suppression

In February 1829, the general council was addressing the issues raised by the papal postponement of the general assembly. The minutes of the 15 February meeting also reveal that another crisis was emerging. This situation was potentially even more serious for the community's future than the continuing struggle with Baccari. Étienne recorded the news that "The Chamber of Deputies has received a petition proposing the suppression of the Congregation of the Lazarists...claiming that they exist illegally in France."¹ He also noted, "This petition is preoccupying the political parties. All indications are that it will lead to a spirited and serious debate."² Dominique Salhorgne asked the council if, given the political circumstances, they should consider further postponing the assembly. The council members said that despite the risks, it should meet as scheduled.³

In his account Étienne again mixed fact, fiction, careless, and premeditated error. He stated, for example, that Salhorgne's election took place on 20 April 1829. In actuality, the general assembly did not begin until 15 May. Salhorgne's election took place on 18 May. According to Étienne's chronology, after Salhorgne's election "the struggle between political opinions did not wait long before raising new inquietudes...Some months later the opposition liberal party attacked the Congregation's legal existence in the Chamber of Deputies."⁴ However, the struggle to which Étienne was referring actually took place in early March. This was more than two months before Salhorgne's election. In addition, Étienne passed over his own key role in the political maneuvering responding to this threat. Instead, he gave all the credit for the successful outcome to his mentor Salhorgne.

In 1828, in the Bourbon Restoration's declining years, the anticlerical liberals in the Chamber of Deputies had been strong enough to

¹ The four authorized religious Congregations of men attacked in the Chamber included the Lazarists, the Foreign Mission Society of Paris, the Spiritans, and the Missionaries of France.

² *General Council Minutes*, meeting of 15 February 1829, 1: 39, ACCR.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

force the Jesuits' dissolution upon a reluctant Charles X.⁵ In early 1829 François Isambert, a Parisian lawyer, submitted a petition to the Chamber. He "alerted the government to the existence...of various religious congregations devoted to preaching parish missions."⁶ Isambert highlighted the "deleterious effects of these missions in the kingdom's principal cities, denounced their existence as illegal, and demanded the execution of the dissolution laws in their regard."⁷ The Chamber's commission on petitions recognized the charges' merit and recommended forwarding them to the justice minister for action.⁸ If the Chamber of Deputies agreed to accept this recommendation, the government "would have found itself constrained to sacrifice these besieged congregations and order their legal proscription."⁹

According to Étienne, this attack on the Congregation was the result of "the public agitation provoked by a congregation called the Missionaries of France."¹⁰ This Congregation's founder was Jean-Baptiste Rauzan. A royal ordinance had granted the community legal recognition in 1816.¹¹ Étienne offers this assessment of the community: "Its members were respectable men of incontestable zeal and talent. Unfortunately, they mixed politics and religion in their hymns and in their public preaching. This led the liberal party to consider them as propaganda instruments employed by the government to support its interests."¹² According to Étienne, the liberal party planned to stop this partisan preaching by challenging the missionaries' legal existence. However, the liberals also mistakenly believed that the Lazarists "shared the same spirit, and should share the same fate."¹³

Rosset gives the following description of the lobbying undertaken by the twenty-eight-year-old Étienne: "Attentive to the danger that menaced the Company, M. Étienne worked zealously to prevent it. He made many visits to the rightist deputies who would naturally oppose

⁵ See Geoffrey Cubitt, *The Jesuit Myth: Conspiracy Theory and Politics in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

⁶ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 45.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ See François Isambert, *Observations sur les Missions de l'Intérieur et les congrégations illégales de religieux et religieuses. Extraites de deux pétitions soumises à la Chambre des Députés dans sa session de 1829* (Paris: Ladrangé, 1829).

⁹ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 46.

¹⁰ Étienne, *Notice*, 27.

¹¹ See P.A. Delaporte, *Vie de très Révérend Père Jean-Baptiste Rauzan. Fondateur de la Société des Missions de France aujourd'hui la Société des prêtres de la Miséricorde sous le titre de l'Immaculée Conception* (Paris: Jacques Lecoffre, 1857). See also, E. Sevrin, *Les missions intérieures en France sous la Restauration (1815-1830)* 2 vols. (Paris, 1948, 1959).

¹² Étienne, *Notice*, 27.

¹³ *Ibid.*

such a proposal. He excited their zeal and did not fail to leave them, in writing, the arguments that he judged would be most effective in defeating M. Isambert's petition."¹⁴

The two principal points that Étienne worked to establish in his lobbying efforts were, the Congregation's utility to France and the legality of its existence. To illustrate this point he highlighted the services rendered to the state by the Lazarists. Secondly, he noted the impossibility of preserving the Daughters of Charity if they lost their "natural guides."¹⁵ Étienne also provided a summary of the jurisprudence recognizing the Congregation's legal existence from Saint Vincent's time.¹⁶

Rosset noted that Étienne "was not content with furnishing solid arguments to the orators of the right. He also attempted to establish support for the Congregation among those of the opposition party who had resolved to destroy it."¹⁷ One influential opposition deputy was Alexandre-Louis-Joseph, comte de Laborde. Laborde was a distinguished orientalist. During an earlier trip to the Middle East, he had become acquainted with the work of the Congregation. After this trip, he wrote an account "in which he greatly praised them [the Lazarists], spoke at great length about the good that they were doing in these countries, and of the influence they were thus obtaining for France."¹⁸ Étienne gives this account of his meeting with Laborde.

I reminded him of his previous praise of our Congregation, and asked if he would be willing to repeat this again in the Chamber of Deputies. He welcomed me in the most gracious manner, and put himself entirely at my disposition to defend our cause. He fulfilled his promise, and his opinion eventually was shared by all the members of his party. At the session at which the Chamber

¹⁴Ibid. There is a memorandum in Étienne's handwriting from this period which explains to the government the "utilité de la Congrégation des Lazaristes." There are also two memoranda entitled respectively, "Note relative à la légalité de l'existence de la congrégation de la Mission de St. Lazare," and "Note relative à la pétition de Monsieur Isambert à la chambre des Députés, à l'effet d'obtenir la suppression de la Congrégation des Lazaristes." *M. Salhorgne, (1829-35), C 39 Haut, ACMP.*

¹⁵Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 46-47.

¹⁶The opening paragraph of the *Note relative à la pétition de Monsieur Isambert*, acknowledges that "It would be difficult, just by examining the memorandum of Monsieur Isambert, for a right-thinking person not to agree with his conclusions. However, one can discern a prejudice in his reasoning that reveals he has an ardent personal desire for the Congregation's suppression rather than this being a logical consequence of the legal principles he is trying to establish. Thus, it is necessary to expose to everyone the true nature of his attacks. The simplest explanations will suffice to reveal the malignity of his intentions. See *Isambert, ACMP.*

¹⁷Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 47.

¹⁸Ibid.

discussed this question, he managed to arrange that our Congregation would be considered separately from the Missionaries of France. Thus, the vote that would have gone against us, was unanimously in our favor.¹⁹

Laborde's influence on the leftist deputies must have been private, since he did not speak in the Chamber during the debates. Conservative deputies who spoke closely followed the text of Étienne's utilitarian and legal justifications.²⁰ The liberal deputies recognized the strength of the Lazarists' defense. They made a motion to separate the vote on Rauzan's community from the Lazarists and the two other communities under challenge. Rauzan's missionaries were their real targets. Rightist deputies opposed this division since they wanted to preserve the Missionaries of France. The Chamber voted in favor of this separation and then successfully demanded the suppression of the offending congregation.²¹

Relics, Apparitions, and the Fall of the Bourbons

A year after the Chamber of Deputies' debate, and almost a year after Salhorgne's election, there occurred an event that Étienne described as "a great consolation for the entire Company, because it marked the opening of the beautiful apostolic career that it was destined to travel."²² This seminal event was the translation of Saint Vincent's relics to the new mother house chapel.

In his *Notice*, Étienne asked this rhetorical question: "Is it not astonishing that since the sack of Saint-Lazare in 1792... [these relics] remained hidden in the shadows without being displayed for public veneration?"²³ This took place although public worship was possible in France after 1801...and while the Daughters of Charity enjoyed a high place in public opinion."²⁴ Étienne described how this delay was "inexplicable" unless seen "in the light of providence's mysterious designs that events later revealed."²⁵

¹⁹ Étienne, *Notice*, 28.

²⁰ "Chambre des Députés, Présidence de M. Royer-Collard. -Séance du samedi 7 mars 1829, Discussion sur l'existence légale des Lazaristes," *Actes du Gouvernement*, 190-216. See also the article of 11 March 1829 in the *Ami de la Religion*, cited in *Actes du Gouvernement*, 190-91.

²¹ *Chambre des Députés*, 212.

²² Étienne, *Notice*, 28.

²³ Here is another Étienne inaccuracy. The sack of Saint Lazare took place in 1789, and not 1792.

²⁴ Étienne, *Notice*, 28.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

Étienne served as a witness at the canonical authentication of the relics that preceded their translation.²⁶ When officials opened the reliquary, they found previous authentications. Everyone present examined these papers as the officials inventoried them. Among these documents was a letter dated 18 July 1806 in which François Brunet had entrusted the relics to the Daughters of Charity. He stipulated that the sisters were to return the relics at the request of the superior or vicar general. He also imposed the condition that “the said relics are never to go on public display.”²⁷ As a witness, Étienne would have known the reason that the community had not displayed the relics.

According to Étienne, the moment providence chose for the translation came “as France prepared an army to attack Islam in Africa [Algeria] by conquering the Barbary coast. This was the area that for many centuries had been the source of the piracy that had been such a great trial to Christianity.”²⁸ Archbishop Quélen, “who had a great devotion to Saint Vincent,” came to the conclusion that this was the moment for the long delayed translation of the relics. This timing made sense since “Saint Vincent himself had been a slave in Algeria.”²⁹ After his escape, “The saint had undertaken marvels of charity toward those unfortunate Christian slaves who suffered the same fate that he had suffered.”³⁰ It was the archbishop’s intention, according to Étienne, that the translation would establish Saint Vincent as the patron of the French army. Then, through his intercession, God would grant France a “glorious victory.”³¹ Less than three months after the April translation, an invading French army “triumphantly occupied the city of Algiers and planted the cross of Jesus Christ and the French flag.”³² For Étienne, this was the proof that the “prelate’s hopes were realized.”³³

²⁶ *Mandement de Monseigneur l’Archevêque de Paris, qui ordonne que le Te Deum sera chanté dans toutes les Églises de son Diocèse, en actions de grâces de la Translation solennelle du Corps de saint Vincent de Paul, et qui publie les Procès-Verbaux dressés à l’occasion de cette Solennité* (Paris: Adrien Le Clere, 1830), ACPM.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Étienne, *Notice*, 29.

²⁹ This refers to the traditional story of Vincent’s captivity as a slave in Tunis. This legend, which played an important role in traditional Vincentian hagiography, now is rejected by most scholars. For accounts of this apocryphal event see Abelly, *Life*, 1: 42-46 and Coste, *Life and Works*, 1: 26-43. The attacks on this myth began in 1929 with an article by Pierre Grandchamp entitled “La prétendue captivité de Saint Vincent de Paul à Tunis, (1605-1607),” extrait de *La France en Tunisie au XVIIe siècle, 1651-1660*, t. 6, reprinted in *Cahiers de Tunisie* (1965): 53-70. For a summary of the question and the arguments involved, see Stafford Poole, C.M., “The Formative Years of a Saint: Vincent de Paul, 1595-1617,” *Vincentian Heritage* 13, no. 2 (1992): 90-103.

³⁰ Étienne, *Notice*, 29.

³¹ *Ibid.* Rosset also asserts that this was the motivation of the archbishop of Paris. See *Vie Étienne*, 55.

³² Étienne, *Notice*, 29.

³³ *Ibid.*

Rosset mentions that Quélen's faith gave him the courage to ignore the capital's anticlerical climate, "the clamor of the press and the timidity of the government," and go ahead with the ceremony.³⁴ The archbishop conducted the translation with the greatest possible pomp. However, in his public *Mandement* the archbishop made no mention of the upcoming invasion of Algeria. He also did not invoke the saint's protection over the French armies as claimed by Étienne.³⁵ Quélen stated a very different justification for the translation than the glory and triumph of French arms. Instead, he said it would be for the glory of religion and the monarchy:

Yes, it is our hope, it is the fondest wish of our heart that by Saint Vincent's patronage, protection, and intercession...God will receive greater glory and that people will more fully practice their faith. We hope that it will be the motivation and source for greater and more abundant alms, and that it will lead to the multiplication of good works. Because of it, may charity perpetually reign among us. May we soon see the divisions among us, the bitterness that irritates us and the passions that divide us disappear. May it affirm our beautiful homeland in a solid and durable peace under the shadow of a beneficent and revered scepter, that all true Frenchmen will be always jealous to preserve without change or alteration.³⁶

The ceremony took place on 25 April. Salhorgne gave the following brief description of this event:

I am happy to have the opportunity to give you an account of one of the most glorious events in the Company's history! The public and solemn translation of the precious remains of our Holy Founder was done with a pomp that contrasted marvelously with the humble and modest character of this servant of God. Along the route an immense crowd filled the streets without obstructing them. Spectators filled the windows of all the houses along the route. What was most astonishing to those who saw this was that the procession took place without noise, without confusion, and with a respectful silence which the spectators only broke by singing hymns. The celebration...lasted for eight days, and even this length of time was not sufficient to accommodate the piety of the faithful who from sunrise to sunset visited our church to touch the reliquary with crosses, medals, images...One day, this pious crowd was honored by the king's presence [Charles X] and the presence of the two princesses who are his daughters-in-law. This scene

³⁴ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 57.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Quélen, *Mandement*, 7, ACMP.



M.^r Salhorgne, Dominique
XII^e Supérieur
Élu le 18 Mai 1829. Mort le 25 Mai 1836

*Dominique Salhorgne, C.M., superior general of the
 Congregation of the Mission, 1829-1836*

moved all to tears. Everyone blessed God for having conserved the precious gift of faith in the hearts of this great city's inhabitants.³⁷

Étienne's *Notice* does not go into detail about the ceremony. However, he thought one detail warranted special mention; this was the presence of priests and seminarians representing the Lazarist foreign missions. Participating in the ceremonies "were an Armenian from Constantinople, a Greek from Smyrna, and four Chinese seminarians sent to Paris by the superior at Macao."³⁸ According to Étienne, it was providential that these foreign Lazarists were in Paris. In being present, they witnessed the event that opened "the mysterious future reserved for the Company."³⁹ This mysterious future was the establishment of a far-flung missionary enterprise.

According to Étienne's creation myth, the year 1830 would be a turning point in the Congregation's history. This is how Étienne described the state of the community before these April days:

In the fourteen years since the mother house had been opened, it remained completely sterile; vocations were both rare and of poor quality; attempts at foundations at Soissons, at Sarlat, at Montauban and other places had run aground. In addition, the education of the new generation of Missionaries was incomplete. Despite the virtue of the ancients, the spirit of our vocation underwent changes; certain points of the rule went unobserved; confreres abandoned many traditions and pious practices. One sensed that the community was a body awaiting a soul that would give it being, movement, and life.⁴⁰

According to Étienne, it was only when the "body of our Holy Founder was placed in the midst of his family that the soul returned to the community's body." From the moment that the relics came home "a comforting and powerful influence spread throughout the mother house, and we felt our hearts fill with hope." From this moment, the new generations "possessed an ardent desire for the return to the Community's primitive spirit, a desire that continued to grow and attract increasing numbers of vocations."⁴¹

³⁷ Salhorgne, *Circulaires*, 2: 442-43.

³⁸ Étienne, *Notice*, 29.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

According to Étienne, two thoughts dominated this new generation of missionaries. The first was "to establish the mother house exactly as it was under Saint Vincent." The second was the conviction that the foreign missions represented the great apostolic work that was the Congregation's future. However, given the internal difficulties that would plague the Congregation for at least the next thirteen years, Étienne's mystical insistence on the 1830 date as the turning point for the community's renewal rings decidedly hollow.

Étienne gives this description of the translation and the days that followed. "All of Paris was in movement. More than three hundred thousand people of all ages and ranks stood along the procession route. During the novena that followed, from four in the morning until nine in the evening, people filled our chapel to venerate Saint Vincent's precious remains. This great gathering was something wonderful to see. On the surface it appeared to be only a magnificent and consoling religious experience, but in God's designs a hidden reason was present."⁴² God's "hidden reason" according to Étienne, was to provide "society and religion with an efficacious preservative against the great evils that menaced it." These great evils were the result of "a revolution that overthrew the throne and chased three generations of kings from French territory." It was "the destiny of our two families to exploit this situation to their advantage."⁴³

The 1830 revolution not only overthrew the Bourbons, but also unleashed a new wave of anticlericalism.⁴⁴ Étienne gave the following description of the attacks: "These were not just directed at the monarchy, but the faith itself also was subjected to its rigors: churches were profaned, crosses thrown down; religious communities invaded, devastated, and their members dispersed, and priests pursued and mistreated when caught. The archbishop of Paris became the object of the populace's furor. The situation obliged him to hide to save his life. We thought that the horrible days of 1793 were again upon us."⁴⁵

At the mother house on the rue de Sèvres, the confreres removed Saint Vincent's relics from their silver reliquary and spirited them out of the city. The community returned the reliquary to the artist who

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Adrien Dansette compares the anticlericalism and antireligious nature of the 1830 revolution with the French Revolution in this way: "if one compares the terrible excesses of the great revolution with the violence [of the 1830 revolution] the comparison is that of a cyclone to a squall" (*Histoire Religieuse*, 1: 286).

⁴⁵ Étienne, *Notice*, 31.

created it. The funds collected by the archdiocese to pay for the piece were lost in the sacking of the archbishop's residence. The superior general, students, novices, and all nonessential personnel left Paris for the provinces.⁴⁶ Étienne remained behind. The new mayor of Paris was the comte de Laborde, the liberal deputy whom Étienne had previously recruited to defend the community. Étienne sought an immediate audience and received his assurances that "our Congregation had nothing to fear."⁴⁷ Both mother houses remained undisturbed during the July revolution and afterward.⁴⁸

During the worst of the July days Étienne and another missionary, Jean-Marie Aladel, dressed in lay clothes and mixed with the mobs in the streets.⁴⁹ They wanted to know of any developments that might threaten the safety of the Lazarists and sisters remaining in the city. The two missionaries visited the houses of the Daughters of Charity. Étienne even discovered the archbishop's hiding place. He met with him and provided a firsthand account of events.⁵⁰ According to Étienne, these July days also witnessed spiritual events that were just as remarkable as the political events then taking place. In the *Notice*, he mentioned that the "three revolutionary days that produced such disasters" occurred during the octave of Saint Vincent's feast.⁵¹ At this time, a retreat was taking place at the Daughters of Charity's mother

⁴⁶ Early in 1831, the community's procurator general to the Holy See, Giuseppe Ferrari wrote to Étienne telling him that as soon as Baccari heard that Salhorgne had fled Paris he had gone to work behind the scenes in Rome:

Monsieur, I would like to bring to your attention a matter which could have the most unfortunate consequences. The other day Monsieur Cuomo told me that when Monsieur Baccari heard the news of the superior general's departure and of the difficulty in communicating with him, he approached the Holy See asking that he be named vicar general. Since the secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, Msgr. Conali, is very devoted to him, he expects to be successful. I find it necessary to warn you of this, Monsieur, so that in your prudence you make take some preventive action. In the meantime, I have taken the opportunity of warning Cardinal Odescalchi. My contacts have been personal and secret. No one knows that I have contacted you or that I have contacted the Cardinal. I think that I have been able to convince this good man to stop the creation of a new schism which would be greatly prejudicial to our Congregation's unity.

Ferrari to Étienne, 26 January 1831, *Administration Générale: Procure Générale près le St. Siège: 1832-1849*, APGR.

⁴⁷ Étienne, *Notice*, 28.

⁴⁸ Once, when a crowd appeared outside of the mother house and threatened to tear down the exterior cross from atop the chapel, Étienne rebuked them and took the precaution of rushing to the local prefect of police. Rosset notes, "Immediately the police stopped this odious plan and dispersed the rabble." *Vie Étienne*, 63.

⁴⁹ Aladel (1800-1865) was a close friend and ally of Étienne. He later served as an assistant general and as director of the Daughters of Charity. For a biographical notice see *Relations Abrégées*, 3: 313-32.

⁵⁰ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 64.

⁵¹ During this era, Saint Vincent's feast was celebrated on 19 July rather than on its present date of 27 September.

house on the rue du Bac. Étienne noted that the retreat continued "calmly in the midst of cannon fire and the clamor of delirious people."⁵² As was customary during such retreats, the community exposed a reliquary of Saint Vincent for the sisters' veneration. Étienne gives the following account of the events that surrounded this retreat:

A young seminary sister⁵³ was frightened to behold what appeared to be a somber and sad red heart as she contemplated the reliquary. An interior voice made her to understand the following words: *This is the heart of Saint Vincent, who is profoundly afflicted by the great evils that are breaking out in France.* Every time she entered the chapel, she saw the same vision and heard the same words spoken to her. This experience took place during the entire octave. It was only during the last three days that the color of the heart changed to a ruby red and the interior voice gave a new message: *The heart of Saint Vincent has been consoled, because he has obtained from God, by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, the promise that our two families will not perish in the midst of these misfortunes and that God will use them to reanimate the faith.* She was quick to reveal all this to her confessor.⁵⁴

The young sister's name was Catherine Labouré, and her confessor was Jean-Marie Aladel.⁵⁵

Étienne said that at first, the sister's confessor paid little attention to these accounts. They "contrasted strongly with the situation in France, at a time when the nation was still celebrating the French victory in Algiers and when the government seemed secure."⁵⁶ The octave of Saint Vincent's feast ended on 27 July "and on the next day the revolution broke out spreading terror throughout Paris."⁵⁷ Étienne noted, "our two mother houses were untouched. Revolutionaries visited ours, but they caused no trouble or damage. The young seminary

⁵² Étienne, *Notice*, 31.

⁵³ Since the Daughters of Charity are not religious they traditionally have referred to their year of initial training and introduction into the community as the time of the "seminary." A "seminary-sister" is a sister who is in this phase of initial formation.

⁵⁴ Étienne, *Notice*, 31.

⁵⁵ The visions of Saint Vincent's heart reported by Catherine Labouré were only one part of a series of visions extending over several months which included one of Christ the King and a series of Marian apparitions which culminated in the creation and distribution of the "miraculous medal." These latter apparitions in which the prayer "Mary conceived without sin, Pray for us who have recourse to you" appeared, played a prominent role in the devotional movement leading in 1854 to the Immaculate Conception's solemn definition. For more information on Catherine Labouré (canonized 1947) and her visions see René Laurentin, *Vie de Catherine Labouré. Voyante de la rue du Bac et servante des pauvres, 1806-1876. Récit et Preuves* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1980). See also, Jean-Marie Aladel, C.M., *Notice Historique sur l'origine et les effets de la Nouvelle Médaille frappée en l'honneur de l'Immaculée Conception de la Très-Sainte Vierge, et généralement connue sous le nom de Médaille Miraculeuse* (Paris: Librairie d'Adrien Le Clere, 1842).

⁵⁶ Étienne, *Notice*, 31.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

sister had predicted all this to her confessor."⁵⁸

In two successive paragraphs in his *Notice*, Étienne first said that the visions took place simultaneously with the revolution's outbreak. In the next paragraph, he says that the revolution began after the visions. Étienne's versions of the chronology and content of these visions are erroneous. Both Étienne and Aladel mistook the "feast" that the young sister was talking about as the saint's July feast day. In actuality, the "feast" she was referring to was the feast of the translation in April.⁵⁹ Years later in 1856, Catherine testified that she had three successive visions of Saint Vincent's heart. She said these took place in the period from 26 April to 1 May 1830:

It appeared to me three different times on three successive days in the following order: with the color of flesh announcing peace, calm, innocence, and union. Then I saw it colored red. It was as red as the fire with which charity must illumine our hearts. It seemed to me that the entire community would experience a renewal and spread to the world's limits. Then I saw the heart colored dark red. I felt this represented the heart's sadness. This reminded me of the pains that I would have to overcome. I do not know how this sense of sadness was related to the change of government.⁶⁰

With regard to the two messages that, according to Étienne, the young sister received interiorly, René Laurentin points out that "If we carefully read Catherine's accounts these explicit messages did not come until later, during the apparition of Our Lady. These took place on Monsieur Vincent's feast, the night of 18-19 July."⁶¹ From the start, both Étienne and Aladel confused the two sets of apparitions. They constructed their own "synthetic stylization."⁶² This confusion continued in subsequent semi-official accounts.⁶³ Laurentin observes:

One comes to the conclusion that Aladel and Étienne combined all the predictions concerning the July revolution contained in various ways in three different apparitions: first the vision of the heart of Monsieur Vincent [the only one mentioned by them but incorrectly cited as that of July]; that of Christ the King; and finally that of the Virgin on the feast of Saint Vincent [the night of 18-19 July]; an apparition about which Aladel and Étienne are silent. They did

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Laurentin, *Preuves*, 171.

⁶⁰ Laurentin, *Récit*, 73-74.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁶² Laurentin, *Preuves*, 20-28.

⁶³ *Ibid.*



Louis-Philippe, King of the French (1830-1848)
Corbis Bettmann

this to show the protection afforded by God through the double intercession of Saint Vincent and the Virgin. Their account generally conforms to the messages Catherine testifies to having received from the Virgin Mary during the apparition of 18-19 July.⁶⁴

The content of Mary's message during the night of 18-19 July, as recounted by Catherine, is worth quoting at length.

The times are evil. Misfortunes will befall France. The throne will tumble. The entire world will be upset by misfortunes of all sorts. But, come to the foot of this altar. Here, I will spread graces over all persons who ask for them with confidence and fervor: both the great and the small...My child I particularly love to shower these graces on the community. I love it very much ...Yet I am pained. Great abuses against regularity exist. The rules are not observed. There is a great relaxation in the two communities...The rule must be observed, in all its rigor...Avoid the reading of inappropriate materials, the waste of time, and useless visits. When the rule is observed again in all its vigor, another community will want to unite with yours...Great misfortunes are about to take place. The danger will be great. Nevertheless, do not fear! God's protection will always be with you in a particular way, and Saint Vincent will protect the community. I myself will be with you. I will always watch over you and grant you many graces. The moment is coming when the danger will be great. It will appear that all is lost. There, I will be with you! Have confidence. You know of my visit and the protection of God and that of Saint Vincent for the two communities. Have confidence! Do not be discouraged! Then I will be with you, but it will not be the same for other communities. There will be victims even among the clergy of Paris. The archbishop will die...My child, the cross will be scorned. It will be thrown down to the earth. Blood will run. The side of our Lord will be opened again. The streets will be filled with blood. The archbishop will be stripped of his vestments. My child, the entire world will be sad.⁶⁵

Étienne commented that at the time of the revolution "all seemed lost for Religion and for us."⁶⁶

Yet all was not lost, and according to Étienne, this era marked the opening of the "beautiful apostolic career of our Company." In 1870, he reflected:

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 146-47.

⁶⁵ Laurentin, *Récit*, 84-87.

⁶⁶ Étienne, *Notice*, 31.

Who today does not understand that because of the upheaval produced among all the peoples by this explosion of democracy he [God] would elevate the flag of charity in the midst of the revolutionary movement, as a sign to oppose its ravages? Just as God had an image of the serpent raised in the desert as a sign of salvation for those who saw it,⁶⁷ he replaced in the midst of the great capital the body of Saint Vincent, as the symbol of the salutary influence that would heal the evils caused by democracy...and turn its principles into benefits for the peoples.⁶⁸

Étienne claimed that "during the fifteen years of the Restoration the voice of charity was silent in France and elsewhere."⁶⁹ Then, "when the storm of social upheaval was giving birth to a new world the name of Vincent so long forgotten, reappeared. This name appeared like *the spirit of God over the waters* from which creation sprang at the beginning of time."⁷⁰ As an example, Étienne recalled the foundation of the "beautiful institution" of Frederick Ozanam's Saint Vincent de Paul Society.⁷¹ This movement "has spread from France throughout the world to relieve the poor in their own homes...The consolation of charity has given birth everywhere to works that heal the miseries of humanity and regenerate all peoples."⁷² According to Étienne, it was the "general movement toward charity that explained the providential protection experienced by our Company during these grave events."⁷³

A less mystical explanation of why the community remained unscathed was that it did not meddle in politics, and was committed to obey whatever government held power. In his 1830 circular Dominique Salhorgne noted,

Saint Vincent de Paul is our protector in heaven. His intercession for his children will be far from unsuccessful. This is if we, by the exact observance of the rules that he has left us, practice the virtues of which he has been our model. By this we will prove ourselves worthy to belong to him. He too lived in times of troubles and of civil dissensions. Because of his rare prudence, he forbade

⁶⁷ Numbers 21: 8-9.

⁶⁸ Étienne, *Notice*, 32.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Founded in Paris in 1835 by the layman Frederick Ozanam. See *Massilien. seu Parisien. Beatificationis et Canonizationis servi Dei Friderici Ozanam, Patris Familias, Primarii Fundatoris Societatis Conferentiarum S. Vincentii a Paulo: Disquisitio de vita et auctositate servi Dei* (Romae: Sacra Congregatio pro Causis Sanctorum Officium Historicum, MCMLXX).

⁷² Étienne, *Notice*, 32.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

all involvement in political questions. He wanted us to be faithful to God, submissive to the Church, and solicitous to pray for the good and salvation of all men and those who govern us. Until now that rule has guided our conduct, and we will not depart from this.⁷⁴

Étienne noted that the "little Company still had to pass through a crucible of rude tribulations to prepare itself for the grand mission reserved for it by providence."⁷⁵ Throughout the 1830s and into the 1840s, this crucible would not result from external factors such as revolutions and changes of government; it would, however, be a "furious internal tempest."⁷⁶ "Without a manifest intervention of heaven this tempest would have destroyed the community forever."⁷⁷

The General Assembly of 1835

In his *Notice*, Étienne set the stage for his account of the internal troubles that were to beset the community in this era: "I have already spoken of Monsieur Salhorgne's repugnance in accepting his election to the generalate. Afflicted with gout, and many other infirmities aggravated by his advanced age, he found his charge to be very heavy. Arriving at the age of seventy-six, he was surrounded by assistants who were weighed down by their years. They could not help in the

⁷⁴Salhorgne, *Circulaires*, 2: 444.

⁷⁵Étienne, *Notice*, 32.

⁷⁶Despite their fears about the Congregation's fate, under the new regime of Louis-Philippe the community enjoyed relations with the Orleanist government that were closer than those that existed under the Bourbons. In November 1830, François Guizot, the Secretary of State and the Minister for Public Instruction and Cults, wrote to the new king recommending that because of the budget crisis the annual Lazarist subsidy be reduced from 15,000 to 10,000 francs. Yet, there was no doubt that the community would be favored by the new government. Guizot observed to the king:

The services of the Lazarists consist in acting as superiors and professors in many seminaries and other educational establishments. According to the statutes of their founder, Vincent de Paul, they also direct the Daughters of Charity, servants of the poor.... Besides their religious contributions they can also be considered to be providing a public service because of political and commercial considerations. They serve the French establishments in the Levant, in northern Africa, and in China where they are chaplains to consulates, prisons, or schools.... The superior general must be French and reside in France. This practice has always been observed.... These pressing considerations have always led us to show the most encouragement possible to a congregation which has been judged to be of such utility, particularly by superiors in the Ministry of the Marine, our ambassadors to Constantinople, the consuls, and successive Ministers of Foreign Affairs. There can be no doubt that the government should continue to afford the society of the Lazarists its protection.

Early in 1831 when news of the subsidy cut reached the Lazarists, Étienne wrote to Guizot: "We very much regret that the present budgetary constraints have forced this reduction in our subsidy. But we are more happy to know that this is the sole reason that has motivated His Majesty to take this step." At this point Salhorgne was still in exile from Paris at Amiens. AN.F19.6240.

⁷⁷Étienne, *Notice*, 32.



M: Jean Marie ALADEL.
Prêtre assistant de la Congrégation de la Mission

Paris, chez la Citoyenne Lesclapart

Jean-Marie Aladel, C.M.

company's administration.⁷⁸ He felt that he had satisfied the debt of his devotion to the community. He resolved to resign from the position that he had held for six years."⁷⁹

The community already had a sexennial assembly scheduled for 1835.⁸⁰ Salhorgne made known his intention to resign as general and convoked a general assembly in place of the sexennial assembly.

In Étienne's opinion, Salhorgne's resignation could not have come at a worse time for the community: "As I have remarked, if no external threats to the Congregation's existence arose at this time, there was still much that was lacking as to the spirit that animated the community. Many confreres of the new generation were totally lacking the community's true spirit, because they had been admitted without sufficient screening and had received an insufficient formation. Many of these confreres took part in the general assembly, exercised a harmful influence over it, and were responsible for its unhappy outcome."⁸¹

In his last circular letter as superior general Salhorgne spoke critically of the failings that he observed in the community.

Immortification is leading us rapidly to relaxation. Regularity is a difficult task...for those who love themselves and do not want to make any sacrifices. A desire for a liberty has motivated these men to be without restraint...This is to the prejudice of the order prescribed by the rules dictated by the Spirit of God...This opposition from some spirits is often the cause, and always an unfortunate symptom, of relaxation. If the contagious example of these unsubmissive spirits finds other imitators, regularity will necessarily be affected. Relaxation will claim its place unless the firm vigilance of superiors constructs a dike to hold back this devastating torrent...Messieurs and

⁷⁸The assistants general were, Pierre Le Go, age 68, Joseph-Mansuet Boullangier, age 77, and Jean-François Richenet, age 76. The position of the Italian assistant general remained unfilled during Salhorgne's administration.

⁷⁹Étienne, *Notice*, 33.

⁸⁰At the general council meeting held 1 June 1835, Étienne presented a financial accounting of the Congregation during Salhorgne's time as superior general. A fascinating footnote to this report was the Council's decision to authorize that two sets of books be kept:

Taking into consideration present circumstances the Council decided that it was appropriate to take measures to ensure that the community would always have a sufficient amount of cash in hand and the resources necessary to survive political changes and it authorized:

1. That there will be established two registers of receipts, one to record the ostensible receipts which could be handed over if required by the civil authorities and the other recording the particular receipts that it is necessary to regard as secret.

2. That there be established a fund of 40,000 francs to take care of the needs of the Congregation in the face of grave events.

3. This sum is to be hidden in a chest; one set of keys is to be entrusted to the superior general and one set to the procurator general.

General Council Minutes, meeting of 1 June 1835, 1: 66. ACGR.

⁸¹Étienne, *Notice*, 33.

dear confreres, I say to you with all my heart: let us mutually encourage each other in our own conduct to follow the example of the first disciples of our Holy Founder. Let us renew in ourselves the spirit that animated them.⁸²

Étienne claimed that the prevalent hope in the community was that the upcoming general assembly would resemble that held in 1642. At this assembly, Saint Vincent had offered his resignation as superior general. The offer edified all concerned, but the assembly wisely had refused to accept.⁸³ As Étienne pointed out with evident scorn, "This assembly did not resemble the one presided over by Saint Vincent."⁸⁴

The eighteenth general assembly convened at the mother house on 15 August.⁸⁵ According to Étienne, "A certain number of missionaries formed a party bent upon changing the direction that had been set by Monsieur Salhorgne."⁸⁶ These delegates believed that "our century required rules and maxims other than those received from our Holy Founder." Since these missionaries "had not been formed in the spirit of our state they were incapable of appreciating it." These priests felt that the Congregation's future lay in founding new establishments in France. They opposed the direction set by Salhorgne in sending so many French Lazarists to the foreign missions. These missionaries formed a "powerful party that sought to gather support before the assembly's opening." This strategy was successful.⁸⁷

Gabriel Perboyre sheds some light on the conflicting currents of opinion within the community that collided at the 1835 assembly. According to him, one party wanted "to abandon the primitive works and spirit of the company."⁸⁸ They advocated concentrating on establishing successful lay colleges in imitation of the Jesuits. This group preferred these colleges to the traditional works in seminaries, and the missions. The leading representative of this "party of progress," ac-

⁸² Salhorgne, *Circulaires*, 2: 458-59.

⁸³ See Coste, *Life and Works*, 1: 501, and Coste, *CED*, 13: 296-97.

⁸⁴ Étienne, *Notice*, 34.

⁸⁵ In a letter to Jean-Baptiste Torrette, the French superior at Macao, 22 May 1835, Étienne wrote, "On all sides we are preparing for our coming assembly which begins in three months. At this moment it is impossible to foresee what will be its results... We do know that the Congregation faces a moment of crisis. What we do not know is whether the crisis will be harmful or salutary for the Congregation. God alone knows." *Congrégation de la Mission correspondance du M. Nozo et M. Étienne, lettres importantes aux externes, 1836-1873*, Dossier, B: Nov. 1834-May 1836, Letter 7b, ACMP. The eighteenth general assembly was composed of twenty-nine members. Because of political conditions in their countries the Polish and Portuguese provinces were not represented. Of the twenty-nine delegates, eighteen were French, nine were Italian, and two were Spanish. For the acta of this assembly see *Acta XVIII Conventus Generalis Congregationis Missionis: 1835, 793-803*, ACGR.

⁸⁶ Étienne, *Notice*, 34.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Perboyre, *Note*, 4, ACMP.

ording to Perboyre, was Ferdinand Joseph Bailly. The other party, which strongly opposed this position, represented those who “wanted to recapture the primitive spirit and again take up the works of our ancestors.” Perboyre claims that this party represented the “bulk of the Missionaries,” and included men like Jean-Baptiste Nozo.⁸⁹

At the general assembly’s opening session, Salhorgne asked the delegates to accept his resignation. He gave as his reasons “his advanced age, bodily debilities, defective memory, and the many other infirmities under which he labored.”⁹⁰ After offering his resignation, Salhorgne left the assembly to give the delegates the freedom to discuss the issue. The only person who spoke was an assistant general, Jean-François Richenet. The account Étienne gives of Richenet’s speech is consistent with that recorded in the assembly’s minutes:

He testified to his personal veneration of the respectable superior general and his profound regret at his decision. He then argued that the general’s infirmities were not a sufficient justification for the assembly to accept his resignation. The reason for this was that these infirmities did not affect his moral faculties. Thus, in this regard he was as capable of governing the Congregation as he was at the time of his election. He acknowledged that if administration of the Congregation had become impossible for him it was because his assistants were not aiding him. The election of new assistants could remedy this situation. Consequently, to urge the adoption of this measure he resigned and urged the other council members to do the same. Unfortunately, the others did not imitate this act of courage and devotion to the Congregation.⁹¹

At the assembly’s second session, without further debate, the delegates accepted Salhorgne’s resignation by a vote of twenty to seven.⁹²

In his *Notice*, Étienne attacked this action and the assembly’s legitimacy. He said that the decision “immediately produced consternation in our two families. It was considered a portent of a disastrous crisis that threatened to subvert the company. Events would very soon confirm this fear.”⁹³

The only previous resignation of a superior general was that of Nicolas Pierron in 1703.⁹⁴ In Étienne’s view, this resignation also “had been the

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁰ *Acta XVIII*, 778, ACCGR.

⁹¹ Étienne, *Notice*, 33.

⁹² *Acta XVIII*, 796, ACCGR.

⁹³ Étienne, *Notice*, 34.

⁹⁴ See Chapter 1. While there was a crisis following Pierron’s resignation and the election of François Watel, this was only part of the long-standing Italian-French antagonisms.

occasion of a crisis that had threatened the Congregation's ruin."⁹⁵ He believed that the assembly's acceptance of Salhorgne's resignation was "a flagrant constitutional violation."⁹⁶ The constitutions foresaw the possibility of a superior general becoming incapable of governing because of "physical infirmities or the alteration of his moral faculties."⁹⁷ In these cases, "the superior general or a general assembly should name a vicar general to govern and conserve the Congregation until his [the general's] death."⁹⁸

Étienne was adamant in maintaining that the Congregation could not act contrary to the constitutions without "shaking the edifice to its foundations."⁹⁹ The assembly had the opportunity, according to Étienne, of acting legitimately by electing a vicar general instead of accepting Salhorgne's resignation.¹⁰⁰ He said that the assembly did not adopt this course of action because the party of progress "wanted to inaugurate a new administration that would have nothing in common with its predecessor." He also acknowledged that even those who did not belong to this faction thought that Salhorgne could not survive long "and they did not want to have to pay the cost of another trip to Paris."¹⁰¹

Étienne's view of the consequences of this irregular decision is clear: "To violate the constitutions has the consequence of depriving oneself of the blessings heaven attaches to them and of traveling down a path that can only lead to a dangerous precipice."¹⁰² This first illicit decision led immediately to another. In Étienne's opinion this lapse was so serious as to "render radically null all the assembly's proceed-

⁹⁵ Étienne, *Notice*, 34. Perboyre admits to being baffled by Étienne's reasoning on this point. In Perboyre's view, a superior general had the right to resign and a general assembly had the right to accept such an act since there was nothing specific in the Constitutions which prohibited this. Perboyre refers to the example of Saint Vincent who felt moved to offer his resignation in 1642, even though it was not accepted. At the time of Pierron's resignation, no one claimed that such an act was contrary to the Constitutions. As Perboyre also noted, a cardinal, bishop, or even the pope can resign. Why could not a superior general resign? Perboyre agreed that the Constitutions provided for the case of the election of a vicar general instead of a resignation but said again "that which he [the general] is not forbidden, he possesses." Perboyre, *Note*, 8-9, ACMP.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Étienne, *Notice*, 35. *Constitutiones*, II, §5, 13-14.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Étienne, *Notice*, 35.

¹⁰⁰ In a letter to Jean-Baptiste Torrette, 5 January 1836, Étienne commented, "Everyone here is doing well with the exception of Monsieur Salhorgne who has become more and more infirm. For the last month he has not been able to lie in bed. He is now confined day and night to a chair. He correctly understood that it was time to submit his resignation. If he had not done so, we could find ourselves today in a very difficult situation." See *Étienne lettres*, Dossier b, ACMP.

¹⁰¹ Étienne, *Notice*, 35.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*



*Louis-Philippe entering Paris after the Revolution of 1830.
Corbis Bettmann*

ings.”¹⁰³ The recent Spanish revolution had prevented the province from holding its provincial assembly to elect its two delegates.¹⁰⁴ However, the visitor, Juan Roca, was able to come to Paris. Miguel Gros, a senior missionary accompanied him. The Spanish visitor requested that the assembly seat Gros as an unelected delegate to give the province additional representation.¹⁰⁵ Roca told the assembly that, in his opinion, had the province been able to hold a provincial assembly that Gros “very probably” would have been elected as a delegate.¹⁰⁶ The assembly voted to admit Gros as a “quasi-delegate” representing the province of Spain. Étienne complained about this decision because the new superior general would be elected by one vote.¹⁰⁷

Despite his rhetoric about the constitutions’ unchangeableness Étienne does not mention another change that took place. According to the constitutions, the secretary and procurator generals were not eligible to vote in the election of a superior general. These officials entered the general assembly, with the right to vote, only after the general’s election.¹⁰⁸ This question vitally concerned Étienne at this assembly since he then was serving both as secretary and procurator general. The assembly, at its second session, considered a motion to amend the constitutions to allow the secretary and procurator generals to participate in the general’s election. By a secret vote, the motion passed with fifteen out of a possible twenty-seven votes.¹⁰⁹ Étienne took his seat and participated in the election.

Étienne’s criticism of the general assembly included another point. According to the constitutions, after his election a superior general was secretly to name two men whom he judged to be worthy to serve as superior general after his death.¹¹⁰ He then was to seal these names in a

¹⁰³ Ibid. It should also be noted that at the end of a general assembly it was the duty of the secretary to read aloud the acts and decrees. Each delegate was then required to sign these to testify to the assembly’s legitimacy. At the end of the 1835 assembly Étienne, as a member and as assembly secretary, read and signed as required. If at that point he had any doubts as to the assembly’s validity, or that of any of its decrees, he would have been morally bound to indicate these. In this case, he did not. See *Acta XVIII, Sessio X*, “Lecta et probata acta omnia quae in Precedentibus sessionibus gesta et decreta fuerunt. Tunc Conventus conclusus est et solutus hac ultima sessione et Congregati declaratione facta quod suppleat omnibus defectibus quae accidere potuissent in decursu hujus Conventus.” 803, ACGR.

¹⁰⁴ Visitors were delegates ex officio to a general assembly. See *Constitutiones*, “Caput V: De Conventibus Provincialibus mittendi causa ad Conventum Generalem pro eligendo Superiore Generali,” 29-45.

¹⁰⁵ *Acta XVIII*, 795, ACGR.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Étienne, *Notice*, 35.

¹⁰⁸ “Caput VIII. De iis quam post electionem Generalis fieri debent,” “Caput XII. De Conventu Generali cogendo ad tractanda negotia,” *Constitutiones*, 79, 117.

¹⁰⁹ *Acta XVIII*, 794-95, ACGR. See also, *Constitutiones, Declarationes a Conventibus Generalibus ad apertiore Constitutionum intelligentiam factae, et ex Conventus Generalis decimi precepto in unum collectae ac Constitutionibus subjectae*, 23° *Ex Conv. XVIII. Sess. 2.*, -1835, 154.

¹¹⁰ “Caput III. De Superioris Generalis Schedis nominationem Vicarii Generalis et Electionem Superioris Generalis in locum demortui, Spectantibus,” *Constitutiones*, 18-19.

locked box. At the assembly called to elect a new superior general this box was to be opened and the names announced. The assembly then proceeded to the election. The delegates were free to choose one of the men recommended by the late superior general or another qualified candidate.¹¹¹

According to Étienne, the delegates asked that Salhorgne's sealed recommendations be opened and read. The superior general replied that no such document existed.¹¹² When the assembly asked him which two candidates he would endorse, he declined to answer.¹¹³ Salhorgne's position was that since he had resigned and had not died in office, this constitutional provision was not applicable. Étienne explained that Salhorgne was aware "the [opposition] party had already made its choice. He knew that the assembly's majority would not have followed his advice. Since he was a man of consummate prudence, he preferred to keep completely silent on this subject."¹¹⁴

Again, Étienne failed to mention a fact that would have weakened his mythic arguments. After accepting Salhorgne's resignation as general, the assembly unanimously agreed to invite him to return to the assembly not only with the right of precedence but also with voting rights.¹¹⁵ The constitutions had no provision for such actions. However, the assembly felt that since these actions were not specifically forbidden it was within its power to accord these rights and privileges to Salhorgne. The superior general's reluctance to reveal his preferences for candidates is understandable, since he was also now an elector.

According to Gabriel Perboyre, the three candidates were Étienne, Ferdinand Bailly, and Jean-Baptiste Nozo. For some, Bailly and the progressive party seemed certain to win. Perboyre observed, however, that Bailly "conscious of his own insufficiency" did not want to be elected.¹¹⁶ He also said that in place of Bailly, the progressives would have been willing to go with Étienne. They perceived him as belonging to the *coterie Bailly*.¹¹⁷ Perboyre believed that this identifica-

¹¹¹ "Caput VI. De Agendis in Conventu Generali ante diem electionis Superioris Generalis," *Constitutiones*, 48-50.

¹¹² The assembly minutes record that Salhorgne claimed to have burnt the paper containing the names that would have been announced in case of his death. *Acta XVIII*, 797, ACGR.

¹¹³ There is evidence, however, that Salhorgne held Bailly in high regard. The general had taken refuge at the seminary in Amiens during the 1830 revolution. In his annual circular letter issued from Amiens in 1832, Salhorgne had this to say about Bailly, "The superior of this vast establishment is Monsieur Ferdinand Bailly. It was he who before my election received many votes. Why did not the Holy Spirit inspire a few more votes? I would have been happy to have continued to live without this responsibility, and the Congregation would be better governed." Salhorgne, *Circulaires*, 2: 445.

¹¹⁴ Étienne, *Notice*, 36.

¹¹⁵ *Acta XVIII*, 795, ACGR.

¹¹⁶ Perboyre, *Note*, 6, ACMP.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*

tion with the progressives cost Étienne the election. Étienne later told Perboyre that although Bailly was a close friend, he had never shared his views.¹¹⁸ This left only one candidate, Jean-Baptiste Nozo. According to both Perboyre and Étienne, Nozo enjoyed a "reputation for his personal holiness."¹¹⁹

The election took place at the assembly's sixth session on 20 August. Étienne dryly comments in his *Notice* that "The choice fell on Monsieur Jean-Baptiste Nozo who was then the visitor of the province of Champagne."¹²⁰ Étienne also pointed out that "because those who were in the minority had very little confidence in him, his [Nozo's] margin of victory was only one vote. It is certain that if the assembly's majority had known him better, he would never have obtained a victory."¹²¹ Thirty-five years later the venom that characterized the relationship between Étienne and Nozo was still present. His opinion of his rival is devastating:

Many who voted for him allowed his exterior simplicity, piety, and modesty to influence them. He designed these to make this impression and attract support. Those of us who had entered the community with him knew that he secretly hid his ambition below an edifying exterior. He was supremely self-confident and believed in his superiority over others. These faults would have serious consequences after his election to the generalate. Among his many weaknesses was a false sense of judgment. This would lead him to undertake the most disastrous measures when he possessed supreme authority in the Congregation. It was not long after his election that this judgment about him came true.¹²²

Étienne and Algeria

Within three months of Nozo's election, Étienne was maneuvering to extricate himself from what was a very difficult position. He now had an unfriendly rival as superior general. As procurator general, Étienne was responsible for the Congregation's foreign missions. He dealt directly with the French government and the Congregation of Propaganda Fide on missionary matters. With the establishment of Algeria as a French colony, the government recognized the "necessity

¹¹⁸ Perboyre accepted Étienne's statement, since as general the direction he gave to the Congregation was opposed to that which had been advocated by the progressives. *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

of organizing the exercise of the Catholic cult."¹²³ This process would begin "by replacing army chaplains with a regular ecclesial establishment appropriate to the colonial population's needs."¹²⁴ The French government's and the Holy See's initial plan was to establish the colony as missionary territory under the French Lazarists.¹²⁵ Étienne represented the Congregation in the negotiations with the various ministries of the French government, and the Holy See.¹²⁶ This plan also called for the superior general to nominate a missionary to serve as vicar apostolic, subject to governmental and papal approval. The general also could replace the vicar apostolic, under the same conditions. The government agreed to provide for all the mission's expenses.¹²⁷

In November 1835, Étienne wrote to the government informing it that the first missionaries were ready to depart for Algeria. He also made this request:

We are still awaiting, Monsieur, the letter from the Minister that will request our superior general to name the missionary designated to be the vicar apostolic of Algeria. You are aware that Rome must approve this nomination before the missionaries' departure. If they are to arrive in Algiers before the first of January, there is no time to lose. For our part, we are ready. It appears all but decided that the community has chosen me to organize the African mission. I will gladly accept this post to give the government evidence of our good will and our desire to comply with its wishes.¹²⁸

¹²³ "26 janvier 1836, Ministère de la Guerre: Note pour le Ministre sur l'affaire des Lazaristes," AN.F19.6223.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ The Holy See's chargé d'affaires and internuncio in France, Monsignor Antonio Garibaldi, persuaded everyone to agree in principle that the best solution would be that of entrusting the mission to the French Lazarists. As Garibaldi wrote to Cardinal Fransoni, the prefect of Propaganda Fide, "What is most important is to send ecclesiastics of quality to Algiers. Ecclesiastics who are willing and capable of doing good, and the Lazarists are these ecclesiastics." Quoted in Jacques Paul Martin, *La nonciature de Paris et les affaires ecclésiastiques de France sous le règne de Louis-Philippe (1830-1848)* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1949), 244.

¹²⁶ See for example, "9 juillet 1835-Note de M. Étienne à M. Paravey, chef du Bureau d'Alger, au Ministère de la Guerre," AN.F19.6223.404.

¹²⁷ "22 juillet 1835-Le Ministère de la Guerre renvoie à celui des Affaires Étrangères le susdit projet d'organisation du culte catholique à Alger, avec les modifications suivantes," AN.F19.6223.412. See also, "25 novembre 1835-Directeur des Finances, Alger à Gouverneur Général," *ibid.*, 6223.465. In this letter, the director of finances for Algeria wrote that he had arranged for the purchase of a suitable residence "for the Lazarists who will be charged with the administration of worship."

¹²⁸ "Lettre de 11 November 1835-M. Étienne, procureur général des Lazaristes à M. Paravey, chef du bureau d'Alger au Ministère de la Guerre," AN.F19.6233.454. On 14 December, Étienne wrote to a confrere, "Without a doubt you have heard that we are about to begin an enterprise which is of the greatest importance, the foundation of three houses of our Congregation in Africa. It appears that Divine Providence wishes that I, myself, be dedicated to this work. It is probable that I will leave next month with three confreres and two brothers in order to found the Mission at Algiers." *Ibid.*, 6233.479.

Almost a year later, however, Rome and the French government still were arguing over who would control Algerian ecclesiastical affairs.¹²⁹ In July 1836, Étienne wrote to Jean-Baptiste Torrette, "God only knows when I will go to Algeria. This affair is a struggle between cabals, and is full of difficulties."¹³⁰ Early in 1837, Étienne would write again to Torrette, "The whole Algerian affair is an enigma far from a solution."¹³¹

According to Rosset, the difficulties among the three parties finally were ironed out and the Holy See named Étienne vicar apostolic. The king was about to confirm this appointment when another complicating factor arose. Rosset says that the French clergy in the new colony had protested against an arrangement that would only give them the "temporary and incomplete" ecclesial status of a foreign mission. They instead requested the creation of a see at Algiers under regular French ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The government agreed with this proposal and asked the Holy See to establish a see at Algiers. The king supposedly was ready to name Étienne the first bishop.¹³²

Rosset notes that "while Monsieur Étienne had welcomed the opportunity of being named the vicar apostolic of Algeria to escape the difficulties surrounding him, he did not hesitate for a moment to decline this new dignity."¹³³ To have accepted the Algerian see would have "condemned him to live outside the Congregation, and nothing would have persuaded him to make this sacrifice."¹³⁴ Étienne did not want to offend the king by declining his offer. However, the government "interpreted his reserved attitude as a refusal."¹³⁵ In August 1838, Louis-Philippe named Antoine Dupuch the first bishop of French Algiers. The Lazarist presence in Algeria did not come until 1842.¹³⁶

Rosset's account of the Algerian episode is erroneous. Nozo and the general council had designated Étienne to serve as the vicar apostolic of Algiers. Rome said that it was willing to accept this nomination.¹³⁷ Late

¹²⁹ "Note pour le conseil des Ministres: 13 avril 1836 (rédictions des 7 et 9 avril)," AN.F19.6223.

¹³⁰ Étienne to Torrette, 23 July 1836, *Correspondance Étienne*, dossier b, llb, ACMP.

¹³¹ Étienne to Torrette, 19 February 1837, *ibid.*, 18c.

¹³² Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 92-93.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹³⁶ For more details see Gabriel Perbyore, C.M., *Mémoires de la Congrégation de la Mission: À Tunis et à Alger*, vol. 3 (Paris: À la maison principale de la Congrégation de la Mission, 1864), 706-61.

¹³⁷ The minutes of the general council meeting of 9 November 1835 record the following decision, "After having prayed to God since the last meeting on this important question, and after having examined the list of the Company's subjects who would be able to fill the post of vicar apostolic of Algiers, the council knowing that Monsieur Étienne, the procurator general, has volunteered to found this mission... agrees to his request and designates him to occupy the post of vicar apostolic." *General Council Minutes*, 1: 76, ACGR.

in 1835, when the Lazarist missionaries and Étienne were ready to depart, the king received the final agreement for his approval. Louis-Philippe refused to sign, and the plan fell apart. The nuncio, Monsignor Garibaldi, wrote to Cardinal Fransoni in Rome to explain what had happened. Throughout the long course of these negotiations, neither the Ministers of War nor of Foreign Affairs had consulted the king. Louis-Philippe, who was "very agitated," did not believe that the appointment of a vicar apostolic sufficiently protected his rights.¹³⁸ He also did not think that "confiding the care of the entire Algerian colony to one congregation was prudent."¹³⁹

Contrary to Rosset's account, the colonial clergy were not the ones who were interested in the establishment of a regular diocesan structure in Algiers. At this point, the only Catholic clergy in the colony were a handful of army chaplains.¹⁴⁰ According to J. B. Martin, Louis-Philippe agreed with his Minister of Cults that establishing a diocese in Algiers was preferable to sending the Lazarists.

At first, Gregory XVI was unwilling to erect a see. A new see would fall under the 1801 Concordat, giving the king the right of episcopal nomination. The nuncio convinced Rome that the only other alternative was the continuation of the "anarchy in which the African Church presently finds itself."¹⁴¹ The Holy See asked the government to name a cleric who was "young, active, and healthy."¹⁴² Rome approved the choice of Antoine Dupuch. After considerable delay, the Chamber of Deputies voted the necessary funds to support the new colonial diocese.

No evidence exists to sustain Rosset's claim that Étienne was the first choice of the king. In a letter of June 1838, Étienne responded to the rumors that were circulating in Rome. These intimated that he had been soliciting the appointment as bishop. Étienne wrote Giovanni Guarini, "I defy whoever made this accusation to cite one example of anything that I have done directly or indirectly, or to cite any words that I have spoken, which would lead anyone to suspect that I was seeking the episcopacy... Even if I were named as a bishop, whether to this or any other see, I would not accept."¹⁴³ Meanwhile, Étienne

¹³⁸ Martin, *Nonciature*, 252-53. Étienne in a letter to the procurator in Rome said that the collapse of the Algerian proposal "was the result of ill will neither from the Chamber of Deputies nor from the governmental ministers but from a higher authority." Étienne to Giovanni Guarini, 13 June 1838, *Corrispondenza: P. Étienne, Jean-Baptiste, Super. Gener. 30 marzo 1836-3 febbraio 1874*, APGR.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Martin, *Nonciature*, 237.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Étienne to Giovanni Guarini, 13 June 1838, *Corrispondenza*, APGR.

realized that his escape route from Paris and Nozo was closed.¹⁴⁴

Nozo and the "Most Disastrous Measures"¹⁴⁵

According to Étienne, not even a year had past under Nozo's leadership before "the assistants had agreed among themselves that the path that he [Nozo] was taking could only lead the Congregation to certain ruin."¹⁴⁶ One of Nozo's early targets was his rival, Ferdinand-Joseph Bailly.¹⁴⁷ Étienne described Nozo's attitude toward Bailly: "M. Nozo, who believed that he [Bailly] posed a threat to his authority, conceived an ill-concealed animosity toward him that he translated into acts of deplorable gravity."¹⁴⁸

After a period of continual harassment, Nozo escalated his attacks on Bailly by "publicly expressing doubts as to his honesty."¹⁴⁹ He charged that Bailly had "used the Congregation's funds to enrich his own family."¹⁵⁰ According to Étienne, these charges led to an "increasingly acerbic" correspondence between the two. This phase ended with Nozo ordering an audit of Bailly's steward-

¹⁴⁴ *Actes du Gouvernement Supplément*, 128-29.

¹⁴⁵ Étienne, *Notice*, 36.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁴⁷ Bailly also charged that he was not the only "senior and important member of the Congregation that Nozo had expelled" since 1835. He cited the example of Pierre Vivier "who for fifteen years had been the superior of an important house of the Congregation [Montlieu]," but who fell afoul of Nozo and was dismissed from the Congregation. Perboyre identifies Vivier as being a member of the "progressive party." See "Affaire Bailly contre Nozo, 4^e Chambre du tribunal civil de la Seine, conclusions de M. Charency, substitut du procureur du roi," undated, AN.F19.6240.2.210. In the minutes of the general council meeting of 22 February 1841 there is the following note:

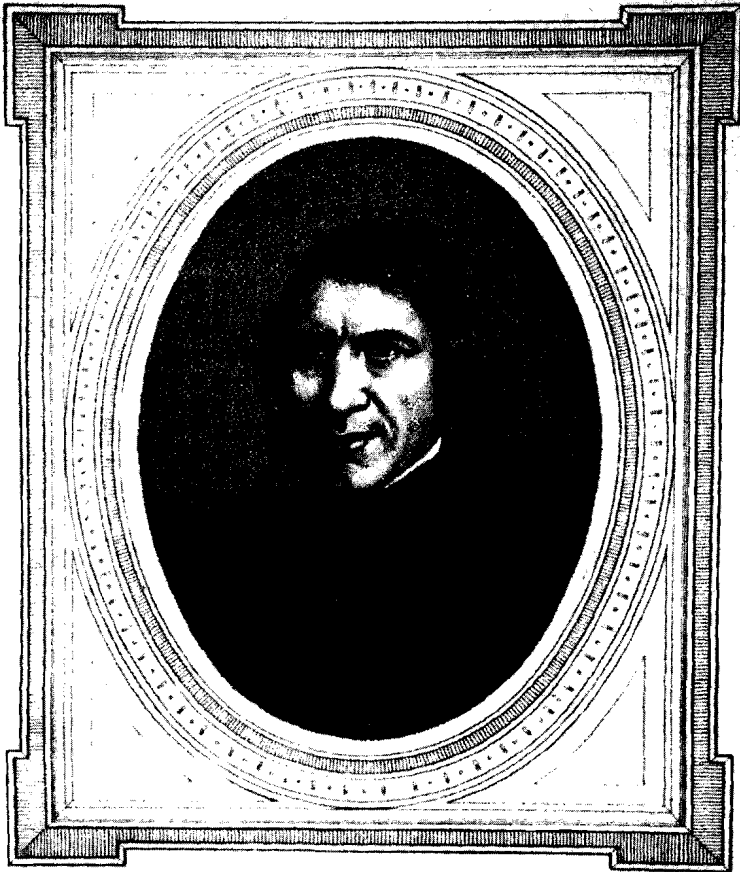
Until now not enough care has been taken to ensure that dispensations from vows for those who leave or who are dismissed from the Congregation are recorded in the council's deliberations. This recording is in line with the spirit of the Constitutions requiring that the assistants are consulted and have given their advice about these matters. This omission could be the cause of grave difficulties as recent experience has shown. To remedy this, the superior general proposed that in the future all such actions be recorded in the minutes of the general council, and that for all those in the past mention be made now to demonstrate the validity of these actions.

The council agreed to Nozo's proposal and the minutes listed the names of twenty-two confreres either dispensed or dismissed from the French provinces. At least one other member of the progressives named by Perboyre was among those dismissed. See *General Council Minutes*, 1: 132, ACGR.

¹⁴⁸ Étienne, *Notice*, 37.

¹⁴⁹ Nozo's harassment of Bailly began as early as the third council meeting of the new administration on 15 September 1835. While the harassment began with regard to relatively petty matters it soon escalated. See for example, *General Council Minutes*, 1: 73, ACGR. At this time Bailly was also serving as the vicar general of Amiens under Bishop Jean-Pierre de Gallien de Chabons. Nozo requested Bailly to resign from this position since it was contrary to community custom. While Bailly claimed he was willing to do so, he said that Chabons refused to accept his resignation. *Bailly*, 5.

¹⁵⁰ Étienne, *Notice*, 37.



*M^r Nozo, Jean Baptiste
XIII^e Supérieur
Élu le 20 Août 1835. Mort le 24 Juin 1868*

*Jean-Baptiste Nozo, C.M., superior general of the
Congregation of the Mission, 1835-1842*

ship in the houses where he had served as superior.¹⁵¹ Later, in the middle of a “violent discussion,” Nozo told Bailly “that he did not regard him as belonging to the Congregation.”¹⁵² The general claimed that Bailly “had taken his vows at a time when no legitimate authority existed in the Congregation to receive them.”¹⁵³ Bailly angrily asked Nozo “to give him a formal declaration that his vows were null and that he had never been a member of the Congregation.”¹⁵⁴ With this written statement in hand, Bailly “used it to attack Monsieur Nozo and the Congregation to obtain an indemnity for the years that he had worked in the Company’s service.”¹⁵⁵ Bailly filed suit and began an embarrassing scandal for the Congregation and Nozo. According to Étienne, this action received wide publicity not only in Paris but throughout France.¹⁵⁶

Bailly’s defense of his reputation and the righteousness of his financial claims against the Congregation was as spirited as it was effective. The suit sullied Nozo’s reputation. In the end, after arbitration, the suit cost the Congregation a settlement of more than 100,000 francs.¹⁵⁷ The arbitrator spoke about Nozo in his judgment:

¹⁵¹ Nozo’s actions against Bailly were taken with the consent of the general council. See for example, the minutes from the meetings of 15 September 1835, 9 October 1835, 23 July 1838, and 11 March 1839. *General Council Minutes*, 1: 73, 84,107-08, 115, ACGR.

¹⁵² Étienne, *Notice*, 37. Bailly had been a diocesan seminarian at Amiens when it had been entrusted again to the Lazarists before their Napoleonic suppression. Dominique Hanon was a friend of Bailly’s family and served as his mentor. During this time, the Congregation had no legal existence. Thus, Bailly lived informally as a Lazarist under the direction of the former Lazarists at Amiens, who expected that one day the community would again be legally restored. Bailly, who was already ordained, formally entered the community immediately after the Bourbon Restoration in 1816, under the authority of Charles-Vincent de Paul Boujard. On the basis that Boujard had not yet been recognized canonically as vicar general when he received Bailly’s and others’ vows, doubts were raised as to their validity. See *Bailly*, 5.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* The text of Nozo’s dismissal read: “We the undersigned, superior general of the Congregation of the Mission also called the Lazarists, declare to those present that the vows pronounced by Monsieur Amable Ferdinand Bailly in the said Congregation are recognized as being null and that consequently he has no attachment to it. To attest to this we have delivered this notification to him signed in our hand and that of our secretary and sealed with our seal.”

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Étienne, *Notice*, 37. In a letter to Louis-Florentin Leleu, a Lazarist missionary in Constantinople, 7 February 1840, Étienne commented with regard to the publicity attending the Bailly judgment:

In my last letter I already announced the results of the Bailly suit. I do not wish to speak anymore about it. You know enough already. I will only tell you now about its effect on the public which is not what you thought it would be. The bad newspapers have been silent about this affair, so that there is no publicity about it in Paris. I have heard nothing said about it in the government ministries. But in Picardy, the situation is not the same. In the end though, I think the only damage will be the monetary judgment, and in a few months the case will be forgotten. I am more sorry for Monsieur Bailly than the Congregation.

Étienne: Lettres, C, 40, H:3, I (39-73), ACMP.

¹⁵⁷ Étienne, *Notice*, 37.

After a long and conscientious examination, I am completely in agreement with the conclusions presented by M. Bailly...Having examined all the evidence, I repeat the judgment given in the greatest of all trials, "I find no guilt in him."¹⁵⁸...I can understand and sympathize with what he has gone through...After Monsieur Nozo's elevation, everyone could see that his [Bailly's] position was becoming delicate and perilous...He lost everything, but would not lose his good name...May these words serve as a true homage and compensation for the evils suffered by M. Bailly...I know that for a long time Monsieur Nozo has been considered a model Lazarist because of his austerity and his virtue...One of his own friends has written, "What Nozo is now he was not before...Have honors changed his character?"...Monsieur Nozo is the same person he was before, but the immense responsibility that weighs upon his shoulders has changed him. From the high place he now occupies, he is no longer able to measure distances with firm and clear sight. He wanted to restore and renew the primitive life and the ancient severity [of the Congregation]. His belief that men and things were standing in the way of this desire irritated him. In desiring to do good, he ended by doing evil as this sad case proves. My words today may seem hard and severe, but perhaps when time has passed and the disturbance that is inseparable from a case like this has subsided and calm has returned to his soul he will come to see this judgment as a solemn and public expiation of his injustice and he will rejoice at what I in conscience have had to say.¹⁵⁹

Étienne's judgment of Bailly was as harsh as that he bestowed upon Nozo: "He exploited the unfortunate decisions and imprudence of Monsieur Nozo for his own benefit and tried to profit from the scandal that the two of them had made public."¹⁶⁰ Bailly's actions "brought down a heavenly curse upon him." Étienne recounted, with evident satisfaction, that Bailly had used his undeserved settlement in financial speculations. He ended by losing everything that he possessed. Thus, "This man, this former vicar general and dean of the cathedral chapter, underwent the humiliation of seeing his possessions put up to a public auction...Monsieur Bailly ended his life living in humiliation and misery."¹⁶¹

Diverted for a moment with his diatribe against Bailly, Étienne turned his attention back to Nozo. He noted, "Monsieur Nozo also was inclined

¹⁵⁸A reference to Pontius Pilate's statement about Christ in John 19: 38.

¹⁵⁹Bailly, 32.

¹⁶⁰Étienne, *Notice*, 38.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

toward financial matters. He did not hesitate to render himself guilty of the same offenses of which he had accused Monsieur Bailly.¹⁶² Étienne recounted how Nozo had become involved in a complicated financial arrangement with a distant relative [Denis Hennecart] who then sued him and the Congregation.¹⁶³ This action continued the unfortunate publicity begun by the Bailly suit.

Hennecart's published attacks on Nozo's character were devastating:

Others have had the experience of encountering unfaithful partners who betrayed their confidence and caused the ruin of their partner and his family. However, in these cases rarely does one find that the author of this ruin is a relative, a priest, the head of a justly esteemed religious order, and the successor of Saint Vincent...I would not have believed it possible. I considered Monsieur Nozo to be a true friend and benefactor who in difficult circumstances had come to my assistance providentially. He promised to help my family and to be my son's guide. All my hopes collapsed when I discovered that he was the person responsible for my destruction and was the spoliator of my possessions...In my search for justice in the present circumstances, I am forced to bring the facts to the public along with the documentation to prove my position. This is not my fault. I tried every means to avoid a public scandal by suggesting arbitration. He has forced me into this action.¹⁶⁴

Hennecart testified that Nozo had described himself as "the Rothschild of the religious orders," saying that "if he lost a million francs he would still be rich."¹⁶⁵ He claimed that Nozo also said that he was "more powerful than the king of France." As superior general "he could count on the absolute obedience of the world wide double family." Unlike the king, "he did not have to abide by a budget or a vote of the Chamber of Deputies in deciding how to invest his capital." Hennecart alleged that "M. Nozo had a reputation in the Paris stock market as an able speculator who heavily invested his capital, or that of his Congregation, in stocks and other industrial issues."¹⁶⁶ He described Nozo as having turned the Congregation into a "commercial agency" because of lending his name to

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Nozo was a "distant relative" of the wife of Denis Hennecart, who was the merchant who filed suit. For details of the legal quagmire surrounding these suits see AN.F19.6240.208, "Exposé pour M. Denis Hennecart, propriétaire, ancien négociant, demeurant à Roye, arrondissement de Montidier, département de la Somme, contre M. Nozo (Jean-Baptiste), prêtre, supérieur général des Lazaristes," See also, "Note additionnelle sur les négociations qui ont eu lieu postérieurement à l'exposé de M. Denis Hennecart contre M. Nozo," AN.F19.6240.211. "Complément de la note additionnelle qui précède par le détail ce qui s'est passé depuis son impression, Denis Hennecart," AN.F19.6240.209.

¹⁶⁴ Hennecart, 1-2.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

endorse several public stock offerings.¹⁶⁷ Hennecart also charged that Nozo speculated with money that the Congregation received from the Lyons-based Society for the Propagation of the Faith. This was money designated for the support of the foreign missions.¹⁶⁸

Hennecart ended his account by observing, "it is impossible that the members of the Congregation of which Monsieur Nozo is the superior... are not afflicted by his conduct in this affair. We can assume that their sentiments of honor and honesty will not fail to motivate them to prevent him from ever straying again."¹⁶⁹ The settlement of the Hennecart suit did not take place until after Nozo's departure from the scene. As Étienne noted, however, the Congregation eventually was successful in having itself dissociated from the lawsuits.¹⁷⁰

Étienne commented that anyone could easily have surmised the state of Nozo's internal administration based on how he handled external matters. According to Étienne, the assistants general had very quickly decided that only the protection of divine providence could keep the Congregation from "certain ruin" under Nozo's leadership.¹⁷¹ The assistants decided, however, to take their chances and ride out the intervening years until the sexennial assembly scheduled to meet in 1841.

The only other option open to the assistants would have been to convoke a general assembly, make formal accusations against Nozo, and seek his constitutional deposition.¹⁷² Unfortunately, the assistants decided against this option "since it appeared to be too extreme and would only have aggravated a situation that was in need of healing."¹⁷³ They also felt that such an action "would have led to internal divisions in the Company, while also provoking another scandal that could not help but become public."¹⁷⁴ To avoid this "greater evil," they took refuge "in prayer and patience, awaiting the day when heaven would end this lamentable crisis."

¹⁶⁷ Hennecart also made a charge that involved Étienne. According to Hennecart, in early 1838 there were a series of public advertisements announcing the prospectus for a "remarkable opportunity" to invest in the *Exploitation générale des distilleries du nord de la France*...one of the listed members of the oversight committee for this investment was *M. l'abbé Étienne, procureur général des prêtres de Saint Lazare*." Hennecart wondered out loud whether the bad example of Nozo had rubbed off on his subordinate. *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁷⁰ Étienne, *Notice*, 38.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² "Caput II. De cura auctoritate et potestate Congregationis erga Superiorem Generalem," "Caput XII. De Conventu Generali cogendo ad tractanda negotia," *Constitutiones*, 15-17, 115.

¹⁷³ Étienne, *Notice*, 38.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

Meanwhile, the assistants decided "to keep silent as much as possible about this painful situation and to do all they could to maintain unity." In any case, they would "keep watch against violations of the constitutions." According to Étienne, this "wise decision" meant that "the acts and decisions of Monsieur Nozo in his private life and in his administration of the Congregation remained hidden by inviolable secrecy."¹⁷⁵ Étienne claimed that the Congregation's houses outside France remained unaware of what was taking place. Supposedly, the houses in France only knew what became public because of the lawsuits. However, it is unlikely that word of Nozo's and the Congregation's troubles could be kept completely secret from the foreign, or French provinces.

The general council thus waited for "the moment when the deputies from the various provinces would come together to discuss the state of the Congregation and save it from the menace that threatened it."¹⁷⁶ At the general council meeting held on 8 March 1841, "The superior general noted that six years had now passed since the last general assembly and that according to the constitutions it was time to set a date for the sexennial assembly."¹⁷⁷ The council agreed to schedule the assembly for the end of July.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 132, ACGR.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Chapter 6

The Resignation of Jean-Baptiste Nozo

"We await the events destined for us by Providence without the least inquietude."¹

Relations between Nozo, the members of the general council, and Étienne had grown increasingly tense. Now, in the months before the July meeting of the sexennial assembly, they all but collapsed. The brief council meeting held on 8 March, which convoked the assembly, would be the last held before its meeting. It also was the last ever attended by Nozo.²

Both the general and his opponents planned their tactics for the upcoming confrontation. Nozo understood "the peril he was facing."³ He knew that without a carefully planned strategy on his part the assembly, in all likelihood, would strip him of his authority and choose a vicar general. All this would be in preparation for his deposition by a general assembly. Nozo had never before shied away from any confrontation. He secretly wrote to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars at the end of March asking for permission to name a vicar general.⁴ Not mentioning the upcoming assembly, Nozo justified his request by saying that "since he has responsibility not only for the conduct of the Congregation of the Mission but also that of the Company of the Daughters of Charity; he is often in danger of succumbing to the fatigue and cares that are inseparable from their government. By the mercy of God, these two communities are growing and continually extending outside Europe to the world's farthest reaches. His faltering health increases the difficulty of his governance

¹ Étienne to François Viallier, C.M., letter of 11 April 1842, *Étienne: Lettres 1839-45*, C: 40, H: 3, 1 (39-73), ACMP.

² *General Council Minutes*, 1: 132-33, ACCR.

³ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 132.

⁴ Apparently, Nozo wrote directly to the Holy See without using the services of Vito Guarini, the Roman procurator, as would have been customary.

under these conditions."⁵

Nozo claimed that his assistants general were of little help, either because of age or because of their other duties. Since he was without assistance, Nozo said that he was unable to leave Paris to conduct community business. He asked Gregory XVI to accord him the faculty to confide his powers, "limited and revocable and in the case of my absence or sickness," to a vicar general.⁶ The pope agreed to this request in May.

In the months before the assembly Nozo, who was aware of the growing sentiment against him, tried to defuse the most damaging accusations that he faced. He had learned of Denis Hennecart's plan to publish his charges. He desperately wanted to prevent this. Nozo wrote his lawyer instructing him to do everything he could to stop the publication of this information, including purchasing Hennecart's silence. Nozo's lawyer, who happened to be Étienne's brother Louis, felt conscience-bound to violate his client's confidentiality. He warned the assistants of what Nozo was planning.⁷ Hennecart's brochure appeared and did the damage that Nozo had feared.

Étienne and the assistants felt a great uneasiness about all aspects of Nozo's administration as superior general. They believed that Nozo had violated the constitutional requirement that he consult the general council "on the most important matters."⁸ Under these circumstances, he needed the consent of the majority of his consultors. Étienne charged, "Monsieur Nozo has clearly dealt

⁵"Pièces Justificatives," *Circulaires*, 2: 643. The public excuse that would later be used concerning Nozo's poor health requiring him to have the assistance of a vicar general had some validity to it. In the minutes of the general council meeting of 31 August 1835, the following notation appears:

The assistants general understanding that the first of their duties, on behalf of the Congregation, is to conserve for many years the head which it has chosen. Considering the superior general's weak health, in conformity with the constitutions and the rules of their office, they believe it their duty to attend immediately to this important part of their responsibility. They have taken the resolution of consulting the house physician Monsieur Rathcau and another doctor, Monsieur Récamier, to obtain their professional opinions concerning the superior general's health and the means that should be taken to fortify and conserve it. This consultation has taken place...and the doctors have fixed the regime that the superior general must follow in the future under the vigilance of the assistants general.

General Council Minutes, 1: 69, ACGR.

⁶"Pièces Justificatives," *Circulaires*, 2: 643

⁷Ibid.

⁸This is from a lengthy, undated memorandum in Étienne's handwriting. The document details the charges against Nozo as formulated by the general council. Étienne also gives some background on the sexennial assembly and subsequent events. There is a later notation in Gabriel Perboyre's handwriting indicating a probable date of June or July 1842. *Nozo II, Documents 1843-66*, C 39, bas 2°, 26, ACMP.

with many grave matters having the potential of compromising the Congregation's honor and existence without seeking his assistants' advice."⁹ Étienne would later explain,

Despite our profound sadness, despite our lively concern about our Congregation's future...we kept within the limits traced for us by our constitutions [to respect the superior general's person and authority]. We thus had no choice but to leave Monsieur Nozo a free hand in public. Fortified in our consciences by Saint Vincent's promises, we placed our confidence about the Congregation's future in divine providence's hands....We observed a complete silence concerning Monsieur Nozo's acts until the sexennial assembly which would meet to examine the condition of the congregation....At this time we planned to fulfill our responsibility and speak publicly."¹⁰

In his biography, Rosset said that "until the time of Monsieur Nozo's resignation he [Étienne] kept silent." Rosset claimed that he "had found no trace in his [Étienne's] papers of his active participation in the actions of the sexennial assembly, and the internal troubles that followed it." Rosset admits only that "here and there" in Étienne's correspondence during 1841 and 1842 "he did make passing allusions to the afflicting events he was witnessing." However, "he carefully avoided telling any one his secret sorrow....Prayer and work were his only refuge."¹¹ This claim is not credible given the irrefutable evidence of Étienne's leading role in the struggle with Nozo.¹²

Étienne's position was that "given Nozo's unfortunate administration and the public scandals he had caused, the assistants had a sworn responsibility to save the Congregation from the dangers that menaced its interests, its reputation, and its very existence."¹³ Under the circumstances, "the sole measure" that could remedy the situation was for the sexennial assembly to withdraw Nozo's powers

⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 137.

¹² "Notes de M. Perboyre, Gabriel, sur les agissements de MM. Cremisini et Guarini, Vite," *Envoi: Étienne*, Casier: 40, Haut: 1, 3, ACMP.

¹³ Étienne, *Nozo*, 2, ACMP. To illustrate the "seriousness of the responsibility" felt by the assistants, Étienne also quoted the oath taken by each assistant after his election: "I call on Jesus Christ, who will judge me, that if anything should occur that warrants the deposition of the superior general, as soon as the matter shall have been sufficiently proved, I will faithfully announce it to the Congregation and at the same time I will vote to convoke a general assembly," "Caput IX. De Electione Assistantium et Admonitoris Superioris Generalis," *Constitutiones* §V, 96-97.

and give them to a vicar general.¹⁴ The vicar general would then have the responsibility of preparing for the convocation of a general assembly. The assembly would “judge the cause of Monsieur Nozo and depose him if it judged him guilty of an offense foreseen by the constitutions for a superior general’s removal.”¹⁵

When the three Italian delegates arrived in Paris, they heard for the first time about the superior general’s scandals and legal troubles.¹⁶ The Italian assistant, Pasquale Fiorillo, told them of the “miseries and dissensions that divided the general council.”¹⁷ They also learned that the four French provinces had recommended that the sexennial assembly convoke a general assembly.¹⁸

The minutes of the assembly do not reflect any of the turmoil that took place at the mother house from 27 to 31 July.¹⁹ According to Guarini’s version of events, each day two sessions of the assembly took place. One was “legal,” meeting under the superior general’s presidency, and the other, that he described as “illegal,” met in the mother house library, supposedly without Nozo’s knowledge.²⁰ At these unofficial sessions, Étienne and the assistants laid out their charges against the general for the assembled delegates.²¹ Guarini commented that they did not even spare Nozo criticism of how he dressed.²² Given the superior general’s acumen, he undoubtedly took the opportunity of privately rallying his supporters. Nozo refuted the

¹⁴ The thirteen members of the eighth sexennial assembly included the superior general, Jean-Baptiste Nozo, the assistants general Pierre Le Go, Jean Grappin, Jean-Marie Aladel, and Pasquale Fiorillo. Jean-Baptiste Étienne was present as procurator and secretary general. The delegates from the Italian provinces included Nicola Legnito from Naples, Pier Paolo Sturchi from Turin, and Vito Guarini from Rome. The French provinces were represented by Jean-François Chossat from Lyons; Barthélémy Trouve from Aquitaine; Joseph Wagnier from Picardy; and Nicholas Martin from France [Paris]. At this time, both the provinces of Spain and Portugal had been suppressed by their respective liberal, anticlerical governments. The provinces of Lithuania and Warsaw were cut off from Paris because of Russian imperial religious policies. The province of the United States, because it was outside Europe, had no right of representation. See *Circulaires*, 2: 521-22.

¹⁵ Étienne, *Notice*, 40.

¹⁶ *Relazione di quanto precedette accompagnò e seguì un ricorso avanzato all S. Sede nel 1842 dal Signor Michele Cremisini visitatore della Missione, pel Signor Vito Guarini, procuratore general presso la S. Sede della stessa Congregazione* (Rome, 1870). This document is an important counterpart to Étienne’s more famous *Notice*. Guarini addressed this account to the confreres of the Roman province in September 1870 as a response to the August publication of Étienne’s *Notice*. This edition, however, must be dated to sometime after 1896. [See footnote on pp. 9-10]. The issuance of this edition was in response to the continuing historical and mythical blame laid by the French on the “intrigues” of the Italians. Étienne, *Ecrits et Documents*, C 40, bas 3°, B 15, ACMP. Guarini claimed that the Italian delegates found a copy of the Hennecart brochure waiting for them in their rooms. He describes this document as an “infamous libel” from an “ungrateful relative.” *Relazione*, 19, ACMP.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁸ *Poussou*, 1, ACMP.

¹⁹ *Acta VIII Conventus sexennalis, 1841, 800-07*, ACGR.

²⁰ Guarini, *Relazione*, 20, ACMP.

²¹ *Poussou*, 2, ACMP.

²² Guarini, *Relazione*, 20, ACMP.

charges against him, while making countercharges against the assistants and Étienne.²³

According to Guarini's account, two French delegates, Joseph Wargnier and Barthélémy Trouve, were indignant at Étienne and the assistants. They attributed their actions to "intrigue, vendetta, and ambition."²⁴ During the assembly, the three Italian delegates supposedly "said nothing and betrayed no emotions," as they witnessed the spectacle of French internecine warfare.²⁵ In fact, however, the Italians gave their votes to Nozo's cause.

Guarini recalled that he had felt perplexed by the charges against Nozo. He said that he had spoken confidentially to the first assistant, the aged Pierre Le Go.²⁶ Le Go supposedly told him that the general was being "persecuted," and that "he was a saint."²⁷ According to Le Go, the opposition came from those who were fighting Nozo's attempts to restore regularity to the community, as it existed among the Italians. Le Go also supposedly told Guarini not to worry since he was confident that Nozo would emerge victorious.²⁸

The assembly's first session began at 5:00 P.M. on 27 July 1841. As Nozo opened the assembly, he proposed the nomination of Antoine Poussou as vicar general.²⁹ At the end of the session, the assembly elected Étienne as secretary.³⁰ This move suggested that the anti-Nozo party controlled a majority of the votes. According to Poussou, the delegates were split into two groups. The majority party consisted of the four assistants, Étienne, and two of the French delegates, Chossat and Martin.³¹ The pro-Nozo party consisted of the three Italian delegates and two French delegates, Trouve and Wargnier. To choose a vicar general required the vote of a majority, plus one. The anti-Nozo party seemed to have the votes it needed.

On the following day, Nozo formally nominated Poussou to serve

²³ Given Nozo's skillful maneuvering, it is hard to accept Guarini's claim that at the sexennial assembly "he had been a victim of his own simplicity." *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Guarini testified that the Italians previously had formed a very positive opinion of Nozo during his visit to Italy and Rome in 1837 for the celebration of the centenary of Saint Vincent's canonization. He mentioned that, at the time, no one spoke of anything but Nozo's "amiability, sanctity, generosity, and virtue." See *ibid.*, 16.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁸ *Ibid.* How seriously Le Go's testimony should be taken is colored by the fact that Guarini in his account admitted that Le Go was almost an "imbecile" because of his advanced age (*ibid.*, 21).

²⁹ For a biographical notice of Poussou see *Relations Abrégées*, 2: 321-405.

³⁰ *Acta VIII*, 807, ACGR.

³¹ *Poussou*, 3, ACMP. This statement would seem to conflict to Guarini's account of Le Go's support for Nozo.

as vicar general.³² He gave as his reasons “my inability to sustain the weight of my office due to my frequent illnesses.”³³ Nozo then renounced the faculty given him by the Holy See. He accepted that the assembly would choose a vicar general as foreseen by the constitutions. The assembly unanimously approved Poussou’s nomination.³⁴

At the third session held on 29 July, Nozo gave the assembly the text of the Roman rescript that he had renounced. The delegates, “moved by the example of the general’s humility...and wanting to express their gratitude for his generous act, offered to reserve him some of his faculties.” They did this “as much to preserve the generalate’s honor as for the respect due to his person.”³⁵

The assembly honored Nozo’s request that the new vicar general not take office until 1 November. The delegates reserved to the general his rights to name visitors upon presentation by the vicar general, to grant dispensations from vows, and to convoke a general assembly after consulting his council. This last concession was Nozo’s only hope. Under the circumstances, it seemed unlikely that he would soon consent to convoke a general assembly whose purpose would be to judge whether to depose him or not.³⁶ The vicar general was to write Nozo at least every three months, and ask his advice regarding important matters.³⁷

Guarini said that Nicola Legnito, the Neapolitan delegate, believed that the only authority the sexennial assembly possessed was to decide “whether a general assembly was necessary.”³⁸ He said that any other action taken by the assembly would be “null and void.”³⁹ After the assembly, this became Nozo’s position as well. Guarini believed that it was at this point Nozo made a fatal error in judgment.

³² Poussou was chosen as a compromise candidate. Guarini reported that Nozo had first intended to appoint Jean Brioude, the visitor of the province of Picardy. Étienne commented that the assembly chose Poussou “Since he had passed many years in a faraway mission [he had been prefect apostolic of the Congregation’s missions in Syria] and had only been in France a few months before being called to fulfill the functions he would exercise [as vicar general]. He had played no part in all the debates which had taken place in the Congregation since the election of Monsieur Nozo, and was not even in the position to have knowledge about them.” Étienne, *Nozo*, 9, ACMP.

³³ *Acta VIII*, 808, ACGR.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 806-07.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 809.

³⁶ In his circular letter of 1 June 1842, Nozo commented with respect to convoking a general assembly, “My opinion was that it would be better to defer it for a while in order to allow the dissipation of the storms that could obscure the truth and so that matters could be judged more calmly and with more security for the future.” *Nozo II, Documents*, C, 39, 24, ACMP.

³⁷ *Acta VIII*, 810, ACGR.

³⁸ Guarini, *Relazione*, 21, ACMP.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

He thought that if the general had used the papal faculty to name a vicar general, he could have done so based entirely on his own conditions. In this way, he could have “foiled his enemies’ intrigues,” and pulled off “a counter coup-d’état.”⁴⁰

As expected, Étienne’s abbreviated mythic account of the sexennial assembly often bears little resemblance to what was the actual course of its convoluted events. Étienne claimed that it had been the assembly’s judgment that the general, having “compromised the honor, the interests and the Congregation’s very existence” was “unfit to govern.”⁴¹ It therefore had stripped Nozo of his authority. He does not mention, however, that this decision was made on the basis of a seven-to-five split among the delegates and that one less vote would have defeated the anti-Nozo party. On this basis, the assembly’s agreement to Poussou’s appointment cannot be said, as claimed by Étienne, to represent a “unanimous” decision to strip Nozo of his powers and prepare the way for his removal as superior general. There obviously were some delegates at the assembly who while willing to support the nomination of a vicar general, still supported Nozo enough to agree to conditions favorable to him.

According to Étienne’s account, Nozo had “avowed on his knees that his conduct had rendered him unworthy to occupy his post. He then asked pardon from the Congregation for the scandals he had caused it.”⁴² In another place, Étienne added that Nozo had done this “in tears.”⁴³ He said that Nozo had told the delegates “that for some days now he had felt the need to refrain from saying mass. He did not think he could go to the altar again until he reconciled himself to God by means of a retreat he also vowed to make.”⁴⁴ Étienne said that Nozo had asked for special consideration from the assembly to prevent his legal adversaries from using his “humiliation” to triumph over him.⁴⁵ As part of this special consideration, Nozo requested that Poussou not take office until 1 November and asked that his poor health be the public reason given for the vicar general’s appointment. Finally, he wanted to be the one to announce the appointment.⁴⁶ Étienne goes on to say, “He also knew that out of regard for his difficult position the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Étienne, *Nozo*, 2, ACMP.

⁴² Étienne, *Notice*, 40.

⁴³ Étienne, *Nozo*, 14, ACMP.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Étienne, *Notice*, 40.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

assembly would agree that the minutes of the meeting would not contain one word that reflected badly on him."⁴⁷

Étienne also claimed that in Nozo's public remarks "to which all the assembly members could attest," he had expressed his satisfaction at the measures taken in his regard. Further, he had approved of the manner in which "a happy solution had been found for the critical situation that the Congregation found itself in."⁴⁸ Antoine Poussou adds the following testimony to this as well: "He signed the acts [of the assembly] freely and wholeheartedly. After the assembly's close, everyone at the mother house was a witness to his joy as he embraced each assistant. He told them how happy he was to have the assembly relieve him of the great burdens that had weighed upon him."⁴⁹

If the pattern of Étienne's mythic construction holds true, Nozo probably did make some sort of emotional appeal and public expression of sorrow. The general later acknowledged that "my sins are one true cause of the evils we suffer."⁵⁰ This emotive behavior would have been in keeping with what we know of Nozo's volatile personality. In the *Notice*, Étienne made the comment, "The assembly felt touched by the humble sentiments that he [Nozo] had expressed. It believed in his sincerity, and thought that charity demanded that it condescend to agree to his desire. The events that followed proved that Monsieur Nozo had fooled the delegates, and that the danger the assembly had tried to avoid would only become more severe."⁵¹

Vito Guarini, in his own mythic account, commented that at the assembly's end he still did not know which reputation of Nozo to believe, that he was a saint as Pierre Le Go had told him or that he was "an inept, incapable, dissipated demon" as claimed by his opponents.⁵² In reading Guarini's account, however, his negative opinion of Étienne is apparent. Guarini correctly observed that after the assembly, neither Nozo's supporters nor his opponents, could long accept the status quo.

Nozo reminded the departing delegates of the required secrecy concerning the vicar general's nomination. They were to inform only

⁴⁷If this charge were true the legality of the assembly would have been hopelessly compromised. Étienne, *Nozo*, 15, ACMP.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*Poussou*, 3, ACMP.

⁵⁰Undated letter which is described in an unknown hand as probably being written "from Cahors where he had retired" [after the sexennial assembly] to "Monsieur Baudrez his correspondent in Paris." *M. Nozo: Administration Générale*, ACMP.

⁵¹Étienne, *Notice*, 40.

⁵²Guarini, *Relazione*, 22, ACMP.

their respective visitors of the assembly's decisions. Vito Guarini mentioned that on his return trip, Nicola Legnito, had spoken publicly about "the ambition and trickery of the enemies of Monsieur Nozo." Consequently, word of the "Parisian miseries" began to spread immediately in Italy.⁵³

Meanwhile, back in Paris, Nozo did not inform Antoine Poussou of his selection until 15 October. On 28 October, the general finally issued the circular letter informing the community of the sexennial assembly's results.⁵⁴ Nozo explained that because of the Double Family's growth and his own "frequent enough indispositions," he had asked the pope for permission to name a vicar general. He said he had foreseen that the vicar general could "substitute for me in case of illness or a long absence." Nozo explained that at the time of the assembly, "I felt a great need for rest and tranquility." This led him to conclude that "the moment had arrived to put my plan into operation." Nozo said that he had informed the assembly of the permission he had received and his choice to fill the position of vicar general. According to Nozo, the assembly "accepted my proposal and agreed to my choice." He then announced Poussou's appointment. He noted that Poussou possessed "all the powers that the constitutions attribute to the vicar general...and under the conditions foreseen by them."⁵⁵ The differences between the assembly's decisions and Nozo's version of them are apparent.

Nozo ended his circular saying,

This is why, as of the first of November, you should contact Monsieur Poussou for all the matters that normally are the superior general's concern. I urge you to give him the same obedience as you would to the superior general. Matters will rest in this state until the general assembly meets. I will convoke the assembly when, before the Lord, I judge it to be expedient. I will make this decision after consulting my council. Above all, I will consider the good of the Congregation and the wishes of my confreres. I can say, with all sincerity, that the Congregation's prosperity, and its members' welfare, have always been the goal of my weak efforts, and the object of my most ardent desires.⁵⁶

In late October, Poussou and Nozo had four or five meetings. According to Poussou, the superior general "spoke at length about his

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁴ Nozo, *Circulaires*, 2: 528-29.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

imagined persecution by the assistants and the blow he had received to his personal honor. During these meetings, Monsieur Nozo never said one word to me about the Congregation's interests. He never gave me any advice concerning the direction of its affairs. I never learned anything useful from him. I was profoundly disappointed, because in all these meetings he never appeared to be concerned about anything but himself. I therefore resolved not to speak to him any further about anything."⁵⁷

On 2 November 1841, Poussou presided over his first general council meeting.⁵⁸ Nozo left Paris for Cahors. He would reside there for much of the next year.

Even with Poussou's arrival and Nozo's departure, the "crisis was far from over and became more dangerous and violent."⁵⁹ According to Étienne, Nozo "had spread the word among the confreres' and sisters' houses that the assistants were persecuting him."⁶⁰ He charged that the sexennial assembly had exceeded its powers. Nozo assured anyone who would listen that "he still possessed his authority as superior general and could exercise it whenever the occasion warranted."⁶¹ He also spoke about the "self-interest, jealousy, ambition, calumnies, and independent spirit of...the party of rebellion."⁶² Its members possessed "sentiments totally contrary to a spirit of submission and respect toward authority."⁶³ By the beginning of January, Poussou wrote that Nozo had repeated his charges, "everywhere he has traveled, even while he was claiming to be silent."⁶⁴ Poussou said that he had received so many letters telling him what Nozo was saying that he "now knew them by heart."⁶⁵

The first major post-assembly clash between Nozo and Poussou, Étienne, and the assistants came early in November. At an extraordinary meeting held on 15 November, the council addressed Nozo's refusal to sign the financial account books for the year 1840 and for 1841 up to his departure date. The council declared that the general had refused to sign "for no legitimate reason," and they certified the accuracy of the accounts as presented by Étienne.⁶⁶ At the next meeting on 22 November, Poussou

⁵⁷ *Poussou*, 1, ACMP.

⁵⁸ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 133-34, ACGR.

⁵⁹ Étienne, *Notice*, 41.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Baudrez*, 1, ACMP.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Poussou*, 1, ACMP.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 143-44, ACGR.

asked the council's advice on how to address the confusion among the Daughters of Charity caused by Nozo's circular letter to them of 28 October.⁶⁷ The vicar general said that Nozo's words "are being misinterpreted by some and that many others are uncertain over the vicar general's real authority. Consequently, I fear that under the present circumstances, a division may appear that could have unfortunate results."⁶⁸

The text of Nozo's letter read:

My reason for addressing you today is to inform you that in view of the great need that I feel for rest and tranquility that I have chosen, to replace me provisionally in the Congregation's government, a confrere whom I know to have all the qualities necessary for this position. I have given all my powers, with the title of vicar general of the Congregation, to Monsieur Antoine Poussou... Consequently, in the future, it is to him that you should address all the matters that pertain to the superior general. This situation will continue until you receive new instructions in this regard. I have also instructed my vicar general to give me an account, from time to time, of the state of your Company... I ask you, my very dear sisters, not to be preoccupied with this measure. Nothing here should upset you, since I have taken this action after consultation with my council. Pay no attention to the storms that certain persons may seek to spread.... The sole source of truth, for you and for all the members of Saint Vincent's Double Family, will always be those persons animated by his spirit, who by their position in the Congregation have the responsibility of watching over all things.⁶⁹

The council advised Poussou that it was "necessary and urgent" that he immediately write a clarifying circular.⁷⁰ Poussou issued his own carefully worded letter to the Daughters of Charity on 24 November. While avoiding "superfluous explanations" of the present "critical situation," Poussou urged the sisters to "scorn the storms caused by malintentioned persons who are only seeking to cause trouble.... By means of this wise reserve, you will quiet the confusion and the spiritual pain in which some of you appear to have fallen."⁷¹ He also told the sisters that he hoped that the "difficult and critical situation that we face" would not last long. He added a piece of information that Nozo had failed to mention: that this state of affairs would last only until the general assembly. On a personal note Poussou added, "Let us

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 146-47.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁶⁹ *D.C., Nozo: 1841*, C 198, 1°, ACMP.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *D.C., Poussou: 1841*, C 198, 1°, ACMP.

hope that the assembly comes soon, for I long for the moment when this burden will be lifted from me. Then, I will have my freedom."⁷²

At the council meeting of 6 December, Poussou asked the assistants' advice on how to handle Hennecart's civil suit against Nozo and the Congregation. Hennecart's attack on Nozo's activities had caused great scandal, and the suit seemed far from being settled.⁷³ The archbishop of Paris had expressed concern over the situation.⁷⁴ He "demanded that the Congregation do all that it could to stop this unfortunate suit and the publicity it caused."⁷⁵ The council observed, "This entire unfortunate affair is attributable to Monsieur Nozo personally. He has acted on his own in this affair. He has never consulted his council over the details of his involvement...nor the sources of the capital that he employed in these operations."⁷⁶ They realized, however, that Hennecart's suit had also compromised the Congregation, since Hennecart was suing it as well as its superior general. Caught in a very difficult position, the council decided to have Poussou write to Nozo and inform him of the archbishop's concerns. They also appointed a legal commission to advise them on how to extricate the Congregation from the legal difficulties it faced. If Poussou had come into his position with neutral feelings toward Nozo, this now had changed.⁷⁷

The Charges against Nozo: "The facts speak for themselves."⁷⁸

As time went on, more evidence surfaced concerning Nozo's financial and personal activities. In a memorandum prepared for the general council Étienne commented, "We understand that we have another and important duty to fulfill, that of gathering all the documents that

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ The voluminous records of Nozo's legal troubles with both Ferdinand Bailly and Denis Hennecart have been rediscovered recently in the procurator general's archives in Paris. C 10^o, 1 *Procès: Nozo/Bailly*. A. I, II, III, IV. B. I. *Correspondance*, II. *Documents*, III. *Pièces Communiquées*, IV. *Fondes Corneil/Transactions*, V. *Rentes/Bailly*. C 10^o 1. *Procès: Nozo/Denys*, I. *Documents*, II. *Appel par Denys du Jugement* 7. XII. 41, III. *Appel par Denys du Jugement*, 12. VII. 43, IV. *Mémoire Imprimés*, ACPG.

⁷⁴ A year earlier, in the summer of 1840, the famed Daughter of Charity, Sister Rosalie Rendu, had appealed to Archbishop Affre to use his influence and try to head off the public scandal between Bailly and Nozo. For texts of these letters see *Nozo II, Documents, 1835-42*, C 39, bas 2^o, ACPM.

⁷⁵ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 151, ACPG.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ In this letter of 1 January, Poussou told his correspondent, "I believe, and I am entirely convinced that the restoration of Monsieur Nozo would be harmful to the Congregation which he has already gravely compromised....The reasons for this conviction are numerous. I will not report them in full here, suffice it to say that Monsieur Nozo has lost the esteem and the confidence of the clergy of Paris and the episcopate. This reason, by itself, would appear sufficient for the company to be given another head." *Poussou*, 4, ACPM.

⁷⁸ Étienne, *Nozo*, 3, ACPM.

will prove to the Congregation the true motives for what we have done. This task is a difficult one to undertake, since in doing so we must accuse someone who because of his office should be the recipient of our respect and veneration. Our Constitutions oblige us, through our oath of office, to watch over the Congregation's health, and to spare it from a chief who is unworthy of governing it."⁷⁹ Étienne framed the devastating charges against his archenemy. These accusations "showed the impossibility of Monsieur Nozo resuming his administration of the Congregation."⁸⁰ The first charge was "that the character manifested by Monsieur Nozo in his administration has set the Congregation in a disastrous direction." The second was that Nozo's "abuse of his authority, and his violation of the Constitutions has led to his compromising the Congregation's material interests, its honor, and its very existence." Finally, Étienne raised charges about Nozo's "personal moral conduct."⁸¹

As an example of Nozo's official misconduct, Étienne laid out an attack on his handling of the Bailly affair. He pointed out that while the constitutions commissioned the procurator general to take care of community litigation, Nozo had insisted upon handling the Bailly lawsuit himself. According to Étienne, Nozo "because of his susceptible and suspicious character" made it impossible for the council members to intervene in any way. He saw their advice to be prudent as "an expression of criticism against his conduct that revealed a secret support for Monsieur Bailly's cause." Étienne noted that Nozo was motivated solely by a personal "irritation and acrimony" against Ferdinand Bailly. These feelings were so extreme that "he was without any sentiment of charity toward him."⁸²

Given Nozo's unreasonable manner of acting, Étienne said, anyone could have predicted that the Congregation would lose its legal battle. The superior general insisted on appealing the adverse verdict and launching a publicity campaign against Bailly. The council advised him to follow Saint Vincent's example and let the matter drop. When Nozo insisted, the council gave in and commissioned Étienne and Aladel to write a brochure defending the superior general and the Congregation. Étienne said that he and Aladel had accepted this

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.* In later years this would be Étienne's own stance toward Nozo as well. Nozo's life after his resignation was a sad one, and Étienne's treatment of him was cruel and uncharitable. For more information see *Nozo II, Documents, 1842-1866*, B 42-66, ACMP.

charge only under obedience, and they refused to take any personal responsibility for its consequences. The council agreed to let Nozo publish this defense only after a commission of lawyers and theologians had examined it. Étienne charged that Nozo ignored these conditions and published 3,000 copies of the brochure. These "he sent to all the French dioceses, making public the details of the unfortunate debate."⁸³

Bailly replied to the brochure, thus "augmenting the scandal and entirely discrediting Monsieur Nozo in the eyes of the clergy and the public." The financial judgment against the Congregation and in Bailly's favor was for more than 150,000 francs. Étienne noted that the true costs of the case were much higher, but no one knew the exact figure since Nozo gave the council no accounting of the expenses.⁸⁴

Étienne moved on to discuss the second charge concerning Nozo's abuse of his authority and his constitutional violations. He pointed out that in the Bailly case Nozo had at least minimally consulted his council. In the instances he promised to cite, the superior general had never consulted his assistants and thus bore full responsibility.⁸⁵ The charges in this category dealt largely with Nozo's financial involvement with Denis Hennecart. Étienne alleged that Nozo speculated with funds entrusted to him by Hennecart to the total of 225,000 francs.⁸⁶

Étienne also charged that Nozo had asked the treasurer of the Daughters of Charity to give him 50,000 francs from the community's treasury. According to this account, after receiving the money Nozo "forced the sister to promise never to mention this to anyone, not even the superioress general." The sister in question soon regretted her promise. She repeatedly pleaded with Nozo to inform the superioress general of his action. Nozo finally did speak with the superioress general, "but he spoke to her in terms not of a deed that was already done, but as if it was a loan he wished to arrange." On a subsequent occasion, Nozo tried unsuccessfully to extract an additional 10,000 francs from the sister-treasurer.⁸⁷

Étienne cited another incident that he said had taken place soon after the sexennial assembly. Nozo requested that Étienne, as procurator general, give him 25,000 francs "while refusing to say how he intended to spend these funds." Étienne commented that "the procu-

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸⁶ Included in this amount was money entrusted to him by various Daughters of Charity from their personal funds. *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

urator general invoked the authority of his office and refused to honor his [Nozo's] repeated requests for the funds, without the general council's authorization." The council refused to authorize the transfer of these funds "until he [Nozo] would certify that he would spend them only in the Congregation's interests."⁸⁸ Nozo would not accept this condition. At this point, Étienne could not resist adding the comment that "this resistance from the procurator general caused Monsieur Nozo to feel an irritation toward him that he could not conceal. This later motivated him [Nozo] to make the most odious charges against him [Étienne]. If he [Étienne] had been more compliant, he could probably have remained in his [Nozo's] good graces."⁸⁹

Another charge leveled against Nozo was that he had "made many long journeys at considerable expense in his own coach." Étienne noted that Nozo had never received any funds from the procurator general's office to pay for these trips. He speculated that since Nozo had no family wealth, he could not see how he could cover these costs without secretly using funds that belonged to the Congregation. Étienne asked rhetorically about the judgment that should be drawn about a superior "who has lost sight of the demands of justice and the delicacy of conscience. Someone who would use his influence and authority as means to favor his private interests and undertake speculations that were unworthy of his position!"⁹⁰

In the third part of his indictment, Étienne laid out what were the most disturbing charges against Nozo, "his conduct with respect to his personal morality."⁹¹ Étienne commented, "To the great astonishment of the members of Monsieur Nozo's council, he revealed certain deplorable personal dispositions. Before his election, no suspicion of these had become known. He had a reputation for appropriate conduct, and even a reserved and austere reputation... However, as Saint Vincent's successor as superior general... of a community of more than 4,000 Daughters of Charity... we have become aware of certain familiarities that have compromised his personal morality."⁹² Étienne noted that everyone on the council would have liked to believe that these incidents were isolated examples of imprudent behavior. However, given the evidence they had no choice but to believe "that these

⁸⁸Since there is no record of any official council meetings between March and November of 1841 this controversy must have taken place outside of a formally convoked meeting. *Ibid.*

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 15.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 16.

⁹²*Ibid.*

incidents reflected a long-standing habit."⁹³

According to Étienne, soon after Nozo's election the council members had the first indications that something was wrong with the general's behavior toward Daughters of Charity. They brought these incidents to the general's attention, pointing out the consequences of such "imprudent actions," especially if they were to become known among the sisters and their superiors. Yet, "Monsieur Nozo continued to permit himself improper familiarities with persons of the opposite sex. This caused the fear that there might be even more serious deeds leading to the most disastrous consequences."⁹⁴ In this section of the exposé, Étienne cites seven different examples of Nozo's alleged personal misconduct with sisters.

1. Interviewing sisters by themselves, in particular for spiritual matters. During these interviews he often embraced them, held their hands in his, and conducted himself in other ways that were not at all edifying. When he embraced them, he would embrace them very forcefully. He had them come to visit him often and spent many hours with them for no other purpose than this sort of familiarity.
2. He manifested his preference for certain sisters whom he visited often or invited to visit him. Usually these sisters were young and highly favored by nature.
3. During his trips, forgetting the propriety of his character, position, and his relatively youthful age, he had sisters accompany him in his carriage. In these circumstances he permitted the same familiarities and once even allowed a sister to fall asleep in his arms. To heighten this unbelievable imprudence he often traveled in his carriage late at night accompanied by only one sister.
4. Violating canonical regulations, he heard sisters' confessions in his rooms using neither grill nor confessional. He did this with the sisters for whom he had a particular affection.
5. Joining seduction with immorality, he told these innocent daughters that nothing was wrong about these familiarities because he did them; but they would be so if they came from someone else.
6. When conscientious remorse stung these sisters, they told him that they felt guilty for receiving this sort of familiarity so severely forbidden by their rules. He told them that as Saint Vincent's successor, it was he who interpreted the rules. He assured them that they had no need to confess, and in doing so he added seduction to the other faults that were already so great in themselves. He would hear their confessions and after leaving the confessional permitted himself these same familiarities.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

7. This shows that the penchant of Monsieur Nozo for these problems was deep seated. It was primarily for his guilt in this regard that at the recent sexennial assembly he was forced to give up the Congregation's administration.⁹⁵

It has come to our attention that this behavior has continued since then and has become even more grave. During this time, in a house in the provinces, he several times embraced a young sister and expressed evidently passionate sentiments. He offered her money. The sister interpreted this offer to be a means of seduction, and she indignantly withdrew. She was at the point of abandoning her vocation out of fear that all the Lazarists were like their superior general and that she would become a victim of their corruption.

Again during this period, in another house of the province, during the twenty-four hours he stayed there he twice received and three times went to see a young sister in her room. He embraced her several times, pressing her closely against him, and he told her that he had never felt for any other person the affection that he felt for her.

What is even more afflicting is that he told these two sisters that nothing was wrong in his relationship with them and that they had nothing to confess. Yet, he still recommended that they observe the greatest secrecy about these familiarities.⁹⁶ He thus joined to his flagrant culpability a perverse teaching that could not help but lead him to the profanation of the sacraments and lead to the most dangerous illusions.

We will abstain from making any comment on these deplorable circumstances. The facts speak for themselves. It is the Congregation that God will reprove if it allows its superior general to act in this way without incurring the indignation and the scorn of all the members who compose it.⁹⁷

Étienne commented that given Nozo's behavior it would have been worse than negligent for the council not to convoke a general assembly to "expose and judge" the general.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ There is no evidence that these morals charges were discussed formally at the sexennial assembly.

⁹⁶ The behavior described here, if accurate, seems to indicate the classic behavior of a sexual abuser.

⁹⁷ *Nozo II, Documents, 1842-1866*, B 42-66, 17-18, ACMP.

⁹⁸ Étienne also quoted the Constitutions in this regard which in Chapter II, *De cura, auctoritate et potestate Congregationis erga Superiorem Generalem* (On the responsibility, authority, and power of the Congregation with regard to the superior general) speaks about the deposition of the superior general for moral offenses,

With regard to deposition, that is, if he should commit some very serious external sin, especially if he should fall into a sin of lust through sexual intercourse, or if he should kill or seriously wound someone, or if he should take the goods of some house as his own or dissipate or give them away, or if he should hold to heretical teaching, which cases, it is hoped, will never occur. In these cases, if the matter is sufficiently attested, the Congregation is to depose him without dismissing him from it [the Congregation], even if the matter demands it, as will be stated below.

On 1 January 1842, Antoine Poussou issued his first circular letter. He gave a verbatim summary of the sexennial assembly and its decisions.⁹⁹ He was straightforward as to the reasons for the care with which he was reporting these events and decisions:

I am doing this to calm those confreres who, being ignorant of the manner in which the assembly dealt with these things, seem to have conceived some apprehension that the rules have been violated and that there is a lack of respect for the superior general. This account is also to satisfy the reasonable desire of many others who have complained that externs know more about what is going on in the Congregation than they do. Finally, it is to counteract the false impressions arising from a libelous account spread in Paris and neighboring dioceses that is not faithful to the acts of the assembly and is written by malintentioned persons.¹⁰⁰

Poussou took care to quote verbatim from the assembly's minutes and from the constitutions to answer Nozo's distortions.¹⁰¹ Jean Grappin, an assistant general, wrote a more inflammatory criticism of Nozo's distortions, and his actions as superior general. Nozo commented that he felt he had to respond to the "horrors" of what Grappin was saying.¹⁰²

Meanwhile, events were taking place in Rome that would aggravate the crisis over Nozo's position and future. They would lead to another outbreak of French and Italian antagonisms within the Congregation.

The Holy See and the Nozo Controversy

On 27 November 1841, the French ambassador to the Holy See, the Comte de Latour-Maubourg, wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, François Guizot, about the government's opposition to the Jesuit college in Beirut moving to Aleppo. Latour-Maubourg commented that "everyone here at the Vatican, Propaganda, and among the Jesuits attributes this policy to the Lazarists and the influence that they enjoy

⁹⁹ *Poussou, Circulaires*, 2: 535.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 2: 536.

¹⁰¹ *Poussou*, 4, ACMP.

¹⁰² *Baudrez*, 2, ACMP.

with the government in Paris."¹⁰³ The ambassador reported that at his last papal audience "the pope expressed ill humor against the Lazarists, and notably against Father Étienne. The pope accused him of having little regard for the Holy See. He also accused him of having distributed arbitrarily, and almost entirely for the French missions, the funds received from the Lyons-based Society for the Propagation of the Faith."¹⁰⁴ The ambassador felt that since he had no basis upon which to judge the truth of the pope's charges, the government should encourage the Lazarists and Étienne to resolve these issues directly with the Holy See.¹⁰⁵

Vito Guarini also reported that in a conversation with Cardinal Lambruschini, the papal Secretary of State, he had to correct the false rumor that Étienne had refused to recognize the papal rescript given to Nozo. He told Lambruschini that Nozo had renounced the rescript voluntarily. Lambruschini told Guarini that he did not have a high opinion of Étienne based on his contact with him while he was the nuncio in Paris. The cardinal also commented that he believed Étienne was an "intriguer" (*intrigante*).¹⁰⁶ This was not the time for the French Lazarists and Étienne to be out of favor in Rome.

When Nozo's October circular reached Italy, Michele Antonio Cremisini, the visitor of the Roman province, decided to protest the Congregation's "anomalous status" (*stato d'anomalia*).¹⁰⁷ Cremisini wrote to the pope, via the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, asking for

¹⁰³ In the fall of 1840, at the request of the French Foreign ministry, Étienne undertook a diplomatic mission to Lebanon to discourage the local Maronite Christian population from revolting against Egyptian domination. The French government, which took its protectorate over middle-Eastern Christians very seriously, was trying to ease the situation. Word of this trip reached Rome. For a copy of Étienne's instructions from Adolph Thiers of the Foreign Ministry see *Nozo II: Documents 1835-1842*, C 39, bas 2°, 7, ACMP. For a copy of Étienne's report, "Notes sur les espérances du Catholicisme en Orient et sur les moyens propres à les réaliser," see *Antoura*, C 118, Haut Pauch I-b, 1°, ACMP. For details of the trip see Étienne's correspondence with Jean-Marie Aladel, *Étienne: Lettres 1839-1845*, C 40, H: 3, I: (39-73), pli, 1°, ACMP. Letters of September 13, 21, 27, 1840. See also Rosset's account, *Vie Étienne*, 101-114. Rosset quotes Étienne's closing remarks in his report: "It has been important for me and for our Congregation to have had the opportunity to give your Excellency a proof of the devotion that I always possess, for in serving the cause of France I will also be serving the cause of religion and of humanity," 114.

¹⁰⁴ Comte de Latour-Maubourg to François Guizot, letter of 27 November 1841, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 983: 206, AMAE. In his *Relazione* (24-25), Guarini recalled that upon his return from Paris he had met Justin de Jacobis, an Italian Lazarist who was prefect apostolic of Ethiopia. De Jacobis was awaiting mission funds from Étienne in Paris. Guarini reported that Étienne had forbidden him to give any funds to De Jacobis since he did not consider the mission to be sponsored by the Congregation. Propaganda also received word that monies intended to support the mission in the United States also had not been distributed. These charges were not greeted kindly at Propaganda Fide, as will be seen

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Guarini, *Relazione*, 30, ACMP.

¹⁰⁷ For a biographical notice of Cremisini (1795-1875) see *Relations Abrégées*, 4: 461-83.

“an efficacious intervention on behalf of his Congregation’s welfare.”¹⁰⁸ The visitor told the Holy See that the sexennial assembly, held the previous July, had resulted in a “provisional government” for the Congregation.¹⁰⁹ He charged that this situation was now the source of “anguish” not only for the Roman province but for the entire Congregation and the Daughters of Charity. The anguish also came from their continued dependence on a French-dominated community government. Cremisini expressed his fears about holding the upcoming general assembly under these chaotic conditions.¹¹⁰

On 11 January 1842, Cardinal Nora Patrizi, the pro-prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, asked Vito Guarini to submit a report on the sexennial assembly. Eleven days later, Guarini submitted his account. He gave the facts on Nozo’s convocation of the assembly, its constitutional purpose (to decide whether the convocation of a general assembly was warranted), and its composition. He also noted that before their arrival, the Italian delegates “had been entirely in the dark concerning what had happened within the Congregation in France.” Guarini commented that the provincial assembly of the Roman province had voted against the convocation of a general assembly. He said, however, that if they had known about the “humiliating” state of the Congregation they would have voted for the only “remedy” available, the convocation of a general assembly.¹¹¹

Guarini outlined the scandals surrounding Nozo’s legal and financial problems. He repeated the allegations that Étienne was involved in financial speculations as well.¹¹² He also mentioned the dissension between Nozo and his council. According to Guarini, despite the need for a general assembly, Nozo opposed a convocation that was sure to lead to his condemnation.¹¹³ Guarini gave the Holy See a straightforward summary of the assembly and Poussou’s selection. This gave him the opportunity, however, to also make the points that he wanted to make concerning the community’s future.

According to Guarini, given the Congregation’s confused governance an insoluble crisis was at hand. If, on one hand, the superior

¹⁰⁸ Guarini, *Relazione*, 34, ACMP.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹¹² Here, Guarini is referring to the fact that in the brochure published against Nozo by his cousin Denis Hennecart Étienne had been accused of becoming publicly involved in investment schemes. Hennecart claimed that between Nozo and Étienne that Lazarists had become “a commercial agency.” *Hennecart*, 11, AN.F19.6240.

¹¹³ Guarini, *Relazione*, 37, ACMP.

general had compromised the Congregation's honor, then this was problematic; on the other hand, if the charges brought against Nozo by the council were not true, then the assistants were compromised. Guarini quoted Nozo as saying that "the assistants were all in need of the same baptism [removal]."¹¹⁴ He also quoted a letter from one of Nozo's partisans in France, Barthélémy Trouve, who claimed that "everyone wants the council [the assistants and procurator] to be changed."¹¹⁵

Guarini did not believe that the coming general assembly could do anything to solve the "incurable" situation. In his opinion, it was the French domination of the Congregation that had caused these problems. The only solution, in his mind, was "the intervention of pontifical authority." The goal of this pontifical intervention would be "once and for all to establish a reasonable proportionality in the representatives to the general assembly. This action would ensure that elections would, as much as possible, be the result of the agreement of the entire Congregation and not solely of the French."¹¹⁶

Guarini also proposed another long-term solution to the Congregation's ills, moving the general's seat to Rome.¹¹⁷ According to Guarini, this was "a solution foreseen by the founder himself."¹¹⁸ Guarini then posed this rhetorical question: "When can be a better time than now to establish the superior general's seat in Rome, as foreseen by Saint Vincent?"¹¹⁹ Guarini also gave several other reasons for the general's removal to Rome. He alleged, for example, that their respective governments had forbidden the provinces of Lithuania, Warsaw, and Brazil from corresponding with their French superiors. He said that the province of the United States also preferred having a representative in Rome to watch over its interests. Guarini pointed out that Rome was more centrally located than Paris, and would make the convocation of a general assembly more convenient. He also noted the small number of French houses and confreres compared with those of Italy.¹²⁰ Perhaps Guarini's most telling argument was an ultramontane one; the move to Rome "would make the head of the Congregation immediately depen-

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40. In an undated letter from this period Nozo wrote that he had been quoted as saying, "that all the members of the council deserved to be expelled." The general denied that he ever said this, "I leave this to the judgment of God. I protest that I have never used this language." *Baudrez*, 1, ACMP.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Vincent de Paul to Bernard Codoing, letter of 10 July 1643, Coste, *CCD*, 2: 409.

¹¹⁹ Guarini, *Relazione*, 41.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

dent upon the head of the Church. This would be in contrast to the Congregation's dependence on a secular government's nationalism and pretensions. Ultimately, this arrangement would be to the Congregation's benefit and God's glory."¹²¹ The Roman visitor, Cremisini, and two of his consultants endorsed Guarini's memorandum.

After receiving Poussou's circular at the beginning of 1841, Cremisini again wrote to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. He charged that the coming assembly "would not truly represent the entire Congregation."¹²² The visitor noted the manifest disproportion in an assembly between the French and the Italians, not to mention the other nations." This situation could end only by reproducing the unfortunate events of the last general assembly." Cremisini pointed out that four French provinces, comprising a total of seventy priests, had representation at the last assembly. Meanwhile, Italy had only three provinces, representing a total of 250 priests. The votes of the French delegates, the French assistants general, and Étienne already assured a French majority at the next assembly. Cremisini observed that "the French preponderance did not work to the Congregation's advantage at the 1835 general assembly, and I do not expect it to do so at the next."¹²³

Having laid out his arguments, the Roman visitor asked the Holy See to suspend the assembly's convocation, induce the superior general to resign, appoint a new superior general for this time only, and require him and his assistants to reside in Rome. A few weeks later, on 8 February 1842, Guarini received a request for more information from the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Among other things, the Congregation requested a copy of the community's constitutions and a report "on the character and pretensions of Signor Étienne."¹²⁴

After playing a leading role in the onslaught against Nozo, Étienne now fell under attack from Roman officials.¹²⁵ In February 1842, the French ambassador to the Holy See sent two dispatches to the Foreign Minister detailing Propaganda Fide's complaints against Étienne. François

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, *Consultazione*, 2, ACMP.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ This document is a memorandum from Étienne to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, answering the charges made against him by the Congregation of Propaganda Fide. *Nozo II: Documents 1842-1866*, C 39, bas 2°, 18, ACMP.

Guizot immediately passed these charges on to the Lazarists in Paris.¹²⁶

In his *Notice*, Étienne blamed the Roman “intriguers” for the Holy See’s intervention in the Congregation’s affairs.¹²⁷ He also charged that these same confreres “sought to destroy my reputation and remove me from the debate.” According to Étienne, they understood “that because of my relationship with the French government I would be the only serious obstacle to their plans.” These missionaries then “made the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda a part of their plan.” They did this by persuading him to write to the Foreign Minister, detailing “a series of accusations against me and against my direction of our foreign missions that the cardinal said was unacceptable to the Holy See.”¹²⁸

The general council met on 21 March to “consider the complaints against certain individuals of the Congregation and most especially against Monsieur Étienne, the procurator general.” The council also had heard the rumor that Propaganda intended to support changes in the Congregation’s administration, especially “to require a representative of the superior general to reside in Rome.”¹²⁹ Étienne reported that he had consulted with the inter-nuncio in Paris, Antonio Garibaldi, asking how best to respond. He said that Garibaldi had “urged him to take advantage of this occasion to inform Propaganda of the true state of affairs. He believed that a simple exposition of the facts would suffice to dissipate the Roman accusations.” During the council meeting, Étienne presented the memorandum that he proposed sending to the Foreign Minister. The council “approved all its points and authorized him to transmit it immediately to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to use as he sees fit.”¹³⁰

¹²⁶ At the end of December, Guizot had written to Latour-Maubourg denying that the Lazarists influenced French policy in the Middle East. At the same time, however, he heaped high praise on the Congregation:

The king’s government appreciates the well known merit and the utility of the Congregation of Saint Lazare, the enlightened zeal that animates them, the wisdom of their works, the effectiveness with which they laboriously serve the missions. The services that they render give them the right to receive the gratitude of all true friends of religion and humanity. It is not possible to deny these priests the esteem they generally deserve. Faithful to the teachings of their illustrious and holy founder, vowed body and soul to the most useful work of their most respectable apostolate, they courageously pursue their task. They do this without any other ambition or recompense than the good that they achieve.

Guizot to Latour-Maubourg, memorandum of 28 December 1841, *Correspondance Politique*: Rome, 983: 228, AMAE.

¹²⁷ Étienne, *Notice*, 41.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 181, ACGR.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

Étienne then wrote to Guizot:

Reading the contents of these two dispatches, while causing me great surprise, was also a source of great consolation to my heart. They have provided the key to an enigma that I did not previously know how to explain. For several years now, I have realized that Propaganda has held prejudices against me. I heard from all sides that the Congregation had made grave accusations against me. Yet, I never received any of these reproaches directly, and no one ever asked me for any explanation either directly or indirectly. I remained under the weight of these accusations. Often, the pain that I felt brought me to the point where I almost asked about the nature of these accusations. I wanted an opportunity to dissipate the prejudices held against me. On the other hand, however, I could not bring myself to believe that Propaganda would condemn me without giving me the opportunity to refute these grave and unjust insinuations. In the end, it seemed to me that the better course would be to conform myself to the gospel's teaching that I preach and to the example of Saint Vincent de Paul and accept this condemnation in silence....However, providence now has come to my aid through your mediation, Monsieur, without which I doubt I would ever have come to know the true causes of this mystery.¹³¹

Étienne thanked Guizot for having asked Propaganda to list specific complaints against him. This now gave him the opportunity to defend himself. It also gave him the chance "to testify that it never entered my thoughts to do anything that would be lacking in the respect and submission that I always have recognized that I owe the Sovereign Pontiff."¹³²

Étienne proposed to answer each of Propaganda's charges in turn. In his *Notice*, Étienne later claimed that "I easily proved that all these allegations were nothing."¹³³ The first accusation he addressed was the charge that according to newspaper reports he had taken a public role in promoting investment in an industrial concern.¹³⁴ Étienne responded that this item first had appeared in the paper *L'Univers* in 1838. At the time, he said that he had written to the editors denying that he had any connection with the project in question. He demanded that they print a retraction, which the paper did. Étienne also denied that he had used 150,000 francs of the community's money in stock speculations. This was a charge that Guarini quoted Nozo as

¹³¹ Étienne, *Propaganda*, 1, ACMP.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Étienne, *Notice*, 41.

¹³⁴ Étienne, *Propaganda*, 2, ACMP.

having made against the procurator general.¹³⁵

The second accusation made by Propaganda against Étienne concerned his having undertaken a "secret" mission in 1840, without the Holy See's permission, on behalf of the French government. Propaganda said that this mission violated the neutrality expected by Rome of Catholic missionaries in the Middle East. It also said that the mission exposed the region's Catholics to greater danger from their Moslem rulers.¹³⁶ Étienne reminded the Foreign Minister that the mission he had undertaken at the government's request had not been "political" in nature. He recalled that Adolph Thiers of the Ministry had assured him that he could accept the mission without fear of displeasing the Holy See. Thiers also had said that a dispatch from Rome had confirmed that the trip was not at odds with papal policies.¹³⁷ Étienne also pointed out that he had asked the inter-nuncio if his taking on the mission would meet with Roman disapproval. Msgr. Garibaldi had replied "that although he had no official instructions from the Court of Rome, he could see no reason that the mission...could not take place." Finally, Étienne also noted that he had undertaken the mission with the general council's permission.¹³⁸

The third charge leveled against Étienne was that he did not abide by the agreed upon distribution formula for the mission funds that the Congregation received from the Lyons-based Society for the Propagation of the Faith. Étienne denied that any such formula existed. According to his account, the Society gave one annual sum to support all the Congregation's foreign missions. The general council then decided upon the allocation of these funds.¹³⁹ Here, Étienne does not mention that the council relied upon his recommendations as to the funding priorities.

Étienne next addressed the other specific points to this charge. Propaganda had said that the visitor of the American province, John Timon, had complained to Rome about the Texas mission being treated unfairly in the distribution of funds.¹⁴⁰ Étienne replied that while he did not know what Timon might have said in Rome, he did know that when Timon was recently visiting the

¹³⁵ Guarini also claimed that this was the reason that Nozo wanted to remove Étienne from the scene by having him appointed to the proposed mission in Algeria. Guarini, *Relazione*, 15, ACMP.

¹³⁶ Étienne, *Propaganda*, 2, ACMP.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Timon later was the first bishop of Buffalo, New York. For more information on Timon and his career see John Rybolt, C.M., ed., *The American Vincentians: A Popular History of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States, 1815-1987* (New York: New City Press, 1988).

mother house he had handed over to him all the monies destined for the United States. He acknowledged that Timon had expressed his disappointment that the council had not allocated more money for the American missions. Étienne claimed, however, that Timon “did not say a word to me suggesting that he did not believe he had received the full sum allotted to these missions.”¹⁴¹

Étienne also observed that Timon had asked for the authority to distribute the funds according to his own judgment. The general council turned down this request. Instead, it decided that the superior of each mission would send the visitor his accounting of the previous year’s funds and his request for new assistance. Timon was to forward these to Paris with whatever observations he wished to make. Then, the general council would decide what amounts would go to the various American mission stations. The council authorized Timon, “in the case of unforeseen necessity” and with the consent of his council, to adjust the amounts allocated by Paris. In this case, however, he was to notify Paris of the changes and the reasons for them. The council also recognized that Timon had the right to claim part of the mission funds to support his office.¹⁴²

Étienne said that the council of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith recognized that the Congregation’s general administration was best able to prioritize the various missions’ needs.¹⁴³ At this point, Étienne could not resist making some additional comments about Timon.

I could easily expand this explanation citing many other facts that would fully justify my conduct on this point. I believe this to be useless. You easily will appreciate, Monsieur, that if Propaganda chooses to listen to the complaints of a missionary and not to have confidence in the administration upon which he depends nor to trust the legitimate motives that it has adopted for the conduct of its internal regime, no effective administration would be possible. One quickly would see the entire destruction of the order that reigns in all our missions. Propaganda would be surprised if I brought to its attention the complaints that we have received against the administration of Monsieur Timon. These complaints, as well founded as they might be, have done nothing to lessen our esteem for this respectable and holy missionary. However, they serve to teach us that the most respectable and holy of men are not always free from errors, from oversights, and from other human

¹⁴¹ Étienne, *Propaganda*, 3, ACMP.

¹⁴² *General Council Minutes*, meeting of 11 November 1841, 1: 141-42, ACMP.

¹⁴³ Étienne, *Propaganda*, 4, ACMP.

weaknesses. This insight has led us to the decisions that we have made concerning the administration of our American missions.¹⁴⁴

Étienne next addressed similar accusations made by the Italian Lazarist, Justin de Jacobis, the head of the Ethiopian mission.¹⁴⁵ Étienne pointed out that he regularly replenished the Ethiopian mission's funds at the procure in Alexandria, Egypt. He noted that he had never received any complaints from the Ethiopian missionaries that they were short of funds.¹⁴⁶ A funding dispute had arisen in 1841 over a Roman pilgrimage that De Jacobis had made with a group of Ethiopians.¹⁴⁷ The amount available to De Jacobis in Alexandria was insufficient for the trip's expenses. According to Étienne, De Jacobis had made this trip without informing Paris and without asking for any extra financial help.¹⁴⁸ He claimed that when he learned of De Jacobis's need for extra funds, he had approached the council of the Lyons Society. He discovered that Cardinal Giacomo Fransoni of Propaganda Fide had already made a special request that the Society had granted.¹⁴⁹ Étienne blamed De Jacobis for any subsequent shortage since he had spent the entire treasury of 3,000 francs set aside at Alexandria.¹⁵⁰ Étienne also said the expectation that the Congregation use its limited mission funds to pay for De Jacobis's extraordinary expenditures was unfair.¹⁵¹

Étienne told Guizot that he could not understand how he was responsible for the separation of the Lithuanian and Brazilian provinces.¹⁵² He pointed out that the separation and destruction of the Lithuanian province were the results of anti-Catholic Russian imperial

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ De Jacobis (1800-1860) was canonized in 1975. For more information see Auguste Devin, C.M., *L'Abyssinie et son apôtre ou Vie de Mgr. Justin De Jacobis évêque de Nilopolis et vicaire apostolique de l'Abyssinie* (Paris: Chez l'auteur, rue de Sèvres, 95, 1866). See also Gabriel Larigaldie, C.M., *Héraut du Christ, Le Vénérable Justin de Jacobis, prêtre de la Mission, premier vicaire apostolique de l'Abyssinie (1800-1860)* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1910).

¹⁴⁶ Étienne, *Propaganda*, 5, ACMP.

¹⁴⁷ The purpose of De Jacobis' trip was to have a delegation of leading Ethiopian Coptic Orthodox clerics and laity meet the pope. The hope was that this would more favorably dispose them toward Catholicism in their homeland. For more information on this trip see *Vie De Jacobis*, 64-74, and *Héraut du Christ*, 147-156.

¹⁴⁸ The decision to make a detour to Rome from a pilgrimage which was headed to Jerusalem was made in route. The importance of getting this delegation to Rome to meet the pope was such that De Jacobis took whatever risks were necessary. See *Vie De Jacobis*, 64-65.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 65-66.

¹⁵⁰ Étienne, *Propaganda*, 5, ACMP.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

policies.¹⁵³ Regarding the province of Brazil, Étienne noted that the government had mandated its separation both from the Portuguese province and from the Congregation.¹⁵⁴

The substance of the fifth charge addressed by Étienne was that he “favored the ‘French’ missions to the detriment of the Congregation’s other missions.”¹⁵⁵ Étienne pointed out that the practice of characterizing the various missions according to the nationalities who ran them was not new and that Propaganda itself described them in this way. He used as an example the Lazarist presence in Peking where a “French” mission and a “Portuguese” mission were served respectively and exclusively by French and Portuguese Lazarists. He pointed out that the Holy See had started this practice when it, and the French government, agreed to confide the Levantine and Chinese missions exclusively to the “French” Lazarists. Also, the Holy See and the Portuguese government had decided to confide another mission in China exclusively to the “Portuguese” Lazarists. According to Étienne, even if these missions were “French” or “Portuguese” they still “belonged to the same Congregation and depended on the same resources and administration.”

The final “grave” charge made by Propaganda was that Étienne “had the pretension of exercising the office of procurator general, although a procurator general already existed in Rome representing the entire Lazarist Congregation.”¹⁵⁶ Étienne wrote to Guizot, “I declare to your Excellency that until this moment I was not aware that we possessed, in Rome, a procurator general for the entire Lazarist Congregation.” He explained that throughout its history the Congregation had only one procurator general. This official always worked under the superior general’s authority. Étienne expressed his astonishment to learn the Holy See presumed that Vito Guarini served as the Congregation’s procurator general. Propaganda had even said that Guarini “was elected to this position by his confreres.” Étienne told the Foreign Minister that he could only conclude “that someone

¹⁵³ As has been noted, because of the tightening of Russian religious policies against Catholicism the Lithuanian province elected its own visitor with subsequent confirmation, when possible, by the superior general. During this period, the Russian government pursued policies that were designed to destroy all Roman Catholic religious communities. In December 1842, the imperial government suppressed the Congregation and ordered its members to become members of the diocesan clergy. For more information see *Pologne*, 694-735.

¹⁵⁴ Étienne, *Propaganda*, 6, ACMP.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

has given Propaganda incorrect information on this point."¹⁵⁷

Étienne observed that according to the Congregation's constitutions, the procurator general was not elected but appointed by the superior general. He then commented, "I have held this position since July 1827. Subsequent superiors general have confirmed me in my exercise of this responsibility. My nomination to hold this post was announced to the entire Congregation. This has not been done with respect to Monsieur Guarini."¹⁵⁸

Étienne further explained that until 1792 the superior general customarily had appointed a French Lazarist to serve in Rome. This official had the title of "French procurator." His responsibility was to conduct the community's affairs with the Holy See under the superior general's direction. Étienne noted that since the reestablishment of governmental unity in 1827, the superior general had filled this position, "provisionally with an Italian Lazarist, at this moment it is Monsieur Guarini."¹⁵⁹ Étienne professed that "he could not understand how Propaganda could conclude that Monsieur Guarini was the procurator general of the entire Congregation."¹⁶⁰

In his *Relazione*, Guarini gives his own version of this affair.¹⁶¹ He claimed that in 1836, when Nozo had appointed him, he had asked him to clarify his position and title. According to Guarini, Nozo replied, "You are the procurator general in Rome to deal with the Holy See concerning the Congregation's affairs. Monsieur Étienne is procurator general in Paris to deal with the government here."¹⁶² Later in August 1841, Nozo sent Guarini another letter outlining his rights and duties, saying he had consulted with his council on the matter.¹⁶³ Guarini noted that Nozo, in his circular of 28 October 1841, had made no mention (*ne verbum quidem*, "not even a word") of his position as

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ In the minutes of the general council meeting of 11 January 1836, Étienne recorded Guarini's original appointment: "Monsieur Ferrari *procureur général français* at Rome, has manifested his desire to be replaced in this office and receive another assignment. The council has agreed to his desire, and has designated as his successor, Monsieur Guarini of the house of Monte Citorio in Rome," *General Council Minutes*, 1: 78, ACGR. At the meeting of 18 April 1836, the Italian assistant brought to the council's attention that the visitor of the Roman province had appointed "Monsieur Guarini, *procureur de la Congrégation à Rome* to also serve as procurator of another house outside the city. Guarini complained of this additional appointment which the council ordered reversed. Ibid., 1: 81.

¹⁶⁰ Étienne, *Propaganda*, 7, ACMP.

¹⁶¹ For a detailed discussion of the whole question of a procurator general in Rome see Gabriel Perboyre's notes, *Cremisini et Guarini*, ACMP.

¹⁶² Guarini, *Relazione*, 47, ACMP.

¹⁶³ As noted previously, there were no meetings of the general council held between March and November of 1841.

procurator in Rome. However, he said he did receive a letter from Nozo soon after saying, "I persist in my determination concerning you. However, in the present unfortunate circumstances and given the present disposition of spirits, if I were to put this decision into effect, it would cause great problems for me and the Congregation in France."¹⁶⁴

Étienne pointed out to Guizot that Propaganda believed that the sexennial assembly had left the congregation with two heads and that this irregular situation demanded Roman intervention. The Sacred Congregation had said that "understandably this state of affairs upsets most of these worthy French Lazarists." Propaganda attributed the problems to "the reprehensible conduct of certain individuals." Étienne felt that Rome was looking for an opportunity "to change the position and the existence of our Congregation."¹⁶⁵

Étienne said he would willingly resign as procurator general to allow the appointment of someone who was "more worthy to occupy this post." He also said, however, that he believed that his actions as procurator general were not the real source of the problems with the Holy See. Propaganda was merely using these as excuses to demonstrate the need for the procurator or superior general to reside in Rome. Étienne's analysis of this strategy was unambiguous: "This would upset the order of things established by our constitutions for the last two hundred years. Their aim is to replace it with something entirely new."¹⁶⁶

Étienne next gave a brief chronology of the present crisis. Speaking about Nozo's election in 1835, Étienne noted that "at the time the majority of the assembly's members believed that he possessed the personal qualities needed to occupy this eminent position. However, his subsequent acts caused a great commotion both inside and outside the Congregation. This soon proved that the positive judgments made by those who had voted for him were incorrect."¹⁶⁷

Étienne then went on to make a charge against Nozo that appears nowhere else. He said that Nozo knew "there were some confreres who believed that his election was invalid."¹⁶⁸ Consequently, he went to Rome "to ask the sovereign pontiff to confirm his election."¹⁶⁹ Étienne said that

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in Guarini, *Relazione*, 47-48, ACMP.

¹⁶⁵ Étienne, *Propaganda*, 8, ACMP.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Étienne held this position as has been seen, see *Notice*, 34-35.

¹⁶⁹ Étienne, *Propaganda*, 9, ACMP.

Nozo took this trip "without informing the council of its true purpose."¹⁷⁰ What he fails to mention is that the purpose of this trip in the summer of 1837 was to attend the hundredth anniversary celebration for Saint Vincent's canonization.¹⁷¹ Étienne said that Nozo knew that a Roman appeal was not necessary, since the Congregation's constitutions called for a general assembly to judge such a question of irregularity. According to Étienne, Nozo's motivation in seeking a papal sanation was to avoid the consequences of his actions in France and cultivate papal favor for the future. Étienne makes no mention of how the Holy See responded to Nozo's alleged request.

Étienne told the Foreign Minister of Nozo's unsuccessful attempt to head off a condemnation by the sexennial assembly. He described how Nozo surreptitiously obtained permission from the Holy See to name a vicar general. The Foreign Minister heard how the assembly had unanimously decided to deprive Nozo of his authority and entrust it to a vicar general of its own choosing. Étienne told Guizot that the general council believed that Nozo was trying to convince the Holy See to overturn the assembly's decision. He also claimed that Guarini, as a Nozo supporter, also was working toward this end.¹⁷²

Étienne closed his lengthy memorandum by saying:

It seems to me that this explanation of our present position should shed a bright light on the allegations contained in the communication from Propaganda. It also should explain the prejudice that it nourishes against me personally and against certain individuals of our Congregation. This explanation has made it necessary to reveal the actual state of our community's administration. Your Excellency can appreciate this...and I am confident that you will give the French ambassador in Rome instructions to enlighten the Holy See and Propaganda about the true state of things. This will reveal the source of the dark insinuations made against certain members of our Congregation.¹⁷³

In his *Notice*, Étienne commented that the Foreign Minister wrote a reply to Rome, "which undoubtedly displeased Propaganda with its praise of me." He said that Guizot "strongly reproached Propaganda for not rec-

¹⁷⁰ Vito Guarini mentions that while in Rome, Nozo had approached the pope about the question of the validity of vows taken by French confreres during the vicariate of Charles-Vincent de Paul Boujard before he had been confirmed by apostolic authority. See Guarini, *Relazione*, 17, ACMP. Recall that this was the basis upon which Nozo declared the Ferdinand Bailly's vows were invalid.

¹⁷¹ For Nozo's description of his journey to Italy and the anniversary celebrations see Nozo, *Circulaires*, 2: 490-96.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

ognizing the twenty-one years of devoted service that I had given the Church through my work to restore and develop our foreign missions."¹⁷⁴

In his notes on Guarini's *Relazione*, Gabriel Perboyre noted that during this period Nozo was visiting houses in the French provinces. He was speaking out against the assistants and administration in Paris, especially Étienne.¹⁷⁵ Nozo's cause had some vocal supporters among the French and Italian Lazarists. To these supporters, Nozo raised the possibility of establishing himself in Rome.¹⁷⁶ Perboyre said that he heard Nozo often say that "if the French no longer wanted him, the Italians would certainly welcome him."¹⁷⁷

At the general council meeting on 28 March 1842, Poussou asked whether he should send a letter to Nozo asking him to "convoke the general assembly as soon as possible to end the temporary state of affairs established by the sexennial assembly."¹⁷⁸ The council agreed, and Poussou wrote on 29 March to Nozo:

Since the resolutions adopted by the last sexennial assembly have been executed, we are sure you will agree with us that the order of things that it established must necessarily be of a temporary nature. The general welfare of Saint Vincent's two families demands that this situation not last too long. After prayerful consideration before God, we believe that it is urgent that the general assembly, which alone can remedy this situation, take place this year. We believe that the circumstances that the Congregation finds itself in demand this. It is crucial then, that you convoke the assembly as soon as possible. We refer you to your circular letter of 28 October of last year. We presume that you will want to have your council's advice on this important measure. We feel a responsibility to advise you to convoke the assembly with the briefest possible delay. We unanimously recommend that you should convoke the assembly to meet this coming August 15th.¹⁷⁹

At the next council meeting on 5 April, Étienne announced that "Monsieur Nozo is disposed to agree to your request, and he will convoke the general assembly for the coming 15 August."¹⁸⁰

Soon after issuing the letter convoking the general assembly Nozo wrote to an unknown correspondent,

¹⁷⁴ Étienne, *Notice*, 41-42.

¹⁷⁵ Perboyre, *Cremisini et Guarini*, 3, ACMP.

¹⁷⁶ Étienne, *Notice*, 42.

¹⁷⁷ Perboyre, *Cremisini et Guarini*, 4, ACMP.

¹⁷⁸ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 182, ACGR.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1: 183.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 1: 183-84.

By this time you will have received your copy of the convocation letter for the general assembly. I am writing a short letter to ask your advice, but since you do not have a sufficient knowledge of the situation I believe it is necessary to tell you, as much as possible, what has taken place.

Given the calumnies that external enemies have spread about the Congregation and my person and given the manner in which many of our own confreres have already judged me, it seems to me that I cannot offer my resignation without great dishonor. The Congregation will share this dishonor equally. These same confreres openly have insinuated that it would be better for me to resign so that they will not have to reveal the grave charges which exist against me. However, if I resign, one could then easily believe that it is because of the very grave charges made against my reputation. These confreres have demanded a general assembly for this year. But what will be the result? Do they hope that I will give my resignation? If I do not, will they then want to depose me? Do they want a deposition by the assembly? Would not this be a great scandal? Constitutionally speaking, I do not believe that I have anything to fear. If the deposition does not take place, they will need to name a vicar general. However, a vicar general already possesses all my powers. I have not interfered in any way in his administration. I only ask to live my community life quietly and to be left tranquilly alone in my room.

I fear that the only result of a general assembly will be afflicting scenes and unfortunate consequences. Please share with me, according to your prudent judgment, your thoughts and those of your councilors or other missionaries, and please do me the favor of giving me your advice.¹⁸¹

While all of this was happening, Joseph Rosati, C.M., the bishop of Saint Louis, arrived in Paris. He was returning from a papal diplomatic mission to Haiti.¹⁸² Rosati thus learned first hand of the crisis that was dividing the Congregation. From Paris, he traveled to Rome. On 24 April, Rosati and Guarini visited the Cardinal Secretary of State and spoke about the situation in France. Guarini reported that Cardinal Lambruschini had asked Rosati's opinion of whether if the general assembly took place as scheduled it would elect Étienne as the new superior general. Guarini reported that Rosati had replied that the Italian assistant

¹⁸¹ Nozo to an unknown correspondent, date unknown, *Nozo II: Documents 1835-1842*, C 39, bas 2°, ACMP.

¹⁸² For more information on Rosati see Frederick J. Easterly, C.M., *The Life of Rt. Rev. Joseph Rosati, C.M., First Bishop of St. Louis, 1789-1843* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1942). See also *American Vincentians*.

general had assured him that Étienne would not be elected. Guarini gave his opinion, saying that since an assembly could only elect a Frenchman it could not be considered a canonical election.¹⁸³

When the Roman visitor, Michele Cremisini, received the letter convoking the general assembly, he immediately informed Cardinal Pietro Ostini, the prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Early in May, Ostini called a meeting of Cremisini, Guarini, the sub-secretary of the Congregation, Giuseppe Bizarri, and Joseph Rosati. Ostini asked them whether the Holy See should allow the general assembly to meet.¹⁸⁴ The cardinal prefect's position was that, given the divisions between the pro-Nozo and anti-Nozo factions, an assembly posed great dangers. Particularly, the danger of scandal would be too great. Ostini decided that the Congregation would write to Nozo ordering him to suspend the general assembly's convocation and come to Rome. With the pope's approval, Rosati was to write to the assistants telling them that the true reason for Nozo's summons to Rome was to induce him to "spontaneously offer his resignation."¹⁸⁵

Meanwhile in Paris, relations between Poussou, the assistants, and Nozo deteriorated even further. The council had set 18 May as the date for the mother house's domestic assembly. Nozo did not receive this announcement well. He "declared that he did not wish for the domestic assembly to take place so soon. He has accompanied this declaration with threats of legal action that reveal his violent irritation."¹⁸⁶ The council decided to postpone the domestic assembly until after Pentecost for the sake of peace and to avoid any more scandal. However, the council ordered a statement to be inserted in the minutes saying that they were doing this only as a matter of "concession," and without recognizing any right of Nozo to overturn its first decision.¹⁸⁷

At the council meeting held on 21 May, Poussou communicated the letter that he had received from Rosati. He asked for the members advice. The council responded by adopting four resolutions.

1. The council expresses its astonishment that Rome has taken this course of action without consulting the administration of the Congregation that alone possesses the documents that could enlighten this situation.

¹⁸³ Guarini, *Relazione*, 50, ACMP.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁸⁵ Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, *Consultazione*, 3, ACMP.

¹⁸⁶ *General Council Minutes*, meeting of 15 May 1842, 1: 192, ACGR.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

2. The council must blame the Roman confreres, whom the Holy See consulted, for taking such a grave responsibility upon themselves without consulting their superiors. We believe that a better course of action would have been to submit this to the judgment of the coming general assembly.

3. The council also blames the conduct of Monsieur Guarini in this circumstance. 1. He has, on his own, given information at the Cardinal Prefect's request without first consulting the council of the Congregation that he represents in Rome. 2. For having said that a general assembly would be powerless to remedy the misfortunes suffered by the Congregation. This is contrary to the constitutions that say that a general assembly is the sole means provided to the Congregation in just such a grave situation. It expresses these reservations about Monsieur Guarini's conduct for the future general assembly's consideration.

4. The council resolves, 1. That in response it will do nothing to suggest that it approves of these decisions. Its conduct will be purely passive. 2. That all responsibility for what will follow falls completely on those who have brought this situation about. 3. That out of respect for the Holy See, to which this affair has been so imprudently referred, we will not publicize this matter.... We will bear it in silence without, however, renouncing our right to employ all legitimate means that the circumstances permit and that may have to be used to save the Congregation from a ruin that now appears inevitable. 4. That it unanimously adopts the points of this resolution reserving the future right of carefully reviewing and revising this as necessary for the Congregation's welfare.¹⁸⁸

On 16 May, Rosati wrote to the Italian assistant Pier Paolo Sturchi describing the letter that Poussou would soon receive from him,

For the rest Cardinal Ostini...has charged me to write to Monsieur Poussou about these decisions in order not to alarm you and have you think that its purpose is to keep Monsieur Nozo in his position as superior general. Rather, its purpose is to avoid the inevitable troubles and unfortunate circumstances that a general assembly called to solicit his resignation or legislate his disposition would cause. This is why Rome has summoned him. We have no reason to doubt that he will agree to the Holy Father's desire. Cardinal Ostini...believes this measure to be necessary for our Congregation's welfare and honor....I believe that providence is arranging this opportunity to come to Rome to offer his resignation for the welfare of Monsieur Nozo. He should welcome the opportunity to relieve himself of the heavy burden of his responsibilities.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, I: 196-97.

¹⁸⁹ Rosati to Sturchi, letter of 16 May 1842, *Nozo II: Documents, 1842-1866*, C 39, bas 2°, 23, ACMP.

According to Rosati, after Nozo's resignation, the vicar general and the council would already be in place to govern the Congregation. "When all the spirits are calmed," Rome would judge the "appropriate" time for the general assembly to meet. Rosati hoped that this strategy would diffuse the controversies and prevent "sinister judgments that would ruin the Congregation's reputation."¹⁹⁰ Rosati and Ostini's hope that forcing Nozo's resignation would restore peace ignored the fact that the Italian/French antagonisms had already taken over the unfolding of events.

On 1 June, Nozo issued a circular letter announcing the papal suspension of the general assembly. He also announced his own summons to Rome, "for consultations."¹⁹¹ Nozo ended his letter by saying,

All this should be for each of us a great source of consolation and a powerful motive for gratitude that the Vicar of Jesus Christ has deigned to give his attention to us and extend a secure and protecting hand in the critical circumstances in which we find ourselves. For myself, I must admit that I find that I am greatly troubled. Given the many and grave considerations that I am burdened with, I have not found that tranquility that I greatly need and desire to assure the peace and health of my soul. The contradictory advice that I have received has only increased my anxiety and my uncertainties. However, now I find myself relieved from all inquietude. I leave everything to the wisdom of His Holiness, and I will be honored to conform myself to all of his orders and his least desires.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 196-97, ACGR.

¹⁹¹ *Nozo II; Documents*, C 39, bas 2°, 24, ACMP.

¹⁹² *Ibid.* 2-3.

Chapter 7

The Succession Crisis of 1842-1843

“This affair is grave.”¹

On 24 May 1842, François Guizot wrote to Ambassador Latour-Maubourg concerning the Lazarists' problems.² He repeated the government's position “that it would not tolerate any changes in the community's administration.” The Foreign Minister also related he had “learned indirectly but with certitude” that the Holy See had summoned Nozo to Rome, apparently to persuade him to resign. Guizot told Latour-Maubourg that if this were true, the government supported the action, “given the Congregation's extremely grave complaints against him.” Consequently, Guizot instructed the ambassador “to demand explanations from the pontifical government concerning its views on these subjects.”³

Regarding Nozo personally, Guizot said, “It would be manifestly contrary to all principles of reason and of beneficence to maintain Monsieur Nozo in his duties as the Lazarists' superior general. The archbishop of Paris has said that he will not suffer the presence, in his diocese, of the head of a congregation whom he considered an instrument of scandal. The king's government cannot tolerate as the head of this community a man against whom charges exist (and I tell you this confidentially) of such a nature that a court would likely convict him.”⁴ Guizot was no less clear concerning the possibility of the Congregation's headquarters moving to Rome. “This is an innovation to which we cannot consent. I have already told you the motives for this, in that the interests of the Congregation of Saint Lazare in certain regards, and in very important ways, are connected too directly and too intimately with those of France. This is notably true regarding our policies in the Middle East. The royal government's need for frequent communication with this congregation is too great to allow for its headquarters to move so far from Paris.”⁵ The

¹ Joseph Wagnier to Antoine Poussou, 14 March 1843. There is a notation in an unknown hand on the letter which states, “M. Wagnier, superior at Chalons, blesses divine providence for the happy result of our business in Rome.” *Poussou, Vicaire Gén.*, C 39, bas 3^o, 41, ACMP.

² Guizot to Latour-Maubourg, 24 May 1842, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 984: 90-91, AMAE.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

Foreign Minister instructed Latour-Maubourg to point out to the Holy See that such a fundamental change in the Congregation's government would raise the question of its legal existence. He said that such a move would compromise the community and lead to its destruction. The government's position was that with Nozo's resignation, a general assembly should choose a new superior general. This would be "in conformity with the rules contained in the Constitutions, and...nothing could justify any change in the established order of things."⁶

At the general council meeting held on 4 June 1842, the vicar general presented the assistants with Nozo's request for a reimbursement of 10,000 francs. Poussou also told them that he had learned that Nozo wanted his Parisian confidant, Amand Baudrez, to accompany him to Rome. The council turned down the reimbursement request. Their reason was that the superior general had not provided any accounting for his expenditures. Also, the lawyers who were advising them had recommended that they give no appearance of being involved financially with Nozo or his interests. If the superior general asked for permission for Baudrez to accompany him, the vicar general was to say no. The council warned Baudrez that if he undertook the trip it would be considered as a "formal act of disobedience."⁷

At the council meeting of 6 June, Poussou reported that Nozo had written to complain of being deprived of Baudrez's companionship for his trip. He also requested 3,000 francs to cover his traveling expenses. The council replied by suggesting the names of three confreres for him to choose from as a traveling companion. As for his monetary request the council commented, "3,000 francs is a considerable sum for making a trip to Rome, if the journey were made in conformity with the simplicity required by our state." The council agreed to provide the sum, "leaving it to his [Nozo's] conscience that he employ the funds properly." However, the council stipulated that only half the money would be given to Nozo immediately. The community would provide the other half once he was in Rome and ready to return to France.⁸ Nozo chose to have his confessor, Alexandre Henin, accompany him.

On 18 June, Latour-Maubourg wrote to Guizot reporting his conversations with Propaganda Fide and Cardinal Ostini. He had been assured that the question in their minds was not the transferal of the superior general to Rome but rather the procurator general.⁹ The

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 197, ACGR.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 198-99.

⁹ Latour-Maubourg to Guizot, 18 June 1842, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 984: 107, AMAE.

cardinal also promised that the Holy See would consult the French government and the Lazarists' council before making any decision. The ambassador promised that he would "combat this measure." He added, "I hope to be able to stop any plan that is contrary to our views and to the Congregation's true interests." He said he expected no further developments on these fronts until the settlement of the Nozo question.¹⁰ On 28 June, Guizot wrote to Latour-Maubourg about the attempts to rehabilitate Étienne's reputation in Rome.¹¹ The Foreign Minister reported that De Jacobis had denied making the complaints attributed to him and to the contrary had expressed "his confidence and regard" for the procurator general. Guizot also reported that he had read a letter from John Timon. In this letter, Timon, "disavowed the charges against the procurator general attributed as having come from him."¹² The Foreign Minister instructed the ambassador to report this new information to Propaganda Fide.

In his *Notice*, Étienne commented on these events, adding a few more details. When the news came suspending the general assembly's convocation and summoning Nozo to Rome, the vicar general and the council feared that the Holy See was unaware of "Monsieur Nozo's blind and deplorable leadership." They assumed that it was the Italian missionaries who had "mised the Sacred Congregation," since the Holy See had never requested any information from Paris. In Étienne's view, this situation "was alarming...and something had to be done to avoid this danger."¹³ According to Étienne, it was Garibaldi, the inter-nuncio in Paris, who suggested a plan of action.¹⁴ Garibaldi told the French to compose an account of the sexennial assembly for the pope. He recommended that the report include all the charges against Nozo and the reasons that had prompted the assembly to nominate a vicar general. Garibaldi stressed that this document needed to arrive in Rome before the superior general. He recommended finding a way of getting the document directly to the pope without it first being filtered through the Roman Curia. According to Étienne, Joseph Rosati took this report with him to Rome.¹⁵

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Guizot to Latour-Maubourg, 28 June 1842, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*: 984: 110, AMAE.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Étienne, *Notice*, 42.

¹⁴ Étienne said that Garibaldi "loved the Company sincerely, deplored its misfortunes, and was indignant at M. Nozo's conduct." *ibid.*

¹⁵ Ibid.

However, there is no mention of this memorandum in the general council minutes.

Nozo arrived at the port of Civitavecchia on 24 June. Vito Guarini later recalled the profound sadness he felt as he saw a humiliated Nozo disembark. He said he could not help but contemplate the great changes in the general's life since he visited Rome only five years earlier for the centenary celebrations.¹⁶ Nozo introduced his companion Alexandre Henin¹⁷ to Guarini by saying, "This is the man designated to spy and report on me."¹⁸ The next day, accompanied by Rosati, Nozo had an audience with Cardinal Ostini. According to Guarini's account, the cardinal entered the room "and without ceremony, and without any opening remarks, said to him [Nozo] in good French, 'It is the Holy Father's wish that you resign.'"¹⁹ Guarini recalled that this statement stunned Nozo, who could not believe that the pope would demand his resignation without giving him a hearing. The reason that he had come to Rome in the first place was for a chance to present his case. Nozo could not understand a summons just to request his resignation. He felt that if this were the Holy See's decision, the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars could have issued the demand by mail.²⁰ This first meeting did not have the result hoped for by Cardinal Ostini, as Nozo declined to make a decision.²¹ As Guarini correctly pointed out, however, Nozo delayed but could not avoid his fate.²²

Nozo had a papal audience the morning of 3 July. According to Guarini, Gregory XVI started the audience by asking Nozo, innocently enough, if it were true that he had suffered greatly from the heat during his voyage. Nozo replied that the heat he had suffered was only external, while "what afflicted him more was the moral suffering that he had endured, and continued to endure, at his enemies' hands." Guarini said that at this point, the pope interrupted Nozo to tell him "to deal with the cardinal prefect about these matters."²³ He then changed the subject and turned to Guarini to ask him a few innocuous questions. After only a few minutes, the audience quickly ended.

¹⁶ Guarini, *Relazione*, 54, ACMP.

¹⁷ See *General Council Minutes*, 1: 198, ACGR.

¹⁸ Guarini, *Relazione*, 54, ACMP.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ On 28 June, the French ambassador wrote to the Foreign Minister reporting that Nozo had arrived in Rome, and that he had already had his first interview. The ambassador also mentioned that according to the cardinal, in this meeting Nozo "had manifested the most pacific and conciliating attitudes." *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 984: 113, AMAE.

²² Guarini, *Relazione*, 55, ACMP.

²³ *Ibid.*

In his *Notice*, Étienne claimed, "Monsieur Nozo was not disposed to obey the Sovereign Pontiff's order, and several weeks passed without the situation being resolved."²⁴ Meanwhile, according to Étienne, Nozo asked permission to visit Naples. This request did not meet with papal approval. In Étienne's version, a Neapolitan Lazarist, "Mgr. Laetitia," [sic] sought out Nozo in an attempt to resolve the impasse. Étienne said that Letizia, who was in Rome for his episcopal ordination, told Nozo the truth about his position. He said that the Holy See had received a full report on his conduct...and the pope had requested his resignation to spare him the humiliation of a scandalous deposition."²⁵ According to Étienne, this news appalled Nozo. The general immediately wrote out his resignation and gave it to Mgr. Letizia to convey to the pope.²⁶ Camillo Letizia, C.M., was the bishop of Tricarico from 1838 to 1859.²⁷ He therefore could not have been "the bishop, newly named," referred to by Étienne in his *Notice*.

In his account Guarini, as an eyewitness, gave a differing version of these same events. He said that it was Ferdinando Girardi, a Neapolitan confrere, who invited Nozo and his companion to visit Naples.²⁸ Girardi was in Rome for his ordination as bishop of Sant' Angelo dei Lombardi. Nozo accepted this invitation. When Joseph Rosati heard of these plans, he informed Cardinal Ostini. The cardinal made it known that "it was the will of His Holiness that Signor Nozo may not leave Rome until he has given his resignation from the generalate."²⁹ This restriction increased Nozo's despair.

Guarini received a letter at this time from Joseph Boury³⁰ in France who wrote: "We ardently desire that the affairs that have occupied us for such a long time, and have so greatly afflicted us, will be settled happily in Rome. We hope that the superior general's cause will be triumphant. Toward this end, we recommend that the Holy Father summon two confreres to Rome to confirm the details of the superior general's defense. Two possible candidates would be Monsieur Wargnier and Monsieur Trouve."³¹ This plan for Nozo's support was much too little, and it arrived much too late.

According to Guarini, on 26 July, when Girardi heard of the papal veto of Nozo's trip, he sought the superior general out in his room.

²⁴ Étienne, *Notice*, 42.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Hierarchia Catholica*, 7: 564.

²⁸ Girardi (1788-1866) was consecrated on 24 July by Cardinal Ostini. *Ibid.*, 7: 75.

²⁹ Guarini, *Relazione*, 56, ACMP.

³⁰ Boury was then the visitor of the province of Aquitaine.

³¹ Guarini, *Relazione*, 57, ACMP.

Girardi locked the door so that they would have no interruptions and after a half-hour of "animated exhortation" persuaded Nozo to write his resignation letter.³² The bishop-elect immediately sent the resignation to Cardinal Ostini. Three days later the French ambassador relayed the news to François Guizot in Paris.

The Cardinal Secretary of State told me this morning that Monsieur Nozo has finally given in and resigned in terms that are to the cardinal's complete satisfaction. His Eminence was pleased with this result and does not think it would have been obtained without calling this ecclesiastic to Rome....His Eminence greatly desired that I immediately transmit this good news to you....It does not seem that Rome will take any other actions for now with regard to changes in the constitutions of the Lazarists or the residence of the procurator general.... So, for the moment we are without inquietude on these points. Nevertheless, I will be on the watch for such and will keep you informed. While awaiting further developments, we can say that we have achieved our immediate goal, and that the Lazarists, the cause of religion, and the royal government have avoided grave embarrassment, unfortunate publicity, and scandal.³³

On 2 August, Cardinal Ostini wrote to Guarini with the news that the pope had accepted the superior general's resignation with satisfaction.³⁴

In a letter written on the day he resigned, Nozo confided "to a secret correspondent" a partial account of the events leading to his resignation.³⁵ He spoke of having dinner with Cardinal Ostini and telling him of his planned trip to Naples. According to Nozo, the cardinal had simply said, "one of these days we must speak about the Congregation's affairs." Nozo said he and the cardinal agreed on a future meeting date. While awaiting this meeting, Nozo recalled that he had kept silent and spoken to no one about the negotiations. He noted that Cardinal Ostini had not done similarly and that he had been busy consulting "with our dear confreres whom you know." According to Nozo, "someone has used this time to agitate, write, and intrigue with the cardinal prefect concerning my actions and my motives." Nozo now realized the impact of the French government's intervention "in the person of Monsieur Guizot." He acknowledged

³² Ibid.

³³ Latour-Maubourg to Guizot, 29 July 1842, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 984: 129-30, AMAE.

³⁴ Guarini, *Relazione*, 57-58, ACMP.

³⁵ Nozo to an unnamed correspondent, 28 July 1842, *Nozo II, Documents, 1835-1842*, C 39, bas 2°, ACMP. In another hand is written the following notation at the top of the letter, "M. Nozo writing to a secret correspondent that he had offered his resignation. Poor M. Nozo and his illusions."

that he was an embarrassment to people "in high places in Rome." Nozo wrote, "No longer wishing to be the source of embarrassment and annoyance for the venerable pontiff...I have given my resignation pure and simple."³⁶

On 2 August 1842, Cardinal Ostini wrote to Antoine Poussou informing him of Nozo's resignation. He spoke of Rome's desire to restore "peace and order" by confirming him as vicar general. This arrangement was to last "until the Holy See should decide upon the election of a future superior general." At the general council meeting of 18 August, Poussou and the council members discussed the news. They approved drafts of circular letters to the Congregation and the Daughters.³⁷ The vicar general issued these letters two days later on 20 August. On 17 August, Guizot wrote to the French chargé d'affaires to the Holy See, the Comte de Rayneval, expressing his pleasure at the news of Nozo's resignation. The Foreign Minister commented that the only thing left to do was to "procure the election of his successor by a general assembly as called for by the constitutions.... There is nothing more plausible than that things should now be conducted according to ordinary procedures."³⁸

"Monsieur Nozo's resignation did not end these affairs."³⁹

Guizot's assumption that normalcy would now return to the Lazarists was mistaken. According to Étienne, the "four Italian missionaries" whose appeal had stopped the general assembly now pursued the rest of their plans. Their ultimate goal was "to transfer the superior general's seat to this capital of the world."⁴⁰ Étienne claimed that the only way for the Italians to accomplish this goal was for the pope to name the next superior general. The new general would then presumably agree to the transfer. Étienne said that the French government remained the only "obstacle" preventing the Italian plan's success.⁴¹ The Holy See sought the French government's agreement to the plan of having the pope choose the next superior general. Rome's reasoning, in Étienne's view, was that since Guizot was a Protestant "he would not attach any importance to an affair of this nature and

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 215, ACCG.

³⁸ Guizot to Rayneval, 17 August 1842, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 984: 135, AMAE.

³⁹ Étienne, *Notice*, 43.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

would easily consent to the pope's desire."⁴² Étienne's analysis here was ridiculous. The Holy See was already aware of the French government's, and Guizot's, deep interest in the solution of the Lazarists' problems.

After Nozo's resignation, Rome moved quickly to formulate its plan for the Congregation's future. The Holy See wanted to avoid any solution that would lead to further confusion and divisions within the Congregation. Under the circumstances, it therefore believed that a general assembly should not meet. The only alternative then was for the pope to name a superior general as in 1827. Rome realized that naming either an Italian or a Frenchman would only continue the internecine disputes within the Lazarists. Apparently, it was Joseph Rosati who suggested that naming a neutral outsider as superior general was a possible solution to this dilemma. Rosati put forward the name of his old friend, John Timon, the visitor of the American province, as just such a candidate.⁴³ Timon was well known in Rome. He had already declined appointments to several sees in the United States. Once named, Rosati thought that Timon could then establish an equilibrium between the French and the non-French provinces in future general assemblies.⁴⁴ These plans made no mention of moving the superior general's seat to Rome.

On 2 August, Ostini wrote to Garibaldi in Paris, instructing him to approach the French government with this proposal.⁴⁵ According to Étienne, Rome forbade Garibaldi from making the details known to the French Lazarists. He was to ask Guizot to follow the same policy.⁴⁶ Guarini reported that he too was forbidden to write to Paris about this matter.⁴⁷ The Roman attempts to keep negotiations confidential between the Holy See and the French government failed. The French embassy had already informed the Foreign Minister about the plan's details.⁴⁸ Cardinal Lambruschini had told Rayneval "We will use this occasion to give the Lazarists a superior general from the new world."⁴⁹

Guizot waited for further explanations from the Holy See that would justify the course of action they were proposing to take. This information was forthcoming from Rayneval in a dispatch dated 8 August. At the

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Guarini, *Relazione*, 64, ACMP.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ For the correspondence between the Holy See and Garibaldi during this period see *Arch. Nunz. Parigi, Garibaldi*, 45, ASV.

⁴⁶ Étienne, *Notice*, 43.

⁴⁷ Guarini, *Relazione*, 65, ACMP.

⁴⁸ Rayneval to Guizot, 8 August 1842, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 984: 82, AMAE.

⁴⁹ Guarini, *Relazione*, 65, ACMP.

general council meeting on 30 August, Poussou told the assistants that Guizot had sent him a copy of this dispatch. This information revealed that the Holy See would soon propose a plan for settling "the Congregation's present position."⁵⁰ Poussou informed the council that the Foreign Minister had asked it to advise him on the best means "to refute the motives advanced to justify such grave departures from our constitutions."⁵¹ The council agreed to have a memorandum prepared for consideration at their next meeting.⁵² At this crucial juncture of events, Étienne was absent on a trip to Algeria. Arriving back in Paris during the first days of September, he took up the familiar task of writing the memorandum mandated by the council. Étienne presented the draft of his work at the council meeting held on 6 September. The council approved the document with a few minor changes, and directed Étienne to send it to Guizot.⁵³

A concise statement of the Holy See's position can be found in a letter from Ostini to Garibaldi dated 21 September 1842.⁵⁴ Cardinal Ostini said that the reason for not allowing the "inopportune" convocation of a general assembly were problems that were "inherent in the actual structure of this assembly." If not corrected, he felt that these could only lead to further problems among the Lazarists. In Rome's view, "the delegates in electing [a superior general] do not possess a full and necessary canonical liberty."⁵⁵ Ostini held that no distinction could be made between *droit et fait*.⁵⁶ The French had always recognized the constitutional principle that any qualified Lazarist, regardless of nationality, could be elected as superior general. They also acknowledged, however, that given the special relationship between the French government and the Congregation, the government would only accept a French candidate. This distinction had always troubled the Italians and the other nationalities.

The Congregation of Bishops and Regulars attacked the presupposition that the superior general of the Lazarists in any sense "had to be" French. Rome would not recognize such a restriction made either by the Lazarists or by the French government. If claimed by the

⁵⁰ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 216, ACGR.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* At the same time Guizot wrote to Rayneval in Paris instructing him to take no further action on this question until he had received "formal and detailed instructions that will enable you to judge and speak about this issue with a full knowledge of the facts." Guizot to Rayneval, 6 September 1842, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 984: 143, AMAE.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 217, ACGR.

⁵⁴ Guarini, *Relazione*, 66-67, ACMP.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Lazarists, it would have been manifestly contrary to their constitutions and past papal decisions. If the government required this restriction and the Lazarists accepted it, for whatever reason, this action destroyed "the electors' absolute and perfect liberty" to vote for the candidate whom they judged "to be the most worthy" not just among the French, but among all the Congregation's members.⁵⁷ Ostini denied that the papal appointment of Pierre de Wailly as superior general was a recognition of the government's claim that only a Frenchman could serve in this position. The Congregation of Bishops and Regulars also noted that Louis XIV's veto of Maurice Faure and the subsequent election of Nicolas Pierron had required a pontifical sanation (*sanatoire*).⁵⁸ In this case, the Holy See had not recognized any claim by the French king of the right to veto the general assembly's choice. The Congregation also noted how the many years of Italian and French antagonisms had been detrimental to the Lazarists.

The document observed that the unbroken succession of French superior generals was attributable to the fact that the French held a guaranteed majority in general assemblies. This led to their second major objection that an assembly "would not represent a just and equitable equilibrium among the nationalities that composed the community."⁵⁹ Ostini pointed out that the community had four French provinces with a total of eighty priests, while the three Italian provinces totaled more than 230 priests. The Cardinal Prefect said that until these problems were resolved his Congregation would not allow a general assembly to meet. He wanted to avoid the possibility of any further "intrigues and irregularities." To help determine a just equilibrium, the cardinal instructed Garibaldi to have the Lazarists send a report to Rome listing each province, its canonical houses, and its members.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* At the general council meeting on 18 October 1842, Poussou told the council of Ostini's request for information on the Congregation. The council made the observations that "this was the first time that the Holy See has made a request of this nature, and it is not difficult to see that the true reason for the Roman request was to procure the information that would support the desire to change the Congregation's present organization." The council advised Poussou to respond to Ostini by saying that it would be impossible to respond immediately to this request since it would take many months to contact the foreign missions for the required information. It seems hard to imagine that the always precise Étienne did not have the information on the foreign missions at his fingertips. Despite their professed reverence for Roman authority, the French did not hesitate to stonewall when they felt it served their purposes, and they could get away with it. See *General Council Minutes*, 1: 228, ACCGR.

In the preamble of his report to Guizot, Étienne spoke of the council's reaction to the Roman dispatch:

The council members could not read this dispatch without being profoundly saddened. They discovered that the Holy See imputes intentions to the French Lazarists that they have never held and have always been far from their thoughts. They learned that it has judged their conduct with respect to the government of their Congregation with a severity that they believe to be unjustified. They can easily see that the accusations made against them did not originate with the Holy See but were the result of calumnious insinuations made by those who hope to attain their goals by this means. The council believes that by exposing the true state of matters they will reveal these prejudices to be entirely without foundation, and the Holy See will abandon this project.⁶¹

In his typical fashion, Étienne answered Rome's objections, point-by-point. The first accusation he addressed was the alleged "French disregard for the Constitutions." Étienne responded emotionally,

This accusation gravely wounds our hearts. We have, to the contrary, always considered them [the constitutions] as a precious deposit left to us by Saint Vincent de Paul. We view them as a deposit that we must pass on in its integrity, from age to age and by each generation to posterity. They must be for the community a source of consolation and the guarantee of heavenly favor. Contrary to this accusation, we believe that the community must obey the constitutions with the greatest and scrupulous exactitude. Our experience convinces us that the Congregation's prosperity depends on our fidelity in this regard.⁶²

Étienne then addressed the specific way in which Rome accused the French of "disregarding" the Constitutions. "Rome has accused us of arrogating to ourselves a supremacy that adversely affects all the other provinces of our Congregation. It has also accused us of purposely arranging things so that in all matters the French are always in the majority. This is said to be true in the election of the superior where, according to the constitutions, all the provinces should be equally represented, but because of the French majority the other provinces are only consulted for form's sake."⁶³ Étienne told the Foreign Minister that these "assertions were entirely without founda-

⁶¹ *Nozo II: Documents, 1843-1866*, C 39, bas 2°, 32, ACMP.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1-2.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

tion." He pointed out that it was Saint Vincent, who over two hundred years previously had given the Congregation its particular structure. He said that the claim that the organization of the provinces violated the community's constitutions betrayed "an incomplete knowledge" of this document. He pointed out that the papally approved constitutions gave the superior general "full and entire authority" to erect and suppress provinces, "when in his wisdom he judges that the Congregation's interests demand this action."⁶⁴

Étienne commented on how in the past the number of French provinces, and thus the number of French votes at general assemblies, had been much greater than they were now.⁶⁵ He did not mention, of course, the greater number of French Lazarists before the Revolution that justified a larger number of provinces. He noted that the number of Italian provinces had grown from one to three, as well as the addition of the provinces of Spain and Portugal.⁶⁶ Nowhere, however, did Étienne directly address the great disparity in the number of French Lazarists and provinces in relation to the number of members and provinces in Italy. Étienne concluded that the French Lazarists could only unjustly be accused of having a disregard for the constitutions. Thus if, as the dispatch from Rome claimed, "an internal problem" existed within the Congregation the true source of this came from those who were using this argument as an excuse to produce "a great upheaval" for their own purposes.

Étienne next addressed the charge "that in the election of a superior the non-French provinces were only consulted pro forma." In response, he noted that in examining the minutes of the Congregation's previous eighteen assemblies he found no evidence to support this charge. He asked rhetorically, "Can one imagine that a transgression of this grave nature could take place regularly over the last two centuries without anyone attending these assemblies ever mentioning it?" Étienne retorted that only someone who had little knowledge of the "spirit that has always animated our various assemblies" could charge that a nationalistic spirit so presided there as to exclude other provinces from anything but a pro forma consultation.⁶⁷

The next accusation addressed by Étienne was the complaint made by "the Italian provinces" to the Holy See. The Italians claimed that they were deprived "of their legitimate influence in the general direction of the

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ This argument of Étienne's still did not address the great disparity in numbers between the membership of the French and Italian provinces for example.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 5.

Congregation's affairs." Étienne denied this charge. He countered by saying that the French believed that it was only "a few individuals from these provinces who were responsible for this complaint." He further claimed that the majority of Italians "do not support this claim." Étienne commented, "We know the true spirit of these provinces too well, and we believe that they support the maintenance of the Congregation's organization as established by Saint Vincent de Paul."⁶⁸

Étienne next discussed the exclusion of the provinces outside Europe from the Congregation's assemblies.⁶⁹ He pointed out that again this was in accord with a provision of the papally approved constitutions. Étienne explained the original reason for this exclusion. With the difficulties in communication and long travel times, delegates from overseas provinces did not have time to reach Paris within the maximum six-month period given from the convocation of a general assembly to its opening. Étienne admitted that "today we travel much more quickly and the motive for this exclusion no longer exists." He said that the general council had already decided to bring this issue before the upcoming general assembly. The assembly alone could, with the Holy See's approbation, make such a change in the constitutions.⁷⁰

Étienne went on to discuss the relations between Paris and the American province. He claimed that the French had always done everything that they could for the Americans. They had erected the province in 1835 and had promised as soon as possible to see that its delegates could attend assemblies. He also noted that the French had sent "a great number" of the missionaries who now comprised the membership of the province.⁷¹ Étienne recalled how in 1835, Jean-Marie Odin had come to Paris from America.⁷² He said that Odin had "insisted that the mission pass from its dependence on the Roman province to the jurisdiction of the mother house in Paris."⁷³ Étienne overstated his case with respect to French relations with the American province. The mission in the United States was under the Roman vicar general's jurisdiction from its establishment in 1816.⁷⁴ However, when unified government returned to the Congregation in 1827, it then came under the superior general's

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 4. At this point there were only two provinces erected outside Europe, the United States and the Middle East.

⁷⁰ *General Council Minutes*, meeting of 8 May 1842, 1: 190, ACGR.

⁷¹ Étienne, *Projet*, 5, ACMP.

⁷² For more information on Odin see *American Vincentians*. See also *Vie de Mgr. Jean-Marie Odin, Missionnaire Lazariste, Archevêque de la Nouvelle Orléans* (Paris: Du Moulin, 1896).

⁷³ Étienne, *Projet*, 5, ACMP.

⁷⁴ See *American Vincentians*, 451-54.

jurisdiction. The minutes of the general council meeting attended by Odin in 1835 do not show any request by him for the mission to pass to Paris's jurisdiction. The minutes simply record that the superior general, taking advantage of the presence of Odin in Paris, had convoked the meeting of the council "in order to deliberate on the state of our American mission, and upon the measures which will ensure its future welfare."⁷⁵ Étienne also claimed that it had only been through his efforts that the Lyons Society for the Propagation of the Faith had provided any funds for the American missions. He said that it was only after their association with Paris that the prosperity of the American establishments began.⁷⁶ Étienne concluded that the Americans "had to have been entirely unaware" of the requests made on their behalf to the Holy See. These were so manifestly contradictory to the "true interests" of the American province as to be unthinkable. Thus, Étienne dismissed the threat reported to Rome of an American schism unless "a real reform took place in the Congregation."⁷⁷

Étienne next discussed the Italian provinces. Here, the assertion to which he was responding was that if no changes took place in the Congregation's administration a schism by the Italian provinces was probable. Étienne felt that the Italians were using this threat as a scare tactic to get their way. He made the counter charge that the real danger for a schism was among the Italians themselves, since most Italian members did not support changes in the community's Constitutions.⁷⁸ Étienne pointed out to the Foreign Minister that the French Lazarists, "had nothing to lose" by an Italian schism. This was because their existence and welfare did not depend on their union with their Italian confreres. As far as the French were concerned, a schism would pose no "inconvenience" for them. All it would mean would be that Paris would no longer have authority over the Italian provinces. According to Étienne, if Paris were to lose its authority over the Italians, "in our eyes this would have the very agreeable compensation of our no longer having to sustain the burden of the corresponding solicitude

⁷⁵ *General Council Minutes*, meeting of 2 September 1835, 1: 71, ACGR.

⁷⁶ Étienne, *Projet*, 5, ACMP. Given the troubled history of the early years of the American province and Étienne's own criticisms of the province it is hard to justify this claim. On 1 November 1852, for example, Étienne as superior general issued a circular letter to the confreres in the United States giving a gloomy assessment of their province. He noted that its progress "is far from presenting us with the consoling results that would have been expected." He went on to speak of "unfortunate ups and downs, aborted projects, sterile arrangements, failed undertakings, and deceived hopes that had caused so much work and sacrifice to be without fruit." See *American Vincentians*, 46.

⁷⁷ Étienne, *Projet*, 5, ACMP.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

that our present union with them imposes upon us."⁷⁹

Having said this, however, Étienne noted that the French "would greatly regret it if even one word they said contributed in any way to a schism." Paris's position was that, "We do not want to separate what Saint Vincent himself has united. We greatly desire to see his work remain intact and enjoying its primitive unity." Étienne noted, "if this schism takes place and it is not our fault, we will consider it a development that will lead to the tranquillity and peace of the French Lazarists."⁸⁰ Étienne concluded that if the Italians wanted "to conserve the order and unity" of the Congregation they should "leave things as they are and as they have always been." If they thought that without a union that included them, the Congregation "could not function, or would disappear" they were operating under an "illusion."⁸¹

Étienne continued his argument by saying that the Vatican plan "proposed to reform an abuse that does not exist and to remedy an interior weakness that has a source entirely different from what is presumed." These actions could only lead to "the inevitable dispersion and the fall of the Congregation of the Lazarists." Étienne felt that it was the proposal for a papal appointment of the superior general that revealed a true disregard for the constitutions. He then asked this series of rhetorical questions. "Can one reasonably expect that a superior appointed in this manner would be received without trouble, without controversy, and would not find his coming to power strewn with obstacles of every nature? Can one believe that he will obtain the submission and confidence of everyone, without which it will be impossible for him to govern? Is it not obvious, that to impose a superior will lead to a real fermentation within the community, as opposed to the one that is only imagined to exist now?"

Having said this, Étienne had to explain away the example of just such a papal action in Leo XII's appointment of Pierre de Wailly as superior general. According to Étienne's analysis, the situation in 1827 was completely different from what the community faced in 1842. In 1827, the Congregation had been without a superior general for almost thirty years. The community was also divided between the jurisdictions of two vicar generals. Under these circumstances, a general assembly could not have been regularly convoked.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

At the time, everyone recognized that the only way to get the Congregation reestablished "on its ancient foundation" was by the intervention of pontifical authority.⁸² Étienne said that in 1827, the Holy See had not "imposed" a superior general but had first consulted the vicars general in Paris and Rome. Étienne succumbed, however, to the temptation to overstate his case. He claimed that all the houses and provinces had been consulted about whether "to reinstate the Congregation's seat at Paris, and whether the new superior general should be a Frenchman." Supposedly, "the vast majority of the houses gave an affirmative answer." His final comment was that the French government had proposed De Wailly as the candidate only after assuring the French Lazarists' "consent."⁸³ None of these points was true.

As Étienne next pointed out, "Today the circumstances are different," the Congregation possessed a regular constitutional administration. He said that he could see no reason that the community should not proceed to the convocation of a general assembly, and the election of a new superior general. He further asked, "Why rely on an extraordinary means when no serious motive justifies this?"⁸⁴

Étienne felt that it was his duty to point out the "grave consequences" of the Roman plan. He said that the proposal was "without precedent in the Congregation's long history." The plan sought "not only to impose a superior general but to impose a non-French superior general."⁸⁵ In Étienne's mind, this would be an event "which could only lead to a catastrophe and a frightening upheaval that would lead inevitably to the collapse of everything." What other outcome could be expected from

transporting a superior, who cannot speak French, from another world to Paris and imposing him upon subjects who do not know him or have confidence in him?⁸⁶ What other outcome could be expected from introducing such a superior into circumstances of which he is ignorant and into an administration whose ways he also would not know? What would happen to the Daughters of Charity with such an inexperienced superior general? How could the sisters have confidence in a superior whom their own confreres did not support? Has anyone foreseen the trouble and agitation which would soon arise as a result of this disastrous decision?⁸⁷

⁸² *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Étienne, who had met Timon, knew that he spoke French.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Étienne commented that he believed Timon would not accept a burden “that could only overwhelm him.” If he were to accept such an appointment, according to Étienne’s apocalyptic vision, “He would cause the ruin of the two families of Saint Vincent in France. He also would end up moving the Congregation’s seat to Rome.”⁸⁸

Étienne reminded Guizot that in 1827, some Gallican opposition to the unprecedented papal nomination of a superior general had emerged within the Council of State. He predicted that in this case the “Council of State would refuse to allow the publication of the brief of nomination,” since the papal nominee would be a foreigner. He requested the Foreign Minister’s “powerful intervention.” The purpose of this intervention was to persuade Rome “to abandon the proposed project since it has no legitimate justification, is contrary to all precedents, presents grave dangers for the Congregation’s existence...and is manifestly impossible to execute.”⁸⁹

Étienne also requested that the government lobby the Holy See to allow the immediate convocation of a general assembly. He pointed out that the temporary nature of government by a vicar general was problematic. Étienne explained that a vicar general had “very limited” powers since he usually held office for only six months while awaiting the election of a new general. One implication of Poussou’s limited powers as vicar general was that he had no authority to sign legal documents on the Congregation’s behalf. Étienne ended his long appeal by saying, “We are confident that given these motives, Your Excellency will take those immediate actions that you, in your wisdom, will judge to be efficacious to bring about a solution to the difficulties that presently impede the execution of our constitutions.”⁹⁰

On 25 November 1842, the Foreign Minister wrote to Rayneval “to inform you of what I have learned to this point with respect to the Lazarist affair, the difficulties raised by the Holy See, and the royal government’s intentions.”⁹¹ Guizot told the ambassador that in his judgment the Holy See’s position was imprudent, unnecessary, and “did not take into account inevitable complications.” He admitted that Rome’s disposal of Nozo had been “useful and necessary.” However, Guizot complained that the Holy See had taken this action and subsequent actions without informing or consulting the

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁹¹ Guizot to Latour-Maubourg, 25 November 1842, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 984: 161, AMAE.

Congregation's general council. He also thought that Rome was prejudiced against the community's administration. Concerning the Holy See's justification for its actions, Guizot recalled that "not knowing the accuracy of these accusations" he had relayed them directly to Étienne and asked him to respond. After having examined Étienne's response, Guizot said that he now believed "the Holy See had succumbed to the machinations of intriguers."⁹²

Guizot went on to state: "It is clear...that the royal government will not recognize a superior general installed in such an unusual and extralegal manner. This proposal is contrary to the letter and spirit of the Congregation's constitutions...and violates the king's rights." The Holy See's nomination of a foreigner would create an "inconvenient and impossible situation" regarding the relationship between the Congregation and the government. He concluded saying, "I can only interpret this nomination as having the ultimate goals of getting rid of a French general after two hundred years and moving the Congregation's headquarters to Rome. We cannot tolerate this plan. The pontifical government knows that we have always opposed this move no matter what means it seeks to achieve this end." Guizot agreed that the conditions that existed among the Lazarists were irregular but that the French Lazarists were not to blame. In his opinion it was "the non-French Lazarists, especially those of Italy," who had misled the Holy See and convinced it to create these conditions.⁹³

The Foreign Minister agreed on the need to avoid a "deplorable schism." He hoped to enlighten the Holy See by "defending, with clear evidence, the justice of the cause [of the French Lazarists]. Supplied with this information, Rome would then abandon its present plan that so prejudiced the Congregation's essential interests and left it incapable of fulfilling its functions that are so useful to the cause of religion."⁹⁴ Guizot told the ambassador again that he should urge the Holy See to allow the immediate convocation of a general assembly.

The Foreign Minister also revealed his own Gallican ecclesial and political presuppositions. He told the ambassador that the Congregation's constitutions (which Rome had approved) gave the Holy See no further right to "interfere" in the Congregation's affairs. Guizot went on to say,

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

It is high time for the Holy See to stop this unfounded debate based on illegal arguments that disparages the evident rights of these esteemed men whose apostolic works everyone appreciates...I consider it a singular occurrence that the Holy See has raised these difficulties with respect to the only congregation of men legally recognized in France...a group of men who bear the name of Vincent de Paul...who are justly popular and well known because of the constancy of their moral conduct. These men are distinguished by the grandeur of the services that their indefatigable zeal has efficaciously rendered in the interests of Catholicism.⁹⁵

Guizot instructed the ambassador to use Étienne's arguments. He ended by saying, "I repeat that it is urgent that things follow their regular course. I instruct you to spare no efforts in this affair, especially to see to it that the crisis does not continue. We want it to end as soon as possible."⁹⁶ Rayneval replied a few weeks later, "I have received your memorandum, and I am following your instructions. However, I expect to have problems in the settlement of this affair, since here at the Vatican very old and powerful prejudices are at work."⁹⁷

After the Cardinal Secretary of State received the French response, the pope suggested the possibility of a compromise. He would allow the general assembly to meet, but not in Paris. He felt that if it met instead in Rome, a "necessary harmony" could be assured.⁹⁸ Étienne in his *Notice* commented that this new proposal had been suggested to the pope by the "intriguers," who were only seeking another means to achieve their ends. He observed that Guizot responded by saying that "since the Congregation had always held their general assemblies in Paris, he saw no reason to change this practice now."⁹⁹ The Foreign Minister also pointed out that the members of the Congregation's general administration who had to attend the general assembly could not exercise their responsibilities so far away from the mother house. Guizot characterized this proposal as "being equally contrary to custom, without any utility, dangerous, and very impractical." The Foreign Minister concluded that the new Roman plan was a thinly veiled attempt to influence the upcoming election so that a Frenchman

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* In his *Notice*, Étienne related that after "having attentively and seriously examined" the French response to the Roman allegations Guizot concluded "that the motives alleged" by Rome were "not well founded." Guizot's position, according to Étienne, was that "the successor to M. Nozo should be elected by a general assembly regularly convoked according to the constant practice of the Congregation," 44.

⁹⁷ Guizot to Rayneval, 8 November 1842, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 984: 177, AMAE.

⁹⁸ Guarini, *Relazione*, 77, ACMP.

⁹⁹ Étienne, *Notice*, 44.

was sure not to be elected. In his view, the election of a superior general at an assembly held in Rome would not be a free election.¹⁰⁰

In early January 1843, since it appeared that the Holy See had not yet completely abandoned its hopes of nominating a superior general, Guizot forwarded another memorandum to Cardinal Lambruschini via the embassy in Rome. He made some very telling points about the French government's position and its relationship with the Lazarists. According to Guizot's argument, the French Lazarists had established a secure national position despite the continuing French anticlerical prejudice against men's religious communities. He said that the publicity caused by the proposed Roman intervention "will undo everything that the government has tried to do for the Lazarists."¹⁰¹

Guizot next reflected on the unique Gallican identity of the Lazarists.

The Lazarists were founded in France and in its earliest years were exclusively French. Other nationalities later sought to join, and they gladly were admitted to share in the successful work of Saint Vincent de Paul. Yet, it is no less true that the foundation is entirely French and has taken from France its principal resources and the principal elements of its success. I believe that I can affirm, without any purely nationalistic sentiment, that it has been its French spirit that primarily has accounted for the success of the work that Vincent de Paul gave to his disciples.¹⁰²

Guizot observed that in the case of communities established in other countries, their founders had taken advantage of "the particular religious character of the nation." These founders instinctively used this character with great success to form their establishments. In his opinion, this had been Saint Vincent's intention in establishing his "admirable" communities in France. He then asked the rhetorical question: "Today, what grave and compelling motive urges the Holy See to adopt a measure that will destroy all this?"¹⁰³ The Foreign Minister repeated his contention that if the Holy See persisted in its intentions "the Congregation of the Lazarists would disappear from the kingdom and very soon by necessity from the rest of Christendom." Guizot again asked rhetorically, "Would this deplorable result serve the Church's interests, not only in France, but everywhere that the Lazarists work?" He also reminded Cardinal Lambruschini that the Daughters

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

of Charity inevitably would share the Lazarists' fate, at the cost of their vast network of charitable institutions. The Foreign Minister repeated his view that there was no basis for Rome's allegations against the French Lazarists. He echoed Étienne's charge that "the ambitions of individual malevolent denouncers were the sole cause of the Congregation's present unfortunate situation."¹⁰⁴ In his *Notice*, Étienne observed that after the unequivocal, and unyielding responses from Guizot, Rome finally understood "that it would gain nothing in negotiations with the French government."¹⁰⁵

A Summons to Rome:

"A trap set by the authors of the intrigue"¹⁰⁶

At the general council meeting of 10 January 1843, Poussou informed the members that he had received a letter from the inter-nuncio. This letter announced that Cardinal Ostini had instructed him to invite the general council to send at least two French confreres to Rome. The French representatives were to meet with representatives of the Italian confreres, under the Cardinal prefect's sponsorship, "to resolve the difficulties that have arisen with respect to the Congregation's organization." The goal of this action was "to end the present state of affairs in the Congregation."¹⁰⁷ In his *Notice*, Étienne commented that "one could easily see in this new proposal a trap set by the authors of the intrigue. They believed that once these [French] deputies were in the presence of the Church's supreme authority they would be more likely to give in to its desires and not offer any further resistance."¹⁰⁸

The debate in the general council revolved around the "danger" of consenting "to attend a meeting that in no way is foreseen by our constitutions."¹⁰⁹ This statement again reveals the underlying Gallican sensibilities of the French, who could not understand the ultramontane principles of a pontifical intervention. The French also balked at participating in a meeting "consisting of subjects under our authority who have no right to require any explanation from us. These subjects have caused all these difficulties because of their spirit of independence and have never consulted the general council about their difficulties."¹¹⁰ The council felt that

¹⁰⁴ Rayneval to Guizot, 8 January 1843, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 984: 191- 92, AMAE.

¹⁰⁵ Étienne, *Notice*, 45.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 253, ACGR.

¹⁰⁸ Étienne, *Notice*, 45.

¹⁰⁹ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 253, ACGR.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

"out of respect for the Holy See" they should not refuse to honor the Roman request. Simultaneously, however, they had serious misgivings about cooperating. In this state of "indecision" the council did not feel it could act.¹¹¹ It adjourned so that Poussou could consult the inter-nuncio.

Poussou reported to the council later the same day that Monsignor Garibaldi strongly supported the proposal of Cardinal Ostini and had told him that Rome would receive a French refusal to attend "very badly." After this the council, "wishing to imitate Saint Vincent's own profound submission to the Holy See, agreed to Cardinal Ostini's request."¹¹² It appointed Étienne and Jean-Marie Aladel. According to the council minutes, both Étienne and Aladel at first declined to go but eventually accepted their assignments in a spirit of obedience.¹¹³

In his *Notice*, Étienne gave a different version of these events. He said that Garibaldi "had insisted that I be one of the two deputies chosen by the council." He told Garibaldi that given the way Rome felt about him, he thought it would be "imprudent" for him to be a representative. Étienne expressed his fear that "the prejudices held against me would compromise the Congregation's important interests in this matter." He told Garibaldi it would take "a direct order" to make him agree to serve. Étienne said that Garibaldi had replied that "he knew both Rome and me very well, and for some time he had been looking for the right opportunity for me to go to Rome." After hearing that Garibaldi thought the time was right for him to make such a trip, Étienne said he agreed to accept his appointment. The minutes of the general council meetings do not confirm any of these details.¹¹⁴

The general council met again on 16 January.¹¹⁵ The members gave the delegates two sets of instructions, one public and the other private. In its public instructions, the council said that it did not acknowledge the existence of any problems between the Italian and the French missionaries. In their view it was only "certain individuals in Rome" and not the Italian provinces that had caused the "present difficulties." To avoid setting a "dangerous precedent," the French delegates were to say that they were present at the Roman meeting only because of Cardinal Ostini's "order."¹¹⁶ The council did not recognize that the Italian confreres involved were competent to deal with constitutional questions or questions

¹¹¹ Étienne, *Notice*, 45.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *General Council Minutes*, 1: 254, ACGR.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1: 255-56.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

concerning the Congregation's general administration." The French representatives were only to provide information and any needed factual clarification. Étienne and Aladel "had no authority to decide any question or to make any concession touching our Constitutions."¹¹⁷

It was the council's position that, in any event, it could not agree to any constitutional changes since a general assembly alone possessed this power. They noted that all the proposed solutions to the Congregation's alleged problems were outside the constitutions' present provisions. The council also observed that the Holy See had never previously consulted it during these controversies. According to the council minutes, the second set of "secret" instructions addressed "the delegates' rules of conduct and the manner in which they were to fulfill their mission."¹¹⁸

Poussou also proposed to the council that it instruct the visitors of Turin and Naples, Marcantonio Durando and Pasquale Fiorillo, to go to Rome. They were to "reveal to the Holy See the true spirit of their provinces and to assist the French delegates in the prompt and successful completion of their mission." The council accepted this recommendation, and it ordered the two Italian visitors to meet the French delegates in Rome by 5 February. The council had already written to Timon to ask if, as claimed by the Romans, the province of the United States supported changes in the Congregation's constitutions. According to Étienne, Timon had written back to say that this was not true. The American province "not only had not expressed any such desire but on the contrary would not support the slightest change in the constitutions."¹¹⁹

Étienne said that the Foreign Minister received notification of all these decisions. Guizot agreed that the delegates should "refuse to consider any change in the constitutions."¹²⁰ He also told Étienne that the government's diplomatic efforts to reach an "advantageous solution" would continue.¹²¹ Guizot gave the delegates a letter for the French ambassador in Rome dated 23 January 1843. The Foreign Minister told Ambassador Latour-Maubourg not only to receive the French delegates with "the attention that they deserve" but also "to render them all the assistance in your power."¹²² He went on to say, "You are aware of the intimate relationship that the procurator general [Étienne] has with my department, and the esteem and confidence

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. For a copy of these formal instructions see *Poussou, Vic. Gén.*, C 39, bas 3°, 37-38, ACMP.

¹¹⁹ Étienne, *Notice*, 46.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Guizot to Latour-Maubourg, 23 January 1843, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 984: 202, AMAE.

that he enjoys with the king's government.... With regard to the completion of their mission, you are to support and sustain them in every manner. You should meet with them confidentially and give them complete access to all the materials that you have on this affair. You may intervene officially according to the policy set on this matter by the king's government. You are to cooperate in every way in their mission."¹²³ The full force of the French government thus supported the position that Étienne and Aladel would be representing in Rome.

On 26 January, the two French delegates left Marseilles for Rome, where they arrived two days later. To avoid Michele Cremisini and Vito Guarini at Monte Citorio, Étienne and Aladel stayed at the house of San Silvestro on Monte Cavallo. Soon after their arrival, they had a preliminary interview with Cardinal Lambruschini. In this meeting, Lambruschini repeated the standard Roman reasoning for the proposed intervention in the superior general's election. He also commented "that the reason the Holy Father's supremacy existed was so that he could exercise it in a case like this, when the ordinary rules governing a situation were not able to resolve a dangerous conflict."¹²⁴ The cardinal criticized Gallican constitutional dominance in the community. He repeated verbatim the central Italian charge that "the French majority decided all important decisions such as the superior general's election, and that the other provinces were only consulted *pro forma*."¹²⁵ Lambruschini acknowledged the French government's position but said that the Holy See "understood the situation differently, and believed that its solution for the present state of affairs was preferable."¹²⁶

In this first interview with Lambruschini, Aladel did most of the talking for the French. This strategy was wise since everyone was aware that Étienne had a poor reputation with the Cardinal Secretary of State. Aladel repeated the standard French positions to Lambruschini. The cardinal replied that "he was not really tied to any particular way of resolving the situation as long as the means used attained the desired end." He thought that the proposed French solution "offered greater problems than the one the Holy See had proposed."¹²⁷ This final statement was the first indication given by Lambruschini that

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ "Entretien confidentiel avec Son Eminence le Card. Lambruschini au sujet de la nomination du Supérieur gal. pour remplacer M. Nozo, écrit par M. Aladel qui se trouvait à Rome avec M. Étienne, en l'année 1843," *Envoi: Étienne*, Casier 40, Haut 1°, ACMP.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

Rome might consider other means to achieve their desired result.

On 8 February, Rayneval informed Guizot of Étienne and Aladel's arrival and their first meetings with Lambruschini and Ostini. He also reported that he had met with the Cardinal Secretary of State and told him of the government's "repugnance" for the general assembly being held in Rome.¹²⁸ He told Guizot that this statement seemed to have its intended effect. The cardinal "did not hesitate to tell me that all of this was not really his concern. He said that he was not wedded to the means he previously had proposed."¹²⁹ Rayneval said, "I believe that I am safe in concluding that the task of Messieurs Étienne and Aladel will now be easier."¹³⁰

On 14 February, Guizot wrote to Rayneval acknowledging with pleasure the sudden Roman decision not to name a superior general and its willingness to accept a French candidate.¹³¹ The Holy See, however, still had not abandoned its plan to have the general assembly held in Rome. The Foreign Minister repeated the government's opposition to this extra-constitutional solution. Guizot refuted the argument that holding the assembly in Rome would help "to contain the dissidents who wish to spread and develop germs of discord."¹³² He pointed out that everyone knew that the dissidents consisted of only two or three Italian missionaries. Dealing with these individuals' complaints could be handled just as easily at a general assembly held in Paris.

Guizot noted ironically that at first the Holy See's position had been that because a preponderant French influence created a lack of electoral freedom, the general assembly should not take place in Paris. Yet, it then turned around and wanted to create the same lack of freedom by guaranteeing the election of a French general if the assembly met in Rome. The Foreign Minister speculated that the Holy See had put forward this latest proposal to assure that a general assembly which met in Rome would change the constitutions and require that the procurator general reside there. The government had already said it would not allow this change.¹³³ Guizot then issued explicit instructions to Rayneval:

To summarize, we will not consent, even for this one occasion, that the general assembly meeting to elect a superior general should be held in Rome. We do not admit that any valid reason

¹²⁸ Rayneval to Guizot, 8 February 1843, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 984: 208, AMAE.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Guizot to Rayneval, 14 February 1843, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 984: 211-12, AMAE.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

exists to modify the constitutions to require either the superior or procurator general to reside at Rome. We are formally opposed to any innovation of this type. Please inform the Holy See of our well-known intentions concerning these two points. You must insist in the most positive and pressing manner so that the Holy See will abandon all contrary and peremptory plans and stop raising obstacles to the general assembly's convocation. The vicar general should be allowed to proceed to bring an end to all these difficulties that have gone on for far too long. Let the Lazarists go ahead and do the good that they are called to do.¹³⁴

Showdown in Rome:

"The powers of hell attacked with ferocity."¹³⁵

The first face-to-face encounter between the French and the Italian Lazarists came in a meeting on 12 February arranged by Ostini and chaired by Joseph Rosati. Present at this meeting were Étienne, Aladel, and the three Italian visitors Cremisini, Fiorillo, and Durando.¹³⁶ Étienne spoke first. He said that since the authors of the appeal had claimed that "the three Italian provinces and the American province shared their discontent and subscribed to their views," the first order of business was to determine whether this claim was true.¹³⁷ Étienne and Aladel then presented a letter from John Timon. The American visitor said that "neither he nor any of his confreres supported such an appeal to the Holy See."¹³⁸ According to Étienne's notes from the meeting, Bishop Rosati then asked Durando and Fiorillo "if anyone had consulted them or their provinces to ask them to take part in the recourse to the Holy See." They answered that the authors of the appeal had not consulted them or their provinces. The consequence of these revelations was the "recognition and admission that the recourse only represented the views of a few individuals."¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Étienne to Sœur Marie, [a later hand has identified her as superior of the Daughters of Charity at the church of Saint Louis, Paris], 20 February 1843, *Étienne: Lettres 1839-1845*, C: 40, F: 3, I, (39-73), pli 1°, ACMP.

¹³⁶ The Italian author of the life of Marcantonio Durando noted that before coming to Rome for the fateful meeting, Durando had consulted all the superiors of his province. They advised him "to oppose any division whatsoever." "Difficultés intérieures dans l'administrat. de la Congrégation de la Mission, 1843," (Trad. de la Vie de M. Durando, écrite par M. Martinengo. Dans la traduction publiée par les Annales de la Mission en 1892, on a omis les fragments ci-inclus.) *Envoi: Étienne*, Casier 40, Haut: 1, Adm. gl., ACMP.

¹³⁷ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 150.

¹³⁸ Étienne's minutes from the 12 February 1843 meeting. *Nozo II: Documents 1842-1866*, C 39, bas 2°, 40, ACMP.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

In his *Notice*, Étienne erroneously said that having established that the recourse represented the views of only “four Roman missionaries,” the delegates “had nothing more to discuss.”¹⁴⁰ However, Étienne’s notes from the meeting reveal that the delegates discussed several other important matters at length. Étienne’s lapse on this point is again mythic in its intentionality and proportionality.

The second question put on the table by Étienne was whether “the general assembly had a complete liberty of suffrage in a superior general’s election.”¹⁴¹ Étienne and Aladel clarified the French position on this question.

1. The French Lazarists support the principle enunciated in the declaration inserted in the acts of the 1703 general assembly saying that according to the Constitutions, any member of the Congregation whatever his nationality can be elected as superior general if he possesses the constitutional qualifications.
2. The French Lazarists state that they have had no part in the French government’s professed opposition to the election of a superior general who is not French. They also believe that if a non-French general is elected they can expect to see the suppression of the Congregation in France. However, they are more attached to the constitutions than to their existence. They believe that they can only enjoy heaven’s blessings when they observe these same constitutions in their integrity. They thus leave the consequences of this possibility to providence, and the general assembly’s consideration.
3. If the assembly elects a non-French superior general, and the government suppresses the Congregation in France because of this election, they would not hesitate to recognize the superior general’s authority to fix his seat wherever he thought it to be appropriate.
4. Finally, they would recognize anyone as the true and legitimate superior general if the election was regular and conformed to the relevant constitutional provisions.¹⁴²

Rosati then asked the Italian visitors if “this satisfied them and if they judged” that these explanations guaranteed that “the liberty of suffrage is entire and is that required by the Constitutions?” Étienne’s notes record that “they unanimously responded positively.”¹⁴³

The delegates discussed a third question concerning “the assertion that there was a disproportion in the various provinces’ representation in the general assembly.” “After discussion,” the minutes record

¹⁴⁰ Étienne, *Notice*, 47.

¹⁴¹ Étienne, *Roman Minutes*, ACMP.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

that the delegates “unanimously affirmed” the following points:

1. That a numerical and mathematical proportionality between the various provinces of the Congregation is impossible and has never existed in the Congregation’s history.
2. That there is nothing in the Constitutions to infer or support the above.
3. That all the French provinces have a sufficient number of houses and of missionaries and that no reason exists to justify their reduction.
4. That if, up to the present, the foreign provinces have not taken part in general assemblies this has been a legitimate exclusion. The present constitutions do not allow provinces outside Europe to participate in the general assembly. Nevertheless, we agree to propose that the next general assembly examine this article and see if the present circumstances are sufficient justification to permit that provinces outside Europe possess the same rights as the European provinces, with respect to attendance at assemblies.¹⁴⁴

A fourth question examined at the meeting dealt with a proposal, first put forward by Cremisini with strong support from the Holy See.¹⁴⁵ This concerned “the possibility of having each nationality in the Congregation represented on the superior general’s council, thus increasing the number of the assistants.” The French focused on the fact that the constitutions limited the number of assistants to three or four. They did not support increasing the number. In their view, to specify the assistants’ nationalities would deprive the assembly of its liberty.¹⁴⁶ The French delegates also reminded the others that their instructions expressly forbade them to support, or even discuss, any positive resolution for constitutional changes.

The final point concerned reaching agreement upon “the most expedient means for responding to the Sovereign Pontiff’s wish that the superior general have a representative in Rome.” The delegates again “unanimously” agreed on a way of addressing this issue:

1. The establishment in Rome of a representative of the superior general is a measure that is not only useful but indispensable for the Congregation’s efficient administration.
2. In deciding the title and powers of this representative the opinion of the Italian visitors is important. Consequently, this question should be examined carefully. The Italian provincial assemblies should consider this proposal and present their recommendations to the general assembly.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Guarini, *Relazione*, 85, ACMP.

¹⁴⁶ Étienne, *Roman Minutes*, ACMP.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

Étienne's minutes record this final statement: "We unanimously agree to these resolutions, and we the undersigned have requested Mgr. Rosati to inform His Eminence, Cardinal Ostini, that there no longer exist any difficulties between the French Lazarists and the Italian Missionaries. We ask him to obtain an immediate audience with the cardinal, so that he may hear the assurance from us that we are in perfect accord with the resolutions that are here presented."¹⁴⁸ The "unanimity" so often claimed by Étienne in his minutes did not exist, since the Roman visitor refused to sign the agreement along with the others.¹⁴⁹

Cremisini was unconvinced by the French arguments. He also was undeterred by the lack of support from Durando and Fiorillo. He fired off a letter of protest to Cardinal Ostini. He charged that despite what the French had said and the others agreed to, a lack of liberty at the general assembly and a disproportion between provinces did exist. The Roman visitor said that the French arguments were "illusions not verified by the facts and contrary to the spirit of the Constitutions."¹⁵⁰ Cremisini told Ostini "that in conscience I cannot subscribe to the proposed illusory modifications, and I persist in imploring a true and efficacious solution from the supreme tribunal."¹⁵¹

Cremisini proposed just such a solution to Cardinal Ostini, "The Holy See should stop the abuse of authority by legislating that all the Congregation's provinces, even those outside Europe, have the right to send three delegates to the assembly unless the province contains less than forty priests." He also proposed that the Holy See direct that the four assistants each represent different nationalities. If the French refused to agree to these "indispensable modifications," then the Holy See should divide the Congregation. The French could then go in their own direction. The rest of the Congregation would fall under "a head established in Rome."¹⁵²

On 16 February, the delegates met with Cardinal Ostini to report the results of their negotiations. The Cardinal Prefect made one last attempt to avoid a complete defeat for the Holy See by picking up on Pasquale Fiorillo's reservation that the delegates should ask the pope to authorize the representation of the American province at the next

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. Pasquale Fiorillo added a condition to his agreement, "that the Supreme Pontiff give the American Province the right to attend the next general assembly."

¹⁵⁰ Guarini, *Relazione*, 84, ACMP.

¹⁵¹ Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, *Consultazione*, 21, ACMP.

¹⁵² Ibid.

assembly. Ostini also felt that the measures proposed by the delegates did not sufficiently address the issue of equilibrium within the Congregation. On this basis, the cardinal proposed that the general council have five assistants general, one each for France, Spain, Italy, Poland, and the United States.¹⁵³ The three Italian visitors supported this idea. One went as far as to suggest that the Holy See appoint the assistants before the next general assembly so that their votes could help improve the equilibrium in the superior general's election.¹⁵⁴

In his *Notice*, Étienne said that the "debate" at this meeting with Ostini involved the proposal for national assistants. Étienne said that this represented nothing more than a new subterfuge to set the stage for an eventual removal of the general to Rome: "Once the majority of the assistants were foreigners it would become easy for the council, acting under pressure, to approve the transfer of the superior general's residence. Thus, in time and by a regular means, this end would be achieved."¹⁵⁵

In what Étienne described as a "stormy" encounter, Ostini pointed out that the practice of having national assistants worked well for the Jesuits. Étienne testily replied that, "We are not Jesuits nor do we want to be; we want to be what Saint Vincent formed us to be in his constitutions confirmed by the Bull of Clement X."¹⁵⁶ Ostini just as testily replied, "One pope has confirmed your constitutions, but another can change them."¹⁵⁷ Étienne commented, "We were careful not to agree to these proposals and declared that we would never consent to the least modification in our constitutions."¹⁵⁸ He noted, "We clung to the principle that the work of Saint Vincent should remain intact after two hundred years." Étienne replied to Ostini, "A pope could take this action, and he could also suppress the Congregation. I would prefer to see the Congregation suppressed rather than to see Saint Vincent's work so deformed."¹⁵⁹

In his *Notice*, Étienne commented in the same vein,

We were told that the Sovereign Pontiff had the power to make these changes in the Constitutions. We responded that he also had the power to suppress the Congregation. If he wanted to change

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Normally, the Constitutions provided that the assistants be elected after the election of the superior general. See *Constitutions*, 93.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ "Note de M. Stella (Salvatore) sur M. Étienne, épisode du voyage de M. Étienne à Rome en 1843, d'après ce que ma dit lui même le soir du 23 juillet 1873 à Gentilly. Écrit à Gentilly le 23 Juillet 1873 tout de suite après avoir entendu ce récit de la bouche même de M. Étienne," *Étienne Lettres*, C 40, H 3, 1 (39-73), pli. 1G, ACMP.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵⁸ Étienne, *Notice*, 47.

¹⁵⁹ Stella, *Episode*, 3, ACMP.

Saint Vincent's work, we felt that we could speak for all our confreres in demanding that he instead suppress the Little Company so that we would perish gloriously defending the deposit that had been confided to us. If we were to accept such a decision, we believed that we would later perish miserably because we had allowed the introduction within us of the source of our destruction and death.¹⁶⁰

Étienne and Aladel agreed, however, that in theory the next general assembly, if it so chose, could address the question of mandating the national composition of the assistants. Their view that if such a change was done by papal fiat it could only lead to the community's destruction is strange.

Étienne continually spoke about the importance of never making even the slightest changes in the constitutions. He acknowledged the right of a general assembly to make these changes, but seemingly not the Holy See. Étienne's Gallicanism shines brightly here. Under these circumstances, it appears as if the French had agreed that such a change could theoretically be discussed at the upcoming general assembly only because they were confident that the general assembly would never consent.

Since Étienne and Aladel would not agree to these two proposals, Ostini declared that he would submit the questions to a special congregation of cardinals for a decision, and the meeting ended.¹⁶¹ Étienne immediately reported to Rayneval, who in turn reported to Guizot. Regarding the Vatican proposal for national assistants, Rayneval commented, "This plan to require that assistants be chosen according to nationalities is entirely contrary to the liberty of suffrage guaranteed by the constitutions. Under this system the assistants are chosen from among all the members of the Congregation. In certain circumstances, it could also impede the government's relations with the administration of the Congregation by introducing heterogeneous elements who could easily become difficult and even hostile."¹⁶²

The chargé d'affaires told the Foreign Minister that the Holy See had implied that if the French did not accept one or the other of these points, it was "the pope's intention to divide the Congregation of Saint Lazare into two groups, one with headquarters in Paris to care for the missions and one in Rome with jurisdiction everywhere else."¹⁶³ Rayneval observed that the prospect of such a separation "did not seem to bother

¹⁶⁰ Étienne, *Notice*, 47-48.

¹⁶¹ This special congregation of cardinals included: Lambruschini, the Secretary of State, Ostini, Patrizi, the vicar general for the Vatican, Castracane of the Penitentiary, Polidori of the Congregation of the Council, and Fransonni from Propaganda Fide.

¹⁶² Rayneval to Guizot, 28 February 1843, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 984: 213-14, AMAE.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

the French Lazarists [Étienne and Aladel] who are present in Rome. On the contrary, they seem more disposed to welcome such a move." Rayneval also informed Guizot of the proposal to allow the American province's participation in the upcoming general assembly. He noted that the French representatives "were not greatly preoccupied" with this issue. They expected that Rome would so word the papal act so as to "authorize" rather than to "prescribe" the change in the constitutions. In any event, Rayneval told Guizot that he "would not remain as a passive spectator in the controversy's new developments."¹⁶⁴

Rayneval reported that he had sent a memorandum to Ostini and had met with Lambruschini about these points. He noted that Lambruschini "as usual was inclined to agree completely with my ideas." The chargé d'affaires also stated his belief that if the cardinal would have had his way, "he would have terminated this affair to our satisfaction a long time ago."¹⁶⁵ Rayneval believed that it was the pope's "passionate" dislike for the French Lazarists that had led him to "give the dissidents an authority and a force that they would not have otherwise possessed." Rayneval ended by saying that Lambruschini had told him "that it is probable that the results of the congregation of cardinals' deliberations would finally put an end to these debates."¹⁶⁶

Rayneval's memorandum to Cardinal Ostini of 21 February 1843 had ended any possibility of a successful Roman intervention in the Lazarists' internal affairs.¹⁶⁷ Rayneval had reminded the Holy See that the letters patent of Louis XIV authorizing the Congregation's establishment in France had contained the text of the community's constitutions word for word and that from that time on their legal status was linked indissolubly to this document. The 1804 restoration of the Lazarists had recognized, according to the chargé d'affaires, that Louis XIV's decree had not lost its force.¹⁶⁸ He therefore concluded that the "Constitutions as given by Saint Vincent" are "the condition for the Congregation's existence."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ The intervention of the French embassy was not the only diplomatic effort of the struggle. Durando's biographer notes that the Sardinian ambassador had attempted to win Durando over to the Roman side. See *Durando*, 110.

¹⁶⁸ Rayneval was mistaken. The 1804 Napoleonic restoration decree made no mention of the community's previous legal status. See *Actes du Gouvernement*, 76.

¹⁶⁹ Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, *Consultazione*, 14-15, ACMP.

Rayneval explained that a change in such an essential constitutional point as the general council's composition would require the Council of State to reexamine the Lazarists' legal status. Under the circumstances, it might even prove necessary to submit a proposal to the Chamber of Deputies to authorize such an "important change concerning the government's future relations with the administration of the Lazarists."¹⁷⁰ Rayneval told Ostini that he himself "could well imagine all the problems that would result from this course of action." His point was that the proposal to change the method of selecting assistants was unacceptable to the government of the king. "I hope that you will desist in this project which not only does not please the government but if put into action would compromise the Congregation of Saint Lazare. The government's position is that no changes in the constitutions should take place. I therefore do not hesitate to affirm in its name, that all modification of these rules is unacceptable."¹⁷¹

Regarding the attendance of the Americans at the general assembly Rayneval noted that while this was against the "letter of the constitutions it is according to their spirit." The chargé d'affaires assured Ostini that on this point Paris would have no objection, "if this is the pope's desire." However, this agreement had a proviso. Rayneval noted that Rome would avoid all possible problems if it worded the pontifical brief to "authorize" the Congregation to take such a move rather than being phrased to make it appear that this was a pontifical order.¹⁷²

Vito Guarini commented that Cardinal Fransoni had told him that the Lazarist controversy was a political one and Rome would have to settle it on that basis.¹⁷³ He also quoted Lambruschini as saying, "We are defeated."¹⁷⁴ Cremisini, however, was determined to go out fighting. On 25 February, the Roman visitor wrote again to Lambruschini and Ostini. In this letter Cremisini denied having ever claimed to be speaking for any other province but only on his own behalf. He characterized the position of the "two French commissaries" as not only an "illusion" but as "a tacit insult to the Holy See." The Roman visitor denied that there was any constitutional reason to prevent having the procurator general reside in Rome. He continued to predict dire results if the "supreme authority" did not intervene in the future

¹⁷⁰ Rayneval to Cardinal Ostini, copy of a memorandum dated 21 February 1843, *Correspondance Politique: Rome, 984*: 216-17, AMAE.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 217.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Guarini, *Relazione*, 89, ACMP.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

general assembly.¹⁷⁵ Cremisini quoted Joseph Rosati, whom he alleged to have said that “he knew of no French confrere capable of serving as superior general.” He then repeated his earlier proposal for splitting the Congregation unless the conditions he had suggested were met. To these earlier proposals he added another: that the procurator general, no matter what his nationality, reside in Rome and have a vote in the election of a superior general.¹⁷⁶

Even if the Holy See had supported any of Cremisini’s proposals, Lambruschini’s comment that “we are defeated” was true. With respect to the French embassy’s intervention at this critical juncture Étienne commented, “The French ambassador’s intervention produced the desired effect. The congregation of cardinals decided to abandon these last proposals and not to change our constitutions.”¹⁷⁷ In his *Notice*, Étienne was proud that the French emerged from the Roman negotiations “without ceding on any point whatever.”¹⁷⁸ According to him, one final Roman proposal still threatened a complete French victory, the establishment of an additional procurator general in Rome. In Étienne’s view, the French had no objection to the creation of such a post “since it could only be considered an honor to have the Congregation represented in Rome, as were other religious bodies.” He claimed that what the French objected to was the proposal that this official “could not be French.” He said that if the community accepted this stipulation, “then our procurator general would not be a true representative of the superior general. If the general does not have the liberty to name the man of his choice to this position, he could not be sure that the procurator would act only in his name and according to his instructions.” The French feared that someone like Vito Guarini might someday again fill the post and that such a person “would become the instrument of a new intrigue and would use his official position to try to speak in the Congregation’s name.”¹⁷⁹

Contrary to what Étienne claimed, however, the Holy See did not propose to prohibit the superior general from naming a Frenchman to

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁷⁷ Étienne, *Notice*, 48. It is interesting to note that in Salvatore Stella’s account of his conversation with Étienne about these events, he related that Étienne had told him that after his meeting with Ostini he had appealed to the French ambassador for assistance. Étienne told Stella that the ambassador had said “that he did not want to get involved in these kinds of ecclesiastical questions.” According to Étienne, it was only at his urging that the ambassador agreed to write to the Secretary of State. These oral details obviously do not agree with what Étienne himself wrote and said elsewhere. See Stella, *Episode*, 3, *ACMP*.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

this post. The *Consultazione* prepared for the special congregation of cardinals simply suggests that “a procurator general, or commissary general, be reestablished in Rome with whatever powers seem appropriate as decided by the general assembly.”¹⁸⁰ No mention of this proposed restriction appears in the diplomatic correspondence of the period. Given the French government’s nationalistic sensitivity on these issues, it is unlikely that if this were a serious possibility that there would be no mention of it in the detailed reports of Rayneval to Guizot.

Étienne claimed that it was “God himself who resolved this last difficulty by a manifestation that was proof for us that he efficaciously had helped and sustained us throughout this affair and was the Congregation’s salvation.”¹⁸¹ According to Étienne, “When the decree containing this proposition was presented for the Sovereign Pontiff’s signature, without making any comment he took his pen and with his own hand scratched out the condition that we had been combating.”¹⁸² No other independent confirmation of these details provided by Étienne exists. However, Cardinal Lambruschini said he had a difficult time in getting the pontiff to agree to meet with Étienne and Aladel before their departure, because of his displeasure at their victory.

On 2 March 1843, the special congregation of cardinals met and issued its recommendations. On 5 March, Cardinal Ostini wrote to Poussou with the decisions of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.¹⁸³ The French were victorious on every point. Étienne commented, “Thus the Company emerged from this terrible struggle, not only victorious, but also without receiving the least wound.” He recalled that Ostini had spoken to the French delegates expressing his “edification at the zeal with which we defended the work of Saint Vincent. He also praised the profound wisdom underlying our constitutions, and he exhorted us always to preserve the affection that we had manifested for them.” An audience with Gregory XVI followed the meeting with Ostini. According to Étienne, the pope “greeted us graciously and talked to us familiarly for a half-hour. He permitted us to kiss his feet and gave us his blessing.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, *Consultazione*, 19, ACMP.

¹⁸¹ Étienne, *Notice*, 49.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Lessons Learned:

"The spirit of Saint Vincent hovered over the waters."¹⁸⁵

Étienne reflected back on the events of 1842-1843 in order to draw specific lessons "for the benefit of future generations."¹⁸⁶ First, he said, the community learned that divine providence had saved it by "turning to its favor the attack made against it." Rome [and the authors of the recourse] had incorrectly assumed that the French government would agree to its proposals for appointing a foreign superior general. This assumption supposedly rested on the fact that since the Foreign Minister, François Guizot, was a Protestant "he would be indifferent to a question concerning a religious community." According to Étienne, the Holy See's strategy of involving the French government "in a matter that should only have been between itself and the Congregation" backfired. Instead, the government supported the cause of the French Lazarists, assuring their victory.¹⁸⁷ Étienne summarized this first lesson in an apt quotation from scripture, "The trap seizes those who rejoice in pitfalls."¹⁸⁸

As previously pointed out, however, this interpretation concerning Rome's alleged assumption about Guizot is insupportable. Also, the statement that the crisis should have been treated as a matter solely between the Holy See and the Congregation's general administration is insupportable. Étienne knew that a dispute such as this could not have but required the involvement of the French government. This was an involvement the French Lazarists did not hesitate to request or accept, on this or any other occasion.

According to Étienne, the second lesson was "the respect due to our constitutions."¹⁸⁹ This respect required "the necessity of never departing from them for any reason." Étienne judged that the Italian intriguers were lacking in this respect, as evidenced by their request for the Holy See's intervention. These agents, according to Étienne, "did not hesitate to demand the mutilation of Saint Vincent's constitutions although this would have inevitably compromised the community's future." They had hoped that by obtaining a superior general who was not French, they would be able "to arrive at their

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 40-50.

¹⁸⁸ Sirach 27: 29.

¹⁸⁹ Étienne, *Notice*, 50.

goal of transferring his seat to Rome."¹⁹⁰ Étienne again used scripture to deliver his harsh judgment of these men: "Sons have I raised and reared, but they have disowned me!"¹⁹¹

Étienne noted that during the succession crisis, in contrast to their opponents, "the Company's administration remained unshakable on the rock established by its founder." He repeated his contention that the members of the general administration would have gladly chosen to have the Congregation perish rather than agree to the smallest departure from the constitutions. He used another scriptural quote to characterize their attitude, "Let us all die without reproach."¹⁹² According to Étienne, "Saint Vincent observed this stance with pleasure," and "from the heights of heaven arranged for the defeat and the humiliation of those unworthy children, who had declared themselves to be the enemies of his work."¹⁹³

Étienne repeated his earlier contention that these years of crisis had resulted when the 1835 general assembly departed from the constitutions and accepted the resignation of Dominique Salhorgne and irregularly elected the unfortunate Jean-Baptiste Nozo. Again, he came up with a scripture quote to bring home his always sharpened point: "For whoever keeps the whole law but falls short in one particular, has become guilty in respect to all of it."¹⁹⁴

Étienne's third lesson concerned the truth of Saint Vincent's teaching that "a calumny can never hurt the one against whom it is directed."¹⁹⁵ The saint had noted that "if anyone accepts an attack with submission and patience, it will turn out to be to his advantage."¹⁹⁶ Étienne recalled his own experience in this regard: "When we arrived in Rome we encountered a storm of accusations and calumnies against the French Missionaries and me personally!"¹⁹⁷ In the face of this, he and Jean-Marie Aladel had clung to the saint's teaching even when everything seemed lost. Given the negotiations' success, he said he could only conclude that God had heard the prayers "of all the members of the Double Family." In answer to these prayers, the Lord had

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

¹⁹¹ Isaiah 1: 2.

¹⁹² 1 Maccabees 2: 37.

¹⁹³ Étienne, *Notice*, 51.

¹⁹⁴ James 2: 10.

¹⁹⁵ Étienne, *Notice*, 51.

¹⁹⁶ See for example, Saint Vincent's conference of 6 June 1659 entitled, "Du bon usage des calumnies," Coste, *CED*, 12: 276-86.

¹⁹⁷ Étienne, *Notice*, 52.

"performed a miracle for Saint Vincent's children."¹⁹⁸

According to Étienne's creationist myth, the spirit of Saint Vincent "hovered over the chaos of the troubled waters engulfing our Company."¹⁹⁹ During "the long and sorrowful trial that had been the source of such great agony and painful worry,"²⁰⁰ the saint "secretly was preparing the elements of its complete restoration."²⁰¹ He did this by "disposing all things so that it would emerge in the world...with the same brightness with which it had shone when it first came forth from his hands." Through the founder's intercession "this double storm raised against Saint Vincent's ship in both Rome and Paris was calmed "by a word from the Lord." The ship of the Company was able finally "to dock safely at its destination." Now, the community awaited "the unfolding of its magnificent destinies."²⁰²

The members of the Congregation saw "the dawn of a beautiful day that made us forget all our troubles."²⁰³ They knew that what they had experienced represented the "new creation...the second infancy" of the community. Their faith made them understand that God had permitted the community "to fall into chaos." He had done this in order to get rid of "all its heterogeneous elements." Had these "elements" not been purged they would have been "obstacles to the reestablishment of the community's primitive spirit and purity."²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 54.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid. This is an obvious reference to the account in the synoptic gospels of Jesus calming the storm at sea. See Matthew 9: 23-27, Mark 4: 35-40, Luke 8: 22-25.

²⁰³ Ibid., 53.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 53. One of the "heterogeneous elements" referred to here by Étienne was "the fourteen missionaries who abandoned their vocation during this great crisis." Their loss "was not regretted," according to Étienne, "since they had entered into the family but had never become part of it. They never had its spirit nor loved its rule. They always would have been an obstacle to the reestablishment of regularity." From the dismissal records during this period it is difficult to pinpoint exactly to whom Étienne is referring. The records indicate the dismissal of twenty-three Lazarists at the beginning of 1841. These names reflected those dismissed during the entire period of Nozo's generalate. The dismissals for the years 1842-1845 do not record enough departures to equal the figure quoted by Étienne. Those to whom he was referring must have been spread out over the course of all of the troubles which dated from the election of Nozo in 1835. See *Congrégation de la Mission. Démissions des Voeux. (1838-juin 1923)* 3 bis-5, ACGR.

Chapter 8

The Étienne Era

“The dawn of a new era soon was revealed everywhere.”¹

Étienne and Aladel arrived back in Paris on 18 March. On the following day, Antoine Poussou sent out letters convoking the general assembly to meet at the mother house on 1 August. The vicar general also issued a circular on 24 March, announcing the Roman settlement and the papal permission for the convocation of the general assembly.

We have reason to thank the Lord, the source of all grace, for the long and violent storm that has upset the family of Saint Vincent has now passed...I am confident...that this happy news will be enough to dissipate all the inquietudes and calm all the fears that have existed until this moment...Now it is important that we reestablish complete calm in the two families of Saint Vincent. What is essential at this point is that, answering our fervent prayers, God will guide the votes of the confreres toward the one who is most worthy to become the Father of Saint Vincent’s numerous infants, and who is capable of leading them in the way of salvation.²

On 4 August 1843, at the nineteenth general assembly’s fourth session, the delegates elected Jean-Baptiste Étienne as the Congregation’s fourteenth superior general.³ His victory came on the first ballot as he received twenty-one out of a possible thirty votes. The new forty-two year old general would hold office until his death on 12 March 1874.⁴ The minutes of the electoral session end with a quotation that surely expressed the heartfelt sentiment of many of the assembly’s members: *Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum!* (Behold how good it is and how pleasant where brethren dwell as one!)⁵ Immediately following the general assembly, Étienne was careful to

¹ Étienne, *Notice*, 54. At the general assembly there were thirty-one delegates. Eighteen were French, ten were Italians, and three were Americans. Of the Americans John Timon, the visitor, was a native, Bonaventure Armengol was a Spaniard, and Jean Bouiller was French. See *Circulaires*, 3: 5.

² Poussou, *Circulaires*, 2: 555.

³ *Acta Conventus Generalis XIX*, 825, ACCGR.

⁴ With regard to his election, Étienne commented that the “only reason” that he could account for the assembly’s vote “was that my devotion and the affection that I have always had for the Congregation were well known.” *Notice*, 54.

⁵ *Ibid.* Psalm 133: 1.

notify the government of his election.⁶ The Minister of Cults recommended ratifying Étienne's election.⁷ Louis-Philippe then issued a royal ordinance on 26 September 1843 in which "the election of M. Étienne as superior general of the Congregation of Saint-Lazare is accepted."⁸

Étienne identified the 1843 general assembly as yet another "point of departure" into "the beautiful and important mission that God had reserved for us in the mysterious designs of his mercy."⁹ Étienne recalled that at the time of his election "without knowing it, we were approaching an era when grave political events would upset all Europe and shake the social fabric to its foundations."¹⁰ He noted how just before the revolution of 1830, a manifestation of divine protection toward the Double Family had taken place in the revelation of the "Miraculous Medal."¹¹ Étienne now recalled another timely indication of divine favor prior to the revolutionary era that began so unexpectedly throughout Europe in 1848.

This new devotional manifestation came in apparitions of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin. The date of the first vision was 18 July

⁶ On 14 August, François Guizot wrote to Étienne:

I have received the letter...announcing your election to the dignity of superior general of the Congregation of Saint Lazare. I learned with great satisfaction of the well-merited testimony of esteem and confidence that you have received from your confreres. They understood perfectly that the direction of the Congregation's affairs at the highest levels could not have been placed in better hands than in those of someone whose active zeal clearly has contributed powerfully to the development of the salutary works whose mission it is to accomplish. Please accept my felicitations and do not doubt my fervent desire, as much as it depends on me, to take every occasion to give to the two families of Saint Vincent de Paul the marks of interest that the king's ministers have always been happy to accord them.

Quoted in *Actes du Gouvernement*, 130.

⁷ In the report to the king recommending approval of Étienne, the Minister of Cults failed to give a precise accounting, as was customary, of the jurisprudence supporting the proposed act. Martin's sloppy and inaccurate report makes mention of the article of the Napoleonic restoration decree calling for the emperor to name the superior, and he notes that in 1805 in the case of François Brunet his nomination had been "agreed to." He described Pierre de Wailly's nomination correctly, but he incorrectly stated that Jean-Baptiste Nozo succeeded him as superior general. With Nozo's resignation, Martin reported that a general assembly of the Congregation had elected Étienne as his successor. Martin pointed out that Étienne had informed him of his election and at his further request had provided a copy of the minutes of the assembly confirming his election and requesting royal confirmation. Martin then noted, "In conformance with the constitutions of the Congregation, Monsieur Étienne is French, and he is well and favorably known to the government. Already as procurator general of the Lazarists, he has on many occasions given remarkable proof of his high intelligence, his clear zeal, his vast capacity, and his incontestable devotion to religion, to France, and to the king." AN.F1.350.

⁸ *Actes du Gouvernement*, 130.

⁹ Étienne, *Notice*, 54.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ In his *Notice* (57), Étienne mistakenly stated that "it had been during the first days of the revolution of 1830 that a Daughter of Charity was favored with an apparition of the heart of Saint Vincent and of the Holy Virgin which was the origin of the Miraculous Medal." As previously noted, these preliminary visions took place the preceding April in connection with the translation of Saint Vincent's relics.

1846. The recipient was a Daughter of Charity.¹² In this apparition, later repeated frequently and supplemented by other visions, Jesus appeared to the sister holding in his outstretched hands a red scapular.¹³ One patch of the scapular depicted the instruments of his passion surrounded by the words, "Holy Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, save us!" The other patch depicted the sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary, the former surrounded by a crown of thorns, the latter pierced by a sword. The words, "Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, protect us!" surrounded these images.

The following September, on the feast of the Triumph of the Cross, the apparition involving the scapular occurred again. This time, Jesus added the message that "The priests of the Mission alone must confer this scapular."¹⁴ The message continued, "All who wear one blessed by them shall every Friday receive the remission of their sins and a great increase of faith, hope, and charity."¹⁵ The sister in question immediately related the details of these apparitions to Étienne as superior general. He had no doubts as to their authenticity.

In the following year, Étienne went to Rome for his first audience with the newly-elected Pius IX. He told the pontiff about the new devotion.¹⁶ Soon after returning home, he received a papal rescript that granted an indulgence for those wearing the scapular. In his circular letter of 1 January 1848, Étienne commented, "I was struck by the ease with which this new devotion received the sovereign pontiff's approval. I see in this a clear proof of divine intervention."¹⁷ Étienne noted that "this new sign of favor" naturally had led him to consider what should be the object of his New Year's prayers for the community. He concluded that Saint Vincent would have seen this new sign as "a lesson from our Lord designed to make us more capable of responding to his plans for us." This heavenly favor "appeared as a shining light in the midst of the worldly illusions that surround us. We can now see the path that we must follow."¹⁸

In Étienne's view, Saint Vincent had lived "in an age that greatly

¹²The sister's name was Apolline Andriveau. The apparitions and visions experienced by her continued over several years. She reported them in great detail to Étienne. See *Sœur Apolline Andriveau, Fille de la Charité et le Scapulaire de la Passion* (Paris: Librairie Ch. Poussielgue, 1886).

¹³The scapular was called "red" because in the apparitions the patches and connecting ribbons were red. Red is also the liturgical color associated with the Lord's passion.

¹⁴Soeur Apolline to Étienne, September 1846, quoted in *Scapulaire*, 75.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶Rosset has a somewhat more detailed account of the events surrounding Étienne's audience with the pope and the subsequent approval of the devotion. See *Vie Étienne*, 259-60.

¹⁷Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 117.

¹⁸*Ibid.*



MI. DE BAPTISTOS DE ÉTIENNE

4th SUPERIEUR GENERAL DE LA CONGREGATION DE LA MISSION ET DE LA COMPAGNIE
DES FILLES DE LA CHARITE.

Élu le 4 Août 1643. fête de St. Dominique

Jean-Baptiste Étienne in the early years of his generalate

resembles our own."¹⁹ The saint also "witnessed the faith seemingly dying out and the Church afflicted by great misfortunes."²⁰ Saint Vincent, according to Étienne, never attributed the cause of these troubles "to political struggles nor to the efforts of the enemies of religion."²¹ Instead, he believed that the cause of these misfortunes was "God's anger."²² The Lord, in his "divine justice," was punishing the "iniquities that filled the earth."²³ This belief led to his conclusion that the only means that could address these problems were those that would attract God's mercy, namely "prayer and penitence." Here, the purely devotional and decidedly unpolitical message of the red scapular, as related by Sœur Andriveau, came into play. The message was a straightforward one, "It is the passion of Jesus Christ that will convert sinners and reanimate the faith of the just."²⁴

Étienne rhetorically asked,

Has not our divine savior, by calling us to remember the example of his laborious life and his sorrowful passion, hoped that the result would be that we would clothe ourselves more efficaciously with his spirit? So, in this way we would become more open to the execution of his plans for us? He wants to prepare us, as he prepared his apostles, to share generously the pains, difficulties, and tribulations that contemporary misfortunes reserve for us. Undoubtedly, his aim is to establish in us the conviction that the arms that we must use in the Lord's battles are patience, humility, meekness, charity, conformity to his holy will, and abandonment to his merciful providence. With these weapons, we are assured of always triumphing over the powers of hell.²⁵

According to Étienne's analysis, the saint was accustomed to

elevating his spirit above the political discussions that so agitated his world. He viewed the events that passed before his eyes from the point of view of faith. He acknowledged that he who set the seas' limits also sent storm waves. Our founder also acknowledged that God acts in his own way, and in his own time, to defeat

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid. Étienne's attitude here strongly contrasts with that of the majority of "intransigent" French Catholics led by figures like Louis Veuillot who politicized the struggles of this era and worked to bring the French Catholic Church into the forefront of opposition to French governmental policies. See, for example, Dansette, *Histoire Religieuse*, 2: 285-495.

²² Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 117.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Sœur Andriveau to Étienne, 16 August 1847, quoted in *Scapulaire*, 95. For a further discussion of Étienne's view of this devotion's importance for the contemporary experience of the Double Family, see his circular of 21 November 1853. Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 207-17.

²⁵ Ibid., 3: 118.

the powers of hell so opposed to his glory. He knew that God would, by a secret of his own most admirable wisdom, somehow defeat even the most violent attacks against the faith. This is why the saint always avoided becoming involved in the questions that so agitated the society in which he lived. This is also why, when all institutions of the day fell into ruins around him he could build the edifice of his two families on solid rock. This was an edifice that was strong enough to survive all the upheavals of the social order throughout the succeeding centuries.²⁶

Étienne admitted being struck by Saint Vincent's statement "attributing the calamities that afflicted people to their sins." He noted that the saint also had said, "The destruction of [religious] communities resulted from the abuses that crept into them." These "abuses," in turn, stemmed from "the alteration of the spirit that was supposed to animate them."²⁷

Étienne described religious communities as "institutions raised by God to serve the Church, each according to its own spirit."²⁸ He saw this spirit as "the soul that gives life to the body and efficaciously directs all its movements." Étienne believed that "if a community conserves its spirit in all its integrity, its existence is assured." A community such as this is "able to resist all the violent efforts made to destroy it because its preservation serves God's glory." However, if the opposite were true, "if relaxation in the rule's observance caused an alteration in its spirit" then a community's existence ceased having justification. Étienne asked, "What interest would there be for God's glory for him to provide for its conservation?" A community weakened from within this way would soon find itself defeated by outside attacks and would collapse leaving behind only ruins. This rubble would testify not to the "malice of men" but to "the just punishment from God of which mortal men were only the instruments." Étienne commented, "I hope that this reflection from our Holy Founder will make the same impression on you that it has made on me and that it will inspire you to make the generous resolution to have anything that would alter our spirit disappear from the company's midst."²⁹

In his *Notice*, Étienne recalled that it was little more than a month after his circular, in February 1848, that revolution broke out again in Paris. The Orleanist monarchy of the seventy-five year old Louis-

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 3: 119.

²⁹ Ibid.

Philippe fell in a few days time to be replaced by the Second Republic. This upheaval spread "its devastating influence to all the European peoples with the speed of an electric current. Everywhere, it weakened or overthrew thrones and spread the most subversive doctrines that threatened to destroy society." In its wake, "anarchy was complete and all seemed lost for religion and the social order." Even the Papal States fell to revolutionaries who declared a republic in Rome. Pius IX hastily fled to the neighboring Bourbon kingdom of Naples.³⁰

Étienne pointed out, however, that this "frightening revolution that shook the most courageous spirits and seemed only to suggest coming ruin" became yet another providential "point of departure" for Saint Vincent's families. The community was everywhere unharmed and went about with its regular ministries as if nothing were happening around it. This protection came about, according to Étienne, because the community "then found itself renewed in its primitive spirit and prepared to respond to God's designs." Étienne further noted that because of its fidelity, the Congregation from this time forward experienced "a prosperity that it had never before known," even in Saint Vincent's time.³¹

As he approached the end of his generalate in 1870, Étienne used a gospel image to sum up his experience of the previous fifty years, "The little grain of mustard seed that is the Company grew out of the ruins left by the most frightening of revolutions. It sprouted anew in the fertile ground of the Church. The waters of tribulation watered it, and winds and storms thrashed it from within and without. Yet, it put down deep roots. In just a few years, it has grown into a great tree favored by heavenly dew and the Sun of Justice's salutary influence. This tree's branches laden with salvation's fruits extend to the ends of the earth."³²

Étienne pointed out that in the first twenty-seven years of his generalate fourteen new provinces had been founded. This increase more than doubled the number of provinces that had existed before 1843. Four of these new provinces were in France. Algeria, Ireland, Prussia, Austria, Austrian Po-

³⁰ See Roger Aubert, *Le Pontificat de Pie IX (1846-1878)* (Paris: Bloud and Gay, 1963), 34-35.

³¹ Ibid. The first mention that Étienne makes of his view that the prosperity of the nineteenth-century community under his leadership had surpassed even that of the primitive community came in his circular letter of 4 August 1856 issued on the thirteenth anniversary of his election as superior general. Here Étienne commented, "The events which have taken place before our eyes in the last thirteen years offer us a portrait of new enterprises, success, development, and prosperity that has never before been seen in the more than two centuries of the Double Family's existence." Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 264.

³² Ibid. This is of course an allusion to the synoptic parable of the mustard seed: Matthew 13: 31-32, Mark 4: 30-32, Luke 3: 18-21.

land, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and Ethiopia were the sites of the others.³³ During this period, 120 new houses were founded, fifty in France and seventy elsewhere.³⁴ Commensurately, the Congregation's personnel also more than doubled in number during this period.³⁵ In 1870 the community numbered 1,080 priests, 220 students and seminarians, and 500 lay brothers.³⁶

Étienne observed that during the first half-century of its "second existence," the community had attained "much greater importance" than in the 150 years of its existence under the Ancien Régime. In its first era, the community's "apostolic action" had been limited almost completely within Europe. Now it exercised its apostolates "in the two Americas, in Asia, in Africa, and in additional European countries." Also, according to Étienne, "wherever the community exists it is operating under the most favorable conditions." This situation confirmed that it was "Providence's plan to confide a vast expanse of the world to its zeal and to its works."³⁷ Although "the work of restoration had been so painful and sorrowful" the end results were more than "consoling and prosperous." Étienne felt it was impossible for the community not to echo the sentiment expressed in psalm 118, *A Domino factum est istud, et est mirabile in oculis nostris* (By the Lord has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes).³⁸

The Congregation's worldwide expansion and growth in the first

³³The provinces that existed before 1843 were Ile-de-France, Aquitaine, Lyon, and Picardy in France; Rome, Naples, and Lombardy in Italy; the United States; Spain; Portugal; Constantinople; Syria; and Poland. Here, Étienne fails to mention the status of China. In 1844 he reorganized the Lazarist missions in China. Each vicariate-apostolic under Lazarist jurisdiction was considered to be "une petite province Lazariste." The vicar-apostolic was to be considered as visitor. By the early 1850s, this meant that there were five mini-provinces in China; Tche-Ly, Mongolia, Ho-Nan, Tche-Kiang, and Kiang-Si. The total personnel of these missions, both European and native Chinese, was forty-one. This arrangement lasted until the erection of a single province for all China in 1889. See *Chine*, 137, 154. See also, Étienne, *Notice*, 59. It is interesting to note that this organization of the missions in China had no constitutional basis. Étienne's stated aversion to departures from the letter of the Constitutions did not seem to apply to adaptations which met his approval.

³⁴For a list of the 136 houses founded during Étienne's generalate see *Circulaires*, 3: 9-11.

³⁵For an analysis of the vocations to the French provinces in this era see André Sylvestre, C.M., "Priest of the Mission for what purpose? A study of the development of the French provinces from 1810 to 1960," *Vincetiana* 39 (1995): 363-73.

³⁶Étienne, *Notice*, 64.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

fifty years of its "second existence" were remarkable phenomena.³⁹ Yet this expansion was not without its difficulties. Étienne's sweeping mythic assertion that as a sign of divine favor "the Congregation everywhere existed in favorable conditions" was never of course true, as can be seen in the example of Spain.

Étienne versus the Spanish: "It is a question of life or death."⁴⁰

Liberal, anticlerical governments twice suppressed the Spanish province, first in 1835 and then again in 1868.⁴¹ Each time, many priests, brothers, and students fled to France and elsewhere.⁴² While the Spanish provinces experienced problems with liberal, anticlerical governments and violent revolutions, they also faced, during the 1850s and 1860s, an equally implacable enemy in Étienne. As superior general, he moved to crush every sign of incipient Spanish nationalism.

In his *Notice*, Étienne recalled the 1864 dedication of the Berceau

³⁹The expansion experienced by the Congregation of the Mission during this period, while exceptional, was eclipsed by the phenomenal growth and expansion of the Daughters of Charity. Étienne's reflections on this development are worth quoting at length.

The extraordinary, and evidently providential development of your Company is of late... It was only a few years ago that, notwithstanding its two centuries of existence, the community remained confined within the narrow limits of France. It was barely able to support the houses it had there. Vocations were rare, uncertain, and wavering. The situation was such that the community's council decided that henceforward no new establishment should be accepted. Behold, all of a sudden, a new era opened before you. A prodigious power of life and fecundity is discovered. Vocations pour into it from all ranks of society. Its works experience a new growth. Its houses multiply on all sides. Soon the boundaries of France disappear, and the Daughters of Charity spread over all the countries of Europe. This is not all. The waves and perils of the sea are no longer obstacles capable of resisting the mysterious impulse that carries them to the earth's remotest regions. The heretic and the infidel, barbarians and civilized nations, all hail their approach with delight. They receive them with joy and lavish on them their esteem, confidence, and veneration. This is a new spectacle... The history of the Church affords no similar one, from its origin down to this day. This announces a mysterious design of Providence: that of using your Company thus spread over the whole world, as an immense net of charity, to capture a multitude of souls and lead them into the Savior's fold. It announces that by the works of your holy vocation, Providence will carry the light of truth amidst the darkness of heresy, touch the hearts of infidels, and astonish, confound and convert those who are far away from the road of salvation. It announces that a great mission is entrusted to you... A very manifest proof of this admirable design of Providence over you... is the wonderful success of the works of your holy vocation... See the immense increase of your houses... and the importance they have acquired for the relief and salvation of the poor and of the sick. See in the towns and in the country what a large number of schools are now entrusted to you, also how many asylums, how many work-rooms. Count, if you can, the multitude of young children who assemble to imbibe the knowledge of religion, and to form their hearts in piety and virtue!... This is precious work, which procures glory to God and consolation to the Church. Heaven shows it is well pleased, by the admirable blessings it favors it with!

Étienne, "Circulaire de 27 septembre 1855," DRMA. See also "Circulaire de 26 janvier 1870," DRMA.

⁴⁰"A las Hijas de la Caridad Españolas," anonymous anti-French pamphlet of 1866, 20, ACMP.

⁴¹See for example, *Annales*, 40 (1874): 63, 65, 562, 59 (1894): 73, 150.

⁴²See Pedro Sainz, C.M. *Historia de las casas antiguas de la Congregación de la Misión de la provincia de España* (Paris: 1870), unpublished manuscript, ACGR. See also, Ministère de l'Intérieur, Cabinet du S. Secrétaire d'État to Étienne, memo of 6 October 1835, *Administration Générale: Espagne I: 1704-1852*, ACGR. This memo gave permission for the Spanish exiles to reside in France. The government instructed Étienne "to recommend to these religious to abstain from all political intrigue, and to remain strangers to the parties which divide their country. On this condition they will find in France all the security they seek." For an overview of this era in Spanish church history see William J. Callahan, *Church, Politics and Society in Spain, 1750-1874* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

shrine as an event “containing a mystery that Providence would reveal fully only later.”⁴³ He related that “at the very same moment” as the dedication, a nearby railway line connecting Paris and Madrid was finished. When the 1868 revolution caused the dispersal of the Spanish Vincentians, they discovered “that God had already prepared a refuge for them.”⁴⁴ The novices and students fled Madrid via railway to the Berceau.⁴⁵ Their presence there, according to Étienne, enabled this “new generation of the Spanish province to imbibe the teachings and the spirit of their holy Founder.”⁴⁶ This formation “prepared them to take up the major role reserved for them in the Company’s foreign missions.” In this way, the Berceau “became a connection that closely united the Spanish missionaries to the French missionaries in the common...mission manifestly reserved to our company by Providence.”⁴⁷ The Spanish and French missionaries were in need of being more “closely united.”⁴⁸ Étienne dearly hoped that the “new generation” of the Spanish province would prove easier to handle than their troublesome predecessors.

The period between the Congregation’s Spanish restoration in 1851 and its dissolution again in 1868 was a time of almost uninterrupted nationalistic warfare between most Spanish confreres, many Spanish Daughters of Charity, and Étienne.⁴⁹ The Spanish government, the queen, the Holy See, the French government, the Spanish bishops, members of the Spanish nobility, members of the Cortes, colonial authorities in Cuba and the Philippines, and the Spanish newspapers

⁴³ Étienne, *Notice*, 56.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Sainz, *España*, 240-55, ACGR.

⁴⁶ Étienne, *Notice*, 56.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ The documentation concerning these struggles is voluminous. Some major sources include, *Province d’Espagne: Administration Générale II: 1853-1868, Affaires d’Espagne, Armengol, Confrères et Soeurs, 1855-1856, Spagna e Portogallo, 1862-1933, Lettere, Corrispondenza Proc. Gen., P. Étienne, Jean-Baptiste, Super. Gener. 30 marzo 1836-3 febbraio 1874, ACGR. Arch. Nunz. Madrid, 336, Nunziatura di Mgr. Brunelli et interinato di Mgr. Franchi. Esecuzione del Concordato, Ordini Religiosi, Titolo XXII, Rubricellae 3, Arch. Nunz., Madrid, 443, Nunziatura di Mons. Lorenzo Barili, Cartella 102B, Sezione XLII, Titolo 8, Madrid, 1857-1868, Arch. Nunz. Madrid, 442, Nunziatura di Mons. Lorenzo Barili, Cartella 101, Sezione XLII-C, Regolari, Tit. 8, Congregazione della Missione, Madrid, 1857-58, Arch. Nunz. Madrid, 443, Nunziatura di Mons. Lorenzo Barili, Cartella 102B, Sezione XLII, Titolo 8, Cont’d, ASV. The archives of the Madrid province also contains the following valuable resource compiled by Aurelio Ircio, C.M., *Quince Visitadores y Vicevisitadores de los Países en España, Directores de Las Hijas de la Caridad Españolas: 1825-1963. Fielmente Retrattados en su Correspondencia.**

all became involved in these very public frays.⁵⁰ Previous pitched battles between the French and the Italians paled by comparison to these struggles.⁵¹ Within the Spanish provinces, a fierce division also existed between the priests and sisters who were pro-French and those who were anti-French.⁵²

The first phase of warfare in 1855-1856, for example, resulted in a French victory and the deposition and expulsion of the visitor Buenaventura Armengol.⁵³ With initial royal support, Armengol had appealed to the Holy See requesting the Spanish provinces' separation from French authority.⁵⁴ Étienne counterattacked, traveling to Rome and Spain to present his case.⁵⁵ The superior general forwarded one of his famous memorandums to the Spanish government detailing the "desolation and anarchy" caused by Armengol's attempted schism.⁵⁶ He also extolled the benefits "of

⁵⁰The Spanish government had insisted that the *Real Patronato* forbade the dependence of Spanish religious on foreign superiors. It interpreted the clause in the 1851 concordat restoring the Congregation in this sense. The visitor of the Spanish province was to be the *visitador general* both for the sisters and Lazarists in Spain. No dependence on foreign superiors, especially those in France, was to be allowed. Rosset gives an almost verbatim account of the meeting in Madrid between Étienne (accompanied by the French ambassador) and the Minister of Grace and Justice. The minister told Étienne that "in Spain the religious orders have never been placed under the direct authority of foreign superiors. By virtue of an apostolic concession, at the head of each order there has always been an independent Spanish vicar-general. Why cannot your Congregation comply with this regime as the others have?" Étienne replied, "I will oppose this with all of my strength in the interest of the Spanish missionaries themselves to whom this pretended independence would be fatal. Every province separated from the center of the Congregation is condemned to perish like a branch separated from the trunk of a tree. The history of religious orders in Spain is proof of this. Where are they today? What has become of them? They have disappeared because they were separated from the head which was the source of their life." (Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 394-95.)

⁵¹During the Italian controversies, Étienne repeatedly asserted that the troubles stemmed from only a few confreres. However, he never claimed that the Spanish troubles stemmed from a few disgruntled individuals.

⁵²See for example, Ramón Sanz's report to Étienne in 1862 in which he goes through the list of confreres and students in the province indicating which side of the struggle they were supporting.

⁵³Again in this struggle, Étienne appealed to the French government for its diplomatic support. On 10 December 1855, the French Foreign Minister, Count Alexandre Walewski, wrote to the French ambassador in Spain informing him about the attempted Spanish schism. The details could only have come directly from Étienne. The Foreign Minister instructed the ambassador to use his influence on the Spanish government to support the superior general's authority and head off a possible split. Walewski commented that the imperial government was taking this action in support of a Congregation "it had long appreciated for its excellent spirit, and whose recent services in the Crimean War have furnished another reason for the government to show its appreciation." During the Crimean War, Étienne furnished a number of Daughters of Charity to serve as battlefield nurses and a number of priests to serve as chaplains for the French army. The communities refused all compensation and military honors for their services. See *Correspondance Politique: Espagne*, 847: 337, AMAE. For an account of the Crimean War experiences see Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 357-71.

⁵⁴See, for example, Giovanni Guarini to Étienne, 20 October 1855, APGR.

⁵⁵Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 387.

⁵⁶Rosset describes Armengol's actions in this way: "The visitor, betraying the confidence of the superior general, undertook to remove the Double Family of Saint Vincent from the authority of their legitimate chief. He tried to obtain for them an independence that would only profit his personal ambition." (*Vie Étienne*, 388.)

the paternal authority of Saint Vincent de Paul's successor."⁵⁷

The Spanish government has nothing to fear from the superior general exercising his authority in Spain. The only concern of Saint Vincent's Double Family is to fulfill its charitable mission. Their vocation is to relieve, and bring moral teaching to, the inferior classes of society. They operate throughout Europe and overseas, concerned exclusively with the good work of their vocations. It is because of this fact that they receive the esteem and sympathy not only of governments but local populations. In the exercise of his worldwide authority, the superior general has no other purpose than to express...the charity of Saint Vincent de Paul...and to provide the provinces with the direction that alone can guarantee their success...He is free to do this everywhere. He has visited the various provinces without ever having a problem with any of their national governments. If he is French, it is because Saint Vincent de Paul was French. If the seat of his authority is in Paris, it is because the saint established it there...If in every country the community is dependent upon the same superior general, this is because this arrangement gives the community unity of purpose and action...This continues the work that Saint Vincent began, and it has operated in this way for the last two hundred years. The general has exercised his solicitude in Belgium, Prussia, Austria, Tuscany, the Pontifical States, the United States, Brazil, Chile, Greece, and Turkey without ever encountering the least problem with these governments.⁵⁸

Étienne claimed that "as organized by Saint Vincent de Paul" the community "perfectly respected the nationalities that composed it." Each country formed its own province and had its own superior and central administration "that followed the laws in effect in that nation." Étienne said that the superior general's relations with a province concerned only the community's "interior regime" and in no way "conflicted with either a given nationality or a particular country's legislation." His closing point was that it was in the Spanish government's interest "to allow the superior general his liberty of action. This was the only means that would extend and multiply the benefits of the institute that he directs."⁵⁹

After the Holy See and the Spanish government supported his authority, Étienne began a purge of the Spanish province. He summarily expelled Armengol from the community, along with several

⁵⁷ "Note sur la Congrégation des Lazaristes et la Congrégation des filles de la Charité," *Administration Générale: Espagne II: 1852-1868*, ACGR.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

other leading opponents. He also expelled several unruly students and lay brothers.⁶⁰ Étienne's first round victory and subsequent actions did little to calm the underlying Spanish-French antagonisms that continued to eat away at the Spanish provinces.⁶¹

Serious trouble broke out again in the early 1860s.⁶² These new problems arose from Étienne's determination to bring uniformity to the Spanish provinces. This effort was part of a larger anti-nationalistic, Gallican vision for the community that he pronounced in his opening remarks at the general assembly of 1861:

Unity is the principle of the company's life. The fidelity of all its members to their head is its expression. Complete unity cannot exist except by uniformity. In theory this uniformity exists everywhere. Nevertheless, does it in practice? Are there not certain provinces where the spirit of nationality has produced a dangerous discordance with the Maison-Mère?...Messieurs, this spirit of nationality is essentially contrary to the unity that must make of all provinces, and of all confreres, only one family. This one family must always be animated and characterized by the same spirit. We must possess only one manner of thinking, speaking, and acting. God chose France to be the place where the Company was born. He had his reasons for this. This circumstance entered the designs of Providence. This design inspired Saint Vincent not only to form our constitutions and our rules but also our maxims, usages, and customs. From France, the Company has spread to other parts of the earth with the same spirit and in the same conditions that characterize it here. The community is not to appropriate to itself the spirit and the habits of other peoples, but it is to implant its own particular customs and institutions in their midst. We do not accept their forms, but on the contrary we try to persuade them to accept ours so that we may do good among them. The community must expand throughout the world. This expansion is not like a river that as it runs farther and farther from its source loses its simplicity and its virtue. Rather, it is to be like a sun whose rays traverse the shadows and darkness without losing either their brightness or their natural warmth.⁶³

Étienne also went on to comment,

A nationalistic spirit would try to justify changes in our way of thinking and of acting. Such changes would violate the customs and

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ There was little justification for Étienne's claim in his 1861 circular that "Our Spanish province is enjoying its usual tranquility." Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 342.

⁶² These battles always occasioned a flood of pro-French and anti-French pamphlets. For an example of a virulent anti-French brochure, see *Memoria sobre la fundación y conservación de la Congregación Española de las Hijas de la Caridad perteneciente al real patronato* (Madrid: Ducacal, 1862), ACGR. An unknown hand has written on the cover of this manuscript "escrita par el P. José Recoder, expulsado de la C.M."

⁶³ *Discours d'ouverture de l'Assemblée Générale, prononcée par M. Étienne le 27 juillet 1861*, ACMP.

traditions that the company has always observed. These modifications then become points of difference between the various provinces. Changes in exterior conduct inevitably also alter a community's essential interior spirit. I have seen that this is true. I repeat that this is an evil that we must take action against. This is particularly true if we want the company to fulfill its mission worthily among all peoples. This is an evil that I believe is a great danger for us. I see the magnificent results produced by the absolute uniformity established everywhere among the Daughters of Charity. Today their way of life, their manner of doing their works, their customs, their maxims, are the same everywhere. The difference in the languages they speak or the climates where they are placed are unimportant. They have taken measures to achieve complete uniformity with the Maison-Mère. They allow for no exceptions. Because of this, God has blessed the sisters everywhere. He rewards the generous sacrifice that they have made in abandoning their national customs to adopt those that Saint Vincent introduced into their company!⁶⁴

Étienne noted that "the history of the Church has never before seen a community that has experienced such a beautiful success through the power of uniformity." His question to the general assembly was, "Do not the beautiful results produced by our sisters' uniformity present us with a powerful motive to imitate them and in this way secure the like development and prosperity of our works?"⁶⁵

This ideology explains, for example, Étienne's preoccupation with persuading the Spanish Daughters of Charity to abandon their distinctive dress and adopt the French habit and cornette. This submission would be the prelude for their following all the community customs as modeled by the French sisters and the mother house.⁶⁶ In 1856, to show his low opinion of the Spanish Daughters of Charity he founded a rival house of French sisters in Madrid.⁶⁷ This establishment depended directly on Paris.⁶⁸ Étienne said that the purpose of estab-

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ The distinctive nationalistic identity of the Spanish Daughters of Charity began during the Napoleonic era when relations with France were cut off, and the community came under royal authority. See *Discours d'ouverture de l'Assemblée Générale, prononcée par M. Étienne le 27 juillet 1861*, ACMP, and *Memoria acerca de la cuestión de las Hijas de la Caridad en España*, by X. Nieto, C.M., n.d., ACCR.

⁶⁷ The French attitude toward the Spanish Daughters of Charity is expressed well by Rosset in his biography of Étienne. "The Daughters of Charity were established in this country [Spain] towards the end of the last century. They soon found themselves separated from France by the revolution of 1789 and removed from the direction of their major superiors. In this state of isolation, the true spirit of the Company underwent an unfortunate alteration....Under the influence of the ideas and customs of the country their exterior works such as visits to the poor, schools, and orphanages were neglected. The sisters tended, little by little, to become more like religious than Daughters of Charity." (*Vie Étienne*, 389.)

⁶⁸ See "Nota sulle figlie della Carità di Spagna," *D.C./Étienne, 1843-1874, Soeurs d'Espagne*, C 124, 2°, ACMP.

lishing the French house was so that it “would become a school for our Spanish sisters and the example for all Spain to follow.”⁶⁹

When the Spanish delegates, and Étienne himself, reported the deliberations of the 1861 general assembly, the province’s discontent reached new heights.⁷⁰ One Spanish confrere, Nicolás Armair, has left an extensive statement that typifies the feelings of the anti-Étienne and anti-French party within the province.⁷¹ Armair attributed the problems in the 1850s to the “unjust, unreasonable and inequitable conduct of the superior general.” He laid the causes of the new troubles at the feet of “the superior general’s novelties.”⁷² According to Armair and the anti-Étienne faction, the primary “exotic novelty” of the superior general was his insistence on a rigid conception of Gallican uniformity within the community.

Armair accused Étienne of being unable to distinguish, as Saint Vincent supposedly had, between the rules, practices, and customs that were “essential” and those that were merely “accidental.”⁷³ He went on to criticize Étienne’s archetype of the mother house in Paris.

Should the house of Paris be the model that all other houses must follow? What reason is there for this? Is it the mother house simply because this is what the general calls it? It may be true that it is the mother house for the houses of France. For the Spanish, the Italians, and others, however, they know no other mother house than those of their own respective provinces. It is true that the general and his assistants reside in Paris, but this conveys no special status upon the house in which they happen to reside. The general and his assistants could just as easily reside in Rome.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Étienne to Jean-Marie Aladel, 15 June 1856, and Étienne to Pius IX, 4 November 1856, *II Étienne, 1830-1874, Fiche 1856-60, Casier 40, Haut, 2°*. ACPM. It should be noted that the problems between Étienne and the Spanish provinces also extended to the missions of the province in Mexico and Cuba, which was still a Spanish colony.

⁷⁰ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 326-39.

⁷¹ At this time Armair was stationed at Badajoz. Born in 1813, he entered the community in 1855 during the Armengol crisis. See “Catálogo de las Casas y personas de la Congr. De la Misión en la Prov. de España: 1864,” *Administration Générale: Espagne II, 1853-1865*, ACPM. For a description of the problems caused among the Spanish students by the Armengol crisis, see Masnou to Étienne, 28 April 1857, *Correspondencia*, ACMM.

⁷² *Arch. Nunz. Madrid*, 443: 603-25, ASV. This account is Armair’s testimony at the time of the apostolic visitation of the Spanish province.

⁷³ *Ibid.* In his speech at the 1861 assembly Étienne noted, “I also know that certain spirits have persuaded themselves that there is no great danger in allowing the continuation of certain variations in observance which seem, in themselves, to be unimportant. But my experience in this matter has led me to a totally different conclusion. It is above all in the interior life of a community that one can legitimately apply the words of Our Lord, ‘that he who is faithful in little things will be faithful in greater.’ Inobservance in even a small matter easily becomes habitual and is a breach in an edifice which threatens its solidity.”

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Armair noted that while Saint-Lazare as founded by Saint Vincent would have been a model for all to follow, the new house in Paris was not.⁷⁵ He unfavorably contrasted the simplicity and poverty that he believed characterized old Saint-Lazare with the alleged luxuriousness of the accommodations and food of the new.⁷⁶ He commented further, "And this is the house proposed by the general as the model for all to follow?...O holy God!...Oh our poor Congregation!"⁷⁷

Another inflammatory point for Armair and other Spanish confreres concerned the assembly decree with respect to provincial internal seminaries. In his opening address, and in a subsequent circular, Étienne noted the role of the Congregation's internal seminaries. These were the places where "the faithful transmission of the company's traditions and spirit to successive generations of new missionaries takes place."⁷⁸

Étienne only reluctantly conceded that distances made it impossible to have only one internal seminary at the mother house for the entire Congregation. This circumstance made it necessary for some distant provinces to possess their own internal seminary. Where this was the case, however, the provincial internal seminaries were to be considered "as only being annexes of the one in Paris." They were "to be faithful copies and have the same rules and same observances as their model."⁷⁹ The general approvingly noted that Portugal, Ireland, Prussia, and Austria had already renounced having their own internal seminaries. These provinces sent their candidates instead each year to Paris. At the very least, according to Étienne, if a province were to have its own internal seminary its director was first to spend sufficient time training in Paris.⁸⁰

Armair noted that "these decrees caused alarm in the hearts of all those who read them...since they would ruin our Congregation in Spain."⁸¹ Armair said that the visitors of the four European provinces had agreed to send their candidates to Paris only to "placate the French general."⁸² The danger of this accommodation was that "little by little the general would realize his desires without opposition, and

⁷⁵ Ibid. Étienne never missed a chance to wax eloquent about the mother house in Paris. He typically would describe it as being characterized "by a union of spirits and of hearts which results in an exact observance of the rule. This produces the good odor of edification that is breathed from within and without." See Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 358.

⁷⁶ Armair, *Arch. Nunz. Madrid*, 443: 603-25, ASV.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 332.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Armair, 443: 603-25, ASV.

⁸² Ibid.

we all will be *afrancesados*.”⁸³ The Spanish bristled at the implication that their Vincentian formation had been somehow defective. Armair concluded by saying, “I believe that no person, in whose veins runs true Spanish blood, accepts what has been done. If this has led to an increase in agitation, the fault lies with the general and those who wish to support his plans.”⁸⁴

During these controversies, the Spanish bishops played a pivotal role.⁸⁵ They demanded that the Holy See intervene and protect the Spanish missionaries and sisters from “the yoke of France” for “the sake of justice and the national interest.”⁸⁶ In December 1862 the nuncio in Spain, Lorenzo Barili, wrote to Étienne. He informed him that the Holy See had ordered an apostolic visitation of the Double Family in Spain.⁸⁷ Étienne wrote back, ostensibly welcoming the papal intervention and the opportunity “to reestablish calm and the union of spirits in this province.”⁸⁸ He also wrote, “Because of this measure I believe that I should entirely abstain from taking any administrative actions with respect to this province. The superioress general of the Daughters of Charity will follow the same rule of conduct until we have learned the results of the visitation and his Holiness’s decision.”⁸⁹

The nuncio formulated a set of questions for the apostolic visitors to ask each sister and missionary.⁹⁰ His questions reveal the issues surrounding the Spanish troubles:

⁸³ Ibid. Étienne’s Spanish opponents were fierce in their nationalistic pride and fought all the general’s efforts to impose a “French” identity to the community in the peninsula. The term *afrancesado* had emotional and political connotations for Spaniards. It arose during the peninsular war and referred to Spaniards who were French sympathizers and Bonapartists and hence were regarded as traitors.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ See for example, their petition to Pius IX, July 1867, in which they complained against French domination as “a grave assault against the Spanish nation and church.” Speaking of the Spanish Daughters of Charity, the bishops went on to say, “It is an indisputable fact that this Spanish congregation since its foundation has not recognized the authority of a foreign superior. The only recognized superior has been the visitor general named according to their rules by the *paulies* missionaries of Spain.” This petition was signed by thirty Spanish bishops. See “Nunziatura di Mons. Lorenzo Barili,” Cartell 102 B, Sezione XLII, Titolo 8, Madrid 1857-68, *Arch. Nunz. Madrid*, 443: 516-17, ASV.

⁸⁶ “Rapport du Visiteur de la Province d’Espagne sur l’état de la même Province vers la fin de 1862,” *Province d’Espagne, Administration Générale, 1852-1868*, ACGR. The Spanish bishops were powerful in this matter since at the time of the concordat Rome had suspended, for a ten-year period, religious exemptions from episcopal authority. For a copy of this brief, *Regularium personarum* of 12 April 1851, see *ibid.*, 112.

⁸⁷ *Nunziatura di Mgr. Brunelli et interinato di Mgr. Franchi*, ASV. This move took Étienne completely by surprise. Just before the notification of the visitation reached Paris the procurator general in Rome, Giovanni Guarini, had a long audience with the pope in which no mention of the Spanish decision had been made. See Étienne to Guarini, 20 December 1862, *Corrispondenza*, APCR.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 346.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ The nuncio supervised the visitation in the capital and delegated the bishops to conduct the visitations of houses in their dioceses.

1. Have you noticed, with respect to the interior life or administration of the Institute, whether anyone has introduced any foreign novelties or Spanish customs that are contrary to the rules of your Holy Founder Saint Vincent de Paul?
2. Are you aware of the reasons and motives that led some fathers in 1855 to request a separation of the Congregation in Spain from the superior general?
3. What is the present state of the Congregation? What steps are needed to achieve its greater happiness? What is the general opinion of the fathers with respect to these points? What is your opinion?
4. Do you have any particular reason to oppose your superiors? Is there anything disturbing your conscience that might lead you to leave the Congregation?
5. Are you aware that any troubles exist among the Daughters of Charity? If you are, what is your explanation of their nature and origin? What are the means you would judge to be most effective in preserving tranquility among them?
6. Are you aware of anyone having urged the Daughters of Charity to change their present habit? If so, who has done this?⁹¹

The apostolic visitation dragged on through 1863 and 1864, as Étienne had predicted.⁹² While the superior general refrained from any official communication with the Spanish provinces, the loyalist Spanish missionaries and sisters kept up a steady correspondence with him. These letters kept Étienne informed.⁹³ Étienne wrote that he presumed that the outcome of the apostolic visitation would not lead to a separation of the Spanish provinces from French authority.⁹⁴ His great fear, however, was that "Holy See would allow the Spanish sisters to continue to wear their distinctive costume." In his mind, this permission would be disastrous and "would be the equivalent of their official separation from the community."⁹⁵

Étienne hoped that the Holy See would "permit me to use my own best judgment and prudence to await the particular circumstances that would allow me to make this nonconformity disappear." As he noted, "a single word coming from Rome in this sense would do an immense good and would open a magnificent and prosperous future for this province." Étienne foresaw that if only the Spanish sisters would accept this uniformity "their vocations would be many and

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 418.

⁹² Étienne to Guarini, 10 February 1863, *Corrispondenza*, APGR.

⁹³ See for example, *Visitadores Correspondencia*, for this period, ACMM.

⁹⁴ Étienne to Guarini, 21 February 1863, *Corrispondenza*, APGR.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

solid." He said that with true vocations such as these, "I could respond to the requests that I am constantly receiving. I could fill the former Spanish possessions in South America with true Daughters of Charity and missionaries." He attributed the delay in reaching a decision both to the nuncio and to the deteriorating political situation in Spain.⁹⁶

In June 1864, Étienne was summoned to Rome for an audience with Pius IX. The general reported that he had allowed the pontiff to be the first to raise the question of the Spanish controversies and invite him to state his position.⁹⁷ According to Étienne, "The pope listened carefully to everything I said, and he understands the importance of uniformity." Étienne optimistically concluded that the pontiff "would soon end this affair."⁹⁸

The following day, the general had a meeting with the papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli. Étienne reported that the cardinal "shares our view of the situation." He concluded, "It appears that he also wants this to end soon and that he sees that our point of view is the only reasonable one. Now it appears that everyone understands that they [the Spanish rebels] have taken a wrong path and have deluded themselves."⁹⁹

Finally, in early 1865, word reached Paris of yet another victory for Étienne. Mariano Maller wrote on 3 February 1865, "His Holiness has expressed the desire to see the Spanish sisters change their costume to that worn by the sisters of other countries. The timing and means that will accomplish their return to uniformity are left to their superiors."¹⁰⁰ In addition, the pontiff ruled that "in Spain the superior general enjoys all the authority accorded him by the rules and the Congregation's constitutions." The Holy See recommended, however, that Étienne move cautiously. This would mean "allowing a reasonable period to prepare the spirits whether those of the sisters, confreres, or bishops." Maller concluded triumphantly, "This is everything that we wanted. We did not have to cede anything!"¹⁰¹

Étienne immediately wrote to Giovanni Guarini, the procurator general to the Holy See,

I would like to thank you for the good news that you have given me about our Spanish affair. Let us hope that it will finally be a

⁹⁶ Étienne to Guarini, 11 February 1865, *ibid.*

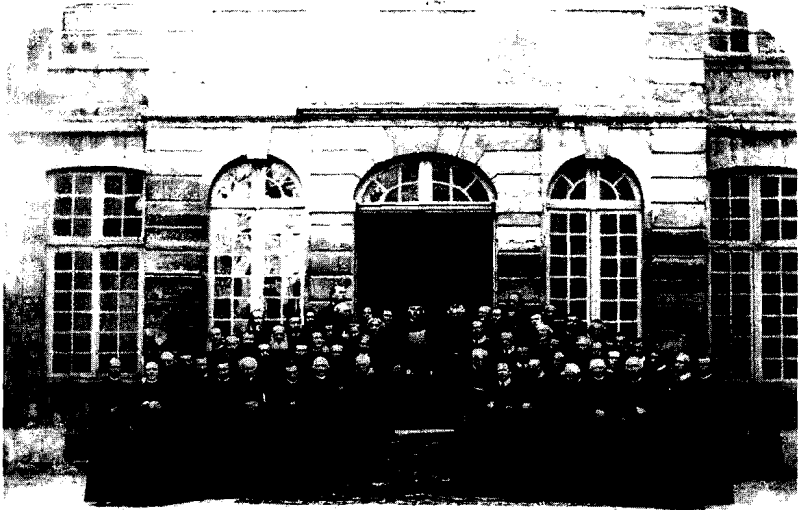
⁹⁷ Étienne to Jean-Marie Aladel, 2 June 1864, *Étienne Lettres: 1861-1869*, C. 40, H 3, I, (39-73), ACOMP.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Mariano Maller to an unknown correspondent, 3 February 1865, *Spagna: Lettere*, ACGR.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*



ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE de la CONGRÉGATION de la MISSION

à Paris 1861

Twenty-first General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission, Paris, 27 July-4 August 1861. Etienne is in the center, holding papers. Aladel is to his left. Note the distinctive collars of the Italian delegates.

good solution. Do not worry about the measures that I will now take. I have had enough experience to understand that acting precipitously gains nothing. Before initiating any kind of reform, one must first detect whether the persons in question are disposed to receive it. When they are, this will suggest that the moment Providence has designated has arrived. Now that the Holy See has established the principle of reform, we can take our time putting it into action. *Que [sic] va piano, va Sano.*¹⁰²

Étienne was true to his promise, and he restored an uneasy peace to the Double Family in Spain. The general appointed the dependable Maller, as the new Spanish visitor and as the director of the Spanish

¹⁰² Étienne to Guarini, 4 March 1865, *Corrispondenza*, APGR.

Daughters of Charity.¹⁰³ The revolution in 1868 and the suppression of the Spanish province temporarily solved the problem of Spanish-French antagonisms, at least in Étienne's lifetime.¹⁰⁴

Vatican I: "A great event is taking place."¹⁰⁵

Étienne published his *Notice* on 4 August 1870, the day of the Parisian celebrations for his fiftieth anniversary. In his circular letter of New Year's 1870, he had set the stage for the coming event. He invited "elite members of the Double Family's provinces" from all over the world to attend the celebration.¹⁰⁶ His purpose in issuing this unprecedented invitation was "to join together all the hearts of our two companies. They will then form one voice of thanksgiving to God, who in his goodness has brought about the happy reestablishment of Saint Vincent's work. It also will give us the opportunity to thank him for all he has done during the fifty years of my vocation and the twenty-seven years of my generalate...It seemed to me that this celebration would appropriately cap my long career. It would bring to a close the task that I had received and believed that I had achieved."¹⁰⁷

There was another milestone, however, that unexpectedly eclipsed his anniversary celebration. In his *Notice*, Étienne recalled that the true crowning event of his career proved to be a letter that he received from Pius IX earlier in 1870. The pontiff was responding to his timely public support of the definition of papal infallibility.

As the prelates of the Vatican Council gathered, the question of the moment was of course the probability of the infallibility declara-

¹⁰³ Maller was a veteran Spanish missionary who had served as visitor of the province of the United States from 1847 to 1853. In order to avoid being named as a bishop in the United States, Maller became visitor of the province of Brazil and then in 1861 an advisor to Étienne in Paris. In 1866 he took office as visitor of Spain. For information on Maller's American career see *American Vincentians*, 44-45.

¹⁰⁴ The controversies regarding to the Spanish Daughters of Charity would erupt again under Étienne's successor Eugène Boré. It was not until 1964 that the question of the variance of the Spanish habit was settled.

¹⁰⁵ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 340.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 3: 434.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

tion.¹⁰⁸ The polemics were fierce on both sides.¹⁰⁹ From the start, the definition's supporters were in the majority. A minority of the fathers were vocal "inopportunist" and an even smaller number were opponents of the definition.¹¹⁰ In his circular written at the beginning of 1870, Étienne had declared the community's neutrality in these debates. He promised, however, to accept the results of the Council's deliberations, "in a spirit of religious submission."¹¹¹

According to Edouard Rosset, Étienne spoke about the infallibility debate "only with great reserve."¹¹² He correctly described the general as an "inopportunist."¹¹³ In the first months of 1870, however, especially in France, the polemics around this issue reached a fever pitch.¹¹⁴ At the beginning of March, Étienne wrote to Giovanni Battista Borgogno in Rome. "I have not received this week's *Courrier*. I therefore do not know what is happening right now in Rome. But here, everyone is in an uproar. The public is preoccupied with the division among the bishops at the Council. The possible results of this division are very disquieting to everyone. May God calm everyone and everything, and give us peace! With respect to us, we are avoiding any involvement in all this. I am seeing no one and have stayed in my room as much as possible. We are praying, and that is all that we can do."¹¹⁵

In an atmosphere of superheated ultramontanism, a neutral position on this issue was no longer tenable inside or outside the Council.

On 26 March 1870, Étienne wrote to Gabriel Delaplace, a French

¹⁰⁸ Étienne's major concern as the First Vatican Council opened was the proposed reform of religious orders that was on the council's agenda. There were stirrings among some bishops to do away with the Daughters' dependence on the Lazarist superior general. In early January he wrote to the procurator general in Rome. "Among other things the Council will occupy itself with the reform of communities. A reform supposes abuses. No one can find any among our sisters. They appear exactly as they did to Saint Vincent. We are not worried. If some bishops oppose the order that governs our sisters, many also will defend it." Later that month, Étienne wrote Giovanni Borgogno that Gabriel Perboyre would be sending him copies of an extensive memorandum that he had written concerning the juridical status of the Daughters of Charity. The procurator general was to distribute these as appropriate. See letters of 15 and 29 January, from Étienne to Giovanni Borgogno. (Borgogno served as procurator general in Rome from 1867 to 1884). A copy of Perboyre's fifty-two page memorandum entitled *Mémoire Relatif aux Filles de la Charité* can also be found in this file.

¹⁰⁹ For a study of the infallibility debate in France and at the Vatican Council see Margaret O'Gara, *Infallibility, Vatican I, and the French Minority Bishops* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹¹ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 432.

¹¹² Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 505.

¹¹³ Rosset quotes Étienne's position as laid out in a letter to Gabriel Delaplace, "It would have pleased me if the definition had been delayed. If the question had not arisen, one would have wished it would have stayed that way. But now that it has, it must be decided." *Ibid.* Étienne to Delaplace, 27 March 1870, *Étienne: Lettres, 1870-73*, C 40, H: 3, 1 (39-73), ACPM.

¹¹⁴ The dying Charles de Montalembert commented at the time, "I do not want to offer up justice, truth, reason, and history as a burnt offering to the idol that the lay theologians of Catholicism have set up for themselves in the Vatican." See Dansette, *Histoire Religieuse*, 1: 417.

¹¹⁵ Étienne to Giovanni Battista Borgogno, 3 March 1870, *Corrispondenza*, APGR.

Lazarist who was vicar apostolic of Peking and was attending the Council, "I believe that matters have reached a point in Rome and here, such that many persons are evidently wrongly interpreting my silence concerning the delicate question of infallibility. The time now has arrived for me to speak. With my council's advice, I have resolved to express my personal sentiments and those of the Congregation to the Sovereign Pontiff.¹¹⁶ I am sending you this letter, trusting that you will deliver it properly. I believe that it will meet with approval."¹¹⁷

Étienne's letter to Pius IX was dated 25 March 1870.

I have believed in the Sovereign Pontiff's infallibility all my life. It is also a doctrine that all the missionaries who compose the family of Saint Vincent de Paul believe. Their founder believed it. To the present, we have conserved this belief religiously as a precious portion of his heritage.¹¹⁸ In their teaching, and in their conduct, our missionaries have always had the honor and glory of professing our founder's teachings on this matter. These include the belief that a humble submission and obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff's decrees are signs that distinguish the Church's true children from the partisans of error.

Most Holy Father, previously I did not think that manifesting to Your Holiness the dispositions of our Congregation on this matter was necessary. I believed that on this point of Church doctrine they were well known. Today, however, some of those who should be the defenders and proponents of the Sovereign Pontiff's infallibility instead are contesting it. These men have declared themselves to be its opponents. Their opposition has given great scandal both to the clergy and the faithful. I therefore believe that I have the religious and filial obligation toward Your Holiness, to place at the feet of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, in the name of the Congregation of which I am the head, a formal protest against such an audacious position. We accompany this protestation with the most ardent wish for the solemn proclamation, of the infallibility of Saint Peter's successor, as a dogma of the Catholic faith.

¹¹⁶This consultation must have taken place outside of a formal council meeting. The council minutes record no such consultation.

¹¹⁷Étienne to Delaplace, 26 March 1870. *Étienne: Lettres*, ACOMP. On 30 March, Étienne wrote to Delaplace saying, "Yesterday, I received a visit from the Nuncio. He expressed his great satisfaction with the letter that I have written to the pope. He is convinced that it will please him greatly," *ibid.*

¹¹⁸Of course, Saint Vincent's opinions on infallibility were not as clear as Étienne would make them out to be. During his involvement with the early Jansenist controversies the saint supported the appeal of many French bishops requesting a condemnation by the Holy See. Saint Vincent stated the principle behind this appeal in a letter of June 1651 to Bishops Nicolas Pavillon and Étienne Caulet. Since there was neither the time nor the opportunity to summon an ecumenical council to decide the disputed questions, "there is no prompter remedy than recourse to the Pope. The Council of Trent itself refers us to him in the last chapter of its final session." See Coste, *CCD*, 4: 213. See also Vincent de Paul to Marc Coglée, 26 April 1651, *ibid.*, 4: 183, and 209-213. The saint's only direct reference to papal infallibility came in his conference of 7 November 1659. Speaking of his late spiritual director, the Sorbonne theologian André Duval, he noted, "A good doctor, the late M. Duval, often told me that he could think of no better example of the infallibility of the pope than his confirmation of orders in God's Church and the canonization of saints." Conference to the Priests of the Mission, 7 November 1659, Coste, *CED*, 12: 376.

Most Holy Father, Saint Vincent de Paul employed an ardent zeal to combat the adversaries of the Holy See's authority concerning its condemnation of Jansenism. I will, with the help of God's grace, imitate this model if the doctrine of the Sovereign Pontiff's infallibility should come under similar attacks. If, God's will notwithstanding, the venom of error should introduce itself among members of our Congregation I will not hesitate to follow the example of one of my predecessors, Monsieur [Jean] Bonnet. In the last century, he expelled forty-one distinguished missionaries from the company. These confreres clung obstinately to the errors of Jansenism.¹¹⁹ Through this vigorous measure he purified the company. He maintained the purity of faith and the filial submission to the Vicar of Jesus Christ that the community has the honor of professing to this day.

Most Holy Father, I have arrived at the fiftieth anniversary of my vocation, and the twenty-seventh of my generalate. It gives my heart joy to be able to mark this memorable event by manifesting the unanimous sentiments of Saint Vincent de Paul's family. I have the honor of disposing these at your feet. I beg you to accept them with benevolence, and to accord me and my confreres the benefit of your paternal blessing.¹²⁰

According to Rosset, the event that changed Étienne's position was a visit from "the bishop of N."¹²¹ He quotes Étienne as recalling, "He used violent language in speaking about the events in Rome. I reacted badly to this."¹²² Étienne concluded, "If all the members of his party share these sentiments we are facing a schism in France. Now, it is evident to me that the question of opportuneness is nothing else than a palliative to hide an opposition to the doctrine itself."¹²³

On 6 April 1870, Pietro Trucchi, an Italian Lazarist who was the bishop of Forli, wrote Étienne from the Council.

Most Honored Father, I am happy to be able to send news that will bring joy to your heart. The letter that you recently sent to the Sovereign Pontiff concerning the infallibility of the pope has given him immense satisfaction. Because of this letter, he is very content with the general of the Lazarists, Monsieur Étienne. He has sent

¹¹⁹ See Bonnet, *Circulaires*, 1: 333-34.

¹²⁰ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 573-74.

¹²¹ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 505.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ An examination of the text of the letter of 26 March 1870, from Étienne to Delaplace, reveals that the identity of the bishop who visited Étienne was Félix-François-Joseph-Barthélémy de Las Cases, the bishop of Constantine in French Algeria. Las Cases left instructions in his will that his funeral sermon should "accurately describe him as an opponent of papal infallibility and not merely an inopportunist." See O'Gara, *Infallibility*, 12, 261. Also deleted from Rosset's account was a line in the autograph letter that states, "If all the members of the archbishop of Paris' party [Georges Darboy] share his sentiments, then we are facing a schism." *Étienne: Lettres*, ACMP. See O'Gara, *Infallibility*, 9. The minutes of the general council meeting of 28 March 1870, reveal that the purpose of the bishop's visit was to request an increase in the number of missionaries staffing his seminaries. See *General Council Minutes*, 2: 579, ACGR.

your letter, with a strong note of approval, to the Cardinal Presidents of the Council...Yesterday, Cardinal Bizzari told me that this letter displayed such wisdom and veneration for the Holy See that it was worth reporting in its entirety to every Catholic journal so that they could publish it for the entire world's edification.¹²⁴

Pius IX wrote to Étienne the following day.

The manifest profession of your devotion and that of your Congregation to the chair of Peter, your sincere adhesion to its decisions, and your entire and spontaneous acceptance of its desires, are all to your glory. Everyone recognizes that your family has held them from its beginnings to the present. They could not be more agreeable or more precious to Us...The explicit declaration that you have made of your faith appears to Us to illustrate again the ancient and constant disposition of your souls. This is why We have graciously and willingly accepted your profession. We believe that this profession is an action that would greatly please your Holy Founder.¹²⁵

For Étienne, this papal letter was a "monument" that would show to future generations of missionaries "our faith, our love, and above all our devotion to the Vicar of Jesus Christ."¹²⁶ Just as importantly for Étienne, it would demonstrate to future generations of missionaries his own "faith, love, and devotion to the Vicar of Jesus Christ."

At the end of his annual retreat in October 1871, Étienne composed his "spiritual testament."¹²⁷ He closed this short written reflection by saying "that out of respect for Saint Vincent and the company's honor, I do not want to leave this world without making one last protestation of my filial love and devotion for the Holy See and Saint Peter's successor."¹²⁸ He repeated his unqualified support for the declaration of papal infallibility. Étienne then wrote, "I consider it to have been a signal grace from heaven that I had the opportunity to make

¹²⁴ Trucchi to Étienne, 7 April 1870, *Monsieur Étienne, 1830-74*, Casier 40, Haut 2°, ACMP.

¹²⁵ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 574-75.

¹²⁶ Étienne, *Notice*, 76. In June 1870, as the infallibility debate at the Council heightened, Étienne wrote to Giovanni Borgogno. "I am sending you a letter for Cardinal Barnabò. Please ask him to put it at the feet of the pope as a protest on my part, and that of the entire Congregation, against the language used at the council by Mgr. [Michael] Domenech. It is important that he understand that this bishop was speaking for himself and not the Congregation. He bears the sole responsibility for his acts." (*Corrispondenza*, APGR.) Michael Domenech, C.M., was a Catalan and an early missionary to the United States. Expelled from Spain after the 1835 suppression, he was ordained in America. In 1860, he became the bishop of Pittsburgh. He was an opponent of papal infallibility. For more information on Domenech's career see *American Vincentians*, 41, 44, 119, 125, 172, 252, 282, 294. See also, James Hennessey, S.J., *The First Council of the Vatican: The American Experience* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963).

¹²⁷ Rosset published this document for the first time (*Vie Étienne*, 565-69).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*



Pope Pius IX Presiding at the first Vatican Council
Corbis Bettmann

this declaration. This occasion allowed me to reveal my heart's true sentiments. It allowed me to dissipate all the shadows that previously obscured my zealous faith and my inviolable attachment to the See of Saint Peter."¹²⁹ The "shadows" that Étienne spoke about having finally "dissipated" surrounded his lifelong reputation in Rome [and elsewhere] as a Gallican.

Monsieur Étienne:

"He is a Gallican...He does not love the Pope."¹³⁰

Étienne's education and formation during the Bourbon Restoration gave him a foundation of what Margaret O'Gara would describe as a moderate "semigallicanism."¹³¹ Austin Gough notes that for Étienne's generation, Gallicanism "because of its emphasis on 'Frenchness' implied at least a tentative search for ways of reconciling Catholic doctrine with the principles of 1789, constitutional government, and a pluralist model of society."¹³² Étienne as a Gallican believed that the Congregation had found such a path to reconciliation.¹³³

Étienne's nephew, Auguste Devin, C.M., related the story that, in common with most seminarians and young priests of his era, Étienne had a subscription to Lammenais's journal, *L'Avenir*.¹³⁴ At one point, the paper published an attack on Denis Frayssinous, calling him "This blind prelate, who began where Luther ended."¹³⁵ According to Devin, "The violence of this language convinced him [Étienne] that nothing good could come from this author, and he canceled his subscription."¹³⁶

Austin Gough also points out that "The unsettling effect in the seminaries and the parishes produced by Lammenais and *L'Avenir*, the exalted papalism and antirational philosophy of the Mennaisians, their contempt for the concordatory French Church, and the polemical

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ This undated manuscript has a title page added by an unknown hand: *Portrait ou vertus de M. Étienne ses rapports avec différentes personnes, ses maximes conformes à celles de S. Vincent. Par M. Auguste Devin, C.M., neveu de M. Étienne. M. Devin, qui avait eu des différends avec son oncle, n'a pas su, en écrivant cette biographie, se préserver de sentiments qui, parfois, ont mal dirigé son plume. C'est pourquoi on n'a pas imprimé cet ouvrage, Étienne: Biographie, C 40, II 2°, W 11, ACOMP. Devin also served as his uncle's private secretary and as secretary general of the Congregation.*

¹³¹ O'Gara, *Infallibility*, 19.

¹³² Austin Gough, *Paris and Rome, The Gallican Church and the Ultramontane Campaign 1848-1853* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 45.

¹³³ See for example, Étienne, *Discours*, throughout.

¹³⁴ *Devin*, 315, ACOMP.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 313-14.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 314. For more on Felicité Lammenais see Peter N. Stearns, *Priest and Revolutionary, Lammenais and the Dilemma of French Catholicism* (New York: 1976). See also, Fernand Mourret, *Le Mouvement Catholique en France de 1830 à 1850* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1917).

violence with which they attacked anyone who did not share their views, convinced the bishops that ultramontane radicalism could easily destroy the fabric of a moderate and national Church."¹³⁷ Étienne came to this same conclusion concerning not only Lammenais, but also Louis Veuillot and l'école Univers.

Restoration Gallicanism "was bound to be challenged in a period when the intellectual current was running so strongly against classicism, rationality, and moderation."¹³⁸ During the first half of the nineteenth century French ultramontanism attracted young intellectuals who were "bored with the cool, pragmatic view of the role of religion put forward by sober Gallican theorists, and yearned for wider horizons and more exciting programs of action."¹³⁹ The ultramontanism of the Lammenais's school fed upon a "potent blend of cultural and political romanticism."¹⁴⁰ This first generation of French ultramontanists was obsessed with "an image of Christian Rome as the ultimate answer to the cultural influences of the Enlightenment, classicism, and rationalism."¹⁴¹

This ultramontanism was essentially a "counter-revolutionary" doctrine.¹⁴² Austin Gough notes that at this point the movement was not directed from Rome and was "as much a part of French political theory as of Catholic ecclesiology." With the death of the former king, Charles X, in 1836, "the old royal Gallicanism of the Bourbons was replaced by the romantic ultramontanism of the new Pretender."¹⁴³ Gough also comments, "The legitimist concept of monarchy and the ultramontane concept of the papacy developed together from the forties to the sixties until there was a virtual fusion of ideas. Their common factor was a rejection of the middle class ideal of pragmatic moderation in both State and Church, in favor of a more dramatic analysis of politics."¹⁴⁴

The authoritarian themes of Lammenais's teaching influenced the young Étienne's Gallicanism. He too rejected the influences of the "Enlightenment, classicism, and rationalism."¹⁴⁵ Étienne also was

¹³⁷ Gough, *Ultramontane Campaign*, 34. Lammenais once printed this reply to the archbishop of Paris [Quélen], "Look around you, Monseigneur, and see who it is that defends Gallicanism today: fawning adorers of power; a small number of old men who have known only this school. Who else? Are there words adequate to depict this nauseating mixture of nonsense, death, stupidity, and absolute poverty of spirit?" Quoted by Fernand Mourret in *Le Mouvement Catholique*, 92.

¹³⁸ Gough, *Ultramontane Campaign*, 60.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 67-78.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

“bored with the cool, pragmatic view of the role of religion.” He too yearned “for wider horizons and more exciting programs of action.”¹⁴⁶ He too possessed a “potent blend of cultural [Gallican] and political romanticism.”¹⁴⁷ Étienne held a conservative “counter-revolutionary” doctrine; however, it was not based on legitimism. Étienne based his own “counter-revolutionary” analysis on “the middle class ideal of pragmatic moderation” in a conservatively aligned state and church. His romantic obsession also was very different from both that of the classic Gallicans and the emerging ultramontanists. His focus was neither ultramontane Rome, nor Gallican Paris, but the mother houses at 95 rue de Sèvres and 140 rue du Bac.

Under the July monarchy’s Orleanist *Gallicanisme parlementaire* “the public picture was of the church having to fight against the coarse-grained voltaireanism of the official class in a series of bitter conflicts, especially over education, with the State’s coercive machinery of the Ministry of Cults weighing heavily on the clergy...and the bishops.”¹⁴⁸ Paradoxically though, this was also an era when Étienne and the Lazarists because of their utility and loyalty enjoyed unlimited governmental favor at home and abroad.¹⁴⁹

As a Gallican, Étienne believed that the Holy See’s authority over the Congregation was “indirect and limited.”¹⁵⁰ This relationship presumed from the community and its superior general respect for the role of the papacy and the person of the Roman Pontiff. It also presumed, however, a large degree of autonomy from direct papal control. Extraordinary papal intervention could perhaps be justified on the rare occasion of a major crisis but ordinary Roman jurisdiction was not.¹⁵¹ Both the French government and the French Lazarists felt that the superior general and general assemblies should govern the Congregation as outlined by the papally-approved constitutions. Under these circumstances, the community needed only “very infrequent recourse” to the Holy See and the Roman Curia.¹⁵²

Throughout the nineteenth century, successive French governments never had any reason to doubt the loyalty or obedience of the Lazarists

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 231, 36.

¹⁴⁹ For an account of Étienne’s relations with Louis-Philippe and the royal family see *Devin*, 318, *ACMP*. See also, Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 270-86.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁵¹ For example, in the succession crises of 1827 and 1843.

¹⁵² Gough, *Ultramontane Campaign*, 33.

or of Étienne.¹⁵³ However, successive pontiffs did find reason to doubt the loyalty and obedience of the French Lazarists corporately and Étienne personally.¹⁵⁴ For example, during his years as superior general, Étienne never had a serious dispute with the French government over the administration of the Congregation's foreign missions. His disagreements with the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, however, were continuous.

Rome's dissatisfaction with Étienne began over his administration of the Congregation's missions as procurator general.¹⁵⁵ The role he played in bringing about the French government's decisive intervention in the Nozo succession crisis did not lessen Rome's antipathy toward him. In the early years of Pius IX's pontificate, the Holy See expressed its dissatisfaction with Étienne's administration of the foreign missions, his interference in the naming of confreres as bishops, and his reluctance to visit Rome.¹⁵⁶ In 1853 for example, Étienne answered the complaints made against him by Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò, the prefect of Propaganda Fide. These charges concerned "My alleged independence from Propaganda in the administration of our missions."¹⁵⁷ Étienne responded that his manner of directing the community's missions was not new or

¹⁵³ The success that Étienne and the Lazarists had in preserving continuously good relations with successive French governments is attributable, in part, to Étienne's connections with career ministerial bureaucrats. Many of these men were of Étienne's own generation. One example was Pierre Cintrat who served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1815 to 1849 and as director of the National Archives until 1866. See also, Étienne, *Notice*, 50.

¹⁵⁴ In the dispatches of the nuncio to Rome or from Rome to the nuncio there are no examples of fulsome praise of Étienne and the Lazarists as there are at every turn in the French diplomatic correspondence.

¹⁵⁵ The Minister of Foreign Affairs explained Rome's antipathy to Étienne and the French Lazarists in a 1841 memo to the ambassador at the Holy See.

There exists at the Vatican and Propaganda false and malevolent prejudices against the Lazarists...in a word they are considered too French and too Gallican. The present pope [Gregory XVI], who formerly was the prefect of Propaganda and favored the Jesuits, took these prejudices with him to the pontifical throne. In 1828, the government intervened to restore the Lazarist house in Antoura contrary to Propaganda's orders. This incident was personally disagreeable to Cardinal Cappellari [later Pope Gregory XVI] who blamed and continues to blame the Lazarist procurator general...In 1832, Cardinal Lambruschini told M. Étienne confidentially that if the Lazarists wanted to be in the good graces of the pope again and have him forget all his past prejudices, all that they had to do was to abandon themselves blindly to him and put their Levantine missions entirely at his disposal...They remained faithful to their responsibilities toward the government of France...and this is why Rome has not forgiven them.

Guizot to Latour-Maubourg, 28 December 1841, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 984, AMAE.

¹⁵⁶ For a discussion of the dispute over the appointment of Lazarists as bishops see Richard Kehoe, C.M. "Becoming a Bishop and Remaining a Vincentian: The Struggles of Archbishop John Joseph Lynch, C.M." *Vincentian Heritage*, 13, no. 2 (1992): 127-48.

¹⁵⁷ Étienne to Giovanni Guarini, 4 October 1853, *Corrispondenza*, APGR.



Pope Pius IX
Corbis Bettmann

unique to him.¹⁵⁸ He said, "It is the same as practiced by my predecessors and by Saint Vincent himself."¹⁵⁹

Propaganda objected to his practice of placing and replacing missionaries at will. Étienne commented,

The missions that we administer have not been confided to this or that individual missionary but to the Congregation. If these missions are directed poorly, it is the superior general who is responsible. In this case, it is he who has sent subjects who are incapable of fulfilling their duties. In this case, it seems necessary that he should have full liberty to make whatever changes he deems necessary in the mission personnel. Propaganda has never given the superior general instructions concerning the personnel of a given mission. It has never previously complained about personnel changes. Yet, it now expresses its discontent with my actions.¹⁶⁰

Étienne pointed out that on each of his three previous trips to Rome he had asked the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda "to tell me his wishes and give me his advice. Each time he told me that he had no complaints and that I should continue as I had been doing. Each time, I asked the Sovereign Pontiff the same thing, and he gave me the same response."¹⁶¹ Étienne told Giovanni Guarini that he had concluded, "There is nothing that I can do or say that will dispel the prejudices they hold against me. I must therefore rely on God alone."

Given the Holy See's and Roman Congregations' attitudes toward him, Étienne eschewed trips there. Rome noted his reserve, and his many trips elsewhere, and counted them as more evidence against him. Auguste Devin said that the reason that Étienne avoided trips to Rome was his fear that the Holy See would take advantage of the opportunity and urge him to move the generalate to Rome. Under these circumstances, "he would have had to consider such an expressed desire to be an order."¹⁶² Étienne believed, of course, that such a move would destroy the community.¹⁶³

Rosset gave this overview of the situation. "At the same time, [the early 1850s] the pope received extensive but inexact reports on the spirit and tendencies of the various congregations that administered

¹⁵⁸ Étienne could not understand that while his manner of administering the missions might not have changed, Rome's expectations of its role in directing these efforts had.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Devin*, 315, ACMP.

¹⁶³ This argument seems strange since as recently as the succession crisis of 1843, the French government had vetoed any possibility of moving the Congregation's headquarters to Rome.



Pope Pius IX
Corbis Bettmann

French seminaries.¹⁶⁴ Certain influential persons...persuaded him that Monsieur Étienne should be suspected of being a Gallican. They pointed to his refusal to move the seat of the Congregation to Rome. They said this came from a spirit of opposition to the Holy See. These men charged that he was communicating this spirit of opposition to the Congregation that he headed, and to the seminaries and missions that it directed."¹⁶⁵

Pius IX "agreed with these views and resolved to overcome M. Étienne's repugnance."¹⁶⁶ Rosset reported that when the Neapolitan delegates to the 1849 general assembly had a papal audience before their departure, the impulsive pope told them "this was the last time that they would be holding a general assembly in France."¹⁶⁷ Naturally, news of this comment reached Paris.

In February 1853, Étienne was traveling by sea to Naples. A storm forced his boat to dock at the port of Civitavecchia in the Papal States. Étienne spent a day there and was visited by missionaries and sisters from Rome. After visiting Naples he went on to Livorno, Florence, Siena, Sarzana, and Genoa. News of his travels in Italy, and the fact that he had been as close as Civitavecchia, reached the Vatican. Soon afterward, the pope received a group of Daughters of Charity in an audience. The sisters asked the pontiff to grant them various spiritual favors. Pius IX pointedly replied, "It appears that I am only the pope of indulgences, while the real pope of the Daughters of Charity is Monsieur Étienne!"¹⁶⁸

Throughout the 1850s, the Holy See watched with approval the growth of the *L'Univers* brand of ultramontanist in the French Church.¹⁶⁹ In March 1853, when Pius IX issued the anti-Gallican encyclical *Inter Multiplices*, Étienne wrote to Giovanni Guarini in Rome, "The encyclical has had the effect of a bomb here. It has caused a great agitation in the spirits. God alone knows what will be its consequence. As for me, I would have enchanted if it had also energetically struck

¹⁶⁴ One example of this would have been the extensive report on the French Church prepared in 1850 for Pius IX by Mgr. Giovanni Corboli-Bussi. See Gough, *Ultramontane Campaign*, 57. The Sulpicians felt the intense scrutiny and displeasure of Rome because of their leadership in support of a moderate theological Gallicanism. Étienne described the embattled Joseph Carrière, the Sulpician superior general, as "a true friend of the Congregation." Étienne to Guarini, 16 June 1863, *Corrispondenza*, APGR.

¹⁶⁵ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 348.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 350. See also, *Devin*, 315, ACMP.

¹⁶⁹ For more information see Gough, *Ultramontane Campaign*, throughout.

out at the doctrines of *L'Univers*.¹⁷⁰ I have always considered these to be harmful to the Church and to society. It is my opposition to this school that has been the cause of the prejudices that Rome holds against me."¹⁷¹

In early 1855, Giovanni Guarini had an audience with the pope concerning the superior general. During this meeting, Pius IX delivered a blistering attack on Étienne. Guarini reported all this in detail to the superior general. Étienne replied, "I thank you for having the courage to tell me everything that the Pope said to you in your audience. I know how much you suffered under these circumstances. You are too sensitive not to have felt pain at hearing such language. Your love for the Congregation is too great for you not to be distressed at hearing your superior general described in such a manner. As for me, I am glad to know about this because, as God is my witness, it confirms me in the resolutions that I have taken, and so far held to."¹⁷²

Étienne's resolutions included keeping a calm, disinterested silence and refusing to defend himself to Rome in any manner. He left to divine providence the determination of whether, and how, he would ever be justified. He told Guarini that it gave him some consolation to know that this was exactly how Rome had once treated Saint Alphonsus Liguori.¹⁷³ Étienne said that experience had taught him "that explanations rarely dissipate prejudices. Often, they just make matters worse."¹⁷⁴ He told Giovanni Guarini,

You may not know this, but during the pontificate of Gregory XVI, Rome nourished the same prejudices against me. I never sought to combat these, yet in the end providence worked to dissipate these

¹⁷⁰ For the text of this encyclical see Claudia Carlen, I.H.M., *The Papal Encyclicals 1740-1878* (Ann Arbor: Pierian Press, 1981), 315-18. Gough, *Ultramontane Campaign*, see Chapter 5, "Louis Veuillot and *L'Univers*," 80-102. When the government suppressed *L'Univers* in 1860 Étienne wrote,

I am sure you are aware of the measures taken here by the government to calm the general agitation. I do not fear that this will lead to a persecution of the Church. These measures have no other object than to end the troubles caused by *L'Univers* and allow the situation here to return to normal. You know how much I have deplored the eccentricities and exaggerations of this journal. I am glad that this action has been taken, although few of the supporters of *L'Univers* agree with me. *Oportet Sapere, Sed sapere ad Sobrietatem* [One should taste but only in moderation]. This is the only way to accomplish the good in France, or anywhere else.

Étienne to Guarini, 23 February 1860, *Corrispondenza*, APGR.

¹⁷¹ Étienne to Guarini, 7 January 1855, *ibid*.

¹⁷² Étienne to Guarini, 14 April 1855, *ibid*.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*.

sentiments.¹⁷⁵ This finally happened at the moment fixed by providence...I am waiting for the same thing to happen again. God alone knows when or if this will happen. If, to the contrary, things do not work out in this way, I will conclude that my work is complete. I will know that it is God's will that I spend the rest of my life in solitude and peace...I assure you that my conscience will not allow me to say one word to cause a resolution. I will be happy if it is in providence's plan to award me this consolation. For more than thirty years, I have consecrated my life to the service of the Church. I have always done my best. If God now says 'enough,' this will cause me no pain.¹⁷⁶

Concerning the question of his attitudes toward the Holy See, Étienne noted, "I believe that I have made these sufficiently clear not only to the Congregation but to the public as well." He cited his circular of 1 November 1851, in which he had legislated the use of the Roman rite by the community in France.¹⁷⁷ Because of the national controversy over the imposition of the Roman rite, Étienne's decision received wide publicity.

The adoption of the Roman missal and breviary were key elements in the national ultramontane campaign.¹⁷⁸ During the Ancien Régime, many French dioceses had adopted their own rites, breviaries, and missals.¹⁷⁹ The Congregation's French houses customarily followed the liturgy of the dioceses where they were located. This was especially true at the various diocesan seminaries administered by the Congregation.¹⁸⁰ The mother house followed the rite of the archdiocese of Paris.¹⁸¹

Rosset admitted, "Monsieur Étienne personally felt a repugnance at abandoning the Parisian breviary. He shared the tastes of his contem-

¹⁷⁵ Auguste Devin recalled that on his return trip after the 1843 general assembly, François Leroy, the visitor of the Syrian province, had an audience with Gregory XVI. Devin says that the pontiff, after learning that Étienne and Leroy were cousins, "took the opportunity to say how highly he thought of him [Étienne]. Among other things he said 'Oh yes, before meeting the good M. Étienne I was prejudiced against him. I could not even stand to hear him spoken about, but since meeting him I have developed an appreciation for him.'" *Devin*, 315, *ACMP*.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 590-96. The 1849 general assembly authorized the superior general to take this action. Although this edict went into effect on 1 January 1852, full compliance by the French did not come until 1868. In the diocesan seminaries conducted by the French provinces, the community continued to follow the diocesan rites until these were no longer allowed.

¹⁷⁸ See Gough, *Ultramontane Campaign*, 119-30, 163-80.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 120-21. According to Austin Gough, at the time of the Empire and the Bourbon Restoration eighteen French dioceses adopted the Roman rite, thirty-five created their own rite by combining traditions, and twenty-seven copied some other Gallican rite.

¹⁸⁰ At the time of the controversy over the Gallican rites versus the Roman rite, the Congregation administered the following French diocesan seminaries: Amiens, Carcassonne, Angoulême, Cahors, Châlons, Évreux, Kouba, Algeria, La Rochelle, Montpellier, Saint-Flour, and Sens. See *Circulaires*, 3: 616-17.

¹⁸¹ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 342-43.

poraries. He sincerely admired this breviary's happy choice of the most beautiful passages of scripture and the Fathers. He admired its elegant hymns and appreciated the fact that it severely limited its use of legends. In his mind, the Roman rite did not share these benefits. Above all, he loved the pompous ceremonies of the Parisian rite that he knew so well. He performed them at Saint-Lazare with grace and majesty."¹⁸²

The public "ultramontane" tone Étienne adopted in his 1851 circular is of great interest.

Messieurs and dear confreres, I thank the Lord that in reestablishing the Roman liturgy I have completed the last detail of the restoration of regularity throughout the company. Now there is no article of our holy rules that we do not observe in every province.¹⁸³ In having this last irregularity disappear we have finished repairing all the changes that the evils of the times imposed on the edifice erected by Saint Vincent. From now on, it will appear as it did when it left his hands...I also thank the Lord for having reserved for me the honor of reasserting this precious link between the company and the Holy See...In effect, it is not just by the profession of the same faith that one is united with the Vicar of Jesus Christ. It is also necessary that one pray with him, offering the same sacrifice of praise and supplications that he does. This must be done to share in the treasury of spiritual riches that are at his disposal. His mission is not limited to teaching us the dogmas that we must believe and the morality that we must practice to arrive at eternal life. It also belongs to him to teach us how God expects us to pray, so that he will answer our prayers...Does not our company's existence depend upon the Holy See? Who gave Saint Vincent's work its distinctive character by the approval and consecration of its rules? Who has conferred the privileges that it possesses? Is it not from the Sovereign Pontiff that we possess all these advantages? Is it not evident that the community has prospered over the last two hundred years of its existence because of this foundation? Also, is it not obvious that its future depends on its fidelity and its determination to remain on the unshakable foundation of its close union with the Apostolic See? After the unity of faith, what tie is more solid than having the same prayer as he? What profession of our gratitude and devotion could be more characteristic and more solemn?¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 344.

¹⁸³ Chapter X, paragraph 5, of the *Common Rules* states, "We should take the greatest care to pray the divine office properly. We pray it in the Roman rite and in common." For Vincent's comments on liturgical uniformity see his conference to the Priests of the Mission, 23 May 1569, Coste, *CED*, 12: 258-59.

¹⁸⁴ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 592.

Étienne told Guarini, "I assure you that it took courage on my part to take this action. My predecessors had always avoided it. No one knows how much I suffered in making this decision."¹⁸⁵

Étienne did not understand Rome's complaint that he did not visit there often enough and that he was staying away purposely. He told Guarini, "They accuse me of the crime of not visiting Rome often enough. No one pays any attention to the fact that Saint Vincent never visited Rome after the establishment of the Congregation nor did any of his successors set foot there until Monsieur Nozo. I, on the other hand have already visited there twice."¹⁸⁶ He suspected an ulterior motive to the Holy See's desire to have him visit Rome. He told Giovanni Guarini, "I believe that I am justified in concluding that these personal questions are being used to hide another very grave question that involves the entire Congregation."¹⁸⁷

Finally, early in 1856, Guarini wrote to Étienne recommending that he come to Rome as soon as possible. The procurator general told Étienne that the pope had stated his wish so strongly that he interpreted it as coming very close to a formal order. Even with this, Étienne "could not see the point of making such a trip" and could not bring himself to go voluntarily.¹⁸⁸ The general submitted the question to his council. He said that he would "blindly follow their decision."¹⁸⁹ At its meeting on 7 January, the council decided "that in view of the Holy Father's insistence, the superior general should make the trip to Rome as soon as possible."¹⁹⁰

On 19 February, Étienne had his audience with Pius IX. According to Rosset's account "he had the opportunity to address the important question of the change of his residence."¹⁹¹ The pope greeted the general by saying, "Ah yes, Monsieur Étienne, you are very reluctant to come and reside among us!" Rosset quotes Étienne as replying, "Most Holy Father, I personally would consider it a true honor and a great favor to reside near Your Holiness. However, as superior general, I would be desolated if you obliged me to do so. In my mind, this measure would be the death blow for Saint Vincent's two families." Étienne repeated the standard defense for keeping the seat of the superior general at Paris. Rosset records that the pope "did not press

¹⁸⁵ Étienne to Guarini, 14 April 1855, *Corrispondenza*, APGR.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Étienne to Guarini, 5 January 1856, *Corrispondenza*, APGR.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *General Council Minutes*, 2: 176, ACGR.

¹⁹¹ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 352.

the point and immediately moved onto another subject."¹⁹²

The pope next discussed the "accusations" made against Étienne.¹⁹³ Pius IX told him, "in the past I believed that these reproaches were true. However, since then, someone has spoken to me about you in another sense, and I have changed my opinion."¹⁹⁴ Étienne then gave the pope a complete justification of his conduct. According to Rosset, "these explanations appeared to satisfy the Holy Father entirely."¹⁹⁵

On 3 March, before departing Rome, Étienne had a second audience with Pius IX. Afterward he wrote to Jean-Marie Aladel in Paris, "I wanted to write you a few lines before leaving Rome. I just had my final audience with the pope...Pius IX could not have been more affectionate. He invited me to be seated. This mark of favor astonished everyone. There are no unsettled questions left between us. We parted as if we were the best friends in the world...Thus, another crisis has ended...I am leaving Rome with my heart relieved and content."¹⁹⁶ Rosset commented on this important turning point, "Thus ended this unfortunate affair whose unexpected resolution caused such a profound joy throughout the Congregation. The pope never again lost his good dispositions. If he still had some suspicion about the Lazarist superior general's Gallicanism, this suspicion would one day dissipate entirely...when during the Vatican Council he [Étienne] had the perfect opportunity to manifest his true sentiments and those of the company."¹⁹⁷

During the fourteen years that elapsed between this 1856 crisis and Étienne's letter in favor of papal infallibility, many instances arose in which tension between the general and Rome surfaced. However, the situation never again reached the 1856 flash point. In January 1862, for example, Étienne learned only *post factum* of the Holy See's decision to conduct an apostolic visitation of the rebellious Spanish provinces. He wrote to Giovanni Guarini,

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 353.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* I would speculate that the person who might have spoken to Pius IX on Étienne's behalf was Cardinal Clément Villecourt, the former bishop of La Rochelle. Villecourt was an ultramontanist who had moved to a curial position in Rome. See Gough, *Ultramontane Campaign*, 224. At the end of 1855, Étienne wrote to Giovanni Guarini, "I am sending you a congratulatory letter for Mgr. Villecourt. I would ask you to deliver it to him personally. I am confident that he will greet you warmly. There has never been another French bishop, except Mgr. De Quélen, who has had as much affection for the double family as he. I hope that his sojourn in Rome will not change the dispositions of his heart toward us. I made no mention of my situation in my letter. I only want what is best for the double family, and I would voluntarily sacrifice everything that regards me personally." (15 December 1855, *Correspondenza*, APGR.)

¹⁹⁵ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 353.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 354.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 355.

Today, I was going to respond to the letter that I received from the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. However, I will follow your advice and not do so. I willingly accept this counsel. It would have been impossible for me to write without expressing my astonishment at the way I have been treated in this sort of affair. The Sacred Congregation has made a decision on an internal community matter. It has pronounced judgment in the pope's name. All this without asking the superior general to give his version of the situation and answer the allegations. If the Sacred Congregation thinks that such a decision will strengthen the authority of superiors and maintain obedience in communities it is very much mistaken. On the contrary, it has followed a policy that is sure to destroy them.¹⁹⁸

At the same time, Étienne was involved in a dispute with Cardinal Barnabò of Propaganda Fide over the administration of the community's missions in Ethiopia. Propaganda was insisting that the community's mission in this country was an "Italian" mission and must have Italian leadership.¹⁹⁹ The general again wrote to Giovanni Guarini.

¹⁹⁸ Étienne to Guarini, 11 January 1862, *ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ At the end of 1864, Étienne wrote to Guarini, "We now are on excellent terms with Cardinal Barnabò. He has given me the freedom to organize the Ethiopian mission without any reference to nationality. I have proposed a French confrere to him as vicar apostolic. He has written me most amiably concerning the mission in Mongolia. I think that from now on, we will understand each other." Étienne to Guarini, 10 December 1864, *ibid.* Étienne's hoped-for understanding between himself and Propaganda Fide never took place. On 1 June 1869, Étienne wrote to Giovanni Borgogno, "The good Cardinal Barnabò hurts himself more than me in the unpleasant sentiments he has expressed in my regard. Truly this is pitiable. How difficult it is to understand how a man in such an elevated position can so compromise his own dignity. It is a sign of decadence that must inspire the most lively apprehensions for the future."

On 25 June, Étienne again wrote to Borgogno,

I believe that your tender affection for me allows you to be too affected by what Cardinal Barnabò says to you. Never respond to him except by silence. Since he is determined to criticize my conduct, there is nothing you could say to influence him. Your silence will be more eloquent than any other response. Note that he has never said anything like this to me personally. He is speaking this way in an attempt to alter your esteem and affection for your superior general. God's spirit does not inspire such conduct.... All that we have to remember is that God takes care of us and guides our works.

Letters of 1 June, 25 June 1869, *ibid.*

Please make it clear to the cardinal that our Congregation is Catholic and that I do not distinguish between its various nationalities. Our foreign missions are neither "Italian," "French," nor "Spanish." They are simply "Catholic." Thus, I do not understand what he means by calling the Ethiopian mission "Italian." I must staff this mission, as I do all the rest, with the subjects that I have available. I cannot do the impossible. Where are we to find Italian missionaries for the Ethiopian mission? In the province of Rome? In the province of Turin or that of Naples? You yourself know that vocations in these provinces are not numerous and vocations to the foreign missions from these provinces are even less numerous. Besides all of this, what is the reason for this repugnance against French missionaries? Is it because they are less capable than the others of doing good? Is it because they are not true men of the Church? Is it because they do not know how to serve God's glory or to save souls? Is their devotion a crime? Truly, I do not know what to think of this ostracism. I want you to explain my position thoroughly. Either the Congregation has charge of this mission as all the rest of its missions, or the Sacred Congregation should confide it to someone else. We are not lacking in work to do.²⁰⁰

"You know that I value honesty and frankness. I do not know how to be diplomatic. I call things as I see them."²⁰¹

Étienne and Propaganda also routinely disagreed about the administration of the Congregation's extensive Chinese missions.

At the end of 1863, Guarini wrote Étienne that he again needed to come to Rome. The superior general replied, "I do not understand why the pope wants me to come... All that I want is to be forgotten and left alone."²⁰² In June 1864 Étienne had his papal audience. This audience led to the quick settlement of the irregular situation in Spain. Étienne told Jean-Marie Aladel that the pontiff "had been most gracious and most affectionate."²⁰³

It never occurred to Étienne that if he had gone to Rome more frequently the second Spanish crisis might have ended sooner or may

²⁰⁰ Étienne to Guarini, 12 April 1862, *ibid.*

²⁰¹ Étienne to Guarini, 13 June 1862, *ibid.*

²⁰² Étienne to Guarini, 19 December 1863, *ibid.*

²⁰³ Étienne to Aladel, 2 June 1864, *Étienne: Lettres*, ACMP. In this letter Étienne also told Aladel, "All that remains to be done is to go and see Cardinal Barnabò. I do not know if I will be successful. I have already gone to see him five times. If I do not see him today, I will not try again. His administration is pitiable. One can see him only in the mornings. He has been absent all this week for one reason or another. One must be very patient and persevering to see him." Étienne had managed to meet with the pope and the Cardinal Secretary of State during his stay in Rome. Cardinal Barnabò's unavailability must have been more than coincidental.

never have happened at all.²⁰⁴ As a Gallican in temperament, Étienne never felt comfortable visiting Rome. He was always relieved to leave and always hoped that it would be a long time before he had to come again. His claim that he was not diplomatic enough to deal with the Holy See and the Roman Curia was true. Yet his finely honed diplomatic skills never failed him in his relations with the French government or other governments.²⁰⁵ At best, his relations with the Holy See could not have been other than periodically tense and prone to mutual misunderstandings and recriminations.

²⁰⁴ At the height of the ultramontane crisis an Italian missionary, Msgr. Vincenzo Spaccapietra, suggested to Étienne that he consider spending one month a year in Rome (Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 351).

²⁰⁵ Devin gives many examples of the effectiveness of Étienne's diplomacy in dealing with the French government (*Devin*, 337-43, ACMP).



Apotheosis of Monsieur Étienne. Engraving commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of his entrance into the community.

Chapter 9

The Legacy of Jean-Baptiste Étienne

“Quelle puissance et quelle autorité!...
très catholique et très française.”¹

As Étienne drew his *Notice* to a close he took one final opportunity, “for posterity’s instruction,” to summarize the “precious lessons” contained “in the ensemble of providential circumstances that have marked the Company’s restoration.”²

With regard to the French Revolution, he noted that at the time the Congregation was like a tree “needing clipping and pruning” so that it could become as fertile as the “divine gardener” wanted. It was this divine-horticultural prerequisite that explained “the misfortunes and difficulties that surrounded its restoration.” God designed this pruning “to cut away any element that was foreign to its [the community’s] primitive purity.” Having undergone this process, the community would return to its primitive spirit and would exist exactly as it had “when Saint Vincent’s hands formed it.”³ Étienne commented that the “venerable old men” who led the Congregation in the restoration’s first phase had not understood this divine requirement.⁴ These men “dreamed only of reestablishing the Congregation as it was when it was swept away by the revolution.”⁵ It was this mistaken dream “that explained the sterility of their efforts over many years to restore life and fruitfulness” to the community.⁶ The Lazarists to whom Étienne refers may or may not have been as nostalgic for the past as he portrayed. They were, however, too tired and too old to lead the community as the nineteenth century entered

¹ Obituary notice appearing in the 18 March edition of *L’Union*, 38. *Étienne: Biographie*, C 40, II 2°, W 9, ACMP. This file contains the obituary notices that appeared in major newspapers.

² *Étienne, Notice*, 64.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁵ *Ibid.* See for example the circular of Charles-Emmanuel Verbert of 6 October 1816, where he says, “Hasten to join me and emerge from our captivity to reenter the soil of our fathers. Let us reconstruct the temple that they sanctified by their presence and which impious hands have reduced to a pile of scattered ruins.” Verbert, *Circulaires*, 2: 297.

⁶ *Ibid.*

its second quarter.⁷

Étienne "could easily see" the providential role of these senior missionaries.⁸ They served "as a link connecting the community's ancient traditions with the new existence to which Heaven destined it." He also concluded, however, that providence had reserved "to the next generation" [his own generation] the task of introducing the community "to the career opened before it." This new generation was to lead the community "in the accomplishment of its beautiful destinies."⁹

Not unexpectedly, there existed a generation gap between those who came to adulthood before and after the French Revolution.¹⁰ In his study of the Restoration era, G. de Bertier de Sauvigny noted a common attitude among the ambitious young men of Étienne's generation. By the late 1820s, these young men were impatient to grasp the reins of economic, political, social, and religious power from "the leaders of the previous generation."¹¹ Fifty years later, Étienne recalled how in contrast to the "venerable old men," his generation "understood the

⁷For example this is what Pierre de Wailly wrote in his first circular in 1827,

Imagine my astonishment when His Holiness deigned to cast his eyes upon me to occupy the important position of superior general. After the fatigues of a long and painful exile and after arriving at an advanced age, I already had found myself bearing the heavy burden of being a local superior. I had no other thought than of ending my career in the peace of the Lord. Alas! How am I to occupy a place requiring so much wisdom, zeal, and virtue? What means will I find within myself to represent Saint Vincent and become one of his worthy successors? How can I embrace the care of two Companies that are so large and extended? Frightened by my weakness and my insufficiency, I at first judged that I was incapable of fulfilling the wishes of the sovereign pontiff. My first thought was to refuse the dignity which he had deigned to offer me and beg him to choose another who would be more worthy to succeed Saint Vincent. (De Wailly, *Circulaires*, 2: 413.)

In 1835, after his election, Dominique Salhorgne wrote, "Despite my prayers and my repeated pleas, despite my advanced age and my infirmities, a burden has been imposed upon me which only my fear of resisting the will of God has kept me from refusing. I admit to you that the sacrifice has been painful, and everything I think about increases my inquietude. Nevertheless, however great the sacrifice it is not beyond the strength of a true missionary." (Salhorgne, *Circulaires*, 2: 430.)

⁸Étienne, *Notice*, 65.

⁹*Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁰Bertier de Sauvigny noted for instance,

Thus in 1827, the Frenchmen who had been adults at the time of the French Revolution and who could regret the demise of the Ancien Régime or to have suffered from its abuses, only comprised one-ninth of the population. At the same time more than 25% of those who had lived under the Empire were also dead. One must take this into account in order to understand the rapidity of the transformation of public opinion from Louis XVIII to Charles X. The young men who were so enthusiastic for the cause of liberty in 1830 could not understand either how their fathers had accepted the imperial despotism nor the ease with which they had accepted the return of the Bourbons... The quarrels that had inflamed the generations that preceded them made no sense to them at all. With what scorn, the young Montalivet in 1827 spoke of "these old men filled with their old hostilities... these survivors of exile, anarchy, or despotism."

The author also cites a 1828 pamphlet entitled, *De la Gérocratie, ou de l'abus de la sagesse des vieillards dans le gouvernement de la France*, 238-39.

¹¹Bertier de Sauvigny, *Restauration*, 239.

future."¹² What his generation had sought was a "prosperity for the interests of the Church and the salvation of souls." What his generation had understood was that this could happen only through "a return to the primitive spirit." This return to the primitive spirit could come about only "through a fidelity to the teachings inspired by our Holy Founder."¹³

However, the importance of the primitive spirit was not a concern that was unique to Étienne and his generation. In 1832, Dominique Salhorgne wrote on this topic.¹⁴ He commented, "How has the Congregation survived to this day? We would be ungrateful if we did not thank our holy founder who has interceded powerfully for his two families. I firmly believe that he will continue to protect us as his children. He will do so if he sees that we imitate his virtues and share his spirit. This is the same spirit that animated his first collaborators. I know this to be the primitive spirit of our vocation."¹⁵

Salhorgne continued at a later point,

We know that our holy rules express the proper and distinctive spirit of our vocation. It is by an exact observance of them that we find this spirit...One cannot ignore that they are the work of a higher intelligence and the fruit of long experience. Their conformity with the counsels of perfection given us in the gospel requires us to esteem and respect them...I have always remembered the words spoken to me as I took vows. The assistant of our house of Saint-Lazare gave me a copy of the rules. Then he said, "Take these and behold the standard by which you will be judged."¹⁶

Salhorgne also went on to note, "some say that our rules do not oblige us to obey under the penalty of sin." Attacking this presumption, he asked,

Who says this? Not those fervent souls who do not neglect the observance of a single point of the rule! Not those who want to progress daily in virtue! These confreres know that fidelity in the smallest matter is the most efficacious way to ensure that one is faithful in great matters. Those who truly love their vocation and above all want its preservation do not say this. They are aware that the frequent violation of even the least provision can become a

¹² Étienne, *Notice*, 66.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Salhorgne, *Circulaires*, 2: 446-48. For other discussions of the "primitive spirit" by the postrevolutionary and Restoration vicars and superiors general see, for example, Sicardi, *Circulaires*, 2: 316-22; Baccari, *Circulaires*, 2: 372-78.

¹⁵ Salhorgne, *Circulaires*, 2: 446.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 447-48.

habit. If such a violation is habitual, it signals a relaxation that ruins one's vocation...What would become of our society if each person, full of confidence in his own judgment, decided that he had the right to neglect the practices that he considered unimportant? This person would soon have many imitators. Examples of relaxation of the rule are always contagious. As a result, these men soon discard the spiritual exercises established to nourish virtue. They no longer observe the most important rules. The institution's end is thus lost. This is what happens when one habitually and deliberately transgresses the rules under the pretext that they do not bind one under penalty of sin!¹⁷

Étienne believed that it was the attitude Salhorgne attacked that differentiated his generation from the older generation of missionaries. He claimed that his generation needed no persuasion to believe in the importance of this fidelity. He noted, "The new generation did not need any convincing. It believed this truth as if by instinct and put it into vigorous practice."¹⁸ Étienne pounced on this claim and said, "The secret of all that we have seen accomplished is here. This spirit will accomplish even more if future generations receive it and maintain it fervently."¹⁹

The second of Étienne's concluding lessons dealt with the nature of the relationship between the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity. Étienne claimed that "It was not until our era that the intimate union that must exist between our Company and that of the Daughters of Charity was apparent."²⁰ He said that previously the reason Saint Vincent "had established them under the one and same head was not understood."²¹ In a circular of 26 May 1844 to the missionaries Étienne commented, "From the moment I first became familiar with this interesting institution [the Daughters of Charity], I have understood the intimate, necessary, and complementary connection that exists between their functions and ours. I have understood that the spirit of our two companies is identical and that in reality the two families of Saint Vincent really form only one family. This family is under the same authority and has the same end: the glory of God and the salvation of the poor."²²

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 447.

¹⁸ Étienne, *Notice*, 66.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Étienne was completely ignorant of the fact that it had been Saint Louise de Marillac who had insisted, against Vincent's initial reluctance, that the superior general of the Congregation of the Mission should also serve as the superior general of the Daughters of Charity. Throughout his years as superior general of the Daughters of Charity, Étienne only rarely mentioned the co-foundress. This forgetfulness of the role of Louise de Marillac in the foundation of the Daughters of Charity was widespread until very recent times.

²² Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 55.

In a circular letter of 26 January 1870 to the Daughters of Charity, Étienne said,

Now the first means to secure to yourselves a glorious future is to keep a strong union with the Congregation of the Mission. This Congregation is your Mother since it gave birth to your Company. It has nourished it with its teachings and directed it in the path open before it. It has made you able to realize the most happy successes. By means of periodic retreats, visits, conferences, and other kinds of services you renew your primitive spirit. You then spread it abroad and maintain it in all your houses. Therefore, wonderful prosperity accompanies all your good works. This prosperity accompanies you to every part of the world. In this way you preserve yourselves in a state that enables you to accomplish the designs of God. It is by it, in a word, that the life-giving sap of the grace of your vocation circulates through all the branches of this tree of charity. These branches extend over various parts of the globe. In every climate they produce the same fruits of benediction and salvation. If you deprive these branches of this life-giving sap, you will soon see them wither away and perish. If your company were ever to separate from that of the Mission soon life would be extinct in its bosom. Instead of presenting a spectacle of edification, it would only present a spectacle of contentions, divisions, and scandals. Experience has proven this truth in too convincing a manner to admit any doubt about it.²³

In his *Notice*, Étienne said,

The two rivers of Charity come from the same source and flow next to each other each in their own courses traced by the Founder. Without mixing their waters, they each carry the elements of fertility within them. This enables them together to produce abundantly the fruits of salvation in the regions where they flow. The Company of the Mission, separate from the Daughters of Charity, is essentially incomplete. Missionaries, wherever they exist throughout the world, always feel the need to ask for the immediate assistance of the Daughters of Charity. They do this because they understand that without their assistance they would be powerless to obtain success in their works. For their part, the Daughters of Charity find their fecundity in that of the Mission.²⁴

Étienne concluded, "When one considers the wisdom of the arrangement by which these two families form but one and the ingenious

²³ *Circulars of the Superiors General to the Daughters of Charity*, Circular of 26 January 1870, 5, DRMA. Étienne comments on this point, "This is exactly what happened in 1809, when they were withdrawn from the authority of Saint Vincent's successor and were placed under episcopal authority. Five or six years was enough time to create such trouble and disorganization that if it had lasted much longer it would have infallibly led to their entire ruin." (*Notice*, 67.)

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

means by which they cooperate for a common end, one must recognize this as the most admirable result of Saint Vincent de Paul's genius."²⁵

The reason for this success was that "while the administration of each family is distinct, both receive direction from a common authority residing in Saint Vincent's successor." Respecting "the distinction of rights and respective obligations" prevented conflict and assured "a sincere union and mutual confidence" between the two branches of the one family of Saint Vincent. Étienne observed that "nothing is arbitrary in this, nothing is left to individual interpretation, or to the will of any individual. Everything and everyone submits "to the sovereign authority of the Rule."²⁶

This "wise and strong organization maintained for more than two hundred years" earned the Double Family, "the admiration of the world and of the Church." According to Étienne, it led Pope Pius IX to call it "a lasting miracle of Saint Vincent." One had to attribute "the present prosperity of our Double Family" to the reestablishment of the organization given it by Saint Vincent. Having accomplished this reestablishment guaranteed to the Double Family "the promise of grace and the protection of heaven."²⁷ Étienne further commented, "Thus, today we see ourselves as a well-disciplined army marching to

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

²⁶ Étienne summarized the principles of constitutional separation between the Daughters and the Missionaries in this way:

It is the superioress of the Daughters of Charity who conducts their Company together with the superior general. It is the Visitatrix who conducts her province together with a Director delegated by the superior general. The sister servant conducts her house.... Missionaries have received no delegation to take part in the administration of the Daughters of Charity. Their actions are limited only to the functions of their ministry which is to say confession, spiritual conferences, annual retreats. In order to fulfill these functions, they must first receive from the superior general a mandate to do so.... They cannot depart from these rules of conduct without disturbing the harmony established by hierarchical authority and without rendering their ministry sterile, odious and impossible. (*Ibid.*)

²⁷ *Ibid.*

combat the powers of men and of hell with the assurance of triumph.²⁸ No fear, no inquietude, no apprehension restrains us. Obedient to the authority that comes from God, we understand the truth of these words of Saint Vincent, 'let us attend well to the interests of God, and He will attend to ours.'²⁹

In Étienne's view, what was "truly marvelous" about the organization of the Double Family "was its power of assimilation."

The Double Family forms today a vast network that entwines all nationalities and makes of them only one, unique, family. It disengages them from their own particular habits and customs. It makes them speak the same language, although it is expressed in all their different idioms. Uniformity makes them live the same common life and fulfill their functions in the most diverse countries and climates. They obtain the same success in the most diverse conditions of existence. All this happens without the least repugnance but with happiness. From one pole to the other, the Missionaries and the Daughters of Charity turn their hearts and eyes unceasingly toward our two Maison-Mères. Here they receive direction and they follow their examples...Throughout the world, the uniformity of means assures the same success in realizing the same destinies. The only things that could paralyze this action and fecundity are nationalistic prejudice, an attention to worldly things, and merely human considerations. Uniformity has disengaged us from all these.³⁰

At the end of this Étienne could only ask rhetorically, "Does the history of the Church present the example of any other religious Institution that offers the same marvel?"³¹

Étienne noted that the "end of our institute to embrace the clergy

²⁸ The providential mission of the Daughters of Charity was, according to Étienne,

To spread over the whole world, an immense net of charity, to take a multitude of souls and lead them into the Savior's fold...to carry the light of truth amidst the darkness of heresy, to touch the hearts of infidels, to astonish, confound and convert those who are far away from the road of salvation...carrying an efficacious remedy to all the evils which afflict the world...regenerating nations fallen into the neglect of religious duties, and blinded by the delusions of ignorance and corruption...Lending in a word, a powerful cooperation to the laborers of the gospel, to combat every kind of error and exhibit to the infidels, with the view of bringing them to the true faith, that characteristic of religion which is at once most distinctive and the most capable of touching their hearts...In the present day you will save [the world] by charity.

Étienne to the Daughters of Charity, Circular letter of 27 September 1855, *D.C. Circulars*, DRMA, 1-2. Also, "21 March 1867, Conference on the Vows given by our most honored Father, M. Étienne superior general of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Daughters of Charity," *D.C. Conferences*, 68, DRMA.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

and peoples of the world with zeal" fit in exactly with the contemporary needs of the Church.³² Providence had already opened "a large door" for the Double Family's "great work in society's transformation and its return to the faith." Bishops and governments everywhere understood "the good done" by the Double Family. All indications were that this work of "regeneration" would continue and would grow. It was no less evident to Étienne that "the spirit of Saint Vincent is the means by which this will come about, because the spirit of Saint Vincent is the spirit of the gospel."³³

Their "great mission of salvation" required the members of the Double Family to "have no other rule of conduct than that which is found in Saint Vincent's teachings."³⁴ The first teaching of Saint Vincent, according to Étienne, was "never to take the initiative in any enterprise or in any work but to hold oneself always ready to follow the way shown by God's providential will." In all their activities, the Lazarists and sisters were to trust in the one who recommended, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice."³⁵ It was up to the "master of the vineyard" to choose the workers he wished to employ. He would then designate to each of them the tasks they were to complete.³⁶ This was the "essential condition for the success of both."³⁷

According to Étienne, Saint Vincent taught the necessity of leaving to God alone "the initiative of his works" and the necessity of avoiding "haste" in pursuing their accomplishment. Providence not only clearly establishes its goals but also provides the means to accomplish them *avec suavité*. The actions of providence "are always mysterious." Despite "our natural impatience" they require from us faith and confidence. When one finally learns to wait for providence, "our admiration grows as we soon see rapid progress." It is our responsibility to "plant and to water." It is reserved to providence to decide the yield, "in the interests of God's glory and the good of souls." God does not demand from us the success of our works, but only the contribution of our work and our devotion.³⁸

Étienne then asked the rhetorical question, "Over the last twenty years have we not seen the seeming sluggishness of providence revealed to be magnificently fruitful?" He also asked, "What unexpected events have furnished our two families the opportunity to operate prodigies of

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 71.

³⁵ Ibid., Matthew 6: 33.

³⁶ Ibid., Matthew 20: 1-16.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

devotion forgotten or unknown since their foundation!" Étienne's rhetoric continued,

What a beautiful scene they [the Double Family] presented to the world during the Crimean War, the wars in Italy, Mexico, and the United States.³⁹ Think of the increase of vocations that has swelled their ranks and allowed them to send many colonies of missionaries to foreign lands! Thus, they have spread throughout the world, to the great astonishment and admiration of all! What beautiful results Missionaries have accomplished in seminaries! What beautiful results Missionaries have obtained working in the missions whether at home or among the infidels and heretics! What beautiful results the Daughters of Charity have obtained in their hospitals, whether civil or military, in the midst of disease or on the battlefield! What beautiful results in their associations of the Children of Mary or that for Christian Mothers!⁴⁰ This beautiful harvest of salvation's fruits that we are seeing today is the result of thirty years of waiting, of labor, of suffering, and all kinds of trials.⁴¹

Étienne summarized by noting, "Thus providence has its plans and its means to arrive at the accomplishment of its ends. Our duty is to await the first, and to help the second. If we do this, our success is assured."⁴²

According to Étienne, Saint Vincent also recommended that "in the accomplishment of our mission we must use the same means as those used by our Savior. These include humility, modesty, and having the sole aim of obtaining God's glory without any selfish considerations or mere human interests." According to "the thought of our holy founder," if the company wanted "esteem and consideration" it should obtain them "by the good example of its virtues and not by any human means." In line with this principle, the founder taught that the community should avoid all publicity. If providence wanted the public to know of the "fame of the Congregation and the results of its works it knew better how to inform them." Again, according to Étienne, experience had proved the truth of this teaching. He noted, "Up to this

³⁹ Here, Étienne is referring to the wartime service of Lazarists as chaplains and sisters as battlefield nurses. For an account of the Crimean War services see Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 357-72. For an account of the service in the Italian wars see, for example, *Annales*, 24 (1859): 444. For an account of the service in Mexico see *Annales*, 28 (1863): 324-30. For an account of the nursing of the Daughters of Charity during the American Civil War see *Annales*, 28 (1863): 306, 313. See also Hannefin, *Daughters of the Church*, 107-38.

⁴⁰ Wherever Daughters of Charity were established they set up devotional societies for children under the patronage of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. They also specialized in forming Christian mothers. For example see the description of the work of the famous Sister Rosalie Rendu, D.C. in Paris during this era, Armand de Melun, *Life of Sister Rosalie, A Sister of Charity*, trans. Joseph D. Fallon (Norwood: 1915).

⁴¹ Étienne, *Notice*, 72.

⁴² *Ibid.*

day we have not publicized the success of our works, yet all over the world everyone knows them. From everywhere requests come for our missionaries and the Daughters of Charity. If we want the tree of our Double Family to continue to grow...it is necessary that its roots remain hidden in the soil of its humility."⁴³

In Étienne's mind, another corollary of this principle was that the Double Family was to remain "simple and modest, enemies of all controversy, pretension, and strangers to all the opinions that divide men." The result of this conduct would be that, "We will obtain the sympathies of all people. All political parties will consider us inoffensive. Thus, we will not offend any form of government. You can easily see that this policy will preserve us from all opposition by the world."⁴⁴ This simplicity will attract the hearts and good will of men. It will provide a power of persuasion that will have the most happy results."⁴⁵

This was how, according to Étienne, the Lord "had attracted a people avid to hear his words and profit from his teachings."⁴⁶ The Pharisees and the high priests were the Lord's only enemies because his life and his teachings "were the condemnations of their pride and ambition." Without a doubt, Étienne observed, "as the Lord predicted we will also experience calumny as he did." If others misunderstand "our attitude and manner of judging," we will experience opposition from those who should sustain and defend us. Like the Lord, the Congregation would have "to suffer these tribulations in silence and patiently endure all the attacks directed against us." Here again, Étienne returned to one of his favorite quotations from Saint Vincent: "Calumny always turns out to be to the advantage of the one who accepts it in silence, and human opposition is an indication of the blessings and the success that God has reserved for us."⁴⁷ Because of this, the Double Family was to attach "little importance" to what the world thought or said about it. It was only to be concerned about edifying the world by its wise, reserved, and modest conduct "having no other ambition than that of doing good throughout the world." In the midst of the "vicissitudes of humanity" Étienne reminded his readers of the reassurance offered by Christ, "Take courage. I have conquered the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ The Congregation's almost one hundred year Gallican alliance with the French government ended in 1902 with the disavowal of the 1801 concordat and the bitter separation of Church and state under Waldeck-Rousseau. Twenty six of the Congregation's thirty houses in France were suppressed, and almost half of the Lazarists left the country to work in the foreign missions. See Sylvestre, *French Provinces*, 364.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

world."⁴⁸

Étienne cited the Double Family's contemporary experience in the newly united Italy to demonstrate the "power of this principle." "In Italy where the Revolution has suppressed all religious institutions, we see the Daughters of Charity multiply and establish themselves everywhere on these ruins. On the other hand, the Missionaries despoiled of their goods and expelled from their houses tranquilly continue the work of the country missions and the regeneration of the clergy. Both enjoy the people's affection and the consideration of the authorities. They accomplish their double mission in calm and in peace. They patiently await better times."⁴⁹

According to Étienne, the same would be true "in all the other countries of the world if the teachings of Saint Vincent alone inspire our conduct." Since the spirit of Saint Vincent was synonymous with the spirit of the gospel, like the gospel, it would continue through the centuries. Revolutions could neither defeat it nor affect its "power in action and in word."⁵⁰

Étienne: "The timid and obscure successor of Saint Vincent"

Étienne described himself in one place as the "timid and obscure" successor of Saint Vincent.⁵¹ He more aptly described himself elsewhere as the "dépositaire" of the founder's "heritage."⁵² As superior general, he continually looked to his understanding of Saint Vincent's teachings, the community's charismatic and Gallican constitutional roots and its "pious customs and traditions."⁵³ In these, and in the dogmas of Catholicism, he found his deposit of eternal, unchanging, and unchangeable truths.

Étienne also looked back to the experiences of the community's prerevolutionary, revolutionary, Napoleonic, and schismatic eras. From these he learned providential "lessons" concerning the consequences of the community's straying away from its "primitive spirit." From his vantage point at 95 rue de Sèvres, overlooking the entire world, he saw the "torrent of democracy" that was giving birth in such pain and chaos to "modern times."⁵⁴ Étienne recreated and refounded the Double Family of Saint Vincent specifically for these "modern times." Étienne

⁴⁸ John 16: 33.

⁴⁹ Étienne, *Notice*, 74.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Étienne, *Discours*, 3, ACFM.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵³ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 390.

⁵⁴ Étienne, *Discours*, 7, ACFM.

believed that a providential worldwide destiny awaited the Double Family at the nexus of Church, state, and empire. Just as fulfilling this providential mission required certain kinds of internal behaviors from the Congregation, it also required certain external behaviors. Étienne understood the difficult challenges faced by the foreign missions in the hostile environments of China, the Levant, or Ethiopia. He knew of the difficult conditions created for the Church throughout Europe and Latin America by liberal, anticlerical, nationalistic revolutions and unification movements.⁵⁵ He understood and accepted the fact that the political future of the world lie in democracy. Étienne believed that the development of a successful French model of conservative reconciliation between a democratic state and the Church was the solution to the "illusions that are the source of the world's troubles."⁵⁶

At the end of his 1864 *Discours*, Étienne spoke of the "dawn of a new day for religion and society."⁵⁷ He characteristically prayed for Saint Vincent's continued intercession. He prayed for God's blessing on "our immortal pontiff" and "our magnanimous Emperor."⁵⁸ Finally, he prayed, "Bless our dear France that you have always loved, whose political influence is so formidable because it possesses such an immense power for good. It uses this power to agitate the world under the protection of providence to force it to become better."⁵⁹

The original Napoleonic legal restoration of the Double Family in France was solely based on the utility of its functions. Étienne went to great pains to take every opportunity to prove the disinterestedness, utility, and loyalty of the Double Family to successive French governments.⁶⁰ He accomplished this goal. He believed that the government, through its intimate relations with the Lazarists and Daughters of Charity, would come, and was coming, to understand the natural link between "the glory of France and the triumph of religion."⁶¹ Étienne believed that this French accomplishment could then be repeated throughout the world. Establishing this alliance, however, demanded a code of external behavior from the

⁵⁵ For example, near the end of his life, in 1873 the Kulturkampf in newly united Germany resulted in the suppression of the Prussian province. Instead of becoming members of the diocesan clergy the members of the province went into exile in France. The Germans put themselves at the superior general's disposal, and he reassigned them throughout Europe and the foreign missions. See Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 578-79.

⁵⁶ Étienne, *Discours*, 26, ACMP.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁶⁰ See, for example, *Devin*, 318-23, ACMP.

⁶¹ Étienne, *Discours*, 19, ACMP.

community.⁶² The 1849 general assembly established a set of detailed rules of office.⁶³ Étienne reported this development in his annual circular.

The assembly understood the importance of conserving that character of the community that makes it universally acceptable and capable of doing good namely of being a stranger to all politics and political questions. This character attracts the goodwill of all parties, because it embraces none of them. To the present this has been our safeguard in the midst of all the events that have upset the world and destroyed so many institutions...The assembly believed that the existence of the Congregation depends upon this observance. Given the present dangers and perils it believed it was necessary to lay out a code of conduct.⁶⁴

The assembly directed the Lazarists to “abstain from taking part in political elections” or from being elected “to a political assembly.”⁶⁵ They could not belong to political parties nor speak at political rallies. The assembly established restrictions on the dangerous “abuse” of the purchase and reading of newspapers and subscribing to journals. Étienne told superiors “to use all the means in your power to convince the missionaries placed under your conduct to be very prudent in their discussions with outsiders. They are always to be neutral on political questions. Above all, in their preaching they are to avoid all allusion and all insinuation in such matters.”⁶⁶

In the midst of everything else, Jean-Baptiste Étienne never lost sight of the reason for the Double Family’s existence in Church and society: “God’s glory and the salvation of souls.”⁶⁷ He worked to see that the Double Family “spread a charitable net that will embrace the entire world, so that no suffering is left unattended, and no need is left without relief.”⁶⁸ He also said, “It is not enough for us to devote ourselves to the material assistance of peoples. Thus, we must also consider their moral needs, rehabilitate them, and make them worthy of their dignity as people and as Christians...In a word, we must see that the light of Christian progress penetrates everywhere even to the

⁶² Étienne reminded the members of the community that failures in this regard had caused troubles in the province of Lombardy in the early 1850s. The duke of Parma felt that missionaries at the Collegio Alberoni in Piacenza were supporting the incorporation of the duchy into a unified Italy. He eventually expelled them from his lands and confiscated the college. Only the united efforts of the Holy See and the French government got this decision rescinded. When the duke again allowed the Congregation to take over administration of the college, Étienne replaced all the former teachers and brought in a Lazarist from the province of Naples as superior. For more information see, Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 312-26.

⁶³ *Acta XX*, 846-47, ACGR.

⁶⁴ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 137.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3: 138-39.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 360.

⁶⁸ Étienne, *Discours*, 18, ACMP.

most obscure cottage."⁶⁹ Adrien Dansette has noted that "the great religious work of the nineteenth century is a work of reconstruction."⁷⁰ Étienne once said, "One thought sustains my confidence. This is that he who brought the Congregation into being is the same one who will lead it to the accomplishment of its destinies. He will dispose events and circumstances so that these will be realized completely."⁷¹

Étienne's understanding and exercise of his role as superior general was paternalistic.⁷² He viewed himself as the father, in the truest sense of the word, of the Double Family of Saint Vincent and of each of its members.⁷³ Louis DeBonald, in his contemporary works describing the traditionalist understanding of the paternal role in family and society, equated the person of a father with "power" that is "one, perpetual, independent, and definitive."⁷⁴ He defined the "power" of a father in this context as "the will and the actions that will produce, conserve, and develop the intelligence of the child. It teaches a child all that it needs to know for its best interests."⁷⁵

With a paternalistic view of authority, it is not surprising that Étienne believed that the greatest evil of the "poisoned atmosphere" of his age and the source of all its problems was pride and "a spirit of independence that seeks to censure all authority."⁷⁶ He reflected, "Oh, how rare it is today to find missionaries who see only God in their superiors and his will in theirs. Missionaries who receive their wise advice and sage observations as coming from heaven. Missionaries who fill their hearts with sentiments of filial confidence. Saint Vincent requires a familial spirit from his children; a spirit that will enable them to lovingly put themselves into the hands of their superiors, as a tool in the hands of a workman."⁷⁷

A spirit of filial obedience was the "vital principle of the community's life."⁷⁸ Étienne appealed to the missionaries,

I thus implore you, messieurs and my very dear brothers, because of the love that you bear for the company. Have a filial respect for superiors. Banish from your conversations anything that would criticize their conduct or their administration. Preserve your spirits

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁰ Dansette, *Histoire Religieuse*, 1: 488.

⁷¹ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 380.

⁷² For background to Étienne's traditionalist paternalism see, for example, Bonald's *Démonstration Philosophique du principe constitutif de la société, suivie de Méditations Politiques tirées de l'évangile* (Paris: Adrien Le Clerc, 1830).

⁷³ See, for example, Devin, "Ses rapports particuliers avec les Missionnaires," 344-51. See also, "Ses rapports particuliers avec les Filles de la Charité," 352-61, ACMP.

⁷⁴ Bonald, *Démonstration*, 101-02.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 93-94.

⁷⁶ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 140.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3: 141.

and your hearts from all thoughts, all judgments, all reflections that would reflect on the exercise of their authority! Persuade yourselves, as Saint Vincent taught us, that God gives superiors the graces necessary to judge and to lead; and since you have not been given these graces it is dangerous for you to judge those who have. I assure you that in reasserting these ties of fraternal charity you will see that the yoke of the Lord will become sweet and light.⁷⁹

Étienne possessed “paternal tenderness” for those who accepted this model of paternal authority.⁸⁰ However, he considered those who resisted or opposed this authority by saying “I will not submit,”⁸¹ to be “unworthy children who have declared themselves to be the enemies of his [Saint Vincent’s] work.”⁸² Étienne treated them as such.

In his extensive biographical notes, Auguste Devin, C.M., has left a revealing portrait of his uncle. According to Devin, Étienne “paid close attention to the smallest details of community life.”⁸³ Whether in the kitchen, sacristy, or gardens of the mother house, or in his administration as general, no detail was too small to escape his daily, personal notice. The importance that Étienne placed on order, and its integral connection to uniformity, unity and “fecundity” cannot be emphasized enough. Not content with the rules provided for the Congregation by the constitutions, the Common Rules, the decrees of the general assemblies, and the ordinances of the superiors general, Étienne supervised the establishment of numerous mind-numbing “directories” and “rules of office.”⁸⁴

Beginning in the 1840s, succeeding general assemblies authorized definitive directories for each of the Congregation’s apostolates.⁸⁵ According to Étienne, the absolute uniformity required by Saint Vincent was not only a matter of “a way of living but also of thinking, speaking, and doing.”⁸⁶ He also noted that a community “all of whose actions, and all of whose movements are directed by uniformity appears to the world as the army prepared for battle spoken of in scripture.”⁸⁷ In order for the Congregation “to be capable of worthily

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Devin, 344, ACMP.

⁸¹ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 141.

⁸² Étienne, *Notice*, 54.

⁸³ Devin, 313.

⁸⁴ The 1843 general assembly authorized the publication of the decrees of the general assemblies and ordinances of the superiors general. Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 139.

⁸⁵ Directories were produced for the missions, parishes, and minor and major seminaries. See *Acta XX. Conventus Generalis Congregationis Missionis, 1849, 841-861, ACGR.*

⁸⁶ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 97.

⁸⁷ Ibid. Numbers 32: 27.

fulfilling the career opening before it in God's Church it is necessary that its members follow a uniform direction in their ministries, so that they will be unified not just in spirit but in action."⁸⁸

The general assembly of 1849 approved the directory for the grands séminaires, and made its use obligatory in the Congregation's seminaries throughout the world.⁸⁹ To accompany the various *Directoires*, the 1849 general assembly approved a set of "Rules for the various offices and various functions of our Institute."⁹⁰ The general assembly of 1843 had entrusted Étienne with the task of reviewing these rules. He was to make "those alterations that the change of times and circumstances and the actual needs of the Congregation require."⁹¹ Étienne explained that following these rules to the letter would "assure order in community houses, establish uniformity in the exercise of our functions, and fix in a precise manner the relations of inferiors with those who occupy the various levels of hierarchical authority and the duties of each."⁹²

Étienne noted that while the Common Rules and constitutions "by their very nature are unchangeable," "proper authority" could adapt the rules of office as needed.⁹³ In preparation for the 1849 assembly, Étienne had sent each house a copy of his proposed changes in the rules of office. He submitted this draft and the responses from the houses to the assembly. Étienne noted,

The assembly examined this draft with all the attention and solicitude that such a work deserves...How important it is for the success of our works that these rules are uniformly observed and that from now on each missionary clearly understands the obligations imposed upon his conscience in the fulfillment of the various responsibilities he is called upon to fulfill...Now, we have filled a lacuna that has existed since the restoration of our Congregation...In fixing these rules of office the general assembly of 1849 has completed the reconstruction of Saint Vincent's edifice.⁹⁴

The three volume set of rules of office approved by the 1849 general assembly included those for the visitor, the provincial procurator, the director of the internal seminary, the director of students, the prefect of studies, professors, scholastics, local superiors, local procu-

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ *Acta XX*, 852, ACGR.

⁹⁰ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 138.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 3: 138-39.

⁹³ Ibid., 3: 139.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

rators, and a long list of others.⁹⁵ Every person, every officeholder, in the Congregation had a detailed set of rules to follow. A provincial treasurer in China had the same rules to follow as a provincial treasurer in Mexico or France. These rules of office extended even to the lay brothers who had care of the community laundries and garbage. Everyone had a place. Everyone knew his place. Everyone was in his place. Order was thus guaranteed to reign throughout the community. Étienne once told the brother gardener at the mother house, "Do your best, but do not worry about arranging things to be beautiful, arrange them simply to be orderly."⁹⁶

As evidenced by the contents of his *Notice*, Étienne spent his entire career as superior general establishing a comprehensive, conservative, authoritarian, paternalistic, and mythic "ultramontane" culture and ecclesiology within the Double Family. However, in Étienne's Vincentian-centric "ultramontanism," France, Paris, the mother house, the "primitive spirit," and the person of the superior general as the successor of Saint Vincent substituted for Italy, Rome, the Vatican, ultramontanism, and the person of the Supreme Pontiff as the successor of Saint Peter. Just as Pius IX wanted all eyes and hearts of the Catholic world focused first on Rome, Étienne wanted all eyes and hearts of the Vincentian world focused first on Paris. The emphasis of Pius IX on hierarchical authority, obedience, unity, uniformity, clarity, and order all were understood, repeated, and carried out internally by Étienne through his efforts to restore the community's "primitive spirit."⁹⁷

In 1852, the embattled Gallican bishops and Sulpicians published a detailed memorandum "analyzing and defending the fundamental Gallican doctrine on the rights of national churches."⁹⁸ The memorandum was entitled, *Sur la situation présente de l'Église gallicane relativement au droit coutumier: Mémoire adressé à l'Épiscopat*. The authors acknowledged that the pope possessed a primacy of jurisdiction in the church and a primacy of honor. As Austin Gough notes, however, they also came close to "decentralism" with their answer to the question of "What, then, stopped the papacy from governing national churches directly?"⁹⁹ They answered that what stopped the papacy was

the existence of customary law, hallowed by centuries of harmonious

⁹⁵ *Acta XX*, 845, ACGR. See also *Regulæ Officiorum Congregationis Missionis, a Conventu generali vicesimo revisæ et approbatæ*, 3 vols. (Paris: Excudebant Ad Le Clerc et Soc., 1850).

⁹⁶ *Devin*, 313, ACMP.

⁹⁷ See, for example, Étienne's 1867 circular. *Circulaires*, 3: 397-98.

⁹⁸ Gough, *Ultramontane Campaign*, 190.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

and agreeable practice, under which bishops admitted the right of the Pope to act in matters of wide importance, and Rome agreed that the local bishop was the best judge of ordinary affairs and should not be overridden without exceptional cause. This balance was what made a centralized religion acceptable to local people anywhere in the world: unity of fundamentals must be flexible enough to contain local variations in customs, ceremonial, and administration, and French bishops in particular must have the right not to receive rules made at Rome, made perhaps to solve Italian problems, which would cause severe difficulties if put into force in France...Authorities...were marshaled to show that local usage had the force of law in the Church if it were not manifestly immoral, was followed by a majority of the faithful, and was of reasonable antiquity.¹⁰⁰

Étienne always acknowledged the Pope's authority in "matters of wide importance in the Church." As a Gallican, he also believed that Rome should acknowledge that he as superior general, together with the community's general assemblies, was the best judge of conducting the ordinary administration of the community and its missions. As such, he should not be overridden or interfered with, without exceptional cause.¹⁰¹ The liberal-Gallican notion that a "unity of fundamentals must be flexible enough to contain local variations in customs, ceremonial, and administration" was anathema to Étienne. As we have seen, he rejected the idea that the Congregation's provinces should or could adapt the community's customs and traditions to the exigencies of local conditions.

Jean-Baptiste Étienne was to the Double Family of Saint Vincent what Pius IX was to the universal Church. The community created by Étienne and the general assemblies of his era parallels the Church created by Pius IX and the First Vatican Council. The understanding reached between these two looming figures was a tenuous one. Pius IX understood Étienne's Gallicanism, and as much as he despised it he generally accepted the realities of the Congregation's special status and protected relationship with the French government. Étienne, for his part, never understood contemporary ultramontane cultural and devotional attitudes with their affected affinity for all things Roman. However, when it came to hierarchical authority, traditionalistic paternalism, simplistic theology, and unity achieved through order and absolute uniformity, both spoke the same language.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ After 1843, the papacy consistently supported Étienne's authority in his struggles with the Spaniards and Italians. It even made broad concessions to him in his administration of the foreign missions.

Étienne: "I find myself facing death."

The spiritual testament that Étienne wrote at the end of his annual retreat in October 1871 is self-revelatory.¹⁰² Étienne began by noting, "I find myself at the end of my annual retreat. Perhaps this will be the last of my life. Facing death, I sense a need to write this farewell to the members of the little Company of the Mission." Étienne begged the community members' pardon for his many "iniquities." He asked forgiveness "for the bad example" that he had given and for any pain that he had caused anyone. Finally, he asked pardon for the losses he had caused to the Congregation, "whether spiritual or temporal," because of his mistakes in office.¹⁰³ These sentiments show Étienne's awareness of the shadow side of his life and his generalate.

Étienne confessed to being "confused by the respect, the confidence, and the affection" with which the members of the community surrounded him.¹⁰⁴ He said he could only understand these expressions by seeing them as representing the "spirit of faith" that the community had in the office of superior general rather than in him personally.¹⁰⁵ Étienne said, "I recognize, and I have always recognized, that I have

¹⁰² In his biography, Rosset, published this spiritual testament for the first time. See *Vie Étienne*, 566.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* In his later years, a cult of personality surrounded Étienne. The highpoint of this was the celebration of his fiftieth anniversary. One commemorative card contained the following sentiments:

L'infirmes et l'orphelin en lui trouvent un père,
Du pauvre et de la veuve il est le protecteur;
D'innombrables bienfaits remplissent sa carrière:
C'est que Vincent de Paul vit en son successeur.

Pour sa double famille il est brûlant de zèle,
Il lui donne et son cœur et ses soins assidus;
Sans relâche il travaille à la rendre fidèle
Aux plus parfaits conseils enseignés par Jésus.

Partout où le soleil fait briller sa lumière,
Vous voyez ses enfants, pleins d'une noble ardeur,
Former au saint amour l'élu du sanctuaire,
Secourir l'indigent, convertir le pécheur.

Dieu lui donne en partage avec sagesse et force,
Paternelle bonté, ravissante douceur,
Douceur qui lui tient lieu d'industrielle amour
Pour attirer les cœurs au culte du Seigneur.

Guide qui nous conduis
Vers le céleste empire,
Père qui nous chéris
Plus qu'on ne saurait dire,
Ah! daigne du Seigneur
La tendresse infinie
Pour notre vrais honneur
Te prolonger la vie!!!

See, *Étienne: Biographie*, C 40, II 1°, Photographies et Images, ACMP.

¹⁰⁵ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 566.

been unworthy to occupy the place of Saint Vincent."¹⁰⁶ He felt that his many faults revealed "how little I am filled with the spirit of our holy founder." Étienne also recognized the effects of "the mediocrity of my talents, the obscurity of my birth, the incompleteness of my education, and the weak and indecisive nature of my character."¹⁰⁷ Over the years, any enemy of Étienne would have found much here to agree with.

In light of his many faults and failings, Étienne again confessed "with the sincerity of my heart that I would be desolated if anyone attributed the least part" of the Congregation's successes during my generalate to me personally. He believed that his failings had been "true obstacles" to the execution of "the designs of providence for the children of Saint Vincent." Therefore, as he had stated repeatedly, "God alone" was responsible for the fact that vocations to the Congregation had increased greatly and the community's works "had become numerous and prosperous."¹⁰⁸

Étienne's only acknowledgment of a positive personal trait was his lifelong "ardent love for the Company," and its members. The "only true joy" he experienced in his life was "the community's successes." He believed that the two central convictions of his life had been gifts from God. The first conviction was that God had reserved a great destiny for the Company in the Church. Because he had believed this with all his heart, he said that he had found his work as general to be "so rewarding." This was also the reason that he "was so happy" as general even with "the fatigue and concerns" that came with his responsibilities.¹⁰⁹

The second grace that Étienne felt God had given him was "the intimate conviction that the Congregation's existence, prosperity, and future depended on its fidelity to its primitive spirit and to Saint Vincent's rules and teachings."¹¹⁰ He repeated that his belief in this insight was so strong that he always had preferred "to see the Congregation suppressed" than for it to permit the least change in its constitutions.¹¹¹ He rejoiced that he could say that after two hundred years the handiwork of Saint Vincent "had not undergone the least alteration or change."¹¹²

The century's revolutions and troubles had never frightened him, since he knew they were always "the means used by providence to enlarge the Community's mission and give it new elements of pros-

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 566-67.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 567-68.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 568. Étienne referred to even the suggestion of making any change in the constitutions or Common Rules as a "form of heresy." See, for example, Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 136.

¹¹² Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 567-68.

perity." Since it did not have to worry about external threats, Étienne believed that "the Company's future existence would be assured if it faithfully observed its rules, customs, and constitutions." He predicted that if the community ever descended into "decadence" it could trace this sad end back to the moment when it first "modified or neglected" its primitive spirit. He left these two convictions to his successor "as a precious legacy." Finally, Étienne "pleaded" with his confreres to join with the new superior general to see that this terrible fate never befell the community.¹¹³

"His thoughts are not our thoughts," this quotation from the prophet Isaiah formed the theme of Étienne's 1871 New Year's circular letter.¹¹⁴ The general wrote from Brussels. Étienne had fled to Belgium following France's startling six-week defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. On 15 July 1870, France had declared war on Prussia. By the end of July, the Prussians were deep in French territory. Meanwhile in Paris, the celebrations for Étienne's anniversary took place as planned on 4 August. The following day, however, the Prussians defeated the French armies at Wissembourg. August was a month "of continual disasters" for the French culminating with the defeat at Sedan and the capture of Napoleon III on 2 September.¹¹⁵ In Paris, the Third Republic was declared and an emergency government of national defense established. On 5 September, as the Prussians began their march on the capital, Étienne fled the city.¹¹⁶ The four-month Prussian siege began soon after. Paris surrendered on 28 January 1871. The combatants signed a peace treaty on 10 May, in Frankfurt.¹¹⁷ The bloody Commune broke out in Paris at the end of March and continued for two months. In July 1871, Étienne returned to Paris in time for Saint Vincent's feast day celebration.

Étienne remarked that this July reunion was an emotional one. He gratefully recalled that during the Prussian siege and the Commune, the two mother houses remained unscathed. No priest, brother, or sister lost his or her life and "not even a hair on anyone's head was harmed."¹¹⁸ What he found just as remarkable, was that "in the midst

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Isaiah 18: 32. Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 433.

¹¹⁵ Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 522.

¹¹⁶ All non-essential personnel from the mother house dispersed to the provinces. The novices and students took refuge at the Berceau. See Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 437-38.

¹¹⁷ The Prussians claimed Étienne's home province of Lorraine as spoils. According to the treaties ending the war, anyone born in the annexed areas who was living elsewhere in France had to declare his/her nationality option. On 17 September 1872, Étienne declared his "option for French nationality." *Étienne: Biographie*, C 40, II 2°, W° 7, ACMP.

¹¹⁸ Étienne, *Circulaires*, 3: 442.

of a profound disturbance and disastrous events nothing stopped the Company's progress nor interrupted the flow of its vocations."¹¹⁹ That same year, the community opened two new houses in France, and twenty-four French missionaries departed for the foreign missions.¹²⁰

Étienne repeated his now standard claim that this providential protection "was without precedent in the Company's history."¹²¹ He concluded: "In times that humanly speaking seem so evil and tormented, we find the community to be in a position that is so consoling that we must repeat the words of the prophet, *digitus dei hic* [the finger of God is here]."¹²²

Beginning in 1856, Étienne's health showed the first signs of decline as he underwent painful and primitive surgery for gallstones. In subsequent years, these health problems and operations increased in frequency. By late 1873, Étienne's physical decline was precipitate. In the early days of March 1874, the community gave up all hope for his recovery.¹²³ On 7 March, after receiving the last sacraments, Étienne bade the community farewell.

I understand the emotions that you are feeling now. Containing mine would be difficult for me, if I had not been preparing for this sorrowful circumstance and this religious ceremony for a long time. At the [sexennial] assembly held last July, I told the confreres that I sensed my end approaching. My age and my infirmities were the warning signals sent by the Lord to tell me that my mission was ending...I said then that I wanted my last words to be those of Saint Vincent, "I am going to rejoin the great family of heaven. I trust in the mercy and goodness of Our Lord." Please do not forget me in your prayers, Messieurs and very dear brothers, so that the Lord may pardon my sins. I ask pardon of all my confreres whom I have caused any pain. I have never willingly done so, but if I nevertheless have, I am sorry. Pray that Our Lord will receive me into heaven with Saint Vincent. One must be pure to enter heaven. Yes, ask Our Lord to make me the object of his mercies and pardon my sins. May he give efficacy to the sacrament I have received. When I arrive before his divine Majesty, may I hear the words of the gospel, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter the joy prepared for you for all eternity by your Lord." Oh, how at these last moments I give thanks to Our Lord for all the

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 3: 443.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 3: 452. Exodus 8: 19.

¹²³ *Notice sur les derniers moments de notre très-honoré Père, M. Jean-Baptiste Étienne, supérieur général de la Congrégation de la Mission et des Filles de la Charité, Décédé le 12 mars 1874* (Paris: Librairie Firmin Didot Frères et Fils, 1874), ACMP.

graces he has given me and the Double Family of Saint Vincent! I ask you to join me in thanking him. Yes, the Congregation is today what it was in the times of Saint Vincent. The primitive spirit animates it. It is our Lord who has done all this. To him alone be the glory! When I am no more, I ask you, I beg you, not to attribute any of this to me. It is to God alone, the author of all good, who must receive this glory.

Nevertheless, I cling to one thing, and this no one can contest, my great love for the Congregation! Oh Yes, Messieurs and my dear brothers, I have loved the Double Family of Saint Vincent above all else. I have consecrated my entire life to them, all my strength, and all my affections. I have loved them more than my own life! Remember to tell all my confreres around the world; priests, students, novices, and brothers that if by the immense mercy of God, I am allowed into heaven, I will carry my love for each of them there. In leaving this earth, I have the firm hope of being able to love them from on high for eternity.¹²⁴

Jean-Baptiste Étienne died at 11:00 P.M., on 12 March 1874. The next morning, his body lay in state in the mother house. The funeral took place at the mother house on Monday, 16 March. A variety of civil and religious dignitaries filled the chapel to overflowing. Louis Mellier, the new vicar general, celebrated the requiem mass. Cardinal Joseph-Hippolyte Guibert, the archbishop of Paris, gave the absolution. Following the services, a long funeral cortege made its way to the Montparnasse cemetery. Here, Jean-Baptiste Étienne found a temporary resting place.

At the request of the Ladies of Charity, the government permitted Étienne's reburial in the mother house chapel.¹²⁵ On 11 September 1874, Étienne's successor as superior general, Eugène Boré, presided over his reinterment in a tomb under the chapel's center aisle.¹²⁶ A marble slab covers Étienne's final resting place. It bears the inscription:

¹²⁴ Étienne, *Derniers Moments*, 20-21, ACMP.

¹²⁵ For an account of Étienne's role in the refounding of the Ladies of Charity see Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 229-49. See also Edward R. Udovic, C.M. "'What about the Poor?' Nineteenth Century Paris and the Revival of Vincentian Charity," *Vincentian Heritage*, 14 (1993): 69-94.

¹²⁶ The twenty-third general assembly had elected Boré as superior general earlier that day.

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 JOANNES BAPTISTA
 ÉTIENNE
 SUPERIOR GENERALIS
 CONGREGATIONIS MISSIONIS
 ET SOCIETATIS
 PUELLARUM CHARITATIS
 1801—1843—1874
 REQUIESCAT IN PACE

All the major Parisian newspapers noted Étienne's death. Typical was the obituary that appeared in the 18 March, edition of *L'Union*.

The press is never too busy to note the death of a great and good man. Such a man was the Very Reverend Étienne, the superior general of the priests of the Mission and the Sisters of Charity. Seeing his funeral celebrated yesterday on the rue de Sèvres would have been enough for anyone to understand who this man was who has now left the earth. He was the head of the Lazarists, who have carried the benefits of Christianity and the French name to far away places. He was the chief of the angelic army of Charity that combats suffering and devotes itself to the touching apostolate of relieving all the miseries of humanity.

What a tribute for Father Étienne that two thousand Sisters of Charity and thousands of children under their care walked silently and respectfully alongside his remains as they traveled to their last resting place. What a respectful attitude the crowds of people had as they watched. They understand who their true friends are in this world. They have experienced the Church's maternal tenderness through the services of these religious and these holy daughters!

It would take many pages to recount the works of Father Étienne during his long life, and above all over the last thirty years. He increased sixfold the number of establishments of his order. Turkey, America, China, and Japan, now know that the house on the rue de Sèvres is a center of Christian civilization because of the preaching, teaching, and charity that come from there.¹²⁷ Under the government of Father Étienne the number of the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul has grown prodigiously... The name of Father Étienne has given prestige to his order! He was the object of profound veneration and religious and filial love! What power, and what authority! Father Étienne's work has contributed to the striking growth of the Church that we have witnessed in the

¹²⁷The obituary notice is wrong on this point. Neither the Lazarists or Daughters of Charity had any missions in Japan.

second half of this century. He leaves an imperishable legacy that is very Catholic and very French.¹²⁸

Conclusion

Jean-Baptiste Étienne did leave a legacy to the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity that was “very Catholic and very French.” Not surprisingly, however, while it was lasting, it was not “imperishable.” The communities that Étienne recreated were nineteenth century communities. He ingeniously designed them to adapt to and thrive under the unique combination of events, persons, and movements that characterized that era.

Through the end of the nineteenth century, and for more than the first half of the twentieth, the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity successfully functioned largely as established by Étienne within the ecclesial framework of the First Vatican Council. When the Second Vatican Council came, this Church and these nineteenth-century communities were swept away as quickly and completely as they were swept away at the time of the French Revolution.

At the end of his *Notice*, Étienne said that only one thought could end his work: *Soli Deo honor et gloria* (to God alone be honor and glory).¹²⁹ However, more than one thought is appropriate. While fully acknowledging the ultimately mysterious role of divine providence, Jean-Baptiste Étienne personally presided over the successful rebirth of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity. His claims that the communities again appeared exactly as they had been when Saint Vincent founded them were mythically true. The communities had recaptured their “primitive spirit.” This achievement came at a great price, and brought great rewards.

At the end of the twentieth century, in an era that is still experiencing the revolutionary chaos engendered by Vatican II to acknowledge that Jean-Baptiste Étienne was the “second founder” of the Double Family of Saint Vincent is also to acknowledge that the Double Family now awaits another rebirth and perhaps its third founder.

¹²⁸ Étienne, *Notice*, 76.

¹²⁹ 1 Timothy 1:17

sur l'autorité du Supérieur général
 de si mince importance,
 l'amour de V^{os} Supérieurs,
 chers Confrères,

Votre Digne Serviteur
 J. B. Étienne

Autograph signature of
 Jean Baptiste Étienne

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INDEX

A

- Accepimus nuper*, 77
 Age of Reason, 44
 Aladel, Jean-Marie, 152-154, 191, 236-241, 245-246, 249, 251, 253, 291
 Albani, Giuseppe, 140
 Alexandria, Egypt, 205
 Algeria, *mission in*, 147, 167-170, 223
 Algiers, Algeria, 147
 Alméras, René, 26
 Amiens, France, 19, 79, 123
 Ancien Régime, 1, 2, 4, 14, 20, 22, 29, 47, 49, 260, 288
 Andriveau, Apolline, 255, 257
 Anne of Austria, 22
 Antonelli, Giacomo, 271
 Armair, Nicolás, 267-269
 Armengol, Buenaventura, 263-264
 Artaud, Comte d', 123-124
 Astros, Paul d', 63-65, 98
 Austria, 264
 Austria, *province of*, 259, 268
 Avignon, France, 39

B

- Baccari, Francesco Antonio, 105-108, 115, 127-132, 134-135, 138-141
 Baldeschi, Giuseppe, 115
 Bac rue du, (location of post revolutionary Paris mother house of the Daughters of Charity), 99-101
 Bailly, Ferdinand, 137, 162, 166-167, 171-175, 190-192
 Barbary, *missions of*, 80, 102
 Barcelona, Spain, 39
 Barili, Lorenzo, 269-270
 Bastille, 13
 Baudrez, Amand, 216
 Belgium, 264, 317
 Berceau, *birthplace of Vincent de Paul*, 55, 262
 Bishops and Regulars, Sacred Congregation of, 62, 77, 79, 106-108, 131-132, 139-140, 179, 197-198, 200, 212, 218, 223, 249, 292
 Bizarri, Giuseppe, 212, 277
 Bonald, Louis de, 112

Bonnet, Jean, 276
 Bons-Enfants, College des, 19
 Borgogno, Giovanni Battista, 274
 Bouillon, Emmanuel de la Tour de, 43
 Boujard, Vincent de Paul, 106-109, 114-117, 120, 124-127, 129, 137-138
 Boullangier, Joseph, 106-109, 123-125, 127-128
 Brazil, *country of*, 264
 Brazil, *province of*, 199, 205, 260
 Bricet, Théodore, 122
 Brunet, François-Florentin, 61-75, 147
 Brussels, Belgium, 317
 Buffalo, New York, xi

C

Cahors, France, 188
 Canary Islands, xi
 Caraffa, Cardinal, 75, 78
 Carven, John, 59
 Cayla de la Garde, Joseph-Félix, 9, 13-19, 47, 49, 60-62
 Carraffa, Cardinal
 Chamber of Deputies
 Champagne, *province of*, 167
 Charles X, 119-120, 126, 128, 144, 148, 280
 Charity, Ladies of, 319
 Chile, *country of*, 264
 Chile, *province of*, 260
 China, *country of*, 63
 China, *missions of*, 65-66, 72, 102, 293
 Chossat, M., 183
 Civil Constitution of the Clergy, 16
 Civatvecchia, Papal States, 218, 286
 Claude, Pierre, 74, 102-103
 Clement X, 27, 244
 Clement XI, 43-44
 Clergy, National Assembly of the, 14
 Codina, Buenaventura, xi
 Codoing, Bernard, 27
 Commune of Paris (1870), 317
 Concordat (1801), 1, 59, 60, 170
 Congregation of the Mission, *and French governments*, 22, 24-25, 27, 38-40, 42, 62, 68, 75, 103-104, 112, 118-129, 167-169, 198, 200, 204, 205-210, 215-217, 221-224, 226, 232-235, 237-239, 244-249, 254,

- 281, 294, 308; and the *Daughters of Charity*, 81-96; *Common Rules*, 23, 26, 28, 312-313; *Constitutions*, 26-29, 33, 36, 62, 191, 207, 211, 220, 225, 228-230, 237-249, 250-251, 271, 281, 311-312, 317; during the *Ancien Régime*, 2, 4, 20-49; during the *Bourbon Restoration*, 51, 54, 96-104; during the *French Revolution*, 4, 7-19, 55, 58; during the *generalate of Dominique Salhorgne*, 143-166; during the *generalate of Jean-Baptiste Étienne*, 253-322; during the *generalate of Jean-Baptiste Nozo*, 166-222; during *Vincent's lifetime*, 2, 4, 20-26, 56-57; *foreign missions*, 63, 65, 67-68, 70-72, 75, 79-80, 167-170, 197, 203-206, 210, 282-286, 292-293, 308, 314; *Gallicanism*, (see listing for); *General Assemblies*, of 1661, 26; of 1668, 26; of 1685, 29; of 1697, 30-32; of 1703, 36, 45, 241; of 1736, 46; of 1762, 46; of 1788, 47-49; of 1829, 136-139; of 1835, 161-163, 165, 200, 208, 251; of 1843, 253-254, 312; of 1849, 286, 309, 312; of 1861, 265-268; *General Council*, 130-132, 139, 143, 169, 177, 179-180, 182, 188-189, 191-195, 198-199, 201, 203-204, 207, 209-210, 212-214, 216-217, 221, 223, 225, 235-237, 242, 244, 247, 275, 290; *Holy See*, (see listing for); "*primitive spirit*," 26, 39, 44-45, 49, 252, 259, 297, 299, 301, 304, 307, 316, 319; *Sexennial Assembly*, of 1841, 4, 176-177, 179-188, 192, 195-198, 209; of 1874, 318; *ultramontanism*, (see listing for)
- Consalvi, Ercole, 71-72, 75, 105
- Consulate, 58
- Cortes, 262
- Council of State, 67-68, 88, 92, 127-128, 231, 247
- Couserges, M., 123
- Couty, Jean, 46
- Cremisini, Michele Antonio, 197-198, 200, 212, 238, 240, 242-243, 247-248
- Crimean War, 305
- Cuba, 262
- Cum uti accepimus*, 70

D

- Damas, Baron de (Ange-Hyacinth, Maxence), 120-122, 124-126
- Dansette, Adrien, 49, 112, 310
- Daughters of Charity*, and *Appoline Andriveau*, 255-257; and *Catherine Labouré*, 153-154, 156, 254; and *Jean-Baptiste Étienne*, 52, 261-263, 266-267, 269-271, 286, 300-310, 313-314, 319-321; and *Jean-Baptiste Nozo*, 179, 189, 192-195; and the *Congregation of the Mission*, x, 1-5, 55, 105, 108-109, 118, 124, 145, 300-310, 314; and the *French Revolution*, x, 11-14, 19; and *Vincent de Paul*, 1, 11, 86, 90, 321;

during the Napoleonic era: restoration and schism, 59-60, 62-63, 70, 81-97; (see also Double Family)

Dax, France, 55

Delaplace, Gabriel, 274-275

Deputies, Chamber of, 143-146, 170, 175, 247

Devin, Auguste, 284, 288, 311

Devitry, M., 19

Double Family of Saint Vincent, 12, 52-53, 55, 59, 137, 210, 231, 251, 254, 264, 269, 272-273, 290, 290-291, 300-310, 313-314, 319, 321

Dubois, Jean-Jacques, 65-66, 103-104

Dupuch, Antoine, 169-170

E

Ethiopia, 205, 308

Ethiopia, province of, 260, 292

Étienne, Jean-Baptiste, and Algeria, 167-170; and the French government, 167-170, 197-252, 254, 294; and the Holy See, 168-170, 197-252, 262, 264, 269-294; and Vincent de Paul, 53, 55-58, 304-308, 314; as procurator and secretary general, 2, 167-170, 190-194, 196-252; as "second founder," xi, 52; as superior general, x-xi, 1-5, 51-53, 253-322; at the end of his life, ix, 52, 315-322; Bourbon Restoration, 54, 103, 297-299; Daughters of Charity, xi, 81-82, 91, 99, 106, 146, 192-196, 230, 254-255, 266, 271-273, 286, 307; Double Family, 300-307, 309-310; entrance into and early years in the Congregation of the Mission, 51, 109-113; foreign missions, 167-170, 200-206, 217, 282, 284, 292-293, 308; French Revolution, 55, 58; Gallicanism, 231, 234-235, 238, 245, 264-267, 279-294, 306-307, 313-314; General Assembly of 1835, 158-167; generalate of Dominique Salthorgne, 141, 143, 146; generalate of Jean Baptiste Nozo, 167-221; governmental schisms, x, 74, 109, 114-129, 134-141; legacy of, 297-322; Napoleonic era, 58-61, 68, 90-92; nationalistic tensions, x, 74, 109, 114-129, 134-141, 196-252, 261-273; personal background, 51; Revolution of 1830, 151-158; Revolution of 1848, 258-259; Spanish crises, 261-273, 291, 293; succession crisis of 1842-1843, 215-252; threat of 1829 suppression, 143-146, translation of Vincent's relics, 146-151; Vatican I, 273-279, 291; Visions of Apolline Andriveau, 254-257; visions of Catherine Labouré, xi, 153-154, 156, 254

Étienne, Louis, 180

Europe, 308

Ex injuncto nobis, 27

F

- Faure, Maurice, 30, 224
 Fenaja, Benedetto, 60-62, 64, 69
 Fenestrelle, *fortress of*, 94
 Ferrara, Italy, 34
 Fesch, Joseph, 67, 69, 71-73, 85-88
 Figari, Lazzaro-Maria, 40, 42
 Fiorillo, Pasquale, 182, 237, 240-243
 First Empire, 1
 Flanders, Netherlands, 60
 Florence, Italy, 286
 Fontainebleau, *royal parish of*, 30
 France, *nation of*, 13, 24, 28, 37, 56-58, 233-234, 241, 259-261, 265-267, 308
 Franco-Prussian War, 317
 Frankfurt, Germany, 317
 Fransoni, Giacomo, 170, 205, 247
 Frayssinous, Denis, 113-114, 117, 119-120, 123, 125-128, 279
 French Revolution, 1, 2, 7, 14, 55, 71, 117, 297-298, 321

G

- Gallican Church, 14, 21, 27
 Gallicanism, 1, 14, 24-25, 27-29, 36, 39, 42, 72-74, 112, 209, 231-232, 234-235, 238, 245, 265-267, 279-294, 306-307, 313-314
 Gardes Françaises, 7
 Garibaldi, Antonio, 168, 201, 203, 217, 222-224, 236
 Genoa, Italy, 77, 286
 Giordanini, Pietro Francisco, 34-36
 Girardi, Ferdinando, 219-220
 Girodi, Filippo, 130
 God, *references to, divine providence, etc.*, 2, 13, 16, 22, 40, 43, 45, 48, 53-54, 56-59, 112-113, 147-148, 150-151, 153, 156-158, 160, 179, 210, 249, 251-252, 253-254, 257-259, 262, 265-266, 268, 273-274, 276, 284, 286-289, 293, 297-298, 300-301, 303-306, 308-312, 316, 318-319, 321
 Gondi family, 22
 Gough, Austin, 279-281, 286, 313
 Grappin, Jean, 196
 Greece, 264
 Gregory XVI, 170, 180, 218, 249, 287
 Gros, Miguel, 165

- Guarini, Giovanni, 170, 182-184, 271-272, 286-288, 290-293
 Guarini, Vito, 186, 197-200, 202, 206-207, 209-213, 218-220
 Guibert, Joseph-Hippolyte, 319
 Guizot, François, 196, 200-202, 205-206, 208-209, 215-217, 220-223, 225,
 231-235, 237, 239, 245-246, 249-250, 254

H

- Haiti, *country of*, 211
 Hanon, Dominique, 54, 79-82, 84-88, 90-99, 101-103
 Hauterive, Comte de, Alexandre de Lanautte, 68
 Henin, Alexandre, 216, 218
 Hennecart, Denis, 175-176, 180, 190, 192, 198
 Holy See, *Algeria*, 168-170; *and approval of the Congregation of the Mission*, 24-25; *and Daughters of Charity*, 85, 97-99, 101, 269-273; *and eighteenth century nationalistic tensions*, 29, 33-34, 38-40, 42-44, 61-63; *and Gallican-ultramontane struggles*, 1, 21-25, 39-40, 42, 280-282, 286, 288-289, 313-314; *and governmental schisms*, 60-63, 71-75, 77-82, 104-109, 115-120, 122-129; *and Jean-Baptiste Étienne*, 118-120, 168-170, 197, 200-209, 225-231, 235-245, 250, 273-294; *and Jean-Baptiste Nozo*, 179, 184, 196-221; *and Napoleon*, 60, 70, 81; *and nineteenth century nationalistic tensions*, 60-63, 69-75, 77-79, 104-109, 114-120, 122-129, 130-136, 138-139, 196-249, 262-264, 269-273; *and the French government*, 33-34, 39-40, 42, 60, 70, 73-74, 77-78, 81, 115-116, 119-127, 167-170, 196-249; *and Vincent de Paul*, 20, 23-25, 27-28; *Succession crisis of 1842-1843*, 215-252; *Spanish crisis*, 262, 264, 269-272

I

- Ieper, Netherlands, 60
 Innocent XII, 33
Inter Multiplices, 286
 Ippoliti, Leonardo, 62
 Ireland, *province of*, 259, 268
 Isambert, François, 144
 Isoard, Joachim d', 108, 116, 119
 Italy, *country of*, 34, 60-61, 71
 Italy, *provinces of*, 105

J

Jacobis, Justin de, xi, 205, 217
 Jacquier, Antoine, 46-47
 Jalabert, M., 86-88
 Jansenism, 276
 Jesuits, 24, 161, 196, 244
 Jolly, Edmond, 29-31
 July Monarchy, 281

L

Laborde, comte de (Alexandre-Louis-Joseph), 145-146, 152
 Labouré, Catherine, *visions of*, xi, 153-156, 254
 Lambruschini, Cardinal, 197, 211, 222, 234, 238-239, 246-249
 Lammenais, Felicité de, 112, 279-280
 Latin America, 308
 Latour-Maubourg, comte de, 196, 215-217, 237
L'Avenir, 279
 Laurentin, René, 154
 Legall, Jean-Mathurin, 102
 Legnito, Nicola, 184, 187
 Le Go, Pierre, 105, 111, 130, 135, 137, 160, 183, 186
 Leo XII, 121, 124, 140, 229
 Letizia, Camillo, 219
 Levant, 63
 Levant, *missions of*, 72, 80, 108, 121-122
 Ligouri, Alphonsus, 287
 Lithuania, *province of*, 199, 205
 Livorno, Italy, 286
 Louis XIII, 22, 118
 Louis XIV, 22, 24, 29-30, 33, 42, 117, 224, 246
 Louis XVI, 7
 Louis XVIII, 95, 99-101, 103, 121
 Louise de Marillac, 11-12
 Louis-Philippe, 1, 155, 158, 169-170, 254, 258-259
 Luther, Martin, 279
L'Univers, 202, 286-287
 Lynch, John, xi

M

- Macchi, Vincenzo, 109
 Madrid, Spain, 262, 266
 Maintenon, Françoise d'Aubigné, Madame de, 30
 Maistre, Joseph de, 112
 Maller, Mariano, 271-273
 Martin, M., 183
 Martin, J.B., 170
 Mary, Children of, 305
 Mannheim, the Palatinate, 61
 Maury, Jean-Siffrein, 62
 Mellier, Louis, 319
 Metz, France, 51
 Mexico, *country of*, 305, 313
 Mexico, *province of*, 260
 Middle East, 203, 215
 Monte Cavallo, Rome, 238
 Monte Citorio, Rome, *house of*, 34, 38, 39, 44, 62, 95, 140, 238
 Montmorency-Laval, Mathieu-Felicité duke of, 120-122, 124-126

N

- Naples, *city of*, 220, 286
 Naples, *kingdom of*, 260
 Naples, *province of*, 237
 Napoleon Bonaparte, 58-60, 63, 65-74, 79, 81-82, 89-92, 94-95, 99
 Napoleon III, 317
 National Assembly, 7, 14, 18
 National Convention, 55, 58
 Necker, Jacques, 7
 Noailles, Louis de, 30
 Noble Ecclesiastics, academy of, 39-40
 Nozo, Jean-Baptiste, x, 4, 5, 162, 166-167, 169, 171-177, 179-200, 202-203, 207-222, 231, 251, 282, 290

O

- Odin, Jean-Marie, 227-228
 O'Gara, Margaret, 279
 Orleans, duke d', 7
 Ostini, Pietro, 212-214, 216, 218-224, 235-236, 239-240, 243-247, 249
 Ottoman Empire, 80
 Ozanam, Frédéric, xi, 157

P

- Pacca, Bartolomeo, 95
 "Pacification" brief of, 33
 Pantheon, 55
 Papal States, 29, 81, 259, 279, 286
 Paris, *city of*, 7, 13, 16, 19
 Paris, *parlement of*, 24
 Patrizi, Nora, 198
 Peking, China, 206, 275
 Perboyre, Gabriel, 161-162, 166-167, 210
 Perboyre, Jean-Gabriel, xi
 Persia, *missions of*, 80
 Philippines, 262
 Piacenza, Italy, 73
 Picardy, *province of*, 37
 Pierron, Nicolas, 33-37, 162, 224
 Pius VI, 60, 62
 Pius VII, 60, 70, 81, 98, 108
 Pius IX, 255, 259, 271, 275, 277-278, 282-283, 285-287, 290-291, 302, 313-314
 Placiard, Claude-Joseph, 62-63, 74-78
 Poissonnière, Comité de faubourg, 18
 Poland, *country of*, 61
 Poland, *province of*, 32-33, 37, 105, 134, 199, 259-260
 Portalis, Joseph-Marie, 63-67
 Portugal, *country of*, 29, 73
 Portugal, *province of*, 29, 105, 206, 226, 268
 Poussou, Antoine, 183-190, 196, 200, 212-213, 216, 221, 231, 235-237, 253
 Prémeneu, Félix-Julien Bigot de, 90
 Propaganda Fide, Sacred Congregation of, 4, 39, 66, 106, 108, 196, 201-209, 216-217, 228, 282, 284, 292-293
 Propagation of the Faith, Society for the, 176, 197, 203-204, 228
 Prussia, *country of*, 61, 268
 Prussia, *province of*, 264, 268

Q

- Qua semper voluntate*, 77
 Quelen, Hyacinth-Louis de, 113, 147-148

R

- Rauzan, Jean-Baptiste, 144, 146
 Rayneval, Comte de, 221-222, 231, 233, 239, 245-247, 249
 "Red Scapular," *apparitions and devotion*, 255-257
 Rendu, Rosalie, xi
 Retz, Jean-François de Gondi, Cardinal de, 88
 Revolution of 1830 (France), 151-158, 254
 Revolution of 1848 (France), 258-259
 Revolution of 1868 (Spain), 262, 273
 Richenet, Jean-François, 160
 Roca, Juan, 165
 Roman Curia, 23, 34, 63, 217, 281, 294
 Rome, *city of*, 27, 33
 Rome, *province of*, 29, 33-34, 36-40, 134, 198, 242
 Rosati, Joseph, 211-214, 217-218, 222, 240-241, 243, 248
 Rosset, Edouard, 3, 109-111, 113-114, 144-145, 169-170, 181, 274, 276-277, 286, 290-291
 Rouyet, Christophe-Simon, 9
 Ryan, Abram, J., ix

S

- Saint-Antoine, *faubourg of*, 103
 Saint-Benoit, Constantinople, 122
 Saint-Denis, *faubourg of*, 7
 Saint-Firmin, *seminary of*, 19
 Saint-Laurent, *parish of*, 11
 Saint-Lazare, *pre-revolutionary mother house of the Congregation of the Mission*, x, 7-14, 16, 18-19, 22, 28, 51, 103-104, 111-112
 Saint-Lazare, *post-revolutionary mother house of the Congregation of the Mission*, 51, 53, 109, 112, 114, 146, 268, 289, 319
 Sainte-Marguerite, *parish of*, 103
 Saint Paul, 56
 Saint Peter, 313
 Saint-Sulpice, *parish of*, 96
 Salhorgne, Dominique, 4, 130, 135-141, 143, 146, 148-149, 157-158, 160-163, 166, 251, 299
Salvatoris nostri, 25
 Sambucy, M. de, 116
 San Andrea, *church of*, 61
 San Silvestro, *church of*, 238
 Sarzana, Italy, 286
 Sauvigny, G. De Bertier, 298

Savona, Italy, 73, 96
 Savoy, 30
 Second Republic, 1, 259
 Sedan, France, 317
 Seghino, Giuseppe, 40
 September massacres (1792), 19
 Sicardi, Carlo Domenico, 62, 69-79, 85, 95-97, 104-105
 Siena, Italy, 286
 Somaglia, Giulio della, 122-123
 Spain, *country of*, 29, 61, 73, 263-264, 269, 271-272, 293
 Spain, *bishops of*, 262, 269
 Spain, *government of*, 263-264, 266-267
 Spain, *newspapers of*, 262
 Spain, *nobles of*, 262
 Spain, *province of*, 29, 42, 165, 226, 263-273, 291
 Spanish Succession, war of, 34
 Spiritans, 101
 Sturchi, Pier Paolo, 213
 Sulpicians, 313

T

Talleyrand-Périgord, Alexandre-Angélique, 95
 Talleyrand, Charles Maurice de, 67
 Thiers, Adolph, 203
 Third Republic, 1, 317
 Timon, John, xi, 203-204, 217, 222, 237, 240
 Toronto, Canada, xi
 Torrette, Jean-Baptiste, 169
 Trent Council of, *Tridentine renewal*, 20
 Trouve, Barthélémy, 183, 199, 219
 Trucchi, Pietro, 276-277
 Turin, *province of*, 37-38, 237, 293
 Turkey, 264
 Tuscany, 264

U

Ultramontanism, 1, 23, 40, 42, 199, 235, 251, 274, 280, 286, 313
 United States, *country of*, 264, 305
 United States, *mission of, province of*, 199, 203-204, 222, 227-228, 237, 240,
 244, 247, 305
 Urban VIII, 25, 118

V

Vacca, Giovanni Battista, 34

Vatican I, 273-274, 278, 291, 314, 321

Vatican II, 5, 321

Verbert, Marie-Charles-Emmanuel, 100, 103-106, 108-109

Veuillot, Louis, 280

Vicart, Eugène, 52

Vieux-Colombier, rue du, *Paris mother house of the Daughters of Charity*, 60, 95, 99, 101

Viguiier, Pierre, 67-68

Villefranche, Pein de, M., 68

Vincent de Paul, saint, *Catherine Labouré's visions*, 153-154, 156; *co-founder of the Daughters of Charity*, 1, 12, 86, 90, 321; *founder of the Congregation of the Mission*, 1-2, 16, 20-28, 44-45, 71, 114, 157, 231, 233-234, 246, 270, 321; *Étienne cites*, 3, 53, 55-58, 117, 151, 161, 225-226, 229, 231, 244, 250-252, 255, 257-259, 264-265, 273, 275-277, 284, 297, 300-307, 310-313, 316, 318-319; *relics of*, 11, 19, 114, 146-148, 151

Vincent de Paul, *society of*, 157

W

Wailly, Pierre de, 4, 122-135, 138, 224, 229-230

Wargnier, Joseph, 183, 219

Watel, François, 37-39, 41-42

Wissembourg, France, 317