
*On-Going Formation for
Pauline Cooperators*

“Be Imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” (1 Cor 11:1)

Group Study Program - (Total time: two hours)

Session Theme: Paul: Model of Pauline Spirituality

Points to Cover:

- Paul as Interpreter of the Divine Master
- Paul’s Universal Spirit
- Paul’s Zeal for the Apostolate
- Paul: A Person of Balance and Equilibrium

You will need:

- A Bible
- Music (instrumental or vocal)

Introduction:

The Apostle Paul holds a central point in our spirituality. He is not just another saint that we pray to. He is our “father” and even our “founder”. Blessed Alberione tells us: “Everyone must regard Saint Paul the Apostle alone as father, teacher, exemplar and founder. It is so. In fact the Pauline Family was born through him, it was he who nourished it and raised it up, its spirit is from him.”¹

¹ Alberione, *Abundantes*, 2.

St. Paul is the “fulcrum” if you will, he is the “necessary passage” that we need in order to interpret the mission given us by God.² Christ is the perfect original; Paul is the most faithful “form.” And it is through Paul that we, too, can be “formed” or “shaped” into Christ.³ And Fr. Alberione always said of St. Paul, “As he has done, so you must do.”⁴ Thus Paul is essential for us in our quest to “live in and of Christ,” for he shows us how to do it! (1 Cor.11: 1) He models for us how to live in and of the Pauline Spirit in the following ways:

The opening invocation

Leader: Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life,

Response: Have mercy on us.

Leader: Mary, Queen of Apostles,

Response: Pray for us.

Leader: St. Paul the Apostle,

Response: Pray for us.

An appropriate hymn is sung or played...

Invite the participants to silent prayer and reflection, placing themselves in the presence of God, and if the Blessed Sacrament is present, you may pray the following:

I believe my God that I am in your presence, that you are looking at me and listening to my prayers. You are so great and so holy. I adore You. You have given me all. I thank You. You have been so offended by me. I ask Your pardon with all my heart. You are so merciful and I ask you for all the graces which You know are beneficial to me...

Honoring Jesus Truth

(Time Allotted: 25 minutes)

² Roatta, p.4.

³ Alberione, *Anima e Corpo*, 37.

⁴ Giacomo Alberione, *Predicazione Umilata' e Altre Virtu' 658*, as quoted in Roatta, *Punti di Riferimento*, Ariccia, 1973.

Paul Master as Interpreter of the Divine

First of all Paul was able to penetrate not only the teachings, but the very heart of Christ. For Paul took the Gospel that he received from Jesus, he profoundly meditated and reflected upon it, and then he applied it to the concrete situations of his day. Thus with “Saint Paul, one finds the Disciple whose knowledge of the Divine Master is complete; he lives the whole Christ; he scrutinizes in depth the mysteries of his doctrine, of his heart, of his sanctity, and of his humanity and divinity... he presents the whole Christ to us as he had already proclaimed himself to be: Way, Truth and Life...”⁵ And so we too, learning from our father, profoundly meditate on the Person of Jesus and assimilate his Gospel, adapting it to our contemporary world. And we do this so that “all may have life, and have it to the full.”

Silent Reflection

Paul’s Universal Spirit

Universality is an essential mark of Paul's mission and is a direct consequence of the mandate he received from Christ to announce the Good News to the Gentiles. (cf. Acts 9:15, 22:15, 21). Paul must go to all nations for the gift of salvation is universal, but at the same time Paul wants to go! His heart was as big as the world for he possessed the heart of Christ! St. Paul is the saint of universality.

Primo Maestro was drawn to this universal spirit that he found in Paul. We read in *Abundantes*:

“His admiration and devotion began chiefly with the study of the *Letter to the Romans* and meditation on it. From then on, Paul’s personality, his holiness, his heart, his intimacy with Jesus, his contribution to dogmatic and moral teaching, his impact on the Church organization and his zeal for all peoples- all became topics for meditation. Paul came across to him indeed as the Apostle, and thus every apostle and every apostolate could draw from him.”⁶

⁵ Alberione, *Abundantes*, 159-160.

⁶ *Ibid*, 64.

And so we the sons and daughters of Paul are called to have this same universal spirit, the same universal outlook in our lives and mission. Yes, we will always have a special love for our own nation, our own people. Yet our minds and hearts must be much broader than this. “We are not sent to a city or a nation but to the world...carry in our heart all the world, as did St Paul: all the nations, all the continents.”⁷ (CISP 515)

Let us grow in the virtues, expand our hearts, broaden our perspectives. In this way, we will understand Europeans, Asians, Africans, Americans, Australians; people from the south, north, east and west—just like Jesus, who came for everyone and who draws everyone to himself. Let us try to understand all mentalities and cooperate with the plan of the heart of Jesus for all people by giving them Jesus Christ Way, Truth and Life through the Holy Spirit.⁸

“Love all, think of all, live with the spirit of the Gospel that is universal and merciful.” “Come to me all of you.”⁹ And so we ask St. Paul to obtain for us this universal spirit.

Silent Reflection

Paul’s Zeal for the Apostolate

The love of Christ that burns in the heart of the Paul is shown most especially in his zeal for his neighbor. Following his conversion, Paul’s entire life was spent in service of his brothers and sisters. He did not tire in carrying the Gospel to the far corners of the then known world. He had experienced first-hand the mercy and unconditional love of the Master on the road to Damascus, and he wanted to share that experience, that Good News of Christ with all!

And that service meant many sacrifices. He tells us in 2 Cor. 11:25-26, “Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people...” and the list goes on. Paul suffered much for the people he served; Paul suffered much because he loved much.

⁷ Alberione, *Carissimi*, 515.

⁸ Giacomo Alberione, *Considerate la Vostra Vocazione*, 71.

⁹ Alberione, *UPS IV*, pp. 117s.

Our apostolate, too, requires sacrifice. Perhaps not in such extreme ways as Paul- prisons and beatings- yet it will cost and does cost nonetheless. Yet this is accepted with serenity because of our conviction and desire to share the Good News of Christ's mercy and love with all.

Paul: A Person of Balance and Equilibrium

The union of sanctity and of activity that is found in Paul was a key in Blessed Alberione's choice of him for the Institute.¹⁰ For Paul was a contemplative in action, he was a man of both prayer and apostolate. And we who are contemplatives in action and who live in a very fast paced and often frenetic world look to Paul. We ask him to help us to always better integrate these essential elements of our lives: prayer and action.

In a letter that Primo Maestro wrote to Mother Thecla in 1950 he states:

“Let us take three things, following the example of the attachment of St. Thecla to St. Paul:

- 1) Read well the life of St. Paul and print and diffuse his letters,
- 2) Imitate St. Paul's faith and zeal: that zeal that is strong, generous and enterprising,
- 3) Have more trust in him and pray to St. Paul: he is the father that must keep us in the right way: lively faith, hope and love; as well as prudence, justice and strength.

Prayers and blessings.... Sac. Alberione¹¹

Silent Reflection

Honoring Jesus Way

(Allotted time: 20 min.)

We take some time for quite reflection and examen. Do our lives mirror Paul's integrality and zeal for mission?

¹⁰ Roatta, p.8.

¹¹ Giacomo Alberione, *Lettere a Maestra Tecla Merlo*. (Roma: Edizioni Paoline, 1987), 89.

Pray together:

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the earth, have mercy on me.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the earth, have mercy on me.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the earth, grant us peace.

Honoring Jesus Life:

(Allotted time: 15 min.)

The extraordinary apostolic results that St. Paul was able to achieve cannot be attributed to brilliant rhetoric or refined apologetic and missionary strategies. The success of his apostolate depended above all on his personal involvement in proclaiming the Gospel with total dedication to Christ, a dedication that feared neither risk, difficulty, nor misunderstandings, “Neither death, nor life,” he wrote to the Romans, “nor angels, nor principalities, not things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (8:38-39). From this we can draw a particularly important lesson. Today, more than ever Christ needs apostles, evangelists, ready to sacrifice themselves. He needs witnesses and persons who are deeply in love with Him, to follow Him and to bring His message of salvation to all peoples. Let us ask our patron St. Paul for his love for God and for humanity.

Pray together:

Prayer to St Paul the Apostle

Holy Apostle, who with your teachings and with your charity, have taught the entire world, look kindly upon us your children and disciples.

We expect everything from your prayers to the Divine Master and to Mary, Queen of the Apostles. Grant oh Doctor of the Gentiles, that we may live by faith, save ourselves by hope and that charity alone reign in us. Obtain for us, vessel of election, docile correspondence to divine grace, so that it may not remain unfruitful in us. Grant that we may ever better know you, love you, and imitate you; that we may be living members of the Church, the Mystical Body of Jesus

Christ. Raise up many and holy apostles. May the warm breath of true charity permeate the entire world. Grant that all may know and glorify God and the Divine Master, Way, Truth and Life. And Lord Jesus, you know we have no faith in our own powers. In your mercy grant that we may be defended against all adversity, through the powerful intercession of St Paul, our Teacher and Father. Amen

Close with music and the invocation, "Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life, have mercy on us..."

(15 minute break followed by gathering in separate space)

During this time, approximately 40 min., the group can share on the following questions that relate to the previous readings and reflections...

Reflection Questions for Group Sharing:

- 1) Paul is central in our lives as Pauline apostles. Why is this so? Why do you think that Bl. Alberione considered Paul to be essential in our quest to "live in and of Christ"?
- 2) In what way did Paul "interpret" the Divine Master?
- 3) Paul's mission was universal because of the direct mandate he received from the Lord (cf. Acts 9:15, 22:14, 21). How does that translate into our lives as Pauline apostles?
- 4) The love of Christ that burns in the heart of Paul is shown most especially in his zeal for neighbor: Paul wanted all to know and love Christ. In what ways is the love of Christ evident in my life?
- 5) Paul was a man of balance: he was a man of both prayer and apostolate. Why was this union of sanctity and activity so important to B. Alberione?

