
*On-Going Formation for
Pauline Cooperators*

“It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me!” (Gal. 2:20)

Group Study Program - (Total time: two hours)

Session Theme: “Galatians 2:20: A Key to the Pauline Spirit”

Points to Cover:

- Primacy of text in Alberione’s writings
- Gal 2:20 as “key” to Pauline spirituality, life and mission
- Many facets to the text

You will need:

- A Bible
- Music (instrumental or vocal)

Introduction:

The theme of this session, “Galatians 2:20: A Key to the Pauline Spirit” best expresses the goal of the Christian life, and more specifically the goal of our lives as members of the Pauline Family. For this is what we aspire to live and announce in and through our mission: “Christ lives in me!” This text of Gal: 2:20 states Don Roatta, SSP “is the top of a mountain to which every member of the

Pauline Family absolutely must arrive.” In addition Gal 2:20 is the most quoted Pauline text of Blessed Alberione.¹

Because of the importance and the centrality of this text, because it is a “key” if you will, for entrance into the thought of Paul expressed through his Letters, and into the “Pauline Spirit” we will reflect on it during this session.

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 wish to 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)

“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” Paul wrote these words to the communities of Galatia almost 2000 years ago (around 53 or 54 AD in Ephesus), yet being the inspired Word of God, they are meant for us as well. What is Paul saying to the Galatians and to us through this

¹ Don Roatta, *Punti di Riferimento della Nostra Vita Spirituale* (Ariccia, Casa Divin Maestro: Centro di Spiritualita' Paolina, 1973) 11.

text. What message does he want to communicate? Let us reflect more deeply upon it, and let us turn to St Paul to direct our reflections...

Prayer to St. Paul by Pope John Paul II

Blessed are you, Paul of Tarsus, the apostle of the Gentiles, the converted persecutor, the admirable lover and the witness of the crucified and risen Christ! Blessed are you, the Apostle of Rome, rooted together with Peter in the very beginning of the Church. Blessed are you, steward of the mysteries of God—you for whom “to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21); you, who desire so much and so exclusively to be called minister of Christ—and who desire to be only that—so that your master speaks in you. We bless you, Paul, this day, and we thank God because before the world you became such a great witness to the truth.

The following can be read aloud with silent reflection after each section, or it can be read silently and reflected upon...

Theological Reflection: Gal 2:20

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.”

Life Flows from Death: I Die to Self so as to Live in Christ:

Life flows from death: We see this reality all around us in the natural world. Seasons change, flowers wither and fade. But with their death, new life springs forth. The same holds true in the supernatural world: Life always flows from death.

This same reality of life flowing from death is found in Gal. 2:20: Paul no longer lives, as he has just stated—“I have been crucified with Christ.” He is dead to himself, but he now lives in and from Christ. This death to oneself that Paul speaks of is attained by death to the law. It demonstrates that the break with the law is not understood in the sense of an emancipation that would open the way to egoism. It is completely the contrary: one treats of renunciation of the self, of death to the self, to give first place to the life of Christ, and to a life of generous

love.² I die to self, to my self-centered inclinations, my selfish desires, to all that is opposed to God and other, so that it is Christ who lives and acts through me.

Silent Reflection

This Life has Already Been Actualized

This life that I now live has already been actualized; it is here and now! It is not something that I will attain only in the next life, but has already begun in my earthly existence. It constitutes a stupendous novelty, an incredible reality. "Christ lives in the believer in a mode so real that the life of the believer goes to be attributed to Christ rather than to themselves."³

Paul explains more precisely the situation of the believer- "I no longer live."- Clarifying this statement, he admits of living still on the earth. His mortal existence is not finished. He is still living "in the flesh", that is in the common human condition, with all its limitations and weaknesses, an existence tried and afflicted, subject to temptations, to suffering and to death.⁴ But at the same time it is a life marvelously new, marvelously changed, different and transcendent in which Christ is now the subject, the actor and protagonist! And because of this St John Chrysostom was able to say, "The heart of Paul, is the heart of Christ."⁵

Silent Reflection

This Life Enters in and Through Faith

Precisely after this affirmation, "Christ lives in me." Paul says, "I live through faith in the Son of God." Thus we are able to understand in which manner Christ takes possession of the life of Paul and of every believer. One does not speak of a violent substitution of one personality over another, which is described in the case of the demoniac. Neither is it the state of inspiration that is described by diverse authors- pagan such as Plato nor the mystical ecstasies that Paul describes elsewhere in his letters, (cf. 2 Cor 12:1-5). With Paul's ecstasies the case is different. Here the affirmation is not limited to some privileged moments of his existence, but rather it extends to his entire earthly life, to his entire earthly existence.

² Albert Vanhoye, *Lettera ai Galati* (Milano: Figlie di San Paolo, 2000), 71.

³ Vanhoye, p 72.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ S. Cipriani, *Le Lettere di San Paolo*, (Assisi: Ed Cittadella, 1963), 364.

The life of Christ penetrates into Paul's and into every believer's existence by means of faith. It becomes the "point of entry" into this new reality, this new existence. Christ does not impose himself on Paul, but rather proposes Himself.⁶ And Paul adheres to Christ with all of his being in and through faith, a faith which "makes of two lives only one."⁷

And it is the absolute dependability of the Son of God that opens to Paul the possibility of this life of faith. The faith is not present here as ascent given of the mind to a certain truth, but of an adhesion of his entire being to the person of Christ. And this faith is the foundation of all and finds its dependability, its security in "the Son of God who loved me and has given himself for me."⁸

Silent Reflection

This Life is Reciprocal: I am in Christ and Christ is in Me

That which is the life of Christ in Paul and of he in Christ is a marvelous interior reciprocity, an intimate exchange. It is in fact "the most intimate possible fellowship of the Christian with the living Spiritual Christ."⁹

This intimate fellowship this intimate exchange is best expressed by Paul with the phrase: "in Christ". "In Christ" (*en Christos*) occurs 165 times in Paul's letters (including "in the Lord" and "in him")¹⁰ It came out of his personal experience of intimate union with the risen Lord Jesus, who he met on the road to Damascus. From that moment Paul felt that between him and Christ there was so real, so close, so indissoluble a union that it could not be expressed in any other

⁶ Vanhoye, p 72.

⁷ Silvio Sassi, *Official House Bulletin of SSP, "I Live, No Longer I, but Christ Lives in Me* (Roma: General House, No. 431, January 2009) 9.

⁸ Vanhoye, p 72.

⁹ James Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI/ Cambridge, UK- William Eerdmans, 1998), 391.

¹⁰ Joseoh Fitzmeyer, *Paul and His Theology: A Brief Sketch* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1987), 90.

way than to say that he lived in Christ and Christ lived in him. Thus for Paul, “in Christ” denotes a mystical relationship, an intense communion between the Christian individual and Christ.¹¹

For Paul after this encounter with the Risen Lord, life was lived in Christ: Every action, every word that he spoke, every experience which he underwent was in Christ. His ways are in Christ (1 Cor 4:17). He speaks in Christ (2 Cor 2:17) He makes his plans and thinks of the future in Christ. (Phil 2:19), he sends his love to the Corinthians in Christ (1 Cor 16:24) His entire life is now lived in Christ.

This reality, this truth is at the very heart of Pauline mysticism, of Pauline Theology: the active presence of the risen Lord and Savior in us who believe.¹² Christ lives in us and shares with us his very life as both God and man. This began at Baptism when we were “inserted” into his Body and became members of his Church. We are in fact, “in Christ.” This is not a wish but a marvelous reality, but a reality that beckons a response.

Silent Reflection

Honoring Jesus Way

(Time allowed- 20 min)

We now take some time to honor “Jesus Way”; we examine our own response to Jesus and to our call to discipleship...

Realization of Discipleship

What is the response to being privileged bearers of the risen Lord? What was the response of Paul? Discipleship: to be a follower, or better yet, a collaborator of the Lord, to do the Lord’s work. During Paul’s Encounter on the road to Damascus he asks Jesus, “what shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said, “Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed

¹¹George Maloney, *The Mystery of Christ in You* (New York: Alba House, 1998), 25.

¹²Maloney, p. 21.

for you to do.” (cf Acts 22:10) So after having “seen” the Lord and having experienced his presence, Paul felt a deep need to respond, to respond to Him who had been so merciful. But isn’t this true of every vocational call? There is always a need to respond to and to share with others “what great things the Lord has done for us!”

In Damascus Paul meets Ananias who lays hands on him and says, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized...” (cf Acts 9:17-18)

From this point on Paul’s life is totally given to the service of the Lord and of his Gospel. And his life becomes one that is completely guided by the Spirit. For he “walks by the Spirit,” (Gal 5:25) he is “led by the Spirit.” (Gal 5:18) He travels along Roman roads and from town to town in Arabia, Syria and Cilicia, and then on to Cyprus, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Achaia, always with an awareness of being led by the Spirit. In fact his plans are often changed because of the promptings of the Spirit. (cf Acts 16:9)(Paul Greatest Missionary, p6)

This same Spirit is at work in all of us who believe. We strive day by day to be “walk by the Spirit”, to “led by the Spirit”. But this idea of “walking” by the Spirit, suggest an element of submission and obedience which is freely given. We the believer must actively choose to listen to and follow the Spirit’s promptings.

Silent reflection and examen...

Honoring Jesus Life:

During this time we pray for the grace to make this text a reality in our lives. Christ does live in us, but His presence needs to grow and to develop... and with this intention, we turn to our Queen of Apostles, who is the disciple of Christ, “par excellence.” We ask her to help us on the road/ journey of Pauline Discipleship...

Entrusting of Oneself to Mary

Receive me, Mary, Mother, Teacher and Queen, among those whom you love, nourish, sanctify and guide in the school of Jesus Christ the Divine Master.

You identify in God's mind those whom he calls, and for them you have special prayers, grace, light and consolation. My Master Jesus Christ entrusted himself wholly to you, from the Incarnation to the Ascension. For me this is doctrine, example and an ineffable gift. I too, place myself entirely into your hands. Obtain for me the grace to know, imitate and love ever more the Divine Master, Way, Truth and Life. Present me to Jesus, for I am an unworthy sinner, and I have no other recommendation to be admitted to his school then your recommendation. Enlighten my mind, fortify my will, sanctify my heart, during this year of my spiritual work, so that I may profit from this great mercy, and may say at the end: "I live now not I, but Christ lives in me." Amen

Recitation of the rosary or part of it, as time allows...

Sing or Recite the following:

R. No longer I, but Christ who lives within me: this poverty a treasure rich beyond compare.

The life we live is not our own. Christ lives within us, the seed that must be sown. Formed in the pattern of God's love, we die to rise with the Lord. **R.**

We have been clothed in Christ, children of freedom, of justice and new life. To him whose dying set us free, we give our lives, our liberty. **R**

Then may we bear the cross of Christ and wear the brand-marks of Jesus in our flesh; as wounded healers we become, images of the risen one. **R.**

Close with 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) Why do you think that Don Roatta, ssp states that Gal. 2:20 “is the top of a mountain to which every member of the Pauline Family absolutely must arrive.”? Do you agree?
- 2) Life flows from death. I die to self so as to live in Christ. Can you give some examples of how a person might die to themselves? Can you give some examples from your own personal life?
- 3) Why did St John Chrysostom write that “the heart of Christ is the heart of Paul?” Have you met persons who imbibe this? What do their lives look like?
- 4) Why do you think that faith is the entry point into this new reality of Christ living in us? How would you describe faith? How does Don Sassi, ssp describe faith?
- 5) Why do you think that this reality- the active presence of the Risen Lord in us who believe- is at the heart of Pauline Mysticism, of Pauline Theology?