



FINAL REPORT FOR THE INTERCAPITULAR ASSEMBLY

Fr. Silvio Sassi, Superior General

0. Premises

0.1. Having reached the end of our works, so as to have a **synthesis** of the journey accomplished and in order to inform the whole Congregation about what we have lived and realized, we have deemed it opportune to entrust the redaction of the *Final Document* to some members of the General Government and to three Major Superiors of Circumscription. I do not intend, therefore, to repeat what will be said in that concluding synthesis.

0.2. I desire to invite you to reflect on the **experience** that we have lived during these past fifteen days together **as a group** that prays, makes documents with precision regarding various aspects of the Congregation, hears each other in dialog, presents proposals, expresses itself in votes regarding our norms and looks to the future of the Pauline charism. The General Government has offered to the Superiors of Circumscription a vision in synopsis which embraces all our reality scattered in the five continents; on their part, each of the Superiors of Circumscription has placed in common the concrete situation of the portion of the Congregation entrusted to him. There has been, therefore, **a fruitful integration between the standpoint of universal character and that one of a local dimension**: we have listened to each other in turns. What we think of the Congregation at the end of the intercapitular Assembly is not the same idea that we had in ourselves at the start.

With the passing of the days, a “**common mentality**” has grown about the situation of the whole Congregation that has allowed the placing of each individual Circumscription in the context of all the others, welcoming awareness of the **positive aspects** and of the **problematic situations**, with gratitude towards the Brothers committed in the Pauline life and who confidently abandon themselves to the wisdom of the Spirit so that He may compensate for our inabilities and our limitations.

1. Considerations about the Pauline personnel

1.1. In my initial report I have offered **data** regarding the numerical composition and the geographical distribution of the members of the Congregation up to 31.12.2012. We have “**meditated**” on the ciphers, on the numbers of the personnel that make up the Congregation and the **first conclusion** is the vivid and thankful a-

SUPERIORE GENERALE

wareness that it is the **Spirit** that guides, through a mysterious but always ongoing action, the Church, and in her, our Congregation. .

This conviction derives from our meditation on the numbers and from the qualitative knowledge that the General Government and the Superiors of Circumscription have of the Brothers: we can testify without hesitation about the **unconditional dedication** of the Paulines of every generation in the commitment of “sanctification and apostolate” that can be expressed by the words of our Father Saint Paul: “I do all for the Gospel” (1Cor 9,23).

At the same time, comparing the great **needs** of our mission and of Pauline formation today and the real **energies** at our disposal to face them, we take note of the disproportion and we are aware that we “carry a treasure in vessels of clay” (2Cor 4,7). However, **we do not want to transform lamentations of our limits into a motive in life**, but we have the boldness to put at the service of the Gospel **our poverty**, whether personal, communitarian or Congregational, following the example of Paul who says: “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2Cor, 12, 10). Blessed Alberione has taught us to not paralyse ourselves “in the crying of the indolent” (*Apostolato stampa*, 1933, p. 154), but to imitate with decision the example of the good Samaritan to live out through the apostolate of communications all the works of mercy (cf *Vademecum*, n. 1010).

1.2. At almost a hundred years from our foundation, while reflecting on the numbers, the geographical distribution and the qualities of the Pauline personnel, we find the confirmation of the **development** and of the **changes** that have transformed the Congregation. Changes in the **distribution of persons**: Circumscriptions that one time had available many members, young of age, in full apostolic activity, operating in numerous communities and that today are still made up of many members but advanced in years, often not directly involved by the apostolate and scattered in communities that are regrouping, also because of a scarce or no injection of youth.

Thanks be to God, other Circumscriptions, in other continents, count generations that have a young median age, with numerous young men who ask to be Paulines, with communities that are expanding and with new foundations.

We observe the changes even in the **apostolic activities**: Circumscriptions that in the past years were leaders in apostolic initiatives, today, also in virtue of difficult economic-financial contexts, don't depend anymore on the successes of a past time and must decide with courage important restructurings if they want to continue to be significant in the apostolate of communications.

Other Circumscriptions, although not availing of big apostolic structures, are however realizing a gradual development of their apostolic activities and are more disposed to integrate digital communication in the same old apostolate.

Already starting from the Special General Chapter of 1969/1971 and, in particular, with the approval of the *Constitutions and Directory* in 1984, considered as **integrating part of the Pauline charism**, apostolate is not only the use of communication for explicit evangelization and the promotion of human values in Christian perspective, but also the **study, research and teaching of communication** in faculties and

centers of study which are important initiatives of today in the Congregation (COMFIL, FAPCOM, SPSF, SPICE, ecc), preceded in the 1980's by the birth and precious didactic activity of the International Pauline Studio of Social Communications (SPICS).

There are changes in the **Pauline integral formation**: in the past it was possible to realize the intellectual formation inside the house; today almost all the academic formation in philosophy, theology and specializations takes place in centers of research and outside studios. If this guarantees, often, the quality of the theoretical teaching, not always is completed in the house the intellectual formation through the "Pauline" formation so as to put studies at the service of the apostolate.

There are changes in the **ecclesial, social, cultural and communications** contexts wherein in these almost hundred years the Congregation has developed and lives today: Vatican Council II, the post-council universal magisterium, above all about evangelization, about the theology of the consecrated life and communication as opportunity for a new evangelization; passage from the industrial era to the post-industrial era and to the now reorganization of labor at world level; evolution from the modern to the post-modern up to the actual society of values in constant change; from mass media communication to communication as culture, until digital communication and the internet that has become a life environment for the person and for society.

All the "**four wheels of the Pauline cart**" evolve in contexts radically different from those in which they have been elaborated and, in order to keep the charism young, it is necessary to proceed to an updating through a creative but courageous fidelity, without repeating formulas and slogans that, little by little, for the new generations of Paulines become incomprehensible and incapable of enthusing and motivating.

2. Future strategies for the Pauline charism

2.1. In order to "rekindle in creative fidelity" the Pauline charism at almost a hundred years after its birth, we must let converge as complementary three different strategies: acquire a documented **knowledge** of the thought and work of blessed James Alberione so as to be able to realize a **modernization** of it in all its components in the present historical context, reaffirming with clarity that our **mission** is the only reason of our existence in the Church which can be realized in a lasting way only by uniting the forces through a multiple **solidarity** among all the Circumscriptions.

2.2. The Pauline charism that we have received from blessed James Alberione has been **elaborated** by him as a "mission" received from the Spirit and through a constant and obstinate dialog that leads to the papal approval, willed directly by the Popes. **The Pauline charism is an inseparable unity of thought and action**, a thought in action and an acting thought: to say that Fr. Alberione is above all a "man of action" reveals a rather superficial knowledge of the "**thought**" that the Primo Mae-

stro has gradually matured to motivate in all its aspects his genial intuition of the “**e-
quivalence between the written preaching and oral preaching.**”

Today, above all the younger generations of priests, perpetual professed and juniors need a “**deepened and systematic**” knowledge of blessed Alberione regarding the Pauline charism in all its components. To be satisfied with some generic affirmations, with some quote extrapolated from its context and with some call for concrete initiatives on the part of the Founder, is not enough to form a robust and rooted Pauline mentality.

If there is no true knowledge of the inheritance received, it is impossible to proceed even to **an effective modernization**, since not knowing the manner of thinking and the contents of the thought of the Founder, one risks not knowing how to identify what consists an unchangeable factor and what must be “updated” constantly. Without an exact knowledge of “from where we come from,” it is not possible to decide with wisdom “where do we go now.”

2.3. A faithful actualization of the Pauline charism is based on the “**pastoral**” **concern** that has guided blessed Alberione to start the Society of Saint Paul and, successively, all the other Institutions of the Pauline Family. All “the four wheels of the Pauline cart” have been conceived by the Founder to allow the Pauline apostle to “evangelize through the fastest and most effective communication of every time.” Everything at the service of evangelization (cf *Constitutions*, art. 66).

In a context of Church that in the last decades acquires ever more awareness that **its sole reason for being is evangelization** (cf Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, n. 14), the actualization of the Pauline charism must reaffirm its initial identity that has been described by Fr. Alberione as a “new, long and profound evangelization” (*UCBS*, 20 August 1926, in *La primavera paolina*, p. 680).

A *Pauline project of new evangelization through present-day communication*, following the methodology used by Fr. Alberione in *Apostolato stampa*, must make actual all the elements of the Pauline charism by assuming today’s interpretations of the thought and apostolic activity of our Father **Saint Paul**, the presentations of the entire faith elaborated starting from **Vatican Council II**, the **universal magisterium regarding communication**, the radical changes that happened in **communication**; must trace, alongside the profile of the Pauline of the era of mass media, **the identity of the Pauline apostle with digital communication**. The entire Project **motivated**, starting from the stimuli of a missionary faith, but **elaborated** starting from those who we want to evangelize, directly or through human values.

2.4. To “rekindle the gift received” we need that **every Pauline** feel motivated in his reasons of sanctity and apostolate; however remaining indispensable is an involvement of **all the communities** that form every Circumscription and the determined commitment for an **effective solidarity** among the Circumscriptions of every linguistic-continental area and of the entire Congregation.

Also pushed by external necessities, we must rediscover the constant invitation of the Founder to value “**organization**”: in the individual Circumscriptions (Apostolic

project, Iter formativo, Community project, administrative, financial and patrimonial centralization); among the Circumscriptions (CIDEP, GEC, CAP/ESW); on the level of Congregation (IX General Chapter, CTIA, SIF, CSP, Pauline Fund, exchange of Pauline personnel, coordination of specializations, study of languages, etc.).

The changes that happened in the Congregation during these almost hundred years, point out to us the **need for solidarity** at all levels among our Circumscriptions: it is the moment to put in common the little or much that each one has, in view of the good of all. If, by neglecting also the supernatural vision of the Congregation as a “**mystical body**,” described by Saint Paul and applied to us by blessed Alberione, we isolate ourselves and think that we can have a future by ourselves, that will be a gradual end in scattered order: **only solidarity at all levels is the most favorable human condition to allow the Spirit to relaunch our Congregation, whether in evangelization employing communication or as style of life fascinating for the young men of today.**



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