



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE SOCIETY OF ST PAUL**

Thursday, 13 May 2004

Dear Brothers,

1. A year has now passed since the great celebration for the beatification of your Founder, Fr James Alberione. I am delighted to welcome you today, his spiritual sons who have gathered for the General Chapter of the Society of St Paul. I greet you and I thank you for the cordial sentiments that your new Superior General, Fr Silvio Sassi, has courteously expressed. I wish him the very best for his work. Through you, I would like to convey my thoughts to all your Confreres scattered in so many nations across the world.

2. The Chapter Meeting has a significant theme: *Being St Paul alive today: A Congregation moving ahead*. These words are typical of Bl. Alberione: his veneration for the Apostle Paul, his evangelical optimism, his "apostolic mysticism", inspired through and through by meditation on the Pauline writings. About 50 years ago he noted: "The Pauline Family must be St Paul alive today, according to the idea of the divine Master; working under the gaze and with the grace of Mary, *Regina Apostolorum*" (*Bolletino San Paolo*, July-August 1954). Hence, the need to imitate him, as he himself wrote to the Christians of Corinth: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (I Cor 11: 1). Consequently, the theme you have chosen invites you *to set out anew from Christ and from St Paul*.

3. But how can you do this? Once again it is Bl. Alberione who tells you: it is a matter of being more closely acquainted with the Apostle, imitating his virtues better, praying to him and loving him. Every new generation of Paulines must, in a certain sense, rediscover St Paul: "Knowing the *Apostolus Christi*, the *Magister gentium*, the *Minister Ecclesiae*, the *Vas electionis*, the *Praedicator evangelii*, the *Martyr Christi*". You must work hard, with filial love, to imitate St Paul, to be "formed"

by him: "*Ut nosmetipsos formam daremus vobis*" ["to give you in our conduct an example to imitate"] (II Thes 3: 9), as the Apostle recalled to the Thessalonians. As your Founder rightly observes, you must nourish in prayer a special trust in him, based on your awareness of being his sons: "Sons receive life from their father: live it, therefore, in him, from him and for him, in order to live Jesus Christ" (*Bolletino San Paolo*, October 1954).

4. The future of your Congregation depends on fidelity to this charism. Always strive to combine a constant search for holiness with the necessary professional competence. Be first and foremost men of prayer and joyful witnesses of unfailing fidelity to Christ. May he, the divine Master, head your every project. Towards him must converge every apostolic and missionary action in social communications, a very important field for the new evangelization. With this interior disposition, in full fidelity to the Church and to her Pastors, you will be able to *bring thoroughly up to date* the valuable spiritual, doctrinal and apostolic heritage that the Founder left you.

5. Urged on by his example, always ask yourselves: "What would St Paul have done had he lived in our time?". Fr Alberione himself answers you: "If St Paul were alive, he would continue to burn with those two flames... zeal for God and his Christ, and for the men and women of every country; and to make himself heard, he would have climbed the highest pulpits and multiplied his words using the means synonymous with modern progress: the press, the cinema, the radio, the television" (*Bolletino San Paolo*, October 1954).

Dear friends, this is your demanding apostolic programme. If you carry it out with constant fidelity to the original spirit of your Institute, you will be making a *precious contribution to the mission of the Church in the third millennium*.

May Mary Most Holy, Queen of the Apostles, guide and accompany you. I assure you of my special remembrance in prayer and cordially bless you and all your Confreres.