

**Acts of the 2nd International Seminar
on the Pauline Formation for the Mission**

Ariccia, 4-8 November 2019



2ND INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR
ON THE PAULINE FORMATION FOR THE MISSION

ARICCIA, 4-8 NOVEMBER 2019

ACTS



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PRESENTATION

With the publication of this volume, we are pleased to offer to all the Acts of the 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*, held in Ariccia from 4 to 8 November 2019, about two years after the realization of the 2nd *International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers*.

The temporal proximity between the two seminars indicates that apostolate and formation are not separate realities, but that they must always walk in harmony. In this sense, the Pauline apostolate is the fruit of integral formation, which includes spiritual life, relationships (with God, with oneself, with others), institutional charism, study, poverty, etc. A formation that starts from the origin and which we have inherited from Blessed James Alberione, who invites us to form ourselves starting from Jesus Christ, in order to live him as He is, Way, Truth and Life, in the spirit of the Apostle Paul.

In particular, this Seminar, celebrated a year after the *Synod of Bishops on the Young People*, has the task of placing us in profound harmony with this important ecclesial event and making us reflect on where we are in the specific field of formation. In this perspective, it

seeks to deepen some aspects of Pauline formation, placing it in the current ecclesial context and of consecrated, social and cultural life, especially considering the challenges imposed by digital technologies in the field of communication.

The value of these Acts is not reduced only to the contents presented by the various speakers, but is greatly enriched with the reflections and debates held during the Seminar, which was attended by members of the General Government, the Circumscription Superiors, the General Coordinators of Formation, the Directors General of the Apostolate, in addition to the novices and juniors of the different nationalities, who represented all our young people in formation within the Seminar.

We trust that these reflections will help the Circumscriptions to deepen and update the initial and ongoing formation. In this regard, it is important to organize moments of study or “weeks of ongoing formation”, taking up the topics presented here, or some other themes in particular, always trying to apply them in the individual realities.

We hope that these studies will always help us to work on our charismatic roots, on our own identity, with the aim of preparing ourselves well to respond to our mission today, aware that formation is a process that never ends. Parallel to the contents, the Pauline witness of people who love their vocation is fundamental in a time when, we believe, the practice is worth more than many words, and the Church – and with it the Congregation – does not grow by proselytism, but “by attraction” (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 14).

Heartfelt thanks to each participant and to all who collaborated for the organization of this seminar, in particular the preparatory commission, coordinated by the Councillors General for Formation and members of the SIF, Fr. José Salud Paredes and Fr. Celso Godilano. To all, happy reading and have a fruitful work!

Father Valdir José De Castro
Superior General

PROGRAMME

MONDAY 04 NOVEMBER 2019

Moderator: *Father Celso Godilano*

- 7:00 **Mass** (Spanish) – *Father José Salud Paredes*, Councillor General and President of the SIF
- 9:00 **Opening of the 2nd International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission**
Father Valdir José De Castro, Superior General of the Society of Saint Paul
- 10:30 Interval
- 11:00 **Conference – “Consecrated Life Today”**
H.E. Mons. José Rodríguez Carballo, Secretary of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
- 13:00 Lunch
- 15:00 **Conference – Reflection on the Final Document of the Synod on the Young and on the Apostolic Exhortation “Christus vivit”**
Father Rossano Sala, Salesian, Special Secretary of the Synod on the Young
- 16:30 Interval
- 17:00 **Round table – “Formation in the Light of the Synod on the Young”**
Vocation and Discernment
Professor Cecilia Costa, University of Studies of Rome Three
Acceptance and Formative Community
Father Carlo Casalone, Society of Jesus
Make the Church Young: Ongoing Formation
Sister Alessandra Smerilli, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians
- 19:00 **Vespers** (Spanish) – *Father Danilo Medina*, Superior of the Colombia-Ecuador-Panamá Province
- 19:30 Supper

TUESDAY 05 NOVEMBER 2019

Moderator: *Brother Darlei Zanon*

- 7:00 **Mass** (English) – *Father Rollin Jean-Marie Flores*, Superior of the Philippine-Macau Province
- 9:00 **Conference – “The Young and the World of Communication today – Beyond Stereotypes”**
Professor Luca Toschi, University of Florence
- 10:30 Interval
- 11:00 **Conference – “The Media Society and the Meducation”**
Professor Massimiliano Padula, Lateran Pontifical University
- 13:00 Lunch
- 15:00 **Round table – “The Digital Natives: Accepting and Forming Them”**
Ethical and Pastoral Dimension
Father Marco Sanavio, Diocese of Padua
Religious and Apostolic Dimension
Father Rosario Rosarno
The Dark Side of the Digital Environment
Dr. Federico Bianchi di Castelbianco, Psychologist and Psychotherapist of the developmental age
- 16:30 Interval
- 17:00 **Group work – Proposals for the Integral Pauline Formation in view of the Mission – Human Formation**
- 19:00 **Vespers** (English) – *Father Varghese Gnaljan*, Superior of the India-Nigeria-Great Britain-Ireland Province
- 19:30 Supper
- 20:30 Cineforum
Father Domenico Soliman, Postulator General

WEDNESDAY 06 NOVEMBER 2019

Moderator: *Father Patrick Nshole*

- 7:00 **Mass** (Portuguese) – *Father Claudiano Avelino dos Santos*, Superior of the Brazil Province
- 9:00 **Conference – “Church Magisterium on Formation”**
Professor Laura Dalfollo, Institute of Theology of Consecrated Life “Claretianum”
- 10:30 Interval
- 11:00 **Round table – “Experiences and Current Practices of Formation in other Religious Congregations”**
Jesuits – *Father Angelo Schettini*, Delegate for the Formation of the Euro-Mediterranean Province and Rector of the Philosophate of San Saba
Salesians – *Father Carlo Maria Zanotti*, Director of the Course for Formators at the Salesian Pontifical University of Rome, former Novice Master
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate – *Father Giuseppe Rubino*, Provincial Vicar, former Novice Master
- 13:00 Lunch
- 15:00 **Presentation of the Results of the “Questionnaire on Formation”**
Father Celso Godilano, Councillor General
- 16:00 Interval
- 16:30 **Conference – “Updated Reading of the Congregational Magisterium on Formation”**
Father José Salud Paredes, Councillor General and President of the SIF
- 17:30 **Personal Reflection on the Study Guide “For an Integral Pauline Formation in view of the Mission”: Search for a Pauline Formative Itinerary that responds to today’s Reality**
- 19:00 **Vespers** (Italian) – *Father Ignazio Hwang In Soo*, Superior of the Korea Region
- 19:30 Supper

THURSDAY 07 NOVEMBER 2019

Moderator: *Cleric Giuseppe Lacerenza*

- 7:00 **Mass** (French) – *Father Jacques Bosewa*, Superior of the Congo Region
- 9:00 **Conference – “Jesus Master, Original Model of the Communicator”**
Sister Regina Cesarato, Bible Scholar of the Pious Disciples of the Divine Master
- 10:30 Interval
- 11:00 **Round table – “Apostle Paul, Model-Form”**
Paul, a Man of Communication and Relationships
Father Giacomo Perego, International Coordinator of St Pauls Biblical Centre
Paul the Formator
Sister Elena Bosetti, Bible Scholar of the Sisters of Jesus Good Shepherd
Paul and his Collaborators
Pastor Lidia Maggi, Baptist Church
- 13:00 Lunch
- 15:00 **Conference – “Accept Diversity without Exclusion: Forming to Interculturality in a Multicultural Community”**
Father Rinaldo Paganelli, Dehonian, Professor at the Salesian Pontifical University
- 16:30 Interval
- 17:00 **Group work: Proposals for the Integral Pauline Formation in view of the Mission – Biblical-charismatic Formation**
- 19:00 **Vespers** (French) – *Father Patrick Nshole*, Coordinator General of Formation, Congo Region
- 19:30 Supper

FRIDAY 08 NOVEMBER 2019

Moderator: *Father Thomas Mankamthanath*

- 7:00 **Morning Prayers** (Italian) – *Father Eustacchio Imperato*, Superior of the Italy Province
- 9:00 **Conference – “Editorial Guidelines and the 2nd International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers”**
Brother Darlei Zanon, Councillor General
- 10:30 Interval
- 11:00 **Round table – International Formative Experiences**
Digital Vocation Promotion
Father Julio Roncancio, Coordinator General of Formation, Colombia-Ecuador-Panamá Province
International Novitiate of Albano
Manoel Gomes da Silva Filho, Pauline Novice
Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)
Father Raymond Ferraris, Coordinator General of Formation, Philippine-Macau Province
Course of Preparation to the Perpetual Profession
James Arinze Edeh, Pauline Junior
- 13:00 Lunch
- 15:00 **Group work – Proposals for the Integral Pauline Formation in view of the Mission – Apostolic Formation**
- 16:30 Interval
- 17:00 **In Assembly: Synthesis and Sharing of the Group Works**
Father Roberto Ponti, Methodologist
- 18:30 **Closing of the Seminar and Concluding Mass**
Father Valdir José De Castro, Superior General of the Society of Saint Paul
- 19:30 Supper

PREPARATORY COMMISSION

Father Salud Paredes

Father Celso Godilano

Brother Darlei Zanon

Father Thomas Mankamthanath

Father Patrick Nshole

Cleric Giuseppe Lacerenza

Father Roberto Ponti (Methodologist)

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Father Jose Pottayil	Councillor General
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Father Antonio Francisco da Silva	CGF Brazil Prov.
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Father Claudiano Avelino dos Santos	MS Brazil Prov.
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Father Wojciech Turek	MS Poland-Ukraine Reg.
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Father Carlos Lomeli	SIF Member & Ref. Course of Prep. Per. Prof.
Chadrack Kiboko Kitumba	Novice Albano Community
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Father Michael Goonan	Delegate of Sydney Community (Australia)
Father Norman Peña	Member of the SIF
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Junior Samy John Torrefranca	Junior Philippine-Macau Prov.
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Brother Walter Rodriguez	Italian/Spanish
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Father Jose Pottayil	Italian/English

READING KEY

INTRODUCTION

The **celebration** of this 2nd *International Seminar on Pauline Formation for the Mission*, from 4 to 8 November 2019, at the “Casa Divin Maestro” in Ariccia (RM), is the response to one of the suggestions made to the General Government by the Circumscription Superiors on the occasion of the last Interchapter of the Society of Saint Paul (Aparecida, Brazil, 15-25 February 2018). The Major Superiors asked the General Government to organize this 2nd *Seminar* to bring us into harmony – with regard to the formation of Paulines – alongside the reflections and lights that came to us from the 2nd *International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers*.

The **objective** is to promote the integral formation of the Pauline, “apostle-communicator and consecrated person”, for a renewed apostolic impetus of our mission starting from the current communication context, highlighted during the 2nd *International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers*.

The **participants**, 79 persons, are made up of the General Government, Major Superiors, General Coordinators of Formation, Directors General of the Apostolate, and invited guests.

The *Seminar* takes place through conferences, round tables, and study groups divided according to language.

This “reading key” acts as a guide for the reading-understanding of all the reports, round tables, questionnaires, etc., presented during the *Seminar*. From this perspective, we take a look at the days of the *Seminar* and present two aspects that we consider very important: the main ideas that emerged from all the interventions, and the persons or groups to whom reading the Acts is most useful.

1ST DAY:

1) *Opening of the 2nd International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* – Father Valdir José De Castro

Father Valdir points out the connection of the *2nd International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* with the *1st Seminar* of 1994. One of the principal themes that concerns our Pauline identity is “*configuration to Christ*” through integral formation. The whole of formation is in view of the mission. In this way, it realizes the formative itinerary of the Pauline to be an apostle-communicator with a specific colour that is of Paul. The Superior General also highlights some challenges in formation, arising from the world of communication and the change of epoch that humanity experiences today. He concludes by reiterating the necessity of a complementarity between formation and mission.

Useful for **initial** and **ongoing formation**, the **formation team**, the **council of apostolate**, and the **community meeting**.

2) *Consecrated Life today* – H.E. Mons. José Rodríguez Carballo

The speaker presents some aspects of formation in consecrated life using contrasting images from nature: death-life, pruning-fertility, sunset-sunrise. He suggests to face positively the challenges of consecrated life, with the hope of prophetically living one’s own call and mission. More than ever, ongoing formation must occupy the first place, demanding a personalized

discernment-accompaniment by the formators responsible in the various stages of formation.

Valid for the **juniorate** and **ongoing formation**, as well as for the **formation team** and the **community meeting**.

3) *Together on the Road to Emmaus for a virtuous reception of the Synodal Journey* – Father Rossano Sala

The text follows the overview of the process of the Synod of Bishops: *“Young people, faith and vocational discernment”*. In accompanying and discerning with young people, the following points are to be emphasized: *“time is greater than space”, “unity prevails over conflict”, “reality is more important than the idea”, “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”*. The importance of the synodal journey as *a way of being* and of *working together*, both young and old, in listening and in discernment, is put forward in order to reach pastoral choices that respond to reality.

Useful for **vocation promotion**, **initial** and **ongoing formation**, for the **formation team** and the **community meeting**.

4) *Round table – “Formation in the light of the Synod on the Young”*

The speakers are those who participated closely in the Synod on young people. Their experiences, observations and insights on the Synod are precious.

I) *Vocation and Discernment* – Professor Cecilia Costa

The author describes the dynamics of the fluid and complex anthropological, social and cultural realities of today – aggravated by the pervasive underground currents of the digital environment – which influence the discernment process for the vocational choices of young people. The role of qualified formators is essential, with *“passion for vocations”*, as *“credible witnesses”*, in accompanying young people.

Suitable for **vocation promotion**; it can also be useful for the various stages of **initial formation** and for the **formation team**.

II) *Acceptance and formative Community* – Father Carlo Casalone

With the image of the journey of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the author describes the process of welcoming on a personal

and communitarian level. It emphasizes formation in discernment and the formation of conscience, linking the spiritual and moral dimensions in the discernment process.

Useful in all stages of **initial formation**.

III) *Make the Church Young: Ongoing Formation* – Sister Alessandra Smerilli

Vocation goes through the discernment process that involves both adults and young people, requiring listening, prayer and dialogue in which the young person is valued for his uniqueness, as a bearer of the “good”. It requires that adults “walk together” with young people, and be credible through their life of witnessing.

To be addressed primarily in **ongoing formation**.

2ND DAY

It is centred on the world of communication and its “inhabitants”, especially the young people, the so-called “digital natives” in connection with the content of the 2nd *International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers*.

1. *The Media Society and the Meducation* – Professor Massimiliano Padula

The professor of the Lateran University explains the concept of “meducation” (educating with, to, and in the media), an innovative pedagogy proposal to educate society or media humanity, which is the set of all individuals (us) who coexist with, and are transformed by, technological devices. It is a school that could greatly assist formators in finding a modern methodology for formation in communication.

Valid for **ongoing formation** and the **council of apostolate**.

2. Round table: *“The Digital Natives: Accepting and Forming Them”*

Among the different ways in which young people are characterized today, the concept of “digital natives”, made known by Marc Prensky, was chosen; it is further deepened starting from several dimensions:

I) *Ethical and Pastoral Dimension* – Father Marco Sanavio

The author develops the fundamental concepts connected to digital natives, such as faith, presence, perception, and imagination.

For the **juniorate** and **ongoing formation**.

II) *Religious and Apostolic Dimension* – Father Rosario Rosarno

Assuming that digital natives are people and not an abstract category, we try to get to know them in order to better welcome them (and involve them) in our communities and apostolic areas.

For the **juniorate** and **ongoing formation**.

3RD DAY

1) “*Church Magisterium on Formation*” – Professor Laura Dalfollo

It is a report difficult to read. It takes Vatican II as its starting point. It comes up with an itinerary divided into two parts. The **first part** is dedicated to understanding religious life and its development within an ecclesiology of communion. The **second part** offers formative guidelines based on the teachings of the Magisterium in the present context, with the consequent urgencies and needs.

For the **juniorate** and **ongoing formation**.

2) Round table: “*Experiences and current Practices of Formation in other Religious Congregations*”

All the speakers present their style of forming candidates. The itinerary is very common across the milieu of consecrated life. Emphasized are the challenges that are described in each of them:

I) *Jesuits* – Father Angelo Schettini

Formation for the vows of the new generation entails new challenges: the young Jesuits are “digital natives”; the media deeply touch their emotional and relational world. During the Novitiate, novices do not have mobile phones, and they use the internet discreetly. Formators try to answer these and other challenges.

II) *Salesians* – Father Carlo Maria Zanotti

We live in a new media era, in which technology is visibly creating and transforming culture. This challenge confirms the need to form formators. An urgent challenge is that of personal accompaniment.

III) *Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate* – Father Giuseppe Rubino

The main characteristic is to form in the charism for the Oblate mission. To do this, the author insists on the knowledge of the Founder. He also relates an experience of youth ministry that they are doing in Marino (Castelli Romani).

All three speakers presented the main challenges they currently face in the field of formation of younger generations. Everyone started from the novitiate onwards. They can be interesting experiences from which one can learn, even if the charisms are different.

These are formative experiences that can help the whole **formation team** and individual **formators**.

3) *Presentation of the Results of the “Questionnaire on Formation”* – Father Celso Godilano

The Questionnaire, with very specific questions directed to perpetually professed and those in the initial formation, had the purpose of perceiving the situation of the Pauline integral formation throughout the formative process. In addition, the Questionnaire had questions addressed respectively to those directly involved in formation, therefore, to the whole formation team, to the council of apostolate and to the circumscription council. The Questionnaire has limitations. The most significant is that not everyone answered the questions. There were 369 responses (out of 837 professed and 20 novices and from 108 selected aspirants and postulants).

To understand the situation of the Pauline integral formation of the formands, its reading is fundamental for the **formation team**, all the **formators**, and all **those who carry out roles of authority**.

4) *Updated Reading of the congregational Magisterium on Formation* – Father José Salud Paredes

Probably one of the main topics of the *Seminar*, the author proposes eight firm principles that must be present throughout the formation course. These are the principles that must give the “Pauline colour” to the whole formation. Each principle is based on a Pauline bibliography.

In a special way, it should be taken into consideration by the **vocation promotion team** and the **formation team** and by **every formator**.

4TH DAY

1) *Jesus Master, Original Model of the Communicator* – Sister Regina Cesarato

In this conference, structured in seven points, Sister Regina shows that Jesus Way, Truth, and Life is the Master and Model of the Pauline Communicator. To know him, we must refer to the Scriptures and are called to imitate him to avoid incommunicability. Communicating salvation and facing the complexity of human communication can be learned from him.

For the **juniorate, ongoing formation** and the **council of apostolate**.

2) Round table

I) *Paul, a Man of Communication and Relationships* – Father Giacomo Perego

The author shows that Paul is formed to become a man of communication and relationships, especially in Antioch with Barnabas (Acts 11). There Paul is formed alongside the Jews and pagans who have adhered to Jesus, that is, he is formed within the community. And it is the community that, moved by the Holy Spirit, sends him with Barnabas for the first missionary journey (Acts 13). Its reading is important because the Pauline is a man of communication and relationships, as publisher of the future.

Valid for the **novitiate** and the **juniorate**.

II) *Paul the Formator: A Father/Mother Giving Birth in Pain* – Sister Elena Bosetti

In five points, Sister Elena presents St. Paul as a formator for his children in the Spirit and as their father and mother at the same time; because forming is like giving birth, which does not exclude suffering. For St. Paul, formation is communitarian because he often uses the “you” in plural form (cf. Gal 4:19); and this formation must conform us to Christ (cf. Gal 2:20; Phil 1:21), imitating the Apostle who, as formator, also had a decalogue: love, apostolate, etc.

Valid for the **juniorate, ongoing formation** and the **formation team**.

III) *Paul and his Collaborators* – Pastor Lidia Maggi

It is very interesting to hear this “non-Catholic voice”, the Baptist Pastor Lidia, to tell us about our father Saint Paul. Her text makes us understand the spirit of synodality of Saint Paul, who worked with many collaborators to proclaim the Gospel. They evangelized as a team, also tackling conflicts together to favour respect, and showing affection among them.

Useful for the **novitiate, juniorate** and **council of apostolate**.

3) *Accept Diversity without Exclusion: Forming to Interculturality in a Multicultural Community* – Father Rinaldo Paganelli

In three points, plus the conclusion, Father Rinaldo starts from the globalization of the world that resulted to the exchange between peoples and nations, opening to a kind of religious life that have multicultural communities, not only international ones. It is therefore necessary to get to the interculturality of the members, to have the ability to interact between the various cultures, to promote listening and dialogue to move from common life to communion of life.

For the **novitiate, juniorate** and **ongoing formation**.

5TH DAY

1) *Editorial Guidelines and the 2nd International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers* – Brother Darlei Zanon

The “Editorial Guidelines” are presented as an important tool to follow in the reorganization of formation, so that it is oriented to form true “apostles-publishers”. It describes what the essence of the Pauline is and his apostolic mission in the current communication context. It calls for a change of logic and sets out useful criteria for carrying out a more effective apostolate.

It offers good ideas, in particular for formation, in the **juniorate, ongoing formation** and the **council of apostolate**.

2) *Digital Vocation Promotion* – Father Julio Roncancio

A video is presented to show the vocational pastoral activity carried out in the Colombia-Ecuador-Panama Province on digital

platforms, which has proved to be useful for the accompaniment and vocational discernment of young people.

Useful in particular for **vocation promotion** and **initial formation**.

3) *The Experience of the International Novitiate* – Novice Manoel Gomes da Silva Filho

The experience lived in the international Novitiate in the Albano Laziale community is shared, highlighting the importance of exploring and knowing the roots of the Pauline charism in the places where it was born, accompanied by authoritative witnesses. The author concludes by exposing some challenges that he perceived during the novitiate, for which to engage in the future.

Especially useful for **initial formation**.

4) *Clinical Pastoral Education* – Father Raymond Ferraris

The Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) project, included in the *Iter formationis* of the Philippines-Macau Province, is addressed to the temporary professed who finished the 2nd year of theology. After defining what is meant by CPE, the author sets out the program in all its phases, the specific role played by students and the objectives in view of the pastoral ministry.

Specific for formation in the **juniorate**, it could also be useful for the **ongoing formation**.

5) *Course of Preparation for Perpetual Profession* – Cleric James Arinze Edeh

The author describes the experience of the *Preparatory Course for Perpetual Profession* as a journey through the history and spirituality of the Congregation. He highlights the poverty of knowledge regarding the Pauline charism and spirituality in the various Circumscriptions. Finally, he lists the benefits of the *Course* and also some organizational aspects that can be improved.

Useful for the **initial formation** and for the **juniorate**.

DECALOGUE FOR THE PAULINE FORMATION FOR THE MISSION

The 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* (Ariccia, 4-8 November 2019) was a moment of congregational reflection that has produced various contents, reports, and group work outputs. It is a material for reading and deepening that needs execution especially in two areas:

- a) in our integral formation itinerary, to better respond to the call and mission;
- b) for the updating of our formative norms.

To make these two purposes explicit, we offer a “Decalogue” based on the contents of the *Seminar*.

1. FORM THE PAULINE FOR THE MISSION

The central theme of the 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*, similar to the first *Seminar*, is that the integral formation of the Pauline is always in view of the mission, and is based on the Pauline pedagogical tradition. A formation that “goes forth” is needed, grounded in the current reality, inculturated to the local

context, committed to the Magisterium, reaching out to the poor and those in the peripheries. The Pauline, therefore, must be formed himself and be formed *with, to and in* the media in order to evangelize in the culture of communication. In addition, for those being formed, it requires a formation to universality in the multicultural and intercultural environment, needing specialization, the knowledge of foreign languages, and experience outside one's circumscription.

2. ESTABLISH CLEARLY OUR PAULINE IDENTITY

Each Pauline, by specific vocation in his dual expression of **priest-disciple**, is a "publisher". This is the "single purpose" – Fr. Alberione would say – of his life and action, of his vocation and mission. The Pauline is a man called by Christ and consecrated to be an apostle of communication, to be essentially a "publisher", who gives form to an experience, who writes or translates his personal and community life of faith and encounter with Christ in words, texts, images, sounds, videos, bytes or in any other form that technology gradually develops; but also in experiences and initiatives where each language is at the service of the inculturation of the Gospel with and in communication. The one who, following the example of Mary, gives (*edit*) the Saviour to the world.

3. PROMOTE THE INTENSITY OF THE "PAULINE COLOUR"

What Blessed Alberione said to the Daughters of St. Paul can also be fully applied to us: "There is a tendency in the Congregation to become colourless, without colour: a piety which is the piety of all the sisters of the world; a devotion to Our Lady which is the devotion of all Christians in the world; an evangelization that is very common to the evangelization given by many institutes and orders. We must have a science that is Pauline in colour: the school must be Pauline, we must have a Pauline heart, our piety has to have a distinctly Pauline colour, what is given by the Constitutions, and we must have a will, a habit, a way of living, of eating, a timetable, a way of putting ourselves in motion, everything Pauline"¹.

¹ JAMES ALBERIONE, *Alle Figlie di San Paolo. Meditazioni e Istruzioni. Gli anni del rinnovamento e dell'approvazione pontificia 1954*, Daughters of St. Paul, General House, Rome, 2008, no. 74, p. 260.

4. INSIST ON “INTEGRAL FORMATION”

From the standpoint of forming the apostle, and the Christian in general, the most important principle transmitted by Fr. Alberione to his sons and daughters is that of *integrality*: the individual must develop his whole personality in Christ. As a lifelong “process of Christification”, the complete person must find in the complete Christ the key to full realization. As the Christ who saves is not a partial Christ but the complete Christ, so the Christian is not formed by developing only a part of himself, but the whole.

5. PERSONALIZE THE FORMATION OF THE PAULINE

Each person is unique and requires a personalized and clear accompaniment throughout the entire formative journey: intelligence, will, heart, physical strength. It necessitates specific and dynamic formation in the style of an “artisan”² in the current context. The person is required to be a protagonist, to be proactive, available, open to others and not self-referential, capable of working in a team. The person in formation, the bearer of the “good,” the “today,” and of the “future” of the Congregation, also demands constant community accompaniment, acquiring the *habitus* of discernment.

6. LIVE IN “MULTICULTURAL” COMMUNITIES

Our communities will be increasingly multicultural, that is, realities where unity will be lived in diversity and cultural richness of each member. The *Seminar* showed us that the ideal is not the only “internationality”, but “interculturality”, meaning, the overcoming of the monoculture model of homogeneity and uniformity in behaviour. All united, despite the differences in assimilation and practice of the values of Pauline consecrated life, in view of the mission.

² The “artisan” is that small producer who practices the trade with effort and patience, working slowly, with constancy, but with particular skill; one who produces objects whose realization requires a particular technical ability and a specific artistic taste; one who carries out an activity requiring ingenuity, skill, and technical expertise. The artisan is a professional in his own field, and also an artist: who is deeply committed and involved in his creation; who “gets his hands dirty”; who sees his work as an extension of his own person, one who gives it life...

7. EMBRACE THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

The digital environment is not an exclusive reality for young people but belonging to all. It is a question not only of using the means but also of inhabiting a culture, with its own Christian style, as “Paulines”. We recall that “... there exists a Christian way of being present in the digital world: this takes the form of a communication which is honest and open, responsible and respectful of others. To proclaim the Gospel through the new media means not only to insert expressly religious content into different media platforms, but also to witness consistently – in one’s own digital profile and in the way one communicates – choices, preferences, and judgements that are fully consistent with the Gospel, even when it is not spoken of specifically”³. In this particular formation, the concept of *meducation*⁴ is given importance.

8. STRAIN FORWARD WITH AN OPEN MIND

It is to break all forms of self-reference. It is worth remembering a thought of Fr. Alberione: “Universality! Do not have a small, narrow head that sees only your own hole. Feel and try to help each other, also among communities. Having a small and narrow head casts doubt as to whether there is a vocation, because one lives by selfishness, we see only ourselves and a few circle of people around us. [...] Have a big heart! The heart of the Apostle, the heart of Jesus! Dilate the heart!”⁵

9. LET COMMUNITIES BECOME GENUINE “FORMATIVE COMMUNITIES”

The community is an indispensable pedagogical mediation in the formative process, as a place and subject of formation for the Pauline consecrated life. The community takes charge of the candidate’s maturation process, and the older brother who is responsible for this process expresses the care and attention of the Congregation for those

³ BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the 45th World Communications Day*, 5 June 2011.

⁴ “We are the media”; we are the first means of communication, our testimony is essential, therefore we must form others and form or educate ourselves with, to and in the media (cf. MASSIMILIANO PADULA, “Media society and meducation”, 2nd International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission, Ariccia, 4-8 November 2019, pp. 125-126).

⁵ JAMES ALBERIONE, *Alle Figlie di San Paolo. Spiegazione delle Costituzioni. Istruzioni degli Esercizi spirituali straordinari 15 maggio – 5 giugno 1961*, Daughters of St. Paul, General House, Rome, 2003, no. 93, p. 135.

who ask to be part of it. *Fraternitas* is the natural environment for the journey of growth, but it is also the agent of formation, not only in the initial period, but also throughout the life of the religious. Vocation occurs by attraction and perseverance is sustained by contagion. All members are asked to be joyful and coherent witnesses, with a synodal style in revitalizing fraternity in order to become a prophetic sign in living one's own consecration and in fulfilling one's specific mission.

10. LET ONGOING FORMATION BE ON THE FOREFRONT

The ongoing formation needs special attention throughout the Society of Saint Paul. This is the longest and most significant time in the life of the consecrated person. For this reason, our formative schemes present in the *Ratio formationis* and in our *formative Iter* must be revised by putting permanent formation in the first place. The qualities of this particular formation is that it should be constant and persevering, integral, personalized, and connected to the Alberionian concept of “studiosità”.



**GREETING AND INTRODUCTION
OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL**

Father Valdir José De Castro

Dear Brothers, in my name and in the name of the General Government, I greet each of you fraternally as participants in the 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*. We are here as “communicator apostles and consecrated persons” to deal with formation, a fundamental dimension of our life, «a task that never ends»¹.

This meeting is the answer to one of the suggestions made to the General Government by the Superiors of Circumscriptions on the occasion of the last Interchapter, which asked to «organize an international seminar on formation to get in tune with the reflections and the lights that came to us from the 2nd International Seminar of Pauline Publishers regarding the formation of the Paulines»².

The proposal to carry out this Seminar undoubtedly arrives at an opportune moment in our institutional history, as something necessary, not to mention urgent, considering that the last similar

¹ *Ratio Formationis of the Society of St. Paul*, no. 1.

² Interchapter Assembly of the Society of St. Paul, Aparecida (Brazil), 15-25 February 2018, in *San Paolo*, no. 451, May 2018, p. 64.

event was celebrated twenty-five years ago. During this period, many things have changed in the world, or at least they present themselves with a different physiognomy if we take, for example, the field of communication, especially with the development of digital technologies and its consequences for human life.

Dedicating a Seminar to formation requires putting the person in the foreground and situating him in the concrete world in which he lives. The person is the greatest wealth of a Congregation, because it is on this that the development and the impetus of the mission largely depends. As our Founder very well considers: *«the apostolate is a fruit, and the fruit comes from the plant: if the plant is healthy, the fruit will be abundant; but if the plant is sick, the fruit will either be lacking or be scarce»*³.

At the beginning of this Seminar, I would like to underline, in a very concise form, some points that I consider important because they constitute essential aspects of our Pauline life and, therefore, they deserve attention when the theme properly concerns formation.

1. WE ARE CALLED TO “EVANGELIZE”

To begin with, let us remember that in the Pauline tradition *«everything about our community – fraternal life, consecration, the spiritual, human, intellectual and professional formation, the structures of government and administration – is shaped and affected by our apostolic vocation»*⁴.

Specifically with regard to the indispensable connection between formation and the apostolate, it is valid to recall the book *L’Apostolato dell’Edizione* which, in its 1944 edition, was presented as a “handbook of formation and apostolate”⁵. Among other orientations, this work of Fr. Alberione sought to help the Paulines to deepen the meaning of “apostle” and “apostolate” in the horizon of the Pauline charism, and presented some essential needs to respond fully to the apostolic vocation, including, *«to feel and think with Jesus Christ, to feel and think with the Church, to feel and think with Saint Paul»*⁶.

³ JAMES ALBERIONE, *Vademecum*, Edizioni Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo, 1992, no. 961.

⁴ *Constitutions and Directory of the Society of St. Paul*, art. 66.

⁵ The cover of *L’Apostolato dell’Edizione* of 1944 presents the subtitle “Handbook of formation and apostolate”.

⁶ JAMES ALBERIONE, *L’Apostolato dell’Edizione*, 1944, no. 33.

In our Congregation, formation, as we have said, is always in view of responding to our apostolic vocation, which is nothing other than evangelizing⁷, an essential task of the Church's life itself. «*Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize [...]*»⁸.

Precisely in this perspective, Fr. Alberione conceived our apostolate as a means to penetrate all human thought and knowledge with the Gospel⁹. Our challenge is to prepare ourselves in the best possible way for our mission so that evangelization becomes true communication that illuminates the world, the ways of relating to God, the relationships between people and the environment and, finally, that it arouses fundamental values for the men and women of today¹⁰.

2. UNTIL CHRIST BE FORMED IN YOU

Formation must realize itself that in order to evangelize, the apostle must first have in himself the Gospel, which is Jesus himself. Jesus, dead and risen, is the eternal Gospel in which the immense love of God is manifested for humanity¹¹. This means that «*the mission is not an extrinsic activity; it is something that touches a person's innermost self. To evangelize supposes already being evangelized; being and acting must proceed in a harmonious criss-crossing; doing must first of all be a becoming*»¹².

In this perspective, Jesus is the first school that his disciples are called to attend, which necessarily presupposes an encounter with Him. In fact, «*being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction*»¹³.

In other words, as our Founder taught us, considering the Pauline consecrated life, «*we must form ourselves in Jesus Christ, indeed this is*

⁷ Cf. *Special General Chapter of the Society of St. Paul*, no. 71.

⁸ PAUL VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 14.

⁹ Cf. JAMES ALBERIONE, *Abundantes Divitiae*, 87-88.

¹⁰ Cf. FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 74.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, no. 11.

¹² *Ratio Formationis of the Society of St. Paul*, no. 8.

¹³ BENEDICT XVI, *Deus caritas est*, no. 1.

the true formation in Christ: to live Jesus Christ, to live him as he truly is, Way, Truth and Life»¹⁴. From Fr. Alberione we have learned that «to live Christ Way and Truth and Life is the method – the pedagogy for every Pauline – which unfolds in a threefold dimension: anthropological, spiritual and apostolic»¹⁵, a method to be valued, deepened and practiced.

An effective formative process is that which tends to the practical experience of the Master, to learn from him to love, to pray, to be merciful and just, to live the fraternal relationship, sharing, giving, sacrifice... to be men of communication. It is not possible to progress on the path of evangelization without “Christ the communicator” being formed in us¹⁶ and, in this process, should not be without the Word and the Eucharist¹⁷ as continuous nutrients.

Only by letting himself be formed by Christ can the Pauline transform himself into a true “publisher”. This is an intrinsic characteristic of the Pauline identity. Indeed, *«the Pauline is a man called by Christ and consecrated to be an apostle of communication, to be essentially a “publisher” who gives form to an experience, who writes or translates his personal and community life of faith and encounter with Christ in words, texts, images, sounds, videos, bytes or in any other form that the technology gradually develops; but also in experiences and initiatives where every language is at the service of the inculturation of the Gospel with and in communication. One who, after the example of Mary, gives (edit) the Saviour to the world»¹⁸.*

Let us consider that in formation, it is necessary to insist on the identity of the Pauline as a publisher, that is, as the one who prepares the “publications”. *«If our “publications” – to use a term dear to our Founder – are not at the centre or heart of a region or province, either directly or indirectly, then its raison d’être in a local church has come to an end»¹⁹.*

¹⁴ JAMES ALBERIONE, *Prediche del Primo Maestro* 5 (1957), p. 123.

¹⁵ *Ratio Formationis of the Society of St. Paul*, no. 76.

¹⁶ «The process of sanctification is a process of Christification: “until Christ be formed in you” [Cf. Gal 4:19]. Therefore we will be saints to the extent that we live the life of Jesus Christ; or rather, according to the extent to which Jesus Christ lives in us: “Christianus alter Christus”; and that is what St. Paul says of himself: “I live no longer I, rather it is Christ who lives in me,” [Gal 2:20]», CISP, pp. 11-12.

¹⁷ «The Eucharist and the Bible form the apostle of the press. May these two things be inseparable and inseparable in your hearts», *Haec Meditare II*, p. 80.

¹⁸ *Editorial guidelines: Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate*, 1.2.

¹⁹ RENATO PERINO, *The Pauline Charism in the thinking and praxis of Fr. Alberione*, in *Acts of the International Seminar on the Pauline Formation* (Ariccia, 12-23 October 1994), p. 57.

3. THE INTEGRAL AND “PAULINE” FORMATION

Integral formation is another challenge for every Pauline, a task that must accompany him throughout his life. It is a process that involves the experience of Jesus, the balance between his faculties (mind, will, sentiments...) and between the four wheels of the Pauline cart²⁰, the relationships with others and with creation. It is a journey that includes the human and Christian dimension, of consecrated life, of the apostolate, of the ecology... We say “integral formation”, but we insist: of “Pauline colour”.

As Fr. Alberione taught us, *«the Pauline Family has a sole spirituality and that is to live the Gospel in its entirety; to live in the Divine Master inasmuch as he is Way, Truth and Life; to live the Gospel as his disciple Saint Paul understood it. It is this spirit which forms the soul of the Pauline Family»*²¹.

In fact, *«from Paul, the Pauline Publisher learns that true apostolic spirituality is that which bears witness to an experience of the crucified and risen Christ, the central and unique content of evangelization that gradually takes on different forms in the announcement. From Paul, the Pauline Publisher captures the ability to address the concrete questions of the world (at the ecclesial, community, social level, etc.) and his effort to adapt the language to each interlocutor. It then assumes the dimension of pastoral spirit and universality, prophecy, zeal and total commitment, passion and the ability to listen, audacity and the ability to build a network of collaborators, apostolic dynamism and the sense of responsibility. From him he learns to do everything for the Gospel»*²².

4. FORMATION FOR THE MISSION

As we have reiterated, the formative journey in the Society of Saint Paul must always look at the horizon of our specific apostolate in the light of our identity as “apostle communicators and consecrated persons”, as “Pauline publishers”. But let us add an important clarification: always in its double vocational expression priest-disciple.

²⁰ «The total man in Jesus Christ, for a total love of God: intelligence, will, heart, physical strength. Everything: nature, grace and vocation for the apostolate. The cart that runs on four wheels: sanctity, study, apostolate, poverty», JAMES ALBERIONE, *Abundantes Divitiae*, 100.

²¹ JAMES ALBERIONE, *UPS III*, no. 187.

²² *Editorial guidelines: Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate*, op. cit., 1.1.

In this sense, it will be a constant need to distinguish the changeable from the unchangeable elements of the Pauline identity, so that the Congregation can strain forward. «Among the unchangeable elements, we have to include fidelity to the Gospel, communion with the Magisterium of the Church, the constant reference to the Founder and to St. Paul, prayer and apostolic spirituality, consecration through the vows, life in community, attentiveness to the signs of the times, communication understood in its globality, the complementariness of the Institutes of the Pauline Family, organization in the various apostolic initiatives. Among the changeable elements, we have: the structural organization of the apostolate, of formation and of community; the adoption of individual means of communication, the roles in the fulfilment of the mission, the concrete forms of inculturation of Pauline spirituality, the individual readings of the signs of the times...»²³.

This means that the Pauline Publisher, if he wants to evangelize the men and women of his time with the current languages, cannot stop but must accompany the development of humanity that causes changes in the history and culture of communication.

In this Pauline apostolate's effort to respond to today's needs were organized two *International Seminars of Pauline Publishers*, in 1988 and in 2017, two meetings that inspired the two *International Seminars on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*, respectively that of 1994 and this which we are about to start. I will therefore make a very brief reference here, highlighting some ideas with the aim of helping us to understand where we are at the apostolic and formative level, two realities that must always be integrated between them.

4.1 THE 1ST INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE PAULINE FORMATION FOR THE MISSION (1994)

The 1st *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*²⁴ – in which the members of the General Government, the Superiors of Circumscriptions, the General Coordinators of Formation and the General Directors of the Apostolate have participated – was held in

²³ SILVIO PIGNOTTI, *Pauline Formation for the Mission. Document of the General Government at the conclusion of the International Seminar on the Pauline Formation*, in *Acts of the International Seminar on the Pauline Formation*, op. cit., p. 168.

²⁴ Cf. *Acts of the International Seminar on the Pauline Formation*, Ariccia, 12-23 October 1994.

Ariccia from 12 to 23 October 1994²⁵. This event was held six years after the celebration of the *1st International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers*²⁶ and two years after the VI General Chapter, which had as theme “The Pauline, man of communication”.

At the *1st International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*, the Congregation sought a re-examination of the basic and continuing formation, of its methods and contents with a view to forming “true” apostolic communicators²⁷, that would respond to the challenges of the communication culture of the 1990s. On that occasion, there was talk of conversion: «*The change of direction consists therefore in this: starting from this seminar, the content, the methods, the objectives of our formation must be redirected towards the Congregation’s operative goal: its specific mission*»²⁸.

In the *1st International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*, there were concerns that had appeared in the *1st International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers*, such as, for example, the resumption of the Pauline identity as a “publisher”, the thinking about multimedia-oriented projects, the quest for a more effective apostolic organization at national and international level, the need to become professional in order to face the challenges of evangelization in the culture of communication and the revival of the vocation ministry.

It is important to emphasize that in the *1st International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* there was already an awareness that communication is not a set of interdependent technical means, but a real “culture”. In this sense, communication cannot be limited to being a new discipline in the program of religious and priestly formation. Rather, it is a matter of seriously contributing to a new

²⁵ It is also worth mentioning that a course on integral Pauline formation was held in Ariccia from 9 to 20 September 1976. Convened by the Superior General, Fr. Raffaele Tonni, it saw the participation of the two General Councillors delegated for formation and two representatives of the Province of Spain, as well as a number of Confreres belonging to the Province of Italy. This course tried to offer some common guidelines for formative orientation and a written record for the formators of all our communities. In his introductory speech, Fr. Raffaele specified: «*The aim of the course should in fact be this: to clarify some guiding ideas and to put them into practice, to give the formative action greater security and unity*», Raffaele Tonni, *Introduction*, in *The integral Pauline formation. Course of study for formators*, Ariccia, 9-20 September 1976, p. 7.

²⁶ Cf. *Acts of the International Seminar of Pauline Publishers*, Ariccia-Milan, 17 September – 2 October 1988.

²⁷ Cf. RENATO PERINO, *The Pauline Charism in the thinking and praxis of Fr. Alberione*, in *Acts of the International Seminar on the Pauline Formation*, op. cit., p. 57.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

inculturation of faith in this new culture, as the pontifical Magisterium of that time directed²⁹.

The communication environment of that era was characterized by “multimedia”, understood as a set of media organized in a project already managed by the computer. By now, it was envisaged as an enhancement of multimedia with interactivity, hypertext, virtual reality, electronic highways. It was stated that the future of communication would be the transformation of all existing means into projects achievable with information technology and telematics. It was recognized that communication would increasingly be a global way of thinking, existing, working, having fun, getting in touch with others³⁰.

The 1st *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* took into consideration the challenges of the Congregation in front of the communication reality that was being transformed, a circumstance that demanded new apostolic initiatives also in the field of formation. The two centres of study at that time, specifically the SPICS (Italy) and the COMFIL (Mexico), were born precisely in this panorama. The importance of these initiatives was acknowledged and it was considered that the study of communication sciences should give us the tools necessary to improve our communication skills, the choice of content, the editorial strategy, the desired results, the verifications that allow an evolution³¹.

What has happened in the last twenty-five years, looking today at these expectations of the past and observing the journey made in the

²⁹ «The means of social communication have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behaviour as individuals, families and within society at large. In particular, the younger generation is growing up in a world conditioned by the mass media. To some degree perhaps this Areopagus has been neglected. Generally, preference has been given to other means of preaching the Gospel and of Christian education, while the mass media are left to the initiative of individuals or small groups and enter into pastoral planning only in a secondary way. Involvement in the mass media, however, is not meant merely to strengthen the preaching of the Gospel. There is a deeper reality involved here: since the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the “new culture” created by modern communications. This is a complex issue, since the “new culture” originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology», JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 37.

³⁰ Cf. SILVIO SASSI, *Communication and the Charism of the Society of St. Paul*, in *Acts of the International Seminar on the Pauline Formation*, op. cit., p. 129.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 115.

apostolate and in formation? What steps have we taken in the search for an integral formation and in creative fidelity to the charism? What steps has the Congregation really taken in the area of multimedia, the organization and development of the Communication Studies Centres, but also of other study centres, for example, in the area of biblical formation? Have our apostolic projects been creative and daring, trying to respond gradually to the signs of the times? What investments have we made in the preparation of Paulines in the different areas of our apostolate? What have we done about the preparation of formators? Where are we today?

4.2 THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE PAULINE FORMATION FOR THE MISSION

The 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*, which we are now starting, takes place two years after the 2nd *International Seminar of Pauline Publishers*, held in Ariccia from 16 to 21 October 2017. This meeting on the apostolate was convened by the General Government to deepen our mission, especially considering the innovations brought by digital technologies in the field of communication and with the aim also of helping to update the editorial lines of the Congregation³².

Almost thirty years have elapsed between the 1st and 2nd *International Seminar of Pauline Publishers*, a period of time in which large sections of humanity immersed themselves in an ordinary and continuous manner in the digital environment. Indeed, today more than ever «it is no longer merely a question of “using” instruments of communication, but of living in a highly digitalized culture that has had a profound impact on ideas of time and space, on our self-understanding, our understanding of others and the world, and our ability to communicate, learn, be informed and enter into relationship with others»³³.

The 2nd *International Seminar of Pauline Publishers* has made it clear that «either we are connected with the world of today or we are relegated in a sort of media Jurassic Park, either we know the mechanisms, the digital languages or we don't know them and, therefore, we cannot communicate.

³² Cf. Acts of the X General Chapter, Operative guideline 1.1.2.

³³ FRANCIS, *Christus Vivit*, no. 86.

If we want to be missionaries in this world, complex and wonderful, it is necessary to know its culture and languages which are in continuous, rapid and constant evolution»³⁴.

We saw in the 2nd International Seminar of Pauline Publishers that the publisher, in this constantly developing world, is called not only to think and to offer content, but also to create relationships. It is worth recalling at least two statements that we heard during the Seminar and that make us think of our way of “doing apostolate” and of orienting formation to this end:

- a) *«The publisher of the future will produce relationships. [...] The contents, the quality and the nature of the relationships between people within the ecosystems that we create and inhabit are – at the same time – the fruit and the sap of our ecosystems»³⁵.*
- b) *«The same force of contents is clearly proportionate to that of relationships. Where the quality of the relationship is in crisis or in any case, the content is of little relevance»³⁶.*

We saw in the 2nd ISPP that digital technologies have changed the publishing world and have consequently changed the relationship and interaction with stakeholders. In fact, *«the new environment is characterized by the protagonism of users who not only choose the navigation route, but become co-authors, putting in the attic the classic distinction between the broadcaster and receiver, between producer and consumer: today the sender is only partially an “original” with more or less sacral value, while the receiver assumes some functions of authorship or co-authorship and the distribution of media materials that were formerly the source of the broadcasting apparatus»³⁷.*

Therefore, today’s communication universe requires Paulines to be prepared intellectually and technically, and also “open” to relationships, true “men of communication” with God and with others, cultivators of a quality communication in internal relationships (with the Paulines and with lay collaborators) and externally (with our interlocutors).

³⁴ DARIO EDOARDO VIGANÒ, *Communication models for the Church in today's world*, in *Acts of the 2nd International Seminar of Pauline Publishers*, Ariccia, 16-21 October 2017, p. 100.

³⁵ FEDERICO BADALONI, *Rethinking the role of the publisher today*, in *Acts of the 2nd International Seminar of Pauline Publishers*, op. cit., pp. 191-199.

³⁶ IVAN MAFFEIS, *Religious aspects*, in *Acts of the 2nd International Seminar of Pauline Publishers*, op. cit., p. 90.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 89.

We cannot close our eyes to the changes and also to the universe of young people who were born in this complex digital environment. If the Paulines of tomorrow were today's hyper-digital young people, what could be the prospects for their formation?

5. THE CHALLENGES TO BE FACED IN THE FORMATION

Certainly, emphasizing the digital world regarding our apostolate does not mean abandoning the traditional means of communication. In other words, there must not be a break between the analogical and digital worlds, but complementarity. Therefore, formation must be planned starting from a global perspective of communication, not exclusive, but integrating all the communicational reality, even our Communication Studies Centres and pedagogical initiatives in the biblical field.

If we talk about a formation addressed to the mission, every Circumscription must have a clear and executable Apostolic Project, which, allowing itself to be guided by the documents of the Congregation regarding this area of Pauline life – including the *Editorial guidelines: Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate* – is an important reference for the Formation Iter. We need to think of formation in its entirety which, in addition to basic formation, can prepare Paulines through specialization courses in the fields of communication sciences, of the biblical and theological sciences, as well as of the formation, of the vocation promotion, of the organization, of the administration, etc...

To renew the momentum of our apostolic mission, we need to invest in the formation of its members. We recall that the New Delhi Interchapter, carried out in 2001, found that in our Congregation persists *«a mentality that is reluctant to change and regardless of the necessary update that reinforces the “status quo”. In some cases we are reaping the fruits of a colourless and generic formation, poor in the study of the Founder and of our charism: poor appreciation of consecrated life, problems of Pauline identity, individualism, a weak sense of belonging, little enthusiasm and even little love for the Congregation»*³⁸. What is the formation situation today? Are we still at this point? Have we overcome the negative aspects?

³⁸ Interchapter Assembly of the Society of St. Paul, *Final Document*, in *San Paolo Bulletin* no. 407, 2001, p. 17.

What concreteness does this 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* offer to the Congregation?

As you have seen in the program, the Seminar opens up spaces not only to reflect on the contents regarding the various issues pertaining to the field of formation, but also to share the concrete situation in which we live. In order not to widen the discussion around the theme of formation too much, we will try to concentrate on the formative proposals in the three dimensions: “human formation”, “biblical-charismatic formation” and “apostolic formation”.

We underline that the Superiors of Circumscriptions, the General Coordinators of Formation, the Directors General of the Apostolate and some guests, including eight novices and eleven juniors (coming from different Circumscriptions), who represent our young people in initial formation, participate in this Seminar.

Let us recall that this Seminar takes place in the *Year of Vocation of the Pauline Family*, which was convened in the light of the Synod of Bishops on young people, carried out a year ago. The presence of young people wants to strengthen the synodal style we want to give to this Seminar. They are here not only as listeners, but also to help us in the reflections and proposals. We trust in the collaboration of all because, in a synodal form, we can look realistically at the present and the future with hope, a future that, to be of quality, will depend on the integral formation of each Pauline.

May Mary, Queen of Apostles and our Mother, accompany us by helping us in our continuous effort to take up the Gospel in our lives, until Christ is formed in us, to carry on, with faith and hope, in the footsteps of Saint Paul and of Father Alberione, our mission in the culture of communication.

Thank you and enjoy your work!



THE CONSECRATED LIFE TODAY

Mons. José Rodríguez Carballo

*Secretary of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life
and the Societies of Apostolic Life*

Mons. José Rodríguez Carballo, born in Lodoselo (Orense – Spain) on 11 August 1953, made his solemn Profession on 8 December 1976, and on 28 June 1977, he was ordained priest in the Church of San Salvador. He graduated in Biblical Theology at the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum of the Flagellazione in Jerusalem and also received the degree in Sacred Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome.

He was master of the novices of the Franciscan Province of Santiago di Compostela and in 1983 he was elected Provincial Definitor of the Province of Santiago di Compostela and named Provincial Secretary for the Formation and Studies, Commissary of the Holy Land and Master of the novices. He worked as teacher at the Centre of Theological Studies in Vigo and in Santiago di Compostela.

In 1992 he was elected as Provincial Minister and in 1993 President of the Union of Franciscan Provincial Ministers of Europe (UFME). On 16 May 1997 he was elected as General Definitor of the Order, General Secretary for Formation and Studies and Delegate of the Grand Chancellor for the Pontifical Ateneo Antonianum (Rome).

On 5 June 2003 he was elected Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, and re-elected for another six years on 4 June 2009.

He was a member of the Congregation of the Evangelization of Peoples and for the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life.

He participated in the Synods of Bishops of 2005 (*The Eucharist: font and apex of the life and mission of the Church*), of 2008 (*The Word of God in the life and mission of the Church*), of 2010 (*The Catholic Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness*) and of 2012 (*The new evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith*).

He participated in 2007 at the V General Conference of the Episcopate of Latin America and of the Caribbean at Aparecida in Brazil.

He was a member of the Executive Council of the Union of Superiors General (2003-2012) and President of the Theological Commission of the said organism in the triennium 2009-2012. On 23 November 2012 he was elected President of the Union of Superiors General (USG).

On 6 April 2013 Pope Francis nominated him Secretary of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life, elevating him at the same time as titular Archbishop of Belcastro and receiving the episcopal ordination on 18 May 2013 in the Cathedral of *Santiago de Compostela* in Spain.

Numerous are his publications on Sacred Scripture, Pastoral Theology, Franciscan Spirituality and Theology of the Religious Life.

Most dear brothers, I am happy to be with you this morning. I would like to share with you, in your Seminar on Formation, some aspects of formation in the context of consecrated life today.

Many ask me how is consecrated life today, and I answer: "It depends". It depends on the information that one has. It depends on the love one has for the consecrated life, and depends on what intentions one has when he makes this question. Because many would like that I would say: "It is in bad shape!". Others perhaps would want that I say: "It is just fine". And so not to satisfy either one or the other I say: "It depends".

1. THE CONSECRATED LIFE TODAY: WINTER, DARK NIGHT, SUNSET

I shall use some images to define consecrated life today: *winter, the dark night, sunset*.

1.1 WINTER

Here in Europe we know very well the differences among the seasons, wherein are very clearly differentiated spring, autumn, winter and summer.

Winter is characterized by the apparent lack of life: there are no flowers, there are no leaves, there are no fruits. Apparently, the consecrated life is passing through winter. Perhaps it is also the Pauline life: few vocations, the median age is rising, many works must be abandoned...

But for one who has lived in the fields like me coming from a family of farmers, one knows that the most fruit bearing season is exactly winter, because nature works at root level, it works at depth, it is a tree that has first sound roots and then it will produce the leaves, the flowers and the fruits. While a tree with sick roots sooner or later, rather sooner than later, becomes dry.

Therefore the first invitation that comes to us from this winter is that of working in depth.

Work on the charismatic roots, on your own identity. Pope Francis, in the document *The force of vocation. Consecrated life today*, published recently, reminds us that charism (even the Pauline one) is like water: it either flows or becomes putrid. It flows or it dies.

Hence the invitation is to work on the roots, to work in depth so that the charism is not modern but actual. Attention! I think that we must not lose time making our charisms modern. I have learned this saying in Vietnam: "Marry what is the mode and soon you will become a widow".

What happens in the technological field? We buy the latest computer and before we pay for it another of better quality comes out. It is not the modern which must guide us in our work but the actuality, the actualization of our charism. Not everything that is up to mode is actual, and not all that is actual is of the mode. The Gospel is more actual than ever, but it is not of mode. Hence, work in depth knowing that charism is like a plant that must grow, develop and keep itself always young. This is your great responsibility, at more than a hundred years since your foundation: so as not to let your charism die it is necessary to not look only at the fruits but also care for the roots.

1.2 THE DARK NIGHT

The second image that pleases me much in defining the consecrated life today is the dark night. This is a moment of spiritual trial which is very strong. Even the prophet Elijah reaches a moment of his life when he invokes God and says: "Enough, Lord, I want to die". He was experiencing a deep dark night, as it has happened to some mystics, among them Saint John of the Cross.

Returning to the image of the field, we can define the dark night as a period of pruning. If we want that the trees remain vibrant, fertile, we must prune them. It is an operation which makes the tree suffer, but it is absolutely necessary if we want that the tree keep itself alive, otherwise the branches start to dry up, then the trunk becomes dry and finally the tree dies.

Attention, however, that the pruning is done at the opportune time: it cannot be delayed because if it is done out of season the tree bleeds and the sap is lost.

This applies also to us who are consecrated: we must accept the idea that consecrated life today needs pruning, but we must do it in this season, without postponing for tomorrow what we can do today, otherwise we shall find ourselves protagonists of a long agony that will lead inevitably to death.

1.3 SUNSET

For many the consecrated life has come to its sunset. They do not see any more its sense in the actual society for which they believe that it is destined to die. I remember that during the *Synod on the new evangelization* an archbishop of the Curia Romana, a religious, wrote on the *Osservatore Romano* that the religious life, above all the female one, is destined to disappear. Thanks be to God, years have passed and the reality shows the contrary.

It is true however that we are living the sunset of a certain consecrated life. Attention! It is not the sunset of the consecrated life, but of a certain form of consecrated life which has disappeared or about to reach its term. After the sunset however comes the dawn, and behold we must work so that the new form of consecrated life may be born.

These three images (winter, the dark night and sunset) therefore invite us to assume first of all an attitude of confidence and hope, because after winter spring comes, after the pruning the tree becomes strong, and after the sunset comes the dawn. But this hope is born of faith. There is no hope without faith in the God of history, who walks with us, as Pope Francis often reminds us. I like much the name *Jhwah*, which as you well know is the imperfect of the verb *hayàh* in Hebrew; and the imperfect, at least in the Latin languages, means something that has begun in the past, continues in the present and opens to the future. *Hayàh* certainly means “to be”, but unfortunately here the Greek version of the Septuagint has translated with *ò òn* (he who is), modifying its original sense. Instead in Hebrew *hayàh* means “He who actuates”, and actuates in favour of man, of humanity. So here faith in this God who actuates, who is alive and who comes to save man. In the book of Wisdom there is a very beautiful definition of our God: “Friend of life”.

The consecrated life moves therefore in the “already” and not in the “yet”. We are in a moment of transition, and even if it seems to us that this period has already been lasting for a long time, we must be aware of it and continue to work without sparing efforts, so that this new form of consecrated life which is being born may be a life that is significantly evangelical.

From here is the invitation to you, as Paulines, to work more in the evangelical significance of your life. This however is not about works. I know that relatively recent institutes like yours point much on the doing. Doing is necessary (“from its fruits you will know the tree”), but the doing is not everything. It is then necessary to pay attention to not thinking of your consecrated life as Paulines in terms of functionality. Many say that the consecrated life is in crisis, and do you know on what is based this affirmation? On the fact that we are constrained to leave schools, clinics and other works in which the institute has worked on in the past years; moreover, vocations are decreasing, etc. But this is judging the consecrated life only for what one does. Let us pay attention to this aspect, because I think that one of the motives of the crisis in religious vocations is exactly this: we are losing our being. What we do must respond to what we are. We must be prophetic signs, otherwise we risk reducing ourselves to being only professionals more or less qualified.

2. THE FUTURE OF THE CONSECRATED LIFE

The future of the consecrated life, in my view, is enclosed in these three areas: God, the brethren, the mission.

2.1 A CONSECRATED LIFE THAT THIRSTS FOR GOD

Where does the Spirit lead us today? I believe that the Spirit is leading us toward a consecrated life characterized by “thirst for God”. Therefore we must strengthen our spirituality. Attention however: the spiritual man and woman is not only the one who prays much. The spiritual man or the spiritual woman is that person who allows himself to be driven by the Spirit, that blows where he wills, when he wills and on whom he wills. So then must we strengthen our spirituality in this sense, allowing ourselves to be guided by the Spirit, without being afraid, as our founders have done, and as Fr. Alberione surely has done.

I turn above all to formators inviting them to pay attention to pseudo-spirituality, to pseudo-spiritualisms which today are very widespread. Spirituality must be founded on the Bible, on the Fathers of the Church, on the Magisterium, on the fonts of charism, period.

I confess that I feel fear when I see postulants or pre-aspirants where the whole breviary is already being prayed. I ask myself: what do they understand? In this sense perhaps we are forming a double life where the important thing is to recite. Let us therefore pay attention and introduce those to be formed to prayer, and to do this formators before others should be men of prayer and not only observers of ecclesiastical laws.

Hence the consecrated life of the future, according to me, is a life that thirsts for God, but for an authentic God. And here we must purify so many images of God which do not correspond to the Revelation of Jesus.

2.2 A CONSECRATED LIFE THAT THIRSTS FOR FRATERNITY

I am convinced that the principal prophecy that the consecrated life can offer today is exactly the fraternal life in community. Neither community without fraternity nor fraternity without community.

Fraternal life and community must go together, each one according to its charism; therefore the Jesuits shall live it in one way, the Paulines in another, the Franciscans in still another way. Each one according to its own charism but always fraternal life in community. And about this I tell you, above all to the young men: less poetry about fraternity and more realism.

Living fraternal life in community is not easy. We know it because we have lived it for so many years. Do you know that second reason for which so many vocations go away? Because we have formed the young men to a community or fraternal life which at the end does not exist. It is all poetic.

Fraternity is built day after day, making use of forgiveness in particular. It is built starting from one's weakness and also from that of one's brother. I therefore repeat that the future of the consecrated life depends on the quality of the fraternal life in community.

2.3 THE FUTURE OF THE CONSECRATED LIFE PASSES THROUGH A MISSION

Mission comes from God, and we are sent, we are not the protagonists. And here I think that your charism has a specific mission and very necessary in the actual moment of the life of the Church and of the world: to make known the Gospel through the means of communication. And here you must invent: your mission must be very creative, otherwise it remains backward.

The "fault" is of Fr. Alberione, who has given you a mission which either modernizes itself night and day or otherwise becomes archaeological. Here indeed that I ask you for much creativity in the name of the Church. Do not stop at what your fathers have done, because those are things of the past.

Mission in the frontiers: I think that you, exactly because of this concrete mission that you have, must absolutely be present in the existential frontiers, and I am sure that you will do it in one way or another. But the Pope, when he spoke about mission, has entrusted to us consecrated people above all mission in the frontiers of thought. I believe that here you must give a very particular contribution, above all by bringing the Gospel through these means that today are basic in communication.

Mission in collaboration with the laity: I do not know you, therefore I cannot know if you have progressed or not, but I think that in your missionary field with the means of communication collaboration with the laity is fundamental.

3. FORMATION

Through all that has been said, so that it may be possible, an adequate formation is necessary. And the first thing that we must bear in mind is the definition of formation, which for me revolutionizes the whole concept of formation.

As you well know, John Paul II, in *Vita Consecrata*, defines formation as the “a path of gradual identification with the attitude of Christ towards the Father”¹. Here we must completely overturn our schemes in formation. We generally in our *Ratio Formationis* start with formation in aspirantship, then in postulantship, then in the novitiate, then the one for the temporary vows and then if time remains, formation for the perpetually professed. No, the schema should be reversed, and I ask you that if in some Chapter you will have to review your Ratio, please reverse the schema and start from the ongoing formation. Then comes formation for the temporary vows, for the novices, for the postulants and for the aspirants.

Why do I say this? Because formation is a process that goes from the less to the more. We generally require more from a novice than from a temporarily professed, more from a temporarily professed than from a perpetually professed. Instead it should be the opposite because formation is a process, and if we do not consider it as such, the risk is forming a double life. Here I narrate to you an anecdote which for me has been very eloquent: when I was Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, I had the habit during my visits to the Provinces of meeting in private the young men in initial formation, and the first thing that I did was to move away the Provincials and the formators because otherwise the young men would not have talked. I went therefore to Croatia, where we have five provinces and thanks to God we still have many vocations. At the end of the dialog with a

¹ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata* about the consecrated life and its mission in the Church and in the world, 25 March 1996, no. 65.

young man, he says to me: “Father, don’t worry. We do today what you tell us to do, tomorrow we shall do exactly what you do”.

You see the deformation: I afterwards called the Provincials and the formators and I said: “My compliments! Because you have a perfect plan of 'deformation', of initial permanent deformation. Continue with that. You shall see very soon what Province we shall have here”.

We must therefore reverse the formative course, because the only authentically formative methodology in the consecrated life is contagion. When I live with a brother who lives the Franciscan or Pauline life with joy, with passion, he infects. When I live with a brother who lives his vocation like a burden, always with a long face, with his face like a funeral, – as Pope Francis would say – he infects. Therefore ongoing formation is very important.

Remember therefore that formation is a process that goes from the less to the more, and we must be much more demanding with ourselves who are already perpetually professed and instead use much comprehension with those who are in their initial journey; because otherwise we risk launching a wrong message: “Stay at peace, from the day they impose their hands on you or you make the perpetual profession you will be able to do what you like”.

I address above all the Provincial Superiors and I invite them to bear well in mind the *process of assimilation*. Assimilation requires much time, therefore do not be in a hurry to admit to the perpetual Profession or to the sacred Orders. Assimilation is the process that takes place in the human body when we eat: if the body does not assimilate the food there is risk of a strong anaemia that can lead even to death.

3.1 PERSONALIZED FORMATION

Gone are the times of formation in mass. Behind mass, behind numbers you can hide so many beautiful things but also so many ugly ones. Personalizing is therefore important because formation must reach the four vital centres of the human being, otherwise it is not an efficient formation:

a) **The head, intelligence:** Tell me how you think and I will tell you how you behave.

b) **The heart:** The heart is the seat of the sentiments. And here Pope Francis underlines for us that behaviour is not being referred to. I cannot imitate the behaviour of Jesus, but I must imitate his sentiments, which is much different. The Pope constantly talks to us about the danger of forming big heads and stunted hearts.

c) **The hands:** Why are hands useful? For life. Hence the invitation is for a formation that is practical, not theoretical.

d) **The feet:** That is, formation must start from my reality. That is why I say that it must be personalized, taking account of my reality, not the reality of the person beside me.

Today the number of the formandi is not as high as in times past, therefore if we do not do a personalized formation it is simply because we do not want it. We do not want to lose time listening to and accompanying each one in a personal manner.

3.2 ACCOMPANIED FORMATION

Here I talk above all about formators who cannot simply be teachers, because even the Pharisees were teachers but they lacked the other dimension: being witnesses. The teacher in fact must be a witness. The apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata* defines very well who is a formator, affirming that he is “very familiar with the path of seeking God, so as to be able to accompany others on this journey”². By experts we do not mean those who have many scholarly titles. Of course, titles are useful, if however you keep humility. Titles are okay but they do not make a formator; he can be a teacher but not a formator.

Therefore I repeat the importance of the testimony of the formator, which must be well centred charismatically. It would be curious to make an inquiry to see how many teachers have left the religious life while they were teachers. What have they transmitted? Crises? They have transmitted what they had in their hearts, and afterwards we lament that the young men leave the consecrated life. Hence before nominating a formator be sure that he is well formed.

Formation that is accompanied therefore requires that the formators be companions, to share the bread with others (*cum pane*).

² JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, no. 66.

The formator is the one who shares bread at the same table, the bread of his faith, the bread of his own vocation. Today there is much talk about narrative theology even in the vocational field. Narration is basic. The young man desires to know, how I, the formator, have succeeded in overcoming crises; he will not be scandalized by my crises, and if he will be, then he is not made for the religious life, because he seeks an institute of perfect people and this he will never find.

The formator should be a well-balanced person vocationally. He may have some crises, but it is important that he loves his vocation, love its mission and is willing to offer all of himself to live its charism.

Let him be moreover a person centred in God, expert in the ways that lead to God, because the true formator is the Father who gives us the form in his Son, and this form we can assume through the action of the Holy Spirit. Therefore it is the Trinity that forms us, therefore let the formators be lesser protagonists and let God be the main protagonist in the work of formation. You are pontiffs, in the etymological sense of the term: *pons facere*, makers of bridges, between the liberty of the person being formed and the liberty of God. The bridge, however, so that it may allow the connection between the two sides must let himself be stepped upon. This is the high value of a formator: he is a bridge and at the same time he is humble, because he does not work other than consent to the passage.

The accompaniment requires of the formator, who is the first accompanying person of those in formation, the following:

a) **Closeness:** be on the lookout for those formators who are almost never present; pay attention to young men who want guides who are far away; that they accept those who are close by them.

b) **Wisdom:** This is another important virtue which a formator must possess in order to stimulate processes of growth.

c) **Crises:** If a formand does not experience a crisis, please induce it for him while accompanying him. Because if he does not experience it now he will experience it when he will not have a companion beside him.

– The psychologists talk about three basic crises: the crisis of self-imagining, the crisis of realism, the crisis of reduction. And all these forms of crisis must be accompanied well. You Provincials keep count

above all of the crisis of realism and the crisis of reduction, while you formators pay attention above all to the crisis of self-imaging.

– *The crisis of self-image*: It consists in the fact that “I, that believed myself to be the wisest man in the world, the most intelligent man in the world, the most handsome among the sons of men, etc., one day I look at the mirror and I see another”. In my opinion this crisis should be lived before the perpetual profession, because otherwise we risk that the I who makes the profession is not the real I but an imaginary I and therefore after, when he will discover it, will rightly leave the institute.

– *The crisis of realism*: “I thought that the day I became a priest I would have changed the world, now I realize that the world goes ahead even without me and I am where I was”. Here you Provincials, please pay attention in accompanying this crisis which usually they say takes place around the 40th year but I, based on my experience, believe can arrive even before. In this, accompany in particular the youngest, above all in the first years after the perpetual Profession.

– *The crisis of reduction*: It concerns above all those of the third age, and it is a crisis to which we do not give much importance. You Provincials, if you listened to the elderly, you would see that they are many times in a deep crisis, even a crisis of faith. I believe that it is there that the crisis of faith enters: “I that I have done so much good in my life, have done much for God, for the Church, for my Institute, now find myself in this negative condition”.

I will always remember when I was Provincial, a confrere of mine who was more than 90 years of age, who had worked for all his life like crazy, when I went to find him in the infirmary, said: “Father! Why does God treat me like this? I that have done ...” (and he started his list). I said jokingly and trying to uplift a little his morale: “But don’t you realize that you are 90 years old? The Lord has treated you too well. Now take your rest and pray so as to die well”. Thanks to God, after a deep crisis, he died reconciled with himself and with God, but this thanks to an accompaniment.

There are religious who have given all their life for Jesus and die refusing the sacraments. This to say that the crisis of faith is very strong, above all at a certain age and they are most at risk those who

during their life have been very active. During a beautiful moment the Lord remembers us, gives us rest and then the crisis comes there.

d) **Experience:** It is important to know how to interpret what the person being accompanied lives in his heart. Perhaps the young man is living a situation which he does not know how to name; the formator, starting from his experience, must know how to say: "The thing that is happening to you is this, stay at peace". Because of that, dialog is therefore important.

I narrate what has happened to me. Thanks to heaven, I have never had a deep crisis of vocation. I was and I continue, by the grace of God, to be happy with my vocation, but I had a moment of strong trial during postulantship, so much so that I was thinking of leaving. The master, who was a truly wise man and very close to us, one day after compline calls me and says to me: "Carballo, you have a problem". And I answer: "No, no, Father. If I had it I would tell it to you" (False). And he: "Okay, okay. Good night and till tomorrow". The day after he repeats: "Carballo, you have something. You are living through a delicate moment". And I: "No, no, Father, be at peace. If I lived it I would tell it to you" (False again). The third day I had in my jacket a little letter wherein I had written that I wanted to go away. He calls me again and tells me: "Look, you don't fool me. You are living through a difficult moment, and perhaps for something stupid. If you don't want to speak with me, speak with another". And I, turning to my master, say to him: "Father, here is my letter. I tear it". I confide that as long as he was alive, he was my spiritual director. Exactly because I saw that attitude of liberty: "You ought not talk to me. The important is that you confide with somebody and free yourself".

I therefore make an invitation to the masters not to be jealous. The formandi must not speak only with the master, because sometimes among them there can be no right feeling, but important is that they speak with somebody.

e) **Joy:** the formator must characterize himself with joy and cheerfulness in living his vocation. If you do not live with joy your vocation, I tell you please give up. Do not wait for tomorrow. It is the best service you can do to your Institute.

f) **Passion:** Let the formator be an impassioned man. One who is impassioned can also make a mistake, because the heart betrays, but

one who is not impassioned has already committed a mistake upon being born. He must not be born because he does not love life. And then we pretend to accompany others to a life of fullness? No.

g) **Hope:** the formator must be a person who transmits hope. And here I make a distinction: if you asked me: "Jose, are you optimistic about the future of the Pauline life?". I do not know you but I would immediately say no; the same about the future of the Franciscan life, of the religious life, of the life of the Church... My answer would always be no. But if you asked me: "Jose, do you have hope?", then I answer you yes. Because there is a big difference between optimism and hope. Optimism is born of my "chariots and horses", as the book of Exodus says: we are so many, we are young, we are all doctors, etc. We are, we are, we are... and we do, we do, we do. And in this context God for us does not count because we can do everything by ourselves. Hope on the other hand comes from Jesus who shows his power in my weakness, as Saint Paul says. And so, knowing that for Him nothing is impossible, also I can say with Saint Paul: "I can do all in him who gives me the power" (Phil 4:13). Hence I turn to the formators: be men of hope, men of faith, prophets of hope.

h) The formator must assure his service in "**a spirit of communion with the whole Church**"³. Today this must not be given as discounted.

A short time ago the founder of an association came to me because I had called him. He knew that things were not going well and I would have told it to him but even before I began to talk, he himself takes the initiative and says: "This is not my Church, this is not my Pope". I answer: "Father, be calm. I do not worry about your Church, I do not worry about your Pope, I just would like to remind you that Jesus has wanted a Church formed by saints and sinners, not only by saints. You perhaps would never have accepted Peter in your association. Jesus instead called him. You would never have named him as the first Pope while Jesus did it. You surely would not have canonized him, because was a traitor like the others, but today Jesus offers him to us as the 'rock' together with the other apostles. I remind you that Peter today is called Francis. Yesterday he was Benedict or

³ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, no. 66.

John or John Paul II, etc. Tomorrow he can be Anthony, Paul. Today he is Francis. This is the Church and this is the Pope. All the rest is in your head". So he tells me: "Therefore you are telling me that I am excommunicated?". I answer him: "Of course, you are not in communion". And he: "So write for me a decree that you tell me that I am excommunicated". I answer: "Father, you are not so important to make the Church lose time writing a document to send you out. You have already put yourself out". He: "So I'm going away". And I: "Go away, yes, because there is no reason to continue our dialog". Important therefore is harmony with the Church. We must build.

i) **Personal dialogue:** "The formator must dedicate the best of his time to personal dialogue with the formand. Hence the invitation is that there be full time formators. If a formand knocks at your door because he wants to talk, do not postpone for tomorrow, because tomorrow perhaps is too late. The chief instrument of formation is personal dialogue... which should take place regularly and with a certain frequency"⁴.

And all this must take place in a climate of **trust, liberty and responsibility**, in which the person is capable of autonomy and personal initiative. Seeing some projects of formation, I am frightened: zero liberty for the formandi, while pretending that they be responsible. But if there is no liberty, there is no responsibility.

3.3 FORMATIVE FRATERNITY

Today formation cannot depend only on one person. He is the one firstly responsible among the agents of formation, but if the consecrated life recognizes in fraternal life in community one of its fundamental elements, an important mediation in formation is the same fraternal life in common⁵. The formator must always remember that formation is a work in *équipe*, for which he must favour the integration of all the members of the fraternity in the work of formation. The formandi are not his "property", they are of the Lord, they are for the community. It is important that the formator be a bridge between the formandi and the fraternity that receives them, avoiding in this way the "double magisterium", deeply harmful for the formation.

⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, no. 66.

⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, no. 67.

A fraternity is formative if its members:

a) feel themselves in a journey and in a permanent and continuing formation;

b) live the conflicts in formative key. Because of this they do not avoid them and much less hide them but handle them in such a way that they serve as purification and growth in the following of Jesus;

c) they live the human values of fraternal courtesy, of joy and cheerfulness, compassion, trust, mutual respect, fraternal correction... with naturalness;

d) celebrate their faith with the celebration of the Eucharist, the prayerful reading of the Word, the Liturgy of the Hours, the sacrament of Reconciliation, personal prayer...;

e) they understand the fraternal life as a “theological space in which one can experience the mystical presence of the risen Lord (cf. Mt 18:20)”, before being an instrument for a determinate mission; a life “shared in love”; a fraternal life lived in “availability for service without sparing of energies”, ready to «receive the other as he is without “judging him”» (cf. Mt 7:1-2)”, with the ability to «pardon even “seventy times seven”» (Mt 18:22)⁶.

f) they are capable of elaborating together the project of life and mission of their fraternity;

g) they feel themselves to be in permanent mission, with their life and activity; in “going out” to the existential peripheries and to those of thought;

h) they feel themselves called to stay with Jesus, called to live together, by the “mystique of encounter”, the following of Jesus Christ, and sent to “awaken the world” as prophets.

I am personally convinced that the more international/multicultural and heterogeneous are the fraternities, the more they will be formative, provided this diversity is managed in an adequate way.

⁶ John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, no. 42.

3.4 FORMATIVE URGENCIES

Many are the challenges and urgencies which today are set before the consecrated life in the field of formation. Here are some of these challenges and urgencies.

a) If the consecrated life supposes a calling, a vocation (cf. Jn 15:16), the first step in formation is **discernment** to recognize the presence or not of this calling. Bearing in mind that the consecrated life is not for all, nor all are for the consecrated life, the formator must help the young man to discover, through some positive signs (the absence of negative signs is not enough), the call of the Lord to the consecrated life or not. In this journey, which requires entering into the logic of God and not of men, we recall the election of David: the formator cannot allow himself to be conditioned by the temptation of number and efficiency⁷. In discernment it is necessary to bear in mind that psychology can be of help in this not easy task, but it can never take the place of spiritual accompaniment, for which it is required that the formator be “very familiar with the path of seeking God”⁸.

b) If Jesus is the centre of the consecrated life, its only reason for being and working, all the formative process, ongoing and initial, must **favour personal encounter with Jesus**. He is the only one who can form the heart; the only one who can create passion, inflaming the heart by his word; the only one who can keep the consecrated in the existential peripheries without they “getting burned”. All of this requires a strong spirituality, based on the Word of God, in liturgy, on personal prayer, on a sacramental life adequate for these delicate and difficult moments⁹. It requires an apostolic spirituality, a unified spirituality, which makes us “children of heaven and children of the earth”; a spirituality in dynamic tension, which makes “mystics and prophets”; a spirituality of presence, which makes us “disciples and missionaries”. We who are consecrated must be aware that “the more one lives in Christ, the better one can serve him in others, going even to the furthest missionary outposts and facing the greatest dangers”¹⁰.

⁷ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND THE SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *Start from Christ: A renewed commitment of the consecrated life in the third millennium*, 19 May 2002, no. 18.

⁸ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, no. 66.

⁹ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, no. 13.

¹⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, no. 76.

c) Given that the consecrated life is a gift of God to his Church, it must walk in **deep communion with the Church**, with all that this involves: “prompt obedience to the Pastors, especially to the Roman Pontiff” and “full participation in church life in all its dimensions”. Everything without failing in the prophetic dimension, which cannot be lacking in the consecrated life, with all that it involves: calling, denouncement, announcement and intercession. The consecrated person, as prophet, is called to receive the Word of the Lord in the dialogue of prayer and to proclaim it “with his life, word, lips and actions”, making himself “spokesperson of God against evil and sin”¹¹. Only starting from communion and prophecy can the consecrated life collaborate in the growth of the Church “in depth and extension”¹². The ecclesial dimension of the consecrated life should be put in evidence during the entire formative process.

d) Considering that the consecrated life in the majority of its manifestations assumes fraternal life in community as irremissible element, it is urgent to form for us/form **a fraternal life in community that is human and humanizing**, which allows us to be more men and more women; a fraternal life in community in which one lives in a climate of evangelical liberty and responsibility; a fraternal life characterized by discretion and respect for the other in his personal reality and which makes possible a deep communication of what one does, of what one thinks about and feels; a fraternal life in which each one feels himself as a gift of the Lord for the other, and it is lived according to the logic of gift; a fraternal life that is expert in communion, in which the law of communion regulates interpersonal relations¹³; a fraternal life which, coming out of its “nest” opens itself to others.

e) Given that the consecrated life wants to be all for the Lord and, because of the Lord and from him, all for others, formation must **handle “passion” for the Lord and “passion” for humanity**, especially for the poorest.

f) **Human formation (affectivity and sexuality)**: I am urged to underline above all human formation. I believe that during the last

¹¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, no. 84.

¹² JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, no. 46.

¹³ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, 6 January 2001, no. 43.

years the human dimension has been a bit neglected, but if we want to be good religious we must be first of all or at the same time men, adult persons and not adulterated ones or adulterers. I invite you to give attention above all to human formation in affective sexual dimension. I, when I talk about this theme to sisters, above all to nuns of the cloister, often make this question: "Do we have affectivity and sexuality?". And all answer me erroneously: "Yes".

We do not have affectivity, we do not have sexuality: we are affectivity and we are sexuality. That means that this is an essential dimension. We must give much attention to this dimension, not only to avoid problems but above all to allow the integral growth of the person. And here, even if it is a debated theme, we must give attention to the sexual orientation. Please read what the Pope says during an interview¹⁴.

Putting above everything else in first place respect toward the person which must never be wanting, he has talked about themes connected to sexual orientation. Sometimes we are accepting people who are not called to the consecrated life and are not able to live serenely their affective sexual identity.

The Pope clearly says in this interview that certain manifestations of sentiments cannot take place in our communities, in our consecrated life. Therefore the greatest respect towards all persons but precisely because we respect them, we must accompany them to choose another option of life in their existence.

Quoting Fr. Amedeo Cencini, I give you these criteria regarding a formation of affectivity and sexuality:

– *Feel yourselves loved.* Today there are many young wounded men who do not feel themselves loved, and who at times come to us because they look for love but do not find it.

– *Feel yourselves called to love.* This is the basic vocation, therefore the religious life is not a refuge to not love.

– *Love your own vocation.* If one is a Pauline, he must love the Pauline vocation, if one is a Franciscan, he must love the Franciscan

¹⁴ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *The force of vocation. Consecrated life today.* Conversation with Fernando Prado, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 2018.

vocation. There are some religious who regret a state of life different from the one chosen, for example, the married one: “Oh, if only I had married!”. It is useless to think what would happen if you got married, you are now a friar and live as a consecrated person. There are persons who feel comfortable only there where they are not. It is the famous sloth, about which the Pope talks so much, about those who have made profession of discontent.

– *Love according to your vocation.* If I have made a vow of chastity, I must always love, but as a chaste person; that is, you must love according to your form of life.

At the centre of these four criteria, there is always love, and this is basic. A person who does not love, or does not feel himself loved, or does not love his vocation, or does not love according to his vocation, cannot live a consecrated life, because he assumes a weight that he will not support.

g) **Formation for the mission:** Since the mission is, as in the case of the Church, “the grace and the vocation” proper of the consecrated life¹⁵, and it is the mission which makes the consecrated life, formation must prepare for the mission proper of the Institute, in such a way that, from the first years of formation, the candidates and the formandi are seduced from forgotten cloisters, the inhuman cloisters where the beauty and the dignity of the person are continuously stained, and along all the formative process, initial and ongoing, candidates and the consecrated, we enlarge the space of our tent (cf. Is 54:2), to make ours the joys and sadness of the poorest and of those who suffer. Formation must prepare the consecrated to be carriers of hope to the near and the far, not as owners of the truth, but as humble servants of a message we have received freely and freely we must give (cf. Gal 3:18): the truth is God alone, and we in the measure in which we come close to him we shall also be carriers of truth. Of truth, not of the truth.

h) **Intellectual formation:** Called to evangelize culture and to go to the “peripheries of thought”, the consecrated must cultivate “a renewed love for the cultural commitment”, “dedication to study as means for integral formation and as ascetical journey”. Thus, just as

¹⁵ Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 8 December 1975, no. 14.

“abstract intellectualism” can lead the consecrated to feel themselves like prisoners in the nets of a “suffocating narcissism”, not to cultivate study could generate in the consecrated “a sense of marginalization and of inferiority” and a dangerous superficiality and thoughtlessness in pastoral initiatives and of evangelization which could render them useless for the noble cause of dialogue with the contemporary culture and of its necessary evangelization. On the contrary, study, as “expression of the unquenchable desire for an ever deeper knowledge of God [...] is an incentive to dialogue and conversation, a training in the capacity for judgment, a stimulus to contemplation and prayer in the constant quest for the presence and activity of God in the complex reality of today’s world”¹⁶.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In the face of the temptation to discouragement, of tiredness and of delusion because of the actual demands of formation and of the scarce results that are obtained, from my experience as formator in the course of many years, I do not hesitate to say to all formators: Do not be afraid. Love the Lord and your formandi with “passion”, live the logic of gift and know that the Lord is assuring you: Do not be afraid, because I am with you to protect you (cf. Jer 1:8).

¹⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*, no 98.



**TOGETHER ON THE ROAD OF EMMAUS
FOR A VIRTUOUS RECEPTION
OF THE SYNODAL JOURNEY**

Father Rossano Sala SDB

Special Secretary of the Synod on the Young

Father Rossano Sala was born in Besana Brianza (in the Province and Diocese of Milan) and has been professed in the Salesian Society since 1992 and priest since 2000.

He was engaged in the exercise of the Salesian mission among young people from 2000 to 2010 (in the Salesian houses of Bologna and Brescia, first as a pastoral and vocation animator and then as Director and Dean). From 2011, he joined the academic community of the Salesian Pontifical University.

He obtained his License in Fundamental Theology at the Theological Faculty of Northern Italy in 2002, and in the same Faculty, he obtained his PhD in 2012.

He taught Fundamental Theology from 2004 to 2012 in the Turin-Crocetta area. From the 2012-2013 academic year, he received the position of holding the chair of "Youth Ministry" in the Faculty of Theology. He currently holds it as Extraordinary Professor.

From September 2016, he became Director of the Journal of Youth Ministry. On 17 November 2017, he was appointed by Pope Francis Special Secretary for the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops with the theme "Young people, faith and vocational discernment".

On 30 April 2019, Pope Francis appointed him Consultor of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, and from 6 to 27 October Father Rossano participated, as Synodal Father, in the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region with the theme: "Amazon: new paths for the Church and for an integral ecology".

From the opening address of Pope Francis to the Synod Fathers, 3 October 2018:

«Brothers and sisters, may the Synod awaken our hearts!

The present moment, and this applies also to the Church, appears to be laden with struggles, problems, burdens. But our faith tells us that it is also the *kairos* in which the Lord comes to meet us in order to love us and call us to the fullness of life.

The future is not a threat to be feared, but is the time the Lord promises us when we will be able to experience communion with him, with our brothers and sisters, and with the whole of creation.

We need to rediscover the reasons for our hope and, above all, to pass them on to young people who are thirsting for hope. As the Second Vatican Council affirmed: “We can justly consider that the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping” (*Gaudium et spes*, no. 31)».

From the beginning, I was privileged to participate in the preparation of the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme *Young people, faith and vocational discernment* and I was also privileged, as Special Secretary, to take part in the Synodal Assembly which was held from 3 to 28 October 2018.

I still have in my heart the warmth and freshness of an unforgettable experience that has left an indelible mark in my soul. The Church has really tried to “frequent the future”, as Pope Francis invited us to do during the first General Congregation. On 3 October, in fact, he told us:

«Let us therefore work to “spend time with the future”, to take from this Synod not merely a document – that generally is only read by a few and criticized by many – but above all concrete pastoral proposals capable of fulfilling the Synod’s purpose. In other words, to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one

another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands, and inspire in young people – all young people, with no one excluded – a vision of the future filled with the joy of the Gospel».

We ask ourselves, therefore, starting from this enthusiasm and eager to truly create a “positive imagery” capable of reanimating our educational and pastoral communities: what new pastoral paths does the Synod open? How can we walk with young people in their vocational discernment? How, as a Church, can we really find and transmit to young people the reasons for our hope, involving them in the mission? How can we rejuvenate the face of the Church together with young people?

As far as the synodal journey is concerned, in this last year and a half many things have happened: the *Pre-Synodal Meeting* of Young People (18-24 March 2018), the publication of the *Instrumentum laboris* (8 May - 19 June 2018), the *Synodal Assembly* (3-18 October 2018) culminated in the publication of the *Final Document*. Then, on 25 March 2019, Pope Francis signed the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*.

It would be impossible for me to think only of making a synthesis of all this, because this concentration of production linked to the commitment of the Church with and for young people will need years to be understood in all its prophetic charge and to bear the fruits that we all desire.

In addition to the invitation to attend this small but precious library, I am just trying to give you four keys to understanding the path that has been done. I order some suggestions in four nuclei that are catalysed by the four principles contained in *Evangelii gaudium* (nos. 222-237). For each of them I point out some strategic themes that come out of the synodal path and that I consider important for the relaunch of our pastoral work.

1. «TIME IS GREATER THAN SPACE»: ENTERING THE SYNODAL PATH

«Giving priority to time means being concerned about initiating processes rather than possessing spaces.

Time governs spaces, illumines them and makes them links in a constantly expanding chain, with no possibility of return»¹.

¹ FRANCIS, Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 24 November 2013, no. 223.

I just reread the synodal path through a few strokes, because it is certainly already instructive for us in itself. To be Church first of all means “to follow the same path together”!

- Choice of theme (6 October 2016)
- *Preparatory document* with questionnaire (13 January 2017)
- International seminar on the condition of young people (11-15 September 2017)
- *Online* questionnaire (June-December 2017)
- Pre-Synodal Youth Meeting (19-24 March 2018)
- *Instrumentum laboris* (8 May 2018)
- *Final document* (28 October 2018)
- Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit* (25 March 2019)

This broad and articulated path is already a style and a method for us: we do not occupy space but we create processes! It is the path we have made together that counts, it is the taking into account of the whole process that renews us.

For this reason, the fundamental references that I will give will be starting from both the *Instrumentum laboris* (IL) and the *Final Document* (FD). It is important to remember that these two texts must be read and studied together with *Christus vivit* (ChV):

«I have let myself be inspired by the wealth of reflections and conversations that emerged from last year’s Synod. I cannot include all those contributions here, but you can read them in the Final Document. In writing this letter, though, I have attempted to summarize those proposals I considered most significant. In this way, my words will echo the myriad voices of believers the world over who made their opinions known to the Synod. Those young people who are not believers, yet wished to share their thoughts, also raised issues that led me to ask new questions².

It is important to clarify the relationship between the *Instrumentum laboris* and the Final Document. The first is the unitary and synthetic reference framework that emerged from the two years

² FRANCIS, Apostolic exhortation *Christus vivit*, 25 March 2019, no. 4.

of listening; the second is the fruit of the discernment made and brings together the generative thematic nuclei on which the Synod Fathers focused with particular intensity and passion. We therefore recognize the diversity and complementarity of these two texts³».

It becomes important for us to learn to create processes that will remain even when we are no longer there, to open roads that we ourselves will not follow. I always like to think of Moses on Mount Nebo, who opens the way to the Promised Land, but does not set foot there! It is a beautiful biblical image of a path taken with others so that they have access to a full and abundant life!

1.1 FIRST QUESTION

What are the processes in place in our institutional realities? Are we “managers” in view of the survival of our pastoral activities or are we accompanying paths of renewal capable of putting ourselves at stake with courage and passion?

1.2 AREAS OF WORK

a) Re-appropriate a renewed youth dynamism

The first chapter of the second part of both the IL (74-84) and the FD (63-76) deal with the question of the singularity of youth as the age of life: in particular the IL from the biblical point of view – much discussed during the synodal discussion – and the FD from the Christological, anthropological and pedagogical point of view. These two chapters, read together, help us to discover that the Synod is truly an appeal to the Church to rediscover within it and in its action a renewed youthful dynamism and its own youth!

All this is taken up and relaunched by the second chapter of the ChV (nos. 22-63).

It is indeed a “generative thematic nucleus” of great interest, especially in Europe where lately we have been very depressed from the social, ecclesial and pastoral point of view! So much humiliated but less humble!

³ SYNOD OF BISHOPS XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *The young, faith and vocational discernment, Final Document*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 27 October 2018, no. 3.

Let us not forget the saints who worked with young people have shaped their own style starting here. For example, on many occasions, Don Bosco affirms that his way of acting among young people was characterized by a true and proper “youthful dynamism”. In other words, from the dynamism of youth, Don Bosco learned the style to accompany young people!

b) Becoming aware of the anthropological and cultural challenges

The fourth chapter of IL (51-63) is unsurpassed in describing the six anthropological and cultural challenges we are called upon to face in our time: body, affectivity and sexuality; new cognitive paradigms and the search for truth; the anthropological effects of the digital world; institutional disappointment and new forms of participation; decision-making paralysis in the superabundance of proposals; beyond secularisation.

In FD and ChV, all these challenges are taken up and faced in different moments in a non-systematic way, but rather scattered and spread. All six challenges are met, with different emphasis and insights. The numbers dedicated to the “digital revolution” underway, which really marks a moment of epoch-making change (cf. FD 21-23.145-146) and those linked to sexuality (cf. FD 37-39.149-150) emerge in a particular way: two truly strategic areas of great topicality. All six of them insert us in the “change of epoch” that we are living.

For us it is clear that these are the real conditions for the exercise of the ecclesial mission today: these challenges must be examined in every context of ours. Those who take care of young people are called upon to address them and to have them clearly defined. We need conferences, studies, in-depth studies so as not to remain out of time and history!

c) The redemption of adults and the qualification of those accompanying them

In the area of formation, the whole theme of the quality of adults emerges, of the formation of those accompanying them, which has found in the synodal journey a multiplicity of denunciations,

expressions and proposals. The fact that adults are too many times adulescent and adulterated is evident to all. Our world canonizes adolescence and youth, fatally forgetting that we must strive for maturity and fullness of adult life also. Yet young people have told us in many ways that they are really a “Telemachus generation”, that is, willing and eager to enter into a positive alliance with a world of authentic adults, which they miss very much from all points of view.

There are many references here too. Just a few references to the profile and training of accompanying persons emerged during the listening phase (IL 130-132: *The qualities of those who accompany*) and substantially confirmed in FD 101-103 (*Quality of accompanying persons*). Everything then refers to the final chapter of the third part (FD 157-164: *Integral Formation*). ChV relaunches the theme at various times (cf. 242-247 and 291-298).

d) The request to rehabilitate the liturgy with conviction

The synodal path started from a lack of theme to a strong rehabilitation of the theme. On the other hand, the liturgy is the first form of ecclesial expression! Not only within the Church, but also as a way of “presentation” visible to all.

The question was not present in the “preliminary” phase (i.e. in the *preparatory Document*). In the phase of listening to the young people, the theme of the liturgy often returned (cf. IL 69). In addition to other IL numbers in which reference is made to the liturgy (72, 178, 184, 192), there are also numbers dedicated specifically to the theme (187-189). Here important things are said.

No. 51 of the FD – entitled *The desire for a living liturgy* – is entirely dedicated to the liturgical theme. In the FD, as in the IL, there are also three numbers consecrated directly and specifically to the liturgy (134-136).

Let us not forget, therefore, that “the liturgical experience is the principal resource for Christian identity” (FD 51) and that the liturgy for youth ministry is an irreplaceable resource. Because it makes us savour the value of silence, contemplation, gratuitousness and prayer. It says the primacy of grace in our lives. That is no small thing!

2. «UNITY PREVAILS OVER CONFLICT»: OPENING UP TO MISSIONARY SYNODALITY

«In this way it becomes possible to build communion amid disagreement, but this can only be achieved by those great persons who are willing to go beyond the surface of the conflict and to see others in their deepest dignity»⁴.

The great acquisition of the synodal journey was the rediscovery of synodality in a missionary key. The young people did not ask us first of all to be “educated” by us. They did not even ask us to “leave them alone”, even if someone did. And not even to organize anything for them. They asked us to be a Church that walks with them. In the episode of Emmaus, it is interesting that Jesus walks with the two wayfarers regardless of the direction of the journey, but first of all in the logic of sharing the journey!

No. 118 of the *Final Document*, along with other numbers that come before and after, specifies what this means. The title of this issue already has an enormous scope (*Spiritual, pastoral and missionary conversion*):

«Pope Francis often reminds us that this is not possible without a serious journey of conversion. We are aware that it is not just a question of starting up new activities, nor do we want to write “vast apostolic projects, meticulously planned, just like defeated generals” (Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 96). We know that in order to be credible we must live a reform of the Church, which implies purification of the heart and changes of style. The Church must truly allow herself to take on the form of the Eucharist, which she celebrates as the source and summit of her life – the form of a loaf made up of many grains and broken for the life of the world. The fruit of this Synod, the choice that the Spirit has inspired us through listening and discernment, is to walk with the young, going out towards everyone, so as to bear witness to the love of God. We could describe this process by speaking of synodality for mission, or missionary synodality: “Making a synodal Church a reality is an indispensable precondition for a new missionary energy that will

⁴ FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 228.

involve the entire People of God” (cf. International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 2 March 2018, no. 9). We are dealing here with a prophecy of the Second Vatican Council, which we have yet to absorb in all its profundity and to develop in its daily implications, as Pope Francis reminds us when he says: “It is precisely this path of *synodality* which God expects of the Church of the third millennium” (Francis, *Address for the Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops*, 17 October 2015). We are convinced that this choice, a fruit of prayer and debate, will allow the Church, by God’s grace, to be and to appear more clearly as the “youth of the world”»⁵.

2.1 SECOND QUESTION

How convinced are we that communion among us is the necessary platform, the privileged way and the first form of education and evangelization? How do we make real the idea that all, as baptized, are subjects of the mission of the Church?

2.2 AREAS OF WORK

a) The style and method of Emmaus

The synodal discussion on the choice of the biblical icon of reference for the Synod was interesting.

The option on Emmaus was clear and accepted by all: before “speaking to the young”, one must “speak with the young”, giving primacy to conversation, sharing, familiarity and confidence. Starting from a clear and decisive proximity. This, more broadly, concerns our dialogue with the world, towards which we have something to give and something to receive, in a real exchange of gifts to be implemented.

In any case, the story of Emmaus is not a biblical image external to the synodal journey, but it is a fundamental stylistic characterization. The editorial choices of the *Final Document* are clear in this regard and leave no doubt:

⁵ SYNOD OF BISHOPS XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *The young, faith and vocational discernment, Final Document*, no. 118

«We took the account of the disciples on the way to Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:13-35) as paradigmatic for our understanding of the Church's mission to the young. This passage expresses well what we experienced at the Synod and what we would like every one of our particular Churches to experience with regard to the young⁶».

In addition to the Proem just mentioned, each of the three parts is introduced by a significant biblical passage with respect to “recognizing” (first part, no. 5), “interpreting” (second part, no. 58) and “choosing” (third part, no. 114). Theologically speaking, this style that makes accompaniment a way of being Church is rooted in the Eucharistic practice of sharing bread, from which the word “accompaniment” itself derives in a significant way:

«As the account of the Emmaus disciples shows us, accompanying requires availability to walk a stretch of road together, establishing a significant relationship. The origin of the term “to accompany” points to bread broken and shared (*cum pane*), with all the symbolic human and sacramental richness to which it refers. It is therefore the community as a whole that is the prime subject of accompaniment, precisely because in its heart it develops that drama of relationships that can support the person on his journey and furnish him with points of reference and orientation. Accompaniment in human and Christian growth towards adult life is one of the ways in which the community demonstrates that it is capable of renewal and of renewing the world⁷».

b) Prophecy of fraternity in pastoral organization

The great key of interpretation offered for ecclesial renewal was that of “missionary synodality” (cf. FD 115-127). This perspective was the answer to the question on the form of the Church expressed in the first chapter of the third part of the IL (138-143). The young people, with their presence and their word, have reopened the *Dossier* on Synodality in the Church of the Third Millennium: no. 118 of the FD

⁶ SYNOD OF BISHOPS XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *The young, faith and vocational discernment, Final Document*, no. 4.

⁷ SYNOD OF BISHOPS XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *The young, faith and vocational discernment, Final Document*, no. 92.

is the perspective centre for reading the entire Document as a whole and for understanding the path that awaits us in the third millennium.

Concretely, this challenges us in the way in which we work together in the animation of youth ministry: IL no. 209 invited us to move *towards an integrated ministry* and FD no. 141 asked us to move *from fragmentation to integration*. In the Dioceses, and even in some Episcopal Conferences, these questions are of dramatic relevance. Because the specialization and atomization of the different pastoral areas risk destroying the pastoral unity of the Church. The passage decided on from “office” work to “project” work was hoped for by many at the Synod. We know that the office tends to separate and the project creates unity instead.

These are the great challenges to be taken up for a true and proper “Institutional Conversion”⁸.

c) Co-responsible and virtuous planning

The theme of pastoral planning did not come out very strongly in the *Synodal Assembly*. It was much more present in the phase of listening to the individual Episcopal Conferences.

IL at numbers 206-208 raised the double question, strongly emphasized, of improvisation and pastoral incompetence on the one hand and on the other of the not always easy relationship between extraordinary events and daily life. The questions were asked in a very clear and precise form.

In the FD, only the second theme was addressed in no. 142. The fact remains that the first, at Church level, remains dramatic: incompetent planning, a sign of the inability to work as a team, is at the root of many failures in youth ministry. We are not always able to create a collaborative and co-responsible climate, and we willingly replace it with a verticalism now unacceptable to the younger generations (cf. the “clericalism” mentioned in IL 199, an issue dedicated to “youth protagonism”), creates a climate of distraction and discouragement. That the young people in a top-

⁸ Cf. “*Instrumentum laboris*” of the XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, 19 June 2018 no. 198.

down and pyramidal system of the Church are no longer with us emerged with great clarity at the Synod!

d) The need to work in a network

The question of “missionary synodality” is central and creates two very precise movements: a centripetal one – that is, the true interior, that is, in the ecclesial environments and in the collaboration between us – and a centrifugal one – that instead goes outwards, capable of involving and creating collaboration with all those who care about young people. Two movements that are both necessary and never reducible to the other.

Many times we realize – with great sadness and shame – that it is easier to work with third parties (civil and social) than between us (various levels of the Church, different offices and various agents)! In fact, the need to work in a network needs strong relational virtues and the ability to involve oneself widely and articulated. The numbers 204-205 of the IL posed the question with clarity.

The Synod also realized that the Church lives in a territory with which she must enter into dialogue for a true and proper exchange of gifts (FD 132) and that the preparation of new formators must include specific competence in networking (FD 159) and in teams in all fields (FD 103.124.163).

3. «REALITY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE IDEA»: LIVING THE CONDITION OF YOUTH

«Ideas – conceptual elaborations – are at the service of communication, understanding, and praxis.

Ideas disconnected from realities give rise to ineffectual forms of idealism and nominalism, capable at most of classifying and defining, but certainly not calling to action. What calls us to action are realities illuminated by reason»⁹.

⁹ FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 232.

Through the Synod, we became aware that the vital listening to the reality of the youth is the first step towards being signs and bearers of God's love for young people. To empathize with their world, their dreams, their existential condition is decisive for not acting outside of history, proposing "pre-packaged recipes" that no longer make sense! Starting from reality, listening to situations in which young people are growing up, sharing with them the joys and hopes. Engaging emotionally with them, making our hearts vibrate on the wavelength of the challenges that young people are facing is once again decisive.

Pope Francis in ChV 75-76 sums this up in the "gift of tears", what Don Bosco had when he got out of prison and at various times in his life. The Holy Father says:

«Perhaps "those of us who have a reasonably comfortable life don't know how to weep. Some realities in life are only seen with eyes cleansed by tears. I would like each of you to ask yourself this question: Can I weep? Can I weep when I see a child who is starving, on drugs or on the street, homeless, abandoned, mistreated or exploited as a slave by society? Or is my weeping only the self-centred whining of those who cry because they want something else?" Try to learn to weep for all those young people less fortunate than yourselves. Weeping is also an expression of mercy and compassion. If tears do come, ask the Lord to give you the grace to weep for the sufferings of others. Once you can weep, then you will be able to help others from the heart»¹⁰.

And these tears, when they are true, clean our eyes, that is, they purify our gaze, they make us see things in a different way. Also on this Pope Francis has words that are good for us and that should be heard again, because he invites us to look at things in a positive way, with a truly evangelical look:

«We adults can often be tempted to list all the problems and failings of today's young people. Perhaps some will find it praiseworthy that we seem so expert in discerning difficulties and dangers. But what would be the result of such an attitude? Greater distance, less closeness, less mutual assistance.

¹⁰ FRANCIS, Apostolic exhortation *Christus vivit*, 25 March 2019, no. 76.

Anyone called to be a parent, pastor or guide to young people must have the farsightedness to appreciate the little flame that continues to burn, the fragile reed that is shaken but not broken (cf. Is 42:3). The ability to discern pathways where others only see walls, to recognize potential where others see only peril. That is how God the Father sees things; he knows how to cherish and nurture the seeds of goodness sown in the hearts of the young. Each young person's heart should thus be considered "holy ground", a bearer of seeds of divine life, before which we must "take off our shoes" in order to draw near and enter more deeply into the Mystery¹¹».

3.1 THIRD QUESTION

How do I look at young people? How do I try to empathize with their condition? When was the last time I was really moved and shed tears of emotion at the situation of so many children, adolescents and young people who are suffering today?

3.2 AREAS OF WORK

a) Empathetic listening to young people

The synodal debate, from the beginning, has become aware that the path of preparation has denounced a Church "in debt of listening". Pope Francis already affirmed this in his initial speech to the Synod:

«The path of preparation for this moment has highlighted a Church "that needs to listen", including those young people who often do not feel understood by the Church in their originality and therefore not accepted for who they really are, and sometimes even rejected».

The question of listening is more radical than one might think: it comes from afar, that is, from an inability to listen to God and his Spirit who continually speak and act in history. It is the fruit of that "spiritual superficiality" and that "spiritual abyss" of a Church that speaks too much: arrogant enough to be able to learn something from someone; very superb in thinking of itself as the sole repository of truth.

¹¹ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, nos. 66-67.

Many passages of the IL and of the final FD refer to listening: it is enough to take a look at the fifth chapter of the first part of the IL (64-72) and at the first chapter of the first part of the FD (6-9) to realize it.

Listening «is the way that God himself relates to his people»¹² (FD 6) and therefore has a theological value, rather than pedagogical and pastoral! Many interventions have confirmed that we are called to regain, through listening, that empathetic capacity capable of abandoning our own point of life and literally entering into the point of view of the other, seeing and hearing things from the heart of the other.

b) Privileged attention to poor and abandoned young people

Both in the listening phase (cf. IL 41-50: *In the culture of waste*; IL 166-171: *Vicinity and support in distress and marginalization*) and in the synodal assembly phase, the need to give more to those who had less was highlighted. This is a very urgent point in our time, where there is no shortage of poor young people.

It is enough to go and see some numbers of the FD to realize this: migrants (25-28 and 147), abuses (29-31), various forms of vulnerability (40-44), wounded young people (67).

How does this attention find its place in the pastoral proposals and initiatives of our realities? How can we better focus on these “natural recipients” of a Church that truly cares for the poverty of our time? How are we today “signs and bearers of God’s love” to these poorest young people? Think only of young migrants, or unaccompanied minors.

c) Vocational qualification of youth ministry

The Synod as a whole had this as a specific focus and therefore as an emergency to be addressed: to move from a youth ministry of entertainment to a youth ministry in a vocational key. It is a perspective that places us in an epoch-making change! It will take time, patience, and courage to enter!

¹² Cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *The young, faith and vocational discernment, Final Document*, no. 6.

There are many references: at the centre is the second chapter of the second part of both IL (85-105) and FD (77-90). There are too many references and it is not possible to make a synthesis in brief, because the subject is strategic and fundamental, both from a theoretical and practical point of view: thinking of vocation as the personalizing expression of the life of faith of every baptized person sets in motion a whole series of long-term consequences that would take us a long way forward. This theme would suffice for a week of study!

In a specific way we could start from no. 139 (*Vocational animation of pastoral work*) and from no. 140 (*Vocational pastoral work for young people*) of the FD, and then collect the many elements that come out of all the synodal texts.

This, properly, seems to me to be the fundamental “generative thematic nucleus” set in motion by the whole synodal movement of the last three years.

d) Renew the idea and practice of the oratory starting from the “oratorian criterion”

The oratory and the oratorian criterion are truly an Italian and Salesian dynamic par excellence, a specific gift that we carry in our hearts and that we are called to give to the whole Church. It is evident that for us to say oratory means transforming the Church into a house for young people, according to the beautiful statement of the FD 138:

«Only a pastoral approach capable of renewal on the basis of care relationships and the quality of the Christian community will be significant and attractive for the young. The Church will thus be able to present herself to them as a welcoming home, characterized by a family atmosphere built on trust and confidence. The longing for fraternity, which emerged so many times as the Synod listened to the young, asks the Church to be “a home for many peoples, a mother for all peoples” (Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 288): pastoral ministry has the task of realizing in history the Church’s universal maternity through concrete and prophetic gestures of joyful, daily welcome that make her a home for the young¹³».

¹³ SYNOD OF BISHOPS XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *The young, faith and vocational discernment, Final Document*, no. 138.

In this sense, after clarifying what I like to call the “oratorian criterion” (characterized by four pillars: house that welcomes, parish that evangelizes, school that leads to life and courtyard to meet with friends) we also speak of the oratory and youth centre as a specific pastoral place. It was done in passing in IL at no. 180 and it is done at no. 143 of the FD, asking to “dynamize” the youth centres making them become privileged tools for a Church going out. How to do it? How do we envision the physiognomy of the oratory of the third millennium? How can we transform our pastoral environments into “homes” and “families”?

4. «THE WHOLE IS SUPERIOR TO THE PART»: LEARNING TO DISCERN

«The whole is greater than the part, but it is also greater than the sum of its parts. There is no need, then, to be overly obsessed with limited and particular questions.

We constantly have to broaden our horizons and see the greater good which will benefit us all... We can work on a small scale, in our own neighbourhood, but with a larger perspective»¹⁴.

Today we live in a great complexity and in a continuous transformation of our condition. For this reason, discernment, which is above all a spiritual practice of putting one’s life in order, is at the top of the priorities of our time.

In the synodal process, we started from the need to help young people in their vocational discernment and gradually we realized that the Church herself was in a certain sense in “debt of discernment”: not being able to discern, the Church does not have the possibility of helping young people to do so. Entering into the dynamics and process of discernment has become step by step a requirement of the synodal journey. There is a need to understand, deepen, clarify and practice discernment in the form of a shared journey, which later became the synodal style. As the Holy Father told us on 3 October 2018,

«The Synod is an ecclesial exercise in discernment. To speak frankly and listen openly are fundamental if the Synod is to be a process of discernment. Discernment is not an advertising slogan, it is not an

¹⁴ FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 235.

organizational technique, or a fad of this pontificate, but an interior attitude rooted in an act of faith. Discernment is the method and at the same time the goal we set ourselves: it is based on the conviction that God is at work in world history, in life's events, in the people I meet and who speak to me. For this reason, we are called to listen to what the Spirit suggests to us, with methods and in paths that are often unpredictable¹⁵».

The “method of discernment” has therefore directed the synodal process from within. The silence of three minutes every five interventions during the Synodal Assembly was a strong sign of this.

It was important to recognize that the “young subject” and the “Church subject” found themselves in the same situation: not only must young people discern to reach their vocation, but also the Church must do this to live with wisdom and prudence in our time. Thus the indications on discernment produced during the synodal journey (cf. *Preparatory Document II*, 2; *Instrumentum laboris* 1,2,4,73,137-139; *Final Document* 62,104-105,110-113,124) are in a sense “interchangeable”: what is said for young people is valid for the Church and vice versa.

4.1 FOURTH QUESTION

Are we carrying out processes of discernment in the Spirit with respect to what we are living? Do we feel equipped to accompany our educational and pastoral works in discerning what the Lord is asking of us today?

4.2 AREAS OF WORK

a) The relationship between the Community and the personal level

Accompaniment and discernment are the insights of the third and fourth chapters of the second part of the FD (91-113), which find new light with respect to IL (106-136), because at the centre was placed the Church as the home of accompaniment and environment of discernment. In fact, it is interesting to note the double shift in the external and internal order of these two chapters with respect

¹⁵ Address of the Holy Father Francis at the beginning of the Synod dedicated to the young, 3 October 2018.

to the IL: in the latter one spoke first of discernment and then of accompaniment, while in the FD it becomes clear that one accompanies for discernment, and that therefore the objective of accompaniment is discernment; then again in the IL it was proposed a first personal and then communal reading of both accompaniment and discernment, while the Synodal Assembly overturned the perspective, inserting the personal sphere into the communal one.

The outcome of the synodal discussion clearly proposed three concentric circles, one within the other: first the accompaniment of the environment, then the group and finally the personal one. It is important to recover this order in our pastoral realities, maintaining the presence of these three levels of animation.

b) Creating suitable environments for discernment

Every pastoral educational community is called to assume the habitus of discernment in its way of thinking, planning and carrying out its mission. For this reason, we are called to create environments suitable for discernment.

I would like to quote in full FD 124, which is very specific about this, because it touches the exercise of authority as a service to community discernment:

«The experience of “walking together” as the People of God helps us to understand more and more deeply the sense of authority as service. Pastors need to share the capacity to increase cooperation in witness and mission and to accompany processes of joint discernment to interpret the signs of the times in the light of faith and under the guidance of the Spirit, with all the members of the community contributing, starting with those on the margins. Church leaders with these capacities need a specific formation for synodality. In this regard, it would seem desirable to devise formation courses for young lay people, young religious and seminarians, especially where matters like the exercise of authority or collaborative ministry are concerned»¹⁶.

¹⁶ SYNOD OF BISHOPS XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *The young, faith and vocational discernment, Final Document*, no. 124.

c) The strategic link between generous service and vocational discernment

Throughout the synodal journey, there has been a growing awareness of the truly strategic link between experiences of generous service and vocational discernment, that is, between mission and vocation. This has emerged from the beginning and is a thought that has gradually been strengthened.

The IL 194-195 summarizes many experiences presented by many Episcopal Conferences. If we think only of the many experiences of service and volunteerism that we offer, perhaps we should ask ourselves whether they are then taken up again in the context of vocational discernment. Perhaps here lies one of our defects linked to pastoral activism: we have many experiences but we are hasty in accompanying them and taking them up again from a vocational point of view, that is, of conversion and formation. In this way we do nothing but nourish in many young people the “collection of experiences” typical of our time. Instead, the young people have asked us to accompany them not only in their experience, but also and above all in their discernment, which needs adequate time, suitable spaces and a favourable climate to resume the experience made from the spiritual and vocational point of view.

The theme of *diakonia* (FD 137) is truly generative for the Church and for young people, but it is better articulated and as a “thematic nucleus” to be deepened in its roots and in its consequences for pastoral care.

d) Forming young people by forming with them

For youth ministry, perhaps the greatest provocations of the Synod concern the accompaniment of young people towards a Church characterized by a “missionary synodality” in which all are called to be subjects of the mission. Mission is always entrusted to the Church as a whole and never to some of its members in an exclusive way. All this originates from the powerful intuition of the introduction and first chapter of the third part (FD 115-127).

In this sense, it is important for us to take as our starting point numbers 160 and 161 of the FD to discern what we are called to propose

in view of the formation of young people in the mission. No. 160 invites the establishment of “centres of formation for evangelization, aimed at the young” and 161 asks each local Church to offer to young people who so desire a time destined for the maturation of adult Christian life, which

«should be built around at least three indispensable elements: an experience of fraternal life shared with adult formators that is essential, simple and respectful of the common home; a firm apostolic program for living together; an offer of spirituality rooted in prayer and sacramental life. In this way all the necessary ingredients are in place for the Church to be able to offer the young who wish it a profound experience of vocational discernment»¹⁷.

Here our educational-pastoral communities are put at stake in their capacity to recover a real closeness to the younger generations. Here we are called to be creative and innovative, involving adults, communities, lay people and young people in a project of common formation. Is this a utopia or a prophecy? How can we start some “pilot experience”? Or support and strengthen those experiences that already go in this direction?

5. CONCLUSION: «BUT THEN WHAT ARE WE TO DO, FATHER?»

I would like to tell you, in conclusion, that we are only at the beginning!

Pope Francis in no. 103 of the ChV says: «I encourage communities to examine, respectfully and seriously, the situation of their young people, in order to find the most fitting ways of providing them with pastoral care»¹⁸. This is the task that awaits us in the coming years. It is a bit of a review of life to be more appropriate to the task that God has entrusted to us. On 10 November 2015, he addressed the participants of the Conference of the Italian Church in Florence with words that were in many ways similar: “So what do we have to do, Father? – you would say. What is the Pope asking of us? It is up to you to decide:

¹⁷ SYNOD OF BISHOPS XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *The young, faith and vocational discernment, Final Document*, no. 161.

¹⁸ Cf. FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 103.

people and pastors together. Today I simply invite you to lift your head and contemplate once again the *Ecce Homo* that we have over our heads". In the ChV Pope Francis invites us to contemplate the living Christ who acts in history and who asks for our collaboration and our synergy with the younger generations to attend the future with them.

In Florence, among other things, he had also asked the young people for this:

«I appeal above all "to you, young men, because you are strong", said the Apostle John (1Jn 1:14). Young people, may you overcome apathy. May no one scorn your youth, but may you learn to be models in speech and deed (cf. 1Tim 4:12). I ask you to be builders of Italy, to put yourselves to work for a better Italy. Please, do not watch life from the balcony, but commit yourselves, immerse yourselves in the vast social and political dialogue. May the hands of your faith be raised to heaven, and may they do so while they edify a city built on relationships in which the love of God is the foundation. In this way you will be free to accept today's challenges, to experience the changes and transformations»¹⁹.

It is therefore clear that we are not asked to "apply" binding magisterial indications. The pastoral field is never applicative, but it is always a space of living discernment, that is, of creative fidelity²⁰. And in a change of age like ours, this ability to imagine renewal together becomes ever more decisive. It is nothing more, to put it in the words of the Second Vatican Council, than to make that journey of "updating" that makes us friends with the young people who exist today and also contemporary with that God who is always alive and present among us.

It is a question, first of all, of regaining proximity with the young generations of today. It is then a matter of immersing ourselves in the mystery of the living God, because Jesus is the true, continuous and eternal novelty of history. Finally, it is a question of reactivating the youthful dynamism that should characterize a Church that feels that it is "the youth of the world", as the Message to young people of the Second Vatican Council of 8 December 1965 declared well.

¹⁹ FRANCIS, *Address of the Holy Father at the meeting with the representatives of the V National Convention of the Italian Church*, 10 November 2015, Florence.

²⁰ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 103.

Since what happens to a person's life could and should happen to all of us at the beginning of the third millennium, so

«at every moment in life, we can renew our youthfulness. When I began my ministry as Pope, the Lord broadened my horizons and granted me renewed youth. The same thing can happen to a couple married for many years, or to a monk in his monastery. There are things that need to “let go of” as the years pass, but growth in maturity can coexist with a fire constantly rekindled, with a heart ever young»²¹.

* * *

From what we have shared, it is very clear that the first and most important fruit of the synodal journey is to assume a “way of being and working together” that makes the difference. It is that “prophecy of fraternity” of which Pope Francis spoke to us at the end of the *Synodal Assembly*:

«The fruits of this labour are already “fermenting”, as grape juice does in the barrels after the harvest. The Synod of young people was a good harvest and promises good wine. But I would like to say that the first fruit of this Synodal Assembly should be seen in the very method that was sought to be followed, the preparatory phase. A *synodal style* that does not have as its primary purpose the writing of a document, which is also valuable and useful. More than the document, however, it is important to promote *a way of being and working together*, young and old, in listening and in discernment, in order to arrive at pastoral choices that respond to reality»²².

I therefore hope that this way of living and working together will become the normal and daily way of being disciples of the Lord and apostles of the young!

²¹ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 160.

²² *Address of Pope Francis at the Angelus*, Saint Peter Square, 28 October 2018.

ROUND TABLE
**“FORMATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE SYNOD
ON THE YOUNG”**

Vocation and Discernment

Prof. Cecilia Costa, University of Studies of Rome Tre

Acceptance and Formative Community

Father Carlo Casalone, Society of Jesus

Make the Church Young: Ongoing Formation

Sister Alessandra Smerilli, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians



VOCATION AND DISCERNMENT

Professor Cecilia Costa

University of Studies of Rome Tre

Cecilia Costa is a professor of *Sociology of Cultural Processes, General Sociology, Sociology of Education* at the Department of Sciences of Formation of the University of Studies of "Rome Tre"; an Ordinary Professor of *General Sociology and of Religion* at the Ecclesia Mater – Higher Institute of Religious Sciences at the Lateran Pontifical University. She was appointed by Pope Francis as Consultor of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops.

Among her publications, we remember those that deal with the new generations: *Between the real and unreal. Young people at the margins*, Franco Angeli, 2012; the article *The young people in the world of today*, in the magazine "The Wisdom of the Cross" of the Lateran Pontifical University, 2017; *The juvenile reality between post-metaphysical and religious search*, in the magazine "Per la filosofia", 2018; and finally *The centrality of the figure of Christ for the new generations: a question of existentially absorbing experience and of familiarity with the sacred*, Editrice Velar, 2018.

1. PREMISE

In the first instance, in confronting the themes of *vocation* and *discernment*, we must start from the description of the actual cultural-historical panorama in which they are inserted, because only in light of such concrete context can they be discussed and framed theoretically. Moreover, in a wider sense, as already evidenced in *Gaudium et spes*, as in *Ecclesiam suam* and in *Evangelii nuntiandi* of Paul VI, the Church intends her mission as universal and supernatural, but also as lowered down in humanity, implanted in society and in history. As a consequence, even if her theological-doctrinal dimension remains complete, the Catholic Institution needs to know the objective reality in which it operates, in which it wants to stipulate a deep relation with men and join the Gospel with modern culture.

In this argumentative prospect, it is necessary to consider that the modern cultural-historical contingency is very “problematic”, because it is characterized by the multiplication of factors interdependent¹

¹ LOREDANA SCIOLLA, *Sociologia dei processi culturali*, il Mulino, Bologna 2002, p. 86-87.

among them, by the absence of symbolic constellations, of visions, of links, of principles, collectively shared and by a crisis of legitimacy of the institutions². Yet more, our post-industrial epoch, if on one hand, offers some infinite scientific-technological communicative possibilities and many spaces of subjective liberty, on the other it determines a polytheism and a polysyncretism of values, a parcelling of *knowledge*, an “intellectual fragmentation” of the world, new exclusions, new discriminations and new particularisms.

To this long list of actual socio-cultural variables must be added digitalization which together with globalization has modified the structures and the forms of relationships, of experiences; *de-localized* is the social, doing away with the physical-geographic³ category place itself, and making obsolete the traditional space-time confines. In connection with such modification of space-time coordinates, one must take into account that in this world, already a *global village*, or if you want in our *civilization of the web*, the original extension of time has been transformed, – today contracted to an eternal present, often without past or future –, and has substituted for concrete space an abstract-virtual space.

In substance, quoting from the *Message of Pope Francis for the Launch of the Global Compact on Education* (Vatican, 12 September 2019): «We are experiencing an era of change: a transformation that is not only cultural but also anthropological, creating a new semantics while indiscriminately discarding traditional paradigms».

All these dynamics, which traverse the social context, are reflected on the world of the young, on their behaviour, on their referred ethical values frame, on their reflective capacity, on their interiorization of the faith, on their possibility to do *discernment*: not only, these factors have some direct consequences even on the same structuring of their identity⁴. In fact, exclusively within a specific cultural scheme, of a precise historical moment and on the base of a determined identity configuration, experiences are elaborated; certain attitudes are assumed; some values are chosen; some aspects are more emphasized and others are excluded and decisions are taken more easily or with more difficulty.

² CHIARA GIACCARDI, MAURO MAGATTI, *L'io globale. Dinamiche della socialità*, Laterza, Bari 2005, p. 80-83.

³ MARC AUGÉ, *Il senso degli altri*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2000, p. 121.

⁴ ZYGMUNT BAUMAN, *La società individualizzata*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2002, 177.

In synthesis, in our season that is pluralistic, globalized, digitalized, individualistic, the new generations are constrained to face and surpass inedited biographic-experiential conditions, because they are immersed in a culture “of emptiness”⁵, of the provisory, of doubt, of “stupefaction”⁶ and of the loss “of the sense of life and of living together”⁷. Of this cultural *crisis* but also anthropological, existential and spiritual, Pope Francis however proposes a binary reading not only in a negative key, whether as situation of *danger* or as an opening to new *opportunities*⁸.

In equal measure, the sociological literature does not intend in linear or univocal sense the complex *trend* of the phenomena in place, but makes them a problem, starting from the phenomenon of secularization⁹, fruit of the processes of modernization, of rationalization and, Weber would say, *disenchantment* of the world which often has evoked the oblivion of the religious sphere and the “death of God”¹⁰. Or rather, inversely to this thesis of an irreversible secular inclination, some scholars affirm precisely that the third millennium could be revealed, more than as a time of the *eclipse* of the sacred, as “an age of faith”, because even if interests are polarized on paradigms that are lay-antimetaphysical, technocratic-rational, the attraction towards the Transcendent¹¹ resurfaces again.

Not accidentally, exactly in our historical becoming that according to somebody reason without transcendence has radicalized, in counter tendency to the “spirit of the time” and also if not always in a manifest way, increasing are the demands for meaning, *nostalgia* for God and the desire to entrust oneself again to the “novelty of hope”¹². Is it not perhaps possible that exactly *nostalgia* for “hope” and for God

⁵ FRANCIS, *Address to the young at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Guard*, 27 May 2017.

⁶ FRANCIS, *Letter to the young*, 13 January 2017.

⁷ FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, 24 May 2015, no. 108, no. 110.

⁸ FRANCIS, *Address to the Pontifical Theological Faculty of Sardegna*, Cagliari, 22 September 2013.

⁹ LUCA DIOTALLEVI, *L'ordine imperfetto. Modernizzazione, Stato, secolarizzazione*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2014, p. 163; ALAN ALDRIDGE, *La religione nel mondo contemporaneo*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2005, p. 43; PETER L. BERGER, *Il brusio degli angeli*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1995, p. 40.

¹⁰ ROBERT L. RICHARD, *Teologia della secolarizzazione*, Queriniana, 1979, pp. 42- 56.

¹¹ PETER L. BERGER, THOMAS LUCKMANN, *Lo smarrimento dell'uomo moderno*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2010, p. 66; GIOVANNI FILORAMO, *Le vie del sacro*, Einaudi, Torino, 1994, p. 30; ULRICH BECK, *Il Dio personale*, Laterza, Roma Bari, 2009, p. 31.

¹² IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Didachè. Letter to Diognetus*, Edizioni Paoline, Milano, 2002, p. 58.

provokes juvenile consciences to consider the need to discover one's vocation and, with discernment, give a deep sense to one's life?

2. EDUCATIONAL-IDENTITY PROBLEMATIC HITCHES

Besides the general problematics indicated, to better understand the cultural period in which the new generations are immersed, it is necessary to also consider the modern formation difficulties which ulteriorly weigh upon their possibility to conceive some definitive choices, imagine their future journeys and make discernment to be able to discover their vocation. Today, the act itself of educating is in crisis, since it is always ever more difficult to transfer to the young people an organic system of knowledge, schemas of thought, decision parameters, symbolic-value codices disposed according to an established order, organic and shared. In fact, during the last decades, the whole formative process has progressively changed, conforming itself to the *trend of de-institutionalization*, because like any other phenomenon it is not universally valid, but depends on socio-historical conditions, normative-institutional systems and the dominant culture.

Moreover, parallel with and also in consequence to the new flexibility and destructuralization of the education model, personalities tend to configure themselves to the flag of liquidity, of variability and of *low definition*. On this point, Pope Francis sustains: «Education clashes with what has been called a process of “rapidification” that traps our existence in a whirlwind of high-speed technology and computerization, continually altering our points of reference. As a result, the very identity loses its solidity and our psychological structure dissolves in the face of constant change»¹³. There is talk in fact of fluid reactive identities to which would be missing their own original biographical narration and their own being projects of a long period, because they conform to the interests, solicitations and goals of the moment¹⁴. Not by accident, there is the risk that juvenile consciences *consign* themselves – almost defenseless – to a *superficial realization of themselves*, to a falling back to an immediate-privatistic sense of life, to a narcissistic liberty, to a

¹³ Message of Pope Francis at the launching of the Education Pact, Vatican, 12 September 2019.

¹⁴ ZYGMUNT BAUMAN, *Intervista sull'identità*, Bari, Laterza, 2003, p. 85.

“situational ethics”, to an acritical accommodation to the common sense and to the absence of hope.

Among the factors that make an impact on the education-identifying processes, on the possibility or not to make discernment and to comprehend one’s vocation, not to be neglected, as determining element, is the Web (already evidenced in the encyclical *Redemptoris missio*¹⁵, just as in much scientific production), because it strongly conditions the manner of thinking and feeling of the young, and it is “so pervasive as to be indistinguishable from the sphere of everyday life”¹⁶. Naturally, the Web must not be stigmatized or demonized, but neither emphasized, because it is a *resource* to be observed, but in a *critical way*. The media environment, – which does not open and does not want to open scenarios of sense, which does not look for and does not want to reveal the truth, rather, without metaphysical backstage activities, *functions* –, it is not the maker of the modern *anomie* and of the cultural unease which most strike the emerging generations; if ever it is the mirror which reflects the contemporary existential condition¹⁷.

3. FORMATION IN THE “SIGN OF THE TIMES”

During the period in which there is the real risk that the education-reflective, identity-relational and of the interiorization of the faith processes are becoming denatured more than in the past and in all the places of formation, – by those deputized for the transmission of the disciplinary competences to those of pastoral –, the young must be prepared before that for work and for the market, for the exercise of the moral conscience, for ability to judge, for the common good and to ask themselves the basic questions regarding existence. Favoured must be a critical reflection of theirs regarding reality and underlined must be the connection between material well-being and the “immaterial goods”, between knowledge and life, between technology and the meaning of man.

Moreover, even before proposing formulas, procedures, notions and dogmas, in order to help the young to become interpreters of change,

¹⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 7 December 1990, no. 37.

¹⁶ FRANCIS, Message for the 53rd World Communications Day, “*We are members one of another*” (Eph 4:25). *From social network communities to the human community*, 24 January 2019.

¹⁷ ZYGMUNT BAUMAN, *La vita tra reale e irreal*, Egea, San Giuliano Milanese, 2014, p. 12.

to learn to discern and develop their talents, the formators, pastors and spiritual guides should adopt as first “education criterion”¹⁸, dialogue, not neglecting however to carry out this delicate task with “vocation passion” (a relational attitude considered basic both by the layman Weber and by the Catholic Card. Newman). In fact, the new generations have need of figures in education and pastoral who are near, patient, sensitive, emphatic and good in dialogue.

The young people need figures in education who can move them, can talk to their hearts and not only to their intellects; who know how to satisfy their demand for affection; who know how to recognize, respect and appreciate *the uniqueness* of each one of them. Above all, in every place of formation and of life, they need *teachers*, but even more, as the Pontiff says, *credible witnesses*. Even the last sociological researches, aiming to bring out the data of the juvenile reality, underline this pressing request for testimony, of coherent personalities and of exemplary figures¹⁹.

In synthesis, to be in line with the *signs of the times* and not “subjected” to the *spirit of the time*, what should be adopted in every educational institution, in every place of formation, in every pastoral seminary, are some relational codices, a manner of forming, accompanying and of listening expressing proximity, friendship, affectivity and *tenderness* (a term, this one, which recurs 20 times in the Apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia*). Taking into account incidentally that the religious dimension today is more easily internalized by the young men due to *emotive-affective knowledge*²⁰, thanks also to the example of authentic interpreters of the faith and not of “functionaries of the sacred”. Only in virtue of this type of *educational alliance* and of personal testimony, every young man will know and will be able to discover, *by discerning*, his vocation.

¹⁸ Address of Pope Francis at the Lateran Pontifical University, during the inauguration of the exhibit: “*Calligrafia per il dialogo: promuovere la cultura di pace attraverso la cultura dell’arte*”, entitled in memory of Card. Jean-Louis Tauran, 31 October 2019.

¹⁹ FRANCO GARELLI, *Italia cattolica nell’epoca del pluralismo*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2006, p. 90; ISTITUTO GIUSEPPE TONIOLO, *La condizione giovanile in Italia. Rapporto giovani 2013*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2013, p. 206.

²⁰ DANIELÈ HERVIEU-LÉGER, *Il pellegrino e il convertito*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2003.

4. DISCERNMENT, VOCATION AND VOCATIONS

In the synodal Assembly stress has been given to the fact that discernment is a style of life, – a *spiritual art* –, that is learned through sensitivity to the Gospel and participation in prayer, without which it would be reduced to psychological technique or to an evaluation of rational or sentimental arguments. Discernment, in fact, is not “a form of egotistical introspection, but an authentic process of leaving ourselves behind in order to approach the mystery of God, who helps us to carry out the mission to which he has called us, for the good of our brothers and sisters” (*Gaudete et exsultate*, no. 175). Rather, it is a process that requires listening, as evidenced in the *Christus vivit*, and which presupposes liberty. This last one is a category which comes out to be almost unknown, in its intimate essence, to the young men of our advanced modernity, hence among the tasks of the formators there’s exactly that of explaining to them that true liberty, as outlined by Paul VI, is a “demand of love”, to which each one is “free to correspond or to refute”²¹.

For what regards, instead, the theme of vocation, its theological understanding has had various accentuations in the course of centuries, according to the socio-cultural and ecclesial context within which it has been elaborated. Actually, beyond the various solutions and the theological interpretations, as for the concept of liberty, the new generations need that it be explained to them that every life is *vocation*²²: better still, every life is *con-vocation*, because to be created is already in itself to be called. Besides, they need to know that every vocation takes shape within an *essentially relational* dynamics inasmuch as like liberty, it fits in the dialectic between the initiative of God and the human response.

The young must have it clear that *vocation* is not a unique and concluded event; it is not homogenization; it is neither “a pragmatic choice”²³; much less is it a design already established by God or a script already written which they would simply recite, but their free will and their personal choices concur to venture into this *voyage of research* which is discovered along the arch of life, at every ordinary and extraordinary moment. Moreover, it is very important to make

²¹ PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam suam*, 6 August 1964, no. 7.

²² PAUL VI, *Populorum progressio*, 26 March 1967, no. 15.

²³ FRANCIS, Apostolic exhortation *Christus vivit*, 25 March 2019, no. 256.

them understand that there are various *dimensions* and so many *types* of vocations and that every *dimension* and *type* of it leads to “finding our true selves in the light of God and letting our lives flourish and bear fruit”²⁴. In fact, the vocational horizons can be multiple: the family, work, the joint commitment, respect for the environment and not exclusively the ordained ministry or the consecrated life.

In the end and not as last, life understood as vocation requires a space for interior *silence*: this last one, necessary for spiritual and intellectual growth, is not a family category or practiced by the young, because they are too often distracted by so many “rumours” from information and by the rapid flow of events. In this sense, together with other complex cultural educational-identity problems, the *rumour* of the Web, to which they are perennially connected, can enter, under certain profiles, in short circuit with the efforts of formation – accompaniment, dialogue, nearness, empathy –, and with the cognitive-rational behaviours, starting from silence and prayer necessary for discernment and for the understanding of one’s vocation: in synthesis, to know how to *recognize, interpret and choose*²⁵.

5. CONCLUSIONS

More than definitively conformed to technological-materialistic, consumeristic, egocentric and secularized values, the present “story” of the *millennials* takes shape as a mosaic of factors oscillating between two opposite poles: individualism and solidarity; narcissistic protagonism and emphasis on affective ties; indifferentism and search for a relation with the divine. It must still be underlined that notwithstanding the breaking from the fonts of the sense and the leaving of reason from metaphysics²⁶, even the juvenile consciences that are most indifferent and agnostic consider that *to believe in God* is an eternal *need* of man²⁷.

²⁴ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 257.

²⁵ SYNOD OF BISHOPS XV GENERAL ORDINARY ASSEMBLY, *Young people, faith and vocational discernment, Final Document*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 27 October 2018.

²⁶ According to some scholars, such as Donati, metaphysics is not so outdated, but rather the opposite is true, as never before has society been looking for it. (Edited by) GIUSEPPE CAPRARO, *Sociologia e teologia di fronte al futuro*, EDB, Bologna, 1995, p. 104.

²⁷ FRANCO GARELLI, *I giovani, il sacro e la fede*, in LORENZO BALDISSERI (ed.), *La condizione dei giovani oggi*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2018, p. 249.

Even in the presence of current historical-structural difficulties, of problematic knots that are cultural, anthropological, educative-identity, impedimental in making understand *true liberty*, in many young people one sees a waiting, even if opaque in its contents, often indeterminate, uncertain, restless, for aperture, breathing, exit from the “prison of self”, to find basic paradigms of meaning. Thus, it is not surprising that even the new generations sense the need to discover the deep essence of their interiority, liberty and vocation.

It is not surprising, today like yesterday, that they are moved by the desire and *nostalgia for dialogue of love* initiated by God, with every person, from all eternity. It is also not surprising that, without fearing that his plea fall into deaf ears, Pope Francis can say to them forcefully: “Do not be afraid to listen to the Spirit”²⁸.

²⁸ FRANCIS, *Letter to the young* of 13 January 2017.



ACCEPTANCE AND FORMATIVE COMMUNITY

Father Carlo Casalone

Society of Jesus

Father Carlo Casalone, born in 1956, graduated in Medicine and Surgery in Milan (1981), joined the Society of Jesus (1984). Doctor of Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome (1997), Provincial of the Italian Jesuits (2008-2014), teacher of Moral Theology in the faculties of the Society of Jesus in Naples, Paris and Rome (PUG), President of the Foundation Carlo Maria Martini since 2013, member and coordinator of the Scientific Section of the Pontifical Academy of Life since 2017.

In the report on the Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit* (ChV) of Fr. Rossano Sala, we have had a panorama on the process of the Synod which has led to its drawing up and on its contents that are present there. On my part, I want above all to return to the biblical icon of the disciples of Emmaus and, secondly, pause on the theme of discernment, putting in light a twofold connection: on one hand through *conscience* and on the other through *formation*. The first step intends to help us root ourselves even more deeply in the process of the Synod and the second to take up with more awareness the *habitus* of the discernment.

1. THE BIBLICAL ICON OF THE SYNOD: THE JOURNEY OF THE DISCIPLES OF EMMAUS (Lk 24:13-35)

The story of the experience of the disciples of Emmaus has been a point of important reference for the synodal process. To understand the importance it is worthwhile first of all to situate it in the global dynamics of the Gospel of Luke. As we know, Luke says that he is writing his gospel for Theophilus (cf. Lk 1:3). We do not know if it

is a real or symbolic person, who is at the same time an image of the whole community. However, his name tells us that he is a *lover of God*. But perhaps it could also be translated as *loved by God*, which is the journey to do: from searcher for God to the discovery of being searched by God (as it is put well in evidence from chapter 15 of the Gospel of Luke, through the parables of the lost sheep, of the lost drachma and of the merciful father). Luke wants to lead the reader to experiment in first person what is known on the information level. This passage desired for Theophilus happens to the disciples of Emmaus, at the end of the gospel: the two experience what the prologue asks, “so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received” (*ina epignòs tèn asfàleian...*): they knew everything, but it was not “true”, that is, existentially consistent, relevant for their life.

To this text of Luke Pope Francis had made reference during his trip to Brazil on the occasion of the World Day of the Youth in 2013. The two disciples, as sometimes happens to young men, go away deluded, embittered and resigned by their Jerusalem, the Church: she «appeared too weak, perhaps too distant from their needs, perhaps too poor to respond to their concerns, perhaps too cold, perhaps too caught up with itself, perhaps a prisoner of her own rigid formulas, perhaps the world seems to have made the Church a relic of the past, unfit for the new questions»¹.

Their journey turns to somewhere else, towards directions which seem to better satisfy the desires that are in their hearts. They are in a journey towards Emmaus. In the geography of Luke it is a city also called Nicopolis, place of the historical victory of Judah, of the family of the Maccabees against the invading army which would have led to a cultural and religious colonization in Hellenistic sense in 166 BC (1Mac 4:25). They hoped for a victory like that of Peter using the sword which was perhaps the one also Judah hoped for. Now, seeing that the basic project which they truly hoped for has failed, they look for gratifications (compensatory) in forms successful in the past: it is a regressive moment, as happens when one experiences a loss.

Jesus first of all walks with them. He is not so much interested in the direction where they go, but in their person. He approaches

¹ FRANCIS, *Discourse to the Brazilian Episcopate*, 27 July 2013.

the confused disciples, who need to be evangelized, without asking for any change. To stay in their company he puts himself at their side. That is, he looks at the reality through their own perspective, walks the same road until reaching the destination where they were directed. He listens, receives and questions to help them **see** what they are passing through.

With affection and energy, in light of the Word, he helps them to **interpret** the events that they have lived. He accepts their invitation to stop with them with the coming of evening, at the moment when the limit of time puts in question the meaning of life. Their invitation: “stay with us”, does not only express welcome but desire, a proactive search. The motive is “because evening is coming”. It is the declining moment, of darkness, of experience of the limit of time, but also of the day (of life). Jesus *enters* with them in the limit (the same word *eiserchomai* which recurs in Lk 24:3 when the women *enter* the sepulchre, but do not find the body). He shares with them that limit of which death is the radical expression, stays with them not in a conquering victory, but making himself in solidarity, precisely, at the limit. He enters into their night, just as the women entered the sepulchre finding it empty, surprised by the first sign of the defeat of death. Perhaps their request to the stranger to stay with them exactly there where they are weak and limited shows that something of what they have heard about the interpretation of the Law and of the Prophets has filtrated in their criteria of choice. In light of the signs of life of Jesus offered as gift for them at the breaking of the bread, exactly in the state of suffering which now grips them, they reread their experience.

During the encounter and in the new reading of the events which have not changed in anything, their hearts become warm, their minds are enlightened, their eyes are opened and they decide. Jesus has not told them what to do, has not mentioned any «commandment» or concrete modalities through which their behaviour ought to be realized. Rather, he disappeared from their eyes, even if this does not mean that his presence becomes less: it is realized in another form. It is therefore they themselves who choose the manner of being missionaries. It is like fruit of a personal and common elaboration (they talk among themselves, in the plural) that they **choose** to reprise

with momentum their journey in the opposite direction and to join themselves to their community of which they now feel themselves to be part, announcing to it the experience they have lived, sharing what they have understood in their encounter with the stranger in whom they have recognized the Risen One. What has happened cannot be reduced only to a knowing event, but it is about a relation: the manner in which Jesus has talked to them with firmness and benevolence, in a communication felt and based on lived experience. They discover that Jesus was with them and acted in them without them recognizing him as he is: without knowing that Jesus is the Risen One, is with them and acts in them. It is on the base of what they have experienced beforehand that, rereading what they have lived and putting it in words, they become aware that Jesus is risen. Thus, they give course to their desire to announce to others the power of this experience and find themselves united to the others of the community from which they were separating themselves.

This gospel scenario has inspired the Synod. And in the course of days, we have become aware that we can meditate it from all the various points of view, knowing well from our history that we find ourselves from time to time or even contemporaneously, in the vicissitude of all the personalities the story tells about. Personally, I consider that this text gives us some indications that are synthetic and pregnant; to be able to pick up what thing it may mean to remain rooted in the synodal process, as the *living Christ* exhorts us to do. He tells us about the interior and formative journey of three phases – to recognize, interpret, choose – valid for each one and for our formation communities, in the phase of verification and of maturation of the vocation journey of each one, so that the choices may be elaborated in a personal way.

The Final Document (FD) offers some hints for the formation of the seminarians and religious²:

- Choice of formators, competent and capable of fraternal relationships.
- Differentiated formative teams, female figures included, small form of synodality.
- Spirit of service and collaboration.

² Cf. FD 163-164.

– Seriousness of initial discernment and of relational and affective equilibrium.

– Dimensions of the formative communities such as to allow personalized and differentiated courses.

But that on which I would like to pause is the theme of formation to discernment, to which both the FD and the ChV give ample space³.

2. FORMATION TO DISCERNMENT AND FORMATION OF CONSCIENCE

Various elements of discernment have already appeared in the story of the disciples of Emmaus:

– listening and contemplative attitude: awareness of the action of God in one's heart and in history;

– capacity to communicate according to one style based on the sharing of what happens in such listening: spiritual conversion;

– personal elaboration of the choice to do.

But I think it is important to put in light some more specific aspects of the rapport between discernment and conscience⁴. The passages of the document of the Synod that deal about discernment make it in close connection with conscience. The understanding of conscience that emerges from it holds in close connection the moral and the spiritual dimension. This is a nexus which is not always clear, but it is about a junction of big importance in formation. Since in carrying on the program it will be about formative communities, even starting from concrete experiences, I would like now to put in light some theoretical elements that connect the formation of conscience and the manner in which the ethical dimension and the spiritual dimension intersect in discernment.

In the first place we note that in the documents conscience is understood not so much as a faculty applying the norm in concrete circumstances, but as the central nucleus in which the person disposes

³ FD, Ch. IV and CV, Ch. IX (nos. 281-282 take up wide excerpts of the FD, no. 108), both dedicated to discernment and to the formation of conscience.

⁴ On the theme cf. GIACOMO COSTA, *Discernment*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo (MI), 2018; MAURIZIO CHIODI, *Conscience and discernment. Text and context of chapter VIII of Amoris laetitia*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo (MI), 2018; SERGIO BASTIANEL, «Discernment and Christian formation», in DONATELLA ABIGNENTE – SERGIO BASTIANEL, *On moral formation. Subjects and itineraries*, The well of Jacob, Trapani, 2013, pp. 23-52.

himself: it is underlined how in biblical language the term “heart” is used and how saint Paul inscribes in biblical tradition the term “conscience”, borrowing it from the culture of his time.

Hence, conscience cannot be reduced to awareness of self or to psychological conscience, which in its turn is indispensable as terrain of rootedness of the moral conscience. Since this last one involves a complexity of dimensions which refer to each other and make up a unitary whole and articulated internally. Conscience shows the ability to recognize oneself as the author of a behaviour or of an act, even if it is not always possible to determine in a clear manner to what point the agent is at the origin of it. Also, it includes liberty, understood as ability to choose, to dispose of oneself while disposing things, deciding in the inside of possible alternatives one’s acts and gestures. Finally, it implies responsibility which is about the qualification properly moral of liberty, as capacity and need to respond for what is done, based on a recognized and assumed sense, in the last instance relating me to persons by whom in an immediate or mediated manner, I feel myself consulted in the situations wherein I live.

The (moral) conscience is always situated in the web of relations in which it is inserted. It is even born and becomes active thanks to relations with other subjects of conscience, in regard to whom it is at the same time dependent and partially autonomous: we can talk of relative (or relational) autonomy. Thus, the personal subject is identified inasmuch as it is moral conscience: conscience is not a faculty, but a characteristic for which the subject understands the world always involving himself. The understanding of external realities always implies a simultaneous understanding of oneself, as deciding about a specific content always leads to a decision about oneself. A single act makes explicit the global direction in which one intends factually to move himself. To decide to execute a single step leads the whole person in the direction in which that step is done. Conscience cannot therefore be understood in an individualistic sense: it is constitutively relational and because of this in the documents there is insistence regarding the formative importance of the communitarian, ecclesial and social context.

Therefore, as every moral choice puts together into play the understanding of things and the understanding of oneself in relation

to things, so to decide regarding things means to decide regarding oneself. To evaluate and decide what in context constitutes the concrete good to be done, it is necessary to have clear in mind in what direction you want to go and choose what thing helps you best to move in that direction, that is, you must have the clearest possible awareness of the general sense of your life. Otherwise, you cannot exercise the virtue of prudence and discernment, because the premises regarding orientation are lacking and you remain stuck to the feeling more or less gratifying of the moment.

This conscious and intentional general orientation of life, including the choice of wanting sincerely and honestly what is good, which means care for right intention, shows how discernment is tied to basic life choices, among which the vocational one. In choosing how to realize a value known and valued, you renew and deepen the understanding of that value. Synthesizing, therefore, cognitive and moral discernment plays on various articulations of the journey of elaboration of objective moral judgment:

- knowledge of the reality wherein are present various possibilities of good (values);
- comparative evaluation of values (usually concurrent in the given context and which therefore require to be hierarchized according to criteria of importance and urgency, since to choose means to assign some preferences);
- awareness of the meaning of one's life, putting global orientation in its focus, so as to be able to order in his decisions the "means" in view of the meaning;
- recognition of what is possible for the acting subject (circumstances that concern the effective conditions and attitudes of the subject with his history, character, general profile or his "resources").

After each choice, which touches his conscience, the person becomes transformed (and grows): his manner of feeling and understanding reality, even himself, and his rapport with God, if he is a believer, changes. The choices express the reality of the person and at the same time model, carve and confer upon him a following physiognomy which implicates his affections and his immediate emotive responsiveness. It is through this dynamics of choices

elaborated in discernment that the vocational decision as unifying centre of gravity can mature, as element which can engrave on the sense of his life in an ever deep and organic manner. In this way, vocation in the continuity of personal behaviour, through an ever more accomplished assumption of vocation in its meaning and its finality, matures⁵.

3. ARTICULATE THE MORAL DIMENSION AND THE SPIRITUAL ONE

Not rarely does one speak of spiritual discernment while considering it as independent of the moral sphere. On one side, the latter would be the kingdom of the norm (which it would be the concern of the conscience to apply in concrete circumstances) and not implicate a journey of discernment of interpretation of the good which effectively is asked of the concrete person. On the other, the spiritual life would be of a different level, marked by liberty and intuition, not communicating with the preceding. In both cases one forgets that life in the Spirit takes place through the dynamics proper of conscience, in understanding, evaluating and deciding it for the good concretely possible (in the context of values present in the given circumstances) under the guidance of the Spirit, in relation with the Lord. It therefore implies exactly the same dynamics present in moral discernment. For the believer this process takes place in relation of communion with the Lord: Christian is he who adheres and makes his own – in liberty and responsibility – the sense and manner of the deciding of the Lord: it is about a real decision of following the Lord, and hence of a becoming similar to him in making one's own his manner of seeing, judging and choosing, that is, criteria and intentionality of the Lord Jesus, as we can hear him in hearing the Word and through the mediation of the ecclesial community and of the tradition which she transmits.

This means that in the objectivity of the situations, with the possibility of good that effectively are present, it is necessary to evaluate what is good and what is better, having already chosen the Lord Jesus, on the base of an encounter with him in which we recognize ourselves as freely saved. That can happen on the premise

⁵ Cf. SERGIO BASTIANEL, «Discernment and Christian formation», in DONATELLA ABIGNENTE – SERGIO BASTIANEL, *On moral formation. Subjects and itineraries*, The well of Jacob, Trapani, 2013, pp. 30-31.

of having understood as sensible for me his intentionality, by which I have felt myself reached, taking it as desirable and therefore wanting to assume it as valid for my existence. In the absence of this sincere disposition and will to look for what is good in the Lord to understand what is to be done, the possibility of a spiritual discernment fails: what is being introduced is in fact, even when it were not clearly noticed, a duplicity in intention which is in the order of a lie, of lack of sincerity. This does not mean to be already perfect, that is, this is not incompatible with the recognition of having need for an ulterior and continuing conversion. But such a perspective implies the commitment to invest all of one's actual liberty in that understanding and decision for the good that now presents itself to me. My liberty and capacity to understand certainly can be partial, but exactly for this always on the walk towards a progressive growth and maturation (cf. Ignatian *magis*). Therefore, what takes place is a progressive historical trip: the relation of communion with the Lord does not exclude, even requires, the search for good in the continuing change of historical conditions which posit questions and ask for decisions in new situations (in which the Lord has never been found). Remembering one's relation with the Lord and how the Lord has acted, how he has behaved in preceding situations (perhaps even analogous ones) allows interpretation of the present situation and the search for what may mean realizing his intentionality, putting in exercise his criteria of choice in the context of values that now presents itself. We can evoke as example Peter in front of Cornelius in Acts 10. It is a walk which leads Peter from one understanding to another very different from the preceding. He normally thinks of the pagans according to the references of the (religious) culture of the Hebrew people contemporary to him. To change his vision he needs to pick up that the Spirit precede him and that the relations interpolate him: Peter arrives there gradually.

It is in this perspective that it seems to me it is possible to assume that *habitus* of discernment that is keystone and basic attitude for the Synodal journey of the Church and that we are called ever more to realize in our formative communities.



MAKE THE CHURCH YOUNG: ONGOING FORMATION

Sister Alessandra Smerilli

Daughters of Mary Help of Christians

Sister Alessandra Smerilli, of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA), was born in Vasto in 1974. She graduated in Economy and Commerce at the University of Rome Tre. Then she specialized in Political Economics at the Sapienza University in Rome and at the "School of Economics" of the "East Anglia University" in Norwich. She is Ordinary Teacher of Political Economy at the Pontifical Faculty of Sciences of the Auxilium Education. Also, she has tasks of teaching in other university institutions and is member of the Scientific and Organizational Committee of the Social Weeks of the Catholics promoted by the Italian Episcopal Conference. She is among the experts of the National Council of the Third Sector, an organism instituted at the Ministry of Labour and of the Social Politics.

In October of 2018, Sr. Smerilli participated, as an auditor, at the Synod of Bishops on *The young, faith and vocational discernment*. On 5 March 2019, Pope Francis nominated her Councillor of the State of the City of Vatican, the organism that exercises legislative power in the Papal State.

1. INTRODUCTION

«**D**ear young people, my joyful hope is to see you keep running the race before you, outstripping all those who are slow or fearful... The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them! And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us»¹. The concluding words of the apostolic exhortation, the long letter that Pope Francis gives over to the young, gives us a key to its reading: the esteem that the Church has for the young, the need for their presence and for their freshness, the joy of them preceding us, the request for their patience if we adults sometimes proceed slowly. It is to the young that the Pope turns with his text, but also to all the people of God, because his reflection on the young addresses all of us. He talks to the young with a young language but not following youth fashions, to help everybody to tune in to their wavelengths, to look at them with the eyes of God.

¹ FRANCIS, Apostolic exhortation *Christus vivit*, 25 March 2019, no. 299.

2. VOCATION AND DISCERNMENT

During the Synod, the discussions on the theme of vocation and of accompaniment were very lively and animated. The spectrum was very wide: it went from one who described vocation as a project of God dreamed for each one from all eternity, to which each one is called to adhere, to one who sustained that the only calling is that of sanctity. The assembly rejected the idea of vocation as that of an already written script, or of a ready-made job, but also of a theatrical improvisation without trace: «Since God calls us to be friends and not servants (cf. Jn 15:13), our choices make a real contribution to the historical unfolding of his loving plan»².

Pope Francis in the Exhortation dedicates an entire chapter to the theme of vocation. Before that chapter, he stops several times on the unique and unrepeatable contribution that each one of us can offer with his life on this earth: «Your life ought to be a prophetic stimulus to others and leave a mark on this world, the unique mark that only you can leave. Whereas if you simply copy someone else, you will deprive this earth, and heaven too, of something that no one else can offer»³. Life is seen as an unrepeatable and fundamental contribution of participation in the creative work of God. It is in relation to God, who intertwines his story of love with our story of love⁴, from which emerges our uniqueness. On 26 March, exactly the day following the signing of the Apostolic exhortation, Pope Francis gave a meditation at the Lateran Pontifical University (LPU), and stressed this concept which seems to be close to his heart: the young are the now of God, not a now that is born from nothingness, but which is possible thanks to the dream of who has preceded them. And they are called to construct the now of tomorrow, which can vary according to the personal and unique contribution of each one. To each young man the choice on how to make bloom his uniqueness.

In this sense also the calling of work assumes its importance: in the Exhortation we find very beautiful passages on the sense of work (ChV 268-273) as continuation of the creative work of God, as participation

² SYNOD OF BISHOPS XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *The young, faith and vocational discernment, Final Document*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 27 October 2018, no. 78.

³ Cf. FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 162.

⁴ Cf. FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 252.

in a great project of transformation of the world, also recognizing the actual difficulties and repeating that through what transformations human work may have gone and will go, the dignity of the worker must always be at the centre of the political and economic choices.

3. BUT THERE IS SOMETHING GOOD

There are many ways in which we can look at young people. The Synod of bishops last year has had the merit of activating many looks and has induced the Church to make synthesis by means of listening, prayer, exchange. To discern is, in fact, an exercise in which what one has seen becomes story and reciprocal contamination, in search of what God has in store. What is the divine way of looking at the young people? How much will our visions lead us near to his? And shall we have the courage to rethink the Church, that is, first of all we ourselves, in order to serve a look better than ours?

The phrase that I hear most often in conventions and in occasions in which young people are talked about is: «But there is something good». In a generally negative reading – they are inconstant, fragile, undisciplined, shooting ahead, incapable of assuming responsibilities, etc. – shown are some positive signs: “so there is something good”, and often that *good* is that which approaches the most our customs and values. Now I can perhaps imagine that God looks at me, scrutinizes me, and finally with a sigh says: «But is there something good»? Can he be the God who in front of the human being rejoiced because *it was a very good thing* (Gen 1:31)?

You cannot stay with them without changing something of ourselves. Perhaps we see chaos, a little disordinate life, so many interests, little stability, but at bottom redemption is exactly a going up to order, a progressive discovery of one’s originality deriving treasure even from disbandments, contradictions, falls. Today it is evident that we cannot anymore imagine education, at least the one that we would like, as a straight way, a linear course from which negative experiences are ideally taken from the boy, almost to spare him liberty.

In effect, often we lament and go into crises in the face of the young who do not enrol in associations, who do not obtain cards, who live muddled and fluid memberships. And we do not know how to read

the vital need of them: «I am for it as long as it tells me something, I am for it as long as you are credible, as long as something different does not convince me more». In respect to the weak atmosphere and to the poisons that accumulate in many communitarian experiences, we cannot not pick up what this need for oxygen asks of us. Are weaker personalities, incapable of strong and stable connections truly increasing? I believe that we are getting richer in humanity. Persons who, if only it were true, come to make choices through tortuous routes, descents and ascents, impervious curves. They are for that same reason richer, more complete, more resolved. If ever, we have to ask ourselves if we must adjust the young people to a mode of being and doing community, or do not our communities have to transform themselves according to their measure. What communities for liberating memberships? What cards or bonds to abandon and what ties instead to not miss?

You can also say: what adults, and what human and spiritual maturity to accompany young men so frank and demanding? We must admit it: we are less than ever in the condition to propose ourselves as guides of others. The burden of proof has overturned: now it is up to us to demonstrate dependability, nothing is due to us. Instead of licking our wounds or regretting lost positions, there is the point to make about who we are and about what thing can he find who joins our life. When trust snaps, the heart of the young opens entirely. Sometimes it takes years. They are put to study: «I care for him, but will he also know how to decipher? Does he know how to understand? Does he know how to put in context? Will he be scandalized?». Today we are asked to gather stories, to not judge, to heal wounds and to reassemble what has been broken, allowing to emerge an order that is fruit of mercy and of grace. There are goods the splendour of which appears after having them trampled upon; it is the logic of the *happy fault*. Well, the great gospel resource is that of putting in the field a similar authority, which uplifts and generates autonomy. The contrary of the one that is feared. That an Other exists, thanks to which *I* becomes *more I*, is an experience of eschatological nature, therefore not common, but surprising and non-deducible. For me it is the great biblical theme of the nuptial alliance: to come across a dedication, an interest, a love without reasons which contain the appeal to trust and to proceed together.

4. ADULTS

Who is the adult? The past participle of the verb *adolescere*, it is synonymous with “grown”: in almost all cultures, it has appeared desirable to reach a real maturity and thus the passage towards the world of responsibilities has been ritualized in a feast. Instead they are many who point out how today, at least in the West, essential is it to remain or to return as young, if possible for the entire life. At the anthropological level, it is about *deregulation* without precedents. It is not defined anymore what thing is proper of every generation and what should be expected from the various ages. Each one can take for himself the role of another. The possibilities of each one are multiplied, as like a competition in which anyone can reveal himself as an adversary. For Christianity it is about the implosion of a rapport between generations apparently unavoidable for the transmission of the faith: in the family and then in the community hierarchically structured the elders educate the little ones towards life, introducing to a spiritual order desired to be reflected in the social one. Although in some corner of the planet it seems to still function, the internet materializes everywhere the breaking up of that model, connecting already “horizontally” boys and adults in every latitude, without distinction of roles and identity. It must not therefore surprise that, in Catholic ambience, even the Synod of bishops tends toward not conceiving anymore the young simply as “addressees” of the faith: there is simply no message to transmit from one who knows to one who does not, but a continuing need to convert themselves together to the novelty of the Gospel. We could therefore legitimately ask ourselves: do the young still need adults? In what can we help them? How does this time sound us out?

There are questions that invest the faith itself, in which the millennials are evidently acting as trailblazers and as enzymes in the social body. Generally intense, for example, is their sensitivity for the care of the common house, in the challenges that concern respect for creation and the need for change in our daily behaviour. During an encounter about the rapport between economy and environment, for example, a young boy of 12 years intervened narrating to everybody that this year during Lent he has lived fasting from plastics. To the question “But what does that mean?”, thus he answers: “Every

Saturday I go marketing with my mother and I watch how she makes her acquisitions, asking her with insistence to limit plastic, so as to choose ecological confections and recyclable materials". On the other hand, the adolescents who notify their priest how the sheets of prayer that could have been printed front and back and on recycled paper, are the same that are solicited with a certain vigour so that they do not transform into a dump the alpine scenario in which they are having a packed lunch. The adult, in short, remains determined to structure into *habitus* that from whose mind and body they are attracted, favouring and accompanying the passage from enthusiasm to convictions that afterward motivate real behaviour.

The point, perhaps, is to recognize the circularity of the solicitations: even from the youngest, ever more taking place, one is put in question and still called to grow. In this contemporary context it shows itself to be really new. The more you spend time meeting the boys and young men of our Country, the more you become aware that toward their adults of reference they constitute a constant provocation to confrontation and opening. Where the hierarchies have become weak and the roles have become ever more interchangeable, the substance of words and of behaviour is the true question. In this, doing away with many formalities, the young men exercise in their turn their own maieutic, that asks from who has preceded them to come again and more to the light. During a conference on the themes of finance two adolescents were showing themselves very attentive. They were collaborators of *Radio Immaginaria*, a network of boys. In dialogue with them on the side of the works important questions come: "What can we say to our parents to convince them to be more aware of how they use money? How can we make them understand that they cannot lament a world which does not function if then they themselves with their choices contribute to make it in that way? It is said that we young people are not interested in the big themes, for example, economy and finance, but how much depends on the way in which they are transmitted to us?". These are questions to adults, regarding adults: the meeting between generations therefore remains to be unavoidable, on the condition that it includes the interlocutor and becomes an exchange.

In truth, the change of epoch leads us in this way to the fundamentals of education. Adult is one who assumes the responsibility of what he

says and of what he does, of the world as it is thus configured, of its beauty and of its miseries. He knows that he does not know, he knows his own power and his own limits: those that are structural, but also those which are necessary to give space and breathe to others. Fragile, limited, in movement, the adult makes a proposal, positions himself, places himself with his own character in the complexity. He is opposite the toddler who stamps, is puffed up and shouts pretending to be all and to get all. He is not rigid, because he knows the nuances and instability of reality: his coherence is not ostentation of principles, but ductility and constancy, participation in others' problems, dependability. In the face of questions from the young, the exhortation *Christus Vivit* of Pope Francis launches an appeal to the Church which to be credible in their eyes «needs to regain her humility and simply listen, recognizing that what others have to say can provide some light to help her better understand the Gospel. A Church always on the defensive, which loses her humility and stops listening to others, which leaves no room for questions, loses her youth and turns into a museum. How, then, will she be able to respond to the dreams of young people?»⁵.

The first generation of the new millennium does not want to do without or free itself of us adults, on the contrary. The point is that many times we do not succeed in interacting, because the mutual expectations do not cross each other. We would like that they were ready to hear what we have to say and transmit and they rather are waiting to find themselves before persons who understand them, who look at them with confidence and who spur them in their potentialities and in overcoming difficulties and hardships. It happened during a lesson with various classes of secondary school and technical institutes in Matera. We had prepared ourselves, we wanted to give the best of ourselves; we had tried to arrive with a well done and charming presentation; we risked talking too much. Up to when a teacher asked to talk: can we show you what we have realized? The boys then started to share their preparation for our event: in a more original and innovative way they made themselves spokespersons, one towards the others, of the principal messages that we adults intended to transmit. And so, why call some speakers? The

⁵ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 41.

answer did not come late, with a moment of dialogue together with the boys. Precise, punctual and profound questions: they were asking for a credible testimony, help, hope and stories of life. «We are called to invest in their fearlessness and to educate them to take on their responsibilities»⁶: the Synod calls us to this. «It tries to avoid imposing obstacles, rules, controls and obligatory structures on these young believers who are natural leaders in their neighbourhoods and in other settings. We need only to accompany and encourage them, trusting a little more in the genius of the Holy Spirit, who acts as he will»⁷.

5. Roots

In a taxi toward the airport of Paris at four in the morning. A taxi driver and a sister: The taxi driver: "What do you in your life?". The sister, thinking that the rest was evident from the habit and crucifix that she is wearing, tells not about her religious life, but about her professional experience, that makes the taxi driver curious. Thus he starts a conversation about various themes of economic and social actuality. In the simplicity of the dialogue, he arrives at a surprising question: "Do you have a husband?". Disconcerted – "But... I'm a sister!" – thinking: "Don't you see it?". The taxi driver: "And so?". Wrong-footed question. She tries to make it understood that it is a life choice and not a business, that she dedicates her existence to God and to others; she does it looking for words that do not result incomprehensible to the one who has asked those questions. Silence from the taxi driver. Reprise: "How many years has she been a sister?". "About twenty years". "Oh... no husband and no children for twenty years?" The religious does not know anymore what to say. And the questions go on: "But what you are describing to me is also for the males?" and, to better understand, "Do you live inside a church?". In the Kafkaesque scenario in which she feels she has fallen, the sister observes that at least the church as edifice remains as something known; it is already an element of solace. The echo of that dialogue however accompanies her for the whole day, with the impression of having experienced a taste of a post-Christian society. The believing

⁶ SYNOD OF BISHOPS XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *The young, faith and vocation discernment, Final document*, no. 70.

⁷ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 230.

life takes place in a world that less and less possesses the categories to read its signs and symbols. The languages and words common for centuries in Christianity and in the Church are for an increasing number of persons, in particular for the young, completely lost. It is necessary to return with our memory to the sometimes inexperienced announcements of the apostles during the very first periods of Christianity. Are we in the conditions of the first Christians?

Each baptized person, there where he lives, intercepts today elementary religious questions, picking them up alive as never before. Broken in our cities has been the traditional image of community; conflicts, precariousness and distrust increase, but that entails that at all levels it is necessary to say again for what motives and in the name of what to stay together, how to organize plausible answers to new and ancient problems. What will allow us to live together, we who are diverse, in a civil way? Is there a dependable love, an experience of security so as not to find ourselves alone and lost? How can we recover from an evil that is done and suffered? What will become of the Earth and of us, in the future and beyond death? They are the accents which configure the search for God in the first generation of the third millennium, in one who crosses without a "before 2001" adolescence and youth surrounded by crises. Desire for salvation and for meaning, even if lack of esteem for the traditional hierarchies keeps far interlocutors already admitted as known. If Christianity has a problem, in the West, it is the common, pervasive sensation of having known it enough, without in reality having experience of it and investigated its profundity. This is the basic difference between our Church and the Church of the origins. The omnipresence of the Christian signs, in art and in the traditions, seems to prevent or at least slow down the return to Christ as to somebody New.

What happened on the Paris taxi, at bottom is not an episode to be isolated in France. The same questions that caught a nun off guard are widespread among Italian adolescents, are heard even in oratories or in the hour of religion. And they are exactly the ones, the boys, who constitute a thermometer of our societies. Notwithstanding the numerous data which the researches put at our disposal, we tend to really not give account to the fact that the greater part of Italian youth has interrupted its rapport with the Church. To the question "Are you a

believer?" many answer: "I have been educated as a Catholic, but now I don't practice", or else "I am an atheist", "I don't have any particular interests regarding God and religion". Some, however, do not hide their faith, they profess it without showing off, but with conviction, even among their peers. A small remnant. Often we prefer to look at those oratories still frequented either by children or by adolescents and we fool ourselves to be able to go on as if nothing had changed. If we asked ourselves with some honesty, however, we know well that it is not such and that among the practicing, rapports with the Church and with the Credo are for certain directions unresolved, in continuing evolution, often suspended.

On the other side, «youth is more than simply a period of time; it is a state of mind. That is why an institution like as ancient as the Church can experience renewal and a return to youth at different points in her age-old history. Indeed, at the most dramatic moments of her history, she feels called to return with all her heart to her first love»⁸. The time that we are living is fascinating and we must admit that the young are accustoming us to the possibility of a more genuine Christianity, with less trappings. Contestation or the refusal of religious experience do not prevail, but being felt is a great desire for coherence, freshness and simplicity: of witnesses. When, in fact, one experiences going out of schemas and persons are met where they are, without any propensity to proselytism, many prejudices regarding Christianity and the Church are dismantled in the round of a cup of coffee drunk in company. A conversation has just started and soon a question about the sacrament of reconciliation is heard, which finding a liberal answer, coherent and with a bit of personal involvement, causes to say: "Oh, but I have never seen that in that way!". If a priest or a sister sets foot today in a big multinational, perhaps invited by the one who directs it, to present the Christian point of view about the themes in the agenda, their presence generates immediate curiosity, questions for meaning, a certain nostalgia for that world many of us would like to live in. When we also succeed to put in play – while answering questions with sincerity and warmth, telling about ourselves and even of our own errors, not hiding that we are normal persons, who know how to have a good time, stay in company and enjoy some

⁸ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 34.

good things of life – we contribute to destroy the idea about a sad Christianity, made up of duties, morals, judgments and prejudices. This is in fact a very common perception, also telling about a great distortion of the Christian event: a God who became flesh and does not ask for sacrifices, but sacrifices himself for us. As Pope Francis observes: «At times, in the attempt to develop a pure and perfect youth ministry, marked by abstract ideas, protected from the world and free of every flaw, we can turn the Gospel into a dull, meaningless and unattractive proposition. Such a youth ministry ends up completely removed from the world of young people and suited only to an elite Christian youth that sees itself as different, while living in an empty and unproductive isolation. In rejecting the weeds, we also uproot or choke any number of shoots trying to spring up in spite of their limitations»⁹.

During an experience in the United States, with young universitarians engaged for three weeks at a fast pace in a centre of research, Mass is celebrated in the shared house. It truly seems like returning to the origins of Christianity, when the Eucharistic celebration took place in the houses where from time to time people assembled. The boys talking about it in the university, the news goes around. And, a fact totally unexpected, somebody asks to join. Young people who normally do not attend Mass: and yet, in an atmosphere that smells of home, in simplicity, in the desire for interiority but also for new relationships, one allows to be involved. It is this missionary Church of which like in the beginning, even today there is need: a community that can arise through word of mouth advertising, in which one becomes invited for another. *Come and see* (Jn 1): «Young people – Pope Francis has underlined – frequently fail to find in our usual programmes a response to their concerns, their needs, their problems and issues. I am more concerned with helping young people to use their insight, ingenuity and knowledge to address the issues and concerns of other young people in their own language»¹⁰.

⁹ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 232.

¹⁰ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, nos. 202-203.

6. FAITH

Many expectations naturally are generated around young people. Even in the Church, in one who has particularly at heart the new generations, arises the question that Peter and the other apostles heard being laid down already at Pentecost: “What must we do?” (Acts 2:37). The question invests today not only marginal aspects, but the possibility of faith *simply*. Actually, in his apostolic exhortation *Christus vivit*, Pope Francis with precise lines of action directs the research for new ways, whether for evangelization or for consolidation of him who has already started to believe. This happens in the awareness, never so explicit in a magisterial document, that «a Church always on the defensive, which loses her humility and stops listening to others, which leaves no room for questions, loses her youth and turns into a museum»¹¹. At the Synod about the youth, it was admitted – and Pope Francis continually cites the final Document approved by the Assembly – that «a substantial number of young people, for all sorts of reasons, do not ask the Church for anything because they do not see it as significant for their lives. Some, on the contrary, expressly ask to be left alone, as they find the presence of the Church a nuisance, even an irritant. This request [...] may be based on serious and respectable reasons: sexual and economic scandals; the fact that the clergy are ill prepared to engage effectively with the sensitivities of the young; lack of care over homily preparation and the presentation of the Word of God; the passive role given to the young within the Christian community; the Church’s difficulty in explaining its doctrinal and ethical positions in the face of contemporary society»¹². It is about affirmations laden with responsibilities, which have not prevented a look in advance, or inhibited the missionary thrust. Sketching the future is the New Testament icon of the disciples of Emmaus: walking with the young, making the road with them even if they go the wrong direction, stirring up questions, interrogating them, listening to them, and therefore announcing. What? The three fundamental points that we are reminded of in the heart of the apostolic exhortation: God is love, Christ saves us, and he is alive, is here in our midst: «there can be no

¹¹ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 41.

¹² SYNOD OF BISHOPS XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *The young, faith and vocational discernment, Final document*, no. 53.

doubt that goodness will have the upper hand in your life and that all our struggles will prove worthwhile»¹³. Actually, in identifying the three base elements in a first announcement of the faith, Pope Francis educates the Church toward a new rapport with the contemporary world. She is not anymore its centre, neither is a credit of confidence already due to her, and yet she has a living mystery to share and convincing personalities to play. It is interesting that the young believers are recognized not only as entitled to announce the faith, but as pioneers of the mission among those of their age. The Synod is very clear in this: it is about a provocation that cannot be avoided, upon which to dare an historical verification of pastoral usages. In a secularized horizon, the Pope points out to the bishops and priests the possibility of intervening only after the nucleus of the Gospel has already been transmitted in a face-to-face friendship among lay folk. It asks questions, of course, about the preparation of the believers and about the missionary awareness of one who is also rich in church experience, however it opens its eyes about a word of mouth advertising which among the young already exists and has not had pastoral dignity until here.

Of course, to become Christians requires, besides the moment of the first announcement, a consolidation in fraternity: the pastoral of the young – we read in the Exhortation – is synodal, «that is capable of giving form to a “journeying together”»¹⁴, where nobody must be placed or put apart and the faith can mature. The Pope specifies that such a growth is not to be confused with indoctrination: it is necessary not to be «too concerned with communicating a great deal of doctrine, let us first try to awaken and consolidate the great experiences that sustain the Christian life»¹⁵. Rather – and it is one of the key passages about what is to be done – «to create a home is to let prophecy take place and make our hours and days less cold, less indifferent and anonymous. It is to create bonds by simple, everyday acts that all of us can perform»¹⁶. For this type of accompaniment, Pope Francis proposes an exact model of young pastoral: «To create a “home” is to create “a family”. It is to learn to feel connected to others by more

¹³ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 127.

¹⁴ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 206.

¹⁵ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 212.

¹⁶ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 217.

than merely utilitarian and practical bonds, to be united in such a way as to feel that our life is a bit more human»¹⁷. Not a nest or a flight, but among young people and educators the real place wherein not to dissimulate your fragility, earning there the courage of decisions. Youth, in fact, «cannot remain on hold. It is the age of choices and herein lies its fascination and its greatest responsibility»¹⁸. Francis can allow himself to be very direct: «You have to discover who you are and develop your way of being holy, whatever others may say or think. Becoming a saint means becoming more fully yourself, becoming what the Lord wished to dream and create, and not a photocopy. Your life ought to be a prophetic stimulus to others and leave a mark on this world, the unique mark that only you can leave. Whereas if you simply copy someone else, you will deprive this earth, and heaven too, of something that no one else can offer»¹⁹. For a Christian experience of this tenor, there is need for a Church different from the glorious institution which for centuries has presided over society. A mother who receives, and receives again and puts wings on her children, infusing freedom and confidence.

¹⁷ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 217.

¹⁸ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 140.

¹⁹ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 162.



**THE MEDIA SOCIETY
AND THE MEDUCATION**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper will have a twofold focus. First, we will attempt a synthesis of the practices and formats of digital culture. That is, we will try to conceptualize the media in the light of a contemporaneity increasingly guided by the logic of the Net.

In the second instance, we will try to apply this systematization to educational practices by introducing the concept of “meducation” (Ceretti 2016), that is, the discipline of the soul, typical of the media society that can allow everyone to face with awareness and seriousness the everyday life interwoven with digital actions (communicating, producing, representing, playing, studying, getting informed, etc.).

2. THE MEDIA SOCIETY

We could qualify as the “history of communicative thought” all the intellectual apparatus that has analysed the media in terms of the social effects from the beginning of the twentieth century to our time. It is an imposing and interdisciplinary content system. In fact,

it embraces not only sociology (the media as a social phenomenon) but also all the human and social sciences that are autonomously and interdependently related to the media debate. These include the “educational sciences” that immediately “co-opt” the media as a field of study, research and criticism. They do so by deploying all that intellectual heritage which, since the 1970s, has been known by the expression “media education”. The relationship between media and education (which will be summarized in the second part of this paper) cannot, however, be fully understood unless the main paradigms of the media macrocosm are analysed and understood. The survey on communication media was born – as is written – more than one hundred years ago but has undergone a decisive renewal in recent decades with the advent of the world wide web first and with the subsequent expansion (now widespread and unstoppable) of the digital dimension. We prefer to use the word “dimension” over terms such as “instrument” or “device” because the discussions on technique (technology) and media (mediology) are stripped of their instrumental aura and are increasingly uncertain on concepts such as humanity, socialization, subjectification, and naturalization (anthropology). Eugeni has wisely synthesized this confusion on the human by using the expression “postmedial condition” (Eugeni 2015).

Postmediality indicates that mechanism of substitution of physical places with the communication networks that become the constitutive apparatuses of society. Therefore, the dualism between media and social institutions no longer makes any sense, but both become places (territorial and technological) capable of generating social constructs. Both online and offline we represent ourselves, we tell each other, we project our identity, we transfer our ethical quality. Floridi uses the expression “onlife” to define the combination of online experience and offline life (Floridi 2017). It is a social format that cancels the distinction (between the real and the virtual) that for a long time marked the relationship between man and the media. In “onlife” there is, in fact, a real balance between analogue and digital, between network actions and physical actions. This experiential confluence, if on the one hand strengthens the human dimension of mediated and medial relationships, on the other hand brings out new complexities to decode, new urgencies to face, new problems to solve.

In other words, it invests the traditional patterns of our behavioural architecture characterized by a prolonged and reassuring distance from the media. The media have always been (considered) something else by us, a sort of personal consideration, a complement to our being persons. The irruption of digital logic, however, only decomposes the usual axioms that have characterized the ideas and research on the media universe. Conceptions of the media as mechanical and visual extensions of the human body or of his work (McLuhan 1964), as extensions of the central nervous system (de Kerckhove 1993 and 1996) or as environments that give shape to the experience of every human being (Postman 1986), lose their intellectual specific weight to give way to what Ceretti and Padula call “medial humanity”. This expression indicates the set of women and men who, from a certain point in history (the advent of digital), coexist with increasingly close, immediate online devices and spaces capable of satisfying needs, creating and consolidating relationships (Ceretti and Padula, 2016). In a certain sense, today in a hyper-connected contemporaneity, *we are the media*. Starting from this basic assumption means trying to briefly describe the characteristics of the medial man. Of these, let us underline two of them: *presentification* and *de-spatialization*.

To be ‘presentified’ means first of all to understand that the perception of the temporal dimension has changed because the traditional conceptual tripartition that has characterized the studies on time for a long time has faded. Past, present and future, always in a position of equilibrium, undergo a process of imbalance in the present. It is as if the present widens its sphere of action by swallowing up what has been (the past, memory) and what will be (the future, hope, expectation). The ‘presentification’ of time is the result of the so-called “social acceleration” (high-speed society) (Rosa and Scheuerman 2009) or of a society built around the exaltation of speed (and, jointly, structured around the continuous need for oblivion). The media have become so close that they are lived in a natural, normal, and present way. We are the media also because they are the present of our actions, emotions, relationships. The possibility of transferring a thought or a feeling of ours in an immediate way, building a narrative (a post, a tweet, an instant message) or a representation (a photo, a video), makes the media man a ‘presentified’ individual. In order to better understand the idea of ‘presentification’, it is possible to compare

the pre and post digital media usage times. If we were asked when we watch television we would be immediately ready and precise in answering. We could, for example, say: in the morning, during breakfast, or late in the evening after dinner. Otherwise, we would find it hard to remember the exact moment when we gave a 'like' to the photo posted by a friend of ours.

Our online presence is, therefore, pushed to the present. Posts, tweets, messages, disappear quickly from the home page of our social network. Others can watch our content for a very short time, until it is bypassed by the incessant succession of other content. There is a deconstruction of the traditional time experience. We inform ourselves, we relate, we learn, we experience feelings online. And we do so in endless times, parallel to our present life.

A similar discourse applies to space. Using the outline of the previous example we try to ask someone where he reads a newspaper or listens to the radio. He would probably answer with precision: sitting at a bar table or in a car while driving to work. He could also answer that he was in a specific room, indicating that he was sitting on a sofa of a precise and unmistakable colour. If, absurdly enough, it was night and, due to an electrical failure, the light went off, he would certainly be able to move around in that particular space, knowing every detail carefully. If, on the other hand, they asked him where he sees a video uploaded on YouTube, the most likely answer would be: everywhere. Digital reality is mobile, dynamic, without umbilical cords that tie us to the technological artefact. The media usage is wireless, expanded in a destructured, uncircumscribed, unknown space. The device is no longer different from us but is our moving space. The absence of a spatial fixedness certainly does not imply the absence of a social space, but a redefinition of it starting from a re-perception of spatial categories. Digital territories first of all transcend the dimension of physical presence, emphasizing the relational one. "Digital spaces" (in particular social networks) are, therefore, de-spatialized places of interaction that go "beyond the (traditionally perceived) sense of place" (Meyrowitz 1993). Digital communication, therefore, redefines the social spaces of interaction and relationship. It tears down the identity symbols that define a space (the walls of a house, the plants of a garden) enhancing its interactional architecture.

What counts on a social network is not the colour of the graphic interface but the quality of humanity that fills and characterizes it.

3. MEDUCATION PRACTICES AND FORMATS

Filippo Ceretti writes that

«medial humanity is simultaneously a utopia, a goal and a project. The medial dimension of existence, in fact, can constitute an obscure presence when it is “endured” and lived without reflection. Only a conscious and focused educational programme can bring to awareness an implicit character. Knowledge is the turnkey to digital wisdom; and critical knowledge comes from learning, according to a progressive articulated and exciting understanding that lasts a lifetime. For this reason, alongside a philosophical itinerary and a socio-cultural approach, it is fundamental to try to trace some points of pedagogical reflection: the anthropological meaning of the media necessarily involves the educational dimension» (Ceretti 2016, p. 35).

Medial humanity acts socially. Actions and relationships, narratives and representations are just some of the opportunities that an individual can grasp and exploit in the online universe. He can do so by choosing the path of truth, justice, beauty, respect for the dignity of the person. Or, on the contrary, he can decide to fall into the spirals of distortion and falsification. In the latter case one falls into what sociologists define as “deviance”, i.e. the set of all those behaviours that violate the rules (Cohen 1966) or that move away more or less sharply from the dominant social models (Galimberti 1992) or that are socially disapproved, exceeding in many cases the limits of tolerance and common sense. Practices such as online child pornography, grooming, cyberbullying, revenge porn, hate speech, ludopathies, are part of the so-called “digital deviance” that in many cases require legislative measures to be fought and adequately penalized. But deviating socially online is not necessarily part of the criminal act. It can also include simple transgressions of universally recognised institutional etiquette (think of exaggerations in parental chats or over-the-top discussions about social issues). For this reason, beyond the limits (and sanctions) imposed by the laws, it is necessary to think about a

process of integral education of medial humanity. To understand its main axioms, it is necessary to place this process within a peculiar pedagogical (and cultural) perspective that we will call “meducation”. In order to understand its meaning and characteristics, however, it will be necessary to go back step by step through the theoretical-practical territory defined by the intersection between education and communication, in order to discover its diverse expressions. Calling for analyses and reflections coming from multiple research areas, Ceretti highlights how it is necessary to move from the human logic of “educated BY the media” (as an instrument, object or environment), to that of “educating the media” (because – as has been written – we are the media). The scholar proposes the concept of meducation, which arises precisely from the intention of outlining an “upside-down” approach to the question of the relationship between human development and media technologies in order to identify a model capable of resolving the dualism implicit in all the theories produced so far (the “separation” between media and human). On this historical-interpretative level is placed his proposal for a “pedagogy of medial humanity” or meducation: if it is true that we are the media then it will be important to understand what is the best way to educate the media.

4. CONCLUSION

Living online in a dignified way seems to be the founding premise of meducation. Meducating, however, does not mean educating oneself or training oneself in technicalities, concrete usage, and time limits. It means freely and consciously assimilating traditional educational practices and then being able to project and implement them on the web.

It means embracing the integrity of what is right, without falling into ambiguity and deception. It means becoming virtuous in the field of digital (Rivoltella 2015) not only by following the path of regulation, prohibitions, filters or safeguards, but also by investing in education and ensuring that each individual can be capable of self-control, management and autonomous self-defence.

An (m)educated media society will therefore be characterized by critical awareness and responsibility. These are certainly not

automatic, predictable and easy steps. The web often swallows us up and tends to confuse and take our responsibility away. The first step to undertake on this virtuous path is to “return to man” and to his fundamental qualities such as intelligence, respect for the dignity of the person, proximity, dialogue, truth and critical sense. These are the existential categories (to which many others are added) that we have learned, consolidated and transmitted during the course of our journey, in the traditional times of our primary (in the family) and secondary (at school, at work) socialization. Today’s digital culture (you only need to live portions of life on a social network to realize it) shows that a new (medial) humanity is already at work with qualities and limits. Choosing and promoting good (setting aside the temptations of the spirals of evil) is the challenge for those (communicator, educator or any other social agents) who decide to be part of it and thus contribute to making it as harmonious and positive as possible.

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ROUND TABLE
**“THE DIGITAL NATIVES:
ACCEPTING AND FORMING THEM”**

Ethical and Pastoral Dimension

Father Marco Sanavio, Diocese of Padua

Religious and Apostolic Dimension

Father Rosario Rosarno



**THE DIGITAL NATIVES:
ETHICAL AND PASTORAL DIMENSION**

Father Marco Sanavio

Diocese of Padua

Marco Sanavio, a priest of the diocese of Padua, is the author of a method for the training of young people in the critical use of digital screens (*Generazioni digitali*, San Paolo 2017). He founded the Social Communications Office of the Diocese of Padua and currently teaches at the IUSVE in Mestre where he is also in charge of the multimedia laboratory MUX. A blogger for a three-year period on *Famiglia Cristiana*, he has written a few essays exploring the intersections between the infosphere and pastoral ministry.

1. VOICE, PRESENCE AND IMAGINATION: PLACES OF ENCOUNTER WITH THE DIGITAL NATIVES

V*ocaloid* is a speech synthesis software developed by Yamaha Corporation that can produce complete songs as final output. Thanks to the constant improvement of this software which is able to sample voicebanks with thousands of phrases and melodies, the record market has tried to create not only audio but also holographic products, able to give form to the singing voices. In practice today we can see in Japan, Hong Kong and Los Angeles concerts held by holograms, supported by live bands: a phenomenon that leads viewers to follow, want to meet and ask for autographs from people who do not exist in the flesh.

Is this a new creed lived by the digital natives? This is a question that challenges us.

The first indication that comes to us from this phenomenon is the **centrality of the voice**. The man-machine interface is progressively focusing on voice recognition and speech synthesis: there is an increase, for example, in personal assistants that allow accessible

home automation as well as interactive functions driven by voice in the automotive world. If on the one hand it is the alphabetical articulation that turns into input for the machine, on the other hand it is the voice itself that turns into an interaction channel.

«He who enters through the door is the shepherd of the sheep. The guardian opens the door and the sheep listen to his voice: he calls his sheep, each by name, and leads them out. And when he has brought out all his sheep, he walks in front of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. But a stranger will not follow him, but will run away from him, because they know not the voice of strangers» (Jn 10:2-5).

The Gospel itself shows us in the voice, and not in the alphabetical articulation of sounds, a channel of connection with the Pastor who cares for his flock.

A second concept we are interested in exploring is that of **presence**. How is presence being transformed through electronic mediations? What impact will the domestic robotics have on the lives of these young people? We will have to think more and more of a blended pastoral action, made up of contacts in presence wisely balanced with contacts mediated by digital screens in which the former are able to trigger a virtual continuity with the latter in a pattern of constant empowerment.

The third concept to be taken into consideration is that of **imagination**. Howard Gardner and Katie Davis in their essay *Generation App* argue that it is not only about living in an environment but also about re-reading personal reality according to a number of new categories. They claim that «not only are they immersed in apps, but they have come to see the world as a set of apps and their own lives as an ordered series of apps – or perhaps, in many cases, as a single app that works from cradle to grave»¹. The authors of the essay identify in three fundamental nuclei the processes of education of the youngest people (the path of the three “I’s”: the formation of identity that is widespread in several social networks, the ability to have intimate relationships and the faculties of imagination).

¹ HOWARD GARDNER, KATIE DAVIS, *Generazione App. La testa dei giovani e il nuovo mondo digitale*, Feltrinelli, 2014, pp. 18-19.

Clearly intimacy and imagination are the place of encounter with God (=relation) and the source of his image for us. If we do not treat these aspects, which can be distorted by digital screens, how can we treat the dimension of faith?

Here is a table of comparison between four epochs that stretch from the year zero to today, marked by articulations of language that have profoundly changed its structure:

	Dawn of Christianity	Era of printing	Advent of Electricity	Pervasiveness of electronics
Medium	Spoken Language	Writing Reading	Multisensory contributions	Networks and mobile connections
Predominant message	Testimony	Doctrine	Participation	Relationships mediated by digital screens
Social structure	Discipleship	School	Market	Onlife capillary network

With respect to the concept of presence, today available on digital screens and soon probably also on telepresence systems, we are faced with disturbing perspectives expressed in television series such as *Altered Cabon* (a series available on Netflix inspired by Richard K. Morgan's novel *Bay City*) which imagines the personality and consciousness contained in a cortical stack that can be placed in different boxes (human beings). Set in 2384 it tells that only the richest and most powerful can move from one body to another.

Or *Westworld*, a U.S. television series aired by HBO, which tells about a park for adults, set in the Far West, where you can use any kind of violence on androids (very realistic) present in the park, until death, because they are restored daily by technical staff. In this series we talk about a park, a creator, and creatures that rebel against him in «a dark odyssey about the dawn of artificial consciousness and the future of sin».

Adults, and increasingly young people, feed their imaginations with this.

We are faced with superb perspectives, like the one contained in Yuval Noah Harari's essay in *Homo Deus, Brief History of the Future*, which states in an overwhelming way that «we do not need to wait for the “second coming” to defeat death. A couple of nerds in a lab can do it».

Here are some further indications taken from an essay prepared for education in reading the image and its pastoral use (Marco Sanavio, *Sala della Comunità e Fede*, Effatà, Torino 2019).

2. DIMENSIONS OF PERCEPTION: CHANGES

Therefore, if perception, more than factual reality, can be an important point to understand how to foster faith journeys, let us consider in the subsequent steps some transitions that can have a decisive influence, today, on perceptual processes. We will highlight, in particular, three that describe phenomena useful to the traced course.

a) First transition: from gravity of lead to electron agility

Among those who sensed that electricity and modern means of communication would bring about an anthropological, as well as technical, change was undoubtedly Marshall McLuhan. In his book *The Gutenberg Galaxy* of 1962 McLuhan echoed the theses of Havelock and Innis in describing the transformations brought about by the entry of electricity into man's sensory and cognitive processes. If a first phase of oral communication had favoured the vivacity and evocative power of the word, the entry of the press into man's life, besides demolishing the oligarchy of those who owned the books, introduced a knowledge centred on the alphabet, and therefore on logic, rigour and abstraction. The human brain was not born naturally to read, writing is a human invention and is not part of the genetic make-up, says Maryanne Wolf,² neuroscientist professor at Tuft University in Massachusetts, following her studies, according to which it even seems that different alphabets form different brains. This leads us to consider the extremely significant impact that

² Cf. MARYANNE WOLF, *Proust e il calamaro. Storia e scienza del cervello che legge*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 2012.

alphabetic communication has had on the organization of thought and, consequently, on society as a whole over the centuries. The next epochal passage, the entry of electricity into daily life, has determined a further leap forward in communication and paved the way for the advent of today's mass and personal media. It was not only a matter of strengthening and disconnecting the media from geographical dependence thanks to radio waves, but also of transforming them from a communication based on the alphabet to a more modulated one based on sounds and images, extremely rich in emotional impact.

b) Second transition: from alphabetical logic to symbolic compressions

Electronic communication skips many logical steps in alphabetical composition. The alphabetical compositions of instant messaging, for example, are often written without the presence of vowels, according to conventions that take, for example, the acronym instead of the extended sentence. "Ily" stands for "I love you", but "zzz" means "you make me sleepy": in this case onomatopoeia, the symbolic convention, replaces the logic of the alphabet. In the case of text messages, therefore, these are not simple texts but symbols and conventions that condense the alphabetical passages and reduce them to a fragment. The "icons" of the computer, the content present in the smartphone memory (music, photos, videos) and the images of video games bring the communication back to a symbolic code, no longer alphabetical. For those involved in Christian initiation, this transformation should be a good game because the language of faith itself passes through symbols: the candle, the white robe, the Easter candle, the liturgical colours.

The transition enforced by electronics even in the learning models compels the new generations to change the logical processes that have nourished knowledge so far. Learning is not necessarily memorizing, ordering, schematizing and connecting. The process of content appropriation can also pass through a playful, experiential, empirical logic. The connection between transmitter and receiver is a common experience and not necessarily a written code to be decoded and understood. Communicating in the electronic age means sharing an environment, accepting to be part of the same space, resonating, and being connected.

c) **Third transition: from imaginary to imagined, dimension congenial to faith**

The imaginary, therefore, could be a dimension of human experience common to both the symbolic syntax privileged by the digital and the journey of faith. Note, however, the language: God is imagined and not imaginary: the mind of the believer has created its own representation of the divine according to what has been told to him, what he has read and also what has been suggested by the visual arts, including cinema.

Faith in God allows the believer to perceive him as real, present and living in his own experience, but his appearance and every other characteristic attributed to him are in the field of the imagined. The Gospel of John itself (1:18) suggests this line of reflection: «No one has ever seen God: the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has revealed him». In welcoming Revelation the believer often needs to represent the face of God in a concrete way, a desire which is even reiterated as an invitation from God in Sacred Scripture: «My heart repeats your invitation, “Seek my face! Your face, Lord, I seek”» (Psalm 27). Regarding the risk, always present in the Bible, that God’s images may turn into idols, we know well how history has handed us painful pages and never-ending struggles.

Italo Calvino, the well-known contemporary writer, described «two types of imaginative processes: the one that starts from the word and arrives at the visual image and the one that starts from the visual image and arrives at verbal expression»³. It is a circular vision of the imagination that almost supposes an “inner cinema” of which each one of us is not only a spectator but also the producer. This process may have favoured the settlement in our depths, for example, of some images related to the events of the Bible: we have heard them, read them and imagined them. How did we imagine Eden and the events experienced by our ancestors? How did we frame the flight of the people from Egypt and their journey through the desert?

It is equally true that, sometimes, it was the figurative arts that carried the imagined of biblical events into the verbal fabric of our conversations: we think of the frescoes in the sacred places, of the

³ ITALO CALVINO, *Lezioni americane. Sei proposte per il prossimo millennio*, Mondadori, Milano, 1993, p. 93.

painting but also of the moving image that helped to spread pages of Scripture otherwise consigned to the dust of the library.

The circularity of the process described by Calvino helps to understand how the imaginary and the imagined are plastic pathways that can be modified over time and at various ages. Within the pastoral action mediated by digital media we have the extraordinary possibility of connecting the imaginary of the work that is proposed with the imagined of faith.



**THE DIGITAL NATIVES:
RELIGIOUS AND APOSTOLIC DIMENSION**

Father Rosario Rosarno

Rosario Rosarno, a priest of the Diocese of Oppido Mamertina-Palmi, is currently a novice of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate. A journalist and publicist, he holds a doctorate in Theology of Communication from the Lateran Pontifical University. Former director of the diocesan office of Communication and Press, he has published with St Pauls Publications the book *Youth of Today, Priests of Tomorrow. For a participatory-digital pastoral ministry for vocations*; with St Pauls Publications *QuaGió. Detach, pray, live. Help for youth ministry for Lent and Easter*; with the St Anthony's Publications the book *For a pastoral practice of participative-digital ministry*.

In this Seminar on Formation I am entrusted with the theme *Digital Natives: religious and apostolic dimension*. In contexts of serious study like this one, such a theme can be treated marginally or as an opportunity to challenge ourselves and to discern critically between a dangerously pessimistic attitude or, conversely, a highly propagandistic one. The answer could be in the search for a balance between the two poles. But this would already be a serious prejudice in the face of this important and topical issue, i.e. making the technological capacity of the digital environment (the term “digital”) superior to the subject in question (the so-called natives).

In the light of my readings and studies, I have tried to make a synthesis of my own: the digital natives are people. It could be reductive and perhaps already here I could end my paper; but if we think about it carefully, digital natives are often considered only as objects of study. Paraphrasing Father Oreste Benzi, an Italian priest whose cause for beatification is underway, *the digital native is a person with good skills who resorts to the use of digital devices and technologies because his present style of life and society does not suit*

him and in order not to suffer (no one likes to suffer and everyone seeks happiness) drowns his suffering in the search for something else. To this I would add another thing we always have before our eyes and within our reach: relationships through written and audio conversations, dimensions through sounds and music, worlds through images, sensations through games.

Pope Francis already stated in his message for the World Communications Day 2014:

«We need, for example, to recover a certain sense of deliberateness and calm. This calls for time and the ability to be silent and to listen. We need also to be patient if we want to understand those who are different from us. People only express themselves fully when they are not merely tolerated, but know that they are truly accepted. If we are genuinely attentive in listening to others, we will learn to look at the world with different eyes and come to appreciate the richness of human experience as manifested in different cultures and traditions».

Considering the other person as a person and not as an object of study requires the ability to listen in relating to the other. When we talk about digital natives, which from now on we will call people born and raised in digital cultures, the first opportunity for each of us is to verify our capacity and level of listening. With a simple exercise, each from his or her own place and their own mind, we will now try to answer the following questions:

A short exercise: How do we fare in conversations?

- Do I always talk and listen little?
- Am I easily distracted? (by people, noises, surrounding objects or personal thoughts).
- Do the opinions of others bore me?
- Important: Can I have a chat with a little boy? (*without value judgment*, i.e. not classifying the interlocutor and what he says. Having difficulty putting myself in the other person's shoes, flooding him with prejudices.).
- Do I have arguments to support any conversation? (tricky question).

Communication is for everyone, good communication is to be encouraged on topics that are beyond my sphere of knowledge which I receive mainly through conversations with others and which I must not allow to fade away, but I have to endeavour to receive with engagement.

This simple but not trivial game has allowed us to position ourselves better than people born in digital cultures: not opposite, as if we were perfect strangers, but *alongside, as fellow travellers* who intend to travel a stretch of road together, without necessarily caring about the destination. This relational manner allows us religious to be what we are, pardon the pun, that is, to live the primacy of God even above the formative anxiety about young people and adolescents and teenagers. In doing so, we will not let out a word that puts a brake on the younger generations (the “not”), but will rather try to speak to them about the greatest love that we have followed because we are fascinated by it and to which the face of Christ the Saviour has been associated along the way. It is the “extra” that is not to be found in the “nuclei of death” such as the Netflix marathons, the unbridled exchange of messages and audio, the compulsive-musical isolation: it is to help the young people to search for depth by walking alongside knowing that they are losing (their convictions, their life, their time, their abilities... almost a waste). What we must try never to lose sight of is that we, since we have already met Jesus and the mercy of God who has turned his gaze on us, have already “arrived first” because Jesus precedes all the ages and the feelings and worries of every man and woman in the land of yesterday, today and tomorrow. We cannot “run after” the world, and in doing so we would always come second «because the children of this world are shrewder than the children of the light», says Jesus (Lk 16:8). Our presence in the world is «to console those who are in any kind of affliction with the consolation with which we are consoled ourselves by God» (2Cor 1:4).

Marc Prensky in his *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants* with the title “digital natives” indicates the fact that the new generations are “only” of digital mother tongues, but this does not mean that they know how to live this culture. The person who grows up in highly digitized contexts and in which the 0/1 culture *does not admit nuances* and analogical relationships (i.e. journeys and routes, places in the middle,

sensations in the middle but only black or white without colours, arrival and departure without a route, wanting and getting without looking for and waiting, right or wrong without time to think, correct or mistaken without wondering why) in these contexts two elements of life are lost: being composite and complementary.

a) **Composite:** to compose, put with, put together in an orderly way (and create a whole), give shape and conceptualise a final work from several elements.

b) **Complementarity:** what one can give another cannot give ... therefore one cannot do without the other.

People who grow up in this digital culture run the risk of not integrating the different dimensions of life into a single story and *eliminating what doesn't conform to their own thinking* or doesn't totally embrace it (think, for example, of the echo chambers that are created when searching for topics on Google or the WhatsApp communities occupied by people who basically think the same way without "risking" the comparison with other ideas).

This means that in our "meeting with" and not "studying" the people born in digital cultures, we have the obligation to meet with the man and the woman, not with the mistake made, the abuse they suffer, the label placed on their shoulders. That is why we who seek men and women on the shores of the "lakes of Galilee today" can only "*mingle life with life*", show the new Song of Christ that has the notes of Peace and Justice.

How?

Offer to people born in digital contexts *the figure of the "wayfarer"*, that is, the one who is walking. Period. Not the one who walks with a goal. That is already a next step. Jesus himself invites us to "put ourselves on the way" to be with him, in him (Col 2:6) who is the Way. He invites the disciples to follow him (Mt 4:19/Lk 9:57-62/Jn 12:35f): where? "The Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head"; the Son of Man walks, and besides being Himself the Way, He is Himself a wayfarer, first on the path that leads to the Father, then on the path that leads to men and women. And He invites us to do as He does. For this reason Christians themselves were called "those of the Way" (Acts 9:2/18:25/24:22).

We must have the courage and develop forms that tell the children and the youth of this generation grown up in digital cultures that “moving” is beautiful, healthy, fun... it is vital and vitalizing!

If we think about it well, the religious dimension is lived with a criterion that goes beyond times, places and cultures: “Come and see”. Jesus’ invitation to set out... and when these are “bent back on themselves” (the verb in the perfect tense of the Gospel of Emmaus “have been discussing”, as if there was no future, perhaps it is our historical moment... and also physical, we think of the children, young people and adults bent over themselves and their smartphones – Jesus “becomes” a traveller: his initiative is to get on the road, walk, share the action of walking (first of all), then the road, then the step (in fact he reaches them), then the conversations, and then we know how it ends.

Father Primo Mazzolari offers a definition of Christian wayfarer: «No one is more wayfarer than the Christian: another can go where he wants, because in front of every spring a thirst awaits him; the Christian, instead, thirsts for all things visible and invisible and in every adventure seeks the Someone to whom he is bound» (*Tempo di credere*, 16).

The wayfarer is the one who discovers the “we”, as he walks. The goal is not a place but a discovery: the “we”. Let us look at it schematically:

- As a traveller, I set out and discover (as a gift) that I am not alone.
- I taste and savour the revealing of the other (a necessary appearance),
 - a) His hospitality
 - b) Of his substantial depth: that is, his existence, that he exists, that he lives!
- I get back on the road and (even if I do not think about it) something remains and will return to me the moment I find another man, another woman, another person,
 - a) To host (will I do the same as what I received?)
 - b) To be hosted (will I make a comparison with the other? I will begin to give shape to my own thought).

In doing so, *the other is no longer an adversary*, one with whom to compete, but one from whom to learn dedication (when the encounter, the unpredictable and the unexpected becomes a passion to cultivate), and stimulate zeal in me (a shade of colour that acquires its best tonality, glasses with which to look at life, salt that gives flavour to food).

This is how *the apostolic dimension* of the one who is sent, (so already partly realized) *is characterized by its activation of the us* (I deliberately do not use the words “implementation and application” because it is not a formula, but an inner dynamism that must – precisely – set in motion).

The apostle is the one who is with Jesus, we know this well, he is the one who is *called to live the community in the presence of the Master*.

Mary is the young woman who lives the religious dimension – putting herself in the “Way of Life which will be the Way of Joy and the Way of the Cross” – and the apostolic dimension – in her being Queen of the Apostles *she guarantees the “we”* of the first Christian community – she keeps with her the children entrusted to her waiting for the Spirit to make them one body.

One form of pastoral charity could be that *of forming the person to identify his or her own digital potential*. The culture in which they are born and grow up inexorably offers its own way of conceiving certain “anthropological” categories such as the sense of authority and obedience, time and space, silence, solitude and friendship, and tenderness. These categories can be acquired or developed or even better to say “discovered” in one’s own baggage of human experience by sending/inviting young people to be wayfarers and *discover the “shades” of colour* that make up the human being and his relationships, the creation and the inhabitants of the “common home”, the relational ties and the bonds of love that can lead to the Divine.

In conclusion, the religious and apostolic dimension of the “digital natives” exists to the extent to which we listen to it, and by listening to them we follow their steps by the simple desire to be with them until the time comes when they will ask *“but you, why are you wasting*

your time with me?", and then the answer will be "because my time has already been filled by Jesus Christ and by his example I wish to share it with you". That will be the moment when "their hearts will burn" and *we could disappear*, because they will have crossed their eyes with the Donated-Love and they will go in search of the donating Love by living the Love-Communion among them, it will not matter if with or without social networks.

Just like at Emmaus, *where the disciples become missionaries*.



CHURCH MAGISTERIUM ON FORMATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

The theme assigned to me for this paper, as seen from its title, takes me to a very broad field of research. We need some coordinates to guide us and not to lose our way. With these we will be able to prepare a route-map with clear reference points.

Every choice, however, inevitably involves the giving up of other options if we want to move forward. Not everyone, perhaps, will agree with the approach taken; this too can be the subject of discussion. It is, however, necessary to define the interpretive keys of a rich period to be delimited.

For our paper, let us take the Second Vatican Council as our historical starting point, because with its new ecclesiological reflection, we can find a new perspective for religious life, not only in the decree *Perfectae Caritatis*¹, but also in filigree in various other Council texts, in particular *Lumen Gentium*², to which we will refer.

¹ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the renewal of religious life *Perfectae Caritatis*, 28 October 1965, nos. 782-813, (= PC).

² VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November 1964, nos. 458-633, (= LG).

The implementation of the Council documents has been already taken care of during the pontificate of St. Paul VI. We will refer to the exhortation *Evangelica Testificatio*³ and the well-known directives *Mutuae Relationes*⁴. We will focus on the theology of the consecrated life of Pope St. John Paul II in his exhortation *Vita Consecrata*⁵, and continue with the Magisterium of Pope Francis, a religious, whose guidelines can be clearly found in *Evangelii gaudium*⁶, the pivotal document around which the Bergolian theological-pastoral approach⁷ revolves.

We will not miss Pope Benedict XVI. His theological writings will provide us with a useful and insightful interpretative impetus for the understanding of the basic concepts.

The path along which we want to move, in fact, involves some interpretative tension that is not only historical, nor purely hermeneutical. Which are the concepts that emerge and how are they assumed in the time frame indicated? And, above all, with what range of meaning in relation to the formative dynamic?

Therefore, we will follow a path divided into two parts. The first is dedicated to the understanding of *religious life* and its development within an ecclesiology of communion. Regarding this there is an open question in the theological debate. We do not intend to resolve it, nor will we take a partisan position. It will in fact be the subject of the second part, in the theological context in which we reflect, to offer appropriate formative guidelines in the light of the Magisterium for our times, with its urgencies and needs.

³ PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelica Testificatio* to the members of all the religious families, 29 June 1971, nos. 996-1058, (= ET).

⁴ CONGREGATION FOR THE RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR INSTITUTES AND OF THE CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, Directive Notes *Mutuae Relationes*, 14 May 1978, nos. 586-717, (= MR).

⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, 25 March 1996, nos. 434-775, (= VC).

⁶ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24 November 2013, nos. 2104-2396, (= EG).

⁷ They are to be cited as a path of unitary growth in LG; CP; ET in which the ecclesial theological dimension of the consecrated life expressed, shows us in what sense the formative dynamic of the believer, in relation to this state of life – chapter VI of LG does not place the consecrated life on the sidelines, but in the life of the Church – and of those who choose to consecrate themselves to God in a specific form, leading us precisely to CP. The document ET, already post-conciliar, focuses precisely on Consecrated Life. In it we can already recognize the elements taken up and expressed by Pope Francis in EG. The Vatican Council II gives us an ecclesiology of communion with a missionary task. This reality calls not only to the formation of the individual's identity in his relationship with Christ, but also to the relationship of the specific vocation according to a special charism, with the particular Church in the universal Church.

In the conclusions we will take up the themes that we believe to be the most topical to stimulate debate, leaving an openness to the future, not only to be interpreted, but also to be lived concretely, in the places where your religious houses are present.

2. RELIGIOUS LIFE

After the Second Vatican Council, the relationship between the three states of life in the Church, clerical, lay and religious, is blurred in its contours by virtue of the universal Vocation to holiness. The tendency is to consider everyone in the same relationship with God, called to be saints, leaving the state of life of consecrated persons almost in indifference.

Such an approach has opened the field to reflections that have remained silent in the Church, bringing to light ancient questions⁸, to which today we try to give answers with new words, starting from the Council.

The interpretation of a Council text is never univocal, leaving room for research, for the growth of thought in its creative dynamic, capable of leading to different proposals, in an open field where the definitive word cannot be determined, precisely because the Council itself has not pronounced it.

This does not mean to question the doctrine about *religious life* but, only to indicate a time of reflection on the same, the plurality of opinions, in particular we can affirm different interpretations possible, albeit with different nuances, in two exactly opposite positions. For our topic we cannot neglect these points; on the contrary, they must be analysed in order to bring out the essential elements for the

⁸ The question has distant origins in the past as G. Pasquale explains well in introducing the problem; «In the aftermath of the position taken by the *Decretum Gratiani* (1140-1142) the members of the Church, which in itself and for itself has always been a “communion in the Trinity”, especially in the thought of the Fathers, found themselves (sub)-divided, in the sense of being catalogued into two categories or “states of life”: the laity and the clerics. At that precise moment a *vulnus* was inflicted, perhaps unconsciously, on the ecclesial subject of such virulence that even today it would seem possible to think the opposite of the Church if it had not happened just like that. [...] This double subdivision created, in short, two “lines”, that is, two modes of ecclesial “status”, exclusive in themselves – and not inclusive – of any other type, even though already existing in the Church. The step that caused the exclusion of monks, friars and, above all, nuns, from one of these two states was, in short, simply consequential», in G. PASQUALE, *I religiosi e la chiesa locale*. Between exemption and just autonomy, Ancora, Milan 2015, pp. 10-11.

identity and consequent formation in religious life. In this regard, we must recognise that it is only by carefully reading the passages of the Council documents that we will be able to reap their actual fruit⁹.

In this connection, we want to demonstrate the need for an overall analysis of the texts by proposing passages which need to be carefully examined in the theological context in order to understand them.

We read in *Lumen Gentium*:

«In that Body the life of Christ is poured into the believers who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ who suffered and was glorified. Through Baptism we are formed in the likeness of Christ [...] He continually distributes in His body, that is, in the Church, gifts of ministries in which, by His own power, we serve each other unto salvation so that, carrying out the truth in love, we might through all things grow unto Him who is our Head»¹⁰.

This text really seems to give reason to those who see in the ecclesiology of communion a homogeneity of life and experience, in a linearity within which diversity is, to use an extreme expression, suppressed. The overall picture is not taken into account, however, but rather the articulated structure of the text and the reality to which it refers.

We can, in fact, read these words in the same document:

«Therefore in the Church, everyone whether belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness, according to the saying of the Apostle: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification”. However, this holiness of the Church is unceasingly manifested, and must be manifested, in the fruits of grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful; it is expressed in many ways in individuals, who in their walk of life, tend toward the perfection of charity, thus causing the edification of others; in a very special way this (holiness) appears in the practice of the counsels, customarily called “evangelical”. This practice of the counsels, under the

⁹ «It is clear that, in general, distinctions in things that until a given moment were seen together in a confused way, and which therefore have not been treated separately, cannot be accomplished by coining new words (unless it is a matter of creating the name of a new toothpaste)», in K. RAHNER, *Lelemento dinamico nella Chiesa*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1970, p. 15.

¹⁰ LG 7.

impulsion of the Holy Spirit, undertaken by many Christians, either privately or in a Church-approved condition or state of life, gives and must give in the world an outstanding witness and example of this same holiness»¹¹.

We can approach the different states of life by avoiding the claim of static unity, in favour of a dynamic dimension of relationship, but we cannot avoid a key expression: «both those who belong to the hierarchy and those who are directed by the hierarchy». These words, in fact, place that nuance capable of changing colour at every step.

In fact, the “suspicion” of details hidden between the lines could arise to threaten the valorisation finally achieved or regained, not as a secondary option, nor as a hidden option, but as a living witness of the intimate and exclusive relationship with Christ in the Church, as consecration to God through the profession of life according to the evangelical counsels.

In this passage emerges that sore point around which the *vexata quaestio* revolves, which we wish to simplify into a synthetic syntagma. Consecration to religious life finds its dignity in the evangelical counsels, to be considered as a definition of a state of life recognizable in its sacramental dimension *ipso facto*, or consecrated life is more expendable because it expresses one’s own baptism, that is, that charism which first of all represents the person of the chaste, poor and obedient Christ, particularly in the blending of a specific charism given to the Church by the Holy Spirit.

We would like briefly to propose a few steps in support of the one and the other position, trying to show the ecclesial reflection in its relation to the Council, whose acceptance is still in process.

2.1 FOUNDATION IN THE LIFE OF THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS

Let us include a brief reflection on baptismal consecration as a condition for any other consecration. Faith, confirmation to Christ and life in the Church converge in it. With regard to religious, PC 5 reminds us that «they have dedicated their entire lives to His service. This constitutes a special consecration, which is deeply rooted in that

¹¹ LG 39.

of baptism and expresses it more fully»¹². Religious consecration does not surpass baptism, nor does it sublimate it, but rather flows from it, bringing it to a clearer manifestation for a much deeper communion with Christ.

Baptismal consecration, therefore, cannot be forgotten in the reflection on religious life, whose experience is the possibility of greater fullness of love for God and neighbour, when lived out as a total gift of self to God.

Baptism is not a restricted event. God's love is condensed in it to radiate into an existential movement, a continuous dialogue in which God the Trinity calls man to himself, giving him the possibility of an existence in which he can give his response to the divine gift, in the vicissitudes of concrete history.

The profound understanding of baptismal consecration offers the individual in his or her ability to be *of God*. He is made sacred by the Action he has undertaken. We recognize in it the *active subject* of the consecration that is received, and the individual the *passive subject* on whom the Father pours out the Spirit transforming his existence, incorporating him into Christ in the Church. To define oneself a Christian is not only have a social character; it is to define one's being, one's belonging to Christ, one's identity.

This allows us to reflect on the identity of religious life, having a stable and common starting point. Baptism as a sacrament consecrates the whole existence of the individual to himself/herself, making it God's in a dynamic of communion in which are grafted all the stages of the life of the Christian, of the one who belongs to Christ¹³.

Like baptism, religious life, too, has always been in the Church: «Indeed from the very beginning of the Church men and women have set about following Christ with greater freedom and imitating Him more closely through the practice of the evangelical counsels, each in his own way leading a life dedicated to God»¹⁴.

Religious life is not only participation in the life of Christ by means of sacramental grace, as mentioned above for baptism, but

¹² PC 5.

¹³ «Incorporated in the Church through baptism, the faithful are destined by the baptismal character for the worship of the Christian religion; reborn as sons of God they must confess before men the faith which they have received from God through the Church» LG 11.

¹⁴ PC 1.

conformation to his being, given totally to the Father, in complete freedom, for a chaste, poor and obedient life, as a response of a love recognized in its demand for radicality.

Jesus is the consecrated one par excellence; interesting in this sense is the interpretation that Benedict XVI gives of the Gospel scene of the presentation of Jesus in the temple. Mary and Joseph do not redeem their son through a sacrifice but deliver him to God, thus consecrating his life to God in his temple. In fact, Benedict XVI writes:

«The second event involved is the ransom of the firstborn, who is the unconditional property of God. The price of the ransom could be paid throughout the country to any priest. Luke cites first of all the “right of reservation” towards the firstborn: “Every male firstborn will be sacred [that is, belonging] to the Lord” (Lk 2:23; cf. Ex 13:2; 13:12f.15). The special thing about his account consists, however, in the fact that he does not speak of the ransom of Jesus, but of a third event, the handing over (“presentation”) of Jesus. Evidently he means: this child was not ransomed and did not return to his parents’ property, but, on the contrary, was handed over in the Temple personally to God, totally given to his ownership»¹⁵.

The following of Jesus, in religious life, is lived as a total gift of self to God in the Church, through the profession of the evangelical counsels. It is not a sacrifice outside of one’s own existence, but rather a self-giving to God from whose love one has life and towards whom one wishes to strive for an ever more perfect communion, an anticipation of the fullness of the Kingdom, already present but not yet fulfilled. It is an ecstasy in God, dying to the world to live in God, witnessing to him, in one’s daily existence, letting his life run in that of each one.

Saint John Paul II recalls precisely this intimate union with Christ in *Vita Consecrata* by saying that:

«the profession of the evangelical counsels is intimately connected with the mystery of Christ, and has the duty of making somehow present the way of life which Jesus himself chose and indicated as an absolute eschatological value. Jesus himself, by calling some men and women to abandon everything in order to follow him,

¹⁵ BENEDETTO XVI, *L’infanzia di Gesù*, BUR-LEV, Città del Vaticano 2012, p. 97.

established this type of life which, under the guidance of the Spirit, would gradually develop down the centuries into the various forms of the consecrated life»¹⁶.

Thus, precisely in the very call of Jesus to follow him, he places the foundation of the consecrated life as intimate communion with the life of the Lord, as original and perennial witness in the three evangelical counsels.

The radicality of the call has its hallmark in being in the world, even if not of the world, following Christ and leaving everything behind. It is the Lord's own words which reassure us about the meaning of living according to the logic of the Gospel: «In truth I tell you: there is no one who has left house, wife, brothers, parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God who will not receive many times as much in this present age and, in the world to come, eternal life»¹⁷.

In Christ, man is enabled to live fully in the life according to the evangelical counsels, to die to the world to live in God, to be in God already in this world. We have the authority of Hans Urs von Balthasar to support this view. The author explains, the communion with Christ man, in the evangelical counsels, defined as "state of election" in which the person lives, in a circular relationship, the perfection in the evangelical counsels and in communion with God recognized in Christ, poor, chaste and obedient. The Incarnation makes it possible for man to return to God, because it shows not only the guilt but also the way to the full redemption, to the life of grace, which the author traces in the life according to the evangelical counsels, which for him has a sacramental character:

«This possibility of overcoming the difference between today's world and the "new earth" (Rev 21:1) promised with a life which, seen from the world, remains a utopia, but which in the calling and following of Christ is always new, is a promising sign for the world, which even contains "sacramentally" what it means. This way is essentially called renunciation, since the difference between the original state and the present state can only be balanced by

¹⁶ VC 29.

¹⁷ Lk 18:29-30.

the removal of what caused it: greed and disobedience, which deviated from the order of God's love»¹⁸.

The identity of religious life, therefore, is the *sequela Christi*, translated into the profession of the evangelical counsels through which the whole of existence, in all its aspects and times, is consecrated to God. The creative modality in which this consecration is expressed has a secondary role, almost a derivative one, made possible by the profession of the evangelical counsels.

Balthasar's use of the terms *sacramentally* and *essentially* reopens the question of the consecrated person in terms of ecclesial status¹⁹.

2.2 CENTRALITY OF THE CHARISM

A different theological current recognizes the multiformity of expressions of religious life in the diversity of charisms. The basis for this is undoubtedly found in the Scriptures; «The wind blows where it wills and you hear its voice, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes: so it is of everyone born of the Spirit»²⁰.

The charismatic life of the Church is not governed by human laws, it is often difficult to understand, and needs time to be understood and believed. The active presence of the Spirit is recognizable only partially in the history known to us and which became history of the Church institution, in which the charismatic continuity is recognizable. Such continuity expresses God's constancy in offering Himself to man and becoming the history of sanctification. In this sense the hierarchy has a duty of diligence and prudent openness to the creativity of the Spirit. It is precisely the Spirit's task to offer Himself to man, often with intuitions that are prophetic, counter current, and radical, to be examined before they become the patrimony of the whole Church²¹.

¹⁸ H. U. von BALTHASAR, *Gli stati di vita del cristiano*, Jaca Book, Milano 1984, p. 137.

¹⁹ This passage becomes troubling in relation to the sacramental dimension. John Paul II is explicit on this, stating that «Consecrated persons, who embrace the evangelical counsels, receive a new and special consecration which, without being sacramental, commits them to making their own – in chastity, poverty and obedience – the way of life practised personally by Jesus, and proposed by him to the disciples», VC 31.

²⁰ Jn 3:8. In this sense we must remember that the Spirit is free from human structures; «there is charism, that is, the impulse and direction of the Spirit of God for the Church, even beside and outside the office», K. RAHNER, *Lelemento dinamica nella Chiesa*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1970, p. 49.

²¹ «It is the duty of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to regulate the practice of the evangelical counsels by law, since it is the duty of the same hierarchy to care for the People of God and to lead them to most fruitful pastures.

Charisms are manifested in the Church through “unofficial” channels, sometimes difficult to grasp, true and proper prophecies, in the face of which one is called to recognize not only the newness, but also the contradiction, which can be pointed out to us with freedom only from outside.

One understands, in this sense, why, for K. Rahner, charisms are not possible gifts to be administered through the sacraments, on the contrary, he writes explicitly that «they cannot be obtained through the administration of the sacraments»; and speaking properly of the charism, he recalls us to the relationship with the hierarchical dimension of the Church affirming that «the charism (unlike the virtues), has the purpose of revealing and accrediting the Church in its quality of “holy people of God”, thus completing the ecclesiastical office in what is its specific mission»²², clearly drawing our attention to this priority given to the charism in order of meaning, as a service – *diakonia* – to the Church. This position is perfectly in line with the Council, precisely in *Lumen Gentium* in which we read:

«It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but, “allotting his gifts to everyone according as He wills”, He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church»²³.

Confirming this dimension of service for which charisms are given and to which adhesion or not to one of them – once canonically recognized – is measured by its authenticity. It is in the strength of adherence to the charism, as much as in the attraction of the charism

The importance of the profession of the evangelical counsels is seen in the fact that it fosters the perfection of love of God and love of neighbour in an outstanding manner and that this profession is strengthened by vows. Furthermore, the hierarchy, following with docility the prompting of the Holy Spirit, accepts the rules presented by outstanding men and women and authentically approves these rules after further adjustments. It also aids by its vigilant and safeguarding authority, those institutes variously established for the building up of Christ's Body in order that these same institutes may grow and flourish according to the spirit of the founders», LG 45.

²² K. RAHNER, «Carisma», in *Dizionario di teologia*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1968, p. 87.

²³ LG 12. The text continues with these words: «These charisms, whether they be the more outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church».

itself, that the authenticity of a consecration to a life according to the evangelical counsels is found.

It is necessary, however, to pay attention to the risk of simplification in terms of *functionality*. Consecration through profession becomes an integral part of welcoming and living according to the specific charism in which one recognizes one's call to follow Christ.

The commitment of those who give themselves to God²⁴ in religious life is thus described by *Lumen Gentium*:

«Indeed through Baptism a person dies to sin and is consecrated to God. However, in order that he may be capable of deriving more abundant fruit from this baptismal grace, he intends, by the profession of the evangelical counsels in the Church, to free himself from those obstacles, which might draw him away from the fervour of charity and the perfection of divine worship. By his profession of the evangelical counsels, then, he is more intimately consecrated to divine service»²⁵.

It becomes a perfecting of the imitation of Christ, by virtue of the profession of the evangelical counsels. It is interesting to note in this passage an intimate and profound free will of the individual who responds in a personal and unique way to God's call for a life of exclusive gift, which opens up to inclusiveness.

Consecration, in this case, is a non-sacramental act and takes place by virtue of profession of the evangelical counsels in a particular institute recognized by the Church²⁶. It is profession of the evangelical counsels which consecrates the baptized person to a life of following Christ accepted by the Church according to the charism of the institute in which it is expressed.

²⁴ «Dear sons and daughters, by a free response to the call of the Holy Spirit, you have decided to follow Christ, consecrating yourselves totally to him. The evangelical counsels of chastity vowed to God, of poverty and of obedience have now become the law for your existence», ET 7.

²⁵ LG 44.

²⁶ The relationship between institute, profession, consecration and consecrated person is summarized in PC 11, in which, in relation to the refinement of secular institutes, the fundamental points for every mode of consecrated life are recalled: «Secular institutes, although not religious institutes, nevertheless involve a true and complete profession of the evangelical counsels in the world. This profession is recognized by the Church and consecrates to God men and women, lay and clerical, who live in the world. Hence they should make a total dedication of themselves to God in perfect charity their chief aim, and the institutes themselves should preserve their own proper, i.e., secular character».

Here the ecclesial force of the charism emerges, in which the consequent ecclesial dimension of the consecrated life is seen. The gift given for the service of the Church is made concrete, we could say it is incarnated, in the acceptance of each individual who consecrates his or her life for it.

Paolo Martinelli explains this well in affirming:

«The charisms, in fact, by their communitarian nature, are given to the person for sharing; the great original charisms, which are at the origin of the different forms of consecration are participatory, they provide shared avenues. This acquires a special meaning precisely in the particular Church. The consecrated life is fully called to ecclesiality, to bring its own charism into the life of the People of God»²⁷.

There is a dimension which cannot be defined as fully passive; in fact, profession consists in responding to a specific call for one's own existence. We find this explicitly expressed in *Vita Consecrata*:

«This is the meaning of the call to the consecrated life: it is an initiative coming wholly from the Father (cf. Jn 15:16), who asks those whom he has chosen to respond with complete and exclusive devotion. The experience of this gracious love of God is so deep and so powerful that the person called senses the need to respond by unconditionally dedicating his or her life to God, consecrating to him all things present and future, and placing them in his hands»²⁸.

The placing of the charism as specific to the profession of the evangelical counsels unfolds in this tension. It is no coincidence that in the document *Perfectae Caritatis*, in relation to the general principles of the renewal of religious life, the first point reads: «The adaptation and renewal of the religious life includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time»²⁹. The return to the sources, as a continuous nourishment of one's own lifeblood, requires care and attention for the past, and the value of

²⁷ P. MARTINELLI, «Afterword. The "the change of era" as "time of reform"», in *The consecrated life in a Reformation time*, ed. Glossa, Milan 2018, p. 141.

²⁸ VC 17.

²⁹ PC 2.

memory, to be faithful to the inspiration of the founder³⁰.

A concern that the Church does not fail to express even in the latest messages. It was Pope Francis himself in 2014 who wrote at the beginning of his letter to consecrated persons:

«All our Institutes are heir to a history rich in charisms. At their origins we see the hand of God who, in his Spirit, calls certain individuals to follow Christ more closely, to translate the Gospel into a particular way of life, to read the signs of the times with the eyes of faith and to respond creatively to the needs of the Church. This initial experience then matured and developed, engaging new members in new geographic and cultural contexts, and giving rise to new ways of exercising the charism, new initiatives and expressions of apostolic charity. [...] Recounting our history is essential for preserving our identity, for strengthening our unity as a family and our common sense of belonging. More than an exercise in archaeology or the cultivation of mere nostalgia, it calls for following in the footsteps of past generations in order to grasp the high ideals, and the vision and values which inspired them, beginning with the founders and foundresses and the first communities»³¹.

The relationship between consecration and charism is essential for a reflection that really wants to pay attention to the integral formation of the candidate, not only in the profession of the evangelical counsels, but also in the sense of identification with the charism of the Institute within which he or she decides to consecrate his or her whole life, in all its aspects and for its entire duration.

³⁰ «The specific charismatic note of any institute demands, both of the Founder and of his disciples, a continual examination regarding fidelity to the Lord; docility to His Spirit; intelligent attention to circumstances and an outlook cautiously directed to the signs of the times; the will to be part of the Church; the awareness of subordination to the sacred hierarchy; boldness of initiatives; constancy in the giving of self; humility in bearing with adversities. The true relation between genuine charism, with its perspectives of newness, and interior suffering, carries with it an unvarying history of the connection between charism and cross, which, above every motive that may justify misunderstandings, is supremely helpful in discerning the authenticity of a vocation», MR 12.

³¹ FRANCIS, *Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated Persons on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life*, 21 November 2014.

2.3 PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE RELIGIOUS VOCATION

If we reflect with a certain detachment we must recognize the objective fact that the consecrated life has always been present in the Church. People whose existence has found fulfilment in the total gift to God in Christ chaste, poor and obedient. Whose life has known and recognized the Word as the primary meaning of their own existence, wishing to assume the Incarnation of that Word in their daily life, for an ever-fuller communion and credible witness.

At the same time it is necessary to affirm how religious life has been tinged with different colours and nuances over the centuries, taking as its identity not only the triple acceptance of the evangelical counsels, but also the recognition of a specific charism, in the multiformity that the history of the Church offers us not only in the past, but also in our own time.

Even further we see how time has led the Church to juridically define the different charisms, passing from orders, to congregations, institutes of religious life, societies of apostolic life, and to movements whose identity is still difficult to delineate in a precise way.

It is not by chance that in the first part of *Vita Consecrata* we read:

«How can we not recall with gratitude to the Spirit the many different forms of consecrated life which he has raised up throughout history and which still exist in the Church today? They can be compared to a plant with many branches which sinks its roots into the Gospel and brings forth abundant fruit in every season of the Church's life. What an extraordinary richness! [...] The Synod recalled this unceasing work of the Holy Spirit, who in every age shows forth the richness of the practice of the evangelical counsels through a multiplicity of charisms. In this way too he makes ever present in the Church and in the world, in time and space, the mystery of Christ»³².

The forms of consecrated life are an expression of the charismatic dimension of the Church's life, of the active presence of the Spirit, in different forms, all converging towards the same final goal, to bear witness to the Gospel, in the precise historical context in which they

³² VC 5.

find themselves, offering answers to the demands of the society in which they emerge.

This is how diversity converges with the unity of the People of God, the unity of the universal vocation to holiness, each one called to live it in a personal, unique and unrepeatable way.

Speaking of religious vocation in phenomenological terms, invites us to reflect on an experience that is not entirely catalogueable, yet in some ways recognizable.

The point on which to converge is encounter and recognition: «The invitation of Jesus: “Come and see” (Jn 1:39) still remains today the golden rule for pastoral work for vocations»³³. There is a movement in which the initiative is twofold, the individual who is searching finds a welcoming environment, and is ready to enter into a relationship. At the basis of the search for one’s vocation there is a love wanting to express itself in its own manifestation and life.

The relationship with God, therefore, takes shape in the attraction towards a lifestyle, an existential language recognizable in the visible presence of another in whom I can recognize myself, someone able to show me a way, and to witness to a meaning.

This emergence shows, phenomenologically, the primacy of the charism as a *modus vivendi*, in terms of fascination, desirability, and identification. Whoever feels called to give himself to God seeks the answer to the question «How should I live my life?» in the search for a model in which to find himself, from which he can “come and see”. This is why St. John Paul II recalls regarding the formation of religious themselves that:

«At a time when religious values are increasingly being ignored by society, this plan of formation is doubly important: as a result of it, consecrated persons will not only continue to “see” God with the eyes of faith in a world which ignores his presence, but will also be effective in making his presence in some way “perceptible” through the witness of their charism»³⁴.

³³ VC 64, more extensively you can find this rule made explicit in *Mutuae Relationes*: «The particular Church is the historic space in which a vocation is exercised in the concrete and realizes its apostolic commitment. Here, in fact, within the confines of a determined culture, the Gospel is preached and received (cf. *Evang. nunt.* 19; 20; 32; 35; 40; 62; 63). It is necessary, therefore, that this reality of great importance in pastoral renewal be also kept duly present in the work of formation», MR 23.

³⁴ VC 68.

In the encounter with a specific charism, not on the pages of a book, but in the encounter with a concrete person in whom to mirror oneself, in whom to glimpse the face of God, it is possible for the individual to imagine and desire one's own existence on that concrete path in which to recognize God's will, and a concrete call to which to respond.

It is the task of the formation to examine the intentions, the maturity, the real and sincere commitment to a choice whose motivations are really a response to the motion of the Spirit; however much effort there may be on the part of the individual, it is the initiative of God, it is God who calls and makes it possible and that must be the meaning of one's grateful life, lest it become complacency. Arnaldo Pigna specifies it this way:

«It's not the same thing to "consecrate yourself" and "to be consecrated". Above all, the action by which man dedicates himself totally to the service of God and the action by which God takes possession of a person, making him the place of his presence, the revelation of his glory, and the instrument of his mercy, does not have, nor can it have, the same effectiveness, importance and reach. A formation which does not take this into account would risk forming not the consecrated person, but the stoic volunteer for whom the consecrated life is reduced to a project to be carried out by his own efforts and perhaps even to be modified by his own preferences»³⁵.

Consequently, there is no clear line of distinction by which to give predominance to the evangelical counsels or to the charism, both of which are constitutive elements to which we must refer with equilibrium for an adequate formation, be it initial or ongoing. As we said in the beginning the discussion is open and both positions are present in theological reflection as in the writings of the Magisterium. We are, therefore, called to reflect on formation from both points of view, thus being able to achieve, in terms of an overall vision, a reflection capable of combining the two positions.

³⁵ A. PIGNA, «La formazione in *Vita Consecrata*», in V. GAMBINO, A. PIGNA, *Educare alla carità*, Centro studi Cammarata, Caltanissetta 1998, p. 35.

3. THE IDENTITY TO BE FORMED

Religious life can be defined as a great charism within which everyone has his or her own specific gift. The different expressions, which can be seen in religious families recognized in the Church, are found unified in the charism common to all Christians, which is baptism, specifying itself as religious life in a particular charism in which a particular vocation and mission is recognizable, whose origin is the Spirit in his giving himself to an individual at the service of the whole Church³⁶.

Religious life, therefore, is an umbrella concept, under which we find various specifications of the total gift to God, each of which requires appropriate formation because, to simplify, a Benedictine cannot be formed to be a Servant of Mary nor to be Pauline.

The genetic patrimony of every expression of religious life depends on the charism of the founder, a particular gift given to an individual for the whole Church; *Perfectae Caritatis* has expressed in this sense:

«It redounds to the good of the Church that institutes have their own particular characteristics and work. Therefore let their founders' spirit and special aims they set before them as well as their sound traditions – all of which make up the patrimony of each institute – be faithfully held in honour»³⁷.

In order to realize this, formation to religious life, in all its forms, from its beginning to the end, must keep the fire of that charism alive in the time in which it is lived, so that it can be recognizable in its strength, and in its particular mission, without forgetting that the call to religious life calls for total self-giving in chastity, poverty and obedience.

Saint John Paul II in this sense, in *Vita Consecrata*, combines both dimensions even if, it must be admitted, formation to the charism concludes a long series of the exhortation:

³⁶ «The Council rightly insists on the obligation for men and women religious to be faithful to the spirit of their founders, to their evangelical intentions and to the example of their sanctity. In this it finds one of the principles for the present renewal and one of the most secure criteria for judging what each institute should undertake. In reality, the charism of the religious life, far from being an impulse born "of flesh and blood" or one derived from a mentality which "conforms itself to the modern world", is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who is always at work within the Church», ET 11.

³⁷ PC 2.

«The primary objective of the formation process is to prepare people for the total consecration of themselves to God in the following of Christ, at the service of the Church's mission. To say "yes" to the Lord's call by taking personal responsibility for maturing in one's vocation is the inescapable duty of all who have been called. One's whole life must be open to the action of the Holy Spirit. [...] Since the very purpose of consecrated life is conformity to the Lord Jesus in his total self-giving, this must also be the principal objective of formation. [...] Precisely because it aims at the transformation of the whole person, it is clear that the commitment to formation never ends. Indeed, at every stage of life, consecrated persons must be offered opportunities to grow in their commitment to the charism and mission of their Institute»³⁸.

3.1 FORMATION IN THE CHARISM

A formation project which focuses on the charism as an element of identity must be capable of looking back to the past and looking willingly into the future, living the present with full participation and attention to one's own commitment.

Knowing one's own foundational charism is necessary to understand one's history, possible changes and the time in which one lives with its bright and dark side.

From this first formation in the charism, in terms of knowledge and experience of lived life, the candidate lays the foundations for his religious life, being able to recognize himself by his own identity of belonging in relation to which he is able to discern what is an essential criterion for the journey of the religious and what, instead, is an obligation that is historically conditioned and mutable, transitory, and pedagogical.

The knowledge of the founder is not intended for an identical repetition of his life. The critical historical principle applies not only to literary texts. It is interesting to note how *Mutuae Relationes* represents a change from *Perfectae Caritatis*:

«The very "charism of the Founders" (ET 11) appears as an "experience of the Spirit," transmitted to their disciples to be

³⁸ VC 65.

lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth. "It is for this reason that the distinctive character of various religious institutes is preserved and fostered by the Church" (LG 44; cf. CD 33; 35, 1; 35, 2; etc.). This distinctive character also involves a particular style of sanctification and of apostolate, which creates its particular tradition, with the result that one can readily perceive its objective elements»³⁹.

The emphasis is placed on discontinuity in continuity. What were previously referred to as healthy traditions are now taken up as a particular style of sanctification and apostolate to establish a particular tradition. The shift to the singular, one particular tradition, allows for the recognition of objective elements necessary for identity and formation, in order to recall criteria based properly on the objective dimension of the charism.

With regard to formation, attention should be given to the risk of extreme personalisation. It is necessary to know the spirituality of the founder not to be like him, but to know his biography, his moral and spiritual stature in relation to his time, trying to grasp what is determined by the very context in which he lived in order to really ask what that spirituality has to say to my life in today's world, especially how it is possible to live today that charism, that gift and the way in which the response has been realized.

There is a crucial transition, which is to leave the personal spirituality of the founder in order to be able to focus on his charism, the gift he received for the Church by which we are challenged today. How much of what is proposed, offered in the person and spirituality of the founder is related to his time, to the context in which he began his religious life and what remains as an enduring letter?

Mutuae Relationes reminds us: «Every authentic charism implies a certain element of genuine originality and of special initiative for the spiritual life of the Church. In its surroundings it may appear troublesome and may even cause difficulties, since it is not always and immediately easy to recognize it as coming from the Spirit»⁴⁰.

³⁹ MR 11.

⁴⁰ MR 12.

Perhaps some things are too demanding and take time, a charismatic spirituality, not personal, needs time to be understood and implemented, detached from the individual to live in the community dimension.

Finally, a last passage, which embodies the effort to know the charism of the founder as founder. This expression is intended to indicate the charism in its purest dimension in charismatic terms, as a prophetic and communal power, that dimension in which every member of the religious family still participates today. It is a question of looking at the person as an instrument to recognize grace, the charism as it still remains and can live today⁴¹.

In this way we succeed in bringing the individual subject – in a journey of relational discovery – to the awareness of being part of a history of grace, possible by virtue of the willingness of individuals to form, in their identity, a community in communion with the Church. It is in that community that they have given their life, being able to express it in the *proprium* of the charism known, loved and willed.

Only in this progressive assimilation can we speak of a true formation in the charism, overcoming the danger of superficial knowledge, incapable of becoming part of the very existence of the individual candidate.

Failure to do so leads to the inevitable consequence of a house built on sand, a precipitous and unconscious adhesion to the unknown, by which one will sooner or later be overwhelmed or eliminated.

3.2 Current formation in the evangelical counsels

Having the evangelical counsels as the centrepiece of consecrated life leads to the need for a formation centered on them. We should think about a formation in the consecrated life in the totality of a lived experience. For this we should include the basic aspects, the affective dimension, the material dimension and the understanding of self-determination. These expressions can be questioned, but let us try to explain how we understand each of them.

⁴¹ This triad is taken up by an article by R. F. MAINKA, «Charism and history in religious life», in AAVV, *Carisma e Istituzione. Lo spirito interroga i religiosi*, Rogate, Roma 1983, pp. 91-97.

We recall, first of all, with the Synod Fathers that, «in its essence, the gift of counsel consists in participation in the specific chastity, poverty and obedience of Christ, that is, in a special conformation to the chaste, poor and obedient Christ, and in the introduction into his personal way of living and working»⁴².

The central element is *Christological*; in it the three vows find concrete example and meaning in a Trinitarian dimension of communion:

«God the Father, through the unceasing gift of Christ and the Spirit, is the educator par excellence of those who consecrate themselves to him. But in this work he makes use of human instruments, placing more mature brothers and sisters at the side of those whom he calls. Formation then is a sharing in the work of the Father who, through the Spirit, fashions the inner attitudes of the Son in the hearts of young men and women»⁴³.

Formation in the evangelical counsels is not done without witnesses. There is a return to the dimension of encounter through which the radicality of an existence capable of embracing the evangelical counsels is shown to be desirable, even where it is lived in a charism that we can define as very specific, in certain respects a *niche*.

To be able to live the *sentiments of Christ* means to do everything to everyone by living in communion with God in Christ with a liberating value: by loving in Christ every brother, where the noun brother has a universal character, capable of embracing every person, reaching as far as the *existential peripheries*⁴⁴, as Pope Francis recalls in relation to the mission of the Church, of which the consecrated life is a basic element.

In the formation in the evangelical counsels, emphasis should be placed on an in-depth and inner understanding of the candidate. The evangelical counsels are not an ascetical means, their existential

⁴² SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Consecrated life and its mission in the world. *Instrumentum Laboris*, LEV, Vatican City 1994, 51.

⁴³ VC 66.

⁴⁴ EG 46, «A Church which "goes forth" is a Church whose doors are open. Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world. Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way. At times we have to be like the father of the prodigal son, who always keeps his door open so that when the son returns, he can readily pass through it».

meaning in relation to religious life is not instrumental to a lifestyle. In them, as *Vita Consecrata* indicates to us, referring to the call of the first disciples, a *special grace of intimacy*⁴⁵ must be recognized for which one must «pray always without ever getting tired».

One understands in this sense the passages of Scripture in which Jesus warns His disciples about possible temptations. These texts are clearly valid for all people, as, we must remember, in order to understand their radicality, all are called to live the Gospel to be formed in chastity, poverty, obedience.

What then distinguishes the consecrated person? The radicality of total renunciation, because the offering of one's own person in all its dimensions has been consecrated to Christ in order to tend towards Him in a progressive conformation.

The need for spiritual formation comes by itself. In it the lived experience is brought into a relationship with the Lord through which everything can take on meaning and strength in a dynamic of continuous discernment. Chastity does not only mean sublimating the impulses of the passions, poverty cannot be limited to not having money, just as obedience cannot be limited to following the rules in silence.

The inner world cannot be mortified and silenced. It must be able to grow and mature in a well-defined way of life, in which the values of the Kingdom are able to transcend the momentary, in order to bring the subject to give all of himself and not to sacrifice his identity.

4. OPEN CONCLUSION

To conclude this discussion, we would like to offer not a definitive word on the various questions that can be raised regarding the issues addressed, but rather open reflections in a way that will provide a framework in which to situate the theme of formation.

We have begun by indicating a basic issue in relation to the theme of consecrated life, which is certainly decisive for the approach to the

⁴⁵ «It is precisely this special grace of intimacy which, in the consecrated life, makes possible and even demands the total gift of self in the profession of the evangelical counsels. The counsels, more than a simple renunciation, are a specific acceptance of the mystery of Christ, lived within the Church», VC 16.

formation practice to be adopted. It is a discussed question, to which there is no definite answer from which we may be able to draw a suggestion in line with the charismatic dimension of the life of the Church.

In terms of charismatic life, of which religious life is an element, we can, perhaps with an irreverent example, point to the issue analogous to the paradox of the egg and the chicken. In the history we know there has always existed the aspect of charism as a gift at the service of the Church and life according to the evangelical counsels for a full following, which the first disciples themselves adopted to follow the Master, to live and share his existence. In our opinion it is right that the discussion should remain open because in an osmotic dynamic the study of one aspect enriches the other.

A second very important point is the demand made of the Magisterium, whether explicit or not. Since the universe of consecrated life is so diverse, and each consecration happens in different socio-cultural contexts, we must be aware of the communications of general and changing criteria, and reflect on the different expressions of consecrated life and on theologians whose task it is to deepen faithfully the Magisterium in its different degrees of expression.

Within these coordinates we can distinguish the two tracks on which reflection has evolved. In this respect, in terms of formation, we can speak of an introduction to a lifestyle in which the evangelical counsels are to be lived according to the characteristics proper to the congregational charism, which will be the main purpose of the work of formation. The evangelical counsels are not the gift of something, but of someone: the gift that the chaste, poor, obedient Christ makes of Himself; and to welcome and live them means, above all, to welcome Him and live His life in order to bear fruit by following a specific charism.

The connection is evident if we think of the institutes that have a well circumscribed charism: these are more in crisis not because the charism is not alive, but because the hyper-specialization of the western society covers in other ways those welfare and educational activities within which the charism was established, this is one of the reasons for the crisis of vocation.

We have been able to demonstrate, both for the Magisterium and for theology, that the charism is not a sacrament, but a temporary gift given by the Spirit to the Church⁴⁶. This should make us reflect on the fact that not everything is forever and certain charisms are perhaps in their final phase, to shift us with caution but also physically to where the Spirit blows.

In this sense, however, we must be careful and think of the Church as the universal Church. The charism, in fact, pulsates with life where the Church is alive. It is often difficult for us to follow this space-time principle by remaining tied to our empty churches, rather than leaving them to go where the Spirit blows.

Finally, for the debate I would leave these provocations by adding two last points that are consequential: the first is to pursue a mission *ad extra*, that is, to invest where the Church lives, and the second is to pay attention to a formation on the spot so that the formation candidates can immediately have a relationship, in their understanding as religious, with the particular church they are going to serve.

⁴⁶ «Consecration through the profession of the evangelical counsels as a stable form of life, essentially regards the mystery of the Church, which otherwise would not be fully manifested and implemented; as such it is intrinsically part of the nature of the Church, even if the various institutional forms change over time and eventually disappear», *SYNOD OF BISHOPS, The Consecrated Life and its Mission in the World. Instrumentum Laboris*, LEV, Vatican City 1994, 67.

ROUND TABLE
**“EXPERIENCES AND CURRENT PRACTICES OF
FORMATION IN OTHER RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS”**

Jesuits

Father Angelo Schettini, Delegate for the Formation of the Euro-Mediterranean Province and Rector of the Philosophate of San Saba.

Salesians

Father Carlo Maria Zanotti, Director of the Course for Formators at the UPS of Rome, former Novice Master.

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

Father Giuseppe Rubino, Provincial Vicar, former Novice Master.



FORMATION OF THE JESUITS

Father Angelo Schettini S.J.

Euro-Mediterranean Province – Society of Jesus

Father Angelo Schettini, Jesuit, graduated in engineering from the Polytechnic of Turin. In 1998, he entered the Novitiate of the Society of Jesus in Genoa. After his formation in Genoa, Padua, L'Aquila and Rome, he was ordained a priest in 2008, completed his Licentiate in Theology in Boston in the United States and the so-called "third year of probation" in Havana (Cuba).

He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Jesuits Education Foundation, delegate for the formation of the Euro-Mediterranean Province and Rector of the San Saba Philosophate.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Euro-Mediterranean Province of the Society of Jesus was established in July 2017 by joining two Provinces: the Province of Italy and the Province of Malta. Since January 2018 Romania has also become part of this Province. At present, therefore, the Euro-Mediterranean Province consists of four different countries (Albania, Italy, Malta and Romania), countries where “five different languages are officially spoken” (Albanian, Italian, Maltese, English and Romanian). This highlights the complexity of the territory it is called to serve.

This new Province is the outcome of restructuring the Provinces of the Society of Jesus, a restructuring encouraged in particular by the last two Superiors General, Father Adolfo Nicolás and Father Arturo Sosa. Fr. Nicolás and Fr. Sosa often recalled how the candidate who begins a journey of formation in the Society of Jesus does not join the individual province but the universal Society. Provinces are “simply” instruments to promote the mission of the Society¹.

¹ Cf. Letter of Fr. General Arturo Sosa to the whole Society: “*On the restructuring of provinces and regions*”, 3 January 2019.

The Society was born from a group of people from different European countries². The evident decline of Jesuits especially in Europe is supporting the formation of Provinces destined to welcome different nationalities and cultures. This inevitable process then makes it possible to recover the original charism of the Society of Jesus as an international apostolic body.

The decline in vocations in the old continent has already led to a rethinking of formation houses. During the generalship of Father Peter Hans Kolvenbach there was a discernment that led to the closure of some formation centres including the Theologate of Naples, where young Italian Jesuits normally went to study theology. This reduction in the number of houses of formation in Europe is probably not yet over.

This process involves an increasingly international formation of our young Jesuits. Twenty, thirty years ago a young man who entered the Society in Italy could carry out all his formation in this country. Now this is practically impossible. Normally one or more stages of formation take place in another country. Young Jesuits must then learn another language well and above all come into contact with cultures different from their own. I repeat, this is a very positive aspect which makes it possible to recover the original charism but which clearly poses a challenge to formation.

2. THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF FORMATION IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PROVINCE

2.1 THE NOVITIATE

The first stage of formation is the Novitiate. The Euro-Mediterranean Province has its Novitiate in the city of Genoa. The Novitiate has been in Genoa since the early 80's, when it was the Novitiate of the Province of Italy. Now the Novitiate has the international character as mentioned in the introductory part. In particular in this year (2019) in Genoa in the first³ year there are Italians, Romanians, Hungarians (from the Province of Hungary), a Dane (from the North Polish

² Among the many books on the birth of the Society of Jesus we can mention the following: JOHN W. G. O'MALLEY, *The first Jesuits*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts (USA), 1993.

³ The Novitiate in the Society of Jesus lasts two years.

Province), a Slovenian and a Serb (both belonging to the Province of Slovenia). The Novitiate then becomes the place where one begins to experience the tension between the desire to be inculturated in the local culture (in this case the Italian one) and the desire to integrate and welcome the different sensitivities that each culture brings and expresses.

The Novitiate is the time when the charism of the Company is learned through “experiments”, experiments that date back to the time of Ignatius. The first “experiment” is the community life itself to which the novices are called. In the beauty and toil of ordinary life, a life also characterized by simple housework, the novices learn what it means to live with people who are different in character and personal history, people who have been called to the same vocation. The other experiments are the Ignatian month in which the novices live the founding experience of Ignatian spirituality, the month in hospital where the novices come in contact with suffering and sickness, and the pilgrimage into poverty which allows them to experience abandonment and trust in Providence. At the conclusion of the Novitiate the young Jesuit makes his first vows either as an “approved scholastic” (the “scholastic” is the one who prepares for priestly ordination) or as a brother coadjutor (the brother will be formed to live as a religious of the Society at the service of the mission of the Society itself).

2.2 POST-NOVIATIE

After the Novitiate the young Jesuit “normally” begins his philosophy⁴. The formation house that welcomes the philosophy students of the Euro-Mediterranean Province is located in Rome joined to the Parish of San Saba. The house of San Saba became an interesting experiment of interprovincial collaboration. This house of formation is the result of the restructuring of the formation centres mentioned earlier. The Provinces of Spain, Portugal, Slovenia and Euro-Mediterranean decided to set up their “Philosophate” in Rome. This led to the closure of at least two formation centres: that of Padua

⁴Some people who enter the Novitiate have already studied philosophy. After taking the vows then they begin the ‘First Studies’ directly.

in the then Province of Italy and that of Salamanca in the Province of Spain. After a few years (the Philosophy in Rome began in 2015) a first evaluation of this choice can be made. This decision has had a positive impact. It has allowed to improve the formation in the Society globally. One can clearly see how friendships are being formed that are destined to last and that in the future will make it possible to create strong bonds that will help to set up common apostolic projects. Young Jesuits will now be more and more able to think and feel as part of the universal Society.

From an intellectual point of view, formation is mainly entrusted to the Gregorian University. Scholastics study two or three years of philosophy at the Gregorian University following the programme that this University offers. At the end of the two years the scholastics have the possibility to access theological studies. Those who attend the third year, on the other hand, obtain the of Bachelor's degree in philosophy according to the norms of the "Bologna Process".

2.3 REGENCY

After studying philosophy or after special studies the young Jesuit is sent to live a pastoral experience in an apostolic community. The Regency is considered an essential formative stage. This time of experimentation in contact with the "real Society" is considered fundamental to help the Jesuit in formation to deepen his discernment. The scholastic who is approved during the Regency gains experience in order to understand if he is fit for theology in view of the ordination. The brother in formation will then find confirmation of his religious vocation in the apostolate of everyday living in a community of formed Jesuits.

In the last few years, the Regents have been sent to different communities and missions. Scholastics have spent the regency in schools, parishes, youth movements and retreat houses. The desire to foster a sense of belonging to the body of the universal Society has also suggested the possibility of regency also in other Provinces, in very different geographical and cultural contexts. For example,

in recent years three Regents⁵ have been sent first to South Sudan, Uganda and Egypt.

The regency lived in such different places and missions becomes a formative moment to acquire apostolic skills. It offers an opportunity to engage in a series of pastoral ministries that help scholastics to reflect on their priestly vocation and provide insights and issues for their future theological studies. The teachers in the colleges earn experience especially in teaching and in the spiritual accompaniment of children and adolescents. They also come into contact with the teaching staff and the families of the various children. The reality described for a regency in colleges also finds its counterpart in regency in other pastoral contexts such as a parish or a university chapel. For example, in a parish the regents assigned there acquire pastoral and liturgical skills besides obviously getting experience in spiritual direction and in the accompaniment of individuals and groups. In these parishes and also in our colleges and university centres there are also youth pastoral movements. Jesuits in formation, working in these movements, have the opportunity to meet the varied world of youth with all the questions and issues that young people raise.

The regency in the field of social apostolate (as for example with the refugees at the Astalli Centre) allows them to practise the service of faith and the promotion of justice and dialogue with other cultures and religions typical of the charism of the Society. In particular, the service to refugees puts our “young Jesuits” in continuous contact with people of different religions (Muslims, for that matter) and arouses in them questions and interest in interreligious dialogue.

The Province then organizes once a year a meeting of the regents who work in our Province. This meeting becomes an important moment both for re-reading and sharing experience and for formation. Usually, a Jesuit is invited to speak to the scholastics about a specific theme, a theme that usually concerns the life of the Society or more generally the life of the Church.

⁵ The term Regent refers to the young Jesuit who is going through the period of formation called Regency.

2.4 THEOLOGY

At the end of the apostolic stage of regency, the scholastics are sent to study theology in view of preparing for the priesthood. By now the young Jesuits carry out their theological studies in different places and contexts. In recent years, the preferred places where scholastics are sent to study the first cycle of theology have been Paris and Madrid. In Paris and Madrid there are houses of formation of the Society. In these centres they experience collaboration on a European level, a collaboration that now characterises the formation of European Jesuits. With a view to broadening the formative experience in order to boost the sense of belonging to the universal Society, other centres for the study of theology of the first cycle are also being explored. At the moment, for example, two scholastics are studying respectively in Belo Horizonte in the theologate of the Brazilian Province and another is attending the first cycle of theology in Manila.

Since the time of Father General Pedro Arrupe there has been a specific time of formation to priesthood during the first cycle of theology. In this period one reflects and prays on the priestly call and what it means to be priests of the Society of Jesus. This time, in honour of Father Arrupe, is called "Arrupe Month".

After the first cycle of theology all our scholastics then obtain a licentiate normally in theology or even in philosophy. In recent years some of our scholastics have specialized in biblical theology (some also studying at the *Biblicum*), others have specialized in dogmatic and moral theology. Still others have obtained a licentiate in spirituality. Jesuits destined for university teaching after their licentiate studies obtain a doctorate.

2.5 TERTIANSHIP

The formation of the Jesuit ends with the "Third Year of Novitiate". During this time the experiments of the Novitiate are resumed, in particular the Jesuit relives the month of exercises. The Tertianship is called "Schola Affectus". After many years of intellectual formation the Jesuit resumes our charism and deepens his Ignatian spirituality by entering deeply into his inner world. During this time he re-reads how the Lord led him and how the Lord is calling him to serve Him in

the Society of Jesus. The Jesuits of the Euro-Mediterranean Province live this important stage of formation normally in countries where there is widespread poverty. It also becomes an opportunity to share for a while the lives of the most disadvantaged people.

3. CHALLENGES TO FORMATION IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PROVINCE

In the previous point I have attempted a non-exhaustive and obviously incomplete summary of the formation of young Jesuits in the Euro-Mediterranean. There are challenges in the various stages of formation, and some of these challenges have always characterized the formation to religious life, while some others are new, induced by the very rapid changes of the present times. These challenges are interwoven with each other. The challenges that I will dwell on here are not listed in order of importance or urgency.

3.1 THE AGE OF THE CANDIDATES

Formation in the Society of Jesus takes a long time. Normally it takes about ten years from entry into the Novitiate to priestly ordination. Fifteen to twenty years may pass before the final vows which mark the end of formation. This long formation is due both to the intellectual formation (intellectual preparation that the latest documents stress must be carried out with special care in order to be able to perform the various apostolates of the Society) and to the human and spiritual formation that characterizes the charism of a Jesuit. In recent years, people who were either close to forty years of age, or in some cases even older, have been welcomed into the novitiate. I will not dwell on the difficulty of the younger generations in making choices. This situation poses, however, objective challenges⁶: how to form people who are already adults? Evidently, a person in his or her forties has a structured personality. Hence, such a candidate must be welcomed into the Novitiate, respecting and valuing his or her personal history. Human, intellectual and spiritual skills must be integrated into the formation process. Such a path is not easy. The opposite risk must also be avoided, that is, that the person does not experience detachment

⁶ On this topic we recommend GIOVANNI CUCCI, *La crisi dell'adulto. Peter Pan syndrome*, Cittadella Editrice, Assisi (PG), 2012.

from his previous life and therefore does not perceive religious life as a new beginning where he has left “everything” to follow the Lord. At the moment in the Euro-Mediterranean Province there is no shorter or simplified path for these people. It is rightly thought, for example, that it might be appropriate also for grown-up people to complete the stage of the regency and to engage in the real apostolic life before being sent into theology. At this time we try to follow these “confreres” with the “*cura personalis*”, helping them to re-read what they are living, their hopes, but also their frustrations. Some forms of regression are a real risk for grown-up people. Living in a house of formation with younger people there is a real possibility of adopting behaviour that is not appropriate to their age and previous experience.

3.2 FORMATION IN RELIGIOUS VOWS

The formation of the new generations in the vows presents certainly new challenges.

a) The vow of chastity

With regard to the vow of chastity, what does it mean today in the socio-cultural context to embrace celibacy for the Kingdom? Many of the candidates who enter the Novitiate have also had important and involving emotional experiences (this regards not only the adults but also the younger ones). The person who begins a consecrated life journey will experience a shift (not only cultural and existential, but also affective) from the previous life to the new one. The Novitiate then becomes the privileged place where one can re-read one’s past life, including the affective one, and discern how the Lord gives the grace to be celibate. The journey begun in the Novitiate then continues throughout the course of formation. In my experience I know that Jesuits in formation are freer than those of my generation to talk about emotional issues in personal meetings. A challenge within the challenge regarding affective life is formation for the protection of vulnerable people. Young Jesuits must be helped to understand and live healthy relationships while respecting the proper limits in their apostolic and other commitments. In the philosophy of San Saba this year there was a moment of formation on this very hot topic, a

meeting directed by Father Stefano Bittasi, executive secretary of the CCP (Centre for Child Protection) of the Gregorian University.

b) The vow of poverty

In this case it is a question of helping people who are mostly already accustomed to their economic independence to enter into a dynamic of dependency and need. Also in this case the Novitiate becomes the place to learn this way of proceeding. In the years following the Novitiate this training in “dependence” is continued. The new means, including economic ones, however, pose new challenges. Nowadays, cash is almost no more in use, but there is the need to have debit or credit cards, even personal ones. How does this integrate with the vow of poverty? It is a challenge that must be faced by helping Jesuits in formation to behave in a transparent way also from the economic point of view.

c) The vow of obedience

For the vow of obedience, arguments already taken up for the other vows return. The young Jesuit in formation is called to make his own the logic of dependence, a logic that is not always easy for those who have already had an autonomous life. In particular, formation in the Society aims to make the Jesuit available for the mission entrusted to him in an authentic dialogue with his superiors.

3.3 NEW MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION

The young Jesuits are of course also “digital natives”. The media deeply touch their emotional world and their relational world. During the Novitiate a tangible sign of detachment is the absence also of the new means of communication. Novices do not have mobile phones, and they can use the internet only in a restricted way both in terms of time and use, for example they cannot subscribe to social media. After the vows, however, they are equipped with a personal computer (also for study purposes) and a mobile phone. The jump is remarkable. There is a certain bewilderment in them. At the beginning of the study of philosophy the young Jesuits have a meeting with the person

in charge of communication of the Province to discuss together how to use the means of communication. In this way they can reflect on the fact that now they are not only “public figures” but above all with their vows they are called to express their consecration even in the digital world. For example, they are invited to ask themselves the question “what does it mean as a Jesuit to be present on social networks?”

3.4 COMMUNITY LIFE

As Jesuits we have never excelled in a particularly rich community life. Our formation in the Society had as its “focus” the apostolic life of the Jesuit in a special way. The last Fathers General, beginning with the late Father Kolvenbach, however, insisted on the quality of our community life. The last General Congregations have strongly reaffirmed this and have gone so far as to sustain that “the community itself is mission”. Hence, the importance of community life was stressed in the Novitiate. This involves emphasizing the importance of learning to collaborate and avoiding individualisms that can threaten the mission itself. The young Jesuit is then invited and formed to the spiritual colloquy, to know how to share with his confreres his inner life and how the Lord works in daily life. The spiritual conversation then becomes the basis for common discernment, which has become a priority of the universal Society.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper was intended to give some information on the formation of Jesuits in the Euro-Mediterranean Province. Obviously it is not, and cannot be, complete. It is an attempt to mention how we try to form young Jesuits in this particular Province knowing that most aspects are obviously common to the general formation of the Society. Some of the challenges that formation is facing are considered in the concluding part. In preparing this paper, awareness has grown of the magnitude of the task required for the formation of Jesuits for the twenty-first century. The challenges described and others not directly addressed (for example, we finally have a young brother in formation after a long time, what does it mean today to form a brother for the

mission of the Society?) show how formation is an ever-open building site that asks new questions according to the new people who enter with their human and spiritual baggage. The new candidates for the Society come “obviously” from our world and therefore have the characteristics of today’s young people, characteristics that change as fast as today’s society is changing. The challenges of formation are so demanding and force us to rethink our way of forming our young confreres. There are no easy solutions or solutions that magically solve everything. There is, however, an authentic desire to accompany our young people to welcome and give them the charism of Ignatius and his first companions. In spite of our limitations and shortcomings, we experience the joy of living this mission as formators, a joy that comes from seeing how the younger generations with creativity already carry out the charism of the Society with the help of the Lord, the one and only true formator.

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FORMATION AMONG THE SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO

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He guides various spiritual retreats, especially for young people in preparation for the perpetual profession, and is involved in the organisation of formation courses, most recently the 34th Ongoing Formation Course, for formators of consecrated life, diocesan clergy and community leaders.

1. INTRODUCTION

Thank you for this invitation and for the opportunity, above all, to meet and listen to the experiences of others. That of encounter is the most effective way to achieve a fruitful formation. It is the experience I have had and continue to have: a sort of continuous laboratory to monitor and calibrate every educational and formative intervention.

In my religious and priestly life, after a few years of commitment in school and oratory, I have worked until today in the area of formation, in the various stages of formation, and in a specific and more extensive way in the novitiate, for ten years. At this time, I find myself carrying out a service of the formation of formators and of accompaniment.

I want to share with you a specific tradition that remains a *criterion* for facing new challenges; attempts at solutions in formation in the face of today's challenges and the most successful insights.

2. TRADITION AND CRITERION

If we look at Don Bosco and the aims assigned to the Congregation he founded, we see that the vocational perspective is at the centre of educational concerns. The Formation is necessary for him and gives him a future. Therefore, all pastoral work is aimed at this: the «Salesian community» is the *global subject* of vocational commitment; it **involves** each of the brothers in operative communion, according to an accurate educational-pastoral project. It is a project of youth pastoral work for the education to the faith, particularly permeated by an effective vocational orientation. Young people find in Don Bosco's houses an environment that offers *complete* formative opportunities.

For this reason, from the beginning, our formation has been a **formation in an apostolic context**. The formation of young candidates took place mostly in the communities themselves and was really a «*contagious passage*» of spirituality and a style of life.

In the course of time, this criterion has been consolidated: **to make the Preventive System our model of formation**. Don Bosco said it very effectively: *study to make yourself loved!*

3. NEW CHALLENGES

Naturally, the world is in continual transformation, and especially after the Second Vatican Council, with its various ecclesial and charismatic perspectives, with the centrality of attention to the person, to contexts, the congregation has found itself facing, like everyone else, various challenges¹.

3.1 METHODOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION

The challenges have been analysed and studied, then some working *methodologies* have multiplied, favouring the analysis, the exchange,

¹ In the area of Formation, there have been various Conferences, Seminars and in-depth studies on Formation themes that have allowed us to keep up to date on the possibilities of responding to the challenges. This was done both at the central level, as the Dicastery of Formation, and in the various regional contexts. The publications and documents of our Magisterium in this regard testify to the progressive work, as well as the creation of centres of charismatic and consecrated formation as a response to a growing need for formation. On the website of the congregation (www.sdb.org), in the «*Formation*» section, the various interventions are collected.

the objective reading of the situation through a precise discernment, linked in particular to the different contexts. The *formative commissions* of each province and each *Region* have been valorised and structured with precision (the Region for us is a grouping of provinces: there are 7) and the figure of the provincial and regional formation coordinator. Through these bodies, various documents necessary for Formation have been reworked: *the Ratio*, the *Criteria* for Discernment and the *Guidelines* for Accompaniment.

From this organized work were born the *centres of formation* and of *spirituality* that were able to monitor the formative situation and arrange formation projects and programs: in the care and organization of initial formation and then especially that of ongoing formation². In addition, in collaboration between the Dicastery of Formation and the Salesian Pontifical University, the «*Course for Formators*» was born, which for thirty-five years has offered religious from different families a valid path of updating and study.

The *synergy between provinces*, which has fostered *knowledge among formators*, has been a good way to know more deeply and

² In **Quito**, we have an ongoing formation centre at the service of the two **American Regions** (*Inter America and South America Cone*). It has a strongly charismatic connotation, in the sense that it has fostered the study and assimilation of the Salesian charism. A centre with a good experiential methodology since the courses are residential. Moreover, for decades now this centre has been working in the synergy between consecrated and lay collaborators. In the **South Asian Region in Bangalore** (Don Bosco Renewal Centre), there is the centre that was founded 25 years ago to promote the ongoing formation of Salesians and has opened up over time to offer a service for many other religious. It has important moments and paths for the preparation of the confreres for the perpetual profession. Among the points of excellence is the great competence in Group therapy, Directed retreat... in collaboration with other centres and experts of which the Indian context is very rich. It is hoped to strengthen the Salesian charismatic element in the years to come, in networking with other centres (e.g. Quito). In the **East Asia Oceania Region**, there is no centre but there has been for years a mobile animation team, very active and dynamic, which has involved most of the confreres. In this way, it has been able to create a strong sense of belonging. Perhaps the most interesting process of excellence in recent years is the school for Salesian Teachers, organized in 4 summer modules in Manila, with participation also from other regions both of SDB and other members of the Salesian family. The main objective is to qualify those who teach and train in Salesianity so that there is a path rich in content that is not repeated from phase to phase and that gradually builds good skills on Salesian pedagogy and spirituality. In the **Region of Africa and Madagascar**, the SAFCAM (Salesian Lifelong Formation Centre for Africa and Madagascar) was established in Nairobi (DBYES - Don Bosco Youth Educational Services) in October 2018. One of the most important steps in its first year was a detailed and very synodal study (of great involvement) of initial formation in the region, with challenges of numerical growth beyond the capacities of the individual provinces. Among other things, one of the data that emerged most strongly is the need for more and better formation of formators. Young people in initial formation have grown by 41% in Africa and Madagascar in the last six years. Can we also have a "41%" increase in the quality and quantity of formators? For the two **European Regions** (*the Mediterranean and Central and Northern Europe*) the preparatory study of a centre or team of ongoing formation has started, but nothing concrete has been achieved yet.

courageously how to face the challenges in the area of formation. For example, the more accurate structuring of some stages allowed a better discernment and a more solid fidelity and perseverance (the *pre-novitiate* was the subject of intense work and so was the stage of the practical *internship*).

This work is certainly **a good intuition and a success**, a real and proper **engine of processes**, even if you then travel at different speeds and have to respond to challenges that are sometimes extremely different (for example, the Mediterranean and African regions). This methodology has also made it possible to activate processes that start from the grassroots and that encourage **active and responsible participation**.

3.2 CHALLENGES

Among the *new challenges* that the mission presents today, we must surely point out the fact that we live in a *new media age*, in which technology is visibly creating and transforming culture. «The digital environment is characteristic of the contemporary world. Broad swathes of humanity are immersed in it in an ordinary and continuous manner. It is no longer merely a question of “using” communication, but of living in a highly digitalized culture that has had a profound impact on ideas of time and space, on our self-understanding, our understanding of others and the world, and our ability to communicate, learn, be informed, and enter into relationship with others»³. Formators, therefore, must be able to understand and relate to people who are citizens of the digital continent.

This challenge confirms the need to form the formators!

Linked to this the *urgent challenge* is that of **personal accompaniment**. While stressing the importance also of other components that enter into the relationship of help, there is great expectation in young people towards what opens the way to grow in the capacity to welcome and respond to the presence of God in their lives. Young people seek *leaders capable of this depth and genuine harmony with the Spirit*, and the leaders consider this to be the point of arrival to which good accompaniment should lead⁴.

³ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*, no. 86.

⁴ MARCO BAY, *Giovani Salesiani e accompagnamento. Risultati di una ricerca internazionale*, LAS, Rome 2018.

Another challenge is that of a *new geographical and linguistic centre of gravity* that the congregation is taking on and which requires a precise capacity for welcoming and knowledge of cultures. From this comes, consequently, a serious work of synergy and a unified path between different cultures.

In addition to the new geographical and linguistic centre of gravity that the Congregation will assume in the coming years, two *paradoxes* need to be taken into account when thinking about formation and specifically the formation of formators.

The *first* is that the areas *where there is a greater concentration of young people to be accompanied*, including the greater number of young people who are oriented towards Salesian life and enter the pre-novitiate, novitiate, etc., are also those with the *least number of Salesians with good experience as accompaniers* and even less with adequate formation. This priority cannot be put aside, because these young people in every case enters the novitiate every year, every year they profess... it is the generations that are already shaping our future.

The *second* paradox is that especially the youngest (14% generation of the networks) was born and grew up in the digital hyper connectivity that *makes it increasingly difficult to learn the art of relationship*: at all levels and in particular at an intergenerational level with the adult world. Paradoxically, this makes it all the more necessary and important to meet leading figures of *significant adults* (for them!). But the establishment of a relationship of trust is a much more demanding task on both sides, which therefore requires an even higher level of quality in terms of the favourable environment and competence on the part of the adults involved. The keyword is “trust”.

The publication aims to present the results of an international survey to know and strengthen personal and spiritual accompaniment among Salesians experienced in formation processes. It has chosen to interview 4,000 young Salesians in initial formation and more than five hundred spiritual guides or companions from about sixty countries around the world and located in hundreds of formation houses of the Congregation. The survey was carried out because the Rector Major of the Salesian Society of St. John Bosco, Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, and his Council decided to listen to the life experience of young Salesians in initial formation, young people in research who wish to become Salesians, those who have completed initial formation and some of those who spiritually guide and accompany them. Therefore, the Dicasteries for Formation and Youth Pastoral Care of the Salesian Society of St. John Bosco promoted the survey in the field which involved experts, inspectorial delegates for formation, the teams of the Dicasteries and hundreds of volunteers. While intending to present at the same time a theoretical and operational research, it was decided to act primarily in an inductive way at different levels, favouring the descriptive, exploratory and partly comparative approach for formative phases and continental Salesian regions, and leaving the interpretative and prospective approach to further publications.

This challenge also confirms the need to form the formators!

A further challenge is that of **formative models**.

There exists a certain uniformity and commonality in the way formation is carried out throughout the world, and this stems from our shared tradition, the efforts made to implement the Ratio and the unity that comes from animation and governance worldwide. However, we must admit that there are also *great differences*.

Painting broadly, we could say that in some areas the dynamic of *fraternity* is quite visible and predominant, while in others a certain gap persists between superiors and subjects, as can also be seen from relatively minor things. The term “fear” returns frequently in certain areas, with a consequent tendency towards external conformity (*formalism*) instead of the real transformation of motivations, attitudes, and beliefs. We can, therefore, speak of different prevailing or operational models of formation, even when all theoretically adhere to the model defined and proposed by the Ratio.

It becomes important to help us recognize the *model of formation* which, often unconsciously, colours our opinions and moves our choices, because its incidence is pervasive. Salesian formation and personal accompaniment inspired by the model of the Preventive System, therefore, require clear choices of governance at the provincial and local levels, which allow us to create a favourable environment and a shared formation model.

A model of formation that remains only on the external level is deeply dissonant with the Salesian tradition. Francis de Sales was sceptical of those who focused attention and energy on the external aspect: «As far as I am concerned, I have never been able to approve the method of those who, in order to reform someone, start from the outside, with the appearance, the way of dressing, the hair. On the contrary, I feel that it is necessary to start from the inside». (OEA III 23. In McDonnell 72). He was convinced that «those who have Jesus in their hearts will soon have him in all their external manifestations» (OEA III 27. In McDonnell 72)⁵. Salesian spirituality emphasizes the

⁵ EUNAN MCDONNELL, «La direzione spirituale in san Francesco di Sales. Linee fondamentali del metodo spirituale e pedagogico nella prospettiva salesiana», in FABIO ATTARD and MIGUEL ANGEL GARCIA, *L'accompagnamento spirituale. Itinerario pedagogico spirituale in chiave salesiana al servizio dei giovani*, Elledici, Turin 2014, pp. 69-103.

importance of interiority: for Francis, the heart is central. One of the first objectives in the Salesian formation and spiritual accompaniment is to enable young people to reconnect with the centre of their being, with their heart. This primacy of the heart is the mark of authenticity of the Christian humanism of Saint Francis de Sales. The spiritual journey is an interior journey, a journey towards one's own heart, and spiritual accompaniment aims at the transformation of the heart, the configuration of the person to Christ.

The challenge in the short and long term, therefore, will not only be that of preparing isolated individuals, but teams, groups of formators and companions who are attuned to one another, leaders for the provinces who little by little create a formation culture and prerequisites for a charismatic Salesian spiritual pastoral conversion of all of us, as the Synod, the Constitutions, and the chapters ask us.

The need to form formators is still confirmed!

3.3 FORMATION ENVIRONMENT: VIRTUOUS CIRCLE FORMATION – YOUTH PASTORAL MINISTRY

From the work of these years, the relationship of continuous and absolute complementarity between youth pastoral ministry and formation emerges very clearly. The quality of the one is directly and immediately proportional to the quality of the other.

This also applies to the *first*, *during* and *after* the initial phases of formation.

When young people are accompanied in their growth until they reach the mature fruit of the great choices about the future, on which their vocational orientation will depend, those young people who come from environments of this quality of educative-pastoral life and who are oriented towards Salesian life will have a capacity for discernment and openness to the mature and promising path of formation. **Youth pastoral ministry is truly the habitat of good vocational animation and formation**, thanks also to good personal spiritual accompaniment.

Young people who have grown up in this way will have no difficulty in opening up, and many growth itineraries linked to their past

(which is always decisive for growth at all levels) will have already been activated... They will continue to build on good foundations.

If the experience of accompaniment during formation continues to be positive – which does not mean without crisis and difficulties, on the contrary! With crises and difficulties that become a fundamental factor of growth thanks to good accompaniment – there is a good chance that step by step, year by year, these young Salesians will become experts in accompaniment and “apostles” of this fundamental dimension of our charism in their service to the young.

When the initial formation concludes, what comes next will see young confreres entering the provinces convinced and capable of renewing youth pastoral ministry from within, accompanying young people in their growth of faith, up to the most demanding choices where their vocational orientation is profiled.

Before, during and after: the virtuous circle starts again and tends to strengthen and make the whole province, region, congregation grow.

To confirm how true this is, unfortunately, comes its exact opposite: that is, the observation that when things go wrong the problems that are created tend to repeat themselves. Those who have lived very difficult and poorly accompanied years of formation, save the possibility of miracles, will tend to repeat the same mistakes when he is a formator or involved in any field of pastoral work. If, in particular, the accompaniment has been for him more of a painful formality than a significant help, it is difficult to expect that this brother will become a good companion-accompanier of young people.

3.4 PATHS TO TAKE WITH GREATER ENERGY IN THE FUTURE

Involve young people themselves more in designing the path of formation. The generational change is formidable, especially with the post-millennials who are already becoming the majority in our post-novitiate (and obviously in the previous phases): only together can we find a way to make formation communicate on the same wavelength and enable us to do the same with the main recipients of the Salesian mission, oriented by vocation and sent by the Church mainly to their contemporaries, so different from the young people we were used to before.

Formation and mission shared with the laity, before being a functional need, is a true *kairos* to enter more decisively into the ecclesiology of communion, which allows us to rediscover fully the beauty and richness for today of the identity proper to each state of life and vocation in the Church, including ours as consecrated persons.

For us Salesians, there is a rapid shift of centre of gravity that makes the face of the Congregation, faster than we imagine, more and more Afro-Asian (74% more and more confreres in formation are there) and less and less European-American (26% less and less in the other 4 regions all together). This is certainly an epochal change, which will bring many new things: the more it will be lived with mature awareness and capacity for integration, the more fruitful it will be.

4. CONCLUSION

Becoming «*companions on the road*» for young people, as Don Bosco was in Valdocco, is at the centre of our mission. It is one of the best ways to prepare Salesians to embrace this mission and offer them valid experiences of personal accompaniment during initial formation, through the service of confreres «*capable of communicating the Salesian ideal in a vital way, capable of dialogue and with sufficient pastoral experience*» (Constitutions, no. 104).

I believe that this was the most successful choice to start again with greater attention and closeness to young people: **that of personal accompaniment**. The fruit of this commitment is the recent *Guidelines and Directives for the accompaniment of young Salesians*, approved by our Rector Major.

In short, we can say that ***dialogue and encounter between formators was the most successful intuition*** to make some changes and relative paths effective: the care of the relationship, the study made together of the situation, the centrality of accompaniment, the formation of formators, ongoing formation, schools of formation, accompaniment, and updating.



**"THEY WILL WORK TO FORM ABOVE ALL
PERSONS, CHRISTIANS AND SAINTS"***

"BUT THIS...DO NOT DO FOR YOURSELVES!"

Father Joseph Mauro Rubino

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

Father Joseph Mauro Rubino, Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate, has been a perpetual Oblate since 1998, and was ordained a priest in 1999. In 2000, he obtained a Licentiate in Dogmatic Theology (major in Christology) at the Lateran Pontifical University. Over the years, he has assumed various positions in the field of formation: we mention a few.

He was Head of the Youth Centre, spiritual director of the pre-novitiate and novitiate, and Master of novices. He holds a Masters in Formation from the Higher Institute for Formators, affiliated to the Pontifical Gregorian University. He was a member of the formation team of the Student House in Frascati Studentate, a European member of the General Formation Committee, and is currently Provincial Vicar and Provincial Director of Ongoing Formation.

*Cf. EUGENIO DE MAZENOD, Preface to the Constitutions and Rule.

1. PREMISE

First of all warm greetings to all of you, participants in this second “International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission”. I would like to thank the organizers and most especially Fr. José Salud Paredes for contacting me and asking me to share our vocational and formative experience on the occasion of this important moment for your religious family. I am here, on behalf of my confreres to share an experience that we can consider a gift that the Lord has given to us through the “demands of salvation”¹ of the young people who have been entrusted us in these fifty years. It makes us understand step by step, and not without moments of loss and conversion, how to continue to allow ourselves to be accompanied by Him in the educational ministry at the service of young people in search for their vocation in the broadest sense that this term can have.

One thing that intrigued me, in reference to the talk I was asked to make, is what I read in your program regarding the objectives

¹ Cf. Constitutions and Rule of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Constitutions 1, 53 and Rule 7b.

of this seminar: «to promote the integral formation of Paulines, “apostle communicators and consecrated”, for a renewed apostolic impetus of our mission starting from the current context of communication». The pedagogical attention in the promotion of the “integral formation for the mission” – precisely starting from the concreteness of the humanness of the youth whom the Lord entrusts to our care – in an ever-changing socio-cultural context, has always been a topic that is very dear to my Congregation, both for the life experience of our Founder, St. Eugenio De Mazenod. In particular was the historical and existential context in which he lived and received the gift of the Charism and the experience which Divine Providence has done to the Italian Oblates at the end of the 1960s and had then inspired – and continued to inspire – our formative and missionary commitment in the service of young people.

2. ACCOMPANIED BY AN INDISPENSABLE CHARISMATIC IMPRINT

In order to present better the main elements carried by our experience in the field of youth and vocation ministry and formation of our Province, I cannot but outline some essential charismatic elements “influencing” our vision, to interpret and discern the reality experienced and the consequent challenges that will emerge. For the sake of brevity, but also to leave some space for a little dialogue, I will highlight only some of the experience of our Founder.

Eugene was born in France, *Aix-en-Provence*, in 1782, and at the age of nine, he was forced by the socio-political situation of his country of origin to flee to Italy. There he spent all his pre-adolescence, adolescence and a part of his life as a young adult as a political refugee, periodically forced to move so as not to succumb to the advance of the revolutionary army. Son of President of the Court of Auditors of *Aix-en-Provence*, he was noble by birth but passed quickly from a comfortable, serene and full of attention life to a wandering existence without economic resources. His parents, who though they loved him very much would not be able to accompany his growth with adequate care and proximity, nor adequately provide for his intellectual and spiritual formation.

While they were refugees in Venice, his mother and sister returned to France trying to recover their family assets. This separation would be fatal and would gradually lead his parents to separation and divorce. The deep relationship with his father and the particular and providential relationship of human and spiritual care by Fr. Bartolo Zinelli (a Venetian priest) and subsequently by the Duchess of Cannizzaro (during his stay in Palermo) would accompany and forge the growth of this young political refugee, precisely in the most delicate years of his existence and development. It fuelled a deep gratitude for the love he received from these benefactors who were instruments of God's Providence for his person.

He was twenty years old when, requested by his mother, he returned to France and forgetting an initial attraction for the priestly consecration. He began his painful search for a social position suited to his coat of arms. Little by little the internal crisis intensified until during Good Friday of 1807, the conversion arrived and found the priestly orientation of his life leading him to choose to devote himself to the poor, the most abandoned, the most distant from God and the least reached by the structures of the Church. Animated by this desire, he began precisely with the young who were manipulated by the first political revolutionary power and then by the Napoleonic political power. Also included were the prisoners of war, mostly young men abandoned and despised.

It is precisely within this charismatic imprint and moved by the desire for fidelity to the charism and to the Church that the Lord allowed a group of confreres to make an experience of faith which marked a turning point for our Province. Later it also inspired other branches of our Congregation and many other religious Institutes.

3. ANOTHER GIFT FROM ABOVE: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE YOUTH CENTRE AND THE COMMUNITY OF MARINO²

It is an experience that began in 1967, in a social and ecclesial period full of excitement and hope but at the same time also complex

² In outlining the history of the Youth Centre and the Oblate Community of Marino, I refer extensively to Luca Polello, *Non fatelo per voi. Marino, storia di una comunità*, Ed. Missionari OMI, 2019. In fact, in this recent text there is a documented account of the historical experience of the birth and development of this Community, accompanied by a re-reading of the fifty-year experience of the present formative community.

and conflicting. It was another period of “revolution” that led to epochal changes. For the Italian Oblates it was an experience of faith which, as we know, is always linked to events that have occurred, to circumstances, to people and events that have aroused, nourished, shaped and strengthened even by providential encounters where the mysterious action of God evidently appeared. It is only for this reason that a story is narrated, only because within the narrated facts one can see a Presence and a Project that, in fact, surpasses them. In the events that today I have been asked to share with you – and which were told to us by our confreres who lived them first-hand – in fact you can really see the presence of the Holy Spirit who works in history.

The people directly involved in this story were immersed in the aforementioned social and ecclesial context. It was «success '68» and, just at that time, some Oblates had known the Focolare Movement, founded by Chiara Lubich, in 1943, in Trent. The spirituality of the ecclesial charism of Chiara Lubich was defined earlier as a «collective» or, better, «community» spirituality, at the service of *ut omnes unum sint* – “that they may be one” (Jn 17:21). This new charismatic reality, in that era of change and questioning of the status quo, fuelled the search for a unifying light. It had inspired the spiritual experience of the Oblates who had come into contact with it, instilling a different vision of the facts and of life, starting from the epochal events that society and the Church were then experiencing. Thus the same realities, difficult to comprehend, complex and far-reaching as experienced, became illuminated by a meeting that led them to interpret its context in the light of these words: «*See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the wilderness I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers*» (Is 43:19).

At this point, it is necessary to refer to the Italian situation of the late sixties but also to the situation of the formative institutions of the Italian Province of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate. It was therefore the year 1968 that became a symbol of contestation and profound socio-cultural transformation. The contradictions of society typical of that epochal change were experienced also in Italy by young people of that time with a particular intensity. Dissatisfaction was spread primarily among students, even with violent forms of

protest against institutions and a society considered by many to be dehumanizing which structurally disregarded the demands of the new generations. The ongoing cultural revolution, which soon spread to other areas of society and to the world of youth, inevitably reached the Church which had recently celebrated Vatican Council II. It had infused deep expectations of change in young people. In the whole ecclesial context, there were fragments of renewal, combined with dialectical conflicts, characteristic of a period of profound transformation crisis where tensions and dissensions did not allow anyone to remain indifferent.

Already the Council, in the dogmatic constitution *Gaudium et spes*, stated that:

«Today, the human race is involved in a new stage of history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world. Triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of man, these changes recoil upon him, upon his decisions and desires, both individual and collective, and upon his manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and to people. Hence, we can already speak of a true cultural and social transformation, one which has repercussions on man's religious life as well»³.

These words still resonate today if we think, for example, of the changes taking place due to the advent of the digital era and the consequent rapid development of the mass media, as well as the socio-cultural impact due to the ongoing powerful migratory phenomena (even if the latter cannot be traced back to the intelligent and creative activity of man in the service of a more human and supportive world).

But let us go back to "68". The Church – which lives in time – has undergone, as it always happens over the centuries, the conditioning of that period. The world of seminaries and formation was not exempt from the general crisis. The Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI), in 1972, stated that «*the seminary institution, like any other institution, has been called into question*». What was hoped for was a renewal of religious life regarding how it had been at that moment thought of and lived. The roles of educators and formators were the first to be questioned.

³ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 7 December 1965, no. 4.

In the first years after the Council – CEI always observed – «*several seminaries made a process and an effort to adapt to situations by changing structures, norms and orientations. Sometimes this happened without taking into account the fundamental values and the immutable choices*». Global protest entered the seminaries: the young people in formation asked for a reform of the formation structures. Also driven by the desire for a simpler life, they felt the need for authenticity and for a return to the Gospel. The formators were under severe pressure, often finding themselves internally torn apart. They had to manage on the one hand the invitation to prudence by the Ecclesial Authority and on the other the requests of those being formed who appealed to the Council. All were in a community context that evidently also generated strong intergenerational tensions, if not real theological and practical conflicts between those who appealed to the security of tradition and those who opposed the new conciliar Magisterium pushing towards a necessary change. The seminaries, in most cases, were emptied, leaving only trails of perplexity and frustration. The wind of contestation obviously also infected professors and formators. There was also a situation of suffering and bewilderment in the superiors who often felt isolated, contested, accused and misunderstood.

The congregations and religious orders, including the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, were also overwhelmed by this wave of renewal. «*The Province – as affirmed by the Italian Oblates during the Provincial Assembly of 1969 – is going through a “growth crisis” and seeks a reaffirmation of the authentic values of religious and apostolic life*». The Italian Province of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, confronted with the need for an authentic religious and apostolic renewal promoted by Vatican II and the General Chapter of 1966, felt a lack of religious and priestly faith, the devaluation of the values of consecration to God, of community life and of the apostolate.

The specific causes of the crisis facing the Italian Province of the Missionary OMI were different. Among these were the lack of community structures renewed in the light of the Council and the difficulty in accepting the new Rules of 1966 by some members of the Province. At that time, some Oblates asked for secularization and laicisation while others asked to live outside the community *ad*

*experimentum*⁴. The crisis was also accentuated by the request of a considerable part of the members to divide the Italian Province into two distinct units. But the deepest crisis was manifested above all in the houses of formation. Paradoxically, just some years before 1968, the number of students at the superior Apostolic School of Florence (for young people between 15 and 19 years) were the highest in its history, as was the number of Apostolic Schools in the Province of Italy. However, the symptoms of the crisis soon emerged: the phenomenon of the loss of vocations began precisely in the Apostolic Schools.

In those years – said Fr. Marino Merlo, the then superior of the Apostolic School of Florence – the air that was breathed in the formation houses had become very tense; the educational style was based on an imposing style, based on discipline, on an education that now no longer affected the lives of the young. The problem was not vocational but purely formative. It was however very difficult to admit and to find new methodologies. The houses of formation of the Oblates in Italy began to be empty: the Novitiate in Ripalimosani, despite considerable efforts to revitalize it, closed in 1968. The students at the House of Theology, located in San Giorgio Canavese (TO) which remained open until 1973, registered the lowest number of students in its history.

The beginnings of the Youth Centre of Marino were linked to two strands that would gradually providentially intertwine with each other. On the one hand was the work among young people carried out by some Oblates who, in fidelity to the Charism, wished to take care of them to prevent them from being left to themselves and exploited by the Marxist ideology that increasingly spread among the protest committees. On the other hand was a reflection and the search for a new spiritual path to implement and bring alive the charism of Saint Eugene in the changed socio-cultural and ecclesial situations. The new community therefore began from two different instances which at the same time turned out to complement each other. On the one hand was the search for a spirituality of communion that would make the religious life of the Oblates more authentic and on the other was the desire to respond to the invitation of young people who asked

⁴ Extraordinary Provincial Council, June 1969, p. 11.

to be able to experience community life with these missionaries who in a new way spoke to them of Jesus Christ and of “certain” Gospel values that seemed even more revolutionary than those coming from the social context in which they were immersed.

In Rome the experience started by some confreres in Monte Mario, the popular district of Rome, was decisive. The *beginning* was the relationship with some young students encountered on the street outside their school. They felt a little lost and lacked a religious culture, were far from the sacraments, immersed in a de-Christianized environment yet sensitive to the appeal of the great values of life. As the relationship grew, they felt attracted by the concrete love that these confreres showed towards them. «For four months», says Fr. Marcello Fidelibus for example, *«I have not spoken of God; I simply tried to love them. Love for them has become a listening interest in what was important to them, with great respect for their freedom. Indeed, what have I done with these young people? Nothing special. I was with them, and that was the important thing. I tried to love God in them. Basically, it was a matter of applying the Pauline tactic of “making oneself”, entering their world and taking it on»*. The young people, for their part, began to feel understood and attracted. They started looking for him and took an interest in his life and ideals: *«We understood that everything could be contested»*, continues Father Marcello, *«but it was not possible to dispute about love... These young people felt that after all I only wanted their good. Love attracted and challenged them. It was really surprising to me to see how this first group seemed to understand the most essential reality of Christianity. Little by little they came to discover fraternity, mutual love, then the Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation and, finally, the apostolate itself among the people of the neighbourhood»*.

This style of proximity with the world of young people was carried out simultaneously by different confreres who, although living in different places, shared their experience and compared with each other. It led to the formation of different youth groups throughout Italy, even if the base group at the start of this new experience, remained that of Monte Mario in Rome. Some of these young people coming mainly from popular neighbourhoods showed themselves eager to have a life experience together were probably also attracted by the sixty-eight appeal of the “communities”. However, it was

unthinkable to propose to them the Apostolic School of Florence. They were simple and “free-range” boys and it would not have been possible to insert them in the formative framework of the Apostolic School, the only structured formative experience of that time. The need arose therefore to think of something new, suited to the path of the young people encountered. All this for love of them, to respond to the desire they had repeatedly expressed to be able to continue the journey undertaken.

The young people of the Monte Mario district began to develop an awareness of a «new company project», a new life, with the certainty that this would only happen through the life of the Gospel and in mutual love. «*We had a desire – said the young people – to live in a house of our own, united in the name of Christ, to know and live the Church and humanity. Being Church in humanity today*»⁵. A home was therefore needed. The Provincial in those months of 1967 was therefore consulted and agreed to open a new house... «*if Providence had sent it*». After a Mass, the young people decided to ask God for a house directly: «*They asked for it from Him who had many: in essence we were penniless, but full of faith. We told him: we make for you a “spiritual” house between us, will you provide the “brick”? He took us by word, a few days later the house was there!*».

Fr. Marcello at that time carried out his missionary animation not only in the neighbourhoods of Rome, but went as far as the Castelli Romani. In Marino he had a strong collaboration with the nuns of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, a women’s Institute that had a relational affiliation with the OMI missionaries dating back to the times of the two Founders, respectively Saint Eugenio of Mazenod and the venerable Pierre-Bienvenu Noailles. It would be one of them who would suggest to Fr. Marcello to contact a lady⁶ who during the summer period lived in Marino, near their community. During the war, Mrs. Solina had known Fr. Armando Messuri⁷, who had been chaplain to the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux in Marino but Fr. Marcello and the other confreres were not aware of all these.

⁵ *Comunità Marino*, 25 November 1970, p. 1

⁶ Mrs. Caterina Siracusa Solina was widowed after a few years of marriage. She had not remarried and had various goods that her husband’s family had received from the confiscation of ecclesiastical goods in 1870. Mrs. Solina had always tried to return these goods to the Church, through a form that God would offer her.

⁷ Father Armando Messuri, a native of Camigliano (CE), died in Rome on 8 June 1944.

For some years, the woman had entered a profound crisis of solitude: she no longer left the house, not even from her room, and kept the shutters of the windows always closed. Fr. Messuri, who had become her confessor, gently imposed her to get up, to open the windows, to leave the house. For her it was a rebirth. Because of the Second World War⁸, Mrs. Solina, for fear of thieves, seeing that she lived alone, entrusted Fr. Messuri with her jewels and various precious family goods, so that he could keep them in a safe place. Fr. Messuri, during that period of frequent bombing, slept in the caves inside the property of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, where he had probably also hidden the things entrusted to him. One night, two thieves entered the cave and encountered Fr. Messuri who recognised them. They shot him, leaving him mortally wounded. Towards dawn, a German soldier passed who, having recognized him, took him to the nearby emergency room of Marino. During the night, he had lost a lot of blood and the doctors transferred him to the hospital in Rome for better treatment. He died of septicaemia after a few days, on 8 June 1944, the feast of *Corpus Domini*, without revealing the name of the killers he had recognized.

But let us return to 1967. Fr. Marcello, that day decided to accept the indication of the nuns and ask Mrs. Solina if she had a space to start this new experience with young people. He therefore made his request and presented himself as an Oblate Missionary of Mary Immaculate. «*The circumstance that led the benefactor to agree to the few words of request was that Fr. Marcello went to her on Corpus Christi day, the very day on which Mrs. Solina celebrated the memory of the death of Fr. Messuri*»⁹. This circumstance prompted the benefactor to make available one of the two houses she owned in Marino.

In August 1967, Fr. Marcello invited fifteen young people to spend a holiday together in La Thuile, in the Aosta Valley. At the end of the summer camp, eleven young people felt the urge to live together in the community and to deepen the new experience that had just begun. To these would be added two more during the year. The house that Mrs. Solina made available had been uninhabited for four years. For this

⁸ On 19 July 1943 Ciampino was bombed; on 8 September the nearby Frascati was transformed into a pile of rubble, on 17 February the bombs hit the home of the Little Sisters of the Poor of Marino (19 Sisters lost their lives).

⁹ S. BISIGNANO, *Report on the Religious Convention*, Rocca di Papa, 25-28 November 1969, p. 3 (Manuscript).

reason, when young people arrived at the beginning of September, the house was not yet ready. There were no dormitories, toilet, heating and in short, everything had to be rearranged. Yet Providence fixed everything. On 21 January 1968, the decree of construction of Marino's residence was promulgated before the community, under the title and protection of «St. Dominic Savio». It was issued by the Provincial Council on 4 October 1967. Later the official name became «Armando Messuri» Youth Centre.

4. INSPIRATION FOR A NEW COMMUNITY LIFE

The Youth Centre was born from a small «cenacle» of Oblates determined to devote themselves to the pastoral service of young people and eager to accept the invitation to renew the religious life required by the Council. The inspiring idea of the Marino community was based on the desire to live the ideals of «religious community» expressed by *Perfectae Caritatis*:

«Common life, fashioned on the model of the early Church where the body of believers was united in heart and soul (cf. Acts 4:32), and given new force by the teaching of the Gospel, the sacred liturgy and especially the Eucharist, should continue to be lived in prayer and the communion of the same spirit. As members of Christ living together as brothers, religious should give pride of place in esteem to each other (cf. Rom. 12:10) and bear each other's burdens (cf. Gal. 6:2). For the community, a true family gathered together in the name of the Lord by God's love which has flooded the hearts of its members through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5), rejoices because He is present among them (cf. Mt 18:20). Moreover love sums up the whole law (cf. Rom 13:10), binds all together in perfect unity (cf. Col 3:14) and by it we know that we have crossed over from death to life (cf. 1Jn 3:14). Furthermore, the unity of the brethren is a visible pledge that Christ will return (cf. Jn 13:35; 17:21) and a source of great apostolic energy»¹⁰.

The Oblates wanted to start from the experience and teaching of Saint Eugenio De Mazenod, founder of the Missionary Oblates of

¹⁰ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree *Perfectae caritatis* On the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, 28 October 1965, no. 15

Mary Immaculate, who had underlined mutual love as a fundamental element of his community. Their first goal was not to find a new method of recruitment and formation, but to live religious life, returning to the evangelical roots of the Oblate charism and opening hearts and houses to young people and lay people. Two of them, who were assiduous at the meetings of the religious as part of the Focolare Movement, during a meeting, felt internally driven to make a request to the Lord. It was love for the religious family and the suffering that drove them to do it: *«Lord, we ask you, united in your name, if it is your will that a community be born in which you are constantly present among its members and that you realize today the Founder's testament – “among you charity, charity, charity... and out of zeal for souls” – to contribute also, according to your plan, “that all be one”».*

They had certainly not foreseen all the consequences of this prayer. They had seen before their eyes only the experience gained in those days and in their hearts an article of the Constitutions and Rules on the Oblate community, which reads: *«They will testify before men that Jesus lives among them and makes their unity to send them to announce the Kingdom».* At the origin of that request there was therefore a twofold need: to deepen the «return to the sources» of religious life (as *Perfectae Caritatis* says in paragraph 2: *«the adaptation and renewal of the religious life includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time»*) and the spirituality of Chiara Lubich's Unity to whom they felt called and which nourished their hope and their discipleship and gave creativity to their apostolate.

The first steps were taken with the aim of establishing a religious community on three realities, explicitly chosen as the basis for religious and apostolic renewal:

1. *«to live in constant tension of personal and communitarian evangelization, placing at the basis of everything the personal choice of God, the mutual love and the explicit will to seek together the will of God and to make every effort to achieve it»;*
2. *«to be ready to give one's life for one another, so that Christ the Lord might be present in the community (cf. Mt 18:20) and in it the Master, the guide and the life; even if this would have required a little “death”, like losing one's ideas and one's wealth of experiences, to bring out the idea of God, as what would have the presence of Jesus suggested»;*

3. «to try to be at the service of “that they may all be one” to build ever deeper unity, everywhere and with everyone, starting with the religious in communion with each other thanks to the spirituality of the Work of Mary»¹¹.

Something new had begun, born from the existential periphery where the call of the Charism and the appeal of the Council had led them. From the beginning, the experience was first gained, then it became certain that the young people would continue to come willingly to Marino, in that house desired by them. To encourage and attract them would be the presence of a community that would allow God to make Himself present, close and active thanks to the life of the gospel lived by its members. There the pact of mutual love that also included death to oneself «to make room for him» would continue to remain a place where he could freely listen to understand and verify God’s plan for their lives. Confidence in the immense abilities and profound needs of young people and awareness of the changed condition of the times and the demands of the conciliar Magisterium on religious life therefore prompted these confreres to seek, on the basis of the evangelical life, new educational paths for Christian and vocational formation of young people who felt called to have this experience.

Thus, Father Marino Merlo wrote:

«It was a matter of finding a new formula where there were no masters and disciples, convinced of a fundamental thing, that the true Formator, as it was written in the Gospel, it had to be just Him, Jesus among us. This meant that all traditional schemes had to fall. We started from the Word of God, to start all over again, Priests and young people, to find out what it means to be a Christian, making a journey as a body. Persuaded to have to review our lifestyle, we Priests faithfully resumed our relationship with the Work of Mary with fairly regular rhythms. This helped us to make a journey of life. A much less structured experience than before. Consciousness was formed almost naturally in everyone, for example, how authority was the point of reference, of unification with which one had to continually commune, in order not to do things individually. Those

¹¹ *Extraordinary Provincial Council*, June 1973, p. 7, Manuscript.

who came from outside were very disconcerted because they no longer found the classic patterns of religious life»¹².

5. AN UNEXPECTED REQUEST AND PROVIDENCE

In 1969, two years after the beginning, some young people after the community experience in Marino asked to be able to join the Oblate family: «*We have seen how you live, why can't we become like you, live like you?*». The Novitiate house in Ripalimosani (CB) had been closed due to a lack of vocations. «*For us young people*», says Fr. Fabio Ciardi, from the first novitiate group, «*it is a place we like more than any other. We even wanted to reopen the old novitiate in Ripalimosani, in the Province of Campobasso. We were interested rather in being able to continue in the same line that we had experienced at the Youth Centre. The Provincial of that time, after listening to us, thought that the most suitable environment to meet our needs would have been the community of Marino, where the young people had lived until then*». The Novitiate thus began on 28 September 1969, with seven novices. It was made possible by the donation of another house, next to the one where the first youth centre was born. The new house was an unexpected gift and marked a new course. Mrs. Solina, who followed the evolution of the experience very closely and to make sure that it could continue over time, had secretly decided to buy that new home. And when the Oblates communicated to her their wonder and concern for so much generosity, she replied: «*do not worry about me, I did it because I want this experience with the young people to go on, but dear fathers: don't do it just for yourself!*» At the beginning of the third year, the community of Marino was already distinguished by the presence of three realities: the religious community of the Oblates, the Youth Centre and the Novitiate.

One of the characteristics of the Marino community was the family life that was conducted there. Young people, novices and Oblates felt that they formed a single reality by virtue of mutual love and the presence of the Lord as fruit of mutual love: «*All brethren around the same Father, all: priests and young people. Disciples listening to the only Master who lives for mutual love between us*»¹³.

¹² MARINO MERLO, from a conversation done in the Scholasticate, 25 October 1997.

¹³ *Acts of the Canonical Visit*, May 1970, p. 13.

6. EXPERIENTIAL IMPLICATIONS THAT INSPIRED THE FORMATION PROJECT

I would be tempted to tell you other “stories” in order to help grasp better the inspiring principles that have progressively and “vitality” led to articulate our current formative plan, listening to the experience that the Lord continued to make us live and the post-conciliar ecclesial Magisterium that gradually led to revision of our Constitutions and Rules and the general norms of formation. I will just make a summary. The indication of the then Provincial Superior who, in 1969, decided to transfer the canonical seat of the Novitiate to Marino after listening to the young people who asked to become Oblates, marked another important novelty which subsequently had a significant impact on the formative level.

The providential arrival of a new home, in conjunction with the request of young people eager to continue their vocational discernment, allowed the continuance of the experience of the Youth Centre and also a response to the desire of these young people. In the light of the experience gained so far, of the community discernment that followed and of the discussion with the Superiors, it was understood that the Community had to continue to be “one” even in the distinction of the places and of the educational objectives and roles. A single community, therefore, with a single team and with a single training project... to be understood, embodied and evaluated at the school of Jesus present in the community and of the ecclesial authority that followed, certainly not without a little apprehension, the evolution itself of experience.

The years that followed continued to be years of experimentation, but keeping firmly the inspiring values of the experience and the formative objectives to be reached, always with that “soul”, which remained the very heart of the experience: «to be all disciples of the only Master, radically placing themselves at the school of the Word, carrying out the communion of material and spiritual goods, living the new commandment with everyone and everything, always being ready to give life for one another, to the will of God of the present moment, in order to “make home” to the Risen One who asked to live among his own and who carried out their unity... making them a school through the daily self-sacrifice of self to him and to the brothers he placed beside us». An experience at times of “stripping”

that continually required to leave behind the old formative styles, the exercise of roles, and to go to the school of the new that the Lord built. This is in a period in which the updating required by the Council and the passage from the historical Constitutions and Rules (and of the formative norms) was long and laborious and at times also controversial.

It was only in the '90s that a second year of experience in the Youth Centre that the stage of the Pre-novitiate began to become necessary, starting from the observation that young people needed longer time to assimilate the Gospel values, to strengthen themselves in the life of faith, and be able to read oneself in order to make a real vocational discernment. It was precisely by questioning and confronting the educational challenges that emerged from the personal and community journey of young people that the Lord entrusted us that it was understood that it was necessary to offer more adequate time and attention to the human dimension, also through specific and personalized paths, in order to facilitate spiritual and vocational growth.

The experience over the years also welcomed the goodness of some educational elements that were fundamental for the subsequent development of the current formation project. I will focus only on three of them. The first element that emerged strongly was the importance of continuity of formation. Staying in the same place, for a longer period, living the experience of the Youth Centre and the first two stages of the Oblate formation in the same Community, that is within the same "soul" and with the same training references, allowed young people to develop a greater trust and reliance on ecclesial mediations and formators so as to register a greater formative incidence in individuals and in the group. Continuity contributed to the consolidation of the human and spiritual maturity of young people and allowed them to go deeper into vocational discernment. From this data and from the evaluation of the formative path to the post-novitiate (which we call Scholasticate) and the first years of ministry, the importance of a second element emerged. The formative incidence, vocational fidelity and apostolic fruitfulness were also affected by the continuity (or non-continuity) of the formative project between the first formative stages, the years of temporary profession and those of the first insertion in apostolic communities. Accompanied by the then Provincial, the two

teams (from Marino and from the Scholasticate, who in the meantime moved from San Giorgio Canavese to Frascati) began to meet regularly to update, discuss, reread the formation journey as a whole and evaluate it. Over the years, awareness has grown of the importance of thinking of all the educators of the various formative stages as to a single educational team as subject and object of formation. The unity of the formative project, in addition to requesting fidelity to the Charism, to the experience that the Lord gives and of course to the ecclesial Magisterium, also requires the communion and unity of educational agents. In addition to a particular charismatic sensitivity and that deriving from the influence of the Focolare Movement, the experience itself is probably not very different from what parents do and it convinced us of this need and led us to set up and organize our initial and ongoing formation in light of this belief. We believe it is important to take care of our formation, putting necessary attention to guarantee the preparation, communion and internal unity of the individual educational teams but also of the large team made up of all of them and which needs regular time and space to form, reread the educational experience and promote the updating of the Directory of Formation.

There is certainly no shortage of difficulties in building communion within and between teams, also because of the internal challenges linked to intergenerational and intercultural dialogue, to which are added those related to the influence of socio-cultural changes in the current context. One point, however, is clear: to try to live and work together as brothers whom Christ has united, promoting active understanding and effective collaboration at various levels, both between formators and those being formed. This allows, despite all the efforts that there may be, to plan a unitary line of vocational animation and formation of young people.

7. ELEMENTS OF EVALUATION ON THE EXPERIENCE OF MARINO YOUTH CENTRE

Wanting to evaluate Marino's experience, the fruits that arose from it on a vocational level both apostolic and ecclesial, and wanting to grasp its most important values together with the characteristic element of the «story that continues», we realize that it is still an

evolving reality. It also has an inner dynamism often difficult to reduce to a pattern since it continues after more so years to respond the wishes and needs of deeply changed generations of young people.

The experience of the Youth Centre of the Italian OMI missionaries can be defined as a project born «from below», in response to concrete circumstances in life and which gave rise to a community laboratory for the young people who seek the truth and the meaning of Christian life. Christ the Lord is presented through the experience of the community that tries to build itself daily on the Gospel. The community is considered a fundamental value, a proper place for the maturation of the person on both human and spiritual level. It is a place of encounter with Christ and of openness to the Church and to the world. The educators, other than their communion and testimony, they try to show young people that the Gospel has the power to renew the life of a person. The community dimension becomes one of the highlights of youth formation just because «*the ecclesial nature of faith requires that there be a community to educate through its lived testimony so that each component can draw benefit in reciprocal testimony from the climate Christian life*»¹⁴.

In fact, the life of the community which creates this favourable climate of human and evangelical values in which the young person feels truly at ease is free. It therefore has the opportunity to deepen his relationship with God and to give oneself to one another and learning to live almost naturally according to the Gospel. The community of the Youth Centre is therefore «an experience of evangelical life lived in community». The Youth Centre is not, primarily, the place where vocations are cultivated in favour of the Congregation of the OMI Missionaries nor a more open form of a seminary. It is a place where the religious community offers to the young people the opportunity to have a community and evangelical experience with free and participatory style that helps them to the search and building up of a personal life plan. It follows that its fundamental purpose is to help young people to understand the will of God for them and their specific vocation in the Church through an experience of the Christian life lived in community.

¹⁴ F. CIARDI, *Community Renewal and Rebirth of Vocations*, 1985.

This implies the existence of a religious community aware of some fundamental choices: tension to evangelical radicality and to the primacy of God, transparency to take each other into account, unity consumed in communion and in the mutual pact and expression of mercy among all members, the will to give sincerely one's life for others, and faithfulness to the Church and the charism of the Founder. The radical choice of God to be renewed every day personally and in community is «*the narrow door*» (cf. Mt 7:13) to be credible and to present to young people options which are valid and rewarding.

It is also essential to experience the common will to embrace, assume and complete in itself the sufferings of humanity. It starts with one's own and that of the other members of the community, without forgetting that portion that the Lord entrusts to us such as the state of abandonment and dissolution of the young people we meet and also the pains of the Church and of humanity. With these, we are able to participate in the sufferings of Christ and also become recipients and instruments of His saving grace. As our spirituality mentions it speaks to have those sufferings, these painful situations and perhaps of abandonment and despair and recognizing in them the presence and redemptive power of Christ crucified and abandoned. The humility to put oneself at the service of others, to know how to deal with conflicts, to learn to forgive and to start over together, to have the ability to put their talents into service, personal creativity and his own person and to make room for Christ among those who want to live united in His name: «*As I have loved you, so love one another too*» (Jn 13:34). Moreover, in relationships with young people learning to accept becomes fundamental and to grasp the grace of living a constant inner purification and being able to love them without interest and make themselves available to them for free without asking for anything, participating in their life by becoming «one» from below, weak with the weak, poor with the poor, to live joy and hope together, anguish and desolation. The experience of these fifty years leads us to say that it blossoms. The development of vocations really starts from afar and it must be prepared through a true renewal of people and community.

The Youth Centre, inaugurated in October 1967, turned out to be a laboratory of a new formation method which could be summarized

in words written thirty years after in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*:

«God the Father, through the unceasing gift of Christ and the Spirit, is the formator par excellence of those who consecrate themselves to him. But in this work he makes use of human instruments, placing more mature brothers and sisters at the side of those whom he calls. Formation then is a sharing in the work of the Father who, through the Spirit, fashions the inner attitudes of the Son in the hearts of young men and women»¹⁵.

It speaks simply, as I hope it is highlighted in the story, of a Christian experience lived in community, who helps young people to encounter with the person of Christ and choose Him, to discover their life project in the Church and to put oneself at the service of humanity today. It is a community and vocational experience, which seeks to broaden the hearts and horizons of young people to be a Christian community builder at the service of the human family toward a more united and supportive world. The heart of the experience refers to the personal choice of Christ the Lord, to the unity and to the life of communion, that is, mutual love which generates the presence of Christ the Lord in the community. We conclude by citing a prayer which the Marino community makes as their own: «O Lord, who promised to be present in those who love you and with an upright and sincere heart they guard your Word, make us worthy of become your permanent home»¹⁶.

8. ECCLESIAL RECEPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

Finally, I highlight two evaluations on experience of Marino and the formative approach that resulted from it.

a) The evaluation of our current Superior General, Father Louis Lougen OMI:

«The stories convince more than speeches and that of the Marino community, the Youth Centre in particular, is one of the great little stories that is capable of speaking even today and to show that Jesus continues to call and give full meaning to the life of each person.

¹⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, no. 66.

¹⁶ Prayer of the 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

For hundreds of young people, the Youth Centre was the place where they developed their vocation and the door that introduced them to a particular social and ecclesial mission. For nearly two hundred of them the door opened to the Congregation of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate. But also the others who have followed different paths have been marked by the charism of Saint Eugene and continue to be part of his great family. After fifty years of life, the Marino community remains a sign and an appeal.

Its birth and its coherent development are marked by elements which can inspire the path of the community even today and be a proposal for the Oblates and also for other similar ecclesial realities.

Marino's experience is primarily the result of attention to the signs of the times. In a troubled period for the life of society, of the Church, of the religious family itself, there was a careful listening to the world of young people, to the deepest instances of Vatican Council II, and the firm will to respond to it in a discernment that knew how to avoid the rocks of opposite extremisms, letting oneself be guided by the grace of the Spirit. It was a courageous journey, even among the misunderstandings, the judgments, the obstacles that always characterize the apostolic creativity and newness, typical of the Oblate vocation that leaves no stone unturned, as Saint Eugene taught: "Nothing left undared, to fulfil the empire of Christ".

Marino's experience is also the result of a return to the roots of the Oblate charism, especially in the radical choice of God and in a sincere fraternal life, ready, as was said at the beginning among the first members of the community, "to give life for each other, so that Christ the Lord might be present in the community (cf. Mt 18:20) with the Master, the guide and the Life". A community strongly characterized by fraternal communion, but always with a great ecclesial openness, testified above all by the relationship with the Focolare movement, one of the new charisms aroused in the Church. The involvement with it has brought a salutary sensitivity to grasp "what the Spirit" continues to say to the Church and expanding horizons on all that is beautiful, good, just, lovable in the Church... (cf. Phil 4:8).

Missionary audacity was a further constant characteristic of a community which by its nature would seem rather attentive to its

internal life. From the beginning, it has proved to be the point of arrival and departure of a vast dynamic activity of evangelization not only in the world of youth. The same vocational discernment is the result of a constant being “out there”, as Pope Francis would say, to grasp the needs and appeals of the world in which one is immersed. Another constant that I like to underline in Marino’s history is faith in prayer and trust in providence, which leads to a serene and joyful poverty, to a simplicity of life that should characterize every Christian community.

The lively youth movement created by the Oblates in Italy and the birth of new communities open to vocational discernment as well as the rich presence of lay people linked by the Oblate charism, are largely the result of the experience of Marino. Its community after fifty years of life still remains a fundamental “unifying centre of the effort of youth and vocation ministry”. Although it is evolving – and it could not be otherwise or else it faces death – it continues to respond to the desires and needs of generations of young people who are always changing.

Marino has been able to create a “new formation method”. I recognize in Marino creativity, sensitivity to the signs of the times and Mazenodian audacity to discover new ways of welcoming and accompanying young people on their vocational journey! My warmest congratulations and my hope that you will continue in this same spirit!».

b) The testimony of an educator who knows closely the Marino experience: Fr. Beppe M. Roggia, SDB.

«“Reason and passion are the rudder and sail of our sailing soul”, said the great mystic Khalil Gibran. Reason and passion not only as gifts and simple characteristics of human resources, but above all to welcome the signs of the times. They are binomial things truly lacking today both in society and in the Church as we frequently disperse in the shifting sands of a liquid culture in which we have to live. Reason and passion therefore are among the most precious qualities in this complex post-Council climate on all fronts of the Church.

Here it is: if we want a good virtuous example of how reason and passion have been able to hit the centre of the tornado of the great change that has occurred at all levels in society and in the Church in these 50 years, there is the beautiful OMI experience of Marino (RM). It is an experience that has been able to intercept God's interpellations today through the great transformations of society, through the changing of the planet young people and their expectations, through the possibility of "re-founding" the charism under the pressure of some providential input of ecclesial movements in particular that of the Focolare. And all this, in a fortunate synthesis, has opened up a new perspective of conviction and methodological praxis to accompany the young people themselves, in their journey of discernment and vocational discovery and in the first steps of formation.

The most interesting from my point of view is undoubtedly that of not starting from our expectations on young people; not even from the simple expectations of the young people themselves and even less from the conditions of the formation system. Instead, simply start from wanting to live the Gospel together especially mutual love, concretely conjugated in sharing everyday life. Everything else is a consequence. It is a modality that is not only opportune and fruitful for the OMI Institute but paradigmatic also for the vocational and formative paths of all forms of consecrated life and, I would say, also for the whole Church.

For this reason, every year, as director in charge of the Salesian University Formation Course, I have always found it very useful, a real lesson, to accompany the students – about two thousand now – to contact this experience directly for knowing, but above all as a proposal. I hope that many feel the urge to go directly to Marino to feel the experience live. Also because it contains all the necessary and appropriate cachets to untangle it and embody it in all other charismatic cultures and traditions.

A heartfelt thanks then to the many Oblate Missionaries who believed in it and continued to live it and pass it on year after year and thus enrich it more and more significantly».

I conclude by thanking everyone for your patience in listening but also apologize if I mainly told "stories"... instead of just briefly

telling you about our System of Formation. I was asked to share our formative experience and it would have been impossible for me to do it, on behalf of my confreres, without these historical and charismatic references. Finally, allow me to specify that there was no “self-celebrating” intention in this story but only the desire to return to the Church of which you are a living and important cell, the gift received in the hope that it will continue to be of help and encouragement to those who like you work with hope and passion in vocation ministry and formation.



**PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS
OF THE "QUESTIONNAIRE ON FORMATION"**

Father Celso Godilano

Councillor General SSP

1. INTRODUCTION

The 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* is the response of the General Government to one of the requests of the Circumscription Superiors formulated during the last Interchapter. The General Government was asked to «organize an international seminar on formation to get in tune with the reflections and the lights that came to us from the 2nd *International Seminar of Pauline Publishers regarding the formation of the Paulines*»¹. This formation seminar is closely related to the 2nd *International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers*² celebrated two years ago (2017). A year after the celebration of this seminar, the General Government has also published the *Editorial Guidelines: Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate*. In this document, we find an orientation that has specific reference to formation:

«For the Pauline, communication ecology is not a space that is reduced to the professional field, but a true vocation and missionary

¹ Society of St. Paul Interchapter, Aparecida (Brazil), 15-25 February 2018, in *San Paolo*, no. 451, May 2018, p. 64.

² 2nd *International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers*. Ariccia (Rome), 16-21 October 2017.

place that coincides with the environment of life and proclamation of the Gospel; it is our “existential form of witnessing”. To be able to respond to this call, the Pauline Publisher must be a person of faith, passionate about the Gospel, capable of “feeling with Jesus, with the Church and with St. Paul”. He is a person full of prophetic audacity that emanates from his process of “Christification”, through the progressive formation of the whole person: mind, will and heart»³.

To assess the pulse of the Congregation regarding the Pauline integral formation, which involved perpetual members and those who are in initial formation, a simple **Questionnaire** was created and sent on 11 July 2019. The Questionnaire also had questions addressed respectively to those who are directly involved or collaborate in formation, therefore to the Formation Team, to the Council of Apostolate and to the Circumscription Council.

To discover the lights and shadows, the hopes and the challenges inherent in formation, the Questionnaire asked specific questions addressed directly to the **Perpetually Professed**, the **Juniors**, the **Novices**, the **Aspirants** and **Postulants**, the **Formation Team** and the **Councils of the Apostolate** and of the **Circumscription**. The results of the statistics that emerged for our particular consideration, however, had focused more on the responses of the professed members.

There are some limitations regarding the results of the Questionnaire.

The first: we would have expected more about the number of responses, which could represent all the members, especially for the young professed. In total, we received **369 responses**, divided as follows: a) **Perpetually Professed, 173**; **Juniors, 73**; c) **Novices, 15**; and d) **Aspirants and Postulants, 108**. These represent the **five continents**, in the **three geographical areas** of CAP-ESW, CIDEP, GEC.

Another limitation concerns the accuracy or specificity of the answers to particular questions. An example, wanting to find out if synergy or team spirit works in a team or a council, instead of responding as a team or as a council, some of them have sent all the answers from each member. So if there are five members in a team,

³ *Editorial Guidelines: Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate*, 5 June 2018, no. 7.1.

each of the five members sent their own responses, which means they did not work together.

Another observation, on the limits of the responses to the Questionnaire, is the consideration regarding cultural diversity, vocation reality and other influences in the various geographical areas. For example, in areas where the vocation are flourishing, as regards formation for the mission, young people are insisting on specialization or orientation towards the new means. This is particularly true of some young people who are disillusioned or discouraged because the realities within the Congregation regarding the apostolate do not correspond to the proposals they read or see in our vocation promotion materials and during vocation promotion animations.

To conclude, we hope to be able to find the answers through the results of the Questionnaire, regarding some directives that the *1st International Seminar on Pauline Formation for the Mission* had indicated to each member, to the Circumscription Superiors, to those who are engaged in formation and in the apostolic activities of the Congregation in particular, without neglecting those other elements that concern our life as consecrated persons. We will try to find out what, for example, has been achieved in the **process of integral and Pauline formation, of learning a foreign language, of educating our young people in communication in all stages of formation, in implementing programmed ongoing formation and in adapting the means that the signs of the times offer to the Paulines in their concrete realities.**

2. READING AND SYNTHESIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

2.1 GENERAL STATISTICS AS OF 30 SEPTEMBER 2019

Priests	502	140 of whom have responded
Perpetual Clerics	16	
Perpetual Brothers	223	33 of whom have responded
	741	Partial total

Juniors		
♦ Clerics	90	71 of whom have responded
♦ Brothers	6	2 of whom have responded
Total	837	246 of whom have responded (29,39%)

2.2 PERPETUALLY PROFESSED = 173 (FROM THE TOTAL OF 741 AS OF 30 SEPTEMBER 2019)

a) Member's disposition

As for the **morale** or **disposition as a consecrated person**, we addressed this question only to the **Perpetually Professed**. Following is the statistics of the members who replied.

CAP-ESW (84)					
Australia = 3	Korea = 15	Philippines = 19	Japan = 18	India = 22	United States = 7
Number of confreres according to age					
30-39 = 14	40-49 = 12	50-59 = 22	60-69 = 19	70-79 = 11	80+ = 6
30 – 49 = 26		50 – 69 = 41		70 – 80+ = 17	

CIDEP (43)					
Argentina = 2	Venezuela = 1	Brazil = 8	Colombia = 6	Mexico = 23	Peru-Bo-livia = 3
Number of confreres according to age					
30-39 = 5	40-49 = 7	50-59 = 13	60-69 = 7	70-79 = 8	80+ = 3
30 – 49 = 12		50 – 69 = 20		70 – 80+ = 11	

GEC (46)					
	Congo = 3	Italy = 28	Poland = 13	Spain = 2	
Number of confreres according to age					
30-39 = 7	40-49 = 7	50-59 = 11	60-69 = 6	70-79 = 11	80+ = 4
30 – 49 = 14		50 – 69 = 17		70 – 80+ = 15	

The perpetual confreres have been divided into two groups: those who have been **perpetually professed for more than ten years (146)** and those who have been **perpetually professed for less than ten years (27)**. However, the following answers concern both categories.

80,34% (139 responses) of them replied that they are **happy** (with variations, but similar responses such as *contented, grateful, fulfilled, stimulated, full of hope*, etc.). **14.45% (25)** are **unhappy**, that is, *disappointed, anxious, discouraged, deficient spiritual life, health problems, old age, lack of witnessing*, etc., **2.31% (4)** are **just getting along**, looking for new ways to live the consecrated life and the Pauline mission.

To motivate their own responses, those who are happy, define themselves as *contented with their Pauline vocation and mission, in good health, with peace within themselves and with others*, etc. The discontented ones answered with phrases like these: *difficulty in religious life, tired, poor fraternal life, not feeling part of the apostolic work, economic difficulty* and so on. Other responses, **2.9% (5)**, which do not fall into the categories mentioned above. For example: *“I have a negative attitude due to lack of study and communication skills”*; another: *“Struck by the fact that... consecrated life is becoming less attractive”*.

b) Pauline life

As for the Pauline life, **“What do you still consider of great value as a consecrated person?”**, we present here the answers of the professed members, delineating those of the perpetually professed from those of the Juniors. In the answers, we prioritize the more significant results.

Perpetually professed (173)	Juniors (73)
74: Spirituality (42,77%)	32: Consecration (43,83%)
70: Consecration (40,46%)	22: Spirituality (30,13%)
63: Apostolate/Mission (36,42)	14: Apostolate/Mission (19,17%)
44: Community life (25,43%)	13: Community life (17,80%)
03: Integral formation (1,73%)	13: Four wheels (17,80%)

Spirituality was expressed in these other terms: *“life of prayer”*, *“charism”*, *“holiness”*. **Consecration** includes the terms *“Pauline*

vocation", "the vows". One Junior expressed it very emphatically as "love for the Congregation". **Apostolate** also expressed as "mission". **Community life** also understood as "fraternity", "witness of life".

According to the importance and priority of the great values for the Juniors, they coincide with those of the perpetually professed, almost equal for the first four values. It is natural, we believe, because we only have one DNA that flows in the Pauline blood.

We also want to give importance to the response of 3 Juniors who have underlined the importance of the **Pauline Family** as a great value.

We can say that the first two groups of "great values" are almost similar, that is, **spirituality** and **consecration**. But it can be noted that there is more emphasis on our **identity** as consecrated persons rather than on the activities, that is, the **mission** – in third place – even if it carries a great weight as a fundamental value. As a trend, strong is the assertion of both groups on **community life**.

c) **Expectations on the Pauline life of a consecrated person**

On the question, "**Today, what are your expectations?**", following are the answers of our perpetual confreres.

73: Our perpetually professed indicate, as one of their expectations, a "new spring time of vocation", that is "a rebirth of the Congregation and apostolic impetus for the mission with new means", "reading the signs of the times to reach everyone" with "dynamism and enthusiasm".

35: Creative fidelity to the charism.

25: Strengthen community life (fraternity, greater unity as Pauline Family).

22: Grow in holiness (strengthen the life of prayer, become saints).

12: Ongoing formation of perpetually professed and formation of young people for the mission in today's world.

7: Work in a team.

4: Organization of the apostolate with the inclusion of all the Paulines in the activities of the specific Pauline mission.

3: Good leaders in all levels of authority.

3: Care for the sick and elderly members and those in difficulty.

The following statements, which come from our youngest perpetually professed, received **2 points** each: “integral formation in all stages”; “suitable formators (available and well trained)”; and “international collaboration between the circumscriptions”. We want to privilege these phrases that indicate the urgency that is felt today. We believe in particular that our young perpetually professed are enjoying the effect of our two international courses in Rome, namely the “Preparation for Perpetual Profession” (already in the fourth year) and the “International Novitiate” (in the third year). The “international collaboration between the circumscriptions” is indeed urgent, starting with the formation!

A phrase still to be given attention. One of our elders wrote: “strengthen human formation”. He reasoned out this way: “If there is no foundation, what can be constructed?”.

d) Aspects that need to be changed or strengthened in a program of ongoing formation

One of our confreres wrote: “Is there ongoing formation?” Another specified: “I have only heard of it, but there is none in my circumscription!”. So what must be changed or strengthened in a program of ongoing formation?

59: Integral and Pauline formation at all stages, *not only* in ongoing formation, include these themes: “strengthening human formation and community life”; “qualify the motivations of the candidates”; “strengthen the Pauline apostolic identity”; “integration of spiritual formation and apostolic formation”, etc.

51: In precisely specifying the ongoing formation, the following ideas are not very different from those above: “updating and actualization of ongoing formation for today’s mission, with digital means, social networks”; “with clear, precise and continuous programs that allow us to grow as persons, as religious and as Paulines”; “change of mentality”, etc.

Here are the other themes that are to be modified or strengthened.

42: Creative fidelity, renewal of the Pauline life, promoting the course on the charism.

29: Strengthen fraternity-community life.

14: Guarantee the principles of consecrated life (fixed points of Pauline integral formation, live one's own consecration and mission).

8: More attention and care for the integral health of the members; "help members grow gracefully".

Our younger perpetual confreres underlined the following three themes: "promote ongoing formation" (5); "need for suitable formators for adequate and constant accompaniment" (5); "implement the Norms related to formation" (4).

For the two groups of perpetually professed, "encouragement" is also welcome (3); "to be living and attractive vocational signs-witnesses", "committed with vigour and enthusiasm in all possible ways in communication" (5); and the need to "free ourselves from a certain spiritualism" (2).

2.3 JUNIORS = 73 (FROM THE TOTAL OF 96 AS OF 30 SEPTEMBER 2019)

Where are our Juniors coming from?

CAP-ESW (47)				
Korea = 5	Philippines = 15	Japan = 2	India = 23	Nigeria = 2
Number of confreres according to age				
21-30 = 39	31-40 = 7		41-50 = 1	

CIDEP (16)			
Venezuela = 2	Brazil = 2	Colombia = 6	Mexico = 6
Number of confreres according to age			
21-30 = 10		31-40 = 6	

GEC (10)			
Congo = 5	Italy = 1	Poland = 2	Spain = 2
Number of confreres according to age			
21-30 = 6	31-40 = 2	41-50 = 2	

We note that vocations in general come from Asia, Africa and Latin America. To date, 10 of the Juniors who are in Europe, that is in Italy, Portugal and Spain, come from Brazil, Congo, Mexico, the Philippines and Venezuela.

a) Expectations regarding the integral formation that they have not received

After asking the Juniors “What do you consider of great value to you as a consecrated person?” (see results above), we also asked them “**What have you not received according to your expectations regarding integral formation?**”

They gave the following indications:

23: Integral Pauline formation for the mission according to “the signs of the times” and in “using more media tools during formation” and “the modern resources necessary to carry out the mission better” and with “pastoral approach”.

8: Community life with the absence of “discipline in common life, prayer, fraternity...” and the “lack of witnessing from older members”.

2: The lack of materials and courses “in deepening the spirituality”.

b) Expectations regarding integral formation that need to be changed or strengthened

With regard to the Pauline integral formation, “**What must be changed or strengthened?**”

80: We group the different expressions, but very similar and correlated, which point to the **Pauline integral formation**. Our temporary professed want to be fully formed “on the four wheels”, “spirituality”, “mission”, “continuous updating in all stages according to today’s needs” and “use more media tools”; “balance between spiritual and academic training”, “specialization”. The answers went beyond the respondents because some have more than one answer.

Other indications include the following:

- 9: Community life.
- 6: Regular spiritual direction, accompaniment.
- 3: Prepared and stable⁴ formators.
- 2: Taking risks.
- 2: Live one's own consecrated life/religious identity.
- 2: Valuing more the *Opera Omnia*.

There are 3 valid voices that emerge among the many concerns and expectations, which are current and prophetic. The first: “**Greater clarity of the Brother’s vocation**”. It should be given due importance because it is an integral part of our unique Pauline vocation in its dual expression of “Priest-Brother”. The second: “**Specific formation for adult professional vocations** (who come from a professional background)”. We already know that it is not only in the western world that not a few adult vocations also seek entrance. In both Asia and Africa, the adult vocation is already growing. On the other hand, why do we also give these candidates – many of whom are already professionals – the formative itinerary of the aspirants ranging from 15-22 years? The third: “**Formation for Marian spirituality**”. We hope that the formation requested does not lead us to spiritualism or devotionism but transforms us into true communicators-apostles and consecrated persons, in the image and likeness of the first “publisher”, Mary Most Holy, our Mother, Teacher and Queen.

Before going on to the next topic, we share the following statistics. These are the movements of persons within a decade: from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2018.

227	First profession
123	Temporary professed Clerics/Brothers who left before reaching perpetual profession
5	Perpetual Clerics/Brothers who left

⁴ It simply means not to change formators 3 or 4 times in a year for the same group of the young in formation.

2	Deacons who left
6	Perpetual Brothers who left
16	Priests actually in exlaustration
13	Priests incardinated in other dioceses
21	Priests dismissed from the clerical state

c) The main reasons for the departure of Juniors from the Congregation

For what reasons do our Juniors leave the Congregation? The same question was also addressed to the Circumscription Council. Ten of these have sent us the reasons for the departure of our Juniors according to their point of view. We find the answers of the Juniors alongside the Circumscription Councils, in square brackets [].

69 [5]: Inauthentic Pauline vocation (indifference, unrequited personal ambitions and expectations, difficulty of living religious life).

43 [4]: Inadequate formation for the mission (unclear itinerary; without involvement in the apostolate; old paradigm; not being valued as persons; personal talents not developed for the mission).

40 [8]: Weak fraternal life; problems in community life; lack of fraternal support; individualism; lack of testimony from other members, especially from older confreres.

21 [8]: Personal and family problems.

9 [2]: Problem with formators; unsuitable formator; poor accompaniment.

7 [1]: Weak spiritual life.

To complete, the following reasons, with 1 point each, come from the circumscription Council: “the dispersion generated by social networks”; “general crisis in the Church”; and “more stimulating offers and alternatives presented in the world”.

2.4 NOVICES = 15 (FROM THE TOTAL OF 20 AS OF 30 SEPTEMBER 2019)

CAP-ESW (5)			CIDEP (6)				GEC (4)	
Korea	Philip- pines	India	Brazil	Colom- bia	Mexico	Vene- zuela	Congo	
2	1	2	1	2	1	2	4	
Number according to age			Number according to age				No. according to age	
20-29 = 5			20-29 = 5		30-39 = 1		20-29 = 3	30-39 = 1

In asking the Novices, “*What do you consider of great value for you during the novitiate?*” And “*What did you not receive according to your expectations?*” the tendency of responses according to the importance of values that concern **consecration, spirituality, mission and fraternity**, follows that of Juniors and perpetually professed members.

Instead, we present “**the aspects that must be modified or strengthened concerning the Pauline integral formation**”.

On the aspects to consider, we find the following answers from our Novices.

- 13: Human formation; formation for true freedom.
- 3: More intense life of prayer.
- 3: The transmission of the origins and foundations of the Pauline charism.
- 3: Apostolic formation.
- 2: More welcoming and fraternal community.

2.5 ASPIRANTS AND POSTULANTS = 108

The origin of our Aspirants and Postulants who participated in the Questionnaire.

CAP-ESW (50)			
India = 15	Philippines = 29	Japan = 2	Korea = 4
Number of candidates according to age			
15-24 = 39	25-34 = 10	35-44 = 1	

CIDEP (46)			
Brazil = 9	Colombia = 11	Mexico = 18	Venezuela = 8
Number of candidates according to age			
15-24 = 31		25-34 = 15	

GEC (12)	
Congo = 11	Poland = 1
Number of candidates according to age	
15-24 = 11	25-34 = 1

From the answers of our Aspirants and Postulants, we can have a glimpse of their hopes and aspirations in their desire to try our style of life. Hopefully, what they shared will help us prepare a formative itinerary that will accompany them with proper care and attention in the different stages of the Pauline integral formation.

a) Their expectations of religious life before joining the Congregation

65: To be closer to God; to be holy; to love and serve God; a life of offering to God; to praise and serve God and the people.

46: A life of harmony; fraternity; community life; happy life.

11: Called on a mission; evangelization; to reach the people with the apostolate.

As can be seen, community life from the very beginning has a strong attraction for those who want to enter religious life.

b) The image of the apostolate of the Society of Saint Paul before joining the Congregation

74: Evangelization through communication: digital media; social media; innovative apostolate; very challenging mission.

7: Commercial aspect: Owners-Managers of the bookshops; members as employees; businessmen or “men of the office”.

3: Different reality from what was shared during vocation promotion (impressed, excited, because “the only thing I had as a reference was the vocation promoter”).

3: Paulines who have their own computers, can speak on the radio, on the television; journalists.

2: Priests and Brothers who live and pray together.

The expected answers, as regards the true intent of the question, should be those that preceded the vocation promotion phase of our candidates. The 74 responses were obviously influenced by the various vocation promotion activities they experienced prior to entrance.

The 7 answers instead captured the true intent of the question in which we are perceived as “businessmen” and “employees”, not as religious.

On the other hand, 3 answers should make us think where, after some time with us, our candidates do not experience what they heard during the vocation promotion period. What they experienced once inside is “a different reality from what was shared during the vocation promotion”. In other words, they are disillusioned because they do not see in reality what was offered during the vocation promotion phase.

c) **The reasons for joining the Society of Saint Paul**

59: Evangelize with the media, modern apostolate.

45: The charism, religious life, spirituality of the Congregation.

16: Through a friend; a father who was an ex-seminarian Pauline, Pauline priests.

9: In line with my media talents.

9: Spend my life with Jesus.

6: Vocational discernment.

2: Study Philosophy and Communication.

2: Ardent faith and personality of the Founder.

The validity of the closeness of persons who are connected to the Congregation must be valued: through “a friend”, by an “ex-seminarian”, by “Pauline priests”. These apply to vocation promotion where the vocation is “by contamination” of the witnesses or for having met the interested parties “face to face” and not only by advertising through the means of our apostolate, such as social media, magazines, leaflets, books, posters, etc..

2.6 TEAM OF FORMATION

For the **Formation Team**, we asked two particular questions related to formation. The answers come from 12 Circumscriptions⁵.

1) What are the principal means you use for formation today?

a) in the initial formation

- 9: Studies in seminaries-institutes outside of the SSP.
- 9: Integral basic formation with Pauline colour (human, cultural, four wheels).
- 8: Personal accompaniment (verification, evaluation).
- 6: Insertion in the apostolate.
- 6: Formation on the charism, on spirituality and for the mission.
- 3: Formation for community life, for fraternity.
- 3: Follow the *Formation Iter*.
- 2: Studies on the new means.

It is important to note that, in all Circumscriptions, not only of those who responded, our Juniors have their theological studies (as well as philosophy) in third-party institutions. In this situation, in most cases, the formation of candidates with the “Pauline colour” is almost zero or scarce. There is still much to do in the area of specific Pauline formation within our own communities. In the *Formation Iter* of the Circumscriptions approved by the General Government there is this provision of forming candidates with a “Pauline colour” within the Congregation but, in many cases, this remains only on paper.

⁵ Circumscriptions CAP-ESW (5); CIDEP (3); GEC (4).

b) in ongoing formation

12: Seminars, retreats-spiritual exercises, conferences, annual meetings.

8: Specialization.

4: Possible apostolate for the sick and the elderly.

4: Charism course.

4: Formation for the apostolate; highlight the current requirements of the apostolate.

We note that the above means used in the ongoing formation of the members are valid, however we must insist on the contents. For example, to give importance to the study of Saint Paul and of the *Opera omnia* of our Founder, on the Word of God, on communication, on our interlocutors and, as regards specialization, the courses that are in view of our Pauline mission today. Not to be overlooked is the need for an attentive accompaniment for the aging “gracefully” of members!

2) The main challenges of the Team/Council to work more effectively in a team

As for the **Formation Team**, the **Apostolic Council**⁶ and the **Circumscription Council**⁷, a question was asked “**What are the main challenges to work more effectively in a team?**”.

Below are the results of the challenges indicated. In round brackets () you will find the answers of the Apostolic Council. The replies of the Circumscription Council are indicated in square brackets []. The answers of the Formation Team are without brackets.

19 (20) [16]: More synergy: working in a team; cooperation; have regular meetings; dialogue; synodality.

10: Formation for the mission in today’s communication; knowledge of the realities of the contemporary world; openness to new and creative ideas; leadership training; new forms of youth involvement.

⁶ Circumscriptions CAP-ESW (4), CIDEP (3), GEC (4).

⁷ Circumscriptions CAP-ESW (4), CIDEP (3), GEC (3).

- 5: Avoid the multiple roles of members; prioritize commitment.
- 4: Gain more experience; proper formation of team members.
- 4 (3) [2]: Personal agenda, individualism, too many external ministries.
- 3 (3) [1]: Have more mutual trust, no gossip.
- (6) [1]: More passion for the apostolate, to be witnesses.
- (4): Sense of responsibility and convincing leadership.
- (1): Lack of Pauline formation for lay collaborators.
- [3]: Respect diversity, multicultural diversity.
- [2]: Communion and absolute discretion of the office.

2.7 A NOTE ON THE FOLLOWING TOPICS

1) Foreign languages

What are the languages that our Perpetual Professed and Juniors have studied? Here are the languages most spoken or studied. There are **246** persons who responded (Perpetually Professed: **173** and Juniors: **73**).

Many of them have written that even if they have studied foreign languages, without practice, the language is lost. But at least reading for everyone is easy enough; to understand, more or less for some; and expressing oneself easily, great effort is needed. Among those who answered, the most studied languages are the following: **188 English; 127 Italian; 35 French; 29 Spanish**.

2) Education of our young people in communication

Already in the 1st Seminar on Pauline formation, as regards specific formation, the “formation for communication” is asked which “must accompany all phases of the initial formation”. It turns out that among our Juniors⁸ (73 answers out of 90 professed), 13 studied communication. Instead, for our perpetually professed

⁸ Circumscriptions CAP-ESW (7) and CIDEP (6).

young members⁹ – in the first 10 years after perpetual profession – 15 (among 27 respondents) studied communication. This is obvious, since the origin of the members who studied communication in these two geographical areas, that is CAP-ESW and CIDEP, have their own communication school¹⁰. Just the same, we are still far behind in taking this recommendation with commitment.

⁹ Circumscriptions CAP-ESW (9), CIDEP (4), GEC (2).

¹⁰ Schools of communication of the Congregation with government recognition: Brazil, India, Mexico, Philippines.



**UPDATED READING OF THE CONGREGATIONAL
MAGISTERIUM ON FORMATION**

Don José Salud Paredes

Councillor General and President of the SIF

In memoriam: Father Juan Manuel Galaviz Herrera, ssp

1. INTRODUCTION

Before I begin to present my “report” on the theme «*Updated Reading of the Congregational Magisterium on Formation*», I must say that what I have written here in no way constitutes a novelty in the field of formation. But on the contrary: the reflections that I propose are simply the points of view of a person who has carried out his apostolate in the formative area for several years, in a specific Circumscription of the Society of Saint Paul, in a specific time and which at the present moment historian finds it difficult to understand the complex reality that we are experiencing. With great simplicity, I will present some **firm principles** which, according to the *International Secretariat of Formation* (SIF), **must be present throughout the formative arc of the Pauline**. They are the guiding principles of the formation of candidates from the first moments, that means in the language that is normally used – supposedly still valid today – from **initial formation to ongoing formation**.

2. FIRST PART

2.1 FORMATION, A CONSTANT CHALLENGE IN THE SOCIETY OF SAINT PAUL

In our Congregation, the interest in vocations and their formation has always been a constant concern. The SSP is aware of the importance of the formation of its members and has made the following principle its own by trying to bring it to practice: «*The renewal of religious institutes depends mainly on the formation of their members*»¹. In response to this concern, the Congregation has implemented numerous initiatives over the years, studying new strategies and new forms of response, while at the same time ensuring that the charismatic principles would remain fixed, firm and increasingly consolidated on which must rest the vocation ministry and the integral formation of the people with whom the Lord continues to bless our Institute. This is evident in the operative guidelines issued in each of the General Chapters on the theme of formation, especially in two fields: *First, giving priority to formation*. This need is partly due to the fact that our Congregation runs the risk of being overwhelmed by the great apostolic works, which often leads members to give in to activism, leaving their formation in the background. *Second, very close to the first: to be creatively faithful to the charism of Fr. Alberione*. In these two aspects, formation plays a fundamental role.

2.2 AN OPEN CHALLENGE IN THE SSP

2.2.1 ADAPTING THE FORMATION PRACTICE TO THE CONGREGATIONAL PRINCIPLES

At present, collaboration in the formation of new generations is essential for the planning of a serious formative apostolate, having the precise knowledge of our charism, based on the writings and practices of the Founder as well as in the various congregational documents. On the contrary, implementing without knowing the richness of our charismatic heritage means not thinking about the future of the SSP. Despite the fact that our Congregation has had its own *Ratio formationis* (1990) for several years, it has been found that the concrete

¹ Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL). *Directives on the Formation in the Religious Institutes*, 2 February 1990, no. 1.

application of it in the *Formation Iter* of the Circumscriptions is often diminished, unknown, or simply merely repeating it.

2.2.2 FORMATION OF FORMATORS

In several circumscriptions of the Congregation, the key point in the formative apostolate continues to be the lack of formators, and not only in terms of number but in their preparation for carrying out this apostolate. Their mission to accompany candidates is not possible without solid formation. Pope Francis says in this regard:

«Formators capable of truly accompanying persons. Dialogue must be serious, fearless, sincere... formation is an artisan work, not that of a police. We must form the heart. Otherwise, we form little monsters... In short: we must not form administrators, managers, but fathers, brothers, fellow travellers»².

In order for formation to be effective, it must be founded in a pedagogy that is not limited to a single and generic proposal for everyone, with regard to values, spirituality, styles, ways. Therefore, on the need to be very careful in choosing the formators is to be insisted. They will have as their main apostolate that of transmitting to those in formation «*the beauty of following Christ and the value of the charism by which this is accomplished*»³.

2.2.3 ONGOING FORMATION

I begin by specifying what ongoing formation should be. This is the longest and most significant formation period. The first person responsible for ongoing formation is every religious himself, who finds in the community the right environment for his continuous growth. It is in the community that ongoing formation actually takes place. It is there that the religious help each other on the path of their response to the call and in completing each of the formative dimensions⁴. Awareness of this responsibility must be present from the initial formation.

² Interview with Pope Francis (*La Civiltà Cattolica*, no. 3925, 4 January 2014, p. 11).

³ JOHN PAUL II, *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation: Consecrated Life*, no. 66.

⁴ Cf. JORGE CARLOS PATRON WONG, "El arco de la formación sacerdotal", in DANIEL PORTILLO TREVIZO (Coordinador): *Como hombres de Dios*. Buena Prensa – UPM 2018, pp. 25-26.

In particular, *ongoing formation* needs special attention throughout the SSP. In this area, we suffer a common evil: we talk a lot about it, but we do little. Formation deserves the name of *continuous* only when it is ordinary, and is carried forward in everyday reality. In this regard, ideas should not be confused:

a) It is not only a question of updating oneself in theological studies or specializations made after canonical courses, although this is worthy of praise.

b) It should also not be confused with the organization of the annual Spiritual Exercises or with moments of information about the journey of the Circumscription. We are convinced that today, more than ever, it is urgent to implement a culture of ongoing formation.

2.2.4 ABANDONMENT OF JUNIORS AND PERPETUALLY PROFESSED

The abandonment of the professed, the Juniors and the perpetual Paulines, continues to be one of the most serious problems that deserve special attention. We could call these young religious «provisional Paulines»⁵. Faced with the stark reality presented by statistical data, it becomes easy to fall in an attempt to identify «the culprits» or «the causes» that have determined and continue to determine this situation. Some blame the bad example present in the formation communities; others see the origin in the unprepared formators to accomplish the formation tasks; still others see the cause in the poor dedication of the religious; others, in the end, find the causes «in the external environment», that is, outside our religious communities, in the current consumeristic society, in the secularized world away from God, in religious indifference, in permissiveness in various fields, in the scandals of certain incoherent lives by religious and priests.

In the face of these not-so-Christian positions, the question arises: With this way of dealing with the complex vocation problem, are we not ruling out the possibility of getting to know some of the deeper causes of the situation? There is certainly a need to recognize that with similar positions we move away from the possibility of analyzing formation in a more constructive way, avoiding stopping at the simple condemnation and denunciation of evils. Without

⁵ RENATO PERINO in: "Forming the man of God". Circular letter for the animation of the Pauline communities. 1989-1990, in *San Paolo*, year 64, no. 384, September 1989.

pretending to be a fortune teller, I can indicate some of the causes that, from my point of view, motivate the lack of perseverance of our trainees: deficiencies in the initial formation processes, numerical and qualitative insufficiency of the formators, poor pedagogical, scientific and professional preparation. It is not only and always about emotional crisis; many times these are the consequences of a remote disappointment in front of an incoherent community life.

3. SECOND PART

3.1 CONGREGATIONAL MAGISTERIUM ON FORMATION: FIRM POINTS OF THE PAULINE IDENTITY PRESENT IN A FORMATIVE PROCESS

3.1.1 FIRST FIRM PRINCIPLE:

Called and consecrated to a specific mission: that of evangelizing today's society in and with communication⁶.

a) Feeling called and consecrated

Let me begin with these words of the Founder:

«“One does not take the honour upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was” (Heb 5: 4). Religious life is not what makes a person holy; but fulfilling God's will does. Religious life places a person in the canonical state of perfection, and here it is easier to become holy. The person who is sure of God's call must heed it, because it is God's will. The person who has entered religious life must be observant in order to carry out God's will. God, a just remunerator, compensates always but only those who carry out his will. To discover the will of God is at once, simple and complicated; clear and obscure; sorrowful and pleasant; natural and wonderful, according to the individual case. Therefore, there is to be neither carelessness nor an exasperating, tormented uncertainty; but prudence, examination, prayer, advice, and a faith decision. God's call is often made clear soon after the use of reason,

⁶ Biography: **Church Magisterium:** II Vatican Council, Consecrated Life, communications; *Evangelii nuntiandi*. **Congregational Norms and Documents:** *Special General Chapter* (1969-1971). *Capitular Documents*, no. 532 (gradual insertion in the apostolic activities); nos. 554ff (apostolic formation); *Constitutions and Directory*, 89ff (integral formation); 97-97.1 (gradual insertion in the apostolic activities); *Service of Authority. Manual:* 255 (a year of full-time insertion in the specific Pauline apostolate); *Ratio formationis*. **International Seminars:** *Pauline Formation for the Mission* (1994); *The Actualization of the Pauline Charism in the Third Millennium: Spirituality and Mission* (2008). **Writings of the Founder:** *Apostolate of the Press and Publishing Apostolate*. UPS: I, 372-374, 423-424; II, 193; III, 129. Father Valdir José De Castro: Annual Letter of the Superior General to the Brothers of the Society of Saint Paul (2018): *'Apostle Communicators. For a Culture of Encounter'*.

when there is still innocence and the right environment. Often, too, it is exiting a dark forest into the sunlight; passing from sorrow or disenchantment to reality; from a sickening mundane experience to the gentle and coaxing sound of God's invitation: "Come and follow me"; from a humiliating experience to a vision filled with hope; from a carefree, lazy, sumptuous life to a thirst for sacrifice. "The Spirit [the wind] blows where he wants"» (Jn 3:8)⁷.

b) Network of pedagogical mediations

To the aforementioned wise words of Fr. Alberione, we must add the important function of mediation. It is not difficult to indicate this network of mediations: they are the classic ones in the history of formation to consecrated life⁸. In fact, if every genuine vocation starts from a plan of God, its manifestation over time generally passes through the mediation of people and circumstances and is presented as a proposal made to the chosen subject⁹. Therefore, an indispensable component, in order for the person called to respond adequately, is the network of pedagogical mediations, starting with the person of the formator, his competence and preparation for a qualified service and his affective-effective availability with regard to time and energy. Other important mediations are those of the educational community, with the corresponding articulation of roles, conditions and stimuli that facilitate the formative action, its explicit or implicit proposal, and finally the atmosphere or the human environment. Although God is the only formator, he who develops his apostolate in formation fulfils the role of collaborator-mediator, indispensable to help the person to let himself be shaped by grace.

We have already mentioned that discovering the will of God is at the same time simple and complex, bright and dark, painful and sweet, natural and wonderful. These paradoxes become even more intense when it is a question not only of discovering the will of God, but of following it. The whole religious life is a continuous mystery and paradox. They will always be an interplay – sometimes

⁷ UPS I, 115-116.

⁸ AMEDEO CENCINI, *The Sentiments of the Son. Formative journey in the priestly and religious vocation*, EDB 2016, pp. 41-73.

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 11-12.

conflicting! – between a loving election by God and a free response from the person. Our Founder confesses that

«at times the Lord constrained him in a paternal way to accept gifts for which he felt a natural repugnance. The same was true for certain promptings to push ahead. Ordinarily nature and grace worked together in such a way that one could not distinguish between them but [it was] always in the same direction»¹⁰.

The predominance of this harmonization of divine grace and free human correspondence, Fr. Alberione refers to it again in numbers 43-45 of *Abundantes divitiae*, considering it as «*the ordinary divine method*».

c) For a specific mission

The means of communication at the service of the Gospel. We owe our Founder to have resolutely and explicitly introduced the means of social communication in the pastoral care of the Church, and to have promoted and defended instrumental preaching on an equal footing, in value and dignity, with oral preaching. Today the Church can state without hesitation:

«Our century is characterized by the mass media or means of social communication, and the first proclamation, catechesis or the further deepening of faith cannot do without these means, as we have already emphasized. When they are put at the service of the Gospel, they are capable of increasing almost indefinitely the area in which the Word of God is heard; they enable the Good News to reach millions of people. The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims “from the housetops” the message of which she is the depositary. In them she finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit. Thanks to them she succeeds in speaking to the multitudes»¹¹.

In the field of formation, we Paulines count on a rich tradition to continue and transmit, among other things, formative pedagogy through the apostolate and integrality in the process of formation. We cannot ignore these characteristics.

¹⁰ AD 28.

¹¹ PAUL VI: Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 45, 8 December 1975.

3.1.2 SECOND FIRM PRINCIPLE:

*To be sustained and nourished by an apostolic spirituality, that is to say, our Pauline spirituality*¹².

We speak of a Christocentric-apostolic spirituality. The following quotations from the Founder would suffice to affirm this principle. On Jesus Master:

«We promise what is obligatory, what constitutes the spirit, the soul of the institute: that is, to live the devotion to Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life: devotion that is not only prayer, but includes all that one does in daily life... It is not a beautiful expression, not an advice: it is the substance of the Congregation; it is to be or not to be Pauline. Digressions cannot be made! Study must conform to the devotion of Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life: religious discipline must conform to Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life; and the apostolate must give this. When it does not give this, it is only a source of distraction»¹³.

This devotion implies total self-surrender, because it is the principle of integrality in all expressions of life and action; this is the characteristic that identifies the Pauline.

«The Congregation nourishes itself of Christ by means of the word of God and the Eucharist; it is in Christ that it unifies prayer, study, apostolate and religious consecration, and it is from Christ that it draws in order to communicate to human beings the fullness of God's salvific mystery»¹⁴.

The devotion to Mary is another essential component of our apostolic spirituality. In her we see the first Apostle:

«Our character as consecrated persons and apostles is also given to us by the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. She is venerated by us

¹² Bibliography: **Biographies** of the Founder. **Congregational Norms:** *Constitutions and Directory*, 9; 105. **Sacred Scripture:** particularly the Gospels and the Letters of St. Paul. **International Seminars:** *The Christocentric Heredity of Father Alberione* (1984); *Jesus, the Master yesterday, today and forever. The Spirituality of the Pauline Communicator* (1996); *International Seminar on Saint Paul* (2009). **Writings of the Founder:** AD, FD, AE (sections I and II; CISP, pp. 601-602). Letter of the Superior General, Father Valdir José De Castro, to the Confreres of the Society of Saint Paul (2016): "*Sanctity. A style of life*".

¹³ Meditation to the community of Rome, 1957. Preaching on the Divine Master, pp. 72-73, Daughters of Saint Paul Archives.

¹⁴ *Constitutions and Directory*, 7.

as the Queen of Apostles since she is “the model of that motherly love with which all who join in the Church’s apostolic mission for the regeneration of humankind should be animated”»¹⁵.

The Founder during the last week of the Spiritual Exercises of April 1960 said:

«Mary was created for the apostolate to give Jesus Christ to the world: He who is the Way, the Truth and the Life... Mary is the Apostle with Christ, in dependence on Christ, sharing in the apostolate with Christ»¹⁶.

Saint Paul: an apostle moved by a living and apostolic spirituality. The commitment to be “Paul alive today” requires from us the double dimension of the model Paul:

- a) his constant assimilation of Christ (disciple) and
- b) his conscience and his attitude as an envoy (apostle).

They are two dimensions of the unique single life. They cannot be separated. When we speak of spiritual life, both in the experience of Saint Paul and in the proposal of a spirituality for the Pauline Family, we cover the two dimensions: the process of Christification and the spirit and practice of the apostolate. Pauline spirituality is apostolic; the Pauline apostolate is rooted in a solid spirituality. The Founder said: «*Everyone must regard Saint Paul the Apostle alone as father, teacher, exemplar and founder. It is so, in fact. [The Pauline Family] was born through him, it was he who nourished it and raised it, its spirit is from him*»¹⁷. The Pauline spirituality, being eminently apostolic, must be embodied in the industrious life of the apostolate: «*Combining contemplative life with activity is the most perfect way: to ignite and to illuminate! Two kinds of merit: proper sanctification and zeal for the glory of God*»¹⁸. It is Saint Paul that we must imitate in his way of responding. His words will never cease to be his testament for us: «*Become my imitators, as I am of Christ*»¹⁹.

Many conflicts and failures in our Pauline reality depend on the dichotomy or rupture of these two dimensions considered as two

¹⁵ *Constitutions and Directory*, 11; *Lumen gentium*, 65.

¹⁶ UPS IV, 268.

¹⁷ AD 2.

¹⁸ *San Paolo*, February 1953; CISP, p. 649.

¹⁹ 1Cor 11:1.

separate things: spirituality and apostolate, making one dimension prevail over the other. The most common mistake is to limit oneself to apostolic activity not founded on an authentic spiritual life. In these cases, the same apostolic activity is usually presented without the supernatural elements, dynamism and totality of dedication that characterize the life of those who are fully dedicated to the apostolic mission.

When we speak of the *Pauline spiritual life*, we first of all realize that we are talking about life; and life expresses itself with a particular dynamism, implies a series of processes, is characterized by a certain rhythm, generates its own defense strategies and bears fruit. It is not something static, mechanical, replete with repetitions, with external formalisms, or with acts without meaning. Our spirituality must be *life*; and we also give it the qualification of *Pauline*, which refers us to the apostle Paul, for whom *living* and *giving* Christ are intimately united aspects. It is Paul himself who can help us most to place the Word of God and the Eucharist as the basis of our spirituality. Paul is the one who can best guide us in the process and in the vital rhythm that must be manifested in our apostolic spirituality.

3.1.3 THIRD FIRM PRINCIPLE:

*The fact of having an identity articulated in a double expression: Priests/ Disciples*²⁰.

The identity of the Pauline is described thus in the Special Chapter Documents (1969-1971):

«Paulines are consecrated persons called by the love of Christ to bear witness to the Gospel and to serve the Church by announcing to man the fullness of the mystery of Christ, by means of the media of social communication. They form a fraternal communion of life which is made up of priests and disciples. They share the same religious vocation and the same mission»²¹.

²⁰ Bibliography: *Modules for reflection and study on the identity of the Pauline in its dual expression: Priest-Disciple* (2002). **Congregational Norms and Documents: Special General Chapter** (1969-1971). *Capitular Documents*, nos. 32-34; *Constitutions and Directory*, 1-6. **International Seminar and Meeting: Pauline Formation for the Mission** (1994); *International Meeting of the Coordinators of Vocation Promotion* (2008). **Writings of the Founder**. AD, 39-41 (The Disciples); UPS (various points); cf. CISP (argument on "Priest" and "Disciple").

²¹ *Special General Chapter* (1969-1971). *Capitular Documents*, no. 32.

In the IV General Chapter (1980), the Pauline was defined:

«Person called by God and consecrated to him to be, in communion with many brothers, “Saint Paul alive today” in order to live and give Christ Way, Truth, Life to men through an evangelization that makes use of the means of social communication»²².

In turn, the International Seminar on the «Pauline Formation for the Mission» (1994) offers this profile of the Pauline: «*A missionary who communicates his profound experience of the whole Christ in the culture of communication*»²³.

Our Congregation is made up of a fraternal communion of disciples and priests who participate in the same religious consecration and the same mission.

«In this new picture, the characteristic undertaking which the Pauline priest carries out in his specific apostolate, by virtue of his ordination and link to the episcopate, is to confer surety and authenticity to the preaching of the message of salvation. The presence and action of the brother is closely allied to that of the priest. He shares in the same mission, multiplying and disseminating the Word of God with the instruments of social communication»²⁴.

From this, it is deduced that, according to personal preparation and tendencies, there may be different and specific orientations in formation: *pastoral* type (spiritual-sacramental guide and editorial-apostolic competence) for priests; and respectively of the *professional* type for disciples. In any case, «*all the areas and stages of mediated evangelization – editorial, production and distribution – are open to all members*»²⁵.

Single identity and mission: double expression in ministeriality

In our Constitutions, in article 2, we read:

«The Society of St Paul is a religious clerical Congregation of apostolic life. It sets as its goal for its members the perfection of charity – to be attained through the spirit and practice of the vows...»;

²² *Acts of the IV General Chapter of the Society of Saint Paul*, Ariccia, 24 February 1980 – 13 April 1980, p. 13.

²³ **Pauline Formation for the Mission**. *Acts of the International Seminar on the Pauline Formation* (Ariccia, 12-23 October 1994), p. 173.

²⁴ *Ratio formationis*, 22-22.1.

²⁵ *Ibidem* 23.

and article 4:

«The members of the Society of St Paul, priests and brothers, profess the same religious vows. They form a community of life, prayer and apostolate. They are governed by the same norms, they share in the same spiritual benefits, and they have common rights and duties with the exception of those deriving from the sacrament of Order».

Being a priest or disciple in the Society of Saint Paul is a matter of vocation, that is, it depends on the call of God.

The old pattern «editorial, production, diffusion» has undergone radical transformations and today it is necessary to re-read the Alberionian discourse in which he entrusted the first moment to the priest and the other two to the disciples. Currently everyone admits that «*as regards our apostolic activity; orientation to such activity is to be based on aptitude, preparation and experience. All Paulines can carry it out in its various stages*»²⁶. However, there is also a need to deepen the sense of the «typical space» recognized as the priest's own and that attributed to the disciple²⁷. Such «typical spaces» are not exclusive but qualifying, and in them we will find a greater light to enhance and promote appropriate orientations for the Pauline priest or disciple. The union of priests and disciples is not a simple operational but a charismatic fact. «*The disciple by himself is a worker, not a Pauline; the priest himself, although a writer, is not a Pauline. Priest and Disciple together, united in the same apostolate, are both Paulines*»²⁸, declares Fr. Alberione. The ecclesiology of communion offers new lights in this regard to understand more about this relationship. To the gift of consecration – common to all Paulines, priests or disciples – are added the gifts of one or the other expression of being Pauline²⁹. The concept of complementarity must be understood and used well.

3.1.4 FOURTH FIRM PRINCIPLE:

*Belonging to the Pauline Family*³⁰.

²⁶ *Ratio formationis*, 21.1.

²⁷ Cf. *Constitutions and Directory*, 5.

²⁸ CISP, p. 159.

²⁹ Cf. *Modules for reflection and study on the identity of the Pauline in its dual expression: Priest-Disciple* (2002), modules 3.7; 3.8; 4.13.

³⁰ Bibliography: **Congregational Norms and Documents: Constitutions and Directory**, 3; VIII General Chapter: objective, priority and operative guidelines on the Pauline formation, and Chapter Declaration on the Pauline

Belonging to the Pauline Family is also a charismatic element:

It has pleased the Lord to continue to give me the health and the possibility of being able to complete the Pauline Family... I can assure everyone that everything has been done, only and always, by the light of the Tabernacle and in obedience»³¹.

Catechesis and reflection on the Pauline Family, made by the Founder especially in the years 1953-1954³², can now be considered complete, after the studies and insights promoted by the general governments of the FP in the annual meetings. To the Society of Saint Paul,

«the ministry of unity falls within its jurisdiction, for it is necessary for the Founder's original insight to be ongoing. His insight was to incorporate in one great unified operation a number of groups which, while preserving their own autonomy as regards government and organization, have their profound roots in one basic movement, spirituality and mission»³³.

The animation of the Aggregated Institutes (cf. UPS III, 105-106) and of the Cooperators (cf. AD 123) is a particular duty of the Society of Saint Paul. Moreover, with regard to the Daughters of Saint Paul, the Founder specifies:

«In our relations with the Daughters of St. Paul on an apostolic level it will be especially borne in mind that, in accordance with the charism of the Founder, we have in common with them a single mission, and as such it must appear before the Church. This principle should be the constant inspiration of the whole of our apostolic activity, both in content and in project, as well as in choices that have to be made on a practical level»³⁴.

Anticipating in a way the ecclesiology of communion rediscovered by Vatican II and the reality that various institutes of ancient tradition are trying to restore, the Founder indicated from the outset ecclesiality as the essential element of the FP:

Family. **Writings of the Founder**: AD, UPS, cf. CISP, pp. 137-138; 151-152; 262-263.

³¹ UPS, I, 375.

³² Cf. CISP, pp. 137ff; AD 33-35; and developed by Primo Maestro during the Spiritual Exercises in 1960 (cf. UPS I, 19-20 and 371-382; II, 243-244; III, 180-191; IV, 212-221).

³³ *Ratio formationis*, 26.1.

³⁴ *Constitutions and Directory*, 86.1.

«The Pauline Family – expressly says Fr. Alberione – reflects the Church in its members, in its activities, in its apostolate, in its mission... The sole origin: Jesus Christ, Master, whom we do not consider only in one part... but we have to take the whole spirit, the life of Jesus Christ... So the Institutes have to live a common spirit with a colour that then specifies the particularities, but the general principles are all the same, that is; spirituality is always in Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life... What is fundamental is common to all, to all parts of the Pauline Family [...] We mirrored ourselves in the Church, more than mirrored, *vita in Ecclesia, vita in Cristo et in Ecclesia*, physical Christ, mystical Christ in the Church»³⁵.

3.1.5 FIFTH FIRM PRINCIPLE:

*The call to attain in Christ the integral growth of one's own person*³⁶.

From the point of view of the formation of the apostle and, in general, of the Christian, the most important principle transmitted by Fr. Alberione to his sons and daughters is that of *integrality*: the individual must develop his whole personality in Christ. The complete person must find in the complete Christ the key to full realization. Just as the Christian does not realize himself by developing only a part of himself, so the Christ who saves is not a partial Christ but the complete Christ. The Jesuit Fr. Sorge said to the Paulines present in the VII General Chapter:

«in order to harmonize fidelity to the Gospel and to the Church with fidelity to man and faithfulness to the needs of social communication, it is necessary to be able to have the unity of life from the roots»³⁷.

With the expression: «*unity of life*», we touch a focal point of formation. I still refer to the thought of the Founder to formulate

³⁵ Course of Spiritual Exercises to the Pious Disciples [1963], in *Unitary Project...*, pp. 228-229 in the Italian edition.

³⁶ Bibliography: **Church Magisterium**: *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* (revised in 1985), *Potissimum institutioni* (1990), *Vita consecrata* (1996), *La collaborazione inter-istituti per la formazione* (1999). **Congregational Norms and Documents**: *Constitutions and Directory*, 69ff (integral formation); *Ratio formationis*, 62, 68, 70, 77.1, 137. "Integrality", *the Passion of the Pauline* (Letter of Father Silvio Pignotti, 1993). **International Seminar and Meeting**: *Pauline Formation for the Mission* (1994), *International Meeting of the Coordinators of Vocation Promotion* (2008). **Writings of the Founder**: AD, Leaflets (in *Anima e corpo per il Vangelo*).

³⁷ Cf. *Reflections for the VII General Chapter of the Society of Saint Paul*, pp. 47 and 78.

two convictions that I consider fundamental for the success of the formation of the Pauline. In Instruction IX of the second week of the Month of Exercises (April 1960), Fr. Alberione affirms: «For a general overview of our Pauline formation what is published in the *Ratio studiorum* is helpful as a summary»³⁸. The *Ratio* in force at that time had been approved a year earlier (3 March 1959); in the *Introduction*, signed by the Founder, the general principles on which all Pauline formation must be based, not only studies, were thus described. He qualifies this formation with the titles of «unitary», «complete», «Christocentric», and indicates as a goal a «*summa vitae*», a «balanced fusion of all the elements». Alberione warns against the generic: «Do not transmit a generic life, but an eminently Pauline doctrine, piety and religious life», and says he is in favour of a «preventive, positive, optimistic», not «repressive, pessimistic and negative» pedagogical system³⁹.

First conviction: the need to guarantee *integrality* in the Pauline formation, in each of its stages, in all the circumstances and in the two directions that Fr. Alberione takes into consideration and that we could define as *vertical* and *horizontal*.

Second conviction: the specifics of our apostolate. In the *Introduction* to the *Ratio*, we find an indication of Fr. Alberione that we can take as one of his great insights for the exercise of our apostolate. After saying that «the end sought is he who imposes the means», he says that in our mission «three elements are required: knowledge, language, technology» and explains that with these three words he intends to refer: to the contents, to the means of expression and the tool that guarantees speed and effectiveness in transmission.

In the Special General Chapter (1969-1971), the Congregation took up this research on *integrality* as an element of the Pauline identity. The Chapter Documents affirm: «*Integrality is the focal point of the Pauline spirit: the centre of its outflow is the wholeness of Christ*»⁴⁰. A particular pedagogy in the educational process must correspond to this statement. I propose some practical criteria:

1) In order for *integrality* to be truly a substantial characteristic in the formation process, it is necessary to understand it not only as a goal but, above all, as a starting point and as a methodological reference

³⁸ UPS II, 190.

³⁹ Introduction to the *Ratio studiorum* of the Pious Society of Saint Paul (1959).

⁴⁰ Special General Chapter (1969-1971). *Capitular Documents*, no. 381.

throughout the process. From the facts, formation embraces all aspects of the person: man, Christian, religious and all expressions of life: spirituality, study, spirit and practice of the apostolate, fraternity...

2) Since the whole process of formation and the different expressions of the Pauline life converge in the mission⁴¹, the promotion of integrality requires constant dialogue between the formators and those responsible for the apostolic activity.

3) The principle of *integrality* must be clear in the directives of the *Formation Iter* and in the *Apostolic Project*.

4) In order to foster the spirit of integrality in all Paulines, the formators and community superiors must seriously engage in the verifications and guidelines necessary to avoid any partial, disarticulated, disproportionate, reductive or static approach or attitude, and in promoting wholeness, organic unity, harmony, balance and healthy dynamism.

5) Although considered as a permanent commitment, formation must be integral. Only on this condition will communities be formative environments.

The main objective: sanctification

In our circles today, we speak little of holiness, perhaps because we consider it an impractical topic. Instead, we could see that precisely this theme is one of the most relevant among those dealt with in recent Magisterium documents, especially those concerning consecrated life. On the other hand, we cannot say that it is extraneous to the Pauline tradition. The first to deny this affirmation would be Fr. Alberione, who always considered the Paulines' primary commitment to aim for holiness, as he himself did. Valdir José De Castro writes:

«Generally, today, we speak little of sanctity. Perhaps because we think of it as a set of extraordinary gestures or ways of unusual act, far from the lives of ordinary people. Or because we see sanctity as similar to an object of luxury, patrimony of a few, unattainable whether by us in our consecrated life or by Christians in their state of life»⁴².

⁴¹ Cf. *Constitutions and Directory*, 66.

⁴² Annual Letter of the Superior General (2016), Fr. Valdir José De Castro, to the Confreres of the SSP: *Sanctity*.

We also know the declaration of Fr. Alberione: «*We need saints who precede us in these ways which have not yet been beaten and in part not even indicated...*». Perhaps, we know less about the context of this sentence. Well, it should be clarified that it is like the conclusion of one of the most current and enthusiastic projections of Alberione about our apostolate. He begins by saying:

«The apostolate is the flower of true charity towards God and souls; it is the fruit of an intense, inner life. It supposes a burning heart, which cannot contain and compress the internal fire: therefore it expands and is expressed in all forms that conform to the Church»⁴³.

And, after speaking of the Pauline duty to be at the forefront of service to the Church, as well as of the extraordinary character of our apostolate by its very nature, and of the conditions necessary to operate effectively, the Founder adds:

«There is persuasion that in these apostolates a greater spirit of sacrifice and deeper piety is required. Empty attempts, sacrifices of sleep and schedules, money that is never enough, misunderstandings of many, spiritual dangers of all kinds, perspicacity in the choice of means... Save others, but first save ourselves! We need saints who precede us in these paths which have not yet been beaten and are not even indicated in part. It is not a matter for amateurs, but for true apostles. Seek therefore the necessary lights at the tabernacle; and the graces of perseverance for a universal mediation of Mary Assumed in heaven»⁴⁴.

3.1.6 SIXTH FIRM PRINCIPLE:

*The call to community life for the apostolate*⁴⁵.

A style of life.

⁴³ CISP, p. 800.

⁴⁴ *Idem*. 807.

⁴⁵ Bibliography: **Church Magisterium**: *Redemptionis donum* (1984), *La vita fraterna in comunità* (1994), *Vita consecrata* (1996). **Congregational Norms**: *Constitutions and Directory*, 66; *Service of Authority. Manual* (nos. 305ff). **International Seminars**: *2nd International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers* (Ariccia, 16-21 October 2017); *Pauline Formation for the Mission* (1994), *The Actualization of the Pauline Charism in the Third Millennium: Spirituality and Mission* (2008). **Writings of the Founder**: UPS, Leaflet "Per una coscienza sociale" (in *Anima e corpo per il Vangelo*).

The community dimension is essential in our vocation. This dimension of consecrated life does not reduce or identify with living together, although it may also require life in common. The fundamental point will not be to live together, but to live in unity, in communion of life, in genuine fraternity. Our community life is characterized by the specific type of apostolate; *«born of the apostolate and in view of the apostolate... "We are at the service of souls": we are religious-apostles; we have to pass on what we have acquired, following on the example of the Divine Master»*⁴⁶. For us, the community is a school of fraternity and communion, of spiritual and apostolic growth⁴⁷. The spirit that unites us is essentially a *«family spirit»*⁴⁸. Everything in our community life is marked by the *«Pauline colour»*, which constitutes our own spirit: *«Each Congregation has a spirit and "its proper gift"; a spirit that is the soul and the principle of fruitfulness and also its reason for being, approved by the Holy See»*⁴⁹. The Founder was precise and had no doubts in this sense:

«Common life matters in putting together the forces. Do not consider ourselves individually: putting together our strengths because our society is the Congregation. Now in a society (whatever it is) everyone cannot do as he thinks: we get together, we look and we decide... The common life is to put together the strengths, the intelligence, the skill, the advice: it is to submit our thoughts, our work, our written article and our initiative in that particular office, etc. We hear the opinion of others and we correct and help each other, because there is something to receive and something to take away. Common life is negated when everyone acts by himself»⁵⁰.

In the Pauline community, each one fulfils his duties: the specific one of the superior is *«to take care of the four wheels»*: sanctity, study, apostolate, poverty⁵¹.

For Fr. Alberione, instrumental preaching is equated to oral preaching. He expressed this conviction in multiple occasions,

⁴⁶ UPS I, 285.

⁴⁷ Cf. UPS IV, 216-221.

⁴⁸ Cf. UPS IV, 212ff.

⁴⁹ UPS IV, 215.

⁵⁰ JAMES ALBERIONE, *Predicazione sulla Vita comune*, 50. Collection of the thoughts of the Founder arranged according to topics and by chronological order – Daughters of Saint Paul Archives.

⁵¹ Cf. UPS II, 117ff; AD 100.

especially in the book *Apostolato Stampa*. In other words, for Fr. Alberione instrumental preaching does not simply consist of giving aid to oral preaching, a kind of aid, but it is a true and authentic preaching. Therefore, it is necessary:

– To form apostolic persons as Christ did with the Apostles. The Founder, applying his Christological vision (the total man in the total Christ) to the formation of the Pauline personality, uses the metaphor of the cart which moves forward resting on the four wheels.

– To enter into the culture of communication in the name of efficacy in favour of evangelization. It is the substantial aspect deriving from the nature of our mission: to proclaim the Gospel in modern languages.

– To acquire an integral apostolic professionalism: evangelization with social communication and the style of witnessing full of the experience of God and of the competence to communicate it, which require creativity, editorial capacity, teamwork, organizational ability to manage people and works, openness towards cultures and religions, knowledge of languages, collaboration within the Pauline Family, animation and involvement of the laity in the mission, inculturation, willingness to read the signs of the times.

– To take on the corporate-organizational structure with an apostolic spirit, a spirit that must be that of those formed by Christ: awareness of the mandate, dedication of one's life to evangelization with one's own witnessing.

Reconsideration of work in consecrated life

We cannot ignore the reasons that led to the restoration of the practice of work in consecrated life. We are talking about an intense, systematic work carried out on a professional level.

«Redemptive work, apostolic work, tiring work. To expend in God's active service the whole of our strength, even our physical activity: is not this the way of perfection? Is not God pure Act? Are we not talking here of true religious poverty, that of Jesus Christ? Is it not work that pays homage to Jesus the Worker? Is there no obligation, even more so for religious, to comply with the duty to

earn one's living? Was not this a rule that Saint Paul imposed on himself? Is it not only by fulfilling this social duty that the apostle can stand up to preach? Does this not make us humble? Is not the pen in the hand and the pen of the machine essential for the apostolate of the Pauline families? Is not work [synonymous with] well-being? Does it not save [us] from laziness and many [other] temptations? Is it not better that beneficence and donations be only for new initiatives (for example, a church, an apostolic implement, or to earmark them for the poor and for vocations)? If Jesus Christ chose this path, was it not because it was one of the first points to be restored? Is not work a means of merit? If the Family works, does it not root its life in Christ under an essential point?»⁵².

3.1.7 SEVENTH FIRM PRINCIPLE:

*The totality of the message to be given to men today (the whole Christ)*⁵³.

A specific apostolate is assigned to each of the institutions of the Pauline Family and indicated in the rules of life. **But all the apostolates of the Pauline Family must be convergent...** This convergence of apostolic purposes is indispensable **so that together we can give the whole of Christ.** In 1949, the Founder warned:

«The Institute is a teacher. It aims to give Jesus Christ to the world, that is, his dogmatic doctrine, his morals, his cult. Here is Mary Queen of the Apostles who thus presents Jesus to the shepherds, to the Magi, to the world, as He is. The segmented Christ does not restore us, the complete Christ is Resurrection, Life and salvation for the whole world. We make a complete and sanctifying apostolate»⁵⁴.

It is true that every institution of our family must strive to give the total Christ; but it is also true that the specific task assigned to

⁵² AD 128.

⁵³ Bibliography. **Congregational Norms and Documents:** *The Formation Iter* of the Circumscription with its Study Program; the *Apostolic Project* of the Circumscription; *Special General Chapter* (1969-1971): 139ff; 554f; *Constitutions and Directory*, 69ff; 94ff; Document of the General Government at the conclusion of the International Seminar on the Pauline Formation (1994). *The Christocentric Heredity of Father Alberione*. "Acts of the International Seminar on the Spirituality of the Pauline Family. Ariccia, 16-27 September 1984; *Jesus, the Master yesterday, today and forever. The Spirituality of the Pauline Communicator*. "Acts of the International Seminar on Jesus, the Master", Ariccia, 14-24 October 1996. **Pastoral Programs of the Local Church. Writings of the Founder:** *Apostolate of the Press and Publishing Apostolate*, AD, UPS.

⁵⁴ Introduction to the book of Father Stephen Lamera: *Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life*, EP Alba 1949, p. 18.

each and the same human and material resources available to each congregation or institute does not allow, in practice, to be on all fronts and to satisfy all the pastoral needs of the people. It is therefore explained that the variety of institutions of the Pauline Family has “*converging ends*”, which should not be considered only as a strategy; it is an explicit indication of the Founder, who has repeatedly confirmed it. To describe the Pauline Family, he used several images, for example, that of a large parish, where the different pastoral services are assigned to different groups or commissions. In practice, it is the whole and the variety of institutions that allow the Pauline Family to achieve the common goal of giving the world the greatest gift: the complete Christ, the Divine Master.

The Founder writes:

«In his study of the various spiritualities – Benedictine, Franciscan, Ignatian, Carmelite, Salesian, Dominican, and Augustinian – it appeared more and more clear that each one has good points; but basically there is always Jesus Christ, the Divine Master, and each reflects primarily on one aspect of him; one more on the truth (Saint Dominic and followers); another more on charity (Saint Francis and followers); one more on his life (Saint Benedict and followers); another on two aspects, and so on. But if one then moves on to the study of Saint Paul, one finds the Disciple whose knowledge of the Divine Master is complete; he lives the whole Christ; he scrutinizes in depth the mysteries of his doctrine, of his heart, of his sanctity, and of his humanity and divinity: he sees him as Healer, Victim, Priest; he presents the whole Christ to us as he had already proclaimed himself to be: Way, Truth and Life. This angle contains religion, dogma, morals and worship; this perspective encompasses the whole Jesus Christ; through this devotion Jesus Christ completely embraces and conquers the human person... All devotions to the person of Christ, God and Man, converge in this devotion»⁵⁵.

The word “devotion” must be taken in its richest meaning, not as “devotionism”. Fr. Alberione excludes any false interpretation and clarifies it:

⁵⁵ AD 159-160.

«Devotion is consecration, giving oneself to the Divine Master, Way, Truth and Life, the total, integral gift of ourselves, in our physical, moral and intellectual forces... It is to receive everything from the Divine Master, in his light, in his spirit, in his examples and in his grace. Live in him, for him, with him and from him»⁵⁶.

The «total Christ», the «integral Christ» is found in the experience of the apostle Paul; for this reason the first meaning of “Pauline spirituality” or “Pauline spirit” is to be found in reference to Saint Paul: he knows the Divine Master in his fullness. The Founder specifies:

«Not many books of spirituality, since one is the spirituality: to live in Christ Jesus, Way, Truth and Life... Beware of spiritual discussions; beware of the various schools of spirituality which are 15-16... There is only one of spirituality and it is what the Lord has given you in Jesus Christ Master, Way, Truth and Life»⁵⁷.

It is inconceivable for the Primo Maestro a spirituality that accentuates an aspect of Christ nor to claim that Christ can be considered “one of the many means” for sanctification. Christ is all of spirituality and Christification is all of sanctity: this is the Founder’s conviction when he speaks of the Pauline spirituality:

«It happens that in various books, or of preaching, little emphasis is placed on the preponderant part of the person of Christ in our sanctification. The devotion to Our Lord is sometimes presented as one of the many means»⁵⁸.

Furthermore, this Christological title addresses the totality of the person:

«Jesus Truth works in the mind and confers faith; Jesus Christ is Way and works in the will, which conforms to the will of God; Jesus Christ is Life and works on sentiment leading to a supernatural life. If the graft is inserted successfully, the Christian will be able to say: “*vivit vero in me Christus.*” This is the great teaching of Saint Paul»⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ *Haec meditare*, First series, Monthly Retreats, 4 volumes – FSP: Alba-Roma I, 3, 14.

⁵⁷ *Alle Pie Discepolo del Divin Maestro*, 30 May 1963, 238-239.

⁵⁸ CISP p. 1379.

⁵⁹ UPS II, 149.

The whole Christ (Way, Truth and Life) offers the totality of faith (morality, doctrine and worship) to the totality of the person (will, mind, sentiment). This spirituality cannot be particular because it is the only one in which it coincides with the gospel lived by Saint Paul. The “substance of the Congregation” and the essence of the “Pauline spirit” is: *the whole Christ for the total person for all aspects of the Pauline life*⁶⁰.

3.1.8 EIGHTH FIRM PRINCIPLE:

*The universality of the Pauline mission (to the whole man and to all of humanity)*⁶¹.

As Paulines we were born under the sign of novelty, we are called to develop the whole personality in Christ, always straining forward, like Paul, in the effort to bring the light of the Gospel to all men and women. This requires some operational attitudes which I consider essential to be kept in mind and implemented right from the initial formation. Of these, I mention three:

a) Attention to the signs of the times

We must be aware of the situation in the world today, or rather of the situations that occur in the world; in particular, the situations of the Nations in which we are present by evangelizing. Each situation must be considered with a panoramic vision, recognizing the processes that are taking place, the precise point in which things are and the direction in which they move; the relationship between cause and effect, future forecasts, emerging aspects, the positive and negative values that come into play, the potential, the means at one's disposal, etc. ...

⁶⁰ Cf. SILVIO SASSI, “The total Christ during the time of global communication”. In “Jesus, the Master yesterday, today and forever”. *Acts of the International Seminar on Jesus, the Master* (1996), pp. 509-510.

⁶¹ Bibliography. **Congregational Norms and Documents:** *Special General Chapter* (1969-1971). *Capitular Documents: Our apostolic life*, chapter II: “Recipients, extension and situation of our specific mission”. nos. 71-131; *Constitutions and Directory*, 69ff; *Service of Authority. Manual*; VIII General Chapter: objective, priority and operative guidelines on the apostolate; *Apostolic organization and multimediality in the light of the third priority* (1992). **International Seminars:** *Acts of the International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers* (1988); *Acts of the Seminar on 'Jesus the Master'* (1996); *The Actualization of the Pauline Charism in the Third Millennium: Spirituality and Mission* (2008). **Writings of the Founder:** *Apostolate of the Press and Publishing Apostolate*, AD. UPS, “San Paolo” Bulletins.

For the Pauline, this attention to the signs of the times cannot be an academic fact, a set of cold data; it is necessary to arrive at a *pastoral reading of these signs*: to recognize the most urgent needs of the society that it serves. Perceive them with the heart of the divine Master who had compassion for the crowd and began to serve them (cf. Mk 6:34-44). Identify the real needs that must be met and find the most effective way to do it with our specific apostolate.

b) Acquire a vast culture

For us a consistent (non-generic) general culture and a high level in the sciences and techniques necessary for our identity and to put them at the service of our charism is indispensable. The wider and more consistent our culture is, the more our availability and effectiveness will grow in the many fields of our apostolate. We cannot “live on rents”; we need a culture that is constantly updated. In a few months, perhaps weeks, the different sciences are progressing, and new sciences are also emerging. We cannot assimilate them all, but we cannot completely ignore them if we are to be faithful to our mission. It is sufficient to outline some topics or fields of great relevance to realize our duty to live constantly updated: the new digital media, the world economy, migration, the phenomenon of globalization, genetics and bioethics, human rights and peoples, ecology, the “common home”, the excluded and marginalized, the theme of peace, etc.

Together with a broad culture, we need to *know and understand the various cultures*, starting with language, religion, system of government, laws, family institution, art, tradition, etc. Without a knowledge of cultures one cannot speak of inculturation, even less of interculturality.

c) Thinking of everyone

We say it in the words of Fr. Alberione: «*Our heart needs to be more vast than the seas and the oceans. [...] Love everyone, think of everyone, and work with the spirit of the Gospel which is universality and mercy. “Venite ad me omnes”*»⁶². But this “thinking of all” requires a clear awareness of the various sectors of society, of the various categories of people to

⁶² UPS IV, 117-118.

whom we turn. The Founder never fell into an indistinct universalism. The evidence of his concern would be sufficient for us to have a precise awareness of the various categories of recipients in "our great parish which is the world". Let us give an example: «*Toward a graded order in our publications: first, to serve the clergy, children, youth, the masses and those who exert greater influence over them, such as teachers; then the missions, social questions, the intellectuals, etc.*»⁶³. The pastoral dimension and the right choice of the contents of the apostolic works depend to a large extent on the attention we pay to the recipients. Furthermore, we must say that in recent times the number of social categories that can be called new has grown a lot, as well as the number of marginalized or excluded, the peripheries. We must think of everyone.

The universality of the Church's mission is another note much underlined in the Founder's initiatives and teachings. «*The Pauline apostolate is universal for the places and for the times*»⁶⁴. It is the awareness of the universality of the mission of the Church, which leads us to take care of everyone, to take an interest in all matters, to apply the principles of organization and coordinated action at all levels, including the international level, in the apostolate, without therefore ignoring the particular needs and the needs of inculturation. «*First of all, give the teaching that saves. Imbue all thought and human knowledge with the Gospel. Don't talk only about religion but talk about everything in a Christian way*»⁶⁵.

With regard to universality, the statements contained in AD 65 are still illuminating:

«The Pauline Family has an enormous opening onto the whole world, and in its whole apostolate: studies, apostolate, piety, activities and production. Publications for all categories of people, as well as all matters and events [are to be] judged in the light of the Gospel; its aspirations are those of the Heart of Jesus in the Mass; [all this] in the one apostolate "to make Jesus Christ known" [cf. Jn 17:3], to enlighten and to support every apostolate and good work, to take all peoples to its heart; to make the Church's presence felt in every issue: a spirit of adaptation and understanding for all public and private needs, [for] the whole of worship, [for] law and the intermarriage of justice and charity».

⁶³ AD 69.

⁶⁴ CISP, pp. 165-166 and UPS I, 372-373.

⁶⁵ AD 87.

4. CREATIVE FIDELITY: CONSTANT ADAPTATION OF THE CHARISM TO NEW SITUATIONS

By creative fidelity we mean the constant research, the constant study and meditation of the Founder's Charism, not an inert, static continuity, but a commitment to renew it «*taking care to continually transcribe it in the present, adapting it to changing situations of time and environmental conditions*»⁶⁶. It is

«an invitation to a call of perseverance on the path of holiness in the midst of the material and spiritual difficulties of daily life. But it is also a call to pursue competence in personal work and to develop a dynamic fidelity to one's mission, adapting forms, if need be, to new situations and different needs, in complete openness to God's inspiration and to the Church's discernment»⁶⁷.

I present two forms of approaching the charism of Fr. Alberione in the apostolate of formation: to **know** and **live it**. They are two intimately united aspects, which I present separately only for methodological reasons:

a) Approach the charism, through knowledge

The first task in formation is to guide people to know and appreciate the charism as a common treasure, a treasure of the Pauline Family in which we are all committed to carrying it forward, in the here and now of the Church. The formandi should be put in direct contact with the history of the Institute, with due graduality, so that they perceive the person of the Founder and his mission in true ecclesial function in response to the needs and requirements of his time.

b) Approach the charism, making it a way of life

If the specific formation is first of all a spiritual imprint that comes to be the decisive address of the religious discipline in general, the whole set of studies and spiritual formation must be able to come to be one's own life in each of the formandi.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Special General Chapter (1969-1971). Capitular Documents*, no. 45.

⁶⁷ *Vita consecrata*, 37.



JESUS MASTER, ORIGINAL MODEL OF THE COMMUNICATOR

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1. INTRODUCTION

The human person is created to communicate and to love. This desire penetrates all our relationships, and is a reflection of God who created us in his image and likeness.

In fact, the verb to *communicate* refers us to another term of the same root which is *communion* and connects to our daily experience of being together and forming *communities*. Authentic *communication* is not only a necessity for the survival of a *community* but it is also a gift of participation in the mystery of God which is *communion* and *communication*, as we profess in the so-called Apostolic Symbol, since ancient times of Christianity, the *rule* of our faith¹.

Today, especially in western society, we experience a “communication fatigue” in the *communication of the faith*, which is a primary task of the Church and of our Pauline communities. A kind of “muteness of faith” as Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini called it,

¹ Cf. BRUNO FORTE, *La porta della fede. Sul mistero cristiano*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo, 2012, pp. 7-26.

already thirty years ago², offering us believers in Jesus Christ, dead and risen, a path of evangelization and conversion that gives us a renewed *ability to communicate the Gospel*.

The “Secret of Success” to achieve this goal is certainly openness to the action of God who, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit³, introduces us to the whole truth of the mystery of Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen One. As it happened to the two disciples of Emmaus⁴, the Risen One meets us on the road of our perplexities and disappointments, explains the Scriptures to us and warms our hearts in understanding that only he is the foundation of our faith. The grace of the encounter with Jesus Christ offers our life a new “horizon” of meaning and the “decisive direction” to go to reach the “goal” and live fully in the Father’s House. In fact, he is “the Way, the Truth, the Life, the resurrection, our only and highest good”.

For this *vital encounter*, transforming and decisive, we put our existence at stake and experience the *urgency* of the Gospel which makes us apostles of Jesus Christ to announce, to testify and to *communicate* the preciousness of faith. Along these lines, we all become *disciples of Jesus Master, Original Model of the communicator*.

As *believers* in Christ and therefore, at the desire of the Founder, Father James Alberione, as “experts” in the world of communication, we enter in the active and dynamic process of the Pauline apostolate that addresses the men and women of our time⁵ in this phase of history called the *post-human*.

Indeed, we cannot *evangelize* without *communicating* the love of God at its source: “Now, the burning bush here is actually the mystery of the Trinity. In fact, there is no true inter-human communication except starting from that reality from which, in which and for which man and woman were created, that is, the mystery of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, their communion of love, their unceasing dialogue. God creates man in the image and likeness of himself. Each

² Cf. CARLO MARIA MARTINI, Lettera Pastorale *Effatà, apriti*, 1990-91.

³ Cf. Rm 5:5.

⁴ Cf. Lk 24:13-35.

⁵ Cf. SILVIO SASSI, *Evangelizzare con la comunicazione e nella comunicazione*. “Ravviva il dono che hai ricevuto”. The creative fidelity to one hundred years of the Pauline charism. Letter of the Superior General (posthumously), Rome, 26 November 2014, Feast of Blessed James Alberione on the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Society of Saint Paul, *San Paolo*, Year 89, no. 446, November 2014, in www.paulus.net.

human creature carries within itself the imprint of the Trinity that created it. This imprint also manifests itself in the ability and the need to connect with others by communicating⁶.

God educates us with his *Word to communication*⁷. But how does God speak?⁸ God speaks by *doing*, producing history in the history of men. Whatever we do – this is the mystery of freedom and grace – God finds a way to carry out his plan in what we do. So when we say “Word of God” we must not immediately think of the sound of the voice, but we think about what happens in *history*, about *events: creation, exodus, covenant, exile... incarnation of Jesus, Church, etc.*, from Genesis to Apocalypse.

The Word explains the *facts*, the interventions of God in favour of his people and therefore requires above all to be *listened to*⁹ then become a *Halakhah*¹⁰, that is, to be lived and put into practice¹¹.

Since the Word – the *Logos* – became flesh and placed his tent among us, learning and using our language, he is *Master* and *original model* of how a Pauline communicates.

2. KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES

All the Scriptures are necessary to know Jesus Master: *Original Model of the communicator*. Only in him do we find the *ultimate meaning* of Scripture which, in his Person, reaches completion.

⁶ CARLO MARIA MARTINI, *Effatà, apriti*, no.18.

⁷ Communication includes language, but it does not boil down to this. The verbal (the language, the words, the content) represents only 7% of the communication, that is, only a minimal percentage of what we have said. Instead, 38% of communication passes through the para-verbal channel: tone of voice, timbre, rhythm, inflection, volume, pauses, speed... Finally, as much as 55% of communication passes through the non-verbal channel, also called body language: it includes the movements of the body, face, eyes, attitude, proxemics, appearance, posture. Effective communication is a communication in which all three levels are involved and are coherent with each other. To communicate 360° we must touch all the senses, through all three access channels: auditory, kinesthetic, visual. Cf. Spazioprever online lessons, I.I.S. “A. Prever”, Pinerolo.

⁸ *Word*, in Hebrew is called *dabar*, but its first meaning is not “word”, but rather “fact”, “event”.

⁹ Dt 6:6-9: Listen Israel...

¹⁰ The Hebrew root of the verb *hлк*: הִלַּךְ, means *to walk*. The literal translation of *Halakhah* would be, “*the way to go*”. The plural *halakhot* indicates the religious “normative” tradition of Judaism, encoded in a body of Scriptures and includes biblical law (the 613 *mitzvòt*) and subsequent Talmudic and rabbinic laws, as well as traditions and customs.

¹¹ Lk 11:28.

The mystery of the Transfiguration¹², common to all three synoptic gospels, can help us comprehend that to understand who Jesus is, it takes Moses and Elijah; and to understand who Moses and Elijah are, it takes Jesus. The full unity of God's plan that gives birth to the New Testament includes the Old Testament which is needed to understand the New Testament¹³.

From this splendid fact of the history of salvation, the mother community of Jerusalem was born and all the churches were born, which in faith understood that the whole saving economy was concentrated in Jesus Christ, the Risen Crucified. They had met him, followed him, loved him and they were spending their life in love for his *Name*. Their relationship with Jesus was a true *communication* of life that went on growing, through the action of the Holy Spirit.

Their experience of faith has its source in the paschal mystery and, starting from this culminating moment, they re-read the whole journey made with Jesus, in order to transmit it to others:

«What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of life – for the life was made visible; we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us – what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing this so that our joy may be complete»¹⁴.

Faith therefore allows us to insert ourselves in this “deep and original relational space”, where God comes to meet man and, at the same time, where man hands himself over to God in a filial relationship that unites him indissolubly to God, in Christ and through the Spirit. It is a *process of communication* that is continuous and enriching, received as grace, which runs through all history, in a *descending and ascending movement*, between heaven and earth¹⁵.

¹² Lk 9:28-36.

¹³ Cf. Lk 24:44-48. Cf. the no. 41 of *Verbum Domini* of Benedict XVI which quotes Saint Augustine: «*Il Nuovo Testamento è nascosto nell'Antico e l'Antico è manifesto nel Nuovo*».

¹⁴ 1Jn 1:1-4; cf. Jn 1:1-18; Heb 1:1-3.

¹⁵ This is evident in the liturgical experience where the fundamental communication between God and

The great question that arises in us confronting the continuous technological evolution of digital culture, with its sudden changes in society and customs, concerns on *how* to maintain and grow in the authentic *interpersonal relationship*, beyond loneliness and individualism. *How* can we reach and form our and others' *conscience*, in the light of the Word of God in order to respond with responsible freedom?

In the world of communication, the new styles of linguistic interaction used especially by digital natives constitute a cultural area of great importance for evangelization. How can we communicate to them the good news that is Jesus Christ, if we do not enter their logic of relationship with the intelligence of the heart? How can we encourage a *personal* encounter with Jesus Christ, the only one in whom we can be saved? The "media" society that lives permanently on the Net constitutes, for the Pauline communicator, the "theological place" where to consume his life "by doing the charity of truth". Today there can no longer be an "evangelization" detached from communication. The Church has taken on a new awareness. The great challenge, also for us, therefore concerns the meaning and scope of faith in Christ Jesus in our existence, in order to be able to combine, in a new way, *Gospel and communication*.

3. JESUS CHRIST: THE ORIGINAL MODEL OF THE COMMUNICATOR

The *Original Model of the communicator* is Jesus Master Way, Truth, Life. He did not leave us *words* but his *life* perfectly coherent with the words spoken and which we hear in the Gospels. In his Person and in his ministry, as Messiah of Israel and of the entire humanity, He reveals the Father to us, in the Spirit and opens us to Trinitarian life, as "communion" of the three divine Persons. He makes his exodus to the Father, in a continuous gift of himself and freely offers himself for our salvation¹⁶.

The Son, in fact, is not *a* revealer of the Father, but is the *only* revealer of the Father: «Whoever sees me sees the Father»¹⁷. The

humanity takes place which also involves all creation and history. Our *amen* responds to the gift of salvation offered to us by the Father through Christ and in the Spirit.

¹⁶ Jn 10:11-18.

¹⁷ Jn 14:8-11.

Letter to the Hebrews clearly expresses it: «In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe»¹⁸.

In the Son, filled with the Holy Spirit, the Father pronounces his definitive *Word*, for this reason he asks us to *listen* to him¹⁹. At the wedding in Cana, Mary his mother recommended to the servants: «Whatever he tells you, do it!»²⁰. In fact, Jesus did not come to abolish but to fulfil all the Scriptures²¹, within the one story of the Covenant and faith of Abraham and Israel²². In his *diaconia*, as Messiah of Israel and of all nations, Jesus *personifies* all that *is salvific* for his people²³. He is sent by the Father into the world «so that all might have life and have it more abundantly»²⁴.

Jesus Master reveals to us that God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we believe, is a God *who speaks* and *communicates life*. He has spoken in history and continues to speak today, unlike idols²⁵, adored by the pagans, who «have mouths and do not speak, have eyes and do not see, have ears and do not hear, there is no breath in their mouth»²⁶.

Since creation and from the ancient covenant, divine pedagogy has progressively unfolded in history and can be found as a valid project

¹⁸ Heb 1:1-2.

¹⁹ Lk 9:35.

²⁰ Jn 2:5.

²¹ Mt 5:17-19.

²² Mt 8:10-12; Lk 7:9; Rm 3:21-4:25; Gal 3:6-29, etc.

²³ While in the Synoptics Jesus speaks of the *Kingdom of heaven* in parables, in the Gospel of John he uses the formula of direct revelation: *I am*. The four gospels are a "manual" of progressive formation to the mystery of his Person.

²⁴ Jn 10:10; cf. 1Jn 4:9-10.

²⁵ FRANCESCO ROSSI DE GASPERIS: "The idols of a human imperial Power that intends to dominate the universe or teach the world with a manufactured wisdom, as nations, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians and the Greeks once did. Rome, with all their successors on the stage of history up to the present day; the idols of Arrogance that makes use of military Strength and Power, the idols of Money and Communication that oppresses and dominates by dulling them, on the consciences of men and women; idols of Consumerism and the Propagation of lies; idols of Words continuously repeated, but without substance; idols of the Sex empty of love; idols of the genetic Manipulations of life and death that drunk humanity, as the bricks cooked in the fire and the bitumen with which the tower of Babel was built (Gen 11:3-9); the idols of the Walls that rise among peoples and civilizations; the idols of Cultures who claim to replace the Word of Adonai; idols of a Knowledge that seeks to violate the secret of the Name of the Lord, instead of teaching us to pray and say yes to him".

In www.azionecattolica.it/aci/assistenti/appuntamenti/convass09/Schema_Relazione.

²⁶ Ps 135(134),16-17.

in Sacred Scripture, read and transmitted in the Church, as a great educational book and code of meaning for humanity²⁷, which helps to rekindle one's affection. In this pedagogical process which is the history of salvation, the three divine Persons are at work in a unitary but differentiated way, each according to the personal property that characterizes it; in this sense, the Trinity offers itself as a model and criterion for a believing community that evangelizes. God educates by addressing his Word of freedom, of Covenant, first of all by calling us to existence out of love²⁸, arousing otherness with which to enter into communion of life, although we have preferred to accept the lie of the ancient snake that has broken, causing a great disorder, the harmonious relationships with God, with the other, with creation²⁹.

The human person is of a dialogic nature and God is communicated to him gradually, in history, to heal broken relationships. The threatened person, afraid of his fragility and weakened by the disorder of sin³⁰, can count on the covenant that God offers him incessantly, even in the moment of utmost loss. In fact, God's love always reaches us where we are currently and saves us if we allow him to act.

The educational work of God is fully manifested in Jesus Christ in his Only Begotten Son, the definitive Word full of love and truth addressed to us, sinners. The goal that God pursues is to make us conform to the image of his Son³¹, the fullness of the image and likeness of God according to which the human being, male and female, was created³².

Jesus Christ became completely involved, except in sin, in our human condition³³, falling into the life situations of the people he met in his ministry of Messiah and Saviour. He takes on the language of human experience to communicate to men. In this too it is an inspiration for us in the apostolic service, within the world of communication where we are called to live and know the languages of the recipients of the mission to understand their needs and respond to them³⁴.

²⁷ Cf. 2Tm 3:16.

²⁸ Cf. Wis 11:23-26.

²⁹ Cf. Gen 3:1-22.

³⁰ Cf. Jn 1:14; Heb 1:1-2; Gal 4:4-6.

³¹ Cf. Rm 8:29-30.

³² Cf. Eph 1:3-14; Col 1:13-20.

³³ Cf. Heb 4:15.

³⁴ Cf. FRANCESCO ROSSI DE GASPERIS, *Il Dio Trino educatore dei suoi figli*, Convegno diocesano 2010.

In Jesus God knows how to relate to the situation of the people with whom he comes in contact, using images, examples, symbols taken from everyday reality, social life and the natural environment in which listeners are immersed. He deeply involves them, stimulating them to respond freely and leaving them free to accept his desires or to reject them, driving away their fears³⁵. In an era characterized by the difficulty of recognizing authentic, stable and long-lasting desires, capable of giving orientation to the various areas of existence, the Gospel can be considered and received as an education in the importance and truth of one's desires, as a guide for each further step. God speaks through the focus of the great desires that open to the future, containing within it a propensity for their implementation, a hope that pushes us to take initiatives³⁶.

The paschal event of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the culminating moment of God's communication with humanity.

«In Jesus crucified, God addresses man a Word that accepts rejection, the defeat of failure, in order to offer himself as free Love, without manipulative coercion, and to be welcomed freely as Love always alive. From this Easter love of God, not conditioned by our acceptance or rejection, from this Easter love that transforms the failure in relationship, that is sin, into an occasion of growth in love and reconciliation, we are educated not to stop at defeats, not to give up or lose courage, generosity, when our proposal is not accepted or exceeded by events, to continue to offer our collaboration with God with confidence and humility, who has been able to go through crises and changes, epochal evolutions of his people without fail in his fidelity»³⁷.

4. JESUS CHALLENGED BY INCOMMUNICABILITY

Jesus Master, eager to offer the Father's love to everyone he meets in his ministry, finds himself facing *incommunicability*, that is, that human experience of closure which sometimes turns into a restrictive existential condition, in which it becomes difficult or

³⁵ Cf. CARLO MARIA MARTINI, *Dio educa il suo popolo*, Centro Ambrosiano, Milano, 1987, p. 16.

³⁶ Cf. GIOVANNI CUCCI, *La forza della debolezza. Aspetti psicologici della vita spirituale*, Apostolato della Preghiera Edizioni, Roma, 2011, pp. 41-51.

³⁷ FRANCESCO ROSSI DE GASPERIS, *ivi*.

impossible to communicate. Jesus heals from incommunicability, as the Gospel often tells us, bringing people back to the possibility of communicating and participating fully in the banquet of life and of *interpersonal relationships*, as well as in worship to strengthen the *relationship with God* and praise him in prayer, by making himself the voice of all *creation* that also waits to be liberated³⁸.

A meeting with human incommunicability, Jesus Master makes it, for example, by casting out a mute demon³⁹; when the demon was cast out, the mute began to speak and the crowd, taken aback, said: «Never before has such a thing been seen in Israel!» But the Pharisees said, «He casts out demons by the prince of demons».

To many questions about the disease of human communication, the deaf-mute recovery scene narrated in Mk 7:31-37 is the answer. We contemplate Jesus when he is letting a man out of his inability to communicate. It is about the healing that St. Ambrose calls “the mystery of openness”⁴⁰. Jesus does not immediately perform the miracle. First of all, he wants to make this man understand that he can and wants to take care of him. This is why he separates him from the crowd and takes him aside. Jesus uses his corporality to be in contact: he puts his fingers into his ears as if to reopen the channels of communication and anoints his tongue with his saliva to communicate his fluency. They are bodily signs that allow getting in touch with those who have closed themselves in their own world.

Jesus begins, both in signs and then in the next command, by healing the sense of listening, the *ears*. The rehabilitation of the *tongue* will follow. To these signs, Jesus adds *an upward gaze* and a *sigh* that indicates his suffering and his participation in such a painful human condition. The true and proper command follows: “*Effatà*” that is, “Be opened!”⁴¹.

What happens following Jesus’ command is described as *opening* («his ears were opened»), as *loosening* («the knot of his tongue was

³⁸ Rm 8:19-24.

³⁹ Mk 7:31-37 and Mt 9:32-38.

⁴⁰ S. AMBROGIO, *I misteri* 1,3: «Christ celebrated this mystery in the Gospel, as we read, when he healed the deaf mute».

⁴¹ It is the command that the liturgy repeats before the Baptism of adults: the celebrant, touching with his thumb the right and left ears of the individual chosen and their mouths closed, says: “*Effatà*, that is: open, so that you can profess your faith in praise and glory of God” (Adult Christian Initiation Rite, no. 202).

loosened») and as rediscovered *expressive correctness* («and he spoke correctly»). This ability to express oneself becomes contagious and communicative. In the story of the deaf-mute, with Jesus being involved in the complex and fascinating vortex of human communication, we can read the parable of our own arduous interpersonal, ecclesial and social communication⁴².

Already after the call of the four fishermen, Mark⁴³ tells us what happens on the typical day of Jesus in Capernaum. Immediately Jesus collides with the evil one who opposes his work of liberation.

The authority of Jesus is manifested in teaching and in the ability to free from evil so that his Word is effective in casting out demons and does what he says: «Shut up! Come out of him!» The person is freed from the anxiety of incommunicability. Evil spirits cannot stand the presence of Jesus, the Holy One of God.

Particularly detailed is the narration of what happens to the demoniac of Gerasa and his total liberation and integration⁴⁴. Jesus is faced with an inhuman and alienating situation, which generates anguish and fear and from which man is freed. We are in pagan territory, and the one who was possessed by Legion⁴⁵ frequents the tombs, places of maximum impurity for the Jews⁴⁶.

His «going out» from the tombs, the place of death to go to Jesus, indicates a desire to get out of his state and to have the possibility of new life. «He was bruising himself with stones» and could not be «controlled by anyone». After the intervention of Jesus, his situation totally changes: from “human refusal” he becomes a “sane” and “dressed” person, a symbol of identity and dignity found. Jesus was not afraid to meet him and welcome him as he was.

Jesus is asked to leave but the man freed from Legion is sent by Jesus to announce «what the Lord has done to him»⁴⁷; he must return from the place of death to that of life and face a new way of

⁴² Cf. CARLO MARIA MARTINI, *Effatà, apriti*, nos. 2-3.

⁴³ Mk 1:21-28.

⁴⁴ Mk 5:1-20; Cf. Mt 8:28-34; Lk 8:26-39.

⁴⁵ “Legion” indicated both the name of a military unit of 6,000 men, but also the Roman army itself. The image of the boar, out of contempt for the submissive people, was present in the banners of the 10th Fretensis legion, which was part of the army of Syria and was stationed in Palestine.

⁴⁶ Nm 19:16.

⁴⁷ Ex 18:1, 8; 19:4; Dt 1:30; 3:21.

communicating with the reality of himself, his fellow citizens and their economic interests.

Communication here is intertwined on various levels. Jesus Master promotes the person and his freedom and fully heals him. The evil one, on the contrary, destroys and ruins⁴⁸.

5. JESUS COMMUNICATES SALVATION TO ZACCHAEUS

The episode of the publican Zacchaeus in the synoptic gospels is narrated only by Luke who with this salvific meeting, at the end of Jesus' *journey* to Jerusalem, shows the fulfilment of the prophecy pronounced at the beginning of his ministry in the synagogue of Nazareth⁴⁹. The year of grace bears fruit in Zacchaeus. Luke is very attentive to the theme of conversion⁵⁰ and the passage concerning Zacchaeus must be read in the whole of the Lucan work. In fact, it is an admirable story where all the great coordinates of the Gospel are present and where the *communication of salvation* between Jesus and the sinner shines.

As he approached Jericho, Jesus had healed a blind man.⁵¹ Now he *crosses* the oldest city in the world. Jericho, the city of palm trees, an oasis rich in vineyards and balsam plants, a few kilometres from the Jordan and the Dead Sea, is surrounded by a completely arid region. In ancient times, it was a city famous for the corruption of customs. Located 300 meters below sea level, at geological level, Jericho is the most depressed city in the world, in an antithetical position with respect to Jerusalem, built at the top, towards which you always go up.

In Jericho, there is the redemption of a "public" sinner, or rather of the *chief of the publicans* and a *rich* man.

Conversion always springs from an encounter with Jesus, from a look, from a dialogue, from a *communication* of life and forgiveness. The encounter with Jesus is the principle of salvation for all.

⁴⁸ Jn 10:12-13.

⁴⁹ Lk 4:16-21.

⁵⁰ Conversion dynamics: Lk 15:20; 7:36-50; 18:9-14; 5:27-32; 23:39-43. Jesus goes to the sinner, takes the initiative, justifies and praises him because he repents and then takes him with him to heaven.

⁵¹ Lk 18:35-43.

In the narration, it is easy to distinguish several successive moments. In the first (v. 1), Luke notes that Jesus was crossing the city. In the second (vv. 2-4), the character Zacchaeus is described with negative shades and in the third moment (v. 5), Luke takes up the description of Jesus who looks up and utters a startling and unexpected word: «Zacchaeus, come down quickly, because today I have to stay at your house». Each of these words bounces throughout the Gospel of Luke and offers us the key to Jesus' behaviour, entering his heart.

In the fourth moment (v. 6), there is Zacchaeus' reply who, surprised, immediately descends from the tree and welcomes Jesus full of joy. The following image portrays people who murmur (v. 7); Jesus faces the fierce criticism: «He went to stay with a sinner»!

At the sixth moment, Zacchaeus re-enters the scene, expressing the fruit of his conversion in the desire to return what he had defrauded and giving goods to the poor; consequently, Jesus himself ends with a hymn of joy because his mission is «to seek and save what was lost»⁵².

Jesus looked up at him, so that the desire of Zacchaeus and that of Jesus meet. Jesus calls him by name: «*Zacchaeus, come down quickly, because today I have to stay at your house*». With the living presence of Jesus and with his welcome, something decisive is realized for the people he meets. He *must* do the work for which he was sent: that nothing and nobody be lost!

In God's plan there is Zacchaeus' call to conversion, that is, to the possibility of "changing course". By asking him to "stay" at his home, Jesus shows him the desire for friendship, for communion and deep personal relationship.

From this encounter comes a new life for Zacchaeus. Finally, Zacchaeus met someone who welcomes him for what he is, touching with his hand the salvation that entered his house, in the person of Jesus.

Immediately, the fruits of faith spring forth from Zacchaeus. He is no longer the same as before. Jesus has become the reference point of his life. This "little man", in fact, knew well to be in the category of unrecoverable sinners.

⁵² Cf. Lk 15: The primacy of mercy is affirmed; Jesus scrutinizes and values the small steps and openings of the human heart.

To obtain forgiveness, according to the Pharisaic thought of the time, he would have to repair all the damage done and change his business. Jesus does not ask him this, indeed he does not ask him anything. The whole Gospel is contained in the conversation between Jesus and Zacchaeus: God calls and man is put in a position to respond by having the opportunity to convert, that is, to understand his life in a completely different way than in the past.

Zacchaeus tried to see who Jesus was: one who was not impressed by appearances; perhaps it was right for him since he certainly suffered from the *quality* of his life, and at the same time he lacked the possibility to change it.

Thus, he overcomes the obstacle of the crowd by climbing the tree... he tries to see Jesus but at the same time he hides from his eyes, avoids direct encounter, avoids entering into a relationship. On the one hand, in fact, Jesus fascinates him; on the other, he inspires fear. Zacchaeus has his convictions, he has something to defend, to hide among the branches of that sycamore tree... but he accepts the initiative of Jesus who has found a way to get to his heart, without hurting him out of respect. Indeed, Zacchaeus being a *public* sinner, Jesus compromises himself *scandalously* with his sin.

Jesus *raises up his gaze* and looks at him. It is a look of love and tenderness that penetrates within Zacchaeus and that loosens the scaffolding and incrustations that the *chief of the publicans* had carefully built within himself in order to do that reprehensible job that attracted everyone's hatred and resentment. Jesus sees "a man" where others see only a delinquent and a corrupt one: *chief of the publicans* (arch-sinner), wealthy landowner, small in stature... Zacchaeus is aware that he is a *sinner* hated and despised by everyone, but has in his heart still indistinct desire to know Jesus; something is changing in his life: «He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he did not succeed...». A disciple always walks *behind* but Zacchaeus «ran *ahead* preceding Jesus and, to be able to see him, he climbed on a sycamore tree, because he was about to pass there». In fact, according to the word of Jesus, «Tax collectors and prostitutes go ahead in the Kingdom of God»⁵³.

⁵³ Mt 21:31.

In an unexpected way, the situation turns upside down because when he arrives at the place, at the foot of the sycamore tree, Jesus looks up, sees him and speaks to him by calling him by name. Zacchaeus, who wished to see Jesus, discovers that he is seen by Jesus. In this meeting of glances, there is a whole sense of faith, as a relationship and as an encounter that prepares the experience of being saved. This dynamic has a paradigmatic value for each of us. Jesus' words reveal it: «Zacchaeus, come down quickly, because today I have to stay at your house». He is called by *name*, in the *urgency* of love that saves because there is no time to waste *today* (not yesterday, nor tomorrow). I must and want to stay, “ *dwell* ” – not simply “to stop” – *at your home*, that is, share the intimacy of the table and of life. As happened when the risen Lord met the two disciples of Emmaus on the road while in their despair which turned into joy⁵⁴. The intensity of Christ's gaze and words, addressed precisely to him, the sinner par excellence, changes Zacchaeus' life forever, who «descends *quickly* and welcomes him full of *joy*»⁵⁵. Of course, there is always the possibility of a *bad gaze* that does not allow others to change; they are those who knew Zacchaeus for the bad experiences with this loan shark and feel authorized to “murmur” against Jesus who «entered the house of a sinner!». The ability to carry the weight of the stretcher of one's paralysis⁵⁶ is also part of the conversion process.

Zacchaeus, however, without any request from Jesus, undertakes to make concrete gestures well beyond what is due. Jesus comments: «*Today* salvation has come in this house...» in fact «the Son of man came to seek and save what was lost»⁵⁷. We are at the heart of the Gospel and of fulfilling the *Promise* of God. Observance of the law is no longer sufficient; following becomes necessary. At the origin of every authentic conversion is therefore God's gaze on the sinner. When the human being has discovered and tasted the God of mercy and forgiveness, he cannot live otherwise than by continually converting to God.

⁵⁴ Cf. Lk 24:29; Ap 3:20.

⁵⁵ Cf. Lk 6:23; 8:13, etc.

⁵⁶ Cf. Jn 5:1-18.

⁵⁷ Cf. Lk 5:32; 15:32.

6. JESUS CONFRONTS THE COMPLEXITY OF HUMAN COMMUNICATION (Jn 8:1-11)

The Gospel passage of Jn 8:1-11 narrates the encounter between Jesus and a woman caught in adultery⁵⁸. We read it in the context of chapter eight, where the final editorial redaction placed it, that is, within a controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees. The text offers us an extraordinary icon of communication between Jesus Master and the woman. Law, mercy and sin confront each other.

Jesus finds himself in Jerusalem in the days preceding his last Easter, that of his passion, death and resurrection. After spending the night on the Mount of Olives, at dawn he goes up to the temple, where he welcomes those who come to him to listen to him⁵⁹. While he is seated and intent on proclaiming the Word, «scribes and Pharisees bring him a woman caught in adultery»⁶⁰ and do this «to test him»⁶¹. According to the Torah, in fact, the attack on marriage is serious because it is an attack on the project of creation and the covenant with God, of which marriage is a *figure*⁶². These religious men, zealous interpreters of the Law, place her *in the midst* of everyone and hurry to declare: «Master,... Moses in the Law has commanded us to stone

⁵⁸ The Church has always considered Jn 8:1-11 an authentic passage of the Gospel, therefore belonging to the canon of the inspired biblical books, yet it has known a strange and particular history. It is ignored by the Fathers of the Greek Church until the twelfth century and still in 1546, on the occasion of the Council of Trent, there are some who would like to remove this pericope from the gospels. In the oldest manuscripts, this text is missing, then over the centuries it wanders now within the Gospel according to Luke, now in the Johannine one. After a long and troubled migration, this text was inserted in the gospel according to John, after chapter 7 and before v. 15 of chapter 8, in which a word of Jesus is attested which seems to justify this position: «You judge according to the flesh; I don't judge anyone». Jn 8:1-11 presents thematic and content similarities with the Gospel according to Luke and could also be placed literally after Lk 21:37-38.

⁵⁹ Cf. Jn 8:1-2: «Jesus made his way to the Mount of Olives. But in the morning he went to the temple again and all the people went to him. And he sat down and began to teach them»; the same thing says the parallel text of Lk 21:37-38: «During the day [Jesus] taught in the temple; at night, he would go out and spend the night on the mountain called of the Olives. And all the people went to him early in the morning to listen to him».

⁶⁰ Jn 8:3.

⁶¹ Jn 8:6.

⁶² The prophet Malachi explains this relationship: «The Lord is witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have broken faith though she is your companion, your betrothed wife. Did he not make one being, with flesh and spirit: and what does that one require but godly offspring? You must then safeguard life that is your own, and not break faith with the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with injustice, says the Lord of hosts; you must then safeguard life that is your own, and not break faith» (MI 2:14-16).

women like this»⁶³. Their declaration is formally flawless⁶⁴. For them, there seems to be no *third way out*, only “yes” or “no”.

The keepers of the Law ask Jesus: «What do you say?»⁶⁵. Let us imagine the scene seeing these people with the stone in hand, ready to throw it if one takes responsibility for starting first. Jesus feels the threatening tension growing, but his nerves remain under control and he keeps his mental clarity. As a non-verbal answer, *he bends down* and *begins to write with his finger*: «Jesus bent down and started writing with his finger on the ground». The Gospel does not report any of the written words... The Pharisees look and insist because if he says “yes”, he contradicts his message, but if he says “no”, it contradicts the Law and he can be stoned too.

And since they insisted on questioning him, Jesus then straightens himself up, *raises his head* and, breaking the psychology of the pack, says the decisive words, which refer to their own conscience: «Who among you is without sin, throw the first stone against her» and *bending over again* wrote on the ground⁶⁶. At that point, starting with the elderly, everyone leaves. Only Jesus, he who was sinless⁶⁷ could throw a stone, but he does not. His word-question, which does not contradict the Law and at the same time confirms his practice of mercy, appears effective, goes to the heart of his accusers. Then Jesus approaches the woman who has not run away and remained there, in the middle with Jesus at his level that makes her say, with her own mouth that “nobody condemned her”. The scene ends with the resolute words of the Lord: «Go and from now on do not sin anymore».

The intervention of Jesus is a perfect strategic intervention. His personality, perfectly balanced and integrated with a healthy and broad mind, reasons with all the criteria and makes use of his acute intuition.

In a *wise* manner, Jesus varies his *communicative positions* because he knows that if he stands up, in a defiant attitude, the stones would

⁶³ Jn 8:4-5.

⁶⁴ In Lv 20:10 and Dt 22:22, the Law provides for the death penalty for adulterous men and women; in Dt 22:23-24, attests the same penalty, by stoning, about a man and a woman engaged in adultery.

⁶⁵ Jn 8:5.

⁶⁶ Jn 8:8.

⁶⁷ Cf. 2Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1Jn 3:5.

come to him. For this reason, it knows how to lower itself in order to intervene with other actions. Bending to the ground, it breaks the group's anger, the system that had been created, the dynamics of the group that wants to eliminate him. In this humble position he can say: «Who among you is without sin, throw the first stone against her»⁶⁸.

With these words and his attitude towards the bottom, the collective anger subsides and each of those present is sent back to his own conscience and returns to being: "individual". Jesus knows that if the first one throws the stone, all the others will follow as irresponsible robots. Therefore, he acts on the leader to block the whole group. So everyone leaves. He remains in the middle and does not abandon the woman accused of adultery but frees her first from the judgment of others and then from that of God through forgiveness but helping her to see his truth clearly: from now on, do not sin anymore⁶⁹. Jesus takes upon himself the penalty reserved for this woman: it is no coincidence, in fact, that at the very end of this chapter we read that his opponents «collected stones to throw them against Jesus»⁷⁰.

Only when everyone is gone that *he straightens up* and stands *in front of the woman*. She, standing there in the midst of everyone, is now finally returned to her identity as a woman⁷¹ who stands before Jesus and sees Jesus standing before her: thus, true encounter is possible, true communication with equal dignity. It is the end of a nightmare.

Nobody had spoken to her; everyone had dragged her there like an object. Jesus instead speaks to her, restores her to her dignity as a woman and asks her: «Where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?» And she, answering «No one, Lord», makes a great confession of faith.

He who is in front of her is more than just a teacher, «he is the Lord»! who affirms: «I do not condemn you either; go and from now on do not sin anymore». They are absolutely gratuitous and unilateral words.

⁶⁸ As in other cases, Jesus is not satisfied with confirming the Torah which prescribes to make the evil of adultery disappear, but transfers the need for observance starting from the human *heart*, as he explains in the discourse of the mountain (Mt 5:21-48), thus Jesus also denounces the adulterers who commit it in the heart and in the way of *looking* (Mt 5:27-30).

⁶⁹ Cf. Ez 33:11.

⁷⁰ Cf. Jn 8:59.

⁷¹ Jesus calls her: «*Woman*» (Jn 8:10), as he had done with his mother (Jn 2:4; 19:26), with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:21) and as he will do with Mary of Magdala on Easter dawn (Jn 20:15).

In fact, the text does not tell us that the woman was repentant, she is not interested in her feelings but reveals that, when the encounter between the holiness of Jesus and the sin of this woman occurred, then – to take up again the words of Saint Augustine: «only the two of them remained, the wretched and the merciful».

7. CONCLUSION

Jesus Master is the Original Model of the communicator, as an inspired *Event-Word* of the Father, living and written, which in turn inspires and, by virtue of the Holy Spirit, makes the internal dynamism of all the stages of the history of salvation that occur from the first creation to eschatology⁷².

In the beginning was the *Logos*⁷³, and with his *Word* God created the world and its inhabitants, placing them in Eden, in the *garden* which is a place of meeting and communication⁷⁴. But before the *word*, in the beginning was *silence*⁷⁵; in fact, as Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, «Our awareness of God is a syntax of *silence*»⁷⁶. Silence is also in the fulfilment⁷⁷, as a figure of the ineffable mystery of God who *communicates* himself in history.

In our communication, personal, community, apostolic difficulties, we can let ourselves be touched and healed by Jesus in order to reopen the channels of communication at all levels. Keeping our gaze fixed on him, on how he communicated salvation, in the gift of himself totally free and for everyone, each of us learns the art of *effective communication*. In fact, in its dual dynamism, *communication* involves not only “breaking the silence with the word” but also “breaking the word with silence” because we are always faced with the mystery of the other.

⁷² Rm 1:1-4.

⁷³ Jn 1:1-18.

⁷⁴ Gen 1:1-2:24.

⁷⁵ Cf. EMILIO BACCARINI, *L'umanesimo biblico di Abraham Joshua Heschel*, in <https://mondodomani.org/di-alegesthai/>, ISSN 1128-5478.

⁷⁶ ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL, *L'uomo non è solo. Una filosofia della religione*, Rusconi, Milano, 1970, pp. 82-83: «Our awareness of God is a syntax of silence, in which the soul mingles with the divine, in which the ineffable that is in us unites with the ineffable that is beyond us. [...] In the kingdom of the ineffable God is not a hypothesis derived from logical presuppositions, but an immediate intuition, evident in itself like light. He is not something to be sought in the dark with the light of reason. In the presence of the ineffable He is the light».

⁷⁷ Cf. Ap 8:1-13: When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was *silence* in the sky for about *half an hour*.

I wish to conclude with the programmatic words of Pope Francis in the 53rd *message* for the World Day of Social Communications:

«Ever since the internet first became available, the Church has always sought to promote its use in the service of the encounter between persons, and of solidarity among all. [...] Today's media environment is so pervasive as to be indistinguishable from the sphere of everyday life. The Net is a resource of our time. It is a source of knowledge and relationships that were once unthinkable. [...] Everyone can see how, in the present scenario, social network communities are not automatically synonymous with community. [...] Being members one of another is the profound motivation with which the Apostle invites us to put away falsehood and speak the truth: the duty to guard the truth springs from the need not to belie the mutual relationship of communion. Truth is revealed in communion. Lies, on the other hand, are a selfish refusal to recognize that we are members of one body; they are a refusal to give ourselves to others, thus losing the only way to find ourselves. [...]

Such a capacity for understanding and communication among human persons is based on the communion of love among the divine Persons. God is not Solitude, but Communion; he is Love, and therefore communication, because love always communicates; indeed, it communicates itself in order to encounter the other. In order to communicate with us and to communicate himself to us, God adapts himself to our language, establishing a real dialogue with humanity throughout history (cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, 2). By virtue of our being created in the image and likeness of God who is communion and communication-of-Self, we carry forever in our hearts the longing for living in communion, for belonging to a community. [...]

The present context calls on all of us to invest in relationships, and to affirm the interpersonal nature of our humanity, including in and through the network. All the more so, we Christians are called to manifest that communion which marks our identity as believers. Faith itself, in fact, is a relationship, an encounter; and under the impetus of God's love, we can communicate, welcome and understand the gift of the other and respond to it.

Communion in the image of the Trinity is precisely what distinguishes the person from the individual. From faith in God who is Trinity, it follows that in order to be myself I need others. I am truly human, truly personal, only if I relate to others. In fact, the word person signifies the human being as a “face”, whose face is turned towards the other, who is engaged with others. Our life becomes more human insofar as its nature becomes less individual and more personal; we see this authentic path of becoming more human in one who moves from being an individual who perceives the other as a rival, to a person who recognizes others as travelling companions. [...]

The image of the body and the members reminds us that the use of the social web is complementary to an encounter in the flesh that comes alive through the body, heart, eyes, gaze, breath of the other. If the Net is used as an extension or expectation of such an encounter, then the network concept is not betrayed and remains a resource for communion. [...]

We can, in this way, move from diagnosis to treatment: opening the way for dialogue, for encounter, for “smiles” and expressions of tenderness... This is the network we want, a network created not to entrap, but to liberate, to protect a communion of people who are free. The Church herself is a network woven together by Eucharistic communion, where unity is based not on “likes”, but on the truth, on the “Amen”, by which each one clings to the Body of Christ, and welcomes others»⁷⁸.

⁷⁸ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, Message for the 53rd World Communications Day. «*We are members of one another*” (Eph 4:25). From social network communities to the human community”, 24 January 2019.

ROUND TABLE
“APOSTLE PAUL, MODEL-FORM”

Paul, a Man of Communication and Relations

Father Giacomo Perego, International Coordinator
of St Pauls Biblical Centre

Paul the Formator

Sister Elena Bosetti, Bible Scholar of the Sisters of Jesus Good Shepherd

Paul and his Collaborators

Pastor Lidia Maggi, Baptist Church



PAUL, A MAN OF COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

Father Giacomo Perego, ssp

International Coordinator of Saint Pauls Biblical Centre

Father Giacomo Perego, Pauline priest, is a doctor in Biblical Sciences. He has carried out various apostolic responsibilities in the Congregation; we only mention here that he was also the director of *Edizioni San Paolo* (St Pauls Publications).

He is presently the international coordinator of the St Pauls Biblical Centre. He carries out his apostolate in the biblical sector of St Pauls Publications. He also doubles as a professor at PIME Theological School of Monza, where he teaches courses on St Paul and biblical history.

1. INTRODUCTION

When we reflect on Paul in the context of communication and formation, we generally tend to understand him from a “subject” point of view (one who communicates and forms)¹. In this brief presentation, I would like to present him from an opposite point of view; Paul as a person who allows himself to be formed and makes himself available to the communication of others both in reference to individuals, in reference to the first community, and in reference to the realities that he lives. An individual knows how to communicate and form not only when he has a great impact on others (this could also be the result of manipulation), but above all when others become for him a value to which he gives significant space and particular importance.

It seems to me that this could be well delineated in the light of the events that took place in Antioch, the Church that in my opinion has

¹ Cf. GIUSEPPE MAZZA - GIACOMO PEREGO (ed.), *Paolo: una strategia di annuncio. Identità di una comunicazione d'impatto*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo (MI), 2009.

had the greatest influence on Paul as a man of communication and relationships².

2. «THEY STAYED TOGETHER IN THAT CHURCH FOR A WHOLE YEAR» (ACTS 11:26)

The first experience of communication and relationship, in Antioch, was the encounter with Barnabas. According to the account in Acts 11, the formation of the Christian community in Antioch took form in three successive stages: the arrival of those who were dispersed by persecution: these are those who brought the first announcement to the Jews and pagans (Acts 11:19-21); the arrival of Barnabas and his work of consolidation with the involvement of Saul (Acts 11:2-24); the opening of the Church to missionary experience with all the related challenges (Acts 11:25-26). All this will have a strong impact on Saul.

– **Acts 11:19-21.** The expression «those who had been dispersed» refers to the persecution that involved Stephen and the group of Hellenists which had the Pharisees as principals, including Saul. The drive to get out of the boundaries of Judaism stems from this group. It should be remembered that among the seven deacons chosen to serve the community in the distribution of goods, a certain Nicola is mentioned, a proselyte of Antioch and a pagan who converted to Judaism (Acts 6:5): thus the seed of the announcement to the pagans had already been launched. The story states that within the group of Hellenists there was a movement directed exclusively to the Jews and another that addressed the pagans: «some of them are citizens of Cyprus and Cyrene». How can this sudden opening be explained? Either before their adhesion to the Gospel, these Jews did not consider separation from pagans as a matter of importance, or adhesion to Christ has imprinted on their faith such a strong eschatological imprint to remove all sorts of “barriers” to make room for an extended proclamation. The birth of the mixed church of Antioch, the living centre of the spread of the Word, is not planned and has no official protagonists: anonymous Christians played a key role in Antioch. Openness to the pagan world is not a “choice” made by Paul or Peter

² The articles contained in MATTEO CRIMELLA (ed.), *Atti degli Apostoli*, Messaggero, Padua, 2013 are useful for an in-depth analysis of the passages covered in this report.

as “leader”: the Church walks in this direction by the influence of the Spirit³.

– **Acts 11:22-24.** When Barnabas arrives in Antioch, he consolidates an experience already started, recognizing its positivity. He probably arrived in Antioch in a delicate moment connected to the period in which Caligula was emperor (37-41 AD)... According to a detail reported in Eusebio’s Chronicle, Caligula’s reaction to the resistances of the believers of Antioch, determined to reject any form of veneration of the emperor, he also forced the leaders of the Church to abandon the practice. “Christians” was the derogatory name with which these uncompromising men were hunted for by the empire, this would be confirmed by several first century texts (Suetonius, Tacitus and Flavius Josephus) where the name “Christians” is used in this light⁴. Barnabas, therefore, would not have gone to Antioch to carry out an inspection, but to strengthen a tried and despaired community: this would also explain the presentation of Barnabas in Acts 4:36.

– **Acts 11:25-26.** In such a situation, Barnabas sets out in search of Saul. The two will work together for a year, dedicating themselves to teaching as “doctors” within the community. The move to engage Paul proves tactically intelligent. Who could comfort a persecuted community more than one who is a converted persecutor? Saul’s presence would demonstrate the strength of the grace and power of the gospel. This is how Saul, after the first unsuccessful attempts conducted independently after the revelation on the road to Damascus, finds himself involved in a community where Jews and pagans who have accepted Jesus, live together in mutual trust and respect. This trait becomes a strong, intense experience that shapes Paul. According to the exegete Peerbolte⁵, we are used to thinking of a Paul who forms Antioch but, in reality, it is Antioch that forms Saul. Barnabas and Saul will be the ones who will help the community to reinterpret in a

³ Cf. MICHEL GOURGUES, *Sept pas vers l'étranger, voie d'accès à l'identité ecclésiale: le témoignage des Actes des apôtres*, Science et Esprit 71, 2019, pp. 347-364.

⁴ Keep in mind that the term occurs only in three passages of the NT: Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1Pet 4:15-16. Very significant in this regard is the passage from 1Pt 4:15-16 in which Peter stresses: «None of you has to suffer as a murderer or thief or evildoer or informer. But if one suffers as a Christian, one should not be ashamed; rather, glorify God for this name». Cf. JUSTIN TAYLOR’S study, *Why were the Disciples first called “Christians” at Antioch?* (Acts 11:26), *Revue Biblique* 101, 1994, pp. 75-94.

⁵ Cf. L. J. LIETAERT PEERBOLTE, *Paul the missionary. At the origins of the Christian mission*, St Pauls, Cinisello Balsamo (Mi), 2006.

theological sense what was a derogatory label “Christians”: defining oneself means finding one’s reference point in the person of Jesus, the Christ. And this passage constitutes a fundamental turning point of the early Church. We pass from a “suspicious” current inherent in Judaism, to a new movement that is no longer defined on the basis of the Torah, but on the basis of faith in Christ. The reference point is no longer the Sabbath, the law, the standards of purity, the temple... but Christ. Saul absorbs all this and absorbs the good fruits of the providential relationship that God has offered him: we find the characteristics of Barnabas in him, a sign that his “teacher” has had a positive and constructive impact not only on the community of Antioch but also on the future apostle:

- 1) Barnabas stands out as one who «sees the grace of God»: this is the work that Paul will try to carry on with his letters: pointing out the grace of God and his primacy in the life of believers.
- 2) Barnabas is the apostle «who exhorts»: there is no Pauline letter that does not have an exhortative section, adherence to Christ is not a cognitive or intellectual fact but permeates the whole of existence.
- 3) Barnabas qualifies as a man «good and full of the Holy Spirit»: the Holy Spirit has a key role in John and in the Pauline letters which contribute to the unveiling of the Trinitarian mystery.
- 4) Barnabas qualifies as a teacher, able to «educate many people»: how not to think about the doctrinal argument of the Pauline letters, even when they arise from practical questions.

3. «THEY LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM AND DISMISSED THEM» (ACTS 13:3)

However, in Antioch Paul is formed not only by Barnabas, but also by the entire atmosphere that characterizes the community⁶. There he breathes a new way of being a “holy assembly”. If in Jerusalem the decisions are entrusted to the so-called “Pillars” (which, not by chance, in Gal 2:6, 9 Paul makes relative), in Antioch the confirmation of the community is different and can be seen at the same moment in which the Spirit pushes the Church to proclamation and it was necessary to focus on “who” to send. Read **Acts 13:1-3**.

⁶ Cf. RINALDO FABRIS, *Paolo. L'apostolo delle genti*, Paoline, Milan 1997, pp. 138-172.

1) First of all, Luke wants to clarify that the drive for the mission does not come from Paul or from Barnabas, but from the Holy Spirit, the true great protagonist of the entire narrative: he is the one who intervenes; he is the one who chooses. Barnabas and Saul are presented as «sent by the Holy Spirit». The subject is the Spirit. To the extent that Luke intervenes with a direct speech, a clear and lucid command: «set apart Barnabas and Saul for me!».

2) Secondly, we are told that the whole community is involved in the episode. The choice of the Holy Spirit passes through the mediation of a community that fasts, prays and lays hands on its emissaries. Until now the act of laying on hands had been “reserved”; this can be seen in Samaria: the Spirit does not descend if Peter does not lay his hands first... Things then began to change and, in Caesarea, Peter had just begun to speak when the Spirit, descended surprisingly on Cornelius and his family. Now the whole community seems to lay hands. It was not a small change. After the mission, the two returned to the Church that sent them, gathered the community and spoke about what God has done and accomplished⁷.

3) A third aspect is linked to the composition of the community: various origins are noted. Barnabas comes from Cyprus, a “Niger” certainly from regions farther south closer to the east, Manaen comes from the Herodian family, Saul is a Pharisee from Cilicia, Lucius comes from Cyrenaica (present-day eastern Libya). In other words, the Church of Antioch reveals itself as a space in which the differences of origin, social backgrounds and formation coexist without problems or discrimination of any kind. The same charisms are diversified: we speak of prophets and teachers. For someone like Saul this was to be a great novelty that found its most evident (and most exposed!) expressive point in the one table (common meal). This way of “being church” will generate a certain dissatisfaction from “some on the side of James” who will disrupt the emblematic place of communion – the one table – causing confusion and debate.

4) Indirectly, the text suggests that the work begins under the leadership of Barnabas, appointed first at the beginning of the process (Acts 13:2, 7). Gradually the roles are reversed: Saul gradually assumes

⁷ Acts 14:27-28.

a leading role during the mission, taking control of situations; reacting strongly to some and delivering significant speeches with regards to certain situations. Perhaps it is no coincidence that precisely in this context we witness the change of name, from Saul to Paul, as if his formation process had reached a turning point.

In Antioch, Paul receives a heritage that no one will ever be able to take away from him and that will push him even further. This heritage allows itself to be shaped by the image of the Church of Antioch such that it feels with conviction that it is necessary to go even further, towards an image of the Church as a “body” in which Christ becomes present and manifests himself. In this sense, Antioch remains exposed to two contrary currents: those who want to make Christianity flow back into Judaism, structuring the community according to the synagogical assemblies (those on the side of James) and the group of those who want to push Christians towards a new identity that finds in Christ the fulcrum of living and working and in the community meal, the place of being the body that manifests the Risen One.

4. «SENT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT THEY LEFT» (ACTS 13:4)

What we have said in order to show how Saul’s personality allows himself to be challenged and questioned by the relationships and new communication models also emerge in the so-called “first missionary journey” that he lived in the company of Barnabas. In the Acts of the Apostles, the “missionary journeys” structure the narrative plot dedicated to Paul. The journeys, however, do not differ only in their range of action – ever wider – but also according to the type of mission that is involved, varying according to the situations. The first trip brings to light the challenges that will mark Paul’s whole life, both on the level of relationships, as well as proclamation. The journey can be understood under four moments.

1) **Acts 13:4-12.** At first, Paul and Barnabas evaluate themselves in Cyprus with a proconsul who calls them to himself to listen to the word of the Gospel, but the proconsul doesn’t find it problematic having his daily teacher, Elimas the magician, at his side; he does not imagine in the least that his fiddling with the world of magic could

constitute an obstacle to welcoming the Word. The apostles will need to respond actively in order for the proconsul to open his eyes and for the magician to close his mouth (and his eyes!), staggering out of the scene and holding out his hands. The first outcome is positive, but we are perplexed by the sudden conversion of the proconsul and the risk of syncretism that characterizes the scene. Going to the pagans is not a foregone conclusion: syncretism is imminent.

2) **Acts 13:13**. Success was followed by a first moment of crisis: John Mark left. This abandonment will impress deeply on Paul's experience and in his relations with Barnabas, to the point that Luke attributes to John Mark precisely the reason for the dispute that will lead to the separation of the two apostles. Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 140-202) is the first to identify John Mark with the author of the second gospel, a hypothesis which, in our opinion, is likely. Mentioned several times in the Acts of the Apostles (12:12, 25; 13:13; 15:37-39), cited in some letters from Paul (Col 4:10-11; 2Tm 4:9-11; Phlm 23-24) and in the final greetings of Peter's first letter (1Pt 5:13), Mark would have found himself uncomfortable with the new turn that Paul and Barnabas, were giving to the mission: not only the opening to the pagan world, but the decision to turn to reality where the pagans were the majority. Going to the pagans is not a foregone conclusion: it requires a questioning of one's schemes.

3) **Acts 13:14-15, 44-52**. The mission continues with the absence of Mark and enters a city where the proclamation to the Jewish community of Antioch of Pisidia and Iconium does not give the desired results due to the jealousy and obstacles that are encountered, while a decisive openness characterizes the pagan world. Success gives a new turn to the mission, with a heavy gesture (shaking off the dust) towards a world, the Jewish one, which up to now has represented the fundamental context of the proclamation. To keep the Jews away from Paul and Barnabas the nobilities (noble women and noble men) are stirred up: action is directed toward the "big fish" to condition the "small" ones. Going to the pagans is not taken for granted: the reaction of the Jews is decisive.

4) In **Acts 14:8-20**, Paul and Barnabas reach Lystra. If in Cyprus the accession of the proconsul seems to be the result of an unexpected fright more than a simple and free faith, the reception in Lystra is

enthusiastic, but the apostles must pay close attention to the audience. Winning applauses is not enough, conversion is needed. The response of the inhabitants of Lystra is that of idolatry (sacrifices, processions, animals...) and, with difficulty, Paul and Barnabas manage to appease a delirious crowd... which was easy to manipulate. The fruit, which seems so promising at the beginning, results in a dangerous stoning. Starting with a miracle was not a good idea. Turning to the pagans is not forgone: everything can be totally misunderstood without the foundations that Judaism offers.

What do we mean? From success to crisis, from crisis to rejection, from rejection to stoning, the first missionary journey allows for sowing and reaping of some fruit. However, it must also be noted that the proclamation of the Gospel is more complex than expected. It is not enough to announce, it is necessary to keep in mind the recipients to whom one addresses and then to support, to form: «After having made a considerable number of disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, confirming the disciples and urging them to remain firm in the faith» (Acts 14:21-22).

The facts speak, the experiences form, directing Paul towards a precise relational and communicative style. He shares what he personally lived and experienced.

- Not human strategies, but listening to the Spirit who speaks through deeds.
- Not a solitary experience, but an experience of Church and communion⁸.
- Not imposing content, but pointing to the living person of Christ.
- Not letting in the truth from the outside, but allowing the truth to emerge from the recipients, orienting with patience and constancy.

⁸ Cf. MARC RASTOIN, *Paul apôtre dans les Actes (Ac 14,4.14) et l'ambition ecclésiologique de Luc*, Revue Biblique 126, 2019, pp. 264-276.



**PAUL THE FORMATOR: A FATHER/
MOTHER GIVING BIRTH IN PAIN**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking of Paul as “formator” – and of formation in Saint Paul – is a great challenge for me because it is not a peripheral aspect, but a living and pulsating nucleus rooted in the Apostle’s soul and viscera. Paternal and maternal viscera. Indeed, Paul feels he is “father” and “mother” of the communities he generated through the proclamation of the Gospel. Indeed, Paul suffers the pains of childbirth until Christ is fully formed in those whom he generated: *Donec formetur Christus in vobis*.

Paul’s “formator” identikit is that of a “father” who generates in the Spirit, of a “mother” who suffers pains, who gives birth in pain¹. Rupnik writes:

«The spiritual father is the one who, in the fertilizing power of the Holy Spirit, generates men for God. He is the one through whom what the post-Sanctus of the 4th Eucharistic prayer accomplishes:

¹ See B.R. GAVENTA, «The Maternity of Paul: An Exegetical Study of Galatians 4:19» in: *Studies in Paul and John* (FS J.L. Martyn), Nashville 1990, pp. 189-201.

“because we no longer live for ourselves, but for him who died and rose for us”. The spiritual father is the bearer of this charisma of the generation, therefore he has a mission closely linked to life: the sense of true fatherhood is giving life².

But Paul goes further, he becomes so involved (also on a human level) that he can say to the Thessalonians: «We were gentle among you, **as a nursing mother** cares for her children. With such affection for you, we were determined to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our very selves as well...»³.

2. FORMING IS LIKE GIVING BIRTH, AND GIVING BIRTH HAS TO DO WITH SUFFERING...

Paul is an expectant mother, he feels like a pregnant woman who «suffers the labour pains». And not only once, but again and again: it is the case of the Galatians: «My children, for whom I again suffer the birth pangs until Christ is formed in you»⁴. Bonnard observes: «A child cannot be born into the world twice, but the Galatians can»⁵. The Apostle generated the Galatians with the announcement of the Gospel through which he also gave birth to life in Christ. But these his “children” have let themselves be seduced by preachers of a pseudo-gospel, they want to return under the Law making the grace of Christ in vain. Paul does everything he can to win them back, he suffers pain again until his “children” (such they remain) have completed the “gestation of Christ” in themselves. What a web of relationships! Paul suffers the labour of childbirth, but the gestation of Christ must be carried out by the Galatians. *Donec formetur Christus in vobis*.

Let us pause for a moment on this phrase which had a strong impact on Father Alberione: this is confirmed by his *Donec formetur Christus in vobis*, published in 1932, a life and formation project for the whole Pauline Family.

– Let us first dwell on the verb «*formetur*» (in Greek «*morphōthē*», passive voice of the verb «*morphein*») which means «to give shape,

² M. I. RUPNIK, *Nel fuoco del Roveto ardente*. Iniziazione alla vita spirituale, Lipa, Roma 1996, pp. 86-87.

³ 1Thes 2:7-8.

⁴ Gal 4:19.

⁵ PIERRE BONNARD, *L'Épître de Saint Paul aux Galates*, Neuchâtel, Paris, 1972.

to form, to model», and to the passive «to be formed». In the New Testament writing only Paul uses this verb and only here. It alludes to the formation of the embryo in the woman's womb⁶. Formation is therefore a gestation....

– Paul says: «*Donec formetur Christus*». Which Christ? The Christ of the Gospel he preached, the Christ crucified and raised from the dead, who «freed us so that we could remain free»⁷.

– ...*in vobis*: «until Christ is formed **in you**» (in Greek, *en hymin*). It is the communitarian “you”, the ecclesial “you”. The gestation/formation of Christ must take place in every believer and in the ecclesial community. «Only when Christ has assumed such a stable form among the Galatians *that the community is fully strengthened in the gospel* will the apostolic pains of childbirth have fully achieved their spiritual purpose»⁸. In other words, formation will have reached its goal when Paul's children can say like him: «*I live but no longer I: Christ lives in me*»⁹. Father Alberione has a good intuition: there is a deep connection between Gal 4:19 and 2:20. «Formation is needed where we live of Jesus Christ: *donec formetur Christus in vobis* (Gal 4:19), and for greater reason when we must be a form to others: *forma facti gregis ex animo* (1Pt 5:3)»¹⁰.

3. «DO NOT CON-FORM... BUT BE TRANS-FORMED»

At the beginning of the exhortative part of the letter to the Romans, Paul offers a fundamental criterion: «Do not *be conformed* to this world, but *be transformed yourselves* by renewing your way of thinking, in order to discern the will of God, what is good, pleasing and perfect to him»¹¹. We have two imperatives here: the first of negative sign (*mē sychēmātizesthe*, «do not be conformed»), the second of positive sign (*metamorphousthe*, «be transformed»).

⁶ Cf. ANTONIO PITTA, *Lettera ai Galati*, EDB, Bologna, 1996, pp. 271-273. The generative language is recurrent in the Pauline letters: the Apostle qualifies Timothy «my true son in faith»; «beloved son», and so Titus (cf. 1Tm 1:2, 18; Ti 1:4). And dearest son is also Onesimus, the slave whom Paul «began in chains» (Phil v. 10).

⁷ Gal 5:1.

⁸ FRANZ MUSSNER, *La lettera ai Galati*, Paideia, Brescia, 1987 (new edition 2000), pp. 478-79.

⁹ Gal 2:20.

¹⁰ JAMES ALBERIONE, *Donec formetur Christus in vobis*, Pia Società San Paolo, Alba-Roma, 1932, p. 37.

¹¹ Rm 12:2.

The Christian (the Pauline) is decidedly **nonconformist**: not by fashion but by vocation, and not only for a season but always. The wisdom of the world in fact contrasts with the «wisdom of God» which is manifested in the «word of the cross»¹². It is therefore necessary to go against the trend: *do not be conformed... but be transformed yourselves*. «The metamorphosis required by the mercy of God is a fundamental, radical, wonderful transformation of the whole person... It is a profound and global transformation, of a “renewal” (*ana-kainōsis*) that starts from the mind/thought and it leads to the «discernment of the will of God»¹³. One becomes “new” starting from the thought, from a way of seeing, of evaluating, of judging¹⁴. According to Father Alberione: mind-will-heart. Spiritual and apostolic formation, with a universal, cosmic breath.

a) Con-forming the mind to the mentality of Christ. Paul can say: «We have the thought, the mind (*nous*) of Christ»¹⁵. What does it mean? That the baptized received the gift of the Spirit and therefore the ability to see, think and discern in the manner of Christ, in the Spirit of Christ.

b) Con-forming the affections to the feeling of Christ: «Have the same sentiments of Christ Jesus in you» (Phil 2:5). The Christological hymn that follows specifies: «he humbled/emptied himself by assuming the “form” (*morphèn*) of the slave»; «He made himself obedient to death, and to a death on the cross» (vv. 7-8). But neither should the previous context in which Paul exhorts the Philippians (and us) like this: «Do nothing out of rivalry or vainglory, but each of you, with all humility, consider the others superior to yourself. Each does not seek their own interest, but also that of others» (Phil 2:3-4).

c) Con-forming the will and acting on the behaviour of Christ. Paul can say of himself: «For me, living is Christ» (Phil 1:21). Now, «those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. So if we live by the Spirit, we also walk by the Spirit. We do not seek vainglory, provoking and envying each other» (Gal 5:24-26). And to the Galatians (to us) the Apostle indicates

¹² 1Cor 1:18-25.

¹³ HEINRICH SCHLIER, *La lettera ai Romani*, Paideia, Brescia, 1982, p. 580; see also EDOARDO M. PALMA, *Trasformati in Cristo. L'antropologia paolina nella lettera ai Galati*, Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Rom, 2016; STEFANO ROMANELLO, *L'identità dei credenti in Cristo secondo Paolo*, EDB, Bologna, 2011.

¹⁴ Cf. ROMANO PENNA, *Lettera ai Romani*, III. Rm 12-16, EDB, Bologna, 2008, pp. 27-33.

¹⁵ 1Cor 2:16.

a fundamental criterion: what matters «is the faith (*pistis*) which becomes active through charity (*agape*)» (Gal 5:6).

4. «BECOME MY IMITATORS AS I AM OF CHRIST»

Paul has fully con-formed himself to Christ. There is no discrepancy between the gospel he announces and his lifestyle. For him, «living» is Christ. In his flesh he bears the «stigmata of Christ» (Gal 6:17). And therefore he can exhort his children to take an example: «You know how you must imitate us» (2Thes 3:7); «Make yourselves my imitators» (Phil 3:17).

Let us deepen the theme with another scratchy text, decidedly Pauline. The Apostle writes to the Corinthians: «You could also have ten thousand teachers in Christ, but certainly not many fathers: **it is I who generated you** in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. Please, therefore become **my imitators** (*mimētai*)» (1Cor 4:14-15).

Here a close link emerges between fatherhood and exemplarity. Paul is not simply one of many educators. There can be many educators and teachers, of fathers only one. And shouldn't children look like their father? *Talis pater, talis filius*. But the Corinthians are far from resembling the father who generated them! Hence, Paul insists: «Become my imitators as I am of Christ» (1Cor 11:1).

Paul is not a narcissist (as some think). Of course, proposing himself as a “model”, he draws attention to himself. But like a “mirror” that reflects the face of Christ. In imitating Paul, one imitates Christ. Barbaglio observes:

«There is therefore a reduplication of the imitative scheme: as I imitate Christ, so you must imitate me. Paul is at the centre of a chain of models and imitators, at whose ends we have the active example of Christ and the imitation of the Corinthians; the apostle is the intermediate dimension, in one way an imitator of the Christ model, for the other model offered in imitation to the interlocutors»¹⁶.

Paul is *model-form*. According to Father Vanni, he is «**a model of a person united in Christ**». He said in a conference at the Institute of Jesus the Priest:

¹⁶ GIUSEPPE BARBAGLIO, *La prima lettera ai Corinzi*, EDB, 1996, p. 246.

«If we accept Christ as the absolute of life we will be people united within; otherwise we will experience multiplicity and fragmentation within us. Christ, accepted with faith, constitutes the new nucleus of ideals and values that makes Paul an integrated person. It should be noted that it took years and years to reach the experience of an assimilation of Christ; it was a gradual journey. The road to unity is that which followed Paul, that is, a truly total, uncompromising acceptance of Christ. Then, once this acceptance is made, the courage to continue it in life by discovering that a life given to Christ, in which Christ truly becomes Lord, the one who guides everything, is a life that must necessarily have a freshness, an unrepeatable novelty»¹⁷.

5. THE “DECALOGUE” OF PAUL THE FORMATOR

Finally, I would like to indicate, in a flash manner, a sort of decalogue of the formator Paul and his formation. Ten words to think about with regard to the Pauline formation. The numbering may very well vary according to the concrete situations (in some cases the formator will have to insist more on joy, in others on gratuity or apostolate). After all, Paul also insists on one aspect, now on the other, based on the situation. «It is on the foundations that Paul insists, because the rest must come as a natural consequence»¹⁸.

a) **Agape/love/charity.** Paul is decisively a formator of love, of total self-giving. But in the first place *agape* is «the love of God» which has been «poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us» (cf. Rom 5:5). Paul made a living experience of this love, and declares it: *Dilexit me et tradidit semetipsum pro me*, «he loved me and gave himself up for me» (Gal 2:20). From the love of God who loved us when we were still his enemies (cf. Rom 5:8), fraternal love is poured out and it is towards all; it is sincere love: «Let love be sincere. Hate what is evil and hold fast to what is good. In brotherly love, be devoted to one another. *Honour one another above yourselves*» (Rom 12:9-10). Charity is expressed *in taking care of each other*, as members of a single body, so that «if a member suffers, all of them suffer (suffer-

¹⁷ UGO VANNI, *Paolo modello di persona unificata in Cristo*, sito IGS (Istituto Gesù Sacerdote).

¹⁸ ROMANO PENNA, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

with), and if one is honoured, all rejoice together» (1Cor 12:26). Charity is the summit of the whole Christian life, it is «the most sublime way» (1Cor 12:31). 1Cor 13's hymn to charity is a hymn to be declined in daily life as a program of "ongoing formation"! A litmus test for the formand and for the formator:

«Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things» (1Cor 13:4-7). Charity is the only thing that remains forever, like God: «*Deus Caritas est*»¹⁹.

b) **Apostolate/mission.** It is the heart of the Pauline identity. Paul is essentially «*apóstolos*», he is by direct mandate of the Risen Christ and he claims it forcefully in the letter to the Galatians: «an apostle not from human beings nor through a human being but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead» (Gal 1:1). Paul conceives everything according to the mission received: «If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it!» (1Cor 9:16). «To Greeks and non-Greeks alike, to the wise and the ignorant, I am under obligation... For I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes» (Rom 1:14, 16). From this conviction Paul draws energy, courage, audacity: «To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save at least some. All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it» (1Cor 9:22-23). Alberione was definitely fascinated by Paul, the Apostle par excellence. The Paulines were born to be apostles, they were born to be "Saint Paul alive today". There is no doubt then that that formation for the apostolate is a priority, as an announcement and as a testimony.

c) **Joy.** Paul is the formator of «joy», he wants his sons/daughters to be happy, joyful, and insists on them: «Rejoice in the Lord... Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!» (Phil 3:1; 4:4). The joy of which he speaks is clearly a «gift of the Spirit» (cf. Gal 5:22) and

¹⁹ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas est*, 25 December 2005.

involves the ability to *co-rejoice*: «Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep...» (Rom 12:15). Paul invites us to do everything with joy, in particular when we give ourselves (this is the case of the collection for the mother community of Jerusalem): «Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver» (2Cor 9:7). He lives his ministry in function of the joy of his sons/daughters: «Not that we lord it over your faith; rather, **we work together for your joy**, for you stand firm in the faith» (2Cor 1:24). To the Thessalonians he writes: «You are our joy!» (1Thes 2:20). Paul is «in joy» even in the midst of tribulations of all kinds (2Cor 7:4) and forms in the joy of the Gospel, on which Pope Francis insists so much: «With Jesus Christ joy is always born and reborn»²⁰.

d) **Gratitude/gratuity**. It is a recurring word on the mouth of Paul, theologian and singer of «grace». The Apostle always begins his letters by *thanking*: he gives thanks to God, thanks the communities, thanks his collaborators and spiritual children. Just a few examples: «I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now» (Phil 1:3-5); «First, I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is heralded throughout the world» (Rom 1:8); «I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus» (1Cor 1:4). Furthermore, Paul teaches *apostolic gratuity*: it is a boast for him to be able to *freely* give the Gospel! And he leaves it as a *pastoral testament* to the elders of Ephesus: «I have never wanted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You know well that these very hands have served my needs and my companion» (Acts 20:33-34).

e) **Freedom**. Paul is the herald of the freedom of the Gospel. To the Galatians he seems almost to cry out: «**Christ freed us for freedom!**» (Gal 5:1). Freedom from sin, from the slavery of the law, freedom from all forms of discrimination, however deeply rooted it is: «There is no Jew or Greek, there is no slave or free, there is no male and female, because you are all one in Christ» (Gal 3:28). Walls, religious and cultural, social and gender barriers collapse. At the heart of the

²⁰ FRANCIS, Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24 November 2013, no. 1.

Pauline message is «**freedom**»²¹. Undoubtedly, it is the keyword of the Pauline vocabulary, but it can be easily misunderstood whereby the Apostle must clarify its meaning to the Galatians (and to us). Freedom is not an excuse to do what you like and pleasing to you, but to make yourself a gift: «For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, “*You shall love your neighbour as yourself*”» (Gal 5:13-14). **Pauline freedom** unfolds in «allowing oneself to be guided by the Spirit» (Gal 5:18).

«For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death... For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, “*Abba, Father!*”. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ»²².

f) **Parresia/frankness**. Paul is the formator of evangelical *parresia*, of frankness, of candour and of courage which forms a body with hope: «Therefore, since we have such hope, we act very frankly (*parresia*)» (2Cor 3:12). Paul demonstrated this frankness in the community of Antioch, towards Peter himself: «When Kephass came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he clearly was wrong» (Gal 2:11). Even to the Corinthians the Apostle speaks openly, with *parresia*: «I am very frank with you...» (2Cor 7:4). He asks the Ephesians to pray for him so that he can «make known the mystery of the gospel with frankness (*parresia*)» (Eph 6:19). To Timothy he writes that the deacons who have exercised their ministry well, will acquire a great «*parresia* in the faith» (1Tim 3:13). What does it mean for Paulines to form in the *parresia* of the Gospel?

g) **Prayer** (of praise, of thanksgiving, of intercession...). Paul was “formed” in the womb of the community of Antioch, in an atmosphere of prayer and listening to the Spirit, a breath that will accompany him everywhere (cf. Acts 13:1-3). Even deep inside of the prison, in the middle of the night, after being brutally maltreated and beaten, Paul sings hymns to God together with Silas (cf. Acts 16:22-25). Hymns,

²¹ Cf. SILVANO FAUSTI, *La libertà dei figli di Dio. Commento alla lettera ai Galati*, Ancora, Milano, 2010.

²² Rm 8:2,15-17.

psalms, spiritual songs²³, but also supplications and prayer of intercession: «Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus» (1Thes 5:17-18); «With all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the Spirit» (Eph 6:18). Paul prays for the Christian communities and nevertheless for Israel, his people: «My heart's desire and prayer to God on their behalf is for salvation» (Rom 10:1). He encourages prayers for all men and especially for the rulers (1Tm 2:1-2). And he asks for prayers also for himself, for the ministry entrusted to him by the Lord: «To that end, be watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all the holy ones and also for me, that speech may be given me to open my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains, so that I may have the courage to speak as I must» (Eph 6:18-20). Paul essentially transmitted us a *Trinitarian* prayer (cf. 1Thes 1:2-5), a prayer in the Spirit that brings from the depths of our being the very prayer of Jesus: «Abba, Father» (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15). «The Spirit comes to help our weakness; we do not know how to pray properly, but the Spirit himself intercedes with unspeakable groanings» (Rm 8:26-27).

h) **Poverty/work.** For Paul, «poverty» (*ptōcheía*) is not praised in itself, but insofar as it follows the path followed by Christ, who «for your sake he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich» (2Cor 8:9). In this perspective, poverty becomes shared: «...not that others should have relief while you are burdened, but that as a matter of equality» (2Cor 8:13). Paul voluntarily “impoverishes” himself, relieves himself of everything to run after the One from whom he was conquered, he impoverishes himself to gain the precious pearl. He confides it to the Philippian: «Whatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ... to know him and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead» (Phil 3:7-11). For Father Alberione, poverty entails work: exactly as Paul believes, who could

²³ In the foreground of Paul's letters is *berakah*, the blessing prayer which is always for something specific: «because God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heaven in Christ» (Eph 1:3); because «it consoles us in all our tribulations, because we can also console those who find themselves in every kind of affliction» (2Cor 1:3-4).

boast of not having been a burden to anyone, but of having maintained himself with his own hands:

«For you know how one must imitate us. For we did not act in a disorderly way among you, nor did we eat food received free from anyone. On the contrary, in toil and drudgery, night and day we worked, so as not to burden any of you. Not that we do not have the right. Rather, we wanted to present ourselves as a model for you, so that you might imitate us. In fact, when we were with you, we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat»²⁴. «You know well that these very hands have served my needs and my companions. In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive”»²⁵.

i) **Hope.** For Paul, hope is the very meaning of Christian living, direction and dynamism, because: «in hope we have been saved» (Rm 8:24).

«Redemption is offered to us in the sense that hope has been given to us, a reliable hope, by virtue of which we can face our present: the present, even a tiring present, can be lived and accepted if it leads to a goal and if we can be sure of this, if this goal is so great as to justify the effort of the journey»²⁶.

And Paul testifies: «We even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us» (Rom 5:3-5). Paul is definitely a “formator of hope”, of a hope that shapes the present of serenity, breathing the breath of the Risen One. Indeed, the Christian’s hope is the hope of resurrection. Otherwise, our hope would be in vain: «If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all» (1Cor 15:19). Paul exhorts Christians to “keep hope alive” precisely on the basis of the Scriptures (Rm 15:4). He expects that “the God of hope” will fill believers «with all joy and peace in believing, so

²⁴ 2Thes 3:7-10.

²⁵ Acts 20:34-35.

²⁶ BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Spe salvi*, 30 November 2007, no. 1.

that you may abound in hope by the power of the holy Spirit» (Rom 15:13); «May the eyes of (your) hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones» (Eph 1:18).

j) **Humility.** For Saint Paul, humility is more than a virtue; it is to make the very feeling of Christ who voluntarily humiliated himself, «becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross» (Phil 2:8). Paul therefore identifies in humility a fundamental value for living a new life and for building the community. Humility is essentially “truth”, therefore the Apostle exhorts us not to get an exaggerated idea of oneself but to have a true image of oneself: «not to think of himself more highly than one ought to think, but to think soberly, each according to the measure of faith that God has apportioned... Do not aspire to too high things, instead bend to humble ones. Do not get too high an idea of yourself... do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation» (Rom 12:3,16). Humility/truth excludes all boasting because, says the Apostle, «What do you possess that you have not received? But if you have received it, why are you boasting as if you did not receive it?» (1Cor 4:7). Paul is deeply “humble”, his only boast is the cross of Christ and his own weakness: «I will not boast, except about my weaknesses... in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me» (2Cor 12:5-10). What does humility entail for the formation of the Pauline?

In short: Paul the formator does not ask to be «better than the others»²⁷, but encourages us to be better than we were yesterday. I strain forward... Paul never feels like one who has already arrived, but one who “runs” to reach the One who conquered him.

²⁷ On the contrary: «Do nothing for rivalry or vainglory, but each of you, with all humility, consider the others superior to yourself» (Phil 2:3).



PAUL AND HIS COLLABORATORS

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Together with her husband, she takes care of small hospitality for people in crisis or in search, or simply wanting an encounter.

She collaborates with various Catholic magazines (Rocca, Mosaic of peace, Marriage, Servitium, Exodus, Word Spirit and Life, Capuchin Messenger...) and Protestants (Reformation, Protestantism).

Her works include *Preghiera* (Editrice Missionaria Italiana); *Quando Dio si diverte. La Bibbia sotto le lenti dell'ironia* (Il Pozzo di Giacobbe); *Le donne di Dio. Pagine bibliche al femminile* (Claudiana); *Qoelet, il dolore del mondo* (Edizioni San Paolo).

I am grateful to be here, in this attempt to enlarge the fences, which is exquisitely Pauline, and also because between the Paulines and the world of the Reformation there is a common love that is Paul.

I believe that this common passion linked to Paul has made it possible to make a great contribution to the rapprochement between the world of the Reformation and the Catholic world. And the Paulines act as mediators in the ecumenical conflict that led the churches to apology and excommunication. Protestantism and the whole Church have a debt of recognition towards your reality, since Paul has been deformed, crushed in the conflict with the reform, identified as an identity marker of Protestantism... opposed to Jesus... And also the Pauline rediscovery of the figure of Paul allowed the Catholic Church to understand that this patrimony was not specific to the Reformation but a specific one of the whole Church, and this rediscovery led to the possibility of a resumption of dialogue up to the joint declaration on justification. Directly and indirectly, the Paulines played an important role with their charisma in keeping Paul's importance alive within the Christian tradition.

Having said that, **let us get to the topic**: Paul and his collaborators.

Paul was by no means the solitary evangelizer one thinks. Even his writings are actually double, triple signature writings. Almost all his letters mention other co-authors: Silvanus, Timothy, all the brothers...

– **1Thessalonians**: «Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians...» (1Thes 1:1).

– **1Corinthians**: «Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother...» (1Cor 1:1). «The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca together with the church at their house send you many greetings in the Lord» (1Cor 16:19).

– **2Corinthians**: «Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother...» (2Cor 1:1).

– **Philemon**: «Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother...» (Phlm 1:1). «Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as well as Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my co-workers» (Phlm 1:23-24).

– **Philippians**: «Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the holy ones...» (Phil 1:1). Even this personal letter written to thank for the gift received when he was in prison in Ephesus is co-signed by Paul and Timothy.

While recognizing, by many authors, that it is not easy to distinguish in detail, the role and degree of involvement in the Pauline mission, which so many figures had, unanimously **the scholars recognize that Paul was not a free hitter** and that the image of the lone hero belongs to fantasy and myth rather than reality.

The list of collaborators, reported in the various contributions on the topic, varies from scholar to scholar, from those who identify a hundred, mentioned among the Acts and the Pauline letters, to those who register about fifty. **Everyone agrees that, around the Pauline mission, a working team is created made up of a staff of people, men and women** who, in different ways, facilitate its success. Men and women, of different social classes, of different origins, of Jewish, Roman or Greek culture, married or single, young or older who come on line, in ways and strategies that change with contexts, to facilitate the dissemination of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Men: Barnabas, Mark, Silas, Timothy, Titus, Luke, Aquila, Epaphroditus, Apollos, Epaphras, Tychicus, Aristarchus, Demas and Silas; and among the women: Phoebe, Mary, Priscilla, Damaris, Lydia, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Euodia, Syntyche...

Some were his traveling companions – Barnabas, Mark, Silas and Timothy –, others welcomed, supported, protected him, introduced him to the cities where Paul chose to start expanding his mission.

A team of which he was the leader, a band of which he was certainly the frontman, an orchestra of which he was sometimes the conductor, more often the first violin, after having been in the past in turn, student at the conservatory. Just think of the relationship between Ananias and Paul, Barnabas and Paul: relationships that evolve and transform. **Ananias** who laid his hands on a blinded Paul, from whom he received baptism and early formation; and **Barnabas** who acts as a talent scout, who introduces him, overcoming the mistrust of the apostles, in the Church. He then accompanies and supports him in Jerusalem when Paul must account for his vision of mission open to the people. Barnabas, however, is above all the one who senses Paul's potential, his possible talent when, in order to make him work in Antioch, he goes to fish out Paul, in Tarsus, where he was "confined". Barnabas is Paul's mentor, and despite what Luke tells us in the Acts, he will always have a place of honour for Paul.

A symphony of instruments. All this so that God's music could reach every corner of the Earth, overcoming barriers and resistances.

There is no doubt, the Pauline mission was far from solitary. This network, however, differs from that of an industry that is endowed with strategies to conquer the market, since Paul nurtured true affection for these collaborators, companions in Christ, true affection, which translated into care, attention and esteem. In this regard, see the endings of the letters or the headers with the initial greetings, where the various collaborators are handed over to the communities to be supported, recognized, encouraged... (Rm 16; Phlm 1:24). There are companions of the first hour and those of recent times.

After photographing Paul's collaborators, I think it is useful to ask ourselves: where does this model of mission come from? A network of collaborators around Paul, what do we refer to? What

are the conditions for living such a widespread collaboration project between missionaries, Churches and collaborators? Is it an anachronistic model? Of course, conditions have changed. Today, that expansive model of the Christian faith gives way to a downsizing of the springtime experience, while distances are shortened and communication becomes increasingly immediate and faster.

Contemporary or not contemporary of the Pauline model of mission? Anachronism or less of the project?

My thesis is that it is not so much a question of asking ourselves about the chronological distance from the Pauline model, but rather about the distance linked to the ecclesial conception between Paul and us. Since this model, form and missionary strategy, referred to an ecclesial model that did not win, that was lost, or partially lost. Without that model of Church, it is difficult to shape that type of mission.

What conception of Church conveys the organizational model that Paul equips himself with for the mission?

The Pauline intuition that the **Church** is a body, indeed the **body of Christ**, and that the believer is immersed, with baptism, in the reality of Christ, his death and resurrection, **has ecclesial and missionary consequences**. You are the body of Christ, Christ acts through each of the brothers and sisters, all are necessary for the life of the body of Christ.

This Pauline intuition has ecclesial, structural and missionary consequences. **It generates Church models** where **believers live an equality status** in plurality – the body with different members – model hardly found in cities where the Church is rooted. This is a totally transgressive model, difficult to radicalise in the urban context, where the Church takes root. So, it represents an “other” reality. In an urban context where social and sexual hierarchies are very high, this “laboratory of the Spirit” arrives, which dares to form communities of equals, without however eliminating differences. The Church takes root in urban contexts where the status of Church members is not recognized as equal, except in the Church where they find themselves sharing the Christ.

What could it mean to live in a space where the cleaning lady is a preacher inside the Church, and a factory manager is a catechumen who is trained by the cleaning lady?

We have seen the transgressive impact of the Pauline model reborn in the event that, on the explanatory level, I think it is more parallel: in the time of racial segregation, African American Churches are the place where African Americans are recognized in their full dignity, and encouraged to think to strategies for social change of their conditions.

The Pauline Church represents another reality, an unexpected, unpublished freedom that sometimes generates misunderstandings and conflicts, but precisely **these misunderstandings and conflicts attest**, in Paul's interventions to settle them, **the status of freedom** lived by believers in the Pauline Churches. Galatians 3:28 and 1Cor. 12 are the theological synthesis of this vision of the Church as a mirror of the network of collaborators with which the Church is endowed.

The relationship between Paul and his collaborators refers to a particular concept of Church that has become extinct... at least in part... or better: the intuition of a Church formed by cultural contexts other than Israel has survived – the commitment of Paul to widen the fences of Israel – but not the model, the form: a synergistic, plural and unitary reality together. Already the next generation, even within the Pauline Church, transformed the Church into a hierarchical reality (from the body of Christ to the family, with the bishops to govern it... 1 Timothy... Titus).

In normalizing with the social context where the Church is inculturated, there is perhaps the greatest effort in communicating that the Church is the bearer of another way of living, in fascinating to another reality, that of God in Christ. A gap between the message and the context where the message is lived... leads to a disaffection.

I share my experience with you: I have met various people in my itinerant ministry, which I address in the ecclesial communities of the territory, but these insertions do not always work: the insertions skip, the Churches disappoint, they are different from the Gospel that I have announced. Missionary work that is not accompanied by community work produces short-term fruit.

The conflict: the plurality of points of view generates conflict. It is the risk of democracy. Paul dealt with the conflict with the various collaborators. We know of Paul's conflict with his collaborators: with Barnabas, with John called Mark, with the false apostles...

Conflict is a topic that, in communication, in the missionary relationship and in the contents of the mission, we must face. How are we to manage it?

Paul faced the conflict, sometimes considering it an opportunity to announce the Gospel and sometimes separating himself from others, recognizing that the world is wider than we think, that the fields of action can be different and that conflicts often arise and they become harsher in treating the mission field like a condominium.

The New Testament does not say much about conflict management and yet presupposes the Old Testament. Paul was aware of all his formation and implemented it when he had to manage conflicts.

Think of the debate on how to distinguish the true word from the false word: the true from the false prophets.

Criteria:

– Dt 18:21-22: When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord and it does not happen and his word does not come true, that will be a word that the Lord has not said, the prophet said it presumptuously, you do not fear it. The true Word is the one that comes true. The problem, however, is when this occurs over long periods of time. For example for Jeremiah (three generations to return from exile).

– Dt 13:1-4: Even if the Prophet carries out the Word, but does not follow it, and teaches to follow other gods, he must not be listened to. That is, the criterion of orthodoxy, the consistency of a communication system, the whole of the message.

To these two criteria, Alberto Mello, in his book on prophetism, enumerates more subjective criteria, including the personal vocation or the fact that whoever announces the Gospel pays with his person: he is not only credible but is also capable of paying with his life.

In the light of this debate, what indication derives from it for the management of a conflict where ministerial diversity is recognized and yet the full dignity of each ministry?

The different points of view that result to conflict can be seen as different working hypotheses. They must be discussed but not with a single criterion. In the Catholic Church, divergence was often discussed with a single criterion, that of orthodoxy (that of tradition):

Paul would have been a loser in many respects, with this criterion. The criterion of orthodoxy cannot be the only one. It is necessary to keep this plurality of criteria open.

Next to these criteria I would approach the Pauline ones of 1Cor. 12-14, that is, everything is made for building and that "everything is done in order" where order, *taxis*, means "according to a plan, a project", does not mean to say "according to a hierarchy".

Of course, then we must recognize that in the conflict over the way of being a Church, the tradition and believers who preceded us perhaps betrayed that model, but that model remained alive, because the canon we received did not deliver the letters of others, but it gave us Paul's letters. This means that the Church has made a choice; a choice that perhaps has not been able to live but has dreamed of living. Or, perhaps, it is only the fact that the Spirit, despite the Church being hurt, manages to blow, and he has given us the letters of Paul to ask us for this conversion to make the ecclesial models coincide with the form and content of the mission and of the announcement that we bring.



**ACCEPT DIVERSITY WITHOUT EXCLUSION:
FORMING TO INTERCULTURALITY
IN A MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY**

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Thank you for inviting me to address an issue of extreme importance and bearer of positive changes. My intervention will try to focus on three aspects: a reading of what is happening, the possibilities for religious life, and the consequences for a genuine acceptance.

1. INSIDE A GLOBALIZED WORLD

It can be said that the most striking event of the last twenty years is the phenomenon known as “globalization”. The distances have been drastically reduced. People and places are more easily connected. Living in the world is now like living in a village. Globalization can, therefore, be defined as the contraction of time and space, which has caused a growing interdependence between people of different nations and cultures. It has brought with it a congenital process of exclusion that widens the gap between rich and poor. It is criticized for its approach, which allows the current powers to impose an economic system, a political ideology, a philosophical vision, a cultural model of values and a common or uniform “religious” mentality.

International migration is another expression of globalization which gives this phenomenon particular importance. Today, as a result of this fact, societies are becoming more and more multicultural. The pace of urbanization has accelerated in our cities. This has led to the emergence of ever-expanding mega-cities that become multicultural centres and supermarkets of plural beliefs and divergent values. Urbanization also transplants the deepest forms of poverty from rural to urban areas. It is estimated that today, in developing countries, one urban inhabitant out of three lives in the slums of the city and this equates to about one billion people or one-sixth of the world population¹.

1.1 CRISES IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

Along with the social elements mentioned above, it should be noted that globalization has marked the persistence of the crisis in religious life. There are two main indications of this crisis: the decrease of members in religious congregations, and the perception of an absence of significance.

The lack of new vocations has led to the aging of the provinces in Western Europe and North America, causing a decrease in vitality and creativity. The fear of taking risks and undertaking new initiatives has become real. Disaffection has infiltrated.

The lack of vocations is an indication, among others, of the perception that religious life is no longer a meaningful life choice. Many young people today are engaged in noble causes such as the promotion of peace and justice in the world, the defense of human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the safeguarding of

¹ Cf. UNION OF SUPERIORS GENERAL, *Inside Globalization: Toward a Multi-centered and Intercultural Communion*, Publisher "Il Calamo", Roma 2000, pp. 10-21. More than half of the world's population lives in cities, in ever-expanding urban areas, which very often give rise to megalopolises of tens of millions of inhabitants, such as Tokyo, Shanghai and Mexico City. But this already impressive proportion could grow further in favour of the metropolis and to the detriment of rural areas, with more than six billion people who will be "urban" in 2045 according to the latest *World urbanization prospects*, the document of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs on urbanization. In the 1990s, there were only ten megalopolises in the world. Today there are 28, of which 16 in Asia, 4 in South America, 3 in Africa, 3 in Europe and 2 in North America. The largest remains Tokyo, the capital of Japan, with almost 38 million inhabitants, followed by Jakarta, Indonesia, with almost 30 million and New Delhi (India) with 24 million. Rural areas, on the other hand, will have to face the opposite fate. Today there are 3.4 billion people living in the countryside, but by 2050 there will be no more than 3 billion and almost all (90 percent) will be concentrated in Asia and Africa.

the integrity of creation. Many are involved in voluntary services. Others join different lay movements. These considerations seem to suggest that today's young people no longer see religious life as an important choice through which they can express their ideals and their generosity.

It should also be borne in mind that the socio-cultural form of the current religion arose from the context of a predominantly agrarian society. This type of society has practically disappeared, and has undergone a radical transformation. The current reality is in large part not only post-agrarian, but also post-industrial and post-modern.

1.2 THE EMERGENCE OF A WORLD CHURCH

These phenomena of transformation have not passed without leaving any trace in the Church. The Second Vatican Council perceived the Church as a world reality, even if it was only a beginning, with an episcopate acting in harmony with the Supreme Pontiff. The continental Synods were a recognition of the diversity of situations and cultures that are part of the universal Church. They have been a confirmation of the fact that attention to the variety of situations and cultures is important to determine the model and form of the life and mission of the Church on the continents². In fact, it is no longer possible to simply give the message as directives from the centre and it is necessary to take into account the concrete situation of the local Churches. All of this has also imposed itself in the life of religious congregations.

The Second Vatican Council, an initial experience of a world Church, has handed down the making of the Church to an enlarged scenario and has left prospects for renewal in this direction. Today the challenge is that of a «world Church not simply in the sense of a Church that extends everywhere, but of a Church that takes into account the world in its entirety and interacts with it»³.

The very idea of “catholicity” comes out redesigned: *Lumen gentium* 13 and 17 show the overcoming of a purely geographical-extensive

² Cf. J. Allen, *The Future Church*, Kindle Edition 2009, pp. 17-21.

³ R. Schreiter, *La teologia postmoderna e oltre in una chiesa mondiale*, in R. Gibellini (ed.), *Prospettive teologiche per il XXI secolo*, Queriniana, Brescia 2003, p. 388.

vision of this ecclesial property. The eschatological trait is determined by a universal openness, according to a unity in plurality, constitutive of the Church at all levels, as fullness and totality through exchange and communication. The note of catholicity is therefore preached as much by the universal Church as by the local Church: for the latter the first form of the exercise of catholicity is given by the permanence in the dynamics of reciprocal giving and receiving⁴. The “world Church” that germinates in the Council and that the documents deliver as inheritance and challenge to the post-conciliar reception is then not the “universal Church according to the Tridentine spirit”, but the Church “*communio ecclesiarum*”, one in the plurality of the relationships of the local Churches in communion with Rome, living in the never-ending process of inculturation of the Christian faith.

1.3 CONTEMPLATIVE FRATERNITY

Cultural changes have prompted us to move from life in common to the communion of life according to the Gospel and as a missionary expression. Communion of life is generated with simple, understandable and accessible structures for everyone, where the starting point becomes the acceptance of the brother, with his gifts, qualities, possibilities, and also as a surprise of God. Freer communities have been created, because the Spirit is creator and always awaits a new response. They have left or are leaving heavy structures that can become the sole reason for living, and have not tied themselves to a specific land, because they feel bound more to man than to a limited territory. We have thought of communities where structures are at the service of values, and gradually become signs of life, transparency rather than efficiency and, above all, significant for our world. When a community is serenely free, because it is rooted in trust in God and in others, it becomes liberating and pacifying even for those who approach it. It easily frees all the abilities and gifts with which each and every person is rich, to put them at the service of others. All this facilitates a family atmosphere of collaboration, rather than of competition, opposition or jealousy.

⁴ *On the Proprieties of catholicism*, cf. W. BEINERT, *La cattolicità come proprietà della chiesa*, in H.M. LEGRAND – J. MANZANARES – A. GARCIA y GARCIA (Eds.), *Chiese locali e cattolicità*, EDB, Bologna 1994, pp. 467-501.

1.4 EXODUS COMMUNITIES

This type of community says that religious life must be characterized by a constant exodus, a meeting of the other. Religious life is understood as a spirituality of encounter rather than expectation.

Another “novelty” at this time are the attempts to put primary attention to the individual person, and not to the structures, be they pastoral, survival or otherwise. The mission is an indispensable point of reference; it is this that is constituted as a community around a shared project, for which there is no value in this or that culture, but each one urged to proclaim the Gospel. The ministry of vocation consists precisely in helping to purify, deepen, explain and construct the reasons for the call.

Gospel values are received, understood and lived differently in individual cultures. It is therefore important that everyone has their cultural identity present and clear, and is at the same time open to comprehending and accepting the ways of understanding and living the same values in other cultures.

1.5 DISORDER IN RELIGIOUS ORDERS

In religious congregations, the intuition began to develop that there is no single way of being religious and that the charism of the Founder can find different expressions in the cultures of different peoples. Like the Gospel, the original charism of the congregation cannot only enrich, but can also be enriched by the cultures in which it is incarnated. This leads to a situation in which the religious congregation is no longer considered to be composed of members of different nationalities who all learn the same way of life, shaped by the dominant culture, but by members of different nationalities who share the richness of their cultural diversity. The multicultural nature of the members inevitably raises the question of the different understanding of the elements of religious life, such as prayer, community, use of money and vows.

To give an example, we can say that Europe is no longer the sole source of a formative and mission model. Because the missionaries of the South also go as missionaries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Today we speak not only of a mission “from south to north”, but also of a mission “from south to south”, unlike the past in which the mission was basically a phenomenon “from north to south”. The same cultural influences circulate and mix.

2. OPPORTUNITIES FOR RELIGIOUS LIFE

The situation of the world and of the Church today offers many opportunities for religious life. Among the many we highlight some: the interculturality of the members, the freshness of the new arrivals, the discovery of listening, and the evolution of people.

2.1 INTERCULTURALITY OF MEMBERS

Numerous religious congregations have discovered the value of internationality in their composition. The ideal is not just “internationality” but “interculturality”. Here we open a parenthesis on this theme. The monocultural model, from which we come, has tried to define a culture that characterizes the whole context. The “guiding culture” has demanded that the minorities assimilate. The ideal inherent in this model was homogeneity and internal coherence, both within its own ethnic-cultural group and in the wider context. Cultural diversity was seen as a threat to stability. Impulses from other cultures that could serve for critical verification or further development of one’s identity were usually not allowed.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the meaning of the terms “intercultural” and “international” is different from a few years ago. Every person is marked by the culture that breathes through the family and the human groups with which he enters into a relationship, in the educational paths and the most diverse environmental influences, through the same fundamental relationship he has with the territory in which he lives. Culture is the way in which a group of people live, think, feel and organize, celebrate and share life. It is, however, established that no cultural expression exhausts the human experience; no culture is autonomous and self-sufficient. Only with the humble awareness of the limits of every culture can we hope to

arrive at an authentic interculturality that goes beyond the hegemony of the majority or of religious who live under the same roof⁵.

2.2 FRESHNESS OF SPACE

The new arrivals bring home a new freshness, a potential that has never been known before. It is also a precious pouring for the soul. In the community there are not only emigrants who are looking for a space to live, there is also a different wisdom and a different image of God. When a person moves, not only a culture moves; when the people emigrate, they not only move their ways of living, God also changes. And the most beautiful God is an itinerant God, a God who walks. To accept, then it means to listen to life, whatever language it speaks. The acceptance asks us to open our eyes to ways of being that are not ours, flowered under other suns, bathed by different waters, but which are also refractions of the one Being in which the roots of every man sink. To give strength to this concept I take an effective image of Etty Hillesum: «I feel like a small battlefield on which we fight the problems of our time. The only thing you can do is humbly offer yourself as a battlefield. Those problems must find hospitality somewhere, find a place where they can fight and calm down».

All life around us speaks to us of diversity, of variety. There is no life without diversity, without contrast. Wherever you turn, life needs diversity. Thus it was also according to the Bible when God, to create life, separated the waters above from those below, the earth from the sea... Until everything was One, there was no place for life, there was no place for man. To us men God has entrusted the task of carrying out the work of creation, but instead of safeguarding diversity we have the tendency to bring everything back to one. There was a moment in which «the whole earth had the same language and the same words»

⁵ *Meeting of the Holy Father Francis with the participants of the XXI Plenary Assembly of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG)*, 10 May 2019, www.vatican.va: «With regard to fraternal life in community, I am also concerned that there are Institutes in which multiculturalism and internationalism are not seen as a richness but as a threat, and they are experienced as conflict instead of being experienced as new opportunities that reveal the true face of the Church and of religious and consecrated life. I ask those in charge of the Institute to be open to the very newness of the Spirit, who blows where it wills and as it wills (cf. Jn 3:8), and to prepare the generations of other cultures to assume responsibility. Sisters, may you live the internationalism of your Institutes as good news. May you live the changing face of your communities with joy, and not as a necessary evil for preservation. Internationalism and interculturalism do not turn backwards».

(Gen 11:1), they stopped the journey and built a Tower, a symbol of strength and power. A prison and an immobility from which God freed us with the gift of the diversity of languages. The problem with diversity is that they look a lot like contrasts rather than harmony. And, inevitably, the contrasts we always try to overcome.

But there was the day of Pentecost: the apostles in the streets of Jerusalem did not speak a single language that everyone could understand, they spoke their own language, and the representatives of the peoples of the whole earth understood them, «everyone in their own language» (Acts 2:8). There is therefore an alternative to uniformity or contrasts, if we speak our own language others can understand us in theirs. It is important to speak your own language: to be yourself, not the beautiful or bad copy of others. Diversity, we could say, does not require us to be better, or to change, but to be ourselves. This is why God at the Tower of Babel has given us the gift of different languages, of diversity, in order to learn to be ourselves, to be so again⁶.

2.3 THE STRENGTH OF LISTENING

Interculturality, then, is not only or mainly the perception and description of plurality but, above all, the will and the capacity for interaction between people and institutions of the most diverse cultures. We live in the actualisation of a positive realization of new common spaces of life, of systems of values, of worlds of faith, of distinct spiritualities. The vision to be accepted is that of a greater possible appreciation of cultural-religious differences and, at the same time, of a unity that does not eliminate or marginalize divergences but highlights their dignity and value.

The starting point for an authentic intercultural relationship lies in the profound knowledge of one's own culture, recognizing its strengths and limitations. We must then work hard to understand others, penetrate the meaning of their symbols, learn to respect their

⁶ *Ibid.*: «I am concerned with the generational conflicts, when young people are not able to bring forward the dreams of the elderly in order to make them bear fruit, and the elderly do not know how to receive the prophecies of the young (cf. Jl 2:28). How I like repeating: young people run a lot, but the elderly know the journey. Both the wisdom of the elderly and the inspiration and strength of the young are necessary in a community».

value system, and participate intelligently in their celebrations. Going beyond the limits of one's own culture begins with the willingness to listen to the other. Listening takes time and effort. We must also suspend judgments and be ready to take the risk of getting closer to the other. While prudence indicates the ability of good judgment in assessing one's own culture and that of others, wisdom allows one to weigh the values of one's own culture in the light of the culture of others and to grasp the impact of one's own cultural expression⁷.

2.4 THE EVOLUTION OF PEOPLE

Interculturality is expressed in the invitation to a deeper vision of the current plural world and in continuous evolution, and of the people who live there. Regardless of language, culture and religion, it is necessary to have a vision that is in harmony with "Christian contemplation with open eyes".

This is the fundamental "mission" of consecrated life, a mission that does not consist first of all in charitable efficiency, and in commitment to development but in the ability to create meeting spaces where God can also be experienced today.

Sometimes internationality is intentionally chosen as a stimulus towards the creation of a fraternity where authentic interculturality can be experienced and can become an immediate subject of evangelization. The most effective means of promoting cultural mutuality is the art of dialogue. Dialogue is not proud. It "proposes", does not impose. It is never offensive, but always charitable and respectful in its approach.

An intercultural community exists where every member really feels "at home", not just a guest, even if privileged. What seems indispensable in all this is the presence of people who act as a bridge between members of different cultures in the community, who are familiar with more than one language and who have spent a sufficiently long time in another culture. Furthermore, these communities serve as the basis for evangelization efforts, given that they already show where the Gospel message wants to arrive, that is, the creation of a new world.

⁷ Cf. H. CHANG – C. AURILIA, *Educarsi all'interculturalità in che senso e come nella comunità religiosa*, in Gonzalez-Silva, *Vita consacrata e multiculturalità*, Ancora, Milano 2000.

3. THE CHANGE IN FORMATION

The prospects that are maturing ask us to revisit the theme of formation in a new way. It is the key that opens the door to a meaningful life and mission. Without adequate formation for today's needs, the risk of recurrence, of stopping and of losing the sense of what one is and does, is more than just a working hypothesis.

3.1 THE NECESSARY FORMATION

Formation itself is already a delicate and difficult mission, because it is not only a question of professional preparation, but of coherence, authenticity and balance. When we commit ourselves to integrate people from different cultures so that they may know themselves, the will that God has for them and for the Congregation, to accompany them on this journey to build an international community that lives in communion, we must come to terms with the cultures and at the same time with cultural transformations.

If Christianity and the following of Christ are not measured by the vital environment of each one, they do not leave their mark, they risk remaining external manifestations, which perhaps at best are accepted, tolerated and, at worst, can cause personality deviations.

The acceptance calls for formation in reciprocity, which essentially consists in respecting and valuing the differences. It is a long and profound journey, which involves not only the spiritual dimension, but also the human one. Having become international, institutions must offer the essential elements to develop new formation processes. This specifically involves the new generations in formation.

3.2 ACCEPTING IS SELF-TRANSCENDING

The willingness to accept the other is understood as an integral part of the process of self-growth, within a group context made up of people who share the same ideal that motivates their coexistence. Such an attitude of openness to the other takes on a vocational and planning character. It is in this way that everyone is involved in the change of self through the knowledge and integration of the riches of the other, in a relational context where each member of the group

is invited to redefine himself or build himself in his own specific identity.

Only to the extent that one succeeds in living this self-transcendence of human existence is he authentically human and is he authentically himself. In mutual comparison, people have a dual task that concerns the other's and their own identity:

- maintain a solid sense of the original cultural traditions;
- incorporate a quantity of values and behavioural norms of the majority culture, sufficient for the members of that group to feel and behave like the members of that culture.

The distinctive feature of integration is therefore a bicultural sense of self. Cultural diversity and coexistence with others of different cultures can be maintained if people are at risk of exposing themselves and opening up to the surrounding world. For this reason, the differences between people who belong to different cultures are not to be eliminated or to be ignored, but to be accepted with profound respect, because it is from them that true dialogue begins⁸.

3.3 SOME PRIOR CONVICTIONS

Formation for acceptance therefore presupposes a community that feels on a mission, not a community closed in on itself. This is an important mediation, especially for younger brothers, and it diminishes some attention to formation.

a) The theology of formation has surpassed the model of "imitation", to make its own the model of "following", and is being forged on the model of "identification" with the feelings of Christ. This entails, both in ongoing and initial formation, simultaneously a profoundly human and evangelically demanding formation⁹.

b) The identity crisis that has influenced religious life calls for it to be founded in a model of relationship rather than in a model of contrasting strong identities, as was the case until not long ago. It is a task as necessary and urgent as it is arduous, because it is not easy

⁸ Cf. G. Crea, *Vivere la comunione nelle comunità multietniche. Tracce di psicologia transculturale*, EDB, Bologna 2009, pp. 148-166.

⁹ Cf. A. Cencini, *Formazione permanente: ci crediamo davvero?*, EDB, Bologna 2011, pp. 21-26.

to remain faithful to one's own identity and, at the same time, open oneself to integration with others.

c) Fraternal life in community is an indispensable element. The ways of living it change according to the charisma. Sociological models of religious communities, forms of organization and community rhythms may be secondary, but the essential remains: a fraternal life in community that shows the world what Christian love consists of: a fraternal life in community that comes to be a true family united in Christ, where everyone manifests their needs to the other and where all members can reach full human, Christian and religious maturity. For many of our contemporaries it is the first form of evangelization.

d) Ordinary life is one of the first mediations as a school of formation. Everyday life, weekday life and normality are the true secret of formation and what makes it permanent¹⁰. In this sense, international or multicultural communities are very important, in which one is obliged to confront oneself daily.

e) In formation, particular attention must be paid to communication. Despite the many means of communication available to religious, one has the impression that today interpersonal communication has been greatly penalized. More and more interconnected people meet and fewer people communicate, more and more people talk about communities and yet they are increasingly alone. This can lead to tragic consequences in relation to vocation¹¹.

f) Thanks to interdependence and collaboration, the group disappears to become a family, made up of heterogeneous people and a wealth of roles. A family in which common rules of conduct are developed and a satisfactory form of leadership is established.

3.4 IDEAL EXPECTATIONS

The ideal expectations that generate impoverished relational and structural dimensions are not an insignificant element. As far as I know and feel, it seems to me that there is no lack of expressions like: "finally new vocations". The expectations of rotation in the roles

¹⁰ Cf. A. CENCINI, *Guardare al futuro. Perché ha ancora senso consacrarsi a Dio*, Paoline, Milano 2011, p. 96.

¹¹ Cf. TH. M. NEWAMB, *The acquaintance process*, New York 1961.

resound, then, almost like a challenge: “now it’s up to them and let’s see how they manage”, no less serious are the claims of uniformity in the conduct: “we have always done so, what do they think they’re doing to renew these”. Finally, I would like to point out the call to a certain formation that we have to endure without complaining: “a good religious knows no nostalgia”. If we want to be concrete, we can say that they are all situations that can catch even a consecrated person unprepared. It is true that the need to experience something different and authentic emerges strongly when the difficulties are stronger. Goodwill, let alone institutional zeal, is not enough to adapt to a new multicultural community, but there needs to be a path of progressive involvement, both on the part of the person who joins, and on the part of others in the group. It is precisely from the reciprocal encounter between people belonging to different cultures that everyone can discover the meaning of the bond to the same religious family on the basis of shared objectives. This common perspective becomes a strong element of cohesion in the group, but also an opportunity for confident dialogue, necessary to re-read the cultural differences in terms of mutual enrichment¹².

In the specific context of multicultural communities, the support of multicultural cohabitation cannot be reduced to attempts at accommodating adaptation or episodic mutual endurance efforts, but it must be a continuous interpersonal maturation work where dialogic attention to the different contextual opportunities can become a favourable opportunity to open up to new strategies of appreciation and mutual enhancement.

Strengthening this common identity through the rediscovery of the value identities of each one means accepting the progressive journey of maturation, in which the differences open to new meanings because they are recognized and integrated in the group’s project of communion.

¹² The principle indicated by the Pope supports us: «The whole is more than the part, and it is also more than the simple sum of them. [...] Nor do people who wholeheartedly enter into the life of a community need to lose their individualism or hide their identity; instead, they receive new impulses to personal growth. [...] Instead, it is the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness. [...] it is the sum total of persons within a society which pursues the common good, which truly has a place for everyone» (*Evangelii gaudium*, 235-236).

3.5 COMMON MEANINGS AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

In every situation man is called to a different behaviour. I have tried to ask some of my brethren what the meaning of their religious life is.

This I gathered:

- The goal of my life as a religious is to be ever closer to God. To serve him in my brothers and sisters every day.
- Do good to people, not for their own glory, but for others. I would like to be remembered doing something for others.
- The meaning of my life is, first of all, to know that I am loved by God, and to try to respond with love to all that I will encounter on my way.

These answers indicate the need of the subjects to give meaning to the difficulties of cultural adaptation they have faced. When people are aware of the motivation of their vocation, they know how to provide meaningful answers to different situations, even when faced with difficult conditions of cultural adaptation. Every situation carries a meaning. We could also add each culture a meaning within itself: it is up to everyone to look for it and find it, because it is unique and unrepeatable, inherent in every condition both of success and failure. In a multicultural community, this search for meaning is concretized in the encounter with those who are culturally different, because together it is possible to detect the elements of value that make it possible to proceed towards the objectives of meaning in the life of consecration.

To be a person means to be absolutely different from any other man, because each one has unique characteristics that allow him to enter into a relationship with others and to discover in mutual relations the values that unite all for the same ideal of life.

The universal meaning of the relational factor is even more evident when it comes to people who live in religious groups animated by the same vocational purpose, as in the case of multicultural communities, where the reciprocal relationship is understood as a task to be accomplished through meaningful relationships, with which they witness the sense of communion among peoples, races and cultures.

In the context of intercultural dialogue, the interpersonal relationship has a special value, above all, because the different cultures differ in the way they conceive the relationship.

3.6 NEW POTENTIALS FOR OPENING UP TO CULTURES

The acceptance of the other leads to a careful consideration of cultural diversity. This attention to cultural identity has a double meaning:

- On the one hand, it serves to identify and strengthen the boundaries of one's own identity, identifying in one's own way of being the specific task of each one.
- On the other hand, it helps the individual to relate in the new environment, without fear of disorientation.

In fact, as the individual orients himself in the new environment, he makes himself available to modify his own cultural system, without having to stop behind attitudes of defensive distrust. This confrontation with the new culture leads him to rediscover his own, to verify and evaluate it, thus acquiring greater security in his traditions, which helps him to deal with the other without fear of losing his own identity.

Self-realization passes through sincere openness to the other. When the person opens himself up to the diversity of his brother, it means that he makes himself available for confrontation and dialogue, this fact leads to a continuous inner and relational renewal, to a continuous passage from "I" to the "we".

When a religious becomes part of a multicultural community, he finds the influence of the host group important in the work of cultural adaptation. It is likely that an open attitude to the diversity of the other and a greater willingness to provide support will help people move from a phase of marginalization to one of greater trust.

When a person migrates from one culture to another, he must face the risk of coming into contact with habits and traditions that are foreign to him. In this impact, it often needs better communication skills and a broader knowledge of the environment. If this is not the case, he may feel a sense of disorientation and discomfort.

This is stronger if the impact is experienced in a traumatic way or if the discomforts are trivialized by a superficial attitude. All this has repercussions on interpersonal relationships. Often in the new environment he lacks concrete points of reference.

An African brother of mine said: «When I return to the community, I have the impression of leaving Africa to enter Europe. Many factors combine to offer this impression: we speak another language instead of the local language, we listen to foreign radio, we decorate the house with images that come from Europe, we easily criticize the rulers of the country, we refer to Western criteria for judging everything, we eat in the European style, we are not hospitable to Africans». At this point, the impact with all these innovations can become a real cultural shock, to the point of turning into a condition of inner emptiness or loss of meaning.

What about the linguistic factor. It remains a constantly open problem, because certain nuances lead to giving completely different meanings, and misunderstandings are the order of the day.

The congregations with the creation of international communities, composed of members of different nations, race, language, culture and social background, who live together for a project of life and mission, propose that prophetic sign, a forerunner of a reconciled and unified humanity in a single family.

It is an exciting but immense task, which at other times, at the beginning of Christianity, required centuries of prayer, reflection, attempts, in which even the deviations were not absent. Today Christianity will be understandable and accepted only through the mediation of the cultural models of the people to whom it is announced.

4. BY WAY OF CONCLUSION: NEED TO ADAPT

This task becomes more difficult and delicate when it comes to letting the salvific message of the Gospel descend into people's hearts and the radical ways in which it has been interpreted and implemented historically by the institutes of consecrated life. Congregations are not adequately prepared to face this situation. They felt whipped out of their certainties, from their human and spiritual traditions, from what

was always considered essential. Faced with new situations, they are called to review, recalibrate and verify the specific charism, and the very modality of evangelical radicalism. This is obliging the institutes to reflect that the Gospel and the consecrated life can be expressed, lived and planned in different ways, while jealously preserving their original values. At the same time, they have been accustomed to the respect, esteem and appreciation of cultural differences, with listening, understanding, constructive dialogue, through the appropriation of the essential.

The international religious communities are a prophetic sign for this humanity which, if on the one hand, goes towards a more globalized culture, on the other, continues to show signs of racism and cultural and religious intolerance. We are aware that we must form ourselves in this new mentality, and that we must always ensure that prejudices and pre-understandings do not resurface at critical moments. It is necessary to respond to this moment of the Spirit, bearing in mind that it is the Lord who leads the small history of the congregation.

Are we sure that it is more important to become yourself and not something better? An ancient problem, even Adam and Eve thought about it and decided not to be themselves, but to become something better. Since then, we have never stopped eating the forbidden fruit, taking wrong paths. But God wants us too well, he will keep the differences and these differences will continue to hurt us until we learn to be ourselves, to recognize our needs, our desires and those of others around us.



**EDITORIAL GUIDELINES AND THE 2ND
INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR OF THE
PAULINE PUBLISHERS**

Brother Darlei Zanon

Councillor General SSP

Among the various superfluous readings that occupy my free time, some time ago I discovered an Italian concept that becomes a true philosophy of life and that seemed suitable for introducing today's topic, because it reflects very well the situation we are experiencing today in our Congregation, especially in this week dedicated to the Seminar on formation. I am referring to the concept of "Leopardism".

Surely, the Italians present here will know what it is. *The Leopard* is a novel by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa that narrates the transformations that took place in Sicilian life and society during the *Risorgimento*, in particular from the moment of the transition from the Bourbon regime to the unitary transition of the Kingdom of Italy, following the expedition of the One Thousand of Giuseppe Garibaldi. Along the narrative track, the nephew of the Prince of Salina pronounces this phrase/concept/philosophy, which becomes a historical challenge: «*If we want everything to remain as it is, everything must change*».

The book was telling of the political and economic situation of the time. Trying to adapt this phrase to us today, it seems clear to me that

if we want to continue to develop the Pauline mission well, if we want to continue having vocations, if we want to continue to have beautiful bookshops, readers, many publications, different activities..., and finally, if we want things to remain big and beautiful as they always have been, “everything must change”.

And here we come in our “Editorial Guidelines”. We can say that the updating of the document *Editorial Guidelines. Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate*, published in response to a request from the 10th General Chapter (operative guideline 1.1.2), tries to offer answers in view of the change to ensure that things can remain as they always have been, because we can remain effective and meaningful in the Church and in society. It suggests some possible changes in different areas of our apostolate but, above all, in the structure and in the basic attitude, touching the root of our own “identity” because, as Father Tonni, the second successor of Father Alberione, already said in the distant past of 1975:

«In various circumstances, the identity of the religious of the Society of Saint Paul was spoken and discussed, even animatedly. The recurring proposal of the question about our identity is certainly a reason for consolation, both because it is necessary that we often ask ourselves about who we are or what we should be, and because our young people want to know precisely their identity within the religious Family to which they are incorporated».

And here we come to this Seminar on formation, where it makes even more sense to talk about our identity, not to change it, but to clarify and strengthen it.

We reserved this moment of the Seminar to talk about the “Editorial Guidelines” not because this is a recent document of the Congregation. No! Rather, because the updating of this document has made us reflect for a long time on our mission, which now must necessarily find continuity in the formative dimension. The “Editorial Guidelines” is the conclusion and synthesis of the 2nd *International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers* (2nd ISPP). They are the reflections of all the Pauline publishers gathered together and presented in a very dense and concise way. But these reflections cannot remain only beautiful thoughts or pure poetry thrown in the air. They must be translated into concrete projects, actions and initiatives in

our apostolate. This will only be possible if we have creative and committed Paulines, true “apostles-publishers”. For this reason it is fundamental that formation establishes criteria and strategies, paths or itineraries so that future Paulines can respond to these needs, have the tools to correspond to what the “Editorial Guidelines” suggest for the future of the mission. The theme of this seminar is: “Formation for the Mission”. This is in fact the philosophy of our Founder: everything for the mission, formation must be entirely oriented in order to build true apostles-publishers.

I like to present the “Editorial Guidelines” as a beacon. Because the lighthouse is fundamental when we sail in the sea (also digital). In difficult situations of uncertainty, in the dark, in the storm... When we do not know where to go, how to move, the lighthouse gives us a direction, guides us. Even if it is far away, we know where we need to go. In this particular moment of “crisis”, darkness, change, etc., it is essential to have a guide, a light to follow. Using the same image or metaphor of the lighthouse, I would say that formation is what helps us get to this lighthouse. It is what teaches us to use the wind more effectively, to read the maps, to understand the movements of the sea, the sea currents, the position of the stars, to build a stronger and faster ship... Finally, it is what gives many possibilities to arrive in a safer, faster and more peaceful way to our goal/objective.

I am assuming that all of us present here have already read and studied the document “Editorial Guidelines”. There are many ways of reading them, according to the needs and context of each Circumscription. In this presentation, I will try to underline only a few points, especially related to formation, because this is, in fact, the step we are missing: the preparation of a formation plan that translates the “Guidelines”, which leads young people to this ideal that the “Guidelines” themselves propose very optimistically and utopically.

As I have already mentioned, this document is not a treatise on the Pauline mission nor, even less, a treatise on the Pauline apostolate. It is simply a contribution to reflect and update our apostolic action in the current context: the communicative, social and ecclesial context. The **objective** of the document is to give some fundamental principles to standardize the criteria of universal Pauline publishing. To be an

orientation for the next few years, a “beacon”, in fact. This agrees with the trends and paradigms of current communication, which will surely be different in 5 or 10 years. It wants to help the Congregation to take steps forward, recognizing its history and also the wealth that makes it up, with all the firm points of our mission.

The document tries to bring us into a new communicative, cultural, sociological, ecclesiological and even charismatic vision. Already from the title, you can see this new vision: “Editorial Guidelines” is the central element, the essential guidelines, the track on which to move on, the light to follow... The three terms “identity”, “content” and “interlocutors” become the three prongs of this trident, the three sides of this triangle, the three fundamental dimensions of the policies and actions that give unity to the institution as a whole and to its mission. Example of this novelty is also the terminology used, for example, “interlocutors” (and not “recipients”, “public” or “customers”), which responds to the logic of current communication, not only “mass”, but “social”, “digital”, “inter-relational”, etc. Each of the **seven parts** of the document brings new concepts¹, just as it reminds us of some fundamental elements of our mission.

It is perhaps obvious to say it, but I still want to emphasize that the “Editorial Guidelines” are not “editorial themes”, or editorial contents (they are *also* these, but not only), or rules only for those who work in the editorial office. Instead, they are in a broader way fundamental policies, parameters, working principles that give unity and organization to a project and to the whole institution. There is an ideal that must inspire and motivate us, even if obviously not 100% achievable. It must promote processes (cf. *Evangelii gaudium*, nos. 222ff: «Time is greater than space... Giving priority to time means taking care of starting processes rather than owning spaces»). They are guidelines for all Paulines, for all communities, for all sectors, for all projects, for all initiatives... given that, as Father Alberione reminds us:

«The apostle does his apostolate when he handles the pen, like when he starts the machine to print what has been composed. [...] It is the work of all together: the writer, the printer, the gatherer,

¹ Identity, courage to change, create relationships, open to every interlocutor, apostolic unity, editorial choices, formation for the mission.

the bookbinder, the propagandist, united in the same apostolate, to receive all together, having all contributed to this work, the apostle's prize, when the Lord will not distinguish between those who have used the pen and those who have used the compositor but will give the prize according to the love with which one has accomplished it»².

1. IDENTITY OF THE PAULINE PUBLISHER = TO BE "PUBLISHERS"

The identity of the Pauline publisher is one of the fundamental elements of the "Editorial Guidelines" document. After presenting the apostle Paul as a model of communicator, from which we must learn many things (for example, «*the dimension of pastorality and universality, prophecy, zeal and total commitment, passion and listening skills, the audacity and ability to build a network of collaborators, apostolic dynamism and a sense of responsibility*», etc.), it states – in the words of Father Alberione recalled by Father Perino – that the specific vocation or the unique purpose of every Pauline is to be a "publisher". The essence of the Pauline is to be "publisher", not writer (this too, but it is not the essential component), not media communicator, not printer, let alone trader, distributor or vendor...

However, we understand well what it means to be a "publisher". Alberione says that:

«By the name of *publishing* we don't mean just a book: we mean other things. The word *publishing* has many applications: publishing of the periodical, publishing of those who prepare the script for the film, of those who prepare the program for television, of those who prepare things to communicate by means of the radio. "*Edidit nobis Salvatorem*" says the liturgy; the Blessed Virgin gave us the Saviour. It uses the verb *edidit*. The publishing includes the artistic concept, the study to produce an object that is liturgical and artistic at the same time. It also includes the work of the nuns who prepare to do the catechism to the children and then, certainly, in charity, they explain it»³.

Edit comes from Latin and means "giving birth", giving life, childbirth, transforming... and refers to all forms of communication.

² JAMES ALBERIONE, *Predica del 25 settembre 1952*.

³ JAMES ALBERIONE, *Prediche*, 1957.

For this, we can say that

«the Pauline is a man called by Christ and consecrated to be an apostle of communication, to be essentially a “publisher”, the one who gives form to an experience, who writes or translates his personal and community life of faith and encounter with Christ in words, texts, images, sounds, videos, bytes or in any other form that the technology gradually develops; but also in experiences and initiatives where each language is at the service of the inculturation of the Gospel with and in communication. He who, in the example of Mary, gives (*edit*) the Saviour to the world»⁴.

The publisher “gives” Jesus to the world in all forms and languages of communication, in any sector of the apostolate, and mainly with his testimony. In fact, the first tool of communication is ourselves. This is why we refer to the concept of *meducation* (“We are the media”) and a whole section is dedicated to relationships (**3. Creating relationships**). The Final Document of the *Synod on Young People* reminded us precisely that «it is not enough to have structures if authentic relationships do not develop in them; it is the quality of these relationships, in fact, that evangelizes»⁵. And, recently, speaking to the Dicastery for Communication, Pope Francis gave an advice that is also very suitable for us Paulines:

«Our communication must be witness. If you want to communicate just one truth without goodness and beauty, stop, do not do it. If you want to communicate a truth more or less, but without involving yourselves, without witnessing that truth with your own life, with your own flesh, stop, do not do it»⁶.

To reinforce this essentiality of the Pauline vocation we can also resort to some historical statistics. For example, 97% of the publishing production in the period 1931-1940 is the result of the Pauline publishing staff (i.e., of the members); this index dropped to 25% in the 1940s, to 15% in the 1950s and reached 1.5% after 1960. If we look at the evolution of Father Alberione’s thought, we

⁴ *Editorial Guidelines. Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate*, no. 1.2.

⁵ XV SYNOD OF BISHOPS ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *Final Document. The young people, the faith and vocational discernment*, 27 October 2018, no. 128.

⁶ *Speech of Pope Francis to the participants at the Plenary Assembly of the Dicastery for Communication*, 23 September 2019.

come to the same conclusion: the first “apostolate manual” or the theoretical arrangement of his new evangelization project through communication was entitled *Press Apostolate* (1933), immediately after it became the *Publishing Apostolate* (1944: *Apostolato dell’edizione*) and, then, the second edition *Publishing Apostolate* (1950: *Apostolato delle edizioni*)⁷.

The question now is: how to be “publishers” in a new model of communication, no longer mass media, “social” in the sense that Father Alberione intended? How to be “publishers” in the digital environment? This is the current challenge, especially for the formation that must prepare future “publishers” and no longer “printers” or “book sellers”. Here we also enter the second section of the document: **Courage to change**. Change not only the way of doing and the structures but, above all, the mentality. Switch from the logic of the *pulpit* (mass media, one-way, hierarchical, etc.) to that of the *agora* (dialogical, relational, horizontal, etc.).

On this aspect, we are in tune with what Pope Francis says (and which he then promotes through his example): to create a culture of communication as a *noun* and not as an *adjective*. He affirms:

«We have slipped into the culture of the adjective: we use many adjectives and we often forget the nouns, that is, the substance. Adjectives are always linked to a noun, to a person. Therefore, a migrant person. In this way, there is respect and one does not slip into this culture of the adjective which is too “liquid”, too “gaseous”»⁸.

In the meeting with the staff of the Dicastery for Communication mentioned above, he reaffirms this concept: «*May yours be a Christian communication without adjectives. [...] We have forgotten the strength of nouns that speak the reality, to make room for adjectives*». The indication is therefore to move from the culture of the adjective to the theology of the noun: «*Communicating by witness, communicating by involving oneself in communication, communicating with the nouns of things, communicating as martyrs, that is, as witnesses of Christ, as martyrs*». Switch from technical-instrumental communication (mass media, etc.

⁷ In 1955, the third edition was published, which takes up again the title *Publishing Apostolate* (that of 1944 edition).

⁸ FRANCIS, General Audience at St. Peter’s Square, 3 April 2019.

= culture of adjectives, focus is on the object) to human communication (relationship/communion = culture of the noun, focus is on the subject). Put the human being before the technology.

The theme of the World Day of Social Communications for the year 2020 – «*That you may tell your children and grandchildren*» (Ex 10:2) *Life becomes history*»– reminds us exactly of this. The focus on memory as a “transmission” (= delivery) of experiences, dreams, hopes, etc. – and not just information – between one generation and another emphasizes that true communication arises from the encounter and ends in a change/transformation of the other (for example, the communication of Jesus). In practically all recent messages for the *Days of Social Communications*, the Pope follows this line of human, interpersonal, and not “social” communication in the traditional sense. A communication according to its original sense of “communion” and not according to the modern concept of “technical transmission of information/data”. We must remember the Pope’s insistence on promoting communication as a bridge, for a culture of encounter (2014 and 2016), in moving from a network of threads to a network of people (2014), or from network communities to human communities (2019), communicate hope and trust (2017), etc. That is, putting man before technology, encouraging dialogue, de-technicalizing communication to rediscover the values of a true humanism. This is because the technology changes, and very quickly. Formation must be very careful in this aspect. Forming technicians in communication is a great risk. We see going to the Circumscriptions how many Paulines are excluded from the apostolate today because they have learned only one technology, for example, typography. To form communicators, publishers, subjects who think and live communication; and not simple technicians, adjectives, because these will be immediately excluded, on the sidelines of the mission.

2. OPEN TO EVERY INTERLOCUTOR

Changing from the logic of the *pulpit* to the logic of the *agora* also involves “going out” from our homes, and mainly from our offices, to find people, that is, the “interlocutors”⁹ as we have expressly

⁹ One who takes an active part in a dialogue or discussion; the person with whom one speaks, the subject with

mentioned in the “Editorial Guidelines”. Hence, the importance of creating true communities, the centrality of dialogue and listening (including silence, see 4.3 on *big data*, noise and excess information, etc.). Only by listening to the other can we know what he needs, how we can help him, how we can transform him. We must listen and not only speak. This serves for the apostolate and especially for formation. We are in the public square (*agora*), no longer in the pulpit. We are no longer recognized immediately as bearers of the truth, for this reason we must gain trust before transmitting a content: indeed, “the content” which is Christ. Saint Paul is also a model to imitate here.

This content is specified in section 6 of the “Editorial Guidelines”, the **Editorial Choices**:

«From this central and essential content (Christ/Gospel), all other content must stem. The primacy of content, therefore, is indispensable. [...] Our editorial choices, in the different fields and areas, must manifest the prophetic dimension of our consecration, helping people to understand reality and to face the present challenges, offering them the criteria necessary to make responsible and conscientious choices»¹⁰.

The relevance and contemporaneity of the three specific and determining areas of our apostolic mission is reaffirmed¹¹, namely: the Bible, the family and communication. Adding each year a theme «inspired by the major contemporary problems and in harmony with the path of the universal Church»¹².

3. APOSTOLIC UNITY

Before concluding, I want to underline another fixed point in the document, to be enhanced in the formative process because it is essential in the current context: teamwork (and network) and apostolic unity, that is, synergy or “synodality”. We find this theme in point 5 of the “Editorial Guidelines”, but it is already present at

whom one establishes a dialogue, a relationship and, also, a negotiation, an agreement.

¹⁰ *Editorial Guidelines. Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate*, 2018, nos. 6.1 and 6.2.

¹¹ Cf. *Editorial guidelines, contents, recipients of the Pauline apostolate*, 2005, no. 4.

¹² *Editorial Guidelines. Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate*, 2018, no. 6.3.4.

the beginning, in paragraph 1.5. Several times, it is repeated (also with reference to our *Constitutions*¹³) that the publisher is not only a person, but a collective, a whole, a group. Teamwork, collegiality/synodality is essential¹⁴: working in a group, with the respective Councils and with a clear and functional Apostolic Project; working with lay people and the Pauline Family, etc. Teamwork is an important type of communication. We cannot be men of communication if we are unable to communicate well with each other, if we cannot work together in a common project, discussing ideas, changing thoughts when necessary. If we cannot build collaborative networks, after the example of St. Paul.

The document also highlights the aspect of communication as communion, as well as the importance of our unique brand (logo which, moreover, was a request from the *1st International Seminar of the Publishers* and approved in a General Chapter¹⁵). The logo is the visible symbol of unity, of our value and credibility, essential elements in today's world of communication. Indeed, this is what bloggers, YouTubers, influencers, etc., are trying to build: credibility. We already have it, we should not lose it.

4. FORMATION FOR THE MISSION

The document ends with the necessary link with formation, which is strengthened in this Seminar. How are we to form the Pauline to correspond to the profile presented in the "Editorial Guidelines" (and required by the current socio-communicative context)? How can we adapt our formative processes so that they form true apostles-publishers? Here is our function in these days: to look for ways that optimally favour this renewal that the Congregation needs to continue to do well and better its mission. We hope that this Seminar would enhance the sprouting of many ideas to "change everything" so that "everything remains as it was", as the *Leopard* wished us.

¹³ Cf. *Constitutions and Directory*, art. 85ff: "Collaboration in the apostolate".

¹⁴ The *Final Document* of the "Synod of Bishops on the Young people" also speaks a lot about teamwork and synodality: cf. nos. 103 and 124.

¹⁵ The logo was formally presented during the 6th General Chapter in Ariccia in April 1992. The 1998 General Chapter took up this topic again and expressed itself in its deliberations: «The 7th General Chapter pronounced itself with a deliberative vote on the value of the new logo, establishing that it is taken both to identify the apostolic activities and in reference to the Institution of the Society of Saint Paul» (cf. Acts, p. 45).

«There are many challenges and difficulties to “renew our missionary impetus” in the current socio-communication context. Although we recognize ourselves as limited and insufficient, we are nevertheless driven and animated by the certainty that the Pauline is a continuer of the mission of Jesus, the Master, according to the missionary dynamism of St. Paul and the apostolic passion of Father Alberione. “We should not escape from our duty; we should not excuse ourselves easily; we should not fool ourselves with presumption to do other good, we should do ours; we should not waste time”, exhorted Primo Maestro. We are called to evangelize today, as “apostles-communicators-publishers”, with all the means and languages, to make the truth reach everyone. “If our apostolate will follow God as writer and publisher, it will be truly fruitful, it will never end, vocations will multiply themselves”»¹⁶.

¹⁶ *Editorial Guidelines. Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate*, 2018, no. 7.3.



DIGITAL VOCATION PROMOTION

Father Julio Roncancio

*Coordinator General of Formation
Colombia-Ecuador-Panamá Province*

Father Julio Roncancio proposed to the Seminar Assembly a video which talks about the digital vocation promotion initiatives taking place in the Colombia-Ecuador-Panamá Province.

The video is available at the following web address:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5OnBwz-yxc>

To access directly frame the QR Code with the smartphone camera:





**THE EXPERIENCE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL NOVITIATE**

Manoel Gomes da Silva Filho

Pauline Novice

Living this beautiful experience of diversity in unity, received as a great gift from God in this year of novitiate, I would like to share with my beloved brothers a little of what I experienced in these first months in the international Novitiate in Albano Laziale. We have just started the journey, so I cannot present a solid assessment. I just want to talk about some things that impressed me and how I perceive this rich and complex reality.

Father Alberione, in the first week of the famous spiritual exercises of 1960, said of the novitiate:

«The education of the novice is preparation for religious life. Experiencing how to live religious life, as undertaken in the novitiate, is the best guarantee of living it joyfully after profession. The discontented religious will only be able to say: “If I do not conform I am the only one to blame; I am not using the means laid down in the Constitutions.” “Educate” comes from *e-ducere* [to bring out]; from a shapeless mass of marble, an artist can bring out a beautiful image of Jesus. The Master of novices lives and works with them – Jesus chose the Twelve “*ut essent cum*

illo” – and, living among them, he represents Jesus himself as regards poverty, obedience, chastity, common life and apostolate. Speech addresses the ear; reason persuades the mind; piety instills piety; life communicates life. Candidates enter the novitiate as good Christians to come out of it as religious; there is a real transformation of mind, heart, habits and desires [...] It is the most important year of one’s life»¹.

In 1958, he explained to the novices of the Daughters of St. Paul what this transformation means:

«You must already be religious in substance, before making your profession. The novitiate is that great means established by the Church to accomplish this transformation. Neither a day nor an hour should be lost in the novitiate: everything is precious, what is said, what is given, what is taught, corrected, indicated; all the means in hand for the increase of grace and for this transformation. “Lord, create another spirit in me: *Emitte spiritum tuum et creabuntur*”; that new beings, beings of God, totally of God, be created. The transformation must be profound»².

Experiencing this stage of formation in Italy is a wealth that words cannot fully illustrate. Seeing, hearing and touching many things, which in Brazil were only information, is for me the greatest gift of this experience. I could say that everything speaks here and what we listen to could never be heard elsewhere. I tell you why.

In September, we went to Alba to learn about the historical places of the Congregation. What a joy when I heard that we were already in Piedmont! Piedmont, which I heard about before I entered the seminary. I cannot list here all the places we have visited but each, in its own way, has filled me with joy and gratitude for the action of God accomplished through Primo Maestro. Leaving Piedmont and returning to Rome, my feeling was of gratitude.

As soon as this Seminar on Formation is over, we will begin another experience which, without a doubt, will be unforgettable: we will follow the steps of our Father St. Paul, starting from the port where he arrived as a prisoner to his grave. I imagine it will be a

¹ JAMES ALBERIONE, UPS I, 251-252.

² *Fascicolo Meditazione del Primo Maestro alle novizie*, 1958, p. 5.

great opportunity to “get to know this father better” and that it will certainly warm our heart.

These are only two examples and I would certainly have much more to say. Many Pauline confreres and Sisters who, while not saying a word, speak to us of the beauty of our charism and look at us with eyes full of hope.

Impossible not to mention even those who accompany us as professors. During these almost three months, we have had the opportunity to find ourselves in front of Paulines who speak to us of our charism and our Founder with such enthusiasm that, the minimum we can hear, is the desire to always know something more on the subject.

Each professor, in his own way, enriches us enormously and, at the same time, makes us see the greatness of the Pauline vocation and how imperative it is to prepare ourselves. In particular, I can say that my concept of being a Pauline is no longer what I had before starting the novitiate.

I could make quotes that confirm what I say, but not having enough time I just want to share two ideas that impressed me:

- a) the need to prepare ourselves to be true preachers in the culture of communication, that is, not only to reproduce what others say or write, but to fulfil our mission as a teaching Congregation.
- b) The true apostolate favours the life of prayer and, when our work leads us to have no time or desire to pray, it can no longer be called apostolate. The apostolate, as Fr. Alberione understood it, is what Jesus does in us. And how can this be given without an authentic life of prayer?

I would still like to highlight one last topic: the importance of correspondence between words and action, that is, *witness*. Let me share a passage from a speech by Pope Francis to the Dicastery for Communication:

«If you want to communicate just one truth without goodness and beauty, stop, do not do it. If you want to communicate a truth more or less, but without involving yourselves, without witnessing that truth with your own life, with your own flesh, stop, do not do it.

There is always the signature of the witness in each of the things we do»³.

Of all the lessons, I felt honoured to study the norms of the Society of Saint Paul having as professor Father Teofilo Perez, one of the responsible persons in the elaboration of the texts. He showed us the importance of the Constitutions, as Father Alberione saw them: «It is necessary to read them and meditate on them, and then bring our thoughts and our whole life into conformity with them. The Constitutions outline our particular way of life as regards our spirit, study, apostolate, and poverty»⁴.

After this brief summary, I would now like to focus on some challenges that I perceived in the international novitiate experience, but also in formation in general.

The first, perhaps the most evident, is that of the need for a formation that prepares us to be Paulines for the world. The current situation of the Congregation leads us to think that the reality of international communities will become increasingly common⁵. The heart of this challenge is the transition from “multiculturality” to “interculturality”. It is not enough to gather Paulines from different nations in one house; it takes a lot of personal and community work in the search for a unity that, respecting diversity, would form communities according to the New Testament model and that would be of “one heart and one soul”. In my opinion, interculturality presupposes sincere respect for the nation that hosts us, that is, we must arrive with an open heart and mind to live a new and enriching experience.

Another challenge that I would like to share, and I am pleased that at least two of our speakers have talked about this, is the need to create in our communities, not excluding formation communities, the *culture of silence*. And they ask us: why? Benedict XVI, in his message for the 46th World Communications Day (2012) offers us a clear answer: «Silence is an integral element of communication; in its absence, words rich in content cannot exist». Make no mistake: I am not talking about the silence that sometimes transforms our

³ *Speech of Pope Francis to the Dicastery for the Communication*, 23 September 2019.

⁴ JAMES ALBERIONE, UPS I, 44.

⁵ Father Angelo Schettini, Jesuit, who spoke to us of “International logic”.

communities into tombs and confreres into “perfect strangers”, but what opens us to listen to the other, understand his suffering and take an interest in his history. Especially today, that we live in the digital culture, mutual knowledge between those who live together cannot be taken for granted. An education to true communication is needed more than ever. And here too Benedict XVI helps us in the aforementioned message:

«Learning to communicate is learning to listen and contemplate as well as speak. This is especially important for those engaged in the task of evangelization: both silence and word are essential elements, integral to the Church’s work of communication for the sake of a renewed proclamation of Christ in today’s world»⁶.

Finally, I would like to refer to a need, rather than a challenge, that imposes itself more and more. Let us talk about witnessing. Professor Massimiliano Padula spoke of the lack of adults who can be reference points for young people. We, young people in formation, need adult Paulines who show us, with their lives, the beauty of the choice we have made and allow us to shape our identity. Father Renato Perino, in his report on the occasion of the first seminar on formation, already spoke of this:

«It is indispensable that they find in the community an atmosphere that is characterized by a keen sense of being wanted, a spirit of witness, hard work, order, as well as an incorporation—apostolic, spiritual and intellectual—that creates in them a strong undercurrent of responsibility and belonging»⁷.

We are not guileless, hoping to find perfect people in our communities, and we know well that everyone, like us, has his limitations. But we hope to find people who are taking a serious journey and whom we can rely on in our formation process.

⁶ BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the 46th World Communications Day, «Silence and Word: Path of Evangelization»*, 20 May 2012.

⁷ *Acts of the International Seminar of the Pauline Formation for the Mission*, Ariccia, 12-23 October 1994, p. 86.



CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION

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1. A HISTORY

Much has been said about “responding to the needs of the times”. This can just mean anything, depending on the context one is using it. Sometime in 1925, a man, Rev. Anton T. Boisen¹ was a patient in a hospital in Boston, USA and did respond to a definite need of his times. In one of his loneliest moments, he needed someone to whom to address his needs; there was no one who could give him time. He realized that health is an inner harmony of the many vitalities, which is not attained by medical materials alone, but also demands the combine efforts of spiritual and psychological instruments, such as, the Sacraments, prayer, Scripture, guidance and counselling. It is the “holistic” approach of healing the sick person that medical science, religious faith and other allied

¹ ANTON T. BOISEN (1876-1965) was the visionary founder of the clinical pastoral movement that includes pastoral care, counseling and psychotherapy, and of clinical pastoral training and education. It was as a result of his own personal crisis and the caring he received from his classmate and friend Fred Eastman that modern-day clinical chaplaincy was born. Although the practice of pastoral care has a long tradition in Christianity and to some extent in other faith traditions, the systematic analysis of pastoral practice associated with clinical pastoral education had its beginnings in the early 20th century.

disciplines join forces and share their vast knowledge and resources to form the “healing team”.

A program was begun in 1925 serving two-fold purpose: better care for the patient, and the supervised training for the clergyman. This evolved into what we now call **Clinical Pastoral Education**².

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), today, has developed into an international response to a common need. The Church during the past few decades, seems to have become aware of the basic humanness of each individual, including – or perhaps especially – the priest or the minister himself. In times past, it almost appeared that once ordained, a man was supposed to automatically become adequately competent to deal with any pastoral situation that might arise. He was, or perhaps in some places, still is, sent immediately from the seminary classroom to the parish, and there expected to function in a manner befitting the title he bore. Often it was the first time he found himself in a position of really ministering to the needs of others; he attempted to put into practice all he had learned in his seminary training. And, in an effort to be all that he had understood a priest or minister should be, he sometimes forgot what he actually was – a fallible human being, with all the weaknesses and frailties of the people to whom he was ministering.

Fortunately, today we are beginning to understand that preparation for effective ministry necessarily includes more than mere classroom lecture and theories. A direct result of this realization is the rapid growth of the CPE centres in numerous countries throughout the world, many seminarians now requiring this training before ordination.

The objective of the CPE, as mentioned, is to help the priest or minister grow into so sensitive a person as to be able to lovingly and effectively respond to the needs of his fellowmen. Thus, with better-prepared clergyman, a more integrated approach is achieved in caring for the whole person, that is, his spiritual as well as his physical, emotional, social and psychological needs.

² Although in the beginning it was usually based in a hospital, the training itself prepared the person for any apostolate he eventually found himself in, since the main thrust of the program was toward competent *pastoral care*.

2. WHAT IS CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION?

Clinical Pastoral Education is a process of theological and professional education for ministry. Theological students, religious and lay directly minister to people in crisis, people who are vulnerable, and often in pain. This being done while being supervised.

Through hands-on practice, clinical supervision and academic study, CPE students are chaplain interns who learn how to listen and attend to patients more effectively. For instance, how to engage patients and their loved ones, establish rapport and maintain eye contact, pay attention and respond to both verbal and non-verbal communications, and better understand what they are observing during encounters. «What did you learn?» is a common question in CPE.

The participants are challenged to improve the quality of their pastoral relationships through the intense interaction with supervisors, other participants, these people in crisis³ who are coping with a life-changing situation and various professionals⁴. This also enables him to develop new insight into himself personally and professionally (a pastoral identity). And within this interdisciplinary team process of helping persons, he develops skills in interpersonal and inter-professional relationships.

Through pastoral practice *written verbatim*⁵, *case studies and evaluations*, *individual supervision*, *participation in seminars*⁶ and doing *relevant readings*, it is hoped that the student comes to experience and develop genuine, caring pastoral and personal relationships. He learns by describing, analyzing, evaluating and reflecting upon his actual pastoral relationships, human encounters and acts of ministry.

Through reflecting on complicated life situations from various viewpoints, the participants are helped to gain a deep awareness and understanding about the human situation, and this will lead, hopefully, to more compassionate ministry. Students are encouraged, through theological reflection, to integrate their theology with life experience.

³ E.g., the patient, family members, watchers, etc.

⁴ Nurses, doctors, hospital staff, peer participants, etc.

⁵ A verbatim report on what transpired in conversation with the patient, writing down his feelings, emotions, choice of words, gestures, etc. for group evaluation.

⁶ Before doing his hospital rounds, instructions are given or group encounters.

He also learns how to identify and address the needs of those to whom he offers spiritual care (pastoral competence). Using action and reflection (the clinical method of learning), he begins to articulate the meaning and purpose of his experiences as a spiritual caregiver and integrating these insights into his ongoing spiritual care practice.

Also, from a theological reflection on specific human situations, he gains a new understanding of this ministry. CPE, essentially, seeks to clarify for the student the resources, methods, and the meaning of Christian faith as expressed in “pastoral care”.

Pastoral care is a ministry of healing. The word “*pastoralis*” means, the shepherd, the herdsman. For the Christian, the ultimate model is Jesus, “the good shepherd”. *Pastoral care* is an outreach of **compassion** often accompanied by an **action of care** always as part of, or on behalf of, a faith community.

What CPE is not. CPE is not a program to provide therapy for troubled or troublesome participants, at whatever level. And it is not to be used as a tool to weed out undesirable candidates. That some elements of the CPE program prove therapeutic is generally recognized. And it is not uncommon that a participant may reassess a vocational choice at the end of CPE. However, in order for a participant to profit from a CPE program, and to engage in reflection upon pastoral life experiences in the context of theological orientation, it is important that the participant possess a basic maturity and stability which will enable him to set aside, at least momentarily, personal crisis.⁷ Personal and pastoral issues may be a matter for supervision and peer group interaction, while the focus remains on ministry.

3. THE PROGRAM OUTLINE

3.1 PATIENT VISITATION AND VERBATIM REPORTS

Each learner will be assigned a variety of pastoral situations and will be expected to minister to his designated “parish” as fully as he is able. Since the clinical method utilizes the study of “human documents”, written records of pastoral visits will be submitted to the

⁷ It happens that personal issues would arise during encounters and evaluations, e.g., issues on fear, rejection, authority, abandonment, etc.

supervisor. It is through these reports that the supervisor “goes with” the learner and supervises his pastoral encounters. The verbatim reports will assist the student and the supervisor to discover and evaluate the various dynamics of the pastoral encounter.

The students will function as chaplains and will without doubt provide a helpful ministry; however, we want to stress that the main purpose of the students being here is to learn. It is sometimes a temptation to become so involved in ministry that he feels training is getting in the way of “doing his jobs”. **Being** is the student’s job for the program.

3.2 GROUP SEMINARS⁸

There will be group seminars and the specific group will agree upon the frequency. For many students, the group interactions and relationships comprise the most important aspect of the program. The primary media by which pastoral care is offered is interpersonal relationships. The group provides immediate relationships, which can serve as a microcosm as to how the students relate. The students are expected to enter into discussions as freely, openly, honestly and spontaneously as possible. As the students share their acts of ministry, their experiences, feelings, insights, they will come to know one another, know themselves better, learn from one another, and supervise one another.

3.3 THE SUPERVISORY CONFERENCE

The student-supervisor conference will generally be one period a week (in a 10-week CPE program); the student or the supervisor may request additional sessions. The supervisor is interested in providing a relationship in which the learner is enabled to discover his own personal and pastoral strengths and limitations. Students meet with their CPE Supervisor for about an hour during which they

⁸ Within any unit of Level I/Level II CPE, you will be part of a peer group (minimum of three but usually more) who learn from case studies, critique and feedback on your practice of ministry. Peer groups also critique each other’s verbatims, which are word-by-word reviews of a pastoral visit. You work with a qualified supervisor who is first and foremost a pastoral educator, a companion in your own pastoral formation process. This supervisor has pastoral experience and a Master’s of Divinity or the equivalent. By certifying as a CPE supervisor, he/she has pursued approximately four-five years of post-graduate work.

discuss ministry events, personal issues, theological questions, peer relationships, or any other experiences that might have an impact on their ministry and/or their pastoral identity.

4. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

4.1 ASSIGNMENTS

The student will be assigned to various areas for ministry (his particular apostolate). Initiative will be left to the student as to how he plans to provide pastoral care to his charges. He will want to discuss his plans with his supervisor.

4.2 SEMINAR

During the regular seminars, the verbatim or other CPE instruments will be the primary data. There will be unstructured Group Concern Seminars, which will focus on personal concerns growing out of the program. Additional seminars and conferences will be scheduled depending on need, possibility and availability.

4.3 REPORTS AND REFLECTIONS

Each learner is asked to submit typewritten verbatim periodically (frequency to be agreed upon). He will also write his reflections regarding his growth and will submit this to the supervisor.

4.4 WRITTEN EVALUATIONS

A written evaluation at the end (or also at the middle) of the program will be prepared. Guidelines will be presented at those times.

5. THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS IN CPE

The program provides students with an opportunity to learn through a blend of:

- Providing spiritual care to people in crisis – the actual practice of ministry to persons.

- Detailed reporting and evaluation of that practice.
- Pastoral supervision by a certified supervisor.
- Reflection in seminars and workshops – process conception of learning.
- A theoretical perspective on all elements of the program.
- Case study presentations and reflections.
- A specific time period.
- Group dynamic seminars – small group of peers in common learning experience.
- CPE accreditation of the CPE Centre.

6. THE INDIVIDUAL LEARNING CONTRACT

- **Pastoral Reflection:** Reflection on one's self as a person, in relationship to persons in crisis, the supervisor, and peer group members, as well as the curriculum and institutional setting.
- **Pastoral Formation:** Focus on personal and pastoral identity issues in learning and ministry.
- **Pastoral Competence:** Deepening and unfolding of competence in pastoral function, pastoral skills and knowledge of theology and the behavioural sciences.
- **Pastoral Specialization:** Some Centres can focus on the student's desire to become competent and knowledgeable in a particular area of ministry, e.g., oncology (cancer treatment), urban ministry, parish ministry, hospices ministry, youth ministry.

CPE serves as a part of one's preparation for parish ministry, chaplaincy, lay ministry, youth ministry, teaching and counselling.

Many theological schools require one unit of CPE as a part of a theological degree program. Approximately, 6-8 weeks for 400 hours.

7. GENERAL OBJECTIVES FOR CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION – A SUMMARY

- To become aware of oneself as a minister and the way one's ministry affects persons.

- To develop the skills to provide intensive and extensive pastoral care and counselling to persons in their crisis situations.
- To understand and utilize the clinical method of learning.
- To accept and utilize the support, confrontation and clarification of the peer group for the integration of personal attributes and pastoral functioning.
- To utilize individual and group supervision for personal and professional growth and for developing the capacity to evaluate one's ministry.
- To develop the ability to make effective use of one's religious/spiritual heritage, theological understanding, and knowledge of the behavioural sciences in pastoral ministry to persons and groups.
- To become aware of how one's attitudes, values and assumptions, strengths and weaknesses affect one's pastoral care ministry.
- To become aware of the pastoral role in interdisciplinary relationships and to work effectively as a pastoral member of an interdisciplinary team.
- To become aware of how persons, social conditions, systems, and structures affect the lives of self and others and to address effectively these issues in ministry.
- To develop the capacity to utilize one's pastoral and prophetic perspectives in a variety of functions such as: preaching, teaching, leadership, management, pastoral care and, as appropriate, pastoral counselling.

8. IMPLICATIONS TO FORMATION

The Clinical Pastoral Education is part of the Program of Formation, speaking here of the Philippine-Macau Province *Iter formationis*. After the 2nd Year of Theology, the Junior (temporary Professed) takes the **Spiritual and Pastoral Formation Year (SPFY)**. The SPFY is divided into four parts.

1. Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE).
2. Exposure and immersion in a rural parish.

3. Exposure in media organizations.

4. Exposure in the various sectors of our apostolate and formation.

It is here that CPE comes in.

CPE brings one closest to the suffering and invokes compassion for humanity, the training helps candidates to be aware of their own woundedness, needs for healing and integration before they can minister to others or even in the process of ministering to others.

In the initial stages of formation, the participant will, usually, have little theological background; thus, personal rather than pastoral issues are more likely to surface. The participant may be dealing with authority problems, self-centeredness, weak ego and related issues in the CPE program. It is likely that the same issues will be matter for formators and spiritual directors during the initial stages of formation. CPE can provide a framework for reflection and for dialogue and supervision, as well as for peer group interaction. A participant who learns to come prepared for a supervisory conference, or a peer group session, will be able to do the same in spiritual direction or a formators' conference. There is little theological integration at this stage of formation, but there is a format for theological reflection.

After three or four years of formation, it is expected that the CPE participant would be able to integrate some theological issues with lived experience: e.g., how does one's faith enable one to cope with crisis? This integration is a matter for deeper reflection after a few years in active ministry. And in mid-life renewal, or career change, one may wish to concentrate on integration of personal or relational issues: e.g., emerging emotional needs, teamwork ministerial skills, theological reflections, etc.

Pope Francis says:

«The thing the Church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds first. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds... And you have to start from the ground up».

«Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd» (Mt 9:36).

«I will give you shepherds after my own heart» (Jer 3:15).

In these words from the prophet Jeremiah, God promises his people that he will never leave them without shepherds to gather them together and guide them: *«I will set shepherds over them [my sheep] who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed» (Jer 23:4).*

9. APPENDIX

9.1 WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE OR DISTRESS? SOME EXAMPLES

Illness can cause spiritual struggle or spiritual distress, *«a state of suffering related to the impaired ability to experience meaning in life through connections with self, others, the world, or a superior being»*. A health crisis – experienced first-hand by a loved one – can challenge a person’s entire belief system or view of life. The negative emotions we experience and express during a health crisis are evidences of our spiritual distress:

- Shock: *«I never thought this would happen to me!»*.
- Disruption: *«Why did God let my child die?»*.
- Anger: *«That drunk driver should get what he deserves for what he did to my son!»*.
- Hopelessness: *«I was hoping the clinical trial would work. What’s left?»*.
- Resentment: *«My mom doesn’t deserve this. She’s the kindest person I know!»*.
- Guilt: *«My children have been after me to stop smoking. I guess I got what I deserve»*.
- Abandonment: *«Where is God now?»*.

Spiritual struggle can also be caused by death or loss because these experiences can change our connections with ourselves and others, sometimes permanently.

- *«I could always count on my Dad’s advice. Now that’s gone»*.

- «How can I continue jogging now that I'm losing my leg?».
- «I can't have normal conversations with my wife anymore because of her dementia».

Serious illness may prompt us to think of our own mortality:

- «I had hoped to travel more before this hit me. Now, it may be too late».
- «I don't know how much time I have left, but I have to make it to my daughter's wedding».
- «I need to make amends with my sister. It's been too long, and I may not have much time left».
- «What happens when I die? Will I go to heaven?».

Simply being in a hospital may complicate your ability to deal with an illness, regardless of the impact of the illness itself. Hospital patients are:

- isolated from family and loved one;
- depersonalized in the hospital environment;
- disconnected from their worshipping community;
- not able to employ their traditional coping methods, such as using religious literature and artefacts, journaling, walking through nature, enjoying quiet time or privacy, or eating their favourite foods.

Patients and their families are not likely to use the terms spiritual struggle and spiritual distress, but that does not mean they are not experiencing it. The spiritual distress they may feel may not be expressed in language traditionally associated with religion or faith; however, spiritual struggle or distress is always revealed as a change or loss of meaning and, sometimes, trying to reconstruct what is purposeful.

9.2 FEEDBACKS FROM THE CPE PROGRAM

- Engaging in the incredible power of listening in such a way that someone knows that he/she has been heard. I have sat or walked with people while they talked and talked and felt as if I were not doing a thing, but I have learned that my reflective listening

helped them process and sort through issues they were struggling with to help them come to deeper insights about themselves, their purpose, their relationship with God, and their relationships with other people.

- Deepening my ability to identify my own emotions.
- Discovering appreciation for emotions that I have wanted to run from throughout my life. In particular, I've dealt with anxiety throughout my life and perpetually tried to eliminate it, but now I consider it one of many emotions that comprise my everyday life and have begun to appreciate the many ways anxiety has helped me in life.
- Appreciating my past and embracing hope as a way to live and learning practices that will help me live hopefully.
- My experiences in CPE also helped me hone my theology. I'll conclude with my thoughts on the central themes of my religious heritage and theological understanding which shape my ministry.
- CPE program was one of the best educational experiences I've ever had. I went into the program thinking it was primarily about learning how to minister to people in a hospital setting. I did learn about ministry in hospitals, but more importantly, I came away personally transformed. CPE was about who I am. A great combination of theory and hands-on training along with personal supervision and group work. It helped me identify and build on my strengths while also challenging and helping me grow in my weaknesses. I am better equipped for ministry because of CPE.

9.3 THEOLOGICAL REALIZATIONS

- Image of God: All people are made in God's image; therefore, God chooses all people as his friends, giving all people infinite worth.
- Hope: God has invested each person and all creation with purpose.
- Community: God is a divine community in three persons. We humans are made to be in community as well, and we need each other.

- Sin: Life is difficult and full of misery, and people will make poor choices that hurt others and themselves.
- Grace: God’s compassion looks upon all people with the same love that a healthy mother has for her young child (see Psalm 131).
- Incarnation: God made us and all creation with matter, and God entered the material world through Jesus Christ.
- God’s providence: God cares for people and all creation intimately.
- God’s immanence: God is present throughout the world and with all people. God rejoices and weeps with us, his friends.
- God’s transcendence: God is not limited by the material, temporal world.



**COURSE OF PREPARATION FOR
PERPETUAL PROFESSION**

James Arinze Edeh

Pauline Junior

1. INTRODUCTION

It is a special period of grace for us juniors participating in the *Course of Preparation for Perpetual Profession (CPPP)*. Celebrating the 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* precisely in the Vocation Year of the Pauline Family is truly a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is obvious that the Holy Spirit is communicating something very important to us, that we must listen to his suggestions with open ears. Especially for us young ones who are still in initial formation, it is a great privilege to be part of this great event. It is, therefore, on this note that I, **James Arinze Edeh**, in the name of the group that is currently preparing for the definitive “Yes” to our Divine Master in the Congregation, express our profound gratitude to the Lord for the gift of the Pauline vocation. Our thanks also go to the Superior General, Father Valdir José De Castro, and his General Councillors for giving us the opportunity to be part of this historic moment of the Congregation. Above all, we thank you for having set out three intense and exclusive months of preparation for perpetual vows, as requested by the Congregation in the X General Chapter.

The importance of this preparation cannot be underestimated. It is very timely, considering the fact that today culture is breaking down the fences that once divided nations and building communicative bridges between them. It is in this context that my intervention intends to present our extraordinary experiences in the international preparation period. This is the fourth *Course of Preparation for Perpetual Profession*. Today the course is composed of 11 young juniors from 5 different countries: Congo, Italy, Nigeria, Philippines and Venezuela.

For us, having an international formative experience in view of perpetual vows is truly a moment of grace. This can be likened to the event of 1960, in which our beloved Founder, Blessed James Alberione, brought together a good number of his sons (the oldest) from different parts of the world to Ariccia for an intense and special course of a month of Spiritual Exercises entitled: *Come to a lonely place, and rest a while*. Leaving all other commitments, we too are making a historic, spiritual, community, academic and apostolic journey, specifically Pauline. Often, in our provinces we learn only in a fragmented way the Pauline life, while this period allows us to make a journey to the places of our origins, especially Saint Lawrence of Fossano, where our beloved Founder was born, and the “Mother House” in Alba. This *Course* also brings us closer to the Holy See to better appreciate the fourth vow we profess, that is, fidelity to the Pope and the Founder’s insistence on walking with and in the Church.

2. ORIGINS: PILGRIMAGE TO THE PLACES OF OUR BIRTH

Returning to the origins is a necessity for any institution that has survived over time and has spread to all continents and nations. This is why when the institution grows, develops and expands, meeting many other realities and struggling to assert itself, there is always a tendency to deviate from its fundamental principles. Returning to drink from the origins not only guarantees fidelity, but invigorates, renews and revitalizes. In order to take control of the present and chart a promising future, we need to withdraw from time to time to where it all started. It ushers us into the original experiences, ideas or visions of the Founder while creating new insights with which to relaunch into the mission.

Therefore, the international preparation for perpetual vows is very important as it is an appeal to all the young members who are about to make a life commitment in the Congregation to “return home”. This home, which is located in the place where the Congregation was born, creates a sort of personal relationship between those preparing for perpetual vows and the charismatic heritage of the Congregation. It gives them the opportunity to walk on the footsteps of the Founder. Visiting Alba and Bra, special places of both the Founder and the Society of Saint Paul, offered us the opportunity to have a panoramic view of the cultural, spiritual and socio-political situation in which our Congregation was born. Walking on those sacred lands of Bra and Alba reflecting, imagining, meditating, questioning, praying, trying to assimilate and deepening the knowledge of where it all started, connecting it to how far we have gone and where we are today, automatically makes us to ask: where are we going? Those days of pilgrimage to the places of grace for the life of the Founder and of the Congregation were really strong for us. We came to understand that the future challenges are greater than those of the past. It made us even more aware that Fr. Alberione lived and has left the Congregation in our hands, to us who are preparing to commit ourselves in perpetuity to live the Charism and the Pauline Mission.

3. PAULINE CHARISM

Our charism and our spirituality suffer from great poverty in most of our Circumscriptions due to inadequate Pauline formation. There are no members specialized in both these fields. Consequently, even among our senior members, we notice how difficult it is to translate these in the formation of young ones coming to join us. The consequence is that there is little or no Pauline colour in the way that many of us are trained. This is why we young ones do not know much about our Founder, and therefore we have little love for him. Since we do not know him, we do not understand the richness and beauty of our charism and spirituality. Therefore, we do not spread our spirituality that involves the whole Christ for the whole person. Furthermore, we do not encourage people to pray to Blessed James Alberione and to ask for his intercession, so that there may be witnesses leading to his canonization.

This *Course* offers the young generations the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and love for our Founder. Loving him, we come to appreciate the beauty of our charism that he breathed in us and the rich spiritual heritage he left us.

Our spirituality, which is so rich in content and which should be the Pauline life project from which our apostolate should flow, is often reduced to a simple slogan. The spiritual legacy that Fr. Alberione left us has the purpose of ushering us into a profound relationship with Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life. In this relationship we are enriched and enabled to build community relationships with our brothers, whose fruit translates into relationships in view of the apostolic mission. Our charism therefore flows from our spirituality. It becomes a shared and expressed testimony using different means of communication, as in the case of our Mary Queen of the Apostles and of Saint Paul the Apostle.

Today's exegesis calls us to update our charisma. To this end, it is pertinent to return to the essentials, in particular for young ones still in initial formation, bearing in mind that our time is defined as a "change of age", which has no respect for the fundamentals and essential elements of cultures. In fact, it continues to disseminate information without respect for any culture, religion, morals, race, cult or belief; hence, the need for us to return to the roots, which is precisely what this phase of international preparation aims to achieve. Apparently, the pontificate of Pope Francis continues to make us aware of the fact that *«we are not in an age of change, but in a change of age»*. Translated thus; new technologies are rapidly and radically changing the production system and information, but always within the old consumerist paradigm. The failure to create a social structure that can benefit from these changes is one of the causes of this crisis. Faced with today's rapidly changing world, it is essential that the young Paulines be well armed with a good understanding of the Pauline charism. It is important that we try to understand the teachings of our Founder. To respond adequately to the pressing needs of the people of our time, we must return to the root. This is indeed what this intense quarterly preparation to final vows is doing.

This program seeks to provide us with the Founder's language so that we can read it in his original writings. Secondly, the experts of

the Pauline charism and spirituality come to teach us and thus open us to a new and broad horizon that will allow us to evangelize in communication and with communication.

4. PAULINE FAMILY

The Society of Saint Paul is not the only foundation of our Blessed Founder. It is just a branch among ten branches. So, we were born as a family. It is very important that we not only think or feel this, but we also live it. This idea of family was very dear to Fr. Alberione, so much so that before the great spiritual exercises of 1960 in Ariccia (April-May 1959), he said: «*We walked a lot during the 45 years (1914-1959)*». Later, however, Fr. Alberione clarified that it was now necessary to walk together, in the same spirit, and no longer only as a Society of Saint Paul but as a whole Family. The course of the spiritual exercises proposed, in fact, has “another purpose”, «*the updating of the members to the Congregation and to the Pauline Family; and as the spiritual testament, conclusive of the mission that the Lord imposed on me*». For some of us from abroad, the reality of a person founding ten institutions with the same spirit and the same charism is unthinkable. We can only imagine it. For us, therefore, the word *Pauline Family* was just an idea yet to be realized. However, this reality comes to light immediately upon arriving in Italy. This *Course* opens us to the broader picture and to the wider project of Blessed James Alberione, which is a family project. We come to realize that we are not alone making this journey, but we are born as a *Family*.

5. TESTIMONIES OF OUR ELDERLY

“History is the teacher of life”. The experiences of others can be useful to us; our experiences teach us more and more. Living with the most experienced and educated people, conversing with them and taking advice from them is always a beautiful experience. The wise prefer conversations, conferences, the best books. Testimonies are very important. They are like candles burning to ward off the darkness. They ignite motivations in the heart of the listener. They are often transforming, arousing hope, challenging and giving the certainty that every mission is possible. The testimonies clarify our

fears, doubts and perhaps our misconceptions. In flame the heart with zeal to go forward with faith, because if others sacrificed themselves for the mission, we too can offer our bid. Seeing with our eyes and listening to the testimonies of older brothers and sisters who have offered their lives for the Pauline Mission is a huge motivation for us young Paulines. Although most of them are already old and sick, they are still full of enthusiasm because in their suffering they are happily leaving the apostolate. From them we learn to persevere in the challenges and difficulties that we may have to face for the cause of our mission. Listening to the challenges they have faced and the way they have managed the graces that our Lord has given them, makes us understand that to stop moving forward is not an option, and that if the Lord has willed something, we must make ourselves available. We are really grateful to all.

6. UNIVERSALITY: THE WORLD AS OUR PARISH

For us Paulines, there are no limits to the distance we can travel to carry out the work of evangelization. Alberione affirms that the world is our parish; we belong to the parish of the Pope. That is, we must have our eyes on the world and be ready to Christianize it. We should be attentive to the movements of the world and be ready to respond promptly in a Christian way. We cannot be closed or self-referential, as Pope Francis says, confined to our little world or our comfort zone because the world, especially the world of today, is not closed at all. Ours is a changing era, and in which new forms of communication are breaking down those walls that hinder communications and building new ways of relating and connecting. As noted and stressed during the *2nd International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers*, being attentive to “relationship” as a key element for the practice of communication and for networking as places of meaning and content of communicative creation, the Pauline Publisher must seek new forms of presence and action not so much tied to the means but rather to the culture and the new grammar of communication, being at the service of all the people of God, especially of the men and women who live in the peripheries. So communication is defined today in terms of relationship and interactivity. Communication is weighed by the number of relationships that can be created. Today “influence” is emphasized more.

An ancient proverb says: “Charity begins at home”. So to be effective communicators and creators of relationships, we have to start with ourselves. We create relationships, within the community, between the communities, between the Provinces and the Regions and also with the General House if we want to influence today’s culture. We can no longer remain confined to one place; we need Pauline brotherhood as a testimony of today’s culture. This *Course of Preparation for Perpetual Profession* has the opportunity to be enriched with a missionary spirit, which increasingly takes on the traits of multiculturalism and mutual knowledge, to broaden horizons and build together the future of the Society of Saint Paul. It is an opening to the world and to the greatest realities. So we celebrate our spirituality, share experiences, work, study, pray, play, dream, walk and eat together, allowing us to have a great experience and friendship.

7. CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

Obviously, the positive aspects outweigh the negative ones. The challenges are always there to build. But we must not create them. I present only two that we would like to be taken into consideration to improve the subsequent years of this *Course*.

a) Learning of the Italian Language

One of the challenges we are facing is that of language. As we know, language is essential for effective learning. Since this is a very short-term project, we did not have much time to focus on learning the Italian language. Despite the difficulty, especially for us who come from English-speaking countries, we managed to make it. However, we appeal to Major Superiors and General Coordinators of Formation to include the learning of the Italian language in formation programs, so that young people do not come to Italy with a low level of knowledge of the Italian language.

b) Appropriate Spaces

Secondly, being in the same community with the novices is very nice as we can exchange ideas and experiences. However, it would be better if both groups could have a separate community. This would

help each group enter the proper spirit required of the phase they are experiencing. To deepen the contents, it is necessary that each group has its own space.

8. SUGGESTIONS

To the extent that it is true that there is a vocational crisis in Europe and elsewhere, we must not fold our arms and do nothing. During these few months, we met some other congregations and we were amazed to see that they still have young vocations in Italy. Therefore, we suggest that, perhaps, it is not enough to have a three-month preparation course; in the end, the participant could celebrate perpetual vows together in any of the parishes where a bishop can be invited. This would create awareness in many young people who do not yet know the religious or priestly life. It will also create a strong spiritual bond between those preparing for perpetual profession.

9. CONCLUSION

Approaching the end of this intensive three-month course, together with John's words in his First Letter, we can say that that which we have heard, seen with our eyes, contemplated and deepened and touched with our hands are wonderfully immense, great, beautiful and worth going through. We must confess that we had an enriching moment that will remain with us all our life. We had the opportunity to realize all that the Superior General said in his homily during the opening Mass of this year's *Course of Preparation for Perpetual Profession*. He stated that they will have the opportunity to deepen the Pauline charism, study from the original texts of the Founder, to know his true thoughts, visit the Alberionian places where it all began and, above all, enrich themselves with the experience of so many Pauline confreres and sisters who in these three months would share their vocational stories and provide contributions on our charism and how to interpret it in the current context of communication, to bring Christ to today's generation.

Therefore, once again we use this opportunity to thank our dear Superior General, Father Valdir José De Castro, and his Councillors, in particular, Father Salud Paredes and Father Celso Godilano.

We appreciate and thank our Circumscription Superiors for their support and guidance. Words are not enough to thank all our competent and very friendly professors, who made every lesson very interesting with their love and affection. We thank all of you and pray that our Master and Lord continue to bless you with his joy. We thank Father Lomelí who, more than being our Referent, became one of us, participating in all the activities and guiding us very well. Thank you, Father Lomelí, may the Lord continue to bless you. We thank all those who have contributed to making our stay here in Italy blessed and comfortable, especially the chefs in all the communities where we stayed. You are all wonderful, may God bless you and your families. Finally, thanks to all the participants in the 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*.



SYNTHESIS OF THE GROUP WORKS

GROUP WORK/1
Tuesday 05 November 2019

Proposals for the Integral Pauline Formation in view of the Mission – Human Formation

Called to the human condition with individual and community responsibility, to knowledge, to action, to fraternal love, to collaboration, to harmony, to rectitude, to commitment, to holiness...

Questions:

1. In the pastoral care of vocations, what should be the criteria for a good choice of candidates?
2. What should change in the formation process to better respond to the needs of the ecclesial, cultural, social and communicative context; and to the changes introduced by the “digital revolution”?
3. With regard to the affective-psychological maturation of young people, what kind of professional accompaniment is made in your Circumscription? What do you suggest to intensify this dimension?
4. How could our members be formed in view of aging, to continue to be active and participatory in the apostolate even in old age?

GROUP 1 – Italian

Premessa 1: l’area geografica di ingresso incide nella considerazione di alcuni criteri.

Premessa 2: l’intera comunità deve essere coinvolta nella valutazione del giovane.

1. *Nella pastorale vocazionale, quali devono essere i criteri per una buona scelta dei candidati?*
 - a) Verificare le motivazioni che spingono il candidato a donarsi alla Congregazione.
 - b) Prendere in considerazione la capacità relazionale (interazione, affettività e capacità comunicativa), il grado di interazione con

l'ambiente comunicativo paolino (intelligenza della realtà e coscienza formata).

- c) Conoscere i giovani a partire dall'ambiente da cui provengono: storia familiare, percorso di studi, interessi.
- d) Valorizzare gli spazi che frequentano per conoscerne le reazioni e le attitudini.
- e) Saggiare la docilità agli stimoli educativi, il tipo di risposta all'itinerario formativo proposto.
- f) Capacità di portare la responsabilità, verificandone la costanza in periodo di tempo consistente.

2. *Cosa dovrebbe cambiare nel percorso formativo per rispondere meglio alle esigenze del contesto ecclesiale, culturale, sociale, comunicativo, e ai cambiamenti introdotti dalla "rivoluzione digitale"?*

- a) Offrire percorsi formativi che prevedano sin dall'inizio il lavoro di squadra su progetti specifici (all'interno della comunità, della famiglia paolina e di altri enti educativi come università, parrocchie e diocesi). Promuovere la collaborazione del giovane con i laici.
- b) Assieme alla trasmissione del contenuto della vita religiosa (voti e costituzioni), rendere più accogliente e fraterno l'ambiente comunitario in cui avviene l'itinerario formativo perché possa verificarsi la trasmissione della vita paolina.
- c) Rilanciare e approfondire il carisma paolino, in particolare pensare itinerari formativi che approfondiscano la comunicazione e la spiritualità paolina.
- d) Accompagnamento nell'incarico o nel servizio affidato al giovane (evitare delle responsabilità dirigenziali esclusive ai giovani nei primi anni formativi).

3. *Riguardo alla maturazione affettivo-psicologica dei giovani, che tipo di accompagnamento professionale si fa nella tua Circonoscizione? Cosa suggerisci per intensificare tale dimensione?*

- a) Affidarsi a collaborazioni esterne per verificare e aiutare il giovane in formazione (terapia somatica).
- b) La maturazione affettiva e psicologica deve essere accompagnata per tutta la vita. Se non si affronta la conversione affettiva a ogni età, il disagio si manifesta in ambito comunitario e apostolico in modo drammatico (ruolo e non servizio, individualismo esasperato...).
- c) Suggestire a tutti la necessità di un accompagnatore spirituale.
- d) Necessità di una progettazione nel preparare i formatori.
- e) Il test psicologico può essere uno strumento utile per valutare il candidato.

4. *Come si potrebbero formare i nostri membri in vista dell'invecchiamento, per continuare a essere attivi e partecipativi nell'apostolato anche nell'età avanzata?*

- a) Ripensare la nostra vita comunitaria perché diventi accogliente per i giovani: ricostruire le nostre relazioni profonde come consacrati (“Ripartire da Cristo”) per superare individualismo esasperato (come ha suggerito mons. Carballo, è necessario che i professi si rimettano in gioco).
- b) Continuare a coinvolgere i fratelli in servizi costruttivi.
- c) Alimentare il cammino spirituale a ogni età per imparare a custodire la vita di preghiera nell'età più avanzata.
- d) Incentivare la disponibilità a cambiare ambiente e servizio coltivando l'elasticità del cambiamento fin dai primi anni formativi.

GROUP 2 – Italian

1. *Nella pastorale vocazionale, quali devono essere i criteri per una buona scelta dei candidati?*

Tra i criteri emersi dai vari interventi si segnalano i seguenti:

- a) Scegliere e accogliere giovani che abbiano una frequentazione e partecipazione alla vita parrocchiale ed ecclesiale.
- b) Non prendere assolutamente giovani/adulti che provengono da altri istituti o seminari. Non sempre si conoscono le vere ragioni

dell'abbandono o della dimissione, al di là delle relazioni dei loro formatori. Respingerli decisamente, meglio una vocazione in meno che avere più vocazioni ma problematiche.

- c) Essere molto severi nella selezione, evitare i passaggi da un istituto all'altro.
- d) Rafforzare l'identità paolina nella duplice proposta di sacerdote-discepolo.
- e) Verificare le qualità umane di base; solo su una solida maturità umana si può costruire un buon cristiano e un buon religioso.
- f) Prendere contatti anche via Internet, come avviene in Brasile. Ma anche nell'itinerario vocazionale in rete ci vuole molta severità nella selezione; se la persona ha superato i trent'anni, ed è senza una solida preparazione professionale, meglio non prenderli in considerazione.
- g) Ammettere i giovani dopo un serio test psicologico (avviene nelle circoscrizioni di Corea e Argentina). Alcune malattie psicologiche non è possibile scoprirle altrimenti. Importante verificare la motivazione, l'autenticità e la trasparenza di chi viene da noi; molti bussano alla congregazione per avere un rifugio o una sistemazione; metterli seriamente alla prova.
- h) Capacità di saper lavorare in équipe (anche se è difficile da cogliere subito).

2. Cosa dovrebbe cambiare nel percorso formativo per rispondere meglio alle esigenze del contesto ecclesiale, culturale, sociale, comunicativo, e ai cambiamenti introdotti dalla "rivoluzione digitale"?

- a) Occorre una presenza continua del formatore, che deve essere a tempo pieno; l'accompagnamento è molto importante.
- b) Creare opportunità per conoscere l'ambiente esterno (Chiesa, società, mondo della cultura...) che dobbiamo evangelizzare.
- c) Essere comunità aperte e in dialogo col mondo circostante; evitare rischi di chiusura e di autoreferenzialità.
- d) Dopo gli studi base di teologia (5 anni), passare subito a una

specializzazione nei settori specifici del nostro apostolato (proposta fatta dalla circoscrizione Italia).

- e) In Brasile si segnala il percorso in contemporanea tra filosofia e comunicazione.
- f) Formare a un uso responsabile di Internet e del mondo digitale.
- g) Puntare molto sulla spiritualità paolina; in Corea durante il noviziato non è permesso l'uso di Internet per non mondanizzarsi.
- h) La formazione paolina andrebbe fatta da subito, non alla fine degli studi.
- i) Equilibrio tra formazione intellettuale e formazione apostolica.
- j) Tutta la comunità deve essere apostolica e formativa, e avere un progetto comunitario e apostolico.

**3. *Riguardo alla maturazione affettivo-psicologica dei giovani, che tipo di accompagnamento professionale si fa nella tua Circo-
scrizione? Cosa suggerisci per intensificare tale dimensione?***

- a) La psicologia non determina la vocazione, ma si ritiene necessaria.
- b) Si è ribadito la necessità di test psicologici e anche medici per una verifica dell'integrità mentale e corporale della persona (in modi differenti lo si fa in Corea e Argentina; in Italia vi si ricorre solo per casi specifici). Anche per l'itinerario vocazionale on line (Brasile), dopo l'incontro diretto del vocazionista, è prevista la presenza e l'assistenza di uno psicologo e di altri paolini.
- c) Accompagnamento psicologico che deve continuare nell'itinerario vocazionale.
- d) Il formatore non sia solo un uomo di preghiera, ma una persona matura, sia umanamente che psicologicamente.
- e) In Corea l'accompagnamento psicologico spesso è fatto da paolini che hanno questa specializzazione; e si offrono anche itinerari psicologici all'interno dei corsi di formazione.
- f) È importante che gli psicologi siano credenti.
- g) Ci sia distinzione di persona tra il maestro di formazione e lo psicologo, affinché il formatore non formi le persone a propria immagine.

4. *Come si potrebbero formare i nostri membri in vista dell'invecchiamento, per continuare a essere attivi e partecipativi nell'apostolato anche nell'età avanzata?*

- a) Valorizzare l'esperienza degli anziani nel trasmettere ai giovani la storia paolina e l'amore per la vocazione e la nostra missione.
- b) Far comprendere agli anziani che, anche a età avanzata, devono sentirsi partecipi della missione paolina.
- c) Informare gli anziani delle attività paoline, con un continuo aggiornamento.
- d) Evitare che gli anziani si lascino andare in depressione o che si isolino, coinvolgendoli in qualche attività compatibile con l'età e la loro situazione di salute.
- e) Imparare a invecchiare bene. In Polonia, pur essendo il più anziano di 69 anni d'età, un terzo dei membri non fa quasi nulla. Alcuni si sono autoesclusi da tutto. Ma questo problema, difficile da risolvere, dipende anche dal tipo di formazione ricevuta.
- f) Affiancare ai giovani in formazione qualche anziano, come avviene nella comunità di Albano, purché non siano depressi o problematici, ma sereni ed equilibrati, e sappiano trasmettere l'amore per la vita religiosa e l'apostolato paolino.
- g) Tenere attivi gli anziani. In Brasile, nella casa per anziani delle Figlie di San Paolo, le suore – anche quelle in carrozzina – lavorano nella produzione di piccoli oggetti religiosi e si sentono attive e coinvolte.

GROUP 3 – Spanish

1. *En la pastoral vocacional, ¿cuáles deben ser los criterios para una buena selección de candidatos?*

Aunque algunos criterios pueden variar de un Nación a otra, dependiendo de la edad en la que algunos buscan ingresar y el nivel de vida, se pueden mencionar los siguientes:

- a) Asegurar que tengan experiencia de Dios y que vivan y conozcan la fe cristiana.
- b) Asegurar que sean personas humanamente sanas y equilibra-

- das, recurriendo incluso a los respectivos test psicológicos, médicos y de antidoping.
- c) Asegurar que hayan llevado un adecuado proceso de discernimiento vocacional de al menos un año.
 - d) Asegurar que tengan una recta intención.
2. ¿En el itinerario formativo qué debería cambiar para responder mejor a las exigencias del contexto eclesial, cultural, social, comunicativo; y a los cambios introducidos por la revolución digital?
- a) Que la reconfiguración de la formación comience por la Formación permanente de las comunidades como sujetos formativos.
 - b) Que los formadores desarrollen y apliquen nuevos criterios formativos.
 - c) Que la formación sea cada vez más personalizada, integral y dinámica.
 - d) Que los maestros pasen a ser facilitadores que acompañen el proceso de formación de los candidatos con su testimonio de vida y su orientación.
 - e) Que los formandos se conviertan en protagonistas de su propio proceso formativo.
 - f) Usar un lenguaje común que se adapte mejor a nuestra actividad formativa.
3. *Respecto a la maduración afectivo-psicológica de los jóvenes, ¿qué tipo de acompañamiento profesional se hace en tu Circunscripción? ¿Qué sugieres para intensificar tal dimensión?*
- a) Garantizar un ambiente sano y adecuado en las comunidades formativas.
 - b) Facilitar la posibilidad de un acompañamiento psicológico a quien lo requiera.
 - c) Asegurar que se dé seguimiento a los test psicológicos, de modo que se puedan superar los bloqueos problemáticos y se pueda

alcanzar una aceptable maduración antes de la Profesión perpetua.

- d) Establecer los protocolos necesarios para no dar lugar a que se presenten casos de abusos sexuales en la Congregación.
4. ¿Cómo se podría formar a nuestros miembros en vistas al envejecimiento, para seguir siendo activos y participativos en el apostolado en la edad avanzada?
- a) Invertir en nuestra propia capacitación.
 - b) Ofrecer otras opciones de apostolado que no se sujeten solamente al trabajo manual productivo que se nos ha enseñado siempre.
 - c) Proveer alternativas necesarias para tener una buena calidad de vida religiosa.
 - d) Ofrecer la orientación y los programas geriátricos adecuados para ayudarnos a enfrentar los problemas propios de la edad.
 - e) Valorar los contenidos hechos por paulinos.
 - f) Valorarnos como personas que hemos dado nuestra vida a la Congregación.

GROUP 4 – Spanish

1. *En la pastoral vocacional, ¿cuáles deben ser los criterios para una buena selección de candidatos?*
- a) Asegurar que tengan experiencia de Dios y que vivan y conozcan la fe cristiana.
 - b) Asegurar que sean personas humanamente sanas y equilibradas, recurriendo incluso a los respectivos test psicológicos, médicos y de antidoping.
 - c) Asegurar que hayan llevado un adecuado proceso de discernimiento vocacional de al menos un año.
 - d) Asegurar que tengan una recta intención.

2. ¿En el itinerario formativo qué debería cambiar para responder mejor a las exigencias del contexto eclesial, cultural, social, comunicativo; y a los cambios introducidos por la revolución digital?
 - a) Personalización en los procesos formativos (acompañamiento), teniendo en cuenta la edad y su realidad.
 - a) Profundizar en la formación en mundo digital para la evangelización y dar espacios para que hagan experiencias con acompañamiento.
 - b) Tener formadores preparados con prioridad en este empeño y con una comunidad que debe ser formativa. Reforzar el trabajo del acompañamiento espiritual.
 - c) Favorecer y mejorar los ambientes formativos (espacios y personas adecuados).

3. *Respecto a la maduración afectivo-psicológica de los jóvenes, ¿qué tipo de acompañamiento profesional se hace en tu Circunscripción? ¿Qué sugieres para intensificar tal dimensión?*
 - a) En casi todas las experiencias se inicia en la pastoral vocacional (realizando "Test de personalidad") y, posteriormente, se continúa en grupo y, quienes necesitan (casos especiales y particulares), lo hacen personalizado. Algunas experiencias han permitido tener un acompañamiento profesional más constante. Con todo ello, se requiere mejorar el seguimiento y tener formadores capacitados para dar continuidad.
 - b) Valorar el acompañamiento psicológico también en la formación permanente.
 - c) Se requiere atender mejor el aspecto de la Formación permanente, poniendo énfasis en las etapas iniciales y sistematizando e institucionalizando el proceso.
 - d) Se necesita profundizar en el acompañamiento humano (especialmente en las etapas donde se realizan estudios fuera de las comunidades) y el acompañamiento espiritual, que no puede improvisarse, y que conecta con todas las dimensiones de la vida de las personas.

4. ¿Cómo se podría formar a nuestros miembros en vistas al envejecimiento, para seguir siendo activos y participativos en el apostolado en la edad avanzada?
 - a) Considerar el tema del cuidado y preocupación de la salud (enfermedades), pero también atenderlos de manera integral: escucharlos, no excluirlos, no aislarlos de las comunidades y del apostolado, según sus posibilidades. También la comunidad debe ser formada para saber atenderlos, aprender a convivir entre generaciones. Valorar su presencia.
 - b) Hay que aprender a prepararse para envejecer, saber desprenderse. Saber cultivar el ser y no solo el hacer.

GROUP 5 – English

1. In the pastoral care of vocations, what should be the criteria for a good choice of candidates?

The group agrees that we will approach the question in a general way, since one member commented that this question is not clear because our candidates enter our congregation at different ages. Thus, various criteria are set depending on the candidate.

Criteria could be summed up into the following:

- a) Candidate must have a sound mind and body.
- b) Candidate must come from a good family.
- c) Candidate must be practicing the faith.
- d) Balance.
- e) Must have a right motivation.
- f) For adult vocation, depending on the circumscription, must determine the age bracket which could still be accepted. Minimum of 28 years of age to the maximum of 40 years old.
- g) Must possess compassion for another.
- h) Average intellect.
- i) Avoid accepting candidates dismissed from another seminary.
- j) Minimum love for the Eucharist. The love for the Eucharist must be present.

2. *What should change in the formation process to better respond to the needs of the ecclesial, cultural, social and communicative context; and to the changes introduced by the “digital revolution”?*

- a) The topic is a bit comprehensive, basic structures of formation should remain like charism and the four wheels.
- b) Integrality of all the aspects of formation.
- c) Utilize the use of all media platforms for formation. (YouTube, Skype, Instagram and Twitter, etc.).
- d) Prepare our candidates to work for the digital age but stress the importance of human formation.
- e) The candidate must be mature to live in the community and be able to live in a group and not as individual and be able to work with a team.
- f) Create a formative community, a community that is welcoming.
- g) Rootedness in our identity as Paulines to avoid crisis of identity (some members are more involved with ministry that are not Pauline like Marriage Encounter, Charismatic Groups, etc.)
- h) Study the collective reason why for the past years there is an emerging exodus of young perpetuals. Why our members are leaving at the height of their apostolic career.
- i) To know the digital change in the world. Not all members are knowledgeable about digital gadgets like cell phones and computers.
- j) Study should be geared toward the future.
- k) To create a balance of human and apostolic formation.
- l) To go back to basics, we should not be running after the development of same pace as the digital world. It is important to learn technology, but stress must be put to what makes us different from the rest of the people who use technology.
- m) There is always the temptation to look after candidates knowledgeable of digital technology but we need to give importance to forming the bearer of the content.

n) Lot of things should not change at all, like human values; of being grounded on faith must be intensified.

3. *With regard to the affective-psychological maturation of young people, what kind of professional accompaniment is made in your Circumscription? What do you suggest to intensify this dimension?*

- a) Importance of the psycho-spiritual formation.
- b) Make sure that candidates have Spiritual Directors and must be given psychological assessment.
- c) Encourage dialogue and close accompaniment, provide spiritual direction as well as counselling.
- d) To train our own people in the field of Psychology.
- e) The importance of the presence of both Spiritual Director and Psychologist in all stages of formation to guarantee a close accompaniment.
- f) Intensify accompaniment to ensure better guidance.
- g) Continue to offer our candidates affective-psychology. If the formator needs to know that a candidate needs special attention, he must make himself available.
- h) If the person is in extreme need, then let them go if all help has been exhausted.

4. *How could our members be formed in view of aging, to continue to be active and participatory in the apostolate even in old age?*

- a) Stress the importance of permanent formation or ongoing formation. It is interesting how members live their lives. Retirement is not a vocation. We Paulines are not called to retire because we are religious for life. Unfortunately, some members, even if they are still capable of doing their apostolate opt for retirement. Some members would also deliberately ask to be relieved from apostolate. Our formation and apostolate, continue. Despite the years of being in the congregation, members should not look and feel that retirement is self-entitlement to the point

of pampering. Members should not demand. There should be an emphasis of what is to be a religious regardless of the age.

- b) Making our community more welcoming because some negative experience brought members to withdraw from our community. Encourage compassion and brotherly concern for one another.
- c) Go back to the basics; there is so much to do even in old age. Prepare apostolate for the elderly.
- d) Encourage elder members to minister as Confessors or Spiritual Directors or good witnesses to the young.
- e) Members should be prepared for the process of aging. Emphasize other forms of apostolate other than Communication, like prayer, suffering, etc.
- f) If members are not able to work in their department, they must be prepared to other area possible.
- g) Give proper medical assistance but not to the point of exaggeration.
- h) Clear congregational policy for the last things, like last will and funeral arrangement.

GROUP 6 – English

1. In the pastoral (care of) vocations, what should be the criteria for a good choice of candidates?

- a) We feel that the openness, honesty, and motivation of the candidate are very important.
- b) The background of the candidates, including the family and faith formation, is vital.
- c) To be a Pauline, goodwill alone is not enough. Therefore, we need to consider the candidate's intellectual calibre, ability to do the Pauline apostolate, and the sense of fraternal life.
- d) Candidates should have some kind of social concern and a desire to help people.
- e) The physical and mental health of the candidates is important.

f) A recommendation from the parish priest or someone who knows the candidate.

2. *What should change in the formation process to better respond to the needs of the ecclesial, cultural, social and communicative context; and to the changes introduced by the “digital revolution”?*

a) Since our identity is being communicators of the Gospel, we need to intensify our knowledge on social communication and information technology from the early stages of formation.

b) We emphasize so much on “doing” and we fail to pay enough attention to the “being” aspect of the candidates. We need to synchronize the expectations of the formators and the candidates for a better Pauline formation.

c) Our formation is for the apostolate. Therefore, education should be oriented for the apostolate, knowing the society and changing realities in the digital world. We need to be professionals in our Pauline apostolate.

d) A lot of our time and human resources are spent on maintaining the existing traditional apostolate and we fail to venture into something new in the rapidly changing society.

e) It is the spirituality and the prayer life of the Paulines that make the apostolate fruitful and we need to emphasize the prayer life and not just doing the apostolate alone.

f) We feel that we are not sufficiently prepared to create content on digital media. Quality of life is the content of the apostolate. Therefore, we need to emphasize on Pauline formation in every sense to create content for the Pauline apostolate.

3. *With regards to the affective-psychological maturation of young people, what kind of professional accompaniment is made in your Circumscription? What do you suggest to intensify this dimension?*

a) In the Philippines, during postulancy, the candidates are sent out to work and be responsible for themselves while they

keep regular contact with the formators. After second year of theology, they have the clinical pastoral education which helps them to get in touch with the realities of the world.

- b) In India, during philosophy and theology, candidates are provided a closer accompaniment and, if needed, psychological help to integrate one's personality for the Pauline apostolate and avoid possible future problems.
- c) We felt the need to have lifelong supervision and accompaniment.
- d) We need to provide more stability in the formation programs.
- e) Psychosexual and spiritual education need to be part of the formation.
- f) We need to give more attention to formation of formators, so that they can give better accompaniment. They also need to get some recognition, respect, and support from the other members of the circumscription.

4. *How could our members be formed in view of aging, to be active and participatory in the apostolate even in old age?*

- a) It is important to engage them in simple apostolic activities.
- b) Younger members could show more care for the older members.
- c) We feel during formation that we need to teach and give a taste about the "apostolate of prayer and suffering" to help members for the old age.
- d) We felt that some of our older members get into depression and we need to provide them psychological help.

GROUP JUNIORES – Italian

1. *Nella pastorale vocazionale, quali devono essere i criteri per una buona scelta dei candidati?*

- a) La prima cosa è l'accoglienza, così come invita papa Francesco ad accogliere i giovani che vengono nelle nostre comunità con atteggiamento materno: come una mamma che attende il proprio figlio nella sua casa.

- b) Il candidato deve essere disponibile a formarsi e lasciarsi guidare nel cammino di discernimento.
- c) Non chiudere a nessuno la porta per iniziare un processo formativo. Il responsabile della pastorale vocazionale, nella scelta dei candidati, non tenga conto di un prototipo di candidati, ma veda le specificità di ciascuno. Inoltre non abbia timore nell'accogliere persone che sono già formate o laureate.
- d) Capire se il candidato riconosce che la sua è una chiamata del Signore alla vita religiosa.
- e) Un candidato ammesso nella nostra congregazione non dovrebbe solo concentrarsi sul campo degli studi teorici, ma questi studi siano accompagnati dalla pratica, per vivere in pieno ed efficacemente la vocazione paolina.
- f) Dobbiamo fare un cammino con i giovani che desiderano entrare nelle nostre comunità per un percorso di discernimento. Essi devono essere accompagnati nella conoscenza della propria storia e vocazione.

2. *Cosa dovrebbe cambiare nel percorso formativo per rispondere meglio alle esigenze del contesto ecclesiale, culturale, sociale, comunicativo e ai cambiamenti introdotti dalla rivoluzione digitale?*

- a) Noi paolini dobbiamo collaborare maggiormente con la Chiesa locale, per comprendere meglio la nostra missione e compiere un apostolato incarnato nella realtà in cui viviamo.
- b) Inserire nel percorso formativo opportunità di approfondimento sulle tematiche legate al contesto ecclesiale, culturale, sociale, comunicativo, che siano organizzate da realtà esterne a quella paolina (come ad esempio le diocesi o istituti professionali che organizzano corsi o conferenze specifiche).
- c) Prevedere fin dall'inizio della formazione, quindi già dall'aspirando, l'apprendimento e assimilazione del nostro carisma, facendo anche alcune esperienze nell'apostolato della comunicazione digitale, ponendo attenzione a non correre il rischio di "utilizzare" i candidati, in questa prima fase, solo per svolgere

lavori manuali per soddisfare le esigenze pratiche della comunità.

- d) Cercare di valorizzare nella formazione le inclinazioni e aspirazioni di ciascuno, con il fine di avere all'interno della congregazione una efficace varietà di competenze.
- e) Non dobbiamo portare via i nativi digitali dai loro contesti e realtà, ma accompagnarli per mezzo della nostra formazione paolina, che è pratica ed è aperta al mondo, permettendo il dialogo tra il Vangelo e i giovani nella cultura della comunicazione.

3. *Riguardo alla maturazione affettivo-psicologica dei giovani, che tipo di accompagnamento professionale si fa nella tua Circo-scrizione? Cosa suggerisci per intensificare tale dimensione?*

- a) In alcune Circo-scrizioni è previsto un accompagnamento opzionale fatto da uno specialista psicologo, su richiesta del maestro o del formando.
- b) Si suggerisce di prevedere incontri formativi sulla maturità psicosessuale.
- c) Organizzare incontri di "team building" con specialisti, per acquisire una capacità di vivere in armonia con i fratelli e lavorare in équipe.

4. *Come si potrebbero formare i nostri membri in vista dell'invecchiamento, per continuare a essere attivi e partecipativi nell'apostolato anche nell'età avanzata?*

- a) Formare a ben vivere una vera amicizia con i fratelli.
- b) Dopo un determinato periodo di vita paolina, si preveda un tempo di aggiornamento, per esempio: *Studio per la missione, corso del Carisma; per promuovere la formazione sulla vita paolina.* Un tempo di riflessione della propria vocazione di consacrato e di rigenerazione, per ritornare alla freschezza e genuinità della chiamata del Signore.

1. *Dans la pastorale vocationnelle, quels doivent être les critères pour un bon choix des candidats?*

Dans la pastorale des vocations, les formateurs sont appelés à prendre pour critères tout l'homme, c'est-à-dire corps-santé, cœur-volonté et cerveau-intelligence ; reconnaître à juste titre les origines et la situation socio-culturelle du candidat, l'intention qui sous-tend son discernement de sa vocation, qui doit être surtout celle de vivre et d'annoncer le Christ intégral par les nouveaux langages de la communication. Alors, ce jeune ayant le désir ardent d'« être Paul vivant aujourd'hui », doit au minimum avoir une capacité de prise de décision en toute conscience et liberté. La réussite au test d'admission et l'expérience communautaire sont en majeure partie les éléments qui confirment cet appel.

2. *Qu'est-ce qui devrait changer dans le parcours formatif pour mieux répondre aux exigences du contexte ecclésial, culturel, social, communicatif et aux changements introduits par la "révolution numérique"?*

Durant la formation, nous devons prendre en considération certains éléments importants, notamment : **l'écoute**, le **dialogue**, **l'accompagnement**, **l'ouverture**, **la responsabilité** et le **témoignage de vie** de part et d'autre ; c'est-à-dire du côté des formateurs et du côté des formés. Ce faisant, la formation aujourd'hui ne devrait pas se fonder sur le primat et l'autoritarisme du *magister dixit*, mais plutôt sur une franche collaboration et une compréhension mutuelle. Dans la formation paulinienne, il serait nécessaire de mettre des matériels pour renforcer et apprendre aux jeunes l'usage des moyens de la communication sociale et de leur appropriation comme champ apostolique. Il serait mieux d'encourager et promouvoir dans la jeunesse le sens de la créativité dans l'apostolat paulinien, aujourd'hui marqué par la révolution numérique. Il en va aussi de même pour les études et l'orientation de chaque jeune à

développer ses talents qui devraient être une richesse pour la Congrégation. A tout cela, il ne faudrait pas oublier d'insister sur les points fermes de l'identité paulinienne.

3. *En ce qui concerne la maturation affectivo-psychologique des jeunes, quel type d'accompagnement professionnel se fait dans ta Circonscription ? Que suggères-tu pour intensifier une telle dimension?*

En général, l'accompagnement psychologique et affectif se fait d'abord en groupe et ensuite au niveau individuel par le formateur. Au début de chaque année, il y a aussi une session animée par un psychologue pour les jeunes. En cas de force majeure, le formateur fait recours à un spécialiste pour accompagner un jeune qui éprouve des problèmes sérieux du point de vue psychologique. De ce fait, la formation psychologique s'avère indispensable dans la formation. Il est toujours souhaitable que chaque maison de formation s'approprie un accompagnateur psychologique pour œuvrer dans ce secteur important de la formation. Dans ce registre, il est aussi toujours nécessaire de penser au respect du cadre socio-culturel des uns et des autres.

4. *Comment pourrait-on former nos membres en vue de leur vieillissement, pour continuer à être actifs et participants à l'apostolat même à un âge avancé?*

Il faudrait former les consciences, inculquer l'esprit apostolique, former à la responsabilité et à l'amour de l'apostolat ; changer de temps en temps de secteurs d'apostolat, en terme de remaniement, si nécessaire et former la jeunesse pour une bonne alternance dans les différents secteurs apostoliques. Un jeune bien formé à l'apostolat, gardera cet esprit même à l'âge adulte ou au troisième âge. Cela nécessite aussi de bien prendre soin de la formation continue et de faire souvent l'aggiornamento des membres adultes.

GROUP WORK/2
Thursday 07 November 2019

**Proposals for integral Pauline Formation in view of the Mission –
Biblical-charismatic Formation**

Called to the supernatural life to bring about salvation and divine participation in Christ Jesus, called to be “leaven”, to leaven others, life, history, the world... Called to total donation to God, characterized by the practice of the vows and by the profession of the religious community life, for love of God and neighbour, to one’s own and others’ sanctification...

Questions:

1. One of the strongest crises today is that of the sense of consecration, of living the vows, of the life of prayer:
 - A. What must change in our formation to face this crisis?
 - B. What would be the most suitable ways to promote the sense of consecration and the living of the vows, both in initial formation and in ongoing formation?
2. Regarding the one Pauline vocation in its twofold expression, disciple-priest:
 - A. Is it promoted with care and clarity?
 - B. What are your suggestions for further promoting the vocation of the disciple?
3. Formation to universality and interculturality is important: in addition to the International Novitiate and Course of Preparation for Perpetual Profession in Italy, what are your suggestions for other experiences or initiatives?
4. What initiatives can you propose in order to promote the biblical charismatic formation in view of the mission?

GROUP 1 – Italian

Premessa 1: La crisi non riguarda la formazione iniziale ma i professi perpetui.

Premessa 2: Sarebbe auspicabile scavare le cause di questa crisi facendo circolare gli studi in merito.

1. *Una delle crisi più forti oggi è quella del senso della consacrazione, del vissuto dei voti, della vita di preghiera:*
 - A. *Cosa deve cambiare nella nostra formazione per affrontare questa crisi?*
 - B. *Quali sarebbero i percorsi più adatti per promuovere il senso della consacrazione e del vissuto dei voti, sia nella formazione iniziale che nella formazione permanente?*
 - a) Offrire dei corsi di aggiornamento annuale periodici, valorizzando il tradizionale corso di esercizi annuali.
 - b) Il nostro percorso formativo è legato a pratiche esteriori, è carente di esperienze significative.
 - c) Occorre istituire delle tappe formative dopo la formazione iniziale, scadenmandoli con una certa periodicità.
 - d) Ripartire da una buona pratica quotidiana della vita fraterna: spezzare i circoli viziosi dell'individualismo esasperato (assenza nella preghiera e nei momenti comuni), vincere la pigrizia spirituale, disponibilità ad accettare le decisioni dei superiori. Abbiamo acquisito una mentalità borghese nella gestione dei nostri soldi, del nostro tempo e delle nostre decisioni: metto al centro me stesso, le mie necessità.
 - e) Sviluppare l'ascolto a Dio che mi chiama ogni giorno nei vari momenti della vita comune.
 - f) Rafforzare la dimensione personale della responsabilità della propria formazione.
2. *Riguardo all'unica vocazione paolina nella sua duplice espressione, discepolo-sacerdote:*

A. è promossa con premura e chiarezza?

B. Quali sono i vostri suggerimenti per promuovere di più la vocazione del discepolo?

- a) Scarsa promozione della figura del discepolo. Necessità di far conoscere la figura di fr. Borello.
- b) Nella formazione iniziale è opportuno prevedere la presentazione della figura del discepolo. È bene promuovere una ricerca storica per valorizzare le figure di quei discepoli che hanno incarnato la loro vocazione. Sarebbe auspicabile che i discepoli stessi promuovano uno studio sulla figura del discepolo paolino.

3. La formazione all'universalità e all'interculturalità è importante: oltre al Noviziato internazionale e alla Preparazione alla Professione Perpetua in Italia, quali sono i vostri suggerimenti per altre esperienze o iniziative?

- a) Promuovere cicli di incontri formativi a livello internazionale a scadenza fissa in base all'anno di professione (al decimo anno di professione, al ventesimo anno...).

4. Quali iniziative proponete per promuovere la formazione biblico-carismatica in funzione della missione?

- a) Riporre al centro della formazione iniziale l'approfondimento biblico, insegnando la lectio divina a partire dagli scritti del nostro Fondatore.
- b) Riprendere in mano i metodi di preghiera paolina: meditazione personale, l'adorazione secondo il metodo Verità, Via e Vita.
- c) Il centro biblico stimoli i percorsi formativi orientati all'approfondimento biblico.
- d) Valorizzazione della Domenica della Parola (*Aperuit illis* 3) e degli appuntamenti formativi organizzati nella nostra Circoscrizione di appartenenza.

GROUP 2 – Italian

1. *Una delle crisi più forti oggi è quella del senso della consacrazione, del vissuto dei voti, della vita di preghiera:*
 - A. *Cosa deve cambiare nella nostra formazione per affrontare questa crisi?*
 - B. *Quali sarebbero i percorsi più adatti per promuovere il senso della consacrazione e del vissuto dei voti, sia nella formazione iniziale che nella formazione permanente?*
 - a) Ai giovani va proposto un modello di vita più radicale, con un cammino di formazione più aderente ai valori evangelici. Uno dei motivi della crisi è una vita religiosa vissuta con superficialità, dovuta a una formazione più formale che di sostanza.
 - b) Ritornare all'essenziale. Mettere davvero in atto la nostra spiritualità paolina basata su Gesù Maestro Via, Verità e Vita, sul modello di san Paolo e del beato don Alberione.
 - c) Ripartire dal Vangelo e dalle nostre Costituzioni, per una verifica concreta della nostra vita di consacrati.

2. *Riguardo all'unica vocazione paolina nella sua duplice espressione, discepolo-sacerdote:*
 - A. *È promossa con premura e chiarezza?*
 - B. *Quali sono i vostri suggerimenti per promuovere di più la vocazione del discepolo?*
 - a) Innanzitutto va promossa la vocazione paolina, che poi si declina nell'opzione per il sacerdozio o per la figura del discepolo. Prima di ogni altra cosa, esiste il paolino.
 - b) Al tempo stesso, si propone uno studio di approfondimento, in forma rinnovata e con linguaggio nuovo, della figura del discepolo.

3. *La formazione all'universalità e all'interculturalità è importante: oltre al Noviziato internazionale e alla Preparazione*

alla Professione Perpetua in Italia, quali sono i vostri suggerimenti per altre esperienze o iniziative?

- a) Si propone, nell'iter formativo, un periodo di un anno da trascorrere in un'altra nazione.

4. Quali iniziative proponete per promuovere la formazione biblico-carismatica in funzione della missione?

- a) Si propone un seminario sulla pedagogia paolina, basata sul metodo Gesù Maestro Via, Verità e Vita, da applicare alla nostra vita religiosa e al nostro apostolato.

GROUP 3 – Spanish

1. Una de las crisis más fuertes hoy es la del sentido de la consagración, de la vivencia de los votos, de la vida de oración:

A. ¿Qué debe cambiar en nuestra formación para afrontar esta crisis?

B. ¿Cuáles serían los itinerarios más adecuados para promover el sentido de la consagración y de la vivencia de los votos, tanto en la formación inicial como en la formación permanente?

a) Ante todo, es imprescindible tener claros los *puntos firmes* de la identidad paulina para poderlos mostrar a los que entran en contacto con nosotros para un discernimiento vocacional y, también, para enseñarlos a nuestros formandos.

b) Redimensionar la vivencia de los votos, para ser vistos no como renuncia, sino como un don. Teniendo en cuenta que la consagración es un estilo de vida que debe ir alimentándose durante toda la existencia.

c) Recuperar el sentido de haber sido llamados por Dios y reforzar el sentido de pertenencia a la Congregación.

d) Promover comunidades vivas, alegres, comprometidas.

e) No rebajar los niveles de exigencia para ingresar en nuestras

comunidades, hacer un discernimiento serio y profundo de los candidatos.

- f) Redimensionar el sentido de los votos, de la vida comunitaria y de la oración.

2. *Respecto a la única vocación paulina en su doble expresión, discípulo-sacerdote:*

- A. ¿Se les promueve con atención y claridad?

B. *Cuáles son vuestras sugerencias para incentivar más la vocación del discípulo?*

- a) Pensamos que existe todavía en nuestra Congregación un excesivo clericalismo. Por ello no se promueve con atención y claridad esa doble expresión de nuestra única vocación.
- b) Habría que hacer promoción vocacional para ser Paulino. Sin hacer ninguna distinción. La aclaración acerca de la doble expresión vendrá después. La vocación debe presentarse en forma clara: ser entra para ser Paulino.
- c) Evaluar nuestros *Iter* formativos, para que no exista ningún tipo de distinción con respecto a la preparación académica. Se han de exigir estudios a nivel de licenciatura y/o doctorado a ambos. Y también a ambos una sólida formación teológica.

3. *La formación a la universalidad e interculturalidad es importante: Además del Noviciado Internacional y la Preparación a la Profesión Perpetua en Italia, ¿cuáles son vuestras sugerencias para otras experiencias o iniciativas?*

- a) Promover, un tipo de “*Erasmus*” Paulino. Es decir, intercambio de estudiantes que vayan a estudiar parte de su *curriculum* académico a otras Naciones.
- b) Promover el intercambio de miembros entre las Circunscripciones.
- c) Promover años sabáticos o de reciclaje entre los Profesos perpetuos.

- d) Tener en cuenta que la “primera obediencia” la recibe del Superior General.
 - e) Recuperar el estudio de las lenguas: italiano, inglés y español.
4. ¿Cuáles iniciativas proponéis para promover la formación bíblico-carismática en función de la misión?
- a) Revitalizar y promover el “Curso de Formación sobre el Carisma de la Familia Paulina”.
 - b) Promover la “catequesis” bíblica en nuestras comunidades; para ello los Centros Bíblicos y el “Centro de Espiritualidad Paulina” elaboren materiales y subsidios de formación interna.
 - c) Promover la lectura comunitaria de la Palabra.
 - d) Realizar algún curso Bíblico sobre todo de la figura y Cartas de San Pablo.
 - e) Promover actividades bíblicas que impliquen a toda la comunidad.
 - f) Realizar Ejercicios Espirituales de tipo bíblico-carismático.

GROUP 4 – Spanish

- 1. Una de las crisis más fuertes hoy es la del sentido de la consagración, de la vivencia de los votos, de la vida de oración:**
- A. ¿Qué debe cambiar en nuestra formación para afrontar esta crisis?
 - a) Mejorar el acompañamiento personalizado, insistir en la dirección espiritual.
 - b) Mejorar nuestra comunicación, compartir las experiencias de vida y crear ambientes que transmitan vida.
 - c) Dar testimonio integral de la vida paulina.
 - d) Afrontar con determinación el clericalismo en nuestras comunidades (privilegios), comenzando desde el juniorado.
 - e) Reforzar la dimensión fraterna en todas las áreas de la vida paulina: servicio de la autoridad, comunidad, apostolado, espiritualidad. Propiciar un clima de confianza.

- B. ¿Cuáles serían los itinerarios más adecuados para promover el sentido de la consagración y de la vivencia de los votos, tanto en la formación inicial como en la formación permanente?
- a) La **gradualidad** en las exigencias de cada etapa.
 - b) **Encauzar la sensibilidad** de los jóvenes en los procesos formativos.
 - c) **Involucrar a toda la comunidad** en la formación.
 - d) Recuperar la **dimensión humana** en la formación, en la vivencia de los votos.
 - e) Ofrecer un **camino de formación cristiana** con los evangelios.
 - f) Rescatar en los procesos formativos la **pedagogía paulina** (mente, corazón y voluntad).
 - g) Buscar el equilibrio entre la vida apostólica y la vida espiritual. Centrarse en lo **esencial de la vida religiosa**: Existen hoy en la Congregación un modelo rígido en horarios y actividades, presentado como un ideal que no se vive y otro modelo con compromiso apostólico sin tiempo para la espiritualidad.

2. Respecto a la única vocación paulina en su doble expresión, discípulo-sacerdote:

- A. ¿Se les promueve con atención y claridad?
- a) Continuar incentivando en la pastoral vocacional nuestra consagración paulina en su doble expresión (prevalece el clericalismo como dato cultural y una incorrecta comprensión de la vocación del Discípulo, viene valorada en menos).
 - b) El acompañamiento al joven también debe extenderse a la familia para la comprensión de su opción vocacional.
 - c) Revalorizar y acompañar en la reflexión sobre el aspecto “paulino” de nuestra vocación, las motivaciones genuinas de los candidatos, antes de centrarse en sus expresiones.
 - d) Volver a presentar la moción de que los Discípulos puedan ser Superiores mayores y otros cargos al interno de la comunidad, hasta ahora reservados a los sacerdotes.

B. *Cuáles son vuestras sugerencias para incentivar más la vocación del discípulo?*

- a) Fomentar encuentros entre los miembros discípulos.
- b) Presencia de los hermanos en las comunidades formativas. Que compartan su experiencia/testimonio de vida con los formados.
- c) No obligar al discípulo al mismo currículo académico de los sacerdotes.
- d) Cambiar la mentalidad en la formación y no dar a entender que el presbítero tiene algo mayor o mejor en la vida paulina.

3. *La formación a la universalidad e interculturalidad es importante: Además del Noviciado Internacional y la Preparación a la Profesión Perpetua en Italia, ¿cuáles son vuestras sugerencias para otras experiencias o iniciativas?*

- a) Rotación del personal en las Circunscripciones compuestas de varias Naciones.
- b) Recuperar el “Teologado Internacional” que se realizaba en Roma. Definir algunos centros mundiales de formación para la etapa del juniorado, para conseguir la excelencia en la formación y tener una experiencia multicultural.
- c) Realizar algunas especializaciones en nuestros propios centros de estudio de Comunicación.
- d) En el año de experiencia apostólica, tener experiencias internacionales.
- e) Motivar para hacer el *Curso de Formación sobre el Carisma de la Familia Paulina*.
- f) Reforzar las experiencias que ya existen: Noviciado internacional y Curso de Preparación a la Profesión Perpetua.

4. *¿Cuáles iniciativas proponéis para promover la formación bíblico-carismática en función de la misión?*

- a) En el *Iter* formativo considerar o reforzar la formación bíblico-carismático, con espacios y tiempos concretos.

- b) Promover jornadas y semanas bíblicas con sentido alberoniano.
- c) Que los Centros de Espiritualidad, en donde existen, ayuden con subsidios a dichas Circunscripciones.
- d) Fomentar la iniciativa del “Domingo Bíblico” también en nuestras Circunscripciones.
- e) Formentar la *Lectio Divina* en nuestra praxis de oración.
- f) Formar un equipo itinerante o un directorio, a través del Centro de Espiritualidad Paulina y del SIF, con propuestas concretas de formación permanente y de ejercicios espirituales para las Circunscripciones.

GROUP 5 – English

1. One of the strongest crises today is that of the sense of consecration, of living the vows, of the life of prayer:

A. What must change in our formation to face this crisis?

- a) The group agrees that there is no need to change anything in the formation process. However, there is a need to reinforce the content of the formation. Each community must be able to create an environment where Christ is felt so that potential candidates will be able to experience Christ through their chosen vocation.
- b) Each community should bear witness to Christ. Unless Christ is present in any community, it will be very difficult to sustain religious life. Accompaniment is important.
- c) The community must strive to balance the practice of the four wheels in all stages of formation. At times, we tend to forget the value of a balanced life. Any community living only in one or two wheels is not a balanced community.
- d) What does it mean to be consecrated? The word implies something different or being set apart from the rest. Since we are so much preoccupied with the thought of engaging more on knowing what is new, we tend to forget that we are consecrated people and we must bear witness to what keeps us different from the rest of those who are using the digital means. There is a need to go back to the basics. Let us deepen our understanding of our life as religious within the ever-changing world. Let

others see the difference in our life as a religious. People deserve to be given a sense of transcendence. Let other people see that we are different in a healthy, good and spiritual way.

- e) It is known to many that crisis happens because we have been lax with the way we live our life as a religious in the past. Often than not, spirituality was put on a side and was not given a bit importance because somehow members lived or managed without it or exercise spirituality in a very minimal way.

B. What would be the most suitable ways to promote the sense of consecration and the of living the vows, both in initial formation and in ongoing formation?

- a) The group believes that this question is connected to the first. The group agrees to find ways to emphasize the importance of formation. This could be done by doing some apostolic project or community project geared toward strengthening our life as consecrated. There is also a need to make known to our friends that we are religious and we live a different kind of life.
- b) There is a need to fortify community life. Each community must be able to promote camaraderie among the members. Emphasis must be given to any communal activities like common prayer, monthly retreats, outing, etc.
- c) There is a need to constantly impart knowledge of religious consecration. The awareness of what it means to be consecrated must be instilled in the mind and heart of each one.

2. Regarding the one Pauline vocation in its twofold expression, disciple-priest:

A. Is it promoted with care and clarity?

- a) The group agrees that during vocation promotion the twofold expression is promoted with care and clarity. Somehow culture plays a big part on it. In places where there is so much emphasis on priesthood and nothing about brotherhood, often than not, understanding of the latter is limited or even shunned.
- b) During the formative years, emphasis must be given to the twofold expression of Pauline vocation. Allow all candidates to

learn the deeper aspect of these ministries and allow candidates to discern which at the end they are called into. Formators must not be allowed to impose on the candidate what they think they should become.

B. What are your suggestions for further promoting the vocation of the disciple?

- a) There is a need to put a priest and a brother in the Office of Vocation Promotions. Both should be present during all activities. By being present, both could give witness to a chosen vocation.
- b) Candidates under formation regardless of their chosen vocation must be given educational opportunities.

3. Formation to universality and interculturality is important: in addition to the International Novitiate and Preparation for the Perpetual Profession in Italy, what are your suggestions for other experiences or initiatives?

- a) To stop the International Novitiate program. The group finds it premature to allow candidates to travel out of their circumscriptions because novices most of the time are lacking in maturity. Novitiate should be a time to understand deeply what religious life is and develop a love for silence.
- b) To promote universality and interculturality, the international program could be conducted alternately in different circumscriptions. This will give our candidates a wider view by being exposed to different countries. Italian Formators should also go where the program will be conducted. We suggest that International Programs should not solely be conducted in Italy.
- c) There has been a clamour to have the *Corso* conducted in English, especially to our elder members in the English-speaking world. Since learning a new language would be impossible for them, offering the course would be equally beneficial.
- d) Members must learn the English language apart from Italian because that is the language of the digital world and the digital natives.

- e) Allow members to have work experience in other countries to better grasp the universality and interculturality of our mission.

4. *What initiatives can you propose in order to promote the biblical charismatic formation in view of the mission?*

- a) The group finds this question unclear. What do you mean by the term “biblical charismatic”?
- b) Nonetheless, the group suggests encouraging each circumscription to offer further studies in the field of scriptures.

GROUP 6 – English

1. *One of the strongest crises today is that of the sense of consecration, of living the vows, of the life of prayer:*

A. *What must change in our formation to face this crisis?*

- a) The initial formation should emphasize and help to provide an experience of the foundational principles of religious life and Pauline life.
- b) The foundation of life has to be an experience of God and we should not force one way of prayer but rather leave the freedom for the individual to experience God while also respecting the importance of community prayer.
- c) Religious life has to be a merging of the profane and the sacred. The ultra-modern comforts in religious life have compromised the values of religious life and the spirit of sacrifice.
- d) We feel that we do not attract people for religious reasons but often our lifestyle attracts them for the wrong reasons. The primary reason should be Christ and the Gospel.

B. *What would be the most suitable ways to promote the sense of consecration and the living of the vows, both in initial formation and in ongoing formation?*

- a) We need to make radical changes and there is no easy way for renewal.
- b) The key is going back to the roots.

- c) We need concrete steps and more witnessing.
- d) Experience teaches us that apostolate alone is not what holds us in our religious life. The root of religious life is an experience of the death and resurrection in Jesus Christ.
- e) There has to be a personal experience enriched with the help of ongoing spiritual direction and good readings.
- f) Religious life is a sign and a witness. We should respect it and love it.
- g) In religious life, we need to enter into a covenant relationship with other members in the community, helping and supporting them in their religious and apostolic witnessing.

2. *Regarding the one Pauline vocation in its twofold expression, disciple-priest:*

A. Is it promoted with care and clarity?

- a) We felt that in certain cultures the vocation to the disciple is very difficult to appreciate.
- b) Though the Founder had a clear understanding of the disciple, in the past the members were forced to become a disciple as per the judgments of the formators.
- c) We need to rediscover the sense of religious life that is not clerical. The presence of disciples in our congregation safeguards against clericalism.
- d) We failed to form disciples as per the changes in the society.

B. What are your suggestions for further promoting the vocation of the disciple?

- a) We need to keep the option open and specify the roles of disciples and empower them.
- b) The visibility of disciples in the apostolate and vocation promotion is important.

3. *Formation to universality and interculturality is important: In addition to the International Novitiate and Preparation for*

Perpetual Profession in Italy, what are your suggestions for other experiences or initiatives?

- a) CAP- ESW is a real experience of interculturality.
- b) We could encourage short-term exchanges of skills between the circumscriptions.
- c) Our formation should emphasize the openness to work anywhere in the world.
- d) The problem of language needs to be addressed. The preparation for perpetual profession could be organised in English as well at least in alternative years.
- e) We found certain challenges in cultivating a sense of belongingness and the difficulties of colonized countries to accept foreign missionaries.

4. What initiatives can you propose in order to promote the biblical charismatic formation in view of the mission?

- a) Conduct bible quiz at the diocesan or national level annually.
- b) Form and equip a group of Pauline experts in the Bible who could offer short-term and long-term courses.
- c) More emphasis on fraternal living and doing.
- d) Involving every member in the community for the apostolate.
- e) Appreciating and celebrating the small achievements of confreres.

GROUP JUNIORES – Italian

1. Una delle crisi più forti oggi è quella del senso della consacrazione, del vissuto dei voti, della vita di preghiera:

A. Cosa deve cambiare nella nostra formazione per affrontare questa crisi?

- a) Dovremmo intensificare la nostra formazione iniziale, partendo dal presupposto che tutto deve essere in comunione, senza divisioni, per vivere una vita di carità, uniti nella preghiera, evitando di isolarsi col rischio di distruggere le nostre comunità.

b) Sarebbe utile intensificare e prestare attenzione a tutte le fasi della formazione, affinché nessuno si senta escluso o esentato.

B. Quali sarebbero i percorsi più adatti per promuovere il senso della consacrazione e del vissuto dei voti, sia nella formazione iniziale che nella formazione permanente?

a) Abbiamo bisogno di formatori bravi e preparati soprattutto nelle prime fasi della formazione. È anche importante sottolineare che la formazione non si ferma dopo la professione perpetua.

b) L'attenzione e la cura fraterna sono importanti nella nostra vita di consacrati.

2. Riguardo all'unica vocazione paolina nella sua duplice espressione, discepolo-sacerdote:

A. È promossa con premura e chiarezza?

a) In alcune Circoscrizioni non c'è premura da parte degli animatori né chiarezza in merito alla vocazione del discepolo paolino.

B. Quali sono i vostri suggerimenti per promuovere di più la vocazione del discepolo?

a) Individuare le nazioni in cui viene prestata attenzione e vi è la nascita di qualche vocazione al discepolato paolino, affinché queste esperienze siano utili per l'animazione vocazionale degli altri paesi.

b) Cambiare la mentalità nelle nostre comunità, per conoscere meglio la vocazione del discepolo paolino. Purtroppo la nostra realtà attuale mette in secondo piano la figura del discepolo.

c) Nell'animazione vocazionale parlare sempre della doppia vocazione paolina di discepolo e sacerdote.

3. La formazione all'universalità e all'interculturalità è importante: oltre al Noviziato internazionale e alla Preparazione alla Professione Perpetua in Italia, quali sono i vostri suggerimenti per altre esperienze o iniziative?

a) Il noviziato dovrebbe essere istituito per gruppi (CAP-ESW, CI-DEP).

- b) Dovrebbero essere istituiti i Seminari internazionali per i giovani, affinché si conoscano meglio le realtà delle altre Circoscrizioni.
- c) Il corso del carisma paolino dovrebbe essere obbligatorio per i giovani membri perpetui.

4. Quali iniziative proponete per promuovere la formazione biblico-carismatica in funzione della missione?

- a) Il Centro biblico San Paolo dovrebbe realizzare un programma accademico che preveda il contributo di studiosi della Bibbia di tutte le Circoscrizioni.
- b) Si potrebbe esportare nelle altre Circoscrizioni l'iniziativa di Bible Quiz che si tiene nelle Filippine.
- c) Organizzazione da parte del Centro biblico di studi di formazione internazionali sulla Bibbia, tenendo conto della nostra specificità di apostoli.

GROUP NOVIZI – Italian

1. Una delle crisi più forti oggi è quella del senso della consacrazione, del vissuto dei voti, della vita di preghiera:

A. Cosa deve cambiare nella nostra formazione per affrontare questa crisi?

- a) Introdurre gradualmente il giovane alla vita di preghiera (in particolare col metodo paolino).
- b) Educare il giovane alla preghiera individuale (la qualità della preghiera comune dipende della preghiera individuale).
- c) Le comunità devono dare testimonianza.
- d) A livello vocazionale è importante presentare il paolino come un "uomo consacrato" che vive la sua consacrazione in un modo specifico, non soltanto come un lavoratore della comunicazione.

B. Quali sarebbero i percorsi più adatti per promuovere il senso della consacrazione e del vissuto dei voti, sia nella formazione iniziale che nella formazione permanente?

- a) Rafforzare l'accompagnamento umano e spirituale (prendersi cura).
 - b) Mettere in pratica quello che le nostre normative già prevedono.
 - c) Formare alla libertà e alla responsabilità.
- 2. Riguardo all'unica vocazione paolina nella sua duplice espressione, discepolo-sacerdote:**
- A. è promossa con premura e chiarezza?
 - a) Non in tutte le circoscrizioni. Vi è un buon livello di attenzione in Italia e in Messico.
 - B. *Quali sono i vostri suggerimenti per promuovere di più la vocazione del discepolo?*
 - a) In Messico viene organizzato un incontro annuale dei fratelli discepoli con la partecipazione di tutti i giovani in formazione.
 - b) Lì dove è possibile ci sia la presenza dei discepoli nelle case di formazione.
 - c) Nell'animazione vocazionale, mettere in rilievo le specificità della vocazione paolina, attraverso il coinvolgimento sia dei sacerdoti che dei discepoli. Non affidare il compito dell'animazione vocazionale solo a gruppi di sacerdoti.
 - d) Favorire la specializzazione dei discepoli, soprattutto privilegiando l'area tecnica.
- 3. La formazione all'universalità e all'interculturalità è importante: oltre al Noviziato internazionale e alla Preparazione alla Professione Perpetua in Italia, quali sono i vostri suggerimenti per altre esperienze o iniziative?**
- a) Pensare alla possibilità di interscambio di juniores per un'esperienza apostolica.
 - b) Incontro internazionale periodico dei formatori, per scambiare esperienze e cercare di fare un cammino comune.

4. *Quali iniziative proponete per promuovere la formazione biblico-carismatica in funzione della missione?*

- a) Promuovere la formazione continua (iniziale e permanente), ad esempio con il supporto della Società Biblica Cattolica Internazionale (SOBICAIN).

GROUP WORK/3

Friday 08 November 2019

Proposals for integral Pauline Formation in view of the Mission – Apostolic formation

Called to the Pauline mission, to evangelize in and through communication...

Questions:

1. The first Seminar on Formation (1994) insisted on training in the field of communication. How can we systematically introduce this formation in the stages of formation?
2. With reference to apostolic formation in your Circumscription:
 - A. Are moments of formation organized involving also our lay collaborators?
 - B. What are your suggestions for improving this formation?
3. As a Congregation, what update in the formation process do we need in order to respond to the profile of the Pauline Publisher/ Editor that emerged in the 2nd ISPP, especially in the digital environment?
4. The identity of the Pauline “apostle communicator and consecrated person” seems unclear to many (see as an example the many exits of young members or the constant need to find a parish ministry, etc.):

- A. To what should this “crisis” be attributed?
- B. What do you suggest to resolve this situation?
- 5. In your Circumscription, what are the processes in place to achieve integration between community life, spiritual life and apostolic life?

GROUP 1 – Italian

1. *Il primo Seminario sulla formazione (1994) chiedeva con insistenza la formazione nel campo della comunicazione: come possiamo introdurre in modo sistematico tale aspetto nelle tappe formative?*
 - a) Rendere obbligatorio un anno di formazione allo studio della comunicazione, proseguendo l’aggiornamento sul tema comunicativo nella formazione permanente.
 - b) La formazione alla comunicazione è bene che inizi dalla cura delle relazioni interpersonali nella comunità: i nostri giovani siano guidati nella condivisione (umana e spirituale) e nella gestione dei conflitti (sulla violenza verbale).
 - c) Promuovere degli appuntamenti formativi con quelle congregazioni o istituti che vivono le stesse difficoltà comunicative.

2. *In riferimento alla formazione apostolica nella tua Circoscrizione:*
 - A. *Vengono organizzati momenti di formazione coinvolgendo anche i nostri collaboratori laici?*
 - B. *Quali sono i tuoi suggerimenti per migliorare questa formazione?*
 - a) Programmare dei corsi di aggiornamento sulla comunicazione aprendoli ai nostri collaboratori laici.
 - b) Instaurare collaborazioni proficue con laici specialisti, coltivando un ascolto generativo per modificare e ripensare i nostri progetti editoriali e comunicativi.

3. *Come Congregazione di quale aggiornamento, nel processo formativo, abbiamo bisogno per rispondere al profilo dell’Editore*

Paolino emerso nel 2°SIEP, specialmente nell'ambiente digitale?

- a) Conversione costante attraverso un legame sempre più vivo con Gesù Maestro.
- b) Una conferenza dei superiori maggiori ha preparato delle linee guida su come abitare i social da consacrati. Perché non produrre un prontuario simile a livello paolino: come usare gli stati di Whatsapp? Le foto su Instagram? Siamo consapevoli delle leggi della privacy delle grandi aziende multinazionali? Affrontare le sfide etiche degli algoritmi e dell'intelligenza artificiale (Paolo Benanti)?

4. L'identità del paolino "apostolo comunicatore e consacrato" sembra non chiara per molti (vedi come esempio le tante uscite dei membri giovani o la costante necessità di trovare una "pastorale" parrocchiale ecc.):

A. A che cosa si deve attribuire questa "crisi"?

- a) La mancanza della testimonianza sulla vocazione paolina da parte dei professi perpetui.
- b) La mancanza di consapevolezza della ricchezza della vocazione paolina: riusciamo a comunicare la differenza tra un professionista e un paolino?
- c) Fatica della vita comunitaria.

B. Cosa suggerisci per risolvere questa situazione?

- a) Aiutare il giovane a conoscersi in profondità per comprendere le motivazioni che lo guidano.
- b) Creare un percorso formativo sui testi paolini nelle tappe di formazione iniziale.
- c) Inserire nel calendario settimanale un'ora di studio sui testi paolini.
- d) Promuovere le traduzioni dei testi del Fondatore da utilizzare nelle tappe formative.

5. *Quali processi si possono mettere in atto per arrivare alla integrazione tra vita comunitaria, vita spirituale e vita apostolica?*

- a) Suggestire momenti di condivisione settimanali a livello comunitario sulla vita spirituale e apostolica.

GROUP 2 – Italian

1. *Il primo Seminario sulla formazione (1994) chiedeva con insistenza la formazione nel campo della comunicazione: come possiamo introdurre in modo sistematico tale aspetto nelle tappe formative?*

- a) Inserire come obbligo nel percorso formativo un anno di formazione nel campo della comunicazione, con particolare attenzione all'ambiente digitale.

2. *In riferimento alla formazione apostolica nella tua Circoscrizione:*

A. *Vengono organizzati momenti di formazione coinvolgendo anche i nostri collaboratori laici?*

- a) Nelle Circoscrizioni presenti nel Gruppo 2 si sono già organizzati alcuni momenti di formazione su aspetti apostolici e sui valori della missione paolina, che includono anche i laici. Ma si tratta di incontri sporadici.

B. *Quali sono i tuoi suggerimenti per migliorare questa formazione?*

- a) Si rimanda al prossimo documento del CTIA e del Governo generale che sarà, appunto, sulla formazione dei laici.

3. *Come Congregazione di quale aggiornamento, nel processo formativo, abbiamo bisogno per rispondere al profilo dell'Editore Paolino emerso nel 2°SIEP, specialmente nell'ambiente digitale?*

- a) Si rimanda a quanto suggerito al numero 1 (vedi sopra).

4. *L'identità del paolino "apostolo comunicatore e consacrato" sembra non chiara per molti (vedi come esempio le tante uscite dei membri giovani o la costante necessità di trovare una "pa-storale" parrocchiale ecc.):*

A. *A che cosa si deve attribuire questa "crisi"?*

- a) Sui motivi della crisi del paolino "apostolo comunicatore e consacrato" si segnalano:
- la mancanza di una vera vita di fraternità nelle nostre comunità.
 - una formazione generica e non specifica, cioè senza "colore paolino".
 - mancanza di coscienza del nostro essere apostoli della comunicazione e della nostra identità paolina. Per questo, prima o poi, alcuni escono per andare in parrocchia.

B. *Cosa suggerisci per risolvere questa situazione?*

- a) Formare comunità paoline fraterne, che vivano e testimonino la spiritualità paolina.
- b) Appropriarsi sempre più del carisma e dell'identità paolina, oltre a vivere meglio la vita consacrata.

5. *Quali processi si possono mettere in atto per arrivare alla integrazione tra vita comunitaria, vita spirituale e vita apostolica?*

- a) Vivere e celebrare l'Eucaristia, tenendo sempre presente i frutti del nostro apostolato paolino.
- b) Fornire maggiori informazioni e comunicazioni, in modo che nessuno si senta escluso da quanto si fa nelle attività apostoliche.
- c) Creare più momenti di fraternità.

GROUP 3 – Spanish

1. *El primer Seminario sobre la formación (1994) pedía con insistencia la formación en el campo de la comunicación: ¿cómo podemos introducir de modo sistemático tal aspecto en las etapas formativas?*

- a) Para responder a esta pregunta partimos de una reflexión acerca de todo aquello que se ha ido dejando y que se revela accesorio y no fundamental. Por lo que habría que cuidar lo esencial, el mensaje que es Cristo y el ser apóstol al modo de San Pablo, cuidando la comunicación.
- b) En algunos países se cuenta con Institutos y Facultades que atienden a la sistematización del estudio de la comunicación en las etapas formativas.
- c) Introducir en el *Iter* formativo de todas las Provincias y Regiones planes específicos de estudio de la comunicación que se lleven a cabo en centros propios o ajenos, pero que se introduzcan como plan de formación para todas las etapas.
- d) La creación de talleres itinerantes en los cuales vayan paulinos por diversos países impartiendo y compartiendo sus conocimientos.
- e) Retomar la idea de un “*Observatorio de la comunicación*” y garantizar una formación básica en comunicación desde las primeras etapas.

2. Con referencia a la formación apostólica en tu Circunscripción:

A. a. ¿se organizan momentos de formación coimplicando también a nuestros colaboradores laicos?

- a) En algunos lugares se está llevando a cabo esta formación pero de manera parcial, centrándose básicamente en el campo de la difusión y las librerías, en otros sitios se está intentando ampliar a las demás áreas.
- B. ¿cuáles son tus sugerencias para mejorar esta formación?
- a) Formar a los laicos con talleres en los que se muestren los valores paulinos de forma más bien laica, pues en algunos lugares los contextos son difíciles ya que hay empleados no creyentes o de otras confesiones.
- b) Se propone también la creación y realización de videosectoriales para proyectar a los empleados y colaboradores.
- c) Para llevar a cabo esto se propone que las Circunscripciones

elaboren planes y programas de formación para los colaboradores laicos.

3. Como Congregación, ¿de qué actualización necesitamos, en el proceso formativo, para responder al perfil del Editor Paulino resultante en el 2ºSIEP, especialmente en el ámbito digital?

- a) Una constante actualización en comunicación, Biblia y familia.
- b) Con planes de formación que abarquen estos tres ámbitos. Así como la creación de redes de comunicación al interno de la Congregación en la que se pueda ver y compartir qué es lo que se hace en otros lugares.
- c) Insistir en el estudio de otros idiomas, algo que ya se dijo en el Primer Seminario (1994), especialmente en el Inglés, el Italiano, el Español. Además, el propio idioma habrá que saberlo bien.
- d) Insistir en los contenidos, no tanto en las técnicas, para poder responder de la mejor manera al perfil del Editor Paulino.
- e) Hacer de la comunicación en el mundo digital un estilo de vida, una cultura en la que todos, a pesar de las posibles resistencias, vayamos entrando y asumiendo.
- f) Ver la necesidad de una motivación, preparación y sobre todo una seria formación en cuanto al ámbito digital.
- g) Establecer un mecanismo que nos permita pensar globalmente y actuar localmente, asimismo proveer de las herramientas necesarias para poder evaluar si esto se está realizando.
- h) Ciclos de formación para formandos y perpetuos, una vez más, insistiendo en los contenidos.

4. La identidad del paulino “apóstol comunicador y consagrado” no parece ser clara para muchos (basta ver como ejemplo las numerosas salidas de miembros jóvenes o la constante necesidad de encontrar una “pastoral” parroquial, etc.):

- A. ¿a qué debe atribuirse esta “crisis”?
- a) Se percibe un excesivo clericalismo.

- b) Si se toma la opción del sacerdocio, es necesario preguntar y preguntarse qué y quién es el sacerdote paulino. Ante esto se hace patente una crisis de identidad, por lo que es importante desde las primeras etapas clarificar el por qué y para qué del sacerdocio paulino.
 - c) Otra de las posibles causas es el bajo nivel de la vida comunitaria, la cual hay que potenciar y junto a ella los valores de la fraternidad, la estima y la coherencia.
 - d) Existe una Pastoral vocacional deficiente
- B. ¿qué sugieres para resolver esta situación?
- a) Clarificar el sacerdocio paulino y la figura del Paulino en sí misma.
 - b) Mejorar la calidad de la vida comunitaria.
 - c) Potenciar y reforzar la pastoral vocacional
 - d) Potenciar la comunidad como una comunidad de envío y acogida
 - e) Reforzar el discernimiento vocacional y paulino, para identificar bien cuáles son los valores del paulino y transmitirlos lo mejor posible.
 - f) Reafirmar la identidad Paulina, desde la figura del apóstol Pablo y a partir de él desarrollar el perfil del Paulino.
 - g) Reforzar la creatividad y la inventiva, y mejorar la autoridad moral.
 - h) Profundizar más en las causas, no quedarnos en lo superficial.
5. ¿Cuáles procesos se pueden poner en acto para llegar a la integración entre vida comunitaria, vida espiritual y vida apostólica?
- a) Se reflexiona sobre el hecho que ya tenemos herramientas como el *Proyecto comunitario*, el *Íter formativo*, los documentos regionales, provinciales y generales de los Capítulos, por lo que se formula la pregunta: ¿por qué no somos capaces de desarrollar procesos que ya se encuentran en esos documentos?

- b) Se apunta que hay que revisar los procesos interiores, del corazón en vistas a un discernimiento profundo y constante.
- c) Motivar la dirección espiritual, ya que esta es como un espejo y junto a ello, si es necesario, buscar ayuda profesional que nos permita integrar las diferentes dimensiones.
- d) Integrar y animar constantemente actividades que unan las tres dimensiones.
- e) Profundizar sobre el concepto de sinodalidad para caminar juntos y aprender que es bueno para todos.
- f) Educar en el uso de los medios de comunicación, no ser simples consumidores, sino consumidores responsables.

GROUP 4 – Spanish

1. *El primer Seminario sobre la formación (1994) pedía con insistencia la formación en el campo de la comunicación: ¿cómo podemos introducir de modo sistemático tal aspecto en las etapas formativas?*
 - a) En México se tiene el COMFIL y en Brasil la FAPCOM que permiten formar a los jóvenes en comunicación.
 - b) Es necesario incluir, reforzar e insistir en el *Iter* (en todas las etapas) materias de comunicación, práctica y teórica y, por lo tanto, también tener en la formación permanente tiempos dedicados a la actualización en comunicación.
 - c) Favorecer la colaboración entre las circunscripciones en el campo de la capacitación en comunicación (Ejemplo: “Curso de verano” en el COMFIL en México).

2. *Con referencia a la formación apostólica en tu Circunscripción:*
 - A. *a. ¿se organizan momentos de formación coimplicando también a nuestros colaboradores laicos?*
 - a) En México, cada dos meses, se dedica media jornada para la formación de los laicos.
 - b) En Colombia: encuentro anual de administradores y formación virtual, especialmente para quienes están en el área comercial

(aspectos carismáticos, atención al cliente, conocimiento de productos, etc).

- c) En Brasil existe un Departamento de Recursos Humanos que vela por la formación de los colaboradores laicos.
- d) En España existe un programa anual de formación profesional. Existen dos momentos anuales de encuentro y formación.
- B. ¿cuáles son tus sugerencias para mejorar esta formación?
 - a) Que la formación a los laicos no sea opcional, sino que se garantice este aspecto: reforzar un programa de inducción y reforzar la formación carismática.
 - b) Abrirnos a la formación *on line*.
 - c) Asumir el documento de formación que será propuesto por el CTIA para establecer programas concretos de formación para paulinos y laicos en las circunscripciones.
 - d) Asumir el trabajo con los laicos de manera más significativa en la toma de decisiones.

3. Como Congregación, ¿de qué actualización necesitamos, en el proceso formativo, para responder al perfil del Editor Paulino resultante en el 2ºSIEP, especialmente en el ámbito digital?

- a) Asumir líneas concretas para la formación y el apostolado en el campo digital.
- b) Se necesita incentivar en los miembros un cambio y apertura de mentalidad:
 - en un proceso de continua actualización a nivel personal y comunitaria.
 - integrar en ello a las jóvenes generaciones.
 - dejarnos ayudar por especialistas.

4. La identidad del paulino “apóstol comunicador y consagrado” no parece ser clara para muchos (basta ver como ejemplo las numerosas salidas de miembros jóvenes o la constante necesidad de encontrar una “pastoral” parroquial, etc.):

- A. ¿a qué debe atribuirse esta “crisis”?
- a) Hay divorcio entre las cuatro ruedas de la vida paulina.
 - b) Desprecio por la espiritualidad.
 - c) Ausencia de fraternidad.
- B. ¿qué sugieres para resolver esta situación?
- a) Realizar un proceso de conversión personal: volver a las fuentes de la fe y del carisma. Volver a apasionarnos de nuestra vocación.
 - b) Formación personalizada (acompañar procesos de discernimientos) y que se busque el equilibrio, creando convicciones sólidas, reforzando la identidad paulina: inculcar el “ser” paulino, el “ser” apóstol.
 - c) Recuperar espacios de oración, de espiritualidad (¡también el silencio!), y de comunicación en la vida comunitaria.
 - d) Presentar de mejor manera la vocación paulina a los jóvenes: ajustar procesos vocacionales y formativos (por el afán de tener vocaciones, hemos bajado en el nivel de exigencia).
 - e) Reforzar compromisos comunitarios.
5. ¿Cuáles procesos se pueden poner en acto para llegar a la integración entre vida comunitaria, vida espiritual y vida apostólica?
- a) Equilibrio e integración en las cuatro ruedas, entre el ser y el hacer.
 - b) Mejorar los ambientes comunitarios y nuestra fraternidad: conversión en las comunidades. Revalorización de las reuniones comunitarias.
 - c) Saber delegar en los colaboradores laicos, desde compromisos asumidos como comunidad, para tener espacios que refuercen la espiritualidad y la vida comunitaria.
 - d) Reformar los procesos formativos desde la Formación permanente.

GROUP 5 – English

1. *The first Seminar on Formation (1994) insisted on training in the field of communication. How can we systematically introduce this formation in the stages of formation?*

- a) It is evident in all circumscriptions that training in the field of communication had been placed. However, in circumscription where vocations are scarce, training is passed on by a member to another.
- b) Candidates under formation have been encouraged to take specialization in the field of communication.
- c) We believe that there is a need to systematically introduce this formation to those in the permanent formation. Most of the time when a candidate becomes a perpetual member, he refuses to do further studies.

2. *With reference to apostolic formation in your Circumscription:*

A. *Are moments of formation organized involving also our lay collaborators?*

- a) Not in a very systematic way. It is done depending on the need of each circumscription. It is done in the form of seminars and retreats.
- b) In some cases, canonical visitation gives an opportunity to gather both the members and lay collaborators for a common project. This will also give our lay collaborators a sense of our apostolate and mission.
- c) In some case, this does not apply because there is no involvement of the lay collaborator.

B. *What are your suggestions for improving this formation?*

- a) The Human Resources Department could be given the responsibility to do an improvement in this matter.
- b) There is a need to involve candidates to work in the apostolate as well as encourage them to use more the digital means.

3. *As a Congregation, what update in the formation process do we need in order to respond to the profile of the Pauline Publisher/ Editor that emerged in the 2nd SIEP, especially in the digital environment?*

- a) Candidates must be involved in the apostolate in all levels of formation. It is the task of the formator or a person in the apostolate to come up with possible projects. An example could be a parish book exhibit or simple podcast that would promote the faith or utilize social media for evangelization.
- b) Each formation house must have a responsible person who would coordinate all the apostolic activities of the candidates.

4. *The identity of the Pauline “apostle communicator and consecrated person” seems unclear to many (see as an example the many exits of young members or the constant need to find a parish ministry, etc.):*

A. *To what should this “crisis” be attributed?*

- a) This boils down to the lack of understanding of the two-fold expression of our Pauline vocation.
- b) The crisis also springs from the excessive emphasis on the “doing” part (apostolic activities) rather than the “being”.
- c) Pauline identity has not been a conviction in one’s life such as the wrong motivation on the part of the candidate. (Candidates tend to see religious life as an improvement of one’s life.)
- d) Candidates tend to see the over emphasis on the corporate style of doing our apostolate, looking at it more like a business entity than a religious entity.

B. *What do you suggest to resolve this situation?*

- a) Again, we need to reinforce the going back to the basics. We acknowledge that crisis happens in both ways. Meaning, the congregation did not do its part to impart its charism as well as the failure to assimilate on the part of the candidate. If the candidate fails to assimilate our life, then formators must make a decision to let go of the candidate.

- b) There is a need to establish a proper formation for the formator. Formators need formation too.

5. *In your Circumscription, what are the processes in place to achieve integration between community life, spiritual life and apostolic life?*

- a) Basic structures like common activities both in the field of apostolate, prayer, study and common life are already put in place; we just need to make sure that all our members are involved.
- b) There is a need to reinforce a sense of accompaniment.
- c) As they say, what we know, we learned in kindergarten. The same way in religious life. What we know in religious life, we learn in the seminary. A seminary environment could be a good ground in forming well-balanced religious members.

GROUP 6 – English

1. *The first Seminar on Formation (1994) insisted on training in the field of communication. How can we systematically introduce this formation in the stages of formation?*

- a) To a great extent, we feel that our members are trained in the field of communication and we are taking it seriously.
- b) To initiate it from the early stage of formation, during postulancy, candidates could be offered short media courses.
- c) We could make compulsory specialization in one's field of interest for all members either before or after ordination.

2. *With reference to apostolic formation in your Circumscription:*

A. *Are moments of formation organized involving also our lay collaborators?*

- a) Our mission is possible only with the help of lay collaborators.
- b) We need to work in a team and need to learn the art of teamwork.

- c) Collaborators are treated as part of the family and provided health and retirement benefits.
- d) In some places, collaborators are more equipped than the members and we need to educate our members.
- e) We have challenges when we have non-Catholics as collaborators. We need to provide them formation in a Pauline way.
- f) We need to specialized people from outside to train our candidates.

B. What are your suggestions for improving this formation?

- a) We need to train our collaborators by finding scholarships and sending them for specialization.
- b) We need trained members to coordinate the collaborators for the apostolate.
- c) Collaborators could be part of the vocation promotion.

3. As a Congregation, what update in the formation process do we need in order to respond to the profile of the Pauline Publisher/ Editor that emerged in the 2nd ISPP, especially in the digital environment?

- a) Bring experts to train and update our members.
- b) Prepare and orient members for content creation.
- c) Give them space and freedom to be creative.
- d) We need to demand from candidates, creative works along with the required seminary formation.
- e) We need to take the risk sending members to secular institutes for specialization and exposure.

4. The identity of the Pauline “apostle communicator and consecrated person” seems unclear to many (see as an example the many exits of young members or the constant need to find a parish ministry, etc.):

A. To what should this “crisis” be attributed?

- a) Lack of contact and dialogue with the people.
- b) Lack of fulfilment in the ministry.
- c) Poor testimony or witnessing.
- d) Our inability to collaborate.
- e) Poor visibility of our presence in the local church.

B. What do you suggest to resolve this situation?

- a) Insert ourselves as media professionals in the local church.
- b) Create room for continuous dialogue and interactions with the people to know the requirement and experience fulfilment.
- c) We need to become an authority in the field of communication.
- d) Fulfilment comes from our identity and we need to cultivate real Pauline identity.

5. In your Circumscription, what are the processes in place to achieve integration between community life, spiritual life and apostolic life?

- a) We have the pretense of apostolic excellence while other aspects of religious life are neglected.
- b) Regular community meetings, monthly recollection, community celebration, recreation and sports are helpful.
- c) Regular meetings and animation of responsible people found to be helpful.
- d) Human relationships and better communication among members need to improve.
- e) Quiz for members on the Founder, charism, and history of the congregation.

GROUP JUNIORES – Italian

- 1. Il primo Seminario sulla formazione (1994) chiedeva con insistenza la formazione nel campo della comunicazione: come***

possiamo introdurre in modo sistematico tale aspetto nelle tappe formative?

- a) La formazione nel campo della comunicazione sia prevista insieme agli studi filosofici, oppure prevedere una specializzazione dopo gli studi teologici.

2. In riferimento alla formazione apostolica nella tua Circonscrizione:

A. Vengono organizzati momenti di formazione coinvolgendo anche i nostri collaboratori laici?

- a) È importante chiarire chi sono i nostri collaboratori, e quindi distinguere se la formazione è con i laici che lavorano con noi oppure i laici fuori dagli uffici.

B. Quali sono i tuoi suggerimenti per migliorare questa formazione?

- a) In riferimento ai nostri laici collaboratori di apostolato bisognerebbe prevedere incontri che permettano di approfondire l'importanza e il senso autentico della nostra attività apostolica, per essere sempre più in comunione con loro.

3. Come Congregazione di quale aggiornamento, nel processo formativo, abbiamo bisogno per rispondere al profilo dell'Editore Paolino emerso nel 2°SIEP, specialmente nell'ambiente digitale?

- a) Dobbiamo innanzitutto implementare una strategia pratica per poter rispondere al profilo dell'Editore Paolino, ossia non dobbiamo concentrarci nella produzione di tanti documenti bensì nell'avvio di un processo formativo di tipo pratico.
- b) Implementare la formazione online, organizzando studi di comunicazione e specializzazione attraverso le piattaforme digitali.

4. L'identità del paolino "apostolo comunicatore e consacrato" sembra non chiara per molti (vedi come esempio le tante uscite

dei membri giovani o la costante necessità di trovare una "pastorale" parrocchiale ecc.):

A. A che cosa si deve attribuire questa "crisi"?

- a) Vocazione paolina non autentica (indifferenza, ambizioni e aspettative personali non corrisposte, difficoltà nel vivere la vita religiosa).
- b) Formazione inadeguata per la missione (itinerario non chiaro; senza coinvolgimento nell'apostolato; paradigma vecchio; non essere valorizzati come persone; i propri talenti non sviluppati per la missione).
- c) Mancanza di una buona testimonianza da parte degli altri membri della Congregazione, soprattutto da parte dei confratelli più anziani.
- d) Problemi personali e familiari.
- e) Vita fraterna debole; problemi nella vita comunitaria; mancanza di sostegno fraterno; individualismo.
- f) Problema con i formatori; formatore non adatto; scarso accompagnamento.
- g) Vita spirituale debole.

B. Cosa suggerisci per risolvere questa situazione?

- a) Gli aspetti che devono essere modificati o rafforzati:
 - Vita comunitaria.
 - Direzione spirituale regolare, accompagnamento.
 - Formatori preparati, stabili.
 - L'assunzione di rischi.
 - Vivere la propria vita consacrata/identità religiosa.
 - Studio dell'Opera Omnia del Fondatore.

5. Quali processi si possono mettere in atto per arrivare alla integrazione tra vita comunitaria, vita spirituale e vita apostolica?

- a) Dobbiamo dare priorità alle attività proprie della Congregazione.

- b) Aggiornamento dei formatori, affinché siano in grado di animare a loro volta la formazione dei giovani e la vita Paolina.
- c) Dobbiamo migliorare il rapporto di comunicazione tra i membri della nostra Congregazione.
- d) Dobbiamo integrare ogni tappa della formazione; ad esempio, durante il postulando i contenuti dell'insegnamento devono essere gli stessi in tutte le Circoscrizioni.
- e) Dobbiamo avviare un processo di integrazione nelle comunità internazionali – dove cioè sono presenti membri di varie nazioni – affinché si abbia lo stesso spirito e una vita comunitaria condivisa, evitando situazioni in cui vi sia separazione tra i Superiori e i formandi, a volte anche durante i pasti.

GROUP NOVIZI – Italian

1. *Il primo Seminario sulla formazione (1994) chiedeva con insistenza la formazione nel campo della comunicazione: come possiamo introdurre in modo sistematico tale aspetto nelle tappe formative?*
 - a) Prima della Professione perpetua organizzare un corso intensivo per quelli che non hanno studiato comunicazione.
 - b) Formazione continua fin dall'ingresso in congregazione.
 - c) Cercare di integrare gli studi di comunicazione con gli studi filosofici e teologici.

2. *In riferimento alla formazione apostolica nella tua Circoscrizione:*
 - A. *Vengono organizzati momenti di formazione coinvolgendo anche i nostri collaboratori laici?*
 - a) No.
 - B. *Quali sono i tuoi suggerimenti per migliorare questa formazione?*
 - b) Creare opportunità di formazione integrata (i nostri collaboratori conoscono le linee editoriali?).

3. *Come Congregazione di quale aggiornamento, nel processo formativo, abbiamo bisogno per rispondere al profilo dell'Editore Paolino emerso nel 2°SIEP, specialmente nell'ambiente digitale?*
- a) Formare bene quelli che si sentono adatti a essere scrittori o pensatori, perché i giovani in formazione non sono utili solo per compiere lavori tecnici.
 - b) Fare del noviziato un momento privilegiato per il giovane, con l'obiettivo di definire l'area in cui desidera lavorare e/o specializzarsi (il noviziato offre la formazione apostolica secondo le inclinazioni personali di ognuno? Ci sono i mezzi per farlo?).
4. *L'identità del paolino "apostolo comunicatore e consacrato" sembra non chiara per molti (vedi come esempio le tante uscite dei membri giovani o la costante necessità di trovare una "pastorale" parrocchiale ecc.):*
- A. A che cosa si deve attribuire questa "crisi"?*
- a) Problemi nella comunità.
 - b) Manca dall'inizio chiarezza sull'identità paolina.
- B. Cosa suggerisci per risolvere questa situazione?*
- a) Dobbiamo formare nelle persone l'identità paolina ("Non sono un 'prete paolino', ma un paolino che ha riconosciuto la sua vocazione al ministero sacerdotale).
 - b) Formare le persone per vivere insieme.
5. *Quali processi si possono mettere in atto per arrivare alla integrazione tra vita comunitaria, vita spirituale e vita apostolica?*
- a. Cercare l'equilibrio fra la formazione accademica e la formazione specifica paolina (l'aspirandato e il postulandato sono dedicati quasi esclusivamente alla formazione accademica).
 - b. Rafforzare la vita comune.

CLOSING DISCOURSE OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

Father Valdir José De Castro

Dear Brothers,

Shortly we will celebrate the Eucharist to thank God for the completion of the 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*. We want to thank him, in particular, for the many graces he has showered on us during these days.

The Methodologist, Father Roberto Ponti, has now presented us with a summary of the reflections that have emerged from the work of individuals and groups. These are proposals that make us think and invite us to review our formative journey. Thank you for the commitment of all! Now, these proposals will be taken into consideration by the General Government, also in view of the synodal journey towards the XI General Chapter, of which this *Seminar* is an integral part.

The content produced in these days (the reports and the results of the group work) is already on the web and, as soon as possible, will be published in the Acts. They are all the materials to be read and studied. The *Seminar*, of course, has offered us many ideas, which help us to rethink our formation. Faced with a complex society

(social, political, economic, cultural, ecclesial...) and with so many changes – especially in the field of communication, particularly with the arrival of digital technologies – let us ask ourselves: where do we stand regarding formation (initial and ongoing) and where do we want to go?

The journey that we will make to put into practice the ideas that have emerged in this *Seminar* – besides certainly accepting it in the light of the Spirit – we want to do it in a synodal way, that is, by walking together, involving the members of the Congregation, especially those who are directly involved in the job of formation and pastoral care for vocations. Therefore, we do not want to present a conclusion here, but rather to give continuity to a process that is already underway. And certainly, on this journey we will be able to reap some fruits already.

In these days, we have been in contact with many ideas. However, we need not wait for a “later time” to begin to put them into practice. Every circumscription government can already see what is most urgent in its reality to improve Pauline formation for mission. For example, if a circumscription feels the need to prepare Paulines to work in formation – the deficiency of which was highlighted in this *Seminar* – it is not necessary to wait for an operational guideline from the next General Chapter on this subject to send some confreres to prepare themselves in this field. The same applies to other initiatives to be taken in view of improving the integral formation (human, biblical, charismatic and apostolic).

In this process, we must bear in mind some important indications that have surfaced in this *Seminar*. I would like to highlight some of them that I believe are essential:

a) Always return to our Pauline identity as a “publisher”, starting from the profound meaning of it as given to us by our Founder. A publisher who lives and proclaims Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life, in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul and in the manner in which Blessed Alberione interpreted him. A publisher who seeks inspiration from Mary, Queen of the Apostles, the “publisher” of God; a publisher who lives the “four wheels of the Pauline cart” in an integrated manner. A publisher who evangelizes in the culture of communication, trying to reach everyone, especially those who are far away.

b) Assess the intensity of the “Pauline colour” of one’s own circumscription. Here is a thought of Father Alberione addressed to the Daughters of St. Paul, but which is appropriate for all members of the Pauline Family:

«There is a tendency in the Congregation to become colourless, without colour: a piety that is the piety of all the sisters in the world; a devotion to Our Lady that is the devotion of all Christians in the world; an evangelization that is very common like the one carried out by many institutes and orders. We must have a culture of Pauline colour: the education must be Pauline, we must have a Pauline heart, our piety has to have a distinctly Pauline colour, that which is given by the Constitutions, and we must have a will, a lifestyle, a way of living, of eating, a timetable, a way of travelling, all Pauline»¹.

c) Insist on the “integral formation” of the Pauline as a process that lasts a lifetime. In addition to the need to improve the initial formation further – preparing our young people to evangelize in the world of today, not in the world of thirty years ago – we spoke in this *Seminar* of the importance of ongoing formation, and more precisely, with the observation that this dimension is not always given its due attention. From now on, we ought to pay attention to these observations. Strive for an ongoing formation that will help to develop our apostolate, but also that will lead every Pauline to fraternal life, to teamwork and to apostolic zeal... a formation that will lead to witness!

d) Make our communities real “formative communities”.

«A community is formative when it lives in an atmosphere of welcome, communion-participation and fraternity: Let all the members, and particularly those of the formation team, know how to welcome those who join; let young people and adults collaborate; be understanding towards those who make mistakes or who have not yet learned; there is responsibility to fulfil one’s commitment and willingness to help those in need; be optimistic about the future; talk about perspectives of the apostolate, of the Church, of social problems...»².

¹ JAMES ALBERIONE, *Meditations and Instructions*, Rome, Generalate of the Daughters of St Paul, 2008, p. 260.

² *Ratio Formationis of the Society of St Paul*, no. 124.

e) Live in “multicultural” communities. We have realized that our communities will be more and more multicultural, that is, realities where there will be unity in differences and cultural riches of each member. We have seen in this *Seminar* that the ideal is not only “internationality”, but “interculturality”, that is, the overcoming of the monocultural model of homogeneity and uniformity in behaviour. All united, despite the differences in the assimilation and practice of the values of the Pauline consecrated life, in view of the mission.

f) Tackle the digital environment, which is not an exclusive reality of young people, even if they are the great protagonists of the networks, but of all... Today it is not a matter of “using the means” but of “living a culture”, with a Christian style that is proper to “Paulines”. Let us remember that

«... there exists a Christian way of being present in the digital world: this takes the form of a communication which is honest and open, responsible and respectful of others. To proclaim the Gospel through the new media means not only to insert expressly religious content into different media platforms, but also to witness consistently, in one’s own digital profile and in the way one communicates choices, preferences and judgements that are fully consistent with the Gospel, even when it is not spoken of specifically»³.

This does not mean abandoning traditional means. The press, radio, television and cinema have not disappeared. To these means, we add other initiatives born in the Congregation in the field of teaching and diffusion: the Study Centres in Communication, the Bible Courses, the Cultural Centres, the Bible Festival, the Bible Quiz, etc. Our charism must consider all means, all forms (present and future). We cannot forget that in the universe of the culture of communication everything coexists in an integrated way! There must be no exclusion, but complementarity.

g) Move with an open mind, breaking all forms of self-referentiality. In this regard, it is worth remembering a thought of Father Alberione:

«Universality! Do not have a small, narrow mind and only see your own niche. Understand and try to help each other even between

³ BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the XLV World Communications Day*, 5 June 2011.

communities. When you have a small, small mind, you have to doubt whether there is a vocation, because you have a selfish life, you can only see yourself and a few small circles of people around you. Big heart! Heart of the Apostle, heart of Jesus! Dilate the heart!»⁴.

* * *

Dear Brothers, among the Paulines who participated in this *Seminar* are the Superiors of Circumscription, the Coordinators General of Formation and the Directors General of the Apostolate. All of you, together with your councils, are the first animators of your circumscription for a synodal journey towards formation. After this *Seminar*, I request you not to be negligent with respect to what we have heard and reflected together. Try to do an integral job in communicating and reflecting on the content of this meeting.

This eventual negligence will surely do serious harm to your circumscription and to the development of our charism in the different territories where we are present. We count on the collaboration of all in carrying forward the ideas that emerged in this *Seminar*, trying to apply the most urgent ones, which respond to your reality, in order to move forward. Remember that «*the dynamism of “straining forward” is a constitutive element of the Pauline’s genetic code. But being undecided, stopping and turning back are a dangerous genetic mutation of our charism*»⁵.

I invite you to look realistically at the present state of “Pauline formation for mission” but also to be committed to the future, as the Synod of Bishops on Youth has invited us. Let us take a formative path that can

«plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm

⁴ JAMES ALBERIONE, *Spiegazione delle Costituzioni* (manuscript), Ariccia, 1961, p. 83.

⁵ SILVIO PIGNOTTI, *Pauline Formation for Mission. Document of the General Government at the conclusion of the International Seminar on Pauline Formation, in Acts of the International Seminar on Pauline Formation* (Ariccia, 12-23 October 1994), p. 167.

hearts, give strength to our hands, and inspire in young people – all young people, with no one excluded – a vision of the future filled with the joy of the Gospel »⁶.

Speaking of the future, I want to make a reference to the young (novices and juniors) who participated in this *Seminar*. Their dynamic presence has shown us that the Congregation has a future and that we need to invest more and more in them so that they can respond fully to the Pauline vocation. Thank you all!

Despite our inadequacies in everything, let us go forward, entrusting our lives to Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life, aware that he will always be with us!

This *Seminar* was possible because we had the collaboration of many Paulines, whom we want to thank:

The General Councillors for Formation: Father José Salud Paredes and Father Celso Godilano.

The Preparatory Commission: Father José Salud Paredes, Father Celso Godilano, brother Darlei Zanon, Father Thomas Mankamthanath, Father Patrick Nshole, cleric Giuseppe Lacerenza.

The Methodologist: Father Roberto Ponti.

The Translators: Father Jose Pottayil, Brother Walter Rodriguez, Father Norman Peña.

The Speakers.

The Secretariat and Technical part (coordinated by Giuseppe Lacerenza) = the juniors.

The Novices for the liturgy.

The community of Ariccia and the community of General House.

We thank our confreres (from all over the world) and the members of the Pauline Family who accompanied us with their prayers.

Finally, we thank all of you!

⁶ FRANCIS, *Opening Address to the Synod of Bishops on Youth*, 3 October 2018.

HOMILY OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL AT THE CLOSING MASS

Dear Brothers,

With this Eucharist, we want to thank the Lord for having lived together this 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* which ends today.

We are aware that one of the essential aspects of the formation process is to enter and remain in the school of Jesus Master. The Eucharist is an integral part of this school, where Jesus himself is present among us through his Word and the Eucharistic Bread to nourish us on our way. From him we learn to love, to forgive, to live as brothers, to share the gifts we have received, to be apostles of the Gospel. From him we receive the mandate to evangelize the world through our specific charism, with and in communication.

The Eucharist we celebrate is the starting point to resume our mission, and also to face the challenges of “integral formation”, which is an indispensable dimension of the life of the Pauline. That is, of a person called to live and proclaim the Gospel to the men and women of today, with the present languages, as Saint Paul did in his time with regard to his contemporaries.

Therefore, one of the challenges of formation – and one that profoundly affects our identity – is that of continually forming ourselves in Saint Paul and of assuming in us the characteristics that have transformed him into the great Apostle. This means assuming in our lives that “Pauline spirit” which, according to our Founder, rightly means *«to live in Jesus Christ Master, Way, Truth and Life as Saint Paul presents it to us»*¹.

In this perspective, the first reading, which we have heard, offers us at least two particularities of the life of the Apostle Paul: the first is his awareness of *«being a minister of Christ Jesus among the nations»* (Rom 15:16), which certainly comes from his personal encounter with Christ. The other is to *«not to proclaim the Gospel where the name of Christ was already known»* (Rom 15:20).

Guided by the Holy Spirit, Paul sought to arrive boldly, creatively and shrewdly – as Jesus asks his disciples in today’s Gospel (cf. Lk 16:1-9) – especially to the Gentiles. We can say that he was a true shrewd “son of light”, who sought to bring the Gospel above all to those who were far from Christ, from the Gospel, from the Church... In all these aspects, Saint Paul is an important reference for our life and for our specific pastoral work.

For us today, the challenge is not only to use modern languages to proclaim the Gospel to all, with special attention to the “distant”, but also to choose how we want to do it. One of these ways, which we have reflected on in our Seminar – and which is absolutely Pauline! – is the synodal journey, that is, the “walking together”. In fact, *«the Apostle Paul, the greatest missionary in the history of the Church, helps us to ‘make a Synod’, to ‘walk together’»*², Pope Francis reminds us. So as Paulines let us ask ourselves: do we see Saint Paul in this perspective? Do we see him as a communicator who promotes communion between individuals and communities? Do we imitate him?

In this Seminar, we also spoke about ongoing formation and initial formation and, in these contexts, we have had young people, adults and the elderly present in our reflections. It is worth pointing out that a synodal journey is not made by breaking the harmony between

¹ Cf. JAMES ALBERIONE, *Vademecum*, no. 658.

² FRANCIS, *Homily in the opening Mass of the Synod for the Amazon*, 6 October 2019.

the generations, but by uniting and integrating them, despite all the difficulties. The synodal journey presupposes opening oneself up to listening to one another, as well as between the generations. Without the effort of integration between the generations, it is very difficult to think of a promising future.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit* is intriguing:

«The elderly have dreams built up of memories and images that bear the mark of their long experience. If young people sink roots in those dreams, they can peer into the future; they can have visions that broaden their horizons and show them new paths. But if the elderly do not dream, young people lose clear sight of the horizon»³.

This makes us think: do our elders – or our perpetually professed – dream? Obviously, dreams are not so important in themselves as dreams that are accompanied by the testimony of a joyful life.

The Synod of Bishops on Young People reminds us that «*There is a language that all men and women of every age, place and culture can understand, because it is immediate and radiant: it is the language of holiness*»⁴. Unfortunately, however, the Synod itself recalled that many young people have left the Church because they have not found holiness in it, but mediocrity, presumption, division and corruption. All this also makes us think of our communities and, if there is something similar, to seriously review our lives.

In a synodal journey, each one is responsible so that our Pauline formation can help to form “saints”, people who, despite their limitations, try to live and proclaim the Gospel in the light of the Pauline charism. A formation that helps its members to grow in communication (with God, with others, with themselves, with creation...), a communication that breaks the temptation of self-absorption, that generates communion, synodality and “credible communities” in view of the mission.

May Mary, our Mother, Teacher and Queen, intercede for us before Jesus, so that our formative journey may be truly enlightened by the

³ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 193.

⁴ *Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, no. 166.

Spirit and may she prepare holy Paulines to live and proclaim the Gospel with joy and hope in the culture of communication.

Amen!

Father Valdir José De Castro

Superior General

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