



ANIMATION PAPER 3 (DECEMBER)

*...to be artisans of communion...*

**A SYNODAL CONGREGATION**

## IV. PRAYER

### Prayer to St Paul

O Holy apostle, with your charity and doctrine you taught the whole world. Look kindly upon us, your children and disciples. We expect everything from your intercession with the divine Master and with Mary, queen of Apostles. Grant, O doctor of gentiles, that we may live by faith, that we may be saved by hope, and that charity alone may reign in us.

O vessel of election, obtain that we may faithfully correspond to divine grace, so that it bears maximum fruit. May we better know you, love you and imitate you, and may we be living members of the Church, the mystical body of Christ.

Raise up many and holy apostles. May the warmth of your love be poured out on the world. Grant that all may come to know and glorify God and Jesus the divine Master, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

And you, Lord Jesus, who understand that we have no confidence in our own strength, grant that, in your mercy, we may be protected from all evil, through the powerful intercession of Saint Paul, our teacher and father.

### Prayer for the General Chapter

O divine Spirit, who, sent by the Father in the name of Jesus, infallibly assist and guide the Church, pour over our Chapter the fullness of your gifts.

O gentle Master and Comforter, enlighten our minds, let abundant fruit ripen from this Chapter; let our commitment of sanctification and apostolate take new vigour; spread ever further the light and the power of the Gospel among men.

O sweet Guest of souls, confirm our minds in the truth, dispose the hearts of all to obedience, so that the deliberations of the Chapter find generous assent and full compliance.

Renew in our Family the wonders of a new Pentecost. Grant that, united in unanimous and more intense prayer, around Mary, Mother of Jesus, and the Apostles, spread the kingdom of the Divine Master, in the spirit of the Apostle Paul. Amen.

## I. PRAYER

### To the Holy Trinity

O Divine Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit present and working in the Church and in the depths of my soul, I adore you, I thank you, I love you! And, through the hands of Mary most holy my mother, I offer, give and consecrate my whole self to you, for life and for eternity.

To you, heavenly Father, I offer myself, I give and consecrate myself as a son.

To you, Jesus Master, I offer myself, I give and consecrate myself as brother and disciple.

To you, Holy Spirit, I offer myself, I give and consecrate myself as a “living temple”, to be consecrated and sanctified.

O Mary, mother of the Church and my mother, who live in the presence of the divine Trinity, teach me to live through the liturgy and the sacraments, in intimate communion with the three divine Persons, so that my whole life be a “glory to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit”. Amen.

## II. READING THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### From the First Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

(12:12-14,19-22,24-31; 13:1-13)

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. [...] If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of

you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable [...] But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,<sup>[a]</sup> but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now, we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

### III. FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“Synodality (...) indicates the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church, the People of God, which manifests and concretely realises its being a communion in walking together, in gathering as an assembly and in the active

difficulties, to overcome sins in relationships and to heal the effects caused by them.

“When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways” (13:11). The dynamism of life, the mutability that we want to experience as a continuous development and maturation, also applies to the reality of love. On the one hand, love itself must mature until it is realised as a gift of self; on the other hand, it determines the direction of change in relationships with God, with oneself, with others and with the world.

#### Comparison with the Word of God

In the light of this word, read the passages from the *Instrumentum laboris: INTERPRETING* in the light of faith, 22-24. *Formation in the exercise of authority...* (p. 48-50), *Laity and Paulines together* (p. 50-51). *The Pauline Family* (p. 51-52).

Being a “Pauline editor” and a man of communication means making the reality of relationships the fundamental space for the realization of one’s identity and mission. It is clear that it is only by remaining in the network of relationships and constantly building it that we can grow and communicate the life-giving Gospel to others, fulfilling “the charity of truth”.

Love, which by its nature is a relationship, demands of us a commitment to place it continually as the guiding principle of our life. First of all, this means shaping through love the immediate contexts of our Pauline life: the community, including relationships with superiors, relationships with those with whom we collaborate in the apostolate, and the reality of the Pauline Family. The direction of these changes was made clear by the Divine Master: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12).

#### Personal Resonances

What place does love have in my motivations? What actions do I perform for reasons of love?

How do I form loving relationships with the Brothers, with the laity and with the members of the Pauline Family? Can I give some concrete examples?

What is the greatest difficulty for me in exercising love towards others? How can I try to overcome it?

participation from other Brothers. Whatever the responsibility, we all always benefit from the presence and work of others. No one owes everything to himself.

### **Personal Resonances**

What is “my part” in the whole that is the Congregation?

To what extent do I use my personal gifts and commit myself to multiplying the common good and carrying out the mission of the Congregation?

What is the greatest difficulty for me in collaborating with others? How can I try to overcome it?

How do I express my gratitude for what I receive from other confreres and from the people with whom I collaborate?

### **3. Guiding Principle**

*“And I will show you a still more excellent way” (12:31); “Love never ends” (13:8).* Paul's reflections on the social body of Christ and the charisms given to its individual members take on their full meaning only in the context of love, which is the guiding principle of the Christian life and the end of all things. It cannot be otherwise, because “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8), and therefore those who live and act in him cannot find a more legitimate and powerful motivation for their aspirations and actions, which must always take into account the perspective of eternity.

*“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love” (13:1); And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith (...) but do not have love” (13:2); If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love” (13:3).* St Paul refers to the various realities of human life: the skills acquired, the gifts and charisms received, the works done. They all have meaning only when they are motivated by love and become a way of realising it towards other people. Otherwise, they mean nothing and give nothing.

*“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (13:4-7).* Paul considers love in the context of human relationships. It is what forms them in the best and healthiest way. It is also the “means” and the most effective way to overcome

participation of all its members in its evangelising mission” (International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 6). This specific way of living and acting in the Church is not a concept that has been artificially imposed on the reality of the Church. Rather, it springs from Vatican II's profound reflection on the nature of the Church. Synodality cannot therefore be understood, let alone implemented, merely in terms of a new method or style of being Church, but as a natural consequence of the identity of the Church, the people of God. It is also based on the theology of St Paul, who compares the Church to the body of Christ. This image helps us to understand the importance of synodality for the life and action of the community of the People of God, of which our Congregation and the entire St Paul Family is a part.

### **1. Synodality: a mentality to be assumed**

*“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ” (12:12).* The image of the body helps us to understand the idea of unity in multiplicity. Unity does not presuppose and cannot consist in uniformity, but reveals the way in which diversity exists. It is not chaos, but an ordered unity that does not destroy the specificity of any member, but enhances it.

“The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you” (12:21). In a healthy body there is coherence and inner harmony. Respect for the whole body implies acceptance of each of its members. Each member benefits from the presence and good functioning of the other members.

“That there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another” (12:25). From the idea of the unity of the body follows the principle of complementarity. Some members are necessary for others, because no one is self-sufficient. The well-being of the whole body, that is, of all its members, is the fruit of their mutual care.

“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it” (12:26). St Paul refers to empathy as one of the characteristics of the functioning of the body. The pain of one part is felt by the whole body, the action aimed at the well-being of one member is also felt by the whole body.

## Comparison with the Word of God

In the light of this word, read the passage from the *Instrumentum laboris*: RECOGNISE our situation, 18. *The great challenge of the Church and the Congregation* (p. 42-43) and INTERPRET in the light of faith, 20. *Synodality: mentalities to be assumed* (p. 46-47).

The spirit of synodality grows from an awareness of belonging to one body: of Christ, of the Church, of the Congregation, and from a sense of responsibility for these communities. In this context, “I” remains a way of defining the uniqueness and specificity of one's own person, but it is also extended to the whole body, which makes the statement true: Christ is also me, the Church is also me, the Congregation is also me. Here there is no place for indifference towards the community or disinterest in its needs and mission.

Understanding belonging to a community as part of one's identity leads to the confession: I am not self-sufficient, I need others to form a community with them, that is, to realise who I am. Understanding this principle, however, cannot be reduced to just looking at others in a selfish way, as if they are obliged to meet my needs. The expectations I have of my brothers are inextricably linked to my duties towards them, who have a right to expect my commitment to their welfare.

### Personal Resonances

How do I live and demonstrate my belonging to the Congregation?

How do I exercise responsibility for my community, the Congregation and the Pauline Family?

Is gratitude for the gifts of other brothers present in my life?

Do I use the gifts received from God willingly and generously for the good of the Congregation and its mission?

## 2. Teamwork

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (12:27). St. Paul orients our thinking towards the community of Christians understood as the body of Christ. Thus the nature and functions of this community can only be fully understood in a supernatural key. Jesus Christ is the glue of the Christian community, in Him everything acquires its true meaning and gains its proper direction of growth and action. The Body of Christ strives for what Christ himself strives for, desires what Christ desires. The realisation of these

aspirations takes the form of individual tasks, activities, functions... which have been delegated to the members of the community. Each one has his “own part” in the mission of the whole and fulfils it by carrying out the competences and responsibilities delegated to him.

“And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues” (12:28). St Paul explains the essence of the charisms in the Church. We can understand his teaching more broadly as indications on how to use also the personal gifts we have received from God.

Each member of the community, who has received his or her share of tasks in the functioning of the whole body, performs them in harmony with who he or she is. Indeed, charisms and other gifts have been inscribed in a particular person and constitute his or her uniqueness and complementarity with others. The best use of these gifts, however, is to use them for the good of the whole, according to the principle: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor 12:7).

The common good therefore presupposes and can be realised in the co-operation of the members. Only in this way can the body, that is, the community, develop and fulfil the tasks entrusted to it.

## Comparison with the Word of God

In the light of this word, read the passage from the *Instrumentum laboris*: RECOGNISE our situation, 19. *Applied/embodied synodality* (p. 43-45) and INTERPRETING in the light of faith, 21. *Teamwork* (p. 47-48).

The idea of the one body of Christ that we all form translates into an understanding of our identity as well as a methodology for action. All the movements and manifestations of activity of individual members are aimed at the common good and at achieving the objectives of the whole body. It is therefore about coordination and collaboration. In our religious reality, this means the responsible exercise of the ministry of authority and teamwork, i.e., the voluntary and responsible interaction of individual members with their superiors and with each other.

No organ of the body, not even a single one, lives and works only for itself. The fruit of its proper functioning is the health of the whole organism. Therefore, the principle of co-operative work also applies to those who, by the nature of the tasks entrusted to them, carry them out alone or with little direct