



CONGREGAZIONE DELLA PASSIONE DI GESÙ CRISTO
P.ZA SS. GIOVANNI E PAOLO, 13
00184 ROMA - ITALIA

Il Superiore Generale

Prot. n. 2008.102

**LETTER CONVOKING THE XIII
GENERAL SYNOD OF THE
PASSIONIST CONGREGATION**

My dear Brother Passionists, and Nuns, Sisters and Lay members of our Passionist Family,

From the Holy Land, from our Retreat at Bethany dedicated to Saint Martha and Lazarus, from the side of the Mount of Olives which looks toward Jerusalem, where the General Council has met for a week's retreat which has included visits to various holy places, I am convoking the 13th General Synod of the Congregation in accord with numbers 144, 145 and 146 of our Constitutions. As was decided during the last General Chapter, the coming Synod is to be celebrated in Mexico, at our retreat house in Cuernavaca, from 6th to 17th September, 2008.

Those who will participate at the Synod should arrive at Mexico City on either the 4th or 5th September from where they will be taken to the Cuernavaca retreat house. The Synod will open on the morning of Saturday, 6th September, and will close the afternoon of Wednesday 17th of that month. Thereafter everyone will be free to head for home.

Synod members are those who participate ex officio at the General Chapter or their substitutes as stipulated in #147 of our Constitutions and also according to the norms approved at the 2004 General Synod which were subsequently confirmed by the 2006 General Chapter. The said norms prescribe that besides those religious mentioned in #147 of our Constitutions, (i.e. members of the General Curia and all Provincial and Vice-Provincial Superiors,) the Regional Vicars of those Vicariates which have at least 25 religious on the Synod opening day are likewise ex officio members of the Synod. At the moment the Vicariates with at least 25 religious are the following: CARLW-CORM (Kenya), GEMM-CORM (Tanzania), PAC-CORI (Puerto Rico), RES-CORI (Peru), THOM-CRUC (India) and VICT-DOL (Brazil). Furthermore, in consideration of the fact that the central theme of this Synod is to be "Restructuring," The General Council has deemed it convenient to invite to the Synod those Coordinators who don't participate ex officio, to wit: Fr. Norberto Donizetti (CALV) for the Latin American COPAL Conference and Fr. Michael Ogweno (MATAF) for the African CPA Conference.

Given that the Synod is to be held in Mexico, the General Council has invited to the same Fr. Carlos San Martín, the Provincial Delegate for the ex Vicariate of O.L. of Guadalupe in Mexico (GUAD-FAM). Fr. Kevin Dance will deliver a report on his work and efforts to make our presence at the United Nations Organization bear fruit. All those invited will have the right to speak.

In #144 of our Constitutions we read, *“The General Synod... will examine the programmes proposed by the General Chapter and evaluate their implementation. Further, it will suggest initiatives to keep the Congregation continually up to date; it will propose means of settling problems in a spirit of brotherly harmony, and will call the attention of the various Provinces to their duties towards one another.”* I am reminded also of what is said in #146 of the Constitutions, *“The members of the Synod... are free to put forward other topics for discussion.”* It therefore behooves anyone who might wish to present other proposals or matters for discussion to advise the General Secretariat as soon as possible, certainly no later than June 30th in order to allow their inclusion in the definitive Agenda for the Synod.

As is customary, we shall be studying the implementation of the Programme set out by the last General Chapter, the presentation of the General Treasurer’s Budget and financial plan, the General Secretary for Solidarity and the Missions’ report, and such other reports as shall be specified in the Synod Agenda, which will be sent out to everyone concerned by the first week of next July and which will include useful information for your trip.

Regarding the matter of travel, I would like to suggest to members of the Synod, as well as to the translators, secretaries, members of the liturgical and communications commissions, to recorders, etc. and others who will be lending their services to the Synod, that they ascertain right away as to whether or not they will require VISAS to enter Mexico. It’s not unusual that for citizens of certain countries a number of formalities have to be gone through in order to obtain a visa and these can take quite a time. Fr. Francisco Valadez, the Mexican Provincial Superior (REG), who forms part of the Synod Preparatory Commission, together with General Consultors Luigi Vaninetti and Clemente Barrón, and the Economo Generale Fr. Battista Ramponi, might be of help were any difficulties encountered.

Obviously the central theme and very kernel of the Synod will be the consideration and in-depth study of the mandate of our last General Chapter, which committed *“the Congregation to enthusiastically push ahead with the process of Restructuring begun with the 2004 General Synod and which will continue at least till the next General Chapter in 2012. We are undertaking this in order to promote the life and vitality of the Congregation and so as to more efficaciously respond to the mandate of the Gospel and our Passionist vocation, i.e. to proclaim the message of the Cross to today’s world.”* (Introduction to the Central Declaration.) We recognize this as a call from the Spirit of God, whose *“ineffable presence begets in us a charismatic experience of conversion.”* Wherefore *“the Chapter, in a spirit of discernment, has pinpointed ten priorities directed toward the Restructuring process at every level. The Chapter has decreed that each Province, Vice-Province and Vicariate must develop a plan for the future of its own life and mission. As they go about developing this plan, they may either work alone or cooperate with others, be they from the same region or from beyond it. These plans however are to be then shared within the region. They will also be shared with the entire Congregation in order to go forming a basis for the next General Synod and for the next phase of restructuring.”* (Decree)

The Synod, as it evaluates the road traversed with the divers Plans and the interaction between these, and studying the response to the outlined Project which will allow for a reading of the various realities of each Province, Vice-Province and Vicariate, will then be able to indicate the ulterior steps which will need to be planned and carried out. Closely related to this task will also be the encounters which the General Council has had with the various Conferences and their Coordinators, as will be the next encounter with the Iberian

Conference (CII) and the Coordinators, to take place during the first half of the coming month of May in Spain.

We are ever more convinced about all that was prophetically affirmed by the 2000 General Chapter in n. 4.6 of the Chapter Document: *“Solidarity is the word chosen to describe a new way of coming together as Passionists in our mission for the life of the world. New realities call for a ‘new’ response in faith. Solidarity requires a deep conversion of mind and heart on the part of everyone. This entails a growth in understanding that life is a gift to be shared.”* (Ch Doc. #4.6)

Now is the moment to create *“a new manner of being together,”* to offer new responses to new realities,” not only on a community and Provincial level but also on that of the Congregation as a whole, arriving perhaps at juridical realities different to our present ones, with a new vision of the Congregation.

This Easter season in which we find ourselves is a reminder that the Resurrection must be preceded by Passion Week, yet the presence of the Resurrected Christ leads us to faith: we simply must arrive at the other shore if we want the Congregation to live.

My dear brothers, let us embark upon the coming Synod with understanding and faith. Let’s face our task without any prejudice or closures, with great interior freedom, with courage and deep trust in the Spirit who will guide us. After all, it is for the sake of the Kingdom of God and his Mission that we seek to restructure, and we have the conviction that the efficacy of the same will be directly related to our willingness to listen to his Word and *“restructure”* our interior selves and our spiritual life.

We must have no fear of blustering headwinds, of having to strain hard at the oars, or even of ghosts who might scare the living daylights out of us, for Jesus himself will be assuring us, *“Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!”* (Mk 6:50)

And so with this I convoke the 13th General Synod, to be held at Cuernavaca, Mexico, from the 6th to the 17th September in this year of grace 2008. We stand at a strategically important moment vital to the efficacy and mission of our Congregation, for which reason I invite all our communities and each religious in person, particularly our dear sick and infirm, to offer their prayers and sufferings to the Lord and to Our Lady of Guadalupe for the success of this Synod. Needless to say I am relying heavily upon the prayers of the Nuns, Sisters and lay members of our extended Passionist Family.

Finally, what better mark of my love and esteem for all of you than to quote Jesus’ greeting to his assembled disciples: *“Peace be with you!”*

Fraternally,

Bethany upon the Mount of Olives,
St. Martha’s Retreat. April 10th 2008

Ottaviano D’Egidio
Superior General, C.P.