

The Primo Maestro and the Eucharist

Eucharist: experience of font and foundation

"The Eucharist is posited as the *font* and at the same time as the *culmination* of all evangelization, since its end is the communion of men with Christ and in Him with the Father and with the Holy Spirit."¹ This citation from Vatican II is easily applicable to the life of Fr. Alberione. The mission of evangelizer has asked him to be well rooted in the experience of the Master, Way, Truth and Life, present and operating in the eucharistic mystery. Experience lived from the night between 31 December 1900 and 1 January 1901. Night that he himself had to define as "decisive for the specific mission and particular spirit wherein the Pauline Family would be born and live."²

Going to the dome of Alba with other seminarians, following the invitation of Leo XIII to pray for the new century so that the Gospel would be brought to the masses, he has a unique and singular experience in spite of his young age.³ It's an experience of illumination that injects in the young James the desire to commit himself totally to a new project that was shown to him.

In 1952 he recalls about it while talking to the Pauline Family in America: "It has come 52 years ago during a night of adoration. At that time the Lord made us understand that, with the start of the new century, it was necessary to establish life and activity on the Eucharist."⁴ Interesting is the emphasis made by the Primo Maestro at a distance of half a century, almost to want to signify the vital dynamism springing from the Eucharist, light that illuminates and directs concretely toward an apostolic action that receives from it its force.

Another experience which is not less significant than the preceding, and which even comes to be a clarification of it, was the one lived by the Founder in the first years of the 20's and defined by himself as a "dream," preferring it to the term "vision."⁵ The experience is narrated in nn. 151-155 of AD. The year is 1923, when Fr. Alberione, in poor health, shows vivid concern for the future of the Pauline work and narrates:

"In moments of particular difficulties, reexamining his entire conduct, if there were obstacles to the action of grace on his part, it seemed that the Divine Master wanted to reassure the Institute started a few years back. In the following dream he had, it appeared to him, to have an answer. Jesus the Master, in fact, said: "Do not fear, I am with you. From here I want to enlighten. Be sorry for your sins." The words "from here" came out from the Tabernacle; and with force; thus to ma-

¹ Cf CONCILIO ECUMENICO VATICANO II, Decreto *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5.

² AD 13.

³ Cf AD 15.

⁴ G. ALBERIONE, *Esercizi e meditazioni alle case d'America*, FSP, New York 1952, p. 375.

⁵ Sul termine *sogno* usato al posto di *visione* troviamo un utilizzo simile nei "sogni" di Don Bosco. Per un approfondimento si veda l'articolo di Sr Mercedes Mastrostefano, fsp, in *Il Cooperatore Paolino*, aprile-maggio 2010.

ke it understood that from Him the Master all light is to be received"... From here he oriented himself ever more and derived everything from the Tabernacle."⁶

A practical program of life tied to a method

Fr. Alberione gave a christocentric-eucharistic imprint to the spirituality proper of all the Institutes he founded. He established in this way for the journey of his "Saint Paul Families," a conformation to Christ on the model of Paul: "Therefore, let the thought be always clear to live and operate in the Church and for the Church; to insert oneself as wild olives in the vital olive, the Christ-Eucharist; to think and nourish oneself with every phrase of the Gospel, according to the spirit of Saint Paul."⁷

In September of 1936 Fr. Alberione, in Rome for about only three months, published in *San Paolo* a writing of Fr. Giaccardo on the "cornerstones of the spiritual life." Referring to the four wheels of the *Pauline cart* (piety, study, apostolate, poverty), he equals the Pauline common life to an organism in which are realized and actualized the four parts that "form the cart and make up the spirit of the House," and insists on the grafting of the community to the Master:

"As branches inserted on the vine full of life, as healthy members on the mystical Body of Christ, according to the similitude so dear and so many times carried by S. Paul so that we may receive the *more abundantly* of the spiritual and supernatural life brought by Jesus. What is therefore the deficiency in common life if not the separation from Jesus, the divorce from Jesus the spouse of our souls?"⁸

and then insists indicating three essential points for the practice of common life: sincerity, humility and the visit to the Bl. Sacrament. Regarding this last, he explains:

"it is the public prayer and the office of our House, and the complement of the Holy Mass. Let us be faithful and watch (cf CIC [1917], can. 595) so that all may be faithful to it; it is the social prayer, the office of the House: in it Jesus teaches us what the Father wants to tell us (*1st part*); it makes us docile to what the Father wants to ask from us (*2nd part*); it gives us what the Father wants to give us (*3rd part*)."⁹

The writing of Fr. Timothy attests how in the House (thus is the Pauline community denominated) has been established the practice of the eucharistic visit following the Pauline method willed by the Primo Maestro and explained by him in this manner:

"In the Pauline Family the Visit is done generally according to the devotion to Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life. The time is divided in three parts; the first two acts especially can be inverted.

Example:

⁶ AD 151-155.

⁷ AD 95.

⁸ *San Paolo* (SP), settembre 1936.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

a) We go to the school of Jesus Truth: "*I am Truth.*" We do the *spiritual reading* [...]. Or else we consider a truth of the supernatural or even of the natural order, taken perhaps from Theology; or else we read a passage of the Gospel, of the Letters of Saint Paul, a book of Ascetics or Mysticism, etc. Then we make reflections, *we ask for increase of faith and for light*, we enter into sweet dialog with Jesus. Act of faith, the *Credo*...

b) We make the *examination of conscience*. Contemplate the Divine Model: "*I am the Way*"; or pause on a virtue, a moral principle, etc.

We look at Jesus in a particular part of his life [...]. We look at Him as in a mirror, we compare ourselves with Him, especially for the virtue that we want and the resolutions that we have; we descend to the particularities of the day.

Thanksgiving and compunction follow; we recite the act of sorrow; we express all that can come out from our considerations and we conclude with the most ardent desire for perfection and a practical resolution.

c) We pray: "*I am Life*"; for habitual grace and for actual graces. We recite the Rosary; we make a spiritual Communion; we renew our baptismal or religious vows. We pray with Jesus, with Mary, with Saint Paul. We introduce the best prayers for ourselves and for the world; often we make use of the Liturgy.

Other times are for personal prayers; many petitions are about particular needs of ours and those of others."¹⁰

It's about a particular method that is appropriate for the apostolates that the Pauline Family is called to carry out:

"The hour of daily adoration in the Pauline Family, particularly for its own apostolate, is necessary. There would be a tremendous responsibility if it had not been prescribed: the Pauline religious would not have sufficient nourishment for his spiritual life and for his apostolate. But one who omits it assumes upon himself such responsibility; and those Superiors would assume it who would not make it to be practiced.

Our piety is in the first place eucharistic. Everything is born, as from a font of life, from the Eucharistic Master.

Thus the Pauline Family has been born from the Tabernacle, thus is she nourished, thus does she live and operate, and thus does she sanctify herself. From the Mass, from Communion, from the Eucharistic Visit everything comes: sanctity and apostolate."¹¹

All things oriented toward sanctity and apostolate

This is everything: sanctity through configuration to Christ and apostolate in relation to the component of the Master Way, Truth and Life that every Institute in the Pauline Family is called to represent and disseminate through its own specific apostolate. Regarding this, here are some significant passages. The first is addressed to the Daughters of Saint Paul in 1941:

¹⁰ *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei* (UPS), II, 107, pp. 262-263.

¹¹ *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei* (UPS), II, 10, pp. 223-224.

"The great help for our sanctification is the exercise of the apostolate [...] it is noble and meritorious because it multiplies what is good and therefore the merits of the Institute and of the persons who belong to it.

Keep on sowing, keep on sowing! It is true that fatigue accompanies sowing, but one harvests with joy (cf Ps 126,5). In death the thought of having done well the apostolate will give the soul great consolation.

Who, however, will accomplish better the apostolate and will get from it greater fruit? The eucharistic souls. Jesus in the Eucharist is the Teacher who teaches. Jesus in the Eucharist is the Truth and the eucharistic soul will have greater love for the truth, greater zeal in the apostolate. Even more, the fruit of devotion to the Eucharist must be love for the apostolate. [...] The first means that I must suggest to you, through duty of conscience, is this: be eucharistic souls, and you will be fervent apostles."¹²

To the Pious Disciples of the Divine Master, on the other hand, he will say in 1947:

"In the Church the apostolates are so many, if however they do not lead the souls to the sacred Host, they are only rumors, words and not spirit and life. Your apostolate is magnificent and immense; without it there cannot be effective activity; all the others must end up in yours and without yours none of the others can assist."¹³

To the Pastorelle in the same year:

"Your intimate life with Jesus before the Tabernacle must radiate in every action of our day, above all in the pastoral activities that must aim at bringing souls to the Eucharist."¹⁴

To the Apostoline Sisters, in 1958, quoting their *Constitutions*, he calls to mind:

"268. - In their apostolate for vocations, the members of the Institute Regina Apostolorum are to always take care to orient vocations toward the Eucharist: in that way they are sure to direct them to Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, for a complete development of their vocation."¹⁵

All of us, truly all of us, in the Pauline Family, are of the Eucharist and of the Eucharist we nourish ourselves, we live and fill our apostolate.

¹² *Haec Meditare* II/1, pp. 79-81 [Istruzione XIII. *Eucaristia e Apostolato*].

¹³ Cf *Apostolato eucaristico in Ipsum Audite*, II, Roma 1981, pp. 54-55.

¹⁴ *Alla sorgente. Meditazioni del Primo Maestro*, EP, Ostia 1969, p. 75

¹⁵ CISP 187.