

will be able to see that indeed nothing in this world so well represents the admirable assembly of the heavenly Jerusalem as a religious society perfectly united in benevolence. Our Lord is in their midst; the place they inhabit is 'the gate of heaven' [cf. Gen 28:17]» (*San Paolo*, 1953, p. 3).

5. From the Word to Life

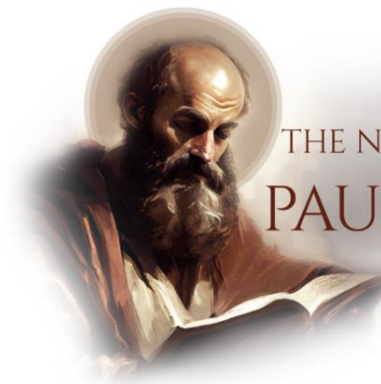
An integral part of the process of metamorphosis to which we are all summoned is to transform our communities so that they become more and more places of encounter and an environment conducive to personal and community growth. This metamorphosis – as in all other dimensions of our lives – will not happen by decree or through the publication of some policy document. Although the congregation takes initiatives in this regard, the execution will always depend on the commitment of each brother.

- Is the community where we live a warm and welcoming environment or simply a group of people isolated and enclosed in their own particular universe?
- What do I do to make community life more pleasant and make others feel welcome and loved?
- In our community, does everyone feel free to say what they think without fear of being condemned by those who think differently?

6. Prayer

«Holy Mary, Mother of God,
you have given the world its true light, Jesus,
your Son - the Son of God.
You abandoned yourself completely to God's call
and this became a wellspring of the goodness which flows forth from him.
Show us Jesus. Lead us to him.
Teach us to know and love him,
so that we too can become capable of true love
and be fountains of living water in the midst of a thirsting world.»

(Benedict XVI)



THE NECESSARY METAMORPHOSIS TO LIVE AS PAULINE "EDITORS"

November 2024

OUR COMMUNITIES AS PLACES OF ENCOUNTER

Relationships are a fundamentally important element in the life and development of any person. Human life without healthy and deep relationships becomes something unbearable. The same happens in the community and social sphere. Therefore, we must all strive to establish the so-called 'culture of encounter' to which Pope Francis constantly refers. It would be unfortunate for a Pauline community that was not characterised by the joy of being able to share life and the sincere openness to diversity that always enriches us. We cannot resign ourselves and let individualism and narcissism lead us away from the life project we have taken on with our religious profession.

1. From the Superior General's Letter

«Even the Pauline community today must be thought of as "open," a place of encounter. Among us, first of all, but also with those who participate in our mission – including the lay – and with those whom we providentially encounter on our journey, because it is this network of relationships that our apostolate requires. In a time where relationships are in crisis, there is a need for places available to take care of them. It belongs to the "culture of encounter" to create opportunities to get to know each other and plan together. There is a need for communities that show how to live as apostles like Paul with his collaborators, who not only talk about communication, but make communication their lifestyle. Communities, therefore, that draw from their bag – like the boy in the Gospel – the food necessary to feed themselves, food which is also the charismatic legacy of our Founder: universality, pastoral approach, the prophetic passion for God and for humanity. Sharing, breaking, relating...» (Annual letter 2023-2024, 5.3 *Our Communities as Places of Encounter*).

2. The encounter with the Word of God

We all must be welcomed and want others to hear what we wish to express. Aware of this need, we must welcome the other and listen carefully and patiently to what he or she wants to express. In the Gospel narrative, there is a place that illustrates very well how Jesus also enjoyed moments of encounter and deep communion: the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. In Luke's account, we see Jesus speaking, Mary listening, Martha expressing her dissatisfaction, and Jesus trying to lead her to the full knowledge of what he intends to be 'the better part'. Our communities should resemble the house of Bethany: they should always remain open to welcome those who come and be places of dialogue and personal and institutional growth.

«Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her"» (Luke 10:38-42).

3. The Magisterium of the Church

There is no ready-made or perfect community. Community is dynamic, that is, it is built up with the contribution of each person and the relationships established between them. We can say that the fraternity experienced in community life is both a gift and the fruit of our effort. Fraternal life is above all a path of liberation. We have to free ourselves of many things if we want to welcome the other and share our lives with them profoundly and authentically. Many times, we are not happy because we cannot make space for the other. It is increasingly necessary to understand our life as a gift and to abandon all desires that distance us from the true spirit of Christian and religious life.

«Christ gives a person two basic certainties: the certainty of being infinitely loved and the certainty of being capable of loving without limits. Nothing except the Cross of Christ can give in a full and definitive way these two

certainties and the freedom they bring. Through them, consecrated persons gradually become free from the need to be at the centre of everything and to possess the other, and from the fear of giving themselves to their brothers and sisters. They learn rather to love as Christ loved them, with that love which now is poured forth in their hearts, making them capable of forgetting themselves and giving themselves as the Lord did. [...] Communion is a gift offered which also requires a response, a patient learning experience and struggle, in order to overcome the excesses of spontaneity and the fickleness of desires. The highest ideal of community necessarily brings with it conversion from every attitude contrary to communion. Community that is not mystical has no soul, but community that is not ascetic has no body. "Synergy" between the gift of God and personal commitment is required for building an incarnated communion, for giving, in other words, flesh and concrete existence to grace and to the gift of fraternal communion» (*"Congregavit vos Christi amor"*. Fraternal Life in Community, nos. 22-23).

4. Thought of the Founder

Happiness is impossible when everyone lives enclosed in their own particular world, seeking only personal fulfillment. As in a family, we must open ourselves to others and consider them as intrinsic parts of ourselves. Within our homes, we embrace differences, recognizing the bonds that unite us as far more significant than those that divide us. Our communities should be places of encounter, where we strive to simplify, soothe, and uplift the lives of our fellow beings. This can only be achieved through open-mindedness and a willingness to engage with the diverse perspectives that enrich and challenge us.

«Moreover, man, by nature sociable, is only comfortable where it is easy for him to form an environment in which this instinct of his can be gratified. When he leaves the domestic hearth, warm with pure affection, in any environment where he finds himself, he finds an overpowering need to create for himself a circle of friends, who understand him, who encourage him, and who are safe supports for him in the inevitable storms of life. Even the greatest saints cannot escape this innocent human weakness. Their intimate correspondence is a striking proof of this. Therefore, the religious who spends his days in a community, where he finds open hearts, generous and benevolent souls, noble and gentle spirits, will live happily and serenely and