

**Study group on the theme**  
**“Identity of the Pauline in its dual expression: Priest-Disciple”**

To the Communities of the Society of St. Paul:

Dear Brothers,

The study group on the Pauline identity... concluded their work on 27 June, anniversary of the pontifical approval of the Society of St. Paul. We met for this second session (the first was from 28 February to 6 March) on 16 June, Sunday. Meeting place: Rome, General House. We had twelve days of intense and uninterrupted work (no Sunday break), made even more difficult due to the exceptional heat and humidity that hit Rome and Italy right during these days...

Perhaps it is worth briefly describing the steps we followed. The first days were utilized to place ourselves again in context and to take into attentive consideration the material accumulated during the last months. Everything was read very attentively. Thus, we arrived at identifying a series of “topics” that ought to comprise the substantial content of our study. After having divided the tasks in order to coordinate the work better, we started working on every “topic” and turn it into a dense, synthesized as much as possible, motivating, article. On 21 June, with all the articles on hand, organized in a general outline, we began the first stage of revision and integration of each article. The observations, above all about the content, were useful and drawing a second editing and a better refinement of the “topics,” before arriving at a second revision and a final correction.

Well, till here is work done. What about the “final” product? What is it all about, when is it reaching our communities? As we have already anticipated in the preceding communiqué, it is not a document, the nth one to put in the library... We preferred to call it a “work tool”. Meanwhile, it shall continue making us work inasmuch as we still have to take into consideration the last observations, after which the first recipient is going to be the General Government. At the Government’s discretion, it shall reach all Paulines during the forthcoming months. A “tool” like this ought not, after all, reach anyone at the start of summer; it still needs, as we were saying, some final touches and its translation into the principal languages used in the Congregation. The ultimate date of “submission” is nonetheless the meeting of the Circumscription Superiors in November.

Something, however, we can anticipate. We can, however, say that the resulting text covers more than fifty pages, excluding the appendix that shall contain further studies on certain topics. The outline falls along the line of the “four fidelities” required of religious today according to the document *“Religious and human promotion.”* The four fidelities concern man and our times, Christ and the Gospel, the Church and her mission in the world, the religious life and the charism of the institute. Although the document dates back to 1980, it seemed to offer us a fecund and enlightening outline because by itself it invites a reflection that is not turned inwards, but with a broad outlook that takes into consideration the world wherein we live and of people, our contemporaries. All this is in order to be truly Paulines, priests and disciples, prophetic presence, creative witnesses of Christ of his Gospel of salvation. The purpose of this “work tool” is in fact that of stimulating reflection, offering an orientation on the level of vocation, formation and apostolate, to stir new enthusiasm and to infuse trust and hope. Even more, we hope that the text would elicit further deeper studies, corrections, discussion. Never has it been important as now that there should be a circulation of ideas, a cultural exchange. Also in our Pauline communities. This is why we chose to call it “work tool”: an open-ended text; it does not intend to resolve problems but to point out itineraries; not a point of arrival but a point of departure for a fruitful debate, a fuse that is lighted so that the fire of enthusiasm, of dialogue, of apostolic thrust goes ever wider.

At this point, one might ask: but regarding the priest and the disciple, what happened? Obviously, the subject is dealt with and is directly discussed in specific topics that are even problematic or controversial. For example the juridical and canonical aspects, the complementariness of priests-brothers, how should one understand the “typical space” of priests and brothers, and so forth. We would, however, point out how the choice of the 7<sup>th</sup> General Chapter not to separately deal with the identity of the Pauline priest and the Pauline disciple has been a genuine change of perspective. It is the perspective that we wanted to adopt while focusing on the Pauline’s identity as the basis for a proper evaluation of the particular gifts of the disciple and of the priest.

In conclusion, we would like to thank wholeheartedly all the confreres who sent in their contributions during the last months. Theirs is a sign of love for the congregation and it has been an encouragement for all of us. We would like to thank also Councilors General Fr. Juan Manuel Galaviz and Francesco Chessa who guided us in our work. We would like to thank the Superior and all the confreres of the General House who willingly and fraternally welcomed us. Finally, last but not least, we would like to thank the General Council and the Superior General, Fr. Pietro Campus. They have taken us for a while off our daily work loads (about time that we take them up again...), but they have given us the possibility to reflect, in behalf of the entire congregation, on the vital themes for our future. And they have made us recover once more the beauty of our Pauline vocation.

The participants of the Study Group