

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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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

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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.