

Rekindle the gift you have received. *Creative fidelity to hundred years of Pauline Charism*

Second Group work morning of 27 April 2010 **PROCEDURE OF WORK**

Theme: THE APOSTLE PAUL AS MODEL OF THE PAULINE

Aim: To integrate our reflection on the gift we have received while looking at St Paul whom Fr Alberione considered as our “true Founder” and “form” according to which every Pauline has to model himself.

To be kept in mind: The second stage of the group work serves to complete the image of the **Pauline**, who lives and works in a **community**, formed in view of the **mission**. St Paul, who unites the love of God and profound spirituality with the love of neighbour and apostolic commitment, is the necessary point of reference of every project of rekindling the Pauline charism.

Group 4 – English

Place of meeting: **Hall Canonico Chiesa (C)**

Br. Dominic Calabro	– Delegate, United States of America
Fr. Nestor Candado	– Regional Superior, Australia
Fr. Varghese Gnalian	– Provincial Superior, India-Nigeria
Br. Hansel Mapayo	– Delegate, Philippines-Macau
Fr. Maggiorino An S.	– Regional Superior, Korea
Fr. Jose Pottayil	– Vicar general
Br. Walter Rodríguez	– General councillor
Br. Blaise Thadathil	– Delegate, India-Nigeria
Fr. Kenji Yamauchi	– Provincial Superior, Japan

I. Group meeting

The group meets in their assigned room immediately after the introduction made in the Hall. The results of the work will be presented in the Chapter Hall at **11:30**. It is advised to finish the group work towards **11:00** in order to leave some space for the interval and also to enable the spokesperson of the group to prepare the report.

Steps to be followed:

- Personal reading of the write-up prepared by the Preparatory Commission. During the reading everyone should find time to write on a piece of paper some points on
 - 1) the purpose to which God has called St Paul;
 - 2) the manner in which St Paul has responded to the call of God;
 - 3) relevant and specific aspects of the apostolate of St Paul for the Paulines today;
 - 4) important aspects of St Paul which are absent in the write-up prepared by the Preparatory Commission.
- Every member of the group presents the result of his personal reflection.
- Discussion follows.
- The group should formulate its response to the following:

Starting from the example of St Paul and of the apostolate that St Paul was doing,

- 1) what are the characteristics that render the Pauline an apostle?
- 2) what does the Pauline community, as a social body, do in dedicating itself to the apostolate?
- 3) in what sense the Pauline works of communication are apostolic?
- 4) what are the steps necessary to live fully the apostolic ideal?

II. INTRODUCTORY CONTRIBUTION

1. The sources to know St Paul

Blessed James Alberione points out St Paul as the true founder of the Society of St Paul and of the Pauline Family; of it he is the “Father, Teacher, example, protector” (*CISP*, p. 147). Father Alberione sees in him the model of the apostle who lives fully the integral Christ and communicates him integrally with all the means that he has at his disposal. The spirituality of the Society of St Paul and of the whole Pauline Family is that which St Paul lived and exemplified. The Paulines should live, think and witness in the apostolate the faith and sanctity of St Paul.

The recent International Seminar on St Paul (19-29 April 2009) has presented to us the state of the actual exegetical research, which often gives an image of St Paul very different from that which has inspired and guided Blessed James Alberione. One of the deviating opinions is the attribution to St Paul of only a part of his writings which comprise the *Corpus paulinum* and the negation of the historical reliability of the description of St Paul contained in the Acts of the Apostles.

The development of the exegetical research that occurred in the last years has given much space to the so-called synchronic methods that express themselves in the analysis of the biblical text in its canonical form, and therefore without modifying the

text transmitted from the tradition of the Church according to the different historical and/or literary reconstructions.

Referring to the letters of St Paul, these methods have resulted in revising the unity of the Pauline writings and the understanding of so many inconsistencies noted in the past that have stimulated to formulate different hypotheses on the complex history of the composition of the canonical text which were in reality fruit of the rhetorical and persuasive types of the ancient world, characterised by a different mode of expressing the idea and of another approach on the written text.

The new interpretative model has changed the understanding of some letters of Paul and has put in discussion the division of the *Copus paulinum* in the proto-Pauline letters (Rom, 1-2 Cor, Gal, Phil, 1-2 Thess, Phlm), deutero-Pauline (Eph, Col) and trito-Pauline (1-2 Tim, Tit). The difference among these groups, as regards the authorship of the letters, an exact date is not guaranteed anymore. The research on the Lucan work also insists on the historical credibility of Luke, at times even contradicting the subjectivity and persuasive tendency of the letters of Paul.

All this allows us to reassess the approach to St Paul of Father Alberione that seeks to discover and accept the personality of Paul and his teaching based on the canonical text. Our reading should obviously take into consideration the results of the research which anchor Paul on his historical and cultural milieu and which should help us to understand the rhetorical strategies which he has used, but should be made with the awareness of the priority of the canonical presentation on every critical reconstruction that remains always only probable.

The figure of Paul, which is at the base of the foundation of the Society of St Paul and of the entire Pauline Family, is carved with the texts that the Church has received and transmitted as foundation of her own faith and not starting from the historical and theological hypotheses.

2. The title of "apostle"

While the evangelist Luke in the Acts of the Apostles does not describe Paul as an apostle, Paul claims that title for himself, recalling his personal encounter with Jesus our Lord and the fruit of his apostolic work (1 Cor 9:1-3; cfr. 2 Cor 3:2-3). Paul affirms of his having seen the Risen Christ (1 Cor 15:8) and of having received directly from him the apostolic mission (Gal 1:11-17).

His particular dignity derives uniquely from the quality of the commitment undertaken in response to the grace of God and with his help (1 Cor 15:8-10). Paul seeks to win Christ and to feel the power of his resurrection, living with patience the hard work of the apostolate which he conceives as his way of participating in the sufferings of Christ "in the hope of attaining the resurrection from the dead" (Phil 3:10-11). The strength and steadfastness to progress constantly in the work of the Lord is the vocation of all Christians (1 Cor 15:58), but the apostles themselves show such through their particular union with the suffering and despised Christ and through their labour (1 Cor 4:9-13)¹.

¹ It is significant like the noun "labour" (*kópos*) and the respective verb (*kopián*) they articulate in the Pauline letters the description of the apostolic commitment: Rom 16:6, 12; 1 Cor
Lavoro di gruppo del 26 aprile 2010

In the letter to the Romans Paul presents the proclamation of the Gospel as his act of priestly ministry (Rom 1:9). But while the ministry of all the Christians of Rome consists in the life transformed by the Spirit of God (Rom 12:1), the sacrificial offering of the apostle are the pagans who, thanks to his proclamation, are sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:16). It is important to bear in mind that the fruit of the apostolic work is not simply measured by the quantity of hard work. What counts is the result of the work and its consistency (1 Cor 3:10-15). So for example Paul affirms that even if for others he is not an apostle, for the Corinthians he is an apostle, thanks to his apostolic work, they were able to arrive at the faith (1 Cor 9:2; cfr. 2 Cor 3:2-3).

3. Being Rooted in Christ

The source of the apostolate of Paul and of his perseverance in the midst of difficulties is his being rooted in Christ. Christ is the reason of the existence of Paul. Because of him Paul considers any possible gain as nothing and rubbish (Phil 3:7-11). What is important for him is “to gain Christ” (Phil 3:8), “to be found in him” (Phil 3:9), “to know Christ” (Phil 3:8, 10; 1 Cor 2:2) and to become like Christ in death and in the resurrection (Phil 3:10-11). Paul considers himself dead in Christ to the life of the old man and reborn to a new life which is not anymore his, but of Christ himself (Gal 2:19-20; cfr. Rom 6:11; 14:7-8; 2 Cor 5:15; Phil 3:10-11; Col 2:20; 1 Thess 5:10)². The possibility of knowing Christ as Lord (*kýrios*) is in fact the most important gift of the Holy Spirit that precedes any other particular charism (1 Cor 12:3). Being rooted in Christ does not come however as fruit of any particular act, but it is, for Paul, the programme of the entire Christian life that should consist in the transformation of one's mind, will and sentiments³ in order to be together with the other members of the one body that lives its life “in Christ” (Rom 12:5) and becomes therefore “body of Christ” (1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:12).

4. The community

The participation in the life of Jesus is a bond of solidarity that transforms the believers into one body and dwarfs social distinctions related to the particular vocation, race, wisdom, talent, gender or diversity of civil rights (cfr. 1 Cor 12:14-27; Gal 3:26-29; Eph 2:13-22)⁴.

3:8; 4:12; 15:10; 16:16; 2 Cor 6:5; 10:15; 11:23, 27; Gal 4:11; Phil 2:16; Col 1:29; 1 Thess 1:3; 2:9; 3:5; 5:12; 2 Thess 3:8; 1 Tim 4:10; 5:17; 2 Tim 2:6.

² How much is the importance for Paul the idea of being in Christ appears from the frequency of the expressions “in Christ” and “in the Lord”. The expression “in Christ” occurs 83 times and “in the Lord” 47 times. Besides, Paul uses often the pronoun (“in him”).

³ In Rom 12:2 Paul uses the Greek term *noûs* which is the version of the CEI translated as “way of thinking”, but which can be also translated as “spirit”, “sentiments”, “reason”. Still more universal in its meaning is the verb *froneîn* used by Paul in talking of the identification to Christ in Phil 2:5. The same version CEI translates it in various places with “to experience feelings”, “to feel”, “to think”, “to consider”.

⁴ In order to talk of the unity of the Christians Paul uses the word *koinonía* which indicates not only the belonging to a group, but the same experience of the life of Christ (1 Cor 1:9; 10:16; Phil 3:10) and of the Spirit (2 Cor 13:13; Phil 2:1) which was experienced and participated in by every member of the community of believers.

Being rooted in Christ permits everyone of being already now with Christ “son of God” (Rom 8:14; 9:26; Gal 3:26; 4:6-7) and to walk towards the measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13; Rom 8:19; Phil 3:12), even if everyone lives this reality in accordance to his particular situation. The law that guarantees the activity of the believing community is charity (Rom 12:9-13; 1 Cor 12:31–13:13). Charity empowers to overcome the differences not through arguments and polemics but welcoming the weak and respecting their various sensibilities (1 Cor 8:1-2; 1 Tim 6:4; Tit 8-9).

Charity also allows to overcome the limitations of the laws and traditions (Rom 13:8-9), as in the case of Philemon who was invited to liberate his slave (Phlm 14– 16). On the other hand, Paul recognises the social value of the civil law and recommends its observance not only for fear of its punishment but also for reason of conscience (Rom 13:1-7).

5. Universality

The apostolate of Paul revolves above all on those who are far away. He does not preach in Israel but in the cities of the empire. Luke affirms that Paul habitually began his preaching in the synagogues or in other places of prayer and Jewish meeting, which were the natural support for an itinerant Jewish teacher (Acts 3:14; 14:1; 16:13; 17:1,10,7; 18:4,19; 19:8; 28:17,23). Paul does not however limit himself only to this. He also preaches in the marketplace, in the square and in the Aerophagus where he has a chance to interact and gets in touch with the society of the time, away from the religious places. He interests himself with those who are far away so that in Christ Jesus those who were far away would become near (Eph 2:13; cfr. Rom 3:29-30; Col 1:21).

6. Strategies for the mission

Paul speaks of his preaching to the gentiles as his specific apostolate (Rom 15:20-21; Gal 2:9; Eph 3:8). Therefore he does not make himself contented with simply proclaiming the Gospel, but in the apostolic programming he seeks to follow his particular charism (Rom 15:22-24). The openness to all, in fact, does not mean lack of criteria (Rom 12:3; 2 Cor 10:13; Eph 4:7) or unrecognition of the diversities and peculiarities of the gifts (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:28-30). It is significant to note how Paul feels free to exceed the limits of his task (2 Cor 10:13-16). The missionary strategy of Paul does not simply consist in the preaching in all the localities possible. Paul establishes rather centres of Christian life in the great cities of every region and entrusts to the local Christians the task of propagating the Gospel in the surrounding zone. When Christian life in one zone is established in this way (cfr. Acts 14:21-23; 19:8-10), he is capable of accepting of not finding anymore a place for action and of his need to search for new venues of apostolate (Rom 15:23).

7. Attention to diversity and adaptation to the recipients of the mission

The proclamation of the universality of salvation in Christ brings Paul to affirm that in the Christian community everyone should find his own way in the following

of the only Lord, depending on his particular condition (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 7:7,17; 2 Cor 10:13; Eph 4:7). Everyone is called to live the life of Christ according to what he called faith (Rom 12:6) and in the diversity of the gifts and ministries (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12-14; Eph 4:1-16). Therefore Titus demonstrates himself as a true son of Paul and a worthy successor in his apostolic mission, different from false teachers who propose the same teaching, as he knows how to adapt the one Gospel to different persons (Tit 2:1-10).

As Christ allows himself to be in solidarity with man (Gal 4:4-5), Paul adapts himself to the recipients of his mission (Gal 4:12): a Jew with the Jews and a Greek with the Greeks "in order to save some by all possible means" (1 Cor 9:21-22).

The letters of Paul that are sent to the different recipients differ enormously in language, in images, in themes and in argumentative procedures. The apostle seeks always to address the problems of the recipients and to adapt himself to their mode of thinking. When he formulates theological principles, he does not content himself of referring to Christ or to the scriptural citation, but seeks to refer himself also to the experience of his listeners (e.g., 1 Cor 1:26; 5:6; 6:11; 9:13,24; 12:2). The difficulty of understanding some of his letters is often the result of our own limited knowledge of knowing the context in which they were written.

8. Inculturation and creativity

Paul unites in himself diverse cultures and puts them at the service of the Gospel. Addressing himself to the Greco-hellenist interlocutors he knows how to use not only their language but also their categories of thinking. And he does it in a critical manner. The so-called "domestic customs" (Eph 5:21-6:9; Col 3:5-4:6) are examples particularly eloquent of his capacity to transform the Greek usages in the light of the Jewish tradition and of the event of Christ. The letter to the Romans testifies instead to his capacity to talk to the "experts of the law" (Rom 7:1). Paul here uses the terminology and the rhetorical and exegetical proceedings of Judaism and his argument starts from the assertions of the Jewish tradition.

The same form of letters written by Paul is something new that links creatively typical literary elements of the Greek world with those of the oriental and biblical elements. As for the rest, Paul does not only change the form of the letter, but he "invented" their use for the purpose of the apostolate.

9. The collaborators

Paul is not a solitary apostle. The enormous quantity of proper names demonstrates to us his great capacity to form relationships and to involve others in his apostolate. Among the collaborators of Paul we find Jews and Greeks, men and women, freemen and slaves. The apostle does not close himself to anyone and knows how to treat all with tact, affection and esteem. He gives impression of delicateness, with which he addresses himself to Philemon suggesting to him an act of love, as well as respect with which he speaks of Apollo in the first letter to the Corinthians. The letters of Paul are fruits of communitarian work. The mention of patrons and secretaries testifies to the contribution of these persons in the editorial work.

10. The model of apostolic spirituality

The person of Paul presented from the writings of the New Testament fully justifies the double interest of Father Alberione in his comparisons: point of reference for every believer and inspiration of every apostle and apostolate. Paul is the example of one who has lived and preached Christ in his integrality, expressed by Father Alberione with the Johannine title "Way, Truth and Life". Looking at St Paul, the Pauline can understand and verify his identity of being an apostle.

St Paul, who unites oral and written preaching, has inspired in Blessed James Alberione the intuition and the possibility of elaborating a complete project of new evangelisation centred on the press. Today, almost a hundred years of the foundation, he encourages us to re-invent it – that is, to rekindle it – referring to the new and complex reality of the world of communication.