



## E-BULLETIN #82

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

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item 155

### **a holy man: model for today's priests**

*"The more a priest strives for holiness, the more he will make people holy" (Vincent Pallotti)*



A call to priesthood is fundamentally a call to holiness. Every priest is invariably called to be holy before God and his people, and thereby lead others towards holiness. What does it mean to be holy? Holiness, most of us think, is the fruit of long prayers, fasting and doing severe penance; it is being perfect; it is being extraordinary and special. But the truth is far from it. Holiness does not consist in being extraordinary or special, but in being authentically human, even most ordinarily human. It consists in being in love with God and loving one's neighbour. It consists in carrying out one's duty with perfection.

This is what exactly the life of St Vincent tells us. Pallotti, a simple Roman priest, was well known in the eyes of God, in the eyes of the church and in the streets of Rome as a holy man, not because of his apostolic vision and his service, but because he was holy! He was held as a living saint not because of his extraordinary talents and abilities but because of his extraordinary holiness which radiated from his behaviour, his dealings with people and situations of daily life. As Archbishop Spalding of Baltimore writes:

"he was well known in all of Rome because of his extraordinary holiness...the touching trait of his character was his all-penetrating love of God and of Jesus Christ. This love was the driving force of all his endeavours, it was the true life and soul of all his actions, it was the key to his serenity, the font of his courage and that inner peace that spontaneously radiated from his behaviour."

He manifested from his early childhood an extraordinary desire to be holy. His only concern in life was to remain spotless and holy before God. In fact, even from his very early days, he was known as a *santerello* (little saint) in his neighbourhood. As a priest Pallotti strove with never tiring enthusiasm and zeal to attain that holiness to which he felt God had called him. He was deeply convinced that a priest had to live a holy life in order to die a holy death. Holiness was the message of Pallotti to his time. He once advised Fr John Allemande, his fellow priest, with these words:

"sanctify yourself in the manner whereby God wills your sanctification. God does not expect you to attain holiness by solitude and the rigour of a Trappist or a hermit. He wills that you sanctify yourself in the world, in everyday life and even on vacation or while travelling. Holiness consists in the fulfilment of the will of God..."

For Vincent, holiness consists in carrying out one's duties with perfection. Holiness is not the result of a lifetime of service. One spends a lifetime in service because one is holy. Holiness is not the final reward of doing good works. One does good works because one is holy. Holiness is not the consequence of a lifetime of prayer. One prays over a lifetime because one is holy and holiness is a gift of God. During his canonization Bl John XXIII hailed Vincent Pallotti as a sage of remarkable sanctity, a tireless apostle and a wise spiritual director who generated enthusiasm for holiness.

Vincent's life stands as a model for today's priests, and especially for all Pallottine priests in the third millennium. It bears witness to the fact that a true priest is a holy priest. A priest is not someone exceptional who does exceptional things in life, but one who does just what an ordinary person would do in any given situation. A priest is a person with a human touch, with a genuine heart and mind. Holy mother Church is more than ever in need of holy priests, like Vincent Pallotti. The Church today is suffering from a massive tsunami of moral degradation among priests. The church is harmed more by the counter-witness of its own ministers than by attacks from the outside world. One reason Catholics leave the church is the counter-witness given by priests and religious. When church leaders themselves live a life of corruption and misconduct it becomes scandalous and shameful. The church today needs authentic and holy priests, who are able to show the face of God to others.

As priests let us imitate Vincent Pallotti in his holiness and become holy in our daily life situation. Let our words, deeds and actions show the true face of God. Let us re-dedicate ourselves and work for our own sanctification and that of our neighbour. We cannot give to others what we do not have, we cannot point others towards holiness unless and until we ourselves are holy. Let us become living witnesses of God's love by being holy. In the final analysis what matters is not how much a priest has done, nor how much success he has achieved but how he has lived his priestly vocation, how many souls he has led to God by his life. Minute by minute, day by day, and year by year let us strive for holiness, for Pallotti says: ***"The more a priest strives for holiness, the more he will make people holy."***



Bhuwaneshwer Tandi sac [RA] – Mysore – INDIA  
19.08.13  
tandibhuwaneshwer@gmail.com

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item 156

**'abide in Me as I.....'**

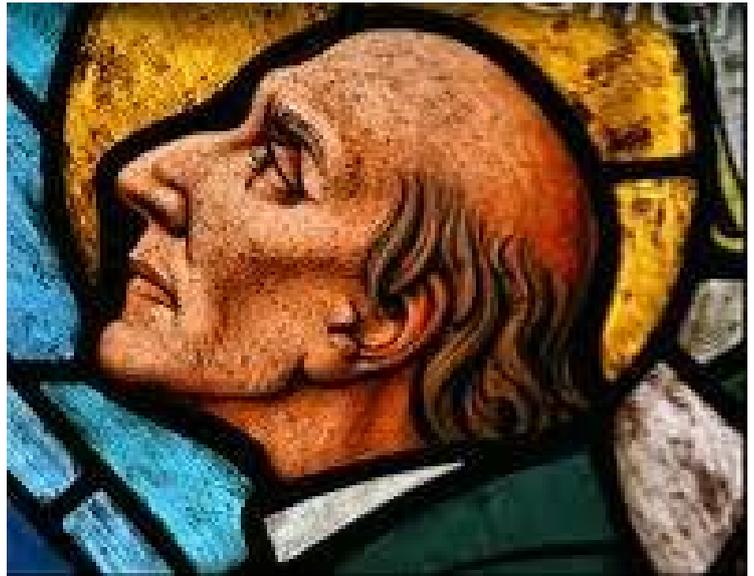
voice 1: Oh! The bowl is dry of water.

voice 2: Blame not the bowl; check whether the pot has some.

The reality is that the bowl and the pot turn to be the one and the same. The metaphor appears to be enigmatic but in fact it is not. We are bowls and pots at the same time. When we receive spiritual inspiration we become bowls, when we give inspiration to others we become pots.

Here I would like to apply this analogy to everyone who is engaged in the Pallottine way of life in their different walks of life. The sweet part of the analogy is that the pot, with all its cracks, has indeed some water but the bitter part is that barely enough water reaches the bowls to moisten their base. Every one of us some time or the other becomes a bowl or the pot. Fr Pallotti was an ever overflowing pot because he was a bowl ever open to God. The core and the main root for his active and socially involved life was sunk onto God and His infinite mercy. His active life flowed out of his silence before God. His innumerable services were the lights which were powered by the dynamo of his spiritual life. His experiences could not

be arrested within himself, for they were like lumps of burning coal in his bones. It was this spiritual force which gave him the strength to express love and pray for the one who kept a gun to shoot him. Many Pallottines and collaborators have been using every possible means in their attempt to give a new lease of life to Pallotti's spirituality. This is the time to salute them and pay tribute to them for their efforts. As we do that we too might take time to check out our own expressions of Pallottine spirituality. However expressed, in the end they are all attempts to sculpture the spirituality of Pallotti in a tangible and conceivable manner.



As I reflect on the spirituality of Fr Pallotti I recall an incident which I want to share. It was a day of recollection for the priests of a particular diocese. They were gathered in the evening to celebrate the Chrism Mass. Earlier at noon adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was being conducted. A deacon vested in an elegant humeral veil, accompanied by a thurifer, walked up to the altar and knelt before the vacant monstrance while a hymn was being sung. As the hymn was nearing its end there was quiet confusion among the priests. Some looked at each other and shook their shoulders, others giggled, while still others openly showed their agitation. They did this not without reason, for the deacon was piously kneeling in front of the empty monstrance. Suddenly a senior priest walked solemnly up to the deacon, touched his shoulder and told him to expose the Blessed Sacrament. Having realised the situation the preacher, who was well prepared for all eventualities, saved the situation by saying: "Fathers, most of us are like this empty monstrance. Most of our brothers and sisters in our own communities and parishes long to meet Jesus in us but go back with their hopes unfulfilled because we do not have Jesus in us. The reason is that we do not have time to spend in prayer." A deep silence fell in the chapel. Perhaps it is true that most of us spend our time and energy in social welfare, education and the health care of others and not in the spiritual care of ourselves. Without self-care our spiritual life withers and we become dry, and our ministry lifeless.

If that happens, our present Pope once said, our faith life has become a career. He likened such a mentality, especially in a priest, to leprosy. The 'holy mission' began by Fr Pallotti needs tireless and sanctified souls to carry it on. He who suffixes the title 'Pallottine' after his/her name and does not do what Pallotti did makes the 'holy mission' ridiculous. Why not renounce our personal ambitions, targets, whims and fancies for the common good? Being a Pallottine is not to take up a career but to be a bearer of souls to Jesus and Jesus to souls. This is possible only if we encounter Jesus in prayer on a daily basis. Only by 'cultivating a life of prayer can one transform one's daily work into the gymnasium of his/her sanctification'. Is it not absurd to enter into the active phase towards others without the listening phase before God?

In his biographies we read how Pallotti levitated while in profound prayer. As members and collaborators in the Pallottine community we should check whether we act as a means to elevate others. To light up others we are to have our own spiritual umbilical cord tied to God, and in no less measure to our fellow human beings. We currently talk a lot about *New Evangelisation* which our founder envisaged centuries ago. He walked into military barracks to preach to soldiers about Jesus, and did the same for sailors. As Pallottines why don't we take the altar to the place where people live? Maybe we have waited too long for the people to come to the altar. Why not stop waiting for the people to come to us but venture into taking the altar to them? This may be a way we can practise our spirituality after the model of our founder. For centuries, we have been trying to fathom his spirituality; but our plans and efforts often turn out to be like the fluttering of a butterfly. What on earth prevents us from helping our brothers and sisters to touch God and confess,



“My Lord and My God?” This help may not be possible when we titillate ourselves with funny motives and are unwilling to abide by the golden words, “Abide in Me as I abide in you.”

**Christu Amal Raj sac [BA] – Mysore – INDIA**  
**18.08.13**  
**christuamalraj@rediffmail.com**

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**sac asia oceania e-bulletin**

**you commented...**

**on #81** From all of us thanks to Shine Augustine. Well done.

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