

E-BULLETIN #67

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

item 126

Africa – a continent of hope!

Often, when we talk about Africa [or Asia or Europe], it seems that the reality under discussion is one, and small, and simple to fully grasp. Closer attention suggests otherwise. Here I allow myself to use similar language but I invite the reader to focus only on unity and diversity in Africa.

So many observations are made about our continent! Some receive more emphasis than others. As an African, and proud of it, I share some views and question others. I share in condemning the deficiencies that are obvious. However I disagree with thoughts and attitudes that imply hopelessness. The words of Pope Paul VI are enlightening: "The Christian life, as encouraged and preserved by the Church, must resist every possible source of deception, contamination, or restriction of its freedom. It must guard against these things as it would guard against contamination by error or evil. Yet at the same time it must not only adapt itself to the forms of thought and living which a temporal environment induces, one might almost say imposes, on it – provided, of course, such forms are not incompatible with the basic principles of its religious and moral teaching – but it must also strive to approach these forms and to correct, ennoble, encourage, and sanctify them. And this demands of the Church a continual process of self-examination and re-appraisal of its external conduct. This in fact is what the present era is demanding of the Church with such insistence and earnestness." [encyclical of Pope Paul VI on the Church, *Ecclesia Suam*, 1964, # 42]



Truly great challenges await us Africans. We are very conscious of that, and from time to time we share about it. There is a great need of African self-reflection. We should know and talk about our history without fear. We have a duty to rectify our own defects in order to progress together towards perfection. We should acknowledge our potential to be able to enter into dialogue with the modern world, not as just passive receivers but active contributors. We might recall what

was said during the Pallottine Congress at Thurles, Ireland: 'Pallottines are invited to keep in mind that Africa is a continent of great promise for the Church, and for the Society of the Catholic Apostolate. Thus we have to approach that

continent with more hope than pessimism. [Final Document of the X Congress of Major Superiors, Thurles, Ireland, 14-22 Oct 2012, p 13. Translation is mine]

I value the comments of Fr Hermes Paononga sac in the *SAC Asia Oceania Bulletin* # 66 [10 May 2013]. Nevertheless I would like to add these points:

- The first is that we should be more and more sincere. As Christians, sincerity and integrity of life are keywords of Jesus' message to us as he said: "I am the way, the truth and the life". By being sincere, honest and true one recognizes one's own weaknesses and incapacities and is open to welcome Jesus' call to conversion.
- The second point is that we should be more united. Divisions are always a tool of the devil. The history of Africa is marked by them. Divisions are seized on by politicians to achieve power and to retain it. Africans should not cooperate with the devil but foster what unites. They should yearn for a better world built on the values of unity and reconciliation. Africans should improve their style of communication and reject all forms of individualism. Where communication is not clear, rumor and falsehood quickly and easily spread. Rumors, falsehood and prejudice are ways that the devil uses to divide.
- Thirdly, I would like to call for more responsibility. Responsibility implies collaboration and sincere communication. In the matter of collaboration the XX General Assembly remarks: "Africans themselves have to determine their destiny, naturally in collaboration with the rest of the Society. Africa has great challenges and at the same time enormous opportunities for us Pallottines." [Final Document of the XX General Assembly, Ariccia, 20 Sep-15 Oct 2010, p 14] That reminder for Africans to be more responsible for their own destiny is very important. It's not a way hindering collaboration as one may think, rather a way of encouraging Africans to stand on their own feet and foster the goals of the Church and of the Society, with all the ups and downs that are positive signs of every growth.

The Church in Africa is not hidden from the world. It is part of the world. Its presence in the world cannot be ignored. We still remember vividly the recent description of Pope Benedict XVI on his first visit to Africa: "a continent of hope, a lung of the world".

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item 127

welcoming Pallotti to the East

The IV Asia Oceania Intercontinental [AOIC] meeting was successfully held from 24 -27 April 2013 at Pallotti College, Millgrove, Australia. Major Superiors and Delegates from all the entities in this Intercontinental grouping were present – from Australia, India, South Korea, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

- the initial Pallottine presence in the region commenced in Australia when the *Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples* entrusted Beagle Bay mission, in the far north west, to the Pallottines on 12 January 1901

- today the biggest Pallottine presence in Asia is found in India with its history starting from 1951
- currently the most difficult mission of the Society is probably found in Papua New Guinea because our men are working there in the most demanding conditions
- our presence in South Korea is growing in quality and quantity with three ordained local priests and another two in formation
- the mission in the Philippines has a great future if we are able to invest more on personnel and the necessary structures for the promotion and formation of local vocations
- the mission in Taiwan can be rightly said to be a success story since in a very short span of time three confreres have mastered the local language and the bishops have already entrusted them with two parishes - two more confreres will be shortly joining this mission
- the Pallottine presence in Hong Kong is just one year old and consists in extending pastoral care to the French-speaking people in this country but offers possibilities for further strengthening of our pastoral commitment

It is said that a third of the world's population lies in the Asian continent alone! It struck me, already as a General Consulter a couple of years ago, that Asia was an unexplored region as far as the Pallottine presence is concerned. I used to hear from the Claritians and the Divine Word Missionaries that their communities had grown tremendously in countries like Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Bangladesh, India and even in China. It was such an awareness that led to the establishment of our Society in the Philippines and Taiwan. A year ago the French SAC Region, regardless of their limited numbers, ventured into Hong Kong in response to the challenge posed by the General Council. Congratulations to the Regional Superior and the confreres of the Region!



Today I wish to place the same challenge before the Australian Region as well! Pope Francis challenged the entire Church, right from the beginning of his Pontificate, to move out of ourselves ("*uscire*") to evangelize, to proclaim the Good News. A self-referring Church without such a spirit will not be able to live its missionary mandate. The same argument is valid for religious communities as well. If we are concerned only about maintaining the *status quo*, or spend all our energies only in preserving our structures and properties, we are bound to face the sunset!

There are a number of areas of Pallottine life and apostolate where such a danger can be present, often without us even being aware:

- Take, for example, our Founder's cherished vision of the Union of Catholic Apostolate itself. Many people ask this question: 'What does the Union stand for? What are the net results of its many gatherings?' True, there is always a danger of transforming the Union into happy and self-contented groups. While an experience of communion is always important, the purpose of the Union must be to build up apostolically conscious and active groups or individuals in service of God and his people.
- Religious formation is another area we need to watch. Formation is not an end in itself; it is always for a mission, and in our case, in service of the Gospel. Therefore, it is so important to give our seminarians a taste of real pastoral work and, if possible, in real mission areas, even as they undergo formation. If such pastoral opportunities are not provided, students can easily settle down within the comfort of the formation house, often losing sight of the mission for which they are being formed.

- For that matter, even parish ministries can at times lead to a life confined to their comfort zone. It can happen especially if one works in the same parish for a very long period of time. One can reach the stage of becoming so totally centred on the parish that nothing else really matters.

The point that I wish like to make is that human and Christian life demand that we remain always in a state of dynamic movement. A “state of hunger” is required for the growth of any organism. Spiritually speaking, it is the awareness of our own poverty before God that leads the spiritual hunger. We are a pilgrim people, constantly in exodus. Such is the nature of faith in God.

Therefore, the AOIC meeting should be seen as another invitation to “move out” in search of the sheep. The huge population in Asia awaits Pallotti and his charism. There is already consideration being given to an outreach towards the needy people in Myanmar, Thailand or Vietnam. China remains the ultimate frontier in this vast continent.

The future of a multicultural country like Australia, as part of the Asia Oceania Pallottine group, is certainly tied up with its Asian neighbours. Australia cannot remain any longer isolated far out in the ocean. It has to strongly assume an Asia Oceania Pallottine identity. For Asian countries, in turn, Australia serves as a stable and strong presence with a rich and long Pallottine tradition. The growing Asian Pallottine entities even have a certain moral obligation to reach out to Australia and keep the Pallottine flame burning. Openness of mind, commitment to the Pallottine Family, and a spirit of collaboration are indispensable conditions for making this journey together. Such should be the objectives, after all, of an important event like the AOIC meeting. Our gratitude goes to the Australian Region for hosting such an event.

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you commented...

on #66

What a great article. I am going to share it with our Sisters and also with our UAC members to look at ourselves in the same way. To pray and respond to the Spirit in these terms because they call us to seriously reflect on our goal and our means as well. Thanks so much.

CF 05.05.13

A great article and an important contribution for all of us who are striving to live Vincent's charism. It is through developing meaningful relationships, encouraging, nurturing and empowering all and working in partnership that we are apostles of Christ.

CS 05.05.13