

19

PASTORAL ASPECTS OF THE MEMORIA PASSIONIS

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

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Myles Kavanagh, C.P.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. THE INNER CITY
Austin Smith, C.P.
2. A PASSION VIEW
Myles Kavanagh, C.P.
3. THE PASSION OF JESUS IN HEALTH CARE
Guy Sionneau, C.P.
4. HOSPITAL MINISTRY: MEMORIES OF THE PASSION
Francis X. Keenan, C.P.
5. STAUROS - U.S.A.
Flavian Dougherty, C.P.
6. HOSPITAL MINISTRY and MEMORY OF THE PASSION
Paul I. Bechtold, C.P.
7. YOUNG ADULT EVANGELIZATION and THE CONTEMPORARY PASSION
Alex Steinmiller, C.P.

THE INNER CITY

Rev. Austin Smith, C.P.

The poor of this world do have a Gospel preached to them. It is a Gospel of competition, private enterprise and self-help. And in this Gospel which is preached to them they are so often called to repentance. For their sin of being poor is too often projected as their own creation. Of this they are called to repent.

This Gospel may well not be THE Gospel. But, again too often, the false Gospel is dressed up in the language of the Gospel of Jesus; and, indeed, in so far as God is called upon to bless the powerful and the rich, is made to seem to be on the side of the powerful, the true Gospel is degraded, becoming a blasphemy and not a blessing.

It is strange, my brothers, but for many years when I preached the Gospel of Jesus, and especially the Gospel of the Passion, invoking many of the hard sayings of Jesus, Christian congregations thanked me for my words. But now when I go out from the Inner City to speak to many white, liberal and middle class congregations, telling them about the sin of racism, the stigmatization of the powerless and the alienation of those at the bottom of the pyramid of power, I am met with anger and rejection. But the texts I use from Jesus' teaching, the message I give out of the depths of Jesus' identification with the poor, are the same texts I used so long

ago. The Memoria Passionis, translated now into the sufferings of my Inner City brothers and sisters, black and white, has become a sign of contradiction.

It is an honor for me to be asked by the Father General to write something about my Passionist life and work for my brother Passionists. But it is very difficult. And I begin with very hard words for two reasons: to say something about how I see the Word of the Passion in our troubled times as a word to be preached; but more importantly, to make it clear to you that my whole Passionist existence is conditioned by those with whom and for whom I exist, with whom and for whom I act, the powerless of this world. If I struggle for their liberation, I offer my thanks to them for their act in liberating me.

What I have to say to you will be more in the mode of meditation than in structured narrative. My meditation is one of hope. But it is one of great bewilderment. We have spent millions of dollars and have ended up erecting tombstones in space; we have refused to spend millions of dollars and have ended up erecting tombstones in the Ethiopian desert. We live in a nightmare of contradiction.

This contradiction stretches across the social, economic, political and cultural spectrum. It stretches from that Ethiopian desert into the deserts of Inner Cities, our ghettos, our 'third worlds' planted at the heart of our 'first worlds.' It is in such a desert I live and work. It is the desert of the Inner City of Liverpool. Flowers, however, do bloom in my desert. We shall come to them eventually.

A MEDITATION

“Then Moses said to God...But if they ask me what his name is, what am I to tell them?
And God said to Moses, ‘I Am who I Am. This’, he added, ‘is what you say to the sons of Israel: I Am has sent me to you.’ (Ex 3:13-14).

What I find appalling in the Inner City of Liverpool, and this applies to all those areas in which the oppressed cry for liberation, is the basic struggle to be accepted as human beings. Or to put this more radically, the scandal rests in the fact that millions of human beings cannot “be creatively.” As long as we escape the prison of mere self-seeking and by-pass the world of simple self-indulgence, the words “I am” are the most crucial words of all human language.

“I am is the unqualified fulness of being,
is the supreme indication of presence,
is the one statement that cannot be uttered without being completely true,
is the one completely and immediately personal statement,
is pre-supposed in every intelligible utterance,
is true equally of God and Man,
is true in every time and place,
is the name of God.”

In my daily world of the Inner City it is hard, if not impossible, for many to utter those simple words “I am” with any real conviction. And if many of the people with whom I exist and act find it hard to utter the word ‘God,’ they do so because it is so hard for them to utter the name of God about themselves, the name “I am.”

The Inner City is both a physical reality and a symbolic projection. It is physical because it is verifiable. I talk to the people of the Inner City, watch their struggles, listen to the expressions of hope and share in their love. They are also a symbolic projection. For they are a symbol in our so-called developed world, our 'First World,' of the thousands and millions who have been left to struggle at the bottom of the pyramid of power. The Inner City population is that sector of our society which is "placed at a disadvantage by law, by social stigma, by discrimination or by the changing requirements of the labour market...The Inner City is therefore of far more than local interest. It is the bombardment chamber where the particles generated and accelerated by the cyclotron of a whole society are smashed into each other. It is therefore a very good place to learn about the destructive forces inherent in that society." Above all, the Inner City is a place of voicelessness face to face with the name of God, the rich name of "I AM." And for this reason face to face with a terrible political, social, economic and cultural oppression, the spirit of my Inner City friends and people, with their yearning for the infinite, their existence given and bestowed by God, exalted by the dying and rising of Jesus, are cast into a state of silence and helplessness and hopelessness.

My friends are the left-overs, the odds and ends, the crumbs of the crumpled bread rolls, the wine stains on the table cloth, after the rich man's capitalistic banquet. As I attempt to share their frustrations, understand and lift their stigmatizations, attend rounds of meetings to plan a better world, encourage them to speak in a world noisy with words about them, feel a darkness of sense and spirit in their company as frustration bursts out in riots and physical violence, I understand the suffering Jesus again as he stood before the religious and political institutions of his time to announce that all, in total equality, shall shout the name of his Father, of God, the name "I am." And from this Inner City I go elsewhere to say that the Inner City is not merely a political crisis, it is a mystical crisis, it is a crisis of the human spirit. Here is my 'Memoria Passionis.'

Not far from where I live with my Passionist companions in the Inner City, just down the road in fact, there flows a river. It is the River Mersey. It was once the life support with its shipping and commercial enterprise. The masters have now gone, profits made and a population abandoned. In a matter of twenty years the dock work force fell from 25,000 to 3,000. This left, in our wage-earning, consumerist and economically described world, thousands in a state of bewilderment. And though the River can tell tales of the thousands it carried on its tides to a new life in the New World, there is also a story about the river which is about tall sailing ships which set sail for distant countries to hunt down cargoes of slaves. Much of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century commercial wealth of the City of Liverpool was built upon slavery.

From time to time I stand by the old dockside, a museum now, and call up into my imagination the tall ships which sailed out on their slavery enterprises. Two years before Paul Danei was granted *Supremi Apostolatus*, years when he was laying the foundation stones for our own charismatic future, the following document was written, signed and sealed. It is but one document amongst many.

"LADING BILL OF A CARGO OF SLAVES - Shipped by the grace of God and in good order, and well conditioned, by James Dodd, (of the City of Liverpool), in and upon the good ship, "THOMAS" (of the Port of Liverpool), master of this present voyage, under God, Captain Peter Roberts (of the City of Liverpool), and now at anchor at Calabar, and by God's grace bound for Jamaica, with 630 slaves, men and women, branded DD, and numbered in the margin 31 DD, and are to be delivered in good order, and well conditioned, at the Port of Kingston, (the dangers of the seas and mortality only excepted), unto Messrs Broughton and Smith.

“In witness whereof the master and the purser of the ship ‘THOMAS’ hath affirmed this bill of lading, and God speed the Good Ship to her destined port in safety, AMEN.

“October 21st 1767, David Morton. 400 men
230 women
630 Grand Total”

When the slaves were taken in Africa they were stowed lying on their backs and arranged spoon-wise. A more thoughtful sailor told the tale of removing his boots as he walked over them. Each man and woman had space about the size of a coffin to lie in. Morning times during the voyage they were brought up, still chained, and whipped and ordered to jump up and down to get the blood circulating. This was the exercise of ‘jumping for joy’. In the same document we are told that when the ‘THOMAS’ got back to Liverpool it made a clear profit, all bills payed, of £24,000. The document ends with the words, ‘God be praised’.

Where I live, and this is the reason for my telling you this story, there is still a black population and some of the streets I walk around are named after the slave ships. But though the Sailing ships have gone, the horror of racism, the sin of racism still exists deep in personal lives and institutional ideologies; my black brothers and sisters are still marginalized by society. It has been the greatest privilege of my life to work with them and to exist with them. One is grateful for their acceptance and for their forgiveness. By inviting me into their on-going struggle for full liberation and equality they absolve me. But the penance will take a lifetime to complete on my part.

Another River Flows

I have used the word ‘bewilderment’ in these pages. Do you know what it means? According to the dictionary it comes from the verb ‘to bewilder,’ and this means to “lose someone in pathless places.” I use the word often these days. It is not the same as despair. Though one can be lost for so long in pathless places that despair takes over the soul. What I have attempted to say to you in these pages is that there are a few people losing too many people in pathless places in our world. Many of our children and young men and women, especially in our Inner Cities, live in a nightmare of terrible bewilderment.

Can you, just for one moment, imagine yourself a little child standing outside your ‘lean-to’ shack in a South African township? As you stand there you see white and black locked in violent conflict. When you run inside to ask what it is all about you are, gently and frustratingly, told that it is all about your right to live freely and fully in your own land. It is all about your right to say “I am” and “I will be creatively”. You are in a pathless place. You are lost.

Paul, our Founder, as he struggled, having given all to God, to understand his aridity, his sense of ‘nothingness,’ his *nu patir*, must have gone through this bewilderment. Each mystic has known it and has searched for the makings of an answer to it, an explanation of it, in the bewildered cry of our God, God to God. “My God why have you forsaken me?...I thirst!” The darkness which overtakes the spirit and the senses leaves one only groping.

Scripture scholars have gone to, and go to, great lengths to explain to us the differences in the Passion narrative. I profoundly respect their work and, in my own way more and more these days, depend upon their thought. But as a very simple layman in such matters I often feel the narratives are the tales of bewildered men and women. Where was my Lord between midnight and morning on that Friday we now call Good? Did he go before all the elders? Was it just the High Priests? What time did he actually go to Herod? When did the Roman political power set up their dialogue with him? Was it the question about the cleansing of the temple which caused the final trouble? Was it, perhaps, his words about the Temple? Was it a question of blasphemy?

I believe we were spiritually born in bewilderment. And, if there is to be authentic Faith, a hope and a believing which can unravel the confusion of the human condition, there must always be bewilderment.

It is in this sense of bewilderment I attempt to keep a flame alive in myself and in my brothers and sisters of the Inner City; and it is in this bewilderment, lived through with a mysterious commitment, that my brothers and sisters in the Inner City keep the flame burning in my own soul. Implicitly or explicitly, we all cry to God out of the depths of our bewilderment in the Inner City amongst the powerless. We all cry the name of God, "I am". But we are all bewildered by the personal and institutional sinfulness which lays siege to our lives. A distinction has always to be kept in mind. Yes, on the one hand, there is a bewilderment at the heart of our human and Christian lives; but there is a bewilderment afflicted upon millions by the powerful minority of this world which allows no rational or spiritual explanation.

For my own life, and I hope the life I communicate to others, my bewilderment is gathered into the Memoria Passionis, that terrible but beautiful expression of the bewilderment of God.

There is, then, another river intermingled in the currents of the Mersey. It is a mysterious river. It has never carried slaves, except those human beings, and there are so many, who give themselves in love for the liberation of the 'little ones' of this world. They become the slaves to the name of God, "I am"; they become slaves to the living Exodus of our time, the exodus from oppression to liberty. If the River Mersey is an Ocean eventually of sorrow and pain, this other mysterious river is eventually an ocean of joy and rest. And yet in that mysterious river there must also be pain and sorrow. It is the flowing paradox of Christian Faith. It is all as paradoxical as the wounds on the glorified body of the Risen Lord.

“How well I know the spring that brims and flows,
Although by night.

 This eternal spring is hidden deep,
 How well I know the course its waters keep,
Although by night.

 Its source I do not know because it has none,
And yet from this, I know, all sources come,
Although by night” (John of the Cross).

Perhaps this struggles to say it all. But let me add one more point in this meditation. It has been a personal meditation. But as there are points of hope and resurrection in the lives of the Inner City population, points when they not only cry "I am" but act to be, there is one specific point of resurrection in my life. Day by Day my other Passionist brothers in the Inner City, Liverpool and London, by their understanding of our lives in the light of the Memoria Passionis, ease away the

stone from the tomb of urban despair and release the hope of the Risen Jesus. Bewilderment is eased for a while and I find myself in a 'clearing,' rediscover my direction and press on into a deeper Faith, Hope and Love.

A PASSION VIEW

Rev. Myles Kavanagh, C.P.

The smell was overpowering, a truly appalling stench. After the hammer of heavy metal bolts the cell door was pushed in and the warder stood back to let me pass. The scene was profoundly disturbing. Human excrement covered the four walls and the ceiling – the excrement had been applied in such a way as to form a pattern. Two figures stood one on either side of the barred windows: two young men, they were naked but for a piece of blanket. There was a quiet greeting from both young men – then one walked from the cell to stand in the corridor while I stood beside the other to hear his confession. After hearing his confession he agreed to pray for me, walked out to the corridor so that his companion could come into the cell to make his confession. The action continued from cell to cell. Each cell and its occupants in the same incredible condition. Many of the young men were my own parishioners. They were all calm with a strange air of dignity. In the context of such filth, of such an all-pervading overpowering stench, of such obviously degrading conditions I came away with a new sense of human dignity and a conviction that these young men, my parishioners, had greater dignity in those stinking cells than they had in the streets of my parish - Ardoyne.

As Parish Priest and Rector of Holy Cross Parish, Ardoyne, I decided to write, for my own benefit, a few notes on the problems of the parish. I got no further than one word, “unemployment” – the degradation of not having the capacity to feed, clothe and house oneself, the indignity of a breadwinner living on handouts for himself and his children. This degraded state causes great anger. The anger expresses itself in violence or hides itself behind the terrifying apathy of a communal mental home. The symptoms are the pastoral problems which the cure of souls services. The question arises, do I go on servicing problems or do I attack root causes?

To a Passionist, “the degraded one” is of special concern. In the Passion Christ is “the degraded one.” The degradation is not something to be loved and by being loved tolerated. It must be an object of anger and by intolerance and rejection it must be removed. I do not see Christ in His Passion as an object of love with whom to identify or whose degradation I wish to share. I see Christ in His Passion as an object of anger from whom I want to distance myself, whose condition is repugnant to me and whose degradation has to be removed. In so far as Christ in His Passion personifies the degradation of the human condition my anger is directed to that condition not as something to love, to identify with, to share, but as something to reject, something repugnant, something to be removed. In our own society the degrading power of unemployment is the deliberately chosen object of my anger.

Starting with a perhaps over-simple understanding of Christ’s sign of Messiahship to the Followers of John the Baptist that the good news is proclaimed to the poor: it may seem a little obvious to suggest that the judges of the good news must be poor. Biblical commentators have every right to interpret for us each and every word of the phrase but in plethora of commentary we might miss the obvious, that what Christ is talking about is good news and the good news is for the poor. Whatever the interpretation, or description, or content of this good news it must be such as to be good news to the poor. If the news is not good for the poor it is not good news. Ultimately the judges of whether the news is good or bad must be the poor. The news is good if

the poor think it is good and experience it as good. The news is either bad or wrong if the poor do not perceive the news as good and experience it as good for them.

The good news is for “the degraded one.” The good news is for the one without capacity, without scope. The good news is for the one whose talent is denied, frustrated, deformed. The good news is for the one whose life is doomed to failure.

In our daily experience success is a word of great importance. The simplest task and the most complex task have success as their objective. The task of creation has success as its objective success. The Creator wants creation to be a success. In humans as in the rest of creation that success is the full flowering of the creative gift. If we turn the focus of our attention on the “degraded one”, we will find that degradation is present in so far as the creative gift is denied, frustrated, oppressed, rejected, deformed. The full flowering of the creative gift does not happen. The anger born of this frustration is the violence and apathy of the poor. If we accept the creative gift, frustrated as the essential element of degradation, we are drawn back to the creative role of Christ. Scripture sees all creation in Christ. The role of Christ in the creative act is that of mediator and originator. In him all things have been made. “The universe has been made through him and from him and in him all things have their existence” (Col 1:16). All things were made by him and without him nothing was made. Christ is the summation and totality of the creative gift. Christ came on this earth as the creative gift in human form. He is the total creative gift. He is the total creative intent. Christ personifies the creative gift. That creative gift is denied, frustrated, oppressed, rejected, deformed, destroyed to the point in this passion where he personifies the creative gift frustrated. He becomes the “degraded one”. He personifies the anger of the frustrated Creator. He personifies the violence and apathy of the poor. The mission of Christ is to change the “degraded one” into the “Risen one”. There is resurrection in the smallest iota of degradation removed and there is Christ’s Passion in the least iota of degradation suffered. Christ’s passion, death and resurrection is the encapsulation of the total process. Because frustration of the creative gift is the essence of degradation it must be that anger is the key emotion.

Can this anger be the drive to remove the degradation, an anger guided and controlled by the powerful dynamic prudence of the Holy Spirit? Could it be that from within the degradation comes the power to change, to remove; that cure and sickness have the same affinity as snake poison and serum? The power emerging from degradation is anger. Could it be that this anger realized and directed at the condition of the “degraded one” will attack that degradation until it is destroyed and the anger spent and the “Risen One” revealed?

After twenty-five years living in the Belfast area I recognize in myself and the people around me a high degree of anger. This anger is inclined to feed on itself through violence and apathy. It has been seen and experienced as a negative, destructive force. In seeking to use this force positively and constructively a number of things has happened.

In late 1976, three Catholic businessmen set up the Flax Trust. They chose the name Flax because of the great linen tradition of the Ardoyne area and because the main entrance to Ardoyne is Flax Street. Flax as a title was available to both communities: Protestant and Catholic. In setting up the original board of directors they made sure that members came from both sides of the religious divide and that there should be local Ardoyne representation. With over 50% unemployment throughout Ardoyne and over 80% unemployment among young

people, the Flax Trust realized it had a formidable task economically. The inter-community strife presented a major problem of reconciliation. Realizing, however, that the gap between the Protestant and Catholic communities was mainly socio-economic, the Trust set about reconciliation through economic activity.

They began looking for space in which development could take place. This space had to be of easy access to the people of Ardoyne, and they began to research ways and means of generating the economic activity. A professional assessment and report on the area resulted in a basic plan of action. A development agency was set up and a community organization founded. The agency would be a company registered under the Provident Societies Act with board members drawn from the Flax Trust, some specialists and local community representatives. A local community association would organize the local support for any economic action without which support any initiative would be still-born.

The Trust then acquired a vandalized factory, the Beltex, and a linen mill, the Brookfield. The purchase of these properties was organized with the help of a bank loan. The Brookfield Mill is a five storey building of some 150,000 sq. ft. A draft proposal for the Brookfield was commissioned and in 1980 a five year development program began and this has resulted in:

- 1) Appointment of a Project Manager.
- 2) 100,000 sq. ft. of industrial space has been redeveloped.
- 3) The establishment of a Youth Training Workshop for over eighty young people.
- 4) Twenty businesses have been established in the project.
- 5) Over one hundred and fifty people are now employed. (The project is integrated community-wise both in the matter of businesses and employees.)
- 6) An on-site Design and Market Research Studio provides a service both to workshops and other businesses in the project.
- 7) A display and merchandising outlet for businesses within the project.
- 8) An administrative and secretarial service.
- 9) An Information Technology Unit.
- 10) An Employment Agency.
- 11) An administration area with business clinics.
- 12) Canteen facilities and Catering Courses.
- 13) Management Courses.
- 14) Incubator units to sprout new businesses.
- 15) Consultancy service for the development of similar projects.
- 16) Yet to be completed is the Performing Arts Centre and Lounge.
- 17) Sheltered Workshop for the Handicapped.

Besides carrying out the refurbishment of the Brookfield Mill and ensuring that viable employment creating businesses are attracted to the project, the Agency is gradually building a development team. This team has multiple skills in accountancy, marketing, management, training, social organization, economics, product and project identification and development. This team must be able not only to service the development but also communicate to others the necessary management skills to develop their own skills. This team should itself be a business.

To date the Brookfield Project has cost over £800,000, more than half of which has come out of the public purse, the rest has been the responsibility of the Flax Trust. The bank overdraft of the Trust is now in the region of £250,000, which by agreement will begin to service this year at a

rate of £40,000 a year. What the Trust hasn't borrowed it has begged. It has benefitted by support from English, American and Irish charitable trusts and foundations. Many private citizens have helped from the millionaire's cheque for thousands to the widow's mite on a postal order. The support of hierarchy and clergy in Ireland and England has been especially encouraging. The support of my own Passionist family from the General in Rome to the Provincial in Mount Argus and the local Superior in Ardoyne has been a critical element of personal survival and by extension the survival of the project.

The Community Association has developed an information program which includes a monthly newspaper. A neighbourhood communication scheme seeks to heal some of the wounds in a severely traumatized community. There are now over 2,000 members in the Community Association and it is gradually becoming better known and more effective. Initially it focused all its attention on unemployment. It now sees as its brief the whole socio-economic and cultural life of its community and is developing its own approach to community economics.

The Flax Trust has taken the first baby steps in reconciliation through economic activity. It sees this reconciliation as not merely between Catholic and Protestant, but between those who have capacity and those who have none. When Christ said: "The poor you have always with you" (Jn.12:8), he did not intend that we should therefore not bother about the poor. He meant that those with capacity would always need to bring that capacity to the service of those without capacity and thereby be mutually redemptive. It may be that the poor need the rich but the rich, even more desperately, need the poor. It is the Mission of Christ to change the "degraded one" into the "Risen one". The Church can have no other mission. Can we?

THE PASSION OF JESUS IN HEALTH CARE

Rev. Guy Sionneau, C.P.

I. THE HEALTH FIELD

Seventeen years of presence and work as a nurse in public hospitals in France (thirteen years) and in the Third World (four years) have allowed me to penetrate into a complex world where there is an intermingling of personal and collective relations; a world where radical life questions crop up (on its meaning and its becoming, and its possibilities), as well as questions on suffering, death, and God. Questions that converge on man in all his dimensions:

- man who is sick, diminished, thrown off balance, who struggles to live or not to die;
- the minister who, day after day, faces the sickness, the suffering of the other in dialogue, by alleviating the suffering or not, by a simple presence and sometimes in discouragement, revolt or rejection.

It is in this field that I live my Passionist Religious Vocation and my priesthood amid a very diversified and structured group of workers of both sexes, who are conscious not only of accomplishing a professional task as a public service, but also concerned with earning a living for themselves and their families. Sharing their condition of life and work, in the manner of the Worker Priests who in the Church of France are one of the components of the Working Mission, makes me discover ever more each day the great distance that there is between this world of Health and the faith in Jesus Christ, and the urgent need to be present in it. This concern for inculturation which characterizes the mission of the worker priests in their work place is a primary condition for announcing the Good News. This “being with” without privilege or special consideration allows us to meet men and women in the depth and the concrete of their existence, where the Word can take root when “the time has come.”

To support and verify such a priestly lifestyle in working conditions in the world of health, it is impossible to do without a Church reflection: among priest workers and among committed Christians so engaged in the mission. Passionist Religious Life cannot escape this deepening when we no longer want to be content with “saying” a Word from the Cross, but to “live” a life of the Cross amid unbelief, indifference, in the daily face to face with suffering, sharing the same conditions of life and work. That is why the research of the past ten years of the Passionists of Europe mingled in various ways to popular classes of our industrialized nations, permits us to compare our life experiences and to question ourselves on our personal and community life, to deepen theologically and spiritually the content of this “Proclamation of the Passion,” of this “Memoria Passionis” which is our particular responsibility in the Church.

II. “REMEMBERING THE PASSION”

The “Memoria Passionis” gives to our Passionist being and acting a limitless depth. In contact with the human realities of today, we cannot be content to evoke an event of the past, essential though it may be, nor even to meditate on it or preach it, but we must take to ourselves all the energy that it contains and translate it into action according to our responsibilities, our commitments, our mission, our solidarities.

For my part, I try to translate this energy of the Passion, this “Founding Memento” in the world of health, and at various levels.

1. To become naturalized in a milieu

I do not think that we can dissociate the Passion of Christ from the Passion of people. If the Passion of Christ is the brilliant sign of God’s love, as Saint Paul of the Cross said so well, it must have a meaning, today as yesterday in peoples’ lives and most particularly where they are diminished, impoverished, hurt. The field of suffering, in the hospitals or outside, is the place of the passion of persons. My presence in such a milieu is not that of a chaplain whose essential duty is to visit, accompany, dialogue, administer the sacraments of the Church. My presence is that of a nurse, similar to that of all the other nurses, of a health worker with the same rights and the same obligations of any other nurse. The religious or ecclesiastical personality ends up by taking second place. One must enter progressively into this world of health, discover its language, its men and women who work there, live at their rhythm to share their preoccupations and their hopes: to become one of them who is not content merely to “pass” but who “stays”. With the others, as the others - even if my identity of priest and religious shows through – I want to live day after day this ordinariness of the work and the life of the team, this proximity to the sick, this confrontation with suffering and death.

2. To be Servant

Christ’s kenosis expresses well to what lengths we must go to reach those who are marked by suffering. “To be servant” in the world of health is:

- to answer to the multiple needs of the sick, to alleviate, to hold back or to suppress suffering, so that they may be welcomed and treated with respect and dignity. Service to suffering man passes through the professional gesture, efficient and quick. The technicality of the gesture is important, even if it is far from defining the totality of the nurse-patient relationship. A silent presence is often needed. To be servant professionally and humanly, even to recognizing in the other cancerous, alcoholic, impaired, abandoned elderly...the face of Him who said: “I was sick and you visited me” (Mt 25:36).
- to answer to the many calls of a team of ministers (medical or para-medical) that one ends up by knowing in depth, to try to resolve personal or collective conflicts, to shed light on confused situations, to help men and women to be happy. A patient companionship, discreet and welcoming, often in the humdrum of the daily life, to help the ministers in search of truth.
- to accept to remain on the professional hierarchical scale more at the level of the daily work of the nurse than at the level of organization or decision making.

3. Struggle for Life

- Against suffering

Suffering is a “less”, an evil that the minister cannot accept passively nor solely with compassion. To fight against the suffering that dominates so many men, women and children in the hospitals is to prepare to “be better”, and to “live better”, often to live differently. “All must have life and have it abundantly.” In suffering, the sick lives a profound crisis, a crisis of the whole person. They live a crisis of personal identity: the body becomes a thing; an

organ crisis with regard to the past: “before my sickness I could work eight to ten hours a day, today the least effort wears me out and what will I do tomorrow?”; a crisis of communication with others: “I no longer go to others, it is they who come to visit me.” As nurse, I enter into this experience of suffering sick so that life may blossom as much as possible. Suffering is revolting, it is a harsh reality that marks man deeply, causes him to disintegrate in all his molecules, obliges him to struggle not to be crushed even if he does not escape anguish, despair, or the temptation to suicide. This is a call to me to support a worn out, crumbling will that is ready to give up: to give back a sense of hope.

- For better working conditions

The daily companionship with the health workers obliges one to be attentive to a whole lifestyle within the hospital structure so that the rights of each one and of each category be safeguarded. For me, within a union organization, it means to do everything so that the conditions of work, hygiene, salary, are transformed progressively for a greater respect of the worker. But it also means that I must see to it that the structures of health care be truly at the service of the sick and not for experimentation or profit.

It seems to me that this responsibility for “life” and its quality, for the sick and for my colleagues flows directly from the Event of the Death and Resurrection which means basically that Life always has the last word over death, all deaths.

4. To speak a word of Faith

The world of health is far from the Church. In sharing the harsh reality of professional work in the health field, the schedules, the weight of the hierarchy, the need for efficiency and precision, the proximity to suffering, the bluntness of commitment to a union; and in facing the radical human questions (genetic manipulation, indiscriminate experimentations, and other ethical problems), I can measure the distance that separates this world from faith in Jesus Christ and a life in the Church. The traditional focal points no longer exist (prayer, the sacraments...) and one must lean solely on the realities of life and work in order to say something of the Gospel, to accompany one or the other in the slow discovery of faith and sacramental life.

This priestly responsibility can only be lived; in the kenosis, attentive to the manifestations of the Spirit who precedes us in the lives of each one: “In the midst of you stands the one you do not know” (Jn 1:26). If this world is foreign to the Church, I can vouch for the fact that the Kingdom is already in the midst of it. It is present in the solidarity that is expressed among the workers, in the patient, human and sensitive presence of the nurses with the sick: “all that you will do to the least of mine...” (cfr. Mt 25:40). I must receive all the strata of this life to present it to the Lord in prayer and in the Eucharist and combine with it the very life of God.

CONCLUSION

These main elements of a “REMEMBERING” in the world of health care define a practice of liberation of which the PASSION OF JESUS is the basis and the starting point. Through and in this Event which is really the “most astounding work of the love of God”, I can today stress three essential convictions:

- All “liberation of the other” supposes a personal commitment in the manner of the servant in the kenosis, to share a human condition in humiliation and even in suffering.
- All “liberation of the other” supposes a permanent struggle against all the structural or individual forces of evil that can disfigure the faces of people and interfere with their most fundamental rights.
- All “liberation of the other” can only be achieved in the logic of the love that alone can sustain a gift of self (cfr. Jn 15:13) so that each “person have life and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10).

Such a practice of liberation of the brother is profoundly liberating for he who tries to live it. It cannot be reduced to a social, economic or political liberation for it is born in the very heart of contemplation of the Cross, where the love of God and the love of neighbor is expressed. At this necessary level of contemplation, the mystical dimension allows us to relativize all the ideological or political absolutes. It is only in the permanent “coming and going” between the Crucified-Resurrected Lord, the Only Living One, and the multiple crucified of today, powerless and faceless, who seek to live and to be recognized, that we can open the way to a new liberty for ourselves and for others.

At the end of this testimony, necessarily incomplete, I would like to raise some wider questions. This “MEMENTO PASSIONIS” that I am trying to translate into action and into life in the health field, even if it remains limited, has certainly sensitized me to the multiple situations of suffering, of alienation that so many men, women and children are subjected to today. Truly, the passion of men, more and more cosmic, prevents us from reducing the Passion of Christ to an historical fact of the past. Truly, we cannot be content to reduce this “Remembering” that structures our vocation, to the meditation of the Passion or to a preaching of the Word of the Cross. We hear the cries of people; they rise from the northern hemisphere and from the southern hemisphere; they jostle our “religious well-being” and call our responsibility into question. We will have to answer at the last judgement (cfr. Mt 25) if we have sought to achieve in each of our brothers marred by suffering, the face of Jesus so that they may receive all the newness of the Kingdom. As Passionists, how can we remain absent or outside these urgent combats that have to be waged against famine, unemployment, racism, torture, drugs, child labor or exploitation? As Passionists, how can we be content to remain solely compassionate each time that a natural disaster destroys whole regions with all their inhabitants? As Passionists, how can we not pronounce a prophetic word directly from the Cross of Christ, each time that injustice, violation of human dignity and rights are manifested in the world?

Many of our Brother Passionists in our different Provinces are variously and profoundly committed in situations of suffering and under-development. In their hearts and in their flesh they live this “Remembering”. We have to receive, make known and reflect on what they are living. Their missionary experiences, often profound and lasting, are the vital places of renewal and deepening of our Passionist Charism. The authenticity and the credibility of our vocation is measured by the quality of our life-style, our prayer and the Word that we are bound to proclaim. It is also measured by the quality of our commitments or the stances that we can take to try to accept the great challenges of our times. “TO KEEP ALIVE OF THE PASSION OF JESUS” cannot be lived above, on the fringes of, or outside of the history of suffering humanity, wounded in its dignity of sons of God, the history of the crucified ones, of the history “of the PASSION OF PEOPLES”.

HOSPITAL MINISTRY: MEMORIES OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

Fr. Francis X. Keenan, C.P.

“We are aware that the Passion of Christ continues in this world until He comes in glory. Therefore, we share in the joys and sorrows of our contemporaries as we journey through life toward our Father. 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.” (Const. #3)

In hospitals, where a majority of persons in our country die, Christ’s passion is cloned in the physical, emotional, and financial agonies of the sick and suffering. Clothing, belongings, home, family, and job are all stripped away. Cancerous bedsores rival any scourging. Crosses of diseased heart, lung, liver, and pancreas are all routinely carried. Patients are grafted to IV poles with needle nails. The rasping gasp of lingering death is commonplace.

“Our vocation as Passionists prompts us to familiarize ourselves thoroughly with the Passion of Christ, both in history and in the lives of people today, for the Passion of Christ and the sufferings of His Mystical Body form one mystery of salvation.” (Const. #65)

I have kept a daily diary of my experiences in hospital ministry: my perceptions, my reactions, my reflections. Blank verse has become my favorite process of developing these personal “negatives” -- candid human landscapes -- within a literary frame: a subjective verbal Polaroid.

To the eye of Christian faith, sharing in the sufferings of a member of the People of God is sharing in the sufferings of Jesus.

The following sketches portray patients, families, and staff encountered in a moment of unanticipated stress, in an instant of psychological nakedness, in a scene of unrehearsed drama.

The most rewarding encounters of hospital ministry are to share with another a moment of redemptive pain and suffering, or a moment of joy, fulfilling today the Paschal Mystery of Jesus’ passion and resurrection.

Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them... "The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here and keep watch with me." He went a little further on, threw himself downward on the ground, and prayed. "My Father, if it is possible, take this cup of suffering from me! Yet, not what I want, but what you want."

(Mt 26:36-42)

CANCER

Construction worker, George
His bulging biceps preaching
Rewards of manual work
Sits on the edge of his bed

"It hit me yesterday, Father"
Mellow, baritone voice
Slight European accent
I guess France or Spain

"It's like a ton of bricks
The doctor says I've got it
The Cancer! It came so quick!"
A tone of hate: "That ... Cancer!"

"One year is all I've got!
I'm only forty-nine!
That's why I asked for you"
His eyes contract ... then close

"My doctor says: 'Go home!'
But I can hardly walk"
Points his finger away
"From here to nurse's desk!"

"All through the war untouched!
Been healthy all my life!
Never abused my body!
Never smoked or drank!"

"Never ran around!
Never in a hospital!"
George cradles his head in palms
"Until three months ago!"

"And Anne! My wife! Poor Anne!"

My little Steve and Annie!
Who'll take care of them?"
Without a sound, George weeps

"And now, my job is gone!
Does God allow this? Why?"
I squeeze his shoulder firm
No phrase of hope seems apt

"Pardonez moi" he says
His voice begins to crack
George rises to stand, unsteady
Limps to the bathroom door

I stand and wait and pray
Search for words of strength
Yet, in my deepest heart
I crave the power of God!

Jesus was still speaking when a crowd arrived, led by Judas, one of the twelve disciples. He came up to Jesus and kissed him. But Jesus said, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you betray the Son of Man?" (Lk 22:47)

THE ANNIVERSARY

Dying Steve lies naked
Among a crowd of strangers
Obese and sixty-five
Massive heart attack

Doctor shakes his head
"His heart has stopped again"
Our Trauma Team has lost
Technology's limits passed

I face Steve's wife, Estelle
A fragile, brittle shell
She scans my face for hope
"Your Steve has gone to God"

Estelle denies her ears
"He sat alone on the porch
While I was fixing supper
If only God would hear us!"

She takes my hand, a squeeze
“June twelfth, our anniversary
It will be forty years
It’s all we had to live for

“Oh, Father, could we pray?
For Steve? That he lives till June?
Please? Please?” Her eyes are prayers
We bow our heads to God

Share familiar words
“Our Father, who art in heaven ..
Thy will be done on earth ...
Deliver us from evil ...”

My lips attempt to pray
But deep within my heart
I sense Another’s voice
“You barter with My Prayer?”

But Peter answered, “Man, I don’t know what you are talking about!” At once, while Peter was speaking, a rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter, and Peter remembered that the Lord had said to him: “Before the rooster crows tonight, you will three times say that you do not know me.” Peter went out and wept bitterly. (Lk 22:60-62)

THE LAST CHRISTMAS TREE

Newspapers littered cement front steps
Her curious neighbors phoned police
The Widow Brown was always so tidy

County Police broke open locks
Discovered widow ... rigor mortis
Reclined against her bathroom door

An only daughter came and talked
We sat within our Family Room
“Oh! What a lonely way to die!

“We argued during Christmas shopping!
I didn't decorate her tree!
Never even called her up!

“And now she's dead and gone forever!
We'll never trim a Christmas tree!
I never got to say 'I'm sorry'!”

I touched the daughter's arm and thought:
Life's too brief to carry a grudge ...
And tomorrow night is New Year's Eve ...

Pilate called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, and said to them, “You have brought this man to me and said that he was misleading the people. Now, I have examined him here in your presence, and I have not found him guilty of any crimes you accuse him of ... So, I will have him whipped.” (Lk 23:16)

It's Karen's fifteenth birthday
She hastens towards MacDonald's
A rendezvous with friends

Decides on a shortcut path
Through a forest preserve
In late September twilight

The rapist came out of nowhere
Muzzled her mouth with his hand
And pressed a knife to her throat

When Karen fought to scream
He hit her hard with his fist
Almost knocked her out

Said he'd kill her unless...
Pinned and tried to bind her
Her memory: fear ... and pain

Sharp stones that cut her back
Clouds of swarming gnats
The dust ... his weight ... her shame

Mother

Unleashed maternal rage
"She never had sex before!
My little baby! So young!

"It wasn't dark at seven!
Why didn't someone help?
Oh, chaplain! What an animal!

Father

Stoic, speechless, divorced
The father slumped in his chair
Spread-eagled feet outstretched
A brooding stare in his gaze
Of anger? Rage? Despair?
He kept avoiding my eyes

Boy Friend

Glenn sat alone, sixteen
Almost trance-like state

Reflecting unshared thoughts

His look was vacant, hollow
“How long do we have to wait?
Phsst ... popped a Pepsi tab

Policeman

He talked at length to assure
How gently he'd question Karen
“That this won't happen again”

But later shared with me
“They'll say that she provoked him
The punk will get off free!”

Chaplain

I ached with Karen's pain
(My youngest niece's name)
With hatred towards her rapist

I gently took her hand
She didn't pull it back
“Oh, Father! Thanks for staying!”

Karen

Her lips were swollen, purple
Both legs seen torn with scratches
Exposed beneath her gown

“What a birthday present!”
She glanced away in tears
“The only one I got ...”

At noon the whole country was covered with darkness, which
lasted three hours. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud shout, “My
God! My God! Why did you abandon me?” (Mk:15:33)

MERCY!

Last night a grace was mine
Merici came to die
From nearby nursing home

Our doctors tried their best
But heart and lungs were gone
With ninety-three long years

Merici's hour was near
No relative was found
Without a single friend

An echo from the past
"My God! My God! Oh, why
Have you forsaken me?"

Merici and I alone
My privileged place just then
Her hand so clammy cold

Heart rate first read ninety ...
Then the monitor's descent
To fifty ... down to naught

Merici's trip to God
Unmourned, unshared, unseen
Except for prayers by me

"Be kind and loving, Lord!
Forgive her any sins!
Embrace her twice ... for me!"

I prayed a happy thought:
Our middle name is "Weakness"
But Thine is truly "Mercy!"

Standing close to Jesus' cross were his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there; so he said to his mother, "He is your son" (Jn 19:25-2).

ERIC

Old Gramps, at almost ninety
Collapsed at home tonight

Just watching evening news

The paramedics brought him
Gramps never had a prayer
Our Trauma Team was helpless

His grandson, Eric, tall
Athletic, lean, and blond
Alert outside the door

Suspects the final verdict
Before I shake my head
And squares his shoulders back

“My relatives are here
But I must tell my Granny”
We enter Family Room

Wide eyes of fear surround us
A blink at Roman collar
They sense the worst at once

But Eric seeks out Granny
Squats down and takes her hands
His gaze, a look of love

His voice is low and warm
“Yes, Granny, Gramps is dead”
Some others gasp and moan

But Eric doesn't heed
Upon his tender shoulder
He cradles Granny's head

The words come slow but sure
A verbal lullaby
“Now, Gramps is better off

“With eighty-nine good years
He's earned his time of rest
In heaven now forever

“I bet he's got their bees
Producing better honey
It must be easier there”

He touches Granny's cheek
And brushes silver strands
“His crowd is back together

“Both Uncle Chet and Ralph
Their penny-ante poker
He missed those Friday nights

“Now, no more pain or pills
In all those little bottles
You lined on the bathroom sink”

He kisses Granny’s brow
She quietly starts to weep
So, Eric hugs her warmly

My ministry: to sit
In silence, thanking God
For grandsons like an Eric

They crucified Jesus and then divided his clothes among them by throwing
dice. After that they sat there and watched him...” (Mt 27:35).

THE NAKED VIRGIN

A crowded suburban mall
An elderly brother and sister
Together Christmas shopping

A twilight dusk had fallen
They stood on the yellow line
Awaiting cars to pass

She never knew what hit her
A van behind her back
Its side-view mirror extended

Her brother held her head
His sleeves all soaked with blood
She probably died in his arms

Our paramedics brought her
At first a feeble heartbeat
But shortly...nothing at all

Much massive cranial trauma
Her purple cheeks and eyes
So swollen beyond recognition

Between remorse and tears
Her brother drops the bomb
“Oh, Father! My sister’s a nun!”

I enter Trauma Room
Move slowly through the team
To bless her skin with oil

A shameful way to die!
God's consecrated virgin!
All naked to all the world!

Monitors, bag mask, tubing
Syringes, needles, tape
A plastic-metal tomb!

I want to scream and explode
"Out! All you strangers! Out!
Fold a sheet across her!

"Now! Get her brother in!
And let us pray alone!
Let her die in peace!

No way...there rarely is
E.R. deaths lack warmth
No family, friends...no heart

I stand aside and pray
Straining to will a heart beat
Desiring the power of God

The doctor shrugs my way
"I think we've tried enough"
So clinical, frigid: "Call it!"

One of the soldiers plunged his spear into Jesus' side, and at once blood and water - poured out. There is a scripture that says, "People will look at him whom they pierced" (Jn 19:34-27).

VOYEUR!

Our Trauma Room
For critical cases
Door's ajar

Lo! Behold!

Female patient
Sleeping soundly
Sheet thrown off
Starkly naked

I enter softly
Silk golden hair
Breasts and legs
Perfectly formed

“Priest Voyeur!”
That inner voice...
I gather the sheet
Cover her body

Guess her age
“Twenty-one”
Stepping back
Stand and ponder

A single blemish
Two hours before
Plastic tubing

An ambulance brought her
Overdosed
Suicidal
Angel Dust!

The soldiers led Jesus away...A large crowd of people followed him; among them were some women who were weeping and wailing for him. Jesus turned to them and said, “Women of Jerusalem! Don’t cry for me, but for yourselves and your children. For the days are coming when people will say ‘How lucky are the women who never had children, who never bore babies, who never nursed them!’” (Lk 23:26-29)

OVERTIME

Our Viewing Room is stifling
The air-conditioning down?
Or is it just my mood?

Jerry Mansion was twenty
Rugged muscles bulging
Belying fact of death

“Massive inner trauma”
Tuck the sheet at his chin
Whisper a final prayer

Family Room is crowded
Co-workers, relatives, friends
Each one is stunned...unreal

Here's Jerry's giant foreman
Grimy, sweaty, nervous
Tried to explain what happened

“We're working overtime
Installing sewer pipes
This cowboy's roars on by

He never had a chance
“Damn! Jerry died like that!”
A snap of fingers, “Wham!”

Now Jerry's wife, Michelle
In total disbelief
Her eyes are wide in shock

She clasps her baby son
Six months old, her link
With living world and sanity

"We couldn't even say
Good-bye! He went so quickly!
And, Father! Only twenty!

"Our life was just beginning!
Now what for me and Brian?
Oh, Father! It's not fair!"

It's well past midnight now
I kneel alone reflecting
Three lives touching mine

Handsome, dark-haired father
Called home before his time...
Clueless orphan wailing...

Tears of young madonna...
But now, the dirge is mine
"Oh, Father! It's not fair"

Suddenly, the Lord himself stood among the disciples and said to them,
"Peace be with you. Why are you alarmed? Look at my hands and my feet,
and see that it is I myself. Feel me, and you will know, for a ghost doesn't
have flesh and bones, as you can see I have" (Lk 24: 36-40).

SLOWLY

Kay dueled with death

Lymph cells grown wild
In twenty-third year soon
 She lies and waits
 “Admit to Hold”
 Her fourth since end of June
 High classic cheeks
 Though hair now gone
 All luminous eyes aglow
 I touch Kay’s hand
 Enclose her palm
 So clammy, moist and cold

Kay smiles at me
Through eyes of pain
“Hi! How’s your writing been?”
 Unselfish heart
 Involved, concerned
 Kay pinches nerve within
 An artist, Kay
 We’d talked before
 Of style, of form, of flow
 I weigh my words
 “It’s coming...but
 “Right now it’s very slow”

Kay’s voice is soft
“Now...everything
“Comes slowly for me too”
 I wince with shame
 Madonna saint
 Authentic, piercing, true
 Amazing Grace!
 Redemptive Word!
 That spoke and set us free!
 On Friday last
 With graceful zest
 Kay danced a waltz with Thee!

On that same day two of Jesus’ followers were going to a village named Emmaus...Then Jesus said to them, “How foolish you are, how slow to believe everything the prophets said! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then to enter his glory?” (Lk 24: 13-25)

EAST TO WEST

I catch him by surprise
Outside an elevator
A pediatric fellow
From India, great with kids

He greets me with a smile
I warmly shake his hand
“And how is Tommy Cross?”
A three-year-old last night

Admitted through E.R.
Fell eight basement steps
Now, Peds Intensive Care
Prognosis very grim

“Subdural hematoma”
Massive cranial bleed
Surgery not an option
A respirator life

My doctor drops his smile
And shakes his head: “He’s dying”
The elevator opens
There’s just the two of us

“Yet sadder still,” I venture
“The boy’s an only child”
He stares above my head
“You men of Western world

“You think it terribly tragic
When younger people die
As though our God is vengeful
By snatching children’ souls

“The Eastern world esteems
A youthful death a grace”
The elevator stops
Pediatric Ward

He bars the door an instant
“God reaches down to earth
Embracing to his heart
A chosen, favorite child”

He smiles his easy smile
Expansive, brilliant white
The doors begin to close
A grateful “Thank You, doctor!”

A first for me today
Ecumenical service
Within an elevator
Wise East enlightens West!

Mary Magdalene thought Jesus was the gardener, so she said to him, “If you took him away, sir, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned toward him and said in Hebrew, “Rabboni” (Jn 20:14-16).

GIRLS

We’re strangers all
Clustering close
Our voices mute
An elevator

Descending ride
From cafeteria

OB-GYNE floor
Doors slide open
One weary male
 Both hands are full
 A shopping bag
 Bouquet of roses

He hesitates
Awkward moment
Then squeezes in
 Stocky short
 Swarthy features
 Receding hair

Candescent eyes
I risk a chance
“Boy or girl?”
 He turns his head
 Radiant smile
 Through roses...”Girls!”

Surprises! “Twins?”
His eyebrows rise
With pride: “No! Triplets!”
 Creative Word!
 “Congratulations!”
 “Would you believe!”

The Lobby Exit
Joyful sharing
Friends with friends!

The most rewarding encounters of hospital ministry are to share with another a moment of redemptive pain and suffering...or a moment of paschal joy...a memory of Jesus' passion and resurrection.

STAUROS -- U.S.A.

Rev. Flavian Dougherty, C.P.

In 1973, when Stauros was founded, our beloved Superior General, Father Theodore Foley, C.P., wrote: "The foundation of Stauros is an undertaking without precedent in the history of the Congregation, and it is true progress on our part and greatly advances the fulfillment of our mission in the Church."

It has been my experience as the Director of the U.S. Office of Stauros that this is truly the case. My particular, and in some ways, unique experiences are attributable to the foundation of Stauros with its emphasis on human suffering and its ecumenical outreach, as well as the generous support by both U.S. Provinces.

Our General Regulations specify the three areas that best describe the apostolic work of our Stauros Office:

1. "Give a special place to the ministry of the word;
2. "Prefer to serve the poor and those who have to endure dehumanized conditions;"
3. "Opt for apostolates that are community-based" (Reg. 28).

1. "GIVE A SPECIAL PLACE TO THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD"

We have conducted four International, Ecumenical Congresses on various aspects of the "continuing Passion." In these the subject of suffering and its relationship to the Mystery of Redemption has been treated in Sacred Scripture, Theology, Ethics, Anthropology and Pastoral Care. In each of these Congresses, the speakers and participants (many of whom being in conditions of suffering personally) manifested what is written in our Regulations: "We have a special preference for poorer peoples...helping this society, which has need of being rescued from alienation...injustices, to discover the real meaning of the liberation brought by Christ Crucified...promoting the integral development of those persons whose conditions, hopes and circumstances manifest their poverty" (Reg. 32).

From the outset of the Stauros Office in the U.S., we have been distributing the scholarly Stauros Bulletins and Bibliographies to various institutions, professors, clergy and students. These in turn have generated articles, theses, various programs, lectures, sermons, etc., by their recipients.

Two of our Congresses have been published in book form and all of our special programs have been put into print and tape recorded. These materials are provided for all of our Passionist communities in the U.S., many religious organizations working with the poor and sold to others on request.

In 1982 we began a small, bi-monthly publication entitled 'Stauros Notebook.' Each issue addresses, in a popularized style, a particular aspect of human suffering "to serve the poor and those who have to endure dehumanized conditions." Our mailing list is approximately 2500, reaching families and organizations in all parts of the U.S. as well as in other countries.

In several instances we have had to reprint hundreds of specific issues, or give permission to reprint, for institutions or organizations desiring to distribute the same to their members.

A Resource Center at Catholic Theological Union (CTU)

Coupled with the dissemination of books, papers and tapes, our Office is a resource center for the faculty and student body at CTU, the largest Catholic seminary in the U.S. with 375 students. These include students from twenty-five religious communities, from other religious denominations, lay men and women, and many citizens and missionaries from other parts of the world.

We have a select library of books, papers, slides, audio and video tapes, as well as up-to-date materials and resource references on the "Passion of Christ continuing in this world." Added to this, we have at our service the library at CTU under the expert supervision of Kenneth O'Malley, C.P.

Extended Preaching Opportunities

By reason of this identification with suffering persons and their causes, I have numerous requests to speak at churches, Catholic and non-Catholic, various organizations, religious and secular, to give retreats for special groups, particularly disabled persons and their families, to address national organizations, and to conduct workshops for hospital personnel, and others in various forms of service for people with special problems.

As a result of these contacts through our programs, publications and preaching, we have a voluminous correspondence from individuals in suffering conditions and groups or organizations from all parts of the country seeking needed resources, support and advice.

2. "PREFER TO SERVE...THOSE WHO HAVE TO ENDURE DEHUMANIZED CONDITIONS"

This brings me to describe a unique personal apostolic opportunity in the context of Stauros. Allow me to tell the story in detail.

An after-effect of the Notre Dame Congress was a request that Stauros conduct a program at the United Nations in New York. In 1980, Luis Dolan, C.P., of the Movement For A Better World, and I, on behalf of Stauros, did so. It was designed as a preparation for the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) declared by the U.N. for 1981. We engaged disabled experts from different countries and backgrounds as our major speakers, as well as key U.N. Officials, including the Papal Delegate to the U.N. Over 250 attendees, a large proportion disabled, representing every type of disability, were present. It was the first time such a gathering ever appeared at the U.N., or had the opportunity to address the officials there. Indeed, it was an embarrassment to these officials as the day approached, since the facilities we were to use, such as the speakers' platform, the auditorium, bathroom and dining rooms were not accessible for those in wheelchairs. We had to instruct the officials and their workers on what make-shift changes had to be made to enable the program to proceed.

Through the preparations for this event, the work at the program itself, and the follow-up contacts with the disabled people and their organizations, I came to realize how little I knew, and the general population of “able-bodied” people know about the conditions disabled people must endure every day of their lives, and their frustration in not being treated as equals in society. This I found was also true of most clerics and religious, who for the most part while having a rightly developed sense of charity, are not attuned to the justice issues regarding such persons. We have absorbed the same false attitudes as the general population. Indeed, these attitudes have been reflected in Church laws which have excluded such persons from the clerical state and most religious communities.

The disabled persons I came to know at that time, and subsequently, are not the passive types who willingly accept this situation of being kept in an excluded, unjust state of existence. They raised my consciousness to the fact that throughout the world, whether in first-world countries, or third-world countries, they are subject to misunderstanding, neglect, discrimination, alienation, exclusion and injustices – a fact most of us constantly overlook. Because of the exclusion, misinterpretation of Scriptural texts, the ‘pity syndrome,’ and the lack of effort on behalf of their rights, large numbers of Catholics have left the Church, and many more are among the “de-christianized groups.” Our Constitutions (n. 71) direct us to give special attention to these persons.

Disabled persons constitute the world’s largest minority: 500,000,000. In the U.S., one of every eight persons has a permanent disability. Disability makes no distinctions of race, color, religion, income or place in society, although the largest numbers are among the poorest of the poor. These numbers are increasing through wars, malnutrition, pollution, drugs, accidents, etc. In most countries they have no rights in law. It was not until 1973 in the U.S. that the Civil Rights Law for disabled people was enacted, and these laws are only minimally enforced at this time in providing adequate health care, appropriate education, housing, rights to jobs, and accessible public transportation.

When the Stauros Office was transferred to CTU in Chicago in 1981, I hardly had my bags unpacked when, by another act of God, not dissimilar to Paul’s being struck on his way to Damascus, I was immediately ‘forced’ into association with other disabled activists. The first was Millie Henke, a woman in a wheelchair, who had been employed for years by our own Passionists of Holy Cross Province, and was at that time the Registrar at CTU. Millie pleaded with me to hold a program on behalf of disabled people at the school, because, as she put it: “here, they don’t even know that this is the IYDP, and they have no idea what disability is all about.”

As I had done in the New York area, I cast about in Chicago to obtain representative disabled people for the program, and, as before, I found myself with some of the most skilled, activist disabled persons who not only participated most eagerly in the program (the first-ever that they recalled for clergy and seminarians), but also immediately co-opted me for other such programs and their local activities in procuring their civil rights, such as joining them in meetings with government officials and in public demonstrations.

At about the same time, because of my interest in the causes of disabled people, I was asked for some assistance by the Sisters of Mercy who conduct two large institutions for developmentally impaired persons. This was another unforeseen grace, enabling me to play a small part in their

work and to learn a great deal about this form of disability, as well as the problems their parents and families face in obtaining proper care, education, etc., for their mentally impaired members.

Another 'sign' in these series of events pointing the way for Stauros to pursue this apostolate was the following: Millie Henke, the visible representative of the disabled world here at CTU, died on January 1, 1982, the day the IYDP ended. Immediately after that, another disabled woman from my newly found disabled community came rolling in her wheelchair to work with me, and has been the disabled witness since in this exclusive clerical environment. She happens to be one of the most knowledgeable persons concerning disabilities, as well as a leading activist for the rights of persons with disabilities in Chicago and the whole country.

Reverse Evangelization

The reason why I have detailed at length this personal experience is to reflect on what I consider essential in terms of speaking about suffering, suffering people, and the sufferings of Christ. WE MUST FIRST BE EVANGELIZED OURSELVES BY THOSE WHO SUFFER. All that happened to me was, and is, a remarkable 'reverse evangelization', and it is still going on.

With the assistance of my Passionist confreres on the faculty here, we have brought to CTU disabled persons for special programs to sensitize the faculty and students on how disabled persons view the Church, its institutions, as well as the traditional pastoral approaches used in dealing with those who are disabled and their families. It was REVERSE EVANGELIZATION at its best. These people told in no uncertain terms how they abhor the centuries-long demeaning terminology which even bible texts and preachers perpetuate: 'cripple,' 'lame,' 'afflicted,' 'leprous,' 'dumb,' 'retarded.' They vehemently assert that they are nouns, not adjectives. They are PERSONS - WHOLE PERSONS not inferior human beings, albeit limited in certain functions more noticeably than other human beings who also are limited creatures of God.

Moreover, they reject with equal force any classifications as 'chosen souls,' 'victim souls,' 'saints,' 'angels,' or objects of a pitying and often a self-serving charity. They see themselves, and want others to see them, as normal, ordinary struggling members of Christ's body.

And what bothers them most, particularly in the resurgence of fundamentalism in this country, is the mentality that they are being punished by God, or that their condition is the result of sin, and that if they had faith and repentance enough, they would be healed.

Too many disabled people, they point out, conditioned by society's wrong perceptions and fears, have accepted the inferior, passive position society has placed upon them. This has led so many to adopt a 'learned inferiority', while able-bodied persons can be beguiled into a 'learned superiority'.

The disabled persons I have come to know are the best witnesses of the Kingdom which Jesus struggled to establish, and for which He died on the Cross!

Necessary Changes for Credibility

Some of the major changes in pastoral care and preaching which church-going and non church-going disabled people and their families would want are as follows:

- 1) ASSISTANCE in recognizing their wholeness as human beings, and assistance in having the faithful recognize that wholeness. This involves breaking down both the attitudinal barriers and the fears of parishioners, as well as the physical barriers which exclude them from the community of the faithful. It involves full 'program' inclusion: in the sacraments, religious instruction, in liturgies, all the activities of the Church community. It involves organizing others to provide respite care for parents and families.
- 2) ADVOCACY in both ecclesiastical and civic circles. Laws and lasting practices in both these spheres still discriminate against them, exclude them, and demean them. As an example, in this great city of Chicago, there was a law until recently that "No person who is diseased, maimed or mutilated or in any way deformed so as to be an unsightly object may appear in public." One of my disabled friends, a woman who has been in a wheelchair all her life, was arrested under this law and fined.

Disabled people, like everyone else, want to be included in voting, jobs, education, housing, transportation and recreation. They need others, particularly clergy, to use their power in Church and civil society in helping them to obtain these necessary components of a truly human existence.

Our office takes an active part with various organizations of disabled people, and I am personally on the Board of Directors of two of these, one to procure accessible housing and the other to procure accessible transportation for those who are disabled.

3. "OPT FOR APOSTOLATES THAT ARE COMMUNITY-BASED"

The Passionists at CTU, faculty and students, are very much engaged in all the Stauros activities. They not only provide support for all our projects, but have instituted new aspects of our work. Fathers Carroll Stuhlmuehler, C. P., and Donald Senior, C. P., both renowned scripture scholars, have instituted a course, "Sickness, Healing and Disability" which has attracted a huge number of students. One of our students who has what is called a "hidden disability" has organized a special peer-group program for others with hidden disabilities. Each year our Stauros Office, with the help of our C.P. community, conducts a "Disability Awareness Day." The influence of our Passionist faculty members is responsible for the school adopting a policy of integrating disabled persons into the school's programs. Father Donald Senior, who conducts the Holy Land study programs, is organizing, with Stauros, a study program in the Holy Land for disabled persons in September 1987.

This verifies in a remarkable way what is said in our Constitutions, n. 67: "Our apostolic commitments must... allow us to belong to a community... This provides mutual fraternal support and contributes to effective pastoral activity." These words are literally true here in our Passionist Community.

HOSPITAL MINISTRY AND THE MEMORY OF THE PASSION

Rev. Paul I. Bechtold, C.P.

I stepped into room no. 3 of the Intensive Coronary Care Unit of Resurrection Hospital. Stanley W., the patient, was a man in his late sixties. He had suffered a heart arrest the previous evening. A large plastic tube from the breathing machine had been inserted into his mouth and was held in place by adhesive tape. From his chest several wires snaked up to the electronic monitor where the pattern of his heartbeat moved across the TV screen. Both wrists were held to the bed with restraining cuffs. His left hand was taped to an arm board so that the intravenous needle would stay in place. As I moved to the bedside Stanley's eyes met mine. He so wanted to tell me something, but he could not speak. Instead his right hand lifted ever so slightly and the index finger pointed to the wall behind me. I turned and saw the crucifix there. Stanley W. knew the meaning of his suffering and his mute gesture shared his understanding with me.

Resurrection Hospital in Chicago, where I am chaplain, is a modern, beautifully equipped, 450 bed health care facility. During the course of one year 18,500 persons are cared for in this hospital, with an additional 90,000 out-patients. The Pastoral Care Department consists of three priest chaplains and five religious sisters. The priests attend principally to sacramental and crises ministry. The sisters visit patients, comfort them, pray with them. All of the pastoral team take turns in bringing Eucharist to the sick.

No ministry in the Church offers greater opportunity for remembering the sufferings of Jesus and telling the story of his love than pastoral care of the sick and dying. It is not a now and then ministry. Each day in just this one hospital there are hundreds of persons in whom the Passion and death of Jesus are again present. Memoria is not simply the recollection of a past event. It, is the contemplation of a present mystery.

The chaplain sees the face of Jesus in the people who die each day. There is the gasping for breath, the ashen skin, the distended mouth. The faces of the dying have a strange sameness about them. Individual differences are blurred. The face of Jesus could have been no exception. People share the pain of the Crucified One in so many ways, in head, in limbs, in back and chest, in heart. There is the indignity of being stripped, of losing one's liberty, of giving one's body over to all manner of probing and scrutiny. The loneliness of the Passion is here, and the fear and desolation. Often there is the dreaded sentencing to death, to a painful and lingering death.

Times innumerable I have kept the deathwatch with a family on their personal Calvary as the life of a loved one flickered feebly and then ceased. I have known the Sorrowful Mother many times in the face, in the weeping, in the wrenching outcries of a mother whose son has been smashed and battered in an accident. There are so many seemingly senseless tragedies. Only the word of the cross can give an answer to the question, "Why?"

Ministry to the, sick and dying and to their families has many dimensions. There is the administration of the sacraments. There is the pastoral visit, giving comfort and sympathy and human being-with to the patient. And there is the cherished moment of prayer. In all of these contacts there is place for reminding people of the cross of Jesus. Most persons have a latent awareness, at least, of the spiritual dimension of their suffering. But they do need to be reminded. As Webster states it: "Remind, v.t. - to cause a person to remember." Their faith needs affirmation and support.

In my own pastoral practice I find that lengthy explanations and fervid exhortations are not usually called for. It may have been different at another time in history or in another culture. In

architecture there is a maxim, "Less is more." I find this to be true in my ministry to the sick. A short reminder suffices. "This is your cross. You are bearing it with Jesus." And how often the sick person's head moves in silent acknowledgment. Or the reminder may be incorporated in a prayer. "Jesus, you have given John a heavy cross to carry. Now give him the strength to bear it patiently." No more need be said.

The Sacrament of the Sick offers many possibilities for reminding the patient of the suffering of Jesus. On an average day I anoint at least ten persons, often more. Because of the heavy caseload I must shorten the ceremony. There is not time for reading the scripture, for a lengthy litany of intercessions. I begin with a prayer: "O Father in Heaven, send the angel who comforted Jesus in the Garden of Olives to comfort and strengthen John in his illness, to watch over and protect him." I invariably call the person by name. I then make a brief act of sorrow with the sick person, I impose my hands on the forehead, I anoint head and hands, I say a final prayer. When I impose hands and invoke the Holy Spirit I say aloud, "Come Holy Spirit, come with the comfort and healing that Jesus promised, give John patience to carry the cross of being sick, give him peace:" As I anoint the forehead and hands I make the sign of the cross very slowly and as ample as possible so that the sick person will feel the shape of the cross being inscribed on his body. "Through this holy anointing, may the Lord in his love and mercy, help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit..." A number of concluding prayers are given in the ritual. To any of them the words may be added by way of conclusion, "Since you have given John a share in your Passion, help him to find hope in suffering, for you are Lord, forever and ever." I have memorized the entire rite. Being free of a book allows for greater personal contact with the person being anointed.

I am often called to assist the dying. One must be careful that the prayers used do not disturb the dying person or raise fears. I find two psalms most appropriate, Psalm 23, Prayer of the Good Shepherd, and Psalm 130, the De Profundis. I bend close to the sick person and say in a loud voice (the dying are often semi-conscious), "My Jesus have mercy. My Jesus I love you. My Jesus forgive me. Father in Heaven, into your hands I entrust my spirit."

When a person has expired I usually read a passage from scripture to the family who have come in to say a farewell. The reading I find most consoling for people is the sublime promise of Jesus in the Farewell Discourse. I introduce this passage with the words, "The night before Jesus suffered and died he spoke these words of promise to his friends."

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. Otherwise how could I have told you that I was going to prepare a place for you? I am indeed going to prepare a place for you, and then I shall come back to take you with me, that where I am you also may be" (Jn 4:1-3).

When I have finished the reading I say, "Your dear one has shared in the suffering of Jesus. Now he will share the glory of his resurrection." I then continue with other prayers from the ritual.

Mass and holy communion offer many possibilities for recalling the Passion of the Lord. I will mention but a few. As I hold up the host before the communion of the people at Mass I often say, "This is the blessed Eucharist. This is the body of Jesus, broken on the cross that it might be broken for us in the bread of this sacrament. Lord, I am not worthy..."

On an average morning I give eighty to a hundred communions in the hospital rooms and the other chaplain on duty gives the same number. It is impossible to do more than the minimum.

“The Body of Christ. The Bread of Life.” It is not often feasible to give viaticum in the long form and few chaplains do.

One pastoral application of the Eucharist that I have begun to use from time to time is to give communion to a sick person under the form of wine only. Some patients cannot take any solid food but can swallow a few drops of the Precious Blood. This is administered by using a small pipette that can be purified and discarded or by using a disposable plastic cup. We now reserve the Precious Blood in a vial in the tabernacle. There are difficulties, however: A catechesis must be given to the person who is to receive in this way. Often this is not practical because the patient is not very alert. But with the chronically ill, e.g., cancer, this can be done. One woman who was allergic to any wheat substance had not received communion for nine years. She was delighted when it was explained to her that she could receive under the form of wine only. She did so twice during her hospital stay and will attend Sunday Mass at a parish where Eucharist is offered to the people under both forms.

If communion is to be given to just one person and time allows, I recommend Rev. George Knab’s booklet, “Communion Services” (Liturgical Press). Father Knab has composed twenty-four services, all of them pastorally helpful. His service, “The Cross”, admirably serves to stir up the memory of the Passion.

After the greeting there is an introductory comment:

“When we are sick or in pain it is helpful to think of Jesus and his cross. But more important we should remember the strength that enabled him to bear the cross, a strength made present to us in the Eucharist.”

As the sacred host is held up before the sick person the words are said:

“To share with you the strength with which he bore the cross, this is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy, are those who are called to his supper. Lord, I am not worthy...”

The service concludes with a prayer:

“Father, the meaning of suffering is a wisdom hidden from our eyes. But we think of your son, Jesus, and realize that since suffering had a place in his life, so it must have a place in our own. John our brother now shares in the Body and Blood of Jesus. May Jesus renew him in hope and give him all the strength he needs until you lift his burden from his shoulder. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Every person admitted to Resurrection Hospital is visited within a day by both a priest chaplain and a pastoral minister. A beautiful prayer leaflet printed on heavy stock is given to each patient. On the front cover there is a line drawing of the Risen Christ with the cross in the background. Inside there are a number of prayers, including this prayer to Jesus- Crucified:

“Lord Jesus, I think of the pains you endured for me. The great sadness of the garden, your scourging and crowning with thorns, your cross, your death. You had to suffer to enter into your glory. The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to come. In the strength of your Spirit I join my sufferings to yours for the redemption of the world. Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

Father Lawrence Browning, a brother Passionist who is also a chaplain at Resurrection Hospital, has written several very short leaflets. Among them are, “The Will of God and Suffering”, “Jesus Suffered and Died for Me”, “The Mass Our Treasure”, “Campaign of Love”. He gives these leaflets to patients to read and leaves them in the visitors’ lounges throughout the hospital. People derive immense strength and comfort from the simple words of these leaflets. Requests for copies come to Father Lawrence from all over the world. A tiny mustard seed has grown into a fruitful tree.

One of the sisters on the pastoral team at the hospital regularly makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of a patient when finishing a pastoral visit. This is both a blessing and a reminder of the meaning of sickness. Another sister points to the crucifix on the wall of the hospital room and says to the family of the sick person, “Jesus was free to come and go until the day he was nailed to the cross. Now your loved one is sharing the same mystery as he lies sick.” This is especially effective when the patient has suffered a stroke or is otherwise paralyzed.

During the course of a typical day I visit sixty to eighty patients. I give special attention to the critically ill patients in the Coronary Intensive Care – and Surgical Intensive Care units. Although religious in purpose, a pastoral visit is not exclusively or even primarily religious in content. The chaplain reaches out to the sick person in a loving, very human way. He speaks cheerful, encouraging, sympathetic words. He asks about family and home. He listens to whatever the patient tries to tell him and tries to resonate with the feelings of patient. The chaplain often touches the face or hands of the sick person with gentle reassurance. At times a person will ask for the sacrament of reconciliation. Often I will say a word of reminder about the sufferings of Jesus. Occasionally there is an opening to talk somewhat more at length about the Passion and the person’s illness. But never to minimize the suffering of the patient or to make him feel uneasy because he finds his suffering hard to bear.

Usually the pastoral visit ends with a prayer and a blessing. During the prayer I often interject a petition such as this: “Give John patience to carry the cross of sickness. Give him strength. Lift the cross from his shoulders if that be your holy will.” I often use the blessing of Aaron (I always use it with Jewish patients): “The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to smile on you. The Lord look upon you graciously and give you peace...and healing.”

If people come to know the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings during their illness, they also experience and proclaim the power of his resurrection. Two attitudes especially manifest this truth, patience and resignation to God’s will.

People are remarkably patient in bearing their suffering. The complainer or bitter person is a rare exception. I do not find a widespread self-pity among the patients. I do find much quiet and even heroic patience: one woman told me, “I am bearing this cross for someone: I don’t know who.” Another said to me, “I look on the cross every day. It gives me strength to keep going.” Often I hear the words, “Others have so much more to suffer.” And many times I hear words of regret for slight impatience shown the nurses or aides.

Especially I find a sublime trust and acceptance among the sick. How many persons accept their suffering and their “sentence to death” with admirable resignation: I try to reinforce this attitude by praying with them, “Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit.” One man, suffering from cancer, told me, “Both I and my wife have learned to say, ‘Thy will be done.’” A Protestant woman with very painful cancer told me the evening before she died, “I was angry with God

when I first became sick. But now I forgive him, now I forgive him.” Here indeed was the presence of grace, here was the power of the resurrection.

The words of our old rule of life come to mind as I think over my ministry in the hospital, “Love is ingenious and will find many ways of expressing itself.” How very true. Short words. Brief moments of prayer: These serve to remind the sick and their families of the mystery of Christ’s Passion which they are sharing.

YOUNG ADULT EVANGELIZATION AND THE CONTEMPORARY PASSION

Rev. Alex Steinmiller, C.P.

I am most grateful for the opportunity to pass on to my Passionist Brothers and Sisters throughout the world these pastoral reflections. They have surfaced in the course of working for twelve years evangelizing young adults in the metropolitan area of Detroit, Michigan. This Archdiocese has 1.2 million Catholics with 331 parishes, and approximately 650 clergy (diocesan and religious) serving them. The city of Detroit is approximately 65% Black, with White, Hispanic and Arabic peoples making up the difference. It is an extremely multi-cultural city, boasting more of a heterogeneity than New York City. In the neighborhood where we are headquartered, there are forty-three different nationalities.

Twenty percent of the families residing in the city are living at or below the poverty line income of a family of four. Black males ranging in age from eighteen through twenty-five have an unemployment rate of sixty-five percent. Violent death is the number one killer of this same group.

A random sampling of Catholic parishes in the Archdiocese indicates that there is a seventy-five percent dropout rate of young Catholics after they have received the Sacrament of Confirmation! According to the recent "Notre Dame Study of the American Catholic Parish (1985)", the average age of the practicing Catholic is forty-nine. Forty-four percent of the Catholics still attend weekly Mass. Thirty-one percent of adult Catholics are single. Fifty-seven percent of American Catholics under thirty are unmarried. An estimated eight million Americans are not affiliated with any Church.

It is within this social, cultural, economic and religious milieu that I have been collaborating with a Redemptorist priest, Father John Phelps, and an Adrian Dominican, Sister Rosalie Esquerra. Presently on our staff we also have another Sister of Saint Joseph, a married deacon, five married people, and five single young adults.

"Like Saint Paul of the Cross our Founder, we dedicate ourselves to evangelizing, and where necessary re-evangelizing the faithful, especially the poor in more neglected areas"
(Const. 70).

This venture has truly been an inter-facing of charisms, as individuals are asked to discern and share as they join.

We call ourselves focus-LIFE, which announces among youth 13-17, and young adults 18-30, that there lies within each person an abundance of Life. Such a discovery is often missed or denied by young people. The young become convinced that life only has abundance in popularity, power, and a life free of responsibility. When this "inner life" is denied or disregarded, fear has easy access to one's heart. That which drives out fear is love (1 Jn 4:18). This is the work of evangelization. It means "bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity, and through its influence, transforming humanity from within and making it new" (Evang. Nunti. n. 18).

New life is experienced as, what limits or degrades it, is overcome. “In the world you will have trouble, but be brave; I have conquered the world” (Jn16:33). Pope Paul defines salvation as “this great gift of God which is liberation from everything that oppresses man but which is above all liberation from sin and the evil one” (Evang. Nunti. n. 9).

Pope John Paul II, in March, 1985, addressing some 200,000 young people at the Vatican celebration marking the U.N.’s International Year of Youth, acknowledged this life within as a “special treasure.” The time of a particular intense discovery of the human ‘I’ and of the properties and capacities connected with it” (“To the Youth of the World”, no. 3). “Self-fulfillment” is envisioned as the carrying out of one’s life plan.

“Before the inner gaze of the developing personality of the young man or woman, there is gradually and successively revealed that specific and in a sense unique and unrepeatable potentiality of a concrete humanity in which there is as it were inscribed the whole plan of future life” (Youth, no. 3).

Such an inner treasure, this unique time of discovery and decision, is so easily missed or passed over, or tragically crushed through failure, unforgiven hurts, and rejection. If it is not the illusory attractions that convince one that the “treasure of pleasure” is the shortcut to success, then this treasure is devalued by the external standards of success, wealth, power and popularity. On the other hand, there is the young adult who recognizes his/her inner treasure and goes about the task of building a future. But, out of fear of losing what they have, they refuse to share, and they refuse to “look back” to their less fortunate peers. The most powerful and destructive force producing alienation in young adults is the ever-widening gap of poverty.

We have developed three projects corresponding to three aspects of the empowerment of the young.

Life Worker Project

The Life Worker Project focuses on teenagers and their “public life.” Weekly, six of us spend a day in five public schools and in the corresponding neighborhoods developing support groups that benefit and support the decision-making abilities of the young and share values which can affect their moral growth.

Pope John Paul II acknowledges that the “treasure,” which is youth, is revealed in “discovery..., organizing, choosing, foreseeing, and making the first personal decisions, decisions that will be important for the future in the strictly personal dimension of human existence” (Youth, no. 3).

Life Search Project

The Life Search Project provides an alternative vision of pursuing “an abundant life with the sharing of a spirituality which can provide the way to future fulfillment through “being a gift for others.” Young adults 17-30 years of age are invited on a multi-cultural and multi-generational weekend, whereby Christian values are proclaimed, and follow-up support groups are offered to support a way of life rooted in Christ.

In Western culture, there are few recognizable “rites of passage” which truly welcome the adolescent into the adult community to share in the mutual responsibility of providing what is

good, right, and just for all. Since 1974, the Life Search weekend has been like a fish net, receiving young adults and adults from every religious, social, cultural, and economic background, in order to provide a way of seeing life, having it more abundantly and sharing it more fully and joyfully.

The support groups have been the greatest challenge to the building of this project. The young adult who comes off of the weekend, needs the support, witness, encouragement and reconciliation to continue on the Way.

Life Directions Project

After five years of developing the Life Search Project, we realized the need to root this support network within the parish, if there were people willing to work at it with us. Hence the development of the Life Directions Project, which has the twofold purpose. First, announcing the call to ministry through a parish mission which culminates in the invitation to take up one's cross and lose one's life in service toward others. The second facet of the project is to provide the resources within the parish to enable laity to develop young adult ministry among their peers.

In broad strokes, these are the three projects which implement young adult evangelization in a multi-cultural and multi-class metropolitan area.

The vision which inspires such an enterprise and the sense of mission from which it receives authorization and empowerment has for its wellspring the Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pastoral Insights

I wish to name some of the pastoral insights which have flowed from this wellspring and have empowered our ministry.

Public witness through reflective awareness has been our primary step in evangelization. Pope Paul VI acknowledged that "above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness" (Evang. Nunti. n. 21). From Capernaum to Jerusalem, Jesus' teaching and preaching was grounded in the day to day experiences of the people, his reflection upon what he was and heard in the company of his Father, and public witness (from storytelling and healing, to death on a cross) to demonstrate his love and his desire to establish his Gospel Way on earth. Realizing that the ultimate obstacle that stops God's life within humanity is the fear of death, Jesus' ultimate action would take on that threat full face. Paul of the Cross immersed himself with the people of his day, whether in the hospitals, rural areas, towns or cities. His heart was filled with the cries of hunger for the Good News of unconditional love. The spiritual richness of his letters, the power of his missions, came from the contemplative/active relationship with the Word of the Cross.

From the beginning of our ministry, we realized that the Word we want to speak, had to be immersed within the cultural milieu of youth. Pope Paul VI made it clear that while the kingdom is independent of cultures, they are not incompatible, "rather, they are capable of permeating them all without becoming subject to any one of them" (Evang. Nunti. n. 20).

The second insight flowing from the Word of the Cross is the attitudinal approach towards those to whom we are sent – an attitude of unconditional and faithful love and respect for the worth and dignity of each person.

There are two actions from the Cross which seal the value of unconditional love for the worth of each human. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). His life violently taken, his love still freely given in mercy to the “apparent” unworthy. And, it was not enough to have taken everything he had, but now, the one whose love brought him into the world, introduced him to Life and nurtured it – his Mother now, he shares even that – not holding out for even the exclusive love of his Mother at the hour of his death, and time of greatest need.

Amidst all the hype which is vying for the attention and investment of the young, amidst all the psychological manipulations that are used to influence, the only force which has absolutely no strings attached is the faithful, unconditional love communicated to the young.

This “love force” is a witness to responding to a call to commit one’s life to the service of others. Many vocations to the priesthood, religious life, married and single life have occurred through the Life Search Project. The Passion and Death of Our Lord shouts “fidelity” and “unconditionality.” This can be the most powerful mission/preaching event a young person may “hear.”

Even in response to the young person who fails in his/ her own eyes or quits; the person who has obviously sinned, faithful, unconditional love is a powerful communication and transformer. In the public school for six hours weekly, I work with groups of students sent by teachers and counselors. The cafeterias are where we usually start our work. They are the most public, wide-open areas in the school. As many as 300 students may be there during one period. Building rapport and trust on their turf is critical. Trust cannot be rushed. It comes with time. Consistency also builds trust. Weekly presence in different parts of the school reinforces trust.

I heard about Calvin from some students. He was a twelfth grader and a loner. He never spoke or bothered with anyone. He was teased constantly. Wore the same clothes to school practically every day. (He had nothing else to wear), It was said that he did not like girls. I could pick him out in the cafeteria. It was easy. He sat alone. The first few weeks I deliberately went by his table and just said “hello.” There was barely acknowledgment. After doing this for a month, I did sit down with him and picked up some thread of conversation. He spoke of two things. Leaving the U.S. because “nobody cares for anybody here” and racing cars. I latched on to his concern and interest. Never really knew if he minded my being there, until he began asking me questions. Who I was? What I was doing at the school? Where do those groups I have, meet? I encouraged him to come. It must have been at least a month before he showed up. I knew that he was constantly testing me to see if I was for real or just a “do-gooder” who would eventually move on. I visited him at his home. He told me that his mother was dead and his father was very old, drank a lot and was never home. Calvin had no one. Many do not survive this kind of loneliness. He did. I asked him one day, to join us for our Life Search weekend. He finally agreed with much hesitation. I could tell that the whole experience was very different for him. He stayed, but I didn’t know how much of it he really could handle. But soon after the weekend, he asked about joining one of our neighborhood circles near his home. He joined, and has been coming ever since. Calvin has changed. He doesn’t talk about leaving the U.S. anymore. He is in trade school. He likes being with people. Unconditional love is transforming.

“Who would die for you?” I ask that question often in groups. “No one.” “Maybe my mother.” These are frequent answers. “How many times would you forgive someone?” The answer, “Once. That’s all.” or “Never, no way.” We live in times of great disillusionment. Whether it be the ultimate threat of nuclear annihilation, or ordinary incidents of total disregard for another’s

“presence,” much less their worth. In such a climate of disregard and hostility, conditional love is the norm, for it protects and insulates one from risk and pain. Before he gave himself up to death, he cried over the city of Jerusalem, the Mecca for a law and way of life which epitomized conditional love and regard that results in death. “If you in your turn had only understood on this day the message of peace. But, alas, it is hidden from your eyes” (Lk 19:42). Visible, unconditional love brings sight, in-sight to a person’s absolute worth and value.

The third insight enables and supports the first two. To publicly witness the Good News, and have an unconditional love for others, there has to be an acceptance of one’s weakness.

Paul’s spiritual deserts and dark nights left him utterly weak. The ultimate lesson of weakness on the Cross is Jesus’ cry of despair. There was nothing left to give; his life work, his associates, his mother, and now his own Father. Or, in Saint Luke where he has given all – he has only his spirit to be committed to the Father, all else has been done, except to breathe his last. The tomb, the nether world, would be his destiny. Total weakness. Life, once totally poured out, is restored. Weakness complemented by Strength. The acknowledgment of my weakness is to share another’s strength. My strength is for another’s weakness.

There is real disappointment in undertaking evangelization among the young. We are relating to generations in transition. Commitment, future planning, responsible decision making with consideration for the consequences, are all relative matters. They have grown up in a society where weakness is intolerable. Any of the above named tasks demand risk and the possibility of mistake and failure. International, national and domestic problems are resolved only by force - where strength is the only power. Risks in commitments become greater. Thirteen percent of all Catholic marriages are ending in divorce. The American divorce rate is the highest in the world – nearly double that of Sweden, the runner-up. To say “no” to something counter to my values is translated out as weakness among peer groups. Feelings are tantamount to self-worth and identity. Feeling good is the standard for the good conscience. Feelings become the standard for what I do or say. It is no wonder that the U.S. has, by far, the highest rate of teenage pregnancy of any industrial nation. Where is the strength to live a value that will be challenged?

In the on-rush of fear to avoid weakness, there is the Good News of the One who says, “My grace is enough for you. My power is at its best in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9). And so it is. “Why look among the dead for someone who is alive? He is not here, He has risen” (Lk 24:6).

To discover strength through weakness; and to complement another’s weakness with my strength could only come from one who has been on the other side of death, having conquered it; for weakness is the first sign of death.

Where do the young see this modeled? Is this not why faith communities are formed? To be the Risen Body of Christ? A body not afraid of death or weakness? A body welcoming others’ strengths in the face of its own weakness?

Paul of the Cross’s mission in life appeared to be an impossible task, yet, here we are visibly taking His Spirit to where there is utter weakness. “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).

Many young adults with whom we work are social misfits. They may have criminal records, never finished school, have a physical, mental or emotional disability. For whatever reason, they

cannot get into the “fast lane” or even into the mainstream with their peers. Their faces and condition in life run through my mind like a live play. I have witnessed profound changes in both them and those whom they encounter on our weekends, in our groups in school, or the Circles in the neighborhoods. To draw all together, the haves and have nots, has to be steadfastly and deliberately planned. Our society subtly, but so really divides and makes it almost impossible, socially and economically for the moment to happen when weakness becomes strength and gift, and strength can acknowledge its vulnerable side. There is a new-found belonging in this complementarity of strength and weakness.

Paul of the Cross’ zealous approach to his missionary work provides a fourth pastoral insight which contributes to the evangelization of young adults. It is the recognition of the inter-play of institutions, which together can benefit the quality of life, and the promotion of Christian values. Establishing the kingdom of God through interdependence.

For Paul, mission preparation meant reading the signs of the times in the context of prayer and contemplation of the suffering love of Jesus Christ. In his own day, he recognized how the various systems controlled the quality of life for the people. He lived in a complex rural, urban society. The Church hierarchy was badly in need of reform; the Roman nobility controlled it. Nationalism was rampant. Concentration on the upper classes and an “enlightened Despotism” had replaced an archaic feudalism. Rationalism favored the educated classes. The Church was no advocate for the poor. The Mendicant Orders had taken on the concern,

Religion had suffered from these trends, becoming a matter of the head rather than the heart: Paul, and Alphonsus Liguori I might add, brought a fiery emotion back to the faith, and a clear, bold message of God’s love to the poor through the suffering love of Jesus on the Cross. It has been noted by the historian and sociologist Werner Stark, that when our Holy Rule was orally approved in 1741, a Papal secretary wrote to Paul:

“His Holiness confirms the regulations and constitutions submitted to him with his understanding, that the clerics of the Congregation, whose exclusive purpose is the preaching of missions, shall preach them especially in the places, villages and hamlets where the air is less salubrious, on islands and in barren regions” (Werner Stark, “The Sociology of Religious - A Study of Christendom”, Vol. 3, p. 307; Routledge & Keegan, London, 1960.

Without the interdependence of the influential institutions of our day: family, neighborhood, work, school, government and church, the alienation of the young heightens. According to Prof. Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University:

“The forces that produce alienated young Americans are growing at a dangerous rate. Chaotic homes turn adolescents to their peers as substitutes for caring and supportive adults. The power of institutions that play key roles in human development – particularly family and school – has eroded. (F.M. Hechinger, “Alarm Over Alienation of the Young,” in N.Y. Times, March 25, 1986, p. 19).

The work of evangelization must deliberately bring into a working, interdependent relationship the components for human development. As these fibers of the social fabric unravel social chaos takes control. Violence is the result of the unraveling, It is more and more commonplace to hear of two and three violent deaths a week in our city! Where there is little or no sense of

“belonging”, there is no sense of ownership and responsibility. That applies to how one person sees the value of another person’s life!

What is all the more tragic is the attitude of the middle and upper class young who have no desire to look back in solidarity with their less fortunate peers, but rather proceed with great haste to success, so as to avoid the abyss and pain of such a life. It is the living out of our “Declaration of Independence” upon which America is built. The task of calling our moral and social, educational and religious institutions into a collaborative interdependence is the challenge to take up the Cross - the struggles, the dying hopes and possibilities, which are crucified on the crosses of “No one,” “No where,” and “No way.”

“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children. For the days will surely come when people will say, ‘Happy are those who are barren, the wombs that have never borne, the breasts that have never suckled!’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ to the hills, ‘Cover us!’ ‘For if men use the green wood like this, what will happen when it is dry?’” (Lk 22: 28-31).

Jesus in the midst of his Death March meets parents responsible yet fearful and sad for him and for their off-spring and what the future holds for them, if this is what the present is doing! Jesus refocuses the heartfelt love and sorrow from himself onto the innocent – the green wood – the wood with the Abundant Life contained within. For the children, future generations, he suffers and dies. He takes all the ignominy and fear unto himself in order to transform the tree into a source of life, which death cannot overcome.

The young teach us what we need to say and do. They tell us through their nightmares of suffering and their dreams of what they hope will be. The charism of Saint Paul of the Cross continues to intrigue, challenge and inspire me. It remains original and new. It is integral to the history of our salvation, and it is called on constantly to respond to the contemporary suffering of destitution – physically, morally and spiritually.

It is our call to be “lifted up” in a pouring out, of the suffering, unconditional love which Jesus shares with us through the Cross. Visibly, publically, for all to see, we are willing to immerse ourselves in the lives of those to whom we are sent, knowing in faith that our weaknesses will be complemented by the strength of the Resurrection.

We continue to evangelize reflectively and zealously, knowing that in him, with him and through him all are drawn to the glory of that original creation.

And when I am lifted up from the earth,
I shall draw all men to myself (Jn 12:32).