



Apostles for Today

Prayer and Reflection - October 2016

Mercy and Mission

The Year of Mercy has really given us an opportunity to reflect on this theme, but above all, to experience the unconditional love of God, and through concrete gestures and actions to spread it to others.

My first observation takes some questions as its starting point: what is the relationship between mercy and mission? What does it mean to discover the mercy of God? Because of the greatness and complexity of the topic, I am sure that I will not succeed in giving a completely satisfactory response.

The gospel reveals to us that we must continue the work begun by Jesus Christ, being at his service and that of our brothers and sisters. In this very complex historical reality, the human person can receive the merciful intervention of God through our evangelical action.

Jesus is “the face of the mercy of God” (*Misericordiae Vultus*), and we are called always to contemplate this mystery of love.

No one can claim with certainty to have discovered and exhausted all of the aspects which characterise the essence of mercy. We may try to say something, but will never succeed in saying it all, because the essence of mercy is within the heart of God and only those who experience it will live the joy of feeling themselves pardoned and gathered into the love of the Father.

Intoxicated by this divine love, we can “comprehend” or come closer to the true meaning and sense of mercy. Therefore, faith can never be missing, a faith that brings us to seek the answers in God. We are called to allow God to work in his creative freedom, to lead us by

ways that are different from ours, to live in his mystery and to throw ourselves fearlessly into the mission that God has entrusted to us.

Our Founder, St. Vincent Pallotti, lived this experience of love deeply. We can see this in his writings, where he was in the habit countless times of repeating words, such as eternity, infinite, immense, my mercy ... (Poem of Mercy). Pallotti lived this experience with great modesty. He humbly recognizes his nothingness and imperfection, to the point of saying, "I am nothingness and sin." However, this feeling of nothingness does not alienate him from God, but moves him to a total confidence, to placing himself completely into the Merciful love of the Father, to then exclaim: "My God and my all."

With great joy we recognise that our Founder experienced the merciful love of God in the depths of his being, leading him to implore "that in me and in all, there may remain the fullness of the merciful love of God."

Following St. Vincent Pallotti's inspiration, we get in touch with our deepest roots and can there discover the essence of our path of conversion and enjoy the great experience of merciful love, bringing us closer to what Jesus has told us: "You, therefore, must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48).

This experience of love that Pallotti lived brought him into contact with many realities of Rome of his day, leading him to feel the need of involving the laity, priests and religious as apostles, and he used to say: we must be "evangelical trumpets," in order to proclaim the Word of God to everyone and to glorify Him in everything through works of mercy.

Every baptized person ought to have the awareness of being called to become an apostle, evangeliser, to proclaim the Good News, to speak of its marvels, to announce Jesus and to bear witness that He lives and walks with us as Church, as the People of God.

We, the Pallottine family, have a very rich inheritance as our charism which impels us to mission, to “be and to form apostles”, and we cannot forget this mandate. Our Founder always displayed a profound missionary zeal, and desired to pass it on to all, announcing the greatness of the Reign of God.

At times, we lack the courage to say yes to the mission, especially when we have to leave our country and face new realities. Let us remember St. Paul, who allowing himself to be led by the love of Jesus Christ, exclaimed: woe to me if I do not announce the Gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16).

Being an apostle means being a missionary, being a disciple of Jesus, and this implies the need to so live in communion with Him as to be able to affirm: “I live not I, but Christ lives in me. And this life that I live in the body, I live in faith in the Son of God who loved me and has given himself for me (Jn. 2:20).

To be a true missionary we must allow ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit as did Mary and the apostles in the Cenacle, with the possibility of giving place to a true “missionary outburst which took place at Pentecost” (EG 284). Our evangelising action has its roots in the mandate of Jesus: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creatures” (Mk 16:15).

What is this mission? Jesus himself gives us the answer. “Go therefore and make disciples of all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always until the end of the world” (Mt 28: 19-20).

It is up to us to be open to listen to the call and to take the path on which God sends us, to build this project of love without forgetting the three pillars of assiduous prayer, attention to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and witness of life.

We must ask God not only to respond, but to have the courage to walk along his paths which are unknown to us, with the certainty that He is faithful and never abandons his children.

I conclude this reflection with the final words of the Gospel of St. John: it is not possible to write all the things that Jesus did (cf. Jn 21:25).

Some questions will help us to develop this theme a bit further:

Am I a door of mercy for others?

How can I be the merciful face of God for others?

How do I live my missionary vocation of being an apostle today?

PRAYER FOR THE 'UNION OF CATHOLIC APOSTOLATE

God, the Father of Mercy, we believe in your Infinite Love, in your Infinite Goodness; we believe that you have invited your Son to redeem us and all people; we believe that your Spirit is the source of light in the mission that you have entrusted to us through St. Vincent Pallotti.

We beg, O Divine Spirit, abundant light on the Union of Catholic Apostolate. Fill every member with your gifts, so that our prayer, our announcing of the Word and our suffering may be filled with apostolic zeal, that God may be infinitely glorified and that as soon as possible there may be one flock under one Shepherd.

Mary, Queen of Apostles, form us so that we may respond generously to the call of the Church; using all possible means to faithfully and lovingly live our consecration; to revive faith and love in all; to always serve with joy and availability.

Lord, grant us the grace to seek the will of God in everything and what will help us to build your Kingdom of love, justice, truth, fraternity and peace. This we ask you through the intercession of Mary, Queen of Apostles and of St. Vincent Pallotti in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Sr. Venícia Meurer

Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate - Pallottines