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The Major Studies on Vincent de Paul

Carcy J. Leonard, C.M.

There are two Vincent de Pauls who have come down to us: the Vincent of legend and the Vincent of history.

The Vincent of legend is the Saint of popular piety. This is the Vincent with two chief virtues: humility and charity, whose works are reduced to three: the foundlings, the galley-slaves, and the poor of Paris and the provinces. It is the St. Vincent of holy cards and statues; the St. Vincent of paintings and pictures who roamed the streets of Paris at night to gather into his arms the abandoned infants, bringing them back to his Daughters. In these paintings, there is usually snow on the ground and almost always in the background a church or church steeple to suggest the driving force of his charity. Statues most often portray St. Vincent with two or three youngsters, one held in his arms, the others enveloped in his ample cloak. Or, on other occasions, the popular image of Vincent is as chaplain of the galley-slaves, voluntarily assuming the chains of an unfortunate convict.

The rise of the Vincent of legend must be laid at the doorstep of the Double Family. For several centuries, his writings — the letters and conferences — were privately printed and restricted to the members of his religious families. But, although his Communities kept the real Vincent to themselves, they could scarcely conceal him; popular devotion grasped St. Vincent as best it could. Henri Bremond in his classic history of French spirituality had high praise for St. Vincent and his doctrine, but

severely castigated the Congregation for not sharing the full Vincent with the world. Fr. Coste's masterful fourteen volumes of letters and correspondence was the response, an attempt to unveil for the public the full legacy of the Saint's spiritual doctrine.

The Vincent of history is rapidly overtaking the Vincent of legend. It is not a different Saint, but a richer one: richer in works, richer in virtue, richer in his spiritual teachings.

A. BIOGRAPHIES

Before the twentieth century began, there were four major biographies which shaped his popular image.¹ All four were institutional, issued with the cooperation and the approval of the Superior General, with both the strengths and weaknesses of that official status.

Louis Abelly (1604-1691)

At the death of St. Vincent (1660), the authorities of the Community recognized their responsibility for laying the groundwork for the hoped-for canonization of their founder. The work of the Bollandists (established in 1643), utilizing the improved methods of historical criticism, had raised the standards of hagiography; the process of canonization had been reformed by Urban VIII (1623-1644). A solid biography was the first need, but if this work was to have a normative and historical value, it needed a recognized author.

The project was offered to Louis Abelly, Bishop of Rodez (1622-1663). Because of an attack which left him

¹In a bibliographical listing he has amassed of more than 10,000 books and articles concerning Vincent de Paul, Dodin indicates there are more than 1,000 entries of a biographical nature. André Dodin, C.M., *St. Vincent de Paul et la charité*, *Maîtres spirituels* series # 21 (Paris, Editions du Seuil), p. 177.

partially paralyzed in one arm, he had quickly renounced all claims to his diocese and accepted the hospitality of Saint-Lazare, where he would remain until his death. For a time the pastor of St. Josse (1644-1652), then the first spiritual director of the General Hospital (1657-1659), he had participated in the Tuesday Conferences and shared in some of the parish missions Vincent had assigned to this group. An ardent anti-Jansenist, he had won some acclaim as an ascetical writer (his *Sacerdos Cristiana* had a wide audience) but was less skilled as a theologian (his *Medulla Theologica* is rather inadequate). But the Bishop knew Vincent, having met him as early as 1635, and had known him well for twenty-two years (1638-1660).

Br. Ducourneau (1614-1677), who had been a secretary to Vincent since 1643, had done a great deal of the preliminary work, especially in the gathering of letters and documents.. But as Coste makes clear, the literary paternity of this biography must be granted to the Bishop who obviously did more than simply lend his name to the work.²

The Life of the Venerable Servant of God, Vincent de Paul (Paris, 1664) presents St. Vincent as the model priest and quotes generously the words of St. Vincent, although Abelly uses only some 200 letters of the Saint. Until 1748, this one volume biography remained the primary and fundamental source for those who would know Vincent, his work and his teaching. There were some seventeen French printings, five of them before the close of the 17th century.

Abelly's work is marred by some serious faults. One can tax the Bishop with a certain lack of candor and sophistication, and even with some serious errors. Working backwards from the known date of Vincent's

²Pierre Coste, C.M., *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, translated by Joseph Leonard, C.M. (London, Burns, Oates & Washburn, 1934), pp. 477-482.

ordination in 1600, he placed his date of birth five years early, at 1576; he misrepresents Vincent's resignation from Clichy and glosses over Vincent's accumulation of benefices.

Abelly, moreover, felt free to touch up the quotations from Vincent to make them more edifying or to "improve" their literary style. Yet his own style has all the faults of the 17th century: verbose, bogged down in trifling details, lacking in warmth and spirit. The framework (life-work - virtues) proved unwieldy, demanding tiresome repetitions, with long extracts from Vincent that are not smoothly integrated into the text. The third section, on the virtues, is especially ponderous.

At the prodding of René Almérás (1612-1672), successor to Saint Vincent as the Superior General, Abelly himself published an abridged edition in 1667, omitting the entire middle section and drastically reducing the final one. This edition was further edited by René Simon and Jean Martin and translated into Italian by an Oratorian, Domenico Acami, whose name it bears. This text of Abelly-Simon-Martin-Acami was translated into Polish (1688) and Spanish (1701), and a Portuguese and a later German version (1710) were made from this.

Pierre Collet (1693 - 1770)

The beatification (1729) and the canonization (1737) of St. Vincent de Paul underlined the need for a new biography utilizing the historical research done on St. Vincent in preparation for those ceremonies. Fr. Collet, a professor at St. Lazare, was a recognized theologian and canonist, author of a successful theological manual and of several biographies. Himself a strong ultramontane, his anti-Jansenistic tendencies are reflected in his portrayal of St. Vincent. His two-volume *The Life of St. Vincent de*

Paul was published anonymously at Nancy in 1748.

The public success of this biography belies its critical weaknesses. In attempting a strictly chronological order in the first six books, Collet is unable to give a synthetic overview of Vincent's works or even treat questions adequately. Lacking an historical sense, he depends too slavishly on Abelly, failing to review the sources on which the first biographer depended. The only truly original section is book nine, on the honors paid to the Saint since his death. Book eight, on St. Vincent's virtues, could well be a hasty insertion to repair an oversight. Collet's "run on" style of sentence structure is deadening, lacking warmth and a personal tone.

Whereas Abelly presented Vincent as the ideal priest, Collet emphasizes his works and presents him as a Saint, as the "Saint of Charity." The first biographer had downplayed any supernatural element in Vincent's life and work; Collet was able to give due place to St. Vincent's holiness and the veneration bestowed on him by the faithful.

Despite its weaknesses, Collet's biography had great success and, either in its original version or in its abridgement, served as the basis for the many popular biographies of the 19th century. Translated into English, Spanish and Italian, a somewhat emended edition of the original was released in 1818.

Michel-Ulysse Maynard (1814 - 1893)

Richer in talent as a writer and historian, Canon Maynard attempted a definitive biography: *St. Vincent de Paul: His Life, His Times, His Influence* (Paris, 1860, 4 vols.). Fr. Etienne, the Superior General, encouraged the Abbé, opened to him the archives of the Community, and instructed Father Gabriel Perboyre, the archivist, to hide nothing. A carefully researched work, with a style and

framework far superior to those of Abelly and Collet, it is unfortunately only a well-written and well-documented panegyric, lacking in critical judgment. Legends are reported as history, stories embellished, imaginative tales accepted at face value. Maynard does succeed in portraying the development of the Saint's works in detail, but the lack of specialized studies on the 17th century leaves his portrayal of St. Vincent without a full background. Despite his claim to have written the definitive biography of Vincent, Maynard succeeded rather in imitating the romantic biographies of his day. But in unfolding vividly the background, inception, growth and flourishing state of Vincent's work, Maynard prepared the way for Pope Leo XIII's proclamation (May 12, 1885) of St. Vincent de Paul as "patron of all the associations of charity."

Louis-Victor-Emile Bougaud (1824 - 1888)

Only 19 years after Maynard's work, Bishop Bougaud of Laval published his *History of St. Vincent de Paul* (Paris, 1889, 2 vols.). A learned apologist and biographer, the author died before revising his manuscript, which was published by Abbé François Lagrange without any attempt at reworking, but with sections lifted from Abelly dealing with the supernatural element in Vincent's life. Vibrant, dramatic, it is clearly inferior to Maynard as regards information and even historical accuracy. More restricted in outlook and with little recourse to original sources, this work also reflects the romantic tinge of the late 19th century. Revised and corrected by Frs. Chevalier and Tournier of the Congregation, this biography was republished in 1891, although the editors failed to remove all the factual and historical errors. This is a pity, for it clearly related St. Vincent to the problems of the 19th century with an

attractive and impassioned style.³

Various factors favorable to an improved history of St. Vincent and his times came into place as the 20th century unrolled.⁴

1. Of prime importance was the publication between 1920 and 1925 by Pierre Coste of a complete and critical edition of the documentation on St. Vincent: *Correspondence, Entretiens et Documents* (Paris, 1920-1925, 13 volumes and one volume of index). The mass of material now at hand far exceeds the information on Vincent that his first biographer had available.

2. The evolution of historical studies on spirituality and on the historical situation of the Church in France in the 16th and 17th centuries permitted Vincent to be projected against the vast social, political and ecclesial movements of his day.

3. The contemporary power of the social problems of our day evoked a deep interest in a Saint who appears as a pioneer in attacking these problems. Numerous studies on the "social" aspects of Vincent's work were appearing.

4. The post-conciliar period, which precipitated a crisis period in religious life, evoked pressing questions for Vincentian Communities on the meaning and validity of their charism. The call of "Perfectae Caritatis" for a return to the primitive inspiration of institutes and to the spirit of the Founder necessitated a restudy of Community sources, with the urgent questions such a study evoked.

³Abelly and Maynard were never published in English translation. For Collet we have: *Life of Saint Vincent de Paul: founder of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Sisters of Charity*, translated from the French by a Catholic Clergyman (Baltimore, John Murphy, 1854). For Bougaud we have: *History of St. Vincent de Paul: founder of the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) and of the Sisters of Charity*, translated from the 2nd French edition by Rev. Joseph Brady, C.M., 2 vols. (New York, Longmans, Green, 1899).

⁴Luigi Mezzadri et Luigi Nuovo, *Saint Vincent de Paul par lui-meme: page choisies* (Rome, CLV Edizioni Vincentiani, 1981), p. 30.

Pierre Coste (1873-1935)

The world and the Church are clearly indebted to Pierre Coste for the painstaking care he devoted to the critical edition of St. Vincent.

Having prepared the way by several specialized studies and encouraged by the Superior General, Fr. François Verdier, Coste moved on to a biography of Vincent: *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul: the great saint of the great century* (Paris, 1932, 3 vols.). But his abilities as an historian did not match those he possessed as an archivist. He did succeed in laying to rest several legends (i. e., the story of Vincent replacing a poor galley-slave) and corrected Abelly in regard to the date of Vincent's birth. But for the early life of the Saint, where admittedly information is scarce, he is too dependent on Abelly, who in turn carelessly accepted information on the young Vincent from the Abbé Saint Martin.

Not a professional historian, Coste found himself on occasion in an awkward situation. As Secretary General of the Congregation, he had to respect the wishes of the Superior General and avoid affronting the sensibilities of his confrères. So in some areas he "pulled his punches," concealing his own doubts on the veracity of certain episodes. He appears to have had serious hesitations about the Barbary captivity episode related in the two certainly authentic letters of Vincent to M. deComet, but contented himself with expressing his doubts in anonymous articles in periodicals while taking a much more accepting stance toward this event in his biography.⁵

Coste's work unfolds according to a logical plan and reflects the richness of the documentation he had made available. Yet, though he had all the information, he

⁵André Dodin, C.M., "État des études Vincentiennes au moment du Quadricentenaire de la naissance de Saint Vincent de Paul," *Bulletin de Société de Borde*, (Dax, Landes, France, 1982), pp. 10-11.

failed to dominate the material. The “great saint” is one-dimensional, for Coste was unable to portray him against the vast canvas of the “great century.” Coste nevertheless contains a wealth of information to be mined by future authors, for little hard information will likely be unearthed by future researchers.

B. WORKS OF AN HISTORICAL-SPIRITUAL CHARACTER.

The spiritual tradition of Vincent has been studied in our age by three masters.⁶

Henri Bremond (1865-1933)

Member of the French Academy, author of *The Literary History of Religious Thought in France since the Wars of Religion* (Paris, 1925-32, 9 vols.), Henri Bremond was a gifted writer, endowed with exceptional talent and a fascinating style, capable of utilizing quotations gracefully and, thanks to his way with words, of imbuing all with vivid imagery. Bremond was not a theologian but a literary figure. Some of his suggestions are startling, but his insights have the sure and precise bite of a top-flight surgeon who cuts to the heart of the matter. One can dispute certain of his interpretations, but one cannot ignore his vast erudition. He has been compared to a bee who gathers the best honey but can also sting not simply other researchers and hagiographers, but even the saints themselves (his entire life was marked by literary debates into which he entered eagerly). His biography of the Abbé de Rancé, reformer of “La Trappe,” has been described as “bordering on cruelty, marked with a spirit almost irreverent, lively as a satire.”⁷

⁶The following pages are deeply indebted to Mezzadri and Nuovo.

⁷Henri Bremond, *The Thundering Abbot: Armand de Rancé, reformer of La Trappe*, translated by F. J. Sheed (London, Sheed and Ward, 1930).

St. Vincent is treated in the third volume, after “Devout Humanism” (Vol. 1) and “The Rise of Mysticism” (Vol. II). Bremond lays out the panorama of French spirituality in its maturity: “The French School.” For him, French spirituality is essentially Bérullian, but it embraces some larger elements as well.

By a somewhat perplexing choice, Bremond places St. Vincent in a descent from Bérulle, after the Oratory, as the most illustrious successor of the Cardinal. Bremond had carefully digested Abelly’s biography of the 1881 edition of Vincent’s works, not at that time in the public domain. He describes these writings as “rich in teaching, sparkling with wit.” He had not encountered “a single banal line,” (III, 212).⁸ He treated St. Vincent at both the psychological and spiritual level and laid to rest the image of the Saint as a “distributor of soup.” He criticized also the picture of St. Vincent as a simple fellow; he remarked Vincent’s ambition and flexibility (194), a vibrant personality, richly nuanced with a complex and inquisitive mind. For him, St. Vincent was a well-rounded man; “to be truly charitable, one needs more than a good heart; one must have a sharp and exact mind” (196). With a few direct quotations, he attempts to convey the depths of St. Vincent; what shines forth is his tenderness and sensibility “as docile as an infant or a woman” (203).

Bremond, never a friend to the Jansenists, had no scruples in comparing St. Vincent with them. He “was not less intelligent than the great Arnaud, less bookish no doubt, less a doctor of the Sorbonne, but more serious, more shrewd, more lofty” (204). St. Vincent’s critique of Arnaud’s *On Frequent Communion* is praised as a masterpiece of logic, of clarity, of consistency (205). Whenever the Saint treats a problem, he places it in the

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⁸References are to the third volume of the partial English translation by K. L. Montgomery (London, Macmillan, 1936).

larger picture (205). This intense intelligence is the source of his goodness, for he “had no less of spirit than of heart, or, if you prefer, the heart in him raised up the spirit while the spirit raised up the heart” (209). His humility was the offspring of his intelligence, it was connatural to St. Vincent to recognize his limits in opposition to a solemn and tranquil self-complacency (210).

Having explored these depths, Bremond moves on to consider the spiritual doctrine of St. Vincent. His sanctity is not presented as an unbroken progression; his conversion was not rooted in his philanthropy. “It was not his love for people that led him to saintliness, but his saintliness which has made him truly and efficaciously charitable; it was not the poor who gave him to God, but God who gave him to the poor” (213).

In St. Vincent’s conversion, the catalyst was the setting of the French counter-revolution of Bérulle and Francis de Sales. After some citations from Bérulle, Bremond concludes that Bérulle’s theocentrism became for Vincent the keynote of his method (217). St. Vincent gave himself to the Divine Will; he had absorbed the teachings of the master and had become one of the great saints of action. “Mysticism truly has given to France the greatest of her men of action” (222).

Jean Calvet (1874 - 1965)

Jean Calvet was an eminent specialist in 17th century spirituality. His early work and numerous articles were crowned in 1948 by his *Saint Vincent de Paul* (Paris, 1948). According to Calvet, the Saint was not simply a man of charity, but a genius, capable of understanding his time and of responding to the needs of the Catholic reform.

He follows St. Vincent in his beginnings (until 1610), then through the stages of his sanctity (1610-

1625), into the reign of Louis XIII (1625-1643), finishing with Vincent's role in the nation (1643-1653) and in the world (until 1660). For Calvet, St. Vincent grew slowly in sanctity and his encounter with Bérulle, "that mastering temperment," was decisive. Vincent needed the spark of a saint to enkindle him and Bérulle was that saintly figure. But his guide, the future Cardinal, never became his friend, not even his confessor. These were maturing years for St. Vincent who advanced day by day, "each day the disciple of its cvc." Towards 1622 he was cured of a temptation against faith and was freed to go to "the land and the men of the land" — to go to his destiny.

Calvet underlines the absence of a synthesized spirituality in Vincent who was not a creator of systems. "In order to achieve a formula, he waited on experience to whittle away what was useless and ill-adapted to this end" (48).⁹ Bérullian in his principles and fundamental lines, Vincent's spirituality depended less on metaphysics and more on action. Bérulle was christocentric, St. Vincent anthropocentric. "Bérulle loved God in God; St. Vincent loved God in the human" (278).

This progression towards sanctity is clearly marked off in periods. Two dates form its axis. About 1620, his spirituality turned towards action; after 1640, it was born of action. For Calvet, the spirituality of St. Vincent was in action. But this action was not improvised but arose from a firm idea of God; God is all, man is nothing. One should not anticipate the Will of God; one can only follow in self-abandonment, with an indifference that is neither apathy or quietism. The Christian in this state of indifference is a "person on watch." In love and with love arises a concentration of forces.

Prayer was not for the Saint an end in itself. One could say, Calvet notes, "that to some extent Vincent

⁹References are to the English translation by Lancelot C. Sheppard, *Saint Vincent de Paul* (New York, David McKay, 1951).

distrusted the exceptional graces received by the mystics in prayer” (283). Prayer feeds the powers of the Christian, it grows into “action and a stepping stone to action” (282). The modalities of this action flow from the theory of instrumental causes; priests are the instruments of Jesus Christ; they become such by participation in the unique priesthood of Christ. This participation, rather than a communication of power, is a certain continuity of person. So priests must adhere to Christ by prayer “which is the source of love and of action, of action through love” (283).

But love ought to be built upon humility, humility in action, since God is the author of all; a humility of intelligence which excludes the immoderate desire for knowledge and the desire for mystical graces, a humility especially of the Community. From the love of God and from humility arises love for the confrères. St. Vincent possessed the “gift of humanity.” There has been no other saint equal to him in love of men, “the face of men,” and for loving God in his brother.

Andre Dodin (1911 -)

With Collet and Coste, Fr. Dodin is one of a small group of Vincentians who have researched St. Vincent. During many years of scientific study, he assembled an immense bibliography which culminated in a penetrating synthesis in the series *Maîtres Spirituels* in 1960: *St. Vincent de Paul and Charity*, which entered a third edition in 1976.

This volume has five divisions:

- The evolution of the earthly work of Vincent
- The spiritual doctrine
- The Vincentian tradition
- Selected texts
- Disputed questions

The section entitled “earthly service,” treating the life of St. Vincent, begins with “the period of the quest.” Fr. Dodin envisions Vincent’s spirituality not as static but evolutionary. He rejects the notion of a Barbary captivity (144-148) and sees in these two years (covered by the recital of the Tunisian period) as a moment “which escapes the rigorous control of history” (148).

In the evolution and the conversion which he places between 1613 and 1617, this last date is a decisive year for it is only then that Vincent sees his life must be a service of the poor. But first it is necessary that God take control of his life, that he reign there, and that Vincent no longer search but give himself “to do the work of God” (22) in all things. In such a fashion, the “theocentric instruction” of Bérulle took form in a mystery of service of the poor (22).

From 1618 to 1633 is the period of his great foundations which are the continuation of the mission of Jesus towards the poor. Now, St. Vincent is not alone; he shares with St. Francis de Sales and St. Jean de Chantel “the preoccupation for the religious life, the sanctification of the laity... the reform of the clergy, the simplification of preaching” (26). In place of Bérulle, who breaks off with St. Vincent, we have two other counsellors, Duval and Saint-Cyran.

The most significant and original section of this book is consecrated to spiritual doctrine; it is in this area that Dodin’s research is most apparent. He sketches this spiritual ancestry of St. Vincent: Benedict of Canfield, Bérulle, St. Francis de Sales, Alphonsus Rodriguez, St. Vincent Ferrer, Duval. Still, he defends the independence of the Saint who, even from a literary viewpoint, preserves a perfect autonomy.

The originality of St. Vincent is manifested not only at a doctrinal level. Our Saint “discourages all the consecrated formulae;” he rejects “the simplifying systematizations” (73). It is his orientation towards action

which is characteristic, an action which arises in faith and draws its substance from faith. "Human actions become the actions of God when they are done in Him and for Him" (Coste XIII, 183). Dodin centers all of Vincentian spirituality on the "fulfillment of the Will of God" (119 sq.). That teaching, in which one can see the influence of Canfield, excludes all horizontalization; the love for the neighbor reflects the attitude of Christ in regard to the world and the poor (69); it relives the mystery of Jesus in the poor (72). This love does not remain simply "affective" but becomes "effective." Finally, the base for the presence of all other virtues is humility, which is a work of God and which includes not simply a passive aspect but an opening towards action.

C. WORKS OF AN HISTORICAL-SOCIAL CHARACTER

Here we find two books, written in different periods, from different viewpoints but with a common object: to study in the range of St. Vincent's works the social meaning of his presence, the social content of his message and the implications for us today of his choice of the poor.

Igino Giordani (1894-1980)

When Giordani began to work on St. Vincent, he was already known for other fine publications. In addition to several biographies of saintly persons (St. Ignatius, St. Paul, Contardo Ferrini, St. Pius X), he is honored for his *Social Message of Jesus* (1935-1947, 4 vols.) and for his *Social Encyclicals of the Popes* (1956, 4th ed.) He had laid the groundwork by extensive research in the history of the social thought of Christianity in the meaning that phrase has acquired in the last 50 years.

His biography, *St. Vincent de Paul, Servant of the Poor* (Rome, 1959), is laid out according to a chronological plan (in this regard, the scheme of Dodin is

very practical) rather than in accord with his works.¹⁰

The source references are irreproachable, but the setting forth of the historical context is weak. Again, the source material is not accompanied nor followed by a setting. The clearest elements regard the social thought of St. Vincent. The spiritual context is good and he proposes some original and successful insights.

Jose-Maria Ibañez-Burgos(1937 -)

Appearing only seventeen years later, *Vincent de Paul and the Poor of His Time* (Salamanca, 1977) proves the intervening years were not wasted. It is above all the school of LeBras which has impressed on historical and sociological studies a rapid pace opening new perspectives.

The work of Ibañez has four parts:

France at the time of Vincent

The response of France to the misery,
and the action

The development of the religious experience
of Vincent

The evangelization of the poor

After a skillful and accurate sketch of the economic-social situation of that period, the author examines the thought of the 17th century on poverty, which did not investigate the causes of destitution, but simply considered the problem on the moral, theological or ideological level.

The second section develops certain aspects of the poverty question in order to interpret the actions of the Saint. His was the only response to start from "a charity poorly organized" so as to find there the pattern for "an organized movement of mercy, tenderness and of feminine love."

¹⁰English version by T.J. Tobin, (Milwaukee, Bruce, 1961).

After a careful analysis of the stages in the Saint's experience, Fr. Ibañez unfolds in his concluding section the meaning of "evangelization of the poor" which was for Vincent a sign, a presence and an appeal. For him the encounter with the poor was the moment of discovering Gospel of Jesus sent to the poor. He then pledged himself to a "radical reconversion of the attitudes of the Church" of his time. For it was the poor who evangelized him. The poor marked the rhythm of his life and his existence; they aided him to empty himself of himself and to fill himself with God.

Since the Company is the work of the Holy Spirit, it is necessary that it be animated by Him and that each member be filled with Him. For this, all must strive. Let us endeavor to live according to that Spirit and to act according to His operations in order to deserve the grace of His blessing upon our employments; otherwise, we deceive the world.

St. Vincent de Paul



Keep continually before your eyes as your model the exemplary life of Jesus Christ which we are called upon to imitate not only as Christians, but because we have been chosen by God to serve Him in the person of the poor.

St. Louise de Marillac

When I see what is good, I cannot refrain from mentioning it; and, on the other hand, when I see what is evil, I also cannot refrain from mentioning and denouncing it, nor from reprehending those who commit it, and are its cause.

St. Vincent de Paul



Do your best to supply them with good bread and good food, and do not sell the best wine in order to give them what is worse, or expose the Community to the danger of complaining that they are being treated in a miserly fashion.

St. Vincent de Paul



God has not dispensed us from the need to earn our living in order that we may fold our hands and live in comfort, but rather that we may work the harder in imitation of His Son.

St. Louise de Marillac