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

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item 343

## In all things give thanks to God!

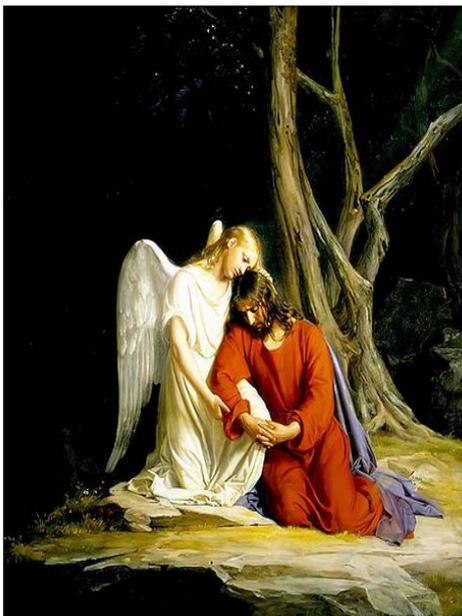
St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: "In all things give thanks to God".

While I was recovering from a malignant brain tumor I received letters from Fr. Jacob assuring me of his prayers. When I thanked him for his kindness he asked me to write this reflection.

It is with gratitude that I now look back on my sickness and reflect on how it affected me in the following areas: physical, mental, emotional, relational and spiritual.

To start with the **physical**, in 2013, after crashing a car I noticed that I was getting dizzy spells and after many tests it was seen that I had a serious brain tumor. I had surgery to remove the tumour and then received radiation and chemotherapy which left me very weak and bed-ridden for a time. Now two years later the last MRI showed that the cancer is in remission.

**Emotionally** this has been a roller-coaster. While recuperating I became aware of a multitude of inner emotions like anger, fear, despair, rejection, guilt, depression, resentment, frustration, desolation and very little peace. At this distance I can now say that my **mental** state was not the best, thoughts of suicide and a recurring depression were two of the side effects from radiation, chemotherapy and steroids.



The surgeon told me that I needed to protect myself from noise and all possible sources of infection, therefore in the area of **relationships** I withdrew a little, seeking refuge in the silence and privacy of the long night and dawn, this was a great source of comfort.

Looking for comfort and **spiritual** support I read the Word of God and was drawn to the following passage from St Luke's Gospel:

"And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more

earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

Daily I reflected on the above passage which left me with many questions like, 'what was Jesus' agony and temptation?' I became aware of an internal battle that left me torn between the past and future. Reflecting on my past life left me with feelings of guilt and failure. I found myself being overcome by guilt and self-condemnation, with thoughts such as 'I am sick because of my past sins', 'I am unworthy and a failure'. When I thought of the future I found I was filled with despair and fear of the unknown.

In my hour of need I turned to our Pallottine spirituality for solace. I placed myself at the feet of Our Lady in the Cenacle and repeated St Vincent's prayer:

"Wherever I shall be, I intend to imagine myself to be together with all creatures in the Cenacle in Jerusalem where the Apostles received the Holy Spirit. I shall remind myself to renew this desire often. As the Apostles were there with Mary, so will I be in spirit with my most beloved Mother and Jesus. As they are my special intercessors I am confident that they will help me and all other creatures to receive the abundance of the Holy Spirit."

I found this meditation empowered me to live in the present moment and it became my spiritual remedy during my inner battle.

The following line from Vincent's prayer to Mary Queen of Apostles graced me with consolation, hope and peace:



"Therefore, relying on your powerful intercession, we are resolved from this moment on, to devote our talents, learning, material resources, health, sickness and trials, and every gift of nature and grace, to the greater glory of God and the salvation of all."

Now I am in the privileged position of journeying with patients at the local Henry Ford Hospital, Wyandotte, Michigan, where I am chaplain. My sickness and struggle have ensured that I have grown in compassion towards all those who experience illness, disease and human frailty. In my heart I echo the sentiments of St Paul, I am "giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

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item 344

## making good soil

Growing up in a farming community in southern New Jersey (yes, New Jersey does have farms, that is why it is called the Garden State), I learned a little something about soil that is good for planting and soil that needs work, sometimes a great deal of work, until planting can happen. Good soil does not just "happen". There is preparation and proper nurturing, even times of rest so that the soil is best. In his recent encyclical *Lumen Fidei*, Pope Francis talks about 'good soil':

“In the parable of the sower, Saint Luke has left us these words of the Lord about the ‘good soil;’ ‘These are the ones who when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance’ (Lk 8:15). In the context of Luke’s Gospel, this mention of an honest and good heart which hears and keeps the word is an implicit portrayal of the faith of the Virgin Mary” (Lumen Fidei, n. 58).

When we celebrate the solemnity of the Assumption, we are offered by the Church the great example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, ever faithful disciple, who witnesses for us the way to live well our baptismal call as disciples and apostles of Christ.

“By her complete adherence to the Father's will, to his Son's redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church's model of faith and charity” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 967).



By witnessing faith and charity we live well our baptismal vocation. Our vocation as baptized is our primary vocation. All of the other vocations as married, single, consecrated, or priest are all secondary to this primary vocation as follower of (disciple) and sent by (apostle) Jesus Christ. Each is a way one can live out the primary vocation.

How does one decide? Through a process of discernment, one is called to be informed, pray, make a choice, and take action. I make it seem easy. The process is not an easy one but, like making ‘good soil’, it is necessary in order to make a truly informed choice about how to live our vocation as a disciple and apostle. Living out our vocation as a disciple and apostle is what all of us are called to do. The Blessed Virgin Mary can assist us in our discernment of our apostolic vocation in life and in living it out faithfully and well, truly being ‘good soil’.

May we join together in the prayer of Pope Francis, at the conclusion of *Lumen Fidei*:

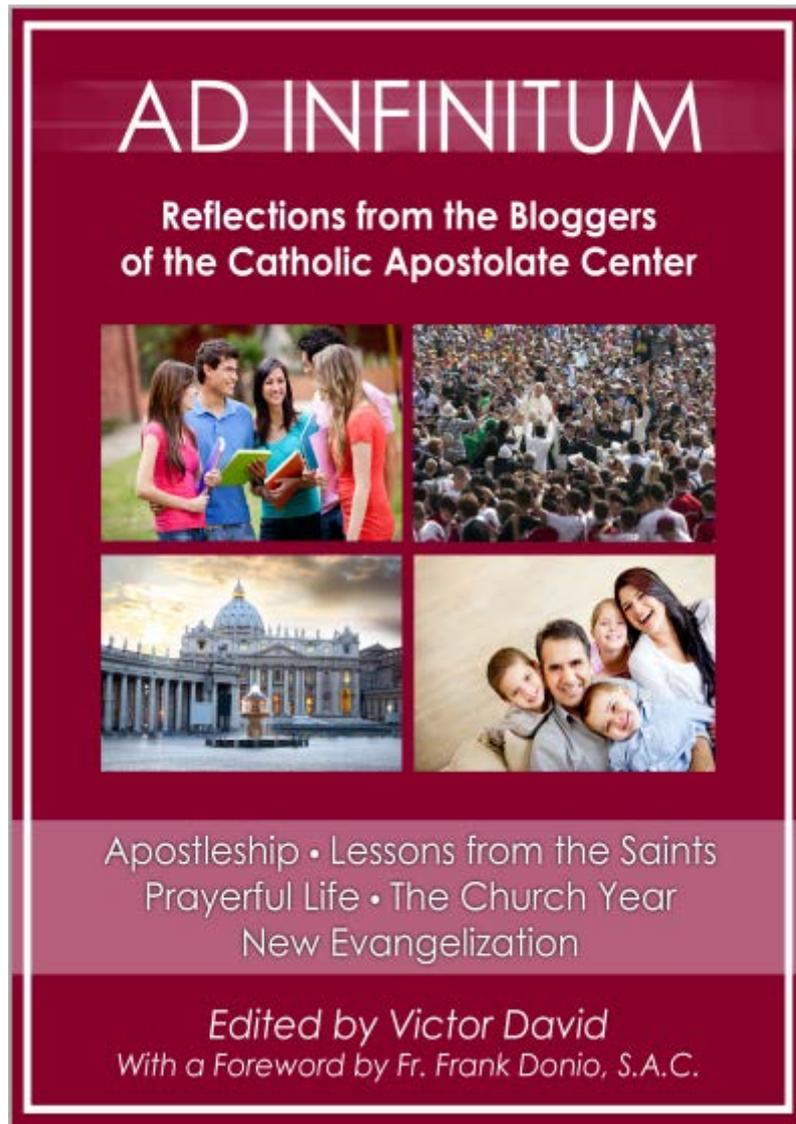
*“Mother, help our faith!*

*Open our ears to hear God’s word and to recognize his voice and call. Awaken in us a desire to follow in his footsteps, to go forth from our own land and to receive his promise. Help us to be touched by his love, that we may touch him in faith. Help us to entrust ourselves fully to him and to believe in his love, especially at times of trial, beneath the shadow of the cross, when our faith is called to mature.*

*Sow in our faith the joy of the Risen One. Remind us that those who believe are never alone. Teach us to see all things with the eyes of Jesus, that he may be light for our path.*

*And may this light of faith always increase in us, until the dawn of that undying day which is Christ himself, your Son, our Lord!”*

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**sac asia oceania e-bulletin**

**you commented...**

**on #177** ...I have been catching up on recent bulletins. Shirley’s article on her faith journey and the history of her family’s Pallottine heritage I found very powerful and provided a positive and clear picture of the Kimberley in those early days. The charism of Vincent Pallotti has been alive in indigenous people of Western Australia for many years. Thank you Shirley for sharing your faith journey.

**CS 04.08.15**

**on #179** It is very inspiring to hear about the missionary spirit and courage of the Pallottine sisters, fathers and some women, living near Teresina, Brazil, saving the lives of the young men who spend days and nights in the streets, taking drugs and creating fear by robberies and assaults. My congratulations and best wishes to them....thank you for sharing such good news.

**MK 02.08.15**