



# *Apostles for Today*

## *Reflections and prayers - October 2009*

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### **God the Infinite Love of St. Vincent Pallotti**

When St. Vincent composed this booklet he set out to reflect on the Infinite Love of God and on the articles of faith expressed in the Apostles Creed. St. Vincent, however, only managed to reflect on the first three articles of the Creed. This month we begin our reflections which are based on the first article:

### **I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH**

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**“God, blessed in Himself, moved by his infinite love and mercy, created the world in order to give himself wholly to creatures.”**

Thus begins the first meditation of ‘God the Infinite Love’.

God, through all of creation, allows us to share in his diffusive, radiating, creative, eternal, but above all infinite, Love, a love which is unlimited and without end.

I have always been struck by St. Vincent’s insistence on the concept of infinity (infinite love, infinite mercy, infinite merits etc.) attributed to God, and then I think of how much we, in our manner of behaviour with all our limitations and our feelings of guilt, in our daily lives are often unaware of his infinite mercy.

In relation to this difficulty that we experience, which is the result of conditioning and of fears induced in us, I will recount a summary of a fable which was written by Claude Steiner, an American transactional analyst, which allows us to observe what goes on inside of us and may clarify our difficulty.

“Once upon a time, a long time ago, there was a place where happy people lived. To understand how happy they were you have to understand how things were in those days.

You see in those happy days everyone was given a small, soft Fuzzy Bag when born. Any time the child reached into this bag they were able to always pull out a Warm Fuzzy. A warm fuzzy was the size of the small fist of a baby and had a warm and tender colour; as soon as the fuzzy saw the light of day it would smile and blossom into a large, shaggy, warm fuzzy. When the warm fuzzy came into contact with a person and when it was caressed, it would melt right against their skin and make them feel good all over for a long time. In those days warm fuzzies were very much in demand and it was very easy to get them. Anytime that somebody felt like it they could ask for one and they would feel happy, warm and fuzzy most of the time. If people were deprived of them for a period of time they ran the risk of developing a strange and rare illness. This illness started in the spine and slowly the person would shrivel up and eventually die.

At that time people used to visit one another often and they would exchange warm fuzzies, and since the were free there were always in plentiful supply.

One day a bad witch who made salves and potions for sick people became angry because everyone was so happy and feeling good and no one was buying potions and salves. The witch was very clever and devised a very wicked plan. One beautiful morning the witch crept up to a child and whispered in his ear, "Do you know that the fuzzies are going to run out?"

The child was astonished by what the witch said and from that moment he began to count all the times he gave warm fuzzies to someone else because he was afraid he would run out of them.

The other children watched this and soon began to get the idea that it was wrong to give warm fuzzies any time you were asked or felt like it. They too became very careful, they were afraid they would lose

something, they began to feel guilty whenever they gave them away so they reached in to their fuzzy bag less and less and became more and more stingy with them.

We all know well how contagious fear can be, in fact, very soon, these fears began to spread over the whole area and less and less people exchanged warm fuzzies.

Despite this people could always find a warm fuzzy every time they sought one in their sack, but they began to take them out less and less, they became more and more selfish and mean.

Soon people began to feel the lack of warm fuzzies and as a result they felt less warm and less fuzzy. They began to shrivel up and, occasionally, people would even die from lack of warm fuzzies.

People felt worse and worse and, more and more, people went to the witch to buy potions and salves even though they didn't really seem to work. Well, the situation was getting very serious indeed and day by day it got worse ....”

The fable does not end here because it is up to us to give it an ending by asking ourselves about our lives up to the present:

- What “bad witch” has suggested to us that love is not infinite? That mercy has its limits and may run out?
- Perhaps it was the education we received, or the way we interiorized negative judgements: “you are impossible!” “You are very bad when you behave in that way!” Or perhaps it came from the threats of those who educated us: “if you behave like that nobody will love you, not even Jesus”, or even punishment received when we committed some misdemeanour?

Let us reflect on our own personal story in order to understand which of our many memories, often hidden and unacknowledged memories, continue to “suggest” to us that the patience, acceptance, understanding, trust and forgiveness we receive and that we show to others are limited and are not infinite.

Then, let us strive together to believe, as St. Vincent did, that love may be INFINITE. That love and mercy are indeed INFINITE even when we make mistakes, or when in our own eyes we are blameworthy, which may be the effect of a habit acquired in time, or perhaps when we feel that we are at fault and are unable to truly forgive ourselves. God loves us INFINITELY and he cannot but love us infinitely because it is in his nature to love as he is the essence of love. If we can really come to believe this, which may mean that we have to sidestep the ‘sentries of fear’ which are within us, then we can radiate our love in all that we do and say.

Let us repeat often each day during this month a simple phrase that we can memorize: “I love myself and others infinitely”, reflecting especially on the word “infinitely” and thereby forgiving all the faults and offences both committed and received. This short phrase will increase our awareness of the infinite love which is present in us, for us and all around us.

We bring our reflection to a conclusion pondering the words of St. Vincent:

“Oh my God, holy Faith reminds me of all these truths concerning your infinite love and mercy, but who will learn to know and profit by them as you wish? My God, only you can enlighten and help me, therefore, through your infinite mercy help me to pray in this way.”

And we pray with St. Vincent, sure and certain of having received this infinite love which he always believed in:

“Eternal Father, in union with the most sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, I offer you the most precious Blood of the Immaculate Lamb, our divine Redeemer, in thanksgiving, as if you had already granted all the graces I have requested for me and for all, now and always. Amen”