

Community Life Study Group Report

Study Group Members:

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Paulist Realities

The committee was formed after the pre-assembly process and convened four times in March and April of 2026. We reviewed the notes from the pre-assemblies held in Fall 2025, re-visited the 1994 Community Direction Statement, collected “best practices” from several local Paulist communities, and now presents some considerations or suggested directions for the General Assembly.

After reviewing and discussing the notes from the three pre-assemblies held in Fall 2025 we note points we found most salient and add our own discussions points.

We lack a definition of community life. Our Constitution, as well as Decrees and Statutes don't assist with this task. Community life is a practiced discipline. It requires ownership by all members. There will always be a need for adaption to local circumstances. Members should accept different roles of ownership. It shouldn't just be up to the local superior. Local communities should have regular discussion of shared expectations for community life. National guidelines may help with such discussions.

The 1994 General Assembly issued a Community Direction Statement. What happened to it? Has it been followed? This General Assembly might consider whether we need a new one. We should consider an integrated document: mission – spirituality – community.

Community life requires a spiritual renewal. A community wide retreat would be beneficial. Local houses or regional groups of houses should consider days of recollection.

Community life will requires on-going formation including conversations about local community expectations. What do other communities (of apostolic life) provide for direction? (cf. attached)

Health care for senior Paulists will continue to be an important aspect of community life. Seniors can feel isolated in community life and their experience and skills not utilized in the mission of the community. Each local community should regularly review the *2025 Transitions for Senior Paulist Handbook*



A healthy community life is a great witness for our vocation efforts. In an increasingly divided society and Church the witness of our community life is an important value.

The 1994 General Assembly issued a Community Direction Statement (cf. attached) The statement, modeled on an earlier Mission Direction Statement, advocated for Discipleship --- faith sharing, Fraternal Support --- acknowledging and celebrating events in each others' lives, and care for senior members, and Accountability ---- individual and mutual responsibility for each other and our common life and resources.

Members reviewed their experience with practice of these points. In some houses faith sharing and/or family time has been a regular practice but not in others. Some houses faithfully celebrate birthdays and other events or have customs that encourage and support their common life. (cf. Best Practices below). We agreed expectations and practices vary from house to house and change as membership in a house changes. Care for senior members has increased in need and practice and is now articulated in Transition for Senior Paulists 2025. (cf. attached) We agreed actual implementation of the policies and financing of senior health care needs more review.

Paulist Constitution, Decrees and Statutes

The Assembly's attention is directed to provisions in our Constitution as well as Decrees and Statutes:

- the nature of our community (C2, C9)
- the relationship of the community and the individual Paulist (C18, C22)
- community prayer (C15, D12a)
- and local community governance and officers (C89-94) (D97-101).
- Cf. attached. Fr. Hecker's thoughts can be read in "The Paulist Life in Community," *Paulist Vocation*, Chapter 14, p. 135-40.

S.O.A.R. Analysis

Strengths | *What are we doing well?*

The small size of our community works in favor of creating good community. In general we are at ease with one another. We try to respect each other's values. Most of our residences provide for decent and comfortable living. We are welcoming toward visitors. We have access to activities in sports and arts.

Opportunities | *What unmet needs or invitations are before us?*

We need to be intentional toward generational + cultural differences. Some members prefer small communities, others large communities. Both possible. Our new Community policies provide better care of our seniors but also challenge. More discussion and efforts in community with retention of younger members.

Aspirations | *What vision of the future is God calling us toward?*

We learn new ways to connect better with each other. We better identify situations leading to isolation and find remedies. We continue to improve care of seniors in our houses. We realize more equity in financing care. Younger members have freedom to pursue new mission opportunities.

Results | *How will we know we are succeeding?*

Our healthy community life attracts more vocations. Younger members receive better mentoring in living in community. All members move closer to a healthy work-life balance. Formation prepares members for mission based community life.

Paulist Best Practices

We personally contacted several of our local communities to learn what activities and customs invigorated their life together.

- Weekly house liturgy and gathering afterwards (Boston)
- Saturday night meal and social time afterwards. (Grand Rapids)
- Holiday/holy day meals celebrating birthdays (Austin)
- Welcoming numerous house guests (59th Street NYC)
- Dinner out once a week (Rome, Chicago)
- Watching movies together. Excursions out. (Hecker House)
- Community night out once a month (San Diego)
- Community members do one-on-one with each other – coffee shop, walks, dinner, accompany to doctor visits (San Francisco)
- November remembrance of deceased Paulists – cemetery, prayer, lunch together (Austin, Chicago)

Considerations

1. The Assembly should address Paulist Community Life holistically in relation to Paulist and priestly spirituality and the overall life and mission of the community, referencing the Paulist Constitution and the expressed thoughts of our founder.
2. Particular practical concerns which significantly impact community life at present (e.g., home health care and related issues) should be addressed separately.
3. Faith Sharing should be encouraged and promoted in every local house. Additionally, opportunities for larger, community-wide interaction and sharing (via zoom) – gatherings by cohorts (by seniority and/or age), ministries, regions, and other interests (e.g., book discussions) – should be encouraged and officially promoted by the administration.
4. The various committees of the General Assembly should be encouraged to communicate regularly with each other on matters of mutual concern.
5. Vocations committee should advise on what vocation prospects are looking for in community life.
6. General Assembly should consider a joint statement on “Community-Spirituality-Mission.”
7. General Council should issue a model document on shared expectations of community life and require each local foundation to discuss and formulate a similar document according to their circumstances.
8. General Council should applaud and shared the “best practices” of local communities and encourage local houses to review these practices for possible implementation in their house.
9. The General Council should arrange for a community wide retreat focused on “community-spirituality-mission” and encourage houses to organize regional days of recollection on similar themes.

Additional Resources ([Link](#))

- The Decrees and Statutes of the Missionary Society of Saint Paul the Apostle
- 1994 Community Direction Statement
- 2025 Transitions for Senior Paulist Handbook
- *The Paulist Vocation* Chapter 14: The Paulist Life in Community