

MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT FOR VOCATION PASTORAL AND FORMATION

Rome 26 – 28 June 2017

STARTING GREETING OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL
FR. VALDIR JOSÉ DE CASTRO

I welcome you, dear members of the SIF (International Secretariat for Vocation Pastoral and Formation), convened here to participate in the first gathering of this Organ of the Society of Saint Paul organized during the mandate of the present General Government. This encounter aims both to share the reality of the vocational pastoral and of formation of the whole Congregation, and to bring about a common reflection for the purpose of proposing common actions in that regard.

Formation, whether initial or continuing, has always been a challenge for the Church, but in a special way it has become such during the post-Council decades, when the process has set off of the opening of the Church herself – and with her also of the Consecrated Life – to the complex human reality in continuous transformation in various fields: anthropological, sociological, religious, political, technological, etc.

In a particular way, these changes have influenced and continue to influence strongly our Pauline consecrated life, if we take into consideration specifically the field of our mission: the reality of communication which has become even more complex with the advent of the digital culture.

As our Founder Blessed James Alberione has always insisted, we must evangelize society as it is: «*it is necessary to take the world and men as they are today, so as to accomplish today something good*» (Vademecum n. 376). Hence, it is necessary on our part to plan a formative trip which corresponds to present-day reality, whether human formation is concerned (that is, the person of the apostle), or that which concerns formation in the exercise of apostolic activity.

The SIF, in its role of evaluating the *Formation curricula* of our Circumscriptions, has the responsibility of verifying if in fact the formation being carried out today in the Congregation has effectively in view an integral formation truly of “Pauline color”. Besides the theoretical or programmatic aspects, the contact with the various circumscriptional realities and the exchange of experiences with the General Coordinators are also of fundamental importance to know the reality of the vocational pastoral and formation.

Another important task of this Organ is to verify if, in the concrete reality, the formation walks together with the apostolate. The integration between formation and the apostolate is a tradition in the Pauline life which cannot be neglected. It is always opportune to call to mind that already at the start of the 1930’s two books of Fr. Alberione were determining for the formation of the Pauline: *Donec formetur Christus in vobis* (1932) e *Apostolato Stampa* (1933). The two writings complement each other.

The Annual Letter of this year, on which we shall have the chance to reflect together in the course of this meeting, has rightly been redacted upon the study for the mission. The objective is that of resuming again the “wheel” of the study, in the sense of “studiousness,” as one of the dimensions without which it is impossible to carry out the Pauline mission with all its requirements.

Looking in a concrete way at the Congregation, we sometimes see apostolic initiatives that are assumed without considering at the same time also the formation. Only by way of example, we actually try to give in the Congregation – on the apostolic level and according to the request of the last General Chapter – a more heightened dynamism in the biblical field, through the creation in the Circumscriptions of the *San Paolo Biblical Centers* (Paulus), and the development of the *Study Centers in Communication*. However, it is evident that to carry out these projects Paulines who are prepared are needed: otherwise, how shall we be able to carry them out? And here I only talk about two specific areas. We cannot on the other hand forget the need to have some Paulines who are well formed also in the area itself of formation, of vocational pastoral, of administration, of various branches of theological and sociological sciences, and so on.

In this perspective, it is fundamental that in the specific field of the international Organs, there be full synergy between the SIF and the CTIA: it's about two Consultative Organs of the General Government that must have a reciprocal complementarity in view of forming a “Single Multimedia Pauline Editor.”

I end thanking you for being present at this Meeting. I want to express my gratitude also to your Major Superiors who have destined you to this important service for the benefit of the whole Congregation. My thanks also to the General Councilors Fr. José Salud Paredes, President of the SIF and Fr. Celso Godilano who, in their quality as General Councilors for formation, have organized the second Course of Preparation for the Perpetual Profession which will take place in Ariccia starting September and ending in November this year, and have planned with care and dedication the international Novitiate which will officially start at Albano, next August 20. They are two initiatives that will help our young men to prepare themselves for the Pauline mission enriched with the two important and peculiar characteristics of those experiences that they will have in Italy: that of internationality and interculturalism.

May Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life, the beginning and end of our formation, through the intercession of the Apostle Paul and of Mary Queen of the Apostles, help us to offer in the Congregation a formation that helps us to “do all for the Gospel” in the modern day culture of communication. Wishing to all of you good work!

Rome, 26 June 2017

Fr. Valdir José De Castro
Superior General