



Apostles for Today

Prayer and Reflection - June 2015

What counts above all is “faith working through love” (Ga 5:6) – Spiritual preparation for the General Congress of the Union in July 2015

In the context of preparing for the General Congress of the Union in July 2015, a series of reflections have been shared through the monthly publication, *Apostles for Today*. In a particular way, the reflections from April and May spoke, respectively, of the importance of peace and dialogue, and of the spiritual motivations for mission. We would like to follow on from these by adding something regarding the biblical truth that what counts above all - in all of our apostolic and missionary commitments - is “faith working through love” (Ga 5, 6). In other words, we are called to remain faithful to the inseparability of faith and love, as the Church teaches us and as our Founder St. Vincent Pallotti urge us. Undoubtedly, this will facilitate in various ways the realisation of the identity and mission of the Union of Catholic Apostolate.

2. The privileged place of faith working through love

As Pope Francis remarked in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (37), “Saint Thomas Aquinas taught that the Church’s moral teaching has its own “hierarchy”, in the virtues and in the acts which proceed from them”. Here, the Pope emphasised, “what counts above all else is “faith working through love” (Gal 5:6). Works of love directed to one’s neighbour are the most perfect external manifestation of the interior grace of the Spirit: “The foundation of the New Law is

in the grace of the Holy Spirit, who is manifested in the faith which works through love”.¹

It is worth mentioning that, thanks to faith working through love, believers enter a new phase of their existence, a new life modelled on the radical novelty of the Resurrection. To the extent that they open themselves, thereby their thoughts and feelings, their mentality and their entire behaviour are slowly purified and transformed on a path never completely finished in this life. In other words, “faith working through love” from this time onwards becomes a new criterion of understanding and action that changes a person’s entire life.²

3. The inseparability of faith and love

The fact that faith working through love enjoys a privileged place in the "hierarchy of virtues and the acts deriving from it" makes these two Christian virtues always inseparable. For Pope Benedict XVI, there is a strong relationship "between believing in God – the God of Jesus Christ – and love, which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and which guides us on the path of devotion to God and others."³ When we have been conquered by the love of Christ and therefore, moved by this love - "caritas Christi urget nos"⁴ – when we are conscious of being loved, forgiven, and even served by the Lord, who bends down to wash the Apostles' feet and offers himself on the cross to draw humanity into God's love, we become open in a concrete and profound way to love of our neighbour.⁵

¹ POPE FRANCIS, EG, 37, referring to *S. Th.* I-II, q. 66, a. 4-6.

² Cf. POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Porta fidei*, 6.

³ Cf. Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI for Lent 2013. Referring to: Rm 12: 2; Col 3: 9-10; Ep 4: 20-29; 2 Co 5: 17.

⁴ 2Co 5: 14.

⁵ Cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, 33.

4. Faith and love: two inseparable realities in the life of Pallotti

In the spiritual writings of Pallotti, observed Jan Kupka, it emerges clearly that he had a stable reference point in his personal life: to live faith in daily life and to believe without reservation the teaching of the Church.⁶ Moreover, Pallotti lived faith in terms of a vow as evidenced by this excerpt from his writings: “I vow to believe in the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin, and all articles of faith; not only do I believe them, since I must do so as a Christian duty, but I also intend to make a vow to believe them”.⁷ However, Pallotti was not content simply to live his faith deeply in daily life. With joy, he also proclaimed the truths of faith and bore witness to the love of God for all people. In other words, for him, faith, as lived and/or proclaimed, and love always went hand in hand, were two inseparable realities. This inseparability of faith and love is likewise maintained in his foundation, the Union of Catholic Apostolate, in that it has the task of reviving faith and rekindling love in the Church and in the world.⁸

5. The importance of faithfulness to faith working through love in the life and mission of the Union

To conclude this reflection, it must be emphasised that faith working through love is of paramount importance to the life and mission of the Union. Indeed, if the Union is defined as “a communion of the faithful who, [...] promote the co-responsibility of all the baptized to **revive faith** and **rekindle charity** in the Church and in the world”,⁹ then the inseparability

⁶ Cf. J. KUPKA, “*Anno della fede 2012-2013: Riscoprire la gioia nel credere e ritrovare l'entusiasmo nel comunicare la fede*” (The Year of Faith: Rediscover the joy of believing and once more find enthusiasm in communicating faith”), pp. 12-16.

⁷ OCCC X, p. 262.

⁸ GSt, 1.

of these two realities in daily life will allow its members to make concrete the spiritual heritage of Saint Vincent Pallotti. Its mission will become strongly credible, because “faith working through love” will become, in all of its dimensions, a contagious testimony to the world, offering each person the possibility of encountering Christ and, in his or her turn, of becoming an evangeliser.¹⁰

6. Let us pray to the Lord:

*Lord God, when we revive and spread faith and love,
we become participants in the redemptive
mission and work of your Son, Jesus Christ.
You send us as labourers in your harvest; for this reason,
no work should seem too hard for us, no effort too tiring.
Send your Holy Spirit, Lord, to enkindle our faith
and strengthen us by his power.
Give us the courage to take up our work faithfully each day.
May our failures not discourage us.
Teach us instead to receive from you all that we lack.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.
Amen.*

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⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Cf. The Synod of Bishops on “the New Evangelisation for the transmission of the Christian faith” (October 7-28, 2012), Proposition,41.