

## INTRODUCTION

*Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan*

*Preaching consists in that activity,  
so intense and fruitful,  
which is “communicating to others  
what one has contemplated” (EG 150).*

It is a joy for me to introduce this important congregational event that will offer us the opportunity to penetrate the heart of the Pauline vocation and rediscover the value of the creative-editorial moment of our apostolate.

My thanks to all of you for having accepted the invitation to participate in this very variegated assembly. We truly represent the Pauline world and we feel that we have been called here to feel once again, all together, the prophetic energy of our vocation: in fact, the writing/editorial apostolate is a fundamental expression of our mission, and the Founder has sketched out for us very inspired apostolic orientations in this sphere.

This Encounter is in continuity with those held on the continental level in 2011-2012 when, in view of drawing up a *Global Apostolic Project*, attention was focused on the diffusion stage and in a special way on our book centers.

Continuing this itinerary, our 10<sup>th</sup> General Chapter urged us to:

Rediscover the importance of the creative stage and give thrust to editorial work—“the essence of the apostolate” and the fruit of prayer, study, reflection and collaboration. To invest new Pauline strength in the various forms of editorial work, taking care to make good choices of content and authors, and to upgrade our editorial sectors so that they will respond always better to new pastoral needs.

In the *Planning of the General Government for 2014-2019*, two lines of action were identified as ways of responding to this priority:

- a) the programming of continental meetings for the apostolate-economy centered on the creative stage, as a further phase of our *Global Apostolic Project*;
- b) the commitment to favoring the development of writing skills beginning with the first stages of formation.

Considering the need to reach concrete and shared objectives, as you yourselves suggested, we opted to hold a single International Encounter to reflect together on our commitment to writing/editorial work as an eminent expression of our Pauline teaching ministry; clarify the image of our Pauline publishing houses in the context of current transformations; reflect more deeply—in the light of our charismatic principles—on the content, recipients and communication methods to adopt so as to respond to the demands of evangelization today; and set down *publishing guidelines*.

At the Interchapter Meeting, celebrated 2 years ago, we observed how, in these years, a new impetus was given to the creative moment, privileging the texts written by FSPs and making a more careful choice of content to be published in response to the real needs of our recipients, in line with

ecclesial directives and with the Pauline characteristics of pastoral work. This also led to progress in our multimedia publishing apostolate and a deeper sense of responsibility to evangelizing in the digital world.

However, we feel the need to improve the quality of this apostolic sphere so as to disseminate “Pauline thought” and favor the missionary “turnaround” that we all desire.

### ***Starting from the Tradition of the Institute...***

Already in the Capitular Documents, fruit of our Special General Chapter (1969-1971), it was affirmed that our every apostolic action has its origin in the creative stage (cf. CD 105). In just a few words, the Documents synthesize the whole tradition of our Institute, which has always identified the writing/editorial apostolate as the heart of our mission.

To rediscover *the creative dimension, and consequently the biblical, catechetical and ecumenical dimensions* [of our apostolate] is one of the “dreams” that also accompanies us in this time of preparation for our upcoming Chapter. “Rediscover” because it is above all a matter of revisiting the history of our Congregation so as to grasp the Founder’s foresight in entrusting to us such an exciting mission in the Church and for having encouraged and incited us to move toward always vaster horizons. In his first editorial for *Way, Truth and Life magazine*, Fr. Alberione wrote: “We are indebted to everyone by nature of our vocation, in keeping with the example of St. Paul and the heart of Jesus Christ, our Divine Master.”

In the thought and directives of the Founder, there emerges from the outset the goal of preparing “sister-writers” associated to the mission of the priest, and therefore academically well prepared. At the basis of this preparation he initially envisaged the sisters finishing high school and then going on to obtain a teaching certificate in elementary education. This would be followed by [in-house] courses in philosophy and theology corresponding to the university studies of the seminarians. Sr. Luigina Borrano recalled that, already in the first FSP canonical novitiate (1929), Primo Maestro repeatedly declared that among them would be young women who would work in the writing/editorial sector alongside the priests.

And in 1932, the Founder underscored forcefully:

It is necessary that the Daughters of St. Paul receive an education that enables them to fulfill their duties. Among these, writing holds the first place. In fact, at the basis of an appealing radio talk, an interesting news article, an attractive magazine, a drama or a film that moves the audience to applause, there must be the hard work of hours and hours at the writing desk. In the Church of Christ, there must be apostles who, almost buried alive, place the pen at the service of God in silence and solitude, after having dipped it in a heart overflowing with love (*Mi protendo in avanti*, pp. 415-416).

In February 1936, Fr. Alberione announced several “noteworthy steps” that the Pauline Family had to take “in order to correspond to the plan of God.” One of these was the formation of FSP writers.

He said insistently to the first Daughters of St. Paul:

Your years are not useless; every year, in fact, you conquer a part of your mission and climb the “mountain of God” on which the Divine Master wishes to speak to you. He says to you: “You are the light of the world.” You must burn like a lamp, and consume yourselves like a lamp does. Consume your physical strength and all your energies for the Lord so that all people will come to know him.... You must aim at all costs at writing, by means of studies done well (FSP36, p. 491).

In July 1938, Primo Maestro wrote with joy, mingled with a little apprehension about the future:

Your wealth does not lie in fields and houses. Your true wealth lies in your editions—the books you write. Let us promise to persevere in using the pen.... A beautiful homage to St. Paul would be [to offer

him] a small gold or silver pen in thanksgiving for his fourteen Letters, as a prayer and a promise. This resolution should be included in your examination of conscience as one of the principal duties of your state and of your Congregation. The Lord will ask you to render an account of it.... (CVV 72).

And thus a pen, symbol of the writing apostolate, was lovingly placed on the tomb of the Apostle Paul on 25 January 1939.

“The grace of the [Pauline] vocation” was at work in our littleness, allowing us to accomplish wonderful things. Through [the Institute’s] publishing, catechetical and multimedia centers, the Daughters of St. Paul disseminated the extraordinary experience of light and grace that the Council was proposing and they accompanied and supported the [Church’s] renewal in the biblical, liturgical and catechetical fields.

Looking back over our history, we admire the humble courage of the many sisters who dedicated themselves tirelessly to the writing apostolate in general and to catechetical writing in particular; their fatiguing studies and their constant search to find new paths for the Gospel. And we marvel at the Founder’s insistence on promoting the writing mission, especially in the area of catechesis, as “the first and fundamental apostolic activity,” constantly reminding the sisters of its indispensable cornerstones: the centrality of Christ, Way, Truth and Life and the totality of the message to be communicated. He himself entrusted various series of books to the Daughters of St. Paul, such as for example, biographies of the Popes, the works of the Fathers of the Church, the Acts of the Holy See, illustrated books for children, books for the formation of youth and all the different catechetical series.

Also important were the initiatives proposed by the Founder to Prima Maestra in order to guarantee a fruitful and continuous editorial production: we can mention here the establishment of the *Sala San Paolo* (1937), the Community of FSP Writers (1952) and the Office of Pauline Editions (1957).

### ***The Woman Apostle-Writer: A Flame of the Spirit***

When Fr. Alberione spoke of the writing/editorial apostolate, he was particularly inspired. On 19 December 1954, he said to the FSP writers of Grottaferrata:

May the first [FSP] writers be not only holy, but *very* holy.... It was God who called you here, who put the pen in your hand. It is as if you were taking notes from God and then writing. Go to church, go to the Visit, ask the Lord what he wants you to say. Then write! Draw from the Mass, communion, the Tabernacle...then write! St. Augustine spent hours before the Tabernacle, his head almost resting on the altar rail.... Take above all from God. Feel the Lord! May your work become an apostolic work: “*opus fac evangelistae*” (“the work of an evangelist”)!

We placed you under the dome so that the Holy Spirit might descend upon you. May each one of you be like a flame. If this is not the case, you will find your work dry and your heart empty. Your pen will seem like it does not want to write....

Remain under the action of the Holy Spirit; pray to the Queen of Apostles.... You must love each other very much, otherwise you will be like golden threads separated from one another. You must all be united; you must consider yourselves an important part of the Institute.... I would like you to feel the delicacy of your office.... Feel it! Recite the Litany for the formation of writers.... At times you might feel far away, separated [from the other sisters], but it is necessary for you to remain here. If this house had not been built, then the Institute would have to take serious steps to set it up. Remain here so as to find your inspiration in Jesus and you will see that he will do great things for you, like he did for St. Teresa and St. Catherine....

In our times too, the 10<sup>th</sup> General Chapter urged us to “rediscover the teaching nature of our Institute,” so as to offer everyone “the charity of the truth” in the world of communications:

Inasmuch as we are a *teaching Institute*, we must be “a light; a city on a mountaintop to which everyone looks.” By reason of this vocation, “the most beautiful one and the one best suited to the

times,” we have to continually “read, study, make progress and learn” because “we must accompany the contemporary world, which is always evolving; respond to its objections and give it proper nourishment, according to its mentality today.” Nevertheless, the apostolate “must always be accompanied by humility. It is necessary to remember that “it is not those who plant nor those who water who bring things to completion; it is God who does this” (CD 14).

***So that the pen will “sing” in our hands...***

May the memory of this history help us rediscover, in the grace of our vocation, fresh enthusiasm and renewed courage to move ahead with a prophetic spirit and be, in the Church, those apostles of the Word who proclaim with joy and hope “the abundant riches” with which we have been gratuitously filled.

May the Spirit enable us to be like “antennas,” ready to detect the seeds of innovation and good that he is raising up in our time too.

May he enable us to make the most of our publishing centers so that they will become places for the elaboration of thought, cultural commitment and study (cf. VC 98); places where Pauline apostolic mysticism can be lived more authentically because one perceives more intensely the need to be channels of grace.

May he give us the ardent heart of St. Paul, the enamored “troubadour” of Christ....

In 1934, Fr. Alberione urged the SSP writers (and he would say the same thing to us today):

O priest-writers, let us write after the Holy Mass and transform ourselves into channels through which the blood of Christ flows from his heart into ours, fills it, and when it is brimming over, then pours it out over our readers....

O priest-writer, the fruit [of your apostolate] depends more on your knees than on your pen; more on your Mass than on your technical skills; more on your examination of conscience than on your knowledge! (SP, 15.12.1934)

My heartfelt thanks to the sisters who, over our 100-year history, have kept alive and shining the flame of the writing and catechetical apostolates—a flame that we hope will continue to irradiate the light of faith and hope to humanity today.