



Apostles for Today

Reflections and prayers - November 2009

God the Infinite Love of St. Vincent Pallotti

2nd meditation

The Creation of the Angels for the Benefit of Man

Prayer

Father in heaven!

Let our hearts be totally consecrated to you.

Fill us with great love for you and for our neighbour.

Let this time of meditation be a light
that will enlighten our way.

Let it strengthen us so that we can serve you. Amen.

(Pallottine Community Prayers, Sunday, morning prayer)

Introduction

The 2nd meditation in Vincent Pallotti's book "God, the Infinite Love" is the first of four meditations on the angels.

How do we feel about this topic? For some years there has been an outright "angel boom" in our country; you meet them as figures and in pictures, in books and in the cinema. They are presented as being saccharine, touching, caring. Often this is a far cry from the powerful appearance of angels in the Bible. Yet in this trend many people find access to them whether they believe in God or not. These angels appeal to them because the presentation does them good. The trend touches an emotion which takes over from years of scepticism during which anything supernatural was questioned and even among theologians there has not been clarity regarding the existence of angels.

For Vincent Pallotti the issue was not one of an entry into discussion between the two positions, apart from the fact that the modern fascination with angels as we now have it did not exist at his time. He writes his meditations on the Creed. First and foremost they are about God, the Creator, *Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible*. And with this, as in each meditation, his starting point is the “revelations of our faith, found in the Bible and in the teachings of the Fathers”. With this it is simply clear to Vincent that as a part of the invisible ‘things’ created by God there are angels and there is a hierarchical structure and classification among such celestial beings.

Based on this premise St. Vincent wants to invite us for prayer. Therefore the issue is not one of theological reflection or discussion, but rather it is about faith: what role do matters that we are told by the tradition of Holy Scripture or the Fathers, play in our faith, in my faith?

Reflection and Sharing

Vincent Pallotti wants to awaken our sense of faith and to revive faith. Therefore, let us open our thoughts, our attitudes and mindset to his words: “God is always engaged in communicating His gifts, graces and mercies to man. These He grants them either directly through Himself or indirectly through the guardian angels”.

- Can I imagine this? Can I accept and believe that God is so interested in us, cares for us, for me and for each person? How does this affect my life, the manner in which I live my daily life?

Again and again St. Vincent confronts us with the invitation of faith. We are invited to believe and to accept that God desired my existence and loves me. And even more than this that God has also created more things than I can imagine to be of service to me and my life. “Yes, such is Your esteem for our souls that You wisely employ all Your works and the service of so many millions of angels to help us and provide for our needs of body and soul. In this way we will not meet with any hindrance in attaining our ultimate goal, which is You ...”.

- Do I live with the awareness that God, infinitely great, has created all visible and invisible things so that they may help me to live rightly and well? Do I experience myself as being served by God and not hindered by him?

With this we come to a second important point which Vincent Pallotti addresses in this meditation, namely, that all of this is given to us for an “ultimate goal, which is You and the manifestation of Your immense, infinite, eternal and incomprehensible glory”.

- Is God the goal of my life, the goal that shapes my daily life and gives direction to it? Does all that is given to me – for body and soul – serve as a source of assistance and a stimulus to me towards this goal?

In prayer Vincent refers to this, he calls it ‘deficiency and guilt’: “I have not profited from the most loving plans of Your infinite love, mercy and graces as I should have. I have abused Your infinite love and mercy.”

- Do I profit from and use the everyday gifts and experiences of my life to nurture faith and trust in God? The access to faith that is given to me, the insights and experiences, nourishment and material goods, talents and abilities, relationships and friendship, family and community, disappointments and set-backs, hurts and illness ...?

Faith does not only mean the acceptance of what is true. Faith shapes and forms our lives: I do not leave the ‘gift’ that is given aside, but I perceive it as a call of God, to trust him and to go deeper and deeper in my relationship with him. We do have a way, a goal, before us: to reach God, in order to finally be with him, to live in his presence. We need not, and cannot, travel this way on our own. We are given other persons and things as assistance which bring life to us and convey that we are cared for and loved, guided and accompanied. All this is an invitation and challenge, to trust in God and to believe that he loves me infinitely.

Vincent Pallotti’s trust is unlimited. He looked at the negative ways of abusing God’s gifts that lead us to other goals, however he did not end up at an impasse of resignation or self-pity. Rather he trusts that God

will recall his attention to: “the fact that the greater my unworthiness the more You will grant me graces in order that I may always profit by Your infinite love and mercy.”

From many of his other writings we know that Vincent was convinced that we only profit from the love and mercy of God by making his care for human beings our own: “Who does not know that in not observing the precept of charity one cannot gain eternal life? Therefore everyone ... is bound to confess that each person who lives on this earth must effectively procure the eternal salvation of his neighbour in so far as he can ... because we have received every good from God and we have received them in order to use them for his glory and simultaneously for the salvation of our own soul and that of our neighbour...” (OCCC IV, 173-174)

Final Prayer

Finally, let us give thanks to God for the gifts he has given to us in this hour of reflection and prayer:

“We thank you, Lord, for all the lights and favours which you have given us. Give us the grace to profit by them. By ourselves we can do nothing, with you we can do everything. Because we love you, our Lord, we will do all for you.” (*Pallottine Community Prayers, ibid.*)

Vincent Pallotti made use of the angels’ care also by invoking them again and again as intercessors. Let us pray together with him:

“Queen of the Apostles, ask your Son, the Lord of the harvest, that he may send workers into his harvest and have mercy on his people. All holy angels, archangels, thrones and dominations, princes and potentates, virtues of the heavens, cherubim and seraphim, patriarchs and prophets, holy doctors of the law, apostles, all martyrs of Christ, holy confessors, virgins of the Lord, anchorites and all saints, pray the Lord of the harvest, that he may send workers into his harvest and have mercy on his people, that all of us with Him and the Father and the Holy Spirit may rejoice for ever and ever. Amen” (OCCC II, 378).