



International Meeting of the Coordinators of Formation and Vocation Promotion of the Society of Saint Paul

Ariccia (Rome), 14-21 September 2008

VOCATION PROPOSAL AND FORMATION FOR THE PAULINE MISSION TODAY

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0. Collaborators with God

0.1. In order to live with a supernatural spirit this important event of our Congregation, we motivate our human effort by drawing some certainties of faith from the Word of God.

While Gideon is preparing to fight the Midianites, the Lord tells him: “The men who are with you are too many, for me to put the Midianites in their hands. The Israelites, in fact, could boast of the initiative against me, thinking that they have been saved through their own efforts”. After a series of attempts indicated by the Lord to select the combatants, only three hundred Israelites of the thirty-two thousand that Gideon had gathered remain with him. Those who have been chosen, notwithstanding the numerical disproportion and armed only with a horn and a vase with inside a torch, won against the Midianites (*Judg 7,1-25*). Victory is a gift of God to the people: **the numbers of men are not the numbers of God**; he alone is Providence that directs everything.

0.2. Even the battle between David and Goliath, narrated in the first book of Samuel (17,1-57) is an illustration of the diversity between human categories and the divine will: a giant in complete battle outfit against a young pastor who carries a staff, a slingshot, and five stones from a torrent. David fights with faith: “I go against you in the name of the Lord” (*1Sam 17,45*). The giant is struck down with the blow of a slingshot.

0.3. At the start of his public ministry, Jesus chooses twelve apostles, calling them to live with him to give them a mission (*Mt 10,1-41*). In choosing and sending the seventy-two disciples, Jesus affirms: “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Pray therefore the lord of the field to send workers in his harvest” (*Lk 10,2*).

At the moment of his ascension, Jesus sends his disciples: “Going, therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (*Mt 28,19-20*). The work that Jesus, through the will of the Father, has carried out during his earthly existence, is by himself entrusted to his disciples and, after them, to the Christians of every historical era with the promise that they will accomplish “works even greater than he has done” (*Jn 14,12*).

0.4. From these citations of passages from Holy Scripture, we strengthen our conviction necessary for our commitment of research and formation for Pauline apostles: it is God who is the lord of the field and we are involved in praying and working for his harvest. **The harvest is not ours, we are only collaborators with God**” (*1Cor 3,9*).

The complete mind-set of our praying, thinking and operating for vocations and for their formation has been synthesized by John Paul II in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Vita consecrata* (25.03.1996), when he reprises a wise conviction: “It will be well, in that regard, to rediscover what the great

protagonists of apostolic action have always taught: it is necessary to trust in God as if everything depended on Him and at the same time to commit generously as if everything depended on us” (n. 73).

1. Goals to attain

1.1. This meeting of ours is connected with the **tradition** that the Congregation possesses in the specific sphere of vocation pastoral and formation. The example and teaching of blessed James Alberione, the *Ratio studiorum* prepared by the same Founder, the indications of the successive General Chapters, the activity of the General Governments resulting in normative documents of the Superiors General, the *Ratio formationis* and the successive *Iter formativi*, the difficult work carried out by the vocation promoters and formators, are the principal expressions of a commitment that has arisen with the Congregation and has accompanied with lights and shadows her entire history until now.

Although it inscribes itself in the continuity of our tradition, this meeting is a **historical event** because it is the first time that those in charge of formation in all our Circumscriptions come to meet.

The historical effect of this meeting is that through this initiative is affirmed with clarity the **importance** of the search and formation of vocations for our Congregation. In numerous occasions the Founder has repeated the same conviction: “Because without personnel, no works are done. We have so many beautiful ideas, beautiful plans, but beautiful programs are not enough so that there may be for souls that fruit which is necessary. Persons are needed! The work of works is: vocations! (*Alle Figlie di San Paolo, 1950-1953, 176*). In even a more synthetic form, the Primo Maestro, during the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Society of Saint Paul, gives notice: “**I remind everybody: the works of God are accomplished by men who are of God**” (*San Paolo, July-August 1954*).

Leaving to Providence to decide on the needed number of Paulines, we translate, for the present situation of the Congregation, the concern that the Primo Maestro from the start attributes to the search and formation of the young: **the quantity and quality of Paulines affects in a decisive way the interpretation and the concrete manner of living of the integrality of the Pauline charism.**

A concrete application of this observation can be seen in the history of our Congregation: the passage from Pauline autarchy, in all the phases of our apostolate, to the gradual insertion of lay collaborators, to the entrusting to competent laity of roles ever since filled up by Paulines. The quantity and quality of Paulines, therefore, affects the human resources, the organigram and the manual of roles in our apostolic activity.

Another episode of observation regarding Pauline personnel can be emphasized in the identity and percentage of the single Pauline vocation, priest and disciple, willed by the Founder: “Love one another, collaborate, respect one another as two complementary parts: two beings that form a new being in the Church: the apostle of the editions” (*Ut perfectus sit homo Dei, I, 155*); “two thirds of the disciples and a third of priests” (*San Paolo, 1965*). We all know the difficulties that in some Circumscriptions the vocation proposal for the disciple meets, having as result a percentage among Pauline priests and disciples that is quite far from the dream of the Founder.

Even the need for an actualization of the Pauline charism is strictly in relation to the admission of new generations of Paulines. When the majority of the members of the Congregation is formed by adult generations and advanced in years and the young are few, generally less felt is the urgency of posing questions on how to interpret and live the Pauline charism today.

With a certain humor the Founder already underlined in 1957: “Little by little as one generation passes, the young seem intolerant of the old and say: “These old people understand nothing!”. The old, in their turn, in general seem to oppose all that is new: “During my time, we don’t do like that!”. A healthy modernity is the right way that you must follow” (*Ipsium audite 3 (1957), p. 18*).

1.2. By means of our meeting, besides reaffirming the indisputable priority of vocation pastoral and formation, it is necessary to reach a **second objective**: realize a **documented analysis**, during this precise historical moment, of what is being done in the vocation proposal and formation in each of the Circumscriptions.

By seriously examining the vocation material of every Circumscription, observing the various *Iter formativi* and listening to the report of the experience of everyone of you, we can have enough information to pick up in this variety what are the **unchangeable elements and the changeable elements** of the Pauline charism. This verification, however, must be realized on two complementary levels: your practice and the identity of the Pauline charism as the Founder has wanted it.

The documentation that has been pointed out to you for you to study before participating in this meeting and the two foreseen reports, permit to single out the changeable and the unchangeable elements of the Pauline charism in the thought of the Primo Maestro. Without this knowledge, we will not be able to size up adequately if in our practice of vocation pastoral and formation we have decided arbitrarily what must be changeable and unchangeable, thus abandoning fidelity to the Founder. We are not the owners of the Pauline charism so as to decide changes through our personal tastes.

The rigorous formation in communication of our young, for example, develops in an original way today an unchangeable element willed by the Founder for the Pauline; viceversa, a vague presentation of the Pauline charism and a substitution of the Pauline apostolate with parish ministry except for special cases that are already present in the history of our Congregation, constitutes a deviation from an unchangeable element of the Pauline charism.

The documented analysis accomplished during these days will allow furthermore putting in relation the *Ratio formationis* and every *Iter formativo*. We all know that the *Ratio formationis* is an application of the indications of the universal Magisterium to vocation pastoral and formation, to our charism. The *Iter formativo*, in its turn, is the adaptation of the *Ratio*, normative document for the whole Congregation, to the reality of a Circumscription.

Putting close to each other these two normative texts and putting them in relation with one another, we can, first of all, observe in what way in each Circumscription one is bound to take into account the real situation to conform to the general indications. Putting aside the fact that the *Iter* must be elaborated by each Circumscription, we can say paradoxically that certain *Iter formativi* appear to be another copy of the *Ratio*; or else that they have an analysis of specific characteristics such that, due to their being generic, could go well in any Circumscription.

On the contrary: a serious study of the ecclesial, social, cultural and above all juvenile context, besides being a valid instrument of local adaptation, can offer useful indications also for the revision of the *Ratio formationis*. In fact, the reelaboration of this text, that we have in program, is motivated certainly by the desire to take into account the new indications of the universal Magisterium, the evolution of the Congregation, the new demands of pedagogy, and the rapid changes in communication, but it also intends to be an important contribution to move the normative text closer to the requirements of the actual international context.

Through ulterior verification we can also put in relief the continuity that exists between the *Iter formativo*, approved by the Government of the circumscription and by the General Government, and its factual realization. It is not improbable that the *Iter* remains a written text without passing into the concreteness of vocation pastoral and formation. When this forgetfulness happens, we miss a big occasion, that is, the attempt to “inculturate the charism” in the various Circumscriptions, since the unchangeable elements themselves of the Pauline charism must be proposed and lived in the “specific” of each Circumscription.

It is true that the inculturation of the charism requires that first of all the inculturation of the Christian faith should take place, but I believe that they are ideals that with the exception of some successful case, still remain only as good intentions.

1.3. The **third objective** that we must reach should be the result of a method of work: **evaluations are made in order to realize new projects**. Emphasizing the priority of commitment for the Pauline personnel and knowing well how in this precise moment of the Congregation we are realizing vocation pastoral and formation, are for the purpose of getting better and for a relaunching for the future. From this meeting we should leave with new ideas to realize new projects: the past and the present even in this Pauline area are at the service of the future.

Before any other consideration, we must identify those who are primarily committed in the formulation of a project to relaunch vocation promotion and formation. The internal normative texts that can help us are: the **Constitutions and Directory**, the **Documents of the General Chapters**, the text **Pauline Formation for the Mission**, the *Ratio formationis* and the **Service of Authority in the Society of Saint Paul. Manual**.

I would like to call your attention regarding **numbers 430-438** of this last text. Dealing with “The circumscriptional delegated structure in vocation pastoral and formation”, it describes the actual situation of the Congregation on this aspect of the Pauline life.

It is necessary first of all to assimilate well numbers 401-409 that define an important collaboration, in the distinction of roles, between **ordinary canonical authority** (Major Superior and his Council) and **delegated canonical authority** (the General Director of the Apostolate and the General Coordinator of Formation).

These two complementary authorities have a juridical foundation in the Church’s Canon Law and are treated in our Constitutions and Directory. Therefore, they respond to a distribution of tasks that is not facultative, but that describes the effective organization of the Congregation in this historic moment.

The history of these last decades that has seen the collaboration between these two canonical authorities functioning, gives evidence both of examples of respect of the competences and therefore of fruitful collaboration, and of misunderstandings of interpretation with relative conflicts. The delegated structure of the apostolate has been the first to be placed in operation and therefore it is also the one that can document better collaboration or conflicts.

The relations between the two authorities in the apostolate and in promotion and formation are regulated by spheres of competence that in theory can easily be distinguished. In effect, it is the ordinary canonical authority that gives the delegation; consequently, it is its role to **indicate** the goals to be attained and to **verify** their accomplishment. The role of delegated authority is to **put in action** all the strategies demanded by the goals fixed by the ordinary canonical authority and to **render account** of the results attained.

The **Apostolic Project** and the **Iter formativo** are two plans proper of the Circumscription that lay the bases of this distinction of complementary roles. If in a Circumscription these two projects, functionally necessary and complementary, have not been elaborated, we can understand the conditions of greater conflict between authorities, with the risk that all want to do all or that each one discharges its own responsibilities to the other.

Though admitting, as exception to the rule and due to a recognized need, that in some Circumscription either the Major Superior or one of his Councilors handles one or both of the delegated tasks, experience, however, documents for us the **greater utility** of the distinction of responsibilities. It is an utopia to exalt as an ideal solution the taking of decision and the putting into action of urgent interventions, the concentrating of responsibilities that normally belong to different tasks.

Meriting to be emphasized is n. 432, that deals with the **task** of the General Coordinator of Formation: “...so that he may coordinate and guide the activity of Vocation Pastoral and of Formation in the Province or Region, and to that end the needed faculties are delegated to him”. N. 434 conveys the **sphere of competence** of the General Coordinator of Formation that: “embraces all the formative activities of the Circumscription in their various stages (from vocation pastoral to permanent formation)”.

This profile allows at least two clarifications. We know that there are Circumscriptions in which the General Coordinator of Formation has at his side one Responsible for vocation pastoral. That is possible and legitimate, but on one condition: that they not be persons incapable of working with common intent and, in particular, that the final responsibility for all is of the Coordinator. The

division of tasks is handled firstly by the Coordinator who, therefore, cannot have other jobs, either given to him by the legitimate Superior or decided on his own, both impeding this priority work of his. Having many inside tasks, one risks in fact neglecting the principal one; in inventing other activities outside the community, one commits a true injustice and a conscious theft, withdrawing necessary forces from the Congregation.

The second clarification concerns “permanent formation” that constitutes a problem recurring on the occasion of General Chapters, Provincial Chapters and Regional Assemblies. The VIII General Chapter in **operative line 2.1.1**, prescribes: “The Circumscription Government should formulate a Plan of Permanent Formation, actively involving all the members”. Between what is written in the *Service of Authority...* and established by the VIII General Chapter on permanent formation, there is no contradiction because the Government of Circumscription, in realizing the Chapter’s decision, can make use of the elaboration of the *Iter formativo*, without creating another project. What is of interest to the VIII General Chapter is to stimulate the urgency of permanent formation.

The valorisation of the General Coordinator of Formation and international collaboration in vocation pastoral and formation will be aided with fruit by the realization of **operative line 2.2.1** that charges the General Government to “create an ‘International Secretariat’ to animate, coordinate and verify the work of vocation pastoral and of basic and permanent formation in the Circumscriptions”.

As we can see, in this meeting two other important events are connected: the **revision** of the *Ratio formationis* and the **constitution** of the International Secretariat that will guide and support the vocation pastoral and formation, following the example of the apostolic organization aided by three **continental bodies**, corresponding to Cidep, Europe Group and Cap/Esw.

2. Integrality and formation for mission for the Pauline of today

2.1. The main goals just outlined: reaffirming the importance of vocation promotion and formation, and documenting – with the help of the reports of Fr. Juan Galaviz (on integral formation) and of Fr. Juan Antonio Carrera (on Pauline formation for the mission) – how this commitment is carried out today in our Circumscriptions, must result in ideas and initiatives of relaunch in this strategic sphere for the future of the Congregation.

To such relaunching of Pauline promotion and formation I too want to contribute, underlining with energy that we need to look for and form young men that may become the **Paulines of today, to evangelize the men of today with the means of today**. The context of the present, in which every day that passes becomes future, is indispensable if we want to be of our time and not fall into the danger of reaffirming certainties that are indisputable but that do not know how to incarnate themselves in the history of today. Of little help are beautiful ideas without arms that dress them with concrete history.

The observations that I propose have as premise acknowledgment and gratitude for all Paulines who are committed in the difficult apostolate of vocation pastoral and formation. The invitation to become better is an explicit recognition that the good already exists and must be appreciated.

2.2. **Pauline vocation pastoral** — All the initiatives that aim to make known to the young the Pauline vocation are characterized for two components: the young that are reached by the message and the content of the message, that is, the Pauline charism.

The Pauline vocation pastoral, as you know well, needs to be programmed on appropriate knowledge of the young with whom we intend to communicate. We must admit that we need to provide ourselves with more rigorous instruments in the study of the world of youth. The young man cannot be imagined based on memories or making reference to a minority or simplifications invented on the study desk or read in some article. We need to **study the youth**, not to imagine it at

our leisure. In some Circumscriptions we have proceeded to surveys done out of our own initiative or taken from specialized institutes and from centers of study regarding youth.

It is for some time that in the social context in which the youth lives, at world level, the vocation proposal struggles to meet some young man endowed with all those requisites that motivate entrance into a religious community and life of Pauline consecration. A young man that comes from a practicing Catholic family, faithful in his Christian life, culturally prepared, with a balanced personality and clear ideas about his future, is not the normal profile of the majority of the sons of today's society.

The temptation of superficial knowledge of the young man or the inability to help him in the road to the maturation of his decision, has as a result the rapid entrance and exit from our communities.

The serious study of the young men with whom we want to communicate must be integrated by a **vocation material** that presents in a true and attractive manner the Pauline life. On the occasion of the vocation year celebrated in the whole Congregation, a commission of Paulines has examined, on behalf of the General Government, the vocation material that has arrived. I believe that the concluding pointers of the commission are still valid.

On the level of **contents** it is necessary to present with clarity the Pauline vocation, avoiding genericalness or an idealized presentation: neither monks nor professionals in communication, much less parish priests, but believers in Christ who feel themselves apostles sent to evangelize, endowed with the necessary competence in communication.

The first professionalism of the Pauline is placed at the service of vocation material: how can one propose a life spent in evangelizing through communication by means of a communication that is "poor" in its formulation? We must have the humility to admit that certain vocation material is only the fruit of good intentions; handling well the **language** used to communicate the Pauline vocation is already a proposal in itself.

Among the favored means to meet young men, internet communication is certainly an important occasion. Observing our **Internet sites**, it is dutiful to ask ourselves also about the commitment and care that we have to present correctly the Pauline vocation. The General Government is studying through the CTIA what path to make so as to have an identical profile in all our sites, above all for the institutional image of the Congregation.

The study of the young men and the realization of an interesting vocation material are completed by the **personality of the Pauline** through which the young man enters in contact for the first time. The young man who already comes from a network of interpersonal relations and loves to care for virtual relationships through informatics, has his expectations in regard to the first Pauline that he personally meets, because the latter constitutes the incarnation of his imagined ideal. For the young man, who lives in a continuous alternation of interpersonal and virtual relations, his first personal contact with a Pauline is destined to leave a mark. In case the young man is disposed to meet or live for some time in a Pauline community, his impressions start to change into more concrete convictions about the Pauline vocation. It is superfluous to underline the importance of the figure of the vocation director and of the community that welcomes young men for an experience. Perhaps the ideal is fascinating, but the persons who incarnate it are disappointing; often the personality of the young man is not disposed to heroism so as to live in a context of obvious contradictions.

2.3. Basic formation — Once the young man asks to enter the community and he is accepted, in order to become a Pauline he passes through an itinerary of specific formation that we can unify in the image dear to blessed Alberione: the **four wheels** of the Pauline cart.

2.3.1. Thanks to experiences of spirituality in the parish or ecclesial movements, the young man already possesses some personal way of believing himself as a **believer** of Christ. Even before thinking about a systematic initiation to Pauline spirituality, he needs help to observe the quality of the faith that he carries with himself. This previous deepening of the Christian faith cannot be put aside choosing to propose to him only the Pauline spirituality.

On the basis of this faith that is aware of its own believing, the **Pauline spirituality** can be grafted. I believe that we must meditate often the invitation of the Founder to not consider the Pauline spirituality as

a series of devotions for the practices of piety. Christ the Master, way, truth and life, Mary Queen of Apostles and Saint Paul are the foundation of the style of Pauline life: to make oneself Christ in order to evangelize by means of communication. The example and teaching of the Primo Maestro has to be studied in depth, not substituted by begging from other spiritualities.

It is useful to ask ourselves about how we form for Pauline spirituality, that has to be presented and lived in an unrescindable unity with the apostolate of communication. Not a generic spirituality for whatever apostolate, but a specific spirituality fit for a particular apostolate.

If our spirituality loses its connection with the apostolate and the apostolate does not find in spiritual motivation its reason for existence, we fall into a deadly schizophrenia.

It is also a harmful equivocation to present spiritual commitment only as fidelity to the **practices of piety**. The constant commitment of participation in the Pauline practices of piety is certainly basic, but it is not all. Cultivating the Pauline spirituality also includes the formation of the entire personality, lived through the commitment of a progressive Christification of all the aspects of existence. Paradoxically, we can have persons faithful to the practices of piety, but inspired by other values in the rest of their lives.

2.3.2. **Cultural formation** is in proportion to the requirements of our apostolate. The serious study of philosophy, theology, communication and languages is the priority of this demanding program.

Since the cultural formation of the young Paulines today takes place in centers of study outside the house, it is necessary to choose with care the best schools, without minding the expenses or losing ourselves in calculations that are out of place. The quality of the teaching, the reactions of the young men and the results obtained must be the object of verification that, in the last instance, is reserved to the General Coordinator of Formation. An ignorant Pauline is a pain for himself and a potential harm to the Congregation.

If attending specialized external centers is often guarantee of the quality of study, it is, however, necessary to integrate these studies, valid for every aspirant to the priesthood and to the religious life, with a systematic **teaching on the Pauline charism**.

The Primo Maestro reminds us that for the Pauline the purpose of study is the apostolate. If a young man is not aided to ordain to his vocation what he studies, he is living a profound gap in his formation. It is not enough that after the courses he is committed manually in the apostolate: the creation of a Pauline mentality is needed.

The urgency of integrating the external academic studies with the methodical study of our charism is so important that the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has published an *Instruction* dealing with the theme *Inter-institutional collaboration for formation* (08.12.1998).

Reaffirming the validity of the document *Formazione per la missione (Formation for the mission)*, I emphasize some directives contained therein.

Before the perpetual profession and the holy orders, it is necessary to finish all the basic studies, “after an adequate formation in the field of social communication” and “after a full-time insertion (not less than 12 months) in the specific Pauline apostolate”(n. 5).

Even the requirement of **formation in communication** is not identified with the eventual hours in the apostolate: needed is a systematic study of the phenomenon of communication, with the relative diploma of recognition. Attending some hours in a course or an eventual self-formation, even making use of the Internet, is not what is asked for a useful formation.

Even n. 6 of *Formazione per la missione* has to be taken in careful consideration: “Every candidate, before finishing his basic formation, should learn at least one **foreign language** (as to read it and speak it according to current usage) in addition to his own native tongue. ...Moreover, all Paulines are recommended to acquire a sufficient knowledge of **Italian** that allows direct access to the historical and charismatic sources of the Congregation”. Knowledge of languages is a true investment for the future of a Pauline; neglecting this ability is to place obstacles in the possibilities of a Pauline life of broad interests, in collaboration among the various Circumscriptions having different languages and in international meetings.

2.3.3. **Involvement in the apostolate**, with hours of effective labor, remains an important educational value, whose success is made easy by a series of conditions.

Before making busy a young man in an apostolic work, it is advisable that, like all the Paulines, he be informed about the **Apostolic Project** of the Circumscription so he can give a sense of community to an activity that can seem to be solitary or of little importance. His reciprocal belonging to the respective Councils both of the General Director of the Apostolate and of the General Coordinator of Formation can be very advantageous in offering a complete panorama in which the young man is being formed.

In the apostolic activity required of the young man, **work** is to be remembered as a formative element in the Pauline personality, because it accustoms one to gain his bread, to responsibility for his actions and to the perception that he is part of a group.

Since practical commitment in the apostolate should accompany all the period of basic formation, it would be advantageous if the young man can experience the **various forms** of the apostolate of a Circumscription, without being confined for all the time in the same work.

The fatigue of work and experience in the various sectors of our apostolate should allow the young man to have an exact idea about the **instrument of the enterprise** adopted by the Congregation as means of useful work so as to be able to evangelize. We are not industrialists. We are apostles that utilize effective means for evangelization. It is evident that the assimilation of the entrepreneurial method, with the planning of human and financial resources, with organigram and procedure manuals, assumes in each Circumscription a particular physiognomy and is incarnated by the way of behaving of the more adult Paulines. In fact, education in order to evangelize by working in a group is not realized only by theoretically explaining the functioning of an enterprise, but by giving the example of one who puts professionalism and office at the service of his sanctification and evangelization.

The presence of **lay collaborators** in our apostolic activity can be valorised also in function of the human and apostolic formation of the young man. Respect for the work of others, ability to have civil and balanced human relations, the example of professionalism in the trade of communication are some ways to perceive in a positive form the presence of lay persons.

Working together in the same area, the young man in formation can perceive how much he must **draw** from the lay collaborators to strengthen his formation and how much he must **leave out** or **add** having recourse to other sources to maintain his apostolate on the level of mission and evangelization. Certainly, some lay collaborators, besides their professional work, are disposed to be involved in our ideals; the young men in formation must all be convinced that supernatural purposes are their priority and that they can give witness through their commitment in work to these their certainties.

Competence in the use of **informatics technology** is an indispensable element for the actual realization of the apostolate. It is evident therefore that apart from a private formation, the young men must have the possibility of having access to suitable courses, eventually specific, according to the needs of their apostolic commitment.

In order to motivate his involvement in the apostolate and to contribute to the integrality of his formation, it is opportune that the young man take into account the **administrative** aspect, economic or financial, of the whole apostolate: elaboration of the preventive budget, verification of the progress, interpretation of the final balance sheets, modalities for fixing the budget and for elaborating investments for projects.

The effective realization of our apostolate is not verifiable only through the economic and financial results, but is connected also to the ability to know the exigencies of the public and the modalities of the offering for our products. Therefore, going along with apostolic formation is also the field of **marketing** and **publicity**.

2.3.4. Leaving his usual life environment, the young man who comes to us inserts himself in a **community**; sometimes he comes from a positive family experience, at other times he is burdened with difficult relations. In both cases, he hopes to find in the community a reception that recognizes him as a person and as a hope for the Pauline life.

It is true that the religious community is not only a family, above all taking into account the physiognomy of many of today's families, but with this comparison we want to indicate that

interpersonal relations must be characterized by good education, respect and understanding. When the human foundation is absent in relationships, we certainly cannot think of supplying with spiritual motivations. In some communities the young men feel themselves supported, hindered, criticized, and, at times, controlled with methods that not only are less than educated but also passable for civil denunciations due to violations of privacy on account of miserable information gathering and authentic calumnies.

The Pauline community, as blessed James Alberione reminds us, “is born of the apostolate and in view of the apostolate” (*Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, I, 285) in the sense that the quality of fraternal life is in function of the apostolate: “we are at the service of souls, religious-apostles” (Id).

It is necessary to let the young man understand that an apostolic community is not a gathering of solitary persons living in the same hotel, neither is it always everybody doing the same thing at the same time in the same place. The Pauline community finds its unity in the elaboration and actuation of a **community project** that involves her in a special way in the Apostolic Project and in the Iter formationis.

The **religious vows** of obedience, chastity, poverty and fidelity to the Pope should be proposed not only from a theological point of view, but also in the perspective of the apostolate of communication. The best presentation of the religious vows, however, is the credible life of the already professed Paulines and priests. Beside the many positive examples present in all the Circumscriptions, it is undeniable that there are Paulines who are a living contradiction of what they have promised with their four vows.

In the face of these situations that lead the young men to severe judgments about the community or some confrere, it is necessary to relaunch the Pauline ideal, above all valorising the one who is faithful and particularly the model of the Founder and of our other “saints” on the way to canonization or beatification.

2.4. Specialized formation. — To have specialized Paulines is a patrimony for the whole Congregation; hence, it is necessary that the Governments of Circumscription consider it a **priority** that at the end of the basic stage, they acquire a specialization.

The period of basic formation allows the young man to manifest his specific abilities and to those responsible to verify his true aptitudes. In the meantime, the Government of Circumscription, with the help of the Council of Formation and of the Apostolate, can single out the necessary specializations.

It is not characteristic of intelligent persons to wait with impatience that the young men finish their basic formation to use them at once for the urgencies of the Circumscription; it is a true myopia that will produce sooner or later strong crises. It is necessary to think in long term.

Moreover, also necessary is coordination of the specializations on the congregational level on the part of the General Government. How difficult it is to convince the Governments of Circumscription that it is more useful for the Congregation to dispose of a group of specialized Paulines in complementary disciplines at the service of all the Circumscriptions, rather than withhold them jealously for themselves, thus risking to find themselves with great shortages.

2.5. Permanent Formation — I have already recalled the necessary collaboration between the Major Superior and the General Coordinator of Formation to realize what the VIII General Chapter has decided about this theme. The documents of the Magisterium regarding religious life, the normative texts of the Congregation and the projects of the Provincial Chapters and of the Regional Assemblies motivate in an exhaustive manner the need for a formation that is **permanent, individual and communitarian**.

Excellent is the stimulus to a continuous professional updating that comes to us from our apostolate. But the community must also evolve a common mentality, in such a way that the courses programmed for all can become an instrument to make grow a common sentiment.

3. The historical context lived with a mentality Pauline in “color”

Talking about the aspects of the Pauline life, the Founder repeats constantly that they must be characterized by a mentality and by an attitude that is “**Pauline in color**”. He wants to emphasize that the Congregation is characterized by something that to her is proper, typical and specific **in living the context** of every historical epoch.

3.1. The Pauline charism is the unrescindable synthesis between our spirituality and the apostolate of communication. It is advisable, during this jubilee year dedicated to Saint Paul, to remember that the **Pauline spirituality is the spirituality of Saint Paul interpreted by Primo Maestro for the apostolate of communication**. The Pauline “color” gives form both to our spirituality and to the apostolate. Sometimes we run the risk of presenting and living the Pauline spirituality without having as model Saint Paul, but considering him in fact as just one of the sources of inspiration.

As a believing and creative part of the **Church**, the Paulines live and preach the “Gospel of Paul”, as he describes it in his *Letters*. The conclusion of the meeting in Jerusalem ends with the preaching of the same Christ to different recipients: “we were to announce the Gospel to the **pagans**, they instead to the **circumcised**” (*Gal 2,9*).

Taking into account the due proportions, the Pauline charism is “**written preaching**” alongside “**oral preaching**”: it is the foundational intuition of blessed Alberione. With boldness we could even say: the whole Church evangelizes, the Paulines have the charism of evangelizing through communication; **as Paul has been sent to the pagans, the Paulines have been sent to communication**.

The **Constitutions** prescribe that we must insert ourselves in the Church “collaborating with her in the sector of social communication” (art. 71); when, in an exceptional way and for grave reasons, the Congregation assumes a parish, the Paulines assigned “should promote the Pauline pastoral charism among the faithful, familiarizing them with social communication by making use of opportune initiatives” (art. 76).

3.2. As they live and evangelize amidst a **society** and a **culture** that above all in these last decades undergo constant and fast changes, the Paulines make their own the attitude of the Primo Maestro who observes the social changes with the instruments of **sociology**. “Today, more than in the past, a sufficient study of sociology is necessary. Our life unfolds for the most part in society; and it is in society that we must exercise the apostolate and sanctify relationships” (*Anima e corpo per il Vangelo*, p. 138).

The Pauline mentality in relation to society and culture is **sociological** in character and **pastoral** in attitude: know the recipients of our evangelization: “Know the souls, know their needs, study their orientations, study where to take hold of them, how to multiply the good, what organizations are apt. All of this is the practical part which for you is the pastoral part. Everything proportioned!” (*Vademecum*, 1200).

3.3. **Communication**, as the world of technologies in continuous evolution and as a complex culture-phenomenon, is the specific area of evangelization of our charism.

I have already recalled the necessity that a systematic formation in communication completed by a direct work, constitutes an unrenounceable element of basic formation. Even the specializations of the Paulines in communication are a blessing for the Congregation so we can carry out both the Pauline multimedia apostolate and the Pauline apostolate of teaching as prescribed in the **Constitutions** (cf articles 74-76).

We must be proud of our initiatives in **education in communication** that have been and in particular are active in the Congregation; among the main ones I want to call to mind: the pioneering activity of the International Pauline Study of Social Communication (SPICS); the FAPCOM, Faculty of Communication of the Province of Brazil; the COMFIL of the Province of Mexico; the course of philosophy and communication in Bogotá of the Province of Colombia-Ecuador-Panamà; the school of communication of the Philippine Province.

The coming establishment on the part of the General Government of the **World Observatory of Communication** has as priority end that of studying and placing at disposal data that examine communication as integral phenomenon: all the aspects connected with technology that combine to create a culture.

3.4. When he enters the community with the desire to be a Pauline, the young man experiences the reported ideal of the Pauline charism, the concrete way in which the Paulines live it and the history of the **Congregation**.

Knowing other Catholic initiatives of communication or having to explain the charism of the Congregation to other rather perplexed persons, the young men can ask the question: “Why be religious, priests and disciples to evangelize with communication?” also: “What distinguishes our commitment in communication from that of the Jesuits, Salesians and others?”

The Paulines have not been the first, nor have they ever claimed evangelization through communication their prerogative: we associate with all who are motivated by supernatural reasons and by professional capabilities. We have never pretended to be the best: if others admit that we are such, we consider it as a compliment, though with the awareness that we are not insignificant in the ecclesial community.

In starting the Congregation, the Founder accomplishes an act that has not many like it: his objective is not only to create an editorial initiative “to oppose the bad press with the good press”, but actually he elaborates a complete plan of **new evangelization**: “the written preaching side by side with oral preaching”.

To be Paulines is, therefore, to be in the Church and to participate in evangelization with a style of life that is original: sanctify oneself through the apostolate of communication understood as effective “priesthood” that through the various means and languages of communication allows “giving God to souls and souls to God”. We are not simple Catholic editors, we are witnesses of Christ through communication; the faith that we live we translate into communication so that God may be encountered in this ever more original Areopagus: “...neither businessmen, nor industrialists, but a society of apostles”” (*Mihi vivere Christus est*, n. 185).

We are born in the Church as a “**new vocation**” and, with a certain pride, we must state that it remains as an **original form** among all the ways used by the entire ecclesial community in valorising communication for evangelization.

4. Conclusion

Even in this important meeting we ought to feel the constant invitation of blessed James Alberione who, taking from Saint Paul, invites us to have as program of life the Apostle’s “**straining forward**” (*Fil 3,13*).

Because of this, after having considered the positive and negative aspects of our vocation promotion and of our formation, we must have the determination to look over to the horizon: **search for and form young men of today to be Paulines of today**, with the goal pointed out to us by the Primo Maestro: “**Saint Paul living today**” (*Vademecum*, 651).

Ariccia (Rome), September 15, 2008

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