



Apostles for Today

Reflections and prayers - August 2011

God the Infinite Love of St. Vincent Pallotti Meditation XXIII

“God, Moved by His Infinite Love and Mercy, Became Man to Teach Us in His Blessed Humanity How We Should Live in order to Perfect Our Souls as Living Images of God”

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT:

Come into our hearts, Holy Spirit, and send us a ray of your heavenly light. We call on you with all our strength, O Spirit of the Father, Spirit of Holiness. We surrender our lives to you once more, just as they are, so that you may become their supreme Master, may wash what is unclean, bathe what is dry, heal what is wounded, make supple what is rigid, rekindle what is cold and straighten what is warped. You, the Consoler of our souls, come and draw us away from sin, free us from the bonds of evil which keep us in misery. In flame us in that great inferno of God’s heart where the fire burns and consumes everything that will not enter the Kingdom. Make us Apostles of the Good News throughout the whole world so that the time of our salvation and of your definitive coming may be hastened.

BIBLICAL EXTRACT:

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created human beings in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them".

What does this passage say to me?

This text made me think about God's free love for human beings, his infinite mercy which expects nothing in return. Are we conscious of this gracious love which God has for us? This likeness to God is a grace which human beings do not recognise! For the most part, we remain ungrateful sinners. From the above passage, it is clear that human beings, from their very creation, are social beings who live in relationship with themselves, with their Creator, with each other and with other creatures. We are called to love and to be loved. This is the source of our special place in creation with respect to other creatures. In this story, human beings receive the task of understanding and living out the differences between them as a complementarity in diversity (Gn1.27). According to the Prophet Isaiah we are precious to God since we were created in His image.

This free and merciful love of God astonished our founder Saint Vincent Pallotti who exclaimed:

"God, my infinite love, my ineffable love, my incomparable love. It is a truth of faith that my soul has been created in Your image. It was not painted on canvas, it was not made of wood, stone or metal but of a living, rational and spiritual substance. O my God, who can understand your infinite love and your infinite mercy? And my ignorance and my ingratitude, I who didn't know how to value my soul as highly as I should? But through your mercy help me to pray to you in this way:

God, my most loving and most merciful Father, my Creator, it is impossible for me to understand the value of my soul, created in your image and likeness, because I am not able to know you. It is even more difficult to understand your infinite love and your infinite mercy; since you deigned to create me, even though in your infinite wisdom you foresaw how little I would make of this great blessing, how ungrateful I would be, also making it impossible for me to be capable of recognising my unworthiness. But through the merits of Jesus Christ, the intercession of Mary, of all the Angels and Saints, I firmly trust and am confident that you will grant me the grace of perfect contrition, and will also grant me to always remember your infinite love and infinite mercy, to always appreciate and value my soul and that of my neighbour, in order to be grateful to you for such an ineffable gift, according to your will".

Let us allow the passage from Genesis to resonate with our experience of life, the stages we must go through, our healthy crises which are laden with hope. Let us learn from this extract to live in the love and the likeness of God while doing our best, even if our efforts seem futile. With faith that the Risen Christ will be present to us through his free gift, in order to lead us to our goal just as he always led St. Vincent Pallotti our Founder, who marvelled at the love of God in his life in the following manner: “Being a living image of God, my soul is also a living image of the Holy Spirit, infinite, immense, incomprehensible love of the Father and the Son. Therefore, ...my soul has a natural tendency which aspires to infinite love as opposed to earthly love. [And so], helped by grace, I am obliged to profit by the gift of free will to become perfect inasmuch as I am a living image of the infinite love of the Father and the Son.