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## The Laity and M. Vincent

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# THE LAITY AND M. VINCENT

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When M. Vincent arrives in Paris in 1608 a seething shakes the Church of France from the fall-out of the Council of Trent. Facing the Protestant Reformation which pleads for an integral priesthood of all the baptized, Catholic leaders are tempted to push for the ministerial priesthood. But by their action, men and women restore the balance of this reaction to the Catholic Reformation. For example, pious lay persons assiduously frequent the Salon of “la belle Acarie”, Blessed Marie of the Incarnation, her own daughters and Charlotte de Gondi, Marchioness of Maignelay, Mme Jourdain, the Princess of Longueville, Mme Billard, Michel de Marillac, Mme Sainte Beuve, Mme de Breaute. At the Salon, Vincent de Paul meets these people of merit and also encounters his teachers: Benoit de Canfield, Andre Duval, Pierre de Berulle and Francis de Sales...

With them, Vincent is going to hold a foremost place in the religious renewal of the seventeenth century. He encourages the apostolic spirit of his time by introducing the Laity as a source of evangelization and other services to the poor of the Church of France. Thus he remains a model and beacon for us today.

Vincent acts **thanks to the laity and with them.**

Vincent **arouses the responsibility of the Laity for the service of the poor.**

In so doing, he brings into play **an intuition**, peculiarly his own which we shall try to make clear.

## I. AN ACTION THANKS TO AND WITH THE LAITY

### **Origins**

Too often we forget. It is the Laity, and particularly women, who encourage the still young man, Vincent de Paul, when he takes the sharp turn in his life as a priest. “I believe that the Pope is not as happy as a pastor in the midst of such a good-hearted people.” This Clichy experience becomes the priestly and missionary mold his soul will always long for. He will speak of it with warmth forty years later. For the time being he obeys M. de Berulle who offers him entre to high society. He becomes the private tutor of the de Gondi

children, whose father is General of the Galleys of France, and whose mother entrusts to him the care of her soul.

In January 1617 he is at Gannes, thirteen kilometers from the Chateau at Folleville. A dying peasant pours out his soul to him and is deeply grateful for having avoided damnation. The saintly woman is so astonished that she urges Vincent to capitalize on the event. On the very next day, at Folleville, our saint admits what he has done and seeks help from the Jesuit fathers at Amiens. Quite obviously nothing could have happened without Mme de Gondi's persuasive help. She is indeed the prime cause of discovering the urgent need of missionary activity needed for the spiritual distress of her peasants.

M. Vincent is doing a bit of missionary work everywhere in the de Gondi estates. At Chatillon-les-Dombes, a parish suggested by de Berulle, Vincent is stirred by another happening: feminine goodwill is brought into action on a Sunday by the needs of a sick family. On the next day, eight women put their heads together and formed an organization. On 23 August St. Vincent gave them their first rule. Chatillon is "the first place where the 'Charity' was established". Following this place, Vincentian in the highest sense of the word, the "Charities" have not ceased to develop, based on the definitive Rule drawn up by M. Vincent and given to the first Ladies of Charity in the Chapel of the hospital of Chatillon on 8 December 1617, shortly before he takes final leave of his parish on Christmas Eve. For the second time it is women, lay women - with the support of their husbands - who determine St. Vincent's action.

The two pillars of M. Vincent's activity owe their existence to lay persons. In our day it is well to emphasize and highlight this. Surely he will one day say to the ladies of Paris while in the mood for confidences and perhaps a bit of boasting: "For 800 years or thereabouts women have not held public office in the church; there were some in the past called deaconesses; now look: Providence speaks to some of you today to make up for what the poor sick at the Hotel Dieu need". Exaggeration or prophecy?

From now on the journey is pursued with relentless logic: it is necessary to be sent, to announce the Good News, free consciences, join them solidly to Christ, and to organize "Charities" as the purpose of Mission, because hearts can adhere to Jesus only if they be somewhat freed from earthly needs - "Mission and Charity" are inseparable from Vincentian thought and action. What is at stake cannot exist without the laity.

### **Women and Men**

Here we witness the willingness of Villepreux (in 1618) with, notably, Jean Coqueret, doctor of theology, Messrs. Berger and Gontiere, counselor clerks of the Parlement, ready to roll up their sleeves to help the women of the parish; those of Joigny (1618), where two nurses are active; those of

Montmirail (1618); those of Folleville, Paillart and Serevillers (1620) where men's "Charities" are organized. At Joigny and Montmirail, where - as we know - St. Vincent tries without success to join the women's and men's groups. However, the attempt to form a mixed group of "Charities" will succeed at Macon (1621) where all the notables of the city will mobilize against extreme poverty with an eye to help the 300 poor of the town, even though this resulted in the great confinement of the poor. It is not fitting to wipe out these collaborative efforts or to be utopian. For the time being, he is declaring war on misery and he does know how to get help.

### **The Ladies of Charity**

St. Vincent also knows, for about two years, another woman of rank: Louise de Marillac. To help her get her mind off herself, he quickly assigns her as "inspectrix" of the "Charities", which are always founded at the close of each mission. In her we find a pious woman, molded through prayer and the trials concomitant with the opening of a "Charity". She travels through the dioceses of Paris, Beauvais, Soissons, Meaux, Chalons and Chartres. She renders an account of her visits to M. Vincent, whose time is absorbed by the Missions.

In 1629 she insists on the "Charity" being instituted in St. Savior, her own parish. This is the first Parisian breakthrough. St. Vincent charges across the frontier of the great city and its countryside to attack its destitution. In 1631 four other Parisian parishes will have their "Charities" - St. Nicolas, St. Eustache, St. Benoit and St. Sulpice.

Louise federates the fine volunteers. The impetus of charity, aroused by Vincent de Paul, win over the parishes of Paris - Marchionesses, countesses, duchesses and even princesses, all want to enter the ranks of the Ladies of Charity. Evangelical emulation, very much in the spirit of the Catholic Reformation, they discover poverty and those who are burdened by it. Filled with generosity, they open their purses.

Father Coste enumerates some forty women and ladies of rank who cooperate in M. Vincent's work, and even increase it tenfold by their own spirited and material involvement. (GSGS, I, ch. XII, p. 271)

Gaston PARTURIER attempted a significant classification:

"The nobility rose one above another in all degrees of the aristocracy:

Baronesses de Renty and de Mirepoix;

Countesses de Brienne, de Breguelonne,

Marchionesses de Laval, Viean, de Pienne, de Palaiseau,

Duchesses de Sully, de Veneuil, de Lude.

The military nobility was represented notably by the wife of Field Marshall Schomberg.

The nobility recruited from the legal profession included the Presidents de Nesmond, Tubeuf, de Brou, Amelot, de Maupeou du Sault.”

### **A few famous names**

To honor their memory let us cite: Mme Goussault, the president, Mlle du Fay, cousin of Mlle Legras and a choice spirit, Mme de Lamoignon, “the mother of the poor”, and her daughter Madelein, the duchess d’Aiguillon, great donor and founder, Marie de Maupeou, specialist in medicine, the Princess de Conde, the Duchess de Nemours, Marie Louise de Gonzague and Queen Anne of Austria, and so many more - more than forty - as noted by Pierre Coste.

The “foundresses” in the real sense of the term, deserve a place apart: Mme de Miramion and the “Holy Family”, Mme de Villeneuve and the “Daughters of the Cross”, Mme de Pollailon and the “Daughters of Providence”. They expand Vincentian charity.

### **Other Associates of M. Vincent**

Well known is the fact, as Bernard Koch points out, that St. Vincent belonged to the **Compagnie du Saint Sacrement**. Founded in 1629 by the Duke de Ventadour, Henri de Levis and the Jesuit Suffren, it brings together pious persons of high rank, as well as tradesmen and craftsmen. The goal of the secret association is entirely devotional and evangelical activity. We know it does much for the poor and St. Vincent could not do other than support it and...make use of it! Let us cite among the famous laymen of this **Compagnie**: the Prince de Conti, the Duke de Liancourt, the Baron de Renty, Elie Laisne de la Marguierie, Guillaume de Lamoignon.

M. Vincent will think up temporary networks closely connected to the **Compagnie** to help the noble Lorraine or the Catholic Irish.

He organizes his own collection network to transport supplies and funds. He gives a choice place in this service to the brothers of his Congregation, such as Matthew Regnard or John Parre. In 1650 we find seven brothers involved in this work!

How can we fail to note the valuable role played by Charles Maignart de Bernieres (1616-1662), treasurer of the **Compagnie du Saint Sacrement**,

former master of petitions and completely dedicated to the poor, who becomes the editor of “**Relations**”, sort of a periodical designed to encourage the rich to donate funds. Each issue consists of eight pages. About 400 are printed, as shown by the account book of M. De Bernieres. The “**Relations**” begin, following the meeting of the Ladies of Charity in July 1650. It seems the ladies cooperated with the **Compagnie du Saint Sacrement** as Pierre Coste comes close to proving in his **Grand Saint du Grand Siecle**. This seems like a modern and helpful way to assist provinces that have suffered a disaster.

He also makes use of the Jesuits and their **Congregations de Messieurs**, notable former students of theirs, who live in prayer, moral rigor and involvement.

We must also recall the influence St. Vincent has over the life of the church in France for the nine years he is a member of the **Council of Conscience**. He is consulted on doctrine, gives authentic advice on episcopal nominations, even feeling obligated to intervene politically while running the risk of displeasing the powers-that-be.

## II. AN ACTION FOR THE SERVICE OF THE POOR

### *The Role of St. Vincent*

From the establishment of the “Charities” it is clear that St. Vincent becomes through them, the great “Animator” of the laity. He inspires them with sacred fire! He communicates the **zeal** which is the mover of his missionary and charitable activity. He lives by his **passion** for the poor. They are constantly present at his foundations and with his acquaintances.

How, for example, does he deal with the ladies? As an animator and a responsible leader, Gaston Parturier speaks without exaggeration of the “court of M. Vincent”. Today, the word is too ambiguous! The hard core is formed by “the group of 14”, sort of a governing body under the presidency of the “Director for life” who is M. Vincent and with a staff usually united around Louise de Marillac. St. Vincent federates these volunteers. In the reports of the meetings still available to us we observe his diplomacy, his politeness shaded with respect, his capacity to instill trust, his way of leaving the initiative and especially his tendency to exhort, to inspire with energy; for example:

“Now then, ladies, compassion and charity have made you adopt these small creatures for your children; you have been their mothers according to grace since their mothers according to nature abandoned them; see now if you also want to abandon

them. Stop being their mothers to become now their judges; their life and their death are in your hands; I'm going to take the opinions and the votes; it is time to pronounce their judgment and to know if you no longer want to have mercy for them. They will continue to live if you continue to take charitable care of them; and on the contrary they will certainly die and perish if you abandon them; experience does not permit you to doubt it." (XIII 801)

There are those who questioned, and not without malice, whether M. Vincent was trying to charm or be cunning with these ladies. This is not at all impertinent. St. Vincent had a special oratorical talent. His successes at Folleville and Chatillon owe a great deal to his eloquence. But he captivates by his way of life, his conviction, his personal aura, his sensitivity, his poise and his judgment. In a world steeped in duplicity, he brings a simple and fresh spirit. It is true. And the ladies of the nobility accustomed to the tricks and the wiles of the Court are not mistaken: his testimony sounds just and they are magnetized by his uncommon personality. Above all his spirituality. He lives his faith and communicates it forcefully and authentically.

### *The Spirit of Work*

No element essential for a pastoral of today's Church is lacking in the organization of the "Charities". In the Rule produced in December 1617, at Chatillon, can be found all the constitutive elements of every pastoral of the Church:

**Working together** is clearly stressed as if M. Vincent foresaw difficulties in the rule of mixed "Charity" groups, like that of Joigny in 1621:

"It will be composed of men, women and girls, of which the latter shall be admitted only with the consent of their husbands, fathers and mothers. The men will take care of the able-bodied and the crippled, and the women of only the sick. The poor sick will be received into the bosom of the association by the prioress, on the recommendation of the rector and assistants" (XIII, 446, 449).

Note also this detail, which does not lack charm, unless it be inappropriate:

"And because the association of men and that of women is but one association, having the same patron, the same goal and the same spiritual exercise, and because only the ministry is divided, the care of the able-bodied belonging to the men and that of the sick belonging to the women, and because our Lord does not receive less glory from the ministry of the women than that of the

men, even if it seems that the care of the sick is preferable to that of the healthy, for that reason the servants of the poor will have equal care in the conservation and augmentation of the association of women as of their own; and for this purpose will put a fourth of their annual revenue, and more, if it is necessary, in the hands of the first assistant, who keeps the women's money, in case the revenue from the collections which the women take up is not sufficient; which can be known by means of the rector, as being the superior of both associations. And in order that the aforesaid directors know the state of affairs of the women's association, they will assist in the rendering of their accounts." (XIII, 455)

Charity unites them, brings them together and makes them live almost like a family, attentive to the joys and sorrows of each other. (XIII, 517 for example)

**Integral Development** is really essential for M. Vincent, as in this same **Rule** of Joigny:

"The directors of the association will put the poor children in a trade as soon as they will be of suitable age. They will distribute weekly to the poor, the crippled and the old who cannot work, what will be necessary for them to live; and as regards those who earn only a part of what they need, the association will supply the rest." (XIII, 447)

The reports on the state of the works are also very eloquent.

If the words seem obsolete (and how would they not be?), they do convey an ever-present meaning: "pass through the bodies to reach the souls", "the claim to announce the Good News is permitted only to people who are alert":

"Oh, ladies, how you must thank God for the attention that he had you give to the bodily needs of those poor sick people; for the assistance of their bodies has produced this effect of grace, of making you think of their salvation, at such an opportune time, that most others never have to prepare themselves for death; and those who have just recovered from an illness would hardly think of changing their lives without the good arrangements where we try to put them." (XIII, 804-& July 1, 1657)

The **Archives de la Mission** have preserved for us a non-localized **Rule** which deals with a factory for young boys with precise instructions for the almoner, the master craftsman, the apprentices themselves and the daily routine (XIII, 507-510).



The report to the **Bishop** expresses what is set up with the pastor. All the rules stipulate that the establishment and the election are made in the presence of the pastor and we note that the approval of the diocesan bishop of the place is needed like the one Madame de Gondi sought from the **Archbishop of Sims** for the parish of Joigny (XIII, 442sq), or from the **Bishop of Amiens** for the “Conferences” of Folleville, Paillart, Serevillers (XIII, 482-483). We even have the register of the capitular deliberations concerning the mixed “Charity” of Macon (XIII, 503-504).

As for **administration**, it is always there! St. Vincent does not leave this matter to anyone else! All is foreseen with minute detail. At the very outset, in December 1617 as Chatillon, he insists on the key positions: the administration of the temporal, the rendering of the accounts, the role of the pay-mistress, the prioress with her cost book, the contributions in the Church’s collecting-box, etc...(already!-XIII, 431-432). And in 1657, in his report on the state of the works (forty years later!) it is noted:

“M. Vincent then read before the assembly the state of the receipts and expenses. Since the last general assembly, that is to say for about a year, we had spent 5,000 pounds for the lunches for the poor sick of the **Hotel-Dieu** and received to this end 3,500 pounds. The deficit amounted thus to 1,500 pounds” (XIII,803).

And to speak plainly to these ladies: it is necessary to think over the problem!

Finally, **formation**. It is especially spiritual, for it is well stipulated, in all the rules, that the undertaking has also a personal finality. The first beneficiaries of the “Charities” are the members of the **conferences** themselves. M. Vincent foresees a monthly meeting and a reading of religious works each day for those who know how to read. Why? To put them in a position to catechize the poor! He who does not perceive this total dimension of St. Vincent curtails him seriously and relegates him to the poster “benefactors of humanity”!

Finally, last but not least: the restoring of the ministry of **women** in the Church. He dares to bring up the prohibition of St. Paul who denies women the right to speak in the church: that women be silent in the churches; he did not permit them to speak there. And in the first to Timothy, Ch.2: Meanwhile, I do not permit women to teach. The quote does not lack charm and humor!

*The Maid Servants*

These are the unknown, the outcast young women who have no stature in society, looked down upon as trash, not afraid to roll up their sleeves and empty the chamber pots. They do all the practical and difficult jobs. They are the ones who really do serve the poor, perhaps without enthusiasm, often with anger, at times conniving and joking with them.

The first persons called upon to assist the ladies of rank are their female and male servants. When a noble or a middle class woman decides to take care of the poor the whole household is conscripted; the servants must roll up their sleeves whether or not they like it.

As early as the **Rule** of Chatelaine we observe that some volunteers receive designated duties:

Moreover, the conference will choose two poor women of honest and devout lives, who will be called caretakers of the poor sick, because their duty will be to watch over those who will be alone and not able to move, and to serve them, according to the orders which the prioress will give them, by paying them decently according to their work, and in this way will be considered members of the aforesaid conference, will participate in the indulgences and attend the assemblies, without nevertheless having a deliberative voice.” (XIII,425) (same indication in XIII,441,179,515,530).

The mixed “**Charity**” of Joigny speaks of “an associate servant” remunerated and dispatched according to the needs (XIII,449, see also XIII,513).

Thus, and this fact merits great attention, service is the distinguishing feature of the “**Charities**”. Service is given in every way: by choice, by designation, either free or paid; but it is at the disposition of the sick or the dispossessed. It’s their needs which command and which finally are going to develop a spirit of service.

### *The Care of the Poor*

The poor are always present in all the letters, rules and reports. They are the actors and the principal subjects of all this consultation and this systematic procedure of the activity the laity engaged by St. Vincent. They are the sick, needy, beggars, shamefaced, galley-slaves, prisoners, victims of wars, foundlings, able-bodied, invalids, the unfit or the fit to work...

Let us look at them with the eyes of the municipal magistrates of Rethel who write of their needs to the ladies of the “**Charity**” through the intervention of St. Vincent, to whom the letter is addressed, as was usually done:

“So many blessings received would give respite to our importunities; but the deplorable abandoning by fathers and mothers of their children, by husbands of their wives, girls standing dishonored, overwhelmed with misery, the tyrannical extortion of those who assume the right to levy the sustenance and taxes in unwarranted ways, the deportment of partisans who would gladly break the bones of the peasant in order to sell their marrow, added to this the highway robbery and universal disorders of the undisciplined soldiers, they have caused us such great compassion and such sensitive regrets, that we are obliged by law and necessity to have recourse to the continuation of your charities...” (XIII,829)

### *The Spirituality of Support*

The poor cannot be separated from Christ. They are the way to him and the surest way of honoring him, of rejoining him. The strongest text at this level is taken from the **Report** on the state of the works of July 11, 1657. It is interesting that it is given to lay persons. Also it assures much help when we think that it could be received by the Daughters of Charity or the Missionaries with the same intensity:

“The third motive which you have to continue these holy works, is the honor which Our Lord draws from them. How is that? Because it is to honor Him by entering into His sentiments, to esteem them by doing what He did and by carrying out what He ordered. Now His greatest sentiments were for the care of the poor in order to cure them, console them, help them and advise them; that was His affection. And He Himself wanted to be born poor, receive poor in his company, serve the poor, put Himself in place of the poor, so far as to say the good and evil we do to the poor He will hold done to his divine person. What more tender love could He have shown to the poor! And what love, I ask of you, can we have for Him, if we do not love that which He has loved! The fact remains, my ladies, it is to love Him in the right way by loving the poor; it is to serve Him well by serving them well, it is to honor Him properly by imitating Him...” (XIII,811)

## III. The Intuition of St. Vincent

St. Vincent's genius for bringing the laity into prominence in the charitable activity of the Church is so well demonstrated by the facts and their results that a **modest synthesis** is now in order.

1) For Vincent the Church continues Christ. She is Christ. But in his time, all men are Christians and thus the poor and the rich form the "Mystical Body" of Christ. It is impossible, thinks and says St. Vincent, not to share. All the disciples of Jesus Christ are bound by the same baptism and if the rich do not serve the poor they are but "christians in name". The ministry of "compassion and mercy" is typically Vincentian. The power of this ministry is found in Mt. 40,25: "...Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me".

The urgency of charity pushes him to organize and diffuse it throughout the Kingdom. Women, in particular, are best ambassadors of this charity because of their availability, their savoir-faire, their natural disposition to be in sympathy and a link with those who suffer bodily. Their sensitivity, as well as their capacity to give, draws them closer to the poor.

For it is necessary to give oneself, to consecrate oneself in some way to charity. The verb most often used by St. Vincent is "to give oneself". It is the gift which leads to service. The priority of the members of his institutions, including his priests, must be to serve. All receive a mandate to be the representatives of the goodness of God in favor of these who suffer.

Natural talent and service culminate in the Eucharist, "center of devotion and place of charity" par excellence. Place of perfection also, summoning all one's strength, because of one's baptism. We must die like Jesus Christ to live in Jesus Christ. Such is the burning obligation of everyone, the call to holiness: "all Christians are obliged by it". In Vincent's way of thinking, because of this there is no need of the cloister! Day after day one can sanctify oneself in normal events and even in the banality of material works or administration. God Himself looks after the world through His Providence! Who does not see the reality of such a life project?

2) The other point of emphasis of St. Vincent is the Announcement of Salvation. For it is a question of saving human kind and especially the poor. Two adverbs hammer out the rules in his institutions: "spiritually and corporally". We must, with all our strength, struggle against the miseries of poverty. Yet it is no less urgent to announce Jesus Christ. The preaching of the Gospel to the poor is the obsession of M. Vincent. In no case, does he want the poor to damn themselves and die of hunger. His great plan is the proclamation of the Good News, in the image of Christ the Evangelizer, in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 12, 49). To catechize is the responsibility of each lay person. The idea is to do it in a sort of natural way without being afraid to share in the lives of the people. To take part in their lives, we say today. It is necessary to spread the Gospel and to tell people that God loves them. Jesus himself came

“to set the earth on fire and how I wish it were already blazing” (Luke 12, 49). This divine fire must set ablaze and consume everything. A Vincentian maxim recaptures all that in a marvelous way: “It is not enough to love God if my neighbor doesn’t love him”. That is why each one is invited to live love daily, as a group, as a community. To live together having but one heart and one soul. Witnessing is more eloquent than any preaching! It is like an image of the “unity God” in the Trinity.

**Passion of human kind, passion of God.** Such is the Mission of the Laity in the time of St. Vincent as well as in our own time.

I would wish, in closing, to summarize the ideas of the Vincentian involvement with the Laity by this well known expression of St. Vincent de Paul:

“The Church is like a great harvest which needs laborers, but laborers who work. There is nothing more consistent with the Gospel than to amass insights and strengths for one’s soul through prayer, reading and solitude, and then to go and share this spiritual nourishment with women and men. This is to do as our Savior did, and after Him, His apostles. It is to join Martha’s duty to Mary’s. It is to imitate the dove, which is to digest half the food it has caught and then, with its beak, to nourish its little ones. That is how we should do, that is how we must witness to God, by our works, that we love Him. All our work is in action” (XI,41).

## NOTES

1. M-D Poinssenet - “France religieuse au XVIIeme siecle” - Casterman 1952
2. The XIIIth volume of the texts of M. Vincent which Pierre Coste has preserved for us of the reglements de charites mixtes. Too often we forget them!
3. Elizabeth Charpy “Petite vie de Louise de Marillac” - DDB 1993
4. Gaston Parturier, Ancien interne des Hopitaux de Paris, Professeur a la faculte libre de medecine de Lille “Saint Vincent de Paul et les dames de son temps” - edition Cartier- Lyon 1945

5. Bernard Koch “Le tissi des relations de Saint Vincent” - Session europeenne 1993 - Polycopie
6. Alain Talon “La Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement” - Cerf 1990
7. GSGS II, pp 625sq
8. For example: La Compagnie des dames de la Charite de l'Hotel-Dieu, des quelles vous etes des plus ferventes” (XIII,763). To Madame de Nemours in regard to perseverance: “Madame, has some good way come to mind?” (understood: for the maintenance of the Compagnie des Dames de la Charite - (XIII,819).
9. In 1657, we even see that St. Vincent must moderate their involvement because they are doing too much; they “go twice a day to the Hotel-Dieu” to visit the sick, console, instruct. There is also the “assistance of the frontiers and the ruined provinces”: “We constitute virtue where it isn’t: there can’t be too much of it”...(XIII,817) and to enumerate as if to put on the brake: “Here is the light lunch and instruction of the poor of l’Hotel-Dieu, the food and education of the foundlings, the care of providing for the corporal needs of criminals condemned to the galleys, the assistance of the frontiers and the ruined provinces, contributions to the Missions of the East, North and South” (XII,818).
10. Beware of the too fundamentalist reading of the famous “more” invented by M. Anouilh. St. Vincent says here: “Don’t presume to be able to do more” (XIII,818)! We note his peasant sense of balance and human wisdom. He is in keeping with the popular, common sense expression: “grasp all, lose all” (XII,816). These pages can always be brought up-to-date and taken up with profit.

(John O’M. Sharpe, C.M., translator)