

ACTUALIZATION OF THE PAULINE CHARISM IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM: SPIRITUALITY AND MISSION

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0. Introduction

0.1. Pope John XXIII describes in these terms the aim of the convocation of the Second Vatican Council: “The Catholic Church is not an archeological museum. She is an ancient fountain of the village that gives water to the generations of today as she gave it to those of the past” (homily of 13.11.1960). I believe that the intent of the VIII General Chapter in putting among its operative lines (1.2.3) this international Seminar is the same applied to the Pauline charism: not an **archeological museum** but **the ancient fountain of the village** that quenches the thirst of all the Pauline generations.

Blessed James Alberione, when he spoke on 26.11.1950 to the Congress of the States of Perfection, explains: “Updating is in making to live again the entire spirit of the Founders and the principles and the rules of the Constitutions, but at the same time in considering the needs and modern circumstances for the necessary applications and interpretations” (*San Paolo*, November 1950).

Indicating the need for a “dynamic fidelity”, John Paul II in his post-synodal exhortation *Vita consecrata* (25.03.1996), affirms: “The Institutes are therefore invited to propose again the entrepreneurship, inventiveness and sanctity of their founders and foundresses as answer to the signs of the times that emerge in the world of today” (n. 37).

With this Seminar we are gathering the invitation of our Founder: “The world will understand if we shall use, in communicating with it, the means of today. Therefore, don’t think of saying: “we have always done in this way”. With the passing of the years it is necessary that we adapt to the conditions of the times in which we live” (*Vademecum*, n. 347).

The quotes reported guarantee us that in order to maintain as valid a charism, it is necessary to make it actual and that the necessary methodology is to adapt the charism to the needs of the times, not viceversa: it is the style of the Incarnation.

The planning of the Seminar has desired to adjust itself to this trajectory, starting from the study of today’s communication, continuing with the examination of how the ecclesial community valorises today communication for evangelization, to arrive at - in this third part - deepening how to actualize the Pauline charism in the present historical situation and in the immediate future.

It is certain that the context in which we live today is not only dominated by communication but that we are immersed in a complex universe where the multiple aspects of society and culture at world and local levels are intertwined. We have opted, however, to focus our interest on communication because it determines the definition of our charism.

0.2. Before dealing with actualization, it is prudent to identify with precision the original physiognomy of the Pauline charism: **to live the spirituality of Saint Paul in evangelizing through the communication of today.**

To be excluded, therefore, are some partial understandings of the charism. The Pauline charism is not **only** the Pauline spirituality, nor **only** the commitment to evangelize through communication. Every polarization on one element alone falsifies the charism because it can be seen as a coin that has two inseparable faces.

Our spirituality cannot be just any other, generic, but only inspired by Saint Paul, as desired by blessed James Alberione. The communication being used does not favor a particular instrument, but globalizes the totality of “the fastest and most effective means”.

The most harmful misunderstanding concerns exactly the manner of interpreting **how** the Founder has adopted communication (first the press and successively the other mass media) and how the Congregation has integrated the forms of communication of the last decades (multimedia

and internet communication). It is a dangerous equivocation to believe that Fr. Alberione limited himself to **use** the press to evangelize. His pastoral sensitivity has led him to gradually elaborate “**a complete plan of new evangelization**” taking into account the religious condition of his time that is characterized by the flight of the masses from the Church, favored in a particular way by the press.

An added consideration merits the physiognomy of modern communication: it is not just a complex of instruments, but **a culture**: a manner of being, a style of life, a complex of values understood as mentality and behavior.

Definitely, to actualize the Pauline charism means to renew a pastoral sensitivity in order to formulate “**a complete plan of new evangelization**” starting from the religious problems of today that are also the result of a communication that is not only a technology but a manner of living.

For some time the universal Magisterium of the Church concerning communication points out to the entire ecclesial community the correct **pastoral** attitude: “Commitment in mass media has not only the purpose of multiplying the announcement: it is a matter of a deeper fact, because the evangelization itself of modern culture depends in great part from its influence. It is not enough, therefore, to use them to spread the Christian message and the magisterium of the Church, but it is necessary to integrate the message itself into this “new culture” created by modern communication. It is a complex problem, because this culture is born even before, due to its contents, of the fact itself that there exist new ways of communicating through new languages, new techniques and new psychological attitudes. My predecessor Paul VI said that the “rupture between the Gospel and culture is without doubt the drama of our times”, and the field of modern communication fully confirms this judgment” (*Redemptoris missio*, 07.12.1990, n. 37c).

Since 1990 the Pope is convinced that wider has become the fracture between “Gospel and culture” already spotted in 1975 by Paul VI, and that to remedy it, it is not enough to “spread the Christian message and the magisterium of the Church”, but it is necessary to “integrate the message itself into this “new culture” that has arisen from mass media.

The actualization of the Pauline charism is an important contribution and should constitute a model of reference for the entire ecclesial community called to integrate the Gospel into the culture of communication. It is necessary that we collaborate in the common project of evangelization entrusted to the Church not only through editorial initiatives but also through a “thought” and a “pastoral model” to valorize communication in preaching the Gospel.

Deepening the certainties that are at the base of the work of blessed Alberione, it is very superficial and unjust to affirm that he has only been a man of great “intuition”; following his example we must instead **join** the boldness of thinking in an original way in order to act in a new way in evangelization.

1. Plan of a new evangelization through the press thought of by Fr. Alberione

1.1. In the bulletin *Unione Cooperatori Buona Stampa* dated 20 August 1926, Fr. Alberione, referring to the good press, writes: “**The world is in need of a new, prolonged and deep evangelization**” (in *La Primavera paolina*, p. 680); “Missionaries are needed! Some missionaries for this new and fruitful apostolate” (*Id*, p. 682). The **new** evangelization is realized using **new** missionaries because we are dealing with a **new** apostolate.

I just outline the profile of the principal elements that Fr. Don Alberione has elaborated in order to realize a new evangelization with new missionaries of the press because in the following days other Paulines, drawing from their direct experience and from the documentation of the teaching itself of the Primo Maestro, will illustrate in detail the exact identity **of the apostle and of the Pauline apostolate**.

1.2. Making his own the invitation of Christ “*Come ye all to me*” (Mt 11,28), the young Alberione, through the appeals of the Popes of his time and giving attention to the studies of Catholic sociologists regarding religious practice, is struck by the progressive **departure** of the masses from the Church. Among the various causes that lead to the flight, **the press** holds an

important role because it gives voice to ideas contrary to the faith and creates a mentality that is atheistic, agnostic and aggressive.

In order to realize a return to Christianity in the XX century desired by Leo XIII in his encyclical *Tametsi futura* (01.11.1900), for Fr. Alberione the most fitting instrument is the **press** because it has an enormous power to influence persons and peoples: “But the press moves man, it conquers him, inspires him, inhabits the atmosphere of public opinion” (*UCBS*, 20 October 1926, in *La Primavera paolina*, p. 688). Sharing the idea of his time that considers the press as having a power of irresistible persuasion, the true “king of the times”, the Primo Maestro makes his own the invitation that the Popes launch to Catholics to “**oppose press to press**”: oppose the good press to the bad press.

1.3. For effective action on the part of Catholics, it is not enough to produce good press. An apostolate of the good press is needed: “Such an apostolate requires the diffusion of thought, of morals, of Christian civilization, of the Gospel in other words, by means of the Press, in exactly the same way as would be done through the oral word” (*UCBS*, 20 January 1926, in *La Primavera paolina*, p. 668). Continuing on the difference between good press and apostolate of the good press, Fr. Alberione explains: “To accomplish this press, men who know are enough; but to work in the Apostolate a priestly heart and soul is needed. It is an eminently priestly apostolate” (*UCBS*, 20 January 1926, in *La Primavera paolina*, p. 669).

The activity of the good press is equivalent to the commitment of evangelization through the (oral) word and since the latter is officially entrusted to the priest, also the Pauline apostolate is a priestly activity. The **written preaching** has equal dignity with **oral preaching** because both are committed in the same evangelization, even if they employ two different instruments that, in this way, become complementary and adequate thanks to the changes that the massive development of the press has brought.

1.4. As a consequence of this supernatural vision, Fr. Alberione abandons the initial idea of involving in the apostolate of the good press a group of lay persons and orients himself to “writers, technicians and propagandists, but **religious people**” (*AD*, 23). It’s not enough to deploy a group of **professionals** that know how to run a press with Catholic values, but in need are **witnesses** that know how to propose to their readers what they live deeply, because they are totally dedicated to the faith, even as a state of life. The quality of their personal and communitarian faith receives testimony from their mission of the press. They communicate what they live.

1.5. The new form of written preaching must innovate also in the **contents** to be proposed to the readers. Reacting to a fragmented presentation of the faith, the Primo Maestro wants that in speaking explicitly of the faith, care must be had to propose as well related dogma, morals and cult through a method of exposition that takes into account the totality of the personality, mind, heart and will, **offering the integral Christ to the total man**.

Since the reader is not a pure spirit, it is necessary “**not to speak only of religion, but to speak of everything in a Christian way**” (*AD* 87).

1.6. Since it is a new apostolate that needs a new apostle, Fr. Alberione gradually leads to maturity the **integral formation course** of the Pauline. It is necessary to form in a new way a new vocation for a new mission.

1.6.1. **Persons** allow the realization of works. Quickly, therefore, the Primo Maestro thinks of gathering around himself some young men who, to be able to live a new vocation, must be in conditions to receive a specific formation when they are still very young. Besides the characteristics necessary to be a religious and a priest or a consecrated layperson, the principal sign of the calling to the new vocation is love for the apostolate of the press. Without this attitude, a young man may be chosen by God, but for another vocation.

1.6.2. Because the new apostolate is expression of a living faith, Fr. Alberione orients himself toward the formula of a **Congregation** where the harmonized contemplative and active lives lead to sanctity by means of the apostolate. A Congregation is characterized by a particular service received as gift from the Spirit and placed at the disposal of the ecclesial community. The **Pauline charism** defines itself progressively as the inseparable unity of a spirituality for an apostolate. After an attentive evaluation of the various spiritualities, the Primo Maestro finds in the life and teaching of Saint Paul the model of the apostle of the press. The Christification that creates similarity to Christ the Master way, truth and life enables becoming complete apostles who testify the integral Christ to all the faculties of the person with whom there is desire to communicate.

Starting from **Saint Paul**, Pauline spirituality becomes complete with **Christ the Master way, truth and life** and with **Mary Queen of the Apostles**.

The Pauline spirituality is a balanced synthesis that allows to be disciples in order to be apostles of Christ by means of the press. Even the **practices of piety** acquire as a result of the demands of the mission in the press, a Pauline “**color**”: it is enough to read with attention what Fr. Alberione writes in *Apostolato stampa* (1933, pp. 48-62; cf *L’Apostolato dell’Edizione*, pp. 84-102).

1.6.3. The **cultural preparation** is being taken care of both through philosophical and theological studies and through competence in communication. “The end of our studies, besides personal upliftment, consists in forming the Pauline religious, priest and apostle so he can follow his vocation” (*Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, II, 192). Study is for the apostolate. The knowledge of contents must be completed by ability in communication: “Our apostolate requires science. First, common science. Then, the science of the means of communication. Thereafter, we must arrive at the edition of not only books and periodicals, but also of other areas of our apostolate like the preparation of films, radio programs, TV, discs, etc.” (*San Paolo*, March 1968).

1.6.4. The written preaching requires the **unity of editing work, technic and diffusion**. The Primo Maestro has indicated the **priorities of redaction**: “An order: a) Catechism and religious instruction in general; b) Scripture presented in the modern way; c) Catholic Tradition and the Orthodox writers; d) everything that prepares, disposes to, explains, synthesizes or increases the force of the divine truths according to what Saint Paul writes (Phil 4, 8-9)” (*San Paolo*, May 1957). The **technique** includes all the procedures in the production of the contents that are considered by Fr. Alberione in a supernatural perspective: “the machines, the microphone, the screen are our pulpit; the printing plant, the hall of production, projection, transmission are like our church” (*San Paolo*, February 1952).

The **diffusion** is a strategic moment for the written preaching: “Propaganda is the great problem of the press apostolate. To it are ordained redaction and technique. It can be said as the channel through which the truths that gush from the heart of the apostle arrive at souls” (*Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, IV, 87). The **bookstore** fulfills a particular role in diffusion, transforming itself into a supernatural reality: “The bookstore is a temple; the librarian a preacher; light, sanctity, joy in Jesus Christ and Christian life are the fruits being searched. The bookshelf is a pulpit of truth” (*Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, IV, 162).

From the start and with firmness Fr. Alberione has theorized and defended Pauline **autarchy** for these three moments of written preaching. Only in the face of evident needs, particularly starting from 1960, did he authorize the systematic collaboration of outside personnel. The motive is his lucid idea regarding the apostolate: not a simple editorial activity, but testimony of a faith that one lives fully.

The pastoral sensitivity of the Founder holds in great consideration the **recipients** of the written preaching that he groups into two categories: the **people** and the **men of culture**, through their influence on the people.

The press apostolate must be **universal** like the preaching of Saint Paul who declares that he has “made himself all for all”: “Let us feel ourselves, like Saint Paul and in Saint Paul, debtors to all men, the ignorant and the educated, Catholics, Communists, pagans, Muslims. Let us love all. Let our apostolate be for all” (*San Paolo*, March 1951).

Love for all, however, must know how to be **pastoral**, adapting itself to the needs of each one: “Know the souls, know their needs, study their tendencies, where you can capture them, how you can multiply what is good, what organizations are effective. All this is the practical part which for you is the pastoral part. Everything proportioned” (*Vademecum*, n. 1200).

1.6.5. The apostles of the press live in **community** in order to live together two principal objectives: “persons who want to help each other attain sanctity” (*Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, I, 284) and together realize written preaching. In fact, Pauline common life “is born of the apostolate and in view of the apostolate” (*Id*, n. 285). This identity has nothing to share with the pretexts of a life where *all* are at the *same* moment in the *same* place in order to do the *same* action, or, at the other extreme, an assembly of solitary persons who live under the same roof. The Pauline community is “an organism, not a mechanism” (*Id*, 284) because “we are at the service of souls: religious-apostles” (*Id*, 285).

The choice to structure one’s life on the **four vows**, obedience, poverty, chastity and fidelity to the Pope in the apostolate, allows a total and exclusive commitment of sanctification and apostolate through the press. Formation in order to understand and live the four vows, besides the biblical, anthropological and historical foundations of the religious life, must also be realized putting in relief their significance for the press apostolate. The vow of fidelity to the Pope, for example, is not only expression of total communion in the contents of faith, but also the entrepreneurship of knowing how to be attentive and realizing the papal teachings regarding the means of communication.

On one hand through the press we must propose the **common doctrine**: The words “*in Christ and in the Church*”, are particularly suitable... Avoid disputes, discussions, opinions, pure investigations” (*Vademecum*, n. 922); on the other hand: “The Pauline Family was born when the Holy Father then reigning was little followed in his orientation regarding the press, and so we intervened” (*Id*, n. 492).

1.6.6. With the involvement of the **Cooperators** and the founding of the **Daughters of Saint Paul**, Fr. Alberione broadens the mode of realizing evangelization by means of the press, utilizing the laity and the sister. During the month of Exercises in April of 1960, the Primo Maestro puts together and describes, while enumerating them one by one, the Institutions that form the **Pauline Family**, leaving to us membership to it as an unchangeable element of our charism (cf *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, I, 19-20 e 371-383).

1.6.7. Since “written preaching” is placed beside “oral preaching” accomplishing through another language the same evangelization, Fr. Alberione, a diocesan priest, leaves the territorial parish in order to found the “**Pauline parish**” composed of readers.

In the history of the Society of Saint Paul, the assumption of parish ministry has been attentively regulated by the Founder, with purposes always connected to the Pauline apostolate and the same attitude has been adopted by the General Superiors who succeeded him. In this context of exception for the Congregation, the Paulines who out of obedience accept parochial responsibilities merit our esteem and consideration.

The Pauline “parish” is not an alternative to the territorial parish, but collaborates with it, offering its specific service of the press: the “Pauline” parish **beside** the traditional parish. The Bishops who have invited or have welcomed the first Paulines knew the identity of our specific charism. On the other hand, regarding this theme, the Paulines have received, following the example and teachings of their Founder, unequivocal indications.

Any actualization of the Pauline charism must know and take into account what the Primo Maestro has taught us about the “Pauline” parish, to avoid concluding in a superficial way that if Fr. Alberione lived today, he would choose for the Pauline charism the traditional parish.

With these explanations we certainly do not want to diminish the importance and the value of the parish and of its pastoral activity; we just want to say with clarity that it is not our mission and that it would be a dangerous inversion of the course that our Founder has made. Moreover, the

attitude of the Congregation with regard to the parish is described with precision by our *Constitutions* (cf art. 76): assuming a territorial parish cannot be a solitary decision, nor can it be a way to compensate a Pauline apostolate that is not understood or badly realized.

2. Fr. Alberione's plan of new evangelization and Vatican II

Starting above all since 1950, sensitivity for a **pastoral renewal** in all the life of the Church was a widespread enough phenomenon. The Primo Maestro has the merit of being part, anticipating the times, of these guardians of ecclesial renewal, adopting the press for evangelization, working for the diffusion and reading, on the part of the people, of Holy Scripture, giving directives for a renewed catechesis, for a liturgy understood and participated in, for a social commitment that manifests the strength of Christian values in every sphere of existence.

In *Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ*, Fr. Alberione recalls the fracture in two currents of the clergy until 1910: “A part still firm on the ancient methods of life and pastoral, and absent with respect to new needs; another part worried by the advance of socialism and convinced of the need to shake the yoke of the dominant Masonry, through systems, organizations and updated actions. And as it easily happens, some, overestimating action, despised prayer, with the consequent condemnation of **Americanism**” (n. 49). With this synthesis, Fr. Alberione describes the condemnation by Leo XIII, in *Testem benevolentiæ* (22.01.1899) of a current of thought that, in order to adapt Christianity to the new social context, exalts the natural virtues more than those connected to the faith.

The decree *Lamentabili* (03.07.1907) and the encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis* (08.09.1907) by Pope Pius X condemn **modernism**, point to the philosophy and theology of Saint Thomas as the fitting way of thinking and expressing the faith.

An ecclesial context in which the suspicion of “modernism” weighed down on any attempt to take into account in evangelization the changed historical conditions, has accompanied the formation of the seminarian Alberione who in his personal life and in his foundations, will concern himself with fidelity to sure doctrine, making use of the theology of Saint Thomas. He confronts the social changes with a **pastoral attitude**, not certainly with the idea of having to change also the contents of faith.

2.2. The haunting dream of an evangelization faithful to the contents but in tune with social changes causes Fr. Don Alberione to welcome with great joy the announcement of Vatican II Council (11.10.1962–08.12. 1965) on the part of John XXIII: “It is necessary first of all that the Church does not distance herself from the sacred patrimony of the truth received from the Fathers; and at the same time must also look at the present, at the new conditions and forms of life introduced in the modern world which have opened new ways to the Catholic apostolate” (11.10.1962). **Fidelity to tradition in contents and innovative pastoral capability.** Fr. Alberione participates in the Council without ever intervening and offering only written suggestions (cf Andrea Damino, *Don Alberione al Concilio Vaticano II*, 1994).

To make us aware of how the Primo Maestro lives this historic ecclesial event, let us examine some considerations that he writes during and after the Council itself.

After his pioneering work to combine the written preaching and the oral preaching, and after having proposed this same conviction in the preparatory phase of the Council (cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 312), Fr. Alberione receives with **true jubilation** the decree *Inter mirifica* (04.12.1963): “The feast of Jesus Master in 1964 assumes particular solemnity. In fact, our apostolate has been approved, praised and established as duty for the whole Church, according to the various conditions: Holy See, Episcopate, the religious and secular Clergy, the laity and all the faithful: press, cinema, radio, television and the like.

In very many papal documents it has been spoken about, occasionally or expressly. Now it has been discussed, clarified, defined by Vatican II Ecumenical Council, the Pope representing the present Church who “approved, decreed and established”.

The Pauline activity has been declared an apostolate side by side with oral preaching; has been declared of high esteem before the Church and before the world” (*San Paolo*, December 1963).

Another important confirmation of the work of Fr. Alberione comes from the continuous reminder of **pastoral**: “In the Ecumenical Council Vatican II the word that resounded most under the vaults of the basilica of saint Peter, was this: “pastoral, pastoral”, that is: arrive at souls, save souls, and invent new ways” (*Vademecum*, n. 1202). “All the arguments are considered under the light of pastoral, starting from the instruments of social communication to the missions in all parts of the world” (*San Paolo*, September-December 1964).

The remembrance of the past and the vigilant eyes of Fr. Alberione single out a **particular phenomenon** connected with the Council: “...on the occasion of the Council which is the work of God and outside of it, ideas abound, voices are heard, perhaps even beautiful in appearance, but far from serving the truth, favor confusion, insubordination and error. They are the parasites of the Council” (*Id*).

For this reason, the Primo Maestro, making his own a discourse of Paul VI, indicates three troubling things in living the Council after its conclusion: “ a) Some see in updating a grave danger for the Church and don’t trust the deliberations of the Council; and they judge as valid only those matters that are not in their thoughts. They would like the Church to be stagnant. But the Church lives, operates, walks with the times. b) Some would like reforms that the Council cannot and does not want. They would like imprudent steps; they approve only the modern; they would like to remake the Church, even her teaching, her morals, her liturgy. It would be to destroy, not build. c) Some consider and judge the Church as a natural, common society in her government, principles, activity, propaganda, etc. Forgotten is all the supernatural, her origin, her life, her end” (*San Paolo*, November 1965).

Until his energies allowed him, the Founder encourages all the Pauline Institutions to assimilate Vaticano II in obedience to the interpretation that the Pope gives of it and is on watch, forcefully and wisely reminding about attempts of deviation that to him appear to show in some ways of thinking and doing.

For our Congregation, the **Special General Chapter of 1969-1971** is the most authoritative expression of the integration of the Council in the Pauline charism and at the same time the **first plan** of new evangelization after the Founder.

3. Contexts and characteristics of the Alberionian plan of new evangelization

3.1. The month of Spiritual Exercises of April 1960 allows Fr. Alberione to accomplish with full lucidity the synthesis of his plan of new evangelization: the text *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei* remains as an **unavoidable reference** for any successive study and actualization of the Pauline charism.

Already on that occasion, while the Primo Maestro sizes up, in a sort of *summa*, his thought, some Pauline capitulars feel the need to ask themselves about some important theme of the Congregation, for example, autarchy in editorial work and the idea of editor. The passage of time seems not to make fully coincide the ideas of the Founder and the effective results, for example, the “priest writer”.

Vatican II, in the estimation of Fr. Alberione, does not require substantial modifications to his integral plan of evangelization by means of the press. On the contrary, the Council is a solemn approval of a work that in some ways has anticipated the conclusions of the Council. Soon after the Council, also due to the influence of the evaluations offered by the Primo Maestro, widespread was the idea among the Paulines of being already “updated” as desired by the Council, without need to change much.

3.2. The earthly existence of Fr. Alberione, with its intense activity of sanctification and as Founder, extends from 1884 to 1971. Let us give a quick look at the **context** in which it unfolded.

3.2.1. A rapid presentation of the **Popes** that have influenced Fr. Alberione: **Leo XIII** (1878-1903) through his commitment in social questions expressed in the encyclical *Rerum novarum* (16.05.1891) and the relaunching of Christianity in the encyclical *Tametsi futura* (01.11.1900); **Pius X** (1903-1914) through the condemnation of Americanism and modernism and, above all, through the reform of the catechism, of the liturgy and of social commitment; **Benedict XV** (1914-1922) and his determination for peace in the encyclical *Ad beatissimi apostolorum Principis* (01.11.1914) and *Pacem Dei munus* (23.05.1920); **Pius XI** (1922-1939) and his relations with Italian Fascism that resulted in the *Lateran Pacts* (11.02.1929, his indications about education through his encyclical *Divini illius Magistri* (31.12.1929), his pronouncement about cinema through the encyclical *Vigilanti cura* (29.05.1936), the inauguration of Vatican Radio through the first papal radio message (19.04.1931), the condemnation of Nazism through *Mit brennender Sorge* (14.03.1937) and of Communism through *Divini Redemptoris* (19.03.1947), his personal intervention for the granting of **diocesan approval** to the Society of Saint Paul (12.03.1927) and to the Daughters of Saint Paul (15.03.1929); **Pius XII** (1939-1958) and his teaching on biblical studies through the encyclical *Divino afflante spiritu* (30.09.1943) and *Humani generis* (12.08.1950), through the excommunication by the Holy Office of members of Communism (1949), his discourses on the ideal film (21.06.1955 and 28.10.1955) and his encyclical *Miranda prorsus* (08.09.1957) that deals with cinema, radio and television; **John XXIII** (1958-1963) through his announcement of a Council (25.01.1959), his encyclicals *Mater et magistra* (15.05.1961) and *Pacem in terris* (11.04.1963); **Paul VI** (1963-1978) through the Conciliar Decree *Inter mirifica* (04.12.1963) and the approval of other *15 Conciliar texts* (1965), through his encyclicals *Ecclesiam suam* (06.08.1964), *Mysterium fidei* (03.09.1965), and *Populorum progressio* (26.03.1967), through the start of *World Day of Social Communications* (1967), the pastoral Instruction *Communio et progressio* (23.05.1971) and the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelica testificatio* (29.06.1971).

For the confirmation of the Pauline charism, besides the diocesan and papal approval that took place through personal action of the Pope, equally instructive are the **discourses** addressed to Fr. Alberione, above all the words of praise of Paul VI (28.06.1969) that render justice to the faithful work of Fr. Alberione to the Church.

3.2.2. The **social context** that influences Fr. Alberione is first of all the family of farmers of his origin, then the clergy of his life as a seminarian at Bra and, above all, in Alba, in the person of Canon Chiesa. The Primo Maestro loves history and sociology. He shows interest in social changes, in the influence of journals, magazines and books for the formation of public opinion. He is a tireless reader.

The study of society makes him understand that the ideological movements that are born and grow empowered by the use of the press, make for the main reason that explains the departure of the masses from the Church.

His activity unfolds during two world wars (1914-1918; 1940-1945) characterized by the operation of extreme ideologies like Communism, Socialism, Fascism, Nazism that, after having come out from the two wars, lead to the fracture of the world into two struggling blocks coagulating around Russia and America.

His international journeys in order to meet the Paulines scattered throughout the world, his passion for statistics regarding religion and his geographical knowledge of nations entirely closed to Christianity stimulate his creativity and motivate even more his conviction to have recourse to an evangelization using the press and the other new means of social communication.

3.2.3. The existence of Fr. Alberione unfolds in a **context of communication** in continuous evolution. It is enough to hint at the gradual appearance of some technologies: it is born in 1884, year of the invention of the rolled photographic film; in 1886, invention of the linotype; 1895, movies and comics are born; 1901, first wireless message across the ocean; 1904, the first Italian film; 1906, first transmission of the human voice; 1912, first typewriter produced in Italy; 1922, first regular radio transmissions; 1927, first film with sound track; 1936, inauguration of BBC's television sets; 1945, the ENIAC calculator; 1948, the 33 rotation discs; 1949, the 45 rotation discs;

1950, cable television in America; 1953, first Eurovision transmission; 1954, first transistor radios in the United States and first television transmissions in Italy; 1957, first artificial satellite; 1958, start of experiments of Arpanet that will become the Internet; 1965, first geostationary satellite; 1967, first worldvision transmission and first color television in Europe; 1968, worldvision transmission in color; 1969, landing on the moon; 1971, invention of the *microchip*. To this list it would be necessary to add the inventions of the means of locomotion and social exchanges (trains, planes, cars, motorcycles, etc.).

To the press are added the other principal **mass media**: cinema, radio, television, comics, publicity. Following above all the teaching and example of the Popes, Fr. Alberione opens the Congregation to the new means: in Italy and abroad appear new book series and magazines, the radio apostolate begins (1948), cinema (1939, 1950, 1955 and 1962) and discs (1966). Scarse emphasis on television.

3.2.4. The Alberionian plan, from the **point of view of evangelization**, is the result of formation in the theology of Saint Thomas and of fidelity to the magisterium of the Popes with whom he has lived. Doctrinal certainty becomes creative through pastoral concern; as teacher in the seminary of Alba, he promotes the mission of the parish priest as “pastor”; as initiator of the Pauline charism, he places with geniality the written preaching alongside oral preaching.

The doctrinal certainty of Thomistic theology and the clear indications of the Popes, above all regarding the means of social communication, have transformed into a pastoral originality both as to contents of the faith (catechesis, Word of God, liturgy, ethical social commitment) and a new mentality and method of evangelization.

The Primo Maestro synthesizes his apostolic strategy to the Congress of the States of Perfection (26.11.1950) using with prudence a citation from an authoritative personality: “It will be useful to consider the words of Card. Elia Dalla Costa: ‘Either we look with courage at reality, beyond the little world around us, and so we see as urgent the need for a radical overturning of **mentality** and **method**; or else in the space of a few years we shall have created a desert around the Master of life; and life, justly, will eliminate us as dead, useless and cumbersome branches’” (*San Paolo*, November 1950). Fr. Alberione shares the idea of a **new method** and of a **new pastoral mentality**, above all for the means of social communication.

The pastoral dimension of the Alberionian plan is justified by theological reasons, but it makes use of a particular **pedagogy**: as Christ the Master teaches, the Paulines are inserted in the “**teaching**” Church, becoming through their apostolate Teachers, way, truth and life. The relation that is established in the Pauline apostolate is similar to that between a teacher and his student, with the difference that the teacher does not communicate “theories” alone, but teaches in a complete way, with all the dimensions of his experience to reach the student in the totality of his mind, heart and will.

Participating in the “**teaching**” mission of the Church means living the written preaching as a “**priestly**” function that acts in an effective way using natural elements, following the example of the “**sacraments**” to be able to “give God to souls and souls to God” (*Vademecum*, n. 1205).

The pedagogy that sustains the written preaching is realized through a **model of communication of the linear type**: an author formulates a message that through expressive means communicates with a receiver. It’s a “one way traffic” model dear to the students of communication based on the theory of information.

The model of “transmission” of information is thus taken up by the Church and by Fr. Alberione for evangelization, sharing the idea of sociological studies in communication proper of the time that describe the press and mass media as omnipotent and capable of an occult persuasion that moves peoples. Having recourse to the power of media to put it at the service of the Gospel finds its justification in the conviction that through the media it is possible to disseminate good or propagate evil.

The main ideas - outdated with the passing of time - that inspire the linear model of communication, deal with the process of the relation: from the author to the receiver who does not have the immediate and meaningful possibility to react. On the other hand, the power of the authors

is overestimated: the one who is the owner of the means, is the owner of consciences, and therefore the race to oppose press with press. Finally, given as discounted is the power, open and subliminal, of the press and of mass media: they control mentalities and behaviors. .

4. Plan of new Pauline evangelization of the Special General Chapter

4.1. The Special General Chapter (22.04.1969 - 06.08.1969 and 01.04.1971 - 02.07.1971) has been celebrated to “update” the charism to the contents of the Vatican II Council. The General Chapter was celebrated at Ariccia and Fr. Alberione was present in some meetings of the first session when his health conditions allowed him; he was present on 5 August 1969 when his first successor, Fr. Luigi Damaso Zanoni was elected and he was proclaimed Superior General Emeritus for life. He did not participate in the second session.

It was a unique event because, while the Founder himself was present, his sons reelaborated his plan of new evangelization making use of the 16 Documents approved by Vatican II, of some Vatican documents emanated to apply the Council, in particular *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* (06.01.1970), *Communio et progressio* (23.03.1971), *Evangelica testificatio* (29.06.1971), and of all the teaching of Primo Maestro, above all the text *Io sono con voi* (successively titled *Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ*) written at the end of 1953, but not much given value to due to the volume *Mi protendo in avanti* (1954) and then ending in a drawer, and the 4 volumes of *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*.

Certainly, knowing to interpret the thought of Fr. Alberione, the Superior General Fr. Luigi Damaso Zanoni writes in the *Presentation of the Chapter Documents*: “They can be perfected, but in substance they reflect well the thought of the Founder and therefore are to be studied, explained and meditated.

They constitute the bridge thrown between the past and the present. They give value to a creative past, full of achievements and broad apostolic ideals. They study the dynamic charism of the Founder and they insert him in the reality of today’s world, to continue his realizations and comb the depths of our Pauline vocation projected towards the future”. The prospect of the future has been held present: “The formation of our people has been the most discussed and suffered element during the Chapter”.

4.2. The order that has been given to the themes treated helps us to understand the choices of the Chapter. After the definition of the **identity of the Pauline**, they confront the **apostolic life** in its various components (charism of the Founder and of the Congregation, recipients, contents, instruments of social communication, Pauline organization strengthened by the Pauline Family and by lay collaborators), the **Pauline community**, **integral formation**, the **government** and **administration**. The identity of the Pauline that is manifested in his apostolic life is lived in community, prepared and taken care of through an integral formation realized with the help of authority and the support of the administration.

Developing the various aspects of each argument, taken up again is the creative journey of the Founder that started with the need for written preaching, pursued with the identification of the apostle of the press considered in his individuality and as community (spirituality, formation, community life, religious vows, Pauline Family, ecclesial community).

The apostolic mission is the pole of convergence that translates the principal objective of Vatican II: recover the dialog with the world to collaborate in human values and to propose faith in Christ in an understandable way. In that sense, significant are the **final messages** by categories of persons that synthesize and apply in concrete the intentions of the Council.

4.3. Let us take in consideration some reflections that can put in light the clear intention of **actualization** following the innovative thrust of the Council.

4.3.1. The distinction between “**charism of the Founder**” and “**charism of the Congregation**”, already part of the theology of the consecrated life, motivates all the activity of the

Chapter, understood as fidelity to the origins and, at the same time, fidelity to today with its changes: a continuity in change.

The effort to apply creative fidelity to the Pauline apostolic life is exemplary. On the **immutable** element of the Pauline charism, authentic “preaching” and not a simple editorial activity, is grafted the need to start from the recipient in a society where **pluralism** and **secularization** have changed the attitude toward faith. Among the other social elements that have influenced the attention dedicated to society, there is certainly the student movement of May 1968 that has become a true social revolution, at least in Europe.

Taking into account the social changes, Pauline apostolic activity must assume the pastoral attitude expressed by better internal organization and by an attitude of dialog toward the world. The Congregation needs to incarnate its pastoral attitude by means of an internal organization that allows to be a respected interlocutor in the world of communication. Premises are put in place for the assumption of the **enterprise** as instrument at the service of evangelization employing mass media and the involvement of **lay collaborators**.

In a context of production where society in all its components seems to be launched toward an unstoppable progress and in an environment of communication where the mass media are consolidating and creating a position of force, the Pauline apostolate needs **planning, coordination, efficacy and competence**. As *Communio et progressio* emphasizes: “...Christian professionals, if they accomplish professionally their trade, give testimony to Christianity” (n. 103).

With the due argumentations, in this Chapter are integrated in the Pauline charism the **pedagogical component** and **public opinion**. Expanding on the exhortations of the Founder and following the indications of *Inter mirifica* (cf 9-10 and 16) and *Communio et progressio* (cf 107-109), the Pauline charism is realized also by “teaching the right use” of mass media (*Documenti capitolari*, nn. 112-113).

Formation has the task of enabling the Pauline to carry on the pedagogical activity in communication as an apostolate and to this end the Chapter foresees the institution of a “**Pauline Institute of higher studies for social communication**” (cf *Id*, n. 576).

Adapting itself to the terminology used by *Inter mirifica* and *Communio et progressio*, the Chapter, together with “press apostolate”, “apostolate of edition”, “apostolate of the editions”, integrates the definitions of “**apostolate of social communication**”, “**apostolate of the instruments of social communication**”, already used after the Council by the Founder himself.

4.3.2. Individual Paulines gathered in apostolic communities practice the apostolate of social communication. Turning to the teaching of the Founder, we clarify that our style of community life is **born of the apostolate and in view of the apostolate** (cf *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, I, 285).

It is exactly because of this apostolic end that the community must build itself as a “**motivated group**” when it lives together the same **spirituality** suited for its mission, when it knows how to live together as **persons** and when it forms a well compact **work group**. In the description of the individual religious vows (*Chapter Documents*, nn. 413-478) we can see the influence of the conciliar decree *Perfectæ caritatis* (28.10.1965) and of *Evangelica testificatio* of Paul VI. The renewed theological presentation of the four Pauline vows does not lose sight of the apostolic purpose that characterizes them.

4.3.3. In dealing extensively with **Pauline formation**, the Chapter starts from the conviction that, above all, in view of the apostolate, a renewal is needed: “Hence, it is necessary to renew the apostolic formation, adapting it to the needs of today’s apostolate, in agreement with the following general norms to be applied according to the environment and culture of the single Provinces and nations” (*Chapter Documents*, n. 554). It is therefore to be ascribed to its merit that of having perceived that in Pauline formation it is necessary to retain, as valid for everybody, **some principles** (integrality, graduality, human, Christian, religious, Pauline, ecclesial) and that at the same time it must be for the Governments of the single Circumscriptions together with the various local formators, to assume the commitment of **adapting** to the local culture.

4.3.4. The **role of authority** in the Congregation is described taking into account the Conciliar indications that invite to a new style of government based on **corresponsability, sharing, collegiality and dialog**.

The greater unity between those responsible in authority and the confreres, the Special Chapter explains, is to be realized with the canonical Superiors; but also in the apostolate, as a work group, the same criteria must hold.

Dealing with **administration**, the Special Chapter reminds that this activity is to be run by competent persons, but also always under the guidance of the Superiors; moreover, the reminder about the **Pauline Fund** puts in light the need for **solidarity** among the various Circumscriptions.

4.4. The **Pauline capitulars** possess a rich experience born of hearing and from the teaching of Fr. Alberione; they have had way of assimilating his thought on the Council referring to the Pauline charism; they have studied the contents of the Conciliar texts; they have been characterized by the social history of the nations from which they come and by the historical climate of the world.

The **ecclesial context**, five years from Vatican II, experiences a relaunching of the faith and at the same time a beehive of ideas and initiatives that create disorientation and that show themselves through a creativity that appears extravagant, hastily abandoning the past for an uncertain future or obstinately sticking to all the past, resulting in the crisis of priests, religious and the laity. Paolo VI has the difficult task of governing with wise equilibrium that at a distance of decades, evidences his giant personality.

On one side the Church comes close to society with sympathy and disposed to dialog; on the other, in her internal this opening creates divisions, contrasts and conflicts.

Society, in general, well impressed by the attitude of the Church in her regard, shows herself favorable to a dialog, but the contemporary spread of secularization, the growth of material well-being, scientific conquests, the perception of the autonomy of thought with respect to religion, the advance of industrial production, the inequality among nations with the predominance of the powerful and the rich, changes her initial enthusiasm to make her busy with other things.

The consolidation of mass media that strengthens **mass culture** already delineated in 1962 by Marshall McLuhan in *La galassia Gutemberg* and by Edgar Morin in *L'industria culturale*, contributes to a speedy **cultural evolution** with the respective changes in behavior.

While the **linear model of communication** that characterizes mass media allows the full development of mass communication, studies of communication and the initiatives of critical education evidence a change in the recipients. With counter information, critical liberty, systematic study of the mechanisms of the functioning of media, the owners of communication are not easily anymore also the owners of consciences and of public opinion.

The plan of new evangelization studied by the Special Chapter constitutes, taking into account the contexts in evolution, a synthesis of Conciliar renewal and, on one hand, will undergo soon the consequences of the **passage**, already taking place but will be very fast, from an industrial society to a post-industrial society, from modern culture to a post-modern culture, from communication of the masses to the masses of communications that promotes the autonomy of groups and individuals.

Without fear of being given the lie, the *Documents* of the Special Chapter constitute the **first successful example** of creative fidelity to the plan of new evangelization of Fr. Alberione and remain even now an indispensable reference.

Rather, it is quite difficult to document the reception that all the Paulines have reserved for this intelligent effort of the Congregation with its consequent assimilation, above all if we try to retrace the consideration and the use that today the individuals and the communities make of it. And yet these *Documents* are still useful not only for their contents, but also for the methodology of a creative fidelity.

A sample of the attitude that has motivated the Capitulars we can meet in the meditation held by Fr. Francesco Borrano on 30 Aprile 1969, when he describes the significance of the updating: "It's up to us to interpret the signs of the times from his point of view. Our Founder has always been a *smasher*: a *smasher* of walls, of obstacles, of prejudices. At every step he had to face

criticisms, objections, often in open struggle against those who, content of the *status quo*, could not (or would not) account for the fact that they were living in the past or were being left behind by the times.

We would not be children worthy of him if we congealed at some point on the road torn open by him by force of tractor, sweeper or even dynamite. Like him, as soon as he reached the peak of a hill, let us immediately look forward to the next hill, to ready ourselves once more to smash in order to arrive”.

It is to be hoped that this guts of being faithful and creative Paulines may never abandon the Congregation! Concentrating ourselves to reflect only on a constitutive element of our identity has as a result the danger of dismembering the solid unity of the Pauline charism. Using a metaphor that we know well, it is dangerous to busy oneself in every detail with one of the four wheels of the Pauline cart while ignoring the others!

Among the important decisions of the Special Chapter there is the creation of a Commission for the redaction of a draft of new **Constitutions** and the creation of the **Center of Pauline Spirituality** that officially starts on 19 June 1971.

5. Plan of new evangelization and General Chapters 1975-1998

5.1. The **first** General Chapter takes place from 4 to 16 April 1957; the **second**, in two sessions, is realized from 22 April to 6 August 1969 and 1 April to 2 July 1971.

The **third** Chapter, celebrated from 1 June to 13 July 1975, examines the draft of the Constitutions and Directory prepared by the Commission desired by the preceding General Chapter and approves the final text to be submitted to the Holy See for an approval *ad experimentum* for nine years.

The plan of new evangelization formulated by this Chapter is the **translation**, in terms of articles of **Constitutions**, of the plan traced by the preceding Special Chapter.

Also formulated is a text with programmatic choices entrusted to the General Government for the areas: consecrated life, vocations and their formation, apostolate, government and administration.

Referring to *Scelte pratiche sulla formazione* (Practical choices regarding formation) A-5 of the preceding General Chapter, there is recommendation to proceed to the creation of the Studio Paolino Internazionale della Comunicazione Sociale (**SPICS**) to guarantee that formation be oriented to the Pauline mission.

In evaluating the apostolic organization, the Chapter indicates to the Paulines two strategic points to be preserved, taking into account the integration of the lay collaborators: **redaction** and **diffusion**.

5.2. From 24 February to 13 April 1980, is convoked a year before the normal expiration, the **fourth** General Chapter that deals with the paring of the **identity of the Pauline** as the Founder has willed it, with the reality of the Pauline in actuality. Starting from the urgency of formation, the Chapter arrives at offering indications about other areas of Pauline life.

The Chapter's activities handle, first of all, the indications for the laying out of the definitive text of the **Constitutions** that will be approved by the Holy See on 4 April 1984.

The priority choices of the Chapter are three: formation in relation to the other components of Pauline life, deliberation on the institutional relation between Pauline Priests and Brothers, and deliberation regarding Houses of apostolate with special statute.

The plan of new evangelization is that of Fr. Alberione, whose texts are chosen purposely and placed at the disposal of the Capitulars in collections of the texts of the Founder; in fact, the *Acts* of the General Chapter are concentrated on the **priority** of Pauline formation and some internal **clarifications** about the physiognomy of the Houses of apostolate (some of which in the Province of Italy were directly dependent on the General Government).

On the occasion of the first centenary of the birth of Fr. Alberione, from 16 to 27 September 1984, an international Seminar goes on about the theme “*At the center is Jesus Christ, Way, Truth and Life*” whose acts are collected in the volume *L’eredità cristocentrica di Don Alberione* (1989).

5.3. The **fifth** General Chapter (28 February - 27 March 1986) is organized based on the Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI *Evangelii nuntiandi* (08.12.1975). The plan of new Pauline evangelization, after assimilating the precious contents of the papal text, flows from the verification of the apostolate in actuality and from the indication, starting from it, of orientations for other areas of the Pauline life.

The plan is characterized for its description of evangelization as **pole** of the whole Pauline life; it must realize itself making use of the method of **inculturation** that motivates the apostolate of every Circumscription to know the local cultures and to promote authors of the place.

As continuation of the theme of mission, from 17 September to 2 October 1988, there is the **International Seminar of Pauline Editors** that on the practical level, leads to the creation on 14 November 1988 of the International Technical Committee of the Apostolate (**CTIA**).

On 22 October 1989 takes place the first beatification of a Pauline, Fr. Timothy Giaccardo.

On 26 February 1990 is published the **Ratio formationis** of the Society of Saint Paul, willed by the General Chapter of 1986 (II priority, n. 13. p. 47) and approved by the Intercapitular Assembly of 1989. On 29 November 1991, at the conclusion of the meeting at São Paulo (Brazil), the *Centro Iberoamericano de los Editores Paulinos* (**CIDEP**) is set up.

5.4. The **sixth** General Chapter (15 March -16 April 1992) is organized on the theme **The Pauline, man of communication**: all the aspects of Pauline life are analyzed and relaunched starting from the process of communication understood as indispensable characteristic of our rapport with ourselves, with God, and with the community as foundation of the mission.

The Chapter foresees a Seminar on “*Gesù, il Maestro*” that will be held from 14 to 24 of October 1996, with the publication of the acts *Gesù, il Maestro ieri, oggi e sempre* (Jesus Master, yesterday, today and always) (1997) and of the document of the General Government *Gesù, il Maestro ieri, oggi e sempre. La spiritualità del Paolino comunicatore* (06.01.1997).

In view of a **multimedia global plan** willed by the Chapter (III priority), the General Government, in the days 7-9 October 1992, organizes at Alba a round table that concludes with the text *A proposito della III priorità* (Regarding the III priority) (16.12. 1992) that deals with the apostolate and its requirements on the other areas of Pauline life, in the context of multimediality. The ideal is for the whole Congregation to become a **multimedia Editor**.

The II priority asks for an *International Seminar on formation* that materializes from 12 to 23 October 1994, of which are published the acts *Formazione paolina per la missione* (1995) that includes the *Document* of the General Government, with the same title, of 19.03.1995.

Among the other requests of the General Chapter: to proceed to the realization in informatics of the *Opera omnia* of the Founder; that every Circumscription elaborate an *Iter formativo* based on the *Ratio formationis*; that every community have at hand a *Community Project*; that a *Manuale dell’ autorità nella Società San Paolo* be redacted (published *ad experimentum* on 19 March 1996, after the Intercapitular Assembly of 1995 in Caracas had approved the draft); that a *Project of planning and coordination* of all the apostolic activities of the Congregation be elaborated.

The plan of new evangelization is oriented to integrate all the components of Pauline life, above all spirituality and formation, in multimediality, so as to become on the level of Congregation and Circumscription a **multimedia Editor**.

5.5. The **seventh** General Chapter (15 April - 15 May 1998) is realized during a particular historical context, with the presence of a Papal Delegate, sent by the Holy See some time before due to a conflict between the Provincial Government of Italy and the General Government.

In these particular conditions, the theme chosen, **Your parish is the world**, becomes concrete with operative conditions in four areas of work: the Pauline today, integral Pauline formation, Pauline mission today and service of authority and administration.

The plan of new evangelization emphasizes the **universality** of the Pauline mission: evangelize the whole person and all persons, employing the fastest and most effective means and adapting our apostolate to the current **culture of communication**.

After having recovered with dignity and justice her legitimate autonomy, the Congregation continues her journey through history: meeting of the **Europe Group** (10-14 May 2000), first gathering of all the **General Directors of the Apostolate** (30 April-3 May 2001) that ends with the commitment for all our editorships in the world to tend to become a **Single Pauline Multimedia Editor**. Another wealth of divine grace is the **beatification** of Fr. James Alberione (27 April 2003).

5.6. From 1975 to 1998 we can single out in the **Church** some events that are useful for our reflection: *Evangelii nuntiandi* by Paolo VI; *Holy Year* of 1975; 26 August 1978 election of John Paul I; 16 October 1978, election of John Paul II that offers to the Church many texts and interventions, in particular the encyclical *Redemptoris missio* (07.12.1990), the Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente* (10.09.1994), and the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (14.09.1995).

Among the emerging themes of the papal teachings that become issues in ecclesial life: **inculturation** of the faith (allocution of 26 March 1979) and a **new evangelization** (discourse of 9 March 1983).

From 1967, on the occasion of the celebration of the *World Day of Social Communications*, the Pope proposes every year a particular theme and he develops it under the form of a message for the ecclesial community: the documents *Orientations for the formation of future priests regarding the instruments of social communication* (19.03.1986); *Pornography and violence in the means of social communication* (07.05.1989); *Criteria of ecumenical and interreligious collaboration in the field of social communications* (04.10.1989); *The New Age* (22.02.1992); *Instruction about some aspects of the use of the means of social communication in the promotion of the doctrine of the faith* (30.03.1992); *Ethics in publicity* (22.02.1997).

The universal magisterium on communication underlines the need of a serious formation even for priests, of considering communication as an element that influences every apostolic programming, of promoting an ethics of communicating.

The *religious life* is treated in the following documents: *Mutual relations* (14.05.1978), *Evangelical options* (12.08.1980), *Contemplative dimension of religious life* (12.08.1980), *Essential elements of the teaching of the Church on religious life* (31.05.1983), *Potissimum institutioni* (02.02.1990), *Fraternal life in community* (02.02.1994) and *Consecrated life* (25.03.1996).

Of particular interest to us are the last three texts with their respective emphases: the mission characterises all the aspects of any apostolic charism; community life is to be lived balancing it with the mission; religious life has a future to be invented.

5.7. In a **society** at world level, the free market and the development of information contribute to create the **globalization** of the economy, of politics, of culture and of communication. The production of goods pushes ever more strongly the system of industrial production to a new phase, called **post-industrial**.

Well-being and freedom of conscience contribute to favor the protagonism of the **individual** who becomes the center of values, giving problems to the traditional agencies of socialization. The spread of **secularization** is strengthened also by civil legislation that recognizes new rights for the person, for couples and for groups. Low population growth, above all in some nations, favors the phenomenon of **immigration** with the relative problems of living together. The possibilities of **science** get results that give rise to opposing ethical evaluations. The **divide** among various countries, whether in the economic or cultural level, sharpens.

The social phenomena are intertwined with **culture**: passage from the values of modernity to **post-modernity** (weak thought, fragmentation, liquidity, non-projectability, etc.); the centrality of

the individual makes possible an ethical autonomy that can border on **relativism** in values; the need for the supernatural is channeled into sects and magic; even immigration offers the problem of **interculturality**.

5.8. In **communication** there is produced a true revolution through the perfecting and spread of technologies based on digital language that allows **multimediality** and **internet communication**. In 1978 the term **telematics** appears; in 1981 **hypertext** is born; in 1983 the **compact disc** is invented; in 1984 the term **cyberspace** is coined; in 1985 there is the **CD-ROM**; in 1992 the **World Wide Web** starts; and in 1998, **DVD** and **cellphones**.

The spread of the use of digital technologies **affects** all means of communication based on analogical language, contributes to **transform** communication from a complex of means to a **complete culture** and decisively changes the model of communication which is not anymore that of mass media (from one to many), but that of one **centered on the subject** (from many to many).

5.9. Studying the works of the various General Chapters, the initiatives that have been realized between one General Chapter and another, the *Projects* of the Provincial Chapters and of the Regional Assemblies, the *Apostolic Projects* and the *Iter formationis*, **we can describe** the journey traveled by the Congregation during the decades that we are examining, both as mentality and as practical attitudes of persons and communities.

In fact, the reflections and decisions that become **normative written texts** for the whole Congregation or for a Circumscription, are checked through the **effective results** they produce on the persons and on the various components of the charism. To give ourselves instruments in order to actualize trustworthy verifications is a means to follow closely the **real advancement** of the Congregation and not only its **ideal itinerary** provided in the documents.

A more documented study that put **in synopsis** the contents of our General Chapters (reflections and operative lines) and the various elements of the world historical context, would allow us to strengthen the impressions, fruit of a general overview, that I'm presenting in succession.

We have the impression that from 1975 to 1998, the Alberionian integral plan of new evangelization has been actualized, in theory and in practice, in a manner **not complementary and not assimilated**, either by all or by numerous Paulines.

If it is true that the schema of the documents of every General Chapter rides on the image of the Pauline charism as a "cart with four wheels", we have the impression that the theme, chosen from time to time as a pole of unification, does not have repercussion in an adequate way on all the components of the Pauline life. The **Chapter of 1975**, with its final observations for the definitive redaction of the Constitutions, inherits the contents of the Special Chapter of 1969-1971 and in the text submitted to the Holy See, finds a true project of new evangelization. In the *Programmatic choices entrusted to the General Government*, instead, the priority given to **Pauline formation** does not mirror in an adequate way the wealth contained in the Constitutions, nor does it characterize in a clear way the remaining wheels of the Pauline cart.

The General Chapters of **1980** (*The Pauline Ideal*), of **1986** (*The Pauline Mission of Evangelizing*), of **1992** (*The Pauline, Man of Communication*) and of **1998** (*The World as Pauline Parish*), develop with valid arguments and from diverse thematic points the **apostolic dimension**, with the concern to underline its aggregate meaning and the urgency of **mission**.

The plan of new evangelization that results, wisely oriented to mission, seems not to involve in an **adequate way** spirituality, formation, community life, the religious vows and the concrete situation of the Congregation, above all as to persons as primary resource.

Just to simplify a much more complex reflection, it seems that the description of our apostolic commitment comes out well delineated, but that **it is given as granted** that spirituality, formation, the community, the religious vows and the quantity and quality of the Paulines would follow, **almost automatically** thought and lived in a way to realize the "new" apostolate. It seems that there is no syntony of projects between those responsible for the apostolate, the canonical authorities and those committed in formation.

The dangers of this underlining that with historical data we can confirm or belie, consists in favoring a **disconnect** between the apostolate and the other realities of the Pauline charism: The apostolate must be in a certain mode, while the rest must be made adequate by those responsible for each; they often are extraneous, kept in obscurity or voluntarily disinterested in the decisions in the field of apostolate. Besides a possible separation, this priority thought of separately from the rest can create a Congregation with communities running on **two speeds**: one bound to apostolic organization and the other to all the rest.

The need for an adequate apostolic organization, concerned with running in an efficient way important apostolic initiatives, has found itself to have to deal with scarce information and assimilation of projects on the part of the base; moreover, diverse evaluations among those in charge, resulting sometimes in open conflict, the recourse to methods of enterprise badly integrated with consecrated life and a source of evident abuses, the certainty of strengthening the apostolate only through organizing of the work (organigram and manual of roles, etc.) have, in all probability, not always had positive effects on vocation pastoral, spirituality, formation, communities and on the interpretation of the religious vows. **The facing off between the must be of the texts and the reality that follows can be analyzed.**

5.10. By the nature itself of our charism, the changes in communication translate for us into concrete problems of apostolate. Therefore, it is well understandable that in the General Chapters of the decades in question, the dominant themes are connected with mission.

However, observing on one hand the Alberionian integral project of new evangelization connected with the press and the successive integral projects of new evangelization connected with mass media and digital communication, we find a **basic difference** that must make us prudent in the future.

The press has not always been a simple “instrument of communication” for Fr. Alberione, but a “new form of evangelization” that has required new apostles having a new spirituality, a new formation, a new style of work for evangelization, a new form of community life, a new interpretation of the religious vows.

Passing from the press to mass media, and, even more, to digital technologies and to the culture of communication, we cannot imagine to just substitute “the means” we possess for those that are the fastest and the most effective of the moment, but in view of the Pauline mission in new contexts, we have to **reelaborate** even the other instruments of our charism.

When we think of actualizing our charism only with “the new” means for our mission, we can become subject to **two dangers**. Interpreting badly the new form of evangelization in which to commit ourselves, giving an almost magical weight to industrial organization exactly when industry has become post-industrial. Social profiles, organigrams and manuals of roles must not be considered as a magic wand, above all when the rapid **changes of the public** question with the decline of subscribers and sales, our contents and our ability to spread.

Limiting ourselves to evolve our apostolate in its organization without giving the greatest attention to the **public** that we intend to reach, contributes to impede that the true **historical context** (Church, society, culture, communication,) be integrated in the other three wheels of the Pauline cart.

It is quite difficult to think and actualize in spirituality, in formation, in the community and in the religious vows the new evangelization and inculturation if it is not actualized in apostolic life. It is arduous to let it be understood that all the components of the Pauline cart must react if secularization, globalization, ethical relativism, the pretenses of scientific power, and the disastrous consequences of politics are not taken into serious consideration by the apostolate and made object of treatment.

These reflections confirm the **polar function** of the apostolate with respect to the other areas of the Pauline life; I underline, however, that it is a true illusion to think of actualizing our charism by giving ourselves the latest communication technologies; these, in fact, are not anymore “**instruments**” but “**parameters of life**” that need a **new** mentality and for us, **new** spirituality, new

formation, community life, religious vows and global vision of the evangelizing strategy of the Congregation.

6. Pauline plan of new evangelization in 2000: the VIII General Chapter

6.1. From 20 April to 20 May 2004 is celebrated the **eighth** General Chapter with the theme **To be Saint Paul living today. A Congregation straining forward.** The general objective unites life and testimony: “Intensify, as individuals and as community, the experience of Christ, in the way lived by the apostle Paul, interpreted and entrusted to us by blessed James Alberione, so as to announce to all peoples the Word of salvation through the languages most appropriate to the actual culture of communication” (*Acts*, p. 219).

The Chapter votes a *Deliberation* which closes the period of *ad experimentum* of the **Manual of Authority**, to be considered from that moment on as the “binding instrument in the life of the Congregation”, with the new title **Service of authority in the Society of Saint Paul. Manual.**

The **operative lines** entrusted to the General Government have been thus distributed: every year a *Letter* of the Superior General in San Paolo with the interpretation given by the Founder and with the application to the Paulines of today; finish the multimedia *Opera omnia* of blessed Alberione; accept new members to the Center of Pauline Spirituality; International Seminar on the actualization of the Pauline charism (18 June - 3 July 2008); international Secretariat for the animation, coordination and verification of the work of vocation pastoral and of basic and permanent formation in the Circumscriptions (September 2008); a vocational Year of the Society of Saint Paul (04.04.2005 - 04.04.2006); World Observatory of Communication (2009); explore the possibility of new foundations (Cuba, China and Eastern Europe); guidelines for the apostolate (16 November 2005); accompanying of the single Circumscriptions on the part of the General Bursar; set in motion the revision of the Constitutions and Directory in view of the next General Chapter; Organism of international coordination for the Pauline Institutes of consecrated secular life and for the Cooperators (2009).

On its part, the General Government **has added:** International meeting of the General Coordinators of Formation (14 - 21 September 2008); Revision of the *Ratio formationis* (September 2008); International Seminar on Saint Paul (19 - 29 April 2009); Month of Alberionian Spiritual Exercises (1 - 30 August 2009).

Beside the meetings of the Continental Organisms of the apostolate coordinated by the CTIA, from 9 al 15 October 2006 took place the **second encounter** at international level of the General Directors of the Apostolate that ended indicating three commitments: all walk in the same direction with group mentality, open to new forms and opportunities in the apostolate, a formation not colorless but finalized to our mission.

On 31.10.2005 was inaugurated at São Paulo (Brazil) the Faculty of Communication **FAPCOM:** a historic milestone for the apostolate of the Congregation.

6.2. In the context of the **Church** we live the event of the **Jubilee Year 2000**, with the continental Synods whose works end with the post-synodal exhortations of John Paul II: *Ecclesia in America* (22.01.1999), *Ecclesia in Asia* (06.11.1999), *Ecclesia in Oceania* (22.11.2001) and *Ecclesia in Europa* (28.06.2003) and his Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte* (06.01.2001).

The **consecrated life** is taken in consideration by the Instructions: *Ripartire da Cristo: un rinnovato impegno della vita consacrata nel terzo millennio* (Start from Christ: a renewed commitment of consecrated life in the third millennium) (19.05.2002) and *Il servizio dell'autorità e l'obbedienza* (The service of authority and obedience) (11.05.2008). **Communication** is treated in various documents: *Ethics in communication* (04.05.2000), *The Church and the Internet* and *Ethics in the Internet* (both of 22.02.2002) and *Il rapido sviluppo* (The fast development) (24.01.2005).

On 19 April 2005 Benedict has been elected. Until now he has published two encyclicals: *God is love* (25.12.2005), *Saved in hope* (30.11.2007) and the exhortation *Sacrament of charity*

(22.02.2007). On 28 June 2007, the Pope announces the celebration of a **Pauline Jubilee Year** (28 June 2008 - 29 June 2009).

Among the events and phenomena of the **social context**: the attack against the twin towers in New York (11.09.2001), the declaration of war of the United States against Iraq (March 2003), international manifestations of terrorism, problems connected with immigration, above all in Europe, increase in the cost of energy, environmental and ecological disasters, emergence with strong economic success of China, India, Brazil, globalization and problems of local ethnicities, low birth rates and crisis of the family, etc.

Culture is affected ever more by the consequences of social phenomena and by communication: the valuing of the individual who becomes ever more free in his life choices, social cohabitation that struggles to find legislation and ethical values that allow peaceful **interculturality**, waning influence of agencies of traditional socialization: family, school, state, churches; an often disoriented youth as far as a project of acceptable life is concerned, etc.

Communication is characterized both by the diffusion of technologies tied to digital language, and by the social use of them which in fact results in a radical change of mentality and practice, becoming a true unedited culture.

6.3. The project of new evangelization for 2000, drafted with the program **To be Saint Paul living today** by the VIII General Chapter, can be deepened by means of the reflections and concrete proposals that are maturing in this international Seminar.

I remind the basic **strategy** of our encounter for study: the **Pauline charism** which globalizes the spirituality of Saint Paul and for evangelization in communication, is by its nature subject to the pastoral “straining forward” of Saint Paul and to synchronization with communicative dynamism.

The international Seminar on Saint Paul, programmed for next year, will allow a relaunching starting from **Saint Paul**, our Father and apostolic model; this seminar, instead, wants to contribute to actualization starting from **communication**, understood as technical and cultural phenomenon and observing how it is taken up by the Church, in her magisterium and in her initiatives, for evangelization.

The example of blessed Alberione who in order to present the Pauline charism as “written preaching side by side with oral preaching” did not limit himself to assume the press as “a means of evangelization”, but has elaborated an integral project of new evangelization starting from pastoral criteria, must be our criterion for “creative fidelity”. Our **reference texts** are “*Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ*” because it describes the “riches” generously given by the Spirit for the institution of the Society of Saint Paul and of the Pauline Family and *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*.

For an integral project of new evangelization we must join together **three components** closely intertwined: the **actual context** of the society, of the culture, of the Church and of communication; the **elements** of Pauline life: spirituality, formation, apostolate, community life and religious vows; the present-future **situation** of the patrimony of the Congregation: persons and material resources.

6.4. To translate, in other words, the project that the Founder has left to the Society of Saint Paul (and to the Pauline Family) to “be Saint Paul living today”, we can say: **to evangelize with the experience of Christ and with the pastoral method of Saint Paul, we must be grafted to the Church of today, the salvation of society and of the culture of today and through the communication of today.**

If we are motivated by the goal of realizing a “pastoral project”, we shall reach the same goal both by starting from the sending of Christ to evangelize the men of every historical epoch, and by doing the inverse route, from documented knowledge, supplied by communication about society and the culture of today, to act so that the Gospel be “made all for all” (cf *1Cor 9,22*).

Each of us and all together, after the first two stages of this Seminar, should have at our disposal valid instruments for a pertinent description of present-day **communication**. We have then to observe how the phenomenon of communication is intertwined with the **societies** and **cultures** of

today: a discernment that requires much attention because there are global characteristics and typical local realities.

The next step after the observation of data that describe communication, society and today's culture, will be the connecting of them with the whole of Pauline life: **spirituality, basic and special formation, apostolic project, community life and religious vows because they must be capable of preparing the apostle who evangelizes through today's communication.**

Simplifying: the culture of communication, characterized by technologies, values and social practices, requires that the Pauline apostle have personal and community experience of Christ and possess the adequate ability to communicate him; it requires a particular basic and special formation; it demands an apostolic project steeped in today, presupposes a community life and a practice of the vows that enrich evangelization.

The **basic question** is: must the "four wheels" of the Pauline cart be **identical** both for the epoch of the press, the mass media, multimediality and the internet? Is the Pauline charism actualized by changing only a part of the wheel of the apostolate, that of the technologies of communication?

When there is no convergence, synergy and the same adherence among the four wheels, even automechanics teach us that we cannot ask from the car achievement primacy. Already our Founder advised us constantly to be "balanced", to take care of the four wheels simultaneously, without favoring one at the expense of the others (cf *Vademecum*, n. 366).

The **final stage** wants to place in relation the ideal of the integral project of new evangelization and **the identity of persons and resources of the Congregation**. The lack of knowledge about the reality of the Congregation is sufficient element to render vain the effort of a dream of an ideal plan. The Congregation is not an abstract identity: it is made up of all the Paulines in their individuality, by the communities of all our eighteen Circumscriptions, by our Apostolic Projects, our Iter formationis, our Community Projects and by daily history.

May blessed James and Timothy intercede for us and obtain for us so that Christian faith, hope and charity may produce creativity, determination and a love that is fruitful.