

ADVENT 2005.

Waiting for the celebration of the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*“God loved the world so much
that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him
may not be lost but may have eternal life” (Jn. 3,16)*



We offer you some material for use in a prayer and reflection session in this very special time for the Church.

Opening prayer.

Let us pray together with Saint Vincent: “You, of my God, have created me in your mercy and with charity you have loved me, and love me, and thus in mercy you have drawn me to yourself. Guide me, move me according to your infinite mercy in every thought, word and deed. Amen”

Advent is a very special time in the life of the Christian. It is a time of waiting, a time for contemplating the plan of God, of discovering the desires of God for humanity. **Advent** underlines God’s solidarity with all the peoples of the earth. In order to make this communion a reality, God, who is infinite love, asked for Mary’s cooperation. He looked “on his lowly handmaid”, and he asked her to be the mother of the Saviour. With Mary’s ‘yes’, the “Word became flesh and lived among us”. Let us contemplate Mary, mother of hope, and so learn from her to open our hearts to receive the desire of God to create communion with us and with all people of good will.

As members and collaborators of the Union, we commit ourselves so that all the people of this world recognize that they are beloved children of the Father who is both in heaven and here among us.

Now, together with Mary, let us listen to the Word of God.

Readings from Sacred Scripture:

- *“Stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand”, (Luke 21,28);*
- *“The angel Gabriel was sent by God ... to a virgin ... he went in and said to her, ‘Rejoice, so highly favoured, the Lord is with you’ ...Mary said ‘I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me’”. (Luke 1, 26 – 38);*
- *“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins”. (Matt. 1, 20-21).*

Reflection on the Appeal of May of Saint Vincent Pallotti as presented by Corrado Montaldo of the Quinta Dimensione Community, of Rome, on August 24th 2005 during the General Congress of the Union at Konstancin, Poland.

“I think this is one of the important and revolutionary points of the Appeal: **“Now these considerations have suggested the idea to certain pious persons, to come together, and to invite the greatest number of the Faithful possible, to join with them in the intention of praying together to the Heavenly Father to send numerous multitudes of Gospel labourers into his vineyard, and to cooperate with their own voluntary offerings in their formation and in their maintenance, because both reason and experience show that ordinarily the good that is done in isolation is inadequate, uncertain and of little duration, and that the most generous efforts of the**

individual cannot achieve anything great in the moral and religious order, as they would when they are united and ordered towards a common goal; thus it is intended that with the necessary prior approval of the Ecclesiastical authority, this mass of zealous Christians be united so as to form a pious society” (OOCC IV, 122-3).

To come together, to invite others, to pray together, to have a common goal ... these expressions struck me because Vincent is asking the others to be with him, to “experience” the Church together with him, to give themselves together with him, to act together. This is beautiful: he wishes that every effort be done “together”, feeling oneself to be part of a body: it is for this that he establishes a foundation, in order to make this being and acting together possible. I do not know if the Founder had a clear idea in his mind about how this “together” was to be lived in practice, and this issue is still being studied in our own time, but certainly he felt that hearts and souls had to be united in order to achieve the goal. Therefore, the call is not to be “lone navigators” but to feel oneself in need of the other so much so that it becomes a lifestyle. To be in communion; Jesus says in the Gospel of John: “by this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”. To be together means first of all to have the presence of Christ. Another thing that seems important to me is that Vincent was sure that only this coming together, this working together in a pact of charity gave efficacy to the actions, made it possible to do good. Perhaps this is why he has recourse to an **Appeal** to all Christians, and does not just limit himself to the setting up of an activity which he would propose only to those he had around him. He desired that the message reach all people, that all would be involved, because it is only if all act together with a strong spiritual bond that the activity would be efficacious.”

Period of reflection:

The season of **Advent** tells us that God did not want us to be ‘lone navigators’ and that is why he sent his Son to the world, to invite all people to collaborate in his work.

Advent emphasises God’s solidarity with all the people of the earth and not merely with a chosen few. Saint Vincent understood this divine will. During the General Congress we heard God’s invitation with greater depth and conviction, his invitation to live our vocation as members of the Union of Catholic Apostolate, collaborating with God in his plan of creating communion in the world. What does this passage of the Appeal, which shows the grace of God working in Saint Vincent for the good of the Church, say to me?

How do I experience the invitation to fulfil the will of God in the Union?

What are the challenges that come from a reading of this reflection?

Spontaneous prayer: Response to each prayer: *“Come, Lord Jesus”*

Conclusion:

There is a statue of the Child Jesus in the Church of San Salvatore in Onda, Rome, which Saint Vincent used to invite the faithful to kiss during the celebrations of the Octave of the Epiphany; the prayer leaflet has the following prayer:

“O Divine Word, splendour and image of the glory of the eternal Father. You became man in the womb of the Virgin Mary in order to redeem all people. In reverence before you I adore your great majesty and I implore you to be born spiritually in my heart.

I ardently ask you to give me the grace to imitate your holy infancy, with innocence of life, with deep humility and perfect obedience to the will of God, so that becoming like you here on earth, I may merit to be like you in the eternal glory of Heaven. Amen.”

**Dear brothers and sisters, we wish you an Advent season that is full of hope;
a Holy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.**

The members of the General Secretariat of the UAC.