



Apostles for Today

Reflection and prayer - January 2011

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

MEDITATION XVI

“On the obligation to become perfect, since we are living images of the Infinite Justice.”

Prayer

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8 NRSV)

Lord, you resist the proud, but are merciful to the humble. Give us true humility, after the example of your own Son. Deliver us from pride so that we may never know your silence; give us the gift of true humility, the virtue which obtains for us your grace. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen. (UAC, *Community Prayers, Tuesday Evening Prayer*)

Reflection

This meditation provides an opportunity to reflection on the biblical understanding of justice as “right relationships.” Living “right relationships” challenges the human person to be in proper relationship with God and with neighbour. Not simply in this meditation, but throughout his writings, Pallotti clearly desired to be in a “right relationship” with both God and neighbour. His relentless movement toward perfection contained within it a deep need to conquer his pride and live a life of humility. Pride, which places one person, people, region, or culture over another is a choice that is made by the prideful rather than a necessity. The choice of pride by the human person often leads to injustice. Pallotti recognized that the path to justice was via the road of humility in the example of Jesus Christ who freely and humbly gave himself over in sacrifice for us on the altar of the cross. In and through

this salvific act, human persons were brought back into “right relationship” with God. Our response to this act on the part of Christ is to live a just and loving life.

Pallotti understood that justice and love could not be separated from one another. Our love of God is made manifest through our love of neighbour. Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical letter *Deus caritas est* clearly articulates this interconnection between love of God through love of neighbour, a lived love that hopefully leads to a more just world.

“Love of neighbour, grounded in the love of God, is first and foremost a responsibility for each individual member of the faithful, but it is also a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community at every level: from the local community to the particular Church and to the Church universal in its entirety. As a community, the Church must practise love. Love thus needs to be organized if it is to be an ordered service to the community. The awareness of this responsibility has had a constitutive relevance in the Church from the beginning: “All who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need” (*Acts* 2:44-5). In these words, Saint Luke provides a kind of definition of the Church, whose constitutive elements include fidelity to the “teaching of the Apostles”, “communion” (*koinonia*), “the breaking of the bread” and “prayer” (cf. *Acts* 2:42). The element of “communion” (*koinonia*) is not initially defined, but appears concretely in the verses quoted above: it consists in the fact that believers hold all things in common and that among them, there is no longer any distinction between rich and poor (cf. also *Acts* 4:32-37). As the Church grew, this radical form of material communion could not in fact be preserved. But its essential core remained: within the community of believers there can never be room for a poverty that denies anyone what is needed for a dignified life (n. 20)”.

As the General Statutes of the UAC state in article 1, the UAC is a “*communio* of the faithful united with God and with one another” which is meant to “revive faith and rekindle charity in the Church and in the world.” As a *communio* of the faithful there is no distinction among us as human persons. “God, who is justice in essence,” as Vincent Pallotti says in the meditation, beckons us to live a life that is in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, particularly those who are one with us in the UAC. We cannot be indifferent to the needs of those who are around us and let our pride keep us from living in true solidarity, justice and love. As St. Vincent Pallotti notes, “in order that I be faithful toward my neighbour, I must love him as myself for the love of God.” Our focus on the needs and dignity of the other in justice will lead us down the path of greater humility and deeper love.

Our lives as members of the Union of Catholic Apostolate are not lives lived simply for ourselves, but for God and neighbour in the example of St. Vincent Pallotti. Our activity in charity and justice deepens and extends our relationship in *communio* with the Triune God and our neighbour. The UAC document “Together and For One Another – the characteristics and the way of the Union.” summarizes well the understanding of St. Vincent Pallotti on this point when it states,

In Pallotti’s perspective the entire human race, as a consequence of its being created and redeemed, constitutes a united community of solidarity: each person is a unique image of God¹ and is called to the apostolate. The Triune God lives and works in each one. All are ‘partners and co-workers’, bound to one another in the realisation of the plan of creation and redemption with mutual responsibility, and are together on the road towards the heavenly Father. Each person has the capacity to respond to God’s love and to share it

¹ Each person is “unique in his essence” and as such, is “essential” for the whole of humanity. Every person, including the seriously handicapped person, thus has a special significance (M. Overdick-Gulden, Der Leib ist erzähltes Leben, in: Die Tagespost, 3.2.2007, no. 15, p. 12).

reciprocally. No one is so poor that he cannot enrich his neighbour, no one is so rich, that he does not need the help of others. (n. 8)

St. Vincent Pallotti in his XVI meditation on ‘the obligation to become perfect since we are living images of Infinite Justice’ reflected on how he lived this vocation in three stages and offers us three areas of reflection on how we live ‘justice’ or ‘faithfulness’;

let us reflect and compose our responses to what he has written:

“In order that I be faithful toward God ...”;

“In order that I be faithful toward my neighbour ...”;

“In order that I be fair to myself ...”.

Suggested texts for reflection and sharing

Isaiah 58; Hosea 2:19-21; Micah 6:8; Psalm 7;

Matthew 25: 31-46; Luke 10:25-37; Luke 16:19-31; James 1:19-25.

Concluding Prayer

“My God, my Father, my infinite love, justice in essence, I am a living image of You. But, my most horrible ingratitude deformed this image. Oh, how guilty I am of so many sins which I have committed and caused to be committed. I have never profited from this gift, rather I have acted against the infinite love and mercy with which You created me in Your image and likeness. Thus, I have deserved all the pains of time and eternity, and these multiplied as many times as the sins which I have committed and caused to be committed. But, through Your infinite mercy, through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, through the merits and intercession of Mary, and of all the Angels and Saints I firmly believe, rather I am certain, that immediately You will grant me perfect contrition for my sins and the grace to utilize all the means to be just toward You, Infinite Goodness, toward my neighbour and toward myself. In this way, at the hour of my death, I may be found disposed to be similar to You in glory for all eternity. Amen.” (God, the Infinite Love, med. XVI).