

One entered into Nazareth in order to acquire the virtues necessary for the apostolate; being ready for “charitable and harmonious cooperation with others in their work”. Vincent stressed ready listening, not only to those in charge, but also to ordinary people in order to cooperate more effectively in works for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. In other words Vincent wanted a cooperation which is not just “for someone” or “with someone”, but one of mutual dependence and reciprocity. In the Nazareth model we all cooperate in the works of the Union with pure charity, free of self-interest or ambition, and to help each one find their **mission** and **place in the community**, with due regard for their “personal qualities, abilities and competence.” Working together in the Union was to be not the project of a single person, but rather of a family, that of Nazareth, since Nazareth was where men and women lived and worked in unity.

Does our parish family live in the spirit of Nazareth with the virtues mentioned by Vincent?

Would Vincent’s models of the Cenacle and Nazareth shape the vocation of our parish to be a family of Apostles and a community of missionary disciples?

Closing Prayer

We ask Mary through her spouse, The Holy Spirit to form Christ within us this Christmas.

Closing Prayer

Mary, you are a woman of courage and hope.

May we too be courageous and hopeful in all our endeavours.

Mary, you are a woman who trusted God in the face of uncertainty.

May we trust ourselves and each other in face of new challenges.

Mary, you were a young pregnant woman fleeing from your homeland.

May we be mindful that everyone we meet carries adversity of some kind.

Mary, you were a young Jewish woman of your time.

May we be aware of our times and the challenges presented to the young as they grow.

Mary, you show us the qualities of true discipleship.

May we be loyal to our God in our words, thoughts and actions.

Mary, you remained with the disciples in their confusion after the death of Jesus.

May we remain connected to each other in times of misunderstanding or confusion.

Mary, you were there in the Cenacle with the disciples on the day of Pentecost.

May we recognise the action of the Holy Spirit in, with and around us each day.

Pallottine Camino to Christmas - Advent Year A Week 4

Gathering Song

O Saviour come to those who wait
And open wide the heav’nly gate
Drop down O clouds like gentle dew
The One whose love makes all things new
Oh come, Oh come, Emmanuel
And save your suff’ring Israel



First Reading

Contrary to the advice of Isaiah to have faith in God to protect his nation, Ahaz, King of Judah, residing in the capital Jerusalem, is entering into an alliance with pagan Assyria. As a consequence Judah will become a vassal state. Isaiah tells him that despite his lack of faith, his reign will continue because a maiden in his harem is with child. This child will be called Immanuel, meaning God is with you.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah (7:10-14)

The LORD spoke to Ahaz, “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Imman’u-el.

The sign promised to Ahaz is only small and seemingly insignificant, whereas the only thing needed is to have faith in God. Like Ahaz do we no longer hold to the teachings of Jesus but put our hope in the false values of the world. We put our trust in alliances with the powerful to the neglect of the poor.

What are the down to earth living signs of Immanuel, that God is among us carrying out his work of salvation in the world?

Gospel

In the gospel, Matthew sees Isaiah's prophecy of the Maiden with child as being fulfilled in Mary's virginal birth of the Son of God truly being with us. Mary is the sign of those who bear God within them and who wait quietly until God's work is born.

Unlike Ahaz, Joseph is a man of faith, who despite his fears and his reservation, eventually commits to his true vocation.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew (1:18-25)

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife.

Have you had a situation when you have been struggling with your own vocation and God has sent someone to show you the way forward?

Vincent Pallotti – Mary, Mother of Jesus, and The Holy Family

Unlike Ahaz, but rather like Joseph, Vincent believed that nothing could be achieved without God's help. When it was suggested that he had worked hard on a particular day he said "*what have I done? God has done everything.*"

In 1835 Vincent founded the UAC and placed Mary as patroness of the Union and of the communities that form part of the Union for two reasons: Mary **as model** and **as intercessor**.

As model, Mary Queen of Apostles, vindicates Vincent's claim that all are called to the apostolate, to ministry within the Church, at a time when the title of the Union, "Catholic Apostolate," was under fire. He argued that we don't have to preach, be a bishop or priest in order to merit the reward of an apostle and pointed to the Litany of Loreto

where the Church herself called Mary, "Queen of Apostles."

Vincent draws the following conclusion, "*Therefore priests religious and laity and all of every sex, state or grade who do what they can to spread the faith, can merit the title apostle.*"

Do you see Mary as a model for you as you go about your own vocation?

As intercessor, Vincent called Mary the great missionary and made the **Cenacle** the model of the Union. The Cenacle is the place of Pentecost, where Mary coached the dispirited disciples to yield to the Spirit as she herself had done in Nazareth in joyful response to God's plan of salvation. It was the place where the Spirit descended like tongues of fire on Mary and the apostles so that the Church came into being. The Cenacle was the place of lay collaboration visually portrayed in the painting of Serafino Cesaretti of two women on either side of Mary praying with the apostles. It was a place to discern the Spirit's leading, to be sent out as apostles and to return and reflect together on the next apostolic action. Vincent urges us to "*place yourself in the hand of the Madonna...and do not let anything worry you*".

Do you believe in Mary's power as an intercessor? Where have you seen it happen?

Another model which Vincent used for the Union was that of **The Holy Family** in Nazareth seen by Vincent as the place where members of the Union entered the family of Nazareth and like Jesus were prepared for their apostolic work. Nazareth was to be a model of collaboration, balancing prayer and work.

How can I live "Nazareth" in my family home?

