

**SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT
AND MARGINALISATION
IN THE VINCENTIAN TRADITION:
*AN EXPLORATORY STUDY***

by

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‘Vincent de Paul with a Beggar’ by Meltem Aktas
Commissioned for Rosati House, de Paul University, Chicago, Illinois
USA

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Declaration of Originality

I certify that this dissertation, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Humanities, Waterford Institute of Technology, is entirely my own work, has not been taken for the work of others, and has not been submitted in any other university. The work of others, to the extent it has been used, has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my own work.

Student:

Dublin, April 2019

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

the many people who have invited me, both formally and informally, to accompany them as they discover for themselves God in their story and themselves in God's story and in so doing have challenged and encouraged me to discover anew my own truth;

those who have accompanied me in my quest to deepen my experience of God, in particular my late parents who were my first spiritual directors

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Finally, a very special thanks for the much practical support and encouragement given by my Community, the Daughters of Charity in particular to Bernardine, Eileen and Patricia, my local community and also by my colleagues in the Office for Evangelisation and Ecumenism in the Archdiocese of Dublin.

ABSTRACT

Spiritual Accompaniment and Marginalisation in the Vincentian Tradition: An Exploratory Study

by Máire Éibhlís NicUaithuas DC

The Vincentian tradition is the legacy of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, seventeenth century collaborators, mystics and founders who, after their deaths, became saints in the Catholic Church. Better known for their compassion, charity and material service to people who were marginalised, they did not neglect the spiritual needs of those to whom they ministered. This reflexive, mystagogic, four-step explorative study examines how the legacy of their spiritual practice contributes to and informs the contemporary practice of the spiritual accompaniment (an interchangeable term for the ministry known as spiritual direction) by members of the Vincentian Family.

The theoretical framework for the research is established by exploring the evolving history of spiritual direction giving particular attention to its availability to and practice with people who are marginalised; exploring metaphors and models for spiritual direction from the early Church to more contemporary offerings; and proposing an over-riding paradigm of story-telling. Key formative influences on the spirituality of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac are explored and more contemporary studies in relation to spiritual accompaniment of people who are marginalised examined.

The applied aspect of the research provides a thematic analysis of the findings of two qualitative studies the first with twelve practicing spiritual directors, who are members of the Vincentian Family internationally, and the second with six people in marginalised circumstances in Ireland who have received spiritual direction from members of the Vincentian Family. These are compared with the themes from a representative sample of the writings of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac.

The research concludes by suggesting some characteristics of spiritual direction in the Vincentian Tradition and identifies the capacity for further research on the nature, character and scope of spiritual direction in diverse contexts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Icon of ' <i>St Vincent de Paul with a Beggar</i> ' by Meltem Aktas	ii
Declaration	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Abstract	vi
Table of Contents	vii

CHAPTER 1 Introduction

Research Questions	1
Definition of Terms	1
Background to Research	3
Aim	5
Objectives	6
Methodology	7
Outline of the Research	8
References	10

CHAPTER 2 Spiritual Direction in the Christian Tradition

Introduction	11
Definition	12
Evolving History	16
Early Church [1st-3rd Centuries]	20
Desert Tradition [4th-5th Centuries]	24

Western Monastic Tradition [6th-12th Centuries]	28
Non-Monastic late Medieval Tradition	34
Reformations – Protestant and Catholic [1450-1700]	41
The Protestant Reformation	42
Catholic Reformation: Spanish	44
Catholic Reformation: French	48
Eighteenth – Twentieth Centuries	54
Mid-Twentieth – Twenty-First Centuries	56
Characteristics of Spiritual Direction	60
Form and Method of Practice	61
Aim and Purpose	62
Qualities in a Spiritual Director	62
Challenges going Forward for Spiritual Direction with People who are	
Marginalised	65
Conclusion	66
References	68

CHAPTER 3 Metaphors and Models of Spiritual Direction

Introduction	75
Language, Metaphors, Models, Paradigms	77
What the Literature has to say about Models of Spiritual Direction	81
Five Significant Metaphors	82
Spiritual Direction as Journey/Pilgrimage	82
Spiritual Direction as Friendship/ <i>Anamchara</i>	89
Spiritual Direction as Hospitality	95

Spiritual Direction as Midwifing	100
Spiritual Direction as Mentoring/Teaching	105
Story-telling as the Paradigm for Spiritual Direction in Contexts of Marginalisation	111
Conclusion	115
References	116

CHAPTER 4 Current Practice

Introduction	120
Vincentian Articles	123
<i>Presence</i> Articles	128
Articles from Other Sources	139
Convergences, Divergences and Emerging Frameworks	156
Conclusion	163
References	164

CHAPTER 5 Research Design and Methods

Introduction	167
Research Design - Exploratory	170
Qualitative Research	172
Qualitative Research Methods	173
Methodological Foundation	174
Philosophical Underpinnings	185
Role of the Researcher	186
Conclusion	193

References	194
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CHAPTER 6 Sampling

Introduction	198
Phase I	199
Phase II	203
Conferences and Correspondence of Vincent and Louise	208
Data Collection	208
Data Processing	212
Ethical Considerations	213
Reflection	219
Conclusion	221
References	222

CHAPTER 7 Vincentian Tradition

Introduction	223
France at the Dawn of the Seventeenth Century	224
Personal Circumstances and Formative Years	228
Vincent de Paul	229
Louise de Marillac	232
Foundations	234
Foundation Documents:	236
Confraternities and Ladies of Charity	237
Congregation of the Mission	240
Daughters of Charity	242

Conferences and Conferences of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac:	
Conferences of Vincent de Paul to the Ladies of Charity	248
Conferences of Vincent de Paul to the Congregation of the Mission	251
Conferences of Vincent de Paul to the Daughters of Charity	257
Conferences and Writings of Louise de Marillac	262
Letters written by Vincent de Paul	266
Letters written by Louise de Marillac	273
Conclusion	278
References	279

CHAPTER 8 Research Findings

Introduction	281
Phase I Interviews	282
Themes – Phase I:	
Gender Differences	285
Training and Post-Training Issues	285
All are called to Holiness	286
Holistic/Integrated Service – Formal and Informal Dimensions	289
Vincentian Discernment and Values	294
Vincentians go out to People – to meet Christ	296
Evangelised by People who are Poor	298
Concluding Note	300
Phase II Interviews	301
Themes – Phase II:	
Reaching out to Others	305

Initiation of Contact	307
Frequency of Meetings	309
Place of Meeting	310
Gender Issues	312
The Call to Holiness	313
Discernment and Virtues	314
The Encounter	316
Evangelising the Spiritual Director	318
Concluding Note	320
Conferences, Correspondence and Writings of Vincent and Louise	320
Themes – Conferences, Correspondence and Writings of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac:	
Method of Delivering Conferences and Writing Letters	324
Integrated Corporal AND Spiritual Service	327
Growth in Holiness/Preparation for Death	328
Virtues	331
Providence/God’s Will	332
Discernment	334
Mental Prayer/Meditation	336
Scriptural Basis	338
Gender Issues	339
Concluding Note	340
Conclusion	341
References	342

CHAPTER 9 Discussion of Findings

Introductory Comments	343
Discussion on Findings by Theme:	
Call to and Growth in Holiness	346
Discernment, Virtues, Providence and the Will of God	350
Holistic/Integrated Corporal AND Spiritual Service	357
Vincentians go out to People/Reaching out to Others	366
Gender Differences/Issues	370
Evangelised by People who are Poor/Evangelising the	
Spiritual Director	372
Training and Post-Training Issues/Method of Delivering Conferences	376
Meditation/Mental Prayer	380
Scriptural Basis	383
Conclusion	383
References	385

CHAPTER 10 Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction	387
Characteristics of Vincentian Spiritual Direction	388
Contribution to the Academic Literature	390
Strengths of the Research	391
Limitations of the Research	392
Unexpected Findings	393
Recommendations for Future Research	395
Other Recommendations	396

References	398
BIBLIOGRAPHY	399
NETORGRAPHY	423
APPENDICES	
Appendix A Luminère	427
Appendix B Letter of Invitation – Phase I	428
Appendix C Participant Information Sheet – Phase I	429
Appendix D Consent Form – Phase I	432
Appendix E Questionnaire – Phase I	434
Appendix F Profiles of Spiritual Director Interviewees:	
Age and Length of time practicing as a Spiritual Director	435
Appendix G Profiles of Spiritual Director Interviewees:	
Spiritual Direction Training Programme Completed	436
Appendix H Profiles of Spiritual Director Interviewees:	
Ministries	437
Appendix I Letter of Invitation to Gatekeepers – Phase II	438
Appendix J Information Sheet for Gatekeepers – Phase II	440
Appendix K Initial Letter of Invitation to Participants – Phase II	443
Appendix L Participant Information Sheet – Phase II	444
Appendix M Informed Consent – Phase II	447
Appendix N Questions for Interviews – Phase II	449
Appendix O Participant Profiles – Phase II	450

Appendix P	De Paul Ireland	452
Appendix Q	Outside History by Eavan Boland	454
Appendix R	Centre panel of a triptych in the Chapel of Mercy, Vincentian Parish, Graz, Austria portraying Vincent de Paul and poor at the Lord's table	455

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Mapping Waaijman's Methodology for Study of Spirituality with aspects of discernment	179
Table 2	Mapping Steps of Mystagogical Research to Lectio Divina	180
Table 3	Summary of Interviewee Spiritual Directors Profiles	203
Table 4	Summary of Interviewee Directees Profiles	207
Table 5	Mapping of Threads to Themes – Phase I	284
Table 6	Mapping of Threads to Themes – Phase II	304
Table 7	Mapping of Threads to Themes – Conferences and Correspondence	324
Table 8	Comparison of the Findings from the Three Samples	345

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this research I aim to distil insights regarding three pressing pastoral issues. Firstly, how is spiritual direction in the tradition of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac offered and delivered, in particular, to people who are marginalised and how is it experienced and received by them? Secondly, from this can a distinctive Vincentian approach to spiritual direction be identified? Thirdly, if the preceding findings are affirmative, what are its characteristics and what has this to offer for the practice of spiritual direction with people who are marginalised?

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Three of the terms used in the title of this research require some clarification. I am using the term ‘Spiritual Accompaniment’ which, as will be seen in the following Chapter, is one of a number of inter-changeable terms used for the ministry known as spiritual direction. Many of the spiritual directors interviewed expressed their preference for this term. It would also appear to me to be a more accurate expression of spiritual direction as offered and received within the Vincentian Tradition.

‘Marginalisation’ is the term I use to describe those people who, as a result of economic poverty or for other reasons, are excluded from real and meaningful participation in the society within which they live. As a result they are pushed to the

margins, are deprived of human dignity, feel and often are voiceless, are often demonised by the derogatory way they are spoken about¹ and treated as pariahs in society. While the term ‘people who are marginalised’ covers a multitude of disparate groups all are in some way excluded from the mainstream of society generally, they often also feel excluded from the Church and as a result can feel excluded from the spiritual dimension of life as well. Juan Reed talks about marginalised people being ‘invisible and inaudible.’² They often live in fear not knowing who they can trust. The reasons people are marginalised may vary according to an individual society’s norms and epoch. While not an exclusive list, at this time people who are homeless, refugees, migrants, belonging to ethnic minority groups; people who are currently or were formerly in prison; people who are victims of war or who have been trafficked and enslaved; people who are physically and/or intellectually disabled, mentally ill or otherwise disturbed; people who are victims of AIDS or who are terminally ill; people addicted to alcohol, drugs, etc; and elderly people are generally marginalised within society today. Despite their social exclusion many in these marginalised groups live, like the poor man Lazarus at the gate of the rich man, (Lk 16: 19-20) isolated yet in full view. On account of their social exclusion, many of the people in these groups also experience economic poverty, in particular since they are denied the possibility of meaningful employment and are in the main dependent on inadequate payments from the State.³ Within the Vincentian Tradition the tendency is to use either the term ‘people who are poor and/or marginalised’ or ‘people who are marginalised and/or in

¹ For example the Mulhall sisters who were convicted for killing and dismembering their mother’s boyfriend are constantly called ‘scissor sisters’ by the media; drug addicts are referred to as ‘druggies’, people in the LGBT community as ‘homos’ and often people who are unemployed or dependant on state support are called ‘wasters’

² Juan Reed, "Can I Get a Witness? Spiritual Direction with the Marginalised," in *Still Listening: New Horizons in Spiritual Direction*, ed. Norvene Vest (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2000). p. 97

³ cf budget submissions from www.vpsj.ie, www.socialjustice.ie and www.svp.ie

poverty'. Since the focus of this research is on their marginalisation, not directly on their economic poverty, I am using the term 'marginalisation' to include people who are marginalised and in poverty. The subject of payment for spiritual direction is a completely separate issue and is not addressed in this research.

The 'Vincentian Tradition' or 'Vincentian Charism' is the term by which the legacy of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac is known. It refers to their way of understanding and expressing their experience of God's presence and action in their own lives and the lives of those they met who were suffering and in need. Many individuals and groups who dedicate themselves today to serve Christ in people who are suffering and experiencing poverty continue to be inspired by it.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Shortly after it was published in 2003 I read an important publication of Spiritual Directors International,⁴ *Tending the Holy: Spiritual Direction Across Traditions*.⁵ While I very much enjoyed the book, in which individual chapters were dedicated to various Christian and other traditions, I was left with the question, 'Where is the Vincentian tradition?' I have been a practicing spiritual director for more than thirty years as a member of the Vincentian Family. In that time and for well over ten years beforehand I have received spiritual direction myself both from other members of the Vincentian Family and directors from other traditions. My experience both as director and directee have given me an instinctive sense that Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac made a different and specific contribution to the ministry of

⁴ Spiritual Directors International was formed in the early 1990's by a number of practising spiritual directors. Today it has become a global learning community on six continents.
<http://sdiworld.org/about/>.

⁵ Norvene Vest, ed. *Tending the Holy: Spiritual Direction across the Traditions*. 'A Spiritual Directors International Book' (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing 2003).

spiritual direction. While the tradition is not documented in the manner of, for example, the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola, I believe it continues in the way the members of the Vincentian Family practice spiritual direction today.

Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac were seventeenth century collaborators, mystics and founders who became saints in the Catholic Church. While better known for their compassion, charity and material service to people who were poor or marginalised, they did not neglect the spiritual needs of those to whom they ministered.

Many of the Letters that we have from both Vincent and from Louise to one another, to the early confrères and sisters and to others are letters of spiritual direction or contain occasional references to spiritual direction. Their Conferences to both the early sisters, confrères, Confraternities and Ladies of Charity also contain spiritual direction and describe a model for how to be present to people who are poor or marginalised. The Letters and Conferences of Vincent de Paul are contained in the thirteen volumes of *St Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences and Documents*⁶ which have been translated, edited, and annotated by the Vincentian Translation Project from the 1920 edition of Pierre Coste, CM. Those of Louise de Marillac are in the single volume *Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*⁷, translated and edited by Louise Sullivan DC. These letters and Conferences continue to be significant in the formation of the members of the Vincentian Family to this day.

⁶ Pierre Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*, trans. Vincentian Translation Project, English ed., 13 vols. (Brooklyn, New York: New City Press, 1985-2010).

⁷ Louise Sullivan DC, ed. *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. Translated by DC Louise O'Sullivan. (Brooklyn, New York: New City Press, 1991).

Much research has previously been carried out into seventeenth century French spirituality⁸ together with the associated history of spiritual direction. The research in relation to Vincentian Spirituality has tended to focus on the expression of that spirituality in practical, material service to people who are poor or marginalised while very little emphasis has been given to the associated spiritual service that is implicit in it.⁹ Research in relation to traditions of Spiritual Direction has also tended to ignore a Vincentian approach.¹⁰

AIM

The aim of this thesis is to explore how spiritual accompaniment, delivered in the tradition of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, is offered to and experienced by people, in particular those who are marginalised, so as to identify a specific Vincentian approach to the spiritual direction given to them.

It plans to consider the significance of the contribution of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac for engaging the spiritual needs of those to whom they ministered specifically as it applies to spiritual accompaniment and to investigate how the resources contained in their writings form and inform the contemporary practice of spiritual direction by members of the Vincentian Family with those who are marginalised. The understanding of this ministry will be studied in both its contemporary and historical contexts.

⁸ Edward R Udovic, "Seventeenth-Century France," in *Vincent De Paul and Louise De Marillac: Rules, Conferences, and Writings* ed. John Rybolt and Frances Ryan (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1995).

⁹ André Dodin, *Vincent De Paul and Charity : A Contemporary Portrait of His Life and Apostolic Spirit* (New York: New City Press, 1993).

¹⁰ Lavinia Byrne, ed. *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance* (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990).

OBJECTIVES

The objectives for this research fall into three broad categories:

Definitional Objectives:

- ❖ To explore definitions of and other names for the term ‘Spiritual Direction’ and propose a working definition;
- ❖ To explore metaphors and models for ‘Spiritual Direction’;
- ❖ To identify an over-arching paradigm for ‘Spiritual Direction’.

Contemporary Objectives:

- ❖ To identify the current practice of spiritual direction, in particular, with people who are marginalised;
- ❖ To examine how the approach of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac continues to form and inform the practice of spiritual directors within the Vincentian Family;
- ❖ To propose and examine a Vincentian approach to spiritual direction.

Historical Objectives:

- ❖ To identify the key elements of the historical development of and the various approaches to spiritual direction as practiced within the Christian tradition;
- ❖ To identify the key elements of the historical, cultural, theological and spiritual context of seventeenth century France for the purpose of reflecting on their influence on the ministry of spiritual direction;
- ❖ To situate Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac within this epoch and to explore the formative influences on their spirituality and its expression;
- ❖ To examine the influences of both personal experience and ministerial practice on spiritual direction in the lives of Vincent and Louise;

- ❖ To identify through a selection of the Letters, Conferences and Writings of Vincent and Louise their specific approach to the practice of spiritual direction.

METHODOLOGY

This research will be carried out by way of a reflexive, mystagogic, four-step exploratory study according to the outline of the process set out below:

1. Establish a theoretical framework grounded on
 - the evolving history of spiritual direction with particular attention being given to its availability to and practice with people who were marginalised,
 - the document analysis of a representative sample of the writings of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac and
 - contemporary studies in relation to spiritual care of people who are marginalised.
2. Describe and understand the practice of spiritual direction by a specific cohort of spiritual directors, i.e. those who belong to the Vincentian Family.
3. Describe and understand the experience of a specific cohort of people who have received spiritual direction, i.e. people who are marginalised and who have received spiritual direction from members of the Vincentian Family.
4. Analyse the findings and draw conclusions.

OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH

In the next Chapter I will begin by looking at definitions for spiritual direction, of which spiritual accompaniment is but one. I will then examine the evolving history of spiritual direction specifically within Western Christianity. This will be done by highlighting how the spiritual ideal, and the spiritual direction it gave rise to, of each period from the early church until today were in response to the particular zeitgeist of a period of time. Special emphasis in each period will be on how spiritual direction was made available to people who were marginalised. The chapter will conclude with some of the characteristics of spiritual direction and the challenges going forward for spiritual direction with people who are marginalised.

Recognising the inadequacy of language when it comes to communicating deeper human experiences Chapter 3 will explore what the literature has to say about Models and Metaphors of Spiritual Direction. It will ask how much literature speaks about spiritual direction with people who are marginalised and it will conclude by suggesting story-telling as an over-riding paradigm for spiritual direction.

In Chapter 4 I will turn to the current practice of spiritual direction with people who are marginalised. In this regard I will highlight the particular lacuna in the literature in this regard.

The research method being employed for the applied aspect of this study will be the subject of Chapter 5. It will set out the methodological foundation and role of the researcher, specifically in relation to being a reflexive researcher.

Chapter 6 will give the details of the sampling methods used for each of the populations of interest before specifically addressing the sampling for the interviews in both the Phase I and Phase II. Summary profiles for both sets of interviewees are included. The design of the research instrument is addressed in the Data Collection

description and the mechanics of the data processing will be set out. Ethical Considerations in relation to the research as a whole and in particular in relation to the interviews in both Phase I and Phase II are detailed.

In Chapter 7 I turn to the Vincentian Tradition setting Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac within seventeenth century France; highlighting each of their personal circumstances and formative years; leading into the foundations they were responsible for. The Chapter concludes by describing and carrying out the process for the random selection of their Conferences, Correspondence and Writings from 1617 when the Confraternities of Charity were established by Vincent until the death of both of them in 1660 to include a selection of:

- conferences given to each group established;
- letters exchanged with each other and a variety of other people; and
- conferences and letters in each decade.

The Phase I interviews, Phase II interviews and the random selection of the writings of Vincent and Louise are coded separately into threads which are then woven together into themes. Chapter 8 details how this is done and the findings from each set of interviews and the writings.

In Chapter 9 the themes from the three samples are compared and discussed further drawing on additional Conferences and Correspondence of Vincent and Louise and the literature generally.

In the final Chapter I draw conclusions and highlight some characteristics identified of spiritual direction in the Vincentian Tradition with people who are marginalised. I also address some of the strengths and limitations of the research, unexpected findings and make some recommendations for future research.

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Chapter 2

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

INTRODUCTION

Spiritual Direction, also known as Spiritual Accompaniment, Spiritual Guidance, Soul Care or Soul Friendship, exists in different forms in all spiritual traditions and in the Christian tradition is as old as the tradition itself. Indeed the terminology itself differs across the different reform traditions.¹ Benner calls it the ‘jewel in the crown of soul-care relationships... a form of spiritual friendship.’² In her Introduction to ‘Traditions of Spiritual Guidance’ Lavinia Byrne observes, ‘So great is the current wave of interest in the ministry of spiritual direction that it is tempting to see it uniquely as a late twentieth-century phenomenon.’³ We tend to use the term ‘spiritual direction’ when speaking of the practice of soul care throughout history, however, Ruffing notes that the terms ‘*spiritual direction, spiritual director and directee*’ originate in the post-Tridentine historical period.⁴ Indeed, Ranft draws our attention to the fact that while the phrases ‘spiritual direction’ or spiritual guidance’ are not found at all in early Christian literature; what is found ‘are people reflecting

¹ The different denominations within the Reform Tradition tend to use the terms ‘spiritual guidance,’ ‘spiritual formation,’ ‘soul care’ and ‘pastoral care’ cf Karen Lebacqz and Joseph Driskill, *Ethics and Spiritual Care: A Guide for Pastors, Chaplains, and Spiritual Directors* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2000). p. 61; Betsy Barber and Chris Baker, "Soul Care and Spiritual Formation: An Old Call in Need of New Voices," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 7, no. 2 (2014). 270-283

² David G Benner, *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship & Direction* (Downers Grove IL: 2002). p. 87

³ Byrne. p. vii

⁴ Ruffing. p. 13

on the reality of spiritual direction, albeit using different terminology.’⁵ Leech, likewise, reminds us that the role of the ‘personal guide’ has been significant in all primitive cultures.⁶ The roots of the Celtic Anamchara may indeed be in the pre-Christian Druidic tradition.⁷ Before tracing the evolution of Spiritual Direction within the Christian Tradition, with particular emphasis on how it has been available to people who are marginalised, to what it has become today and highlighting the particular model out of which I, as a Daughter of Charity, work I will outline some attempts at defining it.

DEFINITION

Spiritual Direction, as we know it today, usually takes place within a one-to-one relationship specifically and exclusively for that purpose, so much so that Barry⁸ and Michael⁹ define it in that way. It was not, as we shall see, always the case; nor indeed is it the only model of practice today. The practice within the different traditions of spiritual direction were also varied, to such an extent that it is impossible to say that any one model of practice defines spiritual direction. Indeed a change in attitude and practice is suggested by Tyler as one reason underlying the changing terminology.¹⁰

There is no single, universally accepted definition of spiritual direction. Apart from the few definitions that specifically link Spiritual Direction to the sacramental

⁵ Patricia Ranft, *A Woman's Way: The Forgotten History of Women Spiritual Directors* (New York: Palgrave, 2000). p. 21

⁶ Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend: An Invitation to Spiritual Direction* (San Francisco, CA: Harper 1992). p. 39

⁷ Ibid. p. 45

⁸ William Barry and William Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, Second ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 1993).

⁹ Chester P. Michael, *An Introduction to Spiritual Direction* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Peter Tyler, "Christian Spiritual Direction," in *The Bloomsbury Guide to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Richard Woods and Peter Tyler (London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2012). p. 200

life of the Church¹¹ most efforts to define spiritual direction describe various aspects of the practice of a process of journeying with others in their relationship with God, however they understand God in their lives. Indeed the website of Spiritual Directors in Europe says that ‘by its very nature, (Spiritual Direction) escapes definition.’¹² While that may well be the case, as a recent contributor to *Presence* states, if a spiritual director ‘can’t explain spiritual direction in a way it can be understood, a potential spiritual directee might feel uncomfortable entrusting part of their spiritual growth to somebody with seemingly so little understanding of what they do.’¹³ Spiritual Directors International defines it as a ‘contemplative practice’, ‘a process of accompanying people on a spiritual journey and helping them grow closer to God (or the sacred, the holy, or a higher power).’¹⁴ The All Ireland Spiritual Guidance Association also defines it as a relationship that ‘accompanies persons on their spiritual journey, befriending their spirit and entering into the spiritual process with them in ways that foster spiritual growth in all of the realities of a person’s life.’¹⁵ Carolyn Gratton in ‘The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality’ focusses her definition on Christian direction of which she says: ‘Christian direction, then, is rooted in Christ as the revelation of the Mystery, as being himself the way, the truth, and the life; the ultimate source of spiritualisation, interiorisation and sanctification; the one who from his fullness pours God’s love into human hearts by giving us the Holy Spirit.’¹⁶ Leech notes that while in early Christianity many ‘references to a personal

¹¹ Gabriel C. Rochelle, "Spiritual Direction," in *The Encyclopaedia of Christianity*, ed. Geoffrey W Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008). 153-155

¹² Spiritual Directors in Europe, accessed May, 2013. <http://www.sd-europe.eu/>.

¹³ Joe McHugh, "Starting out as a Spiritual Director," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 19, no. 2 (June 2013). pp 15-27

¹⁴ Spiritual Directors International, "What Is Spiritual Direction," accessed May, 2013. <http://sdiworld.org/about/what-is-spiritual-direction/>.

¹⁵ All Ireland Spiritual Guidance Association, accessed May, 2013. <http://www.aisga.ie/about-spiritual-direction/about-spiritual-direction>.

¹⁶ Carolyn Gratton, "Spiritual Direction," in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993). p. 912

relationship with a priest are sometimes related specifically to the need for penance and restoration to fellowship within the community' there are also more general references to the need for spiritual guidance.¹⁷

In her study of '*The Contemporary Ministry of Spiritual Direction*', Sandra Schneiders, describes it as 'part of a larger cultural phenomenon of our times which might be called the quest for personal authenticity through interiority,'¹⁸ and Chester Michael says 'the present popularity of spiritual direction is part of the whole search for inner meaning and personal fulfillment that our present age finds so attractive'.¹⁹ Other definitions of spiritual direction include: 'that which helps us figure out how best to 'reform' our lives, to become *imago Dei* once again and thus be happy.'²⁰ 'a relationship initiated by a spiritual seeker who finds a mature person of faith willing to pray and respond with wisdom and understanding to his or her questions about how to live spiritually in a world of ambiguity and distraction',²¹ 'a prayer process in which a person seeking help in cultivating a deeper personal relationship with God meets with another for prayer and conversation that is focused on increasing awareness of God in the midst of life experiences and facilitating surrender to God's will.'²²

The ministry of spiritual direction can be understood as the meeting of two or more people whose desire is to prayerfully listen for the movements of the Holy Spirit in all areas of a person's life (not just their formal prayer life). It is a three-way relationship: among the *true* director who is the Holy Spirit (which in Christian tradition is the Spirit of Christ present in and among us), and the human director (who listens for the *directions* of the Spirit within the directee), and the directee.²³

¹⁷ Leech. p. 41

¹⁸ Sandra Schneiders, "The Contemporary Ministry of Spiritual Direction," in *Spiritual Direction: Contemporary Readings*, ed. Kevin G. Culligan (Locust Valley, NY: Living Flame Press, 1983). p. 41

¹⁹ Michael. p. 3

²⁰ Ranft. p. 20

²¹ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith* (New York NY: HarperCollins, 2006). p. ix

²² David G. Benner and Gary W. Moon, *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls: A Guide to Christian Approaches and Practices* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004). p. 94

²³ Tilden Edwards, *Spiritual Director Spiritual Companion* (New York/Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2001). p. 2

‘Spiritual direction: an interpersonal relationship in which one person assists others to reflect on their own experience in the light of who they are called to become in fidelity to the Gospel.’²⁴ The definition that Barry works out of is ‘the help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship.’²⁵ For Ruffing it is ‘an ancient ascetical practice in which one person serves as a guide, conversation partner, and a co-discerner with another who seeks to explore, reflect on, and grow in his/her spiritual life.’²⁶ More and more today those seeking spiritual direction are coming from non-Theistic traditions as well as Theistic traditions, however they understand and experience the Divine.²⁷ Mabry notes that this in itself poses a challenge for the spiritual director in finding a language that applies across the spectrum.²⁸ This is particularly relevant in relation to people who are marginalised and feel that their marginalisation includes exclusion from a previous Theistic tradition, for example people in the Roman Catholic tradition who are divorced and remarried or who belong to the LGBT community or who have rejected the Church because of abuse they or others have suffered.

All of these definitions from scholars of global significance highlight the nuances and diversity of the definition of spiritual direction today. In different ways they all speak of journeying with others in their relationship with God. However, they focus exclusively on the growth which takes place in the one being accompanied with

²⁴ Katherine Marie Dyckman and L Patrick Carroll, *Inviting the Mystic, Supporting the Prophet* (New York/Ramsey NJ: Paulist Press, 1981). p. 20

²⁵ Barry and Connolly. p. 8

²⁶ Janet Ruffing, "Direction, Spiritual," in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (London: SCM Press, 2005). p. 243

²⁷ John R Mabry, *Starting Spiritual Direction* (Berkeley CA: Apocryphile Press, 2017). p. 3

²⁸ Ibid. p. 3

no mention of the growth that occurs in the spiritual director in what is a mutual though unequal relationship.

The Vincentian Centre for Spirituality and Work defines Spiritual Direction as ‘a ministry of belonging in love that awakens an awareness of God’s Presence and enables a discernment of the daily choices that lead to union with God.’ In line with this vision, over time, both as a directee and a director, I have come to understand spiritual direction as an intentional relationship that enables both director and directee discover how God lives within the story of each of their lives; how they live within the story of God’s life and through which we lead one another more deeply into God. As a spiritual director I contribute to this when I listen deeply to the other without judgement as they unfold their story, listen to God in the situation, listen to myself as I hear what is being shared and hold all three in the contemplative space. I have also come to understand in a deeper way the mutuality of the spiritual direction relationship, despite its asymmetry. An individual directee is guided towards a particular director because of the specific characteristics they can identify. At the same time the directee is a gift given to the director to help the director grow. In this they evangelise one another.

EVOLVING HISTORY

In tracing the history of spiritual direction within the Christian tradition²⁹ writers without exception agree that there are a number of different models³⁰ and forms/approaches.³¹ Almost all historical accounts³² begin, as the history of

²⁹ Byrne.

³⁰ Leech

³¹ Ranft

³² Ruffing

spirituality itself does, with the desert tradition in the early centuries of Christianity³³ and continue through to the contemporary post-Vatican II, practice.³⁴ Ruffing and others, however, draw attention to an earlier tradition, ‘Christianity developed from the relationship of a community of disciples with their itinerant rabbi-teacher Jesus who practised both individual and communal ‘spiritual direction’ together with his preaching and healing ministries.’³⁵ This pre-desert tradition is also highlighted by Ranft while, Gratton and Michael trace the roots of spiritual direction to the Hebrew Scriptures, in particular to the writings and traditions of the prophets found there ‘which emerged with the fullness of revelation in Christ, continued through the apostles and the life of the early Church.’³⁶ Far from simply being variations on an historical timeline, each of the approaches emerge in response to the global zeitgeist and the spiritual ideal that it gives rise to. As a result the practice of spiritual direction has taken different forms within each of the historical timeframes³⁷ as different models are employed related to the specific way(s) of responding to that ideal.³⁸

In general all history is written from the centre, from the perspective of those who have influence – the academy of the powerful. Seldom are the voices of those who are poor or on the margins heard. As is noted on the sleeve of ‘Forgotten Conquests: Rereading New World History from the Margins’ by Gustavo Vardesio, ‘(t)he narrators, speaking for their culture, assume the role of the subject, repressing

³³ Gerald L. Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

³⁴ Adrian Hastings interweaves a geographical frame with the historical one cf Adrian Hastings, ed. *A World History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids MI, Cambridge: William B Eerdmans, 1999).

³⁵ Ruffing, in *The New Scm Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. p. 243

³⁶ Gratton, in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*. p. 912

³⁷ George A Lane, *Christian Spirituality: A Historical Sketch* (Chicago IL: Loyola Press, 2004).

³⁸ What follows also draws on the class notes of the Formation Programme for Spiritual Directors in the Vincentian Tradition prepared and delivered by Dr Vie Thorgren particularly in relation to the significant ‘threads’ of spirituality in any given timeframe

all other voices, epistemologies'.³⁹ Patricia Ranft notes a similar trend related to the history of women being 'rescued from obscurity'.⁴⁰ Laura Swan makes a similar point in naming her book on the Desert Mothers, 'The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, Lives and Stories of Early Christian Women'⁴¹ and on the Beguines, 'The Wisdom of the Beguines: The Forgotten Story of a Medieval Women's Movement'.⁴² In 'The World History of Christianity', Adrian Hastings notes some of his own significant omissions⁴³ and observes that 'Islands, it seems, do tend to be overlooked in wide-ranging studies such as ours.'⁴⁴ The same is true in relation to the history of spiritual direction. The focus of most writers has been on spiritual direction as the prerogative and privilege of the elite to the extent that people who are marginalised are invisible as far as the historical narrative of spiritual direction is concerned and, as in history, generally the poor are written out. Indeed, even those offering this soul care to people who are on the margins have themselves been marginalised and at times treated with suspicion and derision. In most cases they and/or their engagement with people who are on the margins, has been written out of the history of spiritual direction. Yet, not just the elite and privileged, those at the centre, but all people are called to holiness and to grow in holiness and to have the means to do so, including spiritual direction, at their disposal. In this regard it is worth noting that in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis is very clear, 'all are called to be holy by living our lives with love and bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find

³⁹ Gustavo Vardesio, *Forgotten Conquests: Rereading New World History from the Margins*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

⁴⁰ Ranft. p. 1

⁴¹ Laura Swan, *The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, Lives and Stories of Early Christian Women*, Kindle ed. (Mahway NJ: Paulist Press, 2001).

⁴² Laura Swan, *The Wisdom of the Beguines: The Forgotten Story of a Medieval Women's Movement* (Katonah NY: Bluebridge, 2014).

⁴³ Hastings. pp 4-5

⁴⁴ Ibid. pp 4-5

ourselves.’⁴⁵ He also highlights the importance of personal spiritual accompaniment in the process of growing in freedom and closer to God.⁴⁶ Regretting ‘that the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care,’⁴⁷ he goes on to say, (o)ur preferential option for the poor must translate into a privileged and preferential religious care.’⁴⁸

Writers on the history of Christianity note the difficulty in choosing relevant frameworks. Hastings highlights the many contrasting elements, for example Christianity pursuing poverty as an ideal while at the same time being linked with the growth of capitalism, before posing the question, ‘How does one portray the history of such a many-faced monster?’⁴⁹ Threlfall-Holmes also addresses the difficulty of covering more than two thousand years and ‘virtually every corner of the world...in a complex and overlapping sequence of movements, retreats and conflicts.’⁵⁰ Sheldrake notes that ‘periods’ and ‘traditions’ are the most common ways of treating the histories of spirituality, and suggests that neither are straightforward. ‘Periods’ requires choosing ‘time boundaries’ something that involves choices and ‘whether or not we give exclusive attention to “official” history and on what our geographical focus is.’⁵¹ In relation to ‘traditions’ which he notes is another way of addressing the history of spirituality Sheldrake highlights the debate on the ‘question of unity or plurality,’⁵² suggesting that ‘different traditions emerge precisely when people seek to respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of their own time and place.’⁵³

⁴⁵ Pope Francis, *Gaudete Et Exsultate - Rejoice and Be Glad* (Dublin: Veritas, 2018). p. 13 para 14

⁴⁶ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium - the Joy of the Gospel* (London: Incorporated Catholic Truth Society, 2013). p. 85 para 169

⁴⁷ Ibid p. 101 para 200

⁴⁸ Ibid p. 101 para 200

⁴⁹ Hastings. pp 1-2

⁵⁰ Miranda Threlfall-Holmes, *The Essential History of Christianity* (London: SPCK, 2012). p. ix

⁵¹ Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History*, 2nd ed., *A Brief History of Religion* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013). P. 17

⁵² Ibid. p 17

⁵³ Ibid. p 17

In what follows I will examine the evolving history of spiritual direction specifically as this happened within Western Christianity from the early Church, through the desert, the era of monasticism, the reformations, to the present, indicating how it flows from the spirituality which responds to the world climate of the time. Particular attention, through a concluding coda at each stage, will be paid to how, and indeed what the history has to say about how, spiritual direction was available to those on the margins. I will briefly note both how Eastern Monasticism developed somewhat differently evolving to the present Orthodox Tradition and how spiritual direction was expressed differently in the reform traditions until more recently.

EARLY CHURCH [1ST-3RD CENTURIES]

While spiritual direction per se is seldom written about specifically in the early Church writers have deduced that it was both formative and catechising and practiced in a variety of ways. During what was a time of persecution, one of the main forms was mentoring, by the witness of one's life, even to martyrdom. Indeed Threlfall-Holmes notes that it is claimed the way Christian martyrs faced execution 'impressed many into finding out more about the faith that could both be worth suffering for, and could produce such remarkable peace of mind.'⁵⁴ She describes the persecution as sporadic and initially from within Judaism. It would only be in the later part of this timeframe, with an 'increasingly insecure' Roman Empire, that the persecutions became more systematic, even to the explicit and deliberate aim of wiping out Christianity altogether. Threlfall-Holmes observes that the 'Great Persecution' of this time was responsible for almost half of all known Christian martyrs.⁵⁵ Despite this

⁵⁴ Threlfall-Holmes. p 9

⁵⁵ Ibid. pp 9-12

persecution, at the end of this period she notes that Christians made up about ten percent of the population of the Roman Empire.⁵⁶ Hastings notes that despite the difficulty in being exact about the proportion of Christians in the general population, ‘there was no other remotely comparable religious or civil body.’⁵⁷ So much so that they began to be viewed as ‘an empire within the Empire’ leading to the decision to crush them.⁵⁸

There are also some accounts of one-on-one relationships (cf Acts 8:26-40) while Paul’s letters both to individuals (Timothy, Titus, Philemon) and the nascent communities (Thessalonica, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colossae, Philippi, Rome) are early examples of spiritual direction by means of correspondence to both exhort and nurture.⁵⁹ ⁶⁰ In these Paul also points to the witness of his own life as he both encourages,

‘And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia’ (1 Thess1:5-7);

and counsels, ‘Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.’ (1 Cor 11:1)

In a later article Copan further addresses Paul as a spiritual director⁶¹ and while initially stating that it is ‘patently anachronistic to speak of Paul as spiritual director,’⁶² he goes on to explore the ways he in fact is a spiritual director. He does this by examining two sets of generative questions; set 1 the relationship between Paul and

⁵⁶ Ibid. p 14

⁵⁷ Adrian Hastings, "150-550," in *A World History of Christianity*, ed. Adrian Hastings (Grand Rapids MI; Cambridge: William B Eerdmans, 1999). p. 34

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 34

⁵⁹ Victor A Copan, *St Paul as Spiritual Director, Paternoster Biblical and Theological Monographs* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007).

⁶⁰ Michael. p. 4

⁶¹ Victor Copan, "Spiritual Formation and St. Paul as Spiritual Director: Determining the Primary Aims," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 3, no. 2 (2010). pp 140-154

⁶² Ibid. p. 140

the recipients of his letters and set 2 the ethos of Paul as a person.⁶³ From this he proposes a working definition of spiritual direction:

Spiritual direction is the (variegated) means by which one person intentionally influences another person or persons in the development of his or her life as a Christian with the goal of developing his or her relationship to God and His purposes for that person in the world⁶⁴

He concludes the article by presenting Paul in his role as spiritual director and suggesting some ‘key implications for the practice of spiritual direction today based on a careful analysis of Pauline imitation texts.’⁶⁵ These include (a) the personal life of the spiritual director; (b) personal presence, being with rather than doing; (c) a relationship marked by genuine love and concern for the other; (d) Christocentric focus; (e) developing Christocentric virtues; and (f) corporate dimension.⁶⁶ In *Evangelii Gaudium – The Joy of the Gospel* Pope Francis also draws attention to the example of St Paul as a spiritual director.⁶⁷

Referencing as examples the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 6:1-16) and the First Letter of Paul to Timothy (1 Tim 5:3-16) Sheldrake also remarks that the evidence from scripture indicates that at this time groups of widows and virgins, committed women also emerged within the Church.⁶⁸ Hastings recounts that twelve ‘highly committed Christians’, five of whom were women, who were executed in the year 180 in Scillium, North Africa for their adherence to Christianity.⁶⁹ Mary C Earle notes that women had a significant place in the early church in a variety of roles as they sought to authentically live out their faith in Christ. Many of them were spiritual

⁶³ Ibid. pp 143-146

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 146

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 153

⁶⁶ Ibid. pp 152-154

⁶⁷ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium - the Joy of the Gospel*. p. 87 para 173

⁶⁸ Sheldrake. p. 51

⁶⁹ Hastings, "150-550," in *A World History of Christianity*. p. 25

guides.⁷⁰ A significant thread within Christianity at this time was of social justice with additional contemplative, holiness and charismatic strands which was reflected in their relationships with one another and the wider society.

At this time too awareness of the Greek understanding of virtue led to more deliberate attention being paid by theologians to the Christian understanding out of which various theological perspectives have emerged.⁷¹ The study of virtue takes place within the broader disciplines of Theology and Philosophy, specifically the Moral aspects of each. More recently, as MacIntyre has pointed out, modern concepts compete with the traditional understanding of virtues to such an extent that ‘they are all too easily interpreted and misinterpreted in terms of the pluralism which threatens to submerge us all.’⁷²

Coda: During this time the Christians themselves were a minority, marginalised and persecuted within the wider society in which they lived, and yet that they supported and included one another is apparent in early Christian writings, such as Acts 4:34. However, as numbers increased some of the new converts, notably the Hellenists, felt they were being marginalised and ignored and we are told the Apostles stepped in to rectify this situation (Acts 6:1-6). In a study such as this, when the early Christian writings are being used to support a position, it is important to remember that they need to be understood and interpreted in light of their own historical reality and the limitations of language. As Sandra Schneiders reminds us, these writings are ‘the theological-spiritual imagination of the believing community’.⁷³ That said I

⁷⁰ Mary C Earle, *The Desert Mothers: Spiritual Practices from the Women of the Wilderness* (Harrisburg PA, New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2007). p. 1

⁷¹ John W. Crossin, *What Are They Saying About Virtue* (New York, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985). p. 13

⁷² Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1990). p. 226

⁷³ Sandra Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*, Kindle ed. (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1999). p. 127

believe they indicate that spiritual direction was available to almost all without restriction or discrimination at this time.

DESERT TRADITION [4TH-5TH CENTURIES]

By early in the fourth century Christianity had spread throughout the Roman Empire and with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine (272-337) who reigned from 306-337, it became the official state religion. Threlfall-Holmes notes that this ‘radically changed the context in which Christianity existed, and shaped the ways in which it developed.’⁷⁴ In these circumstances what many considered an increasing worldliness that was becoming evident within the Church, as the Church could now receive money and bishops were appointed as judges.⁷⁵ As a result many sought to withdraw and escape from the world to seek for holiness through asceticism,⁷⁶ and following Jesus’ instruction to the rich young man ‘Go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor...then come, follow me.’ (Mk 10:21) Lane characterises this as protest against and renunciation of ‘the world *in* the Church’ (my italics) in order to reach union with God in Christ.⁷⁷ Earle highlights the distress that Christians began to experience as the Church became more enmeshed with the state. She talks about a restlessness which ‘began to grow, a desire to live out the faith in a way that somehow would imitate the faithfulness of the martyrs.’⁷⁸ Chittister speaks of how those who went into the desert ‘devoted themselves totally to the rigors of fasting and the denial of the body in order to sharpen the sensitivities of the soul’.⁷⁹ Laura Swan

⁷⁴ Threlfall-Holmes. p. 26

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 18

⁷⁶ Sheldrake. p. 23

⁷⁷ Lane. p. 5

⁷⁸ Earle. p. 4

⁷⁹ Joan Chittister, *In God's Holy Light: Wisdom from the Desert Monastics* (Cincinnati OH: Franciscan Media, 2015). p. 2

observes that other factors also led to this movement from urban centres including, ‘epidemics, political corruption, social instability including crime, restrictive laws, heavy taxation by the government, persecutions and later the theological debates within Christianity.’⁸⁰

Alexander Ryrie acknowledges that his own treatment of the development of the desert movement would give the impression that it was an all-male affair,⁸¹ yet nothing could be further from the truth. One example of how a marginalised group, in this case women, are not included in the canon of history and whose place is only now being uncovered.⁸² Swan observes that history has only recorded a small fraction of the women who lived as ascetics and that it is the stories of the men that have been preserved.⁸³ Most of the stories of the women that are preserved relate to those from prominent, wealthy families. ‘Stories of truly poor women – not those who gave their wealth away – are the exception.’⁸⁴ Ryrie himself observes that there were a variety of ways that women lived an ascetical life, not only in the desert ‘but in or on the outskirts of towns and villages...or in a cell or hut outside a family home’.⁸⁵ These ascetic women were therefore very accessible for marginalised people in the towns to seek out for the spiritual guidance they could offer. One such *Amma* was Syncletica who came from a wealthy Christian family. Like so many other ascetics she rejected marriage and after her parents death gave the proceeds of the sale of her possessions to the poor. She chose instead to live with her blind sister in a tomb city on the outskirts of the Alexandria alongside widows and orphans who were the focus of her

⁸⁰ Swan, *The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, Lives and Stories of Early Christian Women*. p. 9

⁸¹ Alexander Ryrie, *The Desert Movement* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2011). p. 99

⁸² Swan, *The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, Lives and Stories of Early Christian Women*.

⁸³ Ibid. p. 3

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 18

⁸⁵ Ryrie. p. 100

ministry. Sought after for the spiritual guidance she could give she encouraged those who came to cultivate gentleness, patience and endurance.⁸⁶

A strong contemplative thread existed among those who found in the solitude of the desert – particularly in Egypt, Palestine and Syria – what was necessary to undertake their search for God. This search for God, and the kingdom of God which was waiting ‘to be discovered within the human heart’ itself, was at the heart of desert spirituality.⁸⁷ Journeying to and living in the desert was not, however, for the faint-hearted. In their seclusion those who did also recognised the need for guidance and sought it from others.^{88 89} Chittister also notes that these desert dwellers ‘became the mystics, the spiritual directors and the counselors of the age.’⁹⁰ She continues, ‘(p)eople flocked to the desert to hear from them a Word, a spiritual parable or maxim that would serve to guide their own lives once they returned to the city.’⁹¹ However, Ward maintains it is an ‘anachronism’ to consider this ‘spiritual direction,’⁹² highlighting some of the elitist opinions that there are around spiritual direction.

Many of the early Fathers of the Church emphasise this need for guidance in their writings.⁹³ While the need for guidance applied to all it was particularly true for newcomers, *the neophytes*, who sought advice from holy men and women of the desert who were experienced both in the life of prayer and the chosen lifestyle. These desert elders were known as *Abbas* (fathers) and *Ammas* (mothers), reflecting the relationship of spiritual father/motherhood they had with those whom they guided. Their guidance

⁸⁶ Swan, *The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, Lives and Stories of Early Christian Women*. p. 41

⁸⁷ Benedicta Ward, "Spiritual Direction in the Desert Fathers," in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*, ed. Lavina Byrne (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1984). p. 3

⁸⁸ John Chryssavgis, *In the Heart of the Desert* (Bloomington IN: World Wisdom Inc, 2003). pp 63-68

⁸⁹ Earle. pp 39-46

⁹⁰ Chittister. p. 2

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 2

⁹² Ward, in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*. p. 4

⁹³ Leech. p. 41

was deeply personal and according to Ruffing probably the most individualised in the tradition⁹⁴ as a discerned, unique ‘word’, which was understood as sacramental, was given to an individual for a particular situation. Each seeker was encouraged to share with their *Abba/Amma* all that was within their heart, ‘interior movements, stirrings, affections, temptations, desires and preoccupations’⁹⁵ as a means of discernment, growth in self-understanding and ultimately growth in spiritual freedom.

Over time these solitary desert dwellers began to cluster into the beginnings of communities as a number of individual hermits built their solitary huts close to that of their common elder. From these groups of cenobites and sketes early monasticism emerged developing differently in the East, with the Rule of Basil and in the West, with the Rule of Benedict. It is important to note that at this time both those who sought guidance and the *Abbas* and *Ammas* who gave it were mainly lay people.⁹⁶ Those who lived in the desert had God as their first teacher, followed by their cell, scriptures, word of the *Abba/Amma*.⁹⁷ Many who were not desert dwellers also visited the *Abbas* and *Ammas* seeking their wisdom and discernment. The literature does not indicate whether these included people who were marginalised but I suspect if so they were very few, apart from poor desert nomads passing through. To a large extent this Desert Tradition laid the foundations for spiritual direction to be viewed as a relatively elitist privilege with the spiritual direction available to and being given to people who were marginalised by *Ammas* like Syncletica, largely ignored.

⁹⁴ Ruffing, p. 6

⁹⁵ Ruffing, in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, p. 244

⁹⁶ In this regard it is interesting to note that Pope Francis when speaking to the religious in Rome in May 2015 said, ‘Spiritual direction is not a charism exclusive to priests. It’s a charism of the laity.’ cf <https://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2015/church-needs-women-s-voices-input-experiences-pope-tells-religious.cfm> accessed 20 May 2015

⁹⁷ Ward, in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*, p. 8

During this time also another tradition of guidance was developing in the cities which was much more clerical and based on the doctrinal, catechising and sacramental roles of the church. In some ways this was built on the practice of the Early Church, however, the result, as we will see later, was of competing models of spiritual direction. It would appear that this was the spiritual direction people in the cities were most likely restricted to receiving.

Coda: The literature has little specific to say about how spiritual direction was available to people who were marginalised at this time. In many instances it was largely restricted to the doctrinal, catechising and sacramental roles of the church documented above. It has also been noted, however, how *Ammas* like Syncletica and other ascetic women who themselves lived at the margins of the towns and cities welcomed others, including people who were marginalised, for the spiritual guidance they could offer.

WESTERN MONASTIC TRADITION [6TH-12TH CENTURIES]

This period is marked by the disintegration of the Roman Empire, Barbarian invasions and general social breakdown, followed later by the desire of Pope Gregory (540-604) to evangelise England.⁹⁸ The response of those intentionally striving to live with authenticity, in a contemplative way facing up to temptations, is through living the Christian life in community settings, and so monasticism is born. The result was the institutionalisation of some of the characteristics of the Desert alongside a new charismatic dimension,⁹⁹ and while spiritual guidance was originally distinct from confessor/penitent, and interchangeable language was used when talking of guidance

⁹⁸ Sheldrake. p. 59

⁹⁹ Ruffing. p. 7

and confession of sins (non-sacramental as we understand it), it began over time to merge with sacramental confession, both within male and female monasteries. Monastic communities differed from the solitaries or even the cenobites in the desert in that they had a common Rule of Life to be obeyed by all from the Abbot/Abbess to the youngest novice. Alongside community life itself the Rule became the first spiritual guide for the members of the community. The Rule, derived from the writings of Antony of Egypt (251-356), who is considered the Father of Monasticism, continued to prevail in the desert. According to Sheldrake, the earliest Western Monastic Rule is the Rule of St Augustine (354-430).¹⁰⁰ While the Benedictine model into which Benedict of Nursia (480-547) incorporated some of the features of the desert tradition is the model on which most monastic communities, both male and female, subsequently founded in the West, were based. ‘One of the more significant facts to note about monasticism,’ according to Ranft, ‘is that it is a lay movement...accessible to the vast number of Christians excluded from the hierarchy.’¹⁰¹ Both expansion and reform over the centuries led to the emergence of new monastic communities and expressions of the rule. Monastic communities provided stability with initially an emphasis on and a balance between liturgical prayer, manual work and *lectio divina*, together with strong contemplative and sacramental threads.

Within the monastery the role previously fulfilled by the *Abba/Amma* was now invested in the Abbot/Abbess who in the main guided the monks/nuns as a community, based on the Rule. At the same time the monks/nuns were encouraged to entrust themselves for individual guidance to the Abbot/Abbess; in the case of novices the

¹⁰⁰ Sheldrake, p. 57

¹⁰¹ Ranft, p. 50

Novice Director and on occasions another experienced monk/nun. While the spiritual direction relationship in the monasteries, which was mainly for the monks/nuns themselves and wealthy travellers who stopped, continued initially to be different from the confessor/penitent relationship, and monks including Abbots were in the main lay, it gradually merged with sacramental confession. As we will see the Celtic monks travelling in Europe was a major influence in this.

What of spiritual direction for people who were marginalised in this tradition? The literature of this time has very little to offer specifically in relation to spiritual direction with people who are marginalised. We can however deduce from the fact that during this time the monasteries were also known as places of rest and hospitality for travellers and those in need as the stranger was welcomed as Christ.¹⁰² They also functioned as hospices and laid the foundation for ‘Ars Morendi,’ the spiritual accompaniment of the dying which would develop later. Connors notes that these hospices which flourished in the Middle Ages passed into history only to be reborn by the efforts of Vincent de Paul in the Seventeenth Century.¹⁰³ In many instances it was the monks responsible for keeping the door or the monks in the kitchens who engaged the most with those who were poor when they came to the monastery seeking help and who gave both spiritual as well as temporal aid to them. Many poor people would have returned to the monastery on several occasions and as a result would have confided in the monk they met and who gave them assistance.

Moving from Egypt to Asia Minor through Palestine and Sinai to Athos Eastern Monasticism developed differently by following the Rule of St Basil with three forms of monastic life, the solitary eremitical, the communal or cenobitical and

¹⁰² Rule of St Benedict

¹⁰³ Stephen R Connor, *Hospice: Practice, Pitfalls and Promise* (Washington DC, London: Taylor and Francis, 1998).p. 5

the semi-eremitical/semi-cenobitical emerging.¹⁰⁴ These forms developed into what is the Orthodox tradition of monasticism today. The spiritual elder, father or mother, holds a pivotal role with regard to spiritual direction. While not necessarily ordained there is a sacramental overtone to the communication one has with one's spiritual elder whose function is understood as prophetic.¹⁰⁵ In the East the concepts of authority and obedience are the foundation of the relationship with a spiritual elder who is also seen as a sponsor or godparent.¹⁰⁶ The spiritual elder is also seen as a guide, a physician, a teacher and an icon.¹⁰⁷

Western Monasticism continued to expand and reform over this period. Manual labour was replaced by intellectual labour, with contemplative and charismatic threads to the fore. Lelercq notes that a renewal of the whole Church in the tenth and eleventh centuries was helped by the renewal taking place within monasticism itself, though 'spiritual guidance was not one of the means which made a particularly useful contribution to this movement.'¹⁰⁸ As the Church became more clericalised women, including the Abbesses became subject to cleric confessors.^{109 110} Notwithstanding the clericalisation of the Church there are many examples of charismatic women, like Hilda of Whitby (614-680), Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), and Hadewijch (13th Century) whom others sought out for spiritual guidance. In many instances it was to these charismatic women, who were themselves marginalised by an increasing clericalised church that people who were marginalised

¹⁰⁴ John Chryssavgis, *Light through Darkness: The Orthodox Tradition, Traditions of Christian Spirituality* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004). p. 79

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. pp 125-127

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. pp 133-135

¹⁰⁷ John Chryssavgis, "The Spiritual Elder: The Early Desert Tradition and the Eastern Orthodox Way," in *Spiritual Direction in Context*, ed. Nick Wagner (Harrisburg, PA and New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2006). pp 61-65

¹⁰⁸ Jean Leclercq, "Spiritual Direction in the Benedictine Tradition," in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*, ed. Lavina Byrne (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987). 16-29

¹⁰⁹ Ruffing. pp 7-8

¹¹⁰ Leech. p. 51

turned for guidance and who suffered for the attention they gave to them. Indeed while Hildegard is better known today as a mystic for her visions, poetry and music as Abbess she was also the spiritual director of her nuns and a healer. She was sought out for her wisdom by many including clerics, other religious, bishops, popes and kings. They were not, however her only concern and when she reached out to a young nobleman who had been excommunicated both she and her community were placed under an interdict forbidding them to celebrate the Eucharist or the Divine Office in public.¹¹¹

During this time many lay movements emerged of 'groups searching for a simple Christianity.'¹¹² These included the Humiliati in Northern Italy, the Cathars or Albigensians in France and the Patarines in Milan.¹¹³ Some of these were seen by the Church authorities as dissident and, like the Cathars, condemned as heretical.¹¹⁴ One of the best known of these lay movements is that which was that begun by Peter Waldo in the City of Lyons where he attracted others of the same mind. Known as Waldensians or the Poor of Lyons, like many of these movements there was a desire among the members to read, study, interpret and preach the Scriptures and to live a life of poverty marked by good works. In this way they accompanied one another on the spiritual path. They also saw themselves as a reform movement within the church.¹¹⁵

It was at this time also that the missionary evangelisation by the Celtic Church brought the Celtic monastic rule, which itself had been influenced by Eastern

¹¹¹ Frank Wallace, *Encounter Not Performance* (Newtown NSW: EJ Dwyer, 1991). pp 102-103

¹¹² George H Tavad, "Apostolic Life and Church Reform," in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt, Bernard McGinn, and John Meyendorff (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987). p. 6

¹¹³ Ibid. p 11

¹¹⁴ Norman Tanner, *A New Short History of the Catholic Church* (London, New York NY: Burns & Oates, 2011). p. 150

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 150

monasticism,¹¹⁶ practices and penitentials to mainland Europe, introducing spiritual direction to the laity in France, Germany and the Low Countries.¹¹⁷ Among the practices in the Celtic Church was that of the '*Anamchara*' or soul-friend inherited from the Druidic pre-Christian tradition. An *Anamchara* was seen as essential for everyone and Brigid and others are reported to have held the view that, 'Anyone without a soul-friend is a body without a head'.¹¹⁸ Connolly points out that 'every monk was expected to have an *Anamchara* to whom he could manifest his conscience (*manifestatio conscientiae*).'¹¹⁹ In this the *Anamchara* received the confession of the monastic in much the same way as the *Abbas* and *Ammas* in the desert did leaving as a legacy 'the notion that man's relationship with God could take the form of effective dialogue.'¹²⁰

Coda: With the development, expansion and reform of the monastic tradition literature offers practically nothing in respect of spiritual direction with people who are marginalised. We can, however, deduce that spiritual direction, albeit more informal, was available from the monks/nuns in the kitchen or keeping the door that those who came to the monasteries seeking help confided in. As the Church and monasticism itself became more clericalised often it was marginalised charismatic women who were most available as spiritual directors for other people who were marginalised.

¹¹⁶ Seán Ó Duinn OSB, *Where Three Streams Meet: Celtic Spirituality* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2000).

¹¹⁷ Michael. p. 6

¹¹⁸ Leech. p. 50

¹¹⁹ Hugh Connolly, *The Irish Penitentials* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1995). p. 14

¹²⁰ Ibid.

NON-MONASTIC LATE MEDIEVAL TRADITION [13TH-15TH CENTURIES]

In Western Europe in this period Feudalism gave way to the Medieval City, while merchants and artisans emerged, and from the agrarian culture a new urban commercial culture became the norm. In addition the returning Crusades introduced luxuries from the East whetting the appetites of many, including those in the monasteries. A further time of transition and much turmoil was heralded with the Black Death (1346-1353), the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) and the Great Schism (1378-1417) with rival Popes in Rome, Avignon and Pisa followed. New challenges gave rise to new forms of spirituality which, as in previous periods, was expressed as an ideal that was counter-cultural. Instead of flying from the world to seek the quiet of the desert or the liturgical, quiet, prayerful and self-sufficient social structure of the monastery the spiritual movements that emerged out of this period were focussed on the return to the simplicity of gospel values.¹²¹ The characteristic threads of this period are also the contemplative and to a greater extent sacramental. This is the time of Dominic (1170-1221), Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), Clare of Assisi (1194-1253), and through them the subsequent rise of the mendicant tradition. These new orders, of friars rather than monks, founded by Dominic and Francis included a 'third order' for lay people who 'continued to live at home in normal married and working environments while undertaking a life of prayer and charitable work compatible with everyday commitments.'¹²² Their associate communities of monastic women were known as the 'second order'.¹²³

New lay movements continued to grow as a more educated laity 'emerged ever so slowly as a visible and influential force in the church.'¹²⁴ At this time in the Low

¹²¹ Sheldrake. p. 82

¹²² Ibid. p. 82

¹²³ Ibid. p. 89

¹²⁴ Sittser. p. 191

Countries 'a new style of non-cloistered religious life emerged'.¹²⁵ According to Carol Neel they lived a 'life more radical than the Franciscans' in both its involvement in the world and its separation from ecclesiastical structures.¹²⁶ The women 'were known as Beguines, and their male counterparts Beghards. Neel challenges the generally held assertion that they appeared spontaneously, but rather seeing them as following 'the road opened by sisters of earlier monastic communities in regard to both its spiritual and social directions.'¹²⁷ As a movement of lay women some of the Beguines lived as solitary recluses or anchoresses within urban centres,¹²⁸ while others lived in informal communities of varying sizes called Beguinages.¹²⁹ They revolutionised the practice of spiritual direction in daily life, especially for those excluded from the monasteries. Swan notes that the Beguines were above all, 'compassionate toward the many (urban) poor. Beggars constantly came to their doors and gates seeking help. Beguines provided clothing and shoes, food and guidance.'¹³⁰ In this way they developed what had begun in the monasteries in a very different urban landscape. Their unorthodox lifestyle however attracted the suspicion of Church authorities and some, like Marguerite Porete were burned at the stake as heretics.¹³¹ Despite this the Beguines continued into the twenty-first century when Marcella Pattyn, the last of the Beguines died in Belgium.¹³²

¹²⁵ Benedicta Ward and G R Evans, "The Medieval West," in *A World History of Christianity*, ed. Adrian Hastings (Grand Rapids MI; Cambridge: William B Eerdmans, 1999). p. 133

¹²⁶ Carol Neel, "The Origins of the Beguines," in *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, ed. Judith M Bennett et al. (Chicago IL; London: University of Chicago Press, 1989). p. 242

¹²⁷ Ibid. p. 242

¹²⁸ Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries 1200-1565*, *The Middle Ages Series* (Philadelphia PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001). p. 74

¹²⁹ Ibid. p. 37

¹³⁰ Swan, *The Wisdom of the Beguines: The Forgotten Story of a Medieval Women's Movement*. p. 81

¹³¹ Ibid. p. 155

¹³² "Marcella Pattyn, the World's Last Beguine, Died on April 14th, Aged 92," *The Economist*, accessed May, 2013. <http://www.economist.com/news/obituary/21576632-marcella-pattyn-worlds-last-beguine-died-april-14th-aged-92-marcella-pattyn>.

This was also the time of the Rhineland and English Mystics with their contemplative practices borrowed from the Pseudo-Dionysian tradition. Alongside this there was a growing emphasis on the humanity of Jesus and the ‘sacredness of the city’ giving rise to a tide of popular religiosity and piety.¹³³ A group of poor, penitential pilgrims who had begun to live as hermits on Mount Carmel and having achieved some sense of community approached Albert, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, for a rule of life thereby giving birth to the Carmelite tradition.¹³⁴ They saw themselves as eremitical-contemplatives in the prophetic tradition of Elijah, and dedicated themselves from the earliest days to Mary. Like the other monastic orders their Rule (of Albert) was ‘a document of spiritual guidance’.¹³⁵ Expansion into Europe as a result of the wars in the Holy Land resulted in their becoming, like the Dominicans and Franciscans, mendicant friars.¹³⁶ From the beginning their focus on the spiritual journey was at the same time personal and communal, and the guidance for the soul neither ‘spasmodic or a matter of chance’.¹³⁷

It was to stem the growth of the various lay movements that had developed in the previous centuries, many of which like the Cathars, were perceived as a challenge to the orthodoxy of the Church that the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) was called. The aim was to reform the Church by removing the reason these movements flourished.¹³⁸ One of its significant conclusions was the endorsement of the Irish penitentials over the Mediterranean ‘Order of Penitents’¹³⁹ with the cleric confessor assuming the role

¹³³ Sheldrake. pp 83-86

¹³⁴ Wilfrid McGreal, *At the Fountain of Elijah: The Carmelite Tradition, Traditions of Christian Spirituality* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999). pp 19-20

¹³⁵ Michael Brundell, "Themes in Carmelite Spiritual Direction," in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*, ed. Lavina Byrne (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1985). p. 64

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 66

¹³⁷ Ibid. p. 69

¹³⁸ Tavard, in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*. 1-11

¹³⁹ Ladislav Orsy, *The Evolving Church and the Sacrament of Penance* (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1978). pp 31-48

of the spiritual director, a merging that would intensify after the Council of Trent (1545-1563).

The tradition of spiritual direction separate from sacramental confession, however, persisted at this time. Many of those who fulfilled this role of spiritual director were lay, mainly women and some men, mystics who were sought for their wisdom and holiness of life.¹⁴⁰ Some of them, like Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) and Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510) emerged from the ranks of the 'third orders', while others, like Hadewijch of Antwerp (13th century) from the Beguines. Gertrude of Helfta (1256-c1302) and Mechtild of Hackeborn ((1241-1299) were Benedictines. Indeed Julian of Norwich (1342-1413) who was an anchoress was held in such high esteem throughout fifteenth century England that she was sought by many for her spiritual guidance, including the English mystic and mother of seventeen, Margery of Kempe.¹⁴¹

Richard Rolle (1290-1359) and Nicholas of Flüe (1417-1487) were also lay mystics, while Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) was a Dominican priest and Thomas à Kempis (1379-1471) a Canon Regular. Ranft suggests that one of the reasons for the increase of spiritual directors at this time was in fact directly related to mandatory annual confession arising from the decree of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) since as a society 'the medieval Christian West did not possess all the necessary tools for self-examination and needed guidance from those well-versed in self-examination; it needed spiritual guides.'¹⁴² Spiritual writing as a form of spiritual direction proliferated at this time. Many of these writings, like *The Cloud of Unknowing* and indeed those of the two Catherine's are still extant and remain popular today. Indeed,

¹⁴⁰ Ruffing, in *The New Scm Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. p. 244

¹⁴¹ Ranft. p. 94

¹⁴² Ibid. p. 66

Leech reminds us that ‘in the fourteenth century writers there are numerous references to spiritual direction and guidance.’¹⁴³

In terms of the availability of spiritual direction for people who were on the margins, again the literature makes scant direct reference. However, studying the lives and spirituality of, particularly the women of this time much can be deduced about the spiritual direction given to people on the margins.

In researching the life of Jeanne de Valois (1297-1353) Mulder-Bakker encounters ‘a new type of religious woman: the independent *mulier religiosa*... the wise old matron or widow, the beguine, and the anchoress’.¹⁴⁴ Of the wise old matrons or widows she notes that it was women who ‘provided (religious) instruction for children and household staff.’¹⁴⁵ Now, as they enter a transitional period in their lives, the religious and social functions they appropriate flow naturally from their previous duties and they become the leaders in ‘lay forms of religious life’.¹⁴⁶ Of the Beguines she notes that they were relatively independent in ecclesiastical terms rendering them free to attend to those who needed both materially and spiritually.¹⁴⁷ The anchoresses, societally independent, were ‘intermediaries between God and the faithful’, by ‘listening to people, instructing them if they lacked knowledge, hearing their confessions, helping them find answers to questions of life and death.’¹⁴⁸ For Mulder-Bakker these women and so many more like them ‘resembled Mary, the Mother of God...and represented the soft face of power,’...‘women who were often

¹⁴³ Leech. p. 55

¹⁴⁴ Anneke B Mulder-Bakker, "The Soft Face of Power: Jeanne De Valois and Female Authority in the Middle Ages," in *Mulieres Religiosae: Shaping Female Spiritual Authority in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, ed. Veerle Fraeters and Imke de Gier, Europa Sacra (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2014). p. 159

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 159

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 160

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 161

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 161

in a better position to win the trust of their fellow believers.’¹⁴⁹ Thus spiritual direction at the margins was made available by those who were also marginalised. Ranft notes in relation to Hildegard that while existing ‘sources document clerical demand for Hildegard’s spiritual direction, she did not limit her guidance to this one class.’¹⁵⁰ Each of the new orders had different expressions and understandings of spiritual direction. Within the Dominican tradition spiritual guidance was given primarily through their preaching of the Gospel which they modelled on the apostles and certainly as in apostolic times this would have been available for all. We do know that Catherine of Siena saw service of the sick and poor as an expression of her love of God and I suspect most likely it included spiritual guidance for people who were ill.¹⁵¹ While Francis is better known for his love of animals and nature the Franciscan tradition is also one of the wandering preacher, but the preaching in this instance is in the example of living the gospel; there is the well-known quotation attributed to St Francis: ‘preach the gospel always and if necessary use words,’ which is something Francis himself lived in his embracing the leper, ‘the excluded ‘other’.’¹⁵²

Lay-led movements continued to increase and one that began towards the end of this timeframe was the *Devotio Moderna*, a movement of spiritual renewal¹⁵³ that ‘sought a living relationship between action and contemplation which would serve as a bridge between the life of the world and the Way of the monk.’¹⁵⁴ Originating with Gerard Groote (1340-84) in the Netherlands the movement quickly spread through the

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 164

¹⁵⁰ Ranft. p. 75

¹⁵¹ Benedict Ashley, *Spiritual Direction in the Dominican Tradition* (New York/Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1995).

¹⁵² Philip F. Sheldrake, "Interpretation," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005). p. 471

¹⁵³ John Van Engen, ed. *Devotio Moderna*, ed. John Farina, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York NY, Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1988). p. 25

¹⁵⁴ Ross Fuller, *The Brotherhood of the Common Life and Its Influence* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1995). p. xx

Rhineland, Saxony, Northern France, Spain and Italy. John van Engen notes that many of the adherents of the *Devotio Moderna* lived a common life among the ordinary townsfolk, living simply off their own work. As a result they were also known as the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life.¹⁵⁵ This was a reaction to both the accumulated wealth of the monasteries and the begging of the mendicant orders.¹⁵⁶ At the heart of their spirituality was the Imitation of Christ themselves and encouraging others to do likewise. Otto Gründler notes that they were spiritual counsellors to local schoolboys by holding ‘colloquies...on Sundays after church consisting of talks on a given spiritual subject followed by discussion in groups or by individual conversations with a priest.’¹⁵⁷ They were also accessible as guides to townspeople generally.

Coda: During this time spiritual direction began to merge more and more with sacramental confession. Technically this meant that spiritual direction was available to all including people who were marginalised. However, it has also been noted that spiritual direction also continued separate from sacramental confession. The literature continues to have little to say about the availability of spiritual direction for people who were marginalised. Once again it is in studying the lives of the mystics, mainly women and some men as noted above, that the availability of spiritual direction for people on the margins can be deduced.

¹⁵⁵ While the Sisters were laywomen many of the Brothers who joined the *Devotio Moderna* movement were in fact clerics cf Otto Gründler, "Devotio Moderna," in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt, Bernard McGinn, and John Meyendorff, World Spirituality (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987). p. 177

¹⁵⁶ Van Engen. p. 14

¹⁵⁷ Gründler, in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*. p. 177

REFORMATIONS – PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC [1450-1700]

‘The period from the mid-fifteenth to the end of the seventeenth century is complex. The medieval religious world broke apart and gave birth to the early modern era.’¹⁵⁸ This view is echoed by others,

It cannot be denied that the sixteenth century, and the opening years of the seventeenth, have been painted by most historians, sacred and secular, and notably by the first biographers of Père de Condren and Vincent de Paul, in the blackest of colours.¹⁵⁹

Although Bremond himself does not fully agree with this premise,¹⁶⁰ Ed Udovic¹⁶¹ and others do support it.¹⁶² For her part, Wendy Wright invokes the opening lines of Charles Dickens novel, *A Tale of Two Cities* to characterise it.¹⁶³ Threlfall-Holmes notes that ‘quite swiftly, in the first decades of this period, the religious landscape of Europe changed irrevocably.’¹⁶⁴ Indeed Andrew Pettegree observes that ‘no one could have anticipated that the Church was about to be faced by a challenge which would shake it to its foundations, and leave it, two centuries later, permanently divided.’¹⁶⁵ This was the age of exploration, discovery, conquest and triumphalism, of seeking power, of reformation and counter-reformation, the Inquisition, religious persecution and atrocities in the name of God and religion. It includes the periods known as the *Golden Age* in both Spain (sixteenth century) and France (seventeenth century). The

¹⁵⁸ Sheldrake. p. 112

¹⁵⁹ Henri Bremond, *A Literary History of Religious Thought in France from the Wars of Religion Down to Our Own Times: II the Coming of Mysticism (1590-1620)*, trans. K L Montgomery, English ed., vol. II, XII vols., *A Literary History of Religious Thought in France from the Wars of Religion Down to Our Own Times* (London: SPCK, 1930). p. 3

¹⁶⁰ Henri Bremond, *A Literary History of Religious Thought in France from the Wars of Religion Down to Our Own Times: I Devout Humanism*, trans. K L Montgomery, English ed., vol. I, XII vols., *A Literary History of Religious Thought in France from the Wars of Religion Down to Our Own Times* (London: SPCK, 1928). pp 178-179

¹⁶¹ Udovic, in *Vincent De Paul and Louise De Marillac: Rules, Conferences, and Writings* pp 1-12

¹⁶² Hitchcock.

¹⁶³ Wendy Wright, "Abandoned for Love: The Gracious Legacy of French Spiritual Traditions," in *Surrender to Christ for Mission*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2018). Kindle version location 331 of 4339

¹⁶⁴ Threlfall-Holmes. p 72

¹⁶⁵ Andrew Pettegree, "Reformation and Counter-Reformation," in *A World History of Christianity*, ed. Adrian Hastings (Grand Rapid MI, Cambridge: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 1999). p. 238

counter-cultural spiritual ideal that this period gave rise to was that of ‘union with God in action’; a union of will with God’s will: to find God’s will in the midst of activity and to be totally united with God. The contemplative and sacramental threads are complemented by a strong emphasis on holiness, as well as some social justice and charismatic elements. Sheldrake notes that the Reformation was fed by two strands from the late medieval period, that of the *Devotio Moderna* and of Christian humanism.¹⁶⁶ Both movements were seeking the type of reform that placed less emphasis on the externals of the popular religiosity that had grown in the previous period, like excessive rituals, processions, pilgrimages and veneration of relics, and more on a personal, meditative spirituality.¹⁶⁷ Among the resources influencing all sides were books of meditation and those detailing methods and approaches to prayer. Thus a number of waves of reform can be identified all of which had an impact on the understanding and practice of spiritual direction.

The Protestant Reformation

The Protestant Reformation itself contributed several waves of reform as Luther (1483-1546), Zwingli (1484-1531), Calvin (1509-1564) and others took different stances and directions, leading in a short space of time to the fragmentation of the Christian Church into a number of strands each of which emerged as a separate, autonomous Church. One result of this break-up was that the Protestants of all denominations initially did away with spiritual direction as it was known, focussing instead on a direct God-and-me relationship without any mediation. They largely viewed spiritual direction with suspicion as it was strongly identified in their minds

¹⁶⁶ Sheldrake, p. 113

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. pp 113-115

with the Roman church's sacramental confession with which it had become so enmeshed. Ranft draws attention to the fact that at the time of the Reformation the main locus of spiritual direction was religious life and that 'since Protestant churches disavowed monasticism, they had de facto eliminated spiritual direction's chief locus of operation.'¹⁶⁸ That does not, however, mean that within the Protestant churches they did not indeed practice spiritual direction as both Ranft and Leech point out. Leech reminds us that while they may not have used the term spiritual direction, the idea of a personal guide or counsellor was often stressed within the various Protestant traditions,¹⁶⁹ and Ranft also draw attention to the fact that many of the early reformers – Calvin, Luther and Knox – themselves actively engaged in spiritual direction, although those who came after them did not in general make much of a contribution to, or nourish, the tradition.¹⁷⁰ On the other hand, Anglicanism and the more radical reform movements like the Quakers that grew from it, had a 'visible and articulate tradition of spiritual direction.'¹⁷¹ Leech also reminds us that for the Carolines, one of the strands of Anglicanism, 'personal spiritual guidance' was seen as a necessary accompaniment to the sermon by which the people were taught methods and the benefits of prayer,¹⁷² and also notes the Puritan view that 'the Reformation had not abolished the need for spiritual directors.'¹⁷³

The Council of Trent (1545-1563), called after much political wrangling and wars in the wake of the divisions caused by the various Protestant reform movements, had nothing specific to say about spiritual direction. However, the decrees that they did promulgate on sin, justification and scripture among others would have an

¹⁶⁸ Ranft. p. 157

¹⁶⁹ Leech. p. 84

¹⁷⁰ Ranft. pp 157-158

¹⁷¹ Ibid. p. 158

¹⁷² Leech. p. 79

¹⁷³ Ibid. p. 86

influence on the practice of spiritual direction which, with some notable exceptions, would dominate well into the twentieth century. Ruffing and Leech both note that the sacramental confessor-penitent model became the standard model of spiritual direction from this time on. The consequence of this was, as Leech notes, that spiritual direction ‘became both more widespread and more limited’¹⁷⁴ while there was also an increase in books and manuals on prayer. With some notable exceptions the overall result was that the focus of spiritual direction in this context had moved very far from what it had been up to this. Soundness of doctrine and orthodoxy of belief were stressed as the counter-cultural expressions of this time. The contemplative way of the desert and monastics, the inward re-formation of the heart to reflect the goodness of God, the challenge towards spiritual growth expressed by the nurturing of the fruits of the Spirit, the way of right relationships in all human endeavours and finding and experiencing God active in daily life were side-lined and relegated. This led to a scrupulosity that was almost encouraged and the post-tridentine spiritual director was the ‘Director of Conscience,’¹⁷⁵ in a highly authoritarian way.

Catholic Reformation: Spanish

Despite the fact that for the Catholic Reformation spiritual direction as experienced with the relationships of the *Abba/Amma*, *Anamchara* or the Abbot/Abbess was not seen as necessary and certainly not made available generally by the institutional church, one voice of reform that was to influence and shape spiritual direction to such an extent that it almost became synonymous with him from then on was that of Ignatius of Loyola (1495-1556). Leech suggests that not only are

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 58

¹⁷⁵ Ruffing. p. 12

the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius of Loyola ‘a clear and detailed view of the role of the director, but also the foundation for the development of a whole school of spiritual direction.’¹⁷⁶ The text of the *Spiritual Exercises*, developed from Ignatius’ own experience, both interior life, in particular leading up to and at Manresa, and directing others, is in fact a handbook for retreat directors giving instructions on how to proceed in guiding others through a detailed ‘sequence of active, ascetical exercises.’¹⁷⁷

Sheldrake suggests that,

Ignatius’s vision was that the *Spiritual Exercises* and the spirituality which came from them could only be transmitted in a vital way from person to person, for he saw the Exercises as an *experience* rather than a collection of spiritual maximums.¹⁷⁸

It was an experience that would prepare ‘the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments, and, after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul.’¹⁷⁹ The spiritual direction that accompanied the experience was at the beginning conducted in a one-to-one relationship, but later would be provided in communal settings without the one-to-one direction. From the *Spiritual Exercises* itself Sheldrake highlights three important aspects of spiritual direction: the relationship that exists between the director and the directee; the focus and content of spiritual direction and Ignatius’ teaching on prayer. Ruffing describes the Ignatian model as ‘interventionist’ on account of the structure of the exercises given.¹⁸⁰ One of the major sections of the *Spiritual Exercises* is that

¹⁷⁶ Leech. p. 58

¹⁷⁷ Ruffing. p. 11

¹⁷⁸ Philip Sheldrake, "St Ignatius of Loyola and Spiritual Direction," in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*, ed. Lavina Byrne (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1984). p. 100

¹⁷⁹ Louis Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius*, trans. Louis J Phul (Chicago, IL: Loyola University Press, 1951). No. 1

¹⁸⁰ Ruffing. pp 10-11

on 'Rules for Discernment of Spirits'¹⁸¹, highlighting discernment of spirits as the central focus of spiritual direction. According to Byrne, 'Ignatius of Loyola's influence has been so considerable, given the accessibility of his *Spiritual Exercises*, that other names and practices are less well-known.'¹⁸² As we shall see later this is very much the case when it comes to the vision and practice of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac.

Another wave of reform that would have a significant influence on the practice of spiritual direction was happening almost concurrently with Ignatius' development of the *Spiritual Exercises*, Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) and John of the Cross (1542-1591) were undertaking the reform of the Carmelite Order in Spain. Sheldrake reminds us that Teresa was the initiator of the reform and that John came to share her vision 'which sought to return the order to its contemplative and semi-eremitical origins.'¹⁸³ Teresa and John were both mystics and the fact that Teresa suffered much at the hands of spiritual directors who were unwise and unlearned is well documented.

In *Themes in Carmelite Spiritual Direction* Michael Brundell tells us,

From the point of view of spiritual guidance, St Teresa's most important cry was for good and wise directors for her nuns. She herself had suffered much from the unlearned and the unwise, and she was emphatic about the need for discerning, wise and proper direction for those seeking to make progress in the spiritual life. She was not prepared to accept holy men if they did not know what they were talking about or dealing with in terms of experience along the spiritual path.¹⁸⁴

He further reminds us that both Teresa's writings and the writings of John of the Cross were undertaken at the request of others to fill the void of resources for suitably learned directors. From their experience of the lack of wise spiritual directors,

¹⁸¹ Puhl. p. 141ff

¹⁸² Byrne. p. vii

¹⁸³ Sheldrake. p. 133

¹⁸⁴ Brundell, in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*. p. 71

Ranft, points out that they both emphasised ‘the need for freedom in choosing the confessor-director’¹⁸⁵ and that this freedom of choice would have widespread ramifications. In the first instance, while any priest could fulfil the role of confessor, not every priest could fulfil the role of wise and learned spiritual director. In this regard Brundell quotes from Teresa’s *Way of Perfection*:

I beg every superior, for the love of the Lord, to allow a holy liberty here: let the bishop or provincial be approached for leave for the sisters to go from time to time beyond their ordinary confessors and talk about their souls with persons of learning, especially if the confessors, though good men, have no learning; for learning is a great help in giving light upon everything. It should be possible to find a number of people who combine both learning and spirituality, and the more favours the Lord grants you in prayer, the more needful is it that your good works and your prayers should have a sure foundation.^{186 187}

Both John and Teresa identified three qualities necessary in a good spiritual director. For John these were wisdom, discretion and experience¹⁸⁸ while Teresa expressed them as experience of the spiritual life, self-knowledge, and learning¹⁸⁹ all of which presupposed the necessity of spiritual direction in the pursuit of perfection, which for Teresa, as Chalmers quotes was about bringing the person’s will into conformity with the Will of God.¹⁹⁰ Ranft also highlights that for Teresa the importance of one’s spiritual director having the necessary qualities was greater than either the gender or the religious status of the person.¹⁹¹ She herself received spiritual direction at different stages from the layman Don Francisco de Salcedo and the laywoman Doña Guiomar de Ulloa as well as other religious and clerics, and was sought after as a spiritual director by clerics, lay and religious. Teresa’s spiritual

¹⁸⁵ Ranft. p. 109

¹⁸⁶ Brundell, in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*. pp 71-72

¹⁸⁷ *The Complete Works of St Teresa of Jesus: The Way of Perfection*, trans. Edgar Allison Peers, vol. 2 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1972). Ch V p. 23

¹⁸⁸ Brundell, in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*. p. 72

¹⁸⁹ Ranft. p. 110

¹⁹⁰ Joseph Chalmers, "St Teresa of Avila and Spiritual Direction," in *Traditions in Spiritual Guidance*, ed. Lavina Byrne (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1986). p. 82

¹⁹¹ Ranft. p. 111

direction, which was very practical, arose from an understanding of prayer and daily life being connected. For her the acid test in relation to progress in the spiritual life was, according to Chalmers, ‘whether the person is becoming a better human being.’¹⁹² Much of John of the Cross’ direction took the form of commentaries on his poetry, pithy maxims and letters of practical guidance.¹⁹³

Catholic Reformation: French

While the Catholic Reformation was being heralded in sixteenth century Spain by Ignatius, Teresa and John, further waves of reform emanated from seventeenth century France. The term ‘Seventeenth-Century School of French Spirituality’ tends to be used to include all those involved in this renewal. Deville, however, notes that in the strict sense the term only applies to Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629) and his followers among whom were Charles de Condren (1588-1641), Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-1657) and John Eudes (1601-1680).¹⁹⁴ They represented one strand in the waves of reform. Other strands came from François de Sales (1567-1622) and Jeanne de Chantal (1572-1641) and from Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) and Louise de Marillac (1591-1660). Sheldrake notes that these are ‘the three best known traditions’¹⁹⁵ within the French spiritualities at this time. Two other reform movements, Jansenism and Quietism which have been criticised as ‘heretical’,¹⁹⁶ none the less they also left a legacy in relation to the practice of spiritual direction ‘with a mantle of rigorist practice

¹⁹² Chalmers, in *Traditions in Spiritual Guidance*. p. 87

¹⁹³ Brundell, in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*. p. 72

¹⁹⁴ Raymond Deville, "The Seventeenth-Century School of French Spirituality," *Vincentian Heritage Journal* Vol 11, no. 1 (1990). 17-28

¹⁹⁵ Philip Sheldrake, ed. *Surrender to Christ for Mission: French Spiritual Traditions*, Kindle ed. (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2018). Location 152 of 4339

¹⁹⁶ Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History*. p. 137

and suspicion ... cast over the landscape of French Catholicism'¹⁹⁷ and beyond well into the eighteenth century.

Pierre de Bérulle, himself, was influenced significantly by Ignatius of Loyola and Teresa of Avila.¹⁹⁸ Indeed Sheldrake notes that the influence of these two sixteenth century Spaniards in seventeenth century France was significant.¹⁹⁹ Bérulle's spirituality had echoes of 'the Christocentrism of Ignatius of Loyola'²⁰⁰ but was also different in significant ways, notably 'his mixture of Dionysian mysticism and Trinitarian theology.'²⁰¹ Anne Minton, writing on Pierre de Bérulle contrasts the attention given by both Ignatius of Loyola and John of the Cross to methods of prayer with Bérulle's lack of 'systematic treatment of prayer or spiritual direction'.²⁰² Having said that, she goes on to remark that it is possible to identify his understanding of spiritual direction from his writings and by examining how he directed others – among them Vincent de Paul. In this she highlights the presuppositions underlying Bérulle's ideas on spiritual direction²⁰³ before going on to note the contributions his model have made. She observes that he operated from a contemplative-ascetical model seeing the director as a midwife, attending as one is being born anew in Christ.²⁰⁴ Minton notes however that,

The limitations of this (Bérullian) model of spiritual direction are that it can lead to a very privatized piety. The individual and the director are concerned with the person living with Christ's attitudes in relation to God the Father. There is very little emphasis on the wider Church community or the secular world.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁷ Wright, in *Surrender to Christ for Mission*. Location 484 of 4339

¹⁹⁸ Anne M. Minton, "Pierre De Bérulle," in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*, ed. Lavina Byrne (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990). p. 117

¹⁹⁹ Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History*. p. 137

²⁰⁰ Sheldrake, *Surrender to Christ for Mission: French Spiritual Traditions*. Location 152 of 4339

²⁰¹ Ibid. Location 152 of 4339

²⁰² Minton, in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*. p. 117

²⁰³ Ibid. p. 118

²⁰⁴ Ibid. pp 122-123

²⁰⁵ Ibid. pp 123-124

One wonders if this is one of the reasons that Vincent broke with Bérulle because for Vincent love of God and love of neighbour go hand in hand. The life and teaching of Vincent and Louise could be summed up in the statement ‘It is not enough that we should love you if our neighbour needs our love.’

François de Sales, was a native of Savoy – neither French nor Italian – but his influence on the renewal in France and beyond is well documented. Inspired in part by Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises* François de Sales developed ‘a thoughtful lay spirituality’²⁰⁶ encouraging ‘spiritual direction for lay people.’²⁰⁷ He spent three periods of his life in Paris, as a student at the Sorbonne (1578-1588), as Bishop (of Geneva) in 1602 during which time he met the circle of Madame Acaire and possibly a young Bérulle and (1618-1619) when he met often with Bérulle and Vincent de Paul to whom he entrusted the spiritual direction of Jeanne Frances de Chantal and the Visitation Sisters. He himself, had for a time, prior to her Pentecost experience in 1623, been spiritual director to Louise de Marillac. Henri Bremond says of him, ‘His originality lies rather in the particular selection which he has made of his predecessors.’²⁰⁸ As Ignatius had done with his *Spiritual Exercises*, François de Sales has left a legacy on both prayer and spiritual direction in his *Introduction à la vie dévote* (Introduction to the Devout Life, 1608), *The Traité de l’amour de Dieu* (Treatise on the Love of God, 1616) and the many letters of spiritual direction exchanged with Jeanne Frances de Chantal and others.

In his book on *The Spirit of François de Sales* Jean-Pierre Camus recounts the following:

One day François told me in particular of two priests who were quite well known for their preaching. Both were good servants of God

²⁰⁶ Sheldrake, *Surrender to Christ for Mission: French Spiritual Traditions*. Location 152 of 4339

²⁰⁷ Ibid. Location 152 of 4339

²⁰⁸ Bremond, *A Literary History of Religious Thought in France from the Wars of Religion Down to Our Own Times: I Devout Humanism*. p. 56

but altogether different in their methods of direction. Indeed, they were so different that they seemed to oppose each other, though both had the same end in view, namely, the promotion of God's glory.

"The one priest," said François, "is strict and almost frightening in his preaching. He pronounces the judgments of God like the very trump of doom. And in his special devotions, he talks only of mortification austerities and constant self-examinations. Hence, by the wholesome fears with which he fills the minds of his charges, he leads them to an exact observance of God's law and to an anxious concern for their own salvation. Of course, the effect of his direction is that his penitents greatly fear God fly from sin as from a serpent, and urgently practice virtue. This fear is mixed with a high regard for their director and a friendship for him which is indeed holy. But it is so strong and vehement that it seems to them as though they would be lost were something to happen to their guide.

"Now the other priest," continued François, "leads his charges to God by quite a different path. His sermons are always on the love of God. He advises the study of virtue rather than the hatred of sin. He makes his penitents love virtue more because it pleases God, than because it is itself worthy of love. The effect of this direction is to make souls realize a love of God that is pure and disinterested. It also makes them realize a great affection for their neighbour for the love of God. And as for their feelings towards their director, they approach him with great reverence, beholding God in him and him in God."²⁰⁹

He also comments that François did not tell him the name of either priest, but I find myself wondering if in this he was comparing Pierre de Bérulle and Vincent de Paul.

Sheldrake notes that

Unlike de Bérulle and de Sales Vincent de Paul came from a poor background. However, he was ordained and become a royal Chaplain. Eventually, some challenging experiences...as well as the spirit of Francis de Sales, led Vincent to identify with the poor and to dedicate his life to them as well as well as to slaves and victims of war. At the heart of his socially engaged spirituality lay union with God through serving Christ in the poor.²¹⁰

In this regard Wright observes that 'at the core of Vincentian Spirituality is the paradox that in order to live in Jesus one must consent to die in Christ.'²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Jean Pierre Camus, *The Spirit of St François De Sales*, trans. C F Kelley, English ed. (London: Longman, Green & Co, 1953). pp 220-221

²¹⁰ Sheldrake, *Surrender to Christ for Mission: French Spiritual Traditions*. Location 170 of 4339

²¹¹ Chryssavgis, *Light through Darkness: The Orthodox Tradition*. Location 484 of 4339

Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac are best known for their charity and service to people who were economically poor and marginalised as they responded to the neglect they encountered among so many who were forced to exist in misery. Their concern for the material poverty so many people had to endure was not to the exclusion of their concern for the spiritual poverty of their day. In this their response was both practical and holistic as in many Conferences to and Rules of both the early Daughters of Charity and the priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Mission they are reminded of the importance of serving the sick poor both corporally and spiritually.²¹² Michael highlights Vincent de Paul alongside François de Sales in France and Philip Neri (1515-1595) in Rome in their role of making spiritual direction among lay people more widespread,²¹³ while of Louise de Marillac Ranft says she ‘exemplifies the best of this golden age of spiritual direction.’²¹⁴

Jansenism, ‘a neo-Augustinian form of spiritual rigorism based on a pessimistic view of human existence’²¹⁵ was condemned as a heresy in 1653 by Pope Innocent X. It took an ultra-austere view of sin, teaching ‘limited atonement, predestination of the elect and a severe penitential system,’²¹⁶ in opposition to what they considered the laxity of the Jesuits and those who promoted frequent communion. While representing ‘a new spirit of devotion’²¹⁷ Jansenism contributed in no small way to the increase of scrupulosity we have already noted. Hitchcock also notes that Jansenists were opposed by many for being ‘crypto-Calvinists.’²¹⁸ The spirituality

²¹² Pierre Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*, trans. Vincentian Translation Project, English ed., 13 vols. (Brooklyn, New York: New City Press, 1985-2010).

²¹³ Michael. p. 4

²¹⁴ Ranft. p. 153

²¹⁵ Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History*. p. 139

²¹⁶ Jill Raitt, "European Reformations of Christian Spirituality (1450-1700)," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005). p. 136

²¹⁷ Hitchcock. p. 13

²¹⁸ Ibid. p. 14

that this gave rise to was austere in the extreme, as was the spiritual direction that flowed from it.

Quietism, condemned as a heresy by Pope Innocent XI in 1687, on the other hand, emphasised mysticism and mystical union with God in such a way as to present it as something human beings could attain by their own will and efforts. One of the consequences of this heresy was to render suspect the very thing it sought to promote. Another concern was the severity with which spiritual direction generally was practiced in order to counter it. In his *Some Spiritual Guides of the Seventeenth Century* Abbé Huvelin comments that,

(A)ll direction was severe in those days. The Vincentians were severe, and so were the Jesuits in the Rue Pot-de-Fer. You have only to consider St Vincent de Paul's penitents, women like Madame de Gondî. They were souls whose personality disappeared behind the charitable deeds they performed. They were like leafless trees; only the fruit was left, even the wood had disappeared.²¹⁹

While this was undoubtedly true Vincent had also a much less severe side when it came to his direction of the 'village girls' who would be the first Daughters of Charity and of people who were poor. In this we have only to recall how he approached, among others, the galley slaves.

Coda: While having nothing specific to say about spiritual direction the decrees of the Council of Trent influenced how it would be practiced from then on. With the, almost, complete merger with sacramental confession spiritual direction was available to all without distinction. As shall be seen later Vincent de Paul would discover this universal availability was far from ideal. It has also been noted above, that is only part of the story and spiritual direction separate from sacramental confession continued to be available specifically to lay people. Furthermore, Vincent

²¹⁹ Abbé Huvelin, *Some Spiritual Guides of the Seventeenth Century*, trans. Joseph Leonard (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1927). p. 81

and Louise were as concerned for the spiritual poverty of those they ministered to as they were for their material poverty. Vincent and Louise were not alone at this time in providing spiritual care to people who were poor. Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection (1614-1691) was a lay Carmelite brother who became known as the ‘kitchen saint’ as he learned and practiced the presence of God in the monastery kitchen. From here he had a friendly welcome for all who came which encouraged them to confide in him.²²⁰

EIGHTEENTH – MID TWENTIETH CENTURIES

The Enlightenment, political revolutions in Europe and North America, the Industrial Revolution and the foundations of Modernity mark the beginning of this period which would also see the emergence of evolutionary theory, Marxism, the birth of psychology, two World Wars, the Holocaust, Hiroshima destruction, the birth of the atomic age, the birth of technology, the advance of European colonisation and imperialism followed by the death of European empires, the end of colonialism, the founding of International organisations of collaboration and the establishment of multinational corporations.²²¹ For Threlfall-Holmes this period ‘saw the political and religious climate of Europe and the Americas changed almost beyond recognition.’²²² The globalisation of Christianity ‘which took place over this period was powered by a heady combination of exploration, trade, colonialism and missionary zeal.’²²³ She also notes how the unplanned withdrawal of colonial powers left ‘political disruption and often outright war across large swathes of the old empires,’²²⁴ resulting in major

²²⁰ Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, trans. EM Blaiklock 1981 (London, Sydney, Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton).

²²¹ Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History*. pp 147ff

²²² Threlfall-Holmes. p. 101

²²³ Ibid. p. 115

²²⁴ Ibid. pp 132-135

social upheaval. Together Quietism and Jansenism continued to give rise to a moral-ascetical approach to spirituality and to suspicion of an affective-mystical one. The resulting spiritual ideal is once more comprised of competing ideals with on the one hand the emphasis on acquiring and living virtues by means of methodical, disciplined prayer and on the other emphasising the experience of God.

In the main, the post-tridentine ‘Director of Conscience’ was still the general model of the spiritual director during this period and Ruffing notes that ‘spiritual direction for all practical purposes was no longer considered to be a charism. The link with sacramental confession resulted in spiritual direction becoming a function of office and the responsibility of the cleric-confessors’.²²⁵ Leech, moreover, notes that Ignatian spiritual direction at this time was mainly given in the confessional.²²⁶ As in all the other periods of time the exceptions to the rule are manifest. Michael reminds us that the tradition, started in France by both François de Sales and Vincent de Paul and by Philip Neri in Rome of making spiritual direction more available to and popular with lay people continued and indeed was expanded by the French priests Abbé Huvelin and Abbé Saudreau and the lay Englishman Baron von Huegel.²²⁷ Ranft also highlights that the growth in the religious orders during this period resulted in the tradition of women spiritual directors flourishing and that they took as their models those who had gone before them. Among them she includes Madeleine Sophie Barat (1779-1865) who founded the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,²²⁸ Frances Mary Teresa Ball (1794-1860) the founder of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin in Ireland,²²⁹

²²⁵ Ruffing. p. 14

²²⁶ Leech. p. 61

²²⁷ Michael. pp 4-5

²²⁸ Ranft. pp 174-180

²²⁹ Ibid. pp 180-181

Henriette le Forestier d'Osseville (1803-1858) who founded the Congregation of Our Lady of Loyalty²³⁰ and Thérèse Martin of Lisieux (1873-1897)²³¹

Coda: As already noted during this timeframe spiritual direction was no longer viewed as a charism but a function of sacramental priesthood. Notwithstanding this the tradition of spiritual direction being available separate from sacramental confession continued. Once again, the literature has little to say about how it is provided for people who are marginalised outside sacramental confession. Spanning the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Canada Brother André Bessette (1845-1937), a lay brother of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, was well known for the spiritual care he gave to many who came 'seeking hope, reassurance and even healing.'²³²

MID TWENTIETH – TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Today is another time of immense change as modernity gives way to post-Modernity with increasing social diversity. What was previously experienced as fixed systems of thought have become fragmented and the world is understood as plural. There is suspicion of normative interpretations of the truth with the resultant decline of institutional religion in Europe alongside growing interfaith dialogue. The resulting accelerated pace of change in all aspects of life is experienced as globalisation, which includes the destruction of natural resources, climate change and cyberspace. Alongside this there is increasing Xenophobia, a growing gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots' and an abdication of responsibility by governments of responsibilities for people who are poor and marginalised. Lack of trust in institutions, terrorism and

²³⁰ Ibid. pp 181-182

²³¹ Ibid. pp 182-190

²³² Congregation of the Holy Cross, accessed 2014. <https://www.saint-joseph.org/en/shrine/saint-brother-andre/biography-saint-brother-andre>.

barbarity also mark the world climate at this time. As a result the spiritual ideal is one of liberation, health, wholeness, a different way of being in the world – right relationships with God, self, others and creation grounded in gospel values of justice, compassion and peace in action – with a quest for the mystical and prophetic political approaches. Spiritual life begins to split from traditional religion raising the question, will spirituality replace religion?²³³

It is interesting to note that at the beginning of this timeframe Thomas Merton (1915-1968) describes spiritual direction as a ‘monastic concept’ which he considers necessary for someone who has a special vocation but ‘not necessary for the ordinary Christian’ for whom the spiritual direction received in confession is sufficient.²³⁴ He was certainly unprepared for what was to take place within a short space of time, both in his own life²³⁵ and in the life of the Church.

Probably the single-most significant factor responsible for what Ruffing calls the current renaissance in spiritual direction²³⁶ was the Second Vatican Council announced by Pope John XXIII in January 1959 and opened by him in October 1962. While like Trent the Council did not specifically address spiritual direction in Chapter V of *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, the Council Fathers declared that ‘all in the Church..... are called to holiness’²³⁷ which together with the

²³³ Mary Heimann, "Christianity in Western Europe from the Enlightenment," in *A World History of Christianity*, ed. Adrian Hastings (Grand Rapids MI, Cambridge: William B Eerdmans, 1999). 458-507

²³⁴ Thomas Merton, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation and What Is Contemplation?* (Wheathampstead: Anthony Clarke Books, 1975). 13-20

²³⁵ On 18 March 1958 in Louisville, Kentucky at the corner of Fourth and Walnut Streets Merton has a deep experience which changed his thinking and approach from then on. Writing in his journal the following day he records, ‘Yesterday, in Louisville, at the corner of 4th, and Walnut, suddenly realized that I loved all the people and that none of them were, or, could be totally alien to me. As if waking from a dream – the dream of my separateness, of the “special” vocation to be different.’ cf Lawrence S Cunningham, ed. *A Search for Solitude: The Journals of Thomas Merton*, Thomas Merton, vol. 3 1952-1960 (New York NY: HarperCollins, 1996). pp 181-182 and William H Shannon, *Silent Lamp: The Thomas Merton Story* (London: SCM Press, 1993). p 178ff

²³⁶ Janet Ruffing, *To Tell the Sacred Tale* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2011). p. 19

²³⁷ Austin Flannery, ed. *Vatican Council III: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents* (Newport New York: Costello, 1975). p. 396

Aggiornamento with which religious were called to return to their founding charism contributed to shaping spiritual direction to the present day. One of the outcomes was a return to the less institutional and more charismatic model of spiritual direction within the Catholic Church. At the same time the Council also had the effect of facilitating a resurgence of spiritual direction within the Protestant churches, albeit at a slower pace.²³⁸

Spiritual direction began again to be sought by people in many different situations; the need for it one of the ‘signs of the hunger felt by so many for a deeper relationship with God’ and one of the signs of the Spirit present and active in the lives of people.²³⁹ Formation/Training Programmes also began to emerge and grow, initially based on the Ignatian model. Then, as those coming from different traditions graduated from these programmes they began to re-formulate them in light of their own tradition, be that within the Christian churches or outside. Books on spiritual direction, and the spiritual life generally, also began to appear more regularly. Sheets notes that more has been ‘written on the specific topic of spiritual direction in the past twenty years than was written over all the previous centuries in the history of the Church.’²⁴⁰ Many of these have related to spiritual direction with people in specific groups or situations, eg *Spiritual Direction with People who have Dementia or Life Threatening Illnesses*; *Spiritual Direction with Generation X*; *Spiritual Direction with People who have been Abused*; *Spiritual Direction in Cyberspace*; *Art, Poetry, Dreams in Spiritual Direction*; *Cross-Cultural Spiritual Direction*; *inter-faith Spiritual Direction* and many more.

²³⁸ Ruffing, "Direction, Spiritual," in *The New Scm Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. p. 244

²³⁹ John R Sheets, "Spiritual Direction in the Church," in *The Best of the Review - 3: The Christian Ministry of Spiritual Direction*, ed. David L Fleming (St Louis, MO: Review for Religious, 1988). 69-70

²⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 68

The Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* have also been carried on the wave of revival and been returned to their original delivery in a one-to-one relationship and by the early 1980's had been further developed to be more available, by way of a Week of Directed Prayer, to people in their ordinary lives. In the early 1990's a number of practising spiritual directors came together and formed Spiritual Directors International which has now become a global learning community who represent some forty seven different spiritual traditions.²⁴¹

Developmental psychology has also contributed in a significant way to the spiritual directors understanding of the human person. It was at the beginning of the twentieth century that psychology emerged as a science in its own right from philosophy. Again, following Vatican II's invitation more attention has been paid to what can be learned about the human psyche from psychology in order to more fully understand the person coming for spiritual direction and be in a better position to journey with them in such a way as to facilitate their integration as a whole person.

Coda: In the wake of the Second Vatican Council more attention has been given to a less institutionalised model of spiritual direction than hitherto. This resulted in increased interest in spiritual direction generally; the establishment of training programmes for spiritual directors; the formation of Spiritual Directors International; and the proliferation of books about spiritual direction. It has been noted above how many of these books relate to spiritual direction with people in specific groups including some particular categories of marginalisation. These would indicate that spiritual direction is being made available to some people who are marginalised.

²⁴¹ Spiritual Directors International, accessed May, 2013. <http://sdiworld.org/about/>. Available from <http://sdiworld.org/about/>

CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

From the study of the history of spiritual direction as it has evolved from the beginning of Christianity it is possible to identify certain characteristics in respect of the form and method of practice of spiritual direction as well as its overall aim and purpose, and the qualities necessary in a spiritual director, irrespective of within which Christian denomination it takes place. Indeed two main trends can be identified, formal and informal, both of which have existed in each timeframe. The formal being the development of both the institutionalised, elitist dimension and the clericalised public dimension while the informal is more of the *Anamchara* dimension, where one, including those otherwise ignored and invisible, is met quite literally on the road or at the kitchen window.

The evolving understanding of obedience and authority has been significant within the spiritual direction relationship. In the early days when the actual spiritual direction relationship was that of spiritual father/mother-disciple obedience was given in deference to the discretion of the elder. As that relationship changed to become more one of a superior-subject obedience was demanded by the authority of the director. Today, as our understanding of both obedience and authority have themselves changed, the emphasis is much more on co-listening; co-discerning between director and directee. For this very reason, in addition to their own spiritual direction, those who are directing others are also expected to be engaged in supervision. While this is something that is important for all spiritual direction relationships it takes on additional significance when the directees belong to marginalised groups so that spiritual directors are open to exploring experiences foreign to them or indeed compound the marginalisation the person already experiences.

FORM AND METHOD OF PRACTICE

We have seen how over time spiritual direction has been practiced using a variety of methods. In many instances, and indeed in the present time, these methods are not mutually exclusive but in fact complement and enrich one another. Rather each speaks for a specific way of fulfilling the aim of spiritual direction. These include:

- the prophetic way of example and bearing witness;
- the sacramental way of writing itself practiced over the centuries in many forms, whether by means of letters to individuals or communities or longer treatises and books;
- the charismatic/sacramental, ‘word’ of the Abba/Amma; the soul-friendship of the *Anamchara*; the Rule in early monasticism and linked with that spiritual direction by the Abbot/Abbess of the monks/nuns as a group;
- the different forms of the one-to-one relationship from the contemplative-charismatic forms practiced by Teresa, Ignatius, François de Sales, Vincent, Louise to the institutionalised authoritarian, confessor-penitent model that became the norm between Trent and Vatican II; and
- the current contemporary return to a contemplative-charismatic one-to-one relationship.

This contemporary return to the contemplative-charismatic one-to-one practice of spiritual direction is I believe significant when it comes to spiritual direction with people who are marginalised. For people who are generally viewed as a group and often times negatively it is less authoritarian and seeks to restore to them their innate dignity. Thus it is the form and method of practice that this research is focused on

specifically as it is experienced by people who are marginalised with spiritual directors who are members of the Vincentian Family.

THE AIM AND PURPOSE

While we have seen it expressed differently as it has evolved within the Christian Tradition, the central aim of spiritual direction is to help people develop their relationship with God and to live out the consequences of that relationship. This means that far from being an introspective activity it involves the overflowing of God's life in the person to the world, something experienced very differently for everyone. A person engaged in spiritual direction is enabled to come to a deeper and more realistic understanding of both themselves and God, of who God is in and for them and who they are in and for God. As a result they are supported as they discern the choices they need to make in their lives to live this out for the good of others. The material for spiritual direction then is everything that impacts on one's life and living held in the contemplative space – our Incarnational God is interested in all of our life and ready to transform it with our cooperation.

QUALITIES IN A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

In the desert the hermit did not just approach anyone to guide them, rather they sought out 'an elder seasoned by solitude with an experiential knowledge of the gifts and temptations of (the) lifestyle and of the life of prayer.'²⁴² While choosing a spiritual director is in itself a spiritual quest like that of the desert solitary there are qualities to look for.

²⁴² Ruffing. p. 4

In the first instance a spiritual director is expected to be a person of prayer (p. 26) – a pray-er who is becoming a Prayer. It is hard to see how one could guide another if s/he were not by a life of prayer growing in intimacy themselves with God through their own struggles with life. Thomas Merton emphasises this when he writes, ‘His first duty, if he wants to be an effective director, is to see to his own interior life and take time for prayer and meditation, since he will never be able to give to others what he does not possess himself.’²⁴³ Such a director will as a matter of form hold each of their directees in their own contemplative space.

We have seen how Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross both put great emphasis on learning (p. 47). The knowledge required is of scripture, theology and spiritual traditions as well as knowledge of psychology and the growth of the human person is of inestimable value for a spiritual director. Spiritual directors accompanying people who are marginalised also need to be open to learning from them what it is like to discover and relate to God in their very marginalisation, something that will not be learned from books.

One of the key qualities needed in a spiritual director is that of listening (p. 38) – of being able to listen deeply with the heart to the action of the Spirit in the spirit of the directee which is communicated through the story narrated. It also means compassionate, empathetic listening and being able to listen for what is not being said. While this quality of listening is considered necessary for any spiritual direction relationship it is particularly essential when the directee belongs to a marginalised group whose voice is most often dismissed by society.

Discretion (p. 47) is one of the required qualities that has recurred throughout the history of spiritual direction. It speaks of maturity, prudence, good judgement

²⁴³ Merton. p. 25

diplomacy, the ability to encourage and/or challenge as needed. Again a quality necessary in every spiritual direction relationship and of particular relevance with people from marginalised groups. Prudence is essential as some people who are marginalised may say outrageous things as a way of seeking attention or testing the listener. Having the ability to know when and how to encourage and challenge appropriately and compassionately is also indispensable with this group.

Discernment (p. 27) is one of the major components of the spiritual direction relationship, both in terms of being able to recognise the origin of the various influences at work, and in terms of not stepping on the heels of Providence. To this end the spiritual director must be a person of insight, able to know the inspirations coming from God in their own life – and those that don't – if s/he is to recognise them in the life of the directee.

Every directee, and especially those from marginalised groups, also needs to know with absolute certainty that the person to whom s/he entrusts the story of her/his life will hold that story with reverence, respect and confidentiality.

Many other qualities are suggested which are particularly relevant to people from marginalised groups. These include kindness, compassion, empathy, solidarity, humility and presence. It is generally agreed that no one spiritual director has the fullness of all the qualities that may be desired. Whatever the combination in any individual spiritual director the person seeking their companionship on the spiritual journey that is life needs to feel s/he can talk at ease and know s/he can trust them fully.

CHALLENGES GOING FORWARD FOR DIRECTION WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE MARGINALISED

In all of the methods mentioned above, and particularly if the focus is on the contemplative-charismatic one-to-one relationship which takes place on a regular basis, spiritual direction is in danger of becoming highly formalised, elitist and unavailable to many in our churches and indeed those outside. I believe that one of the major challenges today is to find ways to ensure that spiritual direction is available to everyone, and in particular people whom society has pushed to the margins. As already noted above, much has been written in more recent years about spiritual direction in different cultural contexts and with various groups of people, many of them marginalised. They include people who for a variety of reasons will not necessarily visit a spiritual director in their 'office'. Among them are people who because of the lifestyle into which they have been forced do not make appointments or carry diaries and maybe the only 'regular' place they frequent is the soup kitchen queue or a homeless shelter or people who feel abandoned by the institutional church and as a result feel God has abandoned them too. For all of these people and indeed many others the less formal approach, at least initially, affords them the safe space they need to have their story heard and held in such a way that they discover God in it and come to know anew God's story and discover themselves in it. Then no matter what their life circumstances they will come to know themselves included in and embraced by the dream of God and find their own ways to express this as they contribute to the spiritual growth of the director.

Pope Francis, both by his actions and his words, challenges the Church to provide spiritual care for people who are poor. Indeed as already noted above he has

said 'that the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care.'²⁴⁴ In the Summer 2018 edition of *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* Ted Penton SJ gives an Ignatian response to Pope Francis' challenge.²⁴⁵ Focussing on people who are homeless as 'the poor'²⁴⁶ in the remainder of the article Penton presents, as a response to Pope Francis' challenge, the Ignatian Spirituality Project founded by Bill Creed SJ in Chicago.²⁴⁷

The Vincentian Centre for Spirituality and Work recognises that not every spiritual director is called to journey with people who are marginalised²⁴⁸ and that this itself is an issue of discernment for them. Spiritual directors offering soul care in this less formal way are also challenged to ensure that they are not providing a 'lesser' care. In speaking of the love of the poor to both the priests of the Mission and the first Daughters of Charity Vincent calls the poor 'our lords and masters.'²⁴⁹ It is my thesis, that while not the only one, the approach of Vincent and Louise has much to offer in this regard.

CONCLUSION

Having now reviewed the history of spiritual direction and observed the great diversity of approaches in light of concern for people who are marginalised; the characteristics of spiritual direction in terms of the method of practice and the aim as

²⁴⁴ See p. 18 above and Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium - the Joy of the Gospel*. p. 83 para 169

²⁴⁵ Ted Penton SJ, "Spiritual Care for the Poor: An Ignatian Response to Pope Francis's Challenge," *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits* 50, no. 2 (Summer 2018). 1-39

²⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 2

²⁴⁷ The Ignatian Spirituality Project began in 1988 in Chicago when friends Ed Shurna and Fr Bill Creed SJ developed a short residential retreat for men and women who were homeless and in recovery from addiction. It has since spread to almost 30 cities in the United States and Canada. <http://www.ignatianspiritualityproject.org/>. During 2019 a team based in Manresa Jesuit Centre of Spirituality, Dublin have been working at adapting it to the Irish context and plan to run the first retreats in August/September 2019. <https://www.manresa.ie/content/isp-ireland>.

²⁴⁸ From a Vincentian point of view people who are marginalised include not only people who are homeless, but people who find themselves in any of the situations noted above pp 1-2

²⁴⁹ cf. Coste CM. Vol 11 p. 349

well as the qualities to look for in a spiritual director and the challenges going forward with respect to spiritual direction with people who are marginalised I will now turn to look at the various metaphors and models of spiritual direction.

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Chapter 3

METAPHORS AND MODELS FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

INTRODUCTION

Within the spiritual direction relationship one of the aspects of a person's life that the director is listening for is who God is for him/her, in other words their image of God. This is important as it is our images of God, which evolve over time as we develop and mature as human beings, that shape our beliefs, attitudes and behaviours towards ourselves, others and indeed creation itself as 'it is human beings who form the other half of the image of the divine.'¹ Sometimes those images become redundant, distorted or dysfunctional and one of the roles of the spiritual director at this time is to provide the safe contemplative space to allow the person re-image God, indeed to go beyond the images themselves to God.

The books of the Hebrew Scriptures are replete with metaphors for the divine presence called God, some of them as Mills notes conflicting,² but all indicative of the growing understanding taking place. In the gospels there is a shift in that the metaphors used by Jesus relate not so much to the Godhead as to the reign of God, 'The kingdom of God is like.....' and his own place within it, 'I am.....' As Sallie McFague reminds us metaphor is more than a poetic device, it can also be a search for new meaning and the source of new insights as people constantly strive to understand

¹ Mary E Mills, *Images of God in the Old Testament* (London: Cassell, 1998). p. 135

² Ibid. p. 3

themselves and the world in ever deeper ways.³ Avery Dulles advances a similar opinion in examining the use of models to understand and describe the Church.⁴

By its very nature spiritual direction lends itself to be described in terms of metaphors, associated as it is in many ways with a counter-cultural spiritual ideal and related forms of spiritual direction at different times. The truth of this is evident in even the most cursory examination of the titles of books on spiritual direction and their table of contents. Just as the individual's images of God affect their relationships, so too the metaphor for spiritual direction an individual spiritual director works out of affects how they practice spiritual direction and to whom it is available. We have already noted the difficulty in agreeing a single definition of spiritual direction and indeed that it is known by a number of different terms. Several of the alternative terms for spiritual direction of themselves give rise to/arise from some of the rich metaphors that abound. The term 'Spiritual Accompaniment' arises from metaphors related to journeying and pilgrimage; 'Spiritual Companionship' arises from metaphors related to hospitality and friendship; 'Spiritual Guidance' arises from a number of related metaphors such as guiding, mentoring, teaching and apprenticeship.

In the discussion which follows I will examine spiritual direction in terms of models and metaphors. This will take place in four phases:

1. An examination of the concept of language, metaphors, models and paradigms informed by the work of Sally McFague and Avery Dulles.
2. An exploration of literature in respect of metaphors for and models of spiritual direction.

³ Sallie McFague, *Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975). p. 56

⁴ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Second ed. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987). p. 15

3. A presentation of five significant metaphors, Pilgrimage; Friendship; Hospitality; Midwifing and Mentoring/Teaching, exploring how each help us to better understand the relationship we call spiritual direction and how each is helpful or otherwise when spiritual direction is with people who are marginalised.
4. A discussion of story-telling: which is more than a metaphor or model but a paradigm that permeates all metaphors and models without obliterating them, as the means of discovering 'who we are and who we are meant to be in God's designs.'⁵ In particular what does this look like for people who are marginalised?

LANGUAGE, METAPHORS, MODELS, PARADIGMS

All language is inadequate when one wishes to communicate deeper human experiences, and this is particularly true in relation to language in a religious context. McFague reminds us that without a religious context some religious language can become idolatrous and irrelevant and she points out that the mystics have gone beyond traditional imagery in their attempt to express their experience of God.⁶ She also highlights the significance of interpretation, the glasses through which we see our experience, as critical in this context. Interpretation is composed of a 'plurality of perspectives' among them time, place, history, class, race, nationality, education, which together influence our understanding. If this plurality is not taken into account we again risk our language becoming idolatrous and irrelevant, in particular through the tendency to write out of the tradition the experiences of individuals or specific

⁵ Thérèse Monaghan, "The Sacredness of Story," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 8, no. 2 (June 2002). p. 51 of 51-53

⁶ Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982). p. 2

groups of people.⁷ A similar point is made by Miguel de la Torre in his book '*Reading the Bible from the Margins*'.⁸

When the use of plain language alone is no longer sufficient we need to find other means to communicate the essence of our deeper experiences. One such means is to use imagery/allegory/figure of speech/metaphor, to draw a comparison and make an analogy with the experience we are trying to convey. McFague points out that this is something poets and writers do as a matter of course, as do mystics as we have already noted, and indeed teachers. We have already seen above the books of the Hebrew scriptures are full of metaphors and Jesus' parables are what McFague calls 'extended metaphors'.⁹ She points out that a number of metaphorical expressions are very much part of everyday language, words or phrases are easily used out of context, and we do not even recognise them as metaphors.¹⁰ While metaphor has on occasions been used as a decorative tool, it is also a way of expressing 'what we do not know in terms of what we do know'.¹¹ She also draws attention to the 'is' and 'is not' characteristic of metaphor.¹²

Another means of communicating beyond the point where language alone is helpful is that of modelling. For Dulles a model is an image which is reflected on and critiqued to deepen one's understanding of the underlying concepts.¹³ The use of modelling is extensive in architecture where replica scale models are created, in the sciences where they may be actual physical models or abstract mathematical models, and in economics where conceptual models are created from the raw data in relation

⁷ Ibid. p. 3

⁸ Miguel De La Torre, *Reading the Bible from the Margins* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2002).

⁹ McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*. p. 13

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 33

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Dulles. p. 23

to the economy and the possible behaviour of the various people within it. Barbour draws attention to the fact that in the sciences the different kinds of models serve different functions.¹⁴ Drawing on the work of IT Ramsey and Ewert Cousins Dulles proposes the concept of model as a way of understanding, both on the explanatory and exploratory levels, the mystery we call Church.¹⁵ Models in this way ‘synthesize what we already know’ and lead us to new insights.¹⁶ Using the example of the images of the parables as told by Jesus he points out the limitation of the metaphor, and the need of a model which takes account of specific characteristics of the Church to supplement them.¹⁷ In a later work he defines a model as ‘a relatively simple, artificially constructed case which is found to be useful and illuminating for dealing with realities that are more complex and differentiated.’¹⁸ Quoting from Jacob Bronowski’s *The Visionary Eye: Essays in the Arts, Literature and Science* McFague explains the difference between a metaphor and a model as ‘a model is a metaphor with ‘staying power’.’¹⁹

At times the words ‘metaphor’ and ‘model’ are used inter-changeably. This however is not fully accurate. While as noted above there is a similarity between them, as both offer a greater understanding of that with which they are associated, there are also significant differences. A metaphor is much more a figure of speech, a literary device which can be viewed as two-dimensional linking something familiar with something else less tangible by means of symbolism. A model, on the other hand, is a three-dimensional representation of a structure, procedure or a system on a smaller

¹⁴ Ian G Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms* (New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco CA, London: Harper & Row, 1976). p. 29

¹⁵ Dulles. p. 25

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Dublin: Gill & McMillan, 1992).

¹⁹ McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*. p. 34

scale. Metaphors indeed may be included in models. In terms of spiritual direction one way of viewing a model is the approach taken, for instance the charismatic, contemplative one-to-one is one model while the institutional clerical-sacramental is another. Within both of these models there many metaphors, among them teacher, healer, friend.

Towards the end of his article Fleming notes that ‘all models have played and do play an important part in our understanding of spiritual direction.’²⁰ However, there is no one ‘right’ model and trying ‘to reduce the various models of spiritual direction to a single one is to lose sight of the incomprehensible richness of religious experience which forms the content of direction.’²¹ Within all of the models identified supplementary images/metaphors provide us with a more direct visualisation of spiritual direction, in particular of the role of and the relationship between the director and the directee. Once again it is important to note that no one metaphor encompasses the totality of spiritual direction and their richness is in how, when taken together, they deepen the understanding of the relationship known as ‘spiritual direction’.

Beyond the metaphors and models, and supporting them, is a paradigm; an archetype which helps to interpret experience and, in this instance, gives spiritual direction some of its specific characteristics. Barbour draws on science to help understand how paradigms within the religious sphere can be understood.²² He begins by outlining and critiquing the work of Thomas Kuhn in relation to paradigms in the sciences in which ‘the models lead to theories by which observations are ordered’²³ something which takes place within the scientific community. Drawing further

²⁰ David L Fleming, "Models of Spiritual Direction," in *The Best of the Review - 3: The Christian Ministry of Spiritual Direction*, ed. David L Fleming (St Louis, MO: Review for Religious, 1988). p. 111

²¹ Ibid.

²² Barbour. pp 92ff

²³ Ibid. p. 119

parallels between the scientific and religious spheres he notes that both science and religion are community affairs with central historical events, which in the case of religion are revelatory, and involve a level of commitment, personal involvement and critical reflection.²⁴ We have already noted that spiritual direction is one of the means of critical reflection that enables us to interpret our experience of our relationship with the Divine we call God.

WHAT THE LITERATURE HAS TO SAY ABOUT MODELS OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Despite the fact that, as I have already noted, the titles of books on spiritual direction and their tables of contents point to the existence of the many metaphors and models used to describe spiritual direction, for the most part the topic of models of spiritual direction receives only cursory attention and where they are studied in detail there is little consistency in the way they are identified. In his book *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church*²⁵ George Demacopoulos explored five models of in the early Church all of which highlight the tensions which emerged between the asceticism of monastic life and the doctrinal formation of the clerical/sacramental ranks.²⁶ He also made no reference to the many women already noted, like Syncletica, who were spiritual directors nor the model of spiritual direction they employed. As has already been noted in Chapter 1 these were largely detached from the spiritual direction experience of people who were marginalised. Janet Ruffing identified six models based on the usual historical approach to spiritual

²⁴ Ibid. pp 133ff

²⁵ George E Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

²⁶ Throughout the thesis I will use the term 'clerical/sacramental' to refer to the ordained priestly role as that is the terminology used by George Demacopoulos.

direction,²⁷ which, again Chapter 1 has already addressed. Fleming proposed five models all of which are more contemporary, again none of which speak directly about spiritual direction with people who are marginalised.²⁸

FIVE SIGNIFICANT METAPHORS

In what follows I will explore five significant metaphors for spiritual direction. They are by no means the only metaphors being used today but I consider them to be the most expressive of those I have encountered. In examining them in turn I will ask what they have to offer in relation to spiritual direction with people who are marginalised. In general the metaphors represent the allegories that the spiritual director works out of rather than something the directee is overtly aware of. That being said, it may on occasions be helpful to a directee if the metaphor one is working out is elaborated on.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AS JOURNEY/PILGRIMAGE

As a metaphor for spiritual direction journey/pilgrimage has much to recommend it for people who are marginalised and as a result experience the journey of, an often chaotic, life itself as purposeless. One of the definitions of spiritual direction noted in Chapter 1 is that of ‘accompanying people on a spiritual journey’.²⁹ The spiritual life itself has often been described as a journey or pilgrimage which has long been a tool for discernment, so it is not surprising that one of the metaphors for spiritual direction too is that of journey or pilgrimage. As Sellner reminds us ‘Pilgrimage is one of the most ancient practices of humankind....the pilgrim instinct

²⁷ Ruffing.

²⁸ Fleming, in *The Best of the Review - 3: The Christian Ministry of Spiritual Direction*.

²⁹ Spiritual Directors International, Available from <http://sdiworld.org/about/what-is-spiritual-direction>

itself lies deep within the human heart. We are naturally drawn to those places and people who reveal the goodness of God, the beauty of creation, the sacred dimensions of our lives.’³⁰ For many who undertook it, the journey to the desert was of itself a journey of discernment – an outer journey that mirrors the inner journey. Spiritual direction through the metaphor of journey brings to mind the journey of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, (Lk 24:13-32) a passage often quoted when exploring incidences of Jesus as a spiritual director. The image evokes the opening words of the anonymous Russian pilgrim, ‘By the grace of God I am a Christian man, by my actions a great sinner, and by calling a homeless wanderer of the humblest birth who roams from place to place.’³¹ His outer journey of travelling from place to place was of itself a metaphor for the inner journey which he was invited to take to discover how he could ‘pray without ceasing’. (1 Thess 5:17)

When it comes to journeying, a pilgrim is not a tourist. A tourist tends to travel to many places without being inwardly affected by what s/he encounters.³² A pilgrim, however, is a traveller with a purpose, is intentional about where s/he goes and what s/he does, allowing the interaction with both the place and the people there to inform and deepen his/her experience of the sacred. In his Foreword to *‘The Art of Pilgrimage’*, Huston Smith reminds us, ‘The object of pilgrimage is not rest and recreation – to get away from it all. To set out on a pilgrimage is to throw down a challenge to everyday life.’³³ The same can be said of spiritual direction. Many of the characteristics of pilgrimage can be applied to spiritual direction. ‘Pilgrimage expands the horizons of our faith and gives us a greater understanding of our own

³⁰ Edward C Sellner, *Pilgrimage* (Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2004). p. 20

³¹ Anonymous, *The Way of a Pilgrim and the Pilgrim Continues His Way*, trans. R.M. French (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2010; repr., Second Edition). p. 3

³² Sellner. p. 27

³³ Phil Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage* (York Beach, ME: Cinari Press, 1998). p. xi

spiritual journey.’³⁴ ‘It is also God’s journey towards us.’³⁵ Pilgrimage is a journey that requires discipline, a journey that takes us inwards to the depths of ourselves and God, and outwards in communion with God in our sisters and brothers. Sellner notes the disciplines necessary for the pilgrim:

- ‘the discipline of mindfulness: paying attention, listening, living in the moment;
- The discipline of daily prayer upon rising and before sleeping;
- The discipline of reading sacred texts before leaving on pilgrimage, during one’s travels, and after one’s return;
- The discipline of asking questions, seeking direction;
- The discipline of journaling or of quiet reflection;
- The discipline of letting go, being open to the mystery;
- The discipline of gratitude for all one sees, and all one meets.’³⁶

In terms of the spiritual direction relationship these same disciplines are required of both the spiritual director and the directee. However, where the directees belong to marginalised groups, many of whose lives are dysfunctional and chaotic, discipline as described above, while desired, may be beyond their ability to achieve. In these circumstances where a spiritual director is working out of this metaphor it becomes his/her task to model the disciplines in such a way as to encourage the directee to realise their importance and desire to attain them. In this regard being present, paying attention to, listening to the directee and being open to help them be open to and recognise the mystery in their lives are of paramount importance.

³⁴ Christian George, *Sacred Travels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006). p. 25

³⁵ Ibid. p. 47

³⁶ Sellner. p. 209

‘The pilgrim’s path is seldom smooth. There are plenty of potholes, ditches and valleys along the way.’³⁷ The pilgrim undertaking such a journey is well advised to seek a guide familiar with the terrain who will recognise the hazards and dangers as well as the safe shelters along the way. Just as a pilgrim is not a tourist, a pilgrim guide is not a tourist guide. The tourist guide normally sets the agenda for the people who sign up for a particular tour, deciding on the places they will stop to behold the sights or to take rest along the way. In contrast the pilgrim guide understands the deeper significance of the journey the pilgrim is undertaking, even if the pilgrim him/herself does not fully appreciate it, and that the agenda for the journey is set by the pilgrim not the guide. On one occasion a group of young adults, all members of a liturgical Folk Group in Dublin, went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. While they themselves were not fully aware of the significance of the journey they were undertaking the guide who initially accompanied them had little or no appreciation of what it meant for them. This culminated when they arrived in Bethlehem and she could not understand why they wanted to see sheep, shepherds and fields. Didn’t they have sheep, shepherds and fields in Ireland? She was more anxious to bring them to the Holocaust museum! She was a tour guide not a pilgrim guide. At this point they sought a new guide.

In addition to knowing the terrain, the pilgrim guide remains focused on the pilgrim’s journey, as it unfolds. What has attracted the pilgrim to make this journey? At this time? What are his/her hopes and dreams with regard to it? What do they hope to see? Do? Where is s/he being led or drawn in the present? This means that the pilgrim guide makes a very different sort of preparation than the tourist guide. In likening spiritual direction to a journey/pilgrimage the spiritual director is the pilgrim

³⁷ George. p. 90

guide. The preparation required by the spiritual director accompanying someone on their journey in and to God is about making themselves fully available to the directee and God's presence and work in his/her life. The spiritual director sets aside his/her own agenda and allows the directee discover the ways that God is revealing Godself to him/her. In order to do this the spiritual director must be listening for the promptings of the Spirit which are so often heard, as Elijah discovered, in 'sound of sheer silence.' (1 Kings 19:12)

In a recent *Presence* article Regina Roman comments that 'a spiritual directee is a pilgrim in everyday life, and a pilgrim is a spiritual directee in motion. Both need a qualified guide, experienced soul friend or wisdom elder to assist in navigating life's terrain'³⁸ She parallels the four different stages of pilgrimage with the four phases of spiritual direction which she names as:

i. 'The Call to Journey (Orientation):

The Time of Preparation and Inspiration

What are my expectations? How do I imagine it will be?'

ii. 'The Journey (Dis-Orientation):

Time of Creativity and Discovery

How is the reality of meeting my desires and expectations? How are my thoughts and belief systems affecting reality?'

iii. 'The Return Home (Re-Orientation):

Time of Introspection and Awareness

What fruits (gifts) do I choose to gather, to leave behind? How will these be used to best serve me and the greater community?'

³⁸ Regina Roman, "The Art of Journey: Pilgrimage as Spiritual Direction in Motion," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 18, no. 1 (March 2012). 57-62

iv. Home in the Heart (Omnis-Orientation):

Time of Revitalization and Wisdom

What is being aligned within me and in my relationships to bring harmony and balance?’

It is important that the spiritual director also attends to each of these stages, primarily in terms of his/her own spiritual journey which is the bedrock of preparation to accompany another on theirs.

These four stages or phases are in many regards like the four seasons, which for Roman begins with spring and finishes with winter. The idea of seasons paralleling the spiritual direction process is also suggested by another *Presence* contributor, Victor Loh.³⁹ Loh is looking at the Structure and Dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises which he likens to a *Pilgrimage through the Seasons of the Soul*. For him, however the journey through the seasons begins with what he calls ‘The Summer of Purification’⁴⁰ and culminates with ‘The Spring of Union.’⁴¹ He notes that the Spiritual Exercises are the result of Ignatius’ careful observations of the developing relationship with God during the twists and turns of his life, and that this development does not always take place in a linear progression.⁴²

In another *Presence* article Marcel Neels sees the journey as akin to that of the process of a river meandering from obscure source to the sea.⁴³ The concept, and indeed experience, in the lives of all and in particular the lives of those who are marginalised, of a journey that meanders with twists and turns with and to God brings

³⁹ Victor Loh, "A Pilgrimage through the Seasons of the Soul," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 19, no. 2 (June 2013). 28-34

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 31

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 33

⁴² Ibid. p. 28

⁴³ Marcel Neels, "A Metaphorical Look at Spiritual Direction (Part 1 of 2): Progress or Process," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 1, no. 3 (September 1995). pp 7-8 of 5-11

to mind another image, which itself is an analogy for pilgrimage, that of the labyrinth. While the labyrinth is more often regarded as a tool for prayer and/or spiritual direction⁴⁴ it also serves as a metaphor for the journey of spiritual direction itself. In ‘*The Labyrinth and the Enneagram*’ a number of characteristics of walking the labyrinth are noted which can equally apply to spiritual direction.⁴⁵

Experiencing spiritual direction as a journey with and to God, particularly seeing that journey as non-linear but akin to the journey of the river or the labyrinth that twists and turns towards the centre of our being also reminds me of the end of T S Eliot’s poem ‘*Little Gidding*’ (the last of his Four Quartets)

‘We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.’⁴⁶

Finally, Deborah Hanus reminds us that while we may dispose of many non-essentials as we go ‘on the journey, we throw nothing away of ourselves; rather, all is transformed and made new.’⁴⁷ This is of the essence of spiritual direction that as they journey together both the directee and the director will be transformed by the Spirit who accompanies them both.

⁴⁴ Edward S. Kostyk, "Labyrinths: Coming to the Centre," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 8, no. 1 (March 2002). 28-34

⁴⁵ Jill Kimberly Hartwell Geoffrion and Elizabeth Catherine Nagel, *The Labyrinth and the Enneagram* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2001). pp 2-4

⁴⁶ T S Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969). p. 197

⁴⁷ Deborah Hanus, "Coming Home: Fairy Tales and Spiritual Direction," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 17, no. 1 (2011). p. 13 of 13-20

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AS FRIENDSHIP/ANAMCHARA

Having a trustworthy companion on a long, and at times arduous, journey can help to shorten that journey and help to identify dangers ahead. This is particularly relevant for people who are marginalised and as a result find it difficult to trust. We have already seen in Chapter 1 how essential having an *Anamchara*/Soul-Friend was in the Celtic Church and, Leech recalled the saying attributed to Brigid that ‘anyone without a soul-friend is a body without a head.’⁴⁸ He further notes the importance that Aelred of Rievaulx placed on friendship when he said that ‘to live without friends is to live like a beast,’ and how Thomas Merton saw friendship as the most characteristic element of Aelred’s monasticism.⁴⁹ In *Spiritual Director: Spiritual Companion* Tilden Edwards further explores Aelred’s understanding of friendship, which he notes has much in common with the much earlier writing *On Friendship* by Cicero.⁵⁰ He further notes that ‘Aelred believed that the love of friendship springs directly from God,’ and was based on four qualities; loyalty, right intention, discretion and patience.⁵¹ Making a similar point in *Sacred Companions* David Benner draws on C.S. Lewis who highlighted friendship as ‘one of the four basic human loves’.⁵² Benner goes on to remark that ‘the Christian doctrine of the Trinity places friendship at the very heart of the nature of God.’⁵³ When it comes to the characteristics of friendship, Benner points to several biblical examples and specifically Jesus’ relationships with his disciples and distils from them the qualities necessary:

- love, which includes loyalty and confidentiality;
- honesty, confronting illusions and challenging growth;

⁴⁸ Leech. p. 50

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 54

⁵⁰ Edwards. p. 11

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Benner. p. 62

⁵³ Ibid. p. 65

- intimacy, non-possessive and sharing experiences of God
- mutuality, reciprocal but not equal and
- accompaniment – not getting in the way of the Spirit.⁵⁴

Of particular significance, in light of the focus of this work, is Aelred's quoting 'St Ambrose's insight that friendships among the poor are generally more secure than those among the rich.'⁵⁵

Another significant dimension to approaching spiritual direction from the point of view of friendship is identified by Hugh Connolly in *The Irish Penitentials* when he highlights that a major legacy of the Celtic *Anamchara* from which all have benefitted is 'the notion that man's relationship with God could take the form of effective dialogue.'⁵⁶ While he is addressing the question of the Sacrament of Penance and therefore speaking more about a confessor than a spiritual director the qualities that he suggests are necessary of a 'delicate balance of receptivity, discernment and confrontation'⁵⁷ are equally applicable to spiritual directors.

In *Christian Mysticism* William McNamara lists the five qualities that one should look for in a soul-friend – all of which are applicable to spiritual directors:

- holy, paying faithful attention to God in one's own life in order to remain authentic and integrated;
- recognising and reverencing the mystery and uniqueness of every human person;
- prudent, being at the same time bold, daring decisive and exquisitely delicate, holding what is received in confidence;

⁵⁴ Ibid. pp 62-65

⁵⁵ Edwards. p. 11

⁵⁶ Connolly. p. 14

⁵⁷ Ibid. p.196

- experience, for which there is no substitute and
- learned with a balanced perspective, knowing both psychology as well as theology⁵⁸

He further remarks that ‘a good soul-friend steers us clear of hyper-introspection, self-consciousness and quietism,’ but who ‘will not let us frantically forget the ends and multiply the means’.⁵⁹

Spiritual direction seen in terms of friendship/*Anamchara* emphasises the necessity of trust with all it entails and the ability to really communicate both with God and in the relationship itself. It is not the friendship of ‘a feel-good mutual admiration society,’ but like the friendship of Jesus with his disciples fully grounded in reality and constantly searching for the God’s will in it.⁶⁰ In *Spiritual Mentoring* Anderson and Reese identify three essentials in developing this relationship of trust:

- Holy Listening, by which attention is given;
- Holy Seeing, in which the other is observed with compassion and genuine care and
- Wholly Listening, being fully present to both the directee and the Holy Spirit.⁶¹

Many of the ancient Celtic monastic writings also stressed the qualities necessary in a soul-friend.

Diarmuid O’Laoghaire illustrates this with quotes from *The Rule of Tallaght* in which we are told that the soul-friend ought to be ‘learned in the rules of conduct

⁵⁸ William McNamara, *Christian Mysticism: The Art of the Inner Way* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1995). pp 58-64

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 69

⁶⁰ Benner. p. 67

⁶¹ Kieth R Anderson and Randy D Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999). pp 90-97

laid down in scripture and the rules of the saints,’⁶² and he later suggests that ‘the rules of the saints’ are in fact the Monastic Rules.⁶³ Further there were instructions not to accept alms and cautions ‘lest what began as a soul-friendship should end as a body-friendship.’⁶⁴ This is a crucial reminder of the importance of spiritual directors meeting their own friendship needs other than through the spiritual direction relationship and the significance of supervision – both self-supervision and third-party supervision – to address this and other issues that arise for them. O’Laoghaire also tells us that ‘constant is the reference in the Rules to the monk’s own need for holiness before he can guide others’⁶⁵ and he notes that ‘wisdom in the soul-friend is often stressed.’⁶⁶ In this regard he observes that the wisdom necessary also requires the learning of experience, and is seldom something that the young possess.⁶⁷

The metaphor of friendship/*Anamchara* has a long history and much to commend it in relation to the spiritual direction relationship both in terms of the qualities that both the director and directee bring to the relationship and to the issues that a spiritual director needs to be mindful of both for him/herself and for the directee. This is something that the spiritual director needs to attend to in all spiritual direction relationships, but particularly so where the directee belongs to a marginalised group. It can happen that as the directee begins to trust more and feel listened to and understood, maybe for the first time in their lives, they may also become more demanding on the time of the spiritual director. In these circumstances it is important

⁶² Diarmuid O’Laoghaire, "Soul-Friendship," in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*, ed. Lavina Byrne (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990). p. 32

⁶³ Ibid. p. 40

⁶⁴ Ibid. pp 32-33

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 33

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 34

⁶⁷ Ibid. pp 34-35

that the director acts with integrity, holding the boundaries of the relationship ethically and in such a way that the directee is not abused in the process.

Although not the norm, in some instances, the friendship can develop significantly as it did for some of the saints – St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross; St Clare and St Francis; St Francis de Sales and St Jane de Chantal; St Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac. In their friendships they experienced something of the depth of understanding that the twelfth century monk Aelred of Rievaulx expressed in his classic work *'Spiritual Friendship'*.⁶⁸ He draws on Cassian, Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine as well as Cicero in developing his thesis on friendship in which he sees Christ as the third person in every friendship.⁶⁹ In her Introduction to *'Spiritual Friendship'* Marsha Dutton notes that, 'a resonant motif of the sacramental nature of friendship and of the promise that spiritual friendship begins and ends in Christ,'⁷⁰ is to be found throughout the text. Thus these individual friendships are for us sacraments, visible signs, pointing away from themselves to what Henri Nouwen in the preface to *'Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal: Letters of Spiritual Direction'* calls 'a Jesus-centered, affectionate friendship,'⁷¹ which has much to teach us today. He goes on to say that it is Jesus who 'makes their friendship possible. They have been given to each other as spiritual friends, to enjoy each other's spiritual gifts, to support each other in their commitment to faithfulness, to be of mutual help in their search for perfection and to give shape to a new spiritual family in the Church.'⁷² What is true

⁶⁸ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, ed. Marsha L Dutton, trans. Lawrence C Braceland SJ, *Cistercian Fathers Series* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010).

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 55

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 47

⁷¹ Wendy Wright and Joseph F Power, eds., *Francis De Sales, Jane De Chantal: Letters of Spiritual Direction*, ed. John Farina, *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1988). p. 3

⁷² Ibid.

of Francis and Jane is also true of Teresa and John, Clare and Francis and Vincent and Louise. Of the relationship between Vincent and Louise Elizabeth Charpy writes,

‘The friendship which Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac lived out was founded on authenticity, that is to say on the profound acceptance of the identity of the other, the recognition and respect for their diversity. Starting from obedience in the freely chosen relationship of spiritual direction, it moved through learning from the other in a complementary relationship of collaboration, and, reaching the serenity of old age in a ‘relationship of communion’, this friendship is an astonishing journey of sanctity, filled with humanity’⁷³

I believe that Vincent and Louise made their own Jesus’ words:

*‘I shall no longer call you servants,
because a servant does not know
the master’s business;
I call you friends,
because I have made known to you
everything I have learnt from my Father.’*

Jn 15:15

and, as pointed out by Michael Cummins, knew that Jesus who called them friends was ‘born in a poor and crude stable..... and continues to be born in the poor and abandoned places of our world.’⁷⁴ Authentically living their friendship with Jesus included understanding the poor and befriending them as He did. It is a friendship that is about welcoming of the other with warmth, respect and dignity, reaching out in love and bringing hope and healing in a truly non-manipulative way. The non-manipulative friendship, guarded by professional boundaries, of the spiritual director who offers a safe space for a marginalised person to become truly visible and audible to another through exploring his/her own life also acts as an invitation to give as well as receive friendship and so can become a vehicle of inclusion.

⁷³ Elizabeth Charpy, *Petite Vie De Louise De Marillac* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1991). p. 114

⁷⁴ Michael Cummins, "Vincent’s Yes to the Poor... and Action," accessed May, 2015.
<http://famvin.org/en/2013/09/28/word-fire-blog-vincent-de-paul/>.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AS HOSPITALITY

When we embark on a long journey or pilgrimage, with or without a companion, one of the things we need to pay attention to are the availability of safe stopping-places to find rest, shelter and nourishment along the way, we need hospitality. Hospitality, reminding us of many biblical scenes particularly the hospitality given by Abraham and Sarah to the three strangers, (Gen 18:2-8) is itself another metaphor for spiritual direction. It also highlights the importance of hospitality for people who are marginalised, and largely excluded from society.

While in general use the word ‘hospitality’ relates mainly to entertainment, as a metaphor for spiritual direction it has its origins in the desert. It speaks of the quality of preparation, of relationship, of the welcome and openness that the *Abbas/Ammas* extended to all who approached them for guidance. That welcome for the one coming is about more than providing a comfortable, ambient environment and safe confidential space, important though that is. It is a welcome and an openness that begins in the heart of the spiritual director and has expression in punctuality and attentiveness. In her book of the same name Leslie Hay describes ‘*Hospitality*’ as ‘*The Heart of Spiritual Direction*.’⁷⁵ She begins by grounding her understanding of how hospitality finds expression in the Rule of St Benedict which states, ‘All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ ... Great care and concern are to be shown in receiving poor people... because in them more particularly Christ is received.’⁷⁶ The welcome extended is not to be ‘merely as honored guests, but as windows onto the sacred presence.’⁷⁷ Hay quotes Terrence Kardong, a Benedictine

⁷⁵ Leslie A. Hay, *Hospitality: The Heart of Spiritual Direction* (Harrisburg, PA and New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2006).

⁷⁶ Timothy Fry, ed. *Rb 1980: The Rule of St Benedict in English* (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1981). pp 73-74

⁷⁷ Christine Valters Paintner, *The Artist's Rule* (Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2011). p. 96

monk and scholar as saying ‘The Rule of Benedict (RB) is generally acknowledged as the most influential monastic rule in the Western Church.’⁷⁸ This is certainly the case when we come to explore hospitality as a metaphor for spiritual direction.

On the same theme Margaret Guenther in *‘Holy Listening’* devotes a chapter to ‘Welcoming the Stranger’.⁷⁹ In this she focuses in particular on the person coming for the first time who is quite literally often a total stranger. Drawing comparisons in the first instance with the housework required in giving a dinner party she highlights the necessity of preparing the open, welcoming space for the stranger within, ‘so that we have a worthy place when we invite others to rest and refreshment.’⁸⁰ She reminds us that ‘(a)t its simplest, hospitality is a gift of space, both physical and spiritual,’⁸¹ and that ‘no matter how inviting the physical space might be, I have inner preparations to make before I can offer true hospitality.’⁸²

Paintner takes up the same point. As well as practicing what she calls ‘outer hospitality’ which she explains as those ‘encounters with strangers (that) are precisely the place where we are most likely to encounter God’,⁸³ she highlights our need for ‘inner hospitality.... to extend a welcome to the stranger who dwells inside of us.’⁸⁴ Since discernment is a key dimension of spiritual direction, and undistracted, attentive listening the gift we give to our directees, preparing on the part of the director involves cultivating the soil for discernment. This soil includes a commitment to personal prayer and contemplative practices, Sabbath space, spiritual direction, and supervision as well as engaging in healthy eating, living and sleeping patterns and the

⁷⁸ Hay. p. 5

⁷⁹ Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction* (Lanham, MD: Crowley Publications, 1992). pp 8-39

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 11

⁸¹ Ibid. p. 14

⁸² Ibid. p. 17

⁸³ Paintner. p. 96

⁸⁴ Ibid.

inclusion in a personal horarium of deliberately chosen activities that are enjoyable and recreational.

In terms of spiritual direction as the exercise of hospitality the question however arises, who is the host and who is the guest? When it comes to the preparation of the physical space and environment and the director's own inner environment the spiritual director is undoubtedly the host; but when it comes to the spiritual direction session itself the directee becomes the host, inviting the spiritual director into his/her on-going awakening to and understanding of God and God's action in his/her life. In a reflection in *Presence* on Spiritual Direction in a Cross-Cultural Situation,⁸⁵ Leonard Blahut makes some observations that while he specifically applies them to cross-cultural situations are nevertheless relevant to spiritual direction generally, and particularly significant when talking about spiritual direction with people who are marginalised. In his reflection on the reality that faced him in life Blahut came to the realisation that 'if I am to look out for the spiritual interests of directees, it is not for me to welcome anyone at all. No! I must learn to welcome and embrace the part of me that is awkward with the growing knowledge that I am already in someone else's home. I must learn to serve them in their life-space, in their God-space. In other words I must be the GUEST, they the host.'⁸⁶ This reversal of host/guest roles in this metaphor of the spiritual direction relationship is also particularly relevant to marginalised people who are seldom invited as guests nor indeed in a position to be hosts.

We have already noted above one biblical scene, the Emmaus encounter, relating to hospitality. Another scene (from the Hebrew Scriptures) which also speaks

⁸⁵ Leonard Blahut, "The Spiritual Director as Guest: Spiritual Direction in a Cross-Cultural Situation," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 3, no. 2 (1997). 57-61

⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 59

of hospitality is the widow of Zarephath who welcomes Elijah and makes him bread from her last handful of meal and drop of oil (1 Kgs 17:7-16) only to find that she had more meal and oil than she needed. This widow is a model for spiritual directors who while knowing their limitations are open to be led by the Spirit at work in both themselves and their directees and discover they receive more than they give. It also speaks of how unplanned and unexpected encounters can be occasions of spiritual direction, which is particularly true when those encounters are with people who are marginalised.

Hospitality is also at the heart of Jesus' encounters as narrated in the gospels. Two passages often referred to by spiritual directors in relation to Jesus as a spiritual director are the meeting with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35) and the encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in Sychar (Jn 4:1-42). The account of the feeding of the five thousand which is told by all the evangelists (Mk 6:30-44; 8:1-10 Matt 14:13-21, Lk 9:10-17 and Jn 6:1-13) has a particular resonance for me as a spiritual director. The disciples wanted to send the people away to the villages to find food. Jesus instead invited the disciples to bring their own resources to him to be blessed and broken to feed all. In this I am reminded of my call as a spiritual director and experience the invitation/challenge to bring my resources to the Lord in the same way, so that they may be blessed and broken to be shared with those who come to me, particularly those who are broken, vulnerable and hungry of spirit. This scene also points to Jesus' action at the Last Supper, both in terms of washing the feet of the disciples (Jn 13:1-15) and the institution of the Eucharist (Mk 14:22-25) and to some of his post-resurrection appearances when he reminds the disciples of the need for hospitality when he asks them if they have anything to eat (Lk 24:41) and on the shore when he was preparing breakfast for them and invited them to bring some of

their fish (Jn 21:9-10). These scenes highlight for me both formal (the Last Supper) and informal (the post-resurrection appearances) aspects of spiritual direction. In the washing of the disciples' feet I am again reminded of the importance for us as spiritual directors of preparing ourselves for those who come to us and that ultimately we all carry a beggar's bowl through life.

The institution of the Eucharist calls to mind the central panel of the '*Triptych of Mercy*' in the Vincentian parish in Graz, Austria⁸⁷ in which Vincent is at the table with poor people and the face of Christ is visible on the table. For me this is a reminder of Jesus' instruction to the Pharisees that when hosting a banquet not to invite friends, relations and rich people but rather the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind (Lk 14:12-13) and that as spiritual directors offer of hospitality Christ is present providing a banquet for both director and directee. The post-resurrection scenes remind me that spiritual direction can and does take place in many different settings. They are also a further reminder that what is important is the spiritual director's inner preparation – responding to the bidding to bring that which has been freely given to be blessed so that it in turn can be given as nourishment for others – allowing him/her to hear the invitation to be the guest in the life-space of the other.

The metaphor of hospitality also reminds me of the many times that Jesus was criticised because of those he ate and drank with 'tax collectors and sinners,' (Matt 9:10-13; Mk 2:15-17; Lk 19:1-10) or allowed the 'woman who had a bad name' wash his feet. (Lk 7: 36-50; Jn 12:1-8) In many ways this also echoes the experience of so many of the women identified in Chapter 2 as spiritual directors, for example Hildegard and her community being put under an interdict and the Beguines who were

⁸⁷ See Appendix 'R' p. 436

burned as heretics when their only crime was to reach out to people who were vulnerable and in need.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AS MIDWIFING

The ultimate example of hospitality is that offered by a pregnant woman to her newly developing baby. A baby that begins when seed fertilises egg and is nourished by the woman's body grows until such time as s/he must leave 'the dark shelter of the womb'⁸⁸ and begin his/her own journey in life. Each new birth connects both mother and new-born with the mystery of the Incarnation. Spiritual directors for whom this is their preferred metaphor need to be very careful in the way in which they approach their directees. While this is true for all women who have had still-births and/or miscarriages or indeed who have been abused/raped it is especially true for marginalised women – and men – whose experience of life is, like a miscarriage, one of lost opportunity or like abuse/rape something imposed on them. In all these circumstances the spiritual director more than anything else needs to be totally present to the experience of the other, holding the pain and brokenness within it and so encouraging the directee to acknowledge it and let it go, something that in itself may be a journey and may not happen very quickly.

Belonging to a long and distinguished history a midwife, the literal meaning of which is 'with-woman'⁸⁹ is one who is with and assists the mother in the birthing process. Guenther notes the characteristics of the midwife as 'present to another in a time of vulnerability, working in areas that are deep and intimate', assisting 'at a natural event', using 'her hands rather than instruments or tools', 'sees clearly what

⁸⁸ Guenther. p. 85

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 86

the birthgiver cannot see' 'knows how and when to confront.... (with) loving detachment (that) can bring clarity to the situation' and rejoices 'in the beauty and absurdity of this tiny new creature.'⁹⁰ All of these are characteristics which a spiritual director could use to describe what they do.

The fertile seed itself is used as a metaphor by Jesus for the word of God which different people receive differently. [cf Luke 8] However it is initially received, 'the seed' as it germinates and develops has undoubtedly the power to conflict and disturb in ways similar to the changes that take place in a woman's body, emotionally as well as physically, as her pregnancy progresses. Guenther observes 'when I began to do the work of spiritual direction, and felt myself called to assist at the spiritual birthgiving of others, I was struck by its similarities to the physical birth process.'⁹¹ Further commenting that 'it is striking how often the same "symptoms" are displayed by those who come – either tentatively or aggressively – seeking spiritual direction.'⁹² Joyce Diltz in her contribution in *Presence* makes a similar observation: 'As a spiritual director, I am privileged to be part of the mystery of birth – that birth into the fullness of life and intimacy with God to which we are invited at ever deeper levels.'⁹³

In her contribution to *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings* Karen Hanson, a hospital chaplain, draws many parallels between midwives and ministers in healthcare settings⁹⁴ which can also be applied to spiritual directors. For her though the most important parallel is the stance, 'to be with people, to attend people in a

⁹⁰ Ibid. pp 87-88

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 88

⁹² Ibid. p. 89

⁹³ Joyce Diltz, "A Metaphorical Look at Spiritual Development and Direction Part 2: The Spiritual Director as Midwife," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 2, no. 1 (1996). p. 18 of 18-22

⁹⁴ Karen Hanson, "The Midwife," in *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings*, ed. Robert C Dykstra (St Louis MO: Chalice Press, 2005). p. 201

process'⁹⁵, and focus, 'not so much on doing, but on being with people in travail'.⁹⁶ Beginning with the two midwives that we know by name, Shiphrah and Puah (Ex 1:15) she traces the place of the midwife in the Hebrew Scriptures showing her role of delivering, bathing, clothing and connecting mother and child and how this points us to the image of God as the midwife of creation and the people of Israel.⁹⁷ With reference to the work of Don Benjamin she draws attention to one particular practice of the midwife when labour is protracted, that of calling the child forth by name which she parallels with Jesus calling Lazarus from the tomb (Jn 11:43). She highlights many other New Testament passages where the metaphor of midwife is also applicable, particularly in the death and resurrection of Jesus, in Mary's declaration of having seen the risen Lord (Jn 20:18), in Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:24) and Paul's letter to the Romans (Rom 8:22).⁹⁸ She concludes by naming some of the ways that the metaphor of midwife has inspired her own ministry.⁹⁹ These are equally applicable to the ministry of spiritual direction.

❖ Recognising the Look of Travail

It is important for the spiritual director to recognise when a directee is ready to let go of something that has been precious in order to give birth to something new; not to be frightened by their directees experience but to be present to them with expectant readiness and attention.

❖ Attending to Lived Experience

If a spiritual director is to be a 'midwife' to another their own experience of on-going rebirthing is very important. This highlights the importance, already

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid. pp 202-203

⁹⁸ Ibid. pp 203-204

⁹⁹ Ibid. pp 206-207

noted in some of the other metaphors, of attending to the stages of their own spiritual journey and the soil for discernment in their own lives.

❖ Choosing to be Person-centred

The spiritual director must be fully present to the person in front of him/her and ready to hold whatever the directee brings gently, allowing them to explore and make sense of it.

❖ Naming the Experience

It often happens that a directee is unable to fully name what is happening for them. While it is not the place of the spiritual director to name the experience of the directee, by listening very attentively and with gentle questioning he/she enables the directee to better understand and name their own experience.

❖ Dealing with Death

Giving birth to something new implies allowing something else to die. The spiritual director is invited to be fully present with a directee as they struggle to stay with their own pain as they let what needs to die, helping them to grieve for what was and to see beyond death to resurrection and new life.

Another contributor to *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings*, Brita Gill-Austern, examines the metaphor of midwife in the context of feminist pedagogues linking the metaphors of the midwife and the teacher.¹⁰⁰ Some of the traits of midwife which she considers applicable to feminist teachers are:

- ❖ Catch another's idea rather than simply give their own;
- ❖ Help half-baked ideas and perceptions develop in dialogue to maturity;
- ❖ Ask questions without predetermined answers

¹⁰⁰ Brita Gill-Austern, "The Midwife, Storyteller, and Reticent Outlaw," in *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings*, ed. Robert Dykstra (St Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005). p. 219

❖ Help those who have been silenced to find their own voice

These are also very relevant to spiritual directors.

When I reflect on spiritual direction as midwifery I also think about Mary going to visit her cousin Elizabeth after the angel tells her that Elizabeth too is expecting. (Lk 1:39:45) We know from the gospel account that Elizabeth recognises she is receiving more than a simple visit from her young cousin. One can imagine how these two expectant mothers supported, encouraged and challenged one another, Mary learning from Elizabeth's experience, and Mary there to assist at the birth of John. While not birth in the traditional sense I am also reminded of Jesus calling Lazarus forth from the tomb and requesting that he be unbound. (Jn 11:43-44)

As a spiritual director, I too, have had these privileged experiences as I have been present to a directee who is struggling to let go of what is not helpful and allow the birth of something new, or struggling to stay with their own pain and brokenness. As a directee I have been grateful for the one who has been present to me in similar situations. I have also had the experience of a young woman on a retreat trying to come to terms with a still-birth shortly before I met her which had followed a miscarriage and for me being present to her in her brokenness, hoping that my presence would contribute to her healing. In all circumstances like Joyce Diltz I am always left with 'a deep sense of awe and wonder.'¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Diltz. p 22

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AS MENTORING/TEACHING

Once the baby is born, the pilgrimage begun and hospitality accepted and given freely all of us, including people who are marginalised, have the need for teaching and mentoring, becoming apprentices ‘both for and in the kingdom of God.’¹⁰²

The teaching/mentoring metaphor for spiritual direction also has its origins in the early Church, specifically during the persecutions in the first centuries of Christianity as the Apostles, and particularly Paul encouraged the people to imitate themselves. This continued into the desert tradition, and indeed, I suspect in much of the tension that we have already noted that developed between the ascetic/monastic model and the clerical model. The *Abbas* and *Ammas* in the desert were the teachers and mentors for *the neophytes* who came seeking instruction. Oftentimes the teaching of the *Abba/Amma* was to instruct *the neophyte* ‘Go, sit in your cell and your cell will teach you everything.’¹⁰³ In many instances *the neophyte* would ‘join the established monk in his cell’¹⁰⁴ and in this way learn from him/her. As the desert tradition gave way to the monastic tradition the novices were taught and mentored by those more experienced in the monastic way of life and specially chosen for the task, while ‘collective guidance of the community’ was undertaken by the Abbot/Abbess who handed on the teaching.¹⁰⁵

Anderson and Reese open their book on Spiritual Mentoring with what they call ‘The Anderson/Reese Model of Spiritual Mentoring’ which begins with their definition of Spiritual Mentoring followed by its distinctive features and qualities of both mentor and mentoree. They then tabulate the Movements in the Spiritual Mentoring Process from Attraction to Empowerment all of which are expanded on in

¹⁰² Ward, in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*. p. 3

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 7

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Leclercq, in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*. p. 17

the rest of the book.¹⁰⁶ Their definition of Spiritual Mentoring is ‘a triadic relationship between mentor, mentoree and the Holy Spirit, where the mentoree can discover...ultimate identity as a child of God and a unique voice for kingdom responsibility.’¹⁰⁷ Among the distinctive features of the mentoring relationship they identify, which have a particular resonance for contexts of marginalisation are:

- ❖ a means of enhance intimacy with God, ultimate identity and unique voice;
- ❖ a mode for recognising the already present action of God in the mentoree’s life;
- ❖ an effective way to discern God’s direction in decision-making.¹⁰⁸

The key qualities of the mentor which they identify are:

- ❖ having the ability to discern God already present in the mentoree;
- ❖ having had his/her own experience affirmed by others as worthy of imitation;
- ❖ seeking authentic interiority, biblical knowledge and wisdom;
- ❖ being familiar with and practiced in listening and contemplative prayer.¹⁰⁹

while those of the mentoree which they identify are:

- ❖ being desirous of spiritual growth and maturity;
- ❖ having the capacity to be vulnerable in sharing ‘intimate issues of life’;
- ❖ willingly and respectfully responding to the directives of the mentor;
- ❖ wanting to serve God in his/her life.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Anderson and Reese. pp 12-13

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 12

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

The movements that they identify in the Spiritual Mentoring Process are:

- ❖ Attraction;
- ❖ Rationality;
- ❖ Responsiveness;
- ❖ Accountability and
- ❖ Empowerment.¹¹¹

When defining 'Attraction' they see the 'initiation of the relationship primarily (with) the mentoree,'¹¹² while the actual attraction being the way of life of the potential mentor. Apart from 'Relationship' which they define as 'the nurturing hospitable space of trust and intimacy'¹¹³ where the 'safe space is created by the mentor'¹¹⁴ the later movements are the responsibility of the mentoree as s/he 'submit(s) willingly to the guidance of the mentor' (Responsiveness); 'growth through exercises of grace' (Accountability) and 'discovery of one's unique voice for kingdom service' (Empowerment).¹¹⁵

In *Holy Listening* Margaret Guenther also devotes a chapter to spiritual directors as teachers which she references to, Mark's 'Good Teachers' (10:17).¹¹⁶ Shaun McCarty calls spiritual directors 'Teachers and Guardians of Mystery', 'mystagogues'¹¹⁷ William Ryan explores the learning stage of Apprenticeship as model for spiritual direction¹¹⁸ and Patricia Hendricks proposes the mentoring spiritual

¹¹¹ Ibid. p. 13

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Guenther. pp 42-79

¹¹⁷ Shaun McCarty, "Spiritual Directors: Teachers and Guardians of Mystery," in *Spiritual Direction in Context*, ed. Nick Wagner (Harrisburg, PA and New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2006).

¹¹⁸ William Ryan, "Apprenticeship - One Model for Spiritual Direction," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 12, no. 2 (June 2006). 26-33

direction model as one that is particularly appropriate for guiding young people.¹¹⁹ All of these thus focus in different ways on the teaching/mentoring role of the spiritual director. Guenther observes that she herself, a teacher before entering ministry, is ‘most fully a teacher when I meet with someone in spiritual direction,’¹²⁰ although what she as a spiritual director teaches does not fit easily into the categories generally used for teaching. In keeping with the desert tradition it is more than imparting information and she notes what she does not teach before answering her own question ‘what does the spiritual director teach?’¹²¹ For her ‘the spiritual director is simultaneously a learner and a teacher of discernment’.¹²² As a teacher of discernment the spiritual director teaches in the first instance by example; the example of his/her listening to the directee and more importantly to the action and invitations of the Holy Spirit by which s/he teaches the directee how to develop his/her own ability to discern. The responses given by young directees to a question about advice they would give to spiritual directors mentoring them are pertinent in this regard and apply in spiritual direction relationships with any age group, and of particular significance for people from marginalised groups:

- ‘Listen to me, genuinely listen to me
- Be authentic. Don’t be phony
- Take me seriously
- Come with me and notice God with me
- Stay with me as I try to seek God
- Don’t judge

¹¹⁹ Patricia Hendricks, *Hungry Souls, Holy Companions: Mentoring a New Generation of Christians* (Harrisburg, PA and New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2006).

¹²⁰ Guenther.

¹²¹ Ibid. p. 43

¹²² Ibid. p. 43

- Don't assume I am like all the other people in my age group
- Don't try to make me into what you are
- Don't give me advice that doesn't reflect knowledge of who I am
- Help me find where God is in my daily life
- Ask me probing questions
- Affirm me
- Help me see that my anger is directed toward the church, not God
- Help me process social justice issues.'¹²³

These are qualities all spiritual directors need to be cognisant of developing if they are to be teachers/mentors encouraging their directees to become familiar with and integrate them into their own lives as well. Spiritual directors need to be constantly asking themselves the deeper questions to uncover how the assumptions they bring to the spiritual direction relationship and in so doing become ever more authentic teachers/mentors to those who look to them for guidance.

The gospels are also replete with instances where Jesus is in the mentor/teacher metaphor as a spiritual director, often indeed linked with one or more of the other metaphors. We have only to think about the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:1ff); talking with the children, (Mk 10:11-16); the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37); or the Washing of the Feet at the Last Supper (Jn 13:1-15); among many others.

The experience of Adam Bucko¹²⁴ who offers spiritual direction, mentoring and more to young people struggling with homelessness and prostitution in New York has been one of God living on the street¹²⁵ impelling him to become involved in contemplative activism on their behalf. In a similar way Gregory Boyle in the

¹²³ Hendricks. pp 41-42

¹²⁴ Adam Bucko, accessed May, 2015. <http://www.adambucko.com/about.html>.

¹²⁵ Adam Bucko, "My God Lives on the Street," accessed May, 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/adam-bucko/my-god-lives-on-the-street_b_2347062.html.

Introduction to *Tattoos on the Heart* tells about how the poor in Bolivia ‘turned me inside out’¹²⁶ and how that led to his being appointed to the poorest parish in Los Angeles where he began a gang-intervention programme, Homeboy Industries. He describes how the young men and women gang members taught him, ‘with their patient guidance, to worship Christ as He lives in them.’¹²⁷ This resonates with understanding of Vincent and Louise ‘that the poor are the privileged mediators of salvation... living images of the life and death of Jesus.’¹²⁸ Gillian Ahlgren, makes a similar observation in relation to the legacy of Francis and Clare.¹²⁹

Both of these echo my own experience of being a spiritual director to people who in different ways find themselves marginalised or alienated by society. One young woman, who had been trafficked into Ireland for the sex industry, comes to mind. As I journeyed with her, patiently building up a relationship of trust and giving her a safe place to unburden her concerns she gradually became more trusting of God, accepting of herself and eventually more open and trusting of others. I had a real sense of a flower opening its petals in the sun and coming into full bloom. More than that, I learned so much from her as she struggled to let all that she had experienced in her short life find its rightful place in the story of her life, know that she was not defined by it and that perhaps someday it could help others.

Before leaving the metaphor of teacher/mentor it is worth noting the explosion of books and courses on life and business coaching which is another form of mentoring.

¹²⁶ Gregory Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney: Free Press, 2010). p. 1

¹²⁷ Ibid. p. xiv

¹²⁸ Wright, in *Surrender to Christ for Mission*. Location 484 of 4339

¹²⁹ Gillian Ahlgren, *The Tenderness of God: Reclaiming Our Humanity*, Kindle ed. (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2017).

As already noted in relation to Models of Spiritual Direction from Fleming above, while the various models help our understanding there is no one 'right' model. The same is true of the metaphors we use. Their richness is in the additional insights each gives to the ministry of spiritual direction. The metaphors explored here themselves do not map directly back into any of the models noted but rather are shared between them. Indeed an individual spiritual director may find him/herself applying each of the metaphors at different times with an individual directee as s/he grows and matures and even on the same day with different directees in this way the director is listening to the needs of their directees and truly becomes the artist of the soul.

STORY-TELLING AS THE PARADIGM FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTION IN CONTEXTS OF MARGINALISATION

Just as story-telling is a core dimension of who we are as human beings so too it is the life-blood of the spiritual direction relationship. It is with stories that we reveal ourselves to one another in a myriad of different ways. In *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals* Anderson and Foley remind us that 'human experience is structured in time and narrative. We comprehend our lives not as disconnected actions or isolated events but in terms of narrative.... We tell stories in order to establish meaning and to integrate our remembered past with what we perceive to be happening in the present and what we anticipate for the future.'¹³⁰ We engage in story-telling as we journey/pilgrimage, sharing with others on the way and when we arrive home. With trusted friends it is the cement of their relationship. For people who are poor and excluded the absence of anyone to hear their story is a source of deep pain.

¹³⁰ Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998). pp 4-5

Hospitality offered and received would not be the same without the sharing of stories. The story behind one's birth has great significance for each person – how often a small child asks his/her parents, 'where did I come from?' It is a favourite method of teaching. The Gospels are replete with many instances of Jesus teaching both his disciples and the crowds using stories. Story-telling is found among the ascetics in the sayings of the *Abbas/Ammas*; in the clerical emphasis on doctrine and in the various attempts to synthesise and merge them; it is found in the community sharing in the monastery; it is the source and substance of the interpersonal; it is a gift of the Spirit; it is ritualised in the Sacramental and the way we engage to clarify the meaning of the ordinariness of life and it is the lifeblood of the common table shared in monastic guesthouses across history. To this day in Ireland monasteries act as listening posts for those struggling with addictions, depression and homelessness.

Tilden Edwards reminds us that 'spiritual direction has an oral tradition behind it. We learn what it's about by being involved in the process with a director.'¹³¹ Despite all the books that have been written people belong primarily to an oral tradition which was the first method of learning. From childhood story-telling has been a significant means of understanding and making sense of the world around us and ourselves in it. In her Introduction to *We Live Inside a Story* Megan McKenna says, 'stories sink into your soul and find the goodness and truth within us.... Stories are critical to living and are intertwined with truth in such a way that we carry them with us, remember them and pass them along, sharing them as needed.'¹³² We learn from the stories of others, be they explorers, scientists, historians, or theologians, but

¹³¹ Edwards, p. 106

¹³² Megan McKenna, *We Live inside a Story* (Dublin: Veritas, 2009), p. 11

above all we learn from our own story the telling of which, particularly within the spiritual direction relationship, allows us revisit it and invest it with new meaning.

Everyone has a story. Sometimes it is buried so deep because of the pain it evokes that we can only look at it in fragments, if indeed at all. While this is true for all of us, it is particularly true for people who are marginalised. Indeed for many who have been marginalised by the dominant society, their story has been stolen as they have been written out of history. In this regard it is worth noting that poets who tend to identify with the excluded and the poor, to be counter-cultural and seek to give expression to the voiceless are seldom recognised in their own lifetime. One has only to think about William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) who belonging to the financially protected ascendancy class was well recognised and received the ultimate accolade, the Nobel Prize for Literature. Patrick Kavanagh (1904-1967), on the other hand, who was the son of a small farmer and for a time struggled with alcoholism, gained only limited recognition in his own lifetime although in more recent times has been hailed as one of the foremost Irish writers of the Twentieth Century. In her *'Patrick Kavanagh: A Biography'* Antoinette Quinn remarks,

His dishevelled appearance, lack of a conventional education and apparent eccentricity undermined his reputation as a serious writer in some quarters..... A gradual slide into alcoholism from the mid-1950's exacerbated the situation.¹³³

Eavan Boland, as a female writer, belonged to a marginalised group in 1960's Ireland. In the Preface to her *'Collected Poems'* she comments:

(T)he poet's life – in the small circle I knew and even beyond it in the culture – was exalted in ways which were poignant and suspect at the same time..... the truth is that I came to know history as a woman and a poet when I apparently left the site of it. I came to know my country when I went to live at its margin. I grew to understand the Irish poetic tradition only when I went into exile within it..... Once I began to live my own life – a life with a husband, a home, small children – I could

¹³³ Antoinette Quinn, *Patrick Kavanagh: A Biography* (Dublin: Gill and McMillan, 2003). p. x

see at first hand how remote it was from the life of the poet as I had understood it.¹³⁴

Much of her work reflects her musings on the liminal experiences of herself and others. One of her collections she called '*Outside History*' after the poem of the same name in which she compares outsiders to the stars whose light is only visible long after it was originally emitted.¹³⁵ This is particularly true of people who are poor/marginalised, understood in the Vincentian Tradition as 'Lords and Masters'; as Christ himself. Spiritual direction affords the safe place where the story can be told haltingly in its fragments, re-claimed and in the telling give new meaning to it. It is in the stories of our lives that God speaks to us in so many different ways, because God in fact lives within our stories and we live within God's story.

Story-telling is but one art form through which we create and understand the stories of our lives. Other art forms are also applicable to spiritual direction, visual art, craft, music, dance to name but a few. Spiritual directors can enable their directees who find it difficult to engage directly with their story to find other means of expressing themselves. It can be particularly helpful for people with literacy or other language difficulties, as well as people who find their story too difficult to visit with words, or indeed who forget their story, to tell their story using other art forms which help them find their voice. Sometimes even when someone has well-developed language ability they can find it difficult to express in words what is deepest. Inviting them to use some other art form, eg images, pictures, music with which they can communicate what is important to them can be an invitation to a greater freedom in their relationship both with God and others.

¹³⁴ Eavan Boland, *Collected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1995). p. xi

¹³⁵ Eavan Boland, *Outside History* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1990). p. 45

As spiritual directors listen to the stories of their directees, however they are expressed, in attentive, silent presence, they are also often invited to revisit their own story – although not with their directee – something which becomes an expression of the mutuality of the relationship without the equality as we have already noted. In this way the spiritual director becomes evangelised by his/her directees and, where those directees are marginalised, *evangelised by those who are poor*’.

CONCLUSION

Having examined spiritual direction in terms of metaphors and models and proposed an overriding paradigm of story-telling I now turn to what the literature has to say about the current practice of spiritual direction with people who are marginalised.

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Chapter 4

CURRENT PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE MARGINALISED

INTRODUCTION

In the May 2016 edition of *Connections* an e-Newsletter of Spiritual Directors International Larry Pennings notes in '*From the Executive Director*', that

‘one theme that emerged from Spiritual Directors International’s twenty-fifth anniversary Listening for Wisdom efforts last year was an interest in offering spiritual direction to those living on the margins.’¹³⁶

While not defining what is meant by ‘those on the margin’ specifically, they are noted as those who because they are ‘far removed from ease, privilege and position, are marginalized in that system.’¹³⁷ Four other articles in the same issue ‘highlight work with those who are incarcerated, impoverished, addicted, of minority ethnicity, or simply out of step with the “norm” of society.’¹³⁸

Indeed, over the years since their establishment in 1990 ‘as an inclusive, global learning community that serves and supports the ministry and service of spiritual direction’ articles in their quarterly Journal, *Presence*, contributions at their Conferences and books printed under their banner¹³⁹ have focussed on spiritual

¹³⁶ Larry Pennings, "From the Executive Director," *Connections* Vol 25, 1 (May 2016), accessed May 2016, <http://www.sdiworld.org/sites/default/files/publications/SDI-Connections-May-2016.pdf>. p. 1

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid

¹³⁹ Nick Wagner, *Spiritual Direction in Context, Spiritual Directors International Book* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2006).

direction with people in a number of specific disparate groups. Even a cursory look at the contents of *Presence* itself since it was launched in 1995 will give some idea of the breadth of issues related to spiritual direction they address,¹⁴⁰ as do the individual chapters in *Still Listening: New Horizons in Spiritual Direction*.¹⁴¹ In particular, in respect of this research, they give some indication of the interest and practice of contemporary spiritual directors in relation to people in some individual marginalised groups. Juan Reed's contribution, 'Can I get a Witness? Spiritual Directions with the Marginalized,'¹⁴² is significant in that it does not separate out the different groups of people who are marginalised. Rather he presents people who are marginalised for any number of reasons as those who are rendered 'invisible and inaudible'¹⁴³ within the dominant culture and addresses the qualities required in spiritual directors in these circumstances. A number of *Presence* articles are particularly relevant to this research; 'Listening for Life on the Margins,'¹⁴⁴ 'Spiritual Direction and Encounters with the Marginalised,'¹⁴⁵ 'The Poor and Spiritual Direction,'¹⁴⁶ 'The Ignatian Spirituality Project: An Experience in Sacred Listening,'¹⁴⁷ and 'The ISP Retreat Experience'¹⁴⁸

For a more academic perspective the databases available to All Hallows College/DCU, Trinity College (University of Dublin), Waterford Institute of

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.sdiworld.org/publications/presence-journal/archives>

¹⁴¹ Norvene Vest, ed. *Still Listening : New Horizons in Spiritual Direction* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2000).

¹⁴² Reed, in *Still Listening: New Horizons in Spiritual Direction*. pp 93-104

¹⁴³ Ibid. p. 93

¹⁴⁴ Tom Allen, "Listening for the Spirit on the Margins," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 12, no. 2 (June 2006). 20-25

¹⁴⁵ Myree Harris RSJ, "Spiritual Direction and Encounters with the Marginalised," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 13, no. 2 (June 2007). 49-55

¹⁴⁶ Ellen M Kogstad, "The Poor and Spiritual Direction," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 21, no. 2 (June 2015). 24-30

¹⁴⁷ Bill Creed SJ, "The Ignatian Spirituality Project: An Experience in Sacred Listening," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 24, no. 4 (December 2018). 13-16

¹⁴⁸ Jan O'Halloran, "The ISP Retreat Experience," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 24, no. 4 (December 2018). 16-19

Technology and Milltown Library, including ALTA Religion Database with ALTASerials; Cambridge Journals online; Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition; Humanities Full Text (HW Wilson); JSTOR; Open Library of Humanities; PubMed; Religion and Philosophy Collection; Sage Journals online; Social Sciences Full Text (HW Wilson); Taylor and Francis online and UK and Ireland Reference Centre were searched employing a variety of terms both for spiritual direction and for marginalisation with Vincentian Spirituality.

Google Scholar and the Library Catalogs available via EndNote X7 were also consulted. Using the term “Vincentian Spirituality” or “Vincentian Tradition” with “Spiritual Direction” or one of the other names by which it is known yielded only a few articles in the Vincentian Journals, *‘Vincentian Heritage’* and *‘Vincentiana’*. None of these are specific but some, for example, ‘In the Face of Adversity: The Response of the Vincentian and Charity Families to 9/11’, are I believe pertinent to this research. They also include the findings of a 2014 study of ‘unaffiliated lay Vincentians’, commissioned by DePaul University’s Office for Mission and Values (OMV) which was carried out by Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University and the 2006 doctoral thesis ‘Poor Relief as Catalyst: Female Activism and Confessional Identity in Seventeenth-century France’ which may have a bearing on the discussion.

When the term “Spiritual Direction” or one of the other names by which it is known is used with a variety of different terms for people who are marginalised; including the two different spellings for marginalised the articles come from a much wider range of sources including among others, *‘American Journal of Pastoral Counseling’*, *‘Journal of Clinical Nursing’*, *‘Journal of Advanced Nursing’*, *‘Learning Disability Review’*, *‘Mental Health, Religion & Culture’*, *‘Journal of Religious*

Gerontology, *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, *Counselling, Psychotherapy, and Health*, *Psychotherapy in Australia*, *Health & Social Care in the Community*, *Practical Theology in South Africa* and *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*. Many of the articles and studies in the health-related journals focus in particular on spiritual care in specific situations for example end of life/palliative care or with elderly people. In a number of instances the marginalisation to which they are referring is that of religion itself in contemporary society. However, some of the articles, for example that on 'The Body of Christ has Down's Syndrome: Theological reflections on vulnerability, disability, and Graceful communities'¹⁴⁹ appears to be relevant to the present research.

In what follows I will explore the content of significant Vincentian Articles, relevant *Presence* Articles and pertinent Articles and contributions from other sources drawing conclusions for what they have to say about the current practice of spiritual direction with people who are marginalised.

As has already been mentioned above there is very little written specifically on Vincentian Spirituality and Spiritual Direction. I believe that this is because corporal and spiritual services were and are seen as one as the articles below indicate.

VINCENTIAN ARTICLES

Love – Inventive to Infinity¹⁵⁰

In this article, originally presented at a conference to the members of the Vincentian Family gathered at St John's University, New York in April 1997,

¹⁴⁹ John Swinton, "The Body of Christ Has Down's Syndrome: Theological Reflections on Vulnerability, Disability, and Graceful Communities," *Journal of Pastoral Theology* Vol 13, no. 2 (Fall 2003). 66-78

¹⁵⁰ Gertrude Foley SC, "Love - Inventive to Infinity," *Vincentian Heritage Journal* Vol 19, no. 2 (1998). 237-44

Gertrude Foley, a Sister of Charity of New York, addresses the dehumanizing nature of poverty. She talks, in excited tones, about the potential of the networking of the Vincentian Family and the impact it could have on the lives of the poor. Posing a series of question in relation to holding together both the excitement and the magnitude of the work to be done she notes that the Founders faced the same questions. The apostolic nature of the Vincentian charism she notes is ‘holistic in its emphasis on both physical and spiritual assistance.’¹⁵¹ She suggests that the charism is trivialized if it is limited to ‘works of service’, but rather that service needs to be seen in terms of the Trinitarian relationship of Jesus, the poor and the servants of the poor.

For the Founders, Foley reminds her listeners and readers:

The poor were not faceless and nameless, they were men, women and children right in your parish...The poor were also the children of God, and so the servant of the poor had to find ways to bring them closer to this God who loved them. Mere physical assistance was never enough.¹⁵²

She also reminds her audience that things were not necessarily easier for the Founders but today offers greater opportunities. The Family are also cautioned to act as Vincent did and start small, constantly listening for the voice of God in the situation.

While this article does not address spiritual direction directly it does, however, point to the importance of spiritual service of which spiritual direction is a component.

In the Face of Adversity: The Response of the Vincentian and Charity Families to 9/11¹⁵³

In this article Regina Bechtle, a Sister of Charity of New York, tells the story of the response of members of the Vincentian Family in the aftermath of the terrorist

¹⁵¹ Ibid. p. 238

¹⁵² Ibid. p, 242

¹⁵³ Regina Bechtle SC, "In the Face of Adversity: The Response of the Vincentian and Charity Families to 9/11," *Vincentian Heritage Journal* Vol 21, no. 2 (2000). 49-96

attack on the World Trade Centre. The article which allows the members of the Vincentian Family who responded to tell their own part of the story is divided into six sections. The first begins by situating the site of the attack as an area of great familiarity to Elizabeth Ann Seton.¹⁵⁴

In the second section she tells of how the sisters responded in many different ways. Some were very practical, like co-ordinating the Blood Bank at St Vincent Hospital and Medical Centre in Manhattan or helping with the triage both there and at St Vincent's and Bayley Seton Hospitals on Staten Island. Also on Staten Island and elsewhere Sisters and their Associates staffed 24-hour phone lines where they were 'a listening presence...that gave people a sense of connection.'¹⁵⁵ Sisters trained as spiritual directors and chaplains with crisis and bereavement counselling also brought their skills of sitting with people and listening. The Daughters of Charity in Emmitsburg, assisted by Ladies of Charity who had just concluded their Annual Assembly, provided 'sanctuary, time and space to pray, grieve, wait'¹⁵⁶ to those affected by the attack at the Pentagon.

The third section focusses on the days, weeks and indeed months after the attacks. Bechtle begins it by recounting the 'countless memorial services, funerals for friends, parishioners, current and former students, co-workers, and their relatives,'¹⁵⁷ which members of the Vincentian Family prepared and attended. She then includes in its entirety a letter written by Fr Thomas McKenna CM, Provincial of the Eastern Province, to the confrères thanking them for their response to the disaster. He draws parallels with the work Vincent did during the civil wars in acting 'decisively and effectively to help the devastated victims, certainly with physical aid but also

¹⁵⁴ Elizabeth Ann Seton founded the Sisters of Charity of St Joseph in Emmitsburg, Maryland in 1809

¹⁵⁵ Bechtle SC. p. 58

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 58

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 60

spiritually.¹⁵⁸ In his letter, McKenna goes on to note many of the ways the confrères responded. He remarks how spiritual direction was available as some sought ‘to diffuse the anger and somehow use that energy in a positive way.’¹⁵⁹ He mentions two confrères in particular who attended to grieving relatives and rescue workers where a temporary morgue had been set up. At the end of the letter he comments on the general reaction of people seeing it as the ‘recognition most everyone has of the need for that deeper core of life, which Vincent preached as Jesus’ Kingdom.’¹⁶⁰ In the remainder of this section Bechtle describes how the different Charity Congregations are kept informed and about the ‘psychologists, psychotherapists, counsellors and spiritual directors,’¹⁶¹ who made themselves available to the families of the victims. She also recounts how a reporter joined one of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax, one of their Associates and Inspector Luongo of NYPD at a landfill at the end of October. The conversation was recorded,

“Today's All Saints Day. Tomorrow, All Souls. There's gotta be some significance in that as we stand among all this," [Luongo] recounts for us, his light-colored eyes squinting from the sun. "The saints are here," Sister Maureen says quickly, looking directly in Jimmy's eyes. He looks at her sheepishly the way most of us do when we are acknowledged as doing something holy, somehow uncomfortable with, unwilling to be holy - even though it is our calling. We continued to talk - actually Sister encouraged him to do most of the talking - about such things as horror and spirituality and the work at hand. As our exchange came to a close, Sister Maureen asked Jimmy if he would like to be blessed. He bowed his head.”¹⁶²

Another exchange Bechtle recounts took place on Staten Island. A Sister of Charity of New York was reflecting on her experience of the impact they could have.

[We] found out that they [fire and police rescue workers] could not go home to their families because of the contaminants on their clothing. We got T-shirts, socks, etc. to help supply their needs as well as

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 61

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 61

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 64

¹⁶¹ Ibid. p. 74

¹⁶² Ibid. p. 67

bringing a few good meals. One firefighter looked up at me with weary, teary eyes and said, "Sister, just listen to me - please just listen" - and for days we listened, cried, prayed.¹⁶³

The fourth section of the article is dedicated to the Intercommunity networking and Vincentian Family collaboration. In this she gives details of how other Sisters of Charity congregation from outside the area also became part of the immediate response as US airspace was closed and in-coming flights diverted. These included the Sisters of Charity of Halifax in Nova Scotia, Les Religieuses de Notre-Dame du Sacré-Coeur in Moncton, New Brunswick and the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, Greensburg, Pennsylvania. True to their Vincentian charism they provided for people both physically and spiritually.

The role played by the Society of St Vincent de Paul internationally, nationally and locally is the subject of the fifth section which is called: 'Inventive to Infinity: Charity for the Long Haul.'¹⁶⁴ Also in this section is a particular outreach from the Sisters of Charity New York and their Associates to expectant mothers who had been widowed. Writing to each one individually with congratulations and condolences they received responses from sixteen who were then paired with either a Sister or an Associate as mentors. Turning to the educational facilities Bechtle lists a number of campus events that took place and notes that, 'Colleges and universities founded by the Sisters of Charity and the Vincentians made trauma counselling, grief support, and spiritual direction available.'¹⁶⁵

Bechtle opens the sixth and final section on Theological Reflection with a quote related to Vincent highlighting his first-hand knowledge of war. She includes excerpts from Fr Robert Maloney CM, Superior General's Advent letter and

¹⁶³ Ibid. p. 71

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 82

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 85

reflections from a number of Sister and others working alongside the Sisters. These invite further reflection on what the Vincentian tradition has to offer in light of what had happened.

In highlighting the spiritual service given by the members of the Vincentian Family Regina Bechtle in this article also indicates a more inclusive and less formal approach to spiritual direction than the more elitist approach generally experienced.

PRESENCE ARTICLES

Listening for the Spirit on the Margins¹⁶⁶

In the June 2006 edition of *Presence* Tom Allen¹⁶⁷ has an article entitled, 'Listening for the Spirit on the Margins', in which he give an account of a model of ministry being provided by City House.¹⁶⁸ In the first half of the article he explains what City House is and what they provide. While City House does have a physical address in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA it is not a place. It is a group of volunteers,¹⁶⁹ who bring spiritual companionship to marginalised people in various settings run by social service agencies. The marginalised people to whom they bring spiritual companionship include people who are or have been in prison, people who are or have been homeless and people in recovery from alcohol or drug dependency.

They provide one-to-one and group spiritual direction as well as off-site retreats which they provide. He states his own belief that 'all ministry must be mutual to be life-giving'¹⁷⁰ and grounds this in an opening reflection which he takes from

¹⁶⁶ Allen.

¹⁶⁷ In addition to being a spiritual director Tom Allen's background is in business, organization development and non-profit management. With four other colleagues he serves as executive director of City House cf *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 12, no. 2 (June 2006) p. 4

¹⁶⁸ <http://www.city-house.org/>

¹⁶⁹ At the time the article was written there were 25 volunteers

¹⁷⁰ Allen. p. 20

Janet Hagberg,¹⁷¹ ‘Let me make a suggestion. Get to know someone on the fringe...let this fringe person be your mentor.’¹⁷² Thus the model being employed in City House is that of mentoring, and indeed reverse mentoring.

In the article he includes some personal stories all highlighting how the volunteer spiritual directors have discovered the mutuality of spiritual companionship with people on the margins, something which invites them beyond their own comfort zone. ‘Spiritual formation is happening, but it isn’t in the context of a spiritual direction room with a lighted candle and a formal appointment time, and it isn’t one way – it’s definitely mutual.’¹⁷³ City House uses a partnership model with four spirituality training programmes in Minneapolis and St Paul’s, Minnesota from where they recruit their volunteers. They also work in partnership with a number of Social Service agencies and their staff.

In the second half of the article, Allen lets the voices of the three constituent groups that comprise City House be heard. He notes that many of the people that City House serve come from ‘multiple generations of poverty’ with multiple issues any one of which would marginalise them. Most often those who engage with them are men. He also acknowledges that at some point the City House volunteers will be conned by some of them. While many of the issues in relation to spirituality that come up are similar to those that come up in more traditional spiritual direction with this particular group of people the issue of trust is paramount.

From the perspective of the volunteer spiritual directors one of the things they need to take into consideration more than in other spiritual direction relationships is class and the additional imbalance this creates between themselves and those they

¹⁷¹ Janet O Hagberg, *Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organisations*, 3rd ed. (Salem WI: Sheffield Publishing, 2003). pp 293-294

¹⁷² Allen. p. 20

¹⁷³ Allen. p. 22

serve. In general the spiritual directors are typically white, middle class and female coming from all Christian denominations. As a result the life experiences of the, in the main male, African-American people who engage with them is far removed from anything they may have experienced challenging them to allow God to do God's work. Their ministry to these particular groups of marginalised people calls for more personal sharing on the part of the spiritual directors than in more formal/traditional spiritual direction in order to create the trust necessary for a fruitful relationship. Allen notes the comments of one of the volunteer spiritual directors, 'Moving among this population keeps me much more closely tethered to God...It calls me away from my addiction to comfort, to the control I feel in being always 'the giver','¹⁷⁴ attesting to the reverse mentoring taking place.

The partners in the Social Service Agencies also value the complementary nature of what City House offers to their clients. The agencies themselves are secular and their staff are neither trained nor funded to meet the spiritual needs of the people they serve. Many do however recognise the importance of spirituality, particularly in the recovery from addiction in all its forms and for those with mental illness. Just as their clients have been challenged to take 'the spirituality of their recovery more seriously', so too the agencies have been challenged 'to focus on client spirituality in ways that we did not before.'¹⁷⁵

This City House model of spiritual companionship that Allen's article gives an insight into has much to recommend it and bears many similarities to a Vincentian approach. The volunteer spiritual directors go out to the people who are at the margins and there discover that they are involved in a two-way process. In many respects their

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 24

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 25

engagement with those at the margins also has a positive impact on those in the various Social Service Agencies who provide for the needs of the people at the margins.

Spiritual Direction and Encounters with the Marginalized¹⁷⁶

Myree Harris is a Sister of St Joseph in Australia and her article on ‘Spiritual Direction and Encounters with the Marginalized’ is in the June 2007 edition of *Presence*. In it she recounts the unexpected direction her life took at a time of transition to what has become the Gethsemane Community.¹⁷⁷ She had spent six months in Melbourne in 1989 during which she spent one day a week in a collaborative community for homeless alcoholic men, Corpus Christi. It is a ministry of many laypeople alongside the Jesuits and Sisters of Mercy which was founded by Mother Teresa.¹⁷⁸ She returned to her experience in Corpus Christi Community six months later when her time in the Archdiocesan Catholic Education Office in Sydney came to an end and she was discerning a new direction. Founded by Pauline Fitz-Walter SGS to provide supported accommodation for people with mental illness, Saint Francis Houses, seemed to be an answer and she moved into one of their houses. After some time, in agreement with the original founders the house she was in adopted a separate identity and emphasis. Gethsemane Community, as it became known, was a more stable and long-term community for the residents who continued to come from diverse backgrounds of disadvantage linked to mental illness.

In 2003 she was afforded the opportunity to do the spiritual direction training programme with the Jesuits in Guelph, Ontario, Canada. Returning to Sydney her intention was to offer the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius in Daily Life. The meetings

¹⁷⁶ Harris RSJ.

¹⁷⁷ <http://www.gethsemanecommunity.org.au/>

¹⁷⁸ Harris does not say this is Mother Teresa of Calcutta, but one is left assuming that is who she means

with the directees took place in Gethsemane Community where the first people they meet are one or other of the residents, for some the first time they had met someone with mental illness. Harris describes how friendships grow between the residents and the directees, some of whom when they have completed the Exercises join the relief volunteers at Gethsemane. While the development of friendships between the directees and residents was not a stated goal, using Gethsemane Community to meet her directees appears to have been on account of what Harris calls the ‘inherent invitation to social justice ministry.’¹⁷⁹ The model she was working out of was also a mentoring model as the directees coming to Gethsemane were being invited to open their eyes ‘to poverty, injustice, and oppression in a way that is not so easily ignored.’¹⁸⁰

Focussing on the social justice element she recounts the impact of meeting in Gethsemane on four of those taking part in the Exercises and the ways the directees have become involved with them. For her it is the encounter of those doing the Exercises with people who are marginalised that is the key, linking it with two aspects of the Exercises: The Call of the King and The Two Standards. She advocates that perhaps more spiritual direction take place in similar setting and that such encounters with marginalised people be included as part of spiritual direction training programmes. Concluding she suggests the starting point be ‘the advice attributed to Saint Vincent de Paul, “Let the poor be your teachers”.’¹⁸¹

Harris, however, makes no mention of spiritual direction being available to the residents of Gethsemane. There is undoubtedly a social justice value in exposing people who are not marginalised to those who are. However, notwithstanding the fact

¹⁷⁹ Harris RSJ. p. 51

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 55

¹⁸¹ Ibid. p. 55

that some friendships developed, I had a real sense that in some ways the people in Gethsemane community are being used for Harris' agenda. One concern I would have in relation to this is that the people who are marginalised could be further marginalised rather than being given an experience of inclusion. Despite Harris' concluding with advice attributed to Vincent de Paul I find her use of people who are marginalised quite disturbing and certainly not a model I would recommend be reproduced.

The Poor and Spiritual Direction¹⁸²

The June 2015 issue of *Presence* carries an article by Ellen M Kogstad¹⁸³ on 'The Poor and Spiritual Direction', in which she addresses 'bridging spiritual formation and spiritual direction to adolescent parents' in New Moms, Inc in Chicago, Illinois, USA,¹⁸⁴ which she had founded in 1983. Handing the operation of New Moms to others she trained as a spiritual director and became director of the C John Weborg Center for Spiritual Direction at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago.¹⁸⁵ In 2008, after some gentle nudging in prayer with the question 'what about the poor' she discerned a return to New Moms while remaining at the seminary. Her new role in New Moms would be Director of Spiritual Formation for both the staff and teen moms.

Towards the end of the article she addresses the fact that she uses the term 'poor' rather than 'marginalized' as she says, 'the poor are always marginalized but the marginalized are not always poor'. Earlier in the article she has noted that spirituality can be expensive, whether it is the cost of a bible or other books,

¹⁸² Kogstad.

¹⁸³ Ellen Kogstad is the director of spiritual formation at New Moms, Chicago and also the director of the C John Weborg Center for Spiritual Direction at North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago cf *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* Vol 21, no. 2 (June 2015) p. 5

¹⁸⁴ <https://newmoms.org>

¹⁸⁵ <https://www.northpark.edu/seminary/seminary-centers/center-for-spiritual-direction/>

theological education, seminars, retreats and spiritual direction. Even attending church can be outside the reach of many poor African-Americans as they may not have the 'right' clothes. She also highlights that the vast majority of the poor of the world are women and girls, while the majority of spiritual directors are also women. This leads her to ponder the change which could take place in the world if each spiritual director intentionally included two or three of the poorest people in her ministry of spiritual direction. She also notes that

Spiritual direction at a homeless shelter or human services agency may not look like the sessions spiritual directors were taught to model or the ones enjoyed personally. There may be no quiet place, much less a set-aside prayer room with two comfortable chairs and a nicely scented candle. Most definitely there will not have been an appointment made and kept; the session will often be spontaneous. Nevertheless, true, orthodox spiritual direction occurs.¹⁸⁶

In the body of the article Kogstad outlines some of her approach at New Moms which includes a four-session class based on a three-question handout on spirituality. The questions ask about their religious or Church experiences; what they would like to say to God; how do they think God sees them. As she describes what unfolds the classroom becomes a prayer room and the interaction in it group spiritual direction as each one shares their responses to the questions. The individuals also meet her one-to-one as a safe place to have their story heard. From this she identifies those who come to her for spiritual direction as either process directees or practice directees. The practice directees are those who meet her monthly over an indefinite period of time and for who spiritual direction is one of their spiritual practices. For the process directees spiritual direction is time-limited and may be theme-specific and in addition to including those in New Moms, also comprises those who are fulfilling course requirements or at times people in transition.

¹⁸⁶ Kogstad, p. 26

Towards the end of the article she describes a ‘Spiritual Hope, Healing and Well-Being Inventory’¹⁸⁷ that was devised for them and is used to track changes experienced by the participants. She then outlines how her exploration if there were other spiritual directors engaged in social services as she was, initially finding two and then a few more. From this an informal Chicago Formation Network of spiritual directors working in different social service agencies came into being, meeting quarterly to share experiences and support one another.

Kogstad concludes her article recounting a table discussion she hosted at the 2013 SDI Conference in St Paul, Minnesota for spiritual directors interested in offering their gifts to people who are poor. In doing this she discovered there are pockets of spiritual directors ‘serving the hidden in society: the poor’ and ends by verbalising her hope for further research, more resources and table discussions with this focus.

The approach of Kogstad in this article, like that of Allen’s above, would be at home in a Vincentian setting. Here she is taking a particular group of marginalised people, adolescent parents at New Moms, as they are, where they are and guiding them gently in an exploration of their experience of God. She also highlights the need for spiritual directors working in similar situations to support one another through meeting and sharing experiences, something that can be taken granted when living as part of a religious community.

Two articles in the December 2018 issue of *Presence* focus on a project known as, the Ignatian Spirituality Project (ISP),¹⁸⁸ in the Chicago area. The first of these is by Bill Creed SJ and the second by Jan O’Halloran.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 29

¹⁸⁸ <http://www.ignatianspiritualityproject.org/>

Ignatian Spirituality Project: An Experience in Sacred Listening^{189 190}

Creed describes how he and a friend began to offer retreats to men in the Chicago area who were homeless and in recovery from addiction. The result was the Ignatian Spirituality Project (ISP) which, like the retreats was a combination of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius and the Twelve Step Programme of Alcoholics Anonymous. The ISP has grown from its modest beginnings to now offer overnight retreats, days of recollection and various spiritual accompaniment programmes to this particular group of people across the US. The model used is that of 'contemplative listening' combined with 'personal witness'.

He highlights how the retreat experience allows the participants to deepen their trust and strengthen their resolve to continue the on the road to recovery. However, he also notes that it doesn't happen on the first attempt for everyone. Honesty in facing the truth and fears that are a continual struggle, which takes place in spiritual direction generally, demands additional courage on the part of those who are homeless and trapped in addictions. Creed then parallels what happens for them with Ignatius' experience of radical change following his battle injury in Pamplona.

Another change in those who attend the ISP retreats that Creed notices is the move they make from being self-absorbed and 'takers' to becoming self-givers which usually begins with joining the retreat team for subsequent retreats to tell their story. It is the move from 'I am poor and needy' to 'I am a Beloved child of God'. He includes a number of examples of this self-giving in practice and notes how the ISP

¹⁸⁹ Creed SJ.

¹⁹⁰ Bill Creed also writes on this project in Bill Creed SJ, "Jesuits and the Homeless: Companions on Life's Journey," *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits* 39, no. 4 (Winter 2007). 1-29 while Ted Penton presents it as an Ignatian Response to the Challenge of Pope Francis in Penton SJ. 8-39

has also changed him as he was challenged into ‘discerning which of my attitudes and beliefs foster discouragement and which foster hope and even joy’.¹⁹¹

ISP Retreat Experience¹⁹²

Jan O’Halloran, the Regional Coordinator and Development Associate for the ISP begins, by sharing how being a spiritual director with the ISP has challenged her. She outlines how, while the fundamentals of spiritual direction remain the same whoever one is accompanying, there are also significant differences when people are on the margins and uses the ISP experience to explore these differences. The differences she explores relate to the ISP retreatants courage to enter the unknown, the mutuality of the spiritual direction relationship, images of God, view of institutional church, the question of whether they feel worthy and their thirst for God.

In relation to the courage she has experienced the retreatants have not knowing what to expect she gives some of their reasons for taking part in the retreat, noting that those on ‘the margins are willing to go out of their comfort zones in ways that many of us would not’.¹⁹³

O’Halloran notes that the spiritual director on an ISP retreat may have to share more of themselves than would be the case in regular spiritual direction. Also, in the small group work that is part of the experience the retreatants, without knowing it, also become spiritual directors to one another as they give the contemplatives space for each other to share and be heard without judgement.

Many of those coming on an ISP retreat have an image of God as harsh and judgemental who is as disappointed in them as they are with themselves. The level of

¹⁹¹ Creed SJ, "The Ignatian Spirituality Project: An Experience in Sacred Listening," p. 16

¹⁹² O’Halloran.

¹⁹³ Ibid. p. 17

guilt and self-recrimination they carry needs much healing to discover God as love. In addition many also feel let down by the institutional church as they carry memories that are hurtful and feeling unwelcoming within faith communities resulting in suspiciousness towards organised religion. Dismantling some of these barriers is one of the outcomes of the ISP retreat.

The past experiences of the retreatants leads them to believe they are unworthy and unable to believe they are loved by God. Part of the ISP retreat is when former retreatants tell their story of how they have come through similar situations and been able to make transformative changes. This gives the retreatants a sense of hope that they too can do it.

Despite the images of God they arrive on retreat with or their feelings of being unworthy of God's love for most of the retreatants God is the only stable thing they have. The retreat gives them the opportunity to talk about the ways they have depended on God to get through each day and the deep sharing that occurs leads them to deeper reflection of how God has been with them.

O'Halloran concludes her article by noting that the overnight encounter of the ISP retreat is brief but for some, at least, it is the starting point of something new. However, she says, 'we know that people experience relapses'¹⁹⁴ which in itself challenges the spiritual directors to 'let go of our own expectations.'¹⁹⁵

These two articles on the ISP differ significantly from a Vincentian approach in that rather than meeting the people in their everyday reality they take them to experience a retreat centre. While undoubtedly there is a value for everyone to 'come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while' (Mk 6:30) for people

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 19

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 19

who are marginalised to do so too quickly could be seen as passing a negative judgement on their reality. One wonders if at times the relapses occur in part because of this.

ARTICLES FROM OTHER SOURCES

As mentioned earlier many of the articles from other sources are to be found in peer reviewed journals mainly in health related disciplines. Many of these in the nursing field focus in particular on spiritual care in specific situations, like Palliative and End-of-Life Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Cancer Patients and their Caregivers.¹⁹⁶

In an article in the *British Journal of Nursing* on 'The Puzzle of Spirituality for Nursing: A Guide to Practical Assessment',¹⁹⁷ Aru Narayanasamy notes that in the increasingly holistic approach nurses are being called on to meet the spiritual needs of their patients. However, there is uncertainty about the role of nurses in this regard as well as confusion about what is meant by spirituality. Some patients' spirituality may be linked to their religious conviction while others may profess no religious belief

Barbara Pesut, in *Nursing Philosophy* highlights the difficulty in addressing the question of spirituality in 'A Conversation on Diverse Perspectives of Spirituality in Nursing Literature'.¹⁹⁸ A facilitated dialogue between a Monist¹⁹⁹, a Theist²⁰⁰ and a Humanist²⁰¹ while identifying some common ground underlines the difficulty in

¹⁹⁶ Kirsten G Cloyes, William Hull, and Andra Davis, "Palliative and End-of-Life Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (Lgbt) Cancer Patients and Their Caregivers," *Seminars in Oncology Nursing* Vol 34, no. 1 (February 2018). 60-71

¹⁹⁷ Aru Narayanasamy, "The Puzzle of Spirituality for Nursing: A Guide to Practical Assessment," *British Journal of Nursing* Vol 13, no. 19 (2004). 1140-44

¹⁹⁸ Barbara Pesut, "A Conversation on Diverse Perspectives of Spirituality in Nursing Literature," *Nursing Philosophy* Vol 8 (2008). 98-109

¹⁹⁹ Monists philosophical view is that the world in a unity and indivisible

²⁰⁰ Theists believe in a Supreme Being, a creator God

²⁰¹ Humanists reject religion and a supernatural being and stresses the place of individual dignity and reason

defining spirituality and its implications for nursing ontology and epistemology. She concludes, focussing on end-of-life care of patients, by noting that the current 'one-size-fits-all' approach to the spiritual care of patients needs to be nuanced. The different understandings of spirituality that the dialogue highlights influence how that spiritual care is delivered and received as well as 'the way in which it is epistemologically grounded.'²⁰² Further discussion on the different approaches to spirituality is required if nursing is to fully embrace the spiritual care of patients.

In the *Journal of Clinical Nursing* Janice Clarke, picks up this discussion taking 'A Critical View of How Nursing has Defined Spirituality'.²⁰³ She concludes that the definition of spirituality in the nursing literature has resulted in a model which is 'too large, too existential and too inclusive to be manageable in practice.'²⁰⁴ Clarke suggests that the model itself is what prevents the inclusion of spirituality in nursing. If it is to be something which can be distinguished from psychosocial care a more flexible model that is more relevant to nursing needs to be explored.

In *Seminars in Oncology Nursing* Kirsten Cloyes, William Hull and Andra Davis address the question of 'Palliative and End-of-Life Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Cancer Patients and Their Caregivers'.²⁰⁵ Spirituality is merely mentioned in passing²⁰⁶ and only addressed explicitly as one of a number of challenges that exist in the context of providing care for LGBT patients and caregivers.²⁰⁷ Spiritual direction is not mentioned at all but all of the aspects of care they are referring to relate to the accompaniment of LGBT patients as they

²⁰² Pesut. p. 108

²⁰³ Janice Clarke, "A Critical View of How Nursing Has Defined Spirituality," *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 18 (2009). 1666-73

²⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 1672

²⁰⁵ Cloyes, Hull, and Davis. 60-71

²⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 61

²⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 64

transition along a continuum of care from treatment focused on cure to end of life. Many of the issues they surface relate to the need for healthcare professionals to be aware of and suspend their biases so that the trusting relationships necessary for a healthy outcome can be established led by the LGBT patient. This mirrors what is expected in regular spiritual direction sessions, where the person seeking direction determines how the session proceeds. They conclude by making 'recommendations for education, training and practice'²⁰⁸ under a number of headings. One of these proposes the assessment of spiritual needs and the offering of meaningful spiritual support, suggesting that an open-minded nurse is best placed to do this.²⁰⁹

These articles from the world of nursing open up the discussion on the definition of spiritual and spirituality which needs to be fully addressed if nurses are to contribute to the spiritual care of their patients.

As a dietitian treating people with eating disorders Gretchen Newmark in 'Spirituality in Eating Disorder Treatment'²¹⁰ recounts how, in order to better help her patients', she completed a two-year spiritual direction programme. Aware that one's spirituality can have a positive role in the outcome of treatment she was initially reluctant to address it with those she was treating. This reluctance came from her perception in the first instance that she hadn't the 'language and understanding'²¹¹ and secondly was concerned that she might 'inadvertently influence them with my own religious or spiritual views.'²¹² The spiritual direction training gave her the language and more importantly the skill of deep listening to enable her help others discover and embrace their own spirituality. She acknowledges that not everyone who comes to

²⁰⁸ Ibid. pp 64-69

²⁰⁹ Ibid. pp 68-69

²¹⁰ Gretchen Newmark, "Spirituality in Eating Disorder Treatment," *Healthy Weight Journal* (September/October 2001). 76-77

²¹¹ Ibid. p. 76

²¹² Ibid. p. 76

her has a spiritual hunger and that the sense of connection they need to discover for healing is found from other sources. A client's interest in spirituality can be assessed at the initial interview and an explanation given as to how this can contribute to the healing process. Where that spirituality includes a faith dimension she can help them draw on that as part of the process of healing. Newmark goes so far as to say that if a practitioner is unable or unwilling to include the spiritual dimension themselves clients can be referred to someone who does, suggesting where they can be found. She concludes by noting in respect of eating disorders that, 'somewhere in every human being is a whole self, wise and ultimately knowing how to heal.'²¹³ Including spirituality in their treatment offers them the opportunity of discovering that 'whole self'.

Newmark's instinct of not wanting to get in the way in connection with a person's relationship with God that led her to train as a spiritual director reminds me of my own experience prior to training as a spiritual director. While she comes across as eager to include the spiritual dimension for holistic healing the fact that she allows herself be led by her patient is also evident. Her approach also highlights, as some of the earlier articles do, how spiritual direction can take place in situations that look very different than those exposed to during training.

Roger Fallot, a clinical psychologist and an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ suggests a similar approach in 'Spirituality as a Clinical Tool: Care for the Homeless Mentally Ill'²¹⁴ an article in *Healing Hands*. As co-director of Community Connections²¹⁵ in Washington DC who he says 'think of spirituality as being part of a holistic, bio-psycho-social-spiritual approach to the treatment of severe

²¹³ Ibid. p. 77

²¹⁴ Roger Fallot, "Spirituality as a Clinical Tool: Care for the Homeless Mentally Ill," *Healing Hands* Vol 2, no. 8 (December 1998). 1-3

²¹⁵ www.communityconnectionsdc.org

mental illness’²¹⁶ He highlights the topics used and the ways they are helpful as part of a spiritual discussion within group therapy sessions. These include the issue of hope; life as a journey; holistic self-concept; problem solving; dialogues with God and self-esteem building. He also acknowledges that for some people ‘religion or spirituality may be a major source of conflict and guilt which can be harmful. Such clients need to have a place to talk about that.’²¹⁷ Interviewed for the same article Craig Rennebohm, chaplain with the Mental Health Chaplaincy²¹⁸ in Seattle, WA ‘stresses the importance of understanding and respecting authentic spiritual experiences in the midst of illness which may be helpful to healing.’²¹⁹ He also highlights the lack of collaboration between clinicians and religious professionals except in the case of terminal illness. Rennebohm suggests that such reluctance is ‘based on mutual misunderstanding of each other’s field.’²²⁰

Without mentioning spiritual direction per se Fallot in this article highlights the importance of people having a safe place to tell their story, no matter how painful it is to tell or indeed hear, and that story is held with respect in a way that contributes to the holistic healing of the person.

John Belcher also addresses the question of homelessness, in his article, ‘Helping the Homeless: what about the Spirit of God?’²²¹ In it Belcher, Professor of Social Work at the University of Maryland, explores the tensions between ‘helping people through the Social Gospel and through the Spirit,’²²² arguing that it is not either, or but that both are necessary,²²³ reflecting the Vincentian tradition of corporal and

²¹⁶ Fallot, p. 1

²¹⁷ Ibid. p. 1

²¹⁸ www.mentalhealthchaplaincy.org

²¹⁹ Fallot, p. 2

²²⁰ Ibid. p. 2

²²¹ John R Belcher, "Helping the Homeless: What About the Spirit of God," *Pastoral Psychology* 51, no. 3 (January 2003). 179-188

²²² Ibid. p. 185

²²³ Ibid. p. 179

spiritual service. He is critical of the fact that in many of the studies done on homelessness the person is in fact overlooked.²²⁴ In this he echoes Pope Francis' comment in *Evangelii Gaudium* when he says, 'human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded.'²²⁵ Belcher suggests four reasons why in his view the relationship between homelessness and spirituality has been addressed in only a few studies: immediate needs take precedence; the difficulty of designing a suitable cross sectional study and in measuring spirituality; the tendency to confuse spirituality and religion; and the fact that when people do not have their basic needs met researchers view as inconsequential the religious dimension.²²⁶ He goes on to challenge these suppositions which he sees as paramount assuming that people who are homeless have given up hope, which has not been his experience of them. Belcher acknowledges that people who are homeless are looking for a way out of it but he also observes that for many it was their faith/spirituality that contributed to their ability to do so.²²⁷

Since Belcher's 2003 critique on the failure of studies on people who are homeless to address to spiritual dimension of their lives more studies have in fact done so. One of these is in the *International Journal of Palliative Nursing* entitled, 'The Spiritual Concerns of People Experiencing Homelessness at the End of Life.'²²⁸ Centred on the principle that spiritual care at end of life (EoL) is fundamental to holistic care it aims, by means of a literature review, to explore what is known about the spiritual needs of people who are homeless at the end of life. Based in the UK Webb et al review eleven articles, from 2004 to 2018, identified by means of a

²²⁴ Ibid. p. 180

²²⁵ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium - the Joy of the Gospel*. p. 32 para 53

²²⁶ Belcher. p. 183

²²⁷ Ibid. pp 183-184

²²⁸ Wendy Ann Webb et al., "The Spiritual Concerns of People Experiencing Homelessness at the End of Life," *International Journal of Palliative Nursing* Vol 24, no. 9 (September 2018). 430-437

literature search. Eight of these were from studies in the US, one a study in Ireland and the other two studies were themselves literature reviews. They comment that ‘(t)he spiritual concerns and needs of homeless people approaching the EoL in other countries remain under-reported.’²²⁹ A summary of the articles together with the key findings are presented chronologically in tabular form. The findings are discussed beginning with the US perspective. A number of the US studies ‘confirm the primacy of religious beliefs and spiritual experience for homeless people considering EoL issues.’²³⁰ They focus on one particular US study undertaken by J Song, et al on ‘Experiences with and Attitudes towards Death and Dying among Homeless Persons’ which they consider to be ‘hugely significant in this niche area of research.’²³¹ Highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses of this particular study they note that while the results are interesting, enlightening and thought-provoking they are not necessarily transferable either within the US or to other cultural and ethnic situations.²³² In critiquing the study from the Republic of Ireland they note its lack of depth in reporting with no section on data analysis ‘a major weakness of an otherwise detailed report.’²³³ They conclude by stressing the need for further international research ‘into the EoL priorities and spiritual concerns of homeless people approaching the EoL so that culturally relevant, holistic, person-centred EoL care can be provided for this marginalised, vulnerable population’²³⁴

These articles by Belcher and Webb et al point to the need for further studies to explicitly examine the spiritual dimension of in Belcher’s case homelessness generally and for Webb et al homelessness and end of life. There is, however, no

²²⁹ Ibid. pp 434-435

²³⁰ Ibid. p. 432

²³¹ Ibid. p. 432

²³² Ibid. p. 432

²³³ Ibid. p. 435

²³⁴ Ibid. p. 436

consensus as to how this spiritual dimension can be measured and both highlight the propensity to confuse spirituality with religion.

The intersection between spirituality and homelessness is the focus of Rev Jill Snodgras in '*Spirituality and Homelessness*'.²³⁵ She begins by examining definitions of homelessness, noting that 'every definition is culturally situated'.²³⁶ Snodgras highlights the fact that 'homelessness is a circumstance' the result of 'both individual and systemic factors'.²³⁷ Of these the systemic/structural factors are the most oppressive and the consequences encompass all aspects of life. Turning to the question of spirituality Snodgras suggests three characteristics that people who experience homelessness encounter and which may 'serve as a resource in mitigating the impact of the consequences of being homeless'.²³⁸ These are feelings of vulnerability, being treated as less than human and the finitude of existence,²³⁹ all of which are spiritual experiences. By embracing these she suggests people experiencing homelessness can in different ways be led to new experiences of self, others and God. She demonstrates, from the findings of both qualitative and quantitative studies, how spiritual beliefs and practices are a source of strength; the importance of prayer for people experiencing homelessness; spirituality can be a positive coping-mechanism; and of how spirituality aids people experiencing homelessness to maintain hope.²⁴⁰ Addressing those working with people experiencing homelessness she suggests that they also need to be in touch with and embrace the three characteristics, their own vulnerability; the experience of being treated less than human and their own

²³⁵ Rev Jill L Snodgrass, "Spirituality and Homelessness," in *Routledge International Handbook of Spirituality in Society and the Professions*, ed. Lazlo Zsolnai and Bernadette Flanagan (New York, NY; London: Routledge, 2019). 167-173

²³⁶ Ibid. p. 167

²³⁷ Ibid. p. 168

²³⁸ Ibid. p. 168

²³⁹ Ibid. pp 168-170

²⁴⁰ Ibid. pp 170-171

limitations.²⁴¹ In this I have been reminded of my own experience as a spiritual director when accompanying people in marginalised circumstances. How accompanying them in their brokenness challenged me to look further at some of the issues of my own brokenness. Snodgras concludes by suggesting that service providers adopt three spiritually grounded practices: conduct a strengths-based assessment not just shortcomings and needs; asking the questions about spiritual and religious beliefs, not relegating it to the chaplain; and encouraging individuals and families to seek the spiritual support they need.²⁴²

Without using the phrase spiritual direction Snodgras highlights a number of principles for working with people who are homeless which if engaged with practically amount to spiritual direction. In many respects these same principles also apply when working with people from other marginalised groups. She also suggests that service providers be more in encouraging those using the service to seek spiritual care and more explicit in directly providing it for them.

Reflecting Belcher's assertion that homelessness does not necessarily equate with hopelessness, Anthony Gittins, a Spiritan priest and an anthropologist/theologian in his book, *'Where There's Hope There's Life'*,²⁴³ allows twelve women to tell their stories of homelessness, survival and above all hope. In his Introduction he suggests that it is crucial that people who are homeless are enabled to find their own voice. But, he asks, 'how can they be heard if nobody listens? How will they ever touch others' lives unless people actually hear their own voices and acknowledge their own experience.'²⁴⁴ Having said that he notes how it has taken over twenty years to publish

²⁴¹ Ibid. p. 171

²⁴² Ibid. p. 172

²⁴³ Anthony J Gittins, *Where There's Hope There's Life: Women's Stories of Homelessness and Survival* (Liguori MO: Liguori Publications, 2006).

²⁴⁴ Ibid. p. ix

the women's stories and the disappointment of some of the women that he did not fulfil his promise to have circulate them widely.²⁴⁵ He presents the women's stories in Part I as a way of knowing homelessness from the inside while in Part II he focusses on knowing homelessness from the outside using Theological and Pastoral Reflections with their stories. Gittins first met the women whose interviews comprise Part I while volunteering in a Shelter attached to the Uptown Baptist Church in Chicago where they were living. Their stories are all very different and yet the remarkable similarities become evident as each story is told. It is not just the similarities in the struggles and complexities of their lives that resulted in their becoming homeless but of their faith and the place of God in each of their lives. The women all appeared to be anxious to tell their stories, and have them heard; to talk about the harrowing situations that brought them to the shelter, the difficulties they have and continue to experience as well as their hopes and dreams. While the women all talk about their personal faith in and relationship with God it is not in the context of Church. Some of them do attend the Uptown Baptist Church occasionally but in the main they simply talk to God in their own words out of their own circumstances. Gittins observes that the women do not talk about Jesus and responding to his question about that they all in different ways indicate that Jesus is not relevant for them.²⁴⁶ Later Gittins reflects on this he wonders if this is related to Jesus' maleness and the many ways men have brutalised the women over the years.²⁴⁷

This book disturbed me and left me with many questions. While I appreciate Gittins desire to allow the women speak for themselves I wonder about how they were once their stories had been told – especially when it took so long to do the very thing

²⁴⁵ Ibid. p. xi

²⁴⁶ Ibid. pp 104-114

²⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 161

he had promised them. Where was the follow-up that would be part of a spiritual direction relationship? In my view as a spiritual director inviting these women to tell their stories without putting in place what was necessary by way of follow-up was irresponsible.

Also focussing on the area of homelessness, Gráinne Putney describes her experience of '*Spiritual Capital at Work in the Shadows*'.²⁴⁸ She begins by describing a distressing experience she had as a volunteer on a weekly soup run in Dublin city centre that challenged her at her core.²⁴⁹ As a result, and aided by the necessity to complete a research project for the MA in Applied Christian Spirituality, she set out to listen to the stories of six individuals, two women and four men, who were homeless and willing to share their experiences with her, thereby putting 'a human face on the emotional, psychological, spiritual and physical struggles experienced by homeless people.'²⁵⁰ Those experiences highlighted the desperation and vulnerability of living on the street, the cold and lack of proper food, drinking and depression rollercoaster, nowhere to store your personal belongings, loneliness, trying to fill a day that was a week long, sleeping with one eye open.²⁵¹ Homelessness occurs for many reasons and brings with it many additional problems. It puts additional strains on already fragile relationships and leaves the individual feeling soul-destroyed, isolated, rejected, empty, uncared for, abandoned, guilty and ashamed.²⁵² In spite of their inhuman conditions they speak about concern for others, a community spirit and caring for one another.²⁵³ Above all they speak of the support they 'get from their belief in

²⁴⁸ Gráinne Putney, "Spiritual Capital at Work in the Shadows," in *Spiritual Capital*, ed. Michael O'Sullivan and Bernadette Flanagan (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012). 135-145

²⁴⁹ Ibid. pp 135-136

²⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 137

²⁵¹ Ibid. p. 137

²⁵² Ibid. pp 138-139

²⁵³ Ibid. pp 139-141

God...often their only enduring reality.’²⁵⁴ Unlike the women Gittins interviewed for Putney’s homeless, both men and women, Jesus was significant.²⁵⁵ Putney also reflects Belcher’s question²⁵⁶ when she asks ‘is the lack of attention to the person’s spiritual needs an important missing element in the existing framework for addressing the needs of people who are homeless?’²⁵⁷ She goes on to acknowledge that many areas of spiritual nourishment are not accessible to people who are homeless. She ends by urging the need to ‘attend to the spiritual wellbeing of people who are homeless,’²⁵⁸ and calling for ‘the provision of suitable and relevant access to, more ‘sacred spaces’ and ‘listening ears’.’²⁵⁹

Unlike Gittins interviews Putney had made it clear to those she was interviewing that it was for a study on spirituality and homelessness and those interviewed had signed a Consent Form. However, having someone open themselves in their vulnerability with no access to the necessary spiritual follow-up leaves me, as a spiritual director, feeling very uneasy.

John M Stygles²⁶⁰ Doctor of Ministry thesis, ‘As We Understood Him: The Role of Spiritual Direction with Homeless People,’²⁶¹ examines directly the place of spiritual direction with people who are homeless. He was inspired by an article in *Presence* ‘Spirituality of the Twelve Steps: What Every Spiritual Director Should Know about Spiritual Relapse,’²⁶² in which persons in recovery who in addition to

²⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 141

²⁵⁵ Ibid. pp 141-142

²⁵⁶ Belcher. p. 183

²⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 143

²⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 144

²⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 144

²⁶⁰ John Stygles is a priest in the United Catholic Church

²⁶¹ John M Stygles, “As We Understood Him: The Role of Spiritual Direction with Homeless People” (Memphis Theological Seminary, 2016).

²⁶² JoAnn Campbell-Rice, "Spirituality of the Twelve Steps: What Every Spiritual Director Should Know About Spiritual Relapse," *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction* 21, no. 2 (2015). 35-40

their sponsor also have a spiritual director are more likely to maintain their sobriety. However he notes that access to spiritual direction is not straight-forward for all who might wish to avail of it either on account of cost or because individuals are not active members of a church community. From the provision of a simple meal of burritos on a Tuesday for people living on the streets of Memphis by handful of people in the Iona Community of Faith Stygles describes how it has expanded over five years.²⁶³ Understanding that they had a responsibility to provide more than community service they began to look at possible pastoral responses. As a result a pilot programme to bring spiritual direction to people in Memphis who were homeless was designed and delivered and is the basis for Stygles doctoral project. The spiritual direction was both group and individual where the individual spiritual direction took place within the group activity unless the group activity was missed or a specific need was identified during it.²⁶⁴ Stygles describes in detail the different steps involved in the planning from the initial discussions with the Iona Community of Faith and other allied and interested group through the invitation to the homeless people to participate and beyond to its evaluation.²⁶⁵ The goal of the pilot programme was ‘to provide 29 members of the homeless population access to Spiritual Direction, enabling and empowering them with the tools to develop their personal relationship with God.’²⁶⁶ It would be delivered to two groups, both meeting weekly for six weeks. The implementation of the pilot project ran into a number of difficulties not least because the bed allocation system used by Room in the Inn resulted in a lack of consistency in the groups which they had to adapt to.²⁶⁷ A contemplative group spiritual direction

²⁶³ Stygles. pp 1-2

²⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 3

²⁶⁵ Ibid. pp 4-5

²⁶⁶ Ibid p. 10

²⁶⁷ Ibid. pp 22-25

model was employed which additionally utilised steps from *lectio divina*. Those willing to participate were interviewed individually with a set of questions prior to the groups meeting. At the end of the six weeks they were interviewed again and the project evaluated on the basis of changes in attitudes, behaviours, etc.

At times I found this was a challenging contribution to read as I experienced a lot of rambling and repetition making it difficult to identify the essence of his argument or findings. He also drifted in and out of suggesting practical solutions that others could undertake in relation to homelessness.²⁶⁸ There are also times when Stygles comes across very judgementally in his critique of the actions of others. Very little of the experience of the people who participated in the study is recorded. Having said that also incorporated within this article is the Vincentian principle of corporal and spiritual service, given that the provision of spiritual direction followed on from the provision of a simple meal. It also realistically highlights the difficulties that exist in reaching out to this population to work with in the way he planned, with two groups some of which was a systemic issue in relation to how beds were allocated.

In an article in the *Journal of Pastoral Theology* John Swinton reflects, at the half-way stage, on a research project he is managing relating to people with developmental disabilities and those who care for them, focusing on their spiritual care. 'The Body of Christ has Down's Syndrome'²⁶⁹ introduces some initial findings on the theological discipline, 'practical theology'²⁷⁰ from the project, where practical theology is a critique of authenticity. Swinton notes the transformation which takes place in the lives of the carers and support workers through their encounters with people with profound developmental disabilities. In order to reflect further on and

²⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 59

²⁶⁹ Swinton

²⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 66

better understand this process of transvaluation they look in greater detail at the L'Arche²⁷¹ communities.²⁷² L'Arche communities are comprised of people with developmental disabilities and their assistants who live alongside one another based on the Beatitudes. Swinton points out that 'the act of *welcoming* and *accepting*'²⁷³ is at the heart of the L'Arche communities. Each person is welcomed as 'gift' resulting in the care and support offered to people who have profound developmental disabilities not as 'an act of *charity*, but rather it is an act of *faithfulness* within which people respond in love to those whom God has given to them.'²⁷⁴ Swinton highlights a particular aspect of the theology of L'Arche. Being both marginalised and rejected the people with developmental disabilities represent 'the poor' with whom God is present in weakness and vulnerability calling forth the gentleness of Christ. In the community of L'Arche relationships of friendship between the people with profound developmental disabilities and their assistants a mutuality occurs. In this mutuality how both the world and God are seen and understood by the assistants are expanded. The spiritual direction takes place within the community and is mutual. Having initially highlighted that L'Arche began when Jean Vanier and his spiritual director invited two profoundly developmentally disabled men to share community with them²⁷⁵ Swinton suggests that the theology of L'Arche has much to offer in re-thinking our models of pastoral care.²⁷⁶ In his conclusion Swinton notes that what has been

²⁷¹ L'Arche communities began in 1964 when Jean Vanier invited two men, who were confined within a local institution because of their intellectual disabilities, to live with him in a small house in Trosly-Breuil, north of Paris. Today L'Arche has 149 communities 37 countries. cf <https://www.larcheireland.org/about-us> and https://www.larche.org/en/web/guest/welcome?gclid=Cj0KCQjws5HIBRDIARIsAOomqA3XBCQvPiQYUwKwmJ_V4IqBewgXi0zsuIN5ZRc9j7j-lWtkeEBZP7saArNxEALw_wcB

²⁷² Ibid. p. 67

²⁷³ Ibid. p. 68

²⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 69

²⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 68

²⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 70

learned from this research project does not just apply to ‘people with profound developmental disabilities, but to all people.’²⁷⁷

Spiritual direction as a practice is not mentioned in Swinton’s article but it describes in great detail the form of spiritual companionship that is L’Arche which he suggests is a model for pastoral care generally.

Juan Reed in his contribution, ‘Can I get a Witness? Spiritual Direction with the Marginalized’ in *Still Listening: New Horizons in Spiritual Direction* uses the metaphor of ‘witness’ to talk about spiritual direction with people who are marginalised. He begins by explaining what he means by witness, ‘one who above all is present, one who *looks* as well as *listens*, sees as well as hears.’²⁷⁸ This is something he considers important because people who are marginalised are very often both invisible and inaudible.²⁷⁹ Identifying who he is referring to as ‘marginalized’ he notes that the language of ‘margin’ and ‘center’ are themselves metaphors of space and place, where the centre is the location of dominance and power. While this is the case he observes that ‘those who are marginalized may be within close physical proximity to those in dominance, but remain “hidden from plain view”.’²⁸⁰ He also draws attention to those among the marginalised who while possessing the credentials for belonging are denied full inclusion and exist between the margins and the centre with characteristics of both groups, including examples of how they remain invisible.²⁸¹ Reed then explores the topic under four headings: Dangers for Directors; Directors as Witness; Allowing Stories to Unfold and The Gift of the Margin. The dangers for directors are two-fold. At one extreme the director, uncomfortable with what a

²⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 77

²⁷⁸ Reed, in *Still Listening: New Horizons in Spiritual Direction*. p. 93

²⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 93

²⁸⁰ Ibid. pp 93-94

²⁸¹ Ibid. p. 94

directee is bringing to a session, is unable to be fully present to that directee and fails to explore the experience they are having. At the other extreme the director treats a directee from a marginal group as a 'romanticized representative' of their group rather than an individual in their own right. Since they are unfamiliar with the real lives of marginalised people spiritual directors can distort situations and overlook the rich network of relationships their directee has. It is important for the spiritual director to remember that what they are about in spiritual direction is discerning where and how God is present in the directee's life. Reed also notes that our increased awareness and efforts to include people who are marginalised can of itself also increase their sense of alienation and invisibility. In the attempt to equalise locations, but the power relationship remains and as a result marginalised people can be left more vulnerable and powerless.²⁸² Spiritual directors who wish to be witnesses and present to those on the margins themselves need to move location, not to do so may result in bearing false witness. In this I am reminded of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-35) and of the Vincentian tradition of going out to people. Before one can move location, Reed notes that one must know where one is currently located and recognise the lenses through which one views the world. Stressing the importance of allowing marginalised people the time and space to tell their story and to receive it 'with attentive presence' which 'in and of itself be the beginning of a transformation of the story,'²⁸³ because 'in having someone listen to me, I listen more attentively to myself.'²⁸⁴ When the spiritual director is present to, listens attentively and helps the directee explore their story they can be a witness to 'God's presence in the recovered story and the ongoing mystery of the directee's being in God.'²⁸⁵ In exploring the gifts at the margin Reed

²⁸² Ibid. pp 94-96

²⁸³ Ibid. p. 99

²⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 100

²⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 100

notes that in the spiritual direction with marginalised people marginal space is ‘a place to be explored... a place of rich possibility... a place of divine revelation.’²⁸⁶ In this he echoes some of the points made by Gertrude Foley.²⁸⁷ He concludes by highlighting the fact that marginalisation is the result of systemic institutional structures and that spiritual direction with people who are marginalised ‘must include developing practices of a just life and of advocacy on behalf of the marginalized.’²⁸⁸

Reed in this article, which for me is replete with Vincentian principles, highlights the qualities he sees as necessary for spiritual directors who make their gift available to people at the margins. He also addresses the dangers and the issue of power. Anyone thinking about being a spiritual director to people on the margins would do well to read and reflect on this article.

CONVERGENCES, DIVERGENCES AND EMERGING FRAMEWORKS

As I have reflected on the articles above a number of overlapping clusters emerge. One cluster includes the two Vincentian articles, Gertrude Foley’s ‘Love is Inventive to Infinity’, Regina Bechtle’s describing the response of members of the Vincentian Family to the events of 9/11 in the US, as well as Tom Allen’s article on listening and responding at the margins, Ellen Kogstad’s approach at New Mom’s, John Swinton’s experience in a L’Arche community and Stygles experience with people who are homeless in Memphis. A second group includes the articles from Aru Narayanasamy, Barbara Pesut and Janice Clarke addressing aspects of the definition of spirituality and its diverse perspectives in nursing literature. Overlapping these but with a different slant Gretchen Newmark and Roger Fallot’s articles in terms of

²⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 102

²⁸⁷ Foley SC. 237-44

²⁸⁸ Ibid. pp103-104

clinical practice form a third group. Also from a clinical point of view, this time specifically end of life care the articles by Webb et al dealing with homelessness at end of life and Cloynes et al in respect of LGBT cancer patients at end of life form a fourth group. The theme of homelessness forms the fifth group with the contributions by Harris, Creed, O'Halloran, Fallot, Belcher, Webb et al, Snodgras, Gittens, Punt and Stygles. The sixth and final group from these articles contains the contributions of Gertrude Foley, Juan Reed and Snodgras which speak to all situations of marginalisation.

Regina Bechtle's article describing the response of the members of the Vincentian Family to the events of 9/11 also stands on its own for a number of reasons. In the first instance as 'second responders' they were available to those injured, the families of those who died or were injured and the 'first responders'. Many of the people they accompanied spiritually included those, who although not marginalised initially had the potential of being marginalised because of the trauma they experienced. The members of the different branches of the Vincentian Family remained in it for the long haul. In all the various responses they lived out the quotation from Vincent used by Gertrude Foley for her article, 'Love is Inventive to Infinity'.

In addition to the two Vincentian articles, the first group includes those articles that while not specifically Vincentian describe approaches that Vincentians would be at home with. The City House model of listening and responding at the margins presented by Tom Allen is very close to Bechtle's description of how the Vincentian Family responded: the fact that City House is not a place and that the volunteer spiritual directors that comprise it go out to bring their gift of spiritual companionship to people who are marginalised. So too the acknowledgement of the mutuality which takes place in the spiritual direction sessions in various settings of marginalisation.

John Swinton writes about a similar experience in the L'Arche communities where the 'scandal of the Incarnation' is experienced and both those with disabilities and their carers support one another with mutual spiritual accompaniment. Providing spiritual direction at New Moms's Ellen Kogstad also echoes the approach of Bechtle in meeting people where they are physically. In the case of Bechtle those that the members of the Vincentian Family met were in various place associated with the trauma of 9/11. For Kogstad it is the teenage mothers for whom New Mom's is supportive housing. It is in these places of trauma and grace that the spiritual directors in the Vincentian Family and in New Mom's bring a listening presence, enabling those they meet to hear their own inner story and have it taken seriously giving them hope in the midst of their suffering. Stygles experience also echoes this approach with spiritual direction was offered to people who are homeless in Memphis. They also meet people who are homeless in the shelter they have managed to secure a bed for the night. Using a different approach of contemplative group spiritual direction they empowered the participants to engage in their own spiritual growth introducing them to various prayer forms and journaling as well as sharing their experience of God in their lives.

The second group of articles coming from the field of nursing are more concerned with spirituality itself than spiritual direction. Aru Narayanasamy highlights the confusion among both nurses and patients in relation to a definition of spirituality. He suggests a model for assessing spiritual needs in practice. Janice Clarke echoes much of what he says taking a critical view of how spirituality has been defined within nursing circles specifically looking at the use of religious language. She is particularly interested in having a new model articulated which is more relevant and user friendly. Barbara Pesut highlights the different understandings of spirituality

depending on whether one is a Theist, a Monist or a Humanist and how each make claims on what constitutes the nature of humanity and consequently on morality and ethics, in relation to nursing care.

Again focusing on spirituality rather than spiritual direction Gretchen Newmark and Roger Fallot bring a different perspective to clinical practice. Both in their own fields are very keen to use spirituality as a clinical tool, recognising that it is often a neglected source of growth, Fallot in relation to severe mental illness and Newmark specifically in relation to eating disorders. Newmark, who completed a spiritual direction programme to give her the language and skills necessary, goes into much greater detail in relation to assessing individual patients' interest in spirituality. Fallot gives details of the topics of a spiritual nature he includes in group therapy.

The fourth group of articles, also coming from health-related perspectives, address end of life issues. For Webb et al the end of life concern is in relation to people who are homeless and for Cloyes et al the focus is on LGBT patients and their carers. While they talk more about spirituality both are concerned with the spiritual accompaniment of people at the end of life. Both highlight the need for a spiritual component to holistic care for their respective populations. Having said that their approaches are very different with Webb et al providing a narrative literature review of eleven papers revealed in a search, only one of which was from outside the United States. They conclude by calling for further research to be conducted internationally. Cloyes et al focus on the challenges posed to the nursing care of LGBT patients. They highlight a number of areas that can complicate the patient-provider relationship. These include from the patient's perspective the decision around disclosing their LGBT identity and following on from that issues around family. From the end of life care provider they include issues around communication, lack of

knowledge/understanding, assumptions about their spiritual beliefs and possibly bias. They detail recommendations for education and training all of which relate to patient-centred care, which they conclude are applicable to all situations of end of life care.

While the theme of homelessness links the fifth group of articles it is probably the most disparate group of all. It includes the article by Harris on the Gethsemane Community of supported accommodation for people with mental illness who are homeless. It is in Gethsemane Community she meets directees taking part in the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius in Daily Life as a way of exposing them to people who are marginalised. She does not, however, make any mention of offering spiritual direction to the residents of Gethsemane Community. Creed and O'Halloran both write about their experiences with The Ignatian Spirituality Project, a combination of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius and the twelve-step programme of Alcoholics Anonymous. Initially developed by Creed in Chicago and offered to homeless men who were in recovery it has spread across the United States and includes overnight retreats, days of reflection and spiritual accompaniment all of which take place in a Jesuit Retreat Centre. Belcher highlights the tensions between the Social Gospel and the Spirit when it comes to helping people who are homeless. He suggests that people who are homeless are being short-changed if the Spirit is not included and that both the Social Gospel and the Spirit are necessary to give real hope, reflecting the Vincentian approach of both corporal and spiritual service. Punty and Stygles contributions relate to research studies they conducted for academic purposes. Punty's involved interviewing people who were homeless but didn't indicate any follow up for them in relation to issues they may have raised. Stygles study related to providing spiritual direction over a six week period to a group of people who were homeless and in recovery from addiction with the stated objective to empower them and assist them

developing their relationship with God. The fact that the two groups ended up including twenty nine people rather than the original intention of six in each of the two groups highlights some of the difficulties he encountered around consistency. Gittins looks at homelessness from the inside, through the stories of twelve women who are homeless, and from the outside, through the pastoral and theological reflections he offers on their stories. While the reflections give much food for thought as I have already said I am very uncomfortable with no follow up for the women. In sharing their stories with him on the understanding they would be published and for a long time were left wondering what had happened to them. The final contribution within this group is that of Snodgras in which relates to spirituality rather than spiritual direction. In it she highlights the spiritual characteristics that accompany homelessness and also identifies the same characteristics as those required by anyone working with people experiencing homelessness.

The final group of articles includes Juan Reed's contribution which speaks directly to spiritual directors and what they need to be aware of when they do spiritual direction with marginalised people. In some respects it stands on its own as its focus is on spiritual directors with all marginalised groups. It also echoes much of what Foley has to say as she reflects on the quotation from Vincent, 'love is inventive to infinity,' in relation to both material and spiritual service. Proposing the metaphor of witness Reed speaks of both the dangers and the gifts at the margins as the spiritual director allows the life stories of those who are marginalised to be told and received. He also suggests that spiritual direction at the margins includes advocacy and participation in the struggle for justice. While Snodgras' contribution is entitled '*Spirituality and Homelessness*' it could just as easily have been entitled 'Spirituality and Marginalisation' as the spiritual characteristics she has identified apply in my

experience equally to all people who are marginalised and are needed by those working with them.

The articles cited above would indicate that the published works in relation to the current practice of spiritual direction with people who are marginalised is at best inconsistent. In many instances it happens when individual spiritual directors take an interest in making their gift available to a specific group of marginalised people. Some, as is the case in City House, New Moms or the ISP, invite other spiritual directors and form a group of volunteer spiritual directors who wish to share spiritual companionship with different groups of people who are marginalised. Others, like the Gethsemane Community, appear not so much as offer spiritual direction to the people in the community but to allow other directees to experience people who are marginalised as part of their participation in the Spiritual Exercises.

Spiritual care is seen to be important for holistic care. However, from a nursing and health care perspective a major issue in how spiritual care is offered relates to what is meant by ‘spiritual’ and ‘spirituality’. Definitions that are both too broad and inclusive to be manageable or too narrow to be viewed as ‘sectarian’ are not deemed to be helpful. Having the language and the ability not to impose ones’ own views was seen as crucial if others were to be helped to discern and respond to their own spirituality.

The holistic nature of care is also emphasised in the Vincentian charism of physical and spiritual assistance. This is seen in a very profound way in the response to the 9/11 attacks, also highlighting how more informal spiritual direction has a place. Holistic care is also at the heart of the L’Arche communities where spiritual direction takes place for assistants and people with profound developmental disabilities alike within the community. This highlights the mutuality of the relationship of spiritual

direction particularly when practiced with people who are marginalised. Indeed this mutuality, which as we shall see is one of the characteristics of Vincentian Spirituality, is noted in all of the articles where the spiritual directors are truly reaching out with their gifts to people on the margins.

CONCLUSION

This discussion has contributed to the overall aim by identifying gaps, weaknesses and at times overall silence in relation to the practice of spiritual direction with people in marginalised groups. In the next chapter I will outline the research methodology which I will use to explore how members of the Vincentian Family practice spiritual direction, how it is experienced by people who are marginalised and what can we learn from the Correspondence and Conferences of Vincent and Louise.

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Chapter 5

RESEARCH METHOD

INTRODUCTION

As previously indicated the aim of this research is to explore how the spiritual vision of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac contributes to and informs the contemporary practice of spiritual direction by members of the Vincentian Family. Of specific interest to me are the categories of persons to whom spiritual direction is made available, how it is practiced and experienced and if a distinctive Vincentian approach to spiritual direction can be identified, with particular reference to the service of people who are marginalised and poor in spiritual direction?

In ‘Towards a Spiritual Research Paradigm’¹ the editors acknowledge that while in general there has been an expansion in the field of research a significant shortcoming in textbooks on research methods is the lack of a spiritual research paradigm.² Drawing from the world spiritual traditions, from contemplative practice scholarship and the insights from scientific discoveries they seek to construct a spiritual research paradigm.³ They see that such a paradigm is needed for research that examines deep personal and integrated experiences related to the meaning of life and the intuitive knowing of the Divine.⁴ They recognise that they are only taking the

¹ Jing Lin, Rebecca L Oxford, and Tom Culham, eds., *Towards a Spiritual Research Paradigm: Exploring New Ways of Knowing, Researching and Being*, ed. Jing Lin and Rebecca L Oxford, Transforming Education for the Future (Charlotte NC: Information Age Publishing Inc, 2016).

² Ibid. p. ix

³ Ibid. p. x

⁴ Ibid. p. xi

necessary first step to give the study of religion and spirituality its own distinctive approach.

For his part Wade Clarke Roof notes the difficulty in choosing a research design within the study of religion generally since it doesn't have a distinct approach of its own but borrows from various disciplines and 'the phenomenon we study is elusive, hard to pin down and defies easy definition.'⁵ He poses a number of questions which have a bearing on research design and do not have obvious answers but rather appear to become more complex the more they are probed. Anne Anderson would appear to be sympathetic with this when she says,

We are trying to develop a research paradigm to help us study that for which we have few words and which may or may not yield what typically is thought of as useful information when studied within the parameters of our current understanding of research.⁶

She goes on to propose a 'Transcendent Paradigm'⁷ to take account of spiritual experience which she suggests requires flexibility in order to use multiple perspectives and 'spiritually-based research methods not currently accepted in the academic world'.⁸

This research seeks to describe and understand the practice of spiritual direction of a specific cohort of spiritual directors – those who belong to the Vincentian Family – and the experience of a specific cohort of spiritual directees – those who are marginalised and have received spiritual direction from a member of the Vincentian Family. Based within the broader discipline of spirituality, which of

⁵ Wade Clark Roof, "Research Design," in *Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge, 2011). p. 69

⁶ Anne W Anderson, "Out of the Everywhere into Here," in *Towards a Spiritual Research Paradigm: Exploring New Ways of Knowing, Researching and Being*, ed. Jing Lin, Rebecca L Oxford, and Tom Culham, Transforming Education for the Future (Charlotte NC: Information Age Publishing Inc, 2016). p. 26 of 25-53

⁷ Ibid. p. 44

⁸ Ibid. p. 49

its nature does not usually lend itself to quantitative research and looking at a phenomenon in its emerging phase with insufficient data for quantitative research, qualitative methods will be used. With a wide variety of methods at its disposal *qualitative research* is particularly suited to a holistic understanding of the focus of the research.

Mary Frohlich,⁹ Elizabeth Leibert¹⁰ and Sandra Schneiders¹¹ among others agree that as an academic discipline, Christian spirituality, rooted in the incarnation is characterised by lived experience. It is this lived experience that both shapes and influences the methodology employed and ultimately contributes to the richness of the research itself. For Schneiders the methodology, required because of the multi-faceted nature of lived Christian experience itself, is interdisciplinary involving Scripture and the history of Christianity as '*constitutive disciplines*', with psychology, sociology, literature, science or some other discipline as '*problematic disciplines*' and theology, related to both, approached hermeneutically.¹² In her contribution to *Exploring Christian Spirituality* Judith Berling explores Schneiders claims and concludes that Christian Spirituality is 'intrinsically interdisciplinary'.¹³ She further suggests that this in turn means that spirituality contributes to the other disciplines as well as gaining from them.¹⁴ Frohlich emphasises the 'self-implicating' nature of that lived

⁹ Mary Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality: Revisiting Questions of Definition and Method," in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Elizabeth A Dreyer and Mark S Burrows (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2005). 65-78

¹⁰ Elizabeth Liebert, "The Role of Practice in the Study of Christian Spirituality," in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Elizabeth A Dreyer and Mark S Burrows (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2005). 79-99

¹¹ Sandra Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality," in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Elizabeth A Dreyer and Mark S Burrows (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2005). 5-24

¹² Ibid. pp 7-8 of 5-24

¹³ Judith A Berling, "Christian Spirituality Intrinsically Interdisciplinary," in *Exploring Christian Spirituality*, ed. Bruce H Lescher and Elizabeth Leibert (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2007). 35-52

¹⁴ Ibid. pp 46-47 of 35-52

experience on the part of the researcher requiring the light of as much authenticity as possible.¹⁵ This ‘self-implicating’ nature of lived experience is echoed in what Elizabeth Liebert calls ‘practice,’ defined as the way we bring our lived spirituality into our scholarship.¹⁶

Two intrinsic aspects of this particular research have a direct bearing on the choice of the research design. In the first instance, as already noted, little or no specific research has been undertaken in this area so it readily lends itself to *exploratory research*. Secondly, as noted above, the focus of this research is on the experience of practicing spiritual directors and directees locating it within the broader discipline of spirituality, suggesting as we shall see, a blend of *qualitative research* methods.

RESEARCH DESIGN – EXPLORATORY

Exploratory research is one of a number of forms of descriptive research the main purpose of which is to study and describe natural phenomena and from them generate theory. Stebbins,¹⁷ Adams & Schvaneveldt¹⁸ and Davies¹⁹ all compare exploratory research to the explorers of old, like Columbus seeking the ‘New World’, or those currently seeking to discover life on other planets. In this the researcher is the explorer on a journey or, in the case of this research, a pilgrimage, of discovery. For Adams & Schvaneveldt one of the qualities the researcher brings to this journey is a vibrant curiosity²⁰ which focuses on questions rather than answers, an open agenda and to,

¹⁵ Frohlich, in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*. p. 68

¹⁶ Liebert, in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*. p. 86

¹⁷ Robert A Stebbins, *Exploratory Research in the Social Sciences, Qualitative Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001).

¹⁸ Gerald R Adams and Jay D Schvaneveldt, *Understanding Research Methods* (New York, NY and London: Longman, 1985). p. 103

¹⁹ Pamela Davies, "Exploratory Research," in *The Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods*, ed. Victor Jupp (Thousand Oaks, CA; London; New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006). p. 110

²⁰ Adams and Schvaneveldt. p. 106

Being alert for observations that seem odd or interesting and events that make you question previously held beliefs should be a regular format for those who successfully engage in exploratory research.²¹

Particularly useful because of its inherent flexibility *exploratory research* is much less structured than other forms of research. This does not however imply a lack of direction in the research process. On the contrary, it allows the researcher to be adaptable in relation to the data as the research progresses rather than approaching the research with a fixed formula.²² The freedom afforded by the flexibility is essential to allow the researcher is to engage in the most meaningful way in order to wonder, challenge and evaluate the findings of the research.²³ The implicit flexibility allows the researcher to begin with a broad focus which narrows as the research progresses.²⁴

In different ways many authors suggest that *exploratory research* is simply the first of a series of studies, more like a feasibility or pilot study. Pamela Davies, however, cautions against this as simplistic, misleading and lacking in appreciation for exploratory research itself²⁵ which, as we have noted can lead to the development of theory rather than simply verifying theories. She also cautions against equating *exploratory research* with qualitative research, although it may indeed use one or more qualitative methods, since this too misrepresents and undermines the nature of *exploratory research* suggesting instead ‘exploration-for-discovery’ as a more appropriate terminology.²⁶ Indeed, for Bernd Reiter ‘exploratory studies allow us to think, not just measure; to use our imagination, experience, insight, and skill to propose new and innovative ways how to understand and interpret reality.’²⁷ Kathleen

²¹ Ibid. p. 106

²² Davies, in *The Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods*.

²³ Adams and Schvaneveldt. p. 103

²⁴ Ibid. p. 106

²⁵ Davies, in *The Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods*. p. 110

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Bernd Reiter, "The Epistemology and Methodology of Exploratory Social Science Research: Crossing Popper with Marcuse," *Government and International Affairs Faculty Publications Paper 99* http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/gia_facpub/99 (2013), accessed 9 March 2016. p. 8

Huttlinger points out that *exploratory research* is not limited but is of benefit in both qualitative and quantitative studies.²⁸

Exploratory research is also particularly suitable for this research as spiritual direction itself is a journey of exploration and discovery.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Strauss and Corbin remind us that '(d)iscovery has been the aim of science since the dawn of the Renaissance.'²⁹ As the natural sciences became more diverse, the social sciences developed and indeed the research questions themselves became more complex something other than the mathematical models, objective measurement and quantification to collect and analyse data was needed. With a long and valued, if tense, history within the social sciences³⁰ *qualitative research* involves the researcher seeking to understand and interpret the data as it emerges from the research itself. Riis reminds us that 'Qualitative information is not characterized by being 'softer' than quantitative data. Rather, it is characterized by studying human meanings which are to be interpreted by the researcher.'³¹

Some writers refer to *qualitative research* as a 'research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification'³² or a 'field of enquiry in its own right'.³³ Creswell laments that it is becoming seemingly more difficult to advance a 'fixed' definition of *qualitative research*, highlighting the evolving definition proposed by

²⁸ *Encyclopedia of Nursing Research (Third Edition)*, s.v. "Exploratory Studies."

²⁹ Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research (Second Edition)* (Thousand Oaks CA, London, New Delhi: Sage, 1998). p. 1

³⁰ Renata Tesch, *Qualitative Research: Analysis, Types and Software Tools* (Oxon: RoutledgeFalmer, 1990). p. 9

³¹ Ole Preben Riis, "Methodology in the Sociology of Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Peter B Clarke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). p. 235 of 229-44

³² A Bryman, *Social Research Methods* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). p. 266

³³ Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln, eds., *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks CA, London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000).

Denzin and Lincoln.³⁴ For their part Denzin and Lincoln draw attention to the complex, interconnected nature of *qualitative research* specifically noting seven overlapping historical periods or worldviews each of which give rise to a different meaning of *qualitative research*, based on the specific philosophy underpinning it. Acknowledging this they also note the importance that any definition of *qualitative research* be applicable in all the historical periods and propose the following generic definition: ‘Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible.’³⁵

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative Research is also often referred to in terms of the set of approaches and methods used to collect the data needed for the research itself.³⁶ Creswell notes the wide and ‘baffling’ choice of methods available³⁷ before focussing on five different ‘pure’ approaches; narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic and case study, deliberately chosen for personal reasons as well as being representative of specific disciplines.³⁸ In *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* some twenty-two methods are addressed³⁹ while Waaijman notes four specific methods in relation to research in the area of spirituality; form-descriptive; hermeneutic; systematic and mystagogic.⁴⁰ The method or more usually blend of methods adopted for any particular research is largely dependent on

³⁴ Creswell. p. 36

³⁵ Denzin and Lincoln. pp 2-3

³⁶ Creswell.

³⁷ Ibid. pp 6-9

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* (Oxon, New York NY: Routledge, 2014).

⁴⁰ Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, trans. John Vriend, vol. 8, 9 vols., *Studies in Spirituality Supplements* (Leuven, Paris, Dudley MA: Peeters, 2002).

the what and the why of the research itself. With regard to spirituality one particularly relevant observation has been made in relation to ethnographic social research employing sociology and anthropology which is that it is ‘born out of concern to understand the “other”’.⁴¹

With a focus on pedagogy Max van Manen,⁴² offers many relevant observations regarding the research task which this researcher is undertaking. With reference to Wilhelm Dilthey, van Manen, contrasts the detached observation and experimentation employed in both the natural and behavioural sciences to *explain* with the approach taken in the human sciences to *understand*, where ‘human science’ is defined as the study of ‘“persons,” or beings that have ‘consciousness’ and that ‘act purposefully’ in and on the world.’⁴³ The human science approach he describes as ‘avowedly phenomenological, hermeneutic and semiotic’ specifically because of the requirement of ‘phenomenological sensitivity to lived experience’ and ‘a hermeneutic ability’⁴⁴ to interpret them.

METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The explorative nature of this research involves four steps:

1. Establishing a theoretical framework grounded on
 - the evolving history of spiritual direction with particular attention being given to its availability to and practice with people who were marginalised,

⁴¹ Arthur J Vidich and Stanford M Lyman, "Qualitative Methods: Their History in Sociology and Anthropology," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln (Thousand Oaks CA, London and New Delhi: Sage, 2000). p. 38

⁴² Max VanManen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, 2nd ed. (London, Ontario: Althouse Press, 1997).

⁴³ Ibid. p. 4

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 2

- the document analysis of a representative sample of the writings of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac and
 - the literature review of more contemporary studies in relation to spiritual care of people who are marginalised
2. Describing the practice of spiritual direction by a specific cohort of spiritual directors, ie those who belong to the Vincentian Family.
 3. Describing the experience of a specific cohort of people who have received spiritual direction, ie people who are marginalised and who have received spiritual direction from members of the Vincentian Family.
 4. Analysing the findings and drawing conclusions.

The focus of this research is on the experience of practicing spiritual directors, of the encounter between the human and the divine specifically as it applies to the spiritual direction relationship, within a Vincentian horizon. The spiritual direction relationship in and of itself is an encounter of both the director and directee with God as well as a place where the directee specifically explores his/her own encounters with God in prayer and in the circumstances of life. The framework on which it is supported is built so as to take account of the multi-faceted dimension of this specific lived experience.

This four-step study invites the spiritual directors interviewed in Phase I to engage in critical reflection on their own practice as spiritual directors, and the directees interviewed in Phase II to a deeper reflection of their experience of receiving spiritual direction, the paradigm of which in the Christian tradition, as Kees Waaijman reminds us, is *diakrisis* or discernment, where discernment is understood in terms of

‘critical reflection on lived spirituality’⁴⁵ The dynamic which informs the framework of the research methodology for this are the twin practices of *narrative*⁴⁶ and *listening*⁴⁷ which themselves are the essence of the spiritual direction relationship. These twin practices were also essentially the method used by Vincent de Paul himself when giving Conferences to the early Daughters of Charity, the topic of which had been circulated in advance, as he began by finding out what individual sisters had to offer. Then building on what had been said he offered his own instruction on the topic.⁴⁸

These twin practices, as the figure below indicates, will be informed by

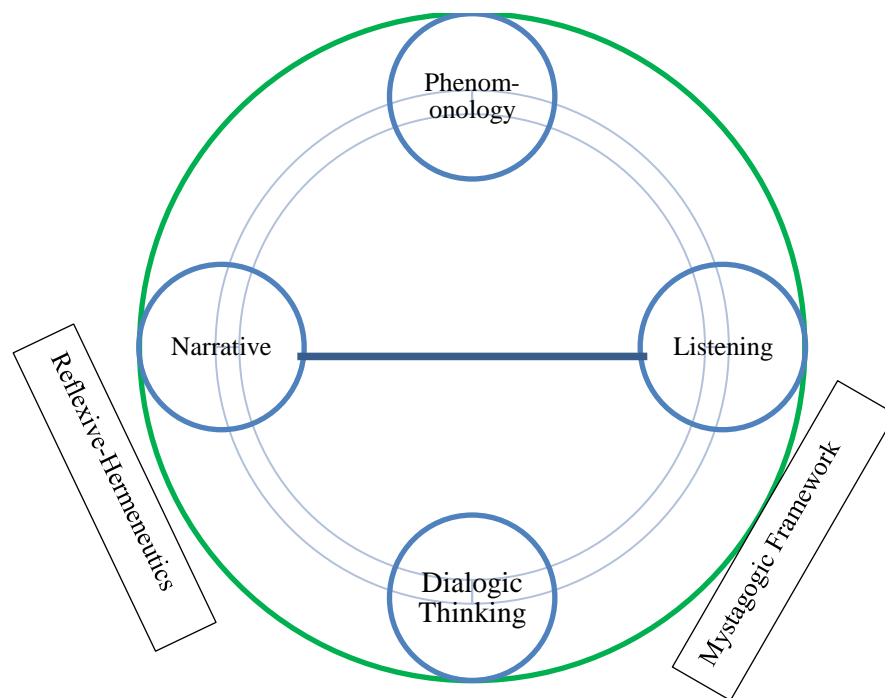


Figure 1: Research Method for Interviews

⁴⁵ Waaijman. p. 484

⁴⁶ Ruffing.

⁴⁷ Guenther.

⁴⁸ cf Coste CM. Vols 9 & 10

phenomenology, and dialogic thinking. I base this approach on Waaijman's insight.

Waaijman notes that this,

'phenomenological-dialogical approach does most justice to the basic structure of *phronèsis*, inasmuch as it develops a trained eye for the world of experience and at the same time allows itself to be guided by the I-you principle'⁴⁹

The analysis of the texts of the documents of Vincent and Louise will also involve interwoven *systematic* and *reflexive-hermeneutic* methods within a *mystagogic* framework as it seeks to identify how the content, delivered and written almost four hundred years ago, has been appropriated by contemporary members of the Vincentian Family.

Waaijman reminds us that experience 'does not readily yield its truth' and can also often be subject to prejudices and the opinions of others.⁵⁰ The experience itself is but one pole of the practical wisdom that is inherent in the human-divine encounter and transformation; the other addresses the '*I-Thou*' relationship which Waaijman identifies as 'dialogic thinking'.⁵¹ This '*I-Thou*' relationship within the spiritual direction relationship has additional significance as it exists in a number of overlapping ways. There are the individual '*I-Thou*' relationships that both the director and directee have with the Divine both outside and within the spiritual direction relationship; the director-directee relationship with the Divine in the context of the spiritual direction relationship itself and the relationship between director and directee that is alert for and communicates the relationship with the Divine in the context of the spiritual direction relationship.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 563

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 539

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 548

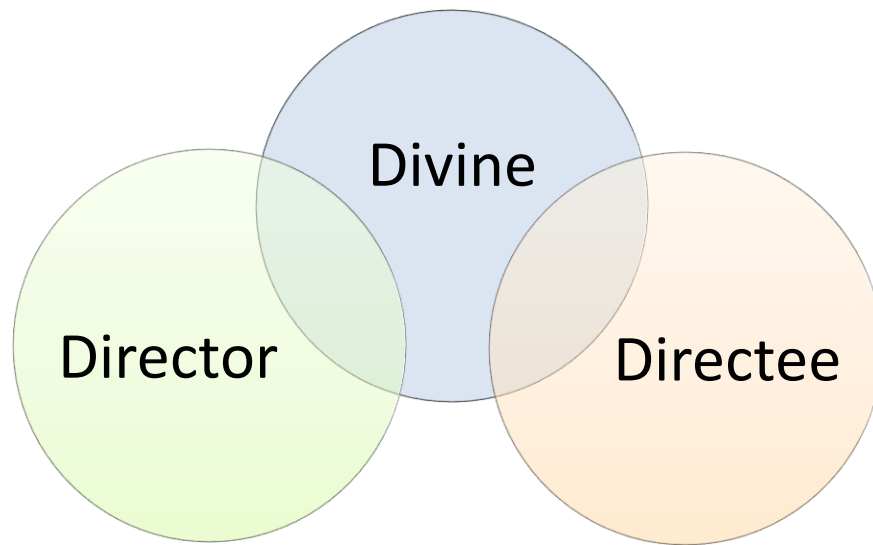


Figure 2 Individual Director and Directee I-Thou Relationships with the Divine outside Spiritual Direction Relationship

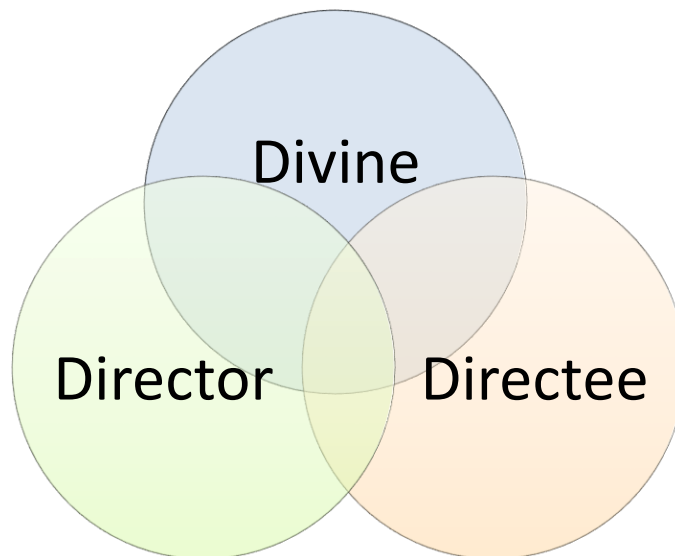


Figure 3 Inter-related I-Thou Relationships within Spiritual Direction

Waaïjman recognises four lines of investigation ‘which in their mutual connectedness together constitute the methodology of the study of spirituality.’⁵² They are descriptive, hermeneutic, systematic and mystagogic. These come from his framework of phenomenology and dialogic thinking, in the light of four identified aspects of discernment. The four aspects of discernment he notes are, recognising the different ways; interpreting the meaning of each; discriminating between the different positions; and testing each position in relation to growth.⁵³

Methodology for Study of Spirituality	Aspects of Discernment
Descriptive	Recognising different ways
Hermeneutic	Interpreting the meaning of each
Systematic	Discriminating between positions
Mystagogic	Testing in relation to growth

Table 1: Mapping Waaïjman’s Methodology for Study of Spirituality with aspects of discernment

As a study of the experience of active spiritual directors the current research utilises the steps of mystagogic research method. Waaïjman identifies the mystagogic dimension,⁵⁴ with that aspect of discernment connected to the state of and growth in relationship with God, where, drawing on Karl Rahner, mystagogy is understood as the reflection on a spiritual experience which leads to a growing consciousness of existence. Mystagogical research begins from the premise of the mystery of human

⁵² Ibid. p. 566

⁵³ Ibid. pp 486-514

⁵⁴ Ibid. pp 584-589

existence where it is ‘a cognitive-reflective appropriation of already effected experience’,⁵⁵ within a biographical mediation grounded in reality giving ‘mystagogical research a special accent of its own’,⁵⁶ God’s self-communication, ‘a mystical-dialogical analysis of the Mystery of the divine encounter’⁵⁷ and personal calling within the community where ‘Mystagogy is the church’s fundamental mission in the world’.⁵⁸ These four steps of the mystagogical research method form a parallel with the four steps of reading, reflecting, responding and resting in God of the classic monastic practice of *Lectio Divina*.

Mystagogical Research⁵⁹	Lectio Divina
Mystery of human existence	Reading
Biographical Mediation	Reflecting
God’s Self-communication	Responding
Personal calling within the community	Resting in God

Table 2 Mapping Steps of Mystagogical Research to Lectio Divina

In relation to the current research these four steps were followed as the interviews were conducted and transcribed; reflected on to allow their ‘inner message’⁶⁰ in terms of themes to emerge; the emergent themes were then further

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 585

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 586

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 587

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 588

⁵⁹ Ibid. pp 584-589

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 586

reflected on in the light of the Vincentian charism specifically in relation to spiritual direction as a service to people who are marginalised.

Although not developing the other research methods explicitly, facets of each are implicit and interwoven within the mystagogical research method.⁶¹ From the descriptive perspective the interviews and their transcripts are the spiritual biographies of the participants specifically as they relate to their practice and experience of spiritual direction. Dealing, as this research does, with narrative both in terms of the transcripts of the participants' interviews and the Conferences and Correspondence of Vincent and Louise the work of Paul Ricoeur is particularly relevant. Maria Duffy notes the 'For Ricoeur, narrative is 'the privileged means by which we reconfigure our confused, unformed and mute temporal existence'.'⁶² He highlights the fact that 'sensitivity to context is a necessary complement and ineluctable counterpart of polysemy'⁶³ which is one of the characteristics of language; words can and often do have more than one meaning. As a result, his focus is on understanding rather than explaining. Ricoeur emphasises the importance of story and storytelling, where story incorporates present, past and future.⁶⁴ Storytelling has already been proposed as the paradigm for spiritual direction. (p. 111). For Ricoeur storytelling presupposes one telling the story and one receiving it. In relation to this research, those telling their individual stories are the spiritual directors and those who have received spiritual direction while the one receiving these stories is the researcher. In the transcription of

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 596

⁶² Maria Duffy, *Paul Ricoeur's Pedagogy of Pardon: A Narrative Theory of Memory and Forgetting*, Kindle ed. (London: Continuum Publishing, 2009). Location 387 of 4335

⁶³ Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B Thompson, English ed. (London: Athlone Press, 1991). pp 54-55

⁶⁴ Duffy. Location 585 of 4335

the interviews the stories told by way of discourse becomes text. Ricoeur's key hermeneutical concepts⁶⁵ as they relate to this research are:

- distanciation, which occurs at two levels – the change which takes from spoken to written word and in standing back from the text which for this researcher is the holding of the transcripts in contemplative space;
- appropriation, which Ricoeur understands as the interpreter being led to an increased understanding of self which for this researcher is in the reflexive nature of the research; and
- explanation, interpretation and understanding, which for Ricoeur is a dynamic movement from naïve explanation to in-depth understanding, which took place in the coding of the transcripts of the interviews and the texts of the Conferences and Correspondence of Vincent and Louise.⁶⁶

In this research the hermeneutical task takes place at two levels. In the first instance the individual spiritual directors who have participated were invited to interpret their own experience both as spiritual directors, and as carriers of the Vincentian Charism and tradition while directees were encouraged to interpret their experience of receiving spiritual direction. Secondly the research itself interpreted the interviews of both the spiritual directors (Phase I) and the directees (Phase II), also in the light of the current practice of spiritual direction and the Vincentian Charism and tradition. Systematics helped to identify themes providing the frame of reference for the mystagogical research.

⁶⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B Thompson, English ed. (London: Athlone Press, 1991).

⁶⁶Heather Tan, Ann Wilson, and Ian Olver, "Ricoeur's Theory of Interpretation: An Instrument for Data Interpretation in Hermeneutic Phenomenology," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* (December 2009).

In *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, Downey, drawing on Sandra Schneiders, identifies and elaborates on the approaches to the study of spirituality: theological, anthropological, historical and appropriative, or what Schneiders calls hermeneutical. Each of these approaches has a specific series of steps to be followed in a clear method, though he does caution that there is a need to pay attention to their interrelatedness and the mutual complementarity between them.⁶⁷

‘All spirituality is particular. It takes place in a particular context: in a particular location...a particular historical setting... and a particular culture.’⁶⁸ The second chapter of *Studying Christian Spirituality* by David Perrin is devoted to the ‘Question of Context’ where the emphasis in ‘context’ is ‘place’ though not as confined to geography. The contexts within which spirituality is lived and studied are more than geography.

Context, or place, shapes personal identity. Environment influences who people are and how they are in relationship to god, others, self, and the world. Place influences the things needed to be attended to in life for survival, work, or recreation (how food is found, how homes are heated or cooled, or how distances are negotiated to travel for work or play). But beyond these pragmatic circumstances of life that are dictated by place the imaginative dimension of human living and the construction of personal identity are also engaged.⁶⁹

Many of today’s contexts are what Downey at the time described as ‘emerging’ approaches, when they were in the early stages of development.⁷⁰ These relate in part to the awakened consciousness within spirituality itself of feminism, gender, liberation, music, art, ecology, cultural pluralism, and marginality. Given the specific focus of this research of particular interest among these identified approaches is that of marginality. In focussing on marginality, according to Downey, ‘the

⁶⁷ Michael Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997). p. 123

⁶⁸ David B Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality* (New York: Routledge, 2007). p. 58

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 59

⁷⁰ Downey. p. 123

governing concern is to attend to the alternative experience of those who are at the margins, the periphery, of religious institutions and societies.’⁷¹ Much work has been done in the intervening years to give some of these contexts a greater voice for example, in relation to how scripture is interpreted apart from male, white, middle-class, Euro-American axis.⁷²

People who are marginalised are those who disenfranchised for a variety of reasons and who are often also economically poor, the very people written about and who recognise themselves in Robert Orsi’s *Between Heaven and Earth*⁷³ and in *The Madonna of 115th Street*, ‘the study of religion in the streets.’⁷⁴ The margins themselves are in fact defined by and from the perspective of those who are in a place of historic and economic privilege, power, importance and significance – from the centre. The focus of this research is on if and how spiritual direction is available to people who are marginalised. It includes both how a specific cohort of spiritual directors within the Vincentian Family themselves understand their experience of the practice of spiritual direction and how a specific cohort of directees, those who are marginalised, experience receiving spiritual direction which will yield a fuller picture than either group on their own would. Echoing the views of Vincent de Paul, Downey concludes his elaboration of marginality by saying, ‘the central conviction is that it is even and especially in the lives of those at the margins..... that something crucial is known about God which cannot be known in any other way.’⁷⁵

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 137

⁷² Fernando F Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, eds., *Reading from This Place*, vol. 1: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 1995).

⁷³ Robert A Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth* (Princeton, NJ & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁷⁴ Robert A Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street 3rd Edition* (New Haven, CT & London: Yale University Press, 2010). p. lvii

⁷⁵ Downey. p. 138

Coming from a qualitative research perspective within an educational setting McBride and Schostak understand qualitative research as requiring the researcher to take an ‘insider’ view, engaging the subjects in such a way that they have a ‘stake in, and an understanding of, the research.’⁷⁶ The same can be said of research in spirituality, and specifically research in the area of spiritual direction. Participants in this Research Study will benefit by having the opportunity to reflect with a new lens on their own ministry of Spiritual Direction and how it is formed and informed by their Vincentian tradition.

PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The ontology will be that of Buber’s ‘*I-Thou*’ already noted above,⁷⁷ which exists in a number of overlapping ways within the spiritual direction relationship. Outside the spiritual direction relationship both the directors and directees have their own individual *I-Thou* relationships with the Divine. The spiritual direction relationship itself has overlapping *I-Thou* relationships. As well as the individual *I-Thou* relationships of director and directee with the Divine there is the additional *I-Thou* relationship between the director and directee, as together they listen for the Divine in the story of the directee.

For Buber the ‘*I-Other*’ relationship occurred at two levels, ‘*I-It*’ and ‘*I-Thou*’ where ‘*I*’ is man’s self-expression, ‘the basic activity of man,’⁷⁸ of which there are different modes. ‘*I-It*’ does not involve the self-expression of the whole of one’s being but ‘*I-Thou*’ does. Indeed for Buber there can be no ‘*I*’ without an ‘*Other*’ since the

⁷⁶ Rob McBride and John Schostak, "Qualitative Versus Quantitative Research," Enquiry Learning Unit, accessed 20 November, 2013.

<http://www.enquirylearning.net/ELU/Issues/Research/Res1Ch2.html>

⁷⁷ See pp 169-171 above

⁷⁸ Robert E Wood, *Martin Buber's Ontology: An Analysis of I and Thou* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969). p. 40

self 'is not substance but a relation,'⁷⁹ but in the '*I-It*' relationship with the limited self-expression of the '*I*' the '*Other*' is an object viewed as '*Other-for-me*'. On the other hand in the total self-expression in the '*I-Thou*' relationship, the '*Other*' is the '*Other-in-totality*'.⁸⁰ From this Buber, from an ontological perspective, emphasised the meeting place of the '*I*' and the '*Thou*', the 'Interval' or the 'Between' which is not simply space, but rather 'is inseparable from the adventure in which the individual himself participates, yet is more objective than any other type of objectivity, precisely because of that personal adventure.'⁸¹ Shifting from the purely human sphere of relationships Buber sees this 'Between' as 'the region of spirit which is a reference to the Transcendent,'⁸² or the '*Eternal Thou*'.

ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

'Traditionally research has been conceived as the creation of true, objective knowledge, following a scientific method.'⁸³ 'Scientific practitioners have traditionally ignored the role they play in shaping the outcomes of their research. So long as their personal passions can be suspended, they presume that the rigors of scientific method will more or less guarantee an objective account of the world independent of themselves as observers.'⁸⁴ Riis suggests that what he calls the 'dilemma of subjectivism' in qualitative studies 'can be reduced by involving several fieldworkers' in order to control for the 'subjective bias'.⁸⁵ Kim Etherington makes a

⁷⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *The Levinas Reader* ed. Seán Hand (Malden MA, Oxford, Melbourne, Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 1989). p. 63

⁸⁰ Wood. pp 38-40

⁸¹ Levinas. p. 65

⁸² Wood. p. 87

⁸³ Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldberg, *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research* 2nd ed. (Los Angeles, CA; London, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington, DC: Sage, 2009). p. 1

⁸⁴ Kenneth J Gergen and Mary M Gergen, "Towards Reflexive Methodologies," in *Research and Reflexivity*, ed. Frederick Steier (London; Newbury Park, CA and New Delhi: Sage, 1991). p. 76 of 76-95

⁸⁵ Riis, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. p. 235

similar point in *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher* when she says, ‘Academic research has traditionally been seen as an impersonal activity: researchers have been expected to approach their studies objectively, and were taught that rigour demanded they adopt a stance of distance and non-involvement and that subjectivity was a contaminant.’⁸⁶ While she goes on to note that this view can seem ‘unchallengeable’ a growing number of voices across diverse disciplines observe that it has been criticised and challenged because otherwise research within academia can become ‘disconnected from the body and soul of the researcher.’⁸⁷

While Alversson and Sköldberg highlight this shift with particular reference to qualitative methods⁸⁸ others also show this criticism becoming more prevalent in the sciences and social sciences in general.⁸⁹ Alversson and Sköldberg further reference Steedman and echo Gergen and Gergen suggesting ‘that knowledge cannot be separated from the knower’,⁹⁰ while later they say that ‘there is no one-way street between the researcher and the object of study; rather the two affect each other mutually and continually in the course of the research process.’⁹¹ Making a similar point David Hufford states, ‘All knowing is subjective, and the ‘objective world’ is what knowers claim to know about.’⁹² He further quotes from the Introduction to Edward M Bruner’s 1986 *The Anthropology of Experience*, ‘we take expressions as objects of study and become ‘conscious of our self-consciousness of these objects.

⁸⁶ Kim Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher: Using Our Selves in Research* (London and Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2004). p. 25

⁸⁷ John (Jack) P Miller, "The Embodied Researcher: Meditation's Role in Spirituality Research," in *Towards a Spiritual Research Paradigm: Exploring New Ways of Knowing, Researching and Being*, ed. Jing Lin, Rebecca L Oxford, and Tom Culham, Transforming Education for the Future (Charlotte NC: Information Age Publishing Inc, 2016). p 127 of 127-39

⁸⁸ Alvesson and Sköldberg. p. 1

⁸⁹ Gergen and Gergen, in *Research and Reflexivity*. p. 76

⁹⁰ Alvesson and Sköldberg. p. 1

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 79

⁹² David J Hufford, "The Scholarly Voice and the Personal Voice: Reflexivity in Belief Studies," in *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*, ed. Russell T McCutcheon (London and New York: Cassell, 1999). p. 295 of 294-310

We become aware of our awareness; we reflect on our reflections. Anthropologists of experience take others' experiences, as well as their own, as an object. Our activity is inherently reflexive.....'⁹³ ⁹⁴

Also writing from the perspective of anthropology in *The Vulnerable Observer* Ruth Behar quotes from the ethno-psychiatrist George Devereux who maintained that if we are to understand that which is observed then 'what happens within the observer must be made known.'⁹⁵ She goes on to highlight the fact that for Devereux 'self-reflexivity was not an end in itself', rather 'a means to a more important end.'⁹⁶ In this she is, rightly in my view, critical of Devereux's half-hearted embracing of reflexivity for the sake of science rather than for itself.⁹⁷ She also quotes from professor of psychiatry, Kay Redfield Jamison's memoir, *An Unquiet Mind*,⁹⁸ 'of course, my work *has* been tremendously colored by my emotions and experiences. They have deeply affected my teaching, my advocacy work, my clinical practice and what I have chosen to study: manic-depressive illness.'⁹⁹ In this regard I am conscious of my own work being coloured by my being a Daughter of Charity, by my own experience of marginalisation as a Catholic growing up in Belfast during the 1960's and 1970's and personal experience of spiritual direction, both as a directee and as a director. Like Kay Redfield Jamison these have all contributed to this very research.

Miller suggests contemplative practice and specifically meditation, 'one of the oldest forms of research'¹⁰⁰ as one means of embodying the research. With meditative

⁹³ Ibid. p. 295

⁹⁴ Edward M Bruner, "Introduction: Experience and Its Expressions," in *The Anthropology of Experience*, ed. Victor W Turner and Edward M Bruner (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986). pp 22-23 of 3-30

⁹⁵ Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer* (Boston MA: Beacon Press, 1996). p. 6

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 8

⁹⁸ Kay Redfield Jamison, *An Unquiet Mind* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1995). pp 188-189, 203

⁹⁹ Behar. p. 11

¹⁰⁰ Miller, in *Towards a Spiritual Research Paradigm: Exploring New Ways of Knowing, Researching and Being*. p. 128

practice he maintains ‘there is a greater possibility that the researcher will embody wisdom, compassion and insight in conducting the research, drawing conclusions, and applying findings.’¹⁰¹

In the Introduction to *Research and Reflexivity*, which he edited, Frederick Steier, taking a hermeneutical stance, states, ‘as enquirers and researchers, we create worlds through the questions that we ask coupled with what we and others regard as reasonable responses to our questions.’¹⁰² Swinton and Mowat also examine the role of the researcher within qualitative research and with reference to Lincoln and Guba conclude that the researcher is in fact the primary tool of the research.¹⁰³ As a result they further identify the key to good qualitative research as related to the researcher’s self-awareness. This self-awareness implies reflexivity on the part of the researcher which is integral to the research itself and where this reflexivity is defined as:

the process of critical self-reflection carried out by the researcher throughout the research process that enables her to monitor and respond to her contribution to the proceedings.¹⁰⁴

Alvesson and Sköldberg go further than ‘defining’ reflexivity as ‘self-awareness’. Drawing on the work of Steier they suggest that in the research context within the social sciences reflexivity means paying attention to: the object of the research, the researcher as subject and the context within which the research is being conducted, without one of them dominating.¹⁰⁵ Steier himself in a contribution to *Research and Reflexivity* draws attention to two different meanings associated with the word ‘reflexivity’. On the one hand the word can mean that one acts instinctively

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 133

¹⁰² Frederick Steier, ed. *Research and Reflexivity* (London; Newbury Park, CA; New Delhi: Sage, 1991). p. 1

¹⁰³ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006). p. 58

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 59

¹⁰⁵ Alvesson and Sköldberg. p. 269

in a knee-jerk way without thinking, what he calls 'small circuit' reflexivity. Alternatively 'reflexivity' involves a contemplative thinking process which he calls 'long circuit' reflexivity. He shows how both are necessary for research as it can be the 'small circuit' reflexivity that enables us begin asking the questions while the contemplative 'long circuit' reflexivity allows those questions to be developed, expanded, clarified and responded to.¹⁰⁶ He further goes on to say that it is indeed by researchers recognising their own role in their research that greater voice is in fact given to the study's participants.¹⁰⁷ Long circuit reflexivity, or contemplative thinking has been an intrinsic part of the current research at all its stages. In many respects the long circuit reflexivity began long before the research itself when after reading *Tending the Holy: Spiritual Direction across the Traditions*¹⁰⁸ I was left with the question 'where is the Vincentian Tradition?' The contemplative stance that this evoked was carried into the design of the research in particular, but not exclusively, to the planning of the applied aspect, and indeed has been heightened by the research itself. This involved me sitting contemplatively with my own reality both as a spiritual director and directee and my experience of marginalisation as I sought to allow the questions that would become the Research Instruments surface. What was it like for me to be a Vincentian spiritual director? How was that expressed? It was at that time too I remember a spiritual director from another tradition complaining that people do not know about spiritual direction. She said, 'I'm here for so many years and nobody has come looking for spiritual direction, and someone else is here for so many more years and nobody has come looking for spiritual direction.' Reflection on her

¹⁰⁶ Frederick Steier, "Reflexivity and Methodology: An Ecological Constructionism," in *Research and Reflexivity*, ed. Frederick Steier (London; Newbury Park, CA and New Delhi: Sage, 1991). pp 163-164 of 163-85

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 180

¹⁰⁸ Vest, *Tending the Holy: Spiritual Direction across the Traditions*. 'A Spiritual Directors International Book'.

statement also fed into the research as I noted the difference in our approaches, waiting for people to come for spiritual direction versus bringing spiritual direction to people. This was something that was highlighted by the spiritual directors interviewed and the experience of the directees. The long circuit reflexivity continued as I conducted the interviews; contemplatively reflecting on each interview and its content with the questions, what inspired me? what surprised me? what challenged me? and what touched me deeply? prior to transcribing and coding them.

Tullio Maranhão further stresses the importance of reflexivity in his contribution to *Research and Reflexivity* when he contends:

Reflection is not an idle function of thought, but it is indispensable for the subject as self to participate in dialogue with another subject as other. If it were not for this capacity to reflect, the speaker would be unable to evaluate what he thought/said in the presence of his interlocutor's response. Dialogue would be a random process in which the return to utterances already made and topics already mentioned would be accidental.¹⁰⁹

Jane Jorgenson observes that 'for those of us who rely on face-to-face interviews in conducting our research, it is becoming increasingly difficult to avoid reflecting on our personal relationship to the research process.'¹¹⁰ Reflection on the different stages of this research, particularly in relation to the interviews, was rich and informative. In the Phase I interviews I was conscious that the members of the Vincentian Family I was interviewing had much more experience both in terms of their time in their respective communities and as spiritual directors. Despite the imbalance I felt in relation to them I was conscious I was accepted as an equal and welcomed as a guest in their spaces. This enabled me to hear the richness of their

¹⁰⁹ Tullio Maranhão, "Reflection, Dialogue and the Subject," in *Research and Reflexivity*, ed. Frederick Steier (London; Newbury Park, CA and New Delhi: Sage, 1991). p. 236 of 235-49

¹¹⁰ Jane Jorgenson, "Co-Constructing the Interviewer/Co-Constructing 'Family'," in *Research and Reflexivity*, ed. Frederick Steier (London; Newbury Park, CA and New Delhi: Sage, 1991). p. 210 of 210-25

contribution to the research and in so doing discard some of the preconceived views I had of what they may have thought. It also helped me as I prepared for the Phase II interviews, where I was conscious of the imbalance being the other direction. As a result prior to the Phase II interviews I was encouraged to reflect both on this experience as well as my own personal experience of marginalisation. While my personal experience of marginalisation is not something I reflect on normally and is significantly different from the marginalisation experienced by those I would interview I could use it to inform the process. I was also surprised by the overall delight expressed by the directors that I was undertaking this research, which of itself was invaluable when the transfer process and the recruitment of participants for Phase II did not run as smoothly as I would have liked or hoped and I was feeling the whole research process was at stalemate. The discarding of expectations began early on as I had initially thought I would transcribe each interview before conducting the next one. Circumstances changed that plan, and just as well as I had not considered how long it was going to take to transcribe each interview in the first place. In the end I chose to conduct all the interviews for Phase I before transcribing any of them. In Phase II the expectation that participants would be recruited as easily as the Phase I participants had to be let go off as the waiting to hear from prospective participants stretched seemingly endlessly.

Kvale focuses on the interviewer as the research instrument and the qualities he outlines as criteria for the interviewer are remarkably like the criteria for a spiritual director.¹¹¹ For another researcher, with whom Kim Etherington had a lengthy conversation about being a reflexive researcher, reflexivity in research was seen as

¹¹¹ Steinar Kvale, *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks CA, London and New Delhi: Sage, 1996). pp 148-149

flowing naturally when ‘contemplation, reflection on personal values, finding God in everyday life and discernment’ have significant value.¹¹² Reflexivity understood in this way echoes Frohlich’s emphasis on the ‘self-implicating’ nature of lived experience on the part of the researcher that demands the light of authenticity.¹¹³ Belden Lane focusses on Schneiders insights in this regard as he explores ‘Writing in Spirituality as a Self-Implicating Act’. He concludes by saying that a writer ‘must dance as lightly as possible, pointing their readers beyond themselves to a truth finally comprehended in their own disappearance.’¹¹⁴ Dancing as lightly as possible has been important for this research in order for the voices of those interviewed and indeed the voices of Vincent and Louise to be heard rather than mine. In this regard having used my own experiences to design the research instruments I had to suspend my own understanding in order to authentically hear and interpret what each individual interviewee was saying. The reflections on each interview and holding the transcripts in contemplative space prior to coding were invaluable in this regard.

CONCLUSION

Having set out the choice of exploratory research design, the qualitative methods to be used with their philosophical underpinnings and the reflexive role of the researcher in the next chapter I will turn to address the sampling required.

¹¹² Etherington. p. 203

¹¹³ Frohlich, in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*. p. 68

¹¹⁴ Belden C Lane, "Writing in Spirituality as a Self-Implicating Act," in *Exploring Christian Spirituality*, ed. Bruce H Lescher and Elizabeth Liebert (New York/Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2006). p. 67 of 53-69

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Chapter 6

SAMPLING

INTRODUCTION

Three separate samples were required to collect the data for this research. They include two phases of semi-structured in-depth interviews and the document analysis of a random representative sample of the Correspondence and Conferences of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. The interviewees in Phase I were members of the Vincentian Family¹ who are spiritual directors and in Phase II those who have received spiritual direction from members of the Vincentian Family. These interviews were recorded, with permission, transcribed verbatim and coded for analysis.

Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used by the researcher to identify representative subsets for each of the ‘populations’ of interest.

Probability sampling in the form of a stratified random sampling was used to identify the Conferences and Correspondence of Vincent and Louise.

Non-probability, convenience sampling together with probability, simple random sampling, was used to identify the spiritual directors to be interviewed in Phase I.

¹ Although strictly speaking ‘members of the Vincentian Family’ includes more than the members of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation from this point on I will use it as a shorter and less complicated terminology when speaking about the members of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation together.

Non-probability, convenience sampling together with some snowballing was used to identify the spiritual directors to be invited to be gatekeepers in Phase II. While it was initially planned to use probability, simple random sampling to identify who to interview from those willing to participate in Phase II this proved to be unnecessary.

As a member of the Vincentian Family in Ireland who is also a practicing spiritual director the researcher knows all of the Daughters of Charity in Ireland who have completed a spiritual direction training programme (n=12), are members of the All Ireland Spiritual Guidance Association (n=12) and are active spiritual directors (n=12). She also knows the members of the Congregation of the Mission in Ireland who regularly facilitate eight-day retreats for the Daughters of Charity and are available as spiritual directors (n=14). A number of Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation (n=11) and members of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States and Australia (n=15) who are spiritual directors are also known to her, while others were identified from the Seek and Find Guide of Spiritual Directors International (n= 3 Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation and n= 1 Congregation of the Mission).

PHASE I

A random selection was made of twelve members of the Vincentian Family composed of six members of the Congregation of the Mission, all of whom are ordained priests and six members of the Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation. In addition to the Daughters of Charity the Sisters of Charity Federation includes other female Congregations in the Vincentian Tradition in the United States. Six of the participants were randomly selected from a list of members of the

Vincentian Family in Ireland known to be currently offering spiritual direction and the other six from members of the Vincentian Family in the United States and Australia either known to the researcher as spiritual directors or identified as such through the ‘Seek and Find Guide’ of Spiritual Directors International. The researcher had intended to include some lay members of the Vincentian Family who are trained as spiritual directors but identifying a sufficient number both in Ireland and in the United States and Australia from which to make a random selection and to guarantee anonymity, proved to be too difficult. It would be hoped that any further studies on this topic would include them.

The twelve Daughters of Charity in Ireland included in the selection process were all known:

1. to have completed a recognised training programme in Spiritual Direction, either in Ireland or elsewhere, at least five years prior to inclusion,
2. to be either Associate or Fully Accredited Members of the All Ireland Spiritual Guidance Association (AISGA) and
3. to be currently offering spiritual direction in a variety of settings.

The fourteen Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation members in the United States and Australia included in the selection process were all also known:

1. to have completed a recognised training programme for Spiritual Directors at least five years prior to inclusion,
2. to be currently offering spiritual direction and
3. although it is not an accrediting body, some are members of Spiritual Directors International (SDI).

Whether the members of the Congregation of the Mission included, both in Ireland or in the United States and Australia, had completed a recognised training

programme was unknown at the point of their inclusion and none of the fourteen in Ireland were members of AISGA and only two of the sixteen internationally were on the Seek and Find Guide of SDI. All however were known to the researcher to be currently offering spiritual direction and to have directed eight-day retreats for the Daughters of Charity and were included on that basis.

The random selection of the Daughters of Charity in Ireland was done by placing the names of twelve Daughters of Charity in Ireland, identified according to the criteria above, in a box and having a colleague draw three names randomly from it. In a similar manner, the names of fourteen members of the Congregation of the Mission in Ireland, known to be offering spiritual direction, were placed in a box and three names drawn from it by the same colleague. The same procedure was then used to select the members of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation in the United States and Australia offering spiritual direction, selecting three from sixteen members of the Congregation of the Mission and three from fourteen members of the Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation. Six of the participants are female, three from Ireland and three from either the United States or Australia and six male, three from Ireland and three from either the United States or Australia. Including international members increased the pool of possible participants significantly as in the United States the Sisters of Charity Federation includes, in addition to the Daughters of Charity, the other female congregations in the Vincentian Tradition. This also increased the level of anonymity, for all who participated.

The six people randomly selected in Ireland were sent a letter inviting them to participate in the study (Appendix B) together with a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C) while the six people randomly selected internationally were contacted

by email with the Letter of Invitation and the Participant Information Sheet as attachments. As each of those selected and contacted replied indicating their willingness to participate they were furnished with the Informed Consent Form (Appendix D) and the questions on which the interviews were to be based (Appendix E) and suitable times were established to conduct the interviews. The international participants were asked to complete and sign the Informed Consent Form and return to the researcher prior to the interview. The participants in Ireland were asked to do so at the beginning of the interview. One of the international members of the Congregation of the Mission originally selected did not reply to the emailed invitation within the two weeks requested so a further name was randomly selected from that group and an email with Letter of Invitation and Participant Information Sheet attached sent. This person responded affirmatively and so the sample of twelve was achieved.

The participants recruited in Ireland were interviewed by means of face to face meetings while those from outside of Ireland were interviewed by telephone or Skype² using the Research Instrument at Appendix E. The face to face meetings and telephone or Skype calls lasted between an hour and an hour and a half. With permission all the interviews were recorded, the face-to-face interviews using a regular digital recording device while the telephone and Skype interviews used 'Call Graph' software, which had been downloaded and tested. After all the interviews were conducted each interview was transcribed verbatim by the researcher and the transcript sent to the individual participant for their review.

² Online video call

TABLE OF INTERVIEWEE SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

Code	Gender	Age Range	Spiritual Direction Programme Completed	Years Practicing
Cait	F	70-79	An Croí	8
Cian	M	60-69	No Formal Training	20
Colm	M	80 +	Ignatian	39
Eiméar	F	70-79	Vincentian	10
Fergal	M	70-79	Ignatian	40
Fionn	M	50-59	Ignatian	20
Laoise	F	60-69	Ignatian	6
Louise	F	70-79	Ignatian	29
Nial	M	70-79	Ignatian	32 ³
Peig	F	60-69	Ignatian	35
Rita	F	50-59	Sacred Heart	5
Rory	M	80 +	No Formal Training	60

Table 3 Summary of Interviewee Spiritual Directors Profiles⁴

PHASE II

From the outset the researcher recognised that recruiting interviewees for the second phase would be more difficult than for the first phase. What was not envisaged was just how challenging this would prove to be.

Without a register of people receiving spiritual direction to consult, a number of spiritual directors who are members of the Vincentian Family were invited to participate as gatekeepers. This was made up of all the names initially placed in the boxes and from which the random selection of spiritual directors were made. In total there were twelve Daughters of Charity in Ireland; fourteen members of the Congregation of the Mission in Ireland; fourteen members of the Daughters of

³ This particular member of the Congregation of the Mission was already ordained and a spiritual director before joining the Congregation

⁴ Full details of the Profiles, Training and Ministries of the interviewees is given in Appendices F-H pp 414-416

Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation in the United States and Australia and sixteen members of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States and Australia. Each was sent a Letter of Invitation as a Gatekeeper (Appendix I), an Information Sheet for Gatekeepers (Appendix J) and an Initial Letter of Invitation for Participants (Appendix K). In proceeding this way the researcher was taking cognisance of the spiritual directors being ethically bound not to pass on the name or information about anyone to whom they offer or have offered spiritual direction. The Initial Letter of Invitation to the participants allowed the directees to contact the researcher directly.

The original plan was to randomly select four of those willing to participate from Ireland and four of those willing to participate from the United States and Australia. Unfortunately, it would not proceed in this way.

While the letter to the Spiritual Directors inviting them to be gatekeepers did not ask them to reply a number of them did. Of the twelve Daughters of Charity in Ireland four responded to the invitation to be gatekeepers. One to inform the researcher that due to age and ill-health she was not in a position to help, two others who on account of recent change of mission were not in a position to assist either and one who was now missioned to accompany women who had been trafficked to say that, despite her reassurances, they were too vulnerable and afraid to take part. Seven of the fourteen members of the Congregation of the Mission in Ireland responded. One seeking some clarification, four to say they had no formal training in spiritual direction and so were not in a position to assist and two acknowledging that while the ethics side was well addressed they would not be comfortable with the change in relationship with their directees that could arise. Of the fourteen members of the Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation in the United States and Australia five responded. Two had recently changed mission and were not in a position to assist,

one as a member of the Provincial Council was not in a position to suggest anyone, one had a mission teaching English as a second language and did not think those she was accompanying would have good enough English to enable them participate and one to say that she would invite a man and a woman she meets to participate. Five of the sixteen members of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States and Australia replied. One to say that due to age and ill health he was not in a position to assist; one cited change of mission; one acknowledging the value of the research and appreciating that the ethics side was being looked after still had concerns about the effect on the relationships between himself and those he might approach; one to say that the only people he was currently engaged with in spiritual direction were other Vincentian priests and one who said he would be happy to follow up on the request.

Despite this after two months only one person, from the United States or Australia had made contact indicating a willingness to participate, unfortunately three months later he pulled out citing the situation he found himself in due to the storms and flooding that had occurred. Three months after the original letter was sent to the Gatekeepers a further two people, one from Ireland and one from the United States or Australia, had indicated they were willing to participate. The one from the United States or Australia did not return the Informed Consent Form and so was ineligible. Given the slow pace of response the researcher went ahead and interviewed the person, from Ireland, who had not pulled out, using the Research Instrument at Appendix N.

Almost a year after the original letter was sent only one person had said they would take part in the study. Then during Lent 2018 the Congregation of the Mission in the United States posted several contributions to the 'Discover the Vincentian Virtues' series. One of the contributions the researcher read suggested that the contributor had received spiritual direction from a member of the Vincentian Family

and so the researcher made contact inviting her to participate in the research. For various personal reasons she declined.

At this stage the researcher decided to approach the spiritual directors who had not ruled themselves out again informing them that she was still looking for some more people to interview for the research again attaching a copy of the original Letter of Invitation to be a 'Gatekeeper' (Appendix I), an Information Sheet for Gatekeepers (Appendix J) and an Initial Letter of Invitation to Participants (Appendix K). One of the spiritual directors contacted at this stage who was unable for whatever reason to suggest the research to anyone replied with the names of some others who were spiritual directors. Most of these had already been included but a few had not (n=4). The researcher then made initial contact with these additional spiritual directors also attaching a Letter of Invitation to be a 'Gatekeeper' (Appendix I), and Information Sheet for Gatekeepers (Appendix J) and an Initial Letter of Invitation to Participants (Appendix K). Over the following number of months five people in Ireland, communicated with the researcher directly or sent a message to say they were willing to participate in the study. No one from the United States or Australia communicated with the researcher either directly or indirectly. The absence of willing participants from the United States or Australia was disappointing and not ideal. Nevertheless at this point the researcher made the decision to proceed with those from Ireland who were willing to participate. As noted earlier one interview had already taken place, so interviews were set up and Informed Consent Forms signed for the remaining five willing participants, using the Research Instrument at Appendix N. All five were males who were homeless and for whom homelessness was a symptom of additional issues of marginalisation.

At the time of interview each one of the five homeless people was living in one of a number of different hostels catering for people who are homeless. In some instances the hostels cater for people who have entrenched addiction issues with extended periods of street homelessness, while others are for those who have completed a residential drug or alcohol treatment programme and are drug and alcohol free. Most of the hostels concerned were being run by another body within the Vincentian Family.⁵

TABLE OF INTERVIEWEE DIRECTEES

Code	Gender	Age Range	Marginalisation Issues
Cathal	M	40-49	Alcohol addiction, unemployed, homelessness
Donal	M	60-69	Drugs and alcohol addiction, ex-prisoner, homelessness, terminal illness
Hugh	M	40-49	Mental health issues, sexual orientation, unemployed
Liam	M	50-59	Juvenile detention, mental health issues, homelessness
Malachy	M	60-69	Alcohol addiction, mental health issues, ex-prisoner, homelessness
Óisín	M	60-69	Alcohol addiction, homelessness

Table 4 Summary of Interviewee Directees Profiles⁶

Some of the interviews had to be re-scheduled a number of times due to the hospitalisation of an interviewee or on account of an interviewee relapsing into addiction and street homelessness for a time. Of the five men who were homeless,

⁵ De Paul Ireland manage over 25 specialised accommodation and outreach services for people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness in Dublin, Belfast, Dungannon and Derry see Appendix ‘P’ p. 433 and <https://ie.depaulcharity.org/>

⁶ For full details of Phase II participant profiles see Appendix ‘O’ p. 431

and willing to participate four had come to their respective hostel via street homelessness as a result of their addictions while one man was homeless as the result of a relationship breakdown.

The six participant directees, all recruited in Ireland, were interviewed by means of face to face meetings. The face to face meetings lasted between three quarters of an hour and two hours. With permission all the interviews were recorded using a regular digital recording device. Immediately afterwards each interview was transcribed verbatim by the researcher and the transcript sent to the individual participant, in the hostel in which they were staying, for their review.

CONFERENCES AND CORRESPONDENCE OF VINCENT AND LOUISE

The sampling of the Conferences and Correspondence of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac will be considered in the next chapter which addresses The Vincentian Tradition.

DATA COLLECTION/INTERVIEWING

In order to collect the data for the research two questionnaires, the research instruments, one each for Phase I (Appendix E) and Phase II (Appendix N), were drawn up which would be administered by means of semi-structured in-depth one-to-one interviews. The questions for the spiritual directors were designed in such a way as to elicit the maximum information from the interviewees on their experience as spiritual directors within the Vincentian Family. To this end the questions were divided into three sections, the first dealing with spiritual direction generally, the second with the Vincentian Charism and tradition and the third with the interviewees

own experience as a spiritual director. The final two questions allowed the interviewees to make additional comments or reflections not covered by the questions.

The questions for the directees were designed in such a way as to elicit the maximum information from the interviewees of their experience of engaging in the spiritual direction. The initial question gave each of the interviewees an opportunity to give as much or as little information about themselves that they considered relevant while the final two questions allowed them to make additional comments or reflections not covered by the questions.

In drafting of the questions for the spiritual directors the researcher was aware of wanting to give each member of the Vincentian Family who had agreed to participate in the research a real opportunity to reflect on his/her own understanding and practice as a spiritual director. To that end I began by reflecting on my own experience as a spiritual director and a member of the Vincentian Family. What has my experience as a spiritual director been? What is the model of spiritual direction I work out of? How has being a member of the Vincentian Family shaped that experience? As I held these questions in my contemplative space I identified the type of question that would elicit the essence of that reflection. Using this approach the questions almost suggested themselves.

The researcher also wanted to give the directees who had agreed to participate the opportunity to reflect on how they experienced the spiritual direction. Once again reflecting on my own experience of receiving spiritual direction the questions suggested themselves. In keeping with the spiritual direction approach the researcher planned to employ all the questions were open-ended, non-leading and so could not be answered with a simple 'Yes' or 'No'. This would also give the researcher scope

to invite the interviewees to a deeper reflection on aspects of their responses during the interviews themselves.

The interviews with the Spiritual Directors based on the research instruments thus developed (Appendix E) were carried out either face-to-face or via Skype and recorded with permission. The interviews with the directees based on the research instrument developed (Appendix N) were carried out face-to-face and recorded with permission. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim and individual transcripts made available to the individual participants. Both the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C) and the Informed Consent Form (Appendix D) for the Spiritual Directors made it clear that participants were free to withdraw from the study up until April 2014 at which point any data collected from those who withdrew would be destroyed. In the case of the directees the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix L) and the Informed Consent Form (Appendix M) initially gave the participants to the end of September 2018, extended to the end of October 2018 to withdraw from the study at which point any data collected from those who withdrew would be destroyed.

In *InterViews* Steinar Kvale proposes what he describes as ‘two contrasting metaphors’ for the research interviewer; that of ‘the miner’ and that of ‘the traveller’.⁷ As the miner the interviewer is digging for nuggets of information – data and/or meaning – from ‘pure experiences, unpolluted by any leading questions.’⁸ These nuggets are ‘precious facts’ which ‘remain constant’ as they are transformed from the oral to written mode. As the traveller the interviewer is on a journey, wandering along with, exploring alongside and engaging with the people along the way encouraging them ‘to tell their own stories of their lived world’.⁹ When the traveller-interviewer

⁷ Kvale, pp 3-5

⁸ Ibid. p. 3

⁹ Ibid. p. 4

returns home s/he reconstructs all that has been experienced. Both the journey itself and the reconstruction may indeed lead, through a self-reflexive process, to new understanding on the part of the interviewer. In addition, ‘the traveler can also lead others to new understanding and insight as they, through their own story-telling, may come to reflect on previously natural-seeming matters of course in their own culture’.¹⁰

It seems to me that the traveller-interviewer metaphor proposed by Kvale is the most appropriate one for this research. The process of mining, precious nuggets notwithstanding just seems to be too invasive to speak to or of the spiritual direction relationship. The mystagogic research method used together with the explicit on-going self-reflexivity practiced in relation to it counters the need for the framework proposed by Alvesson. In many respects the traveller-interviewer metaphor parallels the journey/pilgrimage metaphor for spiritual direction already discussed in Chapter 2 and of the two metaphors proposed by Kvale and the framework of eight proposed by Alvesson is the one preferred in respect of this research.

Kvale goes on to note that ‘conversation is a basic mode of human interaction’ and the research interview is one form of conversation which he calls the ‘professional conversation’. He further defines it as ‘*an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect of interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena.*’¹¹ With respect to this research it was appropriate that a form of professional conversation was employed since this is the normal means by which spiritual direction itself is conducted. In this instance the ‘life world of the interviewees’ was their experience as spiritual directors and Vincentians or as directees. For their part Fontana and Frey note that as a society we have become

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 4

¹¹ Ibid. pp 5-6

more reliant on interviews.¹² This is true, not just in the field of academic research but in everyday life given, among other things, the number of television and radio shows based on people both in studio and confessional-style phone-ins. One of the reasons they suggest for the proliferation of interviews is the perceived inherent trustworthiness of the results that flow from them. From the perspective of this research in-depth interviews, or conversations with a purpose, are also at the core of the spiritual direction encounter. It is therefore appropriate that the semi-structured in-depth interview, which of itself mirrors the spiritual direction encounter, was used to collect data on that encounter.

DATA PROCESSING

Analysis of the data collected began during interviews themselves both in Phase I and Phase II as the interviewer clarified meanings and interpretations and the participants own reflections led them to new insights. So that the information gathered in the interviews is available to further the research itself the interview conversations were transcribed. In relation to the transcribing of the interviews Kvale draws our attention to the fact that ‘they are artificial constructions from an oral to a written mode of communication,’ and that the reliability of the transcription itself may depend on the style adopted.¹³ The transcriptions that are used in this research were transcribed verbatim by the interviewer. While this was a somewhat laborious enterprise it was one which the interviewer preferred to the alternatives as it allowed the interviewer to re-enter the interview while transcribing it and in that way continue to analyse is.

¹² Andrea Fontana and James H Frey, "The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln (Thousand Oaks CA, London and New Delhi: Sage, 2000). p. 646 of 645-72

¹³ Kvale. p. 163

Using Express Scribe software enabled the interview to be replayed at a slower speed to assist with the transcription to the written word.

The transcribed interviews were analysed by coding them according to themes specifically related to the research topic. Specifically among those themes are the models and metaphors used by the participant spiritual directors for their understanding of spiritual direction, aspects of the Vincentian charism that inform their practice of spiritual direction and most particularly who they themselves offer spiritual direction to. For the participant directees the themes relating to the research highlighted how they came to meet their spiritual director, the frequency and place of those meetings and the impact of those meetings on their everyday lives. In this way patterns in the data relevant to the research were identified and available for the analysis and interpretation which follows.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Referencing the work of Amos Hatch, Creswell stresses the importance of remaining sensitive to ethical considerations at all stages of the research process from the planning to the reporting. For him this includes ‘giving back to participants for their time and efforts in our projects’, and ‘honor who owns the account’.¹⁴ This was done by giving each interviewee in both Phase I and Phase II a transcribed copy of their interview to review. It was also built in to the approach taken as the interviews were coded and reported on to ensure their integrity and reliability. Helen Kara also stresses this arguing that ‘research cannot be rendered ethical by completing a one-off administrative task’.¹⁵ Comparing research ethics from the perspective of Indigenous

¹⁴ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. p. 44

¹⁵ Helen Kara, *Research Ethics in the Real World* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2018). p. 9

and Euro-Western research she also ‘advocates for a move away from the ‘do no harm’ ethical baseline inherited from biomedical research, and towards a social justice approach to research ethics.’¹⁶ When it comes to research ethics it is good to remember that as with the ethics of any professional organisation the ethics are there to protect the researcher as well as the researched. With specific emphasis on interviews Kvale also reminds us that ‘an interview inquiry is a moral enterprise.’¹⁷ Ranjit Kumar in *Research Methodology* considers the ethical issues that exist in relation to:

- the participants – collection of information, consent, provision of incentives, sensitive information, possible harm and confidentiality;
- the researcher – bias, providing or withholding treatment, inappropriate methods, incorrect reporting of findings and inappropriate use of information
- the sponsoring organisation – imposing restrictions regarding methodology and/or publications of findings and misuse of information.¹⁸

Research ethics becomes all the more important when the topic and/or those being researched for it are considered ‘sensitive’. Lee and Renzetti remind us that all topics have the potential to be sensitive, but that specific areas of research are more likely to be sensitive than others, including

- (a) where research intrudes into the private sphere or delves into some deeply personal experience, (b) where the study is concerned with deviance and social control, (c) where it impinges on the vested interests of powerful persons or the exercise of coercion or domination, and (d) where it deals with things sacred to those being studied that they do not wish profaned.¹⁹

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 9

¹⁷ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. p. 109

¹⁸ Ranjit Kumar, *Research Methodology* 3rd ed. (Los Angeles CA, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage, 2011). pp 244-248

¹⁹ Raymond M Lee and Claire M Renzetti, "What Is Sensitive Research?," in *Researching Sensitive Topics*, ed. Claire M Renzetti and Raymond M Lee (Newbury Park CA, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993). p. 6 of pp 3-13

In relation to 'sensitive' populations Martin and Dean note that hiddenness of their target population and the resultant difficulty of sampling 'using nonprobability methods'.²⁰ John Brewer highlights how a sensitive context can also result in a researcher withholding sensitive information from those being researched i.e. religion in Northern Ireland.²¹ He concludes by saying that sensitive research is 'highly situational,' a 'social construction' and includes 'what the researchers considered to be sensitive.'²² His final word is:

Consequently, textbooks can be of very little use, so that at the planning stage researchers themselves need to give serious attention not only to what *they* believe to be controversial and sensitive but also to what their respondents, potential gatekeepers, and the community at large might consider to be sensitive about the research.²³

Sensitivity is evident in this research in several ways. In the first instance the spiritual directors in Phase I were asked to reflect on and share something of their experience as spiritual directors. This touches on both a deeply personal experience and something sacred. In Phase II the spiritual directors were invited to be gatekeepers to invite directees to participate. While this was approached in such a way as to not compromise an individual spiritual director's ethical relationship with their directee, a possible change in the relationship was highlighted.²⁴ It was on these grounds that a number of spiritual directors declined to be Gatekeepers. Also in Phase II the directees who participated belonged to a 'sensitive' group of people who are especially vulnerable, those who were marginalised and they were asked to reflect on and share their experience of receiving spiritual direction. As in the case of the spiritual directors

²⁰ John L Martin and Laura Dean, "Developing a Community Sample of Gay Men for an Epidemiological Study of Aids," in *Researching Sensitive Topics*, ed. Claire M Renzetti and Raymond M Lee (Newbury Park CA, London, New Delhi: Sage, 1993). p. 83 of 82-99

²¹ John D Brewer, "Sensitivity as a Problem in Field Research: A Study of Routine Policing in Northern Ireland," in *Researching Sensitive Topics*, ed. Claire M Renzetti and Raymond M Lee (Newbury Park CA, London, New Delhi: Sage, 1993). p. 132 of 125-145

²² Ibid. p. 143 of 125-145

²³ Ibid. p. 143 of 125-145

²⁴ See Appendix 'I' 'Letter of Invitation to Gatekeepers – Phase II' p. 419

this would touch on both deeply personal experiences and something sacred. As a researcher I had to keep this before my mind as I designed how the research would proceed and built my own critical self-reflection into it.

In terms of ethics this research Phase I was guided by the Principles of Best Practice as set out in the *Ethics and Integrity for Graduate Research at All Hallows College* and Phase II by the Legal and Ethical Framework for Research at WIT as set out in *Postgraduate Research Degrees: Regulations and Procedures*. Specifically these relate to the way in which the ‘research is planned and conducted, the results are recorded and reported, and the fruits of research are disseminated and applied,’²⁵ and ‘the duty of each researcher to ensure that the researcher is in compliance with institutional and national data protection policies.’²⁶ As a practicing spiritual director and a member of AISGA the researcher is also bound by their Code of Ethics²⁷ covering, among other things, respect and dignity for the other person, boundaries, multiple relationships and confidentiality.

The ethical issues of Phase I this research related mainly to the selection of participants which was done randomly as described above, the information given to each participant on prior to their decision to participate (Appendix C), the informed consent given by each participant prior to the interview (Appendix D), the guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity given, the arrangements in place to protect same and the researcher’s commitment to on-going critical self-reflection throughout the research. Anonymity is further protected by the transcript of each interview being

²⁵ All Hallows College, accessed December, 2013. <http://www.allhallows.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Research-Ethics-and-Integrity-Guidelines-Revised-May-2013-1.pdf>.

²⁶ Waterford Institute of Technology, accessed September, 2018. [https://www.wit.ie/images/uploads/About_PDF/Section_D._WIT_Academic_Regulations_2018-19_Postgraduate_Research_Degrees_Regulations_and_Procedures_\(RRD\).pdf](https://www.wit.ie/images/uploads/About_PDF/Section_D._WIT_Academic_Regulations_2018-19_Postgraduate_Research_Degrees_Regulations_and_Procedures_(RRD).pdf)

²⁷ All Ireland Spiritual Guidance Association, "Information Booklet and Code of Ethics," accessed December, 2013. http://www.aisga.ie/images/Handbook_and_Code_of_Ethics.pdf/.

code-named with no reference to the interviewee's actual name or other identifiers. No potential risks to participants or adverse outcomes were envisaged. Individual participants benefit by having had the opportunity to reflect with a new lens on their own ministry of Spiritual Direction and receiving the transcript of their own interview.

In Phase II the ethical issues relating to Phase I in the main apply the information given to each participant prior to their decision to participate (Appendix L), the informed consent given by each participant prior to the interview (Appendix M), the guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity given, the arrangements in place to protect same and the researcher's commitment to on-going critical self-reflection throughout the research. Some additional ethical issues exist for Phase II. These relate to two aspects of the recruitment of willing participants and the possible reactions of those who do participate.

In the first instance, as already noted, a register of people receiving spiritual direction does not exist. To recruit people receiving spiritual direction from members of the Vincentian Family the spiritual directors who are members of the Vincentian Family, from whom the random selections for Phase I were invited to participate in Phase II as gatekeepers. The confidential nature of the spiritual direction relationship, whether formal or informal, however raises a number of ethical considerations in this regard. As gatekeepers the spiritual directors are expected to protect the interests of those to whom they offer spiritual direction. Spiritual directors themselves are ethically bound 'to protect the identity' of anyone to whom they offer or have offered spiritual direction except when legally required to disclose same to proper authorities. In this instance the spiritual directors are not contacting the researcher directly with names of their directees but rather informing their directees of the study and inviting them to contact the researcher if they are interested in taking part. This helps to

preserve the confidential nature of the spiritual direction relationship. Also, the spiritual directors are not ‘choosing’ the directees for the study, rather directees who have been given information about the study are free to contact the researcher indicating their willingness to participate and so be included in the random selection. The spiritual directors themselves were also made aware that their very act of informing their directees of the study will change, at least in the mind of their directees, the relationship they have. Indeed it will bring them into an additional relationship with the individuals concerned, something that they will need to be careful they themselves monitor through supervision to avoid any exploitation or conflict of interest. While this would be true in the case of anyone receiving spiritual direction it requires significant additional awareness and monitoring in the more vulnerable situation where the persons concerned can be described as people who are marginalised.

Secondly, the criteria which the spiritual directors as gatekeepers are given to facilitate them in identifying people to invite to participate in the study needed to be precise and unambiguous. Those criteria were specified in the letter inviting them to participate as gatekeepers, (Appendix I).

The in-depth interviews in the study take the form of open-ended reflective questions mirroring a typical spiritual direction session. In this regard as the researcher and indeed as a spiritual director I needed to be aware of the possibility that one of the interviewees may disclose something during the interview that has not, for whatever reason, been disclosed to that person’s spiritual director. If this was to happen, and depending on how I responded to them, they may decide that they would like me to become their spiritual director. In view of the ethical issues of multiple relationships involved in this regard I have committed that I will not be available as a

spiritual director to anyone who participates in this study until at least eighteen months after the thesis is completed. For the same reason I did not invite anyone to whom I am offering or have offered spiritual direction to participate in the study.

It is possible in the course of the in-depth interview an interviewee may become distressed. Should that happen I would, in the first instance, encourage him/her to return to their spiritual director. If s/he is unable or reluctant to do so I would furnish the contact details of other spiritual directors near them and encouraging him/her to make contact with one of them.

One of the reasons for including people internationally was to significantly increase the pool of possible participants for both Phase I and Phase II thereby increasing the level of anonymity from the beginning of all who participate. This happened for Phase I but as already noted did not materialise for Phase II. However anonymity is protected by the transcript of each interview being code-named with no reference to the interviewee's actual name or other identifiers.

As in Phase I no potential risks to participants or adverse outcomes were envisaged in Phase II. Individual participants in Phase II benefit by having had the opportunity to reflect with a new lens on their experience of receiving spiritual direction by receiving the transcript of their own interview.

REFLECTION

It is interesting to note that for me this whole process, in particular the preparation for, the collection and analysis of the data for the research, has been very much a contemplative exercise. The research instruments were designed as I sat with the questions in my own contemplative space. The data was collected during in-depth interviews which mirrored the spiritual direction relationship and thus were

contemplative for me. The transcription of the interviews and the transcripts themselves were also held in my own contemplative space as I prepared to code them for analysis.

There were also some surprises along the way. In the first instance I recognised that among the names of the spiritual directors chosen by random selection were some I may not have selected deliberately and in that saw the finger of God. When I initially scheduled the interviews with the spiritual directors I planned a few days between them thinking that in that time I would have one interview completed and transcribed before embarking on the next. At the time I saw this as a tangible and concrete way of focusing on one interview at a time. Changed circumstances for some of the interviewees at the beginning meant that could not happen and the first two interviews were in fact conducted on the same day several hours apart. However, I was also to discover that transcribing the interviews would take much longer than I had at first envisaged. This was largely because, as I came to realise when I began transcribing, the spoken word is very different to the written one. We do not talk in sentences, rather at times in half thoughts and with many pauses, which meant capturing the spoken word on paper was not such an easy task. In the end I also decided to complete all the interviews before transcribing any of them. Approaching both the interviews and the transcribing in this way still allowed me focus on each individual interview.

I still remember some of the excitement I experienced during the very first interview in Phase I when I realised that the responses to the questions were giving me so much more than I had even hoped for. This did in fact continue for the remaining interviews.

The transcribing of one of the interviews in Phase II also stands out. One of the Phase II interviewees gave a very lengthy response to the initial open question

inviting him to tell me something about himself. His story had some very disturbing aspects which I was aware of at the time. However, I found the replaying of them over and over to capture verbatim what he was saying at times dark, sombre and heavy, even though I knew that the outcome was not.

CONCLUSION

Before turning to the findings from the interviews and their analysis the next chapter on the Vincentian Tradition will situate Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac within their historical milieu. It will examine their very different personal circumstances and formative years and the groups founded by them through their foundation documents. The sampling of the random selection of the Conferences and Correspondence of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac will then be detailed and a résumé of the content of each conference and letter given.

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Chapter 7

THE VINCENTIAN TRADITION

INTRODUCTION

Neither Vincent de Paul nor Louise de Marillac have left us a formal method of prayer or spiritual direction equivalent to, for example, Francis de Sales' *The Devout Life* or Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. They have, however, left us a large body of Conferences and correspondence. Many of the letters that we have from both Vincent and Louise to one another, to the early confrères and sisters and to others are or contain spiritual direction. Their Conferences to both the early sisters, confrères, Confraternities and Ladies of Charity also contain spiritual direction and provide a model for how to be present to people who are marginalised. The letters and conferences of Vincent de Paul are contained in the thirteen volumes of *St Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences and Documents*¹ which have been translated, edited, and annotated by the Vincentian Translation Project from the 1920 French edition of Pierre Coste, CM and those of Louise de Marillac in the single volume *Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*,² translated and edited by Louise Sullivan DC. These letters and Conferences continue to be significant in the formation of the members of the Vincentian Family to this day.

¹ Pierre Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*, trans. Vincentian Translation Project, English ed., 13 vols. (Brooklyn, New York: New City Press, 1985-2010).

² Louise Sullivan DC, ed. *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts* (Brooklyn, New York: New City Press, 1991).

Full document analysis of all the letters and conferences of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac contained in these fourteen volumes is beyond the scope of this research. A representative sample of those from 1617 when the Confraternities of Charity were established by Vincent until the death of both of them in 1660 will be chosen for analysis to include a selection of:

- conferences given to each group established;
- letters exchanged with each other and a variety of other people; and
- conferences and letters in each decade

To better appreciate the significance of the contribution of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac it is important to understand something of their personal circumstances, the culture of both the socio-political and the church into which they were born and lived. Before therefore turning to their letters and conferences I will begin by situating Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac within the historical, cultural, theological and spiritual context of seventeenth century France.

FRANCE AT THE DAWN OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

That seventeenth century France is known as *le Grand Siècle* largely disguises the fact that in the wake of the Protestant Reformation and the Council of Trent:

Frenchmen were shedding their blood in profusion, engaged as they were in the most bitter and implacable civil and religious wars. Catholics and Huguenots were cutting each other's throats with hatred in their hearts under the eye of a weak and indecisive King who, falling under the influence now of one faction and now of another could not make up his mind which to embrace.³

When Luther posted his Ninety-five Theses on the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg, Germany in October 1517 unintended major unrest and violent riots,

³ Pierre Coste CM, *The Life and Works of Saint Vincent De Paul (Vols 1-3)*, trans. Joseph Leonard, 3 vols. (New York: New City Press, 1987). Vol 1 p. 1

social and political as well as religious⁴ were unleashed across Europe. The resulting Wars of Religion lasted throughout Europe until the middle of the seventeenth century. While it was Calvinism rather than Lutheranism that would hold sway in France the Wars of Religion there raged between 1562 and 1598 punctuated by various peace treaties and coming finally to an end only with an uneasy truce when the Huguenots accepted some concessions given to them in the Edict of Nantes (1598). Wars are often the result of the complex interplay of social, economic and political factors and this was certainly the case in the Wars of Religion in France, where as Hitchcock notes 'religion and politics were inseparable'.⁵ Heller traces the roots of the Wars of Religion in France to an accumulation of sixty years of social unrest and of popular resistance intersecting with Calvinism which 'provided the ideology, organization, and leadership that helped transform much of this discontent into a national movement.'⁶

Politically, France at this time was ruled by a monarchy which was 'absolute'. In common with many of the monarchies in Europe it included both constitutional and ecclesiastical aspects. Holt details how, from the coronation ceremony, the ecclesiastical aspects of the French monarchy went 'far beyond the usual ecclesiastical overtones surrounding other monarchs of western Christendom.'⁷ In addition to the usual temporal obligations the king, and it was always a king based on primogeniture, was also responsible for safeguarding the church and combatting heresy as well as nominating bishops, archbishops and abbots. During the first half of the sixteenth

⁴ In a series of essays in her book *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* Natalie Zemon Davis explores the ways in which the political, social and religious conflicts were intertwined

⁵ Hitchcock. p. 4

⁶ Henry Heller, *Iron and Blood: Civil Wars in Sixteenth-Century France* (Montreal & Kingston; London; Buffalo, NY: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991). pp 12-13

⁷ Mack P Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). p. 9

century most of these appointments were on the basis of patronage. Few of those appointed had studied theology at any level and many were not even ordained,⁸ a situation that continued into the seventeenth century. There were many calls for the reform of these abuses. The untimely death of King Henry II as the result of an accident in 1559 plunged France into a succession of crises, the catalyst for the wars that would ravage France for almost half a century. His son, a minor, succeeded him on the throne with his wife, who because of her Italian birth was viewed as a foreigner, as regent. All the while two factions of the nobility, the ultra-Catholic Guises and the Protestant Bourbons both claimed their right to rule⁹. It was finally resolved when Bourbon Henry of Navarre converted to Catholicism in 1593 and the following year was crowned Henry IV in Chartres Cathedral. Hitchcock also notes that in the background and hovering over all that happened was the power of Spain which was viewed as a threat,¹⁰ in particular since France was surrounded on all sides by the House of Habsburg.

From a religious perspective there had also been a move to ‘establish a new and more scholarly platform upon which to question traditional religion.’¹¹ Known as Christian humanists or pre-reformers much of their scholarship was biblical with the intention of making available to the people vernacular translations of the bible. Holt notes that while they shared many ideas in common with ‘explicitly Protestant ideas’ they were not of themselves ‘proto-Protestants’.¹² In their wake ‘the Wars of Religion

⁸ Ibid. pp 10-14

⁹ Hitchcock. p. 4

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 5

¹¹ Holt. p. 14

¹² Ibid. p. 15

had left the Church of France in a state of miserable depression and disorder.... (with) three-fourths of the parochial churches were unprovided with legitimate pastors.’¹³

Of sixteenth century Paris Carroll writes:

Paris was not only sixteenth-century Europe’s largest city; it was its first metropolis. To wander the warren of streets behind its medieval wall was to experience such a bustle, noise and stench that it was compared to an entire province. Everywhere the visitor was reminded of its extraordinary Catholic heritage: its 300,000 souls were crammed into nearly 300 streets, divided into 39 parishes and served by 104 churches and monasteries; its conservative and celebrated university was spread over 49 colleges on the City’s Left Bank.¹⁴

By the middle of the century Knecht notes that the population of all of France had grown to approximately sixteen million,¹⁵ of whom according to Hitchcock some one million were Protestant.¹⁶ While this resulted in the growth of towns, each with its own main trading activity, ‘the vast majority of the people were peasants who lived in France’s 30,000 villages,’ each with its own social hierarchy.¹⁷ Knecht also outlines the complexity of French society both urban and rural¹⁸ all of which had a bearing on the unfolding events. ‘Over the half century or so that the Wars of Religion lasted patterns of motivation changed and new warring sides came into being, prompted by some new political crisis or other.’¹⁹

In addition to the wars themselves,

A series of poor harvests, possibly due to climate change, led to a sharp rise in food prices and famine. As hunger set in, so did disease which the armies helped to spread. In addition to plague, there was influenza, smallpox and typhus. Wherever plague struck, the better-off people

¹³ W Henley Jervis, *The Gallican Church: A History of the Church of France, from the Concordat of Bologna, Ad 1516 to the Revolution*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1872). p. 212

¹⁴ Stuart Carroll, *Martyrs and Murderers: The Guise Family and the Making of Europe* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁵ Robert J Knecht, *The French Religious Wars 1562-1598*, Kindle ed. (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2014). Location 34/1477

¹⁶ Hitchcock. p. 4

¹⁷ Knecht. Location 41/1477

¹⁸ Ibid. Locations 41-47/1477

¹⁹ Ibid. Locations 347-349/1477

fled and urban activities like markets and fairs were suspended. Urban crime grew as municipal officials fled to the countryside.²⁰

As a result poverty exacerbated by famine affecting those with no skills, skilled artisans and indeed their masters alike was rampant both in the city and in the country.²¹ Davis details some of the arguments for, and attempts at, regulating begging and poor relief at this time.²²

By the time the conflict ended between two and four million people are estimated to have died.²³ The fragile peace that resulted was, however, short-lived as France became embroiled in the politico-religious Thirty Years War which began in 1618 in Bohemia (present day Czech Republic) engulfing most of the major powers at the time in Europe including France and its neighbours, only to be followed by a further series of civil wars, known as the Fronde, from 1648 to 1653.

This then was the France into which Vincent de Paul in 1581 and Louise de Marillac in 1591 were born and lived the greater part of their lives, formed by the suffering experienced by so many of their compatriots. By the time of their death six months apart in 1660 they had made a major contribution to society and church in France and beyond leaving behind a legacy that today encompasses every continent.

PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND FORMATIVE YEARS

Vincent and Louise were born into very different circumstances. He was the third of six children of peasants who farmed their own land²⁴ in a village that today bears his name in the Gascony region to the south west of France. She was born out

²⁰ Ibid. Location 1207/1477

²¹ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987). pp 21-22

²² Ibid. pp 17-64

²³ Knecht. Location 1368/1477

²⁴ Bernard Pujot, *Vincent De Paul: The Trailblazer* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2003). p. 4

of wedlock and claimed by her father, Louis de Marillac, 'of the illustrious Marillac family which held positions of power and influence in the courts of Marie de Medici²⁵ and Louis XIII'.²⁶ As the 'natural daughter'²⁷ of Louis de Marillac she would never know her mother nor indeed family life in her formative years.²⁸ When Vincent and Louise met in late 1624 or early 1625,²⁹ before the death of her husband, both had known and been formed by the agony and the ecstasy in their lives up to then.

VINCENT DE PAUL

Vincent grew up in a Christian family and as a child shepherded the family flocks. All his biographers tell us he had 'an open and lively mind'³⁰ which was 'noticed by Monsieur de Comet, a lawyer practising at the provincial court at Dax.'³¹ Encouraged by M de Comet the de Paul family made the sacrifices necessary to send Vincent to study first in Dax and then in Toulouse. So it was that in 1600, at the age of nineteen, since the decrees of the Council of Trent were not adhered to in France, Vincent was ordained priest. His early years as a priest were ruled by ambition as he sought a benefice that would allow him to retire and look after his family. However, these years would be marked by disappointments, failures, captivity (whether real or metaphorical) followed by freedom, crisis of faith and conversion. By 1608 he is in Paris where he became counsellor and chaplain to the ex-queen, Marguerite de Valois while also coming under the influence of Pierre de Bérulle and others who were

²⁵ Marie de Medici, wife of Henry IV was Queen of France and mother of Louis XIII

²⁶ Louise Sullivan DC, "Louise De Marillac: A Spiritual Portrait," in *Vincent De Paul and Louise De Marillac: Rules Conferences and Writings*, ed. Frances Ryan and John Rybolt, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York; Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1995). p. 40

²⁷ Jean Calvet, *Louise De Marillac: A Portrait*, trans. G. F. Pullen (Geoffrey Chapman, 1959). p. 16

²⁸ Sullivan DC, "Louise De Marillac: A Spiritual Portrait," in *Vincent De Paul and Louise De Marillac: Rules Conferences and Writings*. p. 40

²⁹ Ibid. p. 39

³⁰ Coste CM, *The Life and Works of Saint Vincent De Paul (Vols 1-3)*. Vol 1 p. 12

³¹ Jean Calvet, *St Vincent De Paul*, trans. Lancelot C. Sheppard (Burns & Oates, 1952). p. 16

spearheading the movement for spiritual renewal and ecclesiastical reform.³² On the recommendation of de Bérulle he accepted the appointment as parish priest of Clichy, northwest of Paris, in 1612. The short time he spent in Clichy filled him with much joy as he learned from people, not unlike those he grew up with, what it was to be a priest, the duties of which he fulfilled with zeal. Little over a year later, again at the request of de Bérulle Vincent became as tutor to the children of Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, General of the Galleys of France, and his wife Françoise-Marguerite (née de Silly). While there he also instructed the household staff, was spiritual director to Madame de Gondi and when he travelled with the de Gondi's to their country homes he looked after the spiritual welfare of the local people.

Two seminal, formation moments occurred for Vincent in 1617. The first of these took place in January 1617 in Gannes-Folleville,³³ on the Picardy estate of the de Gondi family. A dying peasant in Gannes requested to see him and Vincent hastened to his bedside. In the course of their meeting Vincent recommended the man make a general confession and the man was so overcome that he later said:

*'I should have been damned if I had not made a general confession, on account of the many great sins I never dared to confess.'*³⁴

This incident would be followed up, at the request of Mme de Gondi, on 25 January 1617 when Vincent preached a sermon in the church at Folleville encouraging the people to make a general confession and instructing them how to make a good one. There is no text of his sermon, nor indeed the one he would make a few months later, but what is known is that on this occasion the number of people seeking confession

³² Hugh O'Donnell CM, "Vincent De Paul: His Life and Way," in *Vincent De Paul and Louise De Marillac: Rules, Conferences and Writings*, ed. Frances Ryan DC and John E Rybolt CM, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York; Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1995). p. 16 of 13-38

³³ Gannes-Folleville in the Picardy region is to the North East of Paris

³⁴ Coste CM, *The Life and Works of Saint Vincent De Paul (Vols 1-3)*. Vol 1 p. 68

afterwards far exceeded what Vincent, even with the help of another priest, was able to accomplish, and so the Jesuit Fathers in nearby Amiens were sent for to assist.

Did Vincent simply hear a list of the dying peasant's sins and give absolution? Based on the peasant's own response, the subsequent response of the local people to the sermon preached and in the absence of any scholarly investigation of the incident I very much doubt it. Vincent himself talks about instructing the people and 'disposing them to receive the sacrament well'³⁵ before beginning to hear their confessions. I have no doubt that he also had words of encouragement since, as Coste notes, even before the sermon at Folleville Vincent 'was accustomed to ask his penitents to review the sins of their past life, which was an excellent means both of knowing them and tranquillising their consciences.'³⁶ Writing about the sermon in Folleville José María Román makes the following comment ... 'the sermon was powerful and easily understood. He instructed them, he moved their hearts and encouraged them.'³⁷ Over the next few months the experience in Folleville was repeated with similar results in various villages on the de Gondi estates.

The second seminal event for Vincent took place in August 1617. Once more guided by de Bérulle he had left the de Gondi household in July and been installed as parish priest in Châtillon-les-Dombes,³⁸ on 1 August. Within a few weeks of his arrival, on a Sunday morning when he was vesting for Mass, word came to him about a family nearby all of whom were sick and in dire circumstances. Of this incident Vincent himself says, 'I did not fail to speak feelingly about them during the sermon,

³⁵ Louis Abelly, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent De Paul*, trans. William Quinn FSC, English ed. (New York: New City Press, 1993).

³⁶ Coste CM, *The Life and Works of Saint Vincent De Paul (Vols 1-3)*. Vol 1 pp 63-64

³⁷ José María Román CM, *St Vincent De Paul : A Biography*, trans. Joyce Howard (Melisende, 1999). p. 115

³⁸ Châtillon-les-Dombes is today known as Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne and is near Lyon, in the Rhone-Alpes region South East of Paris.

and God, touching the hearts of those who were listening, caused them all to be moved to compassion for the poor afflicted people.’³⁹ Again, there is no copy of the sermon, but what is known from Vincent himself is that, later, when he was going to visit the family concerned himself, he met a procession of people coming and going to them as well. Vincent realised that assistance of this nature needed to be organised and ‘suggested to all these dear, good people whose charity had induced them to visit the family, that they should take it in turn, day by day, to cook for them, and not only for these but also for other cases that might arise.’⁴⁰ So began Vincent’s work of mobilising lay persons, specifically women, into the Confraternities of Charity.

In Gannes-Folleville Vincent came face to face with the spiritual poverty of the people and in Châtillon-les-Dombes with their material poverty. Over the following forty-three years everything Vincent would do, and Louise and others would collaborate with, had its origins in these two events of 1617. From this point on Vincent always spoke of corporal and spiritual service as two sides of the one coin.

LOUISE DE MARILLAC

Louise’s early life experiences were very different. Although claimed by her father who loved her dearly, as his ‘natural daughter’⁴¹ she was an embarrassment to him,⁴² with the result that Louise’s early years were filled with loneliness, rejection and suffering. Initially she was sent to the Dominican Convent in Poissy, where her aunt was a nun, to be cared for, and where she received a very good education which included religious formation, philosophy, classical languages, literature and art. She remained there until her father’s death in 1604 when she was transferred to a boarding house for young girls where she learned more domestic skills. Attracted by the

³⁹ Coste CM, *The Life and Works of Saint Vincent De Paul (Vols 1-3)*. Vol 1 p 82

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Calvet, *Louise De Marillac: A Portrait*. p. 16

⁴² Román CM. p. 171

cloistered life she was refused admission to the Capuchin sisters, her confessor saying that 'it was his belief 'that God had some other design for her'.⁴³ So in early 1613 the de Marillac's arranged a marriage for her with Antoine le Gras, secretary to Marie de Medici, regent during the minority of Louis XIII.⁴⁴ Even in this Louise was to experience the rejection of the de Marillac family as in the wedding register they signed as 'friends' rather than 'family'.⁴⁵

While the marriage was arranged biographers note that it was a happy time for Louise, particularly with the birth of her son Michel in October 1613.⁴⁶ Her happiness, however, was short-lived. Young Michel was slow to develop, her husband suffered a prolonged illness prior to his death in 1625 and during the civil unrest that began with the assassination of Concino Concini, one of Marie de Medici's chief advisors, and her subsequent exile in 1617, Louise's uncle Louis was executed and her uncle Michel was among those imprisoned or exiled. During her time of crisis Louise confided initially in her uncle Michel and then in Francis de Sales and Pierre Camus, Bishop of Belley. She was assailed by temptations and doubts believing that 'she was being punished because she had broken her vow to become a Capuchin sister',⁴⁷ and on this account contemplated leaving her husband. Calvet questions whether her directors at this time were of any help to her.⁴⁸ So great was her distress that in early May 1623 she took a vow of widowhood in the event of Antoine's death.⁴⁹ This did not, however, prove to be the salve she hoped for and between Ascension and Pentecost that same year she fell into even deeper darkness of doubt and distress, 'all

⁴³ Calvet, *Louise De Marillac: A Portrait*. p. 28

⁴⁴ Following the death of Henry VI Marie de Medici was Queen Regent until Louis XIII came of age

⁴⁵ Calvet, *Louise De Marillac: A Portrait*. p. 32

⁴⁶ Sullivan DC, "Louise De Marillac: A Spiritual Portrait," in *Vincent De Paul and Louise De Marillac: Rules Conferences and Writings*. p. 41

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 39

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 40

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 41

the trials of her childhood and youth were poured into this deadly crucible, at the bottom of which she found nothing but despair.’⁵⁰ Then Louise herself writes of how on the Feast of Pentecost⁵¹ her mind was cleared of all doubt.⁵² From then on she didn’t experience any further qualms about her vows and Sullivan notes that ‘Louise carried with her throughout her life her hand-written account of the experience.’⁵³

At some point between Pentecost 1623 and the death of her husband in late 1625 Vincent became Louise’s spiritual director. Neither of them were enthusiastic about the prospect but it was to be the beginning of a collaboration that would continue until Louise’s death in March 1660.

FOUNDATIONS

The Confraternity of Charity founded in Châtillon-les-Dombes in August 1617, and replicated in the rural villages as missions were preached, was the first organisation founded by Vincent de Paul. In Paris itself they were known as the Ladies of Charity since the members of the Confraternity there were mainly noble ladies of rank. In 1629 Vincent co-missioned Louise into a formative role with the Confraternities sending her first to Montmirail with these words:

Go, therefore, Mademoiselle, go in the name of Our Lord. I pray that His Divine Goodness may accompany you, be your consolation along the way, your shade against the heat of the sun, your shelter in rain and cold, your soft bed in your weariness, your strength in your toil, and, finally, that He may bring you back in perfect health and filled with good works.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 41

⁵¹ 4 June 1623

⁵² See Appendix ‘A’ p. 408

⁵³ Sullivan DC, "Louise De Marillac: A Spiritual Portrait," in *Vincent De Paul and Louise De Marillac: Rules Conferences and Writings*. p. 41

⁵⁴ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 1 pp 64-65

Louise continued in this role of formator of the laity by visiting the Confraternities even after the establishment of the Daughters of Charity.

Following his experience in January 1617 in Gannes-Folleville Vincent had tried to find a religious order to undertake the work of evangelising the poor people in the rural villages. Unable to do so, and with monies deeded by the de Gondi's, in 1625 with three initial companions he founded the Congregation of the Mission. This enabled regular missions to be given in the villages.

One of the results of these missions was that some of the village girls came forward to offer their services. Vincent sent these girls to Louise who arranged for them to assist the ladies by looking after the needs of the poor people which the noble ladies of rank were unable to do. Louise would have brought the increasing number of girls together into a community but Vincent was reluctant. He was aware of the decree of the Council of Trent⁵⁵ concerning the enclosure of religious women and had first-hand experience of how it had been used to enclose the Visitation Sisters founded in 1610 by Francis de Sales and Jane Frances de Chantal. Early in 1633 the zeal of one of the girls, Marguerite Nasseau, resulted in her contacting the plague and dying. Despite this in May Vincent wrote to Louise: 'With regard to your employment, my mind is not yet enlightened enough before God concerning a difficulty which prevents me from seeing whether it is the Will of His Divine Majesty.' ⁵⁶ Later that same year Vincent wrote to Louise from his retreat:

I think your good angel did what you told me in the letter you wrote me. Four or five days ago, he communicated with mine concerning the Charity of your young women. It is true; he prompted me to recall it often and I gave that good work serious thought. We shall talk about it, God willing, on Friday or Saturday, if you do not write to me sooner.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Council of Trent, "Session 25," accessed September 2017. <http://www.thecounciloftrent.com>.

⁵⁶ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 1 p 200

⁵⁷ Ibid. Vol 1 p. 216

This was followed up a short time later with: 'We must surely meet before making a firm decision about the girls, and it can only be towards the end of the week.'⁵⁸ So it was that on 29 November 1633 the first four girls gathered with Louise in her home in what was to be the beginning of the Company of the Daughters of Charity.

All three of these groups founded and formed by Vincent and Louise continue to meet the myriad corporal and spiritual needs of people who are poor, marginalised and vulnerable to this day reaching into every continent. Before turning to the Conferences and letters I will begin by exploring the Foundation Documents of each of the three groups with particular reference to material which furthers the overall aim of the dissertation (p. 5)

FOUNDATION DOCUMENTS

Volume 13b of Coste contains twenty-one documents pertaining to the Confraternities of Charity covering the period 1617 to 1634. Two of these are reports on the Charity of Mâcon from September 1621 while the remaining documents are either connected with the Foundation, Establishment and Approval of specific Confraternities, General Regulations in relation to specific Confraternities and Conferences given by Vincent to them.

A further fifty-four documents in Coste Volume 13b relate to the Daughters of Charity covering 1641 to 1600. Of these twenty-nine are notes from Council meetings between 1646 and 1659 while the remaining documents relate to the establishment, erection and approval of the Company of the Daughters of Charity; regulations, Common and Particular Rules of the Daughters of Charity.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Vol 1 p. 217

Coste Volume 13a contains ninety-eight documents pertaining to the Congregation of the Mission.

CONFRATERNITIES AND LADIES OF CHARITY⁵⁹

The first point to note specifically is that the foundation document for the Confraternity of Charity in Châtillon-les-Dombes was drawn up on 23 August 1617, just a three days after Vincent had preached about the distressed family on the outskirts of the town. Ecclesiastical approval followed a few months later on the basis of more detailed regulations and rules and the Confraternity was formally erected in December 1617. The same pattern applied to the Confraternities⁶⁰ as they were established in other areas

The very first paragraph of the *Foundation of the Charity in Châtillon-les-Dombes*⁶¹ states the aims of the Charity:

On this day, August 23, 1617, the Ladies named below have charitably joined forces to take their turn to assist the sick poor of the town of Châtillon, having decided unanimously that, for an entire day only, each will be responsible for all those whom they have decided together to be in need of their help. To do so, they propose two aims, namely, to assist body and soul: the body by nourishing it and tending to its ailments; the soul by preparing those who seem to be tending toward death to die well, and preparing those who will recover to live a good life.⁶²

In general the documents called ‘Regulations’ contain much greater detail in respect of the working of the Charity, how the members are to behave towards those whom they are serving, how they are to be with one another and how the office-holders

⁵⁹ Ladies of Charity is the name given to the Confraternities of Charity established in Paris comprising the noble women of rank. Together today they are known as the International Association of Charity recognised in Canon Law as an Association of Lay Faithful

⁶⁰ As both words are used interchangeably from here on ‘Confraternities’ will be referred to as ‘Charities’

⁶¹ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 13b Document 124a p. 3

⁶² Ibid.

are appointed. Indeed they appear very similar to the Rules and Regulations for a religious congregation, even to the titles given to the office-holders and the fact that the members are called ‘Sisters’.⁶³ The specific details in relation to how they are to serve the sick poor both in terms of the food to be prepared and served⁶⁴ and in terms of how they are to assist them spiritually are given in the *Regulations for Charity of Women (Châtillon-les-Dombes)*. When someone is admitted to the care of the Charity the Superioress:

(W)ill see that the patient goes to confession in order to receive Communion the next morning because it is the intention of the confraternity that those who want to be aided by it go to confession and Communion. Before anything else, she will bring the patient a picture of the Crucifixion, which she will put up in a place where he can see it so that, by looking at it sometimes, he may reflect on what the Son of God suffered for him.⁶⁵

In all of the documents relating to the foundations of the Confraternities and Ladies of Charity there is a tenderness when speaking of how those who are poor are to be treated, even to the provision of nightshirts, sheets and any other items that are needed⁶⁶. When the person whose turn it is to prepare and serve the food for the day, ‘(s)he will say some little word to him about Our Lord, making an effort to cheer him up if he is very downhearted.’⁶⁷

One complete section of the Regulations is given to *Spiritual Assistance and Funerals*:

Because the aim of this organization is not only to assist poor persons corporally, but spiritually as well, the Servants of the Poor will strive and take great pains to dispose those who recuperate to live better, and those who seem to be approaching death, to die well. They will arrange their visit for this purpose and pray often for that, making some little elevation of their hearts to God for this intention.

⁶³ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 125 p. 7

⁶⁴ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 126 pp 12-13

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 12

⁶⁶ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 126 p. 12

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 13

In addition, they will occasionally read some devotional book that might be useful to those listening who might profit from this, exhorting them to bear their illness patiently for the love of God and to believe that He has sent it to them for their greater good. They will have them make some acts of contrition, consisting in sorrow for having offended God, for love of Him, to ask His forgiveness and resolve never to offend Him again. In the event that their illness [becomes worse], they will see to it that they go to confession as soon as possible. For those who seem to be dying, they will be sure to notify the Pastor to administer Extreme Unction, encouraging them to trust in God, to reflect on the passion and death of Our Lord Jesus, and to commend themselves to the Blessed Virgin, the angels, and the saints, particularly the patron saints of the town and those whose names they bear. They will do all this with great zeal to cooperate in the salvation of souls and, so to speak, to lead them by the hand to God.⁶⁸

These regulations for the Charity in Châtillon-les-Dombes were replicated for Charities established in other areas. While some modifications and/or additions were included depending on the location the basic structure remained the same. So, in 1634 the Regulations for the Charity of Women (Argenteuil) includes the following as the purpose of the Charity

The Confraternity of Charity will be erected in the parish church of Argenteuil to honor Our Lord Jesus its patron and His Holy Mother, and to assist the sick poor of Argenteuil spiritually and corporally: spiritually, by obtaining that those who seem to be close to death leave this world in a good state and that those who will recover make the resolution never to offend God in the future; corporally, by giving them the food they need; and, lastly, to fulfill Our Lord's ardent desire that we love one another.⁶⁹

No further details are given than those quoted above in relation to how the members of the Charities are to administer the spiritual service they are mandated to provide. It seems to me that the 'how' is in the tone of the documents themselves. So that they do not neglect their own spiritual growth the documents provide spiritual guidance for the members of the Charity particularly in the sections on '*Common Rules*' and '*Personal Devotions*'.⁷⁰ Details are given of how the members of the

⁶⁸ Ibid. pp 13-14

⁶⁹ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 142 p. 103

⁷⁰ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 126 pp 18-19

Charity are to treat one another both in life and death, ‘(t)hey will cherish one another as sisters whom Our Lord has united by the bond of His holy love and will visit and console one another in their trials and illnesses,’⁷¹ also a source of strength in view of the service they provide. They are also consistent in reminding the members of the Charity in their turn about ‘greeting them cheerfully and kindly’⁷² and to ‘do all this as lovingly as if she were serving her own son – or rather God, who considers as done to Himself the good she does for persons who are poor.’⁷³

In some places a Charity of men was established. They were given the responsibility of looking after the able-bodied poor, while the Charities of women looked after the sick poor. They were to do this by seeing that,

The children will be placed in a trade as soon as they are old enough. Each week the disabled and the elderly who are unable to work will be given what is necessary for their subsistence. As for those who earn only part of what they need, the association will provide the rest.⁷⁴

The regulations for the Charities of Men also included provisions for their spiritual growth ‘so that the Servants of the Poor may benefit and be strengthened more and more in the spirit of charity’⁷⁵ In a few instances there were combined Charities comprising men and women and the regulations for these included the provisions of the regulations for the Charities of Women only and those of men only.

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

In the case of the Congregation of the Mission the early documents relating the foundation include the *Foundation Contract* of April 1625 in which the de Gondi’s

⁷¹ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 142 pp 100-101

⁷² Ibid. Vol 13b Document 126 pp 12-13

⁷³ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 126 p. 13

⁷⁴ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 132 p. 49

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 51

deeded forty-five thousand livres⁷⁶ to Vincent to found a company of priests to evangelise the rural country people; the *Act of Approval of the Congregation of the Mission by the Archbishop of Paris* a year later and the *Act of Association of the First Missionaries* in September 1626. Between then and January 1633 there are legal documents relating to contracts for the various properties the Congregation had possession of as well as Royal Letters Patent for the approval of the Congregation of the Mission; petitions to Pope Urban VII; communications between Propaganda Fide, Nuncio and various Cardinals; communication between Louis XIII and Urban VII; all seeking approval of the Congregation and the opposition of the Pastors of Paris to that approval. In January 1633 pontifical approval was received from Urban VII in the Bull *Salvatoris Nostri* in which the name Congregation of the Mission was given.

The Act of Association of the First Missionaries in 1626 was signed by, in addition to Vincent de Paul, Antoine Portail, François du Coudray and Jean de la Salle. By this they committed themselves ‘to live together as a Congregation, Company, or Confraternity, and to devote ourselves to the salvation of the poor country people’.⁷⁷ This would be done ‘by way of the mission, to catechize, preach, and exhort poor country people to make a general confession’.⁷⁸ In 1658 the Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission were presented to the priests, students and brothers. This begins by stating the Purpose and Nature of the Congregation,

to imitate Christ the Lord... It seeks to imitate His virtues as well as what He did for the salvation of others. It is only right that if the Congregation is to do the same sort of work, it should act in the same sort of way. This means that the whole purpose of the Congregation is: (I) to have a genuine commitment to grow in holiness, patterning ourselves, as far as possible, on the virtues which the great Master Himself graciously taught us in what He said and did; (2) to preach the good news of salvation to poor people, especially in rural areas; (3) to

⁷⁶ The livre was the currency in the Kingdom of France at the time

⁷⁷ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 13a Document 61 p. 222

⁷⁸ Ibid. Vol 13a Document 61 p. 222

help seminarians and priests to grow in knowledge and virtue, so that they can be effective in their ministry.⁷⁹

The Rule further notes,

There are both clerical and lay members in the Congregation. The work of the former is to travel around through towns and villages, as Christ Himself and His disciples did, breaking the bread of the Divine Word for the neglected by preaching and catechizing. They should also urge people to make general confessions of their entire life and hear these confessions. Their ministry also includes settling quarrels and disputes, establishing the Confraternity of Charity, staffing seminaries which have been set up in our houses for diocesan clergy, giving retreats, and organizing meetings of priests in our houses. Their work also includes any other ministry which is supportive to those mentioned. The lay members help in these ministries like Martha in whatever way the Superior wants them to.⁸⁰

Chapter VI of the Rule is given to ‘Matters Concerning the Sick’, where we read:

1 - One of the principal things Christ did was to visit and care for the sick, and especially persons who were poor. He very often recommended this to those He was sending into His vineyard. For this reason the Congregation should have a special care for helping and visiting the sick, whether outside or inside the house. We should help them physically and spiritually, as far as is practical, especially on missions. As well as this we should pay particular attention to setting up and visiting the Confraternity of Charity.

2.- Wherever we visit a sick person, inside or outside the house, we should look on this person as Christ rather than as just a human being, since Christ said that He regarded any service done to such a person as being done to Himself. For this reason on such occasions we should be considerate and speak in a low voice. And what we say ought to console the sick person, put him in good humor, and help anyone else who is there.

DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

These extant documents relating to the Daughters of Charity indicate that there was a much longer period of gestation than for either the Confraternities of Charity or

⁷⁹ Ibid. Vol 13a Document 117a p. 432

⁸⁰ Ibid. Vol 13a Document 117a p. 432

the Congregation of the Mission. It was in January 1655, almost twenty years after the first sisters came together with Louise to be guided and formed by her as a community for service, that the Company of the Daughters of Charity received the Approval of Cardinal de Retz. A further thirteen years would pass before Papal Approbation was received, eight years after the deaths of both Vincent and Louise. One of the reasons for this is the fact that at the beginning, and indeed up to the *Act of Establishment in August 1655*, the Daughters were seen as a specific Confraternity of Charity associated with the Ladies of Charity.⁸¹ There is no doubt that this was to ensure that the Daughters would not be considered a religious community and so would not be subject to enclosure.

The first of the documents contained in Coste Volume 13b relating to the Daughters of Charity is the 1641 *Regulations for the Sisters of the Angers Hospital*. This begins by stating,

The Daughters of Charity of the Sick Poor are going to Angers to honor Our Lord, Father of the Poor, and His Holy Mother, in order to assist, corporally and spiritually, the sick poor of the Hotel-Dieu of the town: corporally, by serving them and giving them food and medicine; spiritually, by instructing the patients in things necessary for salvation and seeing that they make a general confession of their entire past life so that, by this means, those who will die may leave this world in a good state, and those who will recover may take the resolution never more to offend God.⁸²

In 1645 *The Regulations of the Daughters of Charity* begins by stating,

The Confraternity of unmarried women and widows, Servants of the Poor of the Charity, will be instituted to honor the charity of Our Lord its patron toward the sick poor of the places where they are established or sent, serving them corporally and spiritually according to the order that will be given them by the Ladies who are officers of the Charity in the parishes where they are: corporally, by preparing and bringing to them their food and medicine; spiritually, by seeing that those who are near death may leave this world in a good state and that those who will recover may take the resolution to live better in the future.⁸³

⁸¹ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 150 p. 225

⁸² Ibid. Vol 13b Document 143 p. 108

⁸³ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 145 p. 123

In time these Regulations evolved to become the Common Rules which were the subject of the Conferences given by Vincent to the Daughters between October 1655 and July 1658. The first Article of the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity* reads,

They will often recall that the main purpose for which God has called and brought them together is to honor their patron Our Lord, serving Him corporally and spiritually in poor persons, sometimes as a child, or someone in need, or a sick person, or a prisoner.⁸⁴

while Article 12 goes on to say,

Their chief concern will be to serve the sick poor, treating them with compassion, gentleness, cordiality, respect, and devotion, even those who are most troublesome and difficult, since it is not so much to them they are rendering service as to Jesus Christ. They will not forget to say a good word to them occasionally to dispose them to be patient, to make a good general confession, to prepare for a happy death or to lead a good life, and, above all, to teach them the things necessary for their salvation. They will also see that they receive all their sacraments in due time--even more than once if they have a relapse after convalescence. All this will be done in the manner and according to the order prescribed for them in the Particular Rules of their ministry with the sick.⁸⁵

Also included are the Particular Rules for the sisters in their different ministries. These Particular Rules give the sisters very detailed instructions on how they are to behave in different specific circumstances. There are Particular Rules for the Sisters in the Parishes; for the Sister who Teaches in School; for the Sisters in the Villages; for the Sisters in the Hôtels-Dieu and Hospitals; for the Sisters of the Hôtel-Dieu of Paris; for the Sisters with the Foundlings and for the Sisters with the Galley Convicts. Most begin with a variation on the *Particular Rule for the Sisters in the Parishes*:

They will often think of the principal purpose for which God has sent them to the parish where they reside, namely, to serve the sick poor, not only corporally by giving them food and medicine, but also

⁸⁴ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149a p. 147

⁸⁵ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149a p. 151

spiritually by seeing that they receive the sacraments worthily and in due time, including confession on the first or second day after they are welcomed into the Charity.³ so that those who are near death may leave this world in a proper state and those who are recovering may make the firm resolution to live a good life in the future.⁸⁶

The Particular Rule for the Sisters in the Parishes has, of all the Particular Rules, the most to say in relation to how they are to assist those they serve spiritually. Apart from preparing them to make a good general confession the emphasis is on consoling and encouraging them ‘according to their modest ability and the disposition of the patients’ while what they suggest to them, not be done all at once ‘for fear of fatiguing them.’⁸⁷

The Particular Rule for the Sister who Teaches School begins by reminding her to,

(T)hink of her great happiness in being called by God to cooperate with Him in the salvation of those poor little girls, who might perhaps be damned one day if they did not receive the instruction she gives them. That is why she must be extremely faithful in carrying out her ministry well.⁸⁸

It also reminds her to ‘be sure to learn well herself what she has to teach others, particularly all that concerns faith and morals.’ and not to ‘instruct them either on the catechism or on morality before previously asking the assistance of the Holy Spirit.’⁸⁹

This Particular Rule concludes with the reminder,

She will be convinced that if, after all, God Himself does not instruct interiorly the children for whom she is responsible, in vain will she herself invest her time and energy in teaching them. Therefore, she will often commend them to Our Lord, entreating Him to bestow His graces and blessings both on the pupils that they might profit from her instructions, and on herself that she might fulfill her duty well, so that together they may receive the rewards promised them for that in heaven.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149b pp 169-170

⁸⁷ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149b p. 170

⁸⁸ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149b p. 177

⁸⁹ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149b p. 177

⁹⁰ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149b pp 181-182

The Particular Rule for the Sisters in the Villages is concerned in the first instance with the fact that the sisters ‘are deprived for long periods of time of communication with their Director and with the Superioress,’⁹¹ and emphasises how the sisters are to encourage and console one another. In relation to their ministry with the sick poor they are to ‘do more or less all that is done in the parishes of Paris.’⁹² They are also expected to ‘be concerned about the instruction of poor girls’ in particular ‘those who are almost never able to go to school, such as shepherdesses, girls who mind cattle.’⁹³

They will endeavor chiefly to teach.... everything a Christian is obliged to believe or to do in order to be saved, depending on the age and intelligence of each and the time available.⁹⁴

*For the Sisters in the Hôtels-Dieu and Hospitals*⁹⁵ their Particular Rules also begins with,

The purpose for which the Daughters of Charity are established in a Hôtel-Dieu or hospital is to honor, corporally and spiritually, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Father of the sick poor; corporally by serving them and giving them food and medicine, and spiritually by teaching the patients the things necessary for their salvation and seeing that they make a general confession of their whole past life. By this means, those who are going to die may leave this world in a good state, and those who are recovering may take the resolution never to offend God, with the help of His grace.⁹⁶

In the case of the *Sisters with the Foundlings*, that Particular Rule notes that their ‘is to serve and assist these poor little creatures corporally and spiritually’⁹⁷

⁹¹ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149b p. 182

⁹² Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149b p. 182

⁹³ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149b p. 183

⁹⁴ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149b p. 184

⁹⁵ A group of laymen known as the Fathers of the Poor were responsible for the governance and administration of the Hôtels-Dieu and the Hospitals while nuns were the administrators of the Hôtel-Dieu of Paris. A specific Confraternity of Ladies of Charity was established to look after the patients in the Hôtel-Dieu of Paris who then requested Daughters to assist them.

⁹⁶ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 13b Document 149b p. 185

⁹⁷ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149b p. 210

Acknowledging that the ministry to the *Galley Convicts* 'is one of the most difficult and dangerous they can have,'⁹⁸ the sisters are again exhorted to give both corporal and spiritual assistance adapting the advice given for the Sisters in Parishes in addition to the specific articles that make up the Particular Rule.⁹⁹ Once more this includes:

When the men are ill, the Sisters will take as much or even greater care than with persons in the parishes, taking the proper time to go to visit them, bringing them the food they need for their dinner and supper, and medicines when they require them. Above all, they will give them or obtain for them that spiritual assistance which consists in consoling, encouraging, and instructing them in things necessary for salvation, especially how to make a good general confession and to go to confession and Communion in due time. For those on the point of dying, they will see that they are given Extreme Unction, and when they die, they will have them wrapped in a shroud and attend to their burial. Should they recover, they will encourage them to lead a good life in the future.¹⁰⁰

While the Particular Rules in a number of instances, specifically those for the Hôtel-Dieu and Hospitals, give very detailed advice about how the sisters are to carry out their various duties entrusted them.¹⁰¹ The means that the sisters will use in order to carry out their duties, in other words their rule of life, is also given in great detail.¹⁰² However, very little detail is given in any of the Particular Rules in relation to how they are to carry out the spiritual service entrusted to them. In each case the emphasis is simply on ensuring that they know what they need for salvation, know how to make a good confession, have access to a confessor so that they die well or if they recover they will resolve to live better in the future. How they are to do this is left to each

⁹⁸ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149b p. 221

⁹⁹ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149b p. 221

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149b p. 222

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149 pp 195-204 The Particular Rule included sections of advice for the Sister Servant; the sister who admits the patients; the sisters responsible for the distribution of bread and wine; the sisters responsible for serving the infirm; cooks regarding Fast Days; the sister responsible for the dishes; the Night Nurses and their replacements; the Laundress; on Clothing the Deceased; Laying out the Dead and on the diet to be given.

¹⁰² Ibid. Vol 13b Document 149 pp 189-204

individual sister, just as it was with the members of the Confraternities and Ladies of Charity.

CONFERENCES AND CORRESPONDENCE OF VINCENT AND LOUISE

CONFERENCES OF VINCENT TO THE LADIES OF CHARITY¹⁰³

Twenty-one documents in Coste Volume 13b pertain to the Ladies of Charity covering the period 1636 to 1652. With the exception of two letters to the Ladies, the Will of Madame Goussault, the Regulations for the Ladies of Charity at the Court and the Regulations for the Company of the Ladies of the Hôtel-Dieu these are all conferences given by Vincent to them. Referring to the sixteen Conferences given to the Ladies of Charity a footnote to Document 185 states,

As with many of the documents in this section, we have only the outline for this conference. These talks were given by Saint Vincent to the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris, who also aided the foundlings, galley convicts, the devastated provinces, and other important works. If a subsequent document refers to another group of the Ladies, it will be indicated.¹⁰⁴

Of these

Undated	1 [Document 185]
1630's	3 [Documents 186, 187, 188]
1640's	11 [Documents 189, 189a, 190, 190a, 191-197 including one dated before March 1640, one 1638-1642, one 1638 or after and one between 1640 and 1650]
1650's	1 [Document 198]

¹⁰³ There are no extant documents included in Coste's work that could be classified as Conferences to the Confraternities of Charity. This is possibly because the local Pastor holding the Office of Rector was charged with the welfare and progress of the association (cf Coste Vol 13b Document 130 p. 35)

¹⁰⁴ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 13b Document 185 p. 378.

The numbers 186 through 197 and 2 additional numbers with ‘a’ appended were printed on pieces of white paper the same size and shape with no other identifying marks and placed in containers as follows:

Container 1 Numbers 186-188

Container 2 Numbers 189-197 [plus 2 additional noted ‘a’]

From the three numbers in the first container I had a colleague draw one number. In a similar manner two numbers were drawn from the eleven numbers in the second container. To these were added the single undated document and the document from the 1650’s. In this way the following five documents were randomly selected:

185 an undated Conference on *Visiting the Sick*¹⁰⁵

This is the outline of a Conference given on the importance of personal visits to the persons who are sick, three points [with three sub-points each to points one and two]; manner of visiting them, two points; and means, four points. Overall Vincent links the spiritual service to the corporal service given

188 a Conference given in 1638 or 1639 on *Meetings and Works of the Company*¹⁰⁶

This is the outline of a Conference on the attendance at meetings at the Hôtel-Dieu addressing the importance and spirit of attending meetings, with four points [points one and two grounded in scripture]; what is discussed in terms of what is happening with four points; the spiritual benefits with seven points; some recommendations with six points and the benefit of a second priest with

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. Vol 13b p. 378

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Vol 13b pp386-389

six points. Once again the corporal and spiritual service are linked with Vincent noting that the light meal they bring to the patients is an opening into the Hôtel-Dieu and that the Ladies themselves benefits as much as the patients.

190 a Conference given in April 1640 on *The Works of the Hôtel-Dieu and the Foundlings*¹⁰⁷

A general meeting at the Hôtel-Dieu with three points on the agenda: a report on the situation at the Hôtel-Dieu with four points and at the Foundlings with eight points; motives for being devoted to the work at the Hôtel-Dieu with ten points, at the Foundlings with five points [the third point ‘They are the image of Christ in a special way’ has six sub-points, all scripture based] and some objections; and why attendance of meetings is required with four points [the fourth point with four sub-points]. Vincent again notes that the distribution of the light meal in the Hôtel-Dieu has as its goal the instruction of the patients and encouraging them to make a general confession. Among the motives for devotion to this work mentions the in visiting the poor persons in the Hôtel-Dieu and the foundlings the Ladies are visiting God himself and co-operating with Christ in their salvation while gaining graces for themselves.

196 a Conference given in 1647 on *The Work of the Foundlings*¹⁰⁸

A very short conference or part of a conference, just two paragraphs, with the work of the Foundlings as its only point. Vincent begins by asking the question ‘Should the Ladies of Charity continue or abandon the work of the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. Vol 13b pp 402-407

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Vol 13b p. 423

Foundlings?’ He follows this with a study of the pros and cons, reminding the Ladies of the good they have done and what would happen if they discontinued, challenging them to decide.

198 a Conference given in July 1657 as a *Report on the State of the Works*¹⁰⁹

This is a full conference with three aims: the election of new officers if judged advisable; an update on the state of the works; and the motives and the means of continuing. It is unclear who recorded the conference in which Vincent goes into great detail about the good the Ladies have done in terms of both the corporal and spiritual service they have given. In the course of this Conference Vincent cites the work done by the Ladies as a work of God and not human work and draws the attention of the Ladies to the grace God has given them who as women have a public role in the Church for the first time in eight hundred years. Again he grounds much of what he has to say in scripture. Towards the end of it Vincent asked the Ladies for their thoughts.

CONFERENCES OF VINCENT TO THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

Between them volumes 11 and 12 of Coste contain two hundred and fifty conferences given by Vincent to the Congregation of the Mission. These breakdown as follows:

Coste Vol 11

Undated	103 conferences [Documents 1-82 plus 21 additional noted ‘a’, ‘b’, etc]
1630’s	5 conferences [Documents 83-87]

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Vol 13b 426-440

1640's	22 conferences [Documents 88-106 plus 3 additional noted 'a']
1650's	77 conferences [Documents 107-179 plus 4 additional noted 'a']

Coste Vol 12

1650's	43 conferences [Documents 180-222]
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The numbers 1 through 222 and 28 additional numbers with 'a', 'b', etc appended were printed on pieces of white paper the same size and shape with no other identifying marks and placed in containers as follows:

Container 1	Numbers 1-82 and 21 additional numbers with 'a', 'b', etc appended
Container 2	Numbers 83-87
Container 3	Numbers 88-106 and 3 additional numbers with 'a', 'b', etc appended
Container 4	Numbers 107-222 and 4 additional numbers with 'a', 'b', etc appended

From the one hundred and three numbers in the first container I had a colleague draw three numbers. Similarly one number was drawn from the five numbers in the second container, one from the twenty two numbers in the third container and three from the one hundred and twenty numbers in the fourth container. In this way the following eight conferences given by Vincent to the Congregation of the Mission were randomly selected:

9 an undated Conference on *Retreat Ministry* ¹¹⁰

In this Conference to the confrères Vincent highlights the importance of their retreat ministry in Saint-Lazare¹¹¹ and the misfortunes that may befall them if they made poor use of the graces received. He stresses the need to work faithfully and to welcome all who come. Alluding to its former use as a refuge for lepers now it is a place of welcome for those with spiritual leprosy and as such a place of their resurrection.

23 an undated Conference on *Trust in God* ¹¹²

In this short Conference Vincent exhorts the confrères to total and perfect trust in God who established the Company and to seek Him alone who will provide all that is needed. Relying too much on one's own prudence, knowledge or intelligence produces no fruit.

73 an undated Conference on *Meditation* ¹¹³

This short Conference takes place at a Repetition of Prayer and is largely a dialogue between Vincent and a Brother who asked pardon for his difficulty in

¹¹⁰ Ibid. Vol 11 p. 12

¹¹¹ The Priory of Saint-Lazare had been founded in the twelfth century as a lazar-house. By the middle ages it had become one of the largest ecclesiastical enclosure just outside the walls of Paris. By the seventeenth century the buildings included lodgings for the canons, the church, its cloister, an infirmary, a prison, a house of detention for the mentally disturbed and little houses for the lepers. The Priory was gifted to the Congregation of the Mission and the contract signed in January 1632, moving from the Collège des Bon-Enfants where they had been from the establishment of the community in 1625. This would become the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Mission. Vincent lived here until his death in 1660. It was sacked in 1789 just before the storming of the Bastille and the Congregation of the Mission suppressed. Eventually the buildings were demolished with the exception of one wall and today the area houses Gare du Nord, Saint Lazare Prison, the Lariboisière Hospital and the Church of St Vincent de Paul. Part of the present day Saint Lazare on rue de Severes was given as compensation for the original Saint Lazare when the Congregation of the Mission was eventually re-established in 1817

cf Pujo. p. 96ff; Coste CM, *The Life and Works of Saint Vincent De Paul (Vols 1-3)*. Vol 1 p. 160ff; https://famvin.org/wiki/Saint_Lazare; and https://famvin.org/wiki/Vincentian_Paris.

¹¹² Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 11 p. 31

¹¹³ Ibid. Vol 11 p. 82

applying himself to meditation. Vincent is encouraging while at the same time warning the Brother to watch out for negligence. He also advises the Brother not to force his imagination but to gently and humbly reflect on the Mysteries and virtues in a spirit of faith.

85 a Conference of October 1638 on *Recommendations at Chapter* ¹¹⁴

This Conference begins with a Brother accusing himself of speaking insolently to the Prior; another man of self-interest in giving admonitions and a third of putting a retreatant off to another day. Vincent regarded the insolence in speaking to the Prior as serious and suggested it was the culmination of other acts of disrespect and impudence. The giving of admonitions was in itself a virtue by someone wanting to advance in virtue. However, he cautioned that virtue lies between two extremes, giving pointers – discernment – for examining the legitimacy of the admonitions. To admonish someone is to see yourself as having more guilt than the one being accused while at the same time helping the other to become more holy. With respect to the man who had put the retreatant off Vincent said we had to honour how Our Lord received those who came to him whenever they presented themselves. He also said it was a holy discourtesy to leave someone you are talking to, no matter what their rank, to respond to the bell for some exercise – the reverse of ‘leaving God for God’. He finished by reminding those present not to discuss either inside or outside the house whatever is mentioned at Chapter.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. Vol 11 p. 96

101 a Conference of 1644 on *Responsibilities and Positions of Authority* ¹¹⁵

In this Conference Vincent grounds what he had to say on the importance of having the Spirit of Our Lord, who came to serve and not to be served and of how he rebuked the Apostles arguing about who would be first. It's a spirit of pride in those who want to be in charge of others. Giving several examples he elaborates on both points stressing the importance of not desiring a position of authority but when designated for it to submit with obedience and be on one's guard.

153 a Conference of 1656 on *Advice to Antoine Durand, Named Superior of the Agde Seminary* ¹¹⁶

In this lengthy Conference Vincent gives advice to Antoine Durand who has been named as superior of the Agde Seminary. He begins it by saying that the direction of souls is the art of arts, the work of the Son of God on earth and so a continuation of the ministry of Jesus Christ. It is most important that Jesus is involved so that we speak as He did. He exhorts that the confrère empties himself of self in order to clothe himself with Christ. He stresses the importance of meditation, the reservoir of instructions for ministry. Learn directly from God. Be inseparably attached to Our Lord. The place to discover the needs of those being guided. Humility also stressed as is being servant. Warns against the venom of complacency. Be dependent on the guidance of the Son of God including showing deference to those who are your superiors.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. Vol 11 p. 124

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Vol 11 p. 376

Always consult others. Be faithful in observing the Rules and exact in having them observed. Provide for the needs of both body and soul.

173 a Conference of September 1657 on *The Virtues of Mathurin de Belleville*¹¹⁷ This Conference begins with two of the scholastics reporting on the virtues they had noted in Mathurin de Belleville who died on the way to Madagascar. Vincent mentioned that he had begged to be admitted to the Company and was accepted on account of his devotion and humility despite his lack of learning. He then took the opportunity to encourage those with difficulty in understanding philosophy, theology, etc. He went on to address those who were guiding and directing the retreatant in Saint-Lazare, warning them only to help them decide where God is calling them and to allow God to act, not advising them to enter the Company. Be content with the persons God sends us.

205 a Conference of May 1659 on *Indifference*¹¹⁸

The beginning of this Conference indicates that that Vincent's method with the confrères was most likely similar to that which he used with the Daughters in that a topic for the Conference was circulated in advance. Very likely he also asked those present for their view on the topic before proceeding to give his own input. On this occasion there was a change in topic and Vincent spoke about the virtue of Openness to God's Will [indifference] from the Common Rules. The sort of openness to God's Will that Jesus and the saints developed.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. Vol 11 p. 376

¹¹⁸ Ibid. Vol 12 p. 187

It is necessary to attain holiness and to achieve the intended purpose of going to poor people to instruct them – one cannot give what one doesn't have. One cannot do God's will while following one's own. It is the height of holiness and the sum of all virtues. He details the characteristics of openness to God's Will, the means of attaining the virtue and the virtues that flow from it.

CONFERENCES OF VINCENT TO THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

One hundred and twenty one conferences given by Vincent, often at the request of Louise, to the Daughters of Charity are contained in Volumes 9 and 10 of Coste. The breakdown of these conferences are as follows:

Coste Vol 9

1630's	1 conference [Document 1]
1640's	41 conferences [Documents 2-42]
1650's	19 conferences [Documents 43-60 inc 49a]

Coste Vol 10

1650's	57 conferences [Documents 61-117]
1660's	3 conferences [Documents 118-120]

Of the three conferences given in the 1660's two were given in July on the Virtues of Louise de Marillac¹¹⁹ and one towards the end of August, little more than a month before the death of Vincent himself, on the Election of Officers.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Ibid. Vol 10 Document 118 pp 569-581 and Document 119 pp 582-590

¹²⁰ Ibid. Vol 10 Document 120 pp 591-598

The numbers 2 through 120 and 49a were printed on pieces of white paper the same size and shape with no other identifying marks and placed in containers as follows:

Container 1	Numbers 2-42
Container 2	Numbers 43-117 including 49a
Container 3	Numbers 118-120

From the forty-one numbers in the first container I had a colleague draw two numbers. Similarly four numbers were drawn from the seventy-six number in the second container and one from the three numbers in the third container. To these was added the single conference given in the 1630's. In this way the following eight conferences given by Vincent to the Daughters of Charity were randomly selected:

1 Conference of July 1634 on *Explanation of the Regulations*¹²¹

This is the third of three Conferences given by Vincent explaining the regulations and the only one extant. In it he notes that the sisters have been together for some time (since November 1633) without any regulations for their way of life. In this Divine Providence has been their guide. How this was the same since creation and in the early Church. He then details an Order of Day from rising at 5am to retiring at 10pm, reminding the sisters that they must take due care of themselves for the service of those who are poor. In this he encourages the sisters to pray and share their prayer with one another, in particular the resolutions they make with regard to the practice of a particular virtue; reminds them that they are concelebrants at Mass; of leaving God for God; that their service is both corporal and spiritual; about being gentle with

¹²¹ Ibid. Vol 9 p. 1

persons who are poor; about the frequent remembrance of the Presence of God; making good use of their free time, learning to read to enhance their service and to examine their conscience both at midday and before retiring. He then addresses obedience, how it teaches humility and the need for superiors; how to treat the Ladies of the Confraternities and the sick before naming three superiors and reminding one sister that her guardian angel is her guide. He gives them four reasons for living in this way and seven means for doing so suggesting to the sisters that they reflect on the many graces they have received.

24 Conference of February 1646 on *Love of Vocation and Assistance to the Poor*¹²²

In this Conference Vincent begins, as he generally does with the sisters, by asking a sister about an incident that had happened a few days previously when a house collapsed while she was visiting one of her poor persons. He listened very attentively, noted the sister's fear and prayed. He then asked several sisters for their opinion on the subject of the Conference, thanked God for the inspiration He had given, developed what they had said; told them how the Confraternities and Ladies of Charity had begun and of the first young women coming to serve under the guidance of the Ladies. How this was the beginning of the little Company and that it is still evolving in God's plan; of how the service they render was unheard of until now because God had reserved it for them.

¹²² Ibid. Vol 9 p. 190

39 Conference of August 1648 on *The Spirit of the World*¹²³

In this Conference Vincent begins by asking a number of sisters in turn for the reasons a Daughter of Charity should shun the spirit of the world, further developing each offering in turn. Finally he asks Louise for her thoughts on this before addressing the question of what the spirit of the world is in like manner. In the same way he deals with the means necessary to reject the spirit of the world. Vincent went on to speak about the importance of imitating the poverty of Jesus, practising mortification, avoiding extremes and the difference between being tempted and yielding to temptations.

51 Conference of February 1653 on *The Spirit of the Company*¹²⁴

This Conference, is the second of three Conferences with three points. The first, the reasons to know the Spirit of the Company, was dealt with in the earlier Conference. In this Conference Vincent deals with the second point what the spirit of the Company consists. It is one of the few Conferences that Vincent does not start by asking the sisters their views and he explains why at the beginning. He points out the difference between the Daughters and others who assist poor persons and reminds the sisters that their spirit is to give themselves to God serving Him both corporally and spiritually in poor persons. He elaborates on this and repeats it several time in different ways saying that affective love must become effective love. Humility, simplicity and charity are the virtues that will mark a Daughter of Charity.

¹²³ Ibid. Vol 9 p. 344

¹²⁴ Ibid. Vol 9 p. 465

61 Conference of July 1654 called *To Four Sisters being sent to Sedan*¹²⁵

In this Conference Vincent gives instruction and advice to four sisters being sent to nurse men wounded in the King's service in Sedan. He begins by advising them to reflect on the reasons for doing this well. They are chosen by God from all the women in France for this; it is a holy ministry to be performed with perfection; and the Queen has asked for them, although this is not as important compared to the good pleasure of God. He reminds them that the way to honour God is by practicing the virtues of their spirit, humility, simplicity and charity; that they are going to do what Our Lord did on earth imitating Him by restoring the souls of the poor wounded men to life by their instruction and good example. He stresses the importance of mortification in order to grow in virtue and give glory to God. At the end of his exhortation he asks and takes some practical questions from the sisters.

79 Conference of January 1657 on *The Obligation of Striving for Perfection*¹²⁶

In this Conference, set at the beginning of the year, Vincent addresses three points, the reasons for striving at perfection, to imitate Christ increasing in virtue, if one doesn't advance one falls back; the practices necessary, mortification of the senses, both interior and exterior; and the things that hinder the desire for an easy life and lack of fidelity in little things. He elaborates on each point in turn

¹²⁵ Ibid. Vol 10 p. 1

¹²⁶ Ibid. Vol 10 p. 197

99 Conference of July 1658 on *Fidelity to the Rules*¹²⁷

In this Conference Vincent turns to the importance of the sisters being faithful to their rules. The rules have been given by God, attention to them will help achieve holiness, observing the rules is fulfilling the will of God. He also reminds the sisters where two Rules appear to conflict, for example being at prayer and serving poor persons, they are without scruples to leave God for God.

119 Conference of July 1660 on *The Virtues of Louise de Marillac*¹²⁸

This is the second of two Conferences given by Vincent after Louise's death on her virtues. In this one he asks the sisters about the virtues they have noted and the virtue they intend to imitate. He listened intently as the sisters painted a portrait of Louise by way of her virtues encouraging them to pattern their lives on hers. He went on to note some areas in which some of the sisters were growing lax, modesty, silence and recollection. He entreats the sisters to strive to become virtuous and to encourage one another in this.

CONFERENCES AND WRITINGS OF LOUISE DE MARILLAC

In addition to her correspondence the *Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac*¹²⁹ contains other writings of St Louise. Some of these are her recordings of her own prayer and reflection. Others give details of her visits to the various Confraternities of Charity or notes on meetings with the Ladies of Charity. Still others give the outline for a retreat and the subject for meditations during it. Following the

¹²⁷ Ibid. Vol 10 p. 433

¹²⁸ Ibid. Vol 10 p. 582

¹²⁹ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*.

founding of the Daughters of Charity in 1633 some of them are instructions to the sisters in different situations or thoughts drawn up for conferences subsequently given by Vincent and some very clearly conferences given to the sisters by Louise herself.

Excluding those recordings of her own prayer and reflection which were more akin to the entries in a personal prayer journal there are fifty-three writings as follows:

1620's	3
1630's	9
1640's	15
1650's	24
1660's	2 [including her Spiritual Testament given to the sisters as she was dying]

As was done with the conferences of St Vincent the numbers of these documents were printed on pieces of white paper the same size and shape with no other identifying marks and placed in containers according to their decade.

From the three numbers in the container holding the 1620's documents I had a colleague draw one number. Similarly one number was drawn from the nine numbers in the 1630's container, two from the fifteen numbers in the 1640's container, three from the twenty-four numbers in the 1650's container and one from the two numbers in the 1660's container. In this way the following eight documents were randomly selected:

A9 undated late 1620's outline for a *Retreat*¹³⁰

In these notes from a retreat Louise stresses complete dependence on God; using her entire being to know God; and desiring no longer to subsist of herself.

¹³⁰ Ibid. p. 702

She then lists several resolutions whereby she would imitate Jesus in all that he teaches from his birth through to his death and have confidence in Him; to struggle against her evil inclinations having recourse to God to eliminate sin from her life.

A52 notes from 1633 on *Visits to the Confraternities of Verneuil, Pont-Sainte-Maxence, Gournay, Neufville and Bulles*¹³¹

These notes on the visits to the five Confraternities took place between the death of Marguerite Nasseau in February/March 1633 and before the founding of the Daughters of Charity in November 1633. She notes that in each of the Confraternities that despite some difficulties in general the sick poor are served faithfully.

A44 Conference from 1646 on *Remarks on Three Deceased Sisters*¹³²

This is part of a Conference given by Louise to the sisters in respect of three sisters who are deceased. She highlights the importance of progress in virtue and being grateful for the graces received as the reason for doing this and notes several virtues apparent in those who have died.

A71 Conference of August 1647 called *On Holy Communion*¹³³

Notes for Vincent for a Conference he would give On Holy Communion¹³⁴

Louise suggests he deal with two points in relation to Holy Communion; why

¹³¹ Ibid. p. 722

¹³² Ibid. p. 767

¹³³ Ibid. p. 779

¹³⁴ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 9 pp 260-272

one should communicate worthily; and what one should do in order to communicate worthily. In relation to the ‘why’ she focusses on the fear and the love of God; gratitude for His great love and practice of His virtues. Having a high esteem of Holy Communion; striving to remove the obstacles of being self-centred and self-willed; and having the right intentions.

S1 undated Conference of early 1650’s given as part of *the Visitation of a House*¹³⁵

In this Conference Louise notes that the points to be treated were given to the sisters in advance so they could make their meditation on them. She deals with how each of the six sisters observe the Rules and the virtues in which they have failed.

A81 late 1650’s *Remarks on the Rule for the Sisters with the Foundlings*¹³⁶

This would appear to be Louise’s comments and additions to a number of the Articles of the Rules for the Sisters with the Foundlings. Among these she suggests the need to draw up some meditations on the service of little children; adds a piece on promotion of modesty, purity and good health; adds that the sisters discipline the children with little mortifications or gentle words; suggests the need for particular rules for certain duties; and having the older girls lead the prayers taking their turn weekly

¹³⁵ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. p. 792

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 811

A45 notes from December 1656 *Advice Requested from Monsieur Vincent*¹³⁷

The first lines of this document make it clear that it is Louise's notes of advice given by Vincent to her in response to her asking him about the dispositions she should once again take. She had also raised the question of the direction of the sisters and he told her that direction is a gift obtained through patience.

A100 Conference of early 1660 on *Problems for the Company*¹³⁸

This Conference relates specifically to a method of teaching that one of the sisters has started to use in La Fère. Louise sees it as too sophisticated and could lead the sisters away from more humble duties and develop illusions of grandeur. This could lead to the destruction of the Company as poor girls would be prevented from entering it. She stresses the importance of honouring the hidden life of Jesus.

LETTERS WRITTEN BY VINCENT DE PAUL

There are some three thousand four hundred and twenty nine letters written or received by Vincent between 1617 and his death in 1660 in Volumes 1-8 of Coste. While of these six hundred and seventy three were received, apart from some of those received from Louise, they do not represent both sides of the correspondence. In some instances Vincent made his reply in the column of the letter he had received.

In his *Introduction to the French Edition* Pierre Coste¹³⁹ indicates that we have less than ten per cent of the overall letters written by Vincent and gives a detailed

¹³⁷ Ibid. p. 814

¹³⁸ Ibid. p. 832

¹³⁹ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 1 pp xxv-xlvi

explanation of where the collections are located.¹⁴⁰ Even a cursory glance at the *Tables of Contents* of the eight volumes gives one an idea of the breadth of Vincent's reach. As well as correspondence with Louise and the early Daughters, the Ladies of Charity and the Priests of the Mission there are letters to Popes, ecclesiastics, other religious, royalty, Town Magistrates and beyond France to Italy, Austria, Poland, Ireland and Algiers. Coste also notes in this *Introduction* that of the letters we have four hundred were written to Louise. After her the greatest number of Vincent's letters were to named Superiors in the houses of the Priests of the Mission.¹⁴¹ The *Introduction to the English Edition*¹⁴² gives the background to and working of the Translation Project concluding with:

Let us not fail to seek the man beyond these words, the man of compassion, warmth, humor, savoir faire, authority, and, most of all, the mystic whose sanctity was carved amid the bustle and involvement of very human situations. He will give us hope that we, too, can find holiness in an ordinary, busy life. May this personal acquaintance with the real Vincent de Paul lead us to encounter the dynamic force behind his life, Jesus Christ, Who, for him, was all things.¹⁴³

The breakdown of the two thousand seven hundred and twenty six letters we have that he wrote is as follows:

Letters Written by Decade

Decade	Number
1617-19	3
1620's	24
1630's	371
1640's	533

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. Vol 1 pp xxx-xxxii

¹⁴¹ Ibid. Vol 1 pp xxv-xxvi

¹⁴² Ibid. Vol 1 pp il-lxiii

¹⁴³ Ibid. Vol 1 p. lxiii

1650's 1,652

1660's 143

As had been previously done with the conferences the numbers of these documents were printed on pieces of white paper the same size and shape with no other identifying marks and placed in containers according to their decade.

The three letters written between 1617 and 1619 are one each to Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi [Document 6], Madame de Gondi [Document 8] and Charles du Fresne¹⁴⁴ [Document 10]. All were all written in 1617 when Vincent was still in Châtillon-les-Dombes. However, Coste does not include the full text of these letters simply a summary of their content. For this reason I have not included them in this analysis.

From the twenty-four numbers in the container holding the 1620's documents I had a colleague draw one number. Similarly two numbers were drawn from the three hundred and seventy one numbers in the 1630's container, two from the five hundred and thirty-three numbers in the 1640's container, six from the one thousand, six hundred and fifty-two numbers in the 1650's container and one from the one hundred and forty-three numbers in the 1660's container. In this way the following twelve letters written by Vincent were randomly selected:

32 to Louise, around 1629¹⁴⁵

In this portion of letter to Louise Vincent emphasises the need to follow Providence and not to try to get ahead of it.

¹⁴⁴ Secretary to Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi

¹⁴⁵ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 1 p. 60

69 to Louise, May 1631¹⁴⁶

This letter to Louise is obviously in reply to one Vincent has received from her. He tells her she made a poor decision not receiving Communion pointing out that what led to that decision was a temptation and of how it is an illusion to think she can draw closer to God by withdrawing from Him. He also suggests that her upset and anxiety around caring for her son is another temptation, stressing that the Will of God is not opposed to the Will of God.

244 to Robert de Sergis in Roye, September 1636¹⁴⁷

This letter is written to one of the confrères who was detained by Providence on his way to war and is to accompany the Chancellor. He begins by reminding him of how Joseph went initially to Egypt as a slave and how things ended for him and his family inviting him to see his situation in similar terms. He then gives him some advice depending on whether he is to be chaplain or assisting the soldiers. He tells him of some rituals after Mass in the presence of the great and suggests he make some inquiries. If he is assisting the soldiers Vincent suggest that he give them some catechetical instruction.

424 to Jacques Tholard in Annecy, February 1640¹⁴⁸

In this letter to one of the confrères Vincent is obviously responding to one he has received in which the confrère has written of temptations and difficulties he has in hearing confessions. Vincent encourages him with reference to St Paul and the masters of the spiritual life assuring him that he is not alone in

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. Vol 1 p. 108

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. Vol 1 p. 343

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. Vol 2 p. 19

these difficulties. In the course of what is a lengthy letter Vincent composes a dialogue of sorts with the confrère to make his point. He advises him to continue hearing confessions, only to confess his difficulties and temptations during his annual retreat and generally to pass over the matters concerned lightly.

799 to Guillaume Delattre, Superior in Cahors, April 1646¹⁴⁹

This letter to Guillaume Delattre is obviously in response to one he has sent to Vincent. Vincent informs him that he has not given sufficient information to allow him make a judgement in relation to whatever he has done. He stresses the importance of being gentle as well as firm in his dealings taking care to lead people by example gently and patiently. He also encourages him to humility and confidence in God

1192 to Sister Jeanne Lepeintre in Nantes, February 1650¹⁵⁰

This letter to one of the Daughters of Charity in Nantes is in response to one he has received from her in which she has informed him of the restrictions of their living accommodation in the hospital, which he advises be brought to the attention of the Hospital Administrators; of wishing to be relieved of from her position of authority, which he praises advising her to remain indifferent; her desire for spiritual direction, which he says is useful but in the absence of a spiritual father the Lord Himself will provide; an issue with one of the other sisters, to which he counsels patience; the naming of a confessor which he

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. Vol 2 p. 636

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. Vol 3 p. 602

does; and some other difficulties they have been experiencing to which again he counsels patience.

1213 to Gerard Brin in Limerick, April 1650¹⁵¹

In this letter Vincent thanks and encourages Gerard Brin both for his spirit of martyrdom, staying in the midst of danger [the Cromwellian persecutions] and prudence in looking after the men with him sending them back to France. He also reassures him about the men who were prepared to remain with him and praises the good work they have been doing.

1241 to A Bishop, early 1650's¹⁵²

In this letter Vincent reassures a bishop who has informed him that he is not well that his illness is not incurable and counsels patience. Vincent also advises him to persevere and not to think of leaving his diocese suggesting that the difficulties he has are no greater than those borne by the Apostles.

1653 to A Young Woman of Arras, September 1653¹⁵³

This young woman has obviously written to Vincent looking for advice. For his part Vincent informs her that it is difficult to give this advice when the full circumstances are not known. He poses a number of questions to her that he would like to have had the answers to before responding. He then goes on to advise her that if she had recommended the affair to God, sought advice of

¹⁵¹ Ibid. Vol 4 p. 17

¹⁵² Ibid. Vol 4 p. 53

¹⁵³ Ibid. Vol 5 p. 13

pious persons and drawn up an agreement she should abide by it. If any of these are missing, particularly the agreement, she should carry them out now.

2160 to Sister Marguerite Chétif, Sister Servant in Arras, October 1656¹⁵⁴

In this letter Vincent is responding to a letter from the Daughter of Charity concerned to Louise in relation to the type of headdress the sisters wear. He addresses her concern of appearing different from the locals suggesting it is pride that causes her shame. He points out the situation with other communities and Christ himself, entreating her to desire to make herself pleasing to God and to bear peacefully the humiliation she endures and reminding her to be recollected and modest.

2820 to Luke Plunket in Saint-Méen, April 1659¹⁵⁵

Luke is obviously having difficulty teaching chant, something that doesn't surprise or worry Vincent. What he is concerned about is that this confrère has given up trying and he reminds him that Christian virtue is about mastering difficulties. He is very direct with him posing many questions and advising him to reflect seriously on what he wants to do, to give himself to God to observe the Rules and practice the virtues.

3147 to A Visitation Nun, June 1660¹⁵⁶

This letter to a Visitation nun, written by Vincent just three months before his own death, in response to one he had received from her. He acknowledges the

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. Vol 6 p. 129

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. Vol 7 p. 524

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. Vol 8 p. 374

difficulties she has experienced but advises her to remain at peace with confidence in God. He encourages her to focus on the reasons she has to be grateful rather than on fear.

LETTERS WRITTEN BY LOUISE DE MARILLAC

Sullivan contains seven hundred and thirty letters written by Louise between 1627 and 1660. The Introduction to the 1983 French Edition notes:

For this new publication, a trial method of chronological classifications has been undertaken. The documents without dates are numerous, but by comparing them with the dated letters found in the work of Coste, along with the letters received by Louise de Marillac from the Daughters of Charity, the Vincentians and the Administrators, it was possible to date precisely a great number of them...

Dates in brackets were written on the back of autographs by Brother Ducourneau, Monsieur Vincent's secretary. Dates or other entries in parentheses were determined by taking into account events transpiring in the Company of the Daughters of Charity or in the Congregation of the Mission at a given period.¹⁵⁷

By far the largest number of letters we have were written by Louise to the sisters to whom she wrote three hundred and twenty seven to individual sisters and fifty four to two or more sisters in their various places of ministry. Two hundred and six were written to Vincent, seventeen to Antoine Portail¹⁵⁸ and one hundred and one to the Abbé de Vaux.¹⁵⁹ A further twenty five letters were written to several other people. One of these was written to her son. Others were written to some Ladies of Charity and Priests of the Mission as well as benefactors in places where the Daughters were serving. Unfortunately, with the exception of some of the letters written to

¹⁵⁷ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. p. xxxiv

¹⁵⁸ Antoine Portail was one of Vincent's first companions who was appointed Director of the Daughters of Charity in 1642

¹⁵⁹ The Abbé de Vaux was the Vicar General in Angers and was advisor to the Daughters in the hospital there

Vincent which are in Vols 1-8 of Coste, we only have Louise's side of the correspondence.

The breakdown of the seven hundred and thirty letters we have that Louise wrote is as follows:

Letters Written by Decade

Decade	Number
1620's	2
1630's	12
1640's	298
Pre-1650	11 (undated)
1650's	384
Post-1650	14 (undated)
1660's	9

As had been done with the conferences and Vincent's letters the numbers of these documents were printed on pieces of white paper the same size and shape with no other identifying marks and placed in containers according to their decade.

From the two numbers in the container holding the 1620's documents I had a colleague draw one number. In a similar manner one number was drawn from the twelve numbers in the 1630's container, two from the two hundred and ninety eight numbers in the 1640's container, one from the eleven numbers in the undated pre-1650 container, three from the three hundred and eighty-four numbers in the 1650's container one from the fourteen undated post-1650 container and one from the nine numbers in the 1660's container. In this way the following ten documents were randomly selected:

L1 to Vincent, June 1627¹⁶⁰

Louise writes this letter to Vincent impatient because of his long absence and troubled about the future. She informs him that she takes comfort that it is business that delays him and desires to wait calmly. She also informs him of how she spent time with one of the Ladies who has been more anxious of late and of how they were open to do God's Will. She raises the issue of a girl due to be sent from Burgundy and seeks advice on how to proceed. She finishes by telling Vincent of graces she has received in the past month.

L11 to Sisters Barbe Angiboust and Louise Ganset at Richelieu, October 1639¹⁶¹

In this letter Louise writes to two sister together and is very direct with them, their work has not helped their advancement in perfection. She advises them to reflect on how they offend God and scandalise their neighbours. Within the letter she addresses each one individually pointing out her faults and advising remedies and ends by informing them that she expects a reconciliation and renewal of affection, saying true humility will regulate everything.

L19 to Monsieur L'Abbé de Vaux at Angers, May 1640¹⁶²

Writing to l'Abbé de Vaux Louise begins by praising God for His mercy and justice. Louise is concerned that the sisters in Angers are taking advantage of him and urges him not to let them do so. She asks him to communicate the

¹⁶⁰ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. p. 5

¹⁶¹ Ibid. p. 18

¹⁶² Ibid. p. 27

sisters' faults to her as well as the good they do and to remind them of their duty to obey.

L207 to Sister Barbe Angiboust at Fontainebleau, March 1647¹⁶³

Louise expresses her concern that Barbe has not let her know why she is without consolation, asking her if she has a slight ailment. If this is the case then she urges her to wait better health peacefully and love God's holy will. If it is that she is grieved by others, then leave them to God. She reminds her that all she can do is remain faithful to God; her infirmity cannot prevent her having true humility or being cordial and gentle towards her neighbour.

L369 to Vincent, undated prior to 1650¹⁶⁴

In this letter to Vincent Louise is full of joy which she attributes to God giving her the understanding of 'God is my God'. Her request to Vincent is that he assist her profit from this great joy and to suggest some practices for the following day when she renews her vows.

L300 to Sister Charlotte and Sister Françoise at Richelieu, March 1651¹⁶⁵

This is a general letter written to the two sisters giving them some general community news and asking them to help a former sister come to peace with her decision to leave the community. She also addresses a question they have raised with her about making perpetual vows and explains why it is sufficient

¹⁶³ Ibid. p. 191

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 341

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 346

to make their offering for one year and renew it annually and about submitting to the guidance of superiors.

L447 to Sisters Marguerite, Madeleine and Françoise at Warsaw, August 1655¹⁶⁶

This letter is written to three sisters in Poland as three more are preparing to join them there. In it Louise stresses that they are going to do the will of God and linked to His plans for Poland. She suggests that this fill them with humility at being chosen and to strive not to allow themselves be unworthy of it. In responding to her own question of what they will do to bring this about she highlights mortification, cordial union, by practicing heroic virtue by spontaneous acts of humility and gentleness. She asks the sisters already in Poland not to speak Polish among themselves without letting the newcomers know what they are saying. She reminds the sisters that the same spirit animates the sisters joining them, doing God's will and serving poor people and urges them to do all to help them settle.

L546 to Sister Marguerite Chétif at Arras, October 1657¹⁶⁷

This letter to a sister is in response to one she has written concerning some trials she is experiencing. Louise exhorts her to bear them with loving patience and peaceful acceptance seeing them as opportunities of bearing witness to her fidelity, completely dependent on God and the guidance of Providence.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 477

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 575

L40 to Madame...., undated post 1650¹⁶⁸

This letter is a cover note with some spiritual exercises for the lady in question which Louise has chosen for her in light of the lady having opened her soul. She encourages the lady to put them into practice as a means of acquiring the perfection God is asking. Louise also encourages her to esteem humility and gentle cordiality and in prayer to speak with great simplicity and innocent familiarity, reminding the lady that God only wants our hearts.

L655 to Vincent, January 1660¹⁶⁹

In this letter written by Louise to Vincent just weeks before her death she is putting into writing things she has already spoken to him about. She begins by expressing her concerns for Vincent himself before reflecting for him on the condition of the Company and her concerns in relation to it. This leads her to realise the necessity of the Rules obliging the sisters to live poorly, simply and humbly.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed the historical, cultural, theological and spiritual context of seventeenth century France with particular reference to how Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, formed within it, responded to the needs of the people living in both spiritual and material poverty. It has also detailed the selection made from their Conferences and Correspondence documents to be analysed alongside the interviews from Phase I and Phase II. I turn now to the findings.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 679

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 677

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Chapter 8

RESEARCH FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

In his book on *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* Anslem L Strauss notes

Any researcher who wishes to become proficient at doing qualitative analysis must learn to code well and easily. The excellence of the research rests in large part on the excellence of the coding.¹

Coding for qualitative research is the process that allows the researcher to assign initial labels, a word or a phrase, to capture the essential meaning of data. In the current research the data are the transcripts of the interviews in both Phase I and Phase II and the random selection of Correspondence and Conferences of Vincent and Louise. The codes become the link between the data collected, the findings and the research question, in much the same way as the title and the contents of a book are linked. Reflection on and sorting of these codes then allows the researcher to identify any patterns that are occurring which can then be clustered together into categories. With further reflection the researcher synthesises these categories into themes. The coding itself in relation to this research is, as already noted, a significant aspect of the mystagogical research method being used. It is also important to remember the

¹ Anslem L Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). p. 27

subjective nature of coding and the importance of reflexivity on the part of the researcher during the coding process.

The wide range of treasures contained in both the Phase I and Phase II interviews and the writings were coded in a process not unlike that of weaving fabric from the raw wool using methods detailed by Johnny Saldaña².

PHASE I INTERVIEWS

Significant threads for the Phase I interviews were identified from the initial coding using a mixture of First Cycle Coding Methods. Attribute Coding³ allowed me to document the profiles of the participants;⁴ this was followed by Initial Coding⁵ which provided a starting point as I reflected on the content of the interviews. During this first round of Initial Coding of the interviews and the reflection flowing from it some of the more prominent strands that were identified.

As I continued to reflect with and understand the content of the interview transcripts Structural Coding,⁶ allowed me to associate codes with the questions and probes employed, and indeed the research question itself, and group the responses while Descriptive Coding,⁷ enabled me document and categorise the range of opinions stated by all those interviewed. Together these gave me the basis on which to further classify the content while In Vivo Coding⁸ captured the richness expressed in the actual voices of the persons interviewed. Simultaneous Coding⁹ allowed me to assign multiple meanings to some of the interview transcript material. These threads were

² Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Los Angeles CA, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage, 2009).

³ Ibid. p. 55

⁴ See Appendices E-G pp 415-417 and Appendix 'O' p. 431

⁵ Saldaña. p. 81

⁶ Ibid. p. 66

⁷ Ibid. p. 70

⁸ Ibid. p. 74

⁹ Ibid. p. 62

then further coded using Second Cycle Coding Methods. Employing both Pattern Coding¹⁰ to group together the material emerging and Focused Coding¹¹ to identify the most significant or frequent codes the coded data from the first cycle of coding were woven together in meaningful patterns and categories. This process was repeated until significant multi-faceted threads emerged. These were then formed into themes.

The most prominent strands identified from the Phase I interviews included:

Growth in holiness;

Inclusiveness and availability;

Related to service not just prayer – where is God in the events of life;

Formal and Informal dimensions;

Christ in the Poor – learn from them/be evangelised by them;

Will of God – in the everyday;

Discernment;

Importance of respect, dignity, friendship;

Vincentians go out to people, meet them in their place – a different relationship/power base;

Vincentian virtues;

Some gender differences;

Some training and post-training Issues.

The significant multi-faceted threads that emerged from further First Cycle Coding, reflection and Second Cycle Coding were formed into themes as follows:

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 152

¹¹ Ibid. p. 155

Themes	Threads
Gender Differences;	Some gender differences
Training and Post-training Issues;	Some post-training issues
All are called to Holiness;	Growth in Holiness; Inclusiveness and availability
Holistic/Integrated Service – formal and informal dimensions;	Related to service not just prayer – where God is in the events of life; Informal dimension; Inclusiveness and availability
Vincentian Discernment and Virtues;	Discernment; Will of God – in the everyday; Importance of respect, dignity and friendship; Vincentian virtues
Vincentians go out to people – to meet Christ;	Vincentians go out to people, meet them in their place – a different relationship/power base; Christ in the Poor – learn from them/be evangelised by them
Evangelised by the Poor	Christ in the Poor – learn from them/be evangelised by them

Table 5 Mapping of Threads to Themes – Phase I

GENDER DIFFERENCES

The Profiles of Ministries in Appendix H show the great similarity in the ministries undertaken by members of the Vincentian Family interviewed. Some gender differences did however exist, but these relate mainly to specific functions of priestly ministry. In particular those members of the Congregation of the Mission currently spiritual directors in diocesan seminaries placed more emphasis on the priestly formation dimension of Vincent's work. Preaching and hearing confessions as means of spiritual direction with ordinary people were both mentioned by members of the Congregation of the Mission, neither of which is available to the members of the Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation.

'My preaching is spiritual direction.' [Fionn]

'The other thing that we haven't really talked about but I think is important is confessions. For us priests this is too.... because you get a lot of marginalised people in confession... Sometimes you get some of the poor people who come for confession to you and that's where you have an opportunity to reach out as a Vincentian and to talk to these people and make them feel ok, you know, that they are loved and respected.' [Rory]

TRAINING AND POST-TRAINING ISSUES

Appendix G gives details of the Formation/Training Programmes undertaken by those interviewed. Only one of those interviewed had participated in a specifically Vincentian Formation Programme for Spiritual Directors while two members of the Congregation of the Mission had not participated in any programme. Those who participated in programmes other than strictly Ignatian did so because they felt they were more creative,

'I selected this particular course because I felt it would help me with the creative aspects. It seemed to be quite creative in the syllabus which I subsequently found that it was.' [Cait]

or closer to the Vincentian approach.

'I actually thought it was very, very Vincentian that their approach to it was very, very like what I would expect the Vincentian approach to be, you know, people orientated, it was for everybody, it was gently listening.' [Rita]

Ignatian programmes were more of the norm though some of those who participated in them, while valuing what they received, struggled with their approach:

'There were moments when this doesn't quite fit with our tradition as a Vincentian. And the way I described it was, in general terms, was that their Jesuit, Ignatius was a soldier whereas Vincent was a pastor.... Vincent's way is much gentler.' [Fionn]

and others, in relation to their training in Ignatian programmes, acknowledge that:

'I've kind of let some of that go. How I work now.... you know, in retreat I don't give them a whole lot of stuff, I say ok, where are you now, what's going on in your life now?' [Peig]

And, while it is very helpful in fact you know to study, to read I don't think we can study spiritual direction, but you grow in spiritual direction [Laoise]

ALL ARE CALLED TO HOLINESS

Almost like the overture to an opera one group of threads that links all the responses of the interviewees is the understanding that all people are called to holiness, irrespective of their physical or mental ability or their socio-economic status. The influence of Vatican II was very evident in the expression of this universal call to

holiness, of which growth in relationship with God is part. It can however look different for different groups of people, and so the call to holiness itself is composed of many threads. The experience of working closely with vulnerable people led some of those interviewed to identify the call to holiness in the gospel action of washing of hands and striving for bodily integrity:

'When I saw children (with severe intellectual disability) who couldn't toilet themselves.... I used to think when they are thirty years of age and they still can't toilet themselves what is important for them right now? Not to educate them in the ABC, but to know the importance of washing their hands and of knowing the need to get to the toilet.' [Louise]

For others it is about discovering God's presence in the mess of life:

'We are very practical in our directing. We look at the daily life in the, the little things of daily life. Where's God present in the mess?' [Peig]

'I had a person who thumped me in the chest when her two children died in a caravan fire and she said to me, 'don't talk to me about your God anymore, your God is a greedy God'.' [Fionn]

Others interviewed saw the call to holiness as the invitation to integrate the various aspects of life:

'When they come in spiritual direction, the seminarians, I ask them about what's going on in the human, spiritual, academic and pastoral areas, you know, what's going on in your life in these four areas.' [Rory]

'I mean the kind of a very simple question I might often be asking people at the beginning of a direction session, 'well what's been happening for you, what's been happening in your life?' Helping them to kind of see in the experiences that God is being present in some way.' [Peig]

while also focussing on the personal authenticity required:

'And I would be saying to the guys in spiritual direction, I say, not the guy next door, the holy fella, you embrace your own... don't embrace his story, don't envy his story, embrace your own story, with the black and white and the greys and whatever and it's yours. The agenda of your own life will make you a saint.' [Cian]

A strong emphasis was also placed on inclusiveness even as poverty itself has many faces:

'One big thing I think is the fact the inclusiveness, it's not exclusive for those who are holy or mystical or can afford it, or... it's prisoners, elderly street people, anybody.' [Éimear]

'Following Christ evangelising the poor, however he reveals himself to me on the way, whatever the circumstances, whatever table you are at.' [Nial]

Stressing too each person's search for meaning:

'This whole searching that people have for meaning in life'. [Rita]

'You know they are so earnestly seeking, seeking God in their lives, seeking a relationship with God and they don't even realise it half the time.' [Éimear]

And the marginalisation they experience:

'They were marginalised by society, they were marginalised by the Church.... they were marginalised by anyone who could marginalise them.' [Cait]

'We are focusing there you know on somebody who is poor in many ways, it is not poor financially sometimes, sometimes it is mentally, sometimes it is physically, but in the person in front of me.' [Laoise]

While Fergal words were echoed in what all of the spiritual directors said:

'Nobody is to be excluded from spiritual direction. Nobody is to be excluded from holiness.' [Fergal]

That this call to holiness finds expression in relationship was also highlighted:

'Where's the presence, where's the Spirit present and active in our relationship, not in their life, but in our relationship because I can only understand their life within the context of my relationship with them.' [Nial]

The invitation implicit in this call of all to holiness was understood by one interviewee as:

'I would be empowering the directee to become his/her own director.' [Cian]

while another expressed it:

'...we talk a lot about salvation when we are with the poor. Salvation is not an individual reality. It is, it is a corporate experience. We are saved altogether. We are, we are, we are sinners, you know, we are all sinners and we are saved altogether.' [Laoise]

It appears to me that their understanding that all people are called to holiness colours their overall approach and gives it a luminosity which reminds me of the gospel story of the Transfiguration (Mk 9:2-8) as sitting with the transcripts of the interviews and coding them have been for me an experience of, 'Lord, it is wonderful to be here' (cf Mk 9:5).

HOLISTIC/INTEGRATED SERVICE – FORMAL AND INFORMAL DIMENSIONS

The general understanding of spiritual direction is in a formal offering where someone is met by appointment on a regular basis in an office or other specified place. In these instances the person seeking spiritual direction has usually taken the initiative. All those interviewed identified and spoke about their formal practice of spiritual

direction. However, many more instances of what they call ‘informal spiritual direction’, mainly related to the specific service they were giving, were also identified. This group of threads also draws attention in a number of different ways to how those interviewed see spiritual direction as a holistic or integrated service.

As with the encounters of people with Jesus in the gospels these meetings take place in a wide variety of circumstances and settings, invariably related to specific difficulties being experienced at the time. The gospel encounter most often mentioned is that of Jesus joining the two disciples as they journeyed to Emmaus. In this meeting Jesus took the initiative. Often too when meeting someone through service in an informal setting the initiative is taken by the one providing the service by just by being present for them giving them the space and opportunity to open up about their concerns. By their nature these meetings are not pre-arranged but are often flow out of existing relationships with those for or with whom the members Vincentian Family are working:

‘Different people will come up to talk, some of our staff, walking down the hall, they’re having some problems with family or something.’ [Peig]

‘Students who were expecting and were pregnant and were unmarried and coming to me with a lot of their difficulties and problems or they were coming to me about problems about the house they were staying in and how they couldn’t get on with each other or they were coming to me because there was difficulties at home..... it was guidance for their everyday life, lived experience they were going through.’ [Cait]

‘Sometimes people will come up to you in the food pantry, or the dining room. They come in and sometimes it’s just a few minutes or whatever, but it’s a type of spiritual direction.’ [Rory]

'We hadn't arranged ourselves to be director/directee but in this informal setting he was sharing something which was a pretty significant experience of God for him..... So there've been a few occasions like that that I've kind of sense... there's more an informal way.' [Colm]

Some of those interviewed highlighted the emphasis placed by Vincent and Louise from the beginning on paying attention to both body and spirit:

'Our direction is a gift to the poor way from the beginning. You know we would be told, ok, you take the bread, or you take the soup, but always have a word about God.' [Peig]

'And the Daughters have always from the beginning embraced the spirit of service that concerns the whole person, you know, body mind and spirit.... holistically.' [Éimear]

'People are so broken you know, and nobody cares for them and they do, they work out of their own brokenness and they hit out. It's not always easy to work with people who are broken to that extent, you know. They are acting out of, they are angry with themselves and they are angry with the world and there isn't a great deal of evidence that they are actually loved by others. So in terms of spiritual direction, you know, Vincent was very strong on you have to feed the stomach as well as feed the spirit, you know, both of them go hand in hand.' [Fionn]

This service was also expressed as two-way:

'Our first ministry is bringing God to people and people back to God' [Rita]

It was also seen in terms of not only those to whom the service is provided but in mentoring those who work alongside in delivering that service:

'Making a point of bringing (weekly boarders) home on Friday and taking a different staff with me just to see where those children came out of on Monday morning, so they can make a connection.' [Louise]

This holistic/integrated service is a place of hospitality where God is encountered in the hospitality itself and in the little things:

'It's about creating a Christian, caring atmosphere where dignity, trust and togetherness are valued and a strong sense of welcome, belonging and enjoyment is experienced.' [Cait]

'We look for God in the small everyday things.' [Peig]

The nature of the material brought to and appropriate for spiritual direction was also referred to by some of those interviewed:

'The Vincentian mission widened my experience of spiritual direction to include every aspect of life as opposed to being in a formal academic setting and doing spiritual direction with students and that sort of thing.' [Nial]

'We are in front of the person and trying you know to join the spiritual and the corporal together.' [Laoise]

'The whole life, the total life of the person, everything in the life of the person, are ingredients for that relationship with God.' [Fergal]

'Spiritual direction is a corporal/spiritual work of mercy I think. And I think that's another way of looking at it and I don't think, I don't read that, I don't see that but I think it's another way of doing it.' [Rory]

And the importance of experience shaping understanding was also stressed:

'Again it's the ministry; it's the experience of life that has shaped my understanding.' [Fionn]

As was the need for authenticity on the part of the spiritual director:

'Sometimes people just want to talk about their difficulties and you listen and try to sense where God is present there or what would be an encouragement to that person without being preachy or fakey.' [Peig]

Sometimes in these informal settings one does not allude to the fact that one is doing spiritual direction at the time:

'So was I doing spiritual direction with them? Not consciously, but I was aware of going beyond the experience, analysing the experience. Alright, I suppose I was analysing the experience, yes. But I didn't see myself as... I wasn't conscious then, whereas I would be conscious now.' [Cian]

Informal settings can also include the telephone:

'Even just talking to people on the telephone at times you know you are giving spiritual direction.' [Rory]

While it is not about formal or informal:

'I think it's a 'both and' deal you know, because sometimes people do come into an office, but the people are on a journey as well as I am and we just happen to meet in an office. Sometimes you meet on the road, on the sidewalk, in the soup kitchen or in the shelter, in the classroom or at your family table or at the table of your friends or your enemies.' [Nial]

'I think we have to have a flexible model of spiritual direction. I mean, you know, you might be sitting with a poor person, I might be visiting a poor house in my parish visitation and I have ten minutes, fifteen minutes and they are making their tea or something and something comes up.' [Fergal]

'We wouldn't have called it spiritual direction but it would always have ended up something like that.' [Louise]

Through the nuances highlighted above we can see how all the spiritual directors interviewed have a very broad and holistic understanding of how they provide spiritual direction even if it is not named as such. I see so much of my own engagement as a spiritual director echoed above.

VINCENTIAN DISCERNMENT¹² AND VIRTUES

A significant group of threads that includes Vincentian discernment,¹³ Providence, the virtues and living close to those who are poor, were emphasised as linked while at the same time giving the shape and character to who members of the Vincentian Family are and all they do including spiritual direction.

Regarding discernment, Fionn notes that it is not complicated.

'To discern the will of God, in one way it's portrayed as technical, but you know, you don't have to tell a mother how to discern the will of God. She loves her child. And so the will of God for her is straightforward, is responding to the needs of the child you know. And it's not complicated.' [Fionn]

While Laoise emphasises the daily discernment:

'It's, it's I would say a question of the discernment of the daily choices. And you know with the ladies I am with.... I am always emphasising discernment of daily choices because all their problems, most of them, all of their problems it is a question of bad choices and discerning the choices is very important and I think Vincentian spirituality discerning the choices is very important.'
[Laoise]

¹²Hugh O'Donnell CM, "Vincentian Discernment," *Vincentian Heritage* Vol 15, no. 1 (1994) pp 8-23

¹³ Loretto Gettemeier DC, "Vincentian Discernment and Decision Making," *Vincentian Heritage Journal* Vol 19, no. 1 (1998). pp 19-28

The importance of Providence in relation to spiritual direction is highlighted in a number of ways:

'I think, I think a big part of spiritual direction is Divine Providence.' [Rory]

For Fergal it is linked to how Vincent and Louise viewed it:

'I would see that the overall view that the founders had regarding Providence as very important in spiritual direction. It's always at work, I would say, and in some way it's explicit. It's that the signs of God, the evidence of God's grace are at work in the person's life and this is something that involves the lives of the poor.' [Fergal]

Cait, for her part links it with her own attitudes shaping the hospitality offered:

'My attitude towards people, towards people who come in and even without saying I'm doing spiritual direction, it's about how I am with people who actually come to the door, and I'd say, and come in looking for some service here, and that to me is as much, because if people feel welcome, if they feel accepted, if they feel I'm ok here, then that's, that's really what is very important I think for them to feel.' [Cait]

The importance of the virtues in shaping and giving the specific colour to who the members of the Vincentian Family are, including how they are with others was highlighted in a number of ways:

'The virtues are there for us and they shape, because when we go on... they're the things, they are the stones, as Vincent used to call them, that shape us. They're unique I think to us. Because even the gentleness, the simplicity, the meekness, they are the ones he stresses.' [Fionn]

'It's like, it's like the five virtues that we have in the community, you know they're always there, they're always there. When I think of humility and

simplicity and meekness and mortification and zeal, they're there and no matter what I do, even when I talk to these guys somehow or other those five virtues come out, surface in some way or other.' [Rory]

'I think it comes back to the availability to the ordinary people, the poor people who couldn't afford to pay to go to a spiritual director or wouldn't even think that is was all that important and yet they do come to me for what is their problems in life which again I see is, is God disguised for them.' [Éimear]

This theme has been woven from the threads related to discernment and virtues which all of those interviewed identified as integral to the spiritual direction they offer. They speak of how members of the Vincentian Family are available in particular to people on the margins of society. It is given added value in the luminosity already noted under the Call to Holiness above (p. 286).

VINCENTIANS GO OUT TO PEOPLE, TO MEET CHRIST

Identified in the first round of initial coding, time and again in the course of the interviews I was reminded, often explicitly, that Vincentian Spirituality is Incarnational. This is not surprising given the importance of the Feast of the Annunciation¹⁴ for all branches of the Vincentian Family. The threads of this Incarnational aspect are lived out in the many ways that the members of the Vincentian Family go out to meet people who are marginalised in their own place whether that be a night shelter for the homeless, prisons or food pantries:

'I was asked to be chaplain to a night shelter that St Vincent de Paul people ran..... I decided that (rather than vest and gather two or three people into the

¹⁴ 25 March except when this falls on a Sunday in Lent the Feast is transferred to the following day or if it occurs during Holy Week is transferred to the Monday after Low Sunday

chapel for Mass) I would go out the back and kind of sit down and talk with the fellows. Occasionally I might get one who wanted to come and talk you know more personal, private and we would go around to the Chapel.’ [Colm]
‘I go to prison too... to the homebound, the terminally ill. I am you know a visible sign of God’s belonging.’ [Laoise]

‘I feel I could go anywhere and just sit down among anybody, or prisons anyway especially.’ [Cian]

‘Yes, like being around, just going in once in a while at the food pantries, I mean just showing up as a Vincentian.... and being there if they want to come and talk to you.’ [Rory]

For some of those interviewed this meeting of people where they are helps the members of the Vincentian Family to better understand their situation and challenges the members of the Vincentian Family to be realistic:

‘I suppose that one of the big things is that we meet the people where they are so we’re realistic about where ... the circumstances in which they are living, the reality of their relationship with the people they are with...’ [Rita]

‘You know working with the poor in our own time we accompany them, God is present in them and many times we go to them. It’s not that they just come to us but we go to them where they are or we give something, we make something available that they would really like (examples given of going to the prison and having an Art Centre to which people came because they enjoyed being creative)’ [Peig]

As indeed does living close to them:

‘I learned it because I lived.... I was living among the poor at that stage... The two things go together.’ [Fionn]

For all the spiritual directors interviewed going out to people to meet Christ was hugely significant. Like the call to holiness this shaped the attitudes with which they approached people on the margins.

EVANGELISED BY PEOPLE WHO ARE POOR

Another image presented to me in the course of the interviews and also identified very quickly in the first round of initial coding is that of the icon that Meltem Aktas¹⁵ was commissioned to write for Rosati House, a residence for the priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Mission attached to de Paul University, Chicago.¹⁶ The icon depicts a meeting of Vincent de Paul with a beggar, bread is being given but who is giving the bread to who is difficult to know. Is Vincent giving the poor person bread or is Christ in the poor person giving Vincent Eucharist? Central to Vincentian Spirituality is that when members of the Vincentian Family meet a poor person they meet Christ and when they meet Christ in the poor person they receive more from the poor person than they give. Being evangelised by the poor they accompany was echoed time and again in different ways by all those interviewed. Some had come to understand it as a mutuality of relationship:

'My journey with other people becomes part of my own journey. So it's again that dynamic of being mutually interdependent and regenerative of our relationship with each other... I think the particularly Vincentian

¹⁵ Meltem Arktas was born in 1965 in the city of Sivas on the Turkish Syrian border where she grew up in a Muslim family in the shadow of mosques and Orthodox monasteries. She completed her Masters degree in Istanbul in 1985. In 1988 she moved to the United States to further her studies at the Art Institute in Chicago. It was in the United States that she converted to Christianity. Using transparent oils her work incorporates Byzantine iconography, Flemish painting and New Mexican retablos. She also draws her inspiration from the poetry of St John of the Cross and Gerard Manley Hopkins as well as Turkish miniatures and Sufi mysticism.

¹⁶ See page ii

characteristic of mission, and if you like of spiritual direction, of being mutually evangelised by the people with whom we are living our lives. ’’ [Nial]

This mutuality challenges the spiritual directors and contributes to their own growth:

‘I think experiences people had had and the way they had shared had challenged me to look at my own, my own life, my own journey’ [Colm]

‘I think giving and receiving is a very key part of the spiritual direction with the directees that I’m with now.’ [Cian]

Others spoke about how they are challenged to conversion and a greater authenticity in their own lives:

‘A call to be authentic; a call to my own personal conversion; a call to try living my own life... to live my own life in parallel with theirs.’ [Cian]

‘Being a spiritual director challenges me to be a better spiritual person, to be a more prayerful person, to have a greater, have a greater relationship with the Lord Jesus...’ [Rory]

‘I think you know before spiritual direction and after I feel my relationship with God increased. I am.... I think also grow... I am growing in my faith, in who I am.... because I cannot, you know, be the same in listening to these people and in trying you know to see with them what God is trying to tell them.’

[Laoise]

‘They motivate me to grow more in my own spiritual life’ [Peig]

Of how it is a learning experience that lasts a life-time:

‘They (the Seminarians) keep me young you know. They remind me with all their problems and difficulties, they remind me of me a long, long time ago.... It’s a learning experience you know, it’s a learning experience.’ [Rory]

'For example, one man saying, 'we're incarcerated, we're terminally ill, we're free.' It will take me a life-time to unpack that. So we're in prison, we're going to die in prison, we're free, and what's free?' [Cian]

While members of the Vincentian Family are:

'To be open to being evangelised by the poor. I mean, you know, that's our mission. A lot of people can do other work with the poor but they are not asked to allow themselves to be evangelised by them. But we believe that that's where we meet Christ and are met by Christ and are transformed in that relationship. I mean a Jesuit might go there, but if he goes there and allows himself to be evangelised by them he's a Vincentian.' [Nial]

The mutual nature of the relationship, despite its asymmetry is a source of growth for the spiritual directors. In this I am reminded of how each time I accompany someone I am challenged to revisit aspects of my own life at ever deeper levels.

CONCLUDING NOTE

The spiritual directors interviewed for Phase I all in different ways have reminded me of Jesus saying, 'I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full' (Jn 10:10) and of how that fullness of life is different for each person. In their approach these spiritual directors from the Vincentian Family have all spoken about the flexibility necessary as they seek to be present to others in the messiness of life. This calls for a very practical dimension to how they are available to those they accompany. They have noted that their availability is often linked with and flows from pre-existing relationships they have and that spiritual direction often happens without being named. As a result they themselves are challenged to greater authenticity through the mutuality of inclusiveness.

PHASE II INTERVIEWS

The same process used above was used to code, reflect on and weave together into themes the content of the Phase II interviews. Following this the most prominent strands identified included:

How the relationship was initiated

Frequency of meetings

Place of meetings – the hostel, kitchen, a café maybe

Confession

Acceptance

Understanding

Space to be honest

Gentleness

God gentle as well as almighty and strong

Listening ear

Gratitude

Freedom

Encourages me to think for myself

Empathy

Encourages me to give a listening ear to others

Recognising the Holy Spirit within enabling me

Return to Church attendance

Hope, Faith and Love

Purpose in life

Walk tall

Motivation

Trust

Made me reflect

Help me to grow

I'm a different person

Finding out for me personally who God is

I can do that for others

As before with further First Cycle Coding, reflection and Second Cycle Coding the significant multi-faceted threads that emerged were woven into themes. At this point I also examined the themes that had emerged from the coding of the Phase I interviews to see if there was any relevance to what was surfacing. While they would not have used the same language as the spiritual directors there was a relation with some of the themes identified in Phase I. As a result the themes and the multi-faceted threads forming them in Phase II are as follows:

Themes	Threads
Reaching out to others	Encourages me to give a listening ear to others Encouraged to follow in the steps of Jesus I can also do that for others Returned to Church attendance Spiritual re-awakening Empathy for others

Initiation of Contact	<p>Contact initiated by directee</p> <p>Contact initiated by director</p> <p>Introduced by another</p>
Frequency of Meetings	<p>Regular, weekly and planned</p> <p>Regular but not planned</p>
Place of Meeting	To suit the directee
Gender Differences	<p>Confession</p> <p>Space to be honest, to be heard</p> <p>Need to talk and need to listen</p>
The Call to Holiness	<p>Taught to be kinder to self</p> <p>Seeing life in a different light</p> <p>Learned to calm down</p> <p>Helped me to grow</p> <p>Made me reflect</p> <p>Recognising the Holy Spirit within enabling me</p> <p>Walk tall</p> <p>I can do that for others</p>
Discernment and Virtues	<p>Helped to put things in a bigger context</p> <p>Encouraged to think for myself – make my own decisions, use own conscience</p> <p>Recognising the Holy Spirit within enabling me</p> <p>Purpose in life</p> <p>Walk tall</p>

Discernment and Virtues contd.	<p>Acceptance of self and hurts caused to others</p> <p>Made me reflect</p> <p>Finding out for me personally who God is</p>
The Encounter	<p>Openness</p> <p>Understanding</p> <p>Gentleness</p> <p>Space to be honest, to be heard</p> <p>Non-judgemental but firm</p> <p>Empathy, Compassion</p> <p>Acceptance</p> <p>Appreciated</p> <p>Uplifting</p> <p>Sense of peace and understanding</p> <p>Comfortable</p> <p>Genuine interest</p> <p>Vincentian approach/my director</p>
Evangelising the Spiritual Director	<p>I challenge him as much as myself</p> <p>I encourage her, give her confidence</p> <p>Seeing me being healed</p> <p>Some of my knowledge</p> <p>She smiles</p> <p>You see it in her eyes</p>

Table 6: Mapping of Themes to Threads – Phase II

REACHING OUT TO OTHERS

If the pre-eminent group of threads in the Phase I interviews is the understanding that all people are called to holiness the most significant group of threads coming through the Phase II interviews is the desire of those interviewed, as a result of their individual spiritual direction relationships, to reach out to others in need, a truly Vincentian response. For some of those interviewed this reaching out to others is to give them the listening ear, reassurance and encouragement the directees themselves have received from their spiritual directors:

'I think that's given me...it's kind of...it's, it's sub-conscious, but it's there that it's sort of like, I've been given that ear, I want to give that ear to other people. So it has inspired me to, to let other people talk, let them kind of say stuff that's going on for them and they want to be heard maybe, or be forgiven or reassured just the same as I sought reassurance.' [Hugh]

'Following in the steps of Jesus...I can do that for others myself, I can touch other people myself and that's wonderful...the gift of encouragement and the gift of being able to encourage others. She gives me confidence...knowing the Holy Spirit touches me means that my spirit can touch others. It's a wonderful thing to do.' [Donal]

It was particularly noticeable that the men in the hostels who had been on the streets experienced the call to reach out to others on the street:

'I think God has inspired something, has a purpose for me to be here, I think...to work with alcoholics, which I enjoy, talking to other people you know what I mean, trying to get the message across...I'd have helped out there at...the soup kitchen down there...we'd formed that for the homeless. I used to go over there on a Friday and Saturday night. I haven't been down in a wee

while, sister, because I'm trying to work on my own addictions, get myself well before I can move forward.' [Cathal]

'I'm down...now doing two nights in the soup kitchen with the homeless, eh...me it's more loneliness than homelessness with people...I could have been anywhere in the world I wanted...but I'm in a soup kitchen and I'm really helping people.' [Liam]

While sometimes it is others in the hostel that need to be reached out to:

'And I know my purpose in life sister, I regard myself sister as a good Samaritan...I will go out of my way to help anyone...I try to give other guys and things sister...you know there's a lot of guys who sister...who sit in their room sister they don't come out. I says look you have to get out and about at some stage, you can't just sit in your room...' [Malachy]

For some of the men this reaching out to others includes being ready to reach out to their own estranged family members, in particular children.

'It's Social Services you know they say I'm not allowed because of my addiction you know...but if I go on with my recovery I can bring this to court you know what I mean and do things and get my kids overnight and stuff like that you know. They're wee goals I'm working on.' [Cathal]

'S (teenage daughter) has had no eh...real contact with me since Christmas. What I do is text her every day, just wee short texts, just you know, 'I love you S', 'I'm here', em...tiny stuff nothing overpowering. But oddly enough the last couple of weeks....I've just noticed I'm getting a wee, 'yes' back.' [Liam]

For both Cathal and Malachy this reaching out has also included reconnection with their Church communities:

‘There is a God, I know that, there is a God because He’s been looking over me you know. Me being out there I should have been under the sod, you know, but thank God, you know, I’m here today to talk about it...I go to, I go to my church and all now. I’m a regular Church...you know and things like that...I enjoy getting out now on a Sunday and going to my Church and doing wee things you know. There’s testimonies coming up there so I’ll be away hearing testimonies, peoples’ testimonies you know. How their life...they turned their lives round to God you know.’ [Cathal]

‘Whilst I was out on the streets sister...I started going to Church...on a Sunday night...I wasn’t scruffy...but I wasn’t wearing the right clothes...after a while...I just stopped going to Church sister...but I’m going to start going again on a Sunday with L (one of the other residents in the hostel), L goes to Church on Sunday.’ [Malachy]

This reaching out to others by those who are marginalised speaks to me of their desire for inclusivity both for themselves, others experiencing marginalisation and those marginalised by them. In this way it is both acknowledging their own needs and need for transformation.

INITIATION OF CONTACT

Spiritual direction relationships, as they are generally understood and experienced, are initiated by the directee making contact with a spiritual director. In some instances this contact is made as a result of a recommendation by a friend or following a retreat facilitated by the spiritual director. It can also be as the result of a ‘cold call’, when someone looking for a spiritual director consults with the ‘Seek and Find Guide’ of Spiritual Directors International or the ‘Find a Spiritual Guide’ section

of the All Ireland Spiritual Guidance Association website to find someone offering spiritual direction in their locale. Two of the directees interviewed met their spiritual directors prior to engaging in spiritual direction with them.

Hugh met the person who was to become his spiritual director when he was giving a lecture as part of an adult faith programme he was attending:

'I just understood through some of the ways that he was speaking and presenting the class information that he might be open to me talking to him as a gay Christian man.....He made me feel he was approachable and I could talk to him about my struggles with being a gay man and the faith, but I also wanted to see him because I had a lot of questions about the faith.' [Hugh]

For Cathal, his initial meeting with his spiritual director was when she came to the hostel to show them film clips:

'She was in to show wee clips you know wee pictures and all. And then you could sit and relax you know....You had time out you know what I mean and time to think you know.' [Cathal]

Malachy was introduced to his spiritual director by another sister whom he met while still on the streets and she was part of the Outreach:

'I didn't actually know my spiritual director 'til I actually came in here...Sr A used to come out you know Saturday night sister with you call it the Outreach. They bring you out food and stuff.....I got to know my spiritual director through Sr A' [Malachy]

For the other directees interviewed the spiritual directors initiated the contact in the different hostels in which they were staying.

'So my spiritual director was like going through the house here and you know my spiritual director just started engaging with me and...I found just

that...just...just like after half an hour or forty five minutes talking I'd a sense of just absolute em...the was just a sense of peace so it was and a just a sense of maybe understanding a wee bit more, I got things out.. ' [Liam]

All of these experiences of initiation of contact remind me of the many different ways the gospels tell us of how different individuals first met Jesus. Some people first met Jesus directly, like the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:7ff) others indirectly, as when John the Baptist pointed him out (Jn 1:35ff) while still others, like the man on the stretcher were brought by friends (Lk 5:17-26). All of which emphasises that there is more than one way to encounter Jesus and to initiate contact with a spiritual director.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Each one of the directees interviewed have regular meetings with their spiritual director. Generally speaking the level of regularity appears more frequent than is the norm for spiritual direction reflecting both the complexity of what is going on in the lives of each of the directees at this time and the more informal nature of the spiritual direction. In relation to the five men living in hostels with Daughters of Charity for their spiritual directors each indicated that they meet weekly.

'I think sister...my spiritual director would normally...I think she normally comes about once a week, sister, yeh...' [Malachy]

And in response to my question 'And would you meet her here once a week? he said:

'Unless sister unless maybe eh...she may be away for a week, maybe, you know when she goes down to em...a retreat.' [Malachy]

Cathal also meets his spiritual director weekly:

'Yes, my spiritual director would come in, yes...she comes in her once a week.'
[Cathal]

When asked if he met her every week when she comes in, he responded:

‘Oh aye, yeh, she’d come down and talk...’ [Cathal]

For his part Liam doesn’t make plans to meet his spiritual director:

‘No, I plan nothing...God laughs when we make plans...So no, we don’t meet, I always bump into her, she’s very approachable.’ [Liam]

Donal’s spiritual director comes to the hostel he is in weekly:

‘We have a prayer group every week and...but whenever I see her she says, how are you? and I tell her exactly how I am.’ [Donal]

Hugh has a member of the Congregation of the Mission as his spiritual director for the past two and a half years. When I interviewed him, he hadn’t met his spiritual director for about six months on account of the intense therapy he is having. Prior to that he had met him with varying degrees of regularity:

‘I would have met him quite regularly....At one point we would have met every few months but then I wanted to intensively work with him and so we would have met I think every week, maybe twice a week, but every week for a period of about three weeks.’ [Hugh]

PLACE OF MEETINGS

In all instances meetings with their spiritual directors take place to suit the directees. For the five men in the hostels those meetings normally take place in the hostels themselves. Responding to my question, *‘where do you meet her, do you always meet her here?’* Óisín replied:

‘Yeh, indeed’ [Óisín]

Cathal’s response to the same question was:

'Yeh, she comes in and then she has a wee drop of tea and stuff like and talks to the boys, you know. Me and one of the other boys she would talk to the most you know.' [Cathal]

For Donal the meetings with his spiritual director have also taken place in a café:

'Well basically it's the hostel basically but if I see her outside anywhere she goes for a cup of tea and we'll go somewhere and talk a café or something like that.' [Donal]

He also recounted how his spiritual director was one of those who visited him in hospital:

'Just a couple of visitors came to see me including my spiritual director there. I couldn't speak to her either like...kind of I was shaking my hands together, you want me to pray for you? Yes please. She prayed for me, wonderful. She always visits me when I'm in hospital, always, wonderful woman.' [Donal]

Both Malachy and Liam talk of their meetings with their spiritual directors taking place in the kitchen:

'We sit sister like ourselves...we sit in the kitchen sister...most of the guys would sit down in the... sitting room, watch TV and I get a chance to sit and talk to my spiritual director. We would maybe spend an hour talking sister.' [Malachy]

'So, it's been, do you know, it's... it's...it's time, time in the kitchen, that's where we always meet, you know. We first met in the living room, but it was, it was just a chance meeting that we met and then as I say....I just...it's my only release really is talking and she's, she's a listener.' [Liam]

Hugh named the two places where he has met his spiritual director, identifying them as 'where he was based' and 'where he is now based'. He is correct in the name of

the place where his spiritual director was based and which was readily accessible for Hugh. However, the second named place is not in fact where his spiritual director is based. Unknown to Hugh it is somewhere his spiritual director has arranged to meet him because it is easily reached by him.

'I would have met with my spiritual director originally in...which was where he would have been based. Now he's based in....and we meet there.' [Hugh]

That the meeting place for spiritual direction is chosen to suit the directee reminds me that God meets each one of us where we are. I also see as highly significant that for many of the men in the hostels those meetings take place around a kitchen table, a reminder in its own way of the Last Supper.

GENDER ISSUES

As already noted the spiritual directors of the five men in the hostels are Daughters of Charity for whom spiritual direction is part of their overall service. Hugh is the only person interviewed who has a member of the Congregation of the Mission as his spiritual director. For him that was a deliberate choice.

'I felt I had to go and see a priest or... I was hoping I could find somebody that was approachable, a priest because I was looking to have confession. So that was the two reasons, one to go to seek reassurance, to explain the situation I was in and hope that... I suppose ultimately I was looking to have confession... I went to see him as a priest first and foremost. That was my intention, I was not going to see him as N, I wanted to see him as a priest so often when I would speak with him or contact him or text him I would call him Father N.' [Hugh]

In this, Hugh certainly highlights the dual role that an ordained priest has.

CALL TO HOLINESS

Just as for the spiritual directors interviewed one group of threads that linked the responses of the directees came together as the 'Call to Holiness'. While none of the directees interviewed used the term several of their responses indicated the various different ways this was the reality of their experience. Indeed individual directees said this in a number of different ways. For Malachy it related to seeing life in a different light:

'But...what, what is...actually sister give me the motivation sister because em... that is, that is one thing sister that was a bit of a problem for me I didn't really, you know I didn't have motivation.' [Malachy]

For Hugh it was about adult faith:

'He made me learn to be kinder to myself.... He certainly gets me to think for myself...' [Hugh]

'I suppose also it, it taught me....I was going to have to learn the faith through adult eyes and grow up.' [Hugh]

Donal spoke about being more alive:

'Makes me recognise things within myself, ie the Holy Spirit in myself...that I on my own am enabled to actually be that person.' [Donal]

While Cathal noted he was better able to face situations while also facing up to the harm he had done:

'I'm not running out the door when there's a problem. I'm standing up to problems now you know what I mean, I'm facing them... just calm down you know and think before you react... I can sit now and reflect what harm I was doing you know and try to mend that. It'll take a lifetime to mend you know.'
[Cathal]

Liam recognised that he is searching and wanted to grow:

'I'm searching, I'm looking for something, I'm looking for something to help me to grow. I'm looking for something to help me get stronger.' [Liam]

In the nuances in their replies, while they did not speak about call to or growth in holiness, it is clear that each one interviewed recognised a change in themselves as a result of spiritual direction. It seems to me that the words attributed to Jesus, 'you will be able to tell them by their fruits' (Matt 7:20) have been experienced by each of them in the way that they needed.

DISCERNMENT AND VIRTUES

Just as Vincentian Discernment and Virtues was a group of threads in the responses of the spiritual directors in Phase I so too a significant group of threads that emerged from the responses of the directees in Phase II includes discernment and virtues.

Hugh recognised the importance of using his own conscience:

'He certainly gets me to think for myself what...It really is a matter of... you really have to use your own conscience and deciding yourself with the knowledge you have as much as your spiritual director has, use my own knowledge and decide, you know, trust that I can decide what's right and wrong.' [Hugh]

Donal discovered depths to himself that were new:

'She can lift me up when she touches things within me that I didn't know were there.' [Donal]

Hope was the main consideration for Cathal:

'I've been inspired to turn my life and my will over to God...I get my life back...She gives me hope. She gives me hope, she gives me faith. Hope and faith and there is love. They are the three things, hope, faith and love...that's what she does for me.' [Cathal]

Malachy spoke about acceptance of his situation and transformation:

'You always hurt the ones you love sister. It's them that get hurt sister you know. Eh, ok so I, I hurt my parents, yeh. I've hurt my wife and daughter too sister you know, well that was more or less part of the break-up sister you know and em...em...you know but...eh...but I've learned to accept that now sister you know, em...just trying to be a better person sister again. Get my life back on tracks, sister, get back into society again...its great the transformation that has taken place since I've come here, you know.' [Malachy]

Liam has come to recognise the gift of the situation he finds himself in

'Cause I mean this journey too is all about God for me too. It's, it's me finding out for me personally what God is, what is religion, what is faith....I've been trying to understand if I'd have lived to be seventy with N the way I was going, this world was just amazing, and just... I wouldn't have really lived, I'd have got to the end of my life... this has made me re-think.' [Liam]

From their responses it appears that these directees are learning what is of God and what is not which is the essence of discernment itself. They have also identified in different ways how that supports the choices they make and their own deeper desires. The virtue that is mentioned explicitly and which is encompassed in all their responses is hope.

THE ENCOUNTER

The single biggest grouping of threads related to aspects of the actual encounter with the spiritual director.

In the first instance all of those interviewed spoke in different ways of how their spiritual directors afford them the space to be honest, to be heard:

'From the beginning of the hostels I've known her and have always told her what...if I'm taking anything or not. I've always been open and honest with her.' [Donal]

Cathal emphasises the trust that has built up:

'You can trust my spiritual director, you know what I mean. An alcoholic takes a lot...has to trust someone before they can open up, but you can open up with my spiritual director, you know what I mean.' [Cathal]

While Óisín highlights the frankness in their conversations:

'We speak to each other quite frankly.' [Óisín]

In addition to being heard Hugh and Liam also talk about their need to listen:

'My spiritual director has been easy on me, given me space to be able to talk...without being fearful...He gave me the space to talk and allowed me to say things that were so difficult to say...My spiritual director would put me in a space that I was also listening.' [Hugh]

'I need to talk, I need to listen, I need to try to understand all this I mean 'cause it is a matter of life and death for me.' [Liam]

Many of these threads also identify specific qualities of the spiritual director, and indeed the directee and the spiritual direction relationship itself with many of them repeated in different ways.

Hugh found his spiritual director understanding and non-judgemental encouraging him:

'It made it so much easier for me to be able to open up and talk to him because he understood....His approach allows me feel more like I want to go back and talk to him again...I was surprised at how relaxed my spiritual director was, that he wasn't shocked and didn't give the impression he was looking down at me or that I was being treated like I was bold.' [Hugh]

Understanding was also one of the qualities that Óisín mentioned and how that contributes to his own understanding:

'She understood what I was saying and I understood what she was saying... Any meeting I ever had with my spiritual director was always pleasurable, understandable and in, in retrospect both of us understood you know.' [Óisín]

Donal also spoke about the encouragement he receives and experiences as healing:

'She's a woman with the Holy Spirit, I know that without a doubt. Like Peter and his shadow touching people and healing them. I believe she's like that very much. Casts a shadow unto me and brings me healing. Brings me encouragement.' [Donal]

For Malachy the experience he has is of being unburdened:

'Well sister, well, it gives me...well it gives me a great...sister a great uplifting, you know. It gives me a...what you would say, a spiritual...a spiritual feeling, sister you know after I have a bit of a conversation...You feel, you feel great after it sister you know being able to open up, open up your heart sister, get everything out, out in the open sister rather than keep it bottled up.' [Malachy]

Liam highlights the approachability of his spiritual director and the genuine interest she takes which increases his sense of trust:

'She's, she's very approachable...She has a sweet, honest, caring and you know it's all genuine, you know, you know she is genuine, genuine human being, caring woman... I just...I just feel comfortable, I don't know, I lost a lot of trust.' [Liam]

Other qualities mentioned include acceptance (Óisín), empathy, compassion (Donal) and gentleness mirroring God's gentleness (Hugh)

Commenting on how he found his spiritual director different from other priests he had encountered Hugh observed:

'I don't know if it's the Vincentian approach, or whether it's my spiritual director's approach.' [Hugh]

For his part Donal noted something similar in my approach in interviewing him and that of his spiritual director:

'Well both of you are very similar...You speak very gently and you share what you have, you're not afraid to share what you have.' [Donal]

Reflecting on all the different threads that form this theme it is evident that in the actual encounter the qualities the spiritual directors enabled those interviewed to be more open and honest. This in turn led them to be gentler and less judgemental of themselves.

EVANGELISING THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

I have already noted in the Phase I interviews above that the spiritual directors in different ways experience being evangelised by the poor whom they accompany. In order to identify if the directees had any sense of this, towards the end of each interview I asked each one if they were aware of any gift that they give to their spiritual director.

Hugh has a sense that his spiritual director enjoys their meetings:

'From what I understand what I give him, I think he said to me, I hope I'm right in this, I think he actually said to me that he enjoys them...I think he enjoys...I'm sure he said he enjoys our meetings probably, possibly because I'm inquisitive, probably because I'm challenging to him as much as to myself.'

[Hugh]

For Donal it is seeing him being healed:

'I think just responding the way she wants me to. I believe that encourages her and her confidence...I do like to talk about her to her and tell her how she's touched me with the Holy Spirit and I believe that's the gift that I give her...I believe seeing me being healed...I believe she is very proud of that.' [Donal]

Cathal recognises a light in his spiritual director's eyes:

'She has a smile on her face when she sees you there, you are not out the door, you know what I mean. You can see her light up, you know you can see it in her eyes.' [Cathal]

The way he has of making his spiritual director smile is noted by Liam:

'Em...no, I wouldn't be, wouldn't be looking into my conversations with my spiritual director to see you know if, if...eh...but then I suppose yes, I mean, because I know I have an ability, I know I have an ability to...em...after a bit put people at ease...and I have an ability to make people laugh, to make people smile.' [Liam]

Óisín sees his knowledge as the gift he gives:

'Well I hope I give her something back...maybe some of the knowledge I have. I hope in that way she can understand maybe the tellings I have or the stupidity I have or whatever. I hope she can understand that.' [Óisín]

It is clear from their responses that those interviewed have not previously thought about the gift they may have given their spiritual directors. However, when invited to reflect on this aspect of the spiritual direction relationship they recognise something of the mutuality that exists and that they give as well as receive.

CONCLUDING NOTE

In different ways those who have received spiritual direction from members of the Vincentian Family interviewed for Phase II support the findings from the spiritual directors in Phase I. Having been accepted and received encouragement, that in different ways they expressed as invaluable, their desire is to continue on this path by accepting themselves and reaching out to others. For most of them the hope they have experienced as a result of their spiritual direction is the impetus on which to build.

CONFERENCES, CORRESPONDENCE AND WRITINGS OF VINCENT DE PAUL AND LOUISE DE MARILLAC

The random selection of Conferences and Correspondence of Vincent and Louise above were read, reflected on in the same way as the transcribed interviews and coded using the process that was used to code the interviews. As before the threads which emerged were woven together into themes. From repeated First Cycle Coding, reflection and Second Cycle Coding the prominent multi-faceted threads emerged that were woven into themes. From this the most significant themes contained in the Conferences, Correspondence and Writings above were identified:

Themes	Threads
Method of delivering Conferences and writing letters	<p>Allow me Ladies to ask what you think.</p> <p>Points given in advance</p> <p>Sister, please tell me...</p> <p>Not understanding what the position is, names two possibilities, if it is the first..., if it is the second...</p> <p>Asks the questions he expects would have been asked face to face and proceeds to answer them</p> <p>Ends Conferences and letters with a prayer and a blessing</p> <p>Includes news of others</p>
Integrated Corporal AND Spiritual Service	<p>Importance of visiting the sick</p> <p>God's goodness revealed through our goodness</p> <p>Goal of giving light meal the instruction of patients</p> <p>Say something to them about God</p> <p>Those you guide are both body and soul</p> <p>Corporal assistance and salvation</p> <p>Corporal and spiritual service different from that of others</p> <p>Seek out poor persons</p>

Growth in Holiness/Preparation for death	<p>Preparation for death/changing their lives if they recover</p> <p>Ladies benefit as much as patients</p> <p>Patients make general confession</p> <p>Prepared for the sacraments</p> <p>Heretics converted</p> <p>Reconciliation with one another</p> <p>Advance in the Spiritual Life</p> <p>If not progressing then regressing</p> <p>Lead a good life – examination of conscience</p> <p>Comments on spiritual direction</p>
Virtues	<p>Virtues in general</p> <p>Use of God's graces</p> <p>Virtue lies in the middle – the extremes are vicious</p> <p>Particular virtues – humility, kindness, gentleness, simplicity, mortification, zeal, cordiality, obedience, prudence...</p> <p>Fidelity in difficulty helps progress in virtue</p> <p>Virtues are the Spirit of Our Lord</p> <p>Heroic acts of virtue only in weakness</p>
Providence/God's Will	<p>Dependence of the guidance of God</p> <p>Nothing without God</p>

Providence/God's Will contd	<p>Total trust in God</p> <p>Openness to God's Will</p> <p>Submissive to Providence</p> <p>Fulfil the Will of God in the lowliest of tasks</p> <p>Complete dependence on God</p> <p>Providence detained you</p>
Discernment	<p>Studies the pros and cons</p> <p>Do nothing without reflection and discernment</p> <p>Test vocation</p> <p>Poor decision – need for discernment</p> <p>Judge events and persons always for the good</p> <p>Difficult to give good advice without all the facts</p>
Meditation/Mental Prayer	<p>Make your morning prayer on the subject of your reading</p> <p>Meditation the reservoir of instructions</p> <p>Meditation to preserve your soul</p> <p>Meditation for the needs of those you are guiding</p> <p>Mental Prayer the heart of devotion</p> <p>Leave God for God</p>

Meditation/Mental Prayer contd	<p>Give an account of your prayer to one another</p> <p>Reflect on the graces God has given</p> <p>Ask God</p> <p>Speak with great simplicity and innocent familiarity</p>
Scriptural Basis	Numerous scripture references used to illustrate what was being said
Gender Issues	<p>Work reserved for you (Ladies)</p> <p>Role of women</p> <p>Reserved for the first sisters</p>

Table 7 Mapping of Threads to Themes – Conferences and Correspondence

METHOD OF DELIVERING CONFERENCES AND WRITING LETTERS

In delivering Conferences to the Daughters of Charity, Vincent most often begins by asking the sisters for their thoughts on the subject. He then builds the Conference in his responses to them.

Then he asked for the views of several sisters on the subject of the conference and, when he had listened to all of them with admirable patience, he continued in the following words, “I thank God, sisters, for the thoughts He has given you. The ones I had have already been mentioned, and I am infinitely consoled to hear those with which Our Lord inspired you. What’s left for me to say now other than what you yourselves have already said? [Conference 24]

While this is particularly noticeable in the Conferences delivered by Vincent to the Daughters of Charity the same method can also be observed on those delivered to both the Ladies of Charity:

Allow me, Ladies, to ask what you think. [Document 198]

and the Congregation of the Mission:

You were given another topic for the conference, of which the discussion would be far more useful – with each one mentioning what Our Lord had given him – than anything I could say to you....However, I intend to speak to you about openness to God's Will. [Document 205]

In his letters, Vincent often adopts a dialogical style of writing, posing questions, particularly when he has not been given all the facts of a situation;

And since you did not tell me enough of what went on, I cannot form a judgment on your offense. I shall only tell you, Monsieur, that your dealings should be gentle as to the means, even though firm in arriving at good and just ends.... [Document 799]

It is difficult to give sound advice if the circumstances of an affair are not known. That is the case in this one; for example, how the thought about the good nuns came to you, whether you had some general idea beforehand about doing some similar or different good, or whether it came to you all of a sudden without you having thought about it.....Now I will tell you all the same, Mademoiselle.... [Document 1653]

is attempting to address more than one scenario;

I do not quite understand what your position is, whether it is to act as his chaplain in the absence of M Peleus or to assist the soldiers in the retinue. If it is the first...If you are there in the second capacity... [Document 244]

posing possible objections to what he has said, and responding to them.

Yes, but it is not the same. That man has some sign perhaps by which he recognizes that he was not free when he was carried away by the violence of nature. However, I am not at that point....No, Monsieur, do not believe that....

[Document 424]

Louise's letters are also dialogical in style in particular when writing to more than one sister addressing some difficulty they are having:

I have learned what I have always greatly feared. Your work, which has been succeeding so well for the relief of the sick and the instruction of girls, has done nothing for your advancement in perfection.....Courage, my dear sister!.... [Document L11]

and, for example, when sending additional sisters to Poland:

I cannot rejoice enough, it seems my dear sisters, at the thought of the union in words and actions that I am confident will exist among you in the house and which will appear and edify the whole family as well as those outside of it. [Document L 447]

As a general rule Vincent concludes most of his Conferences and some of his letters with a prayer:

*I ask God in His goodness to give you His spirit in order to do this work according to His good pleasure. “**Benedictio Dei Patris**”* [Document 61]

Louise's letters to the sisters contain in addition to her advice and/or admonishment news about other sisters:

I think you know it was not Sister Françoise who died, but a Sister Mathurine and Sister Perrine, both from Angers. Sister Madeline is quite ill in Angers, as is Sister Élisabeth in Nantes. [Document L 207]

or their family members:

As for Sister Charlotte's father, I haven't seen him since he brought her baptismal certificate and said that he would write to her when he got to Liancourt. [Document L 300]

INTEGRATED CORPORAL AND SPIRITUAL SERVICE

Both Vincent and Louise are very clear in their writings that corporal and spiritual service are one. To the Ladies of Charity Vincent says,

O Ladies, how you should thank God for the attention He has had you give to meeting the needs of those poor sick persons; for corporal assistance to them has produced this effect of grace, namely, of making you think of their salvation at such an opportune time that most of them never had any other to prepare themselves for death. [Document 198]

He goes as far as to say:

Nothing has been changed for the distribution of the light meal, which is sufficient to achieve their goal, namely, to instruct the patients and have them make a general confession..... [Document 190]

he reminds the confrères:

You must know from this that it's up to the Superior to provide not only for spiritual matters but also to extend his concern to temporal matters; for, since those whom he has to guide are composed of body and soul, he has to provide for the needs of both, after the example of God.... [Document 153]

and the Daughters of Charity:

To serve those who are poor is to go to God, and you should see God in them....be particularly alert to the assistance you can give them for their

salvation...you're not there simply to care for their bodies, but to help them to be saved. [Conference 1]

Louise notes in relation to both the Confraternity and Daughters of Charity:

One of the main functions of the establishment of the Confraternity and Company of the Daughters of Charity is the spiritual service of the sick poor.
[Document A 100]

GROWTH IN HOLINESS/PREPARATION FOR DEATH

It has already been noted in the Foundation Documents above that the spiritual service to be given to the sick poor to whom they ministered related to preparing those who were dying to do so well and to encourage those who recovered to live a good life. Over the years from the foundations this thinking was strengthened and was a constant thread through the Conferences and correspondence. In the Conferences to the Ladies Vincent addresses its importance either going into great detail

Let's look now at the Spiritual Benefits..... [Document 188]

or giving them a more succinct account:

You cooperate with Jesus Christ in the salvation of those poor souls, seeing that they are instructed, make a general confession, and either depart this world in a good state or leave the Hôtel-Dieu recovered and in a good state.
[Document 190]

In this he also included the instruction of the foundlings, a work the Ladies have been asked to take responsibility for:

When they learn to talk, they also learn to pray and are gradually given an occupation, according to the aptitudes and ability of each. [Document 198]

To the confrères in the Congregation of the Mission he says of the ministry in Saint-Lazare¹⁷:

O Messieurs, how highly we must esteem the grace God grants us of bringing to us so many persons in order to help them work out their salvation!....This house, Messieurs, was formerly a refuge for lepers: they were welcomed in it, and not one of them was cured. Now it's used to welcome sinners, sick persons covered with spiritual leprosy, but who are cured by the grace of God.

[Document 9]

While he reminds the Daughters of Charity:

It's your duty to teach them how to lead good lives – I repeat, sisters, to lead good lives; that's what distinguishes you from many nuns who care for the body only, without saying a good word. [Conference 51]

Vincent is also clear that those who are serving persons who are poor in this way must also work at their own spiritual growth. He exhorts the Ladies:

To be interiorly and continually devoted to working at your spiritual advancement and to live as perfectly as you can...[Document 198]

reminds the confrères in the Congregation of the Mission that their actions will flow from their rootedness in God:

To reach that point, Monsieur, Our Lord himself has to imprint firmly on you His stamp and His character.... Something important to which you must faithfully devote yourself is to be closely united with Our Lord in meditation; that's the reservoir where you'll find the instructions you need to carry out the ministry you're going to have. [Document 153]

and the Daughters of Charity:

¹⁷ See footnote No 111 p. 253 above

Sisters, the subject of today's conference is how to work harder than previously for our own perfection. [Conference 79]

while Louise in the letter enclosing the spiritual exercises for a lady exhorts:

Put them into practice, my dear Lady, living entirely for God by this loving and serene union of your will with His in everything. In my opinion, this practice, in its holy simplicity, contains the means of acquiring the solid perfection God asks of you. [Document L 40]

Of spiritual direction itself, in a letter to one of the Daughters of Charity, Vincent gives this definition when he tells her that 'spiritual direction is very useful' going on to say:

It is an occasion for advice in difficulties, encouragement in weariness, refuge in temptation, and strength in dejection; in a word, it is a source of well-being and consolation, when the director is truly charitable, prudent, and experienced. [Document 1192]

While to Antoine Durand¹⁸ he says:

O Monsieur, how great – how very great – do you think is the duty of direction of souls to which God is calling you? What do you think the occupation of the Priests of the Mission is, obliged as they are to oversee and guide persons whose motivations are known to God alone? Ars atrium, regimen animarum: the direction of souls is the art of arts. That was the work of the Son of God on earth. [Document 153]

¹⁸ See résumé of Document 153 – Conference of 1656 *Advice to Antoine Durand, Named Superior of Agde Seminary* at page 246 above cf Coste Vol 11 p. 376

VIRTUES

For both Louise and Vincent the bedrock of this growth in holiness is in the practice of the virtues. Every single Conference and letter mentions either virtues in general or specific virtues.

To the Ladies of Charity:

Well then, Ladies, compassion and charity have led you to adopt these little creatures as your own children... [Document 196]

To the confrères in the Congregation of the Mission:

So we're going to speak about the virtue of openness to God's Will [indifference], to which our Rule directs it. This is certainly right, for how could the Company attain holiness, if it doesn't acquire openness to God's Will and detachment from all things. [Document 205]

To the Daughters of Charity:

I think, Sisters, that nothing else is needed than the practice of the virtues that make up your spirit: charity, humility and simplicity. [Conference 61]

Louise, speaking about three deceased sisters:

Among other reasons which we have for speaking of our deceased sister, the little progress in virtue which is apparent among us is one of the most important. [Document A 44]

Vincent writing to one of the confrères:

Take care to lead the people gently and patiently and to rid ourselves of all sensitiveness in our own opinions... [Document 424]

and writing to another reminds him:

As for the servants, you must pay them great honor and treat them kindly, cordially, and most respectfully. [Document 244]

Writing to a Daughter of Charity Vincent says:

You should strive to resemble Him in the practice of virtue. [Document 2160]

To Luke Plunket, a confrère whom he considers is giving in to the suggestions of nature he writes:

Do you not know, Monsieur, that Christian virtue lies in mastering them and that, if you refuse to render this small service to God, you will make yourself unworthy of rendering Him greater ones. [Document 2820]

Louise writing to one of the Daughters:

If your infirmity prevents you from...keep in mind that it cannot prevent you from having true humility, from being most cordial and from exhibiting forbearance and gentleness toward your neighbor, even those who oppose you most. [Document L 207]

PROVIDENCE/GOD'S WILL

Living and practicing the virtues is nothing less than following Providence and carrying out the will of God. Addressing the Ladies of Charity:

So, Ladies, those of you who are not yet enrolled, enter this Company or Confraternity, since its principal aim is to have no heart except for God, nor any will except to love Him, nor any time except to serve Him.

[Document 198]

Writing to Louise Vincent says:

Oh! What great hidden treasures there are in holy Providence and how marvelously Our Lord is honored by those who follow it and do not try to get ahead of it. [Document 32]

While Louise writing to one of the sisters says:

I am likewise sure that your heart is not... without the guidance of Divine Providence and the accomplishment of the most holy will of God.

[Document L 546]

In a Conference to the Congregation of the Mission Vincent says:

Let's ask God, Messieurs, let's ask God, Brothers, to reinforce the grace He's given the Company until now of not wanting anything but what he will it to have, and of not taking on ourselves any ministry whatsoever, but waiting for the call of His Divine Majesty. [Document 173]

He also reminds the Daughters of Charity in a Conference:

When you observe your Rules, you fulfill the Will of God. [Conference 99]

The very existence of the three foundations in Vincent's mind is the will of God. When addressing the Ladies of Charity in relation to motives to renew devotion to their various works he reminds them:

Your Company is a work of God and not a human work...Everything must be referred to the God of virtues and the Father of mercies. [Document 198]

To the Congregation of the Mission:

I ask you, who has established the Company? Who has set us to work in the missions, or with those preparing for ordination, or the conferences, or retreats, etc? Is it I? No way! Is it M Portail, whom God associated with me from the beginning? Not at all, for we weren't thinking of all that and had made no plan for it. So then, who is the author of all that? It is God.

[Document 23]

To the Daughters of Charity:

I've told you many times, sisters, that you can be very certain God is your founder, for I can tell you before Him that in my whole life I never thought of it, and neither, I think did Mlle Le Gras. [Conference 24]

DISCERNMENT

In most of his Conferences and correspondence Vincent engages in discernment in the way he addresses the benefits and objections. In a Conference to the Ladies of Charity in relation to the work with the foundlings this is seen very clearly:

M Vincent asks himself the question: "Should the Ladies of Charity continue or abandon the work of the Foundlings?" He studies the pros and cons and reminds the Ladies of the good they have done until then... I'm going to take a vote; it's time to pass sentence on them and to find out whether you are no longer willing to have pity on them. [Document 196]

A young woman from Arras has written to him, and although she does not appear to have given him sufficient information it would appear to be in relation to her vocation. Vincent poses a number of questions she needs to address, gives her some advice and finishes by saying:

I think it would be well for you, Mademoiselle, to recommend the matter to O[ur] L[ord], seek counsel of very pious, disinterested persons, and follow the call of O[ur] L[ord] and the advice of those persons. [Document 1653]

For Vincent discernment wasn't only about these major life decisions, it was also about those of everyday. In relation to the giving of admonitions he reminds the confrères:

He added that, to examine an admonition and give it legitimately, these circumstances had to be observed: (1) whether there was any antipathy involved, and whether this antipathy was not the reason for our giving the admonition; (2) whether we may not have some self-interest in the matter; (3) to see if it's a real fault, and, if it's something insignificant, to be sure that it wasn't done in haste; if the person did it only once or twice, we shouldn't admonish him – no one is so holy that he doesn't commit some fault; (4) to see whether it's not done through some impulse of revenge to get even with our brother because of an admonition he may have given us. [Document 85]

Good discernment is important on account of temptations. In a letter to Louise he writes:

With regard to the interior trial that caused you to abstain from Holy Communion today, you made a rather poor decision. Do you not see clearly that this is a temptation? [Document 69]

Louise also speaks of everyday discernment when she writes to Marguerite Chétif:

Sometimes these persons compliment us. This seems to comfort us a great deal because our senses are involved. For a time, our minds derive pleasure from reflecting on these words, but after a while, we find that we have not become more virtuous because of them. [Document L 546]

Reflecting on the present state of the Daughters of Charity [January 1660] Louise writes to Vincent and in the course of that letter says to him:

If your Charity sees that God wills something other than what has been done until now, then in the name of Our Lord, be the one to declare and order it. [Document L 655]

MEDITATION/MENTAL PRAYER

Having addressed the importance of the Ladies of Charity making personal visits to the sick poor in their turn and the manner in which they were to visit them, Vincent turned to the means which he said consisted of:

- (1) Ask God for the grace.*
- (2) Retire early the preceding evening and do some profitable reading.*
- (3) Make your morning prayer on the subject of that reading; hear Mass afterward.*
- (4) Keep yourself more recollected on that day. [Document 185]*

In an advice given to Antoine Durand he reminds him:

Something important to which you must faithfully devote yourself is to be closely united with Our Lord in meditation; that's the reservoir where you'll find the instructions you need to carry out the ministry you're going to have.
[Document 153]

In a Conference to the Daughters of Charity he tells them:

When you've finished dressing and have made your bed, you'll begin your mental prayer. This is the heart of devotion, Sisters, and you really have to want to accustom yourselves to making it well. No, don't be afraid that poor village girls – ignorant as you think you are – shouldn't aspire to this holy exercise. God is so good, and has already been so good in your regard as to call you to practice charity, so why do you think He'll deny you the grace you need to pray well? [Document 1]

Later in the same Conference he goes on to say:

Take care to give an account of your prayer as soon as possible after making it. You can't imagine how useful this will be. Tell one another quite simply

the thoughts God has given you and, above all, be careful to remember the resolutions you took at meditation. [Document 1]

However, when it came to prayer and other spiritual exercises or indeed two Rules in conflict, Vincent is very clear about what needs to be done. At Chapter with the confrères:

He called it a holy discourtesy to leave someone when the bell called us to some exercise, no matter what the rank of the persons with whom we were talking at the time. [Document 85]

Several times he reminds the Daughters of Charity:

Remember that when you leave meditation and Holy Mass to serve poor persons, you lose nothing, Sisters, because to serve those who are poor is to go to God, and you should see God in them. [Document 1]

I'm well aware that sometimes two Rules conflict with one another. The Rule of the order of the day calls you to prayer in the morning, and the one for the care of the poor tells you to go to visit them and take them their medicines. What must be done in this case?... In that case, holy obedience reconciles everything and requires that you leave prayer to go serve the poor, as you've so often been taught. That's leaving God for God. [Document 99]

Louise is also very attentive to the need for prayer. In her remarks on the rule for the sisters with the foundlings she asks:

Would it not be appropriate to draw up two or three meditations on the subject of the service of little children?...Such subjects should be meditated on each month. [Document A 81]

In her letter to the lady who had requested the spiritual exercises she exhorts:

Speak to Our Lord with great simplicity and innocent familiarity. Do not be concerned whether or not you experience any consolation; God wants only our hearts. [Document L 40]

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Very often in his Conferences and letters Vincent quotes scripture to back up what he is saying. When talking to the Ladies of Charity about the importance of meetings he begins:

The importance is obvious:

(1) Because Our Lord recommends them and promises to be in their midst.

‘Where two or three are gathered,’ etc. And in another place: ‘If two or three join their voices, I will give them whatever they ask. [Document 188]¹⁹

In the same document he mentions several other scripture references.²⁰ When talking about the motives for being devoted to the work in Document 190 he has a scripture reference for six of the ten points he makes.²¹ While in the same Document when he deals with the foundlings saying:

(3) They are the image of Jesus Christ in a special way:

he then proceeds to make a number of references to the early life of Jesus.

Vincent also refers to scripture when speaking to the confrères in the Congregation of the Mission, oftentimes quoting in Latin:

In a word, you must be like salt: Vos estis sal terrae²², preventing corruption from slipping into the flock of which you’ll be the shepherd. [Document 153]

¹⁹ Matt 18:20; Matt 18:19

²⁰ Matt 5:1-7:29; Mk 9:2-8; Acts 1:15-36; Acts 15:1-30

²¹ Ps 91:15; Matt 5:16; Sir 3:29; Ps 112:5; Pro 28:27; Ps 112:2-3

²² Matt 5:13

Likewise when speaking to the Daughters of Charity:

*The Holy Spirit tells us in Sacred Scripture, 'He who neglects to look after little things will fail infallibly in great ones.'*²³ [Document 79]

Indeed one of the sisters also quoted scripture when responding to Vincent's questioning of them:

*Because Our Lord in the person of His Apostles, taught all those who would follow Him that they mustn't be part of it, saying to them, 'You don't belong to the world; if you did the world would love you; but you don't, and that's why the world hates you.'*²⁴ [Document 39]

Louise, also on occasion makes reference to the life of Jesus as told in scripture:

Have you considered my dear Sister, what we have learned from the example of Saint John the Baptist who knew Our Lord so well that he bore witness to Him, as you know, and loved Him more than anyone else in this world?
[Document L 546]

GENDER ISSUES

While he constantly gave Divine Providence the credit for the foundations that he was instrumental in establishing, having consistently said:

Your Company [Ladies of Charity] is a work of God and not a human work.
[Document 198]

²³ Sir 19:1

²⁴ Jn 15:19

You [Daughters of Charity] can be very certain God is your founder, for I can tell you before Him that in my whole life I never thought of it, and neither, I think, did Mlle Le Gras. [Document 24]

Vincent was very well aware of how novel they were. Speaking to the Ladies of Charity he told them:

The grace God has given you of engaging you in them is so rare and extraordinary. For eight hundred years or so, women have had no public role in the Church; in the past there were some called Deaconesses, who were responsible for seating women in the Churches and teaching them the rubrics then in use...this practice came to an end; persons of your sex were deprived of any role and haven't had any since then. [Document 198]

and to the Daughters of Charity he had this to say:

Until now, however, it was unheard of to have the sick poor nursed in their own homes...It was because that was reserved for you. [Document 24]

CONCLUDING NOTE

From the themes which emerged from this random selection of Conferences and Correspondence of Vincent and Louise we can see how the spiritual was interwoven in all that they did. Despite the fact that none of this particular selection of Conferences and Correspondence was strictly spiritual direction, within every one of them were gems highlighting the importance of spiritual as well as corporal service and the attitudes necessary.

CONCLUSION

Having explored the findings from each sample in the next chapter I will discuss these findings further based on the comparison of the themes from the three samples with particular interest in those themes that are found in all three. Drawing further on their Conferences and Correspondence I will explore what they say about the contribution Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac made and continue to make to the ministry of spiritual direction, through those who live their charism today.

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Chapter 9

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

The work below will proceed at two levels. On the first level they are embedded in story (p. 111) while the second will focus on the themes that have emerged from the findings.

While all of the metaphors covered in Chapter 3, journeying (p. 82), friendship (p. 89), hospitality (p. 95), midwifery (p. 100) and mentoring (p.105) were mentioned by all of the spiritual directors none of them appeared to take precedence over the others. Indeed individual spiritual directors mentioned more than one of them in the course of their interviews. Story was however seen as very important for both the spiritual directors and the directees. The spiritual directors all spoke of how giving directees the space to tell their own story is central to the spiritual direction relationship. For the directees interviewed how their story was heard and held spoke to them of their being accepted in a non-judgemental way, especially when they felt themselves judged harshly by others on account of it.

Story was also significant in many of the articles reviewed in Chapter 4. Bechtle recounts how, as Second Responders, members of the Vincentian Family encouraged both grieving relatives and First Responders to tell their stories (p. 126); Kogstad gives details of how she encourages the teen Moms to share their stories both in a group setting and individually (p. 134); Creed tells of how the ISP experience

enables some of the participants to tell their story on subsequent retreats (p. 136); Gittens' focus is on giving a voice to the women he interviewed so that their story could be heard (p. 147); and Reed highlights the importance of giving people in marginalised situation the time and place to tell their story so that it can be the beginning of their transformation (p. 155).

Comparing the themes from the Phase 1 interviews, the Phase II interviews and the analysis of the selection of the writings of Vincent and Louise shows a significant similarity in the findings.

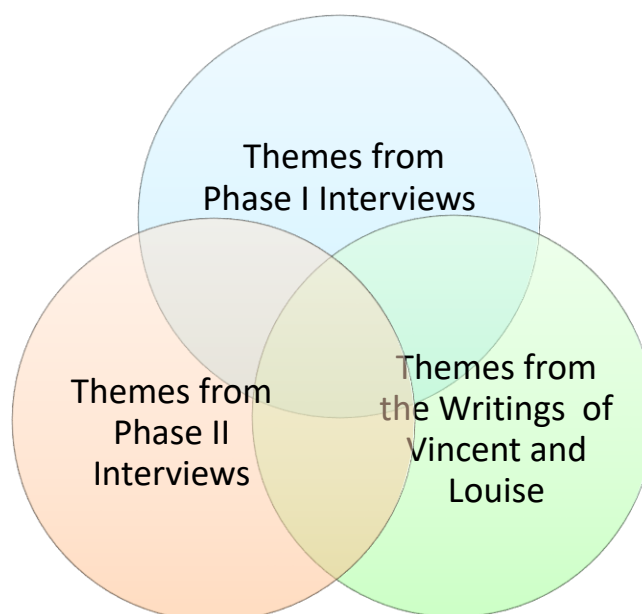


Figure 4 **Overlapping of Themes from the Three Samples**

Of particular interest, in the first instance, are those findings which are common to all three samples and what they have to say about the spiritual direction with people who are marginalised. I will then address some of the findings which emerged from one or two of the samples, again seeking to understand the implications for spiritual direction with people who are marginalised.

Phase I	Phase II	Vincent and Louise
All are called to Holiness	The Call to Holiness	Growth in Holiness and Preparation for death
Vincentian Discernment and Virtues	Discernment and Virtues The Encounter	Virtues Discernment Providence/God's Will
Holistic/Integrated Service – formal and informal dimensions	Initiation of Contact Frequency of Meetings Place of Meeting	Integrated Corporal AND Spiritual Service <i>Gender Issues</i> <i>Method of delivering Conferences and writing letters</i>
Vincentians go out to people – to meet Christ	Reaching out to others	<i>Gender Issues</i>
Gender Differences	Gender Differences	<i>Gender Issues</i>
Evangelised by the Poor	Evangelising the Spiritual Director	
Training and Post-training Issues		<i>Method of delivering Conferences and writing letters</i>
		Meditation/Mental Prayer
		Scriptural Basis

Table 8 Comparison of the Findings from the Three Samples

In the discussion which follows, drawing further on the Conferences and Correspondence of Vincent and Louise and on the literature generally, I will begin with those themes which are common to all three before addressing other themes which emerged.

I have included *The Encounter* [Phase II findings] with Discernment and Virtues as many of the threads that wove into that theme related to the experience the individual directees had with their spiritual director. In different ways these threads were expressions of how the virtues were experienced through the spiritual directors. Also, included with this theme is *Providence/God's Will* [Conferences and

Correspondence of Vincent and Louise] as once again the threads within this theme are common to it.

The themes, *Initiation of Contact*; *Frequency of Meetings*; and *Place of Meeting* from the Phase II findings, as we shall see, are connected with the theme of *Holistic, Integrated Service*, and I have included them there.

I have italicised *Gender Issues* [Conferences and Correspondence of Vincent and Louise findings] and included that theme alongside three other themes, *Holistic, Integrated Service*; *Vincentians go out to People*; and *Gender Differences*. The threads from the Conferences and Correspondence that were woven into that theme, as we shall see, touch all of these themes.

I have also italicised *Method of delivering Conferences and writing letters* [Conferences and Correspondence of Vincent and Louise findings] including it both in *Holistic, Integrated Service* and in *Training and Post-training Issues*, and will show how I believe it touches both.

CALL TO AND GROWTH IN HOLINESS

‘The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.’

Lev 19:1-2

The Universal Call to Holiness (p. 57) which we have been accustomed to talk about since the Second Vatican Council did not originate with the Council, although until the promulgation of *Lumen Gentium*¹ it was often less explicit. We have seen in

¹ Vatican II, "Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery OP (Newport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1975).

Chapter 2 in tracing the evolving history of spiritual direction the different ways this call to holiness expressed.

In the early Church Paul talks about imitating him as he did Christ (p. 22); the desert tradition solitude and asceticism were seen as pre-requisites to the search for God (p. 24); the monastic tradition was born from the desire to live authentically within community (p. 28); in the late medieval tradition a return to the simplicity of gospel values was seen as necessary focusing on the humanity of Jesus with a growing emphasis on the sacredness of the city (p. 34); during the period of the reformations the Protestant reformers focused on God's direct dealing with people (p. 42) while Trent emphasised orthodoxy of belief leading to scrupulosity (p. 44). Alongside this Ignatius developed the *Spiritual Exercises* (p. 45), Teresa of Avila wrote the *Way of Perfection* (p. 47) and François de Sales the *Introduction to the Devout Life* (p. 50); and the eighteenth to mid-twentieth centuries saw the emphasis shift to acquiring and living virtues and experiencing God (p. 55).

Likewise the articles reviewed in Chapter 4 do not speak direct directly about the call to holiness, but some do express in different words the experience of that call. Foley talks about the importance of bringing people who are poor closer to God who loves them (p. 124); Allen notes how some of the spiritual directors feel closer to God as a result of their work with New City (p. 129); and Creed speaks about how some of those who participate in the ISP come to experience themselves as a beloved child of God (p. 136). The articles coming from a nursing/medical background focus on healing and wholeness stressing the importance of including the spiritual dimension of a persons' life towards this goal (pp 139-144).

More recently, Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation on the Call to Holiness in Today's World has placed further emphasis on this call to holiness.

With this Exhortation I would like to insist primarily on the call to holiness that the Lord addresses to each of us, the call that he also addresses, personally, to you: ‘Be holy, for I am holy’ (Lev 11:44; cf 1 Pet 1:16).²

As we can see from the quotation from the Book of Leviticus above this Universal Call to Holiness goes back to Moses. Vincent and Louise do not often use the words ‘all are called to holiness’,³ but they are both influenced by the teaching of Francis de Sales whose *Introduction to a Devout Life* is specifically about holiness in everyday life and it clearly informed their actions as all they undertook was for the salvation of the poor country people.

We have seen how in the documents establishing each Confraternity of Charity and in the Conferences given to them Vincent emphasises their role in preparing the sick poor they minister to for death or if they recover to live a better life. In many instances this included the conversion of heretics. Included too were instructions in relation to personal devotions and reception of the sacraments that the individual members of the Confraternities are encouraged to practice. Growth in holiness was also important for each member of the Confraternities.

Likewise, in addition to the salvation of those to whom they minister Vincent, as we have seen, in his Conferences and Correspondence to the confrères in the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity emphasises the importance of the Sisters and Missioners growing in holiness themselves.

At a Conference on the Purpose of the Congregation of the Mission in December 1658 Vincent does refer to growth in holiness as one of the goals of the

² Pope Francis, *Gaudete Et Exsultate - Rejoice and Be Glad*. p. 11

³ They talk more about the working for the salvation of souls, imitation of Christ, love of God and specifically of the poor as children of God.

members of Congregation. In the course of this Conference he reminds the confrères that this call to holiness is a gospel invitation to all Christians.⁴ He continues however,

but, because all Christians don't work at it, God, by certain ways we have to admire, seeing that most people neglect to do this, raises up some who offer themselves to His Divine Majesty to undertake, with His grace, to become holy themselves and to guide others to holiness.⁵

Louise too was solicitous for the salvation of the poor people the sisters served. In her Instructions for the sisters being sent to Montreuil in 1647 she says, 'Above all, you must have great care for their salvation, never leaving a poor person or a patient without having uttered some good word.'⁶ She also encouraged the sisters to be attentive to their own growing in perfection. Writing to Sr Élisabeth Martin in Richelieu in November 1647 she says, '(I)t is a good thing to know that while practicing charity you take time to think of your perfection.'⁷

Vincent also recognised that only so much could be accomplished by the missions and if the good done by them was to be sustained after the Missioners left it would be important to have good priests in the parishes. As things were many of them, as Vincent himself had discovered, were neglectful of the souls entrusted to their care. It was this that led him to the formation work with clergy.⁸

Indeed everything that Vincent and Louise undertook was directed towards the corporal AND spiritual care of those who were the most abandoned in the society of their time. That is also what all those who would follow Christ inspired by them are

⁴ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 12 p. 68

⁵ Ibid. Vol 12 pp 68-69

⁶ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. A 85 pp 773-774

⁷ Ibid. L 204 p. 232

⁸ This began initially with his organising retreats for the ordinands of the Diocese of Paris then bringing the former retreatants together weekly for the *Tuesday Conferences* and finally with the establishment of seminaries in line with the decrees of Trent.

invited to do in their time. Pope Francis in his ‘Apostolic Exhortation of the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World’ has said,

(T)he worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. The great majority of the poor have a special openness to the faith; they need God and we must not fail to offer them his friendship, his blessing, his word, the celebration of the sacraments and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith.⁹

This also echoes so much of what the spiritual directors interviewed said and the many examples given by them of various different groups of people with whom they minister both corporally and spiritually bear out its truth.

The directees interviewed, as we have seen, did not specifically mention the term ‘the call to holiness’ or ‘growth in holiness’, but rather they all talked about some of the signs they recognised in themselves as a result of their experience of spiritual direction. All of which were different expressions of their experience of growing in holiness.

What is emerging here is that the call to holiness whether expressed directly or implicitly or indeed in the recognition of the fruits of it as in the experience of the directees is a significant strand in the practice of spiritual direction in the Vincentian Tradition

DISCERNMENT, VIRTUES, PROVIDENCE AND THE WILL OF GOD

We have already seen in Chapter 2 that one of the major components in spiritual direction is discernment. Often when the word ‘discernment’ is used in a Christian context the implication is of Ignatius of Loyola’s Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, or perhaps the Clearness Committee of the Society of Friends.¹⁰ However

⁹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium - the Joy of the Gospel*. par 200

¹⁰ Parker J Palmer and Megan Scribner, *The Courage to Teach Guide for Reflection and Renewal* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1999). pp 16, 123-141

from the beginning, whether the term ‘discernment’ was used or not it was at the heart of spiritual direction. In the desert tradition the *Ammas/Abbas* were sought for their wisdom and discernment and many seeking spiritual guidance were encouraged to cultivate specific virtues (pp 24-28); within the monastic tradition discernment, although not specifically mentioned, was central to living the common Rule of Life (p. 29). Despite the importance of discernment from the beginning it was with Ignatius’ Rules for Discernment that discernment became codified spiritual practice (p. 46).

The articles reviewed in Chapter 4 do not mention discernment as such yet throughout many of them the reality of discernment is evident. In posing questions in her article, Foley is inviting her hearers and readers to discernment, listening for the voice of God (p. 124); Bechlte invites her readers to further reflection (p. 128); Allen speaks of how the clients of City House and indeed the spiritual directors and agencies have been challenged (p. 130); Kogstad highlights her own discernment to return to New Moms (p. 133) as well as the transformation experienced by the adolescent mothers (p. 134); both Creed and O’Halloran mention that the ISP experience challenged the spiritual directors while the transformations realised by the participants lead to a sense of hope (pp 136-139); Belcher notes the tensions between the Social Gospel and the Spirit, emphasising the need to include the Spirit, a clear indication of the need for discernment, when helping others (p. 143); Swinton talks about the transformation which occurs for the members of the L’Arche community, both the people with developmental disabilities and their assistants (p. 152); and Reed notes that it is important to remember that spiritual direction is about discerning where and how God is in the life of the person being directed (p. 155)

Once again we find that Vincent and Louise did not as a matter of course speak of discernment, although in a Conference to the members of the Congregation of the Mission in 1659 on 'Gentleness' he says, 'I think only gentle souls receive the gift of discernment; for, since anger is a passion that troubles reason, it has to be the contrary virtues that imparts discernment. O gentle Savior, give us this gentleness'.¹¹ Rather they spoke of following Divine Providence and the Will of God. Vincent and Louise on more than one occasion exhort the ladies of the Confraternities of Charity, the Daughters of Charity and the confrères in the Congregation of the Mission, in their letters and conferences, to have confidence in and not to get ahead of Providence, but rather follow it. Indeed in many of his early letters of spiritual direction to Louise herself Vincent reminds her to allow herself to be guided by Providence, 'my daughter, what great hidden treasures there are in holy Providence and how marvelously Our Lord is honored by those who follow it and do not try to get ahead of it!'¹²

Over time Louise came to recognise and appreciate the importance of allowing Providence to guide her life and she in turn encouraged others to abandon themselves to the guidance of Providence too, 'you have every reason to trust in God and to abandon yourself to His Divine Providence. God will never fail to let you know how agreeable this manner of acting is to Him.'¹³ The essence of Vincentian discernment is in following the promptings of Divine Providence which leads to the discovery of the Will of God. As the spiritual directors interviewed said in so many different ways, this means that the Will of God is not complicated or difficult to know. It's about each person making the daily choices that lead him/her closer to God and to others. Again, this was echoed in different ways by the directees as they were encouraged to 'trust

¹¹ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)* Vol 12 p. 157

¹² Ibid. Vol 1 p. 59

¹³ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. p.354

that I can decide what's right and wrong' [Hugh] or inspired as Cathal was to 'turn my life and my will over to God' or like Malachy to recognise the 'transformation that has taken place.'

In many ways the spiritual service members of the Vincentian Family offer to people is in encouraging and supporting them to make those choices that are good and right for them, leading them on the path to the fullness of life. Offering spiritual direction in this way to those served by members of the Vincentian Family is often in the mentoring/teaching model explored in Chapter 2, just as it was in many instances for Vincent and Louise.

During the both the Phase I and Phase II interviews the virtues (p. 23) were also often mentioned alongside aspects of Discernment (p. 27), Providence and seeking the Will of God. This raises the question what do we mean by virtue? While the reflection on virtues as we have seen goes back to the early Church the emphasis in the interviews was more on the living of them than any theoretical deliberation.

For Vincent and Louise, like the early Church, the virtues were not to simply be talked about but to be prayed for and lived. To Louise in 1641 Vincent wrote,

In order to become soundly virtuous, it is advisable to make good practical resolutions concerning particular acts of the virtues and to be faithful in carrying them out afterwards. Without doing that, one is often virtuous only in one's imagination.¹⁴

something he would also often remind both the Daughters of Charity and the Missioners. Indeed, it is in the living out of the virtues that they contributed to their own growth in holiness. In 1640 he wrote to one of the Missioners, Étienne Blatiron, in Alet, saying 'Perfection consists in a constant perseverance to acquire the virtues and become proficient in their practice, because on God's road, not to advance is to

¹⁴ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)* Vol 2 p. 217

fall back since man never remains in the same condition.’¹⁵ Writing to one of the sisters in 1647 Louise reminds her,

‘if you place yourselves often in the presence of God, His goodness will not fail to advise you on all that He asks of you, whether it be the mortification of your senses and passions or the practice of the virtues which He desires so that you may be pleasing to Him.’¹⁶

The virtues mentioned specifically by the spiritual directors interviewed were Humility, Simplicity, Charity, Mortification and Zeal. The members of the Congregation of the Mission interviewed noted that while the first three are common to both themselves and the Daughters of Charity the latter two are only named explicitly for them. Those who commented on this suggested that this is a result of how well Vincent and Louise knew both the members of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity. Two of Vincent’s conferences to the Daughters of Charity are on the subject of Mortification, one in 1655¹⁷ and the second in 1657¹⁸ explaining some of the Common Rules. No conferences to the Daughters of Charity deal with the virtue Zeal. Vincent does not give any reason for this, but the members of the Congregation of the Mission interviewed did. In their opinion by nature the Daughters of Charity are already mortified and zealous. As I reflected on this I was reminded of the Zeal of Marguerite Nassau¹⁹ and wondered if that was the reason for Vincent’s silence on the subject with the Daughters of Charity. A Conference given by Vincent in 1642 was devoted to her virtues.²⁰ Louise, however, is aware of other

¹⁵ Ibid. Vol 2 p. 146

¹⁶ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. p. 219

¹⁷ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)* Vol 10 pp 44-51

¹⁸ Ibid pp 318-329

¹⁹ Marguerite Naseau (1594-1633) was born in Suresnes, a small town not far from Paris. She met Saint Vincent during a mission and volunteered to work in the Confraternities of Charity. Although she died some nine months before the foundation of the Daughters of Charity, from the plague having taken a victim of the disease into her own bed, Vincent considered her the first and ideal Daughter of Charity,

²⁰ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 9 pp 64-66

dimensions of the sisters' lives and does on a number of occasions when writing to the sisters include Mortification among the virtues to be practiced, though she only mentions Zeal to acknowledge it.²¹

In contrast Vincent speaks to the members of the Congregation of the Mission often in relation to both Zeal and Mortification. In a Conference to them in 1659 on the Characteristic Virtues he says of Zeal,

(it) consists in a pure desire to become pleasing to God and helpful to our neighbor; zeal to spread the kingdom of God and zeal to procure the salvation of our neighbor. Is there anything in the world more perfect? If love of God is a fire, zeal is its flame; if love is a sun, zeal is its ray. Zeal is unconditional in the love of God.²²

In respect of Mortification, in a Conference on Conformity to the Will of God he reminds them, 'Mortification is also necessary because we have to be very firm with ourselves in order to renounce freely what we give to God, and it's by this virtue that we overcome ourselves.'²³

Vincent and Louise both turn often to the virtues of Humility, Simplicity and Charity when speaking with or writing to the Daughters of Charity and confrères in the Congregation of the Mission. For Vincent these virtues are the mark of the good country girls,²⁴ and by extension those who are poor while for Louise they are the mark of Saints.²⁵ Of Humility Vincent has this to say at a Repetition of Prayer in 1657, '[L]et's not deceive ourselves; if we don't have humility, we have nothing,'²⁶ while Louise writing to the sisters in Richelieu in 1639 reminds them, 'True humility will regulate everything.'²⁷ In a Conference to the Congregation of the Mission in 1659

²¹ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. p. 408

²² Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 12 p. 250

²³ Ibid. Vol 12 p. 136

²⁴ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 9 pp 66-77

²⁵ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. p. 532

²⁶ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 11 p. 387

²⁷ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. p. 20

Vincent says of Simplicity, ‘Simplicity...has no other view than God’s view, which refuses any other motive than God and what is apparent!’²⁸ To the sisters in Fontainebleau Louise writes in 1647, ‘We all really need to think of our conversion. We will be helped greatly in this if we ask our good God for holy simplicity.’²⁹ Speaking about Charity to the Congregation of the Mission Vincent said, ‘A heart truly on fire and animated by this virtue (charity) makes its ardor felt; and everything in a charitable person breathes and preaches charity’³⁰ and Louise in a letter of 1639 to the sisters at Richelieu reminded them to, ‘act with great gentleness and charity as the Son of God recommended when He was on earth.’³¹

The spiritual directors interviewed in different ways spoke of the virtues as the ‘air we breathe’, ‘part of who we are’, ‘the soul of ... not only our whole community but of each one of us.’ They also mentioned other virtues pertinent to living the life to which they are called, obedience, poverty, patience, perseverance, respect and dignity for the other which lead them to have a greater sensitivity towards persons who are poor.

Hope is the virtue most often mentioned by the directees interviewed as something they themselves have experienced as a result of spiritual direction. In some instances this hope enables them to trust both themselves and others. This hope has also given them the impetus to be empathetic towards others in similar circumstances. It is, however, in relation to the actual encounter with their spiritual directors that the directees mention virtues most frequently. In addition to being afforded the space to be heard and to be honest the directees said that their spiritual directors take an interest in them and care for them. They also experienced them as gentle, compassionate, firm,

²⁸ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 12 p. 252

²⁹ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. p. 230

³⁰ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 11 p. 66

³¹ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. p. 19

encouraging and genuine. Hugh went as far as to wonder if what he was experiencing was simply his spiritual director's approach or a specifically Vincentian approach. I would suggest it was both/and rather than either/or. While the practice of the virtues is not in itself specifically Vincentian the Vincentian Charism gives a particular slant to the way they are understood and practiced. As each member of the Vincentian Family, including the spiritual directors, make their own the different aspects of the Vincentian Charism including the virtues, daily discernment and being guided by Divine Providence they enrich it with their own particular colour in light of their own temperament, education and life experiences.

What is emerging here is how closely linked the living the virtues are to Providence and discerning the will of God in everyday life are within the Vincentian tradition of spiritual direction, echoing the situation in the earlier timeframes.

HOLISTIC/INTEGRATED CORPORAL AND SPIRITUAL SERVICE

I have already noted in Chapter 2 how spiritual direction developed both in terms of the intentional one-to-one relationship initiated by the directee that is recognised as such and in the less formal encounters like those that would have taken place at monastery kitchen windows (p. 30) and the that offered by so many like the *Amma Syncletica* (p. 25) and the Beguines (pp 34-35) that mirror some of the gospel encounters that Jesus had where he took the initiative eg with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-32) or with the Samaritan woman at the Well (Jn 4:1-42). Many of the spiritual directors interviewed mentioned encounters such as these, often related to their specific service, whether along hospital or school corridors, in classrooms or in soup kitchens, which they also saw as spiritual direction. The

directees interviewed also mentioned encounters such as these and how they met their spiritual director both unplanned and very regularly.

The articles reviewed in Chapter 4 also include spiritual direction offered in the context of corporal service. This is particularly noted in both the Foley and Bechtle articles (pp 123-128) and in the Swinton article (pp 152-154). It is also evident in Kogsard's article on New Mom's (p. 133) and in Newmark's inclusion of her spiritual direction training in the treatment of people with eating disorders (p. 141). John Stygles' thesis details how a pilot programme of spiritual direction began from the provision of a simple meal on Tuesdays (p. 151). All of these highlight ways in which both corporal and spiritual service are one.

That from the beginning and the establishment of the first Confraternity of Charity in Châtillon-les-Dombes in 1617 the service to be rendered was to be both corporal and spiritual was mentioned by all the spiritual directors interviewed. We have already noted how the aims set out in the founding document as we have seen states this very clearly,

To do so, they propose two aims, namely, to assist body and soul: the body by nourishing it and tending to its ailments; the soul by preparing those who seem to be tending toward death to die well, and preparing those who will recover to live a good life.³²

of how this purpose was enshrined in the foundation document for each Confraternity of Charity as it was established, and in its turn the Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission³³ and the Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity.³⁴ Indeed on many occasions before the Rule of the Daughters of Charity was written down both Vincent and Louise exhorted the sisters both in Conferences and letters to take care of both the corporal and spiritual service of the sick poor whom they were sent to serve.

³² Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 13b p. 3

³³ Ibid Vol 13a p. 446

³⁴ Ibid Vol 13b p. 147

It must be remembered that the girls who were inspired to offer their services were themselves simple country girls. Many were unable to read or write but they had a genuine love, understanding and ability to relate well with other poor people. How, one might well ask, could these girls who were the servant girls of the Charities be considered spiritual directors?

Much is written today about the advantages of peer-to-peer ministry,³⁵ particularly in relation to specific groups in danger of being marginalised.³⁶ It could well be argued that the early Daughters of Charity, being poor village girls themselves, were engaged in peer-to-peer ministry with those they served. In carrying out their service they brought with them the teachings they had received from Vincent and Louise. One significant thing to note in relation to this was the general level of ignorance in matters of faith, even among the clergy, that Vincent himself had encountered. From that point of view the emphasis was more on catechising, evangelising and encouraging the sick poor to make a good general confession in preparation for either death or to live a reformed life.

I believe that in the Conferences Vincent gave to the sisters, at the request of Louise, he in fact modelled how the sisters were to approach the sick poor in relation to their spiritual care. The method that Vincent employed in giving Conferences³⁷ to the sisters often began with his asking each sister in turn for her thoughts on the topic. Each sister's contribution was valued. As he responded he affirmed and encouraged each one elaborating on what had been said, thereby giving them further instruction on the topic. I have come to appreciate that what Vincent was in fact doing was modelling a form of group spiritual direction that the sisters themselves could use

³⁵ Brian Reynolds, *A Chance to Serve: A Leader's Manual for Peer Ministry* (Winona MN: St Mary's Press, 1983).

³⁶ Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Women Counseling Women* (Eugene OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2010).

³⁷ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vols 9 and 10

when they were with the sick poor. This is also true of his exhortation to the early Daughters already referenced above to ‘take care to give an account of your prayer to one another as soon as possible after making it.’³⁸ In reminding these early Daughters that they bring both corporal and spiritual food to the sick poor he also suggests that they ‘tell them some good thought from your meditation’.³⁹

Louise too stresses the importance of the spiritual service the Ladies of the Confraternities and the Daughters of Charity render to those they minister. Among her writings are many accounts of her visits to the Confraternities noting how well they are keeping all aspects of their Rule. As already noted detailed instructions for the sisters employed in very different places and circumstances are also included among her writings. Whether they are in the Motherhouse, the parishes, with the galley slaves, in the hospitals or villages they are to ‘take care to encourage the sick to receive the sacraments, doing their utmost to help them prepare themselves well for this.’⁴⁰

While speaking to the priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Mission Vincent reminds them,

so then, if there are any among us who think they’re in the Mission to evangelize poor people but not to alleviate their sufferings, to take care of their spiritual needs but not their temporal ones, I reply that we have to help them and have them assisted in every way by us and by others.... To do that is to preach the Gospel by words and by works, and that’s the most perfect way⁴¹

As many of the spiritual directors interviewed remarked it is much more a question of where the emphasis is placed, service or evangelisation but it is both together that form

³⁸ Ibid. Vol 9 p. 4

³⁹ Ibid. Vol 9 p. 467

⁴⁰ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. p. 741

⁴¹ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 13b pp 77-78

the Vincentian charism and through both that spiritual direction is made available to people.

The spiritual directors interviewed gave numerous examples of their service, be that with people with severe intellectual disability, teachers in their schools, women who have been trafficked, people in prison, disturbed young people, people who are homeless, elderly people, people who are drug addicts or victims of AIDS, people who are terminally ill, people who are migrants or refugees or people from ethnic minority backgrounds, and of how they see that service as spiritual direction. One of those interviewed, spoke of visiting in prison and ‘having an art centre there which the people came to because they liked it as it enabled them to express their creativity. Then extending that to a bible class because they wanted that and they wanted to pray.’ [Peig] In this way the whole person was being nourished. Another interviewee, shared an experience from a homeless shelter. A former client turned volunteer, had gone into a Church while Mass was on,

His name was Tim. He said they came to the First Reading and the Reader got up and said a Reading from the Letter of St Paul to Timothy. And that had such a profound effect upon him it was like there was a special message. And I came to realise that even.... it was kind of not like a full.... we hadn’t arranged ourselves to be director/directee but in this informal setting he was sharing something which was a pretty significant experience of God for him. [Colm]

These and many other similar stories remind me of Jesus saying, ‘I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full,’ (Jn 10:10) and of how attaining fullness of life is different for everyone. Jesus was always offering spiritual direction since He was always calling those He met along the road or who came to Him to the fullness of life, another expression of the holiness to which all are called, no matter who they were or what their circumstances. Indeed, as I have reflected on the examples given I am also reminded of Jesus at the Last Supper after washing the

disciples' feet saying, 'I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.' (Jn 13:15) It is as though Jesus' entire teaching and healing, living, dying and rising are encompassed in this humble, simple, loving action of washing feet and those who would follow in his footsteps are invited to do likewise.

The directees too who were interviewed spoke of their different informal encounters with their spiritual directors. The place of these encounters, as already noted, was to suit the directees. Whether that be around the kitchen table in the hostels where they are currently accommodated as a result of the spiritual directors visiting in the hostels; or as for Donal also in a café or in a hospital room. Hugh's spiritual director went out of his way to meet him in a place he could easily access. When the directees spoke of meeting around the kitchen table, or in a café I was reminded of the responses of some of the spiritual directors who spoke about meeting on the road, in shelters, in prisons or at the table. I was also reminded of the many table fellowship encounters Jesus had and through which he offered spiritual direction to those present.⁴²

Of all the directees interviewed Hugh had the most 'formal' of all their encounters as he initiated the relationship, albeit having first experienced the person who would become his spiritual director delivering a part of a course he attended. All of the other directees recounted how their spiritual directors initiated the contact when they had visited in the hostels in which they were staying. While they were visiting generally or, as Cathal said, to show some film clips, a common thread in the responses of the directees was that the spiritual directors took an interest in them. It was this interest that allowed the directees to respond by meeting with them, telling their story and be enabled to give new meaning to it.

⁴² cf Matt 9:10-13; Lk 7:36-50; Lk 10:38-42; Lk 19:1-10; Jn 6:5-13; Jn 12:1-11; Jn 13: 1-16; Jn 21

Another dimension of the informality highlighted by the directees related to the frequency with which they meet their spiritual directors. While the literature does not indicate a definitive frequency between meetings my own experience has been, both as a director and directee, of meetings normally held every three to four weeks. Having said that there are many exceptions. In some instances a spiritual director or directee may sense the need to meet more frequently depending on what is happening in the life of the directee at the time. This may either result in more frequent meetings being scheduled for a time, as indeed was the case for Hugh. Alternatively, the directee may be assured if they feel the need to make contact before the next meeting is due not to hesitate to do so. Also, some will meet with their spiritual director at longer intervals or only irregularly.

Anyone undertaking the *Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola* either in the 30-day or as an 8-day directed retreat in a retreat house setting would during that time receive spiritual direction daily. This is also the case where the 8-day directed retreat is offered in daily life as a Week of Directed Prayer or Busy Person's Retreat. When the Exercises are offered as the 19th Annotation, again in the context of daily life, the retreatant would meet with their spiritual director weekly for a period of approximately nine months.

In their *Sample Engagement Agreement for Spiritual Direction* Spiritual Directors International include the following: 'Although we agree to a monthly one-hour session, you may desire to meet more frequently or for a longer session periodically, and that is fine, as long as we schedule in advance.'⁴³ The Vincentian Center for Spirituality and Work, in relation to their ministry of spiritual direction with

⁴³ Spiritual Directors International, "Sample Engagement Agreement for Spiritual Direction," <https://www.sdiworld.org/sites/default/files/find-a-spiritual-director/2012.11.21%20Sample%20Engagement%20Agreement.pdf>

the women in Denver Women's Correctional Facility, ask that the volunteer spiritual directors: 'see your directee(s) no less than every 3 weeks and more often if you are able.'⁴⁴

Given that the members of the Confraternities of Charity and the Daughters of Charity were visiting the sick poor on a daily basis bringing both corporal and spiritual service these more frequent encounters are in keeping with the Vincentian tradition. They also remind me of the hospitality offered by those keeping the door or at the kitchen windows of the early monasteries to those who came seeking help.

Vincent in his own time encouraged informal encounters of spiritual direction in particular as the Missioners travelled from place to place.⁴⁵ A number of biblical images come to mind in this regard not least that of Jesus joining the two disciples on the road to Emmaus which I have already noted above and in Chapter 4 as the gospel passage most often quoted during the interviews with the spiritual directors. Others that I am reminded of include the many encounters Jesus had with people who were lame or blind or had leprosy and the meeting of Philip and the Ethiopian recounted in Acts 8:27-39. Louise was well aware of the greater dangers that existed for women travelling both in the coaches and in the stops along the way. Notwithstanding that, and while reminding them about the practice of their rule and warning them against idle talk she also encouraged the sisters to make use of these informal encounters, 'if they have the opportunity to say a few good words to some poor person or the servants at the inns.'⁴⁶ That so many of the spiritual directors interviewed identified how many of these 'chance' encounters existed in their own ministries and how they saw them, on reflection, as encounters of spiritual direction is I believe a testimony to what

⁴⁴ Vincentian Center for Spirituality and Work, "Soul Care for Women in Prison," <http://www.cfsaw.org/soul-care-women-in-prison/>

⁴⁵ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 11 p. 85

⁴⁶ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. p. 771

members of the Vincentian Family have all received in the charism of Vincent and Louise.

When I reflect on the formal/informal dimension of spiritual direction in the relation to holistic/integrated service and particularly on the many situations described to me by both the spiritual directors and directees interviewed I am also reminded of the quotation often attributed to Sr Rosalie Rendu⁴⁷ but which she in fact attributes to her godfather and advisor, Fr Emery, ‘My child, a priest and a Daughter of Charity must be like a milestone on a street corner where all those who pass by can rest and lay down their heavy burdens.’⁴⁸ It seems to me that this is itself a metaphor of spiritual direction as practiced within the Vincentian tradition, linked in a very real way to the service given.

We have already noted how Vincent was keenly aware from the establishment of the Confraternities of Charity that women were, for the first time in eight hundred years, being afforded the opportunity to use their gifts and faith to minister to the sick poor. He was not slow in acknowledging this or pointing it out to them. As the Confraternities and Ladies of Charity and the breadth of their ministry grew and gave birth to the Daughters of Charity I am reminded of the many women who accompanied Jesus (Lk 8:1-3).

What is emerging here is that for the Vincentian Family, continuing what was established from the beginning, a significant way that spiritual direction is provided for people who are marginalised is in and through the corporal service they offer to them.

⁴⁷ Sr Rosalie Rendu (1786-1856) in 1802 becomes one of the first Seminary Sisters after the suppression and dispersion during the Revolution. It was to her that the young university student, Frédéric Ozanam (1813-1853), who would be beatified as the principal founder of the Society of St Vincent de Paul turned to learn about visiting and serving people who were poor.

⁴⁸ Louise Sullivan DC, *Sister Rosalie Rendu: A Daughter of Charity on Fire with Love for the Poor* (Chicago, IL: Vincentian Studies Institute, 2006). p. 37

VINCENTIANS GO OUT TO PEOPLE/REACHING OUT TO OTHERS

Both Vincent and Louise in their writings and conferences placed great emphasis on the Incarnation and marvelled at the fact that our God was willing to become one of us, to leave his home in heaven and join us on this earth. If Folleville and Châtillon-les-Dombes in 1617 were seminal experiences for Vincent involving his going out to people Louise's Pentecost experience of 1623⁴⁹ was her transformational experience which although more mystical in nature than his also included much coming and going, which at the time she did not understand.

Going out to people is not a characteristic within the evolving history in Chapter 2. While, particularly the marginalised women within a growing clericalised church, were more available to provide spiritual direction for people who were marginalised it tended to be the people seeking them out than the women going out to them. The Beguines (p. 35), however, attended those who needed both material and spiritual help as *Amma Syncletica* (p. 25) and others like her.

A number of the articles reviewed in Chapter 4 involves a going out to people. Bechtle's article details a very Vincentain response to a disaster which is very much about going out to people (pp 123-128). Allen's article about City House is about going out to bring spiritual companionship to marginalised people (p. 128) the pilot programme that was Stygles thesis also involves going out to people (p. 150). Also significant, when one considers that some of the ministries undertaken by the Vincentian Family are in the context of services which are more institutional, are Kogstad's New Moms (p. 133) and Swinton's article on L'Arche (p. 152). While both Gittens (p. 147) and Putney (p. 149) go out to marginalised people it is get something from them than offer them anything. Reed also notes that spiritual directors may need

⁴⁹ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. p. 1

to move their location if they are to be reliable witness to those on the margins (p. 155).

The Confraternities of Charity were set up to respond to the needs of the people in the parish and entailed members taking a day each to prepare the food and medicines and take them to those who needed them. From his time on the de Gondi estates Vincent, and in turn those who joined him, went about preaching missions and ministering to the people. Louise visited the Confraternities of Charity bringing them encouragement and connection. The Daughters of Charity in their turn also went to visit and tend to the sick poor in their homes and in time the galley slaves and later again the soldiers during the Fronde. Vincent and Louise were very clear that going to the assistance of people in need is the same thing as going to God. As early as the Conference given to the first Daughters of Charity in July 1634 Vincent tells the sisters, ‘Remember that when you leave meditation and Holy Mass to serve poor persons, you lose nothing, Sisters, because to serve those who are poor is to go to God, and you should see God in them.’⁵⁰ This is something he would return to many times. Louise too when writing to the sisters reminded them of this, ‘we are leaving God for God if we leave one of our spiritual exercises for the service of the poor.’⁵¹ On many occasions Vincent also spoke of the poor as ‘our Lords and Masters’,⁵² which calls to mind again for me Jesus at the Last Supper after washing the disciples feet asking them if they understood what he had done, going on to say ‘You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you must wash each other's feet.’ (Jn 13:13-14) In an undated conference to the members of the Congregation of the Mission Vincent had this to say on the subject:

⁵⁰ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 9 p. 5

⁵¹ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. p. 510

⁵² Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 11 p. 349

I must not judge a poor peasant man or woman by their appearance or their apparent intelligence, especially since very often they scarcely have the expression or the mind of rational persons, so crude and vulgar they are. But turn the medal, and you will see by the light of faith that the Son of God, who willed to be poor, is represented to us by these poor people; that He scarcely had a human face in His Passion, and passed for a madman in the mind of the Gentiles and a stumbling block in the mind of the Jews. With all that, He describes himself as the Evangelizer of the poor: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me*. O Dieu! How beautiful it is to see poor people if we consider them in God and with the esteem in which Jesus Christ held them! If, however, we look on them according to the sentiments of the flesh and a worldly spirit, they will seem contemptible.⁵³

Many of the spiritual directors interviewed spoke of this going out to people as a dimension of the service they give, including spiritual direction. Going to prisons, visiting sick people in their homes, visiting the families of children with intellectual disability, parish visitation, going to the homeless shelters or soup kitchens and more, all fall into the description of going out to others. We have seen in the Rule of Benedict that the stranger was to be welcomed as Christ. Vincent and Louise take this principle further in understanding their going out to people as going to meet Christ. The responses to the interviews with the spiritual directors highlight that this going out to people is an important fact of life for all those who are living the Vincentian charism. It is about going out to meet people in their circumstances, whatever those are and not expecting them to conform to ours.

This going out to people – to meet Christ is an element of the missionary character of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity from the beginning. For the Daughters of Charity this included nursing the sick poor in their own homes. This was something, as we have already seen, Vincent was quick to note was unheard of up until then. The Daughters also went out to minister to the galley slaves and to the wounded on the battle fields. While the early missionary endeavours

⁵³ Ibid. Vol 11 p. 26

of both included going beyond France, it was and is ultimately more about an attitude of mobility and availability, a going out of one's way. In this I am reminded of the story Jesus told of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37) and of how it is necessary to leave one's comfort zone to go out to those who are, for whatever reason, excluded and abandoned to the margins of society. The attitude one goes with will determine whether one meets or misses Christ there. I think that explains something of Vincent's emphasis on the acquiring and practice of the virtues as discussed above.

All the directees interviewed spoke of how their experience of spiritual direction had led them to reach out with empathy to others in need whether in the hostels, soup kitchen or on the streets. For many of them it also included a reaching out to estranged family members and for Cathal and Malachy included returning to Church attendance. As they told me in different ways how they experienced the invitation to be and do for others I found myself being reminded of Paul's letter to the people in Corinth:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Father and the God who gives every possible encouragement; he supports us in every hardship, so that we are able to come to the support of others, in every hardship of theirs because of the encouragement that we ourselves receive from God. [2Cor 1:3-4]

What is emerging here is the way that the provision of spiritual direction by members of the Vincentian Family to people who are marginalised is strongly rooted in the Incarnation. If God is so willing to reach out to us then it becomes each of us to reach out to others in His name and in that reaching out meet Christ himself. When people are met in this way they in turn reach out to others.

GENDER DIFFERENCES/ISSUES

Gender related issues were themes in both the Phase I and Phase II interviews and in the writings of Vincent in particular. While the issues noted that specifically relate to gender were few, not specifically Vincentian and mentioned only by a small number of the members of the Congregation of the Mission [Phase 1] and one directee interviewed [Phase II], I believe they warrant further reflection and discussion. This is particularly true of both preaching and hearing of confessions as means of spiritual direction with people generally and one directee (Hugh) deliberately choosing a priest because he wanted sacramental confession included. The writings of Vincent highlighted the novel public role that the Confraternities of Charity and the Daughters of Charity gave to women.

It has already been noted in Chapter 2 how gender differences played a significant part in the way spiritual direction was available to people at the margins of society. As a more clericalised Church developed from the end of the desert tradition spiritual direction became more and more the prerogative of the cleric confessor with a greater focus on doctrine and orthodoxy rather than growth in holiness or discernment of the will of God. Despite this, as we have seen, the tradition of women and lay men as spiritual directors persisted, even after Trent, particularly for people who were marginalised.

The articles reviewed in Chapter 4 do not speak of this issue in any way.

Preaching as spiritual direction raised, by some of the spiritual directors, reminds us of the tensions and disagreements of the early church, already noted in Chapter 2, between the elitist ascetic/monastic model and a more available

clerical/sacramental⁵⁴ model. The hearing of confessions as an opportunity for spiritual direction also serves as a reminder of earlier times, in this case medieval times, when spiritual direction became so closely related to sacramental confession that it was effectively absorbed into it. For members of the Congregation of the Mission both preaching and hearing confessions are important, although not the only opportunities for spiritual direction with people in general including people who are marginalised. They do however bring us back to Vincent himself and to the origins and *raison d'être* for all the communities he founded, which have already been noted in Chapter 7.

The two key incidents for Vincent in 1617, as we have seen, highlight the role of preaching and hearing confessions, pointing to the gender-specific clerical/sacramental model of spiritual direction. However, in the establishment of the Confraternities of Charity they also go beyond that and beyond being gender dependent. The mentoring/teaching role is also very evident in how Vincent approaches his preaching and in how he encourages the poor village people to make a good general confession. This is also evident in the formation given to the women who formed the original Confraternities of Charity and the village girls who formed the Daughters of Charity, who in their turn were expected to be mentors/teachers to the sick poor whom they tended. Indeed we have also seen how for Vincent the gender issue was that of the public role of the women of the Confraternities, and in their turn the Daughters of Charity, comparing them to the Deaconesses of the early Church.⁵⁵

Something of the gender difference is also borne out by the reflection of one of the members of the Congregation of the Mission interviewed when in relation to

⁵⁴ While the term 'clerical' today tends to be used as a contrast to 'laity' and suggests an ideology that places inflated emphasis on the clergy who relate to the laity as subjects to be ruled. My use of it here is in keeping with its use by George Demacopoulos referred to in Chapter 2 as a contrast to the aesthetic.

⁵⁵ Coste CM Vol 13b p. 432

himself as a spiritual director he said, ‘I took it for granted because of being a priest, a Vincentian priest specially, because of our charism of aiding people in lay life, in vowed life and in priesthood on the way of the spiritual life. I took it for granted.’ [Fergal] This thinking among the priests clearly reflects how Vincent’s experience of 1617 has been so much part of their own formation. There was, however, from the beginning an expectation that the women of the original Confraternities of Charity, and in their turn the early Daughters of Charity, would be mentors and give spiritual as well as corporal service to sick poor whom they served. Despite this the members of Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation interviewed did not take it for granted that they would be spiritual directors although all recognised that they were engaged as spiritual directors long before they had specific training or formation in it. It was in fact their involvement as spiritual directors that led them to seek opportunities for formation/training, as indeed it did me.

What is emerging here is that members of the Vincentian Family place all their gifts for spiritual direction at the disposal of people who are marginalised. That includes the hearing of confessions and preaching as well as the spiritual direction given in the context of corporal service. The women in the Vincentian Family have from the very beginning exercised a very public role in relation to this service.

EVANGELISED BY THE POOR/EVANGELISING THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

‘Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you.’ (Matt 28:19-20)

An evangelist is a messenger of hope, a messenger of the gospel, one who is sent with the authority of Jesus to teach, preach and heal as he did. But, what is meant

by ‘being evangelised by the poor’? Again we find that Vincent and Louise did not talk about being ‘evangelised by the poor’ they experienced it and lived their lives out of that reality. It is also, I believe, a natural follow-on from their understanding that going out to people is going out to meet Christ. Going out to people to meet Christ challenges me, am I open to learning from the Christ I meet there?

Being evangelised by those seeking spiritual direction is not mentioned in the evolving history of spiritual direction. However, in the monastic rule the stranger was to be welcomed as Christ (p. 31). This is something that would be expanded on by Vincent.

While the articles reviewed in Chapter 4 do not speak about being evangelised by those to whom spiritual direction is made available some of them highlight the mutuality of the relationship despite its asymmetry. Allen sees this happening as a result of the spiritual directors being invited beyond their own comfort zone (p. 128); Putney talks about being challenged to her core as a volunteer on a weekly soup run (p. 149); Snodgras talks about three specific characteristics of people who are homeless suggesting that those working with them need to be in touch with in themselves (pp 146-147); and Swinton also suggests that the spiritual direction within the L’Arche community is mutual (p. 153).

At the heart of everything undertaken by members of the Vincentian Family is the ideal of the experience of being evangelised by those whom they serve. One member of the Congregation of the Mission interviewed, emphasised the opening line of their Constitutions which states that ‘(t)he purpose of the Congregation of the Mission is to follow *Christ evangelising the poor*,’⁵⁶ and not *evangeliser of the poor*’ [Nial] as it can often, incorrectly, be quoted. The implications of ‘following Christ

⁵⁶ Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission

evangelising the poor' are considerable. In the first instance the invitation is to follow Christ as he is revealed in the gospels and through relationship in prayer. A number of those interviewed talked about the importance of being in real relationships with people who are poor if they themselves are to evangelise and be evangelised. One of them put it this way: '(it) begins with being in relationship with the poor and allowing that relationship to influence whatever else I am doing in my life.' [Nial]

While being evangelised by the poor is true in all the circumstances the sisters, brothers and priests find themselves it is particularly true with regard to their ministry as spiritual directors. This was very clear in the experiences of those interviewed. One interviewee spoke of how being with people who are marginalised 'is my own call to conversion,' [Cian] going on to say 'sometimes I'd often wish to reverse the experience and say can... would you be my spiritual director now?' and about how the experiences in different settings have, 'informed me to this very day.' Some of those interviewed also spoke about the importance of living close to people who are poor, because it enables 'you to meet people where they are actually at..... treating them and their story with respect' [Rita], 'sharing in the condition of the poor' [Nial] and of the importance of 'a sense of personal poverty' [Fergal] and 'you have to learn to receive' [Fionn]. In this way members of the Vincentian Family understand those who are marginalised to whom go out in their turn reveal Christ to them, as one interviewee, said, 'I am growing in who I am ... because I cannot, you know be the same in listening to these people and in trying you know to see with them what God is trying to tell them.' [Laoise] It was in a very early experience of informal spiritual direction, indeed at the time I didn't see or understand myself as a spiritual director that, I came to realise this in a very profound way.

The directees interviewed did not talk about being evangelisers or of evangelising their spiritual directors. However, they were all aware in different ways of their spiritual directors receiving something from their encounters with them. For Cathal it was the light he saw in her eyes. Hugh recognised that he challenged his spiritual director as much as himself, and felt his director enjoyed it. Donal saw his being healed as the gift he gave his spiritual director while Óisín spoke of sharing his knowledge. For Liam it was his ability to put his spiritual director at ease and see her smile. In all of these different ways the directees became evangelisers, messengers of hope, for their spiritual directors.

When I think of being evangelised by the poor I am also reminded of Jesus' encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman who came to him seeking healing for her daughter (Mk 7:25-30). When he initially refused her request she challenged him to see beyond her gentile status and in so doing challenged his understanding of his own mission. This encounter also calls to mind the words put into Vincent's mouth by the makers of the film *Monsieur Vincent* as speaking to Sr Jeanne he tells her:

It is not everything to give soup and bread. The rich can do the same. You are the little Servant of the Poor, the Daughter of Charity, always smiling and good-humored. They are your masters, terribly sensitive and exacting masters, as you will find out. But the uglier and the dirtier they are, the more unjust and vulgar they appear, the more you must show them your love. It is only because of your love... because of your love alone... that the Poor will forgive you for the bread you give them.⁵⁷

What is emerging here is that while welcoming the stranger as Christ was a feature of early monasticism and a degree of mutuality is noted by some in the articles reviewed being evangelised by people who are marginalised is identified as a specifically Vincentian trait.

⁵⁷ *Monsieur Vincent*, directed by Maurice Cloche (1947).

TRAINING AND POST-TRAINING ISSUES/METHOD OF DELIVERING CONFERENCES

Spiritual direction, as I have indicated in Chapter 2, has existed in the Christian Tradition from the beginning, however, specific formation/training for spiritual directors is a much more recent phenomenon. It was really in the 1970's that programmes for the training of spiritual directors began to emerge. In the beginning these were grounded exclusively on the Ignatian approach and were delivered in Jesuit Retreat Centres/Colleges. Over the years those from other traditions, Christian and otherwise, who participated in these programmes began to explore ways that they could adapt what they had learned to their own specific tradition. This has resulted in many different training programmes becoming available responding to the need for other approaches. The responses to the interviews bear out how this has also been the case in the Vincentian tradition.

Of the articles reviewed in Chapter 4 one which talks about training programmes is that of Harris in which she suggest that encounters with people who are marginalised be included in the programmes (p. 131); Allen's article talks of partnering with four training programmes in order to recruit the volunteer spiritual directors (p. 128); while Newmark's (p. 141) about undertaking a training programme to give her the language and the skills to incorporate the spiritual dimension in her treating people with eating disorders.

It was interesting to note the reasons given by the spiritual directors interviewed who completed programmes with An Croí and with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Specifically the interviewee who completed the An Croí programme, [Cait], was attracted by the creative dimension of it. In this choice I see very clearly the influence of Vincent when in his exhortation to a dying brother in

1645 he said, ‘love is inventive to infinity.’⁵⁸ The interviewee who participated in the programme delivered by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, [Rita], commented on how Vincentian the compassionate listening of the Heart Spirituality in fact was, reminding me of Vincent in a Conference to the Daughters of Charity in October 1655 saying, ‘God, ... asks first for the heart and, after that, for the work,’⁵⁹ and of Louise in an undated letter, enclosing spiritual exercises to a lady which was quite obviously of spiritual direction saying, ‘God wants only our hearts.’⁶⁰

While there was a genuine appreciation among the spiritual director interviewees who had completed Ignatian programmes for what had been received, in particular from the approach and the structure of the long retreat, there was also the awareness that it is not the Vincentian way. The reflection of one of the interviewees, Fionn, regarding Ignatius being a soldier and Vincent being a pastor reminded me of a conversation with a sister a number of years ago during which she said she would not consider making a directed retreat because she did not want to engage in spiritual military manoeuvres – her perception of the Ignatian approach. It is also important in this regard to take account of the living Ignatian tradition which sees God present in all things, ‘active in our lives’⁶¹ and in many cases finds expression in action for justice. Another spiritual director interviewee who trained in a centre originally set up by the Jesuits said it didn’t have a strong Ignatian focus which was appreciated. This particular interviewee’s difficulty was less with the open Ignatian approach being experienced than with the fact ‘that people get too caught up with the terminology, or miss the crucial thing which is the experience that people have of their God.’ [Colm]

⁵⁸ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 11 p. 131

⁵⁹ Ibid. Vol 10 p. 108

⁶⁰ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. L 40 p. 679

⁶¹ Society of Jesus, accessed May, 2015. <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/what-is-ignatian-spirituality/>.

Another interviewee, who was already ordained and trained as a spiritual director before joining the Congregation of the Mission noted that, ‘the Vincentian mission widened my experience of spiritual direction to include every aspect of my life as opposed to being in a formal academic setting and doing spiritual direction with students and that sort of thing.’ [Nial] In reflecting on my own experience of training with the Jesuits here in Ireland, from the opening gathering to the closing ritual I was conscious of Vincent being very close. Two things strike me in this regard, in the first instance the issue would appear to be not so much the Ignatian training delivered as how it is received and secondly that Ignatian training may come across differently in different cultures.

Important and all as formation/training is, there is also a sense that unintentionally it can give rise to an elitist approach, not unlike that of the ascetic approach in earlier times. Irrespective of which training/formation programme one participates in the elitist approach is not the only or preferred way. In many instances today those who embrace Ignatian Spirituality, of which training in spiritual direction is part, are a presence at the margins where they work for social justice⁶² and strive to build bridges between faith and society.⁶³ Within the Vincentian Tradition however from the beginning everything undertaken has been determined by the needs of our brothers and sisters who are impoverished and/or marginalised giving shape and colour to it. This is no less true of spiritual direction than any other activity or ministry members of the Vincentian Family are involved in. Spiritual direction as practiced within the Vincentian Tradition is, in the first instance, shaped by the experience of being with and ministering to people who economically poor and/or marginalised.

⁶² Jesuit Institute South Africa, accessed May, 2015. <http://www.jesuitinstitute.org.za/>.

⁶³ Society of Jesus, "Our Mission," accessed May, 2015. <http://jesuits.org/mission/>.

I have already noted under *Holistic/Integrated Service* above how the Conferences given by Vincent to the early sisters modelled for the sisters how they were to provide spiritual care to the sick poor they served. In many respects his method of delivering Conferences was their formation and training as spiritual caregivers, spiritual directors.

Being with people who are in poverty and marginalised had already taught the spiritual directors interviewed to pay attention to God speaking in the ordinary events of life and to discover through them God in the here and now. In particular ‘living among the poor’ [Fionn] was the school in which many of those interviewed identified as the most important aspect of their formation as spiritual directors. This was often contrasted with what they had received in their formal training which was characterised much more as ‘reading interior signs and experience’ [Fergal], while acknowledging that this is important too. As I initially listened to the responses of the spiritual directors interviewed in relation to their experience of training and reflected further on what they had said I have been reminded of the connection between ‘Riverdance’ and traditional Irish dancing. ‘Riverdance’ would not have been possible without the grounding and understanding the choreographers and dancers had in traditional Irish dance allowing them to take it to new levels. This is what those in the Vincentian as well as many different traditions have also discovered about training in spiritual direction. As a result spiritual direction itself has become a rich tapestry in which all have a significant contribution to make.

What is emerging here is that while there is a recognised need for formation as a spiritual director there is a danger that training programmes give rise to an elitist approach rather than availability for people who are marginalised. While Harris’ suggestion of exposing those undertaking training programmes to people who are

marginalised is laudable I think Allen's approach of partnering with training programmes to provide spiritual direction to people on the margins has More to commend it.

MEDITATION/MENTAL PRAYER

Meditation and mental prayer are not mentioned specifically in the evolving history in Chapter 2 though they are implicit in each timeframe.

In the articles reviewed in Chapter 4 prayer and meditation is also implicit. Bechtle (p. 126) notes a number of occasions when praying with and for people formed part of the response of the members of the Vincentian Family; Kogstad also specifically mentions prayer, both her own prayer (p. 133) and the experiences of the teen Moms (p. 134); Gittens notes that the women he interviewed talk to God in their own words (p. 148); and the pilot programme that Stygles designed and delivered included introducing the participants of various prayer forms (pp 151-152). In all cases prayer on the part of the spiritual directors was implicit.

It is clear from Vincent's Conferences and correspondence the value he placed on meditation and mental prayer. He stresses the importance of prayer in living their vocation to both the Missioners:

The grace of vocation depends on prayer...if we come together before Our Lord and present ourselves all together to Him as the first Christians used to do, He will give Himself in turn to us, will illumine us with His lights, and will Himself accomplish in and through us the good we are bound to do in His Church.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 3 p. 532

and the Daughters of Charity, '(I)t's by prayer that vocation is preserved, because it's true Sisters, that a Daughter of Charity can't survive if she doesn't pray. It's impossible for her to persevere.'⁶⁵

To the Missioners he goes so far to say:

Give me a man of prayer, and he'll be able to do anything; he can say with the holy Apostle, 'I can do all things in Him who sustains and comforts me.' (Phil 4:13) The Congregation of the Mission will survive as long as it's faithful to the practice of meditation because meditation is like an impregnable rampart, which will protect the Missioners against all sorts of attacks.'⁶⁶

Even prior to the Foundation of the Daughters of Charity Louise had a very detailed Rule of Life which included meditation.⁶⁷ When giving instructions to sisters travelling she tells them:

After leaving the coach, before thinking about eating, they shall go to the nearest church to adore God in the Blessed Sacrament. They shall make the same act of adoration in every village through which they pass.'⁶⁸

while to sisters experiencing difficulties she writes, 'If some of you are worried or troubled, I beg of you, in the name of God, to turn immediately to prayer and to be very faithful to our Rules and to the practice of the virtues required by your state.'⁶⁹ She also reminds the sisters about the importance of the sharing of their prayer with one another, '(L)et me know that among all your spiritual exercises repetition of prayer and the little Friday conference are not omitted.'⁷⁰

Vincent also concludes his conferences to the Daughters with a prayer:

With all my heart I ask Our Lord Jesus Christ, who willed to come on earth to submit himself not only to His parents but to the most wicked of all men and to His enemies; who did not come to earth to do His own Will but that of His Father; who did not come to command but to obey;

⁶⁵ Ibid. Vol 9 pp 327

⁶⁶ Ibid. Vol 11 p. 76

⁶⁷ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. pp 689-91

⁶⁸ Ibid. 1991 p. 771

⁶⁹ Ibid. 1991 p. 52

⁷⁰ Ibid. 1991 p. 511

I ask Him, I repeat, to put into your hearts the true desire for perfect obedience, the true spirit of obedience that He himself had, and to give you His true Spirit to act with everyone and in all matters in accordance with His holy and divine Will. I make this prayer to the Eternal Father through the Son, to the Son through His holy Mother, and to the entire Blessed Trinity through our poor Sisters now in heaven. *Benediction Dei Patris...*⁷¹

While meditation and prayer were not mentioned specifically by those interviewed in Phase II they all spoke in different ways of their relationship with God. Donal asked if we could pray before we began the interview and when I asked if he would like to lead the prayer he said, ‘Yes, please’ and spontaneously offered a prayer for both of us. In passing Cathal mentioned that he was sure there was a God and He had been looking after him, and when he feels pressure coming he prays, saying, ‘Lord, please help, take this away.’ Malachy had had a very strict religious upbringing which while he rebelled against it at a time did not lose his connection with God. More recently, as a result of the meetings with his spiritual director, he believes ‘the Lord is trying to tell me that there is a purpose like to go on you know.’ Liam described a lively relationship with both God and Our Lady which if anything has been strengthened by what he has been through. He said, ‘I’ve learned that you know just saying my prayers at the right time and just floating back and forward with God, eh...talking, eh...Our Lady...just being...so I try not to be selfish with my prayers. I try and just you know talk a bit with God and give God time to answer me back, just give God time to seep, just seep into my body, just seep into me.’ One of the reasons Hugh wanted confession was ‘so that I would say ‘sorry’ to God’ and he also talked about popping into a Church when he would be passing.

Meditation and prayer was seldom mentioned explicitly by the spiritual directors interviewed in Phase I, just as they were seldom mentioned in the evolving

⁷¹ Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 11 p. 243

history in Chapter 2 and the articles reviewed in Chapter 4, although it was clearly implicit in much of what they said. Some of them did speak generally about the importance of prayer both for themselves and those they are directing; or about praying for those they are directing; or about how particular encounters of spiritual direction impelled them to prayer.

What is emerging here is the extent to which prayer and meditation is implicit in the lives and experience of the spiritual directors but not, mentioned specifically by them in the way Vincent and Louise did. Prayer was also mainly implicit, though important, for those receiving spiritual direction

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Both in the letters he writes and the Conferences he gives Vincent quotes extensively from scripture, particularly the Gospels, as indeed does Louise. In doing so it seems to me that they are saying that as Christ is the reference point for the Members of the Vincentian Family in terms of both action and attitude. The quotations from scripture are included to illustrate and/or emphasise something they are saying in relation to the growth in holiness, the virtues and following Divine Providence.

CONCLUSION

The themes which have emerged from the three samples provide a rich tapestry to describe how spiritual direction in the Vincentian Tradition is offered and delivered, in particular to people who are marginalised and how it is experienced and received by them. That there is such a significant overlap in the themes from the three samples I believe allows us to say that a distinctive Vincentian approach does in fact exist. In the next chapter I will identify the most significant characteristics of the Vincentian

approach indicating what it has to offer in relation to the practice of spiritual direction with people who are marginalised.

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Chapter 10

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Vincent and Louise themselves would be the first to say that their approach to spirituality and spiritual direction was not totally new. We have already seen how Vincent blended what he had learned from Pierre de Bérulle, François de Sales and others. Louise too had built on the wealth of the experiences within the Christian tradition up to her time. What was undoubtedly new about their approach relates to how they discerned which of those elements they learned from others to make their own and how building on that they moulded the whole into something new out of their own experiences. We have already noted in Chapter 2 how de Bérulle was himself influenced by both Ignatius and Teresa (p. 49) while François de Sales was also influenced by Ignatius (p. 50) and that both of these men had a significant influence on Vincent. That he parted company with de Bérulle is also noted (p. 49) which would indicate that there were some elements of de Bérulle's spirituality Vincent could not make his own. Louise for her part would initially have been influenced by the Dominican sisters with whom she went to school as well as her uncle Michel. Later it was François de Sales and Pierre Camus she confided in before Vincent became her spiritual director. Over and above what they learned from these guides they also learned from the dying man in Gannes and other poorly served marginalised people, from the women who responded to Vincent's plea on behalf of a sick family in

Châtillon, Marguerite Nasseau and the uneducated village girls with big hearts who became the first Daughters of Charity. Vincent and Louise took what they learned from one another and from all of these others and out of that gave birth to the Vincentian Charism.

CHARACTERISTICS OF VINCENTIAN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

The dimensions of their spiritual direction which this research has identified as characteristic are four-fold: the holistic integrated nature of corporal and spiritual service; the qualities of compassion and gentleness flowing from the attitude of servant; their going out to others – to meet Christ; and being evangelised by those they serve.

A significant contribution made by Vincent and Louise to the spiritual direction of people who are marginalised is in incorporating it with service. As we have seen corporal and spiritual service were for them a single reality. This has led to the practice of an informal spiritual direction with the people that the members of the Vincentian Family serve being natural. As the practice of spiritual direction has become more and more professionalised in recent times there are I suspect many who would dismiss this as not really being spiritual direction. To do so I believe is to be overly elitist, dismissing how God works with people and how people experience God in their lives. When writing about the Vow of Service of the Poor to the Daughters of Charity in February 1968, Sr Suzanne Guillemin DC, Superioress General¹ reminds them that ‘competence in a duty is a matter of justice,’ echoing Vincent writing to Firmin Get in Marseilles in 1658 that ‘love embraces justice.’² This is as true of the

¹ Sr Suzanne Guillemin was Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity from 1962 to 1968 during which time she served as Auditor at the Second Vatican Council

² Coste CM, *Vincent De Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents (Vols 1-13)*. Vol 7 p. 115

practice of the spiritual service given as it was of the growth in the technical nature of many of the corporal services that she was alluding to. People who are poor deserve only the best, not the scraps from the table of those who have.

In that same letter Sr Suzanne also emphasised the importance of professional formation and technological skill going on to say, 'it remains for us to humanize technology and make of it the instrument of the tenderness of Christ.' This also is as true of spiritual direction as of the corporal services she mentioned. Something of the qualities that we have noted Vincent and Louise highlighted to the early members of the Confraternities and Ladies of Charity, Daughters of Charity and members of the Congregation of the Mission are evident here. They speak of the need to be compassionate and gentle with the people they serve treating them kindly and with the utmost respect. These qualities for members of the Vincentian Family flow from the attitude of servant as they encounter Christ in the person who is marginalised. This undoubtedly colours the way the members of the Vincentian Family practice spiritual direction.

It is not, as we have seen, that spiritual directors within the Vincentian Family are the only ones offering spiritual direction to people who are marginalised indeed that they only offer spiritual direction to people on the margins. However, by its very nature the integration of spiritual direction with service necessitates going out to people and engaging with them where they are, unseen and unheard. Specifically it means going out to people who would be reluctant or otherwise unable to come to you. In this regard it is interesting that as I was completing this thesis I happened to meet someone I knew and who is also a spiritual director. When she heard what I was doing she expressed her interest and told me that she had spoken to a mutual acquaintance who runs a service for young homeless people. She proposed going in to be available

and offer them spiritual direction but was told they are not interested. It was as though a decision was being made for them.

The spiritual direction offered by members of the Vincentian Family also includes a willingness to be changed themselves through the provision of both corporal and spiritual service to those, who for Vincentians, represent God in their vulnerability, marginalisation and impoverishment. In other words those who are marginalised become their teachers as they are evangelised by those they serve both corporally and spiritually.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE ACADEMIC LITERATURE

This research has traced the evolving history of spiritual direction within the Christian tradition in Chapter 2 and in doing so I have compiled specifically how available or not it has been to people who are marginalised.

Through exploring metaphors and models in Chapter 3 I have developed a heuristic model, based on five overlapping metaphors of spiritual direction, journey/pilgrimage, friendship/*Anamchara*, hospitality, midwife and mentor, all of which are significant for spiritual direction with people who are marginalised.

Some of the contemporary practice of spiritual direction in situations of marginalisation have been examined in Chapter 4 highlighting significant inconsistencies, gaps and weaknesses in relation to how spiritual direction is provided for people who are marginalised.

A random selection of 17th century writings of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac in relation to spiritual direction were analysed. The interviews of a random selection of spiritual directors within the Vincentian Family and people who had received spiritual direction from spiritual directors in the Vincentian Family were also

analysed. From these some distinct characteristics of Vincentian spiritual direction have been distilled.

The overall result is the creation of a theoretical foundation for the development of spiritual direction with people who are marginalised based in the Vincentian tradition.

STRENGTHS OF THE RESEARCH

This research has brought the subject of spiritual direction in the Vincentian Tradition into the academic arena. As already noted most previous research in relation to spiritual direction has tended to ignore the Vincentian approach.

This research makes explicit what has been implicit. We have seen also how research in relation to Vincentian Spirituality has tended to focus on the practical, corporal service with little emphasis being placed on the spiritual service which is implicit in it.

As a result this research begins a process of integrating Vincentian theory into the practice of spiritual direction in particular with people who are marginalised.

This research contributes to filling a lacuna in the literature. As noted above significant gaps, weaknesses and at times even silence has marked both the history of spiritual direction and the literature in relation to the current practice of spiritual direction with people who are marginalised.

This research also highlights the lack of awareness and availability of spiritual direction for people at the margins.

LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

Time and again while both researching and writing this I have had to remind myself that I do not have to say the last word on any aspect of the topic and so as I come to the end find myself with more questions than answers. In this regard I am acutely aware that only a fraction of the richness of the content of the interviews, the transcripts of which taken together are longer than this thesis, can be included without compromising the research itself. The same can be said for the selection of the Conferences and Correspondence of Vincent and Louise

The research itself is limited in respect of the relatively small cohort of members of the Vincentian Family interviewed, the largest branch of the family, the Society of St Vincent de Paul, not being included at all. Indeed, no lay members of the Vincentian Family were included among the interviewees. I have previously explained my reasons for that, (p. 193) but I also acknowledge that the research is the poorer for it.

While the study did include members of the Vincentian Family from the United States and Australia and many had spent time as Missionaries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Oceania it does not fully include the international character of the Vincentian Family. Again, a broader study to truly reflect the international character of the Vincentian Family is to be encouraged.

The small number of people interviewed who are receiving spiritual direction from members of the Vincentian Family is also a limiting factor. Those who responded to the invitation and are included add a richness to the research, limited though it is. Despite the small number it ensured that this research was not another instance of ‘talking about’ rather than ‘talking to’ people who are marginalised. My

hope is that future studies find a meaningful way, notwithstanding the difficulty posed, to include many more of their voices.

UNEXPECTED FINDINGS

While maybe I should not have been surprised, given the history of spiritual direction and how important they were for Vincent as outlined above, I didn't expect preaching and hearing confessions to be raised. Yet as I reflected on that particular finding in the light of the history and models of spiritual direction it was important to acknowledge the place it has within the overall tenets of Vincentian spiritual direction.

A second finding that was unexpected was the identification of toilet-training of a child with severe intellectual disabilities as spiritual direction or the bringing of some of the other staff to see the circumstances the children spent the weekend in so that they could better understand why they came back to school on Monday as they did. Once again reflecting on these in the light of the gospel (cf Jn 10:10) and some of the other contributions I was reminded in the words of another interviewee, 'everything we do is spiritual direction.'

A third finding that was to some extent unexpected was the lack of one or two clearly significant metaphors for spiritual direction. The paradigm of story was mentioned by almost all the spiritual directors interviewed in different ways and all the metaphors covered in detail in Chapter 3 – journeying, friendship, hospitality, midwifing and mentoring – were mentioned and by more than one spiritual director interviewee.

While I recognised from the beginning that recruiting the Phase II interviewees would be more difficult than for Phase I I had not expected it to be as difficult as it was, nor had I expected that only people in Ireland would in the end be included. This

has raised many questions for me. Spiritual directors were approached and invited to be gatekeepers as they were the most accessible to me, especially in trying to include the international dimension of the United States and Australia. However, no one from the United States or Australia completed an Informed Consent Form. Had I realised that that would be an outcome I could have designed Phase II differently. For instance, had I known that so many would come from hostel accommodation for people who are homeless I could have approached the Hostel Managers and asked them to be the gatekeepers. Had I gone that road, however, it would have silenced Hugh's voice, so I may have had to consider a 'both and' approach. I have also wondered if the *Participant Information Sheet* (Appendix L) for Phase II which was sent with the Informed Consent Form was too detailed, explicit and perhaps off-putting to prospective interviewees.

Another completely unexpected finding flows from the fact that five of the six Phase II interviewees were when interviewed in hostel accommodation for people who are homeless. Given the breadth of ministries the spiritual directors who were interviewed alone were involved with (Appendix H), not to mention the other spiritual directors who were included in the invitation to be gatekeepers, I had expected to interview people from a much wider range of poverty and marginalisation issues. That that was not the case was both unexpected and disappointing. Having said that I also recognise that all six interviewees presented with multiple issues of marginalisation which is so often the case for this particular cohort of the population.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE RESEARCH

This research I believe only touches the surface of the topic under consideration. Many further possible research studies are suggested both by the findings and the limitation already outlined above. Some of these are as follows:

In the first instance a much broader study is called for to include the experience of the members of the other branches of the Vincentian Family, in particular the Society of St Vincent de Paul; a broader experience of those whom the members of the Vincentian Family accompany in their service and, given the international character of the Vincentian Family, other cultural realities.³ Perhaps this could be accomplished through a joint international study using the same research instrument.

We have already seen how many of the letters, such as we have, of both Vincent and Louise to one another, the early confrères and sisters and others are or contain spiritual direction. Full documentary research of these letters would be invaluable as it would further illuminate the contribution they have made.

The early Daughters of Charity, many of whom were uneducated village girls, were, I believe, engaged in peer-to-peer ministry. Further research on this, if possible, may throw additional light on this important aspect of ministry going forward.

Service was identified as a vehicle for spiritual direction by all the members of the Vincentian Family interviewed and led the members of the Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation to seek training/formation in spiritual direction. Many other Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation members are also involved in these same services without specific training/formation in spiritual direction. How involved are they in providing spiritual direction to the people they serve?

³ At least one branch of the Vincentian Family is present in 173 countries of the world

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings of this research I believe that spiritual direction formation/training programmes seriously consider making the provision of spiritual direction for people at the margins an integral component of all programmes. In this way spiritual directors in training will experience not just people who are marginalised but the gift of bringing spiritual direction to them. This would be one way of addressing the growing elitism already noted and of increasing the awareness of spiritual direction generally.

Within all the branches of the Vincentian Family that greater focus be given during initial and on-going formation to the spiritual dimension of the service they provide and to undertake a spiritual direction formation programme the better to do so. I believe this is particularly relevant as a number of the members of the Congregation of the Mission invited to be gatekeepers for Phase II responded to say they had no formal training in spiritual direction and so were not in a position to help. This, despite the fact that I was aware they had accepted invitations to facilitate 8-day retreats for the Daughters of Charity and were involved in service with marginalised groups.

The extent to which the virtue hope as a result of their experience of spiritual direction, was identified by all of the directees interviewed is I believe significant especially when one considers the hopeless situations many of them were in. It was this hope that gave them the impetus to reach out to others in need. In this I am reminded of the motto given by Louise to the Daughters of Charity: 'The Charity of Jesus Christ crucified urges us.' How many more people in hopeless situations could benefit from hope-giving spiritual direction? In this I find myself returning to the questions raised by John Belcher (p, 143ff), which he poses specifically in relation to

homelessness, and applying them to all situations of marginalisation. Can one truly do social justice for any group of marginalised people without giving them the opportunity to experience hope through spiritual direction?

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APPENDIX A

LUMINÉRE

In the year 1623, on the Feast of Saint Monica, God gave me the grace to make a vow of widowhood should He call my husband to Himself.

On the following Feast of the Ascension, I was very disturbed because of the doubt I had as to whether I should leave my husband, as I greatly wanted to do, in order to make good my first vow' and to have greater liberty to serve God and my neighbor.

I also doubted my capacity to break the attachment I had for my director' which might prevent me from accepting another, during his long absence, as I feared I might be obliged to do.

I also suffered greatly because of the doubt I experienced concerning the immortality of the soul. All these things caused me incredible anguish which lasted from Ascension until Pentecost.

On the Feast of Pentecost,' during holy Mass or while I was praying in the church,' my mind was instantly freed of all doubt.

I was advised that I should remain with my husband and that a time would come when I would be in a position to make vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and that I would be in a small community where others would do the same. I then understood that I would be in a place where I could help my neighbor but I did not understand how this would be possible since there was to be much coming and going.

I was also assured that I should remain at peace concerning my director; that God would give me one' whom He seemed to show me. It was repugnant to me to accept him; nevertheless, I acquiesced. It seemed to me that I did not yet have to make this change.

My third doubt was removed by the inner assurance I felt that it was God who was teaching me these things and that, believing there is a God, I should not doubt the rest. I have always believed that I received this grace from the Blessed Bishop of Geneva' because, before his death, I had greatly desired to communicate these trials to him and because since that time, I have had great devotion to him and have received many graces through him. On that occasion, I had a reason for believing this to be so, although I cannot now remember it.¹

¹ Sullivan DC, *Spiritual Writings of Louise De Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*. Document A2 p 1

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INVITATION – PHASE I



7 February 2014

Dear

I am writing to you as you are a member of the Vincentian Family and a practicing spiritual director. Currently I am an MA Candidate (by research) in All Hallows College and I am writing to invite you to take part in the research I am undertaking into how our Vincentian tradition forms and informs our practice of spiritual direction. Your experience and insights will be greatly valued and appreciated while the information gathered will significantly add to the store of our knowledge of Vincentian Spirituality and also to that of Spiritual Direction.

An Information Leaflet is enclosed with regard to the research study. If, after reading this you need further clarification do not hesitate to contact me. The study involves interviews with a random selection of members of the Vincentian Family who are currently spiritual directors from which you have been selected.

I should be grateful if you would let me know, within ten days of receiving this letter, if you are willing to take part in the study. If you agree to take part I will forward you the questions that will be used in the research and a consent form that you will complete when you meet for the interview.

The study has the ethical approval of All Hallows College.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Éibhlís NicUaithuas DC



All Hallows College is a college
of Dublin City University

All Hallows College
Coláiste na Naomh Uile
Grace Park Road,
Drumcondra,
Dublin 9, Ireland.

T +353 1 837 3745
F +353 1 837 7642
E info@allhallows.ie
www.allhallows.ie

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – PHASE I

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY

‘Evangelised by the Poor’: A Study of the Ministry of Spiritual Direction in the tradition of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac is a research study that aims to explore how the spirituality of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac contributes to and informs the contemporary practice of spiritual direction by members of the Vincentian Family. Of specific interest will be who spiritual direction is made available to, how it is practiced and if a distinctive Vincentian approach to Spiritual Direction can be identified? The study is being undertaken for an MA by research in All Hallows College by:

Name: Éibhlís NicUaithuas DC
Mobile: +353 87 4170628
Email: smr.enicuaithuas@allhallows.ie
eibhlisnicuaithuas@daughtersofcharity.ie

WHO IS INVOLVED IN PROVIDING INFORMATION FOR THIS RESEARCH?

Participants will be recruited from among members of the Vincentian Family currently offering spiritual direction. They will mainly be members of the Congregation of the Mission and Daughters of Charity who are currently offering spiritual direction. They will be recruited by means of random selection among members of the Vincentian Family known to be currently offering spiritual direction. Half of the participants will be recruited from members in Ireland and the others from members internationally either known to the researcher or who can be identified through the Seek and Find Guide of Spiritual Directors International.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN PARTICIPATING IN THIS RESEARCH?

Participants will meet individually with the researcher for a one-to-one interview. Participants will be asked to share something of their experience as a spiritual director with particular regard to whom they are available as a spiritual director; the model/philosophy of spiritual direction out of which they work and the specific ways their Vincentian tradition shapes their practice of spiritual direction. Participants should allow an hour to an hour and a half for the interview. For participants from Ireland interviews will be held at a mutually agreed time in All Hallows College or another mutually agreed place to allow for confidentiality and privacy.

For participants from outside Ireland the interviews will be held at a mutually agreed time on Skype where confidentiality and privacy on the part of the researcher will be assured.

**POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS FROM INVOLVEMENT IN THE RESEARCH STUDY
(if greater than that encountered in everyday life)**

It is not envisaged that involvement in this Research Study will pose any risks to the participants.

BENEFITS (direct or indirect) TO PARTICIPANTS FROM INVOLVEMENT IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

Participants in this Research Study will benefit by having the opportunity to reflect with a new lens on their ministry of Spiritual Direction and how it is formed and informed by their Vincentian tradition.

ARRANGEMENTS TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA

All information given will be held in strictest confidence in so far as is practicable. Names will not be attached to the information collected. Personal information which may identify an individual will normally only be seen by me. With permission, I will record the interview and take notes. A copy of their transcript of the interview will be available to each participant, if they want it. The transcribed interviews will be password encrypted and hard copies will not have names attached. The information will be stored securely for the duration of the study and for nine months after the study is completed. The findings of the study will be presented as a dissertation and may be published in relevant reports, books or articles. Names and participants will not be identifiable at any stage in this study, in so far as this is practicable.

DESTRUCTION OF DATA AFTER A MINIMUM PERIOD

Recorded interviews will be transcribed. The recordings will be destroyed when the study is completed. Prior to that, they will be held in a locked storage cabinet accessible only to me. The transcribed interviews will be deleted from all drives, including from all back-up drives, nine months after the study is completed.

STATEMENT THAT INVOLVEMENT IN THE RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY

Participation in this Research Study is voluntary. Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time up to **April 2014** and any data collected will be destroyed upon your withdrawal from the study.

ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

The study group is small but all efforts will be made to protect your anonymity. This will be facilitated by the fact that half of the participants are from outside Ireland. All participants are members of the Vincentian Family, both in Ireland and internationally, currently offering spiritual direction.

While many of the participants are known to the researcher none of the participants is in a dependent relationship with the researcher.

If participants have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

**The Secretary, All Hallows College Research Ethics Committee, c/o
Postgraduate Office, All Hallows College, Dublin 9. Tel 01-8520756**

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM – PHASE I

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE

‘Evangelised by the Poor’: A Study of the Ministry of Spiritual Direction in the tradition of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac is a study being undertaken for an MA by Research in All Hallows College by Éibhlís NicUaithuas DC.

CLARIFICATION OF THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this research is to explore how the spirituality of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac contributes to and informs the contemporary practice of spiritual direction by members of the Vincentian Family. Of specific interest will be who spiritual direction is made available to, how it is practiced and if a distinctive Vincentian approach to Spiritual Direction can be identified?

CONFIRMATION OF PARTICULAR REQUIREMENTS AS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

Have you read or had read to you the Participant Information Sheet	Yes/No
Do you understand the information provided?	Yes/No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	Yes/No
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	Yes/No
Are you aware that your interview will be recorded electronically?	Yes/No

CONFIRMATION THAT INVOLVEMENT IN THE RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY

Participation in this Research Study is voluntary. Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time up to **April 2014** and any data collected will be destroyed upon your withdrawal from the study.

All Hallows College
Coláiste na Naomh Uile
Grace Park Road,
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Dublin 9, Ireland.



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of Dublin City University

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E info@allhallows.ie
www.allhallows.ie

ARRANGEMENTS TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA

All information given will be held in strictest confidence in so far as is practicable. Names will not be attached to the information collected. Personal information which may identify an individual will normally be seen only by me. With permission, I will record the interview and take notes. A copy of their transcript of the interview will be available to each participant, if they want it. The transcribed interviews will be password encrypted and hard copies will not have names attached. The information will be stored securely for the duration of the study and for nine months after the study is completed. The findings of the study will be presented as a dissertation and may be published in relevant reports, books or articles. Names and participants will not be identifiable at any stage in this study, in so far as this is practicable.

DESTRUCTION OF DATA AFTER A MINIMUM PERIOD

Recorded interviews will be transcribed. The recordings will be destroyed when the study is completed. Prior to that, they will be held in a locked storage cabinet accessible only to me. The transcribed interviews will be deleted from all drives, including from all back-up drives, nine months after the study is completed.

ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

As a participant in this study you are a member of the Vincentian Family currently offering spiritual direction.

While the study group is small all efforts possible will be made to ensure your anonymity as the names of the participants will not be identifiable at any stage in this study, in so far as this is practicable. Drawing the study group of participants from both Ireland and internationally will also facilitate the efforts to ensure the anonymity of all.

Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form.

I am a member of the Vincentian Family currently offering spiritual direction and I consent to take part in this research project.

Participant's Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Witness:

Date:

APPENDIX E

Questions for Interviews – Phase I

Related to Spiritual Direction Generally

What is your experience of being a spiritual director?

Who called/invited you into the ministry of spiritual direction?

What do you understand by ‘spiritual direction’?

How would you describe your own specific philosophy/model of spiritual direction?

Related to Vincentian Charism and Tradition

How aware have you been of your Vincentian tradition shaping your practice as a spiritual director?

What specific aspect of your Vincentian Tradition shapes your practice of spiritual direction?

What specific incidents from the life of Vincent DePaul and Louise de Marillac inform your practice of spiritual direction?

In what ways do you consider the Vincentian tradition of spiritual direction to be unique?

What are the implications of Vincentian charism for spiritual direction with those who are marginalised?

In your practice of spiritual direction

What inspires you? How? Why?

What surprises you? How? Why?

What challenges you? How? Why?

What touches you deeply/calls you to care? How? Why?

What is the gift you give to your directees?

What gift do you receive from your directees?

Are there other questions in relation to the Vincentian Charism and spiritual direction that you have reflected on or would have expected to have been asked?

Are there any other comments or reflections you would like to make?

APPENDIX F

PROFILES OF INTERVIEWEES

Ages brackets:

Congregation of the Mission:

50-59	1
60-69	1
70-79	2
80 +	2

Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation:

50-59	1
60-69	2
70-79	3
80 +	-

Length of Time in the Community/Practicing Spiritual Directors:

Congregation of the Mission:

64 years/from shortly after ordination
59 years/39 years
58 years/40-45 years
48 years/20 years
33 years/20 years
32 years/32 years

Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation:

55 years/10 years
55 years/49 years; trained 29 years
54 years/40 years; trained 8 years
46 years/40 years; trained 35 years
40 years/6 years
38 years/5 years

APPENDIX G

Spiritual Direction Training/Formation Programmes Completed:

Congregation of the Mission:

4 participated in various Jesuit
Spiritual Direction training
programmes

2 have not participated in any specific
Spiritual Direction formation/training
programme

Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation:

3 participated in various Jesuit
Spiritual Direction training
programmes

3 participated in various other Spiritual
Direction formation/training
programmes

[These include the An Croí Programme
offered in Ashbourne, Co Meath and
Stirling, NJ; the MSC's Programme
offered in Ireland, the US and Australia
and the Programme offered by the
Vincentian Centre for Spirituality and
Work, Denver, CO]

APPENDIX H

Ministries:

Congregation of the Mission

All have been Spiritual Directors in Diocesan, Missionary or Internal Seminaries. Currently two are Spiritual Directors in Diocesan Seminaries.

Three are former Provincial Directors for the Daughters of Charity.

Other current/previous Ministries include:

Parish Ministry; Education; Parish Missions/Retreat Ministry; Prison Ministry; Young Adult Ministry; Ministry to AIDS victims and drug addicts; Ministry to people who are homeless/food pantries; Ministry to people who are gay; Ministry to ethnic minorities (ie Native peoples, and Travelling people, etc) Ministry to refugees, Missionaries in Africa and Asia; Ministry with the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation

Two Daughters of Charity/Sisters of Charity Federation are or have been spiritual directors to students in seminaries and two in initial or ongoing formation with their sisters.

Other current/previous Ministries include:

Education; Health care both in hospitals and in the community; Chaplaincy; Counselling; Ministry to people who are intellectually disabled; to people who are mentally ill; to people who are terminally ill; Prison Ministry; Ministry to troubled teens and disturbed young people; to elderly people; Ministry to people who are homeless/food pantries; Ministry to migrants; Ministry to women who are trafficked; Ministry to people in war situations; Missionaries in the Middle East and Oceania.

APPENDIX I

LETTER OF INVITATION TO GATEKEEPERS – PHASE II



Waterford Institute *of* Technology

INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LÁIRGE

c/o Research Ethics Committee, Postgraduate Support Unit,
Graduate Studies Waterford Institute of Technology, Cork Road, WATERFORD,
Ireland

April 2017

Dear

I am writing to you once more as a member of the Vincentian Family and a practicing spiritual director. Currently I am a PhD Candidate in Waterford Institute of Technology where I am undertaking research into ‘Spiritual Care and Marginalisation in the Vincentian Tradition: An Exploratory Study’.

Having initially sought the views and experience by interview of a number spiritual directors selected at random from within the Vincentian Family, I am now seeking the experience, again by interview, of some, also randomly selected, people who have experienced spiritual direction, either formally or informally – even if they do not use that name for it – from a member of the Vincentian Family. By ‘formal’ here I mean that it has been initiated by the individual themselves and involves meeting on a regular, on-going basis. While ‘informal’ covers other all forms of spiritual direction/soul care relationships. I am particularly interested in speaking with people within the following groups who are or have within the past six months availed of spiritual direction:

- people who are/were homeless, refugees, migrants, or belonging to ethnic minority groups;
- people who are currently or formerly in prison;
- people who are victims of war or who have been trafficked;
- people who are intellectually disabled, mentally ill or disturbed young people (>18 years)
- people who are victims of AIDS or people who are terminally ill;
- people addicted to alcohol, drugs, etc;
- elderly people

who in addition meet the following criteria:

- have sufficient education/ability to understand what they are agreeing to;
- have sufficient understanding to engage in the interview;
- are sufficiently psychologically able to handle the possibility of the perceived acceptance of selection or rejection of non-selection.

It is in this regard I write to seek your assistance. I should be grateful if you would bring this research to the attention of the people to whom you currently offer or in the past six month have offered spiritual direction. An Information Leaflet with regard to the research study is enclosed for your information together with a Letter of Invitation, including information for them, to be given to your directees. I should be grateful, if where necessary, you would ensure that your directees understand the information in the letter.

I am very much aware that as a spiritual director you are ethically bound not to pass on the name or information about anyone to whom you offer or have offered spiritual direction, so the Letter of Invitation allows your directees to contact me directly if they are interested in being part of this research study.

I am also aware that in inviting someone to participate in this research on my behalf you are altering the nature of your relationship with them and there are implications involved in that for you. Before inviting someone to participate you need to reassure yourself you can be comfortable with the new dual relationship and monitor through your own supervision. Those selected for the interviews will receive a further Information Leaflet and Informed Consent Form. If, after reading the leaflet attached, you need further clarification do not hesitate to contact me.

The study has the ethical approval of Waterford Institute of Technology.

Thanking you in anticipation

Éibhlís NicUaithuas DC

APPENDIX J

INFORMATION SHEET FOR GATEKEEPERS – PHASE II

WHO IS INVOLVED IN PROVIDING INFORMATION FOR THIS RESEARCH?

Participants for this phase of the research will be recruited from among people currently receiving or having within the past six months received spiritual direction from members of the Vincentian Family. Spiritual directors who are members of the Vincentian Family will be asked to act as Gatekeepers and give their directees a copy of the letter enclosed inviting them to contact the researcher directly indicating their willingness to participate in this research. The spiritual directors will have no further involvement in the provision of information for the research.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN PARTICIPATING IN THIS RESEARCH?

- Half of the participants for the research will be drawn by random selection of those in Ireland who indicate their willingness to participate. The other half of the participants will be the random selection of those in the United States and Australia who indicate their willingness to participate.
- All those randomly selected will be contacted directly by the researcher with further information and a Consent Form after which interviews will be arranged.
- Participants will meet individually with the researcher for a one-to-one interview.
- For participants from Ireland the interviews will be held at a mutually agreed time and place to allow for confidentiality and privacy.
- For participants from outside Ireland the interviews will be held at a mutually agreed time on Skype where confidentiality and privacy on the part of the researcher will be assured. Where necessary members of the Vincentian Family, not the person's spiritual director, will be asked to facilitate the space for this meeting.
- The interviews will be recorded with permission for future transcription.
- Participants will be asked to share something of their understanding and experience of receiving spiritual direction, including where it takes place how it is planned, what happens for them in the interaction.
- Participants should allow approximately one hour for the interview.
- All who indicate their willingness to participate but are not drawn in the random selection will be contacted by the researcher.

POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS FROM INVOLVEMENT IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

It is not envisaged that involvement in this Research Study will pose any risks to the participants.

The spiritual directors who bring this study and the invitation to participate in this research to the attention of their directees will be altering the nature of the relationship they already have and need to be aware of the implications involved in that.

The researcher will not be contacting the spiritual directors in relation to anything that is disclosed in the interviews.

BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS FROM INVOLVEMENT IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

Participants in this Research Study will benefit by having the opportunity to reflect on their own experience of spiritual direction.

ARRANGEMENTS TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA

All information given will be held in strictest confidence in so far as is practicable. Names will not be attached to the information collected. Personal information which may identify an individual will normally be seen only by the researcher. With permission, the researcher will record the interview. A copy of their transcript of the interview will be available to each participant, if they want it. The recorded interviews and transcribed interviews will be code-named with no actual names attached and password encrypted. The information will be stored securely for the duration of the study and for nine months after the study is completed. The findings of the study will be presented as a dissertation and may be published in relevant reports, books or articles. Names and participants will not be identifiable at any stage in this study, in so far as this is practicable.

DESTRUCTION OF DATA AFTER A MINIMUM PERIOD

Recorded interviews will be transcribed. Both the recordings and the encrypted transcripts will be held on a password protected computer used only by me while back-ups will be held in a locked storage cabinet accessible only to me. On completion of the study these will be transferred to the WIT storage location. The recordings and transcribed interviews will then be deleted from all personal drives, including from all back-up drives. The recordings and transcripts held in the WIT Storage location will be destroyed five years after the study is completed.

STATEMENT THAT INVOLVEMENT IN THE RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY

Participation in this Research Study is voluntary. Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time up to **September 2018** and any data collected will be destroyed upon their withdrawal from the study.

ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

The study group is small but all efforts will be made to protect your anonymity. This will be facilitated by the fact that half of the participants are from outside Ireland and by the fact that they are drawn from much larger disparate groups.

None of the participants are known to or in a dependent relationship with the researcher.

If participants have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

**Ms Suzanne Kiely, Secretary to the WIT Research Ethics Committee,
Postgraduate Support Unit, Graduate Studies, Waterford Institute of
Technology, Cork Road, Waterford. Tel: +353-51-302609; skiely@wit.ie**

APPENDIX K

Initial Letter to Participants – Phase II



Waterford Institute of Technology

INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LÁIRGE

c/o Research Ethics Committee, Postgraduate Support Unit,
Graduate Studies Waterford Institute of Technology, Cork Road, Waterford

April 2017

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

You are receiving this letter from a member of the Vincentian Family (spiritual director) with whom you are, or have recently been, engaged in spiritual direction.

This letter is to invite you to participate in the research study I am undertaking in Waterford Institute of Technology. I have asked your spiritual director to explain what is involved to you.

At this stage I am asking you to indicate if you are willing to take part in the study. If you are so willing your name will be included among those from which a **random sample will be drawn** of people in Ireland (the United States/Australia). Please contact me directly at:

Mobile: +353 87 4170628

or

Email: maireeibhlis.nicuaithuas@postgrad.wit.ie
eibhlisnicuaithuas@daughtersofcharity.ie

no later than 30 June 2017 if you are willing to take part in this study.

The study has the ethical approval of Waterford Institute of Technology.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Éibhlís NicUaithuas DC

APPENDIX L

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – PHASE II

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY

‘Spiritual Accompaniment and Marginalisation in the Vincentian Tradition: An Exploratory Study’ is a research study that aims to show how the way Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac understood God relates to the way their followers today also understand God and how this shapes the spiritual accompaniment, also known as spiritual direction, they offer to especially to people who are:

- people who are homeless, refugees, migrants, or belonging to ethnic minority groups;
- people currently or formerly in prison;
- people who are victims of war or people who have been trafficked;
- people who are intellectually disabled, mentally ill or disturbed young people (>18 years)
- people who are victims of AIDS or people who are terminally ill;
- people addicted to alcohol, drugs, etc;
- elderly people

Of specific interest will be who spiritual direction is made available to, how it is practiced and if a typical Vincentian approach to Spiritual Direction can be identified? The study is study being undertaken for a PhD in Waterford Institute of Technology by:

Name: Éibhlís NicUaithuas DC
Mobile: +353 87 4170628
Email: maireeibhlis.nicuaithuas@postgrad.wit.ie
eibhlisnicuaithuas@daughtersofcharity.ie

WHO IS INVOLVED IN PROVIDING INFORMATION FOR THIS RESEARCH?

You have been recruited by the random selection from people who:

- currently or during the past six months have received spiritual direction from a Vincentian priest, a Daughter of Charity or other sister belonging to the Sisters of Charity Federation (US) or another member of the Vincentian Family;
- and
- have informed me of their willingness to participate.

Half of the participants are being recruited from people in Ireland and the others from people in the United States and Australia.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN PARTICIPATING IN THIS RESEARCH?

Those taking part will meet individually with the researcher for a one-to-one interview.

For those in Ireland interviews will be held at an agreed time and place to allow for confidentiality and privacy.

For those from outside Ireland the interviews will be held using Skype at an agreed time where confidentiality and privacy on the part of the researcher will be assured. If necessary the researcher will make arrangements with to facilitate this.

Those taking part will be asked to share something of their experience of engaging in the spiritual conversation we call spiritual direction, including how it began, where it takes place, how it is planned, what happens for them during and as a result of the conversation.

The interview should take approximately one hour.

POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS FROM INVOLVEMENT IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

It is not predicted that taking part in this Research Study will pose any risks to those taking part.

BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS FROM INVOLVEMENT IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

Those taking part in this Research Study will benefit by having the opportunity to reflect on their own experience of spiritual direction.

ARRANGEMENTS TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA

All information given will be held in strictest confidence in so far as is practicable. Names will not be attached to the information collected. Personal information which may identify any individual will normally be seen only by me. With permission, I will record the interview to transcribe later. A copy of the transcript of their own interview will be available to each person taking part, if they want it. Both the recorded and transcribed interviews will be password encrypted, held on a computer that is password protected and hard copies will not have names attached. The information will be stored securely for the duration of the study and for nine months after the study is completed. The findings of the study will be presented as a dissertation and may be published in relevant reports, books or articles. Names and those taking part will not be identifiable at any stage in this study, in so far as this is practicable.

DESTRUCTION OF DATA AFTER A MINIMUM PERIOD

Recorded interviews will be transcribed. Both the recordings and the encrypted transcripts will be held on a password protected computer used only by me while back-ups will be held in a locked storage cabinet accessible only to me. On completion of the study these will be transferred to the WIT storage location. The recordings and transcribed interviews will then be deleted from all personal drives, including from all back-up drives. The recordings and transcripts held in the WIT Storage location will be destroyed five years after the study is completed.

STATEMENT THAT INVOLVEMENT IN THE RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY

Participation in this Research Study is voluntary. Those taking part are free to withdraw from the study at any time up to **30 September 2018** and any data collected will be destroyed upon your withdrawal from the study.

ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

The study group is small but all efforts will be made to protect your anonymity. This will be helped by the fact that half of those taking part are from Ireland and the other half of those taking part are from the United States and Australia so they are being randomly selected from much larger disparate group.

None of those taking part are known to or in a dependent relationship with the researcher.

The researcher will not be available as a spiritual director to anyone who takes part in the research for at least eighteen months after it is completed.

If anyone taking part has any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

**Ms Suzanne Kiely, Secretary to the WIT Research Ethics Committee,
Postgraduate Support Unit, Graduate Studies Waterford Institute of
Technology, Cork Road, Waterford. Tel: +353-51-302609, skiely@wit.ie.**

APPENDIX M

INFORMED CONSENT FORM – PHASE II

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE

'Spiritual Accompaniment and Marginalisation in the Vincentian Tradition: An Exploratory Study' is a study being undertaken for a PhD in Waterford Institute of Technology by Éibhlís NicUaithuas DC.

CLARIFICATION OF THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this research is to explore how Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac understood God plays a part in the way their followers today also understand God and how this shapes the spiritual accompaniment, also known as spiritual direction, they offer to especially to people who are marginalised. Of specific interest will be who spiritual direction is made available to, how it is practiced and if a typical Vincentian approach to Spiritual Direction can be identified?

CONFIRMATION OF PARTICULAR REQUIREMENTS AS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

Have you read or had read to you the Participant Information Sheet	Yes/No
Do you understand the information provided?	Yes/No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	Yes/No
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	Yes/No
Are you agreeable to having your interview recorded electronically?	Yes/No

CONFIRMATION THAT INVOLVEMENT IN THE RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY

Participation in this Research Study is voluntary. Those taking part are free to withdraw from the study at any time up to **30 September 2018** and any data collected them will be destroyed upon their withdrawal from the study.

ARRANGEMENTS TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA

All information given will be held in strictest confidence in so far as is practicable. No names will be attached to the information collected. Personal information which may identify an individual will normally be seen only by me. With permission, I will record the interview and take notes. A copy of the transcript of their own interview will be available to each person taking part, if they want it. The recorded and transcribed interviews will be password encrypted, held on a password protected computer and hard copies will not have names attached. The information will be

stored securely for the duration of the study and for nine months after the study is completed. The findings of the study will be presented as a dissertation and may be published in relevant reports, books or articles. Names and those taking part will not be identifiable at any stage in this study, in so far as this is practicable.

DESTRUCTION OF DATA AFTER A MINIMUM PERIOD

Recorded interviews will be transcribed. Both the recordings and the encrypted transcripts will be held on a password protected computer used only by me while back-ups will be held in a locked storage cabinet accessible only to me. On completion of the study these will be transferred to the WIT storage location. The recordings and transcribed interviews will then be deleted from all personal drives, including from all back-up drives. The recordings and transcripts held in the WIT Storage location will be destroyed five years after the study is completed.

ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

As a person taking part in this study you are currently or within the past six months have had spiritual direction from a Vincentian priest, a Daughter of Charity or other sister belonging to the Sisters of Charity Federation (US) or another member of the Vincentian Family.

While the study group is small all efforts possible will be made to ensure your anonymity as the names of the those taking part will not be identifiable at any stage in this study, in so far as this is practicable. Drawing the study group of those taking part from both Ireland and the United States and Australia will also facilitate the efforts to ensure the anonymity of all.

The researcher will not be available to anyone who takes part in the study for at least eighteen months after it is completed.

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form.

I am currently or have within the past six months been engaged in spiritual conversations with a Vincentian priest, a Daughter of Charity or other sister belonging to the Sisters of Charity Federation (US) or another member of the Vincentian Family and I consent to take part in this research project.

Participant's Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX N

Questions for Interviews – Phase II

Would you like to tell me a bit about yourself?

How did you begin spiritual direction?

Where did you first meet your spiritual director?

How often do you meet your spiritual director?

Where do you meet your spiritual director?

What has been your experience of spiritual direction?

In your experience of spiritual direction:

How have you been inspired? Why?

How have you been surprised? Why?

How have you been challenged? Why?

How have you been touched deeply/called you to care? Why?

What is it that your spiritual director gives you?

Are there any other comments or reflections you would like to make?

APPENDIX O

Participant Profiles – Phase II

- Cathal** Is a forty-six year old man who is homeless and unemployed due to his alcohol addiction and related mental health issues. The eldest of a family of three his addiction began as a result of the breakdown of a relationship, then he choose addiction over his family and was a street drinker. His current hostel accommodation (a dry hostel) has an eighteen month to two year programme. He has been in and out of rehab and his current hostel accommodation for about six years without completing a programme. Helps out in the kitchen and doing the garden. Brother was also a recovering alcoholic who ended up taking his own life.
- Donal** Is a sixty-four year old Englishman who was in and out of prison in England from his late teens and early twenties for shoplifting, car theft, etc. At that stage he was already addicted to drink and drugs. A friend arranged a place for him in a rehab run by a group of Evangelicals in Ireland. Stayed with them for twelve years joining the Church until he became disillusioned and left, though stayed in Ireland. Gradually slipped into his addiction again. In his current hostel accommodation (a dry hostel) almost two years this time around – had previously spent a year. Has now been diagnosed with terminal cancer and given at most five months to live.
- Hugh** Is a forty-five year old man, born in England of Irish parents and returned to Ireland over twenty years ago. Considers himself more as an Irishman although born in England. He is gay with a partner for seventeen years. He is unemployed due to severe mental health issues on the OCD spectrum, scrupulosity. Has a real love and appreciation for the faith which is made difficult by both his scrupulosity and being a gay man.
- Liam** Is a fifty-four year old man who is homeless due to the breakdown of his relationship with his wife. Grew up in Belfast and experienced first-hand as a child his family being put out of their home and indeed having to make several moves. As a young teenager was involved in anti-social behaviour and ended up in a juvenile detention centre. While there learned a trade and on release had a job. Had his first child, married and settled down. Went on to have two further children. Had a succession of jobs. Life was full and filled with happiness until about eighteen months ago when his wife told him it was over. Has taken the breakup very badly. Led him to attempted suicide and living in hostels for the homeless. In his current hostel

accommodation less than a year and hasn't attempted suicide in that time. Has secured accommodation for himself and was due to move in shortly after I interviewed him.

Malachy

Is a sixty-six year old man who is homeless due to his alcohol addiction. Relationships at home while he was growing up were not good. He left school at fifteen and did various manual jobs. Mother had him sectioned. In his late teens, to get back at his parents, he joined the street gangs and spent about twenty years in and out of prison for being drunk and disorderly, threatening behaviour etc. He has been addicted to alcohol since his mid-twenties. Married in his late forties and has one child. The relationship with his wife broke down and he ended up on the streets for about fifteen years. Was taken into his current hostel accommodation (a dry hostel) at death's door about six months before I met him. Hasn't had a drink in that time.

Óisín

Is in his mid-sixties and from a well-known family in cultural circles. Started out working in offices, but couldn't stick it. He enjoyed the outdoors so worked on the building sites. Interested in sport and the wild life. Gave up work on the buildings when he could no longer manage the long hours required. Filled the time on his hands in the local. He had had his own apartment but ended up in hostels. In his current hostel accommodation (a wet hostel) for two to three years.

APPENDIX P

DePaul Ireland

De Paul Ireland is a charity helping people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is part of a wider group structure DePaul International. Their founding partners were the Society of St Vincent de Paul, the Daughters of Charity and the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentian Fathers). In Ireland they provide services under four broad headings:

Homelessness and Families

Mater Dei in North Belfast
Cloverhill in West Belfast
Rendu Apartments in North Inner City Dublin

Homelessness and Addiction

Stella Maris in Belfast
Castlehill in Dungannon
Foyle Haven Day Centre in Derry
Sundial House in Dublin
Back Lane Hostel in Dublin
Orchid House in Dublin
Peter's Place
Emergency Services in Dublin - Mount Brown, Blessington Street, Little Britain Street and Brú Aimsir

Homelessness and Criminal Justice

Tús Nua Apartments in Dublin

Homelessness and Prevention

Suaimehneas in Dublin
Housing First in Belfast
Housing First in Derry
Family Floating Support in Belfast
Southern Area Harm Reduction a Community Service covering Armagh, Dungannon, Newry and Mourne Areas
Harm Reduction Floating Support Derry
Resettlement Support Service in Dublin
Migrant Homeless Action Team in Dublin
Ballymun Case Management Team in Dublin
Community Befriending Programme in Dublin

- Managing over 25 specialised accommodation and outreach services for people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness in Dublin, Belfast, Dungannon and Derry;
- Providing over 596 bed spaces per night for homeless people;

- Supporting over 3,600 people each year to make changes in their lives that will help them to move forward;
- Employing over 400 staff and engaging with over 560 volunteers;
- Focussing services to aid those most in need in the homeless community.

For further information see: <https://ie.depaulcharity.org/>

APPENDIX Q

Outside History¹

[by Eavan Boland]

There are outsiders, always. These stars –
these iron inklings of an Irish January,
whose light happened

thousands of years before
our pain did: they are, they have always been
outside history.

They keep their distance. Under them remains
a place where you found
you were human, and

a landscape in which you know you are mortal.
And a time to choose between them.
I have chosen:

out of myth into history I move to be
part of that ordeal
whose darkness is

only now reaching me from those fields,
those rivers, those roads clotted as
firmaments with the dead.

How slowly they die
as we kneel beside them, whisper in their ear.
And we are too late. We are always too late.

¹ Boland, *Outside History*. p. 45

APPENDIX R



**Centre panel of a triptych in the Chapel of Mercy, Vincentian Parish,
Graz, Austria portraying Vincent de Paul and poor at the Lord's Table
Used with permission**

[http://stvincentimages.cstcis.cti.depaul.edu:8181/Pictures/02.%20Paintings/Austria/
Graz,%20Chapel%20of%20Mercy.jpg](http://stvincentimages.cstcis.cti.depaul.edu:8181/Pictures/02.%20Paintings/Austria/Graz,%20Chapel%20of%20Mercy.jpg)