



Monthly Reflection, May 2020

“A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings.” (*Laudato Si'*, 91)

On 24 May of this month, we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the publication of the Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*. This month also marks the 185th anniversary of St. Vincent Pallotti’s “Appeal to anyone who has zeal for the glory of God and charity and compassion for the spiritual salvation of his neighbor.” (OOCC IV, 119) In the *Appeal of the Month of May* as it is commonly called, Pallotti offers an invitation to all to collaborate in the work he calls Catholic Apostolate. A summary of this work is in number 14 of the *Appeal*:

“In a few words, therefore, in order to associate with the Catholic Apostolate, it is important to commit oneself to reviving Holy Faith and piety in one’s native country, and to spreading it to the remotest areas of the two hemispheres.” (OOCC IV, 137-38)

The Catholic Apostolate called forth “all Catholics” into the apostolic work. (OOCC, 124) Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* speaks in a similar way and even calls it an “appeal”. (14) He says: “All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.” (14). Both appeals are calls to co-responsibility which is also at the heart of the way of the Union of Catholic Apostolate as number 1 of the *General Statutes* states clearly:

“The Union of Catholic Apostolate, a gift of the Holy Spirit, is a communion of the faithful who, united with God and with one another in accordance with the charism of St. Vincent Pallotti, promote co-responsibility of all the baptized to revive faith and rekindle charity in the Church and in the world, and to bring all to unity in Christ.”

We are called to be in communion with God, with neighbor, and with all of creation. As Pope Francis points out, if we “lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings” then we cannot be in “deep communion”. (LS, 91) Compassion is to “suffer with” as Jesus Christ did for us on the Cross out of love. The love of Christ impels us forth to care for each other. St. Vincent Pallotti expresses this type of compassion in the form of an aspiration for himself:

“I would like to become food to feed the hungry, clothing to cover the naked, drink to quench the thirst of the thirsty, a soothing potion for the stomachs of the weak, a soft bed for the repose of the tired limbs of the weary, medicine and health for the sick, light for the blind, life to raise the dead, so that if they could return to live on this earth they might do great things, which they would certainly do for the glory of my God, of my Father, of my Creator, of my Good, of my All.” (OOCC X, 115)

When there is not an integral ecology rooted in faith and science, then an imbalance will occur, communion will be lost, and compassion and tenderness for the needs of human beings and the natural environment will not be cared for well. A person with a self-centered attitude has little concern for God or creation. It is simply about self, an inflated pride that makes oneself the center of the universe, rather than placing God in the center of all things and recognizing the beauty of God’s creation, human beings and nature. When the human person is not seen as in the image and likeness of God, then it is easy to dispose of them. We become a “throwaway culture” as Pope Francis often mentions. (LS, 16) Some may be quick to say that they do not act in this way. Pope Francis offer us an examination of conscience with this analysis:

“Many people today sense a profound imbalance which drives them to frenetic activity and makes them feel busy, in a constant hurry which in turn leads them to ride rough-shod over everything around them. This too affects how they treat the environment. An integral ecology includes taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals, and contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us, whose presence ‘must not be contrived but found, uncovered’.” (LS, 225)

Serenity which is true and lasting peace is found most profoundly through life in Jesus Christ. Nothing else will give us the peace that comes from him. We are in the Easter season. The Risen One is not only our hope, but also our peace, our serenity. He is compassionate and infinitely loving with us. His Mother, who we particularly venerate during the month of May, offers us the way to live the fullness of our humanity, not in pursuit of selfish desire, but in love of God and neighbor. Pope Francis reminds us that “an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology and take us to the heart of what it is to be human.” (LS, 11)

Our “common home” created by God, the Infinite Love, requires our co-responsibility. Our care needs to extend beyond self-interest, or certain causes, to communion with all creation. We cannot leave these concerns simply to someone else. St. Vincent Pallotti and Pope Francis appeal to us to be co-responsible, to collaborate, to be in communion. It is our free choice. God provides the grace so that we can be in “holy cooperation” with one another. Let us take up these appeals of Pallotti and the Pope and go forth as apostles of Christ into the world assisting all in loving God and all Creation more fully and deeply in true communion.

What are ways in which each of us can assist others in living more fully their communion with God and Creation?

How can greater co-responsibility, collaboration, and communion be fosters in the life of the Union of Catholic Apostolate in a way that leads to going forth as apostles of Christ more fully and freely?

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