

XXVII MEETING OF THE GENERAL GOVERNMENTS OF THE PAULINE FAMILY
7-11 January 2009, Divine Master Retreat House, Ariccia, Italy



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

At the end of the XXVII Meeting of the General Governments of the Pauline Family, we are writing, as is our custom, to share our experiences with you: our joy at drawing on the common heritage that reinforces our fraternal spirit, the enthusiasm for the Pauline vocation that binds us together and supports us on our journey, and the beauty of sharing with great simplicity and frankness the journey each Institute is making, year after year, in creative fidelity to the charism of Blessed James Alberione.

Within the framework of the Pauline Year, the theme we reflected on and shared ideas about could not help but focus on the Apostle of the Gentiles in the light of the charismatic experience of our Founder: *Alberione: Interpreter of St. Paul for the Pauline Family*.

We began our annual meeting with a pilgrimage to the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, to the tomb of the Apostle, a site dear to the heart of the entire Pauline Family. In his greeting at the opening of the Eucharistic Celebration, Fr. Silvio Sassi, Superior General of the SSP, explained the reason behind this choice: "For Primo Maestro, the purpose of a pilgrimage to the Basilica of St. Paul was to ask for a little of the [Apostle's] spirit of prayer and apostolic daring so as to transmit it to the Institutes of the Pauline Family. We too are inspired by the same intention, asking that our prayers and reflections will benefit our Congregations and the whole Pauline Family."

Getting To Know St. Paul

Our first day of work was dedicated to coming to a deeper knowledge of St. Paul. Fr. Antonio Pitta guided us in a reflection on *Peter and Paul and the Evangelization of the Gentiles*. His conference offered us tips for sharing ideas concerning several current problems and also our method of Pauline evangelization yesterday and today. The talk of Fr. Romano Penna helped us

rediscover *the originality of the Apostle Paul in early Christianity*, highlighting how his genius was both welcomed and rejected—something that is true also today.

St. Paul as Interpreted by Fr. Alberione

Afterward, we approached Paul of Tarsus from the perspective of the Pauline charism. What was Fr. Alberione's thought concerning St. Paul in relation to each of the Congregations that make up our Family? This is the question we sought to answer together. The study and interpretation of our Founder's vision of St. Paul, presented by various brothers and sisters, offered us a picture containing both common and individual characteristics—features that serve to unite us without creating uniformity. Drawing from our common charismatic source is always a reason for great joy: it rekindles our pride in belonging to our Family and strengthens our commitment to getting to know Fr. Alberione better so as to liberate the spiritual and apostolic vitality contained in his legacy for the benefit of the Church and all humanity.

St. Paul in the Prayers of the Pauline Family

The Intercongregational Commission for the revision of the *Manual of Prayers of the Pauline Family* offered us the results of its research and historico-critical reconstruction of the texts that contain this precious legacy of our charism. After a brief synoptic presentation of the prayers in general, the Commission centered its attention on the prayers of St. Paul written by our Founder. The research of the members of the Commission brought to light interesting information, the most curious of which was the origin of the Litany to St. Paul the Apostle. Commissioned by the SSP missionaries in China, the Litany was written in Chinese in the mid-1940's. It was translated into Latin and presented to Fr. Alberione, who liked it so much that he inserted it into our prayerbook. According to the old saying, *lex orandi—lex credendi* (the law of prayer is the law of belief), we draw from this episode too the confirmation of Fr. Alberione's love and openness toward all peoples, which encourages us to explore new frontiers for evangelization.

Sharing Common Elements

We would like to mention here several points drawn from the different reports concerning which we came to a convergence of thought in our sharing sessions:

- to continue a systematic study of St. Paul that will enable us to get to know him more profoundly and make him better known in the Church and in society;
- to get to know St. Paul so as to assume a mentality and a form of life and apostolate worthy of our Pauline vocation;
- to rekindle within us the gift of the apostolic mysticism of St. Paul, who lived in Christ and announced him in the fullness of his Mystery;
- to strive always more, as a Family, to be “St. Paul living today, in a social body” so as to carry out our activities and be recognized as a Family that has Paul as its common Founder.

Next Meeting

We all hope that interest in St. Paul does not end with the closure of the Pauline Year. Together we want to take on the commitment to study the thought and life of the Apostle more profoundly so that he might help us find suitable replies to the issues that question us from time to time. Because of this, all the General Governments of the Pauline Family agreed that our next meeting, to be held in the Divine Master Retreat House (Ariccia), Italy from 7-10 January 2010, will focus on the theme, *Paul: Mystic and Apostle*.

Dear brothers and sisters, having “revisited” together the figure of St. Paul and reflected on Primo Maestro's thoughts about him in relation to the different Congregations of the Pauline Family, we now have a responsibility in our service of governing. We want to not only share with

you our joy in studying and searching together, but above all to “infect” you too with this experience.

We want to “work together for your joy” (2 Co. 1:24), inviting all our governments, at different levels and in all our circumscriptions, to continue to foster occasions for communal encounters, study sessions and prayer around the figure of St. Paul the Apostle, whom Fr. Alberione pointed out to us as the Father, Teacher, Example and Founder of our Family. And in fact, it is so. Through him the Pauline Family was born, by him it was nourished and raised, from him it received its spirit (cf. AD 2).

We send you our affectionate greetings, taking advantage of the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles: “To end then, brothers and sisters, we wish you joy; try to grow perfect; encourage one another; have a common mind and live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you” (2 Co. 13:11).

THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE XXVII MEETING
OF THE GENERAL GOVERNMENTS OF THE PAULINE FAMILY

Ariccia, 11 January 2009

