



GREETING AND INTRODUCTION OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL AT THE 2nd INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE PAULINE FORMATION FOR THE MISSION

Dear Brothers,

in my name and in the name of the General Government, I greet each of you fraternally as participants in the 2nd International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission. We are here as “communicator apostles and consecrated persons” to deal with formation, a fundamental dimension of our life, *«a task that never ends»*¹.

This meeting is the answer to one of the suggestions made to the General Government by the Superiors of Circumscription on the occasion of the last Interchapter, which asked to *«organize an international seminar on formation to get in tune with the reflections and the lights that came to us from the 2nd International Seminar of Pauline Publishers regarding the formation of the Paulines»*².

The proposal to carry out this Seminar undoubtedly arrives at an opportune moment in our institutional history, as something necessary, not to mention urgent, considering that the last similar event was celebrated twenty-five years ago. During this period, many things have changed in the world, or at least they present themselves with a different physiognomy if we take, for example, the field of communication, especially with the development of digital technologies and its consequences for human life.

Dedicating a Seminar to formation requires putting the person in the foreground and situating him in the concrete world in which he lives. The person is the greatest wealth of a Congregation, because it is on this that the development and the impetus of the mission largely depends. As our Founder very well considers: *«the apostolate is a fruit, and the fruit comes from the plant: if the plant is healthy, the fruit will be abundant; but if the plant is sick, the fruit will either be lacking or be scarce»*³.

At the beginning of this Seminar, I would like to underline, in a very concise form, some points that I consider important because they constitute essential aspects of our Pauline life and, therefore, they deserve attention when the theme properly concerns formation.

1. We are called to “evangelize”

¹ *Ratio Formationis of the Society of St. Paul*, no. 1.

² Interchapter Assembly of the Society of St. Paul, Aparecida (Brazil), 15-25 February 2018, in *San Paolo*, no. 451, May 2018, p. 64.

³ James Alberione, *Vademecum*, Edizioni Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo, 1992, no. 961.

To begin with, let us remember that in the Pauline tradition *«everything about our community – fraternal life, consecration, the spiritual, human, intellectual and professional formation, the structures of government and administration – is shaped and affected by our apostolic vocation»*⁴.

Specifically with regard to the indispensable connection between formation and the apostolate, it is valid to recall the book *L'Apostolato dell'Edizione* which, in its 1944 edition, was presented as a “handbook of formation and apostolate”⁵. Among other orientations, this work of Fr. Alberione sought to help the 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, *«to feel and think with Jesus Christ, to feel and think with the Church, to feel and think with Saint Paul»*⁶.

In our Congregation, formation, as we have said, is always in view of responding to our apostolic vocation, which is nothing other than evangelizing⁷, an essential task of the Church's life itself. *«Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize [...]»*⁸.

Precisely in this perspective, Fr. Alberione conceived our apostolate as a means to penetrate all human thought and knowledge with the Gospel⁹. 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 today¹⁰.

2. Until Christ be formed in you

Formation must realize itself that in order to evangelize, the apostle must first have in himself the Gospel, which is Jesus himself. Jesus, dead and risen, is the eternal Gospel in which the immense love of God is manifested for humanity¹¹. This means that *«the mission is not an extrinsic activity; it is something that touches a person's innermost self. To evangelize supposes already being evangelized; being and acting must proceed in a harmonious criss-crossing; doing must first of all be a becoming»*¹².

In this perspective, Jesus is the first school that his disciples are called to attend, which necessarily presupposes an encounter with Him. In fact, *«being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction»*¹³.

In other words, as our Founder taught us, considering the Pauline consecrated life, *«we must form ourselves in Jesus Christ, indeed this is the true formation in Christ: to live Jesus Christ, to live him as he truly is, Way, Truth and Life»*¹⁴. From Fr. Alberione we have learned that *«to live Christ Way and Truth and Life is the method – the pedagogy for every Pauline – which unfolds in a*

⁴ *Constitutions and Directory of the Society of St. Paul*, art. 66.

⁵ The cover of *L'Apostolato dell'Edizione* of 1944 presents the subtitle “Handbook of formation and apostolate”.

⁶ James Alberione, *L'Apostolato dell'Edizione*, 1944, no. 33.

⁷ Cfr. *Special General Chapter of the Society of St. Paul*, no. 71.

⁸ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 14.

⁹ Cfr. James Alberione, *Abundantes Divitiae*, 87-88.

¹⁰ Cfr. Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 74.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, no. 11.

¹² *Ratio Formationis of the Society of St. Paul*, no. 8.

¹³ Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, no. 1.

¹⁴ James Alberione, *Prediche del Primo Maestro* 5 (1957), p. 123.

threefold dimension: anthropological, spiritual and apostolic»¹⁵, a method to be valued, deepened and practiced.

An effective formative process is that which tends to the practical experience of the Master, to learn from him to love, to pray, to be merciful and just, to live the fraternal relationship, sharing, giving, sacrifice... to be men of communication. It is not possible to progress on the path of evangelization without “Christ the communicator” being formed in us¹⁶ and, in this process, should not without the Word and the Eucharist¹⁷ as continuous nutrients.

Only by letting himself be formed by Christ can the Pauline transform himself into a true “publisher”. This is an intrinsic characteristic of the Pauline identity. Indeed, *«the Pauline is a man called by Christ and consecrated to be an apostle of communication, to be essentially a “publisher” who gives form 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 inculturation of the Gospel with and in communication. One who, after the example of Mary, gives (edit) the Saviour to the world»*¹⁸.

Let us consider that in formation, it is necessary to insist on the identity of the Pauline as an editor, that is, as the one who prepares the “editions”. *«If our “editions” – to use a term dear to our Founder – are not at the centre or heart of a region or province, either directly or indirectly, then its raison d’être in a local church has come to an end»*¹⁹.

3. The integral and “Pauline” formation

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 cart²⁰, 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”.

As Fr. Alberione taught us, *«the Pauline Family has a sole spirituality and that is to live the Gospel in its entirety; to live in the Divine Master inasmuch as he is Way, Truth and Life; to live the Gospel as his disciple Saint Paul understood it. It is this spirit which forms the soul of the Pauline Family»*²¹.

In fact, *«from Paul, the Pauline Publisher learns that true apostolic spirituality is that which bears witness to an experience of the crucified and risen Christ, the central and unique content of evangelization that gradually takes on different forms in the announcement. From Paul, the Pauline Publisher captures the ability to address the concrete questions of the world (at the ecclesial, community, social level, etc.) and his effort to adapt the language to each interlocutor. It then assumes the di-*

¹⁵ Ratio Formationis of the Society of St. Paul, no. 76.

¹⁶ «The process of sanctification is a process of Christification: “until Christ be formed in you” [Cfr. Gal 4:19]. Therefore we will be saints to the extent that we live the life of Jesus Christ; or rather, according to the extent to which Jesus Christ lives in us: “Christianus alter Christus”; and that is what St. Paul says of himself: “I live no longer I, rather it is Christ who lives in me,” [Gal 2:20]», CISP, pp. 11-12.

¹⁷ «The Eucharist and the Bible form the apostle of the press. May these two things be inseparable and inseparable in your hearts», Haec Meditare II, p. 80.

¹⁸ Editorial guidelines: Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate, 1.2.

¹⁹ Renato Perino, The Pauline Charism in the thinking and praxis of Fr. Alberione, in Acts of the International Seminar on the Pauline Formation (Ariccia, 12-23 October 1994), p. 57.

²⁰ «The total man in Jesus Christ, for a total love of God: intelligence, will, heart, physical strength. Everything: nature, grace and vocation for the apostolate. The cart that runs on four wheels: sanctity, study, apostolate, poverty», James Alberione, Abundantes Divitiae, 100.

²¹ James Alberione, UPS III, no. 187.

mension of pastoral spirit and universality, prophecy, zeal and total commitment, passion and the ability to listen, audacity and the ability to build a network of collaborators, apostolic dynamism and the sense of responsibility. From him he learns to do everything for the Gospel»²².

4. The formation for the mission

As we have reiterated, the formative journey in the Society of Saint Paul must always look at the horizon of our specific apostolate in the light of our identity as “apostle communicators and consecrated persons”, as “Pauline publishers”. But let us add an important clarification: always in its double vocational expression priest-disciple.

In this sense, it will be a constant need to distinguish the changeable from the unchangeable elements of the Pauline identity, so that the Congregation can strain forward. «Among the unchangeable elements, we have to include fidelity to the Gospel, communion with the Magisterium of the Church, the constant reference to the Founder and to St. Paul, prayer and apostolic spirituality, consecration through the vows, life in community, attentiveness to the signs of the times, communication understood in its globality, the complementariness of the Institutes of the Pauline Family, organization in the various apostolic initiatives. Among the changeable elements, we have: the structural organization of the apostolate, of formation and of community; the adoption of individual means of communication, the roles in the fulfilment of the mission, the concrete forms of inculturation of Pauline spirituality, the individual readings of the signs of the times...»²³.

This means that the Pauline Publisher, if he wants to evangelize the men and women of his time with the current languages, he cannot stop but must accompany the development of humanity that causes changes in the history and culture of communication.

In this Pauline apostolate’s effort to respond to today’s needs were organized two *International Seminars of Pauline Publishers*, in 1988 and in 2017, two meetings that inspired the two *International Seminars on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*, respectively that of 1994 and this which we are about to start. I will therefore make a very brief reference here, highlighting some ideas with the aim of helping us to understand where we are at the apostolic and formative level, two realities that must always be integrated between them.

4.1 The 1st International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission (1994)

The 1st *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*²⁴ – in which the members of the General Government, the Superiors of Circumscription, the General Coordinators of Formation and the General Directors of the Apostolate have participated – was held in Ariccia from 12 to 23 October 1994²⁵. This event was held six years after the celebration

²² Editorial guidelines: *Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate*, op. cit., I. I.

²³ Silvio Pignotti, *Pauline Formation for the Mission. Document of the General Government at the conclusion of the International Seminar on the Pauline Formation*, in *Acts of the International Seminar on the Pauline Formation*, op. cit., p. 168.

²⁴ Cfr. *Acts of the International Seminar on the Pauline Formation*, Ariccia, 12-23 October 1994.

²⁵ It is also worth mentioning that a course on integral Pauline formation was held in Ariccia from 9 to 20 September 1976. Convened by the Superior General, Fr. Raffaele Tonni, it saw the participation of the two General Councillors delegated for formation and two representatives of the Province of Spain, as well as a number of Confreres belonging to the Province of Italy. This course has tried to offer some common guidelines for formative orientation and a written record for the formators of all our communities. In his introductory speech, Fr. Raffaele specified: «The aim of the course should in fact be this: to clarify some guiding ideas and to put them into practice, to give the formative action greater security and unity», Raffaele Tonni, *Introduction*, in *The integral Pauline formation. Course of study for formators*, Ariccia, 9-20 September 1976, p. 7).

of the *Ist International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers*²⁶ and two years after the VI General Chapter, which had as theme “The Pauline man of communication”.

At the *Ist International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*, the Congregation sought a re-examination of the basic and continuing formation, of its methods and contents with a view to forming “true” apostolic communicators²⁷, that responded to the challenges of the communication culture of the 1990s. On that occasion, there was talk of conversion: «The change of direction consists therefore in this: starting from this seminar, the content, the methods, the objectives of our formation must be redirected towards the Congregation's operative goal: its specific mission»²⁸.

In the *Ist International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*, there were concerns that had appeared in the *Ist International Seminar of the Pauline Publishers*, such as, for example, the resumption of the Pauline identity as a “publisher”, the thinking about multimedia-oriented projects, the quest for a more effective apostolic organization at national and international level, the need to become professional in order to face the challenges of evangelization in the culture of communication and the revival of the vocation ministry.

It is important to emphasize that in the *Ist International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* there was already an awareness that communication is not a set of interdependent technical means, but a real “culture”. In this sense, communication cannot be limited to being a new discipline in the program of religious and priestly formation. Rather, it is a matter of seriously contributing to a new inculturation of faith in this new culture, as the pontifical Magisterium of that time directed²⁹.

The communication environment of that era was characterized by “multimedia”, understood as a set of media organized in a project already managed by the computer. By now, it was envisaged as an enhancement of multimedia with interactivity, hypertext, virtual reality, electronic highways. It was stated that the future of communication would be the transformation of all existing means into projects achievable with information technology and telematics. It was recognized that communication would increasingly be a global way of thinking, existing, working, having fun, getting in touch with others³⁰.

The *Ist International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* took into consideration the challenges of the Congregation in front of the communicational reality that was being transformed, a circumstance that demanded new apostolic initiatives also in the field of formation. The two centres of study at that time, specifically the SPICS (Italy) and the COMFIL

²⁶ Cfr. *Acts of the International Seminar of Pauline Publishers*, Ariccia-Milan, 17 September – 2 October 1988.

²⁷ Cfr. Renato Perino, *The Pauline Charism in the thinking and praxis of Fr. Alberione*, in *Acts of the International Seminar on the Pauline Formation*, op. cit., p. 57.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 58.

²⁹ «The means of social communication have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behaviour as individuals, families and within society at large. In particular, the younger generation is growing up in a world conditioned by the mass media. To some degree perhaps this Areopagus has been neglected. Generally, preference has been given to other means of preaching the Gospel and of Christian education, while the mass media are left to the initiative of individuals or small groups and enter into pastoral planning only in a secondary way. Involvement in the mass media, however, is not meant merely to strengthen the preaching of the Gospel. There is a deeper reality involved here: since the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the "new culture" created by modern communications. This is a complex issue, since the "new culture" originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology», John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 37.

³⁰ Cfr. Silvio Sassi, *Communication and the Charism of the Society of St. Paul*, in *Acts of the International Seminar on the Pauline Formation*, op. cit., p. 129.

(Mexico), were born precisely in this panorama. The importance of these initiatives was acknowledged and it was considered that the study of communication sciences should give us the tools necessary to improve our communication skills, the choice of content, the editorial strategy, the desired results, the verifications that allow an evolution³¹.

What has happened in the last twenty-five years, looking today at these expectations of the past and observing the journey made in the apostolate and in formation? What steps have we taken in the search for an integral formation and in creative fidelity to the charism? What steps has the Congregation really taken in the area of multimedia, the organization and development of the Communication Studies Centres, but also of other study centres, for example, in the area of biblical formation? Have our apostolic projects been creative and daring, trying to respond gradually to the signs of the times? What investments have we made in the preparation of Paulines in the different areas of our apostolate? What have we done about the preparation of formators? Where are we today?

4.2 The 2nd International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission

The 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission*, which we are now starting, takes place two years after the 2nd *International Seminar of Pauline Publishers*, held in Ariccia from 16 to 21 October 2017. This meeting on the apostolate was convened by the General Government to deepen our mission, especially considering the innovations brought by digital technologies in the field of communication and with the aim also of helping to update the editorial lines of the Congregation³².

Almost thirty years have elapsed between the 1st and 2nd *International Seminar of Pauline Publishers*, a period of time in which large sections of humanity immersed themselves in an ordinary and continuous manner in the digital environment. Indeed, today more than ever «it is no longer merely a question of “using” instruments of communication, but of living in a highly digitalized culture that has had a profound impact on ideas of time and space, on our self-understanding, our understanding of others and the world, and our ability to communicate, learn, be informed and enter into relationship with others»³³.

The 2nd *International Seminar of Pauline Publishers* has made it clear that «either we are connected with the world of today or we are relegated in a sort of media Jurassic Park, either we know the mechanisms, the digital languages or we don't know them and, therefore, we cannot communicate. If we want to be missionaries in this world, complex and wonderful, it is necessary to know its culture and languages which are in continuous, rapid and constant evolution»³⁴.

We saw in the 2nd *International Seminar of Pauline Publishers* that the publisher, in this constantly developing world, is called not only to think and to offer content, but also to create relationships. It is worth recalling at least two statements that we heard during the Seminar and that make us think of our way of “doing apostolate” and of orienting formation to this end:

³¹ Ibidem, p. 115.

³² Cfr. *Acts of the X General Chapter, Operative guideline 1.1.2.*

³³ Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 86.

³⁴ Dario Edoardo Viganò, *Communication models for the Church in today's world*, in *Acts of the 2nd International Seminar of Pauline Publishers*, Ariccia, 16-21 October 2017, p. 100.

- a) «The publisher of the future will produce relationships. [...] The contents, the quality and the nature of the relationships between people within the ecosystems that we create and inhabit are – at the same time – the fruit and the sap of our ecosystems»³⁵.
- b) «The same force of contents is clearly proportionate to that of relationships. Where the quality of the relationship is in crisis or in any case, the content is of little relevance»³⁶.

We saw in the 2nd ISPP that digital technologies have changed the publishing world and have consequently changed the relationship and interaction with stakeholders. In fact, «the new environment is characterized by the protagonism of users who not only choose the navigation route, but become co-authors, putting in the attic the classic distinction between the broadcaster and receiver, between producer and consumer: today the sender is only partially an “original” with more or less sacral value, while the receiver assumes some functions of authorship or co-authorship and the distribution of media materials that were formerly the source of the broadcasting apparatus»³⁷.

Therefore, today’s communication universe requires Paulines to be prepared intellectually and technically, and also “open” to relationships, true “men of communication” with God and with others, cultivators of a quality communication in internal relationships (with the Paulines and with lay collaborators) and externally (with our interlocutors).

We cannot close our eyes to the changes and also to the universe of young people who were born in this complex digital environment. If the Paulines of tomorrow were today’s hyper-digital young people, what could be the prospects for their formation?

5. The challenges to be faced in the formation

Certainly, emphasizing the digital world regarding our apostolate does not mean abandoning the traditional means of communication. In other words, there must not be a break between the analogical and digital worlds, but complementarity. Therefore, formation must be planned starting from a global perspective of communication, not exclusive, but integrating all the communicational reality, even our Communication Studies Centres and pedagogical initiatives in the biblical field.

If we talk about a formation addressed to the mission, every Circumscription must have a clear and executable Apostolic Project, which, allowing itself to be guided by the documents of the Congregation regarding this area of Pauline life – including the *Editorial guidelines: Identity, contents and interlocutors of the Pauline apostolate* – is an important reference for the Formation Iter. We need to think of formation in its entirety which, in addition to basic formation, can prepare Paulines through specialization courses in the fields of communication sciences, of the biblical and theological sciences, as well as of the formation, of the vocation promotion, of the organization, of the administration, etc...

To renew the momentum of our apostolic mission, we need to invest in the formation of its members. We recall that the New Delhi Interchapter, carried out in 2001, found that in our Congregation persists «a mentality that is reluctant to change and regardless of the necessary update that reinforces the “status quo”. In some cases we are reaping the fruits of a colourless and generic formation, poor in the study of the Founder and of our charism: poor appreciation of consecrated life, problems of Pauline identity, individualism, a weak sense of belonging, little enthusiasm

³⁵ Federico Badaloni, *Rethinking the role of the publisher today*, in *Acts of the 2nd International Seminar of Pauline Publishers*, op. cit., pp. 191-199.

³⁶ Ivan Maffei, *Religious aspects*, in *Acts of the 2nd International Seminar of Pauline Publishers*, op. cit., p. 90.

³⁷ Ibidem, p. 89.

and even little love for the Congregation³⁸». What is the formation situation today? Are we still at this point? Have we overcome the negative aspects? What concreteness does this 2nd *International Seminar on the Pauline Formation for the Mission* offer to the Congregation?

As you have seen in the program, the Seminar opens up spaces not only to reflect on the contents regarding the various issues pertaining to the field of formation, but also to share the concrete situation in which we live. In order not to widen the discussion around the theme of formation too much, we will try to concentrate on the formative proposals in the three dimensions: “human formation”, “biblical-charismatic formation” and “apostolic formation”.

We underline that the Superiors of Circumscription, the General Coordinators of Formation, the Directors General of the Apostolate and some guests, including eight novices and eleven juniors (coming from different Circumscriptions), who represent our young people in initial formation, participate in this Seminar.

Let us recall that this Seminar takes place in the *Year of Vocation of the Pauline Family*, which was convened in the light of the Synod of Bishops on young people, carried out a year ago. The presence of young people wants to strengthen the synodal style we want to give to this Seminar. They are here not only as listeners, but also to help us in the reflections and proposals. We trust in the collaboration of all because, in a synodal form, we can look realistically at the present and the future with hope, a future that, to be of quality, will depend on the integral formation of each Pauline.

May Mary, Queen of Apostles and our Mother, accompany us by helping us in our continuous effort to take up the Gospel in our lives, until Christ is formed in us, to carry on, with faith and hope, in the footsteps of Saint Paul and of Don Alberione, our mission in the culture of communication.

Thank you and enjoy your work!

Ariccia, 4 November 2019

Father Valdir José De Castro
Superior General

³⁸ Interchapter Assembly of the Society of St. Paul, *Final Document*, in *San Paolo Bulletin* no. 407, 2001, p. 17.