



Don Ricardo Ares, ssp

SAINT PAUL THE APOSTLE THE GREAT COMMUNICATOR

I. PAUL'S PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL: CONTENTS AND STRATEGIES

1. PREMISE

In this presentation, we shall try to develop some themes which will shed light on the topic presented by the organizers of this Seminar, which is "to offer materials on Paul's experience of faith as well as materials for the multi-media Pauline international publishing." Living and celebrating the Year of St. Paul is, without doubt, the most opportune occasion to examine deeply the personality of St. Paul, the preacher to the Gentile world. He is the Apostle par excellence. The Pauline spirit is the force of our being missionaries.

2. TO BE SAINT PAUL ALIVE TODAY. A Congregation that strains forward.

This is the theme that animated our 8th General Chapter. This is the challenge of the present and of the future. We know very well what Blessed James Alberione said, moved by a deep reflection and divine inspiration: "Everyone has to see Saint Paul the Apostle as the only father, teacher and founder." To follow in his footsteps and to live his spirit is our task. The Founder traces for us the route to follow in the following words: "What does the Pauline spirit consist in? It consists in this: Saint Paul, the one who indicates to us the Divine Master; in other words, he took the Gospel, deeply reflected on it, and then adapted it to the world, to the needs of his time and of different nations... In the same way, we must apply the Gospel to our own days and give it to the present world with the means which human progress gives us in order to transmit the thought and the doctrine of Jesus Christ" (PrA (apostolate). FSP Collection).

STRATEGY: The Founder points to us the way and the horizon: "To bring the Word of God to men and women of today with the means of today."

3. SAINT PAUL'S PERSONALITY

We know very well the weight of the figure of Saint Paul over the evangelization of the pagan world and the teaching of the Church. Let us underline some aspects:

3.1 Paul was an intrepid and enterprising character

Without batting an eyelash, Paul testifies that he surpassed his contemporaries in his zeal for Judaism and for his ancestral traditions, and he affirms that he "persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it" (Gal 1:13-14). As an excellent strategy, he did not hesitate to ask for letters from the high priest so that he could arrest and bring the Christians in Damascus back to Jerusalem in chains (Acts 9:2). Then Jesus stopped him in his journey and "took

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SAINT PAUL

Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009

possession” of him (Phil 3:12). It was the most decisive event in his life. Paul had an excellent knowledge of Scriptures, but now he discovers that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. He turned a man on the move. He began to preach, first to the Jews, who did not tarry to stop him on the way. Paul escaped from their hands and continued his mission. At the end of his life, he could say: “I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4:7).

STRATEGY: “Strain forward” with the zeal and the courage of Saint Paul: “Go down into the deep,” said John Paul II.

3.2 Tireless missionary

Paul had a clear conviction about his mission to the Gentiles; he moved in all direction, restless, looking for new challenges (Rom 15:17-24). His strategy was totally new and did not know limits or shortcuts. He felt the urgency to let people know Christ and his Gospel (Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 1:17). Fr. Silvio Sassi, explaining Paul’s motto of “being all to all,” synthesizes Paul’s missionary style. At the origin of his evangelizing activity lies his encounter with Christ. “If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it” (1 Cor 9:16). (Cfr. Sassi: “*New Wine into Fresh Wineskins*” [NFWF]).

STRATEGY: “True love shows itself in the daily struggle for the apostolate: it makes us think, run, organize” (Alberione).

3.3 Apostle in love with Christ

Fr. Sassi, in the above reflection, expounds the deepest experience of Saint Paul: “For to me, life is Christ, and death is gain” (Phil 1:21). “I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20). Comments Fr. Sassi: “Christ’s presence in Paul’s life is not a divine possession that eliminates human personality nor is it a mystical ecstasy... It is a matter of a permanent condition of Paul’s existence that has certainly been influenced by the episode on the way to Damascus... but he remained autonomous in his decisions and in his response” (NFWF, 1). Christ is the cause, the mover, the meaning, the energy, the motivating reason, the hinge, the center, and the propeller of the Apostle’s entire existence (NFWF, 1.3).

Paul’s letter to the Philippians shows us his life’s trajectory after the Damascus event: “Whatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ” (Phil 3:7-9). All his apostolic effort is being done for Christ and those being evangelized.

On the other hand, we should not forget that Paul’s passion for Christ is directed to a special mission: “To me, the very least of all the holy ones, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the inscrutable riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8).

STRATEGY: The General Objective of the 8th General Chapter: “To intensify, as individuals and communities, the experience of Christ in the manner in which it has been lived by the Apostle Paul... in such a way that we may proclaim the Word of Salvation to every people with the most appropriate languages of the current culture of communication.”

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SAINT PAUL

Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009

3.4 Paul: a different priesthood

Paul was a lay person, but in Rom 15:16, he speaks of a special privilege granted him by God: “to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in performing the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering up of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the holy Spirit.” This is a different priesthood of Paul which likens us to the Priests and Disciples of the Divine Master, with the exception of the ministerial priesthood. All of us are called to preach the Gospel. “Saint Paul felt taking the role of one who performs a sacred rite while preaching the Gospel in cities and regions of the Roman Empire” (Giancarlo Biguzzi).

STRATEGY: Our parish is the world: our priesthood is evangelization through the means of social communication.

3.5 Pauline thought

It is not easy to make a synthesis of the Pauline thought. Paul was not a theologian by profession, but a Pastor who had to answer the questions which his communities presented before him. His thought appears, therefore, as taking the form of an apostolic reaction. This explains the variety and spontaneity of his letters. In spite of being addressed to different recipients, we are able to discover the basic lines of his thinking, the nucleus of which is centered on the person of Christ and the life of salvation which he gained for us through his death and resurrection. (Cfr. Juan Jose Bartolome, *Diccionario de San Pablo, Edit. Monte Carmelo [FSP]*).

The above statement helps us to understand the insistence of our Founder on the pastoral aspect of our mission.

It is worthwhile to quote here what Fr. Jose Bortolini shared in the 8th General Chapter: “There is a danger of seeing Paul as one who ceases being one who dialogues and seeks with others the truth in order to become the master of truth... an image which can become unwelcome in our post-modern world characterized, among others, by subjectivity... Paul was a man of profound convictions... that gave him directions in action and in the letters that he wrote... I prefer to see and present our Father as a man of dialogue with the world and culture of his time” (J. Bortolini, “*A Memorial of Paul*”).

STRATEGY: What characterizes our mission is pastorality: to go out and meet the receivers with the most modern and efficacious means and with adequate languages.

3.6 Paul, an apostle with an imaginative and creative spirit

Paul did not wish to evangelize territories where others have already worked. He frankly wrote the Christians in Corinth: “We are not boasting beyond measure, in other people’s labors... our hope is that... we may preach the gospel beyond you, not boasting of work already done in another’s sphere” (2 Cor 10:15-16). Paul was a pioneer and a sower. He was not afraid of contact with other cultures; on the contrary, he knew them, mastered them, and made use of them for the sake of evangelization. He was a citizen of the world; he did not discriminate. This is an important aspect for our globalized world (Jose Bortolini). Someone said that Paul lacked people, but people did not lack of Paul.

STRATEGY: Creativity should be a special quality of a Pauline. Find out whom to reach out to, with what message and with what means.

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SAINT PAUL

Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009

3.7 A good strategy with clear and precise plans

It is a given that in Paul's time, there were philosophers, preachers and propagandists who covered big and populous cities looking for adherents and followers, but none had a strategic plan which was as complete and as organized as Paul's. "Others moved like vagrants, Paul was moving forward," an author captured with precision (*cfr. G. Biguzzi, "Pablo Comunicador," p. 104*).

STRATEGY: Strategic planning is important for the efficiency and efficacy of our apostolate. We should not move without it.

3.8 Paul worked with collaborators

"It is good to recall Paul's capacity to coordinate a network of collaborators, an urgent topic for the survival and the growth of our Congregation and mission in the world... this always opens for us, ever more, apostolic cooperation, especially with lay persons" (*J. Bortolini, "A Memorial of Paul"*). Saint Paul is our model and teacher. He knew how to inspire his collaborators, be they individuals or communities. We can take, for example, the case of Barnabas (Acts 13⁴³, 46, 50), Paul's companions (Acts 13:13), Luke, Mark, and other individuals and family members he mentions in his letters.

STRATEGY: Collaboration with lay persons is necessary. But it has prerequisites: professionalism and a sense of sharing with our mission.

3.9 Choice of big cities

In his plan of evangelization, Paul was not attracted to small areas; he set his feet in great cities and capitals or ancient world. We can cite thickly populated centers like Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. "Paul searched for the great centers of Hellenism, culture, commerce, and political and economic powers" (*G. Biguzzi*).

All roads led to Rome. There were about one million inhabitants in that city. Corinth was strategically located between two seas and was the capital of Achaia; it had half a million inhabitants. It was a veritable crossroad of communication. Thessalonica and Ephesus were likewise port cities and were centers of politics, culture and entertainment.

"For Paul, the city was the center of irradiation; from it the Gospel would spread to the interiors and to the provinces by virtue of its dynamism" (*G. Biguzzi*). The Acts of the Apostles bears this out: "As you can see and hear, not only in Ephesus but throughout most of the province of Asia this Paul has persuaded... a great number of people" (Acts 19:26). "To reach urban centers was part of his pastoral strategy, to create in them a Christian nucleus capable of generating other nuclei (2 Cor 10:15-16)" (*J. Bortolini*).

On this subject, the Pauline Family in Brazil organized in March 2008 a big symposium on this theme. It would be interesting to know the more important topics discussed there.

STRATEGY: We should make use of better means of communication in order to reach the more specific urban audience.

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SAINT PAUL

Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009

3.8 Community-Family-Communities**a) Community**

“The concept of community is central in the thought of St. Paul. With it, the Apostle expresses the intimate union of the faithful with God and among themselves... Common participation in the Spirit (2 Cor 13:13) cements this union among them, convinced that they have one faith and one Lord alone. Love is the force which unites them.” (Cfr. *Carment Bernabe and Fernando Cuenca in “Diccionario de San Pablo”*).

b) The Family

This concept of the community naturally passes on to the family. The family at that time was composed of parents, children, relatives, slaves, servants, up to invited guests... It was here that social transformations happened. The community turns to be the house of God. Towards it did the development of Pauline thought turn, as we see in the Pastoral letters.

c) The Pauline communities

These communities rose under the influence of Paul’s thought. All these constitute what is called “Pauline Christianity.” Their birth was eminently an urban phenomenon. Cities were the central points and reference for the whole territory. Generally, they had a mixed character: distinct ethnic groups, cultures, social conditions, etc. For this reason, cities generated great mobility which favored the propagation of the Christian faith. The fundamental and unrenounceable principle of Paul in his mission was always the opening to the Gentiles (Gal 3:28). The Pauline groups had inclusiveness as fundamental characteristic.

STRATEGY: The theme of community has a captivating force in our globalized world which, however, is being divided by business interests.

d) The family house

The family house was the basic structure of the local Church. The family or the family house became the determinant model of formation in Christianity. As pointed out earlier, the family was composed of a wide variety of members: parents, children, slaves, relatives, friends, etc. In families, domestic gathering took place. These constituted the smaller nuclei which formed part of a bigger unity which is “the Church of God.”

STRATEGY: In our time, there is need to rescue and restore the community of the family vis-à-vis ideologies which threaten to destroy it.

e) Women in Pauline writings

One of the more controversial aspects of St. Paul is his view of women. In the letter to the Galatians (3:28) Paul affirms the equality of man and woman: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” We have been re-created by faith in Christ and we are all brethren, children of God. Civil, social, and religious barriers fall. We all form a new reality. We do not enter here into the complex arguments over the issue of women. In the authentic teaching of Paul—apart from social conditions of his time—it is clear that all social discrimination has been broken, to be replaced by interdependence and complementariness between man and woman. “Among Christians, there is no woman without man, and no man without woman.” (1 Cor 11:11) (Cfr. *Elisa Estevez Lopez—Diccionario de San Pablo*).

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SAINT PAUL

Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009

STRATEGY: The theme of woman as protagonist is eliciting more interest and is being more and more promoted. We have to take this into account in our apostolic initiatives.

3.9 Paul as communicator and writer

In his Letters, we discover the more authentic Paul in his missionary activities. His continuing influence is basically owed to his literary activity: the Letters, addressed to more direct destinaries, were fruits of his personal reaction to concrete circumstances and needs.

In the Greek-Roman period, letter-writing was a well-utilized form of communication. St. Paul transformed letter-writing and made it a more effective means of communicating with the communities from afar. The receiving communities found in Paul's letters the Pauline gospel as answer to real situation. Paul knew how to adapt the letters and illuminate them with the light of the Gospel. The Roman network of roads facilitated the communication of Paul and his communities. "Writing a letter was for him an apostolic act, an act of teaching and pastoral guidance. To the letters he would give all his energies, writing with intense emotion" (G. Biguzzi). Paul confesses that at times he would write "with many tears." He would open himself to the point of affirming: "You are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by all, shown to be a letter of Christ administered by us, written not in ink but by the Spirit of the living God" (2 Cor 3:2-3). After Paul's death, his school made use of letter-writing. We can therefore affirm that Paul turned "what was then a profane means of communication into a means of apostolic action" (G. Biguzzi).

Also today, letters are means of ecclesial teaching and apostolate. For example, we have the Papal Encyclicals. Fr. Alberione clearly entrusted us with bringing the Christian message to the world "with the fastest and most efficacious means." He had surely meditated on and understood St. Paul.

STRATEGY: St. Paul presents us with a challenge: the use the best technologies, for example, the digital technology, to communicate the Word of God in an inculturated language.

3.10 Paul and inculturation

The 8th General Chapter in operational guideline 3.1.1 and priority 3.2 calls us "to evangelize cultures with today's means and languages" and "in dialogue with culture, propose an updated vision of reality, in order to orient the Pauline apostolic action."

If St. Paul is our model, what should be our stand vis-à-vis the diverse cultures with which we come into contact? It is true that, coming from the city of Tarsus and even if a Pharisee, Paul breathed the air of new culture and of new sentiments. He was open to the world he was evangelizing and to its diverse languages. We are cognizant of Paul's great sensitivity to the new challenges posed by the Gentile world. As example, it is enough to see how Paul used the language taken from urban life. He spoke of architecture, circus, sports competition, military parade, musical instruments, etc. All this he did to re-create an inculturated and evangelizing message. His letters are the most eloquent proof.

STRATEGY: Fr. Jose Bortolini offers us this strategy: "We have ahead of us a great cultural challenge because the major population concentration in our countries is found in big urban centers, generators of a culture that no longer dialogues with the rural culture present in the Gospels. Would it not be the case of studying better the Letters of our Father in order that we may become effective in our mission?" (J. Bortolini, "A Memorial of Paul," p. 75).

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SAINT PAUL

Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009

II. CHALLENGES FOR THE PAULINE INTERNATIONAL MULTI-MEDIA**4. PREMISE**

Up to this point, we have considered the more salient aspects of the mission and style of Saint Paul. Now let us focus on the world in which we are living, from an international perspective, basing ourselves on the documents that touch on the matter. The Superior General, Fr. Silvio Sassi, in his presentation at the 8th General Chapter (*New Wine into Fresh Wineskins*), speaks of the necessity of having a global project for the whole Congregation and, in a way possible, for the Pauline Family: “Without this project for the entire Congregation, the continental, circumscription and local projects could have as a result an enhancement of the autonomy that leads to anarchy” (cfr. NFWF no. 3:19). It is true that the CTIA is making a laudable effort in the animation and planning of international initiatives through regional and linguistic groups like CIDEP, CAP-ESW and EUROPE GROUP. However, I believe that there is a path ahead to take, be it as a group or as global directives.

At this juncture, let us refer to the Apostolic Exhortations of the Holy See addressed to the five Continents on the occasion of the holding of Synods of Bishops. In them we find criteria and global objectives which will help us to orient our mission in the different continents and to project concrete priorities. The General Government has traced some clear lines of action which we have to take into account.

4.1. SYNODAL DOCUMENTS FOR THE FIVE CONTINENTS

At the start, it is good to point out what is the central objective of evangelization brought out in each Synod.

- a) ECCLESIA IN AFRICA (E/Africa): The special Assembly of the Synod of Africa “shall trace out various aspects of the mission of evangelization which the Church has to confront at present: evangelization, inculturation, dialogue, justice and peace, means of social communication” (no. 8).
- b) ECCLESIA IN AMERICA (E/America): Pope John Paul II announced the theme of the Synod in these words: “Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ: The Way to Conversion, Communion and Solidarity in America. Put this way, the theme makes clear the centrality of the person of the risen Christ” (no. 3)
- c) ECCLESIA IN ASIA (E/Asia): The Synod Fathers underlined the complex reality of a vast continent to trace out a unique objective. However, it came out that for this part of the world, “the issue of encounter of Christianity with ancient local cultures and religions is a pressing one. This is a great challenge for evangelization... to make a renewed commitment to the mission of making Jesus Christ better known to all” (no. 2).
- d) ECCLESIA IN EUROPA (E/Europa): The Synod Fathers affirmed clearly the growing desire to trace out and interpret the situation, with the purpose of discovering the tasks which await the Church; they proposed “vital directions that will make the face of Christ become ever visible through an evangelization which is more effective, aided by a coherent witnessing” (no. 3).
- e) ECCLESIA IN OCEANIA (E/Oceania): “The heart of the matter is inspired by a passage from the Gospel of John where Jesus speaks of himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn 14:6). Through the Holy Spirit the Father is calling the believers to walk the path taken

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SAINT PAUL

Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009

by Christ, to announce to the nations the truth revealed by Jesus... and to live the fullness of life which Jesus lived and continues to live in us" (no. 8).

COMMENT: It is interesting to ask ourselves how the person of Christ becomes the central axis around which almost all the Synod documents revolve. Worth reviewing above all is the view of the E/Oceania which rests everything on Jesus Christ, Way, Truth and Life. Subsequently, we shall gather together the points which appear in the documents, looking for guidelines in order to draw a program of content and of the receivers of our Pauline mission.

4.2. THE GREAT PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF HUMANITY

Saint Paul sought to give answer to the questions which the pagan world presented to him. He studied the problems and planned strategies for evangelization. What we intend to do now is to ask "something else" for our world today.

Fr. Silvio Sassi, in his intervention *New Wine into Fresh Wineskins*, states that "the programming of the Pauline apostolate is called, on the basis of the theological foundation and of effective pastoral experience, to integrate itself, through its specific service with the continental projects, those of the bishops' conference and of individual bishops" (no. 2.33). In this present activity we shall try to gather together, almost to the letter, the sentiments of the continental Synods with the purpose of integrating ourselves to his plans in the best way possible.

Numerous are the challenges before us. Let us underline some. Along the way, each Continent, Zone or Country will discern what to prioritize in its apostolic undertaking. After the official texts which come with a challenge each, we will offer some comments.

4.2.1 The challenge of "communicating the Word of God to the world today with the means of today" in Christ, the Word made flesh.

a) Africa: "The Bishops of Africa entrust their continent to Christ, the Lord, convinced that with his Gospel and with his Church, he can save Africa from its present difficulties and cure it of its many ills" (E/Africa, no. 10).

b) America: "Jesus Christ is the 'good news' of salvation made known to people yesterday, today, and forever... Everything planned in the Church must have Christ and his Gospel as its starting point. Therefore the Church in America must speak increasingly of Jesus Christ, the human face of God and the divine face of man" (E/America, n. 67).

c) Asia: "The Synod was an ardent affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ the Savior. The Church' faith in Jesus is a gift received and a gift to be shared; it is the greatest gift which the Church can offer to Asia. Sharing the truth of Jesus Christ with others is the solemn duty of all who have received the gift of faith" (E/Asia, nos. 4 & 10).

d) Europe: "In the context of the actual ethical and religious pluralism which characterizes Europe more and more, it is necessary to confess and propose the truth of Christ as the unique mediator between God and human beings and the only Savior of the World... He who knows the Lord knows the Truth, discovers Life and knows the Way which leads to life" (E/Europa, no. ___).

d) Oceania: "The main preoccupation of the General Assembly was to find adequate paths in order to present today to the people of Oceania Jesus who is Lord and Savior... He is the Prophet and the King not only of those who follow him, but also of all peoples of the earth. The Father offers him as Way, Truth and Life to all men and women, to all families and communities, to all nations and to all generations" (E/Oceania, no. 5).

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SAINT PAUL

Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009

COMMENT: "In order to understand Scriptures and to discover in it the Truth, it is necessary to consider as well Jesus as Way, Truth and Life" (Alberione, Vademecum, no. 595).

The continental Synods hinge their pastoral work in the person of Christ, Word made flesh.

The General Government, for its part, underlines this as priority for us: the communication of the Word of God.

4.2.2 The challenge of catechesis

a) America: "The new evangelization in which the whole continent is engaged means that faith cannot be taken for granted, but must be explicitly proposed in all its breadth and richness. This is the principal objective of catechesis... Catechesis is a process of formation in faith, hope and charity; it shapes the mind and touches the heart, leading the person to embrace Christ fully and completely" (E/America, no. 69).

b) Europe: "It is necessary for Christian communities to mobilize themselves in order to propose an adequate catechesis for the diverse spiritual itineraries of the faithful of different ages and situations in life, foreseeing adequate forms of spiritual accompaniment and re-discovering one's own Baptism" (E/Europa, no. 51).

COMMENT: The Synods of America and Europe call for mobilization of catechesis. "Faith cannot be taken for granted." In a world which is losing its faith, it is necessary to commit ourselves to catechesis which is nourished by the Word of God.

4.2.3 The challenge of unbelief

a) Europe: "At the root of the loss of hope is the striving to make an anthropology without God and without Christ prevail." This has opened a very wide field for nihilism and relativism. "We see here worrisome signs, like interior emptiness, loss of the meaning of life, egoism, etc" (E/Europa, nos. 17, 18).

COMMENT: Modern ideologies fight to sow an "anthropology without God and without Christ." The relativism and nihilism denounced by Pope Benedict XVI have a citizen's residence visa in our developed world.

4.2.4 The challenge of new paganism

a) Europe: "The de-Christianization of society in what is called the First World and the weakening of the ecclesial fabric cannot simply be attributed to the modern development of secularization; it is being accompanied by the eruption of a paganism which affirms and presents itself as alternative to Christianity." (E. Bueno de la Fuente)

Pope John Paul II used to say that "the mission of the Church is from its beginnings." The methods of the New Evangelization ought to be modernized.

COMMENT: New paganism, with its new idols, invades the First World most of all. "The mission of the Church is from its beginnings" (John Paul II). What initiatives does this ask of us?

4.2.5 The challenge of seeing the world as a "global village."

Marshal McLuhan affirmed that the world has become a "global village." Yves Congar has made his own the phrase of John Wesley: "The wide world is my parish." In the 7th General Chapter, we Paulines have appropriated the slogan, "Our parish is the world." Today, things have changed due to diverse factors: the spectacular progress in telecommunications and the increasing "borderless"

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SAINT PAUL

Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009

world. Pope John XXIII used to say: “Every Catholic, as such, is and ought to consider himself or herself a citizen of the world.” “Begin to have promising signs of a sense of co-responsibility for the good of the whole human family. Four great publishing agencies control today 95% of information for the whole Planet” (*Luis Gonzales-Carvajal*).

COMMENT: “The world is our parish.” What meaning does this principle have for us? Does this not involve a “change of mentality and outlook”?

4.2.6 The challenge of globalization

The world is being directed and is characterized by global capitalism, by dominion of multinational companies, and globalization of the market. All these are being supported and powered by means of communication. We can affirm Jose Arturo Chavez’s statement: “The future of each one of us is being manufactured in the ladder of the world.” There are many people who call for urgent regulation of this type of globalization. This generates deep inequality. The rich become richer and the poor poorer. The challenge of evangelization becomes stronger, now that in the world there are people who grow hungry more than any time before. St. Paul strongly criticized the Corinthians in their Eucharistic celebration on account of discrimination against the poor and of lack of sharing of their goods (cfr. 1 Cor 11:18-34; 2 Cor 8:13-15).

COMMENT: Globalization can also offer something positive, especially in the world of communication. How capable are we of assuming the benefits of globalization, at least on the level of zone groupings?

4.2.7 The challenge of migration

a) Europe: The state of misery and underdevelopment which, unfortunately, characterizes many countries, produces the phenomenon of increasing migration which confronts the Church in Europe with the question about its “capacity to find forms of welcome and intelligent hospitality. There is need to widen the perspective in order to meet the needs of the whole human family... to recognize the fundamental rights of migrants... and to help achieve a more authentic integration” (E/Europa, nos. 101-102).

b) America: The phenomenon of “migration affects many people and families from Latin American countries... Church communities will not fail to see in this phenomenon a specific call to live an evangelical fraternity... with a view to a more penetrating evangelization” (E/America, no. 65).

COMMENT: Migration is a recent phenomenon. It calls for evangelizing and humanizing initiatives. Do we do something to meet the challenge of migration?

4.2.8 The challenge of cultures

a) Diversity of cultures

“Because the earth has turned smaller compared to that of yesterday and because migration will multiply in the near future, the meeting of diverse cultures will become more and more frequent” (*Luis Gonzales-Carvajal*). This encounter is necessary, but it is not a matter of making an idol of cultural diversity. It is necessary, comments Fernando Sabater, “to break the self-preserving mythology of cultures which require to be preserved as they are. Neither does this mean a mixing of cultures, to the point of developing the hidden potentials in each one of them.” “It is important to have intercultural dialogue in a climate of reciprocity, convinced that each culture is called to give and to receive, to learn and to teach” (*Luis Gonzales-Carvajal*).

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SAINT PAUL

Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009

b) America: With Christian perspective, the Synod Fathers of America have considered that “the new evangelization asks for an effort that is clear, serious and orderly in order to evangelize culture.” Pope Paul VI affirms: “The rupture between the Gospel and culture is without doubt the drama of our time.”

4.2.2 bis Inculturations of Christianity

There exists a historical sin in the thinking of Christians: that Christianity is identical with Western culture. But at present, there is a rising phenomenon of the Catholic Church moving to other places. European Catholics continue to diminish, but in other places Catholics increase in number: each year 8 million are added in Latin America, 4 million in Africa, and nine hundred thousand in North America.

For many decades, mission was oriented to reproduce one model in the world. We have before us a challenge of first magnitude. The Church must choose between inculturation and globalization. Vis-a-viz the Third World, says Paul Richard, we need a Catholic Church, not a Global Church. Christianity can recover its credibility only through the path of inculturation. The true encounter between the Gospel and a given culture happens in a local community. This presupposes “a change in order to think of inculturation,” Michael Anadoloss affirms.

- a) Africa: The Synod Fathers affirm that “a deep interest for a true and balanced inculturation shows itself as necessary so as to avoid confusion and alienation of our society which is undergoing rapid evolution” (E/Africa, no. 48).
- b) Asia: “The Church in Asia lives and fulfils her mission in the actual circumstances of time and place. A critical awareness of the diverse and complex realities of Asia is essential if the People of God on the continent are to respond to God’s will for them in the new evangelization” (E/Asia, no. 5).
- c) Oceania: The Synod Fathers of Oceania underline with frequency the importance of inculturation for an authentic Christian life... “Inculturation is born out of respect not just of the Gospel but also of the culture to which it is announced and in which it is received” (E/Oceania, no. 16).

COMMENT: A new culture is being born with force, owing above all to the power of social communications media (scm). We are challenged to inculturate the message with new criteria and with new languages.

4.2.9 The challenge of ecology

- a) America: “To men and women, the crown of the entire process of creation, the Creator entrusts the care of the earth (cf. Gen 2:15). This brings concrete obligations in the area of ecology for every person... Selfish attitudes and lifestyles will lead to the depletion of natural resources... Devastations could lead to the desertification of many parts of America” (E/America, no. 25).
- b) Europe: “Serving the Gospel of hope means striving to have a new and correct use of the goods of the earth” (E/Europe, no. 89).

COMMENT: The theme that is frequently discussed in International Fora concerns ecology. What can we do, with the use of our means, to conscientize people on the correct use of the goods of the earth?

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SAINT PAUL

Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009

4.2.10 The challenge of growing urbanization

a) America: “On the increase in America is the phenomenon of urbanization. For some time now the continent has been experiencing a constant exodus from the countryside to the city... As the Synod Fathers pointed out, ‘in certain cases, some urban areas are like islands where violence, juvenile delinquency and an air of desperation flourishes’” (E/America, no. 21).

b) Asia: “In the process of development, materialism and secularism are also gaining ground, especially in urban areas. These ideologies, which undermine traditional, social and religious values, threaten Asia’s culture with incalculable damage” (E/Asia, no. 7).

COMMENT: St. Paul the Apostle chose as the heart of his mission strategy the urban centers. These centers are melting pots of what is good and bad in human beings. For us, too, it is important to choose, as part of our missionary strategy, receivers of our mission and points of evangelization.

Fr. Silvio Sassi warns the General Directors of CIDEP: “I refer, above all, to the receivers of our apostolate. We run the danger of being concerned only with “what we have to say”; we have to ask ourselves more deeply about those to whom we address ourselves” (cfr. Saint Paul Bulletin, November 2008).

4.2.11 The challenge of inter-religious dialogue

a) America: “Muslims, like Christians and Jews, call Abraham their father. Consequently throughout America these three communities should live in harmony and work together for the common good” (E/America, no. 51).

b) Asia: In *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, referring to the Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, Pope John Paul II noted that in that part of the world “the issue of the encounter of Christianity with ancient local cultures and religions is a pressing one. This is a great challenge for evangelization” (E/Asia, no. 2).

c) Europe: “In every task of the New Evangelization... it is necessary to establish a profound and well thought-out inter-religious dialogue, in particular with Judaism and Islam” (E/Europe, no. 55).

COMMENT: Question: Is it possible to have some initiatives that would lead to dialogue with non-Christian religions?

4.2.12 The challenge of ecumenism

a) Africa: “The Assembly has underlined the importance of ecumenical dialogue with other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, as well as dialogue with the traditional African religion and with Islam” (E/Africa, no. 49).

b) America: It was suggested by the Synod Fathers “that Catholic Christians, pastors and faithful foster cooperation between Christians of the different confessions, in the name of the Gospel” (E/America, no. 49).

c) Europe: “Certain that the unity of Christians corresponds to the command of the Lord, ‘that all may be one’ (Jn 17:11), all the Churches and Ecclesial Communities are being invited to interpret the way of ecumenism as ‘journeying together towards Christ’” (E/Europa, no. 30).

COMMENT: Another Question: “Do we have initiatives in favour of ecumenical journey? This is a favourite theme of Benedict XVI.

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SAINT PAUL

Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009

4.2.13 The challenge of the family

- a) Africa: “This is an important challenge, almost always underlined by the Bishops’ Conferences of Africa. It concerns Christian marriage and family life. What is at stake is very high: in effect, the future of the world and of the Church passes through the family” (E/Africa, no. 50).
- b) America: “There is urgent need of a broad catechetical effort regarding the Christian ideal of conjugal communion and family life, including a spirituality of fatherhood and motherhood... On a continent like America characterized by significant population growth, there needs to be a constant increase of pastoral initiatives directed to families” (E/America, no. 46).
- c) Asia: “The people of Asia hold dear the values of respect for life, compassion for all beings, closeness to nature, filial piety towards parents, elders and ancestors, and a highly developed sense of community” (E/Asia, no. 6).
- d) Europe: “In order to serve the Gospel of hope, it is necessary to pay adequate and prime attention to the family; without doubt, families must take a task that cannot be substituted with regard the Gospel of hope” (E/Europa, no. 44).
- e) Oceania: “One of the most known characteristics of the peoples of Oceania is its deep sense of community and solidarity in the family, tribe, village or neighbourhood. This means that decisions are made through consensus done through dialogue, frequently in large and complex measure” (E/Oceania, no. 7).

COMMENT: The General Council sees this as the second apostolic task: to give priority to the family. The Synod documents clearly identify the option for the family. Do you think that our initiatives take account of parents, young people, children, the elderly, etc?

4.2.14 The challenge of young people

- a) Africa: “Our time thirsts for authenticity. Above all, in reference to young people, it is said that they have a horror for what is fiction, what is false, and that they seek above all truth and transparency” (E/Africa, no. 2).
- b) America: “Young people are a great force in society and for evangelization. They represent quite a large part of the population in many nations of America. On their encounter with the living Christ depends the hope and expectation of a future of greater communion and solidarity for the Church and society in America” (E/America, no. 47).
- c) Asia: “Despite the influence of modernization and secularization, Asian religions are showing signs of great vitality and capacity for renewal... Many people, especially the young, experience a deep thirst for spiritual values, as the rise of new religious movements clearly demonstrates” (E/Asia, no. 6).
- d) Europe: “Particular attention should be made so that young people and those about to marry receive an education to love through programs specifically designed for the preparation for the sacrament of Marriage” (E/Europa, no. 92).
- e) Oceania: “The Synod Fathers wanted to touch above all the hearts of young people, many of whom are searching for truth and happiness... Christ ought to be presented in an adequate way to the new generation which suffer the rapid changes in the culture in which they live” (E/Oceania, no. 14).

COMMENT: The Synods strongly emphasize the necessity of pastoral attention to young people. Benedict XVI declares: “Young people look for answers and meaning in their life... For the Church to continue to be present with its message in the ‘great Areopagus’ of social communication, and not end up being a stranger to the wide world where many young people move, it must spread, with

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SAINT PAUL

Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009

new forms, the voices and images of hope through networks which cover our planet with nets which become more and more clumsy” (Benedict XVI to Vatican employees, 10 Dec., 2008).

4.2.15 The challenge of the dignity of women

a) Africa: “During the discussion in the Assembly, it became clear that questions over increasing poverty in Africa, urbanization... demographic problems and the threats that weigh heavily on the family, the emancipation of women, etc. form part of the fundamental challenges examined in the Synod” (E/Africa, no. 51).

b) America: “Unfortunately, in many parts of America women still meet forms of discrimination. It can be said that the face of the poor in America is also the face of many women... There is need to help women in America to take an active and responsible role in the Church’s life and mission” (E/America, no. 45).

c) Asia: “Reflecting upon the situation of women in Asian societies, the Synod Fathers noted that although the awakening of women’s consciousness to their dignity and rights is one of the most significant signs of the times, the poverty and exploitation of women remains a serious problem in Asia” (E/Asia, no. 7).

d) Europe: “The Church is aware of the specific contribution of women in the service of the Gospel of hope... There are aspects of the contemporary European society which are a challenge to the capacity of women to welcome, share and generate in love... The Church asks that laws which protect women should be applied effectively” (E/Europe nos. 42, 43).

COMMENT: Among the fundamental challenges of the Synods is one that concerns women. St. Paul was the prime promoter and liberator of the capacity of women to generate and nurture life. Here lies also our task.

4.2.16 The challenge of the lay faithful and the renewal of the Church

a) America: “Pastors should have a profound respect for the witness and evangelizing work of lay people who, incorporated into the People of God through a spirituality of communion, lead their brothers and sisters to encounter the living Jesus Christ. The renewal of the Church in America will not be possible without the active presence of the laity. Therefore, they are largely responsible for the future of the Church” (E/America, no. 44).

b) Europe: “The contribution of the lay faithful to ecclesial life cannot be renounced; effectively, irreplaceable is the role that they have in the proclamation and service of the Gospel of hope... We need to have pedagogical programs which enable the lay faithful to witness to the faith in contemporary conditions” (E/Europa, no. 41).

c) Oceania: “One of the extraordinary aspects of the programs (of Christian renewal) is the involvement of many lay faithful. We all are very pleased with the different gifts which God has given to the lay faithful, women and men, for the fulfilment of his mission” (E/Oceania, no. __).

COMMENT: The renewal of the Church and the work of evangelization will not be possible without the collaboration of the lay faithful. This is a challenge for the Pauline formation. Moreover, we have to take seriously their incorporation into the spirit of our apostolate.

4.2.17 The challenge of social communications media

a) Africa: “The Assembly takes into serious consideration the social communications media, a matter of enormous importance; it involves at the same time instruments of evangelization and means of diffusion of a new culture which needs to be evangelized” (E/Africa, no. 52).

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SAINT PAUL

Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009

b) America: “For the new evangelization to be effective, it is essential to have a deep understanding of the culture of our time in which the social communications media are most influential. Therefore, knowledge and use of media, whether the more traditional forms or those which technology has produced in recent times, is indispensable” (E/America, no. 72).

c) Asia: “A number of Synod Fathers underlined the external influences brought to bear on Asian cultures. New forms of behaviour are emerging as a result of over-exposure to the mass media and the kinds of literature, music and films that are proliferating on the continent. Without denying that the means of social communication can be a great force for good, we cannot disregard the negative impact which they often have” (E/Asia, no. 7).

e) Europe: Given their importance, the Church in Europe has given particular attention to the complex world of social communications media. Among other things, this requires adequate formation of Christians who work in the area and the users of the communications media, with the purpose of having a good command of their languages. The document underlines the need to have competent persons, exchange of information and participation in the elaboration of an ontological code of social communications media. (cfr. E/Europa, no. 63).

COMMENT: Culture today is nourished by and lives from social communication. This has been emphasized in the Synods. The General Government points this as the third front of our life and apostolate: the world of communication and formation in the culture of communication.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- S. Sassi. “New Wine into Fresh Wineskins,” in *To Be St. Paul Alive Today* (Rome: Society of St. Paul, 2004)
- J. Bortolini. “A Memorial of St. Paul,” in *To Be St. Paul Alive Today* (Rome: Society of St. Paul, 2004)
- F. Fernandez Ramos. *Diccionario de San Pablo* (Editorial Monte Carmelo)
- L. Gonzales-Carvajal. *Los cristianos del siglo XXI* (Sal Terrae)
- G. Biguzzi. *Pablo, comunicador* (Espana: Edit. San Pablo)
- E. Bueno de la Fuente. *Espana entre Cristianismo y Paganismo* (Espana: Edit. San Pablo)
- G. Roatta. *San Pablo y la Familia Paulina*
- G. Alberione. *Vademecum* (Roma: Edizione Paoline)

SYNODAL DOCUMENTS

- Ecclesia in Africa
 Ecclesia in America
 Ecclesia in Europa
 Ecclesia in Oceania

GROUP REFLECTION

QUESTION: Having in mind the strategies of St. Paul in accomplishing his mission, the challenges of the present time, and the recommendations of the Synods of Bishops, what priorities should we assume with regard contents and receivers of our apostolate?