



THE "FIFTH TALENT"

Dearest Sisters,

I spent several days trying to decide what to talk about in this circular letter. I took into consideration very important and timely subjects such as the 13th Ordinary General Assembly of Bishops on the theme, *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith* (7-28 Oct. 2012), in which I will be privileged to participate as Superior General of the Daughters of St. Paul; the *Year of Faith* that the Church will be celebrating from 11 Oct. 2012–24 Nov. 2013; the preparations for our 10th General Chapter...but I just couldn't make up my mind.

Then, this morning, my meditation on the Sunday Gospel reading (Mark 7:3-37) triggered memories of the early 1990's when the enlightened Shepherd of the world's largest diocese, Milan, proposed in his pastoral letter what might be called a "theology of communication," taking as his starting point God's self-communication to human beings. The Shepherd was Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, already an internationally-renowned biblical scholar, and his pastoral letter bore the title of today's Gospel proclamation: *Ephphatha! Be Opened!* Using the image of this biblical figure—a man who could neither hear nor speak—Cardinal Martini emphasized the urgent need to eliminate every barrier to communication. How? First of all by improving one's listening skills: if you want to communicate, first learn to listen....

As missionaries of the Gospel who work in the field of communications, the FSPs are deeply indebted to Cardinal Martini for his many books, which have enriched our catalogues; for his wise teachings, on which we have often drawn; for the steadfast passion with which he taught and supported the practice of the *Lectio Divina*; for his profound interest in communi-

cations, which, as he said in another pastoral letter, "should make us brothers and sisters, not enemies" (*The Hem of His Garment*, 1991). An adept biblical scholar, in this second letter the Cardinal makes use of another biblical image to express an idea very much in line with the thinking of Fr. Alberione, namely: that the instruments of communication can give rise to "a truly humanizing and even salvific communication" that transmits something of the mystery of God without being this Mystery.

Delivering a talk at a Congress held in 1997, Cardinal Martini used a third image—what he called "the fifth talent"—to define communication in the Church. A Christian community, he said, must take into equal account all the "talents" entrusted to it. The first of these is the *Word of God* (and therefore *catechesis*); the second is the *Liturgy* and *sacraments*, above all the *Eucharist*; the third is *charity*; the fourth is *fraternal communion*, and the fifth is *communication*. In his discourse, he said very clearly that if we do not pay close attention to the way we communicate, then charity, catechesis, the Liturgy, the Word of God and a spirit of communion within the community will not make a very deep impact on the lives of others. These "talents" will all remain closed within themselves and will gradually fade away....



In his book, the *Ages of Life* (2010), the Cardinal quotes an Indian proverb that divides existence into four parts. In the first age of life a person studies, in the second, teaches, in third, reflects and in the fourth, learns to beg. Cardinal Martini learned the art of "begging," of depending on others for care, because had surrendered himself completely to the One who, today, draws us aside, saying once again, this time to us who are evangelizers in the world of communication: *Ephphatha! Be Opened!*

United to all of you in affection and prayers,

S. M. Antonietta Bruscato
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Superior General

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