



Apostles for Today

Reflection and Prayer - August 2012

SAINT VINCENT PALLOTTI: WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR TIMES

(Reflection on the Homily of Paul VI during his visit to Frascati to venerate the body of Saint Vincent Pallotti which was exposed in the Cathedral, September 1st 1963)

« We are responsible: The Saint adverts, on one hand, to the emptiness, that is, the need which reveals itself in everything around us and, on the other, to listening to this voice come down from heaven with a crystal clear appeal: Look, it is necessary to rebuild a Christian society; to reawaken it; see how we are responsible! Tremendous, dynamic, disturbing, energetic words; and whoever understands this can no longer remain restless and indifferent; but feels that such a word changes quite a bit of the perhaps narrow or bourgeois programme of one's life. We are responsible for our times, for the life of our brothers and sisters; and we are responsible before our Christian conscience. We are responsible to Christ before the Church and before history; in the presence of God. A word, therefore, capable of restoring a particular dynamism to those who understand it”.

Paul VI

The homily preached by Pope Paul VI in Frascati on September 1st 1963, encouraging devotion to Saint Vincent Pallotti, is a call to awaken all Christians of all times who wish to work actively throughout their lives for the salvation of the world.

This homily of Paul VI, heroic in character, strongly affirms the grandeur of Saint Vincent Pallotti, the precursor of Catholic Action. It is no longer a mere affirmation, but rather, a pure reality. The work of Saint Vincent Pallotti on behalf of lay people is so magnificent that it will remain engraved on our hearts; above all for us lay people, who were previously kept apart, passive in the work of evangelisation.

Saint Vincent Pallotti was the first to show that the laity on their part share different talents and vocations, possess hidden treasures, and should be employed in the work of evangelisation, of edification and of sanctification. Here, too, St. Vincent Pallotti launches an appeal, to lay people and to all Christians, always to do more, in the future too, as the way remains long with always much to be done.

Pope Paul VI, in his homily, underlines that Saint Vincent Pallotti built a bridge between the clergy and the laity. This was a new phenomenon in all Christian societies. This collaboration between lay people and the clergy has become one of the paths most adopted by modern spirituality and one of those most rich in hope for the Church of God. Saint Vincent Pallotti honoured the vocation of lay people in an age when the Catholic laity was not encouraged, and nor was it developed as it is in our days.

Saint Vincent Pallotti had a special gift of insight and perception of the general unfaithfulness to the mercy and grace of God. This is normal for all of the saints: he underlined the passivity and even negligence which marked many Christians after the French Revolution. It was there that Saint Vincent Pallotti perceived the moral and spiritual vacuum which haunted the society of his day. Starting from that point, he awakened the conscience of Christians by highlighting the urgency of putting order and stability into their relationship with God, reminding Christians of the ultimate appeal which God makes to each one of us: that of being his children, disciples of Christ who must confess our faith and invite people to practise charity.

Our Patron Saint, in drawing attention to this vacuum, was able to identify the needs, as well as the solutions required to fill the vacuum. Thus, he emphasised the responsibility of lay people, indeed

of all people, young and old, religious and lay, men and women, ordained and not, to work together. Yes, as Saint Vincent Pallotti always demonstrated, we are responsible and must always feel ourselves to be responsible for others, to our Christian conscience, to God, in order to give hope to our society.

Saint Vincent Pallotti was always optimistic about human nature. He did not believe in the psychology of the irredeemable human being, for ever fallen, fragile and weak. Rather he saw in them great potential. According to him, the human being, once redeemed, well directed and prepared, is capable of holiness and of heroism. He or she can become a good person, an ideal person for a new and modern society. These revolutionary ideas are such as to encourage lay people and all members of the Church throughout their spiritual paths. Without this revolution of Saint Vincent Pallotti, many Christians remain with their arms folded, on the pretext that they cannot do anything.

Saint Vincent Pallotti, quoted once again in the homily of Pope Paul VI, invites us to act in a timely manner in response to the invitation to Catholic action and to become aware of our role which is so prominent and decisive in the evangelical mission. Because we are Christians, we cannot accept remaining passive, negative, neutral. On the contrary, it is high time to go and teach the good news, to enter actively into the flow of grace. Saint Vincent Pallotti stresses, however, that the clergy cannot do everything; neither are they meant to do everything, as we are all called in virtue of our baptism to be active elements within the Church, conscious that evangelisation is the work of all, without distinction.

Finally, following the masterpiece of Saint Vincent Pallotti, many traits of heroism are in our days rightly attributed to him. As Pope Paul VI reiterated, Saint Vincent Pallotti was, without question, the Pioneer and the Precursor of the Catholic action of the lay faithful. He was also the first to galvanise the consciousness of the laity within the Church. He was equally the inspirer of and the first to attribute responsibility to the active lay world. Saint Vincent Pallotti was also without doubt the Stimulator of collaboration between lay people, the

clergy and religious, something he always wanted; his work is already bearing fruit everywhere in the world: that of **reviving faith and rekindling charity throughout the world.**

PERSONAL REFLECTION :

1. As a spiritual son or daughter of Saint Vincent Pallotti, do I fully realise my vocation as Apostle in the Church?
2. Am I conscious that I am called to be a Founder of the Union of Catholic Apostolate in the present day and to be a bridge builder between different groups of people?

PRAYER :

St. Vincent Pallotti pray with us to the Lord, so that all Christians may live fully in Christ and for Christ, so that all the baptized may recognize their vocation to the apostolate and firmly commit themselves to realising it, that all Christians, lay people, religious and priests, men and women, may open themselves to the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. And that all the sons and daughters of the Church may collaborate generously in the renewal of the Church in the world. amen

St. Vincent Pallotti, pray for us!

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