



Apostles for Today

Reflection and Prayer - August 2009

God, the Infinite Love

Introduction

From this issue you will realize that, in this month of August, we are beginning a new theme in our monthly reflections. For more than 31 months you will receive the reflections based on the meditations taken from St. Vincent Pallotti's booklet "*God, the Infinite Love*".

St. Vincent Pallotti proposed to Christians some meditations and prayers as a way to know and recall the infinite love and the infinite mercy of God, the title of the book which contains them is *God, the Infinite Love*. It was always his great desire to correspond to God who was incessantly communicating himself and his divine gifts to him. And, as St. Vincent intuited, prayer constitutes a privileged moment for God to communicate himself to a person, to fill her/him with his innumerable gifts. It is in faithful and humble prayer that the human heart is capable of opening itself to God, of receiving with gratitude his gifts, and of experiencing the joy of feeling oneself the object of the infinite love of God and the sadness of not having corresponded with such a great love and with the grace with which God wishes to perfect our soul.

The Historical Premise to our *General Statutes* when describing Pallottine spirituality affirms that "the dynamic principle on which the multifaceted apostolic activities of St. Vincent Pallotti was founded was his personal faith experience. God gave him, as a gift of the Spirit, a profound experience of his infinite love and mercy. According to Vincent Pallotti, the most profound motivation of God's activity is infinite love. For this reason men and women, created in the image and likeness of God, reach the full understanding of the meaning of life when they continually exercise the love of God and love of neighbour (cf. 1 Jn 4,16)". The Statutes encourage the members of the Union to "wholeheartedly allow themselves to be permeated by God's infinite love..." (GS art.18).

The meditations proposed by our Founder in the book *God, the Infinite Love* are a good means which can help each one of us, both personally and together in our communities, to be filled with the infinite love of God and to become its messengers for others.

A brief history of the booklet *God, the Infinite Love*

This booklet *God, the Infinite Love* is one of the last writings of Vincent Pallotti and it reveals his spiritual maturity and shows characteristics of his deep spirituality. It was written by our Founder in a very particular situation of his life. He began to think about this book of meditations on the infinite love of God in 1847 and he was searching for someone to whom he could entrust the task of writing it. He asked Fr. Vincent Marie Michettoni, a priest of the Oratorian Fathers, whom he knew well, but he did not have the time at his disposal to accept the request. This happy difficulty permitted Pallotti to pour out all that he had in his heart and all that he understood of the works of the infinite love of God. In 1849, during the revolution, a time of great persecution of the Church, he was constrained to take refuge in the Irish College and while there he wrote these meditations. Today we can visit this place situated in Via Santa Agata dei Goti and thank God for his infinite love revealed to our Founder in those days.

God, the Infinite Love is a little booklet of 149 pages written in Italian. The text contains modifications and additions made by Pallotti himself. It is an incomplete work because St. Vincent wished to write the meditations basing them on the 12 articles of the Creed; instead, the present booklet contains 31 meditations which treat in depth only 3 articles.

The original text of *God, the Infinite Love*, is preserved in the Archives of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate. Fr. Hettenkofer, a German Pallottine, the Postulator for the cause of the beatification of Pallotti, was the first to work on this booklet and prepared it for the 1936 edition. He considered these meditations to be our spiritual treasure. In the introduction he wrote: “Aware of the infinite love with which God has created man and blessed him with innumerable supernatural gifts and graces in order to glorify him in a blessed eternity, the Venerable Vincent Pallotti, filled with a sense of admiration and gratitude, felt himself

compelled to remind all the faithful of the precious gifts given by God which enable man to participate in his divine nature and to become ever more like his divine model, the Incarnate Word”.

The method of the meditations:

In the 31 meditations, which are based on the truths contained in 3 articles of our Christian Creed, St. Vincent follows the same method which helps the person who decides to pray regularly with them to learn the difficult art of meditation. He teaches us how to meditate on the truths of our faith in order to open ourselves to the marvellous work of God in our lives and be filled with His infinite and merciful love. We can learn by looking at Pallotti and how he himself meditated and follow his advice and example.

Pallotti himself :

- **recalls and reflects** on one of the truths of faith proposed for the day,
- **contemplates** the infinite love and mercy of God towards human beings and marvels at the works of God in his own life,
- **formulates a prayer** in which he commits himself to disposing his heart in order to profit from the gift of faith as God desires, and with a contrite heart makes an act of faith that God will perfect his soul,
- **renders thanks to God** – and makes an **offering of himself**.

Pallotti proposes as a way to do the meditations:

- to **read the reflection** on one of the truths of faith,
- to **recite with love the prayer** that follows,
- to conclude with the **prayer of offering**.

Pallotti believed that the faithful who meditate in this way on the truths of faith would be able to profit from the incomprehensible gift of faith according to the designs of the infinite love and infinite mercy of God.

“God, you will grant me the gift of always remembering your infinite love”

In our daily life God manifests his infinite love in many different ways. St. John in his first letter invites us to see the love of God and his

wonderful works. While meditating on the Word of God let us desire to see and be touched by this outpouring of the love of God:

“You must see what great love the Father has lavished on us by letting us be called God’s children - which is what we are! The reason why the world does not acknowledge us is that it did not acknowledge Him. My dear friends, we are already God’s children, but what we shall be in the future has not yet been revealed. We are well aware that when He appears we shall be like him, because we shall see Him as he really is. Whoever treasures this hope of him purifies himself, to be as pure as he is.” (1 Jn 3, 1–3).

In the introduction to this book St. Vincent Pallotti wrote: “*No one is capable of profiting from a precious object if he does not know its value and the worth he can draw from it for himself and for others*”. We can apply the same words to the meditations proposed by Pallotti. They can be a precious gift for us, members of the Union, in order to benefit ourselves from them and so too all the persons with whom we will share the infinite and merciful love of God.

Let us pray with St. Vincent:

“My God, my Father, Father of Mercies, God of all consolation, it is impossible for me to understand your infinite love and that infinite mercy, which moved you and are always moving you to grant me innumerable graces, favours, gifts and mercies through the Holy Angels (...).

You are infinite Love and infinite Mercy and I firmly trust, rather I am certain, that through the same most loving infinite mercy, (...) you will grant me the grace to know you in your infinite Love and in your infinite Mercy, and in all your divine attributes, and the grace to know myself in my wretchedness in so far as You will, and you will give me the gift of always remembering your infinite Love and your infinite Mercy in the distribution of your graces so that I may profit from them according to your will. Amen.” (*God, the Infinite Love*, meditation V).