



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

(Fr. Alberione)

At 1:00 a.m. yesterday (local time), 8 July 2012, the Divine Master has called to his eternal reward our brother Priest

**FR. DOMENICO BENEDETTO SPOLETINI**

***91 years, 78 of Pauline life, 71 of religious profession, 64 of priesthood***

Fr. Benedetto – “Benito,” as he was already called in Spanish by all – was born in Bellegra (Rome), on 23 May 1921. He wanted to enter the seminary, but the places were already filled; providentially, thanks to contacts with the Daughters of Saint Paul, who came for diffusion in his town, and to knowing two Paulines passing by his parish priest, Fr. Benito passed the threshold of the Congregation on 30 January 1934, in the house of Rome. About his first impressions of the “house” he remembers, in an interview published in *Il Cooperatore Paulino* (November 2007): “A great poverty, much cordiality and immediately – less than an hour after my entrance – at work, folding the *Il Giornalino* in the apostolate.” In Rome he also had the chance to meet for the first time blessed Timothy Giaccardo, that gave him quickly “the sensation of knowing a ‘saint’.” Of those years he will still remember the presence of formators and confreres who influenced much, as “living examples,” his formation as a Pauline: “In them,” he affirms, “we saw the Pauline ideal made incarnate. The fundamental Pauline principles, both spiritual and missionary, we received from the examples of the elders and less from the ‘sermons’.”

At the end of the novitiate, lived in Alba, he made here his first religious profession on 18 September 1940. After a deep interior crisis, from which he came out strengthened in his vocation, thanks to the wise and understanding guidance of the Founder and to a book lent to him by a friend, which “saved” him, as later on he affirmed, he made his perpetual profession on 8 September 1945, in Rome, to be then ordained a priest on 3 August 1947 in Alba.

A short time after, in 1948, the Founder sent him to Santiago del Cile, together with Fr. Giuseppe Spuria. In this city, where the house had just been started (1947) and in which he stayed until 1961, he worked little by little in the bookstore, of which he was the manager, (1948-1958), in school teaching the young men, as bursar and with the Pauline cooperators. In 1961 it's the turn of Venezuela, where he remained until 1969, filling the office of director of the CEPLA (Centro Ediciones Latino-americanas, which later on became the CIDEP, 1961-1967) and the offices of superior and bursar (1967-1969).

In 1969 he was called to Italy to participate in the Special Chapter of the Congregation (1969-1971), in which he did not fail to give significant contributions. He then resumed studies at the Pontifical Lateran University (1971-1973), receiving a licence, aware of the need to prepare himself in the best of ways for the Pauline mission. After a year in Ariccia, then the seat of the Center of Pauline Spirituality, with which he collaborated, he was transferred to Albano Laziale, where he became director of *Vita pastorale* (1972-1976).

In 1976 he was sent again to America, this time in Colombia: here he assumed the direction of the editions and was consultant of CELAM (Episcopal Conference of Latin America) for the communications sector. Finally in 1982 he returned to the Province of Argentina - Chile - Perù, in Santiago del Cile, where again he was director of the editions (1984-1987). Starting 1987 he was in Florida (Buenos Aires), committed as local superior and in redaction; in 1991 he returned yet another time to Santiago del Cile, for a decade, lending his service as master of the novices, in redaction and in the Center of Spirituality. Finally, in 2001 he is transferred to Cordoba, where he works again in redaction and continues the work of intense spiritual animation of the Pauline Family; he has also been superior here (2005-2007).

A tireless Pauline writer, Fr. Benito, leaves many books, articles and pamphlets published in many countries and in various languages. But he never neglected the spiritual animation in the Pauline Family and in the Pauline youth movements.

In 2007, during the interview already mentioned, at the question what recommendation he would give to the young men, he answered without hesitation: "First of all, fall in love with the "House," with the Congregation, with the Pauline Family; feel them as your own. Do not settle down, but live in full availability to the mission. Always be ready to fill up the positions that they assign us, without waiting to be very prepared and without aspiring for recognition." He was also convinced of the need for a cultural preparation: "I see with pain and concern the general indifference toward study, reading, updating... and I ask myself what contents shall we transmit, through the means of social communications, with that shortage. The means will become toys and we shall continue to "print" and disseminate what others elaborate, often without the just discernment if they are valid matters or not" (letter to Fr. Eliseo Sgarbossa, 25 January 1983). The values that he believed to be foundational for a Pauline life he summed up in this way: "The profound and lively conviction that ours is a charism of the Spirit given to the Church to evangelize today; and that, being called to this service, we must assume it with seriousness and without waiting for rewards. The reward is already in the service. God will do the rest. And then prayer, much prayer, and a sincere love for the Church, 'holy and in need of continuous conversion.' Nothing helps so much as love for her."

An image of an outstanding Pauline, active on many fronts, firmly convinced that the "world parish" surpasses the "particular parish" and that "today it is possible to evangelize with the means of communication in a more efficient way," he did not fail to keep pace also with the development of the new means: first radio and television, where he participated in TV programs, and, notwithstanding his advanced age, he got interested in the internet, redacting short meditations, as demanded by this means, which he had titled "vitamins of digital evangelization."

As a Pauline he has contributed to keep alive the charismatic and historical memory of the Congregation, by research and also by his own recollections, which he presented not as nostalgic recallings of the past but as memory to make us "strain forward": "Celebration, and not commemoration. One commemorates the past with the risk of being trapped in it. On the contrary, one celebrates life; one celebrates the God who is the friend of life (Wis 11,26), the God present in the midst of his people to guide it to ever higher and farther horizons" (homily on the occasion of the 50 years of Pauline presence in Chile, in 1997). Always attentive to ecclesial problems, seen in the historical, social and political context of the Latin American nations; assiduous reader of the documents of the Congregation, to which he gave value in a work of intelligent dissemination, which offered keys for reading and pertinent and inculturated updatings. Often in dialog with the General Superiors, he offered his contribution of ideas, constructive criticisms and questions. Concerned with the need to update the Pauline charism, seeing the "delays" in the Congregation, he wrote to Fr. Renato Perino, then Superior General: "Don't you think that hermeneutics is valid also for us and for our things?... I believe that the time for just repeating is inexorably past and you know it well! We must launch ourselves forward, also for vocational purposes and in the most genuine ecclesial spirit" (letter of 15 June 1987). Another of his concern was to not lose his "soul," or the ideal convictions that support the Pauline life: "No technology can substitute mysticism," he wrote to Fr. Perino in 1985, referring to the modernization of premises and structures just shortly finished.

We entrust this our brother who goes to add to the "multitude of witnesses" (Heb 12,1) of the Pauline Family in heaven, to the mercy of God the Father and to the kind countenance of the Master Way, Truth and Life, who has promised to his own: "When I shall have gone and prepared a place for you, I shall come again and take you with me, so that where I am you also may be" (Jn 14,4). And in bidding him goodbye and assuring him our suffrages, we ask Fr. Benito to intercede for the many needs of the Congregation that is fast approaching her Centenary of foundation, so that she may be able to "rekindle the gift she received."

*Rome, 9 July 2012*

*Don Vincenzo Vitale*

**The Superiors of Circumscription are to inform their communities for the suffrages prescribed (Const. 65 and 65.1).**