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

item 340

the pilgrim way

The months of June and July 2015 have left deep impressions in my heart and mind. I hope readers will not tire of reading material from myself in our Asia Oceania Bulletin. It has been no small achievement to compile an issue every Sunday across the last three and a half years. A humble effort to create communion and share information worldwide. I pray that readers will continue to contribute!

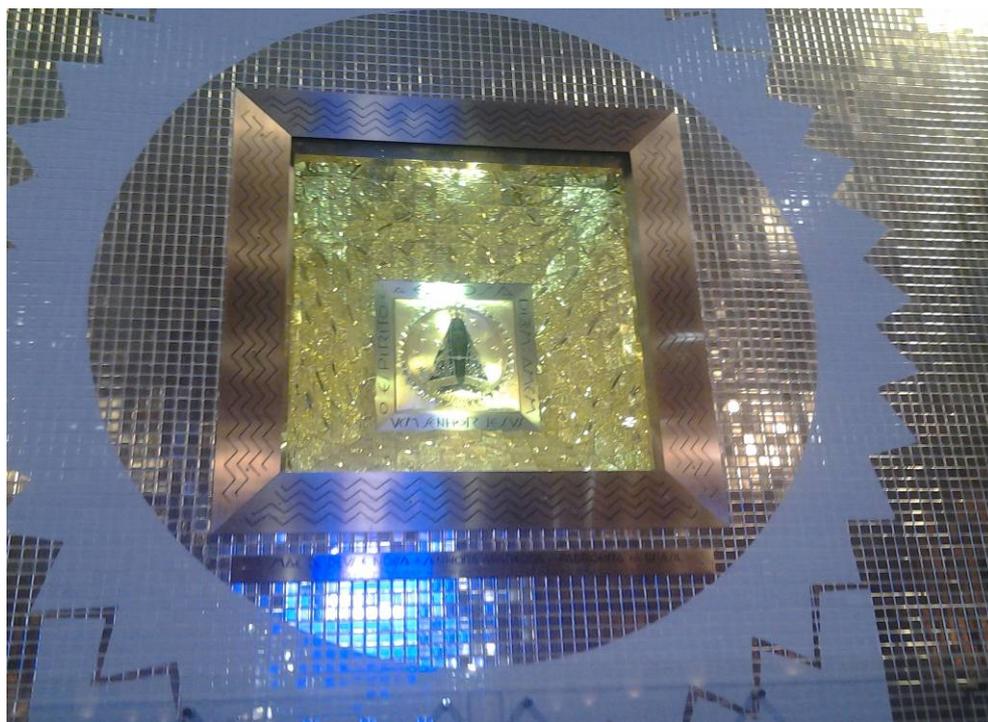
The month of June opened with the European Continental Meeting of our Society in Vienna, **Austria**. There is plenty on which to comment, but I will limit myself to saying that it seems to me that Europe will be strong to the extent that it remains faithful to its Christian roots. The pendulum of history swings but God, as well as nature itself, have a delicate way of maintaining the balance. If we look at human history lineally, and from a distance, we will realise that God, in his infinite wisdom, always directs our destiny to its logical end and in a way that only He can know. So there is nothing to be afraid of, or desperate about. Everything will fall into place at the right moment, which may not exclude massive suffering and pain – as happened in the past! The rich Christian tradition and culture of Europe are its innate wealth.

An account of my visit to **Mexico** was the subject of a previous article.

I write these few lines from Sao Paulo, after participating at the third UAC General Congress at Mariapolis, in **Brazil**. There seems to be a common thread that joins Mexico and Brazil: a profound devotion to our heavenly Mother, as *Our Lady of Guadalupe* and *Our Lady of Aparecida*. The former is the number one



Marian sanctuary in the world, while the latter is second! In both cases Our Lady appeared to simple local people. The little image at Guadalupe and the small black statue of Aparecida have since become the source of divine blessing to millions of people over centuries. A visit to these sanctuaries is indeed a pilgrimage of faith. Once again, for some people, it may all look very simplistic or devotional. But this is often God's way, revealing the keys to his Kingdom through the most ordinary and simple of people. The stories of Lourdes and Fatima are not really different. Long live Mary, the true teacher of Christian life and keeper of Catholic faith.



The UAC Congress was, no doubt, a celebration of communion and fraternity. It provides much joy to see that our founder St Vincent, and his charism, are known and loved in so many parts of the world. However what will the Union become if it does not remain a faith community, consisting of persons who try their best to live the Christian life with great humility, simplicity and charity! Will it stand the test of time if it is not built on anything less than the true spirit of Jesus? Does its structural organisation mean anything if there isn't a genuine conversion of the hearts of its members, a metanoia? If these essential Gospel values are lacking, the Union can even become a convenient platform to proclaim worldly ideologies and principles, often in a disguised manner.

It requires a tremendous amount of Christian and human maturity to become "authentic apostles of Jesus" and it is often a life-long spiritual journey. This principle applies to all the components of the Union. Hence it would be really wise if we do not hasten too much with apostolic commitment after two or three years of half-hearted or abbreviated formation. The aim should not be to include more names on the register at the UAC Secretariat in Rome but to form good and committed Christians who are in the service of God's people with great generosity of heart. Let us not shy away from inviting all the Pallottines to make that intense spiritual itinerary which our holy Founder made during his entire lifetime. Pallotti – mystic and apostle – is our spiritual guide.

I leave shortly for the **USA** to take part in the annual Pallottine retreat, followed by the North American Continental Meeting. The retreat, offered to all our confreres working in both the USA and Canada, is indeed a worthwhile effort. It will be based on Pallottine themes and given by Fr Pat Jackson together with a lay person, Mrs Lorraine McCarthy, both from Australia. I wish we could have more such retreats in the Pallottine world. One thing is very certain, that without knowing and loving the person, spirituality and charism of St Vincent, we will never be truly Pallottines. How nice it is when confreres, who have themselves been imbued with his spirit, explain to us various aspects of our Pallottine spiritual heritage!

This is true about the Union as well. Getting bogged down with structural organisation of the General Statutes without imbibing the spirit of our Founder is like placing the cart before the horse! In fact little time was dedicated, even during the current Congress, to sharing the spiritual and apostolic inspiration of Pallotti!



For me this remains a huge and a joy-filled challenge, to make Pallotti known and loved and discover more and more the great spiritual treasures of this Roman saint!

The summer months will be concluded with a visit to our mission in **Peru**. A new sisters group from India, the "*Cenacle Sisters of the Sacred Heart*", will establish its first international community in Peru, to work in conjunction with SAC men from the St Paul Province already ministering in collaboration with the Immaculate Conception Province. Three young sisters will soon leave for this distant mission, 3200 meters above sea level. They themselves will be barely aware of the challenges ahead of them, the extreme cold on the mountains, the different culture, the language, the solitude, the dangers on the road, the low atmospheric pressure etc. Yet they are "going out", as Pope Francis invites us all to do.

Congrats to these young ones [Anjaly, Chetana and Poonan] and may God protect them. Without such daring ventures, based on faith and in response to the Lord's invitation to share the Good News with God's people all over the world, we really do not stand a chance as Christians, or as consecrated persons or as members of the Union.

Additionally two young confreres from our French Region will leave for a new mission in **Vietnam** in October 2015. Another two, from the *Annunciation of the Lord* Province, Poland will leave for **Cuba** in January 2016. By then some others will likely have arrived in **Malawi** on another outreach. It is not that these entities have so many members to spare. But they feel compelled to go because God's people await us!

It is important to remember that the Union of Catholic Apostolate is not just a social, recreational group which comes together every now and then to sing a few hymns and have a meal together – a self-serving and self-referential group which will then not only have any future but may even become a fertile ground for competition and disunity. The UAC is a serious matter, a Cenacle community, following the dynamism of the Holy Spirit. That means – as is often said – entering, remaining and going out of the Cenacle to the peripheries of human existence to share the message of Jesus. I wish we could build up such selfless and committed Christians all over the world, but that can only be the work of God.

There are already many such wonderful souls in the Pallottine family, many missionaries, both confreres and sisters, working in really trying situations, and numerous lay people who have become active apostles in their own state of life!

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on #177