

## E-BULLETIN #135

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

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item 256

### **"God, in his mercy, inspired me..."**

A recent edition of the Asia-Oceania E-Bulletin focused on the Divine Mercy devotion. Reading Fr. Stanislas Filipek's article on the effect God's mercy had in the heart and soul of a young man who had been badly scarred during the genocide I thought of Vincent Pallotti and his experience of God's mercy.



An incident in St Vincent's life that stands out for me took place in Camaldoli in July 1839. Vincent went to the monastery on 10 July to recuperate and remained there until 28 Oct. He recorded his experience in these words:

"It was in 1839 and ... Jesus Christ wished to show me mercy ....I left for the hermitage of the Camaldolese Monks near Frascati with the trust and confidence that God had disposed to give me in that hermitage, the graces and the illuminations which I was in need of, in order to write on the Society (Union) of Catholic Apostolate; this confidence and trust was upheld by the obedience I showed to my confessor ..... On arrival at the hermitage God in his mercy inspired me to attend seriously during the course of several days to a reordering of my poor spirit, **and so I found myself immersed in an immense sea of divine mercy.**"

Vincent wrote powerfully of his experience of God's infinite mercy and love and of the transforming effect it had throughout the remainder of his life. He could later pray:

"My Jesus (...) make me always aware of and experience my nothingness, so that I may be all you, lost in you, transformed in you, in the Father, in the Holy Spirit and that I may be all of your attributes, of your will and of your love".

A poem on God's mercy by the late Jessica Powers (Sr. Miriam of the Holy Spirit) also struck a chord for me:

## The Mercy of God

I am copying down in a book from my heart's archives  
the day that I ceased to fear God with a shadow fear.  
Would you name it the day that I measured my column of virtue  
and sighted through windows of merit a crown that was near?  
Ah, no, it was rather the day I began to see truly  
that I came forth from nothing and ever toward nothingness tend,  
that the works of my hands are a foolishness wrought in the presence  
of the worthiest king in kingdom that never shall end.  
I rose up from the acres of self that I tended with passion  
and defended with flurries of pride;  
I walked out of myself and went into the woods of God's mercy,  
and here I abide.  
There is greenness and calmness and coolness, a soft leafy covering  
from the judgment of sun overhead,  
and the hush of His peace, and the moss of His mercy to tread.  
I have naught but my will seeking God; even love burning in me  
is a fragment of infinite loving and never my own.  
and I fear God no more; I go forward to wander forever  
in the wilderness made of His infinite mercy alone.



In this poem, Sr. Miriam with the deft brush-strokes of an artist uses words to evoke visual images. I like Vincent's image of being immersed in a sea of divine mercy and Miriam's lovely image of walking out of self and into the woods of God's mercy and abiding there.

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## “what does Divine Providence want of me?”

**Franz Denis Reinisch sac**, a member of the Sacred Heart Province [Germany] was born on 01 Feb 1903 in Feldkirch-Levis (Austria). He died, decapitated by the Nazis, in Brandenburg on 21 Aug 1942.

Following his final exams Franz studied law for one year at the University of Innsbruck and Kiel. In 1923 he participated in a thirty day Ignatian retreat. Little by little the decision to become a priest, in order to win souls for Christ, matured within him. With this goal before him he began to study philosophy at Innsbruck in autumn of 1923 and in 1925 entered the Major Seminary of Bressanone. On 29 Jun 1928 he was ordained a diocesan priest.

Shortly after, on 03 Nov 1928, he entered the Pallottines. For 2 years he taught philosophy to candidates for the priesthood in Untermerzbach, then studied theology himself for a year in Salzburg, and engaged in various pastoral activities. He became enthusiastic about the then new apostolic movement based at Schönstatt, founded by Pallottine Fr. Josef Kentenich. Franz saw in this movement a modern realisation of the apostolic ideas of St Vincent Pallotti. In 1938 the superiors entrusted him with the spiritual care of the men who were enrolled in the Movement.

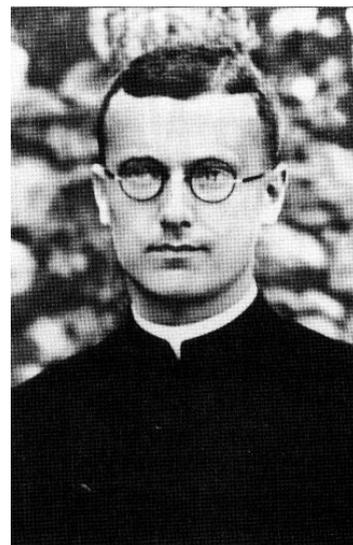
After expressing his disapproval of the oath of allegiance to Hitler the secret police in Berlin (Gestapo), on 12 Sep 1940, forbade him to hold meetings or preach in the whole territory of the Reich. Several months later, on 01 Mar 1941, he was ordered to get ready for military service.

That command provoked a great interior struggle within. In his diary of 01 March he wrote: “What does Divine Providence want of me? For a long time I have had a sense that I will not remain alive much longer. ... And perhaps that hour has come? ... *Mater et Regina ter admirabilis* (Mother and Queen thrice-admirable), help me!”

In that state of mind he sought advice from Fr. Kentenich, according to whom he could remain faithful to his decision to sacrifice his own life, but must not throw it away. The eventual sacrifice should be left to the providence of God, which would manifest itself in the circumstances. After that Fr. Franz entrusted himself totally to the Lord and to his Most Holy Mother Mary, offering his life for the realisation of the will of God. He wrote, among other things: “Christ and Mother Thrice-Admirable, give me the clarity and the determination, the spirit of fortitude and of love, but also that of penitence and of expiation. Whatever happens, I want to be ready to do the will of the Father! ... Vincent Pallotti, founder and father, pray for me!”

Through these spiritual experiences the decision not to take the oath of allegiance to Hitler became even clearer. Even if different people, such as the Apostolic Administrator of Innsbruck, the Provincial Rector of the Pallottines in Friedberg and two military chaplains, while appreciating his personal conviction, advised him to revise his decision, he, in conscience, felt obliged to refuse the oath asked of him. This refusal cost him arrest, imprisonment in Berlin and the trial which was held on 07 Jul 1942, concluding with his being sentenced to death.

According to the testimony of Rev. Heinrich Kreuzberg who, as military chaplain of the prison in Berlin at the time, assisted Fr. Reinisch for six weeks, he repeatedly examined the correctness of his decision and said once: “With the grace of God I do not wish to and cannot act against my conscience. As a Christian I can never take the oath of allegiance to a man like Hitler... Every time I make an examination of conscience, I cannot decide any differently... Someone must protest against such an abuse of authority, and I feel called to make such a protest”. To his Provincial Superior he wrote: “The love of Christ urges me on to do everything for the infinite glory of God, for the destruction of sin and for the salvation of souls, and for this I am also





The Beheading of Cosmas and Damian, by Fra Angelico

ready to die". Fr. Reinisch was up all night praying the night before his execution, which happened by beheading on 01 Aug 1942. His mortal remains now rest in Vallendar, at the Shrine of the *Mater Ter Admirabilis*.

In the general archives of the Society there is a copy of a letter of the Rector General addressed to the Holy Father and sent on 09 Aug 1943, in which all of the circumstances of the death of Fr. Reinisch are laid out. In reply Cardinal Luigi Maglione, the Secretary of State, said that, faced with that example, Pius XII was unsure whether to express his condolences for the loss of such a valiant member or to congratulate the Society for the glory which he merited.

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## sac asia oceania e-bulletin

### you commented...

#### on #134

Many thanks for today's bulletin with the stories of two women imbued with the vision of living their lives to the full wherever they were planted. The article on Elisabetta Sanna certainly clarified for me the life and vocation of a faithful woman. Also many thanks Mark for outlining the life and giftedness of Pat and her many years of living Vincent's charism and in particular her work within UAC.

CS 24.08.14