

## E-BULLETIN #83

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

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item 157

### **'sorry' is the hardest word to say**

On 18<sup>th</sup> August 2013 the **JCMA** (Jewish, Christian, Muslim Association) ran a one-day non-residential program at Mary MacKillop School Centre, located in the Pallottine parish of Dallas, Victoria. It had been hoped to have a residential program at Pallotti College, Millgrove, as has been the practice now for many years, but for a variety reasons this could not eventuate.

The program attracted about 90-100 people from the three faith traditions, and especially good numbers among young Muslim women. Dallas, as a Melbourne suburb, has growing Muslim residency.



The theme of this year's program was "*Sorry is the hardest word to say*". It concentrated on issues arising among the three faith traditions – some as historic as the Crusades, but more recently from events that led to World War II, and even more recent issues. It was clear that, beyond the historical events and the statistics, people's lives are still directly affected and we indeed carry memories.

What was especially instructive were the processes of acknowledgement - who can apologize for whom? The

Jewish participants provided insight into those areas, often from their own family stories. 'No, I can't apologize for others', but what does this mean in a societal and historical perspective? And how do the Jewish faithful engage, for instance, within the modern German state?

A Catholic priest delivered an analysis of sacramental confession, and this conveyed an insight that identifies our own tradition independently of other Christian expressions.

It was also informative to hear how many Christian traditions do not have a concept of "original sin", and what are the follow-on implications and questions of self-image and how such questions find expression in the faith texts, some of which are shared as sacred across the three faith traditions.

One Muslim speaker, herself a psychologist, commented that the inability to come to terms with issues of hurt brings “dis-ease”, and from this the body is directly affected.

It is therefore apparent that every human person engages in this process, drawing from their own humanity as experienced within specific faith dimensions, or perhaps for many from none other than a societal model.

It was a privileged time to share a meal, to listen to the thanksgiving prayers, and to make various connections. Indeed, as people of the Abrahamic faiths, prayer acts as a key focus to the processes of forgiveness sought and given.

**Lindsay Rust sac [AU] – Millgrove – AUSTRALIA**  
30.08.13  
[pallottcollege@bigpond.com](mailto:pallottcollege@bigpond.com)

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item 158

## **SANTARELLO’s call to young minds**



In this era of globalization and post-modernism it is assumed that all information can be found on the internet, and that advanced development in many fields has enhanced human knowledge. Yet the fact remains that young people do not find answers to the questions in their lives that way. Some are very basic and fundamental, both to their life and to their understanding of God. Often they are left confused and stranded at the crossroads in choosing between this world and God. Just as the rich young man of Mt 19, who came to Jesus asking him what he must do to gain eternal life, went back sad and confused, likewise many young people today are baffled about their lives and trapped by the snares and attractions of this world. The reasons are varied. Our modern lifestyle, a desire to conform to peers, the competitive nature of present day education, technological hype and improper or insufficient religious orientation are some of the major factors.

With so many options young people are often in a dilemma about what to do and what not to do. Vat II rightly realized this long ago as it pointed out in *Gaudium et Spes* [par 10]: “The dichotomy affecting the modern world is in fact a symptom of the deeper dichotomy that is in man himself. He is the meeting point of many conflicting forces.”

In such a world what is our response as Pallottines, especially for the lives of young people?

St Vincent stands as a role model who, as a little boy and lacking learning, already tried to find answers to his queries such as: Who is God? Who am I before God? What can I do for the greater glory of God? He was faced with innumerable questions, just as today’s young people. But he sought answers for them, and in the process he was led by the Spirit of God. In that quest the roles of his parents and spiritual director were significant. From childhood itself we find a conviction to do the right thing in the sight of God. All those who saw him called him **Santarello** which means “little saint.”

Who guides young people today towards the road to sanctity? We all know the great capacity and desire in every young person to seek, to explore and to discover. They try to search for the best job, and for good opportunities. They seek good companions and sincere friendships. They search for a life partner with great dedication and enthusiasm. Surely if, as finite beings, they seek such worldly aspirations with so much passion, how much more would be their potentiality to seek God if only the fire in their transcendent nature, which compels them to go beyond this world, is lit?

Pallotti was right in instructing the members of his congregation to act according to the needs of the time. What are the real needs of young people today? They do try to seek God but the changing structure of modern life further increases their spiritual uneasiness. Church doctrines, commandments, catecheses make no sense to them. Participation in church activities and the sacraments become merely customary practices.



St Vincent calls us to revive faith and re-ignite charity. To revive faith so as to make it more meaningful and understandable to the young. To re-ignite charity by making them conscious of the abundant blessings and graces received in the sacraments of holy eucharist and reconciliation. In a practical sense, through the sacrament of reconciliation many young people who feel guilty, lonely, alienated can be brought back to the church, once they realize that God offers His unlimited forgiveness. These young people and their creative ideas and talents can then be of great service in enriching the liturgy and nourishing church life.

Change is a constant in our lives. History progresses, human beings change. To be more relevant to the young there needs to be a revision of our approach to faith, to our doctrines and beliefs. The traditional expression of Christian faith must become appropriate for today.

**New Evangelization** is a good move in this direction – a new way of being Church in the face of new situations. As Bl John Paul II stated, it must be ‘new in its ardour, new in its methods and new in its expressions’ in responding to new situations. It demands courage to find new ways of sharing faith in today’s new circumstances. Thus Pallotti’s concept, of revitalizing and rediscovering the beauty of Christian faith through the joy of a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, has great meaning and implications for today’s youth.

The same media which diverts attention can be used as a tool of evangelization. The same education that focuses so much on job prospects can be made use of – with a pinch of catechesis – to give strength, encouragement and hope in hopelessness. Priests can be a great source of healing by giving young people their time and a listening ear. Just as Pallotti’s preoccupation was to find ways and means of reviving faith which at that time was in a state of decline in Rome, we are called to revive faith in the Church today amidst atheism and agnosticism.

In this revival of faith of young people the role of elders is not to be sidelined. They can contribute a great deal to this mission in two ways. Firstly, by a persevering tolerance in correcting them when they go astray. And secondly, because of their own rich experience they can guide young minds on the right track of faith. They can be a source of deep spiritual and practical knowledge, because they themselves were young once and thus have experienced the realities of life.

In the recently concluded 28<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), **Pope Francis** said this:

*You young people, my dear young friends, never yield to discouragement, do not lose trust, do not allow your hope to be extinguished. Situations can change, people can change. Be the first to seek to bring good. Do not get accustomed to evil, but defeat it with good. The Church is with you, bringing*

*you the precious good of faith, bringing Jesus Christ, who “came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10). You are not alone the Church is with you, the Pope is with you.*

What a great deal of good could be achieved if all pastors and religious had such a positive approach towards young minds! So many vocations could blossom and so many souls saved. As Pallotti would say: “Courage, let us work, let us work. Let us do all that we can, with all our strength for the glory of God. If the devil does so much to destroy souls, how much more shall we do to save them.”

Pallotti worked day in and day out for the salvation of souls and exhorted others to do the same. In communion with the Church and deeply convinced of his faith in Jesus Christ, Pallotti lived his life with such devotion that he was called *Santarello*, the “little saint,” in his early life. He remained faithful to this name till the end of his life. Today he asks of every Pallottine, young and old to be a *santarello*, and to make others *santarellos*.

For the infinite glory of God, I pray that through our lives our founder’s dream may come true.

**Jerry De Costa sac [BA] – Mysore – INDIA**  
**18.08.13**  
[\*\*jerycarls@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:jerycarls@gmail.com)

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