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ABUNDANTES DIVITIÆ GRATIÆ SUÆ
“Rekindle the gift you have received”
Creative fidelity at one hundred years of the Pauline charism
Letter of the Superior general

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ABUNDANTES DIVITIÆ GRATIÆ SUÆ
“Rekindle the gift you have received”
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Dear brothers,

as is known, *operative line 3.3.1* of the IX General Chapter says: “The Superior General is to write an annual letter that has as base reference a fundamental work of blessed James Alberione.” To fulfill it, I have thought of focusing the annual letters on the following works, distributing them throughout the six years in this order: *Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ* (2011), *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei* (2012), *Appunti di teologia pastorale* and *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale* (2013), *Apostolato stampa* (2014), *Un mese a San Paolo* (2015), writings taken from the collections *La primavera paolina* and *Carissimi in San Paolo* (2016). The choice and the order of the works, moreover, take into account both the **programming** of the triennium in preparation for the jubilee of 2014 and the dictate of *operative line 3.2.1* on the **annual theme** which, for 2011, is “**creative fidelity**.”

The booklet *Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ* (The abundant riches of his grace), written by Fr. Alberione at the end of 1953 upon expressed desire of some Paulines in view of the fortieth of foundation of the Society of Saint Paul, is for the Congregation and for the entire Pauline Family an **indispensable text** to know our origins, the progressive maturing of the profile of the Pauline charism and the “abundant graces” granted by Providence to the Founder, to the Society of Saint Paul and to the entire Pauline Family.

In making historical memory we are motivated, on one hand, by the conviction that the gift of the Pauline charism is not bestowed by the Spirit **once for all**; on the other hand, it makes us aware of the **continuous assistance** of the same Spirit in practicing the program of Pauline life contained in “*Non temete, Io sono con voi. Di qui voglio illuminare. Abbiate il dolore dei peccati* (Fear not. I am with you. From here I want to enlighten. Be sorry for your sins).” The interpretation of the text that I propose is found exactly in the perspective of “creative fidelity,” with the twofold intent to recall the necessary **historical remembrance** of what has happened and Fr. Alberione has operated and, at the same time, to project the reflection about the Pauline charism of today **toward the future**.

I am also aware that the methods of reading can be varied. *Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ* is a particular literary genre: it is **not a finished work**, with the only historical concern to narrate the beginning, the progress and the conclusion of a complex of events; it is rather **an open-ended work**, similar to the “entries” of a dictionary always to be updated, in which anyone can pick up different and yet complementary aspects.

The **objective** of this my contribution is to **mobilize the whole Congregation**, so that it may be aware of its “supernatural” origins and of the historical responsibility it has, on the vigil of the celebration of its centenary, to “keep young the Pauline charism” as Primo Maestro himself points out to us: “There are articles in the Constitutions that do not allow the Pauline Family to grow old or to make itself useless in society: it is enough that they be well interpreted and made operative: there will always be new initiatives directed to the same apostolate and based upon it” (*Abundantes...*, n. 130).

For personal and community reflection on this fundamental text of the Primo Maestro, I suggest **four steps**: **1.** reading of the passage that describes the individual “riches”; **2.** “historical” understanding of what Fr. Alberione writes, taking into account the social, cultural, ecclesial and commu-

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nications context of his time; **3.** making actual, through projection into the future, the “riches” illustrated by the Founder; **4.** transforming into prayer of thanksgiving knowledge of the past and invocation to the Spirit actualization in tension toward the future.

0. The Pauline charism is like a “talent” received as a gift and to be made fruitful

The gospel parable narrated by Matthew (25,14-30) and by Luke (19,11-27) to illustrate the attitude necessary for the Christian who lives in expectation of the glorious return of Christ, can also be of help to realize a “**creative fidelity**” in regard to the charism that the Spirit has granted to blessed James Alberione and that, with the approval of the Church, in these almost hundred years has passed into the life of the successive Pauline generations in the five continents. The Pauline charism is like “a talent” that must not be “hidden under the earth” or “in a piece of cloth” to be returned as it is, but it must be “made fruitful.”

The **Vatican II Council**, reflecting on the identity of the religious life in chapter VI of *Lumen gentium* (21.11.1964) and in the decree *Perfectæ caritatis* (28.10.1965), asks all the religious Institutes to proceed to a **radical renewal**. “The suitable renewal of the religious life involves the continuous return to the sources of every Christian life and to the original inspiration of the Institutes, and at the same time the adaptation of the Institutes themselves to the changed conditions. This renewal must be realized under the impulse of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Church” (*Perfectæ caritatis*, n. 2).

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata* (25.3.1996), **blessed John Paul II** recalls fidelity to the origins: “First of all, being asked is *fidelity to the foundational charism* and to the consequent spiritual patrimony of each Institute. Precisely in such fidelity to the inspiration of the founders and foundresses, gift of the Holy Spirit, are more easily rediscovered and more fervently relived the essential elements of the consecrated life” (n. 36).

At the same time, the return to the origins calls back the need for renewal: “The Institutes are therefore invited to propose again with courage the resourcefulness, the inventiveness and the sanctity of the founders and foundresses as answer to the signs of the times emerging today... But it is also an appeal to look for competence in their work and to cultivate a dynamic fidelity to their mission, adapting its forms, when necessary, to the new situations and to the various needs, in full docility to divine inspiration and to ecclesial discernment” (n. 37).

In his discourse to the General Congress of the States of Perfection (26.11.1950), **blessed James Alberione** emphasizes: “*Updating* consists in reviving all the spirit of the founders and the principles and rules of the Constitutions; but at the same time considering the modern needs and circumstances, for the necessary applications and interpretations.”¹ “*Not new things, but new ways of doing.*”²

In a preaching in 1955 to the Daughters of Saint Paul, he exhorts: “Updating makes you young. It is always necessary to keep the spirit young, because we cannot constrict the souls, and we cannot accompany the souls if we do not understand them, if we do not know their psychology, their mentality and all that complex of things that the life of today involves.”³

On the occasion of the convention of the Formators of the Daughters of Saint Paul (8-17 July 1967), the Founder forcefully invites: “Study now the entire Vatican II Council, particularly the documents regarding the religious life and the instruments of social communication: *Perfectæ caritatis* and *Inter mirifica*. Then study the Church and all that refers to Christian formation and to religious formation. Do not just read the conciliar documents to know how to teach them, but to arrive at thinking like them, to think like the Church and with the Church. To think in Christ.”⁴

In this triennium of preparation for the jubiliary celebration of 20 August 2014, the Congregation and the entire Pauline Family are mobilized for a deepening of the Pauline charism in “creative fi-

¹ *San Paolo*, November 1950; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, edited by Rosario F. Esposito, Rome 1971, pp. 805-806.

² *San Paolo*, February 1959; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, cit., p. 193.

³ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo 1955*, Figlie di San Paolo, General House, 2010, p. 438.

⁴ *Acts of the Convention*, pp. 11-12.

delity.” **“Fidelity”** is guaranteed by a rigorous study of the thought and work of the Founder inserted in its historical context in order to understand his intentions in giving start to the Pauline charism. **“Creativity”** takes into account the present-day historical context to proceed to the actualization and re-expression of the essential elements of the charism that the historical research on the Founder has shown. The historical study and the actualization of the Pauline charism make up the complementary instruments of an **“hermeneutics”** that allows a **“creative fidelity”** faithful to the **past** to be creative in a **present** that tends to the **future**.

1. **Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ (=AD)**

1.1. *Origin of the text*

On the origin of the text we possess a first-hand testimony left by Fr. Giovanni Roatta:⁵

“Our Founder wrote *Abundantes divitiæ*, the book synthesizing his fundamental inspirations, in these circumstances.

Approaching was the 40th year of the Congregation (1914-1954), and someone among us (Fr. [Valentino] Gambi, Fr. [Renato] Perino, Fr. [Giovanni] Roatta) thought that it was a good idea to take advantage of the event for some deepening about our Pauline vocation and about our Founder: both for a better hold of inner awareness, and to talk about it with the public. One day I myself [Fr. Roatta] presented this idea to the Founder, who answered me: “Do what the Holy Spirit inspires you. In truth, we have not yet written or published anything, but I have already had reminders (from Fr. Pettinati Guido, in Argentina and from others) about the need to manifest something of what God has done among us, and I believe exactly that the moment has come to do it.”

We looked for other collaborators, and we began the work, that protracted for some very demanding months, until the beginning of 1954.

At a certain point I was called by Fr. Alberione, who told me these few words: “I would like to make this known, that seems important for me: that after my death there must be no more talk about me, but only of saint Paul: he is the Founder, the model, the father, the inspirer for us. It is necessary that he transpire, from the work that you have put your hands on.” I nodded yes and we continued our work. Not much time after he called me again, and I had another surprise: he showed me, and then handed me over a series of originals in rather big format, the writing very refined and his calligraphy minute, and he told me: “See if this can be of help to you.” They were the manuscripts of what was then the book *Abundantes divitiæ*. We read them with notable interest, but our works were already greatly advanced, and we could not anymore take them much into account in the various articles; and not even was it possible for us to get immediately the essential value of his memories.

Those manuscripts remained with me until the conclusion of our work, when the big volume *Mi protendo in avanti* came out printed (summer of 1954). Thereupon we put away all the material used until that day; and Fr. Maggiorino Povero, who had collaborated well in the work on the photographic aspect, asked me to hand them over to him, to keep them diligently, the said manuscripts. I passed them to him willingly. I saw these remembrances re-emerge only much later [in 1969, on the occasion of the Special General Chapter], when they were published, for the first time, under the title *Io sono con voi* (I am with you), for internal use above all of the Chapter.

Reading again many times afterwards, the simple and bare pages of *Abundantes divitiæ*, I have become ever more aware of the exceptional importance of those remembrances for our history, for our charism and for the spiritual journey on which God has caused our religious Family to arise and grow.

Casa Divin Maestro, Ariccia, 10 January 1980.

FR. G. ROATTA”

⁵ Cf *Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ*, Società San Paolo, Casa Generalizia, 1998, pp. 11-12.

1.2. *Nature of the text*

When Fr. Alberione at the end of 1953, at the age of 70, writes these remembrances on the occasion of the fortieth of the start of the Society of Saint Paul, he has already published other works, founded the Association of Pauline Cooperators (30.6.1917) and the Congregations of the Daughters of Saint Paul (15.6.1915), the Pious Disciples of the Divine Master (10.2.1924) and the Sisters of Jesus the Good Shepherd (7.10.1938).

The contents of these “remembrances,” therefore, must be integrated with the thought and works of the Founder that have preceded the writing being examined; in AD there is not “everything” about the history of the Pauline charism, but undoubtedly it’s there what at the end of 1953 the Primo Maestro wanted at all costs to give testimony to and leave as a heritage to the Society of Saint Paul and to all the Pauline Family.

AD is to be considered “**an open work**” both in the sense that it can be integrated with what has been said, written and done by the Founder before 1953, and because in the text it is affirmed that there are still “*Things to be realized*” (nn. 185-203).

We are not in the face of a work to be analyzed as a “text of history,” as a documented narration of a progressive and organic development of facts; neither is it an “autobiography,” of an integral treatment of the life of a person presented through lived complex events.

As the Founder himself explains, it is “something of what he remembers”: “*If in order to comply to you, he wanted to narrate to you something of what he still remembers and you believe is useful for the Pauline Family*” (n. 1), **a selective memory of remembrances that may be useful for the Pauline Family**. Moreover, “*In truth it was not his custom to take down notes; he does not know what to say about many things, feeling simultaneously repugnance to do it and humiliation for all the parts*” (n. 8).

Fr. Alberione, at a distance of 63 years from his first elementary class (1890-1891), of 53 years from the “night of light” of 31 December 1900 and of 40 years from the official start of the Society of Saint Paul (1914), narrates his life experiences and above all his **being aware** ever more clearly that he has received from God a particular “**mission**”: “*do something for the Lord and for the men of the new century*” (n. 15).

The story that he narrates in the third person is a “**sacred**” history: “a twofold history: the **story** of the Divine Mercies... and the humiliating **story** of non-correspondence...” (n. 1). It is the story of his experience of faith.

The **method** used to write down these “remembrances” of the beginnings and developments of the Pauline charism makes us think of the composing of a **mosaic**: a series of **plugs** of “remembrances” that, put one beside the other, acquire with the passage of time, ever more precise contours to the point of offering a vision of the whole.

The choice of the **succession of the topics** is not predetermined by the author with precision but in any editorial disposition we may want to list them down, the result is that of placing a series of elements that when recomposed offer an ever more well-defined unity. The journeys when reading this text are like making so many journeys to arrive at the same objective.

The editorial methodology used finds its criterion of unity in the title given by Fr. Alberione himself to the typewritten version: “*Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ*,” taken and adopted from the letter to the Ephesians (2,7). The “remembrances” are **a list**, illustrated in its arising and in its applications, of the “abundant riches of his grace” granted to him personally and then to the Society of Saint Paul and to the Pauline Family in their beginning and development.

Every “**riches**” of divine grace is presented under the form of a biographical episode, of a task carried out, of a research, of an attentive study, of an initiative, of an experience, of social relations that have helped Fr. Alberione to make mature his convictions and to elaborate the project of foundation of the Pauline charism. The **journey** for the appreciation of every “riches” follows this development: from his personal experience to the beginning of the Society of Saint Paul to pass to the successive widening of the Pauline Family.

The reading for a “creative fidelity” that I propose with this my contribution is articulated in two moments: the “**historical**” recall of every individual “riches” and the “**creative**” reflection for the actualization and the projection into the future of the Pauline charism, starting from the Society of Saint Paul, the mother cell of all the institutions that today compose the Pauline Family.

The reading in “creative fidelity” does not propose as objective to “copy” the experience of Fr. Alberione which remains **unique and unrepeatabe** and, from many sides, veiled by the mystery of a relation of deep faith guarded with modesty by the Founder himself. Yet notwithstanding, the “**faithful**” research of what has happened in the Founder allows us to retrace those constitutive “**elements**” of the Pauline charism that must be evaluated with prudent wisdom in their “essential” and/or “transitory” value with respect to the historical contexts that change to be able to express them again and to live them with “creativity.”

This my contribution has the purpose of mobilizing the whole Congregation, so that by means of the prayerful reflection of every Pauline and of all the communities, energies may be united for a “**shared reading**” of a **fundamental** text for the past and the future of the Pauline charism.

For further information and for every textual reference, I point to the “critical” edition of *Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ*, edited by Fr. Angelo Colacrai and by Fr. Eliseo Sgarbossa and published in the *Opera omnia* in 1998. The content of the text taken by me in consideration is included in nn. 1-204 and in the *Appendix*, nn. 215-220 and 350.

2. A twofold history (AD 1-6)

2.1. *Recallings, historical and contents-wise*

- Twofold history of Fr. Alberione: history of the Divine Mercies and history of his lack of correspondence;
- from the awareness of his collaboration with God springs the conviction that he must “disappear from the scene and from memory” and the resulting invitation to the Pauline Family to “consider as father, teacher, exemplar and founder Saint Paul the Apostle alone”;
- the role of “servant” in the Pauline Family carried out by him on earth and that he intends to carry out in heaven for “those who employ the modern and most effective means of good”;
- the Pauline Family described as “a course of water” that becomes big in its progressive travel, thanks to the convergence of other water sources and that afterwards is utilized and made use of in various ways.

2.2. *Updatings*

2.2.1. Looking globally at his existence, weaving the history of his experience of faith with the foundations realized until that time, Fr. Alberione intends to explain who is the **true Founder** of all, **Saint Paul**: “*It is he, in fact. Through him the Pauline Family was born, by him it was nourished and made to grow, from him it has taken the spirit.*” Talking of himself, he says, “*He must disappear from the scene and from memory, even if, because he is the eldest, he had to get from the Lord and give to others.*”

Making ours the indication of the Primo Maestro contained in the testimony of Fr. Giovanni Roatta: “After my death, don’t talk anymore about me, but only of Saint Paul: he is the Founder, the model, the father, the inspirer of all,” we must affirm that the invocation, the study, the assimilation and the imitation of Saint Paul are **irrepressible means for a profound fidelity and a fruitful re-launch** of the charism of the Congregation and of the Pauline Family in every historical era.

The evolution of the present exegetical studies on the Apostle offers to the ecclesial community fruitful applications in the theological, spiritual and pastoral field; in fidelity to the Primo Maestro, we too **must “rekindle” our understanding of Saint Paul to be able to apply it in a creative way to the essential aspects of the Pauline charism.**

2.2.2. The event of the **Pauline Year**, willed by Benedict XVI (28 June 2008 – 29 June 2009), has urged the entire ecclesial community to approach the originality of the experience of faith and evangelization of Saint Paul. For what concerns us, the principal initiatives willed by the General Government, complementing what has been realized in the individual Circumscriptions, has been: the publication in the *Opera omnia* of a collection of texts of Fr. Alberione in the volume **L’apostolo Paolo, ispiratore e modello**⁶ and the celebration of the **International Seminar on Saint Paul** (Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009) with the successive publication of the **Acts**.⁷

⁶ Care of Center of Pauline Spirituality, Rome 2008.

⁷ Society of Saint Paul, General House, 2009.

The IX General Chapter has approved an operative line for the Governments of Circumscription so that they may give value, “by elaborating aids for animation and for other community projects,” to the International Seminar on Saint Paul (*line* 3.3.2). Therefore, during this first year of preparation for the centenary, it would be well to give actuation to this *line* precisely in the spirit of what Fr. Alberione writes in AD. **The relaunch of the Pauline charism is also proportional to the profound assimilation of Saint Paul, to be given value thereafter in all the aspects of the Pauline life.**

2.2.3. However, although taking into account the indication of Saint Paul as the Founder of the Society of Saint Paul and of the Pauline Family, Fr. Alberione cannot disappear from our memory because his role as “**original interpreter**” of Saint Paul remains indispensable for us. In fact, the study and the applications of the thought and preaching of Saint Paul, although lived with the biblical, theological and spiritual knowledge of his time, make of Fr. Alberione one of the “most creative interpreters” of the XX century.

If it is true that he does not figure in the list of the scholars of Saint Paul as a specialist of the intellectual mould, it is certain that the impact of the Apostle on him has produced the birth of the Society of Saint Paul with the charism to “preach employing the press apostolate” and successively the other apostolates of the Pauline Family.

The first Alberionian “**interpretation**” derived from Saint Paul is the **foundation of the Society of Saint Paul** often synthesized by the Pauline community of the beginnings with the phrase of the Archbishop of Magonza, Mons. Wilhelm von Ketteler (1811-1877): “If Saint Paul returned to the world, he would work as a journalist.”

In 1954, the fortieth of the foundation of the Society of Saint Paul, Fr. Alberione while referring to the Apostle, writes: “He has made himself the Society of Saint Paul of which he is the Founder. It is not the Society of Saint that has elected him, but he has elected us; rather, he has generated us: “It is I that has generated you in Christ Jesus, by means of the gospel” (1Cor 4,15). If Saint Paul were living, he would continue to burn with that double flame, of the same fire, of zeal for God and his Christ and for all men of every country. And to make himself heard, he would climb up the most elevated pulpits and would multiply his word through the means of progress: press, cinema, radio, and television.”⁸

Looking at the **whole Pauline Family** present in 1954, Fr. Alberione widens his interpretation: “It is not we who have elected him; it is, instead, Saint Paul who has elected us. The Pauline Family must be Saint Paul living today, according to the mind of the Divine Master, operating under the gaze and with the grace of Mary Queen of the Apostles.”⁹

2.2.4. The **first riches** bestowed on the Society of Saint Paul and on the Pauline Family is the **Founder: Saint Paul** interpreted by Fr. Alberione for the urgencies of evangelization in the XX century. The **unity** and the **convergence of the apostolates** of the Pauline Family can be better understood and re-expressed **in reference to the thought and evangelizing activity of Saint Paul**: “Let the Pauline Family, composed of many members, be Paul living in a social body.”¹⁰ “The Pauline Family must be Saint Paul living today.”¹¹

In order to be faithful today in a creative way to Fr. Alberione, it is necessary to **interpret Saint Paul for the urgencies of evangelization of 2000**: a profound experience of Christ, that is transformed into missionary faith in present-day communication, into contemplation in the liturgy, laboriousness in parish pastoral, stirring up vocations, living the state of lay life in Pauline style and cooperating in Pauline good works.

The person of Fr. Alberione remains **indispensable** in the future of the Pauline charism to keep alive in the Congregation, in the Pauline Family and in the Church, through the thought and evangelizing activity of Saint Paul, the need to “**save the men of today with the means of today**” to be realized through the adoption of the communication of every time and the convergence of the apos-

⁸ *San Paolo*, October 1954; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, cit., p. 1152; cf *Anima e corpo per il Vangelo*, care of Center of Pauline Spirituality, Rome 2005, p. 62.

⁹ *San Paolo*, July-August 1954; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, cit., p. 147.

¹⁰ *San Paolo*, October 1954; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, cit., p. 1152; cf *Anima e corpo per il Vangelo*, cit., p. 63.

¹¹ *San Paolo*, July-August 1954; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, cit., p. 147.

tolates of the Pauline “social body.” “We must save the souls of today. All the saints have done this way.”¹²

3. Moments of very big grace (AD 7-12)

3.1. *Recallings, historical and contents-wise*

- In the scholastic year 1890-1891, when the young James, at the age of six attends the primary elementary class, was questioned by his teacher, he answers: “*I’m going to be a priest*”: the first clear light;
- consequences of his answer: all his daily life oriented to that goal;
- his vocation, fruit also of the prayers of his mother, of his teacher and of the help of his parish priest.

3.2. *Updatings*

3.2.1. The author narrates an episode of his childhood that stays in his memory as an **important event** for his vocation and mission: the desire to be a priest. I shall later resume the theme of “vocation,” commenting on AD 36 in the perspective of “**Pauline vocational promotion**” today.

4. His particular mission (AD 13-22)

4.1. *Recallings, historical and contents-wise*

- Eucharistic adoration in the night between 31 December 1900 and 1 January 1901;
- experience “decisive for his specific mission and particular spirit”;
- at age 16 the seminarian Alberione takes part for the first time in a congress and assimilates the discourse of the Catholic sociologist Giuseppe Toniolo; he has read the texts of Leo XIII: both talk of a mobilization for evangelization;
- “he deeply felt himself obliged to prepare himself to do something for the Lord and for the men of the new century with whom he would have lived”;
- thinking in the future, he imagines that others will feel the same concern as his to evangelize the new century;
- “the Eucharist, the Gospel, the Pope, the new century, the new means, the doctrine of Count Paganuzzi about the Church, the need for a new array of apostles... He felt obliged to serve the Church, the men of the new century and to work with others”;
- from that time the life of the young seminarian is polarized on this project and even the formation “of the entire human personality” is directed to this apostolic goal.

4.2. *Updatings*

4.2.1. The author offers us in these remembrances the “**genetic code**” of the Pauline charism, which becomes fruitful thanks to the mutual integration between attention to the **social reality** and sensitivity to the **invitation of Christ**: “*Come ye all to me*” (Mt 11,28).

During his long prayer before the eucharistic Christ, the young Alberione perceives that he feels “**deeply obliged to prepare himself to do something**” and formulates his first synthesis putting in interaction: the **social situation**, analyzed through the instruments of the Catholic sociologists who describe a society that is ever more straying from the faith; the **appeals of the Pope** for a total mobilization in view of permeating the whole society with the values of faith; the new means of evil that lead to the “**duty of opposing press to press, organization to organization**” and the need to “**understand the true mission of the Priest**” so that “**a new array of apostles**” may be constituted.

Later on he will formulate in a clear manner what he has intuited during his adoration at the start of the XX century: “**The world has need of a new, long and profound evangelization.**”¹³

¹² *Alle Figlie di San Paolo 1946-1949*, Figlie di San Paolo, Casa Generalizia, 2000, p. 576; *Vademecum*, Cinisello Balsamo, 1992, n. 390.

¹³ *Unione Cooperatori Buona Stampa*, n. 8, 20 August 1926; cf *La primavera paolina*, care of Rosario F. Esposito, Rome 1983, p. 680.

In order to “rekindle” in creative fidelity the Pauline charism in every historical era, we must make ours the attitude of Fr. Alberione, that can be expressed by the terminology of Vatican II Council: “**scrutinize the signs of the times**” (*Gaudium et spes*, 4).

4.2.2. A **simplification** to be avoided, since it impedes the true “rekindling” of the Pauline charism, is to think that it is sufficient to integrate in the Pauline apostolate the new technologies of communication gradually as they appear. This conviction is based on the idea that communication is only a “machine,” a “technology,” a “means” and appears in an always equal social and cultural context. Starting from the communication complex of the last decades of the last century and, above all, with the rise and progressive consolidation of digital communication, more than a technology, communication is an **environment of existence**, a **style of life**, a **culture** that permeates individual and social life, a **project** of choices of data and relations.

For decades the universal magisterium points out to the ecclesial community the need to mobilize for a “**new evangelization**.” We can call to mind some important texts: Paul VI, *Ecclesiam suam* (6.8.1964), *Evangelii nuntiandi* (8.12.1975); John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio* (7.12.1990); *La nuova evangelizzazione per la trasmissione della fede cristiana. Lineamenta* (2.2.2011) for the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops of October 2012.

In order to elaborate, as a Congregation and as Pauline Family, a “**project of new evangelization**,” it is necessary to study with attention: the context of the **society** and of the **culture**, above all in reference to the choices regarding the faith; the changes and the actual sensibility of the universal **Church** and of the local Churches, in particular toward evangelization; the reality of **present-day communication** in continuous expansion, as possibility of announcement of the faith and of formation in human values; the patrimony of persons, projects and apostolic realizations of the **Congregation** and of the **Pauline Family**.

4.2.3. The experience of synthesis lived in the light of faith by Fr. Alberione during his eucharistic adoration, puts before our eyes the thrust of a faith that becomes missionary exactly because it assumes **contemporaneously** the invitation of Christ to preach the Gospel and the needs of today’s persons and of society. Like in those times, the social, cultural and communications changes require a “new” style of evangelization.

The **vitality** of the Pauline charism is nourished by the **recipients**, to whom we want to propose the Gospel and a Christian conception of the entire human reality, and by **communication**, that we want to utilize to enter in contact with them.

In evangelization, **social changes** are the ones that push to a constant “**incarnation**” of the Gospel in different contexts. Remaining as a point of reference is what John XXIII affirms in his discourse at the opening of Vatican Council II: “It is necessary first of all that the Church does not move away from the sacred patrimony of the truth, received from the Fathers, and at the same time must look at the present, to the new conditions and forms of life introduced in the modern world, which have opened new roads for the Catholic apostolate” (11 October 1962).

4.2.4. In order to be faithful in a creative way to Fr. Alberione for the purpose of “rekindling” the Pauline charism, it is necessary that we lend particular attention to the universal magisterium dealing with communication. As he has assimilated the invitation of the Popes of his time to “oppose press to press,” we today must study and draw the consequences from a rich **universal magisterium regarding communication** that, above all starting from the conciliar decree *Inter mirifica* (4.12.1963), has marked an important evolution of the Church toward communication.

Some **documents** relevant for the consequences that they have on the manner of thinking and living the Pauline charism: *Communio et progressio* (23.5.1971), *Redemptoris missio* (n. 37c), *Ætatis novæ* (22.2.1992), *Etica nella pubblicità* (22.2.1997), *Etica nelle comunicazioni sociali* (4.6.2000), *La Chiesa e Internet* and *Etica in Internet* (22.2.2002), *Il rapido sviluppo* (24.1.2005).

Starting 1967, on the occasion of the celebration of the **World Day of Social Communications**, the Pope proposes a particular theme and develops it in the form of a message for the ecclesial community. During the last world day (the 45th), in treating the theme *Verità, annuncio e autenticità di vita nell’era digitale* (Truth, announcement and authenticity of life in the digital age), Benedict XVI says: “The new technologies do not only change the manner of communicating, but

communication itself, so that it can be affirmed that we have before us a vast cultural transformation.”

While receiving the participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council of Social Communications, the Pope illustrates the challenges of the ecclesial and civil community face to face with digital communication: “It is not just a matter of expressing the gospel message in today’s language, but it is necessary to have the courage to think in a deeper manner, as it has happened in other eras, the rapport between faith, the life of the Church and the changes that man is living” (28.2.2011).

If the universal magisterium about communication is valid for the entire ecclesial community, for greater reason it must stimulate us to “revive” the Pauline charism. Benedict XVI helps us to reflect on a phenomenon that is valid for all: **“not only does the manner of communication change, but communication itself”**; moreover, he invites us to not limit ourselves **“to express the message of the gospel in the language of today, but to think in a deeper manner the rapport between faith, the life of the Church and actual changes.”**

Since the Pauline charism is, by its nature, intimately connected to communication, if communication changes, something must also change in the Pauline charism; and since it is not a matter of using communication only as a “language” but of “thinking” in a new way how to express the faith, extremely actual is the intuition of Primo Maestro about “written preaching alongside oral preaching,” that for us means **using communication not as a simple “means,” but as “a new form of evangelization.”**

Characteristic of the Pauline charism is **“pastoral concern”** understood as integral **“new evangelization,”** not only as one of the various ways to realize parish or diocesan pastoral.

In order to share in the community circle your own reflections about these numbers in AD, which contain the “heart” of the Pauline charism, it is well to take in consideration contemporaneously what is recommended by the IX General Chapter in *operative lines 1.1.2* and *3.3.2*.

5. Organization: religious life (AD 23-24)

5.1. *Recallings, historical and content-wise*

- In a first moment he thinks of a Catholic organization of lay people;
- towards 1910 he chooses definitively the state of religious life: greater commitment of sanctity and guarantee of continuity in the apostolate.

5.2. *Updatings*

5.2.1. The state of religious life in order to live the charism of evangelization employing the press has been chosen to allow the greatest apostolic efficacy. For Fr. Alberione it presents **two advantages closely connected with the press apostolate**: “to lead souls to the highest perfection,” uniting to it even the “merit of the apostolic life,” and “to give more unity, more stability, more continuity, more supernaturality to the apostolate.”

With the categories of the **theology of the religious life** of his time, he will make more specific later that the formula of religious life chosen by him is a **“third life”** between the “contemplative” style and the “active” one: “But there is a third life, the one in which the contemplative part, that is, piety, combines with the activities; hence we have a mixed life that is part contemplative and part active... Your life is the best because it includes the contemplative life, that is, of piety, and the life of action, that is, apostolic activities.”¹⁴

The **“mixed”** life unites in an efficacious way the commandment of love for God and love of neighbor: the profundity of the first is manifested in the practice of the second and the quality of love for neighbor is the mirror of the quality of love for God. Because of this constant mutuality love for the apostolate becomes “our way” to sanctity.

5.2.2. Starting from chapter VI of *Lumen gentium* dedicated to the *Religious* and, in particular, from the decree of Vatican II *Perfectæ caritatis*, the theology of the consecrated life has undergone a **profound evolution** both due to the contribution of the documents of the universal magisterium

¹⁴ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo. Spiegazione delle Costituzioni, 1961*, Figlie di San Paolo, Casa Generalizia, 2003, n. 21.

and to the reflection of the world, continental or local organisms of the religious. Some significant documents have come out from them: *Potissimum institutioni*, Directives regarding formation in the religious Institutes (2.2.1990), *La vita fraterna in comunità* (2.2.1994), *Vita consecrata* (John Paul II), *Il servizio dell'autorità e l'obbedienza* (11.5.2008).

5.2.3. The rich reflection on the theology of the religious life has allowed the overcoming of a **dichotomy** that in the practice of the consecrated life, in the course of years, has been shown as sterile: **contemplation and action**. Considering the history and the evolution of the forms of religious life, the universal magisterium has not failed to pronounce in a clear way: "There is no uniform way of observing the evangelical counsels, but every Institute must establish its own way "taking into account its own character and finality." And this not only for what concerns the practice of the evangelical counsels, but also for all that concerns the style of life of its members, in view of tending to the perfection of their state" (*Potissimum institutioni*, n. 16).

And to avoid any misunderstanding, the same document specifies: "There is concretely no religious life "in itself" on which would be grafted, like a subsidiary addition, the specific end and the particular charism of every Institute. There is no, in the Institutes dedicated to the apostolate, search for sanctity or profession of the evangelical counsels, or of life vowed to God and to his service, that is not intrinsically bound to the service of the Church and of the world" (n. 17).

The religious are thus identified as "**consecrated for the mission**"; vocation and consecration are closely bound to mission: "It must therefore be affirmed that *mission is essential for every Institute*, not only in those of active apostolic life, but also in those of contemplative life" (*Vita consecrata*, n. 72).

5.2.4. During the course of spiritual exercises of April 1960, the Primo Maestro affirms that for us: "**Life in common is born of the apostolate and in view of the apostolate.**"¹⁵ Which is like saying, with the theology of the religious life coming from Vatican II, that we are "**consecrated for the mission.**"

To affirm that all the aspects that characterize the consecrated life are in function of the mission, does not mean to limit ourselves to an organization of the disciplinary type, of timetables or of concrete activities. Once it is clear that our mission is to "**evangelize in communication using all communication in the style of Saint Paul,**" being totally in function of this mission means **to be capable of living and translating in the languages of communication that we use, our close personal and communitarian experience of Christ.**

If our experience of Christ does not become, through the community, **testimony in communication** that we utilize for our evangelization, the common life becomes an end in itself and not anymore the best state of life in order to be apostles. **There is thus created a harmful fracture between mission and all the rest.**

6. Declarations about the foundations (AD 25-32)

6.1. *Recallings, historical and content-wise*

- The first idea presented to God: the Cooperators; the second: the Pauline Family;
- around 1922: a mysterious dream about the future of the foundation that causes him great pain;
- how many riches of grace come to the Pauline Family;
- action of Providence that "pushes" the creativity of the Founder;
- guarantees on the foundations: everything proceeds from a double obedience, strength drawn from the Rosary, members of the Institute and external persons make up for his deficiencies, the secret that the Pauline Family is willed by the Lord.

6.2. *Updatings*

6.2.1. Fr. Alberione, enumerating some events and the manner of proceeding in his foundation, shows his constant concern to conform to the will of God in his initiatives. The result of his activity as founder is fruit of a concurrence of human and spiritual factors (God, the Founder, the persons who advise him and all those who make up for his deficiencies).

¹⁵ *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, Cinisello Balsamo, 1998, I, n. 285.

The experience of the foundation, as it is lived and recorded by Fr. Alberione, is **unique and unrepeatabe**. The Pauline charism, that from him has had origin and that endures in time, must be “rekindled” by the Paulines who live with enthusiasm the same style of sanctity and apostolate with the communication of other epochs.

The **responsibility** of creative fidelity, on the level of reflection and practice, belongs to **all Paulines** as persons and gathered in community, who find in the General Chapter the authoritative expression of a shared thought: “The reference to one’s Founder and to the charism lived and communicated by him and then kept, deepened and developed along the arch of the life of the Institute, appears therefore as a basic component for the unity of the community... The deepened understanding of the charism leads to a clear vision of one’s identity, around which it is easier to create unity and communion. Moreover, it allows a creative adaptation to new situations and this offers positive prospects for the future of an Institute. The lack of such clarity can easily generate uncertainty in the objectives and vulnerability towards environmental conditionings stemming from cultural currents and even from various apostolic needs, besides the inability to adapt oneself and renew” (*La vita fraterna in comunità*, n. 45).

The **Documents** of the Special General Chapter 1969-1971 can be very useful to see how the Paulines, after the demise of the Founder, have deepened and “rekindled” the charism. Although they can appear to be far back in time, they are the **first and most organic attempt to rethink all the aspects of the Pauline charism** in light of Vatican II. Moreover, Fr. Alberione, still living in those years, allowed in fact full freedom of elaboration, limiting himself to encouraging approvals through his authoritative and venerated presence.

Even the Documents of the **successive General Chapters** are useful to realize the developments that have happened in thinking and in living the Pauline charism, even if none of them can be compared to the global reflection of the Special Chapter.

The fruits of the celebration of the triennium of preparation for the centenary of 2014 could flow together in the preparation and celebration of the General Chapter of 2016, that could become the occasion for a **complete rethinking** of the Pauline charism on the model of the Special General Chapter.

7. The Pauline Family (AD 33-35)

7.1. *Recallings, historical and content-wise*

- In 1953, four are the Congregations founded: Society of Saint Paul, Daughters of Saint Paul, Pious Disciples of the Divine Master and Sisters of Jesus Good Shepherd;
- all born of the Tabernacle and having a single spirit;
- complementary division of their apostolates;
- collaboration in distinction;
- the Society of Saint Paul is the “animator” of the other three.

7.2. *Updatings*

7.2.1. What the Primo Maestro writes about the Pauline Family in 1953 must be completed with what he will say in April of 1960 during the course of spiritual exercises lasting a month, where he declares: “**The Pauline Family has now been completed.**”¹⁶ In the same circumstance, Fr. Alberione intervenes two times to describe the Pauline Family.¹⁷ Today the Pauline Family is composed of **5 religious Congregations, 4 Pauline Institutes of Consecrated Secular Life** and of the **Association of Pauline Cooperators**.

7.2.2. After the demise of the Founder, every Pauline Institute has lived as a single Institute and at the same time as part of the Pauline Family, because **belonging to the Family** is a “riches” that the Founder has willed as something **immutable** in the Pauline charism.

¹⁶ *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, cit., I, n. 19.

¹⁷ *Idem*, I, nn. 19-20 e nn. 371-383.

In view of favoring unity in the Pauline Family, to be remembered are the **regular meetings** between the Superior General and the Sister Generals of the Pauline Family: one of the most significant fruits is the decision to celebrate together the triennium of preparation for the centenary of 2014.

Since 1983 a systematic appointment at the start of each year is the **reunion of the General Governments** of the five Congregations to reflect together on a theme that can favor unity and to exchange information. One of the arguments has been the role of “animator” of the Society of Saint Paul.

Even the **Course on Charism**, organized and realized together, favors unity through a reflection in common about the story of the Founder and of the single Institutes. The IX General Chapter has approved in this regard *operative line 2.3.2*: “The Superiors of Circumscription are to give value to the Course of Formation on the charism of the Pauline Family, as one of the privileged means to know our charismatic patrimony.”

7.2.3. To the activities of unity in complementarity carried out by the **Superiors** and by the **General Governments** of the Pauline Family, are added the initiatives of the **Governments**, of the **Sisters** and of the **Brothers of every Circumscription** for collaboration in vocation promotion, in basic and permanent formation, in the apostolate, in spiritual animation and in material assistance.

Without hiding that in the past, and still today, there are differences in points of view, conflicting interests above all on the apostolic level, episodes against fraternity and intelligent collaboration, we cannot either generalize on world level or transform single episodes into permanent methods. It remains without doubt that we must gather the **historic opportunity** of this triennium lived together to be the Pauline Family willed by blessed James Alberione, with particular attention toward the Pauline Institutes of Consecrated Secular Life and the Association of Pauline Cooperators.

8. Youth (AD 36-38)

8.1. *Recallings, historical and contents-wise*

- The summer vacations (1909-1918) dedicated to spiritual exercises and to observe the “recruitment and formation of persons”;
- prefer the young because they can be formed better;
- formative choice codified in some articles of the Constitutions, cited in the edition of 1950;
- specific traits of the personality of the Pauline: capable of the spirit of sacrifice and of generous dedication.

8.2. *Updatings*

8.2.1. With the experience of his childhood (nn. 7-12) and the study of the methodology of other institutes, Fr. Alberione makes a choice which, during his time, was common: favor the vocation proposal at the end of the course of the elementary schools, at the age of **11 years**. In the story of the Pauline vocational research, to be also recorded is the idea and the experience, willed by Fr. Alberione himself, of the **pre-seminary schools**, with children less than 11 years of age. Subsequently the Founder in the 1960's, taking into account the historical changes, opens the Congregation to young men **until the age of 23 years** (called by him “adult or late vocations”) and, with more attentive discernment, to young men **more than 23 years old**; in exceptional cases, to young men **more than 30 years**.

The **motive** for privileging the very young in 1960 is explained thus: the Congregation “intends to form religious from a young age, for the purpose of accustoming them more easily to its characteristic life, which requires its own mentality, habits and spirit.”¹⁸

8.2.2. As for the Founder, also for us “**the basic problem is the seminary.**”¹⁹ One of the more recent initiatives, willed by the VIII General Chapter, has been the calling of a **Year of Vocations**, celebrated from 4 April 2005 to 4 April 2006.

On that occasion the Center of Pauline Spirituality has prepared a valid *Compendium*, **The Pauline Vocation**, selecting among the teachings of Fr. Alberione what concerns expressly the Pauline vocation proposal. During the vocation year have also been published, care of the General Gover-

¹⁸ *Idem*, I, n. 88.

¹⁹ *San Paolo*, December 1958, cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, cit., p. 736.

nment: *La vocazione paolina nei Capitoli generali, Il tema Pauline vocation a livello di Congregazione, Analisi del materiale vocazionale and Orientamenti circa la pastorale vocazionale*. All these documents are available in the official site of the Congregation.

Through indication of the VIII General Chapter, on 8 October 2008, the General Government has instituted the International Secretariat for Vocation Pastoral and Formation (SIF), organism in support of the General Government in the care of two fundamental aspects for the future of the Congregation.

8.2.3. On this matter the example of the Founder teaches us that the Pauline vocational promotion needs an **opening** toward those who dedicate themselves to this activity: institutions of the Pauline Family, organisms of the religious, diocesan centers, movements and associations. There is need also for the **ability to appreciate** specialized researches and centers of documentation regarding the youth in order to know and welcome the young men of today according to their personality, values, tastes, habits, lifestyles, languages, etc.

After the accurate knowledge of the world of the youth and of the context in which vocation promotion works, it is necessary to propose to the young man, at the opportune time and overcoming a generic youth pastoral, the specificity of the Pauline charism. The Pauline lifestyle must be clear: **to evangelize by giving testimony to one's faith in the languages and forms of present-day communication, making one's own the experience of faith of Saint Paul**.

8.2.4. The most significant initiative of these last decades for a creative fidelity to the formative concerns of the Founder has been the realization of the International Seminar on **Pauline Formation for the Mission** (Ariccia, 12-23 October 1994), concluded with the publication on the part of the General Government of a document that carries the same title (19.3.1995). The **Acts** of the Seminar and the **Document** of the General Government²⁰ remain valid instruments for an actualization of the Pauline formation today **because all the components of the Pauline identity are treated in the perspective of the apostolic mission**: a faith in God for the mission, a spirituality for the mission, a consecration for the mission, a study for the mission, a specific preparation for the mission, a community for the mission, a complex of competencies for the mission.

All the stages of formation are oriented to the one objective of preparing the Pauline as an **"apostle of communication,"** supplying him with suitable instruments so that he may live and enable himself to be a **"man of communication"** in the historical, cultural, ecclesial and actual communications context.

8.2.5. In order to realize *operative line 4.2.1* of the IX General Chapter regarding the need to "review and update the norms of the Congregation," it will be necessary to examine also the **Ratio formationis** (in force "*ad experimentum*" since 26 February 1990); that will contribute to "rekindle" the Pauline formation, highlighting the **"immutable"** elements valid for everybody and favoring the opportune indications for the necessary **"inculturation"** of the Pauline charism in the various historical, geographical and cultural contexts.

8.2.6. Even some *operative lines* of the IX General Chapter trace valid courses and concrete commitments for the actualization of vocation pastoral and Pauline formation: *3.1.1* (make better the formation of the formators and of the vocation promoters); *3.1.2* (prepare in the Circumscriptions a project of vocation pastoral; inculturating the Pauline identity and mission in the various geographical areas); *3.1.3* (promote the Pauline vocation in the twofold expression of priest and disciple); *1.3.1, 1.3.2, 1.3.4, 3.2.3* and *4.1.2* (referring to specialization).

9. Divine predilection (AD 39-42)

9.1. Recallings, historical and contents-wise

- Making research in other institutions he realizes that there are "very many vocations of lay people" alongside the priest;
- idea of associating the laity to an apostolate: "an almost priesthood";
- birth of the Disciples of the Divine Master.

²⁰ *Formazione paolina per la missione*. Atti del Seminario internazionale sulla Formazione paolina, Casa Generalizia della Società San Paolo, 1995.

9.2. *Updatings*

9.2.1. Taking into account the ecclesiology of the time that entrusted the entire responsibility of evangelization to the clergy and, in a special way, to the hierarchy, the presentation of the Pauline consecrated layman as an “**almost priest,**” even if not accompanied by an adequate theological formulation, reveals in Fr. Alberione a great pastoral sensitivity. He himself informs us that the idea of considering not only the consecrated layman but the layman in general as invested with an “almost priesthood” is not his, but of a priest of Genoa, Fr. Giuseppe Frassinetti (1804-1868): “The spinsters, says Frassinetti, are called during this time by Providence to an almost priesthood, to a true apostolate.”²¹

The **originality** of Primo Maestro consists in applying the “almost priesthood” both to the Disciple and to the Sister to unite them to the Pauline Priest **in preaching through the press and through “the fastest and most effective means.”** Affirming the equal dignity between “written preaching and oral preaching,” the Founder realizes a “**ministerial priesthood by means of communication**” that needs collaboration. In fact, so that the “written” preaching may be realized, redaction is necessary, entrusted during that time to the Priest, and the production and diffusion to the Pauline Disciple.

The “written preaching” is possible only with the collaboration of both: “Priest and Disciple concur in accomplishing the same apostolate of the editions... Priest and Disciple united together in the editions merit therefore the name of Apostles. On the contrary, the writer alone does not make Pauline apostolate, he is a simple writer; the Disciple without the Priest-writer is a simple worker, although he may produce with technique what is really good.”²²

For a valid actualization of the rapport Priest-Pauline Disciple, it is necessary to study the **evolution** that the identity of both has had in the span of the existence itself of Fr. Alberione and in the codification received in the Constitutions of the Congregation. Two are the spheres that have seen an evolution of that rapport: the respective responsibilities in the **apostolate** and the participation in the service of **authority** in a clerical Congregation.

Also meriting to be called to mind is the application that the Founder makes of the “almost priesthood” to the **Sister**: “You are called to cooperate in the priesthood making just one apostolate with them. You share in the same ministry as theirs... You will be co-offerers, co-preachers, co-catechists,”²³; “What are you? I would like to say deaconesses, priestesses! In the same way as Mary is talked about.”²⁴

9.2.2. Theological reflection on the **laity** and on the **common priesthood of the faithful**, which we find in ch. IV of *Lumen gentium* and in the decree *Apostolicam actuositatem* (18.11.1965) of Vatican Council II, allows giving a well-articulated basis to the “almost priesthood” about which blessed James Alberione talks. Even the centrality of the “**Pauline priesthood**” for the entire Pauline Family can draw from the theology of Vatican II arguments suited to better appreciate the role attributed to it by the Founder.

Putting the Pauline priesthood as the “minimum common denominator” of the apostolates of the Pauline Family, Fr. Alberione does not intend to lay out on everybody a clerical type protection, but it is his concern to safeguard the “**sacramental**” efficacy of the apostolates: “give God to souls and souls to God.”²⁵

9.2.3. In order to actualize the identity of the Disciple and of the Priest in the Pauline charism, we must take note of what happens in some of our Circumscriptions: **the young men don’t ask to be Disciples**, but all of them orient themselves to the Priesthood. The reasons for this choice are multiple, often cultural in character so that we find it hard to understand who is the Disciple. If it is true that not even during the lifetime of the Founder the Congregation has attained the objective of the “two thirds of Disciples and a third of Priests” indicated by him, it is easy to foresee with human certainty that this percentage is neither in the present nor in the future.

²¹ *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale*, Cinisello Balsamo, 2001, n. 10.

²² *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, cit., III, n. 127.

²³ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo 1940-1945*, Figlie di San Paolo, Casa Generalizia, 2000, p. 554.

²⁴ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo 1955*, cit., p. 73.

²⁵ Cf *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, cit., I, nn. 313-316.

However, it is necessary investigate well, beyond the cultural reasons, **if** and **how** is being presented to the young men the proposal of the only one Pauline vocation lived in the twofold lifestyle of Disciple and Priest. Since the division of the apostolic tasks thought about by the Founder now comes out hard to propose, it is necessary to **rethink the identity of the Disciple in reference to today's communication** and to the necessities of specializations that motivate an ideal of life whether religious or professional.

9.2.4. Since the Founder has thought of the Disciple and the Priest in close connection for the apostolate, the actual conditions of many apostolic initiatives question in a radical way even the **identity of the Pauline Priest** which finds its motive for being in the “ministry of communication.” When a direct or at least indirect commitment in evangelization through communication fails, many Pauline Priests ask themselves about the meaning of their priesthood.

Some alternative solutions to the “ministry of communication,” above all when no account is taken of the norms of the Constitutions (art. 76) binding for all Paulines, are not acceptable and can become a true deviation from the charism about whose authenticity it is necessary to be vigilant at all costs.

When the “**priestly ministry**” is carried out in the parish environment, whether it is a recognized exception or just a temporary commitment, it cannot renounce its “**Pauline color**” for any excuse. Moreover, the ecclesial community wants that the pastoral ministry of the religious to be not generic, but characterized by its specific charism.

As for the concrete realization of the apostolic activities, it is observed today that the Congregation, proportionally, is **very committed** in the editorial production of books and magazines, **less** in the production of other mass media (cinema, television, radio, music, etc.) and is **at the start** as far as the use of digital communication in a significant form is concerned.

The proposal of the twofold manner of living the one Pauline vocation must have in mind these proportions to give value at best to the abilities of every young man and, at the same time, to think of the “ministry” of the Pauline priest in reference to digital communication. If the formation is not proposed with a clear objective to form the **apostle of communication of today**, it can fall into the easy solution of favoring a **double identity**: on one hand, a priest like the “diocesan” priest and on the other, in the best of cases, a professional of communication.

10. The conduct of God (AD 43-47)

10.1. *Recallings, historical and content-wise*

- Experience of how God operates: “Never force the hand of Providence!”;
- in 1908 he starts to pray for the Pastorelle Sisters, who he founds after thirty years;
- conditions necessary for a calm maturation of decisions.

10.2. *Updatings*

10.2.1. Thinking back about his foundational experience, Fr. Alberione emphasizes with force constant referring to God, the assistance of Providence and allows a glimpse of his deep faith in considering himself a **collaborator of God**, not an **independent master of holy works**. He has lived, in a unique and unrepeatable way, the difficult waiting of the maturing of the times according to the will of God: the example of the foundation of the Pastorelle Sisters is enlightening.

In order to keep and **rekindle the Pauline charism**, it is necessary that **every Pauline and every one in charge** at all levels cultivate the awareness of being a collaborator of God in constant search for his will regarding the work of evangelization in communication.

It can be useful to reflect on the “**commercial**” aspect that characterizes our charism and that from the start, on the part of persons outside the Institute, has been interpreted in a business sense.

The Primo Maestro is aware that this danger can lurk even inside and warns: “The Congregation is to study the thought and to work in editing it: neither merchants nor manufacturers, but a Society of Apostles.”²⁶ “If we shall not accomplish well our mission, the Lord will be able to substitute us. There

²⁶ Cf *Mihi vivere Christus est*, n. 185, in *Viviamo in Cristo Gesù*, Cinisello Balsamo, 2008, p. 220.

is always the danger of deviating from the special end.”²⁷ “The temptation to slide into a commercial form will always be there; it is necessary to be always vigilant... There was no need of a religious institute to engage in industry! There is no need of persons consecrated to God to work in commerce.”²⁸

10.2.2. The commercial danger feared by Fr. Alberione is not only monetary, tied to the preoccupation to increase in our apostolate the economic proceeds for their own sake. The true commercial temptation, that he feared, springs into evidence in the obstinacy with which he wanted that the **diffusion be exclusively the work and fruit of Pauline creativity**. He saw in the easy recourse to spread the editions of others a fatal renouncement of our redactional ability, with the result easily foreseeable of an ever greater separation between the production of contents and the diffusion of works.

His constant defense of the **Pauline autarchy** (only Paulines in redaction, technique and diffusion), supported by him all his life, is a sign that he does not want to surrender to the progressive diminution of the creativity of the Paulines. Even during the course of spiritual exercises of 1960, through a mediating person, he defended his idea of a “Pauline editor.” A reflection on the level of Congregation on the **profile of the Pauline editor today** is a contribution of creative fidelity.

11. Roman world (AD 48-57)

11.1. *Recallings, historical and contents-wise*

- Fundamental riches: being Roman;
- the Institution starts when the First World War is declared;
- two currents in the clergy: traditional pastoral and innovative pastoral;
- Americanism;
- pastoral inspired by Pius X;
- Modernism;
- new discoveries and new social phenomena;
- situation of Italian politics;
- new means of communication;
- invitations of the Holy See for the Catholics to mobilize;
- fourth vow of fidelity to the Pope.

11.2. *Updatings*

11.2.1. Fr. Alberione situates the beginnings of the Institute in the context of history, society, politics, communications and church. As point of reference in the midst of so many changes and different points of view, he thinks about the Pope: “The Pope is the great beacon lighted by Jesus for humanity, in every century.” This experience of his has convinced him to commit the Paulines with “a fourth vow, of **obedience to the Pope in regard to the apostolate.**”

If the start of the Congregation takes place in the midst of social and ecclesial upheavals, analogically the **successive history** of the Pauline charism in these almost hundred years has taken place in historical, social, political, communications and ecclesial contexts subject to profound changes.

11.2.2. The synthesis of the historical contexts that the Primo Maestro offers us in these paragraphs, allows us to observe what are the **important elements** that have remained impressed in his memory and merit to be narrated: the First World War, the currents of pastoral, the papal condemnation of Americanism and Modernism, the political changes in Europe and, above all in Italy, the means of communication, the invitations of the Holy See to Catholics “to be up to the new tasks.” The solution to be free from the contrasts is “always, only and in everything *being Roman.*”

During his existence various Popes have succeeded each other: Leo XIII (1878-1903), Pius X (1903-1914), Benedict XV (1914-1922), Pius XI (1922-1939), Pius XII (1939-1958), John XXIII (1958-1963), Paul VI (1963-1978). A documented research on the approach of Fr. Alberione with the various Popes in order to let them think, approve, keep and promote his foundations allows us to

²⁷ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo 1946-1949*, cit., p. 466; cf *Vademecum*, cit., n. 1065.

²⁸ *Idem*, pp. 573.574; cf n. 1066.

understand how he has appreciated them **to let his creativity emerge**. It would be misleading to consider Fr. Alberione as a simple passive executor of the papal magisterium, both in thought and in practice.

11.2.3. Precisely in the vow of fidelity to the Pope in regard to the apostolate, we can find his original interpretation of the papal indications. With this vow, in fact, the Pauline does not commit himself to be faithful only in his personal life and in his apostolate “to the doctrine and morals” contained in the teachings of the Holy Father, because this is a commitment common to all the baptized belonging to the Catholic Church.

The fourth vow to the Pope concerns also and, for certain aspects above all, **fidelity to the “universal magisterium regarding communication.”** Referring to the development of the means of communication of his time, Fr. Alberione remembers the succession of acts on the part of the Holy See to mobilize the Catholics: “While there were noted many indolent people and inconsiderate spirits, Catholics and the clergy were aware and wisely working according to the papal directives.” “The Pauline Family was born when the then reigning Holy Father was little followed in his direction about the press, and therefore we intervened... Therefore our vow is fidelity regarding the apostolate.”²⁹ In order to actualize the riches of “being Roman” we can **reflect** on what and how we know the universal magisterium about communication, starting from *Inter mirifica* until the last papal message for the world day of social communications. The adequate knowledge of the papal indications should not only have an influence that directs our apostolic works, but should also stimulate an elaboration of a **Congregational “thought” regarding communication**, facilitated by the existence of our centers of study. With reason the IX General Chapter asks in *priority 3.2* to “elevate the general cultural level of the Congregation and ‘to create thought’.”

12. Social spirit (AD 58-63)

12.1. *Recallings, historical and content-wise*

- Work for the Catholic University of Milan (1905-1906);
- courses of conferences, social studies, congresses of social character, cooperation for social organizations, relations with men of Catholic action;
- dissolution of the *Opera dei Congressi* (30.7.1904);
- articles on *Gazzetta d’Alba*;
- in the years 1911-1914 presence in the parishes of the diocese of Alba to help in the birth of the Catholic Association *Unione Popolare*;
- after the withdrawal of the *Non expedit* on the part of Pius X (11.6.1905), work for various years for the election of Catholic candidates in the *Partito Popolare*;
- commitment in Christian social work: task and responsibility of the Pauline Family also to make society Christian.

12.2. *Updatings*

12.2.1. Fr. Alberione remembers an aspect not much known of his life: **his commitment for the social** and, in a particular way, a direct participation in the **promotion of a party** of Catholic inspiration. In order to understand the sense of his “long preparation” for the social spirit that he has left as inheritance to the Pauline Family, it is necessary to know in a deepened manner the political situation of the Catholics of the time, the change in the directives of the Popes, the information that he gets participating in conferences, studies and social congresses, frequenting persons, clergy and laity committed in the social, collaboration with *Gazzetta d’Alba*, social animation in the parishes and open support in political elections for the candidates supporting Catholics. Action and prayer direct him to social commitment, toward this “riches” to be left to the Pauline Family.

The purpose of all the work is: “to heal Governments, the school, the laws, the family, relations between the classes and international entities.” It is the task that Leo XIII, at the start of the new

²⁹ *Vademecum*, cit., n. 942.

century, entrusted to the entire Christian community by his encyclical *Tametsi futura* (1.11.1900) and that had deeply left its mark on the young seminarian.

12.2.2. As Fr. Alberione has lived the developments of the “social doctrine” because of the Popes, also the successive history of the Pauline charism, above all starting from Vatican II Council, has been a witness of a **profound evolution** in the manner of understanding the duties of the believers in social life. Among the principal documents that contain a systematic elaboration of the social doctrine, we find: *Mater et magistra* (15.5.1961) and *Pacem in terris* (11.4.1963) of John XXIII; *Populorum progressio* (26.3.1967) and *Octogesima adveniens* (14.5.1971) of Paul VI; *Laborem exercens* (14.9.1981), *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (30.12.1987) and *Centesimus annus* (1.5.1991) of John Paul II; *Caritas in veritate* (29.6.2009) of Benedict XVI.

12.2.3. In our apostolate we are called to pronouncements on important **social themes**: culture, values, education, family, politics, economy, legislations, means of communication, freedom of expression, war, terrorism, violence, injustices, nationalism, racism, migration, refugees, etc. We agree without reserve that the basic criteria of our pronouncements are the **gospel values**, even if concrete experience shows how within the ecclesial community the result is often different, if not opposite.

In order to manage the just **plurality** of the opinions of the believers in the social field and, in particular, in the political area, we Paulines must safeguard not only the professionalism of information and analysis, but also the awareness of being managers of apostolic activities not ours, but of the **community**, to whose representative we must render account. An apostolic work of the Congregation cannot and must never become the monopoly of a single Pauline; however “competent professional,” society and the Church ask accounting not from a temporary manager, but from the “property.”

Contributing to the formation of public opinion on social themes has been a commitment of the Founder, passed as inheritance to us and to the Pauline Family. For an updating on how to help the young Paulines elaborate an **opinion on the social**, as useful and significant contribution for public opinion, it is necessary to program studies of specialization and a suitable apprenticeship, above all in journalism. Public opinion constitutes one of the phenomena of communication that teaches us that it is necessary to possess some “contents.”

13. Universality (AD 64-70)

13.1. *Recallings, historical and contents-wise*

- Saint Paul: the saint of universality, model of every apostle and of every apostolate;
- universal aperture of the Pauline Family;
- systematic reading of history books for various years;
- task as librarian;
- reading of *Civiltà Cattolica* (since 1906) and of *Osservatore Romano*, of the documents of the papal Magisterium and of the acts of the Holy See;
- everything is transformed as object of meditation and prayer;
- Pauline universality: priority and order of the editions;
- contents of the editions in Pauline spirit.

13.2. *Updateings*

13.2.1. Fr. Alberione lists down the **sources** that have led him to the sense of universality, “riches” for him and for his foundations. His reading of the *Letter to the Roman* fascinates him and makes him decide to consecrate the Pauline Family to the Apostle, to whom he attributes also his miraculous healing.

Also favoring his opening to universality are his reading of history books, his work as librarian which puts him in direct contact with past and new publications, his reading of *Civiltà Cattolica*, of *Osservatore Romano*, of the texts of the Magisterium.

Everything he transforms “into object of meditation and prayer before the Divine Master.” The fruits that derive from it are “**wide opening toward the whole world**” of the Pauline Family and a kind of list of the priorities for the editions as far as recipients and contents are concerned, turning to everybody, giving the integral Christ following the example of Saint Paul and offering everything that is positive.

13.2.2. One of the characteristics of the personality of Fr. Alberione is his **passion for reading**. It is abundant, systematic and varied. It does not fall into pure curiosity but through assimilation of Saint Paul and “prayerful reflection,” it transforms into apostolic mentality open to the universal.

In order to actualize the “riches” of universality left to us as inheritance by the Founder, we must reflect on our “**mental opening**” as persons, communities and Congregation, and on the concrete instruments that we make use of to favor it and make it better.

Reading, of which the Primo Maestro is an example, **ranges** from Saint Paul to general history and history of human activities, from publications that can be found in the libraries to the texts of the Holy See and to publications in the sphere of Catholicism. The vastness of the readings favors a breadth of vision determinant for the exercise of our apostolate.

13.2.3. Due to the charism that characterizes us, **information** constitutes an indispensable constant of our service to the recipients. In his time, Fr. Alberione drew his knowledge from books and magazines; today, we Paulines form our knowledge by taking advantage of the sources of information and culture that the development of present-day communication, above all digital, makes possible. **Interdisciplinary and multimedia** knowledge should favor a wider documentation for studies, for the vocation proposal, for formation, for the apostolic initiatives and for life in common. From the Founder we must also learn to “**meditate and pray**” **with history** if we want to **transform into apostolate** the quantity of information that we can procure for ourselves.

In order to have an idea of our capacity to **actualize as a community** the taste for reading (and therefore to appreciate apostolically the teaching of the Primo Maestro), we could analyze the **reports regarding the situation of the historical contexts** in which we live, that precede the *Programs* of our Provincial Chapters and Regional Assemblies, or else the contexts described in the *Apostolic Projects* and in the *Iter formativi* of our Circumscriptions. Sometimes we get the impression that the programming is interchangeable between one Circumscription and another, exactly because it has no well-documented historical awareness about the local situations.

In this point of view are meditated nn. **65, 69** and **70** of AD, that constitute a “riches” to which to give value in all the aspects of the charism, not only in apostolic activity.

14. The liturgical spirit (AD 71-74)

14.1. *Recallings, historical and contents-wise*

- Reading of books and periodicals specialized in liturgy;
- the work of Pius X for sacred chant, the breviary and the teaching of liturgy;
- teacher of liturgy;
- master of ceremonies, seminary sacristan, master of ceremonies of the Bishop, with the task of preparing the book of ceremonies;
- desire to have churches suitable for beautiful rites;
- confidant of the Bishop;
- appreciation of Gregorian chant and of sacred music in the Pauline Family;
- preparation of the missal, of the liturgical bulletin, start of *La vita in Cristo e nella Chiesa*, founding of the Pious Disciples;
- eucharistic presence in all the chapels of the Pauline communities in the world.

14.2. *Updatings*

14.2.1. The description of this “riches” allows us to grasp better the **editorial methodology** used by the Primo Maestro to write AD: list of his readings and tasks, consequences in his mentality and foundations;

His liturgical experience is situated **on one part** in a tradition where the official prayer, in Latin, is the responsibility of the clergy; **on the other**, thanks to some scholars and the work of reform of Pius X, it manifests the concern to ever more bring near the people to the prayer of the Church. The editorial initiative of the missal with the text in local language facing the Latin text is an index of his sensitivity for a different understanding and celebration of the liturgy, understood always better as “the prayer of the Church and with the Church” which is “its full and realistic sense.”

14.2.2. The liturgical knowledge acquired by Fr. Alberione in his years in the seminary and his concern for the active involvement of the people in prayer, have favored the redaction of the **Manual of prayers** for the Society of Saint Paul and for the Pauline Family. As the people must not act as a “spectator” in the liturgy, so the prayers of the Pauline Family, with their particular “color” of the method “way, truth and life,” aim to create a close bond between “prayer and action”: **a prayer full of apostolate and an apostolate full of prayer.**

In order to update the **Manual of prayers** an intercongregational Commission has been created (8.5.2007) with the task of proceeding to an “**historical**” study about the criteria and contents of the single prayers composed by the Founder. In order to pass to an updating it is necessary, in fact, to have the guarantee of that which belongs to the will of the drafter and receive his criteria of composition.

Precisely due to the irreplaceable value that Fr. Alberione attributes to the **Manual of prayers**, the Superior Generals of the Pauline Family recommend **prudence** in putting in circulation revisions or new editions that are only fruit of local initiatives. We do not intend to repress creativity or underestimate the need for a revision; but since it is a matter of a spiritual “patrimony” of the Pauline Family, it is imprudent to proceed in a solitary way or in a small group.

14.2.3. Only God knows the good that in so many years the **Pauline editorial activity in liturgical matters** has operated among the faithful and even the vocations stirred up by her. As we continue in the promotion of a “liturgy for the people” in the spirit of Fr. Alberione through our multimedia editorial activity, it will be necessary to lend greater attention to the contents of Vatican II Council and operate in conformity with the document *La liturgia romana e l'inculturazione* (25.1.1994) to meet the needs of the individual local Churches.

15. Three principal churches (AD 75-77)

15.1. *Recallings, historical and contents-wise*

- Teacher of sacred Art: reading of texts, visit to masterpieces, discussions in magazines, member of the Society “Friends of Christian art”;
- three churches: *San Paolo*, *Divino Maestro* and *Regina Apostolorum*, built according to the principles contained in *Appunti di teologia pastorale*;
- purpose for which a Pauline church has been built.

15.2. *Updatings*

15.2.1. Fr. Alberione narrates how, by means of his work as teacher of sacred art in the seminary, is born the “riches” of his **love for the arts** and how it is applied in the construction of the three principal churches: “so that the church may have unity and treatment of a theme in every part: architecture, sculpture, painting, stained glass, furnishings.”

The detailed and often indisputable **indications** by him imparted for the construction of the temple of Saint Paul and of the church of the Divine Master in Alba and for the construction of the church Regina Apostolorum in Rome, can be traced to the “purpose for which a Pauline church is built.” To favor adequately “**contemplation for the apostolate**,” all the arts must converge and develop, each in its own language, a unity of theme.

The temple of Saint Paul has been willed by the Founder as “the temple of Catholic journalists” and of the “missionaries of the good press”; the sanctuary Regina Apostolorum is “the heart of the Pauline Family and the church of vocations”; the temple to Jesus Divine Master, built successively by the Pious Disciples in Rome, is to “illustrate Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life.”

15.2.2. These churches, that have been realized thanks to true wagers of faith and sacrifices on the part of so many persons and have required substantial capitals, constitute the **translation** – in architecture, sculpture, painting, ornaments furnishings – of the devotions to Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life, to Mary Queen of the Apostles and to Saint Paul, essential to sanctity and to the Pauline apostolate.

With the affirmation of the Pauline missionary activity on the international level, even the chapels and the churches of the new Pauline communities must be constructed according to the criteria

of “a Pauline church”: **an adequate environment so that contemplation may move to apostolic action typical of the Pauline charism.**

16. Catechism (78-81)

16.1. *Recallings, historical and content-wise*

- As a cleric he is for six years a catechist in the Dome and in the parish of Sts. Cosmas and Damian;
- study of pedagogy with the Brothers of the Christian Schools;
- from 1910 to 1914 he studies catechetical methods;
- catechetical work for three years;
- school of religion;
- participation in catechetical congresses;
- multiple catechetical activity;
- member of the diocesan catechetical commission;
- the catechism as primary and fundamental work.

16.2. *Updatings*

16.2.1. Many are the sources and activities that lead Fr. Alberione to make mature the “riches” of **catechesis**. In the Italian ecclesial community of the first '900 numerous congresses are held regarding catechesis for the purpose of reaching a catechesis that is common for all the dioceses. In 1912 Pius X publishes the *Catechism of the Christian Doctrine*, structured on questions and answers, with the objective to initiate the very young in the faith; and, in fact, this text will form all the generations from the beginning of 1900 until Vatican II.

At a time when on the part of the clergy there is diffidence for the direct reading of Sacred Scripture on the part of the faithful, Fr. Alberione considers catechesis as the **first concrete form of evangelization for the masses**: “The first work that has come out of our printing press in Alba has been the small catechism, with the questions assigned by a corresponding number to the class of children.”³⁰

From the study of the pedagogical methods made in youth has sprung the initiative, entrusted to the San Paolo Film in October of 1952, of producing **documentaries and catechetical films** to contribute to the transmission of the faith through renewed and pedagogically more adequate language.

16.2.2. On the base of the theological reflection of Vatican Council II, catechesis in the postconciliar period has been the object of **rethinking** both on the level of the universal magisterium and on the particular one. On 11 October 1992, John Paul II publishes the **Catechism of the Catholic Church**; on 15 August 1997 the Congregation of the Clergy publishes the **General Directory for Catechesis** and on 28 June 2005 Benedict XVI promulgates the **Compendium** of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. From these texts must draw inspiration the elaboration of the catechisms of the Episcopal Conferences and of the dioceses.

16.2.3. The Society of Saint Paul and the other institutions of the Pauline Family, drawing inspiration from the attitude of the Founder, continue the apostolic commitment of catechesis, at times with **difficulties** of understanding and collaboration with others who are in charge.

For an updating of the pedagogical methods of the Primo Maestro, the Congregation could commit itself in the elaboration of a **catechesis for the expressive forms of the digital language**, drawing from present-day “communication models” that, besides the “transmission of contents,” aim at an **“interactive and creative collaboration”** with the user.

17. Pastoral spirit (AD 82-86)

17.1. *Recallings, historical and contents-wise*

- Riches coming from the light of Jesus-Host and from the tasks entrusted;
- priestly ministry in three parishes;
- various contacts for the ministry;

³⁰ *San Paolo*, October 1952; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, cit., p. 839.

- ever stronger awareness of the words of Jesus;
- idea regarding the Pastorelle Sisters;
- for two years, reflection with other priests on adequate means for the care of souls;
- publication of the book *Appunti di teologia pastorale*;
- reading of pastoral texts of Swoboda and Krieg;
- protection of Mary, Queen of Apostles;
- preaching, oral and written, thinking of the masses.

17.2. *Updatings*

17.2.1. The pastoral experience of Fr. Alberione is realized both through his ministry in the parish and through his teaching of pastoral to the young priests in the seminary; for them, with the help of other parish priests, he writes a book. He, **as a diocesan priest**, “studied the means for good and updated care of souls” that in his book are recognized as “the means most suitable to the times.”

“**For the pastoral character in the Pauline apostolate**” he makes use of the study of the publications of Swoboda and Krieg which “he read and read again for two years.”

Thinking of **pastoral** as “the great art of giving God to men and of giving men to God in Jesus Christ,”³¹ he is guided by only one concern: “reach souls, save souls and invent new means.”³²

The **pastoral urgency** to arrive to the masses who do not come anymore to church and therefore cannot be reached by the parish pastoral ministry, is the reason which motivates the beginning of the “press apostolate” since it allows reaching the people in their own life environment.

17.2.2. In order to update the “riches” of pastoral, the Founder transmits to us his zeal for “**all**”: “Let us feel ourselves, like Saint Paul and in Saint Paul, debtors to all men! Ignorant and educated, Catholics, Communists, pagans, Muslims, let us love all. Our apostolate is for everyone.”³³

The **Pauline pastoral**, understood as method of evangelization that starts from the recipients, is held in continuous “forward tension” by the **changes** that take place in communication. Hence, every change in communication should have an effect also on our pastoral planning, much more now that digital communication is not reduced only to the fact of technologies that change, but involves the modification of the elements of the communication itself.

Attention to the recipients, recommended by the Founder, asks from our apostolic activity to assume also the instrument of market research to perceive the needs of the public. Since the creativity of an enterprise of communication does not limit itself to take note of the needs of the public but tends to anticipate them or to stir up new interests, it is necessary to remember that for us **market research** is not a simple “business” instrument, but a “pastoral” method to reach the ideal of Saint Paul to “make himself all for all.” And as such it is to be used.

17.2.3. The charism that characterizes us in the ecclesial community urges us also to “update” the Pauline pastoral both on the editorial level and elaborating “**our own thought**,” competent and authoritative, about “**pastoral and communication**.” Favoring us in this is the management of apostolic works, that while it obliges us to make verifications and concrete thinking, allows not only “theoretical” but also enriching reflections. Moreover, by drawing from the patrimony of Fr. Alberione, we can make ourselves upholders of a use of communication as an “**original and autonomous form that realizes a true evangelization**” of priestly character, not just a mere “**instrument**” of support for parish pastoral.

18. Salt... Light... City... (AD 87-92)

18.1. *Recallings, historical and content-wise*

- “Don’t talk only of religion, but of everything in a Christian way”;
- deviations in social, theological, ascetical matters, in the years 1895-1915;
- organization of an academy on St. Thomas Aquinas, for four months, in 1904;
- consequences.

³¹ *Vademecum*, cit., n. 1205.

³² *Idem*, n. 1202.

³³ *San Paolo*, March 1951; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, cit., p. 860.

18.2. *Updatings*

18.2.1. The end of the XIX century and the start of the XX are characterized by a vivacity of ideas that Fr. Alberione perceives also as “deviations” with respect to the truth. The commitment to contribute to the rise of the Catholic university of Milan (1921) and the study of St. Thomas Aquinas permit him to find a **strategy** of Christianization and a **secure base** “in the midst of the chaos of ideas.”

The **strategy of evangelization** that the Primo Maestro indicates since the foundation to the Society of Saint Paul and to the Pauline Family: “**Don’t talk only of religion, but of everything in a Christian way**” still remains as the fundamental indication to be actualized through our apostolate. In order to explain better the commitment to “penetrate all thought and human knowledge with the Gospel,” he compares the multiple apostolate of communication with the variegated activities of a Catholic university. An evangelization so vast requires from the apostle a **well-formed mind**: “there is no sanctity where there is no truth, or at least love for the truth,” in the conviction that in all culture the methodology must be: “reason subordinated to faith.”

18.2.2. Leo XIII through his encyclical *Æterni Patris* (4.8.1879) had reposed the study of **Thomistic philosophy** for a solid intellectual formation and as antidote to doctrinal deviations. What fascinates Fr. Alberione in the vast philosophical and theological elaboration of St. Thomas is the harmonious “**synthesis**” between philosophy and theology. The project of a “**synthesis of all the sciences**” remains among the ideas most cultivated by him, intended to remedy the **fracture between “science and faith”** that more and more is widening.

On the rapport between science and faith, the recent universal magisterium has offered some indications and tracks for reflection; consult the encyclicals *Veritatis splendor* (6.8.1993) and *Fides et ratio* (14.9.1998) of John Paul II and the numerous discourses of Benedict XVI criticising *relativism*.

In the present-day conditions of culture and communication, the **intellectual formation** of the Pauline is more than ever relevant in order to introduce the Christian proposal in a context where fragmentariness, temporariness and discontinuity predominate. The Pauline apostle needs an interdisciplinary preparation, which finds the point of synthesis in the characteristics of present-day communication: “Study for the Pauline has for its immediate end the apostolate.”³⁴ We Paulines work out the synthesis of the sciences when we try to propose with efficacy the faith in the cultural and religious pluralism of the users of communication.

19. Pauline spirit (Ad 93-102)

19.1. *References, historical and content-wise*

- Definition of the Pauline spirit;
- to live in Christ according to the spirit of Saint Paul;
- articles of the Constitutions that apply to piety, study and apostolate the spirituality of Christ the Master, the Way, the Truth and the Life;
- totality of the person for the apostolate;
- the Pauline cart: sanctity, study, apostolate, poverty;
- in 1913, thanks to the school of civil and ecclesiastical history he becomes aware of the present reality to think of the rise of a new institution.

19.2. *Updatings*

19.2.1. The spirituality given by Fr. Alberione to the Society of Saint Paul and to the Pauline Family is “**Pauline**” because Christ the Master the Way, the Truth and the Life is lived “**in the spirit of Saint Paul**”; it gives orientation to “think and nourish oneself with every phrase of the Gospel, **according to the spirit of Saint Paul.**” The spirit of Saint Paul is the **interpretative key** of the spirituality of Christ the Master, the Way, the Truth and the Life, lived “under the gaze of the *Queen of Apostles.*”

Since the Pauline spirituality is not a simple “devotion,” but a **complete style of life** that involves the whole person (mind, heart and will), it must be applied in piety, study and apostolate. All

³⁴ *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, cit., I, n. 172; *Vademecum*, cit., n. 266.

the faculties of the person converge in synchrony to realize the apostolate, like the four wheels of a “**cart.**”

19.2.2. For Fr. Alberione there is a **reciprocity** between spirituality and human personality: the totality of the spiritual experience (**dogma, morals and cult**) is thought and lived by the integrality of the person (**mind, will and heart**). A **faith of watertight compartments**, where the truths of faith don't motivate either cult or ethics, is a danger and the context of a fragmented Christology, to which he reacts with his unitary spirituality: “We have to correct our tendency to divide the Christ, to break into pieces what He has united. For some time we have noted this in some preachers and writers... In fact, Christ has to be brought to man, and give the whole man to God through Jesus Christ. If we separate Dogma, Moral and Cult we shall make of man a mutilated being, who could not reach salvation, since he is not inserted in the totality of Christ.”³⁵

19.2.3. To update the image of the “**cart,**” it is necessary to remember that the Primo Maestro makes use of it to emphasize the harmony, the equilibrium and the synchrony needed to live the Pauline charism, which has its reason for being in the **apostolic mission**: “The Congregation is like a cart that travels on four wheels: the spirit, study, apostolate, poverty. This is the cart on which the Gospel is brought to souls and on which we must stay to hand over this Gospel to souls.”³⁶ To make the mission the end of all the components is the objective that the formation must set for itself.

20. First preparations (AD 103-113)

20.1. *References, historical and content-wise*

- Concern for the personnel of the new institution;
- vocations coming out from the parish ministry: Giuseppe Giaccardo, Torquato Armani and Costa Desiderio;
- vocations coming from his work as spiritual director and teacher in the seminary;
- return of the clerics from the first world war, “with wide apostolic ideas”;
- for the female vocations, writing of *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale*;
- male vocations, fruit of personal relations, contacts with the clergy, *Vita Pastorale, Unione Cooperatori*;
- reasons that do not advice the opening of the first house;
- experience of light that guarantees vocations as gift of God.

20.2. *Updatings*

20.2.1. Besides informing us about the identity of the first Paulines, Fr. Alberione describes the various activities to gather male and female vocations for his foundations: parish ministry, activity in the seminary, personal contacts, a book and two periodicals to give “**a clear idea about a vocation that had so much that is new.**”

The idea to give life to an Institute of “missionaries of the good press” and to a group of sisters dedicated to the same apostolate, at first must make its way in the diocese of Alba: Fr. Alberione starts from zero and he is alone. The effort of years to obtain the diocesan recognition and, even more, the papal approval of the Society of Saint Paul can be found in the documents gathered by Fr. Giancarlo Rocca in *La formazione della Pia Società San Paolo (1914-1927)*.³⁷

20.2.2. The best updating of the “riches” of our vocation, as something that has “so much new” in the ecclesial community, is to **understand it** and to **reaffirm it** in its identity, without compromises or changes that distort its nature. It is possible to be saints and professionals in communication; also, the Pauline vocation requires one “**to become a saint when evangelizing using all communication.**” In the Pauline vocation for the mission, being a saint by means of the religious life and being evangelizers through professionalism in communication do not just juxtapose, but

³⁵ *San Paolo*, November-December 1954; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, cit., p. 847.

³⁶ *Vademecum*, cit., n. 365.

³⁷ *La formazione della Pia Società San Paolo (1914-1927)*. Appunti e documenti per una storia, Rome 1982. Extracted from *Claretianum XXI - XXII* (1981-1982).

fuse in unity: sanctity attained in evangelization through communication. Our way of sanctification is evangelization in communication employing communication.

The vocation proposal and the successive formative stages must be characterized by a style of life of a particular “color” in the ecclesial community: **pass through the experience of Christ, having as model Saint Paul, to be capable of translating one’s faith in a witness offered using all the languages and forms of communication.**

Fr. Alberione himself posed a “**Pauline exam**” as condition for priestly ordination: write (or translate) a book to be handed over for printing.

21. ...In Rome (AD 114-116)

21.1. *References, historical and content-wise*

- In Rome (1926), first house outside of Alba;
- is transferred to Rome in 1936;
- reasons for the presence in Rome: to be at the service of the Holy See, draw from the Pope, think of universality;
- experience of universality near the tomb of Saint Paul (1911, probable date).

21.2. *Updatings*

21.2.1. The first expansion takes place thanks to a small group that from Alba makes itself available to go to the capital: you can read there the **desire** to be “great,” to grow and to put oneself in conditions of better developments, assimilating the directives of the Pope and thinking of being sent on missions outside of Italy.

21.2.2. In these almost hundred years the Society of Saint Paul and the other institutions of the Pauline Family have cultivated and continued this **desire to grow**, reaching many nations of the five continents. All that is realized thanks to the almost temerary tenacity of Fr. Alberione, and to the faith and spirit of heroic sacrifice of his sons and daughters.

To narrate and document the history of the foundations is a form of “updating” of the desire to develop, which from the start the Founder has grafted in the Pauline charism, and a manner of rendering homage to those who, before us, have lived the fascination of being Paulines and merit dutifully our tribute of thanksgiving and gratitude.

22. Expansiveness (AD 117-120)

22.1. *References, historical and content-wise*

- Saint Paul is the “great traveler”;
- at age eight (1892) he knows the work of the Holy Infancy;
- from age twelve to sixteen he reads almost every day the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith and of the Holy Infancy;
- later he reads the missionary publications of the White Fathers, of the Institute of the Consolata and of the Foreign Missions;
- in the second year of grammar school (1896-1897) he enrolls in the Work of the Propagation of the Faith and of the Holy Infancy;
- he reads and remains impressed by the life of the great missionaries;
- as a Priest he gathers offerings, cooperates in missionary vocations, preaches about the missions, meets persons who work in the mission;
- Asia and Africa strike him the most.

22.2. *Updatings*

22.2.1. In the seminary of Bra the young Alberione and a companion of his decide to **make themselves missionaries** and write a letter to the rector of the Seminary of the White Fathers of Cartagine, but the idea ended with no results. His participation in various experiences of missionary character is reflected, however, in the particular end that he imprints in his **foundations** outside of Italy.

His desire to make himself a missionary is transformed and develops in the Pauline work of the “**missionaries of the good press**”: “The press is a minister of the missionary: to visit one who the missionary cannot visit, to stay where the missionary cannot stay, to repeat in images the catechism of the missionary, to prepare the alphabets and the indigenous texts, to educate the peoples in Christian civilization, lay down the bases of Christian laws and prepare the men who will be their ministers.”³⁸

22.2.2. Starting from the decree of Vatican Council II *Ad gentes* (7.12.1965), “mission” has been **reconceived** and presented with a richer theology, and the most significant postconciliar documents on evangelization (*Evangelii nuntiandi* of Paul VI and *Redemptoris missio* of John Paul II) deal expressly with the subject. To them can be usefully placed close the document of the International Theological Commission *Il cristianesimo e le religioni* (30.9.1996).

22.2.3. A form of updating of the “riches” of the “missionary spirit” is dictated by *operative line 1.1.1* of the IX General Chapter: “On the occasion of the centenary, the General Government is to strengthen our reality in Africa and to study a project that widens our presence even in other continents with new foundations, entrusting its realization to the Circumscriptions capable of doing it.”

In order to “widen our presence” also new foundations of “**apostolic**” character (bookstores, agents of distribution, presence of agents, etc.) can be planned to be completed in a second moment – a desirable thing – through the opening of “**Pauline communities**” and the promotion of vocations of the place.

22.2.4. The “missionary spirit” is revived by valuing the inheritance that the Founder has left us in **prayer**. In the 3rd point of the chaplet to the Queen of Apostles, he has included his missionary sensitivity with its universal breath.

He suggests: “Having before you an **image** that represents the five parts of the world, with brief description of the religious state of the same, can be a good preparation for Communion and serve for the first part of the visit; it can stimulate your zeal”;³⁹ “During adoration consider a world map or else a sheet where the nations are written. Even just the continents are enough.”⁴⁰

Visible on his writing desk were a **world map** and a **geographical atlas** that reported, among the information about every nation, the religions present and the number of their followers. “Look at that world map, the image of the earth and move, rotate – let us say – that world map and look at the nations... Have a tender heart, the heart of Jesus.”⁴¹

Missionary sensitivity is proportionate to the assimilation of “*come ye all to me*” (Mt 11,28): “And this feeling is more alive when you enter in intimacy with the Lord.”

23. The gift and the riches of the Cooperators (AD 121-123)

23.1. *References, historical and content-wise*

- Director of the Dominican tertiaries in the diocese of Alba;
- he reads books and periodicals of the Work of the Dominicans;
- in spiritual animation he proposes to unite for the betterment of the individual life also the awareness of the apostolate for others;
- in the year 1916 and following ones, the idea and founding the *Unione Cooperatori Apostolato Buona Stampa* (30.6.1917);
- the Society of Saint Paul celebrates 2.400 annual Holy Masses for the Cooperators;
- constant intention in prayer: that the Cooperators be saved.

23.2. *Updatings*

23.2.1. In close connection with the foundation of the Society of Saint Paul, Fr. Alberione thinks of starting “**a kind of third order**,” whose members have as their **objectives**: “to make better their

³⁸ *Unione Cooperatori Buona Stampa*, n. 1, 1925; cf *La primavera paolina*, cit., p. 1009.

³⁹ *Vademecum*, cit., n. 846.

⁴⁰ *Alle Pie Discepolo del Divin Maestro 1963*, Casa Generalizia delle Pie Discepolo del Divin Maestro, 1987, n. 180; cf *Vademecum*, cit., n. 1140.

⁴¹ *Idem*, n. 94; cf n. 288.

Christian life, according to the Pauline spirit, uniting to it the apostolate exercised through prayer, works and offerings.”

From the beginning, and throughout all his life he does not cease to express his **deep gratitude** for the indispensable help received from the Cooperators both in the rise and development of the Pauline works and in the extension of the Pauline charism to the **diocesan clergy** and to the **laity**.

We recall here what the Founder writes in AD 25: “In the prayer that he presented with the chalice to the Lord: the first idea was that part of the cooperators that today (December 1953) is still very much limited.” The involvement of the diocesan clergy and, above all of the laity, will find in the successive foundations of the **Pauline Institutes of Consecrated Secular Life** the development that, perhaps, the Founder wanted to imprint to the sharing of the Pauline charism with the condition of life of **laicality**.

23.2.2. To update the “riches” of the Pauline Cooperators, after the approval of the first **Statute** written by Fr. Alberione himself (29.9.1918), on 30 June 1985 the Superior General Fr. Renato Perrino approves “an updated transcription” of the original Statute, which obtains the papal approval on 11 March 1988 with the official denomination **Association of Pauline Cooperators** (until then *Union of Pauline Cooperators*).

Successively, in February of 1990, there is created an intercongregational Commission for the purpose of including all the groups of Cooperators who make reference to the Congregations of the Pauline Family. The Commission prepares a **new Statute**, approved *ad experimentum* in January 1992.

On 8 May 2007, an intercongregational Commission is nominated to verify the Statute approved *ad experimentum*; it proposes a **new text** which, upon reaching the final redaction after successive stages, will be analyzed in a meeting of the Superior General and the (sister) Superior Generals **within 2011** for then to be subjected to the approval of the Holy See.

23.2.3. The **indispensable conditions** to be enrolled in the register of the Pauline Cooperators remain those indicated by Fr. Alberione: an initiation in the Pauline spirituality and apostolates; commitment for life by means of the *Promise* that allows official enrollment as Cooperator and participation in the benefits of 2400 perpetual Holy Masses and indulgences granted by the Holy See. Every Pauline priest is bound to celebrate every year **six Holy Masses** for the Cooperators.

23.2.4. Considering the actual apostolic reality of the Congregation which makes use of the work and professionalism of so many lay persons, an updating of the particular attention to be reserved for them, although not dealing with Cooperators in the sense illustrated above, is contained in *operative line 1.2.3*: “The Government of Circumscription through the Director General of the Apostolate, is to define and realize a formative program for the lay collaborators, intended to make better their professionalism and increase their knowledge and mutual collaboration.”

24. The work (AD 124-130)

24. 1. *References, historical and content-wise*

- He comes from a Christian family deeply hard-working;
- all in the family, big and small, work;
- during the vacations of the seminary, he studies and reads much;
- in the seminary he starts the *Circle of the Child Jesus* for the cleanliness of the environment;
- as a cleric and later on he meditates on the long and laborious life of Jesus at Nazareth;
- theological reflections on the value of “work” for a religious;
- visit to J.O.C. in Brussels;
- abundant work in the Pauline Family;
- articles of the Constitutions that do not allow the Pauline Family to grow old.

24.2. *Updatings*

24.2.1. By his writings and teachings and, above all, by the rhythm of his life, the Primo Maestro has left to the Paulines of every time a “**theology**” and a living example of laboriousness placed at the service of the Kingdom of God.

His **theological reflection** takes its starting point first of all from the **life of Christ**: “The mystery of Christ the worker seems to us to be deeper than the mystery of his Passion and Death. So many years at the carpenter’s bench! “Is this not perhaps the son of the craftsman?” “Is he not the craftsman?” The sweat on his brow at Nazareth was not less redemptive than his sweat of blood in Gethsemani!”⁴² “Jesus Christ in heaven presents, in honoring and supplicating the Father, his hands not only pierced by the nails, but also callous due to the saw, the hammer, the plane of the carpenter.”⁴³

There is then the example of **Saint Paul**: “He was a great worker. He insisted several times in saying that what he and his companions of preaching needed, “these my hands have provided” (Acts 20,34), by working even at night in the art learned in youth.”⁴⁴

In **motivating the work of the Pauline**, the Founder emphasizes how “work and preaching” coincide: “The work of the Pauline (priest or disciple) has a characteristic: Jesus the worker in working produced modest things; Saint Paul produced military mats called cilices; on the contrary, the Pauline exercises a direct apostolate, giving through his work the truth, accomplishing a task of preaching that has become a mission and approved by the Church.”⁴⁵

24.2.2. The encyclical *Laborem exercens* by John Paul II offers a wide reflection on the Christian meaning of work; it can be given value also to actualize the “riches” of the laboriousness proper of the Pauline charism.

Love for work remains a **sign of Pauline vocation** insofar as it is a necessary condition so that our apostolate may be realized : “If you want to offer yourself as a victim, put yourself to work!”⁴⁶ Much work is a form of penance for the Pauline.

25. Providence (AD 131-135)

25.1. *References, historical and content-wise*

- From 1914 to 1944 a strong preoccupation: how to preserve unity in diversity in the Pauline Family;
- choice of a middle way between the method of S. John Bosco and S. Benedict Cottolengo, bearing in mind the Canon Law: “seek for spiritual unity in Jesus Christ the Divine Master”;
- concern for administration and the means of subsistence to give an economic base to the Pauline Family: a middle way, focusing on a broad vision of labor;
- constitution of a “small credit” bank;
- human means that assure the course of Providence: trust in God, assiduous work and orderly administration;
- the Pauline Congregations have distinct apostolates but these are sufficient for their life and development.

25.2. *Updatings*

25.2.1. The Founder talks about his concerns lasting various years: how to assure the **unity of the diversity** of the four Congregations founded until 1953 and how to guarantee their **economic autonomy** for their ordinary subsistence and development.

Before choosing the way that seems to him to be the most adequate, he **observes** what has already been realized and what the Canon Law provides for, accepting even the initiative to create a bank of “small credit.” All these human devices are at the service of a great confidence in God and of an active abandonment in Providence. **The Founder works with ingenuity to collaborate with Providence.**

25.2.2. The “riches” of the “**spirituality**” of “Jesus Christ the Divine Master” guarantees the unity of the ideals that motivate the apostolates, and the “**laboriousness**” serves the purpose of characterizing well every Congregation in its own mission and in the economic means to realize it.

⁴² *San Paolo*, January 1954, in *Anima e corpo per il Vangelo*, cit., p. 170.

⁴³ *Idem*, p. 178.

⁴⁴ *Idem*, p. 173.

⁴⁵ *Idem*, l. c.

⁴⁶ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo 1934-1939*, Figlie di San Paolo, Casa Generalizia, 2003, p. 479; *Vademecum*, cit. n. 436.

The unity created by the common spirituality is even transformed into unity on the practical level, because, as we have seen, the Founder emphasizes “the abundant work introduced in the Pauline Congregations” (n. 129). Now he clarifies: “work as means of education, as apostolate, as a natural means for sustenance; and beneficence for the new initiatives and the houses, especially for the churches being constructed.”

In updating the choices made by the Founder, we must be jealous of knowing how to live through our work and not through beneficence, which however is not excluded, but placed at the service of the “development” of the apostolate: **“Providence,” according to Fr. Alberione, does not favor capitalization, but investment that bears fruit in the apostolate.**

On the other hand, great confidence in Providence does not contradict laboriousness: “God himself works for one who works for Him. Always ready therefore to do as if all depended on us; and to pray and hope in the Lord as if all depended on Him.”⁴⁷

26. Gospel (AD 136-145)

26.1. *Recallings, historical and content-wise*

- Clear light regarding the diffusion of the Gospel;
- 1906: Pius X makes obligatory the study of the Scriptures for the clerics;
- 1907: animation of three Bible Sundays;
- in those times people did not read the Gospel and Communion was not received often;
- many thought that neither the Gospel nor the Bible could be given to the people;
- three convictions: 1) that the Gospel entered every family; 2) that the Gospel be the model of every publication; 3) that to the Gospel be given a cult;
- thirty adorations preached and written on Sacred Scripture (all gathered in the following work *Leggete le Ss. Scritture*, 1933);⁴⁸
- for 32 years he carries with him the Gospel;
- in 1903 among the clerics of Alba he starts the work of the diffusion of the Bible and of the Gospel and the first Gospel Days.

26.2. *Updatings*

26.2.1. The experiences lived in the seminary for the diffusion of Sacred Scripture and of the Gospel become with the Society of Saint and the other Institutions of the Pauline Family a true **“apostolic program.”** Only God knows the number of copies of Sacred Scripture and of the Gospels spread by the Paulines in the five continents and still more the beneficial spiritual effects that this apostolate has had on the readers.

During his existence, Fr. Alberione, not satisfied with printed editions, pushes the Congregation to give out the Sacred Scripture also through the **other means of communication**: film accomplishments, radio and television transmissions, productions of discs and images. “The Bible is the book that we must give. Either we give it through films, the press, through our voice through the radio, through discs, through filmstrips or other instrumentality: using all the means that the Lord has furnished us.”⁴⁹

It is not to boast if we affirm that Fr. Alberione is among **the pioneers** in the diffusion of Sacred Scripture and of the Gospel in a period wherein individual reading was suspect, unadvisable or prohibited.

26.2.2. In these almost hundred years, the Society of Saint Paul and the entire Pauline Family have gathered and developed the “riches” of the diffusion of Sacred Scripture at world level and in numerous languages.

On 14 October 1960 the Holy See has approved the *Società Biblica cattolica Internazionale* (**SOBICAIN**), that in all these years has carried out a biblical apostolate meriting thanksgiving and praise for the good it has done and continues to do.

⁴⁷ *San Paolo*, January 1950; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, cit., p. 295.

⁴⁸ *Leggete le Ss. Scritture*, Cinisello Balsamo, 2004.

⁴⁹ *Vademecum*, cit., n. 1014.

In order to update the diffusion of the Bible, the IX General Chapter proposes *operative line 1.2.2*: “The General Government and the Governments of Circumscription, in accord with the International Apostolic Organisms are to elaborate a project that coordinates the biblical pastoral of the Congregation.”

27. Development of the personality (AD 146-150)

27.1. *Recallings, historical and content-wise*

- Ends and means for a development of the personality, natural, supernatural or apostolic;
- advantages for one who uses well his liberty in formation;
- the purpose of education.

27.2. *Updatings*

27.2.1. In a few lines the Primo Maestro summarizes the identity of the Pauline formation, that must be “**integral**”: human, supernatural and apostolic. A special means to realize integral formation is the **eucharistic visit**, understood not as a simple devotion, but as an opportunity for a systematic work on oneself.

The Pauline integral formation is not the fruit of disciplinary norms, but of a **freedom nourished by a deep conviction**, since “education has for its purpose to form man to use for good his freedom, both for time and for eternity” (n. 150).

27.2.2. In the last decades, for the realization of the Alberionian “integral formation,” the Superior General Fr. Silvio Pignotti has published the letter **Integrity, the passion of the Pauline** (20.8.1993) and from 12 to 23 October 1994 has taken place the **International Seminar on Pauline Formation for the Mission**. More recent is the international Seminar **Actualization of the Pauline Charism in the Third Millennium: Spirituality and Mission**, held at Ariccia from 18 June to 3 July 2008.⁵⁰

28. “Fear not...” (AD 151-160)

28.1. *Recallings, historical and content-wise*

- A reassuring dream during a moment of particular difficulty;
- “Fear not, I am with you. From here I want to enlighten. Be sorry for your sins”;
- interpretation of the words heard in a dream;
- study of the various spiritualities;
- from the study of Saint Paul to the doctrine of the integral Christ.

28.2. *Updatings*

28.2.1. His spiritual director advises Fr. Alberione regarding the words of the Divine Master heard in a dream: “**Make of them a practical program of life and light for yourself and for all the members.**” For this reason those words are found written, in their respective languages, in the Pauline chapels scattered throughout the world.

Considering the **interpretation** given by the Founder in the historical context of that era, it is easy to update those words in the historical contexts of the Pauline communities today.

“**Fear not, I am with you**”: since the Congregation is a work of God, they are not the human difficulties that hinder the divine work; only doubt and the negation of the certainty that God is the guide of everything can have consequences on the realization of the projects of Providence.

“**From here I want to enlighten**”: cultivate the awareness of having received from God a mission to accomplish. The eucharistic dimension is the source from which to draw in order to communicate to others, with the conviction that “the pen on one’s hand, with the pen of the inkstand of the printing machine” form just one mission.

“**Be sorry for your sins**”: a habitual awareness of the defects that accompany our work of collaboration with the action of God; the prayer “Pact or secret of success” expresses the trustful or hard-working abandonment to the will of God in spite of human limitations.

⁵⁰ The Acts of the International Seminar have been published in 2009, edited by the SSP General House.

28.2.2. In presenting the systematic study of the various spiritualities, before finding in Saint Paul the model of a spirituality fit for the Pauline charism, Fr. Alberione reveals his **criterion of research**: “the total Christ, as he had already defined himself, Way, Truth and Life.”

The Founder is on a search for a “**total spirituality**”: “In this vision is religion, dogma, morals and cult; in this vision is the integral Jesus Christ; on account of this vision the complete man is taken up and conquered by Jesus Christ.” The **synthesis of this spirituality**, pivoting in Christ the Master, Way, Truth and Life, is in the model **Saint Paul** summed up in the phrases: “*It is not anymore I that lives, but the Christ that lives in me*” (Gal 2,20) and “*I have made myself all for all*” (1Cor 9,22).

Fr. Alberione concentrates our attention on **Saint Paul** to interpret, actualize and live the spirituality of Christ the Master, the Way, the Truth and the Life. We stray away from his intentions if in order to understand our spirituality we use other “interpreters of Christ,” and not Saint Paul. The more, thanks also to studies and other researches, the understanding of the thought and work of Saint Paul becomes better, the more we dispose of new contributions and instruments to think and reexpress the spirituality of Christ, Master, Way, Truth and Life.

28.2.3. The study of the ecclesial historical context wherein Fr. Alberione does the research for a “total spirituality,” can be of help to understand his preoccupation. To give an idea in rapid synthesis, the faith upon the ending of 1800 and the start of 1900 was characterized by a **theological reflection** reserved to the magisterium and to the theologians, thought, studied and explained in the Latin language as “truths to be believed”; the **liturgical celebrations**, in Latin, were above all “matters of the clergy” and often understood as “sacred rites” existing by themselves; **morals** was concentrated in a special way on some commandments and with an individual finality to be reached through “concrete acts.”

In order to overcome this “**parallel**” and “**fragmented**” vision of faith, in which dogma, morals and cult seem to lack a fruitful connection, he finds in Saint Paul the model of a spirituality where they are thought and lived in **close connection** by the totality of the person: mind, will and heart. The **totality of the proposal of faith** (dogma, morals and cult) is offered to the **person in his integrality** (mind, will and heart): if the totality of faith is missing, or the integrality of the person, the Gospel of Christ does not become full “salvation.”

28.2.4. Thanks to the “abundant riches” granted by Providence, Fr. Alberione and his institutions established before Vatican Council II have contributed, together with so many other anticipators, to resolve in the **concrete** some basic ecclesial questions, that only the **conciliar reflection** has afterwards extended to the whole Church.

He himself has personally participated in the Council of Vatican II and has written important comments on the concluding decisions; above all, he has had from the Council the **solemn approval** of his foundational work. The example offered by the Special General Chapter of 1969-71, that has been able to appreciate well the contents of the Council, is to be born in mind also to “update” the spirituality of Christ the Master, Way, Truth and life.

The actualization of the spirituality of the Christ, Master, Way, Truth and Life is a basic inheritance: “It is not a beautiful expression, not an advice; it is the substance of the Congregation; **it is to be or not to be Paulines.**”⁵¹

29. Divine assistance (AD 161-173)

29.1. *References, historical and content-wise*

- Persons who offered their life for the Institute: clerics and priests of the seminary, members of the Society of Saint Paul, benefactors, groups of the Daughters of Saint Paul;
- the Pauline Family, fruit of sacrifices, prayers, offerings for many years;
- circle of persons who pray for the Founder;
- methodology of faith for the expenses;
- providential helps in situations humanly unresolvable;
- help of the Bishop and of the clergy more considerable;
- list of the principal benefactors;

⁵¹ *Predicazione sul Divin Maestro*, Archivio FSP, pp. 72-73.

- persons who help with their advices, economic and spiritual;
- his uncle Giacomo pays the first printing machines;
- threats from the Socialists and the Fascists;
- life of faith through rosaries, visits and invocations to Saint Paul.

29.2. *Updateings*

29.2.1. At a distance of years, Fr. Alberione conserves a **lucid record** of the difficulties of the beginnings and of the numberless helps received whether from persons or through the mysterious intervention of Providence. The enumerations of the Founder give us a glimpse of the **environment** of the first periods, immersed in faith in God and in solidarity.

29.2.2. In order to actualize the “riches” of divine assistance, besides the **due gratitude** to be expressed even publicly to those who collaborate to the good of the Congregation and of the Pauline Family in various ways, it is good to apply what *operative line 2.2.1* of the IX General Chapter asks: “The Superiors, together with those in charge in the apostolate, are to give value to all the persons of the Congregation, involving also the elderly or sick confreres.”

30. **Spiritual profundity (AD 174-178)**

30.1. *Recallings, historical and content-wise*

- Seminary of Alba: an environment of simple, profound, active spirituality;
- refusal of the bourse of study in the seminary of Turin;
- abundant preachings and readings of the lives of saints of the last centuries;
- every Sunday, for some years, Sunday conference of the Bishop;
- introduction of daily Communion;
- not heavy discipline, but formation of deep convictions;
- brings to the Pauline Family the best of what he learned;
- eucharistic devotion;
- collaboration to spread the practice of Communion.

30.2. *Updateings*

30.2.1. Fr. Alberione specifies that with “what he learned to be useful, he tried to enrich the Pauline Family, looking for a **greater updating** and **adding** what best was useful to establish life based on Christ.” He makes use of what good the seminary has given him, but at the same time he perceives the need for a “greater updating” and to “add” something in his institutes.

30.2.2. The Alberioniam method of “adapting” to the Congregation what can be meritorious in a seminary or in other ecclesial institutions, must find a particular actualization in the **studies of philosophy and theology**, that in almost all the Circumscriptions our juniors realize in specialized centers.

To have access to specialized centers for the teaching of philosophy and theology is a situation that is acquired and common to the religious Institutes, so much so that the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life has felt the duty to publish a special document *Inter-institute collaboration for formation* (8.12.1998), where it faces the **problem** of how to **integrate** with the specific charism of every Institute the philosophical and theological formation offered in common centers. “Every Institute has a primary responsibility regarding its own identity... Cultivating one’s identity in creative fidelity, means to let together flow in the life and mission of the people of God, gifts and experiences that enrich her and, at the same time, avoid that the religious be inserted in the life of the Church in a vague and ambiguous manner” (n. 7.1).

The indications of our Founder on the matter are clear: “The end of our studies, besides personal elevation, consists in forming the Pauline Religious and Priest and apostle for the purpose of following his vocation.”⁵² It follows from this that the **formation in the Pauline charism** in the life of the community and a period of **systematic, theoretical-practical study in communication** should

⁵² *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, cit., II, n. 192.

constitute for our juniors the adequate integration for the studies in philosophy and theology done elsewhere.

31. The devotions (AD 179-184)

31.1. *References, historical and content-wise*

- For ten years he is the spiritual Director of the minor and major seminaries;
- the first week of the month dedicated to particular devotions;
- introduction and adaptation of the first week of the month for the Pauline Family;
- Jesus Master and Saint Paul;
- Mary, Queen of the Apostles;
- to let everything flow together towards the honor of the Trinity;
- daily communion, monthly retreat, adoration during the first Friday of the month, a second Mass on Sunday;

31.2. *Updatings*

31.2.1. Taking into account the diversity of **how are being lived** in the Congregation the first week of the month, the eucharistic visit and our models of spiritual-apostolic life, it is not out of place to pick the occasion for a **communitarian reflection**.

The **criteria** for a responsible actualization of the “riches” of our devotions are at least two: understand well the “essential” intention of the Founder, taken from the theology and the religious practice of his time; and assimilate well the reflections and the new contributions of Vatican Council II to the eucharistic theology, to the theology of the liturgical year and to mariology.

The most fruitful attitude toward theological formulations or devotional practices of other times certainly is not that of judging them as useless, but rather of succeeding, through new categories of thought and practical initiatives, to reexpress the **essential value** willed by the Founder.

32. Matters to be realized (AD 185-203)

32.1. *Recallings, historical and content-wise*

a. *Unification of all the sciences*

- ever greater disorientation in the sciences: the sciences don’t open themselves to religious questions;
- role of the Priests in enlightening the intellectuals;
- necessity of studies for the Priests;
- missing is the unification of the sciences in a philosophy that introduces to theology;
- experience of the study of Saint Thomas Aquinas and need of a new Aquinas to work out the syntheses of the sciences;
- the not appreciated attempt of Canon Chiesa;
- prayer for the grace of the unification of the sciences;
- the Society of Saint Paul bears in its heart the intellectuals due to their impact on the masses;
- harmony between reason and faith.

b. *Grades for academic studies*

- apostolic value of academic titles;
- Mary, mediatrix of all graces;
- a half-blind enlightened by God.

32.2. *Updatings*

32.2.1. The **unification of the sciences** is an idea that returns in various periods of the history of scientific research. Fr. Alberione interprets it as the need for “**reason and faith**” to complete each other and for all the sciences, combined by a “philosophy of science,” to open the intellectual to theology and to the religious event.

In his vision the **Priests** should have that kind of competence in science and theology as to be able to accompany the intellectuals “from reason to revelation.” He considers **Saint Thomas Aquinas**

nas as the ideal model of this ecclesial mediation and sees in the *Course of theology* of Canon Francesco Chiesa an example of what he intends. But the attempt made by Canon Chiesa is ignored by many and little considered by others.

The reflection on the synthesis of the sciences helps the Primo Maestro to recommend to the Society of Saint Paul to “**bear always in its heart the intellectuals,**” because “**if the intellectuals are won over, one fishes with the net, and not only with the hook.**”

32.2.2. The potentialities of the **digital language**, of the multimedia creation and of the virtual libraries, the extension without boundaries and the inclusion of every human knowledge, represent today, under a different angle, the dream of a “synthesis of the sciences.”

The present-day scientific research, in its multiple applications and various ways of inquiry, cultivates its own **jealous autonomy** from the religious or ideological guardianship of other times and makes more arduous and remote the hypothesis of making itself the “handmaid of theology.” On our part, we have to contribute in favoring an “**ethical reflection**” on the research and possibilities that the sciences offer today.

The aspiration to “bear always in its heart the intellectuals,” aiming at creating the minimum conditions for a dialog with them, in the Congregation finds an actualization in the **systematic and diversified investment for the specializations of the Paulines**. We must make effective what the IX General Chapter has recommended forcefully in *priority 3.2: Elevate the general cultural level of the Congregation and “create thought.”*

From the end of 1953, when Fr. Alberione wrote these phrases, to today, the realization of the objective to “arrive at a completion of the studies until the conferment of academic grades for philosophy, sociology, theology and canon law” can be interpreted in two ways.

A first interpretation, in harmony with the episode hinted by the Founder of having been pushed by Canon Chiesa to take a degree in theology, consists in the remembrance of so many Paulines who in all these years, in various disciplines, have obtained and are obtaining a **recognized title**.

The other interpretation can call to mind the opportunity to have schools of the Congregation that confer academic grades. In our history the list is very short: although it has not given recognized titles, a well-deserving function has carried out in the Congregation, in the Pauline Family and in the Church the **International Pauline Studio of Social Communication (SPICS)**, established in Rome at the start of 1980 and not active anymore from the end of 1990; actually the Congregation has available two Faculties: **FAPCOM** (*Faculdade Paulus de Tecnologia e Comunicação*, Brazil) and **COMFIL** (*Instituto de Comunicación y Filosofía*, Mexico), and **SPSF** (*Saint Paul Seminary Foundation*, Philippines).

33. Thanksgiving to the Lord (AD 204)

The Founder enumerates a series of episodes of his life religious in character and he presents them as personal “**gifts**” for which he must thank the Lord.

34. Appendix (AD 215-220)⁵³

34.1. *References, historical and content-wise*

- Testimony about the first Paulines who, for, four years, have lived with faith and love for God;
- external difficulties, above all the war of 1914-1918;
- internal difficulties: delineate well the profile of the Pauline charism;
- interferences of Fr. Giuseppe Rosa in the education of the first Paulines;
- Matteo Borgogno, the fifth of the first Paulines;
- homage to all, to the first ones especially, who through their fidelity have opened for others the journey of the Pauline vocation.

⁵³ Cf *Mi protendo in avanti*, Alba, 1954, pp. 111-112.

34.2. *Updatings*

34.2.1. The Primo Maestro has words of eulogy above all for the first four (and then five) young men who have followed him at the start, when “**the concept and the orientation toward the Priest-writer, a technique elevated to apostolate, a diffusion that pervaded every soul and modern thought**” have been attained after time and hard work.

34.2.2. Wanting to make present the gratitude of the Founder, it is necessary to **render a merited homage** to the Paulines who, in these almost hundred years and in the various nations of the five continents, have lived the Pauline charism in the commitment of sanctification and apostolate.

The high recognition of the Church has confirmed the goodness and validity of this journey along one hundred years through the **beatification** of Fr. Timothy Giaccardo and of Fr. James Alberione; through the declaration of **venerableness** for Canon Francesco Chiesa, the Pauline aspirant Maggiorino Vigolungo and Brother Andrea Borello, to whom is added the Prima Maestra Sister Thecla Merlo; through the introduction of the canonical cause of the **servant of God** Sister M. Scolastica Rivata.

May the Most Holy Trinity reward the Paulines and all the members of the **Pauline Family in heaven** who have adhered in full to the charism and have accomplished the double commandment of love for God and neighbor through their spirituality and their apostolate.

35. **Leave taking (AD 350)**

The text is part of the interventions made by Fr. Alberione during the month of spiritual exercises for the Society of Saint Paul in April of 1960.⁵⁴

In 1953, as we know from **AD 2-3** and **6**, he wrote about himself: the Primo Maestro “**must disappear from the scene and from memory.**” The same conviction he reaffirms in 1960, putting it as testamentary seal of his foundational work. With a lucid awareness of the mission he has received, he recognizes the littleness of his person and the poverty of his collaboration with God; he sees himself as a fragile instrument, sure however that for him and for the Paulines of all times this is the sign of a guarantee that comes from above: “**that the Lord has willed it and He Himself has caused it to be done.**”

Dear brothers, may the intercession of blessed James Alberione, on which we know to be able to count, accompany us, since he himself has assured “to want to belong to this wonderful Pauline Family: as servant now and in heaven, where I shall take care of those who make use of the modern and most effective means of good: in sanctity, *in Christ and in the Church*” (AD 3).

With fraternal affection.

Rome, 20 August 2011

97th of Foundation of the Society of Saint Paul



Don Silvio Sassi

Fr. Silvio Sassi, SSP
Superior general

⁵⁴ Cf *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, cit., I, n. 374.