



# *Apostles for Today*

## *Reflections and prayers - July 2011*

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

#### **Meditation XXII**

**“God’s Infinite Love and Mercy in giving us his divine son,  
made man for the redemption of our souls”**

***“He who has not spared even his own Son, but has delivered him for us all, how can he fail to grant us also all things with him?” (Rom 8:32)***

#### **Reflection**

St. Vincent Pallotti’s spiritual teaching on God rests on God’s twofold characteristics: love and mercy. God the Father takes the initiative in his desire to communicate his infinite love with us. We in turn, are called to respond in faith, as we open ourselves to his love and mercy. Pallotti’s great desire was that God would become real in our lives; that we would spiritually grow and come to live our lives in that same infinite love.

Now this life in God depends fundamentally on our discovery of who God is in our lives. Pallotti asked the questions, “My God who are you?” and “Who am I before you?” (*OO CC X, 464*) This holy man was contemplating the essence of who we are and our true identity as children of God.

It was through his recollection of God that Pallotti recognized God as ‘Infinite Goodness’. Indeed he loved to identify God as Infinite love and mercy, and as Infinite love he envisaged God sharing himself completely with us. It was from his infinite goodness and mercy that God created the world in order that he might give himself completely to his creatures (*GIL I, 8*).

***“For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that those who believe in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting” (Jn 3:16).*** Creating us in his image and likeness God our Father desired to reveal himself completely to us, and it was in the sending of his own Son

Jesus to redeem us that this gift of infinite love and mercy would become fully manifest.

After quoting the above scriptural passage in meditation XXII, Pallotti continues in his own words: *“A God outraged, offended, disobeyed, a God forsaken by man so much loved the whole human race that he gave it his only-begotten Son, incarnate in the purest womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary”*. We can imagine St. Vincent wondering at how God could send his only Son Jesus even though humanity had been so unfaithful to him.

Further on in the meditation he comments: *“Oh my God, my infinite and incomprehensible love, my eternal, infinite, immense and ineffable mercy, what moved you to grant me such a gift but your infinite love, infinitely merciful?”* This, for Pallotti, was the full revelation of infinite mercy - that even though we would reject God our Father, he would not reject us.

Pallotti goes on to speak of his ingratitude to God for all his gifts, i.e. of how he did not take advantage of this gift of infinite love. He comments, *“Oh, what a monster of ingratitude I am! I was ungrateful to you so many times and for so many years. I did not correspond lovingly with your infinite love. I did not profit as I could and should have done by your incomprehensible gift to destroy the old man in me, which his sin...I have not put on the new man, who is our Lord Jesus Christ. I have not enriched my soul with infinite wealth and merits of Jesus Christ, with his virtues and his most holy life; rather I have loaded myself with all the miseries of vice”*.

Pallotti shows here a deep knowledge and understanding of the anthropology of the human soul - how well he understood the workings of the spiritual soul and how it suffers under the enslavement of sin and the miseries of vice. He teaches us that in order to grow spiritually, we must open up to transcendence – to correspond to infinite love so that our transformation may take place, and thus we can, *“put on the new man, who is our Lord Jesus Christ, with his virtues and his most holy life.”*

The remedy for Pallotti was always ‘trust in infinite love’. How often he reminded us of this gift of infinite love, this gift of Jesus Christ for redemption - that we would abandon ourselves entirely to this same love and mercy.

In his *'Opere Complete'*, we read how Pallotti brings God's mercy in contact with our misery: *"His infinite mercy can easily communicate itself to our misery for he finds infinite misery in us...Through his infinite mercy and the merits of Jesus Christ, God destroys our infinite unworthiness and all the impediments that we posited to his mercy so that we may receive the communications of his attributes, especially his mercy"*.

How consoling it is to comprehend that such communication of love has nothing to do with any merit on our part, but this gift of love has only to do with God and his desire to reveal the depth of his love for us. All this has been born out of his Infinite mercy. *"Yes, my Lord, your infinite mercy has looked upon my misery and is always ready to destroy it in order to give us the true wealth, which is our Lord Jesus Christ"*.

According to Pallotti, Jesus is the greatest gift of love the Father has given to us. We see this point emphasised when he comments, *"Oh ineffable gift of infinite love and mercy! Oh, infinite, eternal, immense and incomprehensible gift! Yes, Jesus is mine! The eternal Incarnate Word is mine, in body, soul and divinity. The most perfect virtues, all the infinite merits of Jesus Christ are mine."* It is as if nothing is held back by the Father of mercies – that in Jesus Christ we have received everything.

Yes we have rejected God; yes we are unworthy of the Father's love, and yet despite all our failings, he continues to love us and gift us with his very self. Jesus is offered to us for our redemption, giving us the opportunity to return to the Father.

### **The Gift of the Holy Eucharist**

Reflecting on Pallotti's understanding of this gift of Christ's total self-giving, one can see parallels with the gift of the Holy Eucharist. We can recognise this gift of Infinite love made manifest in the Church through the various sacraments that have been born of Christ, but most especially in the sacrament of the Eucharist - the Sacrament of sacraments.

Pallotti recognised Jesus in the Eucharist as the gift to be offered in sacrifice by mankind to God, and he is also the gift of God to mankind (*OO CC XI, 441*). It is in this mystery of faith that Jesus, the Eucharistic Lord, gives himself to us completely - his body, his blood, his soul, his divinity –

the total Christ is ours in this sacrament. We recognise here the gift of his love and obedience to the point of giving his life (Jn 10 17-18).

The Eucharistic mystery is for us a fountain of grace where we receive all the merits and graces of Christ's passion, death and resurrection. In participating in the Eucharistic celebration, we open ourselves to an abundance of graces. For St. Vincent, the celebration of the mystery of the Eucharist was an encounter with the total Christ.

### **Final Thought**

In preparing this particular meditation, I believe I have come to a greater knowledge and appreciation of who God is for me; to understand that we can never make too many demands upon his infinite love, for he is always pouring himself out for us. Indeed Pallotti said that *"God is always seeking man/woman in order to give himself wholly to them"*.

At times when conscious of failing the Lord, when full of remorse, and knowing we may have hurt the Lord, let us never fail to recognise and feed upon this infinite love of God. Yes, I may with Pallotti, have *"given vent to my brutal passions and to sins of all kinds"*, and I know that I deserve to be punished, yet *"infinite mercy looks upon my misery and is always ready to destroy it, in order to give us the true wealth Jesus Christ"*.

### **Closing Prayer**

My God, my infinite loving Father, I thank you for the gift of your infinite love and mercy. You have *"created me in your image and likeness that we may become like you in glory for all eternity"*. I know that because of my sins, I am unworthy of heaven, yet because of your infinite love and mercy revealed in Christ Jesus your Son, I can always return to you with trust and confidence, abandoning myself entirely to your mercy.

Heavenly Father, help us to keep in mind that out of your infinite love, you have offered Jesus to us as our redeemer. Give us the grace and strength to overcome our weaknesses and so respond more fully to the gift of your grace in our lives - that we may become what we have been created to be - children of God, heirs of God and co-heirs of Jesus Christ, Amen.