



Apostles for Today

Prayer and Reflection - January 2014

The Octave of the Epiphany as a launching pad for Evangelisation

Saint Vincent Pallotti maintained that the Octave of the Epiphany was “one of the most luminous Mysteries of our Faith”(OOCC I, p.247). He was convinced that such a celebration was a **reawakening of the Christian people to Faith**. He did not content himself with a simple celebration, but invited all to prepare for this special event in which each person made their contribution according to their possibilities (OOCC III, pp.337-338). Furthermore, he urged people to propagate the Octave everywhere and not to limit it to determined places: “And we must celebrate it not only in the church in which the Procura of the pious Union was instituted but, if possible, in all of the communities of whatever reality” (OOCC III, 339). Just as the gentiles were invited in the persons of the Magi to adore and to offer gifts to the King of the Jews, so all must be awakened, making a holy "renewal" of spirit in order to seek Jesus Christ attentively and constantly, so that he might be **known, loved and adored**, and reciprocated in his infinite Love by the entire human race (OOCC III, pp.446-447).

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to revive our faith and rekindle our charity in order to understand more deeply and respond more creatively to this Apostolic intuition of Pallotti in the historical reality of our day.

Come Holy Spirit! Take the veil from our eyes, so that we may recognise that Jesus is Lord: God made man out of love, pilgrim of love in our streets, crucified and risen for love, for our love. Holy Spirit, come! Give us a thirst for the Word of God, making our hearts open to the Light, humble and ready to listen, persevering in searching for the Truth which is hidden in every page of the Divine Scriptures. Holy Spirit, come! Bring us to kneel before the Eucharist to adore and yearn for the Bread become Living Love, in order that we in turn may become living Love. Holy Spirit, come! Make us

capable of mourning over sin, of joyfully welcoming forgiveness, of running into the arms of Mary in order to learn to say her 'Yes' and her Magnificat. Come, Holy Spirit, and send us out onto the pathways of the world.

The Octave of the Epiphany today, a privileged testimony to the apostolic identity left to us by St. Vincent Pallotti

Vincent Pallotti read the pages of the history of his time, identifying the most urgent needs and immediately setting to work! He knew the details of the evil which overran the society of his time and he used all of his creativity to create a place of light and goodness in his day.

The Octave of the Epiphany was one of the many apostolic strategies which entered into the heart of Rome of that time and still continues to be a reality of intense Evangelisation. As members of the Union, we would like to share the experience of the Octave of the Epiphany that we experience in our town of Riposto (Sicily). When we first became close to the Pallottine family, we did not understand the deep meaning of the Octave of the Epiphany, so greatly desired by Saint Vincent. Today, some years after making our Act of Apostolic Commitment, we recognise that this is the moment in which the apostolic identity willed by Saint Vincent manifests itself in all of its fullness. It is the moment in which, perhaps more than in any other, we are called to be rekindled and to rekindle and reappropriate the image and likeness in which we were created, helping all who walk beside us in daily life to more consciously understand their own faith. Every year the celebration of the Octave begins on January 5th and ends on the 13th. Beyond the various times of celebration, the days are rich with formation encounters with people of different age groups. Clearly, the **route** by which we are guided is St. Vincent's exhortation to "Revive faith and rekindle charity": this is why a key component of the Octave is Evangelization, because it is animated by the desire to convey the message of salvation and the "good news" of the crazy Love of God for every creature. This is why we go to various schools in Riposto in order to give our testimony, offering some films that will stimulate reflection or simply sharing our experience of life and faith with them. We always try to convey to our peers the idea that faith is not simply the stuff of the elderly as we would often be led to believe but, on the contrary, it can

and must be lived with the joy and enthusiasm that are typical of our age group. Also during the days of the Octave, we go to **Nursing Homes** where abandoned elderly often have loneliness as their only companion in life; other days are designated for visits to the sick so that each of them might sense, even in the simplicity of a chat, that God is participating in the suffering which they are undergoing. Further, we also establish Scripture Reflection Sessions with families of the area (also in other liturgical times such as Advent and Lent). These meetings involve friends, relatives and neighbours of these families and here is breathed the air of the "Cenacle" so dear to our Founder. The culmination of Evangelisation is the **night event** directed to young people: "A light in the night" (which among other things we also organise during the summer work camp) in which we go out on the streets and propose an alternative Saturday evening to young people, inviting them to enter the church where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed in order to dedicate even just five minutes of their time to a heart to heart conversation with the Lord. It is always touching to see the doors of the church open until late: it is a highly symbolic image; in these squares, on these streets where death is often peddled or excesses are experienced under the illusion that they lead to happiness, these doors, opened on the "world of the night", are almost the arms of the Father which never tire of waiting for all of his children. The conclusion of the Octave is marked **by the Inter-parochialism** of the many youth groups which work in the parish communities of Riposto. For a number of years we have been collaborating in order to combine our spiritual and creative energies (precisely as Pallotti desired), moving out from every form of insularity and experiencing the power of Unity. Thanks to this new impetus, we gather together to complete the days of the Octave with a powerful Eucharistic celebration followed by a "Show" which gives all of the participants a message of life to take away.

From the OOCC IV, pages 137-140:

"In order to enter and become part of the Catholic Apostolate it is necessary to commit oneself to reinvigorate Faith and charity in the country in which one is living and to spread them in the most remote lands of the north and south of the world: in this way the most precious

Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Redemption can bear their fruit everywhere and all can know and adore His most holy Name.

Becoming members of the Catholic Apostolate makes the divine Mercy fill our hearts with abundant graces and blessings and makes the Faith a gift for all non-Catholic peoples: they, deprived of spiritual help, like abandoned children, needy and hungry, appeal to those who might give them a little bit of the bread of the Gospel.

It is necessary, then, to commit ourselves to procuring the greater glory of God, the eternal happiness of our neighbour and to ensure our own. "I am indeed convinced that all fervent Catholics who have at heart others and the glory of God and of Jesus Christ will respond with joy and readiness to our appeal: it invokes their sense of charity and their creed and makes them hurry to enter the Catholic Apostolate in order to promote, defend, spread this Institution with all of the means at their disposal".

Questions:

- Are we willing to set out as Vincent wanted us to do?
- Are we aware that it is up to us to take the first step in today's society?
- Are we capable of not giving up in the face of the hard work of Evangelisation?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, in moments of fragility of any brother or sister, free us from attitudes of self-sufficiency, from every form of "Puritanism" and from the fear of dirtying our hands as did You. Grant that we may be "networks" of protection and of solidarity, placing us next to any person, as simple travelling companions. Certainly, we cannot solve the unfortunate realities and pains of life, but we can travel part of the road together, conscious of being ourselves burdened with fragility and very much in need of your benevolent fatherly mercy and tenderness.

The young and adult members of the "Queen of Apostles" LCC of the Union – Riposto (Sicily)