



# *Apostles for Today*

*Reflection and Prayer - November, 2006*

---

---

## **Fundamental Rule 12 – Spirit of Chastity & Asceticism**

### **Introduction**

Within the scope of our reflection on the 33 points of Vincent Pallotti we come to point 12. It speaks about chastity and asceticism as a way to live more perfectly in imitation of Jesus who accepted suffering and pain for us.

*Our Lord Jesus Christ, eight days after his birth, submitted himself to the harsh law of circumcision, and from then on suffered in his holy humanity throughout his entire life. Therefore, so as to live in perfect chastity for love of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must strive to imitate him by mortifying our flesh with its vices and desires and love above all else community life with all its privations, taking advantage, but always in moderation, of everything and accepting bodily pain.* (OCCC III, p.45)

### **Reflection.**

Chastity is an incomprehensible word in today's world, a world of an exaggerated emphasis of the body and sexuality. It's a world where people would also like to banish suffering and sacrifice from the arena of life. A dread of sacrifice and suffering, of pain and death, dominates the minds of the people of today, who try to cope with them in different ways. The use of analgesics has rapidly increased; drug addiction grows at an alarming rate; the clinical management of pain exists as a separate medical discipline; and even painless birth is offered. To this kind of world Pallotti gives the advice to accept privation and to bear pain willingly in order to live in perfect chastity.

The 33 points were really written for the core groups of the UAC, but chastity in a broader sense is an attitude which concerns all people. It consists not only in bodily abstinence in the sense of renunciation of sexual contact (which is part of the celibate vocation), but also in an attitude of much deeper dimensions.

Sometimes religious virginity is used as a synonym for chastity. Looking in the dictionary we find terms like dedication, transparency, openness, purity, beauty, integrity. Pope John Paul II writes in his Apostolic Exhortation “Consecrated Life (VC)”: “*The chastity of celibates and virgins, as a manifestation of dedication to God with an undivided Heart (cf. 1 Cor 7:32-34) is a reflection of the infinite love which links the three Divine Persons in the mysterious depths of the life of the Trinity; the love to which the Incarnate Word bears witness, even to the point of giving his life, the love ‘poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit’ (Rom 5:5) which evokes a response of total love for God and the brethren.*”(VC 21)

Openness and dedication to a life of love are a response, in freedom, to an undeserved love received from God. Jesus refers to this freedom when he speaks about celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, the freedom to dedicate oneself unreservedly to God and his kingdom. Isn't this really a challenge for all the baptized?

Vincent Pallotti may have had this in mind when he reflected on chastity, even though his language is influenced by a distrust of the body which was of his time. He would like to annihilate all that prevents total dedication to God and communion with Him. Jesus also expressed it once very strongly: “*And if your hand or your foot is an occasion for sin, cut it off...*” (Mt 18:8-9) and Pallotti writes in his diary:

*I want nothing of what is not pleasing to God, nothing, nothing, nothing, but everything, everything, everything that pleases God. I seek only God, God alone, alone, alone.*  
(OCC X, p. 56).

In the parables of the treasure hidden in a field and of the pearl (Mt 13:44-45) Jesus shows that the man who considers God and his Kingdom as his greatest good, voluntarily offers all, even takes on sufferings and privation, in order to gain this good. The cross and suffering belong to the following of Jesus (Mt 16:24-26).

### **Witness:**

Fr. Richard Henkes, SAC, born on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1900 in Germany was ordained a priest in 1925, died on February 22<sup>nd</sup> 1945 in Dachau.

As a Pallottine he lived his total dedication to God as a teacher and parish priest in indefatigable willingness to make sacrifices. Through his intrepid and courageous stand for the values of the Gospel, he came in conflict with the Nazi regime; he was arrested and taken to the concentration camp

at Dachau. Even there he showed a tireless zeal for and dedicated service to his co-prisoners. In 1945, when an epidemic of typhus broke out, he voluntarily offered to nurse the prisoners affected by typhus. In self-sacrificing dedication he served his very sick fellow prisoners until he himself became infected and died on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 1945 in Dachau. In a letter to his parish on Christmas 1944 he wrote: *“If we seek earthly fortune, all sacrifices will be in vain, but if they cause us to grow more and more in the love of God, then nothing is in vain... in the future we desire to leave ourselves to the good God.”* At the recommendation of Pope John Paul II, the process of beatification was initiated in the year 2000.\*

### **Prayer with Vincent Pallotti:**

Vincent Pallotti desired to risk all in order to gain God and be united with Him. He aspired to make God his sole good, to whom he sacrificed everything. Let us be inflamed with his enthusiasm, his love and his yearning to dedicate himself totally, and let us bear the sufferings and the hardships of daily life with joy, in order to come closer to Jesus and become more and more fruitful for His Kingdom. His prayer shows this attitude. Let us pray with him:

*“My God, I would wish to have infinite wills and an infinite number of lives so that I might sacrifice them all for the honour of the name of God, of Jesus, of Mary, and step by step, of the angels and of the saints.”* (OCCC X, p. 109-110)

*“I would like to possess, and I mean to possess, infinite riches, ... so that I might renounce them all for the love of God, of Jesus and Mary, of the angels and of all saints: and I would like to be so poor that being in need of a few centimetres of land on which to lay down my body, of air to breathe, of water to quench my thirst, of food to sustain me, of a rag to cover myself, I would not find anything at all...and I intend to do it for the love and glory of God, of Jesus, of Mary, of the angels and saints, I say that I intend to do that which I would do if I really found myself in that situation,... However, since it is impossible that I should be capable of such great detachment, I confess my wretchedness and I offer to the Lord the negation of my will and the infinite merits of Jesus Christ.* (OCCC X, p. 82-83).

---

\* P. Manfred Probst SAC: “P. Richard Henkes, SAC – a Forgotten Witness of Faith” (unpublished manuscript), Vallendar 2002.

For further information: Postulator P. Manfred Probst SAC, mprobst@pthv.de

*My God, not the intellect, but God,  
not the will, but God,  
not the soul, but God,  
not sight, not hearing, but God,  
not smell, but God,  
not taste and the power of speech, but God,  
not breath and touch, but God,  
not the heart, but God,  
not the body, but God,  
not air, but God,  
not food and drink, but God,  
not clothing, not worldly goods, but God,  
not riches, not honour, but God,  
not worldly recognition, not dignities, not promotion, but God,  
God in all and for ever.*

*Yes, my God, I desire you, because that is your wish. I should not even have the courage to invoke you, because –oh, in so many ways!- I have rebelled, betrayed and crucified you ... my God and my all, always.”* (OCCC X, p.131).

*I want nothing, but God: nothing, nothing.*

*My God all, all, all. Only God, only, only God.”* (OCCC X, p. 68).

Our Lady, with her attitude of chastity, virginity, openness and transparency, and yes, with her total dedication to God, occupies the first place. “*Mary in fact is the sublime example of perfect consecration, since she belongs completely to God and is totally devoted to him.*” (VC 28). But she also was the one who was closest to Jesus in his suffering, and therefore her virginity became fruitful for mankind. Let us follow her in her virginal total openness and dedication to God and His will and in her readiness, born out of love, to endure suffering and pain.

**Questions for Reflection** (both personal and for sharing with others)

- 1) How does Vincent Pallotti speak to me in rule 12?
- 2) Have I found the treasure in the field; what price am I willing to pay for it?
- 3) Reflect on moments in your life, when you have been totally open to God’s will also in suffering and pain. What did you experience at those times?