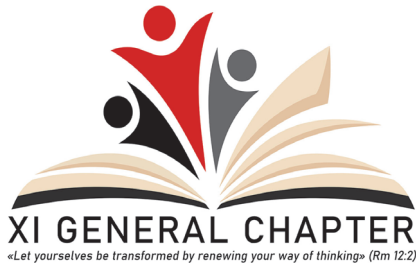


ACTS OF THE XI GENERAL CHAPTER

29 May – 19 June 2022
Divine Master House
Ariccia (Roma)





*«Let yourselves be transformed
renewing your way of thinking» (Rm 12:2)*

Called to be artisans of communion
to prophetically announce the joy of the Gospel
in the culture of communication

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ELECTED GENERAL GOVERNMENT

During the XI General Chapter of the Society of Saint Paul, held in the Divine Master House in Ariccia (Rome) from 29 May to 19 June 2022, the new General Government was elected that, in the order of election, is composed as follows:

SUPERIOR GENERAL

Father Domenico Soliman, 56 years, Italian

VICAR GENERAL

1. **Father Bogusław Zeman**, 54 years, Polish

COUNCILLORS GENERAL

2. **Father Johnson Vattakunnel**, 54 years, Indian

3. **Father Valdecir Pereira Uveda**, 53 years, Brazilian

4. **Brother Lorenzo Vezzani**, 67 years, Italian

5. **Father Joven Jose Lagdamen**, 48 years, Filipino

6. **Father José Antonio Hernández Pimienta**, 38 years, Mexican

PRESENTATION OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

Dear brothers,

I have the joy of presenting to you the *Acts of the XI General Chapter*, celebrated from 29 May to 19 June 2022 in our “Divin Maestro” House in Ariccia. A meeting of grace and of Pauline life that involved about sixty confreres, many of whom are at their first experience in this type of congregational meeting.

Here you will find the golden thread of the journey of our Congregation for the next six years and, in the Objective, the synthesis of our planning: «*Let yourselves be transformed, renewing your way of thinking*» (Rm 12:2). *By allowing ourselves to be transformed by listening to the Word of God, in dialogue with the world in profound metamorphosis, we, Pauline “editors”, commit ourselves to be artisans of communion to prophetically proclaim the joy of the Gospel.*

The expression *Pauline “editors”* immediately catches the eye. The Capitulars welcomed it with all its symbolic and charismatic power, starting precisely from how it is interpreted by Blessed James Alberione. Like Mary Queen of the Apostles, each of us is part of a double process: welcoming and giving Jesus to the world. Communicating is a process that involves us personally, it presupposes a living relationship with the Master, it is experiencing what St Paul reminds of himself to the Galatians: «Christ lives in me» (2:20). In this vital relationship, the yearning for evangelization arises, of those who create opportunities for communication-communion so that humanity encounters the Lord, a humanity that is facing numerous “metamorphoses”. Being *Pauline “editors”* thus becomes an artisan of communion so that the joy that is the Gospel reaches humanity in an ever-renewed way.

Starting from this objective, priorities and operational guidelines arise, divided into three nuclei: *The Pauline and his charismatic roots, The Pauline in mission: integral formation for the mission* and *A synodal Congregation*. They are the most proactive section, what

we have chosen to concretize as inspired by the Spirit. It is a journey that involves each of us personally, our communities, the circumscription Superior with his Council and the Superior General with his Council.

In the *Acts*, you will find an important report by Fr Paulo Bagaglia. This intervention, carried out during the illumination phase, focuses on the figure of the Apostle Paul and our identity: «*Prophets and artisans of communion in the light of Paul*». He helps us to re-read the life of the Apostle starting from the challenges that arose in his apostolate. He is a “non-conformist” apostle, “apocalyptic and prophetic”, “a man in connection”... who with his example provokes us to be a “community renewed for an ever timely mission”.

Now it is a question not only of reading what emerged during the XI General Chapter but of welcoming and giving substance to the choices made in this Assembly. The basic question or the real challenge is that which St Paul described to the Romans: «*Let yourselves be transformed, renewing your way of thinking*» (Rom 12:2). Thinking differently or living our mission in a new way is, first of all, an attitude moved by the Spirit and not a simple planning of activities. The verb “to renew”, so important in a change of epoch, not only and simply suggests organizational changes, but first of all taking care of the life, of the person, of the Pauline apostle, in order to have greater reach towards our interlocutors, even in the digital networks. After all, it is what Jesus lived, he who came so that all may have life and have it in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10).

Rome, 30 June 2022

Solemnity of St Paul the Apostle

Father Domenico Soliman
Superior General

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

CAPITULARS

GENERAL GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL OFFICIALS

Father Valdir José De Castro – Superior General
Father Vito Fracchiolla – Vicar General
Father Celso Godilano – Councillor General
Brother Darlei Zanon – Councillor General
Father José Salud Paredes – Councillor General
Father Jose Pottayil – Councillor General
Brother Luigi Bofelli – Councillor General
Father Alberto Fusi – Procurator General
Father Tomasz Lubaś – Bursar General
Father Domenico Soliman – Secretary General

PROVINCIAL SUPERIORS

Father Claudiano Avelino dos Santos – Brazil
Father Danilo Medina – Colombia-Ecuador-Panamá
Father Rollin Jean-Marie Flores – Philippines-Macau
Father Giovanni Sawada Toyonari – Japan
Father Varghesse Gnalien – India-Great Britain-Ireland
Father Gerardo Curto – Italy
Father Oliverio Mondragón – Mexico-Cuba
Father Miguel Hernández Carmen – Spain

REGIONAL SUPERIORS AND DELEGATES

Father Hernando Jaramillo – Argentina-Chile-Paraguay
Father Gilles Collicelli – Canada-France
Father Jacques Bosewa – Congo
Father Ignazio Hwang – Korea
Father Joseph Kandachamkunnel – Nigeria-Ghana

Father Alberto Scalenghe – Perú-Bolivia
Father Wojciech Turek – Poland-Ukraine
Father Favio Marín Marín – Portugal-Angola
Father José Ángel Torres – Venezuela

PAULINE AGGREGATED INSTITUTES

Father Roberto Roveran – appointed by the Superior General

PROVINCIAL ELECTED DELEGATES

Brazil

Father Jakson Ferreira de Alencar
Father Valdecir Pereira Uveda

Colombia-Ecuador-Panamá

Father Joardin Antonio Martínez Martínez
Father Albino Helí Buitrago Rojas

Philippines-Macau

Father Angelo Paolo Asprer
Father Oliver Vergel Par

Japan

Father Agostino Shinichi Suzuki
Father Timoteo Kenji Yamauchi

India-Great Britain-Ireland

Father Joby Mathew
Father Francis Dalmet
Father Sebastian Thomas
Father Johnson Vattakunnel

Italy

Father Stefano Stimamiglio
Father Guido Colombo
Brother Marcello Sannai
Father Roberto Ponti

Mexico-Cuba

Father Guillermo Vences Gómez
Father José Antonio Hernández Pimienta

Spain

Father Abramo Parmeggiani
Brother José Ignacio Pedregosa

REGIONAL ELECTED DELEGATES

Argentina-Chile-Paraguay

Father Agustín Pedro Cortés García

Canada-France

Father Giuseppe Sciortino

Congo

Father Patrick Nshole

Korea

Father Chang Hang Sebastiano Lee

Nigeria-Ghana

Father David Berkman

Perú Bolivia

Brother Naudy Antonio Mogollón Rodríguez

Poland-Ukraine

Father Mariusz Krawiec

Portugal-Angola

Brother Lorenzo Vezzani

United States

Brother Donald Dominic Calabro

Venezuela

Father Carlos Alberto Astorga Rojas

DEPENDENT HOUSES

Australia

Father Michael Gerard Goonan

Europe

Father Bogusław Zeman
Brother Domenico Cosenza

COLLABORATORS

Methodologist

Father Rossano Sala SDB

Secretariat

Father Mario Sobrejuanite

Father Ulysses Navarro

Translators

Father Antonio Paredes

Father Norman Peña

Brother Walter Rodríguez

Speakers

Father Edmund Power

Father Paulo Bazaglia

Father Javier Cortés Soriano

Sister Nathalie Becquart

Chiara Scardicchio

CALENDAR

Sunday, 29 May – Opening

Opening Mass: *Father Valdir José De Castro*

Greetings of the Superior General: *Father Valdir José De Castro, President of the Chapter*

Official Opening of the XI General Chapter and initial requirements: practical information, submission of credentials, presentation of the methodology, reading and approval of the Calendar and the Regulations (*SoA.M*, 145)

Monday, 30 May – Meditate (Spiritual Retreat)

Meditation on the Theme of the Chapter – Dom Edmund Power OSB

Tuesday, 31 May – Recognize

Election of the Chapter Bodies (see *Const. and Dir.*, 217.2; *SoA.M*, 146): Scrutineers (two), Secretary (one), Central Commission (three), Actuaries (two), Information Officer (one)

Report of the Major Superiors and discussion in the assembly

Wednesday, 1 June – Recognize

Report of the Major Superiors and discussion in the assembly

Thursday, 2 June – Recognize

Report of the General Government and discussion in the assembly

Friday, 3 June – *Recognize/Interpret*

First moment of Discernment on the election of the General Government: Fr Rossano Sala SDB - Methodologist

Communication on group work: Central Commission

Group reflection on the General Objective and fundamental Orientations

Saturday, 4 June – *Interpret*

Discussion in the assembly / Reflection in the group on the General Objective and fundamental Orientations

Sunday, 5 June – *Rest*

Monday, 6 June – *Choose (First Nucleus)*

Illumination: “The Pauline and his charismatic roots” - Fr Paulo Bazaglia SSP (Brazil)

Group work: identification of Priorities and Operational Guidelines

Tuesday, 7 June – *Choose (Second Nucleus)*

Illumination: “The Pauline on mission: integral formation for the mission” (formative aspects) - Antonia Chiara Scardicchio (Italy)

Group work: identification of Priorities and Operational Guidelines

Second moment of Discernment on the election of the General Government: Fr Rossano Sala - Methodologist

Wednesday, 8 June – *Choose (Second Nucleus)*

Illumination: “The Pauline on mission: integral formation for the mission” (apostolic aspects) - Fr Javier Cortés Soriano SM (Spain)

Mass with Mons. José Rodríguez Carballo (CIVCSVA Secretary)

Group work: identification of Priorities and Operational Guidelines

Thursday, 9 June – *Choose (Third Nucleus)*

Illumination: “A Synodal Congregation” - Sister Nathalie Becquart XMCJ (France)

Group work: identification of Priorities and Operational Guidelines

Friday, 10 June – *Choose*

Discussion in the assembly: Summary of the work of the three groups

Group work: identification of Priorities and Operational Guidelines of the three nuclei

Saturday, 11 June – *Choose*

Discussion in the assembly: Summary of the work of the three groups

Group work: identification of Priorities and Operational Guidelines of the three nuclei

Third moment of Discernment on the election of the General Government: Fr Rossano Sala - Methodologist

Sunday, 12 June – *Community Excursion*

Monday, 13 June – *Choose*

Summary of the process of Discernment: Fr Rossano Sala - Methodologist

Moment of community and personal discernment and prayer

Survey election of the Superior General

Resumption of work on the draft of the Programmatic Document

Tuesday, 14 June – *Choose*

Election of the Superior General

Wednesday, 15 June – *Choose*

Election of the Superior General and Councillors General

Resumption of work on the draft of the Programmatic Document

Thursday, 16 June – *Choose*

Election of the Councillors General

Resumption of work on the draft of the Programmatic Document

Friday, 17 June – *Choose*

Various motions and questions

Approval of Final Document; Motions and various questions

Saturday, 18 June – *Choose*

Audience with Pope Francis

Formal Closing of the XI General Chapter

Sunday, 19 June – *Closing*

Closing Mass in the Queen of the Apostles Basilica (Rome): *Father Domenico Soliman*

OPENING MASS

INITIAL GREETING

Dearest Brothers,

With joy, we welcome each of you, coming from every part of the world, to participate in the XI General Chapter of the Society of St Paul. It is an event that we start in front of the Eucharistic Celebration in this Sunday of the Ascension of the Lord, the day in which we commemorate the 56th World Day of Social Communications.

We thank the Lord for having given us the grace in this synodal event in a time in which the world still suffers the consequences of the health crisis caused by Covid-19 and assisted also by some situations of conflict, among which is that in Ukraine.

At the beginning of this Chapter, which opens a new page in the history of our Congregation, we want to thank all those who have given their contribution in these last seven years of service of the General Government that is now expiring: the Councillors General, the Officials of the General Government, the Secretaries, the Postulator, the translators, those responsible of the Information Service, the Center of Pauline Spirituality, the Superiors and the members of the Houses dependent on the General Government, the Superiors of our Circumscriptions with their Councillors, our lay collaborators and many others who have helped us to carry on the work of animation of our entire Congregation.

In communion with all persons who have accompanied us with their prayers, among which are our confreres of our communities (in a particular way the sick) and the members of the Pauline Family, we pray for a good outcome of this XI General Chapter. We entrust our works to Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life, font of every good.

HOMILY

Dearest brothers,

In the readings of the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, we have listened twice (in the first reading and the Gospel), to the story of the ascension of Jesus in heaven. Jesus has been taken from heaven to reach the presence of God the Father, to live in full communion with him and show us that our destiny is to thread the same journey and reach the same finish line. At the same time, the return of Jesus to the Father does not mean being taken away from his disciples, but a more profound presence in their life – by means of his Spirit – to continue his work of salvation by means of their testimony. In fact, Jesus promised: “If I do not go, the Consoler will not come to you, if instead I go I will send it” (Jn 16:5-7).

Jesus returns to the Father and the disciples remain in the world not to linger and “look at the sky” (Acts 1:11), as the Acts of the Apostles narrates, but to “put themselves on the journey” as “missionaries”, as communicators of all that which they have learned living with Jesus who died and rose again. They begin as testimonies of all that has happened (Lk 24:48). In this sense, they become the first ring of that long chain which will unfold through the ages from testimony to testimony, to faith announced, listened to, and transmitted until it arrives in our days.

Now we are called to make the experience of love in Jesus’ measure and to announce to all peoples the conversion and pardon of sins (Lk 24:47). We are called today to live in communion with Him, who for us is Master, Way, Truth, and Life, and to give witness to his Gospel. And we do it as consecrated persons, in the footsteps of the apostle Paul, in the light of the charism of communication that we have inherited from Blessed James Alberione.

In the same way, at opening of our XI General Chapter, in this Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, we celebrate the 56th World Day of Social Communications that invites us to deepen the reality of communication under the aspect of listening.

The message of Pope Francis on this occasion, affirms that listening is a dimension of love and is truly an essential attitude in the process of communication and carries the same activity of evangelization. In this prospective, we can affirm that the disciples of the Resurrection – from the past to the present – journey in the word to announce the Gospel. They are called to be persons who listen.

In every way, in a time when we are losing the capacity to put into practice this decisive dimension of the grammar of communication – and immersed in the variety of relations offered by digital technology -, we are exhorted not simply to “listen”, but – insisted the Pope – “to listen with the ear of the heart” and assume an attitude that does not concern only the sense of hearing, but involves the whole person.

This aspect of communication obviously regards all persons, but particularly those who follow Christ, and more so directly us Paulines who for institutional charism are called to be men of communication of the Gospel by means of our personal witness and with the diverse technical languages of communication. “Penetrate all thought and human knowledge with the Gospel” (AD, 87-88), as our Founder would say.

The message of this Day, rich in significance for our live and mission, is very much opportune for us who are beginning our General Chapter. It is a strong invitation to make this synodal event a profound experience of listening and of dialogue. It is an “opening” of the ear and the heart to God, to the needs of persons and of our communities, to society with its richness and scarcity, to the desires

of the interlocutors and receivers of our apostolate (where and how they live!), to the actual cultural reality of communication, to the signs of the times. In fact, “only giving attention to those we listen to, to things we listen to, to how we listen, can we grow in the art of communicating. Its center is not a theory or technique, but the capacity of the heart which renders proximity possible” (Pope Francis).

In this Chapter, we are particularly called to listen with the ear of the heart to the appeal that comes from its central theme. It is expressed in the title inspired by Rm 12:2, that invites us to not conform ourselves to the mentality of this world with its attraction but to leave ourselves transformed and renew our way of thinking. It is interesting to note that the apostle Paul did not say “transform” the world – obviously in the light of the Gospel – but “transform yourselves”. To transform, the world, yes, but first and above all the world that is inside of us. This way we can work to transform the world outside of us. To transform ourselves renewing our way of thinking “to be able to discern the will of God, that which is good, pleasing to him and perfect”.

It is with these objectives that we are called to live the XI General Chapter, to listen to the spirit and all the realities that involves us in plotting the road we must take as a Congregation. It will bring us to be true artisans of communion to prophetically announce the joy of the Gospel in the culture of communication.

I end remembering the words of Pope Francis addressed to us Paulines and to readers and collaborators of *Famiglia Cristiana*, during the audience give last May 21, which was inspired by the Letter to the Hebrews. The author affirms that “we are not persons who go back” (Heb 10:39), rather, “we go forward with the strength of the Gospel, with the communicative strength that creates communities, not to go back creating small groups of self-preservation, that ends in transforming our souls to museum pieces. Be attentive to this”.

Jesus Master lives in our midst to illumine us that in a synodal way, we listen to each other. In the footsteps of the Pauline charism, we can look ahead, attentive to the signs of the times, and in search of the best roads in the “sweet and soothing joy of evangelization” (EG 10). This was also the longing of St Paul VI, great connoisseur, and admirer of our mission, of which we are commemorating today.

May Mary Queen of Apostle, St Paul, Blessed James Alberione and “the saints of the Pauline Family” be with us. Amen.

Ariccia, Divine Master House, 29 May 2022

Father Valdir José De Castro
Superior General

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

Dear brothers,

Again a warm greeting and welcome to all! We are gathered here in the chapter hall, after the celebration of the Eucharist, to begin the work of the XI General Chapter. We are gathered not as a parliamentary assembly, but as brothers, with our identity as “Pauline Editors”, starting from the profound meaning given by Blessed Alberione to this expression¹.

We are here as «communicators-apostles and as consecrated persons» – following Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life, and under the gaze of Mary, Queen of the Apostles – committed to living and proclaiming the Gospel, in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul, according to the form of life interpreted by our Founder.

We participate in an event in which the true protagonists are not us, but the Holy Spirit, who is present among us with his love and his grace, who inserts us into Trinitarian communion and invites us to communion among ourselves. To him, from whom come the lights for our discernment, we entrust our difficulties, uncertainties and worries, as well as our dreams, joys and hopes.

These are some of my sentiments that I share with you, to which I add some considerations that I consider important to highlight at the beginning of this Chapter Assembly.

1. The theme of the General Chapter and the *Instrumentum laboris*

There is no need to mention all the steps taken for the preparation of this General Chapter, which started on 16 June 2019. We just want to remember that, with the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic

¹ James Alberione, *Prediche del Primo Maestro*, 5, 1957, p. 137.

at the beginning of 2020, we were forced to lengthen this journey of preparation, after having postponed the date of the Chapter several times due to the health emergency.

However, it is important to remember that the theme of the Chapter – «*Let yourselves be transformed, renewing your way of thinking*” (Rom 12:2). *Called to be artisans of communion to prophetically announce the joy of the Gospel in the culture of communication*» –, officially communicated in December 2019, was born after a process of consultation.

The itinerary included a questionnaire sent to the confreres of all our Circumscriptions and also the request for suggestions from the Major Superiors, based on the reflection on the interpretative reading of this questionnaire which took place during the meeting of the Superiors of Circumscriptions held in Rome from 11 to 14 November 2019, that is, before the arrival of the pandemic. This does not mean that the topic has become obsolete, as we will see in the course of our work. On the contrary, the theme, with its strong appeal, is still relevant and leads us to great challenges.

The *Instrumentum laboris* that we have in hand and which is the result of the journey of preparation for the Chapter, despite some possible limitations, highlights some essential aspects that mark the current situation of our Congregation and which will be an important point of reference for the works of the Chapter. In this regard, we thank all those who participated in the elaboration of its content, especially our confreres of the pre-preparatory and preparatory Commissions who drafted the final draft of the text.

The three nuclei that make up the *Instrumentum laboris* – “The Pauline and his charismatic roots”, “The Pauline on mission and integral formation” and “A synodal Congregation” – invite us to reflect on our Pauline life in its various dimensions. The three moments of each nucleus, which characterize the method of discernment – rec-

ognizing, interpreting and choosing –, push us to face our Pauline life with realism and to make decisions regarding the future.

2. The time we live in

Considering that each General Chapter has its own particular significance, this “eleventh” can be considered as the Chapter of the post-pandemic, which takes place in the midst of a worrying war conflict in Ukraine.

Regarding the pandemic, even if it seems to us that the world has passed the most critical phase, the consequences are still present in our life. In any case, for most of the world, the pandemic has been synonymous with disease, suffering, death, poverty and social exclusion. We too as a Congregation have experienced deeply, with sadness, the inconveniences that the pandemic has caused, especially in our personal and community life – with the sick and unfortunately the deceased! –, in our lifestyle, in the apostolate and in the economy.

As Pope Francis reiterated *«the pandemic is a crisis and from a crisis one does not come out the same: either we come out better or we come out worse»*. Surely as a Congregation we want to come out better from this period of trial and our General Chapter – with its theme that invites us to “renew ourselves”, and which perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say, to “reinvent ourselves” in the various areas of Pauline life – is a point of very important momentum to achieve this goal.

As if the uneasy situation caused by the pandemic were not enough, we also find ourselves living the experience of the war in Ukraine, after the invasion of Russia, which has already lasted for three months and which directly affects the local population and also our Pauline community in L’viv (whom we remember in our prayers!); a war that its consequences for the world we cannot yet foresee.

We certainly cannot be indifferent to this tragic situation, as well as to so many other conflicts in many nations. Indeed, as of 4 April 2022, it was possible to identify wars or crises, among the various nations, even in Ethiopia, Yemen, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Sudan, Haiti and Myanmar. We want to remember and keep present during our Chapter the concrete life of the people who are suffering the evil of violence and many other difficulties in various areas.

3. The Chapter as an ecclesial event

The General Chapter cannot be reduced to a congregational event, but is essentially “ecclesial”. Indeed, as our Constitutions affirm *«since religious life is inseparably linked to the life of the Church and to holiness, the general chapter is to be seen as an ecclesial happening, a salvific event, a blade of hope, a particular paschal celebration: the moment in which the Congregation has to tune into and live out more intensely its co-responsibility with the whole Church»*². Briefly, we can use the expression of our Founder, very dear to the Pauline Family, regarding its mission: *«In Christ and in the Church»*.

In this perspective, the General Chapter is the right moment to realize where we are as a Church, a question that should also lead us to evaluate what is the “ecclesiology” we live within our Congregation. To what extent, for example, do we try to respond to the appeal of the current Magisterium to be an outgoing Congregation with the Church, in a world that is experiencing, among other problems, an “anthropological crisis” as well as “socio-environmental” from unprecedented global scale³, aggravated by the pandemic.

² *Constitutions and Directory of the Society of St Paul*, art. 211.

³ Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Constitution Veritatis gaudium. On ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties*, 27 December 2017, no. 3.

It is in this concrete world – also considering the cultures from which each Capitular comes – that the Church is called to bring the joy of the Gospel⁴, which is, above all, Jesus who died and rose again. He is “the eternal Gospel”⁵ who brings salvation that embraces all men⁶. As Saint Paul VI already affirmed, «*to evangelize is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity*»⁷.

Furthermore, the Magisterium of the Church reminds us that service to the Gospel does not consist only in spreading it explicitly, but also in taking care of the defence of human dignity⁸, especially of the poorest, the weakest and the marginalized. It must also lead us to ecumenical and interreligious openness, to dialogue with atheists, to the commitment to justice, to peace and to the protection of creation and to many other actions in favour of life.

This complex reality continually requires on our part, as the Church, to «*scrutinize the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel*»⁹, with the awareness that «*every time we try to return to the sources and recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new paths arise, creative methods, other forms of expression, more eloquent signs, words charged with renewed meaning for today's world*»¹⁰. In fact, Jesus – the living Gospel – makes all things new (Rev 21:3).

4. Fidelity to the charism and “Pauline” creativity

We are with and in the “outgoing” Church with our specific charism and with our identity as “Pauline Editors”. In this regard, it is important to consider during this General Chapter that «*on one hand, we are called to assume responsibility over fidelity to the Founder's charism*

⁴ Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 1.

⁵ Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 11.

⁶ *Lumen gentium*, n. 16.

⁷ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 14.

⁸ Pope Paul VI. *Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 30.

⁹ *Gaudium et spes*, no. 4.

¹⁰ Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 11.

before God, the Church and the members of our religious family inasmuch as the Founder's charism is a patrimony no one has the right to squander. On the other hand, we must be aware that no one in the Church is prisoner of the past and that the Church herself renders us responsible over the practical evaluation of the Founder's charism, measured against her "supreme law" which is the Gospel read and applied according to the actual needs of the Church and of the world»¹¹.

From the charismatic richness we inherited from our Founder, we have the original understanding that the Pauline apostolate is preaching and an act of salvific communication, alongside oral preaching¹². It is not subsidiary or accessory but, as Don Alberione intended, it is true preaching, which uses all the languages of communication.

In the footsteps of this ministry, our first task is rightly to proclaim the Gospel, or to give continuity to Alberione's daring dream of «*penetrating all human thought and knowledge with the Gospel*»¹³, without forgetting to "not talk only about religion, but talk of everything in a Christian way"¹⁴. In fact, as our Founder exhorted, «*the Pauline Family has an enormous opening onto the whole world, and in its whole apostolate: studies, apostolate, piety, activities and production. Publications for all categories of people, as well as all matters and events judged in the light of the Gospel...*»¹⁵.

Among the many other aspects to underline with regard to our institutional charism, there is the fundamental one that indicates that all of our life and apostolic activity receive meaning and dynamism from the "Pauline spirit". In following Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life, we find in Saint Paul the model of disciple and consecrated person, apostolic inspiration and creativity.

¹¹ *Chapter Documents. Special General Chapter 1969-1971*, no. 39.

¹² James Alberione, *Apostolato dell'Edizione*, 1950, pp. 12-13.

¹³ James Alberione, *Abundantes divitiae*, 87.

¹⁴ James Alberione, *Abundantes divitiae*, 87.

¹⁵ James Alberione, *Abundantes divitiae*, 65.

It is appropriate to consider that among the characteristics that stand out in St Paul in his work of evangelization are those of the “pastoral heart” and “missionary spirit”, which push him to be everything to everyone, to be a man of communion and to work in a network, to use the most effective means of communication of his time to reach people with the Good News where and how they live.

Surely, if the Congregation lost its specific task of “being St Paul alive today” – not a mummified St Paul, but active in today’s history, with the same style proposed by Blessed Alberione – the Church would lose a “particular colour” that enriches her evangelizing mission in the world. This General Chapter will have to examine where we are as a Congregation in reference to the “Pauline” identity, considering the current culture of communication.

5. The culture of communication today

As regards our evangelization service in the field of communication, it is useful to have in mind the contents of the two seminars that we have realized in recent years: the *2nd International Seminar of Pauline Editors* (2017) and the *2nd International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* (2019).

These two seminars had the objective of situating the “Pauline apostolate” and “integral formation” – two realities that must walk closely intertwined! – in the context of the changes that have taken place in the culture of communication, especially with the arrival of communication network, thanks to the development of digital technologies.

We recall that from these encounters, among other things, it was highlighted that the Pauline Editor of the present and of the future is a man of relationship: relations with God, with the confreres of the community, with the lay collaborators and with the world that surrounds.

Furthermore, the “interpersonal relationship”, in particular, is one of the aspects on which the current Magisterium of the Church continues to insist when it speaks of communication. It is not enough to use technical means or to live “connected”. It is necessary to see to what extent our communication “creates bridges” or contributes to the construction of the “culture of encounter”.

The work of “updating” that is expected of this Chapter certainly requires from us a broader vision as possible of the current culture of communication and of our apostolic activities as a whole, that is, of our publishing (paper and digital), of our Pauline centers of studies in communication, of initiatives in the biblical field, of our cultural centers... And so, step by step, from this reality we open ourselves with creativity to other possibilities, always with the aim of reaching the people of today with the means of today.

6. In synodality: “to listen with the heart” and “to speak with frankness”

The General Chapter is the highest expression of the collegiality¹⁶ of the Congregation and is a real opportunity to exercise synodality, where each participant is called “to listen with the ear of the heart”¹⁷ and “to speak with courage and frankness”, integrating freedom, truth and charity¹⁸.

Synodality asks us for the wisdom to walk together, seeking unity in the diversity of personal gifts and cultures from which each one comes. It is a process in which we are invited both to listen to one another and to listen all together to what the Spirit is saying! In fact, without the Holy Spirit there is no synodal journey.

In this sense, the synodal journey is an exercise in communication, where dialogue has an irreplaceable role, even if it is a de-

¹⁶ Cf. *Special General Chapter 1969-1971*, no. 650.

¹⁷ Pope Francis, *Message for the 56th World Communications Day*, 24 January 2022.

¹⁸ Pope Francis, *Address at the beginning of the Synod on the Young*, 3 October 2018.

manding itinerary, as Pope Francis reminds us: «*The first fruit of this dialogue is that everyone is open to newness, to change his opinion thanks to what he has heard from others*»¹⁹.

It is natural that each Capitular has his own thoughts on the different themes that will be treated in the Chapter. However, a “synodal path” requires openness to possible additions and modifications that the same path of reflection can suggest. This means: «*Let us feel free to welcome and understand others and therefore to change our convictions and positions: this is a sign of great human and spiritual maturity*»²⁰.

Obviously, a General Chapter is called to look at synodality not only as a path within the Congregation, that is, in a self-referential way, but also to strive to situate our life and mission in the context of our relationships, and concretely with the Pauline Family (including the members of the Pauline Institutes of Secular Consecrated Life, the Pauline Cooperators and the feminine Congregations), with the local Churches, with other institutions (religious and civil), with the people we are called to serve, etc.

Finally, let us not forget that the synodal journey has its profound meaning in the Eucharist, which generates and nourishes synodality. We can find in the Eucharist the strength to make our General Chapter a true place of experience of fraternity, communion and sharing.

* * *

Dear brothers, as members of the Chapter Assembly we have the demanding responsibility of planning the future of our Congregation by scrutinizing the signs of the times and with courage, among other things, to make the necessary changes regarding those realities that are no longer appropriate to the time we live in.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ Ibidem.

In this perspective the Chapter is an opportune time to re-evaluate and give some indication to the various dimensions of Pauline life with regard to our relationships (internal and external), our communities, apostolic structures, Pauline geography, administrative and apostolic organization and , why not say it, even our own norms.

Lastly, in addition to elaborating the Congregation's program for the next six years, this Chapter also has the responsibility of electing the new Superior General and the General Councillors who will be responsible for animating the Congregation in the next mandate and for coordinating the application of the decisions taken in this Assembly. May the Spirit enlighten us in our choices!

In a time with so many challenges for the Pauline life and mission, we cannot leave room for sterile pessimisms or for the "prophets of doom" influencing us. Therefore, «*let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of hope!*»²¹. This does not mean closing our eyes to problems, but facing them with the hope that comes from the Gospel.

As never before, we have the great opportunity to exercise our vocation as true prophets of hope, driven by the "Pauline spirit", within the horizon of our institutional charism.

May Mary Queen of the Apostles, "the Editor of God", be beside us, with her maternal presence.

A fruitful work to everyone!

Ariccia, Divine Master House, 29 May 2022

Father Valdir José De Castro
Superior General

²¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 86.

REPORT OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL ON THE STATE OF THE CONGREGATION

February 2015 - April 2022

«*I do all for the Gospel (1 Cor 9:23). Paulines, evangelizers-communicators. In Christ, new apostles for humanity*» was the theme of the last General Chapter that took place in Ariccia from 25 January to 14 February 2015. That event sought to highlight the challenges of the evangelizing mission of our Congregation and put in relief the “Pauline man of communication” as the subject of evangelization, called to be a “new apostle”, rooted in Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life, in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul.

In this regard, it should be remembered that the X General Chapter was convened after the sudden death, on 14 September 2014, of the previous Superior General, Fr Silvio Sassi, about two years before the expiry of his second mandate. That sad episode, which disconcerted everyone, greatly interfered with the preparation of the Chapter, especially due to the limited time available. Despite the particular circumstances in which the Chapter took place, the Chapter Fathers drew up a final Document in which the general objective, priorities and operative guidelines for the various areas of Pauline life were established, that is, the directions to take for our Congregation.

The mandate of the General Government that now expires began in that difficult circumstance, without a handing over, and now ends in the midst of a troubled world health context, due to the Covid-19 pandemic that has already lasted for two years. This situation, as we know, has forced us to move several times – after prior consultation with the Superiors of Circumscriptions and the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life – the

date of the General Chapter and, consequently, to extend our mandate for a year, together with that of some Major Superiors and their Councillors.

The report that we now present is not intended to be a simple account of the work of a General Government regarding the activities carried out in the last seven years of service to the Congregation. Taking into consideration the various areas of Pauline life, this report tries to present, yes, what has been done (especially on the basis of what has been entrusted to us by the X General Chapter), but it also refers to some initiatives that were not present in the final Document and which the circumstances have required, as well as trying to offer some reflection and indication for the future.

With reference to this aspect, our norms precisely ask that the Superior General, in his report to the General Chapter, not limit himself to drawing up an account of simple “objective” observation, but try to go in depth and make it propositional, that is, it presents perspectives and proposals for the development of the Congregation¹.

In fact, we realize that it is not enough to describe what happened. It is also necessary to reflect on our lived history, in order to find the ways that best help to respond to our Pauline vocation, always in the light of faith in God who walks with us, aware that *«in him we live and move and have our being»* (Acts 17:28), despite our weaknesses.

Now we are here, gathered in Chapter, with a grateful heart to the Lord for his constant presence among us, while still feeling deeply the consequences of the serious health situation we have experienced, as well as witnessing the countless conflicts in the world, among these, the war between Russia and Ukraine. May his Spirit enlighten this phase of our Chapter of evaluation of our histo-

¹ *Service of Authority. Manual*, no. 141.1.

ry and help us to discern in order to orient the Congregation towards the future.

1. PERSONS AND COMMUNITIES

The current reality of the persons and communities of our Congregation is already described, to a certain extent, in the *Instrumentum laboris* and also in the reports of the Superiors of Circumscriptions that we have received. For our part, first of all we want to remind you that, since the beginning of our mandate, we have tried to put the “person of the Pauline” at the center, an essential prerequisite for facing the challenges of our life and mission, believing with our Founder that *«the apostolate is a fruit, and the fruit comes from the plant: if the plant is healthy, the fruit will be abundant; but if the plant is sick, the fruit will either be missing or scarce»*².

This position was inspired by the general objective of the X General Chapter that called to conversion: **«Attentive to the signs of the times, renew the impetus of our apostolic action, converting ourselves, our communities and our apostolic structures, to reach everyone, especially in the periphery, utilising likewise the new languages of communication»**.

In fact, “conversion”, which is always an action that starts from a personal effort, was reaffirmed by the capitulars as necessary for the renewal of personal life and, consequently, of community and apostolic life. The subject, as the theme of the X General Chapter indicated, was the Pauline “evangelizer-communicator”, that is, the Pauline as a “man of communication” or “relationships” (with God, with others, with himself), who lives his mission starting from the community and that he begins to do everything for the Gospel to the extent that he incarnates it in daily life.

² James Alberione, *Vademecum*, Edizioni Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo 1992, no. 961.

The two priorities of the Final Document – which concerned community life – highlighted the need to build our communities in the spirit of the Apostle Paul, in the witness of a life given to God, in fraternal communion and in apostolic synergy (cf. *Priority 2.1*) and also underlined the importance of the Word of God and the Eucharist as a source for reviving one’s vocation and overcoming what causes division (cf. *Priority 2.2*). Furthermore, they presented four operative lines, in which the Circumscription Superiors (Priorities 2.1.1 and 2.2.2) and the Local Superiors (Priorities 2.1.2 and 2.2.3) appeared as the first promoters of this path.

During our service of animation, these indications have been taken up on many occasions, both in the programmatic letters, written on the occasion of the Provincial Chapters and Regional Assemblies, and in the Annual Letters of the Superior General. Below, we briefly present some aspects that we believe should be highlighted, as far as the life of the members and of our communities is concerned.

1.1 The situation of members

a) Statistics of professed members

The figures below indicate some statistical data that refer to the situation of the members of our Congregation:

Number of members and median age

	31.12.2009 (total + median age)		31.12.2015 (total + median age)		31.12.2021 (total + median age)	
Priests	554	58.50	534	59.70	491	60.40
P Disciples	320	66.70	263	70.30	192	72.40
T Disciples	13	30.00	10	36.60	2	31.43
T Clerics	87	27.80	91	29.16	86	29.70
P Clerics &	17	33.40	16	35.15	14	39.50
Total	991	57.60	914	59.00	785	59.50
			-77		-129	

Members divided by age groups (as of 31 December 2021)

< 31	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	>	TOT
56	109	104	132	122	151	111	785

Distribution (total) per geographical Area: number of members and median age

	2009		2015		2021	
Latin America (with Miami e LA)	203	50.6	204	53.1	178	54.1
East (Asia-Oceania)	280	50.1	288	52.4	263	55,9
North (Europe-North America)	483	65.7	382	68.8	294	69,5
Africa (Congo-Nigeria-Angola)	24	43.5	40	42.2	50	38.6
Total	991	57.6	914	59.0	785	59.5

Comments:

Our Congregation, as of 31 December 2021, was made up of 785 members. More precisely, as of 30 April 2022, we have reached 774 members, distributed in 115 communities, present in 34 countries (and in 9 countries only with the bookstore apostolate). It is noted that in the last 12 years (2009-2021), the total number of Paulines has decreased by 206 members, that is, by 20% (against 10% in the period 1998-2010).

While, from 1 January 2015 to 30 April 2022, the number of Priests decreased by 60 members (11%), that of Perpetual Disciples decreased by 81 members or by 30%. The median age of the Priests increased by 1.8%, while that of the Disciples by 5.7%. The Juniors are now composed of 86 Temporary Clerics and 2 Temporary Disciples.

The members of the clerical state at 31.12.2021 are 75.2% of the Congregation, against 24.8% of the Disciples. At 31.12.2009, the Disciples were 33.6% of the Congregation and in 1998 35.8%.

The Area of the North has recorded a 39% decline in members over the past 12 years; Latin America by 12% and the Area of the East by 0.5%; the Area of Africa, on the other hand, saw a 51% increase in members. The median age is significantly higher in the Northern Zone.

As of 30 April 2022, the four Circumscriptions with the highest median age are: Italy (163 members and median age 73.62); Canada-France (8 members and median age 73.43); United States (13 members and median age 72.85) and Spain (25 members and median age 70.85). The four Circumscriptions with a lower median age are: Nigeria-Ghana (21 members and median age 36.86), Congo (30 members and median age 37.31); Portugal-Angola (8 members and median age 46.79) and Philippines-Macau (83 members and median age 49.78).

b) Initial formation. Movement of Persons: from 31 December 2015 to 31 December 2021

1. Aspirants + Postulants

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
223	206	160	162	156	128	123

2. Novices

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
22	20	25	28	11	20	29

3. Temporary professed

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
101	100	93	102	109	91	88

4. Temporary Clerics-Disciples

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
91	90	86	95	105	88	86
10	10	7	7	4	3	2

- **First professions** (from 1.2.2015 to 30.4.2022): 143
- **Priestly ordinations** (from 1.2.2015 to 30.4.2022): 65.
- **Perpetual professions of Disciples** (from 1.2.2015 to 30.4.2022): 6.
- **Deceased** (from 1.2.2015 to 30.4.2022): 183 deaths (95 Priests, 85 Perpetual Disciples, 2 Juniors and 1 Novice). It should be not-

ed that in the year 2020 (the critical phase of the pandemic) 41 members died, while the median for the other years (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021) is 22 members.

- **Definitive abandonment** (from 1 February 2015 to 30 April 2022):
 - **Those who did not renew their temporary vows:** 83 members.
 - **Dispensation from perpetual vows:** 3.
 - **Incardinated in various Dioceses:** 13.
 - **Passed on to other Institutes:** 5.
 - **Dismissed:** 1.
 - **Dispensed from priestly duties:** 5 (and 1 deacon).
 - **Delicta graviora:** 1
- **Other situations** (from 1 February 2015 to 30 April 2022):
 - **Permissions for *absentia a domo*:** 32 members.
 - **Permissions for exclaustation:** 25.
 - **Re-entries after *absentia* or exclaustation:** 11.

1.2 Reflection and planning for the future

a) The profiles of the communities

With regard to our communities, we underline, first of all, that not all of them have a clear identity and consequently their mission. In this perspective, it is necessary to review the “Pauline colour” of the community, in which we include the “Pauline life of piety” and the involvement of its members in our specific apostolate, considering that this is eminently communal and that our communities are characterized by apostolic life³. These are aspects to be carefully evaluated.

Another consideration that did not appear in the statistical data, but to which it is appropriate to refer, is that our communities are becoming more and more multicultural, a trend that will certainly accentuate in the coming years. This reality will require, on the part of the members of the community, the willingness to welcome

³ Cf. *Constitutions and Directory of the Society of Saint Paul*, art. 15 and art. 66.

those who are of a different culture, as well as the effort of openness and adaptation of those who arrive in a new cultural reality.

b) The numerical decline

Certainly, the decrease of numbers in our Congregation, mainly in the Northern Hemisphere, is one of the aspects that attract our attention, even if, as we know, the persons cannot be reduced to a “number”. However, when comparing the total numbers of members from seven years ago with those of today, the Congregation has suffered a reduction of 141 perpetual members, for several reasons.

It is important to note that the decrease in numbers does not derive only from deaths, but also from the members (perpetually professed and juniors) who have left. Among these, there is a significant number of perpetually professed, the majority are young, who left in the first ten years of perpetual profession. We will return to reflect on this reality when we deal with Formation. It should also be borne in mind that among these reasons, the “vocational crisis” must be considered, which obviously is not a problem confined to our Congregation, but which today occurs in the vast majority of Institutes of consecrated life.

This trend, which probably will not be reversed in the short term, leads us to get used to looking at our Congregation not so much from the point of view of “quantity”, but of “quality” and, in this perspective, to rethink the Pauline life in all its dimensions: the personal and community lifestyle, the life of piety and charism, the building structures, the Pauline geography, the apostolic organization, etc.

In this sense, it seems appropriate to recall the words of Pope Francis addressed, a few months ago, to the Catholics of Greece, on the occasion of his pastoral visit to that country and which we can certainly apply to the reality of consecrated life in general and in particular to our Congregation: *«Being a minority – and do not forget that the Church throughout the world is a minority – does not mean being insignificant, but closer to the path loved by the Lord, which is that of littleness: of kenosis, of abasement, of meekness, of*

the synkatábasis of God in Jesus Christ. Jesus came down even to becoming hidden in the weakness of our humanity and the wounds of our flesh. He saved us by serving us. As Paul tells us, “He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant” (Phil 2:7). How often we can be obsessed with external appearances and visibility, yet “the Kingdom of God does not come with signs that can be observed” (Lk 17:20). It comes in a hidden, slow way like the rain does on the ground. Let us help one another to renew our trust in God’s work, and not to lose the enthusiasm of service»⁴.

It seems to us that we must also look at our Congregation from this realistic perspective: minority yes, insignificant no! This is a consideration that should lead us to think seriously not so much from the point of view of the “quantity” of members, but of “quality” which, in turn, requires a strong clarity of the charismatic identity and apostolic commitment.

c) Aging

Aging of members is a visible reality today in consecrated life, especially with regard to religious communities located in the Northern Hemisphere. Our Congregation is not outside this statistic, a reality that has a strong impact on our life and mission and that calls us to look at it with realism.

The aspect to pay attention to is not so much aging itself, which is a natural stage in life, and which must lead us to take care of our elderly and sick with care, offering them our human, spiritual and material help. The danger is resignation, understood as a feeling of defeat, failure and irreversible loss of hope. As Pope Francis said, addressing the priests and religious in the Duomo of Milan (Italy), two years ago: *«Few yes, in a minority yes, elderly yes, resigned no! [...] Do not survive. Live!»⁵.*

⁴ Pope Francis, *Address at the meeting with bishops, priests, men and women religious, seminarians and catechists*, Cathedral of St Dionysius in Athens, 4 December 2021.

⁵ Pope Francis, *Meeting with priests and consecrated persons in the Milan Cathedral*, 25 March 2017.

From this point of view, however, what causes some concern within our Congregation is to see some perpetually professed (over 40, 50 or 60) still in the “productive” stage, already “tired”, in search of retirement as destination to arrive as soon as possible. Certainly, this brother has forgotten the words, still very current, of our Founder: «*Delay in becoming old; not so easily to put oneself in the number of the old and consider oneself at rest. In religious life, there are no retirees; retirement is in heaven. Therefore, make use for the Lord that much of strength and activity that still remain in us*»⁶.

In any case, it is a trend contrary to that which occurs today in our civil society, that is, that of the so-called “perennials”⁷. Perennials are persons who belong to these age groups (40, 50, 60 or more), curious and enterprising who live in the present. They know what is happening in the world, they are up to date in technology and they relate to persons of all generations. They want to grow, learn, and discover ways to become better and make the world a better place. They adapt perfectly to any situation, to new ways of being, to different work tools, to any environment in which they want to fit. It would be nice if this trend would become a reality also within our Congregation!

d) The synodal journey

Another element that challenges us, looking to the future, is synodality, that is, walking together, in synergy – in the light of the Word and the Eucharist – not only on the special occasion of a Provincial Chapter, a Regional Assembly or a General Chapter, but always, taken up as a style of life, as a “method” to be implanted in all

⁶ James Alberione, *Vademecum*, no. 556.

⁷ Cf. <https://www.blog-sviluppoperpersonale.it/2021/09/23/chi-sono-perennials-mentalita-non-eta/>.

areas of the Pauline life. Obviously, this is a path that requires everyone's effort, the improvement of listening and relationships.

As we underlined in the Annual Letter of 2020, synodality cannot be reduced to internal institutional life (between Paulines and our lay collaborators), but must also extend to the Pauline Family, to the local Church, to other religious or lay institutions, to the people we are called to serve, etc.

We know that some Circumscriptions are currently striving to proceed in this direction, trying to open themselves more and more to local, social and ecclesial realities, but in general, this aspect is still missing in many of our communities. This effort must continue in communion with the Church, which is rightly celebrating a Synod on this theme, a Synod that will certainly help us to walk in this direction.

In this context and in the context of the service of the General Government, it is appropriate to share the positive experience of the participation of the Superior General in the Assemblies of the Union of Superiors General (USG) which gave the opportunity to be present at some meetings at the level of the universal Church, such as at the Synod of Bishops on young people (3-28 October 2018), at the international meeting "The protection of minors in the Church" (21-24 February 2019) and at the opening of the Synod on synodality (9-10 October 2021). These are all experiences that create bridges and make our presence visible on the journey with the Church.

e) The new generations

Talking about the future is talking about the new generations, a theme that we will return to later, when we talk about formation. For now we affirm that, thanks to God and to the work of vocation animators, also considering the current "vocational crisis", there are young people who are still arriving in our Congregation, especially in Asia, Africa and Latin America (in the latter continent, not in large quantities as in the past).

However, we cannot forget that, as Pope Francis often insists, without the dialogue between the young and the elderly, history does not go on. It is a real challenge for our communities to find intergenerational equilibrium, where young people respect and recognize the experiences of the elderly and these, in turn, going beyond their witness, are open to the novelties that young people carry in their minds and hearts.

1.3 The Pauline geography

The X General Chapter had underlined the missionary character of the Congregation, leaving the General Government with a demanding task concerning the Pauline geography, with the operative guideline (1.1.1) which asked that «***the General Government evaluate and support the projects which the Circumscriptions have started or are intending to promote to be present in new territories, especially those of the “periphery”***». Allowing itself to be guided by these indications, the General Government, after having listened to the circumscriptions involved, has initiated some changes in the context of our geography.

With the foundation of the community of Asunción (Paraguay), in 2016, the Argentina-Chile-Peru Province became the Argentina-Chile-Paraguay Province and the Peru-Bolivia Region was created. As a result, the Venezuela-Bolivia Region became the Venezuela Region. In 2021, the Argentina-Chile-Paraguay Province became a “Region”.

In 2017, the General Government canonically erected three communities in three countries – Angola, Cuba and Ukraine –, integrating these countries into the Circumscriptions that gave rise to these territorial presences. With these mergers, the previous circumscriptions were redefined into the Portugal-Angola Region, the Mexico-Cuba Province and the Poland-Ukraine Region.

In 2020, the Australia Region became “Sydney, a House dependent on the General Government” and, in 2021, the United States

Province becomes the “United States Region”. In 2021, the Nigeria Region was created, a country spun off from the India-Nigeria-Great Britain-Ireland Province, which in turn became the India-Great Britain-Ireland Province. After a long process, in January 2022, our presence in Ghana was made official, annexed by the Nigeria Region, which became the Nigeria-Ghana Region.

Since 2012, thanks to the work of our confreres from the Japan Province, we have been present in Vietnam, today already with some young Vietnamese in initial formation, both in Vietnam and in Japan. This community has not yet been canonically erected due to local civil-ecclesiastical laws, which require that the Superior of a community be a Vietnamese.

Presence in China is still a dream. Our Macau community has so far failed, for several reasons, to enter this country. However, in the Chinese territory there are already some *Annunziatinas* and some priests of the Jesus Priest Institute, who are accompanied by the Philippine-Macau Province. Thanks to the contact with the Daughters of St Paul of Taiwan, today we have a Chinese diocesan priest who is having a Pauline experience in the community of Cinisello Balsamo (Italy).

With regard to the future, Pauline geography will certainly be subject to re-evaluations and adaptations due to the needs and requirements of the time and place, taking into account the persons and the economic sustainability of the initiatives.

Finally, the Superior General personally visited all the Circumscriptions of the Congregation during the period of his mandate as Government, generally on the occasion of the Provincial Chapters or Regional Assemblies. However, he found it difficult to visit all the communities as required by one of the recommendations of the X General Chapter. In any case, the General Councillors visited all our communities.

1.4 The programmatic letters

During this period of government, 32 programmatic letters were written on the occasion of the Provincial Chapters and Regional Assemblies, the result of the canonical visits and the reflection made within the General Council on the situation of each Circumscription. These letters tried not only to present practical indications for the different areas of Pauline life, but also to offer some reflection on certain aspects to be explored, in harmony with the local reality, always with the aim of animating people in view of the mission.

1.5 Meetings with the Superiors of the Circumscriptions

During this mandate, we held two meetings in Rome with the Superiors of Circumscriptions with the aim of strengthening fraternal relationships and unity. The first meeting, held from 22 to 30 June 2016, in addition to reflecting on the services of the various Bodies of the General Government, sought to deepen the Acts of the X General Chapter. It took into consideration, point by point, the indications of the Final Document, especially the lines of action that concerned the tasks of the Superiors of Circumscriptions. The theme of the exercise of authority was also dealt with, in the light of the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, as a service of animation of the Congregation to foster communion and promote synodality.

The second meeting was held from 11 to 14 November 2019 and was convened as an important stage on the synodal journey towards the General Chapter (which was to take place in April 2021). The encounter tried to deepen the interpretative reading of the first questionnaire (by the pre-preparatory Commission) sent to all our confreres and, based on the reflections on the reality of the Congregation, it offered the General Government some suggestions regarding the theme of the XI General Chapter, which was subsequently approved. On that occasion, in addition to information on the service of the General Government, the *Vademecum for the Secretary*

of *Circumscription of the Society of St Paul*, prepared by the General Secretariat, was also presented.

Other meetings, due to the pandemic, were held online: a meeting with each Circumscription Government in the first half of 2021 and a meeting with the Circumscription Superiors (by geographical area) in the first months of 2022.

1.6 The Interchapter

The Interchapter – which was attended by the members of the General Government and all the Superiors of Circumscriptions – was held in Aparecida (Brazil), from 15 to 25 February 2018, with the aim of verifying the objectives set by the X General Chapter and to deal with the most urgent problems of the Congregation, or to see together the most important and immediate commitments that had to be assumed for the next three years in view of relaunching.

On that occasion, the Acts of the *2nd International Seminar of the Pauline Editors (2nd SIEP)*, held in Ariccia in October 2017, were presented. Having this Document as a basis, the participants reflected and offered suggestions to the draft of the updated *Editorial guidelines. Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate*, which had been in force since 2005.

The future of the intercontinental bodies of the Apostolate (CI-DEP, GEC and CAP-ESW) was also evaluated and discussed in the Interchapter. It was decided to maintain the activities of CIDEP and to suspend, for a more in-depth evaluation period, the activities of the GEC and the CAP-ESW.

Among the recommendations that appeared in the Interchapter, we underline: a) the proposal for the realization of a second international seminar on formation to get in tune with the reflections and lights resulting from the *2nd SIEP*, regarding the integral formation of the Pauline; b) the need to evaluate and rethink the structure and service of the Center of Pauline Spirituality; c) the commitment to finalize the document of the *Editorial Guidelines. Identity, contents*

and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate; d) the challenge of completing the drafting of the document *Formation Programme for Paulines Collaborators* in the apostolate; e) the task of elaborating common guidelines on the formation of the members of the PICSL in the various stages; and, finally, f) proceed with the reorganization of the current and historical Archive of the Congregation.

2. CREATIVE FIDELITY TO THE PAULINE CHARISM

We believe that a great challenge for our time is not only to deepen the institutional charism, as we inherited it from our Founder, but also to read and live it in the light of the Gospel and the signs of the times. In fact, as Pope Francis explains, *«a charism is not an exhibit from a museum, which stands untouched in a display case, to be contemplated and nothing more. Fidelity to the charism, keeping it pure, in no way means enclosing it in a sealed bottle, as if it were distilled water, to prevent it from becoming contaminated by the outside. No, a charism is not preserved by keeping it aside; it must be opened and allowed to go out, so it may come into contact with reality, with people, with their anxieties and their problems. In this way, in this fruitful encounter with reality, the charism grows, is renewed and reality is also transformed, is transfigured through the spiritual power that this charism bears»*⁸. With regard to the “Pauline charism”, we present at least two resources that the General Government has used for the animation of this fundamental area of our consecrated life.

2.1 Center of Pauline Spirituality

With regard to the Center for Spirituality, the X General Chapter had formulated two operative guidelines: **«The Centre of Pauline Spirituality prepare resource materials that could help revive the**

⁸ Pope Francis, *Address to the participants in the General Chapter of Schonstatt Fathers*, 3 September 2015.

Pauline method “Truth-Way-Life” in the communities» (operative guideline 2.2.1) and «***The General Government through the Centre of Pauline Spirituality offer resource materials for the knowledge of our spirituality in view of formation***» (operative guideline, 3.1.3).

In this period no specific works were published on the “Way Truth Life method”, but the Pauline method itself was used in the animation aids prepared by the Center for Spirituality, for example, in the book *Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life*, published in 2018 and in the various animation aids in preparation for the Chapter.

It should be remembered that on 7 July 2018, in response to the request of the Interchapter to «***evaluate and rethink the structure and service of the Center for Pauline Spirituality***», Fr Boguslaw Zeman was appointed as the new Director of the Center who, with a working team made up of Paulines, tried to make it more dynamic.

In this perspective, the Center for Spirituality, in collaboration with the feminine Congregations of the Pauline Family, has organized three Conferences. One was carried out in presential manner: «***The Pact. Foundation of a lifestyle***» (26 October 2019), while the other two online: «***The Pauline Spirit. Sanctify the present and strain forward***» (2-3 October 2020) and «***Give to everyone the charity of the truth. Blessed James Alberione in dialogue with today's humanity***» (22-23 October 2021). The Acts of the three Conferences have been printed.

Among the other initiatives of the Center for Spirituality, the following should be emphasized: the international meeting with Paulines responsible for the “Centers of Pauline Spirituality” of some Circumscriptions (from 14 to 17 September 2019); the “#incontripaolini” (scheduled weekly online and transmitted, starting from May 2020 until April 2022, on YouTube and Facebook, born with the aim of dealing with various themes inherent to the Pauline Family and the Pauline charism); the online course on *Abundantes divitiae gratiae suae*, divided into 11 lessons in the form of videos (21 videos); the online Rosary transmitted every 26th of the month (“Alberionian Day”) from the Basilica *Maria Regina degli Apostoli* in Rome

(to which the Eucharistic celebration was recently added, after the recitation of the Rosary); the thoughts of the Founder for the Sundays of Lent, Advent and the Christmas Novena; collaboration in the restructuring work of the Don Alberione Museum and also in the organization of the spiritual formation program held in the *Casa Divin Maestro* in Ariccia; the preparation of animation aids (prayer proposals) in view of the XI General Chapter, etc.

Looking into the future, we see the urgent need for further charismatic formation of the members of our Congregation and of the entire Pauline Family, where the Center for Spirituality has a significant role to play in this process. However, more members are needed, as current forces seem insufficient.

In 2020, on the initiative of the Superiors General of the Pauline Family, the Commission for Conventions of the Pauline Family began to reflect on the possibility that the Center for Spirituality will return to being “of the Pauline Family”, made up of representatives of all Pauline institutions. This proposal, at the moment, is being discerned in the respective Congregations. However, we believe it is very useful to continue this reflection.

It will also be worthwhile to strengthen the collaboration with the local Centers of Pauline Spirituality, scattered around the world in various Circumscriptions, as well as helping to revive them or to create new ones where they do not exist.

Still in the perspective of the study of the Pauline Charism, it is useful to keep in mind that, in common agreement with the Superiors General of the feminine Congregations of the Pauline Family, the Course on the Charism of the Pauline Family, in Rome – held at the community of the Pious Disciples of the Divine Master of via Portuense until the beginning of the pandemic –, will be transferred to our Generalate, in via A. Severo, more precisely on the same floor where the Don Alberione Museum is also located. The start of activities is scheduled for September 2022.

2.2 The Annual Letters of the Superior General

Seven Annual Letters have been written in this mandate. Among the common elements of these Letters is the emphasis on the “person” of the Pauline as a man of communication and relationship, called to live and proclaim the Gospel – in the following of Jesus Master and in the spirit of St Paul – starting from the community, in the current culture of communication.

The Letters had the objective of deepening some important aspects of our Pauline identity, trying to answer a fundamental question: in a world where, in the field of communication – especially with the advent of digital technologies – a large part of humanity is inserted in this complex universe, what distinguishes the Pauline from these persons and what differentiates the Institutions that operate with these means that we also operate?

In this perspective, the following Letters have been published: *“I do all for the Gospel” (1 Cor 9:23). In love, in communion and with courage* (2015); *Sanctity, a style of life* (2016); *Study, in view the mission* (2017); *Apostle communicators for a culture of encounter* (2018); *Poverty: path of freedom, fraternity and service* (2019); *A Synodal Congregation at the service of the Gospel in the culture of communication* (2020) and *The Pauline Editor: artisan of communion in a connected world* (2021).

3. THE APOSTOLATE IN THE CULTURE OF COMMUNICATION

Proclaiming the Gospel, in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul, is our mission. The subject of evangelization, as the X General Chapter reiterated, is the Pauline “apostle communicator and consecrated person”, called not only to use the technical means of communication in proclaiming the Gospel, but also to be himself, as person, the first instrument of evangelization. In other words, the Pauline is called to be a true “Editor of God” – an expression dear to Blessed James Alberione – that is, the apostle who *«exudes God from all*

pores» by means of personal testimony and with all the languages of communication.

The culture of communication has experienced profound transformations in the last decades, especially with the arrival of digital technologies, which affect our apostolate because they directly affect the means, languages, relationships with recipients and interlocutors, in organization, etc. We cannot go on as if there are no changes. The world of communication evolves and does not wait for us, but challenges us! In our mandate, we have often insisted on the urgency of adapting our apostolate to the current communication reality, especially with regard to the digital environment.

Through the International Technical Committee for the Apostolate (CTIA), the General Government has tried to accompany our Circumscriptions in the elaboration of Apostolic Projects, in the organization of meetings and seminars (presential and online) and in the elaboration of various apostolic documents. Among the activities carried out in this last mandate, we underline:

3.1 The Editorial Guidelines of the Congregation

Thanks to the impulse that came from the theme of the last General Chapter «*I do all for the Gospel (1 Cor 9:23)*», the capitulars felt the urgency to «***creatively renew our missionary impetus at the service of the Word with new sustainable initiatives for the non-believers, the distant ones and the poor, with new openings, in new territories, with the new languages of communication***» (Priority 1.1).

In this perspective, the capitular decision arose to update the Document *Editorial Guidelines. Identity, contents, recipients of the Pauline apostolate*, which by now dated back to 2005. The operative guideline 1.1.2, requested thus: «***The General Government, through the International Technical Committee for the Apostolate (CTIA), within the second year of its mandate, develop the document Editorial Guidelines of Pauline Apostolate and the circumscription***

Governments are to render themselves responsible of its application in the proper pastoral context».

The General Government, considering the relevance of this request and before getting to work to update the Editorial Guidelines, has decided to carry out the *2nd International Seminar of the Pauline Editors*, with the aim of deepening the reality of the Pauline Editor in the current culture of communication.

3.2 The 2nd International Seminar of the Pauline Editors

The *2nd International Seminar of the Pauline Editors* was held in October 2017, in Ariccia. About sixty participants, mostly Paulines and some representatives of the Pauline Family, reflected on the “Pauline editorial” in the new contexts and paradigms, and on the challenges of communication. The sharing of different opinions and experiences, also with the presence of the speakers (generally professionals who work in other Catholic and secular publishing realities), on the impact of relevant changes in the publishing world, especially with the advent of digital culture, helped to redefine the profile and priorities of Pauline editorial.

The *2nd SIEP* took place about thirty years after the *1st International Seminar of the Pauline Editors* held in Ariccia-Milan in 1988, which emphasized the “multimedia” and “organizational” aspects of our apostolate. The *2nd SIEP* challenged us to rethink our pastoral practice and to enter the digital world more incisively. We reflected on the need to move from a linear logic of communication (characteristic of the mass media) to the logic of the network (characteristic of the digital environment), where relationships (internal and external) take on a fundamental role and in which the traditional “recipient” of our apostolate becomes “interlocutor”.

This Seminar warned of the danger of letting ourselves be overcome by the temptation to cling to our “comfort zones” with our methods and our traditional style and motivated us to move for-

ward in the commitment to integrate more and more the paper apostolate with a pastoral approach in the digital.

After the completion of the Seminar, the Document was revised, updated and approved by the General Government on 5 August 2018, entitled *Editorial Guidelines. Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate*.

3.3 Annual editorial themes

The updated Document of the *Editorial Guidelines...*, in addition to reiterating the relevance and importance of the three specific and determining areas of the Pauline editorial, namely the Bible, family and communication, asks that a specific annual theme be added to these, inspired by major contemporary problems and in harmony with the journey of the universal Church. This theme should be suggested well in advance by the Superior General, and should guide initiatives and projects at the national and international level (*Guideline* 6.3.4). The themes chosen in recent years, after prior consultation with those directly involved in the apostolate, are the following: “*Care for the common home*” (2019), “*On the Youth*” (2020), “*The Word of God: light for a time of uncertainty*” (2021) and “*Synodality*” (2022).

3.4 Biblical animation of the pastoral ministry

As we know, biblical animation of the pastoral ministry is a priority in the Pauline apostolate. In fact, our Founder affirmed that «*in the apostolate of the editions, proper to our institute [Society of Saint Paul], the book that we must particularly spread is the Bible: above all and first of all, and always*»⁹. Considering the importance of spreading the Word of God, the General Government has carried out the international projects already outlined by the other General Chapters in this area and has tried to put into practice what the last

⁹ James Alberione, *Vademecum*, no. 1040.

General Chapter asked for. Below, we present in summary form what has been implemented.

3.4.1 St Pauls Biblical Center

Established on 4 April 2013 with a Statute “*ad experimentum*”, at the request of the IX General Chapter, the service of the St Pauls Biblical Center was confirmed by the X General Chapter by means of the operative guideline 1.1.3: «***The General Government consolidate St Pauls Biblical Center so that it could coordinate all the biblical initiatives in the various Circumscriptions***».

On 15 March 2016, Fr Giacomo Perego was appointed as *Coordinator* at the international level (and three Councillors), with a three-year mandate, then renewed for another three years on 13 April 2019. Due to the postponement of the General Chapter, this year the mandate was extended again, until a new decision by the next General Government. The operational headquarters was set in Cinisello Balsamo, where the Coordinator resides.

One of the first initiatives was the updating of the Statute, approved on 8 November 2016. The *1st International Assembly of the St Pauls Biblical Center* in Cinisello Balsamo took place from 24 to 28 May 2017, in which the representatives of the circumscription biblical Centers participated. On that occasion, ideas were shared on the congregational biblical Pastoral Project (approved on 15 November 2017) and the study (drawn up with the Community of Sant’Egidio) to establish the “Sunday of the Word” was also presented”.

In fact, in one of the recommendations of the X General Chapter entrusted to the General Government, it was specified that «***through the Biblical Center, becoming promoters, together with the Community of Sant’Egidio, in the entire ecclesial community, of a world day of the Word of God, adequately involving all the Circumscriptions (this day should be an opportunity to enhance one of the foundations of our mission, raising awareness of the knowledge,***

reading, dissemination and interiorization of the Bible, with liturgical, pastoral and apostolic implications)». After a journey made with the Community of Sant'Egidio and the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, we were able to see the Sunday of the Word approved by Pope Francis, set for the third Sunday of Ordinary Time¹⁰ and valid for the whole Church.

3.4.2 SOBICAIN

One of the decisions of the General Government in the context of the biblical apostolate of the Congregation was to review, renew and revitalize the structures, organization and operations of SOBICAIN (based in Madrid). To this end, the new Director of SOBICAIN was appointed on 17 January 2017 in the person of Fr Abramo Parmeggiani. Along with his appointment, some operative guidelines were provided in order to facilitate the renewal and reorganization of SOBICAIN and his Council was subsequently appointed. The (revised) Directory of SOBICAIN was approved on 10 May 2019.

One of the latest biblical initiatives to underline, still in progress, is the preparation of the Arabic version of the Bible, *Scrutate le Scritture*, the release of which is scheduled for 2024. Another initiative is the financial aid that made possible the publication of the *CIDEP Pastoral Bible* (May 2022).

3.5 Pauline Centers for Communication Studies

To date we have initiatives in the field of formation in communication in Brazil, Colombia, Congo, the Philippines, India, Mexico and Nigeria. In March 2016, a Commission for the Pauline Centers of Communication Studies was appointed, with the aim of following more closely these Study Centers that, as the last two General Chapters have reiterated, are fundamental for the present and the future of our mission.

¹⁰ Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Letter in the form of a Motu proprio "Aperuit illis"*, no. 3.

In fact, while the IX General Chapter had asked to strengthen the pedagogical choice of the Congregation to become formator in the field of communication¹¹, the X Chapter asked that «***the General Government, through the International Technical Committee for the Apostolate (CTIA) and the International Secretariat for Vocation Promotion and Formation (SIF), establish guidelines of pedagogical identity which would become reference point for the Study Centers promoted by various Circumscriptions and promote mutual collaboration***» (1.2.1).

Under the coordination of the CTIA, after the consultation of the heads of the Study Centers and the meeting of reflection with them in São Paulo, from 15 to 18 February 2017, the Document *Guidelines for Pedagogical Identity and Fundamental Operational Choices for the Pauline Centers for Communication Studies* was prepared, and approved by the General Government on 6 June 2017. This Document offers an essential common basis to all our Pauline Centers for Communication Studies, active or as an ongoing project. It is a qualified orientation, in which the main characteristics of the Pauline presence in higher education are established, with the charismatic, academic-pedagogical, organizational and structural aspects.

3.6 Intercontinental Bodies of the Apostolate (CIDEP, GEC, CAP-ESW)

The X General Chapter made no reference to the intercontinental apostolic bodies: the Ibero-American Center of Pauline Editors (CIDEP), the Europe-Congo Group (GEC) and the Conference of Asia-Pacific and English Speaking World (CAP-ESW).

These Bodies were taken into consideration in the Interchapter of Aparecida in February 2018. On that occasion, it was decided to

¹¹ IX General Chapter of the Society of Saint Paul, *Acts and Documents*. Priority 1.3.

maintain the activities of CIDEP and suspend, for an evaluation period, the activities of the GEC and the CAP-ESW, even if it was underlined the fact that, in these geographic regions, the collaboration between the single Circumscriptions continues.

Two CAP-ESW meetings were organized: one in Mumbai (2017) and a second in Manila (2019). As regards CIDEP, two Assemblies have been organized: in São Paulo (October 2015) and Guadalajara (November 2018).

A declaration on these realities is expected from this General Chapter.

3.7 Documents prepared by the CTIA

In this mandate, under the coordination of the CTIA, the following documents were reviewed or elaborated and then approved by the General Government: update of the *Methodological Guide for the Preparation of the Apostolic Project* (10 November 2016); update of the *Manual of the Application of the Trademark* (4 April 2017); elaboration of the *Guidelines for Pedagogical Identity and Fundamental Operational Choices for the Pauline Centers for Communication Studies* (6 June 2017); updating of the *Editorial Guidelines. Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate* (5 June 2018); update of the *Statute of St Pauls Biblical Center* (10 May 2019); update of the *Directory of SOBICAIN* (10 May 2019); elaboration of the *Outline to develop the “Formation Programme for Paulines and Collaborators”* (4 December 2019).

3.8 Prospects for the future

a) Carry out the Pauline apostolate, trying to put the *Editorial Guidelines* into practice, in harmony with the Magisterium of the Church as regards the themes of evangelization, communication, care for the poor and the Common Home, synodality, etc.

b) Find ways to live more and more in the digital environment, integrating traditional means of communication with the realities and logic of network communication.

c) Continue to invest in our Pauline Centers for Communication Studies, in bookstores as centers of evangelization and culture and in other new initiatives in the field of communication.

d) Insist on teamwork, that is, done in “synergy”, trying to optimize relations both internally (among the Paulines and Paulines with lay collaborators) and externally (with our recipients and interlocutors, the local Church, the other institutions, etc.).

e) In the light of the countless changes that have taken place in our society, especially in the area of communication, it is indispensable to review and redefine the purpose, objective and structure of the CTIA together with other international bodies. As an example we can cite is the establishment of a task force and the identification of a sole Executive Secretary for the intercontinental Bodies of the apostolate, a project already started but suspended due to the pandemic.

f) Redefine the control methods on the use of the “St Pauls” trademark at an international level (contracts, royalties, registers, compliance with the rules).

g) Reduce structures and unite human-material resources, intensifying the convergence of the two Organisms – SOBICAIN and St Pauls Biblical Center – for a single and more effective apostolate of the Word.

h) Seek greater and effective coordination of the Pauline Centers for Communication Studies by the CTIA, safeguarding their “Pauline identity”, with the aim of giving our Institutes a unitary face – while respecting the cultural diversity of each Nation – a unique image all over the world and promoting greater collaboration between the Centers with a view to increasingly uniting human-material resources.

i) With regard to the “Pauline” pastoral care of our parishes, we must consider the nature of our apostolate and its charismatic significance, as stated in art. 76 of our *Constitutions and Directory*: «*The Congregation is to take up the overall pastoral care of a parish only in exceptional situations and for serious reasons*». We currently have 11 parishes in the world under the responsibility of the Paulines. Obviously, this pastoral care puts us directly in contact with the people of God and also with the structures of the local Churches. However, it is necessary to ask to what extent these parishes are within the organization chart of the apostolate of the Circumscription. Furthermore, it is suggested to provide for the drafting of pastoral guidelines that promote the “Pauline colour” in order to be truly channels of relationship between the Society of Saint Paul and the local Church and not just the work of individual parish priests.

4. PASTORAL CARE OF VOCATION AND INTEGRAL FORMAZION

The integral formation (human, Christian, spiritual-charismatic, apostolic, etc.) for the Pauline is permanent. It is a journey «*until Christ is formed*» in us (Gal 4:19) and is addressed to life in concrete, that is, it must radiate in human relationships (internal and external), in spiritual life, in community life, in apostolate, in administration, etc.

The X General Chapter, in priority 3.1, affirmed that «***the renewal of the Congregation requires a complete updating of the processes of integral formation aimed at the mission at all levels and for all the age groups within an international dimension***» and in operative guideline 3.1.1 it asked that «***the General Government, through SIF, establish a revision of the processes of integral formation of Paulines and as a consequence the Circumscriptions update their formation lter***».

A renewal of the Congregation, starting from integral Pauline formation, makes sense if this process is in harmony with our apostolate. The General Government, through the SIF (International Sec-

retariat for Formation), in the light of these operative guidelines, has tried to animate the Congregation with regard to Pastoral Vocation Ministry and Formation, putting into practice some initiatives that we present here in the following.

4.1 Pastoral care of vocation

We start from the principle that the Pauline vocation, according to Fr Alberione, is concretized in the double expression of priest and disciple¹². However, as the statistics indicate – which must make us reflect seriously on this reality –, our Congregation has an increasingly “clerical” face, and there is a notable decrease in the number of disciples, a trend that was noticeable for some decades already, but which has become much accentuated in recent years. Just look at the current number of juniors in formation: as of 31 December 2021, there are 86 temporary clerics and only 2 temporary disciples.

4.2 2nd International Seminar on Formation for the Mission

The Interchapter of Aparecida, reflecting on the need to integrate formation with the apostolate, asked the General Government to **«organize an international seminar on formation to put us in harmony with the reflections and the lights that have come to us from the 2nd International Seminar of the Pauline Editors regarding the formation of Paulines»**. Under the coordination of the SIF, the *2nd International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* (2nd SIFPAM) was organized which took place in Ariccia from 4 to 8 November 2019, 25 years after the last Seminar of this kind was held in October 1994.

From this Seminar, the Acts were born and from these, as a synthesis, the *Decalogue for the Pauline Formation for the Mission* was elaborated, which presents the main characteristics of the Pauline

¹² Cf. *Constitutions and Directory of the Society of Saint Paul*, art. 4.

identity, that is, those aspects that give the “Pauline colour” to formation and to community and apostolic life.

4.3 Course of Preparation for Perpetual Profession

Responding to operative guideline 3.1.2 of the X General Chapter, which asked that «*the General Government study the opportunity to promote periodically in Italy an international programme of preparation for perpetual profession, coordinated by SIF*», such courses were organized and realized, always in the months of September-October-November, in the years 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. In these 4 years, a total of 51 Juniors participated. In 2020 and 2021, the program stopped due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We have resumed and organized the course for this year (from October to mid-December 2022), which will have to be carried out by the new General Government.

In the evaluations which we made with the juniors, from among the various aspects, emerged the international and multicultural experience with Paulines from different nations who live the same formative stage, the knowledge of the Italian language, of the places of Father James Alberione and of Saint Paul, the study of the principal works of our Founder, the contact with the members of the feminine Congregations and of the other Institutes of the Pauline Family.

4.4 International Novitiate

The idea of an international novitiate in Italy, as it is configured today, appeared for the first time in the meeting of the Board of Major Superiors of CIDEP, during the meeting of the Circumscription Superiors in June 2016. The proposal was to move in Italy the Novitiate which for some years had been taking place in Medellin (Colombia), also opening the possibility of participation, in addition to those speaking Spanish and Portuguese, to those who are French and Italian speaking, that is, to those who belong to the neo-Latin languages, due to its proximity to the Italian language.

On 19 September 2016, the Novitiate House was erected in Albano Laziale, which began to operate the following year. Three courses alternated – 2017-2018, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 –, which were then suspended due to the pandemic. The current General Government, after having heard the Superiors of Circumscriptions, has organized the International Novitiate for the year 2022-2023 – the start of which is scheduled for next 20 August – which will have to be coordinated by the new General Government.

The novices had internal lessons with Pauline teachers and teachers of the Pauline Family and also participated in the courses of the inter-congregational novitiate in Marino (Rome). There were many positive points presented by the novices themselves: charismatic formation, international and multicultural experience, knowledge of the Italian language and the places of Blessed Alberione and Saint Paul, contacts with novices from other Congregations and with the members of the Pauline Family present in the Albano Laziale area.

During the period of the Novitiate (thanks also to the collaboration of the juniors), the novices developed a vocation site that sought to respond, at least in part, to operative guideline 3.2.1: ***«The SIF, co-involving the Persons responsible for the vocation promotion in the circumscriptions, create and coordinate an international Website for vocation promotion to strengthen our presence in the new digital languages».***

4.5 Online meetings on formation

In 2021, several online meetings were organized by the SIF with the General Coordinators of formation, formators, juniors and Paulines with a maximum of 10 years of perpetual profession. The meetings were organized by geographical area (CIDEP, GEC, CAP-ESW), on different dates. These meetings had the main objective of sharing the current situation of formation, especially considering the reality of the pandemic. The speakers were some of the same participants, who

took as a reference the content of the Acts of the 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*. In the months of March and April of this year there were various online meetings with the formation coordinators and with the juniors (by geographical area), to reflect on the *Instrumentum laboris* and to offer suggestions to the participants of the XI General Chapter.

4.6 Prospects for the future

a) Pastoral care of vocations. It is undoubtedly a great challenge in this “change of epoch” and is vital for the development of the Congregation. For those who are in contact with our vocation centers it is fundamental to present the Pauline vocation in its double expression: priest and disciple.

Even if it is important to be aware of the decline in vocations, we must in every possible way pay close attention so that this reality does not generate a pastoral vocation ministry that does not carefully evaluate the quality and the real motivations of the candidates who come to have an experience in our Congregation, especially of adult vocations.

We are all aware that today the overwhelming majority of vocations come from Asia, Africa and Latin America. The decline in vocations, particularly in the Northern Hemisphere, should not be a reason for stopping the pastoral care of vocations, but on the contrary, one must try to establish appropriate plans, with new methods, suited to the needs of that specific territory and of each Circumscription.

b) Initial formation. It is important that the young people welcomed into our communities are inserted into true “formative communities” and that the perpetually professed realize that their Pauline witness is one of the basic aspects for the perseverance of young people in formation. For those arriving as adult vocation, a specific training program with suitable facilities should be prepared.

From the beginning of the formative journey, the candidates are to be introduced, to some extent, into the Pauline apostolate. In this regard, it is indispensable to pay particular attention to the juniors, so that they are prepared to live in multicultural communities and can gradually assume, without neglecting study and starting from an integral formation, some apostolic responsibility.

c) Ongoing formation. It is appropriate to review the formative process of each Circumscription, mainly with regard to ongoing formation. As we saw in the *2nd International Seminar on Formation*, if today there is a crisis in formation, this is quite accentuated in the perpetually professed. In this regard, Msgr. Carballo, Secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, said: «*We generally start in our Ratio Formationis with formation in aspirantship, then in postulanship, then in the novitiate, then the one for the temporary vows and then if time remains, formation for the perpetually professed. No, the schema should be reversed, and I ask you that if in some Chapter you will have to review your Ratio, please reverse the schema and start from the ongoing formation*»¹³.

d) Formation of formators. We note that in various Circumscriptions of the Congregation the weakest aspect in ongoing formation is the lack of formators with adequate preparation to carry out this apostolic service. It is interesting to verify to what extent the Circumscriptions, especially after the *2nd International Seminar on Formation*, had the foresight to send Paulines to prepare themselves in the formative field (in their own territory or abroad).

e) Abandonment. Carefully observe the reasons for the abandonment of juniors and recently ordained priests: this is a sad reality that still continues and that is a “common disease” in many other religious institutes. In some of our Circumscriptions this “bleeding” is considerable. It is about a large number of already consecrated

¹³ *2nd International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*, p. 55.

persons who ask to leave and/or who are invited to leave the community. It is a problem that continually awaits a response from the Congregation.

f) Resumption of the Course of Preparation for Perpetual Profession and the International Novitiate. Considering the positive aspects already expressed, the expiring General Government has launched the Novitiate and the Course of Preparation for Perpetual Profession for the year 2022-2023. Obviously, it will be up to the next General Government to make the decisions regarding the future. It was also thought of organizing an international novitiate for those who are English speaking. But, with the arrival of the pandemic in February 2020, this project was not carried out.

5. AREAS AND SERVICES OF THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT

5.1 Houses dependent on the General Government

The communities of Canonico Chiesa, Albano Laziale, Ariccia, Vatican and Sydney (Australia) depend directly on the General Government. Our institutional presence in Munich (Germany), which today has a Pauline, also depends on the General Government. Each dependent house has its own “mission”.

a) Canonico Chiesa Community. The confreres who serve the General Government and also the Paulines coming from our Circumscriptions studying in Roman universities or for the Course on the Charism of the Pauline Family belong to this community.

b) Ariccia Community. This community, made up of four Paulines, was renewed in its members in 2016. It has the task of welcoming all those who wish to experience particular events: spiritual exercises, General Chapters, meetings, conferences, etc. The brother priests who live in this community also assume the chaplaincies of the communities of the Pauline Family of the Castelli Romani. Until now, every year the House has welcomed, during the first

week of Lent, since 2014 (except 2021 and 2022), Pope Francis and the Roman Curia for spiritual exercises.

Let us remember that the IX General Chapter had authorized the General Government to sell the House, if necessary, to solve the problem of the economic deficit. This hypothesis was rejected because, thanks to the current management, and despite the health crisis, since 2018 the House of Ariccia has been self-sufficient in everything, even for ordinary maintenance work and does not need to receive subsidies from the General Government.

c) Albano Laziale Community. The international Novitiate takes place in this community, and in the past, it has welcomed the juniors for the Course of Preparation for Perpetual Profession. The members of this community, all three priests, also serve as chaplains to the communities of the Pauline Family in the Albano Laziale area.

d) Vatican Community. Three confreres reside in this community: the Procurator General and two brother Disciples who work in the Vatican telephone sector. Brother Domenico Cosenza has recently been appointed Head of Vatican telephone services to replace Brother Andrea Mellini who, after finishing his working period, was transferred to the Province of Italy. Economically, the Community is self-sufficient and contributes to the Pauline fund.

e) Sydney Community. Community of Sydney. Seven confreres from five different nations are part of this community. On 11 January 2019, it was established as a House dependent on the General Government, at the same time as the abolition of the canonical state of the Region of Australia. On that same occasion, a Statute was approved which includes the different areas of Pauline life. In addition to the Pauline presence in Sydney, in Brisbane we have a bookshop run by a layman and an apartment, now for rent. The Community is economically self-sufficient and contributes to the Pauline fund. The Community has a regular life with its own community-apostolic project. The Delegate regularly sends information on the life of the Community to the General Government.

5.2 Secretariat

The General Secretariat of the Congregation not only implements the decisions of the General Government, and updates the various institutional data, but is the first place of interconnection between the General Government and the Circumscriptions and vice versa. It is in this context that all its actions are to be understood. Thus, every document, every act is to be recognized at the service of communication between the members and a sign of communion to live our Pauline mission to the full.

The X General Chapter did not deal with specific points about this service. What the Secretariat has achieved, therefore, belongs to a custom that is specified by the *Constitutions and Directory*, as well as by the *Service of Authority. Manual*. On the other hand, during these last seven years of General Government, the General Secretariat, responding to new needs a little at a time and looking at the different needs of the whole Congregation and of the individual Circumscriptions, has started processes that will have a positive impact on our mission.

To make the relationship with the individual Circumscription Secretaries more effective and facilitate the different aspects with each of them, the *Vademecum for the Circumscription Secretary of the Society of Saint Paul* has been drawn up, in two versions: that of October 2018 (*ad experimentum*) and the final version published in October 2019, with additions and further clarifications. This document was translated into English and Spanish and sent to all the Circumscription Secretaries of the Congregation. On the other hand, for greater efficiency of the Secretariat, the figure of the secretarial Clerk was joined to the Secretary General.

5.2.1 Historical Archive

In 2017, the General Government began a reflection on the historical and current Archives, prompted by a recommendation from the Interchapter, arriving at the conclusion that it was necessary to

safeguard and reorganize the many documents inherited from the history of the Congregation in a new way.

A Commission was thus appointed to address the various aspects of this reorganization. Under the coordination of the General Secretariat, and seeking the help of a company specialized in this area, a process of reordering the material present in the current and historical Archives was initiated. Once the renewal plan was made, Brother Luigi Bofelli, General Councillor, was appointed Head of the Historical Archive, flanked by a qualified archivist with a regular contract from 1 April 2021.

5.2.2 Prospects for the future

Among the suggestions, from the point of view of the General Secretariat, what emerges as indispensable is the need for greater knowledge of the duties of the Circumscription Secretary. In fact, the *Vademecum* comes to the aid of this need. However, due to the continuous and “natural” changes of the confreres in charge of this service, a lot of knowledge, and above all the different ways of working, are lost, thus making the work of the Circumscription Secretary and consequently of the Secretary General cumbersome, with the consequent loss of time, waste of energy and deterioration of the service.

If on the one hand this phenomenon is constant and, therefore, repeats itself over the years, on the other, it seems that it is necessary to think about organizing personalized and periodic formative and informative meetings, especially with those who are starting this service for the first time. Each Circumscription has specific ways of operating, but the fundamental work at all levels must not be lost sight of. The suggestion, therefore, is to think about formative meetings. At the same time, these meetings can become an opportunity for the Secretary General to clarify or modify customs that, in fact, “weigh down” his service to the Congregation. In summary, it can be said that it is necessary to give continuity to this specific service.

5.3 Information service

In recent years, the *paulus.net* website has carried out its information function for the public (open area) and its institutional function for the Congregation (reserved area). It was the primary tool of official and informal communication. The site has gradually been enriched with contents, which for many Paulines are still to be discovered.

In addition to supporting the General Government with regard to institutional communication and the development of the *paulus.net* website, the *Information Service* took care of the renewal of the *alberione.org* website (together with the Pauline Family), the creation of the Alberione APP and the *Prayer Book of the Pauline Family* APP, the graphic production and all the logistics for the direct streaming of the events from 2015 to today. To be underscored are the intense graphic production for the different sectors (Center of Pauline Spirituality, General Secretariat, General Postulation...), of contents for the web (YouTube and social networks) and the contact with the different means of external communication for the regular publication of articles and news.

In the future, it would be necessary to invest more in this office, taking better advantage of all the possibilities that the digital environment offers us. Here are some suggestions: develop a public archive containing images, videos, audio, all linked to our general archive; create a list of all the “digital” initiatives of the Congregation; intensify activity in social networks; create a clear policy on the processing and use of personal data (legal obligation) and connect the activities of the *Information Service* with the desired Communication Observatory, regarding the production of multimedia content and the maintenance of websites.

5.4 Postulation

The Postulation is the area of our Institution and of the Pauline Family that deals with the process of beatification and canonization of their members. In this sense, it ‘reminds’ all of us that holiness is the meaning of our Pauline life.

On 6 November 2018, Fr Domenico Soliman was appointed Postulator, replacing Fr José Antonio Pérez. On 3 September 2019, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints accepted the request of the Superiors General of the Pauline Family to officially name the “Postulator General” as the “General Postulator of the Pauline Family”, also defining the procedure for the future appointment of the Postulator himself.

On the mandate of the Superiors General of the Pauline Family, together with our Procurator General, the Postulator collaborated in the request to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments to consider the liturgical memorial of Saint Paul VI obligatory for the Pauline Family, request granted by decree of 3 February 2020.

In January 2020, the General Government decided that the headquarters of the General Postulation of the Pauline Family be located on the second floor of the Generalate, near the rooms of Blessed James Alberione and the Don Alberione Museum. With this choice, we wanted to enhance this space so that it becomes more and more a place of animation of the life and mission of our Founder. The documentation of the Postulation has therefore found a new arrangement, as well as the various relics of our blessed and venerable, now contained in new cases.

5.4.1 Our “saints”

At the conclusion of the X General Chapter, the Assembly formulated recommendations and, among these, the third, addressed to all Paulines, underlined the importance of enhancing in one’s life and in the mission the presence of the Pauline “saints” as models and intercessors, an invitation to know them and to make them known to the people of God. It is, in synthesis, what also the general Postulation of the Pauline Family, with its specific role, is committed to achieving.

With reference to the Blessed, Venerable and Servants of God of the Pauline Family, we can say that there are no particular news regarding the canonical process. At the same time, however, two figures in particular should be remembered. The first is Venerable Father Bernardo Antonini, a member of the Jesus Priest Institute, proclaimed as such by Pope Francis on 21 December 2020. The cause was promoted by the Diocese of Verona. We must also remember the beginning of the beatification process of the Servant of God Antonietta Guadalupi, *Annunziata*, originally from Brindisi and for a long time residing in Milan, committed to the National Cancer Institute. The diocesan phase of this process is expected to end next July.

We must then consider the spouses Domenica and Sergio Bernardini, Pauline Cooperators and Franciscan Tertiaries, venerable since 5 May 2015, also belonging to “Pauline holiness”. The cause was brought forward by the Capuchin Franciscans, also because two of their children were of this Order. They were Pauline Cooperators, first of all, for the gift to the Lord of five daughters to the Daughters of St Paul and then with the Promise.

5.4.2 Renovation of the Don Alberione Museum

On the occasion of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the birth of Blessed Alberione in heaven, the renovated and modernized “Don Alberione Museum” was inaugurated, located on the second floor of the Generalate. The inauguration took place on 26 November 2021, with the presence of Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, members of our communities and representatives of the General Governments of the Pauline Family.

5.5 Procurator General

Our Congregation maintains, in its Constitutions, the figure of the Procurator General and counts him among the Officials who «*assist the General Government in their respective roles*» (art. 207). The

Procurator General is assigned the task of looking after «*those matters that concern the Congregation and its members in their relations with the Apostolic See*» and of keeping the Superior General informed «*of all the acts of the Holy See that could concern the Congregation*» (art. 207.2).

Commenting on the dictates of the *Constitutions*, my predecessor, Father Silvio Sassi, referring to the “mens” common to all religious institutes, stated that the Procurator is «*the official representative of the Congregation to the Holy See who is, therefore, to deal with the various (Vatican) Dicasteries the problems and practices of the whole Congregation*».

The Procurator General, in the name of the Superior General and on the basis of his directives, is able to deal with sometimes complex and delicate problems concerning the relationship with the Holy See, including those that may arise with the ecclesiastical authorities of the Nations where our Institute is present.

The task of the Procurator General is also that of instructing the practices concerning fellow confreres in canonically problematic situations and especially those that necessarily involve the intervention of the Holy See. It is therefore required that the Procurator carry out, in full fidelity to the directives of the Superior General and his Council and with due confidentiality, the duties proper to his office, both those which bring him into contact with the heads of the Departments of the Roman Curia, both in carrying out the practices relating to the confreres.

5.6 General Bursar

There are two Priorities of the Final Document of the X General Chapter that concern the Bursar’s Office. The first, albeit indirectly, is expressed in this way: «***Act professionally and in accordance with the Pauline poverty in all the areas of our administration and to work in teams to safeguard transparency, co-responsibility and accuracy***» (Priority 4.1). Teamwork in the Office of the General Bur-

sar had this development: the General Bursar was joined by an Assistant to the General Bursar, to which was then added the presence of a General Councillor. This team, before the meeting of the General Council, meets with the Superior General, discussing the emerging and most significant issues of a given period.

The second request of the X General Chapter is expressed in Priority 4.2, where it is asked to «**improve the reciprocal communication and collaboration between the General Government with its Organizations and the Circumscriptions and also in view of a wise and careful management of the goods of the Congregation**» and to directly involve the Office of the General Bursar. Regarding the management of the assets of the Congregation, the Bursar's Office divided the documents and photographs in its possession by country and included them in a management program. Each year a summary table is sent to each circumscription Bursar's Office for updating the archive, but not all the Circumscriptions respond to this request.

Among the "recommendations", the X General Chapter asked the Superior General and his Government to resume and implement the operative line 4.1.1 of the IX General Chapter: «**The General Government is to establish new modalities of application of the Pauline Fund at the service of the Congregation**». The difficulty of some Circumscriptions regarding the Pauline Fund continues to be that of getting this sum to be received in a legal way, in compliance with local laws. Together with the Superiors of Circumscriptions, the Bursars and their advisers, also with online meetings, legal ways were sought to fulfil this congregational solidarity. Although legal solutions have been found, to this day we are waiting for the Circumscriptions to concretely initiate the most effective procedure.

In any case, we remember that collaboration with the Pauline Fund, more than an obligation, is a concrete form of solidarity between our Circumscriptions and the General Government. We know

that, with the advent of the pandemic due to Covid-19, the economy of all our Circumscriptions has been hit, for some heavily, to the point of asking for help. In addition to this aspect, the Pauline Fund has economically ensured the management of the International Novitiate in Albano Laziale, the Course of Preparation for Perpetual Profession, the Seminars on the Editors and Formation, the Interchapter and the renovation of the Don Alberione Museum.

With regard to the economy and administration, we recall the role of the SASP (*Società Apostolato San Paolo*), which is a society registered civilly as a commercial company s.r.l. (limited liability company), at the service of the General Government. To the SASP is entrusted the task of managing, registering and protecting the St Pauls brand all over the world. Furthermore, being a commercial company, it is authorized to carry out all those operations between the General Government and our Circumscriptions that require the issuance of an invoice.

5.6.1 Prospects for the future

With regard to the General Bursar's Office, it is certainly indispensable to continue looking for new ways of collaborating and applying the Pauline Fund at the service of the Congregation; monitor and always keep up-to-date the management program currently in use; try to enlist the professional help of a consultant regarding bank investments; to promote more and more contacts with the General Bursars of other Congregations for an exchange of experiences, especially those concerning the financing of the activities of the General Government by the individual Circumscriptions.

It would be appropriate to organize a formative meeting with the Bursars of the various Circumscriptions to share their management experience, to create a common mentality regarding the vision of congregational solidarity and to give directives regarding the Offices of the Bursars.

5.7 San Paolo Film

San Paolo Film is a religious foundation, established as a moral Body and, since its foundation, belongs to the General Government. At the moment, it does not have its own business, but enjoys a heritage consisting of films and short films of its own production, original sketches of films, other material of various kinds. Added to these are two properties, one located in Rome in via Portuense, now rented to a facility for the elderly, and one in Florence, where the Community of the Society of St Paul is currently located, and given to the Province of Italy on a loan. The Foundation, economically, has few expenses and the income derives from the rental of the building in Via Portuense.

The income allows the General Government to grant scholarships to some confreres of the Congregation, finance conferences and other promotional activities, at the discretion of the General Government, in the field of culture. In the last period, an agreement is being concluded with the *VatiVision* portal, a platform like that of Netflix, with the aim of enhancing and putting on the network a dozen films produced by *San Paolo Film*. For the future, great care and attention must be paid to the conservation and enhancement of the historical heritage of *San Paolo Film*.

6. THE PAULINE INSTITUTES OF SECULAR CONSECRATED LIFE

The Pauline Institutes of Secular Consecrated Life are “aggregated” to the Society of Saint Paul as its “proper work” and are an integral part of the Pauline Family, sharing its spirituality and mission.

Following the practice of the last General Governments, the Vicar General, in the last seven years, has been the Delegate of the Superior General for the four Pauline Institutes: *San Gabriele Arcangelo*, *Maria Santissima Annunziata*, *Gesù Sacerdote* and *Santa Famiglia*.

Regarding the number of members, these are the figures as of 31 December 2021: *Istituto San Gabriele Arcangelo*: 66 (10 novices, 14

temporary professed, 42 perpetually professed); *Istituto Maria Santissima Annunziata*: 535 (7 novices, 32 temporary professed, 496 perpetually professed); *Istituto Gesù Sacerdote*: 260 (24 novices, 40 temporary professed, 196 perpetually professed) and *Istituto Santa Famiglia*: 2,233 (113 novices, 224 temporary professed, 1,896 perpetually professed).

6.1 Updating of the Statutes

The X General Chapter established an operative guideline that says: «***The Superior General facilitate the updating of the Statutes of the PICSL***» (Operative guideline 5.2.1). In this regard, we recall that the first Statutes of the Institutes were approved by the Holy See in 1960, in which they are recognized as Associations aggregated to the Society of Saint Paul, even if, since the time of the Founder, they have always been treated as “Secular Institutes”.

According to the studies, we have done in this mandate, with the help of experts in Canon Law, in the event that the new Statutes were to be submitted to the approval of the Holy See, our “Aggregated Institutes” would be classified as “Third Order” or “Public Associations”, with the consequences that this entails. Therefore, it is not enough to make a simple update. It is necessary to make decisions regarding the very identity of these “Institutes”, in order to comply with current Canon Law or to continue as established by our Founder. We believe it is the task of this Chapter to define the path to take.

6.2 Activities carried out

In 2019, a central database was created to archive, research and update the data of the members of each Institute. Three international Meetings of the Aggregated Institutes have been scheduled in 2020. It was possible to carry out one in presential mode in the GEC Area, in the Generalate in Rome, from 25 to 27 February 2020, and another in online mode for Latin America, from 23 to 24 September 2021. It was not possible to implement that of the English-speaking

Area. Two online meetings were also held with the Superiors of Circumscriptions and the Delegates of the Institutes, the first on 23 March 2022 for the GEC Area, the second on 26 April 2022 for Latin America.

Beginning in 2020, the drafting of the *Common Formation Guidelines for all the Aggregated Institutes* was started, then approved by the General Government in November 2021. During 2021, the *Specific Rituals of each Pauline Institute* were renewed and approved by the General Government. It should be considered that the fraternal or canonical visits made to the Circumscriptions were important occasions for holding meetings with the Delegates and, where possible, also with the members of the Institutes present in that particular circumscription. A *Vademecum* was also created for the use of the Superiors of Circumscriptions and of the Delegates.

6.3 Prospects for the future

We believe that the most important thing is the definition of the identity of our Aggregated Institutes: Secular Institutes or Associations aggregated to the Society of Saint Paul. We believe that it is a matter for a General Chapter to indicate a path to follow in order to define this identity. This will allow us to update the Statutes, as requested by the X General Chapter, but above all to give a clear identity to the Institutes.

We have not yet perceived all the richness that the Institutes are for the Society of Saint Paul and what are the modalities of participation in some specific projects in our mission.

As for the Delegates of the Institutes, one wonders how long we will still have Paulines who can assume this responsibility, given the scarcity of members and the increased need in the various apostolic sectors and spheres of the Congregation. If this perspective is considered realistic, it will be necessary to rethink the presence of the Institutes in the area and also the methods of animation and accompaniment, making better use of the digital environment.

7. THE ASSOCIATION OF PAULINE COOPERATORS

As of 31 December 2021, we have 2,234 Pauline Cooperators in the world, directly linked to the Society of Saint Paul and who have the Vicar General as Delegate of the Superior General.

Among the activities carried out in this mandate – and in the perspective of the Operative Line of the X General Chapter that asked to «***promote the Association of Pauline Cooperators***» (Priority 5.2) – the realization of the International Convention, held in Rome from 18 to 27 May 2018, at the conclusion of the Centenary of the foundation of the Association, organized at the level of the Pauline Family, which had as its theme *Wake up the world with the light of the Gospel*. About 300 Cooperators participated, coming from 25 Nations, who refer to the Society of Saint Paul, the Daughters of Saint Paul, the Pious Disciples of the Divine Master and the Pastorelle.

After the Convention, the General Commission of the Cooperators, formed by the representatives of the General Governments of the Pauline Family, was charged with updating the Statute of the Cooperators, since it was *ad experimentum* from 2012 and then periodically extended. In the course of this last period, the awareness has grown that it would not be enough to make a few changes of word, but a profound update should be made, considering the changes that have taken place in society and in the Church, and the current civil and canonical laws. The drafting of the new Statute prepared by the Commission of the Pauline Family was handed over to the Superiors General for approval.

7.1 Prospects for the future

We believe that the Association of Pauline Cooperators is not yet understood in its importance by the Society of Saint Paul and by the entire Pauline Family. We recall that, founded in 1917, the Association expresses Father James Alberione's constant concern

to associate the laity above all with the apostolate of social communication¹⁴.

To date, in the Circumscriptions where the Cooperators are present, there is a Delegate who animates them, although often the Delegates have other responsibilities in the Circumscription. One wonders how long we will still have the possibility of having Delegates for the Cooperators, given the scarcity and increased need for Paulines in our various sectors and spheres.

The nominal distinctions between Pauline Cooperators, Friends of Jesus Master, Friends of the Good Shepherd should be re-evaluated. The name could be unified either under the heading of “Pauline Cooperators” or under the heading of “Cooperators of the Pauline Family”. This is a suggestion that arose from the 2018 international meeting that would bring back a substantial unity in the various expressions of the apostolate of the Pauline Family.

8. THE FEMININE CONGREGATIONS OF THE PAULINE FAMILY

The General Government has tried to do its part in walking in communion with the feminine Congregations of the Pauline Family, promoting or participating in various initiatives: the meetings of the Superiors General of the Pauline Family; the meetings of the General Governments of the Pauline Family and the meetings of the General Councillors in the various areas of competence.

In common agreement with the feminine Congregations, the following have been established for the whole Pauline Family: the celebration of the Centenary of the *Pact or Secret of Success* (2019); the *Year of Vocation of the Pauline Family* (25 January 2019 - 25 January 2020); the *Biblical Year of the Pauline Family* (26 November 2020 - 26 November 2021); the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Founder's “dies natalis”, with various activities. In this par-

¹⁴ *Special General Chapter of the Society of Saint Paul* [1969-1971], no. 321.

ticular commemoration, we have promoted in Rome: the transfer of the Founder's urn from the sub-crypt of the Shrine of Mary Queen the Apostles to the side altar of the Basilica, dedicated to Jesus the Master; the audience granted by Pope Francis to a representation of the Pauline Family on 25 November 2021; the inauguration of the Don Alberione Museum and the Eucharistic celebration on 26 November, presided over by Cardinal Marcello Semeraro.

In the annual meetings, from 2016 to 2022, of the General Governments of the Pauline Family, the following themes were developed: *Evangelii Gaudium challenges the Pauline Family – fraternal life* (2016); *Evangelium Gaudium challenges the Pauline Family. In communion for the mission: pastoral action* (2017); *Evangelium Gaudium challenges the Pauline Family: the challenges of the family and the protection of creation* (2018); *The Young, faith and vocational discernment. Challenges for the Pauline Family* (2019); *the Laity in the Pauline Family for the Mission: the Pauline Cooperators* (2020). In 2021 and 2022, due to the pandemic, the meetings were held online: *The laity in the Pauline Family for the mission: challenges to evangelization in a time of pandemic* (2021) and *The Family challenges the Pauline Family* (2022).

Looking to the future, we believe it is important to continue the dialogue and explore the possibility of making projects together, in the field of Pauline Spirituality, Vocation Ministry, Formation and the Apostolate. If in normal times collaboration is fundamental, much more in this time, given the decrease in the number of members (in all the institutions of the Pauline Family) and also of the consequences of the pandemic.

Finally, we cannot forget that the Society of Saint Paul is called to carry out its mission of “doing all for the Gospel” in communion with the whole Pauline Family – the great heredity of the Pauline charism – as an “altrice”, in the sense given by our Founder. In this context, the X General Chapter had asked that «**The General Government promote with pertinent indications a concrete apostolic collabora-**

tion with the Pauline Family in every Circumscription» (Operative guideline 5.1.1). Concrete collaboration at the level of the Family is still a real challenge, mainly with regard to the apostolate, because, operationally, management and activities depend very much on the individual Circumscriptions. Furthermore, it does not arise only from the good will of the Society of Saint Paul, but also from the opening of the other institutions to walk in synodality.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this report, we can affirm that certainly there are many other details regarding the path taken by the General Government in its service of animation of our Congregation in the last seven years, and that, in order not to lengthen this report too much, have not been reported here, but can be found in the individual reports by area, available in the Secretariat of the General Chapter.

We hope that the data and reflections presented here, as well as the information and experiences that each of the Capitulars brings with them, regarding their own Circumscription, will help us to have a broad and realistic picture of our Congregation, necessary to evaluate its past and to plan its future.

The theme of this Chapter rightly motivates us to look at the future with courage, with the invitation to allow ourselves to be transformed, renewing our way of thinking, but not on the basis of what the “world” offers us (Rom 12:2) but, we can say, in the light of the Gospel and the Pauline charism. In this regard, in fact, considering the changes that the present times require of us, especially in the Church and in consecrated life, as well as in the field of communication, we note that there are many aspects of our “Pauline life” to be reviewed, including our own norms, so that they can respond more adequately to the reality of our time.

On this aspect, it is appropriate to make a reference, albeit brief, to the revision of our *Constitutions and Directory*, carried out by the previous General Government to respond to a capitular request. The draft of the revised edition was presented at the Interchapter in the Philippines in 2013, but for various reasons this work was blocked. The General Government which is now expiring, following the indications of the X General Chapter (Operative Line 4.1.1), has assessed that this final drafting does not distort the current legislation in its structure, given that it has remained substantially unchanged, except for some reformulations of language and other practical adjustments. It therefore concluded that an update of words or expressions is not enough to justify this revision.

We have deemed it appropriate to have a longer period of maturation, during which to make a more in-depth study on the changes that are affecting the world and people, the culture of communication, the Church, consecrated life, etc. The two international Seminars (on apostolate and on formation), which were organized in this mandate, were initiatives that sought some deepening and response to these challenges. We think it is up to this General Chapter to say something about it.

Finally, looking at our history, it is possible to glimpse lights and shadows in our path. For our part, we have tried to do the best despite our limitations. Now, the XI General Chapter has the task of projecting the “Pauline Editor” – communicator apostle and consecrated person – towards the future, considering the difficult historical period in which we live in the post-pandemic (which has caused the increase in poverty and of the marginalized in the world) and with many other situations of hardship, including conflicts in different nations (including the war in Ukraine) with its serious effects, the growth of the loss of religious sense in some realities or of a religiosity without commitment, with the socio-environmental crisis, the bewilderment in human relationships and the consequent political polarizations, etc.

We believe that we will not lack the light of the Spirit to illuminate the shadows of our path and to give us the strength necessary to be, in today's world, true prophets of hope, of the hope that springs from the Passover of the Lord who tells us: "*Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, so I send you!*" (Jn 20:21).

May Mary, our Mother, Teacher and Queen, be beside us in this important moment of reflection and planning, helping us to live and announce the joy of the Gospel, in the constant commitment to be St Paul alive today, in creative fidelity to our Founded, Blessed James Alberione.

This report was unanimously approved at the meeting of the General Council on 10-11 May 2022.

Rome, 30 April 2022

The Superior General and the Councillors General

PROPHETS AND ARTISANS OF COMMUNION IN THE LIGHT OF PAUL

*“I will not dare to speak of anything
except what Christ has accomplished through me,
to lead all nations to obedience of faith
by word and by deed,
by the power of signs and wonders,
by the Spirit of God” (Rm 15:18-19)*

It is no easy task to propose to the Paulines a reflection on the challenges of our mission, considering the *Instrumentum laboris* of this Chapter in the light of the life and mission of the Apostle Paul. I have been asked to bear in mind the first nucleus of the *Instrumentum*, on the charismatic roots of our being Pauline. From there, it is evident the challenges related to spirituality in the experience of our consecration in view of overcoming individualism and active mentality markedly entrepreneurial.

My word is not new, and this is not a “scientific” approach, but much more experiential, from the point of view of a Pauline with limited knowledge of Paul and Alberione. This reflection will seek to revisit some aspects or moments of Paul’s life that may enlighten us, a look at who was an apostle precisely because he let himself to be transformed by the Master and becomes our model of following Jesus.

I propose, without great pretensions, to follow just some aspects of Paul’s life that can serve as inspiration for a serene, realistic and, at the same time, confident look at the decisions that this Chapter should take for the Congregation.

1. An apostle contrary to “likes” and “followers”

Our vision of Paul owes much to the Lucan Acts. It is good that it should be so, for Luke was one of the collaborators “to save” Paul in the troubled context of early Judaism and Christianity. Acts presents Paul to us almost like a superhero, a tireless protagonist who even prisons cells were not able to stop. But if for the Pauline dynamism “the Word is not chained” (cf. 2 Tim 2:9), this was due to internal and external processes in the experience of the Apostle, dictated by an uncompromising personality, even in the face of apparent failures, and by the help of true collaborators. It makes all sense that the narrative of Acts has every meaning, therefore, to the model of the apostle-disciple of Jesus: a transformed persecutor, who suffers tribulations, appears in different Roman courts as a consequence of the proclamation of the gospel, just like the Lord Jesus.

A quick glance at the second letter to Timothy, known as Paul’s spiritual testament, allows us to imagine the sentiments of the apostle after long years dedicated to mission: “all those in Asia deserted me, among them Phygelus and Hermogenes” (2 Tim 1:15); “Try to join me soon, for Demas abandoned me, enamoured of the present world. He went to Thessalonica, Crescent to Galicia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke is the only one with me. Get Mark and bring him with you... Alexander, the coppersmith, did me a great deal of harm... In my first defence before the tribunal, no one stayed beside me, but all deserted me (2 Tm 4:9-11,14,16). The experience of misunderstanding and abandonment of the Master in Gethsemane is the experience lived by Paul in Rome: persecuted by “false brothers” contrary to the gospel of freedom, he experiences abandonment, but not necessarily failure, for Paul is aware of bearing in his body the marks of the Crucified One. “The Lord has indeed been at my side and has given me strength, so that through me the message may be fully proclaimed and heard by all nations” (2 Tim 4:17).

Despondency may be one of our feelings today, but certainly not the greatest. To look upon Paul as one who did not let himself be overwhelmed by apparent failures can be enlightening, by reading the portrait of our reality as it appears in the *Instrumentum laboris*. Obviously no one projects failure, and our projects, most of all the apostolic ones (if they exist), tend to be quite optimistic, not to say unrealistic in some respects. We project success in our mission, but the perspective of incomprehension, tribulation and the cross will always be before us: not certainly for us to resign, but to give us a sound and realistic rule to measure our commitment as apostles like “co-workers” of our father Saint Paul, with hope. After all, “who will separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom 8:35).

We have something *to do*, a mission to fulfil, but for such we need *to be* of one specific mold, the imitation of Paul. This leads us to ask ourselves: are our failures in the road of tribulations a consequence of a risky mission and rooted in the Gospel values, or are they more related to inertia, disengagement, disunity and lack of direction? Could we affirm today, like Paul, that we are working harder for the Gospel than others (cf. 1 Cor 15:10)?

Another aspect which can be enlightening, in these times of intransigence and intensification of positions, is to look at Paul considering the various Judaic contexts and the diverse contexts of the primitive movement of Jesus¹. His “side”, positions and choices certainly have something to tell us, since we are always responsible for our actions and our omissions.

¹ Paul’s successes and failures could be evaluated, e.g. by studying the communities of Ephesus at the end of the first century A.D. Ephesus, as expression of the Christianity of Asia Minor of the first century AD, “contained the greatest diversity of religious expressions and forms of community organization of all Christianity of the 1st century.”(Paulo Nogueira, *Religião e poder no cristianismo primitivo*, Paulus, São Paulo, 2020, p. 109). Interestingly, the author’s analysis of how Acts 18-19, a later generation, re-reads Paul’s activity, and how pastoral letters seek to revive Paul’s image and compromise living with the Paulin tradition, a fragile minority in society that articulated in search of survival (op. cit., pp. 109-137).

2. Paul, apocalyptic and prophetic

Alberione, during the famous night that divides the century, makes us think about Paul on his way to Damascus. Both had mystical experiences of revelation, of *apocalypsis*. Four hours of prayer and a light coming from the Host were the decisive apocalypse for Alberione, which directs him to prepare himself to do something for the people of the new century. Paul talked less about his experiences, much less even about the content of revelation he experienced. Jesus himself commissioned him to be the apostle among the nations. In fact, Paul presents his Damascus experience in Gal 1:15-16 as a prophetic call in the backbone of the vocation of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah (Is 49:1-7 and Jer 1:5): from maternal womb God had already separated him to be his messenger among the nations. Alberione has the same awareness of his call, that the Gospel might reach concrete people of the new century, “the masses”, in the language of his day.

An apocalyptic mind is concerned about the new world to come, the world of the lordship of God that will supplant the present order. However, in Paul as well as in Alberione, a new reality challenges us to act in the present, to direct the recent schemes according to the new order desired by God. And here the prophetic begins to make sense. Just think about the suffering of Paul (which in the apocalyptic language he faces as “tribulations”) give account of his awareness that he had in him: the duty, the necessity imposed upon him, the inevitability (1 Cor 9:16) of preparing all nations for the definitive coming of the Crucified-Risen One, whom he encountered after all the process of formation in the pharisaic zealotness². This new reality certainly brought ethical implications in the present. For

² As to the aspect of “zeal”, most likely Paul did not belong to the zealots' movement, who sought to achieve a pure and holy land, free from the presence of pagan authorities and their troops. Cf. C. J. den Heyer, *Paulo, um homem de dois mundos*, Paulus, São Paulo, 2008, pp. 30-31. The fact is that Paul the Pharisee was not a moderate and directed his zeal against a group of followers of Jesus who were “staining” Judaism.

this, Alberione felt the need to prepare himself to do something... And how much important the access that Alberione had for Catholic thinkers involved in social issues which opened his perspectives, among them Toniolo who deserves emphasis at the beginning of *Abundantes Divitiae* (13-24), being exclusively important for the “apocalyptic” experience of the “night of light” for a particular mission of the Pauline Family³.

Certainly, the apocalyptic language does not account to explain the world, however it helps us to think of the importance of the transcending mystical and visionary dimension. Since only such experience of intimacy with God that reveals his *mysterium* or his *plan* to us, to the society and to the world, and he projects to us a new reality essentially new, which can open us to grace and transform us apostles. Transforming experiences of intimacy with God marked Paul and Alberione and allowed them to continue obstinately in the mission despite all difficulties. Such experiences are a legacy for us, challenging us about the certainties that lead us in the mission.

As to the prophetic dimension, without it our mission would not be apostolate, for the Gospel that is the person of Jesus himself and his Good News for the poor necessarily implies a transformation of social relations and the option for the minority, so that all may truly have his dignity known and saved. Something which Father Valdir Jose de Castro, Superior General, expressed in these terms: “We cannot be accomplices of the “globalization of indifference”, rather we should always be impelled to take the Gospel, with prophetic voice, through our apostolate, where it is necessary, and not only to diffuse the Gospel, but also to “deny” injustices and realities which do not correspond to this purpose⁴. The document of our *Editorial*

³ For the vocational experience of Fr Alberione in its context, I recommend reading the detailed Introduction of the *Donec formetur Christus in vobis* written by Fr Antonio F. da Silva in 2001 (DF).

⁴ Fr Valdir José de Castro, The Pauline Editor: artisan of communion in a connected world. *Annual Letter of the Superior General to the Confreres of the Society of St Paul*, paragraph no. 4, 2021.

Guidelines, in fact, employs five times the terms “prophecy” and “prophetic”⁵.

The prophetic dimension of our mission demands above all “change of mentality” which is the biblical theme of this General Chapter. To break mental schemes is certainly one of the most difficult things. Nonetheless if we want renewal, it is necessary and essentially linked to the prophetic and transforming dimension of our mission which establishes and proposes new relations according to the logic of the Gospel, and it is not connected to instruments (“new” they may be today, but tomorrow will no longer be and the following day will be obsolete) which by themselves do not guarantee other than a presence “in the Web”, possibly illusionary, and perhaps a mere pious and devotional presence with less relevance, without something really transforming to offer which touches concretely the lives of people and communities in helping them overcome their conflicts beside a resigned religiosity.

A frank and timely inquiry which we can ask ourselves today is whether our editorial activities and our formative offer lean towards an incarnate Gospel in social issues, with the courage of denial and critical sense, and the proactivity of the proclamation of Good News to the poor, or are we well enough in the way of accommodating a “pasteurized” proclamation with a religious message which does not provoke critical sense and transformation of relations.⁶ Or, as proposed in terms of the Pauline exhortation (parênese) of Rm 12:16: we are concretely

⁵ *Editorial Guidelines: Identity, Content and Interlocutors of the Pauline Apostolate, 2008, in paragraphs nos. 1.1, 4.3, 5.3, 6.2 and 7.1.*

⁶ The reactionary groups have sequestered the expression “ideology” to refer to what they do not accept, concealing with a fine veneer of gospel attitudes diametrically opposed to the gospel, such as intolerance, sectarianism and violence. The challenge of welcoming people respecting their sexual condition becomes “gender ideology”, the challenge of sharing the goods of life becomes “communist ideology” etc. In the latter case, it betrays the Christian reality of “communion” with the concept of “communism”, it is the famous quote of Hélder Câmara, Brazilian bishop of the times of the military dictatorship: “When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint; when I ask why they are poor, they call me a communist”. The question is how each Pauline and as a Congregation, we place ourselves before these issues.

“making a way for the oppressed”⁷ or simply sacramentalizing or resigning ourselves to injustices, only heralds to the service of a religiosity disconnected to an authentically Christian ethics?⁸

Father James Alberione teaches us that “An apostle is the one who brings God in his soul and radiates him to those around him. An apostle is a saint that gathers treasures and communicates them exceedingly to all. An apostle has a heart accessible by the love of God and by men and women and does not constrict and suffocate anyone he feels and thinks.”⁹ To have a heart accessible by the love of God and by people, however, is to feel and make choices for God and for concrete people, for more than offering contents, it involves communicating an experience that transforms and challenges us, it is about offering who we are, knowing how to build relationships: in short, to be bear witness to a Person, who, for us, is the Truth. The *Editorial Guidelines* indicate that every Pauline “is called to be an instrument of evangelization himself and to communicate the Gospel with all means and in all circumstances, with *enthusiasm, creativity, professionalism, dedication, and coherence*.”¹⁰ Each of the five characteristics, emerged during the Second International Seminar of Pauline Editors in 2018, deserves reflection which brings challenges and implications.

Looking at our founder, who concerned himself with social issues and proposed the “Pastoral height of Paul”, which can be translated but cannot be exhausted in the expression “to talk

⁷ “Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation” (Rom 12:16)

⁸ Pope Pius XI had lamented that the biggest scandal of the 19th century was that the Church had lost the working class. It is worth to inquire about who the Church lost or is losing in the next and current century, thinking specifically of the poor who are exploited by neo-Pentecostal groups, the women to whom protagonism is recognized very slowly, in the clerical clergy themselves, which goes in a way contrary to the promotion of the protagonism of the “laity”. Pope Francis said in his Message on 4 February 2017: “A serious form of poverty in a civilization is no longer being able to see its poor, who are first discarded and then hidden”.

⁹ *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, IV, 278, cit. partly *Instrumentum laboris* 1.1.

¹⁰ *Editorial lines: Identity, Content and Interlocutors of the Pauline Apostolate*, 2.3, 2008. *Emphasis mine*.

about everything in a Christian way”; looking at Paul’s mission and his apostolic activities among the nations; and finally looking at our presence in the world, it is necessary to ask about the real incidence of our apostolic actions in concrete realities where we live and where we desire to be “St Paul alive today”. It is with regret to hear, like I already heard, that if Paulines were not present, their absence would be felt either.

It is undoubtedly necessary, most of all for us Paulines, an exercise to free Paul of various chains which still today have imprisoned him, like theological categories that flirt with a disguised Docetism, negating the body and embodiment of the Gospel, invalidating the Good News and transforming it into something that does not touch concrete reality of people, as well as freeing Paul from approaches which transform him into an alienated social apocalyptic. As accustomed, it is just enough to think of Paul and the theme of slavery. Beside the fact that the reflection generally satisfies with higher theology, of liberation like “saving” for a new life, it tells that Paul was not interested in the theme of slavery. Some go beyond, saying that he knew that nothing could make all the slavery system explode. The fact that he was not interested in the theme is dismissed by the note to Philemon, which brings profound social and ethical implications, other than theology. And even Paul was not interested in the theme, should we also not be interested when, two thousand years after, slavery should supposedly have been abolished but slave labour is a reality in all parts of the world?

Perhaps in order to get away from extremism, like what leads to paranoia of wanting perfect communities that never exist and will never exist (neither in the time of Paul nor in our time)¹¹ or what brings us to update the mission as a mere professional offer of an experience-witnessing which perhaps we do not have sufficiently

¹¹ Even Luke can “hide” in Acts, in his idealized image of the first Christian community, the crises of different experiences of following Jesus, of different groups that sought to respond differently to different questions that asked them.

embodied in us in order to offer to the world, to go back to the root may be the best way: to go radically to the Gospel itself, embodying the Crucified-Risen One who transformed and directed the life of Paul and who can make the same thing to our lives—the Gospel of the crucified body, identified with many bodies which today suffer unjustly and necessarily need to question us, to direct our mission, our apostolic projects, if that is, in some way, like Paul, we are really disposed to “carry in our body the marks of Jesus” (Gal 6:16). The *Editorial Guidelines* go back to this question numerous times, when we talk about forming relations, letting ourselves to be challenged. But forming relations for whom? Allowing ourselves to be challenged by what? The return to the root, to the experiential love like service and surrender to the people of God, would it not in any way a “refounding” of religious life that we talked about decades ago? They were not and not only a few critics of “insertion” of religious life in the thorny social questions, which would have twisted the essence of being a consecrated community. We run the risk of self-sufficiency and forget that we are consecrated for a sacred mission, and the holy is essentially the least of the brothers who suffer, which indeed is a eschatological criterion (cf. Mt 25:31-46)?

Prophetism has something to do with the concrete and courageous assumption of the proclamation of a truly transforming Gospel which goes into the opposite direction of wanting followers and “likes” in social media; it goes contrary to the forecast of marketing, for which the commitment with a religion based on the fear of God and in the theology of prosperity would only render those who know more about economic return, but at the cost of commercializing with the Word of God and probably betrayed its essence (cf. 2 Cor 2:17)¹². It is always good to remember, in fact, that even having

¹² In 2 Cor 2:14-17 Paul uses the image of the generals who enter Rome triumphantly after the battle, with prisoners who will probably be killed afterwards, and with perfumes with which they were acclaimed: perfume of life for the victors and of death for the vanquished. Paul and his companions consider themselves the good fragrance of Christ, a perfume of life for those who walk to salvation. These are the paradoxes of Paul: a prisoner

accepted help from the Philippian community while he was in Corinth,¹³ Paul never based his apostolate through the economic help of the community, but “he worked with his own hands”¹⁴.

The proclamation of the gospel of freedom, open to grace and committed to the new reality of the sons and daughters in the Spirit (cf. Rom 8), has constantly cost Paul the persecution of contrary currents that risk annulling the cross of Christ, a question on which Paul was uncompromising (the letter to the Galatians is an emphatic and indignant response in this sense). The prophetic character of our mission has to do with this necessary intransigence, which does not allow us to give up the essential values of the gospel, while, at the same time, keep us alert to commitments that aim more at our own survival (or hoarding of economic resources) and well-being rather than the proclamation of the gospel of freedom itself. The question is whether and to what extent we are willing to assume this and face this dimension of misunderstanding and failure to swim against the tide, against the neoliberal market of faith. It is worth remembering the Apostle who was proud of his sufferings, in the awareness of his fidelity to the Messiah: “If I must boast, I boast the things that show my weakness” (2 Cor 11:30), a phrase that fol-

of Christ, triumphant with him, but asking the question: “Who would be equal to such a mission?” and the answer: “We are not like many who do business with the Word of God (v. 17). The “trade” refers to the adulteration of products by merchants, indicating the adulteration or distortion of the gospel for their own profit. In our case, it is therefore the adulteration of the Pauline gospel of freedom and the will to make money from the Word of God.

¹³ “And when I was with you and in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my needs. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way... And what I do I will continue to do, in order to end this pretext of those who seek a pretext for being regarded as we are in the mission of which they boast. For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, who masquerade as apostles of Christ.” (2 Cor 11:9,12-13)

¹⁴ You know well that these very hands have served my needs and my companions (Acts 20:34); And we toil, working with our own hands (1 Corinthians 4:12); You recall, brothers, our toil and drudgery. Working night and day in order not to burden any of you (1 Thess 2:9); For you know how one must imitate us. For we did not act in a disorderly way among you, nor did we eat food received free from anyone. On the contrary, in toil and drudgery, night and day we worked, so as not to burden any of you (2 Thess 3:7-8)

lows the memory of all the sufferings he went through in 2 Cor 11:16-30. Easier than being co-imitators of Paul in the building of renewed communities in the culture of communication that transforms is the desire to follow the latest fashion or filler of social media. But for what, with what ecclesiology and with what model of social development for the planet?

Our Editorial Guidelines relate our prophetic mission to the very character of our consecration, and evoking *Evangelii Nuntiandi* that reminds us of the deep ties between “evangelization, human promotion, development, and liberation”: “Our editorial choices, in different scopes and areas, should manifest the prophetic dimension of our consecration, helping people to read the reality and confront current challenges, offering them criteria that enable them to make responsible and conscious choices. This requires us to be “editors who go forth”, with social sensitivity, innovative proposals and methods, aware of the deep ties between ‘evangelization, human promotion, development and liberation’”¹⁵.

3. Paul, the connected man and the network of collaborators

The *Instrumentum laboris* shows the portrait of our communities in need of witness and sense of community indeed. This is not novel and it appears in the last General Chapters, always with very similar words. A situation that is not confined to our Congregation, but is spread by religious life as a whole, marking a structural crisis. And if it can happen that those who most protest against the lack of the “community spirit” are those who are least concretely committed to being-in-community, since the community is each of its members, it is necessary to recognize that our community experience falls short and we are all aware of the need for personal commitment to shape and weave, as artisans, in our own community, the communion that we wish to witness to others. So as not

¹⁵ Editorial lines: Identity, Content and Interlocutors of the Pauline Apostolate, 6.2, 2008, citing *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 31.

to yield to the temptation to think that there is a magic solution in simply establishing lines of action and rules for the superiors of circumscription and coordinators of community, when the *conditio sine qua non* is the change of personal mind-set, which leads one to commit himself to be the first person, without influencing the change of oneself to the change of the other. It is important to continue echoing tirelessly, then, the words: “Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect (Rom 12:2).

In addressing community issues and conflicts, Paul did not merely draw attention to or encourage the community *ad intra*. Internal problems obviously need to be worked out, resolved or, when it is not, at least minimized. The Pauline exhortations had in essence to reach *ad extra* (even in the exhortations to inner communities), and perhaps such exhortations to look beyond help us to relativize our internal problems, sometimes inflated by the heat of discussions, dragged by resentments, perpetuated by the lack of merciful and supportive love without which there can be no true communion.

The late Fr José Comblin, in an article of 2001 that still remains relevant, wrote: “The religious should be much less concerned about themselves but much more concerned about the outside world. They should be much less reunited with each other but much more reunited with the people outside. What provokes the most criticism of the Religious Life, is this mania of always talking about themselves, about the problems of the Religious Life and its uncertainties. Some give the impression that their “I” is their first concern. What is expected of a religious is that he is not concerned with his religious life and above all that he never expresses this to the Christian people who have much more serious problems”¹⁶. It does not cease to be a provocation for us today, after decades talking

¹⁶ José Comblin, “Ser Igreja hoje: reflexões também para religiosos/as”, in *Convergência*, n. 339, jan./fev. 2001, p. 63.

about “refounding religious life” and when it is refuted that the primacy of mission reduced religious communities to houses of individualism reproducing an individualistic logic of the world... We always return to the theme of changing mind-set.

In relation to our apostolate, the question that could be asked is: Do our communities become what they are because our apostolate is narrow and short-sighted? (We do not have so much to occupy ourselves with, and so we create and fantasize internal problems and live in disunity.) Or is our apostolate what it is (without so many perspectives due to the lack of common projects, when each one has his “kingdom” to be occupied with) because we do not experience in the community the communion that we wish to propose to others? In fact, we already have the chicken-and-egg situation in front of us.

We enter, then, to the theme of relations in all spheres: one for *what* (the Pauline apostolate) and the other for *how* (the mental openness that characterized the life of Paul and Alberione), because the communitarian experience, the ability to establish relationships and be “connected” must be mirrored in our mission in a Pauline way, from openness and dialogue with the world in order to transform it.

Paul was a “connected” man, just as Alberione was. He was a man of relation and his first connection as an Apostle was with the Crucified-Risen Messiah who transformed his life. This awareness of being an apostle gave him the assurance of a protagonist: his mission was not in the shadow of any other apostle (cf. Gal 2:6-10). But even so Paul did not consider himself self-sufficient but obsessed with the same purposes throughout the mission, for the true protagonist, who directed him, was the Messiah. We can say that the Gospel of freedom, indeed, was Paul’s obsession. Suffice it to mention a few events to realize how Paul knew how to let himself be helped, and in this process, letting himself be questioned, he progressed and “strained forward” (Phil 3:13).

a. Paul's "conversion" is linked to a return, a return to mental openness of before, in the line of the master Gamaliel, whom Paul seems to have abandoned to the detriment of a more strictly "zealous" Pharisaic vision which he supported, for example, the stoning of Stephen (according to the narratives of Acts 5:34-39; 8:1-3; 9:1-2). Paul never actually quotes Master Gamaliel in his letters, and this is evidence of something. Paul on his way to Damascus is not a blank slate (*tabula rasa*), simply a container to be filled by the gospel: he is challenged to open himself up to a new reality, overcoming the closure of the zealous obedience he persecuted, reviewing conceptions and redirecting his own life. That is, a process of formation, Christ being formed in him and in the brethren until Christ lives in him and in the brethren: "Until Christ is formed in you" (Gal 4:19), "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20).

b. To allow oneself to be helped by others is to accept, for example, to be in the background for a year in the apprenticeship with Barnabas, who seeks him in Tarsus for what was undoubtedly a fundamental apprenticeship in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26). To be a protagonist means to recognize oneself also in need.

c. The consciousness of being an apostle by direct revelation from God does not mean for Paul to close himself to others; rather, it means to open himself with determination and coherence. In the case of the "notables of Jerusalem", even evangelizing in different fields and groups, Paul knows that a fortnight's conversation with Peter, an eyewitness of the actions and words of Jesus, would do him good and enlighten his mission (Gal 1:18). On the other hand, before the Judaizing waves that wanted to imprison the gospel of freedom and invalidate the cross of Christ, Paul shows the necessary courage to call Peter's attention in Antioch (Gal 2:11-14), accusing him of hypocrisy, as to the strength found in the Messiah, he bears the loss of support even of fellow Barnabas (and probably of the community of Antioch itself; in writing to the Romans, Paul was in search of a community of support for his mission to Spain). Paul has made it clear, however, that openness to others does not in any way

mean surrendering the principles of freedom that Jesus brought by the Cross and Resurrection, and in that sense it is not surprising that, for example, starting the Letter to the Galatians, he immediately sends two anathemas to those who preach another gospel (cf. Gal 1:8, 9).

d. The very narrative of Paul's "conversion" in Acts 9:1-20 shows how Paul is someone in need of help, from Ananias and the disciples of Damascus, to process his experience of revelation. He needs to be blind to be able to see again, to see in a different way. For this theme, remember also, in the letters, all practical requests for help, from the desire to have a collaborator helping around (2 Tm 4:9) even to having the cover back left in Troas (2 Tm 4:13).

Paul was the protagonist because he was aware of his needs, knew how to help himself and others. For "my grace is sufficient" (2 Cor 12:9) and the conviction of the gospel to be preached in practical relations of daily life came about by the creation and strengthening of communities among nations. Essentially, by creating ties. The Pauline apostolate is the fruit of a *revelation* (which gives the apocalyptic Paul a certainty) and at the same time of a *continuous learning* of the unfolding of such revelation, transmitting the mystery of new life in Christ (the gradual understanding of the implications of the gospel revealed to him).

One only has to look at chapter 16 of the letter to the Romans to get an idea of Paul's network of collaborators, how Paul related to them, demonstrating the affection and familiarity to each of the nearly thirty people he appoints. Greek, Roman, and Jewish names, which indicate his ability to work with diversity and establish relationships without giving up the gospel of freedom. In Romans 16, moreover, ten of the names cited are women, women who in the Pauline communities exercised important ministries and functions.

Using network of terrestrial and maritime travels, Paul's apostolate was with a network of connected collaborators, connecting in-

struments such as letters, tickets, and messengers sent personally, establishing connections between the Jewish and Gentile world for the new experience of following Jesus, the Crucified-Risen Messiah. And none of the tribulations, provoked above all by groups contrary to the gospel of freedom, although threatening and breaking some connections, managed to destroy the network as a whole. Like Paulines, we should not be afraid of losing some connections; indeed, losing some connections could represent true liberation, if our prism/proclamation is the gospel of freedom.

Paul's strong connections were chiefly due to his mentality and attitude as an apostle commissioned directly by the Messiah. Talking with *parrhesia*, admonish harshly, worry like a father, cuddle like a mother... Their firm Jewish formation and their mental openness to the Hellenistic world allowed themselves the freedom and authority necessary to meet those who, for the Judaizers, were almost prohibitively different: something that our recent documents' call of action on the "frontiers", or on "geographical and existential peripheries" to "create thought".

Paul's pastoral care required his creativity, versatility, and agility to answer different concrete questions of different communities at different times. Just think how, by developing in Romans so many of the themes dealt with in Galatians, he needs to admonish the Gentile-Christians in order to defend the Jewish-Christians who were being despised in Rome, while in Galatia he had to call the attention of the Judaizers who incite division, risking to nullify the cross of the Lord.

Looking at the many conflicts present in Pauline communities and Paul's pastoral attitudes to each of them, we can look at our communities and ask ourselves what and how he would exhort us today. A serene and hopeful gaze that allows us, like Paul then, to face problems and commit ourselves to overcoming divisions and everything that does not testify a new life in the Spirit and grace to the world. After all, how can we be artisans of communion and in what

way can we communicate the gospel by witnessing to the communion of new life in which the Messiah inserts us? How can we experience the love of Christ, that love from which “nothing can separate us” (cf. Rom 8:35-39), even in the worst tribulations? Do we bear witness to the way by being in the reality of grace with publications that navigate the Old Testament sea of the retributive mentality, the theology of prosperity?

It is worth asking ourselves, in this sense, how we are “situated in the various realities in which we find ourselves. With our apostolate, we establish what kind of relationships/connections, and with what ecclesial and social subjects are we dealing? These “partners”, “collaborators” or “interlocutors”, as we want to call them, count on us for what? Are we settled on explicitly religious ground? Even if so, our partnerships have in mind or want to propose a model of a Church, on which Pope Francis has pointed to be going forth, stripped, willing to get dirty with the thorny social issues, promoting the protagonism of the “laity”¹⁷, a Church returning to the essence of the gospel, or our mentality is more clericalist, usually closed or disinterested in relation to social issues?

Thinking about Paul and his network of collaborators working in the mission makes us think about how we are forming and how we are acting in the practical relationships of collaboration, beginning with ourselves, Paulines. Because it is not just about being a team player (and that would be a lot). It is necessary to work organically, attentive to the project and priority guidelines of the Circumscription and the Congregation, overcoming the constant temptation of individualism, of the enlightened Paulines who imagine themselves having the best answers to many challenges.

The biblical theme of our General Chapter speaks of “transforming” by “changing mentality”, not conforming to the schemes of this

¹⁷ The very designation “laity” (etymologically linked to the “people”) today sounds prejudiced, when related to ignorance, in opposition to the clergy who supposedly know everything.

world. As for Paul¹⁸, this is also our ministry or priestly office, to prepare all peoples for the new world of the Crucified and Risen One, and we will do so only by helping one another with common projects, and not as hermits and lonely martyrs of something we call apostolate. In an apostolate that is Pauline, all are committed to the same goal or direction, and we do not live dispersed in our personal kingdoms. A common project that everyone participates in, by the way, is the least we can say: “Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified (1 Cor 9:26-27).

4. Paul Alive Today

I then recall some of Paul’s exhortations and like to re-propose them to us today. Who knows how these exhortations help us to face the internal problem of lack of communitarian experience and allow us to look at mission that is truly apostolate, a Pauline apostolate, of openness, inclusion and dialogue with the world, the “different”, and with those we call “distant” (turning away ourselves from a self-referential point of view).

One of the premises for allowing ourselves to be challenged by the exhortations of our father Saint Paul is the exercise of getting him out of the prison in which he is still today, a victim of the history of “ecclesiastical domestication”¹⁹.

¹⁸ It is because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the nations in performing the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering up of the nations may be acceptable, sanctified by the holy Spirit (Rom 15:15-16)

¹⁹ Cf. S. Nogueira e J. Machado, *Lendo as cartas aos Coríntios: unidade, diversidade e autoridade apostólica na comunidade cristã*, Paulus, São Paulo, 2021, pp. 6-7. Notwithstanding all the opposition he faced in his own time, Paul became a giant in the Church Tradition. A position that earned him many contrasting approaches and polemics throughout the history of the Church, and many claims that Paul would be the authority behind certain dogmas and doctrines. Neil Elliott’s book, *Libertando Paulo*, and Ernst Käsemann’s assertion that “the history of the interpretation of Paul’s work is the history of the ecclesiastical domestication of the apostle”, represent the longing to find a more historical Paul and less imprisoned to theological concepts subsequent to the Apostle.

From Divisions to the Building up of Apostolic Communities

In addressing the problem of the divisions at Corinth, specifically regarding the Lord's Supper, Paul says that "there have to be factions among you in order that [also] those who are approved among you may become known" (1 Cor 11:19). We also run the risk of reproducing in our communities the "scheme of the present world", where the rich eat and the poor go hungry. Or, paraphrasing, where some have power and cling in such a way to a position or function, that they end up identifying their Pauline vocation with the exercise of commanding, often without collegiate spirit, relegating our confreres to passive obedience and/or sponsoring lay collaborators, to the detriment of our confreres who are sent to limbo and thrown away. On the other hand, how many have already left the Congregation and how many wish to be ostracized for having "lost" leadership and "power"? Would not the lack of union and communitarian experience, therefore, be related to the sick quest for power that fascinates and easily corrupts, which leads us living superficial relations based on interest?

Our recent documents on apostolate and formation speak of the importance of formation for teamwork and training for the corporate environment, but we realize that, well below this type of training, may be lacking among us the true joy of being together by simply sharing the same mission, in communities that are built with concrete relations of fraternity. For, in fact, the principle of community building is one of the basic criteria for Paul. In the same letter to the 1 Corinthians, speaking of charisms for the common good, Paul says: "Seek love and desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy" (1 Cor 14:1), repeating: "for the edification... that the assembly may be built... for the edification of the assembly" (1 Cor 14:3,5,12). To be artisans of communion is to discern constantly with this Pauline criterion, rejecting or relativizing what does not generate communion and what does not build community. Recreating community, in turn, always means returning to the source or the root, that is love trans-

lated concretely into service and fraternity; love which is the dynamic of “a better way” (1 Cor 12:31). The words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:19 indicate to us that the dynamics of community life is, finally, a daily construction that reveals, that manifests the authenticity of each one of its members in the face of concrete trials.

The challenge of synodality, recently launched by Pope Francis, confronts us to a daily *metanoia*, so that we do not reproduce among ourselves the logic of power that seduces and easily corrupts. This also involves the ability to delegate authority and be responsible in the exercise of service to the Congregation, breaking personalism and personal persecutions that bring so much harm to the mission. It implies recognizing in all brothers and sisters (even in the vagabonds) people who have received gifts of the Spirit for the common good of the one Body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12). Valuing personal gifts is fundamental to authentic community life, in order to also bear the weaknesses, closures, and limitations of our brother, when we consider ourselves strong, or counting on the help of the strong, when we stumble: “We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves; let each of us please our neighbour for the good, for building up... keeping in harmony with one another, an example of Jesus Christ (Rom 15:1-2, 5).

Training for teamwork as an obedient service is a demanding thing. Assuming fraternal relations, lives threatened by our bad examples, and also the bad examples of the young ones who, taking positions of responsibility, end up being more authoritarian than the predecessors who criticized, trying to hide their own insecurities in authoritarianism and in closing to the ideas and opinions of others. Not to mention superiors who, simply to gain sympathy, do not use *parrhesia*, turning on their own burden with a laxity that sharpens the characteristics of the “snowflake” generation. Paul’s words are always valid: “Let each one examine his own conduct...” (Gal 6:4).

Let us also recall Paul's exhortation in Rom 12:16: "Have the same sentiments for one another, without pretensions of greatness, but walking with the oppressed". The invitation to look beyond our community and "make way with the oppressed", the smallest of the kingdom, should prompt at least two things:

1. Relativize our community problems to direct our energies to the holy people of God whom we are called to serve in the culture of communication. People who, indeed, carry heavy concrete burdens, humiliated in dignity and subdued in rights, while we, in our communities, with neuroses and imaginary problems, say solidarity to the Hebrews being in the palace of the pharaoh, or making vows of poverty unconcerned about the finances that the institution guarantees us.

2. Allow the logic of service to be a reality in our communities in order to reap "the fruit of the Spirit": "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faith, humility and self-control" (Gal 5:22-23). Something which, in the letter to the Ephesians, indicates how to live according to the dignity of the vocation received: "I ask you to behave in accordance with the dignity of the vocation to which you have been called: with all humility and kindness, with patience, bearing with one another in love and seeking to maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph 4:1-3).

"To endure in love", in Portuguese and in Italian "soportare", has both the sense of "to support", "to help", and "to tolerate", the need to suffer with the other or for the other, for those who know how to preserve some essential bonds of unity and communion. But it may be comforting to know that not only others can be a burden to us, but we could also be a burden to them, and that the exhortation "bear one another's burden" of Gal 6:2 does not ask us for a resigned suffering, but the proactivity of going in search of one's brother and never giving up on him, especially since many conflicts in relationships are simply unresolved needs, and the one who defames and creates problems wants attention only.

We then return to the theme of Paul's network of collaborators. Do we too feel the "burning desire" to be with our brothers and sisters and to strive for them? "As for us, brothers, for a time we have been apart from you, but not from our hearts, and we have redoubled our efforts for the ardent desire to see you again" (1 Thess 2:17; cf. also 1 Cor 16:5.7; 1 Tim 3:14). There is certainly a path of personal commitment to be made, in the sense of experiencing the joy of being together in the community, giving one's life for the people of God with our specific apostolate.

Renewed Communities for an Ever-Present Mission

Diarmuid O'Murchu²⁰ invites us to recognize that the present religious life is dying. According to him, no hero will save religious life, and the future lies only in courageous and collaborative communities. Many of Comblin's fundamental ideas, from decades ago, are in fact reassumed by Diarmuid: religious life needs to be recreated, passing from a more functional ministry and related to rigid schemes with rules already given by the institution, for the acknowledgment of a return to the origins, the root or the source of the gospel and the congregational charism ("in the beginning it was not so...", Mt 19:8), related to the awareness of the need to serve the prophetic call of religious life in the world, as well as the courage, audacity and prophetic imagination to respond to the signs of the times for the emergence of a renewed religious life.

The emphasis placed on mission in recent decades has been criticized for having neglected the witnessing aspect of the religious community. And we see ourselves today, as the Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han²¹ says, unable to resist, in the "burnout society", in

²⁰ Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Religious Life in the 21st Century: The Prospect of Refounding*, Orbis Books, New York, 2016.

²¹ Cf. Interview at *El País* on October 9, 2021: <https://brasil.elpais.com/cultura/2021-10-09/byung-chul-han-o-celular-e-um-instrumento-de-dominacao-age-como-um-rosario.html>, accessed on 02.12.2021.

a neoliberal system that does not oppress freedom but exploits it, not repressive but seductive, making complete domination the moment it presents itself as freedom.

So, for a serene look to the future, in the light of the Apostle Paul, it is essential to return to the radicality of the Gospel, to the very person of the Risen-Crucified Master, in the central experience of love, translated into relations of authentic freedom. Such a challenge, rather than looking at a distant and highly idealized scenario, implies assuming a mentality that is always renewed, because the way of the Spirit, the way of freedom and grace, always throws out. And the question remains how to preserve the “within”, which unites us and allows us to work together on the same mission for the transformation of the “common home” with and in communication.

To return to our father Saint Paul, just by way of example, I propose the episode of Philemon and Onesimus, to show that, in the face of the challenges, we will always have the great figure of the Apostle pointing out ways.

The note to Philemon, in fact, reveals to us all the wisdom and strategy of Paul to pursue his goals. In the case of the slave Onesimus, Paul shows freedom from the Mosaic Law, which forbade returning a fugitive slave (Dt 23:16-17). He disrespects it, to follow the Roman law, but he does it because it has clearly its objective, superior to both laws: by the Mosaic Law, he could stay with the slave, with the condition of not oppressing him; by Roman law, he has to return the runaway slave and the owner would have the losses repaid. What Paul wanted was something beyond, in full harmony with the gospel of freedom: in Christ, the only Lord, we are all brothers, and essentially this is what Paul asks Philemon: to receive the slave as a beloved brother. And Paul’s request goes on with the promise to compensate for any damages, as Roman law required. With confidence, Paul is willing to take a risk. Although we do not know whether Paul’s request succeeded or not, the epi-

sode makes us think about how we deal with laws and rules in all areas, with the institutionalized, about how we are able to “navigate” the “borders” (think of modern slavery) with discernment, wisdom, freedom, courage, and creativity, going beyond the “schemes of this world”.

This is what it is all about, if we want to recreate communities rooted in the gospel and faithful to our charism of being apostles in the culture of communication. And what does it mean to be *free, courageous and prophetic* in this “culture”, before the picture painted today as “burnout society”: narcissism and exhibitionism proliferating on social media, an obsession for oneself that causes others to disappear and the world becomes a reflection of one’s person; activism that is perhaps just a new kind of passivity; depression that are invalid in the internalized war of performance and spectacle society; the lack of rest and reflection that leads civilization to barbarism; the uneasiness that is silent instead of being heard?²²

Our path to being artisans of communion and prophetically proclaiming the gospel in the culture of communication depends largely on us, and can only be trodden by us. One will need to see, as already mentioned, with our interlocutors, with the understanding and acting of our role in relation to theirs (after all, far from the identity and mission, how Paulines *do* what many others *are already doing* or have been *doing* far better than what in our specificity we seek to *do*), with our ecclesiological view more adherent to the primitive Pauline domestic churches (valuing women of different charisms, fraternal edification, and respect for differences) rather than the institutional power schemes. Just think that while Pope Francis proposes a “Church which goes forth”, in Brazil, for example, in recent research and study²³, a “new clergy” is changing the pro-

²² Cf. Byung-Chul Han, *Sociedade do Cansaço*, Vozes, Petrópolis, 2010.

²³ Cf. Agenor Brighenti, *O novo rosto do clero: Perfil dos padres novos no Brasil*, Vozes, Petrópolis, 2021. Faced with the renewal of Vatican II and the contributions of the Church in Latin America, there have historically been four inconsistent models with the changes of

phetic for the therapeutic, the ethical for the aesthetic (cassocks and barrettes are overwhelming but lack the testimony of sobriety and the commitment to social transformation). Such realities must necessarily challenge us. For, after all, what pastoral model are we Paulines trying to weave and with what connections: the hierarchical church or the church of God's people?

“The gospel needs to bring people effectively to the experience of freedom. The freedom brought by individualism is false; it is induced to an autonomy that is not realized. The exercise of freedom occurs not in oneself, but in contact with the other. Today many in the name of individualistic freedom amidst so many offers do not know what to choose, they walk everywhere and for nothing, they experience everything and nothing, because what comes from the background is the authoritarianism of the will. The purpose of the gospel is freedom in *charity, service and sharing*. The choices arise out of *respect for individuality, in the function of the community*.

As such, this requires a *concrete spirituality, lived and experienced*. It will allow and support the practice of everyday life and vice versa. Each religious charism brings a practical way of putting the gospel into life in a specific situation, at a specific time in the midst of well-defined conditions. And a spirituality can only offer answers if it is first fully experienced by those who assume it. The passive discipline of the classical novitiate is not enough in which the rules are well defined by superiors and do not suffer any possibility of infringement. This leads no one to effective preparation for the outside world, to know if they are

our time: 1) *Christianism*, a pastoral of conservation that ignores the changes; 2) *neochristianism*, a pastoral apologist who fears the changes; 3) *post-modernity*, a pastoral secularist who suffers before the changes; 4) *enchantment with modernity*, the pastoral liberationist who denies the changes. The four models challenge to overcome the temptation to return to the old security of the past (cf. pp. 175-190).

effectively in the place and in the manner they should be to carry out their missions”²⁴.

The search for new ways requires from us the same wisdom of Paul, who comforts and impels us, exhorting us to learn from history: “God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond your own strength. But with temptation he will give them the means to come out of it and the strength to bear it” (1 Cor 10:13). But what are our greatest temptations today, without confusing them with the consequences of having yielded to them, such as insufficient dynamism in so many aspects or an apostolate that should touch more and help transform more the lives of the least of Jesus’ brothers in the challenging culture of communication?

The Pauline exhortation to “flee from idolatry” (1 Cor 10:14), in the knowledge that “all things are permitted, but not all things are expedient, all things are permitted, but not all things edify” (1 Cor 10:23), is the concern that fraternal communion should not be essentially broken, which is the communion with the blood and body of Christ, each seeking not his own interests but those of his neighbour (cf. 1 Cor 10:14-11, 1). In the dynamics of religious community *ad extra*, it means to say: seeking the interests of the people of God whom we are called to make us close and serve, “making way” with him (Rom 12:16), helping to lessen the pains of his wounds which are, as for Paul, the same marks of Jesus Crucified (cf. Gal 6:17).

Paul continues to be our model of following the Master, inspiring us with the words of Alberione:

“Children have the life of their father: they must therefore live in him, for him, with him, to him, in order to live Jesus Christ. It is appropriate for us the words addressed to his sons in Thessalonica, to whom he reminded that he made himself a *molds* for them: *‘Ut nosmetipsos formam daremus vobis’* . Jesus Christ is the original; Paul

²⁴ Alzirinha Rocha de Souza, *O olhar de Comblin sobre a vida religiosa*, 2018, <https://teologianordeste.net/publicacoes/artigos/207-o-olhar-de-comblin-sobre-a-vida-religiosa.html>, accessed on 02.12.2021. *Emphasis mine*.

became and made himself a mold for us; therefore, we are forged in him, to reproduce Jesus Christ. St Paul-mold is not for a physical reproduction of bodily features, but to communicate to the fullest his personality: mentality, virtue, zeal, piety... everything. May the Pauline Family, composed of many members, be Paul-alive in a social body"²⁵.

...with serenity...

Let us be enlightened by Paul and Alberione, may our gaze on the future be serene. The serenity to which Norberto Bobbio praised and, if we look closely, is a distinctly Pauline description, which can be inspiring to us who believe in the folly of the gospel that is the cross:

“Serenity is the opposite of arrogance, understood as an exaggerated opinion about one’s own merits, which justifies oppression. A serene person has no great opinion of himself, not because he has no self-esteem, but because he is more inclined to believe in miseries than in the greatness of man, and sees himself as a person equal to all. Even more so, serenity is contrary to insolence, which is a bragging arrogance. A serene person brags nothing, not even his own serenity: bragging, which is the showy and shameless display of his own alleged virtues, is in itself a vice. [...] He who brags his own charity lacks charity. He who flaunts his own intelligence is usually a fool. With greater reason, serenity is the opposite of arrogance. I say ‘with greater reason’, because arrogance is something worse than insolence. Arrogance is abuse of power that is not only displayed, but actually exercised. [...] A serene person is, on the contrary, the one who lets the other be what he is, even though the other is arrogant, insolent, and boastful. He does not enter into relationships with others for the purpose of competing, creating conflict, and ultimately, winning. It is completely out of the spirit of competition, bidding or rivalry and winning also. In the fight to life, it is in fact an

²⁵ *Amerai il Signore con tutta la tua mente*, 1954; cf. *CISP*, p. 1152.

eternal loser. [...] A serene person does not hold grudges, is not vindictive, and does not hate anyone. He never begins the fire; and if others do, he would not let it burn, though he could not put it out. He could cross the fire without burning, get into the storm of feelings without changing, keeping his own criteria, composure, and availability”²⁶.

...straining forward always...

In the second broadcast of Radio São Paulo, on March 19, 1949, Fr Alberione spoke of the need to “strain forward, like Christ the propagandist, like Paul, the wayfarer of God”²⁷. The following month he resumed the subject, speaking of the three penances: to live looking forward, progress, and build relationships of love and joy in the community, to commit to the apostolate with passion that enables him to understand the meaning of life. Three penances that are re-proposed to us today, with distinct positive and creative emphasis that Alberione has given them:

“Three penances.

They are in our constitutions.

The *first* is common to all religious: the common life lived lovingly, constantly, joyfully.

The *second* is dominant: the development of personality, which allows us to progress ever more, developing our gifts and attitudes: nature and grace. Ever greater intelligence in the things of service of God and the apostolate. Ever more skilful and industrious in places of work. Ever more fervent in practices of piety and religious observance.

The *third* is to apply, use, and converge everything for the glory of God, the apostolate, and treasure it for paradise. Always forward,

²⁶ Norberto Bobbio, *Elogio della mitezza e altri scritti morali*, Il Saggiatore, Milan, 2014. Brazilian Trans: *Elogio da serenidade e outros escritos morais*, Unesp, São Paulo, 2002, pp. 39-40. First Italian Edition 1994, Linee d’Ombra Edizioni, Milan.

²⁷ Alberione, James, cf. “Second Broadcast of *Radio S. Paolo*”, March 19, 1949, *San Paolo*, April 1949, pp. 1-2.

always progress, always prepared for that heavenly life that awaits us. The holy torment from which he aspires to the highest; from whom he strains forward; from whom he resorts to new means and uses them. People who walk; who every day bear fruit in spirit and in action. Who feel that they are living their days with use.

Our penances are not to weaken, exhaust, restrict health, attitudes, energies of mind, heart, body... They are instead a continuous study to make them grow and use them all for God, souls, sanctification"²⁸.

Encouraged by the witness of Paul and Alberione, may the Lord, our Way of Truth for the Life of all, continue to enlighten us so that, with serenity/meekness, we may be prophets and artisans of communion in the world of communication, always straining forward. To be in solidarity with the sufferers, even without having sufficient discernment and without knowing for certain what to ask and where to walk, let us entrust ourselves to the Spirit whose only law, that of love, is engraved in our hearts: "In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because it intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will." (Rom 8:26-27).

Ariccia, Divine Master House, 6 June 2022

Father Paulo Bazaglia, SSP

²⁸ Alberione, James, *San Paolo*, April 1949, p. 2.

PROGRAMMATIC DOCUMENT

OBJECTIVE 2022-2028

*"Let yourselves be transformed,
renewing your way of thinking" (Rom 12:2)*

By allowing ourselves to be transformed
by listening to the Word of God,
in dialogue with the world in profound metamorphosis,
we, Pauline 'editors',
commit ourselves to be artisans of communion
to prophetically proclaim
the joy of the Gospel.

FIRST NUCLEUS

Called...

THE PAULINE AND HIS CHARISMATIC ROOTS

Priorities

1.1

Revive the identity and vitality of our being Pauline 'editors' today, inspired by the universality and apostolic zeal of St Paul, a man of relationships and communion, and by the prophetic insights of our Founder, Blessed James Alberione.

Operational guidelines

1.1.1

Local Superiors:

– will value, for the purpose of community animation, materials for deepening our charismatic heritage, particularly those proposed by the Circumscription Government, the General Government and the Pauline Spirituality Centre.

1.1.2

The Circumscription Superior with his Council:

– will promote initiatives for the knowledge and for the deepening of St Paul and Blessed James Alberione, in particular on themes related to the relational dimension, attention to the signs of the times and apostolic creativity.

1.1.3

The Superior General, in agreement with the Circumscription Superiors:

– will identify members to be prepared in the field of spirituality and charism.

The Superior General with his Council:

1.1.4

– will commit to consolidate and develop the Centre of Pauline Spirituality.

1.1.5

– will pursue, in dialogue with the Circumscriptions, the redesigning of the Pauline geography with the sustainable and generative development of our mission as its first criterion.

Priorities

1.2

Cultivate brotherhood in Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life, in common prayer, mutual forgiveness, acceptance and collaboration to make our communities credible and fruitful in their witness.

Operational guidelines

Every Pauline:

1.2.1

– Allowing himself to be transformed by the Word of God and the Eucharist, be a joyful witness of his vocation in the community, in the apostolic centres, in the environments where he works, including the digital environment.

1.2.2

– Cultivate brotherhood, respect and attention to the members, patience in listening and dialogue, missionary availability to become a credible sign of the Pauline vocation.

1.2.3

Paulines in the service of authority at all levels:

– will pay special attention to intergenerational dialogue, to the integral care of elderly members, to the attentive accompaniment of our young people and members in difficulty.

SECOND NUCLEUS

**...to prophetically proclaim the joy of the Gospel
in the culture of communication...**

THE PAULINE IN MISSION: INTEGRAL FORMATION FOR MISSION

Priorities

2.1

Ensure that every Pauline is provided with integral and generative processes of formation, open to internationality and multiculturalism, enabling him to respond with passion to the demands of the mission.

Operational guidelines

The Circumscription Superior with his Council:

2.1.1

– will organise meetings to study the contents of the *2nd International Seminar of Pauline Editors* and the *2nd International Seminar on Pauline Formation for Mission* in order to deepen our knowledge of the current culture of communication and act more incisively on it.⁷

2.1.2

– will ensure the updating of the *Apostolic Project and Formation Iter*, using the *Editorial Guidelines* and the *Decalogue for Pauline Formation for Mission*.

The Superior General with his Council, through the *International Secretariat for Vocations Promotion and Formation (SIF)*:

2.1.3

– will draw up for the benefit of the Circumscriptions, guidelines for the accompaniment of Paulines during the first ten years of perpetual profession.

2.1.4

– will organise an intensive Pauline training programme for formators within the first three years of their term.

2.1.5

– will organise before the next Interchapter an International Seminar on pastoral work for vocations to know the young people of today and to renew our methodologies of accompaniment and dialogue with them.

Priorities

2.2

Re-create and reorganise the apostolate in fidelity to our charismatic identity to respond to the needs of our interlocutors, where and how they are, with a specific focus on the digital field.

Operational guidelines

The Superior General with his Council:

2.2.1

– will promote and consolidate in the Circumscriptions, applying the *Pedagogical Identity Lines*, the development of Pauline Study Centres in Communication and mutual collaboration among them.

2.2.2

– will find out and propose through the *International Technical Committee for the Apostolate* (CTIA) new ways of apostolate in the digital field.

2.2.3

– will draw up in accordance with our Constitutions (cf. Art. 76) and, through the CTIA, guidelines for Pauline pastoral care in the parishes entrusted to us.

Priorities

2.3

Promote cooperation between the Circumscriptions with a view to new formative, apostolic and administrative experiences.

Operational guidelines

The Superior General with his Council:

2.3.1

– will promote the transfer of members between Circumscriptions for a multicultural experience in study and apostolate establishing appropriate criteria to guide its implementation.

2.3.2

– will redefine through the CTIA, the Continental Organisms (CI-DEP, CAP-ESW, GEC) and perfect the modalities of apostolic collaboration between Circumscriptions for a more effective apostolate.

2.3.3

– will ensure, through the CTIA, the convergence between SOBICAIN and the St Paul Bible Centre for a single and more effective apostolate of the Word of God.

2.3.4

– will organise the Office of General Bursar in such a way as to allow an up-to-date view of the Congregation's assets and economy for a transparent and coordinated management policy for the Circumscriptions.

THIRD NUCLEUS
...to be artisans of communion
A SYNODAL CONGREGATION

Priorities

3.1

Assume synodality as a way of thinking and working within our Congregation, with the Pauline Family, with our collaborators and with the local Church, for the proclamation of the Gospel.

Operational guidelines

3.1.1

Every Pauline who has a managerial task:

– will value and esteem our employees, taking into account their skills and roles, making them co-responsible in our mission.

3.1.2

The local Superior with his community:

– will encourage openness, acceptance, listening and dialogue with young people, promoting - where possible - activities suitable to the local context in order to enter into their mentality and generate mutual enrichment.

The Superior General and the Circumscription Superiors with their Councils:

3.1.3

– will ensure for those who are respectively appointed by them to the service of authority specific training for their role in the perspective of synodality.

3.1.4

– will promote common projects and programmes in the area of vocation promotion, formation and apostolate within the Pauline Family and within their respective areas of competence.

The Superior General with his Council:

3.1.5

– will take up the process of revising and updating the *Constitutions and Directory* and, subsequently, other normative documents, bringing them in line with the journey of the Church and Consecrated Life, the evolution of the culture of communication and the current reality of our Congregation. A report on the progress of this work will be presented at the Interchapter Assembly.

3.1.6

– will give continuity to the process of defining the identity of our *Pauline Institutes of Consecrated Secular Life*.

3.1.7

– in dialogue with the Circumscription Superiors and in accordance with the established norms, will promote ways to involve representatives of the *Pauline Institutes of Consecrated Secular Life* and of the *Pauline Cooperators Association* in their assemblies, chapters and in other significant events of our Congregation.

MOTIONS

APPROVED BY THE GENERAL CHAPTER

1. Motion to the Superior General and his Council:

In view of a concretely synodal Congregation, the modification of the articles of the *Constitutions and Directory* relating to the Provincial Chapters, both programmatic and elective, is requested so that those with a maximum of 60 members are to be assimilated to the Regional Assemblies, to which everyone can participate.

The Provinces are reduced in number of persons, the representatives in the Provincial Chapters are a small part of those few, often the same are repeated in different Chapters and others never participate. Although most of the Provinces are small or very small, some of the members are excluded, which does not favour communion, participation and synodality. Low representation also facilitates the constitution of pre-established majority and only small groups make the main decisions in the Provinces. The Assemblies are already taking place in the Regions and are working well.

2. Motion to amend the Directory:

The age of the appointment or election of the Superior be changed by passing from the 70th to the 75th year of age (cf. art. 160.1 of the *Constitution and Dir.*).

3. Motion to the Superior General and his Council:

In relation to the Pauline Institutes of Secular Consecrated Life and the Association of Pauline Cooperators: that the Delegate General organize every two years a meeting of the Delegates of the Circumscriptions, which should not only be informative, but above all formative.

4. Motion to the Superior General and his Council:

The General Government should establish guidelines in the management of the circumscription archives appropriate to the current digital culture, so that, on the one hand, the history of the Congregation can be preserved and, on the other hand, the organization is unified and the search for information is facilitated.

5. Recommendation to the Superior General and his Council:

Premise: aware of the great importance that our Founder gave to the Spiritual Exercises, a team of the Pauline Family has been working in Italy for many years to prepare together the *Iters* of the Spiritual Exercises, in order to favour a common journey. Year by year a theme of Pauline spirituality is identified and a biblical-charismatic path is elaborated that could actualize it, in harmony with the Church and society today.

Recommendation: We propose that the Superior General of the Society of Saint Paul be a promoter towards the Superiors General of the Pauline Family so that together they identify the themes for a common spiritual journey of the Pauline Family in the world. The Pauline Spirituality Center can be entrusted with the task of preparing specific tracks to be sent to all the Circumscriptions.

**MEETING OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
WITH THE PARTICIPANTS TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT PAUL**

Hall of the Consistory

**INITIAL GREETINGS
OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL**

Holy Father, Pope Francis,

First of all, a sincere thank you for having granted us this very special audience for us Paulines. To tell the truth, recently we have had the gift of encountering you on other occasions, a sign of your closeness and esteem. Thanks Pope Francis!

We have now reached the end of our XI General Chapter, three intense weeks that have led us to identify a new path for our mission at the service of the people of God. All of this has resulted in a strong and clear objective: «By allowing ourselves to be transformed by listening to the Word of God, in dialogue with the world in profound metamorphosis, we, Pauline “editors”, commit ourselves to be artisans of communion to prophetically proclaim the joy of the Gospel».

In these words are expressed the experience of the Apostle Paul, who reminded the Romans to allow themselves to be transformed, renewing their way of thinking (Cf. Rom 12:2). It is also valid for us because being Pauline “editors”, as Blessed James Alberione reminded us, is equivalent to living our mission as Mary, who “editit

Salvatore”, “edited” Jesus to the world, that is, she generated him and gave him to humanity. The primacy of the person and not of the means is indisputable, the primacy of being apostles today.

New challenges await us in this period that you yourself highlighted as a “change of epoch”. Our way of living in community must be renewed, according to a style of communion. Our apostolic realities must orient themselves to what the interlocutors experience, even in the digital environment. Synodality must be taken as a new way of thinking, a renewed way of living our mission, in unity with the local and universal Church so that the proclamation of the Gospel would be credible.

Holy Father, our thanks again for this encounter. In fact, encountering one another is an “artisanal” and effective way to renew our identity as apostles-communicators, thus promoting the culture of encounter as you yourself invite us. After all, we follow in the footsteps of Blessed James Alberione, always intent on scrutinizing new ways to reach humanity...

Bless us! For our part, we will remember you in prayer.

Vatican City, 18 June 2022

Father Domenico Soliman
Superior General

IMPROMPTU SPEECH OF THE HOLY FATHER

Thank you for your words, thank you all for the visit, thank you!

Here is the speech I have to say ... But why waste time saying this when you will read it later, right? It seemed to me better to give it to the General, who then would let it be known – if he thinks it appropriate; if not, let him do the censorship! And then, it seems to me that communicating like this, fraternally, with the warmth of an encounter, is better than the coldness of a discourse.

And you are apostles of communication. We can talk a lot about the theology of communication... God's passion is to communicate himself, he always communicates: with the Son in the Spirit, and then to us. Communicating is one of the things that is more than a profession: it is a vocation. And Fr Alberione wanted this to underline in the various *families* – so-called – Pauline, this of communicating. Communicate *in a clean way*. And you have the vocation to communicate in a clean way, *evangelically*. If we take today's means of communication: lack of cleanliness, lack of honesty, lack of completeness. Disinformation is the order of the day: one thing is said but many others are hidden. We must ensure that in our communication of faith this does not occur, does not happen, that communication may come precisely from the vocation, from the Gospel, limpid, clear, witnessed with one's own life.

Not only to communicate, but also to redeem communication from the state it is in today, in the hands of a whole world of communication that either says half, or one party slanders the other, or one party defames the other, or one party offers scandals on the tray because people like to eat scandals, that is, eat dirt. Is it not true? It is so. Communication, that relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that is in the sign of the Trinity, this becomes indigestible, dirty, not clean meal. Your vocation is that communication be made clean, clear, simple. Do not overlook this, it is very important!

It is not a profession. Yes, there are professional communicators among you, this is fine; but before your profession, it is a vocation, and the vocation gives you identity. I take your identity from your vocation, that is, God calls you to this. I do not care what your name was before I called you. He calls you, you have your identity. That prayer of David, that prophetic conscience: «You were taken from the flock», from there; your identity does not come so much from the flock but from the call that took you from the flock. Do not forget the flock, that the “fumes” do not come and fill your head because you are an important one, you have reached being monsignor, cardinal ... Nothing, no, this is useless. Cleanliness is needed, that is where I come from, the reality. And God always communicates himself in reality: make sure that your life is precisely the communication of your vocation, that none of you has to hide your own vocational identity. The first thing a communicator communicates is himself, unwittingly, perhaps, but it is himself. «This speaks of this theme...», but *how* he speaks is important: clear, transparent; it is he himself who speaks. This is the originality. In this sense, communicators are “poets”. It is the “poetry” of communicating well.

Go ahead with clean communication: also in the Chapter, communicate well with each other. There are always difficulties in communicating well, and in communication, there is always some danger of transforming reality. One tells, communicates this to the other, this communicates it to this, then to that other, then to another and around. When he comes back, he is like Little Red Riding Hood, who begins with the wolf who wants to eat Little Red Riding Hood and ends with Little Red Riding Hood and the grandmother eating the wolf. No, that is not right! Bad communication distorts reality.

Thank you for the vocation to communicate in the Church. Go ahead on this: the Church needs this. I thank you so much. Courage and go on! Pray for each other. The unity of the Congregation will be your strength to communicate well. And pray for me too: I ask for alms, so we go forward. All right. Thank you!

PREPARED SPEECH OF THE HOLY FATHER

Dear brothers, good morning!

I welcome you and I thank the Superior General for his greeting and his introduction. You have come on the occasion of your XI General Chapter, which has this theme: «“Let yourselves be transformed by renewing your way of thinking” (Rom 12:2). Called to be artisans of communion to prophetically proclaim the joy of the Gospel in the culture of communication».

The Apostle Paul, in the verse of the Letter to the Romans that guided your days of work, invites all of us not to conform to the mentality of the world, but to allow ourselves to be transformed by changing our way of thinking. Paul does not say “you transform” the world, but “be transformed”, on the contrary, “*let yourselves be transformed*”, that is, make room for the only Subject capable of being able to transform you: the Holy Spirit, the Grace of God. Let us be transformed first, and then transform the world around us.

The expression “renew the way of thinking” – as you teach me – is at the center of the proposal for a spiritual and apostolic life that your Founder, Blessed James Alberione, elaborated and codified for you, starting precisely from the experience of St Paul. The Blessed wrote: «From the mind everything comes. If one does a good work it is because he thought of it and then wanted it and then did it. Therefore, the first point to look at is always the mind» (*To the Pious Disciples of the Divine Master*, VIII, Rome, 1986, 365).

It is therefore first of all the mentality that must be changed, converted, assimilated to that of Jesus Master, in order to contribute to spreading in society a way of thinking and living based on the Gospel. It is a great challenge for the Church and for you Paulines, characterized by the institutional charism of communication. Indeed, it is not enough to use the means of communication to spread the Christian message and the Magisterium of the Church; it is nec-

essary to integrate the message itself into the new culture created by modern communication. A culture that is born, even before the contents, from the very fact that there are new ways of communicating with new languages, new techniques and new psychological attitudes (cf. Enc. *Redemptoris missio*, 37, c).

A key theme in this regard is that of *interpersonal relationships in the globalized and hyper-connected world*. It is a key theme both on the human and social level, and on the ecclesial level, because the whole Christian life starts and develops through the relationship from person to person. And now, after the early days of euphoria for technological innovations, we are aware that it is not enough to live “online” or “connected”, we need to see to what extent our communication, enriched by the digital environment, actually creates bridges and contributes to the construction of the culture of encounter.

For your specific mission of evangelization in the world of communication, Fr Alberione wanted you to be consecrated men, called to bear witness to the Gospel with unreserved dedication to the *apostolate*. For this reason, look to the Apostle Paul as a model of a man conquered by Christ and pushed by his charity on the roads of the world. From Paul you always learn anew the passion for the Gospel and the missionary spirit, which, being born from his “pastoral heart”, pushed him to make himself everything to everyone. And one aspect that, speaking of Paul, risks being overlooked, but which actually appears clearly from his letters, is that he did not act alone, as an isolated hero, but always in collaboration with his companions in the mission. From him, therefore, you also learn to work as a team with others, to work “in a network”, to be artisans of communion, using the most effective and up-to-date means of communication to reach people with the Good News where and how they live.

Try to cultivate this style of communion first of all among yourselves, in your communities and in the Congregation, practicing that

synodality that throughout the Church we have proposed to deepen and above all to exercise at every level. Speaking to you, I ask you to place your charism at the service of this process, that is, to help the Church *walk together by making the most of the means of communication*. It is a service that has always seen you attentive, but which in this phase asks to be thought out and studied in a thematic way. In two words, the theme is: *synodality and communication*.

But I would not like you to feel considered only on this level, let us say “professional”, of your specific competence. No, you are called to live communion ordinarily in fraternity, in relations with the diocesan communities in which you live, and of course with the great and varied Pauline Family. Your horizon must always be that of Paul, that is, the entire humanity of our time, to whom the Gospel of Christ is destined, especially those who appear to be “distant”, indifferent and even hostile. Often, on closer look, these people hide within themselves a longing for God, a thirst for love and truth.

Dear brothers, thank you for your visit and above all for your commitment to the service of the Church and evangelization. May Mary, Queen of the Apostles, always accompany you on your journey with her maternal protection. I cordially bless all of you and your confreres. And I ask you please: do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

Vatican City, 18 June 2022

Pope Francis

MESSAGE OF THE XI GENERAL CHAPTER TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT PAUL

Dear confreres, may the joy of the Gospel always be in you!

At the conclusion of the XI General Chapter, we greet you by sharing some of the moments experienced and the orientations that emerged for the next six years, and beyond, of our Congregation.

First of all, we thank Fr Valdir José De Castro and his Government for their valuable service over the past 7 years. We express our gratitude to the Lord for choosing in the person of Fr Domenico Soliman as our new Superior General. To him and his new Council we assure our prayers and readiness to be part of the journey undertaken in these days.

During the three weeks of the assembly in Ariccia (May 29-June 19, 2022), we had a rich experience of fraternity, trying to listen to each other and understand reality together, to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to the congregation today. We let the Spirit himself take the initiative among us, just as the theme of the Chapter indicated: "Let yourselves be transformed, renewing your way of thinking" (Rom. 12:2). The journey was at times tiring, but we were invigorated by the daily celebration of the Eucharist, prayer community and spontaneous and open discussion.

The lights

The glimpse of the congregation confronted us with our problems: the number of members in some nations is decreasing, our structures are perceived as heavy, in our communities sometimes the fraternity and the joy of living the consecration are lagging behind. We have realized, however, that within a changing world and

after a pandemic that has hit us hard, many lights, like powerful beacons, illuminate us toward a true "transformation of the mind" for our life and mission.

The light of our charism. We felt the need to return to our charismatic roots to inspire the present and design the future. Our identity as Pauline "editors," capable of scrutinizing the signs of the times, as Blessed James Alberione did, allowing ourselves to be questioned by our interlocutors, is the way that will allow us to re-envision our apostolate.

The light of communication. We have realized that we need to overcome an instrumental vision of communication, with the awareness that we ourselves are the first instruments of the proclamation of the Gospel and thus, with boldness, make our contribution and our presence even in the digital world.

The light of synodality. As artisans of communion, we are called to be in attuned to the synodal journey that the Church is on. Synodality that begins from within of our communities, which are increasingly multicultural, and extends to the entire Pauline Family and the lay collaborators.

Challenges

The greatest challenge, taken up immediately by our Chapter, concerns the search for adequate ways to live our Pauline vocation and mission in the multicultural context. This will be possible to the extent that we know how to imitate the apostle Paul, a man of relationship and communion, follow the prophetic insights of Blessed James Alberione, cultivate fraternity in Christ the Master, Way, Truth and Life and thus make our communities credible.

About vocation, we have spoken at length, a sign of the need to reinforce the integral Pauline formation. We want to become more open, to be a truly outgoing congregation as Pope Francis often in-

vites and as our documents indicate, especially the 2nd International Seminar on Pauline Formation for Mission.

Finally, synodality should be the constant attitude of our living and working together, within our communities and in our relationships with the Church and the whole people of God.

On these themes the Chapter has developed the **Programmatic Document 2022-2028** for the entire congregation.

We intend to face tomorrow with courage and trust in Divine Providence, which since the time of the Founder has never abandoned us. We look ahead with trepidation, because of our insufficiency, but also with supreme hope in the divine goodness that dispenses its gifts of grace and mercy at precisely the most critical and complex moments in human history.

May you receive our most cordial and fraternal thanks for your prayers and closeness: We have felt its full energy.

Let us be transformed by the Spirit, renewing our minds, through the intercession of Mary, Queen of the Apostles, St Paul the Apostle and Blessed James Alberione and Timothy Giaccardo.

Ariccia, Divine Master House, June 19, 2022

*The Confreres
of the XI General Chapter of the Society of Saint Paul*

MESSAGE OF THE XI GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT PAUL TO THE COMMUNITIES AND MEMBERS OF THE PAULINE FAMILY

Dear brothers and sisters,

Do not fear, I am with you: urging us with these words to trust God and the grace of the Holy Spirit, the new Superior General of the Society of St Paul, Fr Domenico Soliman, has assumed his service for the next six years.

In this message, we want to share with you in summary what we experienced in Ariccia from May 29 to June 19, 2022.

The chapter reflected on charismatic identity, formation for mission, and synodality. We felt the urgency to get out of a merely instrumental vision of communication understanding that we, artisans of communion, are the first instruments of communication to proclaim the joy of the Gospel to the humanity of the third millennium. Relationships are therefore the qualifier of our living together and our apostolate. We reflected on this starting from the words of Pope Francis according to whom "synodality is not a personal choice or of a Congregation, but the way of being Church today according to the will of God in a dynamic of listening to and discerning the Spirit." We feel the duty to listen to the cry of our contemporaries, especially young people, considering their spiritual search and offering them the richness of the Gospel, even in the digital world.

The dimension of synodality characterized our days. During the Chapter, we had a rich experience of fraternity, trying to work together and listen to each other, to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to the congregation today. We let the same Spirit take the

initiative among us, just as the Chapter theme indicated: "Be transformed, renewing your way of thinking" (Rom. 12:2). The journey has been at times sometimes tiring, but we were strengthened by the daily celebration of the Eucharist, prayer community and fraternal sharing.

Pointing our gaze toward the future, as courageous sons of Blessed James Alberione, we have matured some choices that flowed into the Programmatic Document opened by this objective:

"Letting ourselves to be transformed by listening to the Word of God, in dialogue with the world in profound metamorphosis, we, Pauline "editors", commit ourselves to be artisans of communion in order to prophetically proclaim the joy of the Gospel."

In the Document, we recalled the charismatic need for collaboration with the whole Pauline Family through concrete projects.

Dear brothers and sisters, we thank you for your prayers and fraternal closeness during this event and ask you to continue to remind us so that we can realize what we have decided together. We entrust ourselves to the intercession of our father and founder, Blessed James Alberione.

Ariccia, Divine Master House, 19 June 2022

*The Confreres
of the XI General Chapter of the Society of Saint Paul*

CLOSING MESSAGE OF THE XI GENERAL CHAPTER

Dear brothers,

We have thus come to the end of our XI General Chapter. We walked together for three weeks, intense and beautiful days, where we shared our life, what we live in the five continents, even if perhaps certain problems we live could have been more discussed among us. Everyone felt part of a body. It does not matter if there are shadows along with the lights. It is good to verify the journey, to see together what is still fragile of our mission, of our communities: telling ourselves the truth is already a sign of hope.

We listened to each other, thus living an attitude that creates communion. Step by step, our days were filled with group work, with moments of personal reflection. We prayed together, ate together. Sometimes it was not easy to proceed quickly, we had to revise our way of working. Yes, “changing”, transforming, seeing things from a new point of view, moving forward in a different, creative way, not “as has always been done”, but accepting to think *in a new way*. The words of our father Saint Paul are indeed true: «Let yourselves to be transformed, renewing your way of thinking» (Rom 12:2).

At the end of this General Chapter each one brings with him a renewed awareness of our identity: Pauline “editors”. This is a reason for true joy, the one that comes from understanding ever better who we are, because the Lord wanted us: apostles eager to prophetically proclaim the joy of the Gospel to everyone.

Our General Chapter is the result of a long journey, slowed down by the pandemic of Covid-19. Little by little, however, it took concrete form and direction, thanks to the confreres of the ante-preparatory commission and, subsequently, of the preparatory one.

Together with them we thank the members of the central commission, the actuaries, those who worked in the secretariat of the chapter, those who drafted the information and final messages, the translators, those who animated the liturgy, the drafting committee and that of the motions. In particular, I would like to thank the secretary of the XI General Chapter. Thanks to this community of Ariccia who welcomed us, to the brothers and sisters who prayed for us and with us.

Once again we remember the passion with which Fr Valdir José De Castro together with the brothers of the General Council and the officials served our Congregation for more than seven years. Thanks to all of you for your dedication, example and some prophetic choices that have triggered new processes. What remains is charity; it is your love for each brother and for our mission, for the Pauline Family, the Church... in the footsteps of Blessed James Alberione.

“Thank you” is therefore an appropriate word to feel that we are in communion with each other, where everyone contributes to giving life to a community of apostles-communicators.

Now we have the Programmatic Document in our hands, where in a few pages the path we wish to face for the next six years is traced. It is the fruit of a dream that is only just beginning, of a new vision that must now be with us all, each in his own environment, completed and built, animated by the desire to let ourselves be involved by the Spirit, so that the Gospel is always announced. The Spirit continues to blow on our Pauline life. He renews, transforms, encourages, makes us enterprising... he always gives a new face to our mission. It is up to us to be available, to let ourselves be involved, not to put resistance to the Spirit that generates continually and always in a new way Pauline “editors” in all continents and in every age, even in those of our realities that have been facing for some years not small difficulties. Let us allow ourselves to be transformed by listening to the Word of God, let us take up dialogue, as a sign of fraternity, as a way of relating to each other and to the world

that is, as we said in the Programmatic Document, in profound metamorphosis. Let us commit ourselves to be artisans of communion: even today there is a need for prophets, not of doom, but for joy, that which arises from the encounter with the Gospel, that is, with Jesus our Master.

The priorities and operational guidelines are like the realization of this new congregational project. They show the way to go, where some issues are a priority. Here I highlight just a few: our charismatic identity, fraternity in order to be credible communities and fruitful witnesses, formation for internationality and multiculturalism, a sustainable and renewed apostolate at the service of our interlocutor, meeting him where he lives, even in the digital environment, collaboration between the Circumscriptions, synodality as a way of thinking and operating in all areas. There is a lot of work to do, not alone, however, but together, because the mission is common.

As Pope Francis reminded us today, it is precisely the call of God that gives a new identity to each one of us, to our communities, to the whole Congregation. The theme of the vocational call and the response is important and we feel the urgency of it. However, it is not a question of organizing something for young people: it is not enough. Probably it is a question of being “generative” Paulines, who put themselves at their service, listening to them, respecting their times and the new mentality. Young people are the ones we meet in everyday relationships and on social networks. Recovering a few more words that Pope Francis addressed to us today, «the whole Christian life starts and develops through the relationship from person to person».

Our chapter work does not end here. Now it is a question of sharing it with the confreres we represent. We do not hide out of shyness all the good experienced in these days. Let us tell it, let us testify to it in many ways, let us accept that we are the first to be involved in this transformation process.

May the Lord bless us and together, with hope and in a creative way, we give continuity to the charismatic heritage received as a gift from Blessed James Alberione for the humanity of our time. Courage and go on!

Ariccia, Divine Master House, 18 June 2022

Father Domenico Soliman
Superior General

HOMILY DURING THE CLOSING MASS MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF JESUS

The Solemnity that we celebrate today, the Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus, helps us to enter deeply into the mystery of the Eucharist: the bread and wine that we see and eat are in reality the true Body and the true Blood of Jesus. The faith of the Church has believed this for two thousand years and we, even today, profess it with joy. The Body and Blood of Jesus are given to us to be able to walk, they make us community, they are the necessary food and they also have the flavour of communion. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we feed on the one the Father has given us out of love.

The Gospel we have heard photographs a moment in the pastoral life of Jesus. Luke the Evangelist fixes on this page the episode of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, thus allowing Jesus to feed all those present, those who were there with him. At the same time, the story takes us on a short journey. There is a crescendo of actions, so the end of the story is different from the beginning, something unpredictable makes the impossible possible.

The first verse creates the context, tells us what Jesus was doing: «He began to speak to the crowds of the kingdom of God and to heal those who needed care». In other words, while walking among the people, Jesus takes care of each of them, in a different way, by telling or by healing. In this scene, however, a very particular problem arises: it is now evening and hungry people need to eat and rest. That is what everyone sees, the situation is clear. Which solution to identify? What can we do?

The first proposal of the Twelve is summed up with these words: «Dismiss the crowd to go to the surrounding villages and country-

side, to lodge and find food: here we are in a deserted area». “Dismiss” is like a surrender here: we cannot do anything, reality cannot be faced. The Twelve surrender to the evidence and therefore propose a reasonable way out. Then as now, how many situations are so difficult to face. In families or in religious communities, in the Church and in civil situations... the problems are so great that the only solution is to “dismiss the crowd”. Yes, we can answer like this.

The second proposal sounds like this: «“We only have five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people”. There were in fact about five thousand men». “We only have five loaves and two fish”, we have some means available, there is some idea... but what to do in front of five thousand men? Some pastoral plans are not lacking, the attempt to respond to the needs of others is taken for granted. Jesus himself provokes them by asking them to feed many people. However, it does not seem that they have managed to feed all these people.

The third possibility is something totally new: «He took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven, recited the blessing on them, broke them and gave them to the disciples to be distributed to the crowd». It is the words of Jesus that change the situation. The power of his words transforms, changes, multiplies the bread and the fish... The situation is transformed: from hungry and tired people to satisfied and rested people. From a few loaves and fishes, the Twelve found baskets of leftover. This is what the Lord wishes to do today in our history as well. Transforming, renewing, multiplying... making new what is old, making our life a new life.

Dear faithful, today we Paulines are finishing the XI General Chapter, an important moment of verification and relaunch of our mission throughout the world. A verse from St Paul’s Letter to the Romans accompanied us: «Let yourselves be transformed, renewing your way of thinking» (Rom 12:2). There is a harmony between these words and what today’s Gospel reminds us of. The secret of our life is to give the possibility to God to act, to work, to be among

us and in our history, in concrete problems... The fruit of his presence is the transformation of our life. It does not take away the challenges, the difficulties: they accompany us; however, it gives us a new vision of life, opens our eyes because we glimpse at different, new paths, never thought of to respond to today's challenges.

For us Paulines it means rereading our mission starting from a world that is continually changing, multiform; it is assuming synodality as a way of thinking and living, it is being artisans of communion...

We are not alone on this journey, just like every family and the Church, it is not alone: the Lord-King is present. He multiplies, transforms the bread and the wine into his Body and into his Blood. Feeding on this food we will walk, we will live within the challenges of today, as in this time of pandemic, of wars, of economic crises. The Eucharist is this great school where we gradually acquire a new, renewed mentality. From here also our life changes, it becomes communal, therefore creative, inclusive, apostolic, we take care of each other.

Therefore, as the Gospel passage reminds us, "everyone ate their fill", no one is excluded from the encounter with Jesus our Master.

Rome, Sanctuary of the Queen of the Apostles, 19 June 2022

Father Domenico Soliman
Superior General

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Society of St Paul - General House
Via Alessandro Severo, 58 - 00145 ROME

General Secretariat: seggen@paulus.net
Tel. (+39) 06.5978.6617 - Fax (+39) 06.5978.6602
www.paulus.net - information.service@paulus.net

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