

Dearest confreres,

this year's Solemnity of Saint Joseph carries within it a very particular significance, both because of the publication of the Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde* by Pope Francis – on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the declaration of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church – and because of the announcement of a special year dedicated to him to commemorate this event. It is precisely the Pope who recalls the important role of Saint Joseph in the history of salvation, alongside Jesus and Mary, indicating him as a model of faith, as *«the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence, an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble»*.

We know that the figure of Saint Joseph was in Don Alberione's heart. It is enough to recall, for example, the whole list of Church interventions about Saint Joseph mentioned in the Saint Paul Bulletin in February 1953 (CISP pp. 229-230), thus demonstrating his admiration and devotion to the craftsman of Nazareth. Certainly, if our Founder lived today he would also add the aforementioned Apostolic Letter and the current Year of Saint Joseph to that list.

We can say that Saint Joseph is part of the spiritual heritage of the Pauline Family, especially in reference to the Disciples of the Divine Master. Indeed, as Blessed Alberione affirms, *«he is in a particular way the model and protector of our dear Disciples. Therefore, his feast is their feast [...]»*. Then he explains: *«Like St. Joseph, they do hard work to cooperate in the coming of the Kingdom of God; they have a way of sanctification similar to his; they find their joy in the spirit of piety, in humble conformity to God's will, in industrious silence. They associate contemplative life with active life. Their apostolate is broad, modern, satisfying. They spend their lives at the Tabernacle, like St. Joseph next to Jesus»* (San Paolo, March 1950).

For this reason, today we express a singular wish to our Disciples of the Divine Master on their feast, an occasion that leads us to reaffirm the richness of their call and to remember that the Pauline vocation is fully explained in the double expression Priest-Disciple. In complementarity, Priests and Disciples participate in a single apostolate, both called to sanctification and to evangelize the world today with the witness of life and with the Pauline apostolate, a vision that must already be clear in the Vocation Promotion.

Finally, let us remember that the Year of the Family begins today, in commemoration of the 5th anniversary of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* which deals with the beauty and joy of family love. Our thoughts go out to all the families in the world, especially those who belong to the Holy Family Institute.

May Saint Joseph be an example of hope, patience and trust in God for all, attitudes that are essential to face this time so troubled due to the Covid-19 pandemic!

Fraternally.

Rome, 19 March 2021



Father Valdir José De Castro  
Superior General

