



SAN PAOLO

OFFICIAL HOUSE BULLETIN
OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT PAUL

THE PAULINE CHARISM IS PASTORAL

“Rekindle the gift you have received”

Creative fidelity to one hundred years of the Pauline charism

Letter of the Superior General

Official House Bulletin of the Society of Saint Paul,
published only in internet:
<http://www.paulus.net>

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THE PAULINE CHARISM IS PASTORAL

Dear brothers,

As prescribed by **operative line 3.3.1** of the IX General Chapter, we pause this year on the in-depth reading and consequent actualization of two texts of Fr. Alberione: *Appunti di teologia pastorale* (Notes of pastoral theology) (=ATP)¹ and *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale* (Woman associated with priestly zeal) (=DA)² in the edition of 1915, even if started some time back, as the author himself informs us.

The reflections that I present, and that I entrust to personal and community study as an enriching contribution, are applicable first of all to the **Society of Saint Paul**; however, since we are getting ready to live in common the third year of preparation for the Centenary of 20 August 2014, I have wanted to widen the horizons to include all of the **Pauline Family**.

Oftentimes using lapidary phrases and on some occasions through good argumentation, the Primo Maestro affirms that “**the entire Pauline Family has been born for pastoral.**” Although the term “**pastoral,**” as noun and adjective, still today enjoys full citizenship in the language of the life of faith, we can also use other expressions to express its meaning: the Pauline charism is “**evangelization,**” it is “**missionary,**” “**apostolic,**” “**communication.**”

The “pastoral” identity of the Pauline charism sinks its roots in *ATP* and *DA* which deal with the **priestly ministry in the parish**, entirely dedicated to the “care of souls,” and to the collaboration of **cooperators**, in a particular way **women**, which the parish priest must make use of, involving them in an “**almost priesthood**” that makes of them as some true “**apostles.**”

Reading in succession *Appunti di teologia pastorale*, *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale*, *Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ* (The abundant riches of his grace) (=AD)³ and *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei* (That the man of God may be perfect) (=UPS)⁴ we have the clear impression of assisting at a phenomenon of concentric circles: starting from the **pastoral identity** of the parish priest and of the associated woman, Fr. Alberione applies it, at the end of 1953, in a form of a list of the “abundant graces” to the Pauline Family of that time and in 1960, when he declares having ended his mission as a Founder, he articulates it in a precise way for the Society of Saint Paul and for the whole Pauline Family.

When the Primo Maestro says that *ATP* is destined for the **Pauline priests** and for the **Society of Saint Paul** and that *DA* has been written for **women** who belong to the

¹ *Appunti di teologia pastorale*, edited by Virginia Odorizzi, sjbp and by Angelo Colacrai, ssp, Cinisello Balsamo, 2002.

² *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale*, edited by Centro di Spiritualità Paolina, Cinisello Balsamo 2001; 2008².

³ *Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ*, edited by Angelo Colacrai, ssp and by Eliseo Sgarbossa, ssp, SSP-Casa generalizia, Rome, 1998.

⁴ *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, edited by Centro di Spiritualità Paolina, Cinisello Balsamo, 1998.

Pauline Family, in particular the **sisters** and those **consecrated in secularity**, besides revealing to us a little of himself, he stimulates our curiosity. A patient research confirms a **continuity** of thought and an **original adaptation** between the description of the priest of the parish and his cooperators, specifically the woman, and the Pauline priesthood and the members of the Pauline Family.

Without wanting to set aside the enriching experience, even if it requires tenacity, of a direct reading of the two volumes or of the integral reading of the present letter, I believe that we can pick the thought of the Primo Maestro and commit ourselves in an actualization of his also by focusing our interest on the numbers **0-1** and **4-8**.

To all of you, brothers, and to all the brothers and sisters who belong to the “wonderful Pauline Family” and who will want to make use of this letter to study in depth **the pastoral identity of the Pauline charism**, I wish that *ATP* and *DA* may contribute to revive the desire to “**communicate the faith**” in the style of Saint Paul: “**I have made myself all for all**” (1Cor 9,22).

0. The Pauline Family has been born for pastoral

0.1 In order to **understand** the contents of the affirmation “*The Pauline charism is pastoral*” we can make reference to three successive moments in the story of the foundations that form the Pauline Family.

When, on **8 September 1913**, Fr. James Alberione receives from the Bishop of Alba, Mons. Giuseppe Francesco Re, the proposal to assume the work of managing the diocesan weekly *Gazzetta d’Alba*, he reads therein “the stroke of the bell” that marks “the hour of God” to start the press apostolate (cf *AD* 30) through the foundation of the *Scuola tipografica “Piccolo Operaio”* (Typographical school of the little worker), the seed of the “**Society of Saint Paul**” (**20 August 1914**). The **Pauline charism** during this time is identified with the “preaching of the Gospel by means of the press,” justified by the declared conviction of Fr. Alberione regarding the equivalence between “**written preaching**” and “**oral preaching.**”

At the **end of 1953**, on the occasion of the fortieth of foundation of the Society of Saint Paul, besides offering his testimony about the preparations and beginnings of his first foundation, Fr. Alberione makes reference also to the Daughters of Saint Paul (15 June 1915), to the Pious Disciples of the Divine Master Sisters (10 February 1924) and to the Sisters of Jesus the Good Shepherd (7 October 1938). The **Pauline charism** is described by the Founder as composed of a “**single spirit**”: to live Jesus Christ and to serve the Church” and of “**complementary apostolates**” (cf *AD* 34).

In **April of 1960**, declaring as finished the “mission” he has received from God, Fr. Alberione, after having enumerated five Congregations, three Institutes aggregated to the Society of Saint Paul and the Union of Cooperators, affirms: “With these organizations, which are international in character, the Pious Society of Saint Paul can extend its riches to all and give to the world Jesus Christ, Way, Truth and Life” (*UPS*, I, 20). The **Pauline charism** is confirmed as characterized by “a **single spirit**, the one contained in the heart of Saint Paul” and “the **various aims converge** in one common and general aim: to give Jesus Christ to the world” (cf *UPS*, I, 20).

The Pauline charism thought about for a long time by Fr. Alberione, with the gradual illumination of the Spirit and the necessary approvals of the Church, is composed of: **a) a common spirituality, b) a complex of convergent apostolates, c) various states of life (religious consecrated priest, religious consecrated layman, sister, consecrated laymen and laywomen in secularity, cooperators).**

The complex of the foundations is described by Fr. Alberione as “**the immense Pauline parish**”: “These Institutions are like the part that directs, just as in a big parish there are: Parish Priest, Coadjutors, Catholic Action, catechetics, cinematography, press; directors in activities for the youth, for men, for artists; for the infirm, vocations, sacred chant, political and social action, charitable works, for the conversion of separated brethren, of atheists, pagans, etc.” (*UPS*, I, 381). “The immense Pauline parish has for limits only the boundaries of the world, and for flock both those already in the fold and those desired to be led to that fold” (*UPS*, I, 382).

While comparing the Pauline Family to a **parish**, the Primo Maestro, drawing from his experience as a diocesan priest, finds the **final image**, even approved by the Church, for that **initial project** of his to want to give life to a **single organization**, composed of men and women, priests and lay persons, animated by a single spirituality and committed in “modern apostolates,” but which the prescriptions of the Canon Law of that time did not foresee and the church authorities would have never authorized.

0.2. From his seminary formation, from his activity in the diocese and from his pastoral teaching for the parish ministry, Fr. Alberione draws the **common denominator** for the whole Pauline Family: **pastoral**, synthesized by the expression “**to save souls.**”

“That it has always been the thought and pastoral end of our apostolate, also results from a fact: in the Pauline Family there is an Institute called of Jesus the Good Shepherd, as mentioned: they are the humble cooperators of pastoral zeal” (*UPS*, I, 427).

“The characteristic of the Pauline Family is exactly to have a *pastoral spirit* and that is, to help souls, to feel the apostolate and the apostolate directed to the salvation of souls, directed to make the Church ever more beautiful, to serve her better and better and therefore to cooperate with her for the salvation of souls, the edification of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ which is the Church, so that redemption may be applied.”⁵

“The entire Pauline Family is ordered to pastoral: someone in a part, another in another (part). The spirit of Saint Paul, especially for the readings, thereafter the books, the periodicals, the spreading of the Bible, etc.”⁶

“The pastoral spirit. Today much is being said about the pastoral spirit and however for some time this pastoral spirit has awakened. From 1910-11, you see (those years are a time that you have not seen), pastoral work, pastoral writings and pastoral books have begun. This has been started in the Pious Society of Saint Paul, with this trend: that everything that concerns the press, cinema, discs, all must be inspired by the pastoral apostolate, since the entire Pauline Family is in order of the pastoral. But you represent in this part the best one. So here you are: this family of yours that is joined to the others.”⁷

“If you know a little better the Pauline Family, it’s all inspired by pastoral. All of it. That is, for souls. And if there is the press, the cinema, liturgy, and if there are sisters who must work for vocations and then those who are aggregated: the priests of Jesus Priest and then the Annunciationists and the Gabrielites: everything is for souls. You then express the action in this. The action, and therefore you must be so close to the Pauline Family as to take and give. You take and give through your contact with souls.”⁸

⁵ *Alle Pie Discepoli del Divin Maestro 1961*, PDDM-Casa Generalizia, Roma 1987, n. 137.

⁶ *Alle Suore di Gesù Buon Pastore 1963*, SJBP-Casa Generalizia, Roma 1984, n. 400.

⁷ *Alle Suore di Gesù Buon Pastore 1965*, SJBP-Casa Generalizia, Roma 1985, n. 94.

⁸ *Alle Suore di Gesù Buon Pastore 1965*, cit., n. 325.

“May all the Pauline Family always orient itself toward souls, all souls.”⁹

The Society of Saint Paul is the **mother cell** of all the successive foundations of the Pauline Family realized by Fr. Alberione, to which he has transmitted “all he felt” (AD 17) to respond to the invitation of Christ: “Come ye all to me” (Mt 11,28).

0.3. The pastoral conceived and realized by the Founder has a “**missionary**” character, because he is well aware both of the masses that not only abandon the life of faith lived in a parish community and not even feel anymore its need, and of the multitude of peoples who have never heard the announcement of the Gospel.

Pastoral and mission, in the ecclesial context of the beginning of 1900, were understood as two different activities: the **pastoral** was understood as the complex of initiatives necessary to cultivate the faith of one who already was a believer, “the art of pastors who take care of souls,” while **mission** was considered as the evangelizing task for non-Christians (foreign missions) and for non-practicing Christians (popular missions).

The consolidation in Europe of the industrial revolution and the birth of the labor movement have also affected the manner of understanding pastoral, above all through sensitivity to the social shown even by church people and lay people in catholic environments. Pastoral and mission ever more converge in a “missionary pastoral.”

The birth of the **JOC** (= Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne) (Young Christian workers) in 1925 in Belgium and in 1927 in France has pushed a part of the clergy to realize that there was being created a fracture that cannot be filled between the workers’ life and the faith being proposed in the parish. There arise the “**priest workers**” (in 1944 in Paris) with the motive that to understand the workers and to make oneself understood by them it is necessary to share their very life, know by direct experience their working conditions, their salaries, their dwellings, their subsistence.

The Church in Europe is becoming aware that she is becoming “a mission land” and these reflections find ever more documented confirmation in the books *La France, pays de mission?* (France, a mission country?) by H. Godin and Y. Daniel (1934) and *Vaste monde ma paroisse*, by Yves M. and J. Congar (1959).

Fr. Alberione, upon informing us about a “visit to Brussels, and in a special way to the JOC” (cf AD 128), confirms his mental openness to the changes in society. With the due distinctions, we can affirm that the Founder has reacted with creativity to the work of dechristianization produced by the press through his idea of the “**priest writer**,” as the “**priest worker**” has been a new way of evangelizing the working class ever more far away from the faith.

The reflection of Fr. Alberione becomes mature even before the official birth of the movement of the priest workers and he himself points out to us **his sources** of German provenance: “For the pastoral character in the Pauline apostolate, he took much from two great masters: Swoboda, *Cura d’anime nelle grandi città* (Care of souls in the big cities), and Krieg, *Teologia pastorale* (Pastoral theology), 4 volumes, which he read and reread for two years” (AD 84).

In the midst of the variety of the changes, Fr. Alberione has a fixed point of reference: “*Pastoral*, then, took an orientation conforming to the example and work of Pius X, following constructive ways... For a certain period, there was nothing good in the culture if it did not come from France; then everybody had turned to the German scholars” (AD 50).

⁹ *Alle Pie Discepoli del Divin Maestro* 1966, PDDM-Casa Generalizia, Roma 1990, n. 443.

With the theological categories of his time and his sensitivity to social changes, the Founder is among those who think and do the passage, first in the parish and then in the press, from a **static pastoral**, intent on taking care of the practicing, to a **dynamic pastoral**, capable of involving even the non-practicing and point to the non-believer.

0.4. Fr. Alberione draws from the **parish missionary pastoral** to apply it with originality to the **missionary pastoral employing the press**. Right from the experience he lived during his adoration on the night between 1900 and 1901, the Founder, even if dedicated to his formative and ministerial activity in the seminary and in the diocese of Alba, is particularly attentive to the effects that periodicals and books produce on the masses, often driving them away from the faith or forming them without Christian values.

“From then on these thoughts dominated his studies, his prayers, all his formation. His idea, first very confused, became clear and with the passing of the years, even became concrete” (AD 21).

Observing the preaching of the priest in the parish, Fr. Alberione compares it with the “preaching” of a “bad” magazine: “The priest can preach to folk that upon arriving home, find a trashy magazine, one that will preach every day and with the enticement of the passions more than he. How will it be of use?” (ATP 130).

We know from information coming directly from him that (cf AD 67) he read the magazine of the Jesuits *La Civiltà Cattolica* in a systematic way starting 1906 and we can deduce that he lingered with particular interest on the articles that dealt with the power of the press and on the advices that were offered to make use of the press for evangelization.

In the months of January and February of 1913, *La Civiltà Cattolica* publishes in two instalments an article titled *La stampa grande potenza*. We can imagine the effect on Fr. Alberione of some passages in the article that cite phrases of authors related to the power of the press: “Carlyle: ‘The true church of England is represented today by journalists who every day preach to the people’; Rosenberg: ‘O periodical press, you are the orator, the great preacher of our time. The words that you pronounce with so much passion echo in a few hours throughout the whole country. You preach in the taverns, in the coffee houses, in the buses, on the trains, in the private houses and powerfully in all the public squares. Where a number of persons meet together, you are in their midst and you preach. But your word does not get lost, like from the pulpit, as soon as it is said. What is not stamped in the memory of the avid reader, remains printed on paper and, to one who glances at it, it preaches assiduously. Thus you shout day after day, without respite and rest.’”¹⁰

In January of 1914 the book by Fr. Giovanni Borgna *Il re dei tempi* is published, dedicated to the “Superiors of the Seminary” of Alba as an act of gratitude for the formation he has had. It proposes as objective “to persuade all Catholics of the capital importance of this mission of journalism and of the press so that they may be zealous of it with all the thrust of their good heart.”

The volume is certainly read by Fr. Alberione since some pages are quoted, without making reference to the provenance, in numbers of the *Unione Cooperatori Buona Stampa*, the first bulletin addressed to the Pauline Cooperators starting 1918 and concurs to formulate the idea of the “**written preaching**.”

¹⁰ *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 9 January 1913, p. 135f.

1. The Pauline Family already present in germ in *ATP* and *DA*

1.1. To appreciate the **importance** that Fr. Alberione attributes to his two writings *ATP* and *DA* in relation to his successive foundations, it is necessary to listen to his direct testimony.

Already in *DA* Fr. Alberione makes reference to *ATP*: “But here it is not the case to examine all the causes of these very grave evils; they would be: not aiming at the *big masses* of the population, lack of modern means in pastoral care, little teamwork among the clergy, etc. I have tried my best to expose this in *Appunti di teologia pastorale*” (*DA* 222).

At the end of 1953, while narrating the history of the beginnings, the Founder affirms that **the churches** to the Divine Master in Alba, to the Queen of Apostles in Rome and to Saint Paul in Alba “are constructed according to the principles published various years before in *Appunti di teologia pastorale*” (*AD* 77).

While explaining the origin of the **pastoral spirit** of the **first four foundations**, Fr. Alberione makes reference to the genesis of his first book: “For two years, in weekly conferences, with twelve priests, he studied the means for a good and updated care of souls. Regarding this he asked and received written suggestions (which he transmitted to the clerics and the young priests) from about fifteen Vicar Foranes. From it came out the book (1913) *Appunti di teologia pastorale*. Card. Richelmy in the preface observes that in it are indicated the most suitable means at the present time” (*AD* 83).

Addressing the **Sisters of the Good Shepherd**, the Founder, in a conference on 20 March 1939, points to his book: “Meanwhile it would be good if you provided for yourselves a treatise of Pastoral Theology and my *Appunti di teologia pastorale*, bearing in mind that in some points they are outdated and not right anymore.”¹¹

During the course of spiritual exercises in April of 1960, the Founder presents the **Society of Saint Paul** in its essential identity: “Before starting it we have published the volume *Appunti di teologia pastorale*: it is pastoral” (*UPS*, I, 376). Such an identity characterizes the Congregation even before its effective foundation: “The Pious Society of Saint Paul has always given very special importance to Pastoral; anticipating the times, we had prepared the book *Appunti di teologia pastorale*, coming out in two editions. It has come out again completely remade” (*UPS*, I, 424).

In 1961, on the occasion of the extraordinary spiritual exercises for the **Daughters of Saint Paul**, referring to pastoral, he affirms: “I have again made to appear *Appunti di teologia pastorale* because that is the stamp of the whole apostolate. There is no other; in fact, we are made for souls! There is little to say and little to add. You can put forward so many thoughts, but that one is exactly the purpose: to be pious and to be apostles! Apostles! “Pious”: the first article (of the Constitutions); “apostles”: the second article.”¹²

In the circular n. 273, of May-June 1965, addressed to the **Daughters of Saint Paul**, Fr. Alberione synthesizes: “For the Society of Saint Paul has been written the first book for priests: *Appunti di teologia pastorale*; and soon after has been written the book *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale*. In other ways God prepared the other Institutes of the Pauline Family.”¹³

¹¹ *Prediche alle Suore Pastorelle, I*, SJBP-Casa Generalizia, Roma, p. 35.

¹² *Alle Figlie di San Paolo. Spiegazione delle Costituzioni, 1961*, FSP-Casa Generalizia, Roma 2003, n. 282.

¹³ *Considerate la vostra vocazione*, FSP-Casa Generalizia, Roma 1990, circ. n. 273, p. 647.

Speaking to the **Sisters of Jesus the Good Shepherd** on 30 March 1967, the Founder does not hesitate to say: “The first book that has been published in Italy regarding pastoral has been of the Society of Saint Paul: we were the ones to write it.”¹⁴

1.2. The passing of the years does not change the conviction of Fr. Alberione that both books, the *ATP* and the *DA*, concern both the **SSP** and the **DSP** with two objectives: acquire a common mentality of mobilization for the pastoral activity and both groups to operate in a role that is well-defined, specific and complementary.

The Founder, in April of 1960, points out that the **female Pauline Congregations** are born in the spirit of what is written in *DA*: “The Sisters in general represent the *Donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale*, also published before 1914, when the first aspirants were gathered and the first small printing press was opened” (*UPS*, I, n. 376).

Daughters of Saint Paul: “You can read: *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale*, chapter five. Starting 1910, day when during meditation I had considered these things, like the work that by God was entrusted to the holy Virgin Mary in the event of the Incarnation, Redemption, Mediation and Distribution of grace, you, Daughters of Saint Paul, have been thought about, wanted, prepared, born, made to grow, up to this day.”¹⁵ «You must be “associated with the priestly zeal.” Before establishing the Congregation I had prepared the book *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale* exactly for you. This is the will of God».¹⁶

Pious Disciples of the Divine Master: “In 1911 I have started to write the book: *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale* and I have finished in 1913 preparing for the Pious Disciple light regarding her vocation and vocations.”¹⁷

“The redemption has started in this way. Let it continue in this way: woman associated with priestly zeal. When you were not yet born and I was writing that book, I thought precisely about you: *The woman associated with priestly zeal*. That is, redemption was done in that way and redemption is applied in that way: the woman with the priest. Heaven help if one or the other mistake their mission, because holy water and soil can create mud. But if in your mission you stay in your place, you sanctify yourselves, you sanctify yourself like the other, you and the other.”¹⁸

Sisters of Jesus Good Shepherd: “Your mission is like the mission of Mary, associated with Jesus in saving souls. For you I have written *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale*.”¹⁹ “In accompanying the action of the priest, look what is represented: Jesus is the pastor, the sister: the shepherdess. As the Lord wanted, from the moment the Lord promised the reparation for the sin of Adam, the Messiah and the Mother of the Messiah are announced. And it’s always like that: the woman associated with priestly zeal.”²⁰

Institute of Mary Queen of the Apostles for vocations (Apostoline Sisters). On 7 August 1961, the Founder speaks to the Apostoline: “And, therefore, your mission: go, preach, teach... Which means: *Woman associated with priestly zeal*, the book addressing all the Sisters of the Pauline Family, the foundation is there. And it was written exactly even before opening the first house...”. What Fr. Alberione affirms in *ATP*

¹⁴ *Alle Suore di Gesù Buon Pastore 1966-1967-1968*, SJBP-Casa Generalizia, Roma 1985, n. 412.

¹⁵ *Considerate la vostra vocazione*, cit., circ. n. 67, p. 188.

¹⁶ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo, 1940-1945*, FSP-Casa Generalizia, Roma 2000, p. 324.

¹⁷ *Alle Pie Discepolo del Divin Maestro, 1946-1947*, PDDM-Casa Generalizia, Roma 1990, n. 504.

¹⁸ *Alle Pie Discepolo del Divin Maestro, 1958*, PDDM-Casa Generalizia, Roma 1986, n. 214.

¹⁹ *Prediche alle Suore Pastorelle, V*, SJBP-Casa Generalizia, Roma 1980, p. 88.

²⁰ *Alle Suore di Gesù Buon Pastore 1964*, SJBP-Casa Generalizia, Roma 1985, n. 110.

about the need of the parish priest to promote “the religious vocations” (cf ch. IX), through the foundation of the Apostoline Sisters finds an original development.

Institutes of secular life aggregated to the Society of Saint Paul. During the spiritual exercises to the Anunciationists in 1962, Fr. Alberione explains their apostolic commitment: “The woman is associated with priestly zeal. The priest is for souls, the woman is associated with priestly zeal. The one regarding the woman associated with priestly zeal has been the second book that I have written, after the first about the priest. In this I have intended to speak about souls consecrated to God, who are associated with priestly zeal.”²¹

The Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* of Pius XII (2 February 1947) will allow Fr. Alberione to give development to what he affirms in presenting the style of life of the *Pia unione delle Figlie di santa Maria Immacolata*: «Remaining however in the world, they intend to sanctify themselves through the practice of the evangelical counsels... “through committing themselves with every effort in the sanctification of others”» (DA 185).

Association of Pauline Cooperators. The care which since 1918 Fr. Alberione dedicates to the Pauline Cooperators is the application to the apostolate of the good press of what he already had delineated for the cooperators in the parish: “This is a very much felt need: either because the priest cannot for reasons of ministry and prudence do all, or because the word of a lay person often mirrors better the needs of the people and is more acceptable” (ATP 343).

At the moment of declaring as done his work as a Founder, he refers to ATP and DA defining the Pauline Family as “our parish” (UPS, I, 377) and “the immense Pauline parish” (Id. 382). In 1961 he explains: “The Society of Saint Paul did everything first, but upon becoming eight Institutes, let each one enter its own way.”²²

2. Pastoral in the parish in ATP and DA

2.1. In order to understand how the project of the Pauline Family in the convictions that Fr. Alberione expresses in ATP and DA has started, it is necessary to identify the principal ideas of “parish priest,” “pastoral,” “woman associated with the priestly ministry” which he will apply with the due adjustments to his successive foundations.

2.1.1. **Appunti di teologia pastorale.** The first typewritten edition by photostatic printing goes back to 1912. In the preface Fr. Alberione explains that since he teaches pastoral theology in the seminary of Alba, upon request of the seminarians, he decides to write a book “with some practical advices” above all for the young priests committed in the parish. The book is prepared by the author with the collaboration of eighteen parish priests with a long pastoral experience, with the reading and meditation of theological treatises, pamphlets, magazines and articles dealing with pastoral.

In 1915 a printed edition comes out with the presentation of the Archbishop of Turin, Card. A. Richelmy, dated 2 February 1913, which describes the book as a fruit of “solid doctrine and practical sense.” In the preface to this edition the author specifies the purpose of the publication: “present to the young priests a guide that with all simplicity directs their first steps in public life: but that may be one that is practical and sure.” In 1960, in accord with Fr. Alberione who writes its preface, there comes out a

²¹ *Meditazioni per consacrate secolari*, edited by Casa Generalizia SSP, Modena 1976, p. 336.

²² *Alle Figlie di San Paolo. Spiegazione delle Costituzioni, 1961*, cit., n. 228.

completely remade edition of the volume edited by Can. Giuseppe Pistoni of the seminary of Modena.

The **text** that I use is the critical edition of the book of **1915**, published in the *Opera omnia* in 2002 edited by Fr. Angelo Colacrai ssp and by sister Virginia Odorizzi sjbp.

The volume **starts** with the definition of the priest, which is then developed in the **first part** through the treatment about the bases of the priestly zeal (piety and the practices of piety, the priestly virtues as fruit of piety, study and the administration of material goods). The **second part** deals with pastoral care and of its general means (pastoral action, care of souls, the relations of the priest, the pastoral action of some priests). In the **third part** are presented some works proper of priestly zeal (confession, communion, liturgical functions, preaching, catechism, devotions of the priest, Catholic action, particular works of Catholic action, religious vocations, organization of feasts and the construction of churches).

2.1.2. *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale*. Edited in **1915** by the nascent *Scuola tipografica "Piccolo Operaio,"* it was however for some time in the mind of the author who in *Abundantes divitiarum gratiarum suarum* writes: "For the Sisters, already since **1911** he had started the redaction of a book, *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale*, to illustrate what the woman can do when she collaborates with the priest. He explains in particular what she can do in the field of the press apostolate, of the social and pastoral apostolate. Such possibility is particularly wide if it deals with the woman consecrated to God, the Sister. ...In its various editions, Italian and foreign, it gave good fruits" (AD 109).

As documented by Fr. Andrea Damino, the book *DA* has been translated in other languages and it reached the ninth edition: the II edition in 1925, the III and IV are probably only reprints, the V in 1928, the VI in 1932, the VII in 1937, the VIII in 1940, the IX in 1954.²³

The text remains unchanged until the edition of 1937 which, upon indication of Fr. Alberione, undergoes some modifications and integrations entrusted to some Daughters of Saint Paul. The edition of 1954 is entrusted by Fr. Alberione to Sr. Cecilia Calabresi fsp with the task of working over the text and inserting passages regarding woman taken from interventions of Pius XI and Pius XII.

The author himself, in an autographic text of **1966**, recognizes that some contents of the book *DA* are fruit of the mentality of the epoch: "the poor book has been written in 1912 and it reflected its time. ...Take into account the present times and Vatican Council II. The principles always come from the Scriptures and from Tradition; on the contrary, the applications to today's times must be made with the wisdom in conjunction of the time, place and social conditions."²⁴

The text that I make use of is the critical edition of the publication of **1915**, edited by Fr. Angelo Colacrai ssp and published in 2001 in the *Opera omnia*. The book in the **first part** presents the identity of the woman in reference to her potential for the apostolate associated with the priest; in the **second part** are listed down the areas of the activity of the believing woman (as an individual, in the family and in society) and in the **third part** are explained to the priest the methods of forming the woman for collaboration in the priestly ministry.

²³ Andrea Damino ssp, *Bibliografia di don Giacomo Alberione*, Archivio Storico Generale FP, Roma 1994, cf pp. 28-29.

²⁴ *Carissimi in San Paolo*, edited by Rosario F. Esposito ssp, Rome 1971, p. 1284.

2.2. *Appunti di teologia pastorale.* The **description of the priest** proposed by Fr. Alberione is drawn from the Apostolic Exhortation of Pius X *Hærent animo* of 4 August 1908, which advises: “We cannot not give notice that the priest must live in a holy way not only for himself; ...hence the priest must be on guard, so that induced by a misunderstood desire for his interior perfection, he does not neglect some of those parts of his ministry that are due to the faithful” (n. 10).

Fr. Alberione comments: “The priest, therefore, cannot be only a man who lives *for himself*: he cannot have as his motto: *I-God*. It is absolutely necessary that he works for the salvation of others, that he writes on his banner: *I-God-People*” (ATP 1). And also: “The priest is not therefore a simply *learned person*: he is not even a simple *saint*, but a *holy and learned person*, who avails of science and sanctity to make himself an *apostle*, that is, to save souls” (ATP 2).

The same definition is reasserted in *DA*: “What is the priest’s mission on earth? To save himself? Too little. To make himself a saint? Also too little. What therefore? To save himself, *but in saving others*. ...The priest is a “*man for others*” (*DA* 14). “He would be out of his mission and therefore would betray his vocation: 1. Who would make as his main or almost exclusive occupation music, literature, art, politics, medicine, care of material interests...; 2. Who reduced his priestly life to the mass and breviary: or who wrote on his banner and took as his motto only these words: *I-God*. He would not be a priest. More suitable for him would be the cloister wherein he could sanctify himself and perhaps through prayer sanctify others; but not the life of the secular priest. For the latter praying, mortifying oneself, living in retirement, avoiding sin as an individual is not sufficient: of him the Lord has the right to ask souls, from him society must expect priestly work” (*DA* 15-16).

The identity of the priest is defined with clarity: **a man for others**; because of this all his ministry serves to **sanctify himself while sanctifying others**, since he is an **apostle**, sent to others, not destined to close himself in the rectory to think of himself. The description of sanctity as “sanctifying oneself while sanctifying others” and of the mission of the priest as a “man for others,” as an apostle, will be applied by the Primo Maestro to each of the foundations of the Pauline Family. Pauline sanctity is not solitary, but social; it is not realized in an isolated place, fleeing from the world, but immersed in society, in the midst of the people.

2.2.1. The pastoral activity carried out by the priest in favor of others is denominated as “**care of souls**”: “It is the action of Jesus Christ and of the Church, exercised by the priesthood for the salvation of souls... It aims to do in such a way so that human thought, science, philosophy, etc., become Christian: it aims to make Christian men’s desires, affections, will, all the works of man; it wants to elevate and sanctify everything... From here we can see that pastoral action aims to *make Christianity live in men*: to make man Christian in his mind, heart and works. Christianity is not a complex of ceremonies, of external acts, of bows, etc. *It is a new life*. It takes hold of man, makes him whole, almost consecrates him. Hence, a priest cannot say he is satisfied that in the church there are splendid ceremonies, songs performed properly, a thousand devotions, etc.; he cannot say he is satisfied with the yearly communions, the weddings done in church, the burials in church, etc.; he cannot say he is satisfied with *certain parades*, like the pilgrimages and processions; that the people admire in a sermon his eloquence, etc.; that some souls tarry in very spiritual concepts. These things can be *means*, but the purpose is to change thoughts from being human to being Christian,

affections from being human to being Christian, works of man to works of the Christian. It is necessary that man be a Christian not only because of baptism, not only in church, but in his house, in his family, in society. This is the goal of this action, and this must be born in mind in everything so as not to exchange the means for the end” (ATP 81-82).

The “care of souls” understood as pastoral has, therefore, a well-delineated end: **to let Christianity live in men** in the sense that faith is a **style of life**, not a complex of externalities or spiritual mawkishness: **we must not confuse the end for the means**.

In his Pauline foundations the Primo Maestro presents the life of faith as a **transformation of the whole personality** (mind, will and heart), which leads to a **style of life** and gives form to the **contents of every apostolate** according to the integral proposal of Christ the Master Way, Truth and Life (dogma, morals and cult). The four wheels of the “**Pauline cart**” (spirituality, study, apostolate, poverty) are “**means**” to reach “**the end**” of sanctification while sanctifying others through the apostolate.

2.2.2. If the “pastoral” finality, “to be a man for others,” “apostle” must be the identity of the priest, love of neighbor, defined as “**zeal for souls**,” must characterize what the priest lives for himself: “Even the books that deal with the qualities and duties of ecclesiastics very often talk at length about studies and piety, too little instead about zeal. And yet zeal is a very essential part of the priest. It is the purpose that science and piety must serve; it is like the badge of the apostle” (ATP 5-6).

2.2.2.1. **Piety and religious practices.** «When we say “piety” we mean a *life*. ...It is an entire internal activity that shows itself on the outside through the fecundity of your works» (ATP 7). There is a difference between the piety of the priest and the piety of the Christian: “The piety of the latter has as end his/her sanctification, the piety of the former aims instead to sanctify himself and the others. ...The priest, especially if he is a parish priest, prays for his own sanctification and for that of others, to make the spirit of God live in himself and others”; “The priest sanctifies the souls depending on his sanctity. If he is more holy *he will guide more ahead in the ways of God* the souls that have been entrusted to him; if he is more holy he will convert a *greater number* of sinners” (ATP 7-8). “The priest has a more strict duty to sanctify himself, since his soul is closely tied to the souls of others; ...if *always* or *habitually* he were impeded by too many works of zeal, it is better to relieve himself of some rather than neglect his soul” (ATP 9).

Speaking of the need of **daily meditation**, Fr. Alberione affirms: “A priest put in the alternative of leaving meditation or some work of ministry, will have to omit the latter, not the former, in ordinary cases of life. He who does not eat does not work: what we neglect for ourselves redounds also to the harm of others” (ATP 13).

In order to justify the need for **spiritual reading**, Fr. Alberione sustains: “We exhort the people not only to listen to the sermons of meditation, but also of instruction. Let us do what we want to inculcate to others” (ATP 15).

Exhorting to fidelity to the recitation of the **breviary**, Fr. Alberione explains: “The priest is a person for others: through actions, words and *prayers*” (ATP 18). “The priest has a spiritual family of souls that belong to him, that must form his main thought, that must absorb a great part of his energies: he must live of them and for them. While praying he must have them before his mind particularly, and not just generally, but in a determinate way, like when they find themselves with special needs. Let him have before him the listeners of his sermons, the young children of his catechisms, the peni-

tents of his confessional, the tempted, the doubtful, the inconstant, the healthy, the sick. The sermon that he will make, the advices that he will give, the admonitions, the holy industries, everything is to be prepared more with prayer than with study. It is necessary to preach more with one's knees than with one's tongue, if one wants to convert and not just make noise" (ATP 20).

Talking about the **eucharistic celebration**, Fr. Alberione explains: "The priest, aside from being a minister of the Most high, is also a representative of the people in the Mass and he holds in his hands the needs and duties of all and looks after the causes of all in God's presence. It is not enough that he offer the holy Sacrifice for himself" (ATP 21); "...the priest, and more so the parish priest, find themselves at the head of a people and have to take upon themselves its needs and duties" (ATP 21-22).

In order to recommend the daily **eucharistic visit**, Fr. Alberione emphasizes: "It is before the tabernacle that every priest must become a priest of fire, for God and for souls" (ATP 24). The **examination of conscience** is indispensable for the priest because: "One who does not know how to make the exam does not advance in virtue and therefore will not even succeed in teaching it to others" (ATP 27).

The **spirituality** that the Primo Maestro places as the foundation of all the Institutions of the Pauline Family has the same "**pastoral**" and "**missionary**" character: in prayer with all our recipients since we must be saints in order to make others saints.

I limit myself to quote two applications that the Primo Maestro makes of the Pauline spirituality for the press apostolate: "The Pauline redactor finds himself in a special condition. In what sense? He is a preacher, not using his word, but paper, film. The preacher must always do two things, and proportionally also the writer, and that is, to ask himself: Who is in front of me? Who it is I am addressing? He is to consider in front of him the readers or those he hopes they will be one day. He is to consider in front of him that public, or better, that group of faithful to which he wants to arrive.

Consider their souls; this after communion and during the visit. Not only Jesus is way for me, but is way for my readers, is way for those I want to turn to, to whom I want to inculcate something, Jesus is truth; it is not enough that you make spiritual reading for yourself. You have an office of redaction, and what truth do you want to communicate? Ask for the grace of an increase of faith for us and then to communicate it to the reader or to the group of persons to which you want to arrive; and if you pray, pray for all the readers, and you pray to have the grace to understand their needs, to find the ways to arrive at those hearts. ...And so you bear all your readers in your hearts during communion, and you bear all in your hearts when you make your visit to Jesus Master."²⁵

To the **Pauline priests** the Founder applies an image taken from Saint Alphonsus de' Liguori: "O priest writer, the fruit depends more on your knees than on your pen! More on your Mass than on your technique! More on your examination of conscience than on your science!"²⁶

2.2.2.2. The **fruits** of spirituality and of the practices of piety of the priest must be **virtues suitable** to exercise with fruit the pastoral activity.

Obedience to the Pope and to the bishop in his ministry: "He has to guide: now he does not know how to guide who does not know how to obey" (ATP 36).

²⁵ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo. Spiegazione delle Costituzioni, 1961, cit., n. 433.*

²⁶ *San Paolo, 15 December 1934; cf Carissimi in San Paolo, cit., p. 20.*

Chastity: “The priest who is not chaste absolutely lacks the force and energy to truly fulfill the priestly obligations; a priest who is not chaste is always the ruin more than the welfare of souls” (ATP 39-40).

Humility: “this is also necessary for him because the fruit of his works is all from God: let him not rob what belongs to God” (ATP 45).

Charity. Since the *Priest is another Christ*, he must identify himself with Christ and say: “What are the sentiments, what is the reaction, what is the stance of Jesus in this case? What would he do in my place?” (ATP 47).

It is then necessary to pay attention to the **signs of slackening**, above all by becoming cold toward the salvation of souls: “Of a priest who in the midst of the ruin of youth, the indifference of adults and the corruption of all, does not feel the need to study new means, to try hard with a thousand ways, to examine himself if he truly does well his part, it can be said that either he did not bring to his ordination the necessary qualities or he has already become lax” (ATP 50).

2.2.2.3. **Study** must be of help to the priest so he can carry out well his ministry: “The priest has an absolute need and even continuing need for it. An absolute need, because it is necessary for him in his high mission of saving souls; a continuing need, because he must not forget the things he has learned, learn new ones, be a man of today, and not of a past time” (ATP 52).

We can read a reflection that in Fr. Alberione will change radically when he will found the Society of Saint Paul: “The priest is not a man of letters, an artist, a physician, a politician, a journalist *for himself, but only by accident*, insofar and till these professions can be useful for him for the salvation of souls and not beyond” (ATP 53). With the start of the press apostolate, the “priest journalist” is *full time* at the service of evangelization.

Study allows the priest to be in **syntony with history** that evolves: “It is necessary to study always ...since at any time one is apt to forget, since one has always the duty to live with the men of today, to know their needs and the new remedies, if you also love to do good” (ATP 54).

There is a study to be accomplished not over books but on persons: “A study that is also completely necessary is that about the tendencies, usages, virtues, defects, education, character, etc. of the population, penitents, persons who are around in the house, in church, etc., how to behave with them, from what perspective to take them, etc. Let the priest see what thing there is or not there, what thing is possible or impossible to obtain” (ATP 57).

Necessary is the “study of all those things that lead us better to the people with whom we live” (ATP 58); even the reading of magazines is a contribution to the study of the priest (cf ATP 59).

From all the Institutions of the Pauline Family, the Primo Maestro asks a study that directs an **adequate preparation toward the specific apostolate**: “Studies have a purpose of their own, even a double purpose: to make perfect the gift of nature, intelligence; and to be prepared to do the mission entrusted by God. We must teach making use of the tongue/language, paper, film, the screen, the image, etc. Know what we must communicate, know the manner and the means to give it: the language, the technology, etc.” (UPS, II, 169). “Study for the Pauline has as immediate end the apostolate, which is already a *royal priesthood*, and the apostolate with the ministry for one who has in mind the priesthood” (UPS, II, 172).

2.2.2.4. Even the **administration of goods** must have as aim the exercise of the priestly ministry: “The priest even in the administration of goods cannot forget that he is a savior of souls: some distinctions cannot be of help in practice. And as in his piety and in his study, so here first of all and above all the principle *the salvation of souls is the supreme law* applies. He must do what saves souls, leave behind what harms them” (ATP 62-63).

Among the initiatives to be administered for the good of souls, Fr. Alberione presents also the “**good press**”: “I have also noted the Catholic works and the good press since today a very broad need of it is felt: of what use is it, Pius X said, to build so many very artistic churches, establish institutes, if we don’t provide them with the defense of the press? A stroke of the pen of lawmakers will be enough to suppress everything. On the contrary, this is the thing to be inculcated also to the people: that associations be set up for this end” (ATP 71).

The presentation of the **vow of poverty**, which the Founder elaborates for all the Institutions of the Pauline Family, emphasizes its functionality for the mission: «All the Institutes are bound by poverty, but not all in the same way. ...Standing is the rule of Saint Thomas: “Religious poverty has an instrumental value, with regard, that is, to two ends to which it is ordained: sanctification and the apostolate”» (UPS, I, 455).

2.2.3. Since the **pastoral activity** “aims to make Christianity live in men: to make man Christian in his mind, heart and works” (ATP 81), “so as not to confuse the means with the end” (ATP 82), it is necessary to endow all pastoral activity with the end, in such a way that “man becomes a Christian not only because of baptism, not only in church, but also in his family and in society” (ATP 82).

2.2.3.1. There are some **general principles** that must guide the entire pastoral activity. First of all, operate with **concordant action**: “The parish is the first and fundamental local organization around which the existing organizations must constitute themselves. ...And since the first hinges on the parish priest, so the members of these organizations must take as their head and let themselves be guided by the parish priest, as members by the head” (ATP 82).

Moreover, there needs to be **personal contact**: “Close union between the parish priest and his flock: an exact knowledge of their miseries and needs, acquired from dealing directly with the people. Sometimes it happens that we find priests who are totally separated from the mass of the people! ...But how is it possible to do good for one you do not know? How can you look for people that you do not know?” (ATP 84).

All the pastoral action, whether direct or indirect, **must gradually lead the people to the sacraments**: “But in all this variety of works and action the priest must have an ultimate goal: to save souls; and a proximate one: to bring as much as possible people to the sacraments” (ATP 85).

The pastoral action must have as objective that of reaching **all the mass of people**: in the parishes there is often a grave inconvenience: “the parish priest does not take care except for a small flock of devoted souls, no care for retreats, hospices or hospitals. ...And in the meantime there is a big number of souls, especially the most needful, who either do not know at all the parish priest, or they know him only in name or by sight: they are the mass of workers, laborers, the so-called cultured class, the lords, the most unfortunate poor; they are perhaps the people Jesus Christ would most approach. ...The parish priest is the pastor of everybody: he must also leave the ninety-

nine safe sheep to retrace the lost one: much more when the safe sheep are a *small flock* and the lost ones are more numerous” (ATP 86).

2.2.3.2. The pastoral mentality also needs to be made concrete through some **operative norms**. It is necessary to **combine zeal with prudence**: “It is our duty in our times to neglect nothing of what can attract souls to heaven; *this is zeal*” (ATP 89).

Also required is an attitude of **openness to changes**: “Always showing oneself as a friend of true progress, even material progress, not opposing but rather favoring moderately initiatives that are good: telephone and electric systems, tramlines, etc. The world goes forward in spite of the *fans of past eras*... and the priest who assumes a position contrary to these good novelties would lose the esteem and affection of the people and also of the cultured class... If the people reads, it is necessary to provide it with good reading” (ATP 91).

The attention to changes must lead to give a **modern direction to works**: “Religion, doctrine, morals, ascetics are unchangeable: but they have also undergone and still undergo a certain accidental progress inasmuch as they are better penetrated by men and adapt themselves to the needs of the times and of social classes. We must always lead souls to heaven: but we must lead not those who have lived ten centuries ago or thereabout, but those who live today. It is necessary to take the world and men as they are *today* to do good *today*” (ATP 92-93).

The changes in the social context exercise an influence in pastoral. Fr. Alberione relates the reflection and the proposal of a parish priest: “*It is necessary to broaden according to the needs of today the purposes of the past associations*. And he added: a Fraternity of Tertiaries today could assume the task of doing away with the bad magazines and disseminating the good ones” (ATP 94).

The concern to organize the apostolates, the will to reach not only the individuals but the mass of the people and the educated classes, the creativity to meet the real needs of persons, the sensitivity to know the contemporary social context, are the **deep motivations** that have led the Primo Maestro to ripen the idea of evangelization through the press and which he has entrusted to the Institutions of the Pauline Family.

2.2.4. As a “man for others,” the priest is a “**man of relations with everybody**”: “The priest is sent as a fisher of souls in the world. He therefore must live in the world: a world that he has to enlighten with the light of the Gospel, that he has to heal with the salt of the grace of his sacred ministry. He will be a much better apostle, to the degree that he will know how to regulate his relations among men. His relations must be holy in order to sanctify. ...Our only regulating principle is this: *all and only what prudent and ardent zeal requires for souls*” (ATP 97).

The **relations of the parish priest** are then enumerated: between the parish priest and the vice-curate, between the parish priest and the neighboring parish priests, between him and the priests dwelling in the parish, between priest and laypeople, between the parish priest and relatives, between parish priest and service personnel, between parish priest and the local authorities, between the parish priest and the teachers, between the parish priest and the sacristan, between the parish priest and the sick, between the parish priest and the asylum, between the parish priest and the hospital.

Particular interest assumes the description of the **relations between the parish priest and families**: “A parish priest will take care to avoid that kind of life that is so solitary as to be spent almost entirely within the walls of the rectory, set apart, insensitive or in the dark of what happens in the people: their dangers, joys, pains, etc. The

father and the pastor are not like that. The father always thinks about his children and the pastor knows well his sheep. S. Paul said that he had wept with the weeping, had rejoiced with the joyful: he had passed from house to house to give advices therein and to preach; the holy priests were men of retirement and prayer, but also of outgoing charity, of industrious zeal in close relations with the people” (ATP 128).

The priest must know his folk “if he wants in his sermons and his advices in the confessional to be able to say only and all that is necessary for the people. Stereotyped advices and sermons made at the desk or studied on books mainly make no difference and do not respond to the true needs and sentiments of the hearers” (ATP 130).

The visit of the parish priest to the families also helps to “see what magazines and books are in circulation” (ATP 129) because: “The priest can preach to people who upon arriving home find a low quality newspaper that preaches every day and with the allurements of the passions more than he. What good will it do? ...Let him study, let him examine, take note, then little by little change the newspaper or at least beside the bad one put one that is good, etc.” (ATP 130-131).

The **relations between the parish priest and the sisters** must be taken care of in a special way: “The sisters are his helpers, I would almost say the sisters of the zeal of the parish priest: what good they cannot do in the asylum, in the hospital, in the hospice, in the schools, in the oratory, in the workshop! They are a powerful help when they are truly formed in *deep piety and sincere virtue*. This idea must determine the relations between the parish priest and the sisters” (ATP 134).

Even with those who are **far from the faith or are enemies** the parish priest must entertain relations: “*I am a debtor to all*: I have to take care of everybody, wrote S. Paul; and he wanted to say: I must preach to all, I must work for all to gain them for God. This can also be the motto of a pastor of souls: save all, work and pray for all: even if they were traitors, like Judas or crucifiers” (ATP 139).

The **strategy** of the parish priest with these persons must be realized “opposing arms with arms,” “if he spreads bad press, he will work to disseminate the good press; if he gives conferences, he will oppose them with others” (ATP 141).

In describing the **mission** entrusted to the Pauline Family, the Primo Maestro defines it as “**universal**”: with respect to men, technical means, times and object (cf *UPS*, I, 372-373). “Let us feel like S. Paul and with S. Paul debtors to all men, the ignorant and the learned, Catholics, Communists, pagans, Muslims. Let us love all. Our apostolate for everybody.”²⁷

The concern of the parish priest to enter into contact with all those who are part of the **territorial parish**, applied to the Pauline Family assumes the boundaries of the **whole world** and of **every category of persons**.

2.2.5. Upon arriving as a new parish priest, the priest must bring with him a general attitude of wanting to dedicate himself entirely to his ministry of “saving souls,” but in order to fix a **specific program** “it is necessary to go to the place, put himself in contact with the people, through family visits, by talking many times with influential pious persons, listening to their needs, seeing their spiritual and material miseries, their weak side, etc.” (ATP 146).

Before starting to work, it is necessary to provide oneself with a **methodology**: “The parish priest has to *be the soul of all the parish work* that directly or indirectly re-

²⁷ *San Paolo*, March 1951; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, cit., p. 860; *Vademecum*, edited by Angelo Colacrai ssp, Cinisello Balsamo 1992, n. 1327.

fers to the care of souls: however, he has to make *an equal distribution of work*: he has to *ably make use of all who can be of help to him*” (ATP 148).

This methodology of work demands a parish priest **in the midst of people**: “To this end it is necessary not to reduce oneself to a life completely hidden in the rectory; it is necessary to know the people, spend even a long time in order to draw near to everybody” (ATP 152). To retire to a hidden life for a parish priest means to deny his identity: “Is it perhaps that he must not *live* to save himself while saving others?” (ATP 153).

The **missionary dimension** of the Institutions that form the Pauline Family is inscribed in the spirituality itself, that does not lead to the isolation of a retired life but projects itself outside: **saving oneself while saving others through the apostolates**.

2.2.6. Thanks to the “pastoral spirit” of Pius X, the Christian life was returning to the need of **integrality** so as to create unity among the truths of faith, the sacramental life and the commitment of testimony in the social. The priestly ministry described by Fr. Alberione is realized in the promotion of the sacramental life (**cult**), of preaching and of catechesis (**dogma**) and of the commitment of Catholic action (**morals**).

2.2.6.1. **Cult: confession**. The only objective of the priestly ministry is to promote “the union of the soul with God. The other things matter *a lot as means*, this one matters *everything as end*” (ATP 164; cf 192, 201). In order to explain how to be effective in this task, Fr. Alberione has recourse to the phrase of a confessor: “If Jesus Christ lives in you, you shall make him live in others” (ATP 165).

In the indications given by Fr. Alberione, confession must not be limited to the celebration of the sacrament, but must be **inserted in a broader pastoral activity** that requires “the need to know the population” (ATP 168), the capacity to adapt oneself to the various category of penitents, the presentation of particular cases and the personal conduct of the confessor.

In dealing with confession of **pious persons**, Fr. Alberione advises “not to spend too much time with them: neither to believe of having done all when they have passed two or three hours in confessing them. The priest must aim at the big mass of the population,” avoiding the danger of “being the parish priest of a hundredth part of the population, that is, of only the *devotees*” (ATP 173-174).

In confessing the **women**, the parish priest must promote a piety that is not all sentiment, but should lead to the Christian virtues (cfr. ATP 174), and he should know how to “find in them a very strong assistance in doing good even to those who he himself cannot reach” (ATP 175).

2.2.6.2. **Cult: communion**. Valorizing the dispositions of Pius X about the necessity of frequent communion, Fr. Alberione explains various initiatives in order to promote in the faithful a more convinced mentality, including the **use of the press**: “providing for a wider diffusion of booklets and practical leaflets, simple, penetrating, attractive ones, regarding eucharistic cult and especially communion” (ATP 200).

2.2.6.3. **Cult: liturgical functions**. “The priest, as a minister of God, must take great care of the external cult: since this gives to God the honor due him, ...inasmuch as the dignity and the majesty of the Catholic functions serve to conserve and awaken the faith, let people think about the best resolutions for a good life, encourage and hearten the Christian spirit” (ATP 211).

Taking into account that during the time when Fr. Alberione writes, the liturgy was expressed in **Latin**, he is concerned with “the cultural liturgy among the people,” rec-

ommending a book “that contains the Latin text with the Italian translation of all the prayers and functions more commonly celebrated by the Church, with brief explanations of the liturgical meaning of each function and rite” (ATP 213).

Since even the eucharistic celebration was in the Latin language, Fr. Alberione suggests **some initiatives** so that the people may be able to participate with faith and “in hearing it in that way, must understand something of the Mass and be aided by some means capturable by the senses” (ATP 215) that he presents (cf ATP 216-219).

Enumerated moreover are **other liturgical functions** and **connected activities**: vespers, the hour of adoration, the forty hours, other celebrations of eucharistic adoration, the month of May, the entourage of Mary, the rosary, feasts and solemnities of Mary, the young clergy, schools of chant, the maidservants of the Eucharist, the group of children accompanying the viaticum, the pages.

Reading today his considerations on cult and in particular on the eucharistic celebration and his eucharistic devotion in ATP, at fifty years from Vatican Council II and from the **liturgical reform** that he has put in operation, we can pick up the great diversity of approach. However, in Fr. Alberione’s concern that the people participate “with understanding” in the eucharistic celebration, be convinced of the need of frequent communion and of a eucharistic devotion that affects change in concrete life, there are premises of the promotion in the “**liturgical spirit**” realized in the Pauline Family.

Meriting a particular recall is the work done by the Primo Maestro with the promotion of the **liturgy** through the press apostolate, in particular of the **missal** that unites the Latin language and the translation in the various languages; the insistence on the hour of adoration to be transformed from “devotion” into “apostolate” and the foundation of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master for their apostolates (cf AD 74).

2.2.6.4. **Dogma: preaching.** “If we give a look at the Gospel, at the Acts of the Apostles, at the Letters, at the history of the Church during the first centuries, the question comes spontaneous: the priest therefore, and the apostle, and Jesus Christ, were preachers and almost nothing else but preachers? And therefore so many priests who reduce their ministry to the Mass, to few blessings, to a little study, etc., are not *true priests*? I don’t want to give an answer” (ATP 240).

“Every priest must preach as much as he can, since for the priesthood in general the first among occupations is preaching; some, not working in such ministry although they can do it, cannot be called true priests, *in the formal sense of the word*: since what Jesus Christ ordered above every other thing to the Apostles was to preach” (ATP 240). “Let us take away preaching and Christianity will perish, as when the seed is taken away, there will be no more plants: “*The seed is the word of God*” (ATP 241).

In presenting the **qualities of the preacher**, Fr. Alberione, after having recalled the mission of the priest: “it is opportune to always repeat that the priest is for the salvation of all” (ATP 243), emphasizes the necessity of **preparation** (cf ATP 247-249) and that the preaching be “**modern and, better, of actuality**: that is, in form and more so in its comparisons, examples, applications: let it be all the life of the people, let it have its thoughts, its language, etc.” (ATP 250).

So that the priest may carry out well his ministry as “**apostle of the word**,” he must also care about the **contents** of what he says: “In writing, let him have before him the audience; thus if they will be boys, he will write for boys; if adults, for adults; if educated, for the educated. He will choose from among the topics, only examples that can apply to them” (ATP 255). It is necessary to remember that the contents will be proposed to the faithful with stances of the body, tonality of voice, gestural character and

gesticulation (cf *ATP* 256-257), writing them anticipatedly in full and drawing from his experience (cf *ATP* 258).

For better effectivity, the ideal condition would be to be able to preach to **distinct classes**: “Talking to a determinate class of persons makes possible to say things that are more interesting, more attractive, more useful” (*ATP* 268). One of the opportunities to be able to have a homogeneous public is a course of **spiritual exercises** that, taking into account the historical situation that we live, should serve not only to nourish our personal faith, but also produce results in **social commitment**: “Regarding social issues, it will be good to note explicitly that today also in spiritual exercises should be treated some of the principal ones of them. It is not anymore enough to be good individually” (*ATP* 270).

Among the **means** that Fr. Alberione suggests to make possible and durable the fruit of preaching, there is “**to make use of the woman**: a docile instrument in the hands of the priest and powerful on the heart of man. ...A holy woman creates saints, a bad woman creates unfortunate people. ...Well then, let the priest make the weak sex truly devout and virtuous: then make use of her as a point of support to move her brothers, her spouse, her children” (*ATP* 274).

Even bad **books and journals** can take away the effectiveness of the preaching of the priest. Because of this “the priest must apply the greatest attention to it” (*ATP* 276) by dedicating a sermon or a conference about the effects of a good or bad press, procuring good publications and magazines, starting a library or making himself available to become the “correspondent of a local paper” (cf *ATP* 276-277).

The fact remains that by means of oral preaching one reaches only those who come to church: “How to make preaching fruitful even for one who does not hear it? It is a great inconvenience in the care of souls in many cities to aim in pastoral action only at that group of the already converted and not at others who have much more need of that. Now for the latter you can pray, you can send some word as a friendly person, etc., but especially you can send a good leaflet” (*ATP* 277).

After having enumerated initiatives that make use of **books, journals and publications**, Fr. Alberione also proposes **traveling libraries**: “There are places where a specific society called *La società della buona stampa* (The society of the good press) takes care of the diffusion of booklets, books and good publications. It makes use of traveling libraries and also of reduced subscriptions to the best magazines” (*ATP* 279).

In giving life to the **Society of Saint Paul** to complete the “**preaching employing the word**” through the “**preaching that employs the press**,” the Primo Maestro reaffirms the indispensable value of “preaching” as the priority and founding act of the life of faith. In *Apostolato stampa* the Founder will adapt to preaching with the press what he says in *ATP* about preaching. Justifying his first foundation, Fr. Alberione appeals to Saint Paul who declares “to have been sent to preach, not to baptize.” Preaching is the priority of the parish priest and of the priest writer.

Moreover, through the weekly *Gazzetta d’Alba*, the printing of the parish bulletins, the leaflets for the liturgy and the initiative of the *Associazione generale delle biblioteche*, he wants to be first of all a help to the pastoral of the parish and of the diocese.

2.2.6.5. **Dogma: catechesis.** Catechesis is of preaching “the most delicate, useful and important” task, ...because the young child of today is the man, the Christian and the citizen of tomorrow” (*ATP* 281). Fr. Alberione draws his convictions from the dispositions of Pius X about catechesis and develops them in reference to the catechism for children (cf *ATP* 282-283). So that the explanation of the catechism may be effec-

tive for them, he must unite the objective of “**instructing**” and “**educating**”: “The catechism is the milk of the Christian: it is necessary to hand it over in a suitable way to the young children and this requires to premise a good preparation and to observe the most elementary rules of pedagogy” (*ATP* 292).

There are also very valid **aids** for the teaching of catechism: illustrations, the collection of images or cards, mural papers, projections that must serve to better reach the **objective**: “The catechism is not, like many other sciences that you learn, something that must stop in the mind only; it must extend to the will, descend to the heart and inform the sentiments, the desires, the works, the life of man. ...Christianity is not only thought: it is a life; now life is made up of thought and action” (*ATP* 297).

Since it is an activity that is not only theoretical teaching, catechism requires that it be realized in a fitting **environment**: the parish hall and oratory (cf *ATP* 299-307) and with adequate verifications (cf *ATP* 308-311).

The Primo Maestro himself, recalling his activity in the seminary and reassuming the activity of the Pauline Institutions founded until 1953, declares: “We always considered the catechetical work as the first and fundamental one” (*AD* 81). “The first work that came out from our printing press in Alba has been the small catechism, with the questions assigned by a number corresponding to the class of the children. From then on we have always labored in that direction. The editing apostolate finds in this sector a very principal task.”²⁸

Other initiatives of the Pauline Family important in catechesis: the Pauline Catechetical Center (1952) entrusted to the Daughters of Saint Paul, the production of catechetical documentaries by San Paolo Film (1952 and 1962) and the activity of the Sisters of Jesus Good Shepherd in the parishes.

2.2.6.6. Dogma: popular piety. “One of the multiple forms wherein is shown the spirit of piety is the institution of varied religious associations, pious sodalities and devoted practices. They are like so many means to reach the end of practicing virtue and saving one’s soul” (*ATP* 314).

Popular piety must be guided by the parish priest so that it may remain as a means to deepen the religious truths, stimulate prayer and motivate social action: “There are priests who are so stable in their virtue that they do not feel much the help that comes from these devotions: for them is enough a deep consideration of the eternal truths or a diligent reading, for example, of the *Imitation of Christ*. Would that there were more of them! But all in general and the people in particular feel the need of certain devotions and even of a bit of externality. In many the Christian spirit does not come in if not by these means: now, when the means are approved by the Church and contribute to form the Christian life, we must favor them and inculcate them, even if we do not find great utility from them for ourselves: the people are more material and it is necessary to take them as they are in order to guide them to the sublime heights of Christianity” (*ATP* 314-315).

Then being enumerated are (cf *ATP* 317-322) the **devotions useful for everybody** (Eucharist, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Virgin Mary, Guardian Angels, Saint Joseph), **devotions for a class of persons** (youth, men, etc.), the **means** to spread them and the various **associations or initiatives** (Third Order of Saint Dominic, etc.).

To the Pauline Family the Primo Maestro has given the **devotions of the first week of every month** (cf *AD*, 179-184): Saint Paul (Monday), Souls in purgatory

²⁸ *San Paolo*, October 1952; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, cit., p. 839.

(Tuesday), Saint Joseph (Wednesday), Guardian Angel (Thursday), Sacred Heart (Friday), Mary Queen of Apostles (Saturday) and Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life (Sunday). Each devotion has a particular motive explained by the Founder himself.²⁹

2.2.6.7. Morals: action of the Catholics. Basing himself on the Encyclical of Pius X *Il fermo proposito* (11 June 1905), Fr. Alberione explains the difference between the social magisterium of Leo XIII, tending to oppose the monopoly of socialism on the working class, and of Pius X, who proposes “an immensely vaster action: to defend and promote in society Christian civilization. Pius X does not destroy, but guides and expands Catholic action and calls the priest to work there in a way that is more in consonance with his ministry and the times” (ATP 324).

Catholic action is the social commitment of all the baptized to promote the values of Christian civilization in the family, in society, in the school, in the working and farming class, in the laws and politics: Catholic action is the action of Catholics in the social world (cf ATP 324).

Even the priest has tasks of responsibility to promote the action of Catholics in society; to stay out of it would be “to disown the priesthood and our mission to save souls” (ATP 325). Drawing from the papal Encyclical, Fr. Alberione lists down some **general principles** that must guide the action of the priest (cf ATP 326-331), then to present the **concrete works** of the social commitment of the Christian (cf ATP 332-353).

Among these, there is the description of the **traveling library**: “The eagerness for reading grows each day and if a healthy food is not provided, very easily so many will run to a poisonous one. On the other hand, a good book is a trusted friend, and even a preacher who makes himself heard in most opportune moments” (ATP 339).

Even **good propaganda** is a commitment for the parish priest: “Sowing good ideas so that they give rise to good works: this is the work that matters. Religious ideas, social ideas, economic ideas, ideas of virtue, of health, etc. ...according to places and circumstances, in public and in private. *Public propaganda*: using the pen, writing booklets, leaflets, bulletins, collaborating and corresponding with journals: according to our forces. As soon as we know that an idea can do good, that a fact can make interesting a magazine, it will useful to communicate them: it is a talent that God gives: let us make it bear fruit” (ATP 340).

Synthesizing the **mission of the press apostolate**, the Primo Maestro says: “Give first of all the doctrine that saves. Penetrate all human thought and wisdom with the Gospel. Don’t talk only of religion, but of everything talk in a Christian way, ...thus for sociology, pedagogy, geology, statistics, art, hygiene, geography, history, every human progress, etc., according to reason subjected to the faith” (AD 87-88).

“The Pauline Family has a wide opening toward the world, in all the apostolate: studies, apostolate, piety, action, editions. The editions for all categories of persons; all the issues and facts judged in light of the Gospel; ...bear in your hearts all the peoples; let the presence of the Church be felt in every problem” (AD 65).

2.2.6.8. Religious vocations. In order to call the attention of the parish priest to the commitment of promoting religious vocations, Fr. Alberione argues: “That if it is a meritorious work to look after the sheep which are the souls, will it not be much more meritorious to form the pastors, who are the religious and the priests?” (ATP 354). The

²⁹ Cf *San Paolo*, December 1952, I; *Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 699.

religious are called to the “life of perfection” and they are the ones who dedicate themselves to others in works of charity and they are missionaries.

The proposal of Fr. Alberione is that “every priest who goes up the altar the first time, every religious who makes profession, every missionary who decides to leave for distant lands, should do his best ...to leave behind him at least two priests, or sisters, or missionaries” (*ATP* 355).

To all the Institutions of the Pauline Family the Primo Maestro repeats with insistence that the “**priority problem are vocations**” because “the works of God are done by men that are of God.” In founding the **Apostoline Sisters**, the Founder has given special development to sensitivity for vocations, already present in *ATP*.

2.2.6.9. In *ATP* 359-360 Fr. Alberione gives indications on how to organize the feasts. In *ATP* 361-372 he talks about the construction of churches, giving as criteria of planning and construction that the church “must be such so as to serve well the people... It must be artistic, ...but it is not an object of admiration, a place rather that must serve the people” (*ATP* 366.368).

We have already called to mind that the Primo Maestro, while referring to the **churches built** for the Pauline Family, has specified that “the three churches are constructed according to the principles published various years before, in the *Appunti di teologia pastorale*” (*AD* 77).

2.3. The woman associated with priestly zeal. In the *Introduction* (*DA* 9-11) the author resumes the convictions that he develops in the book. The interest of Fr. Alberione for the topic treated begins from a phrase of Mons. Mermillod addressed to women and girls: “You must be apostles.”

Being a son of his times, the vision of woman illustrated by Fr. Alberione is in relation to man: “The woman was created by God for man not only for material help, but especially for moral help; ...the woman came to collaborate with the priest in his noble mission.” In this sense Fr. Alberione makes his own the mission of the woman of Fr. Frassinetti: “they are called to an almost priesthood, to a true apostolate.”

The priest has the task of forming the woman so that she may collaborate with him with all her potentialities: “form the woman to the totality of his mission, guide her prudently, make of her an apostle” (*DA* 10).

In close reference to the **priest**, the woman is thus described as endowed with an “**almost priesthood**,” called to a “**true apostolate**” and therefore she is an “**apostle**.”

2.3.1. Fr. Alberione bases his entire treatise on the identity of the priest: the **mission of the priest**, the “**care of souls**” and the **recipients** of the priestly zeal (cf *DA* 14-20), explained lengthily in *ATP*. From this premise derive two indications for the priest: dedicate himself to the “care of the soul of men” and “form women to true virtue.”

While observing the parish life of his time, the author thinks that they are the women who come more often to the church and that the priest must be on guard so as not to communicate to them a faith that becomes “ridiculous,” but form them to “virtues that are necessary for every environment of life” (cf *DA* 21-22).

If the priest wants to care for all the people in the parish, he needs to “makes use of the woman to reach man, apply the woman to this his supreme work: the sanctification of man” (*DA* 23).

In fact, man is less religious than woman: “We know very well that our best conquest is not woman: it is man. Thus is the example of Jesus Christ, who in the Gospel

we see in general as making his way more toward men: this is the way the nature of our religion wants which, if it adapts to everybody in simplicity, in its sublimity it is better understood by the intelligence of man” (DA 25).

Since in practice there is a certain number of priests who have difficulty in dealing with men, “the priest therefore will have a thousand occasions to exercise a salutary influence on her and to make use of her for the benefit of so many souls, who will not come to him” (DA 26). Also because the woman has great potentialities to do good or to do evil: “Either therefore we shall have the woman with us to work for man, or we shall have her against us” (DA 27).

2.3.2. The social identity of the woman during the times of Fr. Alberione is championed by **two types of feminism**: “the socialist, revolutionary, anti-Christian, anti-religious, immoral feminism; the other instead is moral, Christian; it is good, in other words.” (DA 29).

Drawing from Pius X, Fr. Alberione synthesizes the essential objective of **socialist feminism** in the pretense for woman of “absolute equality with all the rights and attributions of man” (DA 30). Christian feminism, instead, leaves the woman in the family and inside the domestic walls because “that sex which is called *weak*, if she stays in her place, becomes the hidden but true parent of the strength, the prosperity and the progress of the nation” (DA 37). “The woman of today must form the men of today; she should take care of the needs of the man of today; she must make use of the means of today” (DA 38). If she remains in her family environment, the woman becomes a “help for the priesthood and for the Church in the great work of salvation of souls” (DA 40).

2.3.3. Considering the women in the Old Testament, during the ministry of Jesus and in the history of the Church, we can become aware of the **great apostolate** that they have carried out (cf DA 42-51); but it above all the **Virgin Mary** who has redeemed the figure of the woman represented by **Eve**. Man and the priest are **guides**: “The woman was compared to a great torrent. ...Abandoned to itself, it becomes an element of destruction; but if man takes possession of it and channels it, he will extract from it surprising electric energies that give light and power. What will woman energy not do under the guidance of the priest? (DA 51-52). “It is not that woman can obtain in the Church a preponderant, teaching and governing part, no; but she always had a very effective subordinate part” (DA 53).

2.3.4. The woman is therefore a **power**, an energy to be valorized: “The force of the woman is not in her intelligence, but in her heart: I would like to say with a modern author, in her weakness, in her spirit, in her beauty, put at the service of her heart. In man the heart is one half of his being, in woman it is everything” (DA 54). “Woman does not reason about her ideal, but she intuitively makes it her own, loves it with all her being and tends toward it with all her forces, passionately upholding it in front of man” (DA 55). “The woman also is powerful in her domestic and social position. ...She is more in the family than man, as a daughter, a spouse, a mother” (DA 57).

2.3.5. In the story of the creation of the woman (cf Gen 2,28) we read that God “created the woman as a help for man” (DA 61): a material help in sharing joys and sorrows in the family and to lead him to eternity. The **vocation** of the woman is to be “**a material and spiritual help for man**”; so many men would forget God and spiritual truths if they had not beside them a sister, a spouse, a mother, a daughter (cf DA

63). The woman: “does not care so much for logic, but if it is a matter of spiritual things, she has a better intuition, she enjoys them better, more easily and is inclined to them more easily” (DA 64).

2.3.6. The priest has for his mission that of “taking care of the souls of men”; the woman, due to her identity connected with the family and the domestic walls, is the one who “stays beside man”: **the mission of the woman and the mission of the clergy go together**: “If this is the mission of the woman, it follows that the priest and the woman meet in the same vocation, that they must work out the same field. But in a disorderly way, out of a whim? Without one who regulates and directs the work? No: the army of the women must have its captain in the priest. The priest has been established by God to save souls: and he must give account of it to Him together with the woman. However, it is the role of the priest to guide his army to victory: it’s for him to study patiently the plan: for him to restrain the audacious and to encourage the timid: for him to reprimand the deserters and to reorder the disbanded: to lead everybody in battle” (AD 65).

Since the talk is about an “**army of women**,” the priest has the rank of “**captain**”: “Today... it is the duty of the priest and most especially of the parish priest to *avail of everybody to obtain his end: to save souls*. ...Among these means of salvation and among these cooperators, one there is that is very important, very able, very effective: the woman” (DA 66).

The **complementarity between the man and the woman** is wanted both by human life and by the spiritual life: “Man in the physical order is incomplete without the woman: since if he has the strength he lacks the grace possessed by the woman: if he has intelligence, woman has the heart: once these two beings are united they complete each other and give origin to other men. Something similar is of the priestly mission and the mission of the woman: the priest teaches, communicates the charisms of grace, sanctifies from the temple: but the woman prolongs this divine influence of his up to the domestic walls; the woman brings man to the priest. The priest without the woman would lose three fourths of his influence in society, the woman without him would lose it all. As between God and man stands the priest, so between the priest and man stands the woman, the connecting link” (DA 66).

The priest must valorize the woman because her potentialities are the **plan** of Providence: “This is the providential order of the world: nor is it for us to change it; if we oppose it we would make sterile our noble ministry; if we adapt ourselves to it we shall operate with less fatigue and a hundredfold benefit” (DA 67).

2.3.7. **The zeal of the woman considered as an individual**. The various apostolates to which the woman can dedicate herself are: the apostolate of prayer, the apostolate of example, the apostolate of the word, the apostolate of works (cf DA 70-117).

For the **apostolate of the word**, Fr. Alberione emphasizes: “The priest cannot make himself heard by all; not by all is he equally understood; not by all is his word equally remembered and applied to practical life. And so the Lord has placed at the side of the priest, so that they may add to his limited force, the best among the lay people and especially the woman” (DA 90).

An **apostolate of works** that the woman can carry out with efficacy is the **press**: “First of all when a woman is endowed with culture, she can write. It is of use to say it: there is too great a number of them who could give themselves to this very noble apostolate: and yet they don’t do it! It must be perhaps a natural repugnance to pro-

duce, it must be indolence, an exaggerated persuasion of incapacity, perhaps even more often, little esteem for this great means of good. Well, let the truly extraordinary power of the press be considered: a power that each day is increasing more and more because of the increasing avidity to read” (DA 101).

Besides writing, the woman can contribute to the “**diffusion** of the good press... so as to take away the bad journal and substitute it with a good one, or at least a neutral one”; a work that “often would more useful than an alms of bread” (DA 103).

The promotion of the **reading of books** can be realized through the initiative of a **traveling library** (cf DA 104), but there are **many other activities** to be valorized: “And with these should also be recalled another holy industry: that of giving out leaflets containing sentences, or sayings of great men through the ways, the plazas, the lounges, the public trolleys, the streetcars, the trains: as also that of leaving, pretending forgetfulness, magazines and good printed stuff, everywhere: and still another pasting on the envelopes of letters, on postal packages, on walls, on the back of seats in public promenades, etc., posters containing some good sayings. And finally, that of writing on the walls of one’s house, along the stairs, etc. some good advice. All those who will read will bring with them a good thought, and those who have done it will be greatly rewarded by God” (DA 105).

The point of reference for all these apostolates remains to be the **parish priest**: “The parish priest is the one who holds the true responsibility over the souls that have been entrusted to him: to him is due as right and duty not only the main part but also the directive part of the care of souls and of pastoral action in his care. He can make use of others and it is his duty to avail of them in proportion to the needs of the environment, the ability of the cooperators and the goals that he fixes in advance. The role of others, and in particular of the woman, is to humbly back up, cooperate according to their forces and put themselves totally at his disposition. The woman’s role with respect to the parish priest, in ordinary cases, must be like that of a hand with respect to the head: a member that executes and serves, lets her needs be heard and leans on the decisions of her superior” (DA 108-109).

2.3.8. **The zeal of the woman in the family.** Since “the family is the area of work more belonging to the woman” (DA 118), her work depends on her condition as a mother, a spouse, a daughter (cf DA 118-151). The duties of a **mother** toward her children are: instruction, example, correction and vigilance. As a **spouse**, the woman must “win the heart of her husband” restraining man from evil (including “the reading of magazines and bad books”), leading him to what is good and making him an educator. In her condition as **daughter**, the woman can sow good in the house (also procuring good periodicals) and in public (through her virtues, especially modesty).

2.3.9. **The zeal of the woman in society.** The woman can carry out a true apostolate in society guided by some **clear principles**: “It does not limit itself to charity work, to lift up the situation of workers: her work goes beyond that, that is, toward the moral and religious healing of society” (DA 153). The woman must defend religion “using her pen and the word” (DA 154); her social apostolate must be a complement of her apostolate in the family; “she must not exercise the directing or teaching part: this is reserved to the Pastors and particularly to the Supreme Pastor of the Church” (DA 155); woman should limit herself “to her power to form moral conduct, not want to pretend to form laws” (DA 156); let her fight not only for beneficence, but also for justice (cf DA 157).

Besides principles, Fr. Alberione offers some **prayers “for the organization”** in view of the social apostolate of the woman, among which also a *Daily prayer to Saint Paul, protector of the good press* (cf DA 164-165).

While reviewing the **works of moral-religious character** of the social apostolate of the woman (cf DA 168-194), Fr. Alberione lists down the commitment for the **press apostolate** to be realized even by going house to house to offer the good press and setting up a traveling library (cf DA 193-194).

The **works having a social character** have as objective “to form good mothers” by establishing schools of domestic economy, hygiene, embroidery, cooking; promoting the culture of women; helping them to choose a job; lending assistance to young emigrants (cf DA 194-203).

The commitment for **works of economic character** must know how to adapt itself to the numerous female professions, setting up associations that know how to defend the interests of the working female class; procure social assistance; accomplish works of beneficence; assist the sick (cf DA 203-214).

2.3.10. **How can the priest form and guide the woman in her mission.** As being responsible for “the care of souls,” the priest must avoid **two dangers** that lead him to ignore the potential of the woman. First of all, the priestly ministry must not close itself in a small number of devotees, giving them much time without realizing in that way that “one has also neglected a thought and a prayer for the big mass of the population: much time has been lost because that small flock of devoted souls perhaps is reduced to a hundred, while the whole parish counts thousands of souls” (DA 218).

In the clergy, moreover, “one is not, in general, sufficiently prepared for the spiritual care of the woman” (DA 223), whether not attributing to it the required consideration, or satisfying or favoring a sugary spirituality.

The priest must cultivate for himself a **piety** that leads him to take care of the woman apostle in a convenient way: “One who has a deep piety will often ask himself these questions: do I work sufficiently for others? do I make use of the woman according to the order established by divine Providence?” (DA 226).

Since all the **cultural formation** of the priest is “for the salvation of souls” (DA 227), “a part of pastoral science that today must be better cultivated is that which concerns the guidance of the woman. ...It is not by being obstinate in closing our eyes that we remove evils and promote what is good, but by studying and facing old and new problems in the care of souls” (DA 227-228).

The reading of books is not enough to learn how to “guide the woman”: “There also is a study that is not done over books, but on facts. It is perhaps much more useful, because the life that we live and that is lived around us has lessons so strong that in no other place they can be had: on condition that we listen and read” (AD 231-232).

The priest who works on forming the woman can either be **too prudent** or **too zealous**; in order to find the solution “it is opportune to study, pray, seek counsel: this is prudence. Finally, it is opportune to resolve to act with all of one’s forces, as if every result depended on us and wait for the effect as if everything depended on God: this is zeal” (AD 232-233).

2.3.11. The priest has the role of “**directing the woman**”: “The word *direction* is understood here in the widest sense: including all the intense work that the priest can accomplish in favor of the religious, moral and physical good of the woman, not only in the confessional and from the pulpit, but also outside the church and in private relations” (DA 239). All the work of the priest is “directed to **two ends** which are equally

noble and holy: to form the virtuous woman to make her an apostle. ...But let us note the close connection that passes between one and the other of these ends: they are in a certain way inseparable. If one is virtuous, that is, he loves the Lord, necessarily he is zealous" (DA 239).

The spiritual formation of the woman must lead her to **act**: "But it is not sentiment that needs to be developed in the woman, but the virile force that is lacking" (DA 242). A piety lived with joy, leads the woman to goodness, to live her time and to cooperate with the priest (cf DA 244-252).

Meriting to be reported are the arguments of Fr. Alberione to exhort the priest and the woman "**to be of our time**": "Ours is the XX century and it is precisely in this century that it is up to us to live and act. We must be of this century, that is: try to understand its needs and provide for them. This is easy because God has given us a temperament, some customs related to our time and not to past times. ...Today organization has value, so let us organize what is good and good people; today love of reading is spreading, so let us provide good readings; today everybody talks about everything, so let us prepare ourselves and let us also do the talking; today they are esteemed who do something for *the people*, whose name has become the only passport to be admitted in society; well, let us also work for people. ...Let us be of our time and let us act so that the woman be also of our time. We shall make them understand that today the people thirst for truth and therefore more meritorious than the alms of bread is that offering that it awaits from the good press" (DA 249).

2.3.12. Since to the **parish priest** is due "the most delicate part of pastoral work, it is his task to call the various workers to cooperate there; it is his duty to direct with firmness his collaborators" (DA 253); he must be the **soul** of the entire pastoral work, capable of stirring up cooperators, promoting the knowledge of the faith through pastoral conferences and knowing how to drag the parishioners by means of the youth (cf DA 253-263).

If in the parish there are **other priests**, all are "more or less his cooperators. They are the arms of the parish priest and a great principle must inform their conduct: study the program and the indication of the parish priest, in the spiritual care of the woman, to back him up as much as they can" (DA 264), above all from the pulpit and in the confessional (cf DA 266-273).

2.3.13. **The formation of the woman in virtue.** "Aim at forming the mother: this is the great principle in the spiritual education of the woman" (DA 274). As basis one must consider the **catechism** for young boys and young girls (cf DA 275-276), thereafter to continue with the education of the woman in **seriousness, strength and amiability** (cf DA 277-286). Particular care the priest must have to form the woman toward **perfect continence, celibacy or matrimony** (cf DA 287-291).

The virtues of the woman are aimed at **apostolic zeal** by means of the formation imparted by the priest who must, first of all, educate her toward **responsibility** whether in the family or in the social area. Since the "pious woman is particularly timid," she needs to acquire from the priest the need of organization, understood as "**sense of the social.**" So that the acquisition may be efficacious, it is necessary to use induction, narrating facts and examples, urging the woman to visit the families to understand their reality and to make use of the results of social surveys.

Remembering the experience of a priest worker (cf DA 296) and of a French scholar (cf DA 297), Fr. Alberione invites to form the woman by "listening to the ex-

periences of life” (cf *DA* 297) and by appealing to her feminine sensibility and to her big heart (cf *DA* 298).

The woman, moreover, is to be educated to appreciate the **nobility** of her mission: “It is a divine thing to cooperate with the priest in her vocation which has no comparison on earth: teaching the truth, teaching the holiest morality” (*DA* 299).

In the face of so great a mission, it is necessary to form in the woman the conviction of the **ease** of the mission: every woman is not called to do everything, but to bring her particular contribution (cf *DA* 300-301).

Education has as its objective that of preparing for **action**: “We admire learned conferences; we advise books, journals, magazines; we believe that even more useful is private propaganda, based on conversations. But without *going into action*, we shall always obtain scarce fruits; like one who pretended to create a good musician, describing to him all the musical instruments” (*DA* 302).

In order to form the woman to action, **two pedagogical criteria** are of use: take into account the attitudes of each one and commit them gradually in an activity, thus “they will come out from the constricting circle of egoism; they will think about the mission to which they are destined” (*DA* 308).

2.3.14. **Zeal in practice.** One more time Fr. Alberione reminds of the **centrality of the parish priest**: “It is our very strict duty to respect the institutions of the Church: now, as above it was said, the basic and central organization is and must remain the parish, and the parish priest is and must remain the soul of the entire pastoral action” (*DA* 311).

The parish priest, by taking the necessary time, has the duty to formulate for his pastoral action “**a well-defined and precise program**,” studying the needs of the people, making use of home visits, conversations and surveys (cf *DA* 311-315). Once he has identified the needs, he must measure his forces and ask help from his cooperators, among whom in a special way the woman (cf *DA* 316).

Once he has known the needs of his ministry and identified the forces which he can avail of, it is wise that the parish priest **make use of what already exists with creativity** and know how to **distribute with attention the work** so that every necessity may be taken into account.

By using what already exists, the parish priest resolves to “**enlarge according to the needs of today the scopes of the past associations.**” “Today it would be ridiculous to persist in adopting the primitive systems of navigation, of printing, of military tactics, etc. Religion, the dogmas, Christian morals are immutable in their substance, but our manner of knowing and applying them progresses. The Catholic Church is indefectible and of the word of the Gospel not even a summit will fall; but the Church and the Gospel also possess a wonderful ease in adapting to the times and to men. ...Much more this has to be said of the companies, associations, religious congregations” (*DA* 318-319).

In the task of “unifying the pastoral work” and of being its “soul,” the parish priest invests much time and energy, but it is necessary that he be vigilant so as **not to neglect** “to nourish his mind and piety. If he lacks the necessary nourishment of his mind, he would become a man of the past, restricted; his judgment would not be more mature and meditated beforehand, but dragged; his action would dominate him instead of emanating as a beautiful work of freedom. If he lacks the nourishment of the spirit, he would become dry, deprived of effusion with God and of the perfume of priestly piety” (*DA* 330).

Talking about the presence of the **sisters** in the parish, Fr. Alberione says of them that “it truly seems that they are succeeding the **deaconesses** of the first centuries” because “their aims become wider according to modern needs. With good reason they were called the *sisters of the priestly zeal*” (DA 330-331).

The sisters help all needs and they enter everywhere: “beside the priest, there you see the sister” (DA 331). The parish priest has therefore the duty to promote **vocations** for the sisters, a state of Christian life wherein one tends to evangelical perfection to transform oneself: “the zeal that inflames them changes them into apostles; they are one of the most shining glories of Christianity” (DA 332).

Another delicate duty of the parish priest toward the sisters who are in his parish is their **spiritual animation**, done with respect to the Rules of their Congregations so as not to “change them into souls who are simply pious, common, ...who become inferior to simple pious old maids” (DA 334).

The involvement in the “care of souls” of the parish will take place while respecting the **charism** of every Institute that contributes to the common good. Then as to the judgments that go around regarding the **defects** of the sisters, Fr. Alberione prefers to lean on the positive contribution the sisters can give to the parish: “It is expedient that we disenchant ourselves: there are works that require a spirit of robust piety, others that demand patience and sacrifice, others that want disinterestedness: ordinarily there are none except the sisters capable of accomplishing them” (DA 338).

As **conclusion** of the book, the author, perhaps a little concerned because of some affirmation made previously, confides: “The apostolate of the press and the apostolate of the word have the same purpose: *to do something good*. Before God I seem to have had, in substance, that intention” (DA 338).

3. Summary synthesis of the contents of *ATP* and *DA*

3.1. The analysis of the two texts allows us to reassume the principal affirmations of Fr. Alberione on the **priest**, on the **care of souls** in the **parish** and on the **woman** associated with priestly zeal.

3.1.1. The **priest** is a **man for others** who sanctifies himself while sanctifying the souls entrusted to him, because his identity is to be an apostle. His spirituality and the various practices of piety are lived by him so he can carry out with fruit his ministry. With his spiritual life become mature in him those virtues that are indispensable for pastoral: obedience, chastity, humility and charity. Even study and the administration of goods have as objective the adequate preparation for ministry in the midst of people.

3.1.2. The parish priest has responsibility over **all the inhabitants** of the parish. He cannot limit his action to those who already come to church, but must direct himself to all the inhabitants of the parish. The parish priest is a **man of relations** who does not close himself in the rectory, but lives in close contact with the people, because from this immersion he draws the indications to exercise his ministry in a way that responds to the real expectations of the people. In the midst of the people, the parish priest realizes how the men of today are, because these are the ones he is called to save.

3.1.3. Because his duty is to bring persons to live a Christianity that is a **style of life** and not only truths to be believed in the abstract, ceremonies to be participated in inside the church, ethical values lived without motivation, the parish priest must cultivate a **life of integral faith** where every aspect is in close reference with the other:

truths of faith (**dogma**), liturgical life (**cult**) and social commitment with Christian values (**morals**).

3.1.4. All the commitment of the parish priest for the presentation of the integrality of Christianity as a style of life received and lived with the **entire personality** (mind, will and heart), in the family and in the environments of work, can be made vain by **books, journals** and **publications** that the people read ever more and that often “**preach**” values that are not Christian. In order to offer an alternative capable of opposing validly using the same means, the parish priest is invited to promote in the parish the **good press**, a traveling library with good books, local bulletins, magazines with Christian values. Preaching with the word must be supported and completed by the preaching of the good press (cf *ATP* 90-91; 200; 275-279; 339-343).

3.1.5. Since the parish priest is **the only center animator**, the ultimately responsible and the mind of all the pastoral activity realized in the parish, he has a very onerous and wide-ranging task; because of this he is responsible for elaborating, once placed in the position and after a period of observation, dialogs, encounters and relations with all the parishioners, a **program** (cf *ATP* 57-59) of activities that is quite precise, knowing how to involve all those who can help him, particularly **the woman** (cf *ATP* 274-275; 343-344). Everyone and everything depend on the coordination and distribution of the tasks entrusted by the parish priest.

3.2. In *DA* Fr. Alberione develops ideas on the woman and the sister already contained in his first book (cf *ATP* 134-135; 174-175; 274-275; 337; 350; 354-358), presenting all their natural and spiritual potentialities in relation to the priest.

3.2.1. The basis of the collaboration of the woman is the **identity of the priest** as a man of others, all bent toward his sanctification while sanctifying others, making use also of the indispensable help of the woman. The priest must take care of all the persons in the parish, but generally those who he frequents more are the women. To also arrive **to men** the priest has need of the woman.

3.2.2. The book of Genesis presents the creation of the woman as **a help for man** and on the spiritual level the mission of the woman is the same: the woman can guide man to faith and make him better. In order to attain better this objective, one cannot accept the program of atheistic feminism that would want woman “equal to man in all rights,” but it is necessary to assume the values of **Catholic feminism** which defends the woman for the **family** (daughter, sister, spouse, mother) and in full activity within the **domestic walls**.

3.2.3. In order to obtain more effectiveness for his ministry toward men, the parish priest avails of the woman in the family and at home, with the conviction that in this way the woman is a **priest almost**, a **deaconess** of modern times. The priest cannot ignore the **value of the woman** as she is presented in the old and new testament, in the primitive church and in the history of the church, and the indispensable work of the sisters in the parishes.

3.2.4. Vast is the field of the **apostolates** that the woman can carry out as **individual**, in the **family** and in **society**; the **press apostolate** is one of the activities wherein she can be valorized. (cf *DA* 101-105; 193-194).

3.2.5. In order to direct to the good the potentialities of the woman, the priest and particularly the parish priest, in their role as the ultimately responsible in pastoral, must acquire a particular formation, since the woman has a power of action that can be

valorized for bad or for good. Spirituality and the practices of piety, cultural formation and pastoral offer the necessary instruments so that the parish priest can form and guide the woman as apostle.

3.2.6. In order to form the woman as a **mother** also in the apostolate, it is necessary to educate her in the Christian virtues that stimulate not the flight in sentimentalism but the **social sense** and **zeal** for works in favor of others. The parish priest will use prudence in taking into account the attitudes of each one and in directing them to action with gradualist, knowing how to valorize the initiatives that already exist and distributing the work with attention. Seeing all the good that they do in the parish and in the missions, the **sisters** are to be considered as the **deaconesses** of today.

4. Ecclesiology and pastoral present in *ATP* and *DA*

4.1. The modifications suggested by Fr. Alberione to the canon Mons. Giuseppe Pistoni for the updated edition of *ATP* published in 1960, the indications supplied starting from the eighth edition of *DA* (1937) for integrations and changes and the admission on the part of the author himself who, referring to *DA*, recognizes that “the poor book has been written in 1912 and reflected its time,” are an added reason to verify the contents of the two works taking into account the **historical context**, above all **ecclesial**, of the first years of the 1900’s.

The **reform** realized by Pius X in catechesis, in the liturgy and in the social commitment is the foundation on which Fr. Alberione elaborates the profile of the priest, describes the pastoral care and the role of the laypeople, above all of the woman beside the priest.

The reformatory work of Pius X as a whole meets a certain **resistance** even in a part of the clergy, since it changes consolidated habits: truths of faith formulated more by theological affirmations rather than based on Holy Scripture; a liturgical cult in Latin understood only by priests; an ethical commitment of the laity understood as an individual act for the general observance of the commandments. Fr. Alberione, thanks also to his work as a teacher in the seminary which leads him to read books and specialized magazines, picks up the **novelty** of the papal interventions, above all for the pastoral ministry.

As we observe the reforms of Pius X at fifty years from Vatican Council II, what at that time appeared as a **novelty** for the Christian life to the more sensitive spirits, today cannot but appear with its limitations. The fact remains that in the face of the progressive moving away of the masses from the church, Fr. Alberione picks up in Pius X the will to relaunch the faith in its integrality, not only for the individual but for the whole society: “**reestablish everything in Christ**,” let the “**Christian civilization**” be born again.

The **Church** which appears in the two books of Fr. Alberione is fruit of the pastoral activity of the hierarchy, of the Pope, of the bishops and of the priests in favor of the baptized: the **active subject** is the hierarchy, the complex of the believers is the **object** of the pastoral cares.

It is an **ecclesiology** that establishes a rapport of “**essential difference**” between the “pastors” and the “flock,” not only in the practice of the pastoral ministry, but by virtue of a **theological justification**: “The Church is in its essence an unequal society, that is, it includes two categories of persons, the pastors and the flock, those who fill up an office in the different levels of the hierarchy and the multitude of the faithful;

and these categories are so distinct among them that only in the pastoral body reside the right and the authority necessary to promote and guide the members toward the end of the society. As for the multitude, it only has the duty to let itself be led and, as a docile flock, to follow its pastors.”³⁰

In this way, the only active agent in the life of the Church, by virtue of the levels in the sacred order, is the clergy, to which is entrusted in its totality the pastoral activity; only the priest holds the responsibility of the care of souls. We are therefore in the presence of a Church that is strongly **hierarchized**, in which the clergy possesses **wisdom** and **power** to guide the people. There is a “**teaching**” clergy and the people who must only learn, “**learning**”; because of this the multitude becomes accustomed to receive without collaborating.

4.2. Both the *ATP* and the *DA* have at their foundation this ecclesiology that bases all the pastoral activity on the **priestly ministry**, above all in the work of the **parish priest**, who has the exclusive task of dedicating himself to the “**care of souls**”: to be occupied full time with the spiritual salvation of every person and of all men.

If on the **theoretical level** Fr. Alberione is not an exception with respect to the magisterial ecclesiological ideas, the **observation of the social and ecclesial reality** in motion allows him to identify a mentality and operative choices that surpass the narrow ecclesiological definitions. The author, in presenting the priest as an **apostolus** who stays in the midst of the people and the woman associated in his ministry as an **apostola** who has a role that only she can adequately carry out, makes to transpire a sensitivity in research and open to innovation in pastoral.

If the priest wants to be “**a man for others**” he is advised to be “a parish priest who does not shut himself up in his rectory, who does not reduce himself to giving right and left, while going out, some aristocratic hat liftings or measured and studied greetings. A parish priest who is hospitable, affable, pleasant, has many occasions to talk with his parishioners” (*DA* 315).

He is called to “live the life of the people; not to pretend the aristocratic conduct, dry, all self-important and majestic, venerated as semigods. We must be semigods of goodness, charity, affability and as such we shall be venerated and loved, we shall be the confidants of all, searched by all” (*ATP* 134).

Some affirmations of Fr. Alberione about the **female identity** on the anthropological and ecclesial level do not differ in anything from a “**chauvinist**” vision that considers the woman as the “material and spiritual help of man,” “all heart and less reason,” confined within the domestic walls in her role as daughter, sister, spouse and mother; forbidden to aspire to absolute equality with all the rights and attributions of man; incapable of self-guidance; who cannot pretend in the Church a preponderant, teaching and governing part; to be educated to modesty to safeguard man from dangers, entrusted to the parish priest and to the priest to be formed in the virtues that produce zeal, etc.

At the **same time**, however, he talks of the “power of the woman,” of her force similar to “a great torrent” to be channeled, rich in “very precious energies that if well guided work wonders that man would not be able to achieve,” with a power of influence on man that the priest certainly cannot have, called to an “almost priesthood,” “deaconess of today,” “apostle,” etc.

³⁰ Pius X, Encyclical Letter *Vehementer nos*, 11 February 1906.

With the **theological categories** of his time, Fr. Alberione valorizes all the cooperators of the parish priest in the pastoral ministry, in a special way the woman, because they are “associated” with the priest through their works: **united with the apostle priest, they become “almost priests,” apostles in their turn.**

4.3. The **pastoral** that derives from a hierarchical ecclesiology centered on the ministerial priesthood is realized through the “care of souls,” giving priority, at times exclusive, to the **sacramental life** of the faithful, concerned only that life on earth not be of obstacle in the observance of the commandments, and in everything trusting in the clergy.

For Fr. Alberione the pastoral ministry of the parish priest, completed by the help that the woman can offer him, promotes a Christianity that is not a complex of notions, ceremonies and individual ethics, but a true integral “**style of life**” that involves the heart, mind and the will of the individual in participating in the **sacraments** and in the religious functions, understanding what is being celebrated, in knowing the **truths** of faith through preaching and the catechism, in committing oneself together with others in social life to give witness to **Christian values** in everything.

5. Ecclesiology and pastoral of ATP and DA applied to the Pauline Family

5.1. In April of 1960, declaring as done his mission as founder received from God, the Primo Maestro describes the complex of the Pauline Family as “**the directing part**” of the various pastoral activities of the Pauline parish (cf *UPS* I, 381), where “the various Institutions will have nourishment and vitality from the Society of Saint Paul. To the degree that the latter will be fervent, so will the other parts be” (*UPS*, I, 382).

After finishing the list of the Institutions of the Pauline Family, he affirms: “With these organizations, which have an international character and with their own apostolates, **the Pious Society of Saint Paul** can extend its riches to all and give to the world Jesus Christ Way, Truth and Life. The warmth and the light of life must descend from the Pauline priests, who here have a great and delicate ministry” (*UPS*, I, 20).

The prayer of Christ for **unity** must be “applied not only to an Institute, but must be lived in all the immense Pauline parish, which for limits has only the boundaries of the world, and for flock both he who is already in the fold as he who is wanted to be led to the fold” (*UPS*, I, 382).

“The Pious Society of Saint Paul and the other parts of the Pauline Family have each one their own government and administration; but the Society of Saint Paul is the animator with respect to the others” (*UPS*, I, 376). “The Pious Society of Saint Paul is like a Mother to the other Institutions and must give them the **Pauline spirit**, while it does its apostolate in conformity with the second article of the Constitutions” (*UPS*, I, 19).

The Primo Maestro entrusts to the Society of Saint Paul, “as the **Mother** of the other Institutes,” a role of “**animator**” to “give them the Pauline spirit,” above all through the work of the **Pauline priests**, from whom must “descend the warmth and the light of life.”

The **Pauline ministerial priesthood**, willed by the Founder as the foundation on which is grafted the entire Pauline Family, is to be understood in the **meaning** that has been explained in *ATP* and *DA*, thus allowing the Pauline Disciple (cf *AD* 40-41), the sisters, the members of the aggregated Pauline Institutes and the Association of Coop-

erators to exercise through the apostolate an “**almost priesthood,**” to be “**deaconesses,**” “**apostles.**”

While explaining the mission of the Daughters of Saint Paul, the Founder, after having reminded: “your mission is tied to the work of the priest,” exclaims: “What are you? I would like to say **deaconesses,** I would like to say **priestesses,** in the same way that we talk of Mary.”³¹

It is not a project to “**clericalize**” the Pauline Family and, even less, **mythicize** the figure of the “priest” with respect to all the other states of life; if we take into account the ecclesiology and the pastoral of his time, thought of and lived as a “reserved and exclusive property” of the hierarchy, we can appreciate the project of the Primo Maestro in its novelty.

Understood with the due precautions, the **true novelty** of the Primo Maestro in the ecclesiological and pastoral area is having valorized all the states of life wherein one can live and witness to the faith, grafting them to the pastoral ministry of the **priest;** the theology in which Fr. Alberione had been formed did not imagine remotely the re-discovery made by Vatican Council II regarding the “**common priesthood of the faithful**” tied to **baptism,** not to the “**ordained priesthood.**”

5.2. While observing some ecclesial changes that have happened after the appearance of *ATP* and *DA*, we find, first of all, the publication of the **Code of Canon Law** (1917) which from the ecclesiological point of view, confirms the role of the hierarchy as responsible for the pastoral activity, while the layperson is defined in relation to his “not being a cleric” (can. 948).

In order to support the creation of the JOC (*see above*, 0.3), **Pius XI** affirms that the “Catholic action of the laypersons complements that of the clergy” and that “Catholic action is the participation of the Catholic laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy.”³² In the Encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* (15 May 1931), the Pope writes: “The apostles suitable for the workers will be the workers; the apostles of the industrial and commercial world will be the industrialists and the merchants.” The laity promoted by Pius XI must form “an armed phalanx” and combat a “holy crusade” against the enemies of the faith. The Pope invites the clergy to support the work of the laity because “**Catholic action is participation in the apostolate of the hierarchy.**”

Pius XII, talking about the **Catholic laity,** writes: “The laypeople must have an ever clearer awareness that they do not only belong to the Church, but that they are Church, ...they are the Church.”³³ And talking to the world congress of the apostolate of the laity (1951), he specifies: “It is superfluous to remind that the apostolate of the laity is subordinate to the ecclesiastical hierarchy. ...Catholic action is an instrument in the hands of the hierarchy and must consider itself as the prolongation of its arm.”

Even the **identity of the priest** is a subject that the universal magisterium deals with in the papal documents. Pius XI, in the Encyclical *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii* (20 December 1935), defines the priest as the “mediator between God and men” and this category will influence a seminary formation that proposes to the future presbyter to be “*Another Christ*” through continuous effort to *imitate* Christ. Pius XII, in the Encyclical *Mystici corporis* (29 June 1943), reserves in an exclusive way to the hierarchy the triple function of priest, prophet and king.

³¹ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo, 1955*, FSP-Casa Generalizia, Roma, 2010, p. 73.

³² Pius XI, *Discorso*, 19 April 1931.

³³ Pius XII, *Discorso*, 20 February 1946.

Up until **Vatican Council II** (1962-1965) ecclesiology and pastoral, notwithstanding significant evolutions, continue to present the hierarchy and the priesthood as those truly in charge of all the pastoral activity, even if the collaboration of the laity in the apostolate becomes more and more aware of its specificity. The **Primo Maestro**, attentive to the documents and discourses of the Popes of his time, finds confirmations of what he had already written in *ATP* and *DA* and makes use of them in his animation of the Pauline Family without substantial changes.

6. Ecclesiology and pastoral according to Vatican Council II

6.1. The four **Constitutions**³⁴ of Vatican II are dedicated to the liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), to the Word of God (*Dei Verbum*), to the mission in the world of today (*Gaudium et spes*) and to the identity of the Church (*Lumen gentium*) and form the base on which lean the nine **Decrees** and the three **Declarations** that deal with specific themes.

The definition of the Church as “**trinitarian work**,” “**mystery**” and “**sacrament**,” that is summed up in the formula “**People of God**,” offers an image different from the formulations of the previous ecclesiology: “**perfect society, unequal and hierarchical**,” “**mystical body of Christ**.”

The Church is not made up only of the **ministerial and hierarchical priesthood**, but also of the **baptismal priesthood** of the members of the people of God, since she is the “**communion of the baptized**,” image of the “**trinitarian communion**” in history. The “baptismal” characteristic of the ecclesiology of Vatican II allows the attribution to all the baptized of the **triple function** priestly, prophetic and regal (*Christian: another Christ*) and the placing of the ministerial priesthood neither *above* nor *beside* nor *in the midst*, but *within* the people of God with a specific “ministry” rendered to the community, that is added to the various charisms and mansions received by others who are baptized.

The **common priesthood of the faithful** and the **hierarchical ministerial priesthood**, in their specific diversity, “are ordained to one another, since both of them, each one in its own way, participate in the one priesthood of Christ” (*Lumen gentium*, 10).

The Church, image of the Trinity guided by the Spirit, continues in time the mission of Christ sent by the Father: **the Church exists in order to evangelize**. The **missionary** dimension of the Church is her intimate essence, her reason for being entrusted to all the baptized, active subjects in all the dimensions of faith, including the commitment of social transformation through gospel values.

Every baptized is a disciple so as to be an apostle of Christ according to the gift received, living and testifying to an **integral** faith: founded on the Word of God contained in Sacred Scripture, nourished by the sacraments and committed together with others in introducing the spirit of the Gospel into every human reality.

Blessed John XXIII had fixed the general objective of the Council: “It is necessary that the Church does not move away from the sacred patrimony of the truth received from the fathers; and at the same time she also must look at the present, at the new conditions and forms of life introduced in the modern world, which have opened new ways for the Catholic apostolate.” The Church in order to be missionary in an effective way must know how to read the **signs of the times** that certainly affect pastoral activ-

³⁴ Date of approval: *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December 1963; *Dei Verbum*, 18 November 1965; *Gaudium et spes*, 7 December 1965; *Lumen gentium*, 21 November 1964.

ity: “one is the substance of faith, or the truth, ...another is the formulation of its outer coating and it is of this that we must take great account.”³⁵

Among the most relevant signs of the times, the decree *Inter mirifica* (4 December 1963) puts the **instruments of social communications**: “The Church ...deems it as her duty to also make use of the instruments of social communication to preach the announcement of this salvation and to teach men the right use of the same instruments” (n. 3).

6.2. The Primo Maestro was invited to participate as a **Father** with deliberative vote in the Council. His contributions, interventions and notes have been gathered with diligence by Fr. Andrea Damino in the volume *Don Alberione al Concilio Vaticano II* (Fr. Alberione in Vatican Council II).³⁶ It would be very useful to gather also **all the interventions** that from the announcement of the Council and, in particular during its celebration and after its conclusion, the Primo Maestro has shared with the members of all his foundations.

I want to mention, first of all, two of his writings, very similar, in commenting the decree *Inter mirifica* and referring **to the Pauline apostolate**: “our apostolate, approved, praised and established as a duty for the whole Church, ...press, cinema, radio, television and the like. ...The Pauline activity is declared as an apostolate, alongside preaching, surrounded by high esteem in the presence of the Church and of the world.”³⁷

To the Sisters of Jesus Good Shepherd he has several times explained that: “The whole Council is ordained to pastoral”³⁸ and has summarized for them the various conciliar documents in “**pastoral key**.”³⁹

Since the Founder has seen and interpreted Vatican II as an entirely “pastoral” Council, without official pronouncements, he has lived the ecclesial event with a **great joy** that he has communicated to his spiritual sons and daughters, because he has seen his foundations confirmed and validated, all of them conceived and structured by him as “pastoral.”

The conviction of “**having preceded the Council**” was widespread also among the Paulines, even reaching affirmations like these: “We don’t need updating, because for some time we do what now appears to be a novelty. Others must update themselves, not us!” Such euphoria, perhaps, has enabled to pick up just one part of the Council, **minimizing or ignoring** its profound changes, above all on the theological level. The **Special General Chapter of 1969-1971** will commit the Congregation in a more balanced reflection so as to integrate the Pauline charism in the totality of Vatican II.⁴⁰

7. Actualization of the ecclesiology and pastoral of the Pauline charism

7.1. Availing ourselves of the profundity of the texts of **Vatican Council II**, of the fifty years of **post-council universal magisterium** for its application and interpretation, of the abundance of reflections of the **Synods** in concomitance with the year 2000, of the mobilization of the ecclesial community for a **new evangelization**, of the

³⁵ Giovanni XXIII, *Discorso di apertura del Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano II*, 11 October 1962.

³⁶ Andrea Damino ssp, *Don Alberione al Concilio Vaticano II*, Archivio Storico Generale FP, Rome 1994.

³⁷ *San Paolo*, December 1963; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, cit., p. 323.

³⁸ *Alle Suore di Gesù Buon Pastore*, 1964, cit., n. 340.

³⁹ Cf *Alle Suore di Gesù Buon Pastore, 1966-1967-1968*, cit., nn. 44-61.

⁴⁰ Cf *Documenti Capitolari*, Capitolo Generale Speciale 1969-1971, Casa Generalizia SSP, Rome 1972 and Alba 1982.

changes in **society, culture and communication** and at almost a **hundred years** from the birth of our Congregation, we have the duty to “**think**” together regarding the Pauline charism, identifying the “**unchangeable elements**” inherited from the Primo Maestro and elaborating them with a **new formulation** based on the theological statements of the ecclesiology and pastoral of Vatican II.

7.1.1. Bearing in mind the **contents** of *ATP* and *DA*, the **application** that the Primo Maestro has made of them to the Pauline Family, and the **affirmations** of Vatican Council II, we can lay down as **basis** of the entire Pauline charism that of making ourselves the object of Christ’s invitation: “*Come ye all to me*” (Mt 11,28) and as **apostolic objective** the program of Saint Paul: “*I have made myself all for all*” (1Cor 9,22). The essential characteristic of the Pauline ecclesiology and pastoral is to be “**missionary**”: to share with all the experience of faith in Christ dead and risen. The exclamation of Saint Paul: “Woe to me if I don’t evangelize!” (1Cor 9,16) is the force that is emanated from the true experience of meeting with Christ; the progressive forming in us of Christ (cf Gal 4,19) has for purpose to imitate Christ “**sent by the Father.**”

7.1.2. The parish priest of *ATP* and *DA* has as mission that of being “a man for others”; the Pauline apostle is exhorted to become like a “**vessel**” that is filled with Christ in order afterward to pour him to others; the baptized described by the Council is a witness: **sanctification** is not “**solitary**” but “**social,**” “**in solidarity**” with the salvation of one’s neighbor. It is necessary to sanctify oneself to sanctify others; love for God verified by love for neighbor; true contemplation leads to action; to be a disciple so as to be an apostle; to pause with God not to flee but to return among the people; not to isolate oneself in the woods but to immerse oneself in the cities.

7.1.3. Like the parish priest in *ATP* and *DA* and the priest described by the Council (cf *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 14), the Founder has thought and structured the **elements** of the Pauline life in such a way that they converge in forming and nourishing continually the **apostle**: the spirituality and the practices of piety, the human formation and the social virtues, the cultural preparation, including the systematic initiation in communication and the mastery of languages, the four vows of consecration and the community life, the specialization and in view of the apostolate and apostolic work realized together with others, continuing formation, knowledge and relations with the Pauline Family.

7.1.4. The parish priest and the woman in *ATP* and *DA* have the task of collaborating to “save the men of today;” the Paulines work for “the men who live today, not for those who have lived centuries ago;” the Council has been celebrated to dialog with the men of today who live in the midst of profound changes.

Pastoral is in view of the **persons of today** and the public, to which the Pauline wants to offer his testimony by means of his apostolate, is an integral part of his apostolic identity.

Not having as its public the inhabitants of a territorial parish, but the “Pauline parish that is as big as the whole world,” the **knowledge of the persons**, among whom the Pauline lives and who can be the interlocutors of his apostolate, takes place through various instruments: the descriptions offered by the specialized human sciences in the observance of society, of culture and of the conduct of believers; the analyses of the development of the “religious” products; the constant monitoring of the diffusion of our apostolic production; the marketing surveys conducted with pastoral objectives; the indications that emerge from the pastoral plan of the bishops; the analyses of the

national conference of the religious; the texts of the universal magisterium; the direct participation in social and cultural events, spectacles and local entertainments; the observation of what is produced and draws the interest of the public in the various forms of communication; the systematic study of the world of the youth, etc.

Starting from the first moments of his foundation, **sociology** has been for the Primo Maestro an indispensable discipline “to save the men of today”; in fact, if the theological reason to collaborate with the mission of Christ is priority on the level of supernatural motivation, a project of Pauline pastoral lays down as point of operative start the **public** with which it intends to enter into communication.

7.1.5. The parish ministry in *ATP* and *DA* has as its objective that of involving the believer in the integrality of the life of faith and to introduce in society the Christian values; the editorial priorities fixed by the Primo Maestro for the Congregation aim at an explicit preaching of the “whole Christ” and at a valorization of all that is human; the Council, besides presenting the totality of the life of faith, expands its dialog with ecumenism, with the other religions and with all men “of good will.” The **contents** of the experience of faith communicated by the Paulines and by their apostolate are based on the Alberionian criterion: “**to present the total Christ**”⁴¹ and “**not to talk only of religion, but to talk of everything in a Christian way**” (*AD* 87): faith presented in its integrality and all the human reality considered in the light of the Gospel.

To live and to communicate to others the Gospel of Jesus Christ Way, Truth and Life in the spirit of the apostle Saint Paul and under the gaze of Mary Queen of Apostles (cf *AD* 93) is that which constitutes the **Pauline spirit**. The specific of the experience of faith of the apostle and of the Pauline apostolate is “**the Gospel as interpreted by Saint Paul.**”

By will of the Founder, the Society of Saint Paul at the start and then afterward the entire Pauline Family have the task of being in the Church of every time, “**Saint Paul living today.**” The centrality of Saint Paul as father, teacher, model and founder is **one of the unchangeable elements** of the Pauline charism that is not exhausted in adopting the “new means of apostolate,” but it wants to continue in the ecclesial community the “**Gospel of Paul**”: his manner of understanding, living and preaching Christ. The Pauline Family does not offer to the Church only “new apostolates,” but the experience of faith in Christ as it has been conceived, lived and preached by Saint Paul. If we want to renew the Pauline charism, let us deepen the letters of **Saint Paul** and his apostolate.

7.1.6. The numerous references to the power of the press that disseminates values that are not Christian, the exhortations for the diffusion of the good press (books, journals, magazines, bulletins, publications, etc.), the usefulness of parish libraries, present in *ATP* and *DA*, are motivated by the conviction that the press is “**an alternative preaching**” that cannot hinder the preaching of the parish priest. Upon starting his first foundation, the Primo Maestro describes the press apostolate as a true preaching, a new evangelization by means of “**written preaching**,” which has the same dignity as “**oral preaching**” and they mutually complete each other.

Evangelization using the press and afterward the other mass media and with “the fastest and most effective means that progress will invent,” constitutes an **immutable** element of the Pauline charism.

⁴¹ Cf also *AD* 160; *San Paolo*, December 1957, II; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, cit., p. 862.

The Founder has not been the first nor the only one to think and act so as to place the press at the service of the Christian life, but certainly he is the one who through the Congregation has started in the Church a “**priestly ministry**” that evangelizes using the press, since the parish priestly ministry is not sufficient anymore to “preach the Gospel to everybody,” in particular to those who don’t come anymore to church. The press is not just a help to the parish priest: it is a “new” and “original” parish priest.

“The four pious women who receive communion every morning, the four young men who gather around the parish priest every evening, are not the whole town, are not all the people: many other sheep stay outside the fold and they do not come to the Pastor because they do not know him, perhaps because they oppose him, and they oppose him because they do not know him. It is necessary to save all the souls: it is necessary that the Pastor go to them: today you go to these souls with the press.”⁴²

Explaining the distinction between the “good press” and the “apostolate of the good press,” the Primo Maestro affirms: “To operate this good press, men who know are enough; to operate instead the press apostolate, a priestly heart and soul are necessary. **It is an apostolate that is eminently priestly.**”⁴³

At the General Congress of the States of Perfection (Rome, 26 November 1950), the Primo Maestro explains to all the Superior Generals: «The priest preaches to a small haggard flock, with churches almost empty in many regions... They leave us the temples, when they leave them to us, and they take the souls. It will be useful to consider the words of Card. Elia Dalla Costa: “...either we look courageously at reality beyond the small world that is around us, and so we see as urgent the need for a radical upheaval of mentality and method; or else in the space of a few years we shall have created a desert around the Master of life; and life, justly, shall eliminate us as dead branches, useless, cumbersome.”»⁴⁴

Preaching making use of the press is the **mentality**, the **method** and the **new means** for the evangelization that Fr. Alberione offers to the ecclesial community starting 1914. The universal magisterium regarding communication that the Founder has preceded and accompanied, and the conciliar decree *Inter mirifica* have inspired and confirmed his thought and work.

The various texts offered by the universal magisterium which have accompanied the evolution of the phenomenon of communication, the systematic study of the change of the nature itself of communication, which from the complex of technologies to communicate has become a true culture and today, thanks to the digital language, is a second environment of individual and social life, are a **constant stimulus** for the Pauline charism to “**convert itself**” so as to become more pastoral and to renew itself in thought and initiatives, so as to remain **young** and contemporary.

7.1.7. The parish priest of *ATP* and *DA* is the only one responsible in the “care of souls,” but if he wants to realize with effect his mission, he needs to form some “**cooperators**” and, among these, the **woman**. Vatican Council II, through the ecclesiology of the people of God founded on baptism, involves all the faithful, in various and complementary ways, in evangelization. Soon after founding our Congregation, the

⁴² *Unione Cooperatori Buona Stampa*, 28 October 1922; cf *La primavera paolina*, edited by Rosario F. Esposito ssp, Rome 1983, p. 645s.

⁴³ *Unione Cooperatori Buona Stampa*, 20 January 1926; cf *La primavera paolina*, cit., p. 668f.

⁴⁴ *San Paolo*, November 1950; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, cit., p. 807.

Primo Maestro founds the **Daughters of Saint Paul** to involve the woman in the press apostolate, convinced of what he had written in *ATP* and *DA*. It would be easy to document how, in various ways but without exception, also **all the other Institutions** of the Pauline Family have been involved in the **press apostolate**, whether complementing the **preaching** of the Society of Saint Paul, or as one of the means to realize the specific apostolate. Reassuming the Pauline spirituality and the Pauline apostolates for the Annunciationists, the Founder affirms: “So we adopt especially the technical means as **center** of the Pauline Family.”⁴⁵

During the **fortieth** of foundation of the Society of Saint Paul, the Primo Maestro recognizes: “From 1904 until 1944 there was always a certain internal travail due to the fundamental problem: how to preserve the unity of spirit and at the same time the administrative and directive independence among the four Pauline Congregations (the Pauline Family at that time)” (*AD* 131); “Follow the Canon Law, in force since 1917 and search for spiritual unity in Jesus Christ the Divine Master” (*AD* 132).

All the concerns coming from how to organize the unity and the diversity of the Institutions of the Pauline Family, not only until 1944 but until 1971, do not change a constant conviction of the Founder: **put together the man and the woman, the priest and the sister in a single spirituality and in convergent apostolates.**

During the month of spiritual exercises of **1960**, the Primo Maestro, talking about the rapport “**man and woman,**” “**priest and sister,**” repeats the convictions of *ATP* and *DA*: “The woman, even if she is consecrated to God, needs the Priest; the Priest must make use in many apostolates of the woman, apostolates more proper for her. Thus Divine Providence, together with the Society of Saint Paul, has made to be born the Sisters Daughters of Saint Paul, Pious Disciples, Pastorelle, Apostoline” (*UPS*, III, 184; cf 182-185).

During the extraordinary spiritual exercises of the Daughters of Saint Paul in **1961**, the Founder reprises the **same conviction**: “It is always in this way: at the beginning of every good thing and at the beginning of every bad thing there is always the woman, as so many writers and history confirm. It is necessary therefore that we think what contribution can come from the woman to the Church, to humanity. It is for this that the Pauline Family has not been conceived. The Lord has not willed it composed only of men, but has willed it composed also of women.”⁴⁶

The necessity of **collaboration between man and woman** is the theme of an almost testamentary “**declaration**” of Fr. Alberione: “Our female Institutes, according to the divine dispositions, should have at their side with parallel end a respective male institute. Thus the Daughters of Saint Paul beside and with parallel end the Pious Society of Saint Paul. Concretely: the Pious Disciples for liturgy and Priests for the liturgy and adorations. Pastorelle and Pastors. Apostoline and Apostles. It is not possible for me to do all, since young boys should be prepared until priesthood. ... This is the holy inheritance, for my successors to complete the work” (*AD* 345-348).

The Pauline parish, made up of the Institutions of the Pauline Family, flows together into an “**army**”: “The Holy See for the works of general interest has at hand the army of the Religious. ... One spends his life well when he serves the Church, the Pope” (*UPS*, I, 383). The Pauline Family offers to the ecclesial community at least three contributions: **the spirituality of Saint Paul; evangelization in communication**

⁴⁵ *Meditazioni per consacrare secolari*, cit., p. 486.

⁴⁶ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo. Spiegazione delle Costituzioni, 1961*, cit., n. 440.

as priestly ministry, strengthened by the other Pauline apostolates; the possibility to be Pauline apostles in the various states of Christian life (priests, consecrated laity, sisters, consecrated laymen and laywomen in secularity, cooperators).

8. Ecclesiology and pastoral of the Pauline charism today

8.1. We are living with the entire ecclesial community the **Year of Faith**, on the occasion of the fifty years of Vatican Council II, and a mobilization in thought and initiatives for a **new evangelization**. The Church, after the experience of Vatican II and motivated by the papal documents: *Ecclesiam suam* (Paul VI, 6 August 1964), *Evangelii nuntiandi* (Paul VI, 8 December 1975), *Redemptoris missio* (John Paul II, 7 December 1990) and by the *Esortazioni apostoliche*⁴⁷ fruit of the continental Synods of the Jubilee of 2000, has become more aware of her identity: **her reason for being is evangelization**.

The Pauline charism, right from the beginning, has received this task, in which converge ecclesiology and pastoral. Its **pastoral objectives**, to be realized through communication, have been conceived in an **ecclesiology** centered on the hierarchy and the ministerial priesthood. Through the ecclesiology of communion, of the people of God, of the common priesthood of the faithful, through the universal magisterium regarding communication, the pastoral reason for being of the Congregation has been confirmed, expanded and better valorized. We feel that we are fully integrated in the Church delineated by Vatican II.

8.2. Applying the ecclesiology and the pastoral of the Council to the internal relations of the Pauline Family, as it has been left to us as inheritance by Primo Maestro, we can call to mind some themes.

The role that Fr. James Alberione has carried out as founder of all our Institutions is **unique and unrepeatable**: what he has accomplished no one else after him can realize. The role of **animator**, which he has desired to reserve to the Society of Saint Paul and, in particular, to the Superior General, in order to be realized with efficacy needs first of all a reliable historical research, as it has been started in the V Meeting of the General Governments of the Pauline Family (12-20 September 1987), dealing with the theme *Il ministero dell'unità nella Famiglia Paolina*.⁴⁸

Besides the historical research regarding the will and the plan of the Founder, in order to attribute an adequate and real meaning to the function of **animator** of the Society of Saint Paul, it is necessary to deepen the change that has been in the ecclesiology regarding the relations and the competences of the **ministerial priesthood** and the **baptismal priesthood** of all the faithful.

The Primo Maestro has given an innovative practical interpretation to 1Pt 2,9 (cf AD 41), extending an **almost pastoral priesthood** to the consecrated layman, to the sister, to the consecrated laypersons in secularity and to the Pauline cooperators, but from the ecclesiological point of view he has grafted it to the priesthood of the presbyter.

Since, in its own way, the **triple ministerial function**, with the priesthood of the people of God, is realized by every believer, the apostolates of the Pauline Family find their **justification and dignity** in baptism.

⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 14 September 1995; *Ecclesia in America*, 22 January 1999; *Ecclesia in Asia*, 6 November 1999; *Ecclesia in Oceania*, 22 November 2001; *Ecclesia in Europa*, 28 June 2003.

⁴⁸ Cf *Il ministero dell'unità nella Famiglia Paolina*, Archivio Storico Generale FP, Rome 1987, quaderno 17.

The ecclesiastical expansion that derives from the identity of the Paulines from Vatican II can be an opportunity to give an actual significance to the role of the Pauline priesthood for the other Institutions: **conserve and nourish the Pauline spirit**. This specific task is realized through the **priestly ministry** for the Pauline communities and, in a particular way, through promoting the **charismatic values** of the Pauline Family: **only one spirituality** centered on Christ the Divine Master Way, Truth and Life as understood by **Saint Paul** (cf *UPS*, III, 187), the **style of the Pauline life**: everything for the mission, what is **specific** in every apostolate which however must be **convergent** and **complementary** with all the others.

For the apostolate of the Society of Saint Paul the ecclesiology and the pastoral of Vatican II have offered a **base**, which is even more solid, to the original intuition of Fr. Alberione to realize the press apostolate and communication not only as a **pastoral activity**, but as a true “**ordained priesthood**.” Fr. Alberione has not thought of the “priest writer” only from the pastoral point of view, so that he may carry out a partial activity which finds elsewhere its totality, but with the ecclesiological foundation that commits full time, because it is complete like oral preaching. The **priesthood as ordained ministry in communication** is exercised on the model of Saint Paul, sent to preach, not to baptize (cf 1Cor 1,17), and transforming preaching into a liturgical act (cf Rom 15,16). God pleasing, the theme of the Pauline priesthood in communication will be the theme of the next year with the study and actualization for digital communication of *Unione Cooperatori Buona Stampa* (Union of Cooperators for the Good Press) (1918-1927) and *Apostolato stampa* (Press apostolate) (1933).

8.3. If the Pauline charism by its nature is “pastoral” and makes the Pauline Family conceived by the Founder all “for pastoral,” it is worthwhile to reflect on how the ecclesiology and the pastoral of Vatican II affect the **evangelization** realized through the Pauline apostolates.

A research that involves all the Institutions of the Pauline Family to document the indications given by the Founder to describe the Pauline spirituality as **unitary project**, has sense only if it is completed by the study of how this common spirituality is “**given**” to the others through the **convergence and complementarity of the apostolates**: “to live and to give to the world,” not only “to live closed in our communities” in quiet contemplation.

During the existence of the Primo Maestro, the Institutions that have appeared in succession, in their progressive formulation of identity have found a **convergence**, established by the Primo Maestro himself, in their participation in the apostolate of the Society of Saint Paul. After Vatican II and the demise of the Primo Maestro, also with the collaboration between the Superior General and the General Superiors and with the experience of regular yearly meetings of the General Governments, an apostolic autonomy has been consolidated which has found a **unity of intents** as a declared intention, but also with episodes of **divergences** and **solitary travels** on the operative level.

On the vigil of the Centenary of the birth of the Pauline charism, to feel ourselves as Pauline Family, it is opportune **to ask ourselves** if we want to delegate to the omniscience of divine Providence the unity of our respective apostolates or if we must listen to the observations that sometimes come from people in charge in the local Churches, if to take note of the comments of those who make use of our apostolates and to listen to the desire for collaboration present in Pauline confreres and Pauline sisters.

Besides the “**unitary project**” of the common spirituality we should feel the need for a “**convergent apostolic project**” of the various Pauline apostolates, elaborated together with a minimal programming, but shared by all. I believe that the **priority themes** of such an apostolic project could be: vigilance, so that our apostolates may be “**Pauline**,” fruit and promoters of an experience of faith that finds in **Saint Paul** its model; systematic observance of the **pastoral dimension** of our apostolates through the attentive study of the changes among our **interlocutors** today, rather than “recipients”; adequate mental and operative assimilation of **digital communication** with the consequences that derive from it for all the components of the Pauline life.

The Pauline pastoral is communication

In thinking about and designating the Pauline charism in its **pastoral** identity, of comfort and stimulus to us are the words of the Primo Maestro who assures us of having left us a charism that remains **always young** as long as it realizes its mission to “**evangelize the men of today with the means of today**”: “There are articles in the Constitutions that do not allow the Pauline Family to grow old or to make itself useless in society: it will be enough that they be well interpreted and made operational: always there will be new initiatives and based on the one and only apostolate” (AD 130).

If it is true that “the mission renews the Church, invigorates the faith and the Christian identity, gives new enthusiasm and new motivations. *Faith becomes strong when you give it!*”⁴⁹ The **Pauline charism** finds in evangelization employing communication its permanent **springhead of youth**.

With fraternal affection.

Rome, 20 August 2013

99th of foundation of the Society of Saint Paul



Don Silvio Sassi

Fr. Silvio Sassi, SSP
Superior General

⁴⁹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 7 December 1990, n. 2.

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August 2013 – Pro manuscripto