

# Sisters of Jesus Good Shepherd - Pastorelle



RE-CONQUERED  
BY CHRIST SHEPHERD  
WE NARRATE  
HIS SALVIFIC LOVE

*"Tell me, you whom my heart loves,  
where you pasture your flock"*  
(Songs 1:7a)

Attachments  
ACTS 6<sup>th</sup> INTERCHAPTER  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Pamphlet**

S. Miguel — Buenos Aires 15-28 June 2009

The cover: Jesus Good Shepherd, Stained glass of Cornelia Rota

## Attachment 1

### **Introduction of the Superior General at the opening Eucharistic Celebration**

*June 15, 2009*

We are set to celebrate our 6th Interchapter, a “favorable time” which the Lord is offering to the Church, to our Congregation, to each one of us. We desire to thank our God who chose to write the story even with us. From the moment He broke in time, embracing the entire humanity a rapport of friendship, every instant is a “favorable moment”, if we know to seize in it the presence of the Lord.

We are called to live this moment in deep communion with Jesus dead and risen, invisibly present in our life and in those of all the Pastorelle who are accompanying us from the different parts of the world. In the Eucharist we live full communion.

The Church, in the liturgy of the Word invites us today to consider the paradox of the apostolic and spiritual life: the Lord leaves us poor, he leaves us in difficulties and precisely in these is manifested his grace and his love radiates. *“Poor yet enriching many; as having nothing and yet possessing all things”*, (2Cor 6:10) says the Apostle Paul. This happens, however, if we allow God to act in our poverty. And we desire that the Holy Spirit act in us during these days of the Interchapter.

Being poor, poor in all senses, we welcome truly in us God's wealth so as to transmit it through our life. Let us draw, then, from our poverty, lived by the wealth of Jesus Good Shepherd and by His grace we dedicate ourselves without reserve in the ministry of “care of souls” which He continues to entrust to our Religious Family.

For this we desire to ask the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit, that He may accompany us with His wisdom in these days of prayer, study, sharing, pastoral discernment.

May Jesus Good Shepherd increase in us the joy of being poor, and help us to be so more and more each day, trustful that our true wealth is and remains the Holy Trinity. It is of this wealth that our world needs! Jesus reminds us: *“Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.”* (Jn. 14:23).

We entrust in this celebration even our delicate service to the sisters as Blessed J. Alberione, our Founder, reminds us: *“Every superior has as her first responsibility: to take care of the spirit of the sisters who are with her. This is*

*the first and an important duty, not those regarding many things which are only exterior. Form the spirit and nourish the spirit of the sisters.”* (Blessed J. Alberione, AAP 1962, 469).

We are about to conclude the Pauline Year, in which we were able to know better the Apostle Paul, his love for Christ and the Church, source of apostolic zeal. And we are about to open the Year for Priests which Pope Benedict XVI will declare officially on June 19. Even this year will involve us closely as Pastorelle because of our pastoral vocation which we received and demands us communion and collaboration with the Pastors of the Church. The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the Cure of Ars, a shepherd of souls whom the Founder indicated to us often as an example of the care of souls, be for us an encouragement and intercession.

I would like to thank all who are present here, who desired to share with us this “favorable moment”: Msgr. Sergio Fenoy, Bishop of the Diocese of San Miguel who presides this celebration, the Pastorelle of this delegation ARG-BO and the sisters who accommodate us in this house. A gratitude to the Lord even to all the sisters and other persons who from the different parts of the world, are accompanying us with prayer and the offering of some sacrifices for the good outcome of this ecclesial event. The grace of the Lord may accompany us in our work. Happy Celebration to all!

*Sr Marta Finotelli*

## **Attachment 2**

### **Conformation to Christ**

*Sr Julieta Stoffel, fsp*

*16 June 2009*

In continuous conformation to Christ Shepherd we deepen and re-express the ministry of pastoral care in order to lead humanity today to the springs of life.

#### Introduction

The Divine Master, whom we are called to live and communicate, is a teacher with the heart of a Shepherd, with attitudes and gestures of a Shepherd. This is certainly the way which must characterize our discipleship and our Pauline teaching: the goodness and mercy of the Master - Shepherd.

Jesus Christ was born a teacher in Bethlehem, the cave was His first school, and His first chair, the manger: *"Come to me to this school. Oh Christian, you say, 'I am a Christian'".* Well, this is the school of Christians - the cave. But who is the master? Jesus Christ, the eternal Wisdom. And what is his chair? The manger. *"Open your mouth O Divine Master."* Jesus spoke and said: *"Happy are the poor in spirit!"* (Q. 043 1910<sup>1</sup>)

What did Alberione perceive, how did he feel, live? Undoubtedly, the whole mystery of Christ. He is the Master who gives, directs real life, who not only teaches, but above all teaches with his example. *"Unlike irresponsible human teachers, Jesus was such a good teacher that He teaches, informs and communicates to the weak with his healing grace "* (Q. 08. 1908).

The term "Good teacher" (Master) has a very deep meaning. When I affirm that a person has been good to me, what does it mean? He has compassion for me ..., I am welcomed without any condition ....., that he understood my mistakes, my limitations and has been merciful...

Could it be that behind the expression "Good Master", Blessed Alberione has in mind the image of Jesus the Good Shepherd? If he felt welcomed, loved and called to a great mission, precisely when he found himself in greatest confusion and disorientation, the Master who invited him to his school is truly good.

Sr. Elena Bosetti, a Pastorella Sister, says that the Christological title "Shepherd" in the Pauline Family, rather than adds or replaces, specifies a prominent feature of the Divine Master, as the Founder in these words addressed to the Pastorelle Sisters: *"Your family, the last born in the family, has the most beautiful mission, the most similar to the Divine Master, who wanted above all to be the Good Shepherd, the Good Savior, the great benefactor of mankind, He who healed every disease - physical and spiritual"* (To the Pastorelle, at Genzano first visit in 1938).

The figure of the Teacher and Shepherd are complementary in the Bible, says Sister Bosetti, particularly the sapiential movement which presents the figure very close to Master Teacher: *"The words of the wise are like spurs, their collected sayings are like a fence whose many pegs have been assembled by one shepherd."* (Ecclesiastes 12:11). Synoptic Tradition also connects the two: the compassion of Jesus to the crowds who are like sheep without a shepherd, is expressed primarily by the words *"and began to teach ...."* (Mk 6:34)

I am the door – I am the Shepherd (Jn. 10:1-21)

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<sup>1</sup> Q is the symbol of the notebooks (quaderni) of Alberione, followed by the year.

Jesus is the “door of the sheep”: through Him, one arrives to the pastures. In other words, He makes us leave the slavery of the law to the freedom of the Son (Jn 10:7-10), to communicate to us the same life of the Son, making us share his relationship of knowledge and love with the Father.

After affirming that he is the “door” of salvation, Jesus identifies Himself with the “good shepherd”. “Good” means real, genuine, caring, who knows and accomplishes entirely his mission, but the same word also suggests something really beautiful and pleasant.

“Come to me all, “is Jesus' invitation to enter his school. “Go – preach - teach,” is the Shepherd’s command. It is the Shepherd who wants to lighten, to liberate and to give rest. (Cf. Mt 11:29)

If for Blessed Alberione, Master, amounts to “the whole Christ, who draws and is involved in his mission, it is essential for us to look at what Jesus mean by being a teacher and be recognized as such. The only time Jesus approved being addressed as ‘Master’, is precisely in the most decisive moment of His life in the Last Supper, after the washing of the feet: “You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, because I am. But if I, the Lord and Master have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet “ (Jn 13:13-14).

Jesus accepted and lived a magisterium of humility, service, and self donation ... He is the only Master at the foot of the brothers. In the experience of D. Alberione there is yet another element of depth that enriches our vision of the Christ Evangelical Teacher: the reference to the Eucharistic Master. In the Eucharist is the Master who permanently surrenders his life. To Blessed Alberione, the Eucharist is the chair of the Master in our midst.

We will be disciples of Jesus, when we will learn to surrender, when we will give up our life without reservation, when we know how to die in order to give life as the Master-Shepherd Jesus in the Eucharist. To follow Jesus as Master-Shepherd is indeed a great challenge! Actually, we received the best: “I have no silver or gold, but I have the greatest treasure, Jesus Master-Shepherd, Way, Truth and Life.”

What does this expression say to us today? If we truly allow it to resonate in our hearts, what does it suggest? Is it not a wake-up call to focus our lives radically and definitively to Him? Could Christ be our only and true Teacher, in reality, we adhere to other teachers and entertain other idols in our hearts? Persons, human criteria, ideas and attitudes, personal positions. . . ., which do not coincide with the Gospel?

Fr. Alberione is deeply convinced that women, who become disciples of the Divine Master-Shepherd, are the strong agents in the transformation of

society. He thought and saw them at the forefront of the new evangelization in the Church.

Conformation to Christ is to orient decidedly the heart to God, seeking always and in everything his glory (cf Mt 6:33). It is the constant confirmation of our fundamental option, that is, although it has a concrete point of departure: the moment in which we decide for God, directing in conscience and responsibility everything of our being to Him, making true and deep concrete choices every moment. If I, in the small decisions of my day: to go there, to come here, to say this or to keep silent, to avoid or to profit in this encounter, etc., without reference to God, but I look for my personal affirmation, the approval of others, etc., then I am denying, contradicting my fundamental option. The instrument to remain in continuous orientation toward God is the examination of conscience, which Fr Alberione calls "secret to walk justly".

The examination of conscience consists of two basic attitudes: listening and discernment.

Listening: "to lend or open your ear," "to accept", "to obey" It is so important to know how to listen, that this depends, in the Bible the fullness of life: listen and you will live" (cf. Isaiah 55:2b-3). "The sheep hear His voice." The oppressed people recognize who offers to them a way out. He who had been blind, who has heard the shepherd, has been expelled from the temple and has come to light. Even Lazarus will hear his voice and he will leave the tomb (Jn 11:43). The people who suffer the yoke of oppression, is sensitive to the voice of freedom, where it is heard, they are happy to hear Him.

"I am the Good Shepherd; I know My sheep and Mine know Me." (Jn. 10:14) After referring to himself as shepherd terms of courage, which leads him to expose his own life, Jesus adds that He is disposed for the sheep: He offers His own life, which is the knowledge and love of the Father. There is a mutual knowledge, an intimacy, a mutual love between shepherd and sheep.

"They will hear my voice". The voice of the Son, who calls each one by name (Jn. 10:3) and that everyone recognizes as true in his heart, "I've called you by your name you belong to Me ... You are precious in My eyes, you are worthy of esteem and I love you."(Is 43:1-4). The shepherd is not looking for his sheep as a "herd";he establishes personal relationship and friendship with each one.

They recognize his voice. Every person who listens to Jesus knows and recognizes the voice of truth, because he distinguishes also the voice of falsehood. The false shepherds oppress with lies and mislead and even resorting to violence, terror and fear, while the true Shepherd sets us free, able to love and serve, and is expected to face life's challenges. Basically, every

person who allows himself to be guided by the Holy Spirit is able to perceive the difference between the two voices.

“They do not recognize the voice of strangers.” We have developed an ability to hear strange voices, but perhaps we have become incapable of giving ear to the inner voice of conscience: we are seduced by some merchants who want to sell us anything, but we do not allow ourselves to be seduced by the One who loves us with eternal love.

Paul reminds that faith depends on the listener and the stories of his conversion manifest very clearly the attitude of listening: “Sir, what do you want me to do?”

Listen to the calls, the cries of the Spirit. St. Paul says that the Holy Spirit groans, cries out within us (cf. Rom 8:29). We need to hear Him to know God's will. He knows the desires of God. Listen to one's sentiments, motivations, the intentions behind our small and great choices, decisions. Listen to the calls that come from God through people, their words, their attitudes. It is interesting to hear and discern. The discernment is effective if the speaker is closely related to the listener: discernment is in a very close relation with listening. Discernment is to know how to distinguish “what is God's from what is ours”, (AD) to distinguish what comes from the Spirit of the Lord and what comes from our egoism.

To be conformed to the Image of the Son

“To enter” is a keyword in the spiritual journey. This is a series of arrangements and movements of the heart that puts us in the reality of an encounter, a vital relationship. (cf. Mt. 19:16-17) In the relationship with Jesus Master - Shepherd Way, Truth and Life, we enter with our whole being, putting in motion all dimensions of our person: mind, will, heart, strength. To enter then, implies an integral relationship, which makes us gradually move from rationalization to the heart; from the superficial emotional impact to profound affectivity; from will power to a free and loving response. A relationship that becomes progressively identification, conformation.

Alberione insists on the knowledge and love, the affirmation that Christ is the only Master, because He does not only teach, but forms, educates and gives grace to accomplish what is taught.

The truth, in the eyes of the Semitics is loyalty, consistency, stability. Biblical truth is not just words, but above all action, events, that is, the revelation which has come to its fullness in Jesus Christ. The truth is Jesus himself, the Word, the revelation of the Father made flesh. The encounter with



Jesus Christ Truth is truly the encounter with the Father: "Whoever sees me, has seen the Father." (Jn. 14:7)

Christ-Truth asks us to recognize Him and to listen to Him, and says: "He who is in truth hears My voice" (Jn. 18:37). Even the Father asks us to listen to His Son "This is My Son, My Beloved, listen to him" (Mt. 3:17).

"As the Father knows Me, I know the Father." (Jn. 10:15) The relationship of knowledge and love that exists between Jesus and each of us, is identical to that between the Father and the Son: "As the Father has loved me, also I have loved you" (Jn. 15, 9). The mutual love between Father and Son, the mystery that defines his life, is equal to the current flowing between us and Him. The expression refers to "the johánnine" of Luke 10:21 where Jesus gets drunk with joy, in feeling that he loves and knows his brothers as the reciprocal knowledge between Him and the Father.

In the experience of Don Alberione, in his existential attitude, it is clear that Truth is not given to us all at once, but must be sought and deepened continuously. It is necessary, therefore, that our intelligence is always awake and knows how to listen to history, events, trends, epochal changes, striving to discern the signs of the times.

"Nourished by each phrase of the Gospel"

Blessed Alberione invites us to read, meditate, ruminate, assimilate the word of God until it becomes flesh of our flesh, it is the secret to acquire the mentality of the Master: His way of thinking, His views, His way of seeing God, people, history, things .... It is a real incarnation of Jesus - Truth in us. The Word is Truth only when it becomes incarnate in us.

"You have to strive, each moment, to walk on My footprints." (DF 102) This phrase puts us in a deep personal relationship with Jesus-Way, beyond the rules and precepts. Jesus, who presents Himself as the Way, is the Son who leads us to the Father, transforming us into God's children, like Him, by the work of the Holy Spirit. It deals then of the deep adhesion to His person, that in St. Paul's word: "to walk in him, to be rooted in him..." Trying to express these attitudes of Jesus in our lives.

Our commitment of conformation to the Master is not a long tiring will power, but a loving response to the Father Who has predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29), it's also a loving response to Jesus, Who has recommended: "learn from Me" (Mt. 11:29), and who indicated us as source of happiness assuming his same attitudes: "Do you understand well what have I done? Happy are you if you put into practice" (Jn.13:17).

It does not deal simply of acquiring this or that virtue of the Master, but to assume His form (cf. Roatta) “con-forming, configuring” and wanting to act like Him, taking upon oneself His lifestyle, until He may express Himself in my attitudes and behaviors. It is a very high goal, in some sense unattainable with our effort, but immensely vivifying because He always keeps us on track, changing, transforming. Fixing our gaze on the Master, contemplating with the heart His attitudes, gestures, behavior, He will awake in us the love and the desire to be like Him, to gradually learn His attitudes, His mode of loving - of living.

If we are alert to know what our intentions are, it would be easier to seek the will of God without entangling with our personal interests. Our vital relationship with the Master, our configuration and discipleship with Him, is at stake at this level: in the interior, the heart – the center of our decisions. The secret then is to put what we do in our minds, our will, our heart, and our energy, in this way, there will be no room for complacency or spiritual and apostolic mediocrity.

In the spirit of St. Paul, this journeying in Christ requires a continuous passage from death to life, “a constant paschal dynamic: dying to things that hurt me, so as to enter into a fuller life, losing what truly does not build me up, so as to attain depth of life.

The attitudes of Jesus will gush forth in our interior to the extent that we accept to go beyond the narrow horizons of our interests. One sets aside the ‘I’ = egocentric selfishness and enters into the self-giving and lover of Christ; it is not utopia; it is the normal process of our Christification. We can never measure the happiness and fulfillment that such discipleship offers us. “I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (Jn. 10:10) Jesus is the Shepherd- Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, Who has come to free the sheep and give them life, His life as Son.

“I am the vine, you are the branches, who remains in Me and I in him, produces much fruit: they can do nothing without me” (Jn. 15). To incarnate Christ in our lives is to welcome and facilitate this presence of the resurrected Christ who lives in us, and living in Him is not a simple relationship of closeness, but a relationship of intimacy, of conformation. It deals with remaining in Him as He remains in us, because He abides in us. (cf. Jn 15) To remain in Jesus is an absolute necessity if we are to receive the vital sap and the fertility that comes from Him. Jesus is the true vine (faithful, coherent) who will never fail to give us life; He promised to give us abundant life and never cease to communicate this life.

But it is entrusted to the branch to bear fruit; this means that the Life of the Vine can only express itself in the branch. The life of Christ is expressed only through us; we are the visibility of Christ, His body, His heart, His hands. It is through our life that He manifests that He is alive and that He gives His life. The disciples can not be fruitful if they do not remain deeply attached to their Master. We can not be women communicating life, abundant life that comes from the Master if we are not spiritually and apostolically fruitful, in an intimate communion with the Lord.

“Likewise, the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness, because we do not know how to pray as we ought. The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans inexpressible in words, and that searches the hearts. He knows our aspiration and He intercedes for the saints according to God’s will”... “(Rom 8:26-27) Praying to God is to bring to the Father the inspirations that the Holy Spirit places in our hearts. Paul says that the Holy Spirit is always speaking to us; He is groaning within us ... he calls us continuously.

The protagonist of our conformation is the Son, Who through the Holy Spirit makes us similar to Him. We collaborate with His action by:

- A regular listening to Jesus which consists of the sanctification of our mind, through study and studiosity, assiduous meditation of the Word of God that will gradually conform in us the mind of the Master, His criteria, His views, His thoughts, His judgments.
- A contemplative gaze on the Master to allow ourselves to be formed by Him, that through his Spirit, desires to reproduce in us His attitudes, lifestyle, Jesus’ model of obedience to the Father, model of this intention.
- Acceptance of his living presence in us and remaining united to Him as the branch in the vine, habitual union with Christ-Teacher, nourished by the Eucharist and prayer.

For Fr. Alberione, all starts, grows and revolves in love. “Love the Lord with all mind, with all the will .... Habitual union with all the heart.” Fr. Alberione anticipated it saying: “this conformation is precisely in love.”

“That is why the Father loves me because I gave my life to take it again.” (Jn 10:17). Jesus hands over his life willingly. His is not a dying, but a realization of His very existence as a total gift of love: “love is stronger than death” (cf. Songs 8:6). To give up one’s life so as to receive it again. Jesus giving up his life, gets it back anew in fullness: He is equal as the Father not only because He knows how to love, but He also loves His brothers with His same love. In Him life becomes what it is: a living circularity of love, gift

received and given. For this, He is the Beloved Son, the perfect fulfillment of the Father's love.

The Holy Spirit is He who conforms us into the image of the Son, and makes us cry "Abba, Father". In exhorting us to acknowledge the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in our spiritual itinerary, Fr. Alberione invites us to create the best dispositions so that the Holy Spirit can work with us in full effect:

"Don't be sad, do not extinguish, nor stifle the Holy Spirit Who dwells in you" (St. Paul);

Faith as absolute and unconditional confidence in Him who is infinitely greater than all;

Hope in His fidelity, in His definitive triumph over evil which keeps us strong and safe in the midst of any difficulty, obscurity, problem, suffering;

The charity that makes us experience the tender and merciful love of Father, who did not hesitate in handing over His Son, Who awakened in us a continuing response of love and moves us to communicate it to our brothers and sisters.

The Good Shepherd came to heal our blindness on God and on ourselves, "its mud" wants us to come to light and make us born from above, water and the Spirit, to lead mankind today to the springs of life.

*PS. As conclusion, a powerpoint presentation on the Washing of the feet was shown.*

### **Attachment 3**

#### **INFORMATIVO N. 1**

*16 giugno 2009*

*We say  
Holy be Your name so that His name  
may be sanctified in us.*

*... He said:*

*You shall be holy, because I am holy (Lv 11,45)*

*Therefore we ask and implore  
that sanctified by Baptism we may persevere  
in what we have begun to be.*

*This is what we ask each day.*

*(From the Liturgy of the Hours, Tuesday, 3rd week in Ordinary Time)*

Dearest Sisters,

The Interchapter of our Congregation began on 15 June at 4.00 pm (Argentinean time) in unity of prayer and intentions around the table of the Lord. The solemn opening Eucharistic celebration was presided by His Excellency Mons. Sergio Fenoy, Bishop of San Miguel, Buenos Aires.

In the opening remarks, the Superior general Sr. Marta Finotelli, invited us to live this moment as a "*favourable time*" in deep communion with Jesus, dead and Risen, present in our life and in the life of all the Pastorelle who are accompanying us in the different parts of the world. Then referring to the Liturgy of the Word, she placed the accent on the paradox of the apostolic and spiritual life; the Lord leaves us poor, He leaves us in difficulties and precisely in these that His grace is manifested, His love shines: "*poor yet enriching many; as having nothing and yet possessing all things* (2Cor 6:10) says the Apostle Paul. Yet this happens if we allow God to work in our poverty.

In his homily, the Bishop also invited us to encounter the richness and grace of the Lord in our story of weakness because it is precisely there that Jesus Good Shepherd works great things. The Church and the Congregation could run the risk of believing in what is visible, the Lord instead invites us to a re-dimension our manner of being, not to trust in the exterior, in strength, in capacity or in methodology because He loves to manifest Himself intimately in the depth of the heart and not in what is visible and impressive.

Reunited in assembly, after having invoked the gift of the Holy Spirit and prayed the prayer from the pamphlet, an instrument to be united with all of you, Sr. Marta has officially declared the Interchapter session open, calling each participant by name.

In her introductory speech, she invited us to live these days, June 15-28, as a favourable time to revitalize our personal and congregational life and to help each other "*not to accept the grace of God in vain*" believing that the favourable moment in which the Good Shepherd listens to us, helps us, accompanies us is precisely now.

The hall prepared for the assembly has as its center the Cross, the Word of God, a small fountain to indicate the spring of life, the relic of the Founder and lots of flowers which represent each Pastorella in the world. Three round tables, called symbolically with the name of Peter, Paul and the Divine Shepherdess, were prepared in order to favor reflection and the group work.

Each one received the working material for these days placed in a bag, donated by the community of Bolivia, a handmade folder prepared by the

community of Salta ad other gifts, like a hand made penholder ad some didactic material offered by the principal house and the Delegation.

After having distributed the organizational tasks, we were recollected in prayer, remembering all the Sisters of the Congregation calling each one by name, praising the Lord for the life of each one. At the end, we were given a *piece of an Icon* which we will complete at the end of the Interchapter. It will be a surprise for all to know the subject of the Icon which will probably accompany us in the "*hereafter of the Interchapter*".

Today, 16 June is spirituality day in which we were invited to verify and to share our experiences of the evangelical service of authority; it was animated by Sr. Julieta Stoffel, Provincial Superior of the FSP on *Conformation to Christ*.

We thank with our heart all the Sisters and the communities who accompany us with prayer, offering and greetings.

Immersed in this hope of renewal and in communion with all the Pastorelle of the world, we have started this congregational event placing at the center the Word of God to enlighten us always and the Eucharist which gives us the strength and a guide to our journey.

For the Intercapitulars,  
*Sr Ana Acero e Sr Lucia Varo*

## **Attachment 4**

### **Report of the General Government In the 6<sup>th</sup> Interchapter Assembly**

*"I will bless the Lord at all times,  
his praise will be always on my lips"*  
(Psalm 33:2)

#### **Introduction**

I desire to start this evaluation of more than three years of journey after the 6<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, in an attitude of "*Blessing*". Yes, to bless the Lord of Life and History with you; to praise the Holy Trinity for everything that he worked in our Congregation for these years and for the gratuitous and absolute Love manifested to us in every circumstance. It is our salvation history

that we celebrate in this Intercapitular assembly! We entrust to Jesus our Good Shepherd the journey done in its "fall" and "rising" as it is in the Christian life.

While I praise and bless the Lord with you, I also ask his mercy on me and on each Pastorella for the incorrespondences to the many loving care bestowed on us and for all the omissions that blocked his work of Salvation toward the persons whom he entrusted to our pastoral ministry in every circumscriptions.

We live in the season of post modernity, a season marked by a vast and profound "crisis" which is more than the economic-financial crisis because it invests the most diverse and delicate field of the human life. This "difficult passage", undoubtedly, is also interrogating deeply our Congregation and each one of us. The great crisis which is affecting the Christian life and is also touching, for a long time by now, the religious life, and it is therefore placed in a more vast context of the world. While the crisis makes us feel vulnerable and helpless, it is also asking us our responsibility as believers and as consecrated persons who have chosen to witness the primacy of God and his Charity in this history that is and remains history of Salvation.

We are therefore called to see with the spirit of faith and hope this reality because in it the Lord continues to speak and to take care of his people. Our life and the life of our sisters, our communities and Circumscriptions is therefore questioned directly to rediscover and cultivate the gift of faith which always allows the primacy of the initiative of God, the only One who makes us read human history and our personal history with the eyes of the Risen One, eyes that are not confined in worldly logic, but aware that only God probe in profundity the reality and the interior of each human being.

We are grateful to the Lord for allowing us to celebrate our 6<sup>th</sup> Interchapter precisely in the "Pauline Year" which is about to end and the "Year for Priests" which is about to be declared by Pope Benedict XVI on 19 June 2009, in occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the Holy Cure of Ars. St. Paul the Apostle and St. John Maria Vianney were two great shepherds at the service of the flock of Christ; shepherds of whose life are to be studied and the style of "Pastoral care" to be imitated as our Founder, Blessed Alberione indicated to us many times.

We entrust to their intercession the course of our Interchapter, asking the grace to remain under the powerful guidance of the Holy Spirit who gives us new life in Christ and makes us capable of a *life of communion*, so as to seek together that which the Father asks to our religious family in the next future.

Before entering in the areas of the Programmation, I desire to remind the spirit with which we have worked as General government, since the start of our

mandate 2005-2011. We consider our service an “expression” of the ministry of pastoral care which is common to all Pastorelle and an invitation to treasure and to make mature the gift of vocation of each sister, with the consequent choice to accompany the singular Circumscription in a personalized manner, basing from the indications emerged in the 7GC<sup>2</sup>.

With this spirit we consider now the areas of the Programmation, on the light of the capitular objective<sup>3</sup> and of the common orientations as they were lived in the first triennium of the present mandate.

### **Life in Christ Shepherd (Area Style of Life)**

In the commitment assumed in the capitular event to revisit and to re-comprehend the roots of our faith to live in continuous conformation to Christ Shepherd, we favored a more profound reflection of new life received in Baptism. The rediscovery of the vital encounter with Christ, fundamental motive of our choice of life and of our apostolic commitment has as its aim to help us to find the identity of “risen persons” seeking to avoid the risk of living the new life with the mentality and behaviour of the old man<sup>4</sup>.

Aware that the new life received in Baptism is a dynamic paschal journey that involves persons and communities, we were guided by the desire to favor within our religious family, a greater *synergy*<sup>5</sup>, that would reinforce the sense of belonging, co-responsibility, communion and the sharing of gifts that God makes of our Congregation for a pastoral mission truly prophetic.

Regarding this, various initiatives were proposed: the memorial of baptism, remembering in prayer each sister on the anniversary of her baptism<sup>6</sup> revisiting the Christian vocation as foundation of the journey of religious life so as to center again one’s existence on Christ and not on the self-reference “I”; the re-reading of pastoral care on the light of the experience of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul through a continuous lectio on the Book of the Acts of the Apostles<sup>7</sup>, with the proposed Worksheet of prayer reflection during Lent and Advent. The proposals of retreat, spiritual exercises and communitarian encounters on the same theme, that would be of help so that nothing in us may be void of the influence of Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Orientamenti per la programmazione del sessennio 2005-2011*, Roma – Casa generalizia, 26 novembre 2005, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> “In continua *conformazione* a Cristo Pastore approfondiamo e riesprimiamo il ministero di *cura* pastorale per condurre l’umanità *oggi* alle fonti della Vita”.

<sup>4</sup> E’ in fondo tutto il percorso che il Fondatore propone con il *Donec Formetur*.

<sup>5</sup> Un’azione frutto delle energie congiunte di Dio e della persona umana in Cristo.

<sup>6</sup> Accanto al libretto dei compleanni si è elaborato un libretto dei battesimi e consegnato annualmente in tutte le comunità della Congregazione.

<sup>7</sup> E’ stato inviato in ogni comunità il fascicolo contenente il commento di p. Pino Stancari al libro degli Atti degli Apostoli durante il 7CG luglio 2005.



We have dedicated the 70<sup>th</sup> foundation of the Congregation<sup>8</sup> to holiness of life and elaborated a prayer to ask the gift of holiness. Some communities have assumed this prayer to be recited even in the next years and some Circumscriptions have opened the initiative to pray it with the Lay cooperators.

We noted that praying together creates bonds of communion and solidarity in the entire Congregation whether through the chain of prayer with the monthly intention for each Circumscription and for the Pauline Family or through the remembrance of birthdays and baptism anniversaries or through the daily thought of the Founder from the Agenda Paolina that we send to all the communities each year. Even the initiative of the nocturnal adoration each Saturday for the necessities of the Congregation and humanity of our time has received an enthusiastic adhesion.

The urgency of we being re-evangelized first has moved us to plan the canonical visits on the theme: *The encounter with Christ renews our pastoral care*". The visits, having a common theme drawn from the Word of God, from the Magisterium of the Church and of the Founder were carried out with different modalities; agreed upon, from time to time with the governments of Circumscription so as to harmonize the common theme with the rhythm and the journey of each local reality. We were able to share with each sister in the simplicity of the fraternal encounter the baptismal itinerary that has brought each one to live the free assimilation of the gift of faith so as to be always more a sister "of" Jesus Good Shepherd according to the heart of the Father in the pastoral vocation.

Many Circumscriptions have asked to be accompanied even through the courses of *guided spiritual exercises* that preceded or animated the same canonical visit. The spiritual exercises propose a course that helps to live the new life in ordinary life, unmasking the falsehood of the old man so as to live according to our true identity. They were favourable occasions to accompany more personally the individual sisters and the individual communities who participated. In our service of evangelical authority we experience the joy and the spiritual taste to visit the different Circumscriptions, participating at the hardships, projects, challenges and expectation of each one.

Through the brief visits, particularly in 2006, we tried to promote a healthy attitude to care the communication between the governments of Circumscription with the General government and communion within the group of government living the service as an opportunity of purification and growth in the coherence of life. This is also a manner of sharing with the sisters of the

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<sup>8</sup> Il 7 ottobre è stato preceduto da un triduo di preghiera vissuto in tutta la Congregazione (cf. Fascicolo: *Il triduo in preparazione al 70° di fondazione ottobre 2008*).

communities that which we lived first. Even the 2<sup>nd</sup> Enlarged general council was lived in this spirit. In order to promote the attitude of sharing the lived experience, in the CTN is published both the experience of the sisters of the General government and the singular group of government, by turn.

Even the usual letter: "*I write to you sisters*", fruit of the dialogue with the Lord in the light of the life of the Congregation, of the Church and the world, we desire to offer an encouragement to place greater attention on our conformation to Christ. A process that passes through the availability to say with life, in a manner always more evident and more clear, the foundational nucleus of the baptismal call which is for all Christians. At the same time, we want to help each other to enter together and always more in the dynamics of the Spirit, who alone can nourish our gaze of faith and make us understand how and where God speaks to us today.

It is the paschal gaze on the reality that makes us envision, even in the signs of death present in the Congregation, the bud of life that opens us to hope and stimulates us to reflect and to remember the essence of our vocation. St. Eusebius of Cesarea said that religious life is born for *excess of love to God*, and it is this "excess" that we are called to return in order to find gestures that speak of God and of His Kingdom even today.

At times in our style of life, we underline more the hardship to journey, to search, to discern together than the beauty of the Christian novelty as expression of the dignity of the person and communion among persons. We know that the two realities are related, on their own they are maim while together, they express the Gospel.

Unfortunately, we perceive a strong resistance to place ourselves in the hands of our sisters, as we have promised in religious profession, making fragile the grace of obedience and fraternal relations difficult forgetting that we are together for the motive of Christ. That weakens the sense of belonging and the availability to assume common services whether in formation or in the government of the Congregation. A certain pessimism often creeps in perhaps because of advancing age, of the lack of vocations, of illness that is always more frequent making us forget that being reduced or pruned, being small and poor can become an opportunity to make religious life more transparent, called to incarnate joy and a belonging different from that which is proposed by the world. To discover the joy which the Father experiences for us in the Son precisely because needy of salvation, is an always actual invitation. Our fragility and weakness entrusted to Him makes us touch with our hands his desire to place us also in a condition to savor fraternity in our communities and in the company of our contemporaries.

We experience at times, the difficulty to arrive at the sisters the material which we propose for the common journey. We underline the demand that she, who carries out the service of authority in the single Circumscriptions, motivates greatly the sisters to assume and to participate on what is proposed to the entire Congregation. Some sisters, for many years now, do not participate at congregational initiatives. This manifests a weakening of the sense of family, certain weariness in the commitments assumed with the choice of life and accentuates individualism that hinders and makes the common journey burdensome, aside from threatening vocational authenticity.

There are frequent requests of permission of absence from the religious community on the first difficulty of family members; it is also noted the facility with which one can absent herself from pastoral commitments in order to participate at gatherings of family or friends. Even these attitudes interrogate us on the necessity to remind ourselves to a greater sense of responsibility and equilibrium, verifying in dialogue with each sister the real and possible demands that are adapted.

With grateful heart to the Lord, we note that some sisters have learned to welcome the paschal mystery innate in the Christian vocation and are affronting more serenely ageing, illness and difficulty whether in the apostolate or in the family of origin. Some sisters have developed a beautiful pastoral vivacity that has to be sustained and encouraged until the end, accompanying them more closely.

A good number of sisters participate with joy and responsibility to the various congregational initiatives and they express gratitude toward the religious family for what they receive. We appreciate much the active participation of some sisters at the preparation to the Seminar on pastoral care, proposed through the Itinerary of Lectio divina through the Pauline letters, with the Worksheets sent in 2007-2008. We have always thought that the challenge for all of us is to find the courage to re-start each day, to give a new ardour on our fraternal and apostolic life so that what we announce is lived first of all by each one of us.

It gives hope the responsibility with which some sisters are committed in their spiritual journey and their attention to fraternal relationships, at times even paddling against the current so as to save the necessary spaces to maintain oneself spiritually alive and pastorally creative. The desire of holiness present in the heart of these sisters expresses a beautiful pastuality, it is in fact nourished also by a reflection and discernment on the contemporary ecclesial social context.

The worldly economic-financial crisis interrogates also our manner of living poverty and asks us to re-evaluate the attitude to always and immediately acquire that which is lacking, avoiding every discomfort and small deprivation, forgetting the difficulties lived by the common people. Our solidarity with the poor starts precisely in the sober and essential style of our very life.

It is noted the demand to boost in all the sisters an intercultural mentality, with a greater exchange of gifts, or resources, of persons available for the mission of common initiative. This increases also through a more frequent communication and a more open sensibility to consider the reality not only of one's own Circumscription but of the entire Congregation. On this objective, the constitution of international community and apostolic experiences in places different from one's origin is favoured.

### **Ministry of pastoral care (Area mission)**

In the different Circumscriptions it seems to us that the 7GC objective is substantially considered with the intention to deepen and understand always more the ministry of "pastoral care" and to be able to re-express it on the light of the orientations of Blessed Alberione. It is noted a commitment to re-own responsibly the precious charismatic heredity left to us by the Founder. A commitment that has to be accompanied greatly in the attempt to tread "new ways" in order to express our pastoral care in a world where it tends to live as if God does not exist. In the fraternal visits, we considered the urgency to interrogate ourselves seriously on our presence in the local Church, even on the light of the triple work for re-launching the pastoral mission starting from a more intense interior life that brings to "care of souls".

Before a worldly panorama where Christianity is no longer the dominant religion, in which challenges of sociological, psychological and spiritual nature is evidence, in which each nation is becoming more a mixture of identities and linguistic, cultural, ethnical and religious diversities, our Congregation is also strongly interpellated. It is therefore always more necessary, in each Circumscription, to place greater attention, on this reality with regards to the new requests of the Local Church, through an always more accurate and punctual common reflection in order to single out modality of presence that may be incisive specially on the line of evangelization and on the accompaniment of the faith.

In the evaluation of the "lines of action" proposed by the 7GC and applied in the different Circumscriptions, we observed that in almost all the sisters, the experience of the charism and the desire to live it remain alive in whatever situation and age. In dialogue, it was often stressed its validity and

the desire to be faithful to it. But it seems that it is still rather scarce the attitude of discernment in view of a renewed manner of expressing our pastoral vocation today. Often, the urgencies do not permit to give the necessary time to a common, attentive and creative reflection in the Spirit.

In the occasion of the closure and opening of community, it is observed, many times, a certain accuracy in following the criteria indicated in the Document Evangelical Service of Authority<sup>9</sup>; other times, instead, it seemed that in the Circumscription, a sufficient discernment has not been done and conditions to arrive at a serene choice and an adequate and complete communication with the General government is lacking.

The invitation to the research of pastoral “new ways”, in a vast vision and open to collaboration has found an echo in some Circumscriptions that are experimenting more significant and propositive forms in the ecclesial and social context in which they live. In some Circumscriptions, the process in singling out the “new ways” and their experimentation is delayed, perhaps because of advanced age in the greater number of the sisters, of fragile health, of the tendency to retreat from the apostolate and to concentrate oneself in one’s own situation. Often, energies are absorbed more by the urgencies than a far-sighted projectuality.

In accompanying the phases of the closure and opening of our apostolic presence, we asked to set a particular attention to “ad experimentum” opening, as a space to better verify the insertion before assuming it. It was suggested to favour significant experiences, more qualified presence in the field of migration, development and experimentation of our groups of Lay cooperators, in expectation at having clear indications regarding the Statute of the Association of Pauline Cooperators in the Pauline Family.<sup>10</sup>

The new *ad experimentum* opening in the different Circumscriptions<sup>11</sup> have as its aim precisely that of experimenting new pastoral expressions which will then be reflected upon in the General Chapter. In some of them, an evaluation has already been done and there is an orientation to elaborate a Contract with the Diocese; others instead are still on the way of experimentation. Possible observations can be found in the report prepared by the government of Circumscription.

The experimentation desired by the 7GC<sup>12</sup>, with the objective to offer a contribution to the reflection-action of “pastoral care” was considered in each

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<sup>9</sup> SEA, Manuale per le superiori consegnato al 7CG 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Il nuovo Statuto dei Cooperatori Paolini è in fase di elaborazione attraverso una commissione intercongregazionale.

<sup>11</sup> In questo triennio si sono aperte cinque nuove comunità: Perquenco (CI-PE), Campo Belo e Londrina (BR-CdS-Uruguay), Barletta (ICS-Albania), Modena (ICN-Mozambico).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Atti 7CG p. 274.

Circumscription in different ways and means. It can be a useful material for our forthcoming Seminar. In occasion of the canonical visits, we have invited to evaluate which aspect of the “triple work”<sup>13</sup> is the Circumscription giving an accent.

The pastoral spirit continues to favor commitment even our elderly and sick sisters. We have seen sisters with advanced age who continue to donate themselves with joy and generosity. It was facilitated a greater involvement of these sisters through apostolic commitment done in prayer and offering, giving them the joy and the possibility to accompany more closely the journey of the entire Congregation.

Through the brief, fraternal, finalized and canonical visits, the feedbacks to the letter of the Superior general, the information-formation with the institutional website and the CTN, personal colloquies, we noted the desire to live a true spirituality of communion, an always new revisiting to the roots of our Christian life and our pastoral vocation.

Even through some instruments<sup>14</sup> sent these years, it was willed to promote a more profound interiorization of the Word of God so as to favor evangelization in a more adequate language to the recipients of our mission.

While there is an increased awareness of being depositaries of a precious charism of pastoral care characterized by a strong spirituality, the journey we are doing toward the actualization of the Seminar on pastoral care, in view of a new apostolic thrust that responds to the challenges of the present society needy of God is also of help to us. Beginning from the analysis of the situation and allowing ourselves be enlightened by the Holy Spirit, our mission as mothers and sisters in the faith could evolve qualitatively aiming at a ministry of personal accompaniment which offers to the people of God welcoming, listening, guide, orientation, help in the search of the Lord and the truth of themselves.

Moreover, the re-discovery of the contemplative dimension of our charism<sup>15</sup> can sustain in the Christian communities a more incisive pastoral, capable of facilitating the work of God, and not only to promote activities. Our style of presence has to help greatly the pastoral workers to privilege that which forms Christian adults in the faith, mature in charity and solid in hope. On this proposal, some of our religious communities could become places

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<sup>13</sup> Istruzione, formazione e santificazione cristiana.

<sup>14</sup> Schede sugli Atti degli Apostoli in avvento e quaresima; Lectio divina in preparazione al Seminario sulla “cura pastorale” (cinque schede); le novene in occasione delle ricorrenze congregazionali, ecc...

<sup>15</sup> PrP III, 1948, p. 201: “*La redenzione è il fine della vita pastorale di Gesù, è il fine costitutivo della missione della Pastorella. Gesù venne sulla terra ma rimase nel seno del Padre; la Pastorella deve essere sempre in Chiesa e sempre in mezzo alla gente. La vita più unita a Dio e la vita più attiva per le anime con libertà di spirito. La vita più contemplativa con la vita più attiva: questo è il punto più difficile ma costitutivo della missione della Pastorella*”.

where it offers greatly spaces of prayer, silence, reflection, listening to the Word and pastoral discernment.

For some Circumscriptions, it is necessary to arrive at constituting “community of witnessing”, in which sisters, by now having grown old, can offer prevalently an evangelization which passes through the sign of their life consumed for the Lord and for the salvation of persons.

This will demand greater courage to re-evaluate apostolic insertions, to retreat from some places and favor new insertions. We hope that the Seminar on pastoral care could give a good contribution for the development of apostolic ministry, both on an attentive listening to the reality in the creativity of the Spirit and in orienting ourselves decisively toward new forms of presence that express our “care of souls”.

In many occasions, Bishops, priests and laity have expressed esteem toward our charism which is perceived very relevant and necessary in the Church. Regarding pastoral collaboration however, we have invited the sisters to place themselves in a sapiential evangelical manner in rapport with the pastors of the Church, persons, ecclesial movements and various groups to favour communion among the different ecclesial expressions.

Regarding the missionary opening entrusted to the different Circumscriptions, a greater solidarity is necessary to sustain the actual insertions and eventually promote other openings. Among these, particular attention could be Vietnam<sup>16</sup>, Ecuador<sup>17</sup> and China.

While on the other hand we notice a greater attention on the common journey of the Congregation in conformation to Christ and in giving more quality and efficacy on our “care of souls”, we seem rather difficult a wise reading of the changes of humanity of today and rather slow the elaboration of an evangelizing proposal more respondent to the present reality.

We accentuate two important facts on which observation would need our attention and wise pastoral discernment: the culture of the *communication media*: media always have a greater role. We notice that it cannot only emphasize and narrate, but it also ignores and removes. It builds events making communication the decisive weapon to produce and not only to narrate a fact. Besides, a specific difficulty is added on the communication of religious and ecclesial themes<sup>18</sup>. A new awareness of the media question is

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<sup>16</sup> Nella visita breve all'Asia-Oceania si è affidato l'incarico di sondare la possibilità di una apertura comune alle PI e alla K.

<sup>17</sup> Come possibile apertura in solido da parte delle Delegazioni di lingua spagnola.

<sup>18</sup> Il disagio verso i media è così sintetizzato dal cardinale e teologo A. Dulles: “*Rispetto al messaggio di fede i media privilegiano lo spettacolo; rispetto alla tradizione privilegiano le novità; rispetto ai beni spirituali privilegiano i fenomeni tangibili; rispetto alla struttura ecclesiale privilegiano la democrazia liberale; rispetto al magistero privilegiano il dissidente; rispetto alla complessità teologica la banalità comunicativa*”.

emerging as bringer of new culture<sup>19</sup>; the very concepts of space and time are more and more being modified<sup>20</sup>, but in the root is observed the danger of separating information from conscience, news from judgment, narration from the collective ethos.

The other fact is the *Synod of Bishops on the Word of God* which reminded the centrality of the Scriptures for the Christian life. This asks an approach to a rigorous time and on the other spiritual and existential, the ability to adapt vitally the biblical tradition to the historical-social contexts: all this seems to cut out a central and congenial role proper to the consecrated life. In our communities, when we proceed with the *Lectio divina*, the seriousness in reading, the effort to translate in life what one reads, notwithstanding our limitations, contradictions and sins, our consecrated life is perceived by the Church as an alive interpretation and a spiritual reading of the evangelical words of Jesus. The Christian following marked by the religious vows constitutes in fact a sort of ecclesial hermeneutics of what Christ has done and suffered and of the life that He and Mary his Mother have embraced. Could the form of evangelical life that we witness as consecrated not signify what the Church is searching for its future?

### **Vocational pastoral and formation (Area formation)**

We are grateful to Jesus Good Shepherd who continues on calling young ladies to our Religious Family, nevertheless the quality of our formative proposal, its solidity on the theological, ascetic, spiritual levels and the educational incisiveness of our personal and community style of life strongly interrogate us. The frequent desertion in the period of initial formation confirm not only the fragility and inconsistencies of the new generations, but also our poverty, incoherencies and inadequacies in the continuous formation.

During the 7GC, the new General Plan of Formation and Studies<sup>21</sup> was presented and distributed. All the Circumscriptions have started to apply it and adopted it to their realities taking care of its translation in Portuguese, Spanish and Korean languages. The translation in English is still in elaboration. In the orientations of the sexennial<sup>22</sup> there was an invitation to study the fundamental contents of the GPF and to plan the studies through a formative project that

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<sup>19</sup> Direttorio sulle comunicazione sociali nella missione della Chiesa, 2004, n. 11: «Possiamo dire che i media sono portatori di una nuova cultura nella misura in cui le loro modalità di funzionamento [...] portano a mutare il tradizionale rapporto con la realtà e con gli altri uomini e a far valere nuovi paradigmi e modelli di esistenza».

<sup>20</sup> Direttorio sulle comunicazione sociali nella missione della Chiesa, 2004, n. 170: «Più che uno strumento, lo spazio virtuale è un nuovo contesto. Stanno cambiando i concetti di spazio e di tempo. È vero che la multimedialità esisteva prima dell'avvento delle nuove tecnologie, ma oggi è attuata in modo nuovo enfatizzandone il rilievo sociale».

<sup>21</sup> PGF 2005

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Orientamenti per la programmazione del sessennio 2005-2011, p. 9.



guarantees a deep and solid doctrinal and theological preparation drawing from the Word of God, from the Tradition of the Church<sup>23</sup> and the charismatic patrimony. To this intention we are questioning on the application to conjugate better in formation a solid spirituality to a more qualified intellectual preparation.<sup>24</sup>

In these years, the community Study/Charism of Traversari has welcomed and accompanied with care the student-sisters of the Course on the Charism of the PF. The international living is revealing a wealth both for the deepening of our charism through the final work of every student and for the experience of fraternity that nourishes the sense of belonging to a single family. The Course is currently an object of reflection of the General governments of the PF in view of improving the contents and its modalities so that it may respond always better to the demands of the participants.

Beginning from the objective and from the "lines of action" of the 7GC<sup>25</sup> we have encouraged the Circumscriptions to maintain alive the attention to the vocational pastoral. As foreseen in the Orientations for the programming, some Circumscriptions have destined full time sisters for the vocational accompaniment or sisters have been qualified for the initial formation.

We have noticed that in all the Circumscriptions, the commitment in the pastoral vocational through projects and fitting initiatives to better accompany the young ones in search continues.

The collaboration among the different Circumscriptions for a more adequate response to the demands of formation has grown. The two Italian provinces have worked together in the Pastoral Vocational and initial formation; the Brazilians have elaborated a formative project common to the two provinces; the Delegations of Spanish language have constituted a single novitiate at Bogotá. Also for the Juniorate, especially in the Orient, formative initiatives are done among the Circumscriptions. Some Korean juniors, in fact, are sent in the Philippines for pastoral experience during their itinerary of preparation to the perpetual profession.

Initially inevitable difficulties were observed because of cultural differences, but these were also positive elements for the formative journey of the formanda.

The collaboration among the different Circumscriptions promotes internationality, enriches the cultures, widens the pastoral horizons and

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<sup>23</sup> In particolare una conoscenza maggiore dei Padri della Chiesa e per chi ne ha le condizioni anche con lo studio delle lingue bibliche.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Atti 7CG, p. 296.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Atti 7CG, p. 275.

promotes a stronger sense of belonging to the whole Congregation. It is certainly a beautiful testimony that gives us hope for the future.

It is in prospect the possibility for some young juniors to undergo apostolic experiences in some Italian communities, while waiting for the International course of immediate preparation to the perpetual profession, which will take place in Rome in April-June 2010.

It was observed the necessity to give more attention to the formation in the Juniorate because of the tendency of neglecting the decisive importance of this level, not keeping in mind of the risk of activism and internal dispersion<sup>26</sup>. If we want formation to be solid, it is necessary besides, that each one has to be more and more responsible of the continuity of her own formation, keeping in mind that this attitude is also one of the criteria for the admission to the perpetual profession. It could also be useful that in the first years of perpetual profession, a systematic accompaniment on spiritual and pastoral level is offered.

Also in the brief and finalized visits, it was reflected together the necessity that every group of government, as recalled often, provides a permanent formation that helps the sisters mature and grow in years in a wise and prolific manner. In different occasions we have guided meetings of formation for formators and superiors of communities, to help them carry out their task of animation and accompaniment under the guidance of the Spirit. The young ones in formation were also personally met and where it was possible, even as a group, to know each one and to assess more directly the consistence of their calling to our Religious family.

In line with the formative commitment of our Congregation we also feel the urgency to train ourselves to accompany in the faith the journey of so many Christians who are in difficulty and risk of abandoning the Church. It is necessary, in this intention, to prepare the new generations of Pastorelle so that they may know how to give valid responses to the new challenges of evangelization. And at the same time, to continue to offer a more intense accompaniment to the sisters dedicated in the initial and permanent formation.

One of the formative assignments entrusted to the General Government by the 7GC is to promote the deepening of the "ministry of pastoral care" and to organize an International Seminar to maintain the charism alive, to be able to re-express it in the actual context and to transmit it to the new generations.

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<sup>26</sup> *"Il peccato più grave è quello di mandare le giovani immediatamente dopo la prima professione, nelle attività apostoliche senza continuare la formazione, sovraccaricandole di lavoro e di responsabilità per le quali non sono preparate sufficientemente, oppure impegnandole in uno studio assorbente e tale da non lasciare il tempo per coltivare con la dovuta intensità il rapporto con Dio e la vita di comunità. Capita di frequente allora che il giovane si lasci assorbire dallo studio o dall'attivismo, perdendo di livello in altri aspetti essenziali fino a cadere in una specie di anemia spirituale"* Carlos Palmes, CLAR 3, 2007, p. 62.

At the beginning we have consulted Mons. Lorenzo Chiarinelli, Bishop of Viterbo and Fr. Giacomo Morandi, biblical scholar, who have directed us to the first steps to be done through some Lectio<sup>27</sup>. Communities were invited to send their contribution to the secretaries of their own Circumscriptions, while other sisters were asked to send directly to the Superior General the personal responses. We collated what we received and made a synthesis for every worksheet. The collated material will be studied by the Commission and be utilized in the Seminar.

In fact, the immediate preparation to the Seminar will be realized with the help of a small Commission of sisters to which will also be asked the preparation of the 8GC. Fr Giancarlo Rocca, ssp is also helping us in this first phase. More detailed information will be given in the course of the Interchapter.

We have encouraged the Circumscriptions to send sisters for the Course of Formation on the Charism of the Pauline Family. The participants in this course have the possibility to go to the sources of one's own charismatic identity and to acquire a global vision of being a Pauline Family in the unity and complementarity of the various charisms. In these three years, some Circumscriptions have given a positive response to this invitation.

In the last meetings of the General Governments of Pauline Family, starting from the theme "*The youth and the Pauline charism*" and considering the specificity of the Pauline formation, a comparative study was attained on what Don Giacomo Alberione said to the single Institutes of the Pauline Family, from which common essential principles have been enucleated. In the XXVI Encounter of the General Governments the *common formation guidelines* and a text of synthesis has been elaborated: "*The Pauline formation: for a point of common departure*". The said text will constitute the premise to the formative Projects of the single Pauline Congregation.

## **Evangelical Service of authority and administration (Area government)**

*"In the heart of one who listens, the Word penetrates more gladly accredited by the life of the one who proclaims it."*<sup>28</sup> In giving the orientations as group of government, we were committed to live it first, notwithstanding our limitation, to be able to animate with love and credibility the Congregation. The initiative to remember before the Eucharistic Jesus every Pastorella, calling her by name, during the particular feasts of the Congregation and the liturgical year, is a privileged way which we have assumed in accompanying in the

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<sup>27</sup> Per questo abbiamo chiesto a don Morandi di prepararci 5 schede per un itinerario sulle lettere paoline.

<sup>28</sup> Regola Pastorale di S. Gregorio Magno, parte II, c. III.

Lord the journey of each one and to ask also the intercession of our sisters who already form the community in Heaven.

We have chosen, since the beginning of our mandate, the Pauline text Eph 3:12-17, in which we have drawn the style to live the relationships within our community and the service entrusted to us. Above all, around the Word and the Eucharist, we wanted to create unity and communion among us and with all the sisters of the Congregation.

The method used has been to experiment in our small group what we would have then proposed in the fraternal visits, drawing from the wisdom of the Fathers who said: *"I have never taught what I myself have not practiced"* <sup>29</sup>.

We have not even wanted to program everything at the beginning of our service to be able to remain more open to the Spirit and to accompany more closely the journey of every Circumscription, considering its life and respecting its process in action. For this reason, brief visits have been done that gave us the possibility, through first contact, to know the sisters, the communities, the various situations of every Circumscription. Subsequently, in the canonical visits, although adopting a common journey, we have adopted the proposal according to the demands of the journey of the single Provinces and Delegations, enriching them according to the necessities and the requests of the Circumscriptions. We were animated by the search to live true, transparent, and constructive relationships among us and with all the sisters even in those situations where dialogue was more difficult.

To favour a better collaboration, participation and co-responsibility among governments, some encounters both intercircumscriptional and circumscriptional were done, treating matters and analyzing situations in climate of reflection and discernment. In the canonical visits effectuated until now, in almost all the Circumscriptions <sup>30</sup>, meetings with the superiors of communities were done reviving the evangelical sense of the service of authority to which they were called. Even the Enlarged Council celebrated in October 2007, confirmed a precious moment of sharing and formation for all the responsible of government. Invited to be *"sentinels of hope"* <sup>31</sup>, to bring our small stone in the great ecclesial mosaic, we gaze at our ministry of pastoral care toward the sisters, the communities and today's humanity, in an always new return to the Gospel, encouraged to live giving precedence to charity, to benevolence, to non suspicion, to the growth of a conscience of communion in the novelty of the Spirit.

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<sup>29</sup> Detti e fatti dei Padri del deserto, Rusconi, p. 44.

<sup>30</sup> Mancano ancora le visite canoniche alle province BR-SP Gabon e ICN-Mozambico. Per via della sperimentazione si effettuerà la visita in AUS solo nel 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Atti del 2° Consiglio generale Allargato, ottobre 2007.

It is undergoing, *ad experimentum*, the journey of unification of the two Circumscriptions Philippines-Saipan and Australia. A Statute that is on experimentation was elaborated. In 2010, a global evaluation of the experimentation will be done. Though there were some initial hesitation to the novelty of the experience and the cultural differences, mutual knowledge that opens to hope for a future of deeper communion and integration is growing.

In different occasions we have also encouraged and supported initiatives that favor internationality and the exchange of persons and resources among Circumscriptions. In this perspective we are grateful toward the sisters who have asked or welcomed the missionary mandate. We have also ascertained a growth in sensibility regarding the Solidarity fund. As regards to the offerings of benefactors and the sharing with the poor, we have suggested some criteria so that in every Circumscription, the aid may be distributed to families and the needy persons without creating dependency or expectation on the part of the poor.

Each government of Circumscription has been invited to re-examine the contracts to adjust them to the new demands of the Congregation, of the parishes and of the respective Dioceses.

The weeks of study which we have done each year as group of government has given us the possibility to deepen various themes<sup>32</sup> regarding our mission as guide of the Congregation. We hold in fact very important for our service devoting to study together some themes that concern the life of the Congregation, of the Church, of the world with a specific gaze on the journey of the religious life.

Along this line, it has been enriching the experience of the encounters of the General governments of the Pauline Family. The encounters allowed us to tackle themes common to the life and Pauline apostolic mission and in deepening the sense of belonging to the same Family. In the Pauline year, there have been a lot of opportunities to know the Apostle of the Gentile and to appreciate the gift of having him as inspirer and protector. One of us has participated in the International Seminar on the Apostle Paul organized by our Pauline brothers last April 2009. A synthesis, which is held important for our pastoral spirituality will be presented in this seat.

As required by the 7GC, the official Logo of the Congregation has been elaborated. By now, it is used by all the Circumscriptions since the 2<sup>nd</sup> Enlarged general council<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Nel 2006: I fondamenti del servizio evangelico dell'autorità nella RdV; nel 2007: Preparazione del tema e modalità per effettuare le visite canoniche; 2008: Rapporto tra obbedienza e autorità; 2009: Preparazione del 6° Intercapitolo e Seminario sulla "cura d'anime".

<sup>33</sup> 2CGA svolto a Tor San Lorenzo (RM) dal 7 al 16 ottobre 2007

On the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> year of Foundation we wanted to make memory of our dead sisters dedicating them the book: *"Journey of holiness of life: our living sisters in the house of the Father."*

The journey of Postulation continues for the recognition of the virtues of Sr. Elisabetta Franchi and at the same time, the research of making better known the other first sisters, whom the Lord called to reward, continues. On the Website and on the CTN their presentations are published regularly.

To facilitate the commitment on the economic-administrative sphere, the Economic Rule<sup>34</sup> was elaborated and distributed to the Treasurers and responsables of government. Although it is perceived the effort of all the Circumscriptions to apply the directives of the sexennial in progress, the dispositions of the Rule of Life and the orientations of the General government were not always followed in this field. In some occasions, difficulties in the economic-administrative sector have brought us to intensify prayer and reflection, to seek dialogue with the interested persons and to avail some consultation with experts in the administrative and juridical field. The problems encountered have favored in us, a greater trust in the Lord in the unity of intention and have invited us to live relationships in a more evangelical way, always striving to distinguish the persons from their actions, in the awareness that persons are always welcomed, loved, respected even when it is necessary to reprimand them. The encountered difficulties have taught us and have made us experienced the support of prayer of different persons.

Each Circumscription, after having experimented the GEP<sup>35</sup>, has given suggestions for the definitive draft. The collated observations will be subsequently presented to you. The final elaboration of the document which will be distributed at the 8GC, will be taken care by the General government assisted by the General Economic Commission<sup>36</sup>.

It gives hope to ascertain, in the heart of so many Pastorelle, the desire for a style of religious life truly evangelical, more sober, more rooted in Christ and in his Word. This is leading some sisters to strengthen their relationship with the Lord, to live fraternal relationships authentically and to give themselves to the people of God making the life of the Risen Christ visible. They are sisters who could open the journey for the future for our Congregation and for the religious apostolic life, in the measure in which they will allow themselves to be transformed more and more by the Word listened and welcomed. It is the task of the responsible of Circumscription to accompany with dialogue these sisters

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<sup>34</sup> Consegnato nel 2CGA 2007.

<sup>35</sup> Progetto Economico Generale consegnato durante il 7CG.

<sup>36</sup> La CEG è la stessa che ha lavorato per la stesura del documento sperimentato.

so as to bear fruits for the benefit of our Religious Family and in the pastoral service.

We are grateful to the Lord to have attained, after so much research, the purchase of the new Generalate and now, we are waiting for its restructuring. We thank the Circumscriptions that have contributed to this work which is at the service of each one. In this seat, more detailed information will be given regarding this matter.

## A gaze on the statistics of the Congregation as of 31 May 2009

<i>Circ</i>	<i>Asp.</i>	<i>Post.</i>	<i>Nov.</i>	<i>PT</i>	<i>PP</i>	<i>Total prof</i>	<i>Età med.</i>	<i>com.</i>	<i>Def<sup>37</sup></i>
ARG-BO	-	2	1	5	16	21	49,00	5	2
BR-CdS	3	-	-	2	66	68	62,15	19	4
BR-SP	2	-	3	3	57	60	59,90	16	5
CI-PE	1	1	-	4	14	18	48,60	4	-
COVEME	3	1	1	3	32	35	48,60	9	1
K	1	1	1	6	18	24	41,67	6	1
PI-AU-SA	1	-	5	9	57	66	52,48	15	-
ICN	4	-	-	-	132	132	69,29	27	20
ICS	2	1	-	-	129	129	69,56	25	23
DGG	-	-	-	-	1	1	65,00	-	-
GG	-	-	-	-	7	7	55,14	2	-
<b>Totale</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>61,47</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>67</b>

### In conclusion

The essential picture that we have delineated asks us, above all to keep watch on the loss of meaning of our choice of life, loss of the serious consequences both for us and for the recipients of our mission. A risk that is not remote is that we experience the recurring temptation of “softening” the demands of our belonging to Christ. In this situation, unfortunately, the cultural context and the current mentality are not helping us.

<sup>37</sup> Le professe decedute prima della suddivisione in province: Italia 6; Brasile 2; prima dell’Unificazione: Australia: 3.

Our choice of life is certainly more important than the singular ministries in which we are engaged, for this the effort to persevere in the care of our religious life is fundamental. We ask ourselves: Which new horizon and precise direction does God want to give us in our life as Pastorelle? Which attentions and strategies to give quality and unity to our life? Which wisdom is asked of us so as to live the pastoral mission today, in this history, to be able to give to our contemporaries reasons of full life and care of the same life?

Let's ask ourselves if we are also in a condition to perceive and to decipher the meaning of what is happening today. The serious emerging problems: a progressive de-christianization, the more and more evident alienation or persecution of Christians, the movements in action of entire populations, the xenophobic laws on immigration, the climatic change with the consequent destruction of the planet, the globalization that cancels or exasperates identities, cultural fragmentation more and more competitive and conflicting and the very same economic crisis (what I have quoted at the beginning), how do they solicit our pastoral responsibility?

In interrogating ourselves together, often not easy and in suffering, the aid and comfort the Word of God comes to us, the certainty of his care for us: "Wisdom gave the holy ones the recompense of their labours; conducted them by a wondrous road, and became a shelter for them by day and a starry flame by night" (Wis. 10:17). For this we abound in joy amidst tribulations and we trust that in his mercy, the Lord Jesus, our Good Shepherd, continue to make use of our weakness and of our surrender to complete his work.

Therefore we set ourselves with trust to evaluate the journey accomplished in these three years, and to discern together the journey of the next years until the 8GC, invoking persistently the gift of the Spirit on our assembly. We can confidently count on the prayer of our sisters and on so many other persons who will also accompany us with the offering of some sacrifices for the good outcome of our work.

May Mary, Mother of the Divine Shepherd and the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul to whom the month of June is dedicated, intercede for us the abundance of the gifts of the Spirit and sustain us with their testimony.

*Sr Marta Finotelli  
and sisters of the General government*

S. Miguel – Buenos Aires 17 June 2009



**“COMMUNICATION” IN THE “PASTORAL CARE”  
IN THE LIGHT OF THE APOSTLE PAUL**

Fr. Valdir José De Castro, SSP

18 June 2009

The Apostle Paul is always the point of reference in the Church when communication is the theme. He tried to bring the Gospel to all peoples with all the means of communication available during his time. With his testimony, he shows that without communication there is no spiritual life, there is no revelation of God, there is no opening of man to God, there is no human relation, there is no “pastoral care”. In fact, the quality of our spiritual, communitarian, social and pastoral life depends greatly on the quality of our communication.

Without the pretence to exhaust the theme, we will try to deepen communication in the pastoral care taking into consideration the form of the being and the works of St. Paul, starting from the information which we find in his letters. There are some points which help us verify our communication and perhaps, to add new initiatives to our pastoral work.

**1. Communication: a fundamental human experience**

The term “communication” has a wide comprehension, which goes from direct interpersonal relationship to the reference of the communication mediated by the technical instruments. All the forms of communications converge in the finality to bring the persons closer to one another and to reduce time and distance.

The meaning of “communication” is found in the term itself. The first sense, from Latin, dates back to the twelfth century (1160) refers to the idea of communion, of sharing. From the sixteenth century onwards, it came to be understood as “diffusion” of ideas, developed in various forms and diverse levels, with the help of technical means of communication<sup>38</sup>. It is connected with the technical development, starting first among them, printing. To communicate is to diffuse through writings, books, periodicals, then through telephone, radio, theatres, then finally through television and informatics. Without forgetting the train, the automobiles, the airplane, physical technologies which had a fundamental complementary role.

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<sup>38</sup> WOLTON, Dominique. *Pensar la Comunicación*, Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2007, p. 42.

The means of communication are not isolated phenomena in the social context. They form part of the culture in which we live and they generate explosion of creativity which brings information to all angles of the planet. Nevertheless, we should not forget that communication is above all a fundamental human experience and in spite of the extraordinary development of technology, there is no ascertained great progress in the quality of communication. In an era marked with the technical and digital instruments, direct contact with persons which is expressed especially in "dialogue", continues to be a challenge.

The term "communication" has become a fashion, but almost no one knows what it means to communicate. It is a word which, in certain measure, has lost its sense of "communion". We do not mean to say that today communication with quality does not exist, rather the excessive communication, especially those produced by the technical instruments, many times generate "incommunicability".

Dominique Wolton challenges us with the question: How do we save the unity of communication when its instrumental dimension prevails?"<sup>39</sup>. It does not deal of seeing a danger in instrumental communication. The author desires to provoke a debate. He insists that expressing oneself, talking with the other and sharing with him, is what defines being human. Naturally these could be done also through the technical apparatus, as the case of an interactive videoconference or through a cellular phone. Nevertheless, the direct personal contact continues to be the privileged form of communication.

Whether with the direct means or with technical instruments, communication is the means for entering into a relationship with the other which is the horizon, that is, what we all desire and fear at the same time, because going close to the other is never easy. It is only communication which permits us to manage this ambivalent relationship among one another and with others.

In the contact with his fellows, the human being can communicate at various levels for varied motives, with the great number of persons in multiple forms. Just considering our everyday life, from the moment we wake up till we go to sleep at night. Communication is realized in diverse forms: with oneself, with gestures, orally, through the means of mass media, etc.

Communication is not a magical act, but a process. Above all it has its source, that is, a person or group of persons with an objective and a reason for putting themselves in communication with someone whom we call receiver. Once there is a source, with his ideas, needs, intentions, information, and an

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<sup>39</sup> WOLTON, Dominique. *Pensar la comunicaci3n*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2007, p. 23.

intention to communicate, it is necessary to have another component, or rather the point of the source should be expressed in the form of a message. In human communication a message can be considered as a physical conduct: translation of ideas, proposals and intentions in a code, together with systematic symbols. Another element is the channel which is the means of bringing the message<sup>40</sup>. The effectiveness of communication will depend upon many factors. One of these is "noise", or rather some signal not desirable which impedes the receiver of the message to interpret it as he desires.

Aside from the process described in a very synthetic way, we can also talk of positive and negative communication.<sup>41</sup>, which is the result of human quality of the person who enters in relationship. The following data are fundamental elements for a positive communication: emotional balance and security, self knowledge, self criticism, capacity to resolve personal conflicts and interior freedom, types of values which motivate one's existence and the identification with the ideals of the group that one belongs.

Communication is positive when the interaction improves the relationship and the individuals who relate; when they feel minimally gratified and satisfied in their fundamental need of affection, of understanding, of acceptance; when they can express their sentiments spontaneously and with freedom, when there is no excessive difficulty integrating the differences and when the inevitable conflicts are overcome, when the group as such reaches their objectives and ideals, etc.

On the contrary, communication results to be negative: they deny or limit affection, insensibility and individualism prevail, the members of the group do not dedicate their time, when the members do not have the device to overcome the personal or group blocks, or they lack the resources to resolve their conflicts, etc.

Pastoral care requires the development of communication in all aspects. The Apostle Paul, in spite of his personal limitations and other exterior difficulties has been a man of communication remarkably positive. His letters reveal a missionary who knew how to value human relationships and create a series of communication as a means to bring the Gospel to a great number of persons. Therefore, what is the profile of Paul as communicator? What does he propose to us for a good communication in the pastoral care? What were the contents and the motives of his communication? What were the means and strategies he used in order to reach persons?

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<sup>40</sup> BERLO, David K. *El proceso de la comunicación. Introducción a la teoría y a la práctica*. Buenos Aires: Editorial El Ateneo, 2004, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> ROMERO, Pedro. *Comunicación y vida comunitaria. Cuestiones psicosociales y posibilidades*. Madrid: San Pablo. 1997, p. 25.

## 2. The style of life of Paul of Tarsus

In the last two thousand years of history, many persons, more than the practice of piety, made Christian life a style of life. Among these, there was the Apostle Paul, who found the reason of his existence in the following of Jesus. He embraced Christianity freely not as a form of entering in the “spiritual realities” in order to escape from the concrete problems of life but to search for the response to real situations of persons and communities.

An opportunity appeared in his life and Paul gives a new sense in his story. He embraced Christianity as a “way of being”. He assumed a mission pushed by an indescribable passion for the person and the message of Jesus. He lived a profound spirituality which gave sense to his way of being and doing.

The Apostle Paul was born around the year 10 during the Christian era in Tarsus, the capital of Silicia, in Asia Minor, a big city during that era, with a population of approximately three thousand<sup>42</sup>. He was influenced by two cultures: Judaism and Hellenism. A Jewish origin, both in race and religion, belonging to the community of the diaspora, in contact with a Greek surroundings from which he assumed the language and many elements which has marked his life and his thoughts.

Before he embraced Christianity, Paul was a passionate supporter of the tradition of the Hebrew people. He was irreproachable in carrying out the law. He was educated in Jerusalem by Gamaliel, one of the great rabbis of his time. Due to his Jewish solid formation, he was a great adversary of Jesus and His disciples. He was present during the stoning (martyrdom) of Stephen, the first Christian martyr.

Around the year 36 of the Christian era, Paul went through a profound transformation. He had an unprecedented encounter which had changed the direction of his life, which oriented him to a new project. While he was going toward the city of Damascus to put in prison the followers of Christ, he had an extraordinary experience, an encounter with Jesus which generated a radical change in his story<sup>43</sup>. From a persecutor he became one of the most faithful disciples.

This transformation that Paul lived was so radical which led him to put at the second level all that which he had learned until that time<sup>44</sup>. He felt very much as an “apostle”, or “sent”, as all the other apostles who had known Jesus

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<sup>42</sup> BARBARGLIO, Giuseppe. *Pablo de Tarso y los orígenes cristianos*. Sígueme: Salamanca, 1989, p. 33.

<sup>43</sup> At 9,1-25.

<sup>44</sup> Phil 3,7.

personally<sup>45</sup>. Paul did not change his religion, even if he had to rethink on many things. He had to see many of his conceptions on God, on man and on the world. Aside from these, he did not consider Christianity as a new religion, different from Judaism, but it is its continuation where new elements are to be added. So, before considering it an episode of conversion, it is necessary to understand this change as an episode of vocation, to which he answered “yes”, and this oriented him to give a response to a fundamental question in relation to Jesus, which he himself pronounced: “Lord, what do you want me to do?”

With the passing of time, Jesus had been “communicating” to Paul that which he had to do. And Paul, “responding” to his call, he became an untiring proclaimer of the Gospel, not only with words, but the testimony of his own life. He gave priority to the pagans<sup>46</sup>, precisely those whom first he discriminated. He became a “builder” and “formator” of the community. He made four journeys filled with dangers, if we consider the conditions of security during his epoch. He visited innumerable cities. The last of his journeys was at Jerusalem and in Rome, where he suffered martyrdom.

The theme of communication related with “pastoral care”, finds in the Apostle Paul an important reference, because “communication” was part of his style of life. He did not spare his time in the interaction with the diverse communities. He used the means of communication available during his time, without disregarding the direct contact with persons. The development of his communication has as motivation his experience of Jesus Christ, the passion for the Gospel and the love for the people whom he felt he was called to proclaim. With his witnessing he manifested that communication is a fundamental human and Christian experience. In fact, his anthropology is not a form of individualism. Persons are sociable beings, defined persons for their capacity to relate.

Whether in the past as in the present, communication continues to be a challenge. It is one of the fundamental needs of being human. Through verbal and non-verbal communication persons interact among themselves and they build the society and the Church. So, as there are no men without society, neither is there a society or ecclesial community without communication. It is a story line which implies persons, social groups and institutions and facilitates the building of what we call culture. We find it in the roots of pastoral care.

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<sup>45</sup> 1Cor 9,1-11.

<sup>46</sup> Gal 2,7-8.

### **3. The profile of Paul the “communicator”**

To evangelize is to “communicate”. Paul is a missionary who was never tired of “communicating “the Good News of Jesus Christ. Aside from maintaining a continuous communication with those who were close to him, he searched for the possible technical resources of his time in order to interact with the far-off communities. He knew how to find a balance between communication through letters and interpersonal communication with the objective to bring the Word of God to a great number of persons.

When the word “communicator” rings today in our ears, it could come to mind an stereotyped image, inculcated by the means of social communication. In reference to the television, specifically the newscaster, it comes the idea of an elegant man or woman, with a good make up, of good diction and with cinematographic image. Besides, there are TV news wherein the commentators are models, or rather persons who do not have any experience of journalism, but their “personal image “ is suitable to the profile outlined by the logic of the spectacular. Generally, it is considered “communicator” any person who simply gives an information.

Evidently, the context of the communication in which the Apostle Paul lived, especially from the technical point of view, was totally different. The preoccupation for appearance and the use of the power of language, even if within the resources of that period were considered important for the communicators who aspired for success. It was done by some evangelizers of his time, the “false apostles”, who, instructed through the means of some technology of communication, used the ministry to search for prestige and wealth. They were the “professionals of the faith”, who proclaimed the message of Christ with the objective of obtaining personal advantage<sup>47</sup>.

In the perspective of the communicator, Paul had nothing to do with an spectacular communicator. In his letters, especially those written to the Corinthians, revealed a man who was not categorized in this scheme. Comparing his preaching with those of the false apostles, Paul acknowledged that he did not know how to speak with the same vivacity: “When I came to you brothers, proclaiming the mystery of God, I did not come with sublime words or of wisdom,”<sup>48</sup>. He was aware of not having a great capacity of oral communication: “I may not be a polished speechmaker, but as for knowledge, that is a different matter; surely we have made this plain, speaking on every subject in front of all of you.”<sup>49</sup>. He admitted that his presence has nothing to

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. 2Cor 10,12.

<sup>48</sup> 1Cor 2,1.

<sup>49</sup> 2Cor 11,6.

do with being a tempter: "I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my message and proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom"<sup>50</sup>.

Paul did not seek to seduce the persons with language nor with rhetoric, not even with appearances. Some members of the community did not accept this way of acting and they criticized him. They came to doubt him as an authentic evangelizer<sup>51</sup>. If Paul was not categorized within the profile of an "spectacular" communicator, where is the source of the force of his communication?

### **3.1 Clear message and openness to listen**

If we look at the Apostle Paul from the point of view of an uninhibited communicator, his message would strike more through his writings than his physical presence. In fact, some of the communities of Corinth affirmed that his letters were hard and strong, notwithstanding his limited physical presence and being a poor orator<sup>52</sup>. As it was already said, Paul did not possess the attributes of an orator nor the other techniques of communication which some evangelizers of his time developed to obtain success. Where then was the source of the efficacy of his mission?

Pope Benedict XVI, in his book *El Año de San Pablo*<sup>53</sup>, after having ascertained that Paul did not know how to talk very well and that the apostolic results did not come from his brilliant rhetoric, concludes that the success of his apostolate was above all in his commitment to proclaim the Gospel in total surrender to Christ. A surrender which did not fear dangers or persecutions.

Paul had a clear message of what he desired to proclaim<sup>54</sup>. He possessed a content which emerged not only from his intellectual formation but also from his experience of life. He was educated in the most perfect Jewish tradition, Paul carries with him a cultural baggage which included a profound knowledge of the Jewish tradition, and the notion of the Greek philosophy and religion of his time. As it was already said, he was educated during his youth by Gamaliel, a famous rabbi during that period.

Aside from his intellectual formation, the experience he had on his journey to Damascus marked deeply his life. The knowledge of Jesus Christ brought a radical change in the life of Paul. From a persecutor of Christians he

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<sup>50</sup> 1Cor 2,3-4.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. 2Cor 11,16-33.

<sup>52</sup> Cf.: 2Cor 10,10.

<sup>53</sup> BENEDICTO XVI, *Año de San Pablo*, Madrid: Editorial San Pablo, 2008.

<sup>54</sup> 2Cor 11,6.

turned to be an “instrument of communication”<sup>55</sup> of the Good News, manifesting that the person himself is the first vehicle of communication in which we set ourselves. From his conversion a mission was born which foundation rested on a conviction: “I know Him in whom I have believed”<sup>56</sup>. Nevertheless, his message was not reduced to a pure and simple verbal communication. The Gospel that he proclaimed did not consist only in the information of the initiative of the pure grace of God and the events of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, Above all it is the Word of God and of Christ.

The Apostle was absorbed in communication. He affirmed that faith depended from preaching, and preaching was the proclamation of Jesus Christ.<sup>57</sup> In fact evangelization and communication are two complementary realities because to evangelize is to communicate the “Good News” with words and with attitudes. It is always an “opening” to the others. Paul carried this mission without sparing himself. “I am perfectly willing to spend what I have and to be expended in the interests for your souls”<sup>58</sup>, he wrote to the Corinthians.

Aside from containing a clear message, communication, in Paul, is not an author motivated by personal ambition. It is a “positive” communication, that is, a process that generates communion which includes a sender who listens attentively to the recipient and respects him. Starting from a clear message, Paul does not only “proclaim” the Gospel, he also knew how to listen. Above all, he remained open to what God wanted to communicate to him in his interior life. Simultaneously, he tried to listen to persons and the external realities. It is only after an attentive listening that he tried to give responses to the concrete situations, starting from the Christian values.

With his life, Paul demonstrated that communication is so important that from it, the quality of the relationship with God, with oneself and with others depend upon. Now, we deepen more the “content” of the communication of Paul. Obviously we know that the center of his message was Jesus Christ. But who is Jesus for Paul? Considering the challenges of communication in the pastoral care, we also ask ourselves: “Who is Jesus for us”?

### **3.1.1 Who is Jesus for Paul?**

The apostle Paul was sure that his mission was “to communicate” the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But who was Jesus for Paul? This is a fundamental

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<sup>55</sup> At 9,15.

<sup>56</sup> 2Tim 1,12.

<sup>57</sup> Rom 10,17.

<sup>58</sup> 2Cor 12,15.



question. Jesus himself made this inquiry among his disciples about his identity: "Who is the Son of Man?"<sup>59</sup> We know that Peter gave the right answer: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God", for this Jesus praised him. But when Jesus started to tell that He has to suffer, Peter was in contrary. Jesus then rebuked him saying: "Get behind me, Satan!".

Peter acknowledged the divine origin of Jesus, but he did not accept the Cross. Certainly after this episode, Peter made a long and sorrowful journey in order to understand, through the subsequent facts, that even suffering and death were part of the mission of Jesus. And this tragic end would be the consequence of the surrender of Jesus for love of the project of God the Father.

Returning to the experience of Paul, we do not dedicate minutely of the concept which he had of Jesus. Because in treating the things of God, it is difficult to explain exactly all the events that have contributed to build this reality. Human words are not sufficient to express the profundity, the greatness and the significance of the experience that Paul had of God. But the Good News that Paul communicated had as principle to present also the image of Jesus that Peter refused to accept: Jesus crucified.

We should not forget that the Crucified Christ that Paul proclaimed with much ardour was a scandal for the Jews and foolishness for the pagans<sup>60</sup>. For a Jew, who awaited for a triumphant Messiah, it was impossible to understand that He ended his earthly life on a Cross. For a Greek, how can he understand that God, the supreme wisdom, would fail with a tragic death? Nevertheless, Paul proclaimed this Jesus, "He was rich but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty"<sup>61</sup>, that "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave"<sup>62</sup>, and "God greatly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every other name"<sup>63</sup>.

Paul followed the journey of Jesus, who made himself as a slave<sup>64</sup>. It is also as a slave that he presented himself to the communities, through an ideal which gave sense to his life<sup>65</sup>. Presenting himself as a "slave" to the communities, Paul accomplished an important step for entering into a dialogue and creating communion. In fact, one of the characteristics of one who sets himself in service is "humility" (humus = earth). Humility is the door so as to be close to persons and to start a true process of communication, if we think in the perspective of communion.

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. Mt 16,13-23.

<sup>60</sup> 1Cor 1,23.

<sup>61</sup> 2Cor 8,9.

<sup>62</sup> Phil 2,7.

<sup>63</sup> Phil 2,9.

<sup>64</sup> 2Cor 8,9.

<sup>65</sup> 2Cor 4,5.

For Paul, the proclamation of Jesus crucified underlined an important dimension of his faith, which is faith in the Incarnation of the Son of God. (revelation = communication)<sup>66</sup>. Accepting this aspect, he considered Jesus in his integral reality, different from things which are said to be “spiritual”, those Christian group of his time who separated the Crucified Savior from the Christ of faith. That is, they denied the historical Jesus and as consequence, the reality of the Cross. They preferred to think of Jesus as the Lord of Glory.

Paul acknowledged Jesus as Lord of Glory, but he also defended His human historicity. For him, Jesus saved humanity in as much that He was part of it, accepting and transforming its conditions. And so, He suffered and died without meriting absolutely such tribulation. Paul expressed the nucleus and the essence of his faith with the affirmation,: “For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve”<sup>67</sup>.

Paul is considered the first Christian theologian and the creator of Christian theology. We know that he did not construct *somma teologica*. His writings narrate the responses which he sought to give to the concrete situations of the communities, starting from Christian message. It was a manner theologically founded to resolve the particular problems of faith and Christian life which were progressively posed to his listeners and to himself. Paul showed that the message of Jesus is not only to be listened, but to be practiced, as condition for acquiring a better quality of life. In all this process, “communication” was fundamental!

### **3.1.2 On the footsteps of the Good Shepherd**

The question on the identity of Jesus is important for the development of communication in the pastoral care. The response at the beginning can seem to be easy, but it is not so simple, because Jesus is a mystery. Mystery not in the sense of a personal reality that we could not know, but instead a person whom we can know, although the knowledge will never be exhausted.

The same thing could be said to any human being and to ourselves. Every person is a mystery to himself. Nobody can say that he knows himself totally. A proof is the fact that many times we are surprised to the point of asking ourselves: “Was it I who did this?”; “Had I courage to say that?”. Jesus

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<sup>66</sup> Gal 4,4-5.

<sup>67</sup> 1Cor 15,3-5.

is a mystery because we will never attain to know His totality. We progress in the knowledge of Him in the measure that we open to the action of His grace, when we meditate and celebrate his Word, when we welcome persons especially the needy. When we become persons of communication, disposed not only in uttering messages, but also in listening, according to all that we have already said.

It is impossible to exhaust the knowledge on Jesus. He is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Lord, the Savior. He defined Himself as the Light, as the Vine, as the Bread of Life. For Paul, as we have already said, Jesus is the Crucified. But we do not mean the Cross as a sign of failure, instead a victory over death. The “language” (“communication”) of the Cross, Paul affirmed, “is the power of God”<sup>68</sup>. It is through Jesus, dead and risen, and through faith, that we have gained access to this grace.<sup>69</sup>

In responding to the question on who is Jesus, in the perspective of pastoral care, it is opportune to seek inspiration in the similarity of the Good Shepherd. Jesus defined himself in the Gospel of John as the shepherd who takes care of his sheep with love, defends them from all dangers and gives his life for them. He affirmed: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”<sup>70</sup>, Jesus made a contrast of the shepherd from the hired man explaining: “A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep”. And he added: “I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father”<sup>71</sup>.

To the affirmation that He is the “Good Shepherd” in contrast with the “hired man”, Jesus is showing that in Him we find true life. He knows each person profoundly and even sacrificed Himself for him, because He loves him and protects him from every danger. Interpreting this similarity, we can say that Jesus does not seek his own interest, but gives life to all who seek him. Besides, in the Gospel of the Shepherd, the verb “listen” appeared many times. The sheep listen to the voice of the Shepherd. They are open, in continuous, “communication”. From this communication derives discipleship<sup>72</sup>.

It is very interesting to look at the apostle Paul from the point of view of “good shepherd”. Obviously, before becoming a “shepherd”, Paul is an

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<sup>68</sup> 1Cor 1,18.

<sup>69</sup> Rom 5,2.

<sup>70</sup> Jn 10,11.

<sup>71</sup> Jn 10, 12-15.

<sup>72</sup> Jn 10,27.

“obedient sheep” who listens and closely follows Jesus, the great Shepherd. He allowed himself to be loved, cared and guided by Him. From Him he learned that the source of life is love. In fact the Apostle will say: “insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me.”<sup>73</sup> Only he who had a profound experience of being a disciple, of listening to the voice of the Shepherd, can be a true evangelizer and is ready to communicate the values of the Kingdom.

It is good to make reference anew to the false apostles who, during the time of Paul, sought to exploit the people in the name of the Gospel.<sup>74</sup> They were like mercenaries who do not think of the life of the sheep, instead they took advantage of them. Paul did not allow himself be led by appearances or privileges. He did not seek the goods of the person but the persons themselves.<sup>75</sup> It is the good shepherd who has as only interest that of proclaiming and living the Gospel, a journey of true freedom and fullness of life.

### **3.2 Grace communicates grace**

As “instrument” of communication of the Gospel, the apostle Paul was aware of his human fragility. Nevertheless, he knew that this was not an impediment in carrying out the pastoral care. He discovered that God loves him as he is, with his qualities and defects to the point of affirming: “we hold this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us”<sup>76</sup>.

The apostle Paul was sure that it was the Creator, with His power and goodness, who gave the strength necessary to overcome the difficulties of life and of the mission<sup>77</sup>. In Jesus, he discovered that the journey toward God was in valuing the humanity in a profound sense, which is manifested in the practice of love, forgiveness, acceptance and respect to persons, solidarity and justice.

For Paul, all these realities are fruits of grace (goodness) of God<sup>78</sup>. In this spiritual journey he found out that grace generates grace. He understood that the gifts which God gave Him gratuitously have their finality: “to be communicated” also to others gratuitously. For this, he arrived at affirming that

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<sup>73</sup> Gal 2,20.

<sup>74</sup> 2Cor 11,5.13-14.20.

<sup>75</sup> 2Cor 12,14.

<sup>76</sup> 2Cor 4,7.

<sup>77</sup> 1Cor 12,11.

<sup>78</sup> Eph3,2.

the grace granted to him was not in vain.<sup>79</sup> In fact, grace rendered his life fruitful with works in favour of others. Aside from giving a new sense of his life, the graces received were transformed in works for the benefit of the common good which we call evangelization.

Of all the graces that Paul received, the greatest, undoubtedly, is his encounter with Jesus Christ. It was Jesus who led Paul to change the direction of his story. Starting from the encounter with Him, he understood that the center of the proclamation is the person of Jesus who died on the Cross and is risen. Convinced of this, he wrote: "For we do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord"<sup>80</sup>. He also declared: "Nobody can lay any other foundation than the one which has already been laid, that is Jesus Christ"<sup>81</sup>. Starting from this faith, his missionary work was developed in the great urban centers of his time, like the cities of Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica and Ephesus.

The Apostle Paul, proclaimed that in Jesus a new covenant between God and humanity has been established. He denounced the false apostles who preached a different Jesus.<sup>82</sup> He accused them as fraudulent workers, disguised as apostles of Christ<sup>83</sup> who lived in appearances. He showed that the journey towards God is no longer the Law, but a person, Jesus, the Messiah. In other words and going down to the reality, he affirmed that every Law finds its fullness in a single commandment: love of neighbor<sup>84</sup>; and love is the fulfilment of the Law<sup>85</sup>.

What happened in the communities during the time of Paul is similar to what is happening to our society today, when many preachers who are called "evangelizers"<sup>86</sup>, make of the faith a profitable business. They transform the Church into a market place. Besides, the era of images in which we live, is prone to persuade through appearances. Such mercenaries of faith seek in the appearances and in the techniques of communication to make of the relationship with God a business. On the contrary, Paul presented himself as an authentic apostle, called to be another Christ, not in the appearances, not in superficiality but in transparency. Rather he sought not to be an economic burden to the community, practicing his profession as a tent maker.

We lived in a culture where what is important is not the "being" but "having and appearances". Unfortunately, the capitalistic system needs a

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<sup>79</sup> 1Cor 15,10.

<sup>80</sup> 2Cor 4,5.

<sup>81</sup> 1Cor 3,11.

<sup>82</sup> 2Cor 11,4.

<sup>83</sup> 2Cor 11,13.

<sup>84</sup> Gal 5,14.

<sup>85</sup> Rom 13,10.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. 2Cor 11,20.

world of appearances. Our time prefers the image than the object, the ugly imitation than the original, the representation than reality, the appearance than the being. Although during the era of Paul the modern means of communication which reproduce the image do not exist, they were one of the resources to be exploited and sought success. Paul did not allow himself to be carried by this current. His life and his testimony were centered on the Gospel which illumines and transforms the person starting from the heart.

### **3.3 To be all for all**

The experience of Paul on his journey to Damascus generated in him a strong missionary impulse. "If I preach the Gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for it is a duty that has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it!"<sup>87</sup>. The call which he experienced interiorly to communicate the Good News was perceived through the innumerable contacts with persons and communities.

For the Apostle Paul, the Gospel of Christ constituted a decisive factor for the aggregation of all people, called to build a new universal human community, where the socio-cultural differences ceased to be a motive of discrimination.<sup>88</sup> He felt at the service of a God who does not make differences between Jews and pagans. In Christ he sought to unite all peoples<sup>89</sup> with a single message: love which creates communion and generates life for all.

The proclamation of the Gospel led the Apostle to break all the barriers of prejudices and discrimination and to seek "communion". For him, what was important was to arrive at a great number of persons starting from the concrete situation of each one, uniting them in a single project. For which he affirmed: "To the Jews I became like a Jew to win over Jews; to those under the law I became like one under the law--though I myself am not under the law--to win over those under the law. To those outside the law I became like one outside the law--though I am not outside God's law but within the law of Christ--to win over those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save some at any cost"<sup>90</sup>.

The letters of Paul written to the different audiences were not reduced to the transmission of the doctrines; neither did they substitute the personal contact. They have the intention to give Christian responses to the concrete problems of the communities. His writings manifested a great affection to the recipients and

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<sup>87</sup> 1Cor 9,16.

<sup>88</sup> Gal 3,26-28.

<sup>89</sup> Eph2,14.

<sup>90</sup> 1Cor 9,22.

the desire to be with them. So it is observed in the Letter to the Corinthians: “I shall come to you after I pass through Macedonia (for I am going to pass through Macedonia), and perhaps I shall stay or even spend the winter with you, so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go. For I do not wish to see you now just in passing, but I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.”<sup>91</sup> To the Thessalonians he repeated the same sentiments: “Brothers, when we were bereft of you for a short time, in person, not in heart, we were all the more eager in our great desire to see you in person”.<sup>92</sup> He revealed the same desire to Timothy: “I am writing you about these matters, although I hope to visit you soon”<sup>93</sup>.

Paul experienced a “great desire” to remain in direct contact with persons. The letters did not substitute the personal encounters. Whether through letters or directly, the Apostle knew that without openness of the heart there is no communication, much more evangelization. The word “heart” (*kardia*) appeared 52 times in the writings of Paul<sup>94</sup>. The heart indicates the most intimate part of the person, the seat of emotions and even of the thought and of the will. From here the depth of the expression as: “We have spoken frankly to you, Corinthians; our heart is open wide as a fair exchange, open your hearts in the same way!”<sup>95</sup>.

Even when he was in prison, Paul sought in some ways to be present in the communities through letters or through a collaborator, who actualized the “personal contact” in his place. For example, he sent Timothy<sup>96</sup> and Epaphroditus<sup>97</sup> to Philippi, Tychicus and Onesimus to Colossae<sup>98</sup>. Chapter 16 of the letter to the Romans cites a list of persons, men and women, who collaborated in his mission.

Whether directly or through a network of persons, Paul sought to transmit the message and also “to listen”. He sent the Good News, but also waited the “novelty” that would come from his recipients. It was expressed, for example, in the first letter to the Thessalonians: “But just now Timothy has returned to us from you, bringing us the good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us and long to see us as we long to see you.”<sup>99</sup> In this way he responded to the anxieties of the community, with the objective to weave solid relationships which create “communion”.

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<sup>91</sup> 1Cor 16,5-7.

<sup>92</sup> 1Thes 2,17.

<sup>93</sup> 1Tim 3,14.

<sup>94</sup> DUNN, James D. G., *A teologia do apóstolo Paulo*, São Paulo: Paulus, 2003, p. 107.

<sup>95</sup> 2Cor 6,11-13.

<sup>96</sup> Phil 2,19-20.

<sup>97</sup> Phil 2,25-30.

<sup>98</sup> Col 4,7-9.

<sup>99</sup> 1Thes 3,6.

### 3.4 The means of communication and the language

The resources of communication which Paul availed during his time, between him and the great Roman roads and the navigations, contributed to the diffusion of the Gospel starting from the big cities. Only in the missionary journey that he sees leaving from the orient and arriving to Corinth through Antioch of Syria, passing for Silicia, Galatia, Triade, Philippi, Thessalonica and Athens, the distance is 3,500 km, including more 700 km of the sea<sup>100</sup>.

Aside from the journey taken personally through land and sea, the letters addressed to some of his close collaborators or to the communities, contributed until the Good News arrived where he was, because of some impediments he could not be present.

Paul was aware of the significance of a letter. He knew that the same written message could reach many persons and communities. The effectiveness of this strategy can be perceived in the recommendation he made to the Colossians: "when this letter is read before you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and you yourselves read the one from Laodicea"<sup>101</sup>.

Another element is referred to the adequateness of the language<sup>102</sup> of the recipients. Paul sought to express the Gospel in the language of an urban cultural context. We recall that Jesus is a man from a rural area. In the parables, He used terms such as seed, sheep, mustard seed, shoot, shepherd. Paul, originating from the middle urban class, situated himself in the semantic language proper to the city, for example: stadium, sports competition, parade and armour.

Jesus proclaimed the Good News along the road of Palestine, on the mountains, on the bank of the lakes, Paul preached in the plaza of the great cities. The book of the Acts of the Apostles, for example, attested that Paul went to the Areopagus where he proclaimed the Gospel using the language comprehensible to his audience<sup>103</sup>. The Areopagus during his time represents the center of culture for the people of Athens.

Utilizing the correct language and the adequate means, Paul sought to respond to the exigencies of the public to which he turned to. He was a great communicator who did not categorize himself, evidently under the profile of an "spectacular, as we have already affirmed. His objective was to

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<sup>100</sup> BARBARGIO, Giuseppe. *Op. Cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>101</sup> Col 4,16.

<sup>102</sup> C'è una vastità di definizioni su cosa è il linguaggio umano. C'è il linguaggio orale o parlato, il linguaggio scritto, il linguaggio dei segni, il linguaggio iconografico... Qui accenniamo soltanto al linguaggio in quanto lingua parlata con i segni linguistici culturali comuni a una comunità.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. At 17,22-31.



create "communion". In interrelating, he evangelized with all possible means. His own way of communicating was also evangelization. He knew how to use all the fastest and effective means during his time, with an adequate language, without losing the human dimension, which includes personal contact. From him, we learn that there is no Church without communication and communication is the basis of pastoral care.

In the last decades, the Church discovered the world of communication as the first Areopagus of the modern times, which is generating a style of life which is becoming more globalized. She observed that the means of communication became the principal means of information and formation which influence, at a certain measure, the individual and social behavior and condition the new generation<sup>104</sup>.

Nevertheless, it is not enough to have at hand the instruments of social communication. Ultimately the Church acknowledges that many times the language used in evangelization and in the catechesis does not take into consideration the change of the relevant existential code in the society influenced by post modernity and marked by a wide social and cultural pluralism. The Church is still in difficulty to enter in the culture generated by the means of communication<sup>105</sup>. It is urgent to face this challenge if the Church wants to be listened and understood by the society today.

#### **4. The culture as the "dwelling" of being human**

In the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*<sup>106</sup>, on the missionary life of the Church, Pope John Paul:

a) Recalls that the apostle Paul, after having preached to numerous places, arrived in Athens and he went to the Areopagus where he proclaimed the Gospel using an adequate language which was comprehensible by that audience<sup>107</sup>;

b) Acknowledges that the first areopagus of the modern time is the world of communication, which is uniting humanity and transforming it - to what we call - a global village;

c) Poses a challenge: the work of the means of communication, nevertheless, does not have only the objective of multiplying the proclamation. It deals of a fact more profound because the evangelization of the modern culture itself depends on a great part from its influence. The Pope admits that it

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<sup>104</sup> GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 37.

<sup>105</sup> Documento di Aparecida, n. 56.

<sup>106</sup> GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Op. Cit.*, n. 37 (Cf. anche: Giovanni Paolo II, *Il rapido sviluppo*, n. 3).

<sup>107</sup> Cf. At 17, 22-31.

is not enough to use them to diffuse the Christian message and the Teachings of the Church, but it is good to integrate the message itself in this new culture created by the modern communication.

The reflection of communication in the “pastoral care” leads us to consider the important dimension of human existence which is the “culture”, conforming to the exhortation of the Pope. What do we understand by the word “culture”? There are many definitions and this is not the case to do in long articulation. Fundamentally, from the point of view of social context, all that is human is cultural, in whatever level is considered human phenomenon. In this sense, we could understand culture as “dwelling” and it is connected to the customs, signifies also the mode of living and relating together. Culture is the “vital context” generated by man and woman who at the same time influences his mode of being and acting<sup>108</sup>.

Man and woman live in culture as it is in their own house. In this dwelling is elaborated the interpersonal and social relationships before the existential bond which structures the human life: the relationship with the goods of existence, with oneself, with the others, with nature, with traditions, with transcendence, with God.

Paul was a Jew of strict observance, but born in Tarsus, an important center of Greek culture and open gate to the occidental world. Aside from his intellectual formation, his experience on the way to Damascus marked his life deeply. In Christ he sought to unite all people with a single message: love that generates relationship of communion.

We have already said that Paul was from an urban background, and as a man of a great city he knew how to adapt the Gospel to the language comprehensible in the cultural context in which he lived. Today, the development of the pastoral care presupposes also to consider and value the positive elements of culture and to transform the aspects which do not help the human being live with dignity.

The means of social communication form part of our culture. They are not simple appendix. They have definitely penetrated the individual and social habits, and as consequence in the form of living and relating. As “means”, they can not be classified as good as bad. All the means of communication are positive. The Vatican Council II had already recognized this, calling it “marvellous inventions of technology”<sup>109</sup>. The problem can arise from the use given to these instruments.

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<sup>108</sup> SANTAELLA, Lucia. *Culturas e artes do pós-humano. Da cultura das mídias à cibercultura*. São Paulo : Paulus, 2003, p. 31.

<sup>109</sup> Decreto *Inter Mirifica*, n. 1.

What kind of man and woman do the means of communication are “generating” today? For example a youth who spends 5-8 hours a day (at times even more) before the computer navigating in the internet, “what does he search?”, “with what identity does he approach other persons?”, “whom does he desire to encounter?”, “what content does he bring in his conversations?” We seem they are questions, from among others, that we should make, with the objective of understanding the new culture which the means of communication are generating.

The culture in which we live is complex and the means of communication makes an intrinsic part of our way of living. We go back to the initial question: How do we redeem the human dimension of communication when its “instrumental” dimension prevails? Once again, it does not deal of putting a form of communication in contrary with the other. The problem to resolve is how to “humanize” communication, keeping in mind that “all that is truly human is Christian”<sup>110</sup>. It seems that this is a challenge that the “pastoral care” must assume and respond.

## Conclusion

It is impossible to think of “pastoral care” without taking into consideration the reality of communication. In the deepening of the theme we became aware that communication was a part in the mode of being of Paul. It was an aspect of the human reality that the Apostle incorporated to his life and it developed for the benefit of the evangelical mission.

As what we have seen, Paul was a communicator with his own style, different from those of the missionaries of his time who in using the techniques of communication were led by their own personal interests. He teaches us that for a good development of communication, from the perspective of the evangelizer, a profound experience of God is necessary, a consistent content, to open oneself to the culture of the recipients, to use adequate languages and channels and finally to choose a “positive” communication. Making converge all in the constant effort to create “communion”, whether in the direct contact with persons or through the means of communication.

The acceptance and the respect of the other are fundamental for Paul. He was aware of the power of the “word” which can edify, heal, hurt or kill. From this knowledge was born the caution to the members of the community of

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<sup>110</sup> “Le gioie e le speranze, le tristezze e le angosce degli uomini d’oggi, dei poveri soprattutto e di tutti coloro che soffrono, sono pure le gioie e le speranze, le tristezze e le angosce dei discepoli di Cristo, e nulla Vi è di genuinamente umano che non trovi eco nel loro cuore.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1).

Ephesus:” No foul language should come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for needed edification, that it may impart grace to those who hear.”<sup>111</sup>.

Many men and women of the Church have sought inspiration in Paul for the pastoral care, among them is our Founder of the Pauline Family, Blessed James Alberione. He had the intuition at the start of the XX century that one of the needs of his time was the development of communication. He hastened to search the means for bringing the “Good News” to the persons who moved away from the Church. He started with the printing and after he assumed the fastest and effective technical means of communication.

In 1960, even before the Vatican Council II, Alberione wrote: “If St. Paul were alive today, he would continue to inflame that double blaze, with the same fire, the zeal for God and with his Christ and for the men of every place. And in order to make himself heard, he would go up into the pulpit which is more elevated and he would multiply his words with the means of actual progress: printing, cinema, radio, and television”<sup>112</sup>.

Paul continues to be the inspiration for all those who believe in the evangelization with the use of the modern technology of communication. He knew how to use the fastest and most effective means of his time, with an adequate language, without losing the human dimension. From him we learn the there is no Church without communication.

In the light of the life of Paul, we pose some questions: immersed in the culture of communication, dominated by business interest, what is the true motivation when the theme is on evangelization? In a world marked by instrumental communication, what space does interpersonal communication occupy? How do we recover the human and Christian dimension of communication? It is necessary to have a clear understanding and to insist that “consumer of the new technologies” very much diffused today is not synonymous to “good communicator”.

The Church recognizes that the new technologies of communication, especially websites, can reinforce and stimulate the interchange of experiences and information which help intensify the religious practices; however, the means of communication do not substitute the interpersonal relationships nor community life<sup>113</sup>.

We live in a historical period characterized not only the era of change, but a change of era<sup>114</sup>, wherein communication is one of the factors which is revolutionizing the story of humanity. In this culture, in which the instrumental

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<sup>111</sup> Eph 4,29.

<sup>112</sup> ALBERIONE, Giacomo. CISP 1152.

<sup>113</sup> Documento di Aparecida, n. 489.

<sup>114</sup> Documento di Aparecida, n. 44.

communication predominates, it is necessary to recuperate the human dimension and not to lose sight the direct contact, eye to eye.

We have presented the Apostle Paul in this reflection as an important reference of a communicator in the pastoral care. He is a saint who sought to know the Divine Master in his fullness<sup>115</sup>. He was a follower of Jesus, the Perfect Communicator, who wisely, “assumed the forms of the parable and the lively stories that expressed truth with simple and daily terms. Not only his words but also his actions, in particular the miracles, were acts of communication, pointing out his identity and manifesting the power of God. In communicating, He showed respect to his listeners, sympathy for their situation and necessity, compassion in their sufferings and a resolute determination to say what they needed to hear, in a way that would catch their attention and helped them to receive the message, without coercion and compromise, deceit and manipulation. He invited others to open their mind and their heart, knowing that in doing so, they would be led to Him and to the Father”<sup>116</sup>.

In the second part of our reflection, we will seek to deepen more the knowledge about the society in which we live, looking from the point of view of the, “spectacular”. We will go back on the theme of communication, integrating it with other related aspects such as the new technologies, consumerism, publicity, protagonism of the merchandise, in such a way to deepen more the culture in which we are called to carry out today the pastoral care.

## Attachment 6

### THE PASTORAL CHALLENGES IN THE ECCLESIAL CONTEXT OF OUR TIME

Fr. Julio Raúl Méndez

20 June 2009

1. ***The pastoral task*** is intense as the participation to the redemptive act of Jesus, as continuity of His action in the diverse circumstances of time and place. We take note that:

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<sup>115</sup> AD 159.

<sup>116</sup> PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO DELLE COMUNICAZIONI SOCIALI. *Etica nelle comunicazioni sociali*, 04/06/2000, n. 32.

1.a.- it deals with the personal action of Jesus, the Word made flesh, was started on earth and was continued until His Glory together with the Father.

1.b.- it is a redemptive act of men and women, its recipients are all men and women.

1.c.- it is continued in an incarnate way through the consecrated faithful as his sacramental presence (the priests, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders), all the baptized in different ways (especially the religious and all the consecrated persons to participate in a special way to the pastoral work).

1.d.- that the multitude of men, recipients of the pastoral action, expresses always a great plurality according to the time and place.

1.e.- that it is necessary to give attention to this plurality, which is always changing

2.- Let us take into consideration the actual situation of humanity in the aspects that comprise a challenge for the pastoral action. Challenge means a reality which presents a difficulty and provokes to give a response. Let us give attention to that which is neither easy nor agreeable in the first appeal for the Church, but which we should not ignore because it constitutes the nucleus of the mission.

We observe that it deals of our time, therefore of an ecclesial context where we belong. At the same time, we observe that the Church in its pilgrim stage is always situated and collocated in a particular context, in concrete ways in which men live who are her recipients and members.

Our gaze always starts from faith toward the complex reality of our world, to discern the signs of our times.

The aspects in which we occupy respond to three requisites:

2.a.- they are general (even if there are place and diverse aspects in particular cases).

2.b.- they are diffused in the different nations and globalized.

2.c.- they are relevant for the pastoral tasks.

3.- The first challenge we find in the situation which touches the same nucleus of our ecclesial identity and pastorally fundamental. It is the anthropocentric secularization.

Let us recall a scene.

**Mt 9:35-36** *Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease*

and illness. At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd.

**Mk 6:34** *When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things*

Here, the evangelists project to us the sentiments of Jesus who gives origin to his pastoral initiative: compassion.

Jesus takes as his own the sufferings of men and suffers together with them. His response is teaching. To offer the truth, to offer his own Self so that men will not be misled. For this He defined Himself as the Good Shepherd, whose Word men would listen and whose voice they would follow.

His being as the Word, his being as the Truth give origin of his being a Shepherd as much as the Truth who gives Himself, moved by Love and Compassion.

**Jn 10** *11 I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd.*

This Johanine hymn inflames our souls because it marks our identity with Jesus and the sense of our life.

But here appears the first great contemporary difficulty.

3. a.- The men of the XXI century give privilege to autonomy

The anthropocentrism excludes the recognition of the necessity of a guide. The parable which includes the recognition of oneself as a sheep, sounds as an offence for the project of Illuminism, of the Liberation from any teacher and tutor (Kant, Nietzsche). This is the key of the modern secularization.

Secularism is dangerous to faith and religion. It sets aside God as One who gives meaning to life in its origin, in its historical development and its final realization.

This anthropocentrism does not only mark the upper class in the society but penetrates also the sectors which are less well-off. It globalizes the culture, in spite of the good it offers it does not arrive to all. If there are poor people and underdeveloped sectors who do not participate yet to this attitude would be a question of time, which is very brief.

3. b.- Not even compassion is a sentiment that wants to provoke or receive. The experience of fighting for one's rights and one's struggle without paternalism is stronger.

There are two ways of feeling satisfied (without arousing compassion) for earthly goods of economic, biological, affective and social nature.

3.b.1. in order to obtain success in some ways

3.b.2. to be committed in the struggle to obtain it.

In both cases, the supernatural desire is not included, the communion with God, and of salvation, consequently there is no unfinished and incomplete desire.

Still more, its inclusion would be an obstacle: religion as opium to the people (Feuerbach, Marx), the consolation of the unsuccessful (Comte), of those who do not animate to be who they are (men).

Religion is something unreal because God is dead; we have to assume to live the inclemency of the weather, the coldness of the absence of God. (Nietzsche). There is no frustration which neither merits a compassion nor justifies the impairment of the acceptance of a pastor in which would consider me as a sheep.

4.-The center of the work of Jesus Christ is not only the teaching of the Truth. It does not deal only of a Teacher in whose doctrine one adheres to. He provokes a true transformation in the reconciliation of men with God through the sacrifice of His own blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

The key of pastoral ministry is here.

**2Cor 5:16-20** *Consequently, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh; even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh.*

The need of reconciliation has its origin of the necessity to be forgiven for having sinned.

**Mt 9:9-9** *When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Courage, child, your sins are forgiven."*

(parallels Mk 2:1-14; Lk 5:17-28).

The comprehensible critic of why pretend to have authority to forgive sins, Jesus responded with the sign of the healing of the paralytic. But the definitive response was in the offering of his own blood as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins.

**Mt 26:26-28** *While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." ...*

(parallels Mk. 14:22-25; Lk 22:19-20; 1 Cor 11:23-25).



So that this ministry of forgiveness may continue, Jesus called Matthew and the other disciples; not only to teach but to put this into practice. The evangelical mandate includes, as a central moment, the mandate to sanctify through the sacraments.

**Mt 28:19-20** *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, ....*

**Lk 22:19-20** *19 Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body,..."*

St. Paul was committed to explain that this was the center of his ministry, how and why he received it. (I Cor 11:23-25).

But this ministry of reconciliation has two problems:

4.a.- The classical objection of the acceptance of human mediation in divine forgiveness (Why do I have to tell my sins to the priest?). It was already expressed to Jesus Christ. It is the problem of faith in the Incarnation.

4.b.- But it's more serious the lack of consciousness of sin, therefore the lack of awareness of the necessity of forgiveness.

The first can be resolved in the deepening of faith in the Incarnation.

The second comes from immanentism: all remains in the human horizon. In spite one acknowledges God; one thinks that our acts can not offend Him. Moreover, if God is so good, how can he be offended!

On the other hand, the ideal illuminist of the liberation of man which affirms himself only in himself, the eradication of the sense of guilt is fundamental. (S. Freud).

5.- When one overcomes the secularized anthropocentrism and the actual man opens himself to religion, the third challenge appears for Christianity that proclaims Jesus as the only mediator between God and men, as the only Savior.

**Jn.15:5** *I am the vine, you are the branches. ....*

**Jn 6:48-53** *I am the bread of life....*

**Jn 14:6** *Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

With great courage, Peter proclaims before the Sanhedrin:

**Acts 4:11-12** *"This Jesus is 'the stone rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone..."*

This proclamation generates difficulty in the context of relativism.

We live in a climate where the absolute, that which one likes to take as the objective truth, the good in itself does not find place. Pluralism is rooted in all fields; all can be accepted in the same manner. At the end, all depends on the fact that there are some who accept it, but one could not pretend that the others accept it.

This relative pluralism is the scenario in the field of values (*assiology*), of cultures and of religions.

When the hunger of God succeeds in fragmenting secularism, a multiple offer of religion as an article of consumption appears.

It deals of the experiences which search for the well being, emotions, prosperity and health. In this case God is not the center.

Since the center is changed from the objective to subjective, there is no place for discussion or for proselytism. All could be centered in its own "I" in the sensation that I produce. If I like one religion, I could adhere to it, when I like another, I could also transfer to it. (as one does with zapping with the TV programs).

When popular religiosity (in all social levels) is not well rooted, it can slip toward these offers or even toward the forms of self-help which combine light psychology and a gregarious religiosity or of imitation (even in reference to Catholics).

6.-In the ministry of the revelation of God and reconciliation with Him, Jesus manifested Him to us as a Father, through his unique and definitive mediation.

**Jn 1:18** *No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him.*

**Jn 14:1-11** *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. ...."*

When he taught us to pray he said:

**Mt 6:9** *9 This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name..* (parallels Lk. 11:1-4; Mk. 11:25).

But different from the request of Philip: "*Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us*", for the men of today many times, the figure of the father does not mean something attractive: because they do not have family, because they have an absent father, because the desire of liberation attacks the figure of the father whoever may he be: he is defined as a cutting figure (Freud).

We live in a culture ***of the death of the father and the mistrust of family ties***. This is perceived as snares.

7.- That there may only be one Truth, one God and Father, only one Mediator Jesus Christ, only one blood that saves, only one Good Shepherd does not mean that the multiplicity of men of all times and places remain abandoned, because the earthly Jesus poses limits of his activity and because now the glorious Jesus Christ is not visible

To assure that every man be reached by Him and by his action, He instituted ***the pastoral ministry and all forms of apostolate.***

All the pastoral workers operate in His name.

The declaration of Peter puts into light that the apostolate is not done with human strength but only with the strength of the Name of Jesus.

**Acts 3:6** Peter said, "I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, (rise and) walk."

**Acts 10:39-43** We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and (in) Jerusalem....

It deals with the fulfilment of the work entrusted to Jesus.

**Mt 16:18-19** And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church ...(parallels Mk 8:27; Lk 9:18-21)

**Mt 18:15-18** "If your brother sins (against you), go and tell him his fault between you and him alone... (parallel Lk 17:3).

That which is entrusted by Jesus as service to men, that which is offered by the pastoral workers as a dual service to Jesus and men, is perceived as an act of power.

Certainly it is an exercise of **power**, but the power to redeem.

Unfortunately, all that has something to do with authority and power is suspected to be a denial to the dignity of man. (Foucault).

The tasks to **discern** and to **decide** with authority, that is with obligatory value for others is strongly questioned. One who presents himself as one who serves is suspected as one who wants to manipulate abusively the life of the others.

8.- From the described panorama, with many obstacles, it seems to arise a discouraging scenario which induces us as defeated or overpowered.

This can happen when we see the decrease of the participation of the faithful, institutions are shattered, the lack of vocations, the fragility of the new vocations, the desertion from the consecrated life, the attacks of the media to

the Church, the scandalous not authenticity among us, the religious indifference, the mixture of faith and superstition, etc.

But the *disciple is not greater than his teacher*. Mt 10:24).

Jesus was betrayed directly by a disciple, denounced by Peter, his relatives considered him as crazy; his teachings seemed to be very hard to the people.

His response was:

**Jn 14:11** *Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, **or else, believe because of the works themselves.***

Which were his works?

**Acts 10:37-42** *you know what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Spirit..*

**Acts 10:30-34** *God has overlooked the times of ignorance, but now he demands that all people everywhere repent ..*

Here, there are two elements:

8. a.- **on the part of Jesus:** to do good, to exercise an effective and irresistible love

**Jn 15:13** *No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.*

And He did it.

**Jn 13:1** *He loved them to the end.; **Gal 2:20** *he has loved me and has given himself up for me* **Eph 5:2** *Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma.**

8. b.- **on the part of God the Father:** to give him merit the resurrection. The surrender of Jesus does not remain in frustration, does not remain in death.

**Jn 10:17** *"This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again....*

The great Christian paradox could be found in the indissoluble sequence of death and resurrection. It is the circle of love: giving oneself reaches to fullness.

The prayer of St. Francis of Assisi summarizes it very well: it is in giving that we receive. In death there is resurrection.

But as disciples of Jesus it is our turn to give, receiving is from the Loving hands of God.

For this, the command is:

**Jn 15:12** *This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.*

To be like the Samaritan in Lk 10:33: who stops and he takes upon himself before a need manifested: **Mt 14:16** *give them some food yourselves.*

Surrendering all that we are and have: talents, gifts, goods, time, with all we can (not intending the phrase "I do what I can" as "I do little more and less", but as "I do not keep nothing" "I give totally"). Like the lad who had five loaves of bread and two fish (Jn 6:9). Not as one who wants to keep one's life for oneself and ends up losing it. (Jn 12:25): egoism is sterile, love generates life and joy.

9.- Among the disciples of Jesus there was not a special capacity to understand what he preached, nor was it easier for them to understand more than the others, the fact is, even the disciples left Him alone at the moment of crucifixion.

But the **experience of love**, which does not depend on the fact that we *have loved God but that He has loved us first* (1 Jn 4:10,19), generated in the disciples a bond of trust that **unfolded to the acceptance of the Word** while many went away.

**Jn 6:66-69** ... *Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ...."*

There is no doubt that the acceptance of faith is the work connected to human freedom and the grace of God that takes the initiative (**Mt 16:17** *For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father*).

The gift of Grace is the love of God in us. For this, only love opens the acceptance of faith, only in the womb of love that faith is generated.

Love always speaks and opens to relationship. Discovering being loved makes one aware of his own dignity. Discovering being loved by God through His Church reveals one's identity as a child of God.

The link between Love and Truth is that which Jesus indicated exhorting us to believe at least for His works, in the insistence that it is the Good Shepherd who gives life for the sheep, in carrying out of the miracles as signs.

When the people stopped only at the multiplication of the loaves, they remained half way, (Jn 6:26). To be friends of Jesus, recipients of His Love, is to receive the Truth when He made known everything that He heard from the Father. (Jn 15:15).

Our apostolate could not be conceived without the priority of Love. If Love is lacking all is useless (1 Cor 13:2).

Our initiative should be always that of demonstrating this First Love which comes unconditionally from God.

Love is:

9.a.- the criterion with which one verifies and discerns every project and every action, in all its stages,

9.b.- it is always the first step that knocks at the door of the heart and of the ears in order to offer the Word.

We will be judged for the works (Mt 25:35-36: I was hungry and you gave me food...). This means that ***love is fundamental orthodoxy.***

Starting from the works of love, the presentation of the Word has its place, like one who gives reason to hope (1Pt 3:15) that sustains it in this action. The Truth of proclamation is not unevaded because Christian love manifests its identity, it is the continuation of the Love of the Father, ours is not a philanthropic initiative.

The basic and central content of the evangelical proclamation is that the ***Risen Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit reconciling us to the Father, from whom we originated, restoring our maximum dignity in the communion with God and with all men. In this life, which is progressively developed, we find our joy.***

Like this, we see that **our pastoral service has also the image of the sower.** The one who sows is always God, we collaborate with Him. St. Paul said to the Corinthians 1 Cor 9:11 *we have sown spiritual seeds for you.*

We collaborate in the sowing, in the planting, but the growth and the fruits come from the Grace of God which operates mysteriously in the heart of men.

St. Paul said: **1 Cor 3:5-6** *What is Apollos, after all, and what is Paul? ....*

To put love and a welcoming sympathy in order to offer in diverse ways an access to the Word of Life and Truth belong to us:

- in personal dialogue; sharing prayer and starting with it;
- in catechesis; in reflection with groups;
- in the Lectio divina; in the spiritual exercises;
- in the means of communication and internet;
- in the teaching of religion in the school;
- offering liturgy with unction, preparing piety and beauty (Mass, Liturgy of the hours).
- underlining Sunday as the day of the Lord.

Opening to every person the door to the experience of God in the faith is his rootedness at the maximum level, is the greatest human elevation. It is at the same time his rootedness in joy.

We are sowers of serene joy, that which the angels and the shepherds sang:  
*peace on earth to all men loved by the Lord*

10.- Although the work of conversion to the faith is realized in the secret mystery of the soul of every person, for the **action** of Grace and freedom, **our exterior cooperation is active**. It is not possible to remain indifferent.

For this, aside from being shepherds, sowers, we are ***fishers of men*** (Mt 4:19; Mk 1:17; Lk 5:10).

This image indicates our delicate attention to the personal process.

What happens in the life of the person in his relationship with God is not something strange to us. All the service of love in the acts of mercy and acceptance would remain incomplete without the seed of the witness of the Message of salvation and the spiritual accompaniment in order that the Word would bear fruit in the interiority of the person.

The apostolate conjugates the missionary impulse in order to serve the real and effective reconciliation with God and the careful respect of the freedom and the interior process of the person. Being all to all, rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep (Rom 12:15) without diluting and silencing the love and the proclamation of the Truth.

It is not a mutual exclusion: active search of the person or respect for their religious freedom; but the contrary: service for free encounter of every person with the source of Love and of Truth.

St Paul tells us how the pastoral zeal is truly of the apostle, it is not in function to bind the persons to oneself or make them our affective refuge. It does not deal with a zeal among the pastoral workers that divides and renders sterile because it hides Christ (Gal 4:17).

It deals with a very attentive care in helping everyone in his encounter and life of communion with Jesus; it deals with the care of the person on the part of God Himself, as His instruments:

**2Cor 11:2** For I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God, ....

This patient craftsmanship of our pastoral is that which generates life, and for this we can be considered **participants of the *paternity and maternity of God*** (1 Cor 4:15). With great joy we participate as instruments in the process of pregnancy, birth and development of the life in Christ.

11.- Although the act of conversion to the faith is always very personal, even faith, as in every thing that belongs to the person, seeks to make itself culture. A faith which does not make culture is a faith that is not fully assumed and it is very closed.

It is a great anthropological illusion wanting a life of faith without expression, without continuity in structural support, without historical fruits.

The ***breaking between faith and culture*** is the drama of our time, in a dual sense:

- it is a sign and a factor of the loss of credibility
- it is a pastoral temptation as a project of a faith that is interiorly exclusive.

As it is, faith generates a style of Christian life and a Christian way of living which mould the Christianized social structure.

It is a defect when these are lacking. It is not an objective to search for, as if it is more authentic the faith which is impossible to express itself or to have continuity and need support in the structure of human relationships.

For this, Jesus declares himself as the ***builder of a structure*** which is the Church.

The same Peter whom Jesus has appointed shepherd with the responsibility to pasture His sheep. (Jn 21:15-19), whom He called fisher of men (Lk 5:1-11), He called him also **rock** upon which He would build His community the Church.

**Mt 16:18** *And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.*

The structures need time, they can grow and diminish. Peter and we are rocks of the edification of the Church through participation to the life of Jesus who is the principal rock. (Mt 21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17; Act 4:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pt 2:7).

To us belongs the role of ***living stones*** (1 Pt 2:5), so alive that we ***participate even in the skill of Jesus the builder***. We are never the dead stones, passive in His hands. The docility and the apostolic task make us active in thinking and acting in the construction of the Church during our earthly life, in every human situation.

We are the shepherds, the sowers, the fishermen, the fathers and the mothers, and we are also the living rocks and builders of the ecclesial structure in every human situation.



The book of the Acts of the Apostles shows us how this process happens. In the narration of the activity of Paul, Peter and the others tell us:

**Acts 9:31** *The church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace. It was being built up and walked in the fear of the Lord, and with the consolation of the holy Spirit it grew in numbers.*

The same Paul:

- understands his ministry as that of the builder (Rom 15:20);
- for this he takes as a criterion of life not only to avoid that which is sinful but even those which are not for the edification of the community (**1 Cor 10:23-24** *"Everything is lawful," but not everything is beneficial....*)
- discerns among the charisms those which serve for the edification of the community (**1 Cor 14:2-4** *For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to human beings but to God, ...*)
- understands also the need to modify the sinful structures and not to go back suppressing the novelty transformed by the Gospel. (**Gal 2:18** *But if I am building up again those things that I tore down...*)

In the centuries of Christianity the seed of the Gospel bore fruits in many structures, it made the Church and the Christian culture. It generated institutions like hospitals, schools, orphanages, social works, scientific and technological progress, awareness of rights etc.

There are names which are well known and others are anonymous for us, but present in the memory of God.

The human process is never static nor definitive, the creative dynamism of the Christians is always stimulated to discern and give the necessary responses. Even in our case in the places of mission where the Church has to be planted from its roots, where the Church is alive and where the Church had flourished and generated structures, but today are weak, in crisis or are losing their nature.

**12.- *How do we exercise our identity as pastors, sowers, fishermen, fathers and mothers, living rocks, builders of the community and structures which are truly human and Christian.?***

Let us recall that the heart of man is made for God which searches God even without knowing Him and without being aware. The human heart needs to perceive God, in whatever way to make myself aware that only He satisfies human desires.

The start of the response to **secularism** is in the desire for God, innate in man, placed by God himself.

It is necessary to find the signs of God. It is our turn to offer a religious style of life, a personality pregnant with faith, eloquent gestures and signs of Christianity.

Love lived makes one experience the attraction for the beauty and the goodness in healthy relationships and of disinterested service.

To show with facts the recognition of human dignity, discover in man his true image which many times has been insulted. This is the response to the culture of death of the **Father** and to the suspicion of **Power**.

The clear gestures of love that makes radiate its origin in Jesus reawakens the radical need for sonship which is innate in man, overcoming the fear of a fatherhood that frustrates.

These same acts of love, removing the prejudices and suspicions of a Power that desire to dominate, are those which can heal the hardness of the heart and open it to the bond of **communion**.

When love and religiosity open the heart and manifest that its origin is the Crucified Christ then the sense of **sin** and the sense of **redemption** appear. And so, it is discovered the horizon of the evil and the injustice in the world.

The discovery of the Risen Christ opens the understanding that we are called to a life more worthy, more full, beyond the dominion of evil and death. In communion with the Blessed Virgin Mary and with all the saints and martyrs.

This conversion, in the measure that it generates the identity of the Catholic, reawakens the identity of active member of the Church.

The life of the members of the Church does not isolated us from the world. It does not deal with cultivating an *ecclesiocentric* style which draws away from the daily reality. But on the contrary, it deals with the Christianization of life.

That the Church in herself and in her mission in the world, be a house and school of communion with God and among men.

### ***13.- What are the special challenges that we have today in the climate of secularism, of relativism, of the refusal of paternity, the bonds of the service of authority?***

We look at some structure and criteria which would respond to the actual challenges:

- Cultivate relationship from person to person. Help to mature the life of faith with patience. Help to discover the presence of God and start a life of prayer and liturgy.
- To develop sympathy with the youth, seek to understand their field and their language. With great authenticity, and not camouflaging with them. Listen to their restlessness, recall expectations and projects to discern what God is asking as a new way of relating to Him.
- Discover To serve the poor and the sick. Discover the new poverty (the elderly, single person, migrants, etc).
- To be near and to collaborate with social leaders. Not only to ask principally their collaboration for the apostolic activities but first of all collaborate in their social activity.
- To dedicate special attention to vocational discernment. Strengthen the time of novitiate and develop a formation at the level of the contemporaneous culture.
- To take into consideration the diversity of man and woman. Incorporate both of them in the structure with their own profile and promoting an equal protagonism.
- In relating with men and women bring with spontaneity the charism of the consecrated chastity, as a sign of total belonging to the Lord and as a ministry of witnessing of the assumed sexuality.
- To cultivate appreciation for the families, be draw closer to them in order to offer them contact enriched with the consecrated life.
- To bring into the Parish a criteria of unity and diversity. Offer in the parish community the presence of the charism of the consecrated life.
- To integrate oneself in the schools, lyceums and universities. Distinguish oneself for the specific preparation, the spirit of service and communion.
- To integrate oneself in the Basic Ecclesial Communities bringing in criteria of ecclesiology of communion, in unity in diversity. Make present the charism of consecrated life.
- To participate in the means of communication and internet with suitability and identity.
- To be attentive to the new journeys that circumstances present to us. Remember that man is the way of the Church: there are always new human journeys which we make ourselves present, like what Jesus did in the journey to Emmaus.
- To make present in the activities the criteria of peace, ecology, of social inclusion and transcendence.

- That one's religious community be a fraternal house, united in the Love of God and in the mission. There may be a climate of family so as the members could transmit it outside the community.
- To integrate oneself in the common action such as ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.
- To place in relationship faith with the life of the faithful, but being aware that not all can be resolved at this level. We make story but with the transcendental and ecclesiological sense.
- To gain the local modality and culture, but retaining the ecclesial sense and the identity of the charism. When the charism of the Congregation has been assimilated from the source of the Founder, it can be adapted to the diversity without betraying it.
- To cultivate a gaze at the future with hope. Do not stop with what has been reached. People change, circumstances are modified. They are the renewal of challenges.

***14.-The development of Christian life we do between the persecution in the world and the consolation of God through the Holy Spirit (Jn15:18 – 16:15).***

The challenges and the hostilities do not mean that the Lord has abandoned the boat. He is with us; He does not abandon us in our torment.

The same Jesus lived in Gethsemane (Mt 26:38-39; Lk 22:44) and upon the cross the experience of feeling abandoned affectively by the Father (Mt 27:46-50; Mk 15:33-37), in spite of the awareness that He was always united with Him (Jn14:10), and He always listens to Him (Jn11:41-42).

For this He was able to abandon Himself in the hands of the Father (Lk 23:46; Jn 19:30).

He carried out his works without allowing Himself to fall into loneliness and discouragement, surrendering all His life to the Father. What seemed to be a break up from outside, the abandonment of God was in reality His return to the Father, who was always with Him and He never left Him alone. (Jn16:16-33).

For this the Father has raised Him up and He lives gloriously sending us the Spirit of Love, of Light, of Truth, of Consolation and of Peace. (Acts 2:32-33; 3:15; 4:10-11).

In order to live our participation to the works of Jesus which includes the cross and resurrection, it is necessary to cultivate a contemplative prayer. Remaining in contemplation of the face of God will lead us to learn to look at the reality with His eyes.

So, the true face of man appears. Not what we want to project.

We know that Jesus is always with us till the end of time (Mt 28:20). In ***living the ordinary in an extraordinary way***, living the daily life supernaturally: as in the intimacy of the Bride (2 Cor 11:2).

Like the Virgin Bride without blemish who looks in a mirror her fidelity at the face of the Groom (Rev 19-22). This face which is not outlined sufficiently in the Ten Commandments but completes its profile in the Beatitudes. (Mt 5:2-20; Lk 6:20-23).

The search and the acceptance of a minor evil does not belong to us. We are supposed to do always the possible greater good like the ***shepherds, sowers, fishermen, fathers and mothers, living rocks and builders*** in a mission which fascinates us and we cannot abandon it without disregarding to be our own selves. (1 Cor 9:16).

In our mission there is still one profile that is lacking, that which unites all the previous images. We are also ***cultivators***.

The vocational call of Mk 4:26-29 is a participation in the gathering. Because the principal sowing and the profitable growth is done by the Lord with His Spirit. We are not the principal actors, but we are convoked as workers in an activity which is in full swing. It is in this measure of the call that we can say: ***Lord, there is nothing without you, nothing without us.***

## **Attachment 7**

### **INFORMATIVO N. 2**

*20 giugno 2009*

*Mary meditated in her heart  
all that she assimilated with what she read,  
saw and heard;  
and she had grown greatly in the faith acquired doing merits,  
how much wisdom were enlightened  
and how much charity was inflamed  
more and more ardently.  
From the Sermon of St Lawrence Justiniani, Bishop.*

Dearest Sisters,

Here we are for the second communication of the intercapitular work done last June 17-19: listening to the reports of the General Government and the nine Circumscriptions. The knowledge of the reality in which the Congregation lives has pushed us to express our gratitude to the Lord for that which, with the commitment of all the sisters, has worked in us for the good of the Church in the different parts of the world in which we live our pastoral care.

It was underlined in every report particularly the common journey of the re-discovery of our Baptism which leads us to live our consecration *in continuous conformation to Christ Shepherd* in response to the objective of the 7th General Chapter.

In our prayer, in the spirit of humility, we presented to the Lord the experience shared in our service of authority, the life of the Circumscriptions with difficulties, the expectations and the hopes of each one.

Last June 18, Fr. Valdir de Castro, Provincial Superior of the SSP of the Argentina-Cile-Peru Province accompanied us with the theme *Communication in the Pastoral Care in the light of the Apostle Paul*. We live in the context of 'diverse communication', thanks to mass media but lesser attention is given to that which is true, the relationship among persons which alone creates communion. The Apostle Paul was a great communicator. In his work of evangelization, he gave importance to personal contact, visit to the communities and when he wrote, he did it to respond to the necessities of the communities. The letters were not end in themselves but they "carry his presence". He was a great communicator because he has a clear message of Jesus, but above all, because he has a personal experience of Jesus.

Saturday June 20, we were enriched by the talk on *The Challenges in the Pastoral Ministry* of Fr. Julio Raul Mendez, a diocesan priest of the Archdiocese of Salta. The Christian message to be shared is not changed, but it has to seep in the varied and difficult situations of life. To make the Word acceptable was not easy for Jesus neither for the Apostles. What is the way to make Jesus' work be accepted? It was not done only with intelligence but with the experience of love. The works of love are the criteria of the Christian identity, *by this they will know you*. Fr. Julio has amplified with significant metaphors the evangelical figures of the shepherd: that of the sower, the fisherman, father and mother, the living rock, the builder, the cultivator, the servant/friend.

From the exposition, we were able to see how the different human situations can be occasions for expressing our charism. He placed the accent on the reality of the young and vocational discernment and also on the

liturgical-sacramental formation which accompanies man along his entire life in which he is introduced gradually in the Paschal Mystery of Christ.

Every after conference, we have worked individually and in groups to gather the queries and the useful elements in the dynamics of pastoral care.

In the evening we received the news of the sudden death of the brother of Sr. Luz Mary. We accompany her and her family with our prayers in this moment of pain in which the Lord has called her to participate in His Paschal Mystery.

Welcoming the invitation of the General Government to the nocturnal adoration which will be concluded with the morning praise on the 'Day of the Lord', we have chosen to remain before the Eucharistic Jesus remembering all of you and the necessities of our Congregation.

For the Intercapitulars  
*Sr Ana Acero e Sr Lucia Varo*

## **Attachment 8**

### **INFORMATIVO N. 3**

*25 giugno 2009*

Jesus said to his disciples:

“ Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who builds his house on rock, the rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock . . . ”

*From the Liturgy of the day*

Dearest Sisters,

*Not anyone who says “Lord, Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven but only he who puts himself humbly before the Lord to search his will and accomplishes it. For us Pastorelle, this means to gaze always at Jesus Good Shepherd and in Him, the rock of salvation, to render our faith strong in our life and that of our Religious Family.*

The Word of God inserts us always in the climate of discernment which we are living in this phase of the Interchapter and asks us to reflect on some arguments of common interest.

Sunday, June 21, the first day of the week, we had a pilgrimage to the Basilica dedicated to Our Lady of Lujan, patroness of Argentina. We have celebrated the Eucharist together with a great number of people who came to venerate the Virgin Mary. We presented to the Lord the Lord, through the hands of Mary, every Sister of the Congregation and we have prayed for vocations. On coming back, we had lunch with the sisters of the two communities of San Miguel which was a great moment of joyful fraternity.

In the afternoon, we have resumed the Intercapitular works. We were invited to a climate of discernment in order to be illumined by the Spirit on the first argument of common interest: *The Sense of Belonging to our Religious Family today* and to share in the group the important elements which are necessary to reinforce and transmit it. We continued to consider the theme on the sense of belonging even on the next day, Monday June 22, through other arguments of common interest.

Tuesday 23, we reflected with the same methodology on the theme: *To Acquire in our hearts and in our thoughts the evangelical poverty and its ways*. The materials prepared by the General Government and the General Economic Project facilitated the reflection.

Wednesday 24, the morning was dedicated for the cultural visit of Buenos Aires in order to know the city. In the afternoon, we visited the community and the editorial office of the Society of St Paul at the center of Buenos Aires. Our brother Paulines have welcomed us wholeheartedly and they showed us their workplace. The presentation of the new system of organization which they have been experiencing for some years now and has centralized the editorial and the financial system of their Book Centers among which is the Bookstore on-line was interesting.

Today, Thursday 25, we continued the reflection on: *The Pauline Cooperators of the Pastorelle, some urgent pastoral innovation (new ways): migration, ecumenism, new missionary openings*. The outcome of the reflection and the research will be objects for further discernment in order to arrive at some concrete choices.

We have concluded the day with the Vespers. Greetings and support of prayers are continuously arriving from the communities: from our hearts we thank you. Fraternally,

For the Intercapitulars,  
Sr Ana Acero e Sr Lucia Varo



**INFORMATIVO N. 4**

*28 giugno 2009*

“But even if you should suffer because of righteousness,  
blessed are you. Do not be afraid or terrified  
with fear of them, but sanctify Christ  
as Lord in your hearts.

Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone  
who asks you for a reason for your hope.”

1 Pt 3, 14

Dearest Sisters,

By now the Intercapitular works have arrived at its completion. We can truly praise and thank Jesus Good Shepherd who has been with us with his Light and his Grace. We were united by the reciprocal closeness in prayer which we felt the strength and the richness of its fruits.

June 26 and 27, we synthesized what emerged in the reflections of the Intercapitular sessions arriving at an outline of the common journey of the Congregation for the next years: 2009-2011.

Starting from the objective of the 7<sup>th</sup> General Chapter - which inserted us greatly in the journey of *conformation to Christ Shepherd* and is asking us to qualify *the ministry of pastoral care* - during these years we have particularly took care of the spiritual life putting at the center the Word of God, the Eucharist, the prayer of discernment for a renewed pastoral mission.

Now, continuing in this journey of conformation we are invited to manifest with more conviction in daily life, *the reason of hope which is in us*: revitalizing our religious profession, manifesting a great sense of belonging to the Congregation expressing with *zeal* the pastoral care in the *triple work* reread today.

We welcome the opening of the *Year for Priests* as a time of grace and another occasion to deepen the charismatic reality of the Pastorelle in the midst of God's people. Another privileged opportunity is the *Seminar on pastoral care* (June 2010), during which we will reflect on the theme of the pastoral mission which will lead us to the 8<sup>th</sup> General Chapter.

Today, June 28, we approved the synthesis of the common orientations for the whole Congregation. We welcomed the concluding message of the superior general, Sr. Marta Finotelli. In the final prayer, we had a very significant moment, in which the sign done at the opening of the Interchapter

was repeated, mentioning the names of the sisters who are alive and of those who are already in heaven. Then we formed the icon of *Jesus Pantocrator* with the pieces of puzzle given to us at the beginning of the Intercapitular assembly wherein at the back was written chapter 12 of the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans, a visual expression of the journey of communion among us. Thanks to all for the nearness in prayer and for the messages and greetings.

On this day, the celebration is made more significant of gratitude and praise for the religious profession of the novice Romina Paola Jalil of the delegation ARG-BO. We wish that she may live in true joy and fidelity the Pastorella vocation that the Lord has given her. This greeting goes also to novice Analiesis Leslie of the delegation CO-VE-ME who will make her first religious profession tomorrow 29 June, in Bogotá (Colombia).

With trust we invoke Mary, Mother of the Good Shepherd, with her help and in following the footsteps of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, may our Congregation offer to the world a witness of unity and of courageous dedication to the Gospel of Christ.

Faternally

In the name of the Intercapitulars  
*Sr Ana Acero e Sr Lucia Varo*





Generalate  
Rome, September 2009