

Jesus Christ, in view of loving God completely by means of one's intelligence, will, heart and physical strength». (AD, 98 & 100)

## 5. From the Word to Life

In trying to become "all things to all people" (1 Cor 9:23) in the modern context, a Pauline should respond positively to his call and strive to live up to the demands of his consecration. He should be able to live harmoniously in Pauline communities and, along with his confreres, carry out the mission of living and giving Jesus Master, the Way, the Truth and the Life, through the modern means of communication. For a Pauline, every community is a formation community and every confrere, a person in formation and a formator at the same time. The need of the hour is to focus on individual candidates who as men called by God for a particular mission, need to be fully in tune with the realities and challenges of the modern world and, as "salt of the earth" (Mt 5:13) and "light of the world" (Mt 5:14), be able to transform it.

- As a Pauline how do I form myself to take on the challenges of the Apostolate? How do I spend my free time?
- Am I able to collaborate with my confreres in the fulfilment of the common mission?
- Do my studies and specialization make me more available to the pressing needs of the apostolate?

## 6. Prayer

O Mother of Jesus Christ, you were with Him at the beginning of His life and mission. You sought the Master among the crowd, you stood beside Him when He was lifted up from the earth, consumed as the one eternal sacrifice, and you had John, your son, near at hand; accept from the beginning those who have been called, protect their growth, in their life ministry accompany your sons, O Mother of religious. Amen. (Cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 82)



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## FORMATION AS A STARTING POINT

*The holistic formation of members is of paramount importance to every religious congregation as its life and growth depends on the quality of its members. In order to address the manifold challenges in carrying out the Pauline mission in the ever-changing world, great emphasis has to be placed on the integral formation of members. Since Pauline formation is always for effective Pauline mission, authentic Pauline formation envisages a smooth blending of one's training and expertise in a given area with the willingness and openness to hard work in the context of a collective experience of a Pauline community.*

### 1. From the Superior General's Letter

«It is not a new theme and we know well how much Don Alberione insisted on the wheel of the Pauline cart of study. If there is one aspect that we must keep alive, or rather strengthen, especially in this epochal change, it is formation understood as studiousness, as constant passion for in-depth study, research, innovation... and, no less important, for integration in our lives of what we learn over time. Knowing is the relevant answer to important questions: how to reach our interlocutors and how to take on new apostolic challenges? How to rethink our mission? Which frontiers must we courageously take on? Before us there is something like an apostolic horizon that is continually growing, the fruit of a gaze that goes beyond the present, which seeks to see beyond, to dream, to think of new ways to meet today's humanity... Where does the Spirit call us to announce the Gospel? And how can we cross the sea of uncertainty, of the fear of taking risks to be where humanity lives?»

However, there is a second aspect. The preparation of the individual Pauline must necessarily be shared and therefore become a gift that also involves the community, for an apostolate lived as a community. From this point of view we must continue to create laboratories of ideas, “education villages,” gymnasiums where one learns to network with everyone’s experiences. Let us think, for example, of the Councils of Apostolate and Formation, but above all of the many forms of participation and sharing of the mission. Therefore achieving academic degrees or accumulating master’s degrees is not enough. Our mission requires people who act with a relational mindset. Always with a view to sharing, it is important to enhance our Pauline Centres for Studies in Communication and the Cultural Centres. Sharing means having an open mind. This helps us to give meaning to our study which is always for the mission, it helps us to be concrete, knowing that we live from our work, and that therefore the apostolate must be sustainable – in every sense – otherwise it must be rethought in its concreteness. In an epochal change it is essential to invest in formation to move to the other side». (Annual letter 2023-2024, 5.2 *Formation as a Starting Point*)

## **2. The encounter with the Word of God**

*St. Peter in his advice to the elders in the nascent Christian community highlights the guiding values that should permeate every aspect of the formation of the young i.e. a sense of sacrifice and total availability. Since religious formation is a work of authentic deeds rather than hypocritical words, our Blessed Founder was uncompromising in his view that the best persons should be available for the formation of the young in order to inculcate in the young minds the values of availability, hard work, a sense of belongingness and the urgency of the mission.*

«I now address the elders among you as a fellow elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ, and also a sharer in the glory which is to be revealed. Shepherd the flock which God has entrusted to you, guarding it not out of obligation but willingly for God’s sake; not as one looking for a reward but with a generous heart; do not lord it over those in your care, rather be an example to your flock. Then, when the chief Shepherd appears, you will be given a crown of unfading glory». (1 Peter 5:1-4)

## **3. The Magisterium of the Church**

*Saint John Paul II, in his post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Formation of Priests, Pastores Dabo Vobis, clearly underlines the importance of adequate structures of formation and the need of formation houses to become truly centres that foster continuous spiritual progress of the future priests and religious so that there will be a true Christification of individuals as St Paul says, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20).*

Church’s «task is not only to discern but also to “accompany” priestly vocations. But the spirit which must inspire and sustain her remains the same: that of bringing to the priesthood only those who have been called, and to bring them adequately trained, namely, with a conscious and free response of adherence and involvement of their whole person with Jesus Christ, who calls them to intimacy of life with him and to share in his mission of salvation. In this sense, the “seminary” in its different forms – and analogously the “house” of formation for religious priests – more than a place, a material space, should be a spiritual place, a way of life, an atmosphere that fosters and ensures a process of formation, so that the person who is called to the priesthood by God may become [...] a living image of Jesus Christ [...]». (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 42)

## **4. Thought of the Founder**

*Our Blessed Founder was a man of deep spirituality and concrete actions who wanted his sons and daughters to be able to read the signs of the times and respond to the challenges of the times positively and effectively with deep seated faith in God and openness to the guidance of the Spirit. In the mind of the Founder, formation is not simply an intellectual stimulation far removed from the concrete reality of one’s surroundings, but an intense preparation to mould oneself into a catalyst of transformation.*

«Care shall be taken that in learning, as well as in teaching, studies be always directed and cultivated in such a way that Jesus Christ, Our Divine Master, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, be ever more known and understood by us, and that Christ be more completely formed in our mind, will and heart. Thus we shall become skillful masters of souls, because we have been, first, humble and intelligent disciples of Christ. The whole person in