

2007

South

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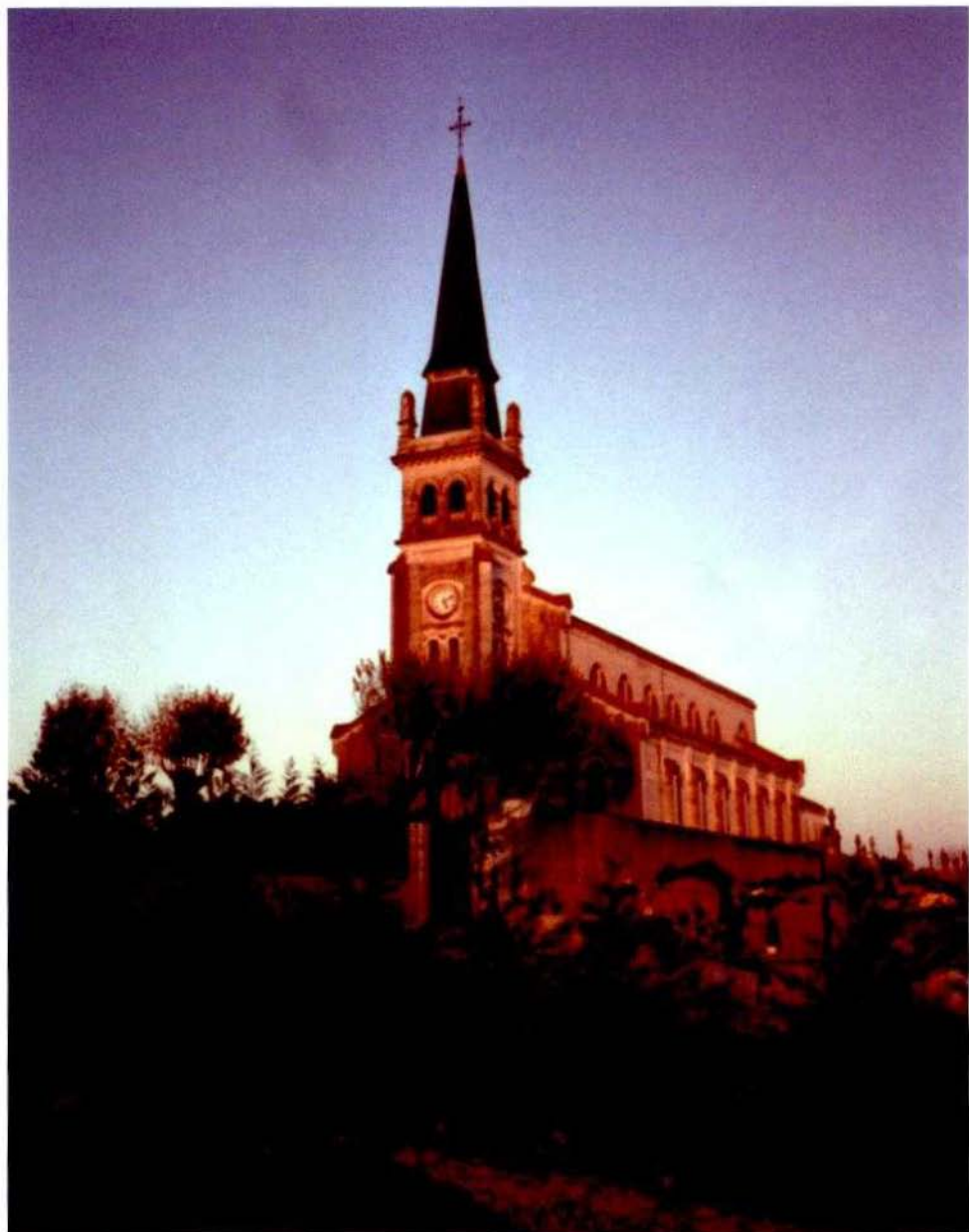
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South



Saint Vincent de Paul parish, Pouy

Aquitaine



Vincent de Paul, a native of the region of Aquitaine and the most famous son of the Landes, was ordained to the priesthood here for the diocese of Dax. Although he did not do much work in this region after the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission, he sent his confreres here. He continued to have friends here and to be interested in his native region throughout his life.

AGEN

So far as is known, Vincent never came to Agen. He accepted a house here in 1650, however, to serve as a seminary, with the proviso that the Vincentians should be able to understand the local Occitan language. Previous attempts at a seminary had been unsuccessful, and problems continued after the Vincentians arrived, mainly involving insufficient funds and a negligent bishop. Vincent had wanted to close the seminary, but his confreres remained until the Revolution. The *seminary* in Vincent's time had been at what is now called Place des Droits de l'Homme. These old buildings became the School of Commerce and Industry, lasting until at least the 1930s.

The diocesan seminary was then rebuilt elsewhere, and it continued in this new location until the Revolution. Afterwards it too continued in use as a school, now the Lycée J.B. de Baudre. The buildings have been converted to their new purpose. The chapel has been taken down, for example. (*Place Verdun, formerly Place du Grand Séminaire, on rue Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny*)

Agen is also important in Vincentian life since it was the see of the first Vincentian bishop, *François Hébert* (1651-1728). He had been the superior of the house in Versailles when, on 6 April 1704, at age 53, he was ordained by the archbishop of Paris. Vincent had considered others of his confreres as possible bishops in mission areas, such as Lambert Aux Couteaux, but Hébert's selection so worried the then superior general, Edme Jolly, that he asked that it

not be repeated. He reasoned that it seemed not in keeping with Vincentian ideals. It was not until the Revolution that another French Vincentian was consecrated a bishop. Undoubtedly because Hébert was the spiritual director of Madame de Maintenon, a Lady of Charity and later wife of Louis XIV, the king hoped he would be elected superior general. When that did not happen, he proposed him to the pope for this diocese. Hébert's memoirs, published only in 1927, shed an interesting light on Versailles, particularly its religious life. He died in Agen.

Among the Vincentians at the Agen seminary at the time of the Revolution were two who took the constitutional oaths. *Antoine Labarthe* (1740-1820) was elected constitutional bishop of Lot-et-Garonne (the new designation for Agen). He quickly refused the office and later retracted his oath. He survived the Revolution and continued as a parish priest. The other, *Antoine Cautenet* (1761-1796) took all the oaths and then abandoned the priesthood during the Terror. He soon fled to Spain, however, and died in Barcelona. After the Revolution, until about 1810, at least two Vincentians served the seminary until the Congregation could get reestablished.

Daughters of Charity came to Agen in 1686 where they worked in the hospital and ran a school. Following the Revolution, they returned to the school in 1836 and took up the hospital again in 1885, and they continue their work here today. In 1733 one of the Daughters reportedly was cured from various ail-

joined became family names. In the religious records at Pouy, all the inhabitants in the seventeenth century, even the humblest, had “de” or “du” before their name. Vincent always signed his name as Depaul, in one word, a practice followed sometimes even by nobility for their own names. Beginning as early as 1628, Louise and others began to call him Monsieur Vincent, never Monsieur Depaul. In addition he always spelled his first name in the Gascon fashion, with a final s: Vincens, not Vincent, with a final t.

We can presume that the name “De Paul” had this kind of origin. However, the earliest registers, from the cathedral chapter of Dax, record the name Paul (in the forms de Paul, or even Pol) from as early as the 1400s. This offers a solution to the meaning of “Paul.” This name has nothing to do with Saint Paul the apostle nor with Latin *paulus* (“little, small”) but rather with *palo* (Latin *palus*, a marsh) It seems to be a southern version of a common French family name, *de Marais* (“from the marsh”). It is common enough, also, in northern Spain, in the form Paúl. Which marsh is meant? This is harder to define, but half way between the Berceau and Buglose runs a stream called “Pont de Paul,” and near the shrine of Buglose is a house called “Paul.” Distant ancestors of his may have lived in that house or on the banks of the marshy stream. Hence that name might have passed to their descendants. Some members of the De Paul family still live in Pouy, and others with the same name, spelled Depaul, live in the surrounding area. Nevertheless, there

were De Pauls in Pouy from at least 1509, one of them being named Vincence.

The family of *Vincent’s father*, Jean de Paul, numbered several important rural officials: Jean de Paul (1545), a royal sergeant; another Jean de Paul (1564), a canon of Dax; and Etienne de Paul (1577), prior of Pouymartet at Gourbera, seven or eight kilometers north of Pouy. The family of *Vincent’s mother*, Bertrande de Moras, was also of some importance. She had several lawyers and clergy in her family, people with important posts in Dax, Bordeaux and elsewhere. Besides, her family was related to the more important ones in the area: particularly to the Saint Martin and Comet families—names occurring in Vincent’s biographies. A cousin, Dominique Dusin, was the pastor of Pouy with whom Vincent lodged when he returned in 1624 to visit his family.

The date of *Vincent’s birth* has aroused lively discussion. Abelly, his first biographer, gave it as Easter Tuesday of



Descendants of the DePaul family,
20th century photograph

1576. Easter Tuesday of that year was 24 April. Vincent's own testimony, however, is different. Depending on what weight one gives to various citations, he was born either in 1580 or 1581. As to the day and month, his birthday could have been 24 April, however, which Abelly converted to Easter Tuesday. If not, Easter Tuesday of 1580 was 5 April, the feast of Saint Vincent Ferrer, Vincent's second patron; and the same day in 1581 was 28 March. Vincent himself said his birthday fell in April, but no one seems to have celebrated it in his lifetime and not until the nineteenth or twentieth century. Baptismal and civil records, in addition, have disappeared and so cannot resolve the case. Consequently, the exact day, month and year are still open to question. Scholars point to his ordination date in 1600 at age 19 or 20 as the reason why Abelly's collaborators presumed that Vincent must have been the proper canonical age of at least 24. Whether they changed his birth year to conceal this problem, or did so without knowing all the facts, is also unknown.

Vincent's brothers were: Jean de Paul, who lived at Lachine (Leschine), a nearby property, larger than his father's place; Bernard; Dominique (also familiarly called Menjon and Gayon); *his sisters* were: Marie, called Mengine; and another Marie, called Claudine, married to a man named Gregoire.

II. The Berceau***

The Berceau-de-Saint-Vincent-de-Paul is officially part of the commune of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul. In the Berceau

(*cradle*) is the farmhouse called *Ranquines*, perhaps from the Gascon term *ranqueja*, to limp. The name may recall the fact that Vincent's father limped, but it seems unlikely, the confusion coming from the fact that the property on which it stands is also called *Ranquines*. Vincent was born here, not in this same building but in an earlier one on the same site. He often described his father as a *pauvre laboureur*, meaning not a simple "laborer" or farm worker in English, but an owner of property who was able to work it. In this the De Paul family differed from many others who did not own land. The term *pauvre* here referred not to his poverty, which would be *laboureur pauvre*, but to his condition in having to work for a living. He once wrote: *it must be said that I am the son of a peasant [laboureur], and that I pastured swine and cows.* (Letter 1372) Although the family owned the property of *Ranquines*, they owed some feudal taxes, as Vincent recalled in later life, to the duke of Ventadour, who was also the marquis of Pouy. Vincent himself inherited land from his father, as he testified in an early will written in 1626.

Only 22 years after the death of Vincent did the question arise of the house where he was born. Guillaume Lostalot (b. 1660), a native of Dax, wrote to his confrere Melchior Molenchon (b. 1653), speaking of Bernard de Paul, Vincent's grandnephew. "He wrote me that the house of Monsieur Vincent fell to the ground, but that the room where he was born has been preserved intact." Another witness wrote that in 1682, when the house fell over, a cross was

placed over the ruins.

On 14 February 1706, the ecclesiastical judge of Dax received in the presence of Father de Cès, who knew the area, four testimonies given under oath in preparation for the beatification and canonization of their countryman. Each one has its own interest, even now, and several are worth mention.

The first testimony came from Louis de Paul, grandnephew of the saint and owner of the Ranquines property. He was 66 years old, a farmer, and declared that: "Monsieur Vincent, [his relative], had never given anything to his relatives to bring them out of their poverty. I heard it said that when Monsieur Vincent was young, he gave away his clothes and a part of his bread to the poor. Monsieur Loustalot, pastor of the parish, had a cross placed over the site of the house where the late Monsieur Vincent was born to preserve the memory of his person, for whom he had a special devotion. I have seen several people cutting and carrying away bits of the wood from this cross because of their esteem for Monsieur Vincent... The room where Monsieur Vincent was born remained standing a long time after the rest of the house fell down and, since the room had been nearly ruined, Monsieur Loustalot had a small chapel built there where he placed an image of the Blessed Virgin. He had a picture of Monsieur Vincent painted kneeling before it. Many individuals, even the processions which go to Our Lady of Buglose, stop there to pray to God, to show the veneration which they have for the memory of Monsieur Vincent." It should be

remarked, however, that this grandnephew was not well informed about Vincent's help. His official will, dating from 1630, bequeathed land and money to his family and to their children.

The fourth testimony came from Pierre de Pasquau Darose, inhabitant of Pouy, 70 years old, a master carpenter. He said: "By order of Monsieur de Loustalot, pastor of Pouy, I myself made the cross and built the chapel which are at present on the place of the house where Monsieur Vincent was born. People come to cut off bits of wood from the cross and to pray to God, in this way showing their veneration for the memory of Monsieur Vincent."

Two traditions about the location of the family house exist. The older one, probably the more accurate, places it under the nave of the present large chapel. The more recent tradition separated the chapel from the house, and thus dictated the house's placement. In any case, the entire site is holy.

In its first *position* the present house was by the side of the road, turned toward it, facing east. The land on which the house stood was purchased only in 1841 to become part of the present Berceau property. In 1864 the house was shifted a little closer to the chapel, with the result that only a small part of the two placements remains the same. Also, it was then turned to face north for reasons of symmetry.

The current *six-room house* and loft, 12 by 8.5 meters in size, is a typical house of a Gascon landowner, with its exposed wooden joists and compressed earth floor. The marks of the original



Postcard, Ranquines,
about 1920, Berceau

reeds left their imprint on the bricks that dried on them and, on the inside, only posts and joists were in evidence. In fact, even though this house was not the one that Vincent knew, it is certainly quite similar to it. It evokes him near the very place of his birth. Some of the old beams may have come from the De Paul house. The first crossbeam at the entry, however, has the date 1744 carved in it, coming from one of its reconstructions. Since the *outer* walls were unstable and frequently repaired, they have been filled with brick and plastered over. The house had a kitchen (the main room) with a fireplace, rooms for the eldest son, the parents, Vincent and his brothers, the daughters, and a lean-to, now the oratory. Above is an empty loft. In an earlier time the front section of the loft was used to store hay, brought in through an opening in the front; and the rear held grains. In addition, the original house was another 1.5 meters wide on the west side—a space for animals and tools.

Below an old altar in the boys' room are preserved some relics and other reminders of the saint: a pair of his shoes, a standing crucifix (marked LA

CROIX DE NOSTRE R. P. VINCENT DE PAUL), a white linen cloth used to bandage his legs, a fragment of a horse-hair belt used as an instrument of penance, a red or violet stole said to have been used by him at Folleville, and two small physical relics. All these items came from the original Saint Lazare and were given to the Berceau by Father Jean Baptiste Étienne, superior general of the Congregation. A copy of a letter written to Vincent's mother, 17 February 1610, recalls that she most probably received it here. The furnishings of the house are not original.

The place where Vincent's birth is commemorated is now found under the sloping roof in the back of the house, where people come to pray and often to celebrate the eucharist. Because the positioning of the house has been changed, this spot is where the second room on the left, the parents' bedroom, was originally located.

The kind of *countryside* that Vincent lived in during his childhood was not the extensive pine forest of the Landes that one sees today, since it did not exist in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The forest was planted in the nineteenth century to inhibit the spread of wind-blown sands from the Atlantic shore. Formerly, the Landes were very sandy and easily became marshy. The area of Pouy is located in a bend of the river Adour, still an area somewhat sandy, which often has flooded pastures. This area, more than any other, resembles the land as it was in Vincent's day.

The family certainly owned what

every small landowner had in the region: a farmyard for cows, pigs and sheep. The Ranquines property was very small, only 30 by 34 meters, but enough for a house, garden and one or more outbuildings. North of the property where the large chapel now stands was a commons, used by the family and their neighbors. Following the usage of the small pastures of olden times, Vincent used to walk along the dusty paths, perhaps using the stilts typical of the Landes, his eyes fixed on the animals confided to his care, and carrying his provisions in a sack. It is not certain that he returned home every evening. There were few large stretches of pasture, and so he would have had to go looking for the more fertile land.

The De Paul diet differed markedly from that followed today. There were no potatoes, tomatoes, corn, even beans, since these originated in the New World and were only then being gradually brought into Spain. Instead, his family ate the local produce: carrots, turnips, broad beans, lentils, and even millet, at the time an important grain. In general, eating meat was not common. They would also have had access to birds (ducks, geese, pigeons, etc.) and their eggs, fish, and small animals, such as rabbits. Wine and cider were in current use as drinks. Milk was normally served only to babies, and water was often unsafe. Vincent recounted years later to the Daughters of Charity how the people of the Landes would eat: They are very plain in their eating. The majority are often content with bread and soup... In the region where I come from, we eat a small grain called millet, which we cook

in a pot. At mealtime, it is poured into a bowl, and the family gathers around to eat, and afterward, they go out to work. (Conference 13) I am the son of a tiller of the soil. I was fed as country people are fed and now that I am Superior of the Mission, shall I grow conceited and wish to be treated like a gentleman? (Conference 85) He also recalled that the use of cider (instead of wine) was common in the region and good for the health.

All his life Vincent showed the qualities typical of peasants: good sense, patience, confidence in Providence, hard work, and modesty. Like Jesus himself, Vincent was born among humble workers, and always demonstrated love for the poor, the little ones.

The first accounts of *veneration* for Vincent in his native area date from 1706 and come from his relatives. Louis Depaul, a farmer at Pouy and owner of Ranquines (mentioned above) and Jean Depaul, another grandnephew, aged 74, lived at Saint-Paul-lès-Dax. He testified, perhaps with some sourness: "I have heard it said by my father that he went to meet Monsieur Vincent while he lived in Paris, to ask his advice about a promise of marriage he had made to a girl whom he had abused. Monsieur Vincent told him that he was obliged to go and marry her. And he gave my father on his return only 10 écus and a letter for Monsieur de Saint Martin. Monsieur Vincent never gave us anything to help lift us out of the low condition in which we were living." Perhaps referring to the same period, Vincent himself admitted to his confreres that some of his relatives were

forced to live on alms (Conference 148, 1656) and still do. (Conference 204, 1659) This condition might easily have been caused by the problems of the Fronde. During this time, some of Vincent's friends helped them, as he did himself. In any case, Jean Depaul, mentioned previously, was badly informed about his grand-uncle, Vincent.

Vincent also made a *family visit*, most likely in 1624. He recalled it in a conference to the missionaries on 2 May 1659: *I fear, thought I, becoming in like manner attached to my relatives. And that is what happened. I spent eight or ten days with them to instruct them in the ways of their salvation and detach them from the desire of possessing riches, so far as to tell them that they had nothing to expect from me, and that even if I had chests of gold and silver, I would give them nothing, because an ecclesiastic who possesses anything owes it to God and the poor. On the day of my departure I felt so much grief at leaving my poor relatives that I did nothing but weep, and weep almost unceasingly all along the road. To these tears succeeded the thought of giving them assistance, and putting them in a better condi-*

tion, of giving this to one and that to another. In my mind, deeply moved as I was, I portioned out to them in this manner what I possessed, and what I did not possess. I say this to my shame. And I say it because it may be that God has permitted this to make me more sensibly perceive the importance of the Evangelical maxim of which we speak. For three months I was worried by this troublesome passion of advancing the fortunes of my brothers and sisters. It was the constant burden of my poor mind. However, when I found myself somewhat free, I prayed to God to be pleased to deliver me from this temptation, and I prayed to Him so earnestly that, in the end, He had pity on me and delivered me from those tender affections for my relatives. (Conference 204)

He perhaps referred to the same



Postcard, oak tree and seminary, Berceau



Ranquines and 19th century oak tree, Berceau

event in Letter 1481: *When parting time comes, there is nothing but sorrow and tears, and what is worse, the servants of God are often left with nothing but distractions. Their minds are full of images and sentiments very little in harmony with their state, and they sometimes lose the attachment they had for their spiritual exercises.* It should be noted, however, that Vincent made a will three years after his visit, and disposed of his property in and around Dax by giving it all to his family. (Coste 13, Document 27)

Besides this visit, he also sent his confreres to give *missions* in the area. At least one is known from the year 1652.

The great *oak tree*, called *Lou Bielh Cassou* (the old oak) in Gascon, is centuries old. The fall of one of its huge branches in 1939 allowed a piece of its wood to be sent for analysis to Bordeaux. The conclusions of specialists showed a planting date of between 1200 and 1230. Young Vincent certainly rested in its shade, although it was not part of the family property, since the road passed it on either side. The oak is one of several ancient trees preserved in the Landes.

At the Revolution, agitators tried to burn it. The tree's worst enemies, however, have been indiscreet pilgrims who took away bits of the bark as a souvenir of the saint. We have such important witnesses as the duchess of Berry and the duchess of Angoulême. Even a spiritual son of Saint Vincent, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, wrote about events of 2-3 December 1852: *I send you, my dear friend, a leaf from a blessed tree. It will dry out in the book where you leave it, but*

charity will never wither in your heart... I saw in it a symbol of the foundations of Saint Vincent de Paul. They never seem held to the earth by anything human, and nevertheless have been triumphing for centuries and growing amid revolutions. The pastor of the place had an entire branch cut down for the founder of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, destined for the General Council of that society. The Vincentians at Buglose gave a cross and rosary to Pius IX in 1856, using wood from the tree. Such treatment clearly compromised the future of the oak. In earlier days a retired soldier was stationed to guard it. Protective enclosures were built in 1824 and 1857. In recent years a barrier has been built around it and the tree reinforced with iron rings and cement plugs. It measures about 12 1/2 meters (38 feet) in circumference.

In 1868 the oak was believed to be dying, especially since someone had set a fire in it in 1865 to rid it of hornets. Fortunately, the son (*Lou Hilh* in Gascon) is vigorous. This sprout, planted in 1857, is taller than its parent and shades Ranquines. Some acorns have also been taken away and in many countries other descendants of the oak are flourishing.

In 1951 it was decided to make a selection of the best acorns. Experts performed what was called the "marriage of the oak," since they placed a huge white veil over the tree to assure that the tree would have acorns of a pure type. Ceremonies with music and dancing accompanied the event, but, mysteriously, that year, for the first and last time,

not a single acorn appeared on the entire tree.

It is certain that, as they are today, oak trees were part of the countryside familiar to Vincent the young boy. Calvet wrote in his biography of the saint: *Around each house a clump of oaks developed. They were protection against the west wind, a shelter for pigs that fed on the acorns, shade in the summer, and a noble decoration in any season.* The account of Vincent placing a small statue of Mary in a fold of the trunk and then praying there, is legendary, dating only from the nineteenth century.

In 1706, a small chapel had been built next to the house. Then, to respond to the increasing devotion of the faithful after Vincent's beatification in 1727, another *chapel* opened in 1730, probably built on the site of his birthplace. Blessed at the end of 1751, it lasted for exactly a century. At that time it gave way to the present chapel, built on the same site. On 6 August 1851, the first stone was laid in the presence of the prefect of the Landes, and the bishop celebrated mass under the old oak. The chapel itself was

loosely modeled on the Val de Grâce in Paris. Progress in building was slow because of a lack of funds. Contributions from the Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity, together with a national lottery, allowed work to continue. A barely legible inscription over the main door recalls its inauguration thirteen years after it began: ANNO DOMINI MDCCCLXIV DIE XXIV MENSIS APRILIS HOC SACELLUM D.O.M. FUIT SOLEMNITER DEDICATUM IN MEMORIAM ORTUS S. VINCENTII A PAULO ("On 24 April in the year of Our Lord 1864 this chapel was solemnly dedicated to God in memory of the birthplace of Saint Vincent de Paul"). The architect was initially Jacques Ignace Hittorff, who had had designed the great parish church of Saint Vincent in Paris. His elaborate plans were simplified by a disciple, Gallois, the architect of the Vincentian motherhouse chapel in Paris.

Over the main door of the chapel is a carving of young Vincent aiding a poor man. The inscription reads *QUIS PUTAS PUER ISTE ERIT* ("Who do you think this boy will be?"), a citation from



41 ENP. DE. D. 83. — Chapelle de l'Établissement du Service de Saint-Vincent-de-Paul. — LL.

Postcard, chapel, Berceau



Chapel, Berceau

Luke 1:66. Above the door is a large statue of the saint similar to that in the Vincentian motherhouse. It shows him in a gesture of openhanded charity. Below are figures of faith, hope and charity, dated 1864. The text, *PERTRANSIIT BENEFACIENDO* ("He went about doing good"), is a citation from Acts 10:38. The sculptures are the work of M. Forget, a Parisian artist.

On 14-15 July 1947, a great *fire* broke out, destroying several buildings. Among them, the chapel burned and its dome collapsed. Because of the energy of two Vincentian priests, Fathers Pierre and Descamps, and the work of Nazi prisoners of war, it reopened 1 December 1948. A modern painting of Saint Vincent in heaven, with angels, now fills the dome. Various outdoor plaques honor former students of the Berceau who served in the second World War and Indochina as well as the many more who died in the first World War.

Thanks also to the generosity of many donors, especially followers of Vincent, the chapel has taken on new life. The most recent altar, built of Bordeaux limestone, was consecrated 27 November 1980 by the bishop of Aire and Dax.

In 1980 Victor Feltrin of Paris carved a strong wooden statue of Saint Vincent. The same artist did a matching statue of Mary the following year. The inside decoration is relatively sober. The letters SV, either intertwined or separated, are nearly the only specifically Vincentian element in stone. The stained glass windows, dating from 1864, closely copy those in the Vincentian mother-

house, depicting incidents in his life and after his death. The central window behind the main altar depicts Vincent escorted by angels into glory. The transept windows, in the shape of a fan, recall his presumed birth date, 24 April 1576, and the dedication of the chapel, 23 April 1864.

A plaque in the right transept reads: "To the memory of the priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Daughters of Charity of the Berceau of Saint Vincent de Paul, who dedicated themselves to children and youth from 1864 to our days. Their Grateful Students." The first Vincentians and Daughters at the Berceau repose in a crypt under the chapel.

The small organ—one manual, seven stops—was the work of the famous builder Cavallé-Coll. Jean Baptiste Étienne paid for it personally from his family inheritance, and it was installed in 1873. In 1998, it was renewed and enlarged.

The *mission of the Berceau* was developed early in the nineteenth century under the inspiration of the prefect of the Landes and the bishop of Aire and



Postcard, seminary, Berceau

Dax. It perpetuates the memory of the saint in his birthplace. At the beginning, it was decided to have all his major works represented here. The first to open was a house for elderly bereft of resources, and for poor orphans. The elderly would receive proper care, and the orphans would receive education and training. The Vincentians and Daughters of Charity were to assume charge of the work under the responsibility of a board. Frédéric Ozanam spoke enthusiastically of the project, and Napoleon III authorized a national lottery to help accomplish it. The work began in 1864 and received civil recognition the next year. The emperor had assigned a military architect to design the buildings, which explains their style, reminiscent of nineteenth-century military barracks from the Paris region. A modern Catholic school adjacent to the old buildings continues the primary and secondary schools begun in the nineteenth century. Its first student was one André Depaul, a distant relative of Vincent.

The hospice became a retirement center and has gradually been modernized. One of the wings admits aged sisters. The active sisters work in the retirement center and bring care to the homes of the needy.

After the other constructions, the Vincentians had a minor seminary built in 1868. It also received émigré Spanish Vincentians in 1869 during a revolution and French Vincentian students during the wars of 1870 and 1939. This seminary graduated some 350 members of the Congregation of the Mission, including seven missionary bishops. The



Saint Vincent de Paul parish, Pouy

chapel, built in 1934, has several striking stained glass windows, particularly one of Saint John Gabriel Perboyre. After 1971, the building became a diocesan “collège” (a residential secondary school). The priests no longer have responsibility for it but continue as its chaplains. They do typical Vincentian works and, with the sisters, receive pilgrims through the work of the Vincentian Center, located in two buildings across the road from Ranquines. These are arranged for groups and present exhibits.

III. Pouy/Saint Vincent De Paul**

The old name of the village, Pouy, is related to Latin *podium* or platform, marking an elevated area. The elevation of the village can easily be seen below

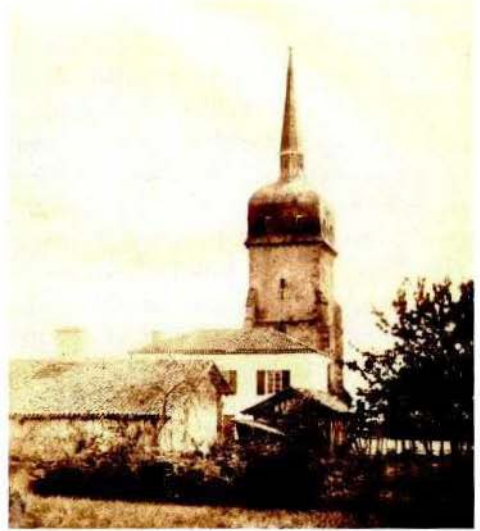


Sign, Saint-Vincent-de-Paul

from the banks of the Adour. There are several other places in France called Pouy, or, more usually, Puy. (Vincent spelled it Poy in Letter 992.) In those cases, the name refers to local volcanic hills. Vincent's Pouy was the center of a rural community, but it was also the seat of an important barony, with rights to dispense justice. One of the judges of Pouy was Monsieur de Comet, who had a home at Préchacq, about five kilometers east of Pouy. The judge received Vincent, his young relative, into his home in Dax as tutor for his children.

King Charles X approved the *change of name* from Pouy to Saint-Vincent-de-Paul on 3 December 1828. To honor its most famous son, the inhabitants of the village had requested the name change, and they changed the title of the patron of the parish to Saint Vincent de Paul at the same time. The name Pouy still persists in some ways, however. (Another village called *Saint-Vincent-de-Paul*, a few kilometers north of Bordeaux, has no apparent connection with the saint. The history of its naming is obscure.)

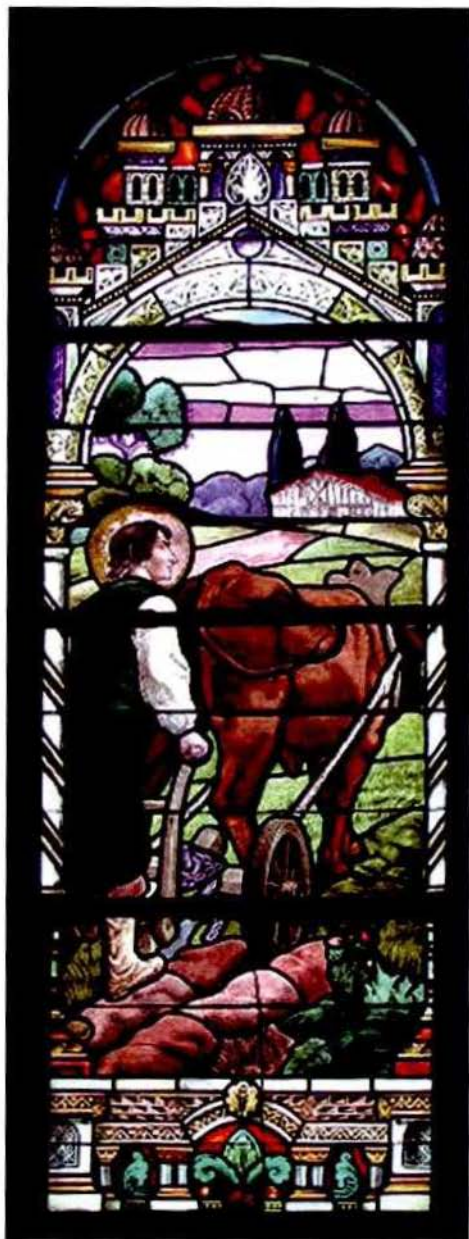
The old *village church*, dedicated to



Parish church, 19th century photograph, Pouy



Saint Vincent de Xaintes, parish church, Pouy



Vincent de Paul at the plow,
church window, Pouy

Saint Peter in Chains where Vincent and his family worshipped, was demolished in 1913 after severe damage from lightning the previous year. The baptismal font, a copper bowl set into a carved stone base, comes from that church and is still in use. A marble plaque records Vincent's baptism there. He received the name Vincent ("the victorious") perhaps because one of his godparents had that name, or more probably out of devotion to Saint Vincent of Xaintes, a martyr, the first bishop of Dax and principal patron saint of the diocese. During his 1624 visit to his home after moving to Paris, he renewed his baptismal vows in that church. Also, Vincent's biographer Abelly noted that he recalled his baptismal anniversary regularly and publicly asked pardon of the community on that day for his faults. The date commonly given is 24 April 1581. Vincent most probably made his first communion in this same church. On 15 August 1628, he also acted as godfather in this church to a nephew, also called Vincent de Paul. The modern church seen today was completed in 1924. Vincentians from Buglose were pastors here as well, from 1706 to 1792, and again from 1955 to about 1997.

The modern stained-glass windows narrate events in the life of Vincent: (1) praying; (2) giving money to a beggar; (3) plowing with oxen; (4) celebrating his first mass; (5) blessing poor men; (6) teaching; (7) ransoming captives [a symbolic depiction]; (8) sending out missionaries; (9) with a child [based on the statue by Alexandre Falguière]; (10) taking on the chains of a galley convict;



Typical house of Landes with oak trees, near Pouy

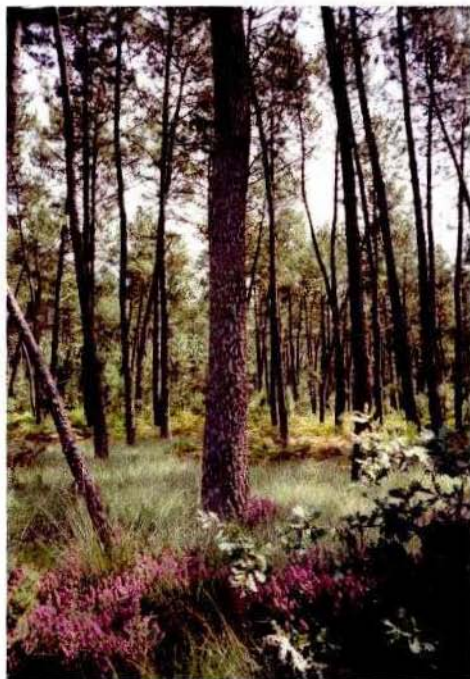
(11) with a bishop and priests; (12) with Ladies and Daughters of Charity; (13) presenting plans for a church; (14) with the pope [a symbolic depiction of the approval of the Congregation]; (15) at the deathbed of Louis XIII; (16) his deathbed; (17) taken up in glory. Antoine Fiat, Vincentian superior general, with the mother general of the time, Marie Maurice, donated the elaborate Stations of the Cross. (A marble plaque recalls this donation.)

The church has preserved the old wooden panels taken from the high altar of the previous building, the altar Vincent knew. They are: (1) Jesus giving the keys to Peter (recalling the previous dedication to Peter in Chains); (2) the tabernacle and four side panels with scenes from the life of Saint Peter; (3) Saint Paul, with the sword of the spirit (Eph 6:7); (4) a saint-bishop, probably Vincent of Xaintes; (5) God the Father with a globe; and (6) a statue base with the head of an angel. These are placed in the right side altar chapel and above the main door. The large main crucifix also

comes from the old church, but it appears to be later than the seventeenth century.

Vincent's parents were undoubtedly buried in the old *cemetery* east of the church, but no trace remains of their graves, probably because of the frequent floods of the Adour. Several Vincentians and Daughters of Charity are buried in simple graves marked by crosses in the new cemetery begun in 1846.

The *De Moras house*, located to the west of the former presbytery, was probably the "town" house belonging to Vincent's mother's family. The name de Moras is widespread in the Landes, with such forms as Morar, Moras, Mauras,



Landscape in forest of Landes, near Pouy

Demoras, Dumoras, with and without an *s*. His mother's family belonged to the local nobility, and many of his relatives on both sides of the family had held, and would later hold, important positions in the Church and in the state.

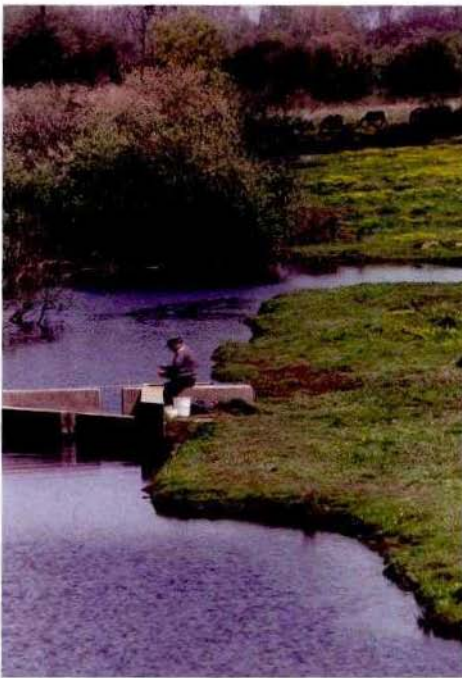
The modern post office is on the site of the home of the saint's sister, where she moved after her marriage to Monsieur Gregoire. The house was named "Paillole," and the site kept that name until the building of the post office in 1930.

The property called *Leschine*, part of Vincent's inheritance, is located north of Pouy facing Route N 124. Its name, however, lives on only in official docu-

ments, not on the modern buildings themselves. A small portion of the same road has been renamed Route de Monsieur Vincent.

IV. The Countryside

The *Holy Wood* is a two-hectare area of imposing old oaks located on the banks of the Adour river, on the road from Yzosse. Local tradition claims that the young Vincent forded the river here (there was no bridge until 1897) to pasture his animals. This is impossible to prove, but this oak grove is typical of the area. In the saint's time, the village carefully maintained an extensive oak forest. Many other oak groves still exist near the



Common lands, Barthes, Pouy



Grain mill, Pouy



Grain mill, 19th century engraving, Pouy

banks of the Adour.

The name *Barthes* designates the marshy bottomland on the banks of the river Adour. The river Adour rises in the Pyrenees and enters the Atlantic just north of Biarritz. The Barthes is common land, flooded twice a year, and various animals graze on it. During the winter, when the river rises, one can easily form an impression of how the entire area looked in the time of the saint's boyhood.

A tradition recounted at the canonical inquiry leading to Vincent's beatification has it that he brought to a local *mill* the grain that his parents had gathered. It would be ground and served as nourishment for the family and their animals. The pious young Vincent, according to what he said about himself, once gave some of his family's grain to a poor man whom he met on the way. On one occasion, he is even said to have given all his meager savings to a poor beggar. These two charitable events became part of the standard series of pictures detailing his life.

Today one can see a remaining mill, on private property on the N 124 east of Pouy. It is no longer in working condition, being unnecessary in modern times. The millstream runs out of the pond, mentioned below. It is not clear if the young man came here or to one of several other mills in the region.

V. Buglose,** Gourbeba

On the busy route D27 leading to the shrine of Buglose is a small oratory, *Our Lady of the Brier*. From the year

1622 the faithful had begun making pilgrimages to Buglose. Beginning in 1803 the pastor of Saint-Paul-lès-Dax, Father Lesbazeilles, erected a series of Stations of the Cross along the road. These stations disappeared over time, but the remaining one led to the construction of a small oratory. In 1876 Eugène Boré, superior general, had it restored to mark the presumed tercentenary of the saint's birth. The statue of Mary placed here copies that of the Miraculous Medal. In 1947 the oratory and its grounds were repaired. In 1974 the little shrine was again completely renovated. Since brier (*bruyère*) grew there in the sandy soil, the title Notre Dame de Bruyère (Our Lady



Our Lady of the Brier,
near Buglose

of the Brier, or Heather) was given to the oratory in that year.

The creek running to the Pouy mill takes its various names from the properties through which it flows. At the place where the road to Buglose crosses it, it is called the *De Paul Creek*. The bridge is an old stone construction, visible at least from its west side. The creek runs into a pond (*Étang de la Glacière*). It seems possible that the young De Paul children came here to swim or fish. The pond has been developed into a public park. Its outlet, called the Mill Stream, runs into the old rural mill mentioned above.



Street sign, De Paul quarter, Buglose



De Paul house, Buglose



Our Lady of Buglose,
church window, Tilh

In the village of Buglose are an old home and a series of apartments called the *Quartier de Paul*. The building on the east side, located at present behind the *Hôtel des Pèlerins*, is called Paul. It has been proposed that the creek and the house gave its name to the family. Since the name Paul is so old in the Dax area,



Vincent's mass at Buglose,
church window, Buglose

however, this supposition seems unlikely. Nevertheless, it shows that the name is widespread in the region.

Our Lady of Buglose is a pilgrimage site of the Landes dating from the beginning of the seventeenth century. It was not here during Vincent's childhood. A chapel was built here in 1622, which the bishop dedicated on 16 May of that year. After giving a mission for the galley convicts in Bordeaux, Vincent returned to see his family (his mother probably had died before this time). During that visit, and shortly after the dedication of the

shrine, as his biographer Collet relates, Vincent came here on pilgrimage. He walked barefoot from the Pouy church, celebrated mass at Buglose, and shared a meal with his family on the day before his departure. Vincent, however, did not mention this visit in his own recollections of this visit home, dated probably to the spring of 1624.

The present church (finished in 1864) has the rank of minor basilica. It houses the old pilgrimage statue of the Virgin Mary and the child Jesus. She is seated, crowned, holding the child in her lap. The child, in turn, is smiling, his hand held up in the traditional gesture of a pontifical blessing. It is said that a poor peasant found the statue as he was plowing. His attention was drawn to it because one of his oxen was licking it clean of the mud that covered it. The heavy stone statue, probably a gift from



Vincentians, seminarians
and poor men, Buglose

the bishop to Pontonx, a neighboring parish, around 1500, had reportedly been hidden at the time of the wars of religion, about 1570. The legend states that the people named the site “ox tongue,” Buglose (although Vincent himself spelled it Burglosse in Letter 992). Instead, the name seems of Basque origin, and refers to a plant known in French as “ox tongue.” Pierre Coste recounts great doubt cast on certain aspects of the story. In any case, Vincent came here. A plaque and a window in the church, showing him saying mass, recall his visit. The text below the window reads: “How Saint Vincent de Paul prayed before the statue of Our Lady of Buglose.” Windows elsewhere preserve the story of Vincent coming here as a boy to pray at the ruins of the church allegedly destroyed by Huguenots. In fact, there is no evidence for this presumed destruction. It is almost certain that there was no church here before 1620—only a small shrine, perhaps, similar to Our Lady of the Brier.

The church building has recently been restored, and is known for its large carillon of 60 bells, blessed in 1895.



Postcard, outdoor Buglose shrine

Statues of four angels crown the square bell tower. Inside are tombs of the local bishops, as well as commemorative plaques from priests ordained here. Noteworthy, too, are two early woodcarvings placed in the left-side chapel. These show the Vincentians (with diocesan seminarians or priests—known from their typical French collar—and two poor men), and Daughters and Ladies of Charity (with poor children). They are important, that of the missionaries is one of the oldest known depictions of Vincentians. They adorned the altar dedicated to Saint Vincent in the previous church. The elaborate Renaissance pulpit likewise comes from that building. In the right-side chapel are two other polychrome carvings, depicting Mary Magdalene in the grotto of La-Sainte-Baume, near Marseilles, where she is said to have received communion from an angel.

Behind the church is the *Chapel of Miracles*. This old chapel marks the original pilgrimage site. A plaque behind the chapel, now incorporated into a large outdoor shrine, completed in 1960, reads: “In 1623 [=1624] in this chapel



Postcard, Vincentian house and Buglose church

Saint Vincent de Paul came to pray with his family.” Near the chapel is a small spring with the two following notices: “Here from 1570 to 1620 was hidden the statue of O[ur] L[ady], which is found in the basilica.” “Miraculous spring of Our Lady of Buglose.” A large statue of Saint Vincent is found nearby, as is the Synod Cross, a large wooden cross placed there in 1993 to recall the synod held for the diocese of Aire and Dax.

In 1647 the bishop of Dax asked Vincent to send missionaries here. He was unable to do so, but his successor sent some in 1706. To the left of the main entrance of the basilica is the large old *community house* where the Vincentians lived during many years of service at Buglose. They gave missions in surrounding dioceses, and retreats to clergy and laity in this house, known locally as “the monastery,” until the Revolution. Since they were the pastors of Pouy and cared for the chapel at the Berceau, the devotion of the Buglose Vincentians for their founder encour-



Typical home, Gourbera



Mill, Pouymartet

aged veneration for Vincent de Paul at Pouy. For their support, they purchased the barony of Pouy in 1715. Their community house, which the bishop recovered after its confiscation during the Revolution, is still in use as a pilgrim center and a residence for the diocesan priests who now staff the shrine. Buglose, like the Berceau, is part of the commune of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul.

West of Buglose lies the small village of **Gourbera**, with some 200 inhabitants. Near here are the remains of the mill of **Pouymartet**. Close by are scattered remains of a brick building. This is believed to have been the priory of Pouymartet that formerly undertook the care of poor and sick pilgrims on their way to the Spanish shrine of Santiago de Compostela. Etienne de Paul, a likely relative of Vincent’s, was its prior, and may have been instrumental in teaching Vincent the basics of his education before he went to Dax. It has been suggested that this relative resided there,



Engraving, 17th century, Dax

and that the young Vincent walked from Ranquines through the fields for lessons with him. Since the mission of this priory was to care for the poor and the sick, Vincent may have received a taste for this kind of service here. The Pouymartet hospital continued in use until the late eighteenth century. There is no proof, however, of Vincent's presence here.

VI. Dax**

Dax, where Vincent attended school after learning the rudiments, was a *walled town*. Some of its ramparts

remain today, built on foundations from the ancient Romans who first built them in the fourth century. That these walls still stand testifies to the vigilance of its inhabitants, who kept Dax virtually free of the various phases of the religious wars during the sixteenth century. Vincent and his schoolmates certainly walked over them. One of the town gates is named *Porte Saint Vincens*, not after Vincent de Paul but after Vincent of Xaintes, the town's first bishop. An ancient thermal spring, the *Fontaine Chaude*, called *Nèhe* after the Celtic goddess of water sources, gave the city its name (*ad aquas - d'Acqs - Dax*).

Dax today, with nearly 20,000 inhabitants, is still famous for its many *thermal springs* treating rheumatism and other disorders. It is the second most popular thermal town in France, after Vichy. These springs attracted the Roman emperor Augustus Caesar, his daughter Julia Augusta, as well as countless others. The Musée de Borda, named after a local scientist and benefactor of the Congregation of the Mission, has a collection of local prehistoric and his-



Seventeenth century map of Dax, Pouy



Comet home, Dax

toric relics and displays Roman ruins visible under nearby buildings. The city bullring demonstrates the area's close ties with Spain, since Dax was an important junction for merchants and travelers using the passes of the Pyrenees, as well as an important river port. The ancient bridge from Vincent's time exists no longer, carried off in 1770 by a huge flood. A second bridge was added in 1970 to relieve the increasing traffic.

In Dax, on the site where the post office and police station are now located, was a Franciscan friary. These religious had a *collège* to receive boarding students, who paid about 60 livres a year. The students included boys from the country whose parents wanted to assure

a secondary education. Vincent came there at age twelve and probably spent four years living first with the Franciscans and then with M. de Comet, while attending classes at the municipal school adjacent to the friary. We know one incident from those years that he related to his confreres in a conference on obedience, 19 December 1659: *I remember that when I was a young boy my father brought me with him into town. Because he was badly clothed and limped a little, I was ashamed of walking with him and of admitting that he was my father.* He recounted a similar story to Madame de Lamoignon: *I remember that once, at the school where I was a student, someone came to tell me that my father, a poor peasant, was asking to see me. I refused to go to speak with him. In this I committed a great sin.* (Coste, *Life*, 1, 14)

At 17, rue des Fusillés is the family *home of Monsieur de Comet*. This has been recently restored and on the outside bears a plaque, dedicated in 1960, recalling the presence of the young Vincent here. Monsieur de Comet was an attorney at Dax and judge of Pouy, and related by marriage to Vincent. He lodged him in his home and confided to him the education of his children, while also giving him time for his studies. Monsieur de Comet served at the courts, still located a few doors north of the home, although now in newer buildings. Young Monsieur Depaul also knew the old bishop's residence, now the city hall. At 27, rue Cazade lived his cousins Saint Martin. In 1658 one of these cousins discovered Vincent's intriguing letter relating his Tunisian captivity. He had writ-

ten the letter to this man's father-in-law more than fifty years previously.

The old Gothic cathedral of *Sainte Marie*, dating from the fourteenth century, fell into ruins and was taken down in 1638-1643. In Vincent's time, the bishop worked to rebuild it, and Vincent was able to get Louis XIV to donate a large sum to help with construction. Rebuilding started in 1644, but the church was consecrated only in 1755. In 1894, when the façade and towers were completed, the Portal of the Apostles, the main (west) door from the previous cathedral, was installed inside in a transept. The present cathedral has some nineteenth-century souvenirs (statue, windows, painting) of Saint Vincent de Paul, as well as some other remnants of the cathedral that Vincent knew, such as a few choir stalls in the right transept. Remarkably, one of the canons of the cathedral proposed a special chapel to be set aside in Vincent's honor supposing that he would one day be beatified; this happened during the founder's lifetime.

The *Hospital of Saint Eutrope*, where the Daughters came in 1712, also



Postcard, Notre Dame du Pouy seminary, Dax



Vincent and peasant of Gannes, seminary chapel, Dax

has Vincentian connections in that Sister Marguerite Rutan (b. 1736), its superior, was accused of anti-Revolutionary activities. (*Now Hôpital Thermal, rue Labadie*) This Daughter of Charity was imprisoned in the Carmelite convent with other religious (*11, rue des Carmes*) and then received a show trial in the former bishop's residence. That same day, 9 April 1794, she was paraded in a cart through the city to the place of execution. A condemned priest was tied back to back to her during this spectacle. They were guillotined in the square by the castle, now replaced by the Hôtel Splendid. Her burial place has never been identified. The cause for her beatification was introduced in 1931, but it has not progressed.

An ancient *monastery* enclosed the tomb of Saint Vincent of Xaintes. A new church, built in 1893, replaces it. It also displays remains from the Gallo-Roman period. Vincent regarded Vincent of Xaintes as his patron and honored him on 1 September, his feast. (Another namesake, Saint Vincent Ferrer, he regarded as secondary patron, keeping his feast as well.) The location of Xaintes

is unknown; it may have been the city of Saintes or even the part of present-day Dax where the bishop was martyred.

After the Revolution, in 1799, several individual Vincentians returned to the diocese and put themselves at the disposition of the bishop. But only much later did they receive a home with a chapel, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, and inaugurated as *Our Lady of the Pouy* in Dax on 21 November 1845. In 1880 a newer building was finished. For many years it was the major seminary and/or novitiate for the Congregation in France. The building still stands, and the chapel can be visited. Of the original small chapel, only the area around the present altar remains. The present chapel holds many memories for Vincentians from other

parts of the world as well as France, since so many studied and were ordained here. During the last years of the seminary's presence, paintings in Byzantine style were completed in one of the transepts and in the back of the chapel, where they symbolically represent the episode of the peasant at Gannes, among others. The superior of the time had wished that the artist, Nicolas Greschny, would cover the church with these paintings, but events overtook his plans. The chapel includes tombs of the Borda family, the former owners of the property.

Saint Jean Gabriel Perboyre was honored here, and the stained glass windows recall him as well as Saints Francis Regis Clet and Louise de Marillac.

The building, apart from the chapel and library, now serves as a hotel for



De Paul family grave, Pontonx-sur-l'Adour

guests taking the thermal cure. Adjoining the property, further up the hill—the *pouy* from which the seminary took its name—is the present retirement home for Vincentians of the Toulouse province. Fronting the home is Rue des Lazaristes, while on the side is the Rue du Père Perboyre.

A small community of Christianized Jews of Portuguese and Spanish origin (Marranos) existed in Dax in Vincent's period. Interestingly, almost nothing is recorded in Vincent's correspondence or biographies concerning his observations on contemporary Jews.

VII. Sites in the Region of Dax

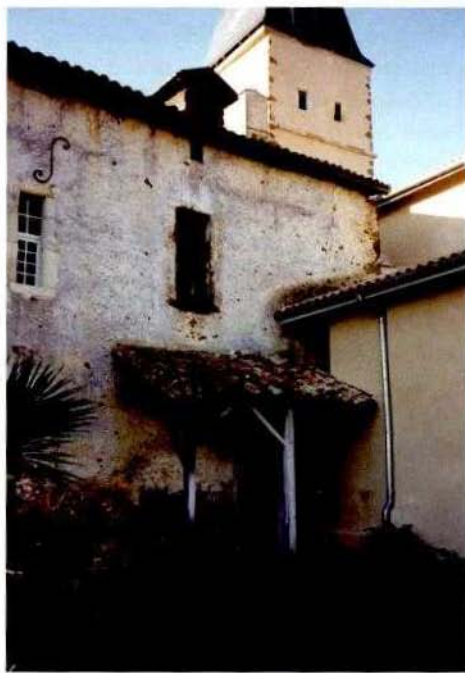
The places in this section are divided into those roughly north and/or east of Dax, still in the Landes; and those south of Dax, called the Chalosse, leading into the foothills of the Pyrenees mountains.

Pontonx-sur-l'Adour is a town north and east of Buglose, with about 2000 inhabitants. Its church, dating only from the nineteenth century, contains a statue, painting and window in honor of the saint. Of general interest is the old communal laundry. This still has in place the sloping antique stones before which the women of the village would crouch to wash their clothing. In the town cemetery are grave markers for the Depaul family (descended from the saint's brother), and the Mora (Moras) family, related to his mother. It has been suggested that the saint's mother took her name from a hamlet, **Moras**, in the small village of **Sainte-Eulalie-en-Born**,

some 70 kilometers north and west of Pouy. Without documentation, this is difficult to prove.

About 20 kilometers northeast of Dax is the town of **Tartas**, the birthplace of Pierre Coste (1873-1935). He entered the Berceau at age eight, as an orphan. He later edited the correspondence of his countryman Vincent and wrote the most comprehensive modern biography of the saint. Tartas numbers some 3000 people.

A few kilometers farther east is the little village of **Cauna**, population 400. The duchess of Ventadour, mentioned above, was marquise of Pouy, Téthieu, Buglose and Cauna, among other places



Priest's residence, Tilh



Street sign, Saint-Paul-lès-Dax

in the Landes. In her will, dated 1634, she left Vincent a sum of money to found a mission house in Cauna. He never made the foundation, however, since he could not acquire the promised funds.

Closer to Dax is *Téthieu*, a village of perhaps 500 people. Its church of Saint Laurence, located near the old Pouy mill, has a modern window showing Saint Vincent as, among other things, a shepherd. A side altar and its traditional painting show local veneration of the saint. This parish is now joined with that of Pouy.

The town of Saint-Paul-lès-Dax is built where the Roman aqueduct of the *Aquae Tarbellicae*, an early name for Dax, began. The apse of the present parish church dates from the eleventh or twelfth century, having outlived the ancient church buildings in Dax. Its exterior has rich carvings on columns, depicting such figures as mythological beasts, acrobats, lions and birds. These probably come from Spanish sculptors. There are several carved panels on the outside of the apse. Vincent knew this town, as he and his family had property

in the area, but there is no monument to him in the church. The church building is also interesting in that the old tower keeps the traditional shape in use in Pouy in the saint's time. Its population today numbers about 10,000 people. A large boulevard, named after Saint Vincent, keeps his memory alive.

About 25 kilometers southeast of Dax is the town of *Tilh*.^{*} A Basque influence is evident in the town: the bullring, the *fronton* (handball court), and some local family names. This parish, Saint Pierre, in the hilly area south of the see city was where, probably in 1598, his protector, M. de Comet had put forth the name of the future Father de Paul. He would need this pastorate, or canonical title, to assure his advancement to ordination. Plaques inside and outside the church recall his appointment, although he was never able to exercise his ministry here. Above the exterior



Commemorative plaque, parish church, Tilh

plaque, installed in 1960, is a bronze profile of Vincent, with a line in Gascon. It preserves the traditional pronunciation of Vincent's name and the final *s* that he used in his signature: LOU BOUN MOUSSU BINCENS [The Good Monsieur Vincent]. A Father S. Soubé (Sansoubé, Soubès, perhaps even Saint-Loubès) appealed Vincent's appointment in Rome, and the new priest had to abandon his claim. It was perhaps at that time that Vincent traveled to Rome, probably for the Holy Year of 1600. As such, his non-appointment was a providential turning point in his life. Tilh today numbers about 800 people.

To the east of the Berceau in the hilly Chalosse area is the town of **Amou**, population 1500. A native of Amou, Bertrand Ducournau (1614-1677), was destined to become Vincent's personal secretary. As a child Ducournau traveled on pilgrimage to Buglose. After his education, he worked in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, on the Atlantic coast, and then in Bayonne. There he met Louis Abelly, at the time vicar general of the bishop. He also met Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, later known as the abbé of Saint Cyran,



De Moras family home, Peyroux



Château of Montgaillard, Orthevielle

the great promoter of Jansenism. A native of Bayonne, Duvergier urged Bertrand to enter religious life, which he did after a retreat at Saint Lazare in Paris. He died at Saint Lazare. The town of Amou has commemorated its prominent son by naming a street in his honor, designating his family home, and identifying the font in the parish church where he was baptized.

In the village of **Orthevielle**, north of the Gave, is the chateau of Montgaillard. Vincent is believed to have pastured his animals in this area, probably coming from his mother's family farm **Peyroux**, located just north on D6. A local tradition says that the future saint learned to read and write here. Vincent told the bishop of Saint-Pons, Persin de Montgaillard, whose family came from the area: *I knew it well. I kept flocks when I was young, and I used to lead them out there.* (Collet, II, 195) The sixteenth-century church, a fortified building with small windows, has an unusual old statue of Saint Vincent, more Spanish than French, and a window depicting Our Lady of Buglose.



Abbey buildings, Arthous

Otherwise, nothing else recalls the saint's presence here. One Vincentian connection dates from 1799, when Antoine Célières (b. 1730), became pastor. The last Vincentian superior at Buglose, he had fled to Spain at the Revolution but returned when the bishop offered him the post. Just below the church is an old communal washing shed (*lavoir*), recently restored. Orthevielle has about 750 inhabitants.

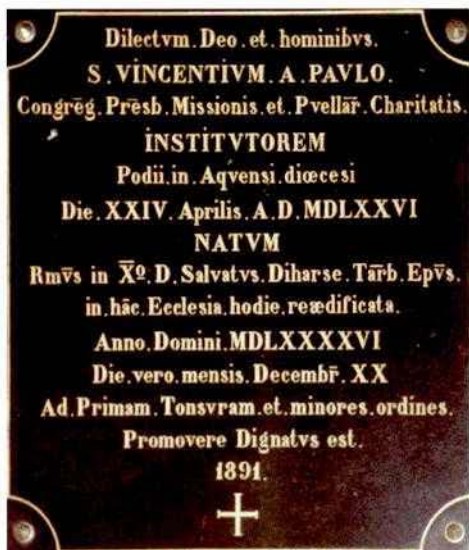
South of the Gave is the old Norbertine abbey of **Arthous**. Founded about 1160, it suffered over the centuries from wars and invasions. It was located here to take advantage of good farmland and it was, moreover, on a pilgrimage route to Compostela. Nevertheless, Arthous suffered because of its location on the frontier between Spanish and French domains and was ruined in 1571 because of the wars of religion. Louis XIII helped to restore it, but it was suppressed at the Revolution. The present buildings, now state property, have been extensively restored, and their rich architectural details are especially interesting, such as the sculpted capitals showing the capital sins. The buildings also house a

museum of prehistory and early artifacts discovered through archaeological research.

One of the abbots of Arthous was Salvat Diharse (1576-1648), himself of Basque ancestry, and whose family castle was located at nearby Labastide-Clairence. He was a commendatory abbot, only in minor orders, but he drew revenues from the lands. He could not live here because the monastery was in ruins. His uncle and namesake was the bishop of Tarbes and would ordain Vincent to subdiaconate and diaconate there. The younger Diharse would, in turn, succeed his uncle as bishop of Tarbes.

Farther south, and approaching the Basque country, is the small town of **Bidache***, with a population of around 1000 people, which, together with Arthous, was in the diocese of Dax in Vincent's day. In the parish church of Saint James the Greater, the young Vincent received tonsure as well as the four minor orders from Bishop Diharse, the elder (d. 1603), on the same day, 20 December 1596, the Friday of Ember Week. The bishop, perhaps a relative of Vincent's mother, or at least a family friend, had been a member of the chapter at Bidache. He possibly chose this collegiate church since it was near Peyroux and near his own diocese. Vincent received minor orders in Bidache and not in Dax since his home diocese had no bishop at the time. The present church, however, built in 1880, stands on the site of the earlier one.

A side altar, with a window depicting his tonsure at the hands of the bish-

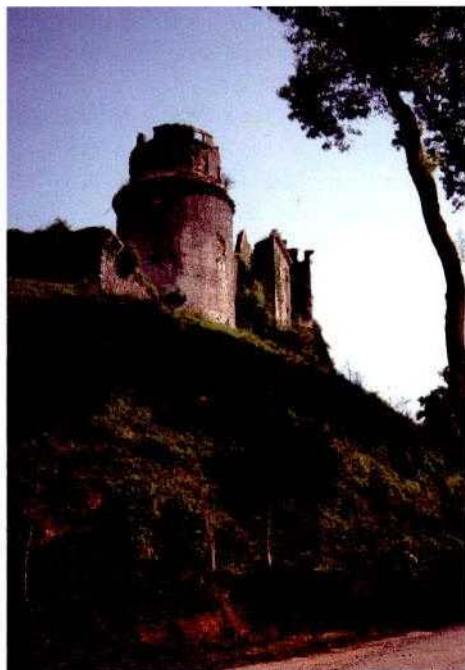


Commemorative plaque, Bidache

op, has two commemorative plaques (in French and Latin). The first reads: “Bishop Salvat Diharse, bishop of Tarbes, deigned to promote to first tonsure and minor orders in this church, today reconstructed, on 20 December 1596, Saint Vincent de Paul, beloved of God and man, founder of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission and of the Daughters of Charity, born in Pouy, in the diocese of Dax, 24 April 1576.” The second reads: “This altar and this window have been given to the parish of Bidache by Father Antoine Fiat, superior general of the priests of the Mission, and Madame [*sic*] Havard, superioress of the Daughters of Charity, as a witness of their filial devotion to Saint Vincent de Paul, their illustrious and glorious founder, on the feast of Saint Vincent, 19 July 1891.” The win-

dows do not mention, however, that the saint was about fifteen years old at the time and took tonsure and minor orders to be qualified to begin his theological studies. Vincent chose Toulouse since it was the nearest university with a theological faculty. In about 1880 the present church, however, replaced the one on the same site where Vincent was ordained. It has been suggested that, because of the Spanish Basque character of the area, he first went from here to Zaragoza in Spain for his theological studies. From Spain he then went to Toulouse, according to this theory.

Facing the church a short distance north is the ruined *chateau* of the dukes



Château, Bidache



Château, Bidache

of Gramont. Duke Antoine II had proposed the younger Diharse as bishop but retained some rights to receiving income from his diocese, a situation that left the young bishop poor and insecure, and having to rely on the duke. This nobleman was able to do so since his small duchy was somewhat independent of the French crown, and Bidache was his principal fortress. His relative independence—he was styled “sovereign of Bidache,” in addition to several other noble titles—also had the effect of allowing Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal to settle here. Their synagogue was in use until the Revolution. The old cemetery has maintained some headstones with bilingual inscriptions in Hebrew and Portuguese. The dukes of Gramont from the period after the Revolution are interred in the crypt of the parish church.

Although not directly connected with Vincent de Paul, the Basque town of Espelette (Ezpeleta) is of interest as the birthplace of *Jean Pierre Armand David* (1826-1900). In 1862, shortly after his ordination, this young confrere of a scientific bent was sent to China, and made

observations (insects, plants, birds, fish, etc.) for various interested parties in France. The Museum of Natural History in Paris supported several of his expeditions to Mongolia, Szechwan and Tibet, and Central China. David’s name has been given to several of his discoveries, in particular “Père David’s deer.” His is noted, in particular, as the first European to have seen and described the Giant Panda, in 1869. The World Wildlife Fund erected a commemorative plaque on his birthplace (355, *karrika Naguisia*), now a private residence. His parish church preserves many features of Basque style. The David family tomb is visible in the parish cemetery. In nearby **Hasparren** a



Jewish tombstone, Bidache



Bilingual road sign, Espelette

Catholic school bears his name (*Lycée Agricole Armand David*).

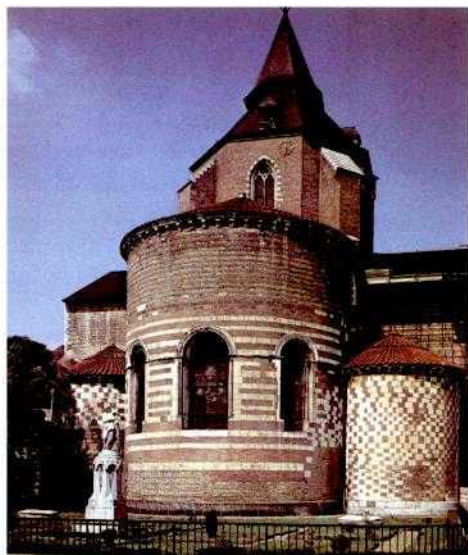
South of Dax, guarding a bridge on the Gave de Pau River, is **Orthez**. This was an ancient capital of Béarn, an old province of the kingdom of Navarre. Orthez began to develop in the thirteenth century. As happened with Pau, its larger neighbor, its citizens took to Protestantism in the sixteenth century and treated Catholics harshly. The old bridge, situated high above a rocky bank, was the scene of several battles between the two groups, and many lost their lives as they plunged off this bridge into the swift waters below. Protestants still live and worship in the area. Jeanne d'Albret, queen of Navarre, founded a Protestant university here in the sixteenth century, and the renowned Theodore Beza (1519-1605) taught here. Vincent's idyllic existence at the Berceau must have been affected by the memory of so much violence in this area. The Daughters of Charity had a public hospital and a school here from 1767 until the Revolution. Today, Orthez, with its pop-

ulation of about 10,000, is also known for its wine production.

Pau, like Orthez, guards a river crossing over the Gave, its great castle recalling the kingdom of Navarre and its rulers. Pau was the hometown of Henri IV, whose mother, Jeanne d'Albret, was the daughter of Marguerite d'Angoulême, the sister of François I, king of France. Henri inherited his mother's Protestantism and his granduncle's lineage. He was thus a claimant for the throne of France when the male Valois line was extinguished with the death of Henri III. Jeanne d'Albret imposed a rigid observance of the reformed faith and led a fierce persecution against Catholicism in her realm. Churches were "reformed," that is, purified of religious pictures and statues, and many priests



Armand David home, Espelette



Cathedral, Tarbes

were imprisoned or executed. As at Orthez, the continuing Protestant-Catholic struggles here surely influenced Vincent's early years and outlook.

From 1686 to 1790, the Congregation of the Mission served in the *diocesan seminary* of Pau. Perhaps because the institution burned down accidentally in 1731, little information exists about its history. The founder was the duchess of Gramont, the same family mentioned above concerning Bidache. Daughters of Charity also had several works here, the most noteworthy being the hospital that they served from 1688. They were expelled at the Revolution but were so missed that the authorities invited them back in 1793. The Sisters developed many other works here in the course of the next century. Esteemed for its fine climate and spectacular views of

the Pyrenees, Pau today has some 82,000 inhabitants.

In the small cathedral of Tarbes,* Notre Dame de la Sède, the same Bishop Salvat Diharse (or d'Yharse), the elder, ordained Vincent to subdiaconate and diaconate during the required Ember Days in September and the following December. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul donated a plaque to the cathedral: "Saint Vincent de Paul was ordained subdeacon, 19 September 1598, and deacon, 19 December 1598, in the cathedral of Tarbes by Bishop Diharse, bishop of the diocese. Erected 21 April 1912." This bishop ordained Vincent since his own diocese was vacant at the time, the new bishop not having received



Commemorative plaque, cathedral, Tarbes

episcopal ordination. The Tarbes cathedral today does not have the same decoration as it did in the saint's time, since it had to be repaired several times after Huguenot attacks. The altar and its furnishings date from the eighteenth century. Troops were guarding the building from attack at the time of his ordination and remained until 1613. Daughters of Charity came to Tarbes sometime before 1792 and then returned in 1803 to work in the hospital, located a few steps away from the cathedral. They continue their work, but in another location. A statue of Saint Vincent adorns the façade. (*Hôpital de l'Ayguerote, Placeta de l'Espitau*) Tarbes today has about 48,000 inhabitants.

BÉTHARRAM

For some centuries a pilgrimage *shrine* at Bétharram had honored the Virgin Mary. According to one account dating from the sixteenth century, a young girl of the neighborhood was about to fall into the rushing waters of the river Gave, in the Pyrenees. She recounted that Mary extended a beautiful branch (*bet arram*) to pull her out. To recognize this event, the bishop repaired an old chapel in 1614. In 1616, a large cross was erected on the hilltop above the little shrine chapel. Damaged in a storm, it was seen to reerect itself, and the shrine became known as Our Lady of Calvary. Bétharram rapidly became a center of pilgrimage, attracting crowds of the blind and the lame. A congregation of priests, called Our Lady of Calvary, was founded to minister here beginning in 1621.

In 1659 the founder of the Calvarians with the bishop of Lescar, the local diocese, invited Vincent to send missionaries here, perhaps on the model of what he had done at the shrine of La Rose some years previously. Vincent described Bétharram as *a place of great devotion, and if it is not the second, it is at least the third most frequented shrine in the kingdom.* (Letter 2877) Vincent wrote of the miracles that occurred. Although he appointed a superior, Vincent saw several problems with the proposal. Nothing came of it in the end because the bishop's response went astray, and perhaps also because Vincent's health was declining and death was impending. There is nothing especially Vincentian about the shrine today, which has incorporated some of the elements of the seventeenth or eighteenth century church in its construction. It is now a part of Lestelle Bétharram, a town of fewer than 1000 people. Bétharram is also known for its large caves and grottoes.

A saint associated with Bétharram is *Michael Garicoïts* (1797-1863), founder of the priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Bétharram. He taught at the major seminary then at Bétharram and, when it was moved to Bayonne, he stayed here and attracted others to live with him to undertake works of evangelization and education. His tomb is in the Bétharram shrine. He was greatly influenced by Vincentian spirituality. Garicoïts was canonized in 1947 together with Jeanne Élisabeth Bichier Des Ages (1773-1838), a foundress who had helped him in his works and profited from his counsel.



Widow at prayer, 17th century wall painting, Notre Dame de Garaison

Another saint, a pilgrim to Bétharram in her early years, was Bernadette Soubirous (1844-1879) from neighboring Lourdes, on the banks of the same Gave. She came here often with her mother or members of her family, particularly a few days before her own experiences at Lourdes began.

As to the great shrine of Lourdes today, catering to the million or more who come on pilgrimage, there is not much of a Vincentian character. In recognition of his being one of the great saints of France, Saint Vincent is represented by a large statue at the left along the great ramps leading to the upper basilica. At the time of her first visions at the grotto (1858), Bernadette, a member of the Children of Mary, was wearing a Miraculous Medal, which by then had been widely distributed in France and elsewhere. The city also remembers Vincent in a Rue Saint Vincent de Paul.

Lourdes has more than 16,000 full-time residents today. It might be noted that this area of the Pyrenees is known for other earlier shrines to the Blessed Virgin Mary in honor of visions at vari-



Procession, 17th century wall painting, Notre Dame de Garaison

ous periods: Notre Dame de Médoux at Asté, Notre Dame de Mouillan at Moutoussé, and Notre Dame de Garaison at Monlong.

The shrine of **Notre Dame de Garaison** was staffed by Pierre Geoffroy, who founded a community here about 1608. Its purpose was the reform of the clergy and the preaching of missions in the country areas. In addition, members of his community came to Bétharram to staff it beginning in 1615. The church at Garaison preserves extraordinary wall paintings from the end of the seventeenth century. They depict mainly healing miracles, and show people in their daily occupations. After the Revolution, this shrine was restored, and another congregation of priests continued the ministry of the previous congregation. These Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception were the first to develop the shrine at Lourdes. Today, despite some efforts to demolish Garaison, it continues to function together with Bétharram, and reflects very well the life and activities of Vincent's period.

Many of these shrines are associat-

ed, as well, with miraculous springs and continue to draw numerous pilgrims.

BORDEAUX

The city of Bordeaux is the capital of the ancient province of Aquitaine, where Christianity was introduced as early as the fourth century. Part of the murky history of the young Vincent is the story of a visit he made here in 1605 for some purpose today unknown. Abelly wondered whether it might not have concerned the offer of a bishopric by the duke of Epernon, uncle of two of Vincent's pupils at Buzet-sur-Tarn. In any case, Vincent never mentioned it afterwards.

Vincent also came to Bordeaux to give a mission for the personnel of the *galleys*, meaning the convicts, sailors and officers. Galleys had been brought here in 1622 to prepare for a siege of La Rochelle, which took place the following year. Since this was still in the period before the foundation of the Congregation, Vincent, as the chaplain general of the galleys, turned to other clergy and religious, such as the Jesuits, to help with this work. After his visit to Bordeaux, dated 1624, he took the advice of two of his friends and visited his family at Pouy. This was his well-known visit home.

He also sent missionaries to the diocese in 1634, an occasion blessed with success. At some unknown period, a conference of clergy was established in the diocese, on the model of the Tuesday Conferences in Paris. Daughters of Charity came here in 1690 and worked in parish schools and hospitals. At the

Revolution the sisters were maltreated and assaulted by crowds in the city. Some were forced to work at paving the city streets. Even though they put aside the habit to appear in public in approved dress, they were recognized and often ridiculed and insulted. They returned following the Revolution and stayed until the expulsions of 1905. They have resumed several works here.

Despite Vincent's contacts here, it is not known how he came to know *Jean de Fonteneil* (1605-1679), a priest of the diocese. This priest, a Bordeaux native, became a friend and imitator of his. Fonteneil's excellent qualities contributed to his rise in the Church. Among other things he became dean of the Bordeaux cathedral and vicar general of the archdiocese. An extensive correspondence between him and Vincent has been preserved. Fonteneil also showed himself helpful to the Congregation as well as to the Daughters of Charity in their various works, and he assisted Vincent's relatives. He founded a community of priests, the Congregation of the Clergy, to give missions and retreats, and to form the clergy, but this group survived him by only three years.

On Fonteneil's death and, with the dissolution of his community, the Congregation of the Mission inherited all the properties, rights and duties of the Congregation of the Clergy. Among the obligations was the *diocesan seminary*. It came to the Congregation of the Mission in 1682. At the beginning the seminarians lived and studied in two houses next to the parish church of Saint Siméon, where Fonteneil had been pas-



Saint Siméon church, Bordeaux

tor, and which the seminarians used for their religious exercises. This church, no longer in use, remains standing, and its name lives on in the street, Rue Saint Siméon. This seminary was later enlarged and moved to another location. The new institution opened in 1739 and continued until the Revolution. It is no longer standing. (*Corner Rue Judaïque and Rue du Palais Gallien*)

Among the Fonteneil properties was the renowned *Haut-Brion*. Fonteneil had received this land in 1650, and the Vincentians, in turn, held it from 1682 until the Revolution. The missionaries used it first as a country house for the Bordeaux seminarians but gradually improved the vines until the vineyard developed an excellent reputation, particularly as mass and table wine for bishops. The Vincentians also built a small chapel here for their own use; it still stands, although no longer used for worship. At the Revolution the property was sold to benefit the state. The vineyard, however, retains the name of the congregation: Château la Mission Haut-Brion. Its wine is highly prized. (*Cours de*

Maréchal Gallieni, Talence)

The seminary staff also had charge of the pilgrimage chapel of *Notre Dame de Montuzet*. This is located on route D135 between Bec d'Ambès and Blaye, and is a hamlet now called *Montuzet-lès-Arnauds*, part of Plassac. It, too, was inherited from Fonteneil's community, some of whose members retired here. Becoming a separate house in 1708, it served as a retirement home for elderly Vincentians from 1737. Nothing remains of the chapel and house today, apart from an ancient stone cross standing in front of the old site. Overlooking the river Gironde and set at the edge of a vineyard, however, is an elevated statue of Our Lady. The statue and site are not otherwise identified.



Stone from Saint Lazare, La Mission Haut-Brion, Talence



Entry, Château la Mission, Talence

Also of Vincentian interest is that the founders of the Vincentian mission in the *United States*, Fathers Felix De Andreis, Joseph Rosati, Joseph Acquaroni, Brother Martin Blanka along with several other non-Vincentians stayed in Bordeaux preparing to embark



Bishop's castle, Château-l'Évêque

for America. Their visit lasted from 1 February to 13 June 1816. A total of thirteen made that voyage.

Bordeaux is now a city of more than 210,000 inhabitants.

CHÂTEAU-L'ÉVÊQUE***

As would make sense, the town of Château-l'Évêque is named after the fortress and residence of the bishops of Périgueux, ten kilometers to the south. It has borne this name officially, however, only since 1831. The bishops used this fort-residence from the fourteenth century to the Revolution. Its importance



Postcard, Château-l'Évêque

came from its location at a significant point in the Beauronne valley water system. The chateau underwent major repairs in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the sixteenth century, Protestant (Huguenot) forces often attacked it. In fact they succeeded in assassinating the bishop of Périgueux in 1575. The castle is now in private hands.

Next to the chateau is the parish church of Saint Julian. Since the name Julian, a patron of sick travelers, was often was attached to hospices for travelers, it can be presumed that this chapel

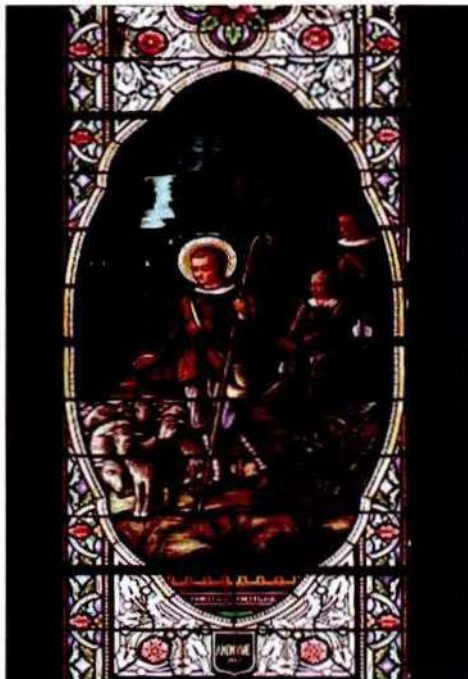
was originally used for pilgrims and travelers. It has since been incorporated as a side chapel in the small parish church. It keeps its original orientation, facing away from the present main altar.

Thanks to the efforts of Father Jean Baptiste Étienne, the parish church was restored beginning in 1874. The windows (dated 1887) in the nave present original themes from Vincent's life. The first two depict "Saint Vincent de Paul in the Landes," and "The family of Saint Vincent de Paul." The second set shows the "Entry of Saint Vincent de Paul in Chateau l'Eveque," and "Saint Vincent de Paul at Buzet," where he had a small school. These windows, however, depict the Berceau as it was in the nineteenth century, full of young pine trees. Instead, in Vincent's time, it was less wooded. Another large window in the side chapel compares the life of Vincent with that of Joseph: the death of Joseph and the death of Vincent; Jesus at work with Joseph, and Vincent helping a poor man, and holding an infant; the marriage of Mary and Joseph, and the ordination of Vincent. A small altar has some reliefs portraying his ordination, teaching and first mass. A plaque recalls his ordination there, as do copies in Latin and French of his ordination document.

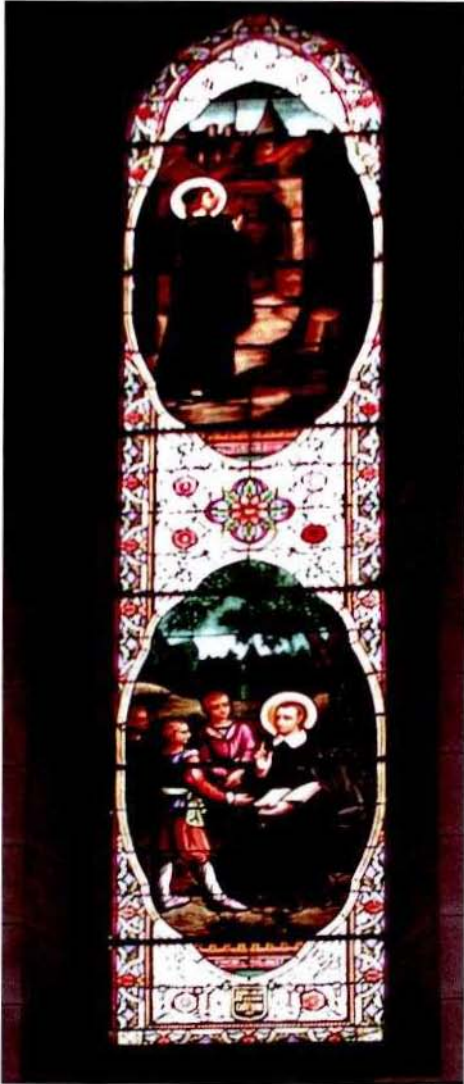
The remains of the early chapel consist principally in the two pilasters at the edge of the sanctuary (the three double Gothic columns are nineteenth century), and the stones in the floor of the sanctuary. Above the sanctuary was an attic, in an area now demolished. It was there among old papers that a copy of the saint's ordination record was found

in the nineteenth century.

Several questions have arisen concerning Vincent's *priestly ordination*. Why did he obtain written permission (dimissorial letters) from the diocese of Dax but not use the permission for more than a year? Also, why was he ordained by François de Bourdeille, the bishop of Périgueux, and not by his own bishop of Dax, to whose diocese he belonged until the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission? No one knows the answer to these questions. Vincent's delay may reflect his hesitation to submit to ordination in a diocese whose relatively new bishop, Jacques Du Sault (1570-1623), was something of a reformer. However,

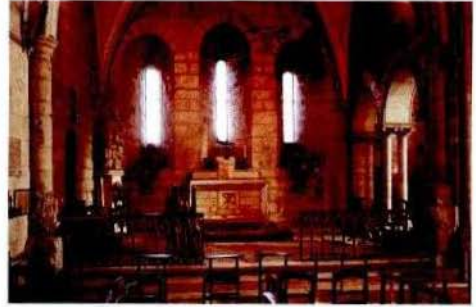


Vincent, flocks and parents,
church window, Château-l'Évêque



Vincent in Château-l'Évêque, Vincent teaching, church window, Château-l'Évêque

the young newly-arrived bishop was in conflict with the canons of the cathedral (1600-1604), and could not ordain anyone there. Besides, even if he could have



Original chapel, Château-l'Évêque

ordained someone, he would probably have had some difficulty in ordaining a man of nineteen or twenty (even though Vincent's dimissorial letter repeated the standard formula that he was of "legitimate age"), and who would not finish his theological studies for another four years. However, since his bishop had been chaplain for Queen Marguerite de Valois in Paris, he may have had a hand in nominating his young priest, Father Depaul, to the same position. This may demonstrate that the bishop had no problem with him. In any case, François de Bourdeille was not a bad bishop. He had been active in reorganizing his dio-



Historical reconstruction, Château-l'Évêque



Ordination, plaque in parish church,
Château-l'Évêque

cese, holding synods, etc. He died 24 October 1600.

Another possibility is that Bishop de Bourdeille had helped Vincent financially in his studies, and he, in return, helped to educate Bourdeille's nephews at his school in Buzet. This, at least, was the tradition among the bishop's relatives, recounted as late as the mid-nineteenth century.

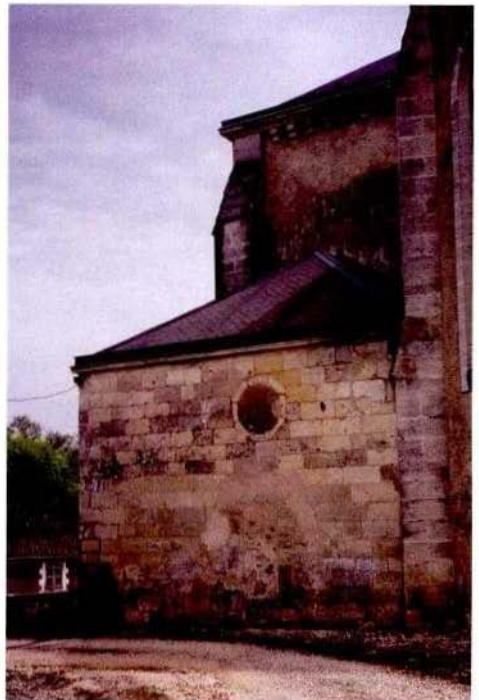
Why was Vincent ordained here and not in Saint Étienne cathedral in Périgueux? First, the Huguenots still held power in Périgueux and it would have been difficult for the elderly bishop to travel. Second, in any case, the bishop no longer lived in Périgueux (since his residence had been destroyed), and he had no usable cathedral (since the Protestants had partially demolished it).

Where exactly was he ordained? The bishop called the chapel his "church" in the official ordination document, as does the diocesan register of ordinations. This leads to the conclusion

that he did not ordain Vincent secretly or privately in his domestic chapel, as some have suggested, but in the chapel on the public road by his castle.

When he was ordained is clearly reported in the ordination document, 23 September 1600. The same document also records that the date was Saturday of the Ember Week, one of the days stipulated for ordinations. This may explain the expression in the document "general ordinations," but it does not prove whether Vincent was ordained alone or together with others.

Château-l'Évêque today is a small village of 1800 persons. The Daughters



Original entry, parish church,
Château-l'Évêque



Commemorative plaque,
Château-l'Évêque

of Charity run a retirement home here (begun in 1869) and receive guests as lodgers for retreats, etc. Some Vincentians lived here from 1877 to 1883 and returned later as chaplains to the sisters. During the second World War, the body of Saint Vincent was moved here, where it was hidden in their chapel and basement, then returned for veneration (from 20 May 1940 to 3 June 1945). Nazis lived in the sisters' buildings but never bothered them or the Vincentians.

At the south edge of town is a road leading to Périgueux said to have been laid out in the time of the ancient Romans. (*Voie Romaine*) To the left, before this road begins, are signs for the Calvaire, a modern series of Stations of the Cross leading up the hillside.

Many years later Vincent reflected on his priesthood. *As for myself, if I had known what it was when I had the temerity to enter it—as I have come to know since then—I would have preferred to till the soil than to commit myself to such a*

formidable state of life. I have said this more than a hundred times to poor country people when, to encourage them to live contentedly as upright persons, I told them I considered them fortunate in their situation. Indeed, the older I get, the more convinced I am of this because day by day I discover how far removed I am from the state of perfection in which I should be living. (Letter 2027)

A few kilometers west of Château-l'Évêque is Bourdeilles, the seat of the noble Bourdeille family. Their large castle witnesses strongly to the power of this family, which provided several bishops for Périgueux, including François, who ordained Vincent.

PÉRIGUEUX*

The region known as Périgueux has been inhabited since prehistoric times. The tribe of the Petrocori gave their name to both the region (Périgord) and the city (Périgueux). Julius Caesar mentioned it in his account of the Gallic wars. In Roman times the city grew and prospered, owing some of its wealth to its natural springs and to the river Isle that runs through it.



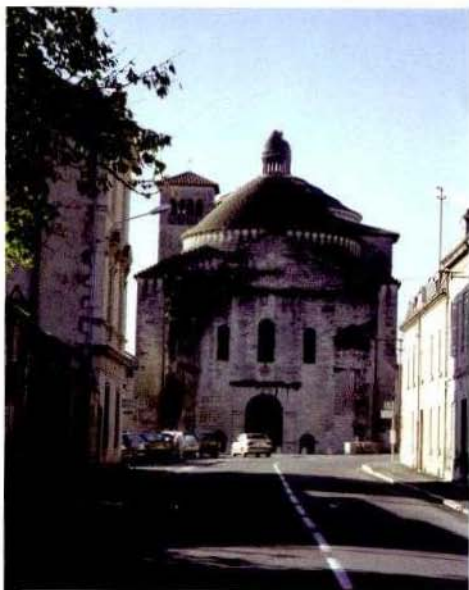
Aerial view, Château-l'Évêque

Its old Roman amphitheater survives as a city park. Envious of this area, successive tribes raided and destroyed it: Alemans, Visigoths, Franks and Normans. Its condition deteriorated so badly that even its Roman name, Vesuna, was forgotten, and it became called simply the Cité, the city.

Périgueux's first bishop was *Saint Front*. A small sanctuary over his tomb, begun in the sixth or seventh century, led to the development of an adjacent town, Puy Saint-Front, rivaling the old Roman settlement. In the eleventh century, the Romanesque church was consecrated, only part of which remains. It was enlarged after a fire in 1120, changing it into a Byzantine-style church in the form of a Greek cross (i.e., with equal arms), finished in 1173. This church is called Saint Front. Since it was not on the site of the old town, called simply the Cité, it was not the cathedral.

Saint Front, however, gradually took over the prerogatives of the earlier cathedral, called *Saint Étienne de la Cité*. This latter is also very ancient, with remains of a third-century wall, and a baptistery dating from 1150. Like Saint Front, it has two Byzantine style domes remaining from an earlier total of four. It was the cathedral until 1669. After the Revolution Saint Étienne became a storehouse until it was restored to worship in 1816. An enormous carved wooden altarpiece is a work of the seventeenth century, formerly part of the major seminary. Had the church not been ruined, Vincent might have been ordained here instead of at the bishop's chapel in Château-l'Évêque.

In the sixteenth century a



Saint Front cathedral, Périgueux

Protestant community was organized in Périgueux. The Protestants eventually devastated Saint Front, destroying the tomb of the saint and pillaging the treasury. By the next century, however, the cathedral had been rebuilt and restored to Catholic use. The old rivalry between the two churches (Saint Étienne and Saint Front) ended when Saint Front was repaired and designated the cathedral in 1669. The Revolution wreaked havoc, but Périgueux survived. In the nineteenth century it underwent a cultural and religious renaissance.

Important personages from Périgueux include the writer Montaigne (1533-1592), Alain de Solminihac, Fénelon (1651-1715, tutor of Louis XV, author, archbishop of Cambrai), Guillaume Joseph Chaminade (1761-



Postcard, Saint Front
cathedral, Périgueux

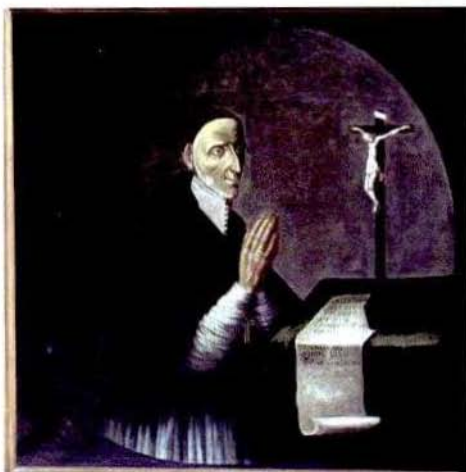
1815, founder of the Daughters of Mary and the Marianists), and the convert author Léon Bloy (1846-1917). Périgueux today has a population of about 30,000.

Although Vincent was ordained in the diocese of Périgueux, he had no other youthful connection, so far as is known, with this diocese. In later life, however, his friend Alain de Solminihac requested he see to the appointment of *Philibert de Brandon* (1597-1652) as bishop. A former lawyer and widower, Brandon was one of the founders of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice in Paris. He came as bishop to Périgueux in 1648, where he remained until his death four years later.

Bishop Brandon invited Vincent to send two men to open a seminary. His responses to this invitation show clearly the complexity of the negotiations involving both finances and apostolic activity (i.e., the requirement of a firm financial base, and a seminary being attached to a mission house). Vincent wanted to send at least four men, two for the seminary and two for the missions. In the end he bowed to pressure

and sent only two for the *seminary*. Shortly after, the bishop's brother, the priest Balthasar de Brandon de Bassancourt, who was also his vicar general, managed to get the Missionaries expelled, and Vincent had to recall them in 1651. The major and minor seminaries of the pre-revolutionary period were somewhere on the site of the present Cité Administrative, practically adjacent to the old cathedral. The Lycée Jay de Beaufort probably occupies the site of the major seminary. The Congregation returned to direct the major seminary from 1672 to 1792, and again from 1916 to 1969. Perhaps in their memory a large square between the cathedral and the river was called Place de la Mission, now surviving as Rue du Séminaire.

Near Périgueux is the *abbey of Notre Dame of Chancelade*. This ancient foundation, begun about 1100, was in the hands of Clercs Regular of Saint Augustine in Vincent's day. His friend, Blessed Alain de Solminihac, had agreed in 1614 to succeed his uncle as abbot and entered the community. He made a brief novitiate, took vows and was ordained a priest in 1618. His monastery, however, had only three other members. Studies in Paris brought him into contact with leading religious circles, likely including Vincent de Paul. Back in Chancelade, he was installed as abbot in 1623 and set to reforming the abbey. To help in this, he was to enlist Vincent, but the interminable problems of reform lasted well beyond both their lifetimes. There is, however, no indication that Vincent came here at the time of his ordination,



Portrait, Alain de Solminihac,
Chancelade

although some have conjectured that he might have made a pre-ordination retreat in the decrepit abbey. Inside the twelfth-century church are relics and objects belonging to Solminihac, who continued as abbot while being bishop of Cahors (1636-1659). Pope John Paul II beatified him on 4 October 1981. Remains of the *jubé* are visible in the walls of the nave, as well as several fourteenth-century murals. Their survival in this humid location is a marvel.

Near the front of the abbey is a Romanesque chapel dedicated to Saint John, probably built for the people of the region as their own. Consecrated in 1147, it is still used for Sunday liturgies and is interesting for its antiquity. Across the road, on the abbey side, is the old communal washing shed (*lavoir publique*), no longer in use. Most medieval towns had one or more of these.



Commemorative stone,
Chancelade

SAINT-LIVRADE-SUR-LOT

Marie de Wignerod de Pontcourlay (1604-1675), marquise of Combalet, and duchess of Aiguillon, wanted to endow a house for the Vincentians in the diocese of Agen. One reason for her foundation was that Agen lay within the territory of her duchy of Aiguillon, which she purchased in 1637. **Aiguillon** itself, however, preserves an old ducal palace, but the adjacent parish church has no monument either to the first duchess or to Saint Vincent.



Reliquary, Alain de Solminihac,
Chancelade

The duchess was able to secure for the Vincentians the shrine of *Notre Dame de la Rose*, an old pilgrimage chapel outside the town of Sainte-Livrade-sur-Lot, on a Roman road from Aiguillon. This was the fourth house of the Congregation (after the Bons Enfants and Saint Lazare in Paris, and the house in Toul).

Before Vincentians arrived, the chapel had fallen into ruins, but it was rebuilt by 1624 through the help of a royal judge who lived nearby. The local clergy then started to look for some help with the increasingly important chapel. For its part, the town council offered land to anyone willing to staff the shrine. Vincent completed the agreement in 1639. Previously, beginning about 1637, at least two priests had been in Aiguillon in a house endowed by the duchess. In 1640, these men then moved to the shrine near Sainte-Livrade. Vincent expressed a wish to visit here, but was never able to do so. Some confreres had problems with the local dialect, a problem the founder could appreciate, since it was a form of his own native language, Occitan.



Saint John Chapel, Chancelade

The confreres handled both the pilgrimages and parish missions—these were their two principal works. In 1646, one unfortunate Vincentian, Bernard Jegat (b. 1610), was in La Rose probably to recover his health. At his doctor's orders, he was to go swimming in the nearby river Lot, but he drowned in its placid waters. Jegat was only 36 and, since few others knew him, Vincent asked his confreres at La Rose to draw up an account of his life.

The Vincentians remained here until 1791. The pilgrimage chapel has disappeared, as has the confreres' home. The name "La Rose," however, remains attached to parcels of land south of the town. The pilgrimage statue of Mary and the child Jesus, of gilded wood, now rests in a chapel adjoining the parish church of Sainte-Livrade. Today, Sainte-Livrade has a population of about 6000.

SARLAT-LA-CANÉDA

Sarlat, to give it its usual name, is a town of some 10,000 inhabitants and one of the Europe's most noteworthy medieval sites. A monastery began here after 820, and a town gradually grew up around it. It became a diocese in 1317. Ruined during the Hundred Years War,



Road sign, Notre Dame de la Rose

the town was rebuilt and its cathedral finished by 1500. The town boasts many beautifully restored private homes.

Vincent greatly esteemed *Nicolas Sevin* (1613-1678), bishop of Sarlat. He was named to this post in 1647, on the recommendation of Alain de Solminihac to Vincent and the other members of the Council of Conscience. He appreciated Sevin's holy life and example, his virtue, learning, health and experience. Again on Solminihac's recommendation, Sevin became coadjutor of Cahors and finally its bishop after Solminihac's death. Sevin lodged for a time with Vincent after resigning Sarlat and before moving to Cahors, and he preached an ordination retreat at Saint Lazare. Other than this connection, the Congregation had no permanent work in the diocese of Sarlat in Vincent's lifetime. Afterwards, however, Vincentians staffed the major semi-

nary beginning in 1683 and preached missions in the area. They left at the Revolution and lost at least one confrere to revolutionary justice, *Jean Élie Bories* (1720-1794), a Sarlat native and the superior of the seminary. He was executed in Périgueux for refusing to take the constitutional oath. Vincentians later returned to the same work in the seminary, transferred from Périgueux, but this time they remained only from 1817 to 1821. The Daughters of Charity followed them here in 1818 to begin a parish school and to work for the poor.

A few kilometers southeast of Sarlat is Carsac-Aillac. An old, perhaps reliable, tradition says that Vincent made his ordination retreat here. The reason for suggesting this is that the lord of Carsac is thought to have been the parent or close relative of one of the students whom Vincent taught at Buzet.

Languedoc-Roussillon



As in the east of France, so in part of the south, the works of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac were not extensive. Nevertheless, several foundations here date from their time: Agde, Alet, Montpellier and Narbonne. These were not great successes in human terms, however.

AGDE

François Fouquet (1611-1673), bishop of Agde, called Vincent to open a *seminary* in his diocese of Agde. The city took its name from the Greek word referring to good fortune, *agatha*. One of the oldest cities in France, Phoenicians lived here before the Romans arrived. In the seventeenth century, it was still recovering from the ravages of the wars of religion. Fouquet had been a good friend of Vincent's from his days as a member of the Tuesday Conferences, and Fouquet's mother was prominent among the Ladies of Charity. Vincent did not agree with details of the bishop's proposed contract (concerning the Congregation's independence and its finances), but at length he told his confreres to leave for the Agde seminary and its attached parish (1654). Further, he foresaw troubles since the climate was difficult and epidemics common. In fact, Pierre Du Chesne, whom Vincent regarded highly, died here (3 November 1654) only a few months after opening the seminary. Vincent never seems to have visited Agde, since it is so far from Paris. Vincentian work here took its normal course, however, with the arrival of new candidates for the Congregation, preaching occasional missions.

The bishop's youngest brother, Louis (1633-1702), succeeded him as bishop of Agde and had a new contract drawn up with the Congregation. The result was not promising and the Vincentians left in 1671. They moved from here to Narbonne to continue their seminary work, but the real reason for their departure was the bishop's overt

hostility. Apparently nothing remains of the old seminary buildings in Agde itself.

The same bishop François Fouquet in 1656 called the Daughters of Charity to serve in Agde. Their important works in the hospital began, however, only in 1761. Although one sister was imprisoned, some were able to stay during the Revolution, and others returned afterward to the same hospital. They had various houses here until 1903. Today, Agde is a small town of about 5000 people.

ALET-LES-BAINS

The town of Alet-les-Bains, to give it its current name, lies in the foothills of the Pyrenees. Its good elevation and hot springs assured its importance, even in ancient times. It became a diocese in 1318. Bishop Nicolas Pavillon of Alet (1597-1677) was a friend and admirer of Vincent. In preparation for his episcopal ordination, for example, Pavillon spent several days in retreat at Saint Lazare. The diocese he inherited had suffered greatly from religious wars in the preceding decades. Vincent sent his confreres to Alet to give missions and to staff a *seminary* in this poor diocese, which they did only from 1639 to 1642. A Tuesday Conference was founded here as well, in imitation of the first one in Paris. Differences with the bishop led Vincent to withdraw them. Nevertheless, the two brothers Chandenier, both diocesan clergy and close friends of Vincent, came to Alet in 1652 to preach a mission, thus keeping alive a relationship with the Congregation. In his later years the bishop became involved with Jansenism and caused his friend Vincent

some anxieties. The bishop was buried in the abbey, but his grave is unmarked. Alet today has about 500 inhabitants.

The Vincentians were lodged in the ninth-century abbey adjoining the present cathedral. The abbey, destroyed by Huguenots, is still in ruins. Its altar and furnishings were removed to the village church of *Espéraza* a few kilometers away. Although an early church in *Espéraza* can be dated to the eleventh century, it was renovated in the seventeenth century following the wars of religion. The altar and its furnishings date, as well, from the eighteenth century, and thus were not contemporary with the presence of the Vincentians.

MONTPELLIER

The mission of Montpellier was not one of Vincent's successes. He was called to open a seminary here in 1659. He agreed but quickly discovered that he had acted too hastily, perhaps because of his advanced age. In any case, Vincent learned from another bishop that the bishop of Montpellier, dissatisfied with his seminary professors, was planning to close the institution. Vincent withdrew his confreres the next year, citing a lack of solid financial support.

As happened elsewhere, the Vincentians returned after the Revolution. They resumed their seminary apostolate in 1844, housing both major and minor seminarians in the same institution, the former monastery of the Recollects. They remained until forced to leave about 1903. One of the professors had been *Antoine Fiat* (1832-1915), superior general from 1878 to



Guillaume Pouget

1914. The Vincentians took charge of the seminaries once again: the minor seminary, 1918-1953, and the major seminary, 1918-1973.

Daughters of Charity came to Montpellier in 1664. After the Revolution, they too returned to continue their work in the general hospital, with orphans and other works of charity. The well-known portrait of a *Lady of Charity*, often identified, incorrectly, as *Marguerite Naseau*, hung in this hospital. The sisters have continued various works of charity here.

Montpellier today is a city of some 210,000 inhabitants. It is relatively young by the standards of the sunny south, dating only from the ninth century. It suf-



Guillaume Pouget

fered during the wars of religion, and its ancient churches were systematically destroyed. The cathedral is one of its oldest buildings.

A native of Montpellier, of interest to Vincentians, is *Fernand Étienne Portal* (1855-1926). After his ordination, Portal taught in various seminaries. Weak lungs brought him to the Vincentian seminary on Madeira. There he met Charles Lindley Wood, Lord Halifax, whose daughter was recuperating. Their friendship blossomed into an interest in Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue, urged on by Leo XIII. Leo's successor, Pius X, was not so anxious to continue this. Portal was effectively censured and forbidden to teach in Paris, but tolerant superiors allowed him to continue his work privately. Under the presidency of

Cardinal Désiré Joseph Mercier (1851-1926), several meetings of Anglican and Roman Catholic theologians, including Portal and Halifax, were held at Malines, Belgium, between 1921 and 1925. These "Malines Conversations" gave impetus to the ecumenical movement.

NARBONNE

A year before his death, Vincent agreed to send three confreres to take charge of the *seminary* here in this ancient city. Archbishop François Fouquet (previously bishop of Bayonne and then of Agde) had invited them, as he had done when he was bishop of Agde. The negotiations dragged on until interrupted by Vincent's death. The peevish bishop wrote him just a month before his death: *let this be the last letter I am obliged to write to you on this matter, and free me of the greatest trouble and chagrin I have in my diocese at present and which is such a headache for me. If not, resign yourself to receive every week letters longer than this one...* (Letter 3229) Vincent's successor in office, René Alméras, signed the contract on 10 September 1661. The Vincentians moved to the newly-built seminary and remained until 1791. There seems, however, to be no trace of either the old seminary, regarded as large and magnificent, or its attached parish, *Notre Dame de Maiour*.

The Gothic *cathedral*, begun in the thirteenth century, has never been completed. However, it has a side altar with a statue, a painting and a stained glass window of Saint Vincent de Paul. Today, Narbonne, with a population of 45,000,

is a part of the diocese of Carcassonne. It keeps traces of a rich history, including Romans, Jews and Moslem Arabs. It was here that, by order of the Emperor Diocletian, the Roman soldier Sebastian was first shot with arrows (he survived) and later clubbed to death. His cult became widespread in the Middle Ages.

The archbishop also invited the *Daughters of Charity* to come here. In an instruction given to the sisters at the time of their departure, the founder had some sharp observations to make: *Do not expect to have only roses, there will be thorns as well. The people there are clever and hard to please. You must expect to be laughed at. They are good, but all their inclinations tend to what is evil. The vice of impurity is, above all others, prevalent there.* (Conference 112, September 1659) As some reflection of this warning, the Daughters were given lodgings in a jail for prostitutes. The situation improved, but the sisters did experience difficulties living apart from their other sisters. They continued here, working in the hospital and keeping school, until the Revolution.



Vincent's school, Buzet-sur-Tarn

Midi-Pyrénées



Vincent de Paul spent important years in the region of the Midi-Pyrénées: philosophical and theological studies in Toulouse, teaching at Buzet, and one of his first masses at Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. In later years his friendship with Blessed Alain de Solminihac led him to send his confreres and Daughters of Charity to the bishop's diocese of Cahors. The future saint, John Gabriel Perboyre, was born in this region and obtained some of his schooling with the Vincentians at Montauban.

BUZET-SUR-TARN,** NOTRE-DAME-DE-GRÂCE**

The village of Buzet-sur-Tarn numbers today some 500 inhabitants and is located on the left bank (south) of the river Tarn, about 40 kilometers north of Toulouse. It is a *bastide*, one of a series of forts built throughout southern France in the thirteenth century, generally on the same plan. All the bastides look similar, with a rectangular layout, often surrounding an existing building; and with walls and towers, regular streets running at right angles, and similar houses. The castle of Buzet used to adjoin the church; only its tower remains. Its castle guarded the river Tarn between Albi and Montauban, since the only bridge in the area crossed here; only its access ramp and some pillars (and a modern suspension bridge) remain after a devastating flood in 1930.

Buzet is important in Vincent's biography since it is believed that in this village he began a small *school* for some local boys during the time of his studies in Toulouse. The story is confused and

uncertain in many respects, but it seems well founded that the young cleric had some connections here. Since it would not have been possible for him to come and go quickly to Toulouse, his work here presumes a continuous presence of some months, at least in the summers and at other holiday periods, unless he hired someone to help him in his absence. It is commonly believed that Vincent undertook this work to help pay for his schooling. He seems later to have moved the school to Toulouse, thus obviating the travel problems.

The parish *church* of Saint Pierre is Gothic, dating in its present form from the fifteenth century. It was much restored in the late nineteenth century, and has kept an imitation of the typical painted walls and ceilings characteristic of the *bastide* churches. The brick octagonal tower, 33 meters in height, is visible from some distance. Its lower section served as the watchtower of the castle, now long gone. At some later period the top section of the tower was added. In side chapels are paintings of Saint



Eighteenth century map of Buzet, N.D. de Rimoule



Church tower, Buzet-sur-Tarn

Vincent, particularly teaching in his school at Buzet. The students in the school are portrayed as elegantly dressed, carrying on the tradition of their noble status. Another large painting represents the saint with children; angels display a ribbon with the words *charité, humilité, simplicité*, traditional virtues of the Daughters of Charity. Stained glass windows also recall his ministry in Buzet. He certainly would have prayed in this church and probably celebrated mass here. It is extremely difficult to be certain about the saint's whereabouts or about his chronology during this period.

Two statues are of interest in this church. The first likely depicts the



Parish church, Buzet-sur-Tarn



Vincent's school, Buzet-sur-Tarn



Commemorative plaque, Buzet-sur-Tarn

Egyptian princess rescuing the infant Moses from the Nile. It may be an offering after someone was saved from perishing in the Tarn. The second is a statue commonly seen in local churches: Saint Germaine of Pibrac, patroness of young farmers. She is depicted here carrying a load of roses in her apron. She died in 1601.

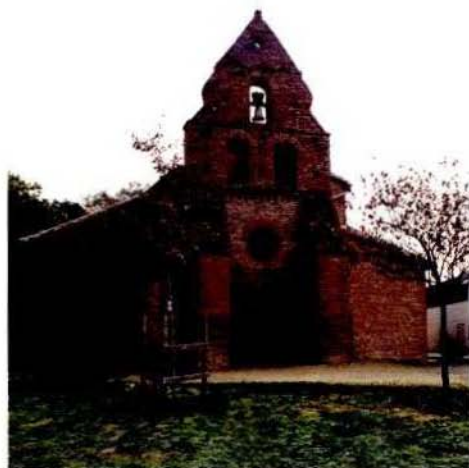
The *house* where Vincent lived is confidently shown. Its location, however, is based only on local tradition. The back of the house is at the end of a small impasse off the Grande Rue des Fleurs, between numbers 82 and 96, and fronts on the recently-named Impasse St. Vincent de Paul. A plaque on the build-



Postcard, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce

ing says: "In this house Saint Vincent de Paul taught school from 1596 to 1597." The house had two large rooms that could have served as a small school. They are not in good condition at present.

A plaque outside the little brick chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce reads: "Chapel of Our Lady of Grace, fourteenth century. Saint Vincent de Paul celebrated one of his first masses here in 1600." This is based on the local tradition reported by Collet. This chapel, a foundation of the Benedictines at Conques and earlier in the diocese of Montauban, has been a place of pilgrimage at least since the end of the 1500s, and it is not difficult to reach from Buzet. Today, one crosses the river, goes through the village of Mézens and climbs the hill by route D35 to the "little chapel in the woods," to cite Collet. Vincent, however, probably took the small path through the woods leading



Notre-Dame-de-Grâce



Eighteenth century map of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce

up the slope to the plateau where the chapel is, a half-hour walk. This chapel is not exactly in the woods anymore, since it is mainly surrounded by farmlands, but it lies on the top of the ridge. When Vincent came here, the chapel was about twelve meters long by five meters wide and did not have its side chapels. After these were added in 1842, the chapel could accommodate about fifty people. Its tall flat façade is typical of others in the Toulouse region. Also, like other country chapels, this one has been restored many times, such as in 1825, 1850, and 1973 after a period of neglect.

The object of devotion is a small statue of Mary and the child Jesus. It is not original but a copy. The tabernacle, on a side wall, is in the shape of an urn with a representation of a bible on top, an original design dating from the eighteenth century. It used to be in the side

chapel dedicated to Saint Vincent de Paul.

In this side chapel, restored in 1980, is to be seen a bust-reliquary of Saint Vincent, donated by the Daughters of Charity in 1851. It was said to be a copy of an original now in the South Kensington museum in London; but the face is that of a local winegrower, with red cheeks and broad nose. The painting



Commemorative plaque, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce

in this chapel depicts Saint Vincent teaching. The altar has a bas-relief head of the saint carved on the front of the altar and apparently dates from the nineteenth century.

The facing side chapel has a large painting of the traditional glorification of Saint Vincent, shown with Saint Louise. In the foreground are the two books of the Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity. Another large painting depicts the first mass, celebrated with an archpriest. Abelly says that Vincent was there alone, with only a server and an assisting priest. Might one not also think of students who could

easily have accompanied their teacher on the day of his first mass?

At the back of the chapel is a large painting of the crucifixion, with two depictions of the Red Scapular, a devotion with roots in the Daughters of Charity. Behind the church is an old cemetery and meeting rooms for catechesis.

The chapel used to contain the altar taken from *Our Lady of Rimoule*. That chapel, now destroyed, was located across the Tarn just west of Mézens. A small cross identifies its place. Some have claimed it as the chapel where Vincent celebrated his first mass, or perhaps one of his first masses. Since it does not fit Collet's description as on a hilltop, amid woods, its place is less secure than the one he described. Nevertheless, nothing would have prevented the young priest from celebrating mass there as well. In any case, a modern marble altar was installed in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce during the restoration of 1989, and the old Rimoule altar was removed.

This chapel is still the site of a pilgrimage in honor of Our Lady of Grace on Pentecost Monday; another recalls Saint Vincent and is held on 27 September. A Vincentian mission here is recorded as early as 1677. During the Revolution a pious neighbor bought the chapel, thus saving it for the future. In the nineteenth century, various pilgrimages of Vincentians and Daughters of Charity came here. Jean Baptiste Nozo, the superior general, sent relics here from Paris in 1837. His successor, Jean Baptiste Étienne, together with the superioress general, visited in 1851. Charles Souvay, another



Our Lady of Rimoule
site, near Mézens

superior general, visited in 1936, as others have since.

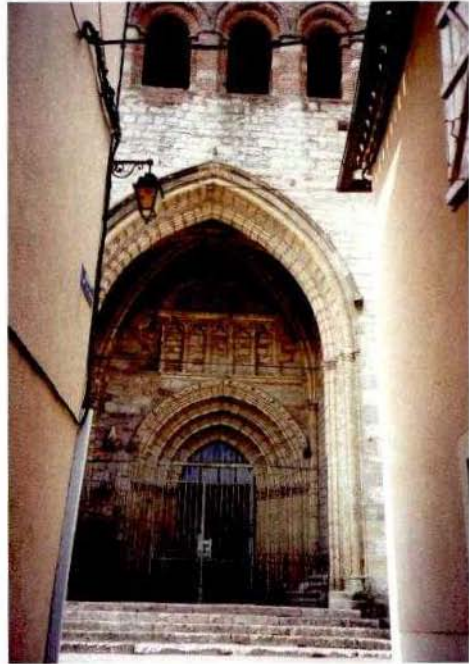
Not far from Buzet is Albi. The Congregation of the Mission ran the seminary for this important diocese from 1774 until the Revolution and, with some gaps, from 1806 to 1903, and again from 1918 to the 1970s. They saw to continuing the tradition of a Vincentian presence at Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. Daughters of Charity, similarly, served in Albi after the Revolution until the forced secularization of their works in 1907.

CAHORS*

Cahors is an ancient Gallic town located in the bend of the river Lot. In Roman times, it had a 1000-seat theater, thermal springs and an aqueduct. In the period of the barbarian migrations, Visigoths (472) and Saracens (732) sacked it, followed by Normans and even Hungarians. The cathedral of Saint Étienne is Romanesque with some Gothic additions, as usual. In keeping with medieval tradition, it preserved a dominical relic, that is, a relic of the Lord (*Dominus*). In this case, it is the Holy Coif, or the linen said to have



Valentré bridge over the Lot, Cahors



Saint Barthélémy church entry, Cahors

wrapped his head in the tomb. This relic is exposed today in a nineteenth-century reliquary. A statue of Saint Jean Gabriel Perboyre is prominently placed in a side chapel. Perboyre was a native of the diocese; his birthplace is only twenty kilometers away.

In the twelfth century, Cahors was a financial center and, under English administration, had Thomas Becket as its governor. Another notable inhabitant became Pope John XXII, one of the Avignon popes (1316-1334). In 1332, he created a university here that continued until its suppression in 1751. The area also produces a fine wine.

Blessed Alain de Solminihac (1593-



Saint Barthélémy tower, Cahors

1659), a friend of Vincent de Paul, was bishop of Cahors from 1636 to 1659. In his ecclesiastical career, he quickly became known as a forceful religious reformer. Vincent remarked to the Daughters going to Cahors that *the great austerity with which he treats himself may render him a little severe. His Excellency is a man who would make it a matter of conscience before ever paying a compliment.* (Conference 104) This severe and unbending man was called the French Borromeo (a painting in the nave commemorates this). Four years before his priestly ordination in 1618, he became the titular abbot of Chancelade, near Périgueux, and succeeded in reforming

it. In 1636, he became bishop of Cahors (by which he also became its count and baron, with civil responsibilities). He was so zealous in holding pastoral visitations and synods that he stirred up much opposition from disaffected priests. He saw to the preaching of missions in his diocese and the foundation of a seminary in 1643, which he confided to the Congregation of the Mission. Pope John Paul II beatified Bishop Solminihac in 1981. He was originally buried in the chapel of the canons of Chancelade in Cahors. His body was brought to his cathedral in 1791 and placed in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin. An inscription on the tomb reads: "The body of the Venerable Alain de Solminihac, bishop of Cahors, which reposed in the church of the Canons Regular [of Chancelade] for 132 years, has been transferred and put here on 7 August 1791." Besides this burial chapel, another one dedicated to him is also in the cathedral.

As part of their pastoral ministry the Vincentians also served the parish church of *Saint Barthélémy* for a time,



Seminary chapel, Cahors

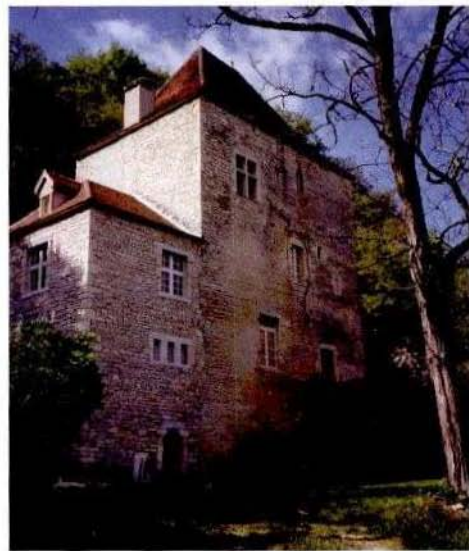
since it was attached to the seminary. A large painting of Saint Vincent de Paul in glory is the only sign of the Vincentian presence in this parish. The original seminary building was turned into a military installation, part of which is still standing, as the east wing of the Caserne Bessières. Vincentian novices were also accepted here beginning about 1690. (*Rue P. Mendès France*)

At the Revolution, the pastor, Jean Baptiste Bégoulé (1751-1808), took the prescribed constitutional oath. As the other Vincentians ostracized him, he later retracted his oath. He then had to flee the country, but he returned, as his confreres did. The revolutionaries pilaged the church. After the Revolution, the Vincentians opened the seminary in another building, formerly the house of the canons of Chancelade and now divided between the Maison de Retraite and the Maison des Oeuvres. A bust of Vincent de Paul and a statue of John Gabriel Perboyre identify the property. The Vincentians maintained this seminary until 1903; the institution itself closed in 1906. (*Rue Joachim Murat*) Besides various members of the Perboyre family, many other notable Vincentians came from this diocese, including three missionary bishops. One Vincentian also suffered death in Cahors during the Revolution, François Bergeon, executed here on 17 May 1794.

The Daughters of Charity came to Cahors in 1658 and opened an *orphanage* for boys—the first one in their long history. An orphanage for girls followed in 1683. They also served in the city hospital from 1697 until the Revolution and

again afterward. One of the sisters, Jacqueline Paujad, was imprisoned in Cahors during the Revolution for her faith. Little is known about her. Another sister, the superior of the hospital, lost her mind over having to resume work after the disasters of the Revolution. Sisters and orphans alike suffered from deprivation, disorder and even famine.

Near the city on a prominent hillside is Mercuès, a small town (800 persons) dominated by the chateau of the bishops of Cahors. It is located on the site of a Roman fort and a temple to Mercury. The present chateau was built in the fifteenth century and, after Protestants had burned it, the building was rebuilt in the seventeenth. Alain de Solminihac lived there and wrote several letters to Vincent from there. The bishops used Mercuès as their residence until



Château, Vilary near Catus

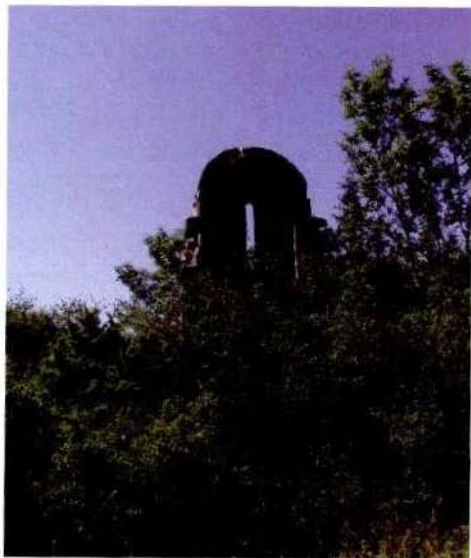
the beginning of the twentieth century. The chateau is now in use as a luxury hotel.

The same bishop was also responsible for the shrine of the Virgin Mary at **Rocamadour**. The bishop called it “the most celebrated in the kingdom,” and he worked to restore devotion and pilgrimages there. It is unknown what Vincent thought of this shrine, or whether he actually went there. (Letter 1220) The year-round population of Rocamadour is about 700.

CATUS, LE PUECH,** MONTGESTY**

The importance of these three places for Vincentians is that they are connected with *Saint Jean Gabriel Perboyre*. He was born at the hamlet of Le Puech (a form of the word *puy*, meaning an elevated place) near the town of Montgesty, 6 January 1802, and was ordained a priest 23 September 1826. He was novice director at the Vincentian motherhouse in Paris but nourished a desire to go to the foreign missions. On 29 August 1835, he landed in China near Macao. He exercised his ministry among the Catholic people of China until one of his students betrayed him. He was thereupon arrested, tortured and executed, 11 September 1840. He was beatified 10 November 1889 and canonized 2 June 1996. In this, he became China’s first saint.

His uncle, Jacques Perboyre (1763-1848), a seminary professor in Montauban, greatly influenced his vocation. This priest, ordained before the Revolution, had been forced to hide out



Saint Martin de Graudène
ruins, near Catus

in the region for several years during the revolutionary period. After which the young Jean Gabriel was sent to school with his uncle, again in Montauban. The old man is reported to have regularly slept in a coffin for the last years of his life as an act of penance. He died there peacefully and was buried simply.

The small town of **Catus**, population 800, is built around the former Benedictine priory of Saint Jean, now dedicated to Saint Astier. Its Romanesque church was begun in 1115 and was modified in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries with some Gothic additions, such as the side chapels. There are superb Romanesque carved capitals on the pillars. Little remains of the monastic buildings, apart from sections of the cloister walk and the chapter hall. Several medieval houses can be seen in



Menhir de Courtis,
near Montgesty

the town. After the Revolution, the church was repaired several times, particularly after the great floods of 1960. Members of the Vincentian province of Toulouse briefly served this parish, and twelve associated parishes in the region, beginning in 1995. Since Catus was the parish for Vilary, Jean Gabriel Perboyre would have attended this church during his family visits to Vilary.

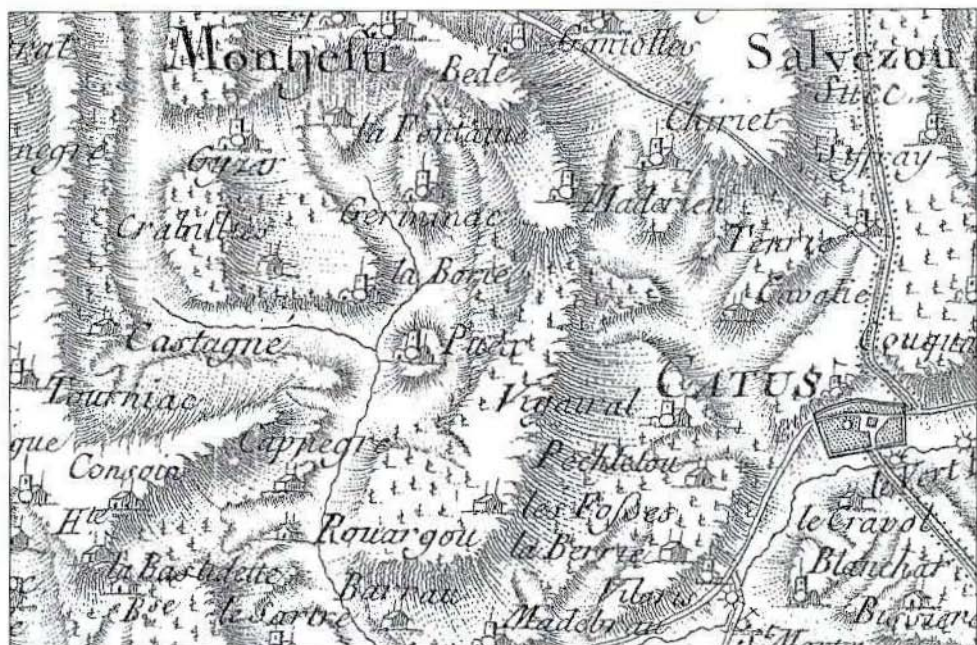
South of Catus on route D13 is the hamlet of *Vilary*. One of the houses, now in other hands, remained, until the middle of the twentieth century, the property of a branch of the Perboyre family. Pierre Perboyre, the father of the martyr, was born here, as was Pierre's brother Jacques. To call it a chateau overstates the case, but the main body of the building was a tower of refuge for nobles in time of war and insecurity; it dates

from the sixteenth century. The only entrance was through a ladder, but now access has been made easier by adding doors on the ground level. Nearby on the west side of route D23 are the ruins of the Romanesque chapel of Saint Martin de Graudène. The young Perboyses knew this place, now hidden amid trees and bushes.

Montgesty is a village of legends, such as one about Roland, the nephew of Charlemagne. He is said to have fought the Saracens here before going on to Rocamadour, where his sword was planted in a rock. In the region of Montgesty are ruins from the Neolithic period (a standing stone, dating from



Early main altar, Montgesty



Eighteenth century map of Montgesty and Catus

around 2500 B.C., the *menhir de Courtis*), the Gallo-Roman period, and burial sites from barbarian times. In the Gothic church dating from the 14th century can be seen a large image of Christ in the Spanish Baroque style. The church also has several reminders of Jean Gabriel Perboyre: an altar, a window depicting a rather pudgy young priest, and a plaque commemorating his baptism. In front of the church is a large statue of him, dedicated in 1897. Montgesty today has fewer than 300 people, as the entire region has been depopulated due to changes in rural life.

One of the hamlets associated with Montgesty is *Le Puech*, the birthplace of Jean Gabriel Perboyre. It is some six or

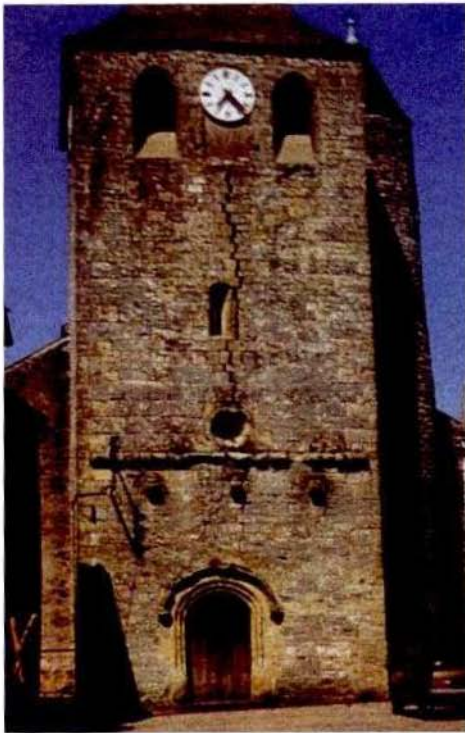
eight kilometers south of Montgesty and preserves the old buildings of the Perboyre farmhouse. Part of their family home dates from the fourteenth or fifteenth century. A large statue of the martyr in Chinese dress stands at the entrance to the property. Here were born four sons and four daughters. Two became Daughters of Charity, one of whom died in China. Another sister resembled her martyred brother so much, that her likeness was used to depict him—except for her eyes, which explains why John Gabriel is shown with eyes downcast. Three of the sons became Vincentians. Jean Gabriel, the martyr, was the eldest. Jean Louis (1807-1831), left shortly after his ordination for

China, but died at sea. Jacques Jean (1810-1896) entered the Vincentians as a lay brother, but later resumed his studies and was ordained a priest in 1845. He attended his brother's beatification in Rome and afterwards celebrated mass at his altar in the motherhouse. Another Perboyre was Jean Gabriel (1808-1880), their cousin. He became a renowned historian of the Congregation. The Le Puech farm is still the property of descendants of the family. The entire area, however, is depopulated because of changes in agriculture and modern life.



MAISON OU EST NÉ LE BIENHEUREUX JEAN-GABRIEL PERBOYRE
PRÊTRE DE LA CONGRÉGATION DE LA MISÉRICORDIE (6 JANVIER 1802)

Le Puech, near Montgesty,
19th century engraving



Tower and entry, Montgesty



Commemorative plaque,
parish church, Montech



Vincentian house,
Notre-Dame-de-Lorm, Castelferrus

MONTAUBAN, NOTRE-DAME- DE-LORM, MONTECH

Saint Theodard founded a monastery in Montauban in 820. The city, one of the *bastide* type of fortresses, was founded in 1144. Like all bastides, it was built on a rectangular plan around a central town square, with fortifying walls. A great bridge was built over the Tarn in 1297, and it has withstood floods for seven centuries.

The city became a diocese in 1317, turned Protestant in 1536, but Richelieu reconquered it for the Church in 1629. The cardinal minister celebrated mass in the cathedral at that time, although the Protestants had removed its roof and nearly ruined the building. After the Revolution, the diocese was reestablished in 1817.

The city now numbers about 55,000 inhabitants. It is in a region that spoke the southern dialect, called Languedoc, or Occitan. Some Vincentians there found it difficult to understand. This language is undergoing a revival, and is, for example, an option on local school examinations.

Bishop Anne de Murviel (1568-1652), bishop of Montauban for 52 years, had two Vincentians evangelizing in his diocese from 1631 and 1640. He noted in a letter to Vincent the presence of sorcerers and witches in his diocese who, mercifully, disappeared after these Vincentians preached their mission. (Letter 684) Pope Alexander VII also recalled their successes in his bull uniting Saint Lazare to the Congregation, 1655. A community house in the diocese began in 1652 in Castelferrus at the shrine of *Notre-Dame-de-Lorm*. The old pilgrimage church has been destroyed, and the original statue (found in the trunk of an elm, *orme*), the object of the pilgrimage, has been moved to the present parish church. The large building next to the



Martyrdom of John Gabriel Perboyre,
Saint-Étienne de Sapiac

shrine church may have been the Vincentian residence, although this is not clear. Vincent described this place as suitable for Firmin Get (1621-c.1681) to recover his health: *Notre Dame de Lorm, in the diocese of Montauban, where the weather is good, the countryside is lovely and the Garonne, a beautiful river, flows through it.* (Letter 2664) Castelferrus today is a village of about 400 people. Despite their good work in Lorm, someone attempted to burn the place down in 1659. (Letter 2809) The Vincentians also had charge of the neighboring parish of **Saint-Aignan**, which the community accepted in 1657 as a way of helping the bishop.

The priests began the seminary in **Montech**. It then transferred to Lorm and next to Montauban in 1660 when it was again safe for Catholics to be there. Vincent oversaw this change during the last two weeks of his life. (Coste 13:182) A plaque in the church of Notre Dame de la Visitation in Montech recalls the presence of the congregation there. "To the everlasting memory of the religious hospitality given to the bishop of Montauban, to his chapter, and to the Lazarists for twenty years by the town of Montech at the time of the wars of religion. This marble plaque was engraved and placed by the pious zeal of Mr. Leon Roussoulières, pastor of Montech, and Dr. J. Larramet, the mayor of Montech, 1876." The seminary appears to have been located on the grounds of the present retirement home near the cathedral. Nothing seems to remain of the old seminary buildings. A small statue of Saint Vincent has been placed in this southern

Gothic church, which dates from the fifteenth century. Montech today has about 3000 inhabitants.

Vincent was also somewhat involved in the *Labadie* affair. Jean Labadie (1610-1674) was a Jesuit for fifteen years but left the Society. He was a popular preacher but given to sensual mysticism and became first a Jansenist and then a Calvinist at Montauban in 1650. Vincent wrote about him. (Letters 1345, 1549, dated 1651 and 1652) Quickly dissatisfied with Calvinists in Montauban, Labadie moved to Geneva, then to Holland, and ended up founding his own church. His followers survived him only until 1744.

In 1808 two Vincentians founded a sort of *minor seminary* in **Montauban** in a former Carmelite monastery. The Perboyre brothers, Louis and Jean Gabriel, nephews of Jacques Perboyre, one of the founders, made their studies here. The future saint attended here from 1817 through 1820. This seminary is now a public school, and its chapel has been set aside for Protestant worship. It was in this chapel that Jean Gabriel made up his mind to become a priest. (2,6 *Grand' Rue Sapiac*) The studio of the renowned painter Ingres, located in Montauban, was responsible for the first painting in honor of the new martyr, dated 1844. It is found today in the church of *Saint Étienne de Sapiac*, a building dating from 1680. This painting is more historically accurate than today's standard versions, but some details are not (Jean Gabriel in a black cassock, for example, whereas he was clad only in shorts). (Another copy is in the Daughter of Charity house.) A

stained glass window depicts Perboyre more in keeping with the usual depictions and serves as a point of comparison. This painting is probably here since Jacques Perboyre was vicar of Sapiac from 1815 and made his first attempts at a minor seminary here (the site is unknown) before moving it to the Carmelite building.

Vincentians also directed the major seminary of Montauban from 1929 to 1958, when it was joined with that of Toulouse. The Daughters of Charity were in Montauban from 1685 to 1792 to serve the sick poor in the hospital. They returned in 1869 to run a parish school.

Near Montauban is the old fortified town of **Villemur-sur-Tarn**. The principal attraction for Vincentians is the Grenier du Roy. The Daughters of Charity used this former royal salt warehouse as a hospital from 1860. It dates from the seventeenth century and is now a well-preserved municipal building. Vincent would have known this town during his travels down-river from Buzet. Today it has about 5000 inhabitants.

A few kilometers west of



Family home, Evariste Huc, Caylus

Montauban, on D926, is **Caylus**. It, too, has a connection with John Gabriel Perboyre, since it was the birthplace of **Régis Evariste Huc** (1813-1860). This young Vincentian arrived in China in 1841, the year after Perboyre's death. With another Vincentian, Joseph Gabet, he set to work among the Mongols. Huc's gift for languages, his daring and bravery, as well as his precise observations, helped him in many adventures in Mongolia, China and Tibet. Gabet and Huc reached Tibet in 1846 in hopes of converting the lamas there, but were quickly escorted away. Huc's many books inspired popular interest in China. On the centenary of his death his hometown dedicated in his honor a section of the main road running in front of his family home, which has a large plaque describing his exploits.

RODEZ

Louis Abelly (1604-1691), Vincent's friend and first biographer, named bishop of Rodez in 1662, was ordained for this diocese in 1664. Because of a stroke in 1665, Abelly retired to Saint Lazare, remaining until his death in 1691. Probably because of his short tenure, there are no monuments or references to him in the cathedral, Notre Dame.

The Vincentians had a *seminary* here, however, from 1767 to 1791. When the Jesuits were suppressed in 1761, the bishop initially placed members of the diocesan clergy in his seminary but finally invited the Congregation. The first superior of the new institution was Jean Félix Cayla de la Garde (1734-1800), a Rodez native and the last supe-

rior general elected before the Revolution (1788-1800). Because of the relatively short life of this Vincentian undertaking, not much information is available. The Romanesque church of Saint Amans served the seminary as well as the people of the parish. After the Concordat between the Holy See and France the seminary buildings continued in use as a seminary for philosophy until 1905. The church building, demolished in 1752, was quickly restored and still stands.

Daughters of Charity also worked in Rodez beginning in 1859. The city today has a population of about 25,000.

TOULOUSE**

Toulouse is more than 2000 years old. Originally founded by Celts, Toulouse was occupied by the Romans in 118 BC. The Gallo-Roman city was a center for the making and distribution of wine. The ancient city contained 25,000 inhabitants and had a theater for 6500 people. Today Toulouse has around 400,000 inhabitants.

The first bishop, Saint Sernin (Saturninus), died about 250, during the Decian persecution. A university existed in the city from its early centuries. The Visigoths conquered the city in 413 and made it their capital. The Franks conquered them in turn. Clovis, their first king, entered the city in 508. Charlemagne (Charles the Great) organized a dukedom at Toulouse, making it the base for his conquest of the north of Spain. He also founded the basilica of Saint Sernin, which Pope Urban II consecrated in 1096. The church and its treas-

ury are well worth a visit. Because of its importance, it is certain that the young theology student, Vincent de Paul, visited here to pray, and perhaps to celebrate mass during the four years he lived here after his ordination.

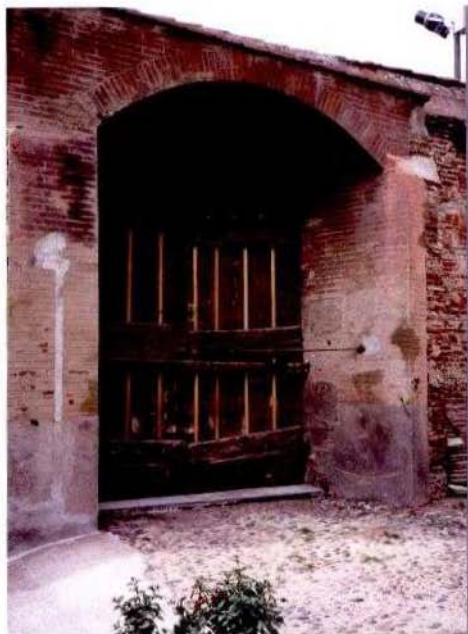
Toulouse was also a center of planning for the First Crusade, to free Christian holy places in Palestine, as well as a center of Catharism, a heretical movement. Saint Dominic founded his order, the Order of Preachers, at the beginning of the thirteenth century and made Toulouse his headquarters. Toulouse had been relatively independent up to the end of the thirteenth century, but through marriage alliances it became French. In this period the Dominicans built their dramatic church to receive the relics of *Saint Thomas Aquinas* (c. 1225-1274). Although he did not teach at Toulouse, Thomas's Dominican confreres sought to have his remains transferred to their main church. The Franciscans, too, built a church and convent, but only a few traces remain.

Unlike the majority of aspiring priests in his time, who studied privately, Vincent undertook his theological studies at the University of Toulouse, probably between 1597 and 1605. It is difficult to be certain about the exact dates. He lived at *Collège de Foix* for the majority of his time. The name of the college (i.e., a residence) comes from Cardinal Pierre de Foix, who had it built and endowed between 1453 and 1457. This building still exists and is one of the finest and rarest examples of the local architecture of the fifteenth century. Fortunately, its



Bilingual signs,
College de Foix, Toulouse

appearance has not changed much since Vincent's day. It consists of a central court surrounded by a cloister, and a rectangular building, the *donjon*. This section contained a renowned library, of which the vaulted ceiling alone remains in the present chapel. There were student rooms above. The original chapel at the side of the college was taken down in 1850. In his time, it received some 25 students of civil and canon law and theology, together with professors. The name of his college lives on the Rue du Collège de Foix. Today the Collège de Foix is the motherhouse of the congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Compassion, founded by Maurice Garrigou (1766-1852). This priest, known as the "Vincent de Paul of



Entry gate, College de Foix, Toulouse

Toulouse," secured this property for his new congregation in 1817.

Pierre Coste recounts how unsettled the University of Toulouse was in Vincent's time. Thousands of students from many countries attended lectures there, and it is no wonder that troubles broke out. Not fortunate enough to secure a scholarship, Vincent had at least enough money to enable him to begin his studies. His father's will, dated 7 February 1598, asks the family to help Vincent continue them. He may also have spent some time at the University of Zaragoza in Spain, since it was not uncommon for students to travel and hear famous lecturers when and where they could. It is likely that Vincent began his studies in Zaragoza and continued



Eighteenth century engraving,
College de Foix, Toulouse

them in Toulouse.

Vincent was ordained in 1600, in the midst of his studies, and expected to become a pastor shortly after. Since 1600 was a Holy Year, he also traveled to Rome, perhaps to ensure his appointment to the parish of Tilh. During that visit, he saw Pope Clement VIII, an event he recalled for the Daughters of Charity later in his life. *I have seen a pope, it was Clement VIII, a very holy man, so holy indeed that even heretics used to say: Pope Clement is a saint. He was so touched by God and had the gift of tears in such abundance that when he went up what is called the Holy Stairs, he bathed it in his tears.* (Conference 30) Toward the end of his time in Toulouse, Vincent took in students at Buzet, and later in Toulouse itself, ten boys, “whom he taught and raised to the service of God,” as Brother Robineau reported. After about seven



Aerial view, College de Foix, Toulouse

years of philosophical and theological studies, he earned his degree of bachelor in theology, receiving the title of *maître*. It is possible that he taught theology briefly at Toulouse, something his degree allowed. Other adventures then occurred in the life of this young priest.

Members of the Congregation of the Mission gave missions in the diocese of Toulouse beginning in 1632. However, the community was established in the city only from 1707, likewise to give missions. Funds for a house in Toulouse had been received at Saint Lazare in Paris in 1632, and Vincent looked for the opportunity to open a house from that time



Commemorative plaque,
Jesuit college, Zaragoza, Spain



Hôtel Dieu Saint Jacques, Toulouse

until his death. In 1752 the diocesan seminary was given to the care of the Vincentians. With the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1762, the *seminary of the Mission* was transferred to their former novitiate and house of continuing formation for their members. It lasted until the revolutionary period and closed in 1792. At that point it became a military installation, the Caserne de la Mission. Today it is a school, the Lycée/Collège Pierre de Fermat, facing the Jacobins. Among the many Jesuits who made their novitiate here was Saint Jean François Régis (1595-1640), a missionary in Canada, and namesake of the Vincentian martyr Francis Régis Clet.

The first Daughters of Charity came to Toulouse in 1689 to work in the Hôtel Dieu Saint Jacques. The sisters returned to this splendid complex, still standing next to the Pont Neuf, in 1800.

During the Terror, however, the superior spent ten months in prison, and 30 others were imprisoned at least briefly. The sisters also had several other houses in Toulouse and continue their works to this day. Vincentians returned in 1892, and the city is now the headquarters for the Vincentian province of Toulouse.

The first *American Vincentians* were the guests of the seminary toward the end of January 1816. They then moved on to Bordeaux, from where they embarked for the United States. This seminary has become the university library. (*Rue de Taur*)

Provence—Alpes—Côte-D'Azur



Vincent's work in this Mediterranean region is not well known, since he is so regularly associated with Paris. In his younger years, however, he knew Marseille well since he was chaplain general of the galleys of France. His confreres continued his work on behalf of galley convicts and of Christian slaves in North Africa.



Major seminary entry, Avignon

AVIGNON

Avignon, the seat of the papacy from 1305 to 1377, is significant to Vincent's life as the place where he wrote his first extant letter, 24 July 1607. In it he recounts for his patron, Monsieur de Comet in Dax, his captivity in Tunis. He wrote a somewhat different account in Letter 2, dated Rome, 28 February 1608. Whatever the historical truth of these letters, they are authentic. Doubts have arisen about his supposed captivity, and experts are divided on the issue. In any case, Vincent seems to have known Avignon. One of the great sights is the papal palace, the Palais des Papes, where



Baptistry, former Vincentian chapel, Marseilles

Pietro Montorio (1558-1643) was vice-legate. Vincent mentioned him, but not by name, in the two captivity letters. The church of Saint Pierre, cited in the same report, still stands. (*Place Saint Pierre*)

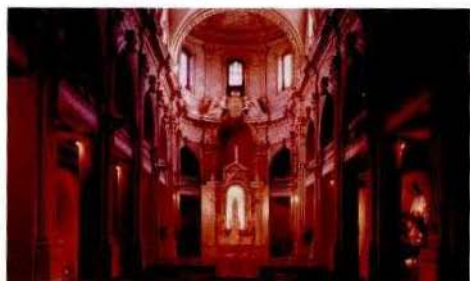
Vincentians served the Church in Avignon from 1705 to 1791, leaving at the Revolution. Since the area of Avignon was papal territory, Vincentians came to staff the *major seminary* here from Italy, rather than from France. At the time of the Revolution, this territorial inconsistency was remedied by the seizure of the territory, and the Italians were expelled. The seminary site is at the north corner of Avenue de la République and Rue Joseph Vernet. A side street, Rue du Collège d'Annecy, preserves the seminary's earlier name, and its dilapidated chapel façade is still visible there. After

the Revolution, Vincentians did not take up the work again in Avignon. Daughters of Charity, however, came here in 1854 for service in the hospital, and they continue their mission here. The city today has about 90,000 inhabitants.

Associated with Vincent's account of his captivity is **Aigues-Mortes**, a town on the coast where he and his companion supposedly landed before making their way to Avignon. Louis IX, Saint Louis, founded the city to serve as a Mediterranean port, from where he embarked on two different Crusades. It was, similar to the bastide fortresses, rectilinear in layout and encircled with stout walls, towers, and a moat. This small city of some 5000 inhabitants has kept its original layout. Nowadays, however, it is several kilometers from the sea.

MARSEILLES, LA-SAINTE-BAUME

Marseilles, with 800,000 residents, is, depending on which statistics are used, either France's second or third largest city, a size demonstrating an importance dating from classical Roman



Former Vincentian chapel, Marseilles

times. Vincent is connected with this important port in several ways. He traveled here in 1619 as the chaplain general of the galleys, a post created for him, and perhaps at two other times (1618, 1622). He came also to console Monsieur de Gondi on the death of his wife (1625), since the latter was then on duty here as general of the galleys. Vincent later sent his confreres here. Known for various reasons as the Priests of the Mission of France, the Vincentians arrived in 1643. Their purpose was to carry on work for the galley rowers, whether volunteers, convicts or slaves, as well as for the crew and the officers. The priests served as a sort of Red Cross, providing parcels or funds sent to the men, as well as advocacy in cases of illness or other needs. Their house also was the center for the ransom of captives in Tunis, Algiers and elsewhere in North Africa. Nearly everything to do with their ransom passed through the hands of the Vincentians. One ceremony was especially spectacular. On their return and release, they would assemble in the Vincentian church for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. At a signal, still holding their chains, the former captives let them crash to the floor simultaneously in an outburst of joy.

In keeping with their traditional Vincentian charism, the members of the Marseilles house also cared for the poor country people by preaching the traditional missions, and they ran a seminary for the training of the galley chaplains from 1648. It was also a seminary for Marseilles from 1673 to 1791. Among those who worked in the house was the

martyr *Jean Le Vacher* (1619-1683), killed in Algiers.

Vincent himself probably worked at one of the great forts to the side of the Old Port. It was here that the galleys were assembled and maintained, and the rowers lived and worked. The Arsenal, the principal building for the service of the galleys, has been demolished, but some seventeenth-century buildings used also for naval purposes still stand behind the site of the Arsenal.

The story of Vincent assuming the chains of a galley convict is centered in Marseilles. It is unlikely, inasmuch as substitution was punishable by mutilation and death, and, besides, as chaplain general, Vincent had the rank of a naval officer. The story has captured popular imagination, but it is generally discounted today. However, the depiction in the film *Monsieur Vincent* of the charitable priest impetuously replacing a brutalized prisoner has much to commend it. Something like this may have been the kernel of the story, repeated even in the saint's lifetime.

The chapel dating from the time of the founder is located on Rue Tapis Vert. The *community house* adjoining it was the first to have displayed the coat of arms or emblem of the Congregation on its building. This has now disappeared. At the time of the Revolution, the members of the house left or were expelled to Nice, at that period part of Savoy. Ten years later, in 1801, they returned but had no funds to buy back the property. At the north side of this building is a small street, the Rue de la Mission de France using the local name for the

Congregation of the Mission.

Father Charles Verbert, however, founded a parish after the Revolution not far from the old chapel. The church of *Saint Vincent de Paul* is known generally as Les Réformés since it began in the chapel of the monastery of reformed Augustinians previously located here. Toward the middle of the century, the plan developed to build a new church. It is a large neo-Gothic edifice. The façade, dating from 1867, is unfinished. There is also a Rue Saint Vincent de Paul to further keep his name alive. However, it is only one block long and not near any Vincentian site.

The government gave the old house and its chapel, Rue Tapis Vert, to others after the Revolution since the Vincentians could not afford to buy it back. First, it went to the Poor Clares (1806-1839), then to the Jesuits, who rebuilt the chapel and added the present façade (1860). They remained until their expulsion in 1880. After various non-religious uses (concert hall, storage, etc.) and damage during the second World War, it was reopened in 1983 for the followers of Archbishop Marcel Lefevre, the Fraternity of Saint Pius X. The furnishings of the old chapel are long gone and the present ones are mostly modern. A plaque inside the chapel recalls its current dedication to Pius X, by the archbishop himself. The site of the church is close to the painter David's house where the French national anthem, known popularly as *La Marseillaise*, was first sung. (*25, rue Thubaneau*)

Many missionaries departed from the port of Marseilles. One especially

important group was the first band of Daughters of Charity to leave for China. They did so in October 1847. Daughters had been at work in a hospital in Marseilles since 1763 and involved in several other works beginning in 1845.

East of Marseilles is the shrine of **La-Sainte-Baume** (literally, the holy grotto). According to legend Mary Magdalene came here and lived in the cave that is the focus of the shrine. It is located high in the hills and requires a stiff climb of about one half-hour to reach it from the car park on D95. In August of 1625 Vincent made a much lengthier pilgrimage visit, as he reported in a conference to the Daughters of Charity, 17 April 1653. [*Mary Magda-*

lene] went up to a high mountain, so steep and toilsome that several days are needed to climb and descend it, so cold that I myself, who was there in the month of August, had to wrap myself up, the cold was so intense; and yet when we reached the foot of the mountain we found it excessively hot. This twelfth-century shrine was badly damaged in 1793, but it has regained its former interest.

Besides the port of Marseilles, **Toulon** was also the home for the galleys at various times. The Congregation did not have an established house here, but some Vincentians did accompany the galley convicts here. As in times past, Toulon continues to be a major French naval base. It is a city of some 170,000 inhabitants.