



# *Apostles for Today*

*Reflection and Prayer - July 2012*

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## **SAINT VINCENT PALLOTTI – PRECURSOR OF THE APOSTOLATE OF LAY PEOPLE**

*(Reflection on the Homily of Paul VI during his visit to Frascati to venerate the body of Saint Vincent Pallotti which was exposed in the Cathedral)*

**“It would be interesting to examine how Vincent Pallotti had what the Saints possessed above all: *an awareness, which, in them, initially becomes painful and almost dramatic; the perception of evil, of needs, of lacks, of the widespread unfaithfulness to the mercy and grace of God*” (Homily of Paul VI)**

I would like to invite you to reflect on this passage from the homily of Paul VI. To begin, I invite you to use your imagination a little: Let us place ourselves at the time of Pallotti and in the places where he lived. Let us try to experience once more what he was able to experience within himself.

... He lived in Rome, a beautiful city: let us look at the beautiful blue colour of the sky. Let us imagine the waters of the Tiber river and the buildings and other monuments which show the beauty of Roman architecture. Let us walk on the cobblestones, some of them witnesses of the first centuries of Christianity, such as the ones remaining on the street near the Colosseum.

... In our soul, the conviction springs up and grows stronger that “God, infinitely happy, brought all of creation into being out of his infinite love and infinite mercy in order to give himself wholly to his creatures”.

... Our heart feels fascination and admiration for God: “God fascinates me; not the intellect, but God; not the will, but God (...) God always, in everything. God, my God”

... The heart feels a pain which intensifies, which becomes stronger, which we cannot bear. The great pain, the strong pain... Why?

... There are people who raise their heads not to look at the beauty of the sky but to nourish their pride and to emphasise their own greatness; look at the Tiber... and think of the people who threw themselves into it, ending their lives in the river; people marvel upon seeing the beauty of the architecture of the city of Rome, admiring human genius... but perceiving nothing beyond human genius; people run on the cobblestones of the streets... to escape responsibility for their heritage, walking briskly ... in order not to be troubled by their own and others' consciences.

... Orphans, widows, prostitutes, soldiers who sometimes have had too much to drink, thieves, politicians who at times are self-important, rich people who have no sensitivity towards the poor; cold Christians, indifferent spiritual people... Divisions between people, the lack of faith and love...

Meditating on the words of Pope Paul VI, I think of his pain, of his preoccupation for Christians: "Many Christians continue to be passive, forgetful, if not even deserters, sometimes, of the great call which God, with Christianity, has bestowed on the world. He has called all to be children, to be followers of Christ, to profess faith and exercise charity. This humanity, which has responded to the great Christian vocation, unfortunately often forgets, falls into a stupor or returns to its temporal habits and buries itself in the immediate interests of external life. They hold these to be dominant, positive, capable of satisfying human desires and superior to the great invitation emanating from Heaven with the Gospel Revelation".

... I hear the words of Saint Vincent in my heart:

*'Enlightened by faith, I recall my God that with love you created us in your image and likeness, you gave us free will, so that we might perfect ourselves as your image in such way as to deserve your reward. But how many souls – we can count the millions and hundreds of millions – they have not reached this perfection because of their sins. (...)*

Faced with such a situation I ask: **is it pessimism? Desperation? Depression? No!!!**

... Meditating on the words of the Saint: “My God, You are infinite Mercy. You always give it more and more fully, where there is more human misery. (...) I believe, I am sure that Your mercy destroys all of my misery and fills my soul with all of your gifts, in such a way that if all generations must admire for ever in Mary Most Holy the miracle of your grace, in me they will have to admire the miracle of Your mercy.

... I feel the call in my heart: **Let us get to work!!!**

“Now, how then are they to call on him if they have not come to believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard of him? And how will they hear of him unless there is a preacher for them? And how will there be preachers if they are not sent? As scripture says: *How beautiful are the feet of the messenger of good news*”(Rm10,14,15).

**... and my response?** “*I would like to become food to feed the hungry, clothing to cover the naked, drink to quench the thirst of the thirsty...*

... the question : **Must I do it alone?**

... What does Saint Vincent suggest?: “*Experience tells us that good done alone is usually lacking, uncertain and of limited duration, and that the noblest efforts of individuals cannot bear fruit if they are not united and directed towards a common goal*”.

“*All, great and small, rich and poor, (...) priests and lay people, religious and diocesan clergy, who live in community or alone, merchants and workers, all who do any kind of work. All, old and young, healthy and sick, prisoners and free, all can in their state of life carry out the apostolate of Jesus Christ. All, whether in their own house or outside of it, studying or working, all can find a way to take care of the eternal salvation of their neighbour.*

*All can benefit from the gifts of God to propagate faith*”.

... God calls me: **DO IT TOGETHER, INVITE OTHERS!**

“*The grace of collaborating for the salvation of souls is one of the graces which God gives to his creatures. Of all of the divine gifts, it is the most divine, the greatest, the most noble for different reasons. The first is that those who receive it and benefit from it are greater imitators of Jesus Christ who came on earth to fulfil the work of salvation for the glory of the Heavenly Father; the second reason is that those who benefit from this grace perfect in themselves the image of the Most Holy Trinity in themselves and*

*become more like God; the third reason is that this grace not only makes us similar to Jesus Christ and to God the Father and the Holy Spirit as their images, but makes us similar to them in glory”.*

... Let us walk the streets of our own towns and cities, with clouds passing over our heads, the sun shining. Before our eyes large buildings, shops, large offices... Let us feel the stone of the streets, each day hundreds of people who walk to work, to school, to church...

... The memory of our Founder’s conviction comes to mind, this conviction becomes mine, grows strong in me, takes on new strength in my heart, the conviction that: “God the Father who created me is present in all that I experience and meet, God the Son who redeemed me is present in all that surrounds me, God the Holy Spirit who sanctified me is present with all of his power to renew: I am in the company of the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity; what wonderful company”.

...Within my heart admiration for God grows, gratitude springs up and intensifies, gratitude for the person and work of our holy Founder, Saint Vincent Pallotti, and for all who following in his footsteps have carried God into this world which is sometimes uprooted from what is good.

... Prayer springs up within the heart ...

Saint Vincent Pallotti, Founder of the Union of Catholic Apostolate, our beloved Father, urged on by the love given to us by the Holy Spirit we walk in your footsteps to be witnesses of unity, communion and peace in this world so full of divisions and separation. Filled with zeal, with all our hearts we desire to proclaim the Good News of salvation to all people, as you proclaimed it so that there would be one Flock under one Good Shepherd. Holy Founder, through your intercession help us in our apostolic activities, so that we may collaborate with God and with our brothers and sisters to help the Kingdom of God grow in the world in which we live.