



Apostles for Today

Prayer and Reflection - July 2013

In the spirit of Saint Vincent Pallotti – World Youth Day/Rio de Janeiro

There is a famous Catholic song in our Latin American repertoire, sung from the north to the south of this immense continent, which provides the first step for this text which will have as its background the theme of youth and World Youth Day - an event that takes place this month here in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. One verse of this song "Missionary Soul" says:

“Lord, take my new life, before the long wait consumes years in me ...”

Yes, this is saying that there is a desire expressed in these words - before the years consume the enthusiasm, the joy, the courage of youth of each person, may the Lord send us in mission to announce his Name, proclaiming his Lordship and building up his Kingdom!

I think that our holy Founder understood this deepest youthful longing; for this reason his life was short and from his earliest years he decided to listen to the good call of the Lord, dedicating his very life to it.

Pallotti as a young person

His life was short: not even 55 years! And what is 55 years today, with respect to life expectancy which is around 80 years! Yes, it is true that Pallotti lived a good while given the Roman conditions, which we cannot compare with our own today, but if being young means between 20 and 30 years, we know that precisely during these years he took on great responsibility, such as priesthood, and opened new paths in the pastoral activity of the Church of Rome.

Pallotti did not waste his youth, but sought in his life all of the strength needed to be a joyful servant of the Lord Jesus, as a young seminarian and then as a young priest.

Pallotti and young people

After he was ordained priest, in love with Christ and with humanity, our Saint sought to evangelise young people: he was certain of the effectiveness of work with them done well.

Thus, he worked with them creatively so that the youth of his day would know the Lord and be educated towards a more just and honest society: night schools, oratories, spiritual direction, etc. If those such as Popes and Cardinals and nobles benefited from the zeal of Saint Vincent Pallotti, we know well that many of the poor but also many young people did so too.

Pallotti the Founder

By convention, our Union is said to have begun from the inspiration of January 9th 1935. This means that, from then on, it began to be understood that the Church was in need of a work which, in addition to reviving faith and rekindling charity, would put itself at the disposal of the Gospel message and unite apostolic forces for a more effective evangelisation: collaboration is a decisive factor for apostolic action and for achieving results.

This is why, at a particular moment, he expresses himself as follows: "Have care for the instruction of young people from their earliest years in every way possible, and collaborate in it".

This means then that in order to be original, to be initiators in working with young people, we need also to join forces with every apostolic reality that works with and for young people. We would then truly be able to affirm: cooperation is of vital importance!

Pallottines in Rio de Janeiro

Once we have a profound understanding of our charism, we understand that cooperation is essential; it was for this reason that the first Polish missionaries came to Brazil in the 1970s. They first went to the south of Brazil and then, for reasons of God's providence, when the Italian Pallottines decided to return to Italy or go to the United States, the Polish missionaries assumed the work in the Marvellous City, Rio de Janeiro. A detail: they were young priests!

It is interesting to note that in this young history of the Polish Pallottine presence in Rio de Janeiro, nearly all of the priests who came in mission were newly ordained, young in age and in ministry. It is as if that song were repeated in the life of each of them: "Lord, take my new life, before the long wait consumes years in me!"

Pallottines in Rio de Janeiro and work with young people

Young people attract young people. Youth attracts youth. From the moment the young priests arrived in Rio, directly and indirectly, they began to work with young people. Many priests, in a spirit of collaboration, became spiritual directors of youth movements.

This work awakened vocations. Young boys, coming from different parts, were accompanied in vocational discernment and many of them decided to try out life in the Society of the Catholic Apostolate. Of these, some persevered to perpetual consecration, others no, but all thank God for their time lived in community. All benefited from this period.

Recently this work with young people joined with the national structure of Juventude Palotina (Pallottine Youth). Here in Brazil, this work is organised, structured, with national and regional coordinators. It gathers young people from all fronts of our work, that is, from parishes, schools or missions. We work together, priests, brothers, lay people and sisters, Pallottine and non-Pallottine. And now, also here in Rio de Janeiro, Juventude Palotina is present.

Pallottines in Rio de Janeiro, who work with young people and World Youth Day

In this way, therefore, all of the work of the young Pallottine priests is reaching a culmination with the great event which will take place in a few days time here in our city of Rio de Janeiro - *World Youth Day*.

When we came to know of our responsibility to host World Youth Day, from the time of the announcement in Madrid, a mixture of joy and expectation, of emotion and of challenge, struck the heart of young "cariocas" (residents of Rio). All were happy, but without knowing how it all could happen.

In this spirit of collaboration, typical of every follower of Saint Vincent Pallotti, each of our young people, through the parishes, began to commit themselves as volunteers in preparing the day. Some took on the responsibility of organising accommodation for pilgrims; others in a more artistic vein already made themselves available for the formation of a "Choir" and also to be actors in different scenes which will be located throughout the city; others again, together with the Pallottine Major Seminary, made themselves available to coordinate one of the 25 Chapels of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament which will be installed in the *Campus Fidei* - the place in which the Vigil and Mass with the Holy Father will take place; others are volunteers with the social networks and communication.

This time it is the Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro which is hosting World Youth Day, and it was decided that, in the spirit of collaboration, Juventude Palotina as a group would take on voluntary work. And this decision was wise, because being thus scattered in different parts of the organization, the ideals of our Holy Founder can be sown here and there, in addition to confirming in each person the universal call to the apostolate in the spirit of cooperation, so dear to Pallotti.

However, before World Youth Day in Rio, all of Juventude Palotina, with people coming from various parts of Brazil and from other nations, will gather for a week of reflection and sharing in Curitiba. Some of our young people here in Rio will be there together with the seminarians. Pray for them. For updates, please go to the Juventude Palotina website:

www.juventudepalotinabrasil.com.br

Dear friends, sisters and brothers in Christ and followers of Saint Vincent Pallotti, there is much joy in writing these lines: it is lovely to know that, despite our weaknesses and many limits, all of you are praying for World Youth Day 2013 in Rio. Both the official prayer and hymn can be found in various languages at the website www.rio2013.com

Oh, and if you cannot come for the Day, the invitation remains for a future visit to the Marvellous City: our arms, and those of Christ the Redeemer, remain always opened wide to welcome you.

Wherever we may be, whatever our age, let each of us be inspired by Pope Francis' words in his Palm Sunday homily: "Dear young people... you have an important part in the celebration of faith! You bring us the joy of faith and you tell us that we must live the faith with a young heart, always: a young heart, even at the age of seventy or eighty. A young heart! With Christ, the heart never grows old!... Prepare well – prepare spiritually above all – in your communities, so that our gathering in Rio may be a sign of faith for the whole world. Young people must say to the world: to follow Christ is good; to go with Christ is good; the message of Christ is good; emerging from ourselves, to the ends of the earth and of existence, to take Jesus there, is good!"

Part of the official World Youth Day prayer

Oh Father, You sent Your Eternal Son to save the world, and You chose men and women, so that through Him, with Him and in Him, they might proclaim the Good News of the Gospel to all nations. Grant us the necessary graces, so that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the joy of being the evangelists that the Church needs in the Third Millennium may shine in the faces of all young people.

A young person from Rio de Janeiro