

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

Third workgroup - Afternoon, 27 April 2010 WORK SHEET

Theme: THE CHANGE IN THE COMMUNICATION PARADIGM AT THE BEGINNING OF THE THIRD MILLENIUM

Aim: to integrate our reflection on the gift we have received, looking at the transformation of the field of communication.

To be kept in mind: the third work group serves to complete the image of the **Pauline**, who lives and acts in a **community**, formed in sight of a **mission**. The Pauline charism has taken on a concrete historical form in sight of the apostolate in communication and with communication. Taking up new realities in the field of communications requires adapting all dimensions of our charism: spirituality, the apostolate, formation, the organization of life and of our activities, as well as of our relations within the Pauline Family, the Church and society.

Group 5 — English

Place of meeting: **Hall Maria SS. Annunziata (D)**

Fr. Ruben Areño	— Provincial Superior, Philippines-Macau
Fr. George Chathanattu	— Delegate, India-Nigeria
Fr. Celso Godilano	— Regional Superior, GB-Irlanda
Fr. Joseph Javillo	— Delegate, United States of America
Fr. Francis Kochupaliyathil	— Delegate, Australia
Fr. Thomas Manimalayil	— Delegate, India-Nigeria
Br. Seiichi Oyama	— Delegate, Japan
Fr. Michael Raj	— Delegate, India-Nigeria
Br. Takahito Tokuda	— General councillor

I. THE GROUP MEETING

The group should meet in its own room or hall immediately after the introduction that will take place in the meeting room. The results of the work will be presented in the chapter meeting room at **5:00p.m.** It is advisable to finish the group work by **4:30p.m.** in order to leave some time for a break and so that the group spokesman can prepare his presentation.

• PROCEDURE:

- Personal reading of the report prepared by the Preparatory Commission. During this reading, each one should write on a sheet of paper some notes regarding:
 - 1) what, in the light of changes in communication, is still actual (relevant) today in our spirituality, formation, apostolate and organization;
 - 2) what needs to be adapted;
 - 3) what has become obsolete and should thus be abandoned;
 - 4) what important aspects, regarding the transformation of communication, are lacking in the Preparatory Commission's report.
- Each member of the group presents the fruit of his personal reflection.
- Debate/discussion follows.
- The group seeks to formulate its answer to the following questions:

Considering the change in the paradigm of communication,

 - 1) how does the idea of the Pauline as communicator change?
 - 2) how does the idea of the Pauline apostolic community change?
 - 3) how should the Pauline works of communication be transformed?
 - 4) what steps are necessary in order to continue to measure up to our vocation of being apostles in communication and with communication?

II. SYNTHESIS OF THE WORKGROUP'S RESULTS

After dinner the spokesman for the group should prepare a small synthesis of the results of the three meetings, in which he describes:

- 1) the Pauline as apostle and communicator;
- 2) the Pauline community as an apostolic community in and with communication;
- 3) the reality of the Pauline apostolate in the world of communication;
- 4) the main steps to be taken in order to realize the Pauline ideal of the apostolate in the field of communication.

The spokesman should prepare, with the operative secretary's help, copies of this synthesis for the members of his group.

N.b.: The synthesis should be schematic and very brief, not to exceed one page.

III. Introductory report

1. The Pauline project of the apostolate in communication and with communication

The Society of St Paul was conceived by Blessed Giacomo Alberione as an organization dedicated to written preaching, that is, the **apostolate of the press**. The Founder later took up the technological progress that during the XX century transformed communications, embracing and developing new means, such as cinema, radio, discs, TV, thus modifying the initial project of the apostolate of the press and changing it to the «**apostolate with the means of social communication**» (*SSP Constitutions*, art. 2).

The new means of communication were integrated into the Pauline apostolate without changing the initial formulation. What had first been said with regard to the preparation of books was essentially applied to the other means, seen as further modes for the transmission of the Pauline preaching. Don Alberione explained in December of 1954: "Preaching can be done by voice or with the written word, and can be transmitted in various ways, for example, with television or radio" (*Preachings*, 5 [1957], 130).

The distinction between the three phases of the Pauline apostolate (redaction, technique, propaganda) was valid, with the necessary adaptations being made according to the expressive laws of each instrument, for all the means of communication. The creation, multiplication and diffusion of messages was always linked to the complex technological processes that implied the division of work, specialization and a significant economic commitment. All this effectively reduced the number of transmitters and resulted in an asymmetrical nature in our communication: one single issuer could address a multitude of recipients.

As a result, communication had a linear and uni-directional quality: the message was determined by the sender and the creative role of the recipient was fundamentally reduced to its reception and de-codification. The teaching characteristic of the Pauline apostolate was protected by the very nature of mass communication.

The new ways of communicating, with their new languages, new techniques, new models of socialization and new psychological attitudes, have brought about strong cultural changes that have necessitated continual cultural and technological updating. It has been necessary to face the evolution in the world of communication with the proper adaptation of editorial forms, reproduction technologies and promotion strategies. The organization of our apostolate has had to adapt to those changes that lead to the creation of a global market and the extreme specialization of technological processes.

The transformation of communication that has taken place in recent years, linked especially to the digitalization and convergence between telecommunications and information technology, has strongly transformed the model of communication.

Reflection on these changes is important for evaluating and updating the formulation of the Pauline apostolate.

2. The transformation of the model of the communicative process

The traditional instruments of communication such as the press, cinema, the radio, and television, are characterized by directional asymmetry, inasmuch as their communicative flow from a single source towards numerous addressees results in a reduced possibility of response on the part of the public. The receivers can interact only indirectly and, usually, only after the act of communication.

The forms of communication born from the processes of digitalization permit the public to choose from among a vast offering of media products, as well as to dialogue in real time and to intervene with their own contributions that can take on different forms (text, image, audio, video). They can also determine which products are offered. The most evident change is the increase in speed, the overcoming of distances and the notable reduction of the costs of communication.

Even more relevant are the changes in the public's attitude(s) towards the media. The digitalization of communication has blurred the borders between instruments of interpersonal communication (the telephone, the letter) and mass media, as well as between public and private spaces. Digital communication is characterized by "multimediality", "cross-mediality", connectivity and portability. The same portable instrument permits the user to interact with various forms of communication: from surfing the web to watching a movie, listening to the radio over the Internet, downloading mail, taking pictures, calling, writing and publishing contents.

It is possible to do all this simultaneously, and the various gadgets are becoming always more "multi-use"; while houses are becoming increasingly multi-screen. A significant sociological fact is that of the television's loss of its central role. On the other hand, the tv set is being increasingly transformed into a multimedial access point for various services, from Play-station to Internet, from DVDs to digital cable, etc.

The communicative process of the "one-to-many" type, which characterized the mass media and presupposed a near passive state of the addressee, is increasingly being substituted by the communicative process of a "many-to-many" style, and by a vision of the recipient as a user of services, capable of deciding what, when, where, how and why to begin or end a process of communication. The centrality of the subject has taken the place of the centrality of the media; and these subjects select from among the multiple forms and contents available.

3. The power of communication

One of the most important stimuli that impelled Don Alberione in his activity as a founder was the conviction of the enormous power of mass communication. The Founder saw in the press, and then in the mass media in general, an instrument

capable of **forming and correcting the mentality** of society. In this, he shared the general conviction of sociologists of his times.

Later research shifted interest from the power of the author of the message to the content of the message itself, and then to the context of the message's reception, which effects an autonomous interpretation, at the usage of the receivers. All this has allowed society to overcome both technological determinism over social and cultural values, and the undisputed power of social customs, imposing their choice over the variety of applications for these new inventions. The fact remains, however, that in the XX century the mass media have become one of the principal agents of socialization, alongside the traditional agents, such as the family, peer groups, school and the Church.

The power of the mass media was above all expressed in their function of re-constructing reality, which was primarily grasped or perceived through media communication. The over- or under-representation of certain experiences, and the silence that surround some ideas and opinions served as a vehicle for a particular vision of reality and formed public opinion, which tends to conform itself to the dominant opinions. In the long run, the involvement induced by cognitive and affective stimulation through the media produced effects on man's knowledge and values, his sentiments and behaviours. Even if the effects of the mass media depend in large measure on the context of their reception as well as their social usage, the media contributed actively to the formation of these contexts.

The recent technological developments have made communication increasingly individualized and personalized. The old apparatuses and systems of communication are giving way to services that allow anyone to place their own programming on the web at no cost; these same services today contain thousands of micro-programs. These developments render increasingly utopian the idea of using communication to form society and culture, but at the same time highlight the need to create a synergic project between communication, family, culture, school, university, parish, youth and cultural associations, civil society, etc.

In the world of digital communication, environments of individual and social life devoid of the presence of the mass media are becoming increasingly rare. The media no longer constitute a particular private interest, but are rather now the social and cultural space in which all individual and social activities take place. Communication and the media are becoming the protagonists of daily activities. Wishing to be present in communication with the Gospel, we must therefore be increasingly present in culture and in the contemporary world's lifestyle.

4. The organization of communication

The communicative process linked to the press and to the other mass media implies the collaboration of multiple, specialized persons in a series of processes geared towards the production of media projects, as well as their reproduction and diffusion among potential receivers. Don Alberione took up this necessity,

constituting as the subject of the Pauline apostolate a “**social body**” composed of different people, all specialized in the various acts of communication. The organization of the apostolate had thus to correspond to three principal phases of communication: redaction (=creation), technique (=production), and propaganda (=promotion and diffusion). Don Alberione’s initial project foresaw the carrying out of all these activities of the communicative process by Pauline religious; and the Pauline editorial apostolate has followed this path up till the end of the 1950’s.

The evolution of the Pauline editorial structures up until the end of the XX century corresponds to the transformation of the whole industry of cultural goods and services towards an ever more marked division and specialization of work. Responding to the new challenges of the times, the Pauline’s media apostolate has taken on the characteristics of business management. The apostolic structures have been opened to external personnel, and various processes linked to the creation of contents, the productive process, and promotion and diffusion have been entrusted to external entities and specialized companies.

Recent decades have been characterized by the imposing process of the concentration of the traditional mass media on the levels of ownership, publishing, and public. The scale of diffusion has allowed them to invest in the communicative process sums that are impossible for the Pauline editorial, resulting, especially in the sector of music and cinema, dominated almost exclusively by a small group of multinational corporations, in the marginalization and reduction of our productions to rare initiatives destined mostly to the religious market.

The current transformation of communication poses new challenges for the conception of the Pauline apostolate. Certainly, the new digital media have not substituted and will not substitute the old mass media. It is interesting to note, for instance, how in the last few years daily newspapers have increased their number of readers. The printing of daily newspapers is in progressive decline, but the number of on-line readers has long surpassed that of its printed newspapers, and grows continually.

At the same time, on-line versions have ceased to be an electronic copy of the printed version, and have adopted forms and languages more suitable to the world of the web. In the same way, in the past theater and the radio did not disappear with the dawn of television, but changed character and function. The dawn of new media requires the old media and old modes of organizing our activity to be transformed and integrated into the new communicative process.