



Apostles for Today

Reflection and prayer - August 2010

St. Vincent Pallotti – “God, the Infinite Love”

Meditation XI

On the obligation of becoming **perfect**, since our souls are **living images** of the eternal Father

Introductory prayer

God our Father, Protector and the true reality of human lives. We thank you for the gift of your servant St. Vincent Pallotti who, through his great faith, revealed to us your infinite love. Amidst the chaos of this passing world grant us your wisdom to realize your loving presence in all aspects of our lives. Lead us to share with others your infinite love and mercy so as to give us courage to be true witnesses of your love to those who seek you with sincere hearts. We make this our prayer through Christ the divine savior Amen.

God is pure holiness,

In his reflection on God the infinite love, Vincent Pallotti has a great desire to perfect his soul to be worthy of the image of God. He desired to live a holy life free of all sin and infirmities. We read in the prophet Isaiah that God the holy one has displayed his holiness by his justice. (Is. 5:6) and in the book of Leviticus God himself reveals to the people of Israel his holiness and assured them of sanctity because God is Holy. “You have been sanctified and have become holy because I am holy” (Lev. 11, 44). Holiness is a pure quality of God who shares that Holiness with human beings. It seems in practice, however, that to be perfect one would need to struggle to live habitually or virtually according to ones spiritual needs. “If you wish to be perfect, go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven (Mt. 19:21). St Vincent Pallotti in his reflection says that if every moment of our lives is rooted in God we

would constantly perfect our souls as living images of God. He wrote: “I must be wholly intent in meditating upon and contemplating my soul, your living image, and you yourself in your essence and infinite attributes. In this way I may imitate you, o eternal divine Father, in eternal contemplation of your whole self”. Our failure to look upon our souls and to contemplate God present there denies us of the profit that comes from his infinite love and mercy.

Our souls the living images of the eternal Father

Through faith, St. Vincent Pallotti recalls that the human soul was created in the image of God. God chose us to be his image as we read in the book of Genesis, “Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves” (Gen. 1:26). He expresses his belief that there is a natural obligation rooted in us by God to look at, to contemplate, both our souls and God. What is unique in St. Vincent Pallotti’s reflection on the image of God is the going beyond our natural image. The true image of God is the human soul. To be the image, the likeness of God is to share in his divine nature by virtue of Grace.

By being images of God we resemble God. Resembling someone entails some similarities. For example when a child is said to resemble a parent, there must be some elements that people look at and recognize in the child. It may be the way of talking or just the way of doing things. When Peter denied that he was one of Jesus’ disciples one of the soldiers saw some resemblance to Jesus in Peter, “you are certainly one of them [disciples] too, your accent gives you away” (Mat. 26:73). Our behavior, our way of being and of acting, as individuals or as a community, even the accent that we use, are like the footprints of the likeness of God if we were true images of God. To become persons who are truly in God’s image and likeness is a “task”, a mission that needs our involvement and cooperation.

St. Vincent says “None is capable of profiting from a precious object if he does not know its nature and the worth that he can draw from it for himself and for others”. We must work to nurture that image which reveals the perfect love of God in us. One of the great characteristics of God is that *God is perfect*. If we are to witness to the true image of God we must strive to grow perfect. Jesus in admonishing his disciples calls the disciples to be perfect as the heavenly Father is “You must therefore be perfect as your

heavenly Father is perfect”(Mt. 5, 48). On the obligation of becoming perfect, St. Vincent says that “I profit from the gift of free will to perfect my soul with deeds worthy of eternal life, for I am a living image of the same eternal Father” (God, the Infinite Love, XI).

Another of the great characteristics of God is that *God is Love*. To be images of God we must be an incarnation of God’s infinite love. St. Paul says “the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us” (Rom. 5, 5). If our hearts are guided and led by the Spirit of love then our actions become the footprints of love which perfect in us the image of God.

Community of love, the perfect image of God.

Loving our neighbor and loving God is the only way to render the image of God alive. In this the eleventh meditation of God, the Infinite Love, St. Vincent Pallotti has so many expressions that show that the infinite love of God is rooted in the human soul. “I am aware, eternal divine Father, that in creating me in your image and likeness, you have made me to lead a life according to the nature of my soul”. Either as a community or as individuals, like St. Vincent, we are impelled by God’s love to contemplate always on our souls and God.

It is when we deny ourselves and take on board our various ministries and our fundamental apostolate in following him that we become more and more the image of God. It is to die to self and live for others. God is Love and therefore we are led to practice that love towards one another in our community.

Our apostolate is shared with other persons. Realizing that I am the image of God and that I am called to be perfect just as my Father in heaven is perfect, gives me a reason to regard and treat the other as the true image of God, “Love your neighbor as you love yourself”.

The Second Vatican Council refers to the Church as the body of Christ, in other words the Church is the holy image of God since it is composed of the members who are created in the image and likeness of God. Since God’s love is infinite, our community becomes a community of infinite love. My sisters and brothers, as we are living in a broken world, full of insecurities, suffering and a loss of hope, people could look to our

communities for love, for hope and charity. In his desire to live a life worthy of being a perfect image of God, St. Vincent Pallotti says “You oblige me to practice the art of looking into my souls and upon you, my living image”. If as a community we develop the art of looking into our souls and upon God, the living image, we will resemble the body of Christ which becomes perfect as God himself is.

Let us pray:

God of Mercy and Love, if each breath I take,
and every step I make, and every movement
were guided by you incarnate love,
I would be more aware of the needy around me.
My loving Father, give me your wisdom
that I may persevere in my apostolate for the salvation of souls.
Grant me joy that I may become a fount of your infinite love
to those who are living in pain and suffering.
Amen.

And with the Psalmist, Psalm 111:

“I give thanks to God with all my heart
where the virtuous meet and the people assemble.
The works of God are sublime,
those who delight in them are right to fix their eyes on them.
Every work that he does is full of glory and majesty
and his righteousness can never change.
He allows us to contemplate his marvels
God is merciful and tender-hearted,
He provides food for those who fear him and never forgets his covenant.
All that he does is done in faithfulness and justice
in all ways his precepts are dependable,
ordained to last for ever, framed in faithfulness and integrity.
This fear of God is the beginning of wisdom
they have sound sense who practise it.
His praises will be sung for ever.”