



CONCLUDING ADDRESS OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL AT THE INTERCHAPTER

Dear brothers,

We are concluding the work of the Interchapter Assembly, which was indeed a “time of grace”, a strong time of fraternity, sharing, prayer, and evaluation of the journey made by our Congregation especially in the last three years, a time of reflection on the current situation and planning for the future. In these days, close to the Shrine of Aparecida and experiencing Mary’s maternal protection, we have been able to see closely the signs of the lights and shadows present in our personal, communitarian, congregational, ecclesial and social life.

After having seen, together, more profoundly the important aspects of the reality of our Congregation, we recognize our “weakness in everything” and wind up this meeting in the certainty that we will not be able to overcome our limits and face the challenges of evangelization today if we will not let ourselves be guided by the Spirit of the Lord.

As “apostles communicators and as consecrated persons” we want, first of all, to entrust ourselves to the hands of Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life. In fact, we have repeated many times in this Interchapter that, without meeting Him, we will not find the light for our journey. As disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ we want to walk united to him, so that we can listen to him – considering that “disciple” is he who listens! – and assume a style of life that leads us to bear witness to the Gospel with authority in the culture of communication, so that our interlocutors may have life in him: *«I am the Way, the Truth and the Life»* (Jn 14: 6).

In fact, only in the encounter with Jesus can we overcome the temptations of individualism, of the divisions within our communities, of the logic of the market that leads us to competition, the feeling of resignation, etc. Only in the encounter with the Master will we find the strength and the hope to live fully our Pauline vocation.

With these sentiments, and in the missionary dynamic that prompted the apostle Paul and Blessed James Alberione, we want to continue firmly in the wake of the objective of the X General Chapter: *«I do all things for the Gospel»* (1Cor 9,23). *Attentive to the signs of the times, renew the impetus of our apostolic action, converting ourselves, our communities and our apostolic structures, to reach everyone, especially in the periphery, utilising likewise the new languages of communication».*

I present below some ideas that I consider important to bear in mind at the end of our Chapter Assembly, after which each of us will return to his office bringing



with him the experiences of these days, to give continuity to his service of animation of his Circumscription.

1. A constant point that emerged in the reflections of these days was that each of us begin **to do everything for the Gospel**, first of all through his personal testimony, in his human relationships with the confreres of the community and with the laity who collaborate in our apostolic works, and with openness to multiculturalism. We hope that the twofold table of the Word of God and of the Eucharist, which we celebrate every day and which builds up the community, may not be reduced to a formal moment of prayer, but may become for all of us the source to draw on in order to revive the gift received, to increase apostolic strength and to overcome what creates division¹.

Let all the Paulines be involved in this journey, both those who actively live the different commitments (community, apostolic works, vocation ministry, formation, administration, animation of the Pauline Institutes and Cooperators, etc.) as well as those who live the apostolate of suffering due to illness.

“Doing everything for the Gospel” is to live also in a human and material collaboration, in a concrete solidarity among the Circumscriptions, seeking the good of our mission which has the whole world as parish.

2. We have recalled that, in order to “renew the momentum of our apostolic activity”, as stated in the objective of the last General Chapter, **it is necessary to convert ourselves, our communities and our apostolic structures**. We are aware of this necessity, which becomes an indispensable condition for arriving at a new life in every sense. As the first animators of your Circumscriptions, I invite you, dear Superiors and Delegates, to approach our confreres who are entrusted to you with a message of “conversion”, a conversion that is born from the encounter with the Gospel, which is Jesus himself. Insist, above all, on the conversion not only of the heart, but also of the mind, which is fundamental for carrying out the work of evangelization with our specific charism. Concerning this, our Founder already warned: *«Do not be narrow-minded, little, and having only a restricted vision. Feel and try to help among the houses. With a small and narrow mentality, it is doubtful if there is a vocation, because life becomes selfish and we can see only ourselves and a small circle of people around us. [...] Big heart! Heart of the Apostle, heart of Jesus! Widen the heart!»*². Let us ask the Master for an open mind, to help us to scrutinize the signs of the times, within the Church, in the culture of communication, in the society, etc.

¹ Cfr. X General Chapter, Priority 2.2.

² James Alberione, *Spiegazione delle Costituzioni (1962)*, p. 83.



3. We have seen the need always to return to reflect on the **Pauline identity**. The importance of recovering the sense of the Pauline as “**publisher**” was emphasized in this Interchapter beginning from the theological vision we have inherited from Don Alberione: that we can all rethink and valorize our identity from the point of view of the “publisher” (which essentially consists in giving Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life to the world, in the style of St. Paul), driven by an incarnate spirituality, bringing the message of salvation to all, especially the distant and the poor.
In this vision, and having in mind the current complex communicational reality, the question we must ask ourselves, perhaps, is not so much “How to evangelize in the culture of communication, today?”, but “What is our ‘Pauline’ identity in the universe of communication?”, which has become a vital space open to all people. Let this question concerning our identity become object of constant reflection.
4. In spite of the constraint of time, we have taken into consideration the **2nd International Seminar of Pauline Publishers** held last October. We recalled that the 1st SIEP was centered on the need for a greater openness of our apostolate to “multimediality” and the dimension of “organization”. We realized that behind these two fronts there was a model of communication prevalent at that time (1988), which originated from a transmitting centre generally known and directed one-way to usually unknown receivers. Obviously it is a system that has still not disappeared. The 2nd SIEP (2017) showed us, however, that with the arrival of digital technologies on the net communication does not depend so much on a broadcaster as on a receptor, on his decision to accept the other. In other words, communication can be reciprocal and will only be effective when we make sure that the other welcomes us, that our otherness is “incorporated”. We have seen that consequently a radical change is necessary with regard to the structure that is based on the one-way traffic of the transmitter towards the receiver.
The 2nd Seminar of Publishers has helped us to see more deeply that the communicational world, especially with the arrival of digital networks, is radically changing the world of human relations, and this calls us to be attentive, daring and creative in our mission.
5. **The Editorial Policies**, to the draft of which you have offered valuable suggestions, will be the guide for the apostolate of the whole Congregation after its approval by the General Government. All of you are now warmly invited to circulate this document – together with the content of the 2nd SIEP – in your Circumscriptions and to animate our confreres to put into practice its guidelines, so that renewal does not remain just a word (or a document...) but, turn into a reality. Evidently it is not enough to have a



document in hand. We need to open ourselves to the Spirit, to guide us where He wants. In this regard, I remind you of an interesting passage from the Document of the Special General Chapter: *«The Congregation, like the Church, must continually renew itself and purify itself in the Holy Spirit (GS 21); not only that, but it must continually ask itself what the Spirit says to it as little church (cf Ap. 2ss). Remaining in this way listening and available to the creative and operative presence of the Spirit, we must open ourselves to the charism that the Founder has transfused into the Congregation, welcoming it in a vital and dynamic way, so that the inevitable tensions between past and present, between tradition and renewal, between structures and charisms become a push for progress towards the goals of our vocation and mission»*³. Let us all listen attentively to the voice of the Spirit of the Lord and search for the signs of his presence on our journey!

6. During this Interchapter we all felt the desire – as the Declaration of our X General Chapter puts it – of wanting to be an outgoing Congregation with the Church⁴, a Congregation, disciple of Jesus and, therefore, missionary. In this perspective, it is urgent to overcome the perspective of a “self-referential” Congregation to make it ever more “missionary”. As Pope Francis makes it clear in an affirmation very similar to the thought of our Founder, *«Pastoral care in a missionary key requires abandoning the comfortable pastoral criterion of “it has always been so”*». To this statement he adds: *«I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the objectives, structures, style and evangelizing methods of their communities»*⁵.

In this movement of “going out”, we can put into practice our 2nd SIEP which has highlighted two actions that must be part of the “Pauline Publisher’s” job, namely, that of not only providing “content”, but above all of “creating relationships with our interlocutors”.

Let this be a motivation to further enhance the new initiatives that are born in the Congregation, such as, the Centres of Studies in Communication, the Cultural Centres, the book centres as real centres of evangelization and culture, the Bible courses organized by SOBICAIN, events such as the Bible Festival and Bible Quiz, etc. May we be really able to move ahead in this journey of openness!

7. The aspect of the “organization” of our apostolate has certainly been highlighted in this Seminar, but we have been warned of the danger of reducing apostolic works to “companies” like many others, that is, to purely

³ Special General Chapter, no. 44.

⁴ Cfr. X General Chapter, *Chapter Declaration “To evangelize today in joy as apostle communicators and as consecrated persons”*.

⁵ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* no. 33.



industrial and commercial entities. It is urgent to ensure that the logic of the market does not take the place of the logic of the Gospel in our apostolic structures and in personal relationships. Teamwork in synergy, that is, “thinking together”, is an essential way to meet the difficulties of all kinds, including economic ones. In this perspective we can read and put into practice what the priority 4.1 of the X General Chapter says: «Act professionally and in accordance with the Pauline poverty in all the areas of our administration and to work in teams to safeguard transparency, co-responsibility and accuracy».

Still in the area of organization, we want to mention the international organizations (CTIA, CIDEP, CAP / ESW, GEC) that, at this time, are redefining their structure and their style of operation, so that they can continue, in a more effective way, to help our circumscriptions in the apostolic collaboration.

8. We will go out from this Seminar with a greater awareness that in order to renew the momentum of our apostolic mission we must also invest **in the preparation of our members**. It is worth remembering that the Interchapter of New Delhi, held in 2001, already noted that in our Congregation persists «a mentality that is reluctant to change and unmindful of the necessary updating, that reinforces the “status quo”. In some cases we are gathering the fruits of a colourless and generic formation, lacking in the study of the Founder and of our charism: little appreciation of consecrated life, problems of Pauline identity, individualism, weak sense of belonging, little enthusiasm and even little love for the Congregation»⁶. How long will we remain at this same point? So we insist that it is essential to invest in the formation – initial and permanent – of our members.

Looking at the formative aspect of the Congregation, we see that it is urgent to set up an integral Pauline formation which leads to a real process of human-spiritual growth, of apostolic commitment and of “Paulinizing”: to be “Paulinized” in order to be “Christified”. The SIF is the body of the General Government that will be close to the Circumscriptions to accompany them, so that the “Pauline colour” may be present in the *Formation Iter* as well as in the practice.

The decision to organize the *2nd Seminar on formation for the mission*, two years after the 2nd Seminar of Pauline Publishers, will be an extraordinary opportunity to reflect on the reality of formation in our Congregation and to look for concrete solutions for a “formation for the mission” in an increasingly globalized and ever-changing world.

⁶ Pietro Campus, *Letter of the Superior General “The service of authority”*, 31 May 2001.



9. **Pastoral care for Vocation** has been also a theme present in our Interchapter, which proves to be an issue to be tackled with care, patience and creativity. It is already an age-old problem which was a matter of concern every time. In 1972 the then Superior General, Fr Luigi Damaso Zanoni, wrote: *«Today there is a general crisis of vocations. This is a reality that we cannot ignore, but we cannot either quietly take refuge behind this excuse, to escape our responsibility. If there are more difficulties, we must have more faith, pray more, be more authentic witnesses of our religious life: poorer, more humble, more supernatural»*.⁷ These tips are still valid!

Evidently, we need a Pastoral Care for Vocation addressed to the young people of today, called “millennials”, young people whom the Lord continues to call to work in his vineyard.

Certainly the next Synod of Bishops, which will take place in October 2018 and which will have as its theme “*Youth, faith and vocational discernment*”, will offer indications that will help us to deepen and to deal with this reality. The Vocation Year 2019/2020 – decided in the last Meeting of the General Governments of the Pauline Family and we will live it precisely at the level of the Pauline Family – will also be very appropriate and for which we will have to make every effort necessary so that it may produce many fruits.

10. **The Pauline Family.** In our works we also realized that we are not alone in the Church, but we are part of the Pauline Family. The challenge to seek closer collaboration with the female Congregations continues, both in the field of vocation ministry and in that of formation and of the apostolate. With regard to the Pauline Institutes of Consecrated Secular Life, let us remember that they are the “own work” of the Society of Saint Paul. Therefore, they must be valorized by us; their members must be accompanied by us with every care; their vocation must be continuously fostered. Let us give due importance and proper promotion to the Association of Pauline Cooperators, which celebrates hundred years of its history.

Dear friends, may all of us in our animation service be able to look forward with hope, trying to help our confreres to overcome any kind of resignation to the problems of today, a feeling that is invading consecrated life in recent decades – and that is also present in some areas of our Congregation – and which has been the object of reflection by Pope Francis several times. On one of these occasions he said: *«Jesus, proclaiming the Beatitudes, shakes that negative prostration called resignation that makes us believe that we can live better if we avoid problems, if we flee from others, if we hide or confine ourselves into our comfort zones, if we fall asleep in a tranquillizing*

⁷ Luigi Zanoni, *Anno di Preghiere per le vocazioni*, San Paolo, dicembre 1972, n. 12.



consumerism». We need to overcome «*that resignation that leads us to isolate ourselves from everyone, to divide us, to separate us, to make ourselves blind to the life and suffering of others*».⁸ Therefore, we need to begin evangelization starting from our own communities, an evangelization that generates mercy, joy and courage.

May each one of you carry out the service of animation in your Circumscription with faith, love and hope, with the same hope that the saints have been able to treasure in their hearts, as the very saints of the Pauline Family who have preceded us have shown.

May Jesus Master, through the intercession of Mary, Queen of the Apostles – who is venerated as Our Lady of Aparecida in the Shrine here near to us – be the light of your life, so that we can walk with apostolic zeal, in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul and of Blessed James Alberione.

Finally, we sincerely thank:

- each of you, participants in this Interchapter, for everything you have said and shared.
- the Province of Brazil, in the person of its Provincial Superior, Fr Luiz Miguel Duarte. Thank you for your fraternal welcome and for your human and material contribution!
- Fr Silvio and junior Guilherme, who assisted us with their valuable work in the secretariat.
- The team that organized the Interchapter: Fr Vito Fracchiolla (coordinator), Fr Jose Pottayil and Fr Salud Paredes.
- The Secretary General, Fr Stefano, and the members of the General Council.
- The translator, Fr Angelo Colacrai.
- Our confreres around the world, the Pauline Family and our collaborators who have accompanied us with their prayers.

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⁸ Pope Francis, *Homily in the Holy Mass for Peace and Justice*, Santiago, Chile, 16 January 2018.