

## **Creative fidelity: the *Pauline mission* “after” the Founder**

The Pauline mission comes from the experience which the Divine Master gave to the young Alberione and that he afterwards made mature from the first years of his priestly ministry.

Upon the approach of the 40th year of foundation of the Pauline work (1954), the Primo Maestro makes a reflection, rereading what the mission has represented for him and for his own. Fr. Alberione, with the soul of one moved upon perceiving his life as wrapped by the benevolence of the Father, allows himself to be guided by the Spirit in visiting again the past years. From the “light” coming from the Host he affirms to have received a specific mandate that will characterize his mission and that of the Institutes he has launched. It is a text that we know well: “He felt himself deeply obliged to prepare himself to do something for the Lord and for the men of the new century with whom he would have lived” (AD 15). Aware of his humanity, he does not find a better image to describe himself except that of one “half-blind” (cf AD 202), enlightened from time to time by the light of the Master who continues to guide him step after step, so that he may always advance securely. In the face of the mission asked of him, he feels that he is an inadequate instrument (cf AD 350), that God however has made use of for his work. The awareness of his mission makes him feel at the same time as a man being guided by God, but also as a guide for others: “Primo Maestro” for his own, he is aware of the mission that becomes reading grille for whatever God has prepared and then developed as project in evolution.

### ***To live and “give to the world Jesus Christ Way, Truth and Life”***

Drawing inspiration from the Apostle Paul (Eph 2,5-7), Fr. Alberione rereads his experience and that of the Pauline Family with the category of the “*abundant riches*” received from Above: “Abundant riches of grace, out of his goodness, God has lavished on the Pauline Family in Jesus Christ; to be revealed in future centuries by means of new angels of earth, the religious” (cf AD 4). The summit of such riches – “of infinite value, as life and devotion,” he will affirm in his spiritual testament<sup>1</sup> – is the person of Jesus Christ, Way, Truth and Life. A Person to know, imitate, love, personally live, to *give to the world* as the greatest riches: “No greater riches can be given to this poor and proud world than Jesus Christ” (AD 182).

Thus is our mission masterfully summarized: to give to the world the complete Christ, as he has revealed himself. But Fr. Alberione knows well that one cannot give what he does not have. From here comes his continuous invitation to “live Jesus Christ,” to give him as a gift to people. This exactly makes us “loudspeakers of God,” that is, “priest-writers, technicians, propagandists joined in one apostolate, according to the spirit and letter of the *Constitutions*; in the mission that the Church has entrusted to us”<sup>2</sup>. This has been the fruit

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<sup>1</sup> *San Paolo* (SP), December 1971.

<sup>2</sup> *San Paolo* (SP), February 1941.

of the “greater light” he has received in 1910: an organization, “but a religious one, for the purpose of “giving more unity, more stability, more continuity, more supernaturalness to the apostolate” (AD 23-24).

### ***The riches of the specific spirituality***

The usual optic with which Fr. Alberione sees the Pauline mission is like the prolongation of the mission of the Mother of Jesus: “The Pauline Discipleship is entirely grafted in Mary who will form Jesus Christ in every aspirant: that means to become Christians, apostles, saints.”<sup>3</sup> It will therefore be Mary who shall make us docile to the Spirit so that she may *form* Jesus in us. In this way will be realized the desire of saint Paul over every Pauline: he continues to generate us in pain until Jesus Christ is formed in us (cf Gal 4,19). From this derives that everything that each one of us thinks, decides and translates into work has for goal conformation to Jesus the Master and at the same time it is in-formed, that is, it gets form from the same conformation to the Master. We let you know immediately how much this aspect involves all of us, called to the *apostolate*: our daily activity is *apostolate* precisely insofar as cooperation in the laboriousness of Jesus, the Apostle of the Father.

The Founder gives a wonderful synthesis: “Establish yourselves totally in Jesus the Master, the Way (*will*), the Truth (*mind*), the Life (*sentiment*); even arrive at the supreme height of our personality: I that thinks in Jesus Christ, I that loves in Jesus Christ, I that wants in Jesus Christ; or Christ who thinks in me, loves in me, wills in me.”<sup>4</sup>

### ***Receive the inheritance, in “creative fidelity”***

Our Founder has returned to the Father exactly 40 years ago. He has been able to affirm having accomplished the task received from God: “The hand of God upon me, from 1900 to 1960 ... I feel the weight, before God and men, of the mission entrusted to me by the Lord; who if he had found a person more unworthy and incapable would have preferred him. This however is for me and for all a guarantee that the Lord has willed and Himself has done that something be done” (AD 350).

Now the commitment to give continuity to his mission has passed to us, his children.

How can we be faithful to his inspiration and at the same time respond to the needs of today’s world? In other words, how do we offer “a witness that knows how to respond to the requirements of the moment without straying from the initial inspiration”?<sup>5</sup>

It is the great challenge of *creative fidelity*, already noticed by the Congregation on the occasion of the Special General Chapter of 1969-1971<sup>6</sup>, relaunched by the 9th General Chapter, and now – following the last *Letter* of the Superior General – theme of the reflection and commitment of the entire Congregation for the current year.

In this optic we want to accept also on our part the indication that blessed John Paul II, recalling PC 2, offered as the first indispensable means to respond to the requirements of *dynamic fidelity*: “However, this must remain vivid: the conviction that in the search for *ever*

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<sup>3</sup> *San Paolo* (SP), November-December 1959.

<sup>4</sup> *San Paolo* (SP), August-September 1956.

<sup>5</sup> *Vita consecrata* (VC), post-synodal apostolic exhortation of John Paul II, 37.

<sup>6</sup> “Fidelity to the original charism, in research and in continuous adaptation... We must open ourselves to the charism that the Founder has instilled in the Congregation, accepting it in a vital and dynamic way...” (*Documenti Capitolari*, 1969-71, p. 39).

*more full conformity to the Lord* stands the guarantee of every renewal that intends to remain faithful to the original inspiration.”<sup>7</sup>

How not to see in this invitation of the Pope the consignment that was most in the heart of the Primo Maestro? For him the Pauline “accomplishes fully his mission when, according to his state, he becomes for souls way, truth and life,”<sup>8</sup> or when he is so conformed to the Divine Master as to be identified with Him.

For such a journey of conformation Fr. Alberione continues to point out to us the model of all times: the apostle Paul. “That all have the mind, the heart, the zeal, of S. Paul!” Like Paul, “everybody full of the spirit of God! Possess the desires of the Heart of Jesus Master; burning with love for souls; understanding the mission of Mary “to give Jesus to the world.”<sup>9</sup> Our Congregation feels in this to have to exert first of all a big effort to make better the *knowledge* of the thought of saint Paul.<sup>10</sup> The Founder wants that we come to reach the *Pauline mentality* which, as we know, consists in “thinking, reasoning” according to saint Paul, so as to “talk” according to saint Paul (*apostolate*), and to “operate according to him” (*style of life*)<sup>11</sup>.

With these premises, it becomes less utopian to realize some of those “*Things to be realized*” (AD, 185ff), indicated by the Founder and examined by the Superior General in his *Letter*.

Remaining indispensable is the strong conviction – true faith! – that our mission comes from the Lord, so that it is He who communicates with us, making use of our persons. Thus the Founder recommended: “Considering the vastness of our tasks, we would feel oppressed if faith were wanting in the mission entrusted to us by God. Hence, first means: prayer, which proceeds from great faith.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Vita consecrata* (VC), 37.

<sup>8</sup> G. ALBERIONE, *Introduzione*, in: S. LAMERA, *Gesù Maestro, Via, Verità e Vita*, 1949.

<sup>9</sup> *San Paolo* (SP), ottobre 1956.

<sup>10</sup> Potrebbe essere questo un aspetto per l’avvio dell’impegno di «Elevare il livello culturale generale della Congregazione e “creare pensiero”» (9° Capitolo Generale, *Priorità* 3.2).

<sup>11</sup> *San Paolo* (SP), ottobre 1954.

<sup>12</sup> *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei* (UPS), III, 209.