

“TO BE ST. PAUL ALIVE TODAY”

Antonio F. da Silva

Father José Bortolini—bearing in mind the theme of the General Chapter, “*To be St. Paul Alive Today*” – *A Congregation that strains forward*—has made a memorial of St. Paul. The Preparatory Commission has asked me to do a Memorial, possibly a twin of that of Fr. Bortolini, but aimed at presenting the Blessed Giacomo Alberione as an expression of St. Paul alive today.

My work’s first step was to adopt as the key for reading that one offered by Don Alberione himself in the Memorial he made in 1950, after the pontifical approval of the Constitutions:

“Docete omnes gentes *with the modern means: not the development of an industry or a business venture, but the apostolate, following and giving Jesus Christ, Way, Truth and Life.*

The Institute, according to the spirit, better declared in the definitive Constitutions, follows the times, draws inspiration from a healthy modernity, in the spirit of Jesus Master: in Christo et in Ecclesia: seek out souls” (San Paolo, February 1950, p. 4)

Hence I understand the expression, “**to be St. Paul... alive**” as synonymous to the traditional expression, “**Pauline spirit,**” thus described by the Founder: “St. Paul’s spirit can be had from his **life**, from his **letters**, from his **apostolate**” (ADs 94).

I have understood the term “today” as synonymous to that “healthy modernity” indicated by the Founder, an object of his intense search and suffered discernment in order to find first of all the kingdom of God in modernity, until its clarification in the focal point of the charism:

“Action and prayer pointed the way toward Christian social work geared to revitalize government, education, laws, the family, and class and international relations. All for Christ, Way, Truth and Life to reign in the world! Here the Pauline Faily has a huge undertaking. (AD 63).

In short: To be St. Paul alive today because Christ Way, Truth and Life reigns in the world.

A successive step of the study has been that of having succeeded to date to 1918 a manuscript Notebook of Don Alberione on the *Mese a San Paolo (Month to St. Paul)* (=MSPM), whose content was known only through a publication in 1925 by Timoteo Giaccardo. Setting in parallel this Notebook (at least of 1918) and the text of *Abundantes divitiae gratiae suae* one can notice that the fundamental affirmations on St. Paul in the two documents are perfectly in harmony, thus allowing us to concentrate our memorial around the much younger Alberione, as expression of St. Paul alive today.

The passages made:

1) As regards modernity:

- a) A chronology on the inventions, historical and cultural facts, church events and some biographical data of Don Alberione (PowerPoint presentation of the data gathered, from 1889 to 1918);

- b) Some texts of Don Alberione on the Pauline Family in relation with modernity.
- 2) As regards the *Month to St. Paul*:
 - a) Contents of the Notebook (images and text);
 - b) A study of the vocabulary of the *Mese a San Paolo* compared with that of the *Letters of St. Paul*, through BibleWorks6. Elaboration of data through Excel and presentation through PowerPoint.
 - c) Contents of MSPM in Intratext.
- 3) Publication of the Memorial, following this Table of Contents:

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In the first part, *Seek God's Kingdom in modernity*, the first chapter of an attempt to read the journey undertaken by Don Alberione in order to introduce himself into his time through a training that involved all his energies and capacities, in terms of intellectual, spiritual and apostolic formation. The second chapter seeks to draw the point of arrival of Don Alberione's maturation, providentially stimulated by great Teachers and significant works and by studying Theology as as “Signor Teologo” in collabora-

tion with the better trained priests, involved not only in Alba. At the start of the foundations he had a broad vision of reality, unified in Christ Way, Truth and Life.

In his formation, Don Alberione measured himself up with works that proposed an organically structured vision of reality (for example, the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, of St. Bonaventure, the school textbooks, the teachings of Toniolo, of Can. Chiesa, the works of E. Dubois, E. Swoboda, C. Krieg) and he arrived at a personal thought synthesis corresponding with his needs to establish a strong life style.

His vision is strongly characterized by a Trinitarian Christo-centrism that allows him to see everything analytically (for example, the three dimensions of the human person) and synthetically (the whole man) and dynamically (describing the process resulting from the interdependence and the interaction of the three dimensions or parts of everything). The analytical consideration, almost as if the individual parts were merely juxtaposed is not enough, inasmuch as the dynamism that runs through them (for example, among mind-will-heart or beginning-means-end, root-means-fruit) greatly enriches the vision that emerges from their composite and from the totality that they make up.

The second part, on *To be St. Paul alive*, under the light of the earlier acquisition, attempts an approach against the backdrop of Don Alberione's person through and articulated reading between the *Appunti di Teologia Pastorale* and the *Mese a San Paolo*. The affirmations on the analytical, synthetic and dynamic principal the unites Don Alberione's vision are important for an approach to the *Appunti di Teologia Pastorale* (=ATP2) capable of showing its structure and the importance of the parts.

To summarize, we can include here two of Don Alberione's affirmations.

The first: "It is absolutely necessary that he works for the salvation of others, that he writes on his own flag: *I-God-People*" (ATP2, p. 1).

The second: "The Priest therefore is not merely *learned*: neither is he simply holy: but he has to be *learned-holy*, that he avails with knowledge and of holiness in order that he becomes *apostle*, that is, in order to save souls" (ATP2, p. 2).

Notice the parallelism of the terms and of the two trinomials:

a: I, b: God, c: People; and a': knowledge, b': holiness, c': apostle.

The division into three parts of the *Appunti di Teologia Pastorale* is founded on these trinomials, with an inversion of the first two terms: God-I-People; holiness-knowledge-apostle.

The first part, consisted of being apostles, establishes the foundation: holiness and knowledge form the zealous and poor apostle. The second, conforming with being and doing as apostle, traces the profile of pastoral action. The third, operational, leads into the field of realization of pastoral zeal..

Don Alberione splendidly describes the experiences that generates and sustains the process that comes from being to doing:

When one says, "*piety*," he means a *life*. As mistakenly superficial souls understand, it is not a simple exterior formalism, neither is it, as its enemies speak ill of it, an illusion of souls affected with mysticism: no. Instead, it is an entirely internal activity that is manifested outside with the fruitfulness of works. The soul, overwhelmed by the splendors of faith, is the first to get into action: it establishes its gaze on God and penetrates more and more each day this infinite Being. The heart immediately participates in this Being: under the fascination of beauty and of truth, the spirit allows itself to be led towards the love and union with God. The will, then, under the influence of grace, assumes stronger resolves, works more vigorously. It is then that the external effects show: one's character becomes sweet, his words echo supernatural love, his hands are ready for zeal; and so behold the fruits: good works. (ATP2. p. 7).

St. Paul became everything to everyone in order to generate all to the grace of the Gospel. The Pauline Family is called to get into the new millennium by bearing witness to the received Pauline Spirit, after the footsteps of Blessed Giacomo Alberione, a true “St. Paul alive today.” The teachings of the *Mese a San Paolo* still incite every Pauline to be “*alter Christus, alter Paulus, alter Alberione*”:

“1. St. Paul clearly states and by general rule: *Fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi* [Rom 10:17]: faith comes from listening to the word of the Gospel. Now, this is the great means used by Our Lord Jesus Christ who dedicated three years to preaching the divine word: this is the great means used by the Apostles who gave themselves, with all the fervor of their spirit, to the evangelization of the world. And it is understandable: the Gospel truths proclaimed by living word speak to the mind, the heart, the senses, to the whole man and Jesus Christ instituted preaching as the ordinary means for the spread of the Gospel: Go to the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature: he who believes and is baptized shall be saved. Hence the Church had always great concern in promoting preaching, popular instructions, religious conferences, catechism classes, meditations, explanations of the Gospel, etc.

2. And it is here where St. Paul’s zeal shines splendidly. His manner of speaking was always suited to his listeners, full of warmth, convincing, penetrating, although simple in its sublimity and alien to empty ornamental rhetoric” (MSPM, pp. 45-46).