



## E-BULLETIN #53

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

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item 100

### **New Evangelisation challenge... Pallottine response! [part III]**

#### **IV channels of New Evangelisation**



What can we do individually and as a Pallottine Family to contribute to this endeavour – ‘The New Evangelisation’?

During this seminar many concrete suggestions will undoubtedly emerge. For my part I wish to focus on just three areas for our reflection and concrete action.

#### **A return to a more radical living of the Gospel**

The most important thing in the whole process of ‘New Evangelisation’, in my opinion, is our own personal conversion. Renewal of the Church must begin with the personal renewal of each one of us. As Christians, as Pallottines, we have only one model, one rule for our life: the entire life of Jesus Christ. The Gospels, the Word of God, must become the source of life for us. All our deliberations, reflections, programs and structural changes will bear fruit only when we are willing to commit ourselves to the values of the Gospel. One of the fundamental gospel values to live would be that of poverty, both spiritually and materially. Materialism, on the other hand, creates a false sense of self-sufficiency and pride. Our over-dependence on money, power and grandiosity are diametrically opposed to the Gospel. Materialism and individualism, rather than the spirit of humility and trust in divine providence, are destroying the Church and consecrated life. We need to have praying individuals and communities. Therefore the first and the most important solution lies in working for a genuine spiritual and apostolic renewal of our personal lives as well as our communities. I am sure Cardinal Kurt Koch will speak more about this theme.

## **B      rediscover the undiscovered treasure – St Vincent Pallotti**

It is no exaggeration if I say that St Vincent Pallotti is still very much an undiscovered treasure in the Church – and even among us Pallottines. Here is a saint, a mystic, an apostle, whose spiritual and apostolic heritage could become the most fitting response to the challenge of ‘New Evangelisation’. To this point our understanding of his charismatic vision, the Union of Catholic Apostolate, is nothing more than the tip of an iceberg. If we are really serious about the Union we need to invest much more in understanding it, and in interpreting it into a useful tool in the service of the Church. First of all we need to rediscover much more profoundly the spiritual richness of this charism. Secondly it should be translated into viable apostolic activities. Thirdly we need a much more effective structural organisation to implement it. It is our common responsibility to realise the dream of our Founder. For me and for my General Administration, the first priority is the same: to make our Founder known and loved by as many people as possible. As Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Union I thank you all for everything that you do in order to realise this Pallottine project. There is much more to do and here we are to make that common commitment.



*Vincente Pallotti*

## **C      engaging in life-giving mission**

We have already addressed the importance of mission in our lives as Christians, as Pallottines. Psychologically, if we live totally self-centred, we will never grow into mature human beings. Self-centredness is already a sign of immaturity. On the other hand, one grows into adulthood by becoming others-centred, altruistic, by loving, by giving generously and by receiving with gratitude. In the same way, in our Christian and Pallottine life too, it is through generous giving that we grow. I have been trying to tell our provinces and regions: if we wish to grow, it is not enough to maintain what we have with fear and trepidation. We need to take “the path less travelled”. We need to be courageous, creative and to trust in divine providence. It is by losing ourselves that we find life, as Jesus has taught us.

This will be the scope of this seminar too. We wish to join hands with the Universal Church in bringing about a true spiritual and apostolic renewal in all the faithful. We want to be formed as apostles of Jesus in a changing world, as the title of the XX General Assembly of our Society suggested. We want to see how we can become an ‘Evangelical trumpet’, an apostolic force in the Church for the revival of faith and re-kindling of charity, which is the core of the current challenge of ‘New Evangelisation’.

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item 101

## **SPIRITUAL DIRECTION: a post-jubilee challenge**

The Pallottine family around the globe has just completed the jubilee celebrations of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Canonization of St Vincent Pallotti. Its general theme was to ‘make the holiness of God shine forth’. It reminded everyone that God is holy and He is the source of all holiness, to which



everyone is invited. St Vincent Pallotti took this invitation very seriously. For him to be a saint meant to become the living image of Christ, losing everything to become everything for God, living only for God, searching only for God in everything and always (OOCC X, 131).

Over the past year we have probably made many resolutions to follow the footsteps of Pallotti as closely as possible. The whole Pallottine world must have taken many initiatives to foster love for the Founder and for the Church, to make the Pallottine charism more relevant and popular. At the personal level, many individuals must have made themselves available to realise the mission statement of St Vincent “to revive faith and rekindle charity”.

Despite appreciating all these good things happening around us, we are called to reflect more and more to make ourselves aware of the teachings of Pallotti and to seek in every way to practise them by following the example he set before us.

Going forward in this post-jubilee time we are now invited to embrace a solid spiritual formation based on regular spiritual direction. Making known to others the holiness of God, reviving faith and rekindling charity, are next to impossible if one does not find oneself attuned with God through a constant evaluation of one’s spiritual life with the help of a spiritual guide. As a well known spiritual director to very many priests, seminarians and lay people in Rome, and being very faithful and obedient to his own spiritual director, Pallotti reminds us all: *“Speaking generally, because it is impossible to arrive at the acquiring of spiritual perfection without the direction of a good guide, so all are exhorted to be guided in the way of the Lord by a holy, learned and prudent spiritual father, and to depend on his guidelines, just as a child depends on his mother: Whoever does this will, in a brief period, experience great consolation and advantage in the spiritual life”* (OOCC V, 505).

We, the sons and daughters of St Vincent, have a great patrimony of spiritual direction in our Founder. However we still need to ask ourselves if we really cherish spiritual direction as an essential and integral component of our spiritual life, and of our whole existence. St Vincent was so convinced of the necessity of a spiritual guide that he repeatedly advised everyone to beg God fervently for a director suited to one’s own spiritual needs, and for the graces necessary to obey their guidance. Therefore, if spiritual direction is important, and total obedience to one’s spiritual director is vital for maximum benefit, then having the right person as spiritual director is even more important. Thus, writing to priests promoting Marian devotion in the month of May, Pallotti asked: *“If you have never cared for a good guide, or have lived in the past without a spiritual director, recollect that this is the most important business of your life. Ask God for a director imbued with His spirit and fit for your spiritual needs”* (F BONIFAZI, *Soul of a Saint; St. Vincent Pallotti, Pioneer of Catholic Action*, p66). It is true that, while we may have great devotion to the sacrament of confession, it does not replace a regular spiritual director. And, in order to gain the greatest benefits from spiritual guidance, St Vincent suggests that the spiritual director and the confessor be one and the same, because the priest who knows the penitent’s soul intimately through confession will be in the best position to address his/her spiritual affairs and direct the penitent towards the fulfillment of God’s will (OOCC X, 758).



Thus, we can say that having a good spiritual director is indeed a gift from God. He responds to everyone who genuinely prays for a wise and holy spiritual director. It is a major responsibility of everyone to choose the right person to be in charge of his/her spiritual life.

Addressing the clergy Vincent affirmed that, in order to revive faith and rekindle charity, they should be imbued with the doctrine of the church coupled with an apostolic spirit. This is why he himself accepted the office of spiritual director in a number of seminaries and colleges in Rome through which he experienced the richness of the universal Church. If this is the teaching and the life-example of Pallotti, then the ministry of spiritual direction is to be considered as the noblest service in formation houses. Spiritual directors in seminaries and convents should be the right people, and have a positive approach towards religious life and a capacity to motivate candidates spiritually to become authentic apostles in a fast changing society.

Importantly the ministry of spiritual direction should not be the role of those who are considered incapable of doing anything else effectively in a formation house. It is no exaggeration to say that, over the years, the spiritual director's role in formation houses has not met with much acceptance or joy. That said there have been very excellent spiritual directors in our formation houses too.

Thus, from the teachings of St Vincent Pallotti, we can conclude that if we do not provide authentic spiritual direction for candidates, we cannot expect a very promising ministry from them either. Especially in the case of priests, it is the duty of formators to make sure that candidates adopt the habit of approaching spiritual direction regularly. If they don't experience a taste for it during their years of formation, they will just ignore it when they become priests. As a result there will be a line of priests who are spiritually less mature and not able to fulfill the expectations of the Church, that they be pastors after the heart of Jesus.



There is nothing that can block God's grace other than one's willful refusal to accept it! Preparing a candidate, for profession or ordination, through an integral formation which embraces a special place for spiritual direction and carrying out the will of God, is a great need of our time.

And every formator is called to do that.

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