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Audience with the participants in the 11th General Chapter of the Society of Saint Paul (Paulines)

Today, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the 11th General Chapter of the Society of Saint Paul (Paulines).

The following are the discourse the Pope had prepared for the occasion, which was handed to those present, and the Holy Father's impromptu speech:

Consigned discourse of the Holy Father

I welcome you and thank the Superior General for his greetings and his presentation. You have come on the occasion of your XI General Chapter, which has this theme: "'Let yourselves be transformed by renewing your way of thinking' (*Rm* 12:2). Called to be artisans of communion to prophetically announce the joy of the Gospel in the culture of communication".

The Apostle Paul, in the verse from the Letter to the Romans which has guided your days of work, invites all of us not to conform to the world's mentality, but to allow ourselves to be transformed, changing our way of thinking. Paul does not say "transform" the world but "transform yourselves"; rather, "let yourselves be transformed", that is, make space for the only Subject capable of transforming you: the Holy Spirit, God's grace. Allowing ourselves to be transformed first, so as to then transform the world around us.

The expression "renew your way of thinking" — as you teach me — is at the centre of the proposal of spiritual and apostolic life that your Founder, Blessed James Alberione, developed and codified for all of you, beginning precisely with Saint Paul's experience. The Blessed wrote: "Everything comes from the mind. If someone does a good work it is because he thought it and then wanted to do it and then did it. So, the first point to always look at is the mind" (To the Pious Disciples of the Divine Master, VIII, Rome, 1986, 365).

And so, before anything else, the mentality must be changed, converted, assimilated to that of Jesus the Master, so as to contribute to spreading in society a way of thinking and of living founded on the Gospel. This is a huge

challenge for the Church and for you Paulines, characterised by the institutional charism of communication. In effect, it is not enough *to use* the means of communication to propagate the Christian message and the Church's magisterium. The message itself needs to be integrated within the new culture created by modern communication. A culture that originates — even prior to content — from the very fact that there are new ways of communicating with new languages, new technologies and new psychological attitudes (cf. Enc. Redemptoris Missio, 37c).

In this regard, a key theme is that of *interpersonal relationships in the globalised and hyper-connected world*. This is a key theme both on the human and social levels as well as on the ecclesial level, because all Christian life starts from and develops through person-to-person relationships. And by now, after the initial moments of euphoria over the new technologies, we are aware that it is not enough to live "online" or "connected". We need to see up to what point our communication, enriched by the digital sphere, effectively creates bridges and contributes to the construction of the culture of encounter.

For your specific mission of evangelization in the world of communication, Father Alberione wanted you to be consecrated men, called to bear witness to the Gospel through unreserved dedication to the *apostolate*. For this, look at the apostle Paul as the model of a man conquered by Christ and driven by his charity onto the streets of the world. From Paul, learn ever again the passion for the Gospel and the missionary spirit that, springing from his "pastoral heart", drove him to make himself all things to all people. And speaking of Paul, one aspect that risks being neglected, but which in reality clearly appears in his letters, is that he did not act alone, as an isolated hero, but always in collaboration with his companions on mission. Therefore, learn also from him to work in teams with others, to work as "networks", to be artisans of communion, using the most efficacious and up-to-date means of communication to reach people where and how they live with the Good News.

Try to cultivate this style of communion above all among yourselves, in your communities and in your Congregation, practising that synodality that we have set out to deepen and above all exercise at every level in the entire Church. Speaking to you, I ask all of you to put your charism at the service of this process, that is, to help the Church to *journey together, making the most of the means of communication*. This is a service you have always been attentive to, but which in this phase calls for thematic thought and study. In two words, the theme is: *synodality and communication*.

But I would not want you to think you are being considered only from this, let's say, "professional" perspective, from your specific competence. No, you are called to live communion ordinarily in fraternity, in your relationships with the diocesan community in which you live, and naturally, with the larger and diverse Pauline Family. May your horizon be always the one that Paul had, that is, all of humanity of our time, to which the Gospel of Christ is destined, especially those who appear to be "distant", those who are indifferent or even hostile. Often, on closer inspection, these people hide within themselves a longing for God, a thirst for love and truth.

Dear brothers, thank you for your visit and above all for your commitment to the service of the Church and evangelization. May Mary, Queen of the Apostles, with her maternal protection, always accompany you on your way. I bless with all my heart all of you and your confrères. And I ask you please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

Impromptu speech of the Holy Father

Thank you for your words, thank you all for this visit, thank you!

Here is the discourse that I should say… But why waste time saying this, since you will read it later, isn't that right? It seemed better to me to give it to your General, then he can share it with you — if he believes that to be appropriate. If not, he can censor it! Besides, it seems to me that to communicate with you this way, fraternally, with the warmth of encounter, is better than the coldness of a speech.

And you are apostles of communication. There's a lot that can be said about the theology of communication. God's passion is to communicate himself. He always communicates: with the Son in the Spirit, and then to us. To communicate is one of the things that is more than a profession: it is a vocation. And Father Alberione wanted to emphasise this through the various so-called Pauline *Families* — that of communicating. To communicate *in a clean way*. And you have the vocation to communicate in a clean way, *evangelically*. If we consider today's means of communication, cleanness is missing, honesty is missing, completeness is missing. Dis-information is the order of the day: one thing is said, but many others are hidden. We must make sure that this does not happen, that this does not take place in our communication of the faith, that our communication comes specifically from our vocation, from the Gospel, crisp, clear, witnessed with one's own life.

Not only to communicate, but also to redeem communication from the state it is in today, in the hands of an entire world of communication that either tells half the story, or where one part slanders the other, or where one part offers scandals on a silver platter because people like to eat up scandals, that is, to eat filth. Isn't this true? This is the way it is. Communication — that relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, which is the sign of the Trinity — becomes this indigestible, dirty, unclean meal. Your vocation is that communication be done cleanly, clearly, simply. Do not neglect this; it is very important!

It is not a profession. Sure, there are professional communicators among you. That's fine. But *before* a profession, it is a vocation, and vocation gives you identity. I understand your identity from your vocation. In other words, God calls you to this. I do not care what you called yourself before I called you. He calls you; you have your identity. David's prayer, that prophetic awareness: "You were taken from the flock", from there. Your identity does not come so much from the flock but from the call that took you from the flock. Do not forget the flock so that the "fumes" do not fill your head because you are someone important, you have become a Monsignor, a cardinal…. None of this, no, this is useless. Cleanness is necessary, that is, where I come from, reality. And God always communicates himself through reality. Make sure that your life is truly the communication of your vocation, so that none of you has to hide his own vocational identity. The first thing that a communicator communicates is him or herself, without wanting to, perhaps, but it is him or herself. "This person speaks about this issue…" but *how* he or she speaks is important: clear, transparent. It is that person who is speaking. This is originality. In this sense, communicators are "poets". This is the "poetry" of communicating well.

Go onward with clean communication — even in your Chapter, communicate well among yourselves. There are always difficulties to communicate well, and in communication there is always some danger of transforming reality. One person tells a story, communicates it to someone else, this person communicates it to this person, to that other one and that other one and so on. And when it comes back again, it is like Little Red Riding Hood that begins with the wolf wanting to eat Little Red Riding Hood and ends up being Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother who eat the wolf. No, this does not work! Bad communication deforms reality.

Thank you for your vocation to communicate in the Church. Go onward with this. The Church needs this. I thank all of you very much. Courage and onward! Pray for each other. The unity of the Congregation will be your strength to communicate well. And pray for me too: I am asking for alms, thus we shall go ahead. Alright! Thank you!