



SAN PAOLO

OFFICIAL HOUSE BULLETIN
OF THE SOCIETY OF ST PAUL

***“I live, no longer I,
but Christ lives in me”***

Letter of the Superior general

LETTER OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

“I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me”

Dear brothers,

My annual letter this year finds itself in an ecclesial context that is particularly attentive to the Apostle. In fact, the current celebration of the **Pauline Year** (28 June 2008 - 29 June 2009), announced by Benedict XVI, commits more than ever our Congregation to study and assimilate the thought and apostolic mission of our Father Saint Paul.

As shown by the title of our letter: *“I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me”* (Gal 2:20), the object of our reflection will be the *Letter to the Galatians*, that indicates an added step in abeyance to operative line 1.1.1 of the General Chapter.

While we renew our gratitude to the Holy Father for this initiative dedicated to the Apostle and particularly meaningful for us, we intend to be present in the ecclesial community with our specific “Pauline color” by means of a multimedia editorial programming planned for the occasion and with the collaboration, often together with other Institutions of the Pauline Family, in initiatives of religious and cultural character on the same theme.

As a Congregation that, according to blessed James Alberione, resolves “to be Saint Paul living today”, we make ours above all the objectives that the same Founder indicated on the occasion of the *Year to Saint Paul* willed by him about fifty years ago (25 January 1957 - 25 January 1958): to be grateful to Saint Paul as our Father; to know better Saint Paul; to imitate better his virtues; to pray to Saint Paul; to love Saint Paul; to obtain for the Paulines throughout the world competence in evangelization.¹

¹ Cf *San Paolo*, January 1957; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, edited by Rosario F. Esposito, pp. 601-602.

An indispensable source available to all for documentation about what the Primo Maestro says about the Apostle is the volume *“Paul the apostle, inspiration and model”* (Rome 2008; available in Italian, Spanish and English), edited by the *Center of Pauline Spirituality* for the *Opera Omnia* of Fr. Alberione. To the confreres of the Center goes my gratitude.

Following the **“literary genre”** already experimented in our preceding annual four letters, also the exposition of the *Letter to the Galatians* is subdivided into **three parts**: a presentation of exegetical character that aims to “popularize” the content for those who want to understand in a simple way; a documentation on how Fr. Alberione interprets the Letter and, finally, some suggestions on how the Paulines of today can make use of it in their commitment of sanctification and apostolate.

The content of the three parts – it seems superfluous for me to emphasize it – does not pretend to be exhaustive; more than anything else, it is a series of stimuli entrusted to the personal and community research of the members of the eighteen Pauline Circumscriptions by means of further deepenings and developments, documentation and original applications.

Like every year, I appeal so that the results obtained in spiritual exercises, retreats, community readings, personal meditations may be shared in the *forum* made available for the purpose in the official site of the Congregation.

We entrust to the intercession of blessed James and Timothy the entire mobilization of thought and apostolic initiatives of the Congregation, so that we may live with fruit the Pauline Year, making ours the wish coined with a neologism in 1924, to “make ourselves St. Paul”.²

² Cf *La Primavera paolina*, edited by Rosario F. Esposito, p. 216.

THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

INTRODUCTION

1. Galatia

Halfway during the first century after Christ, Galatia was a province of the Roman Empire. Its inhabitants, known as Galatians, were descendants of the ancient immigrants that arrived from Gaul in this region that today is part of Turkey. At that time the population was subject to the Roman Empire as a slave. (Gal 5:1ff).

When Paul reached the region, they still had their own language – the Gallic –, a fact that probably caused some problem of communication. In fact, in Gal 3:1 he affirms: “O foolish Galatians, who has charmed you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ crucified has been publicly portrayed?”. Besides Paul’s catechesis present in this verse, we note the difficulty of communication. Probably Paul had to have recourse to sketches in order to communicate.

The attitude of Luke with regard to Galatia is very strange, inasmuch as he practically ignores the events that have taken place there. In Acts 16:6, at the start of the second journey, Luke simply omits the events, thus we do not know if these communities have arisen on this occasion or before, during the long period in which Paul remained at Tarsus.

2. The foundation: the first pains of childbearing

Paul himself calls to mind the unusual manner in which the Galatian communities arose: “You know well that it was because of an illness that I have evangelized you the first time. And you have not shown contempt or disgust before what for you was a trial in my flesh; on the contrary, you have received me as an angel of God, like Christ Jesus. Where is now your good will? Because I render you testimony that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your eyes to give them to me” (4:13,15).

This information allows us to underline some aspects. In the first place, the Spirit of God stands out, the guide of the mission who writes straight on crooked lines. Connected with this, we

note the docility of Paul in allowing himself to be guided by the same Spirit. In the third place, there is the welcoming spirit of the Galatians that entirely overcomes racial segregation. If on the part of Paul some Pharisaical residue still remains – that regarded the pagans as an impure people – the philanthropy of the Galatians has removed racism for good.

There are few details about the rise of these communities. Although we do not know the circumstances, it is possible to suspect that there have been moments of joy on one side, and of hard sufferings on the other. In fact, in 4:19 Paul says: “...my children, for whom I suffer again the pains of childbearing, till Christ be formed in you”. The expression “again” supposes that the two situations – that of the beginning and the present one – are similar as to difficulties and sufferings.

3. The letter: the new pains of childbearing

It is possible that communication by means of letter between Paul and the Galatians has been more intense than we can imagine. In 1Cor 16:1, he orders the Corinthians: “Regarding then the collection being done in favor of the saints, you also do as I have ordered the churches of Galatia”. The theme in question is the collection to help the poor Christians of Jerusalem (Gal 2:10). We do not know if these norms have been transmitted by letter or by mouth. At any rate, we note that the concern of the Apostle toward his communities goes beyond simple sporadic contact (cf 2Cor 11:28).

Around the year 55, the Galatian crisis explodes. It has repercussions also on the other communities, for example, at Philippi. According to Paul, the Galatians have been bewitched by the preaching of a group that habitually we call “Judaizers” (3:1). The Galatians, pagans as a whole, have fallen under the yoke of the Law. “You were running well: who has placed obstacles on you, preventing you from obeying the truth?” (5:7). Said in another way, the Galatians are foolish, because they had started with the spirit and now they end in the flesh (cf 3:3). Called to freedom (5:1) and to radical equality among brothers (3:28), they have allowed themselves to be conditioned by the preaching of the Judaizers, passing to a situation of life worse than the first.

The fulcrum of the crisis is called circumcision. For the Judeo-Christians, who we habitually call Judaizers, the pagans who became Christians had to be circumcised in order to be saved: "If you do not have yourselves circumcised according to the law of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1).

Circumcision occupies a central place in Judaism. It is the response of the human interlocutor to the alliance that God makes with his people (Gen 17). To deny it would mean not to recognize all that it represents. In wanting to subject to circumcision the pagans who became disciples of Jesus, the Judaizers pretended to impose on them also the Jewish culture and customs as essential matter to obtain salvation. That means annulling the saving action of Jesus Christ, to be an enemy of the cross of Christ. For Paul, it is clear that "the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me" (2:20).

The letter also lends itself to make known the mind of Paul in the face of the eventuality that all his missionary work would be lost. The text was written straight off, and if the Galatians are said to be bewitched, as for Paul we can say that all his being is in trepidation, seized by a mixture of revolt, anxiety and tenderness. In fact, he comes to the point of exorcising the Galatians, saying: "I wish that those who unsettle you would castrate themselves!" (5:12). These are being accused of being opportunists (6:11-13).

The question of language is important for good communication. We do not know if the Galatians have understood the reasoning from the rabbinic tenor present in the letter, above all in chapters 3 and 4. At any rate, bear in mind that we are in the face of an extreme effort to succeed in communicating.

Suggestions for a Pauline reading. 1. Share the knowledge you have acquired about the letter to the Galatians. 2. Make remembrance of the "pains of childbearing" of our first foundations. 3. Share with confreres the challenge of finding the right language in communicating, for example, with young people. 4. We can affirm that the seed of evangelization among the Galatians has grown watered by tears. Can this mean something for our apostolate? 5. The Galatians are children of immigrants. Does the letter help to understand the immigration phenomenon of our days?

I. THE LETTER AND ITS PRINCIPAL THEMES

The letter to the Galatians basically consists of three parts (chapters 1 and 2; 3:1–5:12; 5:13–6:18). The first part is an impassioned defense of the Gospel announced by Paul. In the second, Paul deepens his arguments, making use of a typically rabbinic hermeneutics, difficult to understand by many. The third part is dedicated to the opposition between the works of the flesh and the works of the Spirit, and also presents some exhortations.

1. The Gospel of Paul (chapters 1 and 2)

Paul presents himself with the title of “apostle” and immediately shows himself to be polemical. It was known that in Jerusalem a group of conservative Christians considered as apostles only those who had been with Jesus of Nazareth. Paul has not been with the Twelve, but he considers himself as fully an apostle, and he explains: “apostle not on the part of men, neither in virtue of a man, but in virtue of Jesus Christ and of God the Father who raised him from death” (1:1). The conservative group defended the idea that only the Twelve could found communities and had the privilege of being maintained by them (cf 1Cor 9). Paul has such an esteem for the title of apostle that he is led almost to ignore the confreres that are together with him (Gal 1:2); title that he uses in the letters marked by polemics around this concept (Gal; 1-2Cor), or when he wants to give emphasis to his message (Rom).

Without the customary rendering of thanks, he quickly enters into the theme, showing perplexity about the fact that the Galatian communities had abandoned the Gospel preached by Paul and had adhered to the preaching of the Judaizers, accepting circumcision and the consequent practice of the Law of Moses as condition to attain salvation. He hurls curses (excommunications) to whoever announces another Gospel, that does not exist, even if the announcer were an angel (1:6-9).

If Paul had defended circumcision, he would not have experienced the tribulations already suffered and still suffers; in fact, in so doing, he would have sought to please people and sparing himself the confrontation with the Judeo-Christians. He

would have been at the service of circumcision, but would have ceased to be a servant of Christ (1:10).

The absence of giving of thanks reveals not only the haste of the Apostle, but underlines also and above all the uselessness of the Christian message when Christ is eliminated, allowing that another reality take his place. That was what was happening in the communities of Galatia with the arrival of the Judeo-Christians and the obligatoriness of circumcision to attain salvation: "If you allow yourselves to be circumcised, Christ will not be of any use to you" (5:2).

The guiding thread of the letter is the word "Gospel" and its content that must not be adulterated either by those who announce it or by those who receive it. What is the Gospel for Paul? It is not a book but a person. The synthesis is found in the person of Jesus Christ and in his action (2:20), much superior to the action of the Law. To interchange the personalities – as the Judaizers wanted – meant to annul the saving action of the Lord. It is against this movement that Paul raises his voice, without sparing criticisms against those who defend circumcision. Paul threatens them with excommunication (anathema, 1:9) and accuses them of being opportunistic exploiters (6:11), not compliant with the Law.

We can put near the life and mission of Paul to the life and mission of the prophet Jeremiah. Both one and the other recognize that God's plan about them goes back to the origins of their life (his mother's womb, for Paul) and even beyond, even before conception (for Jeremiah; cf Gal 1:15 and Jer 1:5). Equally interesting is the comparison between the mission of the one and the other. Both have been posted for the defense of a higher reality: in the case of Jeremiah, it is the defense of the alliance; in the case of Paul, the defense of the Gospel, the center of which is the person of Jesus Christ.

Paul and Jeremiah are very much alike because of the opposition they have suffered. In the case of Jeremiah, on the part of the politico-religious authorities; in the case of Paul, on the part of the Judeo-Christian heads of Jerusalem. They also have in common their determination: nothing and nobody can shift them from their mission. In the case of Paul, "I did not consult any man, neither did I go up to Jerusalem to them who were apostles before me, but I went away at once to Arabia, and af-

terwards returned to Damascus" (Gal 1:16-17). The confrontation with Peter at Antioch comes from this determination. Paul does not allow that the hypocrisy of Peter contaminate the plan of God. The division of the fields of apostolic work served to facilitate, not to complicate or discriminate. The attitude of Peter at Antiochia (2:11-14) makes of the pagans who converted second-class Christians, cancelling in this way the principle of 3:28.

The conflict at Antiochia shows the existence of different models of church. The church of Jerusalem had as characteristic its attachment to the Temple, to the Jewish traditions and to the question of race; as a result, it was a religion of the Law. Very different was the church of Antiochia: without ties to the Temple, multicultural and multiracial, open to the world and its challenges.

Peter is accused of "not walking rightly according to the truth of the Gospel" (2:14). What is the significance of this affirmation? If by Gospel we mean not a book, but a person in his being and acts, the truth of the Gospel is identified with the whole and integrating Christ. Neither he who announces him nor he who receives him can change him according to his pleasure.

One of the central affirmations of the letter compares the Law and its works with Jesus Christ, presenting him in his superiority. The history of the people of God has clearly shown that the Law does not save or justify. Only Jesus Christ, God's gift, can save, thus revealing that love of the Father who first loved and in a gratuitous manner. For the Christian the name of the way is Jesus Christ, and to walk means to follow him, day after day, incarnating his manner of being and acting. This reality Paul expresses by the words: "I have been crucified with Christ; I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me. The life that I now live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me" (2:19-20).

One of the Pharisaical theses abundantly documented in the Old Testament (for example, Psalm 119) presents the Law as the fount of life for human being. By practicing it, one achieves life. Paul's discovery upsets this perspective, because God's loving and saving action precedes human action. We were all sinners, without merit, when the Son of God freely gave his life (cf Rom 5:8). The response to this insuperable gesture can be faith alone; faith

that makes the person identical to the life of Jesus. It is not anything that is simple, because faith makes of two lives only one life (“I live, no longer I... Christ lives in me”). The life of the Christian becomes a life according to the life of Christ; in other words, it is living the Paschal mystery in a permanent way. In fact, the discourse is about being crucified together with Christ. A later little, Paul says that he bears in his body the signs of Jesus (6:17), and explains: “As for me, may I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (6:14).

Suggestions for a Pauline reading. **1.** The Judaizers do not exist anymore. However, there are ways of thinking and acting very similar to theirs. Find out these ways. **2.** The Gospel is not a book, but a person in his completeness. What are the consequences for us? **3.** Paul has characteristics resembling those of the prophet Jeremiah. What is the prophetic dimension of our mission? **4.** What does it mean for us “to walk rightly according to the truth of the Gospel?” **5.** Discover the Paschal mystery present in Paul’s affirmation: “I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me”.

2. Deepening (3:1–5:12)

Chapters 3-5 are deepening texts. They prove that faith is superior to the Law. In these chapters Paul’s thesis develops: “Abraham believed in God and this was credited to him as justification. Know therefore that those that are from faith are the children of Abraham” (3:6-7). The comparison between the Law and the Spirit, between works and faith goes back to the patriarch Abraham, to whom was given the promise of becoming the father and source of blessing for all humanity. In Abraham has origin not only the Jewish people and the alliance, but also the pagan peoples as members of the new and definitive alliance.

Alliance means pact between two parties: God and the people, in the person of Abraham. God establishes his alliance with the people and, in the case of Abraham, the response-commitment is called circumcision. This, in turn, sends back to the practice of the Law. Paul sees another dimension in the relation God-Abraham. It is the dimension of faith, the response

given by the patriarch before the circumcision. The promise of God bore in itself a novelty for the pagans: in virtue of faith they would have become children of Abraham, heirs of the same promises made to the Jewish people.

Paul's arguing is typical of the rabbinical manner of reflecting. Two realities are being compared: on one side the circumcision, the Law and works, transitoriness; on the other, faith (baptism), life in the Spirit and its perennial validity. The Law had a limited validity: until the arrival of Abraham's descendant, that is, Christ. His arrival has also marked our emancipation in faith and our divine sonship has become evident.

The synthesis of Paul's thought – much more developed in the letter to the Romans – can be this: all of humanity composed of Jews and non-Jews, is not saved by its own merits or through its own efforts. Not even the works of the Law are capable of saving. Only due to the action of Jesus, who has loved us and has delivered himself for us when we were still sinners (Rom 5:8; Gal 2:20), the destiny of humanity is not without hope.

The coming of Abraham's descendant thus becomes our emancipation. As is found in other writings (letter to the Ephesians), the action of Jesus makes of all peoples one big family, a community of equals: "There is no more Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, man or woman: all of you are one person in Christ Jesus" (3:28). Faith in Jesus generates the family of faith. This in turn leads to baptism, which leads to live in fraternity with others under the guidance of the Spirit.

The Law functioned as pedagogue until the arrival of him who would have made us adults in the faith and children of God (4:1ff). The pedagogue was a very common personage during that time. He was a slave that through order of the head of the family, took care of the boy as long as the latter was a minor. When the boy reaches maturity, the father dispensed of the care of the pedagogue and the son is emancipated. This is what happened with us when Jesus arrived.

The great and definitive novelty is the person of Jesus Christ. His act rescued us from every form of slavery and placed us in a condition to live in newness (life in the Spirit). Paul feels himself personally involved in this process. On his part, he declares that he is crucified with Christ and that Christ lives in him (2:20); on

the part of the Galatian believers, the same thing is expected: “my children, for whom I suffer again the pains of childbearing, until Christ be formed in you” (4:19). With that, Paul also presents himself as a model of the Christian educator. The objective to be reached is always the person of the Lord Jesus. The figure of the Christian educator cannot deviate the course of this process; that is, to cede to the temptation that the student become similar to his educator. Paul knows very well that Christian maturity takes place when Christ occupies all the dimensions of the human being.

In practice, Galatians again proposes the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John: “If you remain in my word, you are truly my disciples and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (Jn 8:31-32). Paul fears that the Galatians fall again into the old slavery. So he exhorts: “For freedom Christ has liberated us: therefore be firm and don’t allow yourselves to be subject again to the yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1).

Suggestions for a Pauline reading. 1. What is liberty? 2. In what way is Paul a model educator? 3. What are the consequences of the affirmation in 3:28? 4. What is life according to the flesh and life according to the Spirit?

3. Living the new life

The third part of the letter (5:13–6:18) contains a series of exhortations regarding the identity of the Christian. They are attitudes that flow from knowledge of Jesus Christ, from reception of baptism and of the Spirit, from membership in a community. We can, in fact, establish this sequence: announcement of Jesus Christ, adhesion by means of faith, reception of baptism and of the Spirit, membership in a community in which new values are lived like fraternity and freedom obtained by the Lord Jesus. In this way the community becomes a vital space that tries to avoid any contact with the old way of life.

The series of exhortations can be summarized in the two manners of living: according to the flesh and according to the Spirit. The word “flesh” in the writings of Paul has a wide range of meanings that we can sum up thus: life in the flesh is life without the presence of Jesus Christ and of the Spirit. It is the

human being handed over to his own destiny, deprived of the action of grace. Even more, life in the flesh supposes also the lack of interest of the person for what is good, for solidarity. In other words, it is to feel oneself “thrown to the beasts”, without being able to experience the merciful action of God.

A series of attitudes helps us to understand what for Paul means by living according to the flesh: they are the attitudes that completely pervert rapports among persons: “fornication, impurity, dissoluteness, idolatry, witchcraft, hostilities, quarrels, jealousies, ambition, anger, discord, divisions, envies, drunkenness, orgies and the like; regarding these, I put you on guard beforehand, as I have already done: those who do such deeds will not inherit the kingdom of God” (5:19-21). Note that all these attitudes are a violation of fraternity. They refer to the mode of entering in rapport among persons without bearing in mind the commandment of love. Life in the Spirit openly contrasts with such a way of living, and generates attitudes that Paul clarifies thus: “love, joy, peace, longanimity, goodness, benevolence, trust, meekness, self-mastery” (5:22-23). It is the positive way of understanding freedom: freedom to love, to do good. Freedom opposes and rejects every form of personal or social slavery.

The start of chapter 6 gives some advices about relations among persons. They allow us to shed light on some characteristics of the Galatian communities. In the first place, fraternal correction (6:1). Note how this text comes near to chapter 18 of the gospel of Matthew, base text for fraternal correction. The brother who errs merits special care to be restored to the community. Secondly, solidarity among brothers, translated as “bear the burden of others” (6:2ff). Not always do we succeed in putting ourselves in the shoes of the other to feel and have compassion.

We know that Paul has done all to be faithful to his “woe to me if I don’t announce the Gospel”, working to support himself, so as not to mix preaching and salary. Here, however, we note a difference. Paul acknowledges that the catechist does not live on air. So he urges sharing: the catechist shares his knowledge and faith; the catechized shares his material goods with him who makes him participate in his spiritual goods. This thought is present in various letters of the Apostle (cf Rom 15:27).

In v. 7 the Apostle considers the theme of fear of God. In this case, what does it mean to fear God? The text seems to insinuate that fear of God is to do good, to harvest the greatest good, eternal life. God does not act arbitrarily; in due time each one will be rewarded according to his conduct.

Verses (11-18) are the keystone and a kind of synthesis of the entire letter. The criticism against the defenders of circumcision returns. They are accused: **1.** of being exhibitionists, **2.** of withdrawing from persecution, **3.** of not practicing the Law, **4.** of boasting of marking the body of persons. Quite different is the position of Paul: crucified with Christ, he bears the signs of his passion in his body and glories in the fact of being in deep communion with him (2:20).

Suggestions for a Pauline reading. **1.** What is the new life? **2.** Are our communities fraternal? **3.** What is to be understood by slavery during our times? **4.** Make a comparison between slavery and communication. **5.** The Letter to the Galatians contains many themes not treated here. Find them.

II. BL. JAMES ALBERIONE AND THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

1. Two summaries

1.1. Every summary of a text is an interpretation, because he who must work out the synthesis is forced to realize a series of choices between what he considers useful to keep and what he can leave out, between what for him is more important and what is not so.

In *Leggete le SS. Scritture* (Read the Sacred Scriptures) (1933), Fr. Alberione describes the content of the letter to the Galatians:

“This letter is addressed not to a particular Church, but to a group of Churches scattered in Galatia.

In this Roman province, S. Paul brought the Gospel during his first and second missionary journey. The Galatians accepted the Gospel with enthusiasm; but then they listened to the Judaizers who demanded observance of the Mosaic Law and circumcision

even for the converted Gentiles. After knowing the dangerous intrigues of the adversaries, S. Paul writes to assert his authority and to re-establish the true doctrine against the seductive Judaizers.

The letter is mainly dogmatic, like the one to the Romans, and defends the thesis that justification depends on faith in Christ and not on the Law of Moses, the observation of which is superfluous, even harmful.

This letter is a true picture of S. Paul: his vivacity, his ardor, his zeal throbs in it: his power as a reasoner is there, equally as his fatherly affection".³

This synthesis is part of a commented reading of the Bible during an hour of adoration; from the text the choices of Fr. Alberione transpire: he puts the emphasis on the main consequence of the death and resurrection of Christ, that makes the Law superfluous, and on the strong personality of S. Paul, that shows from the arguments he uses and from the style of his letter. The principal constitutive elements of the letter to the Galatians are, according to this reading, the **Christological content** and the **personality of Saint Paul** as evangelizer.

1.2. In *San Paolo* of December 1966, Fr. Alberione elaborates another synthetic presentation of the letter to the Galatians:

"Saint Paul had evangelized Galatia during his first and second apostolic journey. He had much fruit in his activity; the Galatians had corresponded with generosity.

But others who had come after spread the ideas of the Judaizers, teaching the obligation to observe the Hebrew law together with the Gospel. The Apostle has written the letter to recall them to the sure way.

Apart from the prologue and the epilogue, Saint Paul in his letter makes an apology of his apostolate, confirming it and recommending it for eternal salvation. Advices and exhortations to avoid evil follow.

In this letter Saint Paul shows his strong character, reprimands the fickleness of the Galatians and proves that his doctrine is that of the Apostles.

³ *Leggete le SS. Scritture*, 232.

With clarity S. Paul corrects Peter himself who contradicts his teaching in practice, giving in too much for fear of scandalizing the Jews.

In Jesus Christ having been a Jew or pagan does not matter, but only faith working in charity. Loving one another: 'love your neighbor as yourself'.

Avoid the works of the flesh; on the contrary, follow the works and the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Let everyone examine himself, not others. Everyone will harvest what he has sown.

Be the new creature (the Christian).

The Mosaic Law prepared the way to Christ; and Christ has replaced it with the faith of the Church and the Sacraments, starting from Baptism.

The Galatians are thus free from the Law; as he himself has freed himself from Mosaic practices and invites them to imitate him.

He concludes: 'The grace of the Lord be with your spirit, brothers'".⁴

Even in this synthesis, Fr. Alberione selects through a slightly broader development and with more links the **Christological aspect** (Christ replaces the law) and the description of **Saint Paul as evangelizer** (defends his mission and recalls the Galatians to the authentic truths to be believed).

1.3. These two summaries are 33 years apart from each other; however, in addressing the Paulines in both cases, Fr. Alberione, though with some variant, keeps identical the key points that he reads in the letter to the Galatians: the **value of the death and resurrection of Christ in relation to the Law for the faith of the believers** and the **personality of Paul as an evangelizer, strong and convincing**.

It becomes interesting to observe this constancy of perception, putting it in relation to the "**exemplarist**" use that Fr. Alberione instead makes of the single passages of the letter to the Galatians. We can note a diversity of interests between the summaries and the use that he makes of them in his sermons and writings destined to form the identity of the Pauline charism in its integrality of spirituality and mission.

⁴ *San Paolo*, December 1966; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, pp. 619-620.

The two complementary letters, that of the summaries and the one that applies to the Pauline charism, contribute to illustrate better the **original interpretation** realized by Fr. Alberione: on one side, the understanding of the letter as document with its story and, on the other, the need for an “hermeneutics” able to adapt the text to the needs that he sees as Founder.

Intent on looking for a **model of faith and apostolate** for the Pauline, Fr. Alberione uses to advantage the Christological truth and the strong profile of Paul as apostle: the manner with which Saint Paul lives his faith in Christ and his preaching becomes the ideal example for the Pauline style. **Saint Paul for the Pauline is “form” as to how to live Christ.** The Pauline thus takes up the invitation that the Apostle himself in several letters (cf 1Thes 2:14; Phil 3:17; 1Cor 4:16), addresses to the Christians of the Churches he founded: “Be my imitators, as I am of Christ” (1Cor 11:1).

2. Gal 2:20

2.1. The up-to-date researches in the multimedia version of the *Opera omnia* of the Primo Maestro confirm the data contained in the precious study of Fr. Giovanni Roatta, *Spirito paolino*.⁵ the text of Galatians 2:20 “**I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me**” is the text most quoted by Fr. Alberione in the entire Pauline collection of letters. Naturally, the value of the quantitative result takes consistency from the importance of the applications that, during his existence, the Founder makes of them for the identity of the Pauline charism in reference to all the Institutions that compose the Pauline Family.

2.2. If during the first years of his foundations Fr. Alberione shows a maturation in considering the figure of Christ (from “Sacred Heart” to “Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life”) and of Mary (from “Immaculate” to “Queen of Apostles”), Saint Paul is his saint of reference from the very beginning.

Of capital importance regarding this are two passages from “*Abundantes divitiarum gratiarum suarum*”.

⁵ G. Roatta, *Spirito paolino*, 1973, mimeographed sheets, pp. 10ff.

In the first he narrates with trembling accents what his encounter with the Apostle meant: "Saint Paul: the saint of universality! My admiration and devotion began especially from the study and meditation of the *Letter to the Romans*. From then on the personality, the sanctity, the heart, intimacy with Jesus, his work in dogma and morals, his mark left in the organization of the Church, his zeal for all peoples, were the subject of meditation. He appeared to him to be truly the Apostle: therefore every apostle and every apostolate could take from Him".⁶

Talking afterwards about the search for a spirituality proper for the Society of Saint Paul and for the Pauline Family, Fr. Alberione reviews a certain number of traditions already existing and then explains: "But then if we pass to the study of Saint Paul, we find the Disciple who knows the Divine Master in his totality; he lives him completely; he fathoms the deep mysteries of his doctrine, of his heart, of his sanctity and divinity; he sees him as teacher, victim, priest; he presents to us the total Christ, as he has already defined himself, Way, Truth and Life. In this vision is religion, dogma, morals and cult; in this vision is the integral Jesus Christ; through this devotion the whole man is taken and conquered by Jesus Christ. Piety becomes full and the religious like the Priest grows in this manner in wisdom (study and heavenly wisdom), age (maturity and virtue) and grace (sanctity) until the fullness and completed age of Jesus Christ; until he substitutes in man or to man: '*I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me*' (Gal 2:20)".⁷

2.3 The fascination that Saint Paul has on Fr. Alberione constitutes his "complete" style of loving and communicating to others an "integral" Christ. In Saint Paul is personified the model of a Christian life that is lived and proposed in its totality of way, truth and life. If it is true that the trinomial "way, truth and life" is a Christological definition present in the Gospel of Saint John, it is also true that Fr. Alberione gives it an "interpretation" starting from the style of life and preaching of Saint Paul.

For the Primo Maestro the person and the work of Saint Paul are the **exegesis** of the Johannine trinomial "way, truth and life".

⁶ *Abundantes divitiarum gratiarum suarum*, 64.

⁷ *Abundantes divitiarum gratiarum suarum*, 159-160.

When thanks to up-to-date and well-documented studies and through different methods of research, the “Johannine” meaning of the Christological trinomial is deepened and therefore the results obtained with the rather reductive interpretation of Fr. Alberione (truth=dogma for the mind; way=morals for the will and life=cult for life) are compared, we cannot hide a certain surprise: in fact, an operation is done that takes into account the originality of Fr. Alberione, but that cannot pretend to correct its reading. Two understandings face each other with different finalities and it would be risky to pretend to correct with a rigorous “Johannine” interpretation of actuality the “Pauline” understanding of Fr. Alberione aimed more at searching for a model of Christian life than a theological illustration.

Indirect proof of it are the **continual exhortations** of Fr. Alberione to the Paulines for them to elaborate in a well-structured and rigorous form the spirituality of Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life. His paternal gratitude, when they showed him the finished work, did not prevent him to give new tasks on the same theme, almost to express his conviction that they had not yet reached what he had in mind.

Another fact that confirms the “Pauline” interpretation of the trinomial “way, truth and life” is the printing and diffusion willed by Fr. Alberione himself in 1964, of an extract of the book *Teologia della perfezione cristiana* by Antonio Royo Marin, op: it is a pocketbook of 77 pages that reproduces the first chapter titled *Il fine della vita cristiana* (The purpose of the Christian life) (pp. 41-90).

In the preface, anonymous, is underlined: “It is substantially the spirituality of the Paulines, preached and followed: Jesus Christ Divine Master Way, Truth and Life; Jesus Christ as presented to us by the apostle Paul in preaching Christ to us”.⁸

2.4. We have emphasized that Gal 2:20 is the Pauline citation most used by Fr. Alberione in his books and preaching to the Institutions of the Pauline Family. Some of these passages are quoted by Fr. Giovanni Roatta in the mentioned study and oth-

⁸ Taken from the book “Teologia della perfezione cristiana”, 1964, p. 5.

ers can be researched in the data bank of the *Opera omnia multimediale*.

Leaving to the good will of everyone to document on the numerous citations of Gal 2:20 in the writings of the Primo Maestro, I limit myself to quote of them only some where we can see the objective of Fr. Alberione: **the Christification lived by Saint Paul as model for the sanctification and apostolate of the Paulines.**

2.4.1. "Live in Jesus Christ. Here it is: 'I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me' (Gal 2:20). What a great good in this, what a great good! Thereupon, once this union with God and with Jesus Christ is deeply established, in the course of the year we pass our days differently because we think according to Jesus Christ, we talk according to Jesus Christ and we act according to Jesus Christ".⁹

2.4.2. "Our sanctification is the sanctification chosen in the most perfect way, the one that constitutes the Pauline spirituality: that is, in Christ Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life. And then, through devotion to Mary, to ascend, to ascend each day a little. The author of the 'theology of perfection' says: 'Don't go to look for or even wrangle about schools of spirituality; methods here, methods there, experience one, experience another...'. 'Way, Truth and Life'; the foundations of true sanctity are there. And it is exactly the way that we must hold fast as Paulines. We must reach this point. 'For me to live is Christ' (Phil 1:21); and 'I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me' (Gal 2:20). That is, Jesus Christ in my brain, in my mind; I think like Him or, better, He thinks in me. And after: that his will replaces ours and our will be guided by his; that is, that we be guided by the will of Jesus Christ".¹⁰

2.4.3. "The novitiate entails only one aim, particularly during the novitiate: to take all in order to transform oneself, that is, to remake man. Remake oneself in mind, heart, life and activity. Remake oneself because we must become another person and have afterwards just one personality 'in Christ'. Christ is one personality and the more one grafts himself to Christ the more

⁹ *Alle Suore di Gesù Buon Pastore* 1957, 11.

¹⁰ *Meditazioni per consacrate secolari*, 1976, p. 412.

he possesses an elevated personality: the divine one. So then '*vivit vero in me Christus*' (Gal 2:20). How sublime is this!"¹¹

2.4.4. "So then reach the point of *Vivit vero in me Christus*. When our thoughts and desires exist no more, but we live Christ, then *Vivit vero in me Christus*. It is not I anymore, but Christ in us. Transformation, transformation! In that way we have not only body and soul, but another supernatural life that is the life itself of Christ".¹²

2.4.5. "'My life is Christ', Saint Paul said; moreover: '*I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me*'. May Christ Way, Truth and Life live in us! Then it will not be anymore man that thinks or loves, but Jesus Christ who will think, act and love in man. The error is in dividing Jesus Christ".¹³

2.4.6. "When we live Jesus Christ, when we can say: '*Vivit vero in me Christus*', then we radiate Jesus Christ. We radiate by our words through preaching; we radiate in life by our examples; we radiate in our prayers when we petition the Lord; we radiate by our works through our editions and work for the salvation of souls".¹⁴

2.4.7. "The expressions are two: that I live in Christ. And this is a desire. But that Jesus Christ may live in me, that is more perfect: *Vivit vero in me Christus*. That Jesus Christ may live in me, that is the way, the reality and definitive state of sanctification and perfection: *Vivit vero in me Christus*, or what Saint Paul says: *Mihi vivere Christus est*: For me to live is Christ: Christ is my life, it's he who lives, who guides, it's he".¹⁵

2.4.8. "Live him first and then give him; live him first and then bring him to the world as Saint Paul has done. First he has been able to say: '*I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me*' and then: '*I have made myself all for all*'".¹⁶

¹¹ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo, Spiegazione delle Costituzioni*, 97.

¹² *Alle Pie Discepolo del Divin Maestro 1967-1968*, 71.

¹³ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo 1946-1949*, p. 598.

¹⁴ *Per un rinnovamento spirituale*, p. 346.

¹⁵ *Alle Pie Discepolo del Divin Maestro 1963*, 249.

¹⁶ G. Roatta, *Spirito paolino*, 1973, mimeographed sheets, p. 19.

2.4.9. "If Saint Paul were living, what would he do? He would fulfill the two great precepts as he has been able to fulfill them: love God with all your heart, with all your strength, with all your mind, and love your neighbor without sparing yourself; because he has lived Christ: '*Christ lives in me*'.¹⁷

2.4.10. "If they ask us what is the Pauline spirit, we must know how to answer that it is to live in Jesus Christ as it has been presented to us by Saint Paul. Only when we shall be able to say: '*I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me*', we shall have reached Christian perfection".¹⁸

2.5. Other citations of Gal 2:20 are used by Fr. Alberione to indicate the single finality of all the aspects of Pauline life: spirituality, study and formation, apostolate, community life and religious vows. Everything must be lived and permeated by the dynamism of "straining forward" that has in sight "*I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me*". The **route** in crescendo that we glimpse in the abundant references of Fr. Alberione to the interior dynamism of Saint Paul could be depicted in this way: from "*For me to live is Christ*" (Phil 1:21) to "*...until Christ be formed in you*" (Gal 4:19) to arrive at "*I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me*" (Gal 2:20).

2.6. We can understand better the presence of Saint Paul as inspiration and model of all the Institutions of the Pauline Family: "We had prayed much before establishing the Institute under his protection. **And we have chosen a saint who excels in sanctity and at the same time is wonderful in his apostolate.** He has united in himself love for Jesus Christ: "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?... Tribulation or anguish? hunger or thirst?" (cf Rom 8:35). Nothing. Neither life nor death. And death has not served to separate him from Jesus Christ; he bravely went ahead, traversed the via Ostiense, reached the Tre Fontane, bowed down his head: "Neither death nor life separate me from the love of Christ" (cf Rom 8:38,39). And he has consumed before rendering this final testimony of love for the Master, an entire life of apostolate. An entire apostolate!"¹⁹

¹⁷ G. Roatta, *Spirito paolino*, 1973, mimeographed sheets, p. 18.

¹⁸ G. Roatta, *Spirito paolino*, 1973, mimeographed sheets, p. 19.

¹⁹ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo, Spiegazione delle Costituzioni*, 463.

3. Gal 4:19

3.1. Verse 4:19: “My children, who I deliver again in pain **until Christ be formed in you**”, appears among the texts of the entire Pauline literature as the most quoted by Fr. Alberione after Gal 2:20 and, as far as the letter to the Galatians is concerned, it is the second most used reference.

An affirmation by Fr. Alberione enlightens us as to how he understands it in the perspective of Gal 2:20: “The process of sanctification is a process of Christification: ‘*until Christ be formed in you*’ (Gal 4:19). Hence, we will be saints in the measure that we live the life of Jesus Christ; or better, in the measure that Jesus Christ lives in us; ‘*Christianus alter Christus*’ (The Christian is another Christ); and that is what Saint Paul says of himself: ‘I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me’ ... Proceed in fidelity, *until Christ be formed in you!*”²⁰

3.2. Regarding the interpretation that Fr. Alberione gives of Gal 4:19, the volume titled *Donec formetur Christus in vobis* (Until Christ be formed in you) published in 1932 calls our attention. The recipients and the aim of the content of the book are described right from the start: “The norms and the principles that are given for the Spiritual Exercises in great part are suitable also for the Novitiate. The Spiritual Exercises and the Novitiate are *Exercises* in virtue, in pious practices, in divine thoughts to put to death the old man and to let Jesus Christ live in us”.²¹

The content of the book is the description of a **spiritual journey** that in the novitiate and successively during intense spiritual periods aims to “put to death the old man and to let Jesus Christ live in us”.

As we can read in the documented study of Fr. Antonio da Silva, “*Il cammino degli Esercizi spirituali nel pensiero di Don Alberione*” (The journey of the spiritual Exercises in the thought of Fr. Alberione) (1981), Fr. Alberione, drawing inspiration from the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, from Saint Pier Giuliano Eymard, Antonio Royo Marin, Giovanni Battista Chautard, Adolfo Tanquerey, Canonico Chiesa and others, has elaborated the “**Pauline method**” to reach the goal of Saint Paul: “until Christ live in you”.

²⁰ *San Paolo*, February-March-April 1965; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 11.

²¹ *Donec formetur Christus in vobis*, 9.

The dynamism enclosed in the “until” of Gal 4:19 is described by Fr. Alberione as a gradual journey through three stages: **the purgative way, the illuminative way and the unitive way.**

The person must involve in successive passages his **past, present** and **future** by being aware of sins committed in the past, by deciding to change in the present and by projecting a new life in the future.

The **theological atmosphere** wherein this spiritual change comes into being is the Trinity in its relation with creatures. **God the Father** creates and gives an identity to man: the **purgative way** produces in man the awareness of his refusal of the divine plan. **God the Son** by means of redemption manifests himself to man as Way, Truth and Life: the **illuminative way** is lived through Sacred Scripture, Tradition and Grace. **God the Holy Spirit** sanctifies the members of the Church who live of faith, hope and charity in the **unitive way.**

Synthesizing the purgative and illuminative way, Fr. Alberione explains: “Christ alone lives, thinks, suffers, dies and resurrects in us. Head of reborn humanity”.²²

Describing afterwards the *Means of grace* necessary to live the unitive way, Fr. Alberione proposes the **Way, Truth and Life method** for the Holy Mass, Communion and Visit; then he illustrates the states of lay, priestly and religious life characterized by the vows of obedience, chastity and poverty, by community life and by the Rules.

The last chapter of the unitive way titled *Apostolato stampa* (The press apostolate) describes through very synthetic phrases the press as an apostolate to live under the protection of Saint Paul and Mary Queen of the Apostles.

In the *Conclusions*²³ is summarized the objective of every stage: “Fruit of the *first* part is therefore the total conversion of life toward eternity”. “The conclusion of the *second* part is: dwell in Jesus Christ until *vivit vero in me Christus*”: mind, heart and life; “In three ways *we walk with Jesus Christ*: the way of the Commandments: Christian life; the way of the evangelical counsels: religious life; the way of zeal: life of apostolate”. The last phrase sounds like

²² *Donec formetur Christus in vobis*, 64.

²³ Cf *Donec formetur Christus in vobis*, 99-100.

this: "Therefore, our study is twofold: so that Jesus Christ may be formed in us". Taking into account the context of the whole book, it seems to refer to the synthesis of the Pauline charism: **a double commitment, spirituality and apostolate.**

3.3. According to Fr. Alberione, the verse Gal 4:19 synthesizes from the beginnings of 1930 the reason for existence of the faith of every believer and, in particular, of every Pauline religious who cannot reduce his spiritual life to believing alone with his mind some truths, to material execution alone of pious practices or to the obligation only of living the Commandments. The spiritual life is **a totality** that integrates the truths of faith, the sacramental life and the observance of the Commandments in a journey characterized by "**straining forward**"; and that has as goal, to be relaunched constantly at every stage achieved, **Christification** in every aspect of Pauline life. In fact, Christification allows the contemporaneous living of the commitment of sanctification and apostolate: love of God and love of neighbor.

During the years in which the number of the Paulines grows rapidly, Fr. Alberione finds himself in the condition to indicate a spirituality that leads to live in fullness the press apostolate and the apostolate of the other Institutions already begun.

In 1912 Pope Pius X publishes the *Catechism of the Christian doctrine*, a compendium of faith formulated in simple questions and answers. The first work printed by the nascent Society of Saint Paul is precisely the Catechism of Saint Pius X, but the same cannot constitute a manual of spirituality adequate for the Paulines. On the other hand, Fr. Alberione has researched with diligence among the various spiritualities, remaining however unsatisfied because of their "partial" presentation of Christ.²⁴ It is necessary to formulate a text in which the **theological truths** become an **ambience for all the aspects of life** of every Pauline.

The spiritual models are chosen: Jesus Divine Master Way, Truth and Life; Mary, Queen of Apostles; and Saint Paul. It is offering "**a method**" so as to attend with fruit to sanctification and apostolate. In *Donec formetur Christus in vobis*, Fr. Alberione, drawing from several sources, formulates the "**Pauline method**" of Christification that ends in the unitive way including also the *Press apostolate*.

²⁴ Cf *Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ*, 159.

3.4. In the first years of the 1930's, the Founder starts two texts at the same time: the *Donec formetur Christus in vobis* (1932) and *Apostolato stampa* (published in the form of articles, explained in conferences and then gathered in a volume in 1933). *Apostolato stampa* is the logical development of the last chapter that carries the same title in *Donec formetur Christus in vobis*. **Only the unity of the two texts can be considered as the true *Ratio formationis* of the Paulines:** to separate the two texts means to commit an historical error, of scarce interpretative capacity; equally to exalt one at the expense of the other is a true attempt at the integrality of the charism as the Founder has willed it. **All the spiritual journey done by the Pauline religious with *Donec formetur* is in function of the preparation of the apostle of the press described in *Apostolato Stampa*.**

Reading with attention the interventions of Fr. Alberione in successive years, on the occasion of courses of spiritual exercises for the Institutions of the Pauline Family, we find his concern to structure the contents on the path of the purgative, illuminative and unitive way, completed unflinchingly by themes of the apostolate.

Proof of it is the fact that the Primo Maestro does not hide a mixture of bitterness and surprise in the face of courses of spiritual exercises escaping only in contemplation: "I have heard years ago something that had given me a certain impression and that is, for an entire course of Exercises the word "apostolate" had never been named. How can they have convictions, enthusiasm for editorial work, for technique, for propaganda especially? Thus, the tasks are done materially, with difficulty. But if you describe the role of redaction, of technique, the function above all of propaganda – the principal part – what advantage will come, what advantage in addition, how many added merits".²⁵

Useful for the understanding of the unity between spirituality and apostolate is the affirmation contained in an exhortation of 4 June 1960 to the Daughters of Saint Paul to sensitize them to the apostolate of cinema: "Our concerns must be two: save ourselves and save. Save the cinema! What a great thing: redemption that is applied even in this area! That cinema be truly Christian, that teaching be that of the Church (...). Perhaps we have not yet

²⁵ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo, Spiegazione delle Costituzioni*, 273.

paused enough to meditate about this in front of the Lord and to make a course of exercises about this mission".²⁶ A course of exercises to meditate before the Lord on the urgency of the apostolate of cinema: this helps us to understand better the style of Fr. Alberione!

3.5. An exemplary reference to understand how to translate into a course of spiritual exercises the "*Donec formetur Christus in vobis*" and the "*Apostolato stampa*" are the **Spiritual Exercises of April 1960** that the Primo Maestro has willed to realize in order to stamp the "straining forward" to the Pauline charism, through an assessment of his work and with an eye focused on the heritage to be left.

The edition of "*Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*" (1960-1962) in four volumes – from which the volume of the same title edited in 1998 for *Opera omnia* reprises only the interventions of Fr. Alberione – helps us to understand the **Alberionian method** of the spiritual exercises conceived, in reality, as strong moments of prayer and reflection in order to reproduce what the Paulines are called to live every day with perseverance and progress.

In the contents treated and in the method of organization of the Exercises of April 1960, the Paulines find the formula willed by Fr. Alberione for a course lasting one month, that has the merit of involving the participants not only as individuals, but also as community: a course of **Exercises personal and social**, because it is also as **community**, *Donec formetur* and *Apostolato stampa* must be integrated.

3.6. Although Fr. Alberione focuses his interest on the first part of Gal 2:20, he does not however neglect the **immediate context** "I, in fact, by means of the law, am dead to the law in order to live for God. With Christ I have been crucified" (2:19) and the rest of the verse 2:20: "The life that I live now in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God who has loved me and has given up himself for me".

As we can infer from the quotes tracked down, Fr. Alberione makes use of these two texts to motivate, through the first, Christification that embraces the moment of the cross; and to stimulate, through the second, love for souls in the apostolate. "You, O Jesus

²⁶ *L'apostolato paolino nell'intuizione del Primo Maestro*, 1977, p. 85.

Savior, have given your blood and life for souls: 'he loved me and gave himself up to death for me' (Gal 2:20). Should I now fear any hard toil for souls? Would I be incapable of sacrifice? Should I leave hidden the treasures of grace, the truth of the Gospel, the sacraments of salvation that you have offered to humanity?... It is therefore the salvation of men that is the sigh of your heart: if I love you, certainly I shall lead souls to you".²⁷

4. Gal 1:8; 3:1

4.1. Abandoning the criterion of the verses of the letter to the Galatians more quoted by Fr. Alberione, we adopt the order of the succession of the chapters and verses without taking into account the quantitative aspect.

In the two verses in question, Saint Paul defends the content of the Gospel preached by him to the Galatians, asking himself about the volubility of their faith, so quick in moving away from its original direction. Addressing the Daughters of Saint Paul, Fr. Alberione affirms: "Something similar can happen to some of you. Hold on to your spirit. Always follow what has been taught to you, regarding everything; on the manner of confessing, of making your Visit, the examination of conscience, the spiritual reading, of attending holy Mass, etc. If even an angel told you to act differently, don't listen to him because he would not be an angel of heaven".²⁸

"During his time Saint Paul warned the faithful against novelties, novelties of persons who introduced, as it would appear, a new order, a new word. Be on guard, therefore... The Congregation has its own ideas, its own orientation: to live our own spirit".²⁹

"Because when someone looks for and adopts a different spirit, she merits being addressed to her the words "Even if an angel of heaven came telling you something different from what we have told you, do not believe". Saint Paul wrote this to the Galatians, because after leaving Galatia disorder had started.

²⁷ *Brevi meditazioni per ogni giorno dell'anno*, vol. I, 1948, p. 335 (see p. 271 of the single volume edition of 2008).

²⁸ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo 1946-1949*, p. 218.

²⁹ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo, Spiegazione delle Costituzioni*, 86.

Persons had come afterwards that had disoriented the Christians... Let there always be the Pauline mentality, the Pauline will, sentiment, prayer, spirit".³⁰

Observing the changes that were taking place in the Church after Vatican II, the Founder takes the trouble of asserting: "It is necessary to think about what Saint Paul said in his letter to the Galatians. ...There were the so-called know-alls who pretended to know more than the Gospel. ...Applying to ourselves this verse of Saint Paul, we should say: If somebody wanted to give to the Institute a different spirit, even if he were an angel, even a priest, we must drive this angel away, because he is against the Church which is infallible. Once the Pope has become the head of the Institute after the definitive approval, we must follow him and what he has entrusted to the Institute for observance: the book of the Constitutions. In this period there are so many erroneous movements; this depends also from the fact that until now the discussions of the Vatican II Council are going on".³¹

4.2. Meditating on the concern of Saint Paul for the deviations of the Galatians, in various occasions and with appropriate tone Fr. Alberione puts on guard the Institutions he founded, so that they remain faithful to the "**Pauline spirit**" without allowing themselves to be charmed either by the lucubrations of some member inside or by the alternative proposals that come from outside: "Therefore the Pauline spirit includes: the Pauline thought, the Pauline life and then the devotions to Jesus Master, to the Queen of Apostles and to Saint Paul. It is necessary that all the Sisters conform their whole life to this spirit. Pauline Sisters! Are you Sisters for the Missions? Or Sisters for the sick? There must be the Pauline spirit whether for the spiritual part or for the apostolate. The Daughters of Saint Paul must not act like the Pastorelle; and the Pious Disciples must not be Apostoline".³²

The Founder has always defended with decision and at times with severity what he has, with the light of the Spirit and the approval of the Church, elaborated regarding the Pauline charism in its totality of spirituality and apostolate.

³⁰ *Fedeltà allo spirito paolino*, 30.06.1965, p. 81.

³¹ *Fedeltà allo spirito paolino*, 19.07.1965, pp. 90.93.

³² *Esercizi Spirituali*, 1966, p. 31f.

We can read in him the equivalent of the “jealousy” that Saint Paul had for the quality of his foundations. In the history of the Institutions of the Pauline Family the development of the charism takes place with a “**creative fidelity**” that integrates the changes of the present leaning firmly on a correct and documented knowledge of the past.

5. Gal 1:15

5.1. To sustain the Pauline vocation and mission and mental openness toward vocations, possible at every age, the Primo Maestro quotes in various occasions the verse in which Saint Paul interprets his vocation and mission making reference to the experience of the prophet Jeremiah (1:5), who is also called from the womb of his mother and sent to the nations.

Let this text serve as an example: “The Lord of creation confers vocation and destines those he loves to save men. But then the call can come at all hours of life: from the *first morn* to the eleventh hour (cf Mt 20:1-6). With Saint Paul, every priest can say of himself: “*Who, that is, God, separated me from my mother’s womb*”. But he was called at an age between youth and adulthood”.³³

6. Gal 3:27

6.1. Through his baptism the Christian “puts on” Christ. Alluding to the ceremony of Holy Saturday when the newly-baptized don a white attire, Fr. Alberione, thinking about Low Sunday, makes his transposition: “Instructing oneself in religion, growing in faith, professing it openly is the teaching of this Sunday”.³⁴

6.2. Referring to Gal 2:20, Fr. Alberione invites the Paulines to use Gal 3:27 for constant self-interrogation: “Let the soul of the Pauline acquire the habit of asking itself often, almost by in-

³³ *Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ*, 335.

³⁴ *Brevi meditazioni per ogni giorno dell’anno*, vol. II, 1948, p. 256 (see p. 593 of the single volume edition of 2008).

stinct: 'What now and how would Jesus act?'. What is my soul looking for now? How would Jesus Christ think and do?".³⁵

7. Gal 4:4

7.1. Talking about the incarnation of Christ, Saint Paul observes that he is "**born of woman, born under the law**". The double underlining about Christ as true man and subject to the observance of the law, allows the Apostle to indicate two means that are providentially paradoxical to obtain two positive results: Christ is born under the law to rescue those born under the law, and is born of woman so that all men may become adopted children of God capable of calling him "*Abbà*" (Father).

Pausing on the phrase "born of woman", Fr. Alberione contemplates the incarnation of the Son of God emphasizing above all the unique role of Mary who gives human form to Christ. Extending to all Christians the exemplar way travelled by Christ, he indicates in the Queen of Apostles the first collaborator in the plan of redemption: "According to that plan, Jesus Christ passes through Mary, formed in her womb. In Mary took form the body of Jesus Christ destined to be the head of the mystical body. The Apostles and the priests will form the faithful, that is, the members of Jesus Christ: they will cooperate with Mary".³⁶

8. Gal 5:13

8.1. Through baptism, Saint Paul emphasizes, the Christian receives the gift of liberty that however must be used to love one's neighbor better. Referring to Gal 5:13, Fr. Alberione exhorts the Paulines to use Christian liberty agreeing with the indications of the Church: "There is a new current of thought, the 'new morality', the moral 'of the circumstances' or of the 'situation'. A morality that, at the end, is subjective; the morality of the useful, of the convenient rather than of the honest; the morality of a single and casual judgment which is therefore changeable; morality that creates interior and social chaos; mo-

³⁵ *San Paolo*, May 1964; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 1438.

³⁶ *Le grandezze di Maria*, 1938, p. 51.

rality that Pius XII has described as ‘outside of the faith and Catholic principles’ (23-3-1952)”.³⁷

9. Gal 5:16-26

9.1. Exhorting the Galatians to “walk according to the Spirit” and to not content the “desires of the flesh”, the Apostle lists down in concrete the values that are the fruit of Christian liberty.

In order to offer practical pointers for the process of sanctification as “Christification”, the Founder refers to Gal 5:16-26 to exhort to works of the “Spirit” and to flee from the works of the “flesh”. The term “flesh”, as used by Saint Paul does not include only the sins referring to chastity, but also all the negativities lived by man who does not have the Spirit of Christ. Fr. Alberione often restricts the understanding of the term “flesh” to sins against the vow and virtue of chastity.

“To suppress the strong tendencies of the flesh is great virtue: “The flesh has desires contrary to the Spirit” (Gal 5:17). They are strong tendencies that can even become very strong if there were falls already or the person exposes himself to dangers. “Among human struggles the most difficult are the battles of chastity”. One who fights this most difficult of battles practices a not common virtue. Moreover, it is of great merit. This virtue makes human life similar to heavenly life that is wholly pure and holy. It is a sign of eternal salvation”.³⁸

9.2. With a broader vision the Primo Maestro makes use of the list of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-26) to invite to deepen and invoke in prayer these “gifts” for a “new” life in Christ. “The Holy Spirit inclines us to the evangelical beatitudes which are a foretaste of reward. He gives us the twelve fruits enumerated by Saint Paul in the letter to the Galatians, chapter V. When the Holy Spirit penetrates a soul, he makes it like a living plant, makes it bear fruit for eternal life”.³⁹

³⁷ *San Paolo*, March 1957; cf *Anima e corpo per il Vangelo*, p. 267.

³⁸ *Brevi meditazioni per ogni giorno dell'anno*, vol. I, 1948, pp. 297-298 (see p. 243 of the single volume edition of 2008).

³⁹ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo 1940-1945*, p. 61.

10. Gal 6:2

10.1. “Bear the burdens of one another, thus you will fulfill the law of Christ” is the invitation of Saint Paul. Fr. Alberione applies the words of the Apostle to rapports in community life: life in common “also supposes ‘*bear the burdens of one another, thus you will fulfill the law of Christ*’ (Gal 6:2). Therefore: let envies be repressed, as also exaggerations regarding the defects of others, resentful rancor, sinister interpretations, continuous recall and bringing up of errors and making them public. Jesus did not end up extinguishing the smoking wick or breaking the cracked reed!”⁴⁰

“Sometimes works are destroyed because of envies, because of jealousies: “that they may be one”! Charity eliminates so many things because, no doubt, when we gather together, each one brings some good to the community, carries with him his activity, his talents, but he brings also his defects. Each one has some of them. When we come together, they are many of them. Therefore “that you may learn, one another, to bear the burden of each” (Gal 6:2). Why want that all be of our idea in certain things that are just marginal? Why want that our thought should always prevail and that all should adapt to us? It is said that we should have patience. But we must not only ask that others be patient with us, but that we must be patient with others”.⁴¹

11. Gal 6:6-10

11.1. Perseverance in doing the works of the Spirit, Saint Paul assures us, can be compared to a seeding that will bear abundant fruits. Reconnecting to what the Apostle has said about works that are fruits of the flesh and works that are fruits of the Spirit, the Primo Maestro calls to mind the responsibility that each one has before God to do good works with constancy.

“How many persons, weak, sickly, are full of supernatural life and produce fruits of life that will never fall because they are

⁴⁰ *San Paolo*, July 1951; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 1058.

⁴¹ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo, Spiegazione delle Costituzioni*, 40.

fruits of eternal life! And how many persons who traffic, who work, who carry burdens, have instead dead souls! Their works bereft of grace will not bring them any benefit. "He who sows in the flesh, from the flesh will reap corruption" (Gal 6:8). Always ask for grace and increase in grace".⁴²

11.2. "Let us also sanctify our life through assiduous and constant work, through daily fidelity to our duties. Let us work, let us work, S. Benedetto Cottolengo said, in Paradise we shall rest! And the tireless apostle Saint Paul: '*Dum tempus habemus operemur bonum: while we have time, let us do good*' (Gal 6:10)".⁴³

12. Final observations

12.1. As far as the quotes of the Founder regarding the letter to the Galatians reported here and found in the *Opera Omnia* are concerned, I have limited myself to what has seemed more significant for me. So the field for a more detailed research remains open. Starting from these hints, excellent fruits can be given by a research that supplies other interesting references that make it better understood how the Primo Maestro has interpreted the letter to the Galatians for the Congregation and for the Pauline Family.

12.2. Since I don't seem to have neglected important citations, as we observe the material gathered we can also take into account the passages of the letter to the Galatians that are less used or developed by Fr. Alberione. Among them, arguments of importance are: the content of justification that characterizes the "gospel" of Saint Paul; the variance of points of view with the "pillars" of the Church of Jerusalem and the contrast with Peter in Antioch; the developments in Scripture about the faith and progeny of Abraham; the role of the law in reference to Christ and the nature of Christian freedom.

⁴² *Per un rinnovamento spirituale*, p. 414.

⁴³ *Maria nostra speranza*, vol. III, 1940, p. 118-119.

III. THE PAULINES OF TODAY AND THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

1. Gal 1:1-5

1.1. In the initial greeting, Saint Paul feels the need to explain his **identity as apostle** and the **divine origin**, not human, of his vocation closely connected to the resurrection of Christ. A similar affirmation, redacted under the form of a greeting, gives the tone and anticipates the content of the whole letter: some have discredited him before the eyes of the Christians in Galatia, probably describing him not as a true apostle of Christ but only as an envoy of the Church of Antioch.

As members of the Society of Saint Paul, we know the obstinate effort that blessed James Alberione has employed to formulate **the identity of the charism** of the Congregation and to obtain its diocesan and, above all, pontifical approval. He himself is aware that it is a “new vocation” for “new apostles” committed in a “new evangelization”. The formulation of an entire project of new evangelization based on written preaching, in complementary function and with equal dignity alongside oral preaching, and on the Pauline ministry of the “priest writer” beside the “diocesan priest” has aroused varying reactions that go from admiration to perplexity to open hostility.

Tracing an assessment of the foundational history, the Primo Maestro, in the course of the Exercises of April 1960, can calmly speak of a difficult journey: “For the Pious Society of Saint Paul, after considering the particular and unusual novelty of the Institute, of its nature and apostolate, the Congregation of the Religious decided to present everything to the Pope, leaving to him every responsibility in a matter of so special novelty, importance and consequence... And the great Pope Pius XI, open to all the needs of the times, approved”.⁴⁴

1.2. Reflecting on the need that Saint Paul has to justify unto others the nature of his task as apostle and on the tenacity of Fr. Alberione to obtain church recognition for the Pauline cha-

⁴⁴ *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, I, 18.

rism, we can emphasize the **social** dimension of our apostolic identity.

We do not have the exclusive right on our identity: the **public image** of the Paulines and of the Pauline charism is made up in part by ourselves and, in a certain measure, also by all those who come to know of our existence in the Church and in society. To be able to have documented information on how others define and consider us, in fact, is as much necessary as having well clear the profile that the Founder has willed to trace for us. He himself, on various occasions, has had to explain for us and for others: “neither merchants, nor industrialists, but a Society of Apostles”.⁴⁵

1.3. The image that the Paulines have with the public is not formed in a spontaneous way, but is rather the fruit of our “**institutional communication**” which is a precious instrument to make use of with pertinence. The “how others define us” depends on a concomitance of communicative factors: from the productions of our multimedia editorial activity that at world level finds itself formulated in the visual synthesis of our institutional and editorial trademark; from the quality of service of all our centers of diffusion and contact with the territory; from the style of human, religious and professional life that we adopt in our common activity with our lay collaborators; from the complex of our promotional activities for Pauline vocations; from the formation that is offered to the young people that for a time have been part of our life; from the existential level of our communities; from the ministry that we exercise in the parishes that in full accord between the Dioceses and the General Government, have been entrusted to our responsibility; from our activities of social and cultural animation; from our presence and activity in communication through the web, etc. In the society of globalized communication wherein we live, every form of ours in “public communication”, in good or in bad, affects all the others.

1.4. The importance of the results produced by all these forms of public communication should motivate better the need for **correspondence** among the values expressed symbolically by the

⁴⁵ *Mihi vivere Christus est*, 185.

trademark, the contents of the **editorial priorities** pointed out to all by the General Government and the editorial choices that can be verified through an attentive study of our **catalogs** of multimedia editorship. Certainly, the trademark is not enough to create unity of editorial image for the Society of Saint Paul; on the contrary, through a look of international range, it can be documented that on various occasions the same trademark is placed on contents very different among them, thus creating not “one”, but “various” public images.

So as to not give entry to similar equivocations, also our multimedia material of “**vocation proposal**” should contain something of “identical” in every part of the world, completed with the necessary adaptation to the local social, cultural and ecclesial situation.

Particular care should be given to our presence in “**communication through the web**”: there is an “institutional” part that has to be safeguarded, as has been said for the vocation proposal; and an “apostolic” part that must mirror the multimedia editorial activities of the Circumscription and of the Continental Group.

Along with the legitimate proposal for a more qualified presence that marks the changes of web communication, there is need for **greater coordination** that allows a **common communicative strategy** of the presences that in these last decades are the fruit of the capacity and determination of so many Paulines.

2. Gal 1:6-10

2.1. Saint Paul energetically condemns all who in the community of Galatia have presented a “different gospel” compared to that preached by him, inviting them to not listen even if an “angel of heaven” talked in the same terms. Regarding this warning of Saint Paul we have quoted the application that Fr. Alberione makes of it talking about the risk of distorting the nature of the original Pauline charism.

If it is true that the “social” understanding of the Pauline charism, though favored by us in various ways, deep down is debtor to the judgment that persons outside the Congregation formulate in our regard, in the inside the danger is easier to deviate from the charism willed by the Founder.

The tradition of the General Chapters and of the relative General Governments, the projects of the Provincial Chapters and of the Regional Assemblies and almost the totality of the Paulines – priests, perpetual and temporary professed at world level – guarantee that since the departure of the Founder, the life of the brothers, of the communities and of the Circumscriptions walks in **full fidelity** to the Pauline charism, including the due “**creative fidelity**” in step with social, cultural, communications and ecclesial changes.

2.2. In few Circumscriptions the theoretical affirmation and the practical initiatives of some confreres open a hypothesis of deviation in “**thinking about**” the Pauline charism. According to them it would be necessary to **put alongside** or even **substitute** gradually the apostolate of the “written preaching” with the apostolate of “oral preaching”. In other words, it would be necessary to execute the reverse of the journey made by Fr. Alberione who from diocesan priest becomes a Pauline priest; that is, one would want to adopt in a progressive and permanent form the parish ministry, leaving aside the editorial ministry.

I am not talking, of course, about the confreres who, out of full obedience to the legitimate Superiors of the Congregation, are in charge of the pastoral ministry in the few parishes that the Society of Saint Paul has accepted to run personally. They are Paulines in full syntony with the charism and able to put in practice in the parish ministry what the **Constitutions** provide in these cases (cf art. 76.1).

I refer, instead, to those who support the “distortion” of the Pauline charism, arguing that if Fr. Alberione lived today, he would change his course to be faithful to the signs of the times. Making safe the good intention, a similar affirmation is proof of a total lack of knowledge of the Founder, of the universal magisterium regarding communication and of the possibilities offered by modern communication for evangelization.

Besides being an expression of mental laziness, this hypothesis of change at times goes with failure in the editorial apostolate due to lack of competence or personal or community problems, whence the search for gratification in direct ministry. As long as it is a matter of isolated confreres who out of personal interests look for a charismatic justification of their choices, the damage is

limited. There is great risk, instead, if the attitude of a few, because of the silence or scanty firmness of the one constituted in authority, becomes in fact an alternative ideal of Pauline life for young men in formation.

2.3. On the **operative level**, even if in minimal form, one deviates from the charism in another way: there is some confrere who does not publicly live his membership in the Congregation, putting forth certain justifications that even respecting the personal history of each one, are shown to be untenable for a consecrated Pauline.

The lack of effective belongingness can assume the form of staying in the community as in a hotel in an island; or of inventing for oneself a personal apostolate to make use either of the advantages of the community or for gratification of a personal activity; or exploiting in an interested manner the possibilities offered by the Code of Canon Law and by the Constitutions, ably keeping one foot inside the community and another outside.

Even if we are in front of very limited episodes, it is dutiful to indicate them as a "practical" deviation from the charism. The brothers concerned are to be followed with gentle firmness and using the powers provided by canonical norms. It is not certainly an aggressive will that motivates this concern for total fidelity to the charism, but rather the sense of justice and respect for almost the totality of Paulines who dedicate themselves completely to the apostolate, working and persevering with dignity.

3. Gal 2:1-10

3.1. After going to show "his" gospel "to the pillars" of faith in Christ who lived in Jerusalem, Saint Paul obtains the handshake, sign of full communion and recognition that his mission is of equal dignity: "to me has been entrusted the gospel for the uncircumcised as to Peter that for the circumcised", with the complementary task "of us going to the gentiles and they to the circumcised". Making the due proportions, the foundational activity of Fr. Alberione presents itself to the Christian community with an original form of evangelization: "written preaching side by side with oral preaching". "Side by side" means a diverse task but in full symmetrical communion.

3.2. We too, Paulines of today, want to carry out with courage the specific mission of Saint Paul: as the Apostle has been sent to **evangelize the pagans**, so with the official recognition of the Church, we have the task of **evangelizing in communication**, using its multiple forms and languages.

The will to reach all to bring to all the proposal of Christ dead and risen characterizes the universalism of Saint Paul, of Fr. Alberione and of the Paulines. We are moved by the assimilation of a **Christological truth** that produces a **pastoral sensibility**: that Christ may be a possible experience in all the forms of communication of every time.

The voyages and labors of Paul, his direct preaching and his letters, the adoption of the press and of the mass media on the part of Fr. Alberione and all our actual apostolic communication are not characterized by the use of the “means”, but because the determination to have recourse to the means of communication automatically implies the reelaboration of the contents that allow us to offer an adequate experience of Christ.

The Pauline charism, in close dependence on Saint Paul and on Fr. Alberione, does not adopt the “means of communication” with a mentality and a method that are “**instrumental**”, but with an “**integral project of new evangelization**”.

3.3. The mission to evangelize the pagans that the risen Christ and the other apostles entrust to Saint Paul, influences the very **experience of personal faith** of the Apostle whose formation and life of faith is of strict Jewish observance.

“At first sight, this problem could appear to be of simple disciplinary order. Paul, however, with great theological acumen, discovered the doctrinal implications of this practical problem.

In light of his apostolate among the gentiles, Paul deepened his understanding of the faith in Christ and of the rapport of faith with the law of Moses. Without the apostolate among the pagans, the question would not be posited. The rapport between faith and the law would not have given rise to any problem. Luke testifies to this when he refers the words addressed to Paul by the leaders of the Christian community of Jerusalem: “You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have come to the faith and all of them are zealous for the law” (Acts 21:20). They did not see any incompatibility between faith in Christ and the

law of Moses. They did not perceive, therefore, the need of a choice between one and the other.

Paul, instead, has seen a doctrinal problem at a certain level, because this level was important for his apostolate among the nations. ...Paul reacted with the greatest energy because he understood that to accept their demands would have been the destruction of his apostolate: few pagans, certainly, would have accepted to submit themselves to the laws and customs of the Hebrews".⁴⁶

So that he himself may be able to live fully his faith in the risen Christ and to communicate it effectively to the pagans, Paul, basing himself on Sacred Scripture, reflects on the function of the law in relation to Christ: sanctification is grace, not the work of the person through scrupulous observance of the law. From this conviction springs the universalism of the preaching of Paul: his journeys and letters are the emanation of this theological elaboration of the personal experience of faith.

3.4. His strong desire to respond to Christ's invitation "*Come ye all to me*" (Mt 11:28) marks in a deep way the existence of the young seminarian Alberione who "felt deeply obliged to prepare himself to do something for the Lord and for the men of the new century with whom he would have lived".⁴⁷ The Christological motivation produces the pastoral creativity: recourse to the press is for reaching those who don't come anymore to Church; assimilation of the invitation of Christ is transformed into missionary faith.

Also Fr. Alberione, in function of evangelization through the press, makes his **theological reelaboration**: Christ the Master, Way, Truth and Life. The use of the press is not simple media astuteness, but a "new evangelization" complete in all its components: apostles of Christ, contents, means that are to be used, recipients, etc.

"The Pauline apostolate is giving salvation to humanity: Jesus Christ, Way, Truth and Life... The Pious Society of Saint Paul has something to say to the world; we have set ourselves on a path not to stroll around, but with a fixed goal and means being studied and perfected".⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Albert Vanhoye, *Lettera ai Galati*, Paoline Editoriale, 2000, p. 155.

⁴⁷ *Abundantes divitiarum gratiarum suarum*, 15.

⁴⁸ *San Paolo*, May 1957; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 165.

Paul opposes the Judaistic demands of some Christians; in his own context, Fr. Alberione reacts against a life and a proposal of faith that is “**fractured**” in non-communicating sectors: dogma, cult and morals. “We have to correct our tendency to divide Christ, to break up what He has united. For some time this has been seen in some preachers and writers... Needed are: a Catechism full of Gospel and Liturgy; a Gospel full of catechetical and liturgical notes; a Liturgy (for example, the Missal) full of Gospel and Catechism. We have, in fact, to bring Christ to man, and to give the whole man to God through Jesus Christ. If we separate Dogma, Morals and Cult we shall make of man a disabled person who would not reach salvation, since he is not inserted in the whole Christ”.⁴⁹

The reelaboration of the experience of faith aimed at evangelization through the press is summed up for Fr. Alberione by these terms: “Give in the first place the doctrine that saves. Penetrate all human thought and knowledge with the Gospel. Do not talk only of religion, but talk of everything in a Christian way”.⁵⁰

3.5. During all his existence Fr. Alberione has developed progressively his initial global intuition, leaving to the Paulines not only his commitment, but also a well-structured teaching: only one who knows superficially the thought of Primo Maestro can affirm that he has not been a “thinker”.

The best proof that the Pauline charism does not wear out in the frantic adoption of the last communications invention stands in knowing how to insert the contemporary communication in a “global project of evangelization”. If we do not accomplish an appropriate “reelaboration” of the life and proposal of faith, even the most recent invention in communications will not be used to advantage adequately because of plans tied to an outdated mentality.

Through the effort of the Founder and of the successive Pauline tradition that is mirrored above all in the General Chapters, first among all the Special General Chapter 1969-1971, we can count on the project of “new evangelization” formulated for

⁴⁹ *San Paolo*, November-December 1954; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 847.

⁵⁰ *Abundantes divitiarum gratiarum suarum*, p. 87.

the press that undergoes an evolution with the progressive appearance of the other mass media.

Today multimedia and internet communication require a specific “project of evangelization”. The risk that we can run is to adopt new media for their communicative functionality, but to assume them with the mentality of the past: the danger, for example, of committing ourselves in multimedia or internet editorship with the mentality of editorship of books and magazines.

3.6. The **International Seminar** held in Ariccia from 18 June to 3 July 2008, in fulfillment of operative line 1.2.3 of the VIII General Chapter regarding *The actualization of the Pauline charism in the third millennium: spirituality and mission*, has wanted to be an example of methodology and as such is entrusted to the reflection of the Circumscriptions. The six apostolic projects, fruit of the work of the study groups, can be a starting point for further deepening in every Province and Region.

Starting from the conviction that both Saint Paul and Fr. Alberione – the first for the evangelization of the pagans, the other for the press apostolate – have formulated a “complete project of evangelization”, the Seminar has been structured in an “**inductive**” way: the study of today’s communication, with its characteristics and possibilities, places in a new manner the rapport between “evangelization and communication” which in its turn requires the formulation of a particular evangelization that comprises the languages, the means, the contents, the communications model, the evangelizer and an experience of faith capable of being an understandable proposal for contemporary communication.

From the pastoral urgencies that arise while studying the situation of communications, we have ascended to the way and to the contents of the faith to be communicated. Certainly, we could have confronted the same theme with a more usual methodology, starting from the theological truths to emerge in pastoral urgencies connected to communication. Actually, it is a matter of two complementary trips toward the same objective: God and men, men and God; from God to men, from men to God.

Actualization is a process of “creative fidelity” not certainly of radical change that diminishes the importance of the past. The Seminar has simply been the **start** of a process of actualization

that will have to be realized in every Circumscription, thanks also to the work of animation by all who have personally attended it.

The true fruit of the Seminar is not to offer answers, but to propose a methodology that serves as example in framing well the question about the actualization of our charism, spirituality and mission. As Fr. Alberione has “thought out” a project for the apostolate of the press (public to be reached, means to be used, Christian and human content to be proposed, language to be used, necessary apostolic structures, possibilities for a new vocation in the Church, specific formation, particular spirituality), of this inheritance what must the Congregation and every Circumscription conserve today? What is unchangeable? What is the new that they should integrate in order to evangelize “the men of today with the means of today”?

Some documents of the Church and all of the universal magisterium related to communication encourage us in this direction: “In contemporary cultural plurality, it is necessary to connect the message with the conditions of its reception”.⁵¹

4. Gal 2:11-21

4.1. It is worthwhile to fasten our attention on two principal contents of these verses: the reminder of Paul to Peter and the life of faith as process of Christification.

In our Congregation, besides the three religious vows, we make a fourth vow of “**fidelity to the Roman Pontiff**” where the apostolate is concerned. In the explanation given by the Founder, the fourth vow includes **two frames of mind**: absolute fidelity to the pope’s magisterium as required of every baptized; at the same time, the care to obey the Pope in his indications in the field of evangelization and communication.

Profiting by his personal experience in the life of the Church of his time, Fr. Alberione writes: “We must be faithful interpreters of the word and directions of the Pope. We do not pretend to be other: and God will give us graces to do this. It is not neces-

⁵¹ Pontificio Consiglio della Cultura, *Per una pastorale della cultura*, 23.05.1999, n. 25.

sary to descend the abyss of knowledge. We shall not put ourselves in the forefront of currents of thought. Enough for us will be to understand well and accomplish well the directive of the Pope, and we shall stay close to him in the midst of debated questions and in the crises of thought and practice. It is not our task to advance theories: we shall remain close to the Pope, we shall try to follow, with loyalty, the directive of the Pope".⁵²

Born also of the direct experience of the Founder is the second aspect of fidelity: "The Pauline Family was born when the Holy Father reigning at that time was little followed in his directive about the press and so he intervened. The Pauline Family was born also for this: to remedy for that complex of persons who let the Pope speak, and they taught as they wanted, according to their own convictions, in the way they judged best, without taking into account the one who had the obligation, the duty and the power to direct the Catholics in the true way of the apostolate. Therefore our vow of fidelity to the Pope".⁵³

4.2. In reaffirming without reserve fidelity to the Magisterium in its twofold expression (about the contents of the faith and in the matter of evangelization and communication) willed by Primo Maestro, we must take into account some indications coming from the Popes themselves and that lead us to a more detailed understanding.

Paul VI, while receiving in audience on Saturday 14 June 1975 the Director and the entire College of Writers of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, recalls their service lent to the Church: "And this you do with full, generous and mature fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church... Because fidelity to the Church surely does not exempt intelligence and the will from research, from the effort to investigate, to draw close to the thought of others; it does not dispense from the work of personal conquest of the truth and of its presentation to men. It does not free from the commitment to constantly verify the sincerity of our intents".⁵⁴

John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, talking about the presence of the religious in the world of social

⁵² *La primavera paolina*, p. 621.

⁵³ *Vademecum*, n. 942.

⁵⁴ Cf *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 1975, II [524], pp. 521-525.

communications, writes: "As in the past consecrated persons have learned put themselves with every means at the service of evangelization, ingeniously facing difficulties, so today they are interpellated in a new way by the need to give witness to the Gospel through the means of social communication... Consecrated persons, above all when because of institutional charism they work in this area, are bound to acquire a serious knowledge of the language proper of such means, so as to be able to talk in an effective way of Christ to the man of today, interpreting his "joys and hopes, his sorrows and anxieties", and contributing thus to the building of a society in which all feel themselves as brothers and sisters on a journey".⁵⁵

4.3. Referring to Gal 2:20 and 4:19, for an interpretation on the part of Paulines of today, there is need first of all to take into account what has already been said in points 2 and 3, because what Fr. Alberione has said to the Paulines of every epoch about the commitment of sanctity and apostolate understood as process of **Christification**" remains **more than ever actual and valid**.

Also putting to good use what has been thought in the **International Encounter of the Coordinators of Pastoral Vocation and Formation** (Ariccia, 14-21 September 2008), the preoccupation of the Paulines of today to understand, live and educate toward "Christification" must know how to translate itself in the relative competent texts (*Ratio formationis* and *Iter formationis*) and become educational praxis in every stage of formation.

We all share the formulation of the Pauline charism that, drawing from Saint Paul, the Primo Maestro has left us as inheritance; analyzing our documents for formation and the concrete formation given to the young men in the Circumscriptions, the question of how to "educate" toward Christification becomes urgent.

There is, in fact, the need to **translate into courses and educational contents** the "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me" and perseverance so that "Christ be formed in you". The Primo Maestro has accomplished a unique effort: he was able to interpret the "**practices of piety**" of the religious life in **Christification key**, applying the method of Christ Master Way, Truth and Life in the *Manual of Prayers of the Pauline Family*.

⁵⁵ *Vita consacrata*, 25 March 1996, n. 99.

In the Pauline Family already at work for some time is an **Intercongregational Commission** for the offering of a text that is sure historical reference, on which afterwards the necessary adaptations will have to be elaborated, taking into account the actual changes; thanks to the new formulation, this irreplaceable source for the Pauline spirit will be launched again as it merits.

In order to outline a **course of initiation** toward “Christification”, the Founder has drawn in part from some tracts of ascetics and mysticism that strengthened his vision. Today it is necessary for this progressive project to treasure the texts of Vatican II Council, the basic publications of the Popes and of the Vatican Dicasteries on religious life and communications, the Documents of the Special General Chapter of 1969-1971 and the text *Pauline Formation for the Mission* (19 March 1995).

5. Gal 3:1–4:11; 4:21-31

5.1. In the two passages of the letter quoted, through a scriptural argumentation (the faith of Abraham and his descendants; the two sons that Abraham has from two different wives) Saint Paul shows that through Christ membership in the race is open to every believer and that the Christians are children not of the slave woman but of the free one.

Without entering into the specific of the interpretation that Saint Paul makes of them, we rather want to pause on the love for Scripture that we Paulines, following the example of Saint Paul and of blessed Alberione, must consider as an irreplaceable reality for our sanctification and apostolate.

In the reconstruction of the context wherein the Pauline charism has sprung, Fr. Alberione recalls: “In those years people read rarely and as for the Gospel, only some person; also Communion is received rarely. There was also a kind of conviction that you could not give the Gospel to the people, much less the Bible. The reading of the Gospel was almost the exclusivity of the non-Catholics who interpreted it according to their private sense”.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ *Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ*, 139.

The initiative of Day of the Gospel and the diffusion of the Bible, the Year of the Bible (30.06.1960 - 30.06.1961) and the veneration for the book of the Gospels he carried with him for 32 years,⁵⁷ his instructions for the hours of adoration collected afterwards in the volume *Leggete le SS. Scritture* (Read the Sacred Scriptures), are among the ways used by the Primo Maestro to share with the Paulines his sensibility and to inculcate the centrality of the Bible for the Pauline apostolate.

“The Bible is the book that we must give. We give it either through films, or through discs, or through film strips, or through other ways: using all the means that the Lord has given us”.⁵⁸ “In the apostolate of the editions, proper of our Institute is the book that we must particularly disseminate: the Bible. More than all else and first before all else, and always. Now, for a broader and more organized propaganda, we have promoted the *Società Biblica Internazionale Cattolica*”.⁵⁹

With vigilant attention to the magisterium of the Church of his time, Fr. Alberione has indicated a “method” of reading the Bible that we find applied in *Leggete le SS. Scritture*: the Word of God as truth, life and way for the believer. It is a method that presupposes a **synoptic reading** between the Word of God as dogma-morals-cult and the human person as mind-will-heart. The concern that motivates this method of reading is not only that of studying the Bible to find there in the clearest way the Word of God, but that it may become effective “salvation” for the whole personality of the reader.

Worthwhile for emphasis, moreover, is another characteristic of the Alberionian method to make good use of the Bible: “**popularization**” with the commitment to offer an explanation of the Scripture understandable to **various categories**: the Bible for families, the Bible for children, the Bible for workers, etc. and the Bible in **all languages**.

5.2. As to blessed Alberione goes due recognition for having been part through his inventive spirit of that biblical reawakening that will lead to the dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum* (18.11.1965)

⁵⁷ Cf *Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ*, 145.

⁵⁸ *Vademecum*, n. 1014.

⁵⁹ *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, III, 12.

of Vatican II Council, so it is dutiful to praise the persevering work of various generations of Paulines scattered throughout the five continents for the translation, printing and dissemination of Sacred Scripture. Particular encomium merits the laboriousness of the *Società Biblica Cattolica Internazionale* (SOBICAIN) for the realization and diffusion of the Bible in various languages and for the formation, through suitable courses, of knowledge and interpretation of Scripture.

The Bible even now constitutes the priority content of all our apostolic activities with results and projects going on that are of great value: the Chinese Bible, the Bible in English of the India-Nigeria Province, the pastoral Bible of CIDEF, the Bible of the Province of Japan, of the Region of the Congo, the Bible way, truth and life of the Province of Italy, etc. We can say with certainty that the Congregation continues, with **total fidelity**, the will of the Primo Maestro to make known the Bible and in particular the Gospel and the Letters of Saint Paul.

5.3. Following the example of the Founder, the Paulines also pay attention to the **universal magisterium in the area of the bible**, assimilating the contents of texts like *L'interpretazione della Bibbia nella Chiesa* (Pontificia Commissione Biblica, 15.04.1993) and *Atti della giornata celebrativa per il 100° anniversario della Pontificia Commissione Biblica* (02.05.2003), and to the conclusions of the XII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops dedicated to "*La parola di Dio nella vita e nella missione della Chiesa*" (The word of God in the life and mission of the Church) (5-26 October 2008).

From these texts and ecclesial events, the particular sensibility of the Pauline charism for the interpretation of the Bible is mirrored from what is said in the *Instrumentum laboris* (work tool) of the Synod regarding the Word of God:

"The hermeneutic problem in which are situated the actualization of the Word of God and, together, inculturation, is a delicate and important question. God, in fact, proposes to the person not some information more or less curious and not even of an order that is purely human or scientific, but communicates his Word of truth and salvation and this requires from the one who hears an understanding that is intelligent, vital, responsible and, therefore, actual.

This implies the double movement of recognizing the true sense of the Word being said or written, just as the Lord communi-

cates it through the sacred authors, and also requires that the Word be meaningful for the one who hears it even today”.⁶⁰

Therefore, an hermeneutics that fuses the understanding of the text and the needs of the reader: a dimension that we could qualify as “**pastoral**” and that must characterize all the biblical commitment of the Congregation.

6. Gal 4:12-20

6.1. The stern reproaches and the skillful theological argumentations of Saint Paul to the Galatians are followed, in these verses, by an **affectionate tone**: he abandons his rather severe ways of treating the contents, giving space to gentleness. The truth of the Gospel of Paul is not only the **content** preached by him, but also his **manner** of proposing it and the **relationship** that he knows how to create with the believers.

Among the other applications of the preaching of Saint Paul to the Galatians translated in terms of “**communicative relation**”, as Paulines we can feel ourselves interpellated on two aspects. First: “Become like me, because I, too, have become like you, brothers” (Gal 4:12). Following the interpretation of some scholars of exegesis, Saint Paul, to convince the Galatians of their freedom in Christ, invites them to an **exchange of viewpoint**: as the **Apostle** has renounced being observant of the Jewish law to be able to offer them in a believable form the Gospel, so now the **Galatians** must remain free of the temptation to fall under the Jewish law. A reciprocity that is up to the Galatians to put into action, remembering in what way Saint Paul has evangelized them when he has talked to them the first time.

The reciprocity is more than an obligatory exchange of courtesy in communications, it is rather motivated by an atmosphere of **affection**: “...you would have plucked out your eyes and would have given them to me” and “...my children, who I deliver again in pain until Christ be formed in you” (Gal 4:16 and 4:19). The work of evangelization, whether the one done through **live voice** or the one accomplished through the **actual letter**, is compared by Saint Paul to the gestation and labor of a mother.

⁶⁰ *Instrumentum laboris*, n. 19.

The second aspect to be taken good use of is: “Now I would like to be present among you and change my voice, because I do not know how to conduct myself with you” (Gal 4:20). In all probability the desire to “**change voice**” of Saint Paul in regard to the Galatians is identified with the possibility to be present in flesh and bone among them.

6.2. Knowing well the gratifying relations that can be established between the diocesan priest and his faithful, the Primo Maestro has become aware of the “**distance**” that separates the Pauline apostle from his public, above all in redaction and production, a little less in diffusion. “Let there be the persuasion that in these apostolates are demanded a greater spirit of sacrifice and a deeper piety. Attempts that fail, sacrifice in matter of sleep and schedule, money that is never enough, misunderstanding from many, spiritual dangers of every kind, perspicacity in the choice of means...”⁶¹

Nevertheless, the force of the Pauline apostolate is in the ability to “make oneself all for all”: “Knowing souls, knowing the needs, studying the trends, studying through which way to capture the souls, how to multiply the good, what organizations are needed. All this is the practical part that for you is the pastoral part”⁶².

Communication between the Pauline apostle and the public that he wants to reach through the various languages and means of communication is not based on “**interpersonal relation**”, but is a “**mediated relation**”, because such is the typical modality of mass media, multimedia and internet communication. Naturally, this absence of human relations can become a burden for Paulines who could be tempted to integrate or put on the wrong track their apostolic communication.

As Paulines, it is necessary that we reflect on the “communicative model” of our apostolic activity that, above all in the use of the communication of mass media and of multimedia communication, adopts with more ease the “**transmissive model**”: an author sends the same message to an anonymous multitude of receptors.

⁶¹ *San Paolo*, November 1950; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 807.

⁶² *Vademecum*, n. 1200.

Perhaps, thanks also to the developments of internet communication, we have to take into consideration one of the concluding proposals of the study groups of the *Seminar on the actualization of the charism in the third millennium*: attempt a “**participative model**” in all the forms of apostolic communication.

And, in a certain way, to introduce in our communicative model the exhortation of Paul VI in *Evangelii nuntiandi*: **pass from being teachers to being witnesses**,⁶³ and the possibilities offered by the interactive specific mode of internet communication. It is, no doubt, a mentality to be elaborated and to be made a common heritage: following the example of the Founder, we must think more of our mission in “pastoral” key, where the faith proposal becomes “salvation”.

7. Gal 5:13–6:10

7.1. The Christians are made “**free**” by the death and resurrection of Christ, and Saint Paul explains that freedom does not mean ability to do anything but to be free to love your neighbor because everything is summed up in “**love your neighbor as yourself**” (Gal 5:14). Concretely, love of neighbor is shown in living the works of the Spirit and abolishing the works of the flesh. Even knowing how to forgive while correcting and “bearing the burden of one another” (Gal 6:2) is part of perseverance in being committed “in that which is good” (Gal 6:9).

The Founder, as we have hinted, makes good use of these verses from the letter to the Galatians to exhort to a **spiritual life** made up of good works, whether on the **personal level** or on the **community level**. It is also necessary to remember that he sees in the **Pauline apostolate** a work of charity for one’s neighbor: “Let the apostolate become an exercise of charity. The apostolate that you do is all a work of charity”. “In the exercise of the apostolate are summed up, we can say, all the seven works of spiritual mercy”.⁶⁴

The apostolate is “**putting into action the charity of Christ**”:⁶⁵ “as at the door of convents, in general, in past times, soup was

⁶³ Cf *Evangelii nuntiandi*, n. 41.

⁶⁴ *Vademecum*, nn. 999 e 1010.

⁶⁵ *San Paolo*, December 1957; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 862.

distributed, also bread, which is still done in so many places, so at the door of convents truth must be distributed. What man does need: to know God, to know his eternal destiny".⁶⁶ Citing the Pauline letter to the Ephesians, "*Speaking the truth in love*" (4:15), Fr. Alberione sums up: "**let us speak the truth in love**".⁶⁷

By its nature, the Pauline apostolate is "**social**": "Your apostolate does not only aim at the progress of individual souls, but aims to form a new mentality in society; which means giving an impression, a new direction. Often one falls into the error of wanting to see only the fruit of a particular soul, but the bigger fruit is the mentality that is spreading in society: Christian mentality, fear of God and everything that assures the spiritual life of souls and Christian life in society".⁶⁸

7.2. These indications of the Primo Maestro referring to Gal 5:13–6:10, applied to personal spiritual life, to community life and to the apostolate, also remain valid for us, Paulines of today. We can pause to reflect about what consequences the Pauline definition of "**freedom**" has on our apostolic ministry in communication.

It's not a particular problem to edit texts and commentaries on "Christian freedom" because we remain in the sphere of explicit diffusion of the Christian proposal addressed above all to those who already have the faith. More delicate becomes the interpretation of "Christian freedom" according to Saint Paul in our editorship that wants to "**talk of everything human in a Christian way**", as our Founder asks us. Among the forms that are more sensitive to the commitment to create a "Christian mentality" in society, we must put the journalism of our magazines, radio and television. In its task in public opinion within the ecclesial community and in the application of the social magisterium of the Church to the various problems of society, Pauline journalism must get inspiration from the "freedom of the Christian" as it is presented by Saint Paul.

The Founder himself is aware that our ministry in communication, exactly because it is social and public, encounters serious

⁶⁶ *Vademecum*, n. 1045.

⁶⁷ *Prediche del Rev.mo Primo Maestro*, 27 June 1955, p. 165.

⁶⁸ *Vademecum*, n. 1337.

obstacles from every part: "We must not get lost, but pray and aim at the independence of our activity in the Church, trying to pass unscathed between drop and drop, without wetting ourselves and getting involved. I do not know when and how, but we must have and undoubtedly we shall have freedom of action in the Church because our mission requires it".⁶⁹

The history of our Congregation and, in particular, its apostolic commitment during all these years prove how arduous it is to reach the Alberionian objective of "passing unscathed between drop and drop, without wetting ourselves and getting involved"; that does not prevent that the ideal remains the same even for the Paulines of today, without any attenuation of sort.

7.3. It is the concern of all Paulines to live fully the vow of fidelity to the Pope in the exercise of the apostolate, keeping watch with scrupulous attention so as to be in perfect communion in themes of the truths of faith and of ethics. The most serious accusation that they can address to us is to be outside of the "**common doctrine of the Church**" in matters of dogma and morals. But thanks to the commitment of all, this certainly is not the norm.

There are, however, **themes of the social magisterium** of the Church that can pass as **pluralism**, not certainly in the basic principles that inspire them, but in their singling out, discussion and operative indications of solution, as: culture, social realities, phenomena related to the family, economy, state and politics, war and peace, globalization, communications through media and internet, international justice, hunger, misery, unemployment, injustice, violence, racism, etc. In these cases it is instructive, first of all, to **recall the history** of two thousand years of Christianity.

The experience of faith in Christ, exiting from the phase of oral preaching, gives rise to the letters of Saint Paul, the four Gospels, the letters of the New Testament; the Acts of the Apostles document the living together of Judeo-Christianity and the creativity of Saint Paul in his preaching to the pagans; the extraordinary era of the Fathers must always remain as a valid school of various prospects on the life of faith; the various forms of living the religious vows, the different schools of theology, the

⁶⁹ *L'apostolato paolino nell'intuizione del Primo Maestro*, 1977, p. 82.

numerous spiritual sensibilities, the various charisms of Saints and Blesseds, the rich traditions of the Ecumenical Councils, the diverse personality of the Popes are some examples of the one faith lived in various ways.

With wisdom Vatican II in *Gaudium et spes* explains: “The Church... in no way is to be confused with the political community and is not bound to any political system”.⁷⁰ A clarification of this affirmation is contained in the *Nota dottrinale circa alcune questioni riguardanti l’impegno e il comportamento dei cattolici nella vita politica* (Doctrinal note about some questions regarding the commitment and conduct of Catholics in political life), that explains: “...the legitimate freedom of Catholic citizens to choose, among the political opinions that are compatible with their faith and the natural moral law, the one that according to their criterion suits best the demands of the common good. ...It is not the task of the Church to formulate concrete solutions – and still less technical solutions – for temporal questions that God has left to the free and responsible judgment of each one, even if it is her right and duty to pronounce moral judgments about temporal realities when it is required by her faith and by the moral law”.⁷¹

As **Christians** we are heirs of this tradition of unity in diversity, not of a monolithic uniformity, indefensible on the human level and, much more, on the spiritual level. As Paulines, we are present in the ecclesial community, trying hard to “**be Saint Paul living today**”, as our Founder loved to repeat to us. Certainly, it is not to present ourselves with the presumption of having the **monopoly** of Saint Paul in the ecclesial community, but surely we are among those who strive to live his original synthesis of the faith and his apostolic commitment among the pagans and certainly we do not have the intention of abandoning our model of sanctity and apostolate.

7.4. In order to fulfill totally, in the spirit of our Founder, our vow of fidelity to the Pope, we have to **study in depth** the universal magisterium regarding communication. In the theme of public opinion tied up to journalism, it can be useful for us to recall some

⁷⁰ *Gaudium et spes*, n. 76.

⁷¹ Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, *Nota dottrinale...*, 24 November 2002, n. 3.

indications of John XXIII to the Catholic journalists in his audience of 4 May 1959. The Pope presents the Catholic periodicals as the “*weapons of truth*” (oppose atheistic relativism) and as the “*weapons of charity*” (offer an alternative of truth); the spirit of the Catholic journalist is the Pauline indication: “*Living the truth in charity*”: “Charity in writing, and even in polemics, does not weaken the truth, it rather strengthens it because it renders it more acceptable. ‘*Kill the errors*’ – said Saint Augustine – ‘*love the erring*’. Without renouncing any of the rights of truth, how much more it would be lovable if in polemics is used, to say it with a noted image of S. Francis de Sales, ‘less vinegar and more honey!’”.⁷²

In an allocution to the national French Association of Catholic periodicals, provincial level, the same Pontiff encourages: “It is certainly very legitimate and even indispensable that within the Catholic press every publication conserve its own character and particular orientation, thus bringing an original note of its own in this great symphony. Thus it is worthwhile that each one respect the opinion of the others, in the measure that it too is in accord with the thought of the Church”.⁷³

The reason is evident: “*Truth and charity*: present the truth in the loving light that attracts, taking from it rigidity that sometimes can insinuate itself in very rigid affirmations. *In doubtful matters, freedom, in necessary ones, unity, in all things, charity*. The ancient motto, full of wisdom, is still rich of precious indications for the Catholic journalist who wants to accomplish his daily work as testimony to truth and charity”.⁷⁴

The reference to the Latin saying allows an indication that keeps its value even for public opinion in the Church of today, avoiding the sudden urge to extend to every argument a kind of “obligatory obedience” that instead is demanded in quite specific cases. The **summary accusation** of “being in contrast with the infallible magisterium” that sometimes from several parts can be directed to some publication of ours, should be verified case by case because it could be revealed as not only unfounded, but instrumental and expression of other machinations that are not quite ethical and by no means Christian.

⁷² Cf *Documenti pontifici sulla stampa*, 1964, pp. 374-375.

⁷³ Cf *Documenti pontifici sulla stampa*, 1964, p. 450.

⁷⁴ Cf *Documenti pontifici sulla stampa*, 1964, p. 488.

7.5. The pastoral Instruction *Communio et progressio* expresses itself in a clear way regarding dialog in the Church and rapports between the ecclesial community and the world: "The Church is a living body and she needs public opinion that is fed by dialog among various members. Only on this condition she can spread her doctrine and enlarge the circle of her influence. '...Something would be lacking in her life, if public opinion were wanting to her; the fault of this lack would fall on the pastors and on the faithful' (Pio XII, 17.02.1950)".⁷⁵

In *The Church and the Internet*, reaffirming the need of public opinion in the Christian community, it is stated: "The internet is an effective technological instrument to understand this concept".⁷⁶

The experience of concrete life invites to moderate enthusiasm and to always keep well in sight these affirmations of principle that come from authoritative source, because factually there is at times the impression that they just remain as very good ideals.

7.6. If it is true that Pauline journalism at world level sometimes undergoes pretentious accusations or friendly warnings that will always find our pertinent answer in accord with the necessary autonomy willed by the Founder, it is equally true that after considering its experience and proven capacity, it can become better.

A Pauline **ethics of journalism** is not only a professional question: in fact, we are not a club of writers, but a "society of apostles". It is from Saint Paul that we must draw some values that characterize the necessary professionalism for which to prepare ourselves through a systematic formation supported by appropriate public acknowledgments. It is not by chance that Fr. Alberione points out the letters of Saint Paul as the model of the apostle of the press and it would be too reductive to consider this trend as a pious spiritual exhortation. It is, on the contrary, an apostolic style to hold in consideration with more creativity.

⁷⁵ Pontificia Commissione per le Comunicazioni Sociali, *Communio et progressio*, 23 May 1971, n. 115.

⁷⁶ Pontificio Consiglio delle Comunicazioni Sociali, *La Chiesa e Internet*, 22 February 2002, n. 6.

The **first characteristic** of Pauline journalism rests on a conviction and a praxis instilled on us by the teaching and journalistic activity of Fr. Alberione: in themes of free opinion in the ecclesial community – that is, when they are themes that do not refer to the contents of the faith or morals – we do not want or even can in any way, as it does not depend on us, to be the “official” voice of the Church. We are a voice among others, but well identifiable and not hesitant like a trumpet with a “confusing sound” mentioned in 1Cor 14:8.

In our commitment to “talk of everything in a Christian way” we do not feel ourselves bound by any party or political movement or by various ecclesial sensibilities: with our experience of faith, theological elaboration and the missionary activity of Saint Paul, we too strive to have “the thought of Christ” (1Cor 2:16), interpreting man and society in light of the Gospel. Free of the structures of political parties and of other legitimate ecclesial sensibilities, we commit ourselves to read, interpret and resolve problems and phenomena with the spirituality and pastoral method of Saint Paul: for this we are and must merit for us the name of “Paulines”.

Another characteristic of Pauline journalism consists in the method with which choices and currents of thought become mature. Exactly because we have adopted the entrepreneurial instrument with relative organigrams and organizational charts, we cannot then withdraw from it giving in to the temptation to accumulate roles.

In some very limited cases we can find ourselves in the condition to have received from the property a nomination of front-line responsibility with related editorial lines for a journalistic publication. Successively, it can happen that almost we take possession of the masthead with the reason that besides having the nomination on the part of the property, as Paulines we are also the owners.

Neither very convincing is citing examples of publications where those responsible decide autonomously the line of the journal, ignoring or challenging the interests of the property. These stories are more legend than documentable facts.

I consider it prudent to **avoid** both an absolute division of competences as, on the other hand, a carefree monopoly. The history of the Congregation could document that solitary initia-

tives have afterwards cost her dear because the one who counts knows who are the owners and the legitimate superiors.

Characterizing as “Pauline” the journalism in the choice of the “editorial line” means to involve the Paulines who represent the property and the Paulines who have been tasked to direct, write and coordinate the lay collaborators. This common search must precede any elaboration of “editorial plan” for any publication that rightfully must take into account the norms provided by the rules of journalistic profession.

A **third characteristic** of Pauline journalism drawn from Saint Paul is the type of relation that is established with persons and with themes that become matter for titles, articles, launches of agencies and interviews. The objective of “**doing the charity of truth**”, Alberionian version of Paul’s “*doing the truth in charity*” must skilfully know how to unite truth and charity.

It is not to eliminate the emotive involvement, so characteristic in numerous passages of the letters of Saint Paul, including the advice given to the Judaizers in Gal 5:12, but channeling it in the seriousness of argumentations, in rigorous documentation and in the Christian inspiration of objectives that are desired to be reached. More than using incandescent tones or summary slogans, it is better to entrust oneself – as rhetoric from its appearance suggests – to the force of the “*proverb*” and to the amiability of “*manner of saying*”. Courtesy, far from looking for synonyms to water down what we want to say, is expression of a calm force, not of an insecurity that feels itself threatened by somebody more astute.

8. Gal 6:11-18

8.1. Concluding his letter, Saint Paul, after having assured its authenticity, takes up again the diatribe that he has dealt with in his writing: the reasons of one who solicits circumcision and the observance of the law have purposes that are purely human; the argument of Paul is Christ, the source of a “new creation” (Gal 6:5). “From now on, let no one make trouble for me, for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body” (Gal 6:17).

The **apostolic method** of Saint Paul should be a guide for us Paulines of today: motivated by Christ to the point of resembling

him even in sufferings. Seen with simply human eyes, our personnel, our structures of production and diffusion, the products of our multimedia editorial activity are often appraised as “religious enterprise”, “Catholic multinational”, “powerful publishing house” with consequent judgments of admiration or denigration.

Even if in rapid hints, the teaching of our Founder is explicit: “Apostle is he who bears God in his soul and radiates him around himself. Apostle is a saint who accumulated treasures and communicates the excess to men. The Apostle has a heart on fire with love for God and men and he cannot compress and suffocate what he feels and thinks. The Apostle is an overflowing vessel of election and the souls run to quench themselves. The Apostle is a temple of the Most Holy Trinity that in him greatly operates. He, according to a writer, oozes with God from all his pores; through his words, works, prayers, gestures, conduct; in public and in private; from his whole being. Live of God! Give God!”⁷⁷

“Alongside the power of gold, of the dollar, of weapons, of industrial groups, there is also the power of the purpose that we possess and of the confidence that we have in God. Indeed, because if we are tiny, let us consider that even David went to fight Goliath and the weapons between the two were so disproportionate! Goliath was armed from head to foot and David instead had only a sling with few stones: “You come to me with the power of arms. I come to you instead in the name of the Lord” (1Sam 17:45). And who has won? David. Why? Because the power of God was with him”.⁷⁸

“Concern and vigilance will have to be used so that the apostolate may maintain itself in that **pastoral height that is in the letters of Saint Paul**. Love for Jesus Christ and for souls will make us distinguish and separate well what is apostolate from what is industry and commerce”.⁷⁹ “There was no need of a religious institute to engage in industry! Persons consecrated to God are not necessary to work in commerce!”⁸⁰ “The Congregation will never have to lower itself to the level of an industry, of a commerce; but always to remain on the human-divine height

⁷⁷ *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, IV, 278.

⁷⁸ *Vademecum*, n. 988. See also *Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 343.

⁷⁹ Cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 59.

⁸⁰ *Alle Figlie di San Paolo 1946-1949*, p. 574.

of the apostolate, exercising it using the fastest and most fruitful means, in a pastoral spirit. ...One who lowers himself to the level of an industrialist or trader would contribute to a fatal deviation. Not negotiation, but evangelization!"⁸¹

8.2. The missionary activity of Saint Paul and of blessed Alberione indicates to us that evangelization requires the employment of energies. It produces fatigue and sufferings. A precious inheritance received from the Founder is his example and positive and constant teaching about **labor**, arriving to elaborate, we could say, a "**theology of Pauline labor**".

In the Congregation, from the beginning, there are no particular exterior works of penance. There is abundance of work: "The work of the Pauline (priest and disciple) has its own characteristic: Jesus the worker produced humble things; Saint Paul produced military mats called cilici; instead, the Pauline exercises a direct apostolate, giving the truth through his work, accomplishing a task of preaching that has become missionary and approved by the Church".⁸²

The characteristic of the Pauline work is evangelization as "work". Observing the 30 years of hidden life of the Christ, Fr. Alberione illustrates often the quantity of time spent by the Son of God in a manual activity and not in direct preaching: "The mystery of Christ the worker seems to us to be more profound than the mystery of his Passion and Death. So many years at the bench of the carpenter! "Is this not perhaps the son of the carpenter? "Is he not the carpenter?". The sweat on his forehead at Nazareth was not less redemptive than his sweat of blood in Getsemani!"⁸³

8.3. In the spirit of Saint Paul, who is proud of supporting himself with his own hands (cf 1Thes 2:9), it remains a boast for all generations of Paulines to "**work**" for the Gospel and to know how to "**organize**" work. Even the **assumption of the entrepreneurial instrument** is in view of organizing better the apostolic work. The experience of decades has helped us to single out the necessary correctives so that the requirements of the enterprise

⁸¹ *San Paolo*, February 1951; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, pp. 808-809.

⁸² *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei*, I, 457.

⁸³ *San Paolo*, January 1954; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 1079.

may take into account the Pauline community and the Pauline community may adjust itself to the needs of the enterprise. Every attempt of mutual exclusion has shown itself to be disastrous both for community life as for apostolic activity.

With patient effort and attention to all our brothers, we continue in the Congregation to look for the equilibrium necessary to organize the apostolic work with the methodology of the enterprise above all in the organigram (pyramid of responsibilities) and in the organizational chart (detailed description of the necessary work functions).

Adapting to this work organization the apostolic method of Paul as he describes it at the end of the letter to the Galatians, we can perhaps ask ourselves if we must not concern ourselves more with the “**recipients**” of our apostolate. It is more than necessary to organize the apostolic activity in its work aspects, but it is equally urgent to ask ourselves what effects do we want to obtain in the public that we address.

It is known that the degree of importance that we give to listening to our “**recipients**” is reflected on the results of our multimedia editorial activity. And it is certainly not with an impassive spirit that we notice at world level phenomena at times worrisome of “**drop**” in the diffusion of our apostolic products. If it is more than ever true that we must not think and realize our editorial proposals with the single purpose of following the demands of the market, it is equally temerary to be obstinate in describing at one’s desk a public that does not exist and to produce not to multiply bookstores but to make bigger warehouses.

Our editorial activity, inasmuch as motivated by supernatural goals, must wisely connect “**marketing and pastoral**”, because when it is such, pastoral has always a supplementary initiative – a supplement of charity – with respect to the inventiveness of marketing.

The limits of a Pauline work, motivated only by human instruments, will quickly have an effect on the whole Congregation; equally, Paulines do not know much the spirit of the Founder, who are not convinced that the effort of work must be integrated by a vision that situates it in a supernatural ambience. **For us Paulines, the lack of faith is harmful even for a simple human administration that is creative and effective.**

Dear brothers,

“God himself works for the one who works for Him. Ready, therefore, always to do as if everything depended on us, and to pray and to hope in the Lord as if everything depended on Him”⁸⁴ and “I remind everybody: the works of God are done by men of God”.⁸⁵

With these words of blessed James Alberione I close my annual letter: in them I see outlined the faith and operoseness, the thirst for sanctity leading to the “*Christ lives in me*” and the apostolic yearning leading to the “*till Christ be formed in you*”, personally lived by him and left to us as an inheritance.

With fraternal affection.

Rome, 25 January 2009

Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul

Fr. Silvio Sassi
Superior General

⁸⁴ *San Paolo*, January 1950; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 294.

⁸⁵ *San Paolo*, July-August 1964; cf *Carissimi in San Paolo*, p. 210.

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Translated by Fr. Arthur J. Palisada, SSP

Society of St Paul - General House
Via Alessandro Severo, 58 - 00145 ROMA
General Secretariat: seggen@stpauls.it
Tel. +39.06.5978.61 - Fax +39.06.5978.6602
www.paulus.net - information.service@paulus.net

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