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## Fr. Alberione in the “digital” age

### *Culture and Pedagogy: new pastoral-apostolic prospects*

(Fr. Norman Melchor R. Peña Jr, SSP)

#### Introduction

To speak of Fr. Alberione in the digital age is to appreciate two realities – first, the richness of the Pauline charismatic and pedagogical heritage; and second, the continuing development of the culture of communication. Believing that both complement and enrich the other, my task is to make an in-depth study of their convergences along with their inherent and distinct divergences. The aim is to extract new apostolic and pastoral prospects in culture and pedagogy for Paulines. I start by naming the definitions adopted:

- **digital** as an attribute describing the period of communication wherein contents originally only mechanical, oral and written are digitized and transmitted through the internet, computer or electronic networks.
- **culture** as sum total of the mores, norms, belief, stories, social habits and characteristics, language, music and arts, “mentality, style of life and manner of doing”, shared through encounter and interaction;
- **pedagogy** as the preparation and creation of a didactic process leading to transmitting, learning, and living out of formative content;
- **new** in its etymological meaning as the adjective signifying fresh, novel, innovative and original;
- **pastoral** as leading towards human development through the “substance and style” of the evangelic model of care of true values among persons and in God;
- **apostolic** as the act of “one who prays, speaks, suffers, writes, publishes, and spreads the word of God” (AE #5); and,
- **prospects** as a journey of *kairos*, “already here yet not yet” where all are encouraged to strain forward (Phil 3:13).

Limiting itself to Pauline pedagogy and culture in the digital era, presentation is divided into three: 1) The Pauline charismatic and pedagogical heritage; 2) Evolution and psychodynamics of digital communication; and 3) New pastoral-apostolic prospects for the Pauline pedagogy in the digital communication era. Primary references include Church documents on communication, writings of Fr. Alberione and leading proponents in digital science. Acknowledging their value to the task at hand,

key themes in the writings of Fr. Silvio Sassi will similarly be delineated as part of a resonant launching pad.

## 1. The Pauline charismatic and pedagogical heritage

**“The degree with which you master your tools, you can invest the world with your meaning, the degree with which you are mastered by your tools, the shape of the tools determines your own self image”.** I believe Fr. Alberione would have felt something of this thought by Ivan Illich, Austrian philosopher and social theorist which also presents Alberione’s vision *a propos* the instruments of social communication. Rather than be mastered by them, they are to be mastered so as to invest the world and its sciences with meaning – Christ, who brings fullness – the key to Pauline mission. This links with Pope Paul VI who in 1969 described Alberione as, “ever intent at scrutinizing the signs of the times, the most inspired means of reaching souls giving the Church new ways of expressing herself,”. I propose five interpretative keys, each vital as it is distinctive, to the charismatic and pedagogical legacy of Fr. Alberione.

### 1.1 The charismatic heritage of *Abundantes Divitiae Grae Sueae*

Fr. Alberione always felt the abundance of divine grace God. Central here was his **perennial sentiment of nothingness before God yet also being clothed with an adamant belief in the light, consolation and strength received from the Eucharist.** *Abundantes Divitiae Gratiae Sueae* (AD), confirmed this. Fr. Alberione, “did not intend to narrate that which he had done and realised, even with the help of God, but focused **on the marvellous pedagogy with which the extraordinary abundance of grace was willed to be of service to him”.**

AD, which originated in 1954, is a collection of the richness of the Pauline Family. At work has been a relational encounter not only known but gradually understood, lived in prayer and the apostolate, and bequeathed to each of the members of the Pauline Family who time and again are invited to “live with the times, [not forgetting] their story: a story of grace, of sin and of the journey, like St Paul, to give glory to God”.

### 1.2 *The Publishing Apostolate as a pedagogical heritage*

Fr. Alberione responded actively to grace: “He felt profoundly obliged to prepare himself to do something for the Lord and the people of the new century with whom he would live” (AD, #15). Reflecting on the call of Toniolo and Pope Leo XII to “unite for if not the enemy will overcome you one by one”, Fr Alberione embarked on the publishing apostolate to **“fight the bad press with the good press” and actively stressed the good it can do. Paulines were pioneers in this apostolate of utilizing the instruments of communication to evangelize.** And the Church confirmed this apostolate which for Fr. Alberione possessed a similar value and dignity with oral preaching: “Your machines are your pulpits” and “bookcenters are your churches” (cf. UPS I, 316). Both are means to reach people and in them and with them they can be formed and find meaning and fulfilment.

“*L’Apostolato Stampa*”, originally published in 1933 (later on, *L’Apostolato dell’Edizione*), was the “handbook” on Pauline formation and apostolate. **It defined the identity of Paulines – they work and do formative preparation which centers on the communication of the identity of Christ, Way (Morals) , Truth (Faith) and Life (Worship).** This is the fundamental basis of the Pauline pedagogical heritage containing themes not only scripture, theology, spirituality and liturgy but likewise on the social sciences including history, biography, literature, geography, politics, philosophy, distribution, marketing and promotion, cinema, radio, television and so on.

### 1.3 Pedagogical charism of a family of evangelizers

Believing that “the works of God are performed by men and women of God”, Alberione invited persons to participate in the Pauline charism. More than just workers, they were **apostles of evangelisation made up of, from 20 August 1914, the ten branches of the Pauline Family who share the divine pedagogy** of “living and giving to the world Jesus Christ, Way, Truth and Life”. Distinct in their apostolic means, each are united with that same goal.

Alberione taught the four wheels of the Pauline “cart: *prayer* (spiritual formation), *study* (intellectual formation), *apostolate* (apostolic formation) and *poverty* or common life (an authentic equilibrium of the value of secular realities). **Only through a balance of these four can the Pauline charismatic and pedagogical heritage strain forward towards the Pauline unitary project.** What is most important, is not to remain passively numbed by individual difficulties of a specific wheel that arise but to strain forward embraced by the hope on the underlying purpose of the cart as a whole – to bring the Gospel to persons.

### 1.4 Elements of the methodology of the Pauline pedagogy

To “**live and give to the world Jesus Christ**” is the **principal element of the methodology of Pauline pedagogy**. This is achieved by incarnating the trinomial self definition of Christ (Jn 14:6) to the totality of the human person – “the whole person in his/her mode of being and acting: interiority, suffering, prayer, witness and action” (Alle FSP 1947, IV – VIII, 458). All human sciences should converge and aspire towards this integrality found only in God, the ultimate “*altrice*”. In God everything begins and ends “*ut unum sint*”.

Considering the institute as “teaching” (Alle FSP 1947, VIII, 59), Paulines must always be in **communion with the Church**, who continues the mission of Christ and are likewise born from the Eucharist which nourishes, sustained and inspires.

**Third element is evangelisation.** It is central in Church documents which considers the media at the service of its mission. St. John Paul II affirmed: “To evangelise the world, it is necessary to evangelise culture. And if it is true that the future of the world depends on the culture, it is also true that the future of culture depends in a great way on mass media.”. Pope Francis encouraged a “culture of encounter” symbolically defining it with “neighbourliness” (Lk 10:29). Underlined were: 1) Importance of spaces and time for reflection *vis a vis* the digital communication; 2) Importance of neighbourliness other than just being a neighbour; and, 3) Although difficulties in using the media exists, importance of considering them as a good from God which can help human growth. He added: **“It is not enough to be passersby on the digital highways, simply “connected”; connections need to grow into true encounters.”**

### 1.5 Practical tenets of the Pauline pedagogy

Looking at the future mission of the Pauline Family, Fr Alberione outlined the tenets of Pauline pedagogy: “1) Study the human sciences, 2) unify the sciences with the philosophy of sciences; and 3) demonstrate philosophy as a handmaid that leads directly into Revelation” (AD #189). **Rather than two opposing realities, reason (represented by natural sciences) and faith (represented by Revelation) for Fr Alberione are “two sisters” whose constant embrace leads to integrality and completeness** (AD #198). Continuously updating oneself on both serves personal development and evangelisation. With God’s grace and help of human knowledge, “every science will beam its own ray of light through Philosophy through theology; and the manifold sciences will also find their unity in multiplicity, and through the humility of faith the door opens on revelation, ‘*lumen gloriae*’, empowering cognition to penetrate the essence of God” (AD # 193).

In line with the tenets, Alberione invited Paulines to organize well – time and resources (*Med. ined. alle FSP*, 28/4/1960). As a handbook for formation and apostolate, AE provides possible subject

areas attentive to needs of individual recipients categorised as “*beginners* (children in the faith and non-Christians), *proficient* (adolescents in knowledge) and *perfect* (ecclesiastics or lay people who undertake full study of religion)” (AD #154-156). At the end, **the Pauline pedagogy aims not primarily at forming “great thinkers or writers who guide the masses but forming opinion makers who will be like generals guiding an army”** (AD #155).

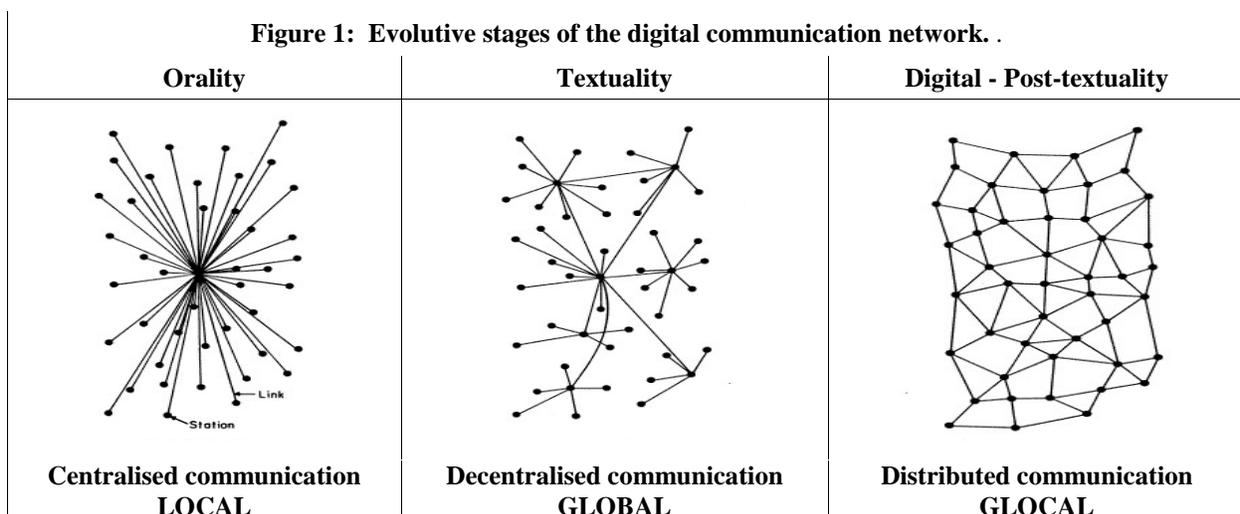
## 2. Evolution and Psychodynamics of digital communication

Communication in the digital era implies understanding its language and evolution from traditional to digital. **While traditional media distribute the contents to the people, they neither create nor easily or economically facilitate spaces for deepening, development, and distribution.** Digital communication does this, above all through the internet and social media.

### 2.1 Genesis of digital communication

The internet and social media are hallmarks of digital culture. The definition of the internet can be linked with its history involving the evolution of the culture of connectivity and communication where the exchange of information and resources occur. Two significant factors accompanied this history: fear and promise. It was out of fear of losing communication in the eventuality of another cold war that in the 1960’s the Advanced Research Project Agency (ARPA) was created, later ARPANET, for communication. In 1983, the military and university/research use of the internet was split: MILNET for military while INTERNET for university, research and common communication. In 1990, ARPANET was decommissioned and HTML (Hypertext Marked Language) was born and by 1992, around one million computers were digitally connected.

Tim Berners Lee, proposed the hypertext now known as WWW (world wide web). Among the digital technologies in year 2000 were fiber optics, satellite disks, Bluetooth and the wireless technologies, together with the introduction of additional browsers, search engines, CMS, commercial, economic and financial activities and the social media network sites.



Initially communication was only transmission of information which although immediate, stable, was also static and limited by time and space (*centralised*). It later evolved to *decentralised* and then to *distributed* i.e relationship building or socialisation. The evolution can also be outlined in three stages: **orality** (paratactic, concrete, situational language, gestures), **textuality** (analytic, abstract

language, stables, limited space, textual) and **digital/post-textuality** (exchange, fluid, unstable, self affirmation, social network).

## 2.2 Psychodynamics of digital communication – the “social media network”

Psychologists Cherly Coyle and Heather Vaughn consider social networking, **as an evolution rather than a revolution**. They affirm Charles Darwin’s notion in 1869 that social networks exists because humans are societal and require relationships in order to survive”. Their structure is similar - made up of actors (nodes and vertices) connected by relational links. Types include: Emails, chats, blogs, social video sharing, collaborative authoring, SNS, mobile apps and AV conferencing. Digital and non-digital communications are part always of a developing whole.

**Table 1: Digital and non-digital communication structure**

<b>NON- DIGITAL structured communication</b>	<b>DIGITAL - non-structured communication</b>
Members	Participants
Asynchronous communication	Synchronous communication
More stable language derived from written culture	Unstable language and derived from oral culture
Stability	Fluid
Focused on expressive-poetic and metalinguistic functions	Focused on emotive functions
Feeling of belonging	Feeling of participation
Longer duration	Shorter duration
Stable and authentic identity	Identity fluid and declared
Internationality	National
Context and source of interaction defined	Context and source of interaction undefined
Open/close	Open
Based on being/knowing	Based on doing
Can be oriented towards expressive behaviour	Oriented only on expressive behaviour and experience of identity
Convergence	Divergence
Integration	Interaction
Consumer	Prosumer
Coins	Bitcoins
Spatial interaction	Virtual (Digital)
“Selfishness”	“Selfiness”
Media literacy	Digital literacy
Digital immigrants	Digital natives

## 2.3 Major themes in digital communication

The transformation from centralised to decentralised and then distributed depict how communication itself has evolved from solely an information input to an unlimited relational participatory exchange. **It highlights not mainly the means or instruments itself which are new but the mode or ways of communicating – from the what to the how**. Here four themes arise.

### 2.3.1 Virtual publics, network identity and community.

Refers to social space which includes virtual realities, network publics, virtual communities, networked sociability and sociality, and digital connections. This network becomes spaces of possibility for information, communication, and social relations. While in traditional media “the medium is the message” (1964), **in digital communication the medium, “is really who we are, our paradigms of perception and interaction which tend to undergo modification so as to adapt to the new medium”**.

### 2.3.2 *Digital convergence, interactivity and collective cultural participation*

Convergence include media convergence, participatory culture and collective intelligence. While media convergence is principally anchored on contents and its tools for transmission and representation, participatory culture focuses on the receivers and how they, using not only tools for transmission but tools for creation, re-narrates the contents, encapsulating it in a unique form, and afterwards re-transmits it. Harold Rheingold highlights three important acts needed: coordination (acknowledging its need if one dances by oneself), collaboration (needed to dance with a partner) and cooperation (needed for organising a dance within a group).

### 2.3.3 *Authenticity, remediation and user generated content (UGC)*

Jay David Bolter, Blair MacIntyre, Maribeth Gandy, and Petra Schewitzer, maintain that “loss of aura and authenticity in the digital era is not an end of aura but rather an ongoing crisis”. Paradigm shifts have arisen. Aura and authenticity takes on a new trinomial form: **remediation, recombination and (re)production**.

De Mul proposes a database ontology – i.e. “insert, select, update and delete”. For him digital media brings infinite instances of aura and authenticity. **Aura and authenticity are not so much on the “being there” (in traditional media) as much as “being with” (in the digital social media)**. I believe that although the aura and authenticity seem to be lost it does not mean they cease to exist. Digital communication presents them anew.

### 2.3.4 *Privacy, governance, deontology, affordance of value and best practice*

Discussions regarding consumption of digital communication abound. They consist of copyright, privacy, common governance, ethical standards, affordance of value, and best practice. Ongoing treatment to each of them has been championed by significant proponents from the academic and institutional sectors alike. Their responses are mostly based on safeguarding the dual narrative networks of self: acknowledging resource outputs (copyright), protecting and enhancing (privacy and ethical standards), appropriating common policy for use and participation (governance and best practice), and identifying value stakeholders (affordance of value). More often than not, issues regarding digital communication converge on the value affordances of self: owners/keepers, shares, caretakers, distributors and monitors.

## 3. Pastoral-apostolic prospects for the Pauline pedagogy in the digital era

Knowing the richness Pauline charismatic and pedagogical heritage and the development of the culture of communication, equips us more to reflect on ten new pastoral-apostolic prospects on the legacy of Fr. Alberione. Each of them responds to ten corresponding temptations. Rather than be considered as provocative or revolutionary, the prospects, I hope can be accompanied by the prayer of Pope Francis that each one “speak frankly and listen with humility”.

### 3.1 “*Scio cui credidi*” - *Inculturating Abundantes Divitiae*

Inculturation of AD means continuing its charismatic significance. The grace in AD are not only for Fr. Alberione but continues rather in our stories. The temptation exist to make AD mainly only as footnote or endnote references in our research, theses, talks and lectures. **AD should not finish with Alberione only but must continue in us!** Our Pauline experiences must be the footnotes in the charismatic and pedagogical legacy of Fr. Alberione. This requires **inculturating AD in our lives and extending it not only for Paulines but to non-Paulines alike through us as its witnesses. We betray Alberione otherwise!** As footnotes, we are part not only of the research but moreso its first fruits

wherein the grace of God is felt and abounds. Three recommendations from St Paul: 1) Rekindle the gift you have received (recognise the value of being heirs and updating ourselves); 2) Take care of, with apostolic passion, the gift given (take care “*custodire*” what is entrusted “*affidamento*”); and, 3) faith in the *scio cui credidi* (cf. 2 Tm 1:6-14).

The temptation comes to simply bury the talents entrusted as a legitimate mode of preservation. Paulines must take care of them to show not only *scio cui credidi* (I know him in whom I have believed) but more positively *cognovit me et mihi credidit* (he knows me in whom he has believed). **God knows and believes in us Paulines!**

### 3.2 “Dare al mondo Gesù Cristo” – Giving Christ “in other words”

Christ centeredness is the principal key in Pauline pedagogy. Like St Peter (cf Acts 3:6), Fr. Alberione echoed: “Everything is here: to live Jesus Christ, Way, Truth, and Life; and to perform the charity of Christ to those populations who are deprived and hungry of him; let us in fact give the total Christ, Way, Truth and Life” (San Paolo December 1957 and CISP 862). “Giving” also means “propose”, an attitude of service and never an imposition”.

The *raison d’aire* for “giving” is the formation of the whole human person. **We give the total Christ that persons can also have a vision of the fullness to which they are destined. This proposal does not grow old in as much as it is maturity of mind, heart and will that defines an authentic human person.** Here I propose the *Pauline Communication Pedagogical Wheel*, highlighting the relational encounter between the trinomial evolution of communication (outer cycle) and the trinomial tenets of Pauline pedagogy (inner cycle). In the pedagogical task of “giving Christ” the five temptations cited by Pope Francis at the conclusion of the III Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family are likewise worth noting. Each of them is present today and needs integral pastoral responses.

In digital communication (like social media) one cannot control what people say – e.g. negative words and trolls. However, **although we cannot control what people say, we can actually offer areas or themes which people can talk about.** We need not limit evangelisation solely on religious terms (e.g. grace, sin, God, Christ) but be open to their foundational significance - goodness, love, forgiveness, etc. **Digital communication offers possibility for speaking of Christ in these “other words”.**

### 3.3. “Un semi-cieco guidato” - Pioneers and avant-gardes of evangelisation through communication

Paulines are pioneers in the use of the media for evangelisation (e.g. AD and AE). Rightly so are we! Cardinal Poupard said: “Don Alberione was not only a prophet, at times misunderstood, but also a courageous pioneer who had opened to the Church new ways of evangelisation in the contemporary world”.

**The affirmation however can be a temptation to nostalgia, to run in vain and be anchored only on the title “pioneer”. We must raise the anchor, set sail and allow it to strain forward by considering ourselves more now as avant-gardes in evangelisation through communication.** How? St Paul says, “to the extent that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule. Let us be of the same mind” (Phil 3:16). Our legacy as pioneers should be the foundation of our task as avant-gardes. Fr Sassi emphasized: “If communication falls into a myth of the past, a utopia of the future and into an all-embracing ideology, it becomes an uncontrollable phenomenon. In order that it remains useful, it must remain within the confines of “culture” to which it relates”. For us as avant-gardes, “communication is not an option, but the mode of evangelisation”. **We are on a journey to the finish line. Our imperfections should not be an excuse for not running or not rising when we fall. We**

are avant-gardes who focus more on the overall purpose the Pauline cart on evangelisation - evangelise.

### 3.4 “Benvenuto a questa casa” – Publishers as *prosumers* in the digital sphere

The evolution from oral (conveying information), to textual (mediated communication), to digital (interactive relational socialisation) highlight a focus from the means (instruments) to focus on the end (purpose). **Digital advancement along with the pioneering spirit brings the temptation to focus only on having and working with the modern means rather than working on what end we want them to serve.** We are evangelical *prosumers* in the digital sphere and we believe, as did St John Paul II that, **it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the "new culture".**

Pauline pedagogy creates didactic programs with a sense of welcome to persons and train them likewise to be *prosumers*. They become evangelizers themselves whose witness become the true contents of diffusion. Digital communication is sharing, participation and interaction. *Prosumers* follow the pattern. Here, I remediated *Social Media as Changing Business*, discussed before, to read as *Evangelisation and Pedagogy in Digital Communication* with its components.

**Translation and translators remain a challenge.** For example “*editore*” translated in English “editor” is limiting its essence which is much broader. Publisher is more suitable which encompasses editing, printing, and diffusion as intended by Alberione. We also need to re-align our use of *multimedia*, *cyberspace*, and the *virtual* for are already somewhat outdated. While recognising their value, current theorists and practitioners instead use *cross-mediality*(interaction among various multimedia) and *digital sphere* (since it is now possible to define the location of cyberspace and virtual).

### 3.5 “Finche la gente comunica avete qualcosa di fare” - Family network of evangelizers

The principal tenets of Pauline pedagogy underlined by Fr. Alberione (AD #189) **must be always seen as an encounter, between those who teach and those who learn.** Two affirmations are useful: 1) the necessity of a “continual conversion”; and, 2) the universality of the call to collaborate and evangelise in the school of the Master.

Continual conversion necessitates participating in ongoing formation and seeing its value. No Pauline can ever say he has finished learning the entire Pauline charism. Fr Alberione said: “as long as people communicate on earth you will have something to do”.

**Linked to the temptation of knowing all, is the temptation of doing it all.** Encouraging individual efforts, Alberione encouraged united efforts.

Pauline pedagogy needs to focus inward (for Paulines) and outward (for the general public). *Donec formetur* and *L' Apostolato stampa* need to be inculturated for a more general audience. There is need to inculturate not only the culture of communication but moreso our own Pauline culture wherein selfishness often also becomes apparent

### 3.6 “Fare la carita della verità” – Do an apostolate or be an apostle?

There is always the temptation of spending much time and resources for the apostolate (*fare apostolato*) to extent of neglecting to spend time and resources for the apostle (*farsi apostolo*). Equilibrium ought to be maintained which allows us, “to look up to the top of the tree whose edge we cannot see” and to “see in the roots of the same three ourselves as part of its foundation”. **This is the Pauline pedagogical tree! An active recognition of who we are allows us to do more for our apostolate. We start the “fare la carità della verità” by affirming first our identity.** The recent film *Jobs*, which recounts the story of the founder of Apple, highlights this well too. Asked why he praised the achievements of his competitors, Steve said, “**we do not win by competing nor by doing better what others are doing but by affirming, focussing and working on what we have, our**

**uniqueness, that which makes us distinct**". There is need to discover or re-discover our uniqueness and promote it.

Msgr Paul Tighe, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications (PCCS), made a vital note: "In front of new media, the main role of the PCCS, is advocacy, promote globally the importance of communication in the life of the Church and the life of the world in general". Paulines share in the advocacy. **Distinctive in Pauline mission and part of its pioneering role though is not advocating but continuing, as a primary task of its members, to "use the instruments of communication for evangelisation" and to teach others to do the same.** Looking at the specialisations per circumscriptions we see many members specialized in theology and spirituality, important and laudable. Remembering Pauline distinctiveness, how much do we promote technical specializations? We also live in a culture of "experts" where regretfully incongruity occurs. **Experts in communication are sometimes those who do not know how to communicate well and those experts in spirituality are those who find less time to pray.**

How is our collaboration with the local Church and with the institutes of the Pauline Family? Is it anchored solely on information and communication or also set sail on participation, encounter and social relations? We need to give space for other groups in our websites for example so that they too could have a space for us, where their *prosumers*, become likewise our own. **We need to rejoice in the achievement of others so as to recognise too what is distinctly ours.** This requires a conversion from *selfishness* to *selfie-ness* (literally taking a photo of oneself through a mobile or smartphone). While *selfishness* refers to producing things yourself for oneself, *selfie-ness* means producing things yourself and sharing it to others through digital media, like facebook.

### 3.7 "La nostra parrocchia è il mondo - Communication as culture

*Culture of communication* has been echoed in the documents of the Church. Pope Francis calls it as an "encounter" - not only being a "neighbour" but neighbourliness. **Here the words of Alberione that "our parish is the world" obtains an added significance. As a service, Pauline pedagogy must be clothed with an attitude of neighbourliness** beginning in our communities.

We hope to live the *Illichian* dictum of investing our meaning - Christ-centered meaning to the world, our communities and our formation institutes. We can adopt the words of Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook: "Our mission is not to connect one seventh of the world but the entire world!" While Facebook relies on the social economy to reach its goal, we rely more on the divine economy to reach our own.

Undeniably, Fr. Silvio Sassi, through his writings had passionately showered us with the Pauline truths about communication. For him, **"communication is not a mere means but a culture; it is not enough to include it in the Christian message and the Church's magisterium. It is a must to integrate them in this culture"**. Together with other Pauline writings, they form a rich treasury of reference for pedagogy that needs to be translated into doable and liveable programs and lines of action. Direct outlets of the Pauline pedagogy are our institutes along with the e-learning formation courses programmed in collaboration with recognised universities. **SPICS was a pioneer institute in communication studies in Italy! Everyone knew and acknowledged its glory. Nonetheless we bury and suffocate it more and ourselves too now by only rekindling in nostalgia such glory instead of straining forward to program innovative and enduring ways to make what it stood for breath and live anew in the world considered our parish.**

### 3.8 "Parlare di tutto cristianamente" - Evangelisation online and online evangelisation

That "we cannot control what people say in social media yet we can offer themes which people can talk about" links with Alberione's thought to "speak of everything in a Christian way" (AD #87). There is still the temptation to see media as "evil" neglecting the undeniable good can do. Pauline

pedagogy strives to find a balance between the social shaping of religion in a way that it becomes continually relevant in culture on one side and the spiritualisation of technology on the other so as to give to the means a more valuable significance in terms of helping people be who they are.

Laura Busch sees in interaction between religion and digital media, “opportunities for spiritualizing technology”. Heidi Campbell agrees noting that **just as digital media have the capacity to shape religion, there is also a need for a “religious-social shaping of technology”**. This is significant in Christopher Helland’s *religion online* (religion placed online like [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)) and, *online religion* (religion formed and practiced online like [www.beliefnet.com](http://www.beliefnet.com)). Both have strengths and weaknesses

The constructive role of digital media in evangelization should be stressed. Domenico Pompili does it while tracing the positive evolution of media and future prospects. Antonio Spadaro links these with the network of relationships that social media create while Fabio Pasqualetti highlights the social order shaped by the evolution of religious identity. Responsibility is vital and he illustrated it evoking the transformation of the concepts of *homo sapiens* to *homo technologicus*. I propose to expand this to becoming *homo Dei*. **Digital media provide people with the capacity and opportunity to become people of God.**

### 3.9 “Iniziare da Betlemme” - “New” as an attitude and not a noun

Part of our re-structuring has been the closure of some of our printing houses and journals for economical or vocational reasons. With our remaining publishing houses, our bookcentres exist, along with our pedagogical institutes (FAPCOM, COMFIL, SPICE, SPSF), biblical and communication program initiatives, digital apps and productions, e-learning, e-commerce, and pastoral and vocational promotion. The Pauline pedagogy **adopts new as an attitude, an attribute, rather than a noun referring only to the instruments**. Important and encouraged are attitudes that are “fresh, novel, innovative and original”.

“Everything starting from Bethlehem” pertains to an open attitude – investing the culture of communication with meaning. Such were the experience of the Magi who “in their brief visit to the Bethlehem learned the whole of the Gospel and left the manger transformed as apostles as well as saints”. Bethlehem conveys an attitude transforming *reasons for being*, part of the signs of the times to which Alberione was always attentive. Through them we can also create, sustain and nourish authentic relationships – first with God and then with each other.

### 3.10 “Attirare alla scuola del Divin Maestro tutti” – *L’Apostato dell’Edizione* as a didactic manual

While AD defined the genesis of the Pauline cultural and charismatic heritage, **AE defines the foundations of the Pauline pedagogy whose next edition, I believe, will be “L’Apostolato della comunicazione”**. Centered on Christ, it contains curricular subject areas not only on scripture, theology, spirituality and liturgy but likewise on the social sciences. In a broad way it hints on the likely Faculties of the Pauline pedagogy e.g. Church History: “To describe how the Church taught, how the Church led people to virtue, how the Church communicated the grace of Jesus Christ, means to write the history of the Catholic Church” (AE #197). To a possible Faculty of Social Sciences: “Politics, social sciences (sociology, law, economics) and philosophy are all valid subjects when the defence and propagation of faith and of natural and Christian morals demand it. There are two ways of writing [speaking] about social sciences – absolute way (actions of persons as members of society) or contingent way (manner of conveying social realities in general laws, sociology)” (AE #364,366).

That AE is for Pauline formation points to dual reference poles: **the formation “of” Paulines and the formation for non-Paulines alike based “on” the Pauline charism**. There is the temptation

to limit AE only for Paulines. Instead we must create more didactic programs that welcomes non-Paulines, “drawing them to the school of the Divine Master”. Here the purpose or end of the digital media becomes most vital as what Neil Postman advocated regarding “the end education”.

Developing AE as a didactic manual requires that curricular programs be formulated based on each of the social sciences underlined by Fr Alberione and aligned with regular learning standards **Without doubt we Paulines have a concrete and distinct pedagogy to contribute to the evangelising mission of the Church!** A panoramic look at Pauline specializations nonetheless shows an imbalance. **While we have a sea of specialization resources in theology, spirituality and biblical studies, the well of our resources on social sciences have been running dry.** The SSP statistics too reveal that a number of those who have specialisations would already be ineligible to teach normally, due to age limit, while others are actually assigned not in areas where they have specialized. The current general government has tried to resolve this in two ways: 1) encouraging young members to do specialized studies in communication; and, 2) monitoring specialisation study overlaps or doubling. **We have a distinct pedagogy. We are challenged to find the arena and financial shield to exercise and support it.**

## Conclusion

The genius of Pauline pedagogy will be rekindled preserving the end which Alberione himself has envisioned: **instruments of communication as specific and necessary means to an end.** Used for “good” they become authentic and valid means to bring persons to Christ – evangelisation within the words and the world currently characterised by digital technologies. Let our unique charism be our anchor and the ten pedagogical and cultural prospects set our sail on this *kairos* journey

The Pauline pedagogy in the digital era, lives in each of us Paulines who encounter persons and who form and are formed to grow responsibly. The formation we receive and give is a good that is vital and necessary. So what could be the future of Pauline pedagogy in the digital era?

The advertisement of *Leclerc Conad*, an Italian supermarket, I believe hints on it: “We cannot increase the salary of our customers yet we can increase its value!” Integrally nourished in mind heart and will whose apex is found in Christ, the Pauline pedagogy can increase the value of the identity of each person. True Fr Alberione, “had no knowledge of terms like ‘computer’, ‘IT’, ‘optic fiber’, ‘mobile and smart phones’, ‘social media’” and others (AE, foreword), but certainly he would have LIKED and adopted their good use. This he bestows on us as pedagogical “*affidamento*”. Like in Alberione’s time we still do not see the top of the Pauline pedagogical tree, yet through creative fidelity, we continuously become the roots which sustains it.