
"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 463

Friends of the Bridegroom

Who is Fr Kristopher Kralka sac?



Since 2002 I have been a member of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate and, even at the time of seminary formation, God gave me a desire to be involved as a priest in a special way in the work of the new evangelization and formation of the formators of evangelizers.

I have been the director of the *Pallottine School of New Evangelization*, in Lublin, Poland since 2010. We also established a worship band 'Following Jesus', where I write and sing worship music and I am the founder and

general moderator of the praying community 'Friends of the Bridegroom'.

Father, you are the director of the *Pallottine School of New Evangelization*. What is the school about?

The school is not primarily a building, but a group of people who have experienced God in their lives, people who, through their testimony of life and the proclamation of the Gospel and the formation of the disciples of Jesus, want to reach out to the hearts of modern man with the Good News. They preach the gospel with a new zeal, searching for new methods and ways of communicating. The *Pallottine School of New Evangelization* organises numerous retreats for youth, adults and priests, we publish books and records, we organize *Evenings of Glory* when we praise the Lord, also prayers for healing. Our office coordinates various activities of evangelization carried out in Poland and England.

'Friends of the Bridegroom' Community – what is it?

The 'Friends of the Bridegroom' Community is one of numerous new communities in the catholic church, which grew out of the experience of charismatic renewal. This Community gathers people from all states of life – laity living in marriages or alone, seminarians, consecrated brothers and sisters and priests – into one reality, which is the image of the People of God in its unity and diversity of vocations. Its members have a common desire to enamour people of Jesus Christ. Through the

formation of evangelizers the community wishes to strengthen the church and to raise awareness of the universal vocation of christians to proclaim the gospel.

'Friends of the Bridegroom' is a Community of formation and evangelization, where each of its members daily reflects on the Word of God, leads a sacramental life, and is committed to the proclamation of the gospel in the local parish where it comes together. We have developed a specific program of formation to lead to a deep rootedness in God, to living the gospel every day and to witnessing to the faith. Currently we have 85 communities, bringing together 7,500 people in Poland and in England, all with the same name, spirituality, mission and charism.

Where did the idea for the establishment of such a Community come from?

Frankly, it would be hard to make it up. The Community was born in 2010, thanks to a meeting with and the cooperation of the Charismatic Community from Ozarow Mazowiecki and also my own experience in the work of evangelization – and, of course, the inspiration of God.

When proclaiming the kerygma, the basic message of the christian faith, we saw the need to create space for spiritual growth within a community structure, offering specific formation and deepening one's knowledge of God, which often many adult people find missing. A 'community', as such, encourages and enables the development of the spirituality of all its members and the sharing of this experience with loved ones. It thus creates an atmosphere within the parish of a 'living church' and not an anonymous crowd.

What is the impact of the charism of St Vincent Pallotti on your work?

The spirituality of Pallotti strongly permeates everything that we do every day.

First of all it inspires our desire for cooperation between different states of life in the work of proclaiming the Word, which was so important for Pallotti. In our communities and the *Pallottine*



School of New Evangelization we have both lay people and clergy [not only Pallottines but also diocesan priests], as well as nuns and members of other congregations. We stand in unity, because Jesus connects us and we enrich ourselves because of this diversity. Whatever we do – all is done to the infinite glory of God!

The *Pallottine School of New Evangelization* as well as the 'Friends of the Bridegroom' Community are places for formation of lay apostles who learn there how to evangelize according to the state in which they live.

At your Masses and sermons crowds of young people come and even larger crowds gather for the 'Evenings of Glory'. What is it that attracts young people?

I strongly believe that they are attracted by a desire for the living God, the God who is close to us human beings, the God whom they experience during our evangelization. Everything that we do is done precisely to that end, to lead to that meeting – of the heart of man with the heart of God. This is after all the desire in every human being! We create worship music, which is primarily a prayer and we preach the gospel to share the witness of our lives with people of today just in order to show the truth of God, which so often they do not know. Many of these young people then enter our communities and allow Jesus to change their lives as they grow in their faith.

At one period of your life you fought with God. Does that experience help in the new evangelization?

I was raised in an average Catholic family and our traditional faith allowed me to persevere through my teenage years. But then there arose within me many questions about God, the meaning of life, of faith – questions to which I found no answers – so I made the decision that there is no God! I left the church, I stopped praying, I fell into an anti-clerical environment and began to fight the church, believing that Poland was lagging behind due to Pope John Paul II and his pontificate. We thought that if the Pope died, Poland would be finally free. So we waited for when the Pope "would exit this world." It was scary!

Although my life appeared to be well organised superficially my heart was unhappy and I could not find my place in life. On the outside life was seamless, but deep down something was not right, there was emptiness ...

But God knew what was best for me, He knew the real needs of my heart. At the very moment in 2002, when John Paul II landed in Poland, a strange thing happened, something caught hold of my heart. In a strange and unprecedented way I was glued in front of the TV screen: the welcoming ceremony, the first Mass, another Mass ... It was amazing – I could not tear my eyes away from the TV! God by His words so strongly touched my heart ... flooded it with peace, joy and love... It was a shock! God flooded my heart with unconditional love and invited me to live for Him as a priest. My family and my friends were amazed at what happened to me but I myself had never planned it beforehand – I had no idea where to start! God then won over my heart and directed my steps so that I came across the Society of the Catholic Apostolate.

I share this testimony of my life repeatedly when I preach retreats. And it turns out inevitably that the story of what God has done to me also touches the hearts of other human beings and allows them too to open up to God – who is love and care for everyone, regardless of how far they may have drifted away. My experience of being 'a troubled youth' allows me to better understand the rebelliousness and spiritual dilemmas of other young men and women.

You often compare prayer to a conversation, and the need to constantly learn from God. You are a relatively young priest, Father, so how are you received by older priests?



I was ordained in 2009, so have been a priest for seven years now. I don't notice any problem in being received by the elderly and am willing to preach to older priests as well as young. I have delivered more than 10 series of retreats for priests, mostly in fact for mature priests and bishops. Many of them asked for guidance and advice, looking for wise strategies for evangelization in their parishes and in the formation of seminarians.

We can co-work together!

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06.11.16
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sac asia oceania e-bulletin

you commented...

on #246

It almost moved me to tears, seeing the pictures of the sad, sad destruction of the Immaculate Church in Al-Tahira in Quaraqosh, Iraq. I had read up a little about the resolute and brave Christians in Iraq some time ago and how they have remained faithful in spite of the persecution by ISIS. If my information is correct, it seems that this Christian Foundation is extremely old, perhaps going back to foundation by one of the Twelve Apostles. These Christians of the Chaldean Rite are greatly to be admired. We have prayed on many occasions for them at the Prayer of the Faithful at Mass and **will continue to do so**. Their unshakeable faith and faithfulness are a tremendous inspiration to me. I have copied and pasted the beautiful prayer by Fr Rebwar Basa O.A.O.C. and will repeat it often.

Your Bulletin #221, quoted in your email, was circularised before we started getting them. Would you be able to send me a copy of that Bulletin? I would love to read about the request of the UAC in Poland and to read the information about the children and the distressing situation of the Christians in Iraq.

BR 15.11.16