



## **The International Seminar of Pauline Publishers**

Ariccia – Milan

17 September – 2 October 1988

### **A Memoir**

*Michael Goonan SSP*

#### **Introduction**

The International Seminar of Pauline Publishers was held in Italy from 17 September to 2 October 1988.<sup>1</sup> The seminar began in Ariccia on 17 September and continued there until 22 September. On 23 September the participants travelled by bus to Milan, where the meeting resumed from 24 to 26 September. On 27 September the participants returned by bus to Ariccia via Alba to resume the seminar from 28 September to 2 October.

Seventy-four Paulines participated in the seminar (62 from the Society of St Paul and 12 Daughters of St Paul). Every Province and Region of the SSP were represented, and most houses directly dependent on the General House. A notable exception was Poland, where the house of Czestochowa was opened in 1984. Besides the participants some 17 experts came, usually for one session, to give a presentation.<sup>2</sup>

My sources for this talk are firstly my own memories as a participant. So I am writing about 'what I heard, and saw with my own eyes, and touched with my own hands', to borrow from 1 John 1:1. Some 29 years later my memories of this seminar remain

---

<sup>1</sup>We are now calling it the "First" International Seminar because a Second International Seminar is scheduled for 16-21 October 2018 but, at the time it was simply called 'The' International Seminar.

<sup>2</sup>Besides myself, Frs Vincenzo Miotto, Aderico Dolzani and Gilles Collicelli, who are expected to be at Frankfurt this year, participated.

quite strong. Also important was the *Acts of the International Seminar of Pauline Publishers*, the official record of proceedings edited by Fr Luigi Giovannini, in particular the Introduction to the Seminar given by the Superior General, Fr Renato Perino, in which he outlined the context of the seminar (historical and present) and its objectives, the Final Documents of the Three Apostolic Sectors, and the Final Document of the Seminar.

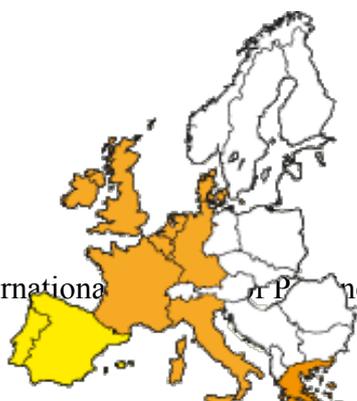
As one of the youngest participants, I remember the seminar as being both an exciting and somewhat overwhelming experience. I am not sure how much I gleaned from the many presentations. Almost everything was in the Italian language, and the simultaneous translations were rather poor because of the length of the presentations and their technical character. It was sometimes hard for the translators to understand the concepts in Italian, let alone translate them immediately into English. Simultaneous translations happened only in Ariccia. The presentations in Milan were without translation. But somehow I still picked up a good deal, and the group discussions were usually in language groups which helped. The bus trips to and from Milan were great fun and, as always, there were plenty of good meals, good wine and good company to lighten the proceedings.

I remember that the Seoul Olympics were held at exactly the same time (17 September to 2 October, 1988). In the evenings a number of us would gather to watch the highlights on TV.

### **Historical Context**

In 1988 the European Union (EU) consisted of 12 nations: Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom, Greece, Spain and Portugal. Although customs duties disappeared in 1968, trade was not flowing freely across EU borders. Europe was scheduled to become a free market in 1992. Some urgency was expressed at the seminar that our European-based publishing houses be ready for this event. A single European currency was still some 14 years away. In 1988 national regulations were still predominant. One of the limitations of the seminar was that the organizational structures being recommended in various reports were in accord with the law in Italy, but not necessarily in other places.

In 1988 Eastern Europe was in ferment and the overthrow of Communist regimes imminent. The following year, 1989, would witness the fall of the Berlin Wall.



**The European Union (EU) in 1988.**

Germany, France, Italy,  
the Netherlands, Belgium,

Luxembourg, Denmark,  
Ireland, United Kingdom, Greece,  
and Spain and Portugal that had joined in 1986.

In 1988 Ronald Reagan was in the White House and Margaret Thatcher at No 10 Downing Street. Both were nearing the end of their time of leadership. Reaganomics, with its focus on cutting taxes and promoting free trade, was the dominant economic philosophy. Australia was celebrating the bi-centenary of European settlement (at least its non-indigenous populations were celebrating!).

In the Vatican, Pope John Paul II had been in office for nearly 10 years, his pontificate marked by theological conservatism and social activism, playing a major role in the downfall of communism in Eastern Europe. In his opening address to the seminar, the Superior General, Fr Renato Perino, described the Church in 1988 as being “so polarized, so shot through with strains and tensions”. Ecclesiastical structures, from the hierarchy to the grass roots, were characterized by a pluralism that stemmed from the pluralism of opinions, of ideologies, of social and political strata that existed in society. ‘How do we see our face in this pluralistic Church?’, Fr Perino asked the seminar participants. Certainly the Church today is no less polarized and the question—what is our face in this Church?—is significant for us also today.

The years following the Second Vatican Council had witnessed an exodus from the priesthood and religious life, and the Society of St Paul was not exempt from this. It was a time of upheaval and redefinition in religious life, a topic the international seminar would consider as it explored the identity of the Pauline religious as being primarily ‘for mission’.

### **The state of the congregation in 1988**

This is a topic that, in 1988, a young priest from Australia was poorly qualified to assess, but there is significant information in the *Acts* of the Seminar to give some clues.

Despite the considerable numbers who left the congregation in the post-Vatican II years, Fr Perino described the congregation in 1988 as being numerically stable, with 300 Paulines engaged full-time in the apostolate and 286 part-time. I expect the statistics to be presented at the Second International Seminar next week will show that the number of Paulines engaged in the apostolate is much less now than in 1988.

Fr Perino described the congregation in 1988 as being in the post-foundational stage (what we could call the Apostolic phase or perhaps the Patristic phase), a stage characterized by great individual activities of certain Paulines, but a general lack of an organizational structure that took the mission beyond the personality and talent

of individuals. Editorial policies were often decided upon by the person in the editor's chair. Different houses and circumscriptions pursued their apostolic works in relative independence of one another. In all this, however, the apostolate was quite prolific worldwide and generally making an impact.

The congregation's apostolic focus still centered largely on print, and alarm bells were sounding that other religious institutes and groups within the Church were embracing newer media with grandiose initiatives and we were starting to be left behind.

The congregation as a whole was still in a relatively strong economic position, able to meet the very high costs associated with a two-week seminar involving 74 participants, 17 expert contributors, and two venues (Ariccia and Milan). It was noted during the seminar that the income from publishing of books and periodicals was sufficient to enable investment in the audio-visual media; it was recommended that the Pauline Fund (*FondoPaolino*) support new initiatives in the audio-visual media. Ongoing funding for SPICS did not seem to present a difficulty. All of this is a far cry from our present situation where the congregation is under much greater financial strain, as are many religious institutes today.

### **The Objectives of the Seminar**

I feel the seminar had four main objectives

1. To promote a unified apostolic image, both nationally and internationally;
2. To raise the apostolate to a new level of professionalism, with better management of resources (human, plant, financial), better organization and greater respect for the secular principles governing a publishing activity;
3. To encourage the internationalism of our mission, with greater apostolic collaboration between circumscriptions and within language groupings;
4. To decisively broaden the range of our apostolate from the press to the audio visual.

I will now say a little about each of these, and offer an evaluation of progress made since the 1988 seminar

#### **1. To promote a unified apostolic image, both nationally and internationally**

Present in 26 countries in 1988<sup>3</sup>, the congregation published under various logos and names, which lessened our visibility and identity as an international publishing

---

<sup>3</sup>In 1988 the congregation was present in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Korea, Ecuador, Philippines, France, Germany, Japan, Great Britain, India, Ireland, Italy, Macau, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Spain, United States, Vatican, Venezuela and Zaire.

group. During the seminar Br Angelo Zenzalari presented an historical survey of logos in the congregation – almost a different logo for every house. As a result, while many people were aware of our products – our books, our magazines especially *Famiglia Cristiana*, our bookstores, our audiovisuals, etc., they did not know the Institute behind these activities – they did not know us. The congregation lacked a clear and precise identity both nationally and internationally.

The seminar was asked to consider whether the time had come for the Society of St Paul to have a single international corporate logo (*marchio*, trademark). In general the seminar was in favour of this proposal. The task of taking this forward was later entrusted by the General Government to the newly-formed CTIA<sup>4</sup> which commenced the required study and took the steps necessary for the realization of a new logo for the entire congregation. This process culminated in the approval of the new trademark by the VI General Chapter in 1992.

Certainly the decision to have a single international trademark was a most significant step and has had far reaching consequences. At book fairs such as Frankfurt, for instance, Paulines are today very recognizable. When I was in the United States from 2012-16 I saw that many immigrants from Mexico and South America immediately recognized the logo (even if the words underneath were ST PAULS and not SAN PABLO) and felt a connection with us.

But it was not enough to have a single, recognizable trademark. What was also needed was a clarification of editorial policy – there needed to be consistency not only in the logo but also in the editorial content found in our publications. At the time (1988), this was far from the case.

In the seventy-four years up to 1988 the congregation had published works of great diversity in a whole range of areas, with considerable variation in content and quality. In the words of one bishop, our output was widespread but confused – “*diffusi e confusi*”! Comments made by Fr Perino about the overall situation certainly applied to editorial direction: “Up to now everything has been left to the competency, initiative, phantasy or improvisation of individual persons but, for the most part, without any kind of link or continuity.”

So the seminar was called upon to clarify our editorial policy – to have editorial guidelines for the whole congregation, that would address two key questions: To whom shall we address our message? What will we say to them?

Such a focusing of editorial policy was not, however, so easy when we consider the range of vision of Alberione with his great dream for the unification of the sciences and all things in Christ. Alberione belonged very much to the mentality of Philippians 4:8-9, to publish whatever is true, good, noble, etc.

---

<sup>4</sup>*Comitato Tecnico Internazionale per l'Apostolato*, about which we will say more later

In trying to define editorial policy the seminar took note that, at the General Chapter of 1957, Fr Alberione did establish some priorities in publishing:

- a) Catechism and religious instruction in general;
- b) Scripture, presented to today's world
- c) Whatever prepares, explains, reconciles or strengthens divine truths in the spirit of Philippians 4:8-9.

At the seminar, Fathers Manoel Quinta, Antonio Tarzia, Stefano Andreatta and Eligio Ermettigave presentations on publishing policies for books, periodicals and audio visuals.

In its final document (1.3.3.), the seminar proposed that in the choice of content, priority be given to Sacred Scripture (the whole for all), catechesis, liturgy, theology and successively with "everything that is true, noble, good and pure, all that we love and honor... let all this attract your attention (cf. Paul to Philippians 4:8)."

Similar issues arose concerning the recipients: To whom do we address our message? Alberione was inspired by the words of Jesus, "come to me all of you" (Mt 11:28) and saw our apostolate as reaching out to all. The seminar continued on this line affirming that our message is addressed to "all humans", but it did specify that we should address firstly the great mass of people, non-believers, the poor and marginalized (1.3.4.), and that we should prefer language that is simple, clear, and accessible to the majority of persons (1.3.5). So a preference is clearly given to works intended for the masses and the unchurched rather than for the elite, professionals, the converted, etc.

In all of this, pastoral concern and contemporaneity were emphasized, with a focus on the needs of the local churches, enculturation of the message addressing contemporary concerns of people: seeking to answer the questions people are asking, not the questions they are not asking.

In the years since 1988 there have been significant steps to further clarify editorial content, most especially the document issued by CTIA on 24 September 2008, exactly 20 years after the international seminar, on *Editorial Guidelines of Pauline Apostolate*, which called for priority to be given to three key areas: Bible, family and communication. That a clear editorial direction remains an issue is underlined in Guideline 1.1.2 of the X General Chapter which calls on CTIA "to develop the document *Editorial Guidelines of Pauline Apostolate*" and for the circumscription Governments "to render themselves responsible for its application in the proper pastoral context."

In terms of recipients, we can note the strong insistence of the X General Chapter to renew the impetus of our apostolic action ... to reach everyone, especially those on

the periphery (Priority 1.1.). Reaching non-believers and those on the margins has been a constant message of our Superior General, Fr Valdir José De Castro, SSP, in his visits to the various circumscriptions. Fr Valdir has also encouraged the publication of works that are not specifically religious but treat important matters in a Christian way.

Because of Alberione's focus on the "all" and the need to respond to the pastoral realities of every place, it will never be easy for us to have a precise editorial policy for the entire congregation. Personally, I have always been guided by something the Founder once said (I'm not sure where): in evaluating a manuscript, the first question to ask is: "Is it for Christ?" (*É per Cristo?*). Only if we answer 'yes' to that question, can we ask the second question, "Will it sell?" (*Venderà?*) The danger is always that we focus only on the second question in making editorial choices with insufficient consideration of the first.

## **2. To raise the apostolate to a new level of professionalism, with better management of resources (human, plant, financial), better organization and respect for the secular principles governing a publishing activity**

This was certainly one of the main thrusts of the seminar as highlighted by the statement of Fr Alberione that was the catch-cry of the seminar: "What counts today, and even more so than in times past is organization, especially at the international level, in every sector, and in a particular way for the apostolate." (UPS, I, p. 382)

The seminar devoted a good deal of time to presenting methodologies for the proper organization of the Pauline apostolate in all its aspects: editorial, management, production, marketing, economic, auxiliary services, collaboration with laity, etc. Many Paulines and lay professionals gave presentations on these topics. While we recognize that our mission has a sacred character, it will continue only if we respect the secular principles governing business and management. This raised a number of important points:

1. The acceptance of organizational processes that will allow the defining of roles (with exact flow charts) and the legitimate working autonomy of Pauline heads of apostolic undertakings (and their councils) (cf. Final Document 3.1). The apostolate can function effectively only if those in charge of apostolic undertakings have the widest necessary delegation in management. This principle was already enshrined in art. 167 of the *Constitutions* but confusion persisted between the roles of local superiors and those responsible for the apostolate, forcing the seminar to reiterate the authority of apostolic sector heads.

2. To aid professionalism, it was proposed that a kind of “code or statute” be prepared for the operation and organization of the apostolate. This would serve as a guide and reference for the whole congregation. The proposal was that this guide could be drawn up and presented for approval at the Interchapter scheduled for the following year. Here we find the origins of the *Handbook of Authority*, as it is called today, *Service of Authority in the Society of St Paul: Manual*. In fact, it was not until the VI General Chapter (1992) that the General Government was officially tasked to prepare a Handbook of Authority to be completed before the Interchapter of 1995. This was duly done and, with the positive vote of the Interchapter, was approved “ad experimentum” for implementation from 1 May, 1996.
3. The importance of lay collaboration in our apostolate was also highlighted. Statistics presented to the seminar showed that, in 1988, there were 586 Paulines active in the apostolate (300 full time, and 286 part time) and 2245 lay persons (1657 full time and 588 part time). The meeting foresaw that lay collaboration would increase and grow in quality in the coming years. The meeting noted that the role of these lay people was not simply to make up for missing Paulines. They should not be seen as substitutes but as an organic part of our mission contributing necessary ‘secular’ skills. It was therefore important to respect the rights, role and professionalism of employed staff, while undertaking a tactful spiritual animation. In its final document the seminar urged caution in the employment of lay staff, “always respecting civil and trade union laws (2.4)”. Some difficulties were arising concerning the employment of lay staff. The collaboration of lay persons (in a voluntary capacity), including the family of Alberione (i.e. members of aggregated institutes, cooperators) was also encouraged.
4. Seeing openness to the laity and the promotion of women as “signs of the times” the Final Document noted that collaboration with the Pauline Family and in particular the Daughters of St Paul was a primary demand of our mission (1.2). The Final Document (3.1) “invited” the General Governments of the Society of St Paul and the Daughters of St Paul to meet together with sector heads to promote effective collaboration “at least on concrete problems and projects”.

I suspect that the implementation of the principles of good management and organization has varied greatly from circumscription to circumscription in the 29 years since the international seminar. The principles are more acute today than ever before. Collaboration with the laity (both employees and volunteers) remains an essential and increasingly complex element of our mission. From my own observation and personal experience, I believe that collaboration with the Daughters of St Paul in the apostolate has improved considerably in most circumscriptions since 1988.

### **3. To encourage the internationalism of our mission, with greater collaboration in the apostolate between circumscriptions and language groups**

The feeling in 1988 was that we needed to “convert ourselves to an authentic, determined publishing renewal ... on an international level, developing synergies and long lasting conventions among ourselves so being able to support one another, learn from one another, thus saving energies and precious resources, indeed enhancing them ... Our prophetic mission should have no geographical ... boundaries” (Perino).

Proposals advocated included

- a) the exchange of persons: for a Pauline with particular skills in one circumscription to lend a hand in another circumscription for a short time, until the ship is able to sail under its own power.
- b) linguistic area mergers at an international level. While each circumscription can certainly seek out local authors, in linguistic areas we better our services if we co-publish materials; together we can undertake large common projects that would be too expensive for a single circumscription but possible when costs are shared and more viable with a larger market.
- c) creating synergies, for example sharing costs of translation, adaptation, financing and production. Especially promoting a non-competitive distribution of the Bible.
- d) For international cooperation, there is a need for rapid and punctual exchange of information
- e) The final document (3.5) called for periodic meetings of those in charge of the apostolate at a continental level, “as happens with EPLA<sup>5</sup> for Latin America.” I think we can say that herein lies the seeds for the large continental groupings that were established in the following years – CIDEP, GEC and CAP-ESW.
- f) Also in the final document (3.1) was the proposal to set up “a technical committee in which the General Government will be directly involved, so as to promote and coordinate projects and undertakings at international levels.” Herein lies the seed of CTIA (International Technical Committee for the Apostolate) which was formally established some six months later, just before the Interchapter in Brazil.
- g) The seminar also called for a unified image of Pauline publishing to be fostered and presented at the Frankfurt Book Fair, where Paulines present themselves “as one group” (3.8).

---

<sup>5</sup>*Editores Paulinos Latino América* (EPLA) which later expanded to become *Centro Iberoamericano De Editores Paulinos* (CIDEP).

How can we evaluate the growth of an international focus since 1988? I cannot evaluate the success of CIDEP or GEC, but I can say that CAP-ESW has yielded only limited results in apostolic collaboration and, indeed, its operation is currently suspended. Some of the issues faced by CAP-ESW have been

- a) The immense cultural and economic differences between circumscriptions that make collaboration on projects nearly impossible. Just because we speak the same language does not mean that a book will succeed in all English-language circumscriptions.
- b) All circumscriptions are well inserted into their local pastoral situations, all of which have different priorities. It is not easy to find projects that work for different local churches.
- c) Poor exchange of information.
- d) A certain territorialism – being more concerned with safeguarding one’s patch of earth.
- e) Failings at the level of leadership (both circumscription governments and apostolic sector heads) to drive wider collaboration.

But positively

- f) While multilateral projects have been difficult, there has been good bi-lateral collaboration where two circumscriptions have worked together on projects, e.g. Bible Diaries and co-publication of titles.
- g) I have always found the interpersonal meetings and exchanges with Paulines from other circumscriptions through CAP-ESW to be very helpful and enlightening. They have been enriching and renewing for my own Pauline vocation.
- h) We have succeeded in presenting a unified presence at Frankfurt.

Personally I always had a dream of a single publishing house for UK-Ireland, USA and Australia with offices in London, New York and Sydney. But the strength and structure was never there in the three circumscriptions to make it a possibility. The congregation is poorer for this and, I suspect, the moment of possibility has passed.

A fully developed international approach to the apostolate demands a structure in which the head office is very strong and the branches (circumscriptions?) are relatively weak in the core decision-making process. This is the model adopted by multi-national companies. It is questionable whether this is what the congregation desires. The International Seminar highlighted the connection we must have with the “local Church” carrying out our mission “in conjunction with the country’s pastoral planning”. The final document called for “pastoral concern and globality”. However, there will always be a tension between these two, a tension with which we must live. A less than perfect internationalism is the price I believe we must pay for strong insertion into the pastoral priorities of the local Church, which may well be the ‘better part’ (Luke 10:42).

#### **4. To decisively broaden the range of our apostolate from the press to the audio visual.**

Though I mention this last, this was seen as one of the key priorities of the international seminar. Already in 1988 there was the recognition that we were failing embrace the new media sufficiently and that other congregations and bodies in the Church were already well ahead of us in these fields.

As a congregation we were born from the typography and our natural home was the publishing of print books and periodicals. Despite some significant initiatives in film, radio, TV and audio cassettes we had not really got away from the printed book and periodical: "Faced with the other media we remain fearful as if these were extraneous to us and practically outside of our apostolic field." (Perino)

A major concern with the new media were the high costs and the high risks involved in their adoption.

To address this situation, the seminar recommended that the General Government steer the Congregation on a direct course towards a greater commitment in the audiovisual field (Final Document, 3.4. )

For this to be achieved, it is asked that:

- 3.4.1 an apostolic- formation project with regards to audiovisuals be developed in every circumscription;
- 3.4.2 an international San Paolo film project be outlined;
- 3.4.3 the opening to audiovisuals be supported economically as well;
- 3.4.4 a scholarship for SPICS be offered to every poor circumscription;
- 3.4.5 the FondoPaolino help furnish the more needy circumscriptions with the basic instruments for communication (telex or telefax).<sup>6</sup>

The important role of SPICS was underlined as a key instrument to lead the congregation into the world of digital media.

In 2015 the X General Chapter highlighted the importance of preparing Paulines adept at using the new technologies in its operative guidelines concerning formation, notably 3.1.4: The General Government, in collaboration with circumscription Governments, promote the exchange of members in formation primarily for an apostolic experience and for learning of new languages and new cultures for our

---

<sup>6</sup>In the late 1980s compact fax machines that could transmit a facsimile document through telephone lines had revolutionised everyday communications around the world. In 1988 about half of the Pauline circumscriptions had a fax number. Some circumscriptions were still using telex machines that transmitted text communications by wire through automatic exchanges. My one and only intervention during the seminar (at least that I remember) was to ask about the relative benefits of each. The answers given were less than satisfactory and reflected the biases of respondents towards one or the other. Within a short time, however, telex machines had disappeared and fax machines reigned supreme for a short period until they too were made largely redundant by email and other forms of electronic communication.

mission. And 3.1.6: The local Superiors encourage the participation of the elderly confreres in ... the knowledge and use of the new media.

In honesty we have to say that proclaiming the Good News through the new media remains an enormous challenge for us. We have made many significant steps forward but we need to humbly acknowledge that, generally speaking, some other groups and individuals within the Church have proved more adept than we have in the use of the new media. That others have done very well should not be a cause of lament. The only thing that matters is that “the Word of God be everywhere known and loved” (Alberione) and we rejoice in all who contribute towards that.

I have always believed that content is the most important ingredient of our apostolate. It is good to have Paulines adept at using the new media but do they/we actually have anything to say? Besides training Paulines in the new media, and in the business management of the apostolate, the need is as great as ever to have Paulines taking advanced studies in biblical studies, in theology, spirituality, sociology, culture, etc. The most important thing is to have something worthwhile to say – the medium through which it is communicated is always secondary.

## **Conclusion**

We can say that the 1988 International Seminar of Pauline Publishers was a prophetic event for our congregation, a very astute reading of “the signs of the times”. The congregation has certainly benefitted from it in many ways but, like the voice of most prophets, it was heard but a number of its recommendations were not fully acted upon or implemented in the various circumscriptions for a range of practical reasons. Oftentimes we are caught up in the concerns of each day and not sufficiently focused on the bigger picture. And indeed some recommendations of the International Seminar were acted upon but yielded poorer results than were anticipated.

We also have to note that it was a seminar of its time and for its time. While there is continuity between 1988 and today, we have to recognize that much has changed since then both in the realities of our congregation, Church and society, and in the means and methods of communication. The second International Seminar of Pauline Publishers, to be held next week, can learn from the first, but it will have to begin with the realities of today and explore meaningful and practical ways to advance our mission in today’s world.