



PALLOTTINE MISSIONS SUNDAY 2016

THE DIVINE MERCY IN PALLOTTI AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN THE ASIAN CONTEXT: SOUTH KOREA, THE PHILIPPINES, TAIWAN, HONG KONG AND VIETNAM

The celebration this year of the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, proclaimed by Pope Francis on 11 April 2015, is an opportunity offered to the whole Church to «contemplate the mystery of mercy» (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 2), fixing their gaze on this divine reality in order to « become ourselves efficacious sign of Act of the Father » (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 3). This favorable moment allows us to understand the depth of the merciful love of the Father who is greater than our sin, and who never is tired to forgive us. The Jubilee this year 2016 also illuminates in a particular and deep manner our Society of the Catholic Apostolate that will hold its XXI General Assembly from 19 September to October 15, 2016 in Ariccia (RM): «*The fundamental rule of our Congregation is the life of our Lord Jesus Christ*» (OOCC III, 40).

Our Pallottine Mission Sunday will be celebrated this year the next **2 October 2016** in this twofold context, that of the Jubilee year of Mercy, and especially during the evolution of our General Assembly. This Supreme instance will examine the current state of our Society in the aspects of life of the members, of apostolate and mission, to lead it towards new horizons, after doing an accurate reading of the signs of our times and of today's challenges in the light of the Gospel (cf. *LSAC*, 103). While celebrating this Pallottine Mission Sunday on the first Sunday of October, month chosen by the Church as missionary par excellence, we want to fix our gaze on our way of life concretely mercy as Pallottine Family in our missions. For this reason, the General Secretariat for the missions has chosen as theme this year to celebrate our Pallottine Mission Sunday 2016: « *The divine Mercy in Pallotti and its development in the Asian context: South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Viet Nam* ». We want to understand the meaning of mercy in Saint Vincent Pallotti and its implementation in Asia, a continent where we, as Pallottines, already operate since 65 years in India, with a great missionary commitment in recent years in the eastern part of this vast continent, especially in South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Viet Nam.

1. THE EXPERIENCE OF DIVINE MERCY IN PALLOTTI

Mercy is a specific theme of the rich spiritual experience of our Holy Founder. In fact, mercy is one of two key features of the understanding that Pallotti got of God; the first one is love. Understanding and contemplating God as infinite love and infinite mercy, we find the theological aspect the most important of Vincent Pallotti's spiritual writings. In fact, he experienced in his earthly existence God's love and mercy. Reading the spiritual writings of St Vincent, *the Enlightenment* and *God the infinite love*, we turn out that the Founder has a frequency and a passion in speaking of God's mercy. This is not a static address, meaningless, but rather a rapid evolution and wide of his thought and his inner world, harmonious fruit of his most significant spiritual experiences.

In the pages of enlightenment, Pallotti makes various hints to the theme of mercy. The understanding that makes Don Vincent is also very rich, since mercy is presented by him as

forgiveness, generosity, charity and above all how to practice works of mercy. In his own spiritual experience, we see that Pallotti acknowledges with gratitude the many stretches of Mercy of which he was the beneficiary in his life. That is why we find in many pages of *Enlightenments* this rich expression: « *my God, my Mercy*» used by the Saint repeatedly throughout his life. In fact, St. Vincent Pallotti tries to compare the divine wealth with his own nothing. He sees the world as a tension between two poles that look like opposite and far from each other: the magnitude or the holiness of God and misery or the indignity of man. On one hand you see the great Triune God, Almighty, infinite, immense, incomprehensible, and on the other at the other extreme, the man represented by Pallotti himself, miserable sinner and root of all evil, with his vast and endless misery, poverty, blindness, ignorance, and impiety (cf. *OOCC X*, 59-60). In Pallotti's youth and in his early maturity is the bridge of divine goodness that combines the two poles that seem very far from each other. In the last phase of his spirituality, there is the divine attribute of mercy. The source of Mercy is the Infinite Love, while the infinite wisdom is its guide. We can define the mercy as the compassion of the heart: that is the love that is adapting to the other's need or the pain that you feel the other's discomfort. In Pallotti, the adjective "merciful" and the noun "mercy" appear as merged inseparably with God's name, as Pope Francis will say today first in his catechesis during the General Audience on 13 January 2016 and then in his book-length interview published on 16 January 2016: "*Mercy is the name of God*" (Francis, *Il nome di Dio è Misericordia. Una conversazione con Andrea Tornielli*, Piemme, Roma 2016).

We have already stated that Saint Vincent Pallotti has had in his life a profound experience of the greatness and holiness of God, without knowing how to reconcile these divine attributes with his flaunted indignity. This indignity is perceptible in one essential question that guides his spiritual journey. It will be present as a refrain in the second book of his *Enlightenment*: « *But then who am I before you o my God, infinite Mercy?* » (*OOCC X*, 482). Despite his unworthiness to even really know God, Pallotti understands that the infinite mercy of God and his infinite mercy attributes give him the courage to stand in the presence of God. This truth is discovered by him because he understands that his soul is the image and likeness of God. By analyzing in depth the text of the *Enlightenment* concerning the argument about who is God and who is the man that is interesting for us to better understand the meaning of God's mercy in Pallotti (cf. *ibid.*, 462-483), we find that it anticipates the meditations of the booklet *God the Infinite Love* written by Pallotti in 1849. The theme contains a solemn introduction and is then developed into three main points: the knowledge of God; ingratitude and the nullity of man before God; and man as a created being in the image and likeness of God for will and gift of divine mercy. We could say that man is like a little lamb who insists on staying lost or the son who insists on being ill, while God is like the shepherd who insists on going after its lost sheep, by searching for it and after having found its sheep, he carries it on his shoulders and comes back with it to the fold, or as a mother that insists on taking care of the child because he heals (cf. F. AMOROSO, *Dal nulla al tutto il cammino spirituale di Vincenzo Pallotti*, Città Nuova Editrice, Roma 1981, 274). The great discovery of Pallotti is that every man, despite his infidelity, filth, his many sins and failures is the image of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In his spiritual experience God's mercy has different attributes. In fact, writing: «*My God, my Mercy, and eternal, immense, incomprehensible Mercy*» (*OOCC X*, 235), Pallotti sees that these attributes best describe the divine mercy. Such a reflection has a reference staff with his own life,

especially when our Holy Founder considers himself unworthy more than the rebel angels, a superb, a selfish, a monster while willing to say to God a word to match to his infinite love (cf. *ibid.*, 473). For this reason Pallotti can say emphatically that the attributes of God are all infinitely merciful: «*Holy, Blessed, and most August individual Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit your infinite mercy, and all your infinite Attributes all infinitely merciful make me dared to present myself before You [...], your mercy assures me that although I don't know what, and how, and on what object I should write, that you let me write whatever you want, You in your infinite mercy, and how you like, and for the purposes that are pleasing to you. Oh infinite Mercy! Oh Miracle of Mercy!*» (*ibid.*, 462-463).

Pallotti arrives to conclude after experiencing the divine graces that God wanted to make him a prodigy of mercy, as expressed in the passage cited above. More he attests that God converted him to *Trophy of Divine Mercy* as he made *Mary Marvel of Grace* (cf. *ibid.*, 303, 311, 315, 319-320). In the meditations in his booklet *God Infinite Love*, Pallotti puts the Mercy beside endless love because the Infinite Mercy is a consequence i.e. an aspect of infinite love. For this reason, the relationship between God infinite love and his weak and unloved creature reduces to compassion, another expression of Mercy (cf. *God Infinite Love*, Meditation X). When Pallotti uses the word “mercy” in the sense of invocation or confession of his unworthiness, and as a cry of exultation in front of the wonder of Mercy itself, he wants to enhance the long-suffering of the same Mercy. In fact, the man should never tire of asking forgiveness from God of Mercy, who doesn't get tired even to spread his Mercy. That is why Pope Francis could write with conviction: «God never tires of reaching out to us» (*MV* 19), because he «is always ready to forgive, and he never tires of forgiving in ways that are continually new and surprising» (*ibid.*, 22). In fact His mercy doesn't know limits. In front of such a generous and free gift, the response of the believer and of Pallotti cannot be only the trusting abandonment to the Divine Mercy (cf. *OCCC* X, 204).

2. THE PALLOTTINE PRESENCE IN EASTERN ASIA

As we have already stated, our pallottine presence in Asia dates back to 1951, i.e. 65 years ago when the first Pallottines from Germany arrived in Raipur in India. This first seed planted by the Pallottines in Asia has grown strongly. As the mustard seed of the Gospel, it gave to the entire Pallottine Family many fruits until today, with more than 600 Indian Pallottines in three Provinces, without forgetting however the two congregations of the Pallottine Sisters which has both each one Province with many Indian Pallottine Sisters.

The Pallottine presence in Asia has strongly grown since 1990 when our Polish Pallottine confreres have gone to South Korea 26 years ago. From the year 2010 a new missionary surge for Asia was set up with the involvement of our Indian confreres who are working now in the Philippines and Taiwan. And most recently since 2012 and by 2015, the French Region of Divine Mercy has also had a missionary interest for Asia, sending some of his members in Hong Kong and Viet Nam. Here we give you an overview of the countries where we, Pallottines, are working now in East Asia.

2.1.SOUTH KOREA (1990)

It's an East Asian country located in the southern half of the Korean peninsula that has an area of approximately 100,000 km². Historically, Korea was an independent Kingdom throughout

its history, until its occupation by Japan in 1905 following the Russo-Japanese war. After the victory of the United States on Japan in 1945, the country has become independent though the northern part has chosen a style of Communist rule and the southern of which we speak here and which is forming today the Republic of Korea, a more democratic form of Government. The South Korean population is estimated today at about 50,800,000 inhabitants divided in eight provinces, one special self-governing province, six metropolitan cities, one metropolitan city and one special city that is Seoul, the capital of the country. The language of the country is Korean, although English is studied in school by the younger generation. At religious level, more than 43% of Koreans are without religion, while Christians represent 29.2% of the population (more than 18% for Protestants and about 11% for Catholics); the Buddhists represent 22.8% with adherents of other religions of minor importance as Islam and various new religious movements.

Having decided to begin a missionary adventure in the Far East with the desire to engage in Papua New Guinea and in South Korea, the first Pole Pallottine missionaries arrived in this country on May 1, 1990. It's the Bishop of the Diocese of Suwon who invited the Pallottines in his Diocese to promote the devotion to the Divine Mercy by implanting the Pallottine charism in South Korean land. Currently seven confreres are working in South Korea in two communities (3 Polish priests and one brother, two South Korean priests and one seminarian): in Bundang-Dong in the Diocese of Suwon and at the shrine of Merciful Jesus at Yangdeogwon in the Diocese of Chuncheon.

2.2. THE PHILIPPINES (2010)

Located in Southeast Asia, the Republic of the Philippines is an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands covering an area of about 300,000 km². The country can be divided into three main geographical areas: Luzon in the North where is the capital of the country Manila, Visayas in the Centre and Mindanao in the South. Spanish colony since the 16th century, then ceded to the United States of America in 1898 after the Spanish-American war, the Philippines have gained their independence in 1935. The country's population is estimated at 102,565,000 inhabitants in 2016 today divided between various ethnic groups among them the Tagalog, the Cebuano, the Ilocano, the Bisaya/Binisaya, the Hiligaynon Ilonggo and other minor ethnic groups. The two official languages of the country are the Filipino (based on Tagalog) and English with eight major dialects among the 175 regional local languages listed in the country. The main religion of the Philippines is Catholicism practiced by more than 80% of the Philippine population; that makes this archipelago the country with the largest number of Catholics in Asia. There are also other Christians (Evangelicals and Christians of other denominations) with more than 10%, Muslims with 5%, Buddhists with 2.5%.

It's since 2003 that the Pallottines of the Indian Province Khrist Jyothi (light of Christ) were planning to open a mission in the Philippines, trying to settle in Manila. Such a project was concretely implemented at the beginning of the year 2010 when the first confreres were installed in the diocese of Bacolod on Negros Island. Currently four Indian confreres are working in the Philippines in the Diocese of Bacolod, in a parish and in a formation House for our Pallottine candidates coming from the countries of East Asia.

2.3. TAIWAN (2010)

This island, situated in the eastern part of the Asian continent covers an area of 35,980 km². It constitutes with other smaller islands (Jinmen, Matsu Islands and Pescadores Islands) the

Republic of China or the National Republic of China also known as the nationalist China. Inhabited by more than 6,000 years by Aboriginal peoples, Taiwan has become a land of immigration since the 17th century for Han people from mainland China. For this reason, Taiwan was governed officially by mainland China from 1885 to 1895, then from Japan that will cede the country to the United States of America in 1945. The Taiwanese population is estimated at 23,415,126 inhabitants in July 2015 composed primarily of Taiwanese who make up 84% of the population, by people from mainland China 14% and by 2% Aboriginal peoples. The capital of Taiwan is Taipei and the country is divided into five autonomous cities, three cities having a provincial character and 14 counties. At linguistic level the official language is Mandarin Chinese which cohabits with Taiwanese (Min) and other dialects; while at religious level, Buddhists represent 35.1%, Taoists 33%, atheists or without a religion 14% and Christians are around 4.5% of the Taiwanese population.

The Pallottines have arrived in Taiwan through Mgr Ambrose Madtha, classmate of our Rector General, Fr. Jacob Nampudakam, and of other Indian confreres in Nagpur and Apostolic Nuncio to Ivory Coast, who died suddenly in December 2012. In fact, Mgr Ambrose Madtha, who has worked in the Apostolic Nunciature to the Republic of China (Taiwan), helped the Pallottines in the opening of a new mission in Taiwan, presenting them to Mgr Martin Su Yao-wen, Bishop of Taichung. After learning the Chinese language, the first Indian confreres of the Province of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Bangalore, started their mission in October 2010. Currently, four Indian confreres are working in Taiwan in the Diocese of Chiayi and in Taichung Diocese.

2.4.HONG KONG (2012)

Since 1997 Hong Kong, located on the southern coast of China, is one of the special administrative regions of the People's Republic of China together with Macao. It has an area of 1,104 Km² for a population estimated at 7,141,106 inhabitants in July 2015. The territory that was limited before to the sole Hong Kong Island was occupied by Great Britain in 1841, which will add new territories during the second half of the 19th century including the peninsula of Kowloon. In 1997, China resumed control of Hong Kong while maintaining the area's distinctive features, often presented as the meeting point between East and West. In fact, Hong Kong is one of the most important financial centres in the world. The Chinese constitute more than 93% of the population and live together with other minor groups, including Indonesians and Filipinos who each have around 2%. Hong Kong has two official languages: Cantonese and English which are spoken along with Mandarin and other Chinese dialects. The majority of the population of Hong Kong doesn't profess any religion, despite the high degree of religious freedom that favors the Asian religions: Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Christians account for approximately 11.7% among them Catholics who are over 7% of the population of Hong Kong.

In 2012, Fr. Remigiusz Kurowski, Pallottine priest belonging to the Region of Divine Mercy arrived in Hong Kong for his sabbatical year. He lives in this year in the Diocesan Centre of Hong Kong and lends his priestly service at the French-speaking Catholic community. For this reason, the Bishop of the Diocese of Hong Kong, Cardinal John Tong Hong, appointed him Chaplain of the French-speaking Catholic community in Hong Kong. So far, Fr. Kurowski is the only Pallottine priest in Hong Kong and he is responsible for the chaplaincy of the francophone community of the

Diocese of Hong Kong. It must be said that our pallottine presence in Taiwan and in Hong Kong is considered as a preview of our future pallottine presence in mainland China.

2.5. VIET NAM (2015)

Officially called the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, it is a country in Southeast Asia located east of the Indochina peninsula, formed geographically by three major regions: Tonkin in North, Annam in Centre and Cochin China in South. The country has an area of 331,210 km², an estimated population according to CIA's data in July 2015 at 94,348,835 inhabitants, and as capital Hanoi. In 1854, France begins the conquest of Viet Nam that will become a part of French Indochina in 1887. After World War II in 1945, the country becomes independent from France. After a period of instability and division between the Communist North and the South more open to Western influence will follow. This will lead to a war against the United States of America that will also affect other countries in the region such as Cambodia and Laos. In 1976, the entire country came under communist influence and is reunified. The population of Vietnam is made up of 86.2% of Vietnamese and the remaining 13.8% consists of Chinese, Thai, Cambodian and other minorities. The country's official language is Vietnamese; and English is studied as a dominant foreign language, while French language inherited from colonization is used today only by a minority in decline. At religious level, as with all countries under communist influence, most of the majority of Vietnamese people doesn't practice any religion. However, Buddhism split into several schools is the most widespread religion in the country, cohabiting with communities of Confucians, Taoists and Christians. Although small compared to the total population of the country, the Vietnamese Catholic community with about 7 million members is among the largest in Asia, second after that of the Philippines.

The French Region of the Divine Mercy has also responded favourably to the appeal of the General Regime for a great commitment in the evangelization of the vast continent of Asia. Therefore, two of its young members have agreed to become missionaries in Vietnam. The first Pallottine missionary in Vietnam, Fr. Martin Grzyb, has arrived in the country in October 2015, while the second, Fr. Adam Galazka, has arrived in February 2016. Currently, the two confreres reside at the Catholic parish Thi Nghe in Ho Chi Minh Ville, South of Vietnam, learning Vietnamese language and culture of the country, giving also a pastoral help to the French-speaking Catholic community of Saigon.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT OF PALLOTTI ON DIVINE MERCY: ONE OF OUR MISSIONARY PRIORITIES IN EAST ASIA

The rich thought of Pallotti on divine mercy that we have already presented is the heritage of the entire Pallottine Family. In many ways, it is presented and experienced concretely where we are working, and especially this year of Divine Mercy. In the five countries in the Far East Asia where are evangelizing now, our Pallottine confreres live such a thought, making the spread of worship and devotion to Divine Mercy, one of the priorities of their apostolic and missionary commitment.

❖ Ordinary pastoral care in the parishes or at French-speaking Catholic communities

If in South Korea we are not responsible of any parish in expectation of promise to have one in the Diocese of Chuncheon, in other East Asian countries where we are present, our confreres are

engaged in ordinary pastoral work in parishes and chaplaincies. In the Philippines and Taiwan our Indian confreres have the pastoral care of the faithful in the parishes, while in Hong Kong and Viet Nam the confreres of the French Region take pastorally care of French-speaking Catholic communities. In ordinary ministry in the parishes, the confreres face various challenges such lack of interest on the side of the faithful for the sacraments (baptism, confession, marriage) especially among young people and a life of assiduous faith, although some other faithful commit loyally in church activities as in the Philippines. In our parishes in East Asia there are several groups and Ecclesial movements led by lay people, with the spiritual assistance of our confreres. Among the various activities carried out in these parishes and chaplaincies, emphasis is placed especially on a good preparation to receive the sacraments, the visit to the sick persons, the visit and prayers in the families.

❖ *Education and training Ministry*

In this area of missionary activities, the confreres undertake much in these five countries in the far East Asia to do better knowing our Founder Saint Vincent Pallotti and his foundation (the Union and the Society of the Catholic Apostolate), in order to attract new vocations for the formation to the Pallottine consecrated life. In South Korea, with the intensification of youth and vocation Ministry, we have already two Korean priests and one seminarian. In the Philippines, we opened a formation House in Bacolod, thanks to the generous contribution of some Pallottine entities (American Province of the Immaculate Conception, Austro-German Province of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Australian Region of Regina Mundi, Delegation of Slovakia). These entities support economically the formation of our candidates who come from Taiwan and the Philippines.

A very important aspect is the training of the laity in the pallottine charism's knowledge and in the awareness of their role and of their mission in the Church. In this context, retreats and training sessions are organized for them in South Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan (country in which there is a plan to open an Animation Apostolic Centre), in Hong Kong and in certain way also in Viet Nam. To facilitate the formation of lay people in East Asia, our confreres have already started a great job of translation of some important texts of Pallotti and of pallottine spirituality in Korean and Chinese, as well as some texts about the divine mercy in Pallotti and in the tradition of the Church. The present engagement of our two missionary confreres in Vietnam is just now to learn very well the Vietnamese language and the culture of the country. There is also the prospect of securing a good Christian and pallottine formation to the communities and groups leaders and to the liturgical Ministers so that they can also become trainers of the other faithful.

❖ *Socio-charitable ministry accompanied by works of mercy*

In East Asian countries, the Pallottines undertake also socio-charitable ministry, accompanied it by the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Through this commitment, they want to make visible the message of mercy spread by Pallotti and today encouraged by the whole Church, especially in this extraordinary Jubilee. In South Korea, the confreres visit and assist spiritually patients by ensuring the chaplaincy in one hospital. In the Philippines they make an effort to visit the sick and to help the poorest, while in Hong Kong some charitable efforts are made for immigrants, children and the poor in some Asian countries like Nepal. In Taiwan, the confreres also put an emphasis on socio-charitable activity of their mission, visiting for example older people. Our confreres want to live concretely and faithfully the works of mercy, by teaching, fortifying, helping

the weak, the needy and the suffering. A great step is done by them even with the readiness to offer spiritual and moral training and assistance to all communities and people who want to live the pallottine spirituality in the Union of Catholic Apostolate. In this sense, some groups and individuals have already made their apostolic commitment in the Union of Catholic Apostolate in South Korea for example.

❖ Specific commitment in spreading the devotion and worship of the Divine Mercy

Taking advantage of today's ecclesial context that gives to the Divine Mercy an importance, our Pallottine confreres want to continue to proclaim the message of God's mercy, in the whole world and especially in East-Asia countries. In South Korea, for example, the proclamation of the message of mercy has always been the hallmark of the Pallottine presence in the country. For this reason, our confreres undertake boldly to enact such a message by spreading the "diary of Sister Faustina", putting an accent on the theme of mercy in their preaching and especially in this year of Divine Mercy, by submitting the material to help the devotion of the faithful. In the Philippines, the brothers began the spread of the devotion and worship of the Divine Mercy. There is also the same thing in other countries where we are present. As we already do in South Korea, it would be desirable for our confreres that they can enrich such a specific commitment with diffusion of the thought of Saint Vincent Pallotti on Divine Mercy, publishing and translating some of his most famous writings in the main languages of the five East-Asia countries where we are working now..