
"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 464

looking back across 29 years

Now 'emeritus', I was the diocesan Bishop of Umuarama, in the state of Paraná in the south of Brazil, for 29 years. I have been requested to write this article and to suggest how we can refresh the charism of St Vincent Pallotti in today's world for the service of the church. My preference is to present my learnings based on the episcopal ministry that I have exercised for so many years.



We know that the foundation of St Vincent Pallotti, initiated with the conviction of a saint, insisted that all those baptized should become apostles. He called all of the lay faithful to participate in the pastoral activities of the church. This had been a very visible reality in the nascent church, which became lost over time and only flourished and bore fruit again after Vat II.

As a seminarian and young priest I was unable to properly understand and work in the spirit of Pallotti's charism because the UAC had been asleep! When my formation was over I wanted to deepen my studies on apostolate and pastoral ministry, but it was not possible.

When I became a bishop, in 1973, I encountered parishes in the diocese guided by Pallottine priests who, at that time, were already working according to the spirit of the UAC. But unfortunately many let themselves be caught up in the spirituality of Neocatechumenal Communities and forgot about about Pallottine spirituality.

Therefore, I need to share about my experience, speaking in a general way, concerning *all* spiritualities and charisms.

I was the first bishop of a new diocese, whose oldest parish had existed for only fifteen years. All of the clergy consisted of members of Institutes, Congregations or Religious Orders. There was not even a single diocesan seminarian!

In the spirit of Vat II and various post-conciliar documents, especially the statements of CELAM (Latin American Bishops' Conference), we organized a conjoint pastoral ministry that led us to become a church of lively and active communities.

It was a very beautiful journey. Many people said we were about thirty years ahead of the other dioceses – just as St Vincent Pallotti was ahead in his time

However within this reality I met with a problem that caused great difficulties. Recent Popes have spoken repeatedly about new movements in the church, new associations and new communities which are evidence of the breath of the Holy Spirit in the church of our time. I really believe that this is true. And I agree that an enormous richness of charisms and spiritualities arose to enrich the church.

Logically then it follows that, to be faithful to their own charisms, these new movements have to imitate the orientation of their founders or actual leaders. However, they also need to remember the teaching of the church, which indicates that nothing can be done without the bishop – and much less against the bishop.

The strongest movements and communities, with a national or universal organization, seem to me to be the worst offenders in this area. They blindly follow their founders, or those substituting for them in leadership, remaining deaf to the words of the bishop or of the Pope. When it comes to a difference of opinion/interpretation more than once I have been told: “between an order of the Pope or of the Founder we follow what the latter tells us”.

And this results then in the formation of small independent ‘local’ churches within an otherwise well-structured diocese.

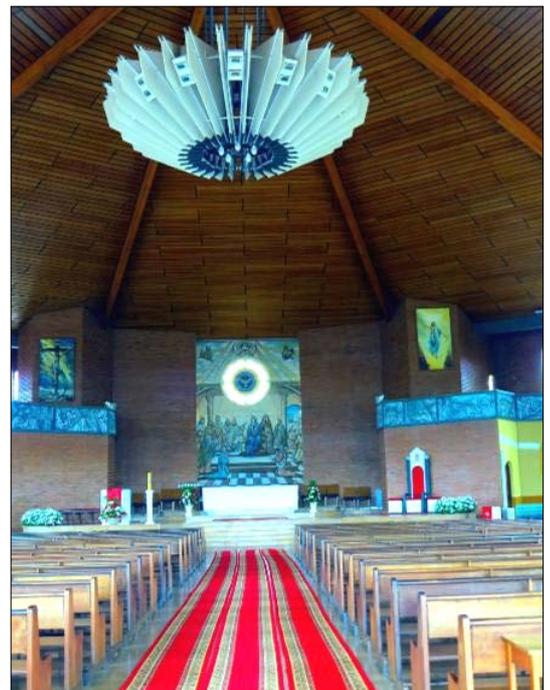
Several times I have wanted to correct things that were wrong or inappropriate and was ignored. But, when later a catechist or guru says the same thing, it is accepted peacefully and the correction made. I acknowledge that it is true that some bishops are often not open for dialogue and don't try to come to know the divergent strains of opinion in “their” diocese, but this can't be generalized.

It may be that someone reading this article attentively might think that I missed the proposed subject and that I am digressing.

No! What I am trying to do is to create an awareness of the concrete reality within which I had to live for so many years. So now I can give my opinion on the presence and activity of the members of the UAC within a diocese.

First of all let us remind ourselves of the love, interaction and obedience that Vincent Pallotti maintained with the authorities of the church of his time. In his reality there was a relationship with the higher authorities of the church, as he carried out his whole apostolate and priesthood in Rome and its surroundings.

So likewise all the members of the Union of the Catholic Apostolate – just as those of other associations, movements and communities – need to maintain a very strong union with the bishop of their Diocese.



While conserving the Pallottine charism and spirituality, they place themselves at his disposal to inspire the whole parish or diocese towards growth in faith and charity, helping them to transmit these virtues to those who are still far from Christ and his church.

This distinctively Pallottine apostolate should be a characteristic within any and every church in which they exist, however much they themselves may be organized.

The activities which St Vincent and his first collaborators conjointly organised with the laity were extremely diverse. So, imitating them and remaining in the charism and spirituality of our Founder, we will be able to serve and will be welcomed in any local Church.

In a time such as ours, when ecumenism is much spoken of, it does not make sense to create divisions through a fanatical way of living our charism, as if it were the only way that will save the church.

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item 465

among the Naga's

One of the more recent missionary initiatives of the Epiphany Province [India] has been the assumption of pastoral care of Christ King parish at Phuvkiu. This community is one of the oldest catholic centers in the Diocese of Kohima, Nagaland. Situated in the district of Kiphire, in one of the more economically challenged localities due to its remoteness from the plains, it rests in the valley of Saramati Mountain, on the border of Myanmar. Its people belong to the Yimchunger tribe, one of the fierce warrior groups among sixteen major Naga tribes, having its origin in Burma/Myanmar. Its 350 families chiefly depend on agriculture and cattle breeding.

This mission centre was established in 1974 with a catholic population of about 130 families. Phuvkiu is one of the bigger villages belonging to this tribe. The entire village is christian, split 50% between catholics and baptists. The depth and the expression of their faith is fascinating and one is edified by the strong mutual bond that they share among themselves. The impression given is that their faith is like gold, tested and proven, as they go through many hardships of life in the face of strong resistance from the protestants who were against setting up of a catholic church in the village.



The church has a school known as Christ King School. Initially managed by the Diocese of Kohima it is now entrusted to the Pallottines. Its enrollment is 232 children. Schooling is a luxury here. So, since many families cannot manage the expenses, it has become one of our priorities to offer basic education and health care to a huge number of deprived children.



Health care itself is another hurdle to be surmounted. The nearest health clinic is an hour's drive on treacherous mountain roads. A hospital, with reasonably modern equipment, requires a 12 hours drive! However, they seem to hum the words of St Paul "who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?"

Myself and Fr Jose Reechus sac are pioneering this thrust. We earnestly request your prayers and support.

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15.11.16
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you commented...

on #247 "The *Pallottine School of New Evangelization* as well as the 'Friends of the Bridegroom' Community are places for formation of lay apostles who learn there how to evangelize according to the state in which they live".

This wonderful and creative work of evangelisation of Fr. Kristopher Kralka SAC shows how the Pallottine charism can be concretely interpreted and implemented in service of the mission of the church today. There are many more such members around the Pallottine world who have developed creative ways to live our charism. Personally I will be contacting many more of these members with the request to share with the rest of us their apostolic works so that we can learn from them and find the vital responses to the many questions that we ourselves have regarding the ways and means to interpret our charism according to the signs of the times.

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