

RICHARD AND PINUCCIA WILSON

SERVING IN ROVERETO, ITALY

With Daniele, Luca, and Mattia, and Stefania in Australia

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On the computer

In an old and forgotten folder in a deep, dark, and dusty corner of my computer, I recently rediscovered some old files of *LaParola*, my computer program to study the Bible in Italian. One of them was the contents of the CD with which I distributed *LaParola* back in 2007. It had a directory with a copy of the version of the program from 10 years earlier, which had a README file with a list of changes to the program, including a date for the first ever public release of the program: March 1995. So this month is the 30th anniversary of my public computer ministry, and I wanted to share some milestones with you so that we can thank God together for what has been done in that time.

1992 December: While at language school, I thought it would be helpful to type some of the text of the Italian Bible on my computer, as a way to learn some vocabulary, some Bible verses in Italian, and to use an Italian keyboard.

1993-1994: To assist my language learning, I wrote some small programs to analyse the text that I had typed, for example a list of all the words in the Bible, or to find which are the most common words. Since others started to ask me for copies of what I had done...

1995 March: Version 1 of *Bibbia* (as it was known then), for DOS. Looking at it now, it surprised me that many characteristics of the current version were already present in the first version, such as: freedom in the use of any abbreviations for the books of the Bible, the syntax of search expressions (which could be quite complicated), and the use of root words to search for variations of a word (after 30 years, I now have a file with 120,000 words, to every one of which I have assigned a root word). There was also an early version of my Bible dictionary, with all the people of the New Testament. Given that the Bible contains about 4 megabytes of text, it was a challenge to fit the program, Bible text, and indexes into the 640 kilobytes that was available in DOS. With a lot of tricks with the memory and other limited resources of the computer, it was possible, but the program could not keep growing. So soon there was a change to...

1996 May: Version 2, a rewrite of the program to use Windows 95. This allowed the possibility of using several Bible texts simultaneously. At this time, there were three Italian translations and the New Testament in Greek.

1997 October: Version 3, another complete rewrite, this time in C++, so the program was quicker and smaller. It was the first version that could be download from Internet, from the site of another missionary, but most

distribution was on 8 floppy disks, as few used Internet then and downloading was slow and expensive.

2000 October: A large commentary (10 volumes in print) on the New Testament was added.

2001 May: Greek-Italian vocabulary completed

2001 September: A new web site (laparola.net) to distribute the program and to put the texts and resources online. The program received its current name, *LaParola*.

2002 August: The Bible dictionary is completed, after 8 years, with all the proper nouns in the Bible.

2004 February: Greek-Italian interlinear.

2007 November: Version 7, another complete rewrite, into C#, which made developing the program for Windows better and easier.

2012 May: The first version of the app for Android.

2014 January: Essentially the last version of the Windows program. This was because there were already all the features I wanted to add, I wanted to concentrate on both creating and improving the apps for other operating systems and adding other resources and texts, and because at the end of that year Luca and Mattia were born, and I suddenly had a lot less time and energy for this ministry.

2014 August: Apps for iOS and Mac. These too have been rewritten twice since then, as the best programming language to use has changed.

2018 November: Completed my explanations of *Hard Passages of the Bible* - almost 300 A4 pages - after 6 years on and off.

Computer Corner

The aim of this computer corner over the past few newsletters has been to inform you about something in my computer ministry that you do not usually see or know about. For this last computer corner, I want to write about something that my users do not usually see or know about: you. The reason that I can offer freely all that I have done in 30 years is that my supporters have paid for it, with financial giving and prayer. As a very rough guess, I have dedicated over 20,000 hours of my life to this. I will let you calculate what that means in dollars and euros. Although there is the Biblical principle that I should be supported by those who receive and use this material, I have had the privilege of receiving support from you so as to serve Italians, as Paul did in 2Corinthians 11:8-9 and 1Corinthians 9:11-14. As Paul said to the Philippians, probably his main financial supporters in his travels, I thank my God in all my remembrance of you because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day (30 years ago) until now.

2022: Four Italian translations were added to the site and apps, to take the total to 10 (as well as many in other languages).

2025 January: First use of Artificial Intelligence to generate content for the site (summaries of every chapter) and many of my own Bible studies added. The navigation system of the site created 24 years previously was overwhelmed by the content added since then, so I completely rewrote it (with AI help) to simplify and modernise the interface.

2025 March: Every day, there are about 15,000 unique users and 50,000 page views on the site. Almost 40,000 people are using one of the mobile apps each month, with 25 new users every day. I don't know the numbers for the desktop programs.

The way this history was written, it seems like a constant growth. But the reality is not like that. Technology has been constantly changing, and apart from having to restart from scratch several times, I have also followed various dead ends, as promising techniques and operating systems have not gained popularity and have died.

In the family

Stefania has settled into her new life in Australia, doing the gap year course at Sydney Missionary and Bible College, and is flourishing. The rest of us are adjusting to life with only five people around the dinner table. Write to me if you would like to receive updates from her also.

In July and August we will all be in Australia, to visit, thank, and report to friends and churches who have been supporting us. Get in touch with me if you would like to see us. We already have some dates booked with some churches, but there are still opportunities for other meetings. We still need to find accommodation and a car. If you know of any possibilities, please let me know.

Upcoming Dates

3 March: ECM Italy prayer day

9-16 April: ECM Biennial conference in Spain

6 July-27 August: Family in Australia

Prayer and thanksgiving points

- Give thanks for the service of *LaParola* (site and apps) to the Italian church over the past three decades. It has helped many people to know the Bible better and to use it to teach others. Pray that Italians will continue to be able to learn, study, and teach the Bible from *LaParola*.
- Give thanks for those who have given money and have prayed for this ministry in these 30 years, without whom it would not have been possible.
- Give thanks for Stefania adjusting quickly and doing well in her new life in Australia. Pray that this year will help to prepare her for the rest of her life.
- Give thanks for quite a few new people in church at Rovereto lately (mostly Christians transferring from elsewhere), that have refreshed the community spirit a bit, and helped the children and teenagers have more people of their own age.
- Pray for Richard's service to missionaries in ECM, as he meets them again in Italy and at the conference in Spain, and for virtual contact with many in his various leadership responsibilities in ECM.
- Pray for the provision of a house and a car for our time in Australia later this year. Pray also for some new financial supporters, as recently some of our long-term supporters have had to stop giving.

Thank you for partnering with us in

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across Europe

We are serving with **European Christian Mission (ECM)**. ECM is an interdenominational mission that partners with local churches to send gospel workers to Europe. ECM's overarching purpose is to glorify God through **evangelism, discipleship, and church planting** all across Europe.

If you would like to find out ways you can partner with ECM through praying, serving, or giving, please contact our office.

How to give to ECM:

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