



5. From the Word to Life

The 11th General Chapter presents the figure of the craftsman as an inspiration to deepen our Pauline identity. A Pauline is an apostle, a communicator, a publisher, and a craftsman. Each of these terms describes the different qualities and characteristics of the Pauline, who is on a journey and therefore subject to transformation. This transformation enables the Pauline to respond adequately with his witness and apostolate to the demands of a changing world. On the horizon, we have perfect love for God and man, which is holiness through identification with Christ and the salvation of all men through the gift of self in apostolic zeal.

- What attracts me and what discourages me about the idea of a Pauline becoming a craftsman-editor?
- Who are the masters from whom I have taken up the mission, and who are the disciples and successors to whom I can pass on my experience?
- What flame burns in me with the passion to continue the mission and to perfect my spiritual life and apostolic skills?
- Do I feel part of God's grand design and collaborator in the realisation of his plan to save the world?

6. Prayer

Lord, you have been our dwelling place
in all generations.

So teach us to count our days
that we may gain a wise heart.

Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Let your work be manifest to your servants
and your glorious power to their children.

Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us
and prosper for us the work of our hands—

O prosper the work of our hands!

Ps 90 (89), 1.12.14.16-17

ARTISANS OF PAULINE “EDITORS”

In another year of reflection on the general objective indicated by the 11th General Chapter, the Superior General, Fr Domenico Soliman, invites us to reflect on the figure of the Pauline ‘editor’ as a craftsman, an artist who does not reproduce ideas but creates them. The witness and school of this creativity is our history and the commitment of so many brothers and sisters who have given their lives to inculcate and develop the Pauline charism in different contexts and cultures. We are the heirs and continuators of their work.

1. From the Superior General’s Letter

«In a change of epoch, in a time of mutation of communication due to the strong presence of digital languages – and today in particular of artificial intelligence – our mission also needs to take new paths and embrace new opportunities, of Pauline “Editors” who embody the figure of the artisan, or of someone who invents something that does not yet exist, never repetitive, courageous, immersed in the Spirit, in Him who makes all things new.

The commitment to be “artisans” as Fr James Alberione was with the first Paulines – enterprising with the press, radio, cinema and other forms of apostolate – highlights how in many situations our generation has lost this quality, preferring to operate with what is already known. It is not a question of changing for the sake of change, nor of multiplying apostolic initiatives, but of generating, creating, giving life as the artisan gives life. Our past, so full of novelties, must not only be known, but also assimilated in depth so that it becomes an inspiration for new paths, for communicative contexts in which today’s humanity can glimpse the signs of that hope that does not disappoint» (*Introduzione della Lettera annuale 2024-2025*).

2. The encounter with the Word of God

When God decides to dwell among his people, he commissions Moses to build a portable temple and the Ark of the Covenant. True works of art are created thanks to the three types of skills that God gave to craftsmen: wisdom and creativity of mind, skill and professionalism in work, and the ability to train co-workers and successors. The Paulines also need all these three talents in their mission as craftsmen-publishers.

«Then Moses said to the Israelites, “See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; he has filled him with a divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge, and with every kind of skill, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of artistic craft. And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to do every kind of work done by an artisan or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue, purple, and crimson yarns and in fine linen or by a weaver—by any sort of skilled worker or designer”.

Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the Lord has given skill and understanding to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the Lord has commanded» (Ex 35:30-36:1).

3. The Magisterium of the Church

We are participating in the realization of a great plan, authored by God himself. This requires us to remain in communion with the Creator and to follow His rules and instructions. Pope Francis also emphasizes that craftsmanship turns our attention to other people: to those who formed us and passed on their heritage in the past, and to those for whom we create apostolic works today. The Pauline craftsman-editor does not live and create for himself.

«Craftsmanship is very dear to me because it expresses well the value of human work. When we create with our hands, at the same time we activate the head and the feet: action is always the fruit of a thought and a movement towards others. Craftsmanship is a tribute to creativity; indeed, the artisan must know how to discern, in inert matter, a particular form that others cannot recognize. And this makes you collaborators in the creative work of God. [...]

The Gospel always calls us to have an outlook of faith; not to think that what we achieve is the fruit only of our capabilities or our merits. It is also the fruit of the history of each one of us, it is the fruit of many people who have taught us to go forward in life, starting from parents. The work I do is the fruit of a history, that has made us capable of doing this. [...]

We all need to set aside the fear that paralyzes and destroys creativity. We can do so even in the way we live our daily work, feeling that we are part of a great project of God, who is capable of surprising us with His gifts. Behind our riches there is not only skill, but also a Providence that takes us by the hand and leads us. Craftwork can express all this well, if it is accompanied day by day by the awareness that God never abandons us, that we are masterpieces of His hands, and therefore we are capable of realizing original works» (Pope Francis, address to representatives of artisans and small- and medium-sized enterprises, 15 November 2024).

4. Thought of the Founder

Blessed James Alberione speaks of zeal as the precious pearl of religious life. It is the quality of an artist-craftsman who never tires of creating and perfecting his craft. Every area of an apostle's life requires zeal and perseverance.

«In religious life, there can be a person who corresponds totally to the grace of God and someone who does not correspond, being content with other pearls. No, one must seek the precious pearl, which is perfection. [...]

However, there are also fervent souls who work constantly for two ends: 1) To diminish their failings as much as they can, both in number and in malice; to remove every imperfection. 2) To be more observant, making progress in the practice of the Rules, the timetable, and in dedication to the Lord and the Institute. Every day, they invent ways to succeed better in their spiritual work or in the apostolate; they are fervent.

The precious pearl of religious life is this fervour, this commitment to remove more and more faults and put more and more perfection and do things better and better and still find that we are always lacking something» (FSP45, pp. 419-420).