

Could Saint Paul have been the first President of the Pontifical Mission Societies?

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1. The PMS: Fundraising as instrument of Faithraising

Pauline Jaricot, with the foundation of her missionary association for the propagation of faith, has created an instrument of „democratization“ of participation in the mission of the Church. While in the 16th century it were only kings and noblemen who promoted the mission of the newly discovered continents, mixed with the sinful motive of colonization, in the 19th century Pauline Jaricot created a spiritual missionary movement for the whole people of God. Each individual Catholic should actively participate in the missionary work of the Church. Her motto was: „Every day a prayer, and regularly a sous for the missions.“ In the “Living Rosary” she gathered more than 2 million Catholics to pray daily a decade of the rosary for one of the five continents. The Mission thus became a common spiritual and charitable effort of all the faithful. She provoked a mentality of taking care of the missions. Everyone was invited and everyone was able to make their own contribution. Giving prayers and giving money for the missionary work of the church became “natural” for every faithful and they were happy, that they could contribute to the growth of the church and in the saving of souls.

Pauline Jaricot thus anticipated in a practical way the statement of the Mission Decree of the Second Vatican Council, according to which the Church (Ad Gentes 2) as a whole is missionary in nature, by giving all the baptized a concrete share in the participation in the mission of the Church „ad gentes“. The enthusiasm for the support of missionaries led to a broad stream of missionary spirit in 19th century France. It also shaped the spirituality of a Saint Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897) who, precisely from the secrecy of Carmel, wanted to provide for the missions through prayer and sacrifice, but also through a comprehensive correspondence.

Since 2013, the Church is led by a Pope who himself comes from a classical mission continent and an country which became Christian only some centuries before: by the help of missionaries from Europe. Pope Francis knows the Pontifical Mission Societies through and through and knows from his own experience their importance for the development of the young churches. He always urgently reminds us that we are not an NGO like other welfare-organizations. At the annual meeting with the Nationaldirectors of all 120 countries, where the PMS is working, he says almost every time in the same words: „Start with prayer first. Organization is not the most important thing, but passion. Your main task is not to collect

donations, but to put the whole church in a missionary mood of departure!” A papal reminder that should probably also be addressed to other church aid organizations, who claim themselves to work “within” the Church. Pope Benedict XVI already saw it dramatically in the practical 2nd part of his encyclical „Deus Caritas est“: He reminds us, that Christian fundraising without faith in Christ, without carrying out his love, is depraved to a mere humanitarian act. Such charity then no longer builds up the faith, the hope, the love. It is not the full proclamation of the Christian message, which does not only fill the belly of people, but mostly the soul.

So we can conclude: The Pontifical Mission Societies have to do fundraising. We exist, because we have to help the growing young churches, which mostly are poor! But our fundraising is only a mean to reach the purpose of Christian mission: to spread out the gospel, to bring a personal relationship to Jesus Christ in the heart of the people. That is, what our name says: We are not the „The Pontifical Welfare Societies“, but we are the “Mission Societies” of the Pope.

2. Paulus and the collect for Jerusalem

We are all aware that Paul was a missionary. But that he was also a fundraiser is remarkable. Would he be suitable as Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies? Yes, because there is no doubt that he was a fundraiser because he was a missionary and he was a missionary by fundraising.

2.1. The Dangerous Conflict Between Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians

In the centre of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 15:1-35) we read a fascinating account of “Council of the Apostels at Jerusalem” in the year 49. It was probably the most critical challenge in the history of the early church. It was about nothing less than the immediate danger that the young church would break apart into two different part: a Jewish and a gentile part. What had happened? Jewish Christians from Jerusalem had invaded Paul's rapidly growing mission in Antioch, now Antakya at the Orontens in southern Turkey. They had demanded that all non-Jews who wanted to become Christians be circumcised beforehand. And they wanted the Christians who had been baptized without circumcision to be circumcised afterwards. Paul thereby sees the redemption „alone through Christ“ questioned, thus the foundation of his faith into Jesus Christ, who was the justification given by God himself. Christ for him ist the liberation from the law, and not those Jewish-Christians wanted the baptised to be subjected under the law by circumcision. He was outraged and reacted with apostolic choleric. He gives an sharp advice to the Jewish Christians, who demand a subsequent circumcision: “As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!” (Galatians 5:12) The Greek word „apokopsontai“ (ἀποκόψονται) literally

means: If they are so inclined to circumcision, then they should have everything cut off for themselves.

With his friend and companion Barnabas he set off for Jerusalem to clarify the situation with Peter and James, the pillars of the Jerusalem early church. The unity of the young church was at stake. At this point it almost broke apart into a Judaeo-Christian and a Gentile-Christian church. After long and heated discussions, Paul finally received full recognition of his mission and preaching by shaking hands with Peter and James: The Gentile Christians need not be circumcised. Only four conditions were to be observed: „You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell.” (Acts 15:29) Paul and Barnabas were pleased with a delegation from the early church in Jerusalem on their way back to Antioch to share with them this decision made in the Holy Spirit. So much for the Acts of the Apostles.

2.2. The collect for Jerusalem as the fifth condition of the Council of the Apostles

In his report on the same conflict in the Letter to the Galatians, Paul, of course, adds an fifth order to the four commands: „All they asked was that we (i.e. the Gentile Christians) should continue to remember the poor (i.e. of the church in Jerusalem), and I have eagerly tried to do that.” (Galatians 2:10) There was obviously a fifth condition for the mission to continue among the Gentiles: collecting money for the church in Jerusalem!

The Apostle Council probably took place in 49, Paul was arrested in Jerusalem seven years later, in 56, when he wanted to deliver the collection. So we can presume, that Paul spent seven years trying to get this collection. The collection was therefore by no means of secondary importance. It occupied Paulus very much and he stood up for it with all his strength and tenacity! The proof we find in the biblical reports: Scattered over several letters Paul alludes to this collections and two long chapters in the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians are totally dedicated to it.

Especially at the end of the first letter to the Corinthians, one can see the great significance of this collection. The oldest New Testament mention of the Eucharistic celebration falls, because Paul mentions the collection here: “Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do: On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem.” (1 Corinthians 16,1-3). On the first day of the week, the day after the Jewish Sabbath, the Christians came together to celebrate the Eucharist. It is astonishing, but Paul mentions this meeting only because of the collection! And for this assembly there is an order of Paul, which he has already given for the Galatians, now also repeated for the Corinthians: „Everyone should always put

something aside on the first day of the week and thus save together what he can. (1 Corinthians 16:2) So one can say: It is really original church, original Catholic, yes, it corresponds to the oldest mention of the Sunday divine service that a collection is held at the Holy Mass!

The background for this collection is a concrete emergency situation: Apparently a part of the community had fallen into material poverty, which could no longer be adequately compensated for by its own efforts. However, this appeal to the collection is obviously far more than an emergency measure carried out on current grounds. The solidarity with the early Jerusalem congregation has a deep symbolic and spiritual meaning for Paul: Just as the heathen peoples took part in the spiritual gifts of the early Jerusalem congregation, they are now also obliged to „serve them with earthly goods“ (Romans 15:27).

Once again: The background of the fundraising activities was the great conflict between Judean Christians in Jerusalem and Gentile Christians, i.e. Paul's missionary practice. It did not come to the breaking up of the young church. I believe that ultimately neither the renunciation of circumcision nor the renunciation of idol sacrificial flesh saved the unity of the early church, but Paul's collection for the early Jerusalem congregation! And Paul, who is so eager in preaching against the traditional veneration of the old Jewish law, on the same time is even more eager to give help the poor of the early Jewish-Christian community of Jerusalem. Paul was very fond of this collection for the unity of the Church, which he described in the same First Letter to the Corinthians as a body with many members. He calls the collection „blessing gift“ and „love gift“ and develops a theology of fundraising. Chapters 8 and 9 of the 2nd Corinthians are the Magna Charta of every theology of Christian fundraising!

3. Read: The Magna Charta of Fundraising in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9¹

2 Corinthians 8:

Donating means to imitate the generosity of Jesus Christ

“1 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, 4 begging us earnestly for the favour of taking part in the relief of the saints - 5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. 6 Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act

¹ English Standard Version (ESV)

of grace. 7 But as you excel in everything - in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you - see that you excel in this act of grace also.

8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. 10 And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. 11 So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. 12 For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. 13 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness 14 your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. 15 As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

Correct handling of the collection by the help of Titus and other brothers

16 But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. 17 For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going[d] to you of his own accord. 18 With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. 19 And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will. **20 We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, 21 for we aim at what is honourable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.** 22 And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. 23 As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. 24 So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.

2 Corinthians 9:

Urgent requests and preparation of the collection

1 There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the Lord's people. 2 For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. 3 But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. 4 For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we - not to say anything about you - would be ashamed of having been so confident. 5 **So I thought it necessary to**

urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.

Encouragement to be generous

6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written: ‘They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.’

Giving away makes rich

10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and **for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.** 14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”

4. Why should one donate after Paul?

Missionary fundraising in Paul has four aspects, four theological pillars:

4.1. Donating means imitating God's generosity in imitating the love of Christ who gave himself away

There is a fundamental motivation that comes from faith in God the Creator. Already the Jews saw in God the generous giver of all good. He gives inexhaustibly, freely and overflowing. Therefore, „Let each one, as he has set himself in his heart, give not withered and not under coercion, for God loves a joyful giver“. (2 Corinthians 9:7) The one who gives freely and joyfully imitates God's goodness, abundance and generosity.

The even deeper motivation for Paul's donation lies in his faith in Christ, to be precise: in the Incarnation of Christ. In Christ God showed the absolute fullness of his giving love:

In 2 Corinthians 8:9 – at the beginning of the Magna Charta of Fundraising – Paul refers to Christ himself as the gift of God for Salvation of the World. And he formulates a central christological proposition about the incarnation: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9, King James Version)

Of its meaning it is similar to the hymn quoted in the Letter to the Philippians, where the kenosis, the withdrawal of the one who was equal to God but did not record his being God like a booty, is described:

“6 who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. 7 Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant (ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσε μορφήν δούλου λαβὼν = kenosis), taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, 8 he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death - even to death on a cross.” (Philippians 2,6-8, Christian Standard Bible)

Paul wants to invite the Corinthians to an attitude that follows the movement of letting go, the model of which is the Incarnation of the Son: „Although he is rich, he became poor for your sake, that by his poverty you might become rich.” (2 Cor 8:9). Paul knows that giving has something to do with letting go, with giving away, with “not-clinging-to-something”. This attitude of clinging to the goods of this world needs to be overcome, because it is a consequence of the original sin, that sinful man is bent in himself and tends to cling to himself. The hymn of the Philippians alludes to the image of an animal, a dog that bites into its robbery and that does not want to give it away.

Paul wants to motivate people to donate generously by reminding them how spiritually rich we have become by the “donation”, that Jesus gave to them: himself! He reminds the faithful of the price at which Jesus gave us such a gift, namely that he became poor as the Son of God himself. His incarnation was a renunciation, an abandonment of his divinity and thus a self-denial out of love for us - a surrender, a pouring out of oneself „*pro nobis*“, „*propter nostram salutem*“. Donating is responding to the Lords donation. Therefore the place of the collection is in the Eucharistic celebration, where the Lord of his Church donates himself to his people. We share in his divine wealth, in his holiness, eternity and glory, because he has let go! For us Christians, therefore, the feast of the birth of Christ, which presents us with the incarnation, has become a feast of giving. And even if in a practical sense it is difficult every year to find the right Christmas gifts, it is precisely at Christmas that we always experience the truthfulness of Christ's word quoted in Acts: „It is more blessed to give than to receive.“ (Acts 20:35)

4.3 Donating means being “one church” in concrete terms

The collection has an enormous ecclesiological significance for Paul. In concrete terms it is to express the spiritual bond between Jewish and Gentile Christians, which proves itself in the hour of need through lived practical solidarity. For Paul, the congregations do not simply stand side by side without connection, but in a spiritual relationship to one another. Like the members of a body, they are referred to and related to one another (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). All differences between people are in some way abolished by Christ in his body, the Church: There are no longer Jews and Greeks, no longer slaves and free, no longer men and women, for all are „one“ in Christ. In a special way, this new view is reflected in Paul's importance to the weaker and lesser members, for „when one member suffers, all members suffer with him“ (1 Corinthians 12:26).

Help is therefore not simply at the same level as “charity” in the Old Testament sense: There it was the obligation of giving alms (mild gifts) because God gave an commandment to give mild gifts! For the baptized, who belong to the one body of Christ, it is a spiritual duty vis-à-vis the other members who suffer need, because they are one body in Christ. While alms-giving is marked by a social divide between the giver and the taker, this division is abolished by the common belonging of all members to the one spiritual body of the universal Church in Christ. Within the spiritual community of the universal Church, the givers are always at the same time the takers, and vice versa. They are on the same level! Therefore Paul also explodes in Chapter 11 of the 1st Letter to the Corinthians, when he realises, that the orientation of the Agape after the celebration of the Eucharist has been crept in by pride of state and social exclusion. He is really angry, because such an behaviour destroys the sense of the Celebration of the Eucharist: “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.” (1 Corinthians 11:29; Kind James Version)

The collection for Jerusalem is even more about a reciprocal, reciprocal giving and taking, which we find in the 15th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: Paul writes about the gathering among the Gentile Christians in Macedonia and Achaia for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. And the newly baptized are to give because they are spiritually debtors of the Original Christians in Jerusalem, who were direct witnesses of Good Friday and the resurrection of Jesus. „For“, Paul says, „if the Gentiles have received an interest in their spiritual goods, they are also obliged to serve them with earthly goods“. (Romans 15:27) This goes in the same direction as the statement 1 Timothy 5:18, which concerns the reward of the missionary, the apostle: „He who works has a right to his reward. (1 Timothy 5:18)

So there is a fundamental solidarity in the body of Christ that applies to all members. It is about a just material balance between the richer Corinthians and the poorer Christians in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:14f.). Thus every donation is a concrete expression of communion

in Jesus Christ the Saviour (9:13). With the donation we communicate as brothers and sisters in faith with one another.

4.4 Donating means becoming happy

Finally there is one very important thing for nowadays-fundraising, that we can find already in the efforts of Saint Paul, to raise funds for the poor community in Jerusalem. Modern fundraisers tell us that fundraising has nothing to do with "begging". The message of fundraising is not the position of a weak man begging a strong man for help. It is the other way round: the fundraiser gives the donor the opportunity to become happy by doing something good. He gives the donor the opportunity to work on something great and in this way to become satisfied inwardly.

Paul ends his fundraising appeal in 2 Corinthians 9 by pledging abundance and joy to the donors themselves. In 9,12 Paul calls the collection a „liturgy“, a thanksgiving service: „For the service of this liturgy (ἡ διακονία τῆς λειτουργίας ταύτης) not only fills the empty hands of the saints, but will continue to work as a manifold thanksgiving to God“. (2 Corinthians 9:12) Helping the poor, the needy, is a sacred liturgy.

When the Acts of the Apostles quotes the word of Jesus which is not found in the Gospels: „It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 15:38), then it is not only about the blessedness of the future reward, of the heavenly and eschatological reward! “Blessed” here means: to be simply happy! Happy, because they now can have the good feeling to do something very important, something very human, something very christian, something very big for the sake of the community in Jerusalem.

The psychology of people back then was just like the psychology of people today. Man wants to do good. The word of Jesus in Acts 15:38 is a universal principle for giving: "Giving is more blessed than receiving!" (Acts 15:38)

5. Would Saint Paul be suitable as President of the Pontifical Mission Societies?

The answer to this question, which of course is meant to be funny, is: Yes! Here are 15 strong reasons that are important for all Christian fundraisers, but especially for fundraising by the Pope's missionary societies:

1. Yes, because Paul saw the fundraising theologically and his first purpose was, to spread out Christian faith. When he did fundraising, he did it only for the purpose of faithraising.
2. Yes, because he saw the fundraising christologically, inviting the donors to imitate the example of Jesus Christ. Donating means to enter in the imitation of Christ.

3. Yes, because he sought always unity with Peter and worked for support of the mother-church in Jerusalem, which afterwards became Rome.
4. Yes, because he saw the fundraising in ecclesiological way: as a service to the unity and growth of the Church; as an commitment to its unity.
5. Yes, because he thought spiritually and acted very practically.
6. Yes, because he was selfless and did not collect anything for himself.
7. Yes, because he was strategic and was planning in advance.
8. Yes, because he tried hard to argue, to animate and to motivate all the faithful by inviting them to support the poor church of Jerusalem.
9. Yes, because he showed great gratitude to the donors and praised them for their generosity.
10. Yes, because he was eager and unashamed in asking for donations.
11. Yes, because he built up a big staff (Titus and other brothers) to organize the collection.
12. Yes, because he handled the donations very carefully and was eager to avoid any suspicion of infidelity and to stay honourable in the eyes of everybody (2 Corinthians 8:21).
12. Yes, because he was courageous and fearless when it came to asking for help for the poor.
14. Yes, because he wrote many letters.
15. Yes, because he was travelling a lot.

So even if the question about the suitability of Saint Paul as President of the Pontifical Mission Society is funny, there is a lot, that we can learn from Saint Paul. It can be summed up in one word: Fundraising is not a disgrace; it is an integral part of faithraising in correspondence to the love of Christ and in the desire to build up his Church.

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