



# UAC NEWSLETTER

January/February 2012



**Dear brothers and sisters in the Union,**

heartfelt greetings to you in this first newsletter of our year of celebration. During this year, we plan to present biographical notes on some of the early collaborators of St. Vincent from the various states of life. We begin our series with a summary of the life of Fr. Rafael Melia SAC, translated by Fr. Franco Todisco SAC from the book, *De Sociis Beati Vincenti Pallotti*, [The Companions of Blessed Vincent Pallotti], 1953, by Fr. John Hettenkofer PSM, along with other news from the UAC.

## **1. EARLY COLLABORATORS OF ST. VINCENT:**

Raffaele Melia, while still a seminarian, knew Pallotti in the Oratory of S. Maria del Pianto and was the first to join him permanently. Born in Rome on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1804, of Felice and Eleanora (Battistoni) he became a person of wide culture. Priest and doctor in Sacred Theology, he entered the Society on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1837, having renounced his post of Vice Rector of the Urban College of Propaganda Fide, receiving the habit from the Founder the same year. He shared labours and humiliations with him until 1844 when, sent to London, he assumed the spiritual care of Italian emigrants in the Oratory of the Kingdom of Sardinia. Tireless, Tireless, he proposed to replace the Oratory, which had become inadequate, with a large Church and, returning once more to Rome towards the end of 1847, he asked for and obtained letters from the Congregation of Propaganda Fide and from Pope Pius IX himself which authorised him to collect alms for the construction of the church. On the instructions of the same pope, he held the office of Vice Rector of the Urban College of Propaganda Fide for a further year. Having made his solemn consecration along with [Paul] De Geslin e [Carlo Maria] Orlandi on March 7<sup>th</sup> and having been sent by Pallotti with [Ignazio] Auconi and Orlandi to conduct a popular mission in Monterotondo from March 12<sup>th</sup> until March 29<sup>th</sup>, Melia returned to London at the beginning of 1849. In 1854 he returned once more to Rome for his very wide-ranging deposition in the Informative Process for the beatification of our Venerable Founder.

When the Rector General Fr. Francesco Vaccari, exhausted by illness, was forced to transfer first to Naples and then to his Calabrian hometown of Fuscaldo, Melia stood in for him in Rome and, when Vaccari died, was elected third Rector General of the Society on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1856, on the second ballot.

In the month of February, 1857, the Servant of God Elisabetta Sanna, close to death, asked Melia, her confessor after Vaccari, that she be buried in the Church of SS. Salvatore in Onda. Having obtained permission, Sanna died with feelings of deepest devotion on February 17<sup>th</sup> of the same year and Melia, after giving her the ritual absolution, laid her in an underground room in front of the altar of Ss Cosmas and Damien where she rests at the foot of the subsequently built Chapel of the Madonna 'Virgo Potens'.

"The situation of the Union (ie. Society) of the Catholic Apostolate - the name was changed by Pius XI to 'Pious Society of the Missions' - when Melia took over the leadership, was such that, were he to have occupied all of his energies in the vineyard of the Lord in London, he would not have been able to put his apostolic zeal into effect without going against his vision or that of others [with regard to the drawing up of the Constitutions and to the number of promises]. Of the nine students who entered under Vaccari, none had received a major Order. [...] As Rector General, therefore, Melia first of all kept confrere Ignatius Auconi, spiritual director of the Sisters of the Pia Casa in Velletri since 1853, in Rome, substituting Orlandi with him, and then he received new students and coadjutor brothers into the Society, selecting them with prudence. He always paid great attention to the candidates and, considering it necessary to send them to a more pleasant place during the strong Roman summer heat, obtained the Shrine of the Madonna della Neve of Rocca Priora and the little adjoining house from the Bishop of Frascati [Card. Antonio Maria Cagiano de Azevedo] in 1858, where he sent the students. Then, after extending the Church, he entrusted the new foundation to Orlandi..." (J. Hettenkofer, *Piae Societatis Missionum Brevis Notitia Historica*, pp. 51-52).

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1862, he presented his resignation as Rector General and returned to London. There he rejoiced at the work completed by confrere Fr. Giuseppe Faà di Bruno, because he was finishing the construction of the church dedicated to St. Peter the Apostle, which was then inaugurated, along with the house, in 1863.

Fr. Raffaele Melia D. Raffaele Melia committed himself brilliantly through the spoken and written word to lead back the lost sheep of Christ and to comfort those who had already returned to His flock, publishing to that end books on individual confession - '*On Aural Confession*' with five editions in Italian - and on Mary - '*The Woman blessed by all generations*', this work published first in the English language and in Italian in 1876. In 1871 he also gave a life of our Venerable Founder to the printers, only in English.

Worn out by fatigue and old age, he returned to Rome in 1876. Having gone to help the Rector of the Church of the

Madonna della Neve in Rocca Priora to hear confessions for the Solemnity of All Saints and the following day for the Commemoration of all the faithful departed, he became ill from the cold. Returning to Rome, he died there on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1876, after having received the last sacraments with devotion, and was buried in the tomb of the Society in the cemetery of Verano.

Fr. Raffaele Melia was distinguished by his religious zeal and his commitment to the salvation of souls. *Of him too can be rightly said what he said on the death of Fr. Francesco Vaccari: 'Sweet is the sleep of those who have worked'. The 'Catholic Times' of November 24<sup>th</sup> wrote of him: "Great zeal and a profound spirit of prayer may be admired in Melia. In his more than thirty years of apostolate in England, he spent his days in continuous meditation. He never slept more than four hours. In all of his undertakings he was as extremely diligent as a novice, and he never let a moment of his time pass without using it well. He lived his life among the poor and the confessional, where he remained with admirable patience even until late at night. He was well known to Pope Pius IX, who called him 'a holy man', and for many years he was known as the saint by many who came to him for advice".*

## **2. Solemnity of St. Vincent Pallotti 2012**

From January 19 - 22, 2012, members of the Pallottine Family in Rome and its environs, joined by some members of the UAC General Assembly began the celebrations for the 50th Anniversary of St. Vincent Pallotti's Canonization (1963 -2013). Masses took place in central Roman churches significant for the UAC, with the intention of bringing St. Vincent into the heart of the Roman Church. The program was as follows:

### **19 January – "St. Vincent in the heart of the Church of Rome" - Mass in SS Biagio e Carlo ai Catinari:**

led by Fr. Antonio Lotti SAC, Provincial of the Italian Queen of Apostles Province and animated by students from the Urban College of Propaganda Fide. After Communion, Fr. Artur Stępień SAC (WA, Poland) shared his vocation story and then the Rector General, Fr. Jacob Nampudakam SAC, read the letter from the Apostolic Penitentiary granting the possibility of a plenary indulgence, under the usual conditions, in the Church of SS Salvatore in Onda.

### **20 January – "St. Vincent and Baptism" - Morning in SS Salvatore in Onda/Evening in San Lorenzo in Damaso:**

Morning Mass in SS Salvatore in Onda was led by Fr. Franco Todisco, SAC, and animated by the students of the Mother of Divine Love School and the young girls of the Pia Casa di Carità.

The evening Mass was led by Bishop Julio Akamine, SAC, Auxiliary Bishop of São Paulo, Brazil and animated by the Congregation of Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate (CSAC). After communion, Sr. Rini Panakkal CSAC (India) gave her witness. Baptismal Promises were renewed by all in this Church where St. Vincent Pallotti himself was baptised, and the candle used during St. Vincent's canonization (20th January 1963) was re-lit and will be kept for the entire jubilee year in the Church of SS Salvatore in Onda.

### **21 January – "St. Vincent and growth in Christian Life" - Mass in Santa Maria in Vallicella (Chiesa Nuova):**

led by Fr. Derry Murphy SAC, President of the UAC, and animated by the members of the annual course in Pallottine spirituality with the UAC Choir leading the singing. After communion, Ms. Cheryl Sullivan (Australia) gave her Pallottine witness.

### **22 January – Solemnity of St. Vincent Pallotti - SS Salvatore in Onda**

Members of the Pallottine family filled the church to pray Vespers and the Rosary with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, all of which "Radio Maria" transmitted throughout Italy. The Rector General, Fr. Jacob Nampudakam SAC led the Mass, which was animated by the Missionary Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate with the UAC Choir once again leading the singing.

This solemn Triduum opened the celebrations for the 50th Anniversary of St. Vincent's Canonization and there was a palpable sense of communion with the entire Pallottine Family throughout the world. We are convinced that this jubilee year will be one of special grace, and each of us is called to play our part by rededicating ourselves wholeheartedly to a thorough renewal of our lives in the spirit of the Gospel, as St. Vincent Pallotti so ardently desired.

## **3. New Members of the UAC:**

**India:** 1. At Pallottigiri, Trivandrum, on 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2012, Fr. Mathew Panakkal SAC, Vice-Provincial, received the Act of Apostolic Commitment of 14 lay faithful their during a Eucharist led by Bishop Vincent Samuel of Neyyattinkara.

2. Six lay people from Nagpur made their Act of Apostolic Commitment in the UAC during the solemn Eucharist celebration led by the Rector General, Fr. Jacob Nampudakam SAC, on 26 December 2011.

## **4. We pray specially for:**

**Sr. Maria Knaus (SAC)** who, in Limburg, Germany, on February 18, 2012, went home to God. For many years Sr. Maria served in positions of leadership within the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate, including as Provincial Superior (1974-1986) and as General Superior (1992-1998). With a loving heart and a keen mind she was a wise and courageous leader. Her trust and her joy in God gave her strength. Sisters from many countries came to Limburg for her funeral, giving witness to the good things they received through her, joined also by many priests, brothers and lay members of the Pallottine family. May she enjoy the fullness of God's life and love in heaven and be transformed into a resplendent and perfect living image of Christ.