

E-BULLETIN #52

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

item 99

New Evangelisation challenge... Pallottine response! [part II]

III Pallottine charism as a response to the challenge of New Evangelisation



This is a theme of great importance for us, and it will be handled by some of our experts on Pallottine spirituality and charism like Fr Jan Kupka, Fr Derry Murphy and Sr Stella Marrotta. St Vincent Pallotti lived at a time in the history of the Church even more difficult than ours. There was tremendous decadence in the Church and in society, both morally and spiritually, especially after the French Revolution. The atmosphere was such that Pallotti introduced the prophetic idea of the Union of Catholic Apostolate.

The core of our Pallottine charism seems to be deeply related to the key word "apostle". The God of infinite love and mercy sent Jesus as apostle of the Eternal Father. We are all called to imitate this Jesus, the Apostle of the Father. Therefore, the entire life of Jesus is to be the only rule for all Pallottines. To be authentic apostles of Jesus is the vocation and mission of each one of us. As Pallotti himself says, "God has commanded each one to procure the eternal salvation of his neighbour; and since in carrying out such a precept we must imitate Jesus Christ who is the Apostle of the Eternal Father, therefore the life of Jesus, which is his apostolate, should be the model of the apostolate of everyone; and as all are called – rather obliged – to imitate Jesus Christ, so all, in proportion to their condition and state, are called to the apostolate..." This is also the message of Pope John Paul II in his homily at the church of San Salvatore in Onda in Rome on 22nd June, 1986: "Continue to increase your commitment so that what Vincent Pallotti prophetically announced, which the Second Vatican Council authoritatively confirmed, may become a happy reality, and that all Christians become authentic apostles of Christ in the Church and in the world!"

Therefore the UAC is not an end in itself. It is a means, an instrument, a "way of being" and living Christian discipleship. The UAC tries to create an apostolic force in the Church, moulding authentic apostles of Jesus through a revival of faith and rekindling of charity in the hearts of these people. It is not just a question of forming a separate Pallottine group; instead it is a spiritually and apostolically animated group of persons who, in turn, work ceaselessly to realize the apostolic vocation and mission of the faithful in the Church and the world.

I would consider the following **5 elements** as indispensable if we wish to offer our charism as an effective instrument for the challenge of 'New Evangelisation'.

A discerning the Signs of the Times

A charism is relevant to the extent that it is able to respond to the needs of the time. Pallotti's prophetic vision emerged as a response to the need to "revive faith and rekindle charity" in the strongly anticlerical, secular world of his time. We are facing almost exactly the same type of situation in the world today. On the one hand, there is the great need to proclaim the Gospel to the millions who have not had the opportunity to listen to the Good News especially in the continents of Africa and Asia; on the other hand, there is the urgent need to re-evangelise the strongly secular, individualistic Western World which boasts of a Christian culture. There is also the perennial need to reawaken the spirit of charity so that the earthly blessings are also shared by the millions of poor and under-privileged in the world. The situations and needs of countries, continents and local churches are so totally diverse that the first step should be to discern the signs of the time, and respond adequately to them by interpreting and implementing our charism with creativity and courage. Hence there is the need for a new evangelisation "ad intra and ad extra". This implies that ways and means of 'New Evangelisation' will differ from place to place, from culture to culture and from situation to situation. Discerning the signs of the times is a typically Pallottine activity and a gift of the Holy Spirit.



B interior spiritual journey

We must never forget that the Pallottine charism was the fruit of an intense spiritual journey of a Saint. Pallotti's writings amply testify to the depth of his spiritual and mystical experiences and to his apostolic commitment. His desire for total transformation into Jesus, the Apostle of the Father, was unparalleled in mystical writings. At times we tend to reduce the UAC to some sort of a theological, intellectual or even juridical construct devoid of such a deep spiritual content. Without having a taste of the spiritual experience of Pallotti, one can hardly understand what is meant by the UAC. Hence priority should be given to making a spiritual journey with Pallotti with a view of a deeper apostolic commitment in service of God and humanity. As the UAC General Statutes state: "The specific spirituality of the Union is the following of Christ, Apostle of the Eternal Father. In faith and charity, the members of the Union are determined to remain united with the crucified and risen Christ ever present among them (Mt 18, 20); they strive to imitate his love for the Father and for all persons, seeking to live his life-style and apostolate as perfectly as possible."

Let's be clear about one thing. 'New Evangelisation' is not so much a matter of academic conferences or a multitude of activities. It is simply a question of returning to the basics of Christian living. As the UAC General Statutes of the Union quoted above point out, it is a matter of transforming our lives into the life of Jesus, Apostle of the Father. That is why we have chosen this motto for the Jubilee Year: "Let the holiness of God shine forth" (Mt 5,16). In 1832, he wrote in the Month of May for all the Faithful: "Do you want a perfect example of the perfection of the heavenly Father? You have it in Jesus. He became man to teach men how to live their lives in order to become holy and perfect like the Heavenly Father. Look, therefore, in faith at your divine model, Jesus Christ: profit by the treasures of grace that he gained for you through his holy life, and you will become holy and perfect as your heavenly Father". These words of our Founder provide the meaning, the goal and the means for 'New Evangelisation'. I am sure both Fr Edward Fröhling and Cardinal Kurt Koch will be emphasizing during their conferences the importance of authentic spiritual renewal in our lives as the most effective means of 'New Evangelisation'.

C Pallotti's ecclesial vision

We all know by now that the ecclesial model that Pallotti followed was that of communion, participation – a novelty in his own time but a common vision after Vatican II. We are also aware that regardless of the courage and vision of Vatican II, such a model of communion is still a dream in many parts of the world. Hence it is fortuitous that this mandate calls for the Pallottine family to contribute to the realisation of such an ecclesial model. The parishes are the privileged place for the realisation of the Union as a “*Home of Faith*”. In this ecclesial vision, a parish is the place where each of the faithful is able to realise his apostolic vocation as an apostle of Jesus. In fact, the Pallottine Family needs to do a lot more for the actualisation of this ecclesial vision, especially in this Jubilee Year of the Canonisation of our Founder as well as of the opening of the Vatican II. Our Theological Institutes and Pallotti Institutes all over the world should promote further studies and research in this direction; efforts should be made to implement the spirit of communion in our parishes, communities and in every other pastoral field. The spirituality of communion has its origin in the Holy Trinity and hence it is a profound spiritual experience. The UAC should be rightly considered as a fruit of such a communion with God and among us. Profound Christian and human formation is the key to building up such a basis of communion.

D cenacle model of UAC formation

One of the urgent needs today is to develop attractive and practical formation models for the Union. Perhaps we may have to search for different models of formation, according to particular situations in various countries and local churches. But the essential elements have to remain the same. We can draw inspiration and guidelines for UAC formation from the original image of Cenacle presented by our Founder himself. We might rightly call it the “*Pedagogy of the Cenacle*” or the “*Cenacle Model of UAC Formation*”. The following are some of the elements of this model:



- a) the Holy Spirit, the creative, transforming Spirit, as the principal agent of formation
- b) Mary, Queen of Apostles as the spiritual guide and example
- c) the Upper Room, symbolising a community of believers gathered together in prayer
- d) listening to the Word of God and breaking the Bread in a spirit of sharing and fraternity
- e) inner transformation of persons into apostles of Jesus as the transforming experience
- f) going forth from the Cenacle as apostles and missionaries to bear witness to the Good News
- g) the spirituality and charism of St Vincent Pallotti as the inspiration as well as the spiritual and apostolic foundation. Hence we can say that the Union of Catholic Apostolate, best exemplified by the Cenacle, is truly a “*Home of Faith*” where apostles of Jesus are formed and sent out.

The spiritual and apostolic formation of the faithful in the Church could be a vast field of Pallottine contribution in the realisation of the challenge of ‘*New Evangelisation*’. In essence, this means enabling people to go through all the elements of the ‘*Pedagogy of the Cenacle*’. The numerous apostolic centres that we have around the world must cater to such a need of the Church today. A new venture in this line is the ‘*Catholic Apostolate Centre*’, established in Washington by the Immaculate Conception Province of the Society, under the Directorship of Fr Frank Donio sac. You will hear more about it during this seminar. Outstanding work is also done in our pastoral centres in Santa Maria, Brazil, Konstancin, Poland, Cardinal Kasper Institute in PTHV, Germany and Pallottine Animation Centre, India. More concerted efforts should be made in the same way in our other centres too. This should be one of the important priorities, in my opinion, of the newly established Formation Commission of the Union as well.

E missionary commitment

The apostles did not remain confined to the Cenacle. Transformed from within, they went forth to the ends of the world to proclaim the Good News. The Cenacle experience has a strong missionary dynamism; it impels one from within. In fact, charity by its very nature urges one to go out of oneself towards God and others. Hence our motto: “the love of God urges on”.



If the UAC is to become attractive and relevant as a means of formation for authentic Christian discipleship, it has to be backed up with concrete missionary commitments. Otherwise it will never be more than pious thinking. Christian commitment is measured by concrete actions of charity, as indicated in the last judgment story (Mt 25, 31-46): “I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was stranger and you made me welcome...”

These conditions are most ordinary and down to earth. It is this realisation that prompted Pallotti to become all things to all men. His prayer is also equally concrete. “I would like to become food to feed the hungry, clothing to cover the naked, drink to quench the thirst of the thirsty...”.

There are so many needs in the world. There are cries for help everywhere. The nature of the needs might differ slightly from place to place but the human condition as a whole remains the same. There is so much spiritual poverty in the developed world; there is so much human brokenness and material need in the developed and developing world; there is terrible material poverty in many poor countries. Perennial wars only add to the misery. A spirituality that does not care for the human person created in God’s own image and likeness cannot be authentic. Therefore, every member of the Union, if he or she wants to be an authentic apostle of Jesus, will have to do what the Master himself did. There is no mission other than the mission of Jesus.

‘New Evangelization’, as the popes have clearly said, also includes mission *ad gentes*. The Good News must be shared with those who so far have not had the opportunity to hear it. This is a divine commandment and an expression of charity. One of the reasons for the decline of faith in the Church and the gradual death of many religious congregations is without doubt a lack of missionary spirit. I once attended a meeting of youth in a European country. The young people present were treated like precious vessels to be handled with utmost care, attention and affection. I have also met numerous young missionary volunteers from Germany, Poland, Australia and England in many parts of the world, especially in Africa and Asia and the witness of their lives and missionary zeal were outstanding. They often lived in the most demanding situations. They were not scandalised or broken; instead they became stronger as Christians and as human beings. Similar situations exist in certain religious congregations and provinces/regions. If we live just for ourselves, with the greatest security of personnel and money, we are destined to die, slowly but surely. If we give without measure, we will receive without measure. Hence, I have no hesitation in inviting our entire Pallottine Family to become more missionary in spirit and deed. This is the hallmark of a Pallottine, in fact, of every Christian. This will be the focus of a presentation by Sr. Bożena Olszewska SAC.

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