

Spirit open our eyes and our hearts to seeing new ways to rekindle faith and charity in all those we encounter daily.

**For reflection:**

*“Each one of you has received special grace, so, like good stewards responsible for all these different graces of God, put yourselves at the service of others. If you are a speaker, speak in words which seem to come from God; if you are a helper, help as though every action was done at God’s orders; so that in everything God may receive the glory through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 4:10-11).*

**For prayer in the community:**

“Christ with me,  
Christ before me,  
Christ behind me,  
Christ in me,  
Christ beneath me,  
Christ above me,  
Christ on my right,  
Christ on my left,  
Christ when I lie down,  
Christ when I sit down,  
Christ when I arise,

Christ in the heart of every person who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.”

*From St Patrick’s Breastplate*

And in this spirit let us pray: “Christ with me, and I with Christ, always and in every place, amen.”

*Pat Maguire,  
NCC President, Ireland.*



# *Apostles for Today*

*Prayer and Reflection - July 2019*

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## **Holiness: A Path Travelled Together**

*“Growth in holiness is a journey in community, side by side with others.” – Gaudete et Exsultate 141.*

Pope Francis, in this affirmation from his Apostolic Exhortation on the call to holiness in today’s world, touches on a central aspect of our lives as members of the UAC.

As a member of the UAC and in the community journey shared with the other members, I am struck by how St Vincent embodied the great Christian value of **Hope**.

St. Paul speaks of the three great Christian virtues: Faith, Hope and Love in 1 Corinthians 13:3. So many books and articles have been written on Faith and Love that Hope appears to have been somewhat undervalued by many writers; but not by St Vincent Pallotti. Hope based on an unshakeable belief and trust in Divine Providence was part of the very fabric of his existence. Hope is the Christian value that is often most needed in times of adversity. The Church went through many difficult times during the ministry of Fr. Vincent. He could see possibility in every situation. He began by befriending the shoemakers and very soon they were attending his retreats. This ministry very quickly spread to other guilds and so began this aspect of the working life of this great missionary priest. It was out of his life-experience and his total reliance on the Holy Spirit that he saw the possibilities and potential for a Union of Catholic Apostolate.

I first became aware of the Union when a young Pallottine priest, Fr. Johnny Sweeney, approached me after Mass one morning and invited me to a meeting about the Union of Catholic Apostolate in the Provincial House in Dublin. Fr. John Fitzpatrick, the then Provincial, greeted us and introduced us to Fr. Seamus Freeman who was based in

Rome at that time. Fr. Seamus showed the group a short video on the life of St. Vincent Pallotti and spoke to us about the Pallottine Charism and Pallottine Spirituality. What struck me most forcibly at that meeting was the fact that St Vincent Pallotti was so far ahead of his time in the Church. He was a true pioneer of Catholic Action through an active Apostolate. He felt called by the Holy Spirit to strongly advocate that each Catholic needed to become aware of his or her own responsibility for the mission of Christ and not to imagine that it was the exclusive responsibility of the priest. Each person, whether a teacher, lawyer, shoemaker, farmer, mother, father, single person, young or old were all called to the Apostolate. This ideal, which Fr. Vincent Pallotti felt Christ was calling him to strive for, resonated with me as I had been involved with a programme in the diocese of Dublin based on the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation '*Christifideles Laici*' of St. Pope John Paul II. Much of what Fr. Freeman said seemed to me to be very close to what the Pope had written.

Over the years, the Union has helped me to try and transform my life to a deeper and more personal relationship with the Risen Christ. I feel blessed to be on this journey of discovery into Pallottine Spirituality with other Pallottines. Our UAC meetings, Lenten and Advent retreats, pilgrimages to Knock and Rome and the regular opportunities for faith formation in our communities have all helped to facilitate people hearing the call of God in their own place and within their own culture and situation. This call invites us into a loving communion with God through experiencing the redeeming presence of Christ who accompanies us on our earthly pilgrimage as children of God.

As someone who lives in a parish served by the Pallottines, I want to say that the journey of allowing oneself to be transformed by the Word of God daily is enhanced and encouraged by the tireless preaching and example of our priests. They seek to awaken in us a deeper awareness that we are all called by God to imitate the Life of Christ as best we can. Our UAC gatherings and activities are helping groups of lay people to become both formed and informed in Pallottine Spirituality, thus enabling us to meet the varied and changing demands of the Apostolate. They have helped us to become conscious of being a

leaven in our own families and in the wider communities that we serve. Each month we are gathered by the Lord, we are nourished and fed by the Word and then we take the Word back with us to our families, to the workplace and to the wider community.

However, we live at a time when the prevailing winds of change are blowing against our Church and against our Catholic faith. I am sure that we are all familiar with the trends that the statistics portray. These have been evident for quite some time now and suggest that the Church structures will have changed significantly by 2030. By then, the current parish system will almost certainly have changed. Existing faith communities will have to be nurtured and preserved for future growth. In such a scenario, how we form and inform groups for the Apostolate may well mean that the Union becomes a model for other groups and even dioceses to replicate.

If we are to do this, we might look at our present formation as members and communities of the UAC.

Does our formation and do our formation programmes cover the basic tenets of our faith? Is our formation broad enough? Do we have a programme that is attractive to new people, to persons who are searching for God? Are our existing groups equipped to provide training for persons chosen to serve, for example, in liturgical ministries in our local Church communities? One very apparent current need in my own parish community is that of a ministry of bereavement and engagement in funeral ministry. Fr. Vincent Pallotti was able to see what others could not see in his time. He was a visionary who could find the good in all people and in all things. Today in Ireland, we need to see the good in people who no longer frequent our churches. We need to see the sacred in the secular and be all things to all people because God has not abandoned our world or our Church. We have the sure and certain hope in Christ's promise to the Apostles: "Look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time".

I am mindful of what Fr. Vincent said to his confreres just minutes before he died: "This Society will be blessed. And I say this not only with confidence but with certainty." This is why I look to the future with hope, hope that is based on trust in Divine Providence. Let the