



# *Apostles for Today*

*Reflection and Prayer - November 2012*

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## THE YEAR OF FAITH, THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS ON NEW EVANGELIZATION AND THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE CANONISATION OF ST. VINCENT PALLOTTI

These three momentous events are jockeying for position in my head and my heart as I prepare to write this reflection for the month of November, it seems as if it is easier to take just one of them and concentrate on that, but the reality is that as Pallottines of the Union of Catholic Apostolate we are invited to immerse ourselves in all three this year.

A central facet of all three events is the desire of the heart of God to invite all people to cooperate with him in the on-going work of salvation. Fr. Vincent Pallotti made this desire his own. In St. Matthew's Gospel we read "And when he saw the crowds he felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples "The harvest is rick but the labourers are few, so **ask** the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest" (Mt. 9,38). Importantly the following passage in the Gospel tells of Jesus sending out the twelve apostles in mission.

Jesus instructed his disciples **to pray** for labourers, **to ask** the Father, **to intercede with** him, that he awaken in the hearts of people a disposition to be a labourer in his vineyard. These words of Jesus echoed in Vincent Pallotti's heart and he composed his Apostolic Prayer and several litanies **to ask** God to awaken in the hearts and souls of many people the willingness to be labourers, workers, apostles and disciples. Vincent's prayers, based on the Gospel passage, are a precious legacy he has left to us, his spiritual family. Each day we pray "**Send forth, o Lord, labourers into your vineyard and spare your people**" and this prayer imperceptibly burrows deep into our hearts. If Jesus encouraged the disciples to '**ask** the Lord of the harvest' to send workers into the harvest we likewise are encouraged **to pray** with the same intention.

Recently, Pope Benedict XVI in his message for World Mission Day, wrote "The number of those awaiting Christ is still immense...we must be attentive to those who do not yet know Christ." This echoes the words of Vincent Pallotti's Appello written in 1835 "Whoever considers carefully the present state of the world

regarding religion comes to the conclusion that, because there is much evil in our age, we have a great need of faith. As a matter of fact, there are many non-Christian people who are willingly disposed to embrace Catholicism. But if one can say that the fields are ripe and waiting impatiently to be harvested, on the other hand one has to admit that the more abundant is the harvest the scarcer is the number of workers. The scarcity of ecclesiastical vocations, which are becoming fewer and fewer, and the difficulties of past events which have caused religious communities to decline in numbers have created a situation wherein we have neither enough apostolic men to spread religion nor enough to maintain it.” And going back even further in time, Pope St. Gregory the Great (540-604) wrote “It grieves us to have to say that the labourers for this great harvest are few, because there are not enough people to preach the good news, although there are people waiting to hear it”.

Three spiritual men, writing in three different times, expressing the same reality that Jesus spoke of. There is a certain consolation in this that, while we are facing great challenges in making a creative response to the call for a New Evangelization, the reality is that the world has always been in need of more ‘labourers for the harvest’.

A Pallottine seminar on New Evangelization was held in Rome in September this year with the participation of over forty members of the Pallottine family. The seminar provided us with material for reflection and time to engage with it. This material will be made available in time; however, during the course of the Seminar some stepping stones emerged which can act as a support for us as we respond to this call of the Church this year.

Among those I identified are the following which may be useful for **personal and community reflection and sharing**:

- ✿ “For it is not ourselves that we are preaching but Jesus Christ as Lord” (2Cor. 4,5).
- ✿ “What you have heard ...hand it on to reliable people so that they in turn will be able to teach others” (2Tm, 2,2).
- ✿ Our faith is the very treasure that we have to share.
- ✿ “Starting afresh from Christ” (NMI 29). Starting afresh from Christ has been the programme for all reform in the history of the Church. Starting afresh from Christ is the only possible and valid programme for the New Evangelization because the Gospel is Jesus Christ in person ... however we start afresh from Christ, not from a Christ constructed with or reduced to human dimensions, but the true Christ, son of God.
- ✿ Jesus Christ, through the Church, proclaims himself and communicates himself; he, through the Holy Spirit, is the primary, the very promoter of

evangelization.

- ✿ God is never an old God, God remains always miraculous and in his activity always surprising and new; according to St. Augustine, God is the youngest of us all.
- ✿ Evangelization can be new only because today we evangelize with the same Gospel but in a new situation.
- ✿ New Evangelization will be truly new if it is able to testify to this ‘newness’ or novelty of Jesus Christ which transcends all our categories and expectations.
- ✿ The best method of evangelization is that of dialogue and of direct knowledge of the other person; dialogue which is a free and honest exchange of experiences, questions, fears, hopes, joys, of all dimensions of life.
- ✿ An essential aspect of New Evangelization is ‘self-evangelization’ because we are not meant to stay the same for the next thousand years...we have to change, to move forward, we have to risk the process of transformation, the only thing which will remain the same is God himself and his love for the world and for all people.
- ✿ The appeal to all Christians is to evangelize those whom we meet in daily life, relatives, family members, friends, work colleagues, those with whom we engage in recreational activities, neighbours; they are the ones to whom the message of God’s infinite love is addressed.

**For a prayer time: Litany of Saint Vincent Pallotti: “Send labourers into your harvest” (OCCC XI 407 – 409)**

Lord Jesus Christ, for the salvation of the world you became obedient even to death. You said to your disciples: “Ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his harvest” (Mt 9:38). We unite ourselves with the intentions with which you yourself, while still on this earth, prayed to the Father. Through the merits and intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary and of all the saints, we beseech your infinite mercy graciously to hear our prayer. Amen

Christ, our Saviour:	<i>Send labourers into your harvest.</i>
Christ, our expectation and salvation:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, our guide and gateway:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, our master and teacher:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, our pastor and director:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, our way and our truth:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, our mediator and advocate:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, our father and healer;	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, revealed to the nations by a star:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, sent to bring the Good News to the poor:	<i>Send labourers...</i>

Christ, you made your Apostles fishers of people:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, teacher wandering through cities and villages:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, whose food it was to bring people to conversion:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, you wish your disciples to be the light of the world:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, at the eleventh hour you send into your harvest labourers who have remained idle throughout the day:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, you gave to Peter and his successors the power to bind and to loose:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, you transformed Paul from persecutor into your chosen instrument:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, you sent your disciples ahead to every place you intended to visit:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, you ordered your disciples to preach the Good News to every creature:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, you ordered your disciples to bring into your fold the sheep still outside:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, you asked your Father to give you as your inheritance the nations and as your possession the ends of the earth:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, you made your most chaste Mother Patroness and Queen of Apostles:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Christ, by the most sacred mysteries of our redemption and by the merits and intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, conceived without stain of sin, and of all the saints:	<i>Send labourers...</i>
Save your servants, O Lord:	<i>Make your name known to all the nations.</i>

Let us pray:

O God, you have assembled all peoples to praise your Name. Grant that we may willingly carry out your will so that your people, called to live with you for ever, may be of one heart in faith and good works.

Lord our God, faithful guide of your people, look with kindness on your servant, Pope N.N., whom you have chosen to be the Chief Pastor of your Church. By word and example may he so assist those for whom he has been called in special service, that all may attain eternal life.

We seek refuge under your protection, holy Mother of God. Listen to our petitions in our necessities, and deliver us from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.