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FINAL HOMILY

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We desire that the passages of the Word of God that have been proclaimed help us to increase our awareness to have to thank Providence for the hundred years of the Pauline charism and at the same time strengthen our determination to continue in creative fidelity the legacy that blessed James Alberione has left us.

The **first reading** (1Sam 1, 1-8) is the beginning, which will be completed in the reading of tomorrow, of the story of the miraculous birth of Samuel. Anna suffers because of her sterility, in a special way because this impossibility of hers to generate makes her an object of derision and scorn on the part of Peninnà, the fruitful wife of Elkanà and, moreover, because the attention of her husband cannot compensate for her desire to be a mother.

In the Sacred Scriptures there are other episodes of sterile women who become fecund due to a miracle: Sara, Rebecca, Rachel, the mother of Samson and the mother of John the Baptist who all give birth to personalities who have a special mission for all the people of God.

Certainly, in these narrations the intention of the sacred author is not only to describe the **omnipotence of God**, capable of generating life even where humanly speaking it is not possible. The miraculous event does not only manifest an exclusive quality of God, but also expresses his **providential attention** for his creatures: through the life of one who generates God becomes a source of life for all his people. Thus it will be in the case of Samuel, called to handle in the Hebrew people the delicate period of passage from a federation of tribes to a monarchical regime.

Through a somewhat brave application, we also are called to handle the passage of the Pauline charism from its one hundred years to the future that God will want to give it. Exactly because what awaits us is a mission **humanly arduous**, we need first of all to entrust ourselves to **divine omnipotence**, following the example and the teaching of the Primo Maestro.

The celebration of the centenary should also stimulate in us a **love for the history** of our origins because, if it is true that the context in which we live is radically different, the elements that make it are comparable.

The Primo Maestro is convinced to have received from God a **mission** to be realized, but when he turns his eyes to his own person, to his first followers and to the insurmountable difficulties and problems that gradually show up, he feels himself **unequal** and **powerless** in bringing to completion what has been entrusted to him by the Spirit.

We, in the single Institution and totality of the Pauline Family, are convinced to have received the **Pauline vocation and mission**, but when we focus our eyes on ourselves, on our communities, on our vocations, on our formation, on our apostolate, we also are invaded by a feeling of **littleness and incapacity** in the face of a fascinating mission but beyond our reach.

The history of the redaction of the “**pact**” or “**secret of success**,” starting January 1919, can help us to understand the faith that has moved the Primo Maestro and the first Pauline generations to live the **paradox** of a wonderful mission to be carried out in the midst of lack of personnel and human resources. “A treasure in vessels of clay!”

We ought to fathom the depths of the **spirituality** of the “pact” in order to keep for it all its “**Pauline color**” that can be synthesized by an expression of the Primo Maestro: “Stay on high in your thoughts and walk with your feet on the ground.”

To the Pauline communities of London, in 1956, the Primo Maestro says: “Living out the *Pact* or *Secret of success* means adopting all the means and yet believing oneself to be ineffective and insufficient. Secondly: basing all our confidence in Jesus Christ: *By myself I can do nothing, with God I can do all. ...Live out the Pact!* You can say it in its longer form as it is printed in the book of our prayers and you can say it in its shorter form: *By myself I can do nothing...with God I can do all.* You also may not use any formula, provided you cultivate these sentiments, thus your life is established in its true path” (*Alle Figlie di San Paolo*, 1956, pp. 283f).

The **Pauline spirit** of the *Pact* is: “Always willing to act as if everything depended on us; and to pray and hope in the Lord as if everything depended on Him” (*San Paolo*, January 1950, in *Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 295). This certainty for the consecrated life is reaffirmed as a wise saying also by John Paul II: “It is necessary to trust in God as if everything depended on Him and, at the same time, commit ourselves generously as if everything depended on us” (*Vita consecrata*, n. 73).

The call of the first four disciples narrated in the **Gospel** (Mk 1,14-20) is interpreted by Mark as the start of the preaching of Jesus which coincides with the choosing of those who will continue his mission of evangelization after him.

From Vatican Council II onwards, thanks also to the wise magisterium of the Popes who have written and talked about evangelization, the Church ever more discovers that she “exists to evangelize.” Even the exhortation of Pope Francis *Evangelii gaudium* is a mobilization of the entire ecclesial community for evangelization when it emphasizes that “the missionary action is the paradigm of every work of the Church” (n.15) and that “The closeness of the Church with Jesus is an itinerant closeness, and communion with him takes shape as a missionary communion” (n. 23). Finally, “I prefer an eventful Church, wounded and dirtied due to walking the streets, rather than a sick Church due to cloister and the convenience of holding on to its safety” (n. 49).

Profoundly grafted in the Church, also the Pauline charism must remain “**itinerant**” as it has been conceived a hundred years ago because her only reason for being is “**pastoral**,” “**for the people**”: “To give God to men and men to God,” “to evangelize the men of today using the means of today.”

In the all missionary Church, **the flame of the Pauline charism must be “rekindled” by the breath of the mission** in which we bring the contribution of our spirituality and the complementarity of our apostolates.

In particular, we have the duty to point out through reflection and our apostolic initiatives that even in communication, including digital communication, “**there is a countless people for the Lord**” (cf Acts 18,10) and to be convinced that he has asked us, sons and daughters of Saint Paul, to spend therein all our life, continuing the example of Saint Paul and of blessed James Alberione.