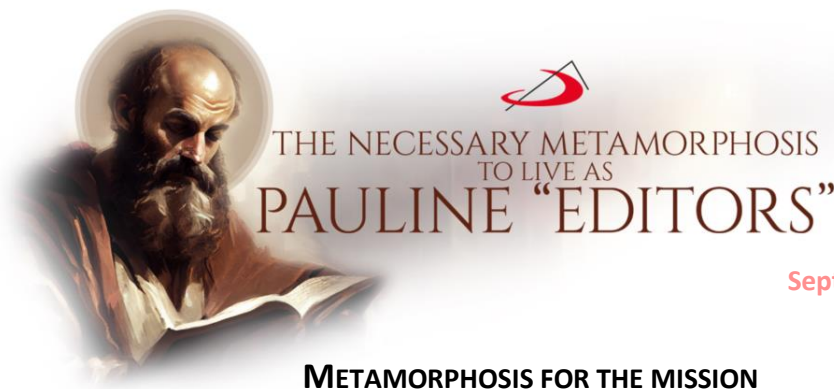


«The sanctifying action of the soul lies in the transformation of us into God *ut homo fieret Deus* through the food Jesus Christ: by nourishing ourselves daily with Jesus Christ the way, the truth and the life. This is the food given by God to man: manducation and assimilation are required. God has set the table; compel people to come in (Lk 14:23)» (DF, 11).



September 2024

5. From the Word to Life

The Christian life, the Bible, the teaching of the Church, and the lives of the saints, all point us to the only path to pursue: the encounter with the Lord and intimate life with him. There is the risk, always lurking, of living as Christians, consecrated, believing in all the teachings of the Church, participating in the sacraments, sharing the various religious contents, praying with a normal frequency... but without ever fully entering into the mystery of the life we are living, the immense miracle in which we are immersed, the gift of faith with which heaven is opened to us, the incredible banquet of gifts that God prepares for us every day. It is all well and good that we have to do and do, the various duties and commitments... but if we do not make the living encounter with Jesus and do not live intimate life with him, we are neglecting the one and only great gift that God wants to give us. We ask ourselves then:

- Do I often stop to think and become more and more aware that I am immersed in a mysterious world, full of grandeur and wonder, of majesty and splendour?
- Do I believe and live in my skin the fact that God has thought of me, created me, loved me and wants me in heaven forever with him, starting today, offering me now, now all possible and imaginable graces?
- What help would I need to realise my living encounter with Jesus, to make my journey of transformation a reality, to live a life increasingly in the presence of God, and full of the Holy Spirit live relationships of intimacy and friendship with the Father and the Son?

6. Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, turn sadness into joy.

Lord Jesus Christ, transform laziness into enthusiasm.

Lord Jesus Christ, transform pride into humility.

Lord Jesus Christ, transform restlessness into peace.

Lord Jesus Christ, transform fear into courage.

Lord Jesus Christ, turn hatred into love. Amen.

METAMORPHOSIS FOR THE MISSION

The reflection proposed to us by the Superior General hints at the enormous changes we are experiencing as a society, 'a world in continual metamorphosis', and encourages us to 'enter', to pass into this other shore, even if this entails insecurities and disorientation, 'pains' that will later prove therapeutic. It is about going to what is essential, what is necessary: reaching out to humanity that has forgotten its own identity, bringing it the bread of our experience of God.

1. From the Superior General's Letter

«In fact, using an evangelical The reflection proposed to us by the Superior General in his annual letter in number 4, entitled 'the "necessary" in the time of metamorphosis', hints at the enormous changes we are experiencing as a society, a world in continual metamorphosis', and encourages us to 'enter', to pass into this other shore, even if this entails insecurities and disorientation, 'pains' that will later prove therapeutic. It is about going to what is essential, what is necessary: reaching out to humanity that has forgotten its own identity, bringing it the bread of our experience of God., we are experiencing the same situation as Jesus when he decides to "cross over to the other side," as the Gospel of John reminds us: "After this, Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee [of Tiberias]. A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick' (Jn 6:1-2) ... Crossing to another shore is what the Apostle Paul actually experienced in his travels, where each journey opened up an encounter with a new culture [...] And it is not strange if we feel disoriented, insecure, unprepared [...] Being inconvenienced helps all of us to get out of ourselves, from our stability, from the usual way of living the mission and inserts us into the dynamism of life. The "pain" here is therapeutic, it is the beginning of something new, a jolt of humanity that makes us feel close to those like us who are crossing the sea [...] This is the mission of Jesus: to reach humanity that is abandoned and alone, one that has forgotten its

identity and experiences such a tragic deformation of its image that it thinks that the Father no longer exists. An authentic relationship with Jesus pushes us to feed humanity today, going to look for it where it lives. Bringing what bread? That of the experience of God, of the Father: this is what Jesus lives, this is what Paul lived, this is what Blessed Alberione transmitted to us» (*Lettera annuale 2023-2024, 4. Il "necessario" nel tempo della metamorfosi*).

2. The encounter with the Word of God

St Paul was the protagonist of a radical turning point, a true metamorphosis. Metamorphosis, like the death and resurrection of Christ, is the threshold and beginning of a new way of living and thinking. Metamorphosis, like the life of the Church, is destined for a mystical transformation, according to the challenge launched by Karl Rahner, when he said that the Christian of the future will either be a mystic – that is, a person who has experienced God – or he will not be. Paul's secret is Christ. His secret is the mystical experience of a Christ who is alive. Paul became the herald of that metamorphosis he had experienced.

«We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing» (Gal 2: 15-21).

3. The Magisterium of the Church

Pope Francis, in a General Audience, spoke about the figure of St Paul, highlighting the transformation that took place in him after his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. It is this living encounter that every Christian and every man deeply desires and awaits because it is this encounter that can fill life with meaning and joy. It is only after this living and continuous encounter with the

Lord that one is a true apostle because, from then on, his every word and gesture will bear witness to the extraordinary event of life with God that he is living.

«In Paul's case, what changed him is not a simple idea or a conviction: it was the encounter with the risen Lord. Do not forget this: it is the encounter with the Lord that changes a life. It was Saul's encounter with the risen Lord that transformed his entire being. Paul's humanity, his passion for God and his glory was not annihilated, but transformed, "converted" by the Holy Spirit. The only one who can change our hearts is the Holy Spirit. And it was so for every aspect of his life. [...] "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17). The encounter with Jesus Christ changes you from within, it makes you another person. If one is in Christ, he or she is a new creation, this is the meaning of being a new creation. To become Christian is not to apply make-up that changes your face, no! If you are Christian, your heart changes, but if you are Christian [only] in appearance, this will not do ... made-up Christians will not do. True change is of the heart. And this happened to Paul» (Pope Francis, *General audience, Wednesday 29 March 2023*).

4. Thought of the Founder

Blessed Alberione invites us to cultivate the 'proper spirit' of the Pauline Family, which is the spirit of Saint Paul, who lived Christ to the full. St. Paul came to this with the preparation of the period of desert and silence that he lived before beginning his mission, with his 'ecstasies and contemplations', then continuing this process of silence and prayer every day of his life, to live more and more in Christ, and to allow Christ to become his own life (Phil 1:21). To realise this wonderful programme we must, the Founder reminds us, feed daily on Christ, the Eucharist and the Word.

«The Pauline Family has a soul of its own, a spirit of its own, to be interpreted exactly, and that is the Gospel, Jesus Christ, Saviour, Master, Priest, in the way St Paul presents it to us in his Epistles. Hence the Pauline spirit: St Paul's interpretation, interpretation of the Gospel. He, St Paul, who was instructed directly by the Divine Master in his ecstasies, in his contemplations, especially in the period that St Paul spent in the desert for some three years, the transformation of himself into Christ: 'the living... is Jesus Christ', *vivit vero in me Christus* (Gal 2:20), and the other phrase that is even more significant, in a certain respect, viz: 'my life is Christ, *mihi vivere Christus est* (Phil 1:21); his life...» (APD63, 333).