

WOE TO US IF WE DO NOT EVANGELIZE!

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My talk makes no other pretension than to revive in our hearts the flame of passion that made Paul exclaim: “Woe to me if I do not evangelize!” (1 Co. 9:16) I am helped in this work by several questions, namely: How have the Daughters of St. Paul lived their mission in the nearly 100 years of our Congregation’s existence? Has there been an evolution in the way we think about the Pauline apostolate and carry it out? What are the unchangeable foundations of our mission? What are the deepest motivations of our apostolic vocation? Toward what future is contemporary communications urging our mission?

Naturally I will not be able to answer to all these questions.... Concretely, my talk will focus on four points:

1. The Pauline mission is inscribed in the DNA of our Congregation, which exists for the purpose of proclaiming Jesus Christ to the world through communications.
2. The mission of the FSPs has a history: it was born of a “dream” that little by little took shape, put down roots and developed into a tree bearing beautiful and succulent fruit.
3. Our mission is solid because it is the same mission of Jesus and the Church: it is founded on sturdy “pillars” and destined to last through the centuries.
4. Today, our mission must meet several challenges so as to reacquire the freshness and dynamism characteristic of its foundation period and live these attitudes firmly, in the midst of continual changes, now that it has reached maturity.

1.

INSCRIBED IN THE CONGREGATION’S DNA:

TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL WITH THE INSTRUMENTS OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

Retracing the history of our Congregation, we can see how its specific mission—to evangelize with the instruments of communication—is inscribed in its DNA.

As early as 1916, Fr. Alberione wrote a small set of *Regulations* for the feminine community that was gradually being formed. In that little *Rule of Life* we can already see some of the specific features of the future Congregation’s mission, dedicated to “the apostolate of the press...which is carried out by distributing...good books, pamphlets, newspapers and leaflets, and by printing, writing and spreading the good press.”

Fr. Alberione inflamed those first young women with his prophetic vision:

“Woman cannot be excluded from the great apostolate of the press. Indeed, there are aspects of it that are uniquely suited to her. It is a very important mission. [...] In three places, I have already seen women working with great competence in typographies. Many times there are those who write. Not long ago, a Cardinal [Pietro Maffi (1858-1931), Archbishop of Pisa] urged that women religious be assigned to printing newspapers. [...] Daughters who want to dedicate themselves to the good press would carry out a much more important service than

sisters who work in nursery schools, old age homes, hospitals or the missions. Women are often much more successful than men in typographical work.”¹

In the midst of innumerable problems, the Founder invited his “daughters” to enthusiastically live the apostolic adventure of running a typography in Susa and printing the diocesan newspaper, calling it “a wonderful occasion, sent by the Lord, to do good.”

This “adventure” took place over and over again. In 1926 a small group of Daughters of St. Paul moved to Rome and in 1928 the Institute’s missionary expansion in Italy began with the opening of branch houses in Salerno and Bari. In 1931, a young novice, Addolorata Baldi (21 years old at the time, with only a basic elementary education), cut short her initial formation to make her profession in the office of Prima Maestra Thecla, after which she crossed the ocean to initiate the Congregation in Brazil. A year later Maestra Paula Cordero also crossed the Atlantic, headed for the United States.... And the story continues up to our own day with the renewed springtime brought about by our Missionary Project in 1994; with the arrival of Sr. Bernard Tran and Sr. Teresa Chen in Vietnam in 2004; with the opening of a community in the martyred country of South Sudan in 2008; with the efforts of the members of the recently-constituted East Asia Delegation to stabilize the Institute’s presence in Mainland China....

What moved and continues to move the Daughters of St. Paul—prompting them to leave their own countries for distant lands, often without knowing the language, their only “luggage” that of faith and obedience—if not a burning interior fire that compels them to seek out those people most in need of God?

The command of the Divine Master: “Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to all creation” (Mk. 16:15), continues to resound in the heart of each of us and to unleash ever-fresh missionary vitality wherever the Lord calls us.

2.

A QUICK REVIEW OF OUR HISTORY

From the very beginning of the Congregation, the apostolate of the Daughters of St. Paul found the various stages of the Good Press (writing, the technical aspect, diffusion) to be the most effective way to proclaim the Gospel. Thanks to the accompaniment of Fr. Alberione and Maestra Thecla, the FSPs quickly realized that their mission was a new way of evangelizing—a true *preaching ministry*.

The unchangeable identity of the Pauline charism is the conviction that *written and oral preaching* are complementary and have equal dignity. For Fr. Alberione, the press, the successive mass media and “the most rapid and effective inventions of progress” were not simply “means” to be incorporated into the usual way of evangelizing, which was tied to oral

¹ C.A. Martini, *Le Figlie di San Paolo. Note per una storia 1915-1984*. Generalate of the Daughters of St. Paul, Rome 1994, p. 99.

preaching and the activities that express a parish's life of faith. They were not "helps" but a new, complete and autonomous form of evangelization.

The Founder worked very hard to inculcate strong motivations in the sisters so that they would be able to meet the challenges of this new mission, which had no historical models to serve as points of reference. In 1932, he said:

"Not only oral preaching but also written preaching has its missionaries. We know that the disciples of St. Paul took his writings to various parts of Asia and that this [example] was repeated down the ages. Today, however, there is an even greater need that the divine Word reach everyone through the most rapid means, which is the press. We must yearn to give everyone the truth in its printed form, so that it will remain with them and speak to their hearts at all times, in joy and in sorrow. The Lord has given this great grace to the Society of St. Paul and the Daughters of St. Paul" (UCAS, n. 5, 1932, p. 12).

Spurred on by deep apostolic passion, the Daughters of St. Paul began to carry out *propaganda*. "Let us help the Divine Master enter every home by means of a *Life of Jesus* or the Gospel," the Founder encouraged them. So the FSPs went from house to house, seeking out individuals and groups, without distinction. Faithful to the teachings of the Founder, they offered the Word of God to everyone simply and pleasantly. Always on the move along the highways and byways of the world, without fixed lodgings or human protection, these young sisters learned to adapt to every situation and became ever-more courageous and zealous.

Within a short time, the propaganda apostolate was being carried out in different ways. The ardent and zealous capillary diffusion characteristic of our beginnings was quickly supplemented by collective diffusion, which came to include Gospel Days, Marian Days and Catechetical Days. Persons from all categories of the laity were reached through this mission. The cinema apostolate was organized and promoted. Privilege was given to conferences, radio programs and book displays held on the occasions of congresses and other events. Fr. Alberione wrote:

"Collective propaganda can be carried out from home, from the book center, almost everywhere.... Collective propaganda involves leaving the house not with a single bag containing just a few books, resulting in a limited range of reading material. Instead, it means leaving home with a car filled to the brim with books suitable for a wide variety of readers."²

In this time, the image of the *book center* was taking shape as a special expression of the Pauline apostolate—a place from which many different initiatives could be launched; a place that was "well suited to deriving practical and long-lasting fruit from preaching" (UCAS, n. 8, 1929, p. 18).

The book center was the source of all the sisters' diffusion initiatives. Its furnishings were modest: a counter, some shelves, a few books... But it was a *place of preaching* and it had a specific identity, clearly sketched out by Fr. Alberione in 1930:

² CVV 208, in: A. Bassi, *La missione delle Figlie di San Paolo*, Generalate of the Daughters of St. Paul, Rome 2006, p. 97.

“Your book centers are centers of apostolate, not show windows in the usual sense of the word, but places from which to teach about St. Paul and the Gospel; not stores but a service; not sales but an apostolate with many initiatives; not customers but disciples and cooperators; not business and finance, but the Gospel that spreads light and warmth throughout the area; not prices but offerings; not domination but humble collaboration with the Church; not money but souls” (CVV 16).

This special identity required appropriate behavior on the part of the FSPs:

“Your book centers are centers of light, love and prayer. Make sure that the Divine Master remains in them willingly, just as he did when he preached the Sermon on the Mount. Sanctify your book centers with your silence, your zeal and your prayers. Have you reflected on the fact that the book center is a church? May it always be the place of your sacrifices, acts of self-denial and love for souls.... If you do not treat the book center like a church, what will it become? The very thought is frightening. It will become a place for useless chattering and gossip; a danger to your heart and a distraction to your spirit; a desert in which no one seeks bread and water; a business that is useless to souls. May the Lord enable you to open a holy book center in every diocese. May he close every useless book center. Be salt. Be light. Be prudent and simple” (CVV 34, 39, 85).

In the nearly 100 years of our history, our Pauline book centers have multiplied. Today they number about 300, most of them located in the big cities of more than 50 nations. They offer the public the best of Catholic and lay publishing produced in their particular territories and also from abroad.

But the Pauline apostolate is not limited to propaganda and book center work or to technical production.

“The apostolate of the press has three parts: writing, the technical aspect and propaganda. According to the directives of the highest legitimate authority, religious institutes must avoid every appearance of industry and business. Therefore the Daughters of St. Paul, to the measure and in the position proper to them, should also devote themselves to writing the leaflets, periodicals and books that they diffuse. [My] first thought was to form a group of [FSP] writers. This step should be taken over and over again with the passing of the years” (UCAS, n. 2, 1937, p. 37).

Writing is a priority for the Daughters of St. Paul because

“your Congregation can be said to be truly developing when everything that comes out of your typographies is either written or edited by the FSPs....”³

Obedient to the words of the Founder and Maestra Thecla, the Daughters of St. Paul applied themselves to their studies with good results and successfully initiated the *writing apostolate*. Primo Maestro was very happy to see the first biographies of the Popes written by

³ J. Alberione, *Spirituali Esercizi. Istruzioni alle Maestre, Ottobre 1936*, p. 16.

young FSPs. He personally wrote the introduction to each volume, encouraging the sisters to persevere in this work:

“You have conquered the demons of pride and laziness and some of you have reached this point [of writing books]. But there is the danger that, having produced this initial work, you will now lay down your pens. This would be a failure to correspond to your vocation. You must not carry out just part of your mission but all of it. [...] Your wealth does not consist in land or houses. Your true wealth lies in your editions, in the books you write” (CVV 72).

The Daughters of St. Paul produced excellent individual titles and also various series of books in the areas of patrology and catechetics. Then the number Pauline of writers began to decrease in some countries, along with activities in the catechetical field.

The ardor of our first sisters was also revealed in their *courageous initiatives in the field of periodicals*. In Italy, it was the FSPs who gave life to the magazine *Famiglia Cristiana*⁴ (which the Founder quickly turned over to the SSP) and to a magazine for women entitled *Così*. Many young FSP apostles were involved in this second project, which also helped them improve the quality of their other apostolic initiatives. Following this, the catechetical magazine *Way, Truth and Life* was launched and the sisters also began to produce catechetical filmstrips and records. This wave of progress in the apostolate in Italy was also taking place in our FSP foundations abroad.

Meanwhile, communications was becoming more and more a social phenomenon and was being integrated into many aspects of people’s lives. In the light of this, a prestigious apostolic activity initiated by the FSPs in the ecumenical field was the “*Ut Unum Sint*” Center (1950) to promote Christian unity. Born in Italy just before Vatican Council II, the Center organized *Faith and Bible Missions* and published a series of study aids on the Bible entitled *Ut Unum Sint*, reinforced by a periodical bearing the same name (1960). In the same year, it also began to organize correspondence courses on the Bible. Unfortunately, our Congregation lost this wonderful initiative but the Lord resurrected it in Korea, where it is still intensively active and is contributing to the biblical formation of thousands of people, Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

In this way, the Pauline apostolate developed and became organized over the years. New means and languages [of communication] emerged and were courageously adopted by the Daughters of St. Paul. We can think, for example, of the cinema apostolate and the meritorious work of the St. Paul Film Agencies, beginning with those in Italy, which worked hard to disseminate morally and culturally uplifting films.

Due to revolutions in the field of technology, the cinema in its traditional form gave way to other forms that could be used by always greater numbers of people. In some parts of the world, audiovisual production (records, cassettes, CDs, DVDs, VCDs) has been very successful. In addition, a number of FSPs are zealously involved in the production of TV and radio programs.

⁴ Born in Italy, the magazine *Famiglia Cristiana* was then initiated in Argentina and Brazil.

The technological revolution currently underway as a result of the development of the Internet is offering us many exciting opportunities to disseminate the Gospel. The World Wide Web puts us in touch with every part of the globe and our many Pauline web sites, virtual book centers, online courses, web pages dedicated to pastoral work for vocations, our first steps in producing digital material (e-books, etc.) all prove that the apostolic passion and imagination of the FSPs is very much alive and willing to take risks....

3.

THE “PILLARS” OF THE APOSTOLATE

The Pauline mission is solid, consistent and perennial because every aspect of it reproduces the mission of Jesus. It is founded on “pillars” that defy time and change, namely: *the person of the apostle; the content of the Pauline mission; its recipients; diverse means and apostolic expressions; collaboration; organization, and the integration of apostolate and economy.*

Let us take a brief look at each of these points.

The Person of the Apostle

Fr. Alberione says that the Pauline apostle “exudes God from her very pores.” In order to do this, she must first of all give *primacy to God*. If the Lord holds first place in our life, then we realize that everything we have received is a gift and that we ourselves are a gift. Thus we live in a spirit of gratuity and we freely obey a plan that precedes us, that strips us of self and enables us to make a complete gift of ourselves to God and others. Our model in all this is Jesus, who gave himself to human beings totally, “to the point of death—death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8). A clear and practical spiritual project can help us make the journey pointed out to us by our Founder. It is a journey that leads us to gradually center our life and actions on the Divine Master, overcoming the self-centered inclinations of unredeemed human nature so as to give ourselves to the Father through service of our brothers and sisters. Only then will we be able to “feel” with Jesus Christ, that is to say, to make his thoughts and feelings our own: “Everything in the heart of Jesus should be in the heart of the apostle of the press” (AS 29).

But to be effective Pauline apostles, we must also be *educated* women—religious who never stop studying, reading and reflecting more deeply on things. Consequently, besides acquiring the basic preparation provided by our formation curriculum, the FSP is called to cultivate *studiosità* (the ability to learn from everyone and everything) by always remaining alert, by wanting to get to know things, to learn, to make progress in carrying out our mission. A Pauline should never think that she has already reached her goal but should be ever on the move, ever ready to learn.

Another point characteristic of the Pauline apostle is her *way of relating to the world*. We are *in* the world—that is, we live within specific structures and societies. Like Paul, we must have “a heart immense enough to embrace the entire world [...] and learn from him the art of ‘being all things to all people,’ as well as the flexibility that will enable us to interact with people in keeping with their physical, intellectual, moral, religious and civil circumstances” (cf. AE 37). This means we must be attentive to their pastoral needs, solicitous to disseminate a culture of hope and solidarity, faithful to the Word of truth—which must be presented without alterations or reductions “so as not to empty the cross of Christ of its power” (Const. 17); clear in discovering and denouncing the *idolatrics of the world*, including where this is hidden under false fronts, and also in *discovering the good* in places where it is hidden.

Fidelity to the Church is another fundamental feature of the Pauline apostle. Like Fr. Alberione, we live our belonging to the Church with awareness and responsibility, faithful to its teachings and aware that we participate in her evangelizing work through a new apostolate, carried out with the most rapid and effective means of communication. Today more than ever, our Founder’s frequent appeal to “feel with the Church” must be translated into the commitment to reinvigorate our communion with and obedience to the Pope and the bishops of our Local Churches.

The Content of the Pauline Mission

The content of our publications and of the material we disseminate is clearly described in our Constitutions:

“What constitutes the content of the message we are sent to proclaim is the whole Christ, the Master, who is Way, Truth and Life” (art. 14).

The Bible, catechetical instruction, pastoral service, the Liturgy, formation—these are the fields in which we are called to work, without neglecting, however, the issues and problems of contemporary society that need to be enlightened by the Christian view of life.

Primo Maestro’s description of the content [we should diffuse] reflects his concern with pastoral—not just publishing—needs. We cannot offer Christ to others in a partial way—that is to say, only his doctrinal or liturgical or ethical dimensions. Nor can we offer him just one dimension of our recipients (mind, will or heart alone). We must not speak only about religion but about everything in a Christian way (and not simply about everything, but about everything from a Christian perspective).

With regard to content, our 8th General Chapter specified the areas on which we should concentrate:

“Give priority to pastoral content that treats the great issues of today in the light of the Word of God: the education to values and to the meaning of life; justice; peace, ecology; bioethics; globalization; ecumenism; interreligious and intercultural dialogue; feminine issues; formation to communication and to a critical sense with regard to it, thus helping to create and spread a culture of hope and solidarity. This content will help us increase our presence in me-

dia that are not our own (radio, television, the Internet...) and reach broader segments of the public” (CD 2001, n. 31.4).

And our 9th General Chapter insisted that improving the quality of our Pauline mission involves, among other things, keeping in mind

“...the centrality of the Word of God, which should characterize our choices of content, in keeping with the invitation of Alberione to ‘speak of everything in a Christian way’” (CD 2007, n. 28).

It would be interesting to ask ourselves how people view our products: if they see us as a publishing house that transmits Christian thought and fosters a Christian conscience, or if they consider us to be publishers that produce material that is good but unnecessary because it does not make a significant contribution to forming mentalities according to the logic of the Gospel....

Attention to content means making the effort to get to know the material we produce and disseminate. This is essential if we are to carry out our mission conscientiously and responsibly since our mission also includes providing our book center clients with orientation/guidance.

A central question in examining our content is that of *language*. Our contact with people makes us realize that it is very hard to propose content suitable for the human-Christian formation of individuals when these persons have been nourished and are expressing themselves in a cultural and communications context different from the one we use. Our language must be “consistent with the circumstances of our receivers and suited to the time, the place and the instrument of communication” (Const. 19). When Karl Rahner was asked what he thought was the *greatest problem facing the Church today*, he replied: “I’m not the one who should say this...but I think it is that of proclaiming the Christian message using the language of ordinary people; to speak the way they speak.”

The Recipients of the Pauline Mission

“Like St. Paul and in St. Paul, let us feel that we owe the Gospel to all people: the educated and the uneducated; Catholics; communists; pagans; Muslims.... Let us love *everyone* and direct our apostolate to all” (RA, 1951).

Our Constitutions clarify what is meant by the word “all”:

“This breadth of vision involves choices. By reason of our vocation and the very nature of the means with which we are sent to evangelize, our preferences are to be for the masses, for the poor, especially those who are more in need of the light of the Gospel, and for those who exert an influence on public opinion” (art. 18).

The universality of our recipients, in fact, means that our projects must be concrete and well focused because even “the masses” are a collection of distinct individuals (cf. AS, 1933, p. 32; AE 37).

Today, the model of communication has changed. Not long ago, the communications process emphasized the broadcaster, who exercised great influence on the receiver. Today, the center of digital communication is the user, who is able to choose *when to communicate, where to begin the process and how to proceed with it...* The user is both broadcaster and receiver, indeed he/she is the “producer” of content (the logic of Web 2.0). Consequently, it is not enough to concentrate on the content to be communicated. If our recipients do not understand what we want to tell them, then our work of evangelization remains closed in on itself. We are invited to take our recipients and their needs/expectations as our point of departure.

Our most recent General Chapters devoted great attention to our recipients and, in fact, our 7th General Chapter made this one of its priorities:

“To focus particular attention on the needs of the recipients of our mission and make a preferential option for the poor and for women, in keeping with different socio-cultural contexts” (Final Document 1995, II.2a).

And our 8th General Chapter explicitly asked us:

“To place the needs and expectations of the recipients of our mission at the center of our apostolic projects. To see to it that the Gospel message penetrates various contexts more widely, seeking ways to reach areas where we are not present. To focus particular attention on several categories of recipients: young people and families, those traditionally classified as ‘the poor’ and those living in newly-emerging forms of poverty (cf. NMI 50), non-believers, men and women of other faiths and religions, workers in communications, and those who exert influence on public opinion. To promote initiatives aimed at critically reflecting on communication in a Christian light” (CD 2001, n. 31.3).

Our 9th General Chapter gave continuity to what was already expressed and assimilated, insisting on

“the need to get to better know our receivers so that our editions will be inculturated, pastoral and accessible to the poor” (CD 2007, n. 28b).

Focusing on our recipients means approaching people in ways that are understandable to them. For us, this involves making a greater effort with regard to keeping ourselves informed and acquiring knowledge; with regard to study and to the formation of a mentality that is open to diversity, dialogue and intercultural/interreligious comparisons, including with persons who are not in agreement with our proposals or the languages we use.

Because of this, our 9th General Chapter suggests that we

“draw up a general plan of action that includes all the aspects of our mission beginning with our receivers, and to carry out new forms of itinerancy so as to reach those with whom we do not come in contact through our present apostolic activities” (Ibid., n. 39).

What do we ask ourselves before we launch a publishing project or disseminate a product? Who are our recipients, concretely speaking?

These are pressing questions that should bring us face to face with reality. They should urge us to connect with the people in such a way that we “feel their heartbeat” and understand their needs, expectations and languages. Only in this way will we be able to use a media language, produce content and carry out initiatives that respond effectively to the yearning for salvation of our contemporaries.

Diverse Means and Apostolic Expressions

“Always alert to the signs of the times, we will be ready to take on for evangelization the swiftest and most effective means that progress provides and the necessities and conditions of the times require” (Const. 3).

These words of the Founder, quoted in our Constitutions, allow us to include among the instruments of our apostolate also current communication technologies—a multiple phenomenon in which mass media, mini-media, new media and online communications all co-exist.

Thus the revolutions taking place in the areas of information technology and cybernetics have not rendered our “old” means of apostolate obsolete but have thrown them into a process of crisis, integration and transformation. As publishers, we have already seen how development of the Internet, combined with the latest generation of digital publishing (including color publishing), has led to a radically different way of producing and distributing material. This new production/distribution method moves in two technologically-distinct directions:

- Print-on-Demand (POD)—the digital printing of a requested book,
- the “liquid book,” that is to say, a PDF file, which can be downloaded into a desktop computer, a handheld device, a cell phone or an e-reader.

We must never cease our efforts to reach the greatest number of people possible, striving to adapt ourselves as much as we can in order to do this.

Our Constitutions urge us to “apply our creativity and pastoral concern to the discovery of new ways to penetrate society with the Gospel, involving the Christian community in this task” (art. 24).

Our 8th General Chapter strongly urged us:

“to rediscover the role and value of the diffusion stage of the Pauline apostolate. To improve and increase diffusion with appropriate marketing initiatives, seeking new modes and channels. To prepare persons who combine apostolic passion with professional expertise to work in this sphere” (CD 2001, n. 31.6).

And, reflecting on the always more strategic importance of our book centers, our 9th General Chapter urged us to

“make our multimedia diffusion centers places of encounter, animation, cultural dialogue and pastoral/ecumenical/interreligious service” (CD 2007, n. 28a).

Collaboration

For believers, collaboration is based on the new commandment of love and is manifested in the integration of the gifts and charisms bestowed on the members of the same body (cf. 1 Co. 12). This is the fruit of a Eucharistic life because only through the Eucharist can people learn to live in communion and collaboration.

In an age characterized by globalization and interculturality, collaboration is a fundamental need and is an imperative dictated by our mission itself. Thus we are called to make meaningful choices so as to have a greater influence [on people and society] by sharing the ideas, projects and opportunities that a single circumscription cannot undertake alone. In fact, we should collaborate with one another not only in mega-projects but also in activities or processes carried out at various levels, such as the exchange of ideas, material, technology and products; promotion and diffusion activities; a temporary exchange of personnel.... It is very important that the results achieved by a circumscription be shared with other circumscriptions so that all might grow.

As consecrated Paulines, we should be able to express our radical belonging to the Lord and the prophetic power that springs from a life lived *in and for* a mission that we carry out *together*: as communities, as a Congregation, as the Pauline Family, as Church; *together with our collaborators in spreading the Gospel*, in a greater union of energies for the sake of our mission.

We must strive to collaborate with the laity courageously, creatively and with great commitment. From our Interchapter Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya (1998) up to today, the employees in our apostolic structures have increased 17%, while in those in our community structures have increased 13%. The number of our apostolic centers managed by the laity is also growing: the majority of these centers are in the Americas, several are in Europe and one is in Asia. Book centers managed by the laity are a great challenge for us. They allow us to expand the horizons of our mission, inculturate our charism better, reach people and places we cannot reach on our own and extend our Pauline presence. The “secret of success” in this strategy lies in our ability to form and coordinate our lay collaborators.

We can multiply our presences if we are able to collaborate among ourselves and provide the laity with the inspiration they need to deepen their love for Christ and for humanity.

Organization

“Organize the good. Organizations have great power. A person might be very holy but alone she is just a twig. Strengthen yourselves through union” (PrPM 1960).

Organization has always been considered an essential element of the Pauline life and mission. For Fr. Alberione, organization had a supernatural dimension because he saw it as a means of exercising love through the apostolate.

But what are the presuppositions for organizing the Pauline apostolate soundly and creatively, in fidelity to the charism? A few are:

- the coordination of individual activities so as to reach a common goal;
- careful and well-aimed planning and the periodic evaluation of all the resources at our disposition so that we can continue our activities effectively;
- the interdependence of the apostolate and economy, and the rediscovery of Pauline poverty as a means of developing our personal and communitarian gifts and resources;
- valuing and integrating our resources.

In reality, as I underscored during our Interchapter Meeting:

“In some of our circumscriptions, the organization of the apostolate reveals a disproportion, at times excessive, between the apostolic structures that were created and our concrete situation with regard to persons and means. It also reveals a lack of integration between apostolate and economy. Expenses related to administration, management, computerization and consultation are increasing but our income from diffusion is decreasing for various reasons. The content of our storerooms moves very slowly and there is a growing trend to put off paying our suppliers. Our marketing sectors are still weak and often we lack the strategic planning that would provide us with common criteria in the area of management. Although centralization marked a big step forward in the management of our book centers, in some cases it has had a negative impact on our apostolic activities, especially diffusion.

“We note that there is still a certain resistance to changing our mentality and ways of acting. Even though our energies are declining and our professional training is inadequate, we still find it hard to delegate responsibilities and make the most of our lay collaborators. Personal problems, difficulties interacting with others and increasing individualism are all posing obstacles to collaboration and organic obedience....”

In short, we really need to take steps to draw up a *Global Apostolic Project* in keeping with the directives of our 9th General Chapter (cf. CD 2007, n. 39).

The Integration of Apostolate and Economy

There is a very close bond between administration and apostolate: each one dictates laws for the other. Awareness of the needs of the apostolate cannot exist without a realistic grasp of our economic situation, combined with great trust in divine Providence and the courage to take on the most rapid and effective technologies of social communication, even when these are costly (cf. Const. 46). Fr. Alberione said:

“Make it your responsibility to establish the apostolate on an economic foundation that will allow it to not only move ahead but also thrive. Many [initiatives] cannot be carried out because we still do not have a sound enough [economic] basis to support them” (Retreat to the FSPs, 04.06.1960).

Consequently, our apostolic and administrative sectors must remain in dialogue from the planning stage of each project/activity up to its evaluation. While it is necessary to find always new ways of diffusion so as to reach our recipients, it is also necessary to respect the economic laws that govern our activities and apply the principles, rules and administration methods that, beginning with planning, take into account the many different elements that need to work together to help our activities yield a financial return so that our apostolate can continue and develop.

A healthy rapport between apostolate and economy will ensure the progress of our mission, the assumption of new instruments, a valid insertion of lay employees in our apostolic structures, and balanced economic activities. The Lord’s Providence will never be lacking: he will provide us with everything we need to carry out the apostolate. On our part, we must exercise the wisdom and prudence illustrated in the Gospel, be vigilant with regard to our apostolic choices and the investments these involve, and carry out our bookkeeping and administrative duties straightforwardly and accurately.

4.

CHALLENGES FACING THE PAULINE MISSION TODAY

In the report I delivered at the Interchapter Meeting, I sketched out the challenges that will affect the future of our apostolate, emphasizing the priorities that should characterize the General Government’s fraternal and specific Visits to the communities. These priorities are:

- to give greater impetus to the creative and diffusion stages of the apostolate;
- to help our sisters rediscover the book center as a sacred temple, a cultural center, a meeting place, a place of dialogue and the comparison of ideas, a place that is open to the world and attentive to every person, giving preference to those who are “far away” and keeping in mind the changes being brought about by the new technologies of communication;
- to reflect together on the future of the Pauline mission, striving to pinpoint initiatives that will open new doors to the apostolate;
- to promote a closer interdependence among projects, apostolic activities and administration, since this is indispensable for continuity and for the development of our mission.

In the light of what I have said up to this point and in coherence with the goals of our Continental Meeting for the Apostolate and Administration, I would like to try to sketch out here some guidelines to help us program our future:

1. *Continual comparison with the foundational project willed by God and implemented by the Founder*, because

“...even if externally our Pauline editions seem to present a literary and technical style that is more or less the same as that of other publishing houses, they are actually very different in spirit. In fact, our publishing house carries out an apostolate according to a specific program and guidelines, namely, to use today’s instruments to give contemporary humanity the living Word of God, in the broadest and most complete sense of the term.”⁵

2. *To feel [the needs] of our recipients* (concrete pastoral action!). Today, to feel the needs of the people and encourage them to respond to our mission is a responsibility that has been turned over to the science of marketing. For Fr. Alberione, it was “pastoral activity.” To be pastoral means to know how to listen to others; it involves “getting to know the needs of people, studying their inclinations and how they can be drawn...what organizations are necessary.”

“A publisher should not produce a book just because he/she likes it. A publisher is faced with an enormous audience: one very varied with regard to classes of people, their education levels, ages, hopes, etc. A publisher should offer the public a banquet that will satisfy the hunger of everyone. Undoubtedly, his/her choices are conditioned by well-defined ideals, but he/she must also adapt to the diversified mentality of the public.... Consequently, to judge the whole array of Pauline publishing from the viewpoint of my culture and/or personal preferences is absurd, childish and apostolically counter-productive.... For instance, a book I personally don’t like might be helpful to my mother....”⁶

3. *To focus on producing good-quality products in the specific areas that identify the Pauline trademark*. In our production and diffusion work, to identify two or three priority areas and specialize in these so as to truly be a point of reference for both readers and other publishing houses.

When we want to be “the best” in all areas, we run the risk of not being the best in any of them. Apostolic activities, planning and production that are too generalized sooner or later lead to discontent, discouragement and an identity crisis.

4. *To work with the Church*. We are Church and, because we work with the latest instruments of technology, we can say that we are “the right hand of the Church.” Our purpose is the same as hers: to offer all people the message of Jesus.

⁵ V. Gambi, *L'editore di Dio*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo, 2003, p. 36.

⁶ *Ivi.*, pp. 54-55.

Thus we must not move forward alone, ignoring ecclesial projects. We must take part in the Church's pastoral work and harmonize our projects with those of the universal and local Churches. It is essential to unite our energies.....

5. *To plan our apostolic projects with a global vision.* "Think globally, act locally."

This well-known principle calls for balance and wisdom. There are those who look so far ahead that they never do anything because they are never ready to take the first step. And there are those who want to respond immediately to a specific need without looking at the whole picture and trying to see ahead. Both aspects must be considered together: some projects should be implemented "on the wing," that is, as soon as they present themselves, while others require a process of gradual development over the medium and long term.

I think the words of Haruki Murakami in his book *Kafka on the Shore* are very apt in this context:

"To look too far ahead is a mistake. Those who look into the distance don't see what lies at their feet and stumble over it. But it isn't good to concentrate too much on what is under our nose either. Those who don't look ahead at least a little will bump into something. So it is best to go about one's business looking far enough ahead to get things done, following an established order step by step. This is the fundamental point in all things."

Let us always remember that projects cannot be imposed on others: they have to be built together.

6. *To make collaboration a true priority.* As I said earlier, today collaboration is not an option: it is more than a need; it is a requirement. By uniting our energies, we multiply them. If we remain alone, we run the danger of remaining on the margins or else of not being a powerful voice in the Church and in society.

Collaboration is an opportunity for the smaller ones to grow and for the bigger ones to make a greater effort, deriving benefit from this. We should promote development in innovative ways, not only in the apostolate but also in every aspect of the Pauline life because the "wheel" of the apostolate helps to move the other "wheels" [of the Pauline cart].

7. *To work by means of projects.* Every day we are faced with changes in the internal and external contexts in which we work: the globalization of markets, economic crises, a decrease in the life cycle of products, the rapid advance of technologies.... All this requires a continual need for innovations. To work by means of projects means to plan, organize and coordinate our resources in carrying out interconnected activities so as to reach pre-established goals.

It is not easy to work by means of projects because every innovation leads not only to organizational and structural change but also to cultural change. And it is precisely cultural change that we must keep in mind in a special way because there are always two contrasting parties involved: one in favor of the change and the other against it. Today it is

necessary that our projects be organized in such a way as to reduce as much as possible the elements opposing them and increase the favorable ones so that the desired change can take place.

8. *To give a new image to our Pauline book centers*, making them places that stimulate and raise questions, that introduce us to the mystery of God and of the person; places of life in which the incarnate Word is transformed into paper, sound, voice.

Our book centers must become, more and more, human “arms” that warmly welcome and embrace their clients; places that offer our book and multimedia productions; places in which faith is communicated from person to person through the cordial exchange of ideas in a spirit of dialogue.

May the command of Jesus to the men and women he calls to take his message to the ends of the earth—*Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to every creature* (Mk. 16:15)—and the anxiety of the Apostle Paul that urged him to always go beyond known boundaries—*Woe to me if I do not evangelize!* (1 Co. 9:16)—give us the light and strength we need to continually move ahead. May they be a font of apostolic creativity, encouraging us to never grow tired of doing good.