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## Belonging to the Congregation of the Passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, a crazy passion?

14th January, 2019

By Passionist Novice Joseph Hồ Sỹ Đoàn

Translation from the Vietnamese by Jeff Foale CP

On a sunny afternoon in 2007, after Sunday Mass, I heard a western priest [1] presenting his vocation to be a priest of this congregation. Actually, this was of no interest to me, because my dream was to become a cultural researcher, to go here and there exploring the cultures of the world. Foreigners; and one thing that made me want to get in touch with them was their presence in Saigon, where I dreamed of arriving at the university gate.

And then that dream came true, in July 2010 I left my poor homeland in Saigon to study. Yet, Saigon was not heaven, as I had thought, but a place lacking human love, too complicated, too shabby, too picky. During my time in school, out of curiosity, I went to investigate and stay with the Passionist brothers on the Sunday of the second and fourth week of each month.

In a small house near Fatima church, there were three extremely simple and friendly foreign priests living and working with Vietnamese brothers. Actually, they were very simple and rustic foreign priests when I saw them for the first time. Because the congregation was new in Vietnam [3], the Vietnamese language of the father was babbling, so they and the students mainly communicated in English. They ate rice in foreign style, but the atmosphere was always cheerful, full of laughter and eastern warmth. Although they were priests from India, Australia and Argentina living and working with ten Vietnamese students, there was no geographical distance. There was something that had brought those people together, living in one and becoming brothers, and there was no distinction between white or yellow skin. They call each other not father and son, but brothers. They do not fold their hands or bow to meet each other, but a handshake or a hug, tight and warm, Western substance. I will remember for the first time in my life, the Argentinian priest washing my feet and then putting a kiss on my thin, black feet on the holy day of Holy Thursday. At first, to me, the congregation was very impressive and a little strange in relation to the

### Vietnamese culture.

At the beginning of my third year of college, I asked the father in charge of the students to enter the lodge of the Congregation in order to have a quiet place for studying and cultivating English at the same time, and to understand the vocation of the congregation. Perhaps more people will wonder, why is this now Dòng Thương

Khó Chúa Giê-su? Well, when they first came to Vietnam, the congregation used an English name: The Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ. Because the English name is long and difficult to pronounce, when their vocation was introduced very few people remembered it, so the fathers took an easy to remember name: Pát-si-ô-nít [4]. This name seemed to fit in the early years, but it does not seem to really describe the meaning of the name. So the fathers unified a different name in Vietnamese and, when mentioned everyone experienced, more or less, the life of a religious of the Congregation of the Crucified Jesus; the Passionist comes from the Passion and Crucifixion of Jesus. XXX

Many people, when they hear of the “Tragedy of Jesus” (Thương Khó), think of the passion of Jesus, or the stream of suffering. To those who know, hidden beneath the surface of the text, the name of the congregation contains not only the suffering of Jesus, but also the passion, the ultimate desire of Jesus to love humankind even unto death, and the religious desire to love and be as passionate as Jesus was.

According to Father Huynh Tru [5], the Vietnamese “thương” (傷) not only means pain, suffering, but also, love, to hold dear, wanting to always be close and available, helping or sacrificing. “Khó” (苦) is bitter, hard, challenging, sad. The word “thương khó” contains both bitterness, suffering, trials and a great love and sacrifice. But the word “thương khó” has not really described the inner meaning of the word “passio”. In English, “passion” not only indicates love, feeling, enthusiasm, zeal, desire but also Jesus as the suffering victim. In the Catholic dictionary of the Vietnamese bishops’ conference, “passio” refers to the Passion of Christ from the Last Supper to His death on the Cross and burial in the tomb. Thus, the hidden meaning of the word “Passion” expresses Jesus’ love without the pain of death, loneliness on the Cross. He was hungry, passionate to love human beings to sacrifice his life. Thus, the religious of the Crucified Jesus were called to walk on that path; dare to sacrifice, dare to die to the trivial things to choose to love a way, a mission that Jesus invited each to and placed in the heart of each religious of the Passionist Congregation. As the spirituality of the congregation, St. Paul, father and founder of the congregation, always reminds you and becomes the identity of a Passionist religious: “May the passion of Jesus Christ always appear. a living book in the heart, in the work and life of each brother.”

The Passion of Jesus is a testimony to our love but not our deep desire, our burning passion for man. His life was only 33 years. He was born in a manger with small pieces of cloth and died, hanging on the Cross again covered with a small piece of cloth. Why do you have such a “crazy” passion? A passion for life? Because He desires, desires us to live happily and peacefully. He does not want to see his children day and night, suffering in sin, in the material things that pass away. Therefore, only through death can he awake His children, bring new life to man. But ironically, when the Cross of Christ became the most insane of the madness to so many people as St. Paul once said: “... we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.” [8] Is a passionate religious passionate about madness? A monster that most people in the world are turning their backs on? Yes,

yes. Father St. Paul the Cross, founder of the Congregation of the Passion, took up the passion of Jesus, saying: "The passion of Jesus Christ is the greatest and most overwhelming work of God's love for human beings and a cure for all suffering in our time." [9] For us as religious it is hard to be crazy in that passion. Who told us to be monstrous religious, crazy as well, because we accept the mad subject of Jesus. For many, preaching the Cross is madness, but with us the Cross is the greatest sign of love, a deep connection between man and God and sweet inspiration for us to resist. To live and love as Jesus did. It is the passion of Christ on the Cross that every dear religious who dares "dare" dare to put his life into the hands of his providence. Moreover, with the fourth vow of a Passionist religious, it is difficult to always write the mystery of the passion of Jesus, so it is difficult for the religious to pray that the Passion is in the mind and his soul. However, in order for it to be its own character or flesh and blood, every Passionist religious always looks deeply, deeply to find the great meaning that the Passion brings, so then, find the image of the poor, the image of those who are suffering through the image of Jesus' pain on the Cross.

Thus, more than eleven years in the presence of Vietnamese, religious have been, and continue to be passionate about how crazy? Dear, we express that passion by cultivating four dimensions: Knowledge, Spirituality, Community and Pastoral. We cannot meet the urgent needs of society without knowledge; We cannot live and function effectively without a spiritual life tied and deeply rooted in Christ; We cannot become sober, imbued human beings without the community - the second family of every Tragedy; in the end our monastic life will become meaningless without pastoral, no passion to be with those who are living in misery.

In fact, we are not only crazy about the Passion of Jesus, but passionate about pastoral care, passion for the poor, being friends and living with them as their relatives. . After the hard days in the academy, two months of obedience to the superior, the brothers carry the bag carrying not only knowledge, enthusiasm, love to serve, share, but also children. The heart is filled with the passion of a Passionist religious, Jesus, to the shelters, to the high places, the ethnic areas, the remote areas to serve, to warm up, to light the hope in the heart. lack of love, or work together with brothers and sisters and live with them as true brothers and sisters. But also, there are experiences that are not easy to take and turn into passion. The shelter of Phan Sinh (Dong Nai), where pastoral leave to sob for the brothers. But the child with disabilities is abandoned, lack of love of parents, relatives, making them feel cold, fear of someone touching them, so when they are care, there are children screaming, biting you, spitting on you. Older people, living the rest of their lives in loneliness, always become hard-headed, or verbally abusive when they are unhappy. Young people who are physically and mentally disturbed by sexual abuse and family violence cannot control their behaviour head brother. Ask if you are sad, tired? Yes, because you are also frail people, but you still serve, caring for them with all their love and sacrifice, for the love and service of those who are suffering is the passion of the brother.

For me, how can I forget the first pastoral experience in Kon Tum. I listen to books or media, the state care about the sibling ethnic people, who suspect "interest" by deforestation, robbery, brittle, see them as tools to exploit. I have "enjoyed" almost two months of summer that was extremely meaningful. I helped ethnic minority students to study, live with ethnic brothers, eat leaf noodles with white rice with salt, sleep on the floor, walk together in the field, bath together, brush my teeth, rinse mouth with water and live as a member of the village. Two months went by, but I had a great experience with the people I called the poor of God, and my brothers and sisters.

Passion does not stop there, but we are "passionate" in the suffering itself in life. I firmly believe that the invitation of Jesus to every Vietnamese religious is as special as the name of the Order. How can there be understanding of any profoundly painful experience if we have never experienced suffering? Every Passionist religious brought with him a passion, a Cross that God sent. Father Thanh, one of the first Vietnamese priests of the Order, had just returned to Vietnam after two weeks in Australia to receive the priesthood, or to lose his mother. More pain when your happy day, also the day of mourning mother. The six learned, living in God's love at home practicing in Australia, received news of three lost. Wiping away tears, the three teachers, strong teacher continues his mission in the land. Tuấn Tuan, near the day of the deacon's ordination, mother hospitalized heart surgery. He put aside the study, the community to the side, to take care of his mother. Or the other students, who grew up carrying scars from their families, from poverty, from mental illnesses that could not be removed overnight. It is the suffering that every Passionist religious experiences through his life, which is a great catalyst for the mission to serve the poor. Moreover, every religious also dares to "indulge" in the suffering of his life. Seeing it as an integral part of the vocation to be aware of the weak, incomplete person, to be humble, to grow up, to know how to sympathize and to listen to everyone living in society.

What is more, not only the Passionists of Jesus have passion and witness to the insanity of Jesus Christ, because even in Vietnam and the whole world there are many priests and other Christians who are witnessing the madness of the day. They are willing to take the name of a madman of God, passionate about madness and to die for a monster. They accept the congregation, ignoring the prejudices of society to preach the Passion of Jesus, dare to serve all for the poor, for those who are suffering, so that the love is spread. And the love of Jesus is so full of people. They also just want to warm up the cold heart lonely heart, the soul missing love. So that passion is crazy when it carries extremely human values?

We think that society is more developed, civilized, modern, that people will reduce poverty, or will have more fun to help people suffer less. But who knows that more and more people are suffering and suffering more diverse. They are not only suffering and materially poor, they are dying from lack of of human affection, love, concern, sharing, but they also suffer and hunger for spiritual life. Atheists cultivate

in them a denial of any religious interpretation so that they pursue pragmatic lifestyles - which show them material and trivial gratification. But why blame them, because they are also victims of a regime, a state, a day-to-day education cramming and directing people who just appreciate material enjoyment. People are more selfish and humanity is quantified by power and money. People just make money and enjoy what they think will satisfy their material needs in this temporary world. Indeed, we, the Passionist brothers of Jesus, were called to live and to join our lives with Jesus Christ, to ask for the Passion of Jesus Christ in the depths of each brother. Through your death, you feel deeply the heart of the poor, your suffering outside of society, from which there are concrete actions to share, sympathize and settle. When we hear their sobbing. At the same time, the sufferings of each brother's life are experiences to grow, mature and empathize and to better understand the suffering of the poor. Thus, the religious congregation was "crazy" in such passions. But Jesus not only invites the difficult religious, but also invites all Christians to live in bondage to the passionate mystery to experience the sweet taste of Love, of one heart. passionately burning in Christ. From there, we do not merely live, but we live with passion, a desire to share it with others who are less fortunate around us in our lives, as our desire. "Love one another as he loved you." [10]

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[1] Fr. Francisco, one of the first three Passionist missionaries in Vietnam to evangelize Vietnam.

[2] Father Jeff (Australia), Father Thomas (India) and Fr. Francisco, Argentina.

[3] The Order was present in Vietnam on October 12, 2005.

[4] Pát-si-ô-nít is a Vietnamese transcription of Passionist.

[5] <http://www.vietcatholic.net/News/Html/134426.htm>

[6] Catholic Dictionary, 500 entries. Page 77

[7] JPIC Passionist. Page 18.

[8] 1Cor 1, 23

[9] JPIC Passionist. Page 21.

[10] Ga 15, 12