



ANNUAL LETTER OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL
TO THE CONFRERES OF THE SOCIETY OF ST PAUL

**Artisans of Christ
in the Culture of Communication**

Dear brothers,

The third stage of our journey after the XI General Chapter offers us the opportunity to delve even deeper into the many facets of our identity. In particular, we will consider our being “artisans of communion,” a path that is renewed step by step and that we do not want to disregard. The objective of the General Chapter – “*Let yourselves be transformed, renewing your way of thinking’ (Rom 12:2). By allowing ourselves to be transformed by listening to the Word of God, in dialogue with the world in profound metamorphosis, we, Pauline ‘Editors’, commit ourselves to be artisans of communion to prophetically proclaim the joy of the Gospel*” – now leads us to reflect on the invitation to be creative and generative. Artisans in the art of communication which for us Paulines is testimony and proclamation of the Gospel, in communion among ourselves and with God.

In a change of epoch, in a time of mutation of communication due to the strong presence of digital languages – and today in particular of artificial intelligence – our mission also needs to take new paths and embrace new opportunities, of Pauline “Editors” who embody the figure of the artisan, or of someone who invents something that does not yet exist, never repetitive, courageous, immersed in the Spirit, in Him who makes all things new.¹

The commitment to be “artisans” as Don Giacomo Alberione was with the first Paulines – enterprising with the press, radio, cinema and other forms of apostolate – highlights how in many situations our generation has lost this quality, preferring to operate with what is already known. It is not a question of changing for the sake of change, nor of multiplying apostolic initiatives, but of generating, creating, giving life as the artisan gives life. Our past, so full of novelties, must not only be known, but also assimilated in depth so that it becomes an inspiration for new paths, for communicative contexts in which today’s humanity can glimpse the signs of that hope that does not disappoint.

I. The Icon of the Artisan

The image of the artisan is particularly significant. Who is the artisan?² He is someone who carries out a job with commitment, patience, constancy and mastery. He produces objects whose creation requires great technical ability and aesthetic taste. He is therefore a professional, but also an artist, a creative, a meticulous innovator. He gets involved in what he does, “gets his hands dirty” and what he does is like an extension of his person. He gives life, he creates. He works in a workshop with perseverance and passion, he takes care of the details and everything he does is for someone else. He trusts his collaborators. A good artisan creates a style that lasts over time, entrusting the secrets of his trade to the new generations and for this reason he is recognized by people, appreciated and sought after.

¹ Cf. Rev 21:5.

² Preparatory Document of the XI General Chapter, Rome, General House, 2020.

Pope Francis, describing the figure of the artisan, reminds us that he “has an original outlook on reality. He or she has the capacity to recognize in inert material a masterpiece even before realizing it. What is for everyone else a block of marble, is for an artisan a piece of furniture; what is for everyone else a piece of wood, is for an artisan a violin, a chair, a frame! The artisan is the first to intuit the destiny of beauty that matter can have. And this brings him closer to the Creator.”³

The “human” traits of the artisan, his personal qualities show us something that we often forget. Work is a divine art, which belongs to the harmony of creation⁴: it is not simply the repetitive production of objects.

We could go on for a long time, but these brief notes already allow us to reflect on who the Pauline “Editor” is, what his lifestyle should be, his way of facing evangelization. We need to overcome a “productivist” and “repetitive” vision of the apostolate to adopt an approach that puts the person first and all that he can give for the Gospel in creativity, passion and ingenuity. The artisan lives in generative spaces and thinks generatively. Our communities themselves must be rethought as places of creativity, “workshops of evangelization,” which have at the center of their activity a dream, a vision, a life experience to communicate, a Person to make known... In this way the boundaries of the apostle’s mentality progressively expand and with them those of evangelization. Artisanship – so little loved by globalization – offers us an eloquent image. Focusing on it allows us to underline that there is still much to discover about our mission, in the light of a communicative context that offers new paths to the mission, keeping in mind that “no algorithm can replace poetry, irony and love.”⁵

Pope Francis adds another piece to our reflection: “Artisanship is a road for work, for developing the imagination, for improving environments, conditions of life, relationships. For this reason, I like to think of you as artisans of fraternity. The parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Lk 10:29-37) reminds us of this artisanship of relationships, of sharing together. The Samaritan makes himself close, he stooped down and lifted up the wounded man, putting him back on his feet and anointing him with dignity through gestures of care.”⁶

From here we draw the second aspect that is close to our hearts: communion. Fraternity is a dimension of living together, of quality relationships. Together with listening, dialogue and forgiveness⁷, fraternity shows us that living as brothers implies living for one another. Being artisans of fraternity challenges our Pauline communities and their apostolic places. Fraternity, therefore, cannot be understood only as an experience in which we seek a certain “well-being,” a feeling of well-being together, calm and far from problems, but above all as the space of mutual giving. The act of communicating, in its various aspects, is done to create relationships, fraternity and, in the highest degree, communion⁸.

2. An Art that is born from Communion

Communion qualifies the Christian lifestyle, our vocation, the sense of following the Master... and it is the goal of the Pauline mission.⁹ “That they may all be one,” Jesus prays: “so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us” (Jn 17:21-

³ Pope Francis, *Address to the Delegations of Confartigianato*, Vatican City, 10 February 2024.

⁴ Cf. Gen 2:2-3.15.

⁵ Pope Francis, “A University with the Odor of People.” *Address during the Meeting at the Pontifical Gregorian University*, Rome, 5 November 2024.

⁶ Pope Francis, *Address to the Delegations of Confartigianato*, Vatican City, 10 February 2024.

⁷ Pope Francis, *Angelus* of 19 February 2017.

⁸ Valdir José De Castro, *Annual Letter. Apostle Communicators. For a Culture of Encounter*, Rome, 2018.

⁹ Cf. International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 2 March 2018, no. 6.

22). Living for one another is the dynamism of the Trinity and therefore of the Church. Communion therefore not of things, but of persons who find the meaning of their life in mutual relationships.

In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul describes the face of communion, making it even more visible, indeed bringing us into the heart of communion itself which is the Eucharist. From this memorial of Jesus' Easter comes the awareness of being the Church, a holy people gathered by the Lord to celebrate the gift of new life, where the gift to be welcomed is the Bread of Life that nourishes us, to the point of being able to say like Paul: "*It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me*" (Gal 2:20). His words are truly enlightening: "*Because there is one bread, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread*" (1 Cor 10:17).

The Second Vatican Council, in the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, deepened this identity of the Church and reaffirmed the mystery of love that we express in being a single body, a community that in baptism finds the strength to walk together as we are loved by the same Father. There is an ecclesiology of communion¹⁰ that we must never forget because the Church manifests its identity and becomes a witness to the Gospel only in mutual love. Synodality itself is a concrete way that expresses this aspect of Christian life, so that, by walking on the same path, learning to listen to each other, valuing the gifts of each and participating in the events of humanity... we bear witness that it is Christ who calls us to communion with him.¹¹

The meaning of consecrated life, and in particular of living in community, is intricately linked to communion. A community not of individuals who strive to be together, but of brothers who in mutual acceptance manifest the words of Jesus: "*The love with which you loved me be in them, and I in them*" (Jn 17:26). If communion is so central to our Christian life, if it defines our identity as consecrated persons, then we understand why communion itself becomes the meaning of the mission. We have to announce other than that God be "*all in all*" (1 Cor 15:28).

There is a term that, although belonging to digital culture, due to its symbolic connotation has something to say also in relation to communion: "connecting." Connection is the necessary prerequisite for responding to the human need for deep relationships. Connecting is an action that belongs to the "culture of encounter." It presupposes that the request to get in touch is also met with explicit acceptance, which is essential for true communication to exist. In particular, connection expresses the Church's desire to remain in contact with a society that is online, but often immersed in solitude, as it does not encounter anyone who testifies that it is possible to live for one another. Only from this love received as a gift does the ultimate meaning of human life emerge. "*The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.*"¹²

Connecting is offering the possibility of enjoying each other's presence, it is arousing the desire to share life,¹³ so that "*that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life, we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ*" (1 John 1:1-3).

¹⁰ Idem, no. 107.

¹¹ Cf. 1Cor 1:9.

¹² Final Document of the second session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2-27 October 2024), *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission*, 26 October 2024, no. 2.

¹³ Vivian D., *Church of Communion: Desire and Prophecy from the II Vatican to Today*, in *Vocations 1* (2012), p. 27.

3. The Importance of Relationship

Communion is also one of the areas of creativity of the artisan. For those who create, it is the face of their interlocutor that is the purpose of their work and that projects it outside of themselves, an action that presupposes love. Creating is not just producing an object, but primarily it is weaving relationships that free us from loneliness, a dynamism that has no end.

The act of creating itself does not simply respond to needs, whatever they may be, and even less to the laws of the market alone. Creating is the place where the artisan not only expresses his own “humanity,” but also something more. The same is true for us. In baptism our life was closely united with Christ and his presence in us makes us children in the Son, immersed in the mystery of divine humanity. Creating, therefore, expresses our “humanity” and our “divinity,” our being children of God, made in the image of the Son. When man creates he does so as a divine-human person in whom the Son also works. He works in the sense that he himself takes us by the hand so that we live our humanity as he lived it: as the Son of the Father. Therefore, being artisans is a vocation, a call to participate in the creative action of God who from the first pages of Scripture is presented as an artisan: he, like a potter, shapes man in Gen 2:7; like an architect, he builds woman in Gen 2:22. Even Psalm 139, thinking back to the creative action of God, imagines him as a skilled weaver, capable of creating “wonders” with very modest material!

How necessary it is not to forget that our apostolate is not an individual work! The fruitfulness of evangelization comes from the relationship, from communion both with Jesus the Master and with the confrere. And this is why the act of creating is one of the most fruitful ways to live a process of “transfiguration.”¹⁴ If our apostolate is truly kneaded with relationships, those who come into contact with the fruit of our work do not only see us, but the Father who generated us and experience that it is communion that fertilizes and gives meaning to our history.

In this epochal transition, where it is more fruitful to “show” than to “demonstrate” the closeness of God, it is necessary to bear witness to the Gospel as Paulines, but also to narrate our daily life, our everyday way of living the apostolate together, which does not mean “all doing the same thing,” but to feel that all of us, even if different from each other, are called to live our humanity as the Trinity lives, in communion.

How truly attractive is a community that creates together! Those who see this communion are surprised, fascinated by its own beauty, feel nostalgic for a more organic life¹⁵ and come into contact with an experience that is in fact a proposal for life. Every gesture, every apostolate, if it expresses the body of Christ, becomes communicative because it gives concreteness to love, shows incarnate love. This happens when we write a book, when we lay out a magazine, when we post a photo, when we create a web page, make a video for YouTube, when we organize a communication course or a vocational meeting with young people, when we engage in a path of biblical animation, when we speak on the radio or spend the whole day in the bookshop, when we dedicate ourselves to pastoral work... but also when we make our home welcoming, prepare food, visit a friend or a sick brother. This lifestyle attracts and transfigures, changes in depth, makes us live a true metamorphosis, that process of Christification which is the goal of creativity and of Pauline life itself.

The community, therefore, is not a generic place, but a house where relationships are more important than roles, where what holds us together is not simply an interest, but the Father himself. For our Pauline Family, the one who “generated” us, the one who, welcoming the life

¹⁴ Brozovič A., *Creativity, Experience of Sonship*, Lipa Edizioni, Rome 2022, p. 110.

¹⁵ Idem, p. 179.

of God into himself, gave birth to a “house,” a very specific way of loving humanity and being apostles like Saint Paul is Blessed James Alberione.

4. The Paulines: Artisans of Evangelization

The art of the Pauline mission finds its point of reference in Saint Paul and in Don Alberione the artisan who was able to redefine it in the new times. Theirs then became the experience of many Paulines who, involved and passionate about the Apostle and the Founder, gave everything for the apostolate, both in the communities that slowly arose in Italy, and progressively in all the continents. We are talking about the first decades of our history, from the 1930s onwards, a phase that for at least thirty years saw the Pauline Family expanding in terms of members, houses and apostolic initiatives.

4.1 Artisans of the “First Hour”

Reading the “book” of our history we encounter many names, many faces who with faith and audacity set out trusting in the word of Don Alberione. A generation of true pioneers of evangelization with the means of the time, artisans who often had to invent something to support themselves and to begin the mission. We are talking about a generation of young people – often unaware of the social and ecclesial reality they had to face – who had to deal with many challenges, including that of the language they did not know, the poverty of means, of a local Church that did not understand them... of a preparation not always up to the task. Therefore, how many letters written to Don Alberione, how many telegrams! How many messages in response sent by the Primo Maestro to give concrete indications, encourage them and motivate them in the mission! One could compose a sort of “diary” of Pauline life, made up of testimonies that are incredible. The Founder, in the first person, took care of relationships, he was close, he did not leave anyone alone, he created that “culture of encounter” that was truly crucial for the mission: he communicated from heart to heart, so that “*each of our priests loves the nationality in which he finds himself, where he has gone or will go to bring the doctrine, the sanctity, the grace of Jesus with the powerful means of apostolate: the edition.*”¹⁶ His way of writing anticipated a style of communication that is commonly used today on social media: a short text, made up of few but incisive words.

The same trips made by Don Alberione to meet the Pauline Family created communion, ever new ways of artisanship of relationships. His visits recirculated enthusiasm, everyone felt supported in difficulties, the awareness of being a family of apostles grew. And so here are the first three foundations outside Italy, all of which occurred in 1931: Brazil with Fr Benedetto Trosso and Fr Saverio Boano; the United States with Fr Pietro Borrano, joined later by Fr Stanislao Crovella and Fr Mario Gandolfi; Argentina with Fr Benedetto Trosso, who came from Brazil, also joined by Fr Edoardo Teresio Costa and Fr Rinaldo Angelo Cozzani.

It is not possible here to offer a summary of all the foundations and their missionaries because there are so many of them. We should talk about our realities in India, the Philippines, Japan, and also in Canada, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela... We should remember Fr Michele Ambrosio, Fr Guido Paganini and Fr Alfonso Ferrero (India); Fr Matteo Bernardo Borgogno and Fr Gaetano Marco Grossi (Philippines), Fr Paolo Marcellino and Fr Lorenzo Bertero (Japan), Fr Angelo Pettinati and Brother Angelico Abrate (Canada), Fr Francesco Michele Sirito and Brother Piero Degani (Colombia), Fr Ugo Zecchin (Mexico), Fr Francesco Sirito and Brother Giuseppe Scarnato (Venezuela), Fr Giacomo Corrà, Fr Raffaele Tonni and Fr Giuliano Zoppi (Congo). How much resourcefulness on the part of the confreres of the first hour.

¹⁶ James Alberione., *Carissimi in San Paolo*, Edizioni Paoline, Rome 1971, pp. 90-91.

This is not a simple list of names, but the presentation of brothers who have given their entire lives to the mission. To them we should add many others: Fr Domenico Valente (Great Britain), Fr Francesco Saverio Borrano (Australia), Fr Giovanni Battista Mabritto (Germany), Fr Renato Simoni (Ireland), Fr Paolo Marcellino (Korea), Fr Giuseppe Costa and Brother Matteo Toffani (Chile), Fr Saverio Boano (Portugal), Fr Paolino Gilli (France) and Fr Cesare Robaldo (Poland).

Their names, their lives are like a psalm of praise to the Trinity, a song of joy for the great things that the Lord has accomplished in our history and in particular in that of these young Paulines who “*left everything and followed him*” (Lk 5:11), becoming creative witnesses of the proclamation of the Gospel. Among these young people we should also remember Fr Desiderio Costa and Fr Antonio Brossa in Spain, now 90 years ago.

Courageous artisans, but also fragile, at times due to the difficulties caused by the relationships between them, perhaps due to their character or their way of seeing things; fragile because of their health and because of the difficult social situations they encountered. This is the case, for example, of our mission in China, when Don Alberione sent Fr Pio Bertino and Fr Emilio Fassino, the latter later replaced by Fr Agostino Ghione and Fr Clemente Canavero. They had to change their plans because of the Sino-Japanese war (shortly after the mid-1930s) and therefore leave Nanking, taking refuge in the Philippines, and after returning there in 1938, they left again – this time permanently (1952) – because they were forced to do so by the government. On 26 April 1951, Fr Speciale noted in his Diary: “*I see so much sadness and pain on the face of the Primo Maestro. Without a doubt, he has the great burden of thinking of his sons and brothers expelled from China who have to leave everything after so much work and after so many hopes for that great nation.*” In 1947 a confrere, Fr Vittorio Borrelli, died in China at just 31 years of age. Buried in the cemetery of Nanking, he will remain there as a seed thrown for the future. Finally, the same thing happened in Cuba and Poland, although in these two last nations, in more recent times, Providence has opened the way for our new presence.

The artisanship of these brothers has expressed itself in the editorial offices – books, magazines, aids of various kinds – but also in the printing houses, radio, record editions, bookstores, in the widespread distribution... in the countless editions of the Bible and with it the biblical weeks and the days of the Gospel, up to the San Paolo Film. How many collaborations with the local Church, how many ways in which we have inserted ourselves into the different contexts.

The genius of Fr Enzo Manfredi also speaks to us of this creativity, who lived for thirty years in the Vatican Community and who invented a multiple telephone communication system for the Vatican City; further proof of this is the editorial fruitfulness of Fr Mauro Ferrero in India with more than one hundred and twenty published books. The fruit of creativity is the valuing of what Providence has given us in Chile where the brothers, helped by the Jesuit Father Alberto Hurtado – canonized by Benedict XVI on 23 October 2005 – managed to buy a bookstore and the editorial Splendor. How can we not think of all that some confreres have done for the creation of the radio in Japan and Brazil? And we could continue with many other examples.

The words of Don Alberione summarize all this dynamism: “*The study of geography has a very high purpose: to know men: customs, religions, laws, means of culture, demographic state, tendencies... to preach the Gospel to every creature... The priest [and the Disciple of the Divine Master] must know geography like all scholars... and he will seek all the inventions and means and goods as far as they serve this very high vocation of his.*”¹⁷

¹⁷ Idem, p. 30.

4.2 Artisans in the Contemporary World

However, our gaze cannot stop at the distant past. Always and in different ways, love for the mission arouses in the confreres the desire to continue to give new impetus to the Pauline apostolate. Over the years, our presence has expanded to Nigeria, Ghana and Angola, to Paraguay, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Panama, to Macau, Vietnam and Ukraine. Horizons made possible thanks to the availability of a good number of confreres and the tenacious commitment of various of our Circumscriptions. The apostolates have therefore continued and have found new expressions such as, for example, the birth of the Pauline Centers for Studies in Communication, the Cultural Centers and the various Festivals. Our apostolate has opened up and integrated into the digital network, to social media. Some of our confreres produce documentaries and films, a good number make radio and television programs; there are professional photographers, some write icons and paint; we have a local television. And we continue to invest in formation and biblical animation.

Creativity of individual Paulines, but also of entire communities, an apostolate lived together because it is complex; today more than ever the languages and communicative contexts must be integrated. This is why Don Alberione addressed his confreres in Australia in this way: “Go forward helping each other, in a cordial, profound, intimate collaboration. Put all your prayers together for this mission that you have here, in Australia.”¹⁸ Surely these words are valid for every reality.

We are part of this flow of Pauline life and we give continuity to a story that does not end, members of an apostolic body, of a mission made of encounters, of shared paths, of so much humanity.

5. Artisans in the Style of the Gospel

There is a parable in the Third Gospel in which the protagonist is an “expert in humanity”: that of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). A doctor of the Law asks Jesus who his neighbour is,¹⁹ after the Master has reiterated that loving one’s neighbour is necessary to inherit eternal life. And here is the figure of the Samaritan who, unlike the priest and the Levite, performs a series of gestures of proximity towards a man found half dead and stripped of everything: he approaches him, bandages him, loads him onto his donkey, takes him to the hotel, advances money to the innkeeper. “He took care of him!” The “neighbour” is not only the wounded man, but also the Samaritan who comes close. It is precisely his heart that tunes in with that of the unfortunate man, showing that he knows what the heart of God feels towards all creatures. His heart opens and, interrupting the journey, takes care of him²⁰.

Everything begins with a look: the Samaritan “sees”²¹ and it is there that the first step of his compassion started. He sees the opportunity for help; he sees the possibility that where he cannot, others can take care of this poor man. The Samaritan has a broad view, has an open mind and is capable of building a network of solidarity. He does so concretely and in an engaging way²².

The scene is set along the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Jericho: from the center to the outskirts. And the Samaritan, as a man capable of decentralizing himself, precisely travels this route and allows himself to be “distracted” by the new situation.

¹⁸ Stesuri V.-Pérez T.-Venturini P., *Raise your Eyes, Aim High. Your Horizon is the World*, International Centre of Pauline Spirituality, Rome 2016, p. 221.

¹⁹ Cf. Lk 10:29.

²⁰ Cf. Pope Francis, *General Audience*, 27 April 2016.

²¹ Cf. Lk 10:33.

²² Cf. Angelini M.I., *Meditation from the Synod of Bishops on Synodality*, Vatican City, 7 October 2024 (<https://www.vaticannews.va/it/vaticano/news/2024-10/sinodo-la-meditazione-di-madre-angelini-del-7-ottobre.html>).

In everything he does, the Samaritan seems to describe the action of the Son of God. He approaches humanity, he wraps it, he carries it on himself... he takes care of men and women who are half dead. He sees the many opportunities for good, for healing and creates a network of solidarity that finds in the Twelve the first to let themselves be involved. This is the meaning of the conclusion of the parable: *“Go and do likewise”* (Lk 10:37). These words are not only addressed to the doctor of the Law, but also to us readers of this Gospel page. He also says to us: *“Do likewise”*. “Doing” is synonymous with living, “living like this”, living with a broad outlook, a mentality capable of building a network of help, an... artisanship of communion.

In this parable we reread the profound meaning of our apostolate. Like the Samaritan, like Jesus, it is necessary to let ourselves be questioned by today’s humanity, to feel compassion (or “suffering-with”) humanity, to understand that my fate also depends on the fate of my brothers and sisters, that a communion of solidarity is necessary, where today’s roads are also digital ones because it is precisely there that we find a good part of humanity, often robbed of dignity, sold by algorithms.

“Go and do likewise!” Jesus seems to repeat this phrase even after the encounter with the sinful woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7:36-50). The scene revolves around an encounter. While Jesus is at the table in Simon’s house, this woman enters without warning, with a jar of perfume in her hand; crying, she begins to wet his feet with her tears, dries them with her hair, kisses them, and sprinkles them with perfume. The Pharisee is scandalized by how Jesus welcomes all these gestures of the woman, but Jesus helps him to read from another point of view what she does.

His gaze toward the woman is full of love: he knows that the tears are for the many sins and is full of repentance. What she does, Jesus perceives as an expression of a love denied by Simon: *“You did not give me water for my feet... You did not give me a kiss... You did not anoint my head with oil...”* (7:45-46). How many missed opportunities.

This woman expresses the creativity of love, she becomes the artisan of a communion born from the encounter with the one who is Love. The actions she performs – she bathes, dries, kisses, anoints, sprinkles – are her way of expressing the passage of salvation in her life. And Jesus is there, standing before her, like the Samaritan. What the woman does toward Jesus evokes everything the Samaritan does. The gestures have the same meaning. Both are creative according to their own history, their own human qualities, their own culture. The Samaritan and the sinner speak to us of their art in communicating love, in living a multiplicity of gestures that have communion as their goal²³.

Two evangelical pages that re-express the meaning of our apostolate. In the act of communicating, we decide, like the Samaritan, to take care of our interlocutors. It is an act of openness to the other that we simultaneously address to Jesus, Master of love and mercy. Anointing the body of humanity – as Pauline artisans of communion – is anointing the body of Jesus; perfuming the body of Jesus is perfuming the body of humanity with resurrection.

6. Artisans of Hope in the Jubilee Year

A wounded humanity like the unfortunate man in Luke’s parable goes in search of hope, of a different future. This is what Pope Francis has set as the theme for the Jubilee Year (24 December 2024 – 6 January 2026). Everyone hopes: *“In the heart of every person there is hope as a desire and expectation of good, even without knowing what tomorrow will bring. The unpredictability of the future, however, gives rise to feelings that are sometimes contrasting: from trust to fear, from serenity to despair, from certainty to doubt. We often meet discouraged people, who look to the*

²³ Valdir José De Castro, *Annual Letter. Apostle Communicators. For a Culture of Encounter*, Rome, 2018.

*future with skepticism and pessimism, as if nothing could offer them happiness.”*²⁴ The “everyone hopes” becomes an appeal for us so that by seeing the reality in which we are immersed we can get closer to everyone, becoming traveling companions. Before arriving in the city of Saints Peter and Paul, we must not be afraid to seek out those who are still closed in their own world, unaware that the Lord is waiting for them. We too are pilgrims, but not alone, but close to other “*pilgrims of hope who will not fail to travel ancient and modern paths to live the Jubilee experience intensely.*”²⁵ Among the modern paths we can also include those of the network, of digital languages, of these existential places that can become spaces of encounter with Christ. Therefore “*let us allow ourselves to be attracted by hope from now and allow it to become contagious through us for those who desire it. May our life say to them: ‘Hope in the Lord, be strong, let your heart be strengthened and hope in the Lord’*” (Ps 27:14).²⁶

7. Looking to the Future

The time in which we live needs artisans of communion and we too can make our contribution. The early Church did so, as the Acts of the Apostles tell us.²⁷ Driven by the Spirit, she was able to speak different languages and leave Jerusalem for new horizons. The same Spirit acted in the first generation of Paulines and in more recent times in the confreres who with equal generosity and a spirit of sacrifice gave life to new communities and new apostolates. Where there is the Spirit, there is creativity, there is generativeness, life spreads: “*And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim*” (Acts 2:4). And the Spirit who is love, continues to lead us even today where there is a need for resurrection.

This is, therefore, the time to ask ourselves some questions. Let us ask ourselves, honestly, if we are truly willing to let the Spirit of the Lord work: where there are resistances that repeatedly emerge, creativity is lacking, the apostolate suffers, communion is no longer witnessed as a lifestyle of those who follow Christ... How do I live the mission? In a tired and repetitive way or with the desire to open new paths for the Gospel? Do apostolic projects have in themselves a healthy dose of courage, of resourcefulness? How do I nourish the joy of being an apostle, a creative and generous Pauline “Editor”? Am I aware that today it is really necessary to “show” and not “demonstrate”, that the new life is lived first of all in communion between confreres, with the people of God and with Jesus Master? Are we committed to building welcoming communities, capable of dialogue, of walking together, going out? Do I offer my contribution so that the community promotes a “vocational culture” and therefore becomes a vocational proposal? Do I love studiousness to renew my apostolate? Do I draw on prayer to be generative, to live a creativity that comes from a profound synergy with Christ the Way, the Truth and the Life? These questions help us not to take the quality of our Pauline life for granted.

Dear brothers, the announcement of the Risen One and his Gospel is truly necessary. Humanity asks and hopes to meet him. Precisely in the light of this incessant question, of this cry sometimes unexpressed, each of us rediscovers the meaning of his vocation, taking care of a stripped humanity. Today, as yesterday, a Pauline artisanship is necessary, a creativity that generates communion at all levels. To each of us the Spirit gives a new courage to be enterprising and in particular to the new generations. The Spirit asks us to live our mission with

²⁴ Pope Francis, *Spes non confundit*, Rome, 9 May 2024, no. 1.

²⁵ Idem, no. 5.

²⁶ Idem, no. 25.

²⁷ Cf. Acts 2:1-11.

more interior freedom, greater availability, ready even to leave our own land, our own culture and above all our own mentality to live in new existential contexts. There is a need for new apostles with generous hearts to give continuity to that process that makes us available for evangelization. Precisely in this contradictory epoch we are called to be less calculating in feeling good, not caged by comfort. And this in every apostolic area.

Let us think of the biblical apostolate that has reached its first centenary (1924-2024). Even today there is a need for the Word of God to enter the lives and hearts of people, a Word not only printed, but always given with creativity. Let us revive the biblical apostolate of our Circumscriptions. The same SOBICAIN, due to its character as an international reality, strengthens not only the work of new translations, always precious and necessary, but also its vocation of animation and biblical formation in the various ecclesial and social contexts.

How then can we not consider the pastoral care of vocations. Every apostolate needs apostles. There are realities where young people still respond to the call of the Lord, while in others there is a widespread deafness. And yet, as the Seminar on Pauline Pastoral Care of Vocations (Ariccia, 20-25 October 2024) has just reminded us, every community can foster a “vocational culture,” can be generative and witness to that true joy that comes from the gift of life. The Pauline “Editor,” living his mission at the school of the Master and with passion, is truly a witness who questions and challenges the world of youth also in relation to the Pauline vocation.

The Jubilee Year gives us the opportunity to be pilgrims of hope. It will not be easy for everyone to come to Rome. Hence the invitation to enhance the proposals of the Jubilee in individual ecclesial realities. Let us take advantage of this holy time, a time of reconciliation with the Lord and among ourselves, a time of liberation from our self-referentiality. Let us rediscover the joy of being artisans of communion, through an apostolate that is not frenetic but fruitful, the fruit of communion with the Lord. Let us ask the Spirit to work in us that change of mentality hoped for by the Apostle²⁸ and so strongly emphasized by the XI General Chapter.

As Pope Francis emphasizes: *“This is the time to be the artisans of open communities that know how to value the talents of each person. It is a time for free and disinterested missionary communities, which do not seek prominence and advantage, but rather walk the paths of the people of our time, stooping to tend to those on the margins. It is a time for communities that look disappointed young people in the eye, that welcome strangers and give hope to the disheartened. It is a time for communities that fearlessly engage in dialogue with those with different ideas. It is a time for communities that, like the Good Samaritan, know how to approach those wounded by life, to bind their wounds with compassion.”*²⁹ Yes, this is the time given to us by the Trinity so that we too – like the woman in the Gospel of Luke – make our apostolate the precious perfume that reaches every corner of the earth and that flows from being prostrated at the feet of the Divine Master in a gesture full of love.

Rome, 8 December 2024

Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary



Domenico Soliman
Father Domenico Soliman
Superior General

²⁸ Cf. Rm 12:2.

²⁹ Pope Francis, *Address to the Participants at the Meeting promoted by the National Catechetical Office of the Italian Episcopal Conference*, Vatican City, 30 January 2021.