



## **GREETINGS OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL AND INTRODUCTION TO INTERCHAPTER**

Dear brothers,

in my behalf and of the General Government, I welcome each one of you, Superiors of the Circumscription, who are taking part in this Interchapter Assembly. I would also like to thank, in behalf of everybody, Fr Luiz Miguel Duarte, Provincial Superior, for the attention and welcome offered by our confreres in the Province of Brazil on the occasion of our arrival.

We are having this meeting at the feet of Our Lady of Aparecida, whose Sanctuary dedicated to her, reminds us of the many Marian pilgrimage sites in the world. This is an appropriate place for direct contact with the people of God and is useful for awakening in us the pastoral sense of our apostolate. We fit right into this context of being pilgrims for, we too, are “apostles-communicators and consecrated” who come to the “Mother’s house” to ask her to teach us to be grateful for the many graces we received from God, just as she did in the “Magnificat”: “*My soul magnifies the Lord*” (Lk 1:46), “*the Almighty has done great things and Holy is his name...*” (Lk 1,49).

To Mary—whom we invoke as Mother, Teacher and Queen of the Apostles—we also want to ask that she help us in the challenge of living and proclaiming Jesus—the Master, Way, Truth, and Life—to all peoples. Under the mantle of her protection, we want to renew our commitment to use all the languages of communication at the service of evangelization, in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul and in creative fidelity to the charism that we have inherited from our Founder, Blessed James Alberione.

Jesus is the living Gospel that we have been called to welcome and to witness to the men and women of today. As “missionaries disciples”<sup>1</sup> in the sphere of communication, we want to make His “program of life” ours too, what He himself presented in the synagogue of Nazareth, as the Evangelist Luke recounts: “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord*” (Lk 4: 18-19). By letting ourselves be enlightened by the Spirit of the Lord, we are renewing our commitment to proclaim the Word that saves and liberates

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, n. 120.



humanity from all evil with joy, hope, and prophetic spirit in the culture of communication.

In this Interchapter, we wish to renew, in particular, our commitment to the Gospel, in the wake of the 10th General Chapter, summarized in the general objective (2015-2021) of the Final Document: *“I do everything for the Gospel” (1Cor 9:23). Be aware of the signs of the times and renew the momentum of our apostolic activity by converting ourselves, our communities and our apostolic structures to reach everyone, especially the suburbs, by using the new languages of communication”*.

We are here in accordance with what our Constitutions ask: *“Three years after the conclusion of the chapter, the general government is to convoke the provincial superiors, the regional superiors and, in the measure that is deemed opportune, persons knowledgeable in the various areas of formation and the apostolate, in order to check with the plans drawn up by the general chapter and to discuss with them the more urgent problems facing the Congregation”*<sup>2</sup>. In addition to evaluating the progress made and transmitting the operational information of the various bodies of the General Government, this is also an opportune time to relaunch the Congregation for the next three years, based on the programmatic orientations of the last General Chapter<sup>3</sup> and the needs that require current circumstances.

This meeting, as it was organized—with its moments of prayer, celebration, reflection, sharing, evaluation and projection—wants to be the best time for dialogue and communion, where we can feel our shared responsibility in carrying out the service of animation of our Congregation, considering that the most important element of an institution are its members, that is people: the Paulines, without forgetting the lay collaborators. The Interchapter is a meeting that orients us to look with concern to our confreres and to feel the different realities of our Congregation, with its lights and its shadows, situating it in the world in which we live, with its many challenges, especially for the life of the Church and for the “Pauline” consecrated life.

As our Founder used to say, *“to govern is to love; it is an office of charity”*<sup>4</sup>. We know that the service which a Superior of a Circumscription carries out in the Congregation together with his Council must respond to the needs of a given territory with regard to the persons and to all the areas of Pauline life. However, this task cannot be an excuse to close one’s self within the limits of one’s own circumscriptional reality. We must certainly look carefully and try to respond to all internal situations, but not to the point of overshadowing the dimension of “collegiality”. No Circumscription is an island, it belongs rather to a body, that is

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<sup>2</sup> Constitutions of the Society of St Paul, art. 223.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Service of Authority. Manual, n. 172.1b.

<sup>4</sup> James Alberione, *Explication of the Constitutions*, 1962, p. 329.



to a larger and more complex reality which is the Congregation as a whole. The Interchapter is a time of grace to make the exercise of reflecting on the current situation and of planning together our Pauline life.

In this Meeting, we will examine some issues of interest to the whole Congregation, trying to answer at least two essential questions: Where are we? Where do we want to go? Or rather: where are we and where does the Lord wants us to go? In this perspective, we will take the *Priorities* and the *Operative Guidelines* of the previous General Chapter to see what we have done—both at the circumscriptional and the general levels—and what we still lack. But we also want to provide a space—certainly a bigger space—for the Spirit of the Lord to act in us and to help us truly realize the ecclesial, congregational, cultural and “communicational” context in which we live, and to deepen our identity in this environment in order to see where we have to go.

Regarding the context in which we live in and carry out our apostolate, the first observation, which is obvious but worth repeating, is that it is no longer the one in which our Founder and the first generations of Pauline lived. In 1949, when Fr. Alberione maintained that “*peaceful and rapid revolutions occur through the press, radio, cinema, television, aviation, political, social, industrial movements, atomic energy ...*”<sup>5</sup>, perhaps he never imagined that, only a few decades later, development has reached such an advanced level, especially in the field of communication, with the advent and development of digital technologies.

We are aware that we live in a constantly changing “communicational” environment, where communication takes place through the different languages produced by technologies—*analog and digital*—that circulate through multimedial, transmedial and crossmedial strategies. On the other hand, we know that the basis of our apostolate is still the communication made with the traditional press, which we must continue to do, to do well and with quality, mainly where this medium corresponds to the public to whom we address. However, the current conjunctures urgently urge us to open ourselves to means—including new “Pauline initiatives”—and to adapt our publishing to the context of the culture in which we live in.

Associated with this is our identity as publishers. Even if the means evolve and the “communicational” environment changes, our identity as “Pauline” Publishers, in the spirit that we have inherited from our Founder, continues in the same way as before. What is rapidly transforming is the very special way of “doing” the publishing today. Regarding this theme, we will have the opportunity in this Interchapter to delve into some aspects of the contents presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Meeting of Pauline Publishers (2<sup>nd</sup> SIEP) held in Ariccia last October.

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<sup>5</sup> James Alberione, *CISP*, p. 1010.



The content of the 2<sup>nd</sup> SIEP, which was organized in view of the updating of our editorial guidelines, will help us to deepen what identifies us as “Paulines” in a globalized world where everyone—people and institutions—find themselves immersed in the environment of a communication which is increasingly connected to the network. We note that we often talk about digital reality, but then in practice we still do little with it. And if we do little or nothing, the future will be unforgiving with us! This meeting will be the appropriate time to have your suggestions concerning this reality and also to update the document on the editorial lines that, after it has been approved by the General Government, will become a definitive guide for our publishing.

To always have a clear image our identity—which involves our “being” and our “doing” and which must respond to the challenge of evangelization of all times—is essential because all the other dimensions that are part of our society depend on this awareness. Pauline life: community life, spirituality, vocational pastoral care, formation “for the mission”, organization, economy, etc.

Dear brothers, these various considerations, which I have considered important to mention already in this introduction, will be the object of reflection and deepening in these days following the program that has already been presented. From this meeting, we hope to come up with some concrete proposals that will help us to move our Congregation forward.

We note that we are in the Church, not by ourselves alone but as part of the great project of evangelization—that is the Pauline Family. Within this “marvellous family” and in communion with every Institute that composes it, we want to do our part in the common commitment to live and proclaim Jesus Master, in the spirit of the Apostle Paul, with the fastest and most effective means, to the men and women of our time.

I conclude with a thought from our Founder who, in my opinion, is very appropriate for this occasion: “*Listen to the Congregation everywhere. By isolating ourselves, considering ourselves alone, we put ourselves in a position where charity fades away. No, let the Congregation be listened to, the Church and humanity as well*”<sup>6</sup>. Truly, we can live out these sentiments in this Interchapter.

May we all have a fruitful labor!

Aparecida (Brazil), 15 February 2018

Father Valdir José De Castro  
Superior General

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<sup>6</sup> James Alberione, *CISP*, n. 177.