



Apostles for Today

Reflections and prayers - April 2011

God the Infinite Love of St. Vincent Pallotti 19th meditation

On the Obligation to Become Perfect, since We Are Living Images of God, Holiness and Perfection in Essence

Prayer

God, infinite Love,
today I am in front of you,
with the awareness that I have done many things that were wrong,
but surely I did some things right, too.
Have I been successful in striving to follow you perfectly?
Did I really try hard to be holy?
I put everything which was successful and unsuccessful in your hands.
God, you are infinite mercy,
change everything into blessings and to the good.
Amen.

Meditation

There is an expression that goes “holy mackerel”. Usually you use this phrase when you see something very special or when something very special happens. But somehow you get the feeling that mackerel and being holy do not fit together. But what is the meaning of “holy”?
Let us first of all think about: What is particularly holy for me?
What does it mean for me to be holy in order to live holiness?
Try to find fitting words that begin with the first the letters of the word holiness.

Time for reflection

H...

O...

L...

I...

N...

E...

S...

S...

Vincent Pallotti writes in his treatise on the month of May for the lay person that when Jesus said “‘You must be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect’ he wished to give this a precept to all people” (OOCC XIII, 696) and so if we are disciples of Jesus, if we are to be his apostles in the apostolate, then we too must long to be holy as the heavenly Father is holy. Holiness of life is for Vincent Pallotti a sign of pure effectiveness in the apostolate. We can succeed in living a holy life in the imitation of Christ who is a living picture of God and the apostle of the Father. Our Founder applies to himself and to his life the words of Jesus in the gospel of John, where we read: “The one who believes in me will do even greater works than I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these.” To believe in Jesus, and this is connected to love of him, brings us back to the longing to learn from Jesus. It is the longing to be a disciple. Discipleship again is essentially connected with the imitation of Jesus: “To imitate our Lord, we need above all to have his spirit. That means that all the inner actions or movements of our souls be similar to those of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we honestly imitate him in our external works, which have to be a true expression of the inner ones.” (OOCC III, 38)

Let us have a look at the 19th meditation of 'God, the Infinite Love':

"Enlightened by faith I must recall that my soul, through divine mercy, being created in the image and likeness of God, is also an image of God's Holiness and Perfection. Therefore, God, moved by His infinite love and mercy, has created me in such a fashion that, aided by His grace, I am obliged to profit by the gift of free will in order to better myself inasmuch as I am a living image of his sanctity and perfection. Thus, our Lord Jesus Christ, did not issue any new precept when He said, "Be perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect." (Mt 5,48)

[...] I might thus get closer to holiness and perfection itself, although I am unable to attain it. God, therefore, has created me in such a way that should I not become holy and perfect as much as I can in my life, aided by His grace, then I am always, and I work always, in constant opposition to myself, for I am a living image of the Holiness which is Perfection in essence."

Pallotti shows us here the big dimension of our lives. We are obliged to strive for Holiness and Perfection, but not because of an order or a command from God, but from a movement that arises out of our very nature. Everyone of us has this 'movement' towards holiness and perfection buried in himself / herself, each of us has to avail of the opportunity to realize it. We know from our own experience that we are reluctant to do bad things. If the feeling that we experience in regard to some specific activity is bad, then we feel that we are acting against our nature. Our actions show or reflect that which is within us. When our thoughts, words and actions are in God then we live in this threefold dimension in which we can become sanctified and more perfect. With Pallotti we can ask ourselves: "Oh my God! When did I live in conformity and harmony with your will?, with all the gifts of nature and of grace which you have given to me and give to me?"

Take a moment to reflect on and answer this question.

Texts for reflection and sharing:

It is important to share with others our experiences. A look into the Bible

can widen our view. The following scripture passages could be used to animate sharing with others:

Ps 99

Wis 2,24-3,15

Isaiah 6

Lk 1,46-55

Mt 5,43-48

Eph 4,317-24

Rom 6,19-23

1Pet 1,13-25

Concluding Prayer

Vincent Pallotti, the man, had the weaknesses of human beings, he was very much aware of his own inadequacy when he compared himself to Jesus. Through his belief in the God of infinite mercy, he found encouragement. He teaches us that we have at any time, every day and every hour up until the moment of death, the opportunity to go on the way of perfection and holiness. Together with our founder and with our consciousness of our own weakness we can pray:

“Infinite mercy, eternal Holiness and Perfection, infinite, immense and incomprehensible; You have created me in Your likeness so that, becoming perfect as a living image of Your likeness and perfection, I may, after this present life, become like Your holiness and perfection in the glory of eternity. I have never profited by this incomprehensible gift of Your infinite love and mercy. I was never grateful for it. Rather I have abused it, acting in opposition to you. [...]

Through Your infinite mercy, [...] I firmly believe, rather I am certain, that now You will grant me at this very moment perfect contrition for my sins. Furthermore, You will grant me such efficacious grace, that I will begin to lead a holy and perfect life. With such fervour I will make up for my past losses, I will become as perfect as you wish me to be.”