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Spring 1993

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### Recommended Citation

McCann, Dennis P. (1993) "Vincentian Pioneers of the Mississippi Valley (1818–1900)," *Vincentian Heritage Journal*: Vol. 14 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.

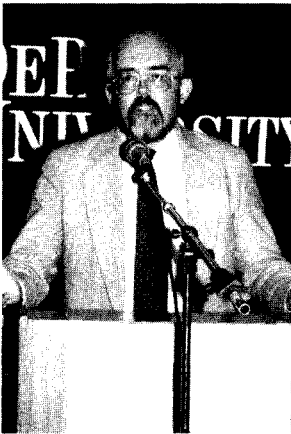
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# Vincentian Pioneers of the Mississippi Valley (1818-1900): Introduction and Commentary

BY

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Discussions of the Vincentian heritage at DePaul University usually start out at a fairly basic level. Campus veterans are fond of remembering the freshman who, seeing the unfamiliar image of Saint Vincent de Paul frequently displayed around campus, wondered why we showed so many pictures of Jacques Cousteau. The same people are apt to express their own understanding of the Vincentian heritage by contrasting it, strangely, with the University's Catholic identity. Their slogan might be, "Vincentian, sí! Catholic, no!"—in approval of the community's demonstrated commitment to the poor and the marginalized and dis-

approval of the Church's alleged inflexibility over a variety of moral issues. Given DePaul's unprecedented growth during the past decade, it is not surprising that even this reaction is overshadowed by most newcomers' complete, but hardly invincible ignorance of Vincentian traditions.

The exhibit that is a part of this Vincentian Heritage Symposium is part of an attempt to reintroduce the Vincentian heritage to the DePaul community and the university's many supporters in the Lincoln Park neighborhood and the greater Chicago area. It has been planned to coincide with the opening of the new University Library on the Lincoln Park campus. The library, of course, is a symbol of DePaul's success as an academic institution. But such institutions define excellence within the context of specific traditions—in DePaul's case, within the context of its "urban, Catholic, Vincentian" identity. The university claims to be urban by design and not just by accident, in its commitment of service

to the people of Chicago, and it seeks to understand both its Roman Catholic affiliation and the Vincentian heritage of its founders, in light of the diverse experiences of all the various groups living and working in Chicago.

Recently, the Center for the Study of Values at DePaul University sponsored a series of discussions on each of these three mission commitments and their interrelationship. These discussions have demonstrated the need for concrete, easily accessible, historical information on the origins of DePaul's threefold mission commitment. The Center for the Study of Values is cosponsoring this exhibit, along with the University Art Gallery, and in conjunction with the exhibits in the new University Library examining the impact of Saint Vincent de Paul on the history of early modern France. The sponsors hope these will provide a clearer picture of what the University's Vincentian heritage has been and how it relates to both Catholic tradition and the challenges of an urban environment.

The French origins of the Vincentian communities—the priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Mission and the sisters known as the Daughters of Charity—are more familiar than the development of these communities in the United States. The French Catholic priest canonized as Saint Vincent de Paul (1581-1660), and in more recent times celebrated as “the Universal Patron of Charitable Works in the Catholic Church,” found his religious vocation, not before, but after his ordination to the priesthood. He discovered his life's work of service to the poor while acting as chaplain to the wealthy Gondi family. On their vast estates Vincent first confronted the wretched conditions, the spiritual as well as material poverty, typically endured by the peasantry of early modern France. Monsieur Vincent founded the Congregation of the Mission in 1625. In 1633 he and his friend and spiritual companion, Louise de Marillac, also later canonized, founded the Daughters of Charity. Because of their close association in the Vincentian mission, the two communities have been known as “the Double Family” of Saint Vincent de Paul. The great insight informing their work was that service to the poor, to be effective, had to be organized, large-scale, and based on appropriate spiritual and moral principles. The Clos Saint-Lazare, the subject of the permanent exhibit on the third floor of the University Library, became the hub of a vast network of houses, in both Paris and the provinces of France, where the needs of the poor—especially abandoned children, destitute women, the dependent elderly, and the very ill—were met.

Most of the care administered through this network was actually provided by the Daughters of Charity and lay support groups like the Ladies of Charity that Vincent had organized as early as 1617. Nevertheless the work of the priests of the Congregation of the Mission in educational reform, directed chiefly toward the clergy of rural France, was understood by Vincent to be an integral part of this service to the poor. What Karl Marx later diagnosed as the sheer idiocy of rural life could be challenged effectively only by overcoming the ignorance, superstition, and indifference of the French clergy. Seminaries with high standards for both scholarship and spiritual formation had to be organized if clerics were to regard their parishes as anything more than rural benefices to be exploited to support lavish lifestyles at court. Such concern for reform of the clergy was supportive, not subversive, of a society like that of early modern France, whose moral legitimacy was grounded on the principles of Catholic Christianity.

It is clear from the subsequent history of the Clos Saint-Lazare, especially from the persecutions that both the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity faced during the French Revolution, that the Vincentian mission was seen as an integral part of the *ancien régime*. The network of voluntary associations organized by Vincent and Louise had provided the upper classes with a trustworthy instrument for discharging their social obligations to the poor. To the extent that the Vincentian communities succeeded, they underwrote whatever credibility the ethic of *noblesse oblige* still had in early modern France.

The French Revolution, of course, rejected the basic premise of that ethic. It is not surprising that the most radical, and therefore most consistent, phase of the Revolution should have tried either to suppress or to coopt the Vincentian communities. Neither the ideology nor the institutional forms of Vincentian charity could be tolerated by an all-encompassing revolutionary state that now arrogated to itself the administration of poor relief.

The dislocations triggered by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars form the background for the American phase of the Vincentian enterprise—that is, for the establishment of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity in the Mississippi valley, the focus of this exhibit. In Europe, the intermittent warfare against orthodox Christianity that ended only with Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo led directly to the enrichment of the fledgling American Catholic church. Emigré French clergy, notably the Sulpicians, fled to

America. Having established Saint Mary's Seminary in Baltimore in 1791, this Parisian order concentrated much of its activity in the formerly French territories to the west of the Allegheny mountains. It was a Sulpician, Father Louis William Dubourg, who discovered Father Felix de Andreis in Rome and persuaded him to found the Congregation of the Mission in America. De Andreis himself had fled to Monte Citorio in Rome as a result of Napoleon's incursions into de Andreis's native Piedmont. Their chance meeting is the prelude to the story told in this exhibit.

Father Dubourg was also instrumental in Elizabeth Bayley Seton's decision to establish the Sisters of Charity in the United States. The story of their founding in 1809 at a farmhouse near Emmitsburg, Maryland, and the impact of the woman known today as Saint Elizabeth Seton, is beyond the scope of this exhibit. She died in 1821, before most of the American Sisters of Charity in 1850 formally united with the restored Daughters of Charity, headquartered once again in Paris. It was clearly Mother Seton's intention from the beginning to form a Vincentian community, but the uncertain status of the Daughters of Charity and the generally strained character of relations between the United States and France during the Napoleonic period made formal affiliation impossible.

One part of the exhibit takes up the story of the Daughters of Charity after their house was established in Saint Louis, Missouri, where they organized the first hospital west of the Mississippi, Saint Louis Hospital, in 1828. On display are artifacts which document their work not only in the Saint Louis area, but also in Chicago, beginning in 1861.

The priests of the Congregation of the Mission who came to the Mississippi valley have a less complicated institutional history. Napoleon had been defeated and the Congregation restored in Paris before Father de Andreis and his companions set foot in Saint Louis. Their history of institution building—most notably in the organization of the Catholic diocese of Saint Louis and the major seminary at Saint Mary of the Barrens in Perryville, Missouri—shows a direct continuity with the pattern of Saint Vincent de Paul's activities in early modern France. It is hard to say which society, seventeenth-century France or the American midwest of the nineteenth century, was less amenable to clergy reform, but certainly the differences between these two social environments challenged the Congregation to refocus its mission in new ways. Most conspicuous among the new forms they developed was the

Vincentian university—still represented today by DePaul University in Chicago, Niagara University in Buffalo, New York, and Saint John's University in Jamaica, New York.

Like most other American Catholic religious communities, the Congregation of the Mission has no long-standing European tradition of college teaching or academic administration. The very idea of a private college or university is a relatively recent American invention necessitated by the underdeveloped state of public institutions in colonial America. Because most existing American colleges and universities were perceived as instruments of Protestant domination, analogous Catholic institutions were created to ensure that Catholics could get an education without prejudice to their religion. DePaul University was founded in 1898 at the invitation of the Catholic bishop of Chicago who, alert to the needs of the recently arrived masses of European, mostly Catholic, immigrants, turned to the priests of the Congregation of the Mission for help. Their chief qualifications were their commitment to serving the poor and their reputation for excellence in seminary education. The institutional precedent for the founding of DePaul University is the seminary at Saint Mary of the Barrens, which at the start was forced to admit students seeking a secular education as well as candidates for the priesthood. The Barrens, too, might have become a major university, had southeastern Missouri been inundated with a sufficient number of needy Catholic immigrants!

The mission of the Daughters of Charity was similarly adapted to the social conditions of the nineteenth-century American frontier. Incessant warfare in Europe, especially the successive waves of violence and devastation unleashed by the Wars of Religion (1618-1648), caused unprecedented levels of suffering for the refugees, not only in the form of material destitution but through the destruction of rural families and the creation of a dependent urban underclass in Paris. The Double Family of Saints Vincent and Louise set out to relieve these miseries, often with the patronage of the governing classes whose activities had helped create the problems in the first place.

On the American frontier, however, rapid and uncontrolled expansion, not incessant warfare, determined the challenges faced by the Vincentian communities. The great European migration, for better or worse, was pressing into the Mississippi valley without benefit of the institutional supports taken for granted as essential to civilization. Economic opportunity may have abounded, but there were few schools, hospitals, or churches to minister to the settlers' needs. The Daughters

of Charity tried to meet these needs, usually without the help of official patronage.

The American constitutional principle of separation of Church and state, so different in intent from the anticlericalism of the French Revolution, meant that religious communities were free to organize their own activities, so long as they could find private sources to fund them. The history of the houses founded by the American Daughters of Charity exhibits a volatility similar to that of other private ventures in this country. Most did not survive for more than a generation, just as most small businesses fail. Nevertheless, like the history of entrepreneurship in business, these houses are testimony to the dynamism of organized charitable activity in this country. Though such institutions are usually short-lived, they do respond to real needs for as long as those needs exist.

The spirit of the Daughters' early houses lives on in the more stable institutions that eventually emerged from them. The development of Saint Joseph's Hospital in Chicago from its origins in Mother Gehring's cottage at Clark and Diversey mirrors the story of the DePaul Health Center in Saint Louis, a venture which the Daughters of Charity launched in a log cabin in 1828. These institutions share with DePaul University—itsself begun as an adjunct to Saint Vincent de Paul parish—an ethic of public service that is distinctively pragmatic and market-oriented. Such similarities in the corporate cultures of these institutions are not coincidental. They stem from a common source—their Vincentian heritage. This exhibit is an attempt to rediscover that heritage, and make it understandable again, especially to those who have been the beneficiaries of the work of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity.

Let me clarify one point of terminology. I have deliberately departed from the way the term "Vincentian" is conventionally used in English, by making it inclusive of both the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity. In the recent past, "Vincentian" usually referred only to members of the Congregation of the Mission. The Vincentians were priests or brothers, and sisters were the Daughters. Thinking about this exhibit forced me to acknowledge the continuing significance of the collaboration begun by Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. In the commentary that follows, I will thus refer to the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity as "the Vincentian communities," in order to emphasize their equal contribution to the continued success of the Vincentian mission.

### Group I: An Errand into the Mississippi Wilderness

The exhibit is introduced by a group consisting of a portrait of Father Felix de Andreis, founder of the first Vincentian mission in the United States of America; a French map of the United States as it appeared in 1804; a case containing a silver chalice given to the missionaries by Pope Pius VII; an early copy of the rules for organizing the Congregation of the Mission in America; and a seal used by members of the Congregation of the Mission in official correspondence.

These objects document the pioneering adventure of a group of Italian members of the Congregation of the Mission who left home to live and work among the settlers on the Mississippi frontier. As the map suggests, for most of the 200 years before the coming of the Vincentians, the cultural geography of the North American interior was still dominated by Native American traditions, against which scattered European enclaves, mostly French in origin, were laboring to imprint the heart of the continent with their own brand of civilization. This is the mission world as it might have been imagined by the first westward-bound Vincentians as they prepared themselves to work in the territory of upper Louisiana. Note that in 1815, the year of their departure from Rome, the Louisiana Territory had been part of the United States for only a dozen years, and the eastern half of the Mississippi valley, including the Northwest Territories bordering on the Great Lakes, had been under English jurisdiction only since the end of the "French and Indian War" in 1763. Illinois was shortly to be admitted to the Union in 1818, Missouri in 1821.

The group of Vincentian priests and brothers who made this errand into the wilderness was led by Father Felix de Andreis, who was determined to journey to the ends of the earth, either China or America, in service to the Christian gospel. As it turned out, the opportunity to go to America presented itself first. De Andreis was born in 1778 in the Piedmont of northern Italy, and at the age of eighteen joined the Vincentians as a member of the province of Turin. The Napoleonic invasion of Italy disrupted his teaching career at the seminary at Piacenza, where he had been ordained to the priesthood in 1801, and forced him to move to Monte Citorio, the Vincentian seminary in Rome. There he distinguished himself for both piety and scholarship. Father Louis Dubourg, a Sulpician, met him there and recruited him to establish a Vincentian presence in the Louisiana territory. After some resistance on the part of his superiors in Rome, de Andreis and five



other Vincentians, including his friend, Father Joseph Rosati, in November 1815 received permission to go to America.

Their mission, according to their charter, was "to form an establishment in his [now Bishop Dubourg's] diocese, discharge the different functions appertaining to their institute [the Congregation of the Mission], and especially to found a seminary as early as possible." Their long and at times difficult journey began on 15 December 1815, as they set out from Rome to Civitavecchia, then by boat to Genoa, from there overland to Piacenza in search of more recruits, and eventually to Bordeaux in France, where they sailed for Baltimore on June 12, arriving on 26 July 1816. After a brief rest with the Sulpicians at Saint Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, de Andreis and his confreres continued their harrowing journey over the Appalachians to Pittsburgh and then, when the river was high enough in late fall, down the Ohio on a flatboat to Louisville, to safe haven with the pioneering Sulpician bishop of Bardstown, Kentucky, Benedict Joseph Flaget. After spending the winter and spring teaching at Flaget's seminary outside Bardstown, and ministering to Catholics scattered in the lower Ohio valley, de Andreis and the first group of Vincentians arrived at Saint Louis in October 1817.

From then until his early death in 1820, de Andreis served as Du Dubourg's vicar general in Saint Louis, in effect the only pastor in the town. At the same time, he managed to found the first American Vincentian novitiate at Saint Louis in 1818, teach theology at Bishop Dubourg's school for boys, the predecessor institution for Saint Louis University; and authorize the founding of the seminary at Saint Mary of the Barrens at Perryville, with Father Rosati as its first superior. At the time of his death, de Andreis was planning mission work among the Native American communities, and had already gained a reputation in Saint Louis for the intensity of his concern for the welfare of African Americans.

His is clearly the spirit animating the American Vincentian mission in the Mississippi valley. He shared with Saint Vincent the combination of intellectual and spiritual gifts, and passion for service to the poor, that distinguishes Vincentian leadership. He hoped to carry the work of Saint Vincent de Paul to the Mississippi valley by establishing a priestly community that would provide spiritual guidance to the motley collection of European adventurers, pious Catholic farmers, unchurched trappers and river people, as well as to the slaves and Native Americans who then made up the majority of the population. De Andreis and his

confreres saw themselves as dedicated first of all to God's truth; they trusted that once this was understood, it could become the foundation of a genuinely inclusive civilization.

The remaining three objects in this group help to characterize the kind of community de Andreis and his confreres set out to found. Because of its central role in the Mass, the silver chalice symbolizes both the Vincentians' basic identity as a sacramental community and their loyalty to the Papacy in Rome. Pius VII (1800-1823), who donated the chalice, was the pope who gave final approval for the American Vincentian mission in 1815.

The handwritten copy of the rule is the first template for Vincentian community life in America. Because community membership, unlike such natural associations as the family, is based on voluntary commitment to a specified form of religious practice, it is essential to maintain the community's sense of identity through the careful observance of a standardized rule of life. Yet, judging from the copyist's having crossed out the word *Regole* and substituted for it the softer term *Condizioni*, the Vincentian attitude toward rules, then as now, was hardly inflexible or absolutist. A rule is not an end in itself but a means to the achievement of personal fulfillment within a community dedicated to a particular religious ideal of human perfection. Like other Vincentian rule books on display here, this one shows how the distinctive vision of the Vincentians is fleshed out in the routine expectations governing membership in the community.

The insignia "C.M." on the seals refers to the Congregation of the Mission, the name given by Saint Vincent de Paul to the religious community for men that he founded. Like the other seals in this exhibit, this one was used for authenticating official correspondence, particularly before the establishment of the U. S. postal service. The seals, preserved from a number of pioneering Vincentian houses, also bring into focus the need for coordination among missionary communities scattered over the great physical distances of the Mississippi valley.

## **Group II: In the Vincentian Tradition**

Under this heading there is a group of documents and books that illuminate the continuities linking the American Vincentian mission with its French ancestors, the communities founded by Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. Additional materials relating to the French origins of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of

Charity are on permanent display on the third floor of the DePaul University library. These artifacts are presented as evidence of a conscious effort on the part of the Vincentians to preserve the traditions of their founders: the spirituality of Saint Vincent and Louise forms the core of their commitment to the poor, in America as in Europe.

Among these documents are two original letters of Saint Vincent de Paul. Vincent was a social activist, an organizer rather than a theoretician, scholar, or contemplative. Most of his writings are occasional pieces, including his extensive correspondence with his confreres and the various projects and houses that they founded. Though these letters are generally brief and of a practical nature, they do afford insight into Vincent's character.

The letter to his confrere, M. Martin, for example, seems to concern a routine personnel matter, the comings and goings of certain priests who have assisted, or will assist Martin at Genoa. Yet, even discounting for the rhetorical conventions of the time, the letter also conveys not only Vincent's profoundly theocentric understanding of the work of the community, but also the humility of a founder who characteristically signs his letters as "serviteur" (servant), and "indigne pretre de la Mission" (unworthy priest of the Mission). We can see in this his distinctive propensity for wedding such pious sentiments with a pragmatic concern for the details of administration.

Except for Abelly's biography of Saint Vincent de Paul, all of the items in the second group represent devotional materials in use among American members of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity in the nineteenth century. The "Compendium of Ceremonies" dated 1818, includes the full range of rituals used in seminaries to confer ordained ministries within the Roman Catholic church. Other items, like Mother Étienne's copybook, "The Spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul," were used to initiate new members into the spiritual traditions of the community. The notes of Bishop Simon Bruté on the sanctity of Mother Elizabeth Bayley Seton, the founder of the community for women that became the American Daughters of Charity, remind us that the new communities in their turn generated their own models of Vincentian spirituality. One little book, "A Thought from Saint Vincent de Paul for Each Day of the Year," exemplifies a genre of devotional literature still used by Vincentians today. Many of the sayings quoted are taken from the spiritual conferences that Saint Vincent held both with his confreres and with the women's communities of which he was director.

The biography by Abelly and a later study by Collet indicate that from the beginning the Vincentian tradition was transmitted primarily through historical narrative. Abelly's book appeared just a few years after the death of Saint Vincent. Its three volumes remain a primary source for historical studies of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity. Like all hagiography, it was written to inspire devotion and to praise a spiritual exemplar; it was also written to advance the cause of Vincent's canonization. Nevertheless, it is still the point of departure for critical inquiries based on the methods of modern historical scholarship. Abelly's biography thus has provoked serious effort among Vincentian scholars to separate pious legend from historical fact. Unlike the quest for the historical Jesus, and thanks largely to chroniclers like Abelly, the quest for Monsieur Vincent is based on an abundance of narrative materials. Whatever the outcome of this quest, the biographies of Saint Vincent remain a rewarding introduction to the milieu and social problems of the early modern period.

### **Group III: American Founders of the Congregation of the Mission**

This segment of the exhibit presents memorabilia from the American founders of the Congregation of the Mission: Father Felix de Andreis and his friend and colleague, Father Joseph Rosati, the first Roman Catholic bishop of Saint Louis, Missouri.

From de Andreis' lecture notes in theology, his crucifix, and his obituary notice, we can see that the quest for spiritual perfection was the driving force in his life. The formal process of canonizing Father de Andreis as a Roman Catholic saint (which has yet to be completed—technically, de Andreis' title is "Beatus" or Blessed, meaning that his good reputation has been vindicated, and his cause now awaits authentication by miracles) is commemorated in the book of testimonies published by the Vatican, here opened to the account of his character submitted by Bishop Rosati. Rosati's notes on the life of de Andreis are an American parallel to Abelly's life of Saint Vincent de Paul. Their eloquence led one historian to observe that the only reason Rosati's own cause for canonization had not advanced very far was that he lacked a Rosati to describe his own considerable virtues.

The letter of Father de Andreis to his spiritual director, Father Giordana, in Rome, yields insight, not only into his character, but also into the trials of cultural alienation endured by this cultivated Italian cleric as he found himself confronting in all its ambiguity the religious

spirit of the American frontier. Here are de Andreis' words in translation:

The most formidable enemy we have to combat is indifferentism. How many people never get the slightest thought of religion! In a way, it is good that Protestants care little for their sect because in this way they are more accessible and favorable to Catholicism. Several times I have been for dinner or supper in the houses of Protestants and the heads of the house invited me to give the blessing before meal and thanksgiving afterwards, and this is the common practice when a priest is present. Yesterday I was called to a dying old man who up to that time had no religion; I baptized him and in that same house this was already the third person I baptized in a similar situation. A lady who came to call me also has no religion, and however I tried to persuade her to prepare for baptism, I could not get any other answer but that she was unworthy to die a Catholic because she was too bad. Thus to have a religion is regarded here almost as a counsel of perfection and supererogation. Is there any more horrible blindness than this? You can say to them whatever you want, they answer, "c'est très vrai, c'est la pure vérité ce que vous dites, c'est la vérité même," "it is very true, you are right, you are perfectly right"; but when they should draw the consequence, they resort to delay, to pretexts, and few are those who let themselves be drawn into the net, if one considers the large number of those who remain entrenched in their fatal indifference.

De Andreis was not the last immigrant Catholic priest in the nineteenth century to misread an ecumenical openness among some Protestants as indifference nor to mistake the cavalier attitudes of many Americans toward formal church affiliation for a lack of religious spirit. Nevertheless, without his zeal for the conversion of souls to the only ultimate truth that he knew, the Congregation of the Mission might never have put down its roots in the Mississippi valley.

Bishop Rosati's memorabilia demonstrate his command of episcopal authority. In Roman Catholicism, bishops are expected to exercise religious leadership to the fullest extent, through the threefold biblical offices of prophet, priest, and king. They are ordained to teach, to sanctify, and to rule the community formed through fellowship in Jesus Christ. As a body or college, the bishops are believed to be the successors of the twelve apostles, with the pope, the bishop of Rome and successor of Saint Peter, serving as head of the college. Normally, the bishop is the ultimate authority in a diocese; the priests of the diocese are regarded as subordinate sharers in the apostolic ministry of the bishop. When Saint Louis was split off in 1827 from the diocese of Louisiana, Rosati became its first bishop.

The documents here show his success in organizing the Diocese of Saint Louis. The pastoral letter announcing the diocese's first synod,

and the minutes of that meeting, establish an organizational structure for the projected growth of the diocese. The synod, a meeting of the clergy of the diocese with the bishop, lends a degree of democratic accountability to the episcopal ministry, though it must not be confused with a democratically elected legislature. The annotated and revised version of the *Rituale Romanum* attests to Bishop Rosati's reputation among his peers as an authority on liturgical questions. Throughout the text, Rosati is adapting church practices to conditions in the United States. For example, he extends the time during which Catholics may make their Easter Duty (a valid reception of the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist during the Easter season), to compensate for the shortage of priests and the great distances from one parish to another.

Also on display are two Rosati letters to Father John Timon, C.M., in his capacity as provincial for the Congregation of the Mission and rector of the seminary at Saint Mary of the Barrens. Father Timon (1797-1867) is remembered especially for his commitment to the education and training of the American Catholic clergy and his stern opposition to slavery. He began the slow and never fully completed work of eliminating the use of slave labor on the farm at Saint Mary of the Barrens. Later, in 1847, he was appointed first bishop of Buffalo, New York, where he died in 1867.

Another Vincentian seal bears the inscription "Cong. Miss. Domus Prima," which refers to the Barrens' status as the original headquarters of the Congregation of the Mission. Rosati served as first superior there before he became bishop of Saint Louis.

There are two rather unusual pieces of ceremonial equipment in the exhibit: a pair of waffle irons for baking communion wafers and a handmade wooden clapper. In the Roman Catholic Church, the communion wafers used at mass are made from unleavened dough, that is, from flour and water without yeast. Usually a religious design or symbol is impressed onto the wafer before it is baked. Displayed here are two primitive baking presses into which the dough is spread. Once pressed together, the plates are placed in the oven for baking; finally the wafers are trimmed to the finished product. At the high point of the lenten season, the seminary community's observance of Holy Week traditionally was marked by heightened austerity. One component of the intensive preparation for Easter was the practice of sounding a wooden clapper in the courtyard to call the community to prayer and to meals. The clapper was meant to substitute for the impressive bronze bell that hung in the tower at Saint Mary of the Barrens.

This part of the exhibit culminates with three important portraits from the first half of the nineteenth century. Two of these, the likenesses of Father Donatien Olivier and Bishop John Mary Odin, C.M., belong to the limner style of American primitive painting, whose practitioners were more or less oblivious to the technique and styles of professionally trained artists. Father Olivier was not a Vincentian but a pioneer missionary, the pastor at Prairie du Rocher, Illinois. He retired to Saint Mary of the Barrens, where he died in 1841 at the age of ninety. Bishop Odin was among the first men ordained to the priesthood at Saint Mary of the Barrens, in 1823. After serving as a faculty member there, he became the first bishop of Galveston, Texas, in 1847, and later archbishop of New Orleans in 1861. He died in his native village in France in 1870. Odin was chiefly responsible for the successful fund raising drive that led to the completion of the church at the Barrens.

The portrait of Bishop Rosati, obviously, is not in the limner style, but is believed by some Vincentians to be the work of the celebrated Missouri artist George Caleb Bingham. Rosati was born in 1789 in Sora, Italy, and ordained to the priesthood in 1811 in Rome as a member of the Congregation of the Mission. One of the original group of Vincentians who came to the United States in 1815, Bishop Rosati served as the community's superior from 1820-1830. He became the first bishop of Saint Louis in 1827, and died in Rome in 1843. One historian has judged him "the most influential Italian-American of the Middle West and one of the greatest Italian immigrants to the United States in the nineteenth century." He survived de Andreis by almost a quarter of a century to execute the details of their common vision of the Church of Saint Louis. Both the Old Cathedral in Saint Louis and the seminary church at the Barrens stand as monuments to this versatile pioneer.

#### **Group IV: Property Ownership in Perryville**

This group consists of materials from the early history of Saint Mary of the Barrens in Perryville, Missouri: an early map of Perry County a document clarifying the status of the property donated to the Vincentians, an oil portrait of Bishop Louis William Dubourg, in whose name the original donation was made, and an engraving of the church and Saint Mary's Seminary just after the completion of the seminary buildings in 1898.

The status of the property at Perryville, apparently, was a complicated one, and makes a revealing study in church/state rela-

tions. The 640 acres were originally purchased for \$900 by the trustees of the Barrens parish, who offered it to Bishop Dubourg on condition that "a seminary of learning" be built there, that is, a college that would admit the sons of local families seeking a secular education and not just students preparing for the priesthood. The parishioners pledged \$1500 to help build the school, and Dubourg was placed under a \$3000 bond, whose payment the trustees promised to void, so long as the land was used for the purposes specified. Such were the stipulations of the title contract of June 1819. By that time, of course, Dubourg had successfully recruited the Vincentians who, with some reluctance, did agree to organize a dual purpose seminary. On that basis in 1826, Bishop Rosati, acting on behalf of Dubourg, had title formally transferred to the members of the Congregation of the Mission in residence at the Barrens. Further records show a series of title transfers to subsequent Vincentians who headed the seminary.

The likely explanation for these legal maneuvers lies in the Missouri state constitution, which decreed that "No religious corporation can ever be established in this state." Legally, since the Congregation of the Mission could not be incorporated, it could not own real estate as a corporation. So the property was held in the name of individual Vincentians, despite the fact that each member of the community takes a vow of poverty as a condition of membership. Legal technicalities may also explain the document displayed here. It is styled a "Declaration or recognition" of the property, not the actual title, but a warrant explaining the status of ownership, confirming the transaction between the original seller, Dubourg and Dubourg's heirs, and signed by the President of the United States, John Quincy Adams. The President's signature is explained by the fact that the transaction occurred before Missouri statehood, when Perryville was still part of the federally administered territory known as the Louisiana Purchase.

When we think of mission and missionaries, it is easy to exaggerate the heroic exploits of individuals, and ignore the organizational matrices that routinely support them. Attention to the legal status of the property at Saint Mary of the Barrens, like close study of the deliberations of the first diocesan synod in Saint Louis, reminds us of what it takes to translate personal zeal into an enduring institutional legacy. The work of Bishop Rosati, in particular, is representative of the organizational genius of the Vincentian community. As inspiring as their repeated gestures of personal charity may be, what stands out, from the time of Saints Vincent and Louise up to the present, is the Vincentian commu-



nities' capacity for creating effective organizations, private voluntary associations, schools, hospitals, orphanages, and other institutions dedicated to public service.

The portrait of Bishop Dubourg is included in the Perryville group because of this Sulpician's substantial impact on the history of the American Vincentians. Dubourg's role in recruiting De Andreis, Rosati and the Congregation of the Mission for service in the upper Mississippi valley has already been noted. Equally significant, however, is the role he previously played in helping Mrs. Elizabeth Bayley Seton, a convert, to clarify her own religious vocation. In 1808 Du Bourg encouraged the widowed Mrs. Seton to move with her children to Baltimore where he helped her establish a school for girls. Later that year, Dubourg counseled Seton on the founding of an American branch of the Daughters of Charity, which she was to make her life's work. The crucial early support given the Vincentians by American Sulpicians like Dubourg repaid an old debt: Vincent de Paul had been the spiritual director for the young Jean-Jacques Olier, and had helped him discover his own vocation in the reform of the Catholic clergy of Paris, which culminated in the founding of the Society of Saint Sulpice, and the seminary of that name.

### **Group V: Vincentian Iconography**

This group includes samples of Vincentian iconography and architectural drawings. These enable us to focus on certain visual images central to the American Vincentian tradition. The architectural drawings are taken from the plans for the chapel at Marillac House in Saint Louis, the motherhouse of the West Central Province of the Daughters of Charity, dedicated in 1930. They derive from an iconographic tradition common to both the Daughters of Charity and the Congregation of the Mission, as we shall see in the photographic study of the church at Saint Mary of the Barrens.

Though the image of Saint Vincent de Paul among the galley slaves is regarded as pious legend by historians today, it has been a very popular dramatization of his concern for the poor and the oppressed. Vincent was appointed to the office of Royal Almoner of the Gallies in 1622, under the patronage of the Gondi family for whom he had served as chaplain. His role was to ascertain the needs of the galley slaves and see that they were met. Yet so appalled was he by the conditions he observed that, legend goes, he tried to trade places with one of the slaves

chained to the ship's rowing bench. The point of this and similar stories is not that Vincent considered slavery an outrageous injustice, but that those who had suffered this misfortune should not be mistreated. Though Vincent and his disciples were eager to alleviate the miseries of the poor and the oppressed, their efforts were rarely meant to be subversive of the social status quo.

The political significance of Vincentian charity, however, was not always understood to be so innocent. The martyrdom suffered by the Daughters of Charity from Arras, 26 June 1794, suggests that the very existence of private charitable organizations could be profoundly threatening in the brave new world of the French Revolution. At the climax of the Reign of Terror, the sisters were guillotined for having refused to swear an oath to the revolutionary state; they had been able to work around a variety of other repressive measures, including a prohibition against wearing their religious habits, but here they had drawn the line. As they had prophesied, the Martyrs of Arras were among the last victims of the Terror. In the nineteenth century they were to become a symbol invigorating the temporary renaissance of the ancien regime.

The cult of the Miraculous Medal was born in yet another period of political turmoil in France, on the eve of the revolution of 1830. While still a postulant seeking admission to the Daughters of Charity, Catherine Laboure—formally canonized a saint of the Roman Catholic church in 1947—received the first in a series of visions of Mary the mother of Jesus. The cult of the Miraculous Medal is based on Sr. Catherine's descriptions of her visions. These visions are depicted here, first, in one of the windows for Marillac House, shown in the blueprint, and then, in the chapel at Saint Mary of the Barrens that is the national shrine of the Miraculous Medal in the United States. Popular response to this cult was a significant factor in Pope Pius IX's proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, 8 December 1854. Though Saint Catherine's visions allegedly predicted the revolution of 1830, and promised that there would be no repetition of the trials suffered by the Daughters during the French Revolution, the Miraculous Medal cult has generally been perceived as apolitical. This devotion has appealed primarily to those seeking relief of personal afflictions rather than protection from political persecution.

Other objects testify to the success of the Vincentian communities in spreading the Miraculous Medal cult wherever they established themselves in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Though

made for use in China, the small vase carries the familiar iconography of the Miraculous Medal apparitions. Vincentian priests from Saint Mary of the Barrens served from 1921 until 1951 in what became the Diocese of Yukiang, roughly the northeast quadrant of Jiangxi province of China. Three of these men, Edward Sheehan, Paul Misner, and Charles Quinn, served in succession as bishops of this diocese, and as local superiors of the Congregation of the Mission. In 1949 the Peoples Republic of China began systematically expelling foreign missionaries. This effectively suppressed the mission in Yukiang, but many of the returning priests brought back artifacts that preserve its memory in the Bishop Edward Sheehan Museum at Saint Mary of the Barrens. Among these is the Miraculous Medal vase. Its companion, a statue believed by Vincentians to be that of Kuan Yin, a popular Chinese goddess representing the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, suggests that the Vincentians were keenly aware of the uncanny similarities linking this Chinese Buddhist image with the Marian cult of the Miraculous Medal.

The Statue of Mary Immaculate from Saint Vincent's House, a multipurpose institution operated by the Daughters of Charity in Donaldsonville, Louisiana, bears witness to the cult, and not just in the iconography at the base of the statue. On December 8, 1854, the very day that Pius IX made the Immaculate Conception a dogma of the Roman Catholic faith, it is alleged that the statue was instrumental in the cure of an orphan who was ill from typhoid fever. Several years later, when Donaldsonville was shelled by the United States Navy during the Civil War, the statue was damaged as a result of a cannonball blast, though the house generally was spared. These eerie episodes confirm the power of the Blessed Mother, to her devotees, and are treasured as an American contribution to the Miraculous Medal cult.

### **Group VI: Saint Mary's of the Barrens: The Genesis of an Institution**

This group directs attention to the daily routines of institutional life at Saint Mary of the Barrens. Most of the items displayed date from the time of Bishop Rosati. The minutes of the first Board of Trustees meeting for Saint Mary's Seminary, and for subsequent meetings through 1830, give evidence of the formal governance procedures for the seminary, and include the signature of Bishop Rosati, first chairman of the Board. Others documents, like the ledger of household accounts, bear witness to the economics involved in running such a school. It is opened to the entries for July, 1832, because they include a record of \$24 disbursed to

Brother Angelo Oliva “for Saint Louis,” which may have covered his expenses in traveling back and forth between construction sites, when he was working simultaneously on both the church at the Barrens and the cathedral in Saint Louis. The copybook of Papal Bulls favorable to the Congregation of the Mission is not just for commemorative purposes. It contains information that might be relevant to any disputes that might arise, either within the Catholic church over the Congregation’s activities and its jurisdiction, or within the Vincentian community over its own internal governance procedures.

One of the seals shown suggests how the name, “Barrens,” came to be. “Collegium Sanctae Mariae ad Silvam Crematam” tends to confirm speculation that the term is a corruption of the French, “Bois broule,” which in Latin is “Silva cremata” (English: “burnt woods”). The Barrens, then, does not signify land that was marginal for agriculture, i.e., barren or unproductive land; on the contrary, land that had been cleared through a forest fire would be particularly suitable for farming. Thus even the name of the place suggests that the people of Perryville had invited the Vincentians to make their home on some of the choicest property in the area.

Of special interest to social historians may be the copybooks in which students learned not just their school lessons, but also the rules of conduct expected in the seminary. The book of Bible stories, dated 1823, in French, indicates that in the early days the student community at the Barrens may still have been bilingual. The rulebooks displayed are in English, but similar copybooks can be found in the DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives in both Italian and French, as well. These help us to form some idea of what life was like for the young men studying at the Barrens, for they reflect expectations at two different points in the program of Vincentian formation, one at the beginning of the high school career, the other during novitiate, the time of final preparation for the vows that mark one’s admission to full membership in the Congregation of the Mission. These rulebooks can be read as manuals of clerical etiquette, for they cover a range of matters from appropriate posture to table manners to elementary lessons in articulating the vicissitudes of one’s personal quest for spiritual perfection. They constitute a demanding set of expectations for young men mostly recruited from the scattered pioneer families of the frontier. As it was, judging from various entries in the house diary from this time, students at the Barrens did experience some degree of tension between the ideal Vincentian standards and the realities of life on the Mississippi.

### **Group VII: Saint Mary's of the Barrens Restored**

The four panels of this group make up a photographic study of the church at Saint Mary of the Barrens after its restoration in 1974. The church was constructed under the guidance of Brother Angelo Oliva, C.M., a lay brother trained as a stone cutter, with the help of the people of Perryville. Saint Mary of the Barrens was used as the parish church in Perryville from 1830 to 1965. Its cornerstone was laid in 1827, and the church consecrated in 1837 by Bishop Rosati. The plan and elevation for it were modelled on those of the church at Monte Citorio, the Vincentian headquarters in Rome, from which de Andreis and his confreres had embarked in 1815.

This study includes views of the high altar, for which a copy of Murillo's Assumption forms the background, and the transept altar, which serves as the National Shrine of the Miraculous Medal. As the photos indicate, the ceiling is dominated by a monumental fresco of "The Glorification of Saint Vincent," modeled after the painting of Bro. Jean-Andre, O.P. Most of the frescoes shown here, including this one, invite comparison with various items in the set of eleven prints on the life of Saint Vincent de Paul permanently displayed in the DePaul University Library. Most of the frescoes at the Barrens portray scenes from the early histories of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity in France, to reinforce the continuities linking the American missions with the original vision of the Vincentian founders.

Of particular interest are the frescoes showing Saint Vincent de Paul and the Galley Slaves and The Martyrs of Arras and a stained glass window commemorating the apparition of the Blessed Mother to Saint Catherine Laboure. These themes may be compared with their treatment in the chapel windows of Marillac House, the Saint Louis motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, nearly a century later. Their similarities suggest a common iconographic tradition that awaits description and analysis by religious historians.

### **Group VIII: Bishop Rosati's Church: Old Saint Louis Cathedral**

The Old Cathedral, a landmark now linked with the Gateway Arch that dominates the Saint Louis riverfront, is a permanent reminder of Bishop Rosati's work there. The cornerstone of this beautifully proportioned structure was laid 1 August 1831, and it was consecrated 26 October 1834. Its Greek Revival style, reminiscent of many churches in

New England, suggests that Rosati wanted his cathedral, unlike the seminary church in Perryville with its European associations, to symbolize the development of an American Catholicism open to the emerging North American civilization and eager to find the church's rightful place in it. The building is further evidence of the skill and versatility of Brother Angelo Oliva, C.M., who supervised the construction of both the cathedral and Saint Mary of the Barrens.

The Old Cathedral was not the first Roman Catholic church in Saint Louis. Shortly after the town's founding in 1764, a small log cabin was reserved for religious purposes. In 1776 the parish was canonically established, and a second log church, much larger than the first, was built. During his residence in Saint Louis, Bishop Dubourg initiated work on a brick cathedral which was never completed. This earlier church consisted of a nave measuring 134 by 40 feet, roughly half the size (136 by 84 feet) of Rosati's cathedral. Dubourg's church, begun in 1818, was destroyed by fire in 1835. Its interior was adorned with six paintings, given by Louis XVIII, including the likeness of Saint Louis IX, the Crusader, for whom the city was named. This portrait is now displayed in the old Cathedral.

Building the cathedral was a costly enterprise totalling over \$63,000, unadjusted for inflation. Not surprisingly, there were priests, Rosati's fellow laborers in Diocese of Saint Louis, who questioned both the prudence and the justice of the expense. Here is Father Peter Paul Lefevere's comment, written from Quincy, Illinois, in a letter responding to Rosati's routine request for a religious census. The dispirited tone of Lefevere's letter, dated March 9, 1837, may be as much due to the demoralizing effects of an overlong winter, as to any deep seated differences with Rosati:

As the money you have received at different times from several parts of Europe, was given for the very purpose of supporting the mission, I had always entertained great hopes that you would have lent some pecuniary aid to erect, here and there, a plain building, at least in places where it is indispensably necessary to celebrate the Divine Mysteries with any degree of becoming decency; and my hopes were so much the more confident, because I knew that you knew that this mission stood the most in need of it. But now my hopes look frustrated, and I begin to despair. From the little zeal and interest you have hitherto manifested towards this mission, it appears to me that you think it not worth your attention, and that all your object is to ornament Saint Louis and care but little about the rest. But I must confess that, when I am in Saint Louis, my heart sickens whenever I behold the superfluous splendor and luxe that is there displayed about the Cathedral, whilst religion here suffers from want of

things indispensably necessary. This, in my opinion, looks pretty much like a father of a family arrayed in the most splendid apparel surrounded by a parcel of his children stark naked.

So much for the subservience of Roman Catholic priests to their bishops! In fairness to Rosati, the evidence shows him as dedicated to the organization of charitable institutions in Saint Louis, as he was to building a suitable cathedral. Under his leadership, both the Society for the Diffusion of Alms and the Catholic Orphan Association of Saint Louis were founded, important forerunners of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society in the United States, the first chapter of which was organized in Saint Louis in 1845.

The lithographs give exterior and interior views of the old Cathedral as it appeared in 1835. At that time, the cathedral was flanked by an orphanage-school on the left, and the Bishop's residence on the right, as indicated in the lithograph. The "Panorama of Saint Louis" shows how the cathedral still dominated the riverfront in 1841. After the Civil War this was no longer the case, as the neighborhood around the Cathedral was given over to commercial warehouses and emporia, which overshadowed it until the riverfront area was cleared for the construction of the Gateway Arch and the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, beginning in 1959.

Though the New Cathedral had become the focal point of the Archdiocese of Saint Louis in 1914, the Old Cathedral was spared demolition, and was completely restored in 1961. The effects of these changes along the Saint Louis riverfront can be gauged by reference to the photos of the Old Cathedral. As comparison with the 1835 lithograph suggests, the interior has been stripped of later accretions, so that it once more resembles the original decor.

The banner bearing Bishop Rosati's episcopal coat of arms was done in recent times as one of a series presenting the insignia of all the Roman Catholic bishops of Saint Louis. It is of interest here because of its Vincentian imagery, particularly the Christ figure in the center of the oval, and the legend, "Evangelizare pauperibus misit me" ("He has sent me to spread the Gospel to the poor"), still the motto of the Congregation of the Mission.

### **Group IX: Building American Institutions : The Houses of Charity**

These original photographs mostly taken from a series done in 1873-74, show some of the institutions founded and operated by the Daughters of Charity. Many of these institutions were multipurpose: a school for girls, for example, might also take on the care of resident orphans, which in turn might require the establishment of an infirmary. The subsequent growth of the institution might depend upon which of these services generated the greatest response within the communities served by the sisters. Of particular interest from this sample of photographs are the houses founded in Saint Louis and Chicago, including Providence Hospital, the predecessor institution to Saint Joseph's Hospital, Chicago, and the parish schools operated by the Daughters at the Holy Name Cathedral and Saint Patrick's in Chicago. Saint Louis Hospital, founded in 1828, was the first hospital of any kind established west of the Mississippi River. The building shown here housed the hospital in the second half of the nineteenth century. The three photographs of the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, on the rue du Bac, in Paris, were taken in the 1940s. The American Daughters of Charity continue to honor the Motherhouse as the center of their spiritual universe.

### **Group X: The Threefold Mission of the American Daughters of Charity**

The Daughters of Charity were involved in all three forms of mission service, education, health care and social work, from the very beginning of their history in the United States. The ledger recording the fate of orphans cared for at Saint Mary's Orphan Asylum shows how individual children were touched by the Daughters, who tried to prepare their wards for a new and better life. Three manuals of instruction for nursing sisters and other hospital attendants demonstrate that, well before the modern professionalization of health care workers, the Daughters of Charity set a standard of care that contributed to the development of American hospitals generally. The Civil War Memorial features a bronze cross hammered from the remains of a captured Yankee cannon. Without much inquiry into the relative merits of the warring factions, the Daughters of Charity ministered to the wounded on both sides, especially as the fighting moved back and forth across the



territories served by them.

The photograph is a rare portrait of Sr. Walburga Gehring, D.C., whose impact on the history of the Daughters of Charity in Chicago is roughly the equal of Bishop Rosati's achievement in the Saint Louis area. Mother Walburga was born in Bavaria in 1832, and received into the community at Emmitsburg in 1848. After heroic service on the frontlines in the Civil War, Mother Walburga was invited to Chicago by Bishop Dugan to found a hospital here after the cholera outbreak of 1868. She organized the Providence Hospital in a cottage house at the corner of Clark and Diversey. Providence Hospital, the first Catholic hospital in the city, later became Saint Joseph Hospital, which was moved to its present site in 1964. Attached to her narrative of the founding of Providence Hospital is an eyewitness account of the Chicago Fire of 1871, written by an anonymous sister. This narrative is a graphic portrayal not only of the chaos and confusion endured by the victims of the Fire, but also of the personal reactions of members of a religious community pledged to serve those victims. It is transcribed in full in the Appendix.

### **Group XI: Life on the Inside: Vincentian Perspectives**

The archives of both the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity hold a rich treasury of materials for reconstructing a picture of daily life in a religious community. The house diaries, the mandate for which may go all the way back to Vincent de Paul himself, provide a glimpse of men and women working in religious communities to achieve personal holiness through service to others. Over the distance of more than a century, these diaries yield a vivid impression of the humanity of Vincentian houses, easily recognized by those who work alongside the priests and sisters today. The diaries displayed here are taken from two different institutions, first, the seminarians' diary from the Barrens, covering the period 1859-1962, and the other, from Saint Ann's Widow's Home, Foundling Home and Lying-In Hospital in Saint Louis, from 1883 to 1890.

The title to the diary from Saint Ann's is disarmingly precise: "C[h]ronicle in which all the little incidents that occur in the institution are to be written." Most of the entries record routine events, but once in a while the reader is rewarded with something like this: "8 September 1888: There was a telephone put in the medicine room today; it was first

used to order ice cream, may it continue." The Barrens' diary is filled with similar details, but occasionally to be found is something more elaborate, and possibly more profound, such as this entry recorded for December 25 and 26, 1861:

Christmas Day. The night was calm & clear & starry & a profound silence wrapped the house and premisses in reverential stillness like, as if the very midnight were expecting the Redeemer where as we watched by our little chapel "Bethlehem." We heard a lone step approach. It was Fr. Ryan Visitor coming to say the Midnight Mass, a privilege accorded him by the Sovereign Pontiff on occasion of his (Fr. Ryan's) late visit to the Eternal City. Fr. Ryan said 4:30 Mass assisted by Fr. Hickey as Deacon & Fr. Fitzgerald as Sub-deacon. Masses said constantly up to 10:30 when Solemn Mass was said by Fr. Barbier, Fr. McNamy Deacon, Mr. Kalmer, Sub.D - Sermon preached by Fr. S. V. Ryan.

Saint Stephen's Day - Fr. Ryan's patron saint - a day of double interest at dear old Saint Mary's College. Solemn Mass at 8 o'clock. Fr. Ryan cel. Fr. Quigley, Deacon. Mr. Dwyer, S. Deacon. Boys gave entertainment in the evening at which they gave a series of addresses some of which savoured of the spirit of opposition between the North and the South boys (the war being now in full blaze). Many of the addresses were given in honor of Fr. Ryan. Fr. Ryan tho' denounced in his closing remarks that spirit of opposition among boys preparing for Christ's Eternal Priesthood. Many songs were sung and a banquet followed.

### **Group XII: Vincentian Legacy: Chicago's DePaul University**

The items in this final group place the story of DePaul University within the larger history of the American Vincentian communities. Priests of the Congregation of the Mission first came to Chicago in 1875, not to found a university, but to establish a parish, Saint Vincent's, in the new area of the city known today as Lincoln Park. The large parish church, a landmark at the corner of Sheffield and Webster, was completed in 1895. DePaul University, which claimed that name for itself in 1907, began as Saint Vincent's College, opened in 1898. These items merely scratch the surface of the University's own history, which will be celebrated in greater depth during its anniversary year of 1998.

The exhibit concludes with the bronze statuette from Saint Vincent's Infant Asylum, founded in Chicago in 1891 to serve orphans, single mothers, and poor families. In a single image it memorializes the collaboration between Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, and between the communities they founded, and at the same time compels us to recognize how little the basic needs of humanity have changed in a modern urban environment. Those needs, to which the

Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity have responded over the centuries, are still there to be met.

### Appendix

This is the complete text of the narrative of the Chicago Fire, attached to Sister Walburga Gehring's manuscript account of the founding and early history of Saint Joseph Hospital, Chicago, Illinois. Courtesy of the Daughters of Charity Archives, East Central Province, Evansville, Indiana:

1871

THE CHICAGO FIRE

Saturday, October 7th

On the evening of this day commenced the terrible fire which devastated and crumbled into ashes the city of Chicago. Some accounts of what then transpired will have to be given which were written by Sisters who passed through the frightful ordeal. Two of our houses were consumed by the flames; the School of the Holy Name, of which Sister Mary McCarty was Sr. Servant, and the House of Providence, Sister Angeline Carrigan, Sister Servant.

Chicago, Ill.

My dear

The grace of our Lord be with us forever!

How shall I correspond with your wishes and send an account of that dreadful fire which desolated our city! No description can give a true idea of the rapidity with which it passed from block to block; the whirling about of the blazing wood by an irresistible wind; the crowd hurrying along, they hardly knew whither, only to be out of reach of the hungry flames, in some, reason being dethroned by the appalling catastrophe; all this and much more would have to be seen to be realized!

The fire had raged about twenty-four hours, and though kept somewhat under control, yet refusing to be extinguished, when the water works took fire and the defenseless city was at the mercy of the elements. You have heard of that early Communion, which to some of us, at least, seemed almost like a viaticum, so little hope was there that anything could survive; then how our dear Sister Mary, having sent all but one companion as far as

possible from the danger, refused to leave the house [Holy Name School] until it was actually on fire; and how she finally followed, bearing the precious ciborium containing the Blessed Sacrament confided to her by our worthy pastor, he fearing to take it into the danger to which he was obliged to expose himself; and lastly, the anxiety caused by some not being assured of the safety of the others, until at last, all were reunited at Saint Patrick's School.

There we were found by our dear Mother Euphemia who saw something of the necessity for the relief so generously extended by other cities, and saw too how those who knew the Sisters, flocked to them to pour into the deeply sympathetic heart of our dear Sister Mary their tale of suffering, those who, a few days before, had been independent, and those always poor, alike in need of shelter, food and raiment. Truly it is rare to meet one "who wept with those that weep" as she did! How it gratified her when she could relieve the distressed! and, on the other hand, how she suffered when powerless to give the needed succor!

Though out of the district in which the fire prevailed, the Sisters, at the Hospital, alarmed by the reports that the fire was tending that way, removed to the woods such of their sick as could bear removal, Sister Walburga herself remaining with the others, resolving to die with them, if she could not save them. Late in the evening of the second day, rain commenced and the fire ceased, after laying waste over three square miles of the city, and making nearly 100,000 people homeless.

The number of lives lost has never been truly estimated; some have missed friends ever since that fearful night; many, it is supposed, were smothered in their beds, having had no warning of their peril, and many others, striving to avoid it, ran into danger and perished. Some rushed to the shipping in the Lake, but even the vessels took fire; others boarded the outgoing trains, and left their friends in agonizing grief, before tidings could be brought of them.

How then did we all escape? God only knows. May we ever prove worthy children of that Blessed Father who so strongly inculcated both by his words and example a steady trust in Divine Providence; and by our unbounded confidence in the same, may we every where rejoice in Its protection.

#### SCHOOL OF THE HOLY NAME

"The Chicago Fire" commenced on the evening of Saturday, October 7, in a barn belonging to a woman named Mrs. O'Leary. It has been said that the cow while being milked upset a kerosene

lamp, hence Mrs. O'Leary's cow was considered the originator of the "Chicago Fire." Those however who witnessed it could regard it only as a punishment sent in mercy to a guilty city. No human agency could produce such a fire. Saturday night and Sunday, through the exertions of the firemen, it was kept under control pretty well. Sunday night, a terrific wind blew up; then the fire baffled all efforts to extinguish it. During Sunday, the Sister in charge of our dormitory broke a pane of glass in the window near my bed; the wind blowing upon this, made such an unearthly noise, that it woke me up. Then the dormitory was all lit up from the reflection of the fire still miles away. I got up and woke the other Sisters in the dormitory; it must then have been about 10 o'clock. We went up in the belfry to watch the fire; the flames seemed to jump from house to house with the rapidity almost of lightning. The sparks were as thick as snowflakes in a storm. While the wind carried them eastward to Lake Michigan, we felt safe: but as we stood watching, the wind changed and blew towards us, and so strong was it that burning shingles and large pieces of burning wood carried the fire in every direction. About three o'clock A.M. on Monday, we went to bed to get a little rest before the four o'clock bell rang. We were scarcely in bed, before one of the girls in the house came in terror, to say that the water works near us were on fire; then, and only then, we felt our danger. We had so much confidence in our Lord and our Blessed Mother that we did not think the fire would reach us. one of the Sisters took a bottle of holy water up to sprinkle the roof, and hung up a new picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succor in the chapel for protection. Sister had scarcely come off the roof when part of the belfry was blown in. The door bell rang and our Sister Servant, Sister Mary McCarthy, answered it. Father Flanigan, one of the assistant priests at the Cathedral, came to take the Blessed Sacrament and to tell us that we must leave the house, at once. Sister asked him if it was as bad as that; he said yes, that there was very great danger. It was the feast of Saint Dionysius. Sister asked him to give us Holy Communion and consume the Blessed Sacrament, which he did. During the time we were at the Altar railing, the house shook and the Stations on the wall rattled, so that it was really terrifying. We made a few minutes thanksgiving, and Father purified the Ciborium, as carefully as ever he did, and we then prepared to take leave of our happy mission. Father often expressed regret that he did not take the little tabernacle key. Each one went to get ready. One Sister put on three habit skirts, and two cloth aprons; she tried two chemisettes, but was

not so successful. With the conferences in her arms and a heavy shawl, worn for the first time, over her cornette and held on by her teeth, she was ready to depart.

We found Dr. McMullen, our pastor (subsequently Bishop of Davenport) at the front door, with a buggy and two men to take two Sisters, both in delicate health, at the time. It was the only vehicle he could procure; the two men volunteered to be the horses. After being dragged a little way in this novel way of travel, the Sisters began to think it was too much to expect of the poor men and begged them to let them get out and walk. Seeing a man coming with a dray, the men asked him to take the Sisters to one of our houses in another part of the city, but out of the direction of the fire. He refused saying that he had to get a load of furniture in the burning district. After going a little distance, he repented and coming back took the Sisters to Saint Columba's School, where they were gladly welcomed by the Sisters. A second band accompanied Father Flanigan, to Saint Joseph's Hospital, a distance of about two miles. Father and a Sister walked first, he having the Blessed Sacrament from the Cathedral. The Sisters walked two and two after them saying the beads. After we had left, Sister Mary asked Dr. McMullen if he had been to the House of Providence, for the Blessed Sacrament. He had forgotten all about it, but ran right away then leaving with Sister Mary the Blessed Sacrament from the Orphan Asylum from which he had just seen the Sisters and orphans safely out. Dear Sister Mary, thinking he would return for the ciborium, waited until the belfry came tumbling down the stairs. Then, she and another Sister started for Saint Joseph's Hospital and had the happiness of depositing our dear Lord in a place of safety.

Sister Angeline, Sister Servant of the House of Providence, had packed any articles that could be so carried in trunks. A neighbor took them with his own on his wagon, to a place then supposed to be out of the reach of the fire; but all were burned. Sister Angeline herself had been carried by the wind and flames towards the Lake, when an unknown man drew her out of the flames. She received a slight burn on the face and one hand. The procession of Sisters to the Hospital passed the Sisters of Saint Joseph with their orphans.

All along the streets were those who had left their houses early in the evening and were too fatigued or too discouraged to go further. The people came out of their houses as we passed crying, "Oh! there are the poor Sisters! Is the College burned? O God help us! Ah Sisters, is the Church burned? O Glory be to God! The

world is coming to an end." one of the children seeing Father Flanigan cried out: "O Father Flanigan, is it the day of judgment?" He told her he thought it was a night of judgment for Chicago. Some of the Sisters were obliged to sit down on the roadside, not being able to keep up with the procession (not the one with the three habit skirts).

After reaching the Hospital and putting the Blessed Sacrament away, we asked Sister Walburga, Sister Servant, to give us her carriage and we would go back for Sister Mary and companions and perhaps save something. As soon as it was ready and Father had a cup of coffee, Sister Anastasia and myself, accompanied by Father started for the Holy Name School, when within two blocks of it we could only see the place where it stood, the Cathedral too was gone. The orphan Asylum [not Saint Vincent's] on the opposite side of the street, was a massive stone building; the flames were going through it, as if it were so much paper. Not meeting the Sisters we thought they must have been burned, for it was reported that two Sisters were seen in the house when it was on fire. We started to Saint Columba's School, hoping they had gone there, but we were disappointed; then not finding them there, we were inconsolable. Back to the Hospital we steered our course, where our dear Sisters had arrived safely by another road just after we had left.

Then Sister Mary's anxiety for us was terrible, she imagined a hundred things that might happen to us. About noon, we returned in safety to the Hospital; every one pronounced me sick, and I had to go to bed. The Hospital, and every spot belonging to it, was filled with furniture and people coming there out of the reach of the fire, and every arrival told a nearer approach of the fire. The last comer said there was only one bridge left and those who wanted to go to the west side ought to start, so we prepared to go to Saint Columba's School.

This time our route was across the prairies. None of us knew the way, so we followed the crowd. "The one bridge left" was so crowded that we were obliged to walk under the horses' heads. When we had gone about half the distance, worn out by fatigue, dust, heat and smoke, a poor Irishman named Pat O'Brien came towards us with an express wagon. He hailed us with "Oh, Sisters, where are you going? Aren't you from the College?" Having told him where we wanted to go, he begged us to get into his wagon which we did most willingly and rode in state. I sat on the driver's seat between Pat and a half grown boy. Every minute, the poor man would jump down to look at his wheel, which he

thought would come off, and I was in mortal terror that I would be thrown from my exalted position. The poor man lost that day all that he had earned in eighteen years; but "sure he had the best load now that ever he carried" (Eight Sisters and six girls, all carrying bundles).

As we went along, we passed several Sisters of other Communities sitting on the road side. We reached Saint Columba's about half past five P.M. There we found the Sisters of Saint Joseph and their orphans, and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and their children. About six o'clock, the Jesuit Fathers came and took the Sisters and children to their schools.

The fire was still making progress north, and our Sisters of the Hospital had to move their sick to the woods; the fire came so near, that even there they were obliged to move again. They had at the time, several patients that could not be moved, and who would certainly have been burned, had the fire gone so far. Sister Walburga, Sister Servant, sent the Sisters away further, to a place of safety, but she could not be prevailed upon to leave her poor sick, saying that if they died she would die with them. Our Lord did not require that sacrifice, for towards midnight rain began and checked the progress of the fire; then all returned to the Hospital.

The new Hospital in course of erection was also spared. All through the night, good Father Burke, pastor of Saint Columba's, kept us informed of the progress of the fire. At one time the wind changed and they thought it would come west. We did not feel safe until Father came in and told us that we might sleep now and not be afraid, as it was raining, and the fire would go out, which it did, after burning three and a half square miles of the city and rendering 95,000 persons homeless. Tuesday morning, the Sisters of the Holy Name School went to Saint Patrick's School which had been opened a few weeks before. The people of the burned district, on the north side of the city, flocked to us for help.

Sister Mary McCarthy through Mr. Kinsella applied to the Relief Fund and obtained abundant supplies of provisions and clothing for hundreds, every day. The school house was turned into a sort of hotel and for about two weeks several hundred were fed and obtained relief.

The Governor of Ohio called on Sister Mary to learn from her what the people wanted most; and on his return home, all of Ohio's donations came to us, so that we had the pleasure of helping a large number of destitute, some of whom were in affluence a few days before.



Our dear Mother Euphemia, then in Saint Louis on her way home from California, hearing of the distress and sufferings of the City, hastened to our relief, bringing with her cooked food of every description, fearing that her poor children were in want of every thing; but not so; through Divine Providence and the kindness of our gentlemen friends, we had an abundance. What we suffered most for was clothing for ourselves, and this soon came too, our dear Sisters in Milwaukee, Saint Louis, and neighboring cities having hastened to our relief.

Our greatest consolation was in having with us our dear Mother who worked with as much zeal as the youngest in assorting and preparing clothing for our poor and by her presence helped to keep us up under so trying an ordeal. The city was in so much confusion that we had a guard of soldiers to keep order round our house. Several attempts had been made to set this part of the city on fire, even in our own house. We had straw on one floor of the school house for a sleeping apartment and among the straw scattered on the stairs was about a box full of matches, but providentially they were discovered in time to prevent another fire. The city put up temporary buildings or "shanties" for the people, and in about two weeks, our school was resumed. Many of our old pupils walked over here during that severe winter. They used to say if the Church and the Sisters were only spared to them, they could bear it better. One of the Children of Mary left her home and went to the Church for safety and was burned there.

After our dear Mother went home, she sent us a supply of everything. When the box came, it was so large that one of the young Sisters got into it to empty it; there were not many dry eyes as one package after another was handed out, and we thought we were indeed "the spoiled children of a good God."

After order was restored, an officer from the Relief Fund called on Sister Mary to pay the Sisters for their services, but Sister refused that the Sisters' services were for God and they looked to Him for their reward.