Father Bernardo Hurault
Parish Priest, Translator, and Promoter of the *Biblia Latinoamérica*

Bernardo Hurault dedicated his life to bringing the Bible closer to people who had little access to it or struggled to understand the language of existing translations. His best-known work, the *Biblia Latinoamérica*, was born from a specific pastoral need in southern Chile and grew into an international project. Collected testimonies reveal that his life's journey was closely tied to prayer, a simple lifestyle, local pastoral work, and a tireless devotion to revising and refining his translations.

From Paris to the Communities of Southern Chile

Fr. Hurault was born in Paris on August 15, 1924, into a traditional Catholic family. That same year, in Alba, Italy, Blessed James Alberione (1884–1971) founded the International Catholic Bible Society (SOBICAIN)—an initiative that would later shape Hurault's entire biblical mission.

Ordained as a diocesan priest, Fr. Hurault served in various parishes in the outskirts of Paris for nineteen years. In France, he worked closely with the Young Christian Workers (JOC) and Working-Class Catholic Action (ACO). This experience brought him into direct contact with labourers and people with little formal education, deepening his desire to explain the Gospel in accessible terms. Responding to the *Fidei donum* missionary call, he arrived in Chile in 1967 and settled in Villa Mora (Coronel), while his compatriot and mission partner, Fr. Ramón Ricciardi, settled in Tomé.

Those who knew him describe him as an austere man defined by long hours of daily prayer and minimal material needs. He owned very few clothes, walked everywhere he could, and chose to share in the daily reality of his parishioners. During his years of ministry in Villa Mora, he encouraged the community to focus its resources on supporting those in greatest need. People close to him remember his warm interactions with children and youth, his attentive ear, and his practical support he offered to help others pursue education or secure employment. He also made discreet contributions to community projects—such as water systems and land for chapels—which he registered under the name of the Archdiocese.

A Bible Made Accessible to All

This biblical project was driven by pastoral need rather than academic theory. It grew out of close teamwork between Fr. Bernardo Hurault and Fr. Ramón Ricciardi. Realising that everyday people understood the words but missed the deeper meaning of the readings, Ricciardi began experimenting with clearer ways to communicate the message during group sessions with individuals in rehabilitation. Hurault joined by writing and translating, while

Ricciardi carefully read and evaluated the drafts. Acting as the key pastoral catalyst, Ricciardi continually pushed Hurault to simplify concepts, refine the language, and anchor every text in the everyday reality of the communities.

A Prophetic Alliance with SAN PABLO and SOBICAIN

The first edition was published in 1972 in Spain by Editorial Castilla, though the publishing house closed shortly after. Divine Providence, however, opened new publishing and missionary horizons: the Bible found widespread distribution thanks to the backing of the Society of St. Paul (Ediciones Paulinas / San Pablo) the Biblie soon achieved widespread distribution. The partnership took root embodying the Pauline charism of Fr. James Alberione, which centered on the mass dissemination of the Word of God especially to "those furthest away." Together, they promoted an accessible Bible with pastoral commentaries that empowered everyday readers to engage with Scripture directly. In doing so, they fully embraced the spirit of SOBICAIN, expanding translations across continents into diverse languages such as Tagalog, Cebuano, Chinese, and English for Africa.

As distribution grew globally, the work also sparked controversy: some critics accused the Bible of promoting communist ideas because of its language concerning poverty and liberation. Historical accounts document these controversies as part of the work's story, alongside the editorial and pastoral efforts that drove its expansion.

For Hurault, publication was not the end of the mission. He wanted Scripture reading to become an integral part of parish life through groups and communities capable of welcoming new readers. Operating from Chile, and later through international travel and collaborations—thanks to a close partnership with SOBICAIN and the Pauline priest Fr. Francisco Anta—he promoted translations and adaptations for other countries and languages. While the global reach of the Bible required the efforts of many individuals and the infrastructure of Pauline publishing houses, Hurault's core contribution was maintaining its pastoral focus and keeping it connected to real readers.

A New Saint Jerome of Our Time

After a life entirely devoted to evangelisation, Fr. Bernardo passed away in Concepción, Chile, on December 16, 2007. On the day of his death, Monsignor Antonio Moreno Casamitjana, Archbishop of Concepción, presided over a private Mass with his clergy at the Carmelite monastery and declared with deep conviction: "Fr. Bernardo is the new Saint Jerome of our time, for his fruitful work in translating and disseminating the Word of

God..." His legacy endures as a beacon of pastoral renewal and Gospel closeness.

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