



INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS of the XI GENERAL CHAPTER of the Society of Saint Paul

*«Let yourselves be transformed
by renewing your way of thinking» (Rm 12:2)*

Called to be artisans of communion
to prophetically announce the joy of the Gospel
in the culture of communication



PREMISE

On 16 June 2019, the Superior General, Fr Valdir José De Castro, addressing all the confreres of the Congregation, announced the beginning of the journey towards the XI General Chapter. On that occasion, in addition to indicating the stages and the style, he suggested the modality to follow on the journey: *«In harmony with the Church and with the aim of trying to respond to the demands of our life and mission in today's world, we have chosen "synodality" as a methodology for the journey of preparation and celebration of the next General Chapter, in the spirit of the exhortation of Pope Francis: "The world in which we live, and which we are called to love and serve, even with its contradictions, demands that the Church strengthen cooperation in all areas of her mission. It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium". [...] As members of the Church, we want to experience this "walking together", trying to find out what the Spirit of the Lord expects of us, in an itinerary of discernment that, starting from our Pauline identity, helps us to look with objectivity»* the different realities of our Congregation, the reality of the universal Church and local Churches, the context of the culture of communication and the reality of the men and women we are called to serve.

The entire preparatory journey covered so far and guided by the ante-preparatory Commission has been characterized by this methodology and led to the drafting of the *Instrumentum laboris*, the result of the precious work of listening and discernment carried out in these two years.

This document, which we have accepted with slight modifications, is offered to the Capitulars so that they can make it the object of discernment during the General Chapter in view of the

choices they will have to make and which will determine the journey of the Congregation in the coming years.

Wishing however to be faithful to the synodal methodology adopted, it is also given as an instrument of animation and reflection to all Paulines in the preparation and celebration of the various Provincial Chapters and Regional Assemblies.

Each circumscription and each Pauline is invited to confront the *Instrumentum laboris* with this, to recognize the situation of one's own reality and to be available for a conversion of the heart, opening oneself to trust and hope. And at the same time, aware of the limitations of the document, to offer further arguments or stimuli for the Capitulars, so that discernment is the fruit of the contribution of all and of "walking together".

We trust that everyone will give their contribution in this moment of grace that the Congregation is experiencing.

In Christ the Master, in the footsteps of Saint Paul the Apostle.

Rome, 31 August 2021

The Preparatory Commission

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INTRODUCTION

A SYNODAL JOURNEY OPEN TO THE SPIRIT

a) History of the journey¹

The first phase of preparation for the XI General Chapter was characterized by a questionnaire (June 2019) and by the analysis and interpretative reading of the responses received. The goal of the 1st questionnaire was to make known the Pauline reality in the various circumscriptions regarding persons, communities, the apostolate and in general the quality of the Pauline life. In the meeting of the General Government with the Major Superiors, held in Rome in November 2019, reflecting on the results of the questionnaire, 5 important challenges were highlighted that the Congregation must face in the coming years². The first phase of preparation for the General Chapter ended here which, following the methodology of discernment assumed by the Church (cf. *Evangelii gaudium* no. 51),

¹ All the materials relating to the synodal journey in preparation for the XI General Chapter can be found at the address <https://bit.ly/3mCfNqK>

² In summary, these are the following:

- 1) There is a lack of testimony and little grounding in the Pauline spirituality, from which most of the apostolic, formative and community problems arise, as well as the loss of the sense of our mission in many confreres.
- 2) There are difficulties in fraternal life and relationships, a spirit of competition and individualism, which block teamwork and availability for service in the Congregation. The aging (physical and mental) of the members and the scarcity of vocations must also be taken into account.
- 3) There is a lack of prospects for renewal of the apostolate, creativity and enthusiasm in starting new processes (*Evangelii gaudium*, no. 222) and in seeking new forms of expression of the Pauline apostolate. Apostolic creativity must be encouraged, more space given to young people, qualify collaboration with the laity.
- 4) Focus on integral Pauline formation, initial and ongoing, more focused on mission, based on the guidelines of the Seminars on the Pauline Editor and on Formation, to foster a change of mentality and establish a fruitful dialogue with today's world.
- 5) To assume synodality as an ordinary style in community and apostolic life, in collaboration between and within the circumscriptions, in relations with the Pauline Family, to overcome self-reference and be an "outgoing" Congregation.

goes under the name of **recognizing**, that is, becoming aware and assuming the Pauline reality with its lights and shadows.

The second phase, starting from the challenges highlighted by the Major Superiors and through a 2nd questionnaire (January 2020), had the aim of discovering the profound reasons behind the stated challenges and, at the same time, of collecting suggestions to overcome them. With the communitarian response to the 2nd questionnaire, it is decided to continue the synodal journey that characterizes the preparation and celebration of the next General Chapter. In the methodology of discernment, this phase is defined as **interpreting**, that is, discovering and understanding the “ultimate” causes on which to intervene so that the goal of the General Chapter can be achieved: *«Let yourselves be transformed by renewing your way of thinking» (Rm 12:2). Called to be artisans of communion to prophetically announce the joy of the Gospel in the culture of communication.*

The Pre-preparatory Commission carefully analysed the responses to the 2nd questionnaire and the fruit that resulted is the present *Instrumentum laboris*, drawn up to be the basis for the discernment of the Capitulars. Given that the pandemic situation generated by Covid-19 lasted longer than expected and the celebration of the Chapter itself was postponed, the Pre-preparatory Commission then proposed a short and specific 3rd questionnaire (April 2021), addressed to the circumscription Governments on the impact of the pandemic in our Circumscriptions. The result has been inserted as an “appendix” at the end of this *Instrumentum laboris*. The latter was delivered to the Preparatory Commission immediately after its appointment. After a careful analysis, the Commission finally adopted it with some changes in its first meeting (25-26 August 2021) so that, in line with the synodal journey, it is sent to all Paulines in view of the circumscription Chapters and Assemblies.

The third phase, always following the method of discernment, concerns the action proper to the Chapter Fathers who are called to **choosing** the actions and guidelines on which to guide the Congregation in the coming years. The contribution of suggestions and guidelines given by the communities and reported in the *Instrumentum laboris* is an aid offered to them in the action of discernment and choice that they will have to make.

Obviously, after the celebration of the General Chapter there will be a further phase: that of reception and implementation by the General Government, Provinces, Regions, Religious Communities and individual confreres of the directives emerging from the XI General Chapter.

b) The method of discernment

The Pre-preparatory Commission has decided to adopt the method of discernment used at the Synod on Young People, which is developed in 3 phases: recognizing, interpreting, and choosing. Pope Francis already proposed it in the *Evangelii gaudium* (no. 51).

Discernment is rooted in an act of faith in God, who is Lord of history and leads it with the mysterious and life-giving presence of his Spirit. Discernment, therefore, is above all *listening* to God and his Word, the Church and the Pope, humanity and the world of communication, the voice of our Founder, our communities and individual confreres.

Through sincere listening, the dynamic of discernment takes us deeply *to find the reasons and the roots of what we are experiencing*. This allows us to verify our reference values, to question our habits, so as to be creatively faithful to the only mission that has always been entrusted to the Congregation: to evangelize in communication and with communication.

Discernment thus becomes a pastoral and apostolic tool, capable of *identifying the paths to follow*, proposing meaningful and useful ways to today's humanity, offering orientations and suggestions not pre-established or packaged behind the desk but the result of a process that allows one to follow the Spirit in order to be and to remain in the world like our father Saint Paul: Pauline prophets and sentinels.

As Pope Francis said on 3 October 2018, the first day of the Synod on Young People, «discernment is the method and at the same time the goal we set ourselves: it is based on the conviction that God is at work in world history, in life's events, in the people I meet and who speak to me. For this reason, we are called to listen to what the Spirit suggests to us, with methods and in paths that are often unpredictable».

An interesting perspective for personal and community reflection can be that of comparing the method of discernment chosen for the *Instrumentum laboris* with the Pauline method of Way, Truth and Life, the heart of our charism³. Interesting connections are perceived that can be useful for our deepening.

c) Structure of the text of the *Instrumentum laboris*

The text of the *Instrumentum laboris* kept in mind the five challenges highlighted by the Major Superiors and that were the basis of the 2nd questionnaire. Analysing the responses received in the 2nd questionnaire, it was considered appropriate to group the five challenges into three central thematic nuclei. In the first thematic nucleus, “*The Pauline and his charismatic roots*, the first and second challenges converge. In the second nucleus, “*The Pauline on*

³ « To really orient ourselves entirely in the way of Jesus Christ, making ourselves a Way, Truth, Life! since this is not a method, a philosophy, a morality, but it is the method, the philosophy, the morality, the Apostolate, the secret, according to man and according to revelation, according to nature and according to grace». James Alberione, *Carissimi in San Paolo*, 1971, p. 19.

mission: *Integral Formation for the Mission*”, the third and fourth challenges converge. The third nucleus, “*A synodal Congregation*”, is entirely dedicated to the fifth challenge on synodality and also groups other themes, for example the relationship with the local Church, with the laity and with the Pauline Family, always in a synodal perspective.

As mentioned above, in the text of the *Instrumentum laboris*, each of the three thematic nuclei was developed following the three moments that characterize the method of discernment: recognizing, interpreting, choosing. The text of each of these parts is reflected in the answers to the questionnaire and often brings the words back to the letter. To underline that they are not three independent parts, but a single path.

- Recognizing our situation

The first step is that of looking and listening. It requires paying attention to reality. It requires humility, proximity and empathy, so as to be in harmony and perceive what are the joys and hopes, sadness and anguish (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, no 1) of the Pauline world. In this first phase, attention is focused on recognizing the characteristic features of the Pauline reality in its entirety.

- Interpreting in the light of faith

The second step is a deepening of what has been recognized. Starting from the answers to the 2nd questionnaire, the Pre-preparatory Commission has tried to point out some of the root causes that generate the difficulties recognized in the first step. It is a question of going in depth, seeking with truth and honesty the causes and expressing the reasons for what we have recognized. In order to formulate balanced assessments it is important to avoid an idealizing or blaming attitude. This is a delicate phase, which will involve the Capitulars in a particular way, because they will have to interpret in the light of the Spirit what has been recognized in reality

- **Choosing**, identifying future choices

Only in the light of the vocation received is it possible to understand what concrete steps the Spirit calls us to and in what direction we must move to respond to his call. In this third phase of discernment, it is necessary to examine congregational tools and practices, and to cultivate the inner freedom necessary to choose those that best allow us to achieve the goal, abandoning those that prove to be the least capable of doing it. It is therefore an operational evaluation and a critical verification, not a judgment on the value or meaning that those same means have been able or can have in different circumstances or periods. This step will be able to identify, where necessary, an intervention of reform, a change of congregational, formative and apostolic practices, in order to avoid the risk of crystallizing them.

d) Conclusion: initiating processes

Pope Francis, recalling a thought from Card. Newman said, *«“Here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often”. Naturally, he is not speaking about changing for change’s sake, or following every new fashion, but rather about the conviction that development and growth are a normal part of human life, even as believers we know that God remains the unchanging centre of all things... We need to initiate processes and not just occupy spaces»* (Audience with the Roman Curia, 21 December 2019).

The intent of this *Instrumentum laboris* is to help the Capitulars to initiate processes that generate new dynamics in the Congregation and to ensure that the Final Document of the General Chapter is wide-ranging, in the wake of what Pope Francis asked at the Synod on Young People: *«Let us therefore work to “spend time with the future”, to take from this Synod not merely a document – that generally is only read by a few and criticized by many – but above all concrete pastoral proposals capable of fulfilling the Synod’s purpose. In other words, to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together*

relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands, and inspire in young people – all young people, with no one excluded – a vision of the future filled with the joy of the Gospel» (Pope Francis, 3 October 2018).

First nucleus

Called to be...

**THE PAULINE
AND HIS CHARISMATIC ROOTS**

RECOGNIZING our situation

I. The characteristics of a true apostle

Our Founder, Father James Alberione, teaches us that *«An Apostle is one who bears God within and radiates him everywhere. An Apostle is a holy person who stores up treasures; and bestows the surplus on others. The Apostle has a love-filled heart for God and for the people»* (*Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, IV, 277-278).

The Founder describes the fundamental characteristics of a true apostle, whose model, for us, is Saint Paul. The words of the Founder serve to challenge us with the panorama described by the majority of the Paulines in the 2nd questionnaire in preparation for the XI General Chapter. Blessed Alberione helps us to give due weight to the reality perceived in our communities, which require us to intensify our interior life, to strengthen love for God and for men. Some confreres speak of the *«challenge of a serious experience of God and of a missionary, innovative, and prophetic passion»*. Others stress that *«the challenge of our Congregation today is to strengthen spirituality and to have missionary courage»*.

On the other hand, excessive trust in ourselves, in the structures, and resources available seems to have moved us away from the ultimate Reality, leading us to an exacerbated activism and a merely corporate mentality. It is as if we had let the new idols (well-being, comfort, or the *«trap of mere economic gain»*) penetrate our realities, preventing the adoration of the only true God and weakening the sense of our religious consecration.

A secularist vision of reality then spreads, which logically provokes “spiritual worldliness (or relaxation)” and purely functional relationships. This spiritual relaxation and this secular vision of reality do not happen without consequences. These are, in

the opinion of many Paulines, the causes of most of the problems of the community and of the loss of the sense of our mission.

2. Communion and witnessing

Numerous communities highlighted, in their responses to the 2nd questionnaire, the problem of the lack of witnessing, largely related to *«individualism, the search for personal interests and even the struggle for power»*. Many speak of self-reference which damages the Pauline life in the various spheres: community, formation, and apostolate.

To strengthen the spiritual life, the need emerges to promote *«the culture of encounter»*, understood as total dedication, in communion with other brothers, whose mission is the goal. It also highlights the need for a *«religious obedience»* that only a person who is mature and purified from selfishness can understand it as *«the greatest freedom»* (UPS I, 254) and as *«the virtue that guarantees the entire life of an Institute»* (UPS I, 523).

This lack of the culture of encounter (described by many members as *«loss of the sense of community»*) is seen as proof of infidelity to the Pauline vocation, which is often manifested concretely in what Father Alberione calls *«closed and parasitic characters, the apathetic, the lukewarm, those who instead of pulling the cart are watching those who toil»* (UPS I, 256).

Finally, it is urgent to promote, as the Founder did in his time, the sense of the group, the sharing of values, teamwork, family spirit and other virtues related to the sociability and communion of people (cf. UPS II, 192).

For deepening:

- What personal resonances has the careful reading of the text aroused in us?

- *In which elements of this synthesis do we recognize ourselves most? Which elements should be more highlighted and which should be integrated?*
- *In our reading of the reality proposed by the text, do we think some important aspects are missing?*
- *Is there any positive element that we would like to highlight?*

INTERPRETING in the light of faith

This second phase is dedicated to discernment, that is to discover and understand the profound reasons for what we have previously recognized present in the Pauline congregational reality, to arrive at corresponding and coherent choices. It should be borne in mind that it is sometimes difficult to clearly separate the reality presented in the “recognizing” part from the underlying causes, reported in “interpreting”. There may therefore be repetitions. At the same time, the causes that are identified here should not only be seen in a negative sense, but also as an expression of a value that has failed or has become blurred and that one wants to recover in order to generate new life.

3. Spiritual worldliness and loss of the sense of consecration

«The works of God are done with the men of God» (Alberione, CISP, p. 210).

«It is your life that must speak, a life from which the joy and beauty of living the Gospel and following Christ shines through» (Pope Francis, 21 November 2014).

«There is a lack of testimony and little grounding in the Pauline spirituality, from which most of the apostolic, formative and community problems arise, as well as the loss of the sense of our mission in many confreres» (First challenge).

These three quotations frame very well what spiritual worldliness consists of and the loss of the sense of consecration. The observations that the confreres make in this regard speak of «ignorance of the Pauline spirit», «little knowledge of spirituality», «loss of passion-dedication for the mission», «spiritual relaxation», «lack of profound relationship with God». They charge often all this to an «insufficient formation», to a «poor knowledge of spirituality, of the life of consecration», of the Pauline charism.

Certainly our spirituality, consecration, and the Pauline charism must be known, studied, and deepened. From their knowledge, love for these gifts begins and strengthens. However, the confreres also denounce an insufficient “incarnation” of the Pauline spirituality, of the sense of consecration and of the charism in the personal life of the Paulines, in their apostolic action and in their relationships. What value, then, can a spirituality, a consecration, and a charism not incarnated have? They become only words that fill the air but do not support and motivate the Pauline and his mission. It is our life in the first place that must speak and communicate.

The example of the farmer can help us understand better. He cultivates the land, cares for plants and does it with love, with dedication, with constancy, with sacrifice. In wanting to be men of God to do the works of God, the action of “cultivating” our spirituality, consecration, and charism, following the example of a good farmer, indicates the path to be taken to fall in love and make others fall in love with the Pauline vocation.

4. Individualism, lack of the culture of encounter and loss of the sense of community

We could blame today’s society if individualism predominates in our communities too, if we have lost the sense of community and the value of the encounter. But this does not help us to improve the quality of our Pauline life. In fact, we *«live in the world, but we are not of the world»* (Jn 17:14). For the choice of life to which we have been called, we are committed to not conforming to the mentality of this world (cf. Rom 12:3), *«always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for reason for your hope»* (1Pt 3:15).

Individualism recalls narcissism, being focused on one’s self, on one’s own life plan. At the end of all this there is only “sterility”, no life, no dreams, no vocations, without new projects generated. It is necessary to generate life within us and around us, attached to the

true Life which is Christ the Lord in communion with the life of the brothers.

The lack of the culture of encounter highlights a strong self-reference present in personal and community life and in our apostolic and formative work, which often makes us believe that we are superior to others or to think that we do not need others. It also highlights the fear of supporting and initiating an encounter with others, probably due to the little cultural and professional consistency of one's personality, but also to the little consistency and immaturity of a disincarnate spiritual and Pauline life. In other words, the fear of "going out". *«Don't be closed in on yourselves»*, Pope Francis asks us instead, *«don't be stifled by petty squabbles, don't remain a hostage to your own problems. These will be resolved if you go forth and help others to resolve their own problems, and proclaim the Good News. You will find life by giving life, hope by giving hope, love by giving love»* (Apostolic Letter on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life, 21 November 2014).

The cause of the loss of the sense of community must be sought in a transversal way in the elements that we have highlighted and does not depend on a single factor. Pope Francis further says: *«Communion is lived first and foremost within the respective communities of each Institute»* (Idem). The community should be seen as a "theological place" in which I build my path of holiness, I exercise in virtues, I create life together with the confreres.

What has been said so far makes sense and is understood only if our Pauline life is read and lived in the dimension that has always characterized the witnesses of the Good News: it is the value of "prophecy". *«I am counting you to "wake up the world"»*, Pope Francis urges us, *«since the distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy. Prophets receive from God the ability to scrutinize the times in which they live and to interpret events: they are like sentinels who keep watch in the night and sense the coming of the dawn (cf. Is 21:11-12). Prophets know God and they know the men and women who are their brothers and*

sisters. They are able to discern and denounce the evil of sin and injustice. Because they are free, they are beholden to no one but God, and they have no interest other than God. Prophets tend to be on the side of the poor and the powerless, for they know that God himself is on their side. So I trust that, rather than living in some utopia, you will find ways to create “alternate spaces”, where the Gospel approach of self-giving, fraternity, embracing differences, and love of one another can thrive» (Idem).

5. Activism and business mentality

Activism and business mentality are constant dangers and deviations from which our Founder already warned us. We should continually check on their presence and work on the causes that generate them. *«Our apostolate», wrote Fr Alberione, «has a part that seems to bring it closer to industry (e.g. printing press) and has a part that seems to bring it closer to business (bookshop); instead, it is all a means for preaching, like the pen in the hand of the Doctor of the Church. It is necessary to beware, even externally, of not showing in yourselves the common practises of merchants or business men» (Anima e corpo per il Vangelo, p. 188).*

Our Superior General also often deals with this theme in his letters. «How sad is the consecrated life», he wrote in 2018, «where there is no love, no gratuitousness, no true communication, no prophecy, no encounter! It is natural that we must confront ourselves with business and with the laws of commerce and industry; it is evident that we must organize well the different areas and sectors of the apostolate unified in a common project; it is equally necessary that we must respect the roles and be attentive to labour laws, etc. But we must at the same time remember that all these things are actually means, never the end, and on this, our Founder has already warned us. History teaches us that where business criteria enter instead of the Gospel – that set of values that includes love, service, fraternity, mercy, justice, peace... –, sooner or

later, the ruin is certain» (Valdir José De Castro, Apostles-Communicators: For a culture of encounter, 6 May 2018).

There is probably a lack of correct distinction between being professional and having a business mentality. It is clear that we must be professional, organized, and serious: communication professionals, *professionals of God*... but with an evangelical mentality, not a corporate one. It does not mean being amateurs or beginners. Perhaps it is appropriate not to use the word “professionals”, which refers to the profession (ours is a vocation), and to prefer the term “experts”, which refers to experience, to the testimony of life.

Activism, indicated by many as the origin of the fragmentation of community life and spiritual relaxation, calls into question the orderly management of one’s time on the basis of the priorities that each gives to his life. Reading Chapter 3 of Qoheleth helps us in this: «*There is a time for everything, a time for everything under heaven*».

The excessive concentration of activity must be framed in its right dimension and with *parresia*, not generalized. It only affects some people. In fact, not all Paulines are overburdened with work and responsibility. This has a twofold aspect: on the one hand there is the concentration of responsibilities and positions on some people, with related risks to one’s health, fatigue, and feeling of emptiness; on the other there is the lack of availability from others (who are on the rise), who do not want to take on responsibility for the community and the apostolate and prefer to remain “in the parking area”. Often then activism, which is also a reality to be monitored and on which to intervene, is indicated as an *a priori* disease, on the basis of preconceptions and prejudices, without real response. It also often becomes an alibi to justify not participating in the Eucharistic Visit, Mass, community meetings.

For deepening:

- *What personal resonances has the careful reading of the text aroused in us?*
- *In which elements of this synthesis do we recognize ourselves most? Which elements should be more highlighted and which should be integrated?*
- *In interpreting our reality, do we think some important aspects are missing?*

CHOOSING: Identifying future choices

The following are the proposals that were most shared in the first phase of discernment, carried out in the various Circumscriptions. We keep the original formulation, even if the list may not be homogeneous.

6. Spiritual life and charismatic sources

- a) It is asked to recover the roots of one's Pauline life through the Eucharist and listening to the Word of God, through personal and community prayer.
- b) It is suggested to make the Centre of Spirituality more functional, International and circumscriptional, in order to help us understand more and more our spirituality and our charism centred on Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life, on Saint Paul and Mary Queen of the Apostles, through the writings of the Founder and other documents of the Congregation.
- c) It is proposed to make the most of the year of the Course on the Charism in Rome (and other similar initiatives of the circumscriptions).
- d) Together with the Founder's writings, it is suggested to go back to read and study continuously the Letters of Saint Paul (and their commentaries) in order to acquire more and more his mental and apostolic openness.

7. Community life and authority

- e) The Superior is asked to be above all an "animator" and not just an administrator, promoting spaces for dialogue and fraternal listening in the community and individually. Be a model of Pauline religious and apostolic life so as to be a credible person.

- f) It is recommended that community life be lived in the name of harmony and fraternal communion. Formal and informal community meetings should be encouraged, where everyone can feel welcomed and accepted. The brother must be seen as a gift, the respect and appreciation of the other must be cultivated («*Anticipate one another in showing honour*», Rom 12:10). Everyone should be committed to being artisan of communion.
- g) To give importance to having short and long-term community project is underlined, prepared by the whole community, on which to regularly discuss also with the circumscription Government, verifying that the life and apostolate of the community correspond to our charism.
- h) One is advised to renounce acquired security and privileges, leading a personal life of convenience, far from religious values, and to contribute instead to community life in everything, living «*in constant conversion*» (Alberione).

8. Vocations

- i) One is invited to recognize the situation of scarcity of vocations as a problem of the Congregation on a world level, even if for some we should rather speak of a scarcity of strategies, of determination in this field. There is a need for constant commitment to vocations, all year round and by all means, and above all to intensify prayer.
- j) It is necessary to insert ourselves more visibly into the people of God and into the vocational pastoral activities of the local Churches. Vocation ministry must also be promoted through our apostolic works, presenting our charismatic identity at the service of society and the Church.
- k) Every Pauline is asked to promote vocational awareness. Each Pauline must appreciate and love his own vocation

in order to witness to it and to propose it with joy, both inside and outside the community. There is a need for more joyful and fraternal communities so that young people can say: «*Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*» (Zech 8:23).

- l) It is asked to motivate and integrate the Aggregated Institutes and Cooperators in the vocational pastoral care of the Pauline Family.
- m) To live in the territories and places where young people are today (with an *ad hoc* project) is advised. Among the new vocational strategies, a project for a digital youth centre could be launched and a model of volunteerism with two objectives could be organized: to support the Pauline mission and to be a source for cultivating new vocations.

9. Aging

- n) One is asked to appreciate and value the elderly for their apostolic witness, making them feel part of the community's activities, valuing them even in the simplest services and helping them to rediscover the apostolate of prayer and suffering.
- o) Aging is a challenge that must be faced with a specific project: human and material resources, reorganization of communities.
- p) It is recommended that each Province prepare a protocol to help members age "well", giving practical indications for physical and spiritual health (a sort of health etiquette).
- q) It should be remembered that it could be useful to deepen the psychology of the elderly through formation courses. It is suggested to plan a community health pastoral plan, including meetings with geriatricians, nutritionists, etc.

- r) As far as possible, it is recommended that the elderly live in active communities, as they are a presence that inspires young people and the whole community. Integration between generations is important: everyone learns and everyone has something to teach, both young and old.

For deepening:

- *After having examined the proposals presented in the 2nd questionnaire in preparation for the General Chapter, we are now called to identify the principal choices for the next six years. What can we realistically do to face the challenges that emerged at a general and circumscription level? What proposals would you add?*

Second nucleus

***... to prophetically announce
the joy of the Gospel
in the culture of communication.***

**THE PAULINE ON MISSION:
INTEGRAL FORMATION FOR THE MISSION**

RECOGNIZING our situation

10. Formation and Mission

In this nucleus, the need emerges for our Congregation to overcome the dichotomy between Formation and Mission, together with the urgent search for the antidote against the risk of an incomplete personality and apostolate. In other words, the lack of an integral Pauline formation is highlighted, understood as the development and maturation of our person on the basis of the integral Christ: Way, Truth, and Life, which involves the whole man: mind, will, heart (cf. Gal 2:20; 4:19).

In this regard, the 2nd *International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers* (2017) and the 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* (2019) underline the need to engage on the Pauline integral formation, initial and continuous, in order to favour a change of mentality and establish a fruitful dialogue with today's world.

What are the elements that highlight this need? An overview of the results of the 2nd questionnaire shows a marked cultural, intellectual and professional poverty (knowledge, language and technique, in the words of Alberione, *UPS II*, 193) and the need for preparation and specific skills in constant updating, to respond effectively to the challenges of today's world, which appears increasingly like a "global village".

This concern today is nothing new. Starting from the spirituality of Saint Paul, Primo Maestro urged his children to engage in the four fields (spirituality, study, apostolic activity, poverty) that lead to the assimilation of the total Christ, in order to respond adequately to our mission. It is a unitary formation that includes human, religious, and apostolic life, so as to reach the perfect man in Christ, that is, to reach the goal of holiness. It is a formative commitment that never ends (cf. *Const. and Dir.*, Art. 156).

The aging of our confreres, the constant departure from the Congregation, and the lack of vocations make it even more urgent to strengthen integral formation. A large number of Paulines underline the «scarcity of models of Pauline life» and the fact that «our lifestyle does not attract the new generations». All this pushes us to reconsider our way of living in community and of doing apostolate as “Pauline Editors”⁴. The image of the artisan can illuminate us: formation, in fact, is like an artisan activity that requires demanding and continuous work, and can give splendid results, generating true works of art.

II. At the root of our charism

Closely connected to the need for an integral Formation, there is the urgency, underlined by the majority of the confreres – especially from the new generations – to guarantee full “creative fidelity” to the Pauline charism in step with social, cultural, communicative, and ecclesial changes. It is not a question of abandoning traditional media, but of firmly embracing all the variants of current communication (in particular those offered by the digital world) with a new mentality, more open and universal, which leads us to reconsider our structures and help to overcome the fear and self-reference that prevent us from being an “outgoing” Congregation.

⁴ «Every Pauline, by specific vocation, is an “editor”. This is the “unique purpose” – Fr Alberione would say – of his life and his action, of his vocation and mission. The Pauline is a man called by Christ and consecrated to be an apostle of communication, to be essentially an “editor”, he who gives shape to an experience, who writes or translates his personal and community life of faith and encounter with Christ in words, texts, images, sounds, videos, bytes or in any other form that the technology gradually develops; but also in experiences and initiatives where every language is at the service of the enculturation of the Gospel with and in communication. One who, in the example of Mary, gives (edit) the Saviour to the world». Editorial Guidelines. Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate, 2018, no. 1.2. For further deepening see also: *The Pauline Editor. Artisan of communion in a connected world*, Annual Letter of the Superior General, 2021.

To do this it is necessary to «*be transformed by renewing our way of thinking*» (cf. Rm 12:2), that is, to live a strong integration to Christ that pushes us to a renewed pastoral sensitivity, so that the encounter with the Lord is an accessible experience in all forms of communication of all times. Otherwise, there are no prospects for renewal of the apostolate, creativity and enthusiasm for facing new processes (cf. *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 222), giving more space to young people.

With patience and paying attention to all the brothers, the Congregation must seek the right balance in the organization of apostolic work according to the corporate methodology, in particular in the organizational chart and in the job description (detailed depiction of responsibilities of each). Next to this concern is the great and constant question of how and what to do to take care both of our interlocutors as well as those who collaborate in our mission (lay collaborators). It is known that the degree of attention in listening to our interlocutors affects the results of our mission, but listening, attention and formation of our lay collaborators are equally important, who must be perceived not as an appendix, but as a gift in the exercise of the apostolate because they participate in our charism, thanks to their competence and belonging to the Church.

For deepening:

- *What personal resonances has the careful reading of the text aroused in us?*
- *In which elements of this synthesis do we recognize ourselves most? Which elements should be more highlighted and which should be integrated?*
- *In our reading of the reality proposed by the text, do we think some important aspects are missing?*
- *Is there any positive element that we would like to highlight?*

INTERPRETING in the light of faith

12. Lacking in integral formation: cultural, intellectual and professional poverty

During the 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* (2019) the need for a radical change in our formation itineraries emerged in order to be able to face the different needs brought by the “epochal change” that we are experiencing and which has influenced in a profound way society, the Church, the world of communication. The Superior General, Fr Valdir José De Castro, already at the opening of the Seminar reminded us that *«integral formation is another challenge for every Pauline, a task that must accompany him throughout his life. It is a process that involves the experience of Jesus, the balance between his faculties (mind, will, sentiments...) and between the four wheels of the Pauline cart, the relationships with others and with creation. It is a journey that includes the human and Christian dimension, of consecrated life, of the apostolate, of the ecology... We say “integral formation”, but we insist: of Pauline colour»*.

From the answers to the 2nd questionnaire, we see that we still have a long way to go in this field: probably the conclusions of the Seminar itself have not yet reached the base, in every community. The Congregation suffers from cultural, intellectual, and professional poverty, the result of inadequate or non-existent formation: in some cases because it has not been offered, but in many others because the members do not cultivate “studiousness”, that is, they do not demonstrate predisposition or motivations for learn new things, to update oneself. A circumscription has well remembered that *«to cultivate is to give constant care and time like the action of the farmer or the artisan, it is to cultivate in order to establish roots, to allow growth; it is not a simple intellectual action»*. In this sense, it is a continuous and demanding action. Many members, however, already feel they are

“experts” in their field and for this reason they do not see the need to continuously update themselves.

Different circumscriptions reiterate that it is «important to have prepared formators, in love with God and the Pauline apostolate because the first formation is the example of life», but not all are aware that the formator alone is not enough. As an African proverb says: «It takes an entire village to raise a child». The community, in the formation process, has a central role that should not be forgotten or overlooked. If our communities are not stable, serene, joyful, a place of witness, etc., it is useless to criticize the formators.

If we really want to *«prophetically announce the joy of the Gospel in the culture of communication»*, we must promote the formation of the future “Pauline Editor” that educates responsible people, capable of making choices, from the smallest to the grandest, *«because life is a time lived from between one choice to another»*, as one circumscription points out. Formation must be integral and serious, remembering that integral formation, which leads to living the total Christ, is that which makes the Pauline a person strong in human values, immersed in the culture in which he lives, with a great maturity in faith, with a clear charismatic identity, with an open mind, sensitive to the needs of society, and capable of working in a team. Formation must be seen as an ongoing process that keeps the person, the community and the Congregation going.

13. Dichotomy between formation and mission

A second theme that emerged clearly is the dichotomy between formation and mission. There is an increasingly strong demand from young people to be fully involved in the apostolate. At the same time, some older members show a certain reluctance to entrust certain roles to young people, because they believe that they are not yet prepared and need to be better formed.

Specifically with regard to the indispensable link between formation and apostolate, it is valid to recall the book *The Apostolate*

of the Edition that, in its 1944 edition, was presented as a “directive manual of formation and apostolate”. Among other orientations, this work of Fr Alberione sought to help Paulines to deepen the meaning of “apostle” and “apostolate” in the horizon of the Pauline charism, and presented some essential needs to respond fully to the apostolic vocation, including, “feeling with Jesus Christ; feeling with the Church; feeling with Saint Paul”. In the opening address to the 2nd International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission, Fr Valdir José De Castro recalled that *«in our Congregation, formation, as we have said, is always in view of responding to our apostolic vocation, which is nothing other than evangelizing, an essential task of the Church’s life itself.. (...) Our challenge is to prepare ourselves in the best possible way for our mission so that evangelization becomes true communication that illuminates the world, the ways of relating to God, the relationships between people and the environment and, finally, that it arouses fundamental values for the men and women of today»*.

The XI General Chapter should seriously consider the discussion on this dichotomy, which according to some circumscriptions is the result of a lack of dialogue between those responsible for formation and those of the apostolate. Some point out that *«we have not been able to connect formative and apostolic projects so that our religious life is imbued with the apostolic spirit and all apostolic activity is animated by the religious spirit. In other words, we must integrate the formative project into the apostolic one in the famous formula that summarizes the double requirement of Consecrated Life: be active in contemplation and contemplative in action»*. In many circumscriptions, the formation lter is not kept up to date. Sometimes it is too conceptual a document, written only to respect a canonical formality to be presented to the General Government, while application and evaluation are lacking.

Today's communication, which has become a real culture, offers us many possibilities and shows how Fr Alberione’s proposal is increasingly urgent and current. However, due to the lack of connection between the Pauline formation and the mission,

according to some we sometimes form only managers without the sense of consecration or clericalized religious who do not understand the meaning of the consecrated Pauline for a specific mission. Other circumscriptions stress the lack of preparation and formation in order to respond to the challenges of today's society (interlocutors), as well as to develop and manage new forms of apostolate that go beyond the press. There is no credible preparation for the proclamation of the Word in a secularized, de-Christianized and multicultural society.

«We must go back to measuring ourselves with the models that have lived and effectively communicated the Gospel: Saint Paul and Alberione. It is by looking at them that we form a Pauline Christian mentality, which allows us to overcome the dichotomy between spiritual and apostolic life», reiterates a circumscription. «Perhaps we need, in the formation Iter», they add, «some practical guidelines to make our relationship with Saint Paul more alive and fruitful. Blessed James Alberione presents him to us as the true founder and recognizes these roles for him: he is father, teacher, model and protector». Saint Paul is a true and suitable artisan of communion and communication and can illuminate us on this journey.

Foremost, we must promote a full configuration to Christ and then a full identity based on communication as a culture, in order to be able to read the internal scenarios of our interlocutors and provide them with an effective service of evangelization. Pauline formation must always be “for the mission”, which implies being very clear what our mission is “today”.

14. Loss of passion for mission, fear of change, inadequacy on the new communication languages

A circumscription highlighted that «the dichotomy between formation and mission is largely due to the idea that updating the Pauline charism is resolved simply by introducing the latest technology invented in the field of communication in formation programs or apostolic activities.

First of all, we must remember that updating the charism is not limited to updating instruments, but first of all updating our mentality and dispositions, in order to be able to operate in the new contexts of communication». This exhortation helps us to understand the third theme highlighted in this nucleus: the loss of passion for the mission, intimately connected to the fear of change (of innovation), to the difficulty of adapting to the new languages of communication (we are only good consumers of technology) and the little courage to take risks (getting out from the comfort zone).

If, as we have already seen, many Paulines are formed to be managers or simply “chaplains”, the charismatic and entrepreneurial spirit that characterized the Founder and the first generations is evidently lacking. The professionalism assumed in recent decades has become bureaucracy and has chained creativity and innovation in our apostolic structures. Authoritativeness has taken the place of authority, the economy (trade) has supplanted the mission. As a consequence, we are witnessing the widespread loss of passion for the apostolate, understandable when we let go of being religious to become managers-supervisors. The joy of consecration and mission disappears, and with it the boldness and prophetic dimension of our mission disappear.

In this scenario, some also include the little capacity for sacrifice, the difficulty of making themselves available for what the Congregation needs. The renewal of the apostolate cannot take place except through personal transformation and the renewal of the way of thinking, as the Pauline passage chosen as the theme of the next General Chapter proposes (cf. Rom 12: 2). We need to overcome the self-referential mentality that blocks us in the past. A circumscription reminds us that *«the renewal of the apostolate arises from every religious who lives in constant conversion, every Pauline who opens himself to the charismatic intuition of the Founder; this implies dying to the personal ego, consolidating teamwork and being creative in carrying out the service that the Church asks of us»*. This goes beyond

physical age and that is why aging emphasized in different responses must not prevent the transformation of mind and practice.

The fear of change leads us to be attached to what gives us security, that is, to the press, books and periodicals, which (still) are profitable. Among the causes that make the renewal of our apostolate difficult is the instrumental apostolic vision that prevents us from understanding the current logics of communication that are more related to mentality and culture, as expressed in the Congregation's *Editorial Guidelines* (2018).

Another cause identified in different circumscriptions is the inability to get out of the comfort zone, to overcome cosiness, to overcome apathy: *«One does not want to work hard»* replied a circumscription, *«we do the minimum necessary»*. This attitude is certainly connected to the issues that emerged in the first nucleus of this document, especially to individualism and the lack of zeal and apostolic enthusiasm, focused on economic gain. It is worth remembering, however, this reflection made in a circumscription: *«The closure in oneself determines the doing of the things that have always been done. The fear of opening up, going out, confronting, dialoguing with others, with the outside world, leads to preagonic isolation. All these fears are determined by the lack of consistency of the person from an intellectual, spiritual, relational aspect»*. Another circumscription states: *«We do not always cultivate communion or the desire to support new forms of apostolate because on many occasions it is the criticisms and the lack of love for the brother that stop these initiatives. In other cases, it is the internal struggles for power that stifle these new expressions of the apostolate»*.

From the answers to the questionnaire, however, we can also collect several positive elements, aware that we have great resources to keep the apostolate dynamic and creative: a well-rooted spirituality, which finds in Saint Paul a reference model, free from frills or devotionism; a charism that sees in the collaboration with the laity a winning style and that finds in the Pauline Family a

unique place of collaboration and communion, where different sensitivities become a source of wealth; we are surrounded by undoubted secular professionalism in various fields; a story that, in its alternating events, has also given us a certain experience from which to learn and to reflect on; circumscriptions with a clear vocational vitality. We need to make the most of these elements and try to *«not be simple text multipliers but dynamic creators of content and meaning to offer to specialists in new communication technologies for men and women of today»*.

Starting from our charismatic heritage, all Paulines are required to be attentive to the signs of the times in order to stay abreast of the culture of communication. This requires a profound reflection on cultural and formative diversity, to work together at the level of the Congregation, of the Pauline Family and of the Church.

For deepening:

- *What personal resonances has the careful reading of the text aroused in us?*
- *In which elements of this synthesis do we recognize ourselves most? Which elements should be more highlighted and which should be integrated?*
- *In the interpretation of our reality, do we think some important aspects are missing?*
- *Our being called to be in the Church, is our apostolate an ecclesial patrimony now?*

CHOOSING: Identifying future choices

The following are the proposals that were most shared in the first phase of discernment, carried out in the various Circumscriptions. We keep the original formulation, even if the list may not be homogeneous.

I 5. Formation and formators

- a) It is recommended that formation be solid in all aspects: human, intellectual, spiritual, apostolic. That formation be integral, with “Pauline colour”, a cart resting on 4 wheels that go forward in synergy.
- b) Formation must consider the time in which we live: young people have changed. A change in the formation process is therefore necessary, according to the times, keeping the essential elements already present in the formation *Iter* and in the *Ratio Formationis*.
- c) It is proposed to orient formation more on the Founder’s charismatic and spiritual heritage, with competent personnel. Continuous and qualitative accompaniment in the formation of young people should be promoted; to form the Pauline especially as a person consecrated for a mission; to form young people as “consecrated-missionary” Paulines in the double expression priest-disciple.
- d) It is recommended to continue promoting international formation such as the novitiate and preparation for perpetual profession in Italy, in order to acquire the sense of the Pauline mission in its universality and multiculturality. The exchange of students between the circumscriptions should be promoted in view of new academic and apostolic experiences.
- e) It is suggested that formators be adequately prepared through human-psychological, spiritual, charismatic, and

apostolic programs. It is good that they attend the Charism Course. The formator must help to bring out the qualities or talents of young people, helping them to develop them fully, teaching them that «every talent is in view of service».

16. Formation and mission

- f) It is asked that the path of involvement of all Paulines in apostolic work should be done through the recovery of the Pauline pedagogy of «*being formed for the mission*», developing the ability of teamwork, vision, ability to execute and creativity which they will be able to renew all apostolic activities.
- g) It is recommended to harmonize the formation Itter with the apostolic Project, following the indications of the *Service of Authority-Manual* and the guidelines of the recent Seminars on the Pauline Publishers (2017) and on Formation (2019).
- h) It is advised to allow young people to gradually assume apostolic responsibilities, so that they can learn and acquire the functioning of the apostolic tasks that they will have to assume responsibly in the future.
- i) One of the findings that emerged from the 2nd *International Seminar of Pauline Publishers* (2017) is that our structures are not adequate to the real needs of the current socio-communicative context. It is therefore important to update ourselves not only with regard to technological and instrumental innovations, but above all with respect to the concepts and new forms of communication, which determine the communicative ecology and the current publishing world (cf. *Editorial Guidelines* 2.1)

17. Apostolate, communication and digital means

- j) It is proposed to create a project that leads all Paulines not only to learn (or teach) to “use” social communication tools (especially digital ones), but to “live” in a widely digitized culture, which deeply influences lifestyle and our perception of reality.
- k) We are invited to have the courage to start new paths, entrusting them to the young “digital natives” whom the Lord sends us. To create a team of young Paulines passionate about social media to explore new ways of apostolate (*ad experimentum*).
- l) It is recommended to strengthen our Study Centers on Pauline Communication and to promote greater collaboration and bond among them.
- m) We are invited you to explore new forms of apostolate – to dare not only in the digital world, but in the formative, cultural, diocesan (communication offices), etc. –, rediscovering the Founder’s audacity, creativity and prophetic dimension.
- n) We are urged not to limit ourselves to the centralized “company” strategy, but also to start targeted projects around small groups (communities with specific apostolic projects in the area).
- o) The rotation of apostolic responsibilities is recommended, necessary to make the new generations grow and give them confidence.
- p) It is important to create a research organization (Observatory) in each Province (and on the international level) to get to know society and know how to move in our apostolate, which is always changing and in need of continuous updating.
- q) The need is perceived to give life to apostolic initiatives aimed explicitly at the world of the young, which is absent from our apostolic programs. This is also an indispensable premise for being known by young people in the perspective of a vocational proposal.

For deepening:

- *After having examined the proposals presented in the 2nd questionnaire in preparation for the General Chapter, we are now called to identify the principal choices for the next six years. What can we realistically do to face the challenges that emerged at a general and circumscription level? What proposals would you add?*

Third nucleus

...to be artisans of communion...

A SYNODAL CONGREGATION

RECOGNIZING our situation

18. The great challenge of the Church and of the Congregation

A third and final nucleus of analysis responds to the theme of *synodality*. Although the Congregation feels challenged by various current phenomena, both internally and externally, it also feels the obligation to discover the path by which the Spirit leads us in this “new era”. And the path that the Church has identified is that of *synodality*, that is, of “walking together” and Pope Francis is one of its promoters. It has also been applied to the last Synods (on the *Youth* and for the *Amazon*), but it will be the specific theme of the next one, which will take place in 2022.

The theme was assumed by the Superior General, Fr Valdir José de Castro, who expressed himself in his annual Letter (2020) to the confreres of the Society of Saint Paul: *«The great challenge as a Congregation is also to transform the synodality into a method of prayer, thought, planning, and common realization, so that our message can reach our interlocutors effectively. [...] We are called to live in unity, despite the diversity of gifts, in view of the mission of evangelization in the culture of communication»*.

The theme of *synodality* is still to be deepened in the ecclesial community, and also in our Pauline communities, but it must push us to assume from now on a lifestyle that enhances each person, which motivates each one to feel truly part of a “body”, which encourages co-responsibility and makes everyone truly partakers of the life and mission that the Lord has entrusted to us as a Congregation.

On the sidelines of the answers to the 2nd questionnaire, it is worth asking oneself: what is the sensitivity regarding the theme of *synodality* present among the Paulines, among our lay collaborators, Aggregated Institutes and the Association of Cooperators? What

observations can we make in view of the future journey of our Congregation? The first element to consider is a certain ignorance on the concept of “synodality” in the vision of the Church. Although some have a correct idea, knowledge of the processes and scope of this wonderful “style of being Church” is often lacking and, together, a true commitment of fidelity on our part to be in tune with the process that the whole ecclesial community has undertaken.

19. Applied/incarnated synodality

First of all, we focus on some elements that help us understand where we are in the process towards a “synodal” Congregation: a) teamwork, b) the “Pauline-laity” relationship, c) the Pauline Family, d) and the exercise of authority as a key element to foster communion.

a) **Teamwork:** when we talk about synodality, we mean “walking together”. Yes, but in view of what? The main objective must be the mission. Because our communion, our “journey in unity” is essentially oriented towards the mission of evangelizing. On this depends our deepest identity. In this regard, it must be admitted that among the Paulines, there is a marked propensity for solo action, for isolated projects, for the fear of generating bonds. And this is true both in formation and in the apostolate (and in the relations between the two sectors). The reasons can be many. But we must not forget that evangelization is never an individual and isolated act for anyone, but a deeply ecclesial act, that is, teamwork. We Paulines, however, seem indifferent to this and we are not very determined to join forces to carry out our mission of evangelizing with the current languages in the complex universe of communication.

A final element to underline is the marked self-reference or the accentuated isolated action of us Paulines with respect to ecclesial institutions and bodies (and not only), that is to say with regard to

«walking together with the local Churches». This is a clear sign of the urgency to consolidate a more participatory organization.

b) **The “Pauline-laity” relationship:** if there is a tendency towards the lack of union between the Pauline confreres, especially as regards the apostolate, even more there appears to be a certain fragility in the relationships with the laity. We are talking about a collaboration that is not limited to functionalism, but to a process that allows them to feel part of the Pauline charism and mission. In this regard, as already mentioned in the section on formation, there is a need for a catechesis (evangelical, ecclesial, charismatic) of our lay collaborators, as well as a program that promotes their ongoing formation (cf. the scheme for developing the “*Formation Programme for Paulines and Collaborators*” proposed by the CTIA).

c) **The Pauline Family:** when we speak of the “synodal journey”, we are referring above all to walking together as a People of God. We are Church and, as a Congregation, we are called to promote participation, co-responsibility in view of evangelization, which begins in each community. But walking with the Church, in the footsteps of our Founder, also means walking as a Family (with the other Congregations and Institutes). It should be noted that, in the responses to the 2nd questionnaire, there is a marked need for unity as a Pauline Family. Unity understood not so much as “camaraderie” but as family ties, which are a wealth for each one, especially in common missionary projects. It is therefore urgent that at the level of the Pauline Family fraternal collaboration be increasingly cultivated to correspond to the common vocation.

Important attention must be paid to the role of “altrice” of the Society of Saint Paul, since this “character” of the Congregation will be a constitutive element for walking together and being credible witnesses to the Gospel, prophetic signs in this epochal change.

d) **Formation in the exercise of authority:** the eminent figure of the apostle Paul, our first reference as Paulines in following Jesus,

helps us to discover the importance of authority in our communities, since this favours (or harms) the fruitful and necessary communication to build the synodal journey.

In some responses to the questionnaire, the lack of clarity of roles and functions in many members of the Congregation is noted. There is a clear need for knowledge, application (and in many cases, of adaptation) of the *Service of Authority-Manual*, as well as knowledge and application of the provisions established by the Constitutions.

In short: formation is needed in the service of authority. But an authority understood not as a “privilege of power”, but as a service, as the Gospel and the congregational charism affirm. In addition, it is of utmost importance to recognize the lack of formation (at all levels) in the service of authority, a determining factor in the functioning of our structures, today and in the near future.

For deepening:

- *What personal resonances has the careful reading of the text aroused in us?*
- *In which elements of this synthesis do we recognize ourselves most? Which elements should be more highlighted and which should be integrated?*
- *In the reading of our reality proposed by the text, do we think that some important aspects are missing?*
- *Are there any positive elements that we would like to highlight?*

INTERPRETING in the light of faith

20. Synodality: mentality to be assumed

In keeping with the path of the Church and the magisterium of Pope Francis, the desire to assume synodality emerged strongly in the responses to the questionnaires *«as an ordinary style in community and apostolic life, in collaboration between and within the circumscriptions, relationships with the Pauline Family, to overcome self-reference and be an “outgoing” Congregation»*.

Of great help for our reflection and preparation for the XI General Chapter is the annual letter of the Superior General, Fr Valdir José De Castro: A “Synodal Congregation” at the service of the Gospel in the culture of communication (2020) and the Declaration of the International Theological Commission *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church* (2 March 2018). We strongly recommend the personal and community reading of these documents.

Starting from these proposals, it will be easier to understand the synodality within our Congregation, a mentality to be assumed by everyone and that develops concepts such as listening, dialogue, comparison, discernment, humility, love, personal commitment, dedication, collaboration, the ability to “go out” and to network, communion with the universal and local Church, with the Pauline Family, etc.

Our models in this process are Jesus Master and Saint Paul. However, as one circumscription has clearly expressed, «synodality, in order to become style in each of us, a mental attitude spread in the communities and in the apostolic work, needs a continuous conversion from one’s own self and is gradually built together, with concrete and daily gestures and actions carried out in search of the common good, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who shapes us as artisans of communion».

Our Congregation therefore wants to place itself in harmony with the current ecclesial journey, seeing in it a great light to repair and heal the many situations and dynamics that are lived within our communities and apostolic structures. Synodality must become a style in all our realities of relationship at all levels: in the community, in formation, in the apostolate, in the Pauline Family, in relationships with lay people, with the local Church etc.

21. Teamwork

At the heart of the concept of synodality is collaboration, working together. Having highlighted the situations of individualism is an invitation to ensure that not only the situations of closure are overcome but that restricted circles are open to everyone's collaboration. In fact, *«synodality requires that the confreres are informed about common problems, are involved with greater participation in the elaboration of important decisions, especially with regard to common projects (community, apostolic, formative...) and giving importance to the various Councils at all levels»*, recalls a circumscription.

A welcoming and intercultural community is the favorable place to learn to live and work together, to understand the diversity of the other as a wealth and to learn to confront and develop an ability to dialogue with that world to which the charism sends us. In such community a culture of encounter can develop where the universal Pauline spirit can mature and educate ourselves to an open mentality like that of Saint Paul. The apostle of the people is in fact a great example of teamwork and networking. Despite the difficulties, Paul tries to work together, in a team, in a “network”, with various collaborators, men and women, showing with his pastoral practice that the Christian community is built and established as a community of relationships.

We can take a further reflection from the recent Editorial Guidelines (2018). Chapter 5 explores the theme of Apostolic

Unity, recalling that «in communication, understood primarily as communion, teamwork and networking are essential. The Pauline Editor is not an isolated person, but is part of a single and cohesive body. The new communication dynamics of the network society demand a coordinated, harmonious, horizontal and universal work».

We must also remember that synodality (in team work) depends above all on the commitment of each person, on his openness to others, on the effort to listen and dialogue, to overcome possible conflicts and to forgive, to have a vision together of the mission (of wanting to “walk together”). *«It is necessary to die to the many expressions of selfishness, to personal interests in community and apostolic contexts»*, mentioned one circumscription.

22. Formation in the exercise of authority as a service

In close connection with teamwork, several circumscriptions have stressed the need to rethink the service of authority. The request for a revision of our *Manual* on this issue is practically unanimous, together with a serious revision of all the regulations and the clarification of roles and functions in the Congregation.

In his 2020 Annual Letter, the Superior General offers us some lights to reflect on this theme: «Obviously, the role of authority does not disappear in the synodal journey, but it requires a more evangelical self-understanding that goes beyond the pyramidal, centralizing and unidirectional vision. What is needed is the testimony of the exercise of a “horizontal” type of authority, which walks together with the brothers, helping them to grow in fidelity to the Gospel and to the charism. Authority has an important role in the synodal journey, but it must be understood from the perspective of service (diakonia)».

A circumscription highlighted a reality often present in our environments, underlining how synodality is «mainly damaged by clericalism, which can be translated into “abuse of authority”.

Clericalism also generates the lack of integral participation. It generates “small kingdoms” or groups that act not in synergy with the community, but according to their will or personal interests». Synodality urges us to put the authority of “Servant” at the centre, because the pyramidal one based on power no longer works. The synodal mentality invites us to a culture of consultation and collaboration, where there are more collective decisions and more information sharing. In this dynamic, the Superiors are invited to stimulate and create times and places for sharing, assessment and discernment among all the members, in the community and in the apostolic field. They are invited to be true animators. «We therefore need leaders who show the way, who know how to give trust through a sincere and frank dialogue to face the various problems, not super managers who do not listen and have little encounter with the confreres engaged in the same apostolic mission», declares one circumscription.

On the other hand, all members are urged to transform themselves by changing the way they think and act. In a Pauline community one cannot make everything depend on the Superior, as if he were to be responsible for every decision and action in the community. Everyone has a role and this must be preserved and enhanced. The Superiors are not carers or babysitters. The comfort zone adopted in different communities as a lifestyle has generated some “childish” religious who project and expect too much from the Superior, renouncing a proactive and assertive, synodal attitude.

According to a circumscription, the synodal lifestyle is the basis for a revolution, even in the government of the Congregation, from the current practice of consultations for the appointment of Superiors, to the elective representation at Chapters and Assemblies, from the functions held by Superiors and Directors of the apostolate and financial administrators, of those responsible for formation up to the system of verifications as a constant style in the conduct of activities and in the management of communities.

23. Lay people and Paulines together

In the process towards a synodal Congregation, it is fundamental to reflect seriously on the relationship with the laity, especially our collaborators, since the lay cooperators or consecrated in the Aggregated Institutes are included in the next point, on the Pauline Family.

It is true that all civil and labor laws must be followed towards lay people who work with us as “employees” or “collaborators”. However, there must also be mutual esteem and respect and mutual trust must grow. In this sense, practically all the circumscriptions agree on the lack of involvement of the laity regarding our identity and mission in the Church. A charismatic and spiritual formation of all those who work alongside us is missing. The circumscriptions on the one hand recognize that *«we have not promoted the spirit of collaboration and subsidiarity»* and, on the other, they are aware that *«the relationship between Paulines and collaborators must not be misunderstood as merely instrumental, but collaborative in the same evangelical mission»*. The conversion that the theme of the XI General Chapter invites us to implement pushes us to be ever more aware that the layperson is called to the work of evangelization. He should be welcomed as a gift in the exercise of the apostolate because he participates in the charism, thanks to his competence and belonging to the Church.

The terminology used towards the laity is also an important element. They cannot be treated as mere “employees”, but as true collaborators, inviting them to participate in our own mission and educating them about our charism. The quality of the formation and preparation that we offer to lay collaborators is decisive for the quality of their service.

In this sense, a circumscription underlines: *«It is true that openness to the laity is a need, but it is also true that it is providential. It undresses that armour of self-sufficiency that characterizes the Pauline, but at the same time makes one discover*

a new aspect of the Pauline vocation to which little is thought of: that of transmitting to the laity the purpose of the Pauline mission of evangelizing in the culture of communication and offering them adequate formation. Thinking about it, it is the outgoing Church of the Paulines, a visible sign of the missionary spirit inculcated by Fr Alberione».

24. Pauline Family

Belonging to the Pauline Family is not an accessory for us. It is an essential part of our identity and mission, as our Constitutions underline: *«The Society of Saint Paul is a part and the “altrice” of the Pauline Family. (...) They have a common origin, a common spirit, converging goals. Their belonging to the Pauline Family, willed as such by the Founder, is one of the charismatic elements of each Institute»* (Art. 3). The Constitutions also recall that *«collaboration is essential if our mission is to be accomplished and this both within our Congregation and within the context of the Pauline Family. (...) Relations between the Society of St Paul and the other Institutes of the Pauline Family are to be marked by a close collaboration on the spiritual, intellectual and apostolic level, while the distinction and interdependence of each Institute concerning matters relating to governance and the administration of goods are to be respected»* (Arts. 85-86).

In different words, practically all the circumscriptions agree that we have a great responsibility as an “altrice” Congregation, a task that we cannot ignore but to live in a spirit of service. We have not been able to always promote real work in collaboration with the other institutes of the Pauline Family, precisely because as Paulines we have neglected our being “altrice”. Our challenge remains that of assisting and accompanying the Institutes and Congregations and planning the future especially in the missionary field in the culture of communication, with the commitment to start common apostolic projects, not limiting ourselves to spiritual animation.

A circumscription thus expressed the common desire: «In the area of the Pauline Family, synodality invites us first of all to free ourselves from prejudices, unhealthy competitions and any wounds and grudges of the past, to instead direct us towards mutual help to grow together».

Meeting more often and focusing on the common mission of making Jesus Master, Way, Truth, and Life, known according to the spirit of Saint Paul, under the gaze of the Queen of the Apostles, trying to humbly carry out our service as “altrice” is one of the ways possible to grow in communion and collaboration. However, it is necessary to take on our community and apostolic commitment through shared projects. *«It is important to listen to the voice of the various Institutes and Congregations, considering their importance and to avoid any kind of self-reference on our part»*, affirms one circumscription. We need to be aware that we were created to be a family in the service of the Gospel.

In this process, it will certainly help us to get to know each of the Pauline Congregations and Institutes more deeply, and the thought of Fr Alberione on our being a Family. In some circumscriptions, there is an inadequacy not only in listening, in dialogue and discernment with the members of the Pauline Family, but also in the knowledge and appreciation and accompaniment of the Institutes. To the point that a circumscription confirms: *«The identity and mission of the institutes are not clear and for this reason they are not promoted in various places»*. For their part, the members of the Aggregated Institutes see it as a wealth to feel involved and to live unity, *«in the immensity of the Pauline parish, which has the borders of the world as its limits and as a flock both those of the sheepfold and those who want to be carried into the fold»*.

For deepening:

- *What personal resonances has the careful reading of the text aroused in us?*
- *In which elements of this synthesis do we recognize ourselves most? Which elements should be more highlighted and which should be integrated?*
- *In the interpretation of our reality, do we think that some important aspects are missing?*

CHOOSING: identifying future choices

The following are the proposals that were most shared in the first phase of discernment, carried out in the various Circumscriptions. We keep the original formulation, even if the list may not be homogeneous.

25. A synodal style

- a) It is suggested to create times and places for sharing, assessment and discernment among all the members, in the community and in the apostolic field. We must focus on the “culture of encounter”, creating both physical and virtual relationships anywhere and with everyone. It is necessary to assume the principle of unity in diversity, through teamwork in the community and in the different apostolic sectors.
- b) Attentive to “relationships” as a key point of communicative practice and to networks as places of collaborative creation of meanings and contents, the Pauline Publisher must look for new forms of presence and action, not so much tied to the means but rather to culture and the new grammar of communication, being at the service of all the people of God, especially the men and women who live in today’s peripheries (cf. *Editorial Guidelines* 3.1).

26. Local Church

- c) The need to always feel and work with the Church and in the Church is underlined, not only as an Institute, and to offer the collaboration of our specific contribution.
- d) The circumscription apostolic Project is asked to be in synchronization and in harmony with the pastoral needs of the local Churches.

- e) We are invited to collaborate with the diocesan centers of communication and to help the dioceses create these centers where they are not yet present.
- f) It is suggested to create collaboration between our communication centers and the local Church.

27. Healthy Leadership

- g) Leadership formation is recommended through the study and deepening of the exercise of the service of authority.
- h) It is recommended that those who exercise authority, both in ordinary and delegated canonical authority, be the first promoters of listening, dialogue and fraternity.
- i) That one who exercises authority promotes, at the circumscriptional and international level, openness to multiculturalism, with commitment and creativity (for example through seminars or conferences).

28. Laity

- j) It is advised to promote among the collaborators, through a specific project, the formation to Pauline spirituality and mission. It is necessary to invest in the formation of the laity. It is also necessary to implement the CTIA program in this regard.
- k) It is recommended to improve communication between Paulines and lay collaborators. The Pauline must avoid the attitude of pride and self-sufficiency that sometimes characterizes him and remembering that everyone has something to learn from the other.
- l) It is asked to enhance and respect the skills of our lay collaborators. They must be involved in the preparation and planning, promoting a climate of respect for their own and others' work.
- m) In addition to being good "masters", the Paulines are called to be authentic witnesses as consecrated persons.

- n) Collaborators must be chosen with care, keeping in mind their professional skills, but also the constellation of their values and their personal motivations.
- o) They are to be given opportunities to undergo updating and the promotion of “extra-working” initiatives (social dinners, events, presentations, etc.) are envisaged to feed mutual knowledge and foster cohesion and a sense of belonging.

29. Pauline Family

- p) It is advised to start processes that lead to an ever-greater unity and mutual collaboration in the spiritual-apostolic field with the other institutions of the Pauline Family, concretely involving the Aggregated Institutes and the Cooperators.
- q) To achieve more communion and collaboration in the Pauline Family, it is considered necessary to meet more often, focusing on the common mission of making Jesus Master, Way, Truth, and Life, known according to the spirit of Saint Paul, trying to humbly carry out our service of “altrice”, remembering to having the same Founder and to be at the service of the same Church.
- r) It is counselled to continue to cooperate in apostolic action and in charismatic and spiritual animation, which offer concrete opportunities to rediscover and grow concretely in mutual esteem and, above all, in the unity of the charism: the Governments of the Pauline Family have in this one of the first and most important tasks to fulfil and to continue to reflect on.
- s) It is suggested to open a channel of dialogue through social networks for questions, sharings... at the level of the Congregation, of the Pauline Family and of lay people on issues such as communication, spirituality, the Pauline Family etc., for an all-round evaluation and dialogue.

- t) It is asked to involve some more the Aggregated Institutes in the Pauline apostolate (always in freedom and taking into account their specific apostolate). The professional skills of the members of the Institutes and of the Cooperators in carrying out the Pauline mission must be valued.
- u) The Society of Saint Paul must engage in the formation and accompaniment of the Institutes. Regular circumscription and continental meetings are also proposed between the persons responsible for the Institutes, together with the members of the Institutes, according to their possibilities.
- v) It is suggested to plan monthly meetings with the Pauline Cooperators, also using virtual media. The Cooperators can multiply the invitation and in these spaces the mission of the Pauline Family can be made known.

For deepening:

- *After having examined the proposals presented in the 2nd questionnaire in preparation for the General Chapter, we are now called to identify the great choices for the next six years. What can we realistically do to face the challenges that emerged at a general and circumscription level? What proposals would you add?*

APPENDIX

30. The challenge of the pandemic

The Pre-preparatory Commission of the General Chapter thought it appropriate to add this appendix to the *Instrumentum laboris* due to the particular pandemic situation that humanity and the Congregation are experiencing. It did so by involving all the Superiors of the Circumscriptions and their Councils through a letter sent on 17 April 2021.

In evaluating the responses received, as a general line, it is highlighted that the pandemic has caused problems to explode already existing before the pandemic and already contained in the previous pages of this *Instrumentum laboris*. Out of respect for the work carried out by the Major Superiors with the various Councils of the Circumscriptions, we report a non-exhaustive summary of the responses received to the 3 questions that we had proposed in the letter cited.

a. Negativities highlighted:

in community life: lack of fraternity, communion and respect for others, individualism, weak relationships between people, communities and circumscriptions; fragility on the subject of obedience and poverty; lack of a spirit of sacrifice...;

in formation: fragile integral Pauline formation for the mission, lack of accompaniment for young people; digital illiteracy; lack of a Pauline identity...;

in the apostolate: heavy structures and slow processes, we are mainly concentrated on the book area; lack of projects and creativity; lack of direction and projection into the future; lack of liquidity and too many debts; we are not able to live constantly and effectively in the digital environment; fragility in the relationship with the laity.

b. Values that emerged:

trust in God as a fundamental value of our life, solidarity, collaboration/teamwork/synodality/fraternity; study and updating in the spirit of “studiousness”, formation in the digital world, creativity; being well integrated into the local Church, care for one’s health; the “sense of belonging” to the Congregation.

c. Humanity’s requests:

a change in our lifestyle; putting God at the centre in order to be witnesses of hope and joy; promotion of fraternity and good relationships; cultivation of a spirit of listening; a testimony of coherent and sober life; an “outgoing” missionary style to create bridges in the Pauline Family, in the Church and in Society in order to be a source of light and consolation for people.

The pandemic has manifested all our limitations due to decisions that have always been reported in our documents, but never seriously pursued and effectively implemented. It showed the urgency of starting new paths and projects not dictated by the simple good will of someone, but taken on at the congregational level, as the result of a new vision.

We must avoid the danger that the congregational renewal, requested of the General Chapter, will become only a response to the difficulties we experienced in the time of the pandemic. The vision we need to have is much deeper.

We are experiencing a **change of epoch** that has put the person, society, communities, relationships, “the common home” in crisis and requires a renewed Pauline identity that springs from a new congregational vision and translates into new styles in the various areas of our Pauline life. This theme was extensively developed in the Superior General’s Annual Letter 2021 entitled *The Pauline Editor. Artisan of communion in a connected world*.

The objective chosen for our General Chapter indicates the path that we as a Congregation have chosen to undertake for the next few years. At the same time, we believe that it gives unity and collects in itself all that we have reported above in the weaknesses highlighted, in the values that have emerged and in the demands of humanity. **“Let yourselves be transformed by renewing your way of thinking” (Rm 12:2).** *Called to be artisans of communion to prophetically announce the joy of the Gospel in the culture of communication.*

The construction of a new congregational vision and a renewed identity of the Pauline today requires and is realized only if there is a transformation and a renewal in our way of thinking. This is possible to the extent that we frequent and let ourselves be shaped by the Word of God and the Eucharist, celebrated and adored. Putting Christ and our configuration to him at the centre of our life becomes a source of renewal, creativity, identity.

Being artisans of communion makes us overcome all the frailties encountered in our personal, community and congregational life and responds to the values and requests that humanity today requires to give meaning to one's life.

Likewise, proclaiming the joy of the Gospel prophetically contains and expresses our identity as consecrated persons who announce what they first lived and experienced. In a lifestyle oriented towards sobriety and a credible witness of fraternal life, the Paulines practice being consecrated persons of communication and relationship and prophetically embody “a fragment of heaven”.

We know very well that our mission of evangelization is expressed in the culture of communication. But, as evidenced by the responses received, we have great difficulty in renewing ourselves in this field. Why? Perhaps because we have not perceived in depth and breadth the transformations in the world of communication and

we have not fully inserted ourselves as a congregation in these transformations.

On the other hand, we must realize that having changed the paradigms of communication, this, together with other factors, has also contributed to undermine the experience of our Pauline life, for which we are today, with difficulty, looking for new ways. The very identity of the Pauline is acquiring a new dimension: radically grafted into God and a man of communication, the Pauline must be a person of relationships in the current culture of communication. In the search for a renewed identity of the Pauline, if we want to incarnate our congregational charism in today's reality and in today's humanity, we will necessarily have to rethink our formation, our apostolic setting, our community life, the expression of our spiritual life, and of our consecration, our relationship with humanity.

All this must be kept in mind for future congregational choices and for the initiation of new processes that give meaning, value, and follow-up to our Pauline vocation, mission and presence in the Church and in the world.

The road to arrive at a renewed congregational Pentecost is to be done together, in a path of fraternity and proximity, exercised in patience, mercy and perseverance, thinking that we are not alone and that we are at the service of a greater project of us: *«It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you»* (Jn 15:16). May Jesus' promise console us and inspire us: *«I am with you always, until the end of the age»* (Mt 28:20).

PRAYER FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER

O divine Spirit, who, sent by the Father in the name of Jesus,
infallibly assist and guide the Church,
pour over our Chapter the fullness of your gifts.

O gentle Master and Comforter,
enlighten our minds,
let abundant fruit ripen from this Chapter;
let our commitment
of sanctification and apostolate take new vigour;
spread ever further the light
and the power of the Gospel among men.

O sweet Guest of souls,
confirm our minds in the truth,
dispose the hearts of all to obedience,
so that the deliberations of the Chapter
find generous assent and full compliance.

Renew in our Family
the wonders of a new Pentecost.
Grant that, united in unanimous and more intense prayer,
around Mary, Mother of Jesus, and the Apostles,
spread the kingdom of the Divine Master,
in the spirit of the Apostle Paul. Amen.

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