

BLESSED JAMES ALBERIONE

Church's Media Saint

The Church, an ever growing, evolving and 'becoming perfect' reality, is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit where we constantly encounter His presence and actions. Our God is the God of the new and to keep the Church ever new and going forward, God calls and sends people who, rooted in his word, will go forth and bear witness to his love and life. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the Church opens its windows to the winds of changes and newness.

Blessed James Alberione, a media pioneer in the Church, is such a wind that God envisaged to sweep away the darkness, lies and waywardness caused by media and to bring Jesus and his gospel using the new means of evangelization. Media, then considered an exclusive property of the world and with which the Church had almost nothing to do, became for Alberione a tool to announce the kingdom of God. Employing them to spread the Gospel, he proved to the world that "Technology and media are not God-free zones." He, having experienced the influence of media, would one day use the same media to evangelize and reclaim those people who were intimidated by the media.

Just as Saul was once stubborn, cranky and powerful, "Still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord," and resolved to annihilate anyone belonging to "the Way", so was media threatening to annihilate the Church with a view to re-establish the powers of darkness and sin. But just as it happened in the life of Saul on the way to Damascus, on the night of 31 December 1900, a new light flashed straight into the heart of a sixteen-year-old seminarian kneeling engrossed in prayer, with the message: "Do something for the new century." That light and message would change the course of the Church and pave the way for a new way of life using the then unheard of and unused means for evangelization. On that day, God planted the first cell of a future religious congregation and it finally took birth on 14 August 1914.

The spirituality of Alberione stems from the devotion to Jesus the Divine Master, the Way, the Truth and the Life and is committed to proclaiming the whole Christ using the means of communication. He was resolved to draw people together to influence and to lead them back to Jesus using the same means that were used in his time to take people away from God and His gospel. To accomplish this, Alberione lived first and foremost 'a God enabled and Spirit-led' way of life. His identity as an apostle of Media and a key to that emerged from a divine appointment, and that it involved a mission commanded and enabled by God and governed by the Spirit of God. It was part of the eternal plan and purpose of God (Titus 1:1-3). Alberione was convinced of the fact that he neither sought nor deserved such an appointment but it came to him as a gracious gift from the Tabernacle. The Spirituality of Alberione, however, was not restricted to 'being' but also vigorously committed and extended to doing the will and purpose of God. His 'doing' and his faithfulness to the task of preaching

the gospel using the modern means of communication was very much part of the Charism he accepted from the Spirit of the Lord.

Secondly, Alberione's Charism and Spirituality were based on the gospel. His mission was to reach the gospel to every home. Undoubtedly, the key characteristic of his Charism and Spirituality was the primacy of Jesus the Divine Master, the Way, Truth and Life. Alberione was committed to becoming 'Paul alive today' and live and give Jesus as he did. As Paul considered it a curse not to preach the Gospel, Alberione too was ambitious to preach Jesus the Divine Master and willingly become "All things to all people... for the sake of the Gospel" (1Cor 9:22-23). He always reminded his sons and daughters that the Institute was born in utter poverty, according to the divine pedagogy: "always begin from Bethlehem" and "They were to use the modern means of communications to spread the Gospel." He insisted and stressed a spirituality based on the study of the Scriptures.

Thirdly, Alberione's Charism and Spirituality were deeply relational and Eucharistic. He developed a distinctively unique spirituality revolving around Jesus the Divine Master, the Way, the Truth and the Life. It is this commitment to personal relationships and the Eucharist that lies behind his narrative of who a Pauline should be, with a view to understand how Paul used to elicit the right response to gospel truths by persuasive appeal. He was convinced of the fact that Spirituality always remained relational, personal, and directed towards the good of others. The Holy Eucharist is the principal source and nourishment of Pauline life and spirituality. Paulines are called to live lives rooted in the Eucharist at all times and they "can in no way take this commitment lightly because it is their charismatic inheritance and so indispensable". For him the fruitfulness of the apostolate depends on the apostle's knees – on his prayer – rather than on his pen or tongue.

Bl. Alberione comes to us as a wake-up call in our media-dominated world. Media propagandists use web portals to manufacture news and views to suit their agenda and gradually draw people away from truth and morals. It is time, knowing the Word and the world and drawing inspiration from Alberione, that we must wake up and stand for and proclaim the Truth taught by Jesus using the most modern means of communication.

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