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BOSSUET: Testimony Concerning the Life and the Eminent Virtues of Monsieur Vincent de Paul (1702)

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BOSSUET

Testimony Concerning the Life and the Eminent Virtues of Monsieur Vincent de Paul (1702)

A previously unpublished manuscript
Published with an introduction by Armand Gasté
Professor of the Faculty of Letters of Caen
Paris, Alphonse Picard, Editor, 82, rue Bonaparte, 1892

Translation and additional annotation by
REV. EDWARD R. UDOVIC, C.M., Ph.D.

BIO

REV. EDWARD R. UDOVIC, C.M., Ph.D., is a Vincentian priest from the Western Province of the Congregation of the Mission. Ordained in 1984, he has a doctorate in Church History from the Catholic University of America. Retired in 2019, Rev. Udovic formerly served as the Secretary and Vice President for Mission and Ministry at DePaul University in Chicago. He also served as a professor in the Department of History. Rev. Udovic has written extensively in the area of Vincentian history. His most recent monograph, *Henri de Maupas du Tour: The Funeral Oration for Vincent de Paul, 23 November 1660*, was published in 2015. Rev. Udovic has also given presentations throughout the United States and internationally on Vincentian history, spirituality, and leadership.

Note: For more information on Armand Gasté (1838–1902) see: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armand_Gasté. Gasté's original footnotes will be inserted in red in the text that follows. For background information on Bossuet's life, career, and relationship with Vincent de Paul, see Edward R. Udovic, C.M., "On the Eminent Dignity of the Poor in the Church: A Sermon by Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet," *Vincentian Heritage* 13:1 (1992), 37–45, at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol13/iss1/3/>.

[Previous Article](#)

[News Notes](#)

[Table of Contents](#)



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**Portrait of Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux.
Engraving by Pierre-Imbert Drevet after Hyacinthe Rigaud. 1723.
Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.**

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The Bossuet manuscript I am publishing (*Testimony of Bossuet Relative to Monsieur Vincent de Paul*, 1702) was part of a bound folio volume entitled *Diverse Manuscripts* labeled *B/165*. Before the unfortunate events of 1871, this document was located at the *Bibliothèque particulière* of the king at the Louvre Palace.¹ The fire started by the communards destroyed this important manuscript along with a great number of other historic documents. Fortunately, the conscientious historian of Bossuet Amable-Pierre Floquet had made an exact copy. Undoubtedly, he would have published it in the last volume of his *Studies on the Life of Bossuet to 1702*.² Unfortunately, death interrupted the work of this indefatigable researcher.³

In 1890, when Monsieur Floquet's estate dispersed his library and papers, I had the good fortune to acquire some autograph pages from his planned work on Bossuet. Included among these was this great bishop's *Testimony* regarding the holy priest whom he so rightly described as being "Providence's steward."

In his *Studies on the Life of Bossuet*, Floquet alluded to the existence of this unpublished *Testimony* and quoted two important passages. For example, he noted Bossuet's comment that "he had been very fortunate during the last six years of M. Vincent's life to have been a member of the Tuesday Conferences."⁴ This would establish a date of around

1 Following France's swift and humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, a bitter and bloody civil war broke out in Paris from 18 March to 28 May 1871. Both sides of the conflict committed atrocities, and fierce fighting took place at the barricades and in the city streets. Large swaths of the city lay in ruins at the conclusion of the conflict.

2 Amable-Pierre, Floquet, *Études sur la vie de Bossuet jusqu'à son entrée en fonctions, en qualité de précepteur du dauphin (1627–1670)*, 3 vols. (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1855).

3 Floquet died on 3 August 1881.

4 [Floquet, Études, 1:397.](#)

1654 for Bossuet's admittance.⁵ The bishop also testified his admission "into this honorable society brought him much happiness and spiritual enlightenment."⁶

We also learn from this manuscript that after the death of Vincent de Paul in September 1660, Bossuet attended the service held on 23 November in memory of this "good priest." Bossuet noted the funeral oration had been delivered by another distinguished ecclesiastic belonging to the Tuesday Conferences, Henri de Maupas du Tour, the bishop of Puy. Monsieur Floquet quoted a lengthy passage concerning this event from Bossuet's unpublished *Testimony*. Bossuet recalled, "The service was magnificent. The funeral oration delivered by Monseigneur the bishop of Puy lasted two hours. The personal knowledge the bishop of Puy had of the servant of God, combined with his own illustrious reputation, attracted a large and celebrated audience that day, all of whom listened with extraordinary attention. His discourse caused many who were present to be moved to tears, especially when he spoke about the profound humility and the incomparable charity toward the poor characteristic of this venerable servant of God."⁷

It is unclear whether Bossuet ever sent this *Testimony* to Rome. (The document is undated, and is not countersigned by his secretary.)⁸ To research this point further, I wrote to the eminent director of the French School in Rome. I previously had the pleasure of attending his brilliant lectures at the *École Normale Supérieure*.⁹ With his usual kindness, which I will never be able to repay, Monsieur Geffroy put me in touch with the Procurator General of the Lazarists in Rome¹⁰ who volunteered to undertake the necessary long and patient research in the Archives of the Congregation of Rites.¹¹ This research, I must note, has to date been fruitless.¹² However, the absence of this document from Saint Vincent de

5 Michel-Ulysse Maynard, *Saint Vincent de Paul: sa vie, sons temps, son influence*, 4 vols. (Paris: A. Bray, 1860) 2:44ff.

6 Op cit., 1:397.

7 "Ms. *Témoignage de Bossuet (en 1702) sur la vie et les vertus éminentes de Vincent de Paul.*" See note in Floquet, *Études*, 2:20. See also Maynard, *Saint Vincent de Paul*, 4:334, citing the same quotation from the *Témoignage* reinforcing the conclusion that the document is authentic.

8 The author here betrays a lack of knowledge of the canonization process. Bossuet would not have sent his testimony directly to the Holy See. The Lazarist postulator of the cause would have included it together with several hundred other sworn statements and letters of support.

9 Founded in 1794 and later reorganized by Napoleon, the *École Normale Supérieure* is an elite educational institution (grande école), originally conceived as a training ground at the service of the Republic for a new generation of professors grounded in secular values and in the critical scholarship standards developed in the nineteenth century. In 1847, it moved to its present location on the rue d'Ulm near the Pantheon in Paris.

10 At this time, the Lazarist headquarters was in Paris. The superior general would typically appoint an Italian confrere to represent him and undertake the Congregation's day-to-day relations with the Holy See and the Roman Curia. This official's title was Procurator General to the Holy See. It is strange that Gasté apparently did not attempt to search the Lazarist archives at the maison-mère in Paris.

11 Mathieu-Auguste Geffroy (1820–1895).

12 It is clear that the author had no real conception of the details surrounding the process and timeline for Vincent's canonization cause. For these details see Pierre Coste, C.M., *The Life and Works of Saint Vincent de Paul*, 3 vols. English edition, (New York: New City Press, 1987), 3:401–32. See: https://via.library.depaul.edu/coste_engbio/



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Portrait of Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet.
Oil on canvas. 1698.
Uffizi Museum, Florence, Italy.

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Paul's dossier does not cast doubt upon its authenticity. Bossuet died in 1704, two years after having written or dictated his *Testimony*. The Reverend Noël Barbagli, C.M.,¹³ believes this manuscript is not in the "Acts" of the Congregation of Rites because the bishop of Meaux had already been dead for some years¹⁴ when the cause for Vincent de Paul's beatification¹⁵ opened in Rome in 1713.¹⁶

The document I am publishing bears all the signs of being authentic. Monsieur Floquet would never have published passages from this source if he had any doubts as to its authenticity. However, before publishing this document, I also asked the opinion of the learned historian who is the author of the *Predication de Bossuet*. Here is the response of Monsieur l'abbé Joseph Lebarq, an expert on Bossuet manuscripts: "Even though you have not been able to find any evidence in Rome, this has done nothing to change my conviction about the document's authenticity. One could not forge a document of such an exceptional nature. A forgery could not match the genuine simplicity of this manuscript that is apparent from beginning to end."¹⁷

13 Noël (Natale) Barbagli, C.M., (1859–1931). In 1697, the general assembly of the Congregation of the Mission authorized the beginning of the official preparations for their founder's canonization, including interviews with those who had known Vincent de Paul in their youth. By the time of the opening of the Roman phases of the cause, all of these witnesses had died. Their sworn testimonies entered into the record of the process. Thus, it was irrelevant if the author of a sworn testimony was deceased when the cause began in Rome.

14 [Letter of 10 November 1891.](#)

15 [The Holy See issued the bull for Vincent de Paul's beatification on 13 August 1729.](#)

16 [In his letter of 11 January 1891, Monsieur l'abbé Lebarq wrote: "Since this document would have needed government approval, I wonder if perhaps it was lost in some office, or was held up by Gallican sensibilities. Regardless, it still represents the genuine testimony of Bossuet and it should be published."](#) Translator's note: Both Louis XIV and Louis XV supported the canonization of Vincent de Paul with the weight of royal authority. Bossuet's testimony followed the standard template and format prescribed by the Congregation of Rites.

17 [Letter of 11 June 1891.](#)

One last word before completing this introduction. I would have preferred that Monsieur l'abbé Joseph Lebarq publish this document, since Monsieur Floquet had given him a copy and authorized him to publish it.¹⁸ However, in a letter M. l'abbé Lebarq wrote to me on 18 April 1891, he noted, "I am in the middle of the *Œuvres oratoires de Bossuet*, and this work must now command my full attention."¹⁹ Therefore, it now is up to me to have the honor of publishing the *Testimony* of Bossuet relative to Monsieur Vincent de Paul, using the copy made by Monsieur Floquet at the Bibliothèque du Louvre.

Bossuet
Testimony²⁰
Concerning Monsieur Vincent de Paul
(1702)²¹

Jacques-Bénigne, by the grace of God and of the Holy Apostolic See, bishop of Meaux, councilor of the king in his Council of State, formerly tutor to Monseigneur the Dauphin,²² and first chaplain to Madame the Duchess of Bourgogne,²³ aged seventy-four years.

It is for God's glory and the Church's edification that we attest,²⁴ to the best of our ability, to the following truths with respect to the venerable servant of God, Monsieur Vincent de Paul, founder and first superior general of the Congregation of the Mission. During the last six years of his life, we had the consolation of witnessing with our own eyes the actions of this apostolic man. We heard with our own ears the life-giving words he spoke. This took place after the company of ecclesiastics who assembled for the Tuesday Conferences admitted us to its membership.²⁵ A large number of prelates and doctors belonged to this

18 *Abbé Joseph Lebarq, Histoire critique de la Prédication de Bossuet, 1re et 2me éd. (Paris: Société de Saint Augustin, 1888), 151, note 2.*

19 Joseph Lebarq, *Œuvres oratoires de Bossuet*, 7 vols. (Paris: Desclée et Brouwer et cie, 1890–1897).

20 Translator's note: Bossuet penned his "testimony" more than forty years after the death of Vincent de Paul. Bossuet's memories of his mentor were vivid but limited. Here and there in his testimony, Bossuet shares unique details. Since Bossuet had to follow the template for such testimony set out by the canonization process, he often consulted the Abelly biography to refresh his memory. In these instances, his testimony is heartfelt but still rather perfunctory and flat. As a whole, his testimony is worth examining because of his prominence in the French Church, his personal knowledge of Vincent, and as an example of similar testimonies collected after 1697 from the remaining and shrinking group of witnesses who encountered Vincent de Paul in their youth.

21 *Biblioth. part. Du Roi (au Louvre), un volume in-f° relié, intitulé: Pièces diverses. Coté B/165.*

22 Louis the so-called Grand Dauphin, the son and heir of Louis XIV, (1661–1711).

23 The Grand Dauphin's wife, Marie-Adélaïde de Savoy (1685–1712).

24 *On 2 August 1702, Bossuet sent the following letter to Pope Clement XII. It is not much different from the text we are publishing. See Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, Œuvres complètes de Bossuet, ed. François Lachat, 31 vols. (Paris: Louis Vivès, 1862–1866), 2:275.*

25 For more information on the Tuesday Conferences see Coste, *Life*, 1:118–49.

group. All of us found his conduct edifying and felt deeply moved by the example he gave us of his love of God and his zeal for the salvation of souls. We regard him as a saint who practiced in a heroic degree all of the Christian and priestly virtues.²⁶ The late Monseigneur Louis Abelly, the bishop of Rodez, who belonged to the same Tuesday Conferences, has given a full account of all this in the biography he wrote of the venerable servant of God.²⁷ In addition, Monseigneur Henri de Maupas du Tour, the bishop of Puy, who was also a member of this company, gave the same testimony in his *Funeral Oration*, which we heard him deliver on 23 November 1660 in the Church of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, and which he later published. We were a witness to many of the events mentioned in this *Funeral Oration*, as well as in the aforementioned biography or *Life*.

To sum up, we can say God gifted the late Monsieur Vincent with an excellent and pure faith that he put into practice his entire life. He used all of his strength to spread this faith through the example of his own actions,²⁸ by his many acts of charity, and by the compassion he always showed in raising up all those who had fallen or who had experienced any of life's misfortunes.²⁹ He founded the Congregation of the Mission in this same spirit to instruct the ignorant, convince unbelievers, and gain them for God.³⁰

We testify that the servant of God firmly believed all the truths of the faith, and he demonstrated a marvelous care to teach this faith to others.³¹ He urged the ecclesiastics of

26 Maupas du Tour, for his part, said something very similar: "To have observed the gestures, speech, room, food, clothing, and everything else that surrounded the eminent Vincent de Paul (who called himself a beggar, whom I esteem as a saint and whom you have so often admired), was to have encountered an example of perfect humility." See Edward R. Udovic, C.M., *Henri de Maupas du Tour: The Funeral Oration for Vincent de Paul, 23 November 1660* (Chicago: Vincentian Studies Institute, 2015), 93. Book is available free to download here: [Maupas du Tour: The Funeral Oration for Vincent de Paul](#).

27 Louis Abelly, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, ed. John E. Rybolt, C.M., trans. William Quinn, F.S.C., 3 vols. (New York: New City Press, 1993). Hereinafter cited as Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*. For more information on Abelly and his biography see in the above the essay by John E. Rybolt, C.M., "Louis Abelly his Life and Works," 1:9–16. See: https://via.library.depaul.edu/abelly_english/

28 Abelly quotes Vincent as saying: "Let us love God, my brothers, let us love God, but let it be in the strength of our arms and in the sweat of our brows. Sentiments of love of God, of kindness, of good will, good as these may be, are often suspect if they do not result in good deeds." Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:106. See also Pierre Coste, C.M., *Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. and translated by Jacqueline Kilar, D.C., Marie Poole, D.C., et. al., 14 vols. (New York: New City Press, 1985–2014), 11:32–33. Hereinafter cited as *CCD*. See: https://via.library.depaul.edu/coste_en/

29 Maupas du Tour put it this way: "Here Messieurs, is the example of a charitable heart dedicated in the highest degree to a perfect charity (and prodigious generosity) toward the neighbor in imitation of the heart of God, which is to say that he embraced everyone and refused no one." Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 113.

30 Urban VIII approved the Congregation of the Mission on 12 January 1633 in the bull *Salvatoris Nostri*. Speaking of the members of the Congregation, the pontiff noted, "In those places to which they are sent, (the underserved countryside) they teach the uninstructed the commandments of God and the rudiments of Catholic doctrine, hear general confessions, administer the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, preach simple sermons that are easily understood by the people, and teach catechism." See Document 84a, "*Salvatoris Nostri*, Bull of Erection of the Congregation of the Mission" (12 January 1633), *CCD*, 13a:299.

31 For a discussion of Vincent's faith see Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:15–20.



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***Vincent de Paul, seated, speaking to the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences.
Framed oil on canvas; original in Collegio Leoniano, Rome, Italy.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

his congregation and of the Tuesday Conferences to teach people the sacred mysteries with a great simplicity.³² He gave us an example himself by preaching simply but always with great force, using examples he took from Sacred Scripture which he knew so well.³³ We testify he had such an esteem for this virtue that he always said he feared the emergence of a new heresy that might cause him to fall into error.³⁴ In order to avoid this fate, he had recourse to prayer, and he wrote the profession of faith on a piece of paper he kept close to his heart. He promised God that whenever he might feel these temptations, he would renew his faith by the simple act of placing his hand over his heart.³⁵

32 For Vincent's approach to simplicity in preaching see for example, Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:219–21. For Vincent's own in-depth commentary on this topic, see Conference 134, "Method to be Followed in Preaching," 20 August 1655, *CCD*, 11:237–60.

33 On this topic, Maupas du Tour noted, "He rescued many people from a most profound ignorance of the mysteries of our faith. He taught many worthy ecclesiastics and great religious how to teach the faithful effectively. He wanted them to preach and administer the sacraments in a simple and familiar, yet strong and powerful manner that would be respectful of the Word of God." See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 124.

34 Abelly quotes Vincent in this way: "All my life I've been afraid of finding myself at the start of some heresy. I saw the great havoc wrought by that of Luther and Calvin and how many persons of all kinds and conditions had sucked in its poisonous venom by wanting to taste the false sweetness of their so-called Reformation. I have always been afraid of finding myself enveloped in the errors of some new doctrine before realizing it. Yes, I've feared that all my life." Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 2:346.

35 See *ibid.*, 3:15: "One of his most extreme remedies against temptations against faith was to write out and sign a profession of faith, and to carry this over his heart. He begged our Lord to accept his gesture, so that every time he was tempted he placed his hand over his heart, as a sign that he rejected the temptation, and that he was once again resolved to live until his least breath in the faith of the Church and to believe firmly all the truths that she taught."

We testify that he strenuously opposed the followers of Jansenius (the bishop of Ypres),³⁶ who tried to win him over to their opinions.³⁷ When they persisted in their efforts, despite his negative response, he kept silent, raising his heart toward God as he quietly recited the Apostles' Creed. He firmly believed his faith was the faith of the Holy See, for which he had an inviolable devotion.³⁸ We testify that he inspired the same spirit among his followers and among the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences urging them to avoid even having conversations with these sorts of persons.³⁹ He also strengthened his listeners by exhorting them to preserve their faith and their submission to the Holy See, asserting this was the only means to preserve themselves from error.⁴⁰ When he saw some of his followers adopting these new opinions, he dismissed them from his congregation.⁴¹ He used

36 For Abelly's account of "The Efforts of Monsieur Vincent to combat Jansenism," see *ibid.*, 3:346–71. For Maupas du Tour's discussion of this issue see Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 125–27. See also Pierre Coste's lengthy treatment in *Life*, 3:113–81.

37 Abelly gives this account: "A person given to Jansenism once spoke to him in an effort to persuade him to come over to that party. When he finished speaking, but with little to show for his efforts, he became angry. He reproached Monsieur Vincent, saying that he was a true ignoramus, and he was astonished that his congregation would tolerate him as superior general. Monsieur Vincent replied that he himself was astonished at the same thing, because, he said, "I am even more ignorant than you know." *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:185–86.

38 Maupas du Tour says the following with respect to Monsieur's Vincent respect for the Holy See: "Didn't he also have respect for the authority of our holy Father? ... He always submitted himself in perfect obedience to the orders of the Holy See. He recognized with a sincere submission of spirit the authority of the Vicar of Jesus Christ in the person of him who is the successor of Saint Peter." Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 126.

39 For a succinct summary of Vincent's views on Jansenism see Letter 1043, "To Jean Dehorgny, in Rome," 25 June 1648, *CCD*, 3:318–30. See also Document 48, "Study on Grace," n.d., *ibid.*, 13a:164–72.

40 For example, Vincent wrote: "By the mercy of God, our Company is resisting all the new opinions and ... I am doing what I can against them, especially with regard to all those contrary to the authority of the common Father of all Christians." Letter 704, "To Bernard Codoing, Superior in Rome," 16 March 1644, *ibid.*, 2:500.

41 Vincent had forbidden the discussion of this controversy within the community. He certainly silenced and punished at least two members for violating this rule, although it is unclear whether they violated the proscription by arguing for or against Jansenism. See Letter 1482, "Vincent de Paul to Lambert aux Couteaux, Superior, in Warsaw," 12 April 1652, *ibid.*, 4:352–53. According to Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:367:

As charity demanded, he used his energy to keep the members of his own Congregation in the purity of the faith and the doctrine of the Church. He spoke several times to his community to impress upon them how much they were obliged to the goodness of God for having preserved them from these novelties, which were capable of corrupting and ruining their Congregation. He recommended that they pray for the peace of the Church, for the removal of these new errors, and for the conversion of those infected. He forbade them to read the books of Jansenius or to support either directly or indirectly their doctrine, nor any of the opinions likely to favor them. After all this, if he knew of anyone who belonged to the sect in any manner whatsoever, he removed him from the community as a gangrenous member, one likely to infect and corrupt the rest of the body.

Brother Robineau notes: "Not only did Monsieur Vincent not let himself be drawn into Jansenius' unfortunate five propositions condemned by the Holy See but also he never permitted anyone who might be tainted with them to remain in his Company. He offered such men two options: either renounce these opinions, or leave his Company. The proof of this is a certain very capable young man, who, as I learned in these past years, was never able to decide to abandon these opinions, despite all Monsieur Vincent's urging. Finally, Monsieur Vincent had to send him away and dismiss him from the Company." See the draft unpublished English translation, "Notebooks of Brother Louis Robineau: Notes concerning the actions and words of the late Monsieur Vincent de Paul our Most Honored Father and Founder," trans. John E. Rybolt, C.M., originally published as *Louis Robineau, André Dodin, C.M., présente Louis Robineau. Monsieur Vincent: Raconté par son secrétaire; Remarques sur les actes et paroles de feu Monsieur Vincent de Paul, notre Très Honoré Père et Fondateur* (Paris: O.E.I.L., 1991), 94. Hereafter the English translation is cited as *Robineau*. Citations to manuscript texts in the draft English translation maintain the same numbering as in the Dodin edition.

the same diligence with respect to religious. He urged them not to have contact with persons who were suspected of holding erroneous opinions, and not to read any books containing suspect teaching.⁴²

We testify that he worked zealously to convince the bishops of France to submit the disputed propositions to the Holy See, so it would judge these opinions and use its authority to quiet the controversy.⁴³

We testify that he also used all his influence to convince the king to take strong actions against heretics, and to prevent them from holding public office.⁴⁴ We ourselves heard this message from this holy man, when we were the dean of the cathedral of Metz. In this city, many heretics had abused the liberty of conscience the king had granted them by his grace.⁴⁵

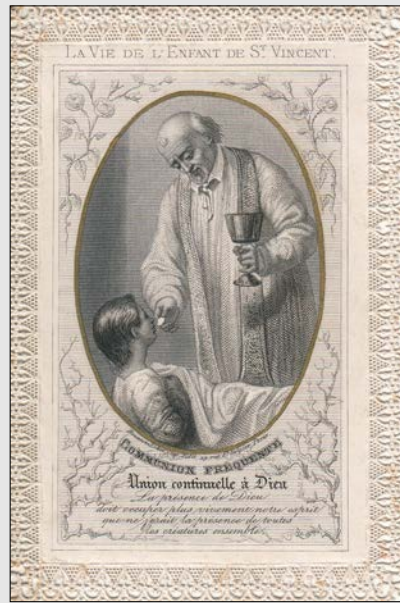
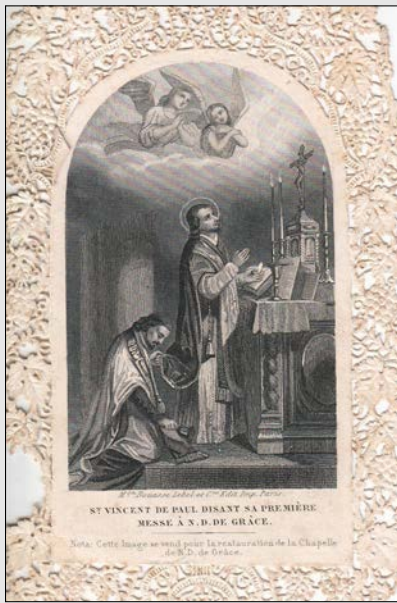
We testify that Monsieur Vincent was zealous and took great care to maintain

42 Abelly has this to say: “His vigilance and charity extended to other sectors of the Church which he saw needed help or at least warning against these new errors. He was aware that those who were of this mind would try to insinuate themselves and their doctrines into monasteries and communities of women under the guise of the greater good. He knew also that these false prophets (as Jesus Christ warned us in the Gospel) would use every artifice to disguise their pernicious doctrines. Consequently, he did his utmost to protect these religious men and women. He saw to it that these wolves in sheep’s clothing would make no inroads into this privileged portion of the flock of Jesus Christ. He forbade them to have any access to the monasteries or convents, especially those under his direct care.” *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:222.

43 For Abelly’s account of Vincent’s efforts with the French bishops see *ibid.*, 3:353–61. See also Vincent’s letter 1320, “To Some French Bishops,” February 1651, *CCD*, 4:156–57.

44 According to Abelly: “Since this false doctrine influenced many to follow these novelties, and since Monsieur Vincent had been invited into the queen’s council from the very beginning of the regency, he explained to Her Majesty and to Cardinal Mazarin the importance to religion and to the state of not offering benefices or positions to any suspected of these novelties. Knowing that the professorships and pulpits were the sources from which saving waters of doctrine and morality were drawn, he did all in his power to assure that those appointed were well grounded in the common teachings of the Church. He had prayers offered for this intention, and used other means for this purpose as his charity dictated.” *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:353.

45 Here Bossuet is referring to contemporary controversies in Metz. Local Huguenots were appealing to the queen in defense of their liberties guaranteed by the Edict of Nantes. Bossuet wrote to Vincent de Paul on 1 February 1658, giving him the details of these situations and asking him to use his influence at court: “I am not telling you now, Monsieur, what you have to do in this matter; it is enough for you to be aware of it. God will inspire you for the rest.” Vincent’s intervention was successful and a month later Bossuet wrote to Vincent: “My most humble thanks to you for your charity in informing the Queen of the affair about which I had the honor of writing you. From the letters Her Majesty has had written about it in this area, I see that your recommendation was most effective.” See Letter 2526, “Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet to Saint Vincent,” 1 February 1658, *CCD*, 7:85–86; and Letter 2544, “Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet to Saint Vincent,” 2 March 1658, *ibid.*, 7:112.



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Holy cards which read: “Vincent celebrates his first mass at Notre Dame de Grace, near Buzet”; and “Frequent communion. Continual union with God. The presence of God should more completely occupy our spirit than the presence of all creatures together.”

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

ecclesiastical discipline, especially the prescriptions ordained by the Council of Trent.⁴⁶ We testify that the grandeur of his faith in God was evident in his words and his actions.⁴⁷ He had a great faith and devotion toward the most holy sacrament of our altars,⁴⁸ the Holy Virgin Mother of God, and the other saints.⁴⁹ He celebrated Holy Mass nearly every day. If he could not celebrate it, he attended and took communion.⁵⁰

46 According to Abelly: “Monsieur Vincent’s zeal moved him to work for the revival of the priestly spirit among the clergy. He instituted the ordination retreats, the clergy conferences and retreats to further this ideal. Although all these were helpful, they still did not bring about in the clergy all the change desirable. He felt the remedy must go to the source of the clerical state, to the formation of young men, who showed signs of a true vocation, in the seminaries envisioned by the holy Council of Trent.” *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:164. Also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 124 (“A pious and holy work.”): “In establishing Seminaries to form a clergy capable of carrying the weight and dignity of their sacred ministry, he participated in this great work that the holy Council of Trent called “*Opus... tam pium, et tam sanctum.*”

47 Abelly notes: “... his main and nearly universal method was to conform himself entirely to the example of Jesus Christ. He knew very well that he could not walk nor lead others on a surer path than that traveled by the Word and Wisdom of God. He had engraved his words and actions upon his own mind, modeling himself in all he did and said upon the prototype of all virtue and sanctity.” *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:293.

48 See for example, *ibid.*, 3:77–78.

49 See for example, *ibid.*, 3:92–96.

50 *Ibid.*, 1:39; 1:243; 3:75–78.

To overcome temptations against the faith, he counselled others to follow his practice of doing the opposite of what the temptation suggested, and to practice the virtues supporting the belief contrary to these temptations.⁵¹

We testify that he had a singular respect for Holy Scripture, and he read it with great devotion.⁵² He established the rule for his followers and the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences of reading a chapter of the New Testament daily, kneeling in devotion, with their heads uncovered.⁵³ He taught them to adore the truths contained in what they were reading, and to enter into the spirit behind these truths to practice what they taught.⁵⁴

The above comments, with respect to the faith of the servant of God, are well known and attested to publicly by everyone.

It was evident in his words and in his actions that Monsieur Vincent possessed the gift of the firm hope of one day possessing the glory of Paradise. He hoped to obtain from God all the means that would lead him to this destination.⁵⁵

We testify that he undertook many great works in God's service, but only after he had discerned it was the will of the Divine Majesty that he should undertake them.⁵⁶ He never felt overwhelmed by any difficulties he encountered. He believed that Divine Providence would provide him with everything he needed, if he submitted to its guidance.⁵⁷

51 *Ibid.*, 3:115:

...he had recourse to two remedies. The first was to write out a profession of faith which he placed over his heart as an antidote to his trials. He specifically repudiated any thoughts contrary to faith, and entered into a sort of pact with the Savior that every time he placed his hand over his heart and upon this paper, as he often did, he intended by the gesture to renounce temptation, all without saying a single word. At the same time, he raised his mind to God and easily diverted it from the thoughts troubling him. In this way, he confounded the devil without directly confronting him. The second remedy he used was to do the exact opposite of what the tempter suggested, striving to act by faith in rendering honor and service to Jesus Christ.

52 See for example, "His talks were founded on principles derived from Holy Scripture, particularly the examples and words of the Son of God found in the Gospels, whose intent he penetrated in a way all his own." *Ibid.*, 2:213. See also Warren Dicharry, C.M., "Saint Vincent and Sacred Scripture," *Vincentian Heritage* vol. 10, no. 2 (1989): 136–48. Also, André Dodin, C.M., "M. Vincent de Paul et la Bible," under the direction of Jean-Robert Armogathe, *Le Grand Siècle et la Bible. La Collection Bible de Tous les Temps*, 8 vols. (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1989), 6:627–42.

53 See Document 35, "Regulations for the Members of the Tuesday Conferences," n.d., *CCD*, 13a:141.

54 See chapter 10 of the Common Rules: "The priests and all the students are to read a chapter of the New Testament, reverencing this book as the norm of Christian holiness. For greater benefit this reading should be done kneeling, with head uncovered, and praying, at least at the end, on these three themes: (1) reverence for the truths contained in the chapter; (2) desire to have the same spirit in which Christ or the saints taught them; (3) determination to put into practice the advice or commands contained in it, as well as the examples of virtues." Document 117a, "Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission," (17 May 1658), *ibid.*, 13a:457.

55 For example, "He often spoke to his confreres about death as a salutary thought, and exhorted them to prepare for it by their good deeds. He assured them that this was the best and surest means to ensure a happy death. He wanted this thought of death to be joined to a great confidence in the goodness of God, far from any anxiety or worry." Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:258.

56 Maupas du Tour noted, "What can you say about a man who ... decided nothing without consulting the will of God, and who accepted no work without an extraordinary indication from the Spirit of God?" Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 131.

57 See Abelly throughout, for example: "His spiritual viewpoint was that we must never anticipate divine Providence. He had a most sensitive conscience on this point. He was convinced that God could accomplish what he wished just as well with him as without him. What God does of his own accord is done better and with greater assurance." *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:102. See also the quote in footnote 64.

We know the expenses of his charitable works were so great they often left his own house of Saint-Lazare with no money to take care of its needs.⁵⁸ This servant of God, far from being upset by this situation, thanked God for this opportunity and used it to increase his confidence in Our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing he would lack for nothing. He stated over, and over again, that his congregation had more to fear from riches than it did from poverty.⁵⁹

We testify that the servant of God told his followers and the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences to possess a perfect abandonment to God's Providence, no matter what the circumstances. They were to exercise a continual recourse to His Divine Majesty to receive direction about what path they must take.⁶⁰ In this regard, he gave them his own example of never undertaking anything without seeking God's guidance and wanting in all things to follow only His directions.⁶¹

We testify that he was not at all bothered when he found himself in the face of adversity, nor was he led to doubt, nor did he allow himself to become upset or sad.⁶² Rather, he remained steadfast, believing the scriptural maxim of Our Lord that "those who hope in me will never be disappointed."⁶³

We testify that this servant of God undertook great works seemingly without any difficulty.⁶⁴ He regarded these tasks as being light to bear when compared to the reward he

58 See for example, Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 111–12. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:188.

59 See for example, Letter 718, "To Bernard Codoing, in Rome," 29 July 1644, *CCD*, 2:517–19; Conference 148, "Repetition of Prayer," 16 March 1656, *ibid.* 11:297.

60 See for example Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:25: "Monsieur Vincent's confidence in God was great in the pressing needs which he and his community experienced, it was no less firm in the reverses, difficulties, and other annoying and threatening things that happened to him. It was noticed that no matter what occurred, or in what difficulties he found himself, he was never beaten down or discouraged, but was always full of trust in God. He enjoyed a constant evenness of spirit and a perfect abandonment to his divine Providence."

61 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, *CCD*, and Udovic, *Maupas du Tour* throughout.

62 For example, "Whatever God does, He does for the best; therefore, we must hope that this loss will be to our advantage, since it comes from God. All things work together for the good of the just, and we have the assurance that when adversities are received from the hand of God, they are converted into joy and blessings." Letter 2653, "To the Community of Saint-Lazare," [September 1658], *CCD*, 7:265–66.

63 Isaiah 49:23.

64 Maupas du Tour noted in this vein:

"I know it is easy to be astonished by the success of all the activities he undertook in ways that were so totally contrary to the means which ordinarily would have been suggested by mere human prudence. This great success came about because he carefully worked to strip himself of his human spirit, and to search for guidance only from the inspirations provided by God's spirit. God, for his part, draws near to those who search for him and he fills them with the light of his wisdom. He then brings about favorable conclusions to even the most difficult affairs having but the gloomiest prospects of success, which would ordinarily make even the most prudent spirits grow faint." Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 100.



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“If the love of God is a fire, zeal is its flame; if it is a sun, zeal is a ray. Zeal is what is purest in the love for God.”

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

expected to receive in heaven.⁶⁵ The above comments with respect to the hope of the servant of God are well known, and attested to publicly by everyone.⁶⁶

Monsieur Vincent loved God and His goodness with all of his heart and soul. He sought to please and glorify Him in all his actions. One could hear in his holy conferences, and see in his virtuous actions, a constant reminder of his love of these divine perfections.⁶⁷

We testify that he also was very exact in his observance of all of God’s and the Church’s commandments, and in his charity gave everyone a model of perfect obedience.⁶⁸

We testify that he possessed a very pure soul and an admirable uprightness of heart, and everyone with whom he conversed never observed the least evidence of any considerable sin in his words or actions.⁶⁹

65 For example, Vincent de Paul commented: “So then, my dear confreres, poor persons are our portion, the poor; *pauperibus evangelizare misit me*. What happiness, Messieurs, what happiness! To do what Our Lord came from heaven to earth to do, and by means of which we’ll go from earth to heaven to continue the work of God” Conference 180, “Observance of the Rule,” 17 May 1658, *CCD*, 12:4.

66 For Vincent de Paul’s comments on hope, see for example, Conference 97, “Trust in Divine Providence (Common Rules, Art. 41),” 9 June 1658, *ibid.*, 10:403, or this passage from Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:33: “We have the seed of the all-powerful God within us. This should be the source of our hope, encouraging us to place all our confidence in him, despite our own poverty.”

67 According to Vincent de Paul: “Now, we must never love anything but God or, if we do, it must be for the love of God; and it’s not lawful to love anything but God or for God.” Conference 199, “Conformity to the Will of God. Common Rules, (Chap. 2, Art. 3),” 7 March 1659, *CCD*, 12:129. For a discussion of Vincent de Paul’s love of God, see also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:37–39.

68 According to Vincent de Paul: “We must do God’s Will in its entirety by observing God’s Commandments and those of Holy Church, obeying our Superiors, observing our Regulations, and preserving uniformity.” Conference 2, “On the Vocation of a Daughter of Charity,” 5 July 1640, *CCD*, 9:14.

69 Abelly notes in his dedication of his biography to the queen mother: “The innocence and sanctity of him whose life we write, Madame, assure us that he is in heaven with his God.” *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:23. At Vincent’s death, one of his confessors noted: “I had the consolation of serving as his confessor while I was in Paris. I was able to see at first hand the sanctity and purity of his soul, which could not entertain even the appearance of sin.” *Ibid.*, 3:75.

We testify that he was not content just to reject all love contrary to charity. He went beyond this in all things to love nothing that was not of God, for the love of God.

We testify that his zeal for the salvation of souls, and for God's glory was ardent.⁷⁰ He always wished, above all, never to offend God in any way. He avoided this with all his strength, and he tried to remedy any such offenses by any means available to him.⁷¹

We testify that he undertook great works in God's service, and in carrying out God's will.⁷² He always possessed a heartfelt desire to undertake even greater things for God's glory, saying, "O Lord, when will I give all to you, and when will I love nothing else but you?"⁷³

When he judged that one of his followers had done something solely out of human motives, the servant of God would tell him that it would be better to be burned alive than to try in any way to do something just to please men.⁷⁴ He held himself at a great distance from the world and its pomp.⁷⁵ He had no esteem for wealth except in the sense he knew he could use it well to serve the poor.⁷⁶ He paid no attention either to praise, or to criticism.⁷⁷

We testify that he took every opportunity to elevate his soul to God and remain united with Him. This was the source of the equanimity of spirit characterizing his conduct and his great desire to accomplish God's will in all things. We heard him speak of this often. His words came from the abundance of what filled his heart.

70 In his introduction to Abelly's biography, Henri de Maupas du Tour noted: "The Sovereign Pastor who watches over his Church has raised up for us in the person of Monsieur Vincent a faithful servant, filled with zeal for his glory and burning with love for the salvation of souls. We have only to read this story of his life, written by the bishop of Rodez, to be convinced of this." Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:26–27.

71 As Abelly notes: "To speak more specifically, the zeal of this great servant of God made him feel very keenly the offenses committed against the divine majesty. We cannot adequately express how much he was moved by this, or what efforts he made to prevent these offenses, and what penances he did as reparation for the sins committed." *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:97.

72 As Maupas du Tour noted, "For this was a man who had no other support for his cares, his conduct, and for all of the great works of God's Providence that were confided to him than the pure teachings of the Gospel which are incapable of either being evaded or defeated, by any earthly Crown or Empire." Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 100.

73 This quotation attributed by Bossuet to Vincent de Paul appears nowhere else.

74 Vincent was quoted as saying: "So you see that everything we do or suffer, if we don't do it or suffer it for love of God, is useless for us; even should we be burned alive or give all our possessions to the poor, says Saint Paul, if we don't have charity and don't do or suffer for love of God, then all that is useless for us." Conference 176, "Repetition of Prayer," 11 November 1657, *CCD*, 11:385.

75 According to Abelly, Vincent de Paul had a "great and perfect detachment from the things of this world...." Abelly also writes, "he therefore closed his eyes to all natural influences, to all worldly prospects, so that he could give himself more perfectly to God." See *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:37 and 63.

76 As Abelly noted: "All this did not hinder him from being prodigal when it was a question of doing something for the glory of God or for the salvation of souls. In these cases, he spared nothing. Money was of no significance for him. He even went deeply into debt when he found it necessary to do so for the interests of the service of God, or for the spiritual good of the neighbor." *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:244.

77 See this passage for example: "Sisters: in serving the sick, you must have God alone in view. What a great thing that is—to have God alone in view in all that we do. Some praise you. Others despise you. In all these circumstances pay no attention either to praise or blame; have God alone in view. If you're praised, say, 'My God, I'm not the one doing this; You are'; humble yourselves interiorly and accept insults when they're given to you, considering the disgrace heaped on the Son of God and seeing how He acted." Conference 114, "Rules for the Sisters in Parishes. (Arts. 6–11)," 11 November 1659, *CCD*, 10:541.

Once, when six of his best missionaries in Genoa died serving the plague-stricken, he shared this news with his community. He urged them to place their confidence in Divine Providence and to believe this loss would somehow be a gain.⁷⁸ He said the same thing when he learned of the shipwreck and loss of those whom he had sent to Madagascar, and on many other occasions.⁷⁹

We testify that Monsieur Vincent's words were so forceful that he touched the hearts of all those who listened to him, enkindling within them the fire of divine love. We experienced this in his spiritual conferences where his listeners felt a singular pleasure in hearing him speak of God. They feared forgetting his words.⁸⁰ To avoid this, some of them would write down what he said.⁸¹ There are many examples of great sinners converted by his preaching.⁸²

We testify above all that he urged his followers and the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences to exercise a love that was both practical and effective. He assured them it was through these holy works that one publicly testified to one's faith.⁸³

The above with respect to the charity of the servant of God is well known, and attested to publicly by everyone.⁸⁴

In his zeal, this servant of God always testified to his willingness even to lose his life in order to procure God's glory.⁸⁵ In addition, he also taught this to his followers and the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences. He said that, despite his advanced age, he possessed the desire to travel as far as the Indies and willingly die there as a martyr, thus honoring God and his holy faith.⁸⁶

78 See Conference 174, "Repetition of Prayer," 23 September 1657, *ibid.*, 11:378–81.

79 See for example, Letter 2366, "To Étienne Blatiron, Superior, Rome," 7 September 1657, *ibid.*, 6:462–63.

80 Maupas du Tour describes the impact of Vincent de Paul's preaching in this way: "Oh what a beautiful sight! The conversion of sinners gives birth to the joy of the Angels. You have seen Monsieur Vincent in the pulpit completely filled with zeal for the salvation of souls. He preached with a holy vehemence, filled with God's spirit. He brought tears to the eyes, and touched the hearts, of all those who heard him. You have seen a deluge of tears come both from the preacher and from his listeners." Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 124. See also for example, Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:100–101; 2:213; and 3:96.

81 For a discussion of Vincent's conferences, and the preservation of these texts see *CCD*, 11:xiii–xxxii.

82 See for example, Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:65: "He applied himself with his usual zeal to instructing the people and converting sinners by his effective preaching and exhortations in both public and private."

83 See for example, Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:101–02.

84 See also *ibid.*, 3:106ff, and Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 106–33.

85 See for example, Conference 17a, "Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission." 17 May 1658, *CCD*, 13a:433: "Christ said: *Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things which you need will be given to you as well.* That is the basis for each of us having the following set of priorities: matters involving our relationship with God are more important than temporal affairs; spiritual health is more important than physical; God's glory is more important than human approval. Each one should, moreover, be determined to prefer, like Saint Paul, to do without necessities, to be slandered or tortured, or even killed, rather than lose Christ's love."

86 See Conference 167, "Repetition of Prayer," 17 June 1657, *ibid.*, 11:357: "We should desire to be so disposed, if we aren't already, we should be ready and willing to come and go wherever God pleases, whether to the Indies or elsewhere; lastly, to devote ourselves willingly to the service of our neighbor and to extend the empire of Jesus Christ in souls; and I myself, old and infirm as I am, must, nonetheless, have this disposition, even to go to the Indies to win souls to God there, although I were to die on the way or on board ship ..."



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Vincent de Paul, standing, with ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences. Oil on canvas; originally in Toul seminary, now in Crézilles.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

We testify that he was not content just to preach, but he always put his preaching into action through the work of the Missions. Even though he was nearly eighty years of age and weighed down by his infirmities,⁸⁷ he hoped to have the grace of dying while at work in the Missions whether near or far.⁸⁸

We testify that the servant of God, filled with this same zeal, contributed much to the reform of numerous Orders of Regulars. He used his influence in the king's council on behalf of these reforms.⁸⁹

We testify that, as he traveled through the streets, he made sure to correct anyone blaspheming the holy name of God or offending it in any manner, but he always did so with humility and meekness. He instructed his followers and the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences to do the same.⁹⁰

We testify that he was profoundly saddened when he learned of incidents where heretics, thieves, or others profaned churches or sacred objects. On these occasions, he

87 According to Abelly: "This faithful servant of God did not let any opportunity pass to serve the Church or work for the good of his neighbor. Despite his advancing years and the infirmities ordinarily accompanying old age, he still bore the principal burden of the many pious works he had established. Notwithstanding this he was always ready, even anxious, to begin new ventures for the glory of God. Rather than being overwhelmed by the burdens of new projects, on these occasions his vigor and strength seemed to increase." *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:224.

88 Vincent said: "...what reason we have to tremble, if we're stay-at-home people, or, if, because of our age or under pretext of some infirmity, we slow down and let our fervor diminish!...Someone may also make excuses for himself because of his age. As for me, despite my age, before God I don't feel excused from the obligation I have to work for the salvation of those poor people; for what could prevent me from doing so? If I couldn't preach every day, *eh bien*, I'd do it twice a week! If I couldn't give long sermons; I'd try to give short ones, if, again, people didn't understand me at these short ones, what would prevent me from speaking plainly and simply to those good people in the way I'm speaking to you right now, gathering them around me, as you are?" Conference 100, "Repetition of Prayer," 25 October 1643, *CCD*, 11:122–123. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 2:16.

89 See *ibid.*, 2:385–390.

90 See *ibid.*, 3:395 for example.

would increase his usual prayers and penances. When he heard of holy places that had been profaned, he had his confreres and the members of the Tuesday Conferences perform penances in reparation to the Blessed Sacrament, thus remedying as much as possible this offense.⁹¹ He often could be seen shedding tears over the faults of his priests and others who were under his authority. He blamed himself before God for their offenses, and imposed penances on himself.⁹²

We testify that he formed ambitious plans for God's glory to procure the salvation of infidels, without any fear as to the expense, amount of labor, or the possibility of death.⁹³

The above with respect to the servant of God's zeal for the glory of God is well known, and attested to publicly by everyone.

We testify that the servant of God conducted himself with great care and diligence with respect to all those things concerning the worship of God.⁹⁴ He knew the ceremonies of the Church thoroughly, and he observed them perfectly. If he overlooked some small liturgical detail, he would humble himself. If he had committed this fault in public, he would kneel in the presence of the community and kiss the floor.⁹⁵ When he noticed others make similar mistakes, he recommended that they too humble themselves.

We testify that he possessed a singular devotion to the mysteries of the Most Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Blessed Sacrament.⁹⁶ To the best of his abilities, he inspired this same devotion in his followers by placing it in their Rules.⁹⁷ He very much wanted to establish this devotion among the members of the Tuesday Conferences⁹⁸ and other persons who were under his direction.⁹⁹ He also tried to instill this devotion among the country

91 See *ibid.*, 3:82.

92 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 122 and Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:266.

93 For information on the failed attempts to evangelize Madagascar during the saint's lifetime see Coste, *Life*, 2:51–117. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 2:134–163. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 120–121. See also Robineau, 74.

94 According to Abelly, "... there is no doubt he was gifted with a sincere and perfect devotion for all that concerned the worship and honor of God." *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:72ff. 81–82.

95 *Ibid.*

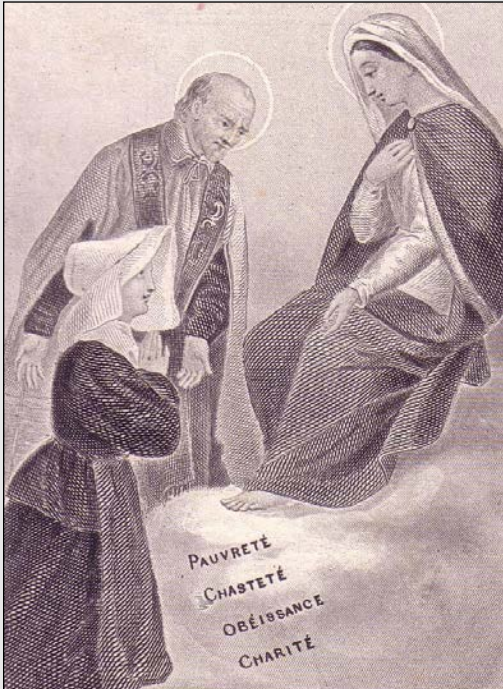
96 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:74, 77ff: "God had given him a great devotion for all the mysteries of our holy religion, particularly those of the most holy Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, and that of the blessed sacrament of the altar. Since the most holy Trinity is the first and principal of the truths to be believed and adored, he was anxious to have it known and loved among souls, and taught on all the missions." See also Coste, *Life*, 3:304.

97 See Document 117a, "Common Rules (Chap. 10, Arts. 2–3)," (17 May 1658), *CCD*, 13a:454–55:

According to the Bull which established our Congregation, we are bound to honor in a special way the Most Holy Trinity and the Incarnation, mysteries beyond words There can be no better way of paying the best honor possible to these mysteries than proper devotion to, and use of, the Blessed Eucharist, sacrament and sacrifice. It includes, as it were, all the other mysteries of faith and, by itself, leads those who receive Communion respectfully or celebrate Mass properly, to holiness and ultimately to everlasting glory. In this way God, Unity and Trinity, and the Incarnate Word, are paid the greatest honor.

98 Strictly speaking, no specific mention of these mysteries of the faith is present in Document 35, "Regulation for the Members of the Tuesday Conferences," n.d., *ibid.*, 13a:140–43.

99 *Ibid.*, 13a:141.



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“Lord, behold her who has sacrificed herself for you. Come good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Master.”

Holy card depicting the Blessed Virgin, Vincent, and a Daughter of Charity, probably distributed for the annual renewal of vows.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

people through the means of catechisms and sermons.¹⁰⁰

We testify that he possessed an ardent love for the mystery of Our Lord’s Passion. During the divine services of Holy Week, he could not hold back his tears.¹⁰¹ In this, he seemed to have a great sorrow for his sins in light of what Our Lord had to endure in expiation.¹⁰² Whether at home or abroad, others often observed him tenderly contemplating a crucifix so he could more closely identify with this spirit.¹⁰³

We testify that his love of Our Lord crucified led to the devotion he had for the Lord’s memorial in the Blessed Sacrament of our altars. He often could be seen spending long hours in prayer in church before the Most Holy Sacrament. He went there whenever he had to consider an affair of any consequence, in order to receive the guidance he needed from the Lord of lights.

We testify he never left, or reentered, his house without stopping to visit Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. He observed this practice whenever the place he visited had a church. When he could no longer genuflect in Church because of his old age and the weakness of his legs, he humbled himself and asked pardon from his followers for the scandal he believed he had given them.¹⁰⁴

100 “We are also to make a great effort to get everyone else to pay it similar honor and reverence. We should try, to the best of our ability, to achieve this by preventing, as far as we can, any lack of reverence in word or act, and by carefully teaching others what to believe about so great a mystery, and how they should honor it.” *Ibid.*

101 Brother Louis Robineau recalled, “On Holy Thursday, he used to kiss with a marvelous affection the feet of the twelve poor men when he performed the ceremonies of the Last Supper. He used to do this on both knees.” *Robineau*, 12. There does not seem to be an extant reference to Vincent’s reaction to the Good Friday Passion.

102 This interpretation is unique to Bossuet, and is not present in other early accounts or testimonies.

103 A moving personal detail not found in other early accounts or testimonies.

104 Abelly notes: “He had a special devotion of praying in the presence of the blessed sacrament, where he was in such a devout posture and where he seemed so recollected that he edified all who saw him.” *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:59–60, 3:77ff. See also *Robineau*, 33–34.

We testify that he celebrated the Holy Mass daily, except for the first three days of his annual retreat. He celebrated it with such devotion that those who witnessed him at the altar could not help but be touched.¹⁰⁵ By rule, he instructed his followers,¹⁰⁶ and the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences to celebrate mass every day.¹⁰⁷

We testify that this same devotion led him, even in his old age, to serve at masses said by other priests of his community.¹⁰⁸ When he spoke to others about this mystery, it was always with great unction.

We testify that he encouraged frequent and devout communion.¹⁰⁹ He took great care, and had his followers take great care, to prepare children for their first communion.¹¹⁰

We testify that his devotion to the Holy Virgin was great, and he took particular care to recommend this devotion to others.¹¹¹ He established many works of piety in her honor, including the Confraternities of Charity. He had a singular devotion to the Holy Angels¹¹² and the Holy Apostles, our fathers in faith.¹¹³ He had a particular devotion toward Saint Peter whom he regarded as being the patron saint for the priests of his Congregation, and for those who belonged to the Tuesday Conferences.¹¹⁴

When he was in choir praying the Divine Office, he appeared so recollected that everyone could see his sole occupation was union with God.¹¹⁵

We testify that he was very faithful to the exercise of meditation and never missed it even in the midst of all of the business to which he had to attend. If he had any spare time, he used it to contemplate God.¹¹⁶ He always recommended this practice to others.¹¹⁷

105 Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:77ff.

106 Document 117a, “Common Rules (Chap. 10, Art. 6),” (17 May 1658), *CCD*, 13a:456–57.

107 Document 35, “Regulations for the Members of the Tuesday Conferences,” n.d., *ibid.*, 13a:141.

108 See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:76.

109 *Ibid.*, 3:80–81.

110 See for example, Letter 897, “To a Priest of the Mission,” 27 November 1646, *CCD*, 3:129–30.

111 See for example, *Robineau*, 33. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:92–94. See also Letter 1, “To Monsieur de Comet, in Dax,” 24 July 1607, *CCD*, 1:6; Letter 36, “To Saint Louise,” [around 1629], *ibid.*, 1:62; Letter 49, “To Saint Louise,” [around 1630], *ibid.*, 1:81; Letter 249, “To Robert de Sergis, in Amiens,” November 1636, 1:350; and Conference 88, “Obedience,” 2 December 1657, *ibid.*, 10:311.

112 See for example, Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:75.

113 *Ibid.*, 3:94.

114 *Ibid.*

115 According to Abelly: “To the edification of all, the devotion of the great servant of God was most evident, in his public celebration of the divine office. When he came to the choir to chant the psalms, he did so with much recollection, and appeared to be totally taken up with the presence of God.” *Ibid.*, 3:73.

116 See for example, *Robineau*, 41. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 21.

117 See for example, Conference 102, “Order of the Day,” 6 October 1658, *CCD*, 10:456–59; Conference 103, “Order of the Day,” 13 October 1658, *ibid.*, 10:459–64; Conference 105, “Order of the Day,” 17 November 1658, *ibid.*, 10:470–75; Conference 66a, “Dispositions to Be Brought to Meditation,” n.d., 11:75–76; Conference 67, “Meditation,” n.d., *ibid.*, 11: 76; Conference 68, “Meditation,” n.d., *ibid.*, 11:76–77; Conference 69 “Meditation,” n.d., *ibid.*, 11:77–78; Conference 70, “Meditation,” n.d., *ibid.*, 11:79–80; Conference 71, “Mediation,” n.d., *ibid.*, 11:80–81; Conference 72, “Meditation,” n.d., *ibid.*, 11:81–82; Conference 73, “Meditation,” n.d., *ibid.*, 11:82; Conference 74, “Meditation,” n.d., *ibid.*, 11:83; Conference 133, “Repetition of Prayer,” 16 August 1655, *ibid.*, 11:232–36; and Conference 168, “Repetition of Prayer,” 10 August 1657, 11:358–61.

The above, with respect to Monsieur Vincent's is well known and attested to publicly by everyone.

We testify that the servant of God perfectly fulfilled the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself by serving his neighbors through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.¹¹⁸

We testify that he fervently desired the salvation of all people.¹¹⁹ For his part he contributed all he could to this end without omitting any effort nor fearing any peril.¹²⁰ He desired even to give his life to this effort.¹²¹

We testify that he very much loved to instruct poor persons and children.¹²² We testify that he received with kindness all those who approached him. He assisted them with his advice and served them with all his strength. When he could not personally assist them, he recruited others to help.

We testify that we often heard him say, "There is no better use of temporal goods than to use them in works of charity."¹²³ He also said there was nothing greater a missionary could do than to give all he had to the poor, even if this reduced him to such poverty that he was in danger of dying from famine.¹²⁴ With regard to the clergy and all those who were elevated to ecclesiastical dignities and to the priesthood, he gladly used all his influence with the king and queen to defend their rights.¹²⁵

We recall that once a priest of his community fell ill, and feared his needs were too

118 "Here Messieurs is the example of a charitable heart dedicated in the highest degree to a perfect charity towards the neighbor in imitation of the heart of God, which is to say that he embraced everyone, and refused no one." Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 113. See also *ibid.*, 108, 121–22, 128. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:106.

119 See for example, Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 96, 99, 124.

120 "Do merchants fail to put out to sea because of the perils they might face? Do soldiers not go to war for fear of scars, or the death they may meet? Should we fail in our duty as helpers and saviors of souls because of the troubles and persecutions we may encounter?" Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:101.

121 See for example, *ibid.*, 2:36 and 3:98.

122 See for example, *ibid.*, 3:16. "Monsieur Vincent did not hold his faith locked up in his mind, for his perfect charity made his beliefs evident to everyone. We have earlier seen the zeal with which he catechized and preached, especially in places where the people were most in need of instruction, such as in the villages and among the poor." See also 1:201 and 3:283.

123 A quotation from Vincent de Paul not found in any other source. See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:126 for similar sentiments.

124 For example, Vincent de Paul said: "You should not fear this poverty, never doubting the goodness of our Lord and the truth of his word. Even if you were forced to go to work for the pastors to support yourselves, or had to beg your bread, or sleep in barns, exposed to the rigors of the weather, suppose someone were to ask you: Poor priest of the Mission, what has brought you to this extremity? What happiness, Gentlemen, if you could respond: Charity. How blessed this poor priest would be, before God and his angels." Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:107–08.

125 There is in reality little evidence to support this particular claim.



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Vincent de Paul at the door of Saint-Lazare kneeling in respect before the waiting poor.

Engraving in Arthur Loth, *Saint Vincent de Paul et Sa Mission Sociale (1880)*; by M. Gaillard.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

much for the house to bear. The servant of God visited him and told him to ask for anything he needed, and if necessary, he would even go so far as to sell the house's chalices to raise the funds to care for him.¹²⁶

Another time a priest who was not a member of the community fell ill while making his retreat at Saint-Lazare. The servant of God supported this priest during his long illness, and after he returned to health even gave him a breviary, a set of clothes, and ten ecus to pay for his journey home.¹²⁷

When many of his followers fell ill after serving those with contagious diseases, the servant of God felt consoled and blessed God for this situation, seeing it as a great grace.¹²⁸ When Monsieur the sub-prior of the Canons Regular of the Priory of Saint-Lazare fell victim to a contagious illness, the servant of God visited him without fear and served him during his illness, even though his followers tried to stop him.¹²⁹

We testify that he established the practice of distributing bread and soup several times a week at Saint-Lazare, and he tried to assist the honest poor in many other ways.¹³⁰ At Saint-Lazare, he introduced the daily custom of feeding two poor persons at the community's dinner. He had them seated next to him, so he could see they lacked nothing.¹³¹

We testify that he was very indulgent with respect to those who were in his debt. He never went to court to force payment. He often forgave the entire debt, seeing this as a form

126 See Letter 366, "To Pierre Du Chesne, in Sancey," 8 January 1639, *CCD*, 1:521.

127 Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:42.

128 See for example, *ibid.*, 3:54–55.

129 See Letter 131, "To Saint Louise de Marillac," [between January 1632 and February 1633], *CCD*, 1:186.

130 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:126–27. See also *Robineau*, 65–66, and Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 112.

131 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:126. See also *Robineau*, 11.

of almsgiving.¹³²

We testify that he showed a particular love for those he knew opposed him. He was always careful to go out of his way to help them in any way he could.¹³³ He very much wanted his followers to imitate this practice, and he gave them an express rule to do so.¹³⁴

We testify that once a noble at court attacked his honor. The Queen Mother¹³⁵ heard of this offense, and wanted to exile this noble. Monsieur Vincent told the queen he would abstain from coming to the council of His Majesty if this happened, and she granted his request for the noble's pardon.¹³⁶

We testify he very carefully covered his neighbor's faults with the cloak of charity. He preferred to harm his own reputation, rather than to talk about the faults of his neighbor. This often caused him a loss of reputation, and other damages as well.¹³⁷

We testify the servant of God never asked for anything for himself, or for his congregation.¹³⁸ However, he frequently asked the wealthy and the queen for funds to assist the poor. He had no fear of rejection, or scorn for making these requests.¹³⁹

The above with respect to Monsieur Vincent's charity toward his neighbor is well known and attested to publicly by everyone.

This venerable servant of God possessed the blessing of a rare prudence,¹⁴⁰ so much so that he acquired a public reputation for this virtue, and many people came to him to ask his advice on important matters.¹⁴¹

We testify he never undertook anything too quickly, but only after taking the time to carefully examine all of the possible difficulties, and the means available to address these issues. If someone urged him to make a decision, he would reply nothing was more likely to

132 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:129.

133 *Ibid.*, 3:156–62.

134 See Document 117a, “Common Rules (Chap. 2, Art. 12),” (17 May 1658), *CCD*, 13a:437.

135 Anne of Austria.

136 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 116–117. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:157.

137 See *ibid.*, 3:110, 283–284. See also *Robineau*, 68–69.

138 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:26–27, 110, 247. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 114.

139 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:121–122, 282. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 108, 112.

140 See *Robineau*, 23–31. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:108; 3:274–75, 400; 3:222 ff; and 3:295ff. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:326, 369–73.

141 See Coste, *Life*, 3:342:

A great part of his time was spent in attending meetings. There were ordinary and extraordinary meetings, weekly and monthly, at Saint-Lazare, at the house of the Daughters of Charity, at the Visitation convents and elsewhere; he had to attend meetings of the Council of Conscience or of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, and to preside as Superior of the Daughters of Providence. He might have been seen sitting in the midst of professors of theology seeking for means to stem the tide of Jansenism; bishops turned to him for help in their diocesan affairs, superiors in those of their communities, and even private families entrusted him with the care of their interests. His advice was listened to as that of a sage; it always threw light on a subject and helped to establish harmony during deliberations.

ruin things than by acting too quickly.¹⁴²

We testify that he rooted his holy prudence in the teachings of the Gospel, and with God's assistance.¹⁴³ He always asked for God's assistance whenever he was in doubt.¹⁴⁴

He had a horror of anything that smacked of human self-interest, deceit, disingenuousness, artificiality, or lies.¹⁴⁵ He knew all these were contrary to true prudence, which always accompanies the virtue of simplicity.¹⁴⁶ He would never allow his followers, or anyone under his direction, to conduct themselves according to mere human interests or other artifices.¹⁴⁷ He always severely corrected this manner of judging.¹⁴⁸

In order to proceed more confidently, he always consulted others, including his followers and even peasants. He believed one person alone could not fully understand the complexity of any given situation.¹⁴⁹

142 "His practice was not to do anything in a hurry, but only after thinking it through. This is another great sign of his prudence. If it were a matter of some importance, he never made a decision about it without first praying and having others pray to beseech God's enlightenment for him in what he was to decide. He never acted without consulting the most qualified and holy people then in Paris." See *Robineau*, 27. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:100ff; 1:172; 2:104; 3:31–32.

143 See, for example, the quote in footnote 72.

144 See *Robineau*, 34. Somewhat strangely, Bossuet does not link Vincent's prudence with his desire to always do God's will by abandoning himself and the Congregation to Divine Providence. According to Abelly, Vincent did not want to anticipate providence. This was his usual way of acting in his affairs. *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:102. Again, according to Abelly, Vincent was always ready to do God's will. God found in him a man after his own heart. *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:207.

145 "One day one of his confreres was accused before the community of having done something through a desire for human respect. Moved by his love of God, Monsieur Vincent said: 'It would be better to be tied hand and foot and thrown into a raging fire than to do anything merely to please others.'" *Ibid.*, 3:39, 217–19.

146 According to Robineau, "He knew quite well and even taught us this: that the virtue of simplicity and that of prudence were like two sisters who should never walk one without the other." 22–23. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:105.

147 "Jesus the Lord expects us to have the simplicity of a dove. This means saying things quite simply in the way we see them, without needless reservations. It also means doing things without any double-dealing or manipulation, our attention being focused solely on God." Conference 201, "Simplicity and Prudence, (Common Rules, Chap. 2, Arts. 4 and 5)," 14 March 1659, *CCD*, 12:139–40. See also *ibid.*, 12:142–43.

148 "One day while he was holding Chapter, he reproved quite severely a member of the Company, who had accused himself of not having acting simply but having used equivocal language during some meeting.... I once heard Monsieur Vincent say that 'he who does not act simply, but who on the contrary uses equivocal expressions, is imitating the devil.' He sometimes told us: 'You have to avoid equivocations like the devil, since they ruin the spirit of simplicity that should shine forth in this Company.'" *Robineau*, 21.

149 "According to Brother Robineau: "As for me, I heard him say several times on this matter that four eyes are better than two, and six better than four. He told us one day: 'Don't you see that even when physicians are sick, they always consult other doctors, follow their advice, and order the medications that they should take?'" *Robineau*, 13. See also *ibid.*, 39; 49; and 63. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:100; 2:274–275; 3:226, 232, 293–296, 343. See also Letter 1231, "To Marc Coglée, Superior, in Sedan," 9 July 1650, *CCD*, 4:41; Conference 97, "Trust in Divine Providence," *ibid.*, 10:406; and Conference 153, "Advice to Antoine Durand, Named Superior of the Agde Seminary," [1656], *ibid.*, 11:314.



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Vincent de Paul, notary at right, giving the rule for the first Confraternity of Charity in Châtillon. Lacquer panel; original in Vincentian General Curia, Rome, Italy.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

We testify that he worked hard to give fraternal correction,¹⁵⁰ to give peace of soul to the scrupulous,¹⁵¹ to give consolation to the afflicted,¹⁵² and to help those who were tempted

150 According to Robineau: “One time he wanted to correct me, and he disposed me to profit from it by asking me if I would mind his giving me a correction. I answered no, and he did so. And I can assure you that since then, this manner of offering a correction has remained so strongly with me and touched my heart so deeply that only rarely have I fallen back into this fault whenever I recall Monsieur Vincent’s correction.” *Robineau*, 26. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:166ff, 302–03. See also Letter 70, “To Antoine Portail, in the Cevennes,” 21 June 1631, *CCD*, 1:110; Letter 383, “To Saint Jane Frances, in Annecy,” 14 July 1639, *ibid.*, 1:555; Letter 1149, “To Mathurin Gentil, in Le Mans,” 9 November 1649, *ibid.*, 3:501; Letter 1243, “To a Priest of the Mission,” n.d., *ibid.*, 4:58–59; Letter 1641, “To a Superior,” 19 July 1653, *ibid.*, 4:599; Letter 1690 “To Mark Cogley, Superior, in Sedan,” 10 December 1653, *ibid.*, 5:63; Letter 1760, “To Charles Ozenne, Superior, in Warsaw,” 10 July 1654, *ibid.*, 5:167; Letter 2330, “To Honoré Bélart,” 6 August 1657, *ibid.*, 6:406–08; Letter 2463, “To Pierre Cabel, Superior, in Sedan,” 17 November 1657, *ibid.*, 6:623; Letter 2521, “To a Superior,” February 1658, *ibid.*, 7:79; Conference 21, “Observance of the Rule,” n.d., *ibid.*, 9:178; Conference 22, “Reconciliation,” [between 1634 and 1646], *ibid.*, 9:180–81; Conference 45, “To Some Sisters Being Sent to the Country,” 22 October 1650, *ibid.*, 9:433; Conference 47, “Confession,” 5 March 1651, *ibid.*, 9:443; Conference 49, “The Good Use of Admonitions,” 25 April 1652, *ibid.*, 9:452; Conference 90, “Visits and the Duty of Informing Superiors (Common Rules, Arts. 28–29),” 23 December 1657, *ibid.*, 10:335 ff; Conference 91, “Relations with Outsiders, Murmuring, Detraction (Common Rules, Arts. 30–32),” 30 December 1657, *ibid.*, 10:354; Conference 93, “Mutual Charity and the Duty of Reconciliation (Common Rules, Arts. 36, 37),” 4 March 1658, *ibid.*, 10:369; Conference 83, “Retreat Recommendations,” 1632, *ibid.*, 11:93; Conference 84, “Retreat Recommendations,” 1635, *ibid.*, 11:95; Conference 101, “Responsibilities and Positions of Authority,” 1644, *ibid.*, 11:126; Conference 151, “Admonitions,” 9 June 1656, *ibid.*, 11:304; Conference 194, “Repetition of Prayer,” 17 November 1658, *ibid.*, 12:65; Conference 202, “Gentleness (Common Rules, Chap. 2, Art. 6),” 28 March 1659, *ibid.*, 12:155–56; and Supplement 23, “Maxims of Saint Vincent,” n.d., *ibid.*, 12:393.

151 According to Robineau: “One day I heard him say these words to a priest of the Company who was greatly tormented by scrupulosity. This caused him to appeal quite frequently to Monsieur Vincent. ‘Father, although I am unaccustomed to using words of command, this is the occasion when I have to use them. I beg you please, Father, for the love of God, do what we tell you.’” See *Robineau*, 16. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:174.

152 See for example, Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:98; 3:148, 155.

to conquer their temptations.¹⁵³ He was everything to everyone.¹⁵⁴

We testify that the Rules, advice, and direction he gave to the Congregation and to many other works of charity that he founded and which still exist, give testimony to his rare prudence, and that this is well known and attested to publicly by everyone.¹⁵⁵

We testify that the servant of God was a member of the king's council where he took great care to support justice, see benefices went only to the most worthy candidates, and ensure the great did not oppress the lowly and small.¹⁵⁶

We testify that he was very exact in paying his debts even before they came due.¹⁵⁷ When, of necessity, he was involved in a lawsuit, he asked the judges to provide justice to both parties.¹⁵⁸

We testify that the servant of God even sometimes waived the legal rights of houses of his Congregation when they were involved in lawsuits, out of fear of causing losses to their opponents.¹⁵⁹

153 See for example, *ibid.*, 3:41, 113ff, 151ff, 225, 237, 269, 287–288, 295. See also Letter 879, “To a Priest of the Mission,” October 1646, *CCD*, 3:97–99; Letter 1113, “To Brother Jacques Rivet,” 27 June 1649, *ibid.*, 3:452; Letter 1152, “To Brother Jacques Rivet, in La Rose,” 13 November 1649, *ibid.*, 3:503; Letter 1619, “To a Coadjutor Brother,” 29 May 1653, *ibid.*, 4:566; Letter 1709, “To Nicolas Guillot, in Warsaw,” 27 February 1654, *ibid.*, 5:93; Letter 1721, “To Stanislaw Zelazewski, in Warsaw,” 27 March 1654, *ibid.*, 5:110; Letter 1824, “To a Priest of the Mission,” 2 January 1655, *ibid.*, 5:256; Letter 1858, “Saint Louise to Saint Vincent,” 4 April 1655, *ibid.*, 5:356; Letter 1948, “To Edme Jolly, Superior, in Rome,” 22 October 1655, *ibid.*, 5:460; Letter 1977, “To Étienne Blatiron, Superior, in Genoa,” 17 December 1655, *ibid.*, 5:492; Letter 2003, “To a Priest of the Mission,” 1 February 1656, *ibid.*, 5:539; Letter 2067, “To a Priest of the Mission, in Saint-Meén,” 17 May 1656, *ibid.*, 5:613; and Letter 2682, “To Jacques de La Fosse, in Troyes,” 16 October 1658, *ibid.*, 7:308.

154 See for example, Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 46, 113, 115. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:108–11, 150.

155 For further reading, see *CCD*, 13a:430–470; 13b:1–66, 73–113, 123–26, 147–225, 441–47.

156 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 100. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:192ff; 2:374ff; 3:156–57, 191, 227–28, 247, 280. See also Letter 701, “To Guillaume Gallais, Superior, in Sedan,” 13 February 1644, *CCD*, 2:495.

157 Robineau notes: “He took great care that we promptly paid our debts, especially loans or letters of credit. He took care that those to whom it was due should not have to return two or three times to ask for their repayment. If by chance these creditors came to see him, he told them that they had should not have taken the trouble to return, and that he would send the money to their home. If he did not know where they lived, which happened quite often for bankers with letters of credit on his accounts, he would have someone find out where they lived and send them someone from the house to repay their money. When I once talked to him about this, I told him that he should just let them come to ask for their money and not take the trouble of sending it to them. He told me that this was wrong, thinking that he was unjustly causing people the trouble of returning three or four times to get what was legitimately due them. As for the salary or wages of the servants and domestics, he carefully made sure that they were paid.” *Robineau*, 31. *Ibid.*, 64. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:233–34.

158 *Ibid.*, 3:234–35.

159 Strictly speaking, this is not an accurate statement. Vincent de Paul was always adverse to lawsuits and avoided them as much as possible. When embroiled in lawsuits, he was content with relying on justice and Divine Providence. On several occasions, he certainly considered not entering into a lawsuit to defend the Congregation's rights, but his advisors usually persuaded him to do so. He did not appeal the great loss of the Orsigny farm even though the case would have been strong. See Letter 2752, “To Monsieur Desbordes, Counselor in the Parlement,” 21 December 1658, *CCD*, 7:422–23. Vincent also said “... we will never engage in a lawsuit with our benefactors, nor with the noblemen on whose estates we are established.” See also Letter 2134, “To the Duc De Noirmoutiers,” September 1656, *ibid.*, 6:88–89.

We testify that no one could ever accuse him of the vice of ingratitude,¹⁶⁰ since he always acknowledged even the smallest services anyone did for him. With great affection, he thanked those who assisted him while he travelled. Later, when he could no longer walk, he always thanked those who carried him to and from the chapel.¹⁶¹

We testify that above all he demonstrated gratitude toward the founders of the houses of his congregation.¹⁶² If any of these donors fell into any hardship by a reversal of fortune, he not only offered to return their original gift but also offered to aid them with all the assistance his congregation could.¹⁶³ He did this without any regret, and with great pleasure and joy. The above is well known, and attested to publicly by everyone.

This servant of God possessed an eminent degree of strength that enabled him to undertake so many difficult tasks for the glory of God,¹⁶⁴ while at the same time enduring temptations and unfortunate persecutions.¹⁶⁵ He showed an equanimity of spirit whether his affairs turned out well or badly, and he never seemed more joyful than when he was working in the face of adversity.¹⁶⁶

We testify that when he was employed on the king's council, he often attracted the resentment of nobles by refusing the benefices they requested for their children when he did not believe they were worthy of the honor. He also paid no attention to the magnificent promises often made to him by these men.¹⁶⁷

We testify that once M. (Adrien) Le Bon the prior of Saint-Lazare had asked the servant of God to intercede with the queen to free an abbess imprisoned for her scandalous conduct. He refused the prior's request since he knew in this case that justice had been done, and that there was good reason for her imprisonment. When the said prior reproached him for his ingratitude, the servant of God asked him to take back everything he had given him, since he had proven himself unworthy of the gift. The prior did not accept this offer.¹⁶⁸

160 On Vincent's gratitude see Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 117–118. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:233–41; Coste, *Life*, 3:315–17 and *Robineau*, 71.

161 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:237.

162 *Ibid.*, 3:239.

163 *Ibid.*, 3:239–40. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 117.

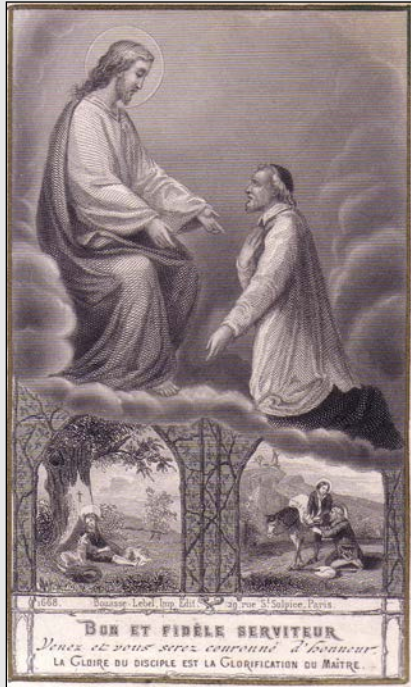
164 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 100.

165 According to Abelly, "If Monsieur Vincent showed his ardent zeal in so many ways, he also showed his strength and constancy. He persevered in the holy enterprises which God had inspired him to undertake, despite the difficulties, opposition, losses, and all the other grievous situations which he encountered." See *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:102. See also Letter 1890, "To Étienne Blatiron, in Rome," 9 July 1655, *CCD*, 5:400 and *Robineau*, 38–39.

166 For Vincent's indifference, see Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:24, 45, 47ff. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:370–71.

167 See for example, Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 100. See also *Robineau*, 25, 44. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:156–57, 191, 280–81.

168 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:281–82. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:343.



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“Good and faithful servant come and you will be crowned with honor.

The glory of the disciple is the glorification of his master.”

Of note, scenes picturing Vincent’s holiness as a child.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

The above with respect to strength of Monsieur Vincent is well known, and attested to publicly by everyone.

The servant of God was so temperate he refused any superfluous personal comforts, accepting only what he felt was necessary. He told me that he customarily left the table without fully satisfying his hunger. He ate nothing special, and only what the rest of the community ate, sometimes satisfying himself with the leftovers.¹⁶⁹

These things with respect to the temperance of the servant of God are true, public, and well known.

We testify that he took pleasure in living a life of obedience, submission, and dependence.¹⁷⁰ For a long time Cardinal de Bérulle served as his spiritual director, and he would undertake nothing without first seeking his advice.¹⁷¹

We testify that he was very submissive to Our Holy Father the Pope, blindly obeying all of the decisions of the Holy See.¹⁷² He acted with the same submission with regard to bishops and pastors. He never undertook a mission without first receiving their permission and publicly receiving their blessing.¹⁷³ He also made this a rule for his followers.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:254, 3:244, 265–66.

¹⁷⁰ See for example Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:205ff.

¹⁷¹ See *ibid.*, 1:50ff, 164ff; 3:207. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:254–55, 367.

¹⁷² See Robineau, 19, 50. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 126. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:107, 222; 2:355.

¹⁷³ See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 100. For a discussion of Vincent’s respect for bishops see Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:192–94; 2:373–84; 3:130–39. See also Coste, *Life*, 2:226–36. Also, Robineau, 53, 68.

¹⁷⁴ See Document 117a, “Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission, (Chap. 11., Art. 5),” (17 May 1658), *CCD*, 13a:461–62.

We testify that he was very exact in the observance of the rules of his congregation,¹⁷⁵ and he taught his subjects not only to submit to their superiors,¹⁷⁶ but also to submit themselves to everyone for the love of God.¹⁷⁷

These things with respect to the obedience practiced by the servant of God are true, public, and well known.

Monsieur Vincent rejoiced at his own abjection, so much so that it was his joy to receive scorn.¹⁷⁸ This is why he always claimed to be an ignorant person without much learning.¹⁷⁹ This is why he never defended himself when others unjustly accused him.¹⁸⁰ He would ask for a pardon on his knees from those whom he thought he had offended.¹⁸¹

With regard to his successes, he was always very faithful to give glory to God for each of them.¹⁸² He fled from praise like the plague.¹⁸³ He always pointed out the lowliness of his birth, saying he was the son of a laborer, that he had minded pigs in his youth,¹⁸⁴ and that

175 See *Robineau*, 54, 55.

176 See for example Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:205ff.

177 See *Ibid.*, 3:210. “Our obedience ought to go beyond those who have the right to give us orders ... We should submit ourselves to all human creatures for the love of God. Do this then and look upon all others as our superiors, and place yourself below all, smaller than even the least. Make this evident by the deference, condescension, and all sorts of services for others. What a fine thing it would be if God would confirm us in this practice.”

178 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 92, 95, 101, 128.

179 See *ibid.*, 125: “Vincent de Paul you told us that you were only a ‘weak fourth.’ You hid your studies. You hid the brilliance of your learning, and your spirit, with an unparalleled exercise of humility.” See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:84, 182, 186. See also Conference 198, “Seeking the Kingdom of God (Common Rules, Chap. 2, Art. 2),” 21 February 1659, *CCD*, 12:114; Conference 210, “Moral Theology, Preaching, Catechizing, and Administration of the Sacraments,” 5 August 1659, *ibid.*, 12:238; and Conference 215, “Informing Superiors of the Serious Faults and Temptations of the Neighbor (Common Rules, Chap. 2, Arts. 16 and 17),” [24 October 1659], *ibid.*, 12:394. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 37.

180 See Conference 151, “Admonitions,” *CCD*, 11:304–05. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:49–51; 3:157–58, 160, 162, 189ff.

181 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 6–7, 28, 30. See also Conference 27, “The Practice of Mutual Respect and Gentleness,” 19 August 1646, *CCD*, 9:218; Conference 49, “Good Use of Admonitions,” *ibid.*, 9:451–52; Conference 75, “To Two Sisters Being Sent to La Fère,” 29 July 1656, *ibid.*, 10:164; Conference 93, “Mutual Charity,” *ibid.*, 10:376; Conference 151, “Admonitions,” *ibid.*, 11:306–07; Conference 156, “Behavior When Going into Town,” 27 October 1656, *ibid.*, 11:326; and Conference 202, “Gentleness,” 28 March 1659, *ibid.*, 12:154–55. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:46; 2:223, 360; 3:70, 80, 128, 158, 160, 163, 185, 188–89, 191, 305–06.

182 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:13, 38, 73.

183 “He avoided honors and praise like the plague.” See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:181–82. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 92–93, 101–02.

184 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 95–96, 101. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:35–36; 3:257, 326. See also Letter 145, “To a Priest of the Mission,” 1633, *CCD*, 1:206; Letter 418, “To Louis Abelly, Vicar General of Bayonne,” 14 January 1640, *ibid.*, 2:5; Letter 467, “Charles de Montchal, Archbishop of Toulouse, to Saint Vincent,” 1640, *ibid.*, 2:103; Letter 1372, “To François de Saint-Remy, in Châlons,” 21 June 1651, *ibid.*, 4:219; Letter 2874, “To the Comte d’Obidos,” 17 June 1659, *ibid.*, 7:617; Letter 2993, “To a Young Man from Dax,” 29 September 1659, *ibid.*, 8:159; Letter 3153, “To François Fouquet, Archbishop of Narbonne,” [1660], *ibid.*, 8:383; Appendix 1, “Brother Ducournau to Canon de Saint-Martin,” August 1658, *ibid.*, 8:600; Conference 2, “The Vocation of a Daughter of Charity,” 5 July 1640, *ibid.*, 9:14; Conference 14, “Union within the Community,” 26 April 1643, *ibid.*, 9:89; Conference 115, “Rules for the Sisters in Parishes (Arts. 12–18 and Appendix),” 25 November 1659, *ibid.*, 10:547; Conference 182, “Detachment from the Goods of This World,” 8 June 1658, *ibid.*, 12:19; Conference 207, “Charity (Common Rules, Chap. 2, Art. 12),” 30 May 1659, *ibid.*, 12:220; Conference 210, “Moral Theology,” *ibid.*, 12:242; Conference 218, “Poverty, (Common Rules, Chap. 3, Arts. 3–10),” [21 November 1659], *ibid.*, 12:318; Supplement 23, “Maxims,” *ibid.*, 12:395.

he was just a poor “fourth form scholar.”

Once during a conference in the house of Saint-Lazare, a member of his Congregation “accused himself of being ashamed because he had not profited from the examples of virtue he had seen in the servant of God.” Hearing this, Monsieur Vincent immediately noted the rule of his Congregation to “never praise another person in that person’s presence.” Furthermore, he said his only claim to public notoriety was for being a marvel of malice and corruption, so much so that he felt himself to be worse than a demon, meriting eternal punishment even more than a demon did.¹⁸⁵

We testify that he often told his followers the Congregation would be justified in throwing him out because of the scandals he had given.¹⁸⁶ He also said he was unworthy to eat the bread put before him because he felt had not earned it by his labor.¹⁸⁷

We testify that once when the Prince de Condé complimented him, the servant of God demurred and pointed out the lowliness of his birth, repeating that he was only the son of a country laborer.¹⁸⁸ He took on the lowest tasks; he would clean the boots of those who came in from the country, carry the baggage of the ordinands arriving at the house for their retreat, and wait at table. He would also take the most uncomfortable place to hear confessions and choose the worst of clothing and nourishment.¹⁸⁹

We testify that he asked pardon for the smallest faults he believed he had committed, such as talking a little too rudely to a lay brother, a fault that he admitted publicly on his knees.¹⁹⁰ He did the same for a cleric who had served his mass, and whom he believed he had offended.

When he began the Congregation and lived at the College des Bons–Enfants, he often prostrated himself at the feet of his followers and asked their pardon, publicly accusing himself of all the most humiliating faults of his past life.¹⁹¹

We testify that once when he was informed of the arrival of one of his nephews, he was embarrassed by the thought of the young peasant’s rude dress. He considered having him shown to his room secretly. However, he immediately thought better of this, and he went to the door to welcome his nephew and then introduced him to the community, all the while praising him as being the most worthy member of his family. Later he accused

185 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:185. See also Conference 93, “Reflections of a Confrere from Repetition of Payer,” 26 June 1646, *CCD*, 11:108.

186 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:193. See also Conference 29, “Relations among the Sisters and with Persons outside the Company,” 2 February 1647, *CCD*, 9:240.

187 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 17. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:214; 3:239, 243.

188 Louis II de Bourbon, Prince of Condé (1621–1686). See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:190.

189 See Robineau, 22. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:93, 266. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 121–22.

190 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 30.

191 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:188–89.



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Vincent de Paul welcomes his nephew to Saint-Lazare. From a series on Vincent's life by Vignola.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

himself of the shame he felt about his behavior toward his nephew.¹⁹²

In 1641, he convoked a general assembly of the principal members of his congregation, and he pleaded with them to relieve him of the office of superior general.¹⁹³ After having offered his resignation, he left the meeting. It was only with difficulty that his confreres' requests and prayers persuaded him to continue governing the Congregation.¹⁹⁴

When he had learned that a princess had sent two of her children to receive his blessing, he told the porter who brought him this news that this embarrassed him. He felt it would be source of horror, rather than a consolation for them, to receive his blessing.¹⁹⁵ He regarded his congregation as being the most useless in the Church, and he instructed his followers always to give precedence to members from other communities.¹⁹⁶

We testify that Cardinal de La Rochefoucault was accustomed to say that if one wanted to find an example of true humility, one needed only to study the conduct of the servant of God.¹⁹⁷

192 See *ibid.*, 3:189, 259.

193 Bossuet is incorrect here. The actual date of the assembly was 1642.

194 *Ibid.*, 3:192. See also Document 89, "Minutes of the Assembly at Saint-Lazare," October 1642, *CCD*, 13a:329. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:293.

195 See Letter 3245, "M. Aubert to Saint Vincent," 31 August 1659, *CCD*, 8:498.

196 See for example Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:102, 147, 182, 187. See also Letter 575, "To Bernard Codoing, in Rome," 17 March 1642, *CCD*, 2:265; Conference 90, "Repetition of Prayer," 18 March 1642, *ibid.*, 11:104; Conference 203, "Humility (Common Rules, Chap. 2, Art. 7)," 18 April 1659, *ibid.*, 12:167; Supplement 23, "Maxims," *ibid.*, 12:395.

197 François de La Rochefoucauld, (1558–1648). Bishop of Clermont, then Senlis. Created a cardinal in 1607 by Pope Paul V, he was one of the key figures promoting the reform of the French religious orders. He served on the king's council and as Grand Almoner of France. He entered the Jesuit order on his deathbed. See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 125. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 2:385; 3:265.

These things with respect to his humility are true, public, and well known.

The servant of God had a great love of poverty. He always requested or chose for himself the most vile nourishment, furnishings, lodging, and clothing. Until his old age, a few years from his death, he never would accept a heated room, and his room was very small. He would allow neither a rug nor tapestry. The only furniture he had was a table with some wicker chairs. He had a poor bed, without covering, and with only one pillow.¹⁹⁸

We testify that he never asked anything for himself,¹⁹⁹ nor for his family,²⁰⁰ nor for his Congregation,²⁰¹ and that he had given so much of the wealth of Saint-Lazare to the poor that he left his house almost without any resources.²⁰² The above is well known, and attested to publicly by everyone.

We testify that the servant of God lived a life characterized by extreme mortification. He treated his body with great rigor, refusing it as much as he could. He also was an enemy of his own will, and he voluntarily submitted himself to the will of others.²⁰³

We testify that he took the discipline every morning,²⁰⁴ and wore a hair shirt for many years.²⁰⁵ He sprinkled a bitter powder on his meat.²⁰⁶

We testify that he incessantly urged his followers to possess a spirit of mortification. He regarded this virtue as the one most necessary for nurturing one's spiritual life and acquiring all the other virtues.²⁰⁷

We testify that he frequently suffered from fevers, and used a very painful remedy. Even during hot weather, he took to bed with two hot water bottles, and then covered himself with many blankets so he would sweat. He would sweat so profusely that he would look like he had just emerged from a bath.²⁰⁸ However, even in the midst of these illnesses, he never missed community prayer.²⁰⁹ The above is well known, and attested to publicly by everyone.

198 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:242ff.

199 *Ibid.*

200 *Ibid.*, 3:257ff.

201 *Ibid.*, 3:246–247.

202 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 111–13. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:123–30.

203 On Vincent's mortification see *ibid.*, 3:254–67. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:360–64. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 121–22.

204 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 121. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:266.

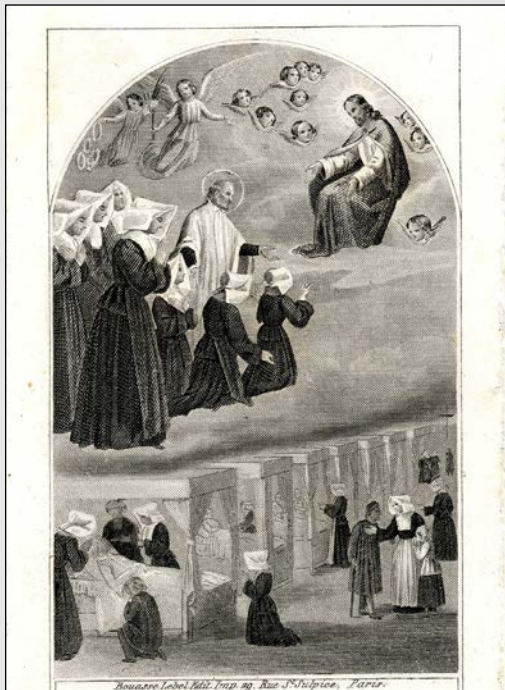
205 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:266.

206 *Ibid.*

207 See Conference 65, "Mortification of the Senses and Passions," 3 January 1655, *CCD*, 10:44ff; Conference 66, "Secretiveness," 2 February 1644, *ibid.*, 10:53ff; Conference 72, "The Maxims of Jesus Christ and Those of the World (Common Rules, Art. 4)," 2 November 1655, *ibid.*, 10:123ff; Conference 89, "Mortification, Correspondence, Meals, and Journeys (Common Rules, Arts. 24-27)," 9 December 1657, *ibid.*, 10:318ff; Conference 204, "Mortification," 2 May 1659, *ibid.*, 12:173ff; and Conference 211, "The Five Characteristic Virtues," 22 August 1659, *ibid.*, 12:243ff.

208 For Vincent's illnesses see Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:250ff. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:385–400.

209 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:252–53.



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***Holy card, the text of which reads:
“Christian Charity. I was ill and you cared for me.”***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

We testify that the servant of God had a singular love for chastity so that he always used every means to preserve it.²¹⁰ If he was obliged to speak with women or girls, he did so with his eyes lowered. If his charity or civility obliged him to visit them, he always did so with a companion. On one of these visits, his companion left the room, and the servant of God recalled him and reprimanded him severely.²¹¹

We testify that he avoided using any words that might give even the least impression of being contrary to chastity. He especially used this caution when he was obliged to speak to women with bad reputations, thus avoiding even the appearance of approving of vice. He encouraged his followers to follow the same conduct. He commanded that when they wrote to persons of the opposite sex they should avoid using any terms that were too tender.²¹²

He also instructed them never to touch a woman, even to refrain from taking the pulse of a sick woman in need of the last rites.²¹³

These things are true, public, and well known.

We testify that the servant of God practiced a heroic patience to the point of even thanking those persons who had injured him. He believed singular graces came from enduring these affronts for the sake of God.²¹⁴

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:268–73.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3:271.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 3:269–70.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 3:268–69.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:156–62.

We testify that he never gave any sign of impatience or sadness during his frequent illnesses. We testify he showed the same equanimity with regard to the persecutions he experienced. He never uttered a word of complaint, nor attacked those who had offended him.

We testify that the venerable servant of God had long suffered from swelling in his legs. Eventually he was afflicted with an ulcer, making his sufferings more acute. This situation did nothing to alter the serenity of his countenance, or the meekness and affability of his conversations. He always ate only what the community ate, and refused any delicacies people tried to give him.

His illness worsened as the ulcers increased, making his life a martyrdom of pain. He endured this suffering with a marvelous tranquility of spirit, and he never said anything to betray his patience and his resignation to God's will. He welcomed every visitor, and bore his pain as penitence for his sins. He continued to live an austere life.

When he sensed death was approaching, he regarded this prospect with pleasure, and made it the object of his desires and the subject of his teachings to his followers. He said, "Soon the corpse of this old sinner will be put in the earth and reduced to dust underfoot." Sometimes in the midst of his old age he wrote, "*Heu mihi, quia incolatus meus prolongatus est.*" ("Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged."²¹⁵) He prayed God would release him from the prison of his body so that he could sing his praises in heaven, but as always he resigned himself totally to God's will.

When he was dying, the members of his community who were assisting him prayed the verse from the psalm of David, "*Deus in adiutorium meum intende.*" The servant of God completed the verse by saying, "*Domine ad adiuvandum me festina.*"²¹⁶ In his last days, when he heard this prayer, he would always awaken to reply. This continued until Monday, 27 September 1660 at 4:30 in the morning, when his soul very peacefully and quietly separated from his body. The expression on his face was serene, and his body remained flexible.

His funeral attracted a large number of people and was graced by the presence of the Prince de Conti,²¹⁷ and the papal nuncio Piccolomini,²¹⁸ many prelates and ladies of the highest nobility, particularly those who assembled each Wednesday to serve the sick poor at Hôtel-Dieu and the poor of the countryside who suffered from public disasters.²¹⁹ One saw solemn services held to honor his memory in various other places, and at various times. Our assembly of the Tuesday Conferences organized a magnificent service in Paris

215 Psalm 119:5 from the Vulgate.

216 Psalm 69:2 from the Vulgate. "O God. Come to my assistance." "O Lord. Make haste to help me."

217 Armand de Bourbon-Conti, a prince of the blood (1629–1666).

218 Celio Piccolomini served as nuncio to France from 1656 to 1662.

219 The Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris. See for example, Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:152–56.

at the parish of Saint-Germain de l’Auxerrois. The bishop of Puy gave the funeral oration at this service held on 23 November 1660. It lasted for two hours. The personal knowledge the bishop had of the servant of God, joined to his own illustrious qualities, attracted a large and celebrated audience who listened with great attention. Those present shed many tears, particularly upon hearing about Monsieur Vincent’s extraordinary humility and his incomparable charity toward the poor. The speaker described how the venerable servant of God had practiced the virtues of constancy and perseverance in all his actions with promptness, joy, and ease.²²⁰ These things are true, public, and well known.

We also testify he was responsible for the great works conducted by the Congregation of the Mission he founded.²²¹ We have worked in these missions alongside the spiritual children of this venerable servant of God.²²² There are also the spiritual retreats offered for all sorts of persons²²³ and the retreats for ordinands.²²⁴ I have assisted with these on four occasions.²²⁵ There are also the spiritual conferences for ecclesiastics²²⁶ and the diocesan seminaries.²²⁷ There are also the Confraternities of Charity²²⁸ that led to the foundation of the community of the Daughters of Charity, servants of the sick poor who have accomplished inconceivable good through their more than 250 establishments, including many in our diocese.²²⁹ There is also the establishment of the company of the Ladies of Charity, which serves the sick at the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris,²³⁰ and assists the provinces desolated by public miseries.²³¹ There is the Hospital for the foundlings²³² and the hospice of the Name of Jesus for service of the elderly poor.²³³ These gave rise to the establishment of the General Hospital of Paris²³⁴ and many other hospitals, as well as many other diverse works of piety done by Monsieur Vincent.²³⁵ We find all this information in his biography, and in his funeral

220 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour* throughout.

221 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:109–12, 19–26; 2:11, 9–182. See also Coste, *Life*, 1:144–76, 469–530; 2:1–117; 3:20–64.

222 See Coste *Life*, 2:136–144.

223 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:141–43, 2:229–48. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:1–19.

224 See Coste, *Life*, 2:150–69, and Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:138–40; 2:183–203.

225 See *ibid.*, 2:153.

226 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:144–47; 2:210–228. See also Coste, *Life*, 2:118–49.

227 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 2:249–258. See also Coste, *Life*, 2:170–91.

228 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:72–73; 2:285–90. See also Coste, *Life*, 2:268–77, 336–462.

229 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:133–38; 2:291–302.

230 See *ibid.*, 1:152–59; 2:303–15; See also Coste, *Life*, 1:232–42; 278–335.

231 See also Coste, *Life*, 2:366–482.

232 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:160–63. See also Coste, *Life*, 2:255–79.

233 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:224–27.

234 *Ibid.*, 1:227–30.

235 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant* and Coste, *Life* throughout.



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“An authentic portrait of the Venerable Servant of God. Vincent de Paul, founder and first superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, endowed with numerous virtues, especially charity, humility, a true father of the poor, dedicated his life to young persons receiving Holy Orders, still done today. Died Paris, Saint-Lazare, in 1660, aged 85.”

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

oration. These things are true, public, and well known.

We testify that during the life of the servant of God, and after his death, all of France and all of Paris held him in esteem as a very holy man. We testify that everyone, whatever their station in life gives him praise, most particularly the clergy and the bishops. The bishops know this fact very well, and they also testify that his renown continues to grow.

We testify that the late Duchess d’Aiguillon,²³⁶ whom we remember for her rare virtues, and most notably for her great charity, donated a silver reliquary to hold the heart of the servant of God.²³⁷

We testify that many people belonging to his congregation and even externs have desired to obtain linen stained with the blood of the servant of God, or some other small piece of his clothing or belongings. The faithful preserve these items with great piety, and they already have brought extraordinary favors to those who have sought his intercession in their prayers.²³⁸ Many of these accounts are recorded and notarized.

We testify that twice a year the Daughters of Charity visit his tomb, where they recommend themselves to his intercession with great devotion and humility. The sisters very often receive the favors they have requested.

We testify there are always many other persons who come to Saint-Lazare to visit the tomb of the servant of God, addressing their prayers to him. They have been attracted by reading his biography, and by their own opinions with respect to his sanctity.

236 Cardinal Richelieu’s niece, Marie Madeleine de Vignerot du Pont de Courlay, Duchesse d’Aiguillon (1604–1675).

237 See Coste, *Life*, 3:399.

238 For an account of Vincent’s relics see *ibid.*, 3:433–61.

Finally, we attest before God, who knows we are speaking the truth, that we have regarded and still regard the venerable Monsieur Vincent de Paul to be a saint. We judge him to be worthy of public veneration, whenever it will please Our Holy Father the Pope to undertake such an examination, make such a determination, and issue such an order.

We have faithfully related all of the above, and have signed this statement which our Secretary has co-signed, and to which we have affixed our seal.

Given at Paris, where we are at present in residence for the affairs of our Church,
1702.

J.B. Bishop of Meaux

By Monsignor.



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Turn of the twentieth-century postcard featuring Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, and a view of Notre Dame, Paris.

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Appendix

Letter from Bossuet to Pope Clement XI

2 August 1702

Letter LXXXIII. BOSSUET TO CLEMENT XI

On the virtues of the venerable Vincent de Paul.

Most Holy Father,

In all the diverse matters that daily come to the Holy See for its consideration, it is the duty of bishops to lend you their assistance to assure that truth triumphs. I am aware that Your Holiness' tribunal is now examining the life and sanctity of the Venerable priest Vincent de Paul, founder and first superior general of the Congregation of the Mission.

We have the advantage of having known him in the years of our youth. His pious teachings, and his wise advice, helped develop in us a taste for a true and solid piety, and a love for ecclesiastical discipline. At our advanced age, we recall these memories with great joy. After our elevation to the priesthood, we had the honor of becoming a member of the company of virtuous ecclesiastics that assembled weekly to discuss spiritual matters.²³⁹ Monsieur Vincent was the founder of these assemblies, and was their soul. There was never a time when he spoke to us that we did not hang on his every word, and feel in our hearts that he was an example of one of those men about whom the Apostle speaks: “whoever preaches let it be with the words of God.”²⁴⁰

239 See previous footnote on the Tuesday Conferences.

240 1 Peter 4:11.

This holy man's reputation and piety often attracted prelates of great distinction to attend these conferences. Besides benefitting personally, these men also benefitted by finding in his students who attended this assembly a group of excellent ecclesiastics who shared their pastoral solicitude, and who were ready to assist them in their apostolic ministry. These worthy ministers, whose actions proved to be no less eloquent than their words, helped carry the light of the Gospel throughout their dioceses. We, ourselves, had the honor of being associated with this work by virtue of our leadership position among the clergy of Metz when we participated in a mission he arranged to take place there.²⁴¹ However, to be honest, Monsieur Vincent ensured the success of this effort through his prayers, advice, and the care he took to inspire all those who participated.

When it was time for us to be ordained to the priesthood, we sought out the assistance of Monsieur Vincent and his followers to help us prepare. He first established the practice of offering ordination retreats.²⁴² Later, we ourselves often conducted these ordination exercises, supported by this holy man's prayers and guided by his advice. Thus, over time, I was able to study his virtues carefully, above all his sincere and truly apostolic charity. I saw how his seriousness and prudence were joined with an admirable personal simplicity. He also had an ardent zeal for the re-establishment of ecclesiastical discipline, and a zeal for the salvation of souls. Finally, he exhibited an invincible constancy in strongly opposing anything that would corrupt the purity of faith, or the innocence of morals. He was an unforgettable person. As for me, I recall with an indescribable pleasure the example of his pure faith, his profound respect for the Holy See, and his sincere and unreserved submission to its decrees. I recall how he served God with such a heartfelt personal humility that was unaffected even by his position and responsibilities at court.

Each day, new luster is added to the reputation of this holy person. He is honored everywhere for his imitation of Jesus Christ. Everyone, everywhere, has expressed their desire that a holy pontiff will one day include him in the ranks of the saints.

Most Holy Father, it is easy for us to preserve our cherished memories of the venerable Monsieur Vincent since he lives on in his Congregation, and since the worthy children of his Congregation labor successfully in our diocese, joyfully joining with us to serve the flock confided to our care.

We also cannot forget the company of virtuous Daughters founded by the pious Monsieur Vincent. The Daughters follow the wise rules that he gave them as they serve the poor and, above all, the sick. They do this with a humility, charity, and purity that always reminds us of their holy founder, whose spirit still fills and inspires their holy Institute.

²⁴¹ See previous footnote on the mission held in Metz

²⁴² See previous footnote on the ordination retreats at Saint-Lazare.

It is our tender memories of these great works that we wish to present for your paternal consideration. We have shared our testimony about Monsieur Vincent because we believe that it gives pleasure to a holy person to hear about someone who was a saint. Because of the profound respect we have for Your Holiness, and because of the knowledge we have of the many matters that always demand your attention, we will not delay you any longer. We know, however, that nothing can ever really distract someone who possesses such a superior spirit and a talent for simultaneously examining so many different affairs, a soul that heaven has favored with its sweetest consolations and that guides and inspires him with wisdom, and strength. May God long preserve such a head for His Church. This is our most ardent and sincere wish. As to the rest, Most Holy Father, I stand here before God in Jesus Christ as I say to Your Holiness in all sincerity, fidelity and truth that I remain your most devoted and most obedient servant.

Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet
Bishop of Meaux

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**Portrait of Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux.
Engraving by Pierre-Imbert Drevet after Hyacinthe Rigaud. 1723.
Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.**

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***Portrait of Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet.
Oil on canvas. 1698.
Uffizi Museum, Florence, Italy.***

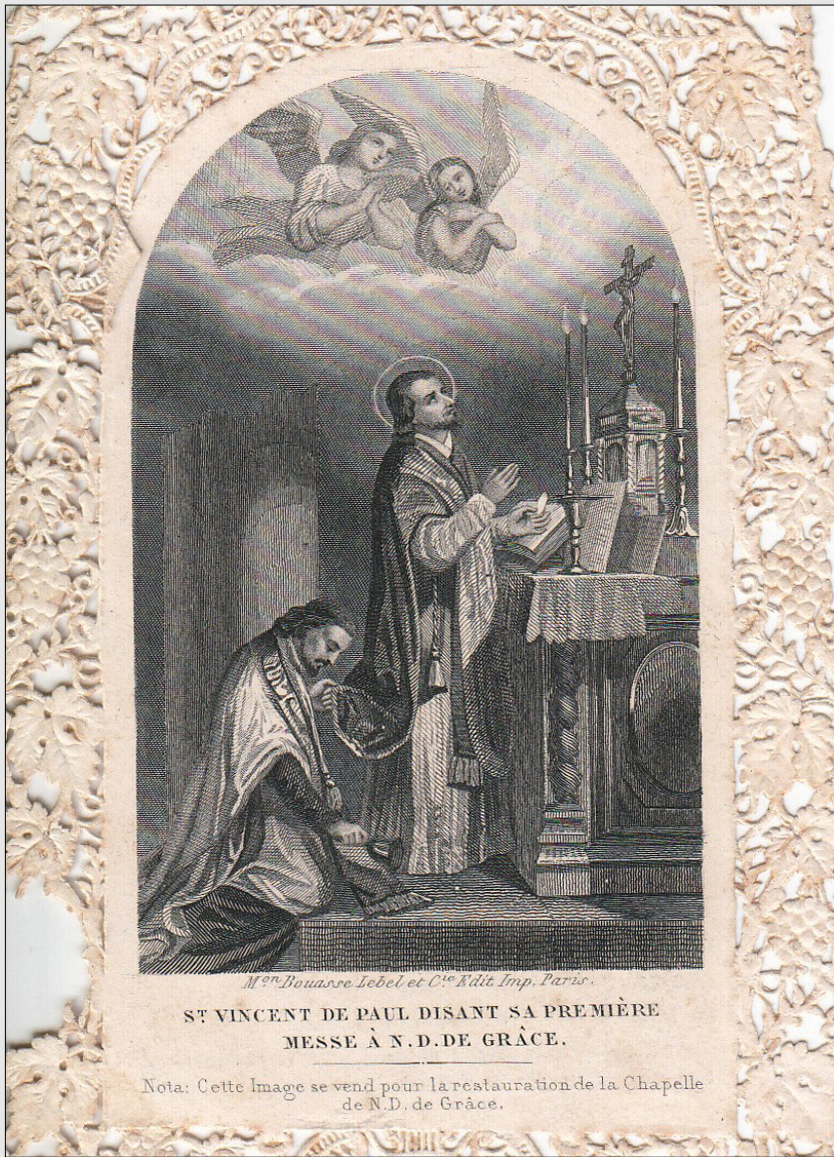
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Vincent de Paul, seated, speaking to the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences. Framed oil on canvas; original in Collegio Leoniano, Rome, Italy.

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Holy cards which read: “Vincent celebrates his first mass at Notre Dame de Grace, near Buzet”; and “Frequent communion. Continual union with God. The presence of God should more completely occupy our spirit than the presence of all creatures together.”

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



Si l'Amour
de Dieu
est un feu,
le zèle
en est
la flamme;
si l'Amour
est un
soleil,
le zèle
en est
le rayon.
Le zèle est
ce qu'il y a de
plus pur
dans l'Amour
de Dieu.

S. Vincent de Paul

[Click to go back](#)

“If the love of God is a fire, zeal is its flame; if it is a sun, zeal is a ray. Zeal is what is purest in the love for God.”

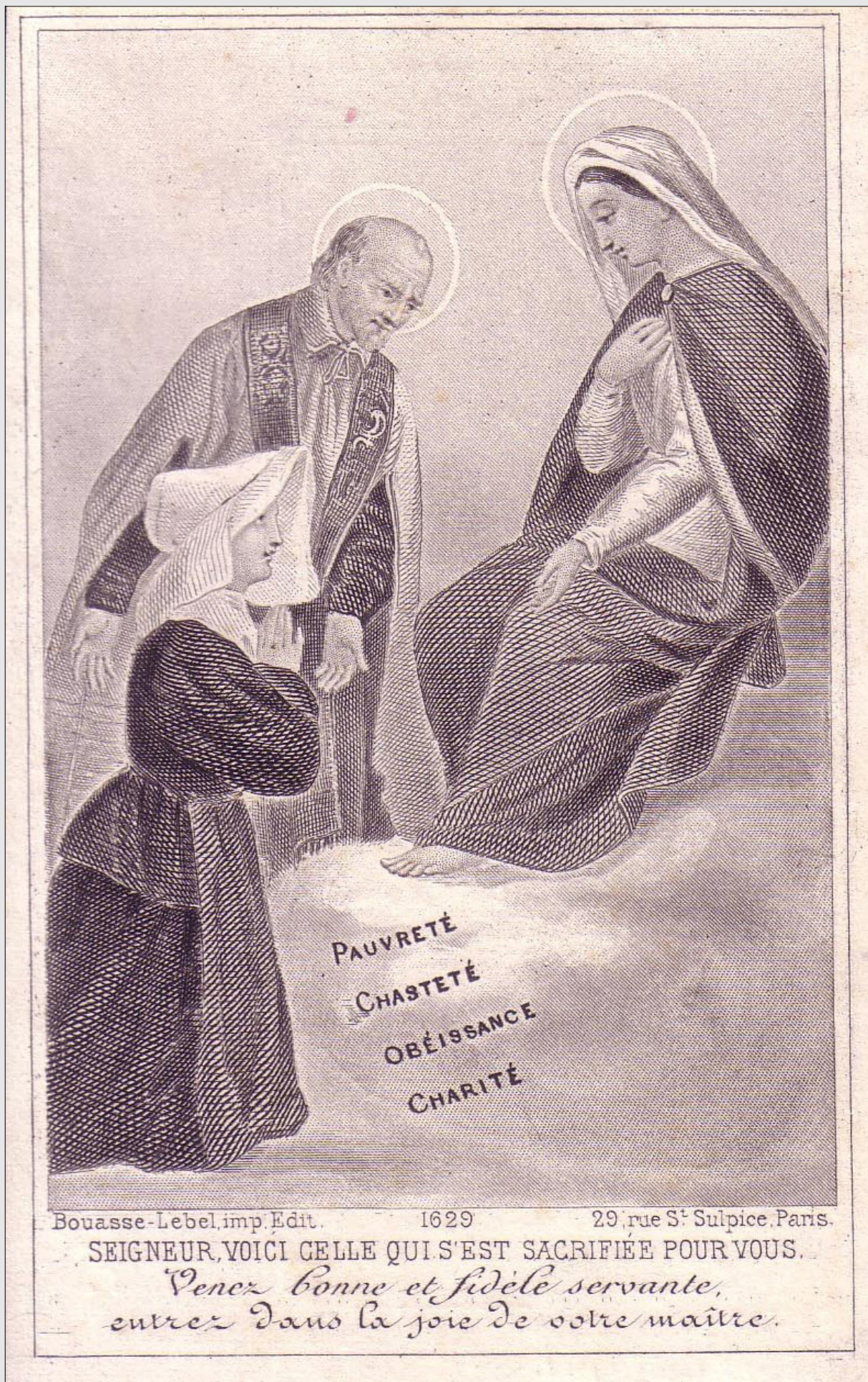
Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



[Click to go back](#)

***Vincent de Paul, standing, with ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences.
Oil on canvas; originally in Toul seminary, now in Crézilles.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



[Click to go back](#)

**“Lord, behold her who has sacrificed herself for you.
Come good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Master.”
Holy card depicting the Blessed Virgin, Vincent, and a Daughter of
Charity, probably distributed for the annual renewal of vows.**

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



LE RESPECT DE SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL POUR LES PAUVRES

Le saint se jette à genoux, à la porte de Saint-Lazare, devant des pauvresses à qui il avait promis l'aumône, et leur demande pardon de les avoir fait attendre. — Composition et dessin de M. Gaillard, à Paris; dix-neuvième siècle.

27

[Click to go back](#)

Vincent de Paul at the door of Saint-Lazare kneeling in respect before the waiting poor. Engraving in Arthur Loth, *Saint Vincent de Paul et Sa Mission Sociale* (1880); by M. Gaillard.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

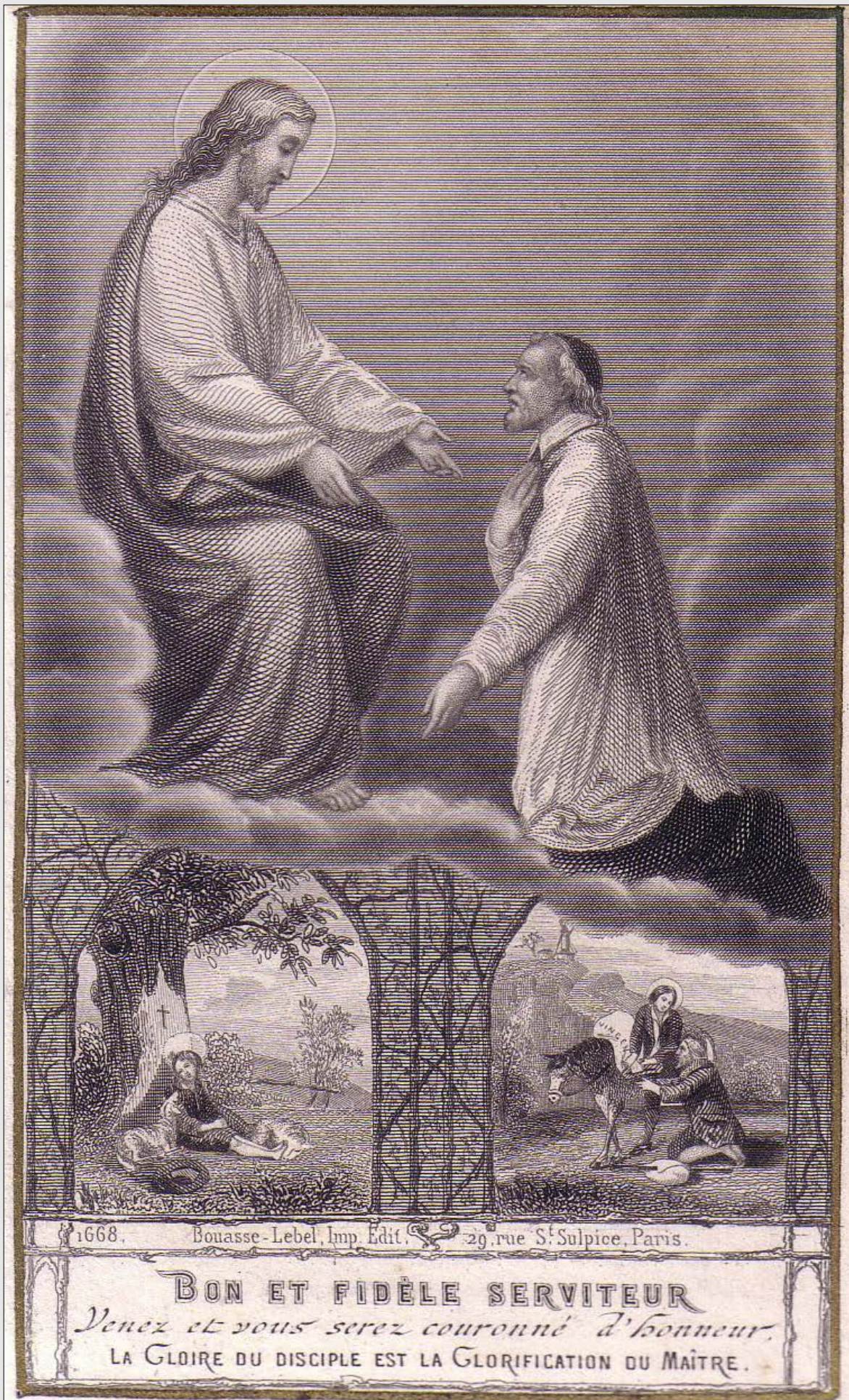


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Vincent de Paul, notary at right, giving the rule for the first Confraternity of Charity in Châtillon.

Lacquer panel; original in Vincentian General Curia, Rome, Italy.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



[Click to go back](#)

***“Good and faithful servant come and you will be crowned with honor.
The glory of the disciple is the glorification of his master.”
Of note, scenes picturing Vincent’s holiness as a child.***

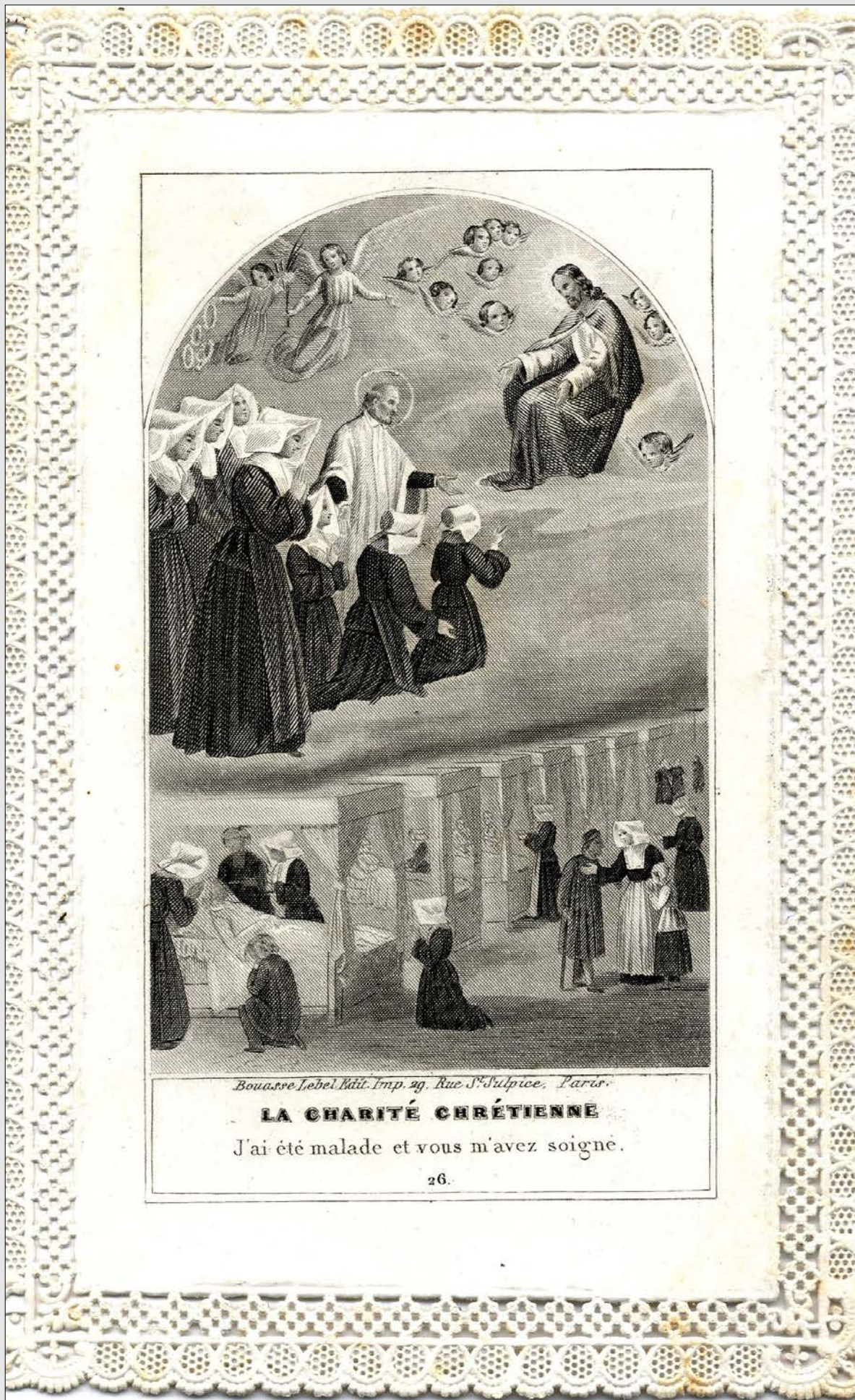
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[Click to go back](#)

***Vincent de Paul welcomes his nephew to Saint-Lazare.
From a series on Vincent's life by Vignola.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



[Click to go back](#)

**Holy card, the text of which reads:
"Christian Charity. I was ill and you cared for me."**

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

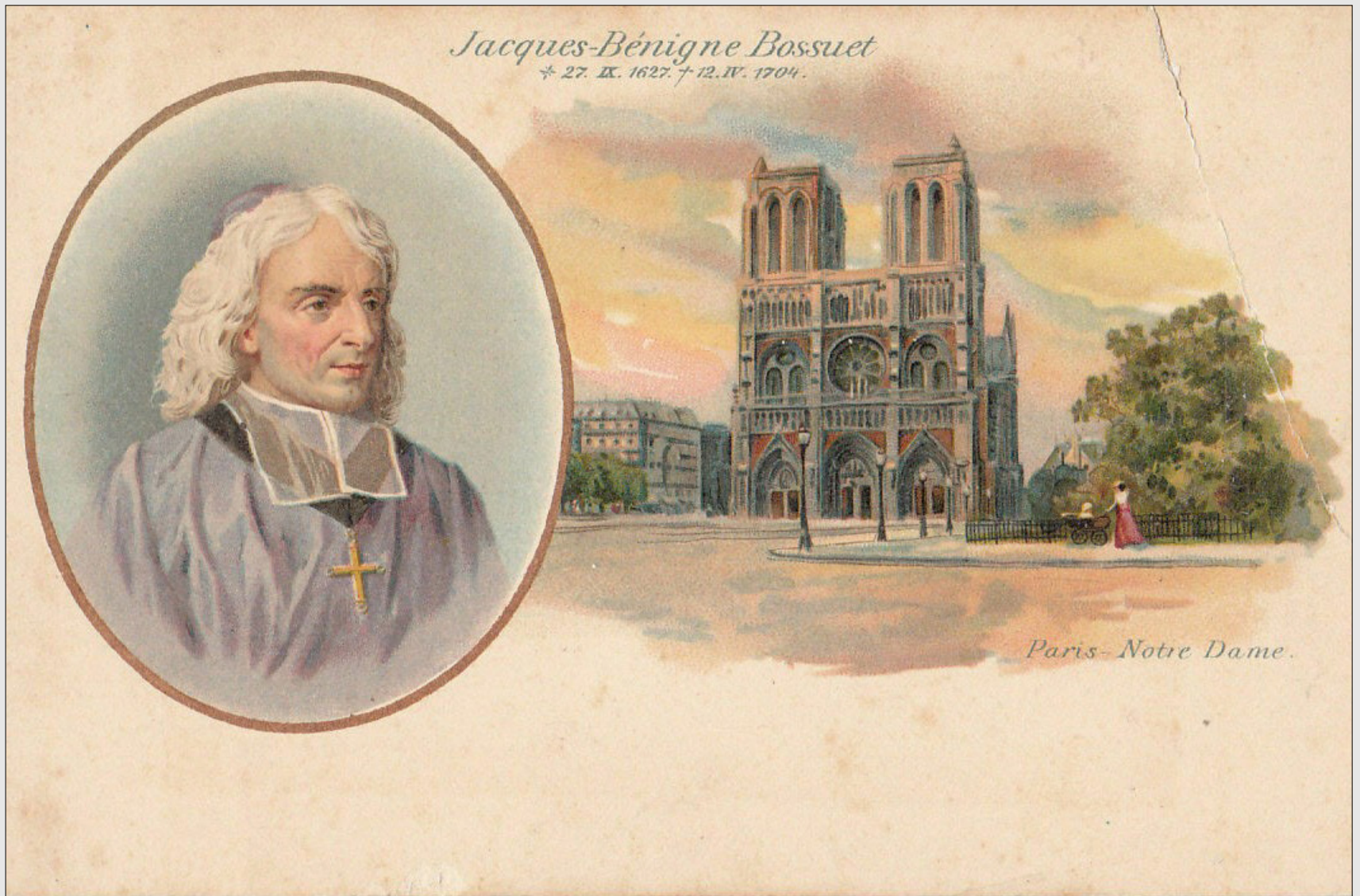


Le vray Portrait du venerable Seruiteur de Dieu, Vincent de Paul, instituteur et premier Superieur general de la Congregation de la mission, doué de plusieurs Vertus, principalement de la Charité, de l'humilité, Vray Pere des pauvres et s'est en son viuant addonné a receuoir des jeunes personnes pour rescevoir les Ordres, ce qui se voit encore aujourd'hui et est mort à Paris dans la maison de s.^t Lazare l'an 1660. aage de 85. ans .

[Click to go back](#)

“An authentic portrait of the Venerable Servant of God. Vincent de Paul, founder and first superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, endowed with numerous virtues, especially charity, humility, a true father of the poor, dedicated his life to young persons receiving Holy Orders, still done today. Died Paris, Saint-Lazare, in 1660, aged 85.”

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



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Turn of the twentieth-century postcard featuring Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, and a view of Notre Dame, Paris.

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