



# *Apostles for Today*

## *February 2011*

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### **St Vincent Pallotti – “God, the Infinite Love”**

#### **On the obligation to become perfect since we are living images of Infinite Mercy - Meditation XVII**

##### **INTRODUCTORY PRAYER**

*O God, merciful Father, who have revealed your love in your Son, Jesus Christ, and have poured it out upon us in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. We entrust to You today the destiny of the world and of every man and woman. Bend down to us sinners, heal our weaknesses, conquer all evil, and grant that all the inhabitants of the earth may experience Your mercy. May they always find the source of hope in You, the Triune God. Eternal Father, for the sake of the sorrowful Passion, and the Resurrection of Your Son, have mercy on us and on the whole world. Amen.*

(Act of entrustment of the destiny of the world to Divine Mercy)

##### **MEDITATION**

God is Mercy. Mercy that is “eternal, infinite, immense and incomprehensible”. God, in His mercy, created us in His image and likeness – He also created us as merciful persons.

The fact that we are able to love with mercy is not to our credit. It is “a priceless gift” given to us by God. However, we are responsible for everything that we do with this awesome and tremendous gift. We are called to take care of, develop and improve this gift – in using our will, which is given by God, and availing of His grace.

God wants us to be redeemed. He wants to show His mercy after death and that is why he made us able to love with a merciful love (caritas): *Happy are those who are merciful to others; God will be merciful to them!* (Mt 5,7). At other point in the Bible we read the description of the Final Judgement: *Come, you that are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the kingdom (...)! I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you*

*gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me; in prison and you visited me (Mt 25, 34-36). We can paraphrase these verses as 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the kingdom (...), because you were merciful.'*

That is why St. Vincent writes that each of us has a duty to “busy myself in the practice of all spiritual and corporal works of mercy, according to my capability, state, position and condition, and with all the means at my disposal”.

Let's recall what the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches on the works of mercy, which are “charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbour in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity”. (CCC 2447).

Financial support of the poor has always been and will always be a very important element of fulfilling the commandment of love. It is worth reflecting on how in our times, the times when we have efficiently working welfare programmes, charitable organisations, there are night shelters and soup kitchens open, how can we do the works of mercy towards our brothers and sisters in need. We cannot ignore our needy brothers and sisters and leave them without help. The way of doing that: by organising the collection of food, donating to charitable institutions or giving a small amount of money to a beggar, must be discerned by each of us in our conscience.

However, many people who we meet every day are poor in a manner that is different than financial poverty. Let's think whether we also help them.

#### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:**

*We can call “homeless” also those who for some reason do not have and cannot find or build a “home”, those who cannot form lasting*

*relationships. Those who feel threatened, who do not have support, who miss a family and friends.*

— Can we invite them to our “home”? To the home of our hearts, with friends, in our free time, into our family, to the home of our caring, offering them a feeling of security, with good words?

*We meet many ‘naked’ people. They are persons whose dignity is ragged, perhaps they do not have a good name, or high self-esteem, maybe their secrets, their intimacy has been betrayed.*

— Can we cloth people by saying something good about them without passing on some gossip, by keeping their secrets, by protecting their dignity?

*We bury the dead without the due respect to them. Regardless of what kind of people they were, whether they did more good or bad things during their life. Everybody is worthy of a good burial. They are worthy of it because they are God’s children, they are God’s creation.*

— Can we see the dignity in people who are, in some way, dead? Who spread the dazing stench of sin, hate and contempt around them? Can we give them our respect, which is due to every person because of their being God’s creation? Can we look at those people with love? Can we talk to them like we would with beloved brothers and sisters?

In 1835 when our Founder Vincent Pallotti received the charism of the Union of Catholic Apostolate, he noted that it was to be ‘multiple institution’ and that the third objective was “An institution of universal charity in the exercise of all the spiritual and corporal works of mercy so that you God who are infinite love may be known and loved.” (OOCC X, 199).

### **THE TESTIMONY OF THE LIFE OF ST ALBERT CHMIELOWSKI:**

“Brother Albert Chmielowski was a man with a very rich nature of many talents. He had all the makings of a great painter, was valued by all the masters of the brush, he will always stay in the memory of our country as a representative of great art. We know that he was very rich also because he did not spare himself. He proved it as a 20-year-old man taking part in the January Uprising. For the love towards his Homeland he staked everything on one card. This love burned in him a lifelong stigma: he

remained a cripple till his death – instead of his own leg, he had a prosthesis (...) Brother Albert is a incomparable example for us. He almost did not have any means, he did not possess any funds, any ready institutions, so he decided to give himself. That is why God put him on his knees in front of the man most disinherited, for him to give himself. And he did do it until the very end of his days; he tried his best. It was a sign of his faith and love. This sign of his faith and love is invaluable for us and for God as well. We need that our society come back in a new way sensitized to other people, to their needs, misery and suffering. And ready to witness with their bare hands and a full heart; as this gift means more than full hands and rich means. “The greatest of these is love.”

**(Liturgy of the Hours III, p.1241, Polish text).**

## **PRAYER**

1. Let us pray for the Church in the whole world so that it show God as a Merciful Father, and not as a ruthless guardian of rules.
2. Let us pray for the Union of the Catholic Apostolate so that it be a school of Merciful Love for all the members and collaborators.
3. Let us pray for those who need help and support so that they receive selfless help, can accept it with gratefulness and use it appropriately.
4. Let us pray for ourselves so that we become sensitive towards the needs of other people and do not stay indifferent towards them

## **LET’S PRAY TOGETHER WITH ST VINCENT PALLOTTI:**

*“My God, my Father, infinite love of my soul, eternal, infinite, incomprehensible and immense Mercy. I firmly believe, rather I am certain, that you will grant me a quick and perfect forgiveness of all my sins and for my ever reprehensible ingratitude. You grant me the grace to be always occupied in the perfect practice of all the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. In this way, I will perfect my soul more and more so that after this life I will be a living image of your mercy in the glory of eternity.”*

(Meditation XVII, “God, the Infinite Love”)