

FATHER VINCENT FITZPATRICK, S.T.

**Sermons and Recollections
on the occasion of his death**



A MONOGRAPH

The Archives
Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity
Silver Spring, Maryland 20903
April 2007

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Father Vincent Fitzpatrick, S.T.

**Excerpts from Homilies
and Recollections
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Father Vincent Fitzpatrick, S.T.

Born on 30 November 1915

Died on 7 March 2006

A religious for 71 years

A priest for 61 years

I

FROM THE WAKE SERVICE AND FUNERAL MASSES



Fr. Austin Walsh, S.T.

From the homily at the Mass of Christian Burial
Holy Trinity, Alabama
13 March 2007

The Mass of Christian Burial is not primarily for the dead; it is for us, the living. The lessons in Scripture that are proclaimed at Mass are for us, the living. How are we going to look at the Scripture that says “no one of us lives for oneself and no one of us dies for oneself?” Isn’t this a call to be selfless? Isn’t this a call to be a servant of God? Isn’t this a call to be an instrument of God in our world? This is a call to us but, especially on this occasion, it reminds us of Fr. Vincent Fitzpatrick, who was all of this: selfless, a servant of God, an instrument of God in our world.

Vincent lived in the presence of God. “For if we live, we live for the Lord and if we die, we die for the Lord.” That is the goal of every disciple of Jesus Christ: to live *for* the Lord and to live *in* the Lord. It is never about you, it is never about me. It is about Jesus. It is about Jesus Christ and the Gospel, and Vincent knew and lived that very well. Vincent didn’t have to *talk* about his spiritual life.

Vincent didn't have to tell you, "In my morning prayer I got this inspiration" or "When I was reading the Liturgy of the Hours this came to me." Vincent never spoke that way. He was not one to wear his spirituality on his sleeve, but you knew that when you were in the presence of Vincent you were in the presence of a deeply spiritual man. You knew that what he said to you, what he shared with you was the fruit of prayer, was the fruit of living in the presence of God.

Throughout the Missionary Cenacle family, Vincent had the earned reputation of being dedicated to the whole Cenacle: to his brother Missionary Servants, to his sisters and brothers in the MCA, to his sisters in the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity, and to his sisters in the Blessed Trinity Missionary Institute. He simply shared his life. We all knew that when he spoke to you, it came from a deep conviction that he had and that it was of God.

Simone Weil, a famous Jewish intellectual, who lived during World War II, never became a Christian even though she wrote beautifully about Jesus Christ and lived authentic Christian values. (During the war she fasted so severely out of sympathy with the people made hungry by war atrocities, she actually starved herself to death.) People say, of course, that she had a baptism of desire, but she never felt worthy enough to accept baptism. In one of her books, *Waiting for God*, she points out that nothing among human beings has such power to keep our gaze fixed evermore intensely upon God than friendship with the friends of God. If we are friends of God, in God's presence and seeking to do God's will, if our hearts are filled with the Love of God, if we are God-possessed and God-obsessed, we show it, and we are icons of God. We show it without having to talk about it. We don't have to say, "I just spent an hour in meditation" or "I just spent six hours doing something." Our lives will show it by the way we live. "By their fruits you shall know them." To know Fr. Vincent was to come to know God.

We get an insight into God, an insight into Jesus Christ, just by observing Vincent and his struggle to be a holy man, a man who really did belong to God. In

life and in death, he belonged to God. And this is what he handed down to us. Vincent saw himself as belonging to God completely. Father Pedro Arrupe, who was Superior General of the Jesuits for almost twenty years and suffered a debilitating stroke several years before he died, was able to address the Jesuit General Congregation that was to elect his successor. Speaking through an interpreter, someone who understood his slurred speech, he said “More than ever, I find myself in the hands of God. This is what I have wanted all my life, from my youth. And this is still the one thing I want. But now there is a difference. Now the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself totally in his hands.” That’s what we should all desire, to be totally in the hands of God and at God’s disposition. But when we are young and healthy that thought gets pushed to the background. We live in a can-do society, where our delusion says: “I have the talent, I have the gifts, I can do it, I can do everything.” But sooner or later we have to realize that we are in God’s hands, as Pedro Arrupe wanted since he was young but never felt until he was disabled. We have to know that we are profoundly in the hands of God.

That has to be the heart of our spiritual life: to be in the hands of God, to be at God’s disposal, to be open to God, to do what God wants. That is all that is important. *Why* we do what we do is important. Many people can do *what* we do and probably do it better than we can. It is the reason that counts. My favorite quote from T. S. Eliot’s “Murder in the Cathedral,” about the murder of Thomas á Becket is “The last temptation is the greatest treason - to do the right thing for the wrong reason.” My mission has to be the extension of the reign of God, not primarily about my self improvement, not my self aggrandizement, not my growth, not my inner self. I can be so into a program of self-enlightenment, that I forget who enlightens me. The mission I am about is extending the reign of God, not myself. My motive has to be the love of God and I have to be a worker in extending the reign of God.

Vincent was certainly a luminous example of this. There is no group in the Missionary Cenacle or elsewhere to whom Vincent spoke that did not see in him someone profoundly in love with God, someone who wasn't out to build up his own reputation, but to extend the reign of God. The gift he leaves to all of us, in whatever ministry we are engaged, is the lesson and the example that whatever we do we must do for the love of God.

There is little poetry that I remember, but this line from Edna St. Vincent Millay comes appropriately to mind: "My candle burns at both its ends and it shall not last the night, but to all my friends and all my foes, it gives a lovely light." Vincent burnt his candle at both ends. He was never concerned about his time or his convenience; he seldom if ever said "No." Do any of you ever remember asking Vincent to do something and being refused? We had to be careful not to ask him to do too much, not to overwork him. But he wanted always to do more. Even in his old age, he was happy to visit our seminaries in Costa Rica, in Colombia and in Mexico, to pass on to our students what he understood of the spirit of Father Judge. And what a wonderful thing it was for our students there to have met him, to have heard him. It was good that he was able to share with the newer members of the Congregation, the future of our Congregation, the spirit of Father Judge and the Missionary Cenacle.

I'm sure that when Vincent closed his eyes finally and let his spirit go, he did it in the spirit of the *Nunc dimittis*: "Now Master, dismiss your servant, in peace according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation." That "salvation" was a lifetime of being an example of selfless service in living and passing on the selfless mission of Jesus as mirrored in our Missionary Cenacle charism. Rest in peace, Vincent.



Fr. Peter Krebs, S.T.

From the homily at the Funeral Mass
Stirling, New Jersey
10 March 2007

On behalf of all Missionary Servants, our Cenacle Family, the Sisters Servants of Jesus and all the lay staff who minister at the Shrine of St. Joseph, we cannot express deeply enough our gratitude that you are here today to be with us. We knew this day would come but, oh my, how it hurts.

I was talking to a good friend of mine about our dear Fr. Vincent. In the course of the conversation, not realizing perhaps what he was saying about Fr. Vincent, my friend said this: “Such greatness housed in the humblest of abodes.” That is our brother, that is our Fr. Vincent.

I was thirteen years old when I first met Fr. Vincent. Like most thirteen-year-olds meeting Fr. Vincent, I was petrified. He seemed so stern, so strong and so wise. As I grew in love and respect of the man, I observed and witnessed how he was universally loved and respected. Universally. It didn't matter what your age, it didn't matter where you came from or who you were, you loved and respected Fr. Vincent. I came to know of his wisdom and intelligence. I heard many of his magnificent homilies. So many funerals and major events for our Community and our Cenacle Family always found Vince at their heart, most often with his “remarkable” words. As I grew as a Missionary Servant and observed this giant of a missionary, this holy man, I would often say to others and myself. “I sure wouldn't want to be the one to preach at his funeral.” And so my charge today is to remind you that each one of us must preach our Fr. Vincent. I will suggest a way to do that.

How can one capture the life and ministry of a Vincent Fitzpatrick? What would be a fitting memorial to this man, this religious, this priest? What kind of memorial dare we raise to our loved one? We have shed tears. I thought my tears

were finished until this morning when more came. Yes, grief is an appropriate memorial. Our memories, so beautifully shared last night certainly are an appropriate memorial. And it is appropriate that we will mark his place of interment in Holy Trinity, Alabama. All of these memorials are fitting and proper, but none is adequate.

Recall that no one was ever lauded or applauded more than our savior Jesus Christ. Artists painted His image. Poets celebrated his qualities. Musicians sang his praises and indeed all of this is appropriate. But let us keep in mind that praise is not what Jesus wanted. Jesus was a teacher, and like all great teachers, what he wanted most is for others to grasp His truth and express it in their lives.

Vincent was a teacher, our teacher. He sought not praise or notice, but only that the truth of his teachings, the truth of who he was, the truth of his person be grasped by his students and expressed in their lives. He taught not just in the classroom, but also in and through his very person. He taught some of us, privileged to be there, from a hospital bed and from his own deathbed here at the Shrine of St. Joseph without saying a word. The only adequate memorial to Vince is to grasp his truth and express it in our lives. A gifted mind and a heart full of love of God and people made him who he was. And isn't it so fitting that it was his heart that wore out? And why not? Fr. Vincent always led with his heart. He possessed great wisdom and knowledge but all of us here know that when we needed Vincent, it was always his heart that he brought to us first. That is what he used the most when dealing with people and situations. Yet, it is not enough for you or me to simply acknowledge Vincent's truth or to remember it. We must translate that truth into deeds in our own lives. Vincent, like Jesus, did not say praise me or honor me, rather Vincent's challenge will always be, follow me.

Many magnificent memorials have been raised to Jesus - Michelangelo's art, the music of Handel, to mention but two - but more adequate than any of these is the memorial left when a cup of water is given to a thirsty brother or

sister, food to the hungry, the lonely are visited and consoled, when all are shown gentleness and compassion. The same applies to our beloved Vincent. We must raise to him a living memorial of our lives continuing to lead with our hearts: lives emptied in service to others; lives marked by humility and gentleness, always open and ready to learn.

Vincent should then live on in us in more than just our memories or a few photographs. An adequate memorial to Vincent, our teacher par excellence, would be for us to select a special quality or trait or gift of his truth, of who he is for us, and determine now that will become a part, or a greater part, of our own lives. Thus, Vincent will be with us more than just in our memories or stories - as precious as they are - but with us in our lives and actions. I would suggest this to be the only adequate memorial to our beloved teacher.

I would like to close this morning with a reading: "Mysteries, Four of the Simple Ones" by Mary Oliver. Vincent taught me and guided me through the mysteries of Latin and Greek, yes, but more than that, through the mysteries of being Peter Krebs, the mysteries of manhood, a vocation, religious life, of priesthood.

To my teacher:

"How does the seed-grain feel
When it is just beginning to be wheat?
And how does the catbird feel
When the blue eggs break and become little catbirds,
Maybe on midsummer's nights and without fanfare?
And how does the turtle feel as she covers her eggs
With the sweeps of her feet,
Then leaves them for the world to take care of?
Does she know her accomplishment?
And when the blue heron, beaking his long breast feathers,

Sees one feather fall, does he know I will find it?
Will he see me holding it in my hand
As he opens his wings
Softly and without a sound -
As he rises and floats over the water?
And what else can we do when the mysteries
 present themselves
But hope to pluck from the basket the brisk words
 that will applaud them,
The heron, the turtle, the catbird,
The seed-grain kneeling in the dark earth.
Its body opening into the golden world?"

I am certain that I speak for all of you when I say: *Fr. Vincent, our beloved, esteemed and incredible teacher, thank you...*"such greatness housed in the humblest of abodes."



Fr. Stephen Giorno, S.T.

From reflection at wake service

Stirling, New Jersey

8 March 2006

Our Rule of Life begins by setting the tone for us. It is intended to instruct us as to who we are as members of a religious community in the Church, and to remind us of what is expected of us by that same Church and by the people of God.

Therefore, let me begin by quoting these words from our holy founder, Fr. Thomas Augustine Judge, which form part of the introduction to our Rule of Life. Father says, “Our Lord had very much at heart the creating of a spirit, a missionary spirit, an evangelical burning that would sweep over the whole world. He came to cast a fire on the earth, and he willed that it would be enkindled. The Holy Spirit has enkindled this fire in our hearts. This is our heritage: an apostolic spirit, a Gospel spirit, a Catholic spirit. It is a spirit of charity, charity aflame.” And now permit me to briefly jump to the conclusion of that same Rule of Life where it underscores the importance of never forgetting our identity nor the unique challenges of living as vowed religious in the Church. In our holy Rule, Father Judge reiterates that a life of consecrated discipleship as a Missionary Servant, “is a lifelong process, and, as we advance in age, we are to follow Jesus ever more faithfully in the power of the Spirit, until that day, when, with him, we enter into the glory of the Father.” He continues, “My children, do give this much thought, do hold yourselves responsible for the future of the Cenacle. Do remember that as you are, so others will be. What more beautiful legacy can you leave than that of an example and life fragrant and rich in the Cenacle traditions.

On the day that we make our perpetual profession of vows as Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity, and promise to be faithful to this Rule of Life and to live it out, by the grace of God, for the rest of our lives, we also receive

this Mission Cross which I am wearing. It is placed over our heads to symbolically remind us that wherever we go, just as the great Apostle Paul did, we are to preach Christ Crucified in word and in deed. Yet, as we know, to preach the Cross, to preach a Crucified Christ has never been easy. It was not easy for St. Paul, and it is not any easier for us today. As St. Paul himself writes in 1 Corinthians, “The message of the Cross is complete absurdity for those who are headed for ruin. The Jews demand signs and the Greeks look for wisdom – but we preach Christ crucified – a stumbling block for Jews and an absurdity to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Christ is the power of God and Christ is the wisdom of God.” This Mission Cross stays with us until the day that we die, and then it is passed on to a new member of the next generation of Missionary Servants who, just like the generation that preceded them, will then go forth to preach with their lives that same Crucified Christ.

This evening, we gather to pay our respects to Fr. Vincent, a man who not only willingly carried his mission cross with him wherever he went in life by giving witness to the Crucified Lord through his untiring example as a Missionary Servant priest, but also do so through his joyful and observant living out of our Rule of Life, something that he did faithfully for over 70 years. In fact, Fr. Vincent was one of the members of our Community who helped to painstakingly draft our Rule of Life, carefully making sure that it was grounded in the vision and spirituality of our founder. This being the case, it seemed that Fr. Vincent always felt doubly responsible to not only observe our Rule of Life, but to incarnate it as best he could, which he so beautifully did throughout his entire life as a Missionary Servant. As a very young man, in fact, while just a boy of 13, Fr. Vincent had the privilege of knowing our holy founder, Fr. Judge, a man on fire with missionary zeal and love for Christ and his Gospel.

Looking back on Fr. Vincent’s life, some of those same sparks of fire which were fueled by faith and burned so ardently in Fr. Judge, must have surely

caught fire and ignited somewhere in Fr. Vincent as well, because from very early on as a missionary this became an obvious quality that Fr. Vincent would carry with him throughout his entire life. And, being the ardent missionary that he was, Fr. Vincent then took those same sparks of faith, fueled with missionary zeal and mixed in with a good measure of charity at white heat, and ignited others with them throughout our missions in the United States, Mexico, and Central and South America. And I wouldn't be a bit surprised if the flame extends even farther than that.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, "Unless the grain of wheat falls to earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat, but if it dies, it will produce much fruit." Fr. Vincent has barely passed on and we have already begun reaping some of the abundant fruits of a life that was truly "fragrant and rich", not only in the traditions of the Cenacle, but also in the traditions of the Church, which Fr. Vincent so dearly loved and gave his life to.



II

RECOLLECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS OF CONFRERES



Fr. Stephen Quinn, S.T.

Memories of Fr. Vincent Fitzpatrick, S.T.

His death

Vincent's heart spiritually knew no limitations, physically just to breathe became more and more a grave problem. So it was that on that Tuesday (7 March 2006) about 7:30 P.M. at the Shrine of St. Joseph, Vincent died. We, Sisters, brothers, priests and some lay staff members, were gathered around his bed in his room, praying and softly expressing our love for him. He received once more the anointing of the sick. Since he was not able to receive the Eucharist, he was blessed by the Blessed Sacrament. It was our privilege to stay with him that night until our Triune God called him home. It was a very peaceful, tranquil passing into the arms of the Lord whom Vincent had served without measure his entire life. We celebrated Mass for him that evening in his room and sang the beautiful Marian hymn, Salve Regina.

His Life

Born in 1917, he took his first vows at 19 years of age at Holy Trinity, Alabama in 1934. He was professed for 71 years and a priest for 61 years.

I met him for the first time at our Cenacle in Silver Spring, Maryland in 1938. For me he was always distinguished by his total commitment to our life as Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity. He served always with deep personal integrity, truly authentically what he professed to be. He was totally in loving service to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. In that same spirit he gave himself in service to everyone he met, unselfish, generous, delightful, cheerful, at home with everyone he met. He presumed the best of everyone he met.

He prayed and studied long hours to come to know and live ever more fully the mind and heart of our founder, Father Judge, and Father's Missionary Cenacle ideals and deep spirituality. He had a great fondness for Mother Boniface, whom he knew at Holy Trinity in his early student days. The depth of his appreciation of our way, was and is revealed in his papers, presentations, conferences and even the daily homilies he prepared with great care. What he preached was already reflected in his personal life.

He loved the Missionary Cenacle in all its meanings and he loved all of us connected with the Cenacle, priests, brothers, sisters and especially our Lay associates.

Like Christ and in imitation of Him, he expended himself at whatever the task might be. Indeed he served without measuring the cost.

While a highly skilled professor of the classic languages of Greek and Latin, his special forte was the rapport he established with his students and the consequent impact he made on them. He brought that same grace of presence to his work at Trinita and here at the Shrine.

His impact on the Cenacle family was so great because of his generous sharing of himself and his deep theological and spiritual knowledge.

He was truly a zealous priest for others, an understanding and compassionate Father confessor, filled with the optimism of his own spiritual journey.

I mention three spiritual sources for his strength: 1) His belief in and devotion to the Holy Spirit and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit; 2) His love for his priesthood, the Mass and his devotion to Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament; 3) A beautiful love, trust and confidence in his Cenacle brothers and sisters.

He was and remains for me personally a dearly loved, true friend - one with whom over so many years I could share my personal journey with its hopes, trials and challenges and always receive back so much understanding, wisdom and support. He brought those same gifts to his work on the General Council. He served our Community so wisely at a challenging time in the life of the Community.

Our Remembrance

Much remains to be remembered and shared for he was/is a holy man of God who has touched us all so graciously. May his memory live on among us.



Fr. Conrad Schmitt, S.T.

Reflection on Fr. Vincent Fitzpatrick, S.T.

In thinking about Vincent, I keep returning to my earliest recollections – which for me defined the man and lasted through the years. In August 1945 Vincent came from Silver Spring to Saint Joseph's Preparatory Seminary, Holy Trinity, Alabama to begin the school year as teacher and prefect of the college. It was also my first year in the college department.

Vincent treated everyone the same, he had no favorites. This was important to someone who was neither a “brain” nor an athlete. When he talked with you, you knew he was interested only in you at that moment. It was a genuine interest; he heard and cared about what you said. Years later, he would remember and, inquire about someone in the family you had told him about.

He was, then, a people-person, who kept current on the world, the Church, the Community, but not caught up in movements or fads. He had that balanced outlook which kept everything in perspective.

I served with him later on the General Council and remember that he took both the long view regarding the Community, and at the same time had a personal, charitable concern for each confrere. I only remember one thing that would get him – literally – angry: he could not abide disloyalty to the Community or the Cenacle.

Surely everyone in Holy Trinity at the start of that 1945 school year will remember one of the first sermons Vincent gave us. Perhaps not the whole sermon, but certainly that phrase: “The Missionary Servants are the garbage-pickers of the Church.” This for me sums up Vincent, and the Missionary Servants: We notice and then minister to the one individual lying by the wayside, bypassed by those pursuing the grand projects and sweeping movements. The Good Shepherds, looking for the lost sheep. There are other phrases in our literature which say this: “preservation,” “reclamation,” and the like. But the images Vincent gave me have, over the years, spoken the most powerfully.



Fr. Gary Banks, S.T.

Our Teacher Fr. Vincent: A Reflection

I. Introduction

It is difficult to write about a person you knew well and admired greatly, because memories always seem to be at flood tide. I am motivated nonetheless so that other Cenacle members, especially the young men in our formation programs, will know who Father Vincent Fitzpatrick was: an ordinary man who left us a powerful legacy. He can be viewed not only as a founding prototype of the Missionary Servant of the Most Holy Trinity but as a model for us all.

Vincent was a man who gave much to *all* of us. He had no favorites; he loved us all. That love flowed easily into abundant generosity. My special regard for him began as an intellectual bond – he was my teacher – but quickly grew into admiration and love. It started with him teaching me Greek, developed through our mutual committee work, and finally flowered in me catching his desire to translate our Cenacle story into the present. It happened over many hours working and traveling together. He was my teacher; I visited him when he was our Novice Director; he was my companion through my biblical studies – especially in reading Greek. Through all of this and through much advice from him on so many Cenacle projects, I come to this particular privileged view point from which I write.

II. The Early Years (1915-1933)

Father Gabriel Hannan is much more familiar with the early history of the Fitzpatricks, their early lives and their interrelationships. I only know what Vincent himself told me. It was 1928 and he was thirteen years old when he went south to Holy Trinity, Alabama. One motivating factor was that his pastor knew and was

impressed by Father Judge. He was by all accounts small for his age; at Holy Trinity, he played baseball on a team called the “Rinky-dinks,” its members united by their diminutive stature. He was a good fielder with quickness and agility, who always liked playing sports and being physically active. Father Paul Anthony Fursman guided and encouraged the “Rinky-dinks.” Vincent was fourteen when his father died. Thereafter Paul Anthony became a sort of father figure for him. Tom O’Keeffe was a member of Paul Anthony’s circle of youth, and even at this early juncture Vincent saw Thomas as the leader of the group. He remained a follower of Tom throughout his life. Jimmy Norris was another member of that group.

From 1928 onward, Father Judge’s visits to Holy Trinity were limited by the extensive time he spent traveling, attending to the growing missionary movement that he was fashioning. His followers, especially Tom O’Keeffe and Jimmy Norris, attended to the practical operations at Holy Trinity. They were admired and imitated by the younger men. Both, but especially Jimmy, had a special relationship with Father Judge. They were all members of the group that met Father Judge and Gerard Fredericks when they arrived in New York from Puerto Rico by boat on 14 August 1933 and took them to Gold Street, where Father gave his famous “last testament” [Monographs 2]. This moving talk, regarded as a “passing on of the spirit,” strongly affected all who heard it.

When Father did visit Holy Trinity, the younger eyes viewed him as an “interruption.” The boys would be called together, whether from classes, the sports field or late at night, so Father could speak to them. Father would talk at great length and many of the boys would nod off. Vincent, however, admired Father very much and became enamored of his vision. Father’s effect on Vincent was strengthened by Vincent’s ongoing relationship with Thomas O’Keeffe, who, as leader, did much to implement Father’s vision. Throughout his lifetime, Vincent never lost the ability to relate Father Judge’s vision as something new and fresh. It

was never a nostalgic remembrance, but always a way of experiencing the past so as to see its implications unfolding in the present and reaching into the future.

For Vincent, Father Judge's character was crystallized in two experiences, both of which had such a strong impact on Vincent that he would tell them vividly decades after they happened. I heard him relate the first story in a retreat he preached to us in 1967. Thirty-five years later, in 2002, on a trip to our formation program in Costa Rica, I heard him tell the story again with the same vigor and freshness. The detail and vividness with which he told the story on both occasions underscored its importance for him. It was about Father Judge selecting the candidates for Fr. Bede's first Novitiate class in 1931. Vincent was sixteen at that time. One afternoon Father called the young men, one by one, to sit with him under a pergola on the south side of the chapel at Saint Joseph's, near where the present parish center now stands. One of the first to be interviewed was Bernardine Bouland. After an initial exchange of pleasantries, Father Judge asked Bernardine why he wanted to enter the Novitiate. Bernardine apparently responded with this and that pious platitude, but none of his answers was acceptable, and each wrong answer made Father more impatient and more insistent in his questioning. Father's total intensity bore down on Bernardine until the brow-beaten boy finally came up with the acceptable answer. Coming out from the interview mightily relieved, Bernardine ran to all the others awaiting their turn to share with them the magic answer, the only answer that Father Judge would accept: "For the love of God." The rest of the interviews with Father, according to Vincent, went much easier. Vincent would describe this encounter with much glee, physically moving back and forth, from one side to the other, while he acted out the interchange between Father Judge and Bernardine, putting the words into each one's mouth.

It was an impressive story to hear and it still rings alive for me today, for it reveals the deepest motivation of Vincent, Donald Lynch, Raphael Toner and all

those early followers of Father Judge: whatever you did, you did it for the love of God. There could be no other nobler motivation. All boiled down to that. Father demanded that of his followers. These simple, carefree, non-reflective boys had to be brought to the right answer. It was as if Father Judge intuitively knew that these would be the people who realized his vision. For Vincent, it was – no matter what he was doing – all about the love of God. Whether it was teaching Latin and Greek, silk screening shirts, or preparing his next talk, it was all for the love of God.

The second experience Vincent loved to relate was one that involved Father Judge's severity. (All the old timers seemed to have these types of stories. Initially, it can be perplexing, since, if Father Judge was so severe and scolding, why did they all admire him so?) On one of Father's visits to Holy Trinity – it was a Sunday – the students were told that Father would speak to them some time during the day. Right after the morning High Mass, the boys rushed out of the chapel, leaving it in disarray, to play some ball before Father would call them back and deliver what was sure to be – because it usually was – a very long conference. Later, with the ball game still in progress, Father was driven over from the Sisters' side. He made his customary visit to Saint Joseph Chapel, finding it in complete disorder. Everyone was summoned immediately from the ball fields to be reprimanded by Father for the condition in which they had earlier left the chapel. Vincent's classical remark was, "Oh, Father Judge. Father could be severe."

Many years after, I questioned Vincent about that incident. There was no doubt that Father was strict and could be severe. But Vincent contextualized it by explaining that because Father was so seldom at Holy Trinity in those days, he put great energy into the future of his movement when he *was* there. Father's intense love of God and for all things holy made it difficult for him to see holy things, the chapel among them, disregarded or mistreated. His scoldings were never mean, unreasonable, or unjust, but the intensity of his personality and his way with

words made those scoldings quite impressive. Father was forming those young men for an important role; he was inculcating in them the supreme importance of the holy. God was a reality in Father Judge's life and he wanted that to be so in the lives of his followers.

Interestingly, my impression of Vincent when I was his student was that he also was stern, strict and demanding. I would not use the word 'severe,' but Vincent's persona demanded respect and radiated seriousness. Vincent was not the type of person with whom you would joke around, especially during class. He was attentive and would give much time to you, but he was also occupied with his projects of preaching, preparing class, working in the dark room, and so many others. He gave the impression of a serious man who did not have time for idleness or useless chatter. He was strict with himself and therefore strict with others. Was this a reflection of, something he learned from, Father Judge?

Vincent was not much given to talking about people in an emotional or affective way, so it is all the more impressive that for the people of my generation that it was Vincent who could open up for us Father's heart and mind. Others, like Father Tim Lynch could give us knowledge of Father Judge and transmit Cenacle lore, but it was Vincent who taught us to love the vision as deeply as he did. This love impelled him as a man well into his eighties to travel to Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico or wherever in the world the ST or the Cenacle Family was forming the next generation. He would share with us Father's mind and heart.

The other figure from those early years who affected Vincent deeply was Mother Boniface. He spoke of her always with great affection. He saw her as his mother and especially enjoyed her visits to Saint Joseph's. She knew every boy by name, was very loving and lovable, was definitely in charge of the daily operations, and seemed to be the embodiment of common sense and wisdom – this in an early world that was filled with youth, enthusiasm, idealism – and basic

impracticality. The vision of Holy Trinity was a dream in potential; Mother Boniface the key component in making that dream a reality.

III. The Middle Years (1933-1969)

I know little about the first part of this time period, except they were difficult years after the death of Father Judge and the abandonment of his movement by his presumed successors. They were times of boys leading boys. They were the years from which Thomas O’Keeffe emerged as leader.

Father Vincent was in the Novitiate when Father Judge passed away on 23 November 1933. He had entered the third Novitiate class on 10 June 1933. He liked Father Bede, the Capuchin Novice Director, and felt that the class received the fundamentals of the religious life and a life of prayer. One of the interesting things that Bede did, as part of his pedagogy on humility, was to ask Francis Xavier Toner to pile up wood and then, without rhyme or reason, to move the pile to another place. This made Pappy Toner livid, much to the amusement of the rest of the novices group. Bede did have pedagogy for teaching the virtues.

For a period of time after Novitiate, Vincent, all the while involved in his studies for the priesthood, was the Procurator at Stirling and Holy Trinity, in both places trying to make ends meet with next to no money at all. In the ST archives is a bounced five-dollar check from Holy Trinity signed by Vincent. It is clearly stamped “Insufficient Funds”. Interestingly, Vincent did not seem to have any “war stories” from this time about how difficult things were. He preferred not to talk about the hard times. From 1933 to 1940 confusion and uncertainty reigned – as did some strong personalities. He liked Bishop Shaughnessy, SM, the Rome-appointed Apostolic Visitor and Superior General (from 16 September 1937 to 31 May 1949). He found him to be competent, thoughtful, and very thorough in

his investigation of the Congregation. The community that emerged from that process was more defined, more stable, economically viable and under more solid leadership, mainly the person of Father Thomas O’Keeffe.

In this more stable environment, Vincent returned to school in Washington, at Catholic University and then White Friars Hall with the Carmelites, to finish his studies for the priesthood. He divided his time between class preparation and general construction work at Holy Trinity Heights, Silver Spring, where he dedicated himself to pouring concrete, roofing – with his classmate Albert Koklowsky – and general carpentry work, his specialty. Vincent was a classic ‘hammer and saw’ missionary.

The first large group of ST ordinations was in 1941. In 1944, Vincent was part of the second large ordination group, twenty priests, the result of joining three classes together. Amy Croke [Sister Marie Baptista, MSBT] remarked about how fitting it was that in 1944, the forty-fifth ordination anniversary of Father Judge, we should have forty-five priests.

With a sufficient number of priests, Thomas O’Keeffe now had the prime material to begin implementing the vision of Father Judge. He continued our presence at Stirling and expanded it in the South. He also began to set men apart for further studies, especially canon law. Thomas had the vision to create our own seminary system, to form young men in our charism, with our pastoral vision, our own way. He also wanted to obtain pontifical recognition for this young Congregation. His years of leadership and his life were dedicated to achieving those two goals.

Thomas had a willing follower in Vincent, but only after an initial struggle. After ordination, Vincent, waiting for his missionary assignment, was surprised to learn that he and another classmate, Stephen Quinn, had been assigned to Silver Spring to be assistants to the Vicar General, Thomas. (Bishop Shaughnessy was still Superior General.) Since Vincent had joined a *missionary* community to become

a *missionary*, this assignment came as a great shock and disappointment to him. He consoled himself with the fact that at least he was not sent to become a teacher. His brother Joe Fitzpatrick, the Jesuit, was preparing himself to become a teacher and Vincent's feeling was, "Had I wanted to become a teacher, I would have become a Jesuit."

Thomas inculcated into his group of collaborators at Silver Spring the philosophy of *sustineo alas*, "I sustain the wings." He took this theme from the ground crews of the war planes of World War II. Every plane that became airborne was supported by a considerable group of mechanics and general support staff, who never saw the front lines of combat, but who made these air missions possible. The motto of this group was "*Sustineo alas*" and their existence was a necessary part of the war effort. Thomas instilled that philosophy into everyone who worked with him at Silver Spring – their behind-the-scene efforts were vital for all the men who were out on the missions. If you asked Vincent what his first assignment was, he would tell you, *Sustineo alas*.

Less than two years later there was even greater disappointment in store for Vincent. Thomas had sent Jerome Hovanec, also ordained in the class of '44, to Catholic University to study the classics. The program did not work for Jerome, so one day Thomas called Vincent to his office, handed him a typewritten letter and told him, in his classic laconic way: "Go study Latin, study Latin." This assignment was hard for Vincent to accept, but he saw it as his obedience and in a short time was converted to Thomas' vision for our own seminary system. He studied Latin and Greek and after his introductory courses found himself, in September 1946, teaching classes to some students a few months his junior. He accepted the changed situation, and applied himself as a teacher – while still being a student – "all for the love of God." After summers of work and study, he completed his Master's Degree in the classics in 1954. From 1946 to 1970, for twenty-four years, year in and year out, Vincent taught some level of Latin and

Greek to every student who entered our programs, all the while continuing with the many hours of cement pouring, carpentry, and general construction work that he did at Holy Trinity. He also dedicated himself to the physical hobbies and, with his undiminished strength and agility, proved to be an implacable player of sports. It was on the playing fields that he earned his nickname of “The Tiger.”

The Vincent I met in 1965 had grown, prospered and become a considerable influence through his teaching of Latin and Greek, and his love of his Missionary Servant priesthood vocation.

He also served on the General Council from 1961-1967 under Father Gerard Fredericks, but he did not share with me much of those years. What was obvious to me at Monroe was that he still appeared a follower of Father Thomas, who was then our rector. In the old system, the priests and Brothers would eat apart in their own refectory, sitting on the outer part of tables which had been joined to form a “U” with squared corners. Thomas sat at the head table, in the middle, with Vincent at his side. They sat in ~~some type~~ of vocational hierarchical order. When, in his usual staccato grunts and quips, Thomas would ask for something from the student waiter, Vincent, acting the interpreter, would say, “Can you please bring more bread?”

Without generally showing much emotion, Vincent was always a consoling presence. This was especially apparent when he celebrated Eucharist. His preaching was always memorable. On one occasion, when we all thought that Harry Baczkowski had just been killed by a car in front of our school (he was not!), Vincent was the stable comfort. The only time that I can remember him moved to tears was at his twenty-fifth Ordination Anniversary in 1969, when, after some short words, he broke down and said very emotionally, “Thank you for twenty-five years. Thank you for my priesthood.” He was a man in love with his vocation, finding the love of God in all things.

IV. The Classics

Vincent taught Latin and Greek in our seminary from 1946 to 1970. Latin was crucial to our system at that time. It was almost the *sine qua non* of the priesthood. The Mass, all sacraments, and the official prayers of the Church were all celebrated in Latin. A priesthood student would study philosophy, theology, canon law and Sacred Scripture from Latin text books. An insufficiency in Latin was a sign of a lack of a vocation. The Monroe that I visited as a student still had Sunday High Mass and afternoon Vespers in Latin. Vincent gave himself to that mission of teaching students Latin and Greek with all his heart, even to the point of having special summer school for students who had to “catch up” on the subjects. Imagine spending all summer long in the heat of the pre-air conditioned Holy Trinity making sure that slower students and new college students were able to qualify in Latin.

He not only *taught* Latin, but he enjoyed it. It was the basis of his life of prayer. He had an old, tattered black Breviary for his Liturgy of the Hours. He knew the Psalms in Latin almost by heart. He read every day something of the Fathers of the Church. When he read the Scriptures in Latin at Mass, they were almost understandable to the hearer. It was obvious that he knew what he was reading.

Vincent was a classicist with an eye for structure. He knew how to read a text as literature and would delight over the various literary devices the ancient authors would use to enhance a point.

As a classroom teacher, he always prepared assiduously. He would hone in on the grammar. If the group responded well, he would push them into composition. At the end of every class, he would always give a little exercise, a spot quiz, just to see if we had done the work and how we were integrating the material.

By the time we had him in class, he had been teaching Latin and Greek for eighteen years. That year in Latin, he taught us Augustine's Confessions; for Greek, Xenophon's Anabasis and selections from Saint John's Gospel and the Psalms. You wonder how many times he had gone over the same material in those eighteen years. He, always a demanding teacher, was always prepared himself, and it would be suicidal for you to come unprepared. He would expect you to be prepared to translate and explain every form of thirty-five to forty lines per class. As the end of class approached, you were always afraid that you would be called on and not have sufficient lines prepared. And to run out of lines while translating made you anxiously nervous, sometimes even sweaty. To be called upon to translate and to have to say, "I am sorry, but I did not get this far" was a fate, we thought, close to death itself.

During what seemed to be the never ending sessions of that Fourth General Cenacle, the first renewal chapter (June 1967 to June 1968), Vincent was frequently away from Monroe and unavailable for class. However, we were left volumes of work to have prepared for his arrival. He would tell us that he would be back on such a day, at such an hour in the evening. We would all be sitting in the classroom waiting for him. He would come up the stairs, fresh from the car ride from Silver Spring, still in his overcoat, with his suitcase in one hand and his briefcase in the other. He left his suitcase in the hall, threw his coat over his teacher's chair, said the opening prayer, took out his book and would call on someone to translate. We would have an hour and a half of class, just as if he had not been away. Only later did I realize how hard he was working on that General Cenacle. The Spirituality Committee and its document were his handicraft. Imagine a week of General Cenacle sessions, a four hour car ride from Silver Spring and, immediately upon arrival, a ninety minute evening class with reluctant twenty year olds. Obviously, Vincent was just as strict and demanding on himself as he was with us.

In class, it was clear that he loved Saint Augustine, the subject of his Master's degree dissertation. We could never read too much of Augustine. Toward the end of the sixties, Vincent was moving with the times; he was doing less and less Scripture work in Latin and more in Greek. For the Gospels he used a worn Merk text, a New Testament with Greek on one side of the page and Latin on the other. The second semester of the year we translated the Psalms and passages from Saint John's Gospel. Vincent was inspiring as he taught us to analyze and translate the text; there was always an excitement. I am certain that this is where my love of the Bible was born.

I spent a year with Vincent at Stirling in 1990 after I returned from Rome. Vincent (he was seventy-five years old then) was on his third tour at the Shrine, this time having come from Colonial Beach. By the middle of my stay there, we were chatting daily and soon were reading Greek together late at night in the library at the end of the hall in the residence building. What an experience! He came every night prepared with pages of notes scribbled on the sheets of his rolled over yellow legal pad, which by this time had become his constant companion and trade mark. At this point of my life, I had studied eight years of Biblical Greek. When I was studying Greek at Catholic University, both professors, Frank Gignac, my Biblical Greek instructor, and Tom Halton, the classicist, commented that whoever trained me initially had trained me well. I made sure that Vincent heard that.

Our sessions at Stirling every night were excitingly exhausting. Vincent would prod me on: "I was wondering how you were going to translate that phrase and relate it to the similar configuration in the previous section." And, "That was an interesting use of the imperfect; how would you nuance that use in the translation?" One thing I learned during that year was structure, how to notice the author's use of structure. Vincent's eye would pick up these structures and he would translate accordingly. This is a direct quote from him which I included in

an article which I wrote about Saint Mark's Gospel: *The disciples again come to the forefront, this time as direct participants in the mission, sent out two by two (6,7-12). True discipleship is only learned in praxis. Using an ancient technique to derive more meaning from a passage through the use of structure, Mark separates the narrative of the sending out and return of the disciples and strategically positions the story of the Baptizer's demise (6, 14-29) in the middle. In doing so, he highlights the shadow of the cross as an integral part of the mission. What happened to the precursor, John, will also happen to whoever follows along the way.*

My surprise in these sessions was that after we had worked all day, we were also going to work all night. I thought that two chapters of Greek well read were enough. Vincent would push us on. "There is an interesting passage two chapters ahead where he develops the same idea with a different structure." And we would push on. He was correct: you did have to read enough of an author every day to develop a flavor, and only constant readings of considerable text permitted you to develop such an appreciation of the whole piece. Of course, all of this was in preparation for the Sunday homily. In 1991 we read through Mark's Gospel in Greek every week and did extensive preparation together on the Lenten texts. Vincent was especially taken with those A-cycle readings on conversion and insisted we map out very carefully the probing questions of Jesus that brought about the changes in the Samaritan Woman in John 4 and in the Man Born Blind in John 9.

I also recall with great fondness Vincent's influence on the development of my thesis. I returned from Rome in 1986 in the final stage of my thesis. I was in the process of rearranging material I had investigated. Brother James McPike had a computer with a word processor (these were the early days of PCs) that I could use to get the material organized. I brought it all together and packed it off to Vincent who at that time was stationed at Colonial Beach. I wanted him to review it. During those previous four years I spent in Rome, I thought of Vincent

often. Not only would he have delighted in the Roman and early Christian ruins, but he would have thoroughly enjoyed every lecture on the Bible. He would have understood them well and used the new insights to pass on to others. He returned my paper to me with about thirty pages of observations and corrections, hand written on his trade mark long yellow legal sheets. Father Bob Shay, the pastor at Colonial Beach at the time, later told me that Vincent would sit at night in the community room, going over my paper line by line, with his Greek New Testament at his side and his yellow pad on his lap. His notes showed me changes where he had correctly re-accented the Greek. He asked so many pointed questions that I went back and reorganized the whole paper to respond to his questions. When I sent it on to Rome, it received a *magna cum laude*. The Pontifical Biblical Institute, always very conscious of its traditions, had on its alumni roster for “the MSSsTs”: Alphonsus Benson, Nathan Kay and me. It should also have included Vincent Fitzpatrick.

I write this section so personally because I feel it is important for future generations to know how the love of God was lived out in this man’s life. I knew a very careful, extremely intelligent, well versed classical scholar, who could hold his own against any professor I had in any university in Germany, France, Italy, Greece, Egypt and Israel. Vincent was a man who loved and lived these ancient languages because they were prayer, and the language and treasury of the Church. He was a man who worked constantly and assiduously for twenty- four years of his ministry so that Missionary Servant priests would be well trained to assume their role in the Church. A man, so steeped in learning, who lovingly and patiently every day dealt with students who little appreciated the difference between *puella* and *puellam*. A man who imparted the *sine qua non* subject for ordination and gave his life so that others could learn it. A man of devoted, day-in-and-day-out, cheerful, prayerful service.

Then came the winds of change, and Latin along with many revered traditions were soon to move from a center stage to the wings.

V. The Years of Change (1968-1980)

For Vincent these years were the most difficult of all and the years of greatest suffering. It was a turbulent time, and he was in the middle of it all, for he would be an architect of building the future through his contribution to the Fourth General Cenacle, his major work on the Constitution Committee, and his role as Novice Director of a whole generation of STs. He would also see the minor seminary system, to which he had given so many years of his life, come down before his eyes. The language of his beloved Psalms and other revered literature – the treasure house of so many of his insights – was now relegated to the category of “useless and dead.”

In the beginning, in 1968, everything seemed possible. There was a unique ferment not only in the world, but also in the Church. In the United States, the Enlightenment came to its ultimate fruition with the dicta that all authority was to be questioned and all systems had to be rethought. We went about Church renewal with an iconoclastic glee. Like all eras of upheaval, these were times of extreme opinions and polarizations: we witnessed the extremely good and the extremely bad. Everyone had an opinion and it was difficult to determine who really had anything meaningful to offer. It felt like we were groping through the darkness. The ST community that would emerge would be very different from the ST community I had entered.

These years were also years of great creativity. Even today, to look back at the documents of our Fourth General Cenacle is to see that they were prescient and insightful, and that they positioned us to walk into the renewal and forge a different future. It is amazing to see that our formation document anticipated *Pastores Dabo Vobis* by twenty-five years. The document created by Vincent and

the Spirituality Committee gave us a good summary of what our spirituality was and laid the ground work for renewal.

In these turbulent times, Vincent was again called to leadership on the General Council, with Father Stephen Quinn, from 1973-1979. He served as Councilor and member of the Constitution Committee, while also being the Novice Director. These were three major tasks, demanding and consuming of time, effort, and self.

It was a difficult time in leadership for Vincent because he was often assailed by people who wanted an instant decision – something which Vincent was constitutionally incapable of giving. As a leader, he could never be a front line commander; he saw every possibility and would be locked into indecision. Especially in these times where everything was questioned with so much new and enlightening thought, it was even harder for him to make a decision. He had to weigh, ponder, and think through every option, a gift not particularly appreciated at that time, but surely a sign of wisdom and stability that brought us into the future.

Vincent's gift as a leader was as a war room strategist. He would present a thorough, well reasoned appraisal of every scenario and provide excellent counsel to the group so a good decision could be reached. His power was that he was an opinion former – to promote any program or idea you had to have Vincent supporting you. If he would shake his head and say, "I don't know," or if he would just stare at you from over his glasses, you knew that your idea was dead in the water.

He knew the importance of the Constitution Committee, thinking it one of the best committees that he had ever worked on, and he gave himself to it with heart and soul. He especially enjoyed being with the MSBTs, and his subsequent close collaboration with Sr. Sara Butler to explain the Rule of Life and the Constitution to the ST-MSBT rank-and-file. His ST collaborators were Tim Lynch,

Shaun McCarty and Jordan Baxter, who worked with Catherine Steiner, Mary Tonra, Sara Butler and Joseph Miriam Blackwell, their MSBT counterparts. It was arduous work to cull through everything that was written, to sift through all our traditions, and to be attentive to all the best literature that was being written about renewal. As part of this process, Tim Lynch produced the renewed Meditation Book and the Monographs, all with the close collaboration of Vincent and others of the committee. Their work could only have been extremely taxing, entailing constant meetings and deadlines. As I write now, I am looking at copies of some seventy typewritten pages that Vincent and Tim brought together to create an historical development time-line, gleaning passages out of Father Judge's writings for the work of the committee and probably for the Monograph on which Shaun worked so diligently, "Grace of our Founder." These documents not only put us all in touch with the thought of Father Judge, but they were the touchstones of renewal and the undergirding of the new Rule of Life and Constitution.

Vincent's real trial of that time was the Novitiate. In 1970 he terminated his career as 'teacher of the classics' and became the 'former of novices,' right in the midst of the upheaval in the Church. He would hold this position for ten years until 1980, and would see the generations change before his eyes. Our novices themselves would change. When the old minor seminary system dissolved, the candidates whom we attracted knew less of us and our traditions, let alone of the foundational truths of the Catholic faith as they were taught in the pre-Vatican II catechism. There was an ongoing symphony of confusion in the congregation at-large playing in the background. Confreres were opting out of the congregation – some in anger, some for ideology, others for love. Key people took leaves of absence.

During his years as Novice Director, Vincent would become a divided soul, torn among those formational responsibilities, his duties as General Councilor and as a member of the Constitution Committee. The Novitiate was physically

on the move in those years: from Winchester to Monroe (1972), to the Villa at Stirling (1973) – only to end up at Silver Spring (1980). He would also lose the help of his Novitiate collaborators; Brother Peter Claver died in the Novitiate at Monroe; Father Joe McNutt went to Puerto Rico for health reasons; Brother Gerard O’Boyle requested a leave of absence from Stirling. Each group of Novices also became progressively more vociferous about Vincent’s required, repeated, and prolonged absences from the Novitiate.

My insights into Vincent’s point of view of this time come from the extensive conversations we had while I was working with our Novitiate program. Vincent went into the Novitiate ministry suffering the personal loss and pain of the end of his minor seminary career. He felt himself a part of the “out of touch” older generation, but was now suddenly asked to be the major companion of youth, a task he had left to others in the minor seminary. Not only did he feel disconnected from the new mentality, but the new mentality itself *was* radically different and would change from year to year with each incoming group. All this questioning and change forced Vincent to examine the very essence of what it meant to be a religious and a Missionary Servant, and to rethink what he would transmit to the next generation. He told me that he emerged from the Novitiate directorship a very different person from the one that had begun it.

Vincent felt during that whole time that his opinion was in peril. His voice was just one among many, though he felt that his voice was important in giving these young men the foundations of Cenacle spiritual life. It would drive him to despair to know that whatever he had just termed as important would be contradicted or trivialized by some other confrere. Postmodernism had dawned: all opinions were of equal weight, with the most important truth being *my* truth. Vincent would never agree with that.

At that time Vincent found himself unsure and wary. He was slow in adjusting to new opinions and following trends. At first, for instance, he did not

allow Don Goergen's book, *The Sexual Celibate*, onto the novitiate reading list, so I am sure that it *was read* by all the novices. He was old school: very uncomfortable in talking about sexuality and sexual matters, but now thrust into the new age of open dialogue. Vincent's own personality did not suit this new age. In one-on-one or polite conversation, Vincent always gave you the impression that he agreed with you. His classic response in any conversation was, "You don't say," or "How about that?" If he agreed with your anger or upset, he would say, "For crying out loud." He was very insightful into human personality but was not very conscious of growth dynamics or how to move people along to the next step, other than through prayer. He would have a hard time speaking of his own growth process, his personal disciplines, or the values that under-girded his life. He was reflective and self-sharing, but he was not personalist. His sharing would be more at an analytical, thoughtful level, but always as a gift of self. He knew that things were not proceeding correctly with some Novices, but he would have no idea how to alter that course. He would just moan and shake his head. And, at that time, those from whom he could take counsel were few and far between.

What he did try to give to the Novices in those years was a love of the community and of the vision of Father Judge. He was a living historian who tried to pass on our spirituality, our history, our customs. He was an historical fount of information about the early years of the congregation and he reflected upon this much, especially in the course of the Constitution work. He brought the Novitiate community into closer contact with the ST community both at Monroe and at Stirling. He moved the Novitiate into closer relationship with the Sisters' Novitiate by frequent trips to Philadelphia and meetings in Stirling. And perhaps most important, he was always an exemplary man of prayer.

His greatest loss was the minor seminary, a system which he had given so many years of his life to create. He was in a quandary as to what to do, and he knew the power of his opinion. At the General Cenacle in 1973, if it were not for

his talk, “This is the work of God and it must go on,” in which all heard his implicit endorsement of the necessary steps into the future, we would never have closed our minor seminary. This decision was not without personal consequence for Vincent and brought him to a period of grief, soul searching and brooding. The times were changing and Vincent painfully continued to grow and change with them.

I now wonder whether Tim Lynch, with his colorful costumes and rants, was not exteriorizing in his uniquely creative way what was going on inside of many of his generation. Vincent worked through the situation in prayer, and, as was his artistry, he was able to bring things to resolution a short time later in a beautiful, charged, emotional homily, “Why did the Triune God reject this prayer?” In it, with his artist’s eye, he described Monroe, but especially the student chapel, a physical hymn of praise to the Triune God. He remembered the brass polished door handles, all in the form of a triangle. He could describe each and every stained glass window, upon which he must have meditated often. Then he described the lights, the long lights hanging from that high ceiling, coming down in threes, their long stems punctuated by periodic brass triangle designs. He reminded us of the floor, set out in waving triangles with a small triangle in the middle. “Why did God reject this prayer?” This beautiful, moving homily was his way of grieving with us the loss of his life work and the vision of Thomas of creating our own system. This homily was his way in prayer of letting go of the past and moving into the future. Another deep loss for him was Latin, both for his daily prayer life and the life of the Church. Personally, Vincent had woven his life into those Latin Psalms. His Breviary was worn thin from their daily recitation. Painfully he made the transition to English, and was overjoyed when the new English Liturgy of the Hours finally made its appearance in 1975. He was ambiguous about the change away from Latin for some practical reasons, “Where will the Canon Lawyers come from?” but more for the fact he feared the next generation would be cut off from

the fullness of the fount of the Fathers and the Classical Tradition, a fount that had nourished him so. He was a lover of those readings. His fear was that we were heading down the road to becoming less.

VI. The Mission Years (1980-2000)

Of these years, I can offer some chronology and comment. Others can provide more details.

Leaving the Novitiate, Vincent did a brief residency at Silver Spring to complete the Constitution work. He then did his first year in retreat work at Stirling. In 1982, he became an associate pastor in Lawtell, Louisiana, and a whole new world of pastoral practice was opened to him. He was like a young priest doing his first marriage. His was the eternal youthful spirit, ever eager to learn. He returned to the Shrine for another year in 1984, and then soon afterward, moved to Colonial Beach. After five years he moved back to the Shrine.

I used to see him when he came to Silver Spring from Colonial Beach in the late eighties. At that time work on the Constitution and the Rule of Life was done and Vincent spent his time preparing talks and homilies. He gave us one on the Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul, 1987, pointing out how Father Judge was a true Vincentian, a theme that would occupy him to his final days.

I rejoined him at Stirling in 1990. Vincent was starting his third tour at the Shrine. He was busy with the retreat work, homilies, and Bible classes. His role in the Missionary Cenacle Family flourished as he served as Spiritual Guide to the BTMI, worked often with the MCA, and made frequent trips to the MSBT Motherhouse. He was present at the Motherhouse for every major celebration and was the requested homilist for so many special occasions and funerals. At seventy-five he had lost his ability to say “No!” and was more in demand than ever. He looked upon every speaking occasion as an opportunity to nourish the

Missionary Cenacle Family and would sit up late at night in the library with the Catholic Encyclopedias open, preparing his next day's talk, writing his notes on those legendary legal pads. He would forever have a pad full and would have to roll the pages to find his place. In 1990 he was also discovering the wonders of the computer. He started as a MAC man, but would later move to PCs.

His talks in those days were classic "Vincent": simple, profound, and well developed, with practical consequences. His retreat talks centered on his favorite themes: why Father Judge founded Stirling; the purpose and history of the Missionary Cenacle; a theme of the liturgical season. Mass would always contain a well thought out homily on the day's Scriptures. Most were gems. Whenever I could, I would sneak into the chapel and listen to his artistry. When I shared this with Guy Wilson later on in Los Angeles, Guy commented that when he was a Novice, Vincent's teaching and preaching was a draw back; it was so well prepared and thought out that it was like a diet of thick, sweet pastries. You could take one or two, but more was overload. A daily diet of Vincent was just too rich.

Vincent always exercised early in the morning. He would put on his sweats and run. He loved physical work. His "old hammer and saw missionary heart" stayed perpetually young. Once that January, we shoveled snow for an entire day. Vincent was as agile with the snow blower as with his shovel. His care for his body and his careful diet – especially helpful with his heart problems – were a regimen that probably prolonged his life.

If there was a theme emerging during this time in Vincent's life, it was the need for transformation. Renewal was not a question of changing just the externals. Vincent began to express it as "the good is the enemy of the better." He was trying to prod us out of the self satisfied renewal rut we were getting into and push us on in the work of being faithful to our charism and true spiritual renewal. He expressed this well in January 2004, writing a reflection for the ST Spiritual Life Committee on The Identity of the Missionary Servant. The theme he latched

on to was from John's Gospel, "I came that you might have life and have it to the full." This theme was interwoven into many of his talks.

These years also saw his constant and dedicated involvement at Camp Trinita. He loved it as an expression of Cenacle Family working with families. The summer program, sponsored by the Sisters, in collaboration with the MCA and volunteers, took place on land that had been purchased by Father Judge in Connecticut. I visited him there a number of times throughout the years. He had a workshop over the main barn and a desk, all that he really needed. In the early years I always found him with his hammer in hand or digging fence post holes the old fashioned way, with physical strength. After his heart problems, the Sisters were vigilant that he would not do this, but he continued his silk screening, creating a new logo tee shirt for each camping season. At the camp fiestas, he would also sing and dance, wearing a wig, no less. He would do a famous two-step with Sister Peggy Cosgrove, singing the camp song. One year the young counselors began to call our feared and revered teacher "Vinny, the Care Bear." It was a different world, one that he loved very much.

Even in this time at Trinita, the fires continued to burn inside "the Care Bear" – formerly "The Tiger!" They would flash out every day in a poignant homily about the mystery of the Trinity as Family, the Missionary Cenacle Family, and the need for good, healthy family life in general. All this in language that every camper, young and old, could understand. Each and every homily would be a Vincent masterpiece. Trinita would be one of his most meaningful and beloved projects until the end of his life.

VII. The Final Years (2000-2006)

Vincent being eighty-five was a milestone on the road of his life. When I returned to the East from California, I found Vincent physically different. He was thinner, older and had undergone a noticeable change.

The change was appearing in little things, things that would make you smile. As a formator, Vincent would go ballistic if he caught you lying down during the day. Neither “siesta” nor “afternoon nap” had been a part of his vocabulary. Now, you might find him dozing off in a chair, especially in his room. At night, he would be fast asleep in his favorite chair in the library at the end of the hall in Stirling, the Catholic Encyclopedia still open and the classic signature yellow legal pad still at his side. What happened on the yellow legal pad was also interesting; his writing was becoming so big that now only two or three sentences would fit on a page. His clothing was always simple. By this time his summertime attire was simplified to black pants, occasionally khaki, but with his classic blue shirt with the worn out collar, or the black clerical shirt, most often a shade of gray after so many washings. In winter, he wore whatever with his black pants and red cardigan. He would still jog, but now it was slower. A younger person could walk faster. It took him ages now to run a short distance, but he still ran.

His life was still wrapped up in the Scriptures and the Psalms. He continued to work painstakingly on his homilies; preaching never lost its importance for him. But gone were the Greek texts and the commentaries. The emphasis now seemed to be in getting the message across. I would call these last years “wrestling with the Word.” He worked everyday to create a message that would let God’s Word – not his – shine forth.

The Psalms were his great love. Whether waiting for a meeting, idling time before the next commitment, or sitting waiting for a doctor’s appointment, his Liturgy of the Hours was his constant companion. Many a time I would walk in on him and there he would be with his Breviary in hand. During our long flights on the airplane, he would pray the Psalms.

He came to appreciate community life all the more. After his brother Cy’s death, he remarked to me: “You know, when your family is gone and the nieces and nephews are so far away, you come to realize that our community is really our

family, the family we really have.” Vincent enjoyed being with his Cenacle family until death.

Always young at heart, Vincent never stopped growing. He was always contemplating issues and wrestling with ideas. As the apostolate at the Shrine of Saint Joseph became more oriented to the immigrant, as more Hispanic confreres came, Vincent had his daily dialogue in Spanish. His personal journey was even more impressive. On a 2004 retreat he gave in Mexico, he spoke openly about chastity and how he found God in his sexuality. It was quite startling and out of character for him, especially to those of us who had known him over the years. But again it showed his great capacity to grow, to change, and to integrate the constant newness of life.

The topic of that 2004 retreat in Mexico was the vows. Vincent had chosen the theme. He brought extensive paper work and notes. He was very concerned in his final years about the vows. On three separate occasions he gave me a copy of the survey that he and Sister Mary Tonra had done for the Constitution Committee. The study revealed that as a whole, the men have a very pragmatic, utilitarian sense of the vows. The vows gave us the detachment and mobility to be missionaries – a work centered orientation. There was very little awareness of their eschatological witness value. He was concerned that for STs the vows were not definitive of our identity, that we did not embrace them and renew them in love. He was afraid that we were somewhat clueless about their witness value. He felt this last point very strongly in light of the sexual abuse scandal in the Church and the growing lack of simplicity in our lives.

For me, Vincent never mellowed and I saw this especially when we were traveling companions. He remained fiercely independent with that determined resolve of steel. We would never take an elevator when we could walk up a flight of stairs. Never, never offer to help him up a flight of stairs. Never offer to carry his overloaded brown leather briefcase, but always be there as he hands it to you and says, “Could you please take this?” Our long journeys by car and plane were

always enjoyable as he was an engaging conversationalist. We always took time to pray. On a car ride, especially as we drove along one of his favorite routes, highway 29 as it goes along the Delaware River, he would love to pray the rosary, which he always did in a unique, inimitable way, forever cadencing the last words “of thy womb, Je-e-e-e-sus.” In our car conversations, he was always working on some new little project or talk, or planning for the upcoming summer at his beloved Trinita.

As the years passed, the burden of our work together shifted to me. In previous years, Vincent would pull the stack of papers out of his brief case and set the work pace. He would never lose his place or train of thought. Now, I was the one doing the work. About two weeks before our meeting, I would send up a number of pages for him to review and then drive up to Stirling to meet on them. We would meet all day and Vincent would have gone over the material and made his notes. Whenever a question came up, he would run to his room and bring out an old wrinkled yellow paper from his treasure trove that had exactly addressed the point in question. It seemed to me he saved his every paper from ordination on. But where? His room never gave the appearance of clutter. During our discussions, he was not as quick now as he used to be to come to a point or take a position. On tough issues, he would lean back, put his right hand, holding his pencil, under his chin in his classic thinking pose and say, “Let me think about that. I will get back to you.” And two or three weeks later, a computer written document of a few pages would arrive in the mail. He was especially interested in the project of writing the biography of Father Judge and would review all the preliminary ideas and proposed sections very carefully.

Our sessions now were also marked by the signs of aging. Some days he would have taken his diuretic and would have to excuse himself every few minutes. When he detected a twinkle in my eye, he would look at me from over his glasses with that classic stare: “Don’t laugh. You too will get old one day.” He would scoot off and come right back and take up his thought exactly where he had left

off in the discussion. When things became cloudy and detail could not be determined, Father Stephen Quinn and Sister Mary Gerald were always nearby to share facts and memories.

Maybe I am reading too much into it, but these sessions were also something of a “legacy.” He would stop in his thought, look at me and say something like, “Always remember, Father Judge wanted...” or “In any decision you make, you should always think about...” If there was one thing that was clear in his message, it was never to get caught up in the immediate, always try to see the big picture of Father’s vision, especially regarding the laity and the Missionary Cenacle Family. He was absolutely convinced of the Family idea being at the center of our charism. One of the most memorable talks he gave was to the Missionary Cenacle Family Council about Father’s vision for the laity and the Family. [This talk is available on DVD.]

Vincent valued to the end the work of Camp Trinita, not only of working with families – the focus of their summer program – but being present as the Missionary Cenacle Family. When I saw him in November 2005 for his birthday, I asked him what he had in mind for Trinita that year. His answer was an unusually vague, “We’ll see.” In our last conversation in January, when I again asked, he said, “I am not sure.” I should have realized then that he was getting ready to set out on the different journey.

He ended up his journey of ninety years on his knees. He always liked to pray kneeling. It was the position from which you honored God and asked for favors. Father Judge once remarked that kneeling itself was a sign of praise to the Triune God. As far back as Monroe, I can remember Vincent kneeling – in our student chapel early in the morning. I can remember him in the 1970s kneeling in the chapel at Alonso Manso, in Puerto Rico, praying with Sister Sara Butler for the success of the Constitution meetings with the Island STs and MSBTs. I remember him kneeling at Stirling as he recited the daily rosary. A man of prayer, he would

kneel down and pray at the side of his bed before retiring when we shared a room in our travels. He had such a grateful heart in prayer and would give free rein to expressions of that gratitude.

VIII. Vincent's Legacy

1. Love of God. This was the only acceptable motivation. All other motivations had to be examined and transformed into a love of the Triune God. Vincent loved God in others and in all that he did. It was expressed concretely in a love of Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, and in drawing closer to the Word by a constant, penetrating, prayerful wrestling with the written Word of God. He was a man of integrity, deep devotion and constancy.

2. Love of Father Judge. Vincent was inspired by Father and his vision. He admired him, remembered key aspects of him, and tried to imitate Father in his life. He pondered often Father's vision and what it meant.

3. The Particular. In talking about the practices that Father Judge gave to the Cenacle, Vincent taught the three "P's" – the practices must be *Personal, Practical* and *Particular*. The first two were readily understood, but "particular" referred to our degree of intensity, our "spiritual temperature." For Vincent, it meant giving a thousand percent in all things. And that is how he lived his life, at that 1000% intensity.

4. Love of the Missionary Servants and of his Cenacle priesthood vocation. Religious Life was very important to him. The theme of the meaning and the witness of the vows was a constant preoccupation. His ministry was to nourish all in the life, history and customs of the Cenacle, and especially to form Missionary Servants. He was generous and self sacrificing in that labor. He felt as deeply a responsibility for the MSBTs as he did for the STs. He knew how to praise us and he knew how to help us realize our potential.

5. Love of the Missionary Cenacle Family. Vincent gave of all of his talents - spiritual, intellectual, and physical – to make this dream of Father Judge live for the present. He was devoted to the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate, but especially to the Blessed Trinity Missionary Institute, and worked hard and long preparing reflections for them.

6. His inquisitive probing mind. This factor kept him eternally young.

7. Everything was to be examined rigorously, thoroughly, painstakingly, slowly.

8. What did it mean in the here and now? It was important to know the past and be nourished by it, but never to be trapped in the past. Vincent was forever rethinking who we are for the present. *Sentire cum Ecclesia – to think, to feel* with the mind and heart of the Church was very important in making the message relevant for today's world. He wanted – for himself and even more so for us – God's life and that life in its fullness. His fear was that the good of the present would blind us to the better that the future can be.

Vincent Fitzpatrick taught us the mind and the heart of Father Judge by who he himself was. He was greatness, intelligence and integrity in an ordinary, approachable wrapper. What a gift from God! *“Do give this much thought, as you are, so also others will be...”*



Fr. Gabriel Hannan, S.T.

Reflection on his cousin

I grew up across the street from the Fitzpatricks on Avenue C, in the Bergen Point section of Bayonne, NJ. Our house and the houses of the extended family (the Donovans' house, the Bagley's house and Grandma Donovan's) were built by Fr. Vincent Fitzpatrick's father. The Fitzpatrick house was built much earlier, about 1840. All the houses had floors with a slight slant to them, but that was simply ignored.

Back in the days of my youth a neighborhood was still a community; everybody knew everybody else. Dr. Daly's house was on one corner and the "Busy Bee" market was on the other. Across the street lived Mr. Clifford, the friendly policeman. I still remember how he laughed when I shouted "My daddy has beer!" on the day prohibition was repealed.

Vince and his four brothers, my mother's first cousins, grew up in this neighborhood. One photograph I remember showed all five of them in their altar server cassocks lined up according to seniority and size.

Frank is the only brother still living (2007). He was in the Jesuits for some years, wrote his own Greek grammar and left the Society of Jesus before ordination. He married and raised a family. He is now retired and lives in North Carolina.

Joe joined the Jesuits after graduating from St. Andrew's School and St. Peter's Prep in Jersey City. He eventually received his Doctorate in Sociology from Harvard University and founded the School of Sociology and Political Science at Fordham University. In his later years he was flown all over to receive honorary doctorates. He told me once, with a bemused grin, that he was invited as a sort of "relic of the past." The only honor he hung on his wall was one proclaiming him

“Puerto Rican Man of the Year,” which he received for his many years of service to the Hispanic Community of New York. The year he received that honor, the parade of a quarter million Puerto Ricans was led by Father Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, S.J., in tails, top hat and cane! Joe would tell that story with a special smile.

Joe was my godfather and was always a big help to me. He visited me often in California and once in Mexico. Always a great booster of the Cenacle family, Joe enjoyed his visits to California where he would stay with us at Ascension Church.

Vince and I spent several days at Fordham at Joe’s wake. I had the back porch duty, greeting visitors and showing them where to enter. Many of them told me the stories of their relationship with Joe. Joe was for many years a sort of family chaplain, always available for family occasions, and deeply interested in family well being. I heard him say one time: “I became a Sociologist to strengthen families.” He and Vince were very close. Both brilliant, I never saw competition between them. Each one gloried in the success of the other.

Cyril – “Cy” – was another of Vince’s brothers. He was in charge of the X-ray department of Bayonne Hospital. Cy was a very spiritual and prayerful man, involved in many activities in the parish. His first wife, Ruth, was Jewish and converted to Catholicism, convinced by the depth of Cy’s spirituality. She and Cy had a daughter. After Ruth’s death, Cy remarried. His second wife was a nurse at Bayonne Hospital.

Martin, another of Vince’s brothers, was killed during World War II.

Vince’s mother was a “Burnell.” She died on 7 March 1971, at Blessed Trinity Missionary Cenacle, Stirling, NJ where she had lived since 1969.

The obituary in the March 8th issue of the “Bayonne Times” stated she was from *“one of the first families of Irish settlers. Her father, the late John Burnell settled in Bayonne in 1862. He came from County Clare, as did his wife, the late Mary Mulvilbill Burnell, whom he met in Bayonne. Mrs. Fitzpatrick was born in 1879 at a house at 19*

George St., which is still standing. She married the late Patrick Joseph Fitzpatrick who was also from one of the oldest Irish families in Bayonne. . . She had five sons, and was preceded in death by two sisters: Sister Mary Seraphime, O.P., and Sister Mary Zosima, O.S.F. Also by five brothers: James, Thomas, Patrick, Michael and Joseph Burnell. She was buried at 'Holy Name,' the old Catholic Cemetery in Jersey City."

Family tradition has it that the Burnell branch was from Ennis, County Clare. Vince looked very much like his mother. She was very Irish in a practical and sophisticated sort of way. Her sophistication consisted of a deep faith that welled up in her as a good sense of humor, simplicity, wisdom, and a generous heart. She worked until she was 93. The bus drivers all knew her and would stop in front of her work so she wouldn't have to walk from the corner. No one ever objected. One time when she was staying with our Sisters in Stirling, I was visiting and passed by her room. She was sick in bed and happy to see me. It was Mother's Day and Joe was in one country and Vince in another. She declared that God had sent me to give her a Mass on Mother's Day. So we had Mass in her room.

I never knew Vince's father; he had died of cancer. My father told me that it was during prohibition and there were not many options available for killing pain. Mr. Fitzpatrick was Irish but they had come to the U.S. through "the back door," that is, Canada. We still had relatives up there then. My dad took his old Dodge up to Kingston, Ontario, and with the help of the family crammed as much liquid painkiller as he could into every possible hiding place. When he came to the border, the American inspector asked if he had anything to declare. He answered in the negative. The inspector then offered to sell him all the liquor he wanted. What they confiscated from one they would sell to the next! He brought enough to last and did not have to go back.

Vince's father's legacy was a large workshop in a separate building behind the Fitzpatrick home. It had every kind of motor and building tool one could

ever want. In those days a contractor had to make everything since nothing was prefabricated. Door frames and the doors to put in them were all made individually. All the Fitzpatrick-built houses had “dumb waiters” and large front porches that were frequently converted into sun rooms.

From his earliest years, Vince was involved in carpentry. That was a big help later in the Cenacle when he contributed so much to the building that needed to be done: the conversion of the barn into the old Chapel at Stirling; more barn conversion at Silver Spring; the construction that went on in Holy Trinity. He was particularly happy about the pillars in the niche for St. Joseph in the conversion of the barn at Stirling. Perhaps his favorite project was the beautiful Shrine of Our Lady in the field at Holy Trinity. He asked that it be maintained. He was especially fond of pillars. I took a picture of the Chapel framed by the shrine’s pillars. He kept that on display in his room.

The Cenacle virtues were important to Vince as he tried to prepare us to be zealous missionaries with a joyous spirit of self sacrifice. After World War II, many veterans came to religious life. In one year, St. Joseph’s Prep Seminary went from twenty-six to ninety-eight students. We all kidded Vince on his memorable talk: “Ninety-eight have entered the arena. How many will gain the crown?” Quite a few did. There were special classes for the veterans to catch up in Latin and Greek. Since they studied under the G.I. Bill, they paid generous tuition, a welcome change at Holy Trinity.

It was in formation work that Vince’s gifts stood out. He was spiritual, prayerful, zealous, generous, simple, kind and prudent. He was free of duplicity and appreciated the same quality in others. If someone earned his trust, there was a smooth road ahead. As a spiritual director he was insightful, practical and gifted. He had a natural ability to see through things and get right to the root of the problem. It had to come from experience and his own openness to the Holy Spirit. Likewise as a confessor he was especially gifted, as was his good friend, Fr.

Louis Leuthy, who died young, only eight years after ordination. He too had a great effect on us, simple and holy man that he was. Both Vince and Louis were talented athletes. In the famous “Turkey Bowl” football games of Thanksgiving Day, Vince was the passer and Louis (I can still see his Lincoln-like figure move down the field) was the faculty’s star receiver.

As I look back at our years with Vince, I get a better appreciation of the richness his presence brought to us. First, he was deeply spiritual: a man of the kind of prayer that led to action. Second, he was tremendously loyal to the Cenacle and had a passionate love for its history, and its traditions. Third, he was generous and gave himself to whatever was at hand, whatever the pressing need. Fourth, he believed in quality. He kept all his writings, but never used an old sermon for a second time. He wrote fresh sermons for each occasion and prepared each class anew, never reusing the preparation from the year before. He wanted to be freshly prepared and have an enthusiastic presentation, not a stale one. Fifth, he was passionate in all he did. There was no “more or less” with Vince. He went all out in work, play and prayer. Sixth, he had a great sense of humor. The story of the spontaneous parade on St. Patrick’s day was only one of many. And finally, he was charitable in speech and in action. He had that old Irish way of his family of speaking only positively of others. The only way one could get a hint of a possibly negative opinion from him would be from his silence. He was a living example of what Fr. Judge spoke of as “the charity of silence.” It wasn’t that he didn’t know what was going on; he knew very well. And if there were good reasons to talk about issues, he would. But he would avoid as much as possible any negative talk about others. Vince was charitable in action as well. As prefect of discipline, he would go out of his way to pay special attention to a person who he thought was hurting or under-appreciated by the group.

In his last years, Vince had that persistent, quiet glow of joy that our holy old men seem to develop if life gives them the time. Their own gentle awareness

of God's presence makes it easy to behold that Presence in them. It shows itself in a gentle, peaceful and loving glow that does not call attention to itself, yet it attracts others.

One event that hit Vince hard was the closing of the Minor Seminary at Monroe. He spoke of the hardship on the faculty, dispersed to other areas of activity, and he felt bad about the criticism of some who claimed that the buildings were luxurious. "You can't build an old building," he argued.

In the Cenacle, our lives took different paths. He gave his all to our minor seminary formation program. I worked in Mexico where I saw people exposed to terrible hardship. But Vince always appreciated another point of view even if he could not agree with it. He had strong opinions and convictions, but at the same time he was always a humble seeker of truth.

Vince had a great influence on others without trying to be influential. He was a consolation to many, including, in later years, the young Hispanic members who came to be stationed at Stirling. He took great joy in being escorted by Fr. Gary to visit our missions and houses of formation in Latin America. He thrilled to see the modern Cenacle being born and to have the opportunity to tell the young Cenacle members about the days of old. The young men were an inspiration to him and he to them.

They last time I saw him was in the hospital but because of the presence of someone else we did not have the opportunity to talk. But Vince knew how to talk with his eyes. Words would have been superfluous. We exchanged blessings, and no more needed to be said. A week later he went home where the Cenacle celebrates without the limitations of time. He has many friends there, and will be waiting to welcome many more. As someone in our Adelphi Cenacle put it: "Father Vincent was Father Cenacle."



Fr. John Edmunds, S.T.

Pastoral recollection on Father Vincent

After twenty-five years teaching Greek and Latin at the minor seminary and ten years as novice master, Father Vincent received his first assignment to work as a parish priest. He was assigned to work in Lawtell, Louisiana, at a parish that the Missionary Servants had recently assumed. Actually it was two parishes. John Ford was pastor of both Holy Family in Lawtell and at St. Anne in Mallet. (There was also a small mission station, St. Agnes.) John Edmunds was the associate pastor for both parishes. The mission plan was for a common pastoral vision to be developed for these geographically close, but culturally different communities.

Father Vincent arrived several months after the two Johns had opened this work for the Missionary Servants. Even though he was almost forty years ordained at this point he entered into the work with the enthusiasm of a rookie. Of course, his care for people and his homilies were excellent and much appreciated. He was a tremendous addition to the pastoral team.

Two characteristics stand out from his time in Lawtell. First, was his humility. Since he was older even than the pastor many people sought him out for pastoral advice presuming he had wide experience dealing with the problems that arise in life. For Father Vincent who had been dealing with seminarians for most of his priesthood the issues of marriage and family life were *terra incognita*. So he would without any embarrassment seek the counsel of the two Johns how to approach certain delicate situations. If he felt the incongruity of taking advice from men many years his junior whom he had taught, he never exhibited it. He understood that he was the one who was “wet behind the ears” when it came to pastoral situations and accepted his status as the new kid on the block with grace.

The other quality Father Vincent exhibited during his time in Lawtell was fraternity. He treated the two Johns completely as peers, never once presuming on his esteem and dignity as a “wisdom figure.” He shared life, prayer and work without pulling rank in any way. He was an ideal confrere both in community life and in the apostolate.

One memory stands out among many as exemplifying his gifts in parish work. One day a sick call came in that Father Vincent rushed out to answer. It turned out to be an elderly man who had committed suicide. Father Vincent was able to offer immediate words of hope and consolation to the devastated family. At the funeral he provided a magnificent reflection on the Pascal mystery and God’s infinite mercy. What had been a terrible blow to the family became an occasion of grace due to his priestly ministry.

After several years Father Vincent left the Lawtell parishes. He worked later in the Colonial Beach churches. In parish work as in all of the ministries throughout his life, he was the soul of generosity and service. Father Vincent was the true embodiment of the charism of a Missionary Servant of the Most Holy Trinity.



III

RECOLLECTIONS FROM FR. VINCENT'S NOVICES



Fr. Frank Conkle, S.T.

Vincent was the kind of guy who left a lot of memories. Kind and gentle with us in novitiate but a little easy to trigger if he thought we were trying to get away with something. He did not stomach slackers easily.

One of the things that sort of stands out in my mind is a little question he would put to us anytime we asked for anything or asked to do anything out of the routine: What is the value of this? This was always asked with that little look over the top of his glasses to let you know he meant business. One of the consequences of his asking that question so many times is that we would all have a huddle before we asked him for anything and think up all the reasons that such a request would have “value”.

I can truthfully say that I have never met another man like him or even anyone who would dare to try and become like him (although we were all good at imitating his mannerisms) it was just too much to try and become like him although he made us all want to be the best persons we could be. Who would dare settle for less in his presence? The other thing about him in novitiate was that, although he

had a good sense of humor it always seemed like a surprise when he laughed. He had a good hearty laugh and it released a lot of the nervousness I always felt in his presence. But it was always a surprise. A very pleasant surprise. And it endeared him to me even more.



Bro. Joseph Dudek, S.T.

I suppose it is safe to say that I approached my novitiate with some ambivalence. I arrived at Monroe as a junior the year “the team” was introduced. This was followed by two and a half years at the Chicago House of Studies and two years living outside of formation. Like many of my generation the Congregation seemed split between the young guys and the old guys. Father Vincent, at least in my mind, was clearly in the latter group and I was not sure if I could relate to him in a way that would maximize my novitiate experience. It did not take long to realize that my ambivalence was groundless. My novitiate year in Stirling under Father Vincent’s leadership while not perfect by any means remains a happy and defining moment in my life. In spite of our generation gap, I felt a real bond with Father Vincent not just because he possessed the qualities that even a stupid novice knew were important but because he never made me feel like a stupid novice; when discussing the vows, the state of the world or even when I managed to get him pinned under the kitchen floor during one of the ill-advised home renovation projects that we both seemed to thrive on! I respected Father Vincent most because he respected me; my decision to be a Missionary Brother, my impatience, my talent for fixing things (through which he seemed to experience vicarious enjoyment) and my desire to become a member of the family he loved.



Fr. Joseph Keenan, S.T.

At our first formal class after our clothing, Father Vincent made a few comments regarding novices. He stated that some people believed that novices were like young broncos that needed to be broken. He also stated that others believed that the Novice Master had to be like an old fashioned Marine drill sergeant. Vince then told us that he did not believe in either of those two approaches and as always he was true to his word. He taught and formed us by his example: his love for the community, his prayer life, his dedication to the Eucharist, his availability to the different Family branches, his humor and his personal interest in each of us. These were qualities that marked the life of Vince from a professor of Latin and Greek to Novice Master, to Retreat Master at the Shrine of Saint Joseph. The gift of Vince's life among us was the constancy of his vocation: a blessing to the Cenacle Family and a challenge to us.



Bro. Paul Michalenko, S.T.

The “medium is the message” is probably the most relevant phrase as I describe Vincent Fitzpatrick as my novice director. Vincent would spend his evenings pounding away on an old typewriter preparing notes for the next day's class. The uneven clack produced single spaced copies of his thoughts. We received carbon copies, sometimes legible (depending which copy you received) but most often with misspellings. He would use these notes to explain the history and spirit of the founder and of the congregation.

The morning class consisted of his reading of the notes in his famous staccato voice which became rather monotone. He usually lost one or two of us by the end of class to the painful process of trying to stay awake. Needless to say, I

remember little of the material of those sessions. What I do remember was the man's generosity. He was a General Councilor as well as novice director. Often a call would come in and the next day he would be off in service to the community. Later we learned of an unfortunate situation that he was called on to rectify. If not on Council business he was burying one of the Sisters or preparing a homily for a commitment he had said yes to.

Then there were the parade of lay and religious who came to him to seek his advice and wisdom. I know that there is a fine line between over extension and generosity but Vince seemed most times to manage it well. If novitiate is a time to learn what it is to be a Missionary Servant it happened in the example of Vincent's self-giving. He lived daily what it is to be a missionary and a servant in the "providence of one's every day life."

One special personal remembrance was my last private conference with him prior to first vows. He had mentioned that months before an ordained confrere had written him suggesting that I not be allowed to be professed. Though not explicitly mentioned it was about some gossip that had been germinating at Holy Trinity Mission Seminary and I was implicated as a contributor. Without revealing anything further he quickly informed me that he had thrown it away. I was shocked. I was new to the community and had spent no significant time at the seminary. Vincent asked no questions and gave no answers. He just apologized saying how even good religious can become sinful people when they lose their focus on God and others and think of only themselves. I often reflect on his wisdom; fully aware that it came from years of experience. A mere five years later the gossip erupted in the formation community and a congregational split. Ironically I was asked to facilitate the infamous "reconciliation" retreat. Vincent's words were right on.



Fr. Víctor Ramón Santiago Mateo, S.T.

I do not really remember many of the concrete and wisdom laden ideas that my dear Novice Master, Father Vincent taught me. But I do hold cherished memories of the many hours when he spoke to us about the history of the congregation and about the vowed life.

All of his classes were passionate, with a great love of the vision of Father Thomas Augustine Judge. I remember leaving the Novitiate in love with the vision of Father Judge and proud to be a Missionary Servant. I can state without equivocation that Father Vincent had a special love and devotion to Mother Boniface. Whenever he spoke to us about her, he would give concrete examples, such as her asking that food be saved for one of the Brothers who was still involved in a project and waiting for him until he arrived. I remember that when he spoke to us about poverty, I learned a term that only many years later I came to understand. I am talking about the term ‘anawim.’ I am certain that at that time he wanted to guide us to the experience of the ‘little ones’, trusting totally in God, the example that he always gave us. I recall one time he came into the chapel and began to slide off the pew. He said to me, “Oh, Victor, I think that you are using too much pledge on the pews.” Once he began to talk to us about the sale of a property. It generated a lot of discussion about the value of keeping this vacation home.

I remember him asking Joe Dudek to write on the board the pros and the contras and he left the room. When he returned he found Joe and Paul Michalenko engaged in a serious philosophical argument. That day he kept us the whole afternoon talking to us about the need to listen to one another and to accept differing ideas. He asked me to stand up and to express my opinion about what was being discussed. I started shaking. He demanded that everyone be quiet and respectfully listen to all that I had to say. It was the first time in which Paul, Mort Byrd and Joe could not make fun of my “broken English.” What I had to say was really not that important,

but he used it as an occasion to speak to us at length about the need to learn how to present our arguments delicately. And, of course, I still have not learned the lesson.

Another moment that I always remember with special fondness was when he once said to me as I was climbing up the stairs at the Novitiate: “Oh, Victor, you are very proud.” His words bothered me very much because I did not know that I was proud. In fact, as my classmates always told me, “I was the poor and abandoned one.” A month later at the monthly interview he said to me: “What I told you as we were climbing up the stairs really bothered you.” I told him yes, that I had not understood his words. So he said: “You are proud of being Puerto Rican and I am very happy with you.” I was so pleased to know that he was talking about “my pride of being Puerto Rican.” From that day on I have always been and always will be a proud ST Puerto Rican.

In that interview he spoke to me about what was going on in my hometown of Coamo and informed me of the situation of the Congregation on the Island. I was greatly surprised by his frankness and openness, even to this day. Vincent was for us young men a model of holiness, a father figure, a wise guide to whom we could always go in respect and reverence. To talk with Vincent was like talking with Father Judge, experiencing the sacred.



Bro. Steven Vesely, S.T.

Vincent was my Latin teacher for the two semesters of first year college in Monroe, Virginia, 1969-1970. At the end of that school year he was named Director of Novices. By the end of that same year I switched to the Missionary

Brothers program. That year at Monroe was considered my postulancy and my request to enter the novitiate was accepted. So in July 1970, Vincent started his first year as Director of Novices and I was in his first group of novices in Winchester, Virginia. Seven novices started the year, three made First Vows, two made Perpetual Vows and I am the only one still a Missionary Servant today. In my first (and only) year of college at Monroe, Vince was my Latin teacher the two semesters of the 1969-1970 school year. Because most of that first year class were new students, Vince separated us for a Latin "101" course. He was an excellent teacher and very generous. He passed me with a grade of C. I remember the college had a 10 minute rule. If the teacher didn't show up in the first ten minutes of class you were allowed to leave. Well we tried it on him - only once. He went looking for us and called us back to the classroom. The 1970-71 novitiate class was a bit rough. It was his first year as Director and he was feeling his way between what he understood novices needed in the post-Vatican II Church and Community. He was probably away from Winchester about a third of the time, being called away for Committee meetings. His daily homilies were always excellent. I professed my first vows in Winchester, VA, on September 8, 1971. After the ceremony, before leaving with my family for some touring in Washington, D.C., I went up to him and said, "Bye, Vince, and thank you." He didn't bat an eye. From that moment on I called everyone only by their first name, no titles, even Steve Quinn. Since then I only saw him for brief moments. I can't recall him ever talking about another confrere in a negative, demeaning way. He was a very integrated person with a serious demeanor about him. If one misunderstood this seriousness as impersonal, one would have missed the genuine concern he had for his confreres and also his humor. I remember the first time he hugged me. It was in Puerto Rico, after I had decided to stay in Coamo, against the Council's wishes. He was visiting the Cenacle in Country Club and was driven over to the nearby house where some of us from Coamo were having a meeting. He wanted to see us.

I went to say hello, he ignored my outstretched hand and gave me a warm hug. I was moved and will always remember the gesture. I think it was his way of showing compassion and empathy. From then on we always hugged hello.



Fr. Guy Wilson, S.T.

Fr. Vincent was my novice director, his second class, the first novitiate in Stirling, NJ. At first we found him an imposing and aloof figure. After all he was named after St. Vincent DePaul; he was on the General Council; he was constantly traveling; he personally knew Fr. Judge; he was an accomplished teacher; he seemed to be held in awe by all; and he didn't know what to do with our generation. On October 31, 1973 I saw a different side of Fr. Vincent. It was Halloween. He had us all dress up in sheets as ghosts. He led us walking up the busy street. We stopped at the Sisters' house in Stirling. He rang the doorbell three times and had us all hide. He waited until all the Sisters in the house came out to see who arrived. Then he jumped out like a child and started yelling "Trick or Treat" laughing at the top of his voice. I saw a completely different side to Fr. Vincent. It was so human, so joyful, so engaging. He taught me more about the importance of Cenacle family that day than all his lessons and teachings on the subject. It was clear to me that Fr. Vincent was made for family and that he deeply loved Fr. Judge's vision of a family for mission. With the Sisters and with the MCA and the MCV he came alive like I didn't experience him when he was just in the presence of S.T.s.



IV

FROM OTHERS IN THE MISSIONARY CENACLE FAMILY



Rosa Tirado, B.T.M.I.

Last night I received the notice of the death of Father Vincent. May he rest in peace. He certainly was a saint of the Cenacle. A humble, true servant of God who witnessed, by his life, “the love of God” to all. We are so grateful and thankful to the Triune God for his life. The BTMI was blessed to have had him as our spiritual Director, brother and friend. He undertook this ministry unselfishly, sharing his wisdom and knowledge to help us grow spiritually in the Cenacle and deepen our relationship with our Lord. May he intercede for all of us and in a special way for the ST’s and all their plans and ministry. We all can just imagine the warm welcome that Father Vincent received from the Lord that he served so well. The line to greet him must have reached to the outer expansion of eternity. We can just hear Father Judge, Mother Boniface and Dr. Margaret Healy saying: “Good job, faithful son of the Cenacle.”



Sr. Sara Butler, M.S.B.T.

A 'Rather Remarkable' Missionary Servant

I visited Fr. Vincent at Stirling a few weeks before his death. He appeared at the door with a thick bandage on his hand. When I inquired, he explained that he had fallen, cut his hand on something sharp on his desk, and then had to have it repaired with 18 stitches. How had he fallen? Well, he couldn't stay awake when he was trying to pray his Office, so he propped the book up on a bookcase, thinking that if he stood up, that would do the trick. But even that didn't help: he dozed off and fell over on top of his desk, encountering something sharp as he hit it. Vincent was, typically, quite chagrined about this, regretting how much trouble his folly had caused—someone was obliged to take him to the emergency room, etc. He shook his head, laughing at himself and his predicament.

He knew that fluid continued to collect around his heart, and that each trip to the hospital gave only temporary relief. We talked about the upcoming celebration of my golden jubilee, and how although I wanted to propose to the Sisters that he be invited to give the homily, I thought it wiser not to, but I was hoping he could at least concelebrate.

It wasn't till I arrived back in Yonkers that it dawned on me that he was really very ill now—in fact, he was a dying man; he might not even be on hand for our next appointment on March 25th—much less for the May jubilee celebration. He had been so terribly weary, and his breath was very short. I sat down and wrote a letter in which I attempted to thank him for all he had done for me, for all he had been for me—brother in the Missionary Cenacle, friend, priest, confessor, fellow pilgrim. It was two months after his death that I learned he had actually received and read this letter in the hospital. Knowing that was a great consolation to me. However inadequately, I had at least attempted to put pen to paper to express my deepest thoughts, and it had been some comfort to him. He was very

good about writing letters, filled more with Cenacle news than with uplifting spiritual messages, but cheery, personal letters that helped keep my spirits up when I was off in the mid-West, far from the center of things.

Father Vincent liked to write, just as he liked to think things out. He had a creative, imaginative side that showed up in the way he would use words, crack jokes, enjoy making puns, search for just the right expression. This is just a first installment in my reflections on Vincent's life and witness. I would like to consider his preaching style, and how it revealed his soul. In this, I believe, he carried forward Father Judge's legacy.

In Fr. Donald's *Man on Fire* we are treated to a "boy's-eye-view" of Father. Donald wrote of how they would fall asleep on the hard benches of St. Joseph's Chapel at Holy Trinity, while Father, on a chair drawn up to the edge of the sanctuary, would preach on and on into the night—bent on imparting to them his love for the Incarnation, the Holy Agony, the Cross. They did not grasp all that he was saying, but they were captivated by his passionate devotion to Christ crucified—the "poor naked Christ"—and frightened by the symbol of the naked wooden cross that he expected them to mount. Through "a fog of weariness," they were mesmerized by his vivid depiction of the mysteries of our faith. These young men knew he was in dead earnest, and they knew that he loved them and wanted with all his heart to share his vision with them.

Father Vincent was also one of those boys. He was in that chapel, and he stood on the steps to receive Father's blessing on his last visit to Holy Trinity. There are many things I could say in tribute to Vincent, but this is as good a place to start as any, because I believe he truly did imbibe Father's spirit, especially his devotional knowledge of the mysteries that shape the Cenacle spirit. Vincent too was capable of preaching on and on, never content that he had done justice to his topic, never satisfied that he had communicated it well enough. He went to the pulpit armed with sheaves of yellow legal-sized paper, the message

written out in his large and inimitable script; but more than that, he brought to his task a kind of passion that would always be conveyed by his choice of words.

Anyone who heard him preach will immediately recall how this worked. He would never say “the mystery of God’s love for us,” it was always “the unbelievable mystery of God’s love for us. Any word, any revelation, any gift that came from God had to be properly set out, given its due, qualified more than once as “remarkable,” “surprising,” “extraordinary,” or “exceptional.” He sometimes tried to tone down his evident enthusiasm by describing some act of divine Providence as “*rather* wonderful,” or “*rather* marvelous,” or “*rather* beautiful,” but this maneuver fooled no one! He simply could not disguise his awe before the wonder of God’s love, especially the love that expressed itself as mercy in the Incarnation and on the Cross. He just could not get over how generous the triune God is, how blessed we are to know and follow Jesus, and what marvelous opportunities we had, even if they cost us much in trials and suffering. The whole project of the Cenacle, no matter what setbacks we might face, always seemed to thrill him. What a wonderful vocation we have! How much we have to thank God for! For Vincent, it was all just too good to be true.

Vincent’s manner of speaking was clearly not a rhetorical convention or something learned in homiletics class—though it may reflect his training in the classics! When he preached, there were no platitudes; his speech was strictly original, and it sprang from his own prayer and study. It was from the heart.

Vincent had learned from Our Savior to have a meek and humble heart. His sympathy was almost boundless, and his zeal kept him at work right up to his last hospitalization. A few weeks before his death he was deploring how little he had been able to offer the BTMI and worrying whether the doctor would let him go to Trinita for the summer. For all the superlatives in his preaching, he was a very simple person, happy to be of service and right at home with the families of the poor. He could translate the vision he set out in the pulpit into

daily life—into “personal, practical, and particular” acts of love for his brothers and sisters in the Missionary Cenacle and for all who approached him. The move from the pulpit to daily life and back was seamless.

It was impossible to be afraid of Vincent, even though many of us thought he somehow embodied Father’s high expectations of us, for his patience and compassion were boundless. The reservoir of love in his heart seemed to draw upon the extravagance of God’s love that he praised and proclaimed so faithfully.

For many in the Cenacle, Fr. Vincent was a special bearer of Father’s spirit, a spirit caught, perhaps, long ago in the chapel at Holy Trinity. We asked him so often to be the homilist for our events because he could be counted on to communicate Father’s vision to us. And Father wanted to put us in touch with Jesus, who came to cast a fire on the earth and whose one desire was that it be enkindled. If we pay tribute to Vincent because in some fashion he embodied the spirit of Father Judge, we must also recall that Father’s legacy was to bring us into the presence of the Holy and Blessed Trinity.

Vincent’s way of speaking revealed his relationship with God, Father, Son, and Spirit, and it revealed his own heart and soul. Father Donald writes of Father Judge, “I remember this man, God-powered, pouring his message of love upon us. . . . as though it were a stream that flowed from soul to soul.” I would like to say the same thing about Father Vincent, S.T., a “rather remarkable” Missionary Servant.



Maria Sánchez, B.T.M.I.

Filled by the Holy Spirit
Radiant as the brightest sun

Vincent Fitzpatrick has lived,
In the service of the Lord.
Nourished by a deep faith,
Conscious of his special call; he
Experienced grace and joy,
Never ending peace and love.
Trinity was very blessed,

For his presence every summer;
Irradiating Jesus' love
Through his peaceful, gentle manner.
Zeal was one of his great assets, his silent
Presence a gift, to
All who through him have seen
The teachings of Father Judge.
Remembered he'll always be, by us the BTMI, for all his
Ispirations, his guidance and his support.
Christ has called him home, and in our sadness we
Know that he is now rejoicing in the presence of the Lord.



V

FROM ALUMNI AND FRIENDS



From Missionary Servant Alumni

We had all been sharing about our lives since leaving Holy Trinity. Fr. Vincent had been sitting in on these, and as the day was almost over, he stands up and says he'd like to share some of his observations and feelings about the reunion. He shared what it felt like for him when the "exodus" began in the 60s; how he asked himself over and over again, what his life was all about. Had he cast his lot with the deck hands of the Titanic. He talked about the ache in his heart as guys left. "But", he said, "today for the first time I realize that all I had put into the formation and incarnation of the charism of Fr. Judge for each and every guy whose path I was privileged to tread upon was not for naught. For the first time I now see the fruits of my labor." The stories of our lives after we left the seminary had so moved him and opened his eyes to the mysterious and unusual ways that God finds to form a soul and direct its path, that he felt his life had achieved a great measure of success..... I am thankful that I had the opportunity to know and experience the man.



One thing no one mentioned yet was his preaching. I remember powerful sermons that started out slow and measured, then picked up in tempo and emotion - almost a controlled shouting - sort of made the hair stand up on the back of your neck. We knew we were in the presence of greatness.



I'll have to tell you that most of my career since leaving the seminary has been involved with computer programming of one sort or another. I've achieved a fairly high level of skill in that area and I've always attributed some of the ease with which it came to me to the language disciplines I learned while in the seminary. Thanks to you in large measure for that. In my career I've been around a lot of important and powerful people, including the Board Chairman and Directors of both AT & T and BellSouth. I'll have to say that none of these people have made my personal and select group of "great people I've known" of which you are a member. I'm not trying to embarrass you but, for some reason, I just wanted to let you know the powerful influence you've had on my life and many others.



From the Memory Book for Fr. Vincent

The Shrine of St. Joseph Chapel
Stirling, New Jersey



Two years ago I was diagnosed with an aneurysm on the brain. The night before I was to undergo this five-hour procedure, I came to the Shrine and went to confession with Fr. Vincent. At the end of confession I just mentioned the upcoming medical procedure and my need for healing. He said “Oh wait here. Come and kneel, I’ll anoint you with oil for the Sacrament of the Sick.” He anointed me and I left. I went to the hospital and underwent this most difficult arteriography. At the end of these many hours the doctor was surprised at how the aneurysm had diminished. He commented to my wife that this was most unusual to have such shrinkage. Six months later, I had another scan, which showed the clot to be gone. Thanks be to the Lord and to Fr. Vincent. When I came back and told him, he was thrilled.



Dear Fr. Vincent, peaceful, loving, man of God – how we loved your homilies and your wisdom. May God love you in His heaven with all those who have gone before. Pray for us.



Dear Fr. Vincent, I often came to our Lord in confession through you, his priest. You were always kind and loving to me, and I experience our Lord’s

compassion, love and mercy through you. I will miss you deeply. I pray the Lord have mercy on your soul and even now that you might be in His Presence hearing those words, *“Good and faithful servant, come to the place I have prepared for you.”*



I met Fr. Vincent in 1963 as a seminarian at Fr. Judge Missionary Seminary in Monroe, VA. Of all the people whom I met during my seminary, Fr. Vincent was one who left the deepest and most indelible memory. Whether it was in Greek class, in chapel, or on the ball fields, his interest, humanity and discipline were objects of respect and adulation. He was a man who really cared. His intelligence, humor and humanity have made him unforgettable to me. He will be sorely missed, and no one will ever fill his shoes.



Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of Father Vincent. He was a great priest confessor, always with a twinkle in his eye and a ready smile. I always felt God’s love and mercy.



A loving priest, a gentle priest, a humble priest, a priest with great wisdom, which he shared with all in his homilies. A priest whom we will miss a great deal. God Bless Fr. Vincent.



Fr. Vincent, may you rest in peace. I remember how impressed I was with your enthusiasm even in blessing our car. Thank you.



We remember with gratitude and edification Fr. Vincent's preaching and praying – no fan fare, just great honesty. We will miss him in this life and look forward to being with him in the next. May he intercede for missionary vocations.



Fr. Vincent Fitzpatrick was the most spiritual person I knew. Many people called him a saint but I'm sure he wouldn't have liked that. He was so humble. I love him and miss him dearly. Just recently, when I had some family problems, my first thought was to call Fr. Vince. Then I remembered he was gone, and I felt desolate. He knew the answers to spiritual problems. I pray to him now because I know he is with God.



Dear Jesus, I pray for Father Vincent every day. I was one of the last people to have had the privilege of going to confession to him. He asked at the end of confession that I pray for him. This I do so willingly. God bless him.



Dear Fr. Vincent, thank you for all the graces you have been for us. Your holy presence is so strongly among us still.



Dear Fr. Vincent, since I was a student in High School, I remember your faithfulness to the St. Joseph Novena on Sundays. Please bestow on me perseverance in my vocation.



Fr. Vincent brought me back to confession. I always looked forward to meeting with him to talk, cry, and pray. Please, Lord, let Fr. Vincent meet up with my baby in heaven and take care of him.



Fr. Vincent - compassionate confessor, good priest,
man of God - pray for us.



Thank you!

