



FEAST OF ST PAUL OF THE CROSS

MESSAGE OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL, FR. JOACHIM REGO, C.P.

19 October 2022

My dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends in the Passionist Family,

Greetings of Joy and Peace from the Lord to you all!



As we celebrate the feast of St Paul of the Cross, I send you my greetings from the sacred place in Rome where the remains of our Founder lie, and I want to assure you that when we celebrate the Eucharist commemorating the *memoria passionis*, I will carry you and your intentions to be placed at the feet of St Paul of the Cross. May you receive a little share of our Founder's spirit to rekindle the fire of your passion to live and promote the charism of God's love and mercy shown in the Passion of Jesus – a gift of **Hope** for the world.

The message I would like to encourage for us to focus on this feast is to appreciate and accept our humanity: **to know and to be yourself**. We are created by God as human beings, not angels. Our humanity is blessed with strengths and weaknesses, and it is important that we know these and live from its truth. This reflects our humility and allows us to live authentically – without any pretence which smacks of hypocrisy. God loves and accepts us as we are, and Jesus gave his life in love of our fallen human nature. We must do the same with regard to ourselves and others. I am reflecting on this theme because I believe that when we live by **who we are**, we discover our potentials, our gifts can shine, and we can be a 'blessing' to others. We need not aspire or pretend to be anyone else other than **myself**, as God meant me to be.

This was brought home to me recently when our Congregation celebrated two significant events: that of the XVI General Synod (11-21 September 2022)

and a Meeting of Young Passionists (3-12 October 2022), which brought together in Rome Passionists from



all parts of the Congregation. I always feel it is such a pity that not everyone can be a part of and participate in such gatherings, because when we come together, there is so much of the ‘**experience**’ of being with each other by which we are enriched, and which strengthens our vocation and renews our spirits. While we can more easily transmit the *content* of these meetings, it is not so easy to communicate and share with those who were not present the ‘**experience**’ of these gatherings.

Our eyes were opened as we met fellow-Passionists who look different one from another, of different colours, cultures and languages. Each one unique and different, reflecting his own beauty and truth. Yet, we were able to transcend these ‘differences’ and open to its **gifts** as we engaged with one another and listened to each other with respect and interest as they shared the joys and challenges of living their vocation of following and walking with Jesus each day in the spirit of St Paul of the Cross. What a different reality we find ourselves in 2022 as from the time of St Paul of the Cross! Today we are Passionists not in mono-cultural, but in multi-cultural realities and contexts, united in a common mission, not in *uniformity*, but in the *diversity* of expressions of the charism. A true experience of Pentecost!



Whenever we gather for these meetings, much focus is rightly placed on, and attention devoted to the business and work component which is usually the purpose of our gathering. However, in this message I want to share what struck me in our ***being-together*** and ***engaging with one another*** – in the **human encounter**. So often we complain and lament about the lacks and



difficulties in our community life, and yet when we come together for any gatherings, be they at the General, Provincial or Local level, something of the dynamics of being with one

another makes it a worthwhile and enjoyable time of *togetherness*. This happens when we know and accept ourselves as we are, when we believe in ourselves, when we can be who we are authentically. In addition, we appreciate that our Passionist life and spirituality forms us as *men and women of compassion, focused on mission*. This was evident during the Synod in the real Passionist hearts from all parts of this earth reaching out with interest, in solidarity and concern for our brothers and the people they serve in war-torn Ukraine, and in the lawless state and security-threatened nation of Haiti.

In these recent gatherings, leaving aside the business and work side of the meetings which were in itself rich and precious, what struck me most was **our common humanity**: the sense of hospitality and care shown by everyone in welcoming our brother-guests and making them feel at ease and at home. For example, I was touched by the utter generosity of those who were asked to make multiple trips (some very early in the morning and some very late at night) to meet and welcome the guests at the airport; the sensitivity and attentiveness of including in groups and conversation those who could feel left-out or isolated due to language barriers; taking care of and providing for those who were ill; assuring the provision of drinks and snacks during breaks; individuals assisting with the washing of dishes and setting tables; the hard work of our Sisters in providing the meals and our cleaners in



keeping clean spaces. In addition, I am also filled with gratitude, again for the total selflessness and generosity of

those who accepted extra work on top of their already usual full work commitments, such as those who were tasked with preparing the meetings, those who were asked to work on and prepare documents, the translators, secretaries, and communications personnel working late into the night etc. The care, responsibility and self-giving displayed was remarkable and inspiring. This kind of practical human example to accept and “walk the extra mile” is what truly warms my heart and gives me great hope for the future of our Congregation’s life and mission.

It would be remiss of me not to mention our six Passionist brother-Bishops who, by their humanity, simplicity and missionary commitment, inspired the Synod delegates when they so honestly shared their feelings of having been called by the Holy Father to serve as Shepherds of dioceses so foreign to the religious community life to which they were committed. It requires great sacrifice, self-knowledge, and trust in God and God's people. We were inspired by the faith and obedience of our Passionist bishops in their generous response to suddenly give-up their familiarity and comfort for the sake of missionary service in the wider Church.



St Paul of the Cross knew himself. He lived by the gifts of his humanity in its strengths and limitations. He appreciated his *nothingness* in the *ALL* of God. He said: *“We must persuade ourselves that we are nothing, that we can do nothing, that we know nothing. To have nothing, to be able to do nothing, to know nothing! and God will cause to spring from this nothingness the work of His greatest glory.”*

I wish you every blessing on this feast day. May we all be generous in placing before the Lord our redeemed humanity through which God's love and mercy can shine forth in Hope for the world.

“May the Passion of Jesus be always in our hearts”.

~ Fr. Joachim Rego, C.P.
Superior General