



Apostles for Today

Reflection and Prayer - April 2010

St Vincent Pallotti – “God the Infinite Love”

Meditation VII

**On the most infinite Mercy of God in the conservation of all created things
at the service of man, although he abuses them to offend God
instead of profiting by them according to God’s wishes.**

Opening Prayer

“My God, you are infinite goodness and as such you wish to give yourself infinitely to your creatures. Filled with eternal love and mercy, you designed the work of creation in order to spend yourself totally in your creatures. You have made all things for our use, providing everything we need for life. We wish to use as much of what you have provided for us as is necessary to attain our last and blessed end.” (*Pallottine Community Prayers*, Sunday Middy, p. 40)

Reflection

In creating the world and entrusting it to humanity God offers all people the possibility of profiting from created things, his plan is that mankind would use all created things, make them fruitful and be master of all that he created (Gen: 1-28). The person is called to preserve and increase this magnificent gift of God which is creation and to see it as an expression of the Creator’s love. However, experience shows that we tend to forget our responsibility for this gift of creation. Instead of using well all that is received from God we tend not to profit from created things as willed by God and St. Vincent terms this attitude an abuse. All that exists is given to humanity for our development. Light, sounds, food, beverages, clothing and riches all derive from God and are to be used prudently. A lack of interior balance in the use of created things leads us to sin, be it against ourselves or against the Lord in offending him. The correct balance in the use of all created things requires of each of us a great deal of wisdom. Created things and riches when they are misused can be a source of danger for us, when well used that can increase our love of God.

St. Vincent’s awareness of not having used well created things moved him to thank and glorify the Mercy of God. Our Founder recognizes that he has abused frequently the gifts of light, sounds and food and deserves to be deprived of all that which is necessary to satisfy our earthly needs. However the discovery of his negligence and sin do not lead him to a lack of hope. In the very moment in which he confesses his ‘abuses’ to God he discovers also that God never stops loving him. He shows us in this that a recognition of the truth of one’s own limitations should not be a source of sadness, neither should it lead one to be submerged in guilt. St. Vincent shows us that while being aware of our own sins we can also praise God for his Mercy.

When we know the gifts of God and the difficulties involved in using them correctly then we will be able to understand properly Pallotti’s words. He saw in all created things and in all that he received from God an expression and a reflection of the Mercy of God. Sometimes we are even tempted to think that if God saw only our ingratitude in the face of all he gives us he could take away from us all that we abuse. However, God does not react in this manner. He does not lose patience with his creatures nor does he punish us for our sins. He does not cease to give us all of

what we need in order to be happy in this life and he continues to satisfy our needs. His gifts, even the more ordinary and simple ones which are as obvious as the air we breathe, are like ‘sacraments’ of his mercy.

In this reflection we can ask ourselves how we profit from the gifts of God and in which situations do we abuse them. St. Vincent reminds us that all that we receive from God should be used in accordance with the will of the Creator. He encourages us to examine our consciences and to reflect on how we profit from created things. Following the example of St. Vincent let us praise the Mercy of God which continues to rain down on us and is stronger than our sins. Nothing can change the generosity of God who will never change his original loving plan.

Questions for reflection:

1. How do I profit from the gifts which I continually receive from God?
2. At what moments and in which situations do I abuse God’s gifts?
3. How do I use material goods?
4. How do I increase the love of God and his kingdom on earth?
5. How can I deepen my relationship with God in the use of created things?
6. Do I express my gratitude to God for his gifts?

Meditation on the Word of God: Lk 15: 11-32

St. Vincent in his book “God the Infinite Love” contemplates the infinite love of God and his mercy towards all persons and he marvels at the workings of God in his life. In order to deepen our awareness of this fundamental truth of God’s mercy let us meditate on this passage from St. Luke’s gospel and allow the merciful love of God for us sinners to touch us again.

What can I ask of God? – to be deeply moved in experiencing the mercy of the Father and a desire to love him with all my being.

- Jesus speaks to us of the prodigal son and of the father’s love. Jesus wants to tell us our own story. Attentively I try to observe the behavior of the son and that of the father.
- Firstly I observe the son who leaves home; then I notice the father who remains silent because he respects the son’s freedom. I ask for the grace to feel the pain of the father and the weight of the sin of the son which pains the father.
- I ask myself: when I acknowledge my sins in my examination of conscience or in the sacrament of penance, do I see the Father’s face and the pain he feels?
- Following closely the story of the son who left his father I see how sin generates further sin and eventually brings the son to a state where he is living in misery. I try to see similar situations in my own life.
- I contemplate the father’s deep emotion as he embraces his son on his return home. I kneel before God the Father, I sincerely confess my sins to him, I ask his pardon and experience his paternal love and my desire to feel myself as a child in his embrace.
- I also take note of the reaction of the elder son who does not wish to enter the home. He is incapable of accepting the father’s behavior towards his brother, he is convinced that he does not deserve the father’s love. What do I think of the elder son’s behavior?

- Reflecting on the words of the father to his elder son I recognize that he addresses them to me also. All that the father possesses is mine. I have received everything gratuitously. I do not have to earn his love, he wishes that I allow him to love me. Now I turn to prayer and praise.

Prayer of intercession

1. O God, Lord of life and death, open our hearts to the mystery of Easter, help us to live the paschal mystery so that together with Jesus we can pass from death to life.
2. O God, Merciful Father, you unite priests, consecrated persons and laity in a common aim, that of spreading faith and love. We pray for the Union of Catholic Apostolate in the entire world that it may fulfill its mission in the Church and in the world.
3. O God, Infinite Love, we entrust the General Congress of the UAC to you in order that it may bear abundant fruit for the Church and increase in each of us a spirit of communion and of collaboration.
4. We praise you Lord for the merciful work of the Church. Strengthen missionaries in their proclamation of Your Word.
5. Almighty God, in your infinite love you have created us in your image, you have given us the gift of freedom, help us to profit from your gifts and all created things so that we may grow in your love.

Let us pray together with St. Vincent Pallotti

“My God, my Father, my infinite love and mercy, most loving creator, most patient custodian, it is impossible for me ever to understand the infinite love and mercy with which you conserve all created things so that they may continue to provide for all my temporal needs according to your most holy and loving purposes, although I have used them to sin and to cause others sin; it is also impossible for me ever to understand how ungrateful and guilty I am before you. But through your infinite mercy, through the merits of Jesus Christ, through the merits and intercession of Mary, and of all the Angels and Saints, I firmly believe and I am certain that you will grant me the gift of a perfect contrition and of always recalling your infinite love and mercy so that I may profit from it according to your desire.

(God, the Infinite Love, Meditation VII)