



# Cooperating with God's Plan

The events leading up to the establishment of the Congregation of the Mission

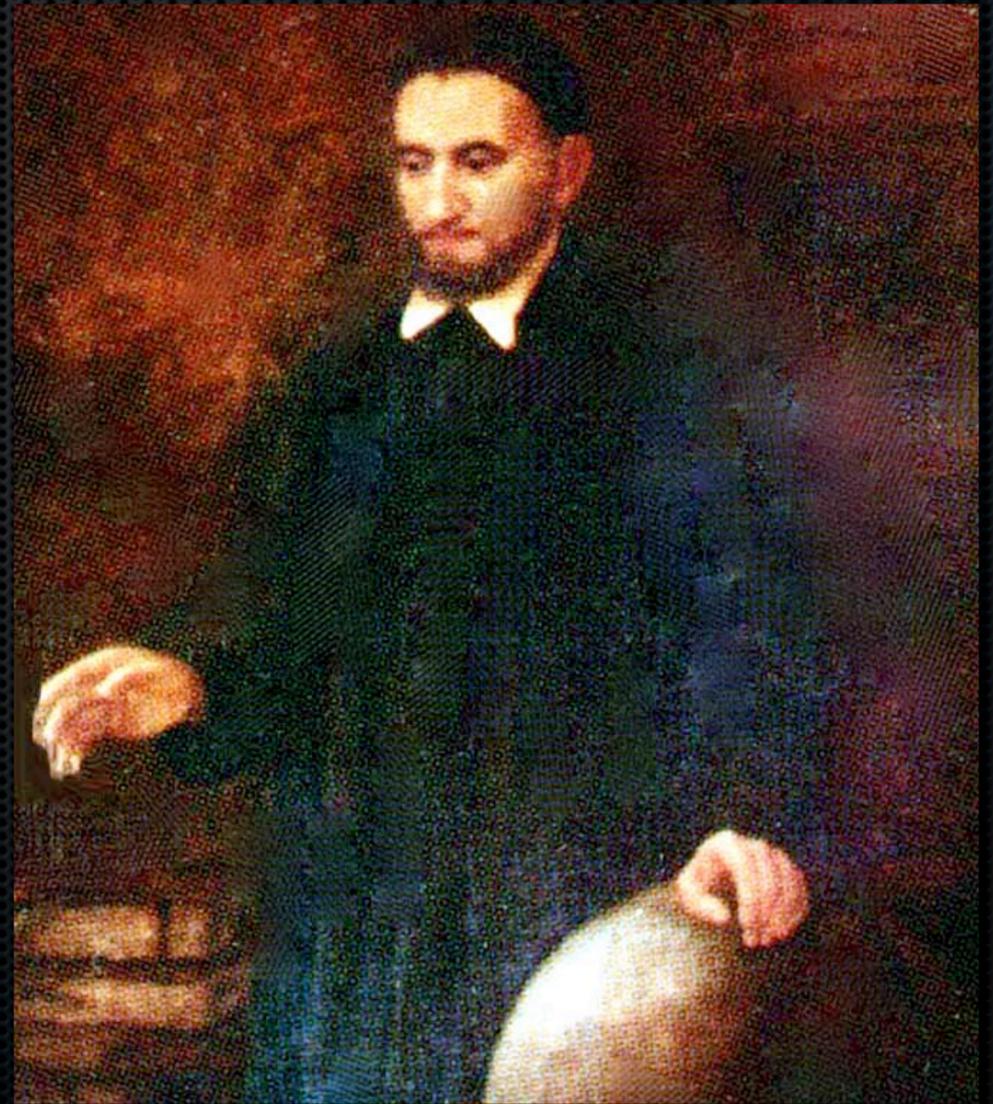
# Fr. Vincent

- ✦ In 1608, Vincent de Paul was 27 years old. He had been a priest for 8 years.



# Providential Chain of Events

- ✦ Watch what happens next: a chain of events that through God's providence led to the origin of the Congregation of the Mission.
- ✦ Fr. Vincent acted on a series of opportunities presented to him. He collaborated with those he encountered along the way. He trusted in the Lord to lead him.



# He crosses paths with de Bérulle

- Fr. Vincent had just moved to Paris. He soon came to know a famous priest, Father (later Cardinal) Pierre de Bérulle, whom he took as his spiritual director. De Bérulle liked Vincent and set him up with a position in the parish of Clichy, in the outskirts of Paris.





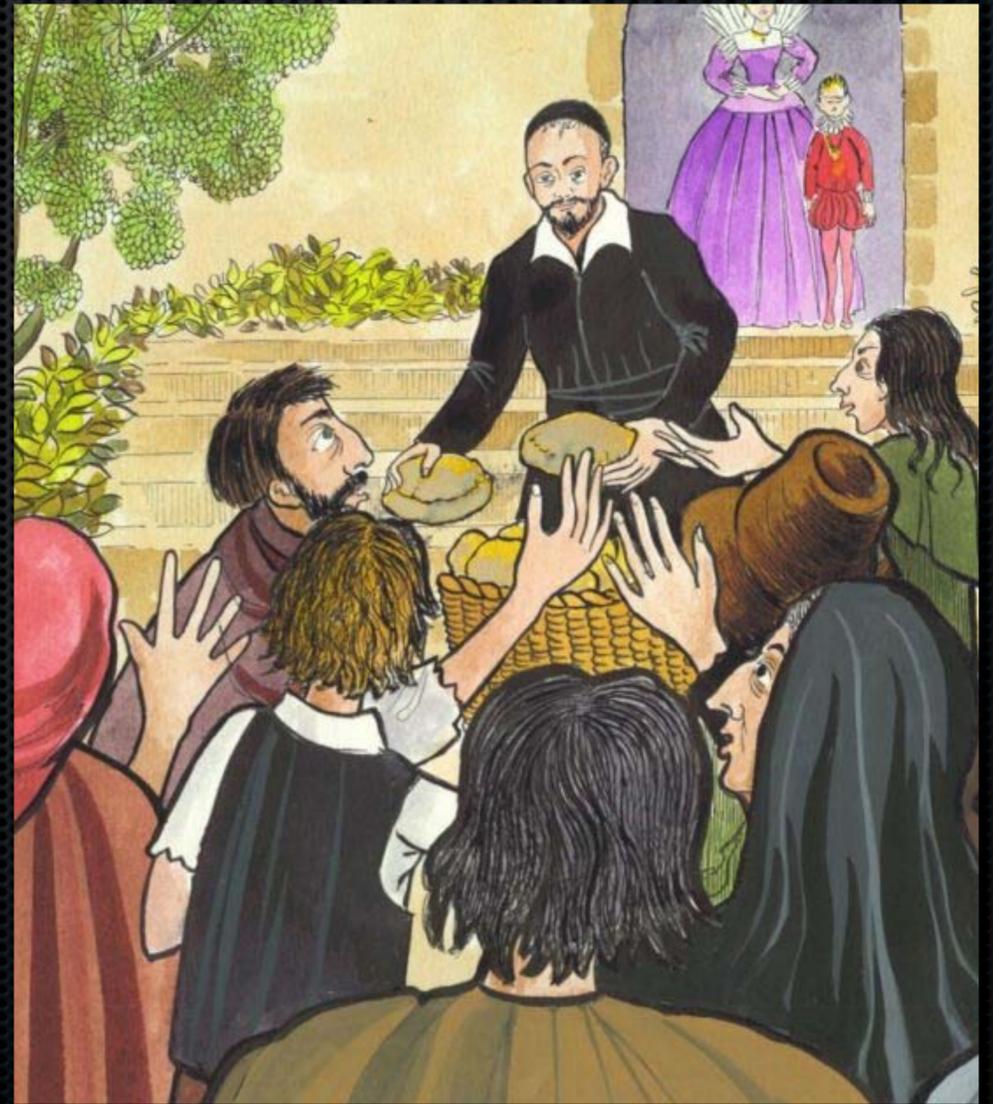
# He joins forces with a noble woman

- The countess, Madame de Gondy, was so impressed by Fr. Vincent that she eventually chose him as her spiritual director.



# He reads the signs of the times

- Fr. Vincent had opportunities of observing the ignorance of religion of the peasants of the community. He also saw that the clergy needed to be trained.



# They decide to conduct missions

- Most noble women of this period probably felt no responsibility for their tenants/dependents, but, like Vincent, Mme. de Gondi was concerned about their spiritual welfare. She persuaded Fr. Vincent to preach in the parish church of Folleville, and instruct the people of the neighboring villages on her estates.



# They meet a great need

- Such crowds came to confess that he had to call in the Jesuits of Amiens to help out. Obviously they were meeting a need... the evangelization of the common people who had little opportunity to hear the Good News and learn the faith.



# He does not remain complacent, but takes on more

- Vincent left the de Gondi household that same year to become pastor of the parish of Chatillon-les-Dombes, which had long been neglected, its church virtually abandoned to the elements.



# Building a replicable model

- ✦ By restoring the church, and the habit of regular worship, Fr. Vincent created a new spirit which helped to regenerate the whole district. He converted the notorious Count of Rougemont and many other aristocrats from their dissolute lives. Seeing how effective Vincent's labors were, Mme. de Gondi now offered him a large sum of money to found a perpetual mission in whatever place and manner he thought fit.



# Working together to formalize missions

- ✦ Mme. de Gondi wanted to set up a foundation that would establish a perpetual mission (every five years) for the rural population of her extensive estates. The Oratorians and Jesuits were unable to do this work at the time, so she urged Fr. Vincent to gather together some zealous priests for the poor country people who at that time were so little in touch with the clergy.



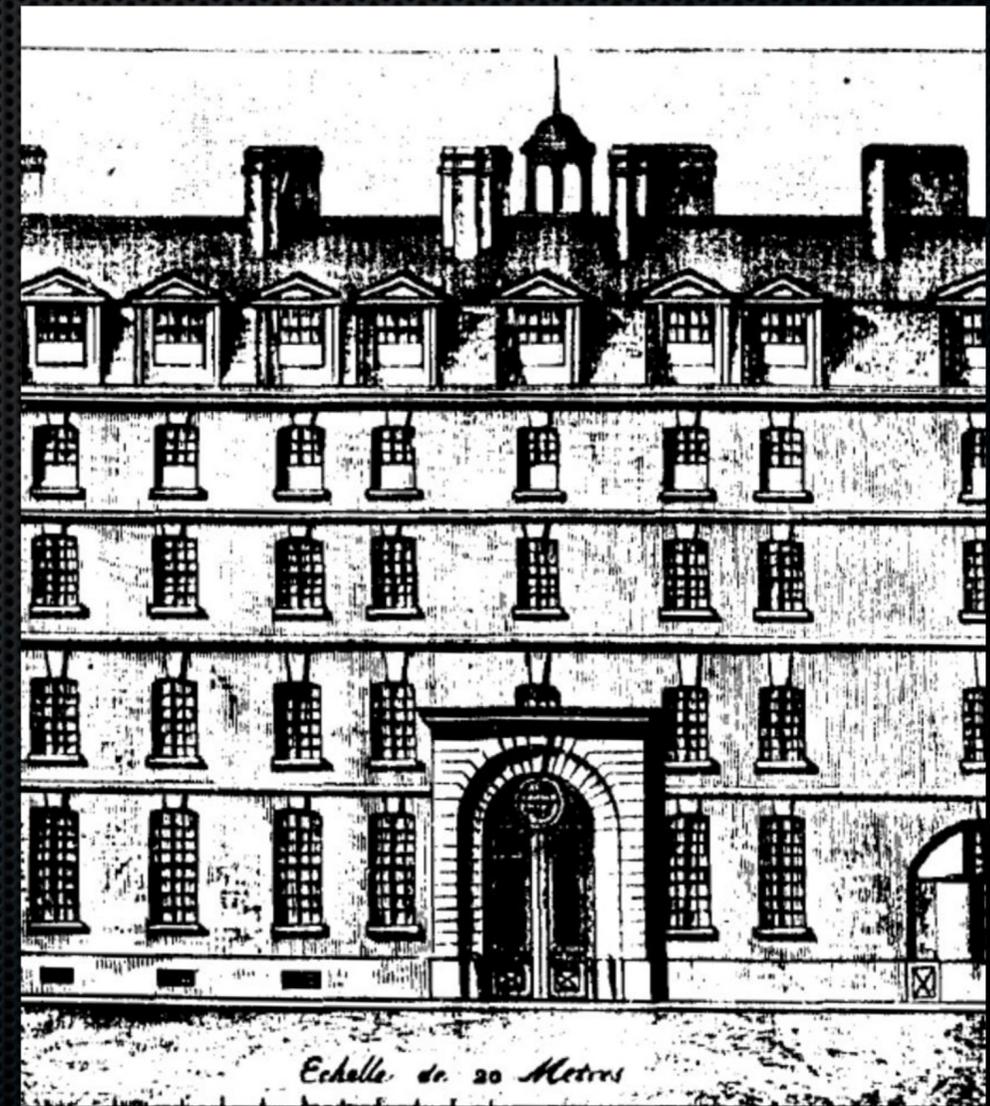
# Connecting with Archbishop of Paris; approves and grants real estate

- ✦ It so happened that the brother of Philippe de Gondy was John Francis de Gondy, the Archbishop of Paris. Ecclesiastical authorization for the missions was easily obtained from him. After discussing the plan for a perpetual mission, he handed over to Vincent the ownership and all the rights of an old college in Paris, called "des Bons Enfants".



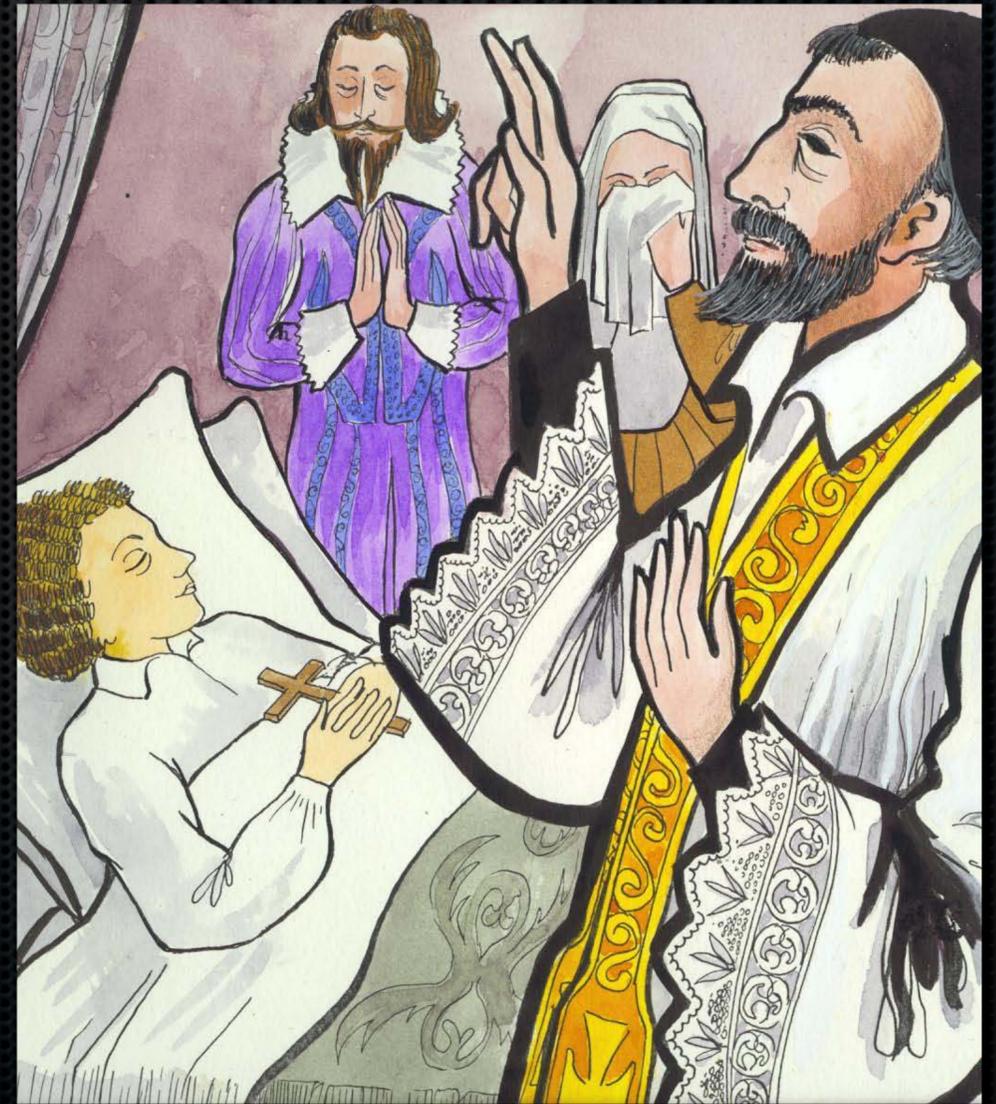
# First establishment of the Congregation of the Mission, Bons Enfants, Paris

- ✦ A contract was signed by the de Gondi family in favor of Vincent and his companions "under the name of Company, Congregation or Confraternity of Fathers or Priests of the Mission". This took place on 17 April, 1625.



# Moving on; new beginnings

- The countess (Mme. de Gondi) had made Vincent promise to continue as her spiritual director while she lived, and to assist her at the end. She was in failing health and died in the summer of 1625. Now, at the age of forty-nine, Vincent was free to assume the position of director of his new congregation.



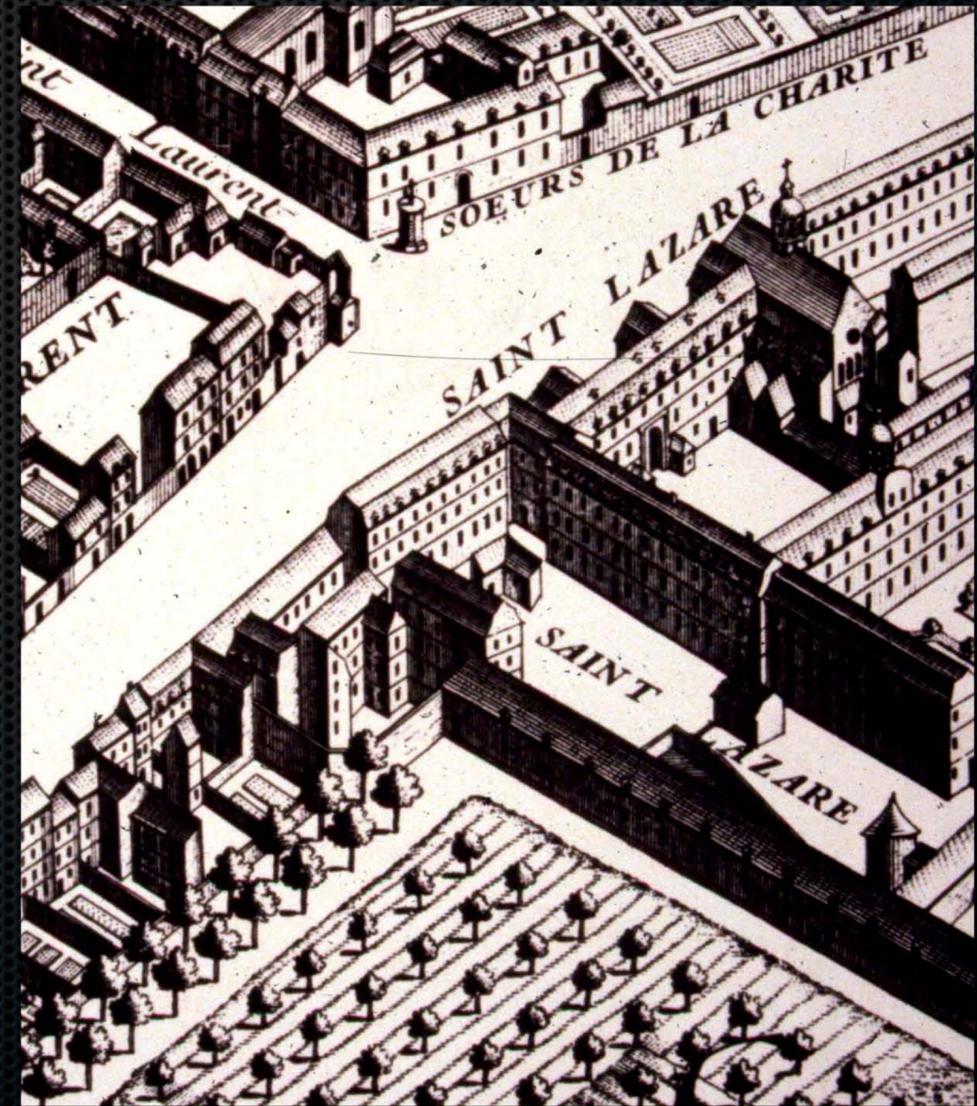
# Still standing today

- The small community of “confreres” took up residence in the Collège des Bons Enfants. It was located in Paris at what is now the corner of Rue des Écoles and Rue du Cardinal Lemoine in Paris (5th Arrondissement) (see photo). This was Vincent de Paul's home for about seven years, from 1625 to 1632.



# They acquire the priory of St. Lazarus

- After that, a group called the canons regular of St. Victor handed over to Fr. Vincent and his congregation the priory of St. Lazarus (formerly a “lazar-house”, an ancient name for a leper colony) in Paris. This is why the Vincentian priests are still called Lazarites or Lazarists. Vincent moved there in 1632.



# Vincent draws up rules and constitutions

- ✦ The institution of the Congregation of the Mission was approved by Pope Urban VIII in 1632.
- ✦ Their objectives were the religious instruction of the poor, the training of the clergy, and foreign missions.



# Reflect

- ✦ Vincent had opportunities presented to him and he acted.
- ✦ While doing so, Vincent trusted in God's providence.
- ✦ Very little was done without some form of collaboration or "networking".
- ✦ Lay people were involved from the start.

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