

Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality - 33

Various Authors

**REFLECTIONS
ON THE OCCASION OF
THE 25th ANNIVERSARY OF THE
APPROBATION OF THE CONSTITUTIONS**

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General Curia of the Passionists

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Superior General
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Solemn Commemoration
of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Circular Letter to the Congregation and to the Passionist Family on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Approbation of the Constitutions

**Dear brothers of the Congregation and the sisters and brothers
of the Passionist Family,**

In 2009 we are celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the approbation of the Constitutions by the Holy See through the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, signed by the late Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, now the “Servant of God”.

We want to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of their approbation in a spirit of faith, immersing ourselves in them once again as if we were washing ourselves in the pool of Siloam that refreshes us and heals us, giving us the capacity to open our eyes to the light of life like the man born blind in the Gospel of John¹. Therefore I invite the Configurations, the Provinces, the Vice-Provinces, the Vicariates, the communities and the Passionist Family to celebrate this year as a special event for remembering and deepening our appreciation of the values and the contents of the Constitutions by means of studies, symposia, community meetings and special liturgies, assemblies, publications and whatever other means that might be useful in each particular setting and culture.

It is surprising how after twenty-five years the Constitutions still have the same freshness and authenticity as when they were first approved and published. They were composed through dialog, discernment and prayer during the General Chapter of 1982 that was celebrated at Sts. John and Paul, I remember the enthusiasm of the Chapter, the first one that I attended. The Constitutions were the fruit of a process that began during the years following World War II and which received significant growth with Pope John XXIII and with the celebration of Vatican Council II.

They have visible roots, not only in their inspiration, but also in the formulation of the text, in the Chapter Document that was the fruit of the General Chapter of June, 1970.

¹ Jn. 9:1-41.

In the preface to the Chapter Document which the Servant of God, Fr. Theodore Foley, addressed to the Congregation, the then Superior General wrote: *“On June 19th, the 39th General Chapter completed the work that was entrusted to it by means of the “Motu proprio” entitled “Ecclesiae Sanctae” of His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, i.e. to study, in a spirit of prayer and reflection, the Rule of life that was left to us as an inheritance from our beloved Founder, St. Paul of the Cross, making the revisions that seem to be necessary and proper today for appropriate renewal of religious life in our Congregation.”*

And Fr. Foley added that, overcoming *“the differences of opinion in the innumerable discussions on every aspect of our life...gradually we arrived at mutual comprehension and understanding, and a fundamental agreement about the essential elements of Passionist life... This now becomes the true heart of our Rule of life, i.e. an authentic interpretation of the spirit of St. Paul of the Cross, which was first expressed in his handwritten texts, and which remains a permanent and indispensable source of inspiration.”*

The Constitutions approved in 1984 have their roots in the pages written by the Founder in Castellazzo and they are alive in the Spirit who confirmed what was written in those pages and in the various versions of the Rule that written successively whether during the life of the Founder or during the centuries that followed even until today.

After the long travail that led to the approbation of the initial version of the Rule, until the final approbation of 1775, the year of his death, St. Paul of the Cross believed in the relentless energy of the Spirit and the dynamic presence of God in the history of the world and in the Church and therefore, in the Congregation.

And to offer a point of origin and a source of inspiration, the text of the Rule that was solemnly approved by Pope Pius VI in 1775 is the preface to the Constitutions and has *“its own special vigour and importance for understanding the genuine inspiration and intention of the Father and Founder, and should always be kept in mind by the Religious of the Passion of Christ.”*².

² Decree of Approbation.

The first words of the Constitutions at No. 1, Chapter 1, “The Fundamentals of our Life”, are the name of the Founder: *“Saint Paul of the Cross gathered companions to live together and to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to all.”*

And at No. 2: *“Recognizing in Saint Paul of the Cross the action of the Holy Spirit, the Church with her supreme authority approved our Congregation and its Rule, and entrusted us with a mission: to preach the Gospel of the Passion by our life and apostolate... We come together therefore in apostolic communities so that we can fulfill this mission of ours by working for the coming of God’s Kingdom.”*

And at No.3: *“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...”*

These are parts of the first three items of the Constitutions that open the horizon and serve as the basis for the eight chapters that comprise them and which are the inspiration and the rules of life for all the religious of the Congregation that live and work today in 58 nations. Furthermore, they are a point of reference for the women religious and for the laity of the Passionist Family who feel themselves called to live the charism of the Passion. Looking back on our history, and the life and apostolate of so many religious, including innumerable saints and martyrs, imbued with so much grace since the early days beginning with the Founder, I am reminded of the words of the prophet Joel: *“A fountain shall spring from the house of the LORD, to water the wadi of Acacias.”*³; we would say: the valley of the present world. And for this we thank God because it is all a gift.

The 25th Anniversary of the approbation of the Constitutions should find us working at ascertaining whether we are still living refreshed by the waters that come to us, in continuity with the original source. The Consti-

³ Jl. 4:18.

tutions are our patrimony: *“Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old.”*⁴

But the heart of this patrimony and the pearl of great price for which “everything is sold” by us and to which we dedicate ourselves with great energy and love is the “Memoria Passionis”. This is the constitutive element of the Congregation and reason for our existence in the Church. It is the mandate that God has given to us and to the Passionist Family by our vocation: Call to mind! Remember! This is to be understood in the biblical sense of the command to Israel which from the very beginnings of its history lived out the experience of continually recalling the saving acts of God in the past and in anticipation of their continual renewal in the present. For us “Memoria” is making the paschal mystery the center of our life, lovingly dedicating ourselves to follow Christ Crucified and proclaiming his Passion and Death not only as an historical event of the past, but as a present reality in the life of people who are *“‘crucified’ as they are by injustice, by the lack of deep respect for human life...”*⁵

The Memoria Passionis inspires and enlightens all of the Constitutions especially the four most important chapters: Fundamentals, the Apostolate, Formation and the Constitution of the Congregation. The other teachings and norms revolve around these chapters. And the same traditional Passionist values of solitude, silence, poverty, detachment and penance--obviously in addition to prayer and meditation—are the environment, the greenhouse in which to cultivate and bring into blossom the flower of the Passion. So too the specific vow of the formula for profession -- *“to recall to mind with greater love the Passion of our Lord and to promote its memory by word and deed...”*⁶ -- precedes and elucidates the other three vows of religious life: *“In light of this, we seek to incorporate this vow into our daily lives by living the evangelical councils.”*⁷

This 25th anniversary is an opportunity that the Spirit and history is giving us to re-read the Constitutions with new eyes and a new heart.

In his Circular Letter to the Congregation of 15 April 1985, on the occasion of the publication of the Constitutions, Bishop Paul Boyle, then Superior General wrote: *“On the feast of the Solemn Commemoration of*

⁴ Mt. 13:52.

⁵ Constitutions, 65.

⁶ *Ibid* 96.

⁷ *Ibid* 6.

the Passion, March 2, 1984, the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes formally approved our revised Constitutions as an authentic expression of our charism and purpose in the Church. Once the Constitutions were approved there followed months of tedious work in controlling technical details such as spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and references and proofreading galley sheets of the official Latin text of the inspirational Rule, the Constitutions and our Regulations. At the same time several language commissions were hard at work translating these three documents into the vernacular."

He invited us to receive it as "a precious text" and, among other points, he recalled what Pope John Paul II said in a special Audience with over 400 Passionists: *the "new Constitutions... intend to indicate the manner of observing the Rule of Saint Paul of the Cross in the present historical situation and according to the directives of the recent Council and the new Code of Canon Law."*

The Circular Letter of Paul Boyle further stated: *"This Rule and these Constitutions should be received in a profound spirit of faith. We firmly believe, indeed it is fundamental to our commitment, that these approved texts express the Will of God in our regard."* And he continued: *"Every document issuing from the Church has a human author, often a small group of persons. But we all recognize that it would be a serious lack of faith to view these documents exclusively or primarily as the work of a particular individual or commission. Such documents come from the Church."*

This 25th Anniversary is an occasion to review and become familiar with the development and the richness of the charism in the Constitutions and in the wider context of the history of the Congregation. These have been studied in depth in timely and specific publications, books, symposia, congresses and reviews, and also in various issues of the series entitled: "Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality" that were sent to the communities.

This Anniversary offers us an opportunity to also reflect on the particular time period in which we are living out the process of Restructuring which has as its goal to give renewed vitality to the Congregation. We are at the mid-point in this process of crossing over; we are in the middle of the river and we have to get to other shore. The period in which we are living is very fragile because, enlightened by solidarity, we are moving toward reconfiguring ourselves into something new. Solidarity in the

various areas of formation, personnel and finances will allow us to share wealth and poverty and to reciprocally reach out to one another in order to be mutually enriched.

Frequently, during General Chapters, Synods, in our communities and in personal conversations we have asked ourselves: what would St. Paul of the Cross think about the Congregation considering the problems of today's world and the realities in which the Congregation is living in its historical areas and in those recently established areas? Would he remain inert or would he theorize about solutions and new possibilities in order to revive fraternal life in the communities and greater effectiveness in ministry? Restructuring would be an answer to these questions. It is an arduous task and we know this; but we are moving ahead with faith, with prayer and with great courage and trust in the Lord. One can also choose to remain in Egypt; but Promised Land of new spiritual energy and effective planning would remain far away, beyond the Red Sea of inertia. It may seem to be wise and prudent to preserve what little we have; the talents can be buried in the ground. But in the parable, the Lord called that servant "wicked, lazy" and took away his talent and he had him thrown out into the darkness. Instead he rewarded the servant who was trustworthy and faithful, who dared to risk his own five talents.⁸ Life is conquered by faith! Faith generates life as in Abram, in Mary and in the miracles of Jesus.

We trust that the leaven of the "Memoria Passionis" will enliven the search for the will of God and the lantern of faith and hope placed on the lamp stand of the communities, of the Synods and on the lamp stand of next General Chapter will illumine our way and the choices we have to make.

I would like to conclude with the act of faith in No.2 of the Constitutions: *"Confident that God will help us to overcome our human limitations, we are determined to remain faithful to the patrimony and evangelical spirit of our Founder."* Amen.

Rome – Sts. John and Paul
2 March 2009

Fr. Ottaviano D'Egidio, CP
Superior General

⁸ Mt. 15:14-30.

THE PASSIONIST VOCATION

**« Saint Paul of the Cross
gathered companions to live together and to pro-
claim the Gospel of Christ to all » (Const. No. 1)**

THE PASSIONIST VOCATION

Fr. Mark-Robin Hoogland, C.P. (SPE)

Being asked to share some thoughts with my Brethren all over the world about the Passionist vocation is a great honour for me. For, indeed, all of us are in a way experts by experience. In this short reflection I would like to share a few thoughts by considering some aspects of our vocation on the basis of the text in our Constitutions (numbers 1 to 4).

Our vocation is the *forma* of our lives. It makes us aware of the meaning of our being and makes us move in the right direction, if we listen carefully. The First four numbers of our Constitutions are dedicated to our specific Passionist vocation. The framework and the focus of the way of our religious life are formulated here. In the light of these principles the various aspects of our life and spirituality are considered under the subsequent numbers.

It is good to see that the designated fundamentals of Passionist life are not high ideals or absolutes carved in stone. Our life is rather directed by the memory of the Crucified One and by the great example of our holy founder, St. Paul of the Cross. Thus we acknowledge that two *persons* are at the heart of the inspiration of our Passionist life. Yet these two are not on the same level, of course: Christ is the source, St. Paul of the Cross an inspired mediator.

And yet, it is interesting to see, number 1 does not set out by referring to Christ Crucified. The whole of this first number is dedicated to our holy founder and only in the last sentence the Passion of Jesus Christ is

mentioned, in a quote of St. Paul. That is remarkable. But if we take a closer look at this number 1 we see that this order does justice to what we, Passionists, are about. Although our holy founder was also a child of his time, he has remained a prominent and inspiring example for Passionists and for the whole of the Church.

First the text calls to mind why St. Paul of the Cross gathered companions: "to live together and to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to all ¹." Note that according to him the object of the Congregation he founded was no other than that of every Christian and in particular someone with a responsible position in the Church: living a Christian life wholeheartedly and as one can in accordance with one's state of life². The religious state includes communal life and taking vows, but also then following in the footsteps of Christ along the lines pointed out in God's Law and the evangelical counsels remains central. This means that we, religious, Passionists, are not a different species; we are distinct (by our vows, our state), and yet we belong to the same flock. It is good to realize that we are not totally different from any "ordinary" Christian in terms of higher or better - especially when we preach and give pastoral guidance.

These two objects mentioned in the first sentence of our Constitutions seem obvious, but can be true challenges. Living together is not always easy because of a clash of cultures and personalities. Some even prefer to live on their own instead of living together with other Brethren because of negative experiences in the past. Friendship or at least respect amongst Brethren, humility, patience, generosity, openheartedness and trust do not come automatically with the vows. Sometimes living apart from the community is required because of one's apostolate. The art of remaining faithful to our Passionist call is in such a situation a matter of creatively finding ways in which we stay connected with our Brethren: e.g. mutual visits regularly, gathering on a fixed day every week, or two or three community days each month.

The same applies to the object of proclaiming the gospel of Christ to all. These words concern our whole life as Passionists, not our apostolic work alone. If we become older and cannot go out and preach anymore, we are

¹ In Italian, Spanish, French and Dutch (and other languages?) it says "to the people", the meaning of which is the same in the end.

² cf. Rule 1775, n.1.

not relieved of this obligation. We may retire as missionaries, pastors, teachers, sacristans, gardeners, nurses etc. but we are religious as long as we receive the breath of life. Being called to proclaim the gospel of Christ to all includes being a living testimony of God's Good News to our fellow Brethren and a stimulus to live religious life to the full: through our presence, attitude, words and gestures.

This proclaiming is not only a matter of individuals, but also of the community as a whole. The choices we make as a community could and should be an example for the people around us, within and outside the Church. Our prayer life, our simple lifestyle, our brotherly love, our hospitality, our careful attention to the environment (products we use, what we eat, how we keep the garden, placing solar panels on the roof etc.) - a religious community is called to radiate the gospel message in everything. And if we want to be distinct by means of our Passionist spirituality we ought to do it with special attention to people and all of creation that suffer, be it by reason of natural causes, individual mistakes or sinful structures. In respect of this the Constitutions make a reference to the Apostles: they became attractive by their way of life and many joined them.

Furthermore, proclaiming the gospel of Christ to all (or: to the people) implies that no one is beforehand excluded from our attentiveness. During his life St. Paul of the Cross followed Jesus Christ as he answered his call and chose to be with suffering people about whom the civil authorities did not care and who were abandoned by the religious institutions. The people in the "Maremma" were forgotten by the state and the Church but he recognized in their faces the face of the suffering Christ. The words "to all" (or: to the people) compel us to sincerely consider who the people are to whom the Crucified One is calling us in our situations in our time. Who are the forgotten and despised people of our days in the region where we live and work? That is where we find our *raison d'être*.

The second and third paragraph of number 1 is about the purpose of our life as Passionists. In the second paragraph we find a threefold purpose: our life is about authenticity, our bond with the Lord and our mission. To authenticity is referred where the observation of the evangelical counsels are mentioned. These counsels direct us to a life as God has in-

tended human life to be. They concern our interior life (our thoughts, will, faith, hope, love and desires) and our outer life (words, deeds) and therefore our individual life as well as our living together. These counsels are critical directives for our actions before we act and afterwards, as an evaluation.

Our bond with the Lord is mentioned where it says that a purpose of our life is to pray always³. Prayer is a way to seek, express, maintain and grow in our relation with God (and all who are with Him in heaven). Here too we find an individual and a communal aspect. There is a lot to say about this, but for this short reflection on our vocation it is enough to underline that it is important for all of us to pray together as a community also in order to seek, express, maintain and strengthen the bond with one another. As for prayer "in secret"⁴: if we experience that prayer in the chapel has become dry and nothing more than a matter of observance, we are called *more than ever* to look for a way of prayer in solitude beside it. After all, through prayer we open ourselves up to the Eternal One so that we are not completely confined by our human limitations and may receive what we need to live human life to the full, in true happiness. And of course, this prayer in private is necessary as it is salutary and wholesome also when we are not at home or not living in a community.

The third purpose mentioned in the second paragraph is our mission to preach the Word of the Cross throughout the year, in word and deed. As Pope Benedict XIV pointed out when he approved St. Paul of the Cross' Rule on the 15 May 1741: this preaching concerns our apostolate and the whole of our life.

Evangelical poverty is presented as the way to achieve these purposes. The fact that in the beginning our holy founder had called his group of companions "The Poor of Jesus", shows how important he thought this poverty to be. Evangelical poverty is a goal in itself since it is one of the counsels and yet it is also the means through which we pursue the aims mentioned. Even more, it is the prerequisite: a matter of attitude.

Since we are an open, apostolic community we are influenced by whatever is happening around us. This is in itself a good thing; the Holy

³ cf. Luke 18:1.

⁴ cf. Mt. 6:6.

Spirit does not only work through clergy and religious. There are many initiatives of lay people that set an example concerning aspects that are central in religious life. Still, in a materialistic world our living in view of evangelical poverty may be blurred before we know it, so that we become as preoccupied with trivial issues like what shall we eat, drink, wear, drive etc. as many around us.

If it is visible that evangelical poverty is a catalyst of our religious life, it is not only good for ourselves, but for the people around us as well: our communities become living signs of the coming Kingdom where there is no place for avarice and pride. We become inspiring examples of a different, more wholesome and happy way of life. We become living evidence that people can make it true, with God's help. Thus we become attractive communities.

In the third paragraph of number 1 the purposes of our bond with God and our mission are repeated and the spirit or attitude of prayer, penance and solitude is marked as the way to reach these ends. Again, these are not presented here as absolutes, but referred to in the light of the life of the Apostles. Their way of life was exemplary according to St. Paul of the Cross.

Number 1 is concluded by highlighting that our holy founder never ceased to emphasize that the remedy par excellence of all sufferings in the world is found in the Passion of Jesus Christ, "the greatest and most overwhelming work of God's love." The inference of this is that Passionists are called to be compassionate religious: not only touched by the people who bear a heavy cross today, but also helping them, freeing them in the name of God who is love. For, suffering is not something to be glorified but to be taken away.

Furthermore, the words "greatest and most overwhelming" prevent us from becoming wild activists. In order not to lose track we continually need to contemplate and study the meaning of the mystery of the Passion, carefully analyse our present situation and prepare and review our actions in the light of this.

People can do all of this without St. Paul of the Cross. But number 2 recalls that by the approval of his Rule and his canonization the Church has recognized him as a truly inspired and inspiring messenger of the

Word of the Cross. His example helps us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, not just as individuals but as a community of Brethren. This prevents us from becoming fundamentalists ("only Jesus/only Jesus and me") and from being trapped by our own blind spots and human shortcomings.

As for number 3: as our world changes, the face of the poor and the neglected changes. The consequence is that in different cultures and in different times we need to reconsider our answer to the call of the Crucified One: our way of life, our apostolate, the choices we make.

Finally (number 4), each and every religious is called to take responsibility for his own Passionist life as described under numbers 1 to 3 and explored further under the following numbers. The fact that we ourselves and our communities are not perfect is no excuse for failing; it is rather an incitement for making the efforts together as we can with God's help and entering into serious self-examination.

Discussion: - What does (my/our) Passionist life add to the Church and to the world full of suffering? -In an individualized society community life is more important than ever. -What makes my community attractive and in what way do /, therefore, need to change?

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF PASSIONIST RELIGIOUS LIFE YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Fr. Pierre Mvumbi Ngumba (SALV)

On 2 March 1984, on the Solemnity of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes formally approved the new Constitutions of the Passionists. These are fruit of a long meditation, a continuation of the 41st General Chapter. It reflects the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, the Code of Canon Law as well as the original inspiration and plan of the Founder that is contained in the Rule of 1775. Faithful adherence to them and commitment to the spirit that inspired them enables the entire Congregation to be faithful to its specific mission, i.e. "*to preach the Gospel of the Passion by our life and apostolate.*"¹

Considering the present global situation with its international financial crisis, its moral relativism and so many other challenges, we may ask ourselves if the foundations of this Passionist mission still constitute a reference point that is up to date and viable, capable of generating energy, vitality and hope? All in all, considering the process of Restructuring that is currently in process in the Congregation, in what measure are the Constitutions the foundation of the a new initiative? These are the questions that we will try to address in this reflection on the "Spirit" of the Passionist Congregation and on the way in which it can be best expressed in our history.

The context in which the new Constitutions were approved was that of a change on the level of society and that of the post-Conciliar Church. Beginning with overall summaries and typically Western values, it directed our attention toward emerging continents (Latin America, Oceania, Asia and Africa) and to a more just and more Catholic world. Everything else being directed by the spirit of the Council, we moved from a model of community life that was more stable and reassuring to a pluralistic life, mobilized by ministries and new charisms. A "passage" of this kind with its apprehensions and tensions is not a new phenomenon in the almost three hundred year history of the Congregation. Didn't St. Paul of the Cross himself frequently make changes to the Rule in order to adapt it to a new life context while still preserving the essential value of the stated

¹ Const. 2.

identity and the specific mission of the Congregation that God asked him to found?

It is precisely this essential element that particularly illustrates the first chapter of our Constitutions, i.e. "***The Fundamentals of our life***" which can also be called "*the original inspiration*" that is reflected in the Rule of 1775 and placed as the preface to our new Constitutions. To reflect on the "fundamentals" of our Passionist life means meditating on the original inspiration, attempting to grasp the thrust of the Spirit that guided the life of a man (Paul of the Cross) and his work whose modality of historical expressions are necessarily conditional. It is about trying to liberate the specific characteristics of a founding movement or of an inexpressible intuition that goes beyond human horizons.

The 41st General Chapter had proposed a "program" that tried to favor continuity in the midst of change, unity within diversity. The program was an instrument devised to "*to stimulate the living out solely of the spirit of the Constitutions and to make the Passionist charism a unifying force for the Congregation*".² Beyond faith (faith in the God of history; faith in the Congregation and in its charism; faith in the religious themselves and in the Chapter as an ecclesial event) the fulfillment of this program demanded courage and fidelity to the spirit of our origins and sustained zeal for apostolic activity as a means of releasing the liberating power of the Cross in the world. Furthermore, it called for considering for discussion the structures of government on all levels in order to better reflect the image of Christ as the "Pastor" and the "Servant" of all. Particular emphasis should be given to our life style and to formation, both internal as well as external.

"*The spirit of the Congregation*", writes Enrico Zoffoli, CP, "is experienced in the loving and sorrowful participation of each person in the immolation of Calvary - the spirit of prayer; which renders us particularly alive for total detachment from created matter - the spirit of poverty and solitude; and therefore it radiates to the world a force called the Crucified One - the apostolic spirit."³ It is not easy to speak about the spirit, and even more so about the Spirit of God. The Spirit is comparable to the wind⁴ whose origin or final destination is unknown. The Spirit is

² BIP, n. 47/1 (1983), 2.

³ E. Zoffoli, *Il nuovo testo delle nostre SS. Regole (pro manuscripti)*, Roma, 1959, 26-27.

⁴ Jn. 3:8.

an unexpected surprise; a sudden eruption⁵; liberty⁶; opening and transcendence. It is comparable to perfume⁷ that is sensed without being able to be embraced. Therefore it is difficult to adequately speak about it. The best stance is silence. However since human beings are "beings - that - speak" and by speaking communicate and are communicated with - thus demonstrating their spiritual and relational structure - they need to be aware that whatever they say relative to the Spirit is always limited, including imperfect and should always be studied and evaluated.

This purification of speech and of human beings themselves occurs through constant detachment from all that is finite (the *spirit of poverty*) and through searching for the radical Absolute (*the spirit of solitude*). And so as not to drown in a process of alienating and destructive depersonalization, this purification should be clarified by that total gift of Christ to his Father for the salvation of the world. Thus, the individual also offers himself to Christ through listening and obedience to various divine meditations (the Word of God, the sacraments, community, the Constitutions, etc.). The Passionist religious not only strives for total unity of his life and his apostolate⁸, but he also witnesses to the veracity and the credibility of the Gospel.

The fundamental demand that is expressed in the Constitutions is expressed as: "to *live together and to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to all*." ⁹ Studying this section more closely, one can see that this mandate is concurrently human, ecclesial and Trinitarian. It is essentially human because a human being is structurally a "being -with", i.e. called to live in relationship with the totality of creation. Isolation can only lead to death. This mandate is also ecclesial because the Church is a body whose Head is Christ and whose members are united by visible and invisible bonds of fraternal charity. Christ calls his disciples "to be his companions and to be sent forth to preach."¹⁰ Therefore this human and communitarian mandate receives its full value and justification in the light of the Gospel to the degree to which the human being is introduced into the mystery of the Trinity that is fundamentally relational in order to acquire the fullness of its being.

⁵ Acts 2:2.

⁶ Jn. 8:32.

⁷ S. Breton, *Le problème de l'être spirituel*, in "Giornale di metafisica", (1953), 399.

⁸ Const. 5.

⁹ Const. 1.

¹⁰ Mk. 3:14; Acts 1:14.

Approving the Constitutions¹¹, the Church recognizes in them its own origin and invites her Passionist children to carry out in her name the preaching of the Word of the Cross in a "Spirit" of poverty, of prayer, of solitude and of penance which are necessary to achieve sanctity and to witness to the liberating power of the Cross on behalf of the crucified of our day and in our world. The Constitutions therefore are the reflection of the evangelical spirit. Consequently, "to *keep alive the memory of the Passion of Christ*" means witnessing to the fact that the Crucified One has definitively defeated the powers of evil and death that oppress all creation¹², and the fruits of this victory are verified even today in every person that believes in Him.

"Living together" is also a wonderful definition of a Passionist and a plan and a commitment for life. We cannot think about life without understanding it as a collective work. A Congolese proverb says: "One finger cannot wash someone's face" and also "A single support cannot suspend a cauldron over the fire." Every one of our personal actions stems from a communal source. The Congregation is a house that we build in this area of the world with a variety and a wealth of materials (living and deceased Passionists, the entire Passionist Family and the young men who aspire to our life) that should be harmoniously adapted to the body of Christ.¹³ In the climate of multiple crises in which we are living, we cannot build a house that may collapse in a minor earthquake and consequently, run the risk of being buried in the rubble.

Humanly speaking, every building, every foundation or initiative is difficult. From a merely chronological perspective, the beginning greatly resembles a work of creation that only divine intervention can create from nothing. In the human sphere, we do not begin from nothing. We still speak about creation: we try, especially the artist, to give a new form and therefore a new life style to existing material. It concerns the work of the Spirit which only those individuals who are inspired, educated and who sense the pneumatic movement of the Other, are capable of fulfilling. From an ontological point of view, beginnings are a work of liberation. One cannot truly be free if one is not "self-liberated", i.e. the author of one's own life which is not interiorly or exteriorly determined by someone

¹¹ Const. 2.

¹² Rm.8:19-23.

¹³ Eph. 4:13-16.

else. We can only say that God alone is free because only He is completely devoid of every limitation since He is totally perfect and eternal.

In the end, it is God who builds the house because *"if the Lord does not build the house, in vain do workmen labor"*¹⁴ and without the saving action of Jesus *"we can do nothing"*¹⁵. We live in a communal "house" whose principal builder is God. It is precisely this point that St. John the Evangelist emphasizes various times. The Word that eternally dwells in the womb of the Father and who is consubstantial with Him¹⁶ has come *"to dwell among us"*¹⁷ because God wanted to make a dwelling place in our midst, precisely in the midst of our house. Whoever welcomes him, He *"gives the power to become a son of God"*¹⁸. Our common house is the world which by means of faith, allows the Father and the Son to build a common dwelling of love, of that love that allows us to live life fully, dispelling the darkness of ignorance and the human pretexts for possessions, power and knowledge.

*"Rabbi, where do you live?"*¹⁹. This is the key question that the two disciples of the Baptist directed to Jesus at the tenth hour highlighting the "place". In a natural environment that is ever more polluted and rendered unlivable due to the combined factors of war, global warming, moral relativism, terrorism, etc., it becomes all the more urgent to discover a "place" beyond this programmed death. It is "at the foot of the cross, with Mary"²⁰ where the Passionists go to build their house. The idea of a "dwelling" is already present in the mystical tradition into which St. Paul of the Cross immerses himself. The dwelling is presented as matter; however this matter is not a closed reality, devoid of doors and windows. The Congregation, our dwelling, does not exist for itself, but for the service of the Church and for the plan of God for humanity. Its reason for being is "ex-static". God raised up in the Church the person of Paul of the Cross and his work of offering an appropriate response to the evils that afflicted the world of his time. Thus assiduous contemplation and mediation on the Passion of Christ is presented as the work par excellence of the love of God, capable of transforming even the hardest of hearts.

¹⁴ Ps. 127, 1a.

¹⁵ Jn. 15:5.

¹⁶ Jn. 10:30; 17:11; 21; 22.

¹⁷ Jn. 1:14.

¹⁸ Jn. 1:12.

¹⁹ *Ibid* 1:38.

²⁰ *Ibid* 19:25.

Even today, this contemplation and meditation, as lived and taught by the Passionists and by all the Passionist Family remains timely²¹. The powers that fashion human beings (affectivity, will, intelligence) and whose spiritual and canonical expression is found in the vows²² are a gift of God that the Congregation should embrace through discernment and should promote, mindful of the demands of place, of time and of all the other factors associated with a good human and spiritual education.

With regard to formation, we can undertake many initiatives to bring about solidarity in personnel, work instruments and finances. The quality of formation and collaboration in this important area will have a positive impact on the consolidation of the unity of the Congregation, on its history (conscious that we continue to have need of historians and therefore of historical consciousness), on its spirituality and on the quality of its apostolate. Whether in the initial phase or during the rest of his life, the religious will need formation that allows for greater self-knowledge and an appreciation of the world around him in order to become a credible witness to the love of Christ for men and women of his time and place.

The Congregation is involved in a process of Restructuring that is inserted in a larger phenomenon of global consciousness. With the advances of telecommunications, distances are continually more reduced if not eliminated and individuals are more conscious of belonging to the same world that we must manage together. We need to create spaces for dialog and co-responsibility so that every exclusionist activity or project that does not respect fundamental human rights can undermine the overall plan. Communication is not easy because it demands trust, justice, exchange, and above all, love. On the other hand global awareness (or Restructuring) is not a solution to all human problems. It too has its risks and its limitations as can be seen in the current financial crisis, terrorism, global pollution, etc. We, therefore, must rediscover our original inspiration and aspire to higher ideals in order to discover the best ways to express the ineffable Good toward whom we haltingly journey.

²¹ Const. 2.

²² *Ibid* 7-24.

OUR CONSECRATION TO THE PASSION OF JESUS

«We seek the unity of our lives and our apostolate in the Passion of Jesus. His Passion reveals the power of God which penetrates the world, destroying the power of evil and building up the Kingdom of God»
(Const. 5)

MISSION AND MEMORY OF THE PASSION

Fr. Francisco José Murray (CONC)

Go in search of your people!

Know them.

Discover the cause of their pain.

Look with them for the reason for their hope.

Love them,

learn with them.

plan with them.

Serve them.

Begin with what your people know.

Build on what they already have.

Mission, Memory and language.

"By virtue of the specific mission that the church entrusted to us, we make our own the words of Saint Paul: 'We preach Christ Crucified'".¹

Language is the first challenge we face in missionary life. We often seek to establish communication with people or communities whose way of dealing with life, culture, history, tradition, religious experience, social and political situations, etc. are different from our own.

¹ Const. 64.

We speak a language that goes beyond our words and is mainly expressed by our life, by the choices we make in seeking to know and understand people and their way of thinking, their dreams, their pain and their hopes as we accompany them and respond to their needs and longings. This language is expressed, fundamentally, in the way we love and serve a country or community.

Our ministry is mediated by the language we opt to use, by the communication we choose to establish and by the way we decide to approach peoples or communities. We can make our approach as teachers and simply teach, with a strong feeling of superiority, believing that truth belongs to us, and that the people we evangelize lack it. Or we can approach them as disciples wanting to share our view of life and faith in Jesus, knowing that the Holy Spirit arrived in that place many centuries ago long ahead of us ... *"Christianity must assume into the full Christian life of our peoples, what is good, noble and living in our cultures and traditions, as well as bring to fulfillment whatever seeds of the Gospel have been planted in Asian cultures previous to evangelization"*. (Asian Bishops)

Our language can be equivocal. That is, can we preach our closeness to the people, but in concrete living try to force them to adapt our thinking and patterns of living that repeat what we believe is true and necessary, leaving aside their traditions.

Our missionary life is illuminated by Christ Crucified who took flesh among his people, humbled himself, took on our human condition, was made one with them, and whose deepest word (language) was spoken on the Cross: *"He never spoke so strongly, neither did he shout as loud as that afternoon when he remained silent on the cross"*...

The first thing that we should review in this time of restructuring is our language, to discern whether the form in which we communicate, the way we live, the things we have and the projects we develop are real answers for the countries to which we have been sent .

The Constitutions invite us to live a permanent **"... adaptation to the changing needs of time and place"**². We are called to listen to the

² Const. 76.

language of the new generations and of the people or communities. It would be an error to approach them with suspicion, with the conviction that they are on the wrong road, with our minds made up that they have lost all the significant values.

At this time of epochal change, where certainties are few, we are called upon to be more open to differences, to listen to the new voices that are arising, although their language is sometimes strange, occasionally misunderstood and often confused. The new always comes mixed and its logic is hard to understand. Sometimes, we have not only to learn new things ... also to "unlearn" structures that catch us and don't allow us to open up to the new...

Two experiences have called my attention to the issue of language. The first is just a detail in the way the Passion is announced in some places. In some western languages "passion" has a double meaning, to suffer and to feel a strong emotion. Some eastern nations and aboriginal communities speak languages that use two completely different words to refer to Jesus' experience on the Cross and to the interior force that impels us to confront life with love, enthusiasm and courage. Thus we need to express some of the sayings used by the Congregation in the west (for example: "Passion of Christ, passion of life") in completely different ways. We have to rework the language with which we transmit the spirituality of the passion. The second is a beautiful experience I had in a village in Vietnam, where an ethnic minority group has recovered the symbols and content of traditional religion and use them in the images in the chapel, in the liturgy and in color. To standardize is sometimes to run roughshod over cultures...

Mission, Memory and human community.

"Conscious of being part of the wider world community, we recognize the need to collaborate responsibly with the people of good will everywhere in pursuing all that is true, noble and just..."³

The country or community where we exercise our mission has a history, a tradition and a religious experience filled with content. We, per-

³ Const. 69.

sonally, also bring our own cultural and religious identity which we must share in an encounter of cultures and religious traditions.

In the encounter of traditions and cultures we are tempted to transmit and, sometimes, to impose what belongs to our own tradition, to repeat forms and content of the Memory of the Passion that correspond to the place of we come from and the tradition we have inherited. We transplant methodologies and structures, not only of our Memory of the Passion but also of the way we have lived consecrated life.

We know that in Religious Life we are in a time of crisis, and of seeking in many areas, with serious and valid questions from the young generations. This too should be reflected in our mission. We are all challenged to try together to devise new ways of expressing the Memory, to create new content that will meet the new challenges of today's problems. To repeat the old formulas and procedures may be safer, but not more accurate. We must search for **"the unity of our lives and our apostolate"** ⁴ in the content of the Passion, not in forms.

But also, in this multicultural world, historical experiences have shown us too many examples of clashes of cultures, of confrontation and domination of one over the other. History continues to repeat itself. We, in our mission, we can repeat that option, since we are always tempted to believe that our own experience is more valuable than that of others.

We can choose, even to lose our own identity and be like the brothers that we were sent to, without contributing to them the wealth of our point of view. However, sometimes we find it hard to be equal to them, because we carry our personal history about with us.

The option is **"to be one of them"**, namely, to share their quest and their struggles, make their needs and their weaknesses our own, to defend together with them their lives and their rights, to learn and plan with them. To be one with them..., not to be like them, and not to have them be like us.

⁴ *Ibid* 5.

Another experience that arises strongly is the great number of people that have opted for other forms of religious experiences or of relationship with the transcendent. Many of them, previously, were identified with the Church. In front of this phenomenon, we can have a defensive attitude, separating us from them, or offensive, trying to make they return to the fold of the Catholic Church. We speak of re-evangelization...But, respecting everyone's right to make his own options, we should open up to the new signs of the times and places. Our mission is to improve respectful dialogue, a combined search and mutual collaboration in the task of defending and promoting the true thing, the noble thing and the fair thing.⁵ Rather than complaining that the churches are empty and everything has gotten lost, the new times invite us to welcome their novelty and the strength of the new actors and new options.

Another dimension that places demands upon our mission is dialogue with science. The new scientific advances instead of causing us fear or suspicion should invite us to open up to their truth and to propose ours from the discernment of the Gospel and the faith in Jesus.

Our mission, more than to win followers, is to live as disciples and to be salt and ferment - next to others who are also salt and ferment in a different way - so that another fairer and more human world can be possible. Another world, nearer to the dream of God, since **"the church was founded to spread the Kingdom of God..."**⁶

We are not only invited to interfaith dialogue, to intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogue, but also, to dialogue on options for life. We can enrich it with different options from our own, but with similar goals, and try to bring about the Kingdom side by side with many who do not belong to the Church circle, but who are deeply dedicated to humanity.

In this sense, our congregational decision to participate in the UN strikes me very positively; and being a voice in an organization where the voices that are listened to more and impose their will are those of the powerful. Also, I take pleasure in seeing in our Santa Cruz Parish in Argentina the participation of Passionists as missionaries in so many different ministries, for example: the defense and promotion of human rights,

⁵ Cfr. Const. 69.

⁶ Const. 62.

Base Communities, the defense of the sources of work of a hospital, the proclamation of Jesus in the neighborhood, the attempt to set up a meeting place for the neighbors and youth organizations in which half of the organizers are non-Catholic.

Mission, Memory and defense of life.

"The power of the Cross, which is the wisdom of God, gives us strength to discern and remove the causes of human suffering"⁷

Have we adapted the ways we express the "Memoria Passionis" to the language, the signs, the culture and the new problems of our people? or have we opted for traditional ways of expressing the Memory? In what way do we work in the defense of the entirety of life, and work **"to discern and remove the causes of human suffering"**⁸?

What forms of group work do we carry out with brothers and sisters, in order to **"collaborate responsibly with people of good will everywhere in pursuing all that is true, noble and just.."**⁹?

Questions.

When we think of the Mission, What do we imagine, believe, dream about it? What is new about our mission in these times? Does our mission include an interfaith, intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogue? How do we do it?

I have heard it said that in some mission places, Passionists have not "evangelized", but only carried out human development, as if the Gospel invited us to the ministry of the Word and the sacraments, and not to a defense of the entirety of human life. However, the last question God Father will ask us will be about hunger, thirst, clothing, sickness, prison...¹⁰.

⁷ *Ibid* 3.

⁸ *Ibid* .

⁹ Const. 69.

¹⁰ Mt 25.

Our mission - like that of Jesus on the Cross - is to arrive at the causes of human suffering, that sin, personal, community and societal. We are not just to "discern" these realities, but also to work with strength and assurance to "remove" them wherever life itself, survival, dignity, religious experience, peace, brotherhood, justice, freedom, ecology, etc are endangered. We Passionists have a great mission there. *"Illuminated by Christ, suffering, injustice and the cross challenge us to live as a Samaritan Church"¹¹, remembering that 'evangelization has always been joined with authentic human development and Christian liberation'."¹²*

These **"ever-present realities to people in the world of today, "crucified" as they are by injustice, by lack of a deep respect for human life, by a hungry yearning for peace, truth, and the fullness of human existence"**¹³, added to aggression and manipulation against our "common house", that is nature, calls on us ever more urgently in our mission to keep alive the memory of the Passion.

Although this experience has been lived deeply in many parts of the Congregation for a long time, in recent days news has arrived of the strong example of our brothers in Peru, who have become "one of them" with our aboriginal brothers and sisters, and they are defending their dignity, their lives, their land and the ecosystem with great courage and clarity.

¹¹ Cf. Lk 10, 25-37.

¹² Aparecida, Bishops of Latin America 27, quoting Benedict XVI.

¹³ Const 65.

POVERTY

« Christ clearly showed His love for us by becoming poor for our sakes ¹» (Const. 10)

POVERTY AND MEMORY OF THE PASSION

Fr. Miguel Pozuelo Utrilla (FAM)

The development of this subject matter on the 25th anniversary of our current Constitutions made it necessary to go over everything written in them; but there's so much richness, clarity and audacity in the way this subject has been approached in the different numbers and chapters that I'd rather make very few personal comments and present the Constitutions as written, including a table of contents, so that the document itself will talk to and challenge us to commit ourselves to the poor and the Crucified Lord.

Putting into practice this constitutional proposal will be reflected and decided upon by each person, community and province by comparing daily life with the Constitutions and asking themselves about the result of their analysis.

Have the same feelings as Jesus Christ:

We, Passionists, have the Easter Mystery as the center of our lives. We are devoted to following Jesus Crucified and prepare ourselves in faith and charity to announce his passion and death, not only as a historical past but as a reality in the lives of human beings who are 'crucified today' by injustice, lack of a deep sense of human life and by hunger for peace, truth and life².

Evangelical poverty, personal and communal poverty, and the

¹ Cor 8, 9.
² Const. 65

unfair impoverishment of many human beings form the same tissue, where all its threads are interlinked³. We want to be poor because Jesus was poor⁴ and because we're His disciples and followers; He thus supported the outcasts to tell them, both in words and deeds that they were not despised in God's heart but had been chosen by the Father⁵.

Living in poverty⁶, recalling the Passion⁷ and choosing the poor⁸, in addition to be intimately and necessarily interrelated, are essential in the Passionist spirit and commitment⁹.

Passionist Vocation: a calling and a proposal

By inviting us to the Passionist family, Jesus has proposed:

- ✓ To be “the poor of Jesus”, basing our lives on the evangelical poverty needed to live by the evangelical advice, to live in prayer and to indefatigably announce the message of the Cross¹⁰.
- ✓ To carry poverty as our political banner¹¹, and to know how to read Jesus' name on the faces of the poor¹².
- ✓ To unite our pastoral life and actions with the Passion of Christ.... so that we're able to destroy evil and rebuild God's Realm¹³.
- ✓ To participate in the Passion from a personal, communal and apostolic point of view, according to the requirements of modern times¹⁴.
- ✓ To leave everything behind and follow Christ in the spirit of the Beatitudes, so as to experience the commitment to poverty and announce the Message of the Cross¹⁵.

An affirmative reply to this proposal, to the Passionist calling, will

³ Const. 13.

⁴ 2Cor. 8, 9 y Const. 10.

⁵ Matt. 5, 2,5-6 and Luke 4, 17-21; 6, 20-21.

⁶ Const. 10.

⁷ *Ibid* 65.

⁸ *Ibid* 70.

⁹ *Ibid* 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid* 1.

¹¹ *Ibid* 14.

¹² *Ibid* 72.

¹³ *Ibid* 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid* 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid* 9.

mean a true and deep conversion that will not just be achieved through a one-minute's decision and heroism, but through a permanent exercise of conversion, i.e., by accepting His call every day and being determined to overcome our weaknesses; by identifying ourselves with the life and mission of the One who humiliated himself by becoming a slave¹⁶.

The good tree renders good fruits:

First of all you have to BE: to *be* memory before *having* memory, and before we can say that we are Passionists, we have to live identifying ourselves with the Passion of the Lord, with its causes and consequences. Each person is both the foundation and support that will allow a community and a devoted church to follow the Crucified and support the crucified ones. In the first place, each of us has to live the memory of the Passion¹⁷, and make Christ's Gospel (the path that took him to His Calvary) the supreme rule of our lives¹⁸.

Our calling urges us to reach a deep knowledge of the Passion of Christ and of human beings, who are a unique mystery of salvation, namely, the Passion of the mystical Christ¹⁹.

It's quite difficult to feel the poor or the crucified's pain while reading a book, meditating or analyzing reality. It doesn't help either to be simple observers of their suffering, nor to be by their side for only a moment, or offer them material or spiritual assistance to mitigate their grief; since we know that the Passion of Christ continues in this world, we wish to SHARE and PARTICIPATE in the humanity's anguish and troubles, above all with the poor and destitute²⁰, which in fact is an invitation to live in the places and in the manner they live in order to feel and support their causes, hopes and projects as they do.

Christ was the first to show his love by becoming poor because of us, so that immersed in our commitment to following the Master we should aim to live in a genuine evangelical, communal and personal poverty, actually detached from material things... this may make us feel insecure and sometimes in need of essential things... without living

¹⁶ Phil. 2,5-8 and Const. 5.

¹⁷ Const. 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid* 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid* 65.

²⁰ *Ibid* 3.

obsessed by accumulating treasures for tomorrow²¹.

What is said about personal commitment should be said about community. We follow the example set by the early Christian communities by choosing to live together and to share a simple and modest life ... subject to the general law of work; each one contributes to daily life according to his or her skills²².

In order to be able to live like this, which according to ‘common sense’ would be crazy, we need constant prayer and contemplation of Christ, who gave His life for us. In this way, we’ll increase our abilities to show our love and be of help to others²³ for it is His grace that sows in us the spirit of poverty²⁴.

Prophetic signs of the Kingdom:

The achievement of all the above will involve having the prophetic strength of the testimony of life, the strength needed to become salt, light and ferment²⁵, and we will become credible and significant signs, prophetic signs in favor of justice and of human beings’ dignity. In this way, our life style will become a clear prophetic proof²⁶ that will point out a path of hope and resurrection to the crucified ones.

In a world where the unfair distribution of riches is one of the chief causes for division and suffering, we want our poverty to be a testimony of the real value and appropriate use of goods²⁷. Our manner of living shall be a prophetic denunciation of the injustice around us, and a PERMANENT testimony against the consumer society²⁸.

You shall be known by your fruits:

That which is abundant in our hearts grows and blossoms in words and deeds; so it is by being poor, by suffering like the poor do, by following the Master who was also poor and stood by the outcasts until

²¹ Const. 10.

²² *Ibid* 11.

²³ *Ibid* 5.

²⁴ *Ibid* 10.

²⁵ Matt. 5, 13-16.

²⁶ Const. 72.

²⁷ *Ibid* 13.

²⁸ *Ibid* 70.

His death on the Cross, that we are going to BE Passionists and GIVE proof of it. We will be thus able to work fervently to enlighten and remove the causes of the evils that distress people, through the power of the Cross, which is God's Wisdom²⁹.

As far as possible, we want to share our life and goods in order to promote justice and peace among people³⁰.

If we also achieve a deep knowledge of the Passion of Christ and of people, we'll be able to guide the members of our congregation to meditation and to experience in their lives the mystery of the Passion of the mystic Christ, thus leading them to a more intimate union with God, to a better self-knowledge and a greater sensitivity towards their neighbors³¹; we'll walk in the steps of our father and founder, to whom the most effective solution to the evils of his time was the Passion of Jesus Christ, the 'greatest work of divine love'³².

Finally, by following the tradition of our Founder, we're devoted to the evangelization and re-evangelization of peoples, preferably the poorest ones, in the remotest locations.³³

In times of reorganization:

The past 45th Chapter recognized ten priorities which will guide the restructuring processes at all levels.

We have to agree that if we fail to give these priorities and our Constitutions time to be reflected upon and *exercised* in-depth, our reorganization may end up as a hollow process.

One of these priorities directly proposes the topic that concerns us: "*Commitment to Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*". It states, for instance, that Passionist commitment to peace and integrity of Creation is a task deeply rooted in the Passionist Charism that is based on the *Memoria Passionis*.

²⁹ Const. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid* 13.

³¹ *Ibid* 65.

³² *Ibid* 1.

³³ *Ibid* 70.

Suggestions for reflection:

1. *To become a PERMANENT testimony against the consumer society³⁴ and meet the requirements of real poverty, thus sharing Christ's fate³⁵, which are the events that make us come closer to or stray from the life of the poor on earth as far as their place of residence and type of abode, life style and pastoral commitment are concerned?*

How can we improve our adherence to a life according to the Constitutions, overcoming the weaknesses or inconsistencies we've found out while reflecting upon this question?

2. *Our life and apostolate shall be a credible sign in favor of justice and human dignity³⁶; by which specific actions do we answer to our Constitutions' requirements: sharing life and goods to alleviate human beings' suffering and promoting justice?³⁷*

How can we improve our adherence to a life according to the Constitutions, overcoming the weaknesses or inconsistencies we've found out while reflecting upon this question?

3. *Which specific facts can we share, according to our own experiences, that make it clear that our work driven by the Charism "enlightened and removed the causes of the evils that distress people through the power of the Cross"³⁸?*

How can we improve our adherence to a life according to the Constitutions, achieving greater strength and efficiency in our mission of being instruments and mediators of the power of the Cross?

³⁴ Const. 72.

³⁵ *Ibid* 14.

³⁶ *Ibid* 72.

³⁷ *Ibid* 13.

³⁸ *Ibid* 3.

CHASTITY

« Christ clearly showed His love for us by becoming poor for our sakes ¹» (Cost. 10)

CHASTITY

Fr. Abelardo Quintero Poveda (FID)

“The first and foremost commandment of God’s Law is: ‘Listen, Israel: The Lord, your God, is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind ...’².”

This means there is no God other than Him. Any other God is a servant of our God. He is the only One, who commands us to serve Him with all our hearts and our souls for He is the Absolute.

If God is the only One, then everything that exists is His creation, i.e., He took it out of nowhere (He created it out of nothing). He created everything, and He did so out of love. He created man in His own image, as the recipient of all He had created. He did it out of love, too.

This God is the only one that deserves to be worshipped with all your heart, with all your soul, with your entire mind. He’s the only one that deserves to be loved in body and soul.

If the sacrifice of our own body as the only genuine worship is the Lord’s will, “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God ...³”, then the true worship acceptable to God is the use of our body for good deeds, and in justice, sanctity and truth.

Sexuality is one of the two most powerful strengths of man. Sexuality leads us, through an open and generous attitude, to the utter com-

¹ Cor 8, 9.

² Mark 12,30-31.

³ Rom. 12,2.

mitment of our body to another human being that makes us vanish in a permanent and gratifying way. No creature on earth is capable of doing such a great work. Only God is, as He loves us immensely. Only He is capable of loving us immensely, permanently and steadily.

Chastity is how Christians love. It's the way God is, and virginity is the best use possible of our sexuality. In it, we love with all our being the one who's taken hold of us once and for ever: "In Him, we live, and move, and have our being ..."⁴.

Christian is the man or woman chosen by God from among others, set aside, purified, sanctified and consecrated to a new creed: that of glorifying God with his/ her body.

Memory of the Passion

Paul of the Cross wanted to form men of prayer that should arrive at perfect union with God and take others to that union.

The means to arrive at that charitable union with God was found by Paul of the Cross in the permanent memory (*Grata memoria*) of the Passion of Jesus.

How can a *grata memoria* of the Passion of Jesus be achieved? By delivering the person from the psychological dependence on material things, and in particular on self-esteem, convenience, thought, love and feelings; and by adhering to Christ for the purpose of sharing His fate.

This radical deliverance is achieved by **confronting** crucified Jesus, the son of God: my life... and His..., my situation... and His..., my reasons... and His..., my ambitions... and His..., my love... and His Love...

This long and ardent contemplation for several hours a day creates in the individual a burning desire to **conform** to Christ, poor, humiliated and crucified. A Christ whose main nourishment was His Father's will.

One who persists in this redeeming action receives from God peace and a **permanent inner devotion**, along with the following fruits:

- The ability to make a *grata memoria* of the love of God as

⁴ Acts,17,28.

shown in the Passion of Jesus;

- The ability to carry out the genuine apostolate: to work for souls in real prayer and contemplation from his inner soul and resting in the Charity of God;
- The ability to approach life from the Passion of Jesus as a revelation of God's saving charity. We rejoice in carrying the Passion of Christ inside and the nourishment from God's will;
- The ability to permanently practice moral (Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance) and theological (Faith, Hope and Charity) virtues, by becoming a living image of Crucified Jesus in constant prayer and self-communion, in the presence of God;
- The ability to keep our spirit in good order, calm and peaceful, and detached from every creation, is to please Jesus Christ and receive God's graces.

For these reasons, Passionists should pray 24 hours a day. This is how they will get to be new men in Christ.

Chastity and Memory of the Passion

Chastity is extinguishing our love in order to love with Jesus's love. The memory of the Passion is dying to ourselves to be born to a new life in Jesus Christ, in order to become living images of Crucified Jesus. Chastity enables us to love like Jesus did; Passion, enables us to be like Jesus. Both paths purify us, sanctify us, overwhelm us with virtues and lead us to our self-fulfillment in Christ, to happiness and to being ourselves. In a word, to salvation.

OBEDIENCE

« As followers of Christ we too accept our roles in this plan. Alert to hear the Father's voice and to do His will, we try daily to ascertain His loving purpose in an attentive and loving search ». (Const. 20)

THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE AND THE *MEMORIA PASSIONIS*

Fr. Robin Ryan (PAUL)

Saint Paul of the Cross earnestly sought to discern and respond to the will of God in his life. As with every great mystic, the spiritual exercises and disciplines that he practiced had one overarching purpose: that God's will be accomplished for his own benefit and for the good of others. Paul loved to quote the passage from John 4: 34 in which Jesus says that his food is to do the will of the One who sent him. The founder taught his followers that the highest perfection in our life with God is found in nourishing ourselves on the divine will in a spirit of faith and charity. His letters convey the incalculable importance of following Jesus in abandoning oneself to the will of God, and they highlight the deep joy that ensues from such self-donation.

It is clear that Paul himself struggled to discern the will of God for his own life and the congregation he felt called to found. His early involvement in hospital ministry and his subsequent decision to leave that ministry, his sustained efforts to write and re-write the Rule and obtain approval of the Rule by the Church, his decisions about the expansion of the community amidst complex ecclesiastical circumstances - all of this testifies to his commitment to the arduous work of listening for the voice of God. So, too, does his practice of seeking the guidance of spiritual di-

rectors and of other people of wisdom from his earliest years. Paul of the Cross was tenacious in his dedication to discern what God was asking of him and his followers. He knew firsthand that this search is a demanding and sometimes painful one, yet he was also convinced that it ultimately engenders a profound sense of peace. He counseled his advisees to "always remain quiet and calm in the shelter of God's will" just as vine-dressers and gardeners seek the peace and protection of a shelter in the midst of a storm. Because of his strong conviction that God is the infinite good - a sea of infinite charity - Paul knew that God's will for him and every person is a salvific and merciful will. Obedience to the divine will entails a personal response to a personal, loving God who always has our best interests, and those of his people, in mind.

For Paul of the Cross and for every Passionist, the exemplar of obedience to God's will is Jesus in his passion. The primary way of keeping the *memoria passionis* is emulation of Jesus in his commitment to fulfill the loving plan of the God whom he addressed as "Abba." Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane becomes the luminous icon of this commitment. In his contemplation of the gospel words of Jesus, "Your will be done," the founder asserts, "All holiness is contained in those divine words." At its heart holiness consists of seeking the will of God in every situation. His own personal experience taught Paul that discernment is not an easy or simple process. But his conviction that God is always faithful to those who sincerely search for his will impelled him to write these reassuring words to a young man: "Don't doubt but that God keeps you in his divine arms and that the time will come when he will teach you his most holy will."

The Constitutions of our congregation evince the inextricable link between the *memoria passionis* and the evangelical counsel of obedience. The sections on our consecration to the passion of Jesus and on the vow of obedience both begin with quotations from the famous Philippian hymn of Paul the apostle. We are called to unite ourselves to the life and mission of the one who "emptied himself taking the form of a servant"¹ and who was "obedient unto death"². In his kenosis Christ shows us the

¹ Const. 5.

² *Ibid* 20.

path that we must follow as we journey toward God in this life. This is the path of self-donation, of self-communicating love that is meant to reflect God's self-gift in Jesus Christ. As Jesus remained steadfast in his commitment to the mission entrusted to him by the Father - proclaiming the reign of God - so we are called to dedicate ourselves to this same proclamation. Each of us is summoned "to be a sign and a constant reminder of the values of [God's] kingdom"³. The Constitutions also remind us that "to the extent that we work with Christ in fulfilling his plan of redemption, our obedience is missionary"⁴.

The ethos of individualism that is prevalent in Western cultures (and may be spreading because of globalization) poses a particular challenge to evangelical obedience. When the Constitutions instruct us that "evangelical obedience is the foundation of the entire Christian life and apostolic service"⁵, they articulate a message that is counter-cultural for many Passionists. The Constitutions suggest that as Passionists we do not come to know God's will in isolation but in communion with one another and through the mediation of others⁶. They teach us that we discern and respond to the will of God in our lives by internalizing a sense of co-responsibility and mutual dependence⁷. This principle of mediation includes, of course, our relationships with community leaders, who have the responsibility to act on behalf of both the common and individual good⁸. Those called to leadership in the community must remember "that all together we are striving to ascertain and fulfill what the Father wants of us"⁹. Every religious is exhorted to support and collaborate with community leaders in advancing the mission of the congregation.

The Constitutions speak of our ongoing efforts to discern God's loving purpose "in an attentive and loving search"¹⁰. They suggest that we are given three major signposts for perceiving the will of God: meditation on gospel values and the example of Christ; attentiveness to the signs of

³ *Ibid* 7.

⁴ *Ibid* 21.

⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷ *Ibid* 22.

⁸ *Ibid* 23.

⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰ Const. 20.

the times; the commitment to live the Constitutions in apostolic community. These are fundamental ways in which we listen for God's voice as it is spoken to us in our life together.

The Constitutions affirm that our commitment to the vow of obedience leads to personal freedom and fulfillment (n. 22). Grounded in the Thomistic tradition, theologian Karl Rahner often reminded his readers that dependence on God and personal autonomy vary in direct and not in inverse proportion. The more we come to recognize and to live out of our dependence on God the more genuinely free we become. Freedom in the Christian sense is a reality that transcends mere freedom of choice. Sometimes the choices we have are severely limited. In its deepest roots, however, freedom entails the capacity for definitive self-bestowal before God. As Passionists we actualize this gift of self to God within community and under authority, always with the mission of the congregation in view.

In a time of congregational reconfiguration the call to co-responsibility and mutual dependence resounds more clearly. We will be challenged to expand our notion of the common good beyond the boundaries of provinces and vicariates to encompass the mission of the entire congregation in the wider world. Our living out of the vow of obedience will continue to be missionary, though in a global context. We will be invited to broaden the scope of our responsibility for one another and our mutual dependence, as we strive to ascertain God's purposes for the congregation in the new millennium. We can accept this challenge with the confidence that it will ultimately bring us freedom and engender new life for the community. With Paul of the Cross, we trust that we are embraced in the arms of God and that God will continue to teach us his most holy will.

THE CONSTITUTIONS AND THE PASSIONIST COMMUNITY

Fr. Fernando Rabanal Calle (FAM)

I'm happy to share this humble contribution on the 25th anniversary of the Constitutions. I intend to incite, in the brief period I've been granted, greater enthusiasm and radicalism in our Passionist calling.

“An only heart”

The manner of the early Christian communities is going to impregnate and make our Passionist community more dynamic, with no easy idealisms. Emotion overcomes Saint Paul of the Cross upon contemplating the eight brothers of the first community of Monte Argentario, and with tears in his eyes, he exclaims: “These men will indeed make a big impact in the path to sanctity.” The mysticism and praxis they irradiated were contagious.

The Constitutions are the core of our lives. And our lives have their hearts in the Constitutions. The Constitutions make the Community and the Community is made from the Constitutions. It's the Spirit itself that inspires the Constitutions and gathers the Community. The Spirit is the main character of these Constitutions and the Passionist Community, so that charismatic identity and community membership are, from their very beginning, the unwavering mark of our Passionist calling¹. Consequently, it is only from our faith and under the influence of the Spirit that we will be able to understand, and will offer our lives in order to embody the Constitutions and experience the joyful fraternal membership to the Community².

¹ Const. 2 & 8.

² *Ibid* 4.

To emphasize the faith in this statement, Constitutions-Community, may seem something obvious, irrelevant. Let's not take it so easily for granted. Here is the knot of the real dilemma posed to our Passionist religious community. Our precariousness does not come from age, number, efficiency or scarce vocations. It's much deeper. It's a matter of faith, both theological and spiritual, that is nesting among us, in our own communities. And we are to convincingly assert that our Constitutions have an inspirational and evangelical potential that is able to destroy and remove that evil spirit³, and make of our lives a significant proposal of God's Kingdom which is credible and attractive. Secularism has infiltrated our religious context (the Community) but has failed to reach the text (The Constitutions) that inspires and gathers us, so that we cannot linger on excuses of shallowness or disappointment on what we've been called to become. Moreover, our Constitutions specifically impel us to "work with enthusiasm"⁴ in order to experience the power of the Cross, aware of the presence in our lives and community of what we're to transmit to others⁵.

That same faith includes and irradiates all the sense and contents of a "living evangelical community"⁶, both in their historical and eschatological dimensions. The power of love and fraternity is born here; it is the most subversive and transforming force in history, the only choice to save this world and make it more humane. There's a whole world to be discovered in the last signs of the Lord and from the atmosphere that pervaded the unforgettable Last Supper, in order to experience fraternity in all its charm and novelty. The point is, if we really believe all this, we will devote all our efforts and tenderness. For it seems we are construing the meaning of fraternity itself based more on a meaning taken from the Illustration than from its evangelical and Pauline concept which is more attractive to us. This perception, along with the impact of modern culture and its ambiguous exaltation of autonomy and freedom, has seduced and misplaced our faith in the living evangelical community. And if our personal choices fail to be focused on the community's welfare and on the

³ Const.3, 5.

⁴ *Ibid* 3.

⁵ *Ibid* 9.

⁶ *Ibid* 25.

community's charity, then there is neither maturity nor freedom or Community possible. The current worldly trend and some medieval patterns we still drag along, propose a genuine renewal of the contents and living style of our Community in order to live today as our founder wanted: a Passionist Community that attends to man's needs, that breathes and conveys the heartbeat of our Constitutions and shows a "life style in the way of the Apostles"⁷

Coexistence based on faith prepares us to be a new family⁸ where both the Constitutions and the Passionist Community are valued as a free gift⁹. We are a real family, a reflection from the Trinity and an anticipation of the Kingdom among us. The different human sciences provide suitable resources for our lives. But if this theological reference deteriorates, we will not achieve an evangelical community. Furthermore, the achievement of a quality and sustained human coexistence will be unlikely. The experience of gift, as a new family,¹⁰ promotes and encourages a life where interpersonal and fraternal relationships prevail on institutional structures or relationships, as in a family¹¹. The vitality of this Congregation depends on this community, as its fundamental cell¹², which presently requires our closest attention because no matter how intent we may be on community issues or on designing fancy galleries and balconies, the foundation supporting the building will fall apart. And here it is not enough to question only our superiors. All of us, every brother and every community, should accept this challenge to arouse faith and to give of ourselves in the real evangelical (and not angelic) community of life.

We need the thrust, the courage, the virtue ('*virtus*'), not in their moral sense but in their theological and evangelical sense, in order to banish from the Passionist Community all kinds of bourgeois ways, apathy or mediocrity and to create Communities of faith, hope and love. "Moved by the Spirit of God....we've gathered and created a community of love. To-

⁷ Const. 1.

⁸ *Ibid* 27.

⁹ *Ibid* 17, 25.

¹⁰ 2Cor.5, 16s.

¹¹ Const. 27.

¹² *Ibid* 119.

gether we face the tough path of faith... together we move forward in the same hope”¹³. Along a whole restructuring process, it would be incidental to be content with the design of any possible Entity or Configuration. The time of faith, of trust and of exposure has arrived. Without this community mysticism, made up of solid convictions about the Community’s courage, meaning and transcendence, only the appearance, or the wrapping, will change, but not the soul of our Passionist calling. Only men of God, Communities of faith, will have the spiritual strength to accompany us and enable us to look beyond the appearances and the raw structures and will focus us on an exodus of the heart. There are changes that we will never be able to carry out if they do not come from faith, because they need a serious exercise of trust (confidence) and involve (entail) great renunciations and risks.

For a new Community face

From our early beginning, the idea of gathering friends and creating a Community has been clear, as the foundation of our apostolic calling¹⁴. Not in vain the Community, along with our ‘*memoria passionis*’ charisma, is the name most repeated and referred to in the Constitutions. It’s also quite significant that the Constitutions, in two of its chapters, not only makes reference to prayer and the apostolate but also speak, in a very skillful and deliberate manner, about the praying Community and the apostolic Community.

Which profile of a likely (and non idealistic) Passionist Community is born from our Constitutions, the elements of which cannot be waived in any current social or cultural model, in order to become a prophetic sign of the Kingdom? I’ll list them with a brief comment. May be they’re still new, ready to be incarnated.

¹³ Const. 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid* 1, 25.

1.- An evangelical community of life¹⁵, where community relationships are based on Christ's charity¹⁶; that is a part of and clearly shows our charism¹⁷; that excels above all in love "with a permanent and sustained communication"¹⁸; that values the others more than itself, is always optimistic and is happy about the richness of its plurality¹⁹, that shows mutual respect and good manners to increase joy and peace²⁰; that is open to those who want to share our life ²¹ by living our profession or consecration "according to these Constitutions"²²; where there's a brother among brothers who serves, leads and coordinates the community's fraternity²³?

2.- A contemplative Community²⁴ that teaches how to pray and how to become schools of prayer and fraternity, focused on the Easter Mystery that is celebrated in Eucharist. If our Communities are unable to render this service today, in a secularized culture, it is unlikely they will become significantly evangelical. Our Communities pray together, but do they join in prayer? That's how we're spoken about in Acts of the Apostles²⁵.

3.- An apostolic, prophetic and missionary Community²⁶. The mission is the Community's purpose. It is also the spiritual mission, with an ecumenical vision. Our charism houses a prophetic spirit that cannot be tamed. Not everyone is going to do the same job. But all the ministries will be inspired and integrated to the same community pastoral project. It's worth remembering that as religious we may be called to be fishermen instead of shepherds.

¹⁵ Const. 25.

¹⁶ *Ibid* 26, 28.

¹⁷ *Ibid* 5,6,65.

¹⁸ *Ibid* 27.

¹⁹ *Ibid* 26, 32.

²⁰ *Ibid* 28.

²¹ *Ibid* 33.

²² *Ibid* 7.

²³ *Ibid* 120.

²⁴ *Ibid* 1, 37 to 53, 66.

²⁵ Act. 1,14.

²⁶ Const. 1, 62 to 76.

4.- A Community that lives in poverty ²⁷. Common property. Sharing property. Taking the side of those who are excluded and impoverished. Supporting communities of insertion is a quest to be strengthened so that it will be the crucified ones and the poor who show and teach us this pedagogy, for it seems that now the religious, in spite of some efforts, still fail to convey the evidence upon which our life and spirituality are based²⁸.

5.- A Community with a spirit of repentance and solitude.²⁹ Two fundamentals of our lives deserve deep reflection, dialogue and embodiment in our awareness of its place in the present process. Will, sacrifice and silence are being favored in other aspects of life, while they devalue or are undervalued within the Community.

6.- A Community of reconciliation³⁰. Since we are sinners and fraternity can be broken, moments of reconciliation are totally necessary as a community experience. In addition to the sacrament, it's necessary to promote, in the light of the Gospel, fraternal correction, review of our own lives, and the necessary moments to restore fraternal relationships and peace³¹.

7.- An open Community which relates to the environment and the reality in suffering³². Undergoing inculturation. We should love the world and assume the belief that another world is possible. Our communities should be sensitive to the defense of a person's dignity and rights, should witness to and participate in the reality of the people among whom we're living and should protect the integrity of creation. A Community whose "life style is a prophetic condemnation of the injustices among which we live; it should be a continual witness against the abuses of a consumer society"³³.

²⁷ *Ibid* 1,10 to 15.

²⁸ *Ibid* 65.

²⁹ *Ibid* 1, 54 to 59.

³⁰ *Ibid* 60.

³¹ *Ibid* 27.

³² Const. 3, 4, 6, 34, 35...

³³ *Ibid* 72.

8.-A Community with the Mother by the Cross³⁴. Without Her, the Passion of Christ would have been incomplete because it would have excluded what we normally love the most in this life. And fraternity without the Mother is not much of a relationship. Mary, a totally human model who fills our house with graces.

Our Communities are to be a part and give evidence of that prophetic aspect proposed by the Constitutions in an unwavering manner, in order to respond in ways that are suitable to the man of today, who is still in need of salvation and is to find in us the most convincing and efficient answer, because we are a Community, the presence and the face of a charism, the only thing that can save the world: the Passion of Christ Crucified, who is risen and to whom we bear witness³⁵.

Questions for further reflection

- 1.- Do I read, delve into and practice any aspect of the Constitutions?
- 2.- Which theological resources from the Constitutions should our Passionist Community incarnate to become more significant, credible and evangelical?
- 3.- Should our Community unravel the power of the Spirit felt in our present world and use it from an evangelical point of view?
- 4.- “The Lord has not sent me to baptize...” If we removed Sacraments from our present Community (which of course are totally necessary), would we ‘halt’ (cease to exist)? (Please analyze if the apostolate is born from life, if it’s communal, if I’m useful through the apostolate or use the apostolate).
- 5.- Which signs that define our Community attract people’s sensitivity?
- 6.- What can we do, adapt or change now, in order to present our Community as a school of prayer?

³⁴ *Ibid* 8, 19, 53.

³⁵ *Ibid* 64.

PRAYER AS FOUNDATIONS OF OUR LIFE

Fr. Augustine Kunii (MAIAP)

I would like to begin my reflections on prayer with a concrete case I have encountered recently. To the instruction class of some 15 to 20 persons in our Tokyo monastery, a catechumen, Mr. Ban, brought a friend in his early thirties. According to Mr. Ban this man was sleeping on the street, and helped him find the shelter. (Tokyo can be cold in winter!) He started coming to the weekly meeting. I was deeply impressed by his modesty and sincerity, as well as keen intellect. The last time he came, however, he sat quietly with his eyes closed and his body was swaying slowly back and forth. I was afraid he might fall off the chair. He had nothing to say that evening, but on his way home he started acting very strangely, and Mr. Ban had to take him to a hospital by an ambulance.

He is now placed in the mental ward. Later I learned a little bit of his personal history. His mother was alcohol addicted, and all efforts for recovery ended in failure. Doors to hospitals and institutions were closed, and she was forced to live on the street. So, her son decided to live with her on the street for three years, when finally she became very sick and died on the street. This left him with deep sorrow and regret, because he could not help her find a better way of dying. A sense of helplessness and regret crushed this simple and honest person into mental sickness.

I am sure such and similar cases are abundant in every society where we work. If we turn our eyes to refugee camps or poverty stricken areas, there would be countless more tragic and staggering cases. The question is how we are to respond to such tragedies. Responses would be different depending on where a person stands. I do not mean to present answers, but such cases challenge us as Passionists to reflect on how we look at the sufferings and pains of people. What are our criteria by which (we) discern good and evil in society? Recent economic disaster is said to have been caused by "moral hazard". The uncontrolled greed and selfishness of the rich have deprived hundreds of millions of people, especially the poor of the daily necessities of life. I am not saying that poor people are not greedy, but the sins of the rich are inexcusable. As Passionists we are called to look at these situations with the eyes of Our Holy Founder

who was "keenly aware of the evils that afflicted the people of his time" he insisted that "the most effective remedy is the Passion of Jesus." ¹

Now we can ask ourselves, "How is the Passion of Jesus going to be the cure and remedy of the evils from which so many people are suffering?" Again, there is no simple answer to this question. The Passion of Jesus - sufferings - moral hazard - remedy and salvation - how are these realities related? It is not by scientific or mathematical thinking that we can see connections, but I believe it is in prayer that we come face to face with what is really at issue and receive some spiritual insight to respond to the needs.

To face the reality of evil and to fight against it, our feet are required to be based upon Passion of Jesus. The weapons of our warfare are not merely human². St. Paul speaks in such figurative terms as "I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing," and "put on armor of light"³. "The secret force of lawlessness is at work"⁴. Sufferings and pain are visible, but their root, namely the secret of evil is invisible, and we are to fight against them on two fronts, visible and invisible. That is why we are expected, first of all, to be united with Jesus in prayer and share in His suffering. Unity with Jesus in prayer is our ultimate and final stronghold. In this sense, I think, we maintain that prayer is the foundation of our life. Prayer of intercession for the suffering people is another incentive for appealing to the Crucified Lord.

In Chapter Three of our Constitutions "Our Community at Prayer" we find a very beautiful summary of the importance of prayer following the example of our Holy Founder. We are called to become men of prayer, and our communities are called to become visible centers of prayer, "schools of prayer"⁵. Individual and common prayer both are indispensable. In the formless battle against the forces of evil, we need visible structures with which to arm ourselves. This visible form is called "horarium". I believe this is a product of long monastic tradition, where individual prayer (mental prayer, spiritual reading, silence etc. included)

¹ Const. 1.

² 2 Cor. 10:4.

³ 1Cor 9:26, Rom13:12.

⁴ 2 Thes 2:7.

⁵ Const. 37.

is integrated with the prayer in common, especially with the community Eucharist and the liturgy of hours. By the help of this structure we try to keep the memory of Passion of Jesus alive, to unite our own sufferings with those of Jesus, and to have compassion on the sufferings of other people. Based upon this foundation we seek to discern where the spirit of Jesus is leading, and where the spirit of selfishness is at work. It is no shadowboxing. It is a real struggle of the heart and soul, to see and accept the guiding hands of the Father in painful and sometimes disastrous situations, hearing the call "to take up his cross and follow him"⁶. Rooted in such prayers, we can seek concrete means to apply the power of the Cross to the affliction our times.

Challenges are great, especially in places (countries) where Christianity is but a minority surrounded by long spiritual traditions of other great religions. In Japan we are immersed in Buddhist and Shintoist traditions. Spiritual depth of Zen meditation, for instance, attracts many Western people. According to Zen tradition, for instance, the most suitable time for meditation is during the semi-dark periods of morning and evening. Perhaps older Shinto tradition, in harmony with seasonal change of nature, would put morning and evening prayer with the rising and the setting of the sun. The formal exquisite beauty of Shinto shrines with its ritual symbolism deserves greater appreciation and respect. Prescinding what is good, noble and beautiful from a cultural whole is no easy matter. The Church in Japan (and in other countries of Asia) has a long way to go to be able to learn and integrate these beautiful spiritual and cultural heritages of other religions. Sometimes it is called inculturation. The term is relatively new, but the fact is as old as the Church. Just think how Christmas was introduced, taking the Roman feast of the Sun and replacing it with the real Sun, the Son of God.

In Asia we are called to live our Passionist vocation in a non-Christian milieu. Because the number of Christians is small, and the number of the Passionists is minimal, our task and challenge is greater. Structures of religious life, the Horarium of prayer and work in particular, which developed in preeminently Christian Europe, have to be translated, adapted and made meaningful in Japanese society. It is the visible struc-

⁶ Const. 56.

ture which tries to support the struggle in invisible spiritual arenas. It is the visible form upon which our prayer life finds secure foundation. Individual and communal prayer needs a very practical support of a viable horarium.

I would like to conclude my reflections with some concrete questions.

- Is our horarium relevant in our society?
- How does it help us to keep individual prayer and community prayer in balance?
- Is community Eucharist giving energy and strength for daily spiritual and apostolic labor?
- How can we make the community liturgy (Eucharist and divine office) more meaningful in harmony with the surrounding religious/cultural tradition?
- Is it possible to incorporate local cultural elements?
- Is our community liturgy open to the public, so that people can take part and draw spiritual strength and insight for their Christian life?
- Are we giving enough importance to our "mental prayer" every day?
- How can we make community meditation more helpful and energizing?
- Is it possible to incorporate rhythms of social life (e.g. beginning of school year, etc) into our community liturgy? How about rhythms of nature?
- How do we relate our prayer with the difficulties and problems of society?

REFLECTION ON APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY

Fr. Christopher Monaghan (SPIR)

Each time we make our profession of faith we proclaim our belief in Jesus Christ as truly divine and truly human. This statement of faith came out of the experience and struggles of the early Church to articulate its belief in the beauty and wonder of the incarnation. On one level this articulation is a statement of faith, it is however, also an invitation to enter into the mystery, to hold in dynamic and creative tension what we profoundly believe to be true. The study of the developing Christology of the early Church shows that different individuals or movements stressed one dimension over the other – some Jesus’ divinity, others his humble sharing in our human condition. The debates were vigorous, and sadly sometimes acrimonious, but the truth of the Gospel was at stake, and like Jacob wrestling for a blessing in Gen 32, the Church honoured both Jesus’ humanity and divinity.

The process that led to the formulation of the Creed provides a useful paradigm for reflecting on the experience of Paul of the Cross, the work involved in the revision of the Constitutions 25 years ago, and our present process of restructuring. Once again we find ourselves seeking to honour a number of sometimes competing values.

Paul of the Cross had a vision of apostolic community as the most appropriate means in which to keep alive and proclaim the mystery of the Passion.¹ It is clear that, like the early Church, he endeavoured to honour both the value of community life and our mission to the Church and the world. Paul’s own story as founder reflects his ability to respond to the call and needs of the local church, as well as foster an intense experience of the common life. His letters give many examples of his desire for prayer and solitude for himself and our communities. At the same time, they testify to his fervent wish to respond to the pastoral needs of the times, and in founding communities so that the Lord of the harvest would

¹ Const. 1

send labourers into the vineyard Mt 9:37.² His many letters bear eloquent testimony to his honouring the friendships and pastoral relationships he developed as director, advisor, and friend - while still respecting the need for solitude, and a life lived in community.

In Paul's own lifetime his initial vision was modified and refined in the light of the wisdom gained through living the Rule, and in listening to the call of the wider Church. Paul's 1720 rule was progressively refined, adapted, and formally recognised in 1741, 1746, 1760, 1769, and finally in 1775. This required a generosity of spirit, and an openness to contributions others could make to his vision for this new religious community.³

As we celebrate 25 years of lived experience of our revised Constitutions it provides us the opportunity to reflect on them and the values they enshrine. We can be justly proud of their beauty, charity, and wisdom. One of the aspects which comes through the Constitutions is how deeply based they are on the lived experience of apostolic community with its tensions and challenges, joys and sorrows.⁴ The revision of the Constitutions took a considerable amount of time, and the end result reflects the wisdom of many religious as they earnestly strove to listen to the signs of the times,⁵ and to each other. There is a strong sense underlying the Constitutions of honouring the past but also of creating room for the future, of realising that there can be unity of purpose, vision and values, but diversity of expression.⁶

The revised Constitutions are the work of many people, and are the fruit of dialogue in which a process of active listening has taken place. There is a real sense within them of attending to the diversity of views

² An early example would be in his letter to Erasmus Tuccinardi in Dec 16th 1730, or his letter to Bishop Garagni in May 17th 1742 in which he laments that offers of Retreats were plentiful but the workers were not yet to be seen. In his testimonial for his brother John Baptist in 1765 he notes his brother's keen desire that the Lord would send tireless, excellent workers into his harvest.

³ In his letter written on Mar 31st 1746 to Fulgentius he shares his sense of relief; "As I busy myself negotiating everything for the good of the Congregation, I am surer all the time it is God's work. And all of Rome, I will say that, religious and prelates, see it the same way. The Constitutions are in good shape and nothing essential has been touched. God knows how I experienced that!"

⁴ Const. 3,5,8,9, 63.

⁵ *Ibid* 20,27,72.

⁶ *Ibid* 32, 68, 124.

and expressions, holding them gently, and incorporating them with respect. A perhaps unexpected consequence of this is that there will be something that can be quoted to support just about any position that we might take. The elements of the jigsaw puzzle are all there, the temptation is not making use of all the pieces! Some will opt for prayer in common as critical, others will quote the needs of the local Church as the justification for their apostolic endeavours. The truth is that the Constitutions call us to value and respect them both, and much more besides.

Our experience of community life leads to the realisation that at different times, individuals, communities and provinces will stress one or other element over another. The challenge is actually being open to all the richness of the banquet that is set before us. We know that there is no one way of being Passionist – our Congregation finds itself in many different contexts in dialogue with many diverse sets of needs circumstances and cultures.⁷

The Constitutions call us to be sensitive to the signs of the times, the needs of the Church, to each other, and to the sufferings of the crucified of today.⁸ We live and minister in the context of community and our apostolic endeavours need to be in harmony with this, though this can often be experienced as a tension.⁹ Embedded in the Constitutions are calls for generosity¹⁰ and creativity, for the ability to be in dialogue on many levels.

In this time of restructuring we are challenged anew to listen to the signs of the times and to each other. There is a call to generosity in terms of personnel and resources in order to face new challenges. One of those is that of restructuring some of our apostolic communities so that they are more flexible and multicultural. Traditional conceptions of provinces or communities are being stretched to respond to new realities. There is a recognition of the very real tension involved in becoming more international in our structures while not losing our local sense of identity and

⁷ Worthy of note is Regulations 28(g) and 31 addressing the international nature of the Congregation and the need to be open to varying circumstances in which our communities find themselves. See also Const. § 76

⁸ Const. 65

⁹ *Ibid* 67

¹⁰ *Ibid* 65,68.

mission. These are times that call for adaptation and openness even though the tendency might be to cry out like Thomas “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” John 14:5

As we face these new challenges it is our turn to wrestle for a blessing, as the Congregation has done from the time of Paul of the Cross. Our Constitutions provide us with a beautiful articulation of the values that need to be honoured if we are not to lose our way. They cannot answer every problem, but they do provide us with a sure guide as to the values we must attend to if we wish to be authentically apostolic communities.

THE CHARISM AND THE "CRUCIFIED OF TODAY"

Fr. Joe Moons (CRUC)

Passionist formation in the cultural context of one's relationships with Jesus, with Passionist community life, with the formator, and with the Passionist mission.

Where is the grace that allows for formation to touch, to change as needed, to clarify and help mature and foster the candidate's calling to a life-giving commitment to the Passionist vocation? Our own experience has taught us that this grace is found in our relationship with Jesus, with the members of the Passionist community (especially initially with the formator) and ultimately in the association of the candidate with the Charism in the context of the mission to the "Crucified of Today." If this mission is to be effective in a candidate's formation in the Charism of St. Paul of the Cross, it will be defined within the culture of the people it seeks to serve.

Enculturation is a graced challenge for formation of Passionist candidates that holds a great hope for the Congregation as its presence grows in over 59 different countries. Today the majority and the growth of the Catholic Church is in the Southern Hemisphere. This is true of our Congregation as well. As we make this shift, the process of enculturation implies a shared enriching grace of God's Kingdom for all involved in formation—the missionary and the native vocation, the young and old, and male and female. The Gospel is alive in all these relationships. Given the growth of our Congregation, especially in the Southern Hemisphere, the cross culture formation will be a rich challenge that will face us for some years to come.

Formators and the Formation Community need to be seen as one. The formation of the candidates as a grace is entrusted as a relationship with the local formation community, with the formator being the most responsible member in dealing one-on-one with the candidates. However, he does not act alone, but within the context of all members of the formation community, who all bear the responsibility to exemplify the life of

the founder, St. Paul of the Cross. The formator and the members of the formation community need to appreciate their calling as members of a formation team—there needs to be a mutual respect of each other's roles, and the commitment to be there for each other as well as for the candidates.

The local formation community is always challenged to deepen and exemplify personally a relationship with Jesus. This relationship reflects humility, a generosity and a transparency that allows for the candidate to be challenged as well as inspired to let go and let God become more a part of his life as well as offer him a guiding light—that is, establishing a greater confidence in his encounter with Jesus. This is reflected in the formation community's personal relationship with the Lord, as well as opportunities for community prayer, Eucharist, and shared faith life. Further, fraternal relationships among the community members is a source of grace for the candidate to sense that he is being invited into a community, a place where he begins to sense a religious home and place of belonging.

This relationship with the Lord among the members becomes the inspiration and source of grace for a candidate's vocation. A vocation is first and foremost inspired by a grace that is experienced and present in his relationship to the local community (and particularly with his formator) and its mission. The candidate will experience the charism of St. Paul of the Cross as it is lived out in the member's daily lives.

The charism has not only to be explained, but lived in community and expressed in mission. The "Crucified of Today" needs to be self-evident in the community and the formator. What is the relationship of the community's mission to the poor? Part of the answer is in awareness and exposure of the candidates to the social teachings of the Church—the relationship of "the preferential option for the poor" and our charism--to serve with love the "Crucified of Today."

There is a graced relationship of our charism and the poor. For the charism to be able to foster the graced inspiration that is necessary to move a candidate forward it must have visible association with the "Crucified of Today" in the life of the community, but especially in the formator. If the mission is not clear here or lacking in integrity, the commitment

on the part of the candidate may waver, or even decrease in as much that he may leave the community, because of what is lacking in the community, not the candidate.

The formation Community is not only made up of vowed religious including a formator, but also of other candidates. The interaction and relationship of the candidates to one another are an important part of the formation and inspiration as a candidate moves forward in his commitment to be a Passionist with the help of God's grace. Opportunities could be provided for the candidates to share their life experiences and struggles, this being the means and the inspiration for each other to move forward in their calling. There may be shared spontaneous prayer, ministry together in a mission, projects around the community house, etc.

We are reminded in the Gospel that Jesus sent out the disciples in twos or in groups. We learn best together; we are not meant to operate alone, but with each other. Formation can foster this graced capacity to serve as a "team" player. God constantly invites us as Passionists to bond and realize that we can depend on each other and each other's gifts as we strive to further the mission of St. Paul of the Cross as a part of the mystical Body of Christ.

The formator should be trained in the culture in which he is exercising his ministry, in order to be able to "journey" effectively with the candidates. He is a spiritual guide, whom the candidate can relate to so the candidate can incorporate the charism into his daily life and sense its meaning in the culture he lives in and for his people, whom he hopes to serve. If the formator is trained in another country and then returns to his own country to be a formator, then there may be a need for some training of the local formation community he is returning to. The community could invite the formator to share what he has learned so that they can own and be a part of a richer formation process. The new formator also may desire to get some feedback from his local formation community so that what he has learned reflects the culture that he is returning to.

The formator should foster an ability to love his candidates, especially in the formator's capacity to be able to listen to the candidate and the movement of the Spirit in the candidate's life relative to family, the growth of the individual charism in his heart, and how his unique rela-

tionship with Jesus is growing. Listening is a grace filled art that allows the candidate to imagine himself in a new and more spiritual mature manner, and then to begin to trust that image of himself as part of God's graced plan for him—his Passionist vocation.

It is important for the community and especially for the formator that through listening and through their love for God, for the candidate and for the congregation, especially in the context of a different culture, that they try to understand what is being communicated to the candidates. What is the candidate within his own culture "hearing" or "understanding" by what is being communicated to him by the formator or the community? Are the expectations of the formator in line with the gifts and the culture of the candidate? It is important what is being said by the formator, and also what is being heard or being understood by the candidate within the context of the community life they are living.

The ministry of the Church is entrusted to all members of the Body of Christ. Formation stands to celebrate this grace in collaboration with the Laity. A Passionist vocation is a living relationship with God's people. The involvement of the candidate in ministry and ministering along with other committed laity is essential for today's Passionist. The call of the laity, especially Passionist laity (those that have grown in the Passionist Charism themselves), to serve alongside vowed Passionists is an essential and rich grace that can form the vowed Passionist vocation as well as the lay Passionist vocation.

Formation Communities are the new frontier of our Congregation as it entrusts itself to the graces of restructuring and solidarity. As the Passionist Community continues to grow in so many more difference cultures and countries, the Sons of St. Paul of the Cross stand to be blessed and enriched so many times over. Grace abounds. Let us seek and go forth trusting our love of God, our love of His people and our love of the Congregation in each of our hearts as we take our place at the foot of the Cross, with our hearts filled with hope that offers us today a life of fulfillment, which the love of the Crucified bestows on all of us.

- Where is the grace that allows for formation to touch, to change as needed, to clarify and help mature and foster the candidate's calling to a life-giving commitment to the Passionist vocation?

- Why is the relationship of a formation community's charism to the "Crucified of Today" imperative?
- Why is the role of a "Formation Community" important to the formation of a candidate, especially as it relates to enculturation?
- What is the candidate within his own culture "hearing" or "understanding" by what is being communicated to him by the formator and/or the community?
- Why is it essential to have the expectations of the formator aligned with the gifts and the culture of the candidate?

OUR CONSTITUTIONS AND THE PASSION OF THE WORLD

Fr. Kevin Dance (SPIR)

The call to be a transforming presence in our world, as we work for justice, seems to be part of our Passionist DNA. This call is beautifully described in many places in the Constitutions. I believe our constitutions were prayed before they were written down. They can help us to face the many challenges involved in the restructuring of the Congregation. A more complex, interdependent and globalised world invites us to again embrace all the facets of our Passionist charism.

Fossils are important because they tell us what we are about. They can help us to better understand our moment in history. They point to our past and they remind us of the need to see our present task in the light of all that has made us who we are. Just as fossils point to the life-forms upon which our present experience of the world is built, so the Constitutions are filled with traces of the lives, love and service of Passionists, from St. Paul of the Cross to the present moment. As we mine the riches of our Constitutions, we are put in touch with generations of Passionists, with the distilled wisdom of Chapters and the writings of our thinkers. Refracted through the call of Vatican 11, they remind us who we are to be in the Church for the world. They guide us towards the action expected of us in a world that is filled with so much pain and yet so much possibility.

Some religious would want to say that work for justice or advocacy, or work to change unjust structures or systems is outside our true Passionist identity. But these things are surely implicit in so many of the demands of our map of life, the Constitutions.

A recent statement of Cardinal Erdo of Budapest, Hungary seems relevant to our reflection. "Questions about justice and peace belong *intrinsically* to the Church's mission and the attempts to separate the pastoral mission or evangelisation from social problems would represent a serious error" *VATICAN CITY, JUNE 10, 2009 (Zenit.org)*.

In the very 1st paragraph of our new constitutions, our founder is introduced to us as a man in touch with pain. *'Keenly aware of the evils that afflicted the people of his time, he never tired of insisting that the*

most effective remedy is the Passion of Jesus, "the greatest and most overwhelming work of God's love" ¹

We are powerfully reminded that *"the Passion of Christ continues in this world until he comes in glory"* We are called to draw strength from the power of His Cross to *"discern and remove the causes of human suffering"*. So, at the core of our call as Passionists, lies the task to become discerning people who are committed to go to the root causes of human suffering. Dare we add, with the insights gained since the Constitutions were written, that this includes the suffering or 'passion' of the earth. ²

"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". ³

There is a beautiful harmony and integrity in the presentation of the various parts of our life. Each meshes with the other, and all faithfully reflect the central charism.

So, the vow and gift of poverty is held up to us as the source of a sense of gratitude for the 'gift' that is life. This gratitude can release in us an urge to serve others. ⁴

Life is to be shared... poverty is less about freeing us from possessions than it is about freeing us *for* solidarity with the poor. *'In a world where the unjust distribution of goods is a major source of division, hatred, and suffering, we want our poverty to witness to the true value and purpose of these goods'. ⁵*

Likewise, chastity is presented as freeing love. As we come to love others *"in Christ, we become more sensitive to their joys, sorrows and anxieties" ⁶*

Obedience is presented to us as a further spur in learning to discern *"the signs of the times"* and to grow into a deeper sense of collective responsibility and "solidarity"⁷. So the economy of the vows, presented in

¹ Const. 1.

² *Ibid* 3.

³ *Ibid* 6.

⁴ *Ibid* 10.

⁵ *Ibid* 13.

⁶ *Ibid* 17.

⁷ *Ibid* 21.

our Constitution, leads to a sensitive, healing openness to and solidarity with our sisters and brothers who suffer.

As we learn to look at the human situation in obedience (deep listening) to the Father, and in brotherly love, we can begin to address the abuse of power we find in ourselves and in our world. And power misused is the cause of untold misery for our brothers and sisters and, indeed, for the physical world. Attitudes of mutual dependence and co-responsibility are presented as a door opening out to freedom for ourselves and for others.⁸ By growing in these attitudes we are thus challenged to discover a way of working or a strategy that enables us to engage with others to build community at every level - whether in a local neighbourhood, a village, a parish or indeed in the community of nations.

We are powerfully reminded that the Passion and death of Jesus are no mere historical events but *"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"* We must ensure we are familiar with the Passion of Christ, both in history and in the lives of people today"⁹

Our Constitutions remind us that we are part of the wider world-community. So we are *"to collaborate with people of good will everywhere in pursuing all that is true, noble and just, bearing in mind the present needs of the Church and the world, our special mission in the Church, and the particular gifts of our religious"*¹⁰

Through their formation younger religious should be helped to *"an ever-increasing knowledge of the currents of thought that underlie contemporary events, and should be helped to judge these in the light of the Gospel"*¹¹

Each and every part of our life and mission is held together in the unity that is to be found in the Passion of Jesus. So we are called to be ac-

⁸ *Ibid* 22.

⁹ Const. 65.

¹⁰ *Ibid* 69.

¹¹ *Ibid* 82.

countable in our use of resources, material and financial ¹²and "*sensitive to the social implications of investments*" ¹³

Paul of the Cross, as he went on his missionary way, stood on a platform in the city square beneath the Cross. From here he could see and feel the struggles, hopes and confusion of the people. From this vantage point he became the great '*reminder, the memory maker, announcing the reconciling presence of Christ. We too, in a radically changed world, are called to stand, in the power of the Cross, where the nations meet, to bring the freeing power of Crucified love into the decisions that affect the spiritual and material wellbeing of all who are crucified by unjust structures.*

Our Founder, steeped in the immensity of God's love shown in the Passion of Jesus, wanted to open his arms and heart to include every part of his world. We are called to be no less inclusive.

Prophetic action on behalf of justice, in any of the situations in which we find ourselves, is the outward face of our contemplation and of the call to be mystics who see that all is united in the love of Christ. So to address the destruction of our environment is a religious task. To speak up in defence of our indigenous sisters and brothers whose land and culture and future are being sold off to multinationals is indeed being faithful to our Passionist call.

To bring the voice and the pain of those rendered voiceless into the shaping of policies that affect the people we serve is the outward face of our Passionist contemplation. If you want peace, then work for justice, Pope Paul VI reminded us. Our Constitutions call us to look at the pain of our world with the eyes of the Crucified and Risen One and there to find a response, because "love is ingenious". There we will understand that nothing truly human is foreign to us as Passionist.

¹² *Ibid* 175.

¹³ *Ibid* 172.

Some questions for us to ponder

- If working for justice and peace is integral to our Christian and Passionist calling, which of the '*causes of human suffering*' cry out for our attention and action?
- "Solidarity" is a new way of being together in mission for the life of the world. What changes might this *solidarity* ask of us as we face the task of restructuring?
- The greatest problems facing us today reach beyond traditional borders. We are called to live our vow to keep alive the Memoria Passionis in a world that is increasingly interconnected and interdependent. What do you discern that the present crises are asking of us as Passionists?

FORMATION FOR PASSIONIST LIFE VIA THE BEAUTY OF THE CROSS

Fr. Giovanni Cipriani (DOL)

Christ “*on the Cross...fully reveals the beauty and power of God's love.... The consecrated life reflects the splendour of this love because, by its fidelity to the mystery of the Cross, it confesses that it believes and lives by the love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*”¹

On the cross Christ is “the most beautiful among the sons of man”², because it is there that he shows the beauty of giving. In fact, on the cross we contemplate the beauty of the heart, the beauty and efficacy of giving. It is not the attractiveness of a beauty queen or of “Miss Universe”; it is a deeper kind of beauty: the beauty of one who has chosen to make his life a gift of solidarity. It is the beauty of Mary, His mother; it is the beauty of Mother Teresa of Calcutta and of so many other men and women who offer their lives to others every day.

On the cross Jesus teaches us that the true beauty of life is love, a total gift. It is this unique beauty that saves humanity; a beauty that is so needed. Consecrated Life is called to live and manifest this beauty.

1. Rethinking formation to Passionist life.

For our Constitutions, the Memoria Passionis is the “*underlying principle*” and the “*unifying source*” of Passionist formation: “*We seek the unity of our lives and our apostolate in the Passion of Jesus.*”³ And in our Founder we find a well-developed attempt to translate the “*Memoria Passionis*” into a “plan for (Christian and Passionist) formation”. It would suffice to read his letters.

I believe that twenty-five years since the approbation of the Constitutions, this intuition of our Founder needs to be studied again, more deeply appreciated and re-considered. Rethinking Passionist formation

¹ Vita Consacrata, 24.

² Ps. 45:3.

³ Const. 5.

not abstractly, but in real situations of human life (*modern fluidity*) and within the scope of what Vita Consacrata has been undertaken during these past twenty-five years, being particularly attentive to those charismatic and prophetic elements. During these years many efforts have been made to “updating” the various Formation Programs. Perhaps this is not enough. We need to “re-think” more than “update”; re-think the content and methodology of formation.

The Constitutions invite us to “*continually have in mind the basic principles of a fully human and religious life, as lived in the Congregation, if we wish to achieve and safeguard the special ends of formation.*”⁴

I believe that the program for our young lacks sufficient time not only for appreciating Passionist spirituality, but also, and above all, for studying and appreciating the identity, the theology, the spirituality and the mission of Vita Consacrata. I don’t believe that a few courses taken during the period of postulancy and novitiate are sufficient!

This applies not only to Passionists; it is a general situation of Consecrated Life. I’ve known young men who have been ordained priests who did not know the difference between being “a religious” and “being a priest”; between being a “religious priest” and a “diocesan priest”! I know young priests who after a few years have left the Congregation because “there’s no difference between being a religious and being a diocesan priest”.

2. Formation for religious life and not only for priesthood

The Catholic universities that our young religious attend are for the most part frequented by seminarians and laity. Their objective is to prepare its students to be good pastors and dedicated laity in the area of pastoral ministry, with little or no concern about Consecrated Life. In some cases, Consecrated Life is studied in the context of Ecclesiology. This creates a mentality in the young religious and in their religious superiors that formal theological studies are for the sole purpose of preparing for priesthood, so much so that in most cases, at the end of theological studies the men are ordained without taking into account the process of formation

⁴ Const. 78.

and the assimilation of the charism of Consecrated Life and Passionist life.

In the process of formation for Consecrated Life we can no longer be satisfied with “white-washing” or “appearances”. What is needed is *in-depth* formation; formation that is capable of arriving at decision-making, motivating, forming beliefs and values – formation that is more concerned about “*interiority*” than “*exterior appearances*”. Formation that is “*mercenary*” or “*superficial*” is deceptive. What is needed is formation that is directed toward *awareness* of the values of Religious life and life in general.⁵

3. Formation for “a sense of belonging” to a community.

By its very nature, Religious Life entails community life, will all that is involved with fraternity, sharing, loving co-responsibility. Frequently when we talk about “community life” the only way of measuring it is by the time that a religious spends in the retreat (monastery). It is as if to say that the father of a family who goes to work every morning and returns home tired, lives “family life” less than another father who spends every day at home watching T.V. or at the computer near his wife and children.

Today the rhythm of life makes us spend more and more time outside the retreat. It is for this reason that we sometimes even change the criteria for relationship in community life. We find religious spend time in the retreat only to protect their “own space”, their “own time”, their “own program”, their “own possessions”, their “own vacations”, “their own

⁵ “Within the horizon of consecrated life there arise three challenges that unsettle and, at the same time, are sources of constant energy for our life. I will list three of them: I believe that the greatest challenge to our life is strengthening the **theological dimension**... **The mission** – is the second challenge – being at the heart of religious life and the identity of every institute. The mission is the origin of our institutes and, therefore, to recreate it with fidelity and creativity is fundamental so that we will continue to have a reason for existence in the Church and in the world... Finally, **community life** as a sign of the coming of the kingdom. To rediscover, cultivate and appreciate the experience and the praxis of community in a social context like ours that is strongly individualistic is another of the great challenges that religious life needs to confront today... Congregations are renewed when the persons who form them are renewed. We are aware that without this it is impossible to envision a future.” (JOSEPH M. ABELLA - Superiore Generale dei Clarettiani, Vicepresidente dell'Unione Superiori Generali, *Presente e futuro della vita consacrata - Nel cuore della Chiesa e alle frontiere della missione*, L'Osservatore Romano - 1-2 febbraio 2010).

money” and their “own prayer”. Those individuals who consider this “I” and this “mine” to be their right become unhappy and they betray the values of religious consecration. They poison the growth of a spirit of communion and sharing.

Community life is about considering the community to be “our family”, a place where we have a sense that we are brothers and we find joy in living. It is a place of personal growth, of a common experience of God, of sharing, of service and of self-giving in order to live the beauty of consecrated life. It is a place where we reason together, we study matters that are of communal importance and we seek communal solutions. These are all attitudes that favor *belonging*.

4. Rediscovering community in formation.

The Constitutions entrust the formation of the young to formation personnel; however, this does not absolve the community. *“Each of us is responsible for the vitality and continued growth of the Congregation. The most persuasive invitation to young people to come and share our Passionist life is given when they find us faithful to the charism of Saint Paul of the Cross. They should see us as employed in a life of meaningful service, which is characterized by joyfulness of spirit, and sustained by the wholehearted support of a community of brothers.”*⁶

Over the course of the years we have entrusted the formation of the young to “formation personnel” and to “formation communities”. Today, in a time of globalization, this no longer works. We need to recover the important idea that one is not formed in isolation, but together: all are responsible for formation (community, province, Congregation, etc.) It is an anthropological matter: the values of religious life are automatically absorbed (like a sponge in water!) if they are lived and held as important by the community.

The psychologist Albert Bandura in his “*theory of social learning*” maintains that behavior is directly acquired through observation and imitation of a “*role model*”. Formation is not possible if there are no models. We need a model that can become an interior law; a point of refer-

⁶ Const. 79.

ence is secure and on-going; a mirror in which to observe and correct one's own actions and, thus even one's own thoughts that eventually become the source of motivation.

5. Formation through the beauty of renunciation

*“The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.”*⁷

In the process of formation a great deal of emphasis is placed on “renunciation”, while not addressing the “why” of renunciation. The young men frequently don't see beyond the renunciation needed for the “pearl of great price” for which it is worth sacrificing everything.

On the other hand, in our society where “all is permissible” and relative, we are not prepared for renunciation. The world of consumerism and hedonism leads us to believe that development and success are attained without effort, without work, without pain, without suffering without renunciation.

It is necessary to guide the young *“to become more and more aware of the demands of their Passionist vocation, and to see it in the wider context of the saving mystery of Christ Crucified.”*⁸ And prior to being a religious principle, the Cross is a universal law. Human-spiritual maturity is attained by denial, sacrifice and many small “interior deaths”. This involves: asceticism, *self-control*, self-discipline and interior freedom.

Formation for religious life that is directed toward the easy way and mediocrity does not bring about anything positive or lasting. In our formation we must be demanding with ourselves. Our formation must be directed toward *denial* – not for its own sake—but *“denial for the sake of”*, i.e. the evangelical denial that is presented in the parable of the merchant of fine pearls⁹: he rejects some pearls not because they are bogus (they are genuine), *“but because he found the pearl of great price”*, the

⁷ Mt.13:45-46.

⁸ Const. 82.

⁹ Mt.13:45-46.

one to which he was attracted and which moved the heart of the merchant who understood that he could not buy this one if he did not sell the others.” (Amedeo Cencini)

6. Educating the Heart

No. 81 of the Constitutions suggests that formation personnel “*inspire each one with enthusiasm for his vocation.*” I find this principle of the Constitutions interesting. It is formation based on love and not on rules and precepts. When a young person falls in love with the Congregation we can be at ease with their life choices. St. Augustine states this clearly: “love and do what you wish.”

Now love is a sentiment that cannot be imposed; I cannot force a person to love me. Love can be prompted; can be elicited. This should make us re-think our methods of formation that are frequently based on norms, precepts and prohibitions while ignoring formation of the heart, a formation that leads the young to be passionate about and to fall in love with Passionist life.

This means that we need to “*educate the heart*” and not only “*educate the will*” because experience teaches that it is not sufficient to know about what is good in order to do it. Thus Plato, in his “*The Apology of Socrates*” (written between 399-388 B.C.) leads the interlocutor to understand goodness in order to then be able to do it; but this method doesn’t always work.

The difference between these two methods of formation can be found in mythology. Homer, in the *Odyssey*¹⁰, “presents us with two strategies for fleeing from the song of the Sirens: do not listen to them or – as Ulysses did—have himself bound. In both cases the message seems to be clear: only by reducing the fullness of one’s own humanity can one conquer the danger of deception. Ulysses—a man who was knowledgeable and who an expert in the art of deception—was aware that he could “lose his mind” when hearing the seducing music of the sirens. In order to be protected, he asked his companions not to acquiesce to his pleas even when, seduced and wild, he demanded that they do so. The challenge of

¹⁰ Book XII, vv. 148-200.

the song of the sirens seems to be one of the crucial moments in personal growth.

There is another story, that of the *Argonauts*, that challenges the song of the sirens by contrasting it with a song that is even more melodious and prevailing.¹¹”

The method of Ulysses and that of the Argonauts seem to be a metaphor for two styles of formation: *education of the will* or *education of the heart*. The first consists of “protecting” the will; the second in “countering” the “pearl” with one of greater value; countering the beautiful and good values of life with ones that are more engaging and for which it would be worth leaving everything.

“Formation of the heart” means creating a hunger in the heart of a young man in order to deeply love God, the Church, the Congregation and community. Only someone who is truly passionate about something does not allow himself to be attracted by other passions and by other “music” that distorts; otherwise the mind becomes bewildered when the heart does not know any music more beautiful than that of the sirens. It is the method that Jesus used when he made the hearts of the disciples of Emmaus “burn” within them.¹² And when the heart is on fire, success is guaranteed.

¹¹ Cf. GIOVANNI SALONIA, Ofmcap, Va' dove ti porta l'eros dello Spirito, in FIDENZIO VOLPI - EGIDIO Picucci (a cura di), *Liberi perché obbedienti, obbedienti perché liberi*, CISM, Il Calamo, Roma 2009.

¹² Lk. 24:32.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON EDUCATION

(Chap. V of our Constitutions)

Fr. José Manuel Pindado (FAM)

Presentation

I'm pleased to offer this simple comment on our constitutions.

I guess the reason I've been asked to write a brief comment (3 pages) on this Chapter V of our Constitutions is that I've spent all my religious life -48 years- in the various stages of education of future Passionists: postulancy, education and, finally, the novitiate.

Since conciseness is being required, I'll try to underline those aspects I find more significant and will leave the rest out of the discussion. More than a critical comment, I'm trying to stick to a brief explanation of what, at this point, our constitutions is offering us. For practical reasons, I've taken the liberty to ask a few questions at the end.

1. ANALYSIS

- This chapter consists of 21 sections, and it's divided up into four paragraphs:
 - **General Education**; this is the most important section and it's mainly focused on **early education**¹; I think it would have been better to further divide this section up into early education and permanent education, since the latter is considered less important.
 - **Education during Pre-Novitiate and Novitiate**, where section 89 is highlighted, it clearly shows the novitiate's rules, and also number 88 deals with postulancy²; nn 90-92 stresses the legal aspect. In my opinion, as far as the novices' education is

¹ Const. 79-83; 86.

² *Ibid* 88.

concerned, we should have resorted to our tradition, so rich and vital in this regard: generosity, simplicity, God's experience, humility (today, we'd call it *memoria passionis*)

- **Admission to the Congregation and the Orders:** in my opinion, this section is excessively legal. I think this paragraph should have clearly dealt with the priest's and brother's education in human, religious and passionist values; the old constitutions were more specific about it. (This is actually explained in the General Statutes, nn. 54 & 55).
- **Exit and Expulsion:** The heading has a negative connotation when number 97 talks about perseverance in the calling, which this is all about.... ; other means listed to preserve one's calling may be quoted, such as devotion to the Virgin Mary (Passionist tradition), an example to the community. ...

2. GROUNDS

- Chapter V of our Constitutions is directly and essentially based on the principles born from the Church's doctrine on this subject, particularly those from Vatican II; the two basic documents which the education is based on, are shown on the P.C. and the C.C.C.; we'll just quote these texts:
 - **Perfectae Caritatis reads:** *the institutions' proper renewal greatly depends on the education of its members.* However, this education not only makes reference to the beginning of religious life (rl), but also to its furtherance; therefore: *"They (religious individuals), in turn, shall strive to carefully enhance their spiritual life, doctrinal and technical culture, and their superiors shall, as far as their strength allows them, give them opportunities, assistance and time to do so"*³.
 - The CCC highlights the following duty: *"after the first profession, the education of all the members shall continue at each institution, to enable them to live more intensely the institu-*

³ PC, 18.

tion's life and fulfill their missions more effectively" (n.659, 1). This education shall have the following features: *it shall be systematic and suit each member's capabilities, and it shall be spiritual, apostolic and doctrinal, and pragmatic at the same time...*" (CCC n. 660, 1). About the permanent education, it emphasize on the same idea as the PC's: "*The religious shall diligently further their spiritual, doctrinal and practical education for life; their Superiors shall provide the means and the time to do so*" (CCC 661).

- On a more general level, the whole chapter is based on **theological, charismatic-passionist, anthropological and legal** principles, as pointed out so well by Norberto González, p.f., in his analysis of this chapter⁴.
- **Theological Grounds:** we should emphasize the following:
 - **Vocation is a gift from God** because He is the one that is calling us; the religious, then, has been *called*⁵. Therefore, the religious shall consider the postulant as a person **called by God**⁶;
 - The Congregation is just an instrument of God and it shall bear in mind that "*The first educator is God*" and that the Congregation "*collaborates with the Holy Spirit's actions*"⁷;
 - The religious shall be an **apostolic man**: *homo evangelicus*, with all the significance this concept bears on religious life and, particularly, on our Founder; **his life is submission to God**...⁸; the postulant has to become aware of the fact that he is to "*serve the Church*"⁹; "*completely opened (penitus) to the church's spirit*"¹⁰;

⁴ Comments on the constitutions, 1987.

⁵ Const. 77.

⁶ cfr. Const. 79.

⁷ Const. 77.

⁸ cfr. Const. 77.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Const. 80.

- The religious shall be educated by making constant theoretical and practical reference to genuine biblical, liturgical and **magisterial** sources¹¹.

- **Charismatic-passionist grounds:** we're told over and over again that the religious should receive **charismatic-passionist** education. This insistence is almost excessive; it is thus so, that in the first three numbers of this chapter the Congregation has been clearly mentioned up to six times; let me only point out some paragraphs:
 - Education is to take place within "*Passionist community life*"¹²;
 - "*Progress in the knowledge and assimilation of the Congregation's nature, character and purposes shall be made, with a permanent, theoretical and practical reference to the genuine sources... as well as to the **current manners** of life in prayer and apostolate in our Congregation*"¹³. (It's kind of odd that it should only refer to the "*current manners...*").
 - **Loyalty to the Charism of Saint Paul of the Cross** is also required. "*Loyalty to the Charism of Saint Paul of the Cross, as shown in a diligent and laborious life, full of inner joy and supported by the Community's fraternal collaboration, is the best invitation to the youngsters that have been called to become a part of the Passionist life*"¹⁴. (I wonder why, when speaking of the loyalty to the Passionist charism, only these human and Christian values are mentioned: work, joy and fraternity; what about experience of God, apostolate and solitude...?).
 - We're reminded that our communities, particularly the educational institutions, have to be "*real schools of prayer and fra-*

¹¹ Cfr. Const. 78.

¹² Const. 77.

¹³ *Ibid* 78.

¹⁴ *Ibid* 79.

ternity”¹⁵; also, a genuine environment of the Passionist family” should be created¹⁶.

- It is also mentioned that the **specific Passionist education** shall take place through “*special courses or seminars*” where “*all the contents of the Passion of Christ and of the Congregation and its Founder’s spiritualities*” will be shown¹⁷.
 - When speaking of the novitiate, emphasis is made, above all, on **Passionist education**: *it’s the Novitiate’s purpose to help the postulants to become more aware of the sense of the Passionist calling, to experience the life style of the Congregation and to assimilate its spirit and apostolic surrender”*¹⁸
- In this chapter, emphasis is made as well on the **psychological and humanist** principles, and above all, in **human freedom**:
 - *On him (the postulant) falls... the greatest responsibility of his own education*¹⁹;
 - The postulant has to ‘*freely and generously*’ cooperate with the divine grace of the call²⁰;
 - The postulant shall develop *human qualities*²¹ *in a atmosphere of dialogue and mutual respect*²² ;
 - The **educators** are required, in the first place, to be “*well trained, both spiritually and psychologically speaking*”²³; they are also required to be supportive in their “*processes of awareness*”²⁴ and they are commanded (this is odd for constitutions, which are of a rather inspirational nature) to lead the postulants

¹⁵ Cfr. Const. 80.

¹⁶ *Ibid* 81.

¹⁷ Const. 86.

¹⁸ *Ibid* 89.

¹⁹ Cfr. Const. 83.

²⁰ *Ibid*.

²¹ *Ibid*.

²² *Ibid*.

²³ Const. 81.

²⁴ *Ibid* 82.

“to human maturity, to fortitude, to the ability to make their own decisions...”²⁵

- The Congregation, we’re reminded, shall *promote in our religious a **free and conscious** surrender to God...*²⁶.
 - Within the anthropological values, the worth of the **Community** should be emphasized. It is not only the educator, but the *community itself* that should discern the postulant’s call, and should support him in his process of awareness²⁷. The community has to be a real brotherhood²⁸. Educators should assist young men in becoming aware of their membership in the community as a family²⁹. The education *takes place in the Passionist communal life*³⁰
 - Reference is made to **human maturity**³¹ and to **affectivity**³².
- **Legal Components:** we’re not going to dwell on this paragraph, but our constitutions abide by free will. ECCLESIAE SANCTAE: the constitutions...shall include these items... and “*the necessary legal regulations to clearly determine the nature, purposes and means of the institution...*”³³. And the CCC speaks of the incorporation and education of members³⁴.

3. PRESENT AND PAST

Our Congregation has not excelled in the past in its intellectual activity, but it has indeed excelled because its religious have always known how to be on the people’s side, because of their apostolate and, more-

²⁵ Const. 82.

²⁶ *Ibid* 77.

²⁷ Cfr. Const. 82.

²⁸ *Ibid* 80.

²⁹ *Ibid* 81, 79...

³⁰ Const. 77.

³¹ Cfr. Const. 82.

³² *Ibid* 88.

³³ ES, 12.

³⁴ Cfr. CIC. 587.

over, for their holiness of life.

Where the strength that nurtured our religious was to be found?

- **Essentially, in the radical initial education:** the atmosphere in our novitiates and schools impelled the postulant to a profoundly apostolic and contemplative life: *homo evangelicus*. This may be proved by the example set by so many young men who in so brief a period covered such a long path: Saint Gabriel, Pio Campidelli, Damiel martyrs... They lived, perhaps, excessively introspective lives but they received a **serious, demanding and committed education**.
- Perseverance was based on a profound life of prayer, community life and spiritual guidance, generosity and humility. ...
- Another aspect that helped both human and religious lives intensely was the link between one's own inner life and the apostolate. One was an apostle on the inside and was contemplative on the outside, but without any dichotomies...
- There were certainly few means in the past; but they were put into practice: the Superior's reflections, spiritual conference, study of a moral case, spiritual readings, spiritual exercises and retreats ... Today, we certainly have a lot more means but the activities captivate us in such a way that we have little use for them....
- What I'm trying to underline is that, at this moment, the primary instrument in initial education, **from a human point of view**, is the **community**; without community, there is no genuine education for Passionist life, but the community has to represent, as far as possible, different ages, activities and even different personalities. During initial education, all the aspects proposed by the constitutions should be presented, but emphasis should be put on those values that entail a confrontation of the superficial and consuming side of our society: **service, austerity, exigency, responsibility, sincerity, generosity...**

4. TO REFLECT UPON

I've taken the liberty to pose a few questions that may help us assess the quality of our education:

1. *Which human values do you think should be particularly taught during initial education?*
2. *Which Passionist values should always exist in initial education?*
3. *What is the level of our professional education regarding the requirements of modern society?*
4. *Do you think our educational institutions are real schools of prayer and fraternity?*
5. *Which aspects should be influenced in order to enable young men to acquire a fraternal conscience and become aware that they are members of a real family?*
6. *Analyze how **on-going education** takes place in your community.*
7. *Is our professional education at the level of other professions?*

In a simple way, I've tried to underline some ideas that may help us reflect on this aspect, which the future of our Congregation depends on to a great extent. **Without education, there's no change and without change, there's no conversion. To keep our education updated is an urgent need.**

THE SERVICE OF AUTHORITY AND THE CONSTITUTIONS

Fr. Leonello Leidi, C.P. (CORM)

*“The Superior is brother to all... As guide to form his community at all times, the Superior seeks and listens to their views in a frank exchange marked by respect and charity, remembering that all together we are striving to ascertain and fulfill what the Father wants of us.”*¹ Thus our Constitutions describe the figure and role of the Superior: as a brother who walks together with others in discerning and doing the will of the Father. Our religious communities, in fact, are not composed of those who give orders and others who obey, being content with passive acquiescence.² Following the example of Christ who was obedient³, together we work at trying to discern and fulfil the will of God that is manifested in a variety of forms and in a variety of circumstances.

Viewed from this perspective, authority is something that is placed at the service of this common search, so that it takes place in sincerity and truth. The superior is the one who has the responsibility of seeing that this principle is remembered and that it constitutes the rationale behind each individual’s personal decisions, and that it becomes the unifying element of the religious community. In fact, the only reference point for each individual and for the community is the person of the superior, as is expressed in the Constitutions. Above all, he should reflect Christ the Lord, the singular model of authority. Similarly, the superior is called to act on behalf of individuals as well as of the community, beginning not with his own authority, but the authority of God, the source of ongoing reflection, listening and discernment.

This principle, that is very evident in our Constitutions, is something fundamental and needs to be recalled when considering problematic extremes: that of identifying the superior, in an almost mechanical way, as a representative of God, an approach that favors infantilism; and that of excessive emphasis on individual freedom and autonomy, which leads to the rejection of every human mediation through which passes the will of God. *“With the intention of doing God's will, authority and obedience are not therefore two distinct realities or things absolutely opposed but rather two dimensions of the same evangelical*

¹ Const. 23.

² Cf., Const. 119.

³ Cf. John Paul II, Es. ap. *Vita Consacrata*, n. 91.

reality, of the same Christian mystery, two complementary ways of participating in the same oblation of Christ.”⁴ Beyond this, there is no other context in which to understand and evangelically live out the service of authority and religious obedience.

Having established this brief, but indispensable premise, we can now ask: what are the fundamental elements of the service of authority that emerge from the Constitutions? We can list several of these:

1) The first element is that of **service**. “*He [the superior] has to realize that on the Superior depends to a large extent the well-being of the local Community, among whom he ought to see himself as one who serves. He therefore exercises his authority in a spirit of service for the brethren and manifests thereby the charity with which God loves them.*” (Const.120) This is how our Constitutions express it. Jesus radically inverted the meaning of authority: from the concept of power = domination, to that of power = service⁵. The wonderful scene of the washing of the feet presented by Jesus as a new logic for the Reign and as a model of Church is proposed as a way for learning the art of humble service in which my brother grows to the degree to which I decrease. However there is still more. Within the economy of salvation, Jesus called the servant his “friend”, and consequently, within the Christian community and the religious community there are no servants; rather, all of us are “friends” and brothers. This then is the superior -- not the one who sits at table, but the one who serves. Religious life, which frequently demands hard work in difficult situations, has always sought to present authority as service and not as privilege or domination. St. Paul of the Cross, our Father, in the “*Rule of 1755*”⁶ expressed this concept in the following way: “*Let him remember that he is not the proprietor but he should consider himself as the servant of all. Therefore let him not ask others to do his duties if he can do them himself.*”⁷ and additionally: “*Let him be gentle to all, affable, charitable and take upon himself the infirmities of his Religious. Therefore he should not use harsh and authoritarian words in giving orders, but rather gentle words by saying:*

⁴ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Instruction, “*The Service of Authority and Obedience*”, No. 12.

⁵ Cfr. Lk. 22:27.

⁶ The text of this “*Rule of 1755*” is published by Fr. Fabiano Giorgini in Vol. 2 of the series *Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality*, Rome, 1980, translation, Fr. Silvan Rouse. In particular see Part II: Offices: Reg. I: The Rector, Nos. 153-181.

⁷ *Rule of 1755*, n. 158.

*‘Have the charity to do this or that, etc.’*⁸.

Authority is perceived as a service of love and of communion, modeled on the Good Shepherd who gave his life for his sheep. Authority within a religious community, exercised in the spirit of the New Covenant, can never submit or respond to threats based on power and self-satisfaction. On the contrary, the New Covenant leads to obedience in the Spirit that is precisely the experience of vulnerability, of divine “kenosis”, to the extent of completely forgetting oneself. Authority as service stems from love, because the superior governs well only those persons that he loves well, those who he embraces in their wealth and in their poverty, who are loved as they are.

2) Looking closely at our communities, one realizes that during recent years, despite some shadowy areas, the climate of life in common has improved: “...*there is more space for the active participation of all; there has been a move from a common life based too much on observance to a life that is more attentive to individual needs, that is better attended to on the human level. The effort to build communities that are less formalistic, less authoritarian, more fraternal and participatory, is generally considered to be one of the more visible fruits of these recent years.*”⁹ In this context the function of the superior assumes a new identity, that of **animator-guide**¹⁰.

Obviously, authority can no longer assume an attitude of “totality”; however, being one of the elements of a pluralistic combination, it must situate itself in a position of promoting, by means of intelligent and prudent decisions, each individual’s potential. More than being primarily concerned about coordinating the pastoral commitments of the community or those of a professional nature, the superior is called to concern himself with fulfilling the communal and shared objectives that the community has chosen and accepted. From a functional point of view, the superior has the responsibility of guiding the community not by his ideas or his vision of community, but by the ideas and vision of the community itself. Therefore he should show great respect for the individual religious, given that the objectives of the community are not different from those of the individual religious; rather they are found “in” and “within” each person. Consequently, it should be clear that the superior, even with the best

⁸ *Rule of 1755*, n.157.

⁹ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, “*Fraternal Life in Community*”, No.47.

¹⁰ Cf. Const. 23.

of intentions, should never impose his own way of thinking and of living, or specific ways of seeing and understanding religious life, or his own whims, on the community – not even under the pretext of institutional needs. This is even more so when he *“has the responsibility of making the final decision, in conformity with our Constitutions...”*¹¹ This is the spirit of what is stated in our Constitutions: *“The Superior must give the kind of leadership that will encourage his brethren to bring an active and responsible obedience to the offices they shoulder and the activities they undertake. Therefore, a Superior should listen willingly to the religious and encourage them to make a personal contribution to the welfare of the community and of the Church. Not to be weakened, however, is the Superior’s authority to decide what must be done and to require the doing of it.”*¹²

With this in mind, the authority of the superior will be fruitful if he works at eliciting the thoughts of the individual members of the community. Therefore he should not aim at having the religious adhere to his ways of thinking or his way of understanding a community project; rather, he should seek to bring about adherence to the common good in a spirit of openness and trust. He should work at engendering obedience rather than imposing it. As the animator *“he must foster those projects and courses of action that will bring his brethren to become an even closer community of life, prayer and apostolate.”*¹³ The superior works at being a model of knowing how to reflect together with the religious; of knowing how to express opinions (which is different from imposing norms); of knowing how to be attentive to others’ opinions, while respecting their view and also their silence. Regarding the task of animation, the one in authority is called to concern himself with human development. All that regards a person’s human and spiritual evolution should become the object of concern for the superior and therefore the object of his respect and personal affectivity in order to offer each religious assistance and presence in his time of need. Conscious of this dimension of respect for the personality and the dignity of each of the religious, our Constitutions are even more specific when they state: the superior *“must guide and direct his brethren with genuine respect for their human personality, so that each may feel he is regarded with kindly consideration. He should unite gentleness with firmness and consistency.”*¹⁴

¹¹ Const. 23.

¹² *Ibid* 119.

¹³ *Ibid* 120.

¹⁴ Const. 120.

3) “*It is not good for man to be alone.*”¹⁵ This is an anthropological reality and a fact that is attested to by every day experience. Each of us, in that we are “in relationship”, needs to feel that we are cared for throughout our life, from birth until death. Perhaps this is even more important in the case of a person who has chosen, as a lifestyle, that of following Jesus Christ and, given his intrinsic need for relationship, he can at times feel as if he is drowning in affective and relational loneliness. Everybody needs the support of others, needs their affection, because living alone is living in isolation and despondency. Normal intimacy with other persons makes us feel secure, whereas their distance or absence creates a void that often becomes a source of illness that attacks the physical, psychological or moral integrity of individuals. As consecrated persons, even after the process of initial formation, we need to be cared for during all the stages of our life during which we experience crises, ideological evolutions, problems of faith, new and demanding feelings, disturbances due to pastoral dissatisfaction, difficulty in living within an institutional setting, etc. With this in mind, the role of authority has to include efforts at caring that is expressed in being attentive to another, being concerned about him, in the everyday experiences of his faith life and his following of the Lord by means of his consecration. Walking together, the superior assumes the responsibility not only for the good order of daily activities or pastoral ministry; but above all, he is concerned with all that concerns the person of the religious and of the community on human, affective, relational and spiritual levels without ever violating or even minimally disregarding their personal integrity.

4) All is to be done in a spirit of sharing: “*the Superior seeks and listens to their views...*”¹⁶. In order to be credible, effective and capable in overcoming the crises that surrounds us today, the service of authority needs to share the journey of the individual religious. The episode of the disciples of Emmaus¹⁷ offers great insight into this dynamic.¹⁸ The disciples were fleeing from Jerusalem, dejected and disappointed. Even the testimony of some women who attested to their faith was insufficient for them. It was Jesus who had to convince the disciples and to make his word and his “authority” credible for them. As a fellow traveler, con-

¹⁵ Gen. 2:18.

¹⁶ Const. 23.

¹⁷ Lk. 24.

¹⁸ There is a very interesting treatment of this episode of the disciples of Emmaus by Arnaiz José Maria, in the Italian language publication: *Crisi di obbedienza o crisi di autorità? Problematiche e compiti attuali del governo religioso*, in González Silva Santiago M (ed.), *Guidare la comunità religiosa. L'autorità in tempo di rifondazione*, Ancora, Milano 2001, pp.52-56.

scious of their blindness, he began to explain the Scriptures to them: he came down to their level, responding appropriately to their questions. He went beyond the present situation, attempting to give a sense of meaning to their lives. He appealed to their intelligence; but this was not enough. Jesus stayed with them; he walked with them, despite their haste and their desire to bring to closure this experience which, in their opinion, had been disastrous. For the evangelist Luke, the episode of leaving Jerusalem was a response to the desperation that had seized the two disciples. The same thing happens today in the Church and in consecrated life when people, disillusioned for various reasons, no longer know how to find meaning in their lives and in their life choices. The attitude of Jesus in this situation is helpful. He doesn't force them to stop; he doesn't bar their way; he doesn't impose his authority. On the contrary, he walks with them, accepts their hospitality; he enters into communion with them; he shares in their everyday life. And behold: his companionship and his revelatory gesture of blessing and breaking bread put an end to their incredulity and restored their faith. In order that there be credible and effective authority in our communities, the superior needs to learn how to share the journey of the religious, trying to enter into their fears, their obstacles, their suffering, their doubts and their hopes. Frequently we talk about persons that we know well, but that we don't love sufficiently, referring to them with the generic "those": those that are late, those that have a bad attitude, those that want to do their own thing, those that are uncooperative, etc. If the superior, in addition to knowing the religious, does not try to enter into his life journey, sharing it and trying to love him, then his ministry of authority will be fruitless and his directives will be ineffective.

To serve, to animate, to accompany and to share – these are the principal elements of the service of authority as is delineated in our Constitutions. While we are grateful for the brothers that the Lord has given us as guides for the common journey of discerning the will of God, we pray for their ability *“to be sensitive to the workings of the Holy Spirit [in order] to lead the community in a way that fosters the wholesome development of each individual religious no less than the common good of the whole Congregation.”*¹⁹

¹⁹ Const. 108.

THE PASSIONIST CHARISM AND THE LAITY

Fr. Adolfo Lippi (PRAES)

1. The original "lay" vocation of Paul and John Baptist

Considering the limited length proposed for this reflection that is inspired by the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the approbation of our Constitutions, one can immediately observe that the beginnings of our Constitutions are not speculative, nor do they make any direct reference to a theological or spiritual ministry; rather they are narrative in nature: "*Saint Paul of the Cross gathered companions...*"¹ It describes the nature of our charism in the Church. This narration does not imply that the Passionist charism is restricted to the exercise of clerical activity, i.e. directed exclusively to worship. The first part of the Constitutions tells of the history of the birth of the charism in the consciousness of the two Danei brothers, Paul and John Baptist. In the letter that he addressed to his spiritual director and ordinary, Bishop Gattinara, Paul, referring to the inspiration to gather companions, expresses some of the objectives of being together: to live out the evangelical counsels in a spirit of poverty which is above all removed from created matter that can become an idol, within the context of fervent prayer and zeal in order to destroy sin and promote charity and the love of God.

Basically, this inspiration tries to allude to the fact that the Reconciliation of God with humanity accomplished in the paschal mystery does not occur within the temple. It does not consist of an act of worship or a sacred ceremony; rather, it occurs precisely outside the city, at the farthest point possible from any sacred space associated with anthropological religions. The entire letter of Paul to the Hebrews, that develops the sacerdotal theology of Jesus, directly states that concretely Jesus did not dedicate his life to acts of worship in the temple or to leadership in synagogues. He belonged to a tribe: "*Now he of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, of which no member ever officiated at the altar. It is clear that our Lord arose from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.*"² According to Paul of the Cross

¹ Const. 1.

² Heb. 7:13-14.

we witness to the Passion through our life, above all by "*detachment from every created thing*", i.e. by refuting idolatry and by proclaiming the Word.

Clearly one can see that in his priestly ordination there was something providential; however, historically it was motivated by norms of seventeenth century Italy which made it only acceptable for a priest to be a founder of a congregation dedicated to evangelization.

As a layman, Paul of the Cross preached missions and retreats, including to nuns and deacons who were preparing for priestly ordination. Although he offered spiritual direction to some priests and he was called by the bishop of Gaeta to preach in his cathedral, he never really considered being ordained a priest nor did he envision his Congregation as a clerical Congregation. John Baptist was even less favorable to the idea than was Paul. They were convinced by Bishop Cavalieri and practically forced to be ordained by Cardinal Corradini when they ministered at the hospital of San Gallicano. In the same way that many institutes of our time have reclaimed the value of the charism of their congregation by rediscovering their autonomy from clerical ministry, it would be very important for us to do the same.

In all of the Christian mystical tradition to which Paul was inclined from his early youth, union with God was not achieved by some act of worship; rather it was through baptismal immersion into the death of Jesus in order to emerge to a new life in the resurrection. Paul expressed this project of the consecration of his life in terms of mystical death and divine nativity. The Word of God, both in the Old and New Testaments, are clearly in the same line of thought. This does not mean that Paul did not have great respect for priests. He greatly appreciated liturgy that was well done and churches that were beautiful, even richly decorated. But the tension created by the Spirit was another matter. When someone, like Paul, has lived the lay vocation, one lives out priesthood in a way that is very profound -- an attitude that is not ordinarily found in diocesan clergy. Consequently, the Passionist charism can truly enrich the local Church, offering it something that, in itself, it does not possess. Reflecting further on this point, the distinction that Carl Barth makes between religion and faith, or one can say, between anthropological religion and faith

which is a response to a revelation and a grace, as well as the view of Lévinas according to whom holiness, i.e. separation, purity, the Spirit - demands a secularization, i.e. something which cannot be confused with the very sacred nature of natural religiosity.³

This attitude explains the strong positive inclination of Paul toward the laity and his capacity to recognize the responsibility of ecclesiastics for the evils that exist in the world, avoiding what Paul the Apostle describes as the thwarting of the cross of Christ, something that in modern times is frequently the result of clericalism.

2. The attitude of the Founder and the Passionists toward the laity

Paul had a good relationship with many lay people that could be characterized as friendships, acquaintances and opportunities for instruction, while never taking advantage of the relationship, and never with a sense of superiority. His manner of speech, as can be seen in his Letters, was fraternal in a spirit of faith and in the love of God, respectful of the spiritual journey of each person, and ready to respond to any opportunity that presented itself to promote life. On the other hand, while deeply appreciating ecclesiastical ministry and being a friend of many members of the clergy -- including popes, cardinals, bishops and ordinary priests - in fact he never gave way to a perception of the clergy where privilege was not accompanied by a serious sense of responsibility for the Church and for humanity. He had a precise understanding of what was occurring in the world around him and of the consequences that would soon take place in the ecclesiastical sphere. Brother Bartolomeo recalled: "*He frequently said that all evil comes from the ecclesiastics, the conversion of whom would reform the entire world.*"⁴ This balanced vision of ecclesial community enabled him to enlist the help of many lay people for the foundation of the Congregation and for the ministry of evangelization: the so-called mayors, benefactors, the collaborators during missions (including former thieves) and many women.

³ For BARTH CONSULT HIS WORK *L'EPISTOLA AI ROMANI* (IN ITALIAN, A CURA DI G. MIEGGE, FELTRINELLI, MILANO, 1993). FOR LÉVINAS, CF *DAL SACRO AL SANTO*, CITTÀ NUOVA, ROMA, 1985, PP. 86 SS)

⁴ Processes for Canonization, IV, 299.

Obviously the Constitutions direct us toward an ecclesiology of communion that pervades all of the Second Vatican Council. The concept of communion (*KOINONIA*) is what best summarizes the results that are present in the doctrinal ecclesiology of the Constitutions.⁵ In them we can recognize the following points concerning the laity:

2.1 Sensitivity toward the laity and their suffering

This characteristic can be found throughout the text of the Constitutions from beginning to end. In No.3 we find this basic tenet: *"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."* And No. 5 explains how we show people the love that God offers to them. Nos. 10 and 13 highlight the social efficacy of the poverty that we profess. But especially No. 72 which, beginning with the vision of society particular to the Founder, proposes a prophetic denouncement of the injustice that we see around us, actualized above all by our own lifestyle.

2.2 The overall aim of the Congregation concerning the laity

As opposed to the prevalent mentality to withdraw into our personal well-being, including spiritual, the charism of the Congregation challenges the religious to serve the entire world. No. 33 speaks of universal charity of the religious toward others and No. 34 exhorts us to be solicitous toward the problems of the local Church and to offer it our assistance. In the same article there is a recommendation to offer hospitality to others in our houses, while always preserving internal order: *"Zeal for the apostolate will lead the community to give a warm hearted welcome to those who may wish to share its life for a time."*

⁵ Cf A. Anton, *ECCLESIOLOGIA POSTCONCILIARE: SPERANZE, RISULTATI E PROSPETTIVE*, IN R. Laturelle (A CURA), *VATICANO II. BILANCI E PROSPETTIVE*, CITTADELLA, ASSISI, 1987, 369.

Equally important is the concept of our houses and communities as schools of prayer and of the Passionists as masters of prayer⁶. In the desert of secularization, the hunger for God is perhaps the deepest hunger that human beings suffer and which is not easily satisfied. The greatest gift that the Congregation is called to offer to the laity is participation in the charism of the Passion, as is stated in No. 62. Although expressing it in the language of his time with its prevalent devotional language, Paul of the Cross possessed an authentic theology and spirituality of the Cross. He understood how in the cross the incomprehensible mystery of God is manifested and that the cross is the basis for all fruitful apostolic activity and every transformation of human relationships. He understood how the "kenosis" of the Son manifested in the "kenosis" of the Father himself brings about a "kenosis" in those disciples who reach out to the least of his brothers and sisters. He knew that this is the true transformation that humanity needs. This result is clearly expressed in No. 65 of the Constitutions and again in No. 72.

2.3 The sharing of the charism and the activity of the Congregation concerning the laity

The sharing of the charism within the context of cooperation is expressed in Nos. 69, 73 and 75 of the Constitutions. The professional competence called for in No. 76 implies the help of professionals and those who have particular gifts, as well as preparation and experience in various areas of apostolic and charitable activity. A great ecclesial openness, including a capacity to appreciate those authentic human values that can be commonly found, is required above all in the field of formation and in formation communities.⁷

Certainly the overall approach of the Constitutions concerning the relationship between religious and laity, as has been seen, is in keeping with an ecclesiology of communion. However we need to realize that there is still a need for some further development in this area. This can be found in successive documents of the Magisterium. For example, I cite the apostolic exhortation, "*Vita Consecrata* " of John Paul II in 1996 in

⁶ Const. 37.

⁷ Const. 80.

which we read: *"Today, often as a result of new situations, many Institutes have come to the conclusion that their charism can be shared with the laity. The laity is therefore invited to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission of these Institutes... These new experiences of communion and cooperation should be encouraged for various reasons. "*⁸ And it further states: *"A significant expression of lay people's sharing in the richness of the consecrated life is their participation in various Institutes under the new form of so-called associate members or, in response to conditions present in certain cultures, as people who share fully for a certain period of time the Institute's community life and its particular dedication to contemplation or the apostolate. This should always be done in such a way that the identity of the Institute in its internal life is not harmed. "*⁹ This last point is in keeping, as has already been noted in No.34 of the Constitutions, with a context of interaction with the local Church.

Considering the relationship that St. Paul of the Cross had with the laity, we can undeniably say that he definitely encouraged these new forms, whether by the apostolic thrust that characterized the totality of his spirituality, by his personal detachment from any kind of clericalism or elitist mentality due to acquired privileges, or finally by his specific efforts at sharing the charism and of collaboration that he encouraged within the limits of the society of his time.

⁸ *Ibid* 54-55.

⁹ *Ibid* 56.

JPIC¹ IN THE PASSIONIST CONSTITUTIONS

Fr. Jesús M^a Aristín (CORI)

Should anyone think that Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation had nothing to do with our Charisma and that these failed to appear in the Constitutions, then, he's utterly wrong. Quite on the contrary, I'd say that they are in the core and heart of our Charisma. The "**Memoria Passionis**"² is essential to us, Passionists. The Constitutions solemnly declares: "We, *Passionists, have the Easter Mystery as the center of our lives*"³. This is what identifies and defines us. The Memory of the Passion, which is based on Jesus' command at the Last Supper: "*Do this in remembrance of me*"⁴, demands that it be cherished in our hearts. The Passion of Christ is not just an event that took place two thousand years ago; Christ still dies in the XXI century. As our constitutions say: The Passion of Christ *not only as a past historical event but as a fact, is certainly present in the lives of men who are 'crucified' by injustice, by a lack of a deep sense of human life and by a hunger for peace, truth and life*"⁵. **The Crucified and the crucified ones are inseparable**, they are the two sides of the same coin. The crucified ones are a part of the Memoria Passionis. The Contemplation of the Crucified takes us to contemplate the crucified ones, and the other way round, by contemplating the crucified ones we find Christ in them, "*as Saint Paul of the Cross, who saw 'the name of Jesus written on the poor's foreheads'*"⁶. We cannot think of

¹ Acronym for "Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation."

² In the Constitutions, The Memory of the Passion was clearly stated five times, and they are chief documents in the foundations of our life (twice in number 6, in the Apostolate (number 62), in education (number 96) and in the Congregation's Constitution (number 100); it also appears four times in Statutes number 7: "*The communities are witnesses to the memory of the Passion*"; 23; 28 and 45: "*keep within the church and worldwide, the memory of the Passion*".

³ Const. 65.

⁴ Luke. 22,19. "*Remember Jesus Christ*" (2 Tim. 2,8)

⁵ Const. 65.

⁶ Const. 72. *Processi*, I, 572. "Once, a poor man in rags staggers in. Paul gives him money and some spiritual advice too. Before going away, the poor man says:

- *Do you recognize me?*

- *Of course, you represent Jesus.*

- *Do you really believe that?*

- *Sure, you represent Jesus to me.*

- *And what if I was Jesus himself?*

He wasn't expecting that. Confused, he kneels down and asks for forgiveness. Meanwhile, the poor man turns into a handsome and bright young man that rises from the ground and, in turn, gives him advice. He feels so much fulfilled as if he was being

Jesus' cross and forget about the crosses of the world. As our constitutions declare: "*the Passion of Christ and the sufferings of His Mystical Body form one mystery of salvation*"⁷. Our charism is to "**remember**" the Passion, to cherish it in our hearts and works, to constantly look at the Crucified and the crucified ones."

Sometimes, I have the feeling that the term "the crucified ones of today" is banned, makes us uncomfortable, and we forget it's in our Constitution.

1. Passion for Justice

The first thing the Passionists are required to do in the Constitutions is to be aware of the reality of our world (or "the evils of today"). It's significant that this is shown in number 1). Saint Paul of the Cross had a clear vision of the evils of his time, and today we, Passionists, have to get a deep knowledge of the reality of our world: "*With a clear vision of the evils of his time, he indefatigably proclaimed that the Passion of Jesus Christ, 'the greatest and most admirable work of divine love' is the most effective solution*"⁸.

We're not just happy with a theoretical knowledge; it's not just to know for knowledge's sake, it's empirical knowledge that leads us to self-identification with Crucified Christ and the crucified ones (that makes us become incarnated in these realities and assume them as our own) and demands that we strive to get the causes of evil to disappear: "*We work fervently to enlighten and remove the causes of the evils that distress men*"⁹. There is evil or "the evils" of our time: injustice, hunger, war, global warming.... But there's also a solution: the Passion of Christ (the most effective remedy to the evils of our time" Const. 1). What does it mean that the Passion of Christ is the solution "to the evils of today"? The Passion of Christ is the love of God for humanity. We, Passionists, want to identify ourselves with Christ in the Cross through meditation, study, contemplation and personal experience: mortification, suffering, purification...¹⁰ We identify ourselves with the Passion of Christ that still lingers

spoken about the end of the world". This is one of the confessions made to Rosa Calabresi

⁷ Const. 65.

⁸ *Ibid* 1.

⁹ *Ibid* 3.

¹⁰ This is what the Memoria Passionis meant to Saint Paul of the Cross.

in this world¹¹ and recall “committed to the events of the world”. We participate in the Easter Mystery through “*the events of the world to which we’re committed through our lives and work*”¹².

Christ loved everyone, prayed for everyone¹³ and offered himself up in sacrifice for everyone¹⁴; likewise, we Passionists aim at universal love: “*We wish to participate in people’s troubles, and above all, of the poor and outcasts, by comforting them in their suffering*”¹⁵. We share the joys and the distresses of a humanity that walks toward the Father¹⁶, to the point that we want to become “*brothers of all people*” as Christ did¹⁷. “*The more we love others in Christ, the more sensitive we’ll become to their joys, pains and anxieties*”¹⁸. This exquisite sensitivity also leads us to “*participate in the needs of all peoples throughout the world*”¹⁹, and we pray for everyone²⁰.

For us Passionists, to preach the Cross means to invite every person to this fraternal love for those who suffer, in order to fight mechanisms that create the Cross and adopt the cause of the crucified ones. For this reason, we Passionists place the Passion of Christ in the center of our lives.

I think the quotation of these two significant numbers is self-explaining:

“*We are lovingly committed to following Jesus Crucified, and we prepare ourselves with a faithful and charitable disposition to announce his passion and death, not only as a past historical event, but as a fact, certainly present in the lives of people who are ‘crucified’ by **injustice**, by a lack of a deep sense of human life and by a hunger for peace, truth and life*”²¹.

“*Guided by the teachings of the Church, and impelled by our con-*

¹¹ “In the knowledge that the Passion of Christ continues in this world until He returns in Glory, we share the joys and grief of the humanity that walks toward the Father”.

¹² Const. 39.

¹³ See John 17, 9-19.

¹⁴ See Matt 10, 45

¹⁵ Const. 3.

¹⁶ GS 1

¹⁷ See Constitutions 20

¹⁸ *Ibid* 18.

¹⁹ *Ibid* 63.

²⁰ *Ibid* 42.

²¹ Const. 65.

secration to the Passion of Christ, we do our best to make of our lives and apostolates a real and credible sign **in favor of justice and man's dignity**.

Our life style is to be a **prophetic denunciation of the injustice** around us and a permanent testimony against the consumer society”²².

Therefore, the goal will be: “To help discover the redeeming sense that the Crucified Christ offers to a society which is eager to be delivered from alienation, greed and injustices”²³ and “to give priority to the poor and to those who suffer inhuman situations”²⁴.

2. Passion for peace

“Passionists give great importance to anything that may take peace away, or cause dissension or dispute”²⁵. Therefore, since the very beginning of popular Missions, one of the main goals has been to seek reconciliation among church members.

The starting point of the Constitutions is that one of the main reasons for violence and war is the unfair distribution of riches: “*In a world where the **unfair distribution of riches** is one of the main causes for division, hatred and suffering, we want our poverty to be a witness to the real value and the righteous use of mundane property*”²⁶. Therefore, we'll have to “*prophetically denounce the injustices around us*”²⁷ and stop the causes for injustices: “*As far as possible, we want to share our life and goods in order to alleviate the suffering and **promote justice and peace among people***”²⁸. Thus, promotion of Justice and Peace has become essential to our Charism of *memoria passionis*. This is further specified in Statutes 32: “**To promote the global development** of the individual, whose condition, hopes and situation are proof of his or her poverty”. Evangelization and Promotion are inseparable; there will be no real evangelization without human promotion”²⁹. “*The supplementary work of so-*

²² *Ibid* 72.

²³ Statutes, 32.

²⁴ *Ibid* 28.

²⁵ Regla de 1775, XXIV, 47.

²⁶ Const. 13.

²⁷ Const. 72.

²⁸ *Ibid* 13.

²⁹ Evangelii Nuntiandi, 31.

cial cooperation should never be neglected".³⁰

Furthermore, the typology of the 'crucified' of today is defined in the Constitutions as "**hungry for peace, truth and life**"³¹.

Both on communal and personal levels, peace plays a significant role in our lives: "*Communal life will be characterized by joy and peace*"³², consisting of men of inner peace³³. The spirituality of peace aims at transforming the human heart, delivering it from the tensions and the personal and community concerns. The spirituality of peace is based on the blessedness of peace: "*Blessed are those who work for peace*"³⁴. In the Scriptures, Peace appears as a gift from God and a task of people. It's a synonymous for salvation. Actually, God is named the **God of Peace**³⁵. The Gospel is also called the **Gospel of Peace**³⁶ and Christ is our Peace³⁷.

3. Passion for ecology

The word "ecology" is not clearly mentioned in our Constitutions; this would mean asking for something uncommon at the time. The development of the Church's ecological awareness, and specifically in the religious life, started after the Constitutions. But the Creation's defense and the respect for all living creatures are indeed included.

Saint Paul of the Cross was widely known for his exquisite taste when choosing the sites for his foundations, usually in paradisiacal places pervaded by a calm and peaceful silence, by nature and God. His own life on Mount Argentario and in other locations is a witness to the extraordinary sensitivity of our Founder to find God in Creation as Saint Francis of Assisi did; and his biographers have said that he would talk to flowers³⁸

³⁰ Const. 75.

³¹ *Ibid* 65.

³² *Ibid* 28.

³³ *Ibid* 37 y 61.

³⁴ Matt. 5, 9.

³⁵ Rom. 15,33; 16, 20; Phil. 4, 9; 1Tes. 5, 23; Heb. 13, 20.

³⁶ Eph. 6, 15.

³⁷ *Ibid* 2, 14.

³⁸ In Vetralla he was widely known for taking frequent walks across the meadows in spring, "and upon seeing all those little flowers, he caressed them tenderly with his cane and spoke thus to them:

- «Hush, hush! You tell me: Love thy God, love thy God as we love him! I've understood what you mean! Hush!»».

and birds. Solitude and silence are not made for emptiness but for being full of the presence of God and of his Word. His long nights in retreat in the farthest corners of the mountain were for praying and profoundly experiencing God. Without silence, solitude and nature, finding God would have become very difficult. It's worth recalling that the old Rules had instructed that our houses should have an orchard or garden, both for nourishment and meditation, the lonely stroll and the encounter with God.

We have to be a model of commitment to the environment and ecology. Taking care of the environment is part of our Passionist being: showing respect for the environment and all the creatures of the cosmos. Passionists seek new life styles that befriend the earth and are justice-oriented. We give a counter-cultural example of the way in which human beings may live in harmony with all creation: "*By living in a spirit of collaboration and peaceful harmony*³⁹, we try to overcome, both in ourselves and worldwide, all kinds of selfishness and abuse of power. In this way, we show the delivering force of the Cross"⁴⁰.

Ecological spirituality should have three criteria as a starting point that cannot be waived:

- ❖ 1. Creation as a sacrament and work of God, and the human being, in Christ, as God's culmination and image;
- ❖ 2. Creation as distorted by sin, as a calling and task from the new creation and the new Adam;
- ❖ 3. Recreation and eschatological glorification.

As the Pope declared in his last encyclical letter: "*Church has a responsibility towards creation*"⁴¹ so that the religious think an ecological conversion is necessary⁴²: "We need to undertake an ecological conver-

³⁹ Phil 2, 2-4.

⁴⁰ Const. 22.

⁴¹ Caritas in Veritate, 51.

⁴² "A real change of mind that takes us to adopt new *life styles* is needed, «according to which the search for truth, beauty and goodness, as well as the communion with the rest of men with common growth in mind, become the items that determine the options of consumption, saving and investment» Caritas in Veritate, 51.

"This means that humanity, if really interested in peace, should always bear in mind the interrelation between natural ecology, i.e. the respect for nature, and human ecology. Experience shows that *any disrespectful behaviour to the environment entails a damage to human cohabitation and all the way round*. An inseparable bond between peace with the creation and peace among men has become increasingly evident. Each one take peace with God for granted". Message given at the World Conference for Peace, 2007. n. 8.

sion; we have to change our production and consumers' models; we have to seriously analyze the issue of poverty with all its components"⁴³. "We should deem it a serious duty to leave the earth to the new generations in such a condition that they may be able to inhabit it with dignity and keep cultivating it"⁴⁴.

"The true education in ecological responsibility entails a genuine conversion of our way of thinking and behaving"⁴⁵.

4. Solidarity

"*Solidarity is the word that has been chosen to describe a new manner of being united as Passionists in our mission for life in the world*"⁴⁶. The last Synod of the Congregation, held in Mexico, may well be called the **Synod of Solidarity**, in perfect harmony with our Constitutions, which bear a prophetic tone on this regard when asserting that solidarity has to be a permanent requirement of the Congregation, the Provinces and all the local communities: "*The Congregation, the Provinces, the local communities and, individually, each religious should wonder how they may effectively respond to these requirements, so that our solidarity to those in need is shown*"⁴⁷. Furthermore, our solidarity has to impregnate all our missions and lives: "By living and working together, in a responsible surrender, we bear witness of our solidarity through the acceptance and fulfillment of a mission in common"⁴⁸.

It's worth mentioning that solidarity has to be present in our prayers too, if we want it to be really Christian: "*In this way, our **prayers**, with a mysterious apostolic fecundity, enlarge the People of God*"⁴⁹, and are **generous with man**, particularly with the poor and the outcasts"⁵⁰. This solidarity has to become evident at all levels, including the Provin-

⁴³ Pope's representative for the UN (2003). In the hearing that took place on January 17, 2001, the Pope John Paul II, recalling everybody's commitment to fight ecological catastrophes, makes a strong call to the need for a genuine **ecological conversion**. The Pope says that the human being has gone from being the Creator's ministry to becoming an independent tyrant of creation.

⁴⁴ Caritas in Veritate, 50.

⁴⁵ Message for the World Peace Conference, 1990, n. 13.

⁴⁶ General Purpose, General Chapter 44.

⁴⁷ Const. 13.

⁴⁸ Const. 21.

⁴⁹ Perfectae Caritatis 7.

⁵⁰ Const. 38. SCRIS: "Dimensión Contemplativa de la Vida Religiosa". Rome 12-VIII-1980, A: 5.

cial and Congregational: “*The Provincial Superior has to promote the tightest **solidarity** of his Province with the rest of the Congregation*”⁵¹. This requirement also applies to the highest decision-making body of the Congregation: “*The General Chapter has to: d) maintain **solidarity** and unity within a healthy pluralism*”⁵².

Our presence in the modern areopagus to be evangelized (UN, FAO) is to lead us to greater cooperation with the new optional movements that believe that “another world is possible.”

Finally, I believe the following parable about ecology can help us become aware of the fact that we are risking our future.

Sowing for others

“A man found his neighbor, an eighty-six years’ old man, digging holes in the ground. “What are you doing, Juan?” he asked. “Sowing mango trees”, the old man replied. “Do you expect to eat mangos from those trees?” the neighbour said mockingly. “No, at my age, I know I won’t”, the old man said. “But I’ve eaten mangos all my life, and not from a tree sown by me. I wouldn’t have had those mangos if other men had failed to do what I’m doing now. I’m just trying to pay my neighbours back for having sown mango trees for me”..

We are greatly indebted to our predecessors, who suffered a great deal to provide what we now enjoy. Each one of us has to pay back to a certain extent, by doing the same they had done at the time; by giving our best to ensure the same thing for future generations.”

⁵¹ Const. 125.

⁵² *Ibid* 127.

THE CONSTITUTIONS OF OUR CONGREGATION AND THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

Fr. Octavio Mondragón (REG)

Introduction

I am beginning this brief reflection with a poem, a sonnet that may serve to guide us through the waters that were opened on the horizon of our history by the act of God. I am not so much trying to multiply definitions; rather I am attempting to capture the true and profound activity that God is doing within us and within every human being through the Crucified Messiah. I am simply trying to echo the eternally pronounced word which goes beyond the limits that we erroneously place on all of life; which surprises us while we attempt to capture its exuberance and its extraordinary charismatic existence within our everyday estimations.

*Jesus, you have forgotten about my America,
Come and be born today in this crazy land.
Is there not enough hatred? Faith you say
No longer burns on the thread of light in our mouths.*

*It is a brilliant sunset against a rocky background
That grows above the dark fountains crevices...
Give us insight into our melodies.
Enlighten our eyes and seal our lips.*

*May there be no "discourses", rather perfect acts.
I know (although I don't say it) that we are chosen...
A stormy risk that even makes the depths cry out.*

*Love will be immense! We don't need to hate so much?
Your blue wave washes against the torrid beaches
Erasing cloudy signs and humming a song.
(Carlos Pellicer -- Mexican poet born in Villahermosa 1899.)*

1) *Jesus, you have forgotten about my America, Come and be born today in this crazy land. Is there not enough hatred?*

The underlying theology of the Cross, which precedes and is expressed in our Constitutions as a charismatic version of life, is also and primarily the “logos” that challenges all our searches and realizations, our intentions and our personal, social and ecclesial identity. It is what threatens all our security and assaults our forms of expressing all that God has pronounced as final and definitive.

The Theology of the Cross will never be a possession or an established inheritance; it exceeds the defined horizon of our attempts to impose a minimal itinerary on the broad paths of God. My thoughts are not your thoughts, says the Lord; and he added so that we don’t make any mistakes – *as far as the heaven is above the earth, so are your ways so far from mine.*

All of this begins with a piercing cry from which poetic expression does not withhold its anguish. The source of this is the inadequate understanding between what is promised or dreamed about and the senseless reality of hatred among human beings. It is the most intense way of provoking the **Memoria** of an urgent need. Come and be born one day in these crazy lands of suffering, of poverty, of inhumanity that runs from north to south along the axis of inequality and impotence.

Beyond the precise boundaries of our Constitutions there are many cries of victims that are heard everywhere. We have to go a little further in order to perceive their depth and their protests. They are not asking for vengeance nor increased violence; rather a gratuitous presence in the midst of the pain of the world.

Our house should be called “Retreats” according to the wish of St. Paul of the Cross; Retreat so that we don’t perceive? Is this what he had in mind? Or rather, Retreat so as not to partake in the scandal and therefore offer another kind of presence?

I believe that the **Amnesia** that exists in many satisfied societies has also nailed its forgetfulness on some of our personal and community ways and lifestyles. The theology of the Cross as a rejection of **Amnesia** and as a **planned stifling of the Memoria that gives rise to the scan-**

dals of the world in which we share and from which it is impossible to escape.

It would be strongly suggested that our Congregation respond to the protest of the poet by living in such a way that it would be very obvious that someone has not forgotten about the world – i.e. Jesus, the Crucified Messiah.

2) The faith that you say no longer burns on the thread of light in our mouths.

Clearly **believing** for us Passionists focuses on a center that is the Paschal Mystery of Jesus. We lovingly dedicate ourselves to the following of Jesus Crucified, and with a spirit of **Faith** and charity we prepare ourselves to announce his Passion and death, not only as an historical event of the past, but as a reality that is surely present in the lives of people today who are crucified by injustice, by an absence of the profound meaning of human life and by a hunger for peace, for truth and for life.

Believing is like feeling a burning filament of light in our mouths. “I will fix my eyes on whoever is moved by my words” says Isaiah speaking about this central nucleus of believing that consists of a radical reaction of being moved by the impact that produces an infinite presence in the fragility of our existence.

Believing that in his radical stirring he opens the wide space of personal and communitarian existence so that the immense and irresistible **Passion for Life**, of which God consists, can decidedly cut across the limits of our vision and the narrow pathway through which our life has to pass.

Believing is like an urgent need to ask the final question: Why am I infinitely needed by God, the creative and limitless Passion for life? The radical experience of God was central and decisive in the life of Jesus; in fact the Passion of Jesus originally began in the Passion of the Father for a life that is worthier, more profound and more beautiful for all humanity. When that Passion of God alighted in the most intimate point of the human existence of Jesus there was nothing that could destroy or break into pieces that limitless communion where the Father is fully expressed.

Believing, as an act of God the Father in each of us is a transforming event of our historical existence. It is confidently dwelling in a world born from the creative hands of one who is the origin of all of life and of all lives. Teresa, the saint and doctor, in her yearning poetry describes this without any anxiety: “Let nothing disturb you, nothing frighten you, God does not change...whoever has God wants for nothing.” It is impossible not to realize the act of supreme liberty that God himself causes in becoming present in our temporal and historical adventure of living for ever. Who cannot realize that believing is about breaking the bonds of individuality with its pretention of self-sufficiency? Who cannot realize that the minor interests that bind us in a thousand ways pales before this immensity?

It is impossible to believe without sensing in the depth of our history the infinite Passion of the Father for full life such as took place in Jesus of Nazareth.

It would truly be good for the Congregation to respond to the question of the poet by making it evident on a personal and a community level that the Father has touched the lips of our existence making the veins of our soul burn.

3) *It is a brilliant sunset against a rocky background. Above the dark fountains separations grow...*

In the afternoon when the sun moves toward the horizon our melancholy becomes more evident. This is a longing for the infinite, which is rooted in our person like a kind of loneliness that surrounds us. **Pure solitude** is an act of rebellion against easy generalizations, against the manipulated labels that we use to sell our products in the market; it is a level space for learning, with some effort, to be present in an increasingly greater transparent way before all forms of existence as a mystery that is freely shared.

Solitude is an open path for recovering our true origin and for sensing the longing for it that never dies. Solitude -- the little school of the afternoon where we learn to appreciate differences, to evaluate changes, to embrace what is definitively other. There, in the human

spaces where solitude dwells, the impulse for creativity emerges, which is an act of honor and gratitude to life which flows as an act of creation.

It is easy for me to imagine St. Paul of the Cross on the top of Argentario casting his eyes toward an imprecise point where the sky meets the sea like an embrace; where from that space of inhabited solitude emerge many of the symbols which will continue to indicate the obvious presence that directed him to see the world, society and life through another prism.

4) *Give us insight into our melodies.*

Enlighten our eyes and seal our lips.

Contemplation – the act of God that goes beyond our perspectives and visions. **Contemplation is born from wonder and grows like a newly discovered vision of life as creation where God expresses himself.**

The Passionist life that the Constitutions express is impossible without contemplation – contemplation of the acts of God – infinite, supreme, revelatory. The most supreme moment of contemplation flows from a fountain that never ceases to nourish: the Crucified Messiah.

Contemplating the Crucified Messiah is allowing oneself to be enlightened, allowing oneself to be pronounced from within the highest expression of life and of death from and in the name of God, our Father. It is about acquiring a new and specific vision of ourselves, of the world, of history and makes the road wide and sinuous so that our life can become a melody of the marvellous music of God.

The Crucified Messiah, the supreme act of God revealed, touches our conscience by means of contemplation; it is the remodelling of the reality of our conscience, i.e. the reality pronounced by God in the Crucified Messiah causes a re-dimensioning of one's conscience. Needless to say, Paul had no other way of expressing it other than by a sublime antithesis: the Mysterious Wisdom of God.

That immensely paradoxical wisdom is what brightens our eyes, the lamps that allow so bright a light to shine that it seals, closes, shuts down all ordinary thoughts and judgments.

The wisdom of God that is plainly revealed in the Crucified Messiah is a purification that **silences us. Silence – a reaction to the summons of the ineffable.**

The Contemplation of the Crucified Messiah is the action of God, our Father, in our lives so that we might be capable of clarifying what the Christian event is all about. It is a fundamental necessity in order to give sufficient and ultimate reason to the Christian dimension of existence. Preaching or proclaiming the Crucified Messiah is giving clear evidence that the Mysterious Wisdom of God has touched even the most intimate depths of the soul in such a way that any human being that encounters us can perceive or discover the firm imprint of God that transfigures and transforms our existence. An existence transfigured by God is translucent; it is the first-begotten word, almost an unmistakable echo that alludes to the ultimate origin of all the melodies in which God expresses the ineffable.

Passionist existence, the melody of God that is capable of stirring within other human beings at least a longing for pure music, emotions and the original sentiments that envelope and cloth the most intimate nucleus of the desire for the infinite: Living with full lungs, inhaling the breath of the Spirit that recreates and which affirms the action of God that is graciously dedicated to making all things new.

5) *May there be no “discourses”, rather perfect acts.*

God, our Father, only acts, although paradoxically, through the unevenness of perfect acts.

When Jesus was at the point of death on the Cross, according to the Johannine version of the act, he uttered a definitive clarification of all the events of his existence, an open space for the acts of the Father. “All has come to me appearing in total completeness”: (Tetélestai – as it is stated in the Greek text).

Consequently, one time during a lively discussion with the representatives of the Jewish religious system who accused him of having violated the sacred law of the Sabbath, Jesus gave his highest testimony: “Until now (let this be very clear), My Father has worked and in union with Him, I too am working.” And so that there might not be any doubt with regard to perfect acts, he solemnly declared: *“I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”*¹ It is not hidden to any of us that the death of Jesus is the maximum fidelity of Jesus to the perfect acts of the Father. They had to kill him because it was impossible to control his unrestricted conviction that there had already been a terrible threat to the entire religious system of his day.

Here we hear an echo of an absolute requirement that Matthew put on the lips of Jesus: *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”* (Mt.5:48) Some may say that such a requirement is an exaggerated command of Jesus; but others may affirm that it is the supreme act of confidence in what the Father can bring about in our fragile existence, as occurred fully in Jesus.

We have spent so much time and so much effort at defining this or that activity as something specific and proper to the Congregation: the list of the proposals that have been amassed during meetings of this kind would be limitless.

Nevertheless, the only thing that matters from the perfect acts of the Father, according to the paradigm of the Crucified Messiah is, that for us the only thing needed is to allow him to reflect in our lives what He is capable of doing: actions where he is historically revealing what the Father continues to do, transforming and recreating.

Stated more simply, **let the Holy One of God reveal himself in such a way that our lives have an air of holiness that is revealed by and in history.** *“You are holy, because I, Yahweh who am in your midst, am Holy.”*

¹ Jn.5:19.

The perfect act of the Father is an act of immense Passion on behalf of Life. It is the means that can fulfil all our deepest needs for living with meaning.

6) *I know (although I don't say it) that we are chosen... A stormy risk that makes the depths cry out!*

The chilling conscience of Israel: to be chosen by God. Of course and without a doubt, the chosen of the Father are also the chosen of Jesus. The Father, immense, has and protects his chosen; however this is not a capricious or arbitrary choice, a choice that alienates one from others. On the contrary, it is an act of revelation: God, our Father, in his act of choosing reveals that he does not agree with any form of constructing a history and life for his children; He cannot be an accomplice nor can He have a part in the desecrating of life which he lovingly formed as creation and not as chaos.

*"The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh King of Egypt."*² It is impossible to ignore and not adhere to this enormous declaration of the Hebrew theologian in the book of Deuteronomy.

Preference is seen as an historical revelation in action, as transforming **compassion**. The compassion of the Father is the measure and the pattern of our Compassion as the Congregation of the Passion. Luke perfectly translated the previous requirement that appears in the Gospel of Matthew and he presented it as follows: *"Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate."*³

The same God of Jesus, the Father of perfect actions, the same style and the same challenge: revealing and historical Compassion that assumes the cry of the victims to rescue them by their right to a full life.

² Dt. 7:7-8.

³ Lk. 6:36.

Therefore, the problem, according to the act of revelation, does not consist in determining who are the chosen -- who are the chosen of the Congregation, who were originally defined as the poor of Jesus; the problem is to discover once and for all, who are the chosen of the Father. It is not sufficient to say that we love them or we are concerned about them; rather to show how much God, our Father, loves them and then to be attentive to this relationship. Our compassion cannot emanate from our stingy and fragile heart; rather it needs to sink its roots in the compassion of God and from there gushes forth as passion for Justice, for Truth and for Life.

We want to share in the tribulations of human beings, above all in the trials of the poor and the abandoned, comforting them and offering them consolation in their sufferings. Through this open road of solidarity with those victims who are suffering we unleash the hurricane of the **Forgotten**.

Forgetting about victims is a risk that is all too obvious for our personal and congregational conscience. The various prophets specifically categorized it as a true form of prostitution, as a form of betrayal of the covenant, as pursuing other gods that fill us with illusory satisfactions.

7) Love will be immense! We don't need to hate so much? Your blue wave washes against the torrid beaches erasing cloudy signs and humming a song.

Within the context of the Last Supper, Jesus, knowing that his hour to pass from this world to the Father had arrived, after having loved his own that were in the world, decided to love them to the extreme.

Love, says St. Paul, concerns what is perfect, that which doesn't wear-out or wither. It is a transforming act that transforms human existence, which transcends it without measure so that the new Creation can be expressed in it. Love inaugurates the new creation in a community that opens its door wide so that life flows without measure and unimpeded.

Love, fullness in the action of the Father in the Crucified Messiah breaks down the wall of division that separates peoples. It breaks down the law and its mandates, and from two or many nations it creates a new humanity giving way to the restoration of peace.

Love in action cancels worlds of indignity, erasing the innumerable confusing signs that defeat the hopes of societies, the rights of the lowly, and the illusive dream of a transparent dawn in the midst of the darkness of the night of incessant violence.

Love is the ultimate foundation of the culture of active non-violence, love that translates in a culture of peaceful resistance. Beginning from love it is necessary to oppose all perverse systems, make decisions against it by means of direct actions that are non-violent, with strong symbolic content and well-planned. Above all, non-violence is a style of life, an integral vision of reality, a way of re-establishing the world from the perspective of the immense love that is revealed in the Crucified Messiah on behalf of the Father. I believe that the Congregation is called to assume the strength and the dignity of non-violence in a visible and tangible body, our communities, the human communities in the midst of which we live; and affording ample possibility for humming a song, the song of life that accentuates the notes of infinite music.

Conclusion

I have been marking some of the words in bold print. There are simply dozens of categories that speak to each other in order to give form to a semantic collection that can serve as a basis for a theological outline of the Cross.

Each of us can feel free to adjust them, to make them speak to the concrete reality in which we live and from there, to convert them into another formulation that follows in the footsteps of the original and the unique.

Within them beats a living heart, the desire that the Constitutions of the Congregation converts into inspiration wherein the full and sublime action of God, our Father is expressed as revelation in our history.

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