

## **We are born of the Eucharist**

In the life of Fr. Alberione and in his foundations, the Eucharist is placed as a font and in a central position. Because of this, the Paulines love and feel as their own the words of Fr. Alberione: "The Pauline life is born of the Tabernacle" (UPS, II, 103) and "Everything is born, as from a vital font, from the eucharistic Master. Thus is born from the tabernacle the Pauline Family, thus is she nourished, thus she lives and operates, thus she sanctifies herself" (UPS, II, 10). Talking to the Daughters of Saint Paul in 1952, he said: "... the Lord made us understand that as we start the new century, it was necessary to establish our life on the Eucharist and on activity" (*Vademecum*, 844). In a word: "We are born of the Eucharist."

There is, however, also a very strong bond in our Congregation between the Eucharist and our specific apostolic mission. The desire to "prepare oneself to do something" for the men of his time is bound in Fr. Alberione to the adoring contemplation of the paschal mystery of the Lord that contains intact the saving *dynamis* released by his death and resurrection. Jesus, in fact, not only has announced and preached the salvation that God has placed in Him, but has effectively procured salvation for us.

### ***The Eucharist in the Pauline mission***

The Pauline mission – to evangelize the world through the instruments of social communications – is born therefore of the salvific work accomplished “*once for always*” by the Lord on the Cross and to it it intends to bring every man who believes in his Word. Rightly therefore our *Constitutions* in synthesizing the thought of our Founder affirm that "The daily eucharistic celebration is the highest expression of community prayer" (art. 53); while Fr. Alberione himself affirms: "The hour of daily adoration in the Pauline Family, particularly for its own apostolate, is necessary... If it had not been prescribed, the Pauline religious would not have the sufficient nourishment for his spiritual life and for his apostolate" (UPS, II, 10).

### ***The Eucharist as source of “communion”***

"It becomes becomes the sign of the Church gathered around Christ; it makes us sharers in the intimacy of the Father, to whom we render glory in union with him, and it assures us the fullness of the Holy Spirit, forming in everybody just one body and one spirit" (*Constitutions*, art. 53).

The formation “*into one body*” effected in us by the Eucharist is the foundation of our unity in the entire body of Christ which is the Church. Now, in the face of our internal divisions and confrontations, our deep-rooted refusals of mutual acceptance, our malicious and destructive judgments, it becomes spontaneous to ask ourselves if it may not also be applicable to us the terrible prospect stated by the Apostle Paul regarding those who eat and drink unworthily the Body and Blood of the Lord (cf 1Cor 11,17-34).

Perhaps it's time for a renewed attention on the part of our Congregation to the Eucharist, to the “mystery” in it contained and to what it represents for us, for the Church and for the whole world. Of help to us are the Constitution of Vatican II Council on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the *General Order of the Roman Missal*, and the documents of the Magisterium, as well as the production of helps and of works of study published by the Edizioni San Paolo, like the dictionary *Liturgia*.

### ***The eucharistic adoration***

Fr. Alberione has given us an exceptional example of dedication to prayer and his countless exhortations are validated by the fact that he himself has prayed much. In his fidelity to the prayer of the Breviary and to the Rosary, Fr. Alberione has practiced assiduously that *coram Sanctissimo*, or eucharistic adoration or “visit to the Most Holy Sacrament” as it was commonly called. Fr. Alberione has felt the missionary impulse to “do something” for the men of his time while he was in adoration in the cathedral of Alba in that famous night. From here a provision of our *Constitutions*: “Every Pauline religious is to attend to, as precious inheritance of the Founder and characteristic of Pauline piety, the daily visit of an hour before the Bl. Sacrament, as personal encounter with Christ: it involves reading and reflection on the word of God, comparison of one's life with it through the examination of one's conscience and prayerful dialog with the divine Master” (art. 54).

The daily eucharistic adoration is experiencing today in the Congregation a moment of strong crisis that can be ascribed to a general diminution of spiritual fervor. It is also true that from the moment it is inculcated and entrusted to the responsibility of the individual religious – as it is inferred from the mentioned article of the *Constitutions*: “Every Pauline religious...” – there is a tendency to make of it a communitarian moment that the same *Constitutions* suggest (“as far as it is possible,” art. 54.1). Fixed for everybody at a preestablished hour, the “visit” becomes a cause of judgments and divisions that tears the necessary unity of our living together for the mission.

If the attitude of one who systematically neglects the prayer of adoration is not acceptable, we cannot praise those who tend to take to extremes such a form of prayer to the point of making it the charismatic datum of our Institute. We put in that way in a shadow our evangelizing mission to be led even through new ways of communication and that from the eucharistic adoration, as extension of the eucharistic celebration, finds support.

Looking at the example of Fr. Alberione and at the teachings of the Church, we find out the essential meaning of the eucharistic adoration. It has the primary role of prolonging and interiorizing the gift of salvation received in the Eucharist and of preparing us to receive it still with fruit. For the Pauline, this “interiorization” means creating the conditions to realize “creative fidelity” to our charism of evangelization in communication.

Individual and communitarian prayer, the prayer of the psalms distributed in the hours of the day per the sanctification of time, the experience of *lectio divina* which our *Constitutions* deal with abundantly as "cult of the sacred scriptures" and as "one of the fundamental traditions of our Congregation and of the whole Pauline Family" (art. 52), are they really capable of transforming us "from simple listeners" into "doers" of the word, which in our case is equivalent to evangelizers that are understandable and credible?