

SOCIETÀ SAN PAOLO
il segretario generale



"As we have been united in the profession of faith, so let us keep ourselves united in suffrage and intercession."

(Fr. Alberione)

At 7,15 (local time) this morning, in the hospital “Luigi Spolverini” of Ariccia (Rome), our brother priest has returned to the house of the Father.

FR. EMILIO ILARIO CORDERO
93 years, 78 of Pauline life, 75 years of religious life, 67 of priesthood

Fr. Emilio had suffered a femoral fracture last Saturday and has been taken to the “Spolverini” hospital the following day. He has passed away due to pulmonary edema, following complications originating from the femoral fracture, because of which he was waiting to be operated.

To write about Fr. Emilio means at the same time to recall a pioneer in the ways of our apostolate employing the means of social communication and to evoke a bold stretch of the Congregation’s history in Italy that has the markings of the heroism of the first hour.

Born in Priocca (Cuneo) on 2 April 1917, the young Emilio enters the Congregation on 12 February 1932. On 21 October of 1934 he starts his novitiate in Alba, which he concludes making his first religious profession on 22 October 1935, during which he assumes the professional name of Ilario. In Alba Fr. Emilio makes his studies in theology and receives the priestly ordination through the hands of Mons. Luigi Maria Grassi on 29 June 1943.

During his first years as a priest (1943-1945) we see him committed in the shipping Department and as assistant of the clerics, but already at this time he starts to think of film work. His lucky finding in the midst of discarded paper, in time of paper scarcity, of two complete volumes of the magazine *Cinema* which he reads avidly, as he himself relates in some pages, are for him a sign; he receives confirmation of it from the Primo Maestro, who already made plans for the reprise of cinematographic activity in the postwar years. In fact, the film sector had been started in the 1930’s by Fr. Delpoggetto, upon assignment by Fr. Alberione, sensitive to the appeals of the Popes regarding the new means; and he had lived a fortunate “peak” with the film *Abuna Messias*, winner in the Venice Film Festival, year 1939. But the war had blocked every subsequent project.

Immediately after the war he attends in Turin the FERT, a movie complex with studios, where he learns the first rudiments of the “trade,” while the Primo Maestro recommends to him also the necessary spiritual preparation, since it is “a very difficult and dangerous task and so much of God’s grace and prudence is required.” Still in 1945 he finds himself in Milan, where he remains until 1947, in contact with a school for Catholic cinema; here he accomplishes the “first round of handling,” as he himself testifies, for the film *Hans*, which the Primo Maestro did not like. Thus he moved forward to *Inquietudine* (anxiety) and to *Il piccolo ribelle* (the young rebel), realized in 1946 in the midst of difficulties of every kind, lack of experience, never enough money and Fr. Alberione’s perplexity. They were still unrealistic experiments, full of good will but wanting in true professional dignity. It was realized that for the moment it was necessary to renounce one’s own production and to fall back to the commercialization of others’ products. Meanwhile, in 1947, he was transferred to Rome. Thus follow the difficult years of organization: the diffusion of 16 mm films through the bookstores of the Paulines and of the Daughters of Saint Paul. In this way was formed the embryo of what would have been the agencies of Sampaolofilm. The enthusiastic

response of the parishes was not long in coming. In 1948 activity catches on. In 1949 he realizes a documentary on the Pauline life and apostolate with the title *Missionari della metropoli*. The need is then perceived to organize one's own production, thus making the necessary steps and acquisitions.

The Pauline society for movie production, which at the start was called REF (1939-1951), after some name changes, became in 1956 Sampaolofilm; the plants which initially were in via Alessandro Severo, were transferred to via Portuense, in Villa San Giuseppe.

They were years of fervor, of intense activity and of expansion, "like a heart palpitation," as Fr. Emilio writes in a note about the birth and growth of Sampaolofilm, of which he is in charge until 1971. They are years in which it is necessary to think out and organize everything: what was cinema about, what was the apostolate of cinema, how to translate all this to a structured and organized activity. To make up for the many difficulties and shortages was the enthusiasm and motivation of many confreres, so that it became possible to pass from 12 titles made in 1947 to 44 (of which 5 in color) in 1950. Exactly in that year, following an idea of the Primo Maestro, Fr. Emilio makes the film *Mater Dei*, the first film in Anscocolor shot in Italy and restored in 2007. The sector rapidly grows, reaching 91 films (of which 48 are acquired) in 1958 and 106 (50 acquired) in 1960. Together with films of entertainment are products of catechetical-formative character which meet with good success. In various films even the Primo Maestro besides Maestra Thecla have been included in the shots. The rapid development of the sector already in 1952 suggested putting up one's own plant for reduction, development and printing, which expanded with the years. To be remembered also are the catechetical documentaries 1952-1953, a pioneering series of 53 short films (inspired by the Catechism of Pius X) on the Creed, the commandments and the sacraments that resulted in an extraordinary diffusion. On the occasion of the first ciak in via di Grottaperfetta the then cardinal Montini was present.

The activity continued feverishly and the 1960's saw also some attempts in the great style of biblical films in the colossal style typical of those years. Going back to the same period is also the attempt, unrealized, to make a film on saint Paul using the script of Pasolini, already acquired.

The activity is tiring and Fr. Emilio realizes he has to hand over to others the responsibility of Sampaolofilm. So he asks to change assignment. We therefore find him as director of the Sampaolofilm agency in Cinisello Balsamo (1971-1977) and in Bari (1977-1980). The wear and tear of an intense activity and the problems connected to a form of depression force him to retirement: he leaves the work that has seen him committed for many years, to go to Alberione house in Albano (1980-2010), where he has stayed for the following thirty years, doing little services for the house, ministering as confessor in the Hospital Regina Apostolorum and helping some confrere.

May the life of this confere be an example and stimulus for us for apostolic zeal in the search for new ways of evangelization and in the concern to translate apostolic dreams and projects into concrete, solid, and far-sighted structures and apostolic organization. We entrust him to the Divine Master who has called him to himself, accompanying him with our prayers of suffrage and asking for his intercession for the Paulines that enter farther into the third millennium, so that we may have faith, courage, zeal and concreteness.

Rome, 28 August 2010

Fr. Vincenzo Vitale

His funeral will be held in Rome, in the Sanctuary of the Queen of Apostles (via Alessandro Severo), on Sunday 29 August at 4 p.m.; presiding in the celebration will be the Superior General Fr. Silvio Sassi. His body will then be brought to Alba, where there will be a celebration on Monday 30, at 3 p.m. in the Temple of Saint Paul, to be buried afterward in the Pauline cemetery of Alba.

I Superiori di Circoscrizione informino le loro comunità per i suffragi prescritti (Cost. 65 e 65.1)