

HOMILY FOR THE INAUGURAL HOLY MASS OF THE UAC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

*OMELIA PER LA SANTA MESSA DI APERTURA
DELL' ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELL' UAC*

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

this is the inaugural Holy Mass of the UAC General Assembly. Naturally, our very first prayer must be “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful and kindle in them the fire of Thy love. Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created.” For thousands of years, Christians have been inviting the Holy Spirit – to come to us, to move in us, to manifest God’s presence among us, and to minister through us with power in the world.

The first reading from the book of Daniel is a very sincere confession of sins, followed by the cry for divine forgiveness. We heard these words from the first reading: “We have sinned, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly, and have revolted: and we have gone aside from thy commandments, and thy judgments... But to thee, the Lord our God, mercy and forgiveness, for we have departed from thee” (Daniel 9:5,9). The antiphon of the responsorial psalm 79 added: “Lord, do not deal with us according to our sins”.

It is fitting that we also, as members of the Union of Catholic Apostolate, listen to Prophet Daniel, and confess our sins and ask for God’s forgiveness. Communion is the fruit of a life of charity. Since God is love, only those who are rooted in God will experience true communion within oneself and with others.

Speaking of the life of the Union, we need to be aware of one possible sinful tendency that some of us may be tempted to experience. It is a temptation that the first disciples of Jesus too experienced: who is greater among us? The Gospel of Luke 9:46-48 speaks of this temp-

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tation: “An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest. But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, and said to them, “Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great.”

Jesus, tried to solve this problem by saying that we all need to become like a child, with the same innocence, trust and goodness. This is an essential condition to enter the Kingdom of God. In short, we all need to become authentic disciples of Jesus, with great humility, faith and trust in God. We are all called to serve the Kingdom of God. This challenge to authentic discipleship was what St. Vincent Pallotti presented to us through his charism. Perhaps we are trying to solve our arguments by preparing more juridical norms and commentaries. They are necessary but cannot displace the need for a genuine Christian life marked by humility, faith and charity. The truth is: “The one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great”. Is this our spirit as members of the Union of Catholic Apostolate?

Let's join St. Vincent Pallotti in praying for the grace of conversion: “My God, destroy my poor heart, give me yours, all spiritual. Destroy my anger and give me a share in that sorrow which made you sweat blood in the Garden for my sins. Destroy my cruelty and change me into your mercy in such a way that my life may be all works of mercy”.

The passage of today from Luke 6: 36-38, on the other hand, gives us the keys to the Gospel way of living. “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful”. As St. Vincent says, our God is a Father of infinite love and mercy. He is the Creator of humankind. All are his children. A Pallottine is someone with such a universal vision and embraces all of God's children with compassion and love. Our mission is Jesus' on mission.

The Gospel says further: “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven”. It is a call to fraternal love, a life without judging and condemning our neighbours; a life without prejudices; a life characterised by forgiveness.

Finally, the Gospel passage puts before us the ultimate challenge: “Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you”. The greatest of all gifts is charity, as St. Paul says in the famous hymn of love (1 Cor.13). That is why our founder chose this motto: “Love of Christ urges us on”. Everything will be judged according to the gratuitous love from our part in favour of the Gospel and God’s most needy people.

We lived through the deadly Covid-19 pandemic. The world is still fighting it out. We are all aware of the destruction, poverty, sickness and the death this historical pandemic has caused. Then comes the unjust war against the people of Ukraine. The images of refugees fleeing their homes, leaving behind their fathers and sons to fight the Russians and to save the freedom of their country have profoundly touched our hearts. There are millions of poor people living the pandemic of poverty, injustice and suffering every day of their life. Worst still, there is the worsening moral and religious decadence happening in the economically rich countries. We have indeed very little time to lose. We need to respond to the cry of God’s people by reviving their faith and giving them the ray of hope. We need to be compassionate and must give spiritual and temporal assistance.

Pope Francis reminds us in *Fratelli Tutti*, 79: “The Samaritan who stopped along the way departed without expecting any recognition or gratitude. His effort to assist another person gave him great satisfaction in life and before his God, and thus became a duty. All of us have a responsibility for the wounded, those of our own people and all the peoples of the earth. Let us care for the needs of every man and woman, young and old, with the same fraternal spirit of care and closeness that marked the Good Samaritan”.

It is in this sense that we need to look at the three words proposed by the Synod of Bishops: Communion, participation, mission. These words constitute the very core of our charism. We are a united spiritual and apostolic force in the Church impelled by the love of Christ. We are an evangelical trumpet inviting all the faithful to participate in this mission of Jesus Christ.

Let's dream of becoming such an instrument of evangelisation. We are not living for ourselves. We are in the Church and for the Church. We are part of the family of humankind. One truth is clear: it is in giving that we receive.

St. Vincent's appeal of 1835, urging all to engage in Christ's saving mission by means of the Union, reflects how deeply he had pondered the life of Jesus. He wrote:

"We can understand how He was moved with compassion at the sight of so many abandoned sheep...We can understand the untiring zeal with which, without rest, breath or respite, He would go on foot around...announcing the Kingdom of God from city to city, village to village, from synagogue to synagogue, always seeking sinners and converting them with care and with a loving and tender concern....He showed the greatest burning desire for the salvation of all on the cross when he cried out: "I am thirsty" (John 19:28), thus ending the painful journey of the apostolate" (OCCC IV, 128-129).

Dear Brothers and Sisters, this is the meaning and mission of the Union of Catholic Apostolate: passion for the Gospel and passion for God's people. Let's pray that the present General Assembly will produce rich spiritual and apostolic fruits for us individually, for our Pallottine Family, for the Universal Church, and for the entire world. Amen.