

MEETING OF THE MAJOR SUPERIORS 2011
Homily of Fr. Silvio Sassi – (Rome, 15 November 2011)

Guided by the liturgy, we start our meeting as a Congregation observing **saint Albert the Great** with the eyes of blessed James Alberione who focuses on him as a saint committed to evangelization by means of the spoken word and written work, a model for our charism.

Wanting to lay a theological and historical foundation for the press apostolate, Fr. Alberione enumerates those who have preached the Gospel with their writings and among them the Doctors of the Church like saint Albert the Great (cf *Apostolato stampa*, 1933, p. 13). When at the end of 1953, he writes *Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ* he remembers that, after forty years since the foundation, there are still things to be realized and among them the “unification of all the sciences” that allows men of culture to open themselves up to theology. In this context Fr. Alberione explicitly refers to saint Albert the Great and to saint Thomas Aquinas (cf *AD*, n. 191-192).

In the sanctuary dedicated to Mary Queen of Apostles, the Founder has wanted an altar dedicated to Saint Paul, blessed on 18 March 1961, where he himself indicates the personalities to be portrayed around the Apostle: six paintings in canvas and 4 sculptures on the sides; at the pilaster in the left there is saint Albert the Great, as model of one who unites science and faith, oral preaching and written preaching.

As we recall the memory of saint Albert the Great in the style of Fr. Alberione, we start our meeting as we observe a model of our apostolate and, therefore, putting at the **center** our mission of evangelization in communication and employing the communication of today. Even the service of authority, at all levels and in all its forms, must be thought of and exercised in order to motivate everybody and to coordinate everybody in **sanctification by means of our specific apostolate**.

Meriting to be recalled here is art. 66 of our **Constitutions**: “Our community is characterized by apostolic life which ‘forms part of the nature itself of religious life.’ Everything, from the concrete practice of fraternal life to consecration, to human, spiritual, intellectual and professional formation and to the structures of government and administration, has for its end our apostolic vocation.”

The service of authority is not an end in itself, but is to “unite the forces” in view of the mission; the topics that we shall deal with during these days must be seen from the **point of view of the Pauline mission**, not for the pleasure of bureaucracy.

To predispose us to this apostolic mentality, we reflect on the passages of Holy Scripture that we have heard. In the **first reading** (*2Mc 6, 18-31*), the gesture of the elderly Eleazar who refuses every pretense of fidelity to God even at the cost of martyrdom, is motivated by the words: “It is not worthy at all of our age to pretend, to the danger that many young people, thinking that at age ninety, Eleazar has gone over to foreign practices, may get lost because of me.”

Since we are members of a Congregation and not hermits, our life of faith does not only have a “**private**” dimension, where everything is limited to a solitary relationship with God, but, since we live in community, we must put into practice also a “**social**” dimension that allows us to think of ourselves, experiment and act as a “unity of forces.”

At almost a hundred years of existence, the Congregation, present in the nations of the five continents that are represented here, is composed of Paulines of various generations that observed from an anagraphic point of view, exhibit a diverse proportion between the more adult generations and the young generations. At this moment, however, regarding this complex phenomenon, I would like only to point out a fact, making use of a phrase of **Pope Paul VI**: “Charity must be like a hope busy at work for what others can become with the help of our fraternal support” (*Evangelica testificatio*, 29.06.1971, n. 39)

In this triennium of preparation for the jubilee of the Pauline charism, part of our service of authority is the ability to indicate, call to mind and explain those who can be considered as “**good examples**” of living the Pauline life: our blessed and venerable confreres, Brothers who have preceded us but have left a reputation of exemplariness that on the occasion of funerals is

underlined with sincerity and Brothers who without display live today with faith their life: among the “abundant riches” that Providence even today grants to the Congregation, there is the sanctity of so many who are to be considered “Paulines of faith.”

Favoring among the Pauline generations the reciprocal help of “good example” has for its purpose to **build up communities for the mission**: “The religious life will be much more apostolic in the measure that its dedication to the Lord Jesus is intimate, its communitarian form of existence fraternal and its involvement in the specific mission of the Institute ardent” (John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 25.03.1996, n. 72).

In realizing our mission as community, we must promote in our Brothers the purpose that Christ the Master recalls for us in the passage of the **Gospel** (*Lk 19,1-10*), commenting on his meeting with Zaccheus the publican: “The Son of man has come to search for and save what was lost.”

Not sharing the thought of the religious people in charge during his time who consider the publicans as persons who cannot return to the faith, Jesus invites himself to a meal with Zaccheus because he knows how to “raise up his eyes” toward the branches of a fig tree where a publican has climbed to see him as he passes by.

To all of us to whom has been entrusted the service of authority, this episode teaches that we must not only stimulate attention to the **recipients** to those in charge in the apostolate, but also to all those who exercise their apostolate in Pauline formation, in spiritual animation and in the care of the Pauline Institutes of Consecrated Secular Life and of the Cooperators.

So that the Congregation may be able to carry out an apostolate that “looks for and saves what was lost,” the service of authority must motivate and keep watch on the **apostolic works**; contribute in elaborating initiatives of **vocation proposal** where the physiognomy of the Pauline apostolate as “missionary in communication” is clear; promote an **integral formation** in all the stages that prepares the young Paulines to be sensitive to “the queries” of our recipients rather than to make them lazy in taking delight in manufactured “answers” studied in books; keep watch on spiritual exercises, retreats, meditations, homilies so that they be not so “generic” that they never help in understanding and living a **spirituality** for the mission, as our Founder has taught us; deepen through ongoing formation the building up of a **communitarian life** in all its aspects so that it may be fruitful in mission.

May saint Albert the Great, Eleazar and Zaccheus be “**stimuli**” for our activities.