

E-BULLETIN #39

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

item 78

nursing ministry: God of infinite love and mercy in action



The more I continue to exercise my apostolate as a nurse, the more I am convinced that it is a ministry that manifests as concretely as possible the infinite love and mercy of God. As I walk around the ward caring for the sick, I am reminded all the time of my call to become an instrument of compassion, love and healing. Nursing is not just a profession; it is the continuation of the work of salvation enabling people to enjoy once again the fullness of life promised by God.

The rich and the poor, the young and the old, the famous and the unknown – all become equal when they are sick. Sickness, suffering and death show no mercy to anyone. Even the apparently most uncaring and bold person becomes a child when faced with a mortal sickness like cancer. They need as much attention and care as a child once they become flattened by unsuspected illness. Confronted by such mortal realities, the human person begins to face his/her mortal nature. With great pain, the realisation dawns that one is not God but only a fragile creature. O how foolish we are at times! In the prime of our health and youthfulness, we create an illusion of our own immortality! Indeed, we are mere dust and ashes! But we are also precious beings before the Almighty.

It is in these most vulnerable moments for patients that we have the best chance to show that we have a God who loves us infinitely, a God who is the Master of our destiny. We are in his hands and hence we shall not fear even in these darkest times.

A nurse is a beacon of this hope, of this unfailing love of God. To become such an instrument of light and life, one must first go through one's own personal journey of faith. It leads to a better understanding of the pain of others. This is the meaning of incarnation. The Son of God assumed the human condition in order to share fully our human nature, and to save us by undergoing the demands of our human existence. Any nurse who is unable to enter into the world of the patient with a lot of empathy cannot be a good nurse. A nurse needs to have compassion, just like Jesus.

As we talk much about new evangelization, nursing is my way of participating in this challenge. My love and care for patients can revive their faith and rekindle their love. In that process, my own faith is strengthened, and my love for God's people, especially for the suffering ones, is deepened. With our Founder I pray, "Lord make me medicine for the sick" – the medicine of God's infinite love and mercy! Today begins the Year of Faith, declared by Pope Benedict XVI. May God kindle the fire of faith in the hearts of every believer in Jesus Christ!

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item 79

Vincent Pallotti: yearning for the God of his heart and the heart of his God



The Church, as custodian of the inheritance left by Jesus, has continued its mission over 20 centuries, always caring for the salvation and sanctification of her children because He wants all to be saved. In Jesus every suffering and longing of the human heart, the joy of loving, the answer to the drama of suffering, the power of forgiveness and the victory of life over death, finds its fulfillment. Benedict XVI, following the Pauline and sacerdotal years, has now introduced a Year of Faith with the apostolic letter "PORTA FIDEI".

It is possible to cross the threshold of faith when the Word of God is proclaimed and the heart is shaped by God's grace that transforms us. St Vincent Pallotti, immersed in the love of God, said "*I desire greatly to love God and I yearn to do so with all my strength. I desire also to have loved Him in order to give Him infinite glory with infinite perfection from all eternity through all eternity, infinitely multiplied, but in such a manner that I would be in Heaven and on earth at the same time – in heaven to love God supremely, on earth to love and suffer supremely for the love of God*".

He had the wings of desire to reach out to everyone so as to share the infinite love of God. He spent his life in searching out, reaching for, touching, relating to, and grasping for one goal – the God of his heart and the heart of his God. His was a soul set on fire, with an unquenchable yearning for union with an infinite God, 'THE WORD THAT BECAME FLESH' the 'Love' that came down on earth. His entire self was an expression of God's love: "*Love of God impels us on*".

In every human person there is a soul, a soul that yearns for God and His love. Faith, hope and love are the whole mark of Christian life. And it is exactly these prodigious things we see in St Vincent, a man of faith. Wanting to be a perfect imitator of Jesus, he cultivated all human and Christian virtues in an heroic way. So in all his actions he was moved by love and inspired by the ideal of evangelical service, in order to give infinite glory to God and to save souls. Even while he was young he made a vow to profess his faith – by martyrdom if necessary.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Vincent's canonization our Pallottine family feels in deep symphony with the proposal of our Holy Father because we know that Vincent was a great supporter of the propagation of the faith, especially to those who were not yet conscious of their obligation to revive this gift in those Christians who had weakened or hidden it. Even with a limited knowledge of his

life, his writings and his works, one can recognise the high level of human, Christian and theological virtue with which he was enriched. Faith, hope and charity combined and were overflowing in his own person. Vincent Pallotti was deeply moved by this thought, and wanted to inflame the fire of faith in the hearts of God's people. As apostles of Christ, every Christian should similarly strive to nourish the virtue of faith, and have the wings of desire to reach out to the whole world.

In his notes of 1835 St Vincent describes the work that he felt called to commence: *“My God... allow me...to promote, establish, propagate, perfect, and perpetuate the pious institution of a universal apostolate for all Catholics, in order to propagate the faith and religion of Jesus Christ among all infidels and non-Catholics; another apostolate to revive, conserve and increase the faith among Catholics; and an institution of universal charity in the practice of all the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, so that You may be known in the world by a reflection of Your infinite charity.”* This was the spark which would soon ignite into the Society for the Catholic Apostolate, where all try to witness and express in their day-to-day living the love of Christ continuing to urge us on.

The Holy Father, aware of the deep crisis in modern society, the unrest and confusion which has reached global proportions, identifies its cause as the abandonment of human and Gospel values. We need to return to the heart of the Gospel, to Jesus himself. In Pallotti's time the French Revolution brought violence but today's violence is the materialism dominating the world. Mother Teresa of Calcutta said: *“Love begins at home. There is so very little love in the home, and in family life. That is why there is so much suffering and so much unhappiness in the world today. Everybody seems to be in such a terrible rush, anxious for greater development and greater riches and so on, so that children have very little time for their parents, parents have very little for each other, and in the home begins the disruption of the peace of the world”*. There is hunger in the world, a hunger for love and appreciation more than for bread. Every person exists in this world to love and be loved. Love is universal because love is God. Love does not differentiate between race and color, between religion and caste, between young and old. It wants to be the guest of all, without any barrier.

Love must be the driving motive for anyone wishing to collaborate in the apostolate. To follow Jesus as an apostle is not just an invitation, but more dynamically it is a mission, to save all people. This mission is entrusted to all. The call is to all – priests, religious, laymen and women, educated and ignorant, poor and rich, those of humble or noble origin. All are, according to their state, profession and fortune, called to respond to a universal vocation. Pallotti encompassed all life-styles in his Society: *“Every Catholic, whether priest, religious or layman, should rejoice because all of one's talents, knowledge, learning, studies, power, nobility, profession, art, earthly goods, riches, service, prayers used or done for the spreading of the faith and the rekindling of charity in the world, can acquire the merit of the apostolate.”* He was sought by all irrespective of background, rich and poor, young and old, ignorant and learned, especially those who held high office in the church. Pallotti not only preached but practiced what he preached.

Pallotti's universal charism has become so vibrant and lively in the world of today. The entities of the Union (clerics, sisters and brothers, and laity) work all over the world in response to the signs of our time and the needs of society. The church values him as a visionary, accepting his endorsement of the Gospel ideal that all may work as one, under one shepherd. Pallotti is a man of the 21st century who lived in the 19th century. Today the world does not want hierarchical order and authority but that we walk hand in hand, in one direction, and with our own uniqueness, in order to make the world a better place to live in. What the world is trying to establish today was visualized by Pallotti in his time. The seed that was sown in fertile soil has grown strong and produces fruit in abundance.

Where there is love there is faith. Where there is faith there is love. “If we are truly animated by the spirit of love, we shall always treat all with love, look on all with love, think of all with love, and speak of all with love” (OCCIII, 338). The experience of the God of love and mercy opened the eyes of St Vincent Pallotti to the needs of the church of his day and prompted him to respond. He visualized an apostolate universal in its character, and he invited every Christian to perform one’s own duty according to one’s call, with infinite love. Our charism is universal, originating from the love of God. The source of energy flows from Jesus the Apostle of the Eternal Father. “In this life we cannot do great things, we can only do small things with great love”.

Every time we smile at someone, we give new life in Christ. It costs nothing but only our willingness to share God’s love. We have received an abundance of love from God, so in turn we must have an insatiable desire to love God, to add love to love. God loved us by giving us His Son. Jesus loved us by dying on the cross, and we as Pallottines wish to be food to the hungry, drink for the thirsty, clothes to the naked and tonic to fortify the weaker ones, in this changing world.

Every Pallottine is called to become love, to satisfy the hunger for love – a heart to listen to someone who wishes to share.

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