

E-BULLETIN #100

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

item 187

"...to walk in a manner worthy..."

'*New Evangelization*' has become a popular term, gaining immense credence with the pontificate of Pope Francis. Ever since his election, there has been active movement in the Christian life. I live in Rome, and the increased number of devotees and the posts in Facebook attest to the truth that 'Pope Francis is a man in whom Christ is visible.'

I think that *New Evangelization* means making Jesus visible and experiential. Living our vocation is an invitation to live an authentic life as Christians, as we are exhorted in Ephesians:

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you *to walk in a manner worthy* of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:1-3).

Every call – be it to priesthood, religious life, or marriage – is a vocation to share a mystery of love that has a salvific characteristic, and it demands faithfulness to the one to whom we are bound. In this love there is an attraction which is reciprocal, and it is the substance of the call. Moreover, there is a willingness to share the love of God and reciprocal passiveness to love and to be loved. There is a reciprocal ascending and descending, a transcendence to be in union with God. Like the psalmist, one expresses the yearning and longing for the Other to enter into an encounter (cf. Ps 62). The hallmark of our Christian vocation is to enter into that encounter with the Other in love.

We are invited, therefore, to live this call with all humility and gentleness. Accepting our merits and demerits,



limits and weaknesses is to live the spirit of poverty. In other words, I am able to accept and live my vulnerability with maturity. In a psycho-spiritual sense, it is living my vocation consistently aware of my needs, but at the same time living the objective values. The more we are aware of ourselves, the more we are able to live a consistent life. Today's trend is to avoid criticism and accept all things as positive, and that boosts self-esteem. We do say everything is for the 'greater glory of

God', but the moment glory does not come to us, we feel exhausted and neglected. "When one chooses an ideal that is not in harmony with the truth of one's ego and/or with the totality of one's being, one will suffer in self-esteem"(Cencini & Manenti, 2010, p. 214).

Jesus never hesitated to condemn the pharisaic attitude of the scribes simply because their internal values never corresponded to their external attitudes and behaviours. Added to that, they showed a self-righteous attitude, arising from a sort of moral and religious superiority, which never allowed them to come face to face with their own poverty before God. They were, so to say, 'blind to themselves'.

This is something that can happen in our Christian and consecrated life too. When our proclaimed vocational and Christian values are in harmony with our external attitudes and behaviours, we can be considered vocationally consistent consecrated persons and Christians. Whereas if our actual testimony of life contradicts and is inconsistent with the values and ideals that we proclaim, we become vocationally inconsistent persons and Christians.

In simple words, it is **a question of authenticity of life**, both at the human and religious/christian levels. It requires a sort of harmony in life between our actual and ideal selves. Authenticity of life, as we know from the lives of saints, and currently from the living testimony of the life and teaching of Pope Francis, is the most powerful instrument of evangelization. His embrace of a handicapped child during a Papal audience in front of an ocean of people conveys the infinite love and mercy of God much more concretely and emphatically than a thousand words uttered in the most professional way.

We may ask why all of us are not able to give such a coherent and authentic testimony of life. As always, there can be many reasons for that.

First of all, one needs to have a strong ideal self with objective, natural and supernatural values. For us Christians, the Sacred Scripture, the teachings of the Church, the testimonies of saintly men and women of all times, the traditions of the Church etc., provide those necessary values. Jesus Christ himself, the Incarnate Son of God, in one word, is the Value – the Way, the Truth and the Life. In addition we also have accumulated personal ideals and values. The sum of these values and ideals makes our Ideal Self. Therefore it is so important to have the right values and ideals to inspire and motivate us. The lack of such values is indeed a problem with many young people today. Consequently, they live a life without direction and motivation.

Secondly, one should also have the inner freedom to live these values in reality. Here comes the question of the Actual Self, the reality of our person with all its dimensions. More than anything else, psycho-social factors can foster or hamper our inner freedom to live our values and ideals. For example, if one has to live the value of charity, he or she needs to have a lot of freedom from his or her egocentric needs. More concretely, if charity has to be translated into concrete attitudes and behaviours like kindness, compassion, care, forgiveness and service, one needs to overcome his or her egocentric preoccupations with affection, self-seeking, craving for attention, inner insecurity etc. Otherwise, one can constantly preach and advocate a life of self-giving and service but in reality, one's attitudes and actions will manifest the contrary. Such inconsistent attitudes and behaviours, as in the case of pharisees, can have a counter-witness effect. Here lies the real danger before us. We can insist on a lot of values but we ourselves may not live them. To give another example, we may demand accountability and transparency in financial matters but we ourselves may not practice them. This is one reason why the Vatican bank itself is bringing out stringent rules regarding its financial management. Such concrete examples abound.

Difficulty with vocational and Christian authenticity is compounded by the fact that many of our motivations remain at the unconscious level. We are not always aware of the source of our attitudes and behaviours. For example, it is hard to explain why we feel a sort of innate liking or dislike for certain persons and their characters. Or a candidate may feel an automatic repulsion to authority figures. The crux of the matter is that we all have our personal histories and carry around baggage full of conscious and unconscious material which

has a definite influence on our manifest attitude and behaviours. Many people are either unaware or deny the influence of such psycho-social factors. As psychologist Carl Yung says, our collective unconscious can be a reservoir of a lot of positive energies or can also contain a lot of destructive tendencies. One's ability to live the values in reality will depend much on the inner freedom one has managed to obtain from one's personal and collective experiences, often received with the help of formation. This is the reason why we say that formation, if it is to be effective, must be a life-long journey of self-discovery, integration and transformation.

Therefore if we wish to live a vocationally consistent, authentic life as humans and as consecrated persons/christians, there is a progressive formative journey that we need to make, which is often a life-long process. First of all, it means knowing, accepting and integrating the right moral and spiritual values, above all, the values of Jesus. Secondly, it involves a life-long journey of self-discovery and self-transformation, leading to the experience of the freedom of the children of God. These words of St Paul summarize very much what I wish to say:

“Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God, truly righteous and holy” (Eph 4:23-24).

Elizabeth Beena Kuruppasseril csac – Rome – ITALY
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item 188

‘into Your hands...’

The *North American Retreat* for all the Pallottines in North America was held from July 22-25, 2013 at San Alphonso Retreat House in Long Branch, New Jersey, USA. **Fr George Augustine sac**, Professor of Dogmatic Theology at our Major Seminary in Vallendar, Germany preached the retreat reflecting on the challenge of the New Evangelization and the Pallottine response to it.

About 45 participants from the 9 Pallottine entities present in the United States and Canada participated. At one point our Rector General, Fr Jacob Nampudakam, addressed all the members placing before them the present day challenges and possibilities faced by our Society.



The retreat was followed by the North American *Continental Meeting*.

The Rector General spoke of the possible means for strengthening our apostolic presence in North America. After his remarks, reports from various entities and the ad hoc Committee for fostering better collaboration and communication among the entities in the United States were presented.

As an action plan for the next two years, it was decided to work towards the renewal of faith in line with the challenge of New Evangelization and in the spirit of our charism.

The participants of the meeting elected for one year Fr Peter Sticco, Provincial Rector of the Immaculate Conception Province as President and Fr Joe Koyickal, Provincial Rector of the Mother of God Province as Vice President of the Continental meeting. Fr Frank Donio (IC) will continue as Secretary.

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