

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

item 309

a Pallottine in the Antarctic!



Fr Nestor Moron sac, a member of the *Mother of Divine Love* Province, Argentine Delegation, is part-time chaplain to the Argentine Air Force VII Brigade in Moreno, Buenos Aires. Members of the Brigade went on a spell of duty in the Antarctic in December and Nestor was asked to accompany them. Because of his commitments in the parish of San Patricio, in San Antonio de Areco, he could not go at the time but agreed to travel in January.

The trip was postponed twice because of adverse weather conditions, but finally on January 20 he travelled with a contingent to the air base in **Rio Gallegos** [the southernmost urban settlement on the Patagonian coast and capital of the Province of Santa Cruz]. However once again conditions were not favourable and they spent two days awaiting a 'window' in the weather to fly south. Nestor celebrated St Vincent Pallotti's feast day with the group in Rio Gallegos and, at 3.30 on January 23, they were informed that they had 20 minutes to get ready for their flight to the base in the Antarctic.

The flight lasted 4.5 hrs and Nestor writes: "The plane began its descent and we saw appear a mountain surrounded by eternal ice and islands of floating ice as previously only seen in books. On leaving the plane and walking on the Antarctic I felt like the astronauts who walked on the moon, the Pallottine community had arrived on the white continent."

Nestor quickly set to work hearing confessions and that evening celebrated Mass. He blessed and enthroned a picture of St Vincent Pallotti in the chapel of the Air Base. The rhythm of the following days was to hear confessions and celebrate daily Mass, visit other bases nearby and talk with the personnel who spend from 12 to 14 months at the base and with others who rotate every three months. He was able to practice his English with scientists from the Czech Republic and Poland, and Portuguese with those from Brazil and proudly raised the Irish flag and that of the Community of Clonmacnoise, San Antonio de Areco.



Those who are stationed at the Base number from 180 to 250, depending on the time of year. Visits from the priest chaplains are much appreciated. Those working there shared with Nestor their tasks in measuring the effects of global warming, in weather mapping and palaeontology studies.



There is an old saying that “you know when you are going to the Antarctic but you never know when you will leave it.” Nestor spent a week there and experienced temperatures which ranged from 12 centigrade below zero to 40 degrees below. He remarked that the beauty of creation and the profound silence made him aware of the presence of God and of the hunger for God of those stationed there. Every Sunday a Minister of the Eucharist leads a celebration of the Word and distributes Communion between visits from a priest chaplain. Before a group ventures out on a mission they always visit the little chapel because each mission involves risk.

Congratulations to Nestor on this milestone in our history—confirmation of ‘join the Pallottines and see the world’!

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item 310

why do I like Pallotti...and his Union?

Why do I like St Vincent Pallotti and his idea of the Union of the Catholic Apostolate?

In the 1960s I had the privilege of working with a number of German Pallottine missionaries in very remote areas of the state of Chhattisgarh, in northern India. My constant interaction with them provided much insight into the life of Pallottines and their founder, St Vincent Pallotti. Among his many saintly qualities what impressed me most was his vision of the Union of Catholic Apostolate (UAC) within the Catholic church.

The German missionaries told me that ‘Death to the Jesuits’ and ‘Down with the Pope’ were slogans constantly heard in Rome during the times of St Vincent. Preaching the word of God became extremely difficult and thus the ‘man of ideas’ emerged in him. During those turbulent times Pallotti came up with the idea of spreading the message of the Gospel assisted by the efforts of each baptized Catholic. This ‘innovation’ gave birth to the Union of Catholic Apostolate. It was truly an innovative and unique idea in the church at a time when everyone thought that it was only the responsibility of priests to become missionaries.

It is this unique idea that led Pope John XXIII to make the remarkable statement on the day of his canonization, 20th January, 1963: “Pallotti was an innovator of new ways whereby people could come to know and love God”.

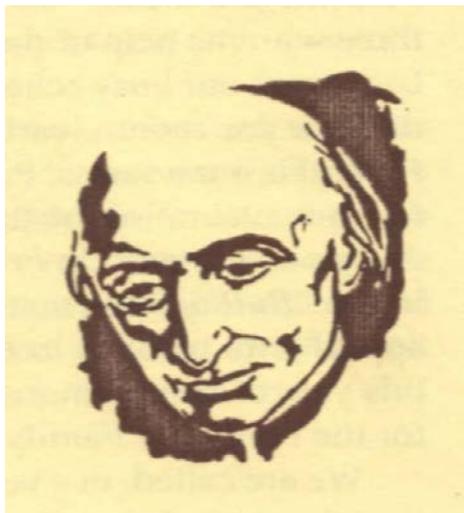
Vincent may have lived a century and half century ago but, looking at our own times, I realize that they are no different from the days when he walked the streets of Rome. Today belief in the Gospel message among Catholics is diminishing, faith in the Church is deteriorating, the pews in most of the gigantic churches the world over are often found empty due to lack of church goers, Catholic priests in the west have become an

endangered species, consecrated men and women focus more on material resources than the words of the Gospel, world religions are fighting among themselves to establish the superiority of one over the other, and the economic disparities among people worldwide are becoming very conspicuous.

It was such troubled times that made St Vincent say:

“I would like to be medicine to strengthen the weak; I would like to be a soft bed, to let tired limbs rest from their fatigue; I would like to be a healing remedy and health, to heal the infirmities of the sick, handicapped, the injured, the deaf and the mute; I would like to be light to illuminate the spiritual and physical blindness; I would like to be life to awaken all the dead to a life of grace or a physical life, or to both. We, the Christians, are called to touch it, to make it our own and to take practical steps to alleviate it”.

As I understand it Pallotti wanted every baptized person, irrespective of their status in life, to realize that the task in front of Catholics is enormous and everyone has to put in his/her share to bring about the changes that the needs of the hour demand. It was this vision that made him convene the first meeting of UAC on July 14, 1835 with just 15 participants: 8 secular priests, 1 religious priest, and 6 lay people.



When I look back into my own life as a lay person, and an ardent follower of St Vincent Pallotti and his Union of Catholic Apostolate, I am often reminded of his visit to his aunt Candida Fiorani at Frascati, when he arrived barefoot without shoes and socks. On the way he gave his footwear to someone in need. He was always willing to share what he had, even though it was done at the cost of his own comfort and convenience.

May St Vincent Pallotti and his idea of Union of Catholic Apostolate give all of us, priests, sisters and lay people, strength to walk as dedicated persons through the troubled times in the world and in the church today!

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sac asia oceania e-bulletin

you commented...

on #161 Many thanks for your article in last week’s bulletin Anto. Sometimes I wonder who locally I could be reaching out to – of course there are aged facilities nearby – why have I not visited?? I know there is an avenue to do that through the parish, perhaps this is my local response.

CS 02.03.15