



Apostles for Today

Reflections and prayers - June 2011

God the Infinite Love

Meditation 21

God, food for our souls

Eucharistic food

“Through their infinite eternal likeness, the Father and the Son love each other with eternal and infinite love ... and with this eternal and infinite love God mercifully deigns to feed me (in the Eucharist).” (OCCC X, 453)

Reflection: God, food for our souls.

With little doubt, the above quotation gives us a glance into the wealth of understanding that Pallotti gained through prayerful contemplation of God and of Jesus, and of the Eucharist. This instruction on the Eucharist forms a complete circle beginning with God’s infinite eternal likeness (between God and Word) and, then, God’s eternal and infinite love (between Father and Son), and, finally, how this eternal and infinite love is given in the Eucharist. Pallotti does not waste one word or phrase. In a succinct and precise manner, from the first phrase to the last, Pallotti speaks about relationship.

Through their infinite eternal likeness...

Jesus is begotten from the Father and was with the Father before the beginning of time. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God* (Jn. 1, 1-2). Pallotti explores this deeper by recognizing their infinite eternal likeness.

The primary foundation of Pallottine spirituality is that we are made in the image and likeness of God. In the writing of Pallotti, he recognizes that the root of this truth is discovered in the relationship of the Trinity. Pallotti begins: *Through their infinite eternal likeness.* (Unlike us, who are not begotten but created in the image and likeness of God).

From the very beginning there is relationship—the relationship of God and Word—dynamic, inseparable, divine union, communion, complete oneness—“infinite eternal likeness.” St. Athanasius described the relationship as “a blend and energizing reality, self-consistent and undivided in its active power, for the Father makes all things through the Word and in the Holy Spirit, and in this way the unity of the holy Trinity is preserved” (First Letter to Serapion).

In the Eucharistic prayers of the Sacred Liturgy, this energizing reality and active power is played out in word and action. The Mass is a constant interchange as we address God through Jesus in union with the Holy Spirit. The closing of the Eucharistic prayers comes to its climax with the doxology and great Amen: *Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, almighty Father, forever and ever. AMEN.*

... the Father and the Son love each other with eternal and infinite love

Pallotti continues with his reflection focusing on the essence of Eucharist—which is the essential relationship that precedes all others. “The Father and Son love each other” with a love that is beyond human measurements or understanding: God, who is love; Jesus, who is the enfleshment of Love. The infinite eternal love of the Father and the Son is not stagnate but “an active power” and is, therefore, manifested through and throughout all creation. This love reaches perfection with Jesus’ incarnation, coming to do only the will of the Father, taking upon himself the sin of the world, freely offering his life in exchange for ours, and is crucified and dies.

The night before Jesus’ dies, he spends intimate time with his disciples: washing their feet, sharing a meal, and revealing to them his emotional pain—that one of them would betray him and one would deny him. After finishing the meal, Jesus then spends intimate time with God—sharing with his Father the pain of perceived failure, fear about the future of his disciples, and asking to be spared but that it not be his will but that of his Father’s.

God mercifully deigns to feed me in the Eucharist

Consistent with Pallotti’s personal spirituality when comparing himself in light of God—he perceives his nothingness and sin relying on God’s infinite love and mercy. Therefore, Pallotti concludes by saying: *God mercifully deigns to feed me in the Eucharist.*

Perhaps the question for each of us in light of Pallottine spirituality with the Gospel as our rule: how is God food for our souls? Ultimately, to be truly nourished we must be in right relationship. We are called to be in right relationship with God and with one another—especially recognizing that each of us is made in the image and likeness of God. Venerating the Blessed Sacrament is a natural part of our understanding of worship; yet, how often we fail to venerate or regard others with profound respect or reverence because we fail to recognize his or her likeness and image to God. Perhaps, we fail to acknowledge the same reality of ourselves. No wonder Pallotti concentrated so intensely on God’s infinite mercy and love.

For God to be the food for our souls we are open to intimacy with God and with one another—allowing the vulnerable and broken aspects of our lives to be shared—just as Jesus shared throughout his public life and dramatically at the Last Supper, in the Garden of Olives, and on the Cross. Jesus celebrated at weddings, cried at the death of Lazarus, shared his anger at the temple, and allowed his humanity to be revealed on the Cross.

God, in the guise of bread and wine, allows us to hold him in our hands, consume Him in our mouths and unites Himself totally to us. God is vulnerable; God is intimate; God becomes one with us. We, human beings, taste the Divine and are called to become what we eat—Love.

Pallotti prays:

I want nothing but God: nothing, nothing.

My God, all, all, all,

Only God, only, only God.

God, food for our souls, works through us for the good of the church and the whole world. This Love empowers us emphatically embraced by Pallotti and taken as our motto: *The Love of Christ impels us*. Fed by the body and blood, we are called to mission. We become the mind, heart, hands, and feet to carry on the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. We are called to magnify the image and likeness of God in each moment.

This is the circle of our spiritual life: to meditate on the relationship of Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier; to own and perfect our understanding of being made in the image and likeness of God; to open ourselves fully to receive God in every form and moment; to allow God's love to impel us and to mirror back the image and likeness of God of those we encounter.

In this circle we, too, become food for others—allowing ourselves to be vulnerable; dying to ourselves to become alive in Christ. We set our sight on the ultimate goal: God.

Prayer

“Jesus, infinite Love, truly God and truly human, my food and drink, I am unworthy to receive you, but I desire you and I wish to desire you with the fullness of love with which you are desired by the angels, the saints and their Queen, the most holy Mary, with the fullness of love of her own heart. And relying on your infinite mercy which does not reject even the most miserable—indeed it seeks them out, I wish to receive you in every moment, forever: and I wish ... to make as many acts of love ... and of adoration as you deserve and for all the goals that are pleasing to you.” (OCCC XI, 63)

My Jesus, ... you are already wholly mine, because the heavenly Father has given you to me and you yourself, with infinite love, ... have given yourself to me. (OCCC X 254)

God in his very essence is love. He loves us and unceasingly seeks what is for our benefit. He did this in the most perfect manner possible by sending his only begotten Son to redeem us by his death on the cross. Since all human beings, as creatures, are living images of this love, they must strive to be perfect in their love for every person. That is what the commandment of love expressly confirms; this is why each and every person is obliged to contribute to the salvation of all through their gifts of nature and grace. (cf. OCCC IV 308-9)