

300 Years of Charity

By REV. JOHN MUNDAY, C.M.

There is hardly a Catholic in the United States who does not have a warm spot in his heart for St. Vincent de Paul. This is why the Church in America, as well as in the world at large, is commemorating the 300th Anniversary of the death of St. Vincent.

The millions of Americans who wear the Miraculous Medal and the millions who attend the weekly Novena in honor of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, owe something to St. Vincent. For it was to one of the Sisters of Charity, founded by St. Vincent, Sister (now Canon) Catherine Laboure, that the Blessed Virgin appeared and bore the design of the Medal. And the Vincentian Fathers, notably Father Joseph A. Maher, C.M., have made America aware of the Medal.

Fruit of the Congregation of the Mission, known as the Vincentian Fathers because they were established by St. Vincent, confer six series of prizes upon diocesan seminarians and the holder of minor diocesan seminaries in this country. These seminarians have produced thousands of diocesan priests who minister to millions of Catholics between the two oceans. This enormous host of priests and people may claim St. Vincent as their spiritual father.

The chief traditional work of the Vincentian Fathers is the giving of parish missions. How many millions of people have attended these missions in the United States! They may all regard St. Vincent with affection as the father who has ministered their hearts and souls through his spiritual sons.

And who has not come under the kindly influence of the Sisters of Charity? Their hospitals, orphanages, asylums and schools have brought millions of Americans into contact with these daughters of St. Vincent. All these people have caught from their Sisters of the alms while head and blue habit the divine spirit of charity that won for their Holy Founder the "Apostle of Charity."

The Church has named St. Vincent the Patron of all works of charity. Hence, the Index of Charity, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and all similar organizations here and abroad hold him in the place of honor. Scarcely wonder then that the whole Church in America is honoring the beloved Saint during this momentous Anniversary Year.

Great is the rejoicing of the two religious families fathered by St. Vincent — the priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters or Sisters of Charity. The Superior General of these twin families — in their worldwide scope they embrace 8,000 priests and brothers and 45,000 Sisters — is William M. Sullivan, C.M., of Baltimore, Md., who now resides as the nineteenth successor of St. Vincent in the Motherhouse of the Vincentian Fathers in Paris, France.

St. Vincent's life was so full of prodigious labors in all branches of charity that his scholarly son, Father Pierre Coste, C.M., needed three large volumes of over 500 pages each to set down his life story.

One phrase, however, summarizes St. Vincent's life — love for God. But it was love for God spelt out in the fourteen works of mercy for the benefit of the children of God. "Let us love God," St. Vincent used to say, "but let it be in the sweat of our brow and with the strength of our arm."

Like those other famous benefactors of mankind who never lost the common touch, Abraham Lincoln and Pope John XXIII, Vincent sprang from the soil. Born in 1581 in southern France, in a family of six children, Vincent had the peasant's shrewdness and capacity for work.

The robust love for God, together with uncommon mental ability, impelled him toward an active life in the priesthood where he could better serve God and assist his poor family.

Relief Aide Now Bishop

Washington — (NC) — Pope John XXIII has appointed Mgr. Edward E. Swannstrom, executive director of the U.S. Bishops' far-flung relief and rehabilitation agency, Titular Bishop of Ache to serve as an auxiliary Bishop to Cardinal Spellman of New York.

Bishop-designate Swannstrom has been associated with Catholic Relief Services — National Catholic Welfare Conference, the U.S. Bishops' worldwide agency, since its inception in 1943 to assist millions made homeless and hungry by the ravages of World War II.

Under his administration, CRS-NCWCF has grown into the largest private relief organization of its kind in the world. In recent years, the annual program of CRS-NCWCF, both in monetary value and in the amount of relief distributed to the world's needy, virtually has equaled that of all other private U.S. relief agencies combined.

Jubilee Mass Wednesday

Bishop Kearney will celebrate a solemn Mass in honor of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac at Saint Peter and Paul Church, Rochester, Wednesday, Sept. 28, at 4:30 p.m.

The Mass honors the patron saints of the Sisters of Charity who staff St. Mary's Hospital, Rochester's first hospital.

Vincentian Father John Coleman will preach.

St. Bernard's Seminary choir, directed by Rev. Robert Smith, will sing the Mass. The mass is to be public to attend.

To get him started with his theology studies at the University of Louvain, his father sold a cow of oxen, and Vincent partly paid his way by teaching.

Obtained at twenty, Vincent looked about for a promising work so he could pay off his school debts and help his family. An elderly woman left him a legacy, but her agent did him wrong and it fled to Marseilles. Vincent took off after him, called in the law, and won the decision.

The money in hand, Vincent set sail from Marseilles for Marseilles, across a week of the Mediterranean. His ship was captured by pirates, he was sold into slavery in Africa, and spent two frustrating years in captivity before escaping.

This experience raised doubts in Vincent's mind whether he should spend his life getting

ahead in the world. And a few years later, while doing parish work in a shabby district about Paris, he finally discerned the destiny God had for him.

Instead of seeking a good position, Vincent himself was to become the friend and father of the poor. He would use millions of dollars from the wealthy and the nobility, but not for himself — there would be no featherbedding for himself, his family or his community.

Let us look at France in that first half of the seventeenth century. The nation was in agony. Foreign wars, civil war, religious strife were drawing its life blood. Nobles were in revolt against the throne. Soldiers and robber bands plundered the countryside leaving the peasants to eat grass and the bark of trees. Religion was at a low ebb. Poisoned by Protestantism, France was on bad terms with Rome.

From Bishops and monasteries the crown was collecting revenues that belonged to the Church, and naming its own Bishops and abbots, unworthy though these often were. While the people in general were Catholic in name, they were ignorant of their religion duties, lax and headstrong. The clergy, lacking priestly learning and piety, were not only ignorant of the poverty-stricken country districts and preferred the more pleasant life in the cities.

Here and there among the clergy, among noble and wealthy families, even at Court, a true Christian was to be found. For the most part, nevertheless, the land of Henry

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St. Vincent's master mind directed all these operations, and others. He gave conferences every week to his two Communities, put together rules and constitutions for them, learning by trial and error. He presided at the weekly meetings and retreats of the diocesan clergy. He laid down minute regulations for the Confraternities and the Ladies of Charity, to mother orphan homes, to nurse in hospitals, to visit jails, and so on.

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the Queen's Council to advise about appointments to bishoprics and abbacies. He visited convicts used as oxmen in slavery of war and fought for better conditions for them. He was flown to God, and he was canonized officially in 1875. He is a peasant priest — the savior of France and the glory of the Church — was already canonized in millions of hearts from the day he died.

Meanwhile, he was devoting his whole soul to his own interior life, to keep the flame of Divine Love burning fiercely. He rose at four o'clock with his priests, made an hour's meditation, offered daily Mass — "like an angel" — as people said of him — wore a hair shirt, encouraged himself in the darkness of his room, read the Divine Office on his knees before the Blessed Sacrament, and on

Integration Set For November

New Orleans — (RNS) — Catholic schools here will integrate on the same schedule as the public schools, according to a statement from the archdiocesan chancery office.

New Orleans public schools, originally ordered to integrate the first grade when classes resumed Sept. 7, were granted an extension until Nov. 14 by Federal Judge Skelly Wright. Catholic schools will open Sept. 6.

The chancery statement said the archdiocese would continue its previously announced policy which "envisioned that the desegregation of Catholic parochial and private schools in New Orleans parish will take place no later than when the public schools will become actually desegregated."

Integration in the Catholic schools, it noted, also will start in the first grade and be extended one grade annually.

Still Room For More

Sydney — (RNS) — Strong exception to widespread propaganda in favor of artificial birth control as a solution to the problem of overpopulation in underprivileged countries was voiced by the Australian Roman Catholic hierarchy in its 21st annual "Social Justice Sunday" statement.

The bishops called instead for an end to the exploitation of these countries by "more powerful nations" and a world-wide campaign to meet their economic needs.

Lay Teacher Ratio To Rise

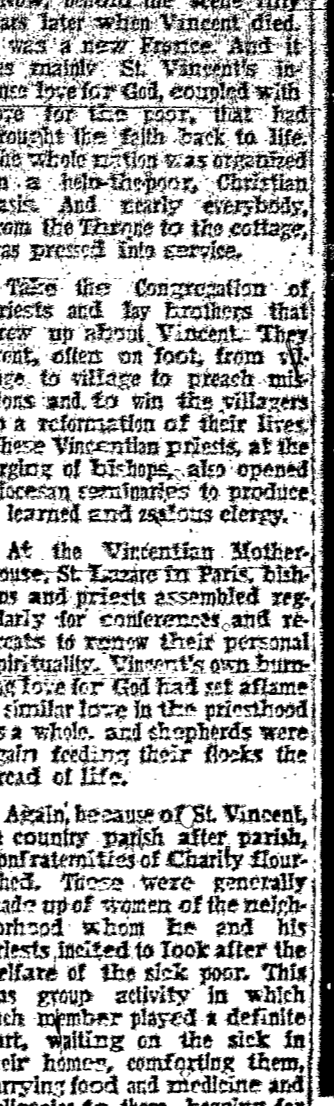
Milwaukee — (NC) — The present ratio of one lay teacher to every three nuns in Catholic elementary and secondary schools in this country will change in 1970 to one nun for every two lay teachers, an official of the National Catholic Educational Association has predicted.

Father O'Neil C. D'Amour said a complete financial reorganization is needed to meet this burden in the field of Catholic education.

Police Raid News Stands

Newark — (NC) — Essex County Sheriff's detectives and Newark P.K. police raided four candy stores near schools here and arrested their operators for dealing in allegedly obscene publications.

Sisters of Charity, with their French peasant garb, have been a familiar sight in Rochester since 1837 when a pioneer band of these arrived to build the first hospital in the city. Founded on fifty cents and undaunted faith the "hospital-in-a-stable" was quickly expanded to serve Civil War victims. During the past century, the nuns have not only cared for the sick, they have also taught catechism to children, aided the aged and given spiritual help to thousands. St. Mary's Hospital today is an up-to-date modern medical center with architects at work planning extensive expansion of its facilities.



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