



Apostles for Today

Reflection and Prayer - July, 2006

The Union of Catholic Apostolate

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The Life of Jesus Christ: Our Fundamental Rule
(The 33 Points of St. Vincent, adapted to the UAC)

Fundamental Rule 8 – Spiritual Infancy

Introduction:

In this month of July we are presenting you with the theme of Spiritual Infancy for the encounter of prayer and reflection, this forms part of the so-called “Rule of 33 points” of St. Vincent Pallotti. In point number 8, our Founder reminds us that Jesus Christ was born a baby, therefore we too should try to exercise the virtues of spiritual infancy, which are: a trusting abandonment to the will of God which is made manifest through the events of life and through the authority of superiors and spiritual directors; to have the innocence of the dove; the prudence of the serpent; gentleness and humility (Cf. OOCC III, 65).

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten us so as to accept with all our hearts the gift of the Word of God in this meeting as we pray together with St. Vincent Pallotti:

My God, my Mercy, my Paradise, you have given me the desire to work for Your glory and for the salvation of souls; increase this desire in me so that I do not wish anything other than a infinitely burning flame for all that contributes to Your glory and to the salvation of my neighbour.

My God, act in me as you will. Expand my desires. Give me the grace to act as You will ... in the same way that You act. God, my all, now and always, infinitely mine in supreme suffering, in infinite love, in receiving your grace without enjoying it, taking pleasure only that you be infinitely glorified and that I be infinitely held in contempt: this would be my Paradise.

My Jesus, I am unworthy to participate in your humble, poor, pain-filled, charitable, arduous and despised life, however you allow me this participation in your infinite mercy. (Cf. OOCC X, 726-729).

Reflection:

Spiritual infancy is not synonymous with childishness and naivety, as one might think; it is, rather, an interior disposition of trust, of humility and of total abandonment of oneself in the hands of God, with the certainty that He is watching over his people, protecting them and guiding them just as the eagle does with its young: *“He protects him, rears him, guards him as the pupil of his eye. Like an eagle watching its nest, hovering over its young, he spreads out his wings to hold him, he supports him on his pinions. Yabweh alone is his guide”* (Dt 32,10-12). Abandoning ourselves to the protection of God allows us to live fully every moment, to marvel before the beauty of creation and to always find a reason for hope and for happiness, be it in times of tears or times of joy, because we entrust ourselves to God knowing that He is only capable of love.

Spiritual infancy in the Bible

There are many passages in both the Old and New Testament that reveal God’s predilection for the weak and the poor; in them the Lord encounters openness and so can act and can accomplish his plan of salvation. We have the example of:

- **Mary of Nazareth:** a simple, humble young girl from the little town of Nazareth who is chosen by God to be the mother of His Son Jesus. Mary was free to reject God’s invitation because she had already been officially promised in matrimony, she was poor, and could have considered herself to be unprepared for such a task, and indeed could have found many other excuses as one does when one trusts in oneself alone. But Mary, on the contrary, abandoned herself completely to the will of God even though she did not see everything clearly. She was sure that the Lord would show her the road to follow when the time was right and she places herself in His hands, saying *“I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me”* (Lk 1,38);

- **Jesus:** the incarnation of the Word of God is the most marvellous example of spiritual infancy. The omnipotent God emptied himself of His divinity and became completely human in all except sin (Cf. Phil 2,5-11). Jesus entrusted himself to his Father’s will: *“He who sent me is with me, and*

has not left me to myself, for I always do what pleases him” (Jn 8,29). The will of the one who sent him is that he give his own life for the salvation of humanity and thus give Him infinite glory: “I have glorified you on earth and finished the work that you gave me to do. Now, Father, it is time for you to glorify me with that glory I had with you before ever the world was.” (Jn 17,4-5).

In chapter 10 of the Gospel of St. Mark we find that beautiful passage where the children came close to Jesus because, as children, they enjoyed his gentle and loving presence, however, the disciples turned the children away. The disciples used the excuse that Jesus was tired and so sent them away, but Jesus was indignant and said to them: *“Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs ... anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”* Mk 10,14-15);

- God does great things in the persons who abandon themselves totally in Him because such abandonment, according to St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, *“is the most delicious fruit of love”* which prepares the fertile soil for the seed so that it can yield a hundredfold harvest (Cf. Mk 4,20);

- Spiritual infancy creates in the person a deep peace and candour, as St. Teresa shows us *“... I would have encountered many things capable to upsetting me, above all because not knowing evil, I was afraid of discovering it, not having yet experienced that everything is pure for the pure and that the simple and honest soul does not see evil in anything, because in actual fact evil only exists in impure hearts and not in inanimate objects ...”* (Complete Works of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, p. 166).

Texts for reflection:

Mt. 19,13-15; Mk 10,13-16; Lk 15; Phil 2,5-11; Deut 32,10 ...

OOCC III, 65-66.

The autobiography of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus (recommended for personal reading).

Testimony:

Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus, Patroness of the Missions and Doctor of the Church, is an example of Spiritual Infancy. She was the fifth of five sisters. Her mother died when she was just four years of age. She thought

of her father as her King and of herself as a little queen. She followed the path of her sisters when she was fifteen years of age and she asked to enter the Carmelite convent; it was not easy for her to obtain permission because of her young age. She persisted and so obtained permission. She died at just twenty-four years of age. At the request of one of her sisters, who was also a Carmelite nun and superior of the community, Teresa wrote, under obedience, her autobiography, called "*Story of a Soul*." In her Complete Works p. 178 we read the following passage, erased in the period in which she fought for permission to become a Carmelite: "*Some time ago I offered myself to the Child Jesus to be his plaything. I told him to use me not as a costly toy which children just look at without touching, but as a ball without value which He could throw on the ground, push around with his feet, puncture, abandon in a corner, or clench to the heart, if this pleased Him, I wanted to **abandon myself to His infantile whims** ... He granted my prayer* (Complete Works of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus of the Holy Face, page 178, no 177).

Another very significant passage is the following "*This is all that Jesus asks of us. He does not need our works, merely our love, because this self same God, who declares that he does not need to tell us if he is hungry, did not hesitate to beg for a little water from the Samaritan woman ... saying: "Give me a drink". The creator of the Universe was calling on the love of his poor creature. He was thirsty for love! ... **Jesus was thirsty**: he encountered only the ungrateful and the indifferent among the disciples of the world and among his very own disciples; he encountered few souls who **would abandon themselves to him without reserve, who understood all the tenderness of his infinite Love**".*

We conclude our meeting praying the Magnificat, the hymn of praise of Mary, the Servant of God.