



E-BULLETIN #108

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

item 203

Pallotti in the Caribbean

BACKGROUND

St Vincent Pallotti 'arrived' in the Caribbean in 1912 with the Pallottine sisters who were invited by the Jesuits to **Belize**. At that time it was known as British Honduras. The sisters actively participated in building the local Church; they were involved in many pastoral activities, they assisted the priests in their missionary trips into the interior and more importantly the sisters were known for their schools and hospitals. Today the majority of their community is of local origin and the sisters pray for vocations so that the work they have started may continue. Meanwhile due to a lack of resources some projects have been handed over to the State, or to the local Church.

From the beginning the Sisters had hoped that Pallottines would come to join them. They prayed that this would happen for almost 100 years. In 2008 four Pallottine priests from the Polish province of *Christ the King* came to **Barbados**. Initially the priests in Barbados and the sisters in Belize had no contact although both Barbados and Belize are considered as part of the Caribbean. Following a first meeting in 2012, and subsequent discussions, Fr Lukasz Ciupa was appointed a chaplain for the sisters in the following year.

The Pallottines, invited by the Archbishop of Castries, decided to extend their mission to **Saint Lucia**. Two from Barbados were sent to Laborie and Augier in September 2012 thus launching a new community on the neighbouring island of Saint Lucia. So at present there are **5 priests in 3 countries of the region**.



BARBADOS

In Barbados the Pallottines have been entrusted with various pastoral responsibilities, parish pastoral ministry, chaplaincy to the schools and hospitals etc. They have been given care of the relatively new but very vibrant community of St Dominic's. In 2013 the community celebrated its 40th anniversary, and the death of its first pastor and founder Fr Taylor who was a Dominican. The parish was run by several Dominican priests and a Holy Ghost Father. St Vincent Pallotti joined the company of St Dominic and another Dominican, St Martin de Pores, whose statues are located in the church. St Martin is a very popular saint in the Americas.



St Vincent and his charism have greatly influenced the community. This is evident in the several pastoral formation programs for lay collaboration that were introduced as well as a revival of ministries like catechists, Sunday school, extraordinary ministers of holy communion, lectors, liturgy group, altar servers, and choir. The community lacked facilities so the parish, encouraged by the bishop and led by Pallottines, built a three storey pastoral centre consisting of a hall for 300, kitchen, offices, classrooms and accommodation for priests. This happened in the span of only 2 years. The parish council was reinstated to represent the community and all ministries. The number of leaders and volunteers has grown rapidly. Among the many successful projects was the new catechetical program, for children and youth.

Barbados is a protestant country with small Catholic minority which has to defend its identity. Sunday school, therefore, has to provide the necessary Catholic education for children who attend public and secular schools, especially in the preparation for First Communion and Confirmation. There were times when the local society was hostile to Catholics and, in fact, the Church was suspended in the country for many years. The new catechetical programs were based on the Montessori method for children and interactive, small group classes for youth. The changes were so successful that they were implemented as the standard policy for the whole diocese.

Many of the pastoral initiatives introduced by the Pallottines were not new but they were never previously implemented. We have to look at the wider context to understand why. The Catholic church in Barbados has unique challenges. It is a small community with only 2,000 practicing Catholics who attend Mass regularly on Sunday, with a limited number of priests, located on an island therefore naturally isolated, with little access to many pastoral and educational resources.

The 'novelties' introduced by the Pallottines were not revolutionary. They were just simple pastoral practices, widely known in churches with an older Catholic tradition. These changes emphasised regular pastoral ministry, accents on the liturgy and the sacraments, with an emphasis on the Eucharist. There was an urgent need to renew the focus on the Church's teaching on social and moral issues.

The proposed changes introduced by Pallottines were widely accepted and supported by the parish community. The parish centre, built in less than 2 years, was a visible sign of that support.

St Vincent Pallotti has inspired all the pastoral endeavours at St Dominic's especially the inauguration of the completely new Care Ministry. This followed an urgent call to reach out to



those in need. It started with a soup kitchen which serves 100 meals weekly. Then empowerment programmes were introduced, legal aid, counselling, educational assistance for children with reading difficulties and special needs, etc. The number of volunteers has grown to 50 people with constant support – monetary and in-kind – from the community. Recently the ministry has introduced a ‘hampers for the poor’ programme and breakfast for children. Every morning volunteers cook breakfast for 50-80 pupils from nearby schools who come from poor families and may not otherwise have a warm meal a day. The community as well as the donors’ response to the new programmes has been overwhelming and has been commented on by the local media.

We can say that St Dominic’s parish is flourishing. According to the diocesan census the number of people attending regular Sunday Mass has grown over the last 2 years by 100. This is evidence of how effective are the pastoral programs introduced to the community.

This year the community was privileged to host Fr Jacob Nampudakam, the Rector General, for the feast of St Vincent Pallotti who at the end of January visited Pallottine communities in the Caribbean. He was warmly received by parishioners who expressed to him simply how happy they are to have the Pallottine priests ministering to them.

St Vincent surprised us again when a family of our regular holiday visitors from the USA presented us with an authentic relic of St Vincent Pallotti, “ex corpus” sealed and certified just one day after his canonization in Rome in 1963. Fr Jacob blessed the congregation with the relic after every Sunday Mass.

Thank you St Vincent for your guidance and constant support.

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item 204

the Pallottine call

- to proclaim Jesus Christ and the Good News!



The relationship, the message, the work and New Evangelization are all an integral part of the charism that God has given us personally, we who have found it in the various congregations within the Union of Catholic Apostolate as well as within the very structure of the Union that includes the laity in all dimensions of life.

Having recently come to the General Council of the Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate in Rome, I have experienced the broader scope of the Pallottine family – with laity, priests, sisters and brothers – in a renewed energy to revive faith, increase love and foster unity in Jesus Christ.

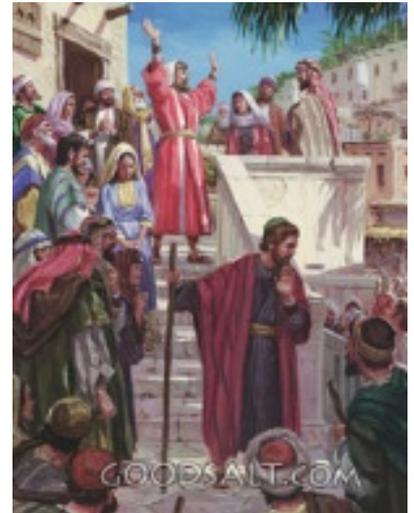
For me, the first key to opening ourselves to the grace of our charism is to enter into the atmosphere and activity of the Cenacle – to be with Mary and with the Body of Christ in our own time and to find there the renewal of several elements:

- the Word of God
- the Community of Sisters and Brothers
- the transforming action of prayer

- the outpouring of the Holy Spirit
- the impetus to go forth to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord

The second key opens the door OUTWARD into the marketplace among the people, wherever we come together with them. Our General Chapter theme spurs us on as Pallottine Sisters to evangelize, but it also calls us to share with others what the Spirit is doing at this time and how the Spirit is moving us in harmony with the Church and its ongoing call to bring everyone to know the love and joy of Jesus Christ.

It's a type of renewed resolution to live out our charism that is so in tune with the needs of our times. We have been given two major opportunities in these days to respond with greater enthusiasm to our call by God and to the call of the Church. We celebrated a New Year with its tradition of making new resolutions. We came together for the Feast of St Vincent Pallotti – the adoration, the liturgy, the homilies and the Pallottine Family were all joined to call us to renewal. The energy was unmistakable. Jesus is still calling us to a combination of “waiting” to receive power and “going out” to all nations to spread the Reign of God.



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sac asia oceania e-bulletin

you commented...

on #106 Just last night we used E-Bulletin #106 during our monthly UAC meeting. How connected we feel to our companions in Ireland, speaking the same language, sharing the mission of Jesus through the Pallottine Charism. Thanks for putting this together. The e-bulletins are becoming a tool for us to use with our members.

MR 19.02.14

on #107