

## E-BULLETIN #96

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

item 179

### **Jesus' mission = Pallottine mission**

In this short article, I wish to present a brief reflection firstly, on the missionary commitment of the entire Church and secondly, on our own responsibility as Pallottines to continue the same mission of Jesus, the Apostle of the Eternal Father.

#### **I evangelization is the task of the whole church**

The Church has received from the Lord Jesus a very important task, to proclaim the Gospel to every creature (cf. Mk 16,15-16), making disciples of all nations (cf. Mt 28,16-20). It is a task that specifies the necessity and the salvific mediation of the Church, sent into the world to proclaim to all people God's salvation in Christ. This task entrusted by Christ to his Church assumed various names in the two thousand year history of Christianity. It was called announcement, proclamation, education, dissemination, propagation, construction or implantation of the Church, ministry, mission, pastoral care, and also evangelization. However, today, two words define better this essential and natural task of the Church: **mission and evangelization**.



The word evangelization, which indicates both the specific task of the Church as well as its essence, is ambiguous. The word evangelization in fact refers first to the proclamation of the Gospel, but also indicates the task of the Church in the world. In the word evangelization we have two unified realities. It refers primarily to the content to be

communicated, i.e., the message to be transmitted, namely, the Gospel which is Jesus Christ himself, and the communication of the message, namely the way of transmitting the received message to the recipient, i.e., the Gospel; in other words the way of presenting to man the person of Christ. In evangelization then we must be attentive not only to the message to be transmitted, but also to the mode of transmitting this message. This requires a double loyalty to the Gospel itself as well the recipient of the proclamation.

The word evangelization is derived from Greek word that comes from *euaggelizomai* which comes from *Euaggelos*, which means **announcement of good news**, proclaiming the good news, announcement of victory. It must be said it is Pope Paul VI who gave the word evangelization a specific content. In his apostolic

exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the Pope states that **evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church**, her deepest identity. Conscious that the Lord Jesus himself was sent to announce the Good News of God (cf. Lk 4,43), for the apostle Paul evangelization is not a title of glory, but a very important duty that he declares, “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (cf. 1 Cor 9,16). The Church is also aware that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes its essential mission. Pope Paul VI gives three important meanings to the word evangelization in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

- **announce**, proclaim a message, a mystery;
- **proclaim** the Good News by the witness of life;
- transform intimately the man of today thanks to the message of liberation and human development.

## II Pallottine foundation for the universal call to evangelization

We have already underscored that evangelizing is the essential task of the Church. It must be said that this task pertains to all the baptized in Christ (laity, religious and priests). All are called to contribute, collaborating effectively in proclaiming the Good News. Such a commitment implies two risks for the Church involved in evangelization. In fact, Cardinal Saraiva Martins stressed that the whole Church is missionary, stating that “we must in this regard avoid at all costs the **‘clericalization and laicization’** of evangelization”. We will do well to add that the consciousness of the commitment of all for evangelization is a very important dimension of our Pallottine missionary charism.

Our charism was inspired by the vision of our founder St Vincent Pallotti, who realized that the infinite love of God for mankind requires a greater commitment of all the baptized in announcing this love of God to all men, reviving their faith and rekindling charity. The charism that Pallotti received from God is the heritage of the whole Union of Catholic Apostolate. For us sons and daughters of Pallotti, consciousness of proclaiming the Gospel and the love of God and the salvation in Christ has a threefold foundation: theological, Christological and ecclesiological.

### a) theological foundation: **the infinite love of God**

We know that the missionary charism received by Pallotti stems from the awareness of God's infinite love. Pallotti is in fact aware that God who is love in essence, created man in His own image and likeness, making man a living image of divine love, that is, image of the one God in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### b) Christological foundation: **Jesus Christ, the Apostle of the Father**

Jesus was sent by his Father to make men participate in his own divine life. For Pallotti, “Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Apostle of the Eternal Divine Father because he was sent by him to repair the glory of his outraged majesty and to redeem the human race.” Pallotti is aware that it is the infinite love of God that gives Jesus Christ to mankind, in order to learn to imitate his life, which is humble, poor, pitiful, persecuted, hardworking, beneficial and despised.

### c) ecclesiological foundation: **the apostolic mission of every baptized**

According to the Pallottine vision, every baptized person has an obligation to work with all his strength for his own salvation and that of others. In this sense, taking the example of the Virgin Mary, who was accorded by the Church with the august title of Queen of the Apostles, our Mother and our model, all – priests, laity, men and women religious, are called to imitate our Immaculate Mother Mary, striving to proclaim the Good News with works of charity and zeal.

### III implications of the challenge of evangelization in our apostolic and spiritual life

The evangelization of our world today is not only a challenge for the Church, but also a necessary commitment that stems from our Pallottine missionary charism. Here I would like to propose just two approaches that could help us in this vital task.

#### a) evangelize by the witness of life

If the explicit proclamation of the Good News is necessary, it must be said that the witness of an authentic Christian life is equally important. Pope Paul VI reminds in this respect that the testimony of a life imbued with Gospel values without words, **“is already a silent proclamation of the Good News and a very powerful and effective one.”** Therefore, he says that today's man thirsts for authenticity and truth and listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers. In this sense, the witness of an authentically Christian life is the first means of evangelization. Pope John Paul II also points out that the testimony of life is the first form of the announcement of the Gospel, through the testimony of the missionary and his care for the people and his charity towards the poor, the lowly and the suffering. The two recent Popes before Pope Benedict XVI and currently the Pope Francis, insist much on life witness for the credibility of the announcement of the Gospel to our world today. It means being able to come out of ourselves to go to the most needy persons, to the periphery of human existence. This implies the ability to leave our comfort zones to embrace the suffering and needs of our brothers and sisters.

#### b) evangelization of culture

It is after the Second Vatican Council that the Church has become more aware of the culture, when during the discussions the issue of culture as well as other great problems of humanity were taken into consideration. In this sense, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, tried to define or rather describe the concept of culture. Pope Paul VI, after stating that the divide between the Gospel and culture is the drama of our time proposed **“to ensure a full evangelization of culture, or more correctly of cultures.”** For Pope John Paul II, peoples everywhere must open the doors to Christ; “His Gospel in no way detracts from man's freedom, from the respect that is owed to every culture and to whatever is good in each religion”.



It must be said that in order to better evangelize cultures today, it is necessary to know them and study them, not merely to seek the positive elements in them. It is important to learn to respect each culture, do a deep discernment because in every culture there are elements of goodness that can enrich the Church, while there are also some negative, dark elements that need to be enlightened by Christ and his Gospel. It is important to strive towards inter-culturalism, in the sense that cultures can both enrich each other and also receive from each other very many important elements.

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## 'sanctity is stronger than scandal'

As the bishop of Rome, Pope Francis met the Roman clergy for the first time on 16 September 2013. His first words to his brother priests were words of encouragement and closeness. He made sure that his message was very informal, speaking from his heart to their hearts, sometimes as a father to children, at other times to friends and brothers. For the first time a Pope was speaking without a fixed text, using the Bible, turning the pages and looking for the exact Bible texts which he wanted, and at times making jokes when it was not very easy finding them.

Pope Francis talked about the joys and trials of the priesthood, taking the examples of John the Baptist, Jeremiah, the Virgin Mary etc. Narrating different stories of his own priestly life, he stated that priestly mission is hard work. "Being in contact with his flock is hard work for a priest." Jesus inspires this hard work, calling priests to go out to the poor, proclaim the Gospel and keep going. He reminded all the priests that "praying before the tabernacle and being close to other priests and the bishop" helps our personal integrity and mission. The Pope also stressed the importance of remembering moments such as the the discovery and beginning of our vocation, our entry to the seminary, the years of formation and priestly ordination. He added: "Memory is the lifeblood of the Church."

Basing himself on the letter he had written to his priests when he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires in 2008, a year after the Aparecida Conference, Pope Francis said that the Church needs "shepherds of the people, not clerics of the State". He invited them to be both pastors and zealous missionaries who live in constant yearning to go in search of the lost, never settling for simple administration. Going against the pessimistic approach of the media he said that the Church is not falling to pieces. The presence of many holy men and women, both recognized and unrecognized, who perform acts of holiness every day, gives us hope. He encouraged everybody, asserting that "sanctity is stronger than scandal"!

For me personally, it was a great day of meeting a great man who is moving the hearts of everyone regardless of age, culture and religion. I believe the intercession of St Vincent Pallotti was with me to have such a spiritual experience because, on the morning itself, after my prayers to him I had a feeling that I would be given a chance to meet the Pope. Because of that I took a shawl (*Ponnada* in my local language) along. Humanly speaking, there appeared to be no possibility of a meeting due to the huge number of priests present, and the Pope was not coming to where I was seated. But for God everything is possible. Suddenly Francis changed his plans and the security guards had to make a new passage for him – just in front of me! When the Holy Father approached me, I explained that it was just the cultural feast day of *Onam* in Kerala, India and one of the ways to honour and welcome a person of importance is by placing a *Ponnada* around them. So he asked me to do so. Our God is able to give us much more than what we can think and ask for!



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**you commented...**

**on #95**

am very happy to see how ... newsletter has so much to say -- and to inspire us. This week's emphasis on our getting to know each other stressed another aspect of our universality -- our charism as Pallottines that broadens our vision beyond our own provinces.

**CF 25.11.13**