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**Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality**

**MODELS OF PASSIONIST LIFE  
AND MISSION**

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## MODELS OF PASSIONIST LIFE AND MISSION

### INTRODUCTION

Passionists in the 1990s are presented with three official Congregational sources of guidance for their lives: the Rule of 1775, the 1984 Constitutions, and the General Programme of the 1988 General Chapter. The question is sometimes asked: “How did we get from the Rule of St. Paul of the Cross to the ‘Green Book’?” (shorthand for the 1988 General Programme). It is a question about continuity and discontinuity: are the Passionists today the same Congregation as founded by St. Paul of the Cross? My aim is to examine the patterns of continuity and discontinuity, and to explore their creative potential for our life and mission today. I will approach this in two ways: by offering an interpretation of the process of renewal lived by the Congregation since Vatican II, and by describing ‘models’ of Passionist life that can be discerned in the official sources. I will explain how I am using the term ‘model’ later.

Vatican II was a major turning point in our historical tradition. Until the 1960s there was, in the main, an unbroken continuity from the time of our foundation in 1720. Our way of life was a carefully regulated pattern laid down in the Rule written by St. Paul of the Cross himself. Although the Rule was modified many times, both by the Founder and in subsequent centuries, it was recognizable as the same fundamental text. The Rule regulated Passionist life, provided a direct link with the original inspiration of the Congregation, was presented to us at profession, was read publicly in the refectory, was material for personal prayer and reflection, and was the basic reference point for all decision making. It was “the Holy Rule,” indicating its status as a “sacred text.”

With Vatican II, however, we were required, like all Religious Orders, to undertake renewal. This meant a re-examination of the original charism of St. Paul of the Cross and its re-interpretation in the light of the needs of the modern world. The psychological effect of this project, begun by the Extraordinary General Chapter of Renewal (1968-1970), was that it made a break in the lived tradition. Not only were various changes introduced, but these were enshrined in a new text. The Chapter Document replaced the traditional Rule. This Chapter Document was not only new, it was also provisional; its immediate purpose was to regulate the period of experimentation allowed by the norms governing renewal (*Ecclesiae Sanctae*, n. 6). The Chapter Document could not function in exactly the same way as the Rule. Impressive as it was, it was not a “sacred text.”

One of the underlying effects of renewal, then, has been to transform the way in which we Passionists stand in relation to our tradition. The tradition now has to be mediated through the challenge of responding to the needs of the modern world. Fidelity to tradition is no longer a matter of adhering to the practices laid down by the Founder, but of reflecting on his core values and interpreting them in a new way. The psychological change has been from living the tradition as an unbroken continuity, to reflecting on the tradition as the resource for a new historical venture. St. Paul of the Cross has become, so to speak, a historical figure speaking to the present out of the past, rather than the immediate originator of Passionist life as lived in the present.

Why was a new text required after Vatican II? Could the original Rule not have been modified once more? The Church, however, required that a new text be drawn up in order to accommodate the theology of Vatican II (*Ecclesiae Sanctae*, nn. 12-14). Secondly, the circumstances of the

modern world were such that a major overhaul of traditional practices was needed. Thirdly, and most importantly, the Extraordinary General Chapter was confronted with quite basic questions about Passionist life, which came from the provinces as a result of the pre-Chapter consultations.

### **Section 1: A QUESTION OF IDENTITY**

The need to return to fundamentals was not entirely foreign to Passionists in 1968. Throughout the 1950s, substantial work had been done on a revision of the Rule, and a new edition had been approved by the Holy See in 1959. However, less than ten years later it was apparent that basic problems remained unresolved, as the reports to the Chapter show:

Confusion has been caused by the failure of the authorities of the Congregation to arrive at a precise, scientific definition of our role in the Church. (Italian Provinces)

There is a great deal of uncertainty and confusion with regard to the nature, scope and activity of our Congregation, and many live as if they had no character other than the generic one of active apostles. (Ireland-Scotland)

A General Commission labored up to 1959 to establish what is essential and what is accidental in our Congregation. However, they never explicitly stated their conclusion and so there still remains much official uncertainty with regard to the sense of certain terms (proper end, particular spirit, etc.) (USA - Eastern Province)

There does exist a general conviction with regard to the relevance of our spirituality but clear theological development of it is lacking. (Brazil-Argentina)

(General Commission for the Preparation of the Extraordinary General Chapter <GCPC 1968>, First Report, pp. 3-4).

The issue facing the 1968 General Chapter was identity. What kind of religious institute is the Passionist Congregation? What are its essential elements? What is accidental? What is its fundamental spirituality and charism? What is its manner of life? What are the practices by which this is expressed? What place does apostolic activity have in its life? What are its characteristic kinds of apostolate? This kind of questioning obviously meant the Chapter had to go back to basics.

### **The Traditional Model of Passionist Life**

At this point, it will help to review the key features of the traditional Passionist life which came under review in 1968. I will do this by means of a first model, drawn from the Rule and writings of St. Paul of the Cross. Here I need to explain my use of 'models'. A model is an attempt to understand something by describing its typical characteristics. Avery Dulles, for example, shows how models can be used in theology, when he examines the nature of the Church by describing five ways it can be seen to function in practice (Dulles 1974). Sociologists use models to describe social institutions: global realities such as capitalism, particular realities such as family life in a specific culture. A model does not attempt to describe everything. It highlights key features, and underscores typical characteristics. It is not a picture, but a kind of map, a guide to facilitate understanding of something. Several models may be needed to explore different aspects of an actual situation.

What I am examining is Passionist life and, more particularly, the different ways Passionist life has been presented in official sources over time. The models focus on how Passionist life has been understood, not how it has been lived in practice. Narrowing the focus, I concentrate on the social structuring of Passionist life; and the models, therefore, are framed in organizational terms. I adopt the framework of the Constitutions, and distinguish two levels of organizational functioning: fundamentals (in sociological terms the “expressive dimension”), and practice (the “instrumental dimension”) (Etzioni 1964, 61-62). The expressive dimension comprises aims, beliefs and values as organizational features of the Passionist Congregation. The instrumental dimension comprises the two basic means, of lifestyle and apostolic activity, by which the Passionists seek to achieve their organizational purposes; it also includes formation and government, but I will not be concerned with these in this article.

The greatness of founders is not simply their spiritual insight, but their ability to create a coherent form of life. St. Benedict is recognized for the genius of his rule, which has given stability to Western monasticism across the centuries. We know that St. Paul of the Cross put great energy into the task of crafting the Passionist way of life, modifying the Rule time and again in the light of experience. Even in the year of his death he was engaged in reshaping it. His final version of 1775 is still relevant today, since: “This Rule has its own special vigor and importance for understanding the genuine inspiration and intention of the Father and Founder” (Decree of Approbation). What socially structured form of life, then, was crafted by St. Paul of the Cross? The first model attempts to capture the key features.

## **TRADITIONAL MODEL**

(The Rule and Writings of the Founder)

“WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED”  
(I Cor. 1:23)

### **FUNDAMENTALS**

**AIMS**           The essential **MISSION** of the Passionists is:  
To seek their own salvation; and  
To devote themselves to works of charity towards their neighbor,  
teaching them to meditate on the Passion.

**BELIEFS**       This is inspired by a fundamental **BELIEF** Passionists adhere to:  
That the Passion of Jesus is the greatest and most overwhelming work of God’s  
love, remembrance of which produces virtues and forgetfulness of which leads to  
evils and disorders.

**VALUES**       In order to fulfil this mission Passionists **COMMIT** themselves:  
To prayer and penance, devoting themselves to their own spiritual advancement,  
so as to be more ready to preach Christ Crucified.

### **PRACTICE**

LIFE-STYLE Passionists live:

In solitude, withdrawing from society;

Fostering profound contemplation in order to acquire true wisdom;

Embracing poverty and penance;

Following, night and day, the regular observance of monastic life.

APOSTOLATE Passionists minister:

To promote devotion to the Passion of Christ as the means of conversion of sinners and the sanctification of souls;

Preaching the word of God in missions and other spiritual exercises;

Teaching meditation, even to simple, uneducated people;

Rejoicing to go to the more neglected places.

Ingenious for the love of God, Passionists grasp whatever opportunities and circumstances open up to lead others to the remembrance of the Passion.

The FOCUS OF UNITY in their lives and activities is that:

Passionists contemplate the Passion and lead others to the same contemplation.

## **Section 2. RENEWAL AFTER VATICAN II**

Renewal - recovering the original inspiration of St. Paul of the Cross and re-expressing it for the modern world - means not only rediscovering the fundamental values but also recrafting the social form of Passionist life in a new and compelling synthesis. This is a formidable challenge to the present-day generation; the charismatic personality and influence of our Founder is no longer directly available. It would be foolish to suggest that, in the 1990s, a completely satisfactory new synthesis has emerged. Renewal has been a continuing journey of discovery. The final test is that of history. Yet, there have been real achievements, and some striking images of the future of the Congregation and its mission in the Church have been presented. It is possible to discern the outlines of a renewed social form of Passionist life. We now look at how this emerged.

The fundamental question at the General Chapter in 1968 was identity. There were three interconnected issues: the charism of the Congregation, its manner of life, and the place and kinds of apostolic activity.

(a) The Charism: "To announce the Gospel of the Passion by our lives and works" (Chapter Document n.2)

There was never any doubt that the charism of the Congregation had to do with the Passion of Jesus. After Vatican II the Passion seemed to be eclipsed by an emphasis on the Resurrection, but theology and Church teaching quickly recovered the centrality of the theology of the Cross. The 1968 General Chapter expressed this for our life by emphasizing the "fourth vow":

We express our participation in the Passion by a special vow, which is at once personal, communitarian, and apostolic. 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 for each person and for the life of the World. 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. (Constitutions, n.6)

(Note: As a general rule, I quote texts from the 1984 Constitutions, rather than their earlier formulation in the 1970 Chapter Document.)

The 1968-70 Chapter introduced a twofold shift in emphasis here - to the function of the vow and its content. The “fourth vow” - added on to the traditional triad of poverty, chastity and obedience - became the first. It is understood as determining how the other vows are to be lived, and as shaping the totality of Passionist life and mission. Secondly, the object of the vow broadens, from “inciting Christian people to meditate upon, and often to recall devoutly the sacred mysteries of the life-giving Passion and Death of Jesus Christ” (Rule, n. 121), to fostering “awareness of its meaning and value for each person and for the life of the world.” This is a shift from devotionism towards a holistic spirituality.

A renewed theology of the Passion is introduced:

We are aware that the Passion of Christ continues in this world until He comes in glory; therefore, we share in the joys and sorrows of our contemporaries as we journey through life toward our Father. We wish to share in the distress of all, especially those who are poor and neglected; we seek to offer them comfort and to relieve the burden of their sorrow. The power of the Cross, which is the wisdom of God, gives us strength to discern and remove the causes of human suffering. For this reason, our mission aims at evangelizing others by means of the Word of the Cross. In this way, all may come to know Christ and the power of His resurrection, may share in His sufferings and, becoming like Him in His death, may be united with Him in glory. Each of us takes part in this apostolate according to his gifts, resources and ministries. (Constitutions n. 3)

This theology interprets the Passion in dynamic terms - as power, as divine wisdom, as effective in contemporary instances of suffering. It emphasizes that the Passionist engages with the Passion through sharing in “the distress of all.” It stresses that the purpose is to evangelize, so that ultimately all may be united with Christ in glory. The intention “to discern and remove the causes of human suffering” is significant, suggesting that the Passionist mission includes working for social transformation as well as personal and spiritual conversion. But there clearly was no intention to reduce the mission of Passionists to a purely social commitment; social concern is seen within a theological perspective.

#### a) The Passionist Manner of Life: From Monasticism to Community

The issue of identity is about more than charism and spirituality. In fact, it is more keenly experienced in terms of the day-to-day practices of community life and apostolate. In the Rule, the Passionist Congregation is understood as a religious institute of “mixed life,” monastic-apostolic or contemplative-active. These are not exactly the same, of course, since a group can be contemplative without being monastic. It seems likely that this traditional category did not correspond fully with the inspiration of St. Paul of the Cross. His guiding idea was “a life like that of the Apostles” (Account of 1747, n.3; Constitutions, n.1). He did not join any of the existing Orders, presumably because he did not find in them his own unique inspiration. Yet, the model of the “mixed life” was the only means at hand for combining contemplation and

apostolate. So, the strong contemplative dimension in our life found expression in the “Observance” and the monastic life style.

At the 1968 General Chapter, the reports from the provinces showed the tensions of the mixed life.

Of fundamental importance also is the declaration about the nature of our Congregation to be made by the forthcoming General Chapter, viz., should we be in the Church of today a monastic-apostolic Congregation or solely apostolic? (Ireland-Scotland) (GCPC 1968, Report 3, p. 26)

Outside houses of formation, observance in the sense traditionally understood no longer exists. Most superiors acknowledge the supremacy of the apostolate; this gives a sense of frustration to those religious who, for various reasons, are not engaged in the apostolate. This situation arises from the unrealistic horaria for communities engaged in the apostolate; from economic pressures which oblige us to accept any kind of apostolate; from the way our life was arranged in the past, making community life wearisome because of frustration; from lack of habits of serious study. (Ireland-Scotland)

In six houses, religious engaged in parish work predominate; in one, lectors; in the novitiate and in one other house, missionaries are predominant. The heavy burden of parish work, the continual requests for other activities, the small number of religious (whose average age is 51), dispersal in ten communities, not including the Swedish Mission and the house in Paris, have impoverished community life. (England-Wales)

Neither in Belgium nor in Holland is there a monastery which can maintain the full horarium prescribed by Rule. (Belgium-Netherlands-France)

Monastic forms are not completely compatible with our apostolate, e.g., separation from the world hinders a permanent, sometimes vital task; apostolates which require constant attention late at night are rendered almost impossible by our horarium. (Brazil-Argentina)

A certain tension arises from having too many community observances; there is a glorification of the apostolate over community life. (Italy) (GCPC 1968, Report 3: p. 24-25)

The problem was the familiar difficulty of combining monastic practices with an active apostolic role. The Preparatory Commission put forward the proposal that:

To foster the family atmosphere, the monastic style may also be modified outside common acts of prayer-life. Such a style is not essential to our character as apostolic workers, and since its functionality is finished, there is no longer any need to maintain it. (GCPC 1968, Report 3, p. 6)

Although cautiously stated, this was a radical shift in self-understanding, and opened the way to a new structuring of Passionist life based on family or community values. The Rule had not contained an explicit section on “community.” Passionists lived the reality of community as a matter of course, but the term itself was used in a descriptive rather than evaluative sense. The problem in 1968 was that the Observance had tended to become the supreme value and an end in itself:

The religious are very devoted to saying the Office and there are very few who would not say the Office every day. However, many see in it only a duty to be accomplished rather than an experience which leads them to Christ. Some prefer to say it in private because it is more helpful to them. The main problem aspect is that the Office does not fulfill its function despite the interest and efforts of the brethren to say it well and thus, instead of being a “support, ” the Office has to be supported. (Australia) (GCPC 1968, Report 2, pp. 21-22)

Instead of the Office existing for the community, the community existed for the Office. The Chapter Document, seeking to overcome these rigidities, adopted a functional approach. In place of a sacrosanct horarium, with which the rest of life had to fit, it stated:

Each local community in conformity with the directives of the provincial authority, and taking into account its local circumstances, will provide for the communal celebration of the divine office. (Chapter Document, 51)

Despite the initial caution about preserving traditional approaches to “common acts of prayer life,” the result of the community perspective was a transition from the concept of “observance” to “community prayer.”

The Chapter also attempted to transcend the monastic-apostolic dichotomy by viewing apostolate as communitarian activity:

Our apostolic commitment is an expression of life in community. Since we have been called to serve the Church in and through community, we should have a special concern for those forms of the apostolate which are enriched by community life and which, in turn, foster it. (Chapter Document, n. 71)

The structuring principle in Chapters II and III of the Chapter Document - “Community Relationships” and “The Community at Prayer” - is clearly community. This model fulfilled two purposes: it provided a basis for our manner of life, and was a way of integrating life-style and apostolic activity. It contrasts with our previous monastic tradition; a new social form of Passionist life was being shaped.

### **C) APOSTOLATE**

The third set of questions at the 1968 General Chapter concerned APOSTOLATE. There were two issues: the place of apostolic work in Passionist life, and the specific apostolates which were characteristic of Passionists.

Part of the Founder’s solution to the problem of combining apostolic action with contemplation was to refuse to accept ongoing pastoral charges and to focus Passionist ministry on the more occasional work of parish missions and retreats. This allowed for a rhythm of periods of apostolic activity followed by times of withdrawal, following the Observance. However, particularly after the extension of the Congregation outside Italy in the 19th century, the needs in local situations led Passionists to take on the care of parishes and other permanent pastoral charges such as chaplaincies. These diversifications, however, were never accommodated within the Rule, but were always seen as temporary derogations from it. This provoked ongoing

controversy about what apostolic activities were proper to Passionists. Moreover, Passionist life was interpreted historically in an unbalanced way, favoring monasticism over the apostolate (Boyle 1979: 4-6). The result was a suspicion of the apostolate, as taking one away from “real” Passionist living. Again, some extracts from the preparatory reports show the extent of the problem:

If the primary work of the Congregation is “missions and retreats,” then the majority of the men in our Province are not engaged in our primary work. In fact less than one fourth of our priests could be classified as full-time missionaries. For historical reasons our legislation and tradition have identified the proclamation of the Word with missions and retreats. But this is placing a limitation on our Holy Founder’s inspiration and an emphasis on the apostolic means rather than the apostolic end of the Congregation. (USA- Western Province)

The terms “proper and ordinary,” “primary and secondary” (works), make little sense because they suppose the Passionist community to be a homogeneous unity throughout the world, without further diversification. They do not bring out the fact enough that if the mission of preaching doesn’t change, the forms of preaching do change. (Belgium-Netherlands-France)

Our proper work is the proclamation of the Word, spoken or written, and priestly and sacramental service. Primary activities are missions and retreats; secondary ones are other priestly ministries. However, this distinction has practically disappeared from the Province. (Spain)

Some admit a distinction, while others consider that every apostolic work is our work. To blur these distinctions leads to confusion in our work with the consequent danger of losing our proper identity as an organized body in the Church. (England-Wales)

The problem was further complicated by a perception that the traditional parish mission was in crisis:

Missions are declining by reason of the social and religious changes which are taking place among the people, the lack of “aggiornamento” in some of the preachers and their small number, the mission format which is not adequate for the new situations, and pastors who do not consider them worthwhile and do not select the most suitable times for them. Some pastors also prefer retreats to particular groups rather than mass preaching. (Ireland-Scotland, England-Wales, Italy, Spain)

Parish missions are in decline not only because their form is antiquated but also because parish structures no longer reach all the faithful. Changes have been attempted without much success because they were merely individual efforts without the support of the Province. School missions, begun in 1956 in place of the traditional retreat, have been very successful. (England-Wales)

The mission, whether in its traditional form or more or less restyled, is in decline. With the understanding of other Congregations, therefore, it was decided not to accept them except in extraordinary circumstances. There is participation instead in the total pastoral (action) of the local Church endeavoring not only to convert individuals but also to

influence and change pastoral structures and methods. Retreats are increasing in importance and quality among communities of all kinds. (Belgium-Netherlands-France)

The traditional parish mission is in critical condition by reason of cultural evolution. During the last 12 years there has been a lessening of 50% in requests for missions. Retreats, however, have not lessened but more and more requests are coming in for specialized courses. Modern man has a limited attention span. He prefers to be active, desires a sense of community and therefore prefers small, intimate groups. He is not impressed by authoritarian discourse. (USA-Western Province) (GCPC 1968, Report 4: p. 13-14)

The preparatory Commission put forward four guiding proposals or principles:

Our Congregation is essentially oriented to an active apostolate in the world by reason of the original inspiration of our Founder.

The apostolate of the Congregation must be colored by and bear the sign of the special ministry...to convert and sanctify men by the word of the Cross.

The third principle...determines the kind of apostolic work through which the Congregation offers the service of its own proper apostolate to the saving mission of the Church.

The need, in our ministry, for planning and specialization. (GCPC 1968, Report 4, pp.3-5)

Working from this basis, the Chapter Document significantly extended the traditional understanding of the Passionist apostolate. The Chapter “expressed overwhelming agreement...that our Congregation is essentially apostolic” (Boyle 1979:23). Having articulated the Passion dimension (CD. 69,79) and the community dimension (CD. 71-73), the Chapter Document specified five areas of ministry for Passionists: parish missions and renewals, (CD. 75), work undertaken for de-christianized groups or regions (CD. 76), parishes and allied ministries (CD. 77), ecumenism (CD.78), missionary work, “planting the Church among those peoples and groups where she has not yet taken root” (CD. 79). No explicit priority was established within these ministries. The scope and range of ministry, therefore, were broadened. Moreover, apostolate was re-focused on the goal of proclaiming the Passion; previously there had been a certain goal displacement, in that the means of missions and retreats had been elevated to the level of primary goals.

### **The Chapter Document Model of Passionist Life**

Three “foundation stones” are clear in the structured form of Passionist life which emerged after Vatican II: the charism of the Congregation centered on the “Gospel of the Passion,” the communitarian nature of Passionist life, and the essentially apostolic purpose of the Congregation. These are highlighted in the second model.

## **CHAPTER DOCUMENT MODEL**

(General Chapter 1968-70)

“WE SEEK THE UNITY OF OUR LIVES AND OUR APOSTOLATE  
IN THE PASSION OF JESUS” (Chapter Document, 5)

## FUNDAMENTALS

**AIMS** The essential **MISSION** of the Passionists is:  
To announce the Gospel of the Passion by their lives and works.

**BELIEFS** This is inspired by a fundamental **BELIEF** Passionists adhere to:  
That, as the revelation of the power of God, the Passion of Jesus penetrates the world to destroy the power of evil and to build the Kingdom of God.

**VALUES** In order to fulfil this mission Passionists **COMMIT** themselves:  
To make the Paschal Mystery of Christ’s Death and Resurrection (an historical event and a mystery which continues in the lives of all mankind) the centre of their lives;  
To share the joys and struggles of their contemporaries, especially the neglected and poor.

## PRACTICE

**LIFE-STYLE** Passionists live:  
As an evangelical, apostolic community;  
Living the fullness of Christian love;  
Becoming real schools of prayer;  
Discovering in community the source of apostolic fruitfulness.  
Passionists contemplate the mystery of Christ’s Passion, share it in the events of the world, and relive it in the liturgy.

**APOSTOLATE** Passionists minister:  
Evangelizing through the mystery of the word of the Cross;  
In various ministries;  
Seeking to overcome the causes of human suffering;  
Guiding the faithful to union with God, and to a response to the needs of their neighbors.

The **FOCUS OF UNITY** in their lives and activities is that:

Passionists seek the unity of their lives and apostolate in the Passion of Jesus.

## **Section 3: THE PERIOD OF EXPERIMENTATION**

1968 to 1982 was the official period of experimentation, when the new text of the Chapter Document was tested in the experience of the Congregation. It was quickly and widely recognized as a genuine breakthrough, a true interpretation of the original inspiration of St. Paul of the Cross for our times. It could not, of course, be a complete substitute for the Rule, since it was a provisional, not a “sacred” text. A moment of crisis came at the General Chapter of 1976,

when differences of approach to the renewal process surfaced. That Chapter failed to produce substantive results, but the subsequent General Chapter in 1982 confirmed the orientations of the Chapter Document and amended it to produce the renewed understanding of Passionist life into the historic body of the Congregation had taken, rather than been rejected.

Exploration of the critical issues behind the Chapter Document, of course, did not stop during these years. The period after Vatican II was one of tremendous turbulence, in the Congregation and in the Church at large. Renewal made heavy demands on individuals, communities and provinces to adjust to new and unfamiliar ways of thinking and practice. New currents of theology and pastoral practice emerged, stressing themes of personal freedom and fulfilment, the value of human experience, salvation as liberation, openness to the world, communitarian life, new liturgical and prayer styles. The Chapter Document was the Congregation's anchor in all this change, while also being itself an impetus to change.

The most significant progress made during these years was in understanding the Passion dimension, and the formulation of the charism as "promoting the memory of the Passion." A great deal of historical and theological research lies behind this development. The story is well known and needs no repetition here. St. Paul of the Cross' characteristic way of articulating the inspiration he had received as a call and gift from God was promoting the memory of the Passion, but this had been narrowed to promoting devotion to the Passion. This was an impoverishment of his fundamental spirituality.

The recovery of the original inspiration and its enshrinement in the 1984 Constitutions was, in effect, the crafting of a new symbol - the Memoria Passionis - which has gained acceptance as the best expression of the spiritual core of Passionist life and mission. It is at once profoundly traditional and new. It is the controlling idea of the Constitutions, and the focus which integrates the diverse elements of Passionist life. Hand in hand with this symbol of Memoria Passionis, during these years, went a deepening awareness of the "contemporary Passion," summed up in a new number inserted in the 1984 Constitutions:

His Passion and Death are no mere historical events. They are ever-present realities to people in the world of today, 'crucified' as they are by injustice, by the lack of a deep respect for human life, and by a hungry yearning for peace, truth, and the fullness of human existence. Our vocation as Passionists prompts us to familiarize ourselves thoroughly with the Passion of Christ, both in history and in the lives of people today, for the Passion of Christ and the sufferings of His Mystical Body form one mystery of salvation. (Constitutions, n.65)

This theme is developed in another significant new number (Constitutions n. 72), and the idea of the "crucified of today" is picked up by the General Program of the 1982 General Chapter, with its target:

As a community, we reflect on the meaning of the "memory of the Passion" to discover the profound link between the Crucified One and the crucified of the world today, as the decisive factor in our life and mission. (Target 2)

## **The Constitutions Model of Passionist Life**

The 1982 General Chapter significantly deepened some aspects of the work of 1968-70. In practical terms, the Constitutions are more precise than the Chapter Document. Preaching of parish missions and spiritual exercises is re-established as a priority apostolate, ie., “our special and central activity” (Consts. n. 70). The criteria for the practice of prayer are more clearly stated - at least Morning and Evening Prayer in common (Consts. n. 46). The structured form of Passionist life, however, did not change substantially from that of the Chapter Document, although some new emphases were given. These are expressed in the third model.

## **CONSTITUTIONS MODEL**

(1982 General Chapter & General Program)

“WE KEEP ALIVE THE MEMORY OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST”  
(Constitutions, 6)

### **FUNDAMENTALS**

**AIMS**            The essential **MISSION** of the Passionists is:  
To keep alive the memory of the Passion of Christ.

**BELIEFS**        This is inspired by a fundamental **BELIEF** Passionists adhere to:  
That the Passion of Jesus reveals the power of God which penetrates the world,  
destroying the power of evil and building up the Kingdom of God.

**VALUES**        In order to fulfil this mission Passionists **COMMIT** themselves:  
To make the profound link between the Crucified One and the crucified ones, as  
the decisive factor in their life and mission;  
To share the joys and sorrows of their contemporaries, especially the poor and  
neglected.

### **PRACTICE**

**LIFE-STYLE** Passionists live:  
As an evangelical, apostolic community:  
Living the fullness of christian love;  
Becoming real schools of prayer;  
Discovering in community the source of apostolic fruitfulness.  
Passionists contemplate, and as a community reflect on, the mystery of the  
Crucified One and the crucified ones.

**APOSTOLATE** Passionists minister:  
Evangelizing others by means of the word of the Cross:  
Through various ministries, especially parish missions and spiritual exercises,  
Giving prophetic witness to justice and human dignity;  
Discerning and removing the causes of human suffering;  
Guiding the faithful to union with God, and to a response to the needs of their  
neighbors.

The FOCUS OF UNITY in their lives and activities is that:  
Passionists seek the unity of their lives and apostolate in the Passion of Jesus.

### **A New Social Form of Passionist Life?**

The 1970 Chapter Document and 1984 Constitutions give a comprehensive reinterpretation of Passionist life. The three foundation stones are: (I) the charism of promoting the Memory of the Passion; (ii) the communitarian nature of Passionist life (which determines life-style and apostolate); (iii) the essentially apostolic nature of the Congregation (re-situating the contemplative dimension within this context). These give a structured social form to Passionist life.

To my mind, however, the linkage of the three foundation stones in the Constitutions is not entirely satisfactory. The symbol of Memoria Passionis is articulated in profoundly inspirational terms and its apostolic implications are clearly developed, but the problem is the link up of these two with the model of community. It is my personal impression that, despite frequent references to the Passion in the chapters on Community (Consts., nn.26,29,33,38,39,42,47, 49,50,53,56,57), the power and originality of the symbol of the Memoria Passionis is not integrated dynamically with the vision of community life and prayer. And, while stating the principle that apostolate flows from community, the Constitutions do not ground this in any clear method of pastoral practice. The Regulations go some way, giving criteria for choosing apostolic activities (Regs., n. 28), and directing that:

“Each Province must draw up a pastoral programme in which each community and each religious should be involved and which indicates its priorities of apostolic activity in accord with the programme and criteria adopted in the Congregation.” (Regs., n. 38)

Community life and apostolate have to be brought into dynamic relationship, with the Passion of Jesus as the focus of unity (Consts. n. 5). For this to happen, a method or praxis is required. i.e., a fundamental manner of approaching present-day challenges, reading the signs of the times, interpreting events in the light of the Memoria Passionis, articulating a communal apostolic response. The Preparatory Commission in 1968 saw ‘planning’ as one of the foundations of apostolic activity, but this was not clearly enshrined in the Constitutions. As a result, insofar as the Constitutions present us with a structured form of Passionist life, it is one which still needs a keystone.

### **Section 4: APPLYING THE CONSTITUTIONS**

If the Constitutions were a fundamental re-expression of the inspiration of the Rule, the 1988 General Programme can be seen as “a dynamic re-reading of our Constitutions in the present day historical context” (Synod 1990). This was the intention when the 1986 Synod chose as the theme of the next General Chapter “Passionists before the Challenges of Today’s World.” This decision was “based on the belief that the Constitutions and Regulations, as well as the General Chapter and recent Synods, have helped us understand more profoundly the richness of our charism. Now, with a clearer self-concept, we are challenged to investigate how we respond out of our charism to the needs of the world in which we live.” (1988 General Chapter Preparatory Commission <GCPC 1988>, Letter, 1/1/87).

The first task of the 1988 General Chapter was to identify the challenges of the contemporary world. The main thrust of the preparatory work, done by the whole Congregation in 1987-88, was a rudimentary social analysis or development of social awareness. This aimed at obtaining “a full picture of the challenges which our world presents to our Congregation, in order that we may have a full and documented vision” (Paul M. Boyle, Circular Letter in Preparation for the General Chapter, 27/2/87). The replies from the Provinces were rich and varied, and itemised an immense number of issues, challenges and problems. Inevitably, these were somewhat diffuse, and the experience of reflecting communally on the social context in a consistent way produced certain reactions:

How to maintain our identity in the midst of the many roles we have to play in the local church...how to work in a culture that is not our own. We are educated and rich; how to accept the new believers as our brethren. Living amidst such misery, we have to change our lifestyle. (Africa)

They (the challenges) cause concern, preoccupation...ideological confusion...we are ashamed of our way of life...they make us discover the contradictions and the lack of meaning in our lives...feeling of being overwhelmed...unable to influence the situation. We lack credibility because we fail to witness. (Iberia)

Examine the profound spiritual reasons for these situations...discomfort and anxiety due to the difficulty of giving an adequate response...a kind of retrenching considering our age, numbers, education...certain closed attitudes...defending a traditional interpretation of our charism. (Italy)

They make us question whether the Gospel has really entered our community life; whether our poverty is really meaningful; whether we share our possessions; whether we refuse to adopt criteria of power and whether we allow ourselves be guided by our belief in the power of love. They invite us to conversion and prompt us to eliminate the contradictions between our Passionist identity and the situation of poverty in which we live. (Latin America)

Too often our thinking, living and acting are affected by these realities instead of these problems being addressed by our life and ministry. (North America)

We are overwhelmed by the enormity of the problems and by the situation of spreading poverty. Our institutional and monastic lifestyle seems to shield us from many issues of today. We still live very much separated from the world and from social reality. New commitments often arise from the initiative of individuals, rather than as a result of community programming. (North Europe) (GCPC 1988, Report II, February 1988)

The General Chapter, in addressing the theme, interpreted “Challenges” at two levels:

(I) WHAT are the challenges which arise from the situation of the world today?

The Chapter’s analysis was two key points: unjust conditions and the hunger for justice, and the absence of God and the yearning for God. (General Program 1988, pp. 34-36)

(ii) HOW is the situation of the world today a challenge to us Passionists?

The conclusion was: “to relive and proclaim the Memoria Passionis.” (General Program 1988, pp. 36-37)

These apparently simple statements gave a focus to the complexities of the theme of Challenges of Today’s World. They are the anchor points of the whole General Program. No claim can be made, of course, that the identification of the two social challenges was particularly original. They correspond to what many other Orders have found (the Jesuit’s 1975 re-statement of their mission in terms of faith and justice, for example); and they are practically identical with the tasks of religious in Europe, as proposed recently by J.B. Metz - to witness to and keep alive the passion for God, and to be intercessors for the poor and deprived (Metz & Peters 1991). What is specific, however, is to see the Memoria Passionis as a dynamic response to these two key challenges of the world today.

The 1988 General Program is drawn up around three Objectives, which correspond to the three foundation stones of the Constitutions: a General Objective, focused on the Memoria Passionis; a Specific Objective for Passionist Life; and a Specific Objective for Passionist Apostolic Activity. This was the first time a General Chapter had made an action-oriented programme its principal task. Instead of offering the Congregation new legislation, it outlined a path to follow. It might be said that, up to this point, the Congregation’s work of renewal had concentrated on Vatican II’s instruction to re-discover the original charism of the Founder; in 1988, Vatican II’s second goal of renewal came centre stage - ie., the adaptation of the charism to the needs of the modern world. This was another perspective within which to interpret our Passionist tradition and to read our sources.

### **The Prophetic Model of Passionist Life**

The General Program is based on an existential approach, a “look outwards.” It takes up the themes of the Constitutions, but plays them in a “new key” - the prophetic key. The Constitutions describe Passionist life as prophetic in just one place, in the new number 72 inserted by the 1982 General Chapter. The theme of prophecy, however, is prominent in the General Program. As a result, a further model of the structured form of Passionist life is discernible.

## **THE PROPHETIC MODEL**

(1988 General Program)

“WE PASSIONISTS IN SOLIDARITY WITH TODAY’S CRUCIFIED”  
(General Objective)

### **FUNDAMENTALS**

**AIMS**           The essential **MISSION** of the Passionists is:  
To take a prophetic stance, addressing the challenges of today’s world:  
Injustice and the hunger for justice;  
Absence of God and the yearning for God.

**BELIEFS**       This is inspired by a fundamental **BELIEF** Passionists adhere to:

That the Passion of Jesus was the consequence of his commitment to the Kingdom of God and the abandoned, and expressed the depth of his love.

**VALUES** In order to fulfil this mission Passionists COMMIT themselves:

To look to the power of the Cross;

In solidarity with today's crucified;

Discovering in them the continuing reality of Christ's Passion;

Allowing the poor and suffering to evangelize them;

Risking with the poor the experience of the Cross.

## **PRACTICE**

**LIFE-STYLE** Passionists life:

as **CONTEMPLATIVES**

In ongoing personal and community conversion;

As a poor and simple community, practising dialogue and discernment;

Reading the signs of the times;

Penetrating the depths of the challenges of today's world, so as to uncover their profound causes.

**APOSTOLATE** Passionists minister:

by **PROPHETIC PROCLAMATION**:

Preaching the Gospel of the Passion (by traditional and new forms);

Sharing with others the liberating memory of Christ's Passion;

Denouncing all that causes injustice and the denial of God;

Announcing the reign of the God of life, justice and peace.

The **FOCUS OF UNITY** in their lives and activities is that:

Passionists see both the Crucified One and the crucified of the world today in one and the same glance.

## **Section 5: RE-CRAFTING PASSIONIST LIFE**

This completes our exploration of Congregational texts. How are they to be used in practice? The main task today is to find practical expression for our renewed understanding of Passionist life and mission, to re-craft our way of life (Leddy 1990).

### **a) Models and Life**

Models are meant to facilitate understanding. There are, however, dangers associated with them. One is to fail to see them as complementary, and effectively to opt for one to the exclusion of all others. The models outlined above are descriptions of historical, time-conditioned understandings of Passionist life. In one sense, therefore, they reveal how we Passionists have moved on in our grasp of our particular way of life. At the same time, the earlier models do not become simply museum pieces. The Rule is not totally replaced by the Constitutions, nor are the Constitutions supplanted by the General Programme. Prescinding from the question of the juridical status of these three texts, we can say that they are all sources for developing our understanding of Passionist life. Their differing perspectives, taken in combination, can be used

creatively to guide thought and action. This is not to assert that there is a simple convergence between them. The models, as we shall see, highlight both continuities and discontinuities in our sources.

A further problem about the use of models is that their clearcut lines can appear simplistic and over-demanding. Models, of course, are meant to be simplistic in one sense. They set out to highlight certain features, and their worth is only proved when they are put to use as maps for exploring the complexity of real life situations. The problem of models appearing over-demanding touches on a sensitive issue of the whole process of renewal. The experience of individuals and communities since Vatican II, as they have struggled to adapt to new ways of thinking and practice, has often been a certain paralysis. Most religious are aware of problems, yet new Constitutions and Programmes may be greeted less as solutions than as “oppressive” demands. Why so?

Leaving aside facile explanations that the changes are all wrong or that there is a lack of goodwill, we can see that renewal has involved a radical shift in our self-understanding, both at the fundamental level (aims, beliefs and values), and at the level of practice (life-style and apostolate). A comparison of the Traditional Model and the Chapter Document/Constitutions Models makes this clear. Nor was it a once-for-all shift. The Prophetic Model marks yet another departure, re-expressing the shape of Passionist life in response to contemporary challenges. It is relatively easy to formulate these shifts in new texts, and to justify them by reference to the needs of our times. However, finding the motivation to make the shift in practice runs into a particular difficulty: that our personal and communal motivation as Passionists is to a large degree given to us by our history, and has been produced and patterned in us precisely by texts such as the Rule. Changing the text tampers with the source of motivation. Yet, motivation is the essential requirement of change.

This reveals the nature of the challenge of re-crafting Passionist life for today. It is helpful to situate our task in relation to that of St. Paul of the Cross. Stanislaus Breton notes three stages in our Founder’s work.

I would say that every efficacious will...must be preceded by a time of enchantment. It is precisely that ‘enchantment’ which we can discern in the life of St. Paul of the Cross before the idea of the future Congregation takes shape and form...The founder thus dreamed his work before he brought it into reality.

There was then, even before the Castellazzo period, what I would call the phase of the primordial dream.

In the second phase of this pre-existence (which occurs in Paul’s life around the years 1721-22), the initial enchantment passes to the rough draft of a first execution, wherein the idea, under the weight of the satisfaction that is there, becomes in some way self-affirmative and self-realizing. I would say that the idea becomes ‘cause of itself’. Self-affirmative, it is developed in a judgement of effective possibility.

Finally, after deliberation and consideration of the external conditions which do not depend upon Paul’s will, he sets his mind on a judgement of reality - the instrumental ensemble which, all things considered, would seem to him more suited to the end which he intended. (Breton 1987:-6-8)

Breton says there is an inevitable diminishment between each stage. The idea born in enchantment can never be fully translated into a text, and the primitive-text can never be fully operational in an established Rule. Yet, everything else arises from enchantment (“an idea which sings and a song which orientates” - Breton). For all founders, the Rule and form of life they succeed in establishing is subordinated to their primordial dream, which is on the level of “myth.” Many writers today insist on the necessity of a recovery of the mythological if renewal is to succeed. Each of our Congregational texts, then, and *a fortiori* the models derived from them, have limitations. Without in any way diminishing the importance of our Rule or Constitutions, we can say that no text should be allowed to become too “sacred.” St. Paul of the Cross was so far from considering his primitive text sacred that he destroyed it. The Scriptures are, for Christians, their only truly sacred text. Life in the Spirit is the source to which we must return for renewed motivation.

## **b) Continuity and Discontinuity**

Breton’s schema provides a context within which our models can be made to work. As already emphasized, our models do not deal with the totality of Passionist life, but attempt to describe the various ways its socially structured form has been historically understood. They underscore what is involved in the re-articulation of the dream of Passionist life, ie., Breton’s second and third stages. They are working tools, which help only if they enable us to be in contact with the myth level, the “idea which sings and song which orientates.”

Renewal involves a delicate interplay of continuity and discontinuity. This may have effects both on the basic elements, which constitute Passionist life, and on the overall form of that life. This, obviously, touches on the very heart of our Passionist charism, and it seems to me that further historical and theological work will be required to explore the topic fully. What I express here is my reading of how the models in the Constitutions and General Program are in both continuity and discontinuity with the model of the Rule.

## **(I) Basic Elements of Passionist Life**

The traditional social form of Passionist life was a dialectical relationship of contemplation and apostolate, which had as its focus the spirituality of the Passion. In organizational terms, this relationship is located primarily at the instrumental level (practice), ie., the life-style of PRAYER and the apostolate of preaching or PROCLAMATION of the Passion.

In the Constitutions, and more explicitly in the General Program, another dialectical relationship comes into play between the ‘Crucified One’ and ‘the crucified ones’. I maintain this is located primarily at the expressive level (fundamentals), because it is a re-definition of the spirituality of the Passion. In the General Programme this relationship is more than a theological principle; it is given flesh as the preferential option for the poor, and expressed as ‘SOLIDARITY with today’s crucified’. Solidarity is a basic life-stance, defined in the General Programme in words such as ‘challenged by’, ‘sharing with’. The strongest expression is: Passionists being ‘evangelized by the poor’. Something more than works of service is involved. The poor are introduced to “their proper location, making them one of the fundamental critical elements of our life.” (General Programme, p. 20) The primary emphasis is on “being with the poor.” This is why I place this element within the contemplative dimension, and as a feature of life-style, not merely as an apostolic goal.

Finally, in the General Program SERVICE to the poor - which is also found in the Traditional Model - signifies practical action responding to the manifestations of human misery (injustice and the denial of God) and confronting their causes. In summary, four basic elements of Passionist life, situated within two dimensions, are discernible:

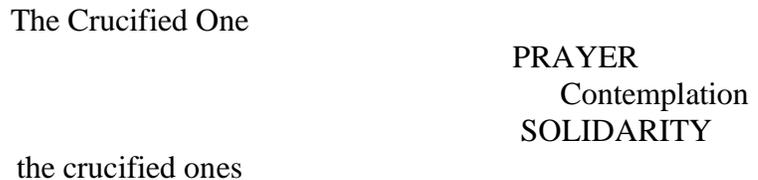
Contemplative Dimension:

PRAYER	with the Crucified One
SOLIDARITY	with the crucified ones

Apostolic Dimension:

PROCLAMATION	of the Crucified One
SERVICE	to the crucified ones

Figure 1: Basic Elements of Passionist Life.



The continuity between the Traditional Model and the Prophetic Model is in the elements of Prayer, Proclamation and Service, which are constant features of Passionist life. Discontinuity is to be found in the new element of Solidarity. This is not only new in itself; its introduction also suggests new ways of understanding the three traditional elements. Has the overall form of Passionist life, then, changed?

**(ii) The Socially Structured Form of Passionist Life**

In the Preface to the Rule, St. Paul of the Cross says:

After these visions of the tunic and the sign, God gave me a stronger compelling desire to gather companions and with the approval of holy Mother Church to found a Congregation called: ‘The Poor of Jesus’. After this God infused into my soul in a lasting manner the form of the Holy Rule to be observed by the Poor of Jesus and by me his least and lowest servant.

What is this ‘form of the Holy Rule’, and what significance does it have for an authentic re-interpretation of Paul’s charism? Costante Brovetto adverts to the contrast between the ‘developmental’ sequence of the chapters of the Rule, which “take the religious metaphorically by the hand from the moment that he begins to consider his vocation until the moment when, having passed to a better life, he receives the due suffrages,” and the sequence in the Constitutions, “which might be termed a ‘logical’ one, that is based on the significant values of the Passionist life” (Brovetto 1987: 41). Is this a purely textual matter, or does it mean the ‘form’ of Passionist life itself has undergone a transformation? If so, is this in continuity or discontinuity with the spiritual experience of St. Paul of the Cross? Would discontinuity be legitimate, in view of Paul’s assertion that God infused the form into his soul in a lasting manner?

It is not clear what precisely the Founder meant by 'form', but it was obviously important to him; he was prepared to make many detailed changes to the Rule as long as the essential 'form' was maintained. The Preface makes clear that the 'form' arose from his deepest spiritual experiences, and therefore, has its roots in the 'mythical' level. Paul Francis Spencer develops the thesis that it is directly related to Paul's symbols (e.g., the Sign) and the role they played in his spiritual experience and teaching:

In his own life, symbol held a privileged place, as it was the medium through which the founding inspirations were communicated... The effect of the symbols on him was formative in that they shaped his vision in a lasting way; the experience was a unifying one, at the end of which Paul understood the various inspirations as related to one unified 'form of life' rather than as a number of disjointed concepts, as they were perhaps later understood... The 'form of the holy Rule' can be seen as referring to the symbolic structure, which, in spite of various revisions of the Rule always remained intact. (Spencer 1989: 61-62)

'Form', then, can be seen as Paul's spiritual perception of what makes Passionist life a unity. However, as symbolic structure, it is not carried over from the Rule to our other Congregational texts. So, we have to examine how the contemporary texts present the unifying feature of Passionist life. In this article, of course, I am examining the social form of our life; but it may be that the two usages of the word are not entirely disconnected. What social form has to be established in order to make Passionist life one, and to avoid the trap of dichotomizing it into separate spheres of contemplation and apostolate?

In the Rule, one way the deep link between contemplation and apostolate is made is by the apostolic goal to teach others to meditate. Passionists contemplate the Passion of Jesus and lead others to the same contemplation (in contrast to the traditional dictum: *contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere*). Also, St. Paul of the Cross wanted to forge a way of life "like that of the Apostles," with a balance of proclaiming the Kingdom and withdrawing to prayer. At the same time, as already suggested, it was difficult in practice to avoid the model of the "mixed life." Similarly, despite the insistence of the Constitutions that "involvement in the apostolate flows directly from our life in community," it is unclear how this principle is to be carried over into practice.

The General Program acknowledges the problem:

The Memoria Passionis produces a difficult dialectical tension between the contemplative dimension and the apostolic activity of our life. (General Program pp. 36)

and presents the challenge to Passionists:

to commit themselves to see in one and the same glance both Jesus Crucified and the crucified of each historical moment. (General Program pp. 49-51)

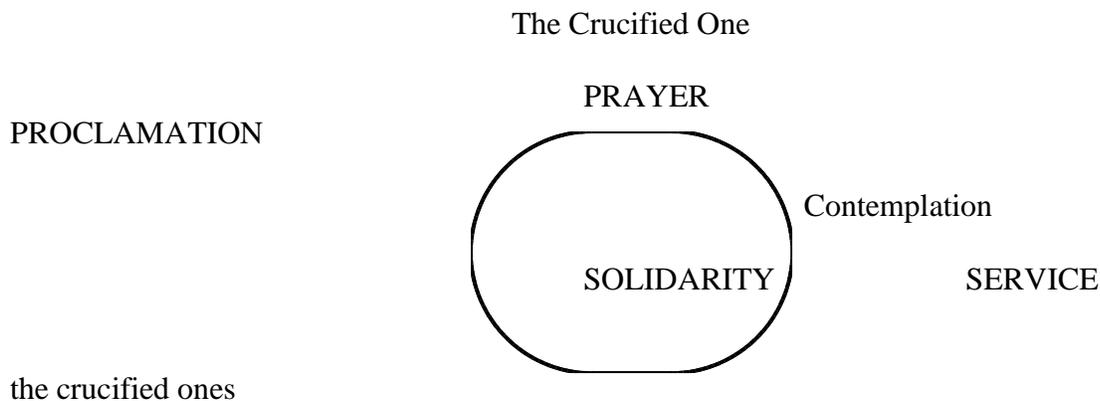
The 1990 Synod, reviewing the General Program, comes back to the same challenge:

The General Program will, in practical terms, become efficacious and credible in the measure in which we are capable of carrying out and, living an existential relationship

between prayer, community life, apostolic service, the Crucified One and the crucified of our day, and the proclamation of the Word of the Cross. (Synod Report p. 3)

The Synod here highlights the four basic elements of the Prophetic Model. What is the inner connection between them which, when established existentially, creates a dynamic unity? I believe that a certain dynamism arises from the two dialectical relationships - between the Crucified One and the crucified ones, and between contemplation and apostolate. Each of the basic elements calls for the others for its completeness. Unity is the fruit of living out this dialectical interplay; it requires a rhythm, a continuous movement linking Prayer and Service, Proclamation and Solidarity. To grasp things this way is to “dream” rather than to remain on the level of logic. If a dream can be put into diagram, the social form of Passionist life would appear something like Figure 2.

Figure 2. The dynamic of the Prophetic Model.



The dynamic is expressed as a figure eight, delineating the two spheres of contemplation and apostolate. The key to the rhythm is crossing between the spheres, and avoiding remaining within them. This also involves continuous movement from the pole of the Crucified One to that of the crucified ones.

The General Program makes the option for the poor the interface between Passionist life and the challenges of the world, and this is expressed in both the contemplative dimension (in Solidarity) and the apostolic dimension (in Service). The Prophetic Model of Passionist life, then, is an ‘open system’, a way of living Passionist life in dynamic openness to the poor. Lived this way, it is a rhythm in which apostolic action is both the fruit and the food of contemplation, and contemplation is both the ground and goal of apostolic action. This dynamic may be seen as the socially structured form of Passionist life today. The unity of our life, therefore, is found at the level of the spirituality of the Passion expressed in the commitment of option for the poor. Rather than discontinuity, the ‘form’ of Passionist life had developed and deepened.

Does this model imply that there is only one way of living Passionist life today? Or are there different ways the Prophetic Model can be expressed in specific situations? The key to this may be which of the elements is stressed. Proclamation is stressed in the preaching ministry; Service

in parochial ministry; Solidarity in insertion among the poor; Prayer in ministries of intercession.

There is a great variety of ways of being a Passionist. The Prophetic Model shows that, whichever element we stress, we are called to respect and find expression for the others as well.

### **Conclusion**

In the General Program, the new feature of Solidarity with the crucified is integrated with the three traditional elements of our life. This avoids any reduction of Passionist life and mission to merely a social concern for material needs. Solidarity with and Service to the poor are linked to Prayer and oriented to Proclamation. It might also be said that the option for the poor provides the 'keystone' which links the three foundation stones of the- Constitutions (Memoria Passionis, Communitarian Life, and Apostolate). Solidarity with the crucified is a fundamental determinant of Passionist spirituality, life-style and apostolic activity. Taking the stance of solidarity with the poor determines the kind of service Passionists offer, the kind of proclamation they make, and the quality of their prayer. The concrete forms that this solidarity with and service to the poor will take have to be worked out in the experience and creativity of the Congregation as a whole. However, the General Program, read together with the Rule and Constitutions, opens a way for us to engage in the demanding but rewarding task of re-crafting our Passionist way of life.

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