

E-BULLETIN #95

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

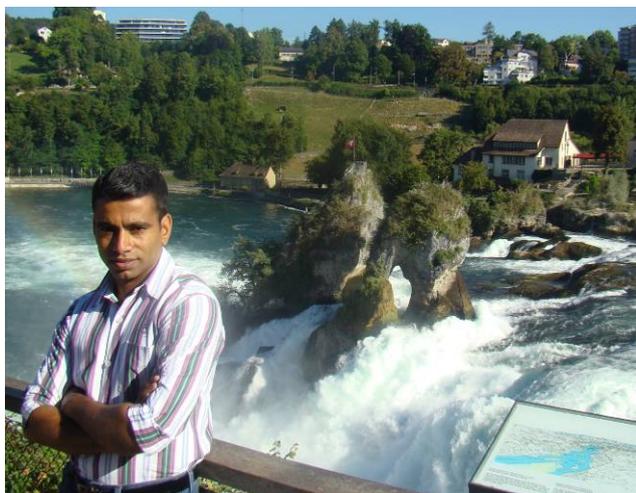
item 177

Life in the Land of Beauty!!!

**"Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round and pluck blackberries."**

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Learning is one of the best accompaniments for growth. It is the newness of life that gives meaning to our development. Meeting with and handling new life situations, getting to know and live together with new friends, helps us to see the whole reality of life from totally new view points. Such an experience can break and reconstruct beliefs and assumptions long held, which at times were thought to be true but in fact were not. And this leads to developing new approaches to people from other traditions and places.



During the months of July, August and September, I was blessed to have such an experience of learning and living in a totally new and beautiful place, Switzerland. I found myself residing in the Provincial House of the Swiss Pallottines situated in St Gallen, a state in the north of the country. For three months I was frequenting German lessons in a nearby town called Will.

I have to admit with no exaggeration that those were wonderful days, spent in a land known for its natural panoramic beauty and a people whose gentleness is striking. I moved around and visited many locations in Switzerland, thanks to Fr Adrian Willi. He would take us on holidays and explain to us the places and their history, guide us to the beautiful churches of Switzerland decorated with fine artworks and paintings. It is a land you can hardly fail to fall in love with.

Coming into contact with the Swiss Pallottines, fathers, brothers and sisters, was a totally new experience. Their welcoming approach and friendly nature added to the enjoyment of my stay. Coming from a very contrasting world my time in Switzerland presented me with an experience of the life of the Church and of our Society in a different way. I hope this will broaden my vision and approach to my own life. I saw a Church that is more open and more adapted to the times and to the people. Their churches aren't

crowded, but there are lots of initiatives by priests and church councils to bring about a renewal in faith, to give a touch of practicality to the life of faith.

Beset with the problem of rather a small number of confreres, of whom many are already advanced in age, the Swiss Pallottines have already entered into collaboration with other Pallottine provinces, thanks also to the initiatives of the Rector General and the General Council. This shows an already developing story of cooperation and mutual collaboration, for the Church in general and in particular for Pallottines. Three Indian and one Polish Pallottine already work in different parishes in St Gallen. There is a new exchange of ideas – a mingling of cultures and traditions, a process of learning – and overall a build up of familiarity between people from distant corners of the world.

As far as the future of the Church is concerned, collaboration and mutual cooperation appears to be an important aspect. However at the same time it calls us to reflect more deeply on a number of emerging questions: the real objectives of cooperation at an international level, and the future itself of such ventures. Apart from the demands of time, what significance does it carry for faith? As faith in people is something closely connected to their culture and traditions, what effect will such collaboration bring about in the people, and how will it shape new tendencies in our way of looking at our own priesthood?



As I conclude these few lines, I would like to thank several whose kindness gifted me such a wonderful opportunity. I would like to thank Fr Jacob Nampudakam, the Rector General, Fr Augustine Varickakal, my Provincial, Fr Markus Reck and Fr Adrian Willi

the Provincial of Swiss Pallottine Fathers and Brothers, and all the Pallottine confreres in Gossau.

Shinson Sebastian sac [NA] – Rome – ITALY
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sheen003ps@gmail.com

item 178

...a seed-bed of Pallottine aggiornamento

At the completion of my experience in Australia – without pretending to know everything about Pallottines here – I think that, as India and Africa might well provide a future for the Pallottine community because of the numbers of their vocations, Australia is the seed-bed of unity of Pallottine identity.

In 1901 two priests and two brothers arrived in the Kimberley to work with the indigenous people. That was the beginning of a Pallottine presence in Australia. From there they established a missionary college in Melbourne, a retreat centre in Millgrove, and several parishes, a ministry that is currently expanding. Currently there are 5 parishes, 2 residential retreat centres, and houses with a special outreach, like Kew, Camaldoli and Dongara. Some ministries founded by Pallottines are continued by active lay people, as at Casa Pallotti. There are 25 members, though numerous are retired.

Despite different ages, ministries and backgrounds, members here try to work together. Inspired by our spirituality they collaborate with the wider Pallottine family. I specially noticed the relationship with Schoenstatt, Mariana and other Christian traditions. In fact I was particularly moved by the celebration of



the feast of the Assumption in Kew, together with the Schoenstatt community. With its special shrine, Kew is a meeting place for many such groups. In the parishes there is a noticeable shared responsibility of lay people with their priests, who look to put into practice Pallotti's dream. It is also interesting to see a willingness to accept confreres from overseas. I see this as a fortunate consequence of the cosmopolitan character of Australia, an openness to recreate the richness of a great

Pallottine family called to unity. This unity will become an even greater reality through the establishment of international communities. Australia has many opportunities for this Pallottine challenge and it can be considered as a seed-bed of Pallottine aggiornamento. We don't have to worry about the crisis of vocations, but take this *time of darkness* for prayer and reflection, personally and in community [this meditation is not only for Australia, but for all Pallottines throughout the world].

We can now ask what the ways are. Without giving any magical solution some suggestions follow which can be seen as a challenge for Pallottines everywhere. Pope Paul VI said in his letter to the Superior General on 6th January 1965, all sons and daughters of Pallotti:

"to continue courageously, loyally and closely united to each other, to carry out the task assigned to them and their own form of apostolate... It is an important, timely and salutary activity. It helps to arouse in those who believe in Christ, the responsibility for the mission that the clergy cannot fulfill alone but which concerns all members of the Church without exception".

To meet this challenge, there are **two** important emphases: international collaboration and formation.

international collaboration

Pallottines here should appreciate the grace they share through the international character of their country. They have to work on the importance of a love for community life, which is already present to some extent.

Those who come here have to be able to learn about their new culture without transposing pre-conceived ideas. Bringing their own richness they have to integrate themselves into a new reality, retaining their identity but accepting differences. This is the way to enculturation, the way to unity regardless of difference. With this dimension, the exchange of members will be easier.

Those in other countries should likewise look to collaborate with external Pallottine foundations, such as Schoenstatt and others. In this way we can all welcome our own history, with all its wounds and conflicts, in order to walk down the road of Pallottine reconciliation, commence together on another path. Like the Magi, who after adoring Jesus took a new road, we have to follow another way, the narrow way, the way of love, patience, forgiveness and reconciliation, to preserve the presence of Jesus and Pallotti in our identity.

formation

Formation has to take up the challenge to be relevant. It is not enough to be a priest or professed, it is not enough to be member of a Pallottine foundation. We have to reflect upon our witness as Pallottines. This has to be the real motivation of all formation.

Today the signs of the times suggest that we have to give greater emphasis to *permanent* formation, set aside time to reflect on our vocation. Certainly we are recognised in many countries, but Pallotti is not known, nor his passion or dream understood. The trap to avoid is to become a priest or religious without a Pallottine identity.

The image to which we are all invited is to return to Pallotti. We have to rediscover him, his experience of *sequela Christi* is always important for our times. His legacy must be known in each of our communities and apostolates. Thus our permanent formation ought to consist of :

- rediscovering the life, the charism and the spiritual works of Pallotti
- rediscovering Mary as Queen of Apostles, and Marian devotion, so dear to Pallotti
- resolving to become in our personal and community lives authentic apostles of Jesus, the Apostle of the Eternal Father
- 'risking' with enthusiasm, passion, love and humility in order to renew our experience with Jesus; experience of life, experience through life and experience for *Life*
- looking for ways to adapt the Pallottine charism, this gift of God which is not fixed in time but, through the power of the Spirit' is called to respond to the needs of every time.

If we decide to follow this way, to take up this challenge, the Church will be more blessed through the fruition of the Pallottine charism called to be the new light to the world, and Pallottines the fire of faith.

If this is the challenge of permanent formation, *initial* formation has to take the same direction. In our seminaries, and in all our formation houses, we have to promote international communities of Pallottine formators, and where possible students also. In the formation process, it is good to emphasise human formation, a style of Pallottine life, and not only priesthood or brotherhood. We need to rediscover and promote a new image of brothers, because we are a Society of priests and brothers, and share the same vocational foundation.

It is good to note that our identity is already visible in many Pallottine communities in Australia. Regardless of its low number of confreres this entity could be considered as the birth place of the new Pallottine Pentecost. With all its advantages and spiritual experience Australia looks like the future *El Dorado* for Pallottines, a seed-bed of unity.



Herve Pascal Okolong sac [CN] – Melbourne – AUSTRALIA

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okolongherve@yahoo.fr

you commented...

on #94 Always interesting and good! Thank you

WW 18.11.13

These articles on "vocations" are both practical and inspirational. Thank you.
I will forward them to our Sisters in the USA.

CF 18.11.13