

March 2006

The imitation of Jesus (continued).

Vincent Pallotti's reflections on the imitation of Christ are so profound thought-provoking that they merit a detailed and extensive study.

This month's reflection is on the text "A practical daily reminder to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ by observance of the holy rules and constitutions." (OCCC III, pages 34 – 39).

Prayer: "Eternal Father, in union with the Heart of Mary, we offer you the blood of Jesus Christ in thanksgiving as if you had already granted us the gift of making his hidden and public life even up to his self-giving of the Cross, our fundamental rule: for your greater glory and for the sanctification of our brothers and sisters. Amen"

I. Pallotti presents a theology of grace and of the development of the spiritual life and he outlines the following points:

1. There are few people who imitate Jesus Christ, because, there are few who think of it or realize that it is possible to do it.
2. Those persons who do think of it and are willing and ready to imitate Jesus Christ, grow in love for Jesus, when this love grows, their confidence in receiving the graces necessary to imitate him also grows, as does their recognition of their own unworthiness of receiving such graces.
3. As a consequence of this openness the person is open to receive grace ever more abundantly.
4. Pallotti recommended that one keep this daily reminder to imitate Jesus in a little book separate from the rules, so that they might read it often and at odd moments.
5. He explains, in detail, this 'practice'. It entails various components:
 - a) 'reminder': to remember and recall the obligation that all Christians have to imitate Jesus Christ;
 - b) 'practical': it is necessary to **effectively** imitate Jesus, to imitate him in actual fact in thought, in speech, in deed and in action and in governing the affections of the heart;
 - c) 'daily': it is not enough to put this obligation into practice for a day, or a month or a year, but it must be practised every day right up to death.
6. This obligation to imitate Jesus Christ is common to all Christians, however, the members of the UAC have received, as a gift, the fundamental Rule of the life of Jesus Christ; therefore they are urged in a special way to imitate him.
7. As members of the UAC, and in the course of daily life, we experience countless graces in order to imitate him.

Biblical texts.

The Temptation of Jesus; Marcos, 1, 12 – 15.

the Transfiguration of Jesus; Marcos 9, 1 – 10.

Reflection.

We recall that our Holy Founder has given us the life of our Lord Jesus Christ as our fundamental rule, so as to imitate him in our life in community and in our apostolate.

The life of our Lord Jesus Christ: this means all of the life of Jesus, his infancy, his youth, his so called 'hidden life' and his public life.

Pallotti was convinced that Jesus wanted him to meditate on his 'hidden' life, because he was convinced of the need to know everything about Jesus, to know the 'total' Jesus.

We are accustomed to meditating and reflecting on the public life of Jesus, it is relatively easy to do this because we have the help of Gospel texts that tell us of his public life.

To meditate on the hidden life of Jesus it is necessary to use our imagination in conjunction with our faith. We know that Jesus is with us when we pray, when we invoke his presence amongst us. Let us ask him to accompany us in our reflection on his hidden life, to open our minds and our hearts to this form of meditation and to lead us, step by step to a deeper knowledge of him.

From the writings of Saint Vincent Pallotti.

“The fundamental rule of our little Congregation is the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to imitate him, with humility and trust, with the greatest possible perfection, in all the works of his hidden life and of his public Gospel ministry, for the greater glory of God, our heavenly Father, and for the greater sanctification of our soul and that of our fellow men and women.” (OCC III, 40).

“My God, we are unworthy to receive the gift of a perfect love for our Immaculate Mother, Mary most Holy, but you, in your infinite mercy and by the merits of Jesus and of Mary, most Holy, grant us this gift. We mean (intend) to love our most beloved Mother Mary with the love with which you, o eternal Father, love her, you who love her as a Daughter; with the love with which you, o divine Son, love her, you who love her as a Mother; with the love with which you, o divine Spirit, love her, you who love her as a Spouse; and we intend that she be loved in the same manner by all possible creatures, past, present and future.” (OCC VIII, 224).

Reflection - testimony.

Pope John Paul II lived a life that was marked by sufferings and by moments of transfiguration. He allowed himself to be transformed by Jesus, and so he became, for the Church, a courageous figure giving testimony to the crucified and risen Christ. He acquired incredible strength in the face of the problems of our times; he came close to everyone, he engaged in dialogue with everyone, he both sought and found communion in diversity. He went out to meet young people and families, he welcomed all. Like Jesus he had the courage to let his suffering be visible; like Jesus he was not ashamed to manifest and witness to his great love for the Heavenly Father. He was not ashamed to show his own limitations when these became apparent. His death moved the entire world, but his life testimony lives on in our hearts. Both the Church and the world have been enriched by the gift of his life.

THE THIRD BOOK of the “Imitation of Christ”

Of the inward voice of Christ to the faithful soul

1. I will hearken to what the Lord God will say within me. (Psalm 85, 8) Blessed is the soul which hears the Lord speaking within it, and receives the word of consolation from His mouth. Blessed are the ears which receive the echoes of the soft whisper of God, and turn not aside to the whisperings of this world. Blessed truly are the ears which listen not to the voice that sounds without, but to that which teaches truth inwardly. Blessed are the eyes which are closed to things without, but are fixed upon things within. Blessed are they who search inward things and study to prepare themselves more and more by daily exercises for the receiving of heavenly mysteries. Blessed are they who long to have leisure for God, and free themselves from every hindrance of the world. Think on these things, O my soul, and shut the doors of your carnal desires, so may you hear what the Lord God will say within you.

2. These things says your Beloved, "I am your salvation, I am your peace and your life. Keep yourself close to Me, and you will find peace." Put away all transitory things, seek those things that are eternal. For what are all temporal things but deceits, and what shall all created things help you if you be forsaken by the Creator? Therefore put all things else away, and give yourself to the Creator, to be well pleasing and faithful to Him, that you may be able to attain true blessedness.

