



Letter of the Superior General
TO THE CONFRERES OF THE PHILIPPINES-MACAU PROVINCE
Program Guidelines for the Quadrennium 2015-2019

Dear Brothers,

Grace and peace!

Greetings to all, hoping to meet you soon, with joy and hope, while fully engaged in the various activities that allow you to strain ahead in the Pauline life in the Philippines and Macau.

I heartily thank you for welcoming the Councillors General **Fr. Jose Pottayil** and **Fr. José Salud Paredes** during the canonical-fraternal visit from 8 to 25 April. Thanks especially to **Fr. José Aripio** for having accepted the service of animation of the Province for the next four years. Everyone can work with him for the good of our mission.

As the Provincial Chapter is approaching consider it as an important moment for the Province to assess the progress made so far and to project itself to the future. The theme of the X General Chapter, “*I do all for the Gospel*” (1Cor 9:23). *Paulines, evangelizers-communicators. In Christ new apostles for humanity*”, should be the inspiration for the preparatory works and for the choices of operational guidelines in the various dimensions of the Pauline life.

We believe that the Lord has called us to evangelize! We can and must, as a Congregation, and you, especially as the Philippine-Macau Province, continue in the work of evangelization marked by the “joy of the Gospel”¹, in the light of the charism inherited from Blessed James Alberione.

Therefore, before offering some indications to consider in the next mandate, I offer you a brief reflection on the central aspect that has illuminated our last General Chapter, from which the entire Congregation is called to make a program of life.

¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n° 1.

1. The Gospel: a program of life

The theme of the X General Chapter “I do all for the Gospel” cannot be reduced to a simple slogan. To do all for the Gospel, for us Paulines, includes using the swiftest and most effective means so that in a large measure the Word of God may reach everyone². However, our evangelization is not reduced to the technical means. That is, we begin to do all for the Gospel when we ourselves become first of all “men of communication” of the Gospel, when we take it as a program of personal and community life, in spite of our weaknesses.

Our Founder, Blessed James Alberione, spoke in this sense of the “apostolate of example”, essential in consecrated life. According to him, “*the apostolate of example is obligatory: not only because it has to be lived well; but because we have to be an open book to other men*”. And then he adds, “*The people do not know how to read other books of Theology; they are not impressed by abstract things. But they know how to meditate on the life of Jesus, read, without even realizing it, in the conduct of the religious, of the Christian faithful*”³. This means that the life of each one speaks more than many words!

Another term used today to say the same thing is: “witnessing” in everyday life⁴. In fact, our person is the first instrument in announcing the Gospel. In this sense we may say that the apostolate is “*a fruit and the fruit comes from the plant: if the plant is healthy, the fruit will be abundant; but if the plant is sick, the fruit will either be lacking or will be scarce*”⁵. The plant will be healthy and will produce fruit if it is planted in good soil. The “good soil”, for us, is Jesus Christ. In other words, the witnessing of the Gospel can only start from a personal encounter with Jesus, the first and greatest evangelizer⁶ that brings us out of our self-reference in order to bear fruit!

The Declaration of the X General Chapter reaffirms that “*we are the Church and we want to be with the Church a Congregation which ‘goes out’, ‘on the way’ to place ourselves beside the ‘new Macedonians’ (cfr. Acts 16:9) who appeal to us*”⁷. In fact, the real encounter with the Master urges us to communicate His Gospel with all the languages of communication, but at the same time, with concrete attitudes of love, of respect, of acceptance, of understanding, of mercy toward our brothers and other expressions, which help to “build fraternity for the mission.”

² James Alberione, *UPS IV*, 139-140.

³ James Alberione, *Haec meditare II*, 8 (1948), p. 54.

⁴ Pope Francis, *Homily during the Eucharistic Celebration at St. Paul’s Basilica outside the Walls, Rome*, 14 April 2013.

⁵ James Alberione, *Meditazione alle Figlie di San Paolo*. 11/03/1951.

⁶ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n° 12. Cf. Paolo VI, *Esort. Ap. Evangelii nuntiandi* (8 dicembre 1975), 7: AAS 68 (1976), 9.

⁷ X General Chapter, *Declaration: To Evangelize Today in Joy as Apostle Communicators and as Consecrated Persons*.

2. Evangelization of “Pauline colour”

We live in an era of change! In this social context various changes occur marked especially by the development of technologies, including that of communication that has become a true culture. In this environment a kind of evangelization is necessary that would light up new ways of relating with God, with others and with the environment, and that would kindle fundamental human and Christian values⁸.

In the light of our charism, we are called not only to be present in all the realities of communication with the contents, but also through our witness. Benedict XVI, talking about the digital world, specifically with regard to the Internet, insisted on the need to bring a “Christian life style” even in the modality of relationships produced by this environment. According to him, “*to proclaim the Gospel through the new media means not only to insert expressly religious content into different media platforms, but also to witness consistently, in one’s own digital profile and in the way one communicates choices, preferences and judgements that are fully consistent with the Gospel, even when it is not spoken of specifically*”⁹.

This is also our challenge, yes, to live a Christian life style, but with a “Pauline colour”, inspired by the apostle Paul, that is, thinking, working, and being zealous for the lives of people and communities as he would if he were alive today¹⁰. Paul is a special reference for us in the following of Jesus, not only in the dynamism in his way of doing, but also in the consistency of this with his way of being. He leads us to the true path of holiness and in the true spirit of the apostolate¹¹. This demands from us an even greater awareness of his life that we will discover principally by reading and meditating on his letters. St. Paul gives us the “colour”. Indeed, “*if it becomes colourless, the Congregation loses its value*”¹², affirmed our Founder.

3. A Province on the way

Dear brothers, from a personal encounter with Christ will arise the “pastoral conversion” and the missionary impulse that will make us come out of our securities in order to reach everyone, even reaching the existential, cultural and geographical frontiers of the present. It is precisely that the objective of the X General Chapter speaks of conversion: “*attentive to the signs of the times, renew the impetus of our apostolic action,*

⁸ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n° 74.

⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, Message for the XLV World Communications Day. *Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age* (05/06/2011).

¹⁰ James Alberione, *Santificazione della mente*, 1956, 56-58.

¹¹ James Alberione, *Prediche del Primo Maestro*, senza data, pp. 260-261. Cf. *Vademecum*, n° 631.

¹² James Alberione, *Predicazioni sull’apostolato*, p. 395.

converting ourselves, our communities and our apostolic structures, to reach everyone, especially in the periphery, utilising likewise the new languages of communication"¹³.

In fact, when the inner life closes itself in its own interests it does not listen anymore to the voice of God, there is no more space for the community, our recipients do not matter, and the enthusiasm to do good does not beat anymore¹⁴. Then one loses the sense of consecrated life. Only in continual conversion to Christ and his Gospel can we get out of our self-reference and our personal comfort, to become free to serve God and the brothers.

Conversion makes us true "joyful" apostles with a heart burning with love for God and for all of humanity, especially the most needy¹⁵. That each of you, individually and as a community, can undertake this journey that would make our apostolate go forward. In this spirit, I indicate some actions to be undertaken.

3.1 Community Life

Evangelization "with" communication and "in" communication starts from the community, in relating well with the brothers, despite the difficulties. Our Constitutions affirm that *"the persons who make up the community constitute its fundamental value, and the community's goal is to give them fraternal help towards their sanctification through their dedication to the apostolate"*¹⁶. Consequently, in this context, human relationships, which presuppose communication, are fundamental.

Obviously, not only communication with others is important, but also and above all, communication with God who wants to speak to us at all times in order to tell us "what we must do." In this communication process "listening" is one of the most important attitudes: listening to God, listening to the confreres, listening to the needs of our recipients! If we do not listen, what shall we say? Without listening it is difficult to respond effectively to the challenges of our mission. Therefore, keeping in mind the reality of community life, I present some guidelines to consider in the project of the Province:

- a) Give more Pauline colour to our community life, taking seriously the call of the X General Chapter asking us to *"build our communities in the spirit of St. Paul in witnessing to a life offered to God, in fraternal communion and in apostolic synergy"*¹⁷.

¹³ X General Chapter, *Objective 2015-2021*.

¹⁴ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n° 2.

¹⁵ James Alberione, *CISP 582*.

¹⁶ *Constitutions and Directory of the Society St. Paul*, Art. 17.

¹⁷ X General Chapter, 2. *Community-Spirituality. Priority 2.1*.

- b) The ordinary and delegated authorities, especially the Superiors or the Delegates of communities, implement with firmness the help to our brothers in being consistent with the option of life they have embraced. Do not let certain lifestyles that are not in keeping with the religious consecration be prolonged. The testimony of an integrated Pauline life must be a commitment of all!
- c) The provincial Government should find effective ways of rotating persons in the different responsibilities of the Circumscription, in the community and in the apostolate.
- d) Every Pauline should give his contribution in building up the community through his witnessing that includes his own behaviour, the quality of communication, the commitment in the Pauline apostolate and the availability to the needs of the Province.
- e) Review the Pauline presence in Macau, community-wise as well as apostolic. After 26 years of existence, what is the quality of our Pauline presence? What can be done to give a new Pauline impetus in this reality?

3.2 Vocation Promotion and Formation

In the Province there are young people in formation who are signs of hope and joy for the whole Congregation. This requires special attention in order to offer an integral formation of “Pauline colour” and with close accompaniment. Besides the moments of prayer and celebration, study, apostolate and coexistence, the young need with graduality, from the beginning of formation, to open the heart to the needs of the confreres, of the Congregation and of the Church. As our Founder said: “one is not a Pauline unless he has a big heart, an open mind to think of all men and unless he has the spirit of Jesus Christ, who came to give his life for all”¹⁸.

Studies occupy an important place in the period of initial formation and cannot be neglected after perpetual profession. As we know, study, for us Paulines, means commitment. It must accompany us until death and all must commit to wanting to learn new things¹⁹. In fact, “it is necessary to prepare oneself well for the apostolate, because we have to work in modern society, taking it as it is, considering it in its current situation”²⁰. If we do not prepare in the various sciences that relate to the exercise of our mission, it is difficult to strain forward. Considering the area of the Vocation Promotion and Formation I present some indications to be taken into consideration:

- a) Update the *Formation Iter*, especially bearing in mind the Final Document of the X General Chapter, the latest documents of the Church’s Magisterium and the

¹⁸ James Alberione, *Prediche del Primo Maestro* 5. 1957, p. 155.

¹⁹ James Alberione, *Spiegazione delle Costituzioni*. 1962, pp. 211-212.

²⁰ James Alberione, *Meditazioni e Istruzioni. Figlie di San Paolo*, Maggio, 1968.

reality of the young Filipinos situated in the ecclesial, social, political and economic context of the country.

- b) The present situation in which the Group of Juniors lives together with the community of perpetually professed in Makati is not that ideal. The group must have its own identity, its own discipline and regimen of life. For this, it is recommended to the provincial Government, helped by the Equipe of Vocation Promotion and Formation, to study and assess carefully the situation and take the consequent decisions.
- c) It is not enough to be just consumers of new technologies. There is need to educate oneself to their proper use. Help, especially the young, to use new technologies to improve fraternal relationships, in the perspective shown in *Evangelii Gaudium*: “*Today, when the networks and means of human communication have made unprecedented advances, we sense the challenge of finding and sharing a ‘mystique’ of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage*” (EG 87).
- d) Resume the communication courses at the Seminary of Silang. Strengthen the school of communication, giving it more and more a Pauline identity and seeking collaboration with other centers of study of the Congregation, with the supervision of the General Government. The Institute, with communication courses, must be part of the Apostolic Project of the Province.
- e) Reinforce systematically the specific charismatic Pauline formation, strengthening it especially during the Juniorate.
- f) The Council of Apostolate shall study ways to insert the young people in the different stages of formation in the apostolic work. This is one of the characteristics of the Pauline pedagogy that can not be neglected in any of the stages of formation.
- g) Make a systematic program for the Permanent Formation, also with regard to the specialization courses, in harmony with the Apostolic Project.
- h) Give attention to the novitiate of San Fernando, reviewing the community environment and providing apostolic activity for the young. Review the program of spiritual exercises of the novices done in Macau, normally, before the religious profession.

3.3. Apostolate

As affirmed by our Founder, “apostolate” is our action to give glory to God and peace to men. It is doing good²¹. Certainly the greatest good we can do to men and women today is to offer the Word of God to all. In fact, “*the Bible is the book that we have to give. Or we give it with the film, or we give it with the press, or we give it with a voice*

²¹ James Alberione, *Ipsium Audite I*. 1947, p. 23.

which will be the radio, or we give it through the disks, or give it through filmstrips, or in another way: using all the means that the Lord has given us"²².

It is true that we have to give in the first place the doctrine that saves, but we also have to penetrate all ideas and human knowledge with the Gospel. This means "not to speak only of religion," but talk about everything in a Christian way²³, taking as first reference the Gospel, aware that "*whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world*"²⁴.

Rejoicing in hope and in creative fidelity to the founding charism we, as a Congregation, open our hearts to the needs of humanity today. In this sense, we are all invited, as required by the X General Chapter, to "*creatively renew our missionary impetus at the service of the Word with new sustainable initiatives for the non-believers, the distant ones and the poor (cf. Evangelii Gaudium), with new openings, in new territories, with the new languages of communication*"²⁵. As for the apostolic reality, I present some indications:

- a) Involve all the confreres in the apostolic activities, even those who are part of small communities.
- b) Aside from updating the Apostolic Project, the Provincial Government should encourage more and more the culture of teamwork, both within the Provincial Government and between the Director General of the Apostolate and the General Coordinator of Vocation Promotion and Formation.
- c) Review the bookstore apostolate, especially regarding the products diffused in these centers, in order not to lose the "Pauline colour".
- d) Integrate the parish of Pasay in the Apostolic Project, giving it more and more the "Pauline" characteristic.

3.4 Poverty/Administration

For us Paulines, called to live from our work, as what St. Paul has done, the administration is an important element and is part of our "poverty"²⁶. One of these aspects is the organization of our work and to work as a team, essential to find the right courses of action. As our Founder exhorted us: "*The Pauline apostolate calls for an effective group of writers, technical people and distributors. Everyone must be in harmony just like*

²² James Alberione, *Predicazione sull'Apostolato*, p. 284. 1933.

²³ James Alberione, *Abundantes Divitiae Gratiae Suae*, 1985, 87-88.

²⁴ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n° 11.

²⁵ X General Chapter, 1. *Apostolate. Priority 1.1.*

²⁶ James Alberione, *Alle Suore di Gesù Buon Pastore*. 1959, pp. 94-95.

orchestra players tune up before giving a performance. How much will-power and energy, un-coordinated and disorganized, ends up in wishful thinking, pain and failure! The bread of the spirit and of truth needs to be prepared by all together"²⁷. Therefore, in this spirit, consider the following indications:

- a) To grow more and more in working as a team.
- b) To instil the culture of budgeting, an essential aspect of the organization.
- c) To control the trips outside of the Province that are not related and dictated by the Apostolic Project or do not have the authorization of the competent authority.

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My dear brothers, the Philippine-Macau Province has the important task of announcing, in this specific cultural reality, the Gospel in the light of the charism that we have inherited from our Founder. As Pope Francis said to the Filipino bishops, priests and religious in the recent visit to your country: *"let us proclaim the joy of the gospel. Since the Gospel is the promise of God's grace, which alone can bring fullness and restoration to our sick world. The Gospel can inspire the building of a social order that is truly just and redeemed"*²⁸. We believe in the power of the Gospel and we want to be part of this evangelizing dynamism as Paulines!

The challenges are many! But it is not enough to have good intentions. You must have, in addition to a strong spirituality and apostolic commitment, adequate preparation so that we can understand today's man and society and especially the new languages of communication.

In this project of living and proclaiming Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life, we are not alone, but as Pauline Family. The Philippine-Macau Province is characterized by the good relationships among the Institutions present in this circumscription. Continue on this path, strengthening the ties that bind us together and looking for more and more collaboration in the apostolic and vocation areas with all the Institutions of our Family²⁹.

²⁷ James Alberione, *UPS I*, 288.

²⁸ Pope Francis, *Homily during the Holy Mass with the Bishops, Priests and Religious*. Immaculate Conception Cathedral, Manila. 16/01/2015.

²⁹ Cfr. X General Chapter, 5. *Pauline Family. Operative Guideline 5.1.2.*

May the Lord help you all to “incarnate the Gospel in terms of prayer, of fraternity, of justice, of struggle and celebration”³⁰, with love, in communion and with audacity.

Jesus Master, through the intercession of Mary, Queen of Apostles and of St. Paul the Apostle, bless each of you in the path of evangelization, in the light of the charism inherited from Blessed James Alberione.

7th of July 2015

80th Anniversary of Arrival of the first Paulines in the Philippines



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Superior general

³⁰ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n^o 237.