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

item 388

Epiphany at Gossau

From 1833 Vincent Pallotti was Assistant Director of the Pontifical Urban College - *Propaganda Fide*. It housed seminarians from all over the world. It became a tradition there, on the feast of Epiphany, to celebrate the *Feast of Languages*. During the celebration the students gathered in front of the altar depicting the Magi worshipping the Holy Family. They recited prayers and chanted hymns and psalms in their own languages. The worship of the Magi became a symbol of the faith of all Christians – they represented the whole of humanity devoid of age, continent and race. The Magi, though not belonging to the people of Israel, found the promised Messiah and worshiped him.

The international community at *Propaganda Fide* and the tradition of the *Feast of Languages* became a concrete expression for Pallotti of oneness in the midst of a diversity of cultures and languages. His idea of a universal catholic apostolate found its impetus here. The Epiphany feast became a symbol of his vision of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, inviting each one of us to engage in the work of reviving faith and charity.

From 1836 until his death in 1850 Vincent organized an Epiphany Octave, a celebration which unfolded into the greatest event in the church of Rome at that time. Its various rituals and languages brought an expression of universality and thus it became a truly ecumenical event. In 1847 the *Feast of Languages* received approbation from Pope Pius IX and he personally embraced the celebration.



Inspired by that history **Fr Josef Rosenast sac**, in 1990, took the initiative to organise a similar celebration. The following year, in collaboration with the Schoenstatt community, he invited all the religious congregations and various pious groups and movements in the Diocese of St Gallen, to come together on 06 Jan to share a common Epiphany Vespers at our community in Gossau.

On 03 Jan this year – 25 yrs later – more than 70 men and women from different groups and movements took part in this celebration. It marked the conclusion of the *Year of Consecrated Life* and the beginning of the *Year of Mercy*. Rev Fr Adrian Willi sac presided and preached during the Vespers. In his preaching he indicated the importance of integrity and of the totality of religious life. He said that it should not be looked



at as some sort of performance, rather as a gift that we have received to live a consecrated way of life. Our earthly church is neither perfect in itself nor can it be compared to the kingdom of God. But it can be likened, as in the parable of Mathew, to the mixing of leaven with flour and thus the initiation of a kind of process. Since Vat II the church is understood as a people of God who are in exile. The evangelical counsels are indicators, they provide guidelines (even though we may not be able to live up to them) and they help us to aspire to achieve a promised Land. In this sense the *Year of Consecrated Life* demands of us not to perform more activities, but to recall who we are. We are called and loved by God as His children, to become more Christ like, so that the imprint of God that we bear in our hearts may unfold into the image of Him.

After the liturgical celebration in the Pallotti Chapel all were invited to the refectory for a family agape. It was filled with an atmosphere of joy and happiness in wishing one another the greeting of a Happy New Year.

Andreas Baumeister, editor of the Pallottine magazine “Ferment”, together with Fr Adrian Willi using a power point presentation, introduced an edition of the magazine dedicated to the past *Year of Consecrated Life*. Baumeister singled out 4 examples of religious communities (Benedictines from Maria Stein, Dominican Sisters from Cazis, Jesuits from Bad Schoenbrunn and Deacon Sisters from Bern). He explained how, despite their difficulties, they have found a place in modern society and engage themselves in various valuable services to humanity. At the conclusion all were encouraged to take the magazine and gift it to others.

In this way the 25th occasion of the Epiphany celebration came to an end. It is remarkable to note that over the years participation has not declined but in fact increased! This is surely a sign that both religious communities and various other groups and movements in the church are alive and take part in its common tasks and developments.

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item 389

from a brother-sacristan...

There is an ongoing discussion in our Society about the vocation and mission of brothers. I wish to contribute my little share to this theme.

I am about forty one years old and am a member of the *Christ the King* Province in Poland. I made my first consecration on 29th September 1994 in Wadowice, Poland.

Ever since that time I have worked in Poland and Slovakia as a receptionist, gardener, a caretaker of our elderly confreres and as a sacristan. My work as the sacristan at the Divine Mercy Sanctuary in Slovakia was particularly memorable.



For the last 11 years I have worked as sacristan in our Church of SS Salvatore in Onda, Rome. I consider this work a special gift since I get the opportunity to serve at the altar of our Founder, St Vincent Pallotti. Every day I am in the closest contact with him.

I enjoy welcoming tourists and pilgrims to our Church. I have an opportunity to participate in all the important Pallottine events taking place in this

spiritual centre of the entire Union. I do the decorations in the Church as best as I can since I believe that we need to give our very best to God.

I also serve at the altar of St John Paul II in the chapel of St Sebastian in St Peter's Basilica every Thursday. I have come to know a lot of people in church circles through this pastoral work at St Peters. St John Paul II is close to my heart.

So also Pope Francis. At times I hear people asking why the present Pope is not following the path that his predecessors followed. But I do believe that every Holy Father is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the church and each one has his unique charism and gift to offer. Therefore, I also follow all the talks and activities of Pope Francis.

What then is my mission as a brother in the Society?

As brothers we follow the spirit of St Joseph, the silent worker. This is the way to holiness for a brother. It is not what one does that matters but the way and the motive with which we work. St Joseph participated in the divine plan of salvation of humankind through his humble, lowly and holy way of life. This must be the way that a brother contributes to the family of our Society as well as the Church.

One of my important works is to pray for various needs especially of the members of the Society. My Provincial Rector often asks me to pray for various needs especially when he has to deal with delicate issues. I do place them before the altar of our Founder. I pray also for confreres who are sick, for example, for Fr Francesco Todisco of the Italian SAC Province who is hospitalised now with a severe brain stroke. I have an opportunity here in this church which many members do not have. Life involves sacrifices. Living the spirit of sacrifice means also praying for persons who are in great need.

My life is very much influenced by advice that I received years ago from my uncle, a diocesan priest. He told me that three things are important: fidelity to God, fidelity to the Society (Church) and fidelity to God's people. He is no more but his words are ever present in my heart. In my own little way, I try to live my life as



faithfully as possible to God, the Society and God's people. Put God in the first place and then everything else falls into place.

I wish and pray that the forthcoming General Chapter of our Society will bring more life and growth to it. A six year mandate for a General Administration is not a very long time. The eleven years that I have spent in Rome have passed so quickly. As long as we can all collaborate and participate in the works of the apostolate of Jesus, time or place does not matter.

Fidelity to God, the Society and God's people – my priest-uncle keeps reminding me from heaven!

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you commented...

on #204