

Eucharistic celebration at the end of IX General Chapter

(Acts 18,23-28; Ps 46; Jn 16,23-28)

Initial greeting

With the help of the Spirit and at the conclusion of this 9th General Chapter, we gather to thank the Father for the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus. We thank Him for giving us the grace to confirm ourselves in the unity of the Pauline charism in our diverse sensibilities, for having rekindled in us the knowledge of the abundant riches which we have received throughout the story of the Congregation, for having reaffirmed the value of the “marvelous Pauline Family”, for having experienced the spiritual and human support of the prayers of all, and for having offered encouragement in the numerous messages of greetings that have come.

At the conclusion of this 9th General Chapter we are sure of having written only the introduction of a piece of story that comprises the next six years and that includes in 2014 the celebration of the centenary of the birth of the Pauline charism in its core cell of “preaching with the written word side by side with the oral”. This is realized with the spirituality and missionary style of St. Paul.

Returning to our Circumscriptions spread in five continents, we ask the Spirit of Christ to make us the first to communicate to all our Brothers the contents of the capitular decisions and to also be the first to put into practice what we have decided together. To be worthy collaborators of the Spirit in this work of transmission and of faith, we ask pardon for our limitations and insufficiencies.

Homily

At the end of the works of the 9th General Chapter of our Congregation, with all the experience of common life that we have shared, we reflect on the passages of the Word of God that has been proclaimed.

The **First reading** (Acts 12:23-38) focuses our attention on Apollo, a Jew originally from Alessandria, educated, expert in Scriptures, who in Ephesus preaches about Christ “with accuracy”. He is original because he speaks of Christ with competence, “although he only knew the baptism of John”.

There was a Christian couple among the listeners of Apollo, **Priscilla and Aquila**, Jews who were expelled by an imperial edict from Rome and who hosted St. Paul. After listening to Apollo “*they spoke with him and explained to him more accurately the way of God*”. Enriched by this catechesis, Apollo went to Achaia and his biblical culture and rhetoric ability in preaching became very useful for the believers.

The community of the first Christians described in Acts consisted of the “preachers” of Christ, different in what they offer, but everyone were witnesses of the resurrection: the apostles, including Paul, the seven deacons, Stephen and Philip, some prophets, doctors of the community of Antioch, priests, itinerant preachers, like Apollo, Priscilla and Aquila.

Already in the community of Corinth (cfr. 1Cor 14), St Paul intervened strongly to harmonize the diverse charisms of the community. He was safeguarding, with the image of the unity if the different functions of the body, the necessity of diversity and not uniformity.

For almost a hundred years, through Blessed James Alberione, we have received a “charism” that, with the work of the 9th General Chapter, we willed to rekindle in creative fidelity. We are proud to have reaffirmed our “faith” in the Pauline charism of working at valorizing the specific mission which we want to continue to offer the church of today: **with the spirituality and apostolic method of St Paul, to evangelize in communication with communication.**

Apollo, with his cultural ability to understand and explain the Sacred Scripture, succeeds in being a preacher of Christ. He uses an original way of interpreting the Scriptures to show that Christ

is the awaited Messiah. By analogy and applying to us Paulines the style of preaching of Apollo, we can say that it is with communication that we want to preach Christ: it is an experience of personal and communitarian faith which we translate in the contents, the languages, the categories and the typical values of communication of today. Our charism allows for a “new” incarnation of Christ that Christ may be understood in the complexity of communication.

The passage of the First letter, likewise, offers a second application. The story of the Church, from the first Christian communities until today, has successively worked on the classifications of the types of witnesses of Christ. It has arrived at a division of roles within the ecclesial community that, in some epoch, with its rigidity, has centered the work of evangelization only by priests.

With the successive foundations that form the Pauline Family, from the original nucleus of **“written preaching side by side with oral preaching”**, Blessed Alberione mobilized all the states of life for evangelization: priests, laity, consecrated, nuns, laity who live consecration in secularity, spouses and cooperators.

Taking the opportunity of the **Year of Priests** which the Church is celebrating, the 9th General Chapter strongly invites the Pauline Family to rediscover the variety of “Pauline priesthood” which knows how to contribute to make the Pauline priesthood efficient with the diversity of their ministerial forms and apostolates.

In the passage of the **Gospel** (Jn 16:23b-28), the risen Christ speaks in a new way to his disciples: *“These things I have said to you are in parables, but time will come when I will not speak in parables but I will speak openly”*. The mission of Christ physically ends with his return to the Father and with the sending of the Spirit which allows every baptized person to turn to God and call him “Father”.

The whole work of evangelisation of the Church must be realised on the model of Christ who have lived and taught a **new way of living the faith**. It is an interpersonal relation between the human person and the three Persons of the Trinity. The mission of Christ offers every human existence the possibility of a direct relationship with God. A faith lived “in spirit and truth”, not made opaque nor heavy by mediators who make the structures that have ends in themselves indispensable and religious practices that become gestures which are almost magical or superstitious.

As Paulines we have received the gift of living a spirituality capable of allowing every type of communicator, to encounter God also immersed in his universe of values and communicative technologies. The 9th General Chapter reaffirms, above all, the necessity of preaching the integral Christ and of speaking of all the human reality in a Christian way with forms of communication which we have inherited from the Founder and which are consolidated with the development of Mass Media in the XX century. At the same time the Chapter firmly invites, above all the young generation of Paulines, to understand and use the digital communication of the XXI century respecting its originality: not as “instrument” of communication but “locus of life”, “parallel world”, “new mentality”.

For this communication understood as a “new way of being”, Paulines have the duty of helping, even with reflection and research, the Church that Benedict XVI, on the occasion of the 44th World Day of Social Communications, mobilized for the evangelization through information network. If we want to work for the quest of God, with the sense of faith, with religious convictions, with the organizations of the Church, with the sacraments, with dogmas, with revelation, with tradition and eternal truths on the web, we must be convinced that the communicative model which has sustained a “teaching ministry”, is not useful in the communicative style of the web. In the logic of the web we find a place only for an offer, for a proposal, for a **“ministry of witness”** because the witnesses do not speak of themselves but are transparent to allow glimpses of something else.

Even in this opening of the Congregation to a project of **“new evangelisation”** in digital communication, the 9th General Chapter encourages all Paulines in the world with the words of Blessed Alberione: *“Forward! Always move forward!”*... Measure the heights and the depths, the length and the width of the Pauline Mission” (*Vademecum, 1330*).

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