



FINAL MESSAGE

XXXVIII MEETING OF THE GENERAL GOVERNMENTS OF THE PAULINE FAMILY ONLINE

THE LAITY IN THE PAULINE FAMILY FOR MISSION CHALLENGES TO EVANGELIZATION IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

Dear brothers and sisters of the Pauline Family,

At the end of the 38th Meeting of our General Governments, we are writing to share with you some of the wealth we received in these days.¹ For the first time in 38 years, due to the physical distancing imposed by the ongoing pandemic, this encounter took place in an unprecedented way. Not only because of the use of the *Zoom* digital platform, to which we were all connected, but above all because of the numerous and varied presences of some of the delegates from our Aggregated Institutes, and also our Pauline Cooperator sisters and brothers. In fact, their international participation expanded the borders of this Family gathering, fulfilling the vision of Blessed James Alberione, who reminded us that “*our parish is the whole world.*”

We share, as **links**, some of the themes that emerged from the contributions to which we listened. The **first link** is to inhabit suffering—the collective suffering inflicted by Covid-19—not by simply bearing it but by questioning it and allowing ourselves to be instructed by it as by a teacher of life. Learning as disciples is the characteristic attitude of those who live with their gaze fixed on Jesus, Way, Truth and Life, and who relate to him as the sole Master, the beautiful and good Shepherd. This maxim, reiterated by Prof. Stefano Zamagni, an economist, echoed the lesson of life that pedagogue Chiara Scardicchio recounted to us. We are therefore paradoxically living in a time of grace that offers us the opportunity to rediscover the best in ourselves. To rediscover humility as truth, as a healthy “keeping our feet on the ground” so as to root ourselves in what is truly worthwhile. To exercise prudence in order to look ahead with vision and *parrhesia*. And, finally, to beware of the arrogance of centralization—an insidious danger for those invested with the responsibility of governing who fail to cultivate the culture of subsidiarity. Instead, to move ahead more and more in the synodal style of solidarity.

We are all caught up in the same storm, but we are certainly not all in the same boat: in fact, the results of this pandemic are not the same for everyone. The split in society is widening dangerously. It is imperative that we remain aware that we are interconnected on the social, political, economic and humanitarian levels. Thus emerges the **second link** between the proposal of Prof. Stefano Zamagni and the vision outlined in broad terms by the President of the European Parliament, the Honorable David Sassoli, who insists that the way out of this emergency lies in seeking and adopting common solutions.

The **third link** can be found in the recommendation to avoid abdicating the Pauline vocation of “*studiosità*,” understood as a love of research, as the courage to produce quality thinking that will help cultivate a new humanism in and around us. This reconfirms our need to dedicate time and energy to cultural formation in order to make up for the loss of teachers, which was underscored with concern.

The critiques presented made us cognizant of a rampant poverty about which the media speak little but which bears within itself nefarious consequences on the human plane, namely: the consequences of the pandemic on ecclesial life. Although on the institutional level the gestures and words of Pope

¹ The talks will be accessible on the www.alberione.org web site.

Francis and of some wise Pastors continue to resonate as a prophetic warning, on the pastoral level an alarming drift is underway in particular Churches. Certainly, at least in the Western Churches of the northern hemisphere, the bell towers “collapsed” a long time ago, but now, because of the pandemic, the consciousness of being a community—a people gathered in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—is evaporating. And the results are there for all to see: in the sacramental life, in the fields of education and aggregation, in parish life. This is a theme that Prof. Marco Ronconi, a theologian, also discussed, but from a different perspective. The profound question of spirituality and meaning that was repeatedly raised opened our eyes to the disintegration of the awareness of being “ecclesia,” and therefore community, since the Lord brings those who are animated by the same Spirit into the same house. Here is the **fourth link**. It is up to us to choose whether to let time slip through our fingers like dry and sterile sand, or to treat it like a seed pregnant with new life (cf. Thomas Merton).

Prof. Ronconi then presented us with “the Church to come” from a lay person’s point of view, that is, as a baptized person, and therefore, like us and with us, part of God’s faithful. From this “people’s perspective,” we were invited to face reality as persons who have learned first of all to love it, not only explain or resolve it. Thus Prof. Andrea Grillo, a theologian specializing in Liturgy, with his input from the stance of “blessing,” that is, a positive reading of what is happening in our lives and in the public and private manifestations of the Christian faith, helped us discover the sacramental dimension of what we are living. Globally, *hands, face* and *space* have become not only catchwords associated with health protection, but also indicate a direct experience for recovering the quality of human relationships with God, with creation and with others. If the pandemic is currently forcing us to distance ourselves in space, then let us make our own the axiom of Pope Francis: “time is greater than space,” so as to rediscover in compulsory distancing alternative opportunities for relationships that build communion. This is the **fifth link**.

The **sixth link** is the theme of adulthood, which came up again and again transversally in all the interventions at which we assisted. The Church, society, young people, politics, culture and spirituality need adult, generative believers, which means people who have credibility and who are capable of authorizing others to creatively invest the inheritance they received. This is the same thing Jesus Master teaches us: those who lose their life (do not keep it for self) for my sake and the sake of the Gospel will find it (cf. Mt. 16:25), and will have abundant life (cf. Jn 10:10).

The online round table, coordinated by Fr. Vito Fracchiolla, SSP Vicar General, in which five Pauline Cooperators from different countries took part: Christin Jezak (California, USA), Rosane Manfro (Brazil), Lourdes Pechuela (Philippines), Antonietta Rago (Italy) and Mireille Yav Manyong (Democratic Republic of Congo), was a very effective tool for dialogue and mutual listening. With a responsible sense of belonging to the Pauline Family, these participants asked for continued Cooperator presence in the meetings in order to get to know one another, form themselves and share the mission of the PF by means of concrete projects.

We are aware that the Pauline Family, an ecclesial presence composed of baptized persons who live the common Christian vocation in different states of life—lay, religious and the ordained ministry—is challenged to respond to the new questions that are emerging. It is necessary to set in motion a courageous hermeneutical process for updating our unique charism in obedience to the Spirit of God and to the questions of the people of our time. It is up to us to express their questions well and to be attentive, without too many interpretative filters, to the voices of those everywhere who are seeking life and salvation, even without knowing it.

We are grateful to the Lord for what we lived during these days and for the rich and pro-active presence of all. We thank the Secretaries General who prepared the Meeting and all those who conducted it with human warmth, courtesy and professionalism. With affectionate greetings in Jesus Master,

Rome, 11 January 2021

THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE 38TH MEETING
OF THE GENERAL GOVERNMENTS
OF THE PAULINE FAMILY