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STUDIES IN PASSIONIST HISTORY AND SPIRITUALITY

COMMENTARIES ON THE GENERAL CONSTITUTIONS

Chapters I and II

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FUNDAMENTALS OF OUR LIFE

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Introduction

The Constitutions of a Congregation should, above all, express the spirit of its Founder. Although our new Constitutions no longer return to the original text as written by our Founder, nonetheless the spirit of St. Paul of the Cross has been definitely respected in them. In making some reflections on the new text of the Constitutions, I will try, above all, to let our Holy Founder speak by quoting passages from his writings regarding particular points. Thus, on the one hand the text of the Constitutions is clarified and more deeply examined, while on the other hand there is the possibility of a better understanding of the original roots of this new plant.

The Passionist Vocation (nn. 1-4)

It seems to me truly opportune and positive that the first consideration of the Constitutions directs our gaze upon our own great and holy Founder, St. Paul of the Cross. Number 1 refers to the Introduction of our first Rule written by St. Paul of the Cross from December 2 - 7, 1720 (Lettere IV, pp. 217-220). This Introduction, together with his Spiritual Diary, is the oldest document of our Founder in our possession today. It reveals clearly how the Saint founded the Congregation under “Divine Inspiration.” At different times he insisted repeatedly that the “Poor of Jesus” must live in rigorous poverty.

Besides poverty, however, there is another dominant motif to which our Founder returns repeatedly in his Introduction to the Rule, namely, solitude. In his own words, his first intention was “to retire into solitude and live a life of penance” (Lettere IV, p. 217). Solitude and penance, however, are not ends in themselves but are means to attaining a spirit of prayer, while intimate union with God in prayer is an implied fundamental for effective work in the apostolate.

Although in his early writings our Founder does not expressly mention the preaching of “the remembrance of the Passion,” as is made known to us from his later writings, nevertheless, there is a clear indication of it when he says: “Let each of the poor of Jesus seek to teach whoever is capable the pious meditation of the sufferings of our most loving Jesus...” (Lettere IV, p. 221).

The oldest text of the Rule of St. Paul of the Cross in our possession today dates from 1736. The first chapter of this Rule, which strongly reflects the charismatic spirit of the saint, is entitled: “The purpose of the Institute.” For a better understanding of the first numbers of our new Constitutions, it would certainly be informative and useful to keep in mind certain passages of the original text. After pointing out in an introductory paragraph how important the observance of the Law of God and of the sacred evangelical counsels were, our Holy Founder continues: “Therefore, the brothers of this poor and least Congregation must first give care to themselves in that manner prescribed by these Rules and Constitutions; secondly to be untiring in the holy works of charity towards the neighbor, applying himself to all that may present itself to him for the greater glory of God and the spiritual good of all, doing all, however, with the greatest prudence, never losing sight of one’s own spiritual profit in the manner spoken of in these Constitutions” (Giorgini: Rules and Constitutions, 2).

Although such an explicit reference to one’s own sanctification may seem strange to men of our day, there does exist a morally good and legitimate love of self. In fact, modern psychology tells us that man must first of all accept himself, “love oneself,” for only then will he be truly able to love his neighbor. This healthy “love of self” is confirmed expressly in the great commandment:

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” For what reason, then, should not a healthy love of self be valid even within the scope of the spiritual? There is no intention of canonizing a mentality which thinks only of self without reference to one’s neighbor. At the same time it is necessary to have a certain prudence which avoids all that may damage one’s individual and personal relationship with God.

Our Founder was firmly convinced that an effective apostolate is guaranteed only if the Passionist himself leads a profoundly spiritual life, that is, if he lives in strong communion with God and true friendship with Christ. For this reason both in his Rules and in his Letters he speaks repeatedly on the importance of solitude, the spirit of prayer and of penance, and a life of poverty. Number 1 of the new Constitutions expresses how important personal sanctification is for service in the apostolate. It refers to an historical source, the so-called “Notizia,” which goes back to the year 1747. This document, probably written by our Founder, or at least inspired by him, is a small sketch of the spirit and purpose of the new Congregation. It was sent to interested friends, in order to present the new religious community and to make the Congregation known.

Number 1 of the new Constitutions refers twice to this document. It will certainly help greatly to know the actual text. After an introduction, number 3 of the “Notizia” tells us: “Their life is like that of the apostles; even more, it is totally conformed to them and the apostles’ conduct is the norm for the Constitutions which endeavour to form a man totally God-centered, totally apostolic, a man of prayer, detached from the world, from things, from himself, so that he may in all truth be called a disciple of Jesus Christ and may beget many sons for heaven who will redound to his glory and honour.” (Notizia 1747 - Fr. Fabiano Giorgini, C.P., p. 7). These words emphasize the importance of perfection and personal sanctity for a fruitful apostolate.

The text of the Rule of 1736 speaks of the ‘first’ and of the ‘second’ purpose of the Congregation. Instead, number 22 of the “Notizia” places these two ends together saying: “This is the primary end of this growing Congregation to qualify oneself by prayer, penance, fasting, tears and mourning so as to help the neighbor, to sanctify souls and to convert sinners” (ibid., 11).

Number 2 of the new Constitutions speaks of the ecclesiological character of our religious vocation. Since it is the Church who approved the Congregation and the Constitutions, it is basically the same Church which entrusts us with the task of living according to the spirit and the charism of St. Paul of the Cross. Thus, our Congregation has a specific duty in the mystical Body of Christ. Yes, the Church has need of our Congregation and can rightfully expect that we conserve the charism of our Founder and that we conscientiously fulfill our special task: to preach the Word of the Cross.

In the Constitutions the expression “apostolic communities” is used. Keeping in mind the charism of our Founder, this expression cannot be understood exclusively in the sense that our community life must be oriented to the external apostolate. In fact, even our elderly, our sick brethren and those who have no possibility for an external apostolate are apostolically active in their sufferings, their prayers and their sacrifices. There exists an apostolate of prayer and an apostolate of suffering which are of maximum importance for the faith of the Church. Our Retreats must be, so our Founder wanted, places of prayer. In the silence, prayer and quiet of the Retreat the laborer in the vineyard of the Lord should have the possibility to deepen his personal and religious experience at the feet of the Crucified, as our Founder had expressed so many times. Our communities should be apostolic and contemplative. Prayer, the interior life,

contemplation - these are the basic principles of which St. Paul of the Cross speaks insistently in his letters and in his Rule.

Now some observations in this regard. Reading and meditating on the five different versions of the Rule from the time of our Founder, we meet with expressions or norms conditioned by time, and, thus, definitely subject to change or substitution. However, the distinct contemplative element which characterizes a Passionist, and desired by St. Paul of the Cross, may not be renounced or substituted. On the other hand, our holy Father did not found a purely contemplative Congregation, but a Congregation whose members must also be active in the apostolate. The fundamental idea of our Founder was: the Passionist must be, above all, a man of union with God, an interior man, a man of prayer who has a great personal experience of the spiritual life. In his personal encounter with God, however, each Passionist must advance not only his personal sanctification and perfection, but also use this as a means of leading one's neighbor to perfection.

Number 3 of the new Constitutions states: "We are aware that the Passion of Christ continues in this world until He comes in glory. We wish to share in the distress of all, especially those who are poor and neglected; we seek to offer them comfort and to relieve the burden of their sorrow... For this reason, our mission aims at evangelizing others by means of the Word of the Cross."

The fact that the Passion of Christ continues in the suffering of mankind is a theological vision which is clearly evident in our day. Giving particular attention to the poor and afflicted was an objective very dear to the heart of St. Paul of the Cross. He knew well the necessities and miseries of the poor. It was to these that the missionaries were to go first of all, announcing to them the liberating word of the Cross. In fact, we read in the text of the Rule of 1741: "... to go to the places most needy, to go to solitary or marshy places, islands and such which appear more abandoned by apostolic ministers, should be judged by members of our Congregation as their particular work" (Giorgini: Rules and Constitutions, 94).

Ministry among the poor and oppressed, who at the time of our holy Founder were subject to conditions similar to if not worse than those of today, was for him a spiritual service above all. This is expressed also by the Constitutions in number 3: "For this reason, our mission aims at evangelizing others by means of the Word of the Cross."

Certainly, there may be situations in which service of the Word implies also the duty of helping people materially and so "remove the causes of human suffering" (Const. 3). However, such a "social commitment" should not become an end in itself. It must be, so to speak, a "first step," so as to be able to take the second: to announce the liberating Word of the Cross.

Such situations are certainly present in the Third World countries. Care must be taken while undertaking such conditioned social commitment that our Retreats be and remain places of prayer. Only then will be verified what is said in the new Constitutions: "The power of the Cross, which is the wisdom of God, gives us strength to discern and remove the causes of human suffering" (Const. 3).

The cause of much of the sufferings of mankind can be sought without doubt in the sins of man himself. St. Paul of the Cross understood this well. He saw his apostolate as a principle task in the struggle against sin. The most effective means in moving men to a conversion was for him

the preaching on the Passion of Jesus. He speaks of this in numerous letters. In one of these he speaks of the task of the members of his Congregation: "... there is need to hurry and send zealous workers, truly poor in spirit and detached from all created things; so that with the trumpet of the divine word, by means of the most holy Passion of Jesus Christ, they might reawaken poor sinners sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, so that God may be glorified in so many converted souls and in many others who will give themselves to the study of prayer and through prayer to a holy life" (Lettere II, p. 213).

Our Consecration to the Passion of Jesus (nn. 5-6)

This new section begins with the statement: "We seek the unity of our lives and our apostolate in the Passion of Jesus" (Const: 5). In reality it is the centralizing of our spirituality on the Passion that characterizes us as Passionists. This is, so to speak, the "specific difference" which, amid the variety of religious orders in the Church, imprints on us an unmistakable sign.

This specific orientation of our spirituality and of our apostolate doubtlessly goes back to our Founder himself. As a young man of 27 he saw in Christ suffering and crucified the clearest expression of God's love for mankind. The text of his diary gives this fact eloquent testimony. For example, in his entry of November 27, 1720: "I was saying to my beloved Jesus: 'your pains, dear God, are pledges of your love.'" These words, dictated by his experience of faith and personal union with Christ, characterize the life and works of St. Paul of the Cross till the very end of his life.

The establishment of our life and apostolate in the Passion of the Lord is, in reality, a factor of unity. By orienting ourselves to the Word of the Cross, common to all Passionists, we are offered the possibility of working together, concentrating, creating unity in variety and diversity of cultures, of modes of thinking, of traditions. For a religious Congregation established in all the continents of the earth, this is of great importance and not to be undervalued.

Fundamental and basic to such a unity of spirit and of action is the live faith of each individual, of his personal relationship and friendship with Christ. This is described by Number 5 with profound affirmation: "Since we have been called to unite ourselves to the life and mission of Him who 'emptied Himself taking the form of a servant' (Phil 2:7), we contemplate Christ through persevering prayer."

By these words, we have a very high goal proposed to us which is certainly not easy to reach: to participate in the emptying of himself which was accomplished by the Lord (kenosis, exinanitio). The way is even indicated for attaining this arduous goal: assiduous and continuous prayer.

This declaration of the Constitutions is exemplified in our holy Founder: to take part in the Passion of Christ. It is, by our participation in the Passion of Christ that he saw for himself and for those whom he guided in the spiritual life a goal worthy to be attained. Therefore, we can rightly characterize the mystery of suffering of our Founder as a mystery of participation, as S. Breton affirms (cf. La Mystique de la Passion). Here are some characteristic words, which we find in the letters of the saint and which express this participation: "...to carry the cross of Jesus; crucified with Jesus; infused pain, marks of Jesus, naked suffering."

This participation in the kenosis of the Lord will render us capable of discovering the kenosis of the acute suffering of our neighbor and in it to discover Christ who suffers. The eminent vocation of a Passionist is, in the first place, to penetrate profoundly the mystery of faith of the Passion of the Lord, to be intimately united in faith with Christ Crucified. Then will we be able to announce the liberating message of the Word of the Cross; then will we find the practical ways of effectively helping the suffering, the 'crucified' ones of our day.

"We contemplate Christ through persevering prayer." Although brief, this declaration of number 5 is one of the most important of the new Constitutions. We can also find a parallel declaration in the writings of our Founder. When speaking of the spirit of the Congregation, he always mentions the spirit of prayer. If we read his letters concerning spiritual direction, we will find that prayer and interior spirituality occupy a primary position.

Whether we succeed in maintaining this spirit of prayer and interior spiritual life, or at least rekindle it, will be, it seems to me, a decisive factor for the future of the Congregation. I do not feel that in such a statement I will fall into unilateral spiritualism. In fact, facing the spirit of our times in which efficiency and activity are over-valued at the cost of man's existence, the danger is certainly found in the other extreme, voluntary submission to a more or less superficial activism.

The great importance which our Founder gave to prayer, interior life, to contemplation and solitude, as proper elements belonging to the nature of our Congregation, is clearly expressed in a letter he wrote to Domenico Pagliari in 1768. In it he says:

Our Congregation, according to the lights His Divine Majesty has deigned to give me, is totally founded on prayer and fasting and on true solitude, according to the most sacred Counsels of our Divine Savior, Who wanted his Apostles, after conducting their sacred missions, to retire into solitude: 'rest awhile in solitude.' And his Divine Majesty gave the example, for after his admirable divine preaching, he would retire to the mount to pray alone. Our Congregation rests on such a foundation, and if this is not there, the whole structure falls in ruins, for it will be foreign to the vocation which God has given us. On such reflection, our Holy Rule obliges us after missions, spiritual exercises, etc., to retire quickly to our retreats of solitude, to gather up the spirit in prayer and fasting. Because, believe me, most beloved and reverend Monsignor, that an evangelical worker who is a man of prayer, a friend of solitude and detached from all created things, will bear more than a thousand others who are not such" (Lettere III, p. 417f).

These words were written at a particular time and within a lifestyle which our new Constitutions do not demand of us today. Despite this, no one would question the fact that a certain measure of solitude is necessary for a profound spirit of prayer in our own day and in the future.

Number 6 speaks of our special vow. I am very happy that the Constitutions speak of our participation in the Passion. As I have previously said, this has a good foundation in the mystery of participation mentioned by our Holy Founder. It is likewise useful for the living out of our special vow to apply it in three different areas: personal, communitarian and apostolic.

A Passionist must firstly attain a personal relationship of faith with Christ Crucified. In the intimacy of his own life he must participate in the Passion of Christ. In our holy Founder's letters

we find precious inspirations in this regard. The untiring contemplation of Christ, suffering and crucified, will render us capable of seeing in the difficulties and anxieties of daily life, in the fatigue of the apostolate, in the sacrifices deriving from our common life and the evangelical counsels, in short, in all the inescapable sufferings, a possibility of concretely participating in the Passion of the Lord.

Living in community is an essential part of living the religious life. For this reason, our vow must be practiced, or realized, even on a communitarian level. The single communities, the provinces, etc., have the duty of guaranteeing and proposing various activities for realizing this special vow.

According to the intention of our Holy Founder, the apostolate is an essential duty of our Congregation. It is not surprising, then, that the Word of the Cross has an outstanding importance in the apostolate. In this regard we have our Founder's clear and concrete testimony for he saw preaching on the Passion of the Lord as an inherent component of the purpose and nature of the Congregation. In number 1 of the Rule which he himself wrote:

...one of the principal ends of this least Congregation, consists not only in being tireless in holy prayer for themselves so as to attain holy union with God, but also to direct others in following this way, teaching them in the easiest way possible in such an angelic exercise. Meanwhile, the brothers of this Congregation, who shall be recognized as capable, shall in time of Missions, as in other times of some devout exercise, verbally teach the people meditation on the Divine Mysteries of the most holy Life, Passion and Death of Jesus our true God, doing so in time of Missions after the sermon, as also at other times when it shall be considered more opportune; promoting it also in the sacred tribunal of Penance and in any other spiritual conference - as the most effective means of destroying vice and leading souls in a short time to great holiness" (Giorgini: Rules and Constitutions, 2 and 4).

This passage taken from the Rule of 1741 reveals the measure in which our Founder wanted our apostolic life directed to the preaching of the Word of the Cross. Even though our new Constitutions no longer give concrete directives regarding the practice of the vow, they still definitely safeguard the special charism of our Founder. It is certainly not by chance that number 6 returns to underlining the ecclesiological character of our special vow (cf. Const. 2). As Passionists we have the responsible task of preaching the central mystery of faith in the Church and in the world, namely, that of the Passion and Death of our Divine Redeemer Jesus Christ. Should this mystery of faith ever be forgotten, or should the Cross of Christ lose the force of its specific expression in our Christian faith, then it is our mission to bring it back within the Church and in the world. This duty was already foreseen by the Apostle Paul when he says: "I determined that while I was with you I would speak of nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1Cor 2:2).

The Evangelical Counsels (nn. 7-9)

Numbers 1 - 6 of the new Constitutions express the specific character of our Congregation. In this commentary I have dealt with them in greater length while also taking the opportunity of giving some respective references to our Founder. Beginning with Number 7 the Constitutions treat a new topic and in the following I will only touch briefly on some points.

From nn. 7-9 a general theological interpretation is given of the evangelical counsels. The religious vows are understood as a deepening of our baptismal consecration. This view is also expressed in the Conciliar Decree “Perfectae Caritatis.” The Decree speaks of the evangelical counsels by which: “They have handed over their entire lives to God’s service in an act of special consecration which is deeply rooted in their baptismal consecration and which provides an ampler manifestation of it” (PC 5, Abbott). Therefore to live according to the evangelical counsels, is, in the first place, an intense following of Christ, imitating him in a radical manner and following the Lord crucified and resurrected.

Religious life can be understood only in the light of faith. Religious life is a sign and, precisely, a valid sign of a lived faith. The symbolic nature of the life is indicated in number 7: “Each of us welcomes the invitation God gives us to be a sign and a constant reminder of the values of His Kingdom.” An existential joy resounds in these words, a joy in being called and chosen for the religious life. The one who unreservedly strives to live according to the evangelical counsels will deeply taste this joy.

Even the Council Decree on the Church speaks of the eschatological and symbolic nature of a life lived according to the evangelical counsels. In Chapter 6, on the Religious Life, it says: “The People of God has no lasting city here below, but looks forward to one which is to come. This being so, the religious state by giving its members greater freedom from earthly cares more adequately manifests to all believers the presence of heavenly goods already possessed here below” (LG 44, Abbott).

The common life is essential to our life as Passionists. For this reason number 8 of the Constitutions says: “Together we undertake the arduous journey of faith, seeking to explore the depths of the mystery of God.” To aspire to live a life of faith, a spiritual life, to aspire after perfection are not things restricted to the range of an individual alone. They also have a social scope and element as well. In practice this means that in our walk towards God one brother helps another brother and encourages him by good example.

Number 9 says, “We leave all things.” This interior liberation from “all things” is a fundamental axiom of the spiritual teaching of our Founder, Paul of the Cross. In numerous letters I see this interior emptying as a premise for the spirit of prayer and a true interior recollection (cf. Lettere III, p.340; IV, p. 220; II, p.814). The spirit of prayer and interior recollection are without doubt necessary to be able to “follow Christ in the spirit of the Gospel beatitudes” (Const. 9).

Poverty (nn. 10-15)

Christ not only recommended the evangelical counsels, he also lived them himself. This is seen clearly by the unanimous account of the Gospels. It is especially the Evangelist Luke who highlights how necessary is “genuine detachment and proper use of temporal goods” (Const. 10) for a true following of Christ.

It means to live the spirit of evangelical poverty, which the Lord himself lived before us. The clearest manifestation of this poverty is that God has become man in Jesus Christ. Number 10 sees in this a manifestation of God’s love for us. The apostle Paul perceived the same. Writing in

his second letter to the Corinthians, he states: “Remember how generous the Lord Jesus was: he was rich but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty” (8:9).

But one can acquire the spirit of poverty only if he has experienced, in one way or another, the disadvantages and discomforts of being really poor. On this point the Constitutions say, “that this may lead to insecurity, and at times even to the lack of necessities” (Const. 10). This participation in being poor will render us sensitive to the difficulties and necessities of the neighbor, who does live in poverty. Rather, as is stated in Number 10, “this spirit of poverty, awakened in us by Christ’s grace, makes us more ready to give service to all.”

The most radical and evident consequence of the vow of poverty consists in not possessing private property. All material and financial funds, which an individual religious receives, are not retained for private use, but are entirely at the disposal of the community. The Acts of the Apostles speak of the manner of life lived by the first Christian community (cf. Acts 4:32,37).

Living the vow of poverty also demands a style of life which is simple and modest. As a rule, we could say: our communities should follow a lifestyle similar to that of peasants and laborers, that is, the simple people of our respective countries. Thus, for example, this would mean that the day for a religious should begin early, as with laborers. To begin the workday relatively late is only possible for the wealthy or persons of consequence. The Constitutions, therefore, recommend that “each one of us willingly accepts that he is subject to the common law of labour” (Const. 11).

The unjust distribution of worldly possessions and goods is, as number 13 tells us, “a major source of division, hatred, and suffering.” To live in evangelical poverty “relativizes” the value of earthly goods. However, when people must suffer the lack of material goods to the extent that they do not have the necessities to live, and thus struggle on a subhuman level, we are then called “to use our possessions for the relief of suffering.” Moreover, we must labor “for the increase of justice and peace in the world” (Const. 13).

However, this social commitment is justified for us only if it is the fruit and consequence of our lived faith. The final objective of our responsible efforts must be the preaching of the Gospel, the announcing of the Word of the Cross and the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth. This relationship with the Gospel will preserve us from committing ourselves in an exaggerated way to the promotion of a given economic system.

We commit ourselves to justice and peace, because they are a practical consequence of the Gospel. The more we live the message of the Gospel, and the more deeply we penetrate the mystery of the Word of the Cross, so much more will we be able to meet the needs and alleviate the sufferings of the people who are oppressed and deprived of their rights. Living our faith in our actual existential surroundings, living the evangelical counsel of poverty and observing these Constitutions are a premise for our commitment to justice and peace.

The fact that no reference is made to our Founder until the end of the section on poverty may cause surprise. The great importance which the Saint gave to the observance of evangelical poverty is well known. Still, by referring to him at the end, the treatment reaches its peak with these words: “By our willingness to share in the poverty of Christ who gave all, even His very life for us, we try to be faithful to the motto of our Founder: Poverty is the standard under which the whole Congregation fights” (Const. 14).

This motto is the introductory phrase of the chapter “On Poverty” in our Founder’s Rules. We find it in all the five versions he wrote. The importance he attributes to poverty is evident from the fact that in his Rules he adds another chapter entitled: “On the Poverty to be observed in the Churches and in the Houses of the Congregation” (Giorgini: Rules and Constitutions, 50-55).

Many citations could be taken from his Rules in which he speaks of the value of poverty. Here we wish to limit ourselves to only one point. In his introduction to the original Rule of 1720, he gives to poverty a very high place; furthermore, it is the essential characteristic of the Congregation. But let him speak for himself: “The intention which God has given me for this Congregation consists in nothing else than, in the first place, to observe with perfection the law of our dear God by the perfect observance of his most holy evangelical counsels, and especially the total detachment from all created things, exercising oneself perfectly in holy poverty so necessary for the observance of the other counsels and for maintaining fervor in holy prayer...” (Lettere, 220).

Chastity (nn. 16-19)

The vow of chastity is not in itself a renouncing of love. In fact we are created by God “to love and to be loved” (Const. 16). The renouncing of a family and of one’s own children is based solely on our faith. We make this renunciation “for the Kingdom of God” (Matt 19:12).

The human encounter and personal love we realize are in the bonds of our community, in the circle of our brethren. For this reason the bond of true friendship should unite all the brothers. Our living together in community gives witness to the realization of the vivid desire of the Lord, “that all may be one” (Jn.17:21). This in reality is a difficult goal proposed to us by the Constitutions (Const. 17). Nonetheless, we must strive with all our strength to attain this objective, for only then will our religious life be authentic and convincing.

Number 18 perceives in the charism of a celibate “a gift from God to His Church.” In a special way this charism helps us to enter into that profound and universal love of Christ. Our capacity to love loses, so to speak, its so-called reserve and it becomes able to share that love with the greatest possible number of people. “The more we love others in Christ, the more sensitive we become to their joys, sorrows and anxieties. Our lives are thus consecrated by vow to the service of our neighbors in fidelity to Gospel values” (Const. 18).

Number 19 stresses the positive content of this vow. The voluntary renunciation of marriage and of a family “for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven,” renders man capable of greater generosity and deeper personal love. The one who resolutely and with all the strength of his heart observes this vow and lives it will thereby discover a font of interior joy. It is not true that the renunciation of sexual love and a family of one’s own becomes an impediment to a human-personal development, on condition, however, that the person concerned assumes this vow with interior liberty and sufficient human maturity. The Council Decree “Perfectae Caritatis” tells us in Number 12: “They should take advantage of those natural helps which favour mental and bodily health. As a result they will not be influenced by those erroneous claims which present complete continence as impossible or as harmful to human development. In addition a certain spiritual instinct should lead them to spurn everything likely to imperil chastity” (PC 12, Abbott).

As with the other counsels, so celibacy for the Kingdom of God is comprehensible only in faith. For this reason it is necessary that one lives a life of intense faith and remains in intimate union with Christ. In this regard the Constitutions tell us: “In all our efforts, we rely on the strength that comes from the grace of God and a close union with Christ. His Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is also our Mother, is our example and support” (Const. 19).

This last declaration recommending Mary as our model is certainly appropriate. Devotion to Mary can, without doubt, be a precious help to live the vow of virginal chastity with all one’s soul and with joy. We have a good example of this true Marian devotion in our Founder. In his Rules he speaks of devotion to Mary when treating of the vow of chastity: “Let there be a tender devotion to the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Most Holy. As Mother of Mercy, she can obtain for us from His Divine Majesty a pure and holy life, which, in his infinite mercy, may God our true God grant us. Amen.” (Giorgini: Rules and Constitutions, 56).

Obedience (nn. 20-24)

The evangelical counsel of obedience also finds its theological justification in the example of Jesus. He, the Man-God, has seen his food in the will and in the mission of his Father. Actually, all his life and his death on the Cross can be considered as one sole act of obedience to the will of his Divine Father (cf. Jn 4:34; Phil 2:8; Heb 10:5-10). Certainly, conforming to the will of the Father was not always easy, humanly speaking. Thus, the letter to the Hebrews can affirm: “Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered” (Heb 5:8).

In post-conciliar theology the vow of obedience has undergone a renewed understanding. As a consequence, this vow has been enriched in its aspects and accentuated in its interpretation. This has found its echo also in our Constitutions. We speak of using our “initiative and working responsibly together” (Const. 21) as complementary virtues, whilst the superior is now seen more as a guide and animator of the community. The burden of the superior, more than anything else, is a function of service and support so that individuals and community can better attain the realization of their duties and objectives. Obedience and the exercise of being superior could be, if lived in profound faith, an efficacious means of “overcoming in ourselves and in our world every form of self-seeking and every abuse of power. In this way is clearly revealed the power of the Cross to set people free” (Const. 22).

The superior must be the “brother to all” (Const. 23). On the other hand, the brethren should accept his responsibility in the spirit of faith (cf. Const. 23). This seems to me an essential point of the religious life: To look upon the office of superior and the one who holds that office in the light of faith. If the living together of superior and brothers is founded on a profoundly experienced faith, then the situations of conflict will not result in insurmountable problems; the common faith will reveal itself to all as a force of unity.

The duty of a superior as guide has the character of service. Its purpose is the good of each individual in the community. The style of government should be characterized by love, respect and dialogue. The brethren for their part should collaborate, bringing co-responsibility and showing good will to the superior, assisting him promptly and generously.

Obedience is an essential element of the religious life. An obedience, accepted and put into practice voluntarily brings man, the same as the other evangelical counsels, to a greater interior

liberty and human maturity. For this reason Number 14 of Perfectae Caritatis tells us: “religious obedience will not diminish the dignity of the human person but will rather lead it to maturity in consequence of that enlarged freedom which belongs to the sons of God.” And our Constitutions place before us the obligatory character of obedience saying: “We have promised to live according to the Gospel and our Constitutions, we oblige ourselves by the vow of obedience to carry out the orders of our lawful Superiors” (Const. 24).

It seems essential to me that the vow of obedience should always be seen in the context of faith. In the last analysis, the evangelical counsels are helps and habits of life which have faith as their origin and purpose. The importance which Paul of the Cross gave to obedience can be deduced from his Rule. He introduces the chapter on obedience in these words: “Obedience is the fundamental rock of perfection, and the truly obedient, scripture tells us, will tell of victories” (Giorgini: Rules & Constitutions 38).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What can we do to preserve the contemplative element in our life, which our Holy Founder considered so important?
2. How can we concretize our Fourth Vow:
 - a) On a spiritual-religious level?
 - b) In the apostolate?
3. How to resolve areas of eventual tension:
 - a) Openness to the world/interiority?
 - b) Apostolate/life in community?
4. What does it mean for us to live “a simple style of life”?
5. What has changed in the practice of the vow of obedience?

FUNDAMENTALS OF OUR LIFE

Rev. Augustine P. Hennessy, C.P.

Preamble

The first chapter of our revised Constitutions is a carefully chiseled germinal theology of our Passionist vocation. In writing these reflections on some key phrases of the text, my comments are unabashedly traditional. One might even say that they are primarily Thomistic. In the interest of objectivity, one cannot presume to reaffirm traditional concepts of medieval Christology and cross-centered soteriology unless one has familiarized himself with the insights of contemporary biblical scholarship and the vision, as well as the charisms, of liberationist theologians. Accordingly, most of the time spent in preparing these reflections has been devoted to reading or rereading the updated theologizing. This involves Christology from 'below' rather than from 'above.'

Inevitably, my general impression is that most of this theologizing is marked by an excessive humanization of the Man Jesus. This conviction is strengthened as I ponder the admonition given by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on February 21, 1972 (1). Nonetheless we cannot escape the relentless fact that in today's Church there are operative both a Christology 'from above' and a Christology 'from below.' 'In the 1979 supplement to the New Catholic Encyclopedia (vol. 17), which is devoted entirely to the theme 'Change in the Church,' the article by T.M. McFadden on "Christology" has helped me to keep my bearing while caught up in a welter of conflicting opinions (2).

To supply a framework in which to present his summary of contemporary thinking about the Man Jesus, McFadden writes:

The charge of neo-Chalcedonianism, asserting that the typical belief of the faithful did not allow for any distinctly human operations of Jesus, has become the touchstone for several new approaches in Christology. Four of these approaches will be considered in this article: Spirit Christology (Piet Schoonenberg), Christology from below, especially as this is exposed by Hans Kung, a process Christology, (John B. Cobb, Jr.) and Kasper's personalist ontology.

It seems to me that we must never forget what Romano Guardini called 'The Utter Otherness of Jesus' (3). We can hardly steep ourselves in the mystique of Jesus, our Redeemer, if we reduce his experience in the Sacred Passion to the limitations of a man as time-conditioned, spatially hemmed-in and culturally modified as we are ourselves. Jesus must remain a transcendent man if He is to be the model and the mystery of men in every age and in every culture. Loss of a sense of wonder about the meaning of Jesus can sometimes be the aftermath of too neat a verbalization of the meaning of His human experience. If we become too plausibly articulate, we are presumptively wrong. Jesus must remain too wonderful for words. I still resonate comfortably to the sense of wonder voiced many years ago by Dom Anscar Vonier:

Christ, the Son of God, could never be man's eternal life, if He is not man's eternal wonder. A Christ whom we could fully comprehend, whom we could understand through

and through, could never be our life and our hope, because we could not wonder at Him any more (4).

For me, a striking verification of this fear of the loss of a sense of wonder alarmed me when I critiqued two contemporary studies of Jesus sponsored by the Princeton Theological Seminary: William E. Phipp's Was Jesus Married? (1970) and The Sexuality of Jesus (1973) (5). Or coming nearer to home, I found both beauty and bewilderment when I read Peter De Rosa's Jesus Who Became Christ (6).

Yet one cannot content oneself with simply reaffirming or parroting a traditional formula without recognizing that a formula is just the beginning of theological pondering, not its end. There are surely enriching insights in the reflections of men like Karl Rahner (7), Bruce Vawter (8), and Raymond Brown (9) on the Chalcedonian formula. Similarly, a thinking person cannot help being heartened by the zeal and compassion which Jon Sobrino puts into the fourteen theses of his Christology at the Crossroads (10) and which Leonardo Boff, O.F.M. (11) unfolds in his own concise summaries of the thirteen chapters and an epilogue which make up his contribution in Jesus Christ, Liberator. For a Passionist, the testimony of these Latin American authors is soul-stirring because they are so obviously face-to-face with the contemporary Passion of Christ every day.

The Catholic Theological Society of America has a membership now of almost thirteen hundred men and women. I am happy to be one of the remaining fifteen charter members. I cannot help but be glad that there is an ongoing seminar on Christology in the annual conventions and I admire deeply the wide range of scholarly reading and writing manifested by lay professors in this organization. Relatively recent entries appearing in the annual "Proceedings" include Francis Fiorenza's "Critical Social Theory and Christology" (12) and Donald P. Gray's "The Divine and the Human in Jesus Christ" (13). Gray's scholarly paper is, in part, a critique of John B. Cobb's Christ in a Pluralistic Age and is followed by a "Response to Donald Gray" by Cobb himself and a second "Response" by Eamon Carroll, O. Carm., which, to me, is a beautifully clear and genteel traditionalist critique.

Today we need gentle mediators in the discussion of Christology 'from above' and 'from below'. Such mediation can come from an old theologian like Jean Guilton (14) or from a young short-lived man like Flor Hofmans (15). I would like to be a gentle mediator. But I must confess that there is little that I read which I cannot put into a framework of Thomistic preconceptions garnered from the Summa Theologica, the Catena Aurea, and Thomas's commentaries on St. Paul and St. John.

I. Our Consecration to the Passion of Jesus

In Number 5 and 6 of Chapter One of our Constitutions, we have basic thematic statements concerning the uniqueness of our vocation and the distinctive physiognomy of a Passionist: "We seek the unity of our lives and our apostolate in the Passion of Jesus." We see the Passion as a manifestation of the "power of God." Power can be broadly defined as capacity for work and ability to resist hindrances to the achievement of the work intended. Christ's work is related to His Father, to Himself, to mankind, and to the enemies of mankind. Hence He recognized His mission as "destroying the power of evil" in the world and "building up the Kingdom of God." We want to share in that mission.

So his Sacred Passion operating through the five modes of redemption - efficiency, merit, satisfaction, redemption, and sacrifice (16) - triumphed over sin, satan, and death in our behalf. As such, objective redemption of mankind was thoroughly accomplished by the personal death and resurrection of Jesus. But subjective redemption is entrusted to His mystical body as it unfolds his prolonged career through human history. Consequently, sacrificial love patterned after his own is the power that transforms our world. We commit ourselves to contemplate this mystery as we find it in Christ and his Church “through persevering prayer.”

We are called to unite ourselves to the life and mission of Him who “emptied Himself.” Commenting upon this kenotic text in the letter to the Philippians, St. Thomas remarks that we must so steep ourselves in the human career of Jesus that it becomes an experiential reality for us. He begins his commentary on “Hoc enim sentite in vobis quod est in Christo Jesu,” by paraphrasing “Hoc sentite” in saying, i.e., “experimento tenete quod fuit in Christo Jesu.” Then he adds that we must see His charity; listen to His wisdom; catch the fragrance of His meekness; taste the sweetness of His filial piety; and touch and feel His power as we plunge into His work (17).

II. Role of Persevering Prayer

The kind of affective union with Christ recommended by St. Thomas’s commentary on Philippians 2:5 is not achieved by the sweat and study of conventional theologizing. It is a kind of conditioned connaturality for divine things which comes from a persevering commitment to prayer. In the light of the recommendation of Saint Paul of the Cross that our prayer should frequently center itself on the divine attributes, I found great inspiration from a single paragraph of William of St. Thierry, the friend and biographer of St. Bernard. He saw four dimensions to the immensity of God: His power, His wisdom, His love, and His eternity of truth. He wrote:

To God’s power, which can punish us, and to His wisdom, which knows our secrets, the soul owes true fear of the Lord - a fear unhindered in its work by the smugness of false confidence or by the hideaways of pretense. To God’s love which is also His eternal truth, we owe a return of love which is unimpeded in its surrender by lukewarmness of affection or uneasiness of suspicion - a foolish heedless suspicion that Love might cease to love, or Truth might be deceitful, or Eternity might fade away. To offset this childishness it is always the saint’s vocation to comprehend with Paul ‘what is the breadth and length and height and depth of God’s love.’

Then without another word of explanation, William writes a sentence which seemed to me to leap right off the page: “Et haec est crux Christi!” (18)

A mere conceptualized theology about the role of the cross in the work of Christ will never terminate in this kind of knowledge of Jesus Crucified. One can ponder Questions 46 to 50 in the Summa Theologica, Pars Tertia of St. Thomas and delight in its exquisite phraseology for expressing his theological insights. But affective union with the realities involved in those insights comes only from the actualization of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In Pope John Paul II’s beautiful homily given at the Angelicum on November 17, 1979 to commemorate the centenary of Pope Leo XIII’s Aeternae Patris encyclical, His Holiness quoted a sentence from the Angelic Doctor’s commentary on St. John’s Gospel, 15:2. The sentence read: “A caritate omnia

procedunt sicut a principio et in caritatem omnia ordinantur sicut in finem.” Then the Pontiff added these words: “And, in fact, the huge intellectual effort of this master of thought was stimulated, sustained, and given direction by a heart full of love for God and his neighbor.”

Quoting Thomas’s commentary on John’s Gospel a second time, Pope John Paul called attention to John 5:6 where Thomas voices a cardinal principle pertinent to persevering prayer: “Per ardorem caritatis datur cognitio veritatis.” Then he added:

These words could be taken as his motto. They allow us to perceive behind the thinker able to rise to the loftiest heights of speculation the mystic accustomed to go straight to the very fountain of truth to find the answer to the deepest questionings of the human spirit (19).

This knowledge which comes through the ardor of love and which made St. Paul of the Cross savor divine truths in serene contemplation is given only to humble hearts. This is affective knowledge. It comes to single-minded lovers. It can be hurt by any kind of subtle egotism. This is so because the proud man, while delighting in his own excellence, disdains the splendor of truth. St. Thomas observes that a puffed-up mind is also a beclouded mind. And he quotes St. Gregory the Great: “The proud, are not able to taste their sweetness and if they know how they are, they are nonetheless ignorant of how they taste” (20).

Experiential knowledge of the meaning of Jesus by this God-given taste for the reality of grace and the communion of the saints is what enables us to go with alacrity to the service of our neighbor even when, humanly speaking, our presence would not be wanted. As Number 5 of our Constitutiones assures us, contemplation “enables us... to help others offer their lives in Christ to the Father.”

III. Meaning of Memory of the Passion

As Passionists, we commit ourselves to participation in the Passion in a way “which is at once personal, communitarian and apostolic” (Const. 6). The special vow by which we make this commitment is a vow explicitly “to recall to mind with greater love the Passion of our Lord and to promote its memory by word and deed” (Const. 96). We believe that we thereby “foster the awareness of its meaning and value for each person and for the life of the world” (Const.6).

A vow that hopes to have such a dynamic impact upon the dignity of personhood and the life of the world has to be much more than the promotion of an inert memory. It is not just a commitment to evoke an ardent love-filled recollection of a past historical event. It is much more than an earnest and zealous expectation of changing sinful hearts by the impact of a mysterious moral causality. It is a commitment to promote the memory of a Person and an event that transcend the limitations of space and time. This memory has a life-giving impact upon the world in its most preeminent manner in the representation of the Paschal mystery in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the risen Christ. It is the memory of a Person and an event which is at the center of human history and of the universe. It is a sacramental reality which pre-contains within itself the power to transform and transfigure the whole redeemed cosmos.

Consequently, Passionist communities are called to become “a leaven of salvation in the Church and in the world.” (Const. 6) The memory of the Passion is meant to dynamize our own lives so

that we live by the wisdom and power of the cross “through which man knows how much God loves him and through this experience is summoned and incited to love him in whom the perfection of human salvation consists” (21). Like the sacramental remembrance of the Passion in the Eucharist, our memory of the Passion has a fourfold finality: it is laudatory, propitiatory, impetratory, and Eucharistic (22). Of these four ends of the Eucharistic memorial, the first in priority is the laudatory. Jesus, our High-priest, came into our world primarily to be the perfect worshiper of the Father. He did not come primarily to be a prophet, or a social reformer, or a teacher, or even a redeemer. He came first of all to be the perfect adorer of his Father. This is the whole mystique of the letter to the Hebrews. No writing in the Pauline corpus is so relentlessly logical in its development as this letter pertinent to the one eternal sacrifice of Jesus, our timeless priest and victim (23). Our memory of the Passion is an unabated summons to an habitual posture of worshipful praise as we identify ourselves with the priestly career of Jesus.

IV. The Dynamism of Devotion

Number 7 of our Constitutions reminds us that our Baptism immerses us in the Paschal dynamic of the death and resurrection of Jesus. At the heart of this dynamic in the human career of Jesus is his personal devotion to the will of his Father. Devotion is the interior act of the virtue of religion (24). It is that promptness of will which summons us to embrace the manifest will of our Father. It is that interior yearning of the spirit which made Jesus Himself long to cast fire upon the earth and to experience an eagerness to see it burst into flame. Devotion is that wholesome restlessness that made Jesus feel hemmed-in and straightened until He could undergo the bloody baptism of Calvary (25). This devotion must ultimately become the driving force behind our dynamic summons to become living images of Jesus, our High-priest, as we run with patience to the battle confronting us while we are looking on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith who for the joy set before Him endured the shame and is now seated at the right hand of God in glory (26).

It is this dynamic summons of devotion which preserves our concept of vocation from being reduced to a stagnant routine. Number 4 of our Constitutions challenges us to “accept the urgent demands made on each of us by the personal call of the Father to follow Jesus Crucified.” Our vocation is not a static, predictable way of life. It is a highly individualized dynamic reality. Here again I find St. Thomas Aquinas the most reliable of guides. Commenting upon Romans 8:30, he expresses the nature of vocation in these words: “*Alia vero vocatio est interior, quae nihil aliud est quam quidem mentis instinctus quo cor hominis movetur a Deo ad assentiendum his quae sunt fidei vel virtutis*” (27). I like to translate this definition with the dynamic overtones in the word ‘instinctus’ and the call to growth in insight and intimacy in the words ‘fidei vel virtutis.’ Accordingly, I hear St. Thomas saying that “vocation is nothing other than a prodding of the mind whereby the heart of man is moved by God to assent to those things which faith reveals and virtue embraces.” In this sense the dynamism of our vocation is as relentless as an instinctive drive. It is a summons both to romance and adventure. It thrives on acceptance of what faith reveals to us moment by moment and what a spirit of adventure enables us to embrace with confidence. The reflective Christian therefore moves toward that which is about to happen (*ad venturum*) with confidence in God and serenity of spirit.

V. In the Spirit of the Beatitudes

In his concise comments on Galatians 5:22-23, St. Thomas has a beautiful definition pertinent to living by the spirit of the beatitudes. Since St. Paul is speaking about the struggle between works of the flesh and fruits of the Spirit, St. Thomas defines a fruit as the ultimate product of a life-principle containing sweetness (28). Accordingly, any ordinary act of virtue proceeding from an infused virtue, theological or moral, can be called a fruit of the Spirit. But only an act of virtue which proceeds from the agent in a markedly superhuman mode can be called a beatitude. In Thomistic theology, beatitudes are not so much habitual postures of the Gospel-minded person but rather recurrent acts which involve actualization of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and, if frequent, would imply a kind of conditioned con-naturalness for divine things in an habitually recollected Christian. Apparently, it is to this high degree of recollection we are called to aspire to when we try to live by the spirit of the beatitudes. The oft-repeated saying of our holy Founder: “If God should someday or other open my eyes to all the evils He has snatched me from and all the good things He has bestowed upon me, you will find me dead of grief and love at the foot of the altar,” would, I think, be a good example of God-consciousness. These words are imbued with poverty of spirit and single mindedness. “Dead of grief” because Paul knew he was miserable; “dead of love”, because he knew God was so merciful; and “dead at the foot of the altar,” because, like Jesus, he wanted to be a worshipful man.

VI. The Mystique of Poverty

The very first paragraph of our Constitutions reminds us that our way of life is based on evangelical poverty which is “so necessary...to observe the other evangelical counsels, to persevere in prayer, and to preach the Word of the Cross in season and out of season.” In the recently published “Accounts of 1747 and 1768,” we can see that Paul’s romance with poverty rivals the ardor of the little Poor Man of Assisi. In describing the cells of the religious, he says in passing that they “should be similar to those of the Capuchin Fathers” (Number 8 of 1747 Account) and, when prescribing an antidote to all those ills which prevent a human heart “from soaring to the Supreme Good,” he tells his sons to embrace “the holy poverty taught and practiced by Jesus Christ” (Account of 1768, Number 5) (29). If Paul of the Cross is echoing the timeless message of Francis of Assisi, our devotion to poverty must extend beyond its preservative function which keeps us from drowning in preoccupation with temporal goods. It must be primarily latreutic as is traditional Franciscanism; it must be one long canticle of praise for the providence of an ever-attentive Father in heaven. Similarly, if a prime value of our lives is our “solidarity with the poor” (Const. 13), we have to let ourselves become tutored by that unitive efficiency which enables us to feel an unembarrassed bond with the poor. Finally, if, as number 10 reminds us, we are going to take our inspiration from Him, who “clearly showed his love for us by becoming poor for our sakes,” we must recognize a redemptive value to our poverty. If we can become co-redeemers with Jesus of our own hour of history only per modum exhortationis et per modum exempli (30), we must discover the redemptive value put into self-emptying by Jesus himself. In this regard, I believe that we can draw much inspiration from the message of Ministers General of the Franciscan Family given at Rome and dated April, 1981, Easter Sunday, on the occasion of the 8th Centenary of the Birth of St. Francis of Assisi (31). Today when once again mendicant orders are in relative disrepute for having too many comforts, it is comforting to recall that when William of St. Amour was casting invective against orders like the Dominicans and Franciscans, both St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure use the same somewhat inelegant phrase to describe his frame of mind; they labeled his attack as a doctrina pestifera (32). No doubt their lives entitled them to use such vigorous language.

VII. Fruitfulness of Celibacy

The section of our Constitutions on the vow of chastity is marked by a humane reverence for human affectivity. It leaves room for an insightful recognition that a high level of affectivity is a God-given asset for one who is called to preach the Sacred Passion and who is hopefully moving toward a highly affective form of prayer or contemplation. Number 19 incorporates the modernity of contemporary psychological insights with the time-honored values of consecrated virginity. It recognizes that fidelity to such a demanding commitment is possible only through the acquisition of “maturity of mind, self-mastery, and a well-balanced character.”

For me, no one source has been so helpful in discovering the mystical meaning of consecrated virginity as the ancient preface for the pontifical Mass celebrating the solemn consecration of virgins (33). This preface is imbued with an awesome sense of wonderment at the holy fortitude of a spirit hemmed in by moral flesh coming to grips with “the sway of nature, the tyranny of convention, the false freedom of wantonness and the urgency of youthful passion.” Such a brave undertaking can count on a victorious outcome only by a sturdy confidence in the power of the God who planted the desire in their hearts to also grant the grace of fulfilling it. The history of this ancient rite has been studied rather exhaustively by Rene Metz (34).

Again trusting primarily my own interior convictions, for me the best criterion for judging the maturity required to achieve fruitfulness of spirit through this perilous commitment is one’s ability to produce the traditional effects of friendship love. The age-old terms for these effects which St. Thomas uses are: *unio, extasis, zelus, influxus universalis in activitatem agentis, et vulneratio* (35). For an updated attempt at understanding these causalities, I suggest more readily-grasped contemporary terms, for union, we can think or speak of ‘mutuality;’ for ecstasy, ‘other-centeredness;’ for zeal, ‘touchy concern;’ for universal influence upon the loved one, ‘psychic presence;’ and for vulnerability, ‘creative caring.’ St. Thomas defined zeal as “*amor intensus non patiens consortium in amato,*” i.e., good possessiveness.

These realities which are effects of friendship love are expressed very beautifully in one of Augustine’s lyrical passages. He is speaking of communion which rejoiced his soul in the company of his friends and writes:

To talk and laugh and do kindnesses to one another; to read pleasant books together; to make jokes together and then to talk seriously; sometimes to disagree but without ill feeling, just as one may disagree with oneself and find that these rare disagreements make our general agreement all the sweeter; to be sometimes teaching and sometimes learning; to long impatiently for the absent and to welcome them with joy when they return to us; these and other similar expressions of feeling which proceed from the hearts of those who love and are loved in return and which are revealed in the face, voice, eyes, and in a thousand charming ways are like a kindling fire to melt our persons together and make us one (36).

Consecrated celibacy has achieved its purpose effectively only when it enables the vowed person to become eminently human in his or her capacity for friendship love. It is not meant to so anesthetize one’s affectivity that he or she is incapacitated for achieving friendship love which is a high level of Christian charity (37). Intimacy involves the gift of being self-disclosing yet distance-respecting.

VIII. The Marginal Implications of Obedience

The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation reminds us that the Holy Spirit “converses uninterruptedly with His Bride.” Our Constitutions in number 20 have a powerful statement of the dynamic exigency of our call to be caught up in God’s own plan of love for the world. “Day by day, we confront our lives with the Gospel values and the example of Christ” (Const. 20). “We become witnesses to the dynamic presence of Christ” (Const. 21) in our world; we mirror “His constant love of the Father” (Const. 21). Surely an exhilarating sacramentality! In these days when there is a new stress upon personal and communal discernment, all religious have a greater responsibility to “recognize that co-responsibility and mutual dependence open the way to freedom and fulfillment for each one of us” (Const. 22). This leads logically to what has been called ‘diligence in exploring the marginal implications of the principle of finality.’ These somewhat ponderous yet challenging words are taken from the final paragraph of James Osborne, O.P.’s controversial book The Morality of Imperfections. Father Osborne champions a more demanding asceticism in this area than Garrigou-Lagrange in his treatment of ‘Imperfection’(38).

In capsule formulation, the outcome of this discussion and the operating result of diligent discernment is reducible to this principle: the more insightful we become in discerning the demands of the commandment of love, the more generous we must be in responding to them in keeping with our strength to do so. Father Gillemann in his magnificent work Le Primat de la Charite en Theologies Morale called our response to the goal of love a ‘morale de depassement;’ it is a recurrent summons to action surpassing the best efforts of our previous exertion. Christian love can never get comfortable in a rut. And to avoid this sluggishness of spirit, he asserts that our moral vision must become a Christocentric morality. It is a doctrine of generous communion with others; it is an outlook of filial devotion to the Father; it is a mystique for living which is finalized by an expectation of death, mystical and physical; it is a sacramental way of life finding Christ everywhere; it is a moral imperative coming from authority and community living. Consequently it is an habitual posture of expectancy wherein we await an overture of divine love urging us to an increasingly demanding effort (39).

In wrestling with concrete problems of conscience in the area of obedience wherein a personal sense of mission may seem to go counter to the habitual attitude of one’s own religious community, we step into a shadow-land. Upright people on both sides of a debate may be in honest disagreement. Seldom in our religious life do any of us receive explicit precepts from our superior binding us to obedience by our vow. It is the marginal implications of the commandment of love which engender tension points. I was once requested to give a paper at the annual meeting of the major superiors of men in the USA at a time when there was a ferment over academic freedom, political protest, and harassment of missionaries proclaiming the gospel where totalitarian regimes were in control. At the request of the editor, it was subsequently published in a Protestant magazine under the heading, ‘Catholic Thinking!’. I hope it deserves that accolade, as it appeared under the title “Freedom and Personhood.”

In an effort to supply a framework for discussion, I elaborated three principles:

1. Freedom in pursuit of personhood is a relentless summons to be the Someone whom God is calling you to be.

2. Freedom in pursuit of personhood is a willing acceptance of struggle, the struggle to achieve a well-formed conscience despite the many hindrances to perfect freedom in our wounded psychical life.
3. Freedom in pursuit of personhood is a recognized opportunity to serve the common welfare.

To harmonize these principles with their inbuilt autonomies is the work of Christian prudence operating under the impetus of sacrificial love in the spirit of Jesus Crucified (40).

Conclusion

As we ponder the demands of love built in the twenty-four numbers of Chapter One of our Constitutions, we cannot help seeing that we are called to a high degree of sacrificial love. There is no escape from our call to that self-emptying which is in some undramatic way an encounter with mystical death. None of us, perhaps, is so brave as to emulate St. Mary Magdalen di Pazzi, as St. Paul of the Cross did, in wanting to be “the rag of the monastery.” We remember that she was one of the three Carmelites who was in the entourage of Mary on the day Paul received the grace of mystical marriage. And at her own similar experience, she remembered the presence of St. Augustine and St. Catherine of Siena. This seems appropriate since her two dominating ideas were delight in eternal complacency of the Triune God and elation in the sign value of consecrated virginity. The twelve Rules and Principles of her “Great Devotion” (Secrets of the Seraph, Salvator Thor-Salviat, pp. 24-25) have a great affinity with Paul of the Cross’s delight in the divine attributes and his chaste single-mindedness of devotion to the Father’s will. Paul wanted to be ever encountering the living Christ in this redeemed cosmos - a universe redeemed by God’s encompassing love.

We remember what he told us to do on our solitary walks. He cherished the admonition “Walk before me and be perfect” and these comments:

Let everything recall to you the presence of God. If, for example, you go into the garden and see some flowers and ask one of them, “What are you?” it will not reply, “I am a flower!” No, it will say to you, “Ego sum vox. I am a preacher. I preach the power, the wisdom, the goodness, the beauty, and the prudence of our great God.”

How do we go about achieving such a great romance and launching out on such a great adventure? Perhaps St. Bonaventure gives us the best advice in the closing paragraphs of *Journey of the Mind to God*:

If you ask me how this is done, I say to you.
Ask for grace, not for doctrine;
Beg for yearning, not for understanding;
Look to the groanings of prayer and not to eagerness for reading;
Go to the Spouse, not to the teacher;
Turn to God, and not to men,
Expect the darkness and not a burst of brilliance;
Rely not on the light but on the fire which leaps
up to God with burning desires and soothing confidence.
The Fire indeed is God Himself; its Hearth is in Jerusalem;

And Christ Himself enkindled it there by the fervor of His burning Passion (41).

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FUNDAMENTALS OF OUR LIFE

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Preface

The very modest intention of this study is to introduce an intelligent reading of the Passionist Constitutions and to guide the reader on a spiritual and action-oriented reflection on them. This latter necessarily requires a chapter-by-chapter reading, but it is also useful to have, at the very beginning, a view of the entire structure of the new Constitutions in order to appreciate the contribution of each of the constitutive parts.

We can call the sequence of the chapters in the old Rule ‘developmental;’ they described the Congregation in such a way as to take the religious metaphorically by the hand from the moment that he begins to consider his vocation until the moment when, having passed to a better life, he receives the due suffrages (1).

The new Constitutions, however, use a sequence which might be termed a ‘logical’ one, that is based on the significant values of the Passionist life.

Therefore, two major parts are distinguished in the Constitutions:

- a) the substance of the Passionist life (chapters 1-4);
- b) the structures for formation toward and maintenance of that life (chapters 5-8).

The first part, in turn, can be divided as follows:

- a) the fundamentals of our life (chapter 1);
- b) the actualization of the fundamentals in communion, prayer, and activity (chapters 2-4).

The first chapter, therefore, lays an essential foundation and what is said here is determinative in building up the entire edifice of Passionist life as a stable and harmonious whole. It would be wrong to read this chapter in isolation or to read the rest of the Constitutions without a continual reference to this beginning. Therefore, although our commentary is limited to Chapter One, we intend to make frequent references to the rest of the Constitutions, thus permitting us a unified vision.

Taking a closer look at Chapter One, we can say that it fulfills two distinct functions:

- a) primarily, it shows that ours is a community vowed “to keep alive the memory of the Passion” (Const. 6) and therefore, is profoundly and wholly a “religious” community;
- b) subordinate to the first and having specific applications is the giving of essential norms for the four vows which are constitutive of Passionist life.

This will not be a paragraph-by-paragraph commentary on Chapter One, far too much space would be required for that; such a commentary, done very analytically and especially in correspondence with the new Code of Canon Law, would be a valuable undertaking for another distinct project. Here, rather, we would prefer to stress the essentially unitary character of the chapter, each of whose parts is characterized by “religious” (a life publicly “vowed” to the glory of God), contemplative, communitarian and apostolic dimensions. Later, in an appendix, we will

present an orderly synthesis of the twenty-four numbers in Chapter One; each of the numbers will be given a sort of subtitle making it easier to grasp their content.

Our study unfolds in four parts:

- a) fidelity to the charism of our religious patrimony;
- b) memoria Passionis, the integrating value;
- c) the integration of person with community in the new Constitutions;
- d) the ecclesial ministry of Passionists today.

I. FIDELITY TO THE CHARISM OF OUR RELIGIOUS PATRIMONY

A ‘faithful interpretation’ of the charism

The issue of whether the new Constitutions faithfully transmit the Passionist charism to us is a question of life and death for our Congregation (2). That they do just this was the specific mandate of the Second Vatican Council when it asked religious institutes to update (3). This is also among one of the concluding affirmations of our new Constitutions (4).

An interpretation is required when one is faced with an entirely new language. The complete renewal of their constitutions has been required in practically every religious institute because the Council itself is a reinterpretation of ecclesiology, which flows from the understanding of the Church which the Christian community achieves in the midst of the modern world, and in the circumstance of having to adopt its language. Some fundamental categories have emerged; for example: the Church considers itself an instrument for unifying the world around the values of the Kingdom; the Church is involved in the Paschal Mystery as a means by which, in historical progression, it advances **per crucem ad lucem**; the Church considers communion more highly than sociological values as it tries to be a living communion in the world. The interpretation of the Passionist charism speaks the same language.

As Pope John XXIII had already affirmed in the preceding revision of the Constitutions, it is not just a matter of being faithful to tradition, but the revised and approved text is proposed with the expectation that it, “having received a new vigor, would become more fruitful and be observed more carefully” (5).

It would be an unpardonable error to consider the new Constitutions as a “mitigation” of the old Rules, and to behave accordingly. If, during the lifetime of our Holy Founder, some of the austerity had already been attenuated and there were similar changes in the later years, it was to accentuate the truly fundamental values. Fraternal community is promoted by “a gentle, lovable, discreet penance which both the strong and the weak can endure” (6). Everything is directed toward supporting the difficult missionary labours: “Since the members of this least Congregation should cultivate the vineyard of the Lord, it is important that they maintain their health and that they gain and preserve their strength to be able to work constantly for the glory of God” (7). We would say, therefore, that there is a concentration on essential values. Statements such as: the Passionist today ought to be as “crucified” as were the first Passionists, though in a manner corresponding to today, are not in accord with our essential values.

The original intentions of Saint Paul of the Cross

The Constitutions open with an historical declaration in which the ends intended by our Holy Founder in establishing the Congregation are expressed practically in his own words (Const. 1). In the final number of the Constitutions the spiritual testament of our Founder in which Paul of the Cross again expresses the Passionist charism is recalled (8). References to our Holy Founder's name and to his intentions occur frequently (9), a reminder to preserve what was closest to his heart. Thus we have also an exact criterion for the interpretation of contemporary tendencies and the obligation of teaching the spirituality of the Founder both in initial formation (10) and in on-going formation as well. Only this can authenticate our intention of remaining faithful to his charism, human limitations notwithstanding (cf. Const. 2).

We should not forget that the founding inspirations were visions of a considerable mystical degree (11), to the extent that Saint Paul of the Cross would justly say that the true Founder of the Congregation was God himself (12). From out of those visions we can derive three elements that are combined into a living and concrete subject:

- A. Poverty in imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. He wanted them to live their lives like apostles.
- C. The "Good News," the saving Passion.

A. Poverty in imitation of Our Lord Jesus Christ (13)

The name "The Poor of Jesus" established poverty as the distinctive trait of the Congregation. This poverty obviously includes all that is encapsulate in that explicit vow, but it exacts even more, namely, "the complete detachment from all created things" (14), so that:

...the Religious, totally freed from temporal things, effectively detached from earth and dead to themselves, are better disposed to receive the impressions of divine grace so that afterwards in due time, and with hearts full of God's love, they may undertake great things for the glory of God and for the defense of Holy Church even at the cost of their own lives, sparing neither privation nor any labour (15).

The oldest text of the Rule is explicit: "the Passionist is one who follows Jesus Christ, who did not have even a place to lay his sacred head, and then died naked on the hard tree of the Cross" (16). It is clear that the "Poor of Jesus" are those in whose hearts there is only the desire to become proclaimers of the Kingdom at whatever cost, confirming the credibility of their particular apostolate by their absolute disavowal of any selfish interest (17).

B. He wanted them to live their lives like apostles (Const. 1)

The radical detachment of the Poor of Jesus corresponds to that asked of the evangelical disciples (18) which thus empowers them to follow the Master everywhere. In aligning himself with spiritual movements based on the "vita apostolica," Saint Paul of the Cross had especially in mind that itinerant community described by the gospels.

The earliest Rules clearly show that, by taking their behavior as a norm (19), the Passionists follow all of the evangelical counsels given by Jesus: those regarding the manner of carrying out the mission (20), that of retiring into solitude after the mission (21), and that of deriving the strength to overcome the diabolical power from prayer and fasting (22). In the midst of the

ecclesial community, which is certainly thoroughly apostolic, the Passionists become, in the wake of the evangelizing Twelve, like those who ‘devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word’ (Acts 6:4).

C. The “Good News” - the saving Passion

The origin of our Congregation clearly shows that our holy Founder, having experienced the immensely transforming power of loving union with Jesus Crucified, defines its exact mission as making the Passion “relive” (or return to memory) in all persons, and that no effort should be spared to this end, for it is a sure way of bringing a remedy to all of the evils of the world (23). Noteworthy is an expression in which this mission is summarized in existential terms:

In short, the workers sacrifice themselves in everything for the good of souls, without concern for their own weariness and sufferings, taking on themselves the infirmities of others like Jesus Christ of Whom it is said, ‘ It was our infirmities that He bore, our sufferings that He endured’ (24).

The Good News is precisely that Jesus has taken on the burden of the evils of the world for love of all. The missionary reminds others of this by showing that this actually continues in his own missionary spirit since it should be evident that it is only out of love that he assumes the burden of his brethren in their striving for salvation. Thus, the missionary is the bearer of salvation. He encourages his brethren to imitate Jesus by assuming the burdens of their neighbors and spreading that love which brings salvation (25). We should seriously reflect on this in the light of the present interpretation of our charism.

The ecclesial validation of the Passionist charism

Every religious institute is born to confront some pressing exigency of its time. The guarantee that it is endowed with sufficient dynamism to embark on the future can be given only by the Church, to which Jesus has assured an indefectible stability. Saint Paul of the Cross was anxious to receive this approbation in his lifetime, so anxious that he desired it even before he had one companion! Greater was his joy when he received the solemn Bull of Clement XIV at the end of his long career. “Before dying, I leave the Congregation well-founded and established in perpetuity on the holy Church of God!” (26). The new Constitutions (cf. Const. 2) cite the repeated approbations of the Church up to the present time, each of which validates the authoritative judgment passed on the perennial evangelical character of our mission in the Church.

This approbation does “objectivize,” in some way, the charismatic physiognomy of the Congregation as expressed in the Constitutions. Obviously, one cannot speak of an “institutionalized” charism, such would be a contradiction. But it can be said that the approbation goes beyond the experience of the foundation and even includes the manner in which the charism, throughout historical tradition, has been “lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth” (27). Approbation guarantees, therefore, that the objective elements of the particular modality of sanctification and of apostolate can be grouped together and that the identity of the institute will be safely maintained, albeit through cultural evolution and ecclesial renewal (28).

The succession of approbations throughout the history of an institute clearly shows that they do not petrify their charism. Even the Church, especially in as much as it recognizes the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit in the living charismatic community, trustingly responds to its creative movements, especially today, when unthought of situations must be confronted: “under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who is by His very nature Creator. A responsiveness rich in creative initiative...is eminently compatible with the charismatic nature of the religious life” (29). The Constitutions do not fail to refer to this guidance of the Spirit (30) and, especially on account of this adaptability and openness, “are the norm and sure guide for our life of consecration in the Passionist Congregation” (31).

The Congregation, therefore, having quite an exact framework for its life and action, need not run the risk of spreading itself into areas which are not proper to it. At the same time, however, reference is made to the Congregation’s spiritual vitality, which encourages the institute to make the most of those occasions which in the very nature of things will present themselves, and thus fulfill its particular mandate: “in fact the love of God is most ingenious and reveals itself not as much with words as with works and with example” (32).

II. MEMORIA PASSIONIS, THE INTEGRATING VALUE

A specific vow because it specifies every aspect of our life

Historians remind us that the so-called “fourth vow” was made for the first time by Saint Paul of the Cross in Rome, in the year 1721, before the painting of Mary, Salus Populi Romani, in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major. This vow included the effort to promote the memory of the Passion, and even - note this well - to found the Congregation for this purpose! (33) From this vow, therefore, flows the very essence of our religious family. It is the special reason which historically justifies the Congregation as a distinct institute among the many missionary congregations which were born before and during the life of our Holy Founder. “By this vow our Congregation takes her place in the Church so as to dedicate herself fully to its mission” (Const. 6).

By including this special vow among the fundamentals of our life, mentioning it even before speaking of the three classical vows, which are lived in the light of the former (cf. Const. 6), the new Constitutions provide a very solid basis for our lives so that in this sacred effort it might be possible to “seek the unity of our lives and apostolate” (Const. 5). This foundation provides the means for us to avoid altogether any dualism regarding ends (personal sanctification and salvation of neighbor) or the dimensions of religious life (contemplative and active), in accord with conciliar guidelines regarding apostolic institutes (34).

It is the entire life of the Passionist which is “vowed” to the memory of the Passion. The Passionist fosters the Memoria Passionis in himself, seeking to incorporate this vow into his daily life (cf. Const. 6) and practicing the other vows as a means of bringing the message of the Cross to penetrate all of his life (cf. Const. 9), thus enabling himself for proclamation (35). The Congregation’s:

purpose is to form zealous workers filled with the Spirit, that they might be fit instruments in the almighty hand of God to sow virtue and root out vice in the people by the most potent weapon of the aforementioned Passion... (36).

Our special vow as a distinct obligation

Our special vow, therefore, has an encompassing spiritual significance: it sanctions the spirit in which all of Passionist life is lived. But it also has a moral significance as a sacred duty flowing from the virtue of religion (37), as the other three vows do. Like them, it must be fulfilled as our holy Founder had already wisely ordained: “this vow is expressed in the Rule in a way and form so as to remove all scruple and ambiguity” (38).

The specific fulfillment has been defined in the new General Regulations (Reg. 7) with these provisions:

- a) each religious personally witnesses to our Passionist charism in varying ways, above all by persevering meditation, and, according to his capacity, by study and by preaching the Word of the Cross;
- b) each community witnesses to this charism by its simple and penitential life-style, in a spirit of self-denial, and in other ways that will keep alive the memory of the Passion;
- c) ... particular attention must be given to practical ways of helping people to pray and to meditate on the Passion so that they may experience it as a vital part of their lives.

As is easily seen, the implications of the vow are extended throughout Passionist life in its entirety, even for those who are not directly engaged in preaching, as it was from the beginning (39). Today, however, it appears even more important to discern the theological-spiritual terms in which the new Constitutions present the integrating value of the Memoria Passionis.

The Passion of Jesus, the ‘most powerful weapon’

The biblical base of our spirit must always be kept in mind (40) because it guides us in a certain reading of the datum of faith, especially that datum which Saint Paul of the Cross was given as “infused understanding” (41). At the beginning of the Rule, He had placed the motto which he drew from 1 Cor 1:18, “The word of the Cross is foolishness for those who are being lost, but for us it is the power of God.”

The new Constitutions speak to us in the same sense. They remind us of the Word of the Cross as the original object of our proclamation (cf. Const. 1) and as the means of the ministry we offer (cf. Const. 3), which includes even the most modern forms of mass media (cf. Reg. 36). The word of the Cross is the complete content of salvific revelation, in as much as it culminates precisely in the event of the redemptive death of Jesus.

In the new Constitutions, the Passion of Jesus is the power by which we are assured the victory (cf. Const. 3) and it is the “power of God which penetrates the world, destroying the power of evil and building up the Kingdom of God” (Const. 5). The restitution of victory in the community over every form of egoism and power explicitly demonstrates the liberating power of the Cross (cf. Const. 22).

We are thus immersed in that hopeful and militant climate in which Saint Paul of the Cross situated his sons. For him the penitential Passionist life offered the proper environment: “by

these means, the poor religious accustom themselves for battle in order then to go out into the field to combat the common enemies....” (42). Saint Paul of the Cross invited the young to “enroll themselves as fervent soldiers under the sacred banner of the Most Holy Passion of Jesus Christ, so that they might promote this devout memory in the hearts of all. They should assume a stance (strengthened by divine grace) ‘pro muro domus Israel,’ thus becoming enduring ramparts against so many grave evils which threaten to flood all of the earth” (43).

We have come a long way from a pietistic style of devotional practices. But concretely, why is the Passion such a powerful weapon? Perhaps in older times the recounting of the Passion was considered certainly able to move anyone’s heart (44); today the preference seems to be to encourage others with the victorious challenge which Jesus hurls against the powers of the princes of this world; his triumphant outcome is manifest from the resurrection (45). In spite of his weakness, Christ is victorious and in him everyone, in spite of his limitations, has the victory assured. Though we know our own limits, we are strong if armed with the memory of the Passion (cf. Const. 2), “joyfully confident that even our weakness can show forth to the world the saving ways of God” (Const. 8).

The Passion of Jesus, the supreme revelation of our loving God

Because it is the wisdom of God, a revelation of his wise design (cf. 1 Cor 1:19-25), the cross is particularly powerful. Therefore, we arm ourselves with the wisdom of the cross (cf. Const. 3). It is typical of the spirit and the proclamation of Passionists to consider the Passion in the light of a wisdom principle, that is, the ultimate revelation of the love of God (cf. Const. 1). The real purpose of Passionists’ solitude is so that “the Religious effectively separated from the world and stripped of its principles, are enabled to receive heavenly lights for acquiring true wisdom” (46).

The Passionist life is, therefore, conceived of as a “mystagogy,” that is, an existential initiation into a mystery. One enters into it thoroughly only if one “dies to oneself, to the things of the world and to one’s own evil inclinations, to live only by God, in God and through God, hiding one’s own life in the most holy life of Jesus Christ, who for the sake of our love and to give us an example was willing to make himself the opprobrium of men and the one rejected by the people” (47). The contemplative dimension includes, therefore, every effort made to enter into the mystery and to provide our brethren with access to it as well.

The Passion thus “reveals God’s love for all people, and shows the path they must follow as they make their way towards the Father” (Const. 5). Jesus humbling himself, becoming poor, shows us his love (cf. Const. 10). Day by day we discover this love’s designs (cf. Const. 20); we discover them as the mystery of God (cf. Const. 8); and we want to show others this mystery; one is able to comprehend it by making memory of the Passion in one’s life and thus make one’s own the meaning and insuperable value of the Passion (cf. Const. 6).

This is why from the beginning the “firm resolve to foster in ourselves the spirit of prayer, and to teach others to pray” (Const. 4) is noted quite clearly among the exigencies of the Passionist life (48). Appropriately enough, there is a return to this theme in the new Constitutions (49). If, in fact, it is proper to the apostolic life in general “to contemplate and give to others the reality contemplated,” for the Passionist it means “to contemplate and to bring others to the same contemplation.”

Participation in the mystery of the Passion

We are speaking of a living contemplation, of a strong experience of God (50), not of pious practices! The key word is participation in the Passion (Const. 6); participation in the lot of Christ, who gave all, even his very life (cf. Const. 14); participation in the universal love of Christ the Redeemer (cf. Const. 18). This phrase typifies the spirituality of Saint Paul of the Cross (51). The new Constitutions propose it by adopting Phil 3:10-11: because of the power of Christ, risen and alive, we wish to unite ourselves to his Passion today so that we may then be joined with him in glory (cf. Const. 3). To participate in the life of the Risen One it is first necessary to participate in his death (52). Hence, we meditate on it so that we may better conform ourselves to it (53).

“Make the sufferings of your Beloved your own!” (54). “To be submerged in the sea of love that is the Passion” (55), as our Holy Founder himself said, means to experience that same love which led Christ to share in all of our human condition, except sin, in order to lead us to the Father (cf. Hb 4:15). Look at what it means to be versed in the Passion: it means to announce what we have experienced (56). Sharing, therefore, becomes the grounding dimension of the common life in all of its aspects. As poor persons, “having chosen to live together, we wish to share what we have in a simple and modest lifestyle” (Const. 11). Thanks to celibacy, “the more we love others in Christ, the more sensitive we become to their joys, sorrows and anxieties” (Const. 18); we fulfill our obedience in solidarity for our common mission and in mutual dependence (cf. Const. 21 22) (57).

As we shall later see, it is especially from this that the typical dimension of the Passionist apostolate is derived: to share in the tribulations of men, in whom Christ suffers, in order to lead them to the Father (cf. Const. 3; 5).

Passionist Life: ‘Sign’ of the Passion

The Passionist habit, that shown to our Holy Founder in his visions, includes the “sign” which is an outward expression that our life is vowed to the Passion: “the most holy sign of salvation!” (58). Our tradition, therefore, had already expressed what today is emphatically repeated by the theology of Vatican II. The religious life is especially a witness and a sign, “visible proof of the unfathomable mystery of Christ” (59), at work in the world today for its salvation. Our Holy Founder wished that his religious would each be “a living image of Jesus Crucified” (60) so that the very sight of them would induce others to conversion (61), and that they would spread the “fragrance of Christ” (62) everywhere.

This aspect of witness is often reflected by the new Constitutions. We are witnesses of the love of God (cf. Const. 1), a sign and constant reminder of the values of the Kingdom (cf. Const. 7); by poverty we witness to the true value and purpose of created things (cf. Const. 13); by celibacy, to the possibility of establishing a communion solely for the love of God (cf. Const. 18); by obedience, to the constant mission of loving Christ the redeemer (cf. Const. 21). Our very houses ought to be “legible signs” of the Passionist charism (cf. Reg. 6).

An evangelical and evangelizing life

The new Constitutions, naturally, also specify the normative and canonical nature of the three classical vows (cf. Const. 14, poverty; 19, celibacy; 24, obedience). But it appears especially clear that these Constitutions intend to witness to a life “vowed” to the radicalism of the Gospel: the Passionist life is the following of Jesus Crucified in “a personal and continual vigilance to make the Gospel the supreme rule and criterion of our life” (Const. 4). The following of Christ Crucified is the way to discover God (63), because Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we might follow him in his footsteps (64).

The explicit conciliar reminder to religious to make the gospel their primary Rule (65) was instinctively grasped by our holy Founder from the beginning: he rejoiced that pontifical approbation had been given to the Rules “as they were, because they were founded on the infallible truth of the holy Gospel” (66). When the force and authenticity of the gospel can be discerned in it, the religious life is a real testimony. We are committed to such a life (cf. Const. 24), we examine our life continually in this light (67), and it is toward this that we are continually being converted (68).

A life lived according to the gospel is, therefore, evangelizing. For the Passionist, proclamation is essential; this is repeated in the first chapter of the new Constitutions in many ways (cf. Const. 1, 2, 8, 9). The most complete formulation is in Const. 3: “our mission aims at evangelizing others by means of the Word of the Cross.” The Passion is ‘gospel’ if the one announcing it lives and proclaims the beatitudes of the Kingdom (cf. Const. 9), that is, carries the announcement of liberation to the poor, to the meek, to those who hunger and thirst for justice, to the persecuted.

Although the specifications are left for Chapter Four, it is already clear that the Passionist “style” of evangelization is kerygmatic and prophetic (69). We labour to make the Kingdom of God come (cf. Const. 2). We are sure that it is particularly the Cross that has the power to establish it (cf. Const. 5). This is certainly what it means to be “church”, but only in as much as it is a seed for the definitive reality of the Kingdom, whose values we especially choose to signify and recall (cf. Const. 7).

Moving through history, ‘per crucem ad lucem’

Passionist renewal includes the affirmation of one of the most important conciliar ideas: the eschatological tension. The Church (and, therefore, every single community in it) accompanies humanity on its historical and evolutionary path. The Church prefigures and indicates the goal toward which we are advancing: the realization of God’s kingdom.

This body of humanity on the move has a face, that of the crucified one. “The Passion of Christ continues in this world until He comes in glory” (Const. 3). The path to glory is the cross (cf. Const. 5). We, pilgrims with all Christians, reveal the future in hope (cf. Const. 8). We anticipate, particularly through the celibacy of the community and as best we can, the heart of the Kingdom of God in the resurrected world, when all will be one, as Christ and the Father are one in the Spirit, when God will be all in all (cf. Const. 17).

Our prophetic way of life affirms these certainties, but they do not exempt us from searching for the means that must be applied in the historical process: it is “the arduous journey of faith, seeking to explore the depths of the mystery of God” (Const. 8). Seeing, in the Crucified One, the loving plan of God for the salvation of the world, we are ready to take each day at a time,

humbly, as the Father wills us to do, measuring our life with his Word, discerning the signs of the times (cf. Const. 20; 27).

It is important to acknowledge that the structures of community life, and particularly superiors, are not only a sociological type of institution, but “mediation of others, especially of Superiors and the community, help us know God’s will” (cf. Const. 21; 23). From this flows the authenticity that should characterize our undertakings (70).

We are at the very heart of the spirituality of Saint Paul of the Cross, which is centered on the search for a perfect union with the will of God (71). We find it well-expressed in the messianic sense that he had intended in one of his most frequent references: “Our amiable Savior said to his beloved disciples that his food was doing the will of his eternal Father and to fulfil his works. Who can understand the depths of this divine language!” (72)

III. PERSON AND COMMUNITY IN THE NEW CONSTITUTIONS

The strong emphasis given to the individual person

We shall now very briefly touch upon a point which should not escape mention among the fundamentals of the renewed Passionist life: the balance between the personal dimension and the communitarian dimension. This expression had to be developed practically from zero because, generally speaking, the former style of religious life considerably reduced the value of the individual as such, while on the other hand it portrayed the common life as the product of a juxtaposition and synchronization of identical behaviors by individuals. Thanks be to God, charity flourished and gave an evangelical flavor to it all. “By practicing charity, removing everything which might impede a perfect fraternal charity....While everyone wills what all are willing and everyone wills what each one wants, it seems to be a paradise on earth because of the peace, the harmony, the tranquillity, the union....” (73).

Today uniformity in community and apostolic matters is certainly of diminished importance. This is obvious in the light of concrete situations. On the other hand, the value of the individual person has made a significant recovery. “Everyone” really means “each one.” The new Constitutions plentifully illustrate this when listing the demand which the divine call places on each of us (cf. Const. 4): vocation and profession are, in fact, eminently personal acts. The reference to this individual responsibility occurs, for example, in speaking of poverty (cf. Const. 10) as well as in other instances (74). Generally, there is an emphasis on ‘personal’ participation in the mystery of the Passion, expressed by the specific vow (cf. Const. 6, 9). A fundamental point is, therefore, the unity of the person with his spiritual gifts (75), so much so, that even the superior cannot decide simply in the light of the good of the entire community, but also must take into account the good of the individual religious (cf. Const. 23).

Personal fulfillment and the complete giving of self

The accent on the value of the individual would seem to create new problems for the building up of a specific community. But it is precisely in the correct understanding of the person that the solution to this apparent problem lies. Rightly do the new Constitutions take this up in the context of obedience, by which we accept, as did Christ, to give all of ourselves, even to death.

Our Rule is the Gospel which “leads us to look at the human situation in the new light of obedience to the Father and brotherly love” (Const. 22); and practically demonstrated in the recognition “that co-responsibility and mutual dependence open the way to freedom and fulfillment for each one of us” (Const. 22).

The charism of the Passion thus enters into even this essential quality of the religious life as a school of perfection. The religious vocation is, in fact, a divine initiative that “gathers”: only God moved Paul of the Cross, having first responded in solitude, to gather companions to live together (cf. Const. 1). A fundamental demand of a vocation is, therefore, “a steadfast will to live and work joyfully as a community of brothers” (Const. 4). This value is the first among those mentioned in the testament of our Holy Founder as giving credibility to our apostolate and making the Congregation flourish (76).

An apostolic community, characterized by solidarity

A model of religious community - applied to us from, our beginnings (77) - is “the first Christian community, one in heart and one in spirit, and holding all their goods in common” (Const. 11). It is a community of apostolic workers (78), therefore, of workers in the vineyard of God for the sake of the Kingdom (cf. Const. 2). Priority over any specific work belongs to our being an exemplary community, “leaven of salvation in the Church and in the world” (Const. 6). Being a leaven, we do not consider ourselves a separate elite, but we live “in the midst of the people of God” (Const. 9).

As a community that is thoroughly human, we live in evangelical celibacy, perfecting our affectivity in relationship with one another, generously and sensitively, while nourishing a climate of true friendship (cf. Const. 19); and we realistically provide for our proper sustenance, especially by work (cf. Const. 11). But the dynamic principle, the prime mover of the apostolicity of the community, is without doubt that of solidarity: every member gives his whole self to the community, every community tries to show its solidarity with the others of the Institute, and every community propels itself outward, toward that world which will discover immediately in this attitude what it means when we say that the Kingdom comes through the Cross born by those who proclaim it (cf. Const. 13).

IV. ECCLESIAL MINISTRY OF THE PASSIONISTS TODAY

The first chapter of the new Constitutions speaks freely of the “mission” of the Congregation in the context of the mission of the entire Church (cf. Const. 2, 6, 8). But, on the ministerial level, it does not mention specifics. Distinct mention of clerics and brothers is not made among the fundamentals of our life, but only in Chapter Six where there is care to affirm, however, that we all participate in the same vocation, are considered truly equal, and are dedicated to the same mission (79).

This position seems to be confirmed by the emphasis given to baptism, in accord with the view of the Council (80), as the real basis of the Passionist vocation. Adopting the theology of the apostle, dear to our Holy Founder (81), we recall that by baptism we have been immersed in the death of Christ and with him buried, to rise to a new life (cf. Const. 7). This ministerial quality of the Congregation is ecclesial because it is the same ministry which all Christians recall in the

event of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, as they identify with the Son-Servant (82), whose ministry culminates in the giving of his life for the world.

We are, in fact, “called to unite ourselves to the life and mission of Him who ‘emptied Himself taking the form of a servant’” (Const. 5). Through this “humbling”, done for love, the celibate shows that we give ourselves to everyone, as did Jesus “who came ‘to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many’” (Const. 18). The spirituality for a most radical service flows from contemplation, which then leads to the existential participation in the Passion and to its proclamation.

Like Jesus, we intend “to rescue”, that is, free those that are most imprisoned and most in need of salvation. It is an integral liberation: “a keen attention to the needs of others, as we strive to lead them to the fullness of their Christian calling through the message of the Cross” (Const. 4). In order to comfort and support our brethren who are most abandoned we ought to confront and “remove the causes of human suffering” (Const. 3). Why should there be persons who feel themselves abandoned by their own people and so believe that they are abandoned even by God? The intertwining today of moral, social and psychic evils demands that someone be dedicated to challenging them with a pointed confrontation, a discerning analysis and a courageous strategy.

The new Constitutions outline this appropriate response: in our world “where the unjust distribution of goods is a major source of division, hatred and suffering” (Const. 13), “we aim at overcoming in ourselves and in our world every form of self seeking and every abuse of power” (Const. 22). In the same realistic light we can appreciate the context of Chapter Four in which it is explicitly said that the prophetic denunciation of abuse of power is a witness that is both costly and perfectly in line with participation in the Passion (83).

It is not one of the fundamentals of our life that this witness should be given by a preestablished technique, even though our tradition presents us with some quite clear models. For our Holy Founder it was essential that the most opportune occasion be used (84). What is fundamental is that people be raised up from their tribulation (cf. Const. 3) until they can offer their lives in Christ to the Father (cf. Const. 5). This happens when the memory of the Passion works to “crush vice and show virtue” (85). In other words, to denunciation is added the credible proposition. If one of the evils of the world is the absence of solidarity, the missionary community shows in itself, as much as it can, a world of solidarity; and the community labours so that the believers will come to accept this model, to achieve it for themselves to the greatest possible degree, in order to influence their society even more. Thus we are working “for the relief of suffering and for the increase of justice and peace in the world” (Const. 13), while we are conscious that the price to be paid for fighting against every wall of separation is the Cross (86).

Thus “the intention”, suggested by God himself to Saint Paul of the Cross in the founding, is realized: “to have zeal for the holy honour of God, promote in souls the holy fear of God, work to destroy sin, and finally, to be indefatigable in the holy works of charity, so that our loving God will be loved, feared, served and praised by all for ever and ever. Amen” (87).

CONCLUSION: Mary in the fundamentals of our life

In concluding, we remember the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom the conciliar Church particularly considers as Mother of the Church. In the Passionist ministry, modeled on Christ the servant,

“we are inspired by the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the handmaid of the Lord” (Const. 8). This is part of the foundation of Passionist life, just as Mary was so profoundly a part in the founding inspiration for our life (88). We are spiritually “The Poor of Jesus”, following the example of Mary, poor and humble. For this reason, she was specially chosen to manifest the Saviour, having believed the Word of the Cross to the limit. God uses the poor for his greater glory! “His Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is also our Mother, is our example and support” (Const. 19), to be “in all truth...a disciple of Jesus Christ and ...beget many sons for heaven” (89).

REFERENCES

1. Even the Rule of 1959, after having spoken of the end of the Congregation (Chapter 1), proceeds to treat externals of the Congregation (houses, churches, habit: Chapters 2-4), and then there is mention of the testing of candidates through their profession (Chapters 5-11). Only then are the four vows described (Chapters 12-16), to be followed by a description of the life of the religious, from the food (Chapters 17-18) to their occupations of prayer, study and work (Chapters 19-23). This is followed by a description of the apostolate, from the leaving of the house to the return (Chapters 23-24). At this point the description of the day is resumed until the retiring at the end of the day (Chapters 26-29). The last part includes the norms for government (Chapters 30-32) and penance (Chapters 33-36); and, finally, the conclusion of life is treated in chapters on illness and death (Chapters 37-38).
2. Cf. Const: 79: the future of vocations depends on the Congregation’s earnest, joyful, congruent fidelity to the charism of our holy Founder.
3. “The spirit of the Founders, the proper finality and the wholesome traditions of the institute are to be faithfully interpreted and observed because they all constitute the patrimony of each institute” (PC 2b); cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Letter **Ecclesiae Sanctae** (6 August 1966) and Norms (AAS 58 (1966), 757-758; 758-787), II:I,a,6.
4. The new Constitutions “interpret the Rule of Saint Paul of the Cross and have been written to accord with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council” (Const. 178).
5. Motu Proprio **Salutiferos Cruciatu**s, John XXIII (1 July 1959) in **Rules and Constitutions of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ**, Authorized English translation (Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son, Ltd., 1962), p. ix.
6. N1, 15; cf. N2, 17.
7. N2, 17. From the start, our holy Founder did not want the “rigour” of the life to be an exaggerated characteristic of the Congregation; he writes of the penance of the Passionists as “discreet”; “It is such that, by the mercy of God, they continue vigorous, strong and sturdy. The popular idea of our life considers it to be more severe than it really is” (N2, 20).
8. “At the conclusion of these Constitutions, we remind ourselves of what our holy Founder on his death-bed urged us to maintain: above everything else the spirit of brotherly love, of prayer, of poverty and of solitude, of filial love for our Holy Mother the Church, that the Congregation may shine forth in the sight of God and all peoples” (Const. 178).
9. St. Paul of the Cross is mentioned by name in Const. 1, 2, 4, 25, 37, 72, and 79; Reg. 1 and 5; and is mentioned as “Founder” in Const. 2, 14, 48, 50, 58, 61, 62, 66, 70, 86, 178; and Reg. 33.
10. Cf. Const. 86: the spirituality of the Founder is mentioned distinctly from that of the Congregation; Const. 48 invites the religious to seek the nutrition of their spiritual reading especially in our Founder.

11. Cf. C. Brovetto, "Le 'visioni intellettuali' di S. Paolo della Croce", **Mistica e misticismo oggi** (Roma, 1979), 440-455.
12. "Our great Father of Mercies has been pleased to raise up a new Order or Institute in His holy Church...." (N1, 1); similarly, N2, 2. Cf. E. Zoffoli, S. Paolo della Croce, *Storia Critica*, vol. I-III (Roma: Curia Generalizia Passionista, 1963-68), III, 1436-52; II, 1108ff.
13. "...one of the strongest and most effective helps of this Congregation is the poverty in imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that the Religious, free of every affection for earthly things, might put all their thoughts on God, whose possession is their only desire" (N1, 9). The contemplative finality emerges clearly; also in N2, 5, it says that if they are attached to temporal goods, "the human heart...is prevented from soaring to the Supreme Good", but that this impediment 'is removed by the holy poverty taught and practiced by Jesus Christ.'
14. This is a quotation from the preface to the old Rules (Lett., IV, 218). In the Rule text of 1736 there are two magnificent Passionist "beatitudes" on poverty: Blessed are they who voluntarily strip themselves of everything, for God will transform them in his most holy Love!..O Blessed is that soul which faithfully dedicates itself to the love of holy poverty and to detachment from all created things, because God will transform it in his most holy love! (Regulae, 44, I, 5-7; 52, I, 70-54, I, 1-5).
15. N2, 5.
16. Text of the Rule, 1736 (Regulae, 54, I, 10-15). The citation of Matthew 8:20 clearly shows the radicalness of the following demanded by Jesus.
17. "...one of the necessary requirements sought in apostolic works, if they are not to sweat in vain, is to keep far from every shadow of greed and every suspicion of self-interest. Thus they show the People that the Religious of the Passion are not looking for their money, which they may not possess, but only for their eternal salvation" (N2, 7). This echoes the Pauline phrase about the "signs" which distinguish the true apostle: "I do not seek your goods, but you!" (2 Cor 12:12-14).
18. In the Rule of 1736 the candidate is to first leave all of his belongings to the poor (except for the obligation of charity to his family): "You must remember the counsel of Jesus: Sell all that you possess and give to the poor" (Regulae, 10. I, 53-55). The total renunciation of one's own goods is still possible (in accord with PC 13), according to Const. 14; 15.
19. Cf. N1, 3.
20. The discourse of Jesus, reported in Luke 9 and 10, is initially taken literally by our holy Founder: only one tunic, no sandals, do not go from house to house, eat what is offered you, visit the sick, etc; the explicit citation is in Regulae, 64, I, 15-27.
21. ...the workers withdraw into more strict solitude in order to renew their spirit in holy spiritual exercises according to the admonition given by Jesus Christ to the Apostles: "Rest a little" (Mark 6:31), (N2, 11).
22. In the Rule of 1736, in the chapter on fasting, it says explicitly: "Jesus, who is our way, truth and life, said, 'This kind of devil cannot be ejected unless through prayer and fasting'" (Regulae, 66, I, 18-21). Citation of Mark 9:28.
23. "The greater number of the faithful have forgotten how much our most amiable Jesus has done and suffered; therefore, they live even more unaware of lying in the terrible realm of iniquity" (Lett., II, 213). Cf. N1, 1-2; N2, 1-2. Cf. C. Brovetto, *The Spirituality of St. Paul of the Cross and our Passionist Spirituality as Symbolized in the Fourth Vow*, *Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality*, 7 (Rome: Passionist General Curia 1982).
24. N1, 27. Saint Paul of the Cross alludes to Matthew 8: 16-17, in which the evangelist applies the citation of Isaiah 53:4 to the mercy shown by Jesus toward the sick, identifying Jesus with the expiatory passion of the Servant of Yahweh.

25. 'Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ,' Gal 6:2.
26. Lett., III, 296 (cf. Lett., III, 833). Texts of 1769 and 1770.
27. MR, 11. 28. Ibid. 29. Ibid., 19. 30. "Those who have the responsibility of government ought to be sensitive to the workings of the Holy Spirit" (Const. 108); "The Provincial Superior...should be alert to the workings of the Holy Spirit" (Const. 124); the General Chapter ought "to discern the workings of the Holy Spirit in the events of life" (Const. 127a). Cf. also Const. 8, 26, 39, 42, 120.
31. Conclusion of the Constitutions. Father General, Paul M. Boyle, C.P., in presenting the new Constitutions, calls them "the most faithful expression of the Spirit, of the nature, and of the end of our Congregation."
32. The phrase was introduced in the Latin translation of the Rule of 1746 at the end of the chapter on the vow of the Passion (Regulae, 58, 111, 61-69). In the same text, at the end of the chapter treating the manner of preaching the divine word, there is the addition: "To say much in a few words, our members zealously dedicate themselves to all that which, according to the diversity of the times, of the places and of the persons, can be of greater usefulness to the people, by curbing their disorders and abuses through a charitable diligence" (Regulae, 86, III, 55-65).
33. Cf. F. Giorgini, *Promuovere la grata memoria e il culto della Passione di Gesu, Ricerche di storia e spiritualita Passionista*, 15 (Roma: Curia Generale Passionisti, 1980), p. 40.
34. "...the very nature of the religious life requires apostolic action and services ...Hence the entire religious life of the members of these communities should be penetrated by an apostolic spirit, as their entire apostolic activity should be animated by a religious spirit" (PC, 8). "...the Constitutions...endeavor to form a man totally God-centered, totally apostolic..." (N1, 3).
35. "This is the primary end of this growing Congregation: to qualify oneself by prayer, penance, fasting, tears and mourning so as to help the neighbor, to sanctify souls and to convert sinners" (N1, 22). There is probably a reminiscence of the great appeal for conversion found in Joel 2:12-17.
36. N2, 2: here there is only one "end"; soon after (N2, 3) there are "two principal ends" cited, without subordination.
37. "A vow is a deliberate and free promise made to God concerning a possible and better good which must be fulfilled by reason of the virtue of religion" (Canon 1191,1).
38. N1, 4; cf. N2, 23.
39. In the Rule of 1736 there was no prescription for the fulfilment of the vow beyond that of preaching; in 1741 there was introduced, as a substitute fulfilment, a half-hour of meditation on the Passion - beyond what was in common; in 1746 there was only the recitation of five Paters and Aves to fulfil the vow (Regulae, 58, II-III, 49-60).
40. Cf. Const. 78.
41. Cf. Brovetto, "Le 'visioni intellettuali' ..."
42. N1, 21.
43. Lett., II, 213. The citation alludes to Ezechiel 13:5, where God reproves the false prophets because they have not constructed ramparts in defense of Israel; in Jeremiah 1:18, God agrees to be like a bronze wall protecting them from enemies.
44. The Passion's "very loving attraction even the hardest heart cannot resist" (N2, 2); "a loving meditation on the Passion of Jesus...falling like a soft, gentle rain on the terrified heart of the sinner, leads him to His God by loving attraction" (N2, 23).
45. "Having forgiven us all our trespasses, having cancelled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the principalities

and power and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him” (Col 2:14-15). For a present day vision of the Passion, cf. J. R. Zubizzareta, *Passionists and the Present-day Theology of the Cross* (Rome: Passionist General Curia, 1982), p. 21. (The original footnote mistakenly cites Ephesians instead of Colossians.)

46. N2, 4.
47. Text of the Rule, 1741, *Regulae*, 18, II, 14-20. There is an allusion to Col 3:3, whoever lives with the risen Christ is dead to the world and hidden in God; cf. Ps 21:7.
48. “One of the principal ends of this least congregation is not only to be indefatigable in holy prayer...in order to reach a holy union with God; but also to instruct our neighbors, teaching them through the easiest of means what they can do in this angelic exercise” (*Regulae*, 2, I, 31-41).’ 49. Cf. Const. 37; 66.
50. “Saint Paul of the Cross...desired our communities to become real schools of prayer, leading to a deep experience of God” (Const. 37).
51. Cf. M. Bialas, *La Passione di Cesu in S. Paolo della Croce* (ed. ECO, 1982) pp. 117-153 (where there is also a beautiful analysis of the small work ‘Mystical Death’ in reference to the religious vows).
52. Cf. Const. 64.
53. Cf. Const. 50.
54. Cf. Lett. III, p. 398; p. 149; cf. Bialas, *La Passione*, 105.
55. Cf. for example, Lett. III, p. 336; II, p. 725; Bialas, *La Passione*, 107.
56. Cf. Const. 50.
57. The theme of participation and sharing returns frequently in the Constitutions; for example: 39, 42, 43, 38, 33, 34, 62, 72, 73, etc.
58. This is how the Sign is referred to in the Rule of 1741, *Regulae*, 12, III, 30-32.
59. MR, 10: “...religious life is a special way of participating in the sacramental nature of the People of God. Indeed, the consecration of those professing religious vows is especially ordained to this purpose, namely of offering to the world visible proof of the unfathomable mystery of Christ, inasmuch as in themselves they really present Christ ‘contemplating on the mountain, announcing God’s kingdom to the multitude, healing the sick and the maimed and turning sinners to wholesome fruit, blessing children and doing good to all, always obeying the will of the Father who sent Him ‘” (LG, 46).’
60. Cf. for example, Lett, I, 508.
61. Cf. Lett, IV, p. 285.
62. The citation of 2 Cor 2:15ff is very frequent in Saint Paul of the Cross. It appears expressly in the old Rules (from 1741 onward) to commend the testimonial value of the harmony among the missionaries while they are engaged. Cf. *Regulae* 96, II, 45ff.
63. Cf. Const. 49.
64. Cf. Const. 64, with citation of 1 Peter 2:21.
65. “Since the ultimate norm of the religious life is a following of Christ as proposed by the gospel, such is to be regarded by all communities as their supreme law” (PC 2a).
66. Lett, II, p. 270.
67. Cf. Const. 27.
68. Cf. Const. 60.
69. Cf. Const. 6.
70. This is the key to the reading of Chapter Seven on government.
71. Cf. M. Viller, *La Volonta di Dio nella dottrina spirituale di S. Paolo della Croce, Ricerche di storia e spiritualita Passionista*, 29 (Roma: Curia Generale Passionisti, 1983), p. 56.

72. Lett., I, p. 49. The reference to John 4:34 is among the most frequent in Saint Paul of the Cross.
73. N1, 14.
74. Cf. Const. 26: “each one of us acknowledges with respect the dignity and equality of every other member, whom we accept as a unique individual”; for personal prayer, cf. Const. 39, 49; living celibacy as a virtue strengthens and develops our personality, cf. Const. 19, etc.
75. “We are aware that the Holy Spirit makes use of the brethren to manifest Himself, and distributes His gifts among them as He sees fit, working in all of them” (Const. 26); 1 Cor 12:11; 12:6.
76. Cf. Const. 25 and conclusion of the Constitutions.
77. Among the Passionists, “the union is very much like that in which the early Christians lived - whose fervour we intend to see renewed in this infant Congregation” (N1, 14). Cf. Lett, II, 80.
78. The term “worker” is favored by our holy Founder, evidently with reference to Luke 10:2ff; Matthew 20:1ff. We should remember that certain missionary institutes were called precisely “pious workers” (“pii operai”).
79. Cf. Const. 100.
80. Cf. LG 44.
81. Cf, Lett, II, p. 811.
82. There is much agreement today that the words of the Father in the baptism - “This is my beloved Son” - refer to the Isaian hymn of the Servant; cf. Mt 3:17; Is 42:1.
83. Cf. Const. 72.
84. Cf. texts cited in note 31. It appears that up to 1736 it was foreseen that they would make memory of the Passion: “as much during the times of the missions as at other times of devout exercises... during the mission it is to follow the preaching; at other times, when it is considered more opportune....” (Regulae, 2, I, 44-47; 53-54).
85. N1, 2; allusion to Jeremiah 1:10.
86. Cf. Eph 2:14-16, to which there is reference in Const. 26.
87. Lett., IV, p. 220 (preface to the old Rules).
88. Cf. Zoffoli, S. Paola del.la Croce, I, 160ff; 239ff; etc. 89. N1, 3.

APPENDIX 1

Synthesis of 24 Numbers of Chapter One of the Constitutions

The Passionist Vocation

1. The charismatic origins of the Congregation
2. Present ecclesial dimensions of our charism
3. Theology of the saving Cross
4. Contemplative radicalism

Consecration to the Passion

5. Nucleus of the charism as a vital, global center
6. The specific vow and its importance

Evangelical Counsels

7. Baptismal rootedness of the vocation

8. Communitarian and Marian dimensions
9. Passionist modality of the evangelical counsels

Poverty

10. Spiritual detachment from earthly goods
11. Effective poverty; communitarian poverty; poverty and work
12. What the religious acquires belongs to the community
13. Constructive solidarity with the poor
14. Juridical aspect of the vow
15. Total renunciation of patrimonial goods

Chastity

16. Empowerment of human love
17. Eschatological pre-proclamation
18. Apostolic empowerment
19. Humanistic and Marian asceticism

Obedience

20. First of all, obedience to the divine will
21. Community mediation in the apostolate
22. Eschatological victory through the Cross
23. The superior
24. Juridic aspects of the vow

APPENDIX II

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What is your understanding of our charismatic origin?
How well do you understand it?
Are you concerned with an accurate and living fidelity to it?
2. Is it your understanding - after the experience of 1970-82 with the Chapter Document, and after your study of the Constitutions - that our present norms are faithful to and in accord with the exigencies of the Church and society under the light of our vocation?
3. Is it your experience that the Memoria Passionis is really a unifying and encompassing center of our life?

How do you feel about charting a path for the future on the basis of the Memoria Passionis?
Is your theology of the Cross benefiting from updating?

4. In your work and activity, is the sense of your being a religious (publically vowed to God) stronger than any other?

What are the most helpful aspects of the religious vows in your life?

What are the most troublesome aspects?

5. Is our insertion into the local Church actually specific? In the sense of a specific insertion, how can we accentuate our prophetic and pastoral relevance?

COMMUNITY LIFE

Rev. Thomas M. Newbold, C.P.

The very placement of the chapter on Community Life in our Constitutions has important significance in itself. After describing the Nature of the Congregation (Chapter I), the first place, in treating of “Our Life in the Congregation,” is given to COMMUNITY LIFE. Such an arrangement reflects much more than simply a logical progression; it is a recognition of reality. It is a way of recognizing that all human beings are made for life in community with God; and, therefore, with one another. Such a statement is far beyond a theoretical premise or an abstract assumption. It is a revealed truth about human persons, and a fact that is thoroughly documented by all the human sciences (1).

Thus, the experience of community life can properly be called a “reality principle.” What is indicated thereby is the fact that fellowship with God and with God’s people and God’s world is both the destiny and destination for which the human person is actually created, and that to fall short of this destiny is to fall short of full humanity and Christian discipleship (2).

At the same time, however, the treatment of community life in Chapter 2 of our Constitutions reflects a realistic awareness of the fact that within the limits of our earthly history we never

reach that destination in its complete fulfillment (3). We only continue to reach for it. We are not yet “home”; and hence the assumption, in the treatment of community life, that we are “on the way”, still pilgrims; and, as human persons, still unfinished business (4). So the vision of community presupposed here sees the end toward which all of creation moves, and the whole Christian story (including our Passionist story) is the experience of that movement (5).

Thus, to state that “our Passionist vocation is a call to live the fullness of Christian love in an evangelical community” (Const. 25), is to assert the primordial experience of community as the “reality principle” of our religious life together (6).

This focus on community in our Constitutions reflects the fact that life in community is a VALUE, not just a personal annoyance or a personal convenience. It is a basic and vital necessity for really living out the possibilities of our vocation and vows (7).

In his essay entitled Between Man and Man, Martin Buber makes a very instructive, almost prophetic, statement about community. He writes: “We expect a theophany of which we know nothing but the place; and the place is called community.” When we join the Passionist community we do have the expectation of finding God (or, more correctly, of being found by God); and we know very little about how it will happen, except that it will happen in a place where we are in community with our Passionist brothers. Yet, while we believe that our deepest desires will be satisfied and our most critical needs met in community, our actual experience of community soon generates some very real challenges.

Perhaps the most common of these challenges is suggested by number 26 of our Constitutions. How are we to live “united in Christ” and at the same time respect “the dignity and equality” of all, while accepting every member “as a unique individual”?

The difficulties raised by this question are often compounded by a popular image of community that is distressingly sentimental. As all of us know, it is possible to be a member of community and feel that the community exists just for us, for the strength and support it can give us, for the feeling of belonging it can produce in us. Such an expectation is not to be condemned outright; but it must be qualified and amended. The community does exist for the nurture of its members; but it also exists in order that God may have a place where His power may come to the world and through which His life and love may break into the world in ever new and effective ways. To value community for the personal nurture it promises is valid enough; but we miss its full meaning if we ignore the challenge of social justice and personal concern for others. Until we have grasped this fact, we do not yet know that membership in community must always take the shape of the Cross of Jesus, who came not just to be served but to serve others (8).

Thus, if community is to serve our real needs and speak to our human condition, we must continually relearn and assimilate those grounding truths about community which keep it from becoming an exercise in romantic personalism and a self-centered pursuit of utopian expectations. If we search our heritage of faith and the history of our Congregation, we shall learn ever more clearly that God calls us to live in community, not just for ourselves but for others. And not for others simply as a nice thing to do, but as a necessary condition of discipleship. We would learn again that true community leads inevitably to confronting the powers and prejudices arrayed against human need, dignity, and integrity. And in such a

confrontation we shall find our unity with one another in the Lord, whose Passion was precisely the supreme confrontation of such forces in the world of His time.

It is a temptation to think of our “life together” in romantic terms which bear little resemblance to the challenging discipline of a common life. And so, in numbers 27 and 28 of our Constitutions, we are reminded that “community life flourishes when its members are careful to maintain and foster fraternal personal relationships.” Only thus can we discern the will of God as it manifests itself in our midst, maintain well-considered structures for community living, and nourish a life in community that will be characterized by joy and peace (9). In such dialogue we shall find that community is no flourishing utopian garden, but a place of promise and discipline where God prepares unlikely soil, and sometimes very parched earth, for the planting of the Kingdom.

We shall also learn that there are true and false communities; and that God knows the difference even if we do not. In false communities, the group is always experienced as dominating the individual, or the individual claims superiority and total independence for himself; while in true communities, both the individual member and the group have a claim upon, and a stake in, the reality of living together. False communities always tend to be too homogeneous, exclusive and divisive; while true communities manage to unite all the members across other-wise fixed lines, whether of age, task, talents, roles, health, or whatever.

It is only through the processes of ongoing communication and fraternal dialogue, therefore, that we shall come to appreciate and enjoy the rich diversity of our unity. A community life without ongoing dialogue will ultimately become a place of maximum pretensions with only a minimum of agreement. Community would be a cheap grace if it meant a merely external conformity and compliance, where unity would come to mean merely a stagnant and stifling sameness of style, language, opinion, etc. Community (real Christian community) is a costly discipleship, calling upon us to retain our unique and diverse identities as persons, while serving the common purpose in love (10).

It is unreal to dream of community as a place where I can associate with people just like myself. This would mean wanting and expecting community to be an extension and expansion of my own ego, a confirmation of my own partial view of reality. In true community we do not choose our fellow members; we accept them as given us by grace. Even though it was said with some exaggeration, it was not an exasperated cynic but a wise and holy realist who once described true religious community as the place where the person we least want to live with lives. In any case, we need to avoid the trap that has been called “the pure community,” where one is surrounded by likeness to the extent that challenge is unlikely and growth impossible. In true community there will be enough diversity and conflict to shake loose our need to make the world in our own image. True community will lead us to risk the prayer that God’s will, not our own, be done, as Jesus did in His life and passion and death.

For any community to be vital and effective, it must continually address itself to the task of remaining an open system, while at the same time retaining its proper identity. The remaining numbers (29-36) of the chapter on Community Life are concerned with this essential task.

Thus, each local community is called upon to be open to serving, gratefully and graciously, the needs of its members, - by showing “a special concern for the sick” (n. 29); by manifesting the

same concern for the aging and the young (n.30); and by grateful remembrance of “our deceased brethren” (n. 31). Also the local community is to be open to those outside the community who are specially related to the community, most especially the parents of the members, and, in appropriate ways, to relatives, friends, guests, and benefactors (n. 36).

At the same time, each local community is called upon to foster openness to the “wider unity” of the Province and the Congregation (n. 32); to the wider communities of the Church and the world in which we live (n. 33); to the local Church (n. 34), and to the “wider community of the area” (n. 35).

It is an established fact that no human community is completely self-contained or self-sufficient. It cannot ultimately survive, much less thrive, as a completely closed system; for it will use up its inner resources and die for lack of the sustenance, support, and stimulation that can only come from sources outside itself (11).

This is why a completely closed community cannot be an effective apostolic witness of the Gospel. As a closed community it tends to become a “cult,” a place of virtuoso performances that are appropriate and sustainable only within its closed world, and not effectively related to the wider ecclesial and cultural world in which it exists, upon which it largely depends, and which it is intended to serve (12).

To be in community means that the self is “placed.” And our placement in local community is not a rigid limit but a rich opportunity; not an accidental circumstance but integral to the history by which we are defined and identified. The presence of others for whom Christ died and lives again anchors us in community more firmly than we could ever anchor ourselves. Their presence transforms the “place called community” into a concrete and realistic determination of our capacities for responsiveness. This is why community as “placement” is not simply a matter of occupying space, but a necessary context for personal life and growth. It means responsibility and accountability; and these offer us more freedom and fulfillment than we could ever find for ourselves. Local community becomes the context of the intersection of personal histories that enrich one another, because they are together incorporated into the life and ministry of Jesus as continued in the Church and the Congregation. In community, therefore, we suffer and serve the needs of others; and this enriches our own possibilities and provides a focus for the exercise of powers that would otherwise remain unused.

At the same time, however, we need to suffer and serve the needs of others, neither on our own terms nor on the terms set by others, but in terms of the charism that defines and identifies us as Passionists. Our Constitutions show an awareness of this. While recognizing that “lawful differences in lifestyle demanded by different cultures and apostolates” are an enrichment of the Congregation, there is also the insistence that this will be so provided that “the fundamental character of our Passionist vocation” remains intact (n. 32).

Just as a society erodes when it tries to live without a culture, so a religious community will lose vitality and apostolic effectiveness if it does not live by its charism. No religious community can be held together simply by procedures and techniques. Only by the values enshrined in its charism can unity, identity, and effectiveness be assured (13).

Thus, commitment and fidelity to the Passionist charism is ultimately the charter of membership in community and the criteria for involvement in ministry. A human person has roots by virtue of his real and active participation in the life of a given community, because the community preserves in living shape the particular and essential values of its past and the only viable expectations for its future. This is why the individual member, or the religious community itself, that ignores its past, or does not draw nourishment from its past, can have no solid expectations of a future. To have no history means that it is impossible to make history.

At the same time, every individual- member and every local community needs to have multiple roots in the “wider unity” of the Province, the Congregation, the Church, and the world. It is necessary for us to draw our nourishment, – intellectual, moral, and spiritual, – by way of appropriate relations to the total environment of which we are a natural part. But a given community (or individual member of community) should not receive any environmental influence as something merely additional to itself. We must receive all such influences as stimulants and challenges that intensify our own particular lifestyle as Passionists. Which means we shall draw real nourishment from ecclesial, cultural, and social conditions, contacts, and contributions only as and if we make them our own in terms of our Passionist charism, in terms of the style and genius of our founding gift. When we are involved in our community life and ministries in terms of the real values and spirit of our Passionist charism, then our own originality and effectiveness as members of community will be confirmed and stimulated and renewed. We will thus be able to experience the richness of diversity without division, and the joy and peace of unity without regimentation (14).

The bottom line about community is that true community is always and ultimately a religious phenomenon. “Our Passionist vocation is a call to live the fullness of Christian love in an evangelical community” (n. 25). There is nothing capable of bringing together and holding together a group of willful, broken, good-but-less-than-perfect human beings except the transcendent reality of the living, loving God. To say this is not to encourage the persistent temptation to “spiritualize” religious community. A comforting “spiritual vision,” or version, of community can be a mask to hide one’s indifference to human needs, or to hide one’s fear of the differences that exist between us and among us. The tendency to “spiritualize” community leads to abstraction, and ultimately to abdication; for it leads to a state of mind and heart that is almost impervious to the reality of sacrificial love.

Because true community is a religious phenomenon, it is not going to always be a creature comfort we can count on, or a consumer item we can buy. True community is one of those desired things that will evade us if we make it the direct and total object of our striving. Instead, true community is a by-product of commitment and struggle. It has an awesome likeness to the Church, which was brought into being through the suffering and death of Jesus on the Cross. Community “happens” when we risk ourselves in righting some wrong, in healing some hurt, in giving some service. Then we discover each other as brothers in resisting whatever would diminish, distort, or destroy our life together.

As a religious reality, therefore, community cannot be reduced to psychological techniques and social procedures. It is ultimately the outcome of active love, of God, of one another, and of ourselves. As such it can break open our minds and hearts to experience the Lord in whom we live and move and have our being. It will constantly remind us that our grasp of reality is fragile and incomplete; that we need more than our own capacity to listen in order to hear the fullness of

God's word. And community life will be the PLACE of our PASSION; for there we shall learn, as Jesus did in undergoing His Passion, that the only dependable power for life lies beyond all human structures and relationships.

If we seek our community of life in the Passion of Jesus, we shall find that the self is deflated to normal proportions, its independence is softened into communion without loss of dignity, its aggressiveness harnessed to the will of God. In the end, what we experience is not collectivity, but COMMUNION. For true community is not just a social recipe for sweet reasonableness and humane projects, but a pooling of the full resources of personal lives in a common adoration and search for God.

Such is the direction of our pilgrimage in Passionist community; but only the direction, not the end. There is no end; only an approximation which is always closer but never closed.

REFERENCES

1. A theological perspective on human being and community is provided in, Becoming Human Together, by Jerome Murphy O'Connor, O.P., Michael Glazier, Inc., 1982 (2nd ed.), Part I, ch. 2, and all of Part III. For the documentation of the human sciences, cf. Modern Systems Re-search For the Behavioral Scientist, ed. by Walter Buckley; Aldine Publishing Co., 1968.
2. John 13:35 (quoted in n. 25 of our Constitutions); and St. Augustine, Confessions, Bk. I, nos. 1 and 2.
3. Numbers 27 and 28 of our Constitutions clearly presuppose that our life in community is an ongoing and unfinished process toward Christian holiness, never a finished product.
4. Cf. Philippians 3:12-16.
5. Cf. A Community of Character, by Stanley Hauerwas, University of Notre Dame Press, 1981; Part Two, chapters 5, 6, 7.
6. The expression, "reality principle", was first made a technical term by Sigmund Freud. It referred to the sum total of the environmental factors impacting the human psyche. Here we are using the term to refer to an essential need that flows from the makeup of the human person as created by God.
7. Cf. the CRIS document: Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life (May, 1983), especially numbers 18-22.
8. Cf. Matt. 20:20-28.
9. Cf. our Constitutions, n. 28; and the CRIS document, Essential Elements, no. 18.
10. Cf. Philippians 2:1-11; and our Constitutions, par. 28.
11. Cf. Modern Systems Research for the Behavioral Scientist, (op. cit.); Part IV, Entropy and Life.
12. Cf. Contemporary Transformations of Religion, by Bryan Wilson; Oxford University Press, 1976; chapter 3.
13. Cf. Our Holy Founder's letter of introduction to the Regulations.
14. Cf. the CRIS Document: Essential Elements, etc., n. 22.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How can I participate in a more just distribution of the world' s resources unless I live in a community which makes it possible to consume less?
2. How can I learn accountability unless I live in a community where my acts and their consequences are properly visible to all?
3. How can I learn to share responsibility unless I live in a community where irresponsibility is challenged and confronted without condemnation, and responsibility is both expected and encouraged?
4. How can I take the risks that right action demands unless I belong to a community which gives support?
5. How can I learn to appreciate the dignity and sanctity of each human person unless I live in a community where we can be real persons, not stereotyped roles, in relating to one another?
6. What would be some practical criteria for a community to use in discerning involvement in ministry and the development of personal gifts and talents?

COMMUNITY LIFE

Rev. Laurentino Novoa, C.P.

Life in common is an essential value of religious life and of our actual Passionist way of living. This value has taken on different expressions throughout the history of religious life and, within the context of the renewal proposed by Vatican Council II, acquired a central importance with practical applications and consequences. But it also has its own anthropological and theological foundations. Somewhat similar to our proper charism, community life can serve as a kind of “hermeneutic key” for understanding, explaining and living our Passionist vocation.

I. Fundamentals of Community Life

Passionist community life is not just the fruit or end-product of a partial vision that was made more concrete by our Founder. It also involves a relationship that is wide and at the same time very practical and within which we can better understand the Passionist ideal and live it in our daily surroundings.

- a. Anthropological Base: As we are taught by Christian anthropology and indeed by the majority of anthropologies, the human person is not an isolated being but one open to others, having an existence with others, a social being: “God did not create man for life in isolation, but for the formation of social unity” (GS. 32, cf. Gn 2:18 ff). The person is not alone and abandoned in the world, as the pessimistic view of philosophical existentialism might put it. Rather, he or she is in contact with others who have similar aspirations for happiness and have a radical need of one another in multiple circumstances of existence. The ideal cannot be individualism, but lies in the discovery of community as an essential value for the person, in an openness to others and in finding self-realization with them.
- b. Theological Base: As salvation history teaches us, God is not closed in on himself, a being isolated and independent, but a God who wants to communicate himself, whose love wants to diffuse itself, who chooses a people to dwell in his midst, forming an alliance with them, a pact of friendship. In the profundity of himself God shows himself in relationship, in communication. The Christian faith is, therefore, essentially Trinitarian, relational, communitarian. God is a Being-Person in communion with man, and who invites him to realize himself in that communion.
- c. Christological Base: Christ Jesus is the culmination of this communication of God to man and with man. He is the Word who becomes flesh and makes his dwelling among men (Jn 1:14). Becoming flesh he has identified himself with man. He has crumbled the walls of separation between men so that no one need feel himself a stranger. He came to create the new man, initiating a new relationship among men, founded on reconciliation and fraternity (cfr. Eph 2:11-12). It is God who calls at man’s door in order to communicate with him (Apoc 3:20).
- d. Ecclesiological Base: The history of salvation is realized in the history of a people among whom God dwells: the people of God. The Church is the new people of God, the community in which the Christian meets God, Jesus Christ and himself. “It has pleased God to make men

holy and save them not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledged Him in truth and serves Him in holiness” (LG 9). The Church of Christ, made up of all the baptized, is essentially a “community of believers”, thanks to the special gifts of divine adoption and brotherhood. Thus Christian faith is an “ecclesial faith”; it implies a “deprivitization” of that same faith and an involvement in and with a community of brothers.

- e. Apostolic Base: Jesus chose a very concrete form of life. He chose a band of disciples who lived in community with him in order to live and announce the Kingdom of God. The reason for belonging to this community does not have its roots in what we can call a “natural community” (family, tribe, nationality); rather, it is an exclusively evangelical reality. Within the perspective of this “apostolic community,” we must place the religious community, which in every institute is formed by its own proper charism.

Within the framework of this relationship, we can see that just as man (a social being) cannot realize himself without being open to others, neither can the Christian (a communitarian being) live his faith in isolation, nor the religious (an apostolic-communitarian being) aspire to the realization and perfection of his vocation without accepting the gift of community.

2. Historical heredity at the time of renewal

Looking back today on Chapter II of our Constitutions, we find ourselves with some “new things” (the new perspective of community) and with some “old things” (those elements lived in the entire history of our Congregation). Therefore, it would be well to keep in mind, while reflecting on this chapter, that we are facing an historical inheritance which we cannot renounce without running the risk of losing our identity. Yet, as persons and community, we are also a dynamic reality which changes and evolves toward a future conditioned by promises of God.

- a. Community in our history and in our Rules: There is no chapter in our old Rules which speaks specifically of “community life.” Yet we are all conscious that Passionists have always lived in community and that this life in common was essential in our history. More than speaking to us of the theological reality of community, the old Rule described the acts of daily life in common, the duties which we have in community and the manner of fulfilling them, the way to live and practice charity and of fulfilling the Constitutions. All this was joined together in norms and very concrete forms, which determined clearly and in the smallest details how to conduct ourselves and how to relate with God and with others.

This approach, common also to other religious institutes, was a valid manner of guided action in the past and was related to the specific principles of theology and ecclesiology of the time. It was subject to a theology which was eminently static and imbued with juridical elements. At the same time it rested on an ecclesiology which took its rise from the concept of “society” (perfect society), in order to stabilize relationships among its members. The theology of Vatican Council II, which gives inspiration to our religious life and to our present Constitutions, is, on the other hand, more historic-salvific, existential and dynamic. Its ecclesiology begins with the key concept of “community” (the people of God, community of believers, etc.). If the relationships of a society are mainly legalistic, in a community they are relationships of communion, of fraternity.

These theological elements, with their different contexts and their riches, are the fruit of historical dynamism in which the Church and the religious life participate. To understand and accept this from the viewpoint of Christian principle is essential if we are to understand the new elements without scorning the old.

- b. Traditional community in crisis: This theological and Ecclesiological evolution has happened with the result that the traditional way of understanding and living community life has been placed in crisis. Some of the elements which integrated the traditional concept were the following:
- a fundamentally juridic community life;
 - a community-life in common, as it was conceived by the Code and Constitutions;
 - community as carrying out a common commitment;
 - community as a reality closed within, lived within and maintained from within.

The elements which have been revalued in the community, from a viewpoint which can rightfully be called a renewed theology, would be:

- community as a theological reality, based on divine adoption and brotherhood.
- a reality which brings us to a communion of life and a communion of faith;
- unity of consciousness that we possess a charismatic mission in the Church;
- openness to mankind, as a sign of God's Kingdom in the midst of the world.

Other elements resulting from this process would be: the new sensitivity to the dignity of the human person; discovery of dialogue, participation and co-responsibility; de-institutionalizing; the transformation of the image of the superior; critical attitudes, etc. This process has also cast its shadows and caused many misunderstandings, perhaps quite logically given the brevity of time in which the changes have taken place. But we cannot, out of a fear of the risk of making mistakes, take refuge in the security of the past to the detriment of the need for renewal at the present time.

- c. The Renewal-demands of Vatican II: Number 15 of the Decree Perfectae Caritatis explains the essential principles of life in common for all religious and traces historically the direction of a new era in the concept of community life. Community thus appears as a primarily evangelical reality in which the juridic element is subject to the theological element. The model of life is the primitive Church in which Christians lived in the spirit of "one soul and one heart." According to this model, the religious community:
- sustains itself through the Gospel teachings and the Eucharist, persevering in prayer and in communion;
 - bases itself on fraternity, helping to carry one another's burdens in solidarity;
 - constitutes a family gathered together in the name of the Lord in which love is, indeed, the fulness of the law;
 - manifests the presence of Christ by the lived unity which generates an apostolic power.

It is in the framework of these requirements of ecclesiastical renewal, the fruit of new theological thinking, that we must understand and experience the contents of our Constitutions.

3. Fundamental Content of our Constitutions

Reflecting on the elements suggested in the two points mentioned above we can frame and understand in their right context the contents of Chapter II of our Constitutions. They reflect a great theological-spiritual richness. The basic points are as follows.

a. An Evangelical Community of Life

Our community life is founded on the love of Christ and on the commandment he gave his disciples and which has been left to us by our Holy Founder as a legacy. A Christian community means communion in Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ. It is he who establishes the need which believers have one for the other. Our community life cannot, therefore, be confused with a group held together by human friendship, even though it is good that there be such and that such should be encouraged. But it is a community of brothers called together in the name of and by the Lord. The essential basis of this community has not been established by us, but by Christ himself, who has called each one of us and loves us personally and in community, with our virtues and our weaknesses. The essential note of our Passionist-religious community is that it forms a “community of faith,” which, like every authentic Christian community bases itself on the love of Christ (Const. 26). A community accepted in this spirit of faith and responsive to the love of Jesus moves in the direction of the new “coordinates” of the Gospels, where the essential values are: the Will of the Father, adoption as children of God, fraternity, availability for service, reconciliation. To understand and accept this fundamental content is the basic task of building community daily. In community life, we all respect and accept one another because it is Christ who loves us and accepts us: “Accept one another as Christ has accepted you” (Rom 15: 7ff).

b. Community, place of encounter with oneself

The self-realization of a person open to others is an anthropological necessity. A person finds his true way in life in community. For it is in the measure in which I meet and accept community that I put myself in the way of encountering myself in depth. For this reason the fulfillment of a person in our religious-Passionist life cannot be understood as individual options but as communitarian decisions assumed personally. We may say that the individual option comes first but, once made, it finds its profoundest realization in its acceptance by the community. When one opts for Passionist life, he will find his true self when he finds it with the community – with its needs, principles, Constitutions and norms. The lack of a practiced acceptance of this principle may explain the phenomenon of individualism resulting from individual decisions as the supreme value of self-realization, as also the frustrations when community is seen as an obstacle to personal aspirations. God reveals himself as communication, as relationship; the mission of Christ comes as a total gift to others. A religious will feel himself realized in the measure in which he goes out of himself to find himself in community in whose midst is the Lord.

c. Community in Dialogue

Community nourishes itself with constant communication between its members (Const. 27). Dialogue is openness to others as a form of existence. One must not confuse it with exchange of words (mere conversation), nor with argumentation, nor with the dialectical articulation of reasoning. To dialogue is to discover first of all that all of life and

existence is “dialoguing”; that we are not alone nor can we attain self-realization alone, but only in constant openness to God (who is our Father) and with others (who are our brothers). To accept dialogue means, first of all, to accept the other as having an essential value for me. Hence one does not dialogue or converse when he listens to another as an “opponent.” But it means that one accepts and listens to another as a brother, conscious that beyond and above the validity of the arguments and words, there is the validity of fraternal love, which is born of and arrives at the “Word” that became flesh. The most valid arguments, therefore, of community dialogue are not the most perfectly articulated with only human reasoning, but those which spring from sincere love and which correspond to an evangelical logic. The best reasoned argument may fail to bring anything positive to communitarian dialogue if it lacks charity. A community in dialogue is one in which we all accept each other, in which all listen to each other without prejudice, but in an attitude of openness and of coming together, talking not to justify ourselves, nor to present what pleases us, but to compare ourselves with the Gospel teachings, seeking God’s Will and the best paths for our community to follow.

d. A Community favoring the poor

In the evangelical community which we form, all of us are equals, brothers, sons of the same Father. However, the favorites of God were the poor and needy. So in our communities the privileged will be the needy brothers, the sick, the aged, the departed. We all know the solicitude which our Holy Founder wanted us to show for needy brethren. This has been clearly expressed in our Rules during the whole history of our Congregation. This manifests that our community life is clearly evangelical, which means to say that our equality is realized in the choice favoring the poor, and our fraternity is lived as disinterested love freely given. To live this way in community is, therefore, the indispensable condition for arriving at the acceptance of and sincere favoring of the poor and needy outside the community.

e. A Community, open and united

The Constitutions point out that a Passionist community must be open and united. Open, first of all, to other Passionist communities of the Province and of the Congregation (Const. 32), open to the Ecclesial community and neighbors (Const. 33-35), and open also to the community of our parents and benefactors. An open community means one which has profound respect for, and extends sincere welcome to, the plurality of forms inherent in different cultures and peoples. Just as the Gospels are a message of salvation, offered openly and generously to every person and every people, so too should the ecclesial and religious families, be truly called evangelical, remain equally open and united. Hence there is need that the community continually asks itself, what kind of relationship does it have with other communities, and how much does it allow them to anticipate in its efforts or needs? To what extent does it make itself available to what is good or noble outside its ordinary sphere of action? If it is fundamental to our Passionist communities that we live according to the call of full Christian love, then our authenticity should be measured by the capacity to carry out this love by acts and attitudes of solidarity with other Passionist communities, with local ecclesial communities, with lay social communities, with relatives and benefactors.

4. Importance of “The Concrete” in Community

It has been said of the post-Conciliar renewal in the Church and in Congregations that there are some very beautiful theological principles, but unfortunately they are impractical in reality. The new Constitutions and Regulations are marvelous in theory, and move on at each stage to suggest a concrete incarnation. Every theory shows its richness in the practice it is able to generate.

This is the work of each individual community. To be an authentic Passionist community depends above all on each local community (Reg. 8). It is the particular community that submits itself to the discipline of community planning, infuses vigor into the Constitutions, seeks to find the most effective forms for our charismatic mission (not from principles deriving from independence, but from co-responsibility and the solidarity of the members), and brings alive the directives of General, Provincial or Vicarial authority.

According to this principle of the responsibility of each local community, some suggestions are offered which can help in the task of putting the Constitutions and Regulations into practice in each of our communities.

- a. How to be an evangelical community: If the Passionist community aims at reflecting well the Gospel of Christ, it:
 - makes the Gospel its supreme and concrete norm;
 - examines and evaluates its life in the light of the Gospel;
 - favors an atmosphere and criteria of faith;
 - prefers spiritual good and spiritual progress over the material;
 - constantly promotes charity among its members;
 - lives in an atmosphere of optimism and hope;
 - often celebrates its faith;
 - creates a climate capable of promoting the spiritual life by means of silence, the proper use of mass media, etc.

- b. How to find ourselves: The religious who seeks to undertake community life and find his self-identity in it:
 - knows that he is called to find himself among his brethren;
 - seeks his fulfillment in accepting the common good;
 - examines his own contribution to the spiritual growth of the community;
 - collaborates actively in the programming, work and concern of the community;
 - accepts the community as his legitimate family and home;
 - sacrifices his own plans and work to community programs;
 - accepts willingly the decisions of the community.

- c. How to be a community in dialogue: If the religious of the community desire sincere communication and evangelical dialogue, let them:
 - assist at meetings in an attitude of faith and generous active collaboration, ready to seek what is best;
 - freely exchange ideas among themselves and favor participation by all, ready to respect each other's opinions and accept the other's personality;
 - be more quick in listening than in speaking;
 - recognize their own faults and ask forgiveness;

- evaluate persons according to their opinions and projects;
 - seek to reconcile differences, bring unity in diversity, harmony where there is division;
 - endeavor to speak with everyone and not only with those who have a similar character or a character compatible with theirs.
- d. How give special consideration to brothers in need: The Passionist community should favor the members in need according to the example set down by the Lord:
- seeing in the elderly and sick brethren the favored ones of the Lord, and nearest to us;
 - accepting them with particular affection and providing them with all they need;
 - opening itself to the spiritual good which they bring by their presence and offering them the best opportunities for realizing themselves in their situation, enabling them to feel satisfied in community;
 - feeling united with those who assist the needy;
 - being itself poor and needy before the Lord.
- e. How to be an open and united community: The Passionist community should desire not to be closed in on itself but to live in solidarity among its members :
- feeling united and in communion with other communities;
 - accepting in a positive way directives emanating from General, Provincial or Vicarial authority;
 - by being open to the contributions or needs of others in the community or to all that it can learn from them;
 - by putting into practice the observance, the Constitutions and the Regulations in a spirit of solidarity with the brethren;
 - by collaborating with the local church in its concerns and needs;
 - by remaining open and collaborating with all around her who seek and work for a more human and better world.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do you think that your community conforms to the ideal of a Passionist Community as reflected in the Constitutions and Regulations? Are changes needed? What changes?
2. What positive signs of an “Evangelical community” do you see in your community? What do you think are negative signs and should disappear to attain the ideal?
3. What do you think the community should contribute to the person and the person to the community? Do you identify with your community? Do you feel identified with the brethren of your community?
4. What level of dialogue do you find in your community? Do you think the exchange of ideas; dialogue) in your community is sufficient and properly evaluated? Is there dialogue with others outside the community?
5. Do you think the sick and aged feel content with the community? What level of hospitality does your community show? Do you think visitors feel welcome?

6. Do you think your community is sufficiently open to other communities of the Province or of the Congregation? Is it open as regards the local Church? Does it participate actively in what goes on in the surrounding area?

COMMUNITY LIFE

Rev. Gabriel Cingolani, C.P.

The most important problem of our time is that of relationships between persons. The solution to this historically challenging question will determine the success, indeed the very survival, of humanity. This observation is applicable to individual men and women in society, to families and to groups on broader levels, reaching also to the relationships of the international community.

Despite the fact that one may not be able to foresee civilization's future developments, it appears that (having first developed to the greatest degree a consciousness of the dignity of each individual as a person) involvement in this phase of history ought to consist in an harmonious combination of the mutually exchangeable riches which each one is known to possess.

Mindful that in the gratuitous love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit the Church had its beginnings, Vatican II gives singular importance to the ecclesial reality of the individual person and to the communion between persons, and therefore concentrates on community as the visible sign of communion. A similar procedure is observed in the new Constitutions of the Congregation of the Passion: to the gratuitous call of God, those persons, joined together in community (Const. 4, 8, 17) for a specific mission, freely give their response.

Establishing this reality (person-community) as the one which stands above all others, that is, the first among all norms, is not merely a choice of methodology, but indicates a different awareness of the meaning of Church and Congregation. It is the basic mental and "cultural" attitude to be assumed, otherwise the new Constitutions cannot be comprehended.

During recent years, the study of theology and spirituality of religious life, confirmed by the statements of the magisterium of the Church, unanimously maintains that communitarian life is an essential dimension of the life of religious insofar as it "simultaneously reveals more clearly to all believers the heavenly goods which are already present in this age" (LG 44; cf. also PC 15, and Canon 607,2).

The document "The Essential Elements of the Church's Teaching on Religious Life" (CRIS, May 31, 1983) says, briefly, that religious consecration is productive of a "particular communion" not only between God and the individual religious, but also "between the members of the same institute" (N. 18). That communion, in itself invisible insofar as it pertains to the world of values, "does manifest itself visibly in life in common." Consequently, "living in community is so very important...so that each individual religious... is obliged to do so by the very fact of his profession and, as a normal thing, is to reside in a community of the institute to which he belongs" (N. 19).

That "particular communion" which unites the individual religious to God and to his fellow-members flows from the one charism, that is, from his having received one and the same gift. The other charisms which individual members possess will be recognized as valid only to the extent that they are in harmony with the charism of the Congregation. From this fundamental communion follows the "particular manner" in which each religious family pursues its life of

dedication to the vows and to communitarian living. Passionist communitarian life, therefore, has its very own specific and expressed physiognomy.

The Congregation's new Constitutions respond fully to the new communitarian awareness of Church and religious life; indeed, in this sense, they stand as creative contributions of universal significance. But, to be truly cognizant of this richness, it is not sufficient merely to have a commentary on the second chapter. Together with the centrality of the Passion (a theme which permeates the Constitutions far more deeply than the 42 explicit references to it) the communitarian dimension of life is the leading, connecting thread which weaves through every part of the Constitutions in a substantial way. One needs only to note the titles given to the fundamental chapters, e. g., the third and fourth.

So, in the course of this commentary I have allowed myself to broaden the scope beyond that of chapter two. My intention has already been indicated by the very choice of the title which I have given to this presentation.

I. THE END OF ONE HISTORICAL MODEL AND THE NEED FOR A NEW MODEL

In the same way that it was possible to produce a constitutional text, different in form and structure from the one written by the Founder, so, too, the Congregation must be able to construct a model of community living; its configuration, however, being incapable of reproducing the one designed with so much love by Saint Paul of the Cross. It is not only a matter of changing the wording, but many values have come into view with the discovery of new ones or the diverse perception of old ones. Still valid are the theological truths of the Passion of Christ and conformity with the teaching and life of the apostles. Still in basic agreement, at least in the manner of expression, are the principal means of the support and development of fraternal communion, such as the conceptual and existential clarity of identity, private and community prayer, the service of authority and of spiritual direction; but even these words denote and involve an entirely different modality.

The main reason for all this upheaval or for all this change which has made things almost unrecognizable is history's movement from a static situation to one that is dynamic.

In the previous style of community life, fraternal communion was based on a manner of life established by the rule and regarded as the objective expression of the will of God. Communion meant "to observe", as a group and in the very same way, the holy rule. From that attitude arose the traditional esteem for observance in the Congregation. In following that method, conformity to the model who is Christ Crucified was, practically speaking, assured; each one could feel comfortably in line with God, his superiors, his confreres and the Church. The fact that little was said about the make-up of community life, or that there were no authentic interpersonal relationships as we understand them nowadays, or that evaluations were made only according to the scale of greater or lesser observance of the rule, did not constitute a problem of communitarian awareness for that period of history. "It is necessary to emphasize and understand well that type of fraternal communion in order to comprehend clearly what it means to return to the objectives of the rule as a point of reference, of discernment which underlies the entire formulation of community life as viewed by the Founder and which underlies also the entire activity of a superior in his work of guidance and animation" (F. Giorgini, *The Passionist Community in the Teaching of Saint Paul of the Cross*, p. 11.

Fidelity to the rule consisted in the repetition of the prescribed acts, and this emphasized the static quality of the community. With reference to individual members, on the one hand, there were those who were able to achieve a notable dynamism by being fruitfully productive in a community which, as such, did not have projected goals but was solely a service to its individual members, and this occurred with those men who were more richly endowed with gifts of nature as well as of grace; on the other hand, there were those who became mired in a communitarian life typified by individual, identical, repeated and regularly-timed acts of behavior, and this occurred with men of ordinary training.

Nevertheless, the model was a valid one, first, because it conformed to the cultural and social structure of the time and, second, because, in practice, it was sustained by a corresponding doctrinal foundation with which it blended harmoniously. Community was static, theology monarchical, morale founded on duty, spirituality reliant on the imitation of pre-existent models, pastoral care repetitive and governed by precise norms of law. Everything was in balance and in harmony. Furthermore, community, already overly structured, was firmly subjected to the control of authority. A local superior each night would find his subjects kneeling at his feet while reporting their achievements of the day and organizing the work of the following day; he would recommend that all “should love God above all things, love each other in holy charity, and observe the holy rules” (F. Giorgini, *ibid.* p. 21); at least twice a week he was required to speak to the members “of the obligations of the life they have embraced, of the virtues that are to be practiced, of fidelity to the rule...” (*ibid.*, p. 22); every Friday he directed the community in an examination of life, on the part of each one as well as of the group, “so as always to make progress toward greater perfection” (*ibid.*, p. 23); every “week or at most two weeks”, he would receive the individual member in private conference (“Common Rule” of 1775, n. 129, F. Giorgini); thus, one in authority was able to lead a group of men to outstanding levels of spirituality, but could also do immeasurable harm to individuals.

Indeed, that mode of community life prospered in the Church and enjoyed its day in splendor. Saint Paul of the Cross, with paternal feelings, was proud of it, leaving behind various testimonies of his admiration (cfr. F. Giorgini, *The Passionist Community in the Teachings of Saint Paul of the Cross*, p. 2. The Notitia of 1747 asserts the following about the communities of that time: “Each one is always competing to become more perfect, to be more humble, to be subject to another, thus removing all that could stand in the way of a perfect, fraternal charity acquired by the religious with an eagerness to practice it, so that...it seems to be heaven on earth because of the peace, the concord, the quiet, the unity...” (n. 14).

That model, however, has played its part in history. The new model of community living should be equally deserving of the Founder’s words of praise just as was the previous one, but it still must be set up on a practical basis. The accord between theory and practice, which characterized the old model is not possible as yet for the new one. In its beginnings, we have noted some strong affirmations, but it has not as yet been firmly consolidated. Perhaps, we will have to set aside the idea of any sort of consolidation as something no longer possible in this period of dynamic change.

Community life can no longer be pyramidal, but must be circular. Fraternal communion will no longer be based upon a form of shared, external life, but must have its basis on authentic, interpersonal relationships lived in faith. The structure will not have a guarantee backed by the

powerful hand of authority, but will be built on the free concourse of the individuals involved. Theology is no longer to be monarchical but communal; morale is to rest on the formation of one's conscience and not on a sense of duty. Spirituality will be the creation of communitarian models, pastoral work becomes an organized program, law will be a fragile, intermediate aid in the evaluation of community and the Church's ministeriality. The dynamism of the new style of community cannot rely on the guarantees of solid structures nor perfect legislation, but rather on continuous dialogue and discernment.

No one disputes any longer the clarity and the validity of these affirmations. But what they determine exactly as a concrete model for the new-style community is still difficult to say. Our own communities are often something lying indefinitely between the old, which no longer exists, and the new, which has not as yet been completely affirmed.

It is a time of transition and, consequently, something difficult to describe and wearisome to achieve. It bears with it many hardships and sufferings, and very little gratification for any good attained or success realized.

The first difference which strikes one is that between the observance of a law and the creation of new approaches. To observe a law requires the output of little energy, the exertion of human faculties on a very limited level. It is a matter of fulfilling a duty by following age-old, established ways with consequences already foreseen, the responsibility for which lies on the shoulders of others. It demands only adherence, both internal and external, to something that has been pre-established. To create new approaches requires a much fuller application of human faculties: it calls for due preparation, planning, evaluating, meeting together, dialoguing and, in a word, discerning. Ultimately it means taking a risk since one does not know for sure whether the new approach, having no precedent, will be able to hold up in the future.

This is the status in which our Congregation has found itself for some twenty years now, that is, it does not have those precise laws which one was accustomed to observe and it has been lacking in the capability of creating new approaches. The approval of the new Constitutions and the compilation of the new Provincial Regulations now offer us more secure points of reference, though we will not be spared the work nor the suffering that accompanies the elaboration of a new mode of Passionist community living.

II. THE SECOND CHAPTER OF THE CONSTITUTIONS

This chapter deals with community under the aspect of relationships. Community is formed by the relationships of its component parts and the values and objectives connected with these relationships. There is here a lack of a true and proper theology of communitarian life or communion, but this is not something bad, since nowadays there is a vast field in which such topics can be handled, and likewise those elements are found interspersed in other chapters. In this particular section, the treatment is mainly concerned with practical matters.

In the special General Chapter held in 1968-1970, there were some 200 interventions dealing with the nature of Passionist communitarian life. From that inquiry, the community was considered to be and resulted in such a state of crisis that it was not able to remedy the situation with temporary concessions and adjustments, but recognized the need for reconstructing "ex novo" its spiritual dimensions and its internal relationships.

Chapter II, therefore, opens with an introductory declaration of an ecclesial character as well as an historical reference to our origins (Const. 25). Community, if it is truly ecclesial, is sign and sacrament of Christ's love; to experience and to communicate that love, one must live in community; Paul of the Cross, though he may not have used this terminology, nevertheless inspired us with this concept, reminding us of it up to the very final moments of his life.

Relationships within the Congregation itself

Const. 26-28 state explicitly the evangelical values which form the basis for Passionist community living and they define the relationships that flow from those values.

Here, then, is a listing of the values and the corresponding relationships:

- The love of Christ as manifested in his death on the Cross produces relationships of unity, eliminating any form of separatism;
- Dignity and equality call for relationships of reciprocal esteem and acceptance;
- The varied gifts bestowed on each one by the Holy Spirit foster relationships of joy because of the talents which one discovers in others (Const. 26) ;
- Fraternal communion is the value recognized when the members join in frequent dialogue discussing both spiritual and human matters, as well as the social and organizational needs that arise in our lives.
- The certainty that we are doing the will of God motivates us to research, to "exchange of ideas", to listening, so that the will of God can be better discovered and fulfilled.
- Organization in our own personal lives as well as that of the community in the light of the Gospel urges us to relationships of mutual study of events, mutual help and encouragement, mutual forgiving (Const. 27).
- Brotherhood with Christ generates relationships of reciprocal concern, esteem and friendship, together with respect for order in community living, even to the finest points of attention, such as the observance of polite manners (Const. 28).

In this context, one encounters a normative directive of significant importance: "Each of us must consider it his duty to take part in these discussions, and to accept the decisions that result and are confirmed by Superiors" (Const. 27); it also contains a reminder of the gifts of the Holy Spirit which flow from these communitarian relationships lived in faith: "Life in community will then be characterized by joy and peace" (Const. 28).

The new style of Passionist community living, therefore, will be the fruit of new relationships based on evangelical values. One will not be able to prescind from communitarian regulations and structures. However, the new arrangement will have to be dynamic, focusing on dialogue in order to meet face to face the likewise dynamic and ever recurring difficulties, such as diversity in viewpoints, individual needs, deficiencies in formation, which all experience because of the rapidity of changes in society and the ensuing complex bewilderment. Only by being dynamic will communities be able to maintain their lives.

One of the most serious inadequacies we have been experiencing in the construction of a new model of community living is the supposition of a human community which does not exist. For this reason, so many efforts of constructing an ecclesial and religious community have turned out

to be unsuccessful. We have not looked at ourselves realistically; we do not acknowledge the situation of others and therefore we do not accept it; in fact, we reject it. The basis for relationships in faith, which the Constitutions describe, is that God dwells in each person, that the Holy Spirit distributes his gifts to all, and that Christ died for every individual. But, perhaps, it is impossible to construct human relationships in faith if the capacity for interpersonal relationships is lacking. Certain deficiencies in education or certain psychological injuries cause people to be closed off from any possibility of a relationship, even though they remain capable of every other sort of sacrifice, except that of being with other people. It is quite a frequent occurrence, during this period of transition, to encounter persons who, as individuals, possess notable qualities and enjoy prestige in society, but, with respect to community living, appear to be gravely immature.

Another possible obstacle to our experimentation is that of counting too heavily on having absolute values for the building up of community. In doing that, one becomes enthusiastic in the presence of all the beautiful principles, but then is suddenly discouraged because of the difficulty of finding agreement on just what should, in practice, be done. Agreement on values is easy, but deciding on a concrete mode of action is something altogether different.

The construction of a new community lifestyle is accomplished by constant referral to God, for it is a gift that comes from above, and by the gradual and persistent effort to formulate communal life, because community is indeed the fruit of one's giving of oneself, which is something each one is called upon to do. Thus, one can see the new ascetical demands which we are still quite far from accepting, demands more trying than disciplines, prostrations and fastings. Communitarian ascetical practice is the hardest thing asked of us. If, in the past, it was the "maximum penance" required of us to participate in those demands which were, basically, structural to a great extent, much more will it be so in the future, when that sharing will touch life in ever broader dimensions, both internally and externally. Already felt as bothersome are the meetings, the family councils, reviews, vital communications. These are evident signs of the difficulties involved in accepting the new asceticism. Just what does one expect? That the time will come when these matters will cease being a trial? Well, that time will not come. There is need for a new asceticism; a kenosis of self-spoilation, of making room for others, of renouncing, even the defense of one's own ideas, of convincing others. But, corresponding to that asceticism will be new life in the Spirit, a new way of living as willed by Christ, a new community which we are asked to construct.

It is clear, therefore, that the axis of this entire process of renewal is dialogue in charity. No longer renewal by means of laws and disciplines, but by means of a new type of relationship. This process was begun at least from the time "Ecclesiam Suam" was issued.

The section dealing with relationships within the Congregation concludes with a reminder of the particular bonds that the community members have with the sick (Const. 29), the aged (Const. 30) and the deceased (Const. 31).

Relationships with those outside the Congregation

The first involves the Congregation as a whole (Const. 32), and under a certain aspect, can be looked upon as still another relationship within the Congregation itself. Pluralism is an enrichment, whereas uniformity, of itself, does not give assurance of community life. Even the

material needs of each part of the Congregation must become the concern of all, thanks to the formation of a consciousness of being one family.

Next, there are two compelling numbers dealing with the relationships of the community to the universal as well as the local Church (Const. 33 and 34). This commentary necessarily cannot treat these relationships in detail, but it calls attention to them inasmuch as they are an essential condition for the intrinsic dynamism of the community. A constitutive element for our “raison d’etre” is service to the Church. Therefore, there is a profound connection between the community and the local church, a vital interaction and reciprocity between Christians and our communities. The context of church and society existing side by side conditions the community’s life. As a matter of fact, the purpose of the community is twofold: its own charism and the needs of others. Its charism is a gift of the community but it is destined for the good of others. Consequently it is impossible to live, authentically, that charism without asking about the needs of others and what it is they expect of our community. Only by responding to concrete needs will the charism significantly release its powers. A community does not become so unless it also becomes apostolic. The danger is that the community may testify to and preach only those things of which it is convinced, or those it has developed in its traditions, or, finally, those things for which it feels it is best prepared - and not ask whether they correspond to the actual needs of the Church and of the world of which it is a part. If that is the case, it would be out of place or, at least, not very meaningful, end consequently unhappy with itself in not being fully a community.

The relationship spoken of here is to be understood as referring to society in general and not only to the Church (Const. 35). Our community must ask itself whether the people are truly aware of our presence and whether we are with the people or not. Do the people look upon our community as being truly concerned with the problems that affect them all, or are we isolated and evasive? Does our solitude beget communion and sharing with others, or does it produce aloofness and self-interest or, maybe, a lack of availability? Civil society is not less a recipient of our service, if in no other way than by our testimony in the face of a problematical situation. Hence, even the daily schedule of the community should take into account the local practices and rhythm of life in the area.

Parents, relatives, friends and benefactors are partners in these extrinsic relationships which the community considers to be particularly worthy of honor and respect (Const. 36).

III.ELEMENTS OF THE NEW MODEL OF PASSIONIST COMMUNITY LIFE AND THE CONSTITUTIONS AS A WHOLE

Whereas Chapter Two treats of community from the point of view of relationships, the Constitutions as a whole present a much broader picture of the complex and rich ecclesial microcosm which is the Passionist Congregation. In gathering together all of its elements, we come up with an attractive image, so much so that it evokes from within us the exclamation: Now that is just what the new community life of the Passionists should be! However, the model is far from constructed; all we have now are the materials for building it. The Constitutions do not have that experience of history needed for the mounting of a model, for that is something which requires incessant experimentation, testing and adaptation. With a study of the entire text

of the Constitutions, we shall try to present, as a synthesis - like working a puzzle - all of the elements which go to make up the new model of Passionist community life. The citations from the text are given by way of exemplification and are restricted to the more important ones.

1. A dynamic, dialoguing, jointly responsible community

The new community lifestyle is not a pre-established reality, but the fruit of a day to day dynamic effort. Dialogue is not only a mode of relationship but, indeed, the soul of community. It includes constant openness to God and to one's brothers, as well as an essential articulation of discernment. Consequently, at one and the same time, it is value and structure. We still have a long way to go in this experimental field, but it is the motive power of new community.

- We practice the vow of the Passion in "our daily lives" (Const. 6).
- We strive to bring "an authentic and evangelical poverty into our own lives," accepting "each day as it comes as a gift from the Father" (Const. 10).
- Day by day we accept the Father's "loving purpose" (Const. 20).
- "In a spirit of faith" we accept "the mediation... especially of Superiors and community" (Const. 21).
- "We recognize that co-responsibility and mutual dependence open the way to freedom and fulfillment for each one of us" (Const. 22).
- "The Superior seeks and listens to their views in a frank exchange marked by respect and charity, remembering that all together we are striving to ascertain and fulfill what the Father wants of us" (Const. 23).
- "Community life flourishes when its members are careful to maintain and foster fraternal personal relationships...We, therefore, need to come together on a regular basis to discuss matters"; in that way, "we come to see more clearly what it is that God wants of us" and we "discover those forms and practices of community living that will help us best to reach the goal" (Const. 27).
- "We should also use loving initiative to find new and creative ways" "of teaching others how to meditate in the best and easiest way upon the Passion of Christ" (Const. 66).
- "Dynamic leadership and vital communities are not produced by laws written down on paper. All our brethren should cooperate to ensure that vigorous leadership is provided at every level" (Const. 113).

2. Christ is the heart of the community

Christ crucified is the center of life for each member as well as of the community. Each one feels his call and is continuously drawn to him, seeking to live only for him. "We accept the urgent demands made on each of us by the personal call of the Father to follow Jesus Crucified" Const: 4).

- "Called to unite ourselves to the life and mission of Him who emptied himself ..." (Const.5).
- We join with Christ in the Father's salvific plan, "alert...to do His will" (Const. 20).
- "In mental prayer, we personally respond to the apostle's exhortation to make our own the mind of Christ" (Const. 49).
- "We frequently meditate on the Crucified Christ as we endeavour to become more fully conformed to His death and resurrection" (Const. 50).
- With regard to the centrality of Christ crucified, cfr. especially Const., Chapter I.

3. Community is based on having an objective in common

Having an objective in common means that all, as one, wish for the same thing and seek to achieve it; each member fully using his individual talents while all work together as a unit. The objective is attained by community only if the people who comprise it attain the objective each in turn. This is a constitutive element of community. If the individuals who live together have different objectives and nothing more, then each one will attempt to realize his own, and there will never be community. In our tradition, awareness of the necessity of a unified effort has always been a vital thing, even without the scientific knowledge of group dynamics. In the Notitia of 1747, we read in N. 14: “All wishing for what is wanted by all, and all wishing for what a single one wants”, the community “seems to be heaven on earth.” That is, in fact, the description of having an objective in common which one will find in every modern manual treating set relationships.

- “We seek the unity of our lives and our apostolate in the Passion of Jesus” (Const. 5).
- “Together we undertake the arduous journey of faith ...Together we share the same hope” (Const. 8).
- “The Provincial Superior should guide and inspire the local Communities and bind them together in genuine brotherly unity” (Const. 124).
- Among the goals mentioned for a General Chapter: “to maintain unity, without insisting on uniformity” (Const. 127).

4. Community is made up of interpersonal relationships

Community does not exist if relationships are based only on the functions which each one carries out, for example, superior, economist, preacher, pastor, cook and so forth; neither is there community in a crowd of people one encounters in a market place, a theater or a stadium. In order to have community there must be relationships based on what each one is, namely, on the values of that person, such as esteem, respect, love, service, dedication, etc.

- “The superior is brother to all. In their dealings with him, the religious are to be open and spontaneous” (Const. 23).
- “Considering others better than ourselves, we intend to help each of our brethren to develop his individual personality and talents” (Const. 26).
- “In our daily dealings with others, each must be treated as a brother in Christ, to whom thoughtful consideration is shown” (Const. 28).
- “The religious who has been designated as Superior is not thereby set above or apart from his community. He is one with his brethren” (Const. 120).

5. Community resulting from a balanced dynamism between internal and external relationships

Since it is to be apostolic, the Passionist community cannot spend itself dealing only with internal relationships. If it were to do that, in the long run it would become frustrated and end up in debasement. At the same time, if it were to devote itself only to external relationships, even though apostolic in character, it would result in disunion. The very deep imprint which our Founder made has succeeded in preserving substantial balance in the community up to this time of renewal. The Passionist who was formed according to the model of Saint Paul of the Cross

carried out his active labors, promoting the remembrance of the Passion of Christ, in between the time he left his place of residence and his return to the foot of the Crucified and to community life. With skillfulness, Paul even reached the point of suggesting the possible amount of time to be devoted to the two occupations. Certainly; he did not foresee the Passionist who would regularly live outside the community. Rather, he accepted the fact that the life of the Passionist would be mainly within the confines of the community, taking into consideration the need for doing community chores and the work of formation.

This balance is now to be re-asserted in the new lifestyle, envisioned in the new spirituality and theology, as well as in ecclesial awareness. Nowadays, it should be easier to do this since the dichotomy between the contemplative and the active life has been surmounted and the use of negative language in referring to a combination of the two has been set aside. As Paul VI stated: “Be active because you are contemplative.”

- “Our prayer...echoes our solidarity with our brothers and sisters, especially the poor” (Const. 38).
- “We should continually ask ourselves whether our prayer life effectively influences our personal life, our community life, and our apostolic service” (Const. 40).
- “Our involvement in the apostolate flows directly from our life in community...we should have special concern for those forms of the apostolate that are enriched by, and in turn nourish, community life. Our apostolic commitments must therefore allow us to belong to a community” (Const. 67).

6. Community in the constant dynamism of programming and reviewing

The only truly notable difference between the Regulations written by Saint Paul of the Cross and the new Constitutions is that the former contain an already established, static programming to the finest details, which was perfect for its time and genre, whereas the Constitutions contain general directives, after the manner of a pattern, according to which each individual province and community is to program its lifestyle. To program means to determine the particular, local objectives to be achieved within an allotted time, but always in keeping with the general objectives of the Congregation as expressed in the Constitutions. It involves making decisions about criteria, ways and means, and the period of time needed for the realization of the objectives. To program also calls for the testing and reviewing of the plans undertaken, making appropriate proposals and eventual adaptation.

Among the very many references in the Constitutions to this dynamism of growth, we mention the following:

- Const. 20, 27, 40.
- “We form a part of human society, and cannot distance ourselves from the people among whom we live. Each community therefore must consider whether it is relating in a Christian manner to the wider community of the area” (Const. 35).
- “We must help one another by speaking among ourselves about this need, and by encouraging one another to persevere in our commitment to personal prayer” (Const. 52).
- “We make our response...by integrating external acts of penance into our community life” (Const. 58).

- “Each Province as a whole, as well as each local community, is responsible for making a mature appraisal of its apostolic activity, and for assessing current forms of collaboration in case these need to be adapted to new circumstances of time and place” (Const. 76).
- More explicit references to this can be found, by the very nature of the themes, in the General Regulations.

7. Community of faith, of prayer, of missionary service

These are innate characteristics of every Christian community. The Constitutions do not fail to remind the Passionist community of them by special references to the Passion of Christ. The community nourishes its faith by hearing the Word, by celebrating the Eucharist and the liturgical Hours, by the practice of spiritual reading, by frequenting the sacraments, by experiencing contemplative prayer, by reading the signs of the times in order to discover the presence of God in daily life and in history. Its missionary service is totally one with its being community insofar as it makes its gift known to others. Just as the individual person becomes a missionary when he makes a gift of himself to others, going beyond his own limited self, so also does community become missionary by rendering its service and mission as a gift of itself in behalf of the needs of the Church and the world.

The principal references are found in the chapters treating vocation, prayer and the apostolate.

8. Community resulting from personal fulfillment

In regard to this topic, the most difficult point is that of reconciling the needs of the individual with the needs of the community. With respect to this thorny question - an inescapable one - the Constitutions once again rise above the dichotomy and open the way for a new experience of harmonization.

Community does not exist without individual persons; it has need of them as an irreplaceable means for fulfilling its role in history. Just as structure stands in service to the person and may not do violence to his freedom nor to his conscience, neither may it do so even for his own good! Community must accept persons with all their distinctive characteristics and make room for the gifts God has bestowed on each one.

At the same time, the individual has need of community as an irreplaceable means of developing his own personality. He is not fully a person until he withdraws from his own individuality and enters into a relationship with others. Since this is the ambience in which he will come to realize the value of communion, community is the goal of the individual person. The freedom and autonomy which he claims as his inalienable rights are not fully valued until they merge together as a gift of himself to the community to which he is called.

Understood in this way, the person-community relationship should not give rise to tensions, since person and community really are one and the same thing, but viewed from two different angles. On the practical level, however, because of human weaknesses and the presence of sin, the complications are, at times, serious and laden with anxiety: the conscience of the individual and the commitments to the community; the responsibility of the individual and the tasks of the community; the creativity of the individual and the needs of the community; the freedom of the individual and the limitations imposed by the freedom of others; personal projects and

community projects; the charisms of the individual and the charism of the Congregation. These are not alternatives, but are two separate items which, in practice, are seeking for a new, harmonious way to coexist. In general, this will not be dependent on laws or on other structures, but on the Christian maturity of each member and, ultimately...on community. It will be the experiencing of the paschal mystery.

With regard to citations from the text of the Constitutions, those that have been quoted up to this point should be sufficient.

IV. SUGGESTED DEFINITION FOR THE NEW MODEL: COMMUNITARIAN HOLINESS

We ask ourselves the question: on the practical, spiritual and pastoral level, what does the new model for Passionist community living, as described in the Constitutions, involve? Having examined the various parts of our physiognomy, we now attempt to put it together so as to have a comprehensive view of it at a glance.

From the teaching which emanated from the Council and from all that has been examined in the text of the Constitutions, it seems that we should be able to maintain the following affirmation:

The Church of today is called to accept and live the invitation to holiness as a people and as a body. This is the nucleus and nerve center of its renewal.

This call embraces every concrete unit within the Church (family, parish, community of every kind), primarily that of religious life.

In Chapter I, LG presents the Church as a mystery of communion from which is born a new brotherhood of mankind, made visible in its communitarian structure. In Chapter II, it offers the same vision in terms of being the people of God. God the Father guides the individual to salvation in the gathering together of a people and in making a covenant with them; he willed “to make them holy and save them, not as individuals, but by making them into a single people” (LG 9). Christ became their head, the Lord and principle of life for that people, joining them to himself as his body to which he communicates his own life and holiness. The Holy Spirit, dwelling within the heart as in a temple, gives it the dignity and freedom of the children of God; a freedom which has meaning only if it involves mutual service (Gal 5: 13).

The trinitarian love of the God-community consequently opens up to a people to whom he wishes to communicate his life. This people is considered as a whole, a unit, to be the addressee and the receiver of God’s gifts. All of the gifts of God are born from the Church, in the Church and for the Church which, existentially, is nothing other than the resultant communitarian actualization of those gifts.

Communitarian holiness, by its nature, is the endeavor to live in fraternal communion the fulness of life that comes to us from the love of the Trinity. With respect to its actualization in history, it consists in the exertion - both by individuals and by groups - of all our efforts together, placing them at the disposal of others, but, at the same time, allowing ourselves to become enriched and productive by sharing in the values of all. That which stands in opposition to this communion is evil and sin. With respect to its mission and its ultimate purpose, it consists in our subordinating

ourselves one hundred percent to the fulfillment of God's plan, that is, the total and universal salvation of souls. In this way, the Church manifests itself as the sacrament of saving unity for all mankind.

This description of the nature of communitarian life and holiness in the Church is coherently applied by the Council to religious life (cfr. LG Chapter IV and PC, especially nn. 1, 2, 6 and 12-15). This new life, holiness and salvation are not actualized in the members of a religious community in an isolated way or without a mutual exchange, but rather in their very togetherness. Religious life is a "sign" of the Church inasmuch as it demonstrates, in a significant way, its unity and communion. The evangelical counsels and life in common are the component parts and the essential expressions of its communitarian holiness. The Council explains the vows by pointing out their communitarian dimensions as well as their solid relationship to charity.

These affirmations can easily be substantiated by an analysis of the texts and by an exegetical approach to the biblical quotations which the texts themselves contain. Even more interesting and fascinating for us Passionists would be the substantiation of those statements from an analysis of the texts of our new Constitutions - not only those sections dealing with vocation and vows, but the Constitutions as a whole. Of course, it is not possible to do that here and now, but one can be assured that a surprising consistency would be noted and, in the main, could be demonstrated as we have done in the three preceding parts of this study. We submit quickly the following references:

- Our sharing in the Passion, expressed in a special vow, is "personal, communitarian and apostolic" (Const. 6).
- Our poverty, "both as individuals and as communities" (Const. 10), is not only a freedom from slavery to things, but it calls for the communitarian disposition of goods of every kind for the needs of the brethren (Const. 11) and likewise an eagerness to bring about a common sharing for all of humanity (Const. 13).
- Our chastity not only frees us from the temptation to be possessive of others, but reaches fulfillment in our capability for a free and universal brotherhood, in a total giving of ourselves in sincere love to our brothers in community (Const. 17, 19). If such were not the case, our chastity would be neither evangelical nor a sign, but rather only the source of frustrations.
- Our obedience rests on the embodiment of the values of liberty, solidarity, co-responsibility and of service (Const: 21 and 22). Those values are achieved only by searching for and bringing to realization the common good concretely willed by God for the community, the Church and the world. In obedience, in a very special way, there is realized the submission of each one and of all to the will of God, that is, the salvation and the sanctification of all.
- In regard to community living, a sufficient number of observations have been made up to now within the limits of this commentary.
- Therefore, it appears to be quite clear that the construction and manifestation of communitarian holiness could be considered, nowadays, as the ultimate reason for the presence of religious life in the Church. To live our renewal means to perceive and to actualize the call to this new lifestyle for ourselves and for the entire world. Indeed, the spread of this testimony could well be the key to the renewal in the Church.

At this point, it is not a slight, interior temptation to prolong this discourse on how the dynamics of communitarian holiness in a Christian group can be developed and, therefore, be applied to the Passionists' new model of community living. One might dare to describe the action of the Holy Spirit on a group, as has been done extensively in describing the action of the Spirit on individual persons trodding the road of spiritual progress. For a group, the Spirit is:

- The principle of unity: the soul of the body and of the people.
- The principle of diversity: he distributes his different gifts which are to be accepted and nurtured; to oppose them is to oppose the Spirit.
- The principle of consonance: if it is the same Spirit who makes us one and yet diverse, it means that these are complementary, that is, reciprocally necessary, not only in a functional sense but in a constitutive, ontological sense. No one is fulfilled unless he exerts himself in behalf of the good of the whole, and vice versa. Each person needs community for his fulfillment, for he becomes what he is, not in himself, but thanks to what the others are. Community is something newly established by all together, but it is not a sum totaling of them. Community needs each one for its fulfillment, because without the consolidation of the gifts of all, it does not exist.

The Constitutions, especially Chapter II, clearly contain a descriptive sketch of the dynamism of relationships in faith, without neglecting the psychological and sociological implications.

The culminating result of this historical dynamism exerted in the construction of the new model will be the emergence, in the dimension of a sign, of the special presence of Christ with those who live in communion (Mt 12: 20):

The communion of persons in the name of Christ has a sacramental value insofar as Christ joins it with a special form of his presence. It is the grace of community whose fruits are, according to the N. T., a new comprehension of the Scriptures, the overcoming of fears, the discovery of joy and courage, even the tangible experience of the Lord (Lk 24: 13 ff.), all the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5: 22 ff.), the capability of attracting new brethren (Acts 2: 47; 4: 33) and - the most amazing fruit of all - the salvation of the world: "In order that the world will believe that you sent me" (Jn 17: 21-23). Christ has made this ineffable gift conditioned on unity among his own.

The fuller exposition of these matters remains within the scope of new treatises on the spiritual theology of community which ecclesial concern must add to the traditional studies which focused on the dynamism of the spiritual growth of individual persons. The latter continues to be fully valid, but no longer sufficient.

As a conclusion to this commentary, it would be useful to offer, in a summary form, a few suggestions which might serve as pastoral encouragement to the community.

1. Community and transition

It is important, for the internal serenity of superiors and of all concerned, to accept this historical period as a time of transition. Community is difficult because it requires the construction of something new, and there are no preceding examples to serve as models. Our work during these days entails being constantly involved in building that model, a dynamic situation that will not allow repose. Realizing this fact will contribute to the feeling of peace and to the acceptance of

difficulties as a normal thing. Not accepting it will lead to a feeling of rebellion and restlessness; all will appear to be destroyed, and nothing emerging as a possibility for the future.

2. Community and prayer

On the whole, community is not generated simply by being together nor by the mere interchange of relationships, but also in the solitude of prayer at the foot of the Crucifix. Just as Christ begot the Church in the solitude of prayer and his death on the Cross; just as Paul of the Cross received the gift of the Passionist community in the solitude of Castellazzo and brought it to maturity in so many other moments of solitary prayer, so now each Passionist is asked to make a contribution to the birth and growth of this new community by welcoming, from the heart of Christ crucified, his love for unity and for the salvation of his brethren.

3. Community and the paschal mystery

Unity and communion are born of the Cross. To experience community is difficult, and that is a normal thing; but to become discouraged or to give up because of difficulties is particularly contradictory for the Passionist. In the present day situation and in a special way it is a matter of our charism, as our experience and service to the Church and the world. The human race is not united; there is no one who wants to die to his own possessions or power. The Church, as described by the Council, has certainly received from the crucified Lord the strength for its own renewal, but it will not be able to effect that unity in all its relationships - internal, ecumenical and those with the world - except by experiencing the Cross. The Passionists seem to be the ones called to be signs that community is possible, regardless of all the difficulties encountered. The Congregation is to give witness to a permanent capability of reflecting on the Passion in all situations in the Church and the world, by giving communitarian testimony far and wide and furnishing guidelines for communitarian living. Wherever there is a need or a will for community, that is where the Passionists should be. It is easy to imagine the possible vocational response to this image of our Congregation.

4. Community and reconciliation

Success in effecting salvation, making Christ present to the world, winning the victory over evil, will come about in accordance with our capability to establish unity, thus eliminating every sort of divisiveness. The devil - etymologically the term signifies one who causes divisions, confusion and who says what is opposite - is defeated only by communion. It is much easier to be persons of disagreement than of unity. Even though, in a manner of speaking, it may be more functional and attractive to talk about communion, most of the time, realistically speaking of our present day circumstances, the word is used rather in reference to reconciliation, pardon, mercy, bearing on one's own shoulders the innumerable burdens which we mutually cause. Inevitably, community must tread down that street too.

5. Community and eschatology

At times, discussion of community can become so attractive as to cause one to forget the Cross which is called for. It is satisfying to allow oneself to be drawn by eschatological considerations, but one should not overlook human history. Perfect community is, indeed, the end and final achievement for mankind. Here below, however, community will always be imperfect, composed of the good and the bad. One cannot build community by selecting only the best and

ostracizing the others. One can enjoy beforehand the values of that final communion and even anticipate them in increasing degrees, but one will never attain them entirely.

6. Community and relationships in faith

One can never fully understand the mutual implications involved in relationships with other people and relationship with God. We do not completely understand what relationship with God truly means. Indeed, we recognize the relationships that we have with each other and, analogically, we apply them in our relationship to God. But God, in Christ and the Holy Spirit, assumed our human relationships to validate our relationship with him. The true and guaranteed way of encountering God and of relating to him is for us to encounter him in our fellow humans. A true encounter is accompanied by love and by giving of oneself, and that is what makes us truly persons.

Community, therefore, is essential for encountering God. For us Passionists, the encounter with Christ crucified is guaranteed in those who are crucified in this world, first among whom are our brethren in community.

Many other things could be added, but this commentary does not pretend to say all that could be said about community.

In concluding, it is enough to say that Christ crucified is indeed, present in the community as is the risen Christ.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR COMMUNITY STUDY

1. Are you cognizant of the need for a new model of Passionist community living based on the authentic, interpersonal relationships of all its members?

What is an interpersonal relationship?

What are the values that we should share and upon which we should base the relationships in our communities?

2. The planning for, and testing of, the principal elements which ought to be included in the formulation of Passionist community living according to the new Constitutions:
 - Dynamism, dialogue, co-responsibility: do we experience them?
How should we activate them?
 - Is Christ crucified truly the “heart” of my life and that of the community? From which signs can this be noted? How can those signs be produced?
 - Does our community have an objective in common? What is it? How can one be formulated?
 - Are our relationships truly interpersonal? If relationships based on functions prevail, why does that happen?
 - Are we more willingly available inside or outside the community? What attracts us to the inside and what to the outside?
 - Do we willingly assemble in order to program our lifestyle together and make revisions of it?

- Does each one of our members find in community the latitude that he feels he needs? Are some frustrated or oppressed? How and why?
 - What influence on community living do prayer and the apostolate have?
3. Do you feel that it is adequate to express the identity of the new Passionist community lifestyle as a communitarian holiness? How can we mutually become involved in this experiment and give witness to this new model?