



Apostles for Today

Reflection and Prayer - August 2007

Fundamental Rule no. 21

Wisdom and grace shone forth in Jesus.....

Introduction

In point number 21 of the Fundamental Rule we read a new meditation on the hidden life of Jesus.

"St. Luke (2,52) tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ, subject to Mary and Joseph in the house of Nazareth, "progressed steadily in wisdom and age before God and men", that is, as He advanced in age, there shone forth in Him, more and more wisdom and grace. This was because He fulfilled exactly all the duties of an Israelite and of a son; while Mary fulfilled those of a mother and St. Joseph those of a foster father.

Therefore, out of love for Our Lord Jesus Christ and so as to imitate Him in our progress in the spiritual life, we must consider and keep in mind the sacred ternary: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, who formed the small family in the house of Nazareth, in fulfilling perfectly all the natural and religious duties and take them as models for every Christian family. And even more must we take them as models for the family formed by our little congregation as a whole, as well as, by the individual communities in our holy houses/retreats.

And so, each one of us in his office, in his rank, is obliged to imitate with all possible perfection Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in the fulfilment of all duties towards God, superiors, confreres, fellow-men, and even in regard to our very selves, by striving for greater holiness. Therefore, all of us must do our work as prescribed by the holy Rules and Constitutions.

And, as there was never in the Holy Family of Nazareth even the slightest expression of laziness, each of us is likewise obliged to keep far from the community, from others and from oneself the slightest expression of laziness.

Finally, as in the Holy Family of Nazareth there reigned perpetual peace, charity, holy cheerfulness and spiritual joy, so too we must strive so that these virtues also reign in our congregation and in our holy houses/retreats as one of their distinctive characteristics". (OCCC III, 50)

Reflection

Who knows how often our Founder, in his contemplative prayer, tipped into the home of Nazareth on his toes!

What would he have observed?

What would he have learnt?

What revelations would he have received?

He would have been enchanted to meet the peaceful gaze of Joseph, the unconditional attention of Mary and the prompt obedience of Jesus.

What would the revolutionary feelings in St. Vincent have been?

Who knows how many times he would have gotten lost in the peaceful ecstasies of the House of Nazareth.

How much peace and joy reigned in those hearts and how much radiance shone on those faces ...

How he revelled in letting himself be moulded by the members of the Holy Family.

A wonderful exchange of energy!

Vincent learnt from each member the art of living, he learnt to listen, he learnt to anticipate the needs of the other, he learnt to pray, he learnt to contemplate the wonderful work which God has done ...

He knew that the small family of the Catholic Apostolate could survive only if it nourished itself with this energy which he, as father, transmitted.

Yes! What else could he leave to his children if not the desire to imitate the "sacred ternary" (the Holy Family) as he called it?

Who knows how many times he entrusted each member of the UAC to the care of the ternary, with the dreams and hopes for each member?

The highest dream or aspiration would have been that of holiness.

To be holy as those three were.

To live communion as they lived it.

The communities, the holy retreats, the families, were all safe under the light of such example.

St. Vincent continues, today, to look at us in God, ...waiting to sing the divine mercies for all eternity.

And now, dear brother and sister, you are going through this and reading these few words, listen to the desire of St. Vincent.

Read and make your own the behaviour and the silent teaching of Mary, of Joseph and of Jesus.

Take them as models for your life.

Strive to begin a conversation with the Founder and turn to him in all your needs.

Ask yourself:

1. *“Jesus subjected himself to Mary and to Joseph”.*
How do you live your relationships with others?
2. *“Jesus progressed steadily in wisdom and age before God and men”.*
How are you taking care of your life?
Does wisdom shine forth in you?
Do you allow yourself to be enlightened by divine grace?
3. *“Jesus fulfilled exactly all the duties of an Israelite and of a son; while Mary fulfilled those of a mother, and St. Joseph those of a foster father”.*
Do you know how to imitate Jesus in your civil, religious and moral duties?
Ask Mary and Joseph for a new heart so as to live intensely your duties as mother, as father, with your loved ones and with all those who have been entrusted to you.
4. *“In the family of Nazareth there was never the slightest expression of laziness”.*
Try to evaluate how you are using the time that God gives you.
Laziness is the father of all vices – so says a proverb – examine how you use time to spread Love, to revive faith, to encourage those who live in sorrow, in anguish, in desperation, and so do the work of the Catholic Apostolate.
5. *“In the Holy Family of Nazareth there reigned perpetual peace, charity, holy cheerfulness and spiritual joy”.*
Look at your family, at your Community, at your work place and observe the atmosphere there.
What can you do in order that peace and love may grow and increase?
What can you invent so that spiritual cheerfulness and joy can always reign there?
Turn to the Holy Family and to St. Vincent and listen to their suggestions.

Prayers

From the writings of St. Vincent Pallotti

- ❖ “Most loving Virgin Mary, Mother of mercy, Queen of the angels and saints, our support and our hope, look with mercy on our community which you have cherished from the beginning. Guard it now and in the future and bless it with continued growth. May poverty, chastity and obedience, the spirit of prayer and the sharing of resources, in a spirit of serving with the love of Christ, remain alive in our hearts. Preserve our community from all harm, especially from any danger of luke-warmness. Mary, our support and our hope, obtain these blessings for us from your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

(Pallottine Community Prayers, p. 234-5)

- ❖ “Eternal Father, in union with the most holy hearts of Jesus and of Mary, we offer you the precious blood of Jesus Christ in thanksgiving, as if you had already given us the gift of perfect observance of the holy rules, and for all the possible ends that please you”.

(Le Preghiere – A. Faller – p. 290)

Let us pray together

Let your mercy fall upon us abundantly, O Lord our God,
and through the merits and intercession of the
immaculate Virgin Mary, of St. Joseph
and of our holy father Vincent,
preserve our community and help its growth.
Grant that it may grow in spirit and in number
and thus may be able to glorify your Name on earth
as it already is glorified in heaven. Amen.

(Pallottine Community Prayers, page 229, no. 12)