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Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality

**THE MEMORIA PASSIONIS
IN THE CONSTITUTIONS**

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REMEMBERING THE PASSION OF CHRIST

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Introduction

Our Constitutions make frequent mention of the memory of Christ's passion as a formative factor both in the life of the Passionist religious and in the work of his apostolate. The development and richness of this theme in the history of the Congregation has been studied in depth and described in detail by Fabiano Giorgini (1) and Antonio Maria Artola (2).

But we need to view this ideal from yet another perspective. The understanding of what memory of the passion means in Christian life has much to gain from a study of the biblical background of this theme. Sacred Scripture presents three elements which contribute much to a competent grasp of what the memory of Christ's passion really signifies. These elements are best described under the following headings:

- biblical use of the word, "memorial";
- biblical teaching on the contemporaneity of the death-resurrection of Christ;
- biblical doctrine on the vital and experiential character of faith-knowledge.

Each of these titles calls for a brief commentary if they are to be of help in fostering remembrance of Christ's passion in our own lives and in our apostolate.

1. Biblical Use of the Word, "Memorial"

From the very beginning of its history Israel lived with an enduring memory of God's beneficent deeds in the past and with expectancy of their dynamic renewal in the present. The very name Yahweh with which God identified himself (Ex 3:14-15) was to serve as a reminder that the savior who brought Israel out of Egypt would always be at hand to renew his past mercies for the Israelites of every generation. With his revelation of the name Yahweh, God sought to remind the people that he who had favored the patriarchs would be ever present in the lives of their descendants. Moses, therefore, was directed by God to say to the children of Israel, "Yahweh, the God of your fathers... has sent me to you: this is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations"(Ex 3:5).

It was Yahweh who ordered the annual liturgical renewal at passover of the delivery from Egypt (Ex 12:1-28) and who commanded constant memory of how the God of Israel "brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Deut 6:12). This memory was to be vital with conviction that Yahweh was mightily present in the life and cult of his people to renew the merciful wonders which he had previously accomplished. Liturgy itself was a powerful challenge to be faithful to the covenant, for the rites and ceremonies enlivened the people's awareness of Yahweh's presence and spurred the hope which echoes in the cry of Micah, "As in the days of old when you came out of Egypt, grant us to see marvelous things" (Mic 7:15).

Sanctuary worship itself with its rich use of symbols and memorials induced a way of viewing past events as happening now. This reliving of the past took place not by literal imitation but by feeling the full impact of the past in a new set of circumstances. Historic events took on a symbolic religious form in the liturgy and by this means successive generations felt themselves to be coming out of Egypt and newly acquiring the land. The exodus thus became symbolic and effective of a present passage from sin to grace, from hardship to joy, from fear to tranquility (3).

All of this was possible because in Israel memory was alive with awareness of God's presence, of his power, and of his beneficent will to deliver his people from sin and oppression and to unite them to himself. Because the covenant revealed God's saving purpose and his powerful readiness to show mercy to what is poor and weak, it became the supreme symbol of what Scripture calls the "justice of God" (sedaqa Yahweh). The memory of Yahweh's past interventions taught Israel to expect that the same "justice of God" would be operative in the present.

This Old Testament mentality sheds light on the command of Jesus at the last supper, "Do this as a memorial (anamnesis) of me" (1 Cor 11: 24; Lk 22:19). It seems undeniable that it is the cultic setting of the Passover liturgy which supplies the major interpretative key to the last supper. Because the eucharist would always be the supreme act of cult in the church of Jesus, God himself, through the activity of the Holy Spirit, makes present and operative the past events of Jesus' death and resurrection. This living memorial(anamnesis) is not only at the heart of the eucharist but it belongs also to the very essence of the gospel which God himself proclaims in the church through his ambassadors (2 Cor 5:20).

Thus the eucharist as anamnesis becomes the prime analogue, the source and model of the Passionist vocation to cherish the memory of Christ's suffering and death. The very phrase "as a

memorial of me,” indicates in its Greek wording that in the Eucharist there is a distinct sense of both remembering again and of renewal. Our Constitutions make this clear in the words with which they speak of Eucharist: “Renewing the Sacrifice of Christ and sharing in His Body and Blood, we announce his death and proclaim His resurrection; He forgives our sins, renews our strength, and pledges us a share in His risen life” (Const. 42).

2. Biblical Teaching on the Contemporaneity of the Death-Resurrection of Christ

Every character profile of Saint Paul of the Cross emphasizes his constant, grateful remembrance of the passion of Christ. Such devotedness meant something more than frequent mental recall of the events of the first Good Friday. It also involved full awareness that the passion of Christ is a perduring reality, ever present to the faithful not only in the sufferings of his mystical body but also in its permanence and efficacy. All through the many years of his life Paul found inspiration and strength in the principle “*Crux stat dum orbis volvitur*,” while the world spins or falters along its course, the crucified Christ is always present as the saving wisdom and power of God. We may say that, for Paul, Christ on the cross was “an eternal contemporary.”

This conviction that the passion of Christ perdures forever is deeply rooted in authentic Christianity as the special legacy of Paul the Apostle. The study of his inspired writings is bound to give a deepened understanding of the lifetime desire of Paul of the Cross, May the passion of Christ be always in our hearts.”

The perspective of the contemporaneity of the passion is always to the fore in the Pauline epistles. Schooled in the theoretic faith of Israel, the Apostle could not think of the redemptive mystery except in the light of what he considered a first truth. God himself was the chief actor both on Good Friday and on Easter Sunday. When, therefore, Paul speaks of Jesus’ passion and death, he emphasizes this divine causality. Far from being a fortuitous prelude to messianic glorification, the death of Jesus is presented by Paul as involving the wise plan and saving power of the Father (1 Cor 1:17-25; 2:7-9; Rom 5:6-8; 8:3,32). The Apostle, therefore, is totally in character when, writing of the whole ensemble of Jesus’ redemptive death and resurrection, he utters the firm conviction that “it is all God’s work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ”(2 Cor 5:17-18).

This factor of divine causality is of special significance if we are to understand the contemporaneity of Christ’s passion. Because Jesus’ death occurred at a given moment in time, the suggestion of its perduring efficacy would be incomprehensible to one who overlooks the Apostle’s emphasis on God at work with the fullness of his divine power. Not so St. Thomas Aquinas; he was one who grasped Paul’s thought perfectly. In discussing the efficiency of Christ’s passion in every age of time, he explains the humanly unexplainable with words which faithfully crystallize St. Paul’s conviction: “Christ’s passion in relation to his flesh is consistent with the infirmity which he took upon himself, but in relation to the Godhead it draws infinite might from it...Therefore all Christ’s actions and sufferings operate instrumentally in virtue of his Godhead for the salvation of all” (S. Theol. III , Q.48, Art. 6, Corp. ad finem and ad 1).

This recognition of God’s power always at work through the passion of Christ is intimately connected with the second factor in Paul’s thought. The Apostle affirms that the death of Jesus was totally inspired by the agape of Father and Son, that is, by their strong, tender and saving love. The generosity of the Father in delivering his Son to the cross and the devoted obedience of Jesus to the Father’s saving will were equally prompted by their mutual loving concern for the

redemption of all (Rom 5:5-11; 8:31-39; Gal 2:20). This mercy, which “surpasses all knowledge”(Eph 3:19), acted as the chief directive of the divine power at work in Jesus’ death, thereby making his cross the efficacious source of limitless blessings for the people of all ages. Only the Spirit of God knows and can make known the profound depths and vast reaches of this efficacy (1 Cor 2:7-16). Face to face with so eminent a mystery of divine love, Paul speaks of it as “the ineffable charism” — the gift of God that beggars all description (2 Cor 9:15; 8:9).

In actual fact, peering into the very depths of God’s saving work, Paul has discovered the consummate mystery of the present efficacy of the passion of Christ. He sees how the boundless love of the Father and the Son who lives with him in glory has found a way to make Jesus’ experience on the cross an ever-present reality in the lives of Christians who are members of his risen body. This work of power and love is accomplished through the Holy Spirit. Given to each Christian in baptism, the Spirit not only unites the baptized to the person of Jesus but also enables him or her to experience “the power of Christ’s resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings” (Phil 3:10). This does not mean that the Spirit renews, in a superficial material way, the fleshly crucifixion of Jesus or his blood-shedding on the cross. Instead, he forges a bond between the crucified Christ and the Christian in a much deeper and more intimate way. By transforming the human heart with Christ’s obedience and love, the Spirit makes the baptized person Christ’s “other self” and renews in the Christian the liberation of Christ’s death and the transformation of his resurrection.

This faith-insight of Paul the Apostle illumines and gives substance to the spirituality of Saint Paul of the Cross. In his letters to those who sought spiritual counsel, he constantly urged frequent thought and grateful remembrance of the sufferings of Christ. But he always saw this devotedness as the way to grow in awareness of a deeper truth. Memory of the sacred passion makes one realize that the love and power of God, like a vast ocean, endure forever. Immersed in this sea, the Christian relives the experience of Christ’s death and resurrection. He is freed from sinful attachment to the honors and pleasures of earthly life and is united to the will of God in perfect fidelity. And with this daily dying, the Christian lives more and more the life of Christ’s resurrection. For Paul of the Cross, as for Paul the Apostle, Christ’s love, given to us by the Spirit, is the meaning of it all.

3. Biblical Doctrine on the Vital and Experiential Character of Faith-Knowledge

It is clear from the life of our Founder that memory of Christ’s passion brings a progressive deepening of one’s experiential knowledge of this mystery. Reared in the school of the great masters — St. Francis de Sales, Sts. Teresa and John of the Cross, and especially John Tauler — Saint Paul took it for granted that the grateful memory of Christ’s sufferings would be alive with awareness of the real presence of Jesus in our life.

This experiential character of faith is a theme often stressed in Sacred Scripture. In the Old Testament faith in God was created and transmitted with a living awareness of God in his activity. As Père M. Boismard states, “The true God of Israel does not march to the beat of metaphysical arguments; He is recognized in his all-powerfulness; He is experienced in his strength”(4). Thus all through its history Israel “knew” God in the vital experience of his benefits and punishments (e.g., Ex 6:7; 7:5,17;8:10;Num 16:28-30;etc).The writers of Israel, therefore, always speak of God, just as their people always thought of him, as a God who lives and acts.

But the phrase, “to know God”, had yet another nuance. God’s activity called for a response. “To know God” is to know his designs for his people, his ways of dealing with them (Is 58; Sir 17).

“To know God” is to recognize and accept his dominion (Hos 2:21-22; 4:2; 6:6; Prov 2:1-2). Therefore, by a transposition from cause to effect, the expression “knowledge of God” became synonymous with the service of God.

Israel, however, failed to give God this homage. Though the nation has often known him through actual experience of his benefits and punishments, most Israelites failed to know him through ethical devotedness. Their careless indifference to the exigencies of God’s goodness could never square with a true knowledge of God. Nonetheless, God’s fidelity could never fail. Though he threatened the bitter ending of the first covenant he promised another to endure forever (Jer 31:31-34; Ezech 36:22-36). This time, too, it is knowledge that forms the mutual bond between God and his people: “The land shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Is 11:9; Hab 2:14; cf Jer 31:31-34; Ezech 36:25-27). As always in Israelite thought, this knowledge is more of the whole man than of just the mind: “I will give them a heart to know me as the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; for they shall turn to me with all their heart”(Jer 24:7).

This Old Testament background has made its own contribution to the emphasis on knowledge which appears in the Pauline and Johannine writings. In Phil 3:8 Paul makes clear that it was the experiential knowledge of Christ and his salvific role which constituted the decisive factor in his conversion at the gates of Damascus. This new knowledge broke the chain binding him to the past and opened his heart to the full dynamism of Christ’s saving activity: “What shall I do, Lord?” (Acts 22:10).

For both St. John and St. Paul the verb “to know” does not mean simply to perceive, to be aware of, but has the full Semitic sense attached to Old Testament knowledge in which personal involvement is always supposed (cf Jn 14:7; 17:3,25; Col 1:9-10; Eph 3:18-19). This knowledge adds to faith the experiential quality which rises out of and accompanies the full-hearted commitment of true love. For this reason, when the Apostle Paul describes his own inward life, he speaks of his living faith as an impetus to ever more intimate knowledge: “All I want is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings” (Phil 3:10). What is more, he identifies growth in this “knowledge” as a sign of progressive Christian perfecting (Phil 3:12-16). So, too, in writing to the Ephesians Paul speaks of their need to grow in the knowledge of the love of Christ which surpasses all knowledge (Eph 3:19). In reality, the vocabulary of Paul’s later letters shows that, in order to express the dynamism of faith, Paul made rich use of words like “knowledge” (gnosis), “wisdom” (sophia), “perception” (aisthesis), and “insight”(epignosis).

This is the kind of knowledge — vital, loving, experiential — which our Founder wanted for us when he asked us to live with the grateful memory of the passion of Christ. This is what our Constitutions mean when they speak of the prayer life of the community as “a deep experience of God” (Const. 37). For in prayer “we respond to the loving initiative of the Father. Led by the Holy Spirit, we unite ourselves with the person of Christ, especially in the Paschal Mystery of His suffering, death, and resurrection”(Const. 39).

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A CONGREGATION

TO REMIND MANKIND OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST

THE MEMORY OF THE PASSION IN THE CONSTITUTIONS

Rev. Antonio M. Artola, C. P.

“Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19)

“Remember Jesus Christ the Lord” (2 Tim. 2:8)

To remember is to re-live. To re-live is to re-create. He who remembers gives new life to that which in the past was once part of the present. Since every revival occurs in a spirit that is different from those who initially experienced the events, reviving is recreating the past in the spiritual space of our personal present.

To remember the Passion is to give a new current dimension to Christ on the cross, who is thus once again brought to exist within us. Offering Christ on the cross the possibility to come alive once again in one’s own historical and temporal life means being a witness to the Passion in a wonderful way.

I. THE MEMORY OF THE PASSION — BACKBONE OF THE CONSTITUTIONS

The theme of the Memory of the Passion is the principle animating the new Constitutions. It is explicitly present in the four most important chapters: Fundamentals, Apostolate, Formation and Constitution. The rest of the teachings and norms all revolve around these four chapters. Let us briefly point out the characteristics of each of these main parts.

1. The Memory of the Passion in the Fundamentals of our Life (n. 6)

Together with the formula of profession (n. 96), n. 6 is the most important regarding the characterization of the Congregation from the vow of the Passion. The number is full of ideas. The text makes reference to the participation in the Passion considered by certain experts to be the biblical and theological approach most suitable for understanding the spirituality of the Passion (1). As for the vow of the Passion, its object revolves around memory as seen in the kerygmatic, apostolic, witnessing and inter-congregational dimensions, as well as in terms of past experience. There are two references to memory. In the Regulations, the chapter is completed by concrete applications in study, meditation and preaching.

2. The Memory of the Passion in the Apostolate (n. 62)

Number 6 already referred to the apostolate as being integrated in the vow of memory. The third paragraph of n. 62 introduces a new concept worthy of special attention. It is the celebration of the memory. It is known that in liturgical terminology the expression “celebrating the memory” signifies celebrating the Eucharist. During the celebration of every Mass, we say in the different Eucharistic prayers: “in memory of his death and resurrection...we thank you for counting us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you” (II). “calling to mind the death your Son

endured for our salvation,” (III). “Father, we now celebrate this memorial of our redemption” (IV).

In compliance with this duty imposed by the Constitutions, the Congregation as such is committed to implementing the mandate of Christ during the Last Supper: “Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19). Thanks to this new focus on the Passionist apostolate, the Eucharistic celebration is converted into a specific act of the liturgical memory of the Passion.

The technical expression “celebrating the memory” seems to refer mainly to the Eucharist. Sometimes all forms of celebration that are not exclusively eucharistic are also included, such as Holy Hours that are celebrated in memory of the agony suffered by Jesus, or the Way of the Cross in memory of Jesus’ last hours of suffering. The same can be said for traditional celebrations of Holy Week. It is interesting to note that, according to this number, the celebration of Mass is chiefly a Passionist act and one of the many forms of apostolate to be particularly related to the memory of the Passion.

3. The Memory of the Passion in Formation (n. 96)

The chapter regarding formation is yet another privileged site in which reference is made to the Memory of the Passion. In n. 45 of the Regulations all formation is aimed at keeping alive the memory of the Passion in the Church. The most important aspect of this chapter in the Constitutions is the fact that it includes the formula of profession. It is stated that formation is the crucial moment for the Memory of the Passion. If the candidates to Passionist life receive adequate formation, if profession is made in full awareness of its significance, if the commitment to the Passion is lived in faith, then the principles proclaimed by the Fundamentals shall be lived up to.

It should be emphasized that for the first time in the history of the Congregation, our peculiar vow is formulated from the Memory of the Passion. The vow has a two-fold objective: that of continuously remembering (personal dimension), and that of promoting the memory (apostolic dimension).

4. The Memory of the Passion in the Constitution of the Congregation (n. 100)

The interesting aspect of this number is the fact that the theme of the Memory of the Passion is included in the very Constitution of the Congregation, and that such a theme is related to the current theological principle whereby religious life is seen as the following of Christ.

II. THE MEMORY OF THE PASSION IN THE HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTIONS

A brief historical overview of the Memory of the Passion in the previous Constitutions may be helpful in providing a general background.

Within the framework of the 1720 Constitutions, the term “memory” appears three times in the same paragraph and the synonyms “do not forget” and remembrance” occur twice (2). The 1736 text made reference to “memory” three times and the word “devotion” appeared four times (3). The 1741 text, the first to have been approved by the Holy See, referred to “memory” twice and the term “devotion” occurred five times (4). In 1745 the formula of profession was drawn up and has remained unchanged. In its framework, the fourth vow was expressed as the vow to

“promote devotion to the Passion”. The 1746 text excludes all mention of “devotion” and refers to “memory” five times. This change in focus was strongly countered by the formula of the vows which remained faithful to the term “devotion”. As of this date, no further changes were made in the subsequent Constitutions.

The formula of the vows that focused on “devotion” gave rise to certain interpretations that minimized the objective of the Congregation (5). This in turn caused a healthy reaction (6) whose repercussions were felt in the new Constitutions. In the wake of the 1746 Constitutions, the new ones have continued to omit the term “devotion”. In the 1982 text, memory appears seven times in the Constitutions and twice in the Regulations, thus establishing a record for frequency of appearance in the texts of our Constitutions.

III. MEMORIA PASSIONIS AND PASSIONIST SPIRITUALITY

1. Biblical roots of memory

The chief peculiarity of Passionist spirituality with regard to memory is the fact that it is closely related to biblical teachings, especially in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, memory is an extremely important concept due to the fact that the Hebrew religion is an historical religion. History looks to the past, which is why the Jewish historical mentality was sensitive to memory, seen as the recollection and personal experience of the past and of salvific history.

In Israel there is a rule which refers to the recollection of past events (Ps 78:3-75). The very name of Yahweh is a recollection of everything that took place in the Sinai (Ex 3:15).

What is more important in the Hebrew faith is memory in liturgical celebrations. Each holy day commemorates some salvific event of the past. All holy days, starting with Easter (Ex 12:14), are celebrated to recall and relive the past and the exploits of God for the good of the people.

In addition to liturgy and history, there is a privileged time to live the memory of God in Israel. It is the time of prayer. The elements of memory in the Old Testament are complemented by new ones in the New Testament. The main element here is the institution of Eucharist in memory of the Lord and that of ministerial priesthood, the members of which are appointed to repeat Jesus' Last Supper in remembrance of him. (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24-25).

Given the reality of resurrection, the memory of Jesus in the Eucharist and the sacraments is not a simple remembrance or commemoration, but rather a truthful and real memory. Consequently, remembering Jesus in the liturgy means invoking his presence through the use of consecrating words. Given the complexity of the elements of memory in the New Testament, it became clear from the beginning of the Christian Era that it would be difficult to maintain its richness. The danger of giving preference to sacrament over memory was not late in arising. After all, it became apparent there was a tendency to give privilege to the christian rite over the element of memory found in the Old Testament. In order to be complete and perfect, the memory of the Old Testament must be effectively complemented by the sacramental dimension of the New Testament.

However, if christian piety disregards the historical element of memory, it is likely to become subjected to the ritualistic and magical distortions of pagan religions.

Some reflections on the greatest danger to the sacramental aspect of Christianity provide us with theological and historical context. It will thus be possible for us to understand the significance of the original contribution made by St. Paul of the Cross to the very essence of Jesus' anamnestic memory.

2. What does memory consist in?

When we speak of memory, we refer to the human faculty, both sensitive and spiritual, which makes it possible to keep the past in a perpetually present dimension. It is the ability to store and achieve all of a human being's past experience. As time elapses the most recent recollections neither erase nor destroy the previous ones. Consequently, events are arranged according to the time in which they happened. The fact that human memory permanently registers past events collected and stored by the mind makes it possible to record them willingly. It is this human faculty to which the term memory refers. However, it can also be used to indicate the very information collected and retained by such a faculty. That is why we sometimes speak of the "memories" of a certain individual. Such memories are the combination of the events which are kept alive by memory. The word memory can also have a third meaning. It describes the very act by which, through the exercise of his will, man can retrieve an experience previously stored in his memory and give it a present dimension. It is this process that we specifically refer to when speaking of "commemorating" and, in more technical terms, "evoking."

Is there any difference between memory and recollection? At first, the two expressions seem to be synonymous. Nevertheless, it is easy to point out some important differences between the two. Memory, with its threefold meaning of faculty, object and act, is an ability common to both humans and animals. Man carries out all these actions related to the recollection of the past in a specifically human manner. Let us see how.

The memory of human beings is an intellectual function. Consequently, the retention of acquired knowledge is of vital importance to human intelligence. The reason for this is that man constantly learns new things and acquires a deeper understanding of what he already knows. Thanks to the retention and storage of previously acquired information and its presence in his mind, man can constantly evoke such information by digging deeper into his intellect. And this is something animals cannot do. Human memory provides the great possibility for human growth through knowledge. As time elapses and the number of recollections increases, man penetrates deeper into the meaning of past events. In effect the entire past of each individual prepares for the present and embodies it in advance. But only a human being is capable of capturing this pre-embodiment as well as the unfolding and meaning of past events. In addition, intellectual memory becomes a creative force in an human being by making new associations between information and images of the past.

Let us single out some of the properties that characterize the human activity of recollection.

In the first place, through the intellectual activity of recollection, the material stored in memory is handled and used in a human manner.

In the second place, recollection is a complex activity in the framework of which the three durations of time become integrated. Through memory the past is recalled, recollection relates it to what man is in the present as a result of what he was or experienced, and what he can become

and is called to be as a result of what he is and was. This three-dimensional integration of events can only be attained when recollection is an intellectual activity.

In the third place, recollection is an intellectual activity of penetrating into the meaning of events. Only through recollection is it possible to capture the significant nexus between past experiences, thanks to the increasingly clear and complete understanding of the unfolding of events, the forces that came into play and the historical context. Remembering is like understanding history.

In the fourth place, recollection is creative. Using the material provided by memory, it is capable of giving events a new image. Not through the transformation of its contents, but through the sublimation, transfiguration, enlightenment and clear demonstration of all its reality. It may be stated that the best achievements in biblical history are the fruit of this faculty of recollection which creates and transfigures the past.

In the fifth place, it is human knowledge par excellence: the ideal knowledge that man has of himself. It is through the recollection of his own past by digging into his own memory that man acquires a real idea of himself as an individual — not just real, but adequately human as well. Then, since man is not a pure spirit but an historical animal, the knowledge akin to his historical component is knowledge acquired through recollection.

In the sixth place, the knowledge acquired through recollection is synthetic and integral knowledge and for different reasons. First of all, because of the integration of the three duration components; secondly, because of the harmonious association between the sensitive and intellectual elements of memory, namely, the association between personal experience and intellectual transfiguration, between the sequence of historical events and the intellectual understanding of their significance.

In the seventh place, this kind of knowledge acquired through recollection is the only one which makes it possible for a human being to formulate a highly accurate prediction as to the ultimate and full development of his personality. The past and present, understood in their total dimension through recollection, easily project into the future the predictable image of a human being's own ultimate spiritual development.

3. The Memory of the Passion in Saint Paul of the Cross

a. Symbol and reality

There are three moments of great significance in the life of Saint Paul of the Cross during which he specifically expresses his concern for the memory of the Passion. Such moments are the retreat at Castellazzo, his spiritual union with God and the spiritual testament he drew up during the last stages of his illness. These are privileged moments, for we can say that they represent the beginning, climax and end of his life as a Passionist. In each of these three stages, Saint Paul of the Cross experiences his obsession with the memory of the Passion in a different fashion. At Castellazzo, he draws up the first Constitutions in which, as observed earlier, the memory of the Passion plays a prominent role. In his mystical marriage, as a symbol of his total self-giving to Christ, the Saint receives a ring on which the instruments of the Passion are engraved, and he is appointed the specific task of “always remembering the cruel Passion” (7).

When lying on his death bed dictating his spiritual testament, he undoubtedly recalls the very first visions that led him to found the Congregation. He talks to his religious of the “holy habit of penance and mourning in memory of the Passion and death of our loving Redeemer” (8).

These three episodes alone in the life of Saint Paul of the Cross, so significantly marked by the Saint’s obsession with the memory of the Passion, are enough to define his life as one devoted to remembering the Passion.

In the three culminating moments we have just recalled, there are two symbols whose significance must be mentioned so as to capture their deep meaning. They are the black habit and the wedding ring of the mystical union with the instruments of the Passion engraved on it. Our Founder consciously used the habit as a symbol. In his personal experiences and texts, the habit of the Passion represents much more than the robe he is called to wear as an ecclesiastic. In order to prove this, it is sufficient to remember that, in the early visions which led him to found the Congregation, he saw the mystical image of a black habit with a white cross on the chest.

Theological essays have already understood the intuitive and supernatural nature of such intellectual visions that characterized the Founding Period (9). The fact that in his spiritual testament the origin of the Congregation is associated with the visions the Saint experienced in his youth is rather indicative.

Where does the truly valuable and meaningful message lie in his ideas? The Saint undoubtedly understood the significance of the Passionist habit from the beautiful metaphors used by Saint Paul the Apostle when he speaks of the symbolic action of dressing in the clothes of Christ (Gal 3:27; Ephes 4:24, 6:11; Col 3:10; Rom 13:14). It is a kind supernatural anthropology, no doubt, in which the will to adopt the inner disposition of Christ acquires a deep significance. In other words, a new man would be created inside the Passionist through actions recalling the Passion of Christ symbolized by the habit. According to theological principles of the time, dressing in the clothes of Christ had a very deep significance when the Incarnation itself was seen as a rite whereby the Trinity clothed the Humanity of Christ in the divine condition of the Word.

These considerations regarding the concepts influencing the mind of Saint Paul of the Cross when he spoke of the black habit he wore night and day are rather superficial. However, they do help to comprehend his understanding of the Memoria Passionis. Although certain of his texts may induce one to think so, the memory of the Passion is neither mere meditation nor contemplation, nor just the will to reproduce Jesus’ inner disposition. To Saint Paul of the Cross it is something much more ontological in the supernatural order. Remembering the Passion is an activity that tends to embody the Passion in the being of the Passionist. Let us just say that his thought cannot be boiled down either to liturgical memory or mere intentional action.

It is all of that and more, expressed in an intuitive-imaginative language which is at the basis of the symbol of the habit. The real theological context in which one can understand the reality of the Memoria Passionis in Saint Paul of the Cross is first of all an expressive rather than an abstract and conceptual world. A symbolic mode of expression that supports the biblical idea of dressing oneself in the clothes of Christ (10), which means nothing more than taking up all of his pain and sufferings (11); in other words, to assume all of the passiological reality of the Redeemer.

The second symbol is the wedding ring that our Founder receives during his mystical union. The symbolic meaning of the ring in human life is clear. It is a reminder of the gift of marriage and the commitments that are made at that time. All of these elements are clearly expressed in the celebration of the Saint's mystical marriage. The Word abandons himself to the soul of Paul in total love. At the same time, through the instruments engraved on the ring and their symbolism, Paul is reminded of his personal commitment to remember the cruel Passion.

The original concepts of memory in Paul of the Cross whereby he dresses himself in the sufferings of Christ and the constant reminder of such sufferings through the wedding ring belong to what we might call an order of mystical memory.

In the Saint's spirituality, there is another way to recall the Passion, which we could call a mystical-liturgical order, represented by his peculiar way of living the memory of the Passion during the Mass: It is not just the universal fact of celebrating Mass as a memorial of the Passion. It is a much more personal dimension, such as the clerical vestments, the colors, etc. For example, the amice symbolizes the blindfold used to cover Jesus' eyes when he was mocked in the house of Annas; the alb symbolizes the white exterior of the house of Herod; the cincture represents the whips with which Jesus was scourged by the Jews; the chalice symbolizes that of Gethsemane; the pyx represents the sepulchre, etc. (12). For this reason, in the spirituality of the Saint, the Mass is the most appropriate time to celebrate the Passion by recalling the different scenes of the Passion and then dressing in all the sufferings of Christ before going up to the altar to celebrate the Eucharist (13).

Another way of participating in the Passion of Christ through remembering and during the celebration of Mass is to experience mystical death by identifying it with the sacramental death of Christ in his liturgical mysteries (14). This mystical and liturgical memory underscores the extent to which Saint Paul of the Cross was able to originally modify such objectively structured realities as the eucharistic memory, according to his own spiritual preferences.

b. Memory used for meditation on the Passion

Leaving symbols aside, if we set out to analyze the abstract terminology used by the Saint to express his idea of remembering, we will easily discover that memory is related to meditation. But the Saint's conception of meditation very closely resembles that of memory, due to the concrete manner in which he sees the former. Meditation, conceived as a technique in his life and teachings, varies according to the spiritual level of the persons practicing it. Meditation according to our Founder always begins with recalling the Passion in its historical elements. At this point it is real memory, for it entails the mental recollection of past events. Once this stage is over, we immediately go to emotional aspects or to considerations of a practical nature, such as the virtues that Jesus perfectly exemplifies in his Passion. The more contemplative and advanced people can go directly from the first stage of meditation, when the Passion is recalled, to a stage of analysis. During this time, the mysteries of love and pain that are revealed in the Passion are considered and the memory is only a point of departure for contemplative elevation. It is for this reason that personal meditation of the Passion contains important elements of memory. Yet it is never identified, not even in the mental activity that is applied to the Passion.

c. The Memory of the Passion in the Saint's apostolate

Saint Paul of the Cross firmly believed that all the evils of Christianity stemmed from the failure to recall the Passion. This was primarily due to a sacramental life that placed a minimum emphasis on consciousness and a high degree on ritualism, which almost assumes a magical and superstitious aspect. In his day the Eucharist was far from being a conscious memory of the Passion. The Saint got to the root of the Christian evils of his time, one of which was religious ignorance. The other was the lowering of Catholic liturgical life to alarming levels, caused by the neglect of the essential message of Christ expressed at the Last Supper.

How did he endeavor to change things?

Reforming the liturgy was not a simple task, nor would it have been profitable. What would he have gained from celebrating Mass in the vernacular, if people remained unconcerned with the conscious and anamnestic return to the events in the life of Christ and of salvific history? The important thing was to make people aware of the need to reflect consciously on the essential mysteries of salvation.

Some of his contemporaries — Saint Leonard of Port Maurice being one of the many — tried to awaken the memory of the mysteries of Christ through practices fostering awareness, such as the Way of the Cross and other forms of popular and para-liturgical devotions. Saint Paul of the Cross did not pursue this path. He did not introduce the Way of the Cross into his Congregation. He chose another way to restore the dimensions of historical and ritualistic memory to Christianity, namely, by introducing people to meditation on the Passion. This was the real context in which he launched his far-reaching catholic reform plan. Few reformers in history have attempted to implement such a radical program aimed at the return to pure Christianity. Saint Paul of the Cross saw as the root of all evil in Catholicism the failure to remember the Passion. The Passion was the main content of the Christian message and the main object of eucharistic anamnesis. Forgetting the Passion meant losing the anamnestic dimension of Christianity.

Other reformers have found the root of all evil to lie in ignorance and have devoted their life to the Christian education of children and youth. That is how many Catholic congregations of teachers came into existence. Others traced the evils of the Church to the lack of formation of the clergy and, consequently, founded seminaries. Still others attempted to reform and renew the Church by dealing with several concerns, all worthy of praise. In his reform program, our Founder went back to the last and explicit will and testament of Jesus: remember him, celebrate his memory and the memory of his death. It is for this reason the Congregation was founded.

IV. THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF PASSIONIST MEMORY

Of all the memories mentioned in the Constitutions, the liturgical memory is the main and most important one. in the order of objective contents and modes of celebration. The first and most perfect of remembering the Passion is that which is celebrated in the liturgy in general, and in particular in the Eucharist when the command given by Jesus, “Do this in memory of me”, is fulfilled. All other forms are aimed at the perfect celebration of this culminating memory. All the awareness of the Passion and death of Christ in preaching, personal meditation and devotional para-liturgies aim at celebrating in the most perfect and conscious form the eucharistic memory that truthfully, really and substantially reproduces the drama of Calvary. One of the great advantages of the new Constitutions is the fact that the liturgical memory is included as a peculiar form of promoting the memory of the Passion.

The second is what we might call the kerigmatic memory which has two aspects in the Congregation. The first is the announcement of the Passion of Christ to the pagans when the image of Christ on the Cross is presented to those who still do not know him (cf. Gal 3:1; 1 Cor 2:2). The other is the preaching of the Passion to believers who already know the mysteries of Redemption.

Preaching to non-believers is memory in the sense that, through words, it recalls and gives a present dimension to the event of Calvary. When the Passion of Christ is narrated or announced, the preaching mysteriously gives new life to the event of Calvary before the eyes of those who completely ignore the Passion of Christ.

In preaching the Passion to believers the memory of the Passion is celebrated in two dimensions. As to the event itself, the kerigmatic announcement to Christians gives the Passion a present dimension, making it re-exist in the form of what has been called “the event of the Word”. As to Christians, who themselves already know the redeeming events of the Passion, the preaching brings back those memories gives new life, puts them in practice and makes them salvific. The failure to recall the forgotten mysteries of the Passion was the greatest concern for our Founder.

The third form of remembering the Passion is that which is celebrated through personal recollection. The announcement of the Passion received in kerigma matures in recollection. The preaching of the Passion which the Christian believer listens to assumes a personal dimension and operates salvifically in recollection. The active preaching of the Passionist apostle feeds on recollection and meditation, which provide him with the vital impulse to announce the Passion and witness to it.

The different ways just mentioned of celebrating the memory of the Passion imply the previous effective celebration of the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit is seen as the enlightening principle of the past and stimulating force for its continuation in the present.

At the Last Supper, Christ promised: “The Holy Spirit...will remind you of all I have said to you” (Jn 14:26). This pneumatic memory has the purpose of leading to ultimate truth (cf. Jn 6:13). It is the supernatural function of what we defined as recollection in the natural order, namely, the penetration and deeper understanding of past events through the application of human reason to history.

All the ways of living the Memoria Passionis in Saint Paul of the Cross have been analyzed and treated in this essay, along with the ideal that the Constitutions represent for all Passionists. In completing this analysis it is important to state that the memory of the Passion does not constitute all of Passionist spirituality. The memory is nothing more than the first component of the Passionist trinity: Keeping alive the memory of the Passion, keeping the memory of the Passion within our hearts, mystical death.

CONCLUSION

The chapel in which the remains of Saint Paul of the Cross are buried, inside the Church of Saints John and Paul at Rome, contains two objects that greatly move those who observe them with devotion. They are the sacred body of the Founder and the magnificent painting by L. Cocchetti.

The painting sums up all the mystical christology of Saint Paul of the Cross in a greatly symbolic mystical episode. If the careful observer attempts to trace each stage of the mystical process, the culmination of which is expressed in the work of art, he will discover most interesting things. It all began on the prie-dieu which is clearly shown in the lower left corner of the painting. That is where Paul went into seclusion to enter into the mystery of the Passion. The center of the painting shows the great cross which was the object of meditation. Around it nine angels are showing the Saint the instruments of the Passion. Those angels undoubtedly represent the activity of memory which recalls all the tortures that Jesus suffered in the Passion. At a given moment, memory becomes love and contemplation. The ascending process continued and reached the climax the artist depicted on the canvas. Celestial lights begin to irradiate from the cross. The aching body of the crucified Christ is transfigured. Golgotha is converted into Tabor and Jesus shows his glory to the Saint who is immersed in the painful contemplation of the Passion. The resurrected Christ removes the nails from his hands. All that is left of the painful Good Friday are the scars on his hands, while his feet are still fixed to the cross. After removing the nails, the triumphant Christ draws the pious contemplator of the Passion to himself with his right hand and raises him up to his side. From this scene, we can easily picture the divine embrace. That which began with the memory of the Cross and the sufferings of Jesus has reached the climax of the transforming union.

In formulating these simple considerations on the memory of the Passion, I am persuaded that Cochetti's painting illustrates the spiritual essence that can lead the Passionist from remembering the Passion to the transforming union with Christ on the Cross.

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Editor's Note: Father Artola graciously sent us the above synthesis of his original article for publication. The Editor will happily make available a photocopy of Fr. Artola's original article in Spanish to anyone who may so desire.

THE LIVING MEMORY OF THE PASSION

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(A paper delivered at the Meeting of the North-European Provincials of the Congregation of the Passion, Les Sables d'Olonne, June, 21-24, 1984.)

I should point out that I have no desire to repeat myself, to go back over, for example, what I said recently about the Memoria Passionis and about devotion to the Passion. However, I will bear in mind the general content developed in several of my works (particularly the most recent on "Le verbe et la croix"), but I have no desire to summarize them.

I will confine myself to the subject of the living memory of the Passion which we wish to consider today and which is in some sense the muted, base accompaniment to our experiences as Passionists and, indeed, to our deepest reflections.

This subject deals with the fundamental relationship which binds to the Cross of Christ all those who are suffering, all those who are crucified in the world. Now, it would seem to me that this relationship raises two problems:

The first relates to the way in which we see this fundamental relationship between Christ and those who are suffering.

The second refers to the way in which we implement it, in which we put it into practice.

I. HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND THIS FUNDAMENTAL RELATIONSHIP?

This is not an easy question. All the more reason, then, to strive for clarity. Clarity demands that we should question ourselves about:

- A. the unique character of this relationship;
- B. the nature of this relationship which, let us not be under any illusions, is unique. The relationship in question is very different from the relationships with which we are familiar either in the natural sciences or what is commonly called the field of social sciences.

A. The characteristics of the relationship.

Since the points of reference, or terms, of this relationship are Christ and those whom he calls his brothers, we must consider each of these terms in order to discover the characteristics of this relationship.

Starting from Christ, the bond which unites him to all the suffering people throughout history is a fundamental one. By which I mean three things.

Firstly, I mean that it is not a relationship which can be superimposed, almost as an afterthought, on the human-divine condition of Christ. It is inseparable from that very condition. In this sense, this relationship is not contingent but, rather, necessary.

Secondly, given that this relationship is consubstantial with the very person of Christ, we may say that it is original or essential.

Finally, as it is at the foundation of the life and the Passion of Christ, we may say that it is fundamental.

Furthermore, this necessary, original and fundamental relationship is, indeed, also universal. The suffering Christ is joined to each and every person who is suffering irrespective of his country, tribe, language or religion.

Conversely, if we consider this relationship from the point of view of its second term, we may say that there is a converse, necessary, original and fundamental relationship of each and every suffering person to the Crucified Christ, independent of the person's racial or religious background.

Therefore, to sum up this first part of our reflection, we may say that this unique relationship is, on the one hand, a relationship between a unique being, Christ and each and every person, and, on the other, between each and every person and this unique being of whom Saint Paul declares the universal virtue.

B. The Nature of the relationship.

The second question relating to the nature of the relationship is more difficult to answer.

To show how enigmatic and paradoxical it is, we can refer to specific, familiar texts. I will limit myself to the best known:

Acts 9:3-4: “Falling to the ground, Saul heard a voice saying: ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ ‘Who are you Lord?’ he asked. ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.’”

There is no need to insist on the emergence of an I and a Me, belonging to Christ, in the men and women whom Paul is hounding.

Mt 25:31-46: This is the most unambiguous text. I will simply recall the crux of it.

“Come you blessed of my Father...for I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me; naked and you clothed me; sick and you visited me; in prison and you came to see me....Truly I say to you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”

Once again the enigma of this relationship is due wholly to the unity of an I who is present in his suffering brothers to such an extent that we must say on the one hand: “I was thirsty, etc....” and on the other: “What you did not do to these the least of my brothers, you did not do it to me.”

It is my belief that these simple relationships, which call for a difficult process of reflection on our part, tell us less about what this relationship is than what it cannot be reduced to. It cannot simply be reduced to a relationship of brotherhood, in the ordinary sense of kinship. We can of course say, if we wish, that whatever anyone does to my brother he is doing it to me. Yet this transfer, no matter how moving it may be, does not justify us saying: “I was hungry, I was thirsty....”

Nor is it possible, in my view, to reduce this unique relationship to a vague sort of representation wherein Christ represents all mankind and all suffering members of the human race represent Christ, just as an ambassador represents a Prince, with any insult on the former redounding ipso facto on the latter.

The image of the **body**, “the body of Christ”, “the mystical body”, seems closer to what we are looking for. The term “mystical” does, indeed, highlight an interior quality which the previous relationships could easily conceal from us. In any case, although the mysterious “virtue” of Christ does spread through all the members of the body, it is not so much the dynamism of this virtue which is stressed in the scene of the last judgement, than the enigmatic passion which is being continued in his members.

This gives rise to a new line of questioning. What do we mean by saying that Christ is suffering in all those who suffer? What do we mean by this “being in” through which we express the depth of an enigmatic relationship?

We could say that Christ is suffering today in all his members in a way which is authentic and universal. In saying this we would be agreeing with the thesis developed not solely in Protestant circles (cf. J. Moltmann) but also among Catholic theologians, some of whom, e.g. Fr. Galot, S.J., hold that the most important development of modern theology has been the elevation and exaltation of suffering in God himself. This transposition displays the praiseworthy desire of not identifying God and his Christ with the impassive gods of Greek mythology. However, in this form this transposition does not, in my view, answer the question it raises. This exalted suffering is wholly unrelated to human suffering as we know it, and intensifying it in God neither solves

the enigma of suffering, nor does it provide us with a means for overcoming it. Yet it would be outrageous, not to say ridiculous, to claim that Christ underwent, or is still undergoing, all human suffering as if he were in some sense the microcosm of it. It is my humble opinion that, as a man living on earth, Jesus could not experience the suffering of all mankind neither in its greatest intensity nor in its widest extent. Thus, this understanding of Christ **being in** all those who are suffering in the world would seem to me not only doomed to failure but also dangerous for it might suggest, through the divine or Christic exaltation of suffering on which it is founded, that suffering has an absolute value. This latter I reject vigorously. as a consoling mythology or mystifying ideology, since the texts about the last judgement talk about eliminating suffering not consecrating it.

If we avoid this first extreme which pushes the passion of mankind back onto a new Passion inflicted on Christ; and, if we wish to avoid the sin of omission of watering down the words of the Gospel: “I was hungry, I was thirsty”, how then do we conceive this **I** of Christ in all those who suffer?

It is possible to see another way of giving these Gospel passages their full force. This would involve extending to all men the hypostatic union through which Christ is the God-man, as for example in the traditional treatises “De Verbo Incarnato”. Thus we could truthfully attribute to the person of Christ, the second person of the Trinity, the sufferings of all mankind, since all mankind by virtue of this relationship of a privileged union would be seen as one single person in Christ. It would then be possible to say without fear of contradiction that Christ is hungry and thirsty in us, and that whatever we do to the least of our brothers we do to him.

I am not sure that today’s theologians would agree with this general extension of the relationship of hypostatic union. Given this, as I continue my analysis I must acknowledge my inability to find a philosophy of this relationship that would do justice to these passages of Scripture which we revere as the basic charter for our apostolic action. It is not simply a figure of speech to say that Christ is hungry and is thirsty in all those who are hungry and thirsty.

I will, therefore, turn to another solution. Christ came to serve and not to be served. Here serving means liberating, liberating from everything which oppresses mankind. This liberating mission is what binds Christ to all those who are suffering. He did not come to consecrate suffering, which is doubtless an aberration of life as if it were some sort of absolute, rather to end it.

Therefore, the relationship which binds the suffering Christ, i.e. who has suffered, to those who are suffering is a relationship of the universal servant to those whom he has come to serve.

Now, serving implies three things:

- 1) To take on oneself, in one’s flesh and in one’s mind, the cause of those whom one wishes to serve;
- 2) acceptance of this cause is a way of identifying oneself with the very being of the one being served;
- 3) this identification is a work of justice to such an extent that whatever one does to others, it is being done to God himself.

The relationship which I am trying to describe is, therefore, ultimately one for which the liberation from suffering becomes in our world, due to the effective presence of Christ, the historical manifestation of the very being of God.

II. HOW DO WE PUT INTO PRACTICE THE UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP WHICH BINDS THE CRUCIFIED ONE TO ALL WHO SUFFER?

Before attempting to answer this question I feel it useful, as I look at the first part of my analysis, to consider its limitations.

It is understandable that each of the relationships we considered to express the uniqueness of the bond between the Crucified One and all those who suffer in the world ultimately seems inadequate. From this point of view the attempt to provide an adequate explanation has been a failure. Yet, I believe that it had to be tried as this abstract language, until we have something better, is still the appropriate tool for our reflection. The most important thing about our efforts is that we do not forget their limitations, i.e., that we remember that these scriptural passages, like poetic texts, cannot be fully exhausted by our explanations of them, no more than movement can be broken down into a series of stills. This movement by which Christ is hungry and thirsty in the poor, this movement which makes it possible to say "I was naked" cannot be reduced to the various relationships by which I attempted to explain it. I think that these magnificent passages which are still reverberating in our world are in their own way poetry. They create in us, or should create in us, movements, changes in the way we live, a sort of metanoia. We can only do justice to the deep meaning of these scriptural passages by putting them into practice and making them come to life, by participating in their movement, and through it transforming men and situations.

This correction which is simply a critical recognition of a certain powerlessness is not without a certain value. By directing us to a practice which is simultaneously an interior change and an attempt at changing our situation, it is calling on us once again to listen to these passages which are the basic charter for our action.

Listening once again to these texts I believe that two aspects emerge. Briefly, I will say that through them we hear:

- a call, or a voice, if you wish;
- and an imperative which is at one and the same time reminiscent of the fiat of Genesis and "do this in memory of me" of a continuing redemption.

A call or a voice: I was naked, I was hungry. These are, indeed, calls by which we could not be unmoved if we have faith. Although the voice is always the same, the call can have different emphases, thus making it possible to answer it in different ways.

The four verbs I mentioned regarding the scene of the last judgement and which in a way express the essence of the history of mankind allow us to divide the attempt at transformation according to the areas of application that indicate or can indicate specific vocations: those deprived of everything, those in prison, the sick, the homeless, those dying of hunger, etc. These are all voices which are in some way manifest in the brutal reality that surrounds us and calls out to us.

This call is also an imperative: do what you do to the least of my brothers as if it were to me. The unity of the two commandments, love of God and love of one's neighbor, is seen in this call and this imperative.

Having said this, I recognize that this call and this command can be heard in two different ways. Our meeting here today bears witness to these different interpretations. I am probably being simplistic, yet, I believe that this simplification corresponds to some extent to a division which I think I have noticed.

This is how I would describe it in general terms:

For some people it is the spiritual poverty of those who are suffering that they hear in this call and command. One might say that the greatest destitution relates to the soul rather than to the body. Thus, the primary necessity is to commemorate the Passion by preaching Jesus Crucified to others so that they can find a meaning for their suffering which our efforts will never be able to eliminate. For what is most intolerable is not so much suffering but, rather, a lack of meaning for it.

According to a different sort of sensitivity — note that I say sensitivity — it is rather the physical destitution of human suffering more than anything that urges us to an attentive and energetic practice. Clearly, it is not a question of abolishing the meaning, nor claiming an exclusive right to preach the Passion, nor challenging the missionary tradition, so important to our forebears. All this does not require a living faith.

For these intrepid individuals, what is involved more than anything in this call and command of Christ is to perceive the necessity of being creative and inventing new ways. The memory of the Passion is just as present. More than anything else, however, it is the call to change the conditions in which we live. Without this change, without this active involvement with the problems of our situation, it would seem that we run the risk of reducing the Word of the Cross, the Verbum Crucis, to a dead letter.

Now, this involvement can take different forms. In general, we may note as a primary condition before we can do anything what Fr. Austin Smith of Liverpool called “**existence with**”. This prepositional construction, **being-with**, has a scriptural flavor and is reminiscent of other such constructions from the New Testament like: being in, being by, being for.

On occasions, this existence may be nothing more (as we have been reminded regarding our apostolate in Sweden) than a simple silent presence, which lays the groundwork for some possible action in the future.

With regard to this **existence with**, I note what has been said in a paper by one of our English brethren who sees four different levels:

- experience
- analysis
- criticism
- reinterpretation.

Experience

The first level, experience, is the basic level. It is the necessary, though not the sufficient condition of any existence with. In my opinion, it is also the first step in the process of stripping ourselves, of denying our own ego. This experience, as distinct from our traditional preaching which gives without needing to receive forces us to learn from others, to learn from their

suffering, to understand that our religious life does not always allow us to understand. At this point, while apologizing for running the risk of breaking up my line of argument, I will distinguish several aspects of this experience, designating them by prepositional constructions in order to remain faithful to the linguistic spirit of the New Testament.

It is to be understood that these expressions denote different facets of **being-with**.

Existence **with** involves letting ourselves be informed by those with whom we are.

This **being through** other people is based on the assumption that we have a lot to receive from those whom we desire to help. They have something to give us which we do not know and can not foresee. In this context letting ourselves be informed implies two aspects that correspond to the two meanings of the noun “information:” the idea of a body of information and, at a deeper level, the idea of being formed and being transformed by those we are with.

This being through other people involves more than just getting to know them; it is also valuable as a form of conversion in the sense that our contact does not leave us unchanged. It forces us, as I said above, to strip ourselves of our prejudices, of our comfortable habits. The crosses of other people help us to come to terms with the Cross of Christ.

In doing this we give a new force to the word **compassion** which we tend to water down to mean a vague sort of emotion. When we use it in respect to some distressing situation, compassion — what St. Paul meant by “sunpa-schontes” — implies a profound sensitivity to misfortune, a sensitivity which we express by the passive form “being touched” by those who surround us. However, this sensitivity is not totally passive. It urges us to deepen our experience on two levels as I pointed out above. By immersing ourselves in a situation of misfortune we cannot leave it unscathed. We have a better understanding of what is happening but, just as importantly, we realize better what has to be changed in ourselves so that we may be ready to answer the command of the Gospel in a particular situation.

In this respect I recall the three meanings St. Thomas gave to the verb *pati* — to suffer.

In the present instance our suffering comes from what we experience. Yet it is also becoming something other than what we were, in the sense that we gain something by being obedient, by listening to those with whom we have chosen to be and to remain.

Analysis

The second level is that of analysis. After immersing ourselves in a situation there comes a time to leave it. This takes place through a strict process of reflection. It is a question of knowing exactly what is going on in the situation. This leads to questioning the structure of the situation, its composition, the needs it displays, the diversity of the elements comprising it.

This analysis is helped, or can be helped, by sociological studies and is not unrelated to effective action. Effective action, far from being incompatible with a clear understanding of what is happening, is dependent on it for its rigor.

Criticism

The third level which our friend has termed criticism is in my view the most important. In the light of our experience we are brought to ask ourselves how we understand our relationship with God. How do we understand and, more importantly, how do we live out our relationship with God? Or to put it even more radically, who is God and who is his Christ for us both in the way we think and in the way we act?

Some people have had their understanding of God changed by their experience of this nocturnal world to the extent that the meaning and implications of it are reduced to a simple demand for justice. In this a clear distinction is being made between a so called “substantialist” concept of God “en-soi”, who is isolated from the world even if he is the essential correlation of the three divine persons, and a “functionalist” concept of God in which he is present through an ethical supplication.

Others would see the problem of combining the “en-soi” and the “pour-nous” of the Christian God as merely the result of our analytically breaking down of ideas we have to transcend. Here again, the “transi Macedoniam” forces us to combine in one single movement the unconnected aspects of substance and relationship.

Reinterpretation

Finally, on the last level, this **being-with** of our immersion in a situation in which the enigmatic **I** of the last judgment rings out forces us to undertake what our English colleague has called a reinterpretation. We are, of course, familiar with the writings of the Old and New Testaments. We know and willingly reread the Epistles and the Gospels. Yet we often read them out of context, on an abstract level. Their meaning attains a new richness when we read them in a specific situation. The liberation message of the Prophets and of the beatitudes have a different reverberation when they ring out in a specific situation and when they echo back at us from that situation. Perhaps this second reading of our text will force us to ask questions again about Revelation, about the meaning of Redemption, about the meaning of history, in short, will call us once again to a conversion regarding the way we look and the way we live. This is, perhaps, reminiscent of what Jesus said to Peter: “Another will lead you where you do not want to go” (Jn 21:18).

CONCLUSION

I think these words of Jesus to the Apostle would be a fitting provisional conclusion to our meeting: “Another will lead you where you do not want to go.”

Having to go where we would rather not is to be in the blessed and difficult position of having to set limits to our world, to order our own horizons, to question our own certainties and our well-established habits.

The world in which we live is very demanding and even almost unbearable. Yet, for those who know that faith is something more than a simple set of dogmas, a “dunamis” as the New Testament reminds us so forcefully, this world in which so much is impossible is, also, by a sort of defiance, an incitement to action. It will give the person crying out in the desert of love, — I was naked, I was in prison — this face of light which is for us nothing other than the hope of our faith and our love.

THE MEMORY OF THE PASSION IN THE CONSTITUTIONS

Very Rev. Eugene Delaney, C.P.

Introduction

The Constitutions clearly and concisely enunciate the Passionist charism. Its fundamental element is to keep alive the memory of the Passion of Jesus. The principal texts are found in Chapter 1, numbers 5 and 6:

“We seek the unity of our lives and our apostolate in the Passion of Jesus” (Const. 5).

“We express, our participation in the Passion by a special vow....Through this vow we bind ourselves to keep alive the memory of the Passion of Christ. By word and deed we strive to foster awareness of its meaning and value....

“By this vow our Congregation takes her place in the Church so as to dedicate herself fully to its mission. “In the light of this, we seek to incorporate this vow into our daily lives by living the evangelical counsels.

“Then, as we relive the memory of the Passion of Christ today, our communities become a leaven of salvation in the Church and in the world” (Const. 6).

In accord with these statements, Chapter 6 establishes the memory of the Passion as the constitutive element of the Congregation:

“Whether clerics or brothers, all of us share the same Passionist vocation, and are called to live in community as equal sons of the same Father. Together we strive to keep alive in our minds and hearts the memory of the Passion, each according to his particular role of service in the Church and in the Congregation. In our continual efforts to follow Jesus Crucified, we are supported and guided by our Constitutions” (Const. 100).

In Chapter 4 the topic receives special emphasis and its present relevance is highlighted:

“By virtue of the specific mission that the Church entrusts to us, we make our own the words of Saint Paul: ‘We preach Christ Crucified,’ of whom we proclaim: ‘He is risen’” (Const: 64).

“We Passionists make the Paschal Mystery the centre of our lives.

“This entails a loving commitment to follow Jesus Crucified, and a generous resolve to proclaim His Passion and death with faith and love. His passion and death are no mere historical events. They are ever-present realities to people in the world today, ‘ crucified as they are by injustice, by lack of a deep respect for human life, and by a hungry yearning for peace, truth, and the fulness of human existence” (Const. 65).

In Chapter 5; which treats of formation, we find it mentioned, though not developed:

“Instruction on the whole range of the mystery of Christ’s Passion and the spirituality of our Founder and our Congregation must be included in the plan of formation for all our religious” (Const. 86).

These references are sufficient to orient ourselves to the topic and locate it within the Constitutions. These clear and precise references adequately demonstrate the centrality of the memory of the Passion in Passionist life and apostolate.

In order to appreciate more deeply the meaning of the memory of the Passion in our Congregation, we offer some reflections based on three core questions:

1. The content of the memory: What do we recall?
2. The modality of the memory: How do we recall?
3. The finality of the memory: Why do we recall?

I. THE CONTENT OF THE MEMORY

To posit the question about the content of the memory may seem unnecessary for the answer is obvious. Nevertheless, the historical fact of the Passion being “forgotten” obliges us not to take anything for granted regarding the question: What do we recall when we remember the Passion of Jesus?

The fact of “forgetting” is what led Paul of the Cross to gather companions for the purpose of experiencing the mystery of Jesus Crucified in the solitude of the retreat, and then proclaim it to the faithful in mission preaching.

Such a “forgetting” ought always to be of concern to the Congregation of Paul of the Cross. It may result from the absence of information, or more positively from the “voiding” of the cross which is brought on by some forms of remembering. The Apostle Paul had already referred to this danger in the early days of Christianity (cf. 1 Cor 1).

It is not enough simply to recall an historical event. Such events can very often be manipulated so that their true meaning is distorted. We should remember that there are ways of recalling which paradoxically generate a forgetfulness that is graver than that, under which one who is misinformed labors.

Isn’t the fact that the Congregation has considered the necessity of complementing the theological formation of our Students with a special course of Passiology indicative that theological studies do not have Jesus Crucified as their focal point? Does the liturgical memorial, celebrated according to the proper ritual, really inculcate the figure of the suffering Christ in the mind and heart of the faithful? How does one explain the fact that communities which have been evangelized for centuries derive from the cross a spirituality of passive resignation that has ended up alienating them?

In spite of the unquestionable advantages which Greek philosophy has contributed to Christian thought, ought we not lament the displacement it has generated, taking Jesus Crucified from the center and placing him on the periphery? The forgetfulness of those who possess knowledge is a

forgetfulness much graver than the that of those who are uninformed. By the Church's mandate, it belongs to the Passionists to counter these "forgettings" by teaching the event of Jesus' death, and continually explaining its true significance.

Without pretense of exhausting the theme, we will indicate some aspects which today appear insufficiently remembered when we keep alive the memory of Jesus Crucified. We shall develop the following three elements: a. The Scandal; b. The Contradiction; c. The Paschal Meaning.

a. The Scandal of the Cross

From the very beginning there has been a risk of watering-down the cross of Christ, emptying it of its scandalous aspect. The cross has rooted itself in Christian consciousness as a "sign of benediction", but it has not equally penetrated as a "sign of malediction" or curse (Dt 21:23; Gal 3:13).

What does Jesus accept in taking on the cross? Does he accept something good, desired by the Father, or, in accord with the will of the Father, does he accept something bad in order to destroy?

The meaning of the cross was that of a curse which was weighing on the world from the first sin. The acceptance of the cross by Jesus is the very same option he selected in his incarnation. In his incarnation he did not opt to enter into a world of blessing, but rather into the world where evil was entrenched. He shed the world created by the Word of Blessing (Gn 1-2; Jn 1), and entered into the world which man had made a malediction. He became a slave and humbled himself unto the cross (Phil 2:5-11).

Jesus became the "suffering servant" (Is 53). His was not a visit to the world of sin, but an incarnation into it. He assumed sin, he made it his own, he appropriated it. He did not hesitate to face it, nor did he turn his face from it. In this he was obedient unto death. His acceptance of the cross was the most profound way he could enter into the world of sin. He was not accepting something good, but something bad. The cross was the symbol of all that was evil. The good was his acceptance to enter into this world to destroy the dominance of evil, for it was the will of the Father, "Who so loved the world that he surrendered his own Son" (Jn 3:16).

Two positions which are eminently important for pastoral activity flow from remembering the scandal of the cross: not accepting the cross as something good and directly willed by God, but as something bad which ought to be combated; and, in solidarity with all the crucified, the choice to enter into and remain in the world of malediction, knowing that it is there that the wisdom and power of God are manifested (1 Cor 1:1-24).

b. The Contradiction

Jesus enters into the world as a "sign of contradiction" (Lk 2:34). His heart was filled with the Father's love for all people. His spirit was filled with complete opposition to sin and its consequences. He assumes the world and human history with all its decadence, but he does not accept it. He decisively confronts the risky duty of changing everything. In the synagogue at Nazareth he makes his own the prophecy of Isaiah 61 (Lk 4:6-21), thus defining his mission to the world.

The life of the Lord is a continual struggle against evil in all its forms. He combats sin in the heart of the sinner. He expels demons where he finds them at work. He cures the illnesses of persons who are blind, deaf, and leprosy. He denounces the formalism and the hypocrisy of the religion of his day. He breaks the chains of oppression and captivity.

He assumes and he combats. These two positions are inseparable in the life of Jesus, they always appear clearly in the Gospel. It is not done without effort and suffering, for he experiences the conflict with evil in his own heart. He was assailed by a dual temptation: by the temptation of not accepting the world as it is, dreaming a possibility of building a new world beyond the old; and by the temptation of “accommodating himself to the framework of the old man.”

The choice the Lord makes is clear. The new world ought to flow out of the old, but, at the same time, out of opposition to the old world. Light will break into the shadows. Life will show itself in death. However, this will never be the result of a peaceful co-existence, but through a systematic opposition instead.

This is the sense in which Jesus takes on the cross. He takes it up and struggles with it until he has taken from it all its potential for destruction. Jesus conquered the cross, despoiling it of its death-dealing power. In death's very destruction the power of God is manifested (Eph 2:14-16).

Remembering the cross as contradiction, as opposition, is to place man upright in the face of all the manifestations of evil. This is entirely contrary to a passive and resigned posture. It means to awaken a critical and liberating attitude and to invite persons to take up the way of the cross courageously and with a challenging attitude (Lk 9:51).

c. The Paschal Meaning

The most important and determinative content of the memory of the Passion is contained in the Paschal meaning of the death of the Lord. We want to state this emphatically: the Pasch is not an event which occurs after death. It is experienced in the heart of dying. The manifestation comes later on the third day. The reality of the Pasch, however, is simultaneous with death. Jesus is definitively rooted into life at the same moment that he dies.

Not every cross is a Paschal Cross. The defeated cross is Paschal. The Pasch supposes the Exodus of Egypt and the journeying toward the new Land. The cross is a Paschal one when the Crucified does not let himself be obliterated by it, nor permits it entrance into his heart as a bearer of malediction. It is a Paschal Cross when the Crucified uses it to outline the new world, and to profile the attitudes of the new man. That is what did not occur with the bad thief, yet it is exactly what happened with the good thief. This is what the world definitively received as possible for it through the majestic manner of the dying of Jesus of Nazareth.

There are some deaths that do not kill and there are some lives that do not die. This is what Christians proclaim in the life and death of Jesus. Our hope is in his life and death. There is surely a new world coming. There is a renewal and strengthening of that hope each time human history sees someone overtaken by the evil of the cross for having fought against it on the side of the world of blessing.

The Passion is forgotten when its Paschal meaning is left in the shadows; when the spirituality of the cross does not set Christians on the way to the Exodus and to the conquest over all forms of

evil in the world; when the contemplation of the cross leads Christians to settle themselves in the structures of Egypt, while expecting a new kind of Pasch in the future as a recompense for their humble submission in the near present.

The Passion of Jesus is not remembered when the Pasch is considered as a later event. On the other hand, the Passion of Jesus is truly remembered as the supreme outpouring of his liberating energy, unleashing to the maximum the Paschal vitality it contains, when we recall it as the ultimate assault which the forces of evil used in trying to destroy Jesus.

II. THE MODALITY OF THE MEMORY

How do we, as Passionists, recall the Passion of Jesus? This question is important because the authentic meaning of the cross is maintained or made meaningless in the way we remember.

In the Constitutions we read: “We seek the unity of our lives and our apostolate in the Passion of Jesus” (Const. 5).

This indicates that we keep alive the memory of the Passion by our lifestyle and apostolic work. We shall reflect on these.

Our Life

Passionist life is principally expressed in the personal and communitarian living of the evangelical counsels. It is through them that we try to keep alive the memory of Jesus Crucified (Const. 6), and to contact Christ “both individually and as a community...at a deep level of his Paschal Mystery” (Const. 9).

This will be so to the degree that we succeed in manifesting the scandal, the contradiction and the Paschal meaning of the cross through poverty, chastity and obedience.

a. The Vows: Memory of the Scandal of the Cross

Because we are accustomed to a terminology of “perfection” by which we express the theology of religious life, it may seem to clash in saying that through the vows the religious is identified with the suffering servant “despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, before whom men hid their faces” (Is 53:3). But for the follower of Jesus Crucified, this is the first meaning of the vows he has professed. They are the concrete manner of incarnating himself thoroughly, as Jesus did, in the world of sin, in the turning about of history.

To bear the misery of the world in his person, to make it his all, is far from what certain attempts at renewal propose as “personal fulfillment.”

The celibate offers his heart. He draws to it the pain of solitude and of failure to communicate with which so many of his brothers must live. In his heart, he shares the frustration of so many failed marriages, the humiliation of women who are used and abused. It is the painful experience of the evil through which the Master walked, and which made him so sensitive to persons like the Magdalen.

The poor person offers his life in order to absorb the penury, the insignificance and the marginalization which affects large numbers of people, even whole communities. He assumes it as a scandal, as something which ought not to be. But he enters into that world freely. He descends to the lesser-world of poverty, because that is the place where Jesus, whom he follows, was incarnated.

The obedient person accepts the condition of a slave, not in the figurative sense, but in the real sense of the slavery under which many sectors of humanity suffer. He offers his own personal history as the locus of the sorrowful experience of knowing the restriction of any possibility of choosing for himself. He is in fraternal solidarity with those who always have their legitimate aspirations deferred and have no voice in the ordering of their society.

The religious is a man of a lesser-world. That is the environment to which he has been invited by the Master who said to him: "If you want to be my disciple, take up the cross, deny yourself, and follow me" (Mk 8:34).

The gesture made by Paul of the Cross in kissing the wound of the poor man who crossed his path one day is a deeply incarnational one, truly prophetic and an eloquent testimony. The religious is one who kisses the wounds of the world, the hurts of history every day. He does so not because he approves of them, but because it is the place where God has become incarnate and where he reveals his wisdom and power.

b. The Vows: Memory of Contradiction

To assume for oneself is not to give approval. Through religious vows we take on ourselves the world of sin, but without approving of the sin in the world. The religious life is a critique of the world; it is a life which denounces evil in all of its forms. It is opposition to idolatries, to the great idolatries which tend to displace God from the core of history. The celibate is an existential prophet against the idolatry of sex which dehumanizes and ruptures interpersonal communion. The poor man offers himself as a witness to the true value of the goods of this world. He contradicts a society in which the unjust distribution of riches is one of the principal sources of division, hatred, and suffering (Const. 12). The obedient person takes on the mission of halting in his life the idolatry of power which brings into being the mighty and the oppressed.

c. The Vows: A Memory of Paschal Meaning

"Baptism immerses us in the flood of divine power welling up from the death and resurrection of Jesus, and consecrates us as members of the people of God. "This consecration we reaffirm, and resolve to live a fuller life through our religious profession, faithful to these Constitutions" (Const. 7).

If the vows are not lived with the dynamism of the Pasch, they are not in accord with the evangelical counsels. If the world's sin is not turned into a "new wine" in the heart of the religious, the vows are not constituting a remembrance of the Passion of Jesus.

The Paschal meaning of the cross is genuinely recalled when the religious overcomes in his life all the experience of the evil which he draws to himself. A religious who is bitter, resentful, self-sufficient or pretentious can never be a memory of the Passion.

If the vows are not expressions of the passage from death to life, they contain no significant message for the crucified of this world. They would then be more a manifestation of the cross of history, “but not of the cross which Jesus took on himself. Our living of the vows ought to be a witnessing to the defeat of the cross and a testimony that the power of God is greater than the power of the cross (2 Cor 4:7-18).

The Apostolate

The Passionist keeps alive the memory of the Passion by his life, particularly when his vows are understood and lived in the Paschal dynamism of the death and resurrection of Jesus. However, that memory is actualized through his apostolate. Both avenues are intimately entwined: “If the message of the Cross has not first penetrated our own lives, we ought not presume to proclaim it to others” (Const. 9).

That which we announce is the same as what we are trying to live. Therefore, if we actually achieve incorporation into our life of the scandal, the contradiction and the Paschal meaning of the Lord’s cross, they will emerge as the content of our preaching and they will shape our identity as apostles.

There are three appropriate guidelines for our Passionist apostolate, if it is to be an activity for truly keeping alive the memory of the Passion.

A delicate sensitivity before the Passion which continues in history.

“As he went ashore. he saw a great throng, he felt compassion for them and cured those who were sick” (Mt 14:14).

If the cross with its scandalous facet is a living experience for the Passionist, it will be difficult for him to turn away from human misery, and still less will he assume an attitude of self-sufficiency before it. On the contrary, it will be true of him what the Letter to the Hebrews says about Jesus: “For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning....For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness” (Heb. 4:15, 5:1 2).

As Passionists we cannot ignore the drama of human existence nor fail to recognize the power and the penetration of evil in the world. We cannot naively think of sin as a merely private matter which is located in people’s hearts. Instead, we ought to acknowledge its ramifications in the make-up of social systems. We ought not turn away our gaze from this lesser-world which is the locus of our incarnation. Nor ought we be scandalized by persons in this lesser-world who set about uncovering and denouncing sin.

To remain in an environment of an untainted sacredness and to preach only about the future Kingdom is not to keep alive the memory of the Passion of Jesus. We ought to remain near and within the situations of the cross which are unfolding in history and there preach the liberating word of the Crucified.

Prophetic Critique

Evangelization is not fulfilled by the simple declaration of what is grace and what is sin. Its process is not exhausted by a magisterium which proposes doctrines. Evangelization is achieved when the apostle points out where sin is and how grace is to be found. It is “discerning.” It is bringing about a “critique,” a purifying judgment. It is a “sign of contradiction” which reveals the opposition between the gospel and the lived situation.

This kind of evangelization led Jesus to the cross. One who follows Jesus cannot adopt any other way of announcing the Kingdom.

The prophetic critique is not accidental. Paul of the Cross considered it indispensable that Passionists should bring the message of the cross to maturity through prolonged periods at the feet of the Crucified. Prophets are made in the desert. The solitude in our retreats would be unfruitful if it did not help us to “appraise more objectively secular trends and standards” (Const. 54) and make possible the maturation of the prophetic word in preaching.

Announcing the Paschal Event

The bishops of Latin-America, gathered at Puebla in 1979, offer this reflection:

“That Latin America be able to transform its pains into growth toward a truly shared and fraternal society, it is necessary to educate individuals who will be capable of molding history according to the practice of Jesus. Latin America needs individuals who are aware that God calls them to act in alliance with Him. It needs individuals who possess a docile heart and are capable of making their own the road and rhythm which Providence indicates. Above all, these individuals should be capable of assuming their own suffering and that of our people in order to transform it, by the Paschal Spirit, into the need for personal conversion as a basis for solidarity with all those who suffer and as a challenge to creative imagination and initiatives” (Puebla Document, n. 279).

This thought applies to all peoples, but in a special way to those whose work is evangelization. Preaching ought to introduce the power of the Pasch into the Passion of the world. It ought to unloose a liberating process. It ought to place men and peoples on their feet and set them on their way. It ought to energize them with the power of faith and hope, awakening them to initiative and creativity. The memory of the Passion ought to stimulate the decision to undertake an exodus. The resigned staying behind in Egypt can be a stoic ideal, but it is not the ideal for following Jesus Crucified.

III. FINALITY OF THE MEMORY

If we have the goal of our life and our apostolate clearly in view, we will be able to choose appropriate methods and means wisely, as well as correctly evaluate results. Our options will be enlightened ones and our criteria will be validated.

What do we intend to do by keeping alive the memory of the Passion of Jesus? What we attempt is to celebrate the Pasch within the Passion of the world and to actuate the Kingdom in the dark situations of our history. We do not attempt to step out of this world, nor to extricate people from their present realities. Rather, we seek to free all from the evil one (Jn 17:15). Our efforts are oriented to transforming the world of malediction into a world of benediction. “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).

Encouraged by the experience of the People of God, we are committed to the great march toward the Promised Land. We understand that the Promise made to Abraham and to his descendants will definitely come about in heaven, but only on condition that it be lived out in the heart of present history.

Our life is a leaven in the dough of the present life. This is the dough we want to be transformed into the bread of fraternity, broken for the great banquet of humanity, from which no one is excluded. We are people of a lesser-world because it is there that we have been sent. But we are also people of an Utopia because we follow the Crucified-one who has risen.

Our message is not exhausted by concrete historical events, since it is part of the total and definitive Pasch. However, we can also simply say that our message does not ignore temporal realities, because the Pasch is lived on the cross of the world which Jesus took on himself.

CONCLUSION

The badge which Passionists wear on their religious habit is a synthesis of the memory which we make of the Passion of Jesus. The dark background represents human history, the history of malediction. We cannot escape it. Over that black background is outlined a white cross, that of Jesus (Jesu Christi Passio). It is white because it is not the world which gives its coloration to Jesus, rather it is Jesus who enlightens the world. It is not the cross which directs Jesus, but Jesus who shapes the cross, transforming it from a symbol of malediction into a sign of benediction.

A white heart emerges out of a dark background. A new man is born out of the interior of an old world: the man of fraternity, love, and peace.

This is a sign which places before the eyes of all people the elements of the Passion of Jesus: the scandal, the contradiction, and the Paschal meaning; or, in the words of Paul of the Cross: the mystical death and the divine birth.

QUESTIONS

1. The Scandal of the Cross

Jesus ate with sinners. He was in solidarity with them. This scandalized the pharisees. Religious life presents an image of an uncontaminated life which looks, as though from above, onto a reality of sin that envelopes the world. Which image is the real one? What ought to be a Passionist’s reaction?

2. The Contradiction of the Cross

Jesus was in solidarity with sinners, but not an accomplice to sin. He was clearly opposed to sin. What distinguishes our presence in the world: complicity or a prophetic spirit?

3. The Paschal Meaning of the Cross

Jesus opened paths. He created a new reality. Is our action generating a process of liberation? Does it point to new possibilities? Does it accompany the initiatives which are begun?