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

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item 341

### **"Let anyone who is thirsty....."**

As one of the General Councillors of our congregation – Pallottine Missionary Sisters – I was sent last year to Brazil, to support our sisters there, with whom I had previously been living for 18 years.

Our history in that country began 35 years ago when three pioneers, Srs Rita-Lore, Mathilde and Christina, travelled to the newly erected Diocese of Coroatá in the state of Maranhão. Together with the first Brazilian vocations, and through their grassroots work and simple prayerful life, they sowed the seeds of two parishes in the outskirts of Codó. Over time, and after asking for Pallottine support, three German priests subsequently arrived and found the pastoral ground already prepared. The sisters had invested in the training of lay leaders and tried enthusiastically to make the Pallottine charism known. Fr Angelo Londero sac and Fr João Batista Quaini sac were two of many who contributed much to growing that charism. In 2004 two large groups of lay members were welcomed as the first Brazilian lay communities of the UAC. Since then the family of the Union has met every month in these Codó parishes.



Today we sisters are a small group of 7 professed members and 2 candidates in formation. We live in three houses in a marginalized area. Our state of Maranhão occupies the last place in Brazil's human development index. Unemployment forces thousands to migrate. Seeing few prospects many teenagers and even children use drugs. Violence and numerous murders frighten everyone. Due to mis-appropriation of public funds, education and health care are poor. At the level of church life syncretism has crept in and sadly many Catholics mix faith with spiritualistic practices. Some Pentecostal churches try to demoralise Catholics who,

because of high mobility, no longer have roots in their rural communities and easily allow themselves to be deceived by promises of healing and prosperity. Few families are still intact.

Faced with the reality of being only a few sisters we try to witness to how Pallotti always acted, responding to needs and always looking for people with whom to collaborate. I would like to share some examples:

- Encountering a high rate of malnutrition and infant mortality, our first sisters adopted a local program called *Pastoral da Criança*, Children's Pastoral Ministry. It concerns itself with the development of the whole family, through the sharing of knowledge. Many groups of lay leaders were prepared who, in pairs, organised street groups with pregnant women and mothers of small children and taught healthy eating habits and how to prepare home remedies. Under the motto "I came that all children may have life in its fullness", volunteer leaders learned to fight against fatalism and passivity. Their commitment gave rise to a new experience of a God who is a lover of life, who gives abilities and calls all, leaders and mothers and fathers, to collaborate so that everyone, especially the most vulnerable children, may have life and hope. This work of the sisters awakened their own missionary identity in many women and men, leading to a generation of children who have grown up more healthy and intelligent. For many years we maintained a nursery specifically for malnourished children, that building now serving as a public school. This pastoral program has been so successful that it is now difficult to find a malnourished child in the city.

- Another need arose in country communities, weakened as a result of the rural exodus. As our Pallottine parishes have 50 and 80 of these communities respectively, and large areas in the city, priests are unable to give constant support to each of them. One of our sisters, Sílvia, has committed herself, with quite a bit of physical sacrifice, to



- accompanying rural communities. With permission of both the parish priest and the bishop she prepared extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. Now the Lord is present in the eucharist in the largest of these communities for which the laity take responsibility. Sr Silvia tirelessly visits and offers biblical formation.
- We lived for 14 years as a formation community on the outskirts of Teresina, capital of the state of Piauí. Near our house there were young people who spent their days and nights in the square, taking drugs and creating fear by robberies and assaults, which we also experienced in our own house. With some women who today are members of the UAC, we held monthly meetings early in the morning during which we prayed, studied Pallottine texts and drank coffee together. In one of these meetings Maria de Jesus suggested that we take coffee and cake for these young people and make friends with them.

This first contact led to a opening up of a new path: we managed to buy a house and, with several volunteer instructors, developed a program of tutoring, job training and cultural experiences. We began each day with a moment of spirituality, reading the Word of God (which also served as reading practice for the young men), and reflecting on it and on life. Now the sixth group of young people is

going through this experience of communion, of liberation and of learning new values. The families of the young people are invited to various meetings. Along with some Pallottine lay members and collaborators we have founded a *Pallottine Association for Education and Citizenship [APEC]* which hosts two other projects with youth. The Youth Secretariat of the Capital has recognised the quality of the work and helps with public funds. Today the works are conducted by collaborators, with Sr Avani visiting regularly in order to give support and supervision.

- With this experience in Teresina and her expertise in the area of social support, Sr Avani helps in the work of the *Mother of Divine Love Farm* near Codó, where Fr Orlando sac currently lives with nine drug addicts. With vision and great courage he builds better facilities with this group. The centre of their life there is a chapel for prayer, sharing and daily Mass. I want to mention that the UAC in Arapongas is contributing greatly to the construction of this farm, organising fundraising meals (“feijoadas”). And in Germany our sisters in Munich organise, with parishioners, a large Christmas bazaar with the proceeds helping to finance the employment of a social worker on the farm. Both are fine examples of a network of collaboration within the UAC.

The appeals for help surpass what we can provide. Like everyone, we are exposed to the temptations of our time: restlessness, superficial communication and individualism. In this *Year of Consecrated Life* we have heard the prophetic call to our Congregation by Pope Francis: to ‘wake up the world’ – and ourselves! – and to rediscover the wonder of consecrated life, to live a new life in Christ with joy, having Him as the basis for our whole being and life. We hear the call to renew our prayer life and our fraternal relationships.

For several years we have been trying to strengthen our sense of belonging by keeping our Mondays ‘sacred’, meeting together three times a month. It is a sort of monthly retreat, when we study and celebrate together. In the evening we come together in the eucharist and share the Word with the Pallottine priests.

In John’s gospel Jesus cries out loudly, “**Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink; out of his [or her] heart shall flow rivers of living water**”. United with the Lord, the ever new spring from which our joy and our mission flow, let all of us in the Union of Catholic Apostolate, whether lay, clerics or consecrated, be dispensers of this water in the giving of our lives.

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item 342

## **SAC Brothers international**

From June 15th to June 20th an international meeting of the Brothers of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate took place in Konstancin-Jeziorna, Poland, planned and organized by our *General Secretariat for Formation*.

In total 44 Brothers attended. The majority came from the two Polish Provinces, but there were also representatives from Germany, Brazil (*Santa Maria & Sao Paolo* Provinces), and from Rwanda. It was the second time we have been hosted by Konstancin. I think everybody remembers the last time we met there – on the last day of that meeting, in 2013, Francis was elected to the Chair of Peter!

This gathering too has provided good memories. There was a great atmosphere and spirit throughout. Everyone was relaxed and, dare I say it, ready to enjoy the experience of togetherness. Being international it was run under the auspice of the *General Secretariat for Formation* and was formative in nature. Fr Stanislaw Stawicki sac spoke on the theme of cooperation in the spirit of the UAC. A very timely and appropriate topic

was the *Year of Consecrated Life*. What does the Church expect of us Pallottines, and how should we respond to those expectations? Fr. Francois Harelimana sac shared his thoughts on this. We listened to and heard from every Brother present; they spoke about their apostolates and life experiences, sharing their “joy of being a Pallottine Brother”. Practical issues were also dealt with: vocations promotion (Fr Michal Wojczak sac) and the whole issue of perseverance in our vocation (Fr Artur Stepien sac).



We are grateful to the Provincials of the two Polish Provinces, Frs. Adrian Galbas sac and Josef Lasak sac for taking the time to visit us and participate. In the context of Eucharistic celebrations both men offered words of encouragement, challenging us to live our Pallottine identity as Brothers. The local community was simply wonderful and the facilities in Konstancin ideally conducive to prayer, work and relaxation.

One of the issues that came up was how Brothers are preparing for the change that will come about in the organization of SAC international meetings after the General Assembly of 2022. Each member of the Society is being actively encouraged to become proficient in either Italian or English. As I am myself a member the *General Secretariat for Formation* I would like to see Brothers being given the opportunity to learn either or both of these languages so that they too can fully participate in future General Assemblies and international meetings.

No date was set for our next gathering but, that said, there was no doubt from the feedback of the various groups present that opportunities to meet as Pallottine Brothers should continue into the future. Amen to that!

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## sac asia oceania e-bulletin

### you commented...

**on #178** Thank you Fr Jacob for the inspiring article in Asia oceanic bulletin. What you have written is very true.

**JD 26.07.15**

First of all congratulations to you, for finding time for everything in spite of various journey and meetings. I read the article and admire the missionary and visionary aspects in you, and wish that many youngsters who read your article may come out with such enthusiasm and courage to spread the Kingdom of God through the Charism of St Vincent Pallotti.

**EB 26.07.15**

I received the bulletin of this Sunday and I read the article. As always, the narration of the events is well composed and is an expression of a deep spirituality that you live and propagate.

**JS 27.07.15**

Thanks Fr. Jacob for the article that you wrote. We pray that everyone may imbibe the spirit of the charism of Pallotti and be open to the world as did our holy Founder who, although did not cross the borders, dedicated himself to the missionary apostolate.

It would be good to re-read the letters which he wrote to encourage Fr. Raffaele Melia and Fr Faa di Bruno, the missionaries in London. Perhaps we must re-read all the letters of Pallotti (so dear to Fr. Bruno Bayer, who has just left us) in order to be "recharged Pallottines". The article in the bulletin, although addressed to the members of the Society and other members of the UAC, helps even me to reflect. There are so many points that you touched me.

**LC 27.07.15**

Very good this e-bulletin regarding Brazil and Peruvian mission. Thanks, Fr General

**JEF 27.07.15**