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

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item 390

## Croatian dream



I am **Fr Jozo Ivić** from Croatia. I write as the Delegate of the *Heart of Jesus* Province [Germany]. I am 40 years a Pallottine, 35 years a priest and have been the Delegate for 27 years. Over that time I have been involved in a variety of pastoral activities such as novice master, parish priest, hospital chaplain, member of the *Commission for Justice and Peace* and Provincial Delegate.

The Pallottine ministry in Croatia was founded by **Fr Joseph Brant sac** in 1978, a Belgian and a member of the former *Sacred Heart* Province. He made his first visit to Croatia in the early '70s and eventually the Delegation was founded in 1978.

We are a rather small community with 7 members working in two parishes. The total population of the country is 4 million and 90% of them are Catholics. About 30% can be considered practising. The pastoral needs vary from place to place. In the cities there are many enlightened lay people belonging to diverse ecclesial movements and we extend our pastoral ministry to them. It is so important to accompany these groups spiritually in order to ensure that they remain faithful to the life of the church especially in the parishes.

To get an overview of our mission in this country, it is important to take note of the demographic situation. It is particularly preoccupying that so few children are being born into our families. Hence the primary field of apostolate must be families. This is a challenge too for all of Europe! We may have had great projects in the past but now we have to learn to situate them into the living reality of our local church and our country.

We work in only two parishes and our main challenge is to incorporate the laity into the mission of the church. We have to go beyond the classical way of doing apostolate and mission, which was through the construction of many structures. Instead we need to be open and flexible to the promptings of the Spirit and discern the signs of the times. We must not hesitate to move into the big cities, like Munich in Germany, and engage with people in the spirit of our charism. We must sing and pray together. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is of special significance in this *Holy Year of Mercy*.

As far as the Union of Catholic Apostolate is concerned, its function would be to animate the various groups in the parish with an authentic apostolic spirit, always inspired by our Founder. The spirit of the Union can become a source of communion especially in families.



The diocese has initiated several steps for the *Holy Year of Mercy*. As said earlier, the Sacrament of Confession is of special significance in this context. As Pallottines we must discover more and more the spiritual depth of understanding of God's "infinite love and mercy" of our holy Founder, St Vincent Pallotti. As Pallottines we have a rich spiritual tradition in this area, much earlier than St Faustina who is recognised as spreading the devotion to the merciful Jesus.

As we prepare for the XXI General Assembly of our Society, I am tempted to dream once again of a stronger Pallottine presence in Croatia. I studied in a Jesuit College and I was expected to join them but I made a conscious choice for the Pallottines and today I wish to see once again the development of our Society in this country.



My dream for the entire Society is that it be a community of communion, prayer and work. Fraternal life in community is fundamental. Even as a secular priest, Pallotti came to realise the importance of working together. Travelling alone will not help; we can all be specialists in something but by working together we enrich each other.

We must not be a group of soloists – we are called to be members of a big orchestra, singing and playing together. This is the meaning of church. This is also the core of our charism.

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## Julio was a true gift...

Fr Julio dalla Valle sac, a priest of the Province of *Santa Maria*, Brazil died on the morning of 25 Nov 2015.



Born on 31 Jul 1928, Julio was a true gift of God to our Society, particularly to our Province. Professed in 1955, he was ordained in 1961 and lived thereafter with joy, simplicity and the strong conviction of being called to be an apostle of the love of Jesus Christ. During the celebration of the 80<sup>th</sup> year of his life he made the following comment: "I wanted to be a good priest: to serve the people well, helping them to love God and to practice the Christian life."

Five of his eight sisters followed a similar path, choosing religious life and dedicating themselves to the community of the *Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*.

Julio's life was a true test of strength and courage especially since 25 Nov 1972, the tenth year of his ordination and the day when he suffered a serious car accident that left him a paraplegic for the rest of his life [43 years exactly to the day of his death]. A few years after the accident he wrote: "At first I cried a lot, hidden, during the night because no one could see me. After that I started to place myself in the hands of God and gradually I experienced a very great calm, a real spiritual consolation."

The experience of his physical limitation and the consequences it forced on him was often described by him as "an ordeal without pain." He said this because he did not feel the wounds that are often formed in parts of one's paralyzed body. Despite suffering, Fr Julio always kept a calm appearance and a heart always open to welcoming God and neighbour. He always tried, and very successfully, to keep busy with manual work such as caring for books in need of restoration. Certainly his firmness of spirit, his character and his will to live, were noticed by all – qualities which grew out of his constant openness to the presence of God in prayer. In fact it was hard to find Fr Julio without rosary beads in his hands. I considered him already a genuine intercessor.

Because of his disposition to listening and the simplicity of his life, he was very much sought after as a confessor. I'm sure that Heaven has received a holy man, a talented Pallottine, not so much for what he might have done, but for what he was.

I thank God for giving us Fr Julio, a fellow friend and inspiration.

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**you commented...**

**on #205**

Thank you for this edition of the e-bulletin. In the first article I was intrigued by the mention of Deacon Sisters from Bern. I did a Google Search to try to find out more about them but this was unsuccessful. I am wondering if one of the other readers might be able to tell me more about them. Wojciech Szporna sac wrote from the heart about his faithful, loyal living of his call. I was sad to read that Fr Francesco Todisco has had a severe stroke. He has been a great contributor to the life of the UAC through his leadership and ministry in Italy and also in the wider world through his writings. I have added him to my prayer list.

**AD 31.01.16**