

“Creative fidelity”

Fr. Alberione, always moved by the desire to “do something” for the men of his time, has given great attention to the socio-cultural, economic and ecclesial environment in which he has lived. On account of this he put at the service of the Gospel the instrument of the most widespread diffusion of thought in Italy during the first years of the 1900’s, that is, the newspaper and the press in general. This intuition, originated in him by the mysterious action of the Spirit, is the charismatic gift that he has transmitted to us for the good and the growth of the Church. This “missionary” charism starting from Fr. Alberione has gathered until today a great number of men and women consecrated totally to the preaching and diffusion of the Gospel of salvation, not anymore by means of the press alone but gradually accepting all the forms of media that technological progress has made available.

A chance to verify

At one hundred years since the foundation it is opportune to verify if the apostolic-missionary nature that draws its origin from the charismatic gift of Fr. Alberione is clear for all the Paulines. It deals with the nature confirmed by reference to the Apostle Paul, the inspirer and model of the entire Pauline foundation:

“She [the Pauline Family] aims to represent and live saint Paul, today; thinking, working with zeal, praying and sanctifying herself as Saint Paul would do. [...] If Saint Paul were living, he would continue to burn with that twofold flame of a single fire: zeal for God and his Christ and for men of every nation. And to make himself heard he would ascend the highest pulpits and multiply his word using the means of contemporary progress... When he arrived, he did not appear for an occasional conference: but he *stayed* and *formed* people...” (*Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 1152).

It is good to ask ourselves, moreover, if and how our Congregation keeps alive today her mission through the means of social communication, and if we keep alive in all of us the capacity to scrutinize and interpret today’s times which certainly are not the same as those during the life of Fr. Alberione. In the face of the present world situation which varies in latitude, culture, thought orientation and socio-economic, political and ecclesial conditions..., what can we do – or how can we prepare ourselves – to give to the world the Gospel of Jesus Christ? The question comes to us from the commitment of “creative fidelity” to the mandate of the Founder:

“The complete man in Jesus Christ, for complete love for God: intelligence, will, heart, physical strengths. Everything: nature, grace, vocation, for the apostolate. Cart that runs based on the four wheels: sanctity, study, apostolate, poverty” (AD 100).

The Pauline “cart”

A similar mission requires the unconditional dedication of the entire person of every Pauline. Fr. Alberione has compared, in fact, the Pauline life to a “cart” that – committing the whole man – in order to move rests on four wheels that are *piety*, *study*, *apostolate* and *poverty*.

Fidelity to the mandate of the Founder pushes us to rethink *today* the meaning of these dynamic realities that move the life of our Congregation, involving each Pauline around the ideal: to live so as to bring to all the Gospel that saves!

The wheel of *piety*

Piety requires a conscious realization of our condition as creatures in the presence of God. His divine greatness shines especially in the revelation of his fatherhood in his Son made man. For us *piety* assumes substance in a Christocentric, biblical, eucharistic and ecclesial spirituality. Hence the reference is to Christ the Master Way, Truth and Life, to Mary Queen of the Apostles and to Saint Paul the Apostle.

Piety therefore roots us and bases us in Him who has chosen us and has elected us to become apostles of his Gospel. It becomes therefore spontaneous to ask ourselves regarding the quality of our rapport with the Lord Jesus. Is it truly He that lives in us or are the spaces reserved for Him narrow since they are full of us, of our pride, of our craving for the affirmation of our sick “ego”? If then *piety* opens itself to the “ecclesiology of communion,” how much space and application does it find in our lifestyle?

The wheel of *study*

By *study* we do not only mean humanistic, scientific, biblical and theological preparation, but also the need to keep alive until the end the desire to learn, to deeply know the world and the man of today to whom we are destined as evangelizers always attentive to the new ways of communication that technology offers us without pause.

It is opportune to ask ourselves what esteem there is in our Congregation and in everyone of us regarding *study* and permanent formation, in reference to the content of our mission, to its recipients and to the peculiar modalities of our Pauline mission.

The wheel of the *apostolate*

This is today the area where we can measure the permanence and actuality of the charism transmitted to us by Fr. Alberione who has given us the example of his apostolic spirit launched on the pathways of mission using instruments active during his time.

What about us? Is anxiety for the Gospel perceived in our communities, as well as anxiety for humanity left unto itself in the face of social, cultural and economic reversals taking place on the level of the planet? Are we at least updated on the new means of communication that run through every corner of the planet creating proselytes who are not certainly of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we talk about them among ourselves? Do we attend to all of them at least in the secret of our hearts?

The wheel of *poverty*

Poverty to be understood first of all in the spirit, or else take away from our “I” human presumption and pride. Only a similar *poverty* makes one capable of entrusting himself without reservations to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and because of this less greedy to have and to possess “things” that are a poor surrogate of what truly every man needs. An important and concrete dimension of *poverty* for us Paulines is that of work according to the constant teaching of the Founder:

“... poverty which produces, provides for persons and works. [...] Poverty requires work with income, takes care of the health of the members, makes acquisitions with prudence and conserves with diligence whatever is possessed” (UPS, II, 117).

Fr. Alberione has practiced all his life a sober *poverty*¹ and he has taught us to avoid in our houses any appearance of luxury and of bourgeois comfort and to commit ourselves so that we may always have in our hands the most sophisticated and costly instruments to be used for our specific evangelizing mission: nothing belongs to us, everything must have as its end the apostolate². He expresses himself thus regarding this matter:

“The institute must be poor and rich at the same time. Poor in our individual observance of poverty, rich in our instruments of apostolate” (*Esercizi e meditazioni del Primo Maestro* (1952) p. 206, in *Vademecum*, 446).

¹ Article **91.2.** of the *Constitutions and Directory* reprises the example of Fr. Alberione and cites his thought, synthetic but at the same time exemplary: “The example of a laborious and simple life that must characterize our communities will lead the young to the spirit of sacrifice, to understand the value of work and the sense of Pauline poverty, which “renounces, produces, conserves, provides, builds up.”

² This is the sense of article **35.2.** of the *Constitutions and Directory*: “The Paulines cannot appropriate for themselves or administer independently the fruits of their work – whether manual or intellectual or ministerial – since they belong to the community. So also the means and the instruments for the apostolate and for the ministry are not to be considered as personal property, but as equipment for community service. Trips and vacations are to be justified by needs, oriented to cultural and apostolic enrichment and to a rightful rest.”