



FINAL MESSAGE

XXXIV MEETING OF THE GENERAL GOVERNMENTS OF THE PAULINE FAMILY

EVANGELII GAUDIUM QUESTIONS THE PAULINE FAMILY IN COMMUNION FOR MISSION: PASTORAL ACTION

FSP St. Paul House
Rome, 9-11 January 2017

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

With joy we are writing to you at the end of our 34th Annual Meeting of the General Governments of the Pauline Family. Once again we had the grace of questioning ourselves *all together* with boldness and hope as to how to prophetically respond to the mandate to communicate the Gospel to contemporary humanity in a Church profoundly marked by the prophetic magisterium of Pope Francis.

Continuing the reflection we began last year on the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, we took a closer look at the dimension of pastoral action—a theme particularly close to the heart of our Founder and an aspect that characterizes the apostolates of our religious Family, as Fr. Valdir José De Castro, Superior General of the Society of St. Paul, underscored in his introductory address.

Guided by Sr. Elena Bosetti, sjbp, and Fr. Giacomo Perego, ssp, we focused our attention on the pastoral vision of the Apostles Peter and Paul, taking several New Testament texts as a point of departure and discovering in them a number of particularly significant challenges. Some of these were: the indispensable need to live our mission by working in communion, resisting the temptation to close ourselves within individualistic horizons; openness to the signs of the times; the effort to make the most of diversities, and attention to the peripheries. All this requires a continual process of *conversion of mind*, or, as St. Peter put it: to *gird up the loins of our mind* (cf. 1 Pt. 1:13), that is, to prepare ourselves mentally to move ahead; to give a reason for our hope; to provoke questions thanks to the testimony of “another way of living”; to serve. In fact, pastoral action springs from love and requires a life anchored in the Word, in the testimony of joy and hope, in humility and gentleness, in maternity and tenderness. The true protagonist of every pastoral activity is the Holy Spirit. His presence in us helps us to recognize and appreciate the fruitfulness that is hidden even in our “failures.”

Our second day was enlightened by the reflection of Brother Enzo Biemmi, a member of the Congregation of the Brothers of the Holy Family, who spoke on the theme “Pastoral Action in *Evangelii Gaudium*” emphasizing that this is the key to interpreting the whole magisterium of Pope Francis. According to Br. Biemmi, the Apostolic Exhortation is the “apostolic frame” for the Church of today, and the sides of that frame are joy, mission, history and the Holy Spirit.

The pastoral dimension of *Evangelii Gaudium* emerges in the language used a language that is *implicative*, because it involves the announcer in an existential way; *hospitable*, because it always takes into consideration and welcomes the interlocutor, and *significant*, because it reveals the Good News, the mercy of God. This dimension also emerges in the *content* of the announcement, where “pastoral action” signifies a return to essentials (*kerygma*), a hierarchy of truths, and graduality.

These talks are already posted on the www.alberione.org website and we warmly invite you to use them for reading and meditation.

During an exchange of ideas, which took place in small groups into which the participants were divided according to their areas of competence, there emerged the need to continue reflection on this subject and also to seek together for ways to live and express as a Family our role as prophets in the sphere of pastoral action in the Church and world of today.

As is by now traditional, the last day of our meeting was dedicated to informing the group about the initiatives each Congregation carried out or is planning to carry out in the near future—a sharing session that fired us with enthusiasm for these new activities and projects, and also the preparations for the upcoming General Chapters of the Pious Disciples and Pastorelle Sisters. We also received more detailed information about what is being organized on the central level to celebrate the *Centenary of the Pauline Cooperators*—to whom we send our best wishes and our thanks for their important presence and testimony among us—and an update concerning the *Charism Course of the Pauline Family*, the situation of the canonical processes of our saints, and the renewal of the www.albeirone.org web site.

Finally, we enthusiastically welcomed the initiative of Pope Francis, who, in his Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et Misera*, invites us to incite the faithful “to become living vessels for the transmission of God’s Word” (n. 7). In view of this, we felt it would be opportune for the Pauline Family to observe September as a “Biblical and Missionary Month.” The Superiors General will soon be sending all our circumscription governments a letter detailing this proposal.

Grateful to the Lord for all that he sowed in us in these days and aware of the great gift of belonging to our marvelous Family, which is called to proclaim the Gospel of mercy to everyone, we send you our warmest greetings and reciprocal best wishes of grace and peace.

Affectionately in Christ our Master and Shepherd,

Rome, 11 January 2017

**THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE XXXIV MEETING
OF THE GENERAL GOVERNMENTS OF THE PAULINE FAMILY**