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

item 346

'Jesus a joy ever new, a joy to be shared'!

That quote, from Pope Francis's *Evangelii Gaudium*, was used as the *theme* of the 3rd UAC Congress held in Sao Paulo, Brazil between 15th and 20th July 2015.

From the beginning joy was palpable. The joy of meeting old and new friends, the joy of music in true Brazilian style, the joy – and deep challenges – shared by presenters. Four aspects of the presentations impacted on me personally and have remained since the Congress:

Prayer

If we follow St Vincent then 'the life of Jesus is the only rule for our life'. We must return to the gospel to be transformed into disciples and missionaries. This means spending time in prayer. If we are not a praying community – a Cenacle Community – then we have no future. Like Vincent we are called to holy solitude, prayer and silence – without silence we cannot hear the spirit. The more our apostolic life grows the more prayer must deepen. Without contemplation our work becomes meaningless.

Unity

There is a pressing need for us to recognise that we are one community – we are all on one train. One train cannot run on two parallel tracks. We are all on one track – all equal in mission. We are called to work in communion/unity with one another – to be co-founders with Vincent.



We must ensure that we take care of relationships within the Pallottine Family itself. Otherwise our mission will not bear the fruit that God desires, because we will lack that most fundamental witness of mutual love and affection, of respect and equality, rooted in and embodying the love and affection which forms the very inner life of the Blessed Trinity.

Apostolate

At the same time we are called to live as enthusiastic apostles and missionaries, to be prophets of today and to evangelise and share the gospel of Jesus with joy, hope and radical love. It is important to focus, not on membership, but on being an 'evangelical trumpet' inviting all to live their vocation to be apostles of Jesus.

There is a clear distinction between living an apostolic life and living the life of an activist. We are not activists, who may not pay attention to their interior world and think that everything depends on them. We are called to an apostolic activism, we care about quality and work happily without worrying about results. We give of our best but our best efforts may not always give us the benefits we expect. The fruits of our work are guaranteed by God, fruits often invisible and indefinable – but no act of love is ever lost, no act of generosity meaningless. The fruit may never be seen by us, we must allow God to produce the fruit in His good time.

Gospel joy will be a false joy unless it is rooted in a deep respect for others. If we as Christians, as members of the Union, fail to respect and live by these basic values, we destroy the very communion of love, respect and equality which is at the heart of our charism. As individuals, as groups and as communities of the Union of Catholic Apostolate, we are called to draw close to people and spend time with them, to listen to their cries – not simply listen! We are called to let their cries touch and move our hearts and affect how we frame our decisions.

In terms of apostolic challenges, the plight of families, youth, and refugees was highlighted. Looking at refugees, we were reminded that in 2014 people seeking asylum in other countries reached a record level of 59.5 million, the worst displacement of people since World War II. As Pope Francis asks: "Have we wept for these people – have we forgotten how to weep?"

Diversity

Our meeting's very diversity – of vocations, race, culture, language, age – was a tangible expression of the reality of UAC. Indeed people from all continents, except Antarctica, were present.

Participants from across the world spoke about how they lived their particular vocation: sisters working in remote areas, priests in their parish and other apostolates, a brother sharing what it is to live his specific vocation, consecrated secular women, married and single people speaking about lives lived in the vision of St Vincent, young people joyfully demonstrating their love for him and the gospel of Jesus and urging us to ensure they are invited into UAC – all reflecting the richness and diversity offered through the living of our charism.



The universal language of music certainly assisted in breaking down communication barriers. A group called *Ministerio de Louvor Manha de Luz* (roughly translated: *Ministry of Light and Morning Praise*) were part of the Congress. They produced extraordinary music, creating prayerfulness and joy throughout each day. Their music ensured that we remembered we were in Brazil and resulted in much dancing and singing.

Grateful thanks to all those who worked towards and planned the time we shared.

Ms Cheryl Sullivan – Melbourne – AUSTRALIA
07.08.15
cherylsullivan1@bigpond.com

item 347

Committed?

Are you committed? To whom or to what? What does this commitment ask or demand?

We all have made commitments in our lifetime – some minor, some of great significance. In baptism we made a commitment. In marriage we made a commitment. In having children we made a commitment. In joining a religious community likewise. Commitment starts with us and our saying ‘yes’, we are willing to devote ourselves unreservedly to someone or some cause.

Let’s look deeper into the commitments we make as Christians and as followers of St Vincent. At the centre of Pallotti’s charism is his experience of God, who is infinite love. This experience elicits in Pallotti the desire to respond. Any and every human person is called to welcome and receive this love, and every recipient is called to become an apostle, a channel of God’s love. This charism calls for far-reaching consequences in our understanding of God, of our church, of our personal and communal life.



The root, or core, of our commitment is God. ‘God is love’ John tells us. God created human beings in his own image and likeness so that he might share his infinite love, become one with us. In this very act of creating, God is committed to loving us always and infinitely. We though, being imperfect, will sin, will reject and refuse his love. But God’s commitment is everlasting and unchangeable, he does not sentence us to wander in darkness and abandonment. He sends his Word to reconnect humankind with his love in an act of divine reconciliation.

Jesus is the point of contact between God and the redeemed human race. In him and through him we are connected to God’s love. Jesus becomes the channel through which God’s love flows to us. Jesus is the outward and visible expression of God’s love for us. He is proof that God cares, that we are precious to him and that he responds to our needs. His teachings and his life’s example are evidence.

Mark wrote: ‘He then went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim

the message, and to have authority to cast out demons.’ Jesus *called* the apostles from all walks of life *to be with him* so that he could share with them the love he had with the Father and the Spirit and show them how to love others. He would commission them to be channels of God’s love *to all peoples* in the world.

The response of the apostles was to freely choose to follow Jesus, to be with him to learn, and then to go to all nations to share with them the joy of God’s love. Just as the Father was always with Jesus, so Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to be with the apostles. He has not left them alone or abandoned them.

We too are called and chosen by God. In baptism we are made members of the Body of Christ, the Church. And we are sent by God, through his Church. Confirmation is the sacrament which gives us the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds.

These (and all) sacraments are the means to our holiness. They help us invite God into our lives and we respond by our actions. This relationship is what we call faith. Our response is to evangelize, to bring the Good News of the great love that God has for us to all people we encounter. We are called into relationship with God, to be with him – and then to take action, to go out and be channels of God’s love. When Jesus told the scribe that the greatest commandments are ‘to love the Lord your God ...and to love your neighbour as yourself’, he was simply telling us what in baptism we are called to do.

Pope Francis cautions us:

“Spirit-filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work...what is needed is the ability to cultivate an interior space which can give a Christian meaning to commitment and activity. Without prolonged moments of adoration, of prayerful encounter with the Word, of sincere conversation with the Lord, our work easily becomes meaningless; we lose energy as a result of weariness and difficulties, and our fervour dies out.”

Pallotti also knew that openness to the love of God, freely given to us, and our response to this love, freely accepted and responded to, would lead us to the final goal of our commitment – to be ONE in God’s love. To be channels of God’s love is our ultimate apostolate.

Francis continues:

“With Jesus, life becomes richer, and with him it is easier to find meaning in everything. This is why we evangelize. A true missionary, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him. He senses Jesus alive with him in the midst of the missionary enterprise. Unless we see him present at the heart of our missionary commitment, our enthusiasm soon wanes and we are no longer sure of what it is that we are handing on; we lack vigour and passion. A person who is not convinced, enthusiastic, certain and in love will convince nobody.”

Members of the Union make an **Act of Commitment**, our response to the love God has showered on us. It reinforces the commitment we accepted in baptism and confirmation – to bring God’s love to everyone we meet, in our families, at work, in recreation, in our parishes and in the world. And we are called to do so with joy-filled hearts, to be enthusiastic – to be in God and have God in us – so that others may see that joy and want to be part of what we have and live.

Ms Maria Domke – Edmonton – CANADA
05.08.15
mdomke@telus.net

you commented...

on #181 Thank you again....Another great example of 'reading the signs of the times', seeing new opportunities and taking positive steps for the future instead of 'wringing hands and lamenting'.

MG 17.08.15

Congrats for the great initiative of the Swiss Province of our Society in establishing yet another international study house at Fribourg. It is said that "fortune favours the bold" and that "only a dead fish goes with the flow". As Christians, our courage is not just an expression of a psychological condition or self-belief but a manifestation of faith in a God who guides our history and destiny. Thanks to Fr. Adrian Willi, the Provincial Rector and his team for being innovative and creative.

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