



Apostles for Today

Prayer and Reflection - December 2016

“My God, I ask you now to grant me the grace, through the intercession of Mary and of all the angels and saints, lay and religious saints, to give me the light to know myself”
(OOCC X, 264)

A Blessed Advent to you!

One year ago, reading the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee of Mercy (which is very beautiful), I was very struck by the expression which the Pope used to finish his thoughts in announcing the opening of the Holy Year on the day of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, December 8th, 2015. Here is how he spoke about Mary: “[God] turned his gaze to Mary, holy and immaculate in love” (Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, n.3).

... Mary, holy and immaculate in love ...

These words continue to have a profound echo in my life. It sometimes happens that I repeat them like a kind of litany, in my prayers and in my activities, in tiredness and when making quick progress.

And now one year later, reading the Apostolic Letter closing the Jubilee Year (which is also very beautiful!), another phrase of the Pope resounded in my heart just as deeply: “*We have to remember each of us carries the richness and the burdens of our personal history; this is*

what makes us different from everyone else. Our life, with its joys and sorrows, is something unique and unrepeatable that takes place under the merciful gaze of God.” (Pope Francis, Misericordia et Misera, n. 14).

... each of us carries the richness and the burdens of our personal history ...

With amazement I realize that my story, our story is within the mercy of God. All of me, of us - joys and sorrows - is to be sung because His merciful gaze is in everything and in every fragment of everything.

... Mary, holy and immaculate in love ...

... each of us carries the richness and the burdens of our personal history ... : they are two realities which call out to each other and unite themselves to each other. Mary, the All Beautiful One, and we, all less than beautiful, can look at each other, continually loved by the mercy of God.

And there is even more: with faith we can dare to desire and with children’s hearts ask Mary to intercede for us with her mother’s heart before God so that we too may be made holy and immaculate in love.

... Mary, holy and immaculate in love ...

... each of us carries the richness and the burdens of our personal history ... : are given to us by the Church, which teaches us to go to the heart of our charism and to take on the mission of our Pallottine Family with responsibility. In this year and a half I have also had the grace of visiting Brazil, Poland, Ireland, Germany, London, Italy, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and India.

... go to the heart of our charism ... :

in all of those places I saw that the Union is an authentic presence of the Church. And the Church is a communion because, as for the action of the three divine Persons, it is “a

people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (*Lumen Gentium*, 4).

I have always felt, in fact, and for me this is our gift to the Church, that the life of the Union, that is, of our entire Family, is a fabric of relationships through which we learn that communion must be made flow through relationships, and that the charism of St. Vincent Pallotti still now reveals the newness of its content in this life of relationships. Because in the face of each one of us there is always the face of someone else who, in this life of relationships, first encountered, attracted and formed me, and so forth right back through history until arriving at the origin: the life of relationship between St. Vincent Pallotti and God, the Most Blessed Trinity.

*... and take on the mission
of our Pallottine Family with responsibility ...:*

in each country I encountered people (among the priests, brothers, sisters, lay people, seminarians, candidates, young people, older people, the sick) who live deeply their conviction and their commitment to follow Jesus Christ and attract yet others to Him, calling all and uniting the efforts of all in service of the Church.

This is what Saint Vincent intended by the expression “co-founders” of his work. I recognise with gratitude that the gift of the Holy Spirit to Pallotti is still working here and now in his sons and daughters for the good of the Church and of humanity.

“The pious Union campaigns under the most effective protection of the Immaculate Mother of God, Queen of Apostles, for two most holy ends: the first to obtain through the merits and intercession of the great Immaculate Mother of God all of the graces and gifts in order that the pious Union, in the moral body and in the present and future individuals, may always exist in the Church of God with the fullness of fruit and may be propagated

quickly in proportion to the needs of souls in whatever part of the world; the second end is that all, lay people and secular and religious clergy of whatever order, state and condition may have in Mary Most Holy, after Jesus Christ, the most perfect model of true zeal and perfect charity” (cfr. OOCC I, p. 7).

For personal and communal reflection:

We are already near to Christmas. We gaze at Jesus who is born and recollect ourselves, united together, meditating on these words of the Founder as if we ourselves had said them:

“MY GOD, WHO ARE YOU AND WHO AM I? WHO AM I BEFORE YOU? WHAT DID YOU DESIRE ME TO BE BEFORE YOU?” (cf. OOCC X, 482);

“COME LORD, DO NOT DELAY, BECAUSE I CANNOT BE WITHOUT YOU FOR A MOMENT” (cf. OOCC X, 277);

“AND WHEN I HAVE NOTHING ELSE TO USE FOR THIS END, I WILL NEVER CEASE TO PRAY THAT THERE BE ONE FOLD, AND ONE SHEPHERD, AND THUS I HOPE TO ARRIVE IN PARADISE TO ENJOY THE FRUITS OF THE APOSTOLATE OF JESUS CHRIST FOR ALL ETERNITY” (cf. OOCC I, 129-130);

“THE PIOUS UNION DOES NOT HAVE A NEW OBJECTIVE, BUT THE ETERNAL LAW OF CHARITY” (OOCC IV, 317).

To the entire Union of Catholic Apostolate in every part of the world, a Blessed Christmas!

Donatella Acerbi,