

## Friday, V week of Easter

(Acts 15:22-31; Ps 56; Jn 15:12-17)

### Greetings at the start of the Eucharistic celebration

At the start of this Eucharistic celebration let us renew the certainty that the Spirit prays with us to the Father to thank him for the gift of his Son, who died and rose for us. We wish to unite ourselves to this praise, invoking the Trinity that it may assist us in the wise programming of the next six years of the Congregation through an audacious project of the Congregation and the composition of the General Government. May it be the guarantor and animator in the realization of what we have decided together for the good of all Paulines, of the Pauline Family and of the Churches where are present.

To be worthy collaborators of God in this moment of history of our Congregation, let us recognize above all the need for divine mercy which makes us worthy of our charism.

### Homily

Let us reflect on the verses of the Word of God which have just been proclaimed, as a capitular assembly gathered in the name of all Paulines spread around the world with the important task of thinking and programming, with creative fidelity, of the future of the Congregation for the next six years.

The **first reading** (Acts 15:22.31) offers for our meditation the episode of the first ecclesial letter regarding the contents brought about by the confrontation between the ideas of Barnabas and Paul, fruit of their preaching among the **pagans**, and the certainty of the **Judeo-Christians** in Jerusalem. The aim of the gathering in Jerusalem is to consider the will of the Spirit on the universality of the effects of the death and resurrection of Christ and to allow that this gift, given equally to the Jews and the pagans, can be lived in an adequate manner by two different religious and cultural factions.

In the letter to the Galatians, St Paul states having been, for a second time, in Jerusalem “*following a revelation*” (Gal 2:2). It is thus the Spirit who gathers the Christian community in the first Council of Jerusalem and in the discussions of the apostles, the freedom of the Spirit descending also on the pagans is first of all noted. It is not for human strategy, but for synchronizing with the universality willed by the Spirit, that the apostles decided to change their restrictive vision of a singular way of living the faith to one that is open to the diversity requested by the pagans.

We therefore understand why in the final letter of synthesis it is affirmed: “*We have decided, the Holy Spirit and us*”: without the stimuli of the freedom of the Spirit and closed in the small idea of a monopolized faith, the apostles would not have written this letter nor would have drafted a letter which is a fruit only of their evangelizing myopia which is not illumined by the visionary gaze of the Spirit of God.

One of the lessons deriving from this episode to the Church of all times is that the mission of evangelizing, which guarantees the universality of salvation, defines the identity of the Church. It is the reason for its existence. The Church has received from Christ the sole task of evangelizing and is preceded by the revelations of the Spirit that notes of the necessity of changing her mentality and methods. The ecclesiological reflection must be elaborated on the necessity of the mission of evangelization in various times, places, cultures and environments. In the story of the Church we have dark periods when the definition of the Church is not the fruit of a missionary Spirit but by the dialectic among the subtleties of scholastic theologies; not of service but of will to power; not of respect but of authoritarianism; not of legitimate diversity but of monopolizing uniformity.

If the priority of evangelization defines the Church, we who are a part of the Church, must think and program our charism with the same mentality: the Congregation in the next six years can be imagined as **starting from the mission of evangelizing the communication of today with the communication of today.**

Let us ask the Spirit, which has preceded us in the human story with gifts of new technologies for human communication, to open our eyes to the true nature of the current communication, on the changes of the models of communication, and on the shifting of fundamental anthropological categories which characterize the communicators of today. The Pauline charism reforms itself starting from the recipients which the communication of every historical epoch raises. The priority for the Pauline charism is communication because from a great instance communication is not only the variety of technologies but is the oneness of communicators. **Our parish is communication because our faithful in the planetary level are the immensity of those who serve in the various forms of communication.** Blessed James Alberione wants to remind this to us even today with his pastoral declaration: **“Our parish is the world”**.

In the passage of the **Gospel** (Jn 15:12-17) we are reminded of the synthesis of the life and teaching of Christ: *“This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you”*. To avoid a moralistic interpretation or merely normative for the working of a small group well isolated from all, we imply the *“as”* not in sense of a *“model to imitate”* but of the *“reason”* of loving which we must possess. *“As”* the Christians of every age must love themselves and be motivated in the **triple love** of Christ: he has given his life for us, he has revealed to us what he has received from the Father and he has chosen us not as servants but as friends.

As the love of Christ manifest itself in the mission received from the Father, so also the love of Christians is not a romantic sentiment in social exchange. **It is rather a missionary motive.** The love among Christians which is the fruit of the love of Christ sent by the Father, forms missionaries. It is not a closed homogenous group who wants to escape the world. To love because Christ loves us is to become a missionary community as demonstrated in the story of the primitive church. This is narrated by the Acts of the Apostles: *“We cannot but speak of that which we have seen and heard”* (Acts 4:20).

In her bimillennium story, the Church, when it has abandoned a pastoral style founded on **witnessing** to *“that which she has seen and heard”*, falls into the trap of fundamentalism of specialization of doctrine, liturgy and ethics. Against Christ who is fragmented by a certain pastoral activity of his time, Blessed Alberione has reacted and found in St. Paul one who knows how to live and preach the integral Christ, Way, Truth and Life. The culture of the diverse disciplines, which reflect on the experience of faith that does not help to transform believers as testimonies, means that it is an auto-referential and narcissistic culture. It is sterile.

The experience of the love of Christ which Paul perceives, brings him to be an apostle: *“Woe to me if I do not evangelize”* (1Cor 9:16). Even we Paulines, immersed in this type of faith that is conscious of being freely loved by God in Christ, must have the courage to **go out into the open**, as the disciples when out from the cenacle after Pentecost. Woe to us if in the prospect of the centenary, we transform our charism from nomadic (because it is strictly linked to the development of communication) to sedentary (blocking it at only one form of communication), from missionary aimed at communicators to solitary hermit, from pioneers in the Christian community to archeologists who lament forms of evangelization that deserve all our esteem, but belong to others.

Let us invoke the Spirit that it may help us to ask ourselves not only on the **good sower** and the **good seed** to sow, but finally, on the **diversity of the terrain** where we are sowing: the communicative complexity of the recipients of our charism.

*Ariccia (Rome), Friday 7 May 2010*

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