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ON
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Vincent de Paul preaching to the prisoners on a galley (top); and taking on the chains of a galley convict.

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Vincent de Paul and the Galleys of France

JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M., PH.D.

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In 1619, six years before the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission, Louis XIII appointed Vincent de Paul “Royal Chaplain of the Galleys of France.”¹ He continued in this responsibility until the last years of his life. This study reviews this work, often neglected in the popular recounting of his accomplishments.

Galley, definitions

In Vincent’s time, the term “galley” [*galère*] was applied to a long and narrow ship, about three feet above the water line, propelled primarily by oars but also having masts for sails (mainly triangular, or lateen, sails). Ships with multiple rowers date from remote antiquity, from the time of the Egyptians, as carvings and written descriptions attest. In ancient Greece and Rome, these ships, originally used for commercial transportation, became war vessels. Biremes and triremes were propelled by two or three oarsmen respectively sitting in rows above or below each other, each with a single oar. In the sixteenth century maritime powers still used very large galleys, and the final great sea battle, the battle of Lepanto, occurred in 1571. It was the last of a long series of engagements between Muslims and Christians, and it was fought in shallow waters. As a result, the Mediterranean was left divided between the Ottoman east and the Christian west.

The Ottoman galleys then expanded to Barbary, the traditional name for the North African coast, now comprising Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. They served mainly for piracy: attacking Christian vessels, seizing their goods and passengers, and often using the Christian galleys to swell their fleets. They also regularly attacked coastal settlements to loot and acquire slaves either for work or for ransom.²

The Christian-rowed vessels (from Spain, France, Genoa, Venice, the Papal States, and others) continued to develop. The Italians had the galleass [*galeazzo*], a larger and heavier craft, or the galliot, a smaller and lighter version. The galleon, by contrast, was a sailing ship propelled by wind and sails, and not by oars. The Spanish developed these for both war and commerce, using them to cross the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans in service of the Spanish Empire. All the ships were armed with cannons and staffed by sailors.

A new system of rowing began in Venice, the great sea power of the period. In the sixteenth century, the Venetians gave up the one-man/one-oar system passed down from antiquity in favor of a more efficient style of several-men/one-oar. This relieved the problem of the possible clash of multiple oars for various reasons, such as broken oars or errors by an oarsman in following the highly complex system of synchronized rowing.

¹ *Saint Vincent de Paul. Correspondance, entretiens, documents*, ed. by Pierre Coste, C.M., 14 vols. (Paris, 1920-25); English translation: *Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. and trans. by Jacqueline Kilar, D.C., Marie Poole, D.C., et al, 1-14 (New York: New City Press, 1985-2014), 13a:58-59. Hereafter CCD.

² Recent works on this topic include Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves and Muslim Masters. White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500–1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Adrian Tinniswood, *Pirates of Barbary. Corsairs, Conquests, and Captivity in the Seventeenth-Century Mediterranean* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2010); and Alan G. Jamieson, *Lords of the Sea. A History of the Barbary Corsairs* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012).



Vincent de Paul distributes Communion to galley prisoners. Illustration by Jean-Loup Chamet.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



France lagged far behind its neighbors in the use of galleys, inasmuch as they were utilized principally for commercial interests such as transporting goods, the long-haul trucks of their day. Henry IV had only one galley, and Louis XIII only twelve at his death. His son, Louis XIV, began with only nine in 1661. As a result, in an effort to build a fleet, he then either appropriated others from commercial owners or constructed new ones to his specifications.

A primary reason for this growth was that France sought to safeguard its coasts from other powers. Consequently, it also had to find a source of suitable rowers. Since France had only a few galleys by the beginning of the seventeenth century, it could rely either on paid volunteers (the *bonnevoles*), or on slaves purchased in the numerous slave markets found in Genoa, Livorno, Malta, Mallorca, and even Constantinople. Many of these were prisoners of war, and a percentage of them, perhaps one quarter, were Muslims.³ The majority, then, were Christians, often Orthodox from Eastern Europe.

It is unclear who first had the idea of using French criminals for service on the galleys—they were not slaves—but it developed during the sixteenth century in the time of Francis I as a kind of punishment, along with banishment from one's home territory.⁴ The first law concerning using convicts for galleys dates from 1561, and in 1564, another extended the time of punishment to no less than ten years. This system powerfully affected Vincent's ministry. As Henri de Maupas du Tour relates in his funeral oration: Vincent could not recount their suffering without becoming "bathed in tears," describing the prisoners as, "being covered with vermin and maggots."⁵

³ André Zysberg and René Burlet, *Gloire et misère des galères* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 86; on the general history, see: Marc Vigié, "Galères," in *Dictionnaire du grand siècle*, François Bluche, ed. (Paris, 1990), 633-34.

⁴ André Zysberg, "Splendeurs et misères des galères de France," in *Quand voguaient les galères*, Exposition du 4 octobre 1990 au 6 janvier 1991, Musée de la Marine, Paris (Rennes, 1990), 188.

⁵ Edward R. Udovic, C.M., *Henri de Maupas du Tour: The Funeral Oration for Vincent de Paul* (Chicago: DePaul University Vincentian Studies Institute, 2015), 107.

Condemned to the galleys

“Until the coming of the concentration camp, the galley held an undisputed pre-eminence as the darkest blot on Western civilization; a galley, shuddered a poetic observer, would cast a shadow in the blackest midnight.”⁶ Although no French galley has survived, the words *galère* or *galérien* (a galley convict) continue in the French language as synonyms for any sort of brutal and rough conditions. It was in this system that the kindly Vincent de Paul, often portrayed simply as caring lovingly for abandoned children, began a new ministry. In his work, he dealt with human fuel, men who were used principally to power the ships, working until they could no longer do so because of illness or death, the most common reason.

As a member of the Gondi household, he would have had occasions to observe the convicts in Paris being held before their transfer to the galleys in Marseilles. They were under the authority of Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, general of the galleys. Vincent recalled later in a conference to the Daughters of Charity, “I’ve seen those poor men treated like animals; that caused God to be moved with compassion.”⁷ This must have happened shortly after he returned from Châtillon in 1617, since he had more time to engage in pastoral work. One of his first cares was to remove prisoners from such inhuman confinement as the dungeon in the Châtelet of Paris. It was known as “the Dyke of Hypocras where a prisoner could not sit or lie down; he had to stand in or trample wearily the filthy water swishing about him, his body chained and bent over his swollen, rotting feet.”⁸ No one survived more than a month there.

Vincent located a building for rent in the city, and the convicts were transferred there. He often spent time with them and recalled in an undated letter: “I kissed their chains, showed compassion for their distress, and expressed sorrow for their misfortune.”⁹ After about ten years, he acquired a much larger property, located on the left bank of the River Seine. It had been designed as a fort, La Tournelle, upriver from Notre Dame. Originally planned to protect the city, it had long outlived its usefulness. In 1632, therefore, the prisoners were transferred here.¹⁰

This property was situated in the parish of St. Nicholas du Chardonnet, an easy walk from the Bons-Enfants, the Congregation’s first house. With the aid of the pastor, Vincent secured regular help from some of his many assistant priests to care sacramentally for the prisoners, especially when the time approached for their departure to the galleys

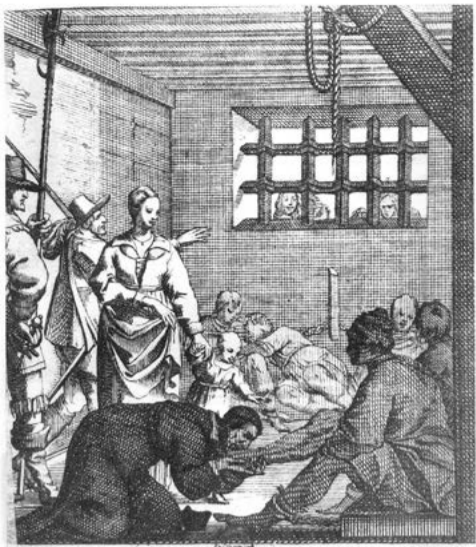
⁶ Warren Hamilton Lewis, “The Galleys of France,” in Dorothy Sayers, J.R.R. Tolkien, et al., *Essays presented to Charles Williams*, ed. by C.S. Lewis (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 136.

⁷ Conference 71, “The Purpose of the Company,” 18 October 1655, *CCD*, 10:103.

⁸ Mary Purcell, *The World of Monsieur Vincent* (New York, 1963), 82; the “Dyke” translates *chausse*, an underground space in the shape of a deep inverted funnel, likely named from the shape of a bottle containing a liqueur named Hippocras. The prisoner was let down by ropes through the narrow opening and escape was impossible.

⁹ Letter 1243, “To a Priest of the Mission,” *CCD*, 4:58.

¹⁰ On this early period, see Pierre Coste, C.M., *The Life & Works of Saint Vincent de Paul*, trans. Joseph Leonard, C.M., 3 vols. (New York: New City Press, 1987), 1:115-18.



ce qui font de lui un pauvre frère aux gallois. Reconnait son amour, et ce vertueux père
Et qui pour leur perfection de charité. Leur emplissent les mains de leur bienfait.

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
VISITANT LES GALÉRIENS DE LA TOURNELLE.
Gravure du temps.

Vincent de Paul, kneeling, kisses the feet of a galley prisoner at La Tournelle.

One of the earliest engravings of Vincent de Paul, reproduced in *The Heroic Life of Saint Vincent de Paul* by Henri Lavedan. Lavedan likely erred in identifying the priest with Vincent de Paul. He is more likely Claude Bernard, a contemporary of the saint known as "the poor priest."

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



themselves. He encouraged the members of the parish Confraternity of Charity to help as well, primarily mature women who could provide kindness and the small necessities of life. In this case, too, the Daughters of Charity, who lived nearby, worked with the Confraternity.¹¹

Vincent drew up rules to guide them in their service.¹² Article one is the most important, inasmuch as it prefaces the rules that follow. It is clear that the founder had thought long and hard about the Sisters' service.

(1) Just as the ministry of the Sisters of the Charity with the galley convicts is one of the most difficult and dangerous they can have, because of the management of money involved as well as the kind of persons to be visited there, it is also one of the most meritorious and pleasing to God when carried out properly, because of what is practiced there to a high degree: the corporal and spiritual works of mercy for persons who are so wretched in body and soul that it is almost beyond imagining. That is why those who are called by God to this holy ministry must, on the one hand, endeavor to make themselves worthy of it by the practice of the requisite virtues and by an exact observance of their Rules, and, on the other, encourage one another and have great confidence in Our Lord Jesus Christ, keeping in mind that, by assisting those poor persons, they will render Him a service as pleasing or more pleasing to Him, than if it were done to His own person. He will not fail to give them as a reward the graces needed to overcome all the difficulties they might encounter there, in addition to the rich crown He reserves for them in heaven.

¹¹ See Letter 2044, "Saint Louise to Saint Vincent," 8 April 1656, *CCD*, 5:589, where she suggests that Vincent should visit the prisoners at the time that the Ladies bring them their meal.

¹² Document 149b, "Particular Rules for the Sisters who Minister to the Galley Convicts," *Ibid.*, 13b:221-25.

Vincent also clearly understood the implication of mixing devoted women with sex-starved men, as seen below, as well as how this concerned the confreres in similar service.

(4) They will make it a point to bring them a change of linen every Saturday and have the soiled linen washed. At that time they will remember to renew interiorly the spirit of purity and modesty in order to protect themselves against the usual insolence of such persons in these circumstances.

(10) When they go to serve the men, they will be extremely careful that no persons suspected of being disreputable or of giving bad advice go in with them. To avoid that, they will never allow anyone to enter except persons who they are sure are there to be of service to them rather than to do them harm.

This service lasted for decades, as seen from a report by Jean Marteilhe, a Huguenot leader condemned to the galleys. Despite his anti-Catholic bias and numerous falsehoods, he reported as follows in 1687: "As regards the food, they [the convicts] have it quite well. A kind of beguines, called the Grey Sisters, daily at midday bring soup, meat, and good bread in sufficient quantity."¹³

Not everything went well, and an astonishing scandal developed involving one of the convicts and a Sister. While serving at La Tournelle, she became captivated by one of the men and they planned to be married. They discussed their hopes with one of the priest chaplains, but he did not realize that the bride was a Daughter of Charity. When he discovered her identity, he wisely turned to another Daughter of Charity working in his parish, and she forwarded the information to Louise de Marillac. Her description, although interesting, does not resolve the story. Vincent was, as superior general, informed and he assembled several advisers (Fathers Antoine Portail, René Alméras, and Louis Abelly). He then interviewed the young Sister who described the history of their relationship. She refused to alter their plans. The couple drew up a marriage contract, and it seems that it went ahead. How the convict was released is unclear, but perhaps he offered suitable bribes. In any case, the Sister disappeared from the records.¹⁴

Sister Barbe Angiboust was perhaps a better model than her infatuated Sister in religion. At a conference after Sister Barbe's death in 1659, the assembled Daughters of Charity spoke admiringly of her charity:

She was very patient in putting up with the troubles to be met there because of the bad temper of those men. For, although they were sometimes so angry with her as to throw the soup and meat on the ground, saying to her whatever

¹³ Jean Marteilhe, *Mémoires d'un galérien du Roi-Soleil*, ed. by André Zysberg (Paris, 2001), 238.

¹⁴ Document 619 in *La Compagnie des Filles de la Charité aux origines. Documents* (Paris, 1989), 685–87; Letter 1852, "To Saint Louise," March 1655, CCD, 5:337; and Letter 1856, "To Saint Louise," March 1655, *Ibid.*, 5:344.

their impatience suggested, she bore it all without saying a word and gently picked up the food, looking just as pleasant as if they hadn't said or done anything to her.¹⁵

Another Sister came to Louise de Marillac with the tearful news that she was often unable to buy bread for the convicts. Louise's comments to Vincent portray some of the difficulties of the Sisters' service: bribery, quarrels, accusations, and lies. "You know, Most Honored Father, what those men are capable of saying and doing."¹⁶

The Chain

"The Chain" was the technical term given to the groups of convicts moved from prison to the galleys, mainly from Paris to Marseilles.¹⁷ To identify the convicts, their heads were shaved except for a small tuft at the crown, and, after 1660, they were branded with GAL on the shoulder. The government then had to provide special and easily identifiable clothing for them. Many had grown weak in prison, despite the care offered by charitable organizations. The provision of food, clothing, and lodging, no matter how rudimentary, was a large expense for the state.

The Chain itself was a chain gang composed of future oarsmen chained two by two, front and back, who were forced to walk while carrying a heavy chain between them. Accompanying them were guards ("archers"), and drivers of horses and carts carrying supplies, the sick, and others who could pay for a ride. Occasionally, family members walked along with them, sharing their sufferings but providing them some respite. Since the so-called conductors (independent contractors) were hired to bring the convicts to the galleys, it was in their interest to keep them alive with food and water, but it was also in their interest to do so as cheaply as possible.

Sometimes numbering up to one hundred men, the Chain traveled in all weathers, but the best times were April and September. At night, they bedded down in barns or stables. Their food was principally bread, beans, and wine. They followed several routes, the most utilized from Troyes, Dijon, and finally to Châlons sur Saône. There, because of the mountainous areas bordering the river, they boarded barges on the Saône to Avignon. Once in Avignon, they walked again. On average, they made only about five miles a day (or three at the end of their exhausting trek). As the Chain passed by farms and villages, the men's blood flowing from their shackled feet formed a gruesome trail. Some guards or unchained convicts would often steal from them and terrify the inhabitants.¹⁸ Indeed, the blood, the noise, and the looting warned the populace of a similar punishment awaiting them in case of wrongdoing.

¹⁵ Conference 109, "The Virtues of Sister Barbe Angiboust," 27 April 1659, CCD, 10:517.

¹⁶ Letter 1520, "Saint Louise to Saint Vincent," 11 July 1652, *Ibid.*, 4:417.

¹⁷ For details, see Paul W. Bamford, *Fighting Ships and Prisons. The Mediterranean Galleys of France in the Age of Louis XIV* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1973), 173 (branding), 189-200; and Lewis, "Galleys," 139.

¹⁸ André Zysberg, *Les Galériens. Vie et destins de 60 000 forçats sur les galères de France 1680-1748* (Paris, 1987), 35.



A *réale* galley ship belonging to the Mediterranean fleet of Louis XIV.

Oil on canvas, c. 1694. Artist unknown.

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The trip of about 350 miles took nearly a month. The few surviving accounts, mainly from after 1660 (following Vincent's death and Louis XIV's accession), agree that the experience of the Chain was the worst of their sufferings, exceeding even rowing the ships.¹⁹

Marseilles

Once in Marseilles, the convicts were taken to receiving ships, then examined and divided into groups according to their physical condition. The sick and physically unfit constituted the lowest class; they were consigned to on-shore work. The others then had to confront their masters on-board, the commander (called the *comite*), officers, sailors, guards, and others responsible for the good order of the galley. A fully staffed ship included between 350 and 500 oarsmen, with the larger number assigned to the flagship, or *réale*. In the summer, with good weather and calm seas, the new arrivals began to learn the art of rowing and military maneuvers. Generally, they were placed alongside other convicts who had spent at least a year in training.

The oarsmen were, as mentioned previously, chained to their benches. Called "The Oar," they numbered five to a bench, with the place nearest the water being the preferred one since the energy required to row was the least. The convict at the end of the oar, in the center of the ship, had the most demanding position, since the oar had to be pulled from the level of his feet to above his head. Convicts with funds could often bribe their way to easier positions. Since the oars were too thick to grasp, handles were attached for each of the rowers.

A crewmember beat out the cadence on a drum or used a whistle, and it was imperative that the rowers follow it exactly. If not, they would become hopelessly out-of-sync and disrupt progress. The exact depth of the stroke was guided by the lashings on the oar. In a perfectly calm sea the ship would move placidly, but that was rarely the case. As a result, since the ship was low in the water, the waves would splash over the rowers, and the salt water would add to their distress.

¹⁹ Zysberg and Burlet, *Gloire et misère*, 96; Vigié, "Galériens," *Dictionnaire*, 637.

The basic motor for the rowers, therefore, was not their arms but their back, legs, and feet. They had to keep their arms unbent at the elbows and push with their legs, alternately standing and sitting, while raising the oar even above their head. Each rower was issued a large piece of cork attached by a cord around his neck. This plug (the *tap en bouche* or *bâillon*) kept them quiet when silence was important, so as to better hear commands or be unheard as the galley moved.²⁰

John Evelyn, a young Englishman on tour, left an important eyewitness account of rowers in his diary dated 1644. He must have witnessed a training session.

The spectacle [of rowing] was to me new and strange, to see so many hundreds of miserably naked persons, their heads being shaven close and having only high red bonnets, a pair of coarse canvass drawers, their whole backs and legs naked, doubly chained about their middle and legs, in couples, and made fast to their seats.... The rising-forward and falling-back at their oar, is a miserable spectacle, and the noise of their chains, with the roaring of the beaten waters, has something of strange and fearful in it to one unaccustomed to it. They are ruled and chastised by strokes on their backs and soles of their feet, on the least disorder, and without the least humanity.²¹

His account introduces the punishments meted out regularly. Junior officers moved along a central walkway, employing a bullwhip (*nerf de boeuf*) to keep the oarsmen attentive. For serious offences, they would beat a rower's elevated soles with wooden rods (the *bastinado*). This punishment could leave the man crippled for some time and consequently unable to row during his recovery.

Life ashore

Surprisingly, the galleys spent three quarters of the year ashore. The ships, as mentioned previously, were too low in the water to move in rough seas. They were designed principally as a coast guard patrol, since they could not cross the Mediterranean directly.²² The problem, then, was what to do with the growing number of convicts?

The solution for the able-bodied was work. Those with some education could serve as office personnel, such as secretaries, bookkeepers, or purchasing agents. Others with less education served in construction, either for naval purposes or for official works: digging, hauling, stonecutting, etc. Many learned skills as carpenters or shipwrights, building or repairing vessels of all sorts, especially galleys. Others made or repaired sails, and those unable to do much else were set to work cleaning ships or knitting stockings. These workers received a pittance, but at least it allowed them to provide some extras for themselves, or

²⁰ Henri Lavedan, *Monsieur Vincent. Aumônier des Galères* (Paris, 1928), 183; Jan Fennis, *Trésor du langage des galères: Dictionnaire exhaustif, avec une introduction*, 3 vols. (Tübingen, 1995), 1:298.

²¹ John Evelyn, *Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn, F.R.S.*, 4 vols. (London, 1854), 1:80-81.

²² Appendix 4, "Louis XIV to the Consuls of Marseilles," 5 July 1657, CCD, 6:649.



S^T Vincent de Paul Aumônier des Galères de Marseille S^O Vicente Paul Cappellan de las Galeras de Marsella

Vincent de Paul, chaplain of the galleys at Marseilles, holds the chain of a galley prisoner.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



the wherewithal to bribe their guards for extra rations or wine. Naturally, this increasing workforce disrupted the Marseilles labor market, since citizens sometimes found it difficult to find a job.

The convicts normally returned after work to eat and sleep aboard the galleys. They were confined to narrow spaces on and underneath their benches. To protect them from the frequent rains and cold weather, a sail was spread over the ship like a tent; it was better than nothing.

In leisure time, the convicts could go ashore on occasion to buy supplies or sell their handiwork. Those with greater resources could buy alcohol from the crew or purchase sexual services, as Vincent noted obliquely in the rules for his confreres who cared for the convicts: “(10) [They should be informed] if women and young boys are permitted to board, and whether they allow some of these boys to sleep on the galleys.”²³ Homosexual relations among the convicts themselves were a part of this reality as well.²⁴

Although malingerers could sometimes bribe their way into the hospital, it was set up for those who truly needed care. Gondi had planned this institution, but he never finished it. This was perhaps because in 1635 the last member of the family to hold his position had to sell it to the duke de Richelieu, nephew of the duchess of Aiguillon.²⁵ Bishop Jean-Baptiste Gault of Marseilles, in office only briefly (1642-43), worked on it, and with the duchess’ financial support, the three-hundred-bed hospital was completed with royal approval in 1646. Vincentians assigned to Marseilles supervised its management, made more complex by rampant diseases. As Paul Bamford notes:

The compounded effects of fatigue in the march to Marseilles, the inadequacy of the rations received, the labor in working the oars, the tainted food and water that was sometimes consumed, the incidence of communicable disease among the

²³ “Regulation for the priests of the Mission of Marseilles responsible for the galleys,” dating about 1670, in Archives Nationales, Paris, France, S 6707; copy in the Archives of the Congregation of the Mission, Paris.

²⁴ Zysberg, *Les Galériens*, 161-62.

²⁵ Zysberg, “Splendeurs et misères,” 191.

crowded oarsmen, and countless other circumstances [rats, fleas, lice; probably venereal diseases] help to explain why there were few really long-lived oarsmen on French galleys.²⁶

André Zysberg, who has devoted his career to the study of the galleys, analyzed the cases of some 60,000 convicts from 1680 to 1715, the height of the galley period. His data on the outcomes of the convicts (including life expectancy, liberation, and length of term) may be taken as approximations of the earlier period under Vincent (1619-60). Out of the total deaths known from 1680 (17,614), 6.1% died on the chain, and 86.4% died in the hospital. Out of those whose length of term is known (16,278), 32.5% died in less than one year, 16.3% died in their second year, and 10.9% in their third year.²⁷

Thus, the Marseilles Vincentians had to care for large numbers of the sick and dying. They also had to be certain that prayers were held. "(1) They should be informed whether morning and evening prayers are held on the galleys, and whether during them each one remains in a decent posture to hear them."²⁸ Besides these daily duties, they were required to give missions to the convicts at least once every five years for each galley. The two or three priests posted to each ship for about three weeks led daily prayers, taught catechism, held spiritual reading in small groups, and prepared the oarsmen and others for receiving the sacraments. With the exception of founding a Confraternity of Charity at the end of a mission, the order of the galley missions resembled closely that followed by Vincentians in rural parishes. Not all the convicts were Catholics, but they were required to attend and to maintain a respectful bearing during the exercises of the mission. In the time of Louis XIV, when numerous Huguenots were condemned to the galleys because of their religion, maintaining order became much more difficult. A nineteenth-century schoolbook, written in an anticlerical period, repeated Marteilhe's many lies and misstatements:

Almost all the chaplains were very severe Lazarists. They were the very cruel persecutors of the Protestant convicts, spying on them, intercepting their mail, keeping them from receiving charity from their brethren, which was so necessary that without it, they would die of hunger. Anyone found distributing money [the charity] would die of a beating.... The Lazarists treated in almost the same fashion, the Protestants who did not kneel at Mass.²⁹

²⁶ Bamford, *Fighting Ships*, 224.

²⁷ Zysberg, *Les Galériens*, 349-50.

²⁸ In "Regulation for the priests of the Mission of Marseilles."

²⁹ Jules Steeg, *Edit de Nantes et sa revocation (1598-1685)* [Paris, 1886], 139-41; repeated in Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France*, 19 vols. (Paris, 1886), 12:303-04. Pierre Coste wrote a refutation, "Prétendues cruautés des Lazaristes de Marseille au XVIII^e s.," but this study remains unpublished; copy in the Archives of the Congregation of the Mission, Paris, France, Guichard papers, *Etudes & Travaux*, vol. 3, 44-55.



Vincent de Paul and galley prisoners in Marseilles.

Illustration from the 1841 biography *Saint Vincent de Paul* by Augustin Challamel.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
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As the work developed, the Missioners labored to form diocesan chaplains of good quality. This was particularly difficult since galley work was not an especially attractive assignment. As a result, those candidates often arrived with a deficient formation. To remedy this, the Vincentians held regular conferences every two weeks, on the model of the Tuesday Conferences for clergy in Paris.

Another undertaking was a kind of Red Cross service, providing access between families and their loved ones condemned to the galleys. This was later extended to those being held captive in the Barbary States.³⁰ A special ministry was the evangelization of “Turks,” the typical term for Muslims. Some became Christians, and the confreres in Marseilles continued their formation by teaching the catechism in Italian, utilizing a rough vernacular spoken in North Africa.³¹ Similarly, Christian slaves “turned Turk” and thus became “renegades.” In both cases, conversion was seen as a route out of slavery.

Life at sea

When summer weather permitted, the galleys began to move from Marseilles into their accustomed duties. As a coast guard service, they surveyed the bays and inlets on the Mediterranean. Rowing managed about five knots an hour under the best conditions. When it became necessary to chase down a prowling ship from Barbary, the oarsmen had to row at a lethal pace. On occasion, they all rowed together, but normally the two front quarters rowed for about an hour, followed by the back quarters. These skirmishes became more common under Louis XIV.

A few other galleys rounded the Iberian Peninsula to guard France’s Atlantic coastline. It was in Bordeaux in 1623 or 1624 that Vincent and some of his friends conducted missions

³⁰ On the missions and other services, see Coste, *Life & Works*, 1:562-63; 2:315-36; and Letter 1004, “To Antoine Portail, In Genoa,” 20 December 1647, *CCD*, 3:260.

³¹ Letter 664, “François du Coudray to Saint Vincent,” 1 June 1643, *CCD*, 2:439-40.

for the galleys. At their conclusion, his companions urged him to visit his family in Pouy near Dax, and Vincent recorded his poignant reflections on his emotions when he left them.³² The galleys moored at Bordeaux were available during the conflict with the English over the port of La Rochelle. The French blockaded the port with them in 1627-28, and because of a combination of circumstances, the government of Louis XIII emerged victorious. The galleys, however, did not directly engage in battle with the English.

From Marseilles, the galleys could carry out another of their functions: the projection of French power. This was accomplished with a fanfare of trumpets and drums, cannon shots, and flags and banners flying. By showing off French military might along the Italian and Spanish coasts and the Balearics, it was hoped that threats to France would diminish. As this appealed especially to Louis XIV, he greatly enlarged the fleet.

Since battles fought with galleys had become outdated, the galley service was of little use in the larger picture. Besides, providing the human fuel for them was enormously expensive and inefficient. This ultimately doomed the galleys, but it would take several decades to complete their use.

Substituting for a prisoner?

Even during Vincent's lifetime, a story circulated that he substituted himself for a prisoner. In the nineteenth century, a large painting by Léon Bonnat in the Paris church of St. Nicholas des Champs perpetuated this fantasy. Abelly told the story and added that one day when a confrere asked the founder about it, he merely smiled. For Abelly, this proved that it was true.³³ Coste and most other biographers have rejected it because it was inherently not possible, especially since substituting for a prisoner was a capital offense. Those who accepted its veracity, such as witnesses for the beatification and canonization proceedings, disagreed on how it happened. Biographers embroidered the narrative with fanciful details,³⁴ and thus it entered further into the realm of fiction.³⁵ If there is a kernel of truth to it, the depiction of the event in the film *Monsieur Vincent* comes closest. It was likely based on the analysis of Henri Lavedan: "a brusque action, a sudden impulse, done on the spur of the moment, and short lived."³⁶ The film depicts a shocked Vincent aboard a galley during a race. A sailor savagely whips a rower who then collapses, and the saint leaps to his aid, moving him aside, and taking his place at the oar.³⁷

³² See Coste, *Life & Works*, 1:123-24.

³³ Louis Abelly, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, trans. William Quinn, F.S.C., 3 vols. (New Rochelle, N.Y.: New City Press, 1993), 3:112-13.

³⁴ See, for example, Arthur Loth, *Saint Vincent de Paul et sa Mission Sociale* (Paris, 1880), 122-23.

³⁵ John E. Rybolt, C.M., "Saint Vincent de Paul in Fiction," *Vincentian Heritage* 15:1 (1994): 51-58.

³⁶ Lavedan, *Monsieur Vincent*, 194.

³⁷ Some have linked this story to an account of St. Paulinus of Nola as related by Gregory the Great (Dialogues, bk. 3, ch. 1), in which the saint sold himself to the Vandals to redeem the son of a poor widow. See: http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/gregory_03_dialogues_book3.htm#C1



Vincent de Paul pleads for a galley prisoner.

Artist AG Laisne; engraved by De Rudder.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
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Later years

What began as a personal ministry for Vincent de Paul developed into a major commitment by the Congregation of the Mission. Since Vincent visited Marseilles only two or three times, he had to delegate his responsibilities to the superiors of the house located there. Vincent continued his support of the work in Marseilles,³⁸ which eventually linked the ministry on the French galleys with relief of French captives held in North Africa.

Vincent's own convictions about the system of using the galleys for punishment are unknown or at least unclear. We never hear of him calling for a change to it, only for more humane care for those condemned.³⁹ However, he called the prisoners "the scum and malice of the kingdom," whose life of penance was clearly deserved.⁴⁰ Jean Le Vacher, the consul in Tunis, reported to Vincent regularly on his ministry among the prisoners, and shared Vincent's ideas. Le Vacher sympathized with the French prisoners held in North Africa: "how many blows those wicked renegades in charge rained upon their poor bodies!" Yet, he made an important distinction between the French in France and those in Barbary:

I am well aware that convicts on the French galleys are treated no better, but the difference is that convicts in France are condemned for their crimes there, whereas the slaves in Barbary undergo all their punishment and suffering only because they are good Christians, faithful to God.⁴¹

³⁸ The Marquise of Vins left a sizeable gift in her will for Marseilles; Conference 198, "Seeking the Kingdom of God," 21 February 1659, *CCD*, 12:125.

³⁹ See his remarks: Conference 24, "Love of Vocation and Assistance to the Poor," 13 February 1646, *Ibid.*, 9:199; and Conference 27, "The Practice of Mutual Respect and Gentleness," 19 August 1646, *Ibid.*, 9:214.

⁴⁰ Document 191, "Works of Charity," 1638, *Ibid.*, 13b:410, notes for a conference to the Ladies of Charity.

⁴¹ Letter 1531, "Jean le Vacher to Saint Vincent," between 1648 and 1660, *Ibid.*, 4:434; Vincent repeats the account: Conference 125, "Repetition of Prayer," 24 July 1655, *Ibid.*, 11:192.

Of course, thinking about systemic change is more a contemporary concern whose roots come from the Enlightenment. It is wrong, therefore, to expect the founder or his confreres to have protested against the system he faced.

The same must be said about his confreres in Marseilles. Jean Marteilhe, mentioned above as a Huguenot writing after 1685, had no love for the Lazarists. Still, even his malicious comments reveal the continuity of the Congregation's style inherited from the founder.

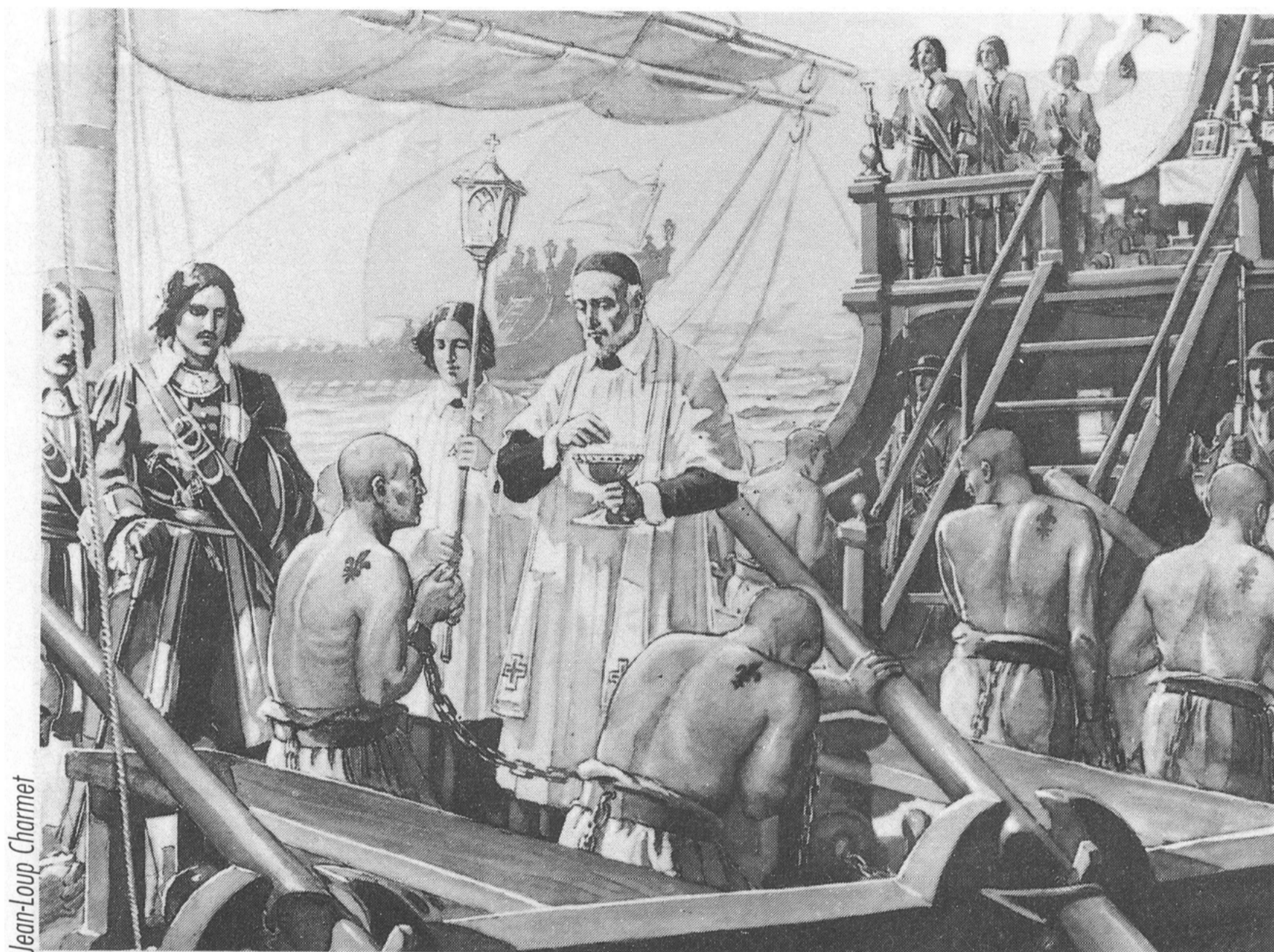
As the leaders of this congregation had had the secret of obtaining the king's confidence, through a certain manner of simplicity and of disinterest, people in Marseilles greatly feared the power of each of its members in particular.... Finally, these fathers knew so well how to insinuate themselves into the court that the ministers looked on them as oracles, and the Jesuits, just like the people that they had tricked, looked on them only with eyes full of envy and jealousy.⁴²

As Louis XIV pushed the development of French glory through his galley fleet, it became clear that the entire system was crashing. The authorities imported slaves from sub-Saharan Africa to become rowers, but they were unequipped to survive the cold, new diseases, and general ill treatment. A few Iroquois were also brought from Canada for punishment, but, like the Africans, they could not become oarsmen.⁴³ Ultimately, it was only under Louis XV that the system was dismantled, thereby removing what Warren Hamilton Lewis called "the darkest blot on Western civilization."

⁴² Marteilhe, *Mémoires d'un galérien*, 207.

⁴³ Bamford, *Fighting Ships*, 165; Zysberg, *Les Galériens*, 60-62.





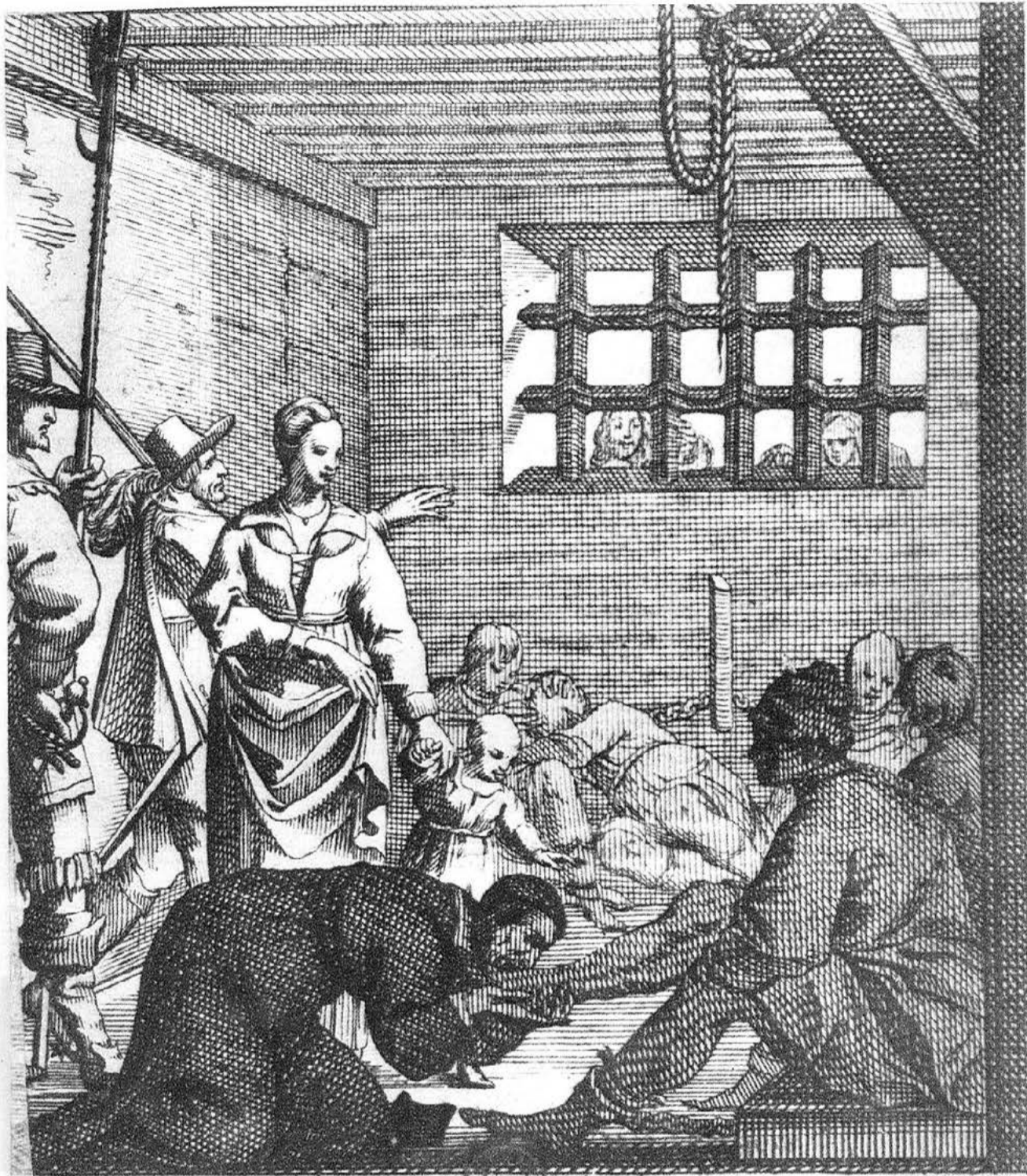
Jean-Loup Charmet

M. Vincent chez les galériens.

Vincent de Paul distributes Communion to galley prisoners.
Illustration by Jean-Loup Chamet.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





*Ceux qui sont destinés pour servir aux galères Reçoivent son aumône, et ce vertueux pere
Et qui pour leur forfait s'ôt de chaînes liés Leur emplissent les mains leur baissent les pieds.*

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL
VISITANT LES GALÉRIENS DE LA TOURNELLE.
Gravure du temps.

Vincent de Paul, kneeling, kisses the feet of a galley prisoner at La Tournelle.

One of the earliest engravings of Vincent de Paul, reproduced in *The Heroic Life of Saint Vincent de Paul* by Henri Lavedan. Lavedan likely erred in identifying the priest with Vincent de Paul. He is more likely Claude Bernard, a contemporary of the saint known as "the poor priest."

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





A *réale* galley ship belonging to the Mediterranean fleet of Louis XIV.

Oil on canvas, c. 1694. Artist unknown.

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Paris Berretta rue de la Cité 36

Lith Vayron r. Calade 51

S^t Vincent de Paul Aumonier des Galères de Marseille

Un jour en visitant les galériens, il en vit un d'une belle figure, mais morne de désespoir; à force de recherches, S^t Vincent reconnut son innocence, demanda, et obtint de l'officier, non sans peine, de prendre la place du galérien père de famille qui fut par son dévouement rendu à la liberté. S^t Vincent ne

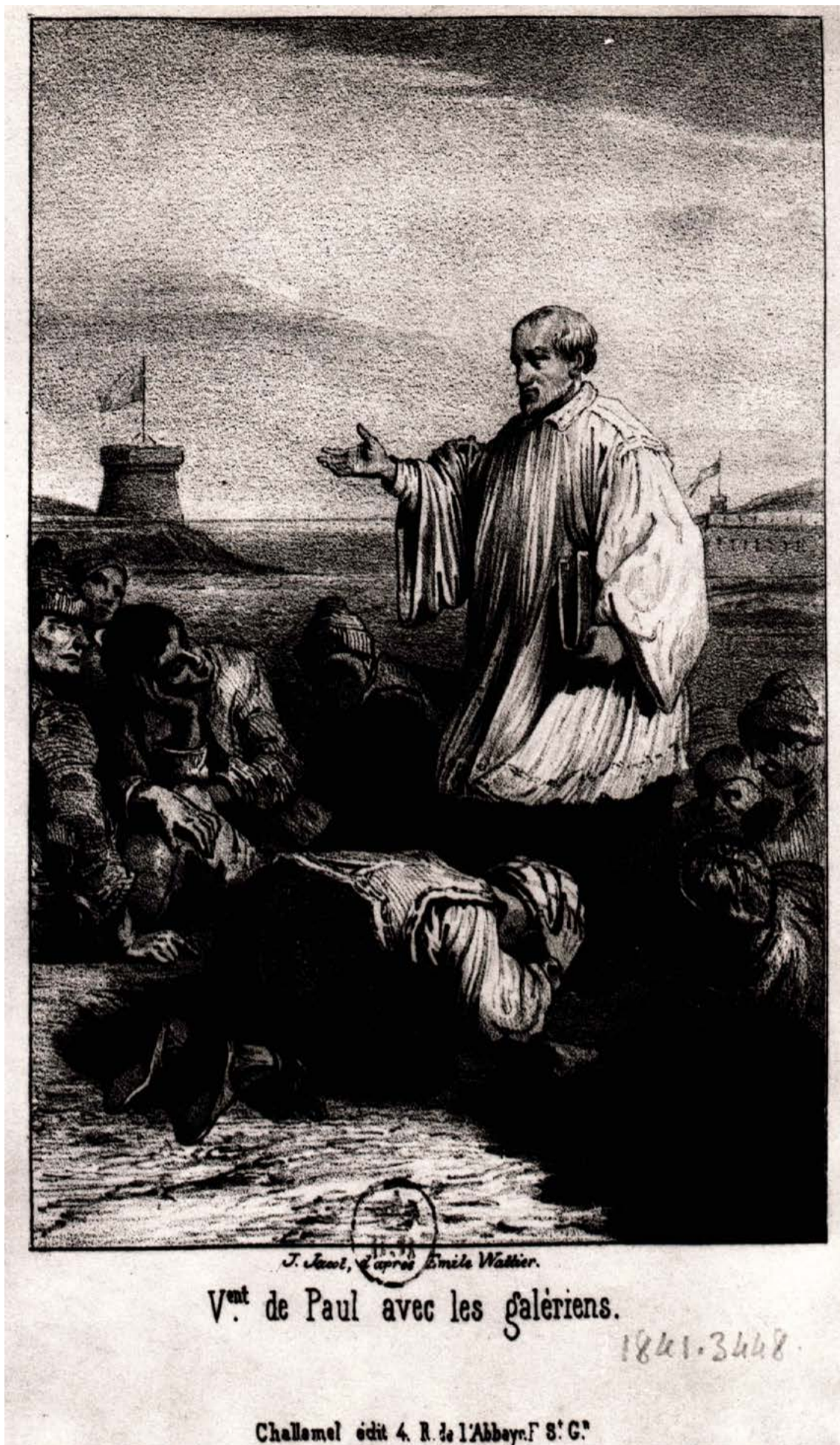
S^o Vicente Paul Cappellan de las Galeras de Marsella.

Visitando un día à los galeros, vio entre ellos a un de una bella fisonomia, mas elle andaba taciturno y llen de desesperacion; a fuerza de averiguaciones, S^o Vicente, llega a conocer su inocencia, duplica y obtiene del oficial, no sin mucho trabajo el ponerle en el puerto del galero, que era padre de

Vincent de Paul, chaplain of the galleys at Marseilles, holds the chain of a galley prisoner.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



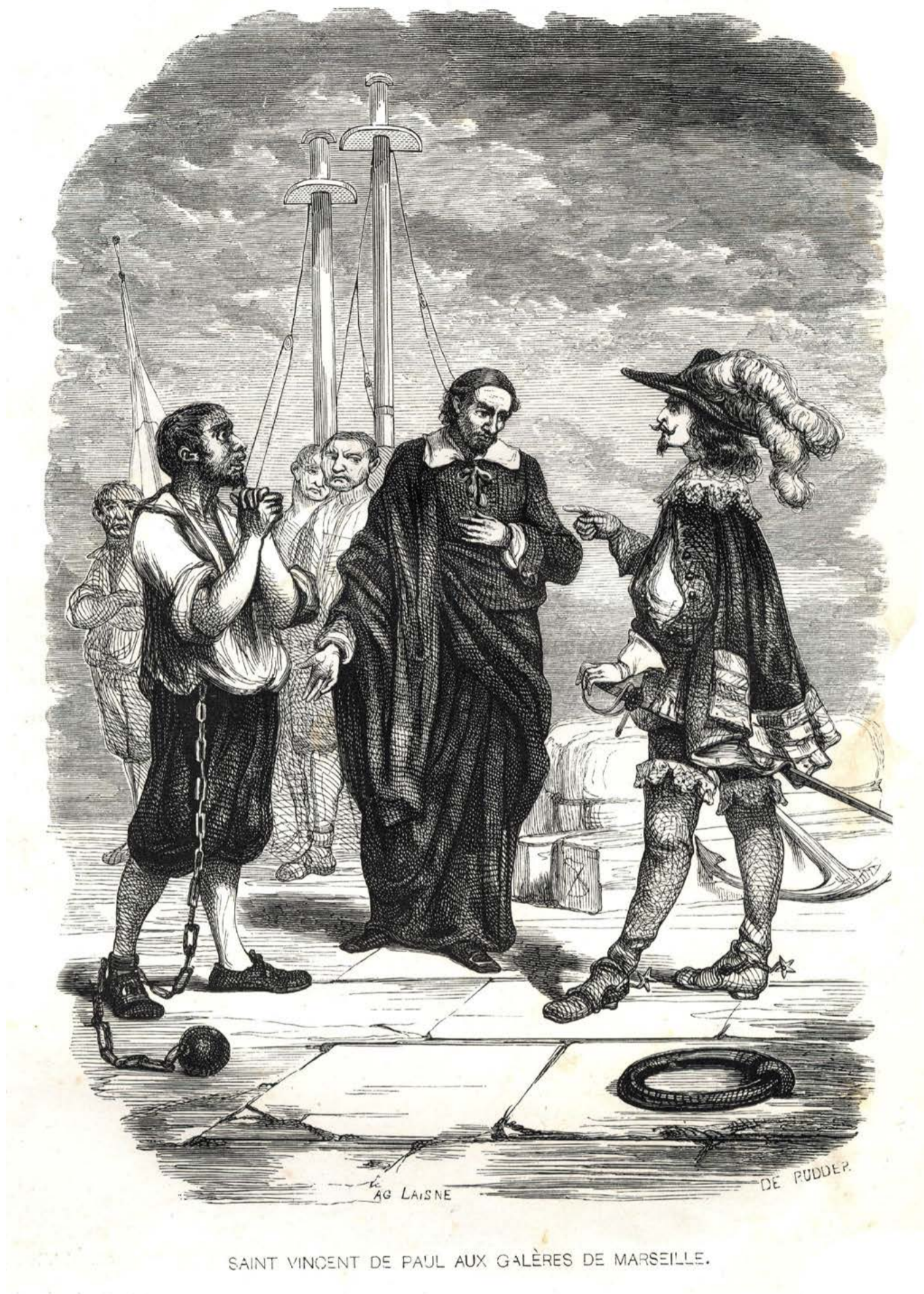


Vincent de Paul and galley prisoners in Marseilles.

Illustration from the 1841 biography *Saint Vincent de Paul* by Augustin Challamel.

Courtesy *St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online*
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Vincent de Paul pleads for a galley prisoner.

Artist AG Laisne; engraved by De Rudder.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
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Slavery on the Frontier: The Report of a French Missionary on Mid-Seventeenth-Century Tunis¹

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This article arises from a digital archival project run by Dr. Alison Forrestal and Dr. Felicia Roşu, comprising an annotated collection of documents relating to the history of Vincentian missionaries between 1625 and 1700. For further information and access to the collection, please see “Vincentian Missionaries in Seventeenth-century Europe and Africa: A Digital Edition of Sources from the Vatican Archives” at: <http://earlymoderndocs.omeka.net/>

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This document is a report sent in 1654 by Jean Le Vacher, member of the Congregation of the Mission, vicar apostolic of the Holy See and acting French consul in Tunis, to the cardinals of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, in Rome. It describes his missionary work in and around Tunis. Le Vacher's letter focuses on the life and conditions of the Christian slaves (mostly Catholic, but Protestant too) in the region and on his efforts to provide spiritual and material assistance to them. It offers insights into early modern slavery in North Africa, the efforts of the Catholic Church to strengthen its presence in the area, and the culture and organization of societies on the border between Islam and Christianity. This presentation includes the full text of Le Vacher's report in an English translation, followed by the original Italian, with an introduction, commentary, and editorial notes.

French Interests in North Africa and Tunis

As the papal body charged with supervising Catholic missionary activities worldwide from 1622, the Supreme Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide (SCPF) gathered a vast corpus of literature on which to base its decision making through the seventeenth century. Although rich in the minutiae of missionary activity, few of the letters and reports that crossed the desks of its secretaries have been published. Furthermore, scholars have drawn on their contents to complete studies of, for instance, missionary networks in the North Atlantic,² but rarely deal with the activity of Catholic missionaries in North Africa, which is generally understood to have taken place during what Fernand Braudel christened the "northern invasion" of the Mediterranean.³ This may be partly because this model of interpretation judges that religious confrontation became less important as the English, Dutch and French asserted their dominance in the Mediterranean through the control of trade during the seventeenth century. Yet, for the French at least, religion was deployed as a tool in support of commerce, so that the crown was animated by great missionary zeal even as it increasingly sought to strengthen its political and economic position in the region.

In the 1600s, the French monarchy was the most active of European governments in the caravan trade, though this was highly contested by the English and the Dutch throughout the century.⁴ It also oversaw, theoretically at least, those who chose to operate under its flag: crown officers, missionaries, consuls, and French merchant communities in Ottoman ports, and was represented in the Ottoman regencies of Tunis and Algiers by consulates

² Luca Codignola, "Competing Network: Roman Catholic Ecclesiastics in French North America, 1610-1658," *Canadian Historical Review* 80:4 (1999): 539-85; Dominique Deslandres, *Croire et faire croire: les missions françaises au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2003).

³ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds, 2 vols. (London: Collins, 1972), 1:615-42.

⁴ In 1600, about a thousand ships flew the French flag in the Mediterranean, while only forty flew the English one; cf. Paul Masson, *Histoire du commerce français dans le Levant au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1896), 31; A.C. Wood, *A History of the Levant Company* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), 23. See also, Peter Earle, *Corsairs of Malta and Barbary* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1970), 3-22; Richard T. Rapp, "The Unmaking of the Mediterranean Trade Hegemony: International Trade Rivalry and the Commercial Revolution," *The Journal of Economic History* 35:3 (1975): 499-525.



Engraved and hand-colored “map” of Tunis by Matthäus Merian, dated 1646.

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first established by King Charles IX. These French outposts were located in areas that Europeans regarded as “pirate republics,” but although the office of consul was in theory state-owned, it was, like many other offices in the crown’s gift, subject to purchase and farming out. Consular income derived from fees such as those paid by Catholic merchant ships for anchorage in port (when relations between the ruling authorities and the French crown permitted it). The office was also secular. Yet, in 1648 it came into the possession of the Congregation of the Mission, a society of secular missionary priests established in 1625 to undertake missions to the rural poor and galley convicts.⁵ At the time still under the direction of its founder, Vincent de Paul, the Congregation owed the transfer to the generosity of one of its major patrons, Marie de Vignerod de Combelet, Duchess of Aiguillon, niece of the late Cardinal Richelieu. In granting the Congregation the office of consul and the right to appoint to it, Aiguillon presented de Paul’s congregation with the means to promote both French and Catholic ambitions in this region, thereby formally combining the public goals of the French Crown with the missionary wishes of Counter Reformation *dévots* [Catholic activists in domestic and foreign affairs]. Although de Paul and the missionaries that he sent to the region did not articulate the reasons for their congregation’s presence there in these terms, in practice they stepped in to minister to slaves, to prevent their assimilation to North African and Islamic culture, and to repatriate any who were French Catholics.⁶

Except for merchants and artisans who settled there or passed through for business purposes, the majority of the Christian population in Tunis and the other two Ottoman regencies on the Barbary Coast (Algiers and Tripoli) consisted, in the seventeenth century, of slaves.⁷ They came from all parts of Europe and were captured either at sea or on land

⁵ The contract of foundation is published in Pierre Coste, C.M., *Vincent de Paul, Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. and trans. Jacqueline Kilar, D.C., Marie Poole, D.C., et al., vols. 1-14 (New York: New City Press, 1985-2014), 13a:213-17. Hereafter cited as *CCD*.

⁶ The Crown normally channeled its funding of ransoms for the liberation of slaves through religious orders. In 1643, for example, Louis XIII granted 10,000 *livres* to the Congregation of the Mission for this purpose; cf. Pierre Coste, C.M., *The Life and Works of Saint Vincent de Paul*, trans. Joseph Leonard, C.M., 3 vols. (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1952), 2:340.

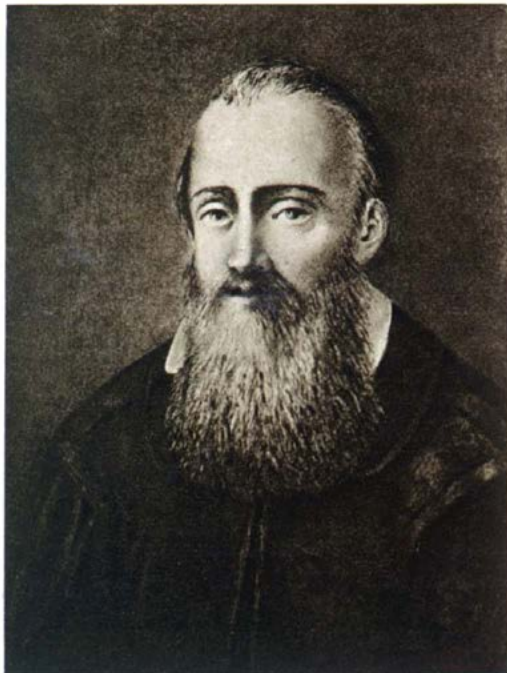
⁷ Most slaves were Catholic, and comprised 10-20% of the total population in the regency. See Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 112.

by Moorish, Turkish, or renegade corsairs who lived off the booty provided by such raids. Some captives quickly escaped, were ransomed, or were freed for other reasons, but most of them spent long years in public prisons (*bagnos*) or in the households of their private masters, depending on whose property they ended up becoming. Even though some slaves converted to Islam, most of them did not, or at least not immediately. As a result, the Christian slave population in Tunis was quite sizeable; witnesses (including Jean Le Vacher) and historians estimate it between 1600 and 6000 persons.⁸ Tunis and the other Barbary regencies practiced a kind of religious toleration similar to that observed in the Ottoman Empire proper, in observance of the general tenets of the Pact of Umar; this was a legal document of disputed historical origins that regulated the status of Jews and Christians under Muslim rule and which had already become an integral part of Islamic legal tradition by the ninth century. Despite the “psychological distance” between religious communities, occasional pressures to convert to Islam, and a number of legal and fiscal disadvantages (for instance, non-Muslims had to pay a head tax and their witness accounts were not accepted in legal cases that could have led to the punishment of Muslims), Christians and Jews were allowed to exercise their faiths privately and to independently manage all the practical aspects related to it.⁹ This autonomy extended to slaves as well: in their *bagnos*, they could set up chapels ministered by slave priests, they could be visited by missionaries, and they could follow the main rituals of their faith. It was first and foremost to respond to their needs, rather than any organized attempt at converting local non-Christians, that justified the Catholic missionary presence on the Barbary Coast.¹⁰

⁸ For Le Vacher’s account, see Historical Archives of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (Archivio Storico “de Propaganda Fide”) in Rome, Collection “Scritture originali riferite nelle congregazioni generali” [= SOCG], vol. 254, fol. 65: Jean Le Vacher to Propaganda Fide, 13 March 1664. Francisco di San Lorenzo recorded in 1654, the year in which Le Vacher sent the letter that is published here, that there were 8000 slaves in Tunis and Tripoli; see his *Breve relatione, del calamitoso stato, crudeltà, e bestiali attioni, con le qual son trattati da’ barbari li critiani fatti schiavi, e tutto quello, ch’è passato nel viaggio della redentione de’ fedeli di Christo nella città di Tunisi l’anno 1653* (Rome, 1654), 12. Algiers, however, had a much larger Christian slave population, which rose above 20,000 in most decades of the seventeenth century. For a discussion of these estimates, see Davis, *Christian Slaves*, 13-15. As with all missionary reports, caution is advised regarding the meaning of “Christian”; many times it meant, in fact, “Catholic,” excluding Orthodox Christians and Protestants; cf. Davis, *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹ For an historical overview of the mixture of tolerance and intolerance experienced by the “Peoples of the Book” in Ottoman Arab territories, see Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), especially 16-40. A similarly mixed picture emerges from a study of early-modern European practices in religiously diverse territories by Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA; London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007). The “ambiguities of inter-confessional relations” (Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 26) that seemed to be present in European as well as Ottoman behavior advise caution against simplistic labelling of either Christian or Muslim solutions to religious diversity.

¹⁰ An indication of the main purpose of missionary activity on the Barbary Coast, namely to “care for the poor slaves and the free merchants who live, come, and go in the said cities [Tunis and Algiers],” is given by the cardinals of Propaganda Fide in a letter sent to the Nuncio of France in December 1647; cf. Archives of Congregation de Propaganda Fide, Lettere, 25, fol. 138r-v, 14 December 1647. For an overview of the many categories of slaves and their status in the Ottoman Empire, see Y. Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800-1909* (London: MacMillan; New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 1-42. For details on the Barbary regencies, see Earle, *Corsairs*, 23-46.



MAISON CH. LETAILLE, BOUMARD FILS, ÉDIT. PONTIF. PARIS

JEAN LE VACHER

PRÊTRE DE LA CONGRÉGATION DE LA MISSION
VICAIRE APOSTOLIQUE DE CARTHAGE
ET CONSUL DE FRANCE A TUNIS ET A ALGER

MORT A LA BOUCHE D'UN CANON A ALGER, LE 26 JUILLET 1683

Engraved portrait of Jean le Vacher proclaiming his title as well as the method and date of his death.

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Jean Le Vacher and the Congregation of the Mission

The author of the letter which follows was Jean Le Vacher (1619–1683), a Congregation priest who was just twenty-eight years old and newly ordained when Vincent de Paul sent him to Tunis in late 1647. Until then he had gained pastoral experience only while participating in the missions that his Congregation carried out in rural parishes throughout France after he entered its ranks in 1643.¹¹ On his arrival in Tunis on 22 November 1647, Le Vacher found himself alone in unfamiliar circumstances, for although another Congregation priest and a brother were resident in Tunis on his arrival, they died of plague within months. Thereafter, with the exception of four years (1653–7), he spent the majority of his tenure solitarily, until he returned to France in 1666. Subsequently, he ministered in Algiers until he was executed by the local authorities in 1683.¹² There were, of course, other clergy in Tunis while Le Vacher served there; in addition to some slave priests, three religious orders, the Trinitarians, Mercedarians and Recollects, specialized in the redemption of slaves, periodically sending small numbers of personnel to Tunis for this purpose.¹³

The arrangements that resulted in Le Vacher's presence in Tunis formed a specific manifestation of the broader phenomenon of clerical-lay collaboration, which defined the Catholic Reformation in France. The Congregation of the Mission attracted a formidable

¹¹ Raymond Gleizes, *Jean Le Vacher, Vicaire apostolique et Consul de France à Tunis et à Alger (1619–1683): D'après les documents contemporains* (Paris: Victoire Lecoffre, 1914), 1-13.

¹² Gleizes, *Jean Le Vacher*, passim.

¹³ Gillian Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs. France and Slavery in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 12, 46. Weiss estimates that Trinitarians and Mercedarians freed over 500 French slaves in Barbary between 1647 and 1657.

range of wealthy patrons, keen to demonstrate their credentials of piety and to procure their salvation through works of merit. Aiguillon made three major donations to the association in regard to the establishment of its missionary presence in Tunis; in 1643, she and Vincent de Paul agreed that a portion of her donation of 14,000*l* would be used to send missionaries to Barbary to “console” the Christian slaves and to “instruct” them “in the faith, love, and fear of God.” She provided further financial resources in 1647 by assigning to the Congregation revenues from a number of *coches* routes in France.¹⁴ Two other wealthy benefactors followed her example; an anonymous “*bourgeois de Paris*” gave the Congregation the annual revenues from tax farms worth 30,000*l* in 1655, while a long-time supporter of de Paul’s charitable works, Madame Marie Fouquet, the widowed mother of superintendent of finances Nicolas Fouquet, donated *rentes* of 2800*l* in 1657.¹⁵ These donations were purely to support the missionaries’ pastoral functions. When Aiguillon purchased the office of consul for the Congregation, however, this granted an overtly secular dimension to its presence in Tunis. Indeed, church protocol forbade priests to act as consuls, which begs the question of why de Paul accepted her gift. He did so because he shared the duchess’s conviction that possession of the office was the only way in which the Congregation could prevent its powers and influence being used to its detriment, for a secular consul would be “governed by principles other than those of charity and public welfare,” namely personal profit.¹⁶ To circumvent the papal proscription on a priest holding the office, Vincent officially appointed a layman (Martin Husson) to the post for a short time; but even during this period Le Vacher took charge and continued to act as consul in effect when Husson left Tunis in 1653.¹⁷ His dual function in Tunis was reflected in the fact that, while Le Vacher acted as consul, he was a papally approved apostolic missionary, and from 1650 vicar apostolic for the archbishop of Carthage, with jurisdiction over all Catholics within the bounds of Tunis.¹⁸

On the Text

Le Vacher’s 1654 letter to Propaganda Fide is one of the few relics of his sojourn in Tunis; although he was obliged to report regularly to Vincent de Paul on his activities, only a tiny number of their letters survive.¹⁹ His letter to the cardinals was not intended for public consumption, unlike many of the *relatios* [reports] that missionaries sent to their authorities

¹⁴ CCD, 13a:335-7; Archives Nationales [hereafter AN], M213 (27 May 1647): The *coches* routes were those for Orléans, Bourges, and Tours. Aiguillon’s donation amounted to *rentes* of 40500*l*, the income from which was to be divided between Tunis and Algiers. In 1656, de Paul recorded that Tunis’ annual share amounted to 1500*l* annually; see “Vincent de Paul to Firmin Get,” 28 July 1656, CCD, 6:54.

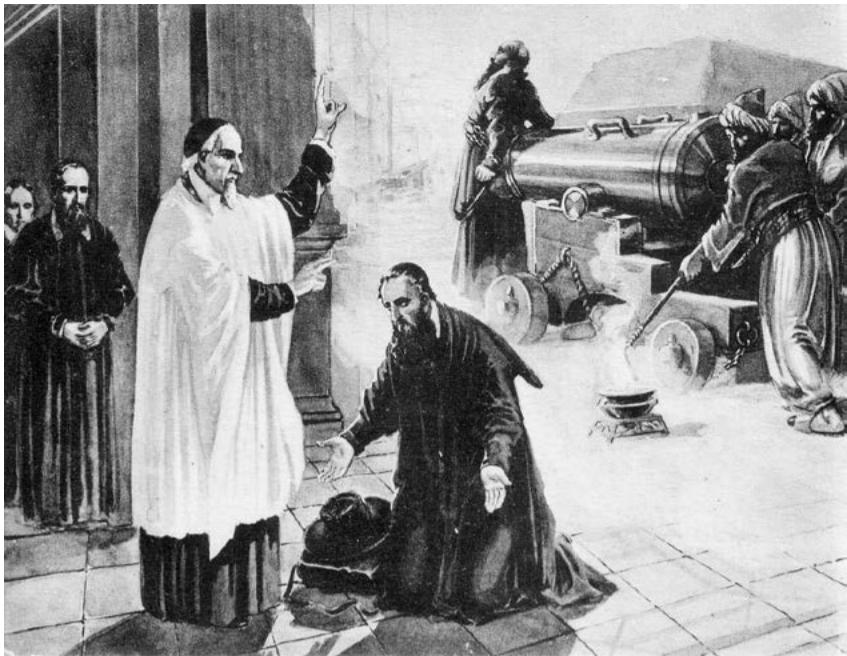
¹⁵ AN, MM536, f. 105 (20 December 1655); Y194, f. 438r, and S6685 (7 November 1657).

¹⁶ “Vincent de Paul to Firmin Get,” 8 June 1657, CCD, 6:338.

¹⁷ As directed by Vincent de Paul, see *Ibid.*, 13a:401.

¹⁸ AN, S6707, “Barbarie,” 14; Louis Abelly, *La Vie du venerable servant de Dieu Vincent de Paul* (Paris, 1664), bk. 2, 99.

¹⁹ See the letter that Le Vacher wrote to Vincent de Paul in May 1654 (three months before he composed the letter published here), which is a brief résumé of his ministerial activities during Lent that year; cf. “Jean Le Vacher to Vincent de Paul,” 6 May 1654, CCD, 5:130-2.



Vincent de Paul sending Jean le Vacher on his later mission to Algiers.

Of note, the allusion to his eventual martyrdom depicted in the background.

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or compiled in book form. The Trinitarians and Mercedarians frequently used these first-hand accounts to advertise their work and to encourage their readers to contribute, in prayers and donations, to their ministry.²⁰ Despite the fact that its readership was limited to a set of influential cardinals, however, Le Vacher's letter shared features characteristic of their reports. Its author interspersed his detailed descriptions of his ministry and the agonies of enslavement with pleas for material and organizational support from the papacy. Particularly striking is the absence of any reference to the political or commercial aspects of his activities in Tunis, or to the fact that the French crown had an interest in exploiting or dominating trade in the region through its consulate. Le Vacher's narrow elaboration of his work may reflect his superior general's teaching, for de Paul insisted that the Congregation's interest in the consulate lay exclusively in promoting charity and public welfare, which were explicitly socio-religious motivations. However, his silence was more likely to have been strategic. He was interested only in giving an account of his religious duties and the requirements of the mission. Therefore, Le Vacher presented the arrangement of the Congregation's presence in Tunis purely in ecclesiastical terms, which would not lead the cardinals to suspect that he had any worldly motives, such as advantaging the French crown economically or militarily, in making such requests. For example, he suggested that the pope should appoint a bishop to serve in the area, probably on the basis that it would free him of some of the ministerial obligations which fell to him as vicar apostolic and which he described in his letter. It is just as likely that secular consular duties contributed to the heavy burden of work that he carried, but he chose not to mention these at all.

It was only towards the close of his letter that Le Vacher appealed directly for the cardinals' favor. He played on both the cardinals' sense of congregational responsibility and their personal virtues. He reminded them of their duty to protect the "poor church"

²⁰ See, for instance, the Trinitarian Pierre Dan's firsthand account of conditions in Barbary, *Histoire de la Barbarie et ses Corsaires* (Paris, 1649), and François Favre's (a priest of the Ordre de Notre-Dame de la Merci) *Le Veritable recit de la redemption faite en Alger l'année passée 1644, par les Religieux de l'Ordre de Notre Dame de la Mercy, & Redemption des Captifs* (Paris, 1645).

of Tunis and to remember its “temporal and spiritual needs.” He also emphasized their obligations, as free Catholics, to show charity to those afflicted in captivity “in the name of Jesus Christ.” While charity was a virtue prized highly throughout the Catholic Church, it held special resonance for a priest of the Congregation of the Mission. Vincent de Paul had emphasized it in the regulations that he wrote for Le Vacher’s mission, which he characterized “as one of the most charitable” that he could undertake.²¹ While living in the Congregation’s motherhouse, Le Vacher had, no doubt, also heard de Paul stress repeatedly in spiritual conferences that the association was “a state of charity” (that is, of effective love), comprising a membership who acted as God’s instruments when they demonstrated their love of God through their evangelizing missions.²² It is quite understandable, as a result, that Le Vacher turned to charity to inspire the cardinals to express their own love of God in supporting his ministry.

Le Vacher adopted a further tactic to attempt to convince the cardinals that his work was worthy of their backing. The “misfortunes” that he had witnessed were difficult to describe, he admitted, but he knew that he needed to do so in order to advocate for and encourage their positive response. Le Vacher’s vivid portrayals of his own life and those of the miserable slaves amongst whom he worked were designed, consequently, to stir both affective and effective emotions in his readership; affective because they aimed to stir the cardinals to compassion for their afflicted fellow Catholics in a heathen land, and effective because they implicitly implored the cardinals to take actions which would prevent the slaves from “[perishing] in body and soul.” Although he did not explicitly draw attention to his own sufferings in his quest to assist the captives, his outline of the manifold calls on his pastoral energy was clearly designed to evoke pity for his position, in the hope that it would be translated into concrete measures to alleviate the demands of his work. Thus, in describing his regular visits to minister to “poor Christians” detained in the countryside around the port, he listed the tiresome negotiations necessary to enable him to make his way to their residences, in tandem with the financial outlay required (he was obliged to make payments to a local escort and to the slave supervisors, and to provide alms in the form of clothes and shoes for the slaves themselves), before revealing that he did “not have enough means to be able to help.”

The factual accuracy of Le Vacher’s account stands up well to scrutiny. By 1654, he was intimately acquainted with the conditions and organization of slave life in Tunis, and he adeptly intermingled descriptions of the daily routine of slaves in the port and countryside with his ministry to them. But while depicting the slaves’ backbreaking work and shocking living quarters was a means of pricking the cardinals’ consciences, Le Vacher was most eager to concentrate on the extraordinary pressure on him to prevent the corruption of Catholics by Islamic believers, and on the structure of the mission in these circumstances. “Taking the turban” was the common term amongst Europeans for conversion to Islam,

²¹ *CCD*, 13a:401.

²² “Charity,” 30 May 1659, *Ibid.*, 12:214.

and the renegades who did so were decried as abominable traitors to the true faith and to Christian culture. Despite this, many did convert.²³ These were particularly important targets for Le Vacher, for to save a renegade was as great a victory for a Catholic missionary as his conversion to Islam had been to a Muslim cleric. Moreover, Le Vacher recounted that youths were often forcibly converted, and predictably illustrated their resistance to such attempts as a litany of sufferings that comprised living martyrdom.²⁴ In seeking to convert renegades, Le Vacher took a grave risk, since the Turkish authorities frowned heavily upon proselytizing.²⁵ But it evidently fitted into the type of pastoral outreach that Le Vacher felt that he should practice. Indeed, he did not restrain his efforts to renegades, for he disclosed that he had baptized two Muslims as well. He regarded Protestants (“Lutherans and Calvinists”) as suitable subjects for conversion too, although he does not appear to have discriminated against them in providing alms.

Like many others dedicated to assisting slaves or reintegrating them into European Christian society, Le Vacher thought that it was not possible to be both European and Muslim, and did not consider that it was possible to straddle the two cultures (as renegades did).²⁶ For this reason, he opted to foster Christian congregations in Tunis port, which mirrored the parishes of Europe as much as possible. However, although Le Vacher did not expressly acknowledge it, the hybridity of the renegade status was a common fact of life in this environment, for he revealed that many renegades secretly contributed to the upkeep of the chapels, despite their public status as Muslims.

Each of the fourteen *bagnos* in Tunis had its own chapel, funded by the slaves and Christian households in the city. They were administered by “the two most important and best Christians” in the *bagno*, a sacristan and a priest (both slaves), under Le Vacher’s direction. The chapels were, he claimed, better kept than many parish churches in the Christian world, with daily masses and regular sermons. The latter were probably the principal means by which catechesis was carried out, although the chapels also hosted confraternities of the Holy Sacrament, which, as in parish churches throughout the Catholic Reformation era, were a means to perpetuate piety through collective devotional focus on a fundamental doctrine.

The organizations and upkeep of the chapels, and the forms of ceremony and piety practiced within them indicate that Le Vacher encouraged the slaves to engage actively

²³ As much as 20% of the slave population converted in Algiers, according to Weiss, *Captives*, 23. Davis suggests much lower numbers, especially for the late 1600s, when he estimates that only 4% of slaves converted to Islam. He attributes the decrease in the number of new conversions to the stronger missionary presence in the region; cf. Davis, *Christian Slaves*, 22. For details on the conversion process, as well as the motives of renegades and their masters, see *Ibid.*, 21-23; and Bartolomé Benassar, “Conversion ou reniement? Modalités d’une adhésion ambiguë des chrétiens à l’Islam (XVIe-XVIIe siècles),” *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 43:6 (1988): 1349-66.

²⁴ Le Vacher claimed that the Turks tried to incite these boys to commit “enormous sins,” but did not state what these were. It is possible that he meant homosexual acts, a common inference by missionaries; it is unclear how widespread the practice was, as missionaries may have used the “sin” of “unnatural” homosexual acts to symbolize the debauchery of the Islamic faith; see Davis, *Christian Slaves*, 125-6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

²⁶ Weiss, *Captives*, 25.



Prisoners brought ashore in North Africa to be sold into slavery.

Etching by Jan Goeree & Casper Luyken, dated 1706.

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in their religion and to assert their religious identity, despite the confined conditions of their lives. Their chapels provided locations within a repressive environment in which they could demonstrate their mastery of their souls, and were protective physical spaces that could both cultivate and represent their interior liberty. Le Vacher related how four young slaves sneaked to the nearest chapel when their owner went to pray in the mosque, a juxtapositioning of Catholic and Muslim, slave and master, resistance and submission. The chapels and the religious routines that Le Vacher used in his ministry constituted a parallel structure of authority in Tunis' regime of slavery, in which the slaves could assert their spiritual freedom against their physical captivity. Simultaneously, Le Vacher presided over a parallel hierarchy of control, through which he hoped to retain their loyalty for the Catholic Church.

Editorial Notes

- Foliation in the archived original is ff. 273r–280r, and 286v (address).
- A French translation of the letter was published in 1924, with no mention of the translator's name or of the location of the original letter in the archives of Propaganda Fide.²⁷ The English translation offered here follows directly and quite closely the original Italian text and it adopts a conservative approach regarding illegible or damaged portions of the document (that is: we have conjectured only in cases that are more obvious). The French version is generally looser and does not include the end and margin notes found in the original document. In the final stage of the translation, we compared the two versions and chose to fill a few gaps in with suggestions from the French text. Those spots are clearly indicated below.

²⁷ "Rapport de Jean Le Vacher, Prêtre de la Mission, à la Propagande sur la Mission de Tunis (1)," *Revue d'histoire des missions* 1 (1924): 232-42. Hereafter: French version.

- The report itself, the margin notes, and the address are written in the same regular hand that appears on many petitions submitted to the SCPF in the same year, which suggests that this is a contemporaneous copy made by SCPF clerks at the time of receipt. The notes on fol. 286v are written in two different hands.
- In the texts below, illegible words are indicated by "...", and hardly legible ones by "(?)"; places where the original paper was torn or otherwise damaged are noted with ***; words between square brackets are added by the translator to facilitate comprehension; other editorial notes in italics within square brackets indicate further details on the appearance and structure of the document. Occasional underlinings in the original text are retained.
- Marginalia have been incorporated here within the text, distinguishable by italics within angle brackets <...>
- For this edition of *Vincentian Heritage* the English translation of the letter is published in full, followed by the Italian original in full.

Text of Letter – English Translation

fol. 273r

Dearest, most eminent and revered sirs and patrons,

< *He says that this is a duplicate* > Having heard that a ship had been lost to sea, which was going from this city to Livorno, and with which I had sent Your Eminencies a report about what was going on in these areas of my mission, I am now going to repeat what I wrote then, so that you may be informed of the state of this poor church, to the care of which you deigned [to] assign me.

< *The slaves are oppressed* > I believe Your Eminencies and the entire Christendom are well aware how much the poor Christians enslaved by these barbarians have to endure, as some are forced to deny our holy faith and others to relinquish their money.

< *Their torments are enumerated* > As soon as they capture a ship or a boat, they take from the poor Christians everything they have, often leaving them with nothing to cover themselves, and then they put them in chains. And if there is a youngster on the ship, as is often the case, he is the first to be beaten, in order that they may find out from him who on that boat has money and where they stored it, and of what birth and station they are, with the purpose of extracting, in this fashion, higher ransoms. Once arrived in port, they take them to the 'Baths' – which are big prisons intended for this purpose – or to the private homes of the Turks who own the ship that captured them. Those who are placed in the Baths receive two loaves of bread per day, more

[*notations on bottom of page*]

Tunis 1654. Barbary.



Negotiating the ransom in order to retrieve Christian captives from slavery in Tunis.

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fol. 273v

bran than flour, weighing eight or nine ounces each, which, together with water, are from now on the [only] provision that they will receive from their masters. Two or three days after they get off the boat, their heads are shaven [and] they are given cloth for a pair of shirts and two pairs of underpants, a coat, a piece that serves as a blanket, and a little woolen cloth to make themselves a cloak.

<In order to go to work, the slaves pay the guard a monthly fee> The prisons mentioned above look like some badly built long storehouses, yet they are strong and tightly locked with three good gates, and there would be neither air nor light if it were not for the cracks in the middle. Once there, the poor Christians are put under the supervision of Turkish or renegade guards, whose chiefs are called 'Bassi Guards'; whoever wants to have the freedom to work in the city or do anything without being supervised by guards, has to pay one piece of eight *reales* and a half,²⁸ or two pieces every month, and the same amount to exempt themselves from the daily labor that everybody has to do, notwithstanding the other dues that everybody has to pay.

<Description of the torments endured by the slaves> Those who cannot exempt themselves from their work duty are called up every morning at the break of dawn by the Bath scribe, to whom the Bassi Guard has [previously] communicated the master's orders regarding the poor Christians' tasks for the day, and he assigns to each of them the place where he has to work, and what he has to do, distributing chores not according to reason, but according to how he is disposed toward each person, often assigning the most exhausting tasks to the weakest, unless they give him some gift or manage to gain his benevolence in some other way. During their work time, which lasts until about ten in the evening, they are guarded by either a Moor, a renegade, or an impoverished Turk, who observes their behavior at work, which he then

²⁸ "One piece of eight," also known as the "Spanish dollar," was a silver *peso* worth eight *reales*.

fol. 274r

reports to the Bassi Guard. Those who are free to go to town have to return to the Bath at the same time as the others, and that is when they are given their provisions, namely the two little loaves of bread mentioned above, one of which they eat in the evening, together with whatever little food they were able to sneak in from the outside, keeping the other loaf for the following morning; as for the water, those who do not go to work do the service of carrying it for the others. Afterwards, the Bassi Guard and the scribe call everybody's last and first name, one after the other, in order to make sure that nobody is missing, and then they lock the Bath until the following morning. That is how the poor Christians live when they stay in the city, because, when the galleys go out, some of them are sent to the ships to row.

<There are 14 Baths> All the slaves are not housed in these prisons, called Baths, which amount to fourteen here in Tunis, but only those who belong to the most important people. Some [owners] send [their slaves] out of the city to work in the mountains. The common people keep their [slaves] in their own houses and, among them, the most tormented are those who are in the hands of Andalusians, renegades, Greeks, and less affluent Turks, because they give them fewer provisions than is the norm in the Baths, and they request more effort from them, some even demanding that [their slaves], after completing their daily household chores, go to town to sell water and bring back seven or eight Roman *baiocchi*²⁹ every evening, and if they fail to do so, there is no lack of beatings.

<The slaves who fall ill starve to death> Some other [owners] give no food and no clothes to their slaves, yet they do not relent in demanding from them one piece of eight every month. When [the slaves] fall ill, especially if they are old, they put them in their horse stables or

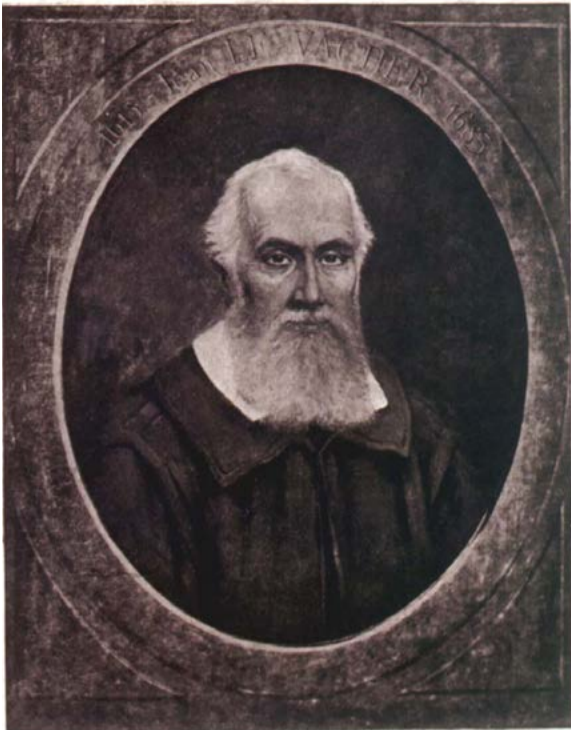
fol. 274v

<Catholic priests help the slaves with their spiritual needs> in some corner of their houses, where many are left to starve to death, without even being given permission to be seen by a confessor, even though we have procured this favor some time ago, by the grace of God, by giving a few *denari* to their masters;

<Two hospitals were built for the infirm> and from now on, with the help of the Lord, they will receive more bodily and spiritual assistance, because we erected two hospitals with the aim of receiving them in such time of need.

<There are 12 priests among the slaves in Tunis. They help the other [slaves] with their spiritual needs> There are approximately six thousand Christian slaves here, and among them twelve priests and just as many deacons, sub-deacons, and unordained ecclesiastics, and even though all of their torments are great, nevertheless some suffer less than others,

²⁹ One *baiocco* was one hundredth of a Papal *scudo*.



Missionary priest Jean Le Vacher, C.M. (15 March 1619–26 July 1683).

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



such as the *spallieri* on the galleys, the front rowers, some of the Bath cooks, the barbers, the scribes, and all those who know a trade or have some other means to make money;

<The priests are respected by the others> the priests also, by the mercy of God, are somewhat relieved thanks to the laymen [around them], who, although they are their companions in slavery, see them as their fathers and have great respect for them, especially when they live like good priests, and they free them of their daily work, and often their galley duties as well, by paying a certain amount to the owner, and they give them better bread than usual, and offer them the Bath chapel every week [and] half a piece of eight, with the sole condition that they say Mass three times a week, and on top of that [the priests] often receive payment from private individuals for [any] additional masses they say, or when they help out with the service for the dead.

<They have some spiritual solace> The blessed Lord, who is the father of all mercy and God of all consolation, does not forget to comfort with his grace those who are so afflicted bodily. The zeal that Jesus Christ bestows on the poor and distressed members [of the Church], in return for so many hardships, through his holy faith and all matters of religion, is truly a great effect of his grace.

fol. 275r

Later I will narrate certain torments that have been suffered for the faith; [but] for the moment I am going to talk about what is done in common by all.

<Every Bath has its own chapel> / <About the upkeep of the chapels> Each Bath has its own chapel, which is maintained, 1) by alms collected once a week from all the Baths and from the city households that are inhabited by Christians. When all the Christians are here [in the city], the handouts amount every week to approximately one *scudo* per chapel, and many renegades secretly contribute to this charity, no less than the faithful; 2) those who

sell or who own wine voluntarily tax themselves by two *testoni*³⁰ per barrel of wine for the chapel of their respective Bath; 3) the Christians who die here with some savings make donations to the chapels. All of this is administered by the two most important and best Christians of each Bath. Their stay in office is decided every year according to how well or how badly they have behaved.

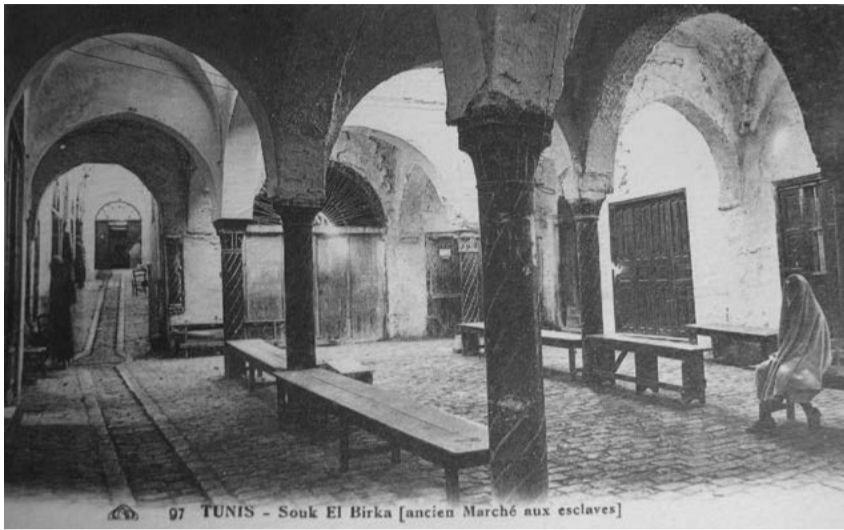
<*The chapels are serviced with...*> Besides the chapel priest, there is a sacristan who takes care of each of the chapels mentioned above and, by the grace of God, these [chapels] are better kept than many parochial churches in Christendom, not only on the holy days, but also the rest of the time. Every day, when there are enough priests in all [of the chapels], Mass is said before the men go to work; every Saturday and on the Eve of feasts, after the Bath is locked, they sing the vespers and then they say the litanies of the Madonna. Every month, three sermons are preached in three different Baths where three confraternities have been established, and on those days Mass is sung there even though at one of the confraternities, which is called the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament, the said sacrament is displayed and then carried in procession

fol. 275v

inside the Bath; and during Advent and Lent, a sermon is preached every Friday. On the days of the patron saints of each chapel, the first and second vespers are said, as well as two masses—one low, where many of those who have to go to work receive communion; and one sung as solemnly as possible. Our greatest consolation is that, although not everybody has the spirit of Christianity fully [within themselves], just like not everybody in Christendom has it, and even though there are a few who only seem to be Christian by name and habit, nevertheless we have not given up hope of converting them, and besides, there are others who give singular example;

<*Confessions and communions are quite frequent*> / <*The great devotion of some poor slaves*> because confessions and communions are a lot more frequent in these poor chapels than in many great churches of the Christian world, and the poor slaves who live in private households are content to voluntarily expose themselves to being beaten for attending Mass or going to confession and are ready to bear their harshest torments patiently and without complaining, which they say they deserve for the sins they committed on Christian ground; [moreover,] to the torments mentioned above, they also add voluntary penances, such as fasting on certain days of the week, or flagellating themselves at night after they come back from work, until they draw blood, and some of them (and those are the poorest) have such love of God that they desire neither liberty, nor that their exertions be diminished, nor even that they feel to a lesser extent the acerbity of their mistreatments, but only the grace to spend their lives without offending God any longer, having no greater

³⁰ *Testone* was worth 30 *baiocchi*.



Turn-of-the-twentieth-century postcard picturing an old slave market in Tunis.

Public Domain



fol. 276r

sorrow than to see Him offended by others.

<*There are a few who are bad*> Just like the laymen, the priests are divided between the good and the rotten; some [offer] greatest example, while others seek their own interest and not that of Jesus Christ, and they [give] scandal, and it is difficult to correct them either with good words or threats, although, by the grace of God, there are few like that.

<*The young are more mistreated than the rest*> Among the multitude of all these poor slaves, I have not yet discussed the most afflicted ones, the young, whom the Turks want to incite either to commit enormous sins or to renounce our holy faith, and if promises and threats are not enough, they add beatings and so many ill-treatments that it is wondrous that they can bear them.

<*The great patience of some*> We have had extraordinary examples of patience from two [young slaves], who for two years refused to renounce their faith [and] suffered the most serious torments with admirable constancy.

<*Progress and results... of the missions*> One of them will be converted from the Lutheran heresy to our religion, for which he even chose to postpone his liberty, refusing to regain it with the help of Englishmen, whose condition for ransoming him was that he return to their sect. We have received the abjurations of fourteen other Lutherans, Calvinists, and one Greek, and we baptized five persons: a 70-year old Tatar; a 27-year old youth, the son of a Moor woman; and three lads of Christian parents.

<*Great edification... of certain slaves for the... of the holy faith*> Great edification came from the example set by four others, who in defense of their faith refused offers and suffered torments above anything that can be expected at their age, the oldest of them being no older than fourteen, and one of them only eleven. They took advantage of the fact that their master had the habit of going to the mosque every Friday,

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<*Many become Turks. He proposes... that the sacrament of Confirmation be administered there*> and they went to the closest chapel, either to make confessions or to ask some priest

to pray for them, since they did not have enough time to attend the entire Mass; but their master found out about this and forbade them to go, and he had their hair shaven, and he made them wear a turban and Turkish clothes, which now prevents us from talking to them as freely as we used to; but God our Lord knows that under that Turkish attire they have a truly Christian spirit: whenever possible, they say their prayers together, mornings and evenings, and they often tell their master that the clothes do not make the Christian, and that neither beatings, nor any other punishment that he can give them, nor even death itself will ever separate them from Jesus Christ.

<[*Marginalia illegible*]> But if these and others behave courageously, still many others fall and become Turks, for which reason Your Eminences could not imagine how beneficial to the service of God it would be to provide or send some currently unassigned bishop, or by any other means [allow] the sacrament of the Holy Confirmation to be administered here and in other parts of Barbary, such that these sons of Christ, being honored with the dignity of [being] Christ's soldiers, would more heartily resist the persecutors of their faith.

<*The female slaves are much pressured to abjure their religion*> They also treat the women very badly, with beatings and much work and with not giving them half of what is necessary for their sustenance, all of which is meant to make them renounce our holy faith, although, by the grace of the Lord, they are very constant and they suffer their exertions [with less difficulty than] not being able to attend the most holy sacrifice of the Mass as they would wish, which they do as often as they can, even though they cannot do so without being afterwards beaten. Among them [there] are some

fol. 277r

who have never been outside of their masters' houses for all the ten, twenty, thirty, thirty-five, and forty years that they have been enslaved, because the Turks want to accustom them to the habit of their own ladies, who stop going out after they get married—or at least [that is the case] for the most important persons; and what afflicts those poor women the most is that, in their time of sickness, they are denied the consolation of a confessor; on the contrary, their masters have them assisted by their own priests, who do everything they can to pervert them, because they believe that if they make a Christian renounce his or her faith, they cannot fail to get into heaven, regardless of the sins that they commit afterwards; yet even so, it is a rare occurrence to hear that one of the ladies mentioned above has abjured [her religion].

Besides the slaves mentioned above, who live in the city, there are many others—as I indicated earlier—whom the barbarians keep in the countryside, in places called 'Masserie' [manor farms], where they keep them all the time, without ever allowing them to come to the city.

<*Fruitful visitation by the apostolic vicar*> Last October I went to one of these manor farms, located approximately twenty miles from here, where Mustafa di Cardo, captain of the Andalusians in these parts, keeps a great number of Christian slaves. It would be



Christian prisoners being sold as slaves in neighboring Algiers.

Etching by Jan Luyken dated 1684.

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difficult to accurately describe their spiritual and secular needs: for sustenance they only have one loaf of bread per day, very dark, half baked, small and made of rotten grain such that mad dogs would refuse to eat; this bread, together with a spoonful of the same rotten grain, coarsely milled and boiled in a little water with salt, is their entire nourishment for the day; they have no clothes besides a few shreds to cover themselves, [they are] constantly oppressed by exertions, from morning to evening, [and] exposed to the injuries of the weather, since their guards work them especially hard in the rain, with a view to increase their suffering, but also in order to use the water more thoroughly

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and thus make the lands and gardens of their masters more fertile; once the night comes, they are locked up in a dark place and the naked earth is their bed. As far as their spiritual [needs] are concerned, they had not seen one single priest since the beginning of their enslavement.

In the space of the few days that I spent with them, they all made their confessions and took communion and were greatly consoled by this benefit and also for having heard Mass, which many of them had not heard in thirty or thirty-five years.

<*The slaves were consoled and fed*> / <*For fear of torments, the renegades do not ****> I then fed them according to the possibilities of my poverty: I bought some sheep (?)³¹ and gave them to them, together with better bread than what their master usually gave them, a small alms of which twenty-two renegades—companions in misery of those poor Christians—also availed themselves; [those renegades] would gladly revoke their abnegation of our religion if they did not fear the great torments ***³² which they undoubtedly would have to suffer.

<[*Marginalia illegible*]> From there, I had intended to go to another Masseria, but I was dissuaded on account of the great perils I would have had to go through in order to get there. Once returned to the city and after having celebrated the festivities of Christmas and

³¹ As in French version, 238.

³² Paper torn.

those of the patron saints of two Baths, where the divine service was celebrated and the Holy Mass was sung, more than seven hundred people made their confessions and took communion;

<*Confessions given by galley slaves*> and thanks to the various incursions made here by Turkish galleys, our Lord gave us the grace of hearing the confessions and giving communion to many poor slaves who had until then spent twenty, twenty-five, and thirty years without any consolation.

The following [day], the Feast of the Innocents, I went to a different Masseria, located about ten miles from here, where there are two hundred poor slaves owned by Chelib, son of the recently deceased *daya* of this reign (the *daya*

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is like a king and is elected). Chelib, who is one of the main persons in this country and owner of those slaves, usually keeps them there until it is time to arm the galleys, whereupon he sends them to row, and on their return they go back [to the Masseria], such that they never see any priest, since there is none among themselves. That is the reason why I had been wanting to go there for a while, but I was held back by the fear that the presence of their owner, who resides there because of some construction work that he has ordered, would impede the freedom that I needed to help them.

<[*Marginalia illegible*]> But when I heard that he intended to stay there for a long time, I resolved to go there and bring him some presents, in order to have liberty to treat with the poor slaves, some of whom, when they heard that I had been seen [in the area], left their work in order to let the others know, and many of them came to meet me. As soon as I arrived, I went to see their master in order to prevent the punishments that I feared he was going to give to the poor Christians who had left their work, but also to tell him about the reason for my visit. On that occasion, I gave him what I had brought [for him], namely a barrel of red wine, a small cask of anchovies, two goblets, and one basket of apples, which he received with a show of great pleasure, particularly for the barrel of red wine and for the apples, which he highly appreciated and which he sent the next day to his wife in Tunis, keeping the rest for himself.

He showed great joy at my visit, after which he told me that I should have all freedom, not only now, but whenever I wanted to go there again, and that he wanted me to take no other lodging than his own house, from which

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I was to take anything I needed, and I felt obliged to accept to sleep there the entire time that I was fortunate enough to spend with the poor slaves.

<*Fruitful deeds done by the apostolic vicar in the Bath*> / <*A spiritually useful courtesy done by the master*> They work in various places, which is why I could never see them all together, except in the Bath at night; there, after having sung the litany of the most holy Madonna, I gave them a brief sermon, at the end of which I announced that the following morning,

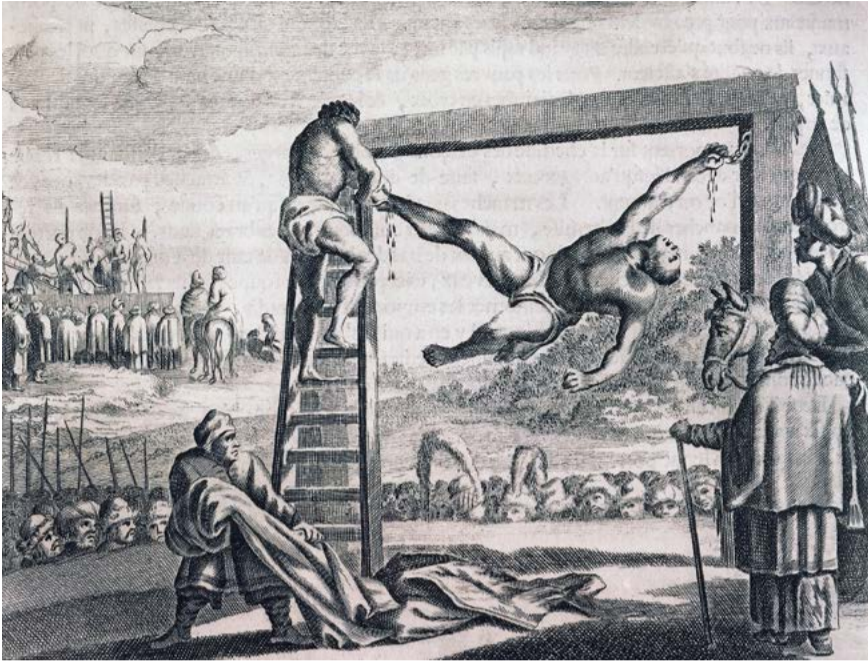
another slave priest (whom I had brought with me) and I would stay in the Bath to hear their confessions, and after that I let them have their rest. In the morning, by order of the master, the Bath stayed open much longer than usual. We celebrated the Holy Mass there, and then we used that entire day to hear their confessions, except for the quarter hour we took at midday for a little lunch. Not seeing me, the master asked where I was and they, not daring to say that I was hearing confessions, told him that I had stayed in the Bath to pray on their behalf, upon which he sent all of them back to pray with me, such that, on that day, most of them heard me.

<Communion [given] to many; reconciliations and peace among the slaves> We were even busier the following day, and having returned to the Bath at two in the morning, we said our prayers and finished hearing the confessions of everybody there and some others besides who came from neighboring gardens and other places, and we reconciled those who had confessed the previous day, and then I said Mass, during which eighty of them received communion after having asked for forgiveness and tearfully forgiven one another for all the old enmities that they had among themselves. After my Mass, the other priest started another, [during which] he gave communion to those who had been confessing and reconciling during my service, such that [in the end] all of them made their confessions

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<[Marginalia illegible]> and received communion, except for two or three, who were not able at the time but promised to come to our house in the city and do it there. I gave each of them rosary beads because they did not have any and, after I bought them an ox, which they slaughtered and divided among themselves, I left(?) them so that I could be home on the first day of the year, when I was supposed to receive the abjuration of a Calvinist, which actually did not happen until the day of the Epiphany.

There are many of these Masserie where I greatly wish to go and visit the poor Christians, who, deprived of the presence of a priest, live their lives like Moors rather than according to the principles of Christianity, but since the country is not free for Christians and especially not for priests, and since, in order to travel safely to the countryside, it is necessary to pay a Turk to come along [as an escort], and make other expenses to treat those who supervise the slaves, and give alms to the slaves themselves, here a robe, there a cap, or a shirt, or a pair of shoes, or something similar, according to their needs, which they otherwise cannot fulfill, and [since] I do not have enough means to be able to help, I can but recommend them to God and show to those who, by the grace of His divine Majesty, enjoy their freedom and have some charity in the name of Jesus Christ, how appreciated they would be if they felt some compassion for the most afflicted members [of the Church] and their true brothers by not letting them perish in body and soul, as they end up too often renouncing their faith . . . and are left without any hope for freedom or support; may it please His divine Majesty to make this known to those who can contribute to such a great work of charity and grant them the grace to accomplish it.



Punishment of Christian slaves.

Engraving from Olfert Dapper's 1686 publication, *Description of Africa*.

Public Domain



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<Attempts made by the slaves to gain their liberty, but in vain> I will now conclude this already-too-long letter by referring to the attempts made by some of these poor people to regain their liberty, even though they can rarely be successful, which is another sign of how much they suffer here. Sixteen or seventeen poor Christians built two little boats, one made of leather(?)³³ and the other of waxed canvas, which they kept hidden in a storehouse until they took them to sea, but after two or three miles, as the sea weather turned bad and one of the sticks they used as a mast broke, they were forced to return to port, where the Moors, having caught them, dragged them back to their masters in the city, who did not spare them a flood of beatings.

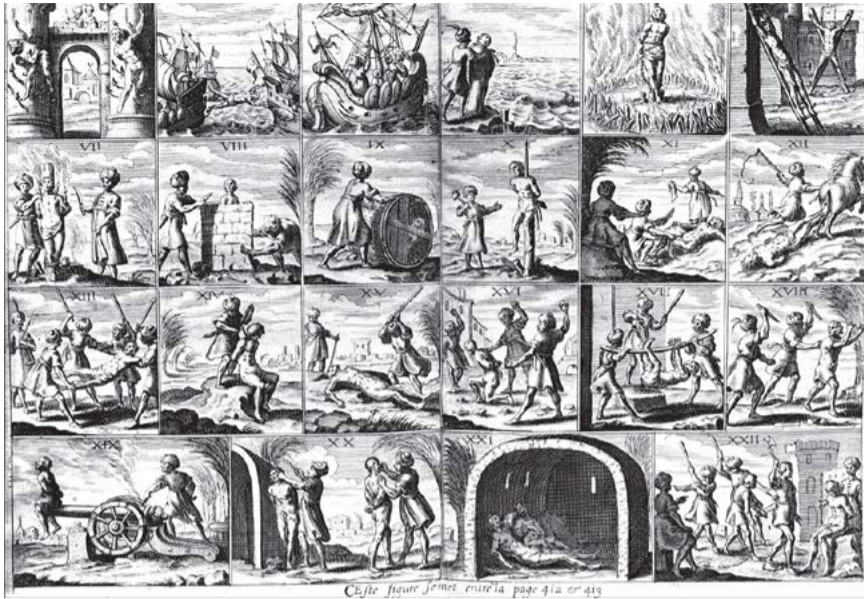
The same occurred to thirty or forty others, who wanted to run away together with a renegade, who, for his own part, received fifteen strikes and was put in the Bath, together with the Christian slaves, and made to work with them and sent to the galleys, which nevertheless did not diminish the zeal he held for his first religion and the devotion he had for the most holy Madonna, a sentiment shared by many other renegades.

<Severe punishments for those who attempt to run away> Forty or fifty other Christian slaves of the current *daya*, not having yet been locked in the Bath, furtively embarked on a boat but were quickly captured; they received, like the others, a great number of beatings, and the instigators of the attempt had their ears cut off.

<Very harsh torments given to some poor slaves> A few of the former Bassa's slaves, who ran away to Bizerte, wanted, it is believed, to kill him³⁴ and sail away with their galley. [Having caught them,] the Bassa had six of them tortured in various ways: he had the limbs

³³ French version, 241.

³⁴ According to the French translation, the slaves wanted to kill "their guards" (French version, 241). However, we believe that the verb "to kill," used with a personal pronoun in the singular ("ammazzarlo"), actually refers to the Bassa himself.



Period etching published in Pierre Dan's *Histoire de Barbarie et de Ses Corsairs* (1637), illustrating twenty-two forms of torture used by Barbary masters to punish their Christian slaves.

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of the first one pulled off while still alive; the second was quartered and dragged through the city; the third was exposed naked and the Bassa ordered that the other Christian [slaves] from his galley kill him with needles; the fourth, he ordered

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killed with red-hot pincers; the fifth was hanged upside down from a window, then burned; the sixth was pierced with a heated iron; four others had their noses and both ears cut and fourteen only one ear each, which they then had to cook and eat; and the rest of the slaves on the same galley were given fifty or sixty strikes each.

This, eminent sirs, is the state of this poor church, whose misfortunes are hard to describe to those who have not experienced or at least seen them. May Your Eminencies always keep it under their protection and occasionally remember its temporal and spiritual needs. I end prostrate at Your Eminencies' feet, humbly kissing your holy vestments. Tunis, on the 29th of January 1654.

<The Church of Tripoli needs a missionary> I forgot to notify Your Eminencies that the church of Tripoli would have great need of a good apostolic missionary, because there is not one single free priest there.

Your Eminencies'

most devoted and obedient servant
Giovanni [Jean] Le Vacher, priest
of the Congregation of the Mission
apostolic vicar in Tunis

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[*address*]

To the Sacred Congregation for the
Propagation of the Faith

On behalf of
Giovanni [Jean] Le Vacher, priest
of the Congregation of the Mission
and apostolic vicar in Tunis

[*SCPF notes, written in different hand*]

Cardinal d'Este

This will have to be read in detail, as it has many points.

[*in pencil, center of page, different hand*]

The secretary³⁵ should tend to this together with the most eminent Cardinal Pan...³⁶

Text of Letter – Original Italian

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Emin' mi e Reu' mi Sig'ri P'roni Col' mi

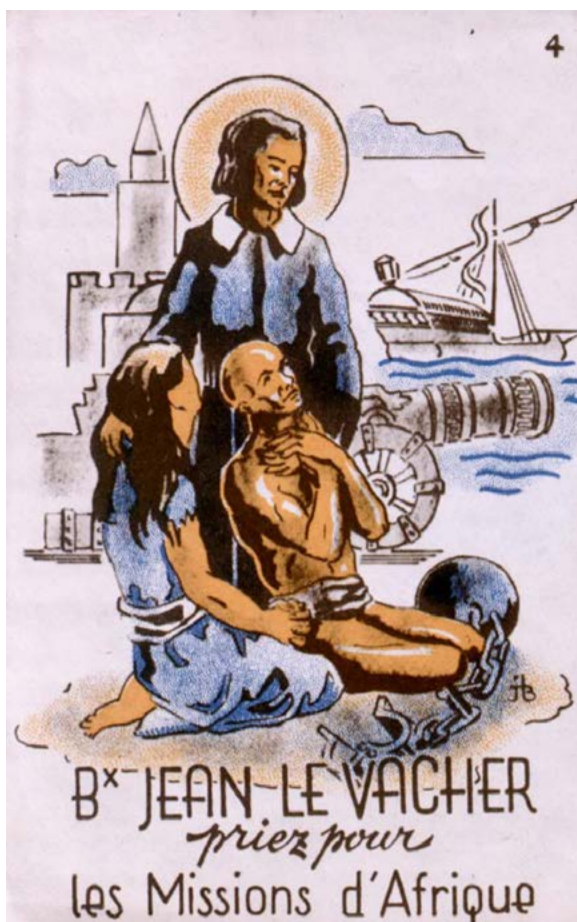
<*Dice che questo/ sia il Dupplicato*> Hauendo inteso essersi perso in mare un Vascello, che andaua/ da questa Città à Liorno con occasione del quale dauo qualche/ ragguaglio all'E.E. V.V. di quel' che passa in questi luoghi della/ mia missione. Vengo con la presente à ripetere quel che all'hora/ scrissi, acciò siano informate dello stato di questa pouera Chiesa,/ alla cura della quale si sono degnate applicarmi.

<*Li Schiaui/ sono(?) angariati*> Quanto patiscono i poueri Christiani fatti Schiaui da questi Barbari, si p[er]/ obligar' gl'uni à rinegar la n'ra S. fede come p[er] cauar' denari/ dag'altri, credo che sia noto all'E.E. V.V. et à tutta la Christianità.

<*Seguitano le angarie*> Subito che hanno preso ò Vascello, ò Barca, leuano ai poueri Christiani/ tutto quelche hanno, non lasciando loro ben' spesso con che coprir/si, e mettendoli poi alla Catena. E se sopra d'e Naui si ritroua/ qualche giouane, come è solito,

³⁵ Refers to Dionisio Massari, Secretary of the SCPF at that time.

³⁶ Indecipherable name, but it might refer to the Cardinal-Priest of San Pancrazio — a title held at that time by Francesco Maidalchini. However, the cardinal is routinely mentioned in SCPF's *Acta* records of that year as "Maidalchinus," not as "Cardinal S. Pancratii," which makes our conjecture problematic.



quello è il p' mo ad esser bastonato, p[er]/ cauar' da lui con questo mezzo; chi trà quelli, che stanno nelle Naue/ hà denari, ò in che luogo gl'habbian' riposti, e di qual' nascita, ò/ beni temporali sin ogn'uno de fatti schiaui p[er] poterne così erigere/ maggior' riscatti. Giunti al Porto li conducono ai Bagni, che sono/ gran' Carceri destinati à quest'effetto, ò uero alle case priuate de/ Turchi, de quali era la Naue, che li hà presi in mare. Quelli, che/ sono nei Bagni hanno p[er] ciascheduno due pani il giorno, più/

[notations on bottom of page]

Tunisi 1654. Barberia.

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semola che farina di 8. ò. 9. oncie l'uno, che con acqua sono di là/ innanzi la prouisione, che gli danno i loro P'roni. Due ò tre giorni/ doppo lo sbarco gli fanno radere i capelli, gli mandano tela p[er]/ farsi un'paro di camiscie, e due para di sottocalsoni, vn cap/potto, una come coperta di letto, et un'poco di Panno p[er] farsi un'/Tabarro.

<Per andare à lauorare li schiaui pa/gano tante al mese/ al Guardiano> Posti i poueri Christiani nelli soprad'e carceri, che sono come lunghi Ma/gazzini mal'fabricati, à però forti, e ben'serrati con tre buone/ Porte, e che non hanno aria ne lume se non p[er] sospiragli fatti in/ mezzo alla volta sono iui custoditi da Guardiani Turchi ò Rinegati,/ al capo de quali che chiamano Guardian' Bassi; chi uuol'hauer li/bertà d'andar à lauorare nella Città, ò far'altro senza esser accompa/gnato da altri Guardiani, si dà una pezza, e mezza da otto reali, ò/ due pezze p[er] ogni mese, et altrettanto p[er] redimersi dal lauoro quo/tidiano, che tutti deuono fare, senza altre corecte, che bisogna che/ tutti gli paghino.

<Seguitano li anga/rie che si fanno/ à Schiaui> Quelli poi che non ponno redimersi da quell'obbligo del lauoro, sono ogni/ mattina al far' del giorno chiamati dallo scriuano del Bagno, al/ quali hauendo d'o Guardian' Bassi fatto intendere l'ordine, che hà/ riceuuto dal padrone p[er] il lauoro de poueri Christiani in quel/ giorno, egli accenna à ciascheduno il luogo, oue hà da andare à/ lauorare, e quel che hà da fare, sparrendo p[er] lo più il lauoro, non/ secondo la ragione, mà secondo che è affetto uerso le persone, mand/dando ben' spesso i più deboli alle maggiori fatighe, se essi non gli/ fanno qualche regalo, ò non procurano p[er] qualche uia di rendersi/le amoreuole. Stanno nel tempo del lauoro, che dura sino alle/ 22 hore in circa sotto la guardia di qualche moro, ò Rinegato, ò pouero Turco, il quale osserua come si portino nel lauoro p[er] poi

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riferirlo al Guardian' Bassi. Ritornati al Bagno deuono parim'te/ ritrouaruisi nella med'ma hora quelli, che hanno licenza d'andar p[er]/ la Città, et all'hora gli si dà la loro prouisione, cioè le due Pagnotte/ soprad'e, una delle quali mangiano la sera, con quel poco, che hanno/ potuto portar' furtiuam'te dall'horto, e l'altra conseruano p[er]/ la mattina seguente, l'acqua fanno la carità quelli, che non uanno/ à lauorare di portarla p[er] gl'altri. Il Guardian' Bassi dopo insie/me con lo scriuano chiamano tutti con i loro nomi, e cognomi/ l'un' doppo l'altro p[er] uedere che non ne manchi alcuno, e poi/ serrano il Bagno sin alla mattina seguente. Così uiuono i po/ueri Christiani quando stanno nella Città perche quando uanno/ fuora le Galere sono una parte di loro mandati sopra di essi à/ uogare.

<Li Bagni sono .../ in num'o di 14> In queste prigioni, d'e Bagni, che sono in numero di 14 qui in Tunisi/ non sono rinchiusi, come hò accennato, tutti i Schiaui, mà solo/ quelli, che appartengono alle persone più principali. Alcuni li mandano fuor della Città à lauorare nelle montagne. Le per/sone piu ordinarie tengono i suoi nelle case proprie e tra/ questi ultimi quelli, che capitano in mano di Andalusi, di Rine/gati, di Greci, e di Turchi meno ricchi sono molto trauagliati,/ p[er]che gli danno meno prouisione, che non si dà ne Bagni, e uoglio/no più fatica da essi, volendo alcuni di loro, che ogni giorno/ fatti i seruitij, che hanno da far' in case, uadano à uender acqua/ p[er] la Città, egli portino ogni sera sette ò otto baiocchi di moneta/ Romana, e se non lo fanno, non gli mancano bastonate,

<Schiaui ammalati/ mureno di fame> altri/ non danno ne uitto, ne uestito à loro Schiaui, e non lasciano d'esi/gere da essi una Pezza da otto ogni mese. Cascando poi am'alati/ massime se sono vecchi, li mettono nelle stalli de caualli, ò/

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<Li Schiaui sono assis/titi da Sacerdoti cat/tolici p[er] i bisogni/ spirituali/> in qualche cantone delle case loro, oue molti li lasciano morir di fame/ senza uoler dar' licenza che siano uisitati massime dal confessore,/ se bene gl'habbiamo p[er] gratia di Dio procurato p[er] l'adietro questo/ bene con dar' alcuni denari ai loro P'roni,

<Si sono fatti fare due/ spedali p[er] gl'Infermi> e di quà inanzi saranno/ coll'aiuto del med'mo Sig're meglio assistiti e corporalm'te, e spiritualm'te/ p[er] che habbiamo fatto fare due Spedali p[er] riceuerli in q'to bisogno./

<Sono in Tunisi fra/ li Schiaui 12 Sa/cerdoti che assisto/no à gl'altri p[er] i/ bisogni sp'uiali> Si ritrouano qui circa sei mila Christiani schiaui, e fra essi dodeci/ Sacerdoti, et altrettanti tra Diaconi, Suddiaconi, e Religiosi Laici,/ de quali tutti, se bene i trauagli sono molto grandi, tuttauia al/cuni patiscono meno degl'altri, come sono i spallieri delle/ Galere i Vogauanti, alcuni, che fanno l'Osteria ne Bagni,/ i Barberi, i Scriuani, e tutti quelli, che sanno qualche arte, ò/ hanno qualche altro mezzo di far' denari:

<Li Sacerdoti sono/ riputati degl'altri> i Preti anche sono p[er]/ misericordia del Sig're alquanto solleuati p[er] mezzo de laici, i quali/ se bene sono loro compagni nella schiauitud'e, li risguardano però/ come Padri, e portandogli gran' riuerenza, massimè quando ui/uono de buoni sacerdoti, li fanno liberare dal lauoro quotidiano,/ et anche ben spesso da quello della Galera, pagando p[er] essi un/ tanto al Padrone, e facendogli dar' pane migliore del solito, e/ dandogli la Cappella del Bagno ogni settimana mezza pezza/ da otto con obligo solo di tre messe la Settimana, riceuendo/ poi ben' spesso retributione da particolari p[er] le altre che dicono,/ come anco quando assistono à qualche messa cantata p[er] morti.

<Hanno qualche/ consolat'ne sp'uale> Non manca Iddio bened'ò che è P're delle misericordie, e Dio d'ogni/ consolat'ne di consolare con la gratia sua quelli, che corporalm'te/ sono tanto afflitti, e ueramente è un'effetto grande della gr'a/ di Giesù Christo il zelo che dà in mezzo à tanti trauagli p[er] la/ sua S'ta fede, e p[er] le cose della Relig'ne à queste pouere et afflitte/

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sue membra. Narrerò poi alcuni particolari patimenti sofferti p[er] la fede; al presente/ sono p[er] dire qualche si fa in commune da tutti.

<Ogni Bagno hà la sua Cappella> / <Di che si mantenghi/no le Cappelle> Hà ciascun Bagno la sua Cappella, la quale uien' mantenuta l'ò con una/ cerca, che si fà una uolta la Settimana, andando in tutti i bagni,/ e nelle case della Città oue sono Christiani, dalla qual' cerca/ si cauarà circa d'un scudo p[er] cappella ogni settimana quando tutti/ i Christiani sono qui, e molti Rinegati contribuiscono anch'essi/ nascostamente à questa limosina non meno di qualche fan'ò/ i fedeli; 2'ò quelli, che uendono uino, ò che ne hanno, si sono/ uolontariamente tassati estessi à dare due testoni p[er] botte di uino/ alla Cappella del loro Bagno; 3'ò i Christiani, che muorono in/ queste parti con qualche poco denaro auanzato, fanno lassite à/ d'e Cappelle: Tutto questo è amministrato da due principali/ e migliori Christiani del Bagno, i quali ogn'anno rendono conto/ esene continuati in officio ò mutati, secondo che bene, ò male si/ sono in esso portati.

<Si offitiano le Cap/pelle con...> Oltre al sacerdote mantengono d'e Cappelle/ ciascuna un' Sagrestano, e p[er] gratia de Dio sono si p[er] le festi/ Sacerdotali, come p[er] il restante, meglio tenute, che molte chiese/ anco Parochiali non sono in Christianità. Ogni giorno quando/ si sono Preti à bastanza in tutte si dice messa p'ma che si uada/ al lauoro: tutti i

Sabbati, e Vigilie di feste doppo che e serrato/ il Bagno si canta il Vespro, e poi si dicono le litanie della Mad'na./ Ogni mese si fanno tre Prediche in tre Bagni diuersi, ne/ quali sono stabilite tre confraternità, et in quei giorni ui/ si canta Messa sebenne, ad una delle quali che e Confraterni/tà del Santiss'mo Sacramento, s'espone e si fà poi la Processione/

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del med'mo Ss'mo Sacramento dentro al Bagno, e mentre l'Auuento, e/ la Quaresima ogni Venardi si fà un Sermone. Ne giorni delle feste/ de Padroni di ciascheduna Cappella ui si dice il 1'ò e 2'ò Vespro,/ si dicono due messe, una priuata, alla quale si comunicano/ molti di quelli, che hanno d'andar à lauorare, et una Cantata/ con la maggior solennità che è possibile. La maggior nostra consolat'ne è che se bene non tutti hanno la plenitu/dine dello Spirito del Christianesimo, come non l'hanno ne anche/ tutti quei che sono in Christianità, e benche uene siano alcuni/ pochi, che paiono non hauerne se non il nome, e l'habito, tuttauia/ non disperiamo della conuersione di questi e uene sono d'altri/ d'un' essemplio singolare,

<Si frequentano/ assai le Confess'ni/ e com'unioni> / <Gran' deuot'ne di/ alcuni poueri Chiaui> p[er]che non solo le Confessioni, e Commu/nioni sono molte più frequente in queste pouere Cappelle, che/ in molte grandi Chiese in Christianità, e non si contentano i/ poueri Schiaui di esporsi quelli uolontariamente ad essere basto/nati, che habitano in case particolari p[er] uenir à sentir messa/ ò confessarsi, e di sopportar pentite'tem'te, e senza lamentarsi/ i loro grauissimi trauagli, quali dicono hauer giustamente/ meritati p[er] i peccati, che commetteuano in Christianità; mà/ anche à d'i trauagli aggiungono penitenze uolontarie, come di/ digiunar' qualche giorno della Settimana, far' discipline/ fin'al Sangue la notte doppo esser tornati da lauorare, et/ alcuni (e questi sono dei più poueri) hanno tanto amor' di/ Dio che non desiderano ne la libertà, ne che gli siano sminuite/ le fatighe, ne meno di non sentir' tanto l'acerbità de mali/ trattamenti, che gli uengono fatti, ma solo la gratia di passar'/ la uita loro senza più offender Dio, non hauendo maggiore/

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afflittione, che di uederlo offender' degl'altri.

<Sono alcuni pochi/ discoli> Come trà i Laici, così ancora trà i Sacerdoti uene sono qui de buoni, e de/ discoli, alcuni sono di grandissimo essemplio, altri quaerentes quae/ sua sunt, et non quae Jesu Christi, sono à scandalo, et è difficile/ ne con buone parole, ne con minaccie emendarli, se bene p[er] gratia/ di Dio questi sono pochi.

<Li Giouani sono mal/trattati piu degli'altri> Frà la moltitud'e di tutti questi poueri Schiaui non hò ancora parlato de/ più afflitti, che sono i giouani, quali uolendo i Turchi indurre q'ndo/ à peccati enormi, e quando à negar' la n'ra S'ta fede, se à questo/ effetto non bastano promesse, e minaccie, ui aggiungono bastona/te, e tanti mali trattamenti che è marauiglia, che possino/ sostenerli,

<Patienza grande/ di alcuni> n'habbiamo hauto essempij singolari di patienza/ in due, che p[er] lo spatio di due Anni p[er] non uoler' rinegare, han'o/ sofferto grauissimi tormenti con una constanza ammira/bile:

<Progressi et effetti/... delle miss'ni> Vno di questi sarà prima dall'heresia di Lutero conuertito alla nostra Relig'ne, alla quale p... anche/ posposta la sua libertà, non hauendolo uoluto p[er] mezo degl'/ Inglesi, che lo uoleuano riscattare con conditione che tornasse alla/ setta loro. Habbiamo riceuto [sic] l'abiurat'ne di altri quattordecì trà/ Lutherani, e Caluinisti, e d'un'Greco, e batezzato cinq' persone,/ un Tartaro, che haueua 70. anni, un' giouane di 27. Anni figlio/lo d'una Mora, e tre fancinolli de Christiani.

<Edificat'ne grande/... d'alcuni Schiaui/ p[er] la... / della S'ta fede> Ci hanno anche dato un' edificat'ne indicibile quattro altri i quali p[er]/ non rinegar' la fede, hanno disprezzato offerte e patito tormenti/ sopra quelche si poteua aspettare dall'età loro, non hauen/do il piu uecchio di loro si non quattordecì anni, et uno sola/mente undeci. Pigliauano p[er] l'addietro l'euasione che il loro/ P'rone il giorno del Venerdi, come è l' solito, fosse andato/ ala Moschea,

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<Molti si fanno/ Turchi./ Proppone.../ ...che ui sia/ am'inistrato il Sacra/mento della Cresima> e se ne ueniuanò alla Cappella più uicina, ò p[er] con/fesarsi, ò p[er] raccomandarsi all' or'one (?) di qualche Sacerdote non/ hauendo tempo di sentir' la messa intiera; mà essendosi di ciò/ auerto il d'o loro P'rone gli e ne hà leuata la facultà hauendoli/ poi fatto p[er] forza radere i capelli, e fatto pigliar' il Turbane/ e l'habito Turchesco il che ci uieta di potergli parlare con/ quella libertà, che faceuamo p[er] l'inanzi; ma Dio NS're sotto/ quell' habito Turchesco conosceua in loro un'spirito ueram'te/ Christiano; fanno mattina, e sera le loro orationi insieme quando/ gli è possibile, e dicono spesso al loro P'rone, che l'habito non fà/ il Christiano e che ne le bastonate, ne quanti tormenti potrà/ fargli sperimentare, ne la morte istessa non li separeranno/ già mai da Giesù Christo.

<[Marginalia illegible]> Mà se questi, et altri si porrano ualoro/samente, altri molti anche cadono, e si fanno Turchi p[er] il che non/ possono l'EE. VV. immaginarsi quanto sarebbe seruitio di Dio/ il procurare, ò con mandarci qualche Vescouo disoccupato, ò p[er]/ altro mezzo che s'amministrasse qui, e negl'altri luoghi di Bar/baria il Sacramento della S'ta Cresima, col quale, essendo questi/ figliuoli di Christo honorati della dignità de suoi soldati re/sisterebòno più animosamente ai persecutori della sua fede.

<Li donne schiaue/ sono molto angariate/ p[er] farle rinegare> Sono parimente molto mal trattate le Donne, e con bastonate o con farle/ molto lauorare e non dargli la metà di quelche è necessario p[er]/ sostentamento della uita, e tutto ciò ad effetto d'obligarle à ri/negare la nostra S'ta fede, se bene p[er] gratia del Sig're sono constantis/sime, e non sentano [tanto] i loro trauagli, quanto di non poter'/ assistere come uorebòno al S'mo Sacrificio delle Messe, il che/ procurano quanto più possono, ancor si p[er] il far' non posso/no fare senza esser' poi bastonate. Vi ne sono trà di esse, che/

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non sono mai uscite dalle case de loro P'roni da 10. 20. 30. 35. e 40./ anni che sono Schiaue, uolendo li Turchi assuefarle all'usanza/ delle loro donne, le quale doppo esser maritate non escano piu, al/meno quelle delle persone più grandi; e qualche affligga più/ quelle pouere schiaue sie che nelle malatie loro gli uien'/ negata la consolat'ne di poter hauere un'Confessore, anzi i loro/ P'roni le fanno assitare da suoi Sacerdoti, che fanno ogni/ sforza p[er] peruertirle, perche credono, che facendo rinegar' un'/ Christiano il Paradiso non gli puol' mancare p[er] qualsiuoglia/ peccati che possono poi commettere, mà con tutto ciò s'intende/ di rado, che nessuna di d'e Donne rineghi.

Oltre ai Schiaui soprad'i che stanno nella Città, molti, come accen/nai, ne tengono i Barbari nella Campagna in luoghi da loro chia/mati Masserie, oue li fanno continuamente stentare, ne gli/ permettono già mai di poter' uenire alla Città.

<Visita fruttuosa/ fatta dal Vic'rio Ap'lico> Andai il mese/ d'ottobre ultimo ad una di d'e Masserie discosta di quà circa/ circa uenti miglie, nella quale Mustafa di Cardo Capitano/ degli Andalusi di queste parti tiene gran' quantità de Schiaui/ Christiani; difficile sarebbe il rappresentare le necessità sp'uali/ e temporali loro, hanno p[er] uitta un'solo pane il giorno, molto(?)/ nero, mezzo tosto, piccolo e fatto d'un grano marcio tale certo/ che molti cani non ne uorrebbono mangiare p[er] il forore: questo pane/ con vn cucchiaino p[er] giorno del med'mo grano marcio grossam'te maci/nato, e cotto in un'poco di acqua, e di sale, è tutto il loro sosten/tamento, sono senza altro uestimento... alcuni pochi stracci/ p[er] coprirsi, sempre oppressi di fatighe dalla mattina sino/ alla sera esposti à tutte l'ingiurie di tempo, facendoli i lor' guar/diani straordinariam'te faticare specialmente mentre le piogge/ si p[er] farli più patire, come p[er] far' più abundantem'te l'acqua/

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nelle terre e giardini de lor' P'roni p[er] così renderli più fertili; uenuta/ poi la notte, il letto loro è la nuda terra rinchiusi in luogo oscuro./ Quanto alle s'puali non haueuano dal principio della loro schia/uitudine uisto alcun' Sacerdote.

Si confessarono, e communicarono tutti mentre alcuni giorni, che io stato con loro molto consolati/ di questo beneficio, e d'hauer' sentito in quei giorni Messa, la quale/ molti di loro non haueuano inteso da trenta o trentacinq' anni./

<Schiaui consolati/ e regalati> / <Rinegati p[er] timore/ de tormenti non/ ***> Li regalai poi secondo la possibilità della pouertà mia, hauendo/ fatto comprare alcuni..., e datigli con pane migliore di q'llo,/ che gli dà il P'rone, della quale poca Elemosina furono anche par/tecipi uenti due renegati, compagni delle miserie di quei poueri/ Christiani, quali ritrattarano uolontieri l'abnegat'ne che sforza/tam'te hanno fatto de la nostra Religione, se non temessero i graui/ tormenti *** p[er] ciò hauerebbono indubitam'te à soffrire.

<[Marginalia illegibile]> Volsi quin/di passare ad un'altra Masseria, mà ne fui sconsigliato p[er] i grandi/ pericoli, che bisognerà passare p[er] arriuarsì, onde ritornato quà/ alla Città, e celebrateui le feste del Santiss'mo Natale, e due altri/ di Santi P'roni di due Bagni, nelle

quali essendosi fatto l'offitio/ diuino, e cantata la S'ta messa solennemente si fecero più di sette/cento confessioni, e Communioni,

<Confessioni fatte/ de Schiaui delle/ Galere> come in diuersi Viaggi, che han'no/ fatto qui le Galere Turchesche, habbiamo anche hauto [sic] questa gr'a/ dal' Sig're di sentir le confessioni, e comunicare molti poueri/ Schiaui, i quali sono stati (?) 20. 25 e 30. anni senza poter' hauer'/ consolatione.

Il (?) seguente alla festa degl'Innocenti mi partij p[er] un' altra/ Masseria, lontana di quà circa diece miglia nella qual si ritro/uano duecento poueri Schiaui, che ui tiene Chelibi figliuolo/ dell' ultimamente morto daya di questo Regno (il Daya/

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e come Rè, e si fà p[er] elettione) d'o Chelibi, il quale è uno de princi/pali di questo Paese, padrone di quei tanto schiaui, li fà in d'a/ Masseria stare ordinariam'te sin' al tempo d'armarsi le Galere, nelle/ quali li manda à uogare, et al ritorno si ridoccono là, si che non ue/dono mai Sacerdote, non essendone nessuno (?) frà di loro. Per questo ha/ueuo desiderato un'tempo fà di andarci à uisitare, mà me n'impe/di la paura, che io haueuo, che la presenza del lor' p'rone, che ad/ occasione di alcuni edifitij, che ui fà fare, colà risiede, non mi/ leuarse la libertà, che m'era necessaria p[er] aiutarli.

<[Marginalia illegible]> Inteso però,/ che egli era p[er] starui ancora lungo tempo, risolsi di andarci/ e portare meco alcuni regali da presentargli p[er] hauer libertà/ di poter trattar con i poueri Schiaui, de quali alcuni si tosto che/ m'habbero uisto lasciarono il lor' lauoro p[er] andarne à dar' auuiso/ agl'altri e mi uenni molti innanzi. Subitò arriuato andai dal/ lor' P'rone si p[er] preuenire qualche castigo di bastonate, che temeuo/ che l'hauer lasciato il lauoro non facesse dare à poueri Christia/ni come p[er] dirli la causa di quel mio uiaggio, e nel med'mo tempo/ gl'offerij qualche haueuo portato cioè un Barile di uin' rosso,/ un Barilotto di Alici, due Bicchieri, et una Cestarella di/ mele, che riceuette con dimostrat'ne di grandiss'mo gusto, particolar/mente p[e]r il Barile di uin' rosso, e p[er] le mele, che stimò assai e/ le mandò il giorno seguente alla sua moglie in Tunisi, con/ seruando il restante p[er] se;

mostrandomi però procedere l'alle/grezza sua dalla Visita, che io li faceuo, et à suoi Schiaui, ap/presso in quali mi disse, che io usassi con ogni libertà non solo/ p[er] all'hora, mà ogni uolta che io uolessi andar' là, e che uoleua, che/ mentre tutto il tempo che mi parrebbe star' con loro, non piglias/si altro alloggiamento, che la sua propria casa, dalla quale

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hauessi da pigliare tutto quello, che mi fosse necessario e fui sfor/zato d'accettare di dormirui mentre il tempo che hebbi fortuna di/ stare con i poueri Schiaui.

<Opere fruttuose/ fatte dal Vico Ap'col/ nel Bagno> / <Cortesia utile/ p[er] lo sp'ò fatta dal/ P'rone> Lauorauano in luoghi diuersi, si che/ non li potei ueder tutti insieme se non la sera al Bagno: quiui/ doppo hauer cantato la litania della Mad'na Santiss'ma gli feci un'/

breue sermone al fine del quale hauendogli auuisato che la mat/tina p[er] tempo io con un'altro Sacerdote Schiauo che haueuo con/dotto meco, sarai stato al Bagno p[er] sentir' le loro confessioni, li/ lasciasti p[er]che andasserò à riposarsi. Fù la mattina d'ord'e del/ P'rone molto più p[er] tempo del solito aperto il Bagno, nel quale/ hauendo amendue celebrato la S'ta Messa, impiegammo tutto/ quel giorno in ascoltare le loro Confessioni, eccettuatone un' quarto/ d'hora uerso l' hora del mezzo giorno, mentre il quale facemmo/ un poco di collatione. Il med'mo loro P'rone non uedendomi chiede/ua loro doue io fussi, à cui non hauendo ardire di rispondere/ che io sentiuo le loro confessioni, diceuano che io stauo nel Bagno/ pregando p[er] tutti, et egli li mandaua p[er] che uenissero à pregar' meco/ di modo che in quel giorno me sentirono la maggior parte;

<Com'unioni di molti/ reconciliat'ni e pace/ frà Schiaui> fum'o/ ancora più solleciti il dì seguente, et essendo ritornati al Ba'gno due hore doppo mezza notte fatte le preghiere finimmo/ di confessargli tutti, et alcuni altri uenuti da Giardini, e luoghi/ circonuicini, e riconciliar quegli, che s'erano Confessati il giorno/ precedente, io dissi messa nella quale si comunicorno da ottanta/ di loro, essendosi p'ma chiesti gl'uni agl'altri perdono pubblicamente/ e perdonatisi con copia di lacrime ad occasione d'inimicitie in/uecchiate ch'erano state tra di loro. Doppo la mia messa cele/brò l'altro Sacerdote, e comunicò alcuni, che s'erano confessati,/ e reconciliati mentre diceuo Messa, di maniera che tutti si confessarono/

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<[Marginalia illegible]> e comunicarono fuori di due, ò tre, i quali non potendolo all'hora,/ mi promisero di uenir à Casa nostra alla Città p[er] farlo. Diedi à ciascu/no una Corona p[er] che non n'haueuano, et hauendogli fatto comprare/ un bue, che ammazzarano e sparitirono fra di se, m'handai(?) da/ loro p[er] esser à casa il p'mo giorno dell'anno presente, nel quale do/ueuo dentro alla nostra pouera Cappella riceuere l'abiuratione/ d'un Caluinista, che però non la fece sin'al giorno dell'Epifania.

Vi e ancora numero di queste Masserie doue haurei gran' desiderio di poter'/ andar' à uisitar' i poueri Christiani, i qual priui della presenza/ d'un sacerdote uiuono più al modo de Mori, che conforme alle/ massime del Christianismo, mà p[er]che il paese non à libero p[er]/ i Christiani, e massime p[er] i Preti, e p[er] poter andare con sicurezza/ in Campagna bisogna pagare un' Turco che uenga in Compagnia,/ e fare altre spese in regolare quelli, sotto la cura de quali stanno/ i Schiaui, et à loro med'mi far' limosina, à chi d'un' Cappotto, à chi/ d'una Berretta, d'una Camiscia, d'un'paro di Scarpe, ò altra cosa/ simile, secondo che son' maggiori i loro bisogni, che altrimenti non/ u'è apparenza di potergli giouare, et io non hò tante facultà,/ che possa souuenire à questo non posso se non(?) raccomandargli à/ Dio e rappresentare à chi p[er] gratia di Sua Diuina M'tà gode la/ libertà, et hà qualche carità p[er] Giesù Christo, quanto gli sarebbe/ grato che compassionasse le sue afflitte membre, e ueri fratelli/ non lasciandoli perire e nel corpo, e nell'anima, e uenendo pur'/ troppo spesso che rineghino la fede p...si redono fuor' di spe/ranza di libertà, e senza alcun' sollieuo: Piaccia à S. d. M'tà/ di far ciò conoscer à quelli, che possono contribuire ad un'opera/ di carità si grande, e dargli gratia p[er] farlo.

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<Tentatiui fatti da/ Schiaui p[er] hauer la/ libertà, mà però/ in uano> Con questa occasione conchiuderò questa l'ra già troppo lunga, con riferire/ alcuni tentatiui fatti da questi poueri p[er] procuare la liber/tà benche ciò di radò gli possa riuscire, che è ancora un' segno del/ molto che qui patiscono. Fecerò sedici, ò dicisette poueri Christiani/ due barchetti una di... e l'altra di tela incerata, le quali hauendo/ tenute nascoste in un' magazzino, si espono poi in esse al mare,/ mà dopo due, ò tre miglia essendo il mare tempo cattiuo, et essen/dosi rotto un' grosso bastone, che haueuano preso p[er] seruir d'albero,/ furono costretti di ritornare al porto, doue i mori hauendoli presi,/ li ricondussero alla Città à loro P'roni, che non gli furono scorsi/ di bastonate.

Lo stesso auuenne à 30. ò 40. altri, che uolsero fug/gire con un Rinegato, il quale p[er] la parte sua hebbe 15. basto/nate, e poi fù posto nel Bagno con i Schiaui Christiani, e mandato à lauorare con loro p[er] il tempo suo andar' in Galera, il che/ però non gli leuò il zelo, che conserua della sua p'ma Relig'ne, e/ la deuotione alla Mad'na Sant'ma, sentimento che hanno ancora/ molti altri rinegati.

<Castigo asprissimo à quelli che/ tentano di fuggire> Quaranta, ò cinquanta altri Schiaui Christiani, che erano del Daya pre/sente non essendo ancora rinchiusi nel Bagno s'imbarcorno furto/uam'te in una faluua mà ben' tosto presi, ebbero come i precedenti/ gran' numero di bastonate, e furono tagliate l'orecchie agl'autori/ dell'impresa.

<Tormenti(?) aspriss'mi(?) / dati ad alcuni/ poueri Schiaui> Volsero alcuni Schiaui dell'antico Bassà i quali si ritrouariano in Biserta/ fuggitti secondo si credessi ammazzarlo, e menar' uia la galera/ oue stauano, egli ne fece supplicare sei in diuersi modi, al p'mo/ fece rompere uiuo le membra, due ne fece squartare, e poscia stra/scinare p[er] la Città, il terzo posto ignudo in un' Sauo uolse, che fusse/ ocisso dai Christiani istessi nella galera con aghi, il quarto fece/

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con Tenaglie infocate morire, il quinto fù con la testa in giù buttato/ da una finestra, e poi bruciato, al sesto fu trapassato il corpo con/ un' ferro ardente, à quattro altri fece tagliare il naso, e l'orecchie,/ et à quattordici un' orecchio p[er] uno, le quali hauendo fatto cuocere,/ glie le fece mangiare, et al restante della med'ma galera sua fece/ dare 50. ò 60. bastonate p[er] uno.

Ecco Em'mi Sig'ri lo stato, nel quale si ritroua questa pouera Chiesa, le cui/ miserie non è facile à far' intendere à chi non l'hà prouate, ò/ almeno uedute. Si degnino l'EE. VV. tener' sempre protettione/ di essa, e nelle occasioni ricordarsi de suoi bisogni temporali,/ e spirituali, et io p[er] fine prostrato à piedi dell'EE. VV. le bacio/ humil'te le Sacre uesti. Tunisi à di 29. di Gennaio 1654.

<La Chiesa di Tripoli/ hà bisogno d'un'/ Missionario> Mi/ scordauo di rappresentare all'EE. VV. Che la Chiesa di Tripoli/ haurebbe gran' bisogno d'un buon' Miss'rio Ap'lico p[er]che non ui è/ alcun' Prete che sia in libertà.

Dell'EE. VV.

Deu'mo, et Vbidient'mo Seruitore
Giouanni Le Vacher Sacerdote
della Cong'ne della Missione
Vicario Ap'lico in Tunisi

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[*address*]

Alla Sacra Congreg'ne de/
Propaganda fide

Per

Giouanni Le Vacher Sacerdote
della Congreg'ne della Missione
e Vicario Ap'lico in Tunisi

[*SCPF notes, written in different hand*]

S. Card. d'Este

Bisognerà leggerlo per extensu' con/tenendo molti capi.

[*in pencil, center of page, different hand*]

Agat secretar.../ cu' Em'mu' S. Card'li/ Pan'...

Acknowledgements

The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Irish Research Council (formerly the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences), which made possible the research and writing of this study.

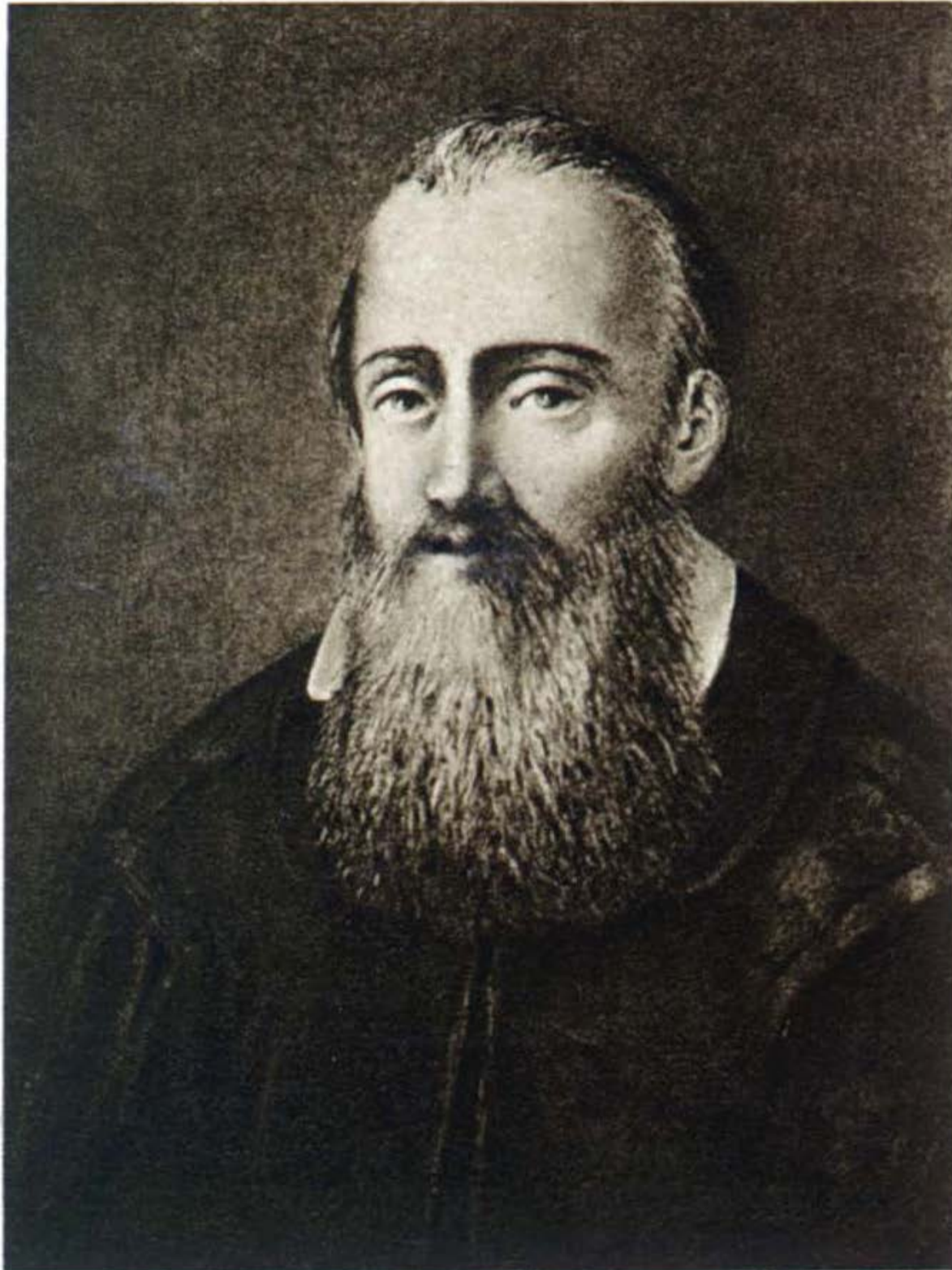




Engraved and hand-colored "map" of Tunis by Matthäus Merian, dated 1646.

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MAISON CH. LETAILLE. BOUMARD FILS, ÉDIT. PONTIF. PARIS

JEAN LE VACHER

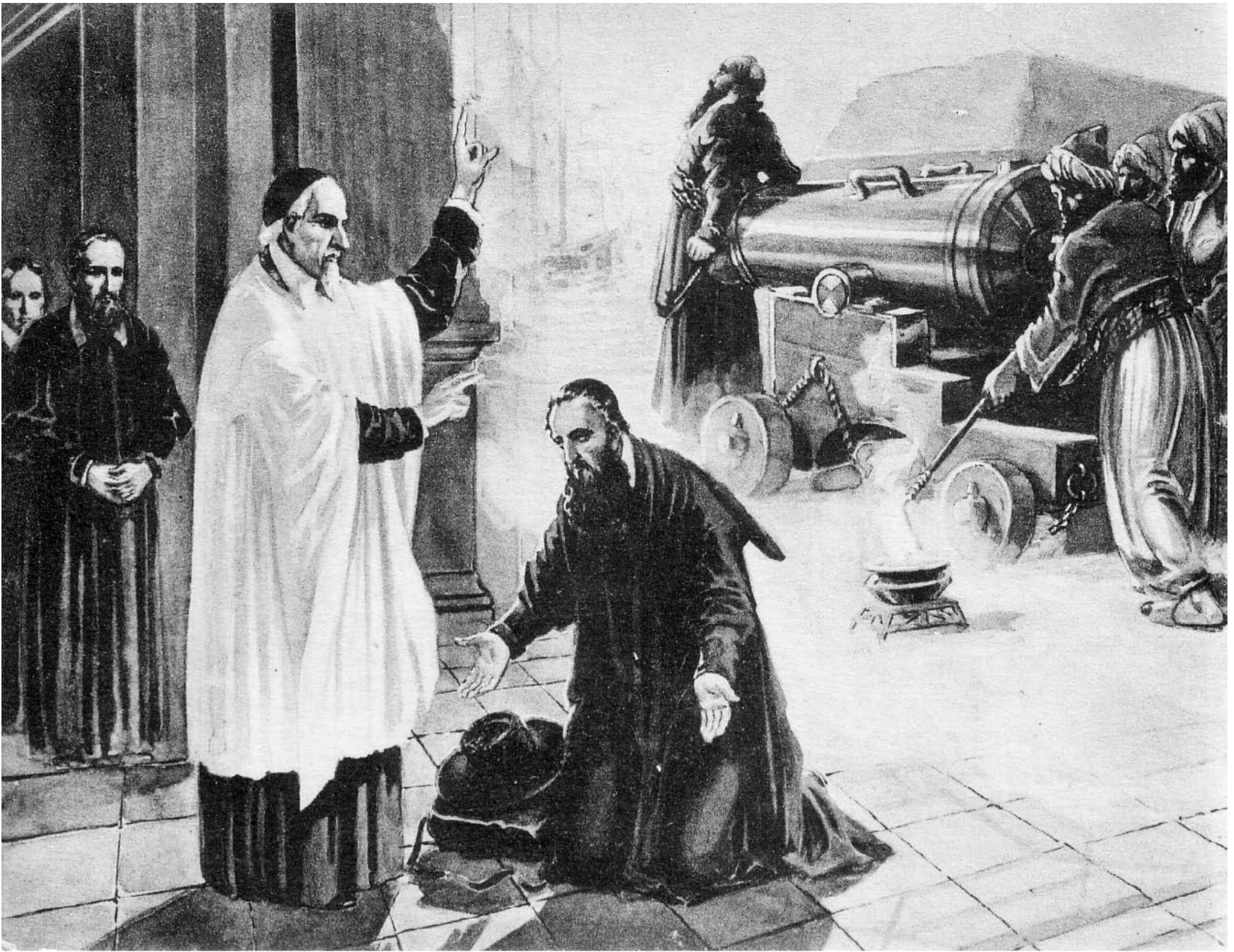
PRÊTRE DE LA CONGRÉGATION DE LA MISSION
VICAIRE APOSTOLIQUE DE CARTHAGE
ET CONSUL DE FRANCE A TUNIS ET A ALGER

MORT A LA BOUCHE D'UN CANON A ALGER, LE 26 JUILLET 1683

Engraved portrait of Jean le Vacher proclaiming his title as well as the method and date of his death.

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Vincent de Paul sending Jean le Vacher on his later mission to Algiers.
Of note, the allusion to his eventual martyrdom depicted in the background.

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Prisoners brought ashore in North Africa to be sold into slavery.

Etching by Jan Goeree & Casper Luyken, dated 1706.

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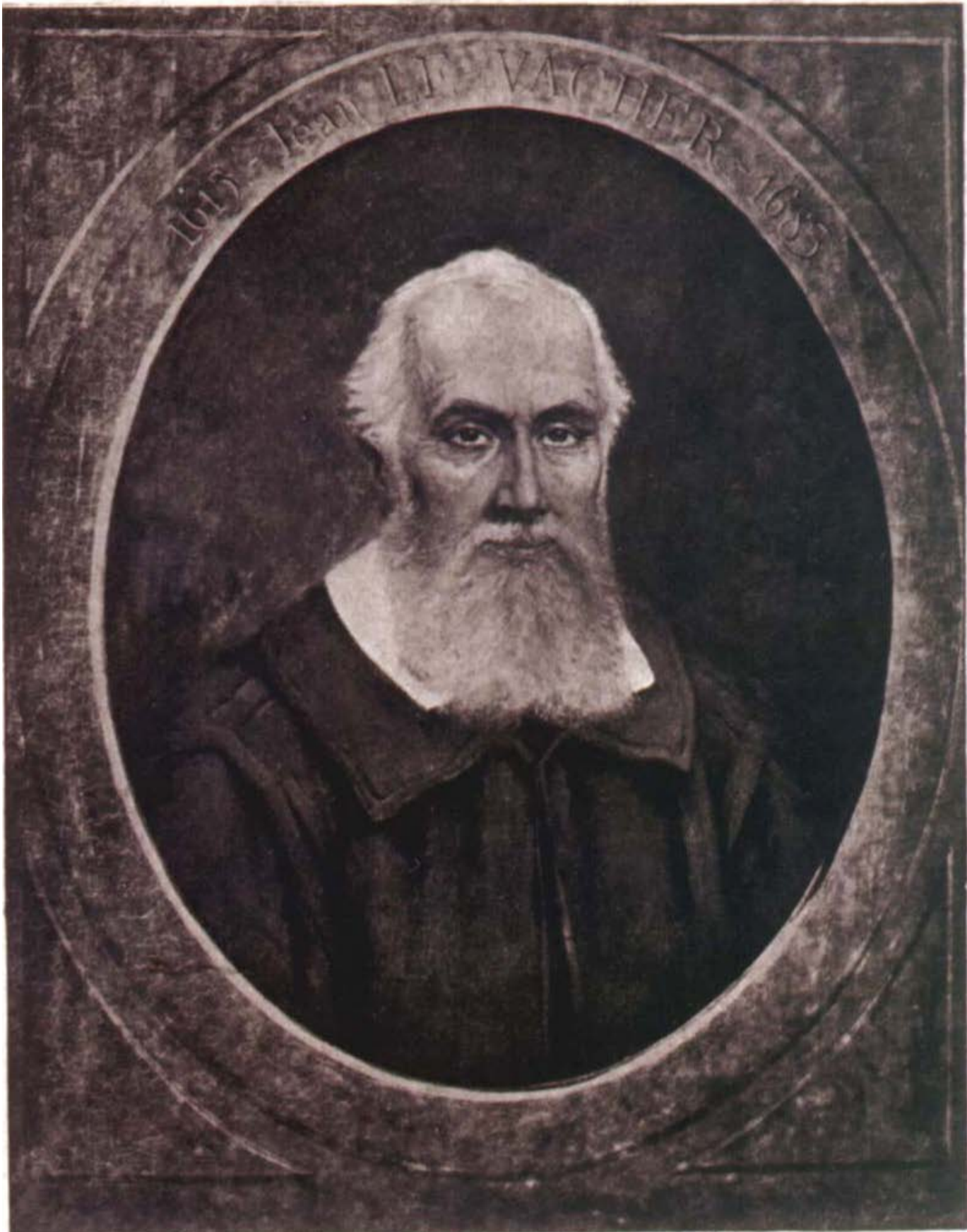


Les Religieux de la Mercy de France, qui sont un 4. Vœu de Rachepter les Captifs, et en cas de besoin de demeurer en leur place, ayant lan 1662. rachepte en Alger environ 100 Esclaves et la 1666 fait une redemptio à Tunis et en l'année 1667 une autre en Al

Negotiating the ransom in order to retrieve Christian captives from slavery in Tunis.

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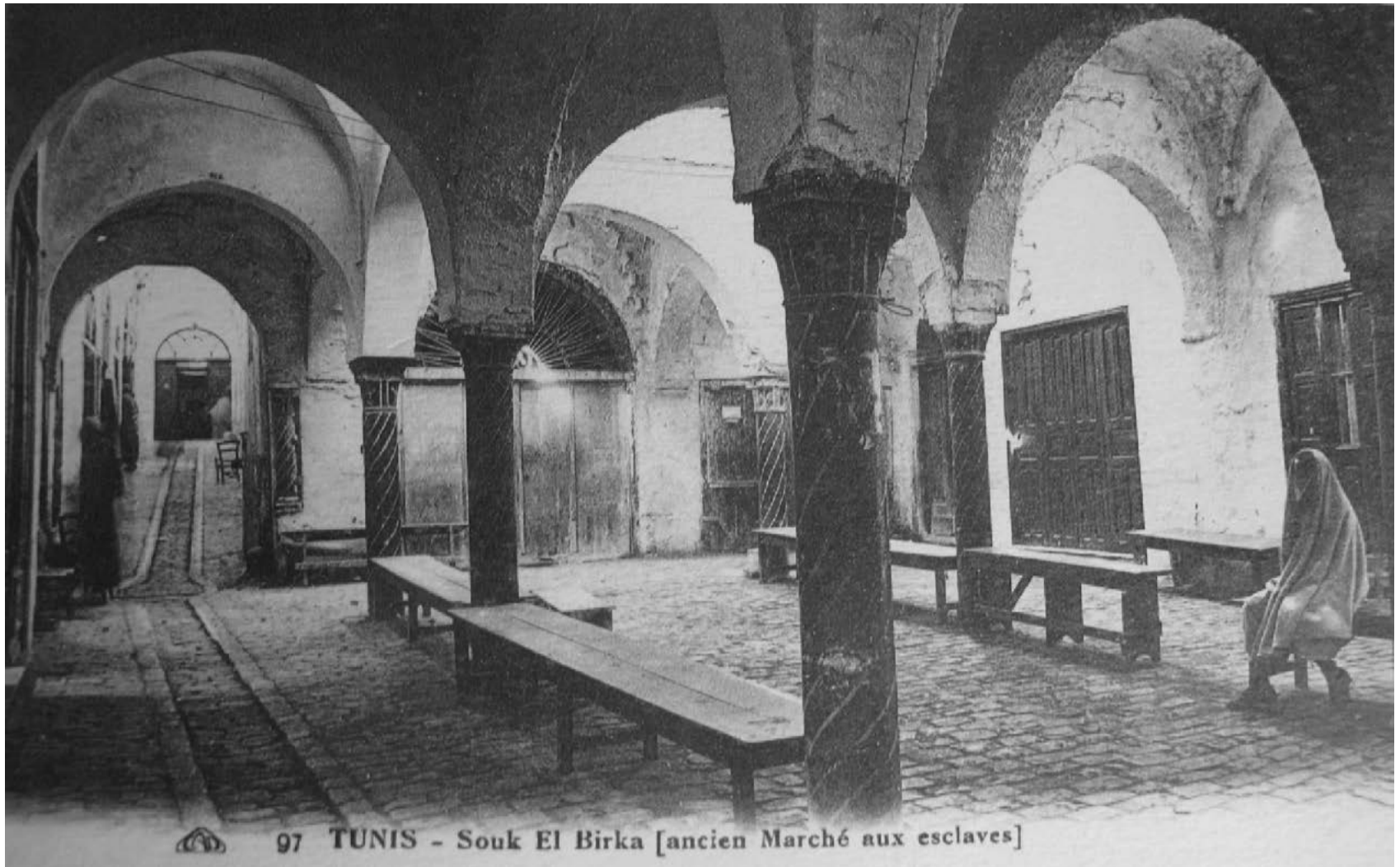




Missionary priest Jean Le Vacher, C.M. (15 March 1619–26 July 1683).

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





Turn-of-the-twentieth-century postcard picturing an old slave market in Tunis.

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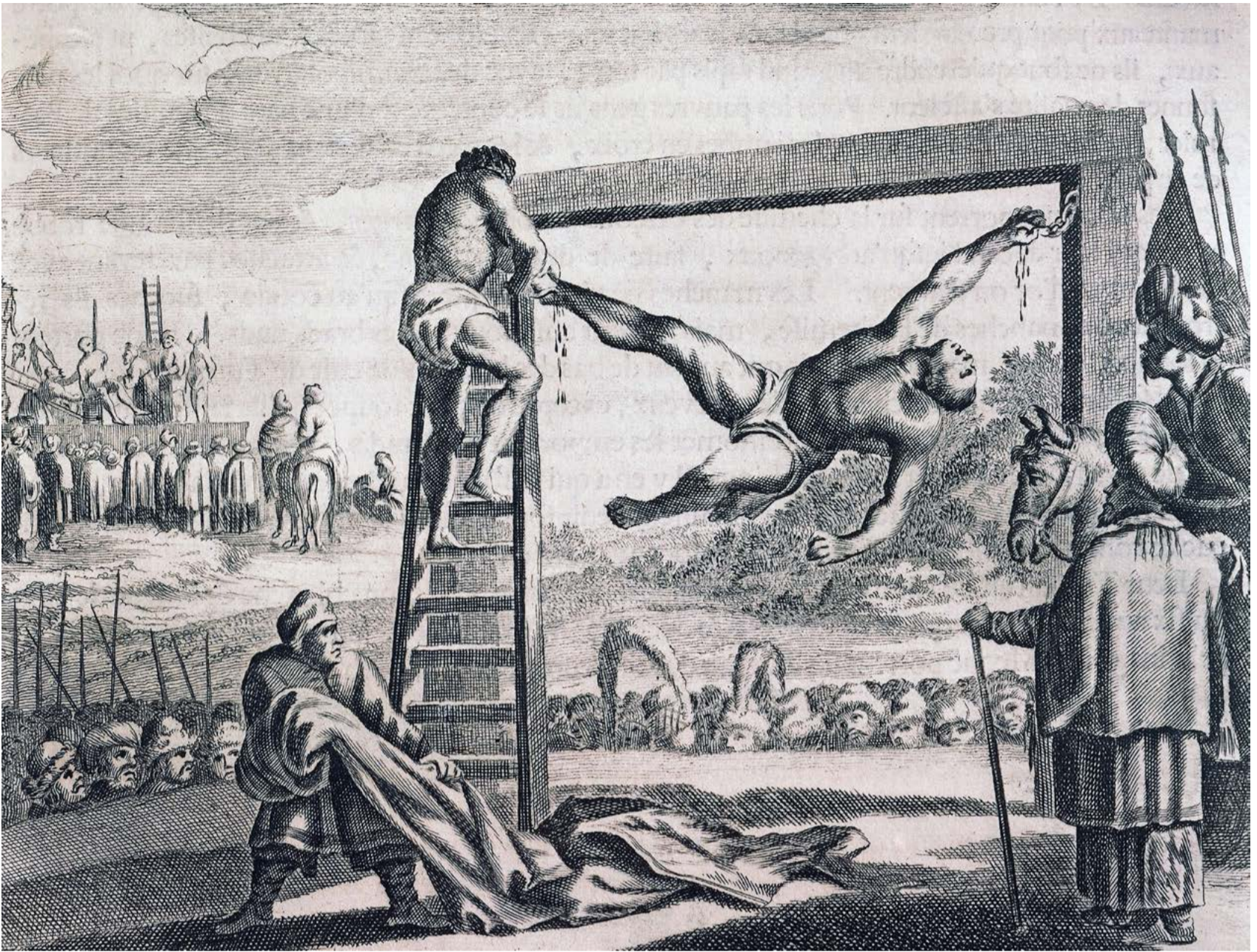


Christian prisoners being sold as slaves in neighboring Algiers.

Etching by Jan Luyken dated 1684.

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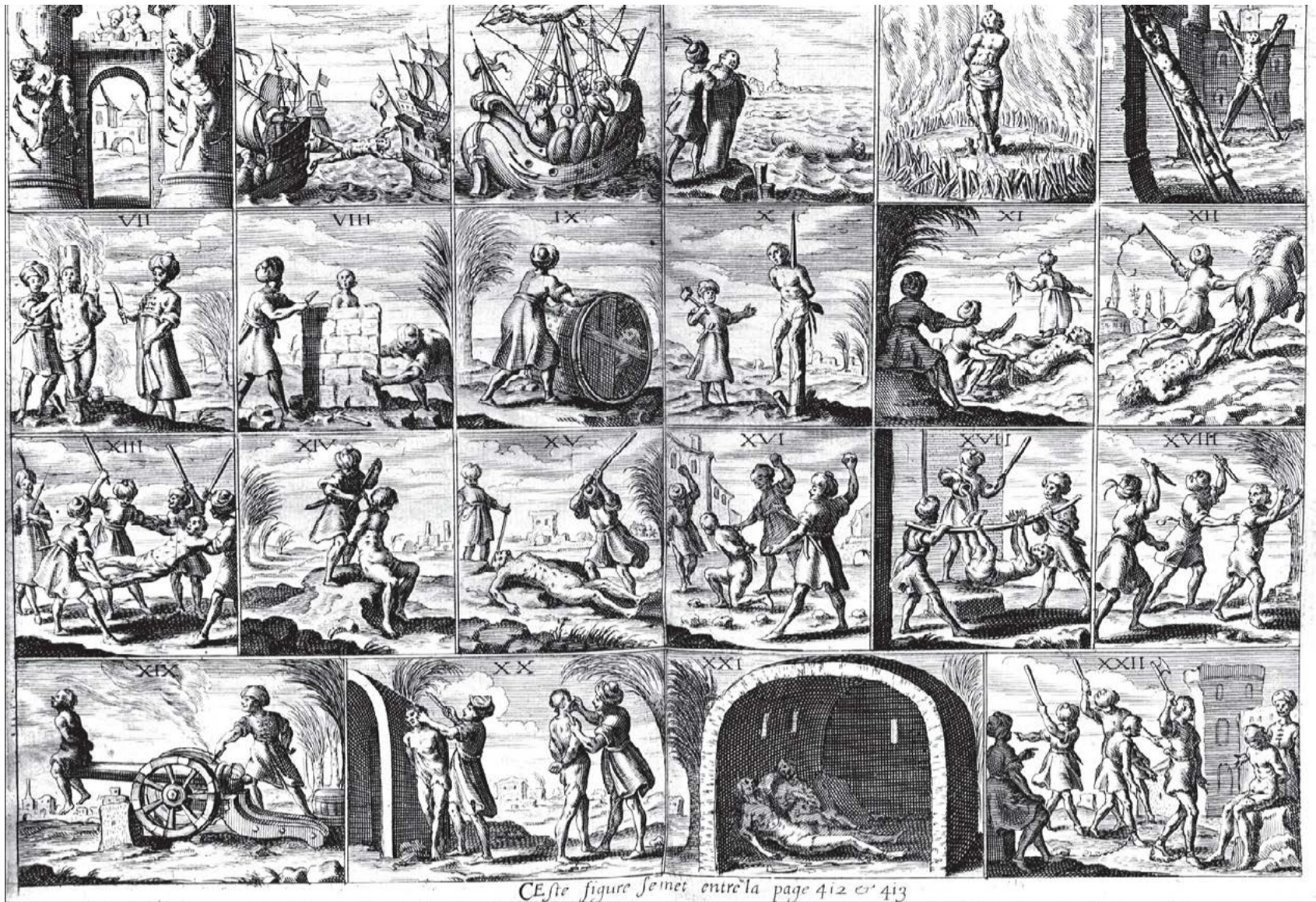


Punishment of Christian slaves.

Engraving from Olfert Dapper's 1686 publication, *Description of Africa*.

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Period etching published in Pierre Dan's *Histoire de Barbarie et de Ses Corsairs* (1637), illustrating twenty-two forms of torture used by Barbary masters to punish their Christian slaves.

Public Domain





B^x JEAN-LE-VACHER
priez pour
les Missions d'Afrique



Daughters of Charity Recall the 1871 Chicago Fire: *“It traveled like lightning.”*¹

BETTY ANN MCNEIL, D.C.

¹ *St. Joseph's Hospital, Chicago — 1869-1872 and The Chicago Fire*, Mission History, Chicago, St. Joseph's Hospital 11-2-2-36(7), Daughters of Charity Archives Province of St. Louise, Emmitsburg, MD [APSL], formerly Archives Mater Dei Provincial House, Evansville, IN [AMDPH], p. 12. Hereinafter cited as *Chicago Fire*.

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Introduction

The first Daughters of Charity arrived at Chicago in 1861. Bordered by Lake Michigan, their new mission was also near a vast prairie. They came to teach young girls but met unexpected challenges. Civil War casualties increased, resulting in the need for nurses. The sisters traveled eastward to care for sick and wounded soldiers of the Confederate and Union Armies. After the sisters returned and settled into teaching at the Academy of the Holy Name, Chicago, the great fire burst into flames on 8 October 1871.

This is their story of the blaze and the ensuing bedlam of those, “who passed through the frightful ordeal,” described in their own words as the “night of judgment for Chicago.”² The primary source material used is annotated and presented here for the first time. Sister Angeline Carrigan (1826-1908), and Sister Walburga Gehring (1823-1883), wrote their accounts individually, but the sheaves of paper were not bound chronologically; Academy of the Holy Name and St. Vincent’s House of Providence are after St. Joseph Hospital, in the original. The latter document is also the longest, 28 hand-written pages (on one side). For the convenience of readers, the versions appear in chronological order according to the establishment of the missions and ministries.

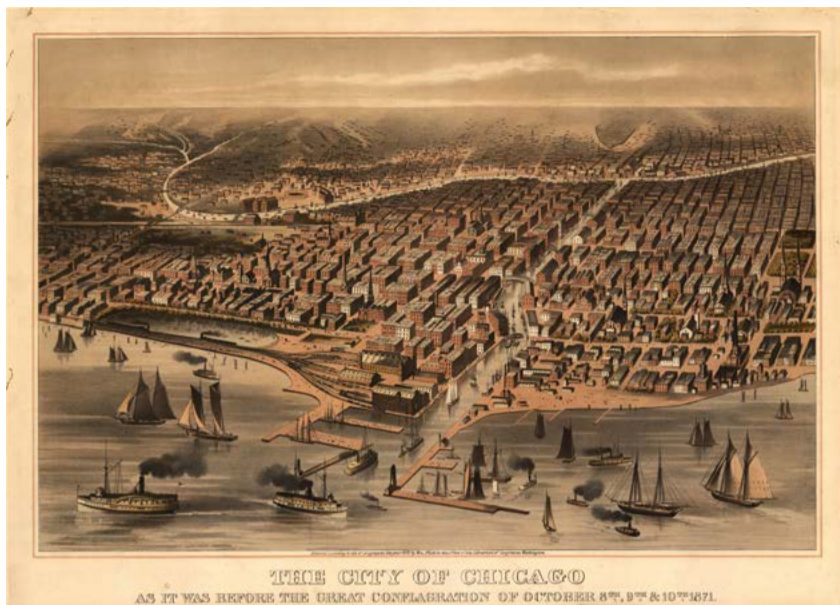
The accounts are written in the form of a lengthy letter, probably to the visitatrix (provincial superior), sent at her request. The sisters recorded their recollections sometime between 1872 and 1882, when Walburga left Chicago for Emmitsburg, Maryland, due to ill health. Gehring wrote a detailed introduction about the establishment of Catholic healthcare in Lake View (then Lincoln Park). Both described their pioneering experiences in nineteenth-century Chicago. This transcription of their accounts preserves each author’s style, language, spelling, and order of events. In addition to the chronological order of presentation, light editing of punctuation, grammar, and spelling has been made for the convenience of twenty-first-century readers. Significant changes are in brackets.³ Clarification and corrections appear in footnotes.

The setting

Chicagoland – October 1871. There had been a fourteen-week-drought the summer the sisters arrived. There were numerous fires, sometimes daily, between 30 September and 7 October 1871. The rapid expansion of Chicago and disproportionate use of wood for construction made the city high-risk for burning; and, it was situated by Lake Michigan where breezes could quickly shift direction, velocity, and direct flames and fiery debris unpredictably. Firefighters were overtaxed that year, their energy consumed on each call,

² *Ibid.*, pp. 35 and 29. For facts about the origin of the fire and the O’Leary family, see Harold Turrentine, ed., “History of the Chicago Fire Department” (Chicago: R.J. Quinn Training Academy and The Chicago Fire Department, 2004), pp. 5-7; available at: https://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/cfd/general/PDFs/HistoryOfTheChicagoFireDepartment_1.pdf

³ See Alfred Theodore Andreas, *History of Chicago. From the Earliest Period to the Present Time*, 3 vols. (Chicago: The A.T. Andreas Company, Publishers, 1886), 3:101-126. Hereinafter cited as Andreas, *History of Chicago*. Blame was attributed to a cow (knocking over a lantern) owned by Patrick and Catherine O’Leary of 13 DeKoven Street. However, the City Council of Chicago, by public resolution of 7 October 1997, declared them innocent of initiating the Great Chicago Fire. See Andreas, *History of Chicago*, 3:101-126.



A view of the city of Chicago as it stood just before the Great Fire.

Public Domain



whether an out-of-control fire or several fires consecutively, and they required breaks for adequate rest and sleep. Yet, the urgency of calls demanded much of courageous fire fighters as did a fire in the boiler room of the Lull-Holmes Planing Mill on Canal Street in October of 1871. Its flames set ablaze an entire area from Jackson, Adams, and Clinton Street, to the Chicago River.

Just several hours later, the great Chicago fire began at about 9:00 P.M., Sunday, 8 October, on the Southside. Strong winds drove the firestorm toward the center of the city with its wooden streets, sidewalks, shops, and bridges. A superheated draft enabled the fire to leap across the south branch of the Chicago River, consuming vessels and floating grease, burning through the night. By Monday, the fire reached Fullerton Avenue, the northern city limits at that time. Thankfully, rain sufficient to overpower the flames fell the next day. A disaster of death, injury, homelessness, trauma, and ruins lay in its wake. The fire had devoured approximately 2,000 acres of land, 18,000 buildings, and about \$200 million in material goods. One hundred thousand residents lost their homes. Fatalities ranged between 200-300 persons. Although the fire began on the Southside, the greatest destruction was on the Northside, where the Daughters of Charity had ministries of education, healthcare, and social services.⁴ At that time, the sisters had five missions in Chicago and another under construction:

Education

1861 School of the Holy Name, North State and Huron Streets, Chicago.

1867 St. Columbkille (Columba) Academy, Pauline and West Grand Streets, Chicago.

1871 St. Patrick's School, Desplaines and Adams Streets, Chicago.

Healthcare

1869 Providence Hospital, Clark and Diversey, Lake View.

1872 St. Joseph's Hospital (Under construction: Sophia and Burling Streets, Lincoln Park).

⁴ For a detailed account, see Turrentine, "History of the Chicago Fire Department," pp. 5-7.



The School of the Holy Name, at left, and St. Vincent's House of Providence.

Both Courtesy, Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise, St. Louis, MO.

Social Services

1867 St. Vincent's House of Providence, 301 Huron Street, Chicago.

The great Chicago fire consumed two missions of the Daughters of Charity: the School of the Holy Name, and St. Vincent's House of Providence. The sisters at St. Columbkille School and St. Patrick's School were not located along the fire's path, and thus were able to minister to refugees. A sudden change in the wind spared Providence Hospital in the township of Lake View, and its replacement, a larger building in Lincoln Park to be named St. Joseph Hospital, then under construction and standing at three floors. During the post-fire crisis, the sisters cared for poor persons of the burned districts at their hospitals and at a Barracks Hospital on Halsted Street.

The mayor assembled a Relief Committee, which developed into a comprehensive organization, The Chicago Relief and Aid Society. The Society established relief districts, and opened district offices and supply depots to address the various devastated areas: providing contributions, shelter, employment, transportation, distribution, and health care. The Society adopted a functional structure of eight committees, headed by prominent civic leaders with expertise in their assigned field. For example, Nathaniel Sherman Bouton (1828-1908) at one time served on the Executive Board of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society, and was Chair of the Committee on Charitable Institutions. Bouton was a highly respected community leader and businessman involved with steel manufacturing. Likewise, Col. Charles G. Hammond (1804-1884), a railroad executive and philanthropist, served on the Executive Committee of the Relief and Aid Society, chaired the Committee on Purchasing and Transportation, and became president of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society in 1874.

The sisters were acquainted with most of the committee chairmen, particularly their friend, Dr. Hosmer Allen Johnson (1822-1891), who was chairman of the Relief and Aid

Society's Committee on Sick, Sanitary, and Hospital Measures. Relief was organized according to districts and sub-districts. Each district had a Barracks Hospital. Sister Walburga Gehring superintended the Barracks Hospital closest to the new St. Joseph Hospital, which eventually opened in 1872. Noted Chicago historian Alfred Theodore Andreas lauded the Daughters of Charity and their role in providing quality healthcare, particularly at St. Joseph Hospital, which was:

Admirable from a sanitary point of view, as well as for being easy of access. Both males and females are received as patients, about one hundred of whom can be accommodated. The private rooms are frescoed and comfortably furnished, and the entire building is heated with steam. To the Sisters, who have the care and management of this institution, the increasing measure of its success and recognition is very gratifying and encouraging.⁵

At the wish of Louise de Marillac (1591-1660), Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) had designed the administrative structure of the Daughters so that there would always be a priest of the Congregation of the Mission serving as the ecclesiastical superior (provincial director). This arrangement preserved the Vincentian tradition from the seventeenth century forward. Reverend Francis J. Burlando, C.M. (1814-1873), had filled this role since from 1853 until his sudden death in 1873. Burlando was a confidant and counselor to the sisters, who held him in high esteem. He was familiar with the challenges of the Chicago missions, particularly those of the intrepid Sister Walburga Gehring, who had been commissioned to establish a hospital despite diocesan obstacles. When lamenting their difficulties to Burlando, whether by mail or during a visit, the director responded with kindness and encouragement, which renewed their courage. The sisters attributed their ultimate success to Burlando's support. He visited Chicago twice and responded with practical advice and empathy to their letters. He wrote a consoling message to the sisters after the great fire, and also sent boxes of liturgical items and other necessary things to replace what had been lost. Sometimes he even enclosed a ten-dollar bill. Burlando enthusiastically endorsed the suggestion made by the bishop to name the new medical facility St. Joseph Hospital.

The original manuscripts, the text of which follows, are primary source material. In their diligence, the sisters included as many details as they could recall along with some significant input from others. At times, the reader may have difficulty distinguishing the author's voice as distinct from the voice of additional persons. They seemed aware that a blurring of voices could happen, hence quotation marks were used to enclose direct statements made by others. Vividly describing the ferocity of the event, Sister Walburga Gehring recorded in her account that the fire "traveled like lightning."⁶

⁵ See Andreas, *History of Chicago*, 3:525.

⁶ *Chicago Fire*, 12.



The Burning of Chicago. An 1871 lithograph by Currier & Ives.

Courtesy Chicago History Museum, ICHI-02954



THE CHICAGO FIRE⁷

Saturday, 7th October 1871

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

Chicago, Illinois

My Dear _____

The grace of our Lord be with us forever!

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

The fire had raged about twenty four hours, and though kept somewhat under control, yet refusing to be extinguished when the water works took fire and the defenseless city was at the mercy of the element. You have heard of that early Communion, which to some of us, at least, seemed almost like a viaticum, so little hope was there that anything could survive; then how our dear Sister Mary [McCarty (1838-1878)], having sent all but one companion as far as possible from the danger, refused to leave the house until it was actually on fire; and how she finally followed, bearing the precious ciborium containing the Blessed Sacrament confided to her by our worthy pastor, he fearing to take it into danger to which he was obliged to expose himself; and

⁷ The account of the Chicago fire that follows comes from a letter written by Sister Angeline Carrigan. Subheadings bracketed in bold are my own and are meant to help identify locations for the reader.



St. Patrick's School on the Near West Side, c. 1900.

Note the Daughters visible standing at the windows in their signature cornettes.

Courtesy, Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise, St. Louis, MO.



lastly, the anxiety caused by some not being assured of the safety of the others, until at last, all were reunited at St. Patrick's School.⁸

There we were found by our dear Mother Euphemia [Blenkinsop] who saw something of the necessity for the relief so generously extended by other cities, and saw too how those who knew the Sisters flocked to them to pour into the deeply sympathetic heart of our dear Sister Mary their tale of suffering, those who, a few days before, had been independent and those always poor, alike in need of shelter, food and raiment.⁹ Truly, it is rare to meet one "who wept with those that weep," as she did! How it gratified her when she could relieve the distressed! And on the other hand, how she suffered when powerless to give the needed succor!

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

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

⁸ The Daughters of Charity had arrived recently from Emmitsburg to teach at St. Patrick's School, Desplaines and Adams Streets, where many Irish immigrants lived on the Near West Side of Chicago.

⁹ The author refers to the Daughters of Charity whom the fire drove from the Academy of the Holy Name and St. Vincent's House of Providence.



The remnants of Holy Name Cathedral after the fire.

Public Domain



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

[School of the Holy Name]

“The Chicago Fire” commenced on the evening of Saturday, October 7, in a barn belonging to a woman named Mrs. O’Leary. It has been said that the cow while being milked upset a kerosene lamp; hence Mrs. O’Leary’s cow was considered the originator of the “Chicago Fire.”¹⁰ Those however who witnessed it could regard it only as a punishment sent in mercy to a guilty city.

No human agency could produce such a fire. Saturday night and Sunday, through the exertions of the firemen, it was kept under control pretty well. Sunday night, a terrific wind blew up, and then the fire baffled all efforts to extinguish it. During Sunday, the Sister in charge of our dormitory broke a pane of glass in the window near by [*sic*] bed; the wind blowing upon this made such an unearthly noise, that it woke me up, then the dormitory was all lit up from the reflection of the fire still miles away.¹¹ I [woke] got up and woke the other Sisters in the dormitory; it must then have been about 10 o’clock. We went up in the belfry to watch the fire; the flames seemed to jump from house to house with the rapidity almost of lightning, the sparks were as thick as snowflakes in a storm. While the wind carried them eastward to Lake Michigan, we felt safe, but as we stood watching, the

¹⁰ For a repudiation of the story of the O’Leary’s and their culpable cow, see Turrentine, “History of the Chicago Fire Department,” pp. 5-7.

¹¹ Located in Chicago, Ward 20 of Cook County, Illinois. The 1870 United States Census lists the persons at their place of abode the 1st day of June 1870. Daughters of Charity at the School of the Holy Name were as follows: Sister Mary McCarty, Sister Anastasia Ryan (1843-1895), Sister Ellen Connaughton (1838-1878), Sister Anna Frasa (1835-1898), Sister Celestine Adelsberger (1837-1909), Sister Mary Joseph Newman (1846-1902), Sister Elizabeth McDonald (1846-?), Sister Agnes Anastasia O’Reilly (1847-1910), Sister Zoé McGee (1843-1895), and Sister Mary Christine Owings (1847-?).

wind changed and blew towards us, and so strong was it that the burning shingles and large pieces of burning wood carried the fire in every direction.

About three o'clock A.M. on Monday, we went to bed to get a little rest before four o'clock bell rang. We were scarcely in bed, before one of the girls in the house came in terror, to say that the water works near us were on fire; then, and only then, we felt our danger. We had so much confidence in our Lord and our Blessed Mother that we did not think the fire would reach us. One of the Sisters took a bottle of holy water up to sprinkle the roof, and hung up a new picture of our Lady of Perpetual Succor in the chapel for protection. Sister had scarcely come off the roof when part of the belfry was blown in. The doorbell rang and our Sister Servant, dear Sister Mary McCarthy answered it.¹² Father Flanigan, one of the assistant priests, at the Cathedral, came to take the Blessed Sacrament and to tell us that we must leave the house, at once.¹³ Sister asked him if it was as bad as that; he said yes, that there was very great danger.¹⁴ It was the feast of St. Dionysius. Sister asked him to give us Holy Communion and consume the Blessed Sacrament, which he did. During the time we were at the altar railing, the house shook and the stations [of the cross] on the wall rattled so that it was really terrifying. We made a few minutes thanksgiving and Father purified the Ciborium, as carefully, as ever he did, and then we prepared to take leave of our happy mission. Father often expressed regret that he did not take the little tabernacle key. Each one went to get ready. One Sister put on three habit skirts and two cloth aprons; she tried two chemisettes, but was not so successful. With the conferences in her arms and a heavy shawl worn for the first time, over her cornette and held on by her teeth, she was ready to depart.

We found Dr. [John] McMullen, our pastor [subsequently, Bishop of Davenport], at the front door, with a buggy and two men to take two Sisters, both in delicate health at the time. It was the only vehicle he could procure, the two men volunteered to be the horses. After being dragged a little way in this novel way of travel, the Sisters began to think it was too much to expect of the poor men and begged them to let them get out and walk. Seeing a man coming with a dray, the men asked him to take the Sisters to one of our houses in another part of the city but out of the direction of the fire. He refused saying that he had to get a load of furniture in the burning district. After going a little distance, he repented and coming back took the Sisters to St. Columba's School, where they were gladly welcomed by the Sisters.¹⁵ A second band accompanied Father Flanigan, to St. Joseph's Hospital, a distance of about two miles. Father and a Sister walked first, he having the Blessed

¹² Sister Mary McCarty (not McCarthy).

¹³ References to "the cathedral" may reflect the occasional use of Holy Name church for episcopal functions because it had more space than St. Mary's Cathedral. When Chicago became a diocese in 1843, the latter was relocated, expanded, and built to be the cathedral at the southwest corner of Madison and Wabash. The great fire destroyed St. Mary's Cathedral and Holy Name Church. When rebuilt, the bishop dedicated Holy Name as the Cathedral.

¹⁴ Reverend Patrick Michael Flannigan (c.1840-1907).

¹⁵ The Daughters of Charity from Emmitsburg had been teaching at St. Columba (Columbkille) School, located at Pauline and West Grand Streets, since 1867.

Sacrament from the Cathedral.¹⁶ The Sisters walked two and two after them saying the beads. After we had left, Sister Mary asked Dr. McMullen if he had been to the House of Providence, for the Blessed Sacrament. He had forgotten all about it, but ran right away then leaving with Sister Mary the Blessed Sacrament from the Orphan Asylum from which he had just seen the Sisters and orphans safely out. Dear Sister Mary, thinking he would return for the ciborium, waited until the belfry came tumbling down the stairs. Then, she and another Sister started for St. Joseph's Hospital and had the happiness of depositing our dear Lord in a place of safety.

[St. Vincent House of Providence]

Sister Angeline [Carrigan (1826-1908)], Sister Servant of the [St. Vincent's] House of Providence, had packed any articles that could be so carried in trunks.¹⁷ A neighbor took them with his own on his wagon, to a place then supposed to be out of the reach of the fire, but all were burned. Sister Angeline herself had been carried by the wind and flames towards the Lake, when an unknown man drew her out of the flames. She received a slight burn on the face and one hand. The procession of Sisters to the Hospital passed the Sisters of St. Joseph with their orphans.¹⁸

All along the streets were those who had left their houses early in the evening and were too fatigued or too discouraged to go further. The people came out of their houses as we passed crying, "Oh! There are the poor Sisters! So the College burned? O God help us! Ah Sisters, is the Church burned? O Glory be to God! The world is coming to an end." One of our children seeing Father Flanigan cried out "O Father Flanigan, is it the day of judgment?" He told her he thought it was a night of judgment for Chicago. Some of the Sisters were obliged to sit down on the road side, not being able to keep up with the procession (not the one with the three habit skirts).

After reaching the Hospital and putting the Blessed Sacrament away, we asked Sister Walburga, Sister Servant, to give us her carriage and we would go back for Sister Mary and companions and perhaps save something. As soon as it was ready and Father had a cup of coffee, Sister Anastasia and myself, accompanied by Father started for the Holy Name School, when within two blocks of it we could only see the place where it stood, the Cathedral too was gone. The Orphan Asylum, on the opposite side of the street, was a massive stone building; the flames were going through it, as if it were so much paper. Not meeting the Sisters we thought they must have been burned, for it was reported that two Sisters were seen in the house when it was on fire. We started to St. Columba's School,

¹⁶ Holy Name Church.

¹⁷ *Located in Chicago, Ward 20 of Cook County, Illinois. The 1870 United States Census lists the persons at their place of abode the 1st day of June 1870. Daughters of Charity assigned to St. Vincent's House of Providence included: Sister Angeline Carrigan, and Sister Clotilda O'Neill (1829-1893).*

¹⁸ The Sisters of Mercy established the first residential childcare programs in Chicago in 1849 but later transferred their administration to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in 1864. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet managed St. Joseph Asylum at the time of the Chicago Fire.



Crowds of people attempting to flee the fire over the Randolph Street Bridge.

Print by John R. Chapin, first published in the October 28, 1871, issue of *Harper's Weekly*.

Courtesy Chicago History Museum, ICHi-02901



hoping they had gone there, but we were disappointed, then not finding them there, we were inconsolable. Back to the Hospital we steered our course where our dear Sisters had arrived safely by another road just after we had left.

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

This time our route was across the prairies. None of us knew the way, so we followed the crowd. "The one bridge left" was so crowded that we were obliged to walk under the horses' heads. When we had gone about half the distance, worn out by fatigue, dust, heat and smoke, a poor Irishman named Pat O'Brien came towards us with an express wagon. He hailed us with "Oh! Sisters, where are you going? Aren't ye from the College!"¹⁹ Having told him where we wanted to go, he begged us to get into his wagon, which we did most willingly and rode in state. I sat on the driver's seat between Pat and a half grown boy. Every minute, the poor man would jump down to look at his wheel, which he thought would come off, and I was in mortal terror that I would be thrown from my exalted position. The poor man lost that day all that he had earned in eighteen years; but, "sure he had the best load now that ever he carried! (Eight sisters and six girls all carrying bundles.)"

As we went along, we passed several Sisters of other Communities sitting on the road side. We reached St. Columba's about half past five, P.M. there we found the Sisters of St. Joseph and their orphans, and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and their children.²⁰ About six o'clock, the Jesuit Fathers came and took the Sisters and children to their Schools.

¹⁹ The diocese relocated a building formerly of St. Mary of the Lake College to be a school for girls, the School of the Holy Name.

²⁰ St. Joseph Asylum was located at Superior and Cass (Wabash) Streets; the House of the Good Shepherd was at Market [now Orleans] Street, Hill Street, and Sedgwick.

The fire was still making progress north, and our Sisters of the Hospital had to move their sick to the woods; the fire came so near, that even there they were obliged to move again. They had at the time, several patients that could not be moved, and who would certainly have been burned, had the fire gone so far. Sister Walburga Gehring, Sister Servant, sent the Sisters away further, to a place of safety, but she could not be prevailed upon to leave her poor sick, saying that if they died she would die with them. Our Lord did not require that sacrifice, for towards midnight rain began and checked the progress of the fire; then all returned to the Hospital. The new Hospital in course of erection was also spared. All through the night, good Father [Thomas] Burke, pastor of St. Columba's[,] kept us informed of the progress of the fire.²¹ At one time the wind changed and they thought it would come west. We did not feel safe until Father came in and told us that we might sleep now and not be afraid, as it was raining and the fire would go out, which it did after burning three and a half square miles of the city and rendering 95,000 persons homeless. Tuesday morning, the Sisters of the Holy Name School went to St. Patrick's School which had been opened a few weeks before. The people of the burned district on the north side of the city flocked to us for help.

Sister Mary McCarty through Mr. [Reverend] Kinsella applied to the Relief Fund and obtained abundant supplies of provisions and clothing for hundreds, every day.²² The School house was turned into a sort of hotel and for about two weeks several hundred were fed and obtained relief.

The Governor of Ohio [Rutherford B. Hayes] called on Sister Mary [McCarty] to learn from her what the people wanted most; and on his return home, all of Ohio's donations came to us, so that we had the pleasure of helping a large number of destitute, some of whom were in affluence a few days before. Our dear Mother Euphemia, then in St. Louis on her way home from California hearing of the distress and sufferings of the City, hastened to our relief bringing with her cooked food of every description, fearing that her poor children were in want of everything; but not so; through Divine Providence and the kindness of our gentlemen friends, we had an abundance. What we suffered most for was clothing for ourselves, and this soon came too, our dear Sisters in Milwaukee, St. Louis and neighboring cities having hastened to our relief.²³

Our greatest consolation was in having with us our dear Mother [Euphemia] who worked with as much zeal as the youngest in assorting and preparing clothing for our poor and by her presence helped to keep us up under so trying an ordeal. The city was in so much confusion that we had a guard of soldiers to keep order round our house. Several attempts had been made to set this part of the city on fire, even in our own house. We had straw on one floor of the school house for a sleeping apartment and among the straw scattered on the stairs was about [*sic*] a box full of matches, but providentially they

²¹ Reverend Thomas Burke (1827-1899).

²² Reverend Jeremiah Kinsella (1812-1875).

²³ The Daughters of Charity already had hospitals in Detroit, Michigan; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Saint Louis, Missouri; and Alton, Illinois, to name a few sites. Others were located throughout the United States.

were discovered in time to prevent another fire. The city put up temporary buildings or “Shanties” for the people and in about two weeks, our school was resumed [but at St. Patrick’s parish]. Many of our old pupils walked over here during that severe winter. They used to say if the Church and Sisters were only spared to them, they could bear it better. One of the Children of Mary left her home and went to the Church for safety and was burned there.

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

After order was restored [in the burned districts], an officer from the Relief Fund called on Sister Mary to pay the Sisters for their Services, but Sister refused [saying] that the Sister’s Services were for God and they looked to him for their reward.

[Sister Angeline Carrigan]

ST. JOSEPH’S HOSPITAL, CHICAGO²⁴

1869–1872, and later the Chicago fire²⁵

When we want to know how a thing was done, we naturally desire to have one tell it [by] who saw it done. Pet phrases and long words do not always give the clearest ideas. Here is an account rendered at request by Sister Walburga Gehring of the commencement of St. Joseph’s Hospital Chicago, of which she was the first Sister Servant.²⁶

“The Renewal of Obedience and depending on Divine Providence”

19 January 1869

In the year of our Lord 1868 the Sisters of Charity were asked for by Bishop Duggan of Chicago to establish a Hospital with fair promises.²⁷ At the closing of the college the Bishop gave some of the furniture, bedding, etc. for the hospital which was deposited at the Holy Name School.²⁸ A sister was asked for to take charge of the hospital affairs, and one [Walburga Gehring] was sent by Superiors. The choice was not happy, and caused manifest disappointment. The sisters felt all the embarrassment of her position, the more as her coming seemed to cast a damper on future prospects. The Bishop soon after became insane, and was transferred to the Asylum in St. Louis which made all his promises void.

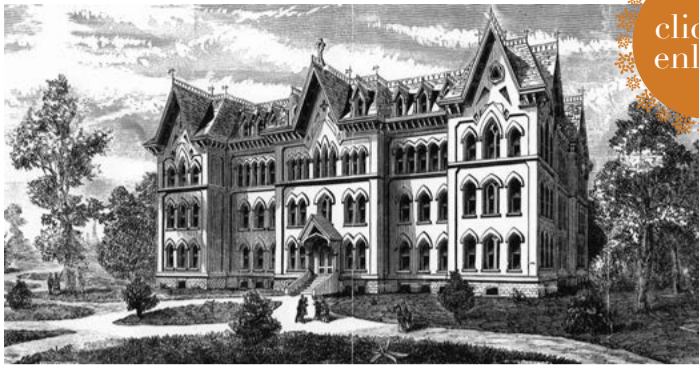
²⁴ Here begins the manuscript of Sister Walburga Gehring’s memoir, which is presented as found until the end. The Potawatomi dwelt in the “Chicagou” area and interacted with seventeenth-century French explorers, missionaries, soldiers, and settlers prior to the incorporation of Chicago as a city in 1837.

²⁵ The last five words are by two different writers: and later / and the Chicago fire. Added in pencil: By Sr. Walburga Gehring. St. Joseph’s Hospital, Chicago, APSL, 36:7.

²⁶ Sister Walburga Gehring. When the scribe uses “we,” she refers to the Daughters of Charity with whom she lived and/or worked. This appears throughout the memoir.

²⁷ James Duggan (1825-1899), fourth bishop of Chicago. Although Sisters of Charity was used popularly, the correct name of the community after 1850 is Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.

²⁸ Chartered by the State of Illinois, St. Mary’s College (1844-1866) is sometimes called St. Mary of the Lake College.



St. Joseph's Hospital, Chicago, as it has evolved over the years following the fire: first at Sophia Street from 1872 to 1890; then at Burling Street from 1890 to 1963; and at its present location along Lake Shore Drive in Chicago. Lake View was annexed by Chicago in 1889.

All Courtesy, Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise, St. Louis, MO.

The sister in charge of the Hospital[’s] affairs was instructed to act under that authority of the Sister Servant of the School of the Holy Name, whose residence for years in the city made her familiar with the character of its inhabitants. The Hospital Sister spent her first six months making bed-ticks, pillows, etc. At the opening of spring, she sent out “collecting,” the result of which was very discouraging. After passing six long months without the slightest appearance of a Hospital, dear Father Burlando came to see how matters stood.²⁹ He considered it necessary to make a start in spite of all opposition. To use his own words, he said: “You must make a beginning, even if we will be obliged to break it up. What would people say about those Sisters who received donations for a Hospital?³⁰ You must try to rent a house, and to make a beginning.”³¹ The poor Sister shed an abundance of tears at which Father Burlando said: “If you undertake the work of God so reluctantly it will grieve me very much.” He then gave her what he called “a big blessing,” cast on her a benign glance, and stepped into the carriage which bore him away.

After the poor Sister had satisfied herself in crying, she summoned up courage to look for a house to rent. It was a difficult task, in fact almost an impossible one: people were not willing to rent their houses for Hospital purposes. At last, we found an old

²⁹ Reverend Francis J. Burlando, C.M.

³⁰ Burlando refers to the visitatrix (superior) and Council of the Daughters of Charity province, which had ultimate authority for personnel and apostolic matters of the sisters.

³¹ Providence Hospital began in Lake View in a rented house near the intersection of Clark and Diversey in 1869. Three years later, a new four-floor facility, renamed St. Joseph's Hospital, opened on Garfield Avenue (then Sophia Street) and Burling Street (near Halsted) in 1872.

summer residence, which had been used for a pleasure garden. It was beyond the city limits and in a most dilapidated condition. But, the owner refused to rent, saying, how could he even live in it himself after its being opened for a Hospital, and as for his wife, she would never consent.

So there was nothing left for us but to pray, and depend on Divine Providence. After making a novena, we thought we had better call on one of the Real Estate men, who was what they call a liberal, minded Protestant. He at once entered into our views and as he was an old acquaintance of the owner of the summer residence, he undertook to disabuse [him] of his false impressions and assured him he would never regret renting his house to the Sisters. At last the proprietor consented, agreeing to give us the use of the entire ground with the two buildings for Fifty-Dollars per month. It took us over two weeks to renovate the house and bring it into a condition to be lived in. We converted the cooking shed into a nice, cozy little chapel. The two dwellings, one of which had been used as a residence, the other for dancing was connected. The accommodations suited our purpose very well, and we made the most of them. The owner, accompanied by the Agent, came to pay us a visit soon after we occupied the house, and they were more than pleased and surprised at the change. The owner declared he hardly knew his own house. We were ever after great friends. We opened our small beginning June 30, 1869, with three sisters — Sister Annina Lutzkus, Mary Burke, and myself, the third.³² Our number was soon increased to six. The cozy little Hospital with its cheerful surroundings soon made us known and we had in a short time quite a number of patients. But the poor Sisters had many privations to endure. We had great difficulty in getting Mass. It was seldom a priest could be found willing to come such a distance. We were not able to keep a horse and carriage. Our house being just at the city limits, no cars [trains] reached us until six A.M. It took thirty minutes to ride to a church, and there we waited for seven o'clock Mass. On Sundays there were no cars before nine A.M. Some of us undertook to walk two miles in order to get early Mass and Communion, and so give the other Sisters opportunity to go to late Mass. As we were walking to Mass one Sunday, we met a man, rather a hard looking customer. He gazed at us very intently and as he got near us thrust a Two Dollar Bill into one of the Sisters hands asking her to pray for him. Sometime later we got to know the man, and he became one of our best friends. God gave him the grace to call for a priest on his death bed. We heard of his sickness and called to see him. He was so delighted that when we were leaving he exclaimed, "O, Sisters! I am more pleased with your visit than if the Bishop had come to see me!" and he thanked us over and over again. The poor fellow died happy on Good Friday, 1874.

The severe weather of our first winter sometimes compelled us to lose Mass. The snow was so deep and the wind so high it was to daring to venture to brave it. Christmas

³² Sister Annina Lutzkus (1833-1920), Sister Mary Bridget Burke (1837-1916), and Sister Walburga Gehring.

morning 1870 the weather was bitterly cold but two of us had determined the evening before to make the effort. We started at four A.M. and managed to get to church but our clothing was frozen stiff, and our shivering hearts were the only prayers we could offer our dear Lord. How we would get home was more than we could tell, but at last the thought came [to] our minds to go to our undertaker who lived near the church and ask him to send us home in his carriage. This he gladly did, but our experience had taught us a lesson, not to be so daring again.

The people had befriended us; we were the people's friend, and were called upon for all kinds of services. Christmas of 1871 we received a call to lay out a poor dead woman. On our way from church we stopped in, and found the house in a terrible condition. The poor dead body crawling with vermin. We cut her hair, cleaned and prepared the body for the grave in the best manner we could, and then continued our route home. After giving ourselves some necessary care. We sat down to our Christmas dinner which was waiting for us. Our most comfortable thought was the act of charity which preceded it.

We had things to make us laugh too. A good old Father John Carroll had recently come into the diocese.³³ He was about seventy-six years of age, and was sometimes called "Dexter." He was staying about seven miles distant from us and offered on a certain occasion to give us Mass. The good old Father undertook to walk to us and as may be supposed it was rather late when he came. After he commenced his Mass he beckoned to the Sister in charge, and said to her: "sister, please don't forget my *stirabout* [sic] for "breakfast!"³⁴ The dear old gentleman was about getting a new set of teeth, which did not work very well.

We were favored on a few occasions by an old Belgian clergyman who came to give his Mass on Sundays. The good old Father was very fond of preaching and as there were but few sisters long sermons interfered greatly with our duties; besides it kept the poor sick waiting for their breakfast. The sisters in charge kindly requested the Father to shorten his discourse, which he promised to do. What did he do, but wait until Mass was over, and then doubled his discourse, and was so long that one of the Sisters was obliged to go and look after her duty, at which he was quite displeased. He appeared to think that nothing was more important than to listen to his sermon. The following Sunday he again began to preach after the Gospel, and continued for nearly an hour in spite of all that had been said to him. We came to the conclusion to manage in some way to get a horse and wagon to take us to church. One of our Lady friends begged a gentle horse for us, and our wagon came to be known and was called "Black Maria." Two of us knowing how to drive made us feel quite independent, and we went to church every morning, when the weather was not very bad, in our new property. It appeared to please the clergy and the people. But, altho' better than walking through the snow and wet, we often suffered from the severe cold, and were sometimes so benumbed that we could scarcely get out of the wagon when

³³ Reverend John Carroll (1798-1889), a native of Ireland, ordained in Nova Scotia, eventually ministered in Chicago.

³⁴ Porridge made from oatmeal or cornmeal boiled in water or milk and stirred until the proper consistency.

it stopped at the church. One morning we did not know how bitter cold it was until we were out. We passed a man going to his work who called out to us: "What in the world brings you out so early in the morning! Go home. Go home!" Another morning as we were driving along in the dark, we were almost run into by a dray team. Sometime after the Fire we were trying to find a certain family among small shanties in a labyrinth of brickyards. We were in a narrow curve close by the steam car track when suddenly without whistle or sound we saw the locomotive coming full upon us. The horse began to rear, and the cars struck his head and the carriage. Two young men, who were working near, heard our screams and saw the danger. They ran over and lifted the carriage and ourselves off the track, leaving sufficient space for the train to pass. The horse was wild with fright, and it required all the strength of the driver to manage him. More than once we met with escapes truly miraculous.

One attic was our store house; it contained our trunks and rubbish of all descriptions. One day a Sister was up there overhauling the treasurers, such as they were, when her foot slipped, the floor broke through, and down she came part of the way into the room below, but she received no injury. The floor and ceiling were not so fortunate.... One winter morning the Sister whose duty it was opened the door to ring the four o'clock bell. A patient stood outside her head wrapped in a black shawl. She did not speak and the Sisters was so frightened that she missed her step and fell from the top to the bottom of the stairs, but she was unhurt.... Our little Hospital was fully exposed to the inclemency of the weather. There were no other houses near to shelter us. We stood alone in an elevation a little distance from the Lake, and often and often we thought when rocking in our beds at night from the force of the wind, that we and our little institution would be drifted into the Lake itself.³⁵

One night we were roused by a fearful crash. We did not know what was coming next. Up we sprang; one rushed down to the chapel, another flew for a blessed candle, but upon examining, we found the wind had blown down and carried off part of the back porch. Another night, the chickens gave a fearful alarm. Sister with some help went down to inquire the cause, and found a large dog had got into the yard and killed about thirty. After that the poor dog lost his own life.

"Wash days" seemed to me lucky days for us. We were too poor to hire the work done, and on Sundays we generally all turned in to keep [up] with the washing and cooking. On one Sunday we were to call on a gentleman to ask a donation in real estate. We hurried up with our work, but as we after all believed [the] time, and as we got to our gate the cars started without us. The conductor saw us, and halted, but as we hurried to get in Sister fell full length on the side-walk.³⁶ She was not hurt, and the good gentleman on whom we called gave us two lots for which we afterwards got Two Thousand Dollars in cash.

³⁵ Lake Michigan.

³⁶ The sister has not been positively identified but could be Sister Zoé McGee, who had difficulty walking.

Another “wash day” a good gentleman gave us One Hundred Dollars in cash. The Sister who carried it kept her hands on the money in her pocket, so fearful was she of being robbed, and said to the other Sister: “Let us go home — let us go home. We have done a good day’s work today after us washing.”

We had now collected Four Thousand Dollars to make our first payment on the ground we had bought to build upon. We bought it from W.D. Kerfoot, a Protestant.³⁷ He was a good kind friend to us. He gave us several names on which to call for donations for our Hospital, all Protestants. We received several Hundred Dollars through him. It was he who made sale of our property for the Infant Asylum.³⁸ During fourteen years I have frequent occasion to call on him for instructions, and it always served to give him pleasure to do anything for us.³⁹ We always called him our “Cousin.” While we were waiting for our papers we counted our hard earned money over and over and each time it seemed to multiply, ten, and sometimes Twenty Dollars, which made us, feel quite happy. There was no secure place to keep this money. The sister in charge kept it in the securest place she knew, and that was her straw-tick [mattress]. She alone knew of it being there. One morning the Sisters all overslept their clock. They did not have time to make their beds but hurried off to church. The Sister whose turn it was to remain home kind-heartedly went to work and made all the beds before they should return. The one who possessed the treasure, as soon as she saw the state of affairs, went to reach her money. But no money could be found, then she went to the Sister who made the bed; she declared she had seen nothing of the money. At last the tick was taken to the yard, and everything in it emptied out. Then the money came to light and the scare being over, the Sisters all laughed at the queer hiding place. When we called in the agent to make the first payment we surprised him, “Well Sisters,” he said, “I think you can do anything after this.”

When our beloved Father Burlando came to pay his second visit, he expressed himself much pleased at our humble beginning. He said he was now convinced that God wanted us there notwithstanding the many opposing positions we had met with, and it was a good sign to have them in the beginning. He blessed us with his whole heart for what we had done; and promised to help us with his prayers. He gave us permission also to repose until five o’clock for one year on account of our hard labors and late Mass; and with the consent of the Bishop we might “collect” through the Diocese. Bishop [Thomas] Foley had then taken Bishop [James] Duggan’s place and he willingly gave the permission, signing several small books to be used in collecting.⁴⁰ Bishop Foley was extremely kind to us, encouraging us in every way he could. He came often to see us, and frequently brought his friends with him.

³⁷ William D. Kerfoot (1837-1918), a realtor, established his firm in Chicago prior to the 1871 fire.

³⁸ St. Vincent Hospital and Infant Asylum [St. Vincent’s Orphanage], (1881-1972).

³⁹ Sister Walburga’s efforts resulted in the establishment of St. Vincent’s Infant Asylum ten years after the fire.

⁴⁰ Thomas Foley (1822-1879), coadjutor bishop of Chicago (1870-1879).



An 1871 Currier & Ives lithograph depicting the enormity of the fire and the masses of people attempting to escape.

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We have now collected considerable [amount of] money; the ground was bought, plan drawn, and the corner stone was laid August twentieth, 1872, by Bishop Foley. Dr. McMullan spoke on the occasion in English, and then Father Zimmerman, Superior of the Redemptorists, in German.⁴¹ There was present a large number of clergymen besides different Societies with their bands of music. The day was lovely; not too warm. The platform decorated with green, white, red and blue. The singing was grand. English and German. Such a throng of people had rarely, if ever, been seen in Chicago before. A collection was taken up which amounted to six hundred dollars, and it would have been doubled had more collectors been appointed. It was gathered by the clergy.

The building was up to the third story when the great Fire broke out. On the night of October 9th 1871, at three o'clock in the morning we were waked up. A wagon loaded with children and all kinds of furniture drew into our yard. The children told us that the city was all on fire. We could see the great light. The sky was red with it. Very soon after our Sisters from the School of the Holy Name and a clergyman bearing the Blessed Sacrament arrived.⁴² As they were leaving, the church steeple had fallen, and the Sisters' school had already caught [fire]. One of the Sisters in trying to save some things made a narrow escape. She was scorched by the intense heat of the flames. Another in infirm health was unable to walk to the Hospital.⁴³ A man who had himself been burned out put her on his buggy and *drew* here to the Hospital. After the Sisters had their cup of coffee, some of us started for the city to see if we could do anything. As we advanced, we found the heat so great and the

⁴¹ Reverend John McMullen (1832-1883) raised funds to assist families left homeless, and to rebuild churches destroyed by Chicago's fire. The bishop designated the new Holy Name Church as the Cathedral replacing St. Mary's as the bishop's church. Reverend Peter Zimmer, C.Ss.R. (1830-1901) was the rector of St. Michael's Church in Old Town, Chicago, from 1865-1872.

⁴² Probably Father John McMullen.

⁴³ Sister Zoé McGee.

wind so high that we were obliged to stop, and then turned back. The people came flocking to our house in crowds all day, famished for a drink of cold water, as the Water Works was one of the first-thing[s] destroyed by the fire. The car tracks were warped, standing up, and consumed by the great heat. Horses and cows were lying dead, people rushing here and there trying to find their own, as some were separated and burned to ashes. Two young men were looking for their mother when a blast of flames divided them. The fire caught the two young men; both died at our Hospital. The poor Mother was saved, but did not know where her sons were until the next day; she came in time to see them both die... several persons were burned to death and their bodies recognized by their friends; others never heard of. It was supposed that a little girl, thirteen years of age was buried under the ruins of the Holy Name Church. A hundred little orphans were snatched from their sleep, and hurried half-dressed along the streets, carrying some of their little clothing in their arms. They took shelter in the Good Shepherd Convent, but no sooner had they taken them their cup of coffee than the alarm was given that the fire was approaching. Three hundred inmates of the convent with the poor little orphans had to flee quickly as possible. They all went as far as they could walk towards the prairie and there waited to see what direction the fire would take. It traveled like lightning. Sometime in the afternoon they went west and took possession of a school house offered them by the Ladies of the Sacred Heart.⁴⁴ Hunger and privations of all kinds was endured by the people without complaint. They thought themselves happy that their lives were spared. One poor man came three different times to our house looking for his family; and not finding them the third time he burst into tears, and exclaimed: "My God! What has become of them!" The poor fellow was so exhausted, so covered with smoke and dust that he could hardly see. We gave him some water to wash, and made him take a little lunch to refresh himself and then he left with a little more courage to pursue his search. He at last found his family at a place about five miles distant from us.

People were coming and going all day looking for their friends. We were kept busy trying to have a little something for each. Two persons very ill were taken from their homes and their lives saved at our home; a lady with a young infant and a gentleman with his mother. The fire spread so rapidly that towards evening all who had taken shelter with us during the day took their flight further west, and we were left to ourselves. Our Doctor, although a Protestant, was devoted. Mounted on horseback he rode back and forth watching the moment when it would be necessary for us to move. At seven p.m. he came to tell us to make all haste to get the patients out, for in half an hour the fire would be upon us. He brought with him a carriage which he had hired and a man to assist in moving the dying patients. "For," said he, "it is better for these poor creatures to die in the carriage than to be burned alive." Three of the Sisters accompanied the ill patients to the prairie where they would remain until the fire came nearer. We sent our corn, clothing, etc., to a family living six miles north. About this time, the Redemptorist Fathers and Brothers arrived with the

⁴⁴ Society of the Sacred Heart (*Religieuses du Sacré-Cœur de Jésus*).



Refugees fleeing north toward Lincoln Park during the fire.

Print by Theo Davis, first appeared in the November 4, 1871, issue of *Harper's Weekly*.

Public Domain



Blessed Sacrament. They had seen their new Convent and Church in ashes.⁴⁵ We gave them some supper which they took hurriedly, and gave us all the last Benediction or Exposition before they took our dear Lord from us. It was a sad sight to see four clergymen walking with the Blessed Sacrament six miles to the next village. One of the Brothers remained with us. It was dangerous remaining in the house. It was dangerous to stay out of it; pieces of burning wood carried by the wind came falling and flying around us.

Providence protected our little hospital. About midnight, when the fire was half a mile from us, suddenly the wind changed, and the flames went in the direction of the Lake. Soon after came a nice shower of rain. Our poor patients who were able made their way back to the Hospital and returned to their beds, saying "Our Lord was too good to let the house burn where so many poor people found comfort and relief." The ill patients came back to safety and lived some days after.

The fire took the direction of the Lake. Many persons had buried valuable furniture and clothing in the ground near the Lake hoping thus to save it. It was all consumed by the intense heat. Towards morning the fire subsided, the falling rain had its effect.

There was great distress the following day. There were no water works — There was no water — People got sick lying out all night in the open prairie. Many came to us for shelter, stiff with cold and hunger. We shared the last bit we had, — There was not Five Dollars in the house, and where the next meal was to come from we did not know but trusted in Divine Providence: Friends, provisions, etc., etc., were sent from other cities in abundance, of which we could not expect to share as we were not burnt out. Our friends were burnt out, and as poor as ourselves. As the poor Sister in charge was making her complaints to our Lord, accompanied with many tears, a messenger arrived, asking us to come to [the] headquarters of the Relief [Committee] which was established about five

⁴⁵ Probably St. Michael Parish, founded as a German parish in 1852 and administered by the Redemptorist priests since 1860. Located on the North side of the German community, the parish is now in Lincoln Park, 1633 North Cleveland Avenue.

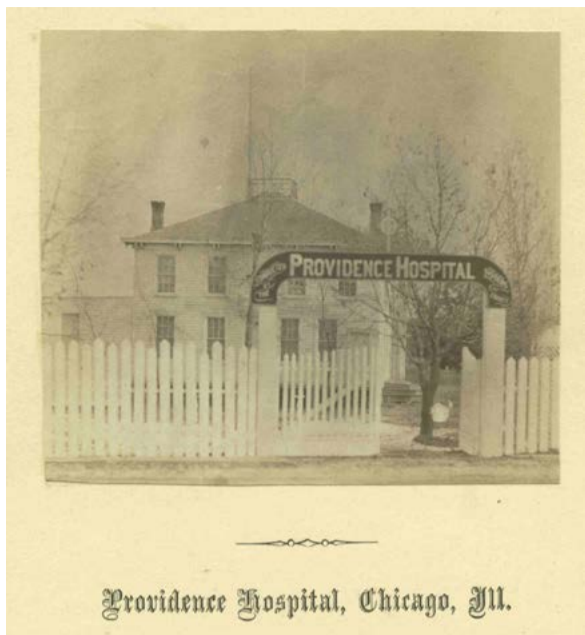
miles from our house.⁴⁶ We went and were received most cordially by the Committee. They expressed their regret at not being able to reach us sooner, and said: "Sisters, you were not burned out but you took care of those who were. State your wants and help all who may apply to you."

From that time we wanted for nothing, — provisions, etc., clothing, fuel, every[thing] was sent in abundance. We were able to help our friends, and the poor flocked to us from all directions. Hundreds of people sought and found relief at our little hospital out of the abundance Providence provided us. Although we knew no want, conveniences were not so plentiful in many aspects as before the fire. No cars could run for some time after the fire, for the tracks and even the iron nails were consumed, and as we were quite a little distance out, we had sometimes to avail ourselves of all sorts of ways in getting back and forth. One time one of our good Catholic friends called to take us to [the] headquarters of the Relief Committee in his buggy. As we returned, we met Bishop Foley. He could not let the opportunity to tease pass. "Is it any wonder" he said, "that we had a fire in Chicago, when two Sisters of Charity go out riding with a gentleman, and in a buggy!" Another day we were perched up on the high seat of an Express Wagon when we met three priests. They saluted us very respectfully notwithstanding the figure we must have cut.

As for our new hospital it was up to the third story when the fire broke out. Four families took refuge in its basement and remained there for several weeks while they were getting their own little houses fixed. At one time the flames had threatened to consume it too, but within two blocks, they changed their course and made towards the Lake. The word came to us that it *was* burned and we did not know under the circumstances whether we should be glad or sorry for our last Dollar had been paid on it. We were just about making a loan when the disaster of the fire came. How could we become responsible for a loan after all our expenditures were burned, was more than we could tell. Just at the time our beloved Mother Euphemia was making a visitation of the houses in St. Louis.⁴⁷ She came to us the day after the fire like a consoling angel and made every possible provision for the Sisters who were burned out. Embarrassed as we were regarding our new hospital in its refurbished state and its future looking so dark. Our beloved Mother [Euphemia] requested Bishop Foley to take the property. The sister could not be responsible for a loan now all their prospects were gone. The Bishop entreated Mother not to take all the Sisters away. "Let Sister Walburga come to me, and we will see what can be done." The Bishop then asked Sister what she was willing to do, and she replied that she was disposed to labor and sacrifice her life for the poor burned out people, but to take the responsibility for the debt was more than she could do. The Bishop said "it appeared to him that a Hospital was more needed when so many were sick, and dying as at the present time" and added: "make a loan, and I will go security for you, and if we break, we will break together." More

⁴⁶ The Chicago Relief and Aid Society.

⁴⁷ Mother Euphemia Blenkinsop (1816-1887), visitatrix [provincial] (1866-1887), Daughters of Charity Province of the United States.



Providence Hospital, located at Clark and Diversey, Lake View, was spared from the flames by a sudden change in the direction of the wind.

Courtesy, Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise, St. Louis, MO.



the bishop could not have said.

Mother then consented to continue the building and make the loan. Sisters felt somewhat encouraged and went to work. She succeeded in making a loan of thirty-thousand dollars at two per cent for five years. Material, labor, everything raised in value in consequence of the fire. Our contract having been broken by not having the money to pay different contractors according to agreement, advantage was taken, and the building therefore came much higher than it was originally estimated.

Sickness and death increased in the city. It became necessary to put up Barrack Hospitals, one in each district. The Doctor of the Relief Committee asked us if we would take charge of the one in ours. Sister [Walburga] consulted the Bishop who appeared to be much pleased, as so much good would result from the arrangement. She also wrote to Father Burlando who replied by telegraph "Take the Barracks. Do your best, and God will bless you."

We were six in number at the time in our little Providence Hospital, Sisters Cecilia Sheehan, Annina Lutzkus, Mary Burke, Aloysia Dougherty, and Cephias Byrne; one of the number was an invalid.⁴⁸ We have not many leisure moments, it may be believed. On the evening of Christmas day we went to the Barracks as a great many things such as provisions bedding, even furniture had been delivered there the evening before.⁴⁹ We slept on the floor without sheets, but had plenty of blankets. The frost was thick on them in the morning and the wall could be scraped. For some time we had only one fire; we tried to keep ourselves warm by working. After we got the place fixed up, it was soon filled with poor sick who enjoyed the comforts of our Barracks. We brought in our invalid Sister who was useful in light-duties able to answer calls, etc. Sisters Annina and myself took

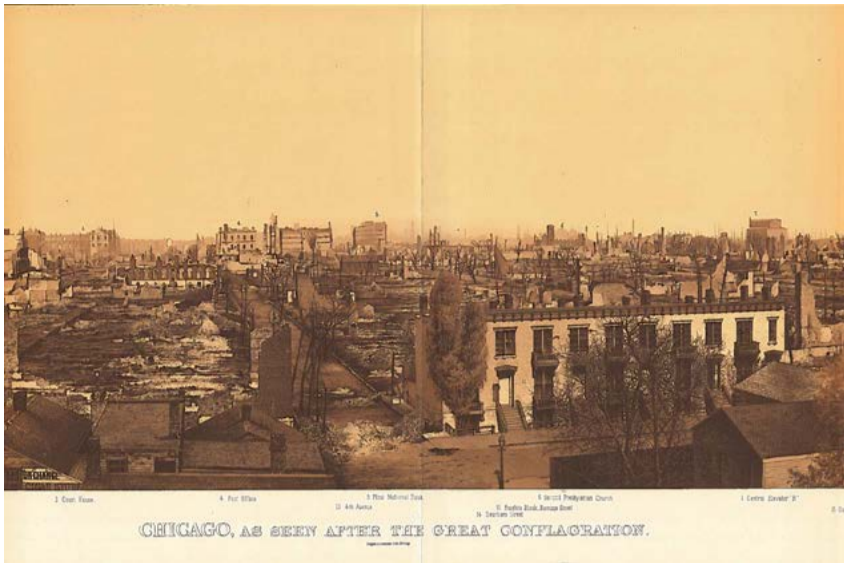
⁴⁸ Sister Cecilia Sheehan (1824-1872), Sister Aloysia Dougherty (1839-1916), and Sister Cephias Byrne (1852-1923), supplemented the labors of Sister Annina Lutzkus, Sister Mary/Bridget Burke, and Sister Walburga Gehring, sister servant.

⁴⁹ The Barracks Hospital.

charge of sick nursing. We had two wards male and female, two private rooms, one male nurse, and one woman whose duties were those we could not perform. Three Doctors attended the Barracks and one medical student remained there to compound medicines and keep the measuring records of the patients. We were furnished with everything in abundance; had the privilege of selecting our own marketing and hire our own "help." All that was required of us was to take care of the sick, and keep the place in order. When the Barracks were in running order we had many visitors, and amongst the first came Bishop Foley with his Vicar General, and some of the clergy. The Relief Committee called several times, and were highly pleased at the good order and cleanliness of the place. On one occasion while visiting the different institutions they came to ours about noon. The Doctor invited them to remain for dinner, as they had still several places to visit. They did so, and enjoyed the dinner given them saying "it was fit for a king" and thought it was not such a hard fortune to be sick at the Barracks Hospital where everything looked so inviting. They said the Sisters "were wonderful women" and told their wives to come to us to learn housekeeping. It was optional for us to give the Doctor his dinner, but whenever duty required him to be there at meal time, we always gave him a good dinner, and it was a little act of kindness he never forgot. There were about five hundred people living in the Barracks near us, who were provided for by the Relief Committee, and who when sick came to us to be taken care of. The Barracks seemed to be the pride of the Committee. They had the whole affair taken by photograph, and almost insisted that we should appear at the Hospital divisions, but we knowing the views of Superiors on such matters declined. In addition to what was furnished for the sick, we received quantities of clothing and provisions to distribute amongst the bashful poor who would not go to the general office for assistance. Every favor asked by the Sisters was granted. Our happiest days in Chicago were spent in the six months at the Barracks. We were kept as busy as ever we could be, and believed the Barracks the Little Providence Hospital, and the new building which had to be looked after too. We had enough to do. We took our turns going out every Sunday evening to the little Hospital in order to be there for the Monday morning's washing, for we tried to save every Dollar for the new Building. Which was about half a mile from the Barracks and fully two miles from the Providence Hospital.

The Superior of the Redemptorists, Reverend Father Zimmer, attended to the spiritual wants of the Barracks.⁵⁰ God alone knows all the good he did there. I firmly believe it was his prayers that saved Sister Annina Lutzkus from having the small pox at the Barracks. She had been laid up several days with every symptom. The Doctor called several times during the day, each time he would say[,] "Well Sister! there is something that is keeping it back!" He could not tell what, but we understood the mystery. We would have suffered for spiritual consolation had it not been for this good Father[.] He was an old grey headed gentleman, very devoted. He walked two miles once a week to Lake View to hear our confessions, and gave us Mass frequently. He was often covered with snow when he

⁵⁰ Reverend Zimmer, a Redemptorist priest, was pastor and superior at St. Michael's in 1871.



An aerial view of the city as it stood following the Great Fire.

Public Domain



reached our house at six in the morning. On several occasions he took up collections for us in his church before and after the fire.

It was in rather a singular manner that we got the name for the new Hospital. There were two institutions in Chicago at the time named House of Providence, the Bishop one day said: “You had better change the name for the Hospital and call it St. Joseph’s as there is no institution with that name in the city.”⁵¹ Father Burlando was in New Orleans at the time. He had occasion to write to me and directed his letter to St. Joseph’s Hospital. I wrote to him, and told him about what the Bishops had said, and how he had directed letter. He could not recollect how the house directed it, but he said: “Very well! Next to Providence comes St. Joseph: Call it after him.”

Our good dear Father [Burlando] was so grieved about us when the fire broke out. He knew the hardships we had already undergone. Besides praying for us and doing all he could for us, he sent us a box of beautiful things, pyx cases, scapulars, Agnus Deis, which we found not only beautiful but useful.⁵² And then there was a letter from a Father’s loving heart. Once when I was very much depressed he wrote: “Keep up your head dear child, it is all for the honor and glory of God.” Enclosed was a Ten dollar bill [*sic*].

The new Hospital was not yet completed when the loan of Thirty Thousand Dollars had expired, and Two Thousand more owing which must be paid before another sticke [stick] would be put on the building. What we were to do we did not know. Two of us started out early in the morning after imploring our dear Lord to direct us what to [do] and where to go. We left no means untried to succeed, but our efforts were of no avail.

⁵¹ Most Reverend James Duggan, actively filled the office of bishop of Chicago (1859-1869). Duggan was removed from office due to his mental health. While he still held the title of bishop, an administrator ran the diocese until September of 1880, when Chicago became an archdiocese and Most Rev. Patrick A. Feehan, D.D., was appointed as the city’s first archbishop. At the time of the fire, Duggan was a patient at St. Vincent’s Sanitarium, operated by the Daughters of Charity, Normandy, Missouri.

⁵² Pyx cases are small, round, metal receptacles used to carry the Eucharist (Holy Communion) to the sick. Scapulars are usually two small pieces of cloth with a religious image or verse, which are joined by thin bands. Devotees wear scapulars as religious reminders. Popular in the nineteenth century, an Agnus Dei was a small circle of pure wax, with the impress of a lamb supporting the standard of the cross, and encased in precious metal. Frequently a gift, recipients wore it devoutly around the neck or displayed it in a glass frame.

All the Banks and the money houses had more calls than they could supply. We were at last compelled to call on the Bishop and remind him of his promises. He listened to our representations in a rather dignified manner, and answered at once a positive refusal given in as few words as possible — We were stunned at his manner — He grieved us both to the soul, and we could not keep our tears back walking along the street. His cause for acting as he did was more than we could ever tell. It gave us a lesson to rely on God alone. — It was then 2 P.M. We had had no dinner nor did we feel the want of any. We prayed as we walked along asking God to enlighten us what to do, when suddenly the thought came to call on the Relief Committee, the Doctor of which had told us some time previously that the Committee intended to give us an appropriation, as we asked for no equivalent — for our services at the Barracks, but gave them gratuitously[.] If any steps had been taken, or arrangement made regarding the matter, we knew nothing of it, and we feel that we had little to hope for as our friend Dr. Johnson had gone to Europe for his health.⁵³ Still, we thought it our duty to leave nothing untried, as we would be obliged to give up the building for the debt. We therefore summoned up courage to call at the Relief Office. It was two miles from the Bishop's house and we walked the distance as there were no cars running in that direction. When we reached the office every member favorably disposed towards us, had not yet returned from dinner. Col. Hammond, not at all well disposed toward us⁵⁴ — even bitter as we thought, as he had on former occasions manifested much sternness and prejudice — was the only one in. We both feared him and we looked at each other despondingly. We were on the point of turning back. As we were making our way towards the door, we thought again: Why not go in? he can do us no harm. We stood for a moment, and begged God to strengthen our hearts beating so rapidly, and went in, The Colonel received us very cordially, and said: "Well Ladies, what can I do for you today?" We stated our case to which he listened with great attention, and said at once: "Why not call on your Bishop?" Money has been sent him from all directions. We told him we just came from the Bishop, and that he could do nothing for us as he was himself very much embarrassed on account of the many churches that were burned.

It will not be out of place to mention that the Bishop gave us Mass a few days after our call. He was as friendly in his manners as ever could be. He handed me about Seventy Dollars or so, saying: "This will keep you along, it is all I have at present." But a lesson had been given; money affairs, and former promises were never spoken of from that time. The poor Bishop no doubt felt sorry for treating us in the manner he did. He appeared to try and make up when he saw that Protestants came to our aid —

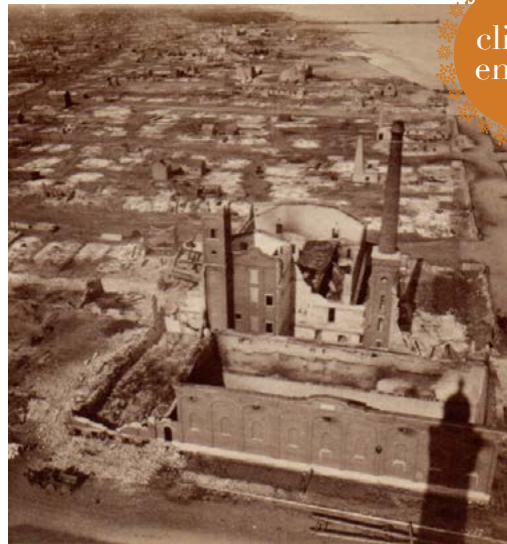
After Col. Hammond had listened to our story, he said: "Well Ladies! You deserve to be helped, you are taking such good care of our sick at the Barracks. I will see what the Committee intends to do for you. If you can wait about fifteen minutes, I will have an answer." The Col. telegraphed to the Chairman of the Committee Mr. Bauthin [Bouton]

⁵³ Hosmer Allen Johnson, M.D.

⁵⁴ Col. Charles G. Hammond.



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The remains of Chicago at State and Madison Streets; as well as views northward.

*Courtesy Chicago History Museum, ICHi-02811;
and Public Domain*

stating our case.⁵⁵ The reply was: "Give the ladies all the money they want and take this note in order to have it applied on the appropriation of Thirty Thousand Dollars that we are going to give the Sisters." The old Colonel said: "Now here is good news for you! In how [*sic*] large amounts do you wish to receive the notes?" I handed him the different Bills to the amount of Two Thousand Dollars. He then gave me the money to that amount with as much grace and kind heartedness as if he had known us all our lives. — Before leaving he said to us: "Now Ladies, hurry up your building, so that you may be able to move your patients from the Barracks and your little Hospital at Lake View and make them more comfortable. Whenever you want money come to me!"

He ever after was one of our best-friends. As I have occasion to call on him frequently the wrinkles of his countenance disappeared by degrees. His nephew, Mr. Jones a young man about twenty seven, had charge of giving the provisions to poor families living in the Barracks. Mr. Jones had often occasion to come by our department for the Doctor. One day he happened to pass through the kitchen, and saw lemon-pie on the table. Sister Annina Lutzkus saw him looking at the pie very wishfully. She asked him to have a piece which he appeared to enjoy very much. He told Sister he was passionately fond of lemon pie. There was no place for taking a warm lunch in those days. Mr. Jones' home was nearly five miles from our Barracks. He had nothing but a cold lunch every day. Sundays included. He was first as good natured as he could be, the very reverse of his uncle. He would bring us occasionally a pocket full of lemons, and hold them up to us very good-naturedly, ask

⁵⁵ Nathaniel Sherman Bouton.

us a favor if we would not make a lemon pie for his mother. He was the proudest man in Chicago going home at evening with his lemon pie. He was so delighted at our little attention to him that he could not do enough for us. One Sunday afternoon two venerable members of St. Vincent de Paul's Society, Mr. Carney and Mr. Riordan, father of the two Revd. Gentleman Riordan (priests) came to our Barracks with a great number of books for distribution.⁵⁶ They gave us several for poor families and Mr. Jones went through the Barracks with them to all the Catholic families. Both of these two venerable members are now before God receiving the reward of their many acts of charity after the fire. These Sunday afternoons were generally spent in looking up poor families. Mr. Jones was so delighted with this visit he came to us and said: "Well! You would not get our Protestant men to do anything of the kind." Soon after this the Barracks was broken up, Mr. Jones married a very nice young lady of his own religion. One of his first visits was to bring her to our house. Suffice it to say that he and his friends were ours ever after.

God alone can tell all the assistance we received through the Chicago Relief and Aid Society. There were twelve members. One and all became our friends after we had taken the charge of the Barracks [Hospital]. They all visited the Barracks in turn. They became yearly benefactors of St. Joseph's Hospital after we closed the Barracks.⁵⁷ Through Dr. [Hosmer A.] Johnson, our great friend, we received from the Committee for St. Joseph's Hospital Thirty Thousand Dollars, besides which, I can safely say before God, and in justice to the Society that we received at different times from, 1872 to 1882, to the amount of Forty Thousand Dollars in Cash, and nearly Two Thousand Dollars in furniture, Bedding, Dry-goods, Fuel and Groceries. Which we received besides for poor families during the ten years is uncountable and known to God alone. Indeed we owe our success in Chicago, under God, to the Relief and Aid Society. Mr. C.G. Trusdell, a Methodist minister, gave up his church at the time of the fire in order to devote his entire time to the Relief Society.⁵⁸ It was through him that all our petitions were granted after we had received the Thirty-Thousand Dollars. Mr. Trusdell frequently called to see us to know if all our wants were supplied. I said to him one day that I hoped God would grant him Heaven for all he had done for us and our poor. He replied: "I hope so Sister. I expect to meet you there, but no doubt it will be in a different form." My sincere prayer for him is that God may grant him the gift of Faith before he dies. I can never forget all he has done for our Catholic poor. I have never known him to refuse me a favor either by note or word of mouth.

How we passed through all the after[math of] the Chicago Fire, which was followed by a panic of the Banks and business, is more than I can tell. It was God alone who preserved

⁵⁶ Mr. William Riordan was the father of the two priests: Reverend Patrick William Riordan (1841-1914), later archbishop of San Francisco (1884-1914); and Reverend Daniel J. Riordan (1846-1922), who was chancellor and secretary of the Archdiocese of Chicago during the tenure of Archbishop Patrick Feehan.

⁵⁷ "They" refers to the Directors of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society, who became generous supporters of St. Joseph Hospital.

⁵⁸ Reverend Charles Gregory Trusdell (1826-1903), a Methodist minister and former Iowa legislator, was a superintendent of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society for thirty years. One of his responsibilities was the Department of Distribution of Food, Fuel, and Clothing.



The Clark and Van Buren Street Bridge resting in the Chicago River following the fire.

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our health through all kinds of weather and exposure besides the many dangers we had to brave. It was scarcely safe to go down town for some days after the fire on account of the great rush, throngs of wagons, etc., accidents happened almost every day. The bridges were half burned — also the Tunnel in which several families had taken shelter; the fire struck in both ends, the gas exploded and smothered all that were in it. Never was there such distress and lamentations heard as there was on the day after the fire.

There was no one to be pitied more than Mother Mary Nativity of the Good Shepherd Convent.⁵⁹ Burned out, penniless and homeless with three hundred inmates of the Convent some of which made their escape and not knowing where to find a home — They at last succeeded in renting a private house. They had nothing saved but a few articles which each one carried in her arms. After they had all crowded in without a bit of furniture, but the few articles [in] their hands, the poor Mother was sitting behind the door on a little bundle unburdening her heart in tears to her Divine Spouse, when suddenly the door opened, and who should walk in but Bishop Foley. He consoled her as best he could, and told her not to want for anything. On leaving he gave her a considerable sum of money. He visited them frequently and gave Mother [Lavoie] Five Thousand Dollars towards rebuilding their own home.⁶⁰ The Chicago Relief and Aid Society gave her Fifty Thousand Dollars besides clothing and bedding in abundance.⁶¹ After Mother Nativity had her convent completely

⁵⁹ Mother Mary Nativity (Adéline) Noreau (1825-1879), R.G.S., had been superior since her arrival from Montreal in 1864, and served in that capacity until her death. Sister Mary St. Catherine of Siena (Vitaline) Lavoie (b.1832) had accompanied her from Canada.

⁶⁰ "Thomas Foley to [Mother Superior, Sisters of the Good Shepherd]," 6 July 1872, Copy, in Archives, Sisters of the Good Shepherd. See Benefactor Book, Right Reverend Thomas Foley, D.D., Bishop of Chicago, n.d., n.p.

⁶¹ The Committee on the Aid to Charitable and Benevolent Institutions recommended in late 1871 that the Chicago Relief and Aid Society allocate \$150 for six months (\$900). The Society contributed \$16,046.56 to the House of the Good Shepherd in 1872. See, *Report of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society of Disbursements of Contributions for the Sufferers by the Chicago Fire* (Chicago: Riverside Press, 1874), 285-91.

rebuilt her beautiful soul took its flight to receive its reward from Him whom she had so faithfully served during her thirty years of convent life. Strange to say she died of the same sickness as Bishop Foley and one month later. May God rest both their noble souls!

Bishop Foley was untiring in his visits after the fire. Where poverty and misery ruined Bishop Foley was seen. The Orphans particularly engaged his attention. He procured for them a beautiful home near the Lake. Once he came to our little Hospital at Lake View after a terrible snowstorm to see if we were not drifted into the Lake. We had no fire in the parlor and he exclaimed: "What! No fire such a day as this." We told him we were too poor to keep a fire in the parlor when we did not expect any visitors. We took him up to our little Community room to warm himself. He was much amused at our being locked up in the snow. He sent several poor girls to our Hospital for treatment and paid for them himself. During my illness in 1875 he visited me several times and once he brought a beautiful little box filled with scapulars, and gold and silver coins to the amount of Fifty Dollars. He told Sister Cephias [Byrne] "To put it under the old lady's plate; it would put her in a good humor." — Nothing pleased him more than to find our front door open. He would walk quietly into the Community room and then take a hearty laugh saying, "Well, well! What are you all doing here? I heard every word you said! Where is the door keeper?"

He was always disposed to do what he could in giving spiritual aid to our poor sick; he told me never to let any of our patients die without Confirmation. Our progress appeared to amuse him. He asked me one day how I managed to pay so much debt? I told him "By hard work and making no presents — depending on Divine Providence and St. Joseph."⁶²

Indeed, it is more than I can tell when I consider that we did not have one dollar to begin our work in time of trouble and disappointment. From all sides, — the [removed] Bishop insane, every one doing — God knows what! —

Our success under God, is due to our departed Father Burlando.⁶³ I felt many times that I must give up. — I would write real scolding and saucy letters to Father Burlando, but he would only reply with words of kindness and encouragement. I often felt sorry and ashamed of my conduct afterwards; then I would set to work with new courage.

Our hardships and many trials were at last crowned by procuring a comfortable and self-sustaining house for the poor sick and dying. I feel more than amply rewarded for the good we have been able to do during the past fourteen years in relieving suffering humanity and saving souls.

We have paid for ground, building and improvements Seventy Thousand Dollars. The City gave us Water, Gas, Sewer, street-cars, and a letter box. There were no improvements

⁶² For post-fire statistics, see Andreas, *History of Chicago*, 3:525. "ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL. Since the completion of this hospital building in 1871, and its occupancy in 1872, many improvements have been made. The situation, on Garfield Avenue, near Lincoln Park and Lake Michigan, is admirable from a sanitary point of view, as well as for being easy of access. Both males and females are received as patients, about one hundred of whom can be accommodated. The private rooms are frescoed and comfortably furnished, and the entire building is heated with steam. To the Sisters, who have the care and management of this institution, the increasing measure of its success and recognition is very gratifying and encouraging."

⁶³ Burlando died of a stroke on 16 February 1873.

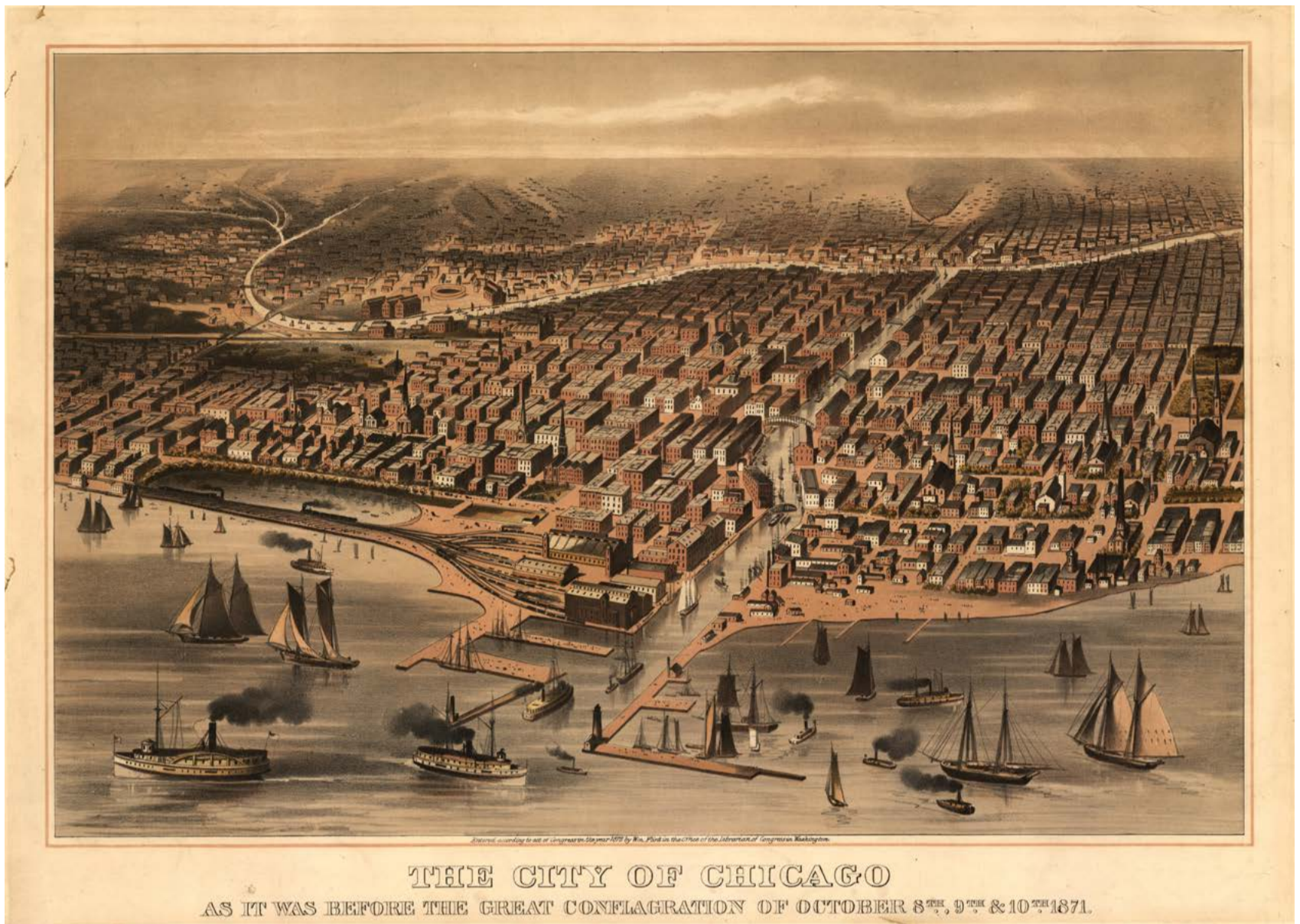
at the time we built there. Since the Fire people have thickly settled around the Hospital. It is a great consolation. To my heart when I now look back and see how God has blessed and made grow the grain of mustard seed that was planted by Holy Obedience January 18, 1869. _____

_____ Well now, my dear Sister, don't you think that I have said enough about Chicago? It makes my tear bag nearly empty.⁶⁴ Please, dear Sister, don't let any one see my scribbling. —

[Sister Walburga Gehring]



⁶⁴ Tears from crying.



THE CITY OF CHICAGO

AS IT WAS BEFORE THE GREAT CONFLAGRATION OF OCTOBER 8TH, 9TH & 10TH 1871.

A view of the city of Chicago as it stood just before the Great Fire.

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School of the Holy Name, Chicago, Ill.



St. Vincent's House of Providence, Chicago, Ill.

The School of the Holy Name, and St. Vincent's House of Providence.

Both Courtesy, Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise, St. Louis, MO.





The Burning of Chicago. An 1871 lithograph by Currier & Ives.

Courtesy Chicago History Museum, ICHI-02954





St. Patrick's School on the Near West Side, c. 1900.

Note the Daughters visible standing at the windows in their signature cornettes.

Courtesy, Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise, St. Louis, MO.





The remnants of Holy Name Cathedral after the fire.

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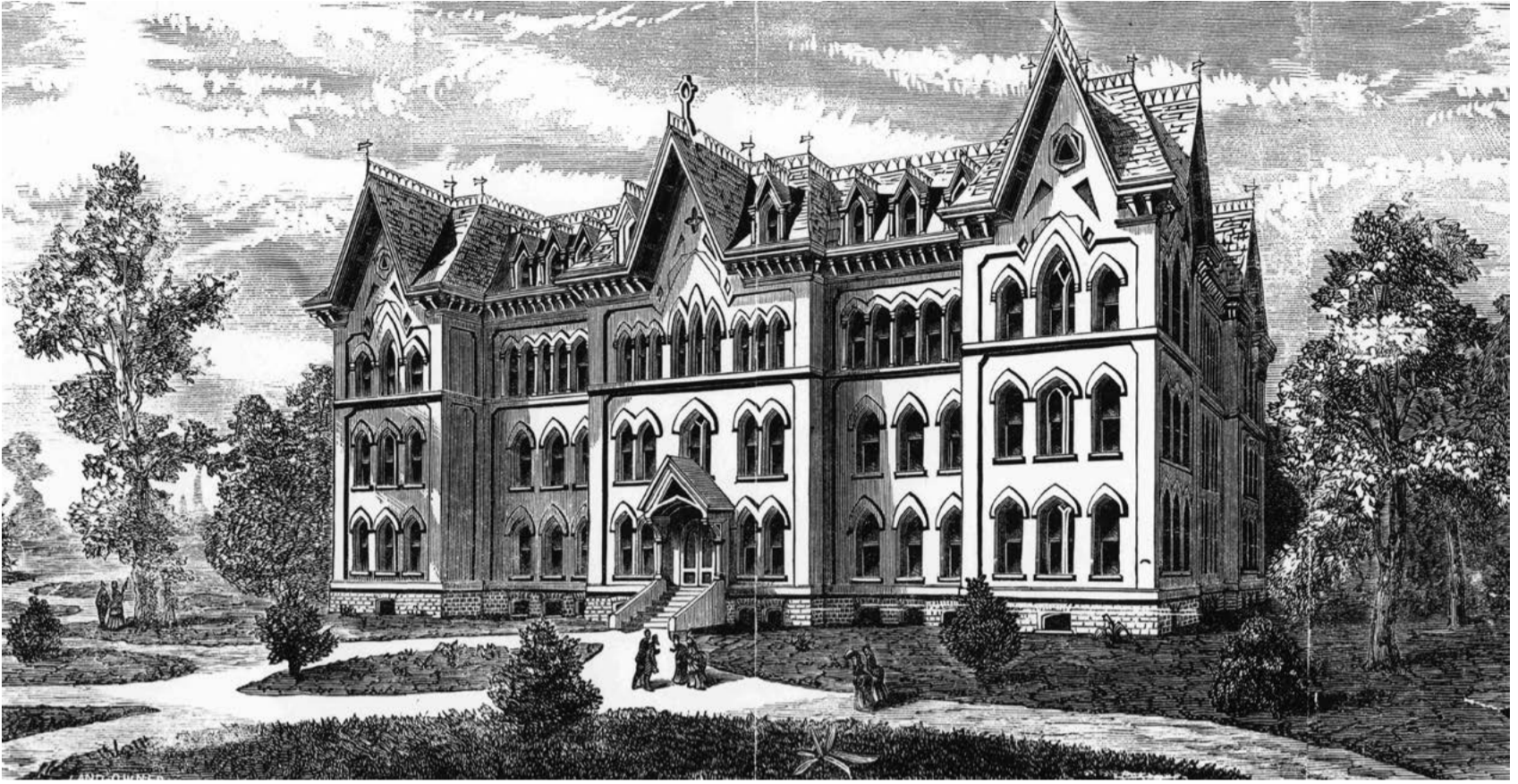
CHICAGO IN FLAMES—THE RUSH FOR LIFE OVER RANDOLPH-STREET BRIDGE.—FROM A SKETCH BY JOHN R. CHAPIN

Crowds of people attempting to flee the fire over the Randolph Street Bridge.

Print by John R. Chapin, first published in the October 28, 1871, issue of *Harper's Weekly*.

Courtesy Chicago History Museum, ICHi-02901





St. Joseph's Hospital, Chicago, as it has evolved over the years following the fire: first at Sophia Street from 1872 to 1890; then at Burling Street from 1890 to 1963; and at its present location along Lake Shore Drive in Chicago.

All Courtesy, Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise, St. Louis, MO.





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All Courtesy, Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise, St. Louis, MO.





An 1871 Currier & Ives lithograph depicting the enormity of the fire and the masses of people attempting to escape.

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THE BURNING OF CHICAGO—RUSH OF FUGITIVES THROUGH THE POTTER'S FIELD TOWARD LINCOLN PARK.—FROM A SKETCH BY THEO. R. DAVIS.—[SEE PAGE 1028.]

Refugees fleeing north toward Lincoln Park during the fire.

Print by Theo Davis, first appeared in the November 4, 1871, issue of *Harper's Weekly*.

Public Domain





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Providence Hospital, Chicago, Ill.

Providence Hospital, located at Clark and Diversey, Lake View, was spared from the flames by a sudden change in the direction of the wind.

Courtesy, Daughters of Charity Province of St. Louise, St. Louis, MO.





An aerial view of the city as it stood following the Great Fire.

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The remains of Chicago at State and Madison Streets; as well as views northward.

Courtesy Chicago History Museum, ICHi-02811; and Public Domain





The remains of Chicago at State and Madison Streets; as well as views northward.

Courtesy Chicago History Museum, ICHi-02811; and Public Domain





The remains of Chicago at State and Madison Streets; as well as views northward.

Courtesy Chicago History Museum, ICHi-02811; and Public Domain





The Clark and Van Buren Street Bridge resting in the Chicago River following the fire.

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Emergent Catholicity: Forming the Mind of Vincent

SCOTT KELLEY, PH.D.



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In her article “The Core Values of Vincentian Education,” Louise Sullivan, D.C., argues that there is an “all-too-pervasive view of Vincent de Paul as an ‘anti-intellectual.’”¹ While it would be impossible to describe precisely how pervasive this view is, it is important to note that the view does exist and, more importantly, might have subtly steered Vincentian studies from focusing on Vincent de Paul’s intellectual formation and educational achievements. The idea that Vincent may have appeared somewhat “anti-intellectual” is understandable given his own description of his educational background, the dominant focus of many of his biographers on Christian virtue, the scant records of his scholastic achievement, and the type of documents left to history. Vincent did not appear to view the intellectual apostolate as an important endeavor for the mission in his times, as Dennis Holtschneider, C.M., former president of DePaul University explains: “universities were not required or even able to achieve his ends for the poor.”² They were certainly not like the modern Vincentian universities of today, able to alleviate poverty in profound ways and an important expression of the mission.³ As such, there appears to be a paradox in Vincentian heritage: on the one hand, Vincent downplayed his own education, but on the other, education has become a significant manifestation of the Vincentian mission today. Therefore, what lessons for the intellectual apostolate might a careful analysis of Vincent’s educational background reveal?

It is clear, judging from his own words, that Vincent did not wear his educational achievement as a badge of accomplishment. In a conference to the confreres on the Kingdom of God, Vincent explains “[y]ou, Messieurs, have studied theology and I’m an ignorant man, a fourth form student.”⁴ And later in a conference on Moral Theology, Vincent told the confreres:

...[i]f the occasion presented itself where it would be necessary to enlighten a Huguenot on the difficulties he might put forward to us, we’d find this very hard — at least I would because I’m a poor, wretched, fourth level student. If I were to meet a minister who presented his difficulties and objections to me, I must confess that I’d really be at a loss.⁵

Vincent claims to be a scholar of the fourth form, completed when he left Dax, which is roughly equivalent to a modern day high school diploma. Members of his own Congregation

¹ Louise Sullivan, D.C., “The Core Values of Vincentian Education,” *Vincentian Heritage* 16:2 (1995): 17. Available online: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol16/iss2/3>

² Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., “The Heart of Vincentian Higher Education. Remarks by the Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., at St. John’s University Annual Vincentian Convocation,” 22 September 2016, available at: <http://scholar.stjohns.edu/jovsa/vol1/iss2/5/>

³ Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., and Edward R. Udovic, C.M., “The Vincentian Higher Education Apostolate in the United States,” *Vincentian Heritage* 22:1 (2001). See: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol22/iss1/3>.

⁴ See Conference 198, “Seeking the Kingdom of God,” 21 February 1659, *Vincent de Paul, Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. and trans. By Jacqueline Kilar, D.C., Marie Poole, D.C., et al, vols. 1-14 (New York: New City Press, Brooklyn: 1985-2009), 12:114. Hereafter cited as *CCD*. Available online: http://via.library.depaul.edu/coste_en/

⁵ Conference 210, “Moral Theology, Preaching, Catechizing, and Administration of the Sacraments,” 5 August 1659, *CCD*, 12:238.

had been unaware of the documentation of his degrees from the University of Toulouse and the University of Paris, and were surprised to find them among his papers after he died.⁶ It is peculiar that Vincent would refer to himself as a “scholar of the fourth form” when in many legal documents his degrees are featured prominently. As was customary in formal documents of the time: “...Vincent de Paul, priest of the Dax dioceses, Bachelor of the sacred science of Theology,” and in his Last Will and Testament, “Vincent de Paul, priest, Licentiate in Canon Law.”⁷ This may well be an expression of Vincent’s humility, especially when comparing his theological credentials to professional theologians like Louis de Guyard, described in legal documents as “priest and Doctor of Theology.”⁸ It was customary for one’s educational pedigree to feature prominently as a credential, a kind of qualification, in many types of formal documents, not unlike the way M.D., Ph.D., M.B.A., or S.T.D., often append the signature at the bottom of our documents today.

In a number of important directives, most significantly in the *Common Rules for the Congregation of the Mission*, Vincent warns the confreres to seek out Christ’s teaching, “which will never let us down, while worldly wisdom always will.”⁹ Vincent appears to adopt the polemic of opposition between Christian revelation, on the one hand, and the kind of wisdom sought by Greek philosophers on the other, a kind of wisdom that Saint Paul refers to as “the wisdom of the world.” Saint Paul’s warning against “philosophy and empty deceit” in 1 Corinthians 1:20-24 and Colossians 2:8 are examples of the long-standing dialectic between the truths revealed in sacred scripture and truths discovered in the philosophical habit of mind.¹⁰ Vincent’s caution could be interpreted as an intentional association with the more mystical-religious side of the dialectic, and not the rational-philosophical. On the surface, truth for Vincent appears to be revealed in Providence, not discovered through the achievement of reason.

Vincent’s biographers also downplayed his education. In the first biography of Vincent de Paul, published in 1664, Bishop Louis Abelly interprets Vincent’s statements about his own education as an expression of Christian humility:

[h]e was not one of those puffed up by the little they know. On the contrary, he strove to hide what he had acquired. Out of an extraordinary sense of humility, he tried to persuade others that he had little education. Saying this

⁶ 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. (New Rochelle, N.Y.: New City Press, 1993), 40.

⁷ See Document 11, “Act of Taking Possession of the Parish of Clichy,” 2 May 1612, CCD, 13a:23; and Document 31a, “Last Will and Testament of Saint Vincent,” 7 September 1630, *Ibid.*, 13a:98.

⁸ Document 25b, “Act of Taking Possession of the Bons-Enfants by Antoine Portail in the Name of Vincent de Paul,” 6 March 1624, CCD, 13a:72.

⁹ See “Chapter II: Gospel Teaching” in Document 117a, *Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission*, 17 May 1658, CCD, 13a:431. Available online: http://via.library.depaul.edu/cm_construles/3

¹⁰ See Steven Marrone, “Medieval philosophy in context,” *Cambridge Companions Online* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 11; available at <http://ernestopriani.com/wp-content/uploads/Medieval-philosophy-in-context.pdf>

he did not offend against the truth, for indeed he had passed through the fourth class, but it was an artifice of the virtue of humility. He maintained silence about his later studies.¹¹

Abelly's account alludes to the claim in Saint Paul's first letter to the Corinthians that "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up."¹² This subtle reference contributes to an organizing theme in Abelly's biographical narrative that Vincent was a pious man of Christian virtue in all respects. In devout religious circles especially, academic achievement was often viewed as worldly hubris and accomplishment, over and against the Christian virtue of humility and gratuitous nature of grace. More pointedly, 'the unmerited gift of faith' is always superior to the achievement, and hubris, of reason. By Vincent's time, the dichotomy between faith and reason was well worn, a simmering subtext in the debates between Dominicans and Franciscans or Jesuits and Jansenists. Pierre Coste, C.M., echoed Abelly's interpretation in his 1932 biography of Vincent de Paul by writing "[t]he glory of a saint does not lie in his university degrees, but in the nobility of his character and the splendor of his virtues."¹³

Even Bernard Pujo's more contemporary biography describes Vincent as "an impatient student," creating the impression that Vincent's time at the University of Toulouse was shaped more by external circumstances and his precarious financial situation than by anything he studied or learned there. Pujo's account provides some context for this period in Vincent's young adult years, but focuses on distractions to his learning such as violent conflicts among students that were prominent at the university during the time. The university years, both in Toulouse and in Paris, do not seem significant to Vincent's biographers; he went there and he received a degree. In his brief chronology of Vincent de Paul's life, Pujo fails to include that Vincent received a Licentiate in Canon Law from the University of Paris in 1624.¹⁴ Considering the stature of the universities he attended, the social value of a Bachelor's degree in Theology and a Licentiate in Canon Law, and the kind of public authority required to draft and execute complex ecclesial and royal contracts, it is a curious omission. Why has such little attention been paid to his educational background?

Another possible reason for the misconception that Vincent was "anti-intellectual" is the type of his writings left to history. Pierre Coste's fourteen-volume collection of material includes correspondence, conferences, and documents pertinent to Vincent de Paul and the organizations he founded. While the Coste collection does provide considerable theological insight and spiritual wisdom, the items within it must always be contextualized by their *type*. For example: correspondence to a particular person for a specific reason;

¹¹ Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:41. Available online: http://via.library.depaul.edu/abelly_english/3

¹² 1 Corinthians 8:1.

¹³ Pierre Coste, C.M., *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, trans. Joseph Leonard, C.M., 3 volumes (Brooklyn, N.Y.: New City Press, 1987), 1:25. Available at: http://via.library.depaul.edu/coste_engbio/

¹⁴ Bernard Pujo, *Vincent de Paul: The Trailblazer* (Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 453.

conferences for a specific community at a specific period in their development; community rules to ensure consistency and integrity over time; and formal documents that function as financial securities, charters, or other legal instruments. As such, the tone and content of Coste's material is significantly different from what is generally considered systematic theology. One expects systematic theology to be presented *systematically*, as for example in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, any of the treatises of the mystics or the early Church Fathers, or in the form of Papal Encyclicals written to the Christian faithful. Judging from extant documents it appears that Vincent was not a systematic theologian, at least not in the way Peter Lombard was. Vincent did not spend much time writing this type of theology. If he did, there appears to be no record of it. This lack of a systematic theological treatise may reinforce the notion that Vincent was more interested in practical matters than speculative ones, or that he simply borrowed his theological worldview from other theologians and did not construct his own.

For all of these reasons, and perhaps others, it is easy to see why there has been little focus on Vincent's *intellectual formation*. Nevertheless, I believe we should consider Vincent's formation as a student and as a thinker under the assumption that his time at the University of Toulouse was indeed formative, helping him develop many of the intellectual capacities he came to depend upon for his later works.

Before we proceed, it is important to describe what is meant by the terms *intellectual* and *intellectual formation*. Misleading and imprecise distinctions between "head" and "heart" aside, there are substantive distinctions to be made between reason and faith.¹⁵ The Greek term '*nous*' [νοῦς] and the Latin term '*intellectus*' generally refer to the ability of the mind to come to accurate conclusions about what is true or real after careful investigation, as evidenced by an increased capacity for problem solving. Socrates, as portrayed in the *Dialogues of Plato*, is often viewed as a symbol or model for the way truth is discovered: progressively and cumulatively through precise definition, pointed questioning, and careful reasoning. In this interpretation, reason begins from a hermeneutic of doubt: is this really so? Have I understood things correctly? What is missing? Is this definition accurate? Conversely, the Latin term '*fidere*,' from which the term 'faith' is derived, means 'to trust.' A person of Catholic faith assents to the truths revealed by God through the person of Jesus Christ, as articulated by the Church. Unlike reason, faith begins from a hermeneutic of trust: "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."¹⁶

The long-standing dichotomy between these two ways of knowing is best captured by the question Tertullian asked in the second century: "what has Athens to do with

¹⁵ For a neurological distinction between reason and emotion see Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (London: Penguin Books, 2005). Damasio finds that Descartes' distinction between "reason" (*res cogitans*) and "emotion" (*res extensa*) is totally untenable, very misleading, and unhelpful in understanding the functions of the human brain. Reason, for Damasio, is more like a mood that is profoundly impacted by emotional imprints. For a theological analysis of faith and reason, see Pope Saint John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Fides et Ratio of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Relationship Between Faith and Reason*, Saint Peter's, Rome, 14 September 1998. Available online at: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html

¹⁶ John 20:29.

Jerusalem?" Athens was a symbol of the philosophical habit of mind, Jerusalem a symbol of faith in God's revelation to humanity. In *Fides et Ratio*, Pope Saint John Paul II artfully positions both faith and reason as *mutually informative* realms of knowledge, functioning like the wings of a bird that are both necessary for an ascent to truth: we believe to understand and we understand to believe. He presents a thoughtful integration of what had been falsely sundered.

Vincent de Paul exhibits a range of higher order thinking, a mastery perhaps best exemplified in Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. Evidence for this can be found in the explicit permissions his degree from the University of Toulouse granted, his capacity to create and negotiate contracts for the acquisition of land or capital, to convince ecclesiastical and royal authorities to bestow much needed resources, to draft founding documents for the establishment and Papal approval of new forms of religious life, and to make new theological arguments in response to the pressing theological questions of his day. These are all activities that Vincent embraced after his time as a student at the University of Toulouse and at the University of Paris, and they presuppose a mastery of Catholic theology, Canon Law, and many other disciplines. It would be a significant mistake to assume that "an ignorant peasant," a "scholar of the fourth form," could accomplish these types of things *without* the kind of education he received. He was, by all accounts, a very intelligent man whose education gave him the skills necessary to do these things.

Considering Vincent's views on his education and the subsequent impression that he was "anti-intellectual," an important question emerges: to what extent did Vincent's intellectual formation, especially his time as a student at the University of Toulouse, influence his later works? It is most remarkable that a self-described "ignorant peasant" was able to earn a Bachelor's Degree from the university in 1604 and, later, a Licentiate in Canon Law from the University of Paris in 1624. It might be useful, then, to contextualize Vincent's experience as a student of theology to locate his intellectual milieu in an evolving arc of scholastic thought, and to position his intellectual formation as a movement toward wholeness.

The Medieval University

With the fall of the Roman Empire, "the torch of learning in the West flickered and nearly died out."¹⁷ There was a sharp decline in the traditions of critical history, philosophy, and literature that had developed steadily for centuries on Greco-Roman foundations. During the great intellectual awakening of the twelfth century, as Thomas Bokenkotter describes, the birth of the university as a distinct institution is remarkable. Much intellectual life during the early middle ages had been confined to secluded monasteries. "Almost imperceptibly," around 1170, the cathedral schools gave way to the first universities in Paris and Bologna.¹⁸

¹⁷ Thomas Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church* (New York: Double Day, 2005), 158.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

As great crowds of students gathered, most of whom were clerical, they participated in a great intellectual awakening that synthesized the wisdom of Jerusalem, Athens, Cairo, and many other cities. Students and teachers began to organize themselves into guilds, much like their merchant counterparts, to protect their mutual interests as scholars, learners, and as seekers of wisdom. Protected and favored by Popes and secular rulers alike, the university-as-distinct-institution began to multiply: Salerno (c 1200), Oxford (c 1200), Cambridge (1209), Salamanca (1220), Padua (1222), Naples (1224), Toulouse (1230), Pisa (1303), Prague (1348), Heidelberg (1385), and Louvain (1425).

For the early university, only three branches of knowledge were worthy of advanced study: medicine, law, and theology. While there were great advances in the study of law, which included both Canon and Civil Law, the study of medicine was for a long time nothing more than “a science of folklore.”¹⁹ The queen of medieval intellectual endeavors was always theology.

The university that Vincent experienced at the dawn of the seventeenth century had developed its texts and traditions of learning over centuries. It was a vibrant, intellectually fertile place where students came to explore, examine, challenge, and synthesize the vast array of ideas, beliefs, principles, and claims that had gradually coalesced during the twelfth-century intellectual renaissance. Medieval life had provided the conditions — agricultural surpluses, the development and expansion of markets and trade, the rise of town populations, and increased leisure time — for people to indulge their intellectual curiosities, as expressed through the careful examination of accepted beliefs.²⁰ As such, the university was not only a distinctly medieval institution, it was “the great achievement of the Middle Ages in the intellectual sphere,” which “affected the progress and intellectual development of Europe more powerfully, or (perhaps it should be said) more exclusively, than any schools in all likelihood will ever do again.”²¹

Medieval usage of the term ‘university’ refers merely to “a number, a plurality, an aggregate of persons,” while the term ‘*studium generale*’ is closer to modern conceptions of its meaning. It refers not to a place where all things are studied, but rather to a place where students from all parts are received. In fact, few medieval *studia* possessed all faculties. In general, the medieval *studium generale* had three primary characteristics:

1. The school attracted or at least invited students from all parts, not merely those of a particular country or district;
2. It was a place of higher education; that is to say, at least one of the higher faculties of theology, law, or medicine was taught there;
3. Those subjects were taught by a considerable number, at least a plurality, of masters.²²

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 161.

²⁰ John Herman Randall, Jr., *The Making of the Modern Mind: A Survey of the Intellectual Background of the Present Age*, 50th edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 14.

²¹ Hastings Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages: Salerno, Bologna, Paris*, 3 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 1:3. All further references to Rashdall, *Universities*, cite material from volume one.

²² *Ibid.*, 5-7.



Detail from a period map of the Collège de Foix, Toulouse, France.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



With institutional form, legal protection, financial resources to support students, a long history of intellectual engagement, and scholars devoted exclusively to their craft, the medieval university was fertile ground for innovation, inquiry, and the development of intellectual culture. It was, by far, the dominant institution of intellectual life in Christendom:

[a]s all priestly power had its visible head and source in the city of the Seven Hills, as all secular authority was ultimately held of the Holy Roman Empire, so could all the streams of knowledge by which the Universal Church was watered and fertilized, be ultimately traced as to their fountain-head to the great universities, especially to the University of Paris.²³

The University of Toulouse

Little is known about Vincent's early life and perhaps even less about his early education, but a rough sketch is possible nonetheless. In 1594, at around age fourteen, Vincent was sent to Dax to study at the College des Cordeliers. Here he learned to master Latin sufficiently enough to secure the patronage of Monsieur de Comet, receive minor orders, and eventually begin his theological studies at the University of Toulouse in 1597.²⁴ The school in Dax may have been under the direction of the Franciscan Friars Minor.²⁵ It is reasonable to assume that Vincent achieved sufficient mastery of the 'seven arts,' the traditional preparatory curriculum for admittance to a school of theology: the *trivium*, which consisted of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic; and the *quadrivium*, which consisted of music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy.²⁶ At the center of his preparatory education for the higher study of theology was dialectic or logic.

²³ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁴ Sullivan, "The Core Values," 17.

²⁵ Coste, *Life and Works*, 1:13.

²⁶ Rashdall, *Universities*, 35.

Vincent, like many other young men of his time, might have carried on his theological studies without leaving his own native place, but he was ambitious to acquire knowledge and realized that, under the guidance of the learned and experienced masters of some famous University, his progress would be more rapid; he also knew that University degrees would give him a right to apply for certain ecclesiastical dignities, and furthermore, by making the acquisition of a benefice more easy, put him more quickly in a position in which he need not worry about the future.²⁷

Regardless of the motivations his biographers ascribe to him, Vincent chose to study at the University of Toulouse rather than Bordeaux, most likely because Toulouse had a faculty that taught theology. It was one of a dozen universities in Europe that housed some of the brightest minds in all medieval Christendom.

Gregory IX founded the University of Toulouse in 1229, not long after the University of Paris; however, it never enjoyed the same academic reputation. Not even a Papal Bull issued in 1233, declaring that anyone admitted to mastership at the younger universities should be freely allowed to teach at the older institutions, could diminish the exclusivity so deeply embedded in the reputations of Paris and Bologna.²⁸ Although Toulouse did enjoy its standing as one of Europe's great medieval universities, it was never viewed in the same way as Oxford, Paris, or Bologna, the three premiere universities in Europe. Nonetheless, it still earned a significant reputation as an established institution of higher learning.

The University of Toulouse clearly exemplified all three characteristics of a university. As Coste describes, thousands of students from all parts of France and even other countries came to study there. There were seven chairs in the Faculty of Theology, three of royal foundation and the remaining four held by Carmelite, Dominican, Augustinian, and Bernardine Fathers. The students at Toulouse were grouped according to their native provinces and native dialects, which often exacerbated simmering tensions and frequently broke into violent conflict. University life was not always a peaceful, nonviolent, engagement of ideas, cultures, or worldviews.²⁹

Mastery of the *Trivium* was essential for the study of theology, but dialectic or logic was considered "the heart and centre" of right comprehension.³⁰ Higher order thought, it was believed, required an ability to apply, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate knowledge, with a certain facility in the precise use of language, the capacity to draw clear distinctions, the consistency of thought to synthesize positions from different theorists

²⁷ Coste, *Life and Works*, 1:16.

²⁸ Rashdall, *Universities*, 8-9.

²⁹ Coste, *Life and Works*, 1:16-17.

³⁰ Rashdall, *Universities*, 37.



A plaque that commemorates Vincent de Paul's time spent as a student in Dax.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



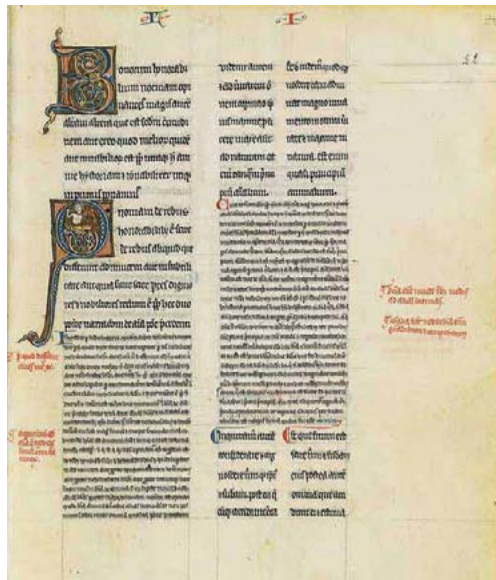
in drastically different contexts, and the ability to evaluate the merit of a position based on its consequences. Vincent spent seven years (1597-1604) between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three at the University of Toulouse developing, cultivating, refining, and honing the skills of higher order thinking. By the time he left, he was well schooled and well versed in the broad evolution of Western Theological thought. By the age of twenty-three, Vincent was no longer “an ignorant peasant” by any stretch of the imagination. He had been blessed with an educational opportunity that few in his time, or few in any time really, ever have. He grew in awareness of the evolution of human thought, the evolution of Church doctrine, and, more importantly, he cultivated the intellectual skills necessary to address pressing social challenges.

Scholastic Theology

While there may not be any extant records of Vincent's exact curriculum or a detailed account of the pedagogy he experienced, it is reasonable to assume that the theology and the pedagogy at Toulouse was predominantly, if not exclusively, scholastic. According to Pujo, Vincent's theology courses were taught by Dominicans and their “beautiful church stood at the very center of the university.”³¹ Even today, the reliquary of St. Thomas Aquinas, the intellectual giant of medieval Theology and Doctor of the Church, looms large in Toulouse. It is reasonable to assume Vincent's education was in the scholastic tradition because he himself explicitly references the scholastic method for the formation of confreres on occasion and holds it in high regard.³² For him, it was a necessary part of the formation of priests and the mission of the Church.

³¹ Pujo, *The Trailblazer*, 21.

³² In Letter 747, “To Lambert Aux Couteaux in Riechellieu,” 18 April 1645, *CCD*, 2:564, Vincent describes the death of a student confrere as “leaving scholastic theology to go learn celestial theology.” In Letter 2942, “To Jacques Pesnelle, Superior, in Genoa,” 15 August 1659, *Ibid.*, 8:93, Vincent recommends that a class be deferred because the Jesuits were no longer teaching scholasticism and “it is likely you will have few students capable of learning it.”



Detail picturing Averroes from Raffaello Sanzio's fresco *The school of Athens*, c. 1509; and Averroes' commentary on *De Anima*.

Both Images are in the Public Domain



For some philosophers the term 'scholastic' is used with great contempt. In the broad arc of philosophical thought, the medieval period is seen by some as an "insignificant intermezzo" between the grandeur of Greco-Roman antiquity and the piercing insight of modernity. For critics, scholasticism is "busied with sterile subtleties, written in bad Latin, and above all subservient to Roman Catholic theology."³³ The famous philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel said he would "put on seven-league boots" to skip right over the thousand years between the sixth and seventeenth centuries and arrive at René Descartes, crying "land like the sailor."³⁴ In the critic's estimation, scholasticism was weak philosophy built on dry syllogisms and held captive by the tyranny of dogmatic superstition.

Criticisms of scholasticism have been significant and remain worthy of careful consideration. In reaction to the dominance of scholasticism, the rise of humanism in the sixteenth century may well have been because "the world was sick of syllogisms."³⁵ Despite these criticisms and its ultimate demise as a method for Catholic theology, the scholastic spirit of inquiry, if not the system itself, has rightly been cherished for its contribution to the development of Catholic doctrine. There is little doubt that scholasticism greatly influenced the development of Catholic theology and that Catholic theologians regard Thomas Aquinas as a prominent scholastic thinker.³⁶ The scholastic imprint on Catholic theology and the Catholic moral imagination is considerable, and Vincent was a student of it.

Scholastic theology sought to harmonize the doctrinal traditions, the deposit of faith, inherited from the early church Fathers with the great intellectual achievements of classical

³³ "Scholasticism," in the *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* (Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2014). See: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Scholasticism>

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Rashdall, *Universities*, 70.

³⁶ See "Aeterni Patris: Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the Restoration of Christian Philosophy," St. Peter's, Rome, 4 August 1879. Online at: http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris.html



Engraved portrait of Moses Maimonides (1135-1204).

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antiquity, most notably philosophy. For centuries, Neoplatonism had been the dominant philosophical influence on Catholic theology, most notably in the thought of Augustine of Hippo. It was not until the complete works of Aristotle had been recovered, imported from Muslim culture and translated into Latin from Arabic, that a new way of practicing philosophy emerged.³⁷ Hence, an “entirely new intellectual influence was introduced into the schools of the West.”³⁸ With the full complement of Aristotle’s thought emerging in Latin, both theology and philosophy were irrevocably changed as a result. Hellenic influence had been deeply absorbed into Arabic science and philosophy, and the School of Bagdad flourished in the ninth century as institutions of higher learning were falling into decay in the Christian West. Aristotle had been brought to Muslim Spain and from Muslim Spain to the rest of Europe. The re-introduction of Aristotle’s thought “revolutionized the intellectual life of Christendom far more completely than he had revolutionized the intellectual life of Islam.”³⁹

The transmission of Greco-Arabic philosophy from Islam to Christian philosophy and theology in the Western Church was enhanced considerably by Jewish thought.⁴⁰ Writing in Arabic, thinkers like Moses Maimonides, a Jewish physician in Cairo, and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), a physician and lawyer from Cordoba, had created a systematic approach for philosophical inquiry. They developed a number of commentaries on Aristotle’s writings,

³⁷ See Paul Vincent Spade, Gyula Klima, Jack Zupko, and Thomas Williams, “Medieval Philosophy,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta (Spring 2013). Online at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/medieval-philosophy/>

³⁸ Rashdall, *Universities*, 350.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 351.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 352.

which shaped some of the most important philosophical debates in following centuries.⁴¹ When these texts were translated into Latin, Western theologians began to rediscover the breadth and depth of their culture's Greco-Roman heritage.

The Scholastics of the thirteenth century faced a daunting challenge. The Latin they spoke did not have the same categories and concepts as the Arabic of Maimonides and Ibn Rushd. As a result, they had to create or re-interpret their own conceptual categories to accommodate Aristotle's highly technical and precise language. They accomplished the difficult task of translation in an honest and humble way, by translating Aristotle's phrases literally. The result was a form of Latin that was neither elegant nor poetic, but one that was rigorous and logically consistent.⁴²

The linguistic and conceptual synthesis that began with the translation of Aristotle into Latin was coupled with the open, evolving, and critical mindset of scholastic inquiry, as illustrated by three thinkers in particular: Peter Abelard (1079–1142), Peter Lombard (1096–1164), and Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274). Each one spent considerable time at the University of Paris, which functioned as an epicenter of theological inquiry for centuries. Because Vincent de Paul's Bachelor's degree in Theology from the University of Toulouse gave him permission to teach the second book of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, it is important to contextualize Lombard's contribution within the broader evolution of scholastic inquiry.

Peter Abelard, *Sic et Non*

The scholastics believed that different, even contradictory positions on a given topic were nothing to be feared, dismissed, or destroyed. Rather, difference of perspective was something to be respected, examined carefully and, when possible, reconciled. The scholastic intuition held that there was always the possibility that some underlying, unifying truth may be uncovered. The scholastic mind sought a greater whole, a grand unity of Being.

In the prologue to *Sic et Non*, Peter Abelard explains that the goal of his approach to theology is to analyze and synthesize what appears to be incompatible or contradictory on the surface in order to discover an underlying unity. "[W]hen, in such a quantity of words, some of the writings of the saints seem not only to differ from, but even to contradict, each other, one should not rashly pass judgment concerning those by whom the world itself is to be judged."⁴³ If there appears to be a contradiction within the tradition, it is only because of one's "weakness in mind" rather than in the saints' lack of felicity in writing. For Abelard, the apparent inconsistencies within his tradition were to be found in truncated habits of mind, not something inherent in Being itself. Abelard sought out difference and distinction because it held within it the possibility of discovering a greater truth, a greater insight into Being.

⁴¹ Marrone, "Medieval philosophy," 21.

⁴² William Turner, "Scholasticism," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 13 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912). Available at: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13548a.htm>

⁴³ "Peter Abelard (1079-1142): Prologue to *Sic et Non*," in *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, Fordham University, trans. by W.J. Lewis from the Latin text in the critical edition of *Sic et Non*, ed. by Blanche B. Boyer and Richard McKeon (University of Chicago Press, 1976); available at: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/Abelard-SicetNon-Prologue.asp>



Les Amours d'Héloïse et d'Abelard.

Oil on canvas, by Jean Vignaud, c. 1819.

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To arrive at a position that retains the yes (sic) *and* the no (non), it is critical for the scholastic thinker to note carefully that words have different meanings in different contexts. As Abelard writes:

[i]t is a noteworthy quality to love the truth in the words, not the words themselves. For what use is a golden key if it cannot unlock what we desire? And what is wrong with a wooden key, if it can unlock what we desire, when we wish nothing but to open what is closed?⁴⁴

The meaning of the text, according to Abelard, is to point to something that *transcends* the text, to the truth that is sought by the one who seeks, the inquirer. In this way, the scholastic thinker would have been quite at home with the Buddhist adage about not mistaking the pointing finger for the moon, the thing itself with the signifier.

Abelard believed that the various positions of the saints must be engaged *charitably*, that is, accurately and fairly in a spirit of exploration, discovery, and favorable interpretation, especially when a certain position appears to contradict another position that is also held to be true. Scholastic thinkers must take great care to ensure there are not false attributions of authorship or corruptions in the text that might explain contradiction. Unsurprisingly, Abelard had a deep appreciation for the challenges of translation. By following the rigors of logic and careful analysis, he did not seek to disprove, discredit, or draw a perfect line around orthodoxy. To the contrary, he sought to engage the apparent conflicts and inconsistencies that had naturally evolved over centuries within the multivalent Christian tradition in a spirit of humble and charitable inquiry.

Ironically, the great care he took to examine positions charitably was interpreted,

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, section 18-43.

most uncharitably, as a failure to embrace orthodoxy. He was accused of contradicting orthodoxy and having an excessive laxity with regard to heresy. As a result, his work was included on the forbidden books list, and his influence on theology was always tinged with suspicions of heresy.⁴⁵ Ironically, it was Abelard's interest in the synthesis and development of doctrine that positioned the scholastic movement as a precursor to the university. As Rashdall describes, Abelard "inaugurated the intellectual movement out of which they [medieval universities] sprang," a method that was transferred from philosophy to theology and to the whole cycle of medieval studies.⁴⁶ With Abelard, the "desire to apply the tools of reason, honed by dialectic, extended to every area of learning" and "the methodical study of religious belief took flight."⁴⁷

As Richard Rohr, O.F.M., a contemporary commentator on the history of spirituality observes, Abelard was a model for the humble pursuit of wisdom. In *Dialogus inter Philosophum, Judaeum et Christianum*, Abelard used Luke 2:46 to describe the way that Jesus, symbol of all wisdom and truth, sat among the teachers in the temple listening to them and asking them questions; "If Jesus can listen and ask questions," Abélard writes, "who are we to think we are better than him?"⁴⁸

Peter Lombard, *Sentences*

Vincent's degree from the University of Toulouse allowed him to teach and lecture on the Second book of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, the standard theological text of the time.⁴⁹ *Sentences* is best viewed as a theological casebook intended for training experts in a wide range of ecclesial and secular professions. These included academic theologian, pastor, abbot, presiding officer of a community, episcopal or papal official, bishop, Pope, or even being in an advisory capacity for the assistance of secular rulers.⁵⁰ Lombard was a colleague of Peter Abelard's, but it is "little more than accident that the odour of heresy still cleaves to the name of Abelard." Meanwhile Lombard went on to become Bishop of Paris, was consulted by a Pope on a theological question, and authored the text that became the standard theological manual for centuries to come.⁵¹

⁴⁵ According to Rashdall, the reason three of Abelard's positions were condemned was not because of "this or that particular error, but the whole tone, spirit, and method of his theological teaching." See Rashdall, *Universities*, p. 57, fn. 2. Even though many of his positions had been accepted as orthodox, later appearing in Lombard's *Sentences*, the standard medieval textbook of theology, and Aquinas' *Summa*, his bold attempt to explain the mystery of the Trinity and to put it into a coherent system was considered supremely arrogant (fn. 3). During the proceedings, as Rashdall describes, "an intolerant ecclesiastical imbecility" prevented ecclesial authorities from understanding his positions, which stifled theological inquiry (p. 58). Peter Lombard escaped this same scrutiny because his project was to distil doctrine, not to synthesize or develop it.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴⁷ Marrone, "Medieval philosophy," 24.

⁴⁸ Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation, "Yes, And," Monday, 6 January 2014; available at: <http://myemail.constantcontact.com/Richard-Rohr-s-Meditation--Listening-and-Asking.html?soid=1103098668616&aid=wptHOk6bNS4>

⁴⁹ Pujo, *The Trailblazer*, p. 21, fn. 23.

⁵⁰ Peter Lombard, Book 2 "On Creation," in *The Sentences*, trans. by Giulio Silano (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2008), vii.

⁵¹ Rashdall, *Universities*, 58.



Chapel of the Sorbonne, detail of the façade, Paris, France.

Left, a statue of Thomas Aquinas. Right, a statue of Peter Lombard.

In the middle, two muses support a clock and the coat of arms of Cardinal Richelieu.

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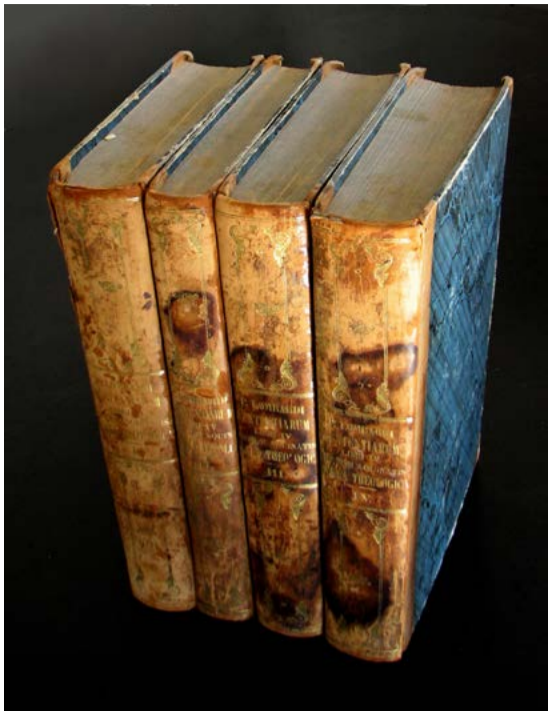


Although Lombard had adopted Abelard's dialectical method, his thought was viewed in a very different light. Abelard's works were included in the Index of Forbidden Books for a long period because he appeared to leave questions of doctrine open for discussion,⁵² implying that doctrine is not fixed, static, or immutable but that it develops over time. He was a precursor to the historical consciousness that is presumed in Catholic theology today. Where Abelard may have been viewed as an agitator or a gadfly for his doctrinal inconsistencies, Lombard was viewed as a great harmonizer, a great synthesizer. For this reason, nearly every theologian in the Middle Ages wrote a commentary on the *Sentences*, including St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas himself.⁵³

Taken as a whole, Peter Lombard's *Libri Quattuor Sententiarum* (the Four Books of the Sentences) describes a comprehensive, systematic theology that synthesizes Church doctrine in a framework wherein all of creation emanates from God (*exitus*) and returns to God (*et reditus*) through revelation, principally in Jesus Christ. The very structure of the *Libri Quattuor Sententiarum* makes the *exitus et reditus* framework explicit: on the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead (Book I), on the emanation of God's creative activity (Book II), on the incarnation of the Word in Jesus Christ (Book III), and on the meaning of signs as a return to God (Book IV). It is not clear why Vincent de Paul's studies focused on Book II. It seems unlikely that Vincent would have had the same freedoms university students enjoy today in choosing an area of focus, especially given his status pre-ordination and during ordination, which occurred half way through his theological studies, in 1600. It also may have been that the Doctors at Toulouse only had expertise in Book II of *Sentences*, that the experts on the other Books were unavailable, or that Book II was an established course of study for a diocesan priest. It is similarly possible, however, that Book II captured Vincent's imagination in a way that the other Books did not, and he chose to study it rather than the others.

⁵² See "Prologue to *Sic et Non*," *Medieval Sourcebook*.

⁵³ Lombard, "On Creation," vii.



1841 Latin editions of *Sententiarum libri quatuor* by Peter Lombard, and *Summa theologia* by Thomas Aquinas.

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Regardless of the reasons why Vincent's studies focused on Book II, it is clear that Vincent's degree allowed him to expound on it. In the context of the broader *Libri Quattuor Sententiarum* corpus, Book II frames the human predicament and the fall of man within the Catholic understanding of Christian revelation. Put differently, the human longing for meaning, for freedom, for happiness, for the vision of the gospel promise unfolds within an ecology of Creation. With permission to expound on Book II, Vincent would have been able to demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of the Catholic worldview in its entirety. He had a sense of the whole.

As Pujo explains, Vincent's degree gave him permission to apply for a position as a "sententiary bachelor," an assistant to a master, which allowed him to comment freely on Book II of the *Sentences*.⁵⁴ Becoming a bachelor in theology was much like becoming a knight; the solemn reception of the novice into the brotherhood of arms came through the touch of the veteran's sword after numerous demonstrations of knightly skill and virtue.⁵⁵ In guilds of scholars and teachers, the aspiring bachelor honed and refined his intellectual skills in the pursuit of truth until the veteran master deemed the candidate fit to engage in public dispute and public exploration. It usually took five to six years to become a bachelor and eight years to become a master-doctor-professor.⁵⁶ It is consistent with medieval practice that Vincent spent seven years at Toulouse to obtain a bachelor's degree in theology after his preparatory studies in Dax.

In schools of theology, there were three distinct degrees of bachelorship: *cursor*, *sententiarius*, and *baccalarius formatus*.⁵⁷ Bachelorhood marked a significant, explicit, and public transition from lower order thinking (comprehension) to higher order thinking

⁵⁴ Pujo, *The Trailblazer*, 21.

⁵⁵ Rashdall, *Universities*, 287.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 471-472. The titles master, doctor, and professor were absolutely synonymous in the Middle Ages. *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, beginning at p. 477.

(application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation). Progress toward any of the bachelor degrees was divided into two distinct periods. As an *auditor* the student took careful dictation and copious notes from master lecturers on the Bible and then the *Sentences*. After a board of examiners determined that the candidate had completed the residency requirement, attended lectures, and had suitable knowledge of the contents of the books, the candidate would be made a bachelor at the *cursor* level.⁵⁸ Although ordinary lectures were reserved to doctors, a student-scholar who was of a certain standing, as determined by a rector, could deliver “extraordinary lectures” on limited texts.⁵⁹ By the sixteenth century, the doctors of theology were mere dignitaries, officiating at disputations, examinations, and other faculty meetings, while “the only real teachers were the bachelors.”⁶⁰ Given his status as a sententiary bachelor, it appears that Vincent may have begun to pursue a professorship.⁶¹ The highest level, *baccalarius formatus*, was the final stage before becoming a master-doctor-professor. Judging from modern educational sensibilities, a *cursor* could be considered equivalent to an associate’s degree, a *sententarius* similar to a bachelor’s degree, and a *baccalarius formatus* similar to a master’s degree.

The progress toward higher levels of bachelorhood was punctuated by significant moments of public debate, including *principium*, a public discourse on a difficult theological problem, a *tentative*, where the master assigned a question to be disputed, and a *collation* or conference. In the popular *Sorbinic*, bachelors engaged in a combative disputation requiring significant stamina,⁶² almost like gladiators in a Roman arena. The trial by ordeal that constituted university life consisted of examinations, lectures, and contentious public disputations, which were meant “to shut the door of the faculty to hopeless incapacity or gross ignorance.”⁶³ Degrees were earned, not casually conferred. While Vincent developed considerable skills in public disputation during his time at Toulouse, skills that served him well later in life, one can understand why he may have had little interest in pursuing a professorship. Especially after the Foleville experience of 1625, the self-described “ignorant peasant” and “scholar of the fourth form” may have sought to avoid the very public, very argumentative disputations that were the foundation of university life — practices that did little for the rural poor in his estimation.

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*

While Vincent’s degree gave him permission to teach Book II of Lombard’s *Sentences*, he also appears to have had a relatively sophisticated knowledge of the thought of

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 450-455.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 473.

⁶¹ Pujo, *The Trailblazer*, 21.

⁶² Rashdall, *Universities*, 474-479.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 483.

Thomas Aquinas.⁶⁴ As is well known, Father Andre Duval, a professor of the Sorbonne, was a counselor to and significant influence on Vincent de Paul. Duval is credited with introducing Vincent to the ideas of Benet of Canfield, especially his notion of Providence.⁶⁵ Duval was a devoted student of the thought of Thomas Aquinas who was viewed as a necessary foundation for refuting heresy and reviving Catholicism. Duval's devotion to Aquinas likely developed in the Catholic intellectual milieu at the University of Paris, and subsequently influenced the worldview of Vincent de Paul as well.⁶⁶ Like the theologians at the Council of Trent who turned to the well-developed sacramental theology of the medieval Scholastics,⁶⁷ Duval believed that the approach of Thomas Aquinas was foundational for the intellectual life of the Catholic Church. Centuries later, Pope Leo XIII concurred:

But the chief and special glory of Thomas, one which he has shared with none of the Catholic Doctors, is that the Fathers of Trent made it part of the order of conclave to lay upon the altar, together with sacred Scripture and the decrees of the supreme Pontiffs, the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas, whence to seek counsel, reason, and inspiration.⁶⁸

The achievement of Trent from 1545-1563 is unique in Church history because no council "has ever had to accomplish its task under more serious difficulties, none has had so many questions of the greatest importance to decide."⁶⁹ The Tridentine reforms emerged from a Catholic intellectual tradition that had evolved over centuries. Vincent de Paul was thirty-three years old when the Assembly of the Clergy endorsed the Tridentine reforms in 1614. It is reasonable to assume Vincent would have been quite familiar not only with the Tridentine Profession of Faith, as a body of doctrine, but also with the systematic theology that justified it and, more importantly, with the method of scholastic inquiry that made it possible.

Scholastic mindset and method

That which was implicit and emerging in the thought of Peter Abelard and Peter Lombard was explicit in the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas. The structure of the

⁶⁴ See, e.g., the reference to Thomas Aquinas in Document 110, "Study of the Vows Taken in the Congregation of the Mission and of the Privilege of Exemption," between 1653-1655, *CCD*, 13a:403.

⁶⁵ Hugh F. O'Donnell, C.M., "Vincent de Paul: His Life and Way" in *Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac: Rules, Conferences, and Writings*, ed. by Frances Ryan, D.C., and John E. Rybolt, C.M. (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 16.

⁶⁶ See Tim Williams, C.M., "Many Strokes of the Lash: André Duval," *Vincentian Heritage* 28:1 (2008), pp. 21-32. Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol28/iss1/2>

⁶⁷ John W. O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council*, Sew edition (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 2012), 119.

⁶⁸ Section 22, "Aeterni Patris."

⁶⁹ Johann Peter Kirsch, "Council of Trent," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 15 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912). See: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15030c.htm>



The Council of Trent. Painting by Elia Naurizio, c. 1633.

Museo Diocesano Tridentino, Palazzo Pretorio.

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Summa itself reflects the method of scholastic inquiry itself: the profound interchange between question, assumption, and judgment, its approach to different perspectives, and its movement toward wholeness. “At the heart of it all,” writes Steven Marrone, “stood logic,” which had become a new paradigm for investigation and summary in all fields during the scholastic period.⁷⁰ The scholastic classroom was a laboratory for the *Trivium*: careful reading (grammar) and literal exposition (rhetoric) of the fundamental texts on a subject would develop into a structured system of question and answer (dialectic or logic), called a *disputatio*. Students would develop and exercise their intellectual skills in debate and carefully analyze the positions of authorities, advancing toward greater comprehensiveness, clarity of thought, and capacity for synthesis. The *Sentences* served as a collection of debating points, touching on all the significant aspects of a subject.

The Medieval *disputatio* was like a riverbed that controlled the flow of theological insight.⁷¹ Although debate and argumentation are “as ancient as civilization itself,” part of the fabric of the human mind,⁷² their function in the twelfth-century renaissance is unique. Anselm of Bec (1033–1109), best known for his ontological proofs of the existence of God, was the first to pioneer the use of dialogue and disputation that eventually gave rise to a

⁷⁰ Marrone, “Medieval philosophy,” 28.

⁷¹ In “The Future of Thomism,” Jesuit philosopher Bernard Lonergan describes the need for a common method in light of the vast expanse of human knowledge that continues to grow exponentially. His analysis of method in modern theology mirrors the function of scholasticism for the medieval mind. “When the natural and the human sciences are on the move, when the social order is developing, when the everyday dimensions of culture are changing, what is needed is not a dam to block the stream but control of the river-bed through which the stream must flow. In modern science, what is fixed is not the theory or system but the method that keeps generating, improving, [and] replacing theories and systems.” This selection comes from Bernard Lonergan, William F.J. Ryan, and Bernard J. Tyrrell, *A Second Collection* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), as quoted in Elizabeth A. Morelli, and Mark D. Morelli, eds., *The Lonergan Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 406-407.

⁷² Alex J. Novikoff, “Toward a Cultural History of Scholastic Disputation,” *American Historical Review* 117:2 (April 2012): 331-364.

culture of disputation. In the course of open dialogue, Anselm would share an insight he had gleaned from meditation. His brothers asked him to express himself in plain language with intelligible arguments and *simplicique disputatione* (simple disputation) so they could engage his thought.⁷³ Vincent's commitment to the virtue of simplicity mirrors the basic conditions that underlie scholastic disputation; one must speak the truth as one sees it (or as it is presented by another) and follow "the little method" for preaching that clearly presents motives, definitions, and a means for putting into practice. Simplicity requires an openness that does not hide what might appear to be contradictory or even embarrassing.⁷⁴ The spirit of critical inquiry and critical engagement in the medieval *disputatio* was so successful as a method of theological inquiry that it was adopted in Italy and northern France. Thus, after Anselm, it became central to the new intellectual milieu of scholasticism and it was adopted by theologians, scientists, and lawyers alike.⁷⁵

As the popularity and sophistication of the scholastic method evolved, the question-and-answer format of the *questiones disputatae* (disputed question) became an important tool for harmonizing conflicting interpretation in legal disputes.⁷⁶ Prior to his death in 1197, Peter the Chanter of Notre Dame had come to understand that the master theologian was like an architect: careful reading provided the basement, disputation the structural walls, and preaching the roof. He encouraged his fellow theologians to avoid useless questioning (*inutilitate questionum*) and altercations and to seek out more productive conversations (*collations*) which proceed as a common inquiry after truth.⁷⁷

The disputation was absorbed into the curriculum of the medieval university, and it was in this context that the University of Paris grew. In the statutes of 1215, the corporation of masters and students (*universitas magistrorum et scholarium*) laid down the structure of a university education and the *disputatio* became an essential ingredient in the basic organization of academic learning.⁷⁸ The *disputatio ordinaria* was scheduled at regular intervals with topics determined well in advance, so that the *opponens* bachelor would make counter-arguments against a thesis and the *respondens* would attempt to address them. The master would typically give a summing-up, or *determinatio*, at the end. With Thomas Aquinas a new form of disputation emerged, the *disputatio de quolibet*, wherein the master would address questions *de quolibet* ("about anything at all"), rather than on predetermined topics.⁷⁹

The text of the *Summa Theologiae* is a written testament to the profound achievement of scholastic inquiry and to the scholastic mindset. Under the guidance of the master,

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 337.

⁷⁴ Robert P. Maloney, C.M., *The Way of Vincent de Paul : A Contemporary Spirituality in the Service of the Poor* (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1992), 38-39. Available at: http://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/1

⁷⁵ Novikoff, "Cultural History," 341.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 344.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 349.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 352.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 353.

students would take positions that supported or refuted a particular position until the master made a determination having carefully weighed the evidence on both sides. The search for truth embedded in the question itself was joined with a definitive judgment based on a transparent consideration of evidence and consistency of thought. As such, the interplay between question-position-judgment formed the structure of an integrated and dynamic search. The *Summa* put this method on full display.

The disputation was a movement *kata holos* (“toward wholeness”), a kind of emergent catholicity.⁸⁰ Not only would a single question in the *Summa* be a movement toward wholeness by integrating the truths of different positions, but also the entire work itself is a movement toward a synthesis of perspectives in the “exit” and “return” flow of Christian cosmology. For the scholastic mind, the emergent catholicity within the *Summa* itself reflected the very nature of God in the great chain of Being:

For He brought things into being in order that His goodness might be communicated to creatures, and be represented by them; and because His goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, He produced many and diverse creatures, that what was wanting to one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another. For goodness, which in God is simple and uniform, in creatures is manifold and divided and hence the whole universe together participates the divine goodness more perfectly, and represents it better than any single creature whatever.⁸¹

Vincent, the Scholastic Master

In a Council with the Daughters of Charity dated 29 February 1658, Vincent’s mastery of and respect for the scholastic method is clear. Vincent had assembled M. Portail, Jeanne Delacrou, Geneviève Poisson, and Madeleine Menage, three Sister officers in the Daughters of Charity chosen on 22 May 1657.⁸² They had the unenviable task of considering whether to dismiss a young woman from Troyes from the Daughters of Charity. By carefully weighing the arguments for and against, the Council eventually decided to dismiss her because, as Vincent noted, the Companies can only keep those who have a vocation, otherwise the Companies could not subsist. What is remarkable is not the unfortunate but necessary decision to dismiss the young woman, but the way the Council arrived at the decision. It was a *collatio*, a common inquiry in pursuit of truth.

⁸⁰ In *Where is Knowing Going*, John Haughey describes the etymology of *katholikos* (“catholicity” in English). The Greek *kata* (toward) and *holos* (wholeness) are the etymological foundations of the term ‘catholic,’ a word that has been used in various contexts by theologians such as Justin Martyr (d. AD 165), Tertullian (d. AD 222), Cyril of Jerusalem (d. AD 386), and Augustine (d. AD 430). As Haughey describes, an emergent catholicity is one that seeks to discover greater unity, greater connectedness between positions and perspectives. For more, see John C. Haughey, *Where Is Knowing Going? The Horizons of the Knowing Subject* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 40-59.

⁸¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, “Article 1. Whether the multitude and distinction of things come from God?”, Question 47. The distinction of things in general, in *Summa Theologiae*; available at *New Advent*: <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1047.htm>

⁸² Document 179, “Council of February 29, 1658,” *CCD*, 13b:359-363.

Vincent asked each of the Sisters their opinion of the young woman's vocation. One of the Sisters, who had never been called to Council before, claimed "I'm not able to make a judgment on this, Monsieur; that's for Your Charity to decide." Vincent responded pointedly, "Perhaps, Sister, you'll feel more at ease after hearing what the others have to say; and, when you've heard them, you must give your own opinion freely, saying 'For the reasons stated, I think such and such,' or you may present other reasons if they occur to you, such as, 'she's not suitable,' or 'she'll do well if she stays.'"

Like the master of the scholastic classroom, Vincent demanded that *each* person state an opinion *and* a justification for their decision before he offered his. The Council proceeded from person to person until all positions and the reasons for those positions had been stated clearly. After each position had been detailed, Vincent concluded, "I agree with you, dear Sisters."

While this particular Council is not an examination of a theological topic, as are many of the other conferences, it illustrates the extent to which Vincent de Paul had mastered the Scholastic *collatio*, even as a form of decision-making. By method, the Council is a performance of the very structure of the *Summa* itself: a question is posed, members state their response in clear and simple terms including their justifications ("it appears that..."), and the master concludes with his own judgment ("I agree with...") based on explicit values (in this case, the necessity of an authentic vocation). Vincent does not merely declare his position at the beginning nor does he let any of the Sisters defer to his position of authority as a way to avoid making their own judgment. While Vincent's firm belief in Providence was an organizing principle for his management style, the scholastic *collatio* gave it form like the control of the riverbed, or the walls of a building.

Vincent de Paul was considered a formidable theologian in his lifetime. Unfortunately, historians overlook his contribution to the Jansenist controversy in favor of the Jesuits. Although Vincent de Paul wrote many letters on Jansenism, only eighty-one are extant. Fifty-two of them were written during his tenure on the Council of Conscience, which helped solidify his reputation as a theologian.⁸³ Gabriel Gerberon, a Jansenist historian, said Vincent "was one of the most dangerous enemies that the disciples of Saint Augustine [the Jansenists] have ever encountered."⁸⁴ A theologian from the Sorbonne declared "just as God had raised up Saint Ignatius against Luther and Calvin, so did he raise up Monsieur Vincent against Jansenism."⁸⁵ And as the Abbé Bremond described:

Although the Jansenists generally considered [Vincent de Paul] inept, he was not less intellectual than the great Arnauld; less bookish certainly... but more

⁸³ Bernard J. McCoy, "St. Vincent de Paul's Letters on Jansenism," *The Catholic Historical Review* 27:4 (Jan. 1942): 442-449. Published by Catholic University of America Press: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25014077>

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

serious, keener, more large-minded and elevated... His letters against Arnauld's *Frequente Communion* are evidence of this. Volumes have been written on the subject, but Vincent de Paul... says everything with a vigorous logic, clear-sightedness, and irony, that are quite remarkable.⁸⁶

Vincent had clearly mastered the *disputatio* and had a comprehensive knowledge of Catholic doctrine. One can imagine Vincent in the discourses of the Council of Conscience, carefully weighing Arnauld's arguments and addressing them point-by-point in an unassuming manner that highlighted precisely where they deviated from Catholic orthodoxy.

While the concerns and theological questions that animated the Jansenist controversy have long since passed, Vincent's participation in them reveals a cautious, reasoned mind operating in a mission-centered horizon. First, it is most remarkable to note that Vincent de Paul maintained a friendship with the Abbé de Saint-Cyran, leader of the Jansenist movement in France until his death in 1643.⁸⁷ Vincent's desire for papal condemnation of Jansenist positions did not come at the expense of his friendship with the Abbé. Perhaps Vincent's experience at Toulouse taught him that one must separate the dignity of the person from the truth of the positions they held. Perhaps he wanted to avoid the kind of public altercations that erupted into violence and bloodshed in his time as a student at Toulouse, but instead engage in disputations in a way that did not tear at the social fabric. Considering today's polarized political discourse, one can hardly imagine a friendship between public figures who hold very different opinions on serious matters.

The scholastic disputation that had been developed by Abelard, Lombard, Peter the Chanter, and Thomas Aquinas provided Vincent a systematic way to examine and explore the truth of a position without reverting to violent condemnation of the individual. However, make no mistake, Vincent found the Jansenist position erroneous and stated his position publicly.

At least one confrere, Jean Dehorgny, was sympathetic to the Jansenist arguments concerning the frequency of receiving the Eucharist. Dehorgny was a notable figure in the Congregation of the Mission, having held a number of leadership positions, including superior in a house in Rome and assistant to the Superior General among others.⁸⁸ It seemed reasonable to Dehorgny that the Eucharist, the heart of the Catholic liturgy, should not be received without appropriate penance and preparation. In a letter to Dehorgny dated 10 September 1648, Vincent carefully addressed the Jansenist arguments in a true spirit of brotherly disputation. Vincent acknowledged that certain persons in France and Italy may well benefit from Arnauld's recommendations to abstain from frequent communion without proper penance, but "there are at least ten thousand it has harmed, by causing them to

⁸⁶ As quoted in *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ For a brief summary of their long-standing friendship, see Pujo, *The Trailblazer*, 125-128.

⁸⁸ Cf. Letter 26, "To Pope Urban VIII," [June 1628], *CCD*, 1:39, fn. 6.

abstain from it altogether.”⁸⁹ Vincent offers a pastoral response, perhaps judging from his Foleville experience where he came to know first-hand the poor country folks who did not have regular access to a confessor, or one that knew the formula for absolution. Arnaud’s position would have only encouraged them to abstain from receiving the Eucharist through no fault of their own.

Vincent’s response to Dehorgny’s argument included careful, measured interpretation of the teachings of St. Charles Borromeo, Tertullian, and the early Church Fathers. Ultimately, Vincent concluded that Arnaud’s position is “to revive the ancient penitential practice as a requirement for being restored to God’s grace.” He believed the Jansenist heresy dismissed the development of doctrine that had occurred since the early Fathers, especially with the Thomistic synthesis of operative and co-operative grace. Vincent’s pastoral and theological responses demonstrate higher order theological thinking, the kind only a master can develop through years of disputation.

Conclusion

In contrast to the all-too-pervasive view that Vincent de Paul was ‘anti-intellectual,’ a careful analysis of Vincent’s educational achievement and intellectual formation demonstrates that he was not. Rather, he had developed a comprehensive understanding of Catholic theology, the capacity to engage viewpoints different from his own, and the kind of intellectual mastery required to articulate sophisticated concepts in ways that were understandable to people who did not have his educational background. He was not at all “an ignorant peasant,” but rather a very well educated man who used his considerable intellectual gifts to serve the poor in various ways throughout his life. In his time as a student at the University of Toulouse mastering the scholastic method, Vincent learned to engage the goodness that is “simple and uniform” in God but is “manifold and divided” in creation.

Vincent’s educational experience and mastery of the Catholic theological tradition, in dialogue with many others, was foundational for his life and works. While it is important to portray a more holistic and historically accurate view of Vincent de Paul as a well educated man, it is even more important to dispel the notion that he was ‘anti-intellectual,’ and to dispel that, by extension, Vincentian heritage does not have as much to offer the intellectual apostolate as other traditions. To the contrary, the legacy of Vincent offers three crucial insights for higher education. One, Vincent himself embodied the kind of intellectual hospitality that ought to make Catholic higher education distinctive.⁹⁰ Through

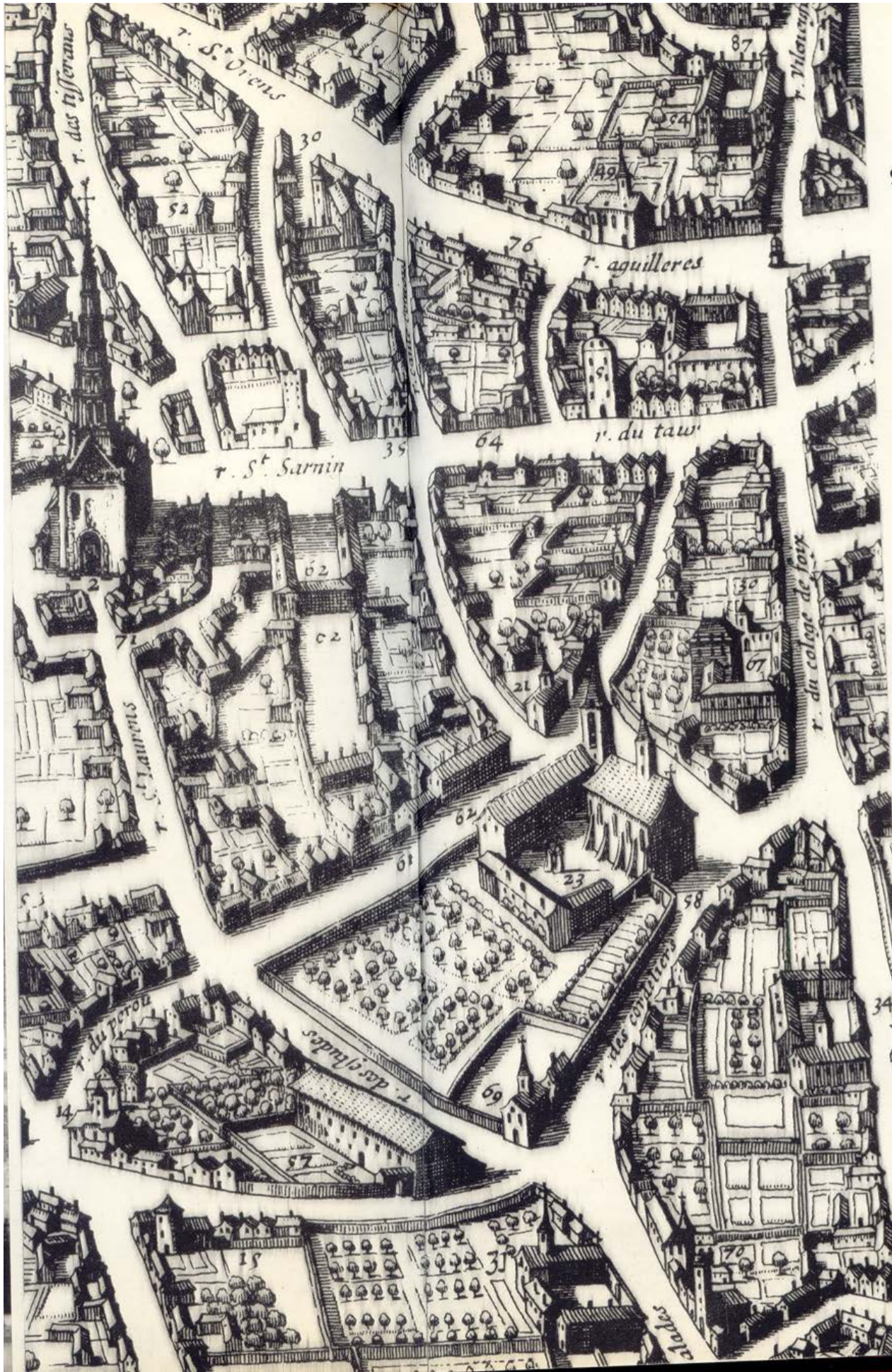
⁸⁹ Letter 1064, “To Jean Dehorgny, In Rome,” 10 September 1648, *Ibid.*, 3:358.

⁹⁰ For more on the theme of hospitality in Catholic higher education, see Haughey, *Where Is Knowing*; John B. Bennett, “The Academy and Hospitality,” *Cross Currents* 50:1-2 (Spring/Summer 2000), at: <http://www.crosscurrents.org/Bennett.htm>; John B. Bennett, “Hospitality and Collegial Community: An Essay,” *Innovative Higher Education* 25:2 (2000): 85-96, at: <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1007520705448>; Luke Bretherton, “Tolerance, Education and Hospitality: A Theological Proposal,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 17:1 (April 2004): 80-103, at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/095394680401700106>; and Aurelie A. Hagstrom, “The Role of Charism and Hospitality in the Academy,” *Integritas: Advancing the Mission of Catholic Higher Education* 1:1 (2013), at: <http://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/integritas/article/view/5318>

the ancient *Trivium*, Vincent learned to “listen to the text” carefully (grammar), to adopt the most charitable interpretation of the other’s position (rhetoric), and then, through careful reasoning, to seek an underlying truth that was not apparent on first reading (dialectic). Two, Vincent’s worldview gradually emerged *kata holos*, toward wholeness. This emerging holistic and integrated vision of creation inspired him to find the hidden truths of other perspectives. He was not threatened by otherness; rather he saw it as a potential source of Providence. Practically speaking, this commitment made him an exceptional facilitator of communal discourse in a time of great theological, political, and social strife. He valued humility, simplicity, meekness, mortification, and zeal not because they were pious virtues of his day, but because they were the conditions necessary for discovering the Divine hidden in ordinary life, particularly in the poor. Three, Vincent put his knowledge in motion. He was not satisfied with useless questioning (*inutilitate questionum*) or intellectual eccentricities, but instead he evaluated positions according to their ability to address the pressing issues of his time. He was a pragmatist, not an idealist. His arguments against Jansenism were not for the sake of developing a perfectly articulated theological doctrine, but that it had real consequence for the place of the uneducated poor in the Catholic Church.

While the modern mind may not share Vincent’s seventeenth-century French Catholic culture, the stilted approach of medieval scholasticism, or even ask the same questions he asked, it has much to learn from Vincent’s capacity to engage otherness in search of truth. Vincent is not just a model for charity, but also for the pursuit of truth. Viewing Vincent as “anti-intellectual,” an “ignorant peasant,” or a “scholar of the fourth form” are all misconceptions that draw attention away from his remarkable intellectual development and his legacy as a theologian, founder, reformer, and advocate for the poor.





Detail from a period map of the Collège de Foix, Toulouse, France.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





A plaque that commemorates Vincent de Paul's time spent as a student in Dax.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





Detail picturing Averroes from Raffaello Sanzio's fresco *The school of Athens*, c. 1509; and Averroes' commentary on *De Anima*.

Both Images are in the Public Domain





Engraved portrait of Moses Maimonides (1135-1204).

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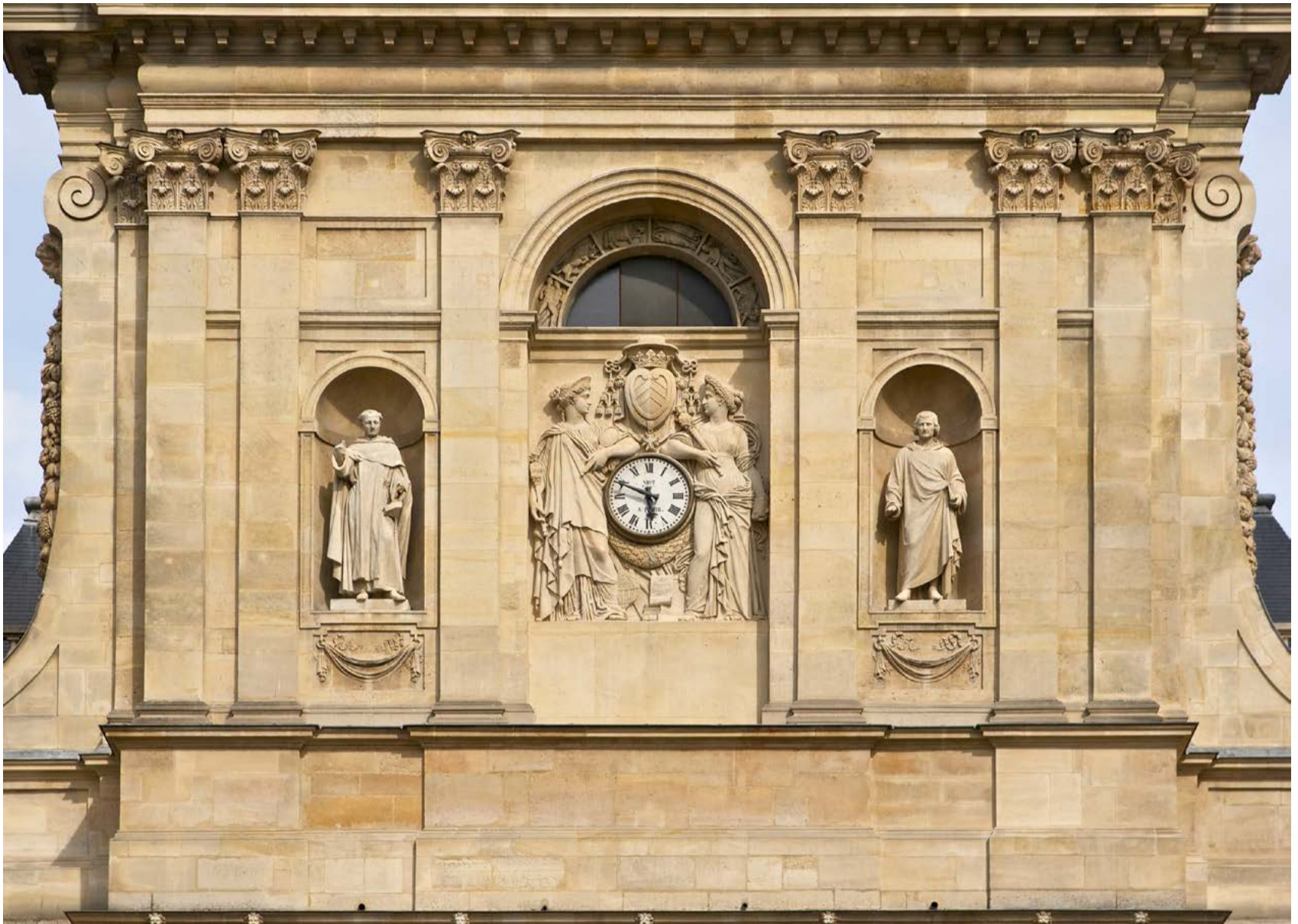


Les Amours d'Héloïse et d'Abailard.

Oil on canvas, by Jean Vignaud, c. 1819.

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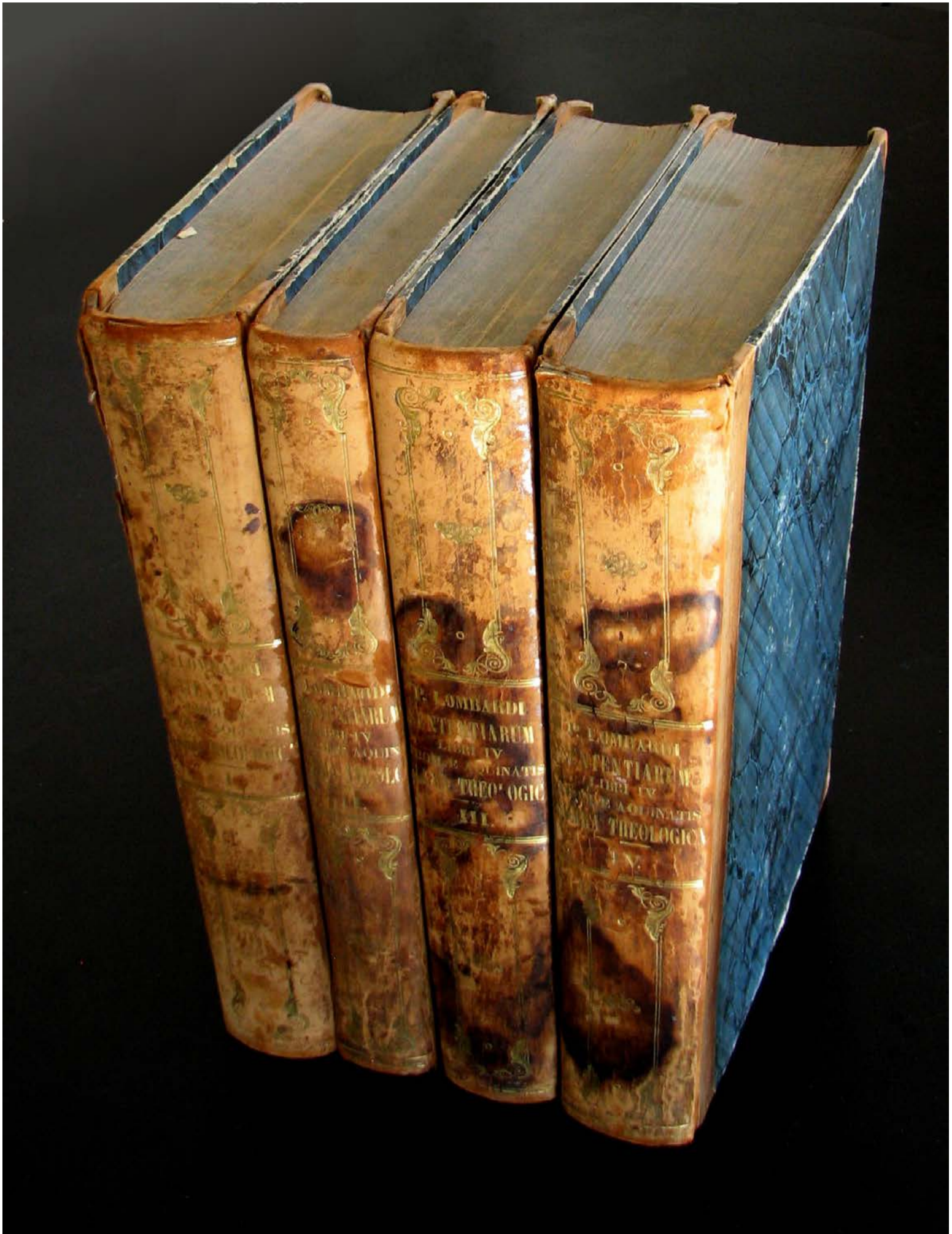
Chapel of the Sorbonne, detail of the façade, Paris, France.

Left, a statue of Thomas Aquinas. Right, a statue of Peter Lombard.

In the middle, two muses support a clock and the coat of arms of Cardinal Richelieu.

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1841 Latin editions of *Sententiarum libri quatuor* by Peter Lombard, and *Summa theologiae* by Thomas Aquinas.

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The Council of Trent. Painting by Elia Naurizio, c. 1633.

Museo Diocesano Tridentino, Palazzo Pretorio.

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Pictures from Past and Present: Church of Saint-Laurent

JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M., PH.D.



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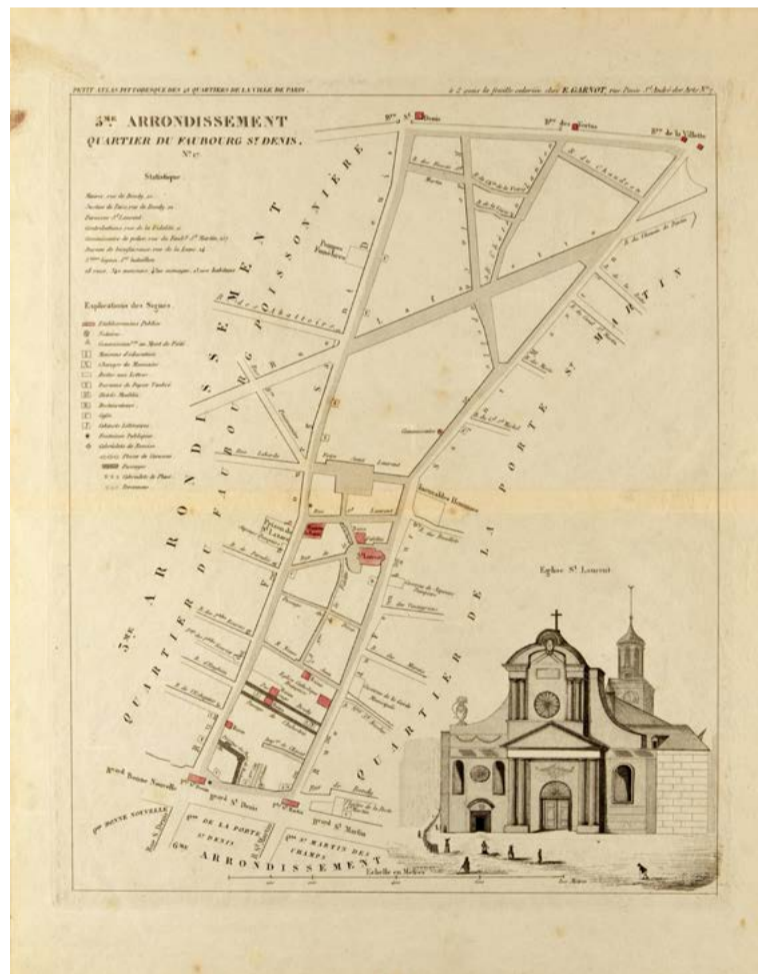




The baroque façade of the Eglise Saint-Laurent, Paris.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



5me Arrondissement. Quartier du Faubourg St. Denis.

Hand colored map by Aristide Michel Perrot, c. 1834, features the baroque façade of the Eglise Saint-Laurent.

Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL



Eglise Saint-Laurent (vers 1830). Sepia tone postcard featuring artistic rendering of the early façade with brief history of the church printed at right edge.

Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL



In 583, Gregory of Tours mentioned this monastic church, begun as a chapel. It overlooked a Roman road, now the Rue du Faubourg Saint Denis. The present church, whose choir was dedicated in 1429, replaces an earlier one. Only the old tower remains from the twelfth-century church. The fifteenth-century church has been enlarged and reconstructed several times. During the revolutionary period, it was used as a Temple of Reason, then a Temple of Old Age (1798). It was restored to the Catholic Church in 1802. The monastic enclosure was removed when the Boulevard Magenta was put through in the nineteenth century, and its neo-Gothic façade dates only from 1865, built to fit the building to the new street.

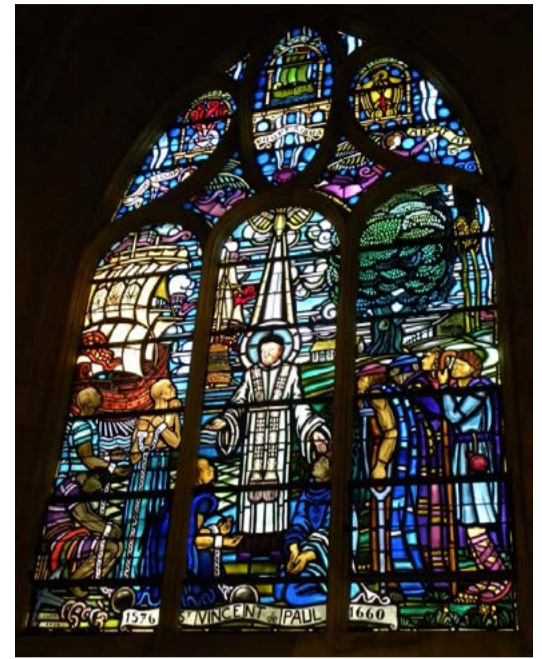
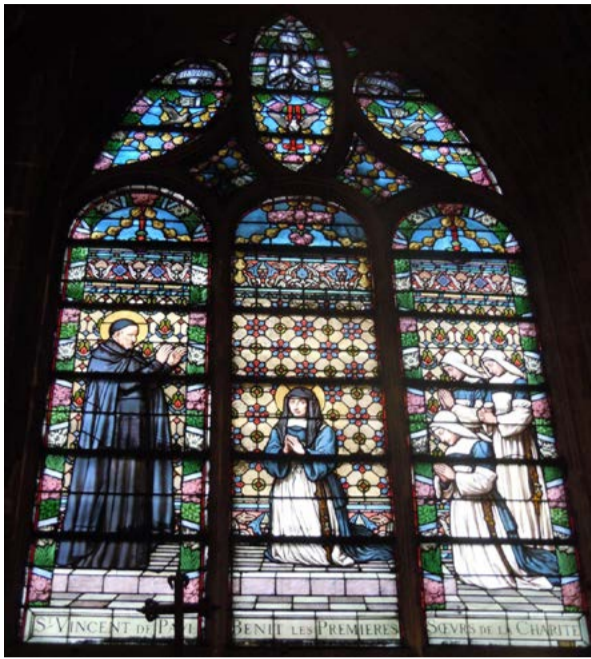


A mid-nineteenth-century photo of the Eglise Saint-Laurent taken by renowned French photographer Charles Marville; and a modern day photo of the façade.

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Saint-Laurent was the parish church of Vincent de Paul from 1632 to 1660, and of Louise de Marillac from 1641 to 1660. Although she had requested burial at Saint-Lazare, the pastor overrode Louise's wishes, and she was buried in the chapel of the Visitation in this church where she came to pray and to make her Easter Communion with the other sisters. Her remains lay here for 95 years, until 1755, when her body was transferred to the motherhouse. Marking the spot is the simple wooden cross with the words *Spes Unica* ["(Hail, O Cross, our) Only Hope"], from the hymn *Vexilla Regis*, the monument she requested in her will.



The wooden cross which marks the spot where Louise de Marillac was once buried; and several of the stained glass windows honoring Saint Vincent and Saint Louise.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



Several modern paintings and stained glass windows show Saint Vincent blessing Saint Louise and the first Daughters of Charity, and Saint Vincent performing works of mercy (galley convicts, slaves in Algiers, etc.) A small plaque also reads: "1660. Saint Vincent de Paul, founder of the priests of the Mission and of the Sisters of Charity, often visited the Church of Saint-Laurent, his parish church." On one of his many visits to Parisian churches during his long stay, Pius VII came to Saint-Laurent in 1804.



*Eglise Saint-Laurent et le Boulevard Magenta.
Postcard dated 4 September 1906.*

*Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special
Collections, Chicago, IL*





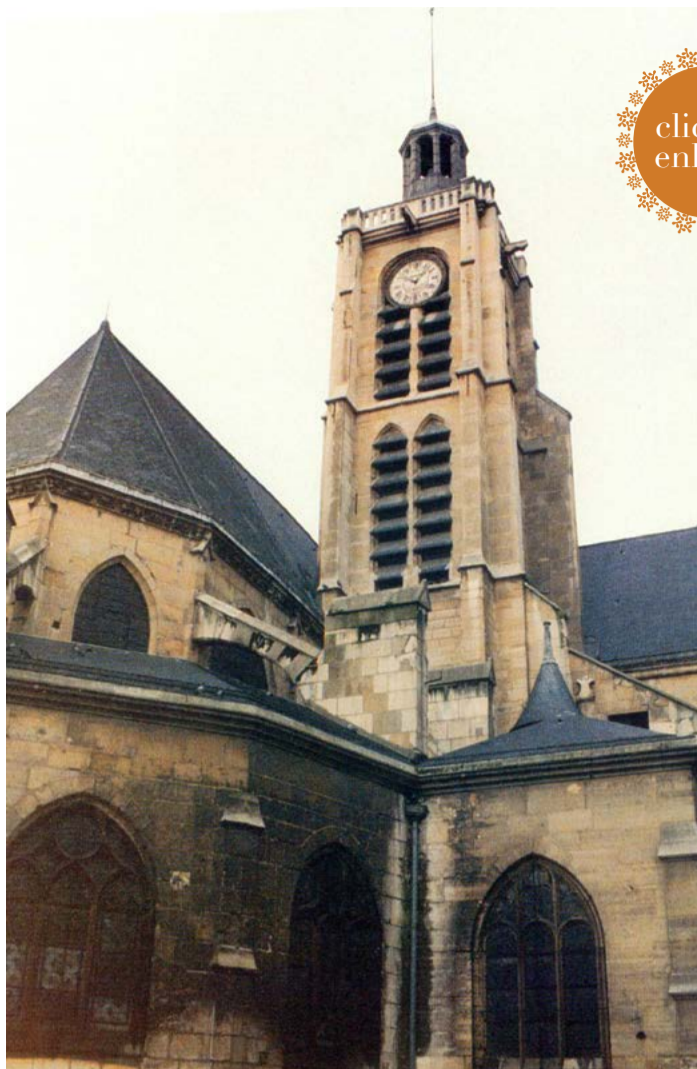
Several interior views featuring the aisle of Saint-Laurent.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online; Public Domain

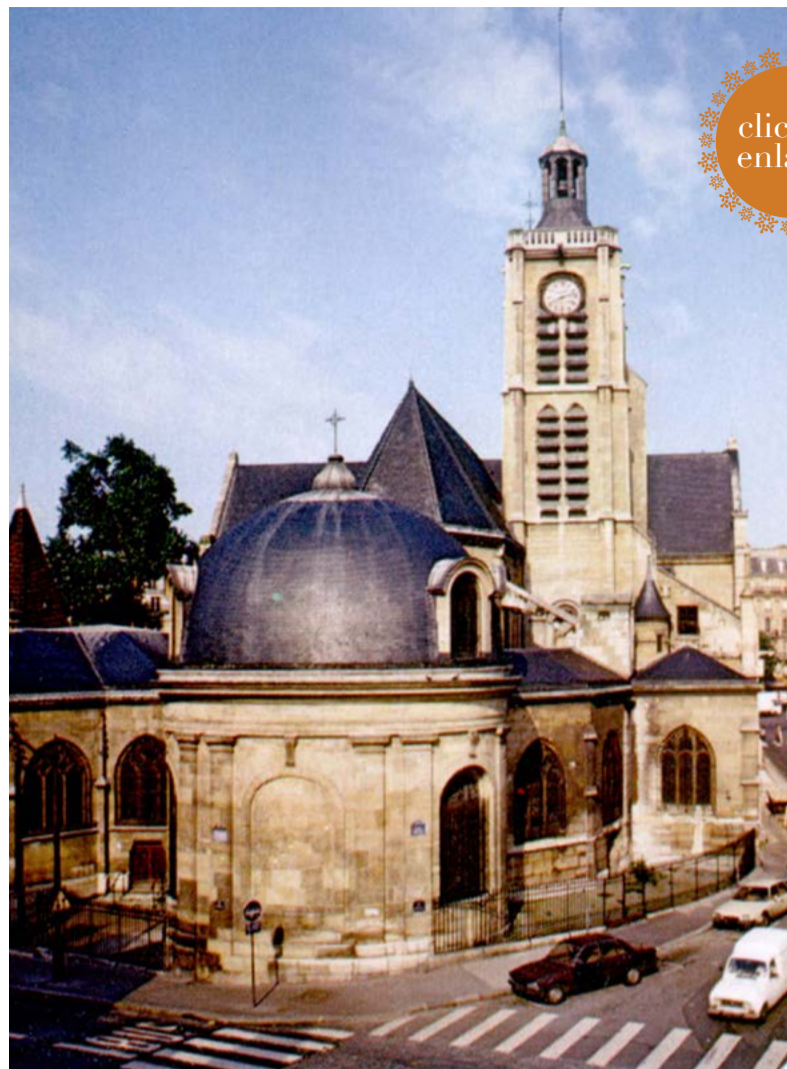


Guillaume de Lestocq (d. 1661), pastor of Saint-Laurent from 1627 to 1661, came with Adrien Le Bon (1577?-1651), the prior of Saint-Lazare, to offer the property of Saint-Lazare to Monsieur Vincent. After repeated and lengthy discussion and discernment, they succeeded. Lestocq assisted Louise on her deathbed and celebrated her funeral, since Vincent de Paul was ill and confined to his room. Lestocq would also send confessors from the parish to the Daughters' motherhouse. A later pastor, Nicholas Gobillon (1626-1706), revered Louise de Marillac and wrote her first biography. To the right of the church is a small park, the Square Saint-Laurent, which marks the site of one section of the parish cemetery. Many of the earliest Daughters of Charity were buried, however, on the north side in another section opened in 1662, adjacent to the chapel where Louise herself was interred. Their remains were removed beginning in 1804 and placed in the catacombs of Paris. This removal was occasioned by public health concerns all through the city in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

During the sack of Saint-Lazare, revolutionaries burst into its house chapel. Finding a reliquary of Saint Vincent, four of them brought it reverently to Saint-Laurent for safekeeping. They then returned to the task at hand — looting and pillaging.



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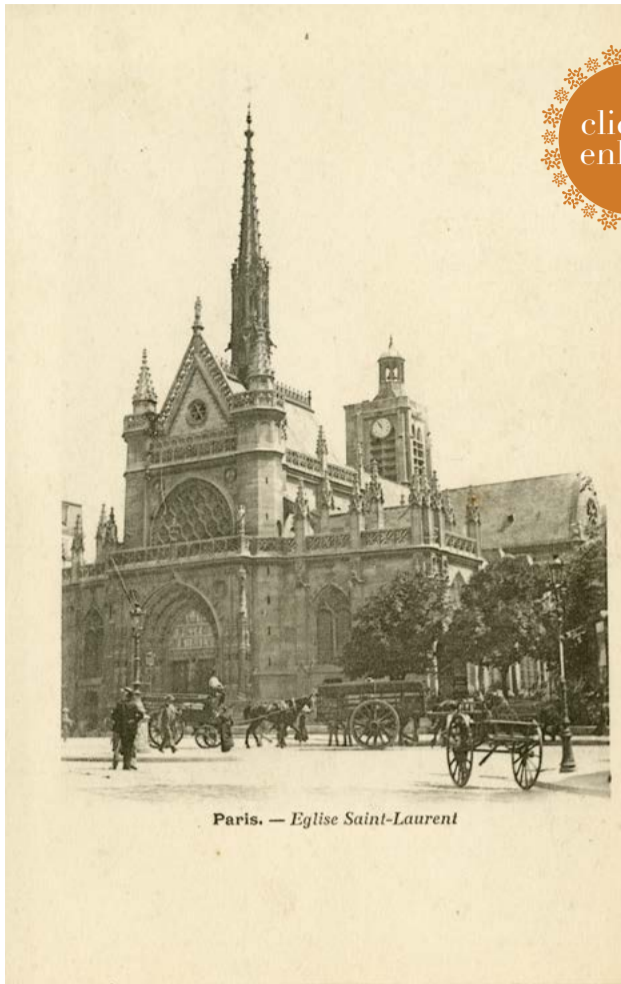
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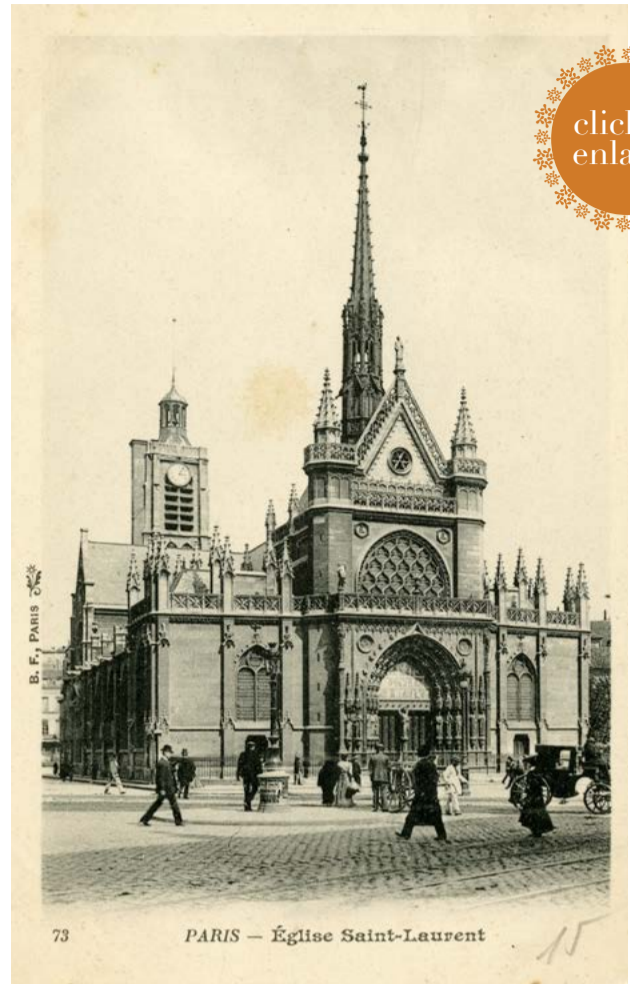
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Photos and a postcard featuring views of the bell tower and apse of Saint-Laurent.

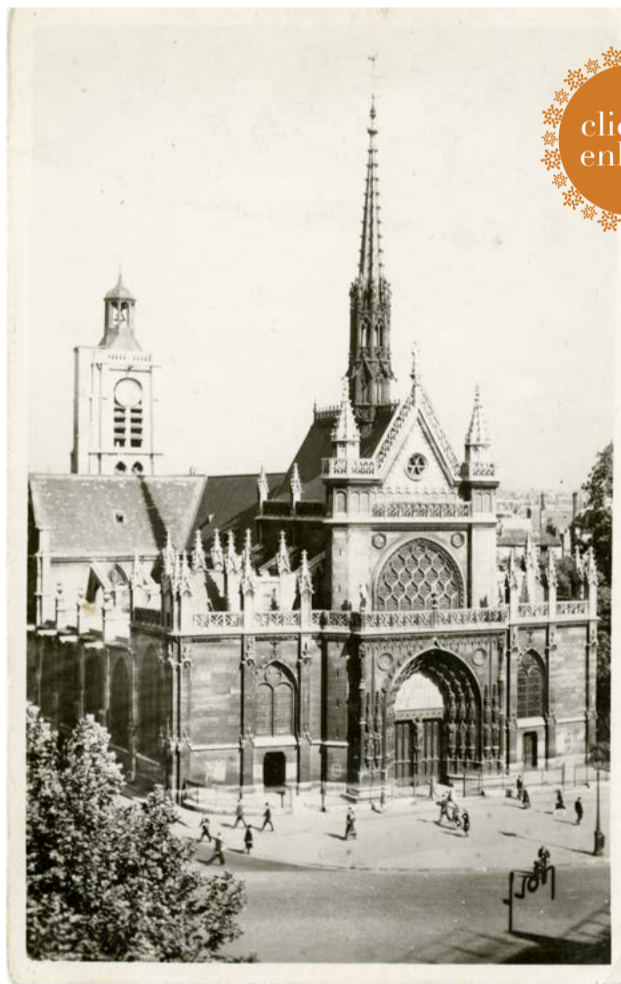
*Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online;
Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*



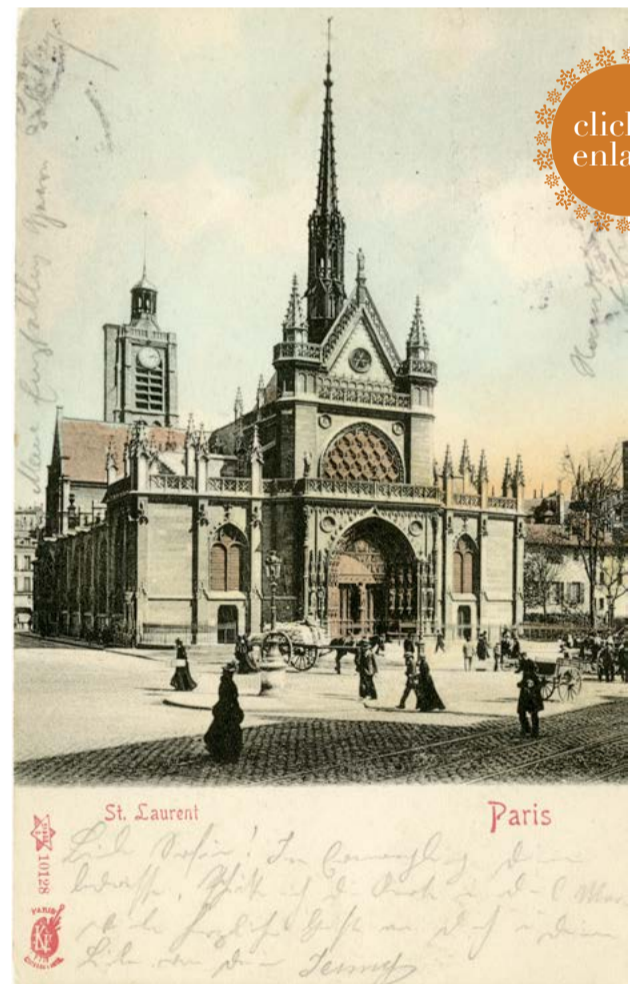
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Postcards featuring exterior views of the façade of Saint-Laurent, notable in particular for capturing the day-to-day street life of Parisians.

Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

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gallery



The baroque façade of the Eglise Saint-Laurent, Paris.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online <http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>

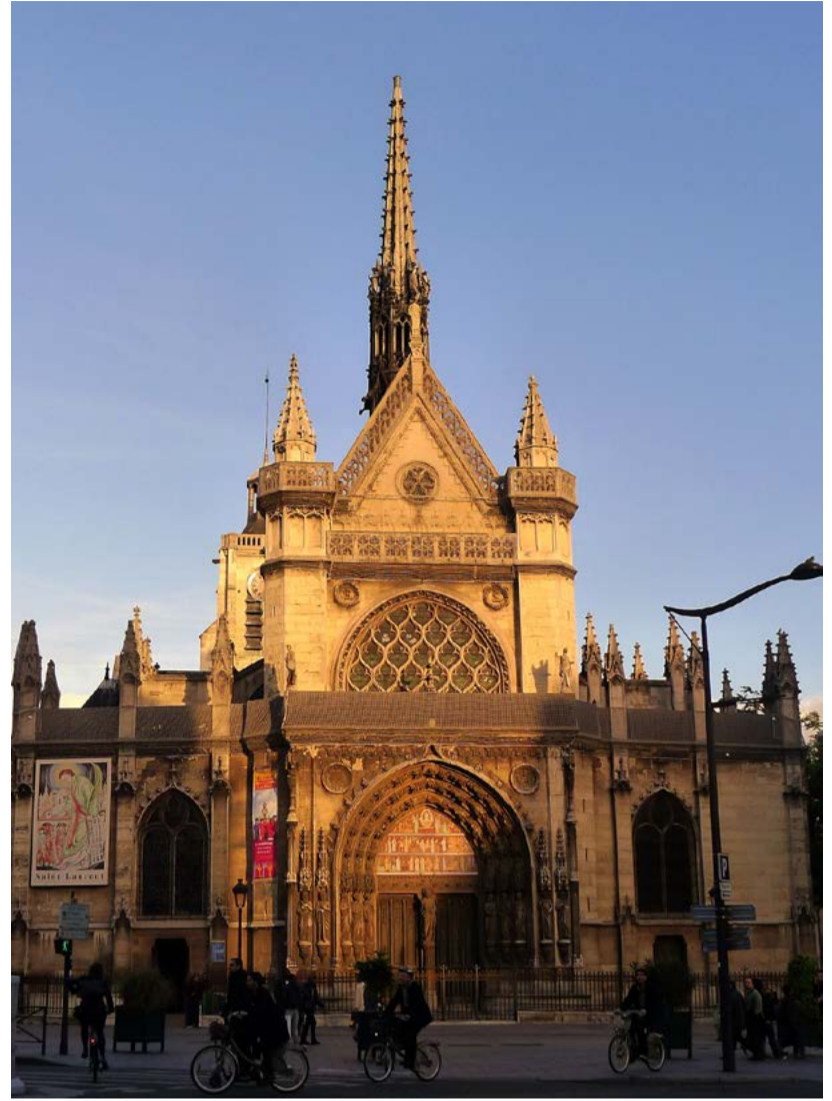




Eglise Saint-Laurent (vers 1830). Sepia tone postcard featuring artistic rendering of the early façade with brief history of the church printed at right edge.

Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

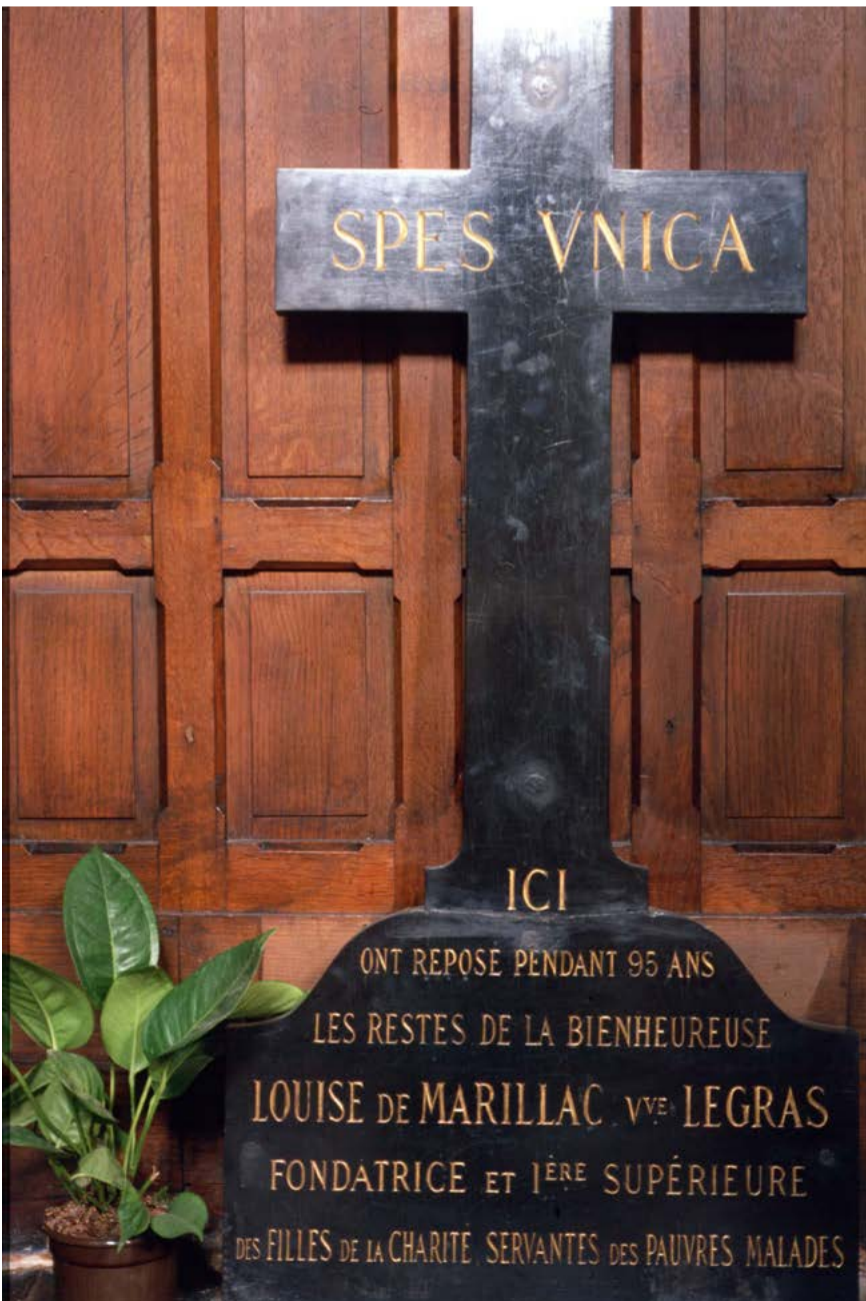
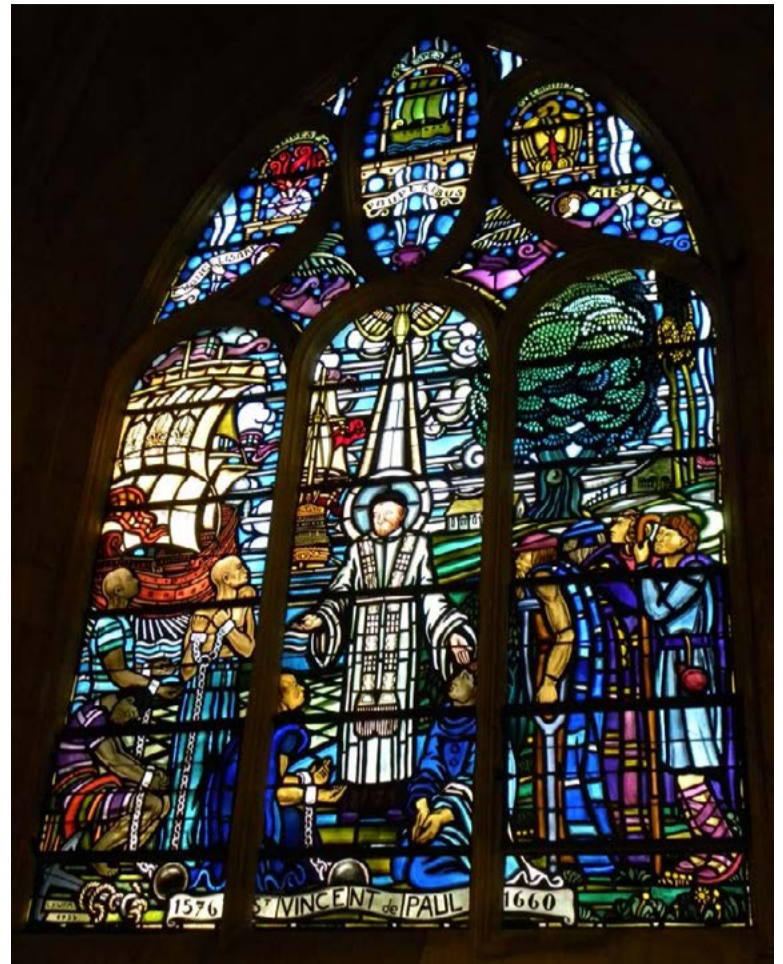
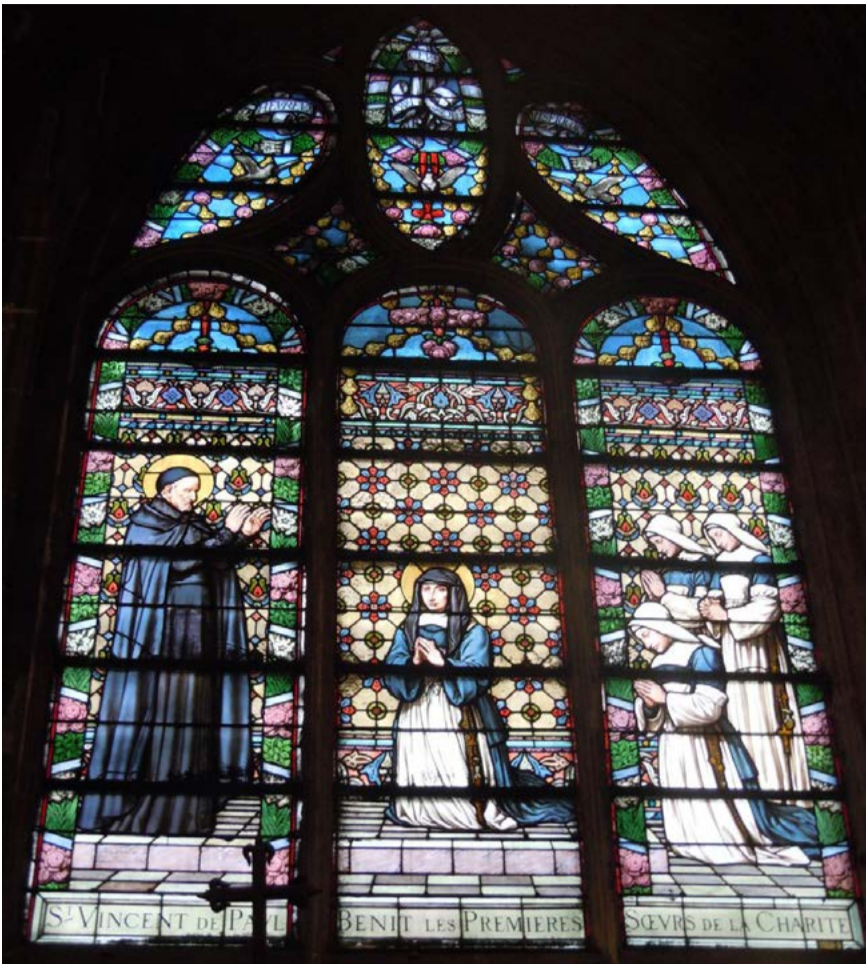




A mid-nineteenth-century photo of the Eglise Saint-Laurent taken by renowned French photographer Charles Marville; and a modern day photo of the façade.

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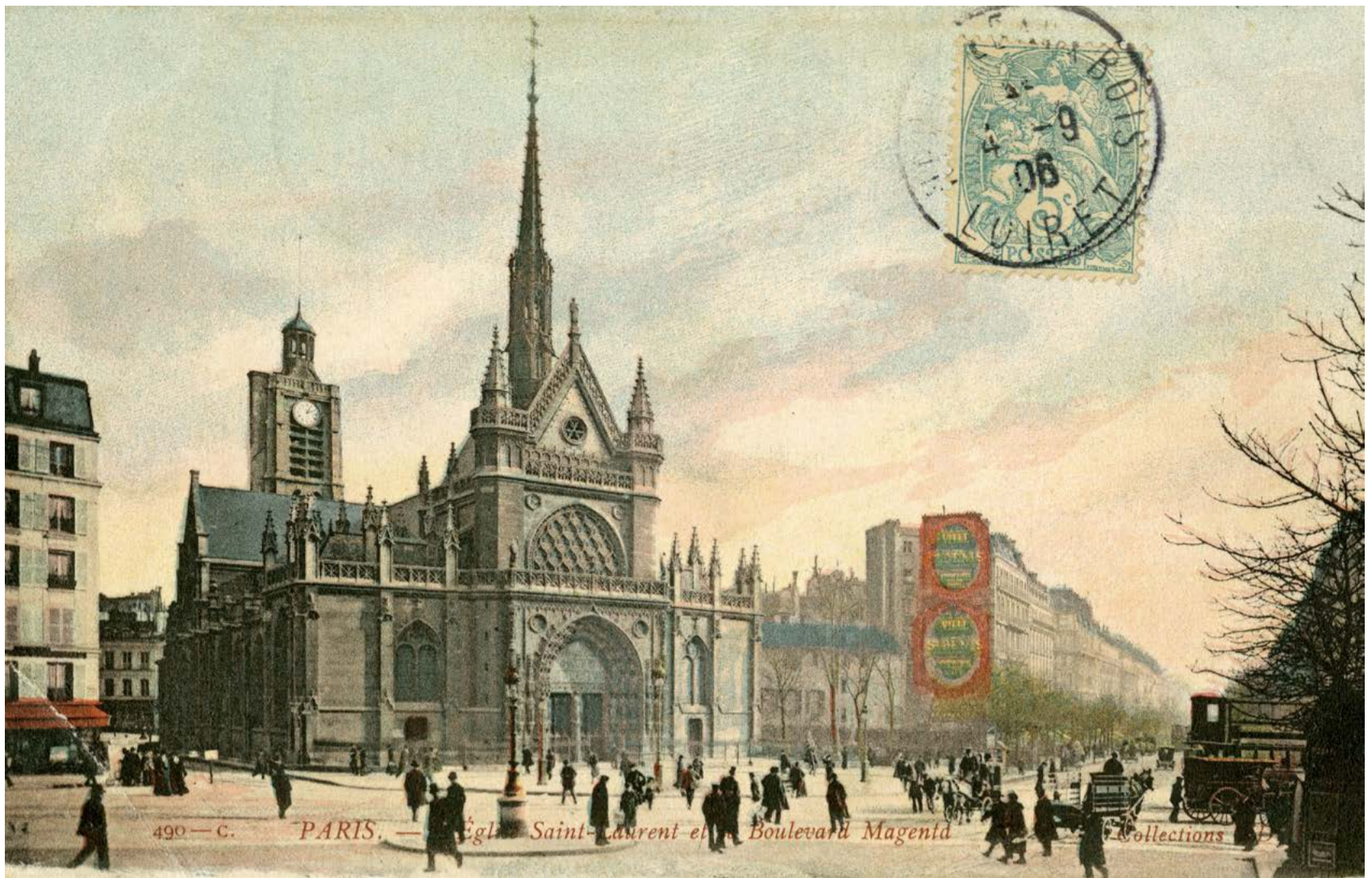




The wooden cross which marks the spot where Louise de Marillac was once buried; and several of the stained glass windows honoring Saint Vincent and Saint Louise.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online





Eglise Saint-Laurent et le Boulevard Magenta. Postcard dated 4 September 1906.

Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL





Several interior views featuring the aisle of Saint-Laurent.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online; Public Domain





Photo featuring a view of the bell tower and apse of Saint-Laurent.

*Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online;
Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*





Photo featuring a view of the bell tower and apse of Saint-Laurent.

*Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online;
Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*





Postcard featuring a view of the bell tower and apse of Saint-Laurent.

*Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online;
Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*

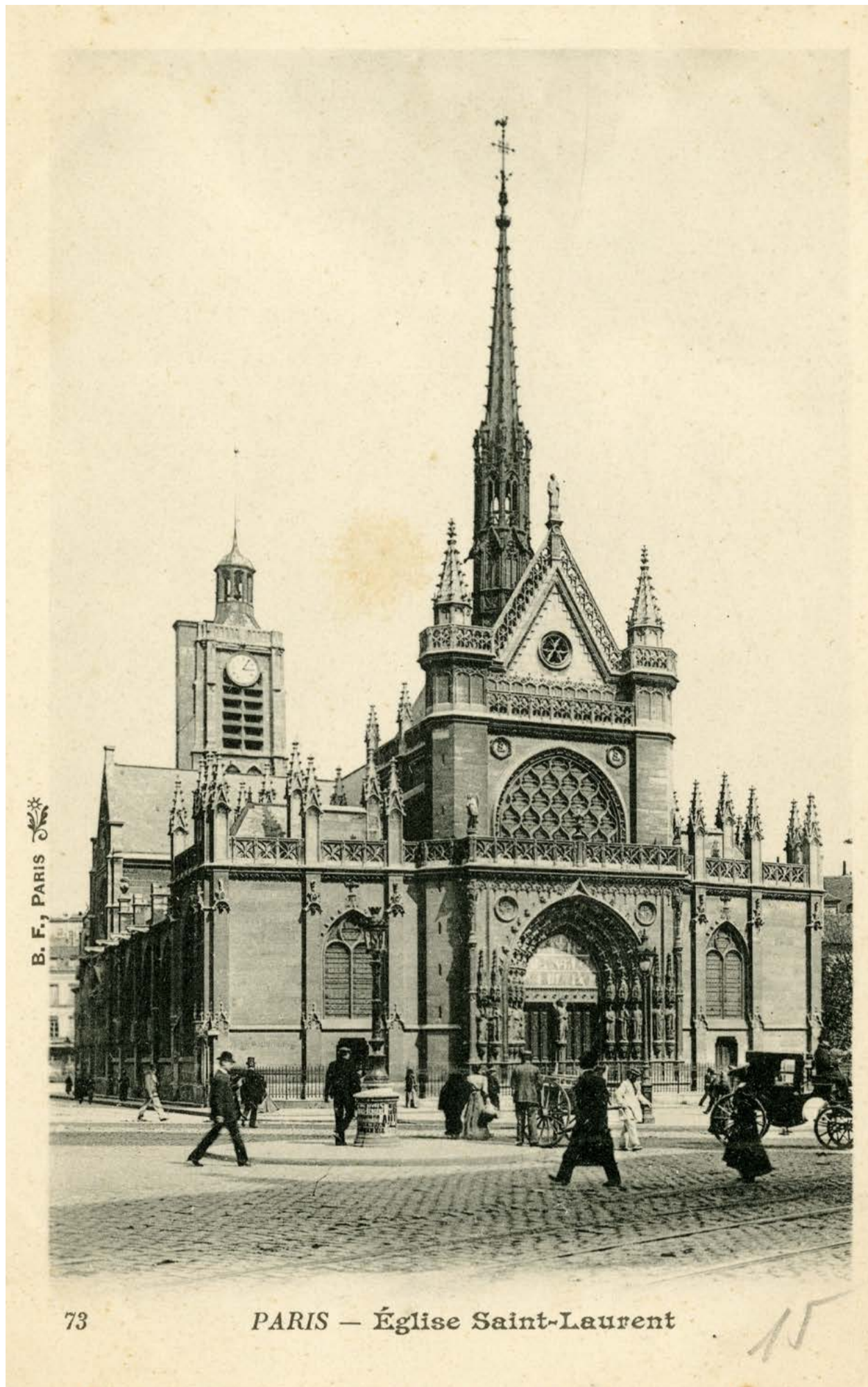




Postcard featuring exterior an view of the façade of Saint-Laurent, notable in particular for capturing the day-to-day street life of Parisians.

Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL





Postcard featuring exterior an view of the façade of Saint-Laurent, notable in particular for capturing the day-to-day street life of Parisians.

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Postcard featuring exterior an view of the façade of Saint-Laurent, notable in particular for capturing the day-to-day street life of Parisians.

Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL



Newsnotes



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Newsnotes

NEWS

John E. Rybolt, C.M., Receives the 2016 Pierre Coste Prize

Carol Hughes of DePaul University *Newsline* writes: “The Rev. John E. Rybolt, C.M., is the recipient of the 2016 Pierre Coste Prize, which was presented December 12 by the Vincentian Studies Institute. Fr. Rybolt, who was ordained in 1967, is a Vincentian scholar-in-residence at DePaul University. He receives the honor in part for his recently published seven-volume global history of the Vincentian community that dates back to its beginning in 1625. The award is named after the distinguished French Vincentian historian Pierre Coste, C.M., who worked during the first part of the twentieth century. Fr. Coste is considered the father of modern Vincentian studies.

Fr. Rybolt, who has a master’s degree in Latin from DePaul, also has degrees in Near Eastern languages and literatures, ministry, theology and sacred scripture, and a doctorate in biblical studies. He taught in Congregation of the Mission seminaries before initiating the Centre International de Formation, headquartered in Paris, designed for ongoing formation of members of the Congregation and the Vincentian Family. Since 2003, he has been the historian of the Congregation.

“Father Rybolt is a prolific author and traveler. He was selected for the Pierre Coste Prize for his significant contributions in advancing Vincentian studies, which includes the monumental seven-volume international history of the Congregation of the Mission plus an additional summary volume,” notes the Rev. Edward R. Udovic, C.M.

Fr. Rybolt’s books, articles and research on the history of St. Vincent de Paul and the Congregation of the Mission have been a part of the major renaissance of Vincentian studies in the second half of the twentieth century, according to Fr. Udovic,

“Now we’re beginning to see the scholars who will follow Father Rybolt in his work.”

The Pierre Coste Prize, established in 2003, is given periodically in recognition of distinguished achievement in Vincentian studies. “Coste is the one who brought together all of Vincent’s extant writings and conferences, and put them into an authoritative critical edition,” Fr. Udovic says. “He wrote what is still considered the foundational modern biography of Vincent. He is the first person who began to clear away the myths, and he contextualized Vincent within his world, so he really set the standard for twentieth-century Vincentian scholarship.”



Previous honorees include, in 2004, Sister Marie Poole, D.C., editor of the acclaimed English translation of Pierre Coste's multi-volume *Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*; in 2006, the Rev. Stafford Poole, C.M., a Vincentian historian; in 2010, Sister Louise Sullivan, D.C., author of several Vincentian works including *Saint Louise de Marillac: Spiritual Writings*; also in 2010, the late Rev. Paul Henzmann, C.M., archivist at the Maison-Mère of the Congregation of the Mission in Paris; and in 2013, Barbara Diefendorf, a Boston University history professor whose contributions to the religious historiography of seventeenth-century France have added context to the foundation of the Vincentian tradition.

"There's a transcendent purpose behind all of this," Fr. Udovic adds. "What this award reminds us of is that this history we're recovering has happened through the scholarship of men and women who have dedicated their entire lives to this study. These individuals are highly specialized and need to be since this history isn't easily recovered, nor is it easily reinterpreted." See: [Newsline](#)

DePaul Art Museum Hosts "The Many Faces of Vincent de Paul: Nineteenth-Century French Romanticism and the Sacred"

Guest-curated by Edward R. Udovic, C.M., Ph.D., as a companion to "Four Saints in Three Acts," this special exhibition of nineteenth-century sculptures, holy cards, textiles, decorative arts and prints from the university's collection explored how Romanticism impacted the iconographic representations of Saint Vincent de Paul (1581-1660), at the dawn of the modern era. The exhibit ran from 26 January through 2 April, 2017. An extensive online Research Guide is available here: [Many Faces Guide](#)

DePaul University Hosts "The Bicentennial Celebration of the Vincentians in America: An Exhibition at the John T. Richardson Library" Exhibition

In fall of 2016, to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Congregation of the Mission's work in the United States, DePaul University Library, with the assistance of DePaul's Office of Mission and Values, presented *The Bicentennial Celebration of the Vincentians in America: An Exhibition at the John T. Richardson Library*. The exhibition was curated by Andrew H. Rea, Vincentian Librarian, and encompassed two separate installations. The first, *God as Compass, Rudder, and Pilot: the Missionary as a Pioneer*, detailed the journey the Vincentian missionaries took, from its beginnings in Rome in 1815 to the company's eventual settlement at St. Mary's of the Barrens in the Missouri Territory in 1818. Its sister installation was *Knowledge and Salvation: the Missionary as a Man of the Enlightenment*, which explored books from the library on these first American Vincentians and the influence of the Enlightenment on the missionaries. The exhibit included books, correspondence, artifacts, and maps, and acknowledged the religious vocations and motivations of the Vincentian missionaries while contextualizing their place within the larger arena of American history.

John E. Rybolt, C.M., Honored by Niagara University

We offer congratulations to longtime Vincentian Studies Institute member John Rybolt, C.M., who received an Honorary Doctorate from Niagara University on Thursday, 29 September 2016, at Niagara's Vincentian Convocation. The Convocation was an opportunity for the Niagara community to learn more about the Vincentian Mission, particularly the impact of a Vincentian education on the Church, society and the world. The Convocation strives to honor and celebrate people who embody the Vincentian mission and values. Fr. Rybolt was chosen for this Honorary Doctorate because of his outstanding contributions to the Church and the Congregation of the Mission as a priest, educator, and scholar. He gave the Keynote Address at the Convocation and spoke on the topic of the 200th Anniversary of the Vincentians in America.

English-language Vincentian Annals Available Online

Mr. Andrew H. Rea, DePaul University Vincentian Librarian, writes: "DePaul University Library and DePaul's Office of Mission and Values are proud to announce the digital publication of *The Annals of the Congregation of the Mission: A Collection of Edifying Letters*. Volumes may be viewed and downloaded for free at: [Annals online](#)

The thirty-two volumes of *The Annals* (1894-1926) represent the English-language translation of those same years of *Les Annales de la Congregation de la Mission*, a French periodical published by the Congregation of the Mission via the Vincentian motherhouse in Paris. The letters, communiques, and updates included in each issue were meant to keep the community apprised of the activities of their confreres around the world. Modeled by the Vincentians on *Les Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* (published by the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, a Catholic administrative body that oversees Church missionary activity), *The Annals*, while successful, proved to be too much translation work for the Vincentians (each volume running approximately 700 pages). Publication ended in 1926.

Available digitally for the first time in English, the information included in these thirty-two volumes is invaluable in understanding the Vincentian community and Catholic missionary work during the late-19th and early-20th centuries. The lives and deeds of countless Vincentian priests and Daughters of Charity are detailed. Moreover, the volumes contain eyewitness accounts of missionaries, chaplains, and battlefield nurses who experienced conflicts including the First Sino-Japanese War, the Philippine Revolution and Spanish-American War, the Boxer Rebellion, the Mexican Revolution, and most importantly World War I.

Volumes are in the process of being digitized and made available online by DePaul University Library, where they reside as part of the Vincentian Studies Collection. This project began in 2016, with the first eight volumes (one quarter of the print run) currently available. The next eight volumes will be available in early 2018, eight more in 2019, and the remaining due to be completed in 2020."

In Memoriam: Sr. Margaret Beaudette, S.C., Distinguished Vincentian Artist and Sculptor



Sr. Margaret Beaudette, S.C., of the New York Sisters of Charity died on Sunday, 12 March 2017. Sr. Margaret was a distinguished artist and sculptor whose work was widespread and enormously popular. One of her most famous statues is of Saint Vincent de Paul surrounded by students. Originally commissioned by DePaul University in 1995, this grouping was replicated at several other locations. Her artistic

portrayals included Elizabeth Anne Seton, Saint Louise de Marillac, and Saint John Gabriel Perboyre. May she rest in peace.

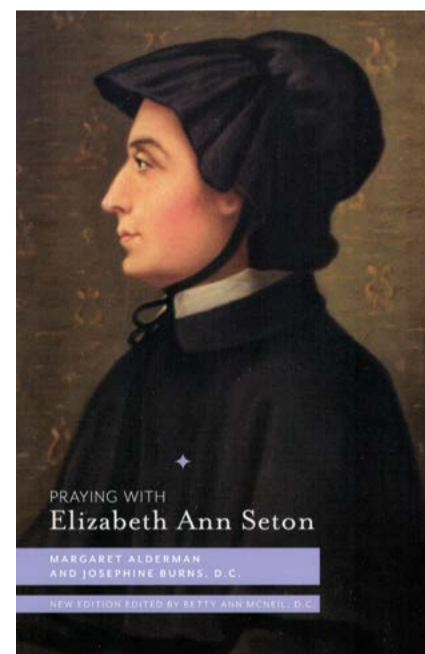
PUBLICATIONS

Notable Books

Margaret Alderman, and Josephine Burns, D.C., *Praying with Elizabeth Ann Seton*, Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., ed. (DePaul University Vincentian Studies Institute, 2017), 117 pp. ISBN: 978-1-936696-10-9. Available at: [Seton Shrine Shop](#)

A newly revised, edited, and updated edition of the classic text. From the jacket: “As the first saint to grow from the soil of the United States, Elizabeth Ann Seton holds a special place in the story of the Catholic church in America. A wife and widow, mother of five children, founder of a new community of religious women, teacher and administrator, Elizabeth was remarkable by any standard. Most importantly, Elizabeth Seton was a holy person who companioned other people to a greater love of God and of their sisters and brothers.”

Sister Judith Metz, S.C., archivist and historian of the Sisters of Charity, Cincinnati, OH, praises the book: “Elizabeth Seton has great name recognition among many around the world. Some know the basic outline of her life, but few know with any depth the beauty and profundity of her spiritual life. Sister Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., has provided a great service by overseeing the revised republication of *Praying with Elizabeth Ann Seton*. It is one of the few books available that offer an in-depth look at important aspects of the saint’s spirituality. For those who use it to truly PRAY with Elizabeth Seton, it can be an opportunity, not only to appreciate Elizabeth’s spiritual journey, but to open the door to one’s own journey into a deeper relationship with God.”

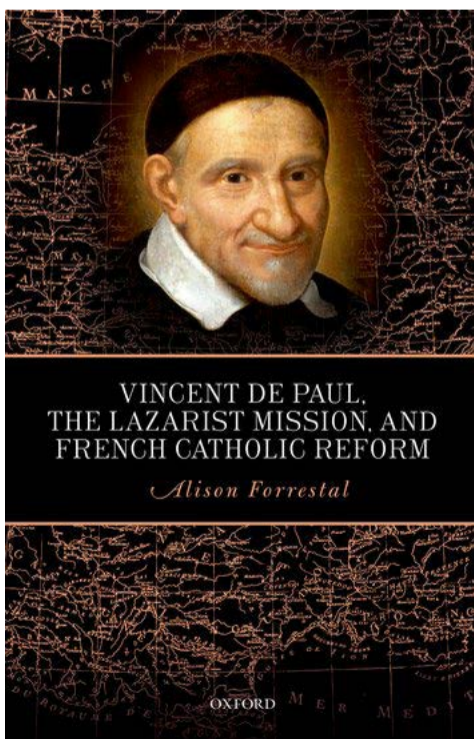


Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée, ed., *Des Filles de la Charité aux Soeurs de Saint-Vincent-de-Paul. Quatre siècles de cornettes (XVIIe-XXe siècle)* [Paris: Honoré Champion, 2016], 530 pp. ISBN-13: 978-2745330345. Available at: [Amazon.fr](https://www.amazon.fr)

Dr. Brejon de Lavergnée writes, “I am delighted to announce the publication of an edited volume of essays about the Daughters of Charity. Thanks to their recently opened archives, more than twenty scholars have studied and written about the history of the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul from the 17th to the 20th century. Specialists across many different fields may be interested, including gender studies, religious history, transnational and colonial studies, nursing, history of education, spirituality, etc. A nice iconography is also presented.”

From the jacket: “L’histoire sans les femmes n’est plus possible, l’affaire est entendue. Mais les religieuses ont longtemps disparu dans les silences de l’histoire. Cet ouvrage collectif entend poursuivre l’effort historiographique qui tend au croisement de l’histoire des femmes et de l’histoire religieuse. Il s’inscrit dans le renouveau des recherches, en particulier dans l’espace anglo-saxon, dont bénéficient aujourd’hui les congrégations.

Vingt-cinq textes abordent ici l’histoire des Filles de la Charité, les fameuses sœurs à “cornettes” qui appartiennent encore à l’imaginaire occidental. Après quatre siècles, les Sœurs de Saint-Vincent-de-Paul demeurent à l’échelle du monde la plus importante des congrégations catholiques (20000 sœurs). Leur histoire n’avait pourtant jamais été écrite. Elle est désormais possible grâce à l’ouverture des archives de la maison mère à Paris, croisées avec des fonds publics et privés tant en France qu’à l’étranger. L’ouvrage aborde le temps long et les ruptures d’une congrégation, déploie les échelles du local à l’international comme il s’interroge sur les conditions politiques et culturelles du ‘service des pauvres.’”



Alison Forrestal, *Vincent de Paul, the Lazarist Mission, and French Catholic Reform* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 336 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0198785767. Available at: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) Kindle edition: [Amazon Kindle](https://www.amazon.com)

From Oxford University Press: “*Vincent de Paul, the Lazarist Mission, and French Catholic Reform* offers a major re-assessment of the thought and activities of the most famous figure of the seventeenth-century French Catholic Reformation, Vincent de Paul. Confronting traditional explanations for de Paul’s prominence in the devout reform movement that emerged in the wake of the Wars of Religion, the volume explores how he turned a personal vocational desire to evangelize the

rural poor of France into a congregation of secular missionaries, known as the Congregation of the Mission or the Lazarists, with three inter-related strands of pastoral responsibility: the delivery of missions, the formation and training of clergy, and the promotion of confraternal welfare.

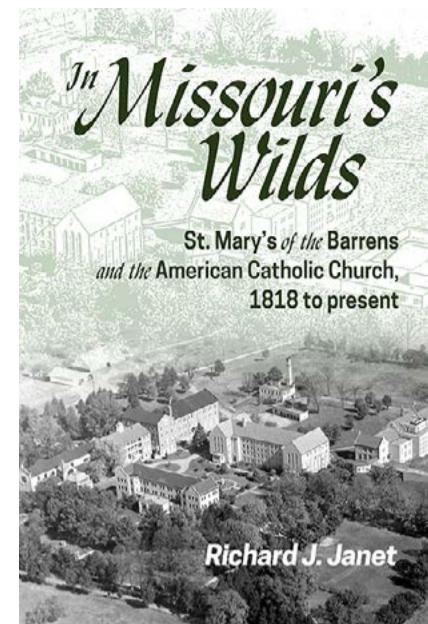
Alison Forrestal further demonstrates that the structure, ethos, and works that de Paul devised for the Congregation placed it at the heart of a significant enterprise of reform that involved a broad set of associates in efforts to transform the character of devotional belief and practice within the church. The central questions of the volume therefore concern de Paul's efforts to create, characterize, and articulate a distinctive and influential vision for missionary life and work, both for himself and for the Lazarist Congregation, and Forrestal argues that his prominence and achievements depended on his remarkable ability to exploit the potential for association and collaboration within the devout environment of seventeenth-century France in enterprising and systematic ways.

This is the first study to assess de Paul's activities against the wider backdrop of religious reform and Bourbon rule, and to reconstruct the combination of ideas, practices, resources, and relationships that determined his ability to pursue his ambitions. A work of forensic detail and complex narrative, *Vincent de Paul, the Lazarist Mission, and French Catholic Reform* is the product of years of research in ecclesiastical and state archives. It offers a wholly fresh perspective on the challenges and opportunities entailed in the promotion of religious reform and renewal in seventeenth-century France."

Alison Forrestal & Seán Alexander Smith, eds., *The Frontiers of Mission: Perspectives on Early Modern Missionary Catholicism* (Brill Academic Publishing, 2016), 202 pp. ISBN-13: 978-9004325166. Available at: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) E-Book at: [Brill Online](https://www.brillonline.nl)

From Amazon: "In exploring the shifting realities of missionary experience during the course of imperialist ventures and the Catholic Reformation, *The Frontiers of Mission: Perspectives on Early Modern Missionary Catholicism* provides a fresh assessment of the challenges that the Catholic Church encountered at the frontiers of mission in the early modern era. Bringing together leading international scholars, the volume tests the assumption that uniformity and co-ordination governed early modern missionary enterprise, and examines the effects of distance and de-centering on a variety of missionaries and religious orders. Its essays focus squarely on the experiences of the missionaries themselves to offer a nuanced consideration of the meaning of 'missionary Catholicism,' and its evolving relationship with newly discovered cultures and political and ecclesiastical authorities."

Richard J. Janet, *In Missouri's Wilds: St. Mary's of the Barrens and the American Catholic Church, 1818 to present* (Truman State University Press, 2017). ISBN: 9781612481982. Available as paperback or E-book at: [In Missouri's Wilds](#)



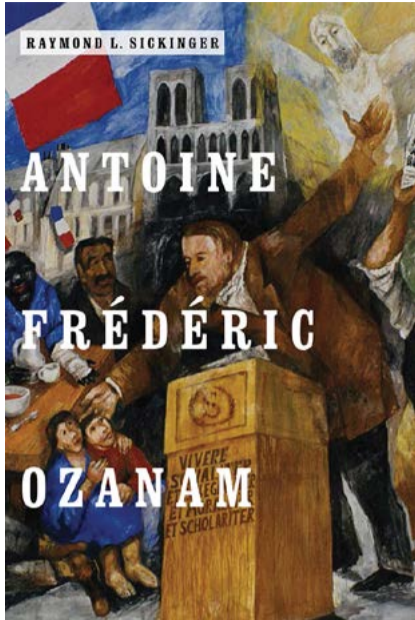
Truman State University Press notes: “In 1818, a small group of Catholic clerics established a religious community in southeastern Missouri and opened a school, grounded in its European Vincentian roots but influenced by the isolation of its rural location. St. Mary’s of the Barrens became the first American institution of higher learning west of the Mississippi River and only the fourth Catholic seminary in the United States. Over the years, St. Mary’s emerged as a significant institution whose early leaders played an important role in the development of the Catholic Church on the American frontier. The school’s subsequent history reflected the changing status of the growing American Catholic community. In this history of “the Barrens,” Rick Janet demonstrates how its story reflects the broader sweep of the American Catholic experience.”

Susan O’Brien, *Leaving God for God: The Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in Britain, 1847-2017* (Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 2017), 448 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0232532883. Available at: [Daughters of Charity UK](#) or [Amazon UK](#)

From the author: “*Leaving God for God* is a study of five generations of Catholic Sisters in Britain from 1847 to 2017 and of their wide-ranging ministries to people in poverty. Written with full access to the Daughters of Charity’s archives in London and Paris, this study assesses how the Sisters lived out their undertaking to serve the most marginalized in society in the modern era, coming up to the present day. Themes explored in the book include: the nature of the Daughters’ community culture; the development of Marian devotional life in Britain; the influence of lay and religious status and gender on the Church’s mission at home and overseas; the Sisters’ engagement in civil society and with the State; their response to the Second Vatican Council; and the interplay of national identities in Catholic Britain.

The history of Catholicism in England and Scotland is seen in fresh perspective through the lens of this singular transnational community of women. Their history, it is argued, challenges both the mainstream narrative about the nature of philanthropy and charity in Britain and the Church’s narrative about Catholic Sisters in the twentieth century.

Published in hardback, *Leaving God for God* is fully referenced and indexed and includes 64 pages of full-color visual essays and a Gazetteer providing details on every House opened and closed by the Sisters since 1847.”



Raymond L. Sickinger, *Antoine Frédéric Ozanam* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 412 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0268101428. Hardcover available at: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) Kindle edition: [Amazon Kindle](https://www.amazon.com)

Notre Dame Press writes: “Raymond Sickinger’s biography of Antoine Frédéric Ozanam is more than a chronological account of Ozanam’s relatively brief but extraordinary life. It is also a comprehensive study of a man who touched many lives as a teacher, writer, and principal founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Ozanam’s life encompassed a particularly turbulent time in French history, and he was a witness to two major political upheavals—the overthrow of the Bourbon dynasty that brought Louis Philippe to power in 1830, and the end of Louis Philippe’s “Bourgeois Monarchy” as a result of the 1848 Revolutions. This book examines Ozanam’s life in a variety of ways. First, it explores the various roles he played throughout his life—son, sibling, student, member of and an inspiration for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, spouse and father, scholar, and spokesperson for the common people. Second, it examines the lessons he learned in his life, including the importance of friendship, the meaning of solidarity, and the role and purpose of suffering, among many others that he shares with those who study his thought and work. It concludes with an account of Ozanam’s enduring legacy.

Antoine Frédéric Ozanam feared that he would not have a fruitful career, but his legacy remains a powerful testimony to his greatness. This book will interest scholars wishing to know more about Ozanam and the period in which he lived, as well as a wider audience including those who are aware or are members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.”

Marc Thieffry, *Les Lazaristes aux Mascareignes aux XVIIIe et XIXe Siècles: Ile Bourbon (La Réunion) et Ile de France (Maurice)* [Editions L’Harmattan, 2017], 540 pp. ISBN-13: 978-2343104331. Available at: [Amazon.fr](https://www.amazon.fr)

From Amazon: “La Congrégation de la Mission a été fondée en 1625 par Saint Vincent de Paul. Ses membres s’appellent les lazaristes ou prêtres de Saint-Lazare. Pendant plus d’un siècle, plus d’une centaine de Lazaristes, prêtres et frères, ont évangélisé l’île Bourbon et l’île de France. C’est leur histoire, leur mission, que nous découvrons à travers les manuscrits, documents, lettres, notes, traités et mémoires entreposés aux Archives de la Congrégation de la Mission à Paris.”

Notable Articles

The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, First View (17 May 2017), features:

Seán Alexander Smith, Ph.D., "Surrogate Fathers: The Lazarists as Jesuit Successors in the Eighteenth Century, 1759-1814," pp. 1-29. Read online:

[Journal of Ecclesiastical History](#)

Sacred Architecture: Journal of the Institute for Sacred Architecture, Issue 30 (2016), ISSN# 1535-9387, includes:

Simone Zurawski, Ph.D., "The Alliance des Arts, the Chapelle des Lazaristes, and the Reliquary Shrine of Saint Vincent de Paul," pp. 11-20. Read online:

[Sacred Architecture](#)

Notable Music

Teodorico Pedrini: Complete Violin Sonatas, Performed by Nancy Wilson and Joyce Lindorff (Paladino Music, 2016), 2 CD's. ASIN: B013F6KRPS. Available at: **[Amazon.com](#)**

Amazon notes: "Teodorico Pedrini, C.M. (1671-1746), had quite the journey during his lifetime. Over the course of eight years, he traveled from Italy to the Canary Islands, Chile, Mexico, Peru, and the Philippines. Pedrini is the sole eighteenth-century composer of which we know that wrote European compositions in China, where he finally arrived in 1711. Upon arrival in Beijing, he worked for emperors Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong until he died in 1746. Pedrini is still considered one of the most significant ambassadors for Western music in Asia. His complete violin sonatas, presented here, are performed by violinist Nancy Wilson and harpsichordist Joyce Lindorff."

Notable Videos

To watch Sung-Hae Kim, S.C., Professor Emeritus in the Department of Religious Studies, Sogang University, Seoul, Korea, and General Superior for the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill at the Generalate in Chicago, deliver the spring 2016 DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives lecture, titled: *The Ecological Spirituality of Elizabeth Ann Seton*, see: **[Sung-Hae Kim, S.C.](#)**

To watch Michael Pasquier, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Jaak Seynaeve Professor of Christian Studies at Louisiana State University, deliver the fall 2016 DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives lecture, titled: *French Missionaries and the Roman Catholic Priesthood in the United States, 1789-1870*, see: **[Michael Pasquier, Ph.D.](#)**

To watch Alison Forrestal, Ph.D., Acting Head and Lecturer in History, School of Humanities, National University of Ireland, Galway, deliver the spring 2017 DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives lecture, titled: *Vincent de Paul, the Lazarist Mission, and French Catholic Reform*, see: [**Alison Forrestal, Ph.D.**](#)

To watch Simone Zurawski, Ph.D., Professor of History of Art and Architecture at DePaul University, deliver a winter 2017 lecture, a collaboration between the DePaul Art Museum and the Office of Mission and Values, titled: *The Iconographie of the "Heroic" St. Vincent de Paul & the Foundlings: Its Origins in the Salons of the Bourbon Restoration, 1817-1824*, see: [**Simone Zurawski, Ph.D.**](#)

To watch the 2017 Annual Vincent de Paul Lecture, titled *The Modern Exodus: Walking with Refugees and Migrants in a Time of Crisis*, in which Kim Lamberty from Catholic Relief Services and Rev. Craig Mousin from DePaul University share their experience and expertise working directly with people who have largely been forgotten, see: [**Vincent de Paul Lecture**](#)

About Vincentian Heritage



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Vincentian Heritage is the journal of the Vincentian Studies Institute of the United States. Founded in 1979 the Institute is dedicated to promoting a living interest in the historical and spiritual heritage of Saint Vincent de Paul (1581-660) and Saint Louise de Marillac (1591-1660), the patrons of the wide-ranging Vincentian Family including the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity, the Ladies of Charity, the Sisters of Charity, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and a number of other congregations, communities, and lay movements who share a common dedication to serving those in need.

Vincentian Heritage welcomes manuscripts, poetry, and other expressions of Vincentian themes that meet the publication criteria. All articles should relate directly to topics of Vincentian interest, be researched and documented in a scholarly fashion, and directed toward Vincentian oriented groups in the reading public and the Vincentian family. Ordinarily, articles should not exceed thirty typewritten pages and should be submitted twelve months prior to anticipated publication.

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