



# *Apostles for Today*

Reflections and prayers - January 2012

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## God the Infinite Love

### Meditation 28 (OCC XIII, pp. 141-146)

#### *The Infinite Love and Mercy of Jesus Christ in the Desert*

##### **Introduction:**

*“My Jesus, who could ever have imagined that a God, eternal, infinite, immense, incomprehensible, blessed in Himself, wisdom in essence as You are, would deign to do all this, foreseeing that You would be unacknowledged and vilified. Oh my God, I do not understand this, I feel within me Your infinite love and mercy, but I do not understand it, therefore I forget about it” (OCC XIII, pp. 143-144).*

##### **Reflection:**

Saint Vincent Pallotti helps us to reflect on the total renunciation of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He wanted to withdraw, before beginning his public ministry, in order to teach us that we in our humanity can overcome every temptation by living his Word. That is what Jesus did; with the Word he overcame the devil: “But he replied: Human beings do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4). It is a proof of God’s infinite love for us: Jesus in the desert, even when he had neither water nor food, even in temptation, didn’t avail of his divine nature, but rather through a *kenosis*, a self-emptying, suffered and so made possible victory as a human

being: “though he was in the form of God, [Jesus] did not count equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness, ... being found in human form (Ph 2:6-7).

It is fundamental to know that Our Lord Jesus Christ, being God, knows everything, also our unfaithfulness to his teachings: he already knew that we, his disciples, would not follow his example fully, but he wanted to grant us the grace, the possibility of a victory, fruit also of our handing over of our individualistic and overbearing “ego”. Pallotti in this way gives us a further indication towards devoutly imitating Our Lord Jesus Christ: open ourselves, free ourselves from attachment to our own “ego”. This is the objective of every Christian and every Pallottine who desires to follow the Gospel and his or her charism with great enthusiasm and commitment.

The desert, of which the Bible speaks and which St. Vincent quotes, leads us to solitude, to the essential: there we succeed in encountering ourselves and God. This experience moves us towards a true and intimate dialogue with Jesus, who can ease the burden of the vices of life for us and conform us more perfectly to himself.

Pallotti also proposed this deep encounter with the Lord to his spiritual children through the monthly retreats, so that we might become more conscious of our misery and incomprehension in the face of the immense and loving plan of salvation of the Lord. It is necessary to recognise ourselves as being “nothing” – as Saint Vincent did for all of his life – and in this way perceive that God makes us his worthy children, brothers and sisters of Jesus, and gives us his inheritance. He makes us partakers of his Love!

The love of God for us is revealed more concretely through the Divine Mercy which gives us the right and the joy of relating to him with familiarity, but we at times ignore it, preferring a frenetic life. Mercy teaches us to live with love, but we often choose egoism and self-

sufficiency. The love of God teaches us detachment from vain things and we, however, are more attentive to the less important things.

The invitation to a desert experience calls us to break open the “shell” of our egocentrism, it favours the possibility of perceiving the incomprehensible love of God who invites us to a true life, conscious that only Jesus – our guide – is the authentic Way.

The desert can become a place of dialogue with the Lord who enhances the most authentic desires which he has placed in us, above all enabling us to overcome egoism. The desert is a suitable place to transcend our individualism and perceive that, even in our fragile human condition, the grace of God, through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, continues to summon us to collaborate in the Proclamation of the Kingdom.

### **Reflecting...**

Further, the desert presents us with the challenge of “human” solitude and invites us to a greater and more sincere facing up to ourselves, to our reality, so that the “masks” which we wear to be accepted by a social group or by each other fall away. It is important to welcome this opportunity to truly know ourselves and so present ourselves to the Lord without hypocrisy. Do we have the courage to put ourselves to the test?

Our Lord Jesus Christ humbled himself for love of us, putting aside his divine condition and subjecting himself to the human one, also to temptation. We instead, while knowing the humble teaching of Jesus, are often presumptuous and attached to our assignment and our social position. He won because of his humility and invites us to entrust ourselves to grace in order to overcome temptation. Let us ask ourselves: Do we let ourselves be overcome by vanity? Do we face different situations alone or do we turn to the Lord with humility so that He who experienced similar situations can help us?

With the experience of the desert, Jesus teaches us that, even through the mortification of the flesh, we can arrive at more intimate communion with God. Our Lord began his public ministry after the experience of the desert, where he experienced hunger, thirst and solitude. We, responding to the missionary mandate: “Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to every creature” (Mk 16: 15-16), and attentive to the Pallottine charism of collaborating in the apostolate of Jesus Christ, are called to bear the preoccupations and sufferings of our neighbour.

Do we have the sensitivity to put ourselves in the shoes of others in order to understand their afflictions and proclaim the Gospel in an effective way?

### **Prayer:**

#### *You are my perseverance*

"My God, my Mercy, I am infinitely unworthy of the gift of holy perseverance. And you alone know the great and infinite evils that I have done by not having been faithful to the resolutions and not having used the means which you granted me in order to persevere. I am a sinful man, because if I make a promise I behave in exactly the opposite way. But your infinite Mercy, through the merits of Jesus Christ, through the merits and intercession of Mary Most Holy and of all the [Angels and] Saints, guarantee me that you will destroy everything in me, now and always, and that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have acted and will act in me.

All of your infinite attributes, all infinitely merciful, now and always, work and will work in me, for ever as if they had operated from all eternity. And you yourself, o my God, you are my perseverance. You are my eternal good. You are my all (OOCC X, 734-735, Spiritual Exercises at Montecitorio for parish priests and confessors, 1842).