

First session of the Study Group on  
"The identity of the Pauline in its dual expression, Priest-Disciple"  
(Rome, 28 February 2002 – 6 March 2002)

GREETINGS OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

Dear brothers,

I am happy to receive and greet you with a cordial "welcome," to the start of this work of your study group on the theme proposed to you.

As you know, the theme is of such an importance that it was the object of a special "recommendation" on the part of the 7<sup>th</sup> General Chapter (1998). In its turn, the Inter-Chapter Assembly held in New Delhi (February-March 2001), "aware of the importance and the complexity of the theme" solicited the General Government to see to it that the task of "deepening" on the theme be entrusted to a sufficient number of confreres and to see to the involvement of the members of the Congregation... (Final Document, 14; *San Paolo*, April 2001, pp. 18-19).

You are the participants of this qualified group, and you know that your task is most engaging. In fact it is asked of you "to deepen" on a theme vital to our religious Family. The deepening shall be the fruit of your personal and group reflections; it shall be the fruit of an enlightened discernment among the proposals and suggestions offered by the communities and by individual members. It shall above all be the result of a joint action of the Spirit of God and of your study, suggested by love for the Congregation.

I believe it is quite clear that it is not asked of you to raise or solve "problems" but to "deepen" in all directions on the theme proposed, so that in due time, especially in the second sessions of your meeting, there emerges a framework of lines of orientations for the congregations: for formation, for development, for prospects updated to the times wherein we live.

At this moment, which is extremely laden with opportunities for the Church and for the world, our congregation must know how to move in the direction willed by God and indicated by evident "signs of the times." In my letter of 31 May 2001 on the "Service of Authority" (*San Paolo*, June 2001, p. 2-10), I referred to the general movement of renewal that is shaking the religious institutes, and which some define as "the new exodus" of the consecrated life in the era of globalization. The Lenten season wherein we live is propitious for understanding the significance and the opportuneness of this movement. The Superiors, in their charism as guides, are called to lead this difficult "exodus" through positive turns. You, however, can effectively help them with the support of your work.

You are as well aware that the discourse on the "identity of the Pauline in its dual expression Priest-Disciple" is not limited to confronting or to the relationship between the groups, but it is a part of a global discussion that matters to the Congregation as a whole. The figure of the Consecrated Pauline matters; it matters to everyone of us: who we are; how we live; what we do; why and for what undertaking we are called; what do God and the Church expect of our being and of our doing today.

Going a bit deeper into the *humus* of our foundational charism, we shall discover currents of water, or perhaps layers of gold, that we had not yet explored or fully utilized. In any case, we shall discover sprouts and seed destined to grow in the near future into new fruit trees.

This hypothesis is not illusory. It is *hope* that is founded on *faith*: faith in the promises of God to our Founder; faith in the intercession of him whom we hope is beatified soon; faith on the fecundity of our charism and on the expectations of the People of God. And on this faith rests also our industriousness that we want to assume once more with greater thrust, and which we want to express in new projects on our part. It is that which Fr. Alberione used to call "industrious hope," made of trust and of planning, of prayer and of steps to undertake, while counting on the intrinsic fecundity of the seeds. "Plant something today so that tomorrow it may sprout and bring forth a tree": this was one of the expressions dear to the Founder, significant of his creativity.

This trust I transmit to you. And I wish you good work, good discernment, much optimism, and the special blessing of the Divine Master, of Mary our Mother and Queen, of St. Paul our patron and inspirer.

With affection and gratitude for your generous availability.

FR. PIETRO CAMPUS  
*Superior General SSP*