

Dear friends in the Union, the members of the General Secretariat of the UAC wish to continue with a monthly pamphlet of prayer and reflection for the entire UAC. We offer it for your use, it can be used for sharing in groups and communities or for personal prayer. Prayer is an essential component of the Christian life, prayer shared in community strengthens communion between those who pray, when we pray we open ourselves to God, to his Spirit and to his activity in us. Study and reflection are paths to growth and to maturity in the Christian faith and in Pallottine spirituality.

For the coming months we propose that the theme for reflection be

The imitation of Jesus

Introduction

St Vincent reminds us, with great concern and zeal, just what our unique and fundamental vocation is in:

“The practical daily reminder to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ by the observance of the holy rules and constitutions.”

He says:

“Every Christian experiences a holy pleasure in the thought of his obligation to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ. But, there are few who constantly and seriously strive to imitate Him because there are few who think of it; but those who do think of it, in so far as they immerse themselves in this holy thought, aspire likewise, to imitate Him more and more, and from this, love for our Lord Jesus Christ grows in them. As love grows, so trust in the grace necessary to imitate Him grows and with it also, the knowledge of one’s unworthiness to receive such grace. In this way one is open to receiving grace ever more abundantly. These are the few who constantly strive to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ”. (OCCC. III)

Reflection:

It is not a question of one’s nature being transformed, but of one’s activities being changed, and this comes about through the grafting of the grace and nature of the life of Jesus Christ in the life of the person. If a graft is watched over in order that the wild plant does not produce further shoots from the old trunk but only flowers and fruits from the true sprouts grafted on to it, the plant will be completely transformed; the same will occur if the individual Christian channels all his or her energies in to the way of Jesus Christ, then his or her transformation in Jesus Christ becomes a dynamic and living reality. (cf. OCCC X, 452-453)

Imitation and love are factors of transformation and St. Vincent, with the assurance and confidence of one who has seen and experienced it, affirms that if a Christian commits himself to imitating Jesus Christ with humility and in trust, he or she will discover that Jesus Christ will enter the person’s soul and He himself will brush away every deformity and excess; *“He will live in it (the soul), He will operate in it, and He will attribute to it the merits of His holy works”*. (cf. OCCC III,37)

Prayer: from the Book of Wisdom 9, 1-6; 9; 11.

God of our ancestors, Lord of mercy,
who by your word have made all things,
and in your wisdom have fitted man
to rule the creatures that have come from you,
to govern the world in holiness and justice
and in honesty of soul to wield authority,
grant me Wisdom, consort of your throne,
and do not reject me from the number of your children.
For I am your servant, son of your serving maid,
a feeble man, with little time to live,
with small understanding of justice and the laws.
Indeed, were anyone perfect among the sons of men,
if he lacked the Wisdom that comes from you, he would still count for nothing.
With you is Wisdom, she who knows your works,
she who was present when you made the world;
she understands what is pleasing in your eyes
and agrees with your commandments.
Despatch her from the holy heavens,
send her forth from your throne of glory
to help me and to toil with me
and teach me what is pleasing to you,
since she knows and understands everything.
She will guide me prudently in my undertakings
and protect me by her glory.”

Gospel reading.

“They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought to him a blind man whom they begged him to touch. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. Then putting spittle on his eyes and laying his hands on him, he asked, ‘Can you see anything?’ The man, who was beginning to see, replied, ‘I can see people; they look like trees to me, but they are walking about’. Then he laid his hands on the man’s eyes again and he saw clearly; he was cured, and he could see everything plainly and distinctly.” (Mark 8,22-26)

Allowing oneself to be transformed by Jesus: the example of Mother Teresa of Calcutta comes to mind. She once was young just like so many others, she studied, she became a Sister and she was sent to India by the religious superiors of her Congregation. She allowed herself to be transformed by Jesus, by the Jesus who gave her the ability to come close to lepers, to welcome them, to be with the poor and not to be afraid. Her life became a living Gospel for our time.

From the Encyclical “Deus Caritas est” (14)

“Here we need to consider yet another aspect: this sacramental “mysticism” is social in character, for in sacramental communion I become one with the Lord, like all the other communicants. As Saint Paul says, “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (*1 Cor* 10:17). Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own. Communion draws me out of myself towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians. We become “one body”, completely joined in a single existence.”

"HE WHO follows Me, walks not in darkness,"(Jn. 8,12, says the Lord. By these words of Christ we are advised to imitate His life and habits, if we wish to be truly enlightened and free from all blindness of heart. Let our chief effort, therefore, be to study the life of Jesus Christ. The teaching of Christ is more excellent than all the advice of the saints, and he who has His spirit will find in it a hidden manna. Now, there are many who hear the Gospel often but care little for it because they have not the spirit of Christ. Yet whoever wishes to understand fully the words of Christ must try to pattern his whole life on that of Christ."

(Charter 1, paragraph 1. of The Imitation of Christ, Thomas a Kempis).