



UAC NEWSLETTER

August-September 2012



Dear sisters and brothers in the Union,

we are very happy to present to you in this newsletter a synthesis of the life of **Tommaso Alkusi**, prepared by Fr. Jan Kupka SAC (for further research, cf. *Der Beginn. Eine Hilfsaktion für den christlichen Orient (The Beginning. A Relief Effort for the Christian East)*, by Heinrich Schulte and *San Vincenzo Pallotti, profeta della spiritualità di comunione*, edited by Fr. Franco Todisco SAC), along with other news from the UAC.

1. EARLY COLLABORATORS OF SAINT VINCENT:

Tommaso Alkusi (1786-1843) was a dedicated and faithful lay collaborator of Vincent Pallotti. Thanks to him, Pallotti came to know of the dramatic situation of the Chaldean Church. And it was precisely the act of helping it, decided on during one of the congresses of collaborators in the family home, which gave impetus to the founding of the pious Union of Catholic Apostolate (cf. OCCC III, p. 2).

Tommaso Alkusi, son of Marc of the Maqdassi family, was born in 1786 in Alqosh, a town in the north of present day Iraq. He came to Rome before 1804 and took the name of his place of birth Alkuscus (Latin form) or Alkusi or Alкуси (Italian form). He studied at the Urban College of Propaganda Fide. For the students of the College, more than being simply a fellow student, he was one of their great teachers. Knowing Arabic and the other oriental languages he was able to participate in discussions on theological questions and on the situation of the Church in both the East and the West. Being a learned man and full of zeal he took on the official representation of the Chaldean Church to the Holy See. After 1822 he was nominated professor of oriental languages in the College of Propaganda Fide. His name became more and more noted in ecclesiastical circles in Rome as a reference person with regard to relations with the Chaldean Church and dialogue with Catholics of the Eastern Churches (information on the life of Tommaso Alkusi can be found in the handwritten letter of Stefano Bello preserved in the archive of the Pallotti Institute - M/0353-3 and M/0353-4).

The year in which Tommaso Alkusi began his relationship with Vincent Pallotti is not known precisely. The first letter of September 2nd 1833 addressed to him from Vincent Pallotti already shows a certain trust (cf. OCL I, I. 282, p. 407). From 1833 Pallotti was Alkusi's spiritual director, being confessor in the Urban College. With the passing of time Tommaso Alkusi became the most diligent collaborator of Pallotti in his various apostolic works and in the commitment to the foreign missions.

Tommaso Alkusi is among the first lay members of the pious Society of the Catholic Apostolate. His name appears in sixth place in the list of those inscribed in the Catholic Apostolate with his handwritten signature (cf. OCCC V, pp. 3-5). He also participated in the first congress of the pious Society of the Catholic Apostolate which took place on July 14th 1835 in S. Maria in Carinis (cf. OCCC V, pp. 6-7). He was actively involved in different works taken on by the Union in its early years. Among other things he was the print editor for Henrion's universal history of the Church (this refers to the publication in Italian of the *Universal History of the Church from the preaching of the Apostles until the pontificate of Gregory XVI. A Work compiled for the use in seminars and by the clergy by Baron Henrion*, vols. 1-5, Tipografia della Minerva Ticinese, Mendrisio-Lugano 1838-1840 and vols. 6-14, Tipografia di Paolo Lampato, Milan 1840-1843, still preserved in the Pallotti Institute in Rome). In the letter of March 23rd 1840 addressed to Alkusi, Pallotti urged the publication of the work and concluded with the words: "Certain of your efficacious activity which is always precious without compromising fairness, justice and charity, trusting in your prayers, I commend myself to Your Most Illustrious Lordship" (OCL III, I. 660, p. 205).

In April 1840 Tommaso Alkusi joined the community of companions of Pallotti which was formed at the Church of Spirito Santo dei Napoletani. From that time on, he participated in the common life and dedicated himself with all of his heart to the apostolic activities, above all to the formation of future missionaries at the College for Foreign Missions. Pallotti greatly encouraged him and on April 4th 1840 wrote to him: "Now that God has led Your Lordship to the sacred retreat, it is time to give effective help to the work of the Lord: let prayers and trust grow to dispose ourselves towards the works for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls – I admire, adore and thank God in his loveable, most wise providence, goodness and mercy" (OCL III, I. 663 II, p. 209).

On December 21st 1843, Vincent wrote to Marianna Allemand that his most faithful collaborator Tommaso Alkusi was sick: "Pray (...) still for Mr. Tommaso Alkusi, an oriental, who is here with us and who is dying, but with excellent dispositions – let us pray to that God will make him a great saint" (OCL IV, I. 947, p. 204). On December 23rd 1843, Pallotti asked Felice Randanini in Vienna to pray and to get others to pray "for the soul of our brother, Mr. Tommaso Alkusi, who is that oriental who was with us here in the dwelling at the Church of Spirito Santo dei Napoletani: through divine mercy he had a beautiful death" (OCL IV, I. 949, p. 206). In fact, Tommaso Alkusi died, assisted by his friend and spiritual director Vincent Pallotti on December 1843. His body, enclosed in a coffin – wrote the parish priest of S. Lucia in Gonfalone Pietro Bedoni – was buried in the public cemetery. On his death, Alkusi declared Pallotti his heir and left his rich library of Middle-Eastern books to the Work of the Catholic Apostolate.

2. UAC National Congress in Poland:

The second National Congress of the UAC in Poland took place from September 21st-23rd, beginning in Konstancin and ending in Ołtarzew. Representatives from the different communities in Poland, Byelorussia, Slovakia and the Ukraine took part. The theme referred to the Year of Faith: the Union-Household of Faith. Fr. Jacob Nampudakam SAC, Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Union, special guest at the Congress as guarantor of the charism, affirmed that the experience of the Congress expressed a real life in the Union. The Congress constituted one of the monthly stages of the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the canonisation of St. Vincent Pallotti. The cross-relic of our holy Founder accompanied the participants. During the closing Mass, celebrated in Ołtarzew and open also to those who could not attend the Congress, eleven people from the communities of Chojnice, Gdańsk, Ołtarzew and Warsaw were admitted to the Union. The Lord blessed us abundantly with the gift of communion and reinvigorated us in order to face the challenges of the Year of Faith. Heartfelt thanks to all who were in communion with us!

3. Pallottine Youth Retreat, Curitiba, Brazil:

About 40 young people took part in a youth retreat in the Pallottine Seminary, Curitiba from 17th-19th August 2012, which focussed on themes around vocation: the fundamental call of all people, including young people, to holiness; the vocation to marriage; the fundamental role of family in vocational discernment; the vocation to mission; the vocations to ordained ministry and to consecrated life. Themes were also illustrated through drama and times of recreation were enjoyed greatly together.

4. Preparations for World Youth Day and the World Meeting of Pallottine Youth, Brazil:

In conjunction with next year's World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro (22-28 July 2013), Juventude Palotina (Pallottine Youth) is preparing the fourth Pallottine World Youth Meeting. It will take place from July 15-21, 2013, in Curitiba-PR. Over 400 young participants from different Pallottine realities throughout the world are expected to attend. There will be activities organised in the areas of formation and prayer, culture and tourism, social action and mission. The aim is to make this a kairos moment of praise and thanksgiving to God, and that real change and transformation may come about in the life of every participant. All are invited!

5. Germany - New Website and Official Opening of Jubilee Year Celebrations:

The Pallottine family in Germany will begin its celebration of the Jubilee Year in January 2013 starting with a symposium in Vallendar followed by a celebration in Limburg. A new website has been launched to give some background information on St. Vincent Pallotti and his canonisation, and to invite people to upcoming events: www.heute-heilig.de

6. Visit of UAC General Secretary to Belize:

Fr. Rory was invited to Belize to give two 8 day silent retreats to the Pallottine Missionary Sisters, lay UAC members and others. The talks were based mostly on reflections on the Beatitudes, both of St. Vincent in his Months of May and of Pope Benedict in his book "Jesus of Nazareth". The overall goal was that of the Jubilee Year: renewal in the personal and community lives of the participants in order to "let the holiness of God shine forth" more brightly. It was a wonderful experience of prayer and of communion in the Pallottine family, despite having to end a day early because of the threat of Hurricane Edward.