



Apostles for Today

Reflection and Prayer - May 2012

In this Jubilee Year, having concluded our series on Pallotti's "God, the Infinite Love", we are now initiating a new series of reflections. The source for this new series will be extracts taken from the homily of Paul VI in Frascati in September 1963, just a few months after the canonization of Saint Vincent. The first reflection takes as its starting point the following extract from that homily:

"Try to evoke the memory of the life, the example and the work [of Saint Vincent]; above all by highlighting his holiness and also reaffirming your intention to imitate his example, to work so that the great lesson offered by Saint Vincent to today's world, ... may have as a legacy a new and beautiful flowering of extraordinary initiatives... in order that Pallotti be alive in his spirit with the energies which he knew how to awaken in God's Church".

Prayer

**"Sing a new song to the Lord!
Sing to the Lord all the earth!
Sing to the Lord, bless his name!
Proclaim his salvation day after day,
declare his glory among the nations,
his marvels among all the peoples"**

(Ps 96:1-3)

We pray in this Jubilee Year for the grace to faithfully proclaim the Lord to all peoples in new and creative ways inspired by the Spirit of God, taking up the call of the New Evangelisation to have "the courage to forge new paths in responding to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the Gospel today" (Lineamenta Synod on N. Ev, n. 5).

Aggiornamento Pallotti: Bring Saint Vincent and his spirit to life again in order to awaken new energies

Vincent Pallotti envisioned a dynamic church which moved out from itself to act in the wider world, true for that time just as for today. Today, for instance, this year's National Catholic Congress in Germany (16-20 May) will be guided by the motto "Risking new departures". At the very dawn of the Church, as a result of encountering the Risen Lord, the Apostles themselves lived in this spirit, risking their very lives proclaiming, "Jesus is alive! Beyond Death! Today!" Pallotti finds a source of inspiration in the Acts of the Apostles: the second chapter describes a community of women and men treating each other lovingly, possessing everything together and sharing their belongings with those in need. They are disciples of Jesus, women and men expectantly praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit and "equipping" themselves with the Spirit of God before heading out for action.

Good technical equipment survives all kinds of wind and weather. Good tools are indispensable for practical activities, in order not to slave away alone, just with our own bare hands. This begs the question: how – spiritually - can I get good equipment? Two practical examples:

Trusting in God's Word

In the process of upheaval in the local church and while reshaping the pastoral ministry in our own Parish of St. Christophorus we were guided by the word: ***"Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on God's saving justice and all these other things will be given to you as well"*** (Mt 6,33) A concrete application of this Word led the co-responsible committees of the parish to a courageous decision. Trusting that God would take care of us when we made His care for people our first concern, while at the same time realizing the need to take cost-cutting measures, we avoided letting people go, instead taking the risk of trying to finance their services through donations. To this day, trusting in God, the parish succeeds in scaring up the necessary funds...!

God's care is for all people, with a clear option for those who are poor and marginalised. What answers do we give to fulfil the mandate to meet the needs of people in a way suitable for every day?

A walk through the city could offer the necessary inspiration to keep our eyes open and look out for God's people, not in an isolated way but rather in a concerted and united manner, with other like-minded comrades-in-arms. What does God's care look like concretely – for example, here in Nord-Neukölln, our quarter – in the city, in the country, in the land, in countries of the third and fourth worlds? What does the preferential concern for the kingdom of God mean, looking at all of these people, looking at those who surround you in your own local area?

“Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on God's saving justice”

Our area is changing in recent times. A new milieu is emerging, with young creative people who are interested in art and culture and open to things “different” from the mainstream. Vincent Pallotti related to all kinds of people and associations; he invited all people of good will to collaboration; our UAC Statutes also express the possibility for non-Christians to collaborate. The founding here of the citizens' group WIN (We in Neukölln) probably just about tallies with Pallotti's desire, as more than 40 very diverse groups and initiatives of civil society gather, also including many Muslim associations. The citizens' initiative WIN defends burning issues for all, for example, rising rents, lack of teachers and doctors, pollution of the roads, decline of public buildings, mistreatment of clients by the job centre etc...Matters are approached with consensus and co-responsibility. There are actually three platforms in Berlin forming parts of a base movement, financed by fundraising and donations. WIN will be involved in the National Catholic Congress. We too will be involved in it – with the church communities of St. Clara, St. Richard and St. Christophorus, together with Pallotti Mobile.

Feast on God's Life.

“Wherever I am “, writes Vincent Pallotti in his diary in 1816, “I will imagine myself (and I will strive to renew often this consciousness) to be with all creatures in the cenacle of Jerusalem, where the Apostles received the Holy Spirit; and as the Apostles were gathered there with Mary, I too will imagine myself to be with Mary and Jesus, so that obtain for me and others the fullness of the Holy Spirit. In this way I desire always to be in the cenacle together with all creatures.” (OCCC X, 86 s.)

It is in the Cenacle that Pallotti refuels, that he finds a refuge. From there he develops his model for a life in community. The German dictionary translates *Cenacle*, slightly quirkily, but perhaps also providentially, as “refectory in a convent”. Pallotti invites us to become sated with Holy Spirit in the Cenacle, the refectory of the Spirit.

“Hello, Holy Spirit, what are your plans for today? Look at my to-do list... all this needs to be managed. Nonetheless, what would give you pleasure today? Doesn't this sound extremely silly, to be on such familiar terms with the Spirit of God? Yet I love to put exactly these questions during the morning cenacle or “breakfast with God”, as a trainee expressed it one day. It's here that I discuss the agenda of the day – seeking the nourishment of the Holy Spirit. “Let go – let God!” This beautiful English wordplay invites me to surrender my plans to the Holy Spirit, to let go of control and yet to stay alert. Then, at the end of the day I sometimes marvel about how much of my to-do list has been done, almost by itself...! On a personal level I am discovering the partnership with the Holy Spirit as a source of things which can sometimes seem crazy, but which often turn out to contribute to healing. And I am grateful to Vincent Pallotti for the power of his vision for the Church and the world, again and again finding new nourishment in the Cenacle. Therefore bon appétit to all of us!

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