

# Paoline <sup>online</sup>



## *Special Centenary Issue*

*We strive to bring everyone the Gospel of joy and peace through the various forms and languages of communications.*

Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan, Superior General



*Dear Sisters,*

*In this special issue of the Information Bulletin you will find the interventions of the various speakers, ecclesiastical and civil authorities, and animators who contributed to the events organized by our General Government to celebrate our Centenary of Foundation. We hope that you will enjoy reading their input.*

*Cordial best wishes from*

*the SICOM Team*

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## “Holding fast to the word of life...”



**W**e have been given the grace to live and celebrate our Centenary, which means lovingly retracing our story of faith, holiness and missionary daring, trusting always more firmly in the fidelity of God, who has placed in our fragile hands the great treasure of his Word.

The celebrations in Castagnito, Alba and Rome concluded with the official consignment of a copy of the Bible to the parishes of these three towns (St. John the Baptist, the Divine Master and Mary, Queen of Apostles, respectively). We wanted those special, finely-crafted editions to represent the enormous quantity of Bibles diffused by the Daughters of St. Paul in every part of the world. We also wanted them to symbolize the Apostle Paul’s invitation to “hold fast to the word of life” as he urged the Christians of Philippi (cf. Phil. 2:16) and as he continues to urge us today.

*To hold fast to the word of life by rediscovering, day after day, the grace of our vocation to be apostles of the Word—this could be the fruit of those memorable days.*

*To hold fast to the word of life so as to “awaken the world” and witness to a new way of behaving, working and living (cf. Pope Francis).*

*To hold fast to the word of life by living with greater intensity the times dedicated to reflecting on, assimilating and contemplating the Word more deeply (which we do through meditation and the Eucharistic Visit). Our Founder wrote: “Those who read the Bible daily will speak the words of God” (AS, p. 43).*

*To hold fast to the word of life, convinced that the Word is one of our greatest riches: “There was a time in which, during his Eucharistic adorations, he received a clearer light about a great treasure the Lord wanted to give the Pauline Family: the diffusion of the Gospel” (AD 136).*

During the round table session held on 6 June 2015, ninety-six-year-old Sr. Lorenzina Guidetti, fsp, spoke about the significance of the Word in the Pauline life:

I remember our early years in Rome when we had only one printing press. We used it to print the Bible and when the last page rolled off the press Maestra Thecla picked it up and kissed it. Today Pope Francis insists that we should carry a small copy of the Gospel on our person. Prima Maestra did this: not a small, bound copy of the Sacred Text but tiny pieces snipped from a Bible signature and gathered together....

From 1921 onward, Fr. Alberione also carried a small copy of the Gospel on his person, saying that it was truly an effective prayer (cf. AD 145).

Our Centenary is a favorable time for restoring the Word to the center of our life and mission, making the most of the small, simple but effective gesture of wearing the Gospel on our person wherever we go, to the point that it is almost engraved on our flesh, thus nourishing, as Pauline apostles, our burning desire, which we transform into prayer and joyous proclamation: *may the Word made flesh through paper, music, pictures and digital languages reach every heart and be a gift of salvation for everyone.*

Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan  
FSP Superior General

## Thecla Merlo, Wise Mother and Sure Guide

Homily of  
Cardinal Agostino Vallini  
Vicar General  
for the Diocese of Rome



*Dear Brothers and Sisters!  
Dear Daughters of St. Paul!*

I willingly accepted the invitation of your Superior General to celebrate this holy Eucharist on the occasion of the opening of your Congregation's Centenary of Foundation, which coincides with the 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the death of your Co-foundress and first Superior General, Sr. Thecla Merlo. It is an initial and very significant moment of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, to be followed by others as the year unfolds—a moment in which to express our gratitude to God for the gifts of grace and holiness he has poured out on you, on the sisters who preceded you, and on the Church over the past century. How many beautiful stories of fidelity to Christ and of service to the proclamation of the Gospel could be recounted! At the same time, this Eucharist is an intercession for the years to come, asking the Lord to make you faithful to your foundational charism. In fact, you Daughters of St. Paul

are links in a chain of graces that continue in time.

The Word of God that was just proclaimed can help us penetrate the heart of the mystery of your vocation, which Prima Maestra Thecla, powerfully drawn by the example and proposal of Blessed James Alberione, incarnated and fecundated by means of her life.

The Gospel of Luke reminds us of an important incident with regard to the revelation of the identity of Jesus and those who want to follow him more closely. It says that, like other decisive moments in his life, Jesus was found praying in solitude (Lk. 9:18). He asked his disciples who the crowds thought he was and who they themselves thought he was, and Peter replied: "You are the Messiah." Jesus then delineated his mission very clearly, saying that his death on the cross would bring salvation to the world.

**How many beautiful stories of fidelity to Christ and of service to the proclamation of the Gospel could be recounted!**

### **The Way of the Cross Is for Everyone**

But the fidelity of the Son of God to his Father to the point of embracing such an infamous death was not a path he would travel alone. Jesus was no solitary hero: he proposed the way of the cross to everyone. It is the condition for being his disciple. Those who want to follow him must renounce themselves, that is, they must stop focusing on themselves and instead center their lives on the Lord Jesus. And this itinerary often bears the imprint of the cross—a cross one must carry





day after day. In the life of a disciple of Jesus, the cross is not an exceptional situation—it is a permanent law that involves two things: to avoid getting lost in worldly concerns and to never be ashamed of Christ. Fidelity to this journey of discipleship ensures participation his resurrection.

### **Thecla and Alberione: An Inseparable Pair**

Dear Daughters of St. Paul, your Co-founder, Sr. Thecla Merlo, understood and lived this fundamental law of discipleship, namely, that of following Jesus to the point of the cross. She embraced it on a daily basis, making it the purpose of her life in the certitude that by doing so she would share in the life of the resurrected Christ. In 1923 she wrote: “When he [Fr. Alberione] told me about a new institution of daughters who would live like sisters, I was immediately enthusiastic.” Many years later, she remarked: “How many graces [I have received] in these years and how poorly I have corresponded to them! If I am still in the Congregation today, it is entirely due to the mercy of God!”

She was humbly aware that the Lord’s plan for her life called her to embark on a new path: that of evangelizing the world through the Good Press. In fact, in 1918, the Founder sent her to Susa with these orders: “Go! You will work in silence and then the Lord will do something with you.” Teresa—as she was still known at that time—followed the Founder’s orders with great trust. She said: “The house was very poor and the sacrifices were many, but we were happy—all of us aiming at a glowing ideal: to become holy and to do great good in the world through the good press.”

What do these words, which reveal the soul of Thecla, mean if not that one must follow the Lord by embracing the big and small crosses of daily life? The goal was clear: to form a community committed to personal interior transformation through a constant striving for holiness. Thus Thecla and the first young sisters launched out on the spiritual life by means of an itinerary that involved discernment, the conquest of personal defects and the acquisition of virtue to the point of explicitly and joyously offering one’s life to the Lord for the sake of the apostolate of the Good Press.

In 1922, at the end of a course of spiritual exercises, the first nine young women made their vows with the specific intent to evangelize through the apostolate of the press. On that occasion, Sr. Thecla was appointed Superior General. Why her? The words of your Founder can help us better understand and penetrate the depths of Prima Maestra’s soul: “Those who guide others must be obedient,” he said. “[Maestra Thecla’s] docility is one of the reasons why I chose her from among the others of that first little group to guide the community. What inclined me in that direction was the fact that she didn’t cling to her own ideas; she wasn’t always ready to give advice or to express judgments. No. She was attentive to everything that was going on around her. She stood out [from the others] for her obedience, her docility. In those first years in which no one could foresee what would become of the

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**“When he told me about a new institution of daughters who would live like sisters, I was immediately enthusiastic”**





Congregation, her only thought was to surrender herself to the Lord; to allow him to guide her in everything" (PrPM, 22.02.1965). In fact, in sketching out a spiritual profile of Sr. Thecla Merlo, Fr. Alberione called her a woman who never resisted the Holy Spirit. "The Lord," he declared, "did whatever he wanted with her because she never resisted his will." And she lived this interior attitude her whole life. We can say that it was one of the distinguishing features of her discipleship of Jesus.

On another occasion, your Founder exclaimed: "Oh, her life! She placed it entirely in the hands of God up to the very end—up to the moment in which he called her to eternal rest, to glory!" He then continued: "You well know that toward the end of her illness her only words were, 'The will of the Lord! What pleases the Lord! May the Lord's will be done!' She was always extremely docile.... The Lord placed a great responsibility, a great mission, on her shoulders in spite of her fragile health.... During her time on earth, she was always ready to accept everything he disposed. Consequently, she was always ready to obey—not only a general obedience but obedience in everything she came to know that the Lord wanted of her. She was always ready to obey in everything."

It was precisely this interior attitude of seeking to know, embrace and follow the will of God that guided her life.

## **Thecla and the Cross**

At the end of the course of spiritual exercises she made in 1951, she wrote: "We must not live our vocation in a state of fear and anxiety, but with love and trust in our heavenly Father. We should do what we have to do and trust in God. We will not be judged according to a divine decree but according to what we did. Never distrust [God].

As long as there is a spark of life in us, we can become saints. We were created for heaven and we conquer it by force." With regard to the struggle and renunciation involved in this, she followed the example of Jesus, saying: "Choose renunciation to the point of privation, to the point of humiliation, to the point of servitude. This is the tragic but inevitable choice one must make to become holy: to choose renunciation to the point of self-annihilation. It is necessary to renew this resolution every day and we will understand its importance only to the degree that we advance in holiness. This choice gives life all its beauty and value."

This, dear sisters, is how your Prima Maestra followed the Lord: she carried the cross on a daily basis until she reached eternal glory.

In today's First Reading, an excerpt from the First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul counsels the Christians of Corinth to refrain from acting according to criteria that have nothing to do with the staggering innovations of the Gospel. He urges them to consider the fact that it is not reference to their evangelizers (Apollos, Peter, Paul himself) that counts. What truly counts is the work God accomplishes in a person. Consequently, if one must boast, he/she should boast about the crucified and risen Christ. We receive everything from Jesus and thus everything must be attributed to him. This is the essence of evangelization. In an earlier passage of the same letter, the Apostle declares: "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Co. 2:2).

To be instruments of the salvation that leads people to Jesus Christ, not to oneself: this was the clear goal to which Blessed James Al-

**The Lord placed a great responsibility, a great mission, on her shoulders in spite of her fragile health**





berione and Maestra Thecla dedicated their lives, making them holy persons who attracted others. The press, the cinema, radio, television and all the other modern technologies—these are the instruments and languages they used, like true prophets, to bring the Kingdom of God to the world.

Reading the biography of Prima Maestra Thecla, one is struck by her interior attitude in inviting her sisters to carry out the apostolate. She knew that it is the Lord alone who touches and converts hearts and therefore that each person should be approached with respect and attention. First of all, respect. Prima Maestra was convinced that in carrying out an apostolate that uses the instruments of communication, the members of your Institute are making use of something that does not belong to you but that, instead, has been entrusted to you, namely: the *Word of God*, and that this Word must be offered in a dignified manner, with the same attitude of the priest who offers the Host.

She urged the Daughters of St. Paul to always be aware of *what it is* they are bringing to others, of *who those others are*, and of *who they themselves are*. The Gospel icon from which she drew her inspiration was that of Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth. For Prima Maestra, this icon was the foundation of what might be called the apostolic deontology (ethics) of service in the world of communications.

And then: attention to the cultural aspect of the world in which one works. Prima Maestra Thecla made 14 extended trips abroad from 1936-1963 and those trips made a profound impact on her

life, triggering amazement, surprise and questions. In 1952, she told her sisters: "We are all Daughters of St. Paul—daughters of the Apostle of charity, who wrote to the Corinthians: 'I made myself all to all so as to save all. I do everything for the sake

**May the courageous and timely witness of this great woman remain always alive in you so that you can pass it on to others**

of the Gospel.' The whole world is our field of apostolate. We must love everyone so as to do good to everyone."

She carried all peoples in her heart, asking herself: "Where is humanity going?" She said: "Our power idea should be souls. This is what should goad us on. We should be concerned about how to approach people so as to bring them the Word of truth and salvation. How many souls never hear a good word, never hear anyone speak about God.... Who should help them? Who should bring them to God if not we who have received so many graces from the Lord and who have in our hands such extremely efficient means of apostolate?" (1950)

## **A Courageous and Timely Witness**



Dear Sisters, may the courageous and timely witness of this great woman remain always alive in you so that you can pass it on to others. The Church of this new millennium—a troubled and confused millennium under many aspects—urgently needs apostles of the caliber of James Alberione and Thecla Merlo. We are drawn to their example, their style of life. Let us pray to them, asking them to transmit to us the passion for evangelization that led them to respond without reserve to the call of the Lord.

Permit me to make my own the words with which St. John Paul II ended his Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, celebrating the great Jubilee of 2000:

"Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ. The Son of God, who became incarnate two thousand years ago out of love for humanity, is at work even today: we need discerning eyes to see this and, above all, a generous heart to become the instruments of his work" (n. 58).

## The Chapter Delegates of the Society of St. Paul to the Daughters of St. Paul

Dear Sr. Anna Maria and Sisters,

We still have very vivid memories of the solemn conclusion of the Centenary of foundation of the Society of St. Paul and the Pauline charism, culminating in the audience with Pope Francis in Paul VI Audience Hall. On that occasion, the Pope confirmed the validity and timeliness of the Pauline mission and encouraged every Pauline to continue to follow the trail blazed by our Founder, Blessed James Alberione, with our gaze fixed on vast horizons.

Today these words—which continue to resound vigorously in the assembly hall in which the SSP is holding its 10<sup>th</sup> General Chapter—offer us a wonderful chance to share this experience once again with you, at the dawn of your Congregation’s Centenary of foundation. We want to assure each Daughter of St. Paul of our prayers, asking the Lord that your thrust toward the “masses” as well as toward the “existential peripheries” of humanity might continue to inspire your life and mission.

May St. Paul’s motto—“I do everything for the sake of the Gospel” (1 Co. 9:23), the theme of our Chapter activities—also be the power-idea for this jubilee year of the Daughters of St. Paul. The words of Fr. Alberione in the book, *The Apostolate of the Editions*, are very eloquent. He said: “Paul was a tireless apostle. He made himself ‘all to all’ up to the point of martyrdom: everywhere, with all people, using every means...in spite of poor health, long distances, mountains and seas [to be crossed], the indifference of the intellectuals, the aggressiveness of the powerful, the mockery of the hedonistic, the chains [he bore]....”



And our Founder’s faithful disciple, Venerable Maestra Thecla, echoed this sentiment, saying: “Apostles are needed, but genuine apostles whose hearts are filled with love for God.... Let us lend our feet to the cause of the Gospel—so that it will race ahead and reach every corner of the earth.... Our apostolate is to do good, so let us feel a holy ‘torment’ for souls!”

In the footsteps of Blessed James Alberione and Venerable Maestra Thecla, let us welcome the invitation of Pope Francis, who urged us to proclaim Christ and his Gospel to everyone, saying that this is the most authentic and necessary charity we can offer people today, who are hungering for truth and justice.

Grateful to divine Providence for the amazing things he has done with and among the Daughters of St. Paul over the past 100 years, we ask him to bless us all, enable us to interpret the signs of the times and, in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul, take the Gospel to everyone, without being afraid of entering “pagan” territory, as the culture of communications often appears to be.

*The Chapter Delegates of the Society of St. Paul*



## The Church, the Daughters of St. Paul and Communications: A 100-Year History

I am very grateful for the invitation to share with you this very special moment, in which I want to speak about tradition but also about looking to the future.

I would like to begin with a personal memory: I come from Rimini, a small town in the Romagna region of Italy where the Daughters of St. Paul used to have a community. In fact, I first met them on the street where I lived. I was about eleven years old at the time and I saw two sisters walking down the street with big bags filled with books. I think the first book of religious inspiration I ever held in my hands was one my mother bought from the sisters at that time, as they went from door to door. They weren't Protestants...no, they were Paulines! Looking back, I admire the way in which those sisters, toting those overflowing bags, canvassed the neighborhood (I think that is the most accurate way to describe what they were doing), visiting families that were still emerging from the trauma of World

War II. We're talking about 1951-1952, and therefore the immediate post-war period in Italy—a time in which everyone was compelled to undertake a completely new journey of rebuilding values, recuperating a fresh vision of life, of family values, etc.

### *A Hundred-Year History*

It wouldn't make sense to simply look back on the past and say with nostalgia and satisfaction: "Look what we did!" The words of Jesus with regard to putting one's hand to the plough and looking ahead are never out of date. Therefore, our attitude toward the past should not be one of nostalgia but one of striving to understand more profoundly the importance of tradition.

It should be an attitude of rediscovering what it means to "cultivate



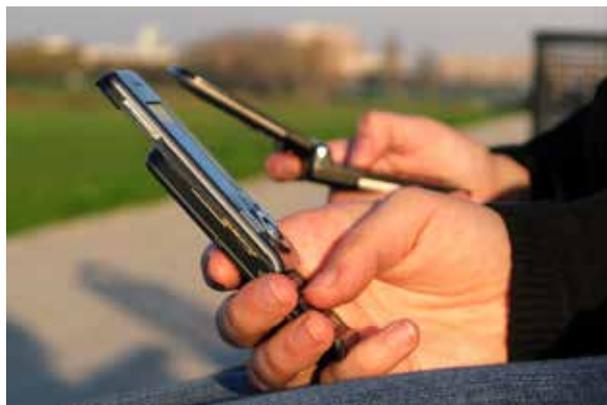
a sacred fire.” When one looks back and contemplates what Fr. Alberione and your Mother Thecla did, one can’t help but marvel. Your Founder was a prolific father—he gave life to many new journeys of holiness and service in the Church. But what does it mean today to cultivate the sacred fire that inflamed Fr. Alberione and Maestra Thecla?

Not long ago we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Inter Mirifica*, the first document of the Council to deal with communications: not only the instruments of social communication but the subject of communications itself. As you well know, it was the first time the Church manifested her awareness of the potentials that the instruments of social communications placed in her hands. Many of the individual bishops still did not understand this. When asked what subjects they thought should be discussed during the Council, the bishops of the world sent in over 9,000 suggestions, out of which not even a hundred mentioned communications. But Pope John was farsighted—he wanted communications to be one of themes of the Council.

I don’t want to get into the subject of whether the press, radio and television have more or less ended their service in the Church, but I *will* say that it would be a huge mistake to think we should stop what we are doing. Indeed, there are times and situations that clearly show us the importance of these instruments today. When I travel

**Pope John was farsighted—he wanted communications to be one of themes of the Council**

to various ecclesial contexts around the world, I am confronted with situations that amaze me: on the one hand, I see super-sophisticated broadcasting systems in the United States, and



on the other, African radio stations which use bamboo canes to support their antennas but which are nevertheless achieving small miracles of broadcasting. But it is the same fire: it is the same profound dimension that involves the Church in communicating because if the Church did not communicate, she would not be the Church. As Church, we exist to communicate and what we communicate is Christ, no one and nothing else. At times, this communication has taken place with bold brush strokes. Think of Pope Benedict XVI, who said that one of the great challenges of communications is to speak the truth about the human being. I remember that I was studying theology while Vatican II was in session. I found a number of the news articles and interventions by certain Council Fathers very interesting....

### **To Catechize in a Digital Context**

But it is undeniable, my friends—and this brings me to the second point of this talk—it is undeniable that a change of era is underway, and that change is the digital culture. Contemporary humanity is immersed in this language and its prospects. In Europe today, a 10-year-old spends from 3 to 5 hours in front of a computer. Just the other day, I offered this example to an international gathering of catechists. What does it mean today, I asked, to catechize in a digital context, when in many of our parishes our catechism teachers are generous men and women in their 60’s and 70’s who have never used a computer and who don’t know anything about the digital culture or language? Don’t mistake me: I say this with great respect and appreciation for what these pastoral workers are doing, but also with worry because they are teaching catechism to children who spend all their time in front of the computer’s play station. What language do we use to talk to these children? The challenge of the digital culture.... Not long ago I spoke with the new SSP Superior General, who is following in the

# Congress

footsteps of our late, lamented Fr. Silvio Sassi. And with great pleasure I also renewed my acquaintance with Sr. Antonieta Bruscato.

Today, my friends—and I say this with the knowledge that I am addressing persons who work with the media—today the great challenge facing the Church is whether or not we are able to dialogue with the digital culture, with persons who “inhabit” this dimension, who not only hold its devices in their hands but who are under their influence. I’m not making a judgment as to whether or not this is good or bad; I’m only pointing out that the situation exists. The Church today is called to proclaim the Gospel in this culture. I ask myself what Fr. Alberione and Maestra Thecla would do today. Not what they did 20 or 40 or 50 years ago, but what they would do *today*, because I have to speak to the people of today.

For us—I address myself primarily to the Daughters of St. Paul but my words can also be directed to the Society of St. Paul—to celebrate a Centenary is to see if we are capable of speaking to the people of today; if we are using a language they understand. It wasn’t easy for Pope Benedict XVI to launch his first twitter accounts, but he said to me: *“I want to be where the people of today are.”* And I was very pleased to see the messages that came in, for instance: *“We are very happy that today the Pope is using a language that we can understand immediately.”*

I said that the Church exists to communicate. The problem (as I say with a smile when I’m speaking with different bishops) is not resolved by opening a communications office in a diocese or by appointing a spokesperson for the bishop. The problem today is to discover what it means to be aware that the Church communicates through all the ways she operates in the world. When I celebrate Mass, I communicate; the Church’s charitable works are communication because they reveal her face to the world.

And here I would say that the basic theme is the one Pope Francis offers us as a point of reference: the parable of the Good Samaritan as a dimension of communication, that is to say: to go forth to meet the other. Why did I

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**It wasn’t easy for Pope Benedict XVI to launch his first twitter accounts, but he said to me: “I want to be where the people of today are.”**

begin this talk with a story from my past? Those two Daughters of St. Paul lugging bags overflowing with books were *going forth* to meet families. They weren’t simply selling books: they were going forth to meet



families, to speak with them, to establish points of contact with them. They were acting like Good Samaritans....

In his closing speech at Vatican Council II, Pope Paul VI underscored that the spirituality of the Council was inspired by the parable of the Good Samaritan. Interesting! Look at the profound ecclesial harmony: Paul VI tells us that the spirituality of Vatican Council II is that of the Good Samaritan and today Pope Francis tells us that to communicate is to go forth to others, just as the Good Samaritan did when he saw a wounded man lying on the roadside. He reached out and took responsibility for that person.

## **“No one can steal the music in my heart”**

So the basic theme of communications today is not technology. If it were, then it would be enough to invest in big broadcasting systems.... Instead, the basic theme is *my heart*—what I carry within me. I would like to end by citing the work of an Uruguayan poet, Eduardo Galeano, who tells the story of a man who went from village to village. He was invited everywhere because he sang beautifully, played the harp and knew many traditional songs. One night, while walking toward a small town, two thieves pounced on him, stole his mule and harp and left him half-dead by the side of the road. Some people found him the next morning and asked, “What on earth happened to you?” The man replied, “Two thieves stole my mule and harp but they weren’t able to steal the music in my heart.”

So, my friends, in celebrating this Centenary, I think the basic question is the same: What music do I carry in my heart? Because this is the fundamental challenge—the music I carry in my heart. Standing here before the Superior General of the Daughters of St. Paul and the new Superior General of the Society of St. Paul, I can say that my greatest wish for you is that in the coming hundred years you will always have beautiful music in your hearts because that is what people today are looking for.

*Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli  
President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications*

## The Pauline Charism

### at the Service of the Gospel of Peace

First of all, I would like to offer my best wishes to all of you for your 100-year history. I think this is a beautiful opportunity for reflection because it should not be taken for granted that one will necessarily live more than a hundred years. After all, nothing is eternal. Effectively, the question to ask is what the charism proper to one's institute is and how should it be lived in the light of the present times.

We have spoken about evangelization for years but we have not carried out the work of evangelization precisely because our efforts were based on will power and, at times, on proselytism. To communicate the Good News, one must know how to communicate, how to speak. The Church's great limitation with regard to evangelization was that she had a hard time commu-

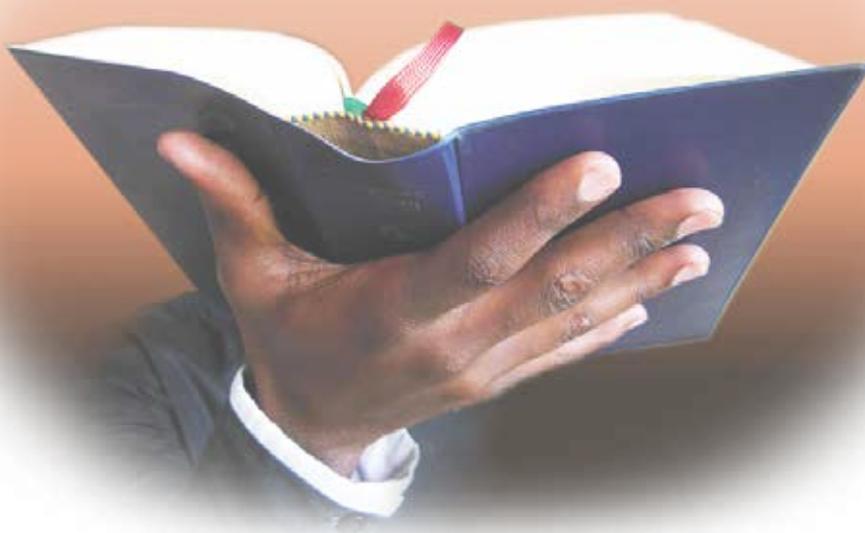


nicating. This gave rise to Fr. Alberione's intuition to return to Paul so as to begin to communicate with people once again. This was also the fundamental idea that, after Vatican Council II, emerged in Paul VI's encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, in which the Pope says that *the Word of God circulates by means of human dialogue* (cf. ES 80-82). We must know how to dialogue with one another if we are to circulate—the Word of God. But how does one communicate? I would echo the conclusion of the talk just delivered by my friend, Archbishop Celli: to communicate, it is vital to know how to listen, and listening to the Word of God regenerates the heart. On the day of Pentecost, those who listened to the Apostle [Peter] felt as if their hearts were on fire, as if they were being reborn.

The heart is the center of life, the center of one's rapport with humanity.

Consequently, I would like to speak about the great intuition of the Pauline priests and sisters, of Maestra Thecla and Fr. Alberione, to give central place to the Bible. This is not something that should be taken for granted; *Dei Verbum* is also taken for granted, but it shouldn't be. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Archbishop of Turin visited one of the parishes of his diocese. Seated in an armchair, he said to the parish priest: "Give me a Bible. Before going into the church, I want to read an excerpt from it." The parish priest replied, "Of course, Your Excellency. But you

**To communicate, it is vital to know how to listen, and listening to the Word of God regenerates the heart**



will have to stand up first." Astonished, the Bishop asked, "Why?" and the priest explained, "Because one of the legs of the armchair you're sitting in is broken and the Bible is holding it up."

There were Bibles in our world, but we lost sight of them because they were holding up broken armchairs.... The Bible served to support our thoughts but not to nourish our hearts. So disseminating the Bible should not be taken for granted! In 1934, Maestra Thecla wrote: "Take the Bible to people. Offer it in Latin and Italian—as a single volume or in booklet format. Let each person choose the edition he/she prefers. After the person has made a choice, ask him/her to write a declaration on a piece of paper stating: I bought this particular Bible.... I like it.... I am happy with it.... It is a beautiful edition, etc. Then when you go to the next person, show him/her the declaration and so on. Have everyone write down a few words or at least sign the paper. Not everyone will agree to do this, but the majority will. Try it in the name of the Lord."

I think this is very important because it captures the idea of what it means to disseminate the Bible, namely: to place the Word of God in the hands of the people of God. Alongside the Liturgy, this was the biggest accomplishment of the Council, and Thecla

**Let us cultivate devotion to the sacred Word and listen to what it has to say**

and Alberione intuitively understood this. And they also understood that on the human level it is important not to force the Bible on people, but to allow them to choose the edition best suited to them, to have them write a declaration, to tell others what they think of the Bible.....

I believe that this is a decisive point, a true turning point and—if you will permit me to say—one that has just begun, namely: to once again place the Bible in the hands of the people of God; to cultivate devotion to the sacred Word and listen to what it has to say. This gives rise to the desire to communicate the Good News. It gives life to the typically Pauline passion that Thecla described in this way: "There are many souls waiting for salvation and few workers for the Gospel. Just think: half of humanity still does not know God and the other half knows and serves him so little.... We must form missionary hearts: generous hearts that are detached from their own comforts and ready for everything."

This is what I see in the Pauline charism: the profound connection between a heart that listens to the Word of God and a missionary heart inflamed with the desire to communicate with others and—specifically—to communicate the Word to them. I put the two together: not only to communicate in general but to communicate the Word of God.

We can speak about how modern Maestra Thecla was. It is enough to point to her "Decalogue of Quickness." This brief list might seem somewhat



functional and even a little silly here and there, but we should be careful because when we read the writings of past generations the things said sometimes seem “silly.” Why? Because it is the language of yesterday! The Decalogue reads: “Be quick: quick on the telephone and in the parlor; quick and uplifting when speaking; quick in correspondence; quick in greeting others; quick in the book center; quick in acting, and also quick in the confessional....”

Maestra Thecla is a modern figure, but is she a figure of global stature? This, I think, is the challenge. Our global world is much more literate than the world of a hundred years ago—the world of her time. But in this more literate world, do we know one another better? I think there are immense swaths of humanity that can be classified as ignorant literates. When I say “ignorant,” I mean people who do not know others and who allow themselves to be swept away by emotional reactions because today each person—even those living in the most remote parts of the world—is in contact with many other realities.

### **To Communicate with Others**

Today ignorance of others triggers not only emotional reactions but also fanaticism. And here we touch on a current problem: one cannot live in a global world without culture. But today “culture” can be likened to the smattering of English that allows you to get around an airport, find a hotel or restaurant—just enough knowledge of the language to get you around the world or else remain lost.



Nicola Chiaromonte said: “Believers and non-believers are the minority. Most people are *misbelievers*,” which is another way of saying “ignorant literates.”

And here lies the challenge, dear friends: to communicate with others; to communicate so as to reach out to them and get to know them. The theme of war and widespread violence is linked to this. Today, the Mediterranean basin is going through a time of terrible violence. We have only to think of ISIS and its incredible capacity to communicate a message of violence: the images of Copts being beheaded are a horrendous but effective message. Violence does not spring solely from distance and ignorance but primarily from its powerful capacity to communicate. So then, here is the big challenge: what does it mean to communicate peace, to cultivate a culture of peace and encounter, of mutual knowledge, in a world marked by great distances, great ignorance and wrenching violence? As you all well know, the massacres in Rwanda were fostered by the broadcasts of Thousand Hills Radio Station, a sower of hate. The media can be powerful instruments for fomenting violence.

### **“Stay where you are”**

The story of the Daughters of St. Paul is connected to World War I (the “Great War” which Italy entered in 1915). During the war, Alberione said: “Stay where you are,” and Maestra Thecla added, “We are in heartfelt union with the sufferings of the world.” The story of the Via Antonino Pio community in Rome is linked to the World War II era, during which the sisters—like many other Institutes—offered hospitality to those displaced by the fighting. What does it mean to live in peace and communicate peace in a time of violence and war? This is extremely interesting and it is the challenge of our times: to communicate—to cultivate—a culture of encounter, a culture of peace, in a world that is not tranquil, in a world challenged by fanatics. We are challenged by the culture of fanaticism, but we must not react to it. Instead, we must foster the growth of a different culture—one that creates communication between worlds, persons and religions, thus nourishing a culture of peace.

**And here lies the challenge: to communicate with others; to communicate so as to reach out to them and get to know them**

## Women on the Front Lines of Communication

I'd like to share with you a personal memory. Many years ago, Fr. Perino (at that time Superior General of the Society of St. Paul) invited me to address a group of superiors of the Pauline Family who were gathered at Ariccia. He asked me to speak about the Pauline Family. I sat down to study the theme assigned me and at a certain point I found myself thinking: "Good grief! This is a jungle—an incredible intertwining of Institutes, Congregations, laity and priests!" But then, upon reflection, I became convinced that the idea of the Pauline Family was an intuition that meets the challenge of our global world: it represents a diversity of conditions and genres and faces the complexities of the world by means of many paths that are not homogeneous but that harmonize with one another. In a very masculine Church—which today is still too masculine and in which it is hard to live genuine fraternal relationships precisely because the presence of women is insufficient—Fr. Alberione from the outset wanted the presence of many feminine Institutes: not in the kitchen to serve the men but on the front lines of communication. This is very important because often when male and female Congregations are paired, the purpose of the women is to serve the men and do their laundry. Instead, Fr. Alberione believed that women should play a lead role in the communications apostolate.

And here I think the idea of communications should be paired with the idea of the *culture of the family*, which involves not only attention to the family nucleus but also attention to the complexity of the world and of communications by means of



many different approaches and sensitivities operating in harmony with one another. Perhaps we have not thought about this enough—it is an idea we must rediscover. And I want to repeat that the culture of the family is a culture of peace.

**Fr. Alberione from the outset wanted the presence of many feminine Institutes: not in the kitchen to serve the men but on the front lines of communication**

I would like to conclude with two very brief reminiscences. I too remember the FSP book center in Rimini. I'm a few years younger than Archbishop Celli so maybe by then the sisters were no longer visiting the families with their heavy book bags or maybe they were making the men carry them.... I remember that during the Council I would go to the book center to buy the documents as one by one they were printed and in fact I still have those booklets. And here is what I want to say about your FSP book center: together with an abundance of titles, it radiated a fresh and cordial atmosphere. It had broken the restrictions of the label "Catholic book center" to become a center of culture—including religious culture—and therefore a center of ecumenism, not in the technical sense of the word but in the sense of *openness*. Frankly speaking, visiting the book center in later years, I no longer had the same feeling. But a few months ago I visited the renovated FSP book center in Mozambique. In that place in which the instruments of Catholic-Christian culture are so rare, I re-experienced what I had felt so many years ago in Rimini: a fresh and open spirit and a cordial communication that seemed to say, "Here is what we have to offer—choose whatever you want and if nothing appeals to you then we will just have a pleasant conversation and part as friends."

I think this spirit has always been proper to the Daughters of St. Paul and that a hundred years have not dulled its luster.

*Prof. Andrea Riccardi  
Historian, Founder of the St. Egidio Community*



## Communications: A Feminine Noun in the Church of Francis

The Church, Pope Francis says repeatedly, is feminine and, just like the noun *communications*, it is declined by women believers in a thousand different ways. In this article, I will try to sketch out some of these ways as revealed in the Catholic Christian community of the Third Millennium. In some contexts, the voices of women are suppressed, defiled and hidden, but this does not mean that they are devoid of prophetic spirit. There are ways of communicating and proclaiming the Gospel that are exquisitely feminine because they are colored by tenderness, attention and sensitivity toward others. And also by *parresia* (frankness), through the deliberate use of straightforward language or even by a silence that nevertheless speaks eloquently.

Pope Francis often cites the exhortation of Francis of Assisi to his disciples: "Preach the Gospel continually, if necessary also through words" (Unofficial Rule, 1221 A.D.). And since Francis is indissolubly linked to Clare of Assisi, who liked to call herself his "little plant," I would like to begin with her and her sisters, the Poor Clares—still present throughout the world 700 years after the birth of their Institute—in delineating three points (a Decalogue would be too long for this article) regarding woman as a communicator of faith. In doing so, I will underscore the words of the Pope on this subject, drawn from the first two years of his pontificate.

### Keep your antennae always tuned

On 17 February 1958, Clare, the first woman in the history of the Church to draw up a rule of religious life, was proclaimed by Pope



Pius XII as the patroness of television and telecommunications. In an article dated 11 August 1993, the Feast of St. Clare, the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* published an article by Aldo Grasso, who called Clare "the saint of *glastnost*, of transparency, as ubiquitous as the global village: the patroness of TV because she 'invented' live broadcasting." "Everyone knows that Francis of Assisi is the patron saint of Italy," the article continues, "but perhaps not everyone knows that Clare is the universal patroness of television (which gives her even greater territory to supervise). Why was she chosen as the patroness of this domain, when presumably her followers don't even watch television? Because the Church recognizes that this communications instrument possesses a feature peculiar to only a few saints: that of ubiquity—the ability to be present in two or more places at the same time. According to tradition, one Christmas Clare was sick in bed in her convent in Assisi, but in spite of this she saw the Mass that was being celebrated in church as if she were there and she also saw the nativity scene set up there."

Although restricted by illness and physical poverty, Clare discovered that she had the ability to "see beyond." The "antennae" of her soul were sensitive enough to pick up the movements of the Spirit, who blows where he wills. When I interviewed Sr. Diana Papa, Abbess of the Poor Clare Monastery in Otranto, for an article I was writing for the Italian weekly *Avvenire*, she followed in the footsteps of her Order's foundress, inviting everyone to "see God working in the human

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**There are ways of communicating and proclaiming the Gospel that are exquisitely feminine because they are colored by tenderness, attention and sensitivity**



story through the beauty of the Incarnation. Living in the presence of God, we are called to be, day after day, women who 'meet' others and are close to them through unconditional self gift, forgiveness, mercy and tenderness."

### **Listen... so as to become a voice for others**

If we are to know what to communicate and the most effective way of doing this, we must first of all listen: to the situations around us, to the 'least' in society, to the Word, to the signs of the times. In a world in which people are drowning in the constant chatter generated by social networks and are perennially connected through the Internet, we should not take it for granted that it is easy to critically sift news and zero in on the information that is important, without becoming disoriented and overwhelmed by the media landslide.

It is not by chance that when Pope Francis received the members of the International Theological Commission last December, he highlighted in his address to them the fact that the group included "an increased presence of women—still not too many...they are the icing on the cake, but we need more!—a presence that becomes an invitation to reflect on the role that women can and should play in the field of theology.

"By virtue of their feminine genius," he continued, "women theologians can detect, to the benefit of all, certain unexplored aspects of the unfathomable mystery of Christ. Consequently, I invite you to derive the greatest benefit from this specific contribution of women to the understanding of the faith."

### **In Contact with the Problems of the Church and the People**

In the same speech, the Pope invited theologians to remain in contact with the problems of the Church and the people. In fact, he said, in order to communicate, we cannot cling to personal securities, or remain locked in an ivory tower or glued to a desk. We have to practice "neighborliness" in a concrete way. We have to take on "the odor of the sheep" and become experts at empathy.

As the late Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski observed: "Cynics are not suited to this work." And Sr. Thecla Merlo, Co-Foundress of



the Daughters of St. Paul, said over and over again: "We must lend our feet to the Gospel"—a statement that is in complete harmony with the contemporary outlook on journalism, which affirms that in order to recount what is happening today, one must wear out shoe leather. This is not a rhetorical statement in a world that is more and more directed to the virtual—a world in which information is pieced together at a desk, using the "cut-and-paste" method. In this way, reality little by little comes to be perceived through intermediary devices—it is no longer something that touches or involves us personally. Instead of seeing victims of war, migrants drifting in shaky crafts on the open sea, or the poor in the heart of our cities, we see a collection of cold, recycled images.

**We must lend  
our feet  
to the Gospel**

Maestra Thecla said, "I wish I had a thousand lives to dedicate to the Gospel." This brief statement admirably summarizes the thought that communication—and even more so the proclamation of the Gospel—involves "getting one's hand dirty" and that the desire to incarnate and share the Good News is imprinted on every Christian's DNA.

*We can no longer put off the challenge to study new criteria and ways to ensure that women do not feel like 'guests' but like fully-active participants in the life of society and of the Church, so that they will be able to make a more direct and incisive feminine contribution to these spheres (cf. Pope Francis, 7 February 2015).*

Laura Badaracchi  
Journalist

## The Daughters of St. Paul

### in Today's History and Culture



This Centenary falls squarely in the midst of the year in which the Pope invites the whole Church to reflect on the consecrated life. In his *Letter to Consecrated People*, Pope Francis reminds them of a famous statement made in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*: “You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things” (n. 11). This statement points out the best way in which to celebrate your Centenary. The fact that you have lived a hundred years means a whole life still lies ahead of you. Therefore, what is important is not to pause to relive the past, to talk

about what was done, but to renew yourselves so that you will be able to do still greater things through the power of the Spirit. There is nothing more harmful than to look at all the gray hair in a community and say: “What will we do tomorrow?” The Lord moves

**A hundred years of grace means other hundreds of years of work to help build the Church and serve society**

at a different pace, by means of different methods and criteria. A hundred years of grace means other hundreds of years of work to help build the Church and serve society. Don't delude yourselves that now that you have reached the hundred-year mark you can relax....

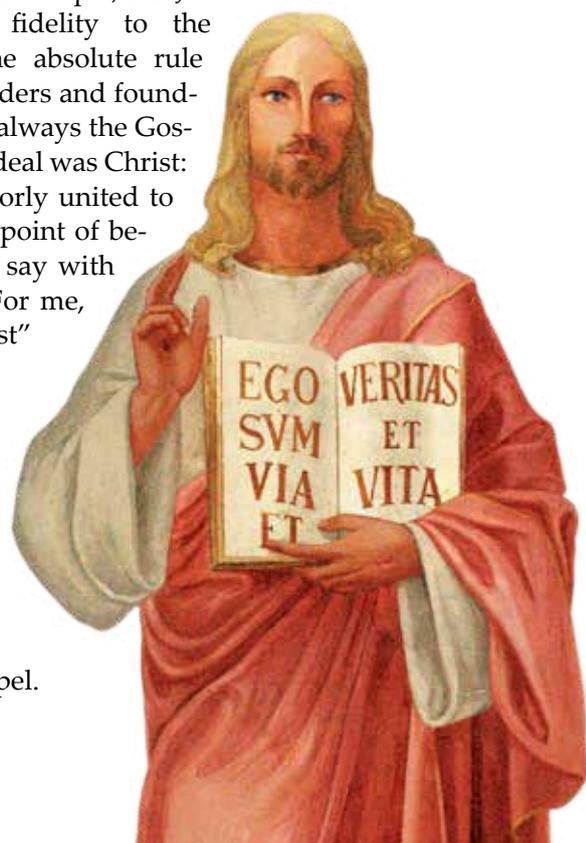
In looking to the future, the best thing to do is allow yourselves to be guided by the criteria indicated in the Council document *Perfectae Caritatis*, which recommends that renewal take place along the lines of *dynamic fidelity to the Gospel, to humanity and its social conditions, and to one's charism*. And in the light of the teachings and example of Pope Francis, I would like to give you a few pointers concerning what it means, after a hundred years of service, to look to the future with faith and optimism, to renew yourselves, seeking the Gospel, human beings and their history, and to rethink and come to a deeper grasp of your charism. This is the key to everything. We may do a lot of beautiful things to celebrate a Centenary but the core of it is this: to not look back but ahead, to where the Lord is leading us. He is a mighty architect: if he has built fifty floors, be assured that he wants to reach a hundred because he would never leave a work unfinished.

### **Dynamic Fidelity to the Gospel**

In his Letter, the Pope says there is a general rule that has inspired all founders and foundresses in giving life to their Institutes. This fundamental rule is the Gospel; it is Jesus.

Therefore, fidelity to the Gospel. The absolute rule for all founders and foundresses was always the Gospel. Their ideal was Christ: to be interiorly united to him to the point of being able to say with St. Paul: “For me, life is Christ” (Phil. 1:21).

From this springs the pressing invitation of Pope Francis to return to the Gospel.



**Let us return to the Gospel!  
Let us return to an experience of the living God! This is the heart of the Pauline spirituality!**

This is in admirable harmony with the spirit of Fr. Alberione. One day, explaining the meaning of the Pauline vocation, he said that the vocation of the Daughters of St. Paul is not something for dilettantes: it means living the Christian life at high voltage.

The first irrenounceable duty of the Pauline Family is conformity to the Master, which is a loving response to the providential love of the Father and is manifested through continual growth. It concerns vital assimilation and adherence to the Master on the levels of faith, life and apostolate, to the point of identification with Christ—transformation in him so as to become an *alter Cristus, alter Magister*. Thus devotion to Jesus the Divine Master, Way, Truth and Life, which is the heart of the Pauline spirituality, is essentially put into practice through fidelity to Christ and his Gospel. This fidelity, says Fr. Alberione, “does not consist in beautiful words, nor is it a counsel. It is the substance of the Congregation. It means being or not being Paulines.” Pope Francis says the same thing: “Let us return to the Gospel—it concerns being or not being Christians.”

So let us begin with this first manifestation of fidelity—we need it! The world needs this living testimony—the testimony of a faith that is not something ideological or sociological; that does not simply mean that our name appears in a parish register. Instead, it involves a vital encounter with the risen Lord—Jesus alive in his Church, in his Word, in the Eucharist, in the poor.

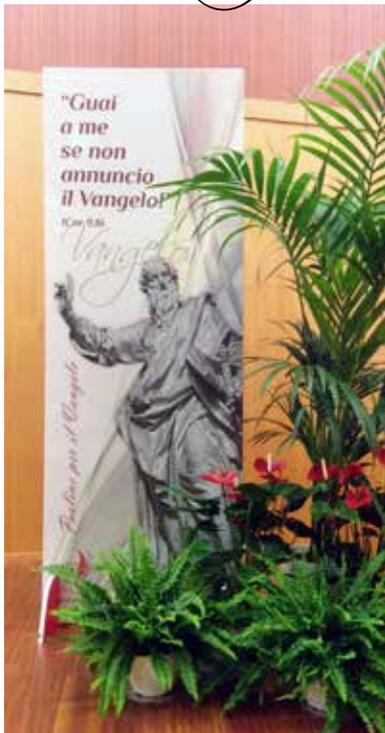


Let us return to the Gospel! Let us return to an experience of the living God! This is the heart of the Pauline spirituality! This is what “dynamic fidelity” means. While not denying in the least the irreplaceable role of doctrine in proclaiming the Faith, the Pope prefers to demonstrate that the Gospel has the power to bring about renewal through the prophetic witness of life. In support of this, he quotes the exhortation of Francis of Assisi to his brothers: “Go forth! Preach the Gospel continually through the witness of your life and, if necessary, also through words.” But we do exactly the opposite.

### ***I believe in God because I trust in Jesus***

I asked myself why everyone is such a fan of this Pope. What is so special about him other than that he’s a very likeable person? Why is he so popular? Is it because he speaks simply? If only it could be reduced to this! There’s a secret here, and he himself explained what it was in a letter to Eugenio Scalfari, who had said to him: “Your Holiness, I love Jesus. There’s no doubt he was a great prophet, an extraordinary person.... But from there to saying that he is God—well, that’s a huge leap. Your Holiness, how are you able to believe that Jesus of Nazareth is God?” And Pope Francis replied that we can know this on an intellectual level but also through our relationships—that is, the level of the heart. The two kinds of knowledge (heart and reason) are not in opposition but instead should be integrated. When a child is born, he/she does not know anything. Do we have to wait until that child is six years old and then send him/her to school to start learning things? No. A child starts to learn immediately. How? Not with the mind but with the heart. This knowledge is acquired through relationships





with trusted people. I don't put my finger in the fire because my mother told me not to.... And I learn something true: I learn to know good and bad. This knowledge acquired through interpersonal relationships must be integrated with intellectual knowledge. That is, says Francis, "I believe in God because I trust in Jesus. Consequently, I believe him when he says to me: 'The Father and I are one. Those who see me, see the Father. I am in the Father and the Father is in me.'"

At the time of Jesus, there were many experts about God (the doctors of the law, the scribes...) but the difference, the evangelists say, lies in the fact that Jesus did not speak like the other experts but "with authority." The Bible translation sponsored by the Italian Bishops Conference reads: "with power, with authority," but the Pope underscores that the original Greek text uses the word *exousia*, which is very hard to translate. It means that Jesus spoke through the power of the Spirit. The power of attraction that the Pope exerts on the world is due to his faith; it is due to the presence of the Spirit in his mission as Pontiff. Many of the things he says, I say too... but when he says these things, he says them *with power*. Jesus did not keep that *exousia* for himself but gave it to his apostles—and therefore to the Church—before ascending to the Father.

To return to the Gospel means to return to the presence of the Spirit in our life, in our communities, in our works. If *exousia* is missing, then we might make a great clamor, we might wind up in the newspapers...but nothing will change.

**To return to the Gospel means to return to the presence of the Spirit in our life, in our communities, in our works**

It is the power of the Spirit that transforms. This is why Pope Francis insists that in the consecrated life, fecundity does not depend on numbers or works or bank accounts. Instead, it depends on the One in whom

we have placed our trust and for whom nothing is impossible. This is the hope that does not disappoint and that will allow the Daughters of St. Paul to continue to write a great history well into the future. It is to that future that you must always look, aware that the Holy Spirit is spurring you on in order to do still greater things with you.

We must speak by means of our life. So let us courageously replace "old wineskins with new ones," as the Pope says, without ever forgetting that that wine will turn to vinegar if we, as consecrated persons, do not spend time with the Lord each day in prayer.

### **Fidelity to Humanity and Its Social Conditions**

"Our founders and foundresses," continues Francis in his Letter, "shared in Jesus' own compassion when he saw the crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd... and sought in different ways to be of service to all those to whom the Spirit sent them. They did so by their prayers of intercession, their preaching of the Gospel, their works of catechesis, education, their service to the poor and the infirm.... The creativity of charity is boundless; it is able to find countless new ways of bringing the newness of the Gospel to every culture and every corner of society."

Thanks to its choice of incarnation in the human story, the consecrated life is an enrichment also on the human level. To consecrate oneself to God in the religious life means becoming *more* human, not less. This is why the Daughters of St. Paul, who are called to evangelize through communications, are destined, in today's globalized world, to enter into dialogue with all its cultures and differences. In the school of Fr. Alberione, the FSPs must become aware that a plurality of





**The Gospel was written for everyone; it speaks to the conscience of everyone, believers and non-believers alike**

cultural and religious positions is an expression of freedom. Therefore, dialogue is necessary and it is always good. In a globalized society, says the Pope in *Evangelii Gaudium*, conflicts are inevitable and should be accepted. Thus, for the Daughters of St. Paul, the challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to contribute to transforming these inevitable conflicts into a common wealth through the powerful

weapon of communications. We shouldn't be afraid of clashing with one another: this is a part of our history; it is the poverty of our human situation. We must transform our differences into opportunities for growth, fostering the dissemination of the "culture of encounter" so dear to Pope Francis because it is the only culture capable of attaining "a multiform harmony within our globalized world."

Sisters, I don't want to scare you, but look at the work that lies ahead of you! The dynamic fidelity of the Daughters of St. Paul to contemporary humanity and its social condition consists in using communications to ensure that the intercultural and interreligious dialogue of our times reaches everyone. We must not use the instruments of communication to throw the huge and visible failings of modern culture back in its face. Let us use communications not to squelch modern culture but to form a genuine bond with it so that it can make the most of its extraordinary

potentials. Let us not make the mistakes that were made in the past. The Gospel was written for everyone; it speaks to the conscience of everyone, believers and non-believers alike, and it is interesting to see how non-believers make constant reference to it.

### **Fidelity to One's Charism**

*Evangelii Gaudium* clearly reveals the yearning of Pope Francis that the whole Church renew itself and assume a permanent attitude of service, "like the Son of Man, who came to serve, not to be served." The world needs a "Samaritan Church," a Church that is a "field hospital." In a homily at St. Martha's, he said: "The picture that comes to my mind is that of a nurse, who heals the wounded one by one, with his/her own hands. God gets involved in our human misery; he approaches our wounds and heals them with his own hands, and in order to have those hands he became a human being."

For the Daughters of St. Paul, what does it mean to live in a state of permanent service? To operate the sophisticated instruments of communication and also take on the new forms of business management are necessary choices that could give rise to problems. Fr. Alberione was aware of this. Listen to what he said: "To carry out our apostolate professionally, we must also take on the requirements and structures of a business because they are a necessary resource. But we must never absolutize them because the Congregation must never lower itself to the level of commerce. Instead, it must always maintain



the human-divine level of the apostolate, carrying it out with the most rapid and effective methods and with a pastoral spirit.”

## Professional Expertise

Dear sisters, it is not enough for you to be holy: alongside holiness, you need professional expertise. You must blend genuine holiness (a meeting with the living God in prayer, in the Eucharist, in the Word...) and professional skill. Your novitiates and formation programs must produce sisters who are both holy and professionally trained according to their specific gifts, otherwise you will not be able to meet the challenges of the new times! In the last decades a new universe of communications has taken root—one radically different from the one Fr. Alberione knew. Today the new technologies have opened possibilities for communication that were completely unimaginable a hundred years ago. A new communications culture has been born, prompting John Paul II to write that today it is not enough to place the mass media at the service of evangelization. “It is also necessary,” he said, “to integrate that message into the new culture created by modern communications. This is a complex issue, since the new culture originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology” (*Redemptoris Missio*, 37c).

When Paul VI was Archbishop of Milan, he said to the Society of St. Paul: “You take the Word of God, typeset it, clothe it with ink, print it and send it out to the world. Clad in this form, the Word of God is the Lord *incartato* (on paper). You



give people God *incartato*, like Mary gave everyone God *incarnato* (in the flesh). *Incarnato* and *incartato* correspond.” But in today’s globalized world the problem is no longer that of giving the Word of God *incartato* in always wider geographic areas or to ever-greater numbers of people. Today we have at our disposition communications instruments that can be used for a more demanding goal—one pointed out by Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: “to affect and, as it were, upset, through the power of the Gospel, humanity’s criteria of judgment; to determine values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life” (n. 19). In today’s globalized world, you Paulines must update your charism courageously, trusting in the Lord who called you.

**It is necessary to integrate our message into the new culture created by modern communications**

The Centenary of the Daughters of St. Paul is not a “finishing line” but the beginning of a new season. It is this that I want to leave you as an affectionate remembrance because by now we’ve known and esteemed one another for many years. Therefore, while we thank and praise the Lord for all the blessings he has poured out on you and the amazing things he has accomplished through and with you, let us also ask the Queen of Apostles, the Mother of the Pauline Family, to guide you toward the great things that Pope Francis, the Church and the contemporary world expect from your renewal.

*Fr. Bartholomew Sorge, SJ  
Expert on the Church’s Social Doctrine*

## Thecla:

### Witness and Model of Pauline Holiness



Given my age (I'm 96 years old), my many years in the Congregation (since 1931) and my knowledge of the Founders, I am often invited to offer my testimony to formation groups, international FSP meetings, and various encounters of the Pauline Family. One day, a very kind woman—a Pauline Co-operator whom I did not know personally—accompanied me to one of these gatherings. Our drive to the meeting was marked by casual conversation and occasional lapses into silence. But at one point, seized by anxiety, I suddenly broke one of those stretches of silence and exclaimed, "O my goodness! What am I going to say to them?" The woman looked at me in amazement and replied, "Just say you saw them [the Founders]!"

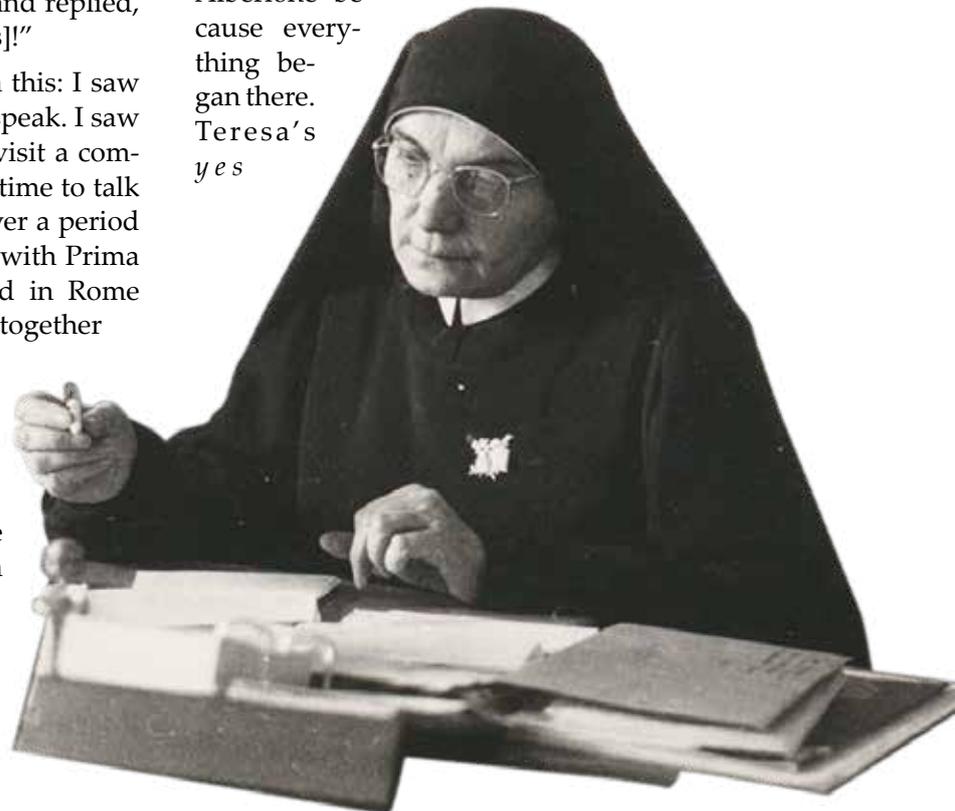
Yes, the difference lies precisely in this: I saw the Founders and that is the reason I speak. I saw them not because they happened to visit a community in which I lived and took the time to talk to us.... No, I saw them frequently over a period of many years. I was in close contact with Prima Maestra in Alba from 1931-1936 and in Rome from 1938-1962. Everything is strung together along the golden cord of memories.... I am no longer able to read or write [due to failing eyesight] but I can still see our Founder and Co-Foundress clearly, in keeping with what I knew about them and the manner in which they lived.... There is an icon of Maestra Thecla that no one fails to see—neither myself,

who knew her personally, nor those who never met her but who have read about her, heard about her and taken an interest in her life and activities. This icon "shines" in the semi-darkness of the Church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian in Alba. The day is 27 June 1915: seated in one of the pews in the church is the mother of young Teresa Merlo. She is waiting for her daughter, who is in the sacristy speaking with the Theologian, Fr. James Alberione. Vincenza Merlo is anxious, perplexed: her daughter is beautiful, young, intelligent and very dear to her.... What will be the result of this meeting?

When Teresa returns, Vincenza immediately asks: "What did he say to you?" "He invited me to collaborate with his work." "What work?" "The Theologian says that woman can do great good through the apostolate of the press." "What does that have to do with you? What did you say to him?" "I said yes!"

### Teresa's "Yes"

Teresa said *yes* to Fr. Alberione—a *yes* wrapped in mystery. It was the *yes* that the Son said to the Father: "Yes, because it pleases you." It was Mary's *yes* to the angel—a *yes* on which everything depended! My testimony concerns primarily Maestra Thecla, but she cannot be separated from Fr. Alberione because everything began there. Teresa's *yes*



**It was not always easy to understand and follow Alberione's great ideal**



to him was a *yes* made in the dark. She said *yes* to what would be happy days and days of great glory, but she also said *yes* to days that would be filled with suffering. She said *yes* to Fr. Alberione because she knew that she was saying *yes* to the Lord, who was making his request through the Theologian. It was not an easy *yes*, just as later it would not be easy to understand and follow his great ideal.

Once (I think the year was 1952 or 1953) I made a course of spiritual exercises with Prima Maestra, who had just been released from our Albano hospital. At the end of the retreat, Fr. Alberione came to hear our confessions. Afterward, I showed Maestra Thecla my notebook, in which I had written down my spiritual project for the coming year. In return, Prima Maestra showed me her own notebook, turning a page so that I could read what the Founder had written there. I saw the phrase, "Queen of Apostles Sanctuary. Queen of Apostles Sanctuary. Queen of Apostles Sanctuary." It was repeated three times. This was the type of suffering the Founder could inflict on the Co-Foundress: a change of program, a new idea, the order to go to one place instead of another.... Prima Maestra always obeyed with creativity and intelligent humility because he was the Founder, she the collaborator.

### **The Pauline Spirit**

The Pauline spirit—which Fr. Alberione gave to the whole Pauline Family and therefore to the Daughters of St. Paul—places the disciple in the school of Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life with the radicality

of St. Paul, under the gaze of Mary, Mother, Teacher and Queen of Apostles.

Those who follow and understand this spirituality find in it a new, original and fascinating vision, founded on the Word and Eucharist. In the Word, the disciple meets the Master, Way, Truth and Life: he is the *Truth* that enlightens the mind and gives meaning to history, to the Church, to one's personal projects; he is the *Way* that leads to the Father; he is the *Life* that opens one to mission, to hope, to the Gospel. In the Eucharist, the disciple finds the strength and grace to follow the teaching of the Master and place herself completely in his hands.

The Pauline spirituality is therefore total: it involves mind, will and heart—the whole person. Primo Maestro, while still a young priest, "enrolled" Prima Maestra Thecla in the school of Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life.

He left her in this school for many years—a long stretch of discipleship, of apprenticeship—until she reached the point of making this spirituality her own, passing it on to the Congregation, entrusting it to each one of us. In fact, to live and proclaim Christ the Master, Way, Truth and Life is the mission of the Daughters of St. Paul. To live Christ—to get to know him and make him known through our apostolate—this was the Founder's

**Primo Maestro  
"enrolled" Prima  
Maestra Thecla  
in the school  
of Jesus Master,  
Way, Truth and Life**



most beautiful gift to the Co-Foundress. We know that Fr. Alberione had many opportunities to encourage Maestra Thecla and direct her (as he himself said, "I was her spiritual director for 46 years"). Today we say she is a saint, but she was also a saint back then, so intense and obvious was her intimate communication with God, so profound her way of living, so transforming her prayer. During my time, I heard around me statements like: "How much Prima Maestra prays!" "Look how Prima Maestra prays!" Her times of prayer were long and fruitful. Her prayer was so sweet and satisfying that it illuminated her face.

### **Thecla: A Sure Guide**

Maestra Thecla was a *sure guide* for the Daughters of St. Paul. She traveled around the world five or six times, visiting all our communities and apostolic sectors: she was a true guide for the apostolate. She was not interested in sightseeing—whenever she would visit a city, she didn't engage in tourism.

The only trips she would make outside the convent would be to visit the local ecclesiastical or civil authorities. Her whole attention was focused on our sisters because the purpose of her trips was to give them the support they needed. However when I went to India and Great Britain with her, she wanted the sisters to take me out and show me around so that I could "see things that could serve for the apostolate," as she put it. At one time I was the director of *Così*, a magazine

for young women, and I am still amazed today at Prima Maestra's understanding of how necessary this periodical was and all she did to encourage and promote it....

I remember our early years in Rome when we had only one printing press. We used it to print the Bible and when the last page rolled off the press Maestra Thecla picked it up and kissed it. Today Pope Francis insists that we should carry a small copy of the Gospel on our person. Prima Maestra did this: not a small, bound copy of the Sacred Text but tiny pieces snipped from a Bible signature and gathered together....

Prima Maestra was the wise Mother of the Institute. Fr. Alberione said: "You will have many Prime Maestre, but she is your only Mother." True to her Piedmontese background, Maestra Thecla had a strong character. Yet she was also a very balanced person thanks to her assiduous prayer and an ascetism put into concrete practice. She was a mother to us even when she was obliged to reprimand us.

Sr. Giuseppina Ballestra, an FSP who celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday last April, was Prima Maestra's driver and the only one of us who had a camera. One of the pictures she took shows Prima Maestra wearing a kitchen apron and washing the stove. It is not a posed picture: Prima Maestra was first and foremost a mother and if there was no one to do these chores, then she would help out. Other pictures show her giving medicine to a sick sister, etc. I can testify to this: Prima Maestra is the Mother of this Institute that has reached its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday!

*Lord, we thank you for having chosen and constituted Maestra Thecla as the sure guide and wise mother of the Daughters of St. Paul.*

*Lorenzina Guidetti, fsp*



## FSP Commemorative Postage Stamp



First of all, I would like to thank your Superior General for the cordiality and courtesy with which she invited, through me, the Department of Economic Development, the authority that issues the country's postage stamps, to be present here today. [This State Department] wanted to celebrate the Centenary of the Institute of the Pious Society of the Daughters of St. Paul through the issue of a commemorative stamp, authorized by a decree of the President of the Republic of Italy on 9 March 2015.

A postage stamp is one of the main instruments by means of which a nation offers public recognition to persons and events important to its culture and traditions. It is also a way of expressing gratitude to organizations and activities that, through their own merits, represent the best the country has produced. In the specific case of the Institute of the Pious Society of the Daughters of St. Paul, which is celebrating its Centenary this year, the Republic of Italy wants to pay homage to the apostolic activities that the Institute's members have been carrying out on a daily basis for the past hundred years in the sector of the press by means of their publishing houses, book centers, agencies, typographies and multimedia centers both here in Italy and throughout the world.

As understood by current law, a postage stamp is a manifestation of national sovereignty inasmuch as it is issued directly by the State and thus emanates from the will and political position of the executive branch of government. Postage

stamps, in fact, although marketed by the Italian Postal Department—and in this case I want to also thank Dr. Andrea Alfieri, director of the Italian Postal Department, who is here with us today—as I said, postage stamps, although marketed by the Italian Postal Department, are issued by the Department for Economic Development, which chooses with complete autonomy the subjects of the stamps and their times of issue. Postage stamps are a media vehicle inasmuch as they are used to circulate the correspondence entrusted to the Italian postal system, enabling this correspondence to reach every class of people and every corner of our peninsula—and, in the case of the Paulines, even beyond our national borders.

The complex process of issuing a stamp involves not only the Department of Economic Development and the Italian Postal System, which see to the stamp's distribution throughout the country, but also the national Zecca Printing Institute, which has the duty to print postage stamps. In fact the new stamp bears the words "IPZS Roma" ("IPZS" is the acronym of the Printing Institute), and also the name of the artist who designed the stamp—in this case Ms. Perrino, an excellent artist and a member of the National Printing Institute.

The work of the Department is to select high-profile subjects and themes of general interest that will capture the interest and attention of the public. Thus we could not fail to issue a postage stamp dedicated to the Daughters of St. Paul, who have been spoken about in a very praiseworthy way by the illustrious contributors to this round table session: His Excellency Archbishop Celli, Professor Riccardi, Father Sorge and the estimable Sr. Lorenzina Guidetti.

800,000 copies of the new stamp, whose postal value is €0,80 (80 cents) per stamp, have been printed. It will be officially issued on 15 June, the foundation date of your marvelous organization.

What can I say to conclude this brief but sincere presentation? I would like to remind you of the words of the Pope, although he speaks with far more power and authority than I do:

Dear Daughters of St. Paul, look to the future! This is your mission! Congratulations!

*Prof. Angelo Di Stasi  
President of the Commission for the Study  
and Issue of Postage Stamps  
Department of Economic Development*

## A Woman's Dream

### Introduction



A very warm welcome to all our guests, collaborators, friends and Pauline brothers and sisters participating in this Centenary celebration.

To tell the truth, 15 June 1915, the foundation date of the Daughters of St. Paul, is the day on which we commemorate the opening of a *small sewing shop* so we are in actual fact celebrating the foundation of an Institute of seamstresses. In fact, Italy had entered World War I just a month earlier and the young women who formed that first small group spent their days sewing clothes for the soldiers.

But even though they were doing the work of seamstresses, Fr. Alberione already thought of these young women as “preachers” and “apostles of the good press.” So they were both *seamstresses and preachers*. There is an analogy between the two activities that shouldn't be overlooked: Thecla, a young woman from the Piedmont, was a seamstress. She plied needle and scissors in provincial Italy and then came to intuitively understand that the whole world needed to be “stitched together” and often “mended” with the robust thread of the Gospel.

Through their apostolate, the Daughters of St. Paul “sew garments” suited to the needs of each person. These “garments” are their books on spirituality and culture for children and families, music for young people, radio programs and presence on the Internet. Everything is “cut to fit” by means of a pastoral spirit that enables them to adapt their message to the persons with whom they want to enter into dialogue.

So we can well say the Daughters of St. Paul are both seamstresses and preachers. In the end, the two are one and the same. To lovingly ply needle and thread to mend a torn humanity, to courageously create “new garments” by adopting new languages and disseminating messages that can help to shape a new humanity in the image of God....



Thecla was the first to do this. She led the way for the Daughters of St. Paul. Writer and journalist Giorgio Torelli said of her:

Thecla, a young woman from the Piedmont, was a seamstress. She plied needle and scissors in provincial Italy and then came to intuitively understand that the whole world needed to be “stitched together” and often “mended” with the robust thread of the Gospel.

She was a forerunner, a pioneer, a trail blazer, a “soldier of fortune” and “captain” of the Daughters of St. Paul. She served the Lord with perennial creativity.

When Thecla—at the time still known as Maria Teresa—met Fr. Alberione, she was “infected,” shaken and inspired by his ideal, ready to “take up arms” for an all-consuming Cause.

Because of this, she became a firm point of reference for all the other “Maria Teresa’s” who would follow in her footsteps, yearning on their part to become “Thecla’s.”

She used every means—writing, images, sound, voices, etc.—to testify with burning yet gentle conviction that the Creator of the universe is our Father. This mission led her to all the world’s continents.

And the Daughters of St. Paul, with their joys, anxieties, ardent desires, many initiatives and hard labors, are a sign of this.

Livia Sabatti, fsp

## With a Dream in Her Heart

**Welcome of  
Felice Pietro Isnardi  
Mayor of Castagnito**



In the name of all the citizens of Castagnito, I want to offer a very sincere welcome to the multitude of Daughters of St. Paul who have arrived here from every part of the world.

Castagnito is a small town. As such, its daily life is similar to that of an extended family. Consequently, we feel honored to be in the limelight as a result of the special event we are celebrating—an event that has not only national but also international reverberations.

This region of Italy, at one time so harsh and poor that it prompted a contemporary poet to call it “a cursed land,” is inhabited by simple but honest people deeply anchored in their values. In times of difficulty the soil of this region has produced some remarkable people.

One of these was Teresa Merlo, who started out on a walk early one morning a hundred years ago. That walk blazed a trail leading to a faith so robust that it will never crumble with the passing of time. Recognized by the Church as *Venerable*, she remains today a point of refer-

ence for those who want to dedicate their lives to the Lord. Thanks to her work at the side of Blessed James Alberione, a program was launched that goes beyond territorial and spiritual boundaries.

Here in Castagnito, Sr. Thecla is present among us on a daily basis—in fact our new primary school is named after her and many of her sisters in religion have been laid to rest in our cemetery.

Sr. Thecla’s faith was shaped by the culture and roots of this land and was carried with great creativity throughout the world—a world that has become complicated; a world in which there is great need to preserve and, if possible, spread the message of faith because modern society still needs to grow in knowledge and respect for the name of God and learn to interact with the world’s many cultures and religions.

Sr. Thecla left Castagnito with a dream in her heart and today 2300 Daughters of St. Paul scattered throughout the world continue to concretize it.



St. John the Baptist Church  
Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

## «My heart rejoices»

Homily of Fr. Gianluca Zurra,  
Pastor



Let us take a minute to think about our heart—our physical heart, made of flesh, beating within us. When we say, “We are our heart,” we are saying something fundamental because our heart is the center of our life. Think about other expressions we use, like: “That wounded me to the heart,” which is to say: “That struck me to the depths of my being.” Or else, adopting the opposite stance: “My heart rejoices.” When we fall in love or are afraid, our heart beats faster. When we experience something beautiful, it stirs our heart.

In the Bible, the word “heart” means the whole person, the essence of that individual. It is by way of the heart that we experience life. It is by way of the heart that we carry out our journey here on earth. It is by way of the heart that we learn a common language: that of feelings, affections and mutual bonds. The heart has its own way of reasoning: it knows life because it is by way of the heart that we learn to interact with others.

The same thing is true of God. God has a heart! Exactly like ours. His heart gets angry, rejoices and feels passionately about things because God travels alongside us; he shapes history with us. In today’s first reading (Hos. 11:1, 3-4, 8-9), the prophet Hosea tells us about

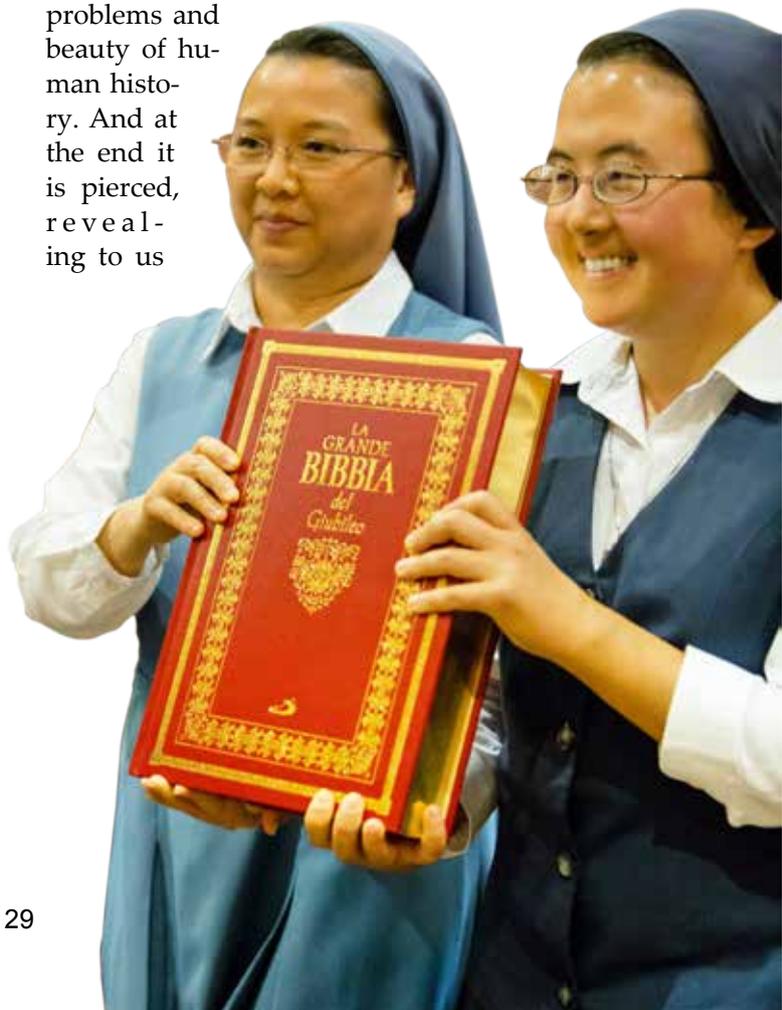
«My yearning is like that of a mother, caring for her child»

a God who learns to love his people by walking alongside them, even when they try to shake him off. He reaches the

point of saying: *My yearning is like that of a mother, caring for her child.* Note this beautiful and powerful image: God takes his children by the hand; he lovingly embraces them but does not clutch them to himself. He teaches them to walk, to be free, to grow up. God’s heart hurts each time he sees that his children are not following the right path, that they are chasing after idols. But he would never dream of striking his offspring precisely because he is God and thus he does not think the way we do. His patience is infinite and his love remains steadfast.

But do we truly see God like this? Can we see that he takes us by the hand, walks alongside us, shares our sufferings and our dreams, and wants only one thing: that we, his children, will make a good journey through life; that we will continue to grow and become free adults? And yet this is precisely what the God of Jesus, our Father in heaven, is like.

As we heard in today’s Gospel reading (Jn. 19:31-37), after Jesus died his heart was pierced by a lance. That heart—his real, concrete human heart—did not remain cold, distant, without wounds. The heart of Jesus, precisely because he is God, is a heart that experiences all the wounds, problems and beauty of human history. And at the end it is pierced, revealing to us



that in spite of everything the secret of life is this: that each time you do not hold on possessively to your life, each time you open your heart to others, it is there that you find God; it is there that you find all humanity; it is there that you are truly a person. The last act of the crucified Christ was precisely this: an open heart from which blood and water flowed. As if to say that not even death could snuff out his heart. Every time we live this way, every time we believe in this (and life continually puts us to the test on this point), we touch God; we touch his heart. All of us—men and women religious, mothers and fathers of families, single people—are able to accomplish great things in life each time we have the courage to live in this way and to believe in this love. Even when things are hard; even when we have a thousand reasons to say: “Why am I wasting my time? Nothing good is coming of this, only a lot of problems....”

And yet today we are here to give thanks and reconfirm through this Eucharistic Celebration, through listening to the Word, that it makes sense to live with an open heart, like Jesus did.

We are here to remember that Thecla left Castagnito and accomplished what she did because she believe in the love of God. She dedicated herself 100% to her mission, beginning with something small and delicate: sewing and embroidery work. A person who is capable of sewing, of embroidering cloth, is also capable of sewing and embroidering life. It requires patience and time to stitch together things that cannot easily be combined.... Thecla’s life was not marked by miracles but by the ordinary events of daily life. But life is like that—it unfolds one bit at a time. Look around you: how much “fabric”—how



many stories, worlds and cultures—are gathered together in this room! The heart of Jesus is present here, in the normal situations of daily life; it is “writing” history in your communities, in the countries where you live.

**The heart of Jesus is present here, in the normal situations of daily life; it is “writing” history in your communities, in the countries where you live**

Today’s reading from the Letter of Paul (Eph. 3:8.12, 14-19) is stupendous! I would like to leave you with this picture, which is typical of Castagnito. At a certain point, Paul says that the heart of Jesus is so big that we are compelled to broaden our gaze. He speaks about “the breadth and the length, the height and the depth” of Christ’s love. In my mind’s eye I see before me a marvelous panorama that we are invited to enter. It is a panorama without boundaries because it is always expanding.

One of you, looking out the window earlier, exclaimed: “What a beautiful view there is from here!” And it’s true. Perhaps when Thecla was living here, she kept her gaze fixed on that panorama. I like to think that she remembered it for a long time afterward. If your faith is genuine, then it is like the panorama that can be seen from here. [You must have] a heart that expands, that has the courage to go forth, to plunge to the depths of things, because this is what the heart of Jesus was like up to the very end.

Let us thank God for this in our Eucharistic Celebration. And let us not forget that we follow in the footsteps of Thecla and the many other people who preceded us in the Faith. We are part of that story. Every time we believe in the heart of Jesus, we can do great things in our daily lives.



Church of the Divine Master

## From Alba to the World

Homily of the Bishop of Alba,  
Giacomo Lanzetti

“Go out to the whole world”—this command becomes once more a project of sacred history, which is unfolding even as we commemorate the Centenary of foundation of the Daughters of St. Paul. At times we live events, we live God’s plan, with a certain arrogance, forgetting all our toil and failures and remembering only the beautiful things.

God has acted in your history to bring you back after a hundred years to this town, your point of departure, underscoring in the “Here I am, Lord” [voiced by Teresa] a fresh adherence to the plan of divine Providence. “*I chose you*”: the fact of being chosen launched a story of salvation with very remote roots, that is to say: from all eternity God loved you and knew your story.

In today’s Gospel reading (Mk. 4:26-34), the way of thinking manifested by Jesus is not very



different from that of Ezekiel (17:22-24). The small seed Jesus refers to bears within itself the ability to develop into a leafy, hospitable tree. Here too is a message about the great human story that is your tiny personal story. God is at work in your heart and in your story. With you, he is writing a page of evangelization and a page of his loving plan. He came to your home, looking for you. St. Paul, your model and founder, together with Fr. James Alberione, saw that this whole growth process from seed to plant to tree has three prospects (cf. 2 Co. 5:6-10), which are also the prospects of your story in this Congregation. They are based on faith and are part of the promise you made. “We walk by faith, not by sight.”

We thought of you yesterday while we were in the huge Basilica dedicated to Mary, Help of



Christians. We thought of you because your triduum coincided with the Feast of the Sacred Heart and with the splendid pilgrimage we made to Turin to see the Shroud. In that image of the scourged and crucified Jesus, we saw your faces too. We also thought of you because this is the year dedicated to the consecrated life and we hope that you will grow and “resurrect” always more. The crucified Christ we contemplated is your risen face, which triggers in you an always greater thrust based on faith, not on evidence, that you are on the right road. However, this is something you will know for sure only at the end of life.



## **Have trust!**

And your prayer today is this: “Lord, increase our trust. Help us understand that you want us—precisely us—that you need us—precisely us—that your story led us from our town, our city, our country and gathered us together here today in Alba,” transforming your life into a hymn of joy and holiness. And this confidence is unshakable despite what is happening in our world, perhaps even in your own countries. St. Paul invites us to have great trust, declaring twice, “We are confident!” (vv. 6, 10) Confidence/trust should be second-nature to us because it is something we have experienced from birth: trust in our mother, who welcomed and nourished us; trust in the family in which we grew up; trust in our teachers; a trust that makes it possible for parents to accept the hard work involved in raising and educating their children; a trust that is being put to the test today by the many crises troubling our world. There is also trust on the religious level—a trust that prompts us to speak to Jesus at night like Nicodemus. And this trust increases as we search together for justice and mercy.

## **An Ongoing Story**

A centenary is significant not because it prompts us to make an evaluation or draw up a balance sheet or glorify everything that was accomplished. Instead, it readies us to help those who are seeking serenity and peace.

I think it is important to comment on today’s readings also in view of this event. I already touched on the subject in my reference to seeds,

trees and trust. This ongoing story tells us that Fr. Alberione and Mother Thecla saw things clearly and tried to ensure that the work they initiated would continue. It is a work wrapped in mystery because it is God who called you. Your vocation, the story of your Congregation, is the small shoot Ezekiel speaks about. Mother Thecla and Fr. Alberione were instruments in the hands of God to help that shoot sprout, to plant it in the “earth” constituted by the faith of many people, and to reproduce it in countless places and hearts. You welcomed me with splendid smiles—smiles that are filled with the future because your choices have made you serene and joyful. Faith invites us to contemplate your story, your vocation, your Congregation, as a work of God. He gave your Institute a special charism and ministry in the Church and world. Consequently, we feel a deep need to thank him for the Pauline Family.

I would like to conclude with three observations made by St. Paul, your teacher and protector.

Our strength lies in our faith, nothing else. In our heart dwells indestructible faith in God, who has chosen us and who walks alongside us every moment until we reach our goal and fling ourselves into his arms. Your Mother Thecla and Fr. Alberione have already reached that goal. Now they are spending all their energies to ensure that their sons and daughters have a bright future, brimming over with enthusiasm. The yearning to see them once again when the time comes to leave this earth reinforces your faith and reinvigorates your hope.

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**Faith invites us to contemplate your story, your vocation, your Congregation, as a work of God**

On your journey, strive tirelessly for the heights of your spirituality, which is centered on Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life. Never cease aiming for the same goal as Paul: "It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me." This will enable you to communicate the Gospel passionately, as he did; to immerse yourselves in it because you are forged by a spirituality that permeates your entire being and makes you docile instruments of evangelization in the hands of God. The means for reaching this point are those pointed out by Fr. Alberione and Maestra Thecla: the Word of God and the Eucharist. So continue to place daily prayer and fraternal communion at the center of your day because they are the resources that give you the energy to carry out your multiform apostolate and discern the signs of the times so as to respond to the needs of the Church and the whole world.

Never tire of placing yourselves at the service of education so as to assist parents in their primary duty, which is to offer their children new instruments that will help them discover and develop their faith.

Never tire of thanking God for Pope Francis—a divine gift to the Church and world. Let us readily welcome his ministry, above all his repeated invitations to live in an attitude of hope, especially in this time in which hope is being sorely tested.

Among the many important things said in *Evangelii Gaudium*, I find the following statement very meaningful: "Christ, risen and glorified, is the wellspring of our hope, and he will not deprive us of the help we need to carry out the mission he has entrusted to us" (n. 275). His resurrection is not an event restricted to the past. Precisely on the day when everything seemed to have ended, the shoot of new life burst into bloom. The resurrection is a power without equal. It is true

that sometimes it seems like God does not exist. We see around us injustice, wickedness, indifference, cruelty, a lack of understanding even among ourselves.... But it is also true that in the midst of darkness something new begins to germinate, like

**May your lives be a proclamation of how beautiful it is to spend all one's energies for the Lord!**



this Centenary celebration that in its own time will produce fruit. Obstinate, invincibly, life returns to a wasteland. No matter how many ugly things surround us, good will nevertheless sprout and spread.

### **Rejoice because it is wonderful to follow Jesus**

Every day beauty is reborn in the world—like the beauty of your vocation, which has been shaped through the twists and turns of history. Values are constantly reappearing in new forms. In fact, many times the human being is reborn as a result of what seemed to be irreversible situations. This is the story we are celebrating today: your resurrection—the story of every evangelizer and every instrument the Lord uses to tell others about how joyful it is to be united to him.

Your vocation is a fundamental charism. Rejoice because it is wonderful to follow Jesus. It is wonderful to be a living icon of the Blessed Mother and the Church. Walk alongside priests and communities. May your lives be a proclamation of how beautiful it is to spend all one's energies for the Lord! May you have the strength in the coming years to courageously proclaim the Gospel in an ever-more de-Christianized world. Speak about Christ, repeat his words, be his courageous alter-egos. Have the courage to immolate yourselves so that life can be reinvigorated and withered branches burst into bloom. May each of you find in your personal life story the will of the Lord, who wants you to live the call to holiness through your particular service.

Queen of Apostles Sanctuary

## Valdir José de Castro to Card. João Braz de Aviz



Your Eminence  
Cardinal João Braz de Aviz,

It is with joy that I welcome you in the name of the Pauline Family, together with my Pauline confreres of the Italian Province, who in these days are celebrating their 19<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter at Ariccia with their superior, Fr. Eustacchio Imperato.

Your presence here today is a great gift for us and especially for our sisters the Daughters of St. Paul: it is a sign that the universal Church looks with trust and esteem at the mission of evangelization proper to the Pauline charism, which has now completed a century of life in proclaiming the message of salvation in Jesus Christ to all the people with all the languages of communication.

On 15 June 1915, exactly 100 years ago, the Daughters of St. Paul began their charismatic and missionary story. In their century of ex-

istence, thousands of sisters have generously made their own the mandate of Fr. Alberione and the Church. And they continue to do so today, seeking to carry out their mission in keeping with the words of their Superior General, Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan, "along the secure tracks of humility and faith traveled by Maestra Thecla and our first sisters."

Tradition and innovation, the past and the future, accompanied in everything by the Holy Spirit, who, faithful to that first inspiration a century ago, ceaselessly points out new and courageous paths for reaching people of every time and place.

Dear sisters, we are praying for you and with you. May Jesus Master, through the intercession of St. Paul the Apostle and under the maternal gaze of Mary, continue to cast light on your journey.

Valdir José de Castro, SSP  
Superior General

# Homily

Queen of Apostles Sanctuary

## A Path of Freedom and Joy

Homily of  
Cardinal João Braz de Aviz  
Prefect of the Congregation  
for Consecrated Life



I am very happy to be here and to offer my greetings to Fr. Valdir, the whole Pauline Family and today, in a special way, to all the Daughters of St. Paul, your Superior General and her council.

I am truly delighted that you invited me to join you in thanking God for these 100 years of charism and life—a modern charism that is already 100 years old but that was born in this era, has developed rapidly and has already produced great fruit. One thing I admire very much about the Pauline Family is that Fr. James Alberione was a very fecund Founder.

The milestone we are celebrating together gives us the chance to contemplate a story that gives glory to God. St. Augustine said: “When you pray, you give glory to God. And when you are not praying but are involved in the things you should be doing, you continue to give glory to God.” In short, one’s whole life should give glory to God.

### **Traveling together**

The texts you have chosen for today’s Liturgy express this attitude very well. Let us take a look at the trip home we are making; let us look

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**The milestone we are celebrating together gives us the chance to contemplate a story that gives glory to God**

at God, who involved us in his life and who is drawing us to himself in Jesus. The first thing to do, in contemplating your charism during this Jubilee, which will continue for a long time yet, is to ask

yourselves what gift you have received through which you can glorify God.

The Council reminded all consecrated persons that our journey should first of all lead us to become disciples of Jesus always more. To become disciples means to live the Word (which is Jesus), the sacraments (which are Jesus) and the Church (which is Jesus). To follow this itinerary means to learn from our one and only Master how to make the trip through life.

In many places today, society no longer wants the presence of God. It is searching for a truth that locks a person in individualism: each person becomes a truth unto him/herself; there is no longer a truth common to all. How can we be disciples today?

Jesus has called the whole Pauline Family—and all the members of the Church—to move ahead in step with the Gospel. The Pope clarified something very important for the spiritual dimension of life. He said that what is proper to consecrated persons—for instance, the Pauline priests and sisters—is not the radicality of the Gospel. This is necessary but it is the foundation for all Christians: married couples, consecrated persons, children, adults, one culture or another.... Everyone must follow Jesus and all of us must live the same values. The Pope has helped us understand that Jesus does not have first-class and second-class disciples.

Therefore we must consider each person who is trying to follow Jesus to be our traveling companion—someone with a different vocation but



following a single path. This means we must travel together.

How can we move from an individualistic journey to the spirituality of communion that John Paul II spoke about? We start out by following the Lord from a self-centered stance but then we are called to cede center place to God so that he can lead us toward our brothers and sisters. Consecrated persons understand this and say *yes* to God's invitation: If you want to follow me more closely, then you must courageously live in genuine poverty and genuine communion. You must courageously understand the importance of virginity. You must also courageously come to understand the authority-obedience relationship in a new light: not as a path of constriction and loss of liberty, but one of freedom and joy....

The characteristic feature of a consecrated person must be *joy*. Joy on one's lips should be the result of joy in one's heart, otherwise we are a little off track. And this joy should be a prophetic sign of what has happened between us and the Lord. We must renew our relationships. The hour of fraternity has arrived.... Fraternal life in our communities must be renewed: community life is not only "the maximum penance"; it also gives us the chance to experience God because when I love others then I am like God: we must become love, in imitation of God, and bring him into the midst of our communities.

The second thing is that we must stop thinking about formation as confined to a specific time, namely: I undergo formation and then, when I am formed, I stop. A disciple of Jesus begins his/her formation in the mater-

**We must  
bring God into  
the midst of  
our communities**

nal womb and concludes that formation with the last breath he/she takes here on earth. It is only then that the person can say: "Now I am formed!"

## **Our Founders: Indispensable Points of Reference**

This dynamic journey with the Lord—the journey of a person in continual formation, who perfects him/herself ever more, who follows Jesus more closely—is for you [Daughters of St. Paul] and for all of us. It is in our charisms; it is the path of our Founders. They are lights; they are indispensable points of reference.

God has given the Daughters of St. Paul a very up-to-date charism through various forms of communication in all parts of the world. You are missionaries of communication and because of this you must cultivate the dimension of fraternal relations so as to communicate the Good News, which is Jesus. Perhaps, for us, the danger is that we might not feel like we are in communion with one another; we might not feel like we are among brothers and sisters. We must help one another to follow this path, which does not view the human apart from the divine but the human and divine moving ahead together.

We must renew the authority-obedience relationship. We are able to hold positions of authority and to practice obedience only if we feel like brothers and sisters to one another, otherwise the result is slavery, distrust. But if we are truly brothers and sisters, then we participate profoundly in one another's sufferings; we try to understand what is happening at a particular moment in the life of another person; we help each other to move ahead, to persevere....

In the consecrated life, the man-woman relationship must also be renewed. We have made too sharp a distinction between the masculine and feminine worlds, as if one were a temptation to the other. This can't be true because God created man and woman; humanity is both male and female, not just man, not just woman. Renewing the way we look at one another can also renew our view of human love, which becomes beautiful, very beautiful.

May God bless the Daughters of St. Paul. May he bless the whole Pauline Family. May he bless all of us who are seeking, in the Church, to follow Jesus and our Founders.

# Concert

## National Police Force Band

### Introduction

A hundred years of good deeds, of friendship with the world, in continual dialogue with the people of every era.

A hundred years of love for the Gospel: listened to, meditated, lived, printed in every form and widely disseminated everywhere.

A hundred years of life in response to a dream: God's dream for the Pauline Family and for each one of us; but also a hundred years of our own dreams within the framework of a great mission that we little by little came to understand better and love always more.

A hundred years in which our love for life has not decreased, even though a few wrinkles have appeared—but those wrinkles witness to a journey of fidelity and make our presence in the world more credible and maternal.

A hundred years of looking to the future in confirmation of the fact that the "best day" is always



tomorrow because it holds the chance to do greater good and to do it more abundantly.

A hundred years in which to say *thank you* to God for our life, for his love, for the gift of fraternity and the grace of the apostolate.

A hundred years and more to live in a spirit of joy and hope, strong in faith, patient in adversity, attentive in charity, after the example of Fr. Alberione and Maestra Thecla.

*Livia Sabatti, fsp*



## Paulines Like Paul

### Presentation of the Hymn: *In the Footsteps of St. Paul*



Paulines like Paul. Blinded by a light. Conquered by a voice. Seduced by a face, by a love transformed into life, passion, energy, self-donation and proclamation. By a love transformed into “Good News”: Jesus Christ.

A song of the heart that rises from the depths, from every fiber, of one’s being. That soars aloft along the chords of faith. That urges us on to proclaim Christ, following all the paths taken by people today, by humanity on all continents. That incites us to go beyond the boundaries of already-established longitudes and latitudes toward a new world—a planet without generational confines. A symphony of voices, languages and forms to proclaim and give the Gospel of life and salvation; the Gospel of mercy and tenderness; the Gospel of peace and happiness, in keeping with the plan of God, revealed in his Son, who took on our human nature. To give Jesus, like Mary, Paul, Alberione and Thecla.

The hymn of a heart urged on by the greatest love, by the transforming Spirit of the risen Christ, the Master ever alive and ever with us. A fire that yearns to enflame. A light that yearns to illuminate so that humanity will re-awaken as a child of God, who is the Father of everyone, who loves everyone in his Son Jesus Christ.

A hymn of missionary love that the Daughters of St. Paul have been singing for the past century and that echoes throughout the world today as they move ever onward in the footsteps of St. Paul, their father.

*Anna Maria Galliano, fsp*  
*Writer of the Hymn*

## Walk and Sing



It was precisely the verb “walk,” found in the first verse, that inspired me to give the hymn the flavor of a march through use of a series of quarter notes. The marked beat not only illustrates the onward march of the

Daughters of St. Paul throughout their 100-year history but also points to the journey the whole Church is called to make down the ages. To sing while walking consoles, accompanies and motivates the singer, inspiring him/her with trust. The verbs *walk* and *sing* convey the idea of a search: they are two complementary realities of the Faith. I hope this hymn, in all its simplicity, will help to solemnize the celebration of the FSP Centenary and at the same time give new interior impetus to the sisters as they march toward Christ, proclaiming his Gospel to every creature.

*Fabio Massimillo,*  
*Composer of the Hymn*

