



Apostles for Today

Reflections and Prayer - March 2007

Fundamental Rule 16 – The hidden life of Jesus

Introduction

St. Vincent Pallotti left us, in Fundamental Rule number 16, a meditation on the hidden life of Jesus.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, as a young man in Nazareth, grew in strength and as a man he possessed all the treasures of wisdom and of Grace: therefore, for love of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must strive assiduously to grow, every day, in holiness and in the perfection of the Christian virtues, and we must remember that it was for this end, which has eternal and incomprehensible consequences, that we entered the Congregation (community life)

(OO CC III, p. 47)

“Jesus lived the greater part of his earthly life in the seclusion of Nazareth. The divinely inspired accounts of this period are very reticent in what they tell: Luke 2:40-52; Mark 6:3; and John 6:42 and 7:15 are the only passages that make reference to this hidden life. Some of these give a general overview of the life of Christ: **‘meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God’s favour was with him’**. This is a brief summary of the years that followed the return of the Holy Family from the purification ceremony in the Temple. “And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men”, and “he lived under their authority”; these are the inspired memories of the life of Jesus of Nazareth after he had reached twelve years of age.

When Jesus was twelve years of age he accompanied his parents to Jerusalem in accordance with the custom of the feast. As they returned home Jesus remained on in Jerusalem “without his parents knowing it”. Three days later they found him in the Temple seated in the midst of the doctors of the Law listening to them and asking them questions, and all those who heard him, including his parents, were astounded at his intelligence and his replies. It was on that occasion that Jesus uttered the

only words that have come down to us from his hidden life: ‘Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father’s affairs?’

The Jews tell us that Jesus had not received training in the rabbinical schools of learning: “What is this wisdom that has been granted him ...? and ‘this is the carpenter, surely, the son of Mary ...?’ At an early age he would have learnt the ‘Shema’ (Deuteronomy 6,4) and the Hallel or Psalms 113-118. Jesus was surely familiar with other parts of the Scriptures.

The public teachings of Jesus demonstrate that he was a keen observer of the scenes and sounds of the world of nature and of the habits of the various classes of persons. The hidden life of Jesus, which lasted for thirty years, was very different to what one would expect in the case of a person who was adored by his followers as their God and revered as their Saviour.”

(The above text is taken from a work entitled “El sentir y vivir de Maria”).

Reflection

Joseph and Mary, like any other family of Nazareth, would have thought of and expected a simple life.

The solitude and the silence of Nazareth. Our intention was to go to Judea and perhaps even to settle in Jerusalem. There our son would have a more favourable climate for his formation. Even in our poverty we wanted the very best for him. Yes, that he would learn to go to the Temple of Jerusalem and to raise his arms in prayer; we wanted him to learn the Holy Word with a good Rabbi, because he would be, later, the King of Israel. But the plans of God were different.

We went to Galilee, to our humble area of Nazareth where the child would grow **“in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men”**.

Our family life was like that of the rest of the community. Home, work, the synagogue, living among others, it was all as simple and as clear as the light of midday. Nothing special happened in our village or in our house. The extra-ordinary was that our God incarnated in Jesus ‘had

become ordinary'; he became one like the rest of us. Jesus grew and matured, his voice deepened, his manner of observing life was profound and became luminous. His sallow countenance transmitted peace and serenity when one looked at him for a time. Solitude enveloped us, and silence was part of our home. All of this mystery grew just like the wheat in the fields, almost unnoticed. We lived in solitude and this solitude strengthened our hearts. Silence was the deepest word in our dialogue. I treasured every detail of the life of my son in the book of my heart. There, in my heart, the first unpublished Gospel was written. I will never forget the times of our family prayer. We would pray at dawn and at sunset. The night, while sleeping on a mat on the hard ground, was the moment to live the most satisfying silence and solitude of the day. Our eyes were closed but our hearts continued to watch.

Blessed be the Nazareth years of Jesus! Have we Christians discovered these years? It is only by entering into the solitude and the silence of the heart that one meets Jesus who continues to live in this 'interior Nazareth'.

Meditation

Jesus was the person who best knew how to maintain silence in order to listen to God and to men. He knew how to live as part of a family, and to form community with others.

We, his followers, must diligently strive to live each day in holiness and in the perfection of the Christian virtues. It is only in solitude and in silence that we become capable of living that 'interior Nazareth', which transforms the ordinary daily life into the extraordinary life of God.

St. Vincent Pallotti was one of those persons who discovered and relished that taste for silence and solitude which becomes obedience, prayer and life.

Biblical texts for further reflection

- ❖ "After Herod's death, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you and go back to the land of Israel, for those who wanted to kill the child are dead'. So Joseph got up and, taking the child

and his mother with him, went back to the land of Israel. But when he learnt that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as ruler of Judea he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he left for the region of Galilee. There he settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way the words spoken through the prophets were to be fulfilled: He will be called a Nazarene.” (Mt 2, 19-23)

- ❖ “When the festival was half over, Jesus went to the Temple and began to teach. The Jews were astonished and said, ‘How did he learn to read? He has not been taught.’” (John 7, 14-15)
- ❖ “He then went down with them and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men.” (Luke. 2, 51-52)
- ❖ “Surely this is Jesus son of Joseph, they said.” (John 6, 42)

Let us pray with St. Vincent Pallotti

*The Incarnate Word, who is infinite Wisdom,
in order to teach everybody how to observe silence,
deigned to be born for us,
in the deep silence of a dark night,
as a child in a stable.*

*He showed himself to mankind
with the characteristics of all children
who do not speak.*

*And so, silence, observed in order to converse
more intimately with God,
is a gift of God himself.*

(OOCC II, p. 24-25)