

E-BULLETIN #106

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

item 199

my vision of the apostolate we serve



There is much that can be said about the Union that St Vincent set up and much is written in his diaries and commented on by those who have studied his life. As a lay member of the Union I address you from that perspective, using language that is less 'churchy'. In doing so I am encouraged by the simplicity and down to earth language used by Pope Francis.

Pallotti is clear about the work we should be doing. First we are to try to rekindle faith wherever and whenever we can. Second we are to engage in charitable action that will make visible the reality of God in our world and be the face of Christ to all we encounter. Third we must acknowledge the power of prayer and be committed to the apostolate of prayer so that our mission will always remain the very mission of Christ himself.

St Vincent may well have had the words of **St Teresa of Avila** in mind when he wrote on his vision for the apostolate:

"Christ has no body but yours,
 No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
 Yours are the eyes with which he looks with
 Compassion on this world,
 Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
 Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
 Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
 Yours are the eyes, you are his body."

When I ask myself how do I carry out the work he wanted us to engage in, I am compelled to look at my own attitude first and see is this what **I want** or is it what God wants. Allow me to borrow from the world of literature to help me explain my approach. Steinbeck's novel 'Cannery Row' is set in Monterey, California. The character in the novel casts a cold eye on the town and its inhabitants. He sees nothing but robbers, pimps and rogues of every description not to mention what he calls the womenfolk of the town. He concludes that a thunderbolt from heaven is needed to bring them to their senses. But the author suggests that had he looked through a different lens he might have seen saints and angels in the making, and holy men making their way into the Kingdom, and he would be describing the same scene. The point being it is all in the act of seeing and our own attitude towards our fellow pilgrims.

In trying to bring this concept of **seeing** from the world of literature into the world of theology permit me to paraphrase St. Augustine who advised his monks that if you go looking for what is good in the world and its

people you may be rewarded by finding God, but if you search for the bad in everyone you will be punished by finding it. So my first point is that a positive, prayerful, charitable but truthful approach is necessary in trying to meet the objectives of the apostolate as set out by St Vincent. I hear an echo of him in what Pope Francis said about our sinful world: "that sin properly assumed is the privileged place of personally finding Jesus Christ our Saviour, of rediscovering the deep meaning that he has for me. In short it is the possibility to live the wonder of having been saved". It might be a good idea for us all to take a few minutes every day to ponder on the immensity of God's mercy that is implicit in the Pope's message and on the sheer immensity of God's love and mercy contained in the writings of St Vincent.

My second point is that Pallotti wanted an apostolate formed in love rather than out of duty and I think there is a clear message here as to how we conduct our weekly/monthly meetings. We need to come not just to fulfil a commitment we made but to help form the apostolate by our presence. St Vincent knew how much more can be achieved when priests, laity and religious work together with a common objective.

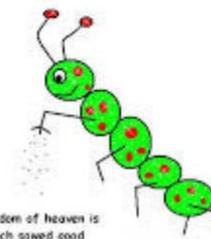
Has St Vincent given us an impossible mission? He knew it was not going to be easy when he wrote 'the harder the ground the harder we must dig'. He sets two ideals before the members of the apostolate. First God wills all people to be saved and the only reason for our creation is to make our way through time until we reach his blissful eternity. Second God has willed that all people should be saved by other people. We have been entrusted by God with a mission which rightfully belongs to God himself. We are back to Teresa of Avila. For St Vincent the realisation that God gives us the riches of his only Son's redemption should further our cooperation with God as though we were his associates. In short, we are making the reality of God visible in our world when we co-operate fully with the presence of the Risen Christ that is in each one of us.

The only way that I can get my head around this deep understanding of the mystery of the incarnation, is to start my day with the following prayer: "*O Jesus, through the most pure heart of Mary I offer you myself this day so that you can pour your love and charity, your compassion and mercy, into my heart. Help me to make visible your love and charity, your compassion and mercy, to everyone I encounter this day*". So my third point is that we have to create the space in ourselves to let God speak through us and the best way to do this is through prayer.

All of us are called by God but it is important to recognise the different kinds of call. Pallotti saw the role of the priest as that of another Christ and to have the same thirst for souls as Christ had. He saw the role of the religious sisters and brothers as being able to increase vocations, convert sinners and spread the faith by living holy and prayerful lives. He saw that the laity, just because of their vocation, can reach people in their homes, through their relatives, in conversation with friends and companions in the market square or in the shop, in the bank or in their professions, in art, hotels, colleges and universities. In other words, we are to bloom wherever we are planted. In this way Christ is brought into the market place of the world. This is a true apostolate. Our daily good example, actions, material help and especially our prayers can become powerful means of spreading the faith and saving one's neighbour.

To conclude I have chosen two pieces of scripture and a blessing, which I think can help us to prepare for our apostolate in the way Jesus would want us to. Jesus revealed who He was and how the kingdom was near through His words, His actions and His table fellowship.

The first piece of scripture is based on the sower, with which you all are very familiar. This parable is about God's Word and if my words are to become God's Word, I need to take on board the main images in this parable. The soil is our heart; therefore I must look at what is in my heart. Are there weeds, rocks, thorns there preventing the seed from taking root? If so, I will have to remove them in order to give Christ the voice that St Teresa spoke of in her prayer.



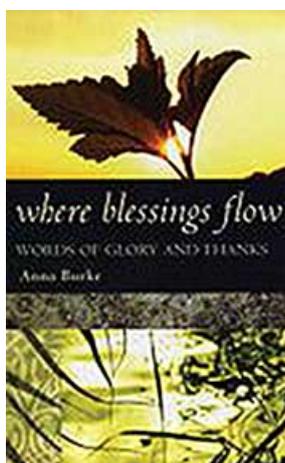
Matt 13:24- The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.

The second parable is the story of Zacchaeus. In this parable I am placing myself in the crowd following Jesus. How would I have reacted when Jesus went and invited Zacchaeus to come down and join Him for dinner? Would I have been one of the murmurers questioning the wisdom of God? In this parable Jesus reveals the reality of God in Himself by His words, actions and table fellowship. He invites a man despised by the crowd to come down and so that they may have dinner together. The fact that Zacchaeus responds shows that, no matter how we have strayed, the seed planted by God in all of us at our creation can be nurtured back to life.



This is precisely what Jesus was showing us through this act of table fellowship. St Vincent was deeply aware of the importance of this approach to evangelisation and he put hospitality at the heart of Pallottine spirituality and our endeavours to rekindle faith and Christian charity.

I have taken this blessing from Anna Burke's book 'Where blessings flow' and it is my New Year wish to all our UAC groups here in Ireland and around the world.



- I bless your search with the Light of Christ. May it burn eternally in your life.
- I bless your journey with the Sign of Christ. May it protect you at every moment.
- I bless your struggle with the Water of Christ. May it wash away your sins.
- I bless your footstep with the Oil of Christ. May it strengthen your purpose.
- I bless your days with the Holiness of Christ. May it sanctify your decisions.
- I bless your speaking with the Mind of Christ. May it soften your responses.
- I bless your hearing with the Heart of Christ. May it open your understanding.
- I bless your loving with the Blood of Christ. May it deepen your promise.
- I bless your working with the Hand of Christ. May it ease your burden.
- I bless your playing with the Laughter of Christ. May it rest your spirit.
- I bless your thinking with the Gentleness of Christ. May it unlock your insight.
- I bless your fearing with the Calmness of Christ. May it heal your anxiety.
- I bless your hoping with the Victory of Christ. May it lead you to your destiny.

Mr Patrick Maguire – NCC President – IRELAND
30.01.14
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item 200

transfer of membership

The General Council gave consent to the definite transfer of the following members from the **Epiphany** Province (Nagpur Province) to the **Mother of God** Province, based in Milwaukee. This happened in accordance with LSAC, n 368, and in accordance with the provisions envisaged in the Permanent Collaboration contract between these Provinces. This transfer is effective from January 1st, 2014.

Fr James Palakudy
Fr Joy Thachil
Fr Stephen Kaichiramattathil

Fr Davies Edassery
Fr Joseph Dominic Elukunnel
Fr Joseph Koyickal

The new members were formally welcomed at a celebration and dinner.

Joe Koyickal sac [IC] – Milwaukee – USA
22.01.14
joekoyicka04@yahoo.com

you commented...

on #105

Again two powerful stories of people living and loving through adversity. Not sure I would have such faith and belief if I were in their shoes.

CS 02.02.14

I am sure many of the readers of our electronic bulletin were touched by the real life story of our confrere **Andrew Bafeltowski sac [WA]** .

During my visitation to the Christ the King Province in Poland in November 2013, I got the opportunity to talk personally with Fr Andrew. I knew his personal story before as well. He wanted to talk to me and I met him in his room. He was seated in his wheelchair. What was fascinating about this young confrere was that there was no sign of any desperation on his face; he spoke with the same passion of a newly-ordained. He has many pastoral plans for the future. He spoke much about new evangelisation and our charism. He emphasised faith formation. I found in him a Christian, a priest full of hope and love for the Society and the Church.

Then I spoke to Fr Andrew about our bulletin. Why not share your personal story to our Pallottine family? He asked me 'what could be a topic?' I told him that the challenge of new evangelisation, and our charism in response to it, was a big topic for the Pallottine family. Then he suggested that perhaps he could share how the pain and suffering could be used as a means of evangelisation. We exchanged email ids.

Upon returning to Rome, in the midst of many other concerns, I forgot to contact Fr Andrew again. Then came his mail after a few days. He wanted to write. And, as he said himself, he wrote this article with one finger. And as you realise, he also has an excellent ability to write.

The reason for this short note is to convey the fact that there are many such untold stories in the Church and in our own Pallottine family. Not everyone has the chance that I enjoy to meet with such people, so usually I ask them to share their experience for the benefit of all.

There is nothing as powerful as life testimony. We can speak many words but they need to be anchored in real life. Faith, hope and love - are they real in my life? Will faith sustain me in a moment like the accident that happened to Fr Andrew? Will hope maintain in me a spirit of positivity or will I fall into desperation and depression? Will love help me to overcome even the worst of division and enmity? The two young priests of this issue of our e-bulletin show that such things are possible, even if the vast majority of us will not measure up to such a level of heroism.

One thing that the readers of this bulletin can do is to pass it on to your friends or get in touch with Fr Ray. He will send the issues weekly with the regular Sunday good morning. This bulletin is here to stay and is fast becoming a global communication network for the entire Pallottine world. Please do not hesitate to share your own stories and reflections. We need to connect to each other in the spirit of our Founder, St Vincent, crossing national boundaries. Let us be strengthened and sustained by many such real stories of God's love in action in the lives of people all over the world.

Greetings from our youngest mission in St Lucia in the Caribbean. I am on visitation to Barbados, St Lucia and Belize. This is another story to be told, on another occasion.

JN 02.02.14

What a blessing ...to know of these priests, Pallottine or diocesan. Thanks!

MR 04.02.14