



Apostles for Today

Reflections and prayers - March 2010

God the Infinite Love of St. Vincent Pallotti 6th meditation

*On the purpose of the infinite love and mercy of God
in giving us the use of created things*

Opening prayer

“Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing for joy. Know that he, the Lord, is God. He made us, we belong to him, we are his people, the sheep of his flock. Loving Father, out of love you have created us and made us your people. We give you thanks. Help us today to be witnesses to your love. Amen.”
(Pallottine Community Prayers, p.38)

Introduction

From the very beginning Christians have professed: “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, of all things, visible and invisible”. St. Augustine suggested: “Question the beauty of the earth, question the beauty of the sea, question the beauty of the air, amply spread around everywhere, question the beauty of the sky, and question all these things. They all answer you, 'Here we are, look; we're beautiful. Their beauty is their confession. Who made these beautiful changeable things, if not one who is beautiful and unchangeable?’” (Sermon 241, 2)

“In the beginning God created heaven and earth” (Gen 1, 1), the first chapter of the Bible begins with these solemn words, they express a fundamental truth: the eternal God is the source of all that exists outside of Himself. Sacred Scripture presents the creative work of the Creator in a symbolic manner as a continuous ‘activity’ which ends with the ‘repose’ of the seventh day (Gen 1,1-2,4) . Scripture affirms that on having completed every work: “God saw that it was good”, that it was beautiful. The things created by God, in all their splendour, in the diversity of colours, forms, perfumes, sounds and taste reflect, each one in its own particular way, a ray of the wisdom and of the infinite goodness of the creator. Humankind is the high

point of creation. St. Irenaeus was moved to exclaim in wonder “The glory of God is the human being fully alive!” We find an echo of this wonder in the life of St. Vincent when he asks: “My God who are you? ... My God, I am aware that if I do not know you I can never have eternal life [...]. O my God, what knowledge must I have of you?” (OCCC X, 464). We are aware that amongst all the visible creatures only the human person was created “in the image of God” and because of this occupies a special place in the work of creation.

Meditation

In the sixth meditation Father Vincent invites us to stop and to observe and contemplate the works created by God in order to reflect for a while on the purpose of creation and to profit from the truth that I, a person, am “the glory of God” and that all that exists will help me to know, love and glorify my Lord.

We are invited to meditate on the infinite generosity of God and on the fact that each one of us has received many gifts. God, the creator, created the universe from nothing and with love gave it in possession to humankind. In this generous gesture the Creator reveals his deepest spirit of joyful hospitality. He gives to humanity all that he created and thus expresses his love: “Since I regard you as precious, (...) and I love you” (Is. 43.4). Let us listen in our hearts to these words full of tenderness. Let us accept with gratitude the invitation of the Lord to rejoice in creation and to make full use of his gifts. Let us reawaken in ourselves the desire to know God, his generosity, love and tenderness.

“Since through the grandeur and beauty of the creatures we may, by analogy, contemplate their Author” (Wis 13,5). The desire to know God is deeply rooted in our human nature because each person carries in him or herself a reflection of divine beauty. We experience a thirst, a desire to experience Love, Beauty and Goodness which is God himself. Father Vincent affirmed that God “desires that we aspire to contemplate for all eternity the inaccessible light which is God himself”.

The person created in the image of God is called to know him and to love him and in seeking him discovers the paths that lead to this knowledge. These ‘paths’ are called ‘the proofs of the existence of God’; but here we are not

dealing with scientific proof but rather questions which allow us to reach true certainty. The starting point on these 'paths' which lead us to God is creation, the tangible world and the human person.

Truly living as a created being

Let us listen to the words of St. Vincent: "My God and my Father, (...) you created all visible things and you have given me use of them so that above all I profit from them in order to know you who are the omnipotent creator of all things, and to come to possess you the infinite, immense and incomprehensible good".

I ask myself, what is my attitude towards the world created by God? I call to mind the moments in which I have delighted in the works of creation, in the firmament of heaven, in the magnificence and beauty of nature, of the works of art. Am I sensitive to the beauty of the world and the beauty of people? Do I stop frequently to admire created things? Do I have the capacity to be awestruck by them and to marvel at them?

The person is not always conscious of feeling his or her thirst for beauty. In daily life which is often full of occupations one may not even perceive the movements of the heart in the face of this beauty. Let me ask myself, do I commit myself to finding time to stop, how much time do I seek for reflection, do I ponder and reflect on my daily life? Now and again at the end of a tiring day we could take time to look at the sky, at the beauty of the stars and of the clouds in the night sky, to fill our hearts with beauty which will raise them up towards the Lord and glorify him for the gift of sight, of the ability to rejoice. Let us ask the Lord to give us again the sensitivity of heart of the child who knows how to be awestruck. Let us ask for the grace to want to know the love and the goodness of God as revealed in all of creation.

Glorify God with all of oneself

"To glorify God" means to see, and to wish to receive from God, all of his gifts of love, to fill one's life with them and to give thanks to him for them: "Yahweh our Lord, how majestic is your name throughout the world" (Ps. 8, 1). The person is WILLED by God, he or she is the reflection of his beauty, love, goodness and wisdom. God wishes to be KNOWN by the person, he desires that the person be open to this relationship, to know him, love him and glorify him committing one's whole self, one's being, one's humanity, all

ones potential, ones mind and also all ones affections and ones sensitivity. In this meditation St. Vincent teaches us HOW to know God with all of ones self, HOW to embrace him with all ones senses: with ones sight and with ones touch: “he has given us the clouds at night, clothing of such variety, gold, silver, precious pearls and stones ...”; with one’s sense of smell: “he has given us the scent of flowers”; with the hearing “he has given us the variety of sounds, and canticles”; with the sense of taste: “he has given us an immeasurable variation in the taste of food and of drink”. Let me ask myself once again if I am aware of the fact that my senses, my ability to feel, should lead me to be enamoured with the beauty of God? In enjoying created things, do I enjoy the beauty and the goodness of God, do they lead me to God? St. Vincent says to us that “all these things God has given to us so that we aspire to eternity, to infinity, to what is immortal, immense, incomprehensible, all of which is God himself”.

Reflecting on our own experiences, let us recall situations in which created things have led us to the Creator. Let us recall moments of wonderment, of awe when faced with the beauty of nature, let us recall works of art which awakened in us a thirst for something that is in itself beautiful and immense, the thirst for God.

We ask for the grace to know how to use created things. It is thanks to this gift that the Christian, docile to the activity of the Holy Spirit, can discern with clarity between that which leads him or her to God and that which separates from Him. The Holy Spirit warns us that things which in themselves are good can become damaging for persons in as much as they distance one from his or her supernatural aspiration. Such a situation is a product of disorder, of an eagerness to possess and to attach ones heart to material things. The gift of discernment helps a person to perceive created things as signs which lead us to God. It is a gift of contemplation thanks to which the person enters into the mystery of God himself and something similar takes place when the gift is that of intelligence and wisdom. In personal prayer we ask the Lord to increase in us this gift and help us to draw many benefits from it.

Concluding prayer – spontaneous.