

We are born of the Eucharist

The historical context where the 16-year old Alberione moves

The eucharistic practice that Fr. Alberione finds in his young years, those that we understand precede the famous "night that divided the two centuries," is historically characterized by an attitude that is strongly devotional. A clear example of such attitude is described in the decree *Regi saeculorum* of 16 November 1900 which calls and regulates the celebration of that night:

"Last year His Holiness Leo XIII... granted that also for the start of January of this year at midnight in the churches and in chapels be exposed for adoration the most august sacrament of the Eucharist; also granted the faculty to read or sing in the same hour before the Bl. Sacrament, one Mass of the Circumcision of the Lord and Octave of Christmas. To the faithful is granted the reception of Communion whether during Mass or outside of it."

It is known that the eucharistic adoration, unknown in the first millennium, is introduced gradually in monastic and devotional environment and will lead into the feast of *Corpus Domini* with Urban IV in 1264. Comments M. Righetti, a very well-known historian of the liturgy: "The hours passed before the Sacrament, almost in an oasis of silence and peace, are very much indeed suitable to placate the turbulent impulses of the heart, and to make understand and savor the holy ideals of our Faith" (*Manuale di Storia Liturgica*, III, 1963³, p. 609).

The eucharistic adoration according to Blessed Alberione

Quite diverse is the eucharistic adoration according to the Alberionian style. The expression itself "we are born of the Eucharist..." indicates a development, a growth: one is not born to then remain chrysalized in that initial moment. "He made the solemn and continued adoration in the Dome, after the solemn midnight Mass, in the presence of the exposed Jesus," says Fr. Alberione (AD 13), but then he continues:

"A particular light came from the Host: greater understanding of the invitation of Jesus '*venite ad me omnes*' (Come ye all to me) [Mt 11,28] ... He felt himself deeply obliged to be prepared to do something for the Lord and for the men of our century with whom he would have lived... that new apostles healed the

laws, the school, literature, the press, customs; that the Church had a new missionary thrust; that new means of apostolate be used well; [...] The need for a new group of apostles thus fixed itself in his mind and heart... he felt his obligation to serve the Church and the men of the new century and to operate with others, in organization" (AD 15-20, *passim*).

Fr. Alberione interprets and lives the eucharistic adoration in a dynamic way, with a missionary-apostolic finality. "Roaming with his mind in the future, it seemed to him that in the new century generous souls would have felt what he felt, and that united in organization what Toniolo so much repeated would be realized: 'Unite yourselves...'" (AD 17). Continuing to read fast AD we seize the progressive and frenetic movement of the considerations that burst in the mind of the Founder until the idea of the Pauline Family for the apostolate. In AD 65 we read:

"The Pauline Family has a wide aperture toward the whole world, in all of the apostolate: studies, apostolate, piety, actions, editions... the aspirations are those of the Heart of Jesus in the Mass; in the only apostolate: "To make known Jesus Christ" [cf Jn 17,3], illuminate and support every apostolate and every good work, to carry in one's heart all peoples."

For Blessed Alberione, "eucharistic adoration" means to create the optimal condition to receive the manifestation of the will of God. Ready oneself to listen to the voice of the Spirit about our apostolic mission, thus backing up the effects of the Eucharist in us, personally and in community.

This explains the prolonged "adorations" of Blessed Alberione: the "activity" of the apostle requires a vitality of inspiration that can come only and exclusively from the eucharistic "font."

In order to deepen

A precious *bibliographical note* relative to the "eucharistic night" can be found in the study of Fr. ROSARIO F. ESPOSITO, ssp, *The encyclical "Tametsi futura" and the eucharistic night of the century. Nel Centenario*, Society of Saint Paul, Casa Generalizia, [Rome] 2000. (Publication for handwritten use). In particular we can read pages 85-91 which correspond to the title 6. *The entire Pauline Family is born of the Eucharist*.

Among the *Meditations and Instructions* of Blessed Alberione to the Daughters of Saint Paul (The years of the Second World War 1940-1945), Instruction XIII of 1941 is dedicated to *Eucharist and apostolate* (pp. 136-138); there we read:

"The eucharistic soul understands what are the desires of Jesus and its will is inflamed and it becomes strong in its resolve to attend to the apostolate. Eucharist and Bible agree very well with each other, thus the press-Apostolate and Eucharist are in accord."