

THE SOURCES OF INSPIRATION FOR ALBERIONE'S CONCEPT OF INTEGRALITY

Giuseppe Forlai, igs



Giuseppe Forlai (1972) is a priest of the Rome Diocese and a member of the Jesus the Priest Institute. He received a Doctorate in Theology with a specialization in Mariology from the Pontifical Faculty of Marian Theology. Following this, he studied Political Philosophy and Ethics at Tor Vergata University, Rome. From 1999-2003, he served as chaplain for Rome's penal institutions. He has worked as a professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University's Institute for Spirituality and also in the Pastoral Office for Schools in the Diocese of Rome. His current ministry is the spiritual accompaniment of the members of Rome's major seminary and he also

carries out animations in different Institutes and organisms dedicated to the consecrated life.

Fr. Forlai likes to say that he occupies his time best when he is striving to be a humble and reflective Christian. He carries out a fruitful "apostolate of the pen" and is, in fact, the author of many books, some of which have been published by the Society of St. Paul and the Daughters of St. Paul. The latter have published his texts: *Cristo vive in me: La proposta spirituale di Don Alberione* (2013) and *Io sono "Vangelo": Decidersi per Cristo alla scuola di Paolo* (2015).

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Let us take as our starting point a fundamental historical observation: there is not just one model of integrality but as many models as there are priests in the Church. We take *priest* as our starting point because Fr. Alberione was a priest, and so we ask ourselves first of all what model of the priesthood he adhered to and developed over the years. If we fail to do this, then the question about Fr. Alberione's concept of integrality remains uncontextualized.

In the history of spirituality, three models of the priesthood emerged for the simple reason that the doctrine connected to the sacrament of Baptism speaks about the *three offices* of the baptized: prophet, king and priest. Since the priesthood has always been understood as a service to the baptized, it is clear that we have three models of the priesthood in which each model gives privilege to one of these dimensions. Thus the teaching office of the baptized corresponds to the *missionary model* of the priesthood, with its link to the *role of prophecy*, that is to say, to the preaching of the Word. The priest is a missionary and itinerant prophet. The office of ruling corresponds to the model of the *priest-shepherd*. And the office of sanctifying corresponds to the *sacramental role of the priesthood*—the priest as mediator of the grace of the sacraments.

It is necessary to understand how these three models evolved through the centuries, what Fr. Alberione took from them, the model according to which he was formed, and what our model is today, because in our day each model of the priesthood has its own way of living integrality. Simply put, an investigation of integrality is a work that concerns the history of spirituality.

First of all, each model of the priesthood has a link with Scripture. The *missionary-prophetic model* is witnessed to above all by St. Paul but even more by the account in the Book of Acts, where the priestly ministry is primarily a ministry of the Word. Instead, it is the *pastoral model* that emerges strongly in the so-called Deutero-Pauline letters (the Letters to Timothy and Titus). These disciples of Paul carry out their priestly ministry in a community, not as itinerant apostles. Their ministry is directed to a specific flock, situated in a specific territory. This is the pastoral model of the presbyterate in the strict sense of the word.

But we can also find the *sacramental/sanctifying model* of the priesthood in Scripture, primarily in the Letter to the Hebrews, which, however, does not refer to ministers collectively but to the one Priest, Christ, who is the Model of the priesthood.

But what do we see? Think of the development of the statement “Christ, the eternal High Priest,” which only the Letter to the Hebrews uses in reference to Jesus. We call all presbyters priests because the term “presbyter” sounds odd to us. But the words *priest* in place of *presbyter* arrived late on the historical scene. After the 4th century, the Bishop of Rome was called a “high priest.” By extension, all the other bishops were called priests, and after this all the presbyters (ordained ministers) were called priests. Quite a journey was made in the evolution of this term because doctrine resisted attributing the term priests to presbyters. The link between the sacramental model of the priesthood and the priesthood of Christ was already present in the *Didaché*, a “second-generation” apostolic work. Therefore, the whole tradition of the first century—the apostolic age and the age immediately after it—was already familiar with these three models.

¹ This text is the transcription from tape of a talk that Fr. Giuseppe Forlai delivered during the *FSP International Seminar on Pauline Mysticism*. The transcription was examined and approved by its author.

In the Patristic age, these models attained much greater depth. However, contrary to what one might think, the missionary-prophetic model is not very evident in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. In fact, St. Augustine underscores the pastoral model (cf. his *Sermon on Pastors*) and, in the following century, so does St. Gregory the Great (cf. his *Pastoral Rule*). The model of a shepherd/pastor who takes care of a specific flock in a specific territory emerged very clearly in the Patristic age. At the same time, in the East, the sacramental model was undergoing great development, above all through the heritage of St. John Chrysostom, who presents a model of the priest as sanctifier because the Liturgy celebrated by the Church here on earth is a mirror of the Liturgy celebrated in heaven (cf. his treatise, *On the Priesthood*). This parallel had already been established in the Book of Revelation. Just as in the heavenly Liturgy angels sing the glory of God, so too in the earthly Liturgy, angels (symbolic “presbyters”) sing God’s glory in anticipation of the end times. (Keep in mind that in the Byzantine Liturgy everything is sung.) Thus in the writings of St. John Chrysostom, this model of the priesthood—taken from human beings apart from the consensus of humans, who must be purified from their earthly preoccupations so as to officiate in the liturgical choir—“won out” over the other two models.

This model of the priesthood developed even more with the circulation of the works of Pseudo-Dionysius in the 9th-century Latin Church, which was unfamiliar with his writings in Greek. As we know, Dionysian thought is completely built on the angelic hierarchy: just as there is a heavenly hierarchy of angels, heavenly choirs, cherubim and seraphim, so too a hierarchy exists in the sacred order here on earth. This gave rise to a hierarchical model of the presbyterate situated above the People of God. The presbyterate gradually progressed from the laying on of hands, which constituted certain individuals as deacons, bishops and priests for the rest of their lives, to the deacon-priest-bishop model. To be a bishop, one had to first be an ordained priest; before being a priest, one had to be an ordained deacon.

In the Patristic age, the missionary-prophetic model did not have a wide following; it was kept alive by the monks of the time, especially those of northern Europe, whose style of life is reputed to have derived from the Irish monk St. Columban (6th century). For purposes of evangelization, Columban “invented” the role of the *itinerant monk* who did not “go out on mission” but rather set forth as a pilgrim to proclaim Christ. (In the history of the Church, the term *mission* appears for the first time in the Constitutions of the Company of Jesus). Why was it up to the monk to evangelize? Because it was he who had the experience of being one with God. Since he sought God alone, it was he who could proclaim God! This is very important: *only the person who seeks God—and only God—is able to proclaim him!* “Do you love me more than these others? Then feed my sheep....” By the sixth and seventh centuries, the prophetic-pastoral model was not in wide use, but was kept alive by the monks.

What differences are there between Chrysostom and Augustine with regard to the other models? While Chrysostom considers the presbyter as a person consecrated to the sacred, in Augustine’s writings the presbyter and the bishop are shepherds/pastors who share the people’s worries and their journey of faith. You might recall Augustine’s famous words: “With you, I am a Christian; for you, I am a bishop.” This statement would be incomprehensible to the model embraced by Chrysostom because he does not see the presbyter as *with* the people but as *above* the people due to the need to keep the rites pure. What is the thought behind this? It can be traced back to the purification ritual found in the Book of Leviticus. Here an interesting historico-spiritual question emerges: is the Catholic priesthood the Jewish priesthood under a false name? That is to say, was the Jewish priesthood re-introduced into the Catholic Church under a different form? This is a significant question on the level of historical investigation....

The *missionary-prophetic model of the priesthood*, linked to the preaching of the Word, greatly expanded after the first millennium due to St. Dominic de Guzman. It would be well for us to become familiar with this model and reflect on it because it was Primo Maestro’s initial model. He was the ecclesiastical assistant of the Third Order Dominican group in Alba and he tried to involve the members of that group in his first attempt to evangelize by means of the press, but he quickly

realized that the members were more interested in the devotional life than in an active mission and so he began to recruit collaborators who were not Third Order Dominicans.

St. Dominic was the first person to make preaching a state of life. Before him, preaching was *not* a state of life. It is of fundamental importance to understand this because on 7 November 1216—a very important date—“holy preaching” came into being as a lifetime commitment. While the pilgrim monk who proclaimed Christ dedicated *part* of his life to preaching, now there was a type of consecrated life that was *totally* dedicated to service of the Word. Dominic possessed only two books: the *Letters of St. Paul* and the *Gospel of Matthew*. Dominic’s first biographer writes that the saint knew the *Letters of St. Paul* by heart.... We don’t have time here to take a closer look at this saint but it would certainly be very beneficial to do so.

So... the *missionary-prophetic* model was revitalized by St. Dominic, who transformed it into a state of life. This became the basic feature the Clerics Regular, that is: the Theatines, Barnabites, Jesuits, etc., all of whom dedicated themselves to preaching, catechesis and the ministry of consolation. With them, *catechesis* as a method of instructing youth in an ongoing way appeared on the scene. This model was strengthened and “canonized” by the Council of Trent, which did something that we still feel the effects of today: it established a division of duties. The Council said that preaching was the work of presbyters and religious, and that bishops were to take care of governing. However, the bishop was the first preacher because of his teaching office. We know from *ecclesiogenesis* (the study of the development of the Church) that [in the early Church] the bishop emerged as a figure who carried out the offices of catechesis and preaching. The organization of the Christian community was left to others (including women) chosen to carry out this service. A bishop was ordained to safeguard correct doctrine, as St. Paul says in his letter to Timothy: “Guard the good treasure entrusted to you” (1 Tm. 1:14). It is the bishop who does this “guarding.” Instead, the Council of Trent decreed that bishops were to administer and govern, while the Clerics Regular were to preach. The bishop not only did *not* preach anymore; he no longer even celebrated Mass. Up until just a couple of centuries ago, he presided over the Eucharist only once or twice a year. Before that, he simply “assisted” at the Liturgy. The Pope too celebrated the Eucharist only three times a year; the rest of the time, clad in a cope and kneeling at a prie dieu, he too simply “assisted” at the Liturgy. The Pope and bishops had chaplains who celebrated Mass, while they themselves simply “heard Mass.” The monsignors were the Pope’s chaplains. This situation lasted up until the end of the 1700’s. There was no need for episcopal ordination: a bishop was appointed and on rare occasions was ordained. It is the same today: a bishop is appointed; he can exercise all his powers even before episcopal ordination because his office of governing is tied to his appointment, not to the sacrament.

In 1642, Jean Jacques Olier—a man who unfortunately is not very well known but who was one of the great spiritual masters of his period—was made the pastor of St. Sulpice parish, located in a Parisian zone with a very bad reputation. A reserved man, inclined to depression, he immediately realized that his parishioners badly needed education in the faith and practical help for their families. In view of this, he decided to gather together young men interested in becoming priests and set them up in a seminary that would form them to the apostolates of charity, catechesis and the sacraments. While the seminaries that followed the line of the Council of Trent focused above all on providing the faithful with instruction and spiritual formation, the seminary of St. Sulpice gave privilege to providing its students with practical experience in pastoral service. Candidates to the priesthood had to dedicate themselves to the service of the people of God even before their ordination. They learned how to preach, catechize children, carry out charitable initiatives for the poor.... The St. Sulpice seminary truly prepared future priests to be pastors/shepherds, in keeping with the thought of the Council of Trent. The priest was no longer someone who just presided at the altar, nor was he limited to administering the sacraments. His role was to accompany the spiritual growth of his flock.

Jean Jacques Olier was following in the footsteps of Cardinal Berulle, who, after the Council of Trent, asked himself if the diocesan priesthood offered a way to perfection or if this could be said

only of the consecrated religious life. His answer was that the diocesan priesthood is also a way to perfection because it imitates Christ, the eternal High Priest. Berulle played an important role in history because, among other things, he introduced the spirituality of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross into the French school of spirituality. The austere Teresian spirituality—a spirituality “of decision and of the will” based on self-denial—was inserted into the “softer” spirituality of St. Bernard (centered on contemplation of the humanity of Christ), resulting in an admirable synthesis of the two. The mature fruit of this blend of austerity and gentleness was manifested in saints like Francis de Sales in the masculine field and Therese of Lisieux in the feminine field.

Cardinal Berulle also played a notable role in history not only through the divulgation of Carmelite thought in France but also by introducing the French school of spirituality to the “vow of slavery.” There is no perfection without the vows. Consequently, the diocesan clergy were to make the vow of *slavery to the Servant Jesus* (a concept that would give rise to St. Louis Grignon de Monfort’s *Consecration to Mary*). This vow to Jesus the Servant included the vow of *martyrdom for the sake of souls*, in imitation of Jesus, who embraced crucifixion for the sake of all human beings. Therefore: not chastity, poverty and obedience, but instead the vow of slavery to Jesus, the Servant of the Father—a vow Berulle considered to be superior to the traditional evangelical counsels on the basis of St. Paul’s Letter to the Philippians, chapter 2. But pay attention: how did Jesus fulfill his mission of being a slave to the Father? What was the culminating point of his slavery? His death on the cross. Consequently, the culminating point, the apex of the slavery of the priesthood, lies in the Eucharistic Celebration, in which the priest unites himself to Christ, the Giver of Life. From this springs the spirituality by means of which, in the life of the priest, the Mass absorbs all his piety. Therefore it is a model of a “Pauline mysticism” that is not linked to the apostolate but to the mysticism of the Eucharist. Fr. Alberione would seize upon this idea and reshape it.

Like his spiritual “father” Berulle, Jean Jacques Olier’s spirituality was founded on the vow of slavery and the centrality of the Eucharist, but he did not stop there. He also took into consideration the “pastoral virtues.” Thus in the late French school of spirituality, the pastoral and the sacramental models of the spiritual life drew closer together, influencing each other in a positive way. The model of the *mystical pastor-shepherd* would be St. John Mary Vianney, who in his personal life attained the heights of transformation in Christ through prayer. He was a pastor par excellence, the model of parish priests and at the same time a model of prayer (the two are rarely found together today). St. John Mary Vianney took from the French school of spirituality the drive to grow spiritually through prayer and at the same time the impetus to take care of the needs of the people of God.

This model of the pastor-shepherd emerged as the winning model until, toward the middle of the 1800’s, something very interesting happened, namely: as a result of the reduction of the Papal States and the suppression of religious orders in France, religious priests, denied the freedom to work among the people, were sent to the missions, especially in Asia. Thus under Pope Gregory XVI the idea of the missionary apostolate of priests resurfaced. Many religious Institutes were founded specifically for the missions (for example, the Combonians, the Consolata missionaries, etc.). The figure of the missionary priest who is not only a pastor-shepherd but also once again an itinerant herald of the Gospel re-emerged.

It was in this context that the term *apostolate* (which Fr. Alberione would also use) came into use. St. Vincent Pallotti was the greatest promoter of the Catholic apostolate. His reasoning was simple: if we can no longer be present among the people through schools and hospitals ...we can print. When, as Bishop of Geneva, St. Francis de Sales was denied the right to preach in his diocese by the Calvinists, he left leaflets under the doors of the people. It is for this reason that he is the patron of journalists. Mission, therefore, also came to include diffusion through the good press. During the time of religious suppression in the Italian Piedmont region prior to the era of Fr. Alberione, Venerable Pio Bruno Lanteri founded the Oblates of the Virgin Mary to reinvigorate Christian faith through the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius and the good press.

What did this *missionary-prophetic model* of the priesthood receive from the other two models? It adopted the pastoral model's solicitude for those outside the parish flock (Jean Jacques Olier would send priests to visit the homes of these families) and it kept the sacramental model as its spiritual backbone. The master of synthesis in this regard was St. Francis de Sales, who served as intermediary of the French school's socio-pastoral model for the great saints of the Piedmont region (St. Joseph Benedict Cottolengo and all the others up to Don Bosco).

So what happened in the second half of the 1800's? *The missionary model was reborn within the context of a very strong personal piety.* But that missionary spirit did not yet include a spirituality of the Word. So where did the power to make this synthesis come from? From the Eucharist, celebrated and adored especially with the intention of *reparation.*

Consequently, what kind of formation did Fr. Alberione receive? He was shaped in a priestly spirituality that sprang from St. Pius X's apostolic exhortation *Haerent Animo* (1980), which even today has a powerful influence on the formation of seminarians. In this letter, written to commemorate the anniversary of his ordination, the Pope speaks about the spiritual life of priests: daily meditation, the Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, frequent confession, the preparation of sermons, the annual course of spiritual exercises.... This was the content of Fr. Alberione's formation. But it was a sacramental model that was to be lived "on the streets" because the seminaries of the Piedmont were dominated by a powerful thrust toward "social sanctity," that is: toward becoming holy in society. Therefore, for Fr. Alberione, a priest is one who *adores God in the streets.* He is the sacred figure of the sacramental model who opts to "dirty himself" because his purity is safeguarded by his intense spiritual life.

But with the passing of time, above all on the vigil of his foundations, Fr. Alberione moved to an idea of the priesthood that was linked to the missionary-prophetic model in an even more radical way. This change of outlook occurred in the interval between his book *Notes on Pastoral Theology* and his foundations. In *Notes on Pastoral Theology*, the sacramental-pastoral model still prevails (the priest is the sacred figure who takes care of the flock). However, faced with the urgent need to proclaim the Word, Fr. Alberione was attracted to the missionary-prophetic model so he tried to blend the two. Is there a model of a priest who is fully missionary-prophetic, fully pastoral, fully sacramental? No. It was Fr. Alberione who achieved this synthesis in his own life but only as the result of a special grace!

He had been profoundly formed to a piety centered on the sacramental life. Canon Chiesa pointed him toward awareness of the socio-pastoral dimension of the priesthood: catechesis, the press, the formation of catechists, and therefore toward the pastoral model. And Alberione's own intuitions concerning the press would lead him to the missionary-prophetic model. But this was the unique and privileged experience of one person out of ten thousand.... And the fact of the matter is that he would never succeed in fully passing on to his spiritual children the *integrality* he had achieved in his own life. It is not that he lacked the good will to do this. There is no integral model of a priest who is at one and the same time a missionary, a pastor-shepherd and a minister of the sacraments. This model does not exist! Perhaps Fr. Alberione realized this and therefore "divided" his priestly ideal into different foundations.

This already tells us something very fundamental, namely: that Pauline integrality is more communitarian than individual. There can be no integrality in an individual Pauline if there is not a Family that lives integrality. What did Fr. Alberione mean when he said, "The Pauline Family is Paul in a social body"? Simply that no one lives integrality alone. No single member of the Pauline religious Family can claim to live to the full in him/herself what is inexhaustible. While sin is an experience of disintegration/breakdown, integrality is an experience of unification, which is a work of grace. Fr. Alberione was an integral person not through any merit of his own but because divine Providence guided him to make a transversal reading of the three models of the priesthood and unify them in himself, making him a *whole* person. To the end of this life, he exemplified all three models of the presbyterate: he was a priest who administered the sacraments and practiced mental prayer; a pastor without a territory (because he was concerned about everything: from Bible

societies to catechesis, to prayer confraternities for those who died in traffic accidents...). And he incarnated the missionary-prophetic model, linked to the Word, through his apostolic-missionary activities with the good press.

As the years went by, Fr. Alberione came to think of integrality always more from a social perspective. In fact, each of his foundations reflects a dimension of the presbyterate: the Pious Disciples, who focus on the Liturgy, Eucharistic adoration, service to priests and liturgical catechesis, exemplify the sacramental model; the Pastorelle and Apostoline Sisters are linked to the pastoral model; and the Society of St. Paul and the Daughters of St. Paul are rooted in the prophetic model. The Institutes aggregated to the Pauline Family also reflect Fr. Alberione's experience of life.

How did he connect these models? What Fr. Bernard said is true: the connection lies in Alberione's concept of the priesthood as being missionary, pastoral and sacramental. His motivating thought was *not* the priestly role of the Christian offering him/herself to God as a spiritual sacrifice. Alberione's unifying idea was the spiritual worship described by Paul in his Letter to the Romans. His basic idea is the priestly role of the people of God: we are all moving toward Christ ("Come to me, all of you"). But the Christ we are moving toward is *one*—he is the Master (prophetic model); Pastor/Shepherd (pastoral model), and High Priest (priestly model)—and we attain our goal by means of the different charisms of the Christian life.

The Alberionian spirituality is *one and triune*: one in substance and triune in hypostasis. But if we don't learn to consider the Pauline Family from the Trinitarian perspective (one in substance—which is the Christ of Paul's Gospel—and three in hypostasis), everyone will continue to follow his/her own path. Therefore, we must first be formed to unity (with regard to substance) and then to what is specific [to each Institute]. The one substance never changes, but the same cannot be said about the specifics, which are linked to history. What is more, we don't know whether or not other specifics will emerge.

To conclude: each of the three models of the priesthood has its own pedagogy of integrality. And each one is legitimate because Vatican Council II approved all three models of the priesthood. It speaks about the missionary-prophetic model in *Lumen Gentium* (n. 28); the pastoral model in the decree *Presbiterorum Ordinis* (n. 2) and the sacramental model in n. 13 of the same document.