

ecclesial vision of unity and communion. Today the Church faces a number of challenges and hardships of power and fame and lives in an institutionalized spirit and money power. The Union of the Catholic Apostolate is a model for the Church today. The little church gathered in the cenacle is a symbol of an ecclesial vision of communion, where all the faithful feel co-responsible for the mission of the Church and participate in it with equal dignity and right. In this model of Church there is fundamentally no claim to a leading position, but all are equals among equals” (cf. The Charism of St. Vincent Pallotti. Origin, Development, Identity, 6.e., pp. 48-49). Let our mission be dominated by the same spirit of being “equals among the equals”. Mary still continues to be our guide, walking alongside us to proclaim Jesus to this challenging world.

Jesus came on earth to give life, and life in abundance, to the full (Jn 10:10). We are evangelical trumpets called to invite everyone in the Church to participate equally to proclaim the infinite love of God to others. Through my endeavours in the field of social work I learn more and more to be an authentic Pallottine. enkindling the hearts of the poor and marginalized. I follow the rule of life of Jesus, bringing justice to the poor in a spirit of equality, respecting the dignity and worth of each person, as everyone has been created in the image and likeness of God. “God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them male and female he created them. (Gen 1:27).

The season of Lent reminds us of God’s infinite love for all people. Let us challenge ourselves change our ways so that we may become more worthy to have him in our life. We can only do it if the Holy Spirit comes and removes our tepid and wayward heart. While the world often ignores and flees from the sickness, sorrow and pain that surrounds us, we instead once more gaze on the Cross of Jesus, to be made capable of forgiving, of forgetting our past omissions and of touching the hearts of people with the love of Christ. In this way, we discover ever more deeply the true meaning of our Pallottine commitment for today’s challenging world in whichever state of life and vocation we have been called.

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Apostles for Today

Prayer and Reflection - March 2019

Holiness: A Path Travelled Together

The Pallottine Charism - A Prophetic voice of a New era

St. Vincent Pallotti, “Prophet to the Catholic Church” “an Innovator and Saint of a new era”. Indeed, his prophetic voice which gives equal space for everyone in the Church to be Apostles according to one’s state and condition of life is really amazing. I am deeply inspired and inflamed by his charism of “rekindling charity and reviving faith” in the Church as an Indian in a Church marked by traditional practices, perceived as placing particular emphasis on hierarchy, traditions and popular saints. This led me to experience much confusion in the initial stages of my Religious life, and a sense of the Pallottine charism being clouded in my mind. Involvement in various UAC gatherings inspired me to deepen my studies regarding St. Vincent Pallotti’s life and charism, and involvement in various Pallottine ministries lifted my gaze out to the deep, to the vast sea of Pallottine spirituality.

The Union of Catholic Apostolate (UAC) is an innovative way of life where people come to know Jesus and love him. In fact, the Pallottine mission is moved by the Love of God alone. Pallotti expresses his passion for God by following Jesus, the Apostle of the eternal Father. It’s very clear when he says: “not my will, but God; not food, but God; not drink ... but God; not clothing, but God; ... God alone” (OCC X, 131). This very call that I received from the Lord through the Catholic Apostolate showed me where this God really is and it is what urged me to embrace vulnerable children infected with HIV/AIDS. For me, they represent our wounded God in human flesh encountered in person, similar to the initial apostolic fire which Vincent experienced towards the children affected by cholera in the Rome of his day.

In 2006, the alarming rate of the killer epidemic HIV/AIDS in the districts of Karimnagar in the state of Telangana was very high. It also swallowed the life of thousands in the state of Andhra Pradesh. This crisis was further

exacerbated by illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, migration and a lack of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS, methods of safe sex and the use of unsterilized syringes, needles etc. Upon coming to know of their illness, some people became severely depressed and wanted to end their lives. Apart from this, they were also discriminated against by relatives and neighbours by being thrown out of their families and villages. They were unable to do any work and were deprived of basic needs like food, housing, and medical services. Thus, they underwent a very hard time. Men and women together with their children lived in a stressful environment. At times they even failed to believe in the existence of God in their lives.

In this challenging and risky situation, the motto of Pallotti pushed us to think about housing for their children irrespective of caste and creed. In the midst of the cholera epidemic, though fear invaded him, Vincent moved with a great love in his heart - "Caritas Christi Urget Nos". (2 Cor 5:14). Our concrete answer to this situation was the opening of our HIV Centre called "Krupa Bhavan" (House of Grace) in the village of Dacharam in 2006, where we could accommodate the infected HIV/AIDS children. The first children we welcomed suffered with deformities, oozing wounds, mouth ulcers and skin deceases. They were almost on the brink of the grave. Our care reached out over miles; to affected villages and families. Once the children were brought in, they were provided with medication, care, education and faith formation. Priests and lay benefactors aided the centre with their personal and material resources. Gradually these children were accepted by our villagers as well as by the schools. At present, a few of them are doing their university studies without any discrimination and living a hopeful life in Jesus the Lord.

I firmly believe that we could not do this simply by ourselves. "Da me nulla posso ... Con Dio posso tutto... By myself I can do nothing ... But with God I can do everything ..." (OOCC XI, 521). When we listen to the One who has called us, it is He who makes everything possible. The Lord raises up new realities. We need to be dynamic in the current circumstances of the world, a world often sinking into darkness. It is time to break out of the shells of our comfort zones and put on the armour of passion and compassion, a passion to serve the poor, downtrodden, marginalized, broken, vulnerable, children, youth, men and women, wounded by epidemic

and chronicle illness, these voiceless of society, let our voice be one which rekindles them and revives their lives. From the very beginning of his Papacy, Pope Francis has never stopped exhorting the world's priests to stay close to the marginalized and to be "shepherds living with the smell of the sheep."(VATICAN CITY- CNS, Feb.3rd, 2014)

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Mt 5:4). In *Gaudete et Exultate*, Pope Francis invites us to embrace the beatitudes like our identity card as Christians GE 63). "Knowing how to mourn with others: that is holiness" (GE 76). We live in a challenging world where people can be constant bearers of conflict, stress, tension and every type of abuse. In the pains and sorrows of our sisters and brothers we are called to feel empathy. Today we are challenged to help bear the pain of others, their physical and spiritual wounds. "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross" (1 Pt 2:24). Personal holiness is the ultimate goal of the Pallottine vision and mission. "Tutti santi, presto santi, grandi santi ... All saints... saints soon ... great saints", says St. Vincent Pallotti. Not to stand idle protective shell of life, we need to feel the pain of others to know to cry with others, as St. Paul says Church is one body If one member suffers all other suffer with it (1 Cor 12:26). It is high time to change our ways, to live our vocation of holiness, sharing the sufferings of others and building the kingdom of God (cf. GE 76).

In his recent letter about the scandals in the Church, Pope Francis highlighted that "every one of the baptized should feel involved in the ecclesial and social change that we so greatly need" (Letter of Pope Francis to the People of God (20 August 2018)). The foundation of the Union of Catholic Apostolate rests on a unity between priests, the consecrated and laity. The active participation of all members in the Church helps to create that communion and support in the ecclesial body which can eliminate many of the evils which cause the destruction of the individual. God expects our commitment in the saving mission of the Church. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis calls us to share the joy of the Gospel. Pallottines are called to live the Gospel as the fundamental rule of their life, to know and to make to known Jesus and to find real happiness in that life.

Vincent addresses Mary, Mother of Jesus, as the woman of faith, model of communion and Queen of Apostles, which in our day could be expressed as New Evangelizer *par excellence*. The Cenacle is a powerful symbol of this new evangelization. The disciples united with one heart and soul with Mary our mother. The Cenacle as commissioned by Vincent Pallotti symbolises an