

4-1-1992

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## Recommended Citation

McNeil, Betty A. D.C. (1992) "Vincentian Values and Fund Raising for the Mission," *Vincentian Heritage Journal*: Vol. 13: Iss. 1, Article 2.

Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol13/iss1/2>

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# Vincentian Values and Fund Raising for the Mission

BY

BETTY ANN MCNEIL, D.C.

Searching for family “roots” has become a national hobby to understand identity and appreciate one’s heritage. This paper highlights selected values that guide and inspire the Vincentian family in realizing its mission.<sup>1</sup>

Advocacy for the poor through collaboration provides a major focus to illustrate fund raising strategies used by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac.<sup>2</sup> Their experience correlates with today’s techniques which will be described in terms recognized by modern fund development professionals.<sup>3</sup> This correlation suggests that despite the mundane, secular nature of fund raising, it is very Vincentian and enables Vincent’s vision to be concretized in today’s social environment.

Revisiting seventeenth century France reveals some of what motivated this charitable team. Their collaborative ministry could be viewed as a model for living out the preferential option for the poor. Action for justice should be integrated with charity for the needy in order for this process to be authentically Vincentian.

Examining Vincent’s legacy can animate us to live out our mission more effectively. His Company of village girls began simply. There was neither a feasibility study nor a business plan, in contrast to modern apostolic planning. The Little Company simply evolved from the plan

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<sup>1</sup>Five core values articulated by the Daughters of Charity National Health System provide a frame of reference: simplicity, advocacy for the poor, respect, quality service and inventiveness to infinity. A version of this paper was originally presented at the Annual Meeting of the Council of Foundations of the Daughters of Charity National Health System in Boston, May 1989. Its purpose was to advise lay collaborators about the mission of the Daughters of Charity and how Vincentian values relate to fund raising.

<sup>2</sup>The financial history of the seventeenth century requires additional research for a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship of Vincent’s enterprises to others. This would help determine to what degree Vincent’s contribution was unique.

<sup>3</sup>The ethical base of professional fund raising may be said to be rooted in the following listing of values: honesty, integrity, keeping promises, fidelity/loyalty, fairness/caring, respect for others, citizenship, excellence and accountability. National Society of Fund Raising Executives, Newsletter, Spring 1989, 4.

of God who has called each of us to continue Vincent's ageless vision of charity. Vincent's rural roots made a lasting impact on living out his mission.

### In The Beginning

The young Vincent matured through mentoring by those who accompanied him at different stages on his journey. His most notable mentors include Monsieur de Comet, Pierre de Bérulle, Philip Emmanuel de Gondi, Francis de Sales, and Louise de Marillac. These enabled him to discover, understand, and accomplish his mission. From the vantage of an historical perspective, one can see how Divine Providence also utilized them as instruments in planting the Vincentian family tree.

*Simplicity places God at the center of everything and maintains this focus steadfastly in all activities and relationships. Vincent's charitable projects began simply as he gradually recognized the suffering Christ in the faces of the poor.*

#### *Marked by Simplicity.*

Vincent, as a Gascon shepherd grew close to God and the poor through his early years. Experiencing the world of nature and waiting for seasonal changes in a pastoral setting profoundly influenced the development of his attitudes, feelings, and values that characterized the mature Father of the Poor. Having worked many hours each day in his youth, the adult Vincent knew how to pursue his goals "by the sweat of his brow."<sup>4</sup> When his charitable projects required begging from house to house, sometimes he even returned home bent with the weight of his collection.

Just as today's fund raising appeals have varying success, and the solicitor must often deal with rejection, we can conclude that Vincent also had to learn to deal with disappointment. For example, he commented on one occasion, "Today after I had preached very well to a lady, I thought she would give me a large contribution. Do you know what I got? Four white crowns! Now what use is that?"<sup>5</sup>

Simplicity continues to characterize Vincentian endeavors. A review of professional fund raising values (honesty, integrity, loyalty,

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<sup>4</sup>Elizabeth Charpy, D.C., *A Way to Holiness*, trans. Catherine Whalen, D.C. (Company of the Daughters of Charity: n.d.), 146.

<sup>5</sup>Pierre Coste, C.M., *The Life and works of Saint Vincent de Paul*, trans. Joseph Leonard, C.M., 3 Vols. (Brooklyn: 1987), 2:408.

creativity, and accountability) suggests that they are closely aligned to the Vincentian tradition.

Vincent regularly used simple means to provide for the poor. He placed alms-boxes in churches, also in various taverns and inns. In other instances, he secured sheep for a supply of wool, and lambs and cows for milk and calves.<sup>6</sup> Today these are known as in-kind contributions.

Both Vincent and Louise seemed conscious of what we now refer to as corporate identity and image as well as how these related to fluctuations in levels of charitable giving. For example, when the children's food supplies had been depleted, Louise lamented that "when people see this magnificent place [Bicêtre] . . . most of them believe that we have plenty of money, yet we have to borrow [for necessities]."<sup>7</sup>

#### *Vincent—Beneficiary and Benefactor.*

Reflecting on some historically significant beginnings for Vincent at Pouy, Dax, and Châtillon-les-Dombes suggests different aspects of simplicity, Vincent's trademark.

*Pouy.* Revisiting seventeenth century France calls to mind Vincent's home of Ranquines at Pouy where his peasant roots molded him for life. The placid marshy countryside probably had miles of pasture with only tiny villages punctuating the horizon. These included Pouy with its rustic church where the de Pauls worshiped and baptized their offspring.

His parents were not poverty-stricken but were peasants who owned tools and farm animals that enabled the family to live off their land. It is within this family of six de Paul children that Vincent, the third oldest came to know the God of Creation and imbibe his life-giving Spirit. Here he developed a realistic and practical approach to life. At Pouy he learned to appreciate the earth and its fruits, as well as the tranquility of nature. He grew to value having personal space that enabled his intuition to percolate into charitable projects.<sup>8</sup>

Familiarity with shepherding prompted him in later years to collaborate once with a local farmer to fund a Confraternity of Charity through what could now be considered a joint venture. The Confraternity purchased some sheep and branded them with a special mark. Members of the Confraternity divided the flock among themselves and

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 1:97.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 2:274-5.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 1:1-14.

pastured the new heads with others. Every year the sale of wool added profits to the Confraternity's treasury.<sup>9</sup>

*Dax.* Dax, a quaint town formerly surrounded by a Roman wall, still boasted its remnants when the schoolboy Vincent might have enjoyed playing on its ruins adjacent to his school.

A letter attributed to Vincent describes the assistance of Monsieur de Comet, lawyer and district judge, in educating the young Vincent in Dax.<sup>10</sup> Monsieur de Comet may have been the key benefactor who made the critical difference in Vincent's life. Coste records that he subsidized Vincent's education in exchange for tutoring his sons. Could this not mark the genesis for Vincentian collaboration and advocacy?

The steps taken at Dax, subsequently led him to the priesthood. As a young priest, Vincent described his pursuit of benefices and an easy retirement at an early age.<sup>11</sup> On one occasion, he pursued a legacy near Toulouse and rented a horse, which he later sold (fully intending to repay the sum).

*Châtillon.* At Folleville Vincent understood the need to evangelize and meet the spiritual needs of rural dwellers.<sup>12</sup> In Châtillon-les-Dombes, Vincent realized his mission of evangelization would be incomplete without charitable service.<sup>13</sup> This realization caused him to establish the prototype of his Confraternity of Charity.

The house where Vincent lived in Châtillon still stands. The stairs he climbed to his rented room also remain and can be used today. One can easily envision him wearily ascending them after a parishioner told him of the dire situation of a family.

One Sunday, when I was vesting to say holy mass, I was told that, in an isolated house, everybody was ill; there was not even one of them who could render any assistance to the others. This news touched me to the heart. I did not fail to commend them affectionately to the charity of the congregation. God, touching the hearts of those who heard me, moved them with compassion for those poor afflicted people.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 1:105.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 1:14. This letter also describes the controverted Tunisian captivity. Some historians question its authenticity.

<sup>11</sup>*Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents. I Correspondence*, vol. 1 (1607-1639), newly translated, edited, and annotated from the 1920 edition of Pierre Coste, C.M., ed. Jacqueline Kilar, D.C., trans. Helen Marie Law, D.C., John Marie Poole, D.C., James R. King, C.M., Francis Germovnik, C.M., annotated John W. Carven, C.M., (Brooklyn: 1985), Letter #3, 1:15 (herein-after cited as *SVP*).

<sup>12</sup>Coste, *Life and Works*. 1: 68-70.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 1:83.

After Vespers, I went to visit those people and overtook on the road some ladies who had set out before us and, a little farther on, met some others who were returning home. There were so many of them, you would have said it was a regular procession. The thing to do was to see how to provide for their needs. I proposed to all those good ladies who had been animated by charity to visit those people that they should club together to make soup, each on her own day, and not only for them but for all who might afterwards come, and that is the first place where the Confraternity of Charity was established. Now, just ask yourselves is that the work of man, or is it not quite manifestly the work of God?<sup>14</sup>

This event taught Vincent that organized charity led to more effective service of the poor. At Châtillon he had discovered the integration of the spiritual and corporal dimensions of his mission. This insight initiated a dynamic chain of collaboration, delegation, follow-up, expansion, innovation, and replication that continues today.

#### *Arrival in Paris.*

Personal crosses marked Vincent's initial adjustment in Paris (1609). These reenforced his thinking about the importance of justice, also the value of collaboration for advocacy. These experiences equipped Vincent to hear God's call in and through collaboration with the Gondi family. Folleville and Châtillon, enabled Vincent to discover the dual dimensions of the mission that God was entrusting to him—corporal and spiritual service of the poor through evangelization.

Through his growth, Vincent's sensitivity to the needs of others developed more fully. When accused by his roommate of theft, he came to know the bitterness of injustice. This experience enabled him to understand better many injustices suffered by the oppressed.<sup>15</sup>

His personal experience of suffering when tempted severely against faith taught him to lean directly on God and to trust more deeply in Divine Providence. In later years he expressed feelings that reveal how ordinary was this extraordinary servant of the poor: "I am like you, Mademoiselle, there is nothing that bothers me more than uncertainty."<sup>16</sup>

Upon arriving in Paris, disgraced due to the unjust accusation of theft and without a job, Vincent was searching for security and his niche. Pierre de Bérulle (1575–1629), a young and popular priest in

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<sup>14</sup>Vincent de Paul. *Conferences to the Daughters of Charity*. #24, "On the Love of our Vocation and on Helping the Poor," 13 February 1643, 216-7.

<sup>15</sup>Coste, *Life and Works*, 1:43-44.

<sup>16</sup>SVP, Letter # 175, 1:240.

Paris, was in a position to help him to meet the right people and get a job. Bérulle had powerful influence for good at court since he was an honorary almoner of Henry IV, and his friend, as well as confidant of Queen Marie de Médicis.

### **Following Providence Step by Step**

*Advocacy for the poor requires being in solidarity with them, while speaking and acting on their behalf in the face of injustice and oppression. This was a priority for Vincent and Louise who collaborated with the wealthy and powerful for the least of our sisters and brothers.*

*Becoming an Advocate.*

Seventeenth Century France was densely populated, with 80 percent of the population being rural. There was a high birth rate, high infant mortality rate, low life expectancy and great inequality among social categories.

There were many local uprisings because of exorbitant taxes and pervasive misery due to massive crop failures. Lacking an organized system of social welfare, routine charity was usually given by parishes, monasteries and convents. However, this was insufficient to meet the increasing poverty. With the onset of famine, epidemic or war, misery became omnipresent. This is the social context that evoked Vincent's vision.

In the events and personages of his day, Vincent recognized both challenges and opportunities for collaboration and advocacy. During the fifty years Vincent was in Paris, there were three kings, four queens, two queen regents and two ministers of France,<sup>17</sup> plus five popes.<sup>18</sup>

Vincent became adept at perceiving potential benefits for the poor in this network and he creatively wove it into a tapestry of philanthropy for the suffering peasantry. He invited and enabled others to collaborate with him to support the powerless, and speak for the voiceless.

Vincent's lifelong colleague, Louise de Marillac, had married Antoine Le Gras who served as a secretary to Queen Marie de Médicis

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<sup>17</sup>Vincent's relations with personages of the seventeenth century court of France included: Henry IV, Marguerite of Valois, Marie de Médicis, Louis XIII, Anne of Austria, Louis XIV, and Marie Louise de Gonzague of Poland.

<sup>18</sup>Paul V, Gregory XV, Urban VIII, Innocent X, Alexander VII.

(1610–1617) during her regency for the young Louis XIII. The Marillac family was well respected and Louise’s uncles held high positions at court.<sup>19</sup>

*Almoner.* Queen Marguerite of Valois was very kind and generous to all in need and had several chaplains who distributed alms in her name. She had been the first wife of Henry IV of Navarre (1572–1599) before he divorced her. During the reign of King Henry IV (1589–1610), Vincent became an almoner for the queen in 1610. Probably, Bérulle negotiated this position.

One of Vincent’s jobs was to visit the financially struggling Charity Hospital. In 1611 he providentially met the master of the Paris mint who gave him a personal gift of fifteen thousand *livres*. Vincent promptly gave this gift to the Charity hospital.<sup>20</sup>

*King Louis XIII.* King Louis XIII and Queen Anne of Austria (1617–1643) were in power during Vincent’s most active years. During that period, royal gifts provided food for the foundlings.

When Vincent informed King Louis XIII of the foundlings need, the poor children received an annual recurring grant of 4000 *livres* to alleviate their necessities. In 1644, Anne of Austria gave an additional 8000 *livres* from property taxes paid by owners of the “great farms” based on annual revenue. The Ladies of Charity subsidized the remaining deficit.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps this could be considered grantmaking based on a public-private partnership.

The unassuming master of charity ministered to King Louis XIII on his deathbed. This was the era of Cardinal Richelieu whose niece, Madame d’Aiguillon, had helped Vincent to obtain numerous major gifts. In addition, Vincent’s projects had also received several royal grants from public funds which today would be categorized as government grants of discretionary funds.

*Anne of Austria.* Before his death, Louis XIII awarded Vincent a grant of 45,000 *livres*. Later, to raise cash, Queen Anne donated the mourning tapestries that had adorned the royal funeral of Louise XIII. The Duchess d’Aiguillon followed the queen’s example when her uncle, Cardinal Richelieu, died.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Jean Calvet, *Louise de Marillac*, trans. G. F. Pullen (London: 1959), 203.

<sup>20</sup>Coste, *Life and Works*, 1:50.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:272.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:370-71.

After the death of Richelieu, the infamous Cardinal Mazarin ascended to power. Vincent served on the Council of Conscience in the court of Louis XIV during the regency of his Mother, Queen Anne of Austria (1643–1651).<sup>23</sup> Not only was the court in turmoil, but all France had collapsed in terrible civil wars. Poverty prevailed in the countryside and victimized all classes.<sup>24</sup>

*Marie Louise Gonzague.* Vincent's influence extended beyond France into Poland where Queen Marie Louise Gonzague (a Médicis by birth), who had been a Lady of Charity, desired to fund an establishment in Warsaw (1651).<sup>25</sup>

### *Fostering Collaboration.*

Vincent collaborated in the palace and in the marketplace to utilize his relationships and their influence to advocate for the poor. "A foundation was set up by a wealthy lay person or ecclesiastic, and the operation of the house was financed by the income from the foundation. Vincent wanted the base secure."<sup>26</sup> Besides the Gondi family, his network included courtiers, also Richelieu and Mazarin.

*With the Gondi Family.* Most likely Bérulle, as Vincent's spiritual director, recommended that Vincent leave his parish at Clichy to tutor the Gondi sons and become chaplain to this noble family. When Vincent's vision crystallized, the Gondi's agreed to support establishing the Congregation of the Mission. According to this contract, which is extant, they provided 45,000 *livres* capital that could be invested in either land or stock.<sup>27</sup>

The generosity of the Gondi family plays the pivotal position in the growth and development of the Vincentian Family. Not only did Phillipe Emmanuel de Gondi and Madame de Gondi provide funds to establish the Congregation of the Mission, but the Cardinal de Retz, Jean François de Gondi, brother of Phillipe de Gondi and archbishop of Paris, gave ecclesiastical approval to this establishment.<sup>28</sup>

Madame de Gondi enthusiastically supported the initiative. She often sought new revenue sources and set aside additional funds for

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 3:86.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 2:366.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 2:41.

<sup>26</sup>James Smith, C.M., "The Vincentian Mission, 1625-1660." *Vincentian Heritage* 4, n. 2, (1984):45.

<sup>27</sup>Jean Jacquart, "Saint Vincent's Real Estate Policy," trans. Jacqueline Kilar, D.C. *Vincentian Heritage* 7, n. 2 (1986):182.

<sup>28</sup>Coste, *Life and Works*, 1:144.

Vincent. One example is her assignment of user fees for Vincent's goals. Madame de Gondi restricted tax income earned from assessments charged to trading vessels and others who paid fees on Sundays or holydays for using the "bridges of the town" or "its drawbridges, cable buoys and boats."<sup>29</sup>

In Joigny, the Count de Gondi granted 500 *livres* annually plus a guaranteed amount of corn. The City Hospital also specified a fixed donation from its funds.<sup>30</sup>

In later years the Gondi sons whom Vincent had taught also supported him. Pierre funded the establishment of the Charity at Montmirail on Gondi patrimonial lands.<sup>31</sup> He later became general of the galleys. Jean François became the archbishop of Paris and second Cardinal de Retz. He gave ecclesiastical approval to the Daughters of Charity.<sup>32</sup> (His uncle had approved the Congregation of the Mission).

*At Court.* The King's Secretary facilitated support from both the King and a local Bishop for the founding of a mission at Crécy (1641).<sup>33</sup> In the same period, the chancellor coordinated the emergency delivery of wheat under guard to the starving children at Bicêtre when the bread supply was depleted due to war.<sup>34</sup> In another situation, the procurator general favorably decided a contested will and preserved a large bequest for Vincent's charitable purposes.<sup>35</sup>

Richelieu was a dominant figure whose potential Vincent wished to channel. Vincent asked Richelieu to help Ireland when England was at war with its king, but Richelieu responded, "Ha! Monsieur Vincent, the king is too busy to be able to do that!"<sup>36</sup> Yet, Vincent did reap benefits from Richelieu's position in other ways. Once Richelieu's niece arranged a business deal that made Vincent a shareholder.

*In the Church.* There were twelve different popes during Vincent's lifetime. Vincent strove to lobby for his cause among the clergy including popes, archbishops, bishops, and pastors.

On one occasion, Vincent went directly to Pope Urban VIII. Vincent wrote to his emissary (du Coudray) in Rome explaining the origin, aim,

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 1:101.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 1:108.

<sup>31</sup>José María Román, C.M., "The Foundations of Saint Vincent de Paul," trans. Stafford Poole, C.M., *Vincentian Heritage* 9, n. 2 (1988): 149.

<sup>32</sup>Coste, *Life and Works*, 1:355.

<sup>33</sup>Román, "Foundations," 149.

<sup>34</sup>Coste, *Life and Works*, 2:273.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 2:320.

<sup>36</sup>"Some Previously Untranslated Writings of St. Vincent de Paul," trans. Alma Homrighausen, *Vincentian Heritage* 8, n. 1, (1987): 49.

and relevance of the Congregation of the Mission in what could be described as a case statement for his community. "You should have them informed that the poor people are being lost, that if His Holiness were aware of this, he would have no rest until he had done all in this power to rectify it."<sup>37</sup>

Diocesan bishops were prominent as collaborators in founding early Vincentian initiatives. Diocesan bishops began fifteen of thirty-two of Vincent's establishments. They provided seed money and operating capital and encouraged pastors to preach about the duty of almsgiving.<sup>38</sup>

*With Major Benefactors.* During his lifetime Vincent's power base of wealth and influence among the nobility spread beyond the periphery of Paris and permeated the country.<sup>39</sup> French nobles were usually concerned that tenants on their lands receive the spiritual benefits of the missions preached by Vincent's priests. Therefore, many nobles subsidized start up costs and provided generous endowments to establish the mission and its subsequent charities. These benefactors included the Duchess d'Aiguillon, Madame Goussault, Madame de Gondi, and Madame Miramion.

The Duchess d'Aiguillon, niece of Cardinal Richelieu, was the prime benefactor for six foundations during Vincent's life.<sup>40</sup> After her uncle founded the royal post (mail) in France and its dominions, Madame d'Aiguillon arranged for Vincent to own the controlling stock in the coach line from Paris to Bordeaux. Vincentian charities gained considerable profits as a result.

Madame Goussault, who had been actively involved in charitable projects at Angers, was also a major benefactor to the two hundred bed Hospital of Saint Jean. Henry II, King of England, had founded this hospital in 1153 in reparation for the murder of Thomas Becket. In 1639, Madame Goussault urged the directors to request Vincent de Paul to send Daughters of Charity.

At that time there were some internal management problems at the hospital that were causing a negative impact on quality patient care. Louise de Marillac herself journeyed there with three sisters and remained from November 1639 until February 1640. As a result of her

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<sup>37</sup>Coste, *Life and Works*, 1:157.

<sup>38</sup>Román, "Foundations," 148.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>40</sup>Coste, *Life and Works*, 1:405.

assessment of the situation, Louise recommended sending more sisters skilled in nursing. Within three months the first contract was signed that gave the Daughters full responsibility to manage the hospital. One suspects that Louise exerted her great administrative skill and thus established the hospital's firm beginning as a health care facility staffed by the Daughters of Charity. The Daughters are still active in this ministry in Angers where the hospital continues to operate today, more than 350 years later.<sup>41</sup>

Vincent demonstrated a keen understanding of diplomacy, especially when dealing with benefactors. Even with the most diplomatic negotiations, however, some misunderstandings did occur. Once a gift of 112,000 *livres* caused confusion because a lady and Vincent saw its potential differently and slow communications caused misunderstanding. Monsieur Vincent quietly withdrew.<sup>42</sup>

Vincent astutely realized that there were many untapped major gift prospects among the elite and powerful of his day. Nurturing his best prospects by personal visits was an important strategy.<sup>43</sup> Intuitively seeking long term support for charity, Vincent actively sought bequests. Frequently he urged the faithful to include the Confraternity of Charity in their will.

#### *Nurturing Community Support.*

Vincent's record of charitable outreach shows that he firmly believed in long term fund development. Reviewing his *modus operandi* helps us realize that he generated community support in ways similar to those used today by our apostolates. Some of these approaches include special events, annual gifts, partnerships, and public relations.

*Special Events.* Special events regularly featured the needs of the foundlings and their misery. For example, Vincent celebrated mass once a month in Notre Dame imploring God to inspire the wealthy to give generously to the foundlings whom he publicly exhibited in order for their needs to become better known. The Daughters brought the foundlings to the church entrance and "displayed" these orphans as they begged for funds from those attending mass.

Today an archeological dig has excavated the area around the cathedral and its artifacts are exhibited in an underground museum.

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 1:405.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 2:480.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 1:97.

Excavations revealed some identification bracelets worn by the frail foundlings of Vincent's day. Perhaps these had inadvertently fallen from the thin arms of malnourished infants while wealthy worshippers stopped to cuddle these tiny abandoned babes and empathize with the Daughters.<sup>44</sup>

*Annual Giving.* Vincent was able to structure donation income so that budget planning included a certain level of expectancy, as we would say today. For example, recurring grants, payments on pledges, and annual gifts provided income for charitable projects of the Vincentian Family.

The Charity at Mâcon (1635) subsisted on various funding mechanisms. Both clergy and affluent citizens made annual pledges of money, corn, wine, firewood, and linen. The Charity also received particular fines earmarked for Vincent's projects by the municipality. These included Sunday church collections and receipts from entrance fees made by public officials.<sup>45</sup>

*Public Relations.* Vincent's innate sense of diplomacy attuned him to the pulse of his donor constituency. There is evidence that Vincent marketed his mission in a timely fashion. For example, the newsletter *Relations* appeared the day after an important meeting. The Ladies of Charity had decided to provide charitable relief to the wartorn provinces by appealing to the wealthy for emergency support. Therefore, they advertised in each issue. "Those who feel inclined to contribute should communicate with the priests of the parishes or with Madames de Lamoignon and de Herse." Following Vincent's example, the Ladies of Charity ardently distributed these newsletters, which they left with "good prospects."<sup>46</sup>

### *Initiating Collaborative Ministry*

"Collaborative ministry calls for efforts to enable all Christians to respond to their baptismal call and engage in ministry with others in the Christian community."<sup>47</sup> Vincent strove to build collaborative relationships to support his mission.

The project at Richelieu demonstrates expansion for the Daughters of Charity. Richelieu became the first permanent establishment (1638)

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 2:408.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 1:112.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 2:405.

<sup>47</sup>Loughlan Sofield and Juliano Carroll, *Collaborative Ministry: Skills and Guidelines* (Notre Dame: 1987), 16.

beyond Paris and could be considered an early example of collaborative ministry. At Richelieu the footsteps of Vincent's followers during the last three centuries have worn a visible recess deep into the original front step of the church there. This worn step is preserved as a living monument to all those who collaborated with the mission at Richelieu.<sup>48</sup> Vincent's chalice is still preserved in the church. The old home remains where Vincent frequently stayed.<sup>49</sup>

*Congregation of the Mission.* The cardinal had asked the Vincentian Fathers to come and evangelize the people building the ramparts, chateau, and the city. Its contract of establishment, one of the few extant, clearly specified evangelization as its purpose. The contract also provided for missions in the duchy and in two neighboring dioceses with the duty of finishing the route every five years, plus preaching retreats in Poitou for seminarians and priests.<sup>50</sup>

*Daughters of Charity.* The Congregation of the Mission requested that the Daughters of Charity collaborate with them in ministering to the people of Richelieu. Vincent sent Barbe Angiboust and Louise Ganset to care for the sick poor and to teach the faith to little girls.

This foundation also illustrates the significant role of Louise de Marillac in enabling Vincent to accomplish his mission.<sup>51</sup> Louise's collaboration and that of their benefactors graphically illustrates friend raising and fund raising—two functions that continue today as important aspects of servant leadership for apostolic vitality into the second millennium.

*Funding.* One could say that creativity characterized Richelieu's financing. The foundation at Richelieu received financial support from diverse streams of revenue.

Since feudal rights were inherited along with property in the seventeenth century, this foundation was able to depend on income from the priory of Saint Nicolas de Champrant as well as the local parish. Cardinal Richelieu awarded the Vincentians benefits associated with the feudal estates of Bois Bouchard, Saint Cassien, and the notaryships or public registrars of Loudon. For these, the Vincentians acted in lieu of the lord of the place in the collection of taxes. In addition,

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<sup>48</sup>Coste, *Life and Works*, 1:533.

<sup>49</sup>"History of the Company: Celebration of the 350th Anniversary of the Parish of Richelieu," Elizabeth Charpy, D.C., ed., *Echoes of the Company* (1988):362-63.

<sup>50</sup>Coste, *Life and Works*, 2:170; see also Román, "Foundations," 151.

<sup>51</sup>*Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac, Correspondence and Thoughts*, ed. and trans. Louise Sullivan, D.C., (New York: 1991), Letter #L11 (26 October 1639), 18.

the Vincentian Family also profited from the rights of some other services since the feudal lord monopolized mills, wineries, and ovens, etc. The Vincentians were also able to rent several of the cardinal's houses for additional income.<sup>52</sup>

The importance of consummating business transactions in a timely fashion became clear in 1643 when a serious problem arose. Cardinal Richelieu died while in the process of converting some investments and the transaction was not yet complete. Richelieu had sold the notaryships of Loudon, the principal asset of the Mission, but had not yet reinvested the money in land as had been planned for long-term support of the mission at Richelieu. A long suit with the heirs seemed inevitable. The Mission had invested over 100,000 *livres* in construction and furnishing of the dwelling. Fortunately, the Duchess d'Aiguillon intervened as an advocate for the Vincentian Family and a favorable decision resulted in the case.<sup>53</sup>

### Foundation of Vincentian Service

*Respect manifests a high regard for the worth and dignity of others by always seeking to give greatest regard to those whom the world disregards as worthless. Authentic Vincentian service requires going beyond mere acceptance of today's multi-cultural reality to understand and respond to the needs of new groups of poor while affirming their ethnic, racial and linguistic differences.*

*Respect.*

The cornerstone of Vincentian service, respect, not only promotes human dignity and enhances self esteem, but it also carries the obligation of being noticeable in all relationships. It can be recognized by a high regard for the worth and dignity of all persons, whether benefactor or beneficiary.

One way of manifesting respect in fund development is to honor the original purpose of the transaction, the intent of the donor, and accountability for use of the gift. Within the context of fund raising, respect relates to the esteem and integrity with which one treats the donor, gift, and stipulated obligations with a view toward responsible stewardship.

Although dealing with an issue of competence, the following wisdom of Louise also applies to fund development. "We should be prepared to proceed in such matters with justice and charity."<sup>54</sup> In

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<sup>52</sup>Román, "Foundations," 155-58.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 159-60.

<sup>54</sup>*Spiritual Writings*, Letter #165 (November 1646), 184.

another instance, Louise warned Sister Julienne Loret, "Be very exact not to profit from anything which belongs to the poor."<sup>55</sup>

*Donor Relations.* Vincent knew that his collaboration was also benefitting his major donors who had their own objectives. Program sites emerged beyond the periphery of Paris to throughout France. This reflected the pastoral and financial interests of Vincent's most important collaborators: Gondi, Duchess d'Aiguillon, Cardinal Richelieu, and Marie Louise Gonzague.

Vincent not only invited collaboration in direct service, but he also made needs known. He created and presented opportunities for making charitable gifts, and thereby enabled others to feel the satisfaction of being generous.

When seeking collaborators and advocating for the poor, Vincent also educated his associates to social responsibility, by both word and witness. In this way concerned individuals could also serve the poor with compassion, care, respect and devotion, despite social, cultural and language differences.

*Leadership Development.* An analysis of Vincent's writings indicates that continuity and consistency marked his messages after 1640 when internal strife was at its peak in France. The majority of his addresses to the Ladies of Charity, which are available for our study, have the same theme: "Persevere in the works already undertaken." Vincent's persistence resulted in the Ladies' firm commitment to the foundlings' cause. The queen even donated the castle of Bicêtre as a residence for the young children.<sup>56</sup>

Vincent had mastered the art of appeal. He believed in the eminent dignity of the poor and was always able to find words that went straight to the heart when soliciting funds to alleviate their suffering.

*Quality Service strives for excellence in job performance and holistic ministry marked by personal and tireless efforts rooted in respect for others. Justice requires competence in Vincentian projects.*

### *Quality.*

"Quality is the very embodiment of the mission. . . . It stands for the future."<sup>57</sup> It distinguishes excellence. It also measures the bottom line, as well as the ingenuity of program design. Quality embraces manage-

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., Letter #339 (7 January 1652), 388.

<sup>56</sup>Coste, *Life and Works*, 2:273.

<sup>57</sup>DCNHS *Perspectives*, 1991, 11.

ment, accountability, and stewardship rooted in justice. For Vincentian collaborators, this always includes prudent management of all monies, especially investments, as the patrimony of the poor.

*Planning.* From our knowledge of Vincent's management style, we could conclude that Vincent saw God in the driver's seat, and, therefore, did not actively seek a foundation or individually initiate establishing one. "Vincent never allowed a mission house to come into existence until the financial basis was secure . . . and [he] was careful to make his contracts ironclad."<sup>58</sup> Early Vincentian foundations followed the general land and sea boundaries of France, which is approximately 80 percent the size of the state of Texas in the United States.<sup>59</sup>

Vincent's personal authenticity as a leader strengthened his appeal. His mission had credibility and his collaborators believed in his cause, alleviating the misery of the poor. This suggests that Vincent exemplified what we now call mission driven administration.

Guided by prudence in fulfilling his vision, Vincent developed his charitable projects from a firm financial base because of his convictions about what we call planning, investment, real estate, also deficit management.

When money was scarce, Vincent needed to be both persistent and eloquent to raise sufficient funds to balance the annual budget. We could surmise that his strategic planning intuitively included program development, staffing, and location based on the market research techniques of his days—observation of need. From those contracts that are in existence, we could conclude that Vincent scrutinized the details of foundations so that sufficient capital was ordinarily stipulated for each initiative.

Following his intuition, Vincent's attitude toward benefactors was not contradictory. Although he accepted financial contributions to establish new foundations, he would not accept money for any missions preached there by his priests. As Vincent replied to Madame Longueville when she wished to pay for a mission, "We are just as much under an obligation to give missions for nothing as the Capuchin friars are to live on alms."<sup>60</sup>

*Program Diversity.* Vincent utilized multiple sources of revenue to support his charitable initiatives. He pursued many income producing

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<sup>58</sup>Smith, "The Vincentian Mission," 45.

<sup>59</sup>Román, "Foundations," 145.

<sup>60</sup>Stafford Poole, C.M., *A History of the Congregation of the Mission: 1625—1843* (Santa Barbara: 1973), 81.

opportunities in the pre-industrial society. In today's terms, some examples of his diverse fund raising programs could be categorized as endowments, user fees, for-profit ventures, gift clubs, in-kind contributions, and joint ventures.

*Endowment.* Documents from that period verify that Vincent routinely established each foundation with a contract that provided a solid financial base of the necessary capital for start-up as well as a principle with sufficient income for future support. Extant contracts were well written and clearly specified the purpose of his establishment, type and frequency of services, target group, and remuneration.

*Public Service User Fees.* The private sector managed certain public services, such as transportation. This service then became a source of revenue for managers who charged a fee for its use. After paying a prescribed amount of income to the treasurer of France, the remaining balance became the manager's profit. Such profits supported several of Vincent's missions.

Coaches of public transport were the major source of capital for six of Vincent's foundations. Vincent earned rent from sublet coach lines or franchised them on an annual basis. One example of this is the circuit: Paris to Chartres, Rouen, Orléans, Soissons and Bordeaux, although profits fluctuated due to taxes and government interference.<sup>61</sup>

Purchasers had to pay tax on some goods, including salt, dry goods, and wines. A portion of these tax revenues reverted to some charities.

*For-Profit Venture.* The French East India Company in Madagascar had received a charter from Richelieu to establish a colony and commercial enterprises there. This required a resident priest. Vincent's accepted the invitation to collaborate with the Company. This opportunity proved costly for the Congregation of the mission due to the untimely death of the majority these missionaries.<sup>62</sup>

Vincent's prime collaborator, Louise de Marillac, was very creative and resourceful. Because of her ingenuity she was able to recognize possibilities and opportunities, and assess their funding potential. Once she wished to earn money by making and selling wine from the dormant vineyards at the castle Bicêtre. Many tavern managers in Paris protested vehemently! They even embarrassed and mocked the sisters so that police assistance was needed.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Román, "Foundations," 157.

<sup>62</sup>Poole, *History*, 253.

<sup>63</sup>Coste, *Life and Works*, 2:275.

*In Kind Contributions.* The record shows that Vincent's charities frequently received in-kind contributions. For example, a company of butchers from various parishes gave 5-6,000 pounds of meat. At another time, the Hosiers Company gave money, vestments, and articles that they had manufactured. There was one project where a barrel large enough to hold approximately ten bushels of salt was constantly being emptied and replenished. Parisian warehouses of Vincentian projects contained valuable silver pieces inscribed with the crests of noble family, period watches, and many curious items donated by Vincentian lay collaborators in order to generate cash to support his charitable initiatives.<sup>64</sup>

*Prudence.*

Prudence shone as the beacon of Vincent's management style, enlightening his deliberations and decisions. As the key operational principle, prudence guided him to choose safe investments, to control daily expenses and to appoint competent administrators. His devotion to prudent judgements probably contributed to his cautious approach to decision making and characteristic attitude of making haste slowly. Even Louise found it difficult to rush Vincent to make decisions!

Since Vincent was noted for being realistic and practical, it seems safe to conclude that his Gascon intuition and shrewd business sense made him realize that the effectiveness of his charitable missions related to sound business practices. To assure that his work would have the financial means necessary to function effectively, he stated, "I neither make nor set up nor accept those plans for establishments that are not made by those who have the power to do so, but by persons who have only the desire and do not wish to meet the costs."<sup>65</sup>

*Responsible Stewardship.*

As a responsible steward, Vincent seems to have used two primary administrative principles for program development:<sup>66</sup> leaving the initiative to God for new projects and accepting only those with a sound financial basis.

*Accountability.* Vincent tried to inculcate his innate sense of stewardship in all his collaborators. Speaking about Sister Jeanne Dalmagne,

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 2:486.

<sup>65</sup>Román, "Foundations," 141.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 138-40.

Vincent said, "She had great liberty of spirit . . . and spoke as frankly to the rich as to the poor. One day hearing that certain rich people had evaded their taxes and overburdened the poor with them, she told them plainly such conduct was contrary to justice. When I mentioned to her that she had spoken out very bravely, she answered that, when it was a question of God's glory and the welfare of the poor, we should never be afraid to tell the truth."<sup>67</sup>

In order to safeguard the patrimony of the poor, one of Vincent's primary goals was to raise the value of assets and manage revenue well. He struggled to support his extensive charitable network. Although this required charity rather than wealth, sufficient capital, plus adequate and regular income were absolutely necessary.<sup>68</sup>

One could even say that Louise kept monthly statistics of services delivered in order for Vincent to present an annual report to his benefactors. For example, towards the end of 1643, Vincent reported that the Daughters of Charity had cared for approximately 1,200 children since 1638. The annual expense at that time was more than 40,000 *livres*.<sup>69</sup>

Vincent was adamant about honesty when presenting accounts. "Those who manage the goods of the poor must carry out this duty faithfully, . . . and never, under any pretext whatsoever, say that a drug cost more than it actually did."<sup>70</sup>

*Investment.* In order to gain greater security, Vincent seems to have preferred investment in real property.<sup>71</sup> Stocks were not Vincent's first choice because he thought they fluctuated too much. He believed that perpetuation of the work directly related to reliable income from securities. "Otherwise, within fifty years, its fund will be reduced by half. The cost of things doubles every fifty years."<sup>72</sup>

To illustrate this point, Vincent once invested in a housing development with capital he had received from a bequest by Louis XIII. The king's widow, Anne of Austria, designated this amount (24,000 *livres*) to endow a foundation in Sedan. Vincent invested the cash in the construction of thirteen houses near Saint Lazare and then rented them

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<sup>67</sup>*Conferences to the Daughters of Charity*, #19 (15 January 1645), 170.

<sup>68</sup>Jacquart, "Real Estate," 181.

<sup>69</sup>Coste, *Life and Works*, 2:271.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>70</sup>*Conferences to the Daughters of Charity*, #83 (26 August 1657), 909.

<sup>71</sup>Jacquart, "Real Estate," 186.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 183.

to the Ladies of Charity as homes for foundlings. The rental income paid by the Ladies then provided regular support to the Sedan Missions.<sup>73</sup>

*Property.* Through extensive collaboration with the elite and powerful, Vincent received substantial gifts of landed property. With funds earmarked from a legacy, he engaged in transactions to combine, acquire or exchange plots to form larger tracts in order to regroup or consolidate small farms. The expanded acreage could better serve his mission because he used the land for farming to supply food to the poor in ravaged provinces. He also added other properties through a systematic and skillful procedure as money became available.<sup>74</sup>

These practices facilitated property development and increased profit earning capacity. Vincent received gifts of landed property that were substantial when Madame de Herse, a widow, gave two farms totalling 328 acres. In Frenneville, three contracts of sale and nine exchanges expanded a core land gift to two hundred twenty-three acres.<sup>75</sup> In another location, by 1672, one of his farms had grown to a total of 643 acres. The king's secretary who was also a benefactor received a gift of land from Vincent in exchange for a life annuity of 1,800 *livres* and hunting rights.<sup>76</sup> Subsequently, this transaction became the subject of litigation and Vincent lost the case.

### Values that Challenge

*Inventiveness to infinity results from the dynamic combination of inspiration with determination for effective solutions to the challenges and opportunities presented by increasing needs and decreasing resources. Creativity arises from the ageless vision of Vincent whose zeal prompted him to do more for the poor.*

#### *Creativity.*

Seeking always to do more to alleviate human misery, Vincent's creative approaches arose from his zeal. Although Divine Providence bestows the gift of creativity through inspiration, individuals express it through pursuits shaped by value-based choices.

Creativity goes beyond analysis. It cannot be planned, but needs to percolate and gradually unfold. Both leisure and prayerful reflection promote the process and prompt the question: "How could I do this differently?" Inventiveness surfaces from the incisive and

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<sup>73</sup>Coste, *Life and Works*, 2:271; see also Román, "Foundations," 158.

<sup>74</sup>Jacquart, "Real Estate," 186.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 192.

lifelong quest depicted in the film *Monsieur Vincent*, “More! I must do more!”

For Vincent, compassionate concern about scarce resources seems to have given birth to his ingenuity. For Louise de Marillac, it appears that when human support decreased, provisions from the sustaining hand of God increased.

This was especially evident during the starvation, illness, and violence of civil war. Once in 1649 matters were in a very bad state due to lack of bread, linen, blankets and money. Debts had piled up and charity seemed cold. Louise knocked in vain at every door.

She became discouraged and wondered if they should no longer accept more foundlings. She even spoke of abandoning the whole work if relief did not arrive soon.<sup>77</sup> Shortly Vincent met with the Ladies of Charity who donated their jewels instead of cash and ransomed the future for these foundlings.<sup>78</sup>

#### *Response to Events.*

Social changes, emerging needs, and limited resources conveyed God’s message to Vincent and he responded. Gradually, Vincent became personally involved with events as divine signals. Vincent seemed to become attuned to hearing God speak to him through the obstacles and opportunities manifested in the events he experienced.

Vincent not only graciously received contributions, he also gave them away generously. Once when funds were lacking to support the poor, Vincent himself contributed the balance needed, even though it was an amount he had just received, which would have purchased another horse to replace his old one.<sup>79</sup>

Who else but Vincent could successfully design what we would now call a joint venture. The unlikely players included a Carmelite nun, an army commander, and a bishop! Such was the basis for the establishment of the Charity at Troyes in 1638.<sup>80</sup>

The mature Vincent eventually realized that God was leading him in this way, and prompting him to bold initiatives. Innovation holds an important place in the Vincentian tradition. The Daughters of

<sup>77</sup>Coste, *Life and works*, 2:276.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:277.

<sup>79</sup>Emile Bougaud, *History of the Saint Vincent de Paul*, trans. Joseph Brady, C.M., 2 vols. (London: 1899). 1:304.

<sup>80</sup>Román, “Foundations,” 149.

Charity were the first women to have the “streets of the city for a cloister.”<sup>81</sup>

*Social Consciousness.*

Vincent valued small advocacy efforts and placed a high priority on personal service. He personally welcomed beggars at the door of Saint Lazare and gave them bread or alms. At times Vincent’s charity exhausted the petty cash box while there were still many poor outside waiting their turn.<sup>82</sup> In addition, a soup kitchen at Saint Lazare fed up to 600 poor persons several times a week.<sup>83</sup>

Even small and seemingly insignificant Vincentian projects have had reverberating impact on French history. For example, Vincent and Louise taught the poor to read despite prejudice and cultural mores. Becoming literate enhanced their human dignity and paved the way for future social change.

The foment leading to the French Revolution resulted in the dispersal of the Vincentian Family and great suffering for all France.<sup>84</sup> Yet, despite persecution, a vast international Vincentian Family of laity, clergy, and religious exists throughout the world.

In the United States, Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton’s early charitable efforts were with the Widow’s Society in New York (founded 1797). Members comforted widows during home visits and sponsored fundraising events. Mother Seton continued this tradition after her conversion to Catholicism, besides establishing the first religious community for women in North America.

The charter of Mother Seton’s little community in Emmitsburg states its Vincentian purpose: “works of piety, charity . . . especially for the care of the sick, the succor of the aged and infirm.”<sup>85</sup> This charter challenges all of Mother Seton’s daughters to be “inventive to infinity” so the vitality of Vincent’s mission endures for future generations.

<sup>81</sup>*Conference to the Daughters of Charity*, #111 (24 August 1659), 1213.

<sup>82</sup>Coste, *Life and Works*, 3:324.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:518.

<sup>84</sup>Historians mark the fall of the Bastille of 14 July 1789 as the beginning of the French Revolution. However, its first incident occurred the 13 July 1789 at Saint Lazare when revolutionaries ransacked headquarters of the Congregation of the Mission. The peasants were frantically seeking arms, ammunition, and food for their campaign. Finding only food at Saint Lazare, they rushed the Bastille the next day and found the arms they needed. Thus began a violent phase: the revolution had begun the previous May.

<sup>85</sup>In the United States, five religious communities of women trace their roots to Elizabeth Ann Seton and the Vincentian tradition.

### Conclusion

This paper has illustrated fund raising by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac for their mission. To continue their vision, today's mission-driven ministry of fund development requires extensive collaboration and advocacy within a framework of Vincentian values. Vincent could fund his initiatives because his appeal always focused on his mission—to serve the suffering Christ reflected in the faces of the poor.

We must continue his tradition and pass on his legacy. Let us energize one another to release our creative potential for projecting the ageless vision of Vincent into tomorrow.

There is no action in life that makes us know ourselves better or shows us more clearly what is God's will than prayer.

*(Saint Vincent de Paul, conference to Daughters of Charity,  
31 May 1648.*

That indeed is the charity which the Holy Spirit teaches when we learn that there is no greater love than to lose one's soul, that is to say, one's life for love of our neighbor.

*(Saint Vincent de Paul, conference to the Daughters of Charity,  
16 August 1644).*

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\*Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's of Emmitsburg: Act of Incorporation in the State of Maryland, 1817.