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A life lived “in the significance of the cross,” that of Fr. Stanislas Breton, religious of the Passionist Congregation since 1928, was born in 1912 in Gironde, France. I want to say about Fr. Breton what he himself wrote in, Le Verbe et la Croix (1981) Chapter III - “The crazy persons of Christ” - “They are men who possess a living and devastating recollection of an essential past dominated by the cross. From on high, from the top of the cross they look “at all that which in our present existence we call reality”. And they lift their heads toward that Nothing that faith tells them is “worthy of being”, because it is in this Nothing and for this that they are what they are. Men discern that their folly is placed within a “metaphor” (in the etymological sense of the term), that continually transports them toward the Crucified One, because there is their treasure and it is there where their heart rests.”

Philosopher, theologian and poet of the Memoria Passionis, he is among the great representatives of contemporary Christian thought. The vast scientific work, 40 published books and 311 articles or contributions to collected works and his academic teaching have contributed to the deepening of the research on the Verbum Crucis in a profitable dialog between faith, reason and intuition. Furthermore, he has enriched the understanding of the charism of the Passionist Congregation that St. Paul of the Cross summarized in the words “promote grateful remembrance of the Passion of Our Lord.”

The Passionist Congregation, wishing to initiate the cathedra Gloria Crucis in the Pontificial Lateran University, could not have found a more opportune occasion than that of the 90th birthday of Stanislas Breton. In fact, Father Breton was one of the first, not only in the Congregation, but in the entire Church to have perceived the renewing power of the Cross and the Passion within the intellectual field. Certainly he anticipated, with his studies, the revival of the theologia crucis that has been confirmed in recent decades in Protestant circles, then, also in Catholic sectors. When this was validated, however, Breton did not limit himself to merely observing what they had already delineated, but, with scientific care and precision, he also revealed the shortcomings, without entering into arguments with anyone.

Breton did not so much discover the pitfalls in the critical stance that the Lutheran theologia crucis assumed with respect to the traditional categories of
Christology. But more so, in the absence of the radicalism that is demanded both by the formulation of the staurological discourse of Paul the apostle, as well as by the experiences of the mystics and scholars and thinkers based on such experiences. Breton then positively developed his own theory that should be placed beyond the limits of individual scholastic disciplines, a theory that will be developed at least in summarized fashion in this Seminar. This theory certainly does not presume any exclusivity: I still believe that it can be an excellent point of departure and orientation for the cathedra that is inaugurated today.

Beyond assuming any ideological position, Breton transmits in an authentic way the Catholic vision of Christology and of soteriology. Within the parameters of this vision, he understands and uses the living and vital experience of the Christian mystics, in particular of Paul of the Cross and of the other mystics of the Passion.

Furthermore Breton is never a mere theorist, enclosed within the concreteness of the ethical exigencies of suffering humanity that seek redemption. In the staurological passages of the first letter to the Corinthians there is a wisdom that, considered folly by the world, distances itself from every other wisdom and establishes a renewed critical optic, and in the second chapter of the letter to the Philippians that witnesses to the characteristic element of inclusive service of the kenosis of the Son of God, who called each of us to evaluate ourselves by our service toward the least of society, toward the crucified of our world.

It is my hope that the Passionist Congregation and in particular the Cathedra that is inaugurated today will more clearly assume their specific mission, which consists of guarding, even on the cultural level, the Word of the Cross, making every effort so that the world, and at times the Church itself, does not render vain the cross of Christ, according to the probing expression of the Apostle. May this revelation and grace, within which are manifested the highest wisdom and the greatest power of God himself, not be emptied of meaning and effectiveness. I would now like to relate some points from the life of Breton.

Stanislas Breton was born in 1912 in Gironde, France. He was orphaned as a child, remaining in the care of his sisters. “When I was young I met the pastor of my home parish who made me one of the most faithful members of the choir. I fervently sang the ‘Requiem’.” He was accepted into the seminary, and then the pastor of the parish advised him to enter the Passionist student center, a 7Km distance from the parish.

At the age of 15 he entered the novitiate; he made profession in 1928 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1936. He was required to serve in the military, and he was placed in charge of the library at the air force base. Subsequently his superiors assigned him to teach philosophy: “They believed that I had a capacity for that material, even if my spiritual director had once told me: You have more imagination than intelligence!” He recalls having read “kilometers and kilometers of scholastic prose.” He acknowledges that he was especially influenced by the work of Suarez, “Disputationes Metaphysicae”.

He was sent to Rome to pursue a licentiate in scholastic philosophy, but because of the world war he was recalled to France and enlisted in the military. He was assigned to a unit of the colonial infantry and then to work in an infirmary. In 1940 he was taken prisoner by the Germans. In his knapsack he had three philosophy texts: “Elementi di logica matematica” of Bochenski, “La modalità del giudizio” of Brunschvieg and “Gli elementi principali della rappresentazione” of O. Hamelein, that he read when he could in the concentration camp. From there he was transferred to Troyes for several weeks and then to Austria. On April 1, 1945, Easter Sunday, he arrived in Russia. After a march of 500 km by foot, he arrived in the native city of Hitler. At the beginning of May he was returned to his country and reintegrated in the community as a professor of theology and philosophy. The superiors permitted him to return to Rome and he received his degree from the Angelicum University of Rome in 1947 with the thesis, “L’esse in et l’esse ad dans la métaphysique de la relation”.

Seminar on the Memoria Passionis
In 1948, having just earned his degree, he was named a professor at the Pontifical University of the Propagation of the Faith. During these years he began a relationship with great philosophers and mathematicians. In 1953 he began to study the topic: “The Passion of Christ and philosophers”, “in which I sought to place the *via crucis* within a schema, objectifying my desolations of body and spirit.” This work was published in 1954.

In 1956 he left teaching at the Propaganda Fidei and returned to France: “Leaving Rome - he wrote - I had the impression of going from the infinite to the finite.”

He was named a professor at the Catholic Institute, first in Lyon and later in Paris. He obtained a doctorate at the civil university and wrote a thesis on N. Hartman, under the guidance of Prof. Rayon Aron. These, after having heard the defense of the thesis, said to him: “According to you, N. Harman would be the last of the scholastic philosophers. Having heard you it seems to me that it would be better to say that he is the ‘next to last’!” In Paris he held the cathedra of Metaphysics and from 1970 he was also professor at the teacher training school. The activity of professor put him in contact with many intellectuals, among whom he particularly remembers Louis Althusser. Retiring from teaching, Fr. Breton continued his intellectual work in the Passionist community of Champigny, France.


In the words of gratitude expressed on the occasion of the reception of his degree “honoris causa” from the University of Louvain, Fr. Breton concluded: “Permit me to add that I have never hidden the fact that I am a Christian. Regarding this classification (Catholic) and I preached about this (membership) I have never made it a reason for exclusivity or pride, never an opportune pretext for exceptional status; but I associate myself with it as a sign of contradiction, the cross of Christ, and it is this shadow that is cast on the sadness of things, on the beauty of the world, that iconoclastic accomplices sometimes critically severe, but which is also an intrepid stimulus that challenges our strengths and which propels us beyond our hopes.” (Stauros, 25-XI-1989).

Fr. Breton assisted and still assists, with surprising vitality, the Congregation and the world, to deepen its understanding of the mystery of the Cross and of the Passion of Jesus. In the Congress “Sapienza della Croce” of 1975 with his conference, “La croce e il non essere,” he reminds us that, “The cross in a Christian setting is the sign and the source of contradiction that is raised above the world. In a judgment that distances it and draws it to itself, the strange power of the negative is renewed in us. The nakedness of the Cross is directed toward the nakedness of faith and by means of it, to the nakedness of the soul.”

Breton does not intend to make the Cross a philosophy lesson. “But one must understand that some times extremes touch at their greatest point of inequality. The Cross divides the world in the sense of original division and judgment that separates. It is inscribed in the radical nature of salvation and in the loss of being and of non-being. For some the Cross is folly and for others the power of God. And it doesn’t lose its appearance of folly for those who are saved by hope. In whatever way that it is understood, it always remains a paradox and folly.”

The “crazy ones” of the Cross are the living paradoxes that revitalize in their uniqueness the derision of the powers of this world, inaugurated by the Cross of Christ. The Cross is concretized as a dynamic sense of commitment, as a place to sink roots. The Cross involves a transformation of the world, a new creation “ex nihilo crucis”. It defines the place where one lives and where it is good to dwell. It reduces or restructures everything, in order to dispel prestige, by the judgment of the Crucified.

Breton says that Paul of the Cross truly lived the Cross: his name in this sense is an ontological name, which says exactly what he is, because it is precisely there where his heart and joy are found. From this “nothing” he finds the spring to “proceed” apologetically toward a transformation of the world. But without making illusions to the results and the effectiveness of the work, he keeps his distance, and he submits himself to the one that judges, who humbles himself and who lets the shadow of useless service slip away in ephemeral glory and in Ash Wednesday.

The God of the Cross, Breton continues, is nothing that is, nor even “the I Am who Am” of Exodus.
Concerning parallelism, the nothingness of God and nothingness of the soul join in a “germen nihil” of non-being. But the empty tomb and the Sign of the Cross of Easter morning announce the era of the new world, the era of the resurrection. Then the becoming of the world and the Reign of God hidden within “this oblique earth” proceed by means of Christ on the cross “ex nihilo Dei et animae”. And it is at this point that Passion and resurrection are reunited. The two moments are original in Christian becoming that demand not so much being of the cross and passion, as being the “pneumatic” of the Resurrection.

Additionally, we are reminded in the work Le Verbe e la Croix (1981) that “free being is being cause of itself”. The stupidity and the weakness of the cross force us to overcome this system of self-determination. These tell us that we cannot control things, or people, or God, or, above all, ourselves. The cross would therefore be the ultimate critique of private property, in the broadest sense of the word “property”. The blessed or the “living beings” know that the world of faith is a world turned upside down. All institutions deserve the invectives concerning these wanderers that are powerful in their total devastation; they know that their weakness is the best argument against the powerful. They feel at ease and within their natural element, in the midst of the poor in every sense of the word, that is, those “that don’t exist according to the world.” The folly of the cross tolerates with difficulty this means of measurement. The critical function of the “crazy person” is to demolish “that which moves by its own means”.

And Fr. Breton raises a song and a poem to one of these “crazy-chosen ones” that we admire for their witness: Francis of Assisi.

Francis of Assisi is one with the stigmata of Verna and the canticle of the sun. The exceptional, in him, is so perfectly under control that one forgets that, as such, under the appearances of a man, there moved among us a flower of the fields. He moved so naturally in the reign of nature and grace, which characterize and distinguish him, causes him to be quickly dismissed as a common wanderer of our streets. The extraordinary, that can only flower, takes its melody from a song, in which the elements of water, air, fire and earth dance in an ethereal space so much so that we are not certain whether we are here or in heaven.

That love that is not of this world, and which the Cross reduces to an interrogative, thus respectful of our decisions, dwells in the silence of nakedness. Indescribable by our wise discourses, he easily passes through our streets, merely a soul, inebriated by his presence, he looms him his dwelling and disappears. The little poor man barely has what he needs so that the instrument doesn’t become an obstacle. Like Paul, “he wants nothing else than to know Christ Crucified”. But this familiarity, so natural, ignores the refinements of “wise ignorance”. It is because of the fact that he “bears the wounds in his body” of his Lord. This is enough for his happiness, if this very unworthy word still serves the Mediterranean icon of the Beatitudes.

Francis preaches to the birds as easily as he does to people, as if he reads in the earth, and in the figures of shadow and light, the universal transparency of the sign of contradiction. In the beauty of beings and in their ephemeral consistence, he recognizes the Nothing that gave them that face that he doesn’t have. As different from so many others, that proclaim their power, he avoids raising his voice. Doesn’t the necessary and sufficient judgment come from that Cross by which he identifies himself, and which he no longer has to put on his shoulders?

Francis of Assisi, like Paul of the Cross remembers that the Cross unites the “nothing of the soul” with the “Nothing by excess” that the Sign signifies. Those that have lived heroically are themselves signs: they indicate where ones needs to go to become that which we are and that which “we should be”. Breton further states that the mystical life which Paul of the Cross allows us to glimpse is the union of spirituality, of the mystery of faith and metaphysics, exercised more than theorized and to see things and the world “from the height of the cross.”

In restating our best wishes to Fr. Breton on his 91th birthday, of which 75 were spent as a professed religious, celebrating the 75th anniversary of his profession on October 10, 2003, it is my sincerest hope that these two study days will help us to preserve the youthful spirit of Fr. Breton and to always begin from Christ and from Christ Crucified, in the witness of the baptized, in the missionary endeavor of all, religious and laity, for the hope of the world.
The Più XI multimedia hall of the Lateran University of Rome was the site of an extraordinary event: the celebrations of the long and interesting life of Fr. Stanislas Breton, Passionist, characterized by his outstanding contributions to the field of philosophy, and the inauguration of serious and specific interdisciplinary study about the Passion of Christ.

The Passionists and representatives of the international community gathered around Fr. Breton and acknowledged him as a model of fidelity to the contemplation of Christ Crucified.

Among the 40 works and 311 articles that compose the monumental literary work of Fr. Breton, the Cross represents the beginning point from which everything originates and toward which everything converges.

The cultural chronicles of the Passionists have always noted the name of Fr. Breton, beginning with the publication of the work, "La Passion du Christ et les Philosophies" in 1954. There has never been a study seminar at which he has not been a speaker. The topic of the Passion and the Cross was studied in the Word, in the mysticism of St. Paul of the Cross, in the non being, in the city of men, in the history of theology, in the actuality of the Passion, in the noise of the City and the Silence of the Cross, in the knowledge of the world and in the wisdom of the cross, in the mysticism and the esthetics of Paul of the Cross.

Considering these themes, the celebration of the 90th birthday of Fr. Stanislas Breton was necessary and opportune. The Superior General, Fr. Ottaviano D’Egidio, gave voice to the common sentiment of the Congregation with regard to Fr. Breton and was insistent that this vital event be celebrated by the Passionist Family.

At the beginning of the millennium the invitation to start again from Christ was addressed on all levels of the Church. The memory of the strong stauropological thought of Breton must necessarily constitute the means for a renewal and deepening of the charism and the presence of the Passionists in the Church and in society. It will serve as a challenge to respond to our charismatic identity, to be dedicated to knowledge of the Passion of Christ and all people.

The well-attended Study Seminar on the Memoria Passionis in the work of Stanislas Breton, on the occasion of his 90th birthday, took place on Wednesday, 29 - 30 October. Those attending received much matter for profound reflection provided by Breton, which he gives as an inheritance to all Passionists. The 143 participants (Passionists from Italy, France, Belgium, Holland, Spain, Latin America, England, Ireland, Scotland, USA, Africans and Asians; Italian and Mexican female Passionists of the various institutes; lay of the lay Passionist movement; students of theology and philosophy) were noted in L’Osservatore Romano of 29 October and by Radio Vaticana referring to Breton. With the intention of making the name of Breton known to a wider audience, publicity was sent to all of the University Colleges of Rome, all higher Institutes of Religious Sciences of Italy and all of the departments of Philosophy of the pontifical and state universities of Italy.

Congratulatory letters and messages were received from the Cardinal of Vienna, Christoph Schonborn; from the Rector of the Pontifical Urban University, Msgr. Ambrosio Spreafico; from the Bulgarian ambassador to the Holy See, Professor Vladimir Gradev, from Professor Giacomo Cannobio, the ex-president of the Italian theological society, from the Passionist community of Colonia Caroya, from the Passionist missionaries of Mozambique and from Fr. Antonio Maria Artola.

We especially note the Municipio of Esine in the province of Brescia (Italy), where Fr. Breton visited for nearly fifty years, doing priestly ministry and building a fraternal and cultural relationship with the pastor Don Giovanni Antonioli.

The Lateran University was represented by the Pro-Rector Professor Msgr. Ignacio Sanna and by the Dean of the Department of Philosophy, Prof. Msgr. Antonio Livi. For the inauguration of the Cathedra Gloria Crucis the Vice-Dean of the department of Theology, Prof. Msgr. Piero Coda was present.
The four conference speakers, individuals well-versed in the thought of Breton, offered the participants a series of systematic studies on the work of Breton. All four agreed that the time allotted them was insufficient, since much more could be said about Breton.

Mention should also be made of the presence of the niece and friends of Fr. Breton, among them Dr. Gabriel Brossard who catalogued all of the works of Breton. Thanks to him, the Fondo Breton of the Catholic Institute of Paris and of our General Archives is a reality. The students, and young Passionists in general, received the necessary intellectual input to appreciate the complete thought of Breton and to further develop it.

The exhibition of the works of Breton in the multimedia room of the university was greatly appreciated by the professors, students and visitors. One frequently heard the remark: “He’s written so much!” to which Breton responded: “I have written a lot!”. And the best is yet to be written.

October 30 was the day dedicated to Breton. His autobiographical Retrospective contained touching moments in the narration of his vocation and his imprisonment during World War II. Several students of the department of philosophy participated in order to better understand Fr. Breton and the history of his thought.

In the same room, from the podium, Fr. Breton cut the ribbon inaugurating the cathedra Gloria Crucis. The solemn academic act was initiated by Msgr. Sanna who stated the objective and the activity of the cathedra according to the Convention which was signed on June 13, 2003 by the Rector, Msgr. Fisichella and the president of the Conference of Italian Passionists, Fr. Luigi Vaninetti. Fr. Breton gave the official opening talk about the Glory of the Cross. He called upon the cathedra to continue his work of investigation and he offered some guidelines for the future.

We note the distinguished Cathedra of Theology of the Cross of the Antonianum of Rome; it produced abundant literature on the Passion and had a martyr associated with it, Fr. Flavio Di Bernardo, as noted by Bishop Piergiorgio Nesti, the former director of the former cathedra.

The discourse of Fr. Breton initiated the endeavor of the cathedra Gloria Crucis. It is not a permanent cathedra, but a project connected with different scientific faculties to propose initiatives and activities of investigation about the Passion of Christ and about its meaning for the life of the world.

At the end of the Seminar, the Superior General expressed his conviction that the cathedra should further study the original and profound thought of Breton. Up to the present, the thought and philosophical work of Breton, which is not easily accessible, is known to only a few; the Seminar has made it available to all. The preparation of the complete list of the works of Breton for the participants has made known the cultural depth and the profound philosophical quality of these works.

The Pro-Rector, Msgr. Sanna, presented the medal of university in gratitude and esteem for Fr. Breton; the Superior General presented him a hand-written parchment; the Italian Stauros Foundation a watercolor painting of Dino Falconi entitled: “The To conclude the events, a Mass was celebrated in the Basilica of Sts. John and Paul, at which Bishop Nesti presided, with the Superior General preaching the homily in an atmosphere characterized by simple and fraternal joy. At the conclusion of the Eucharist, Fr. Breton expressed sincere and heart-felt words to the Lord, to the Congregation and to his friends.

This Seminar was only a seed. Now we need to proceed toward new and broader horizons. Breton will always remain as one of the shining cultural lights of the Passionist Family.

The publication of the Acts of the Seminar will provide a permanent record of these wonderful days in Rome, 29-30 October 2003.
In this return to my past of reflection and of writing relative to the Passion and to the Cross of Christ, I would especially like to recall their origins. Beginning with the various seminaries for which the venerable pastor of my parish of origin believed that I was destined, and considering the shortest road and the impossibility of being elsewhere, he directed me to the theologate of the nearby Passionists in Bordeaux. Then, when I was 15 years old, I went to the novitiate that was then at Melay in Vendée. As far as I remember, from that tender age, I had a deep devotion to the Passion of Jesus, and I would subsequently choose as the place par excellence for contemplation, the agony in the Garden of Olives. This source of inspiration nourished me until I was twenty years old. Later, philosophical reflection that became personal and solitary in the absence of qualified teachers, opened me to the horizon of new perspectives. The philosopher that I approached in this vast field of questions, subsequently connected my writings and teachings with pure philosophy, the Cross of Jesus. I hope, through this reflection, to transform into authentic thought that which overflowed, within the Congregation, with devotion and affection. The period of my residence in the Generalate of Sts. John and Paul, following my captivity in Austria (1940-1945), offered me the inspiration for an intellectual endeavor in the form of a commission where I met Fathers Sciarretta and Monsegur. To be honest, I must admit that a matter of this nature was cautiously addressed in a prior letter of Fr. Kierkels the then Superior General. Around 1948, as far as I remember, although suffering from depression caused by my situation as a prisoner of war, I wrote my first work entitled, “The Passion of Christ and Philosophy” and I highlighted the specific intention that inspired it: to raise to the dignity of a concept the sensitive data of a noteworthy practice, fairly common in the Congregation of that era. I didn’t reflect on the philosophers that interested me concerning this matter except for purposes of offering an example of a way of the cross of a speculative nature. Only later, toward 1959, in order to fulfill my obligation of meditation on the Cross, did I reflect on the mysticism of Passion that was typical of the spirituality of the Founder. The Mysticism of the Passion was the opportunity of making known in France, and by competent means, a mystic whose incontestable originality was found in the line of Tauler and of the tradition of Eckhart, also refocused, through the mediation of Diogenes the Areopagite, and the influence of the Neo-Platonism. It was a type of preparation for a deeper appreciation of the Christian uniqueness that I developed in, The Word and the Cross.

The Word on the Cross

For a long time, if not always, the fundamental text of the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians has been familiar to us. It has been read in such a way that there is the risk, after so many repetitions, of its being unnoticed. My first concern was to analyze the extraordinary phraseology that is proposed therein.

Above all, Paul presents a situation of anarchy that has divided the faithful of Corinth. Partiality has exploded in the declaration of belonging to the various authorities of whom they are boasting: “I belong to Paul”, “I, on the other hand, belong to Apollo”, “And I belong to Cephas”, “And I belong to Christ”. Ultimately, even Christ becomes a source of discord. It would be something unheard of for any one of them to divide the Community! Therefore, it is in view of this disunity created from the selfishness of each that
causes the Pauline interrogatory explosion: “Has Christ perhaps been divided?” “Perhaps Paul was crucified for you?” In the questions proposed there emerges at the same time, the necessity of restoring the lacking unity, the insuppressible beginning point that alone is able to reconstitute unity: Christ on the cross.

In fact that which unites us, rather than dispersing us into factions, is the Word of the cross, the Word on the cross, that is the essence of the new preaching that gives rise to, we note, a new type of word on earth. Now this unpublished word isn’t disassociated from a fundamental rupture. “The language of the cross (logos staurou), is foolishness for some, and the power of God for others.” In this sense, it could be called a “coinciding of antagonists.” Paul states more explicitly: “The Jews ask for signs (semeia) extraordinary: an exceptional people, because it is in the concept of a unity, of divine election, that they understood it demands that the very nature of this people is comprised of exceptions. As for the Greeks, the other people that are unique in their own way, they don’t ask for anything; they look for (zetousiri against aitousin). Instead of appeals, they interrogate and, interrogating, they arrive, at the same time, at wisdom as a science and learning as a philosophy, that is to say, thought that reflects a knowledge that, in turn, is self-reflective.

Therefore, a double reaction could be anticipated in light of the word of the cross and the word on the cross. Compared with learning, the Greeks refer to it as pure folly and in comparison with the power of miracles that confound nature, the Jews call it scandal. In both situations, neither of them could recognize this Word as the one, true God that they claim to be possible and necessary.

Paul, by means of these simple considerations, presents us, without attempting a phenomenology of religion, with the two unique possibilities that, in the Mediterranean world of his era, established a true concept of divinity.

Today it could be said that the nature of God is characterized by power or learning, even both at the same time. Now the word of the cross is rejected by one as well as by the other. In this sense, the sign of the cross, when it is expressed, could be only scandal and folly. It can also be said “that there is a divine folly and a divine weakness” and that it is this “not-being folly and weakness” that energizes the revolution of the Cross: the divine beyond being, not even the fullness of being. It is this which proclaims to us the word of the cross and the word on the cross.

I cannot separate the “kenosis” that is featured in the well known hymn of the letter to the Philippians (2:7) from this Pauline hermeneutic of the Cross. It is well known that the expression “ekénosen heautòn” has undergone numerous interpretations that insisted on an active renouncement of the same divinity, if not all, at least of a series of attributes of which learning and power constituted the divine essence in the fullness of its bring. I cannot agree with this strange and suicidal destruction. But, in order to be better understood, it would be good to remember the key question that tries to resolve the kenosis: if God is totally being, what is left to creatures if not pure and simple nothing? In order for a creature to exist and be truly itself, it needs to create a place within itself for the divinity; it needs in some way to withdraw from itself and thus create a space wherein the created, in order to realize this separation, would enjoy an autonomy of being. The calm echo of this dramatic question can be heard in certain affirmations of atheism: if God is all, I am nothing; if I am somebody, God does not exist. I have the conviction of believing that the essence of present day atheism considers but doesn’t address the penetrating depth of this enduring question.
Does Paul, in the letter to the Philippians, assuming that the hymn is his, share the main point of a question that is found in many religious traditions, including Judaism? More precisely, would it be understood in certain sects of Gnosticism, the probable setting of these poignant questions?

Born in Tarsus, the prestigious city where stoicism was in fashion, Paul must have been, per se, more aware of the stoic logos than of the relative Gnostic assaults pertaining to the radical genesis of things. Rightfully, one may still wonder if “the folly and the weakness” of the divine, as stated in the text to the Corinthians, don’t address an analogous restlessness, that is to say, the necessity to make place for the creature with a kind of interior void for the divinity, that would have rendered the negative expressions of folly and of weakness as a renouncing of the attributes of learning and of power. The Cross could not be understood then except as a means of the recognition of a recurrent kenosis according to the spirit of that time.

When I wrote The Word and the Cross, I was still not very moved by the questions that stir me today. Therefore I should raise the two following questions which seem to me to be most essential: A) What relationship does kenosis have with the texts on the folly and on the weakness of the Cross? B) Do folly and divine weakness present themselves as the reversal of the greater attributes of wisdom and power? Now each reversal implies a simple transposition of a contrary in the other; be it, as Nietzsche imagined, a violent protest against the values of creation that betrays a considerable lowering of the quality of life. Is the cross none other than subversion and masochism? It seems to me that the questions that I pose have a current interest for a way of thinking that demands and questions what the Cross means. The theologians and the philosophers that are concerned with the cross of the Christ can neither avoid it, a fortiori, nor dismiss it with an arrogant smile. The hypothesis of Gnostic influence to explain the Pauline language of kenosis seems to me as more useless than the indication of another source that decidedly appears in the discourse of Paul, or attributed to Paul, before the Areopagus of Athens. Traveling through the city to view its monuments, he found an altar with the inscription “to the unknown god.” He hastens to challenge this unknown god with the classic argument of monotheism (Acts 17:23 ff.).

The explanations subsequent to the meeting matter less than the mere fact of having encountered the tradition of the “Theos Agnostos” that would adequately contest the challenge that Paul makes against this tradition. This is as much a challenge of Hellenism as well as of Judaism and would place it within a type discourse that is very distinctive. Nevertheless, it is true that Paul seems to depict as negative the greater attributes of that time. But does it deal with a classical procedure of reversal? A basic reflection on opposites would be useless in this endeavor. It has been observed for some time that opposites are, in the strict sense, correlatives. Thus one type of uninterrupted movement doesn’t impede the one or the other. This strange destiny doesn’t preclude, however, a certain imbalance that favors the positive over the negative. There is no doubt that Paul complies with this compulsion; I don’t know if its law could be eluded. Additionally it needs to be well understood what “folly and weakness” might mean in Paul’s case. The two epithets don’t have the value of attributes, because it is quickly understood that “this weakness is stronger than men and that this folly is wiser than men.” It is advantageous therefore not to attribute to the epiteth, which are alternately negative and positive, the function of constitutive elements of a transcendent being. They serve as simple brackets to a movement of transcendence that, overcoming the negative as well as the positive, offer a glimpse above and beyond our determinations that are always too human and finite. For Paul, therefore, it does not deal with a systematic depreciation of values that are positive, such as power and wisdom, and which are weakened on account of resentment or of reduced vitality. Paul doesn’t shy away from this power and from this wisdom that he practices and boasts of practicing when the opportunity presents itself, but he knows well that this rich uranium deposit, as we would call it today, could not be the final word when it concerns this divine element that overcomes and challenges every language. That which Paul alleges, due to the excessive tonality of the terms which he uses, symbolizes the zeal that must grasp us when we deal with that which is beyond every name, every thought, and “that gives us the impetus to always go beyond.” The Cross itself invites us to this overcoming of ourselves as well as of all that exists.

Do we need to go further? I thought, at great risk, that the last word of this study could be suggested by the scene of the final judgment (Mt. 25). The text is so well known that I only need to make a brief comment. In this scene, what is noteworthy is not a question of religion and not even of belief or of rituals. What matters is daily service: “I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was naked....” “Truly, I tell you: every time that you did these things for one of my least brothers, you did it to me.” I am bewildered by these texts, by this enigmatic presence of the I-Christ in every disadvantaged person. How does one understand this presence? This is the question that I haven’t yet answered: the presence of Christ on the cross in the least of his brothers. The divine weakness and the divine folly find in this sensible kenosis of the “son of man” a marvelous illustration, but also a pressing exhortation to effective action that it should engender.
Thus the “word” or “the Word of the Cross” is summarized in the triad of its components: divine folly and weakness, sensible kenosis in a paradoxical presence, practice of the Cross in daily service, that is: give to all, without distinction of social or ethnic origin, something to eat, to drink, to clothe oneself in the freedom of the sons of God on our curved earth. In summary, to do everything in such a way that man possesses the double dignity of the son of man and the son of God: that is, it could be said, the divine “poetry” that consists not only in nicely saying “on the earth as it is in heaven”, but to do it in a way that this beauty is verified in the flesh and in the bones of our humanity.

Recently I was questioned about the Memoria Passionis in the Passionist Institute. What I tried to do, even here, not only characterizes the originality of being Christian, but also that which could also be, in the Congregation, a memory, not only a duplicate of the past, but actively open to the future. It is this dynamic use of memory that I read in the biblical mandate: “Remember, Israel.”

I don’t think there is any need to further develop these reflections. Having had the privilege of being in contact with the Buddhist school of Kyoto in Japan and in my contacts with the teacher, Nishitani, I have been able to talk with him about the relative questions about the void in its different aspects. On this topic I have written a philosophical work that I have entitled: Le pensée dû rien. What matters in these studies together with those who are “our distant neighbors,” is the issue of irreconcilable differences; a concern that, at the same time, respects others and respects oneself. It is necessary, in these delicate situations, to take, in relationship with others, responsibility for their questions and their answers. Thus I have been able to observe that, for Nishitani himself, the circumstantial attraction to the Cross as I have proposed it, could change the impression of colonial totalitarianism that, according to the school of Kyoto, simultaneously characterize Christianity and western science-technology. Here and there, it is believed, the same desire for power exists. Christ on the cross is viewed from another perspective. Nishitani was certain about this.

I wish to add a final word about this kind of study that I have done from the point of view of a philosopher. One may still wish to question me about what I think about the point of view of the theologian who studies the dogma of the redemption. The only question that I would ask the theologian would be: today, how does one understand this Christian truth, with regard to the dark notions of original sin, of sacrifice, of expiation-satisfaction and of merit? The modest approach that I have taken doesn’t claim to have clearly resolved the questions that have been put before me. For me the main point remains that of the energy generated by the thought that unites me to the joy of paying tribute to the Cross and Passion of Christ.
Theological Considerations
Regarding the Memoria Passionis
In the Works of Fr. Stanislas Breton, C.P.

“The Memoria Passionis as a category of the Logos of the Cross, in which the loving kénosis of God is revealed.”

Fr. José Luis Quintero, C.P.

The thought, the work, and the life of Fr. Breton have sprung from the “fertile ground of the Cross,” in a motion “in”, “toward” and “at” the Cross [“‘dans’, ‘vers’ et ‘auprès’ la Croix”]. This has been his constant dwelling space; from here he has launched out, and to it he has returned, bringing with him renewed energy for further investigations. Whether directly or indirectly addressing the Cross, the thought of Fr. Breton, taken from this perspective, gives us entry into the category of the “Memoria Passionis” with a renewed and a disciplined approach.

At least in European contemporary theology, the creation of the linguistic expression “Memoria Passionis” suggests a narrative theology which finds expression in the political theology of J. B. Metz. Although he has used the expression on many occasions, his reflections on the “logos of the cross” [‘logos tou staurou’] makes this category a fertile horizon, the “context” or “ground” [ámbito’ o ‘espacio’] which is the fruit of the staurological revelation of God. In this understanding, it becomes the “dwelling place” or the spirit by which and from which to grasp this revelation of God, without loosing its ineffable and non-circumscribed character. This category is based on biblical revelation as empowered and explicated by philosophical reflection.

In the context of the category ‘Memoria Passionis’, Fr. Breton’s understanding comes out of his reflections on the kerygma as framed by a series of biblical texts: 1 Cor. 1, 17-31; Phil. 2, 5-11; Mt. 25, 31-46. These biblical texts, in the light of philosophical reflection, and as they enlighten philosophical reflection, will allow us to probe the theological aspects of this category.

I. The “component of the category. Logos-Moria-Dinamis. (1Cor.1:17-31)

The Pauline text 1Cor.1:17-31 has been his starting point, The apostle Paul finds himself in a divided community, so he addresses it with a most radical tenet, the foolishness and the weakness of God revealed in this ‘logos’, the “logos of the Cross”. He is referring to two attitudes, Jewish and Greek, which have been overturned. The disjunctive conjunction is negated, which is equivalent to the junction of two negatives. “This double-negative is emphasized by the repetition of the article, the logos, the logos of the Cross, which is more than a demonstrative article; it expresses the identity of the two phrases.” This Pauline disjunction which he characterizes as ‘weakness and foolishness’ leads to a ‘Nothingness’ which is changed into a sign, in the context of the Cross, a sign of contradiction, well beyond the reach of wisdom and power. Although it is neither wisdom nor power as they understand it, it makes those who accept it wiser and more powerful. This Pauline reference places us before the originality of the language about God which is engendered by the cross, in which it is revealed and from which it challenges us, while setting us apart.

“Éauton ekénosen” in the hymn of the Letter to the Philippians 2:6-11

“The Word of the Cross overtakes the Logos through the paradoxical figure of the Servant who is obedient unto death, a death on the Cross. The Cross is where the two extremes coincide: That which is beyond thought is also beyond volition, and his own will.”. “Faith is essentially related to the Cross of Christ and to his kenosis.”

This dramatic kenosis event obliges us to go beyond the conceptual frameworks of an ontology which has seriously limited historical representations of faith. Nevertheless, the kenosis cannot be the substitution of some qualities of the Absolute for others of an entirely different order. Weakness and foolishness in the context of the kenosis enhance the distance between the God who manifests himself on the Cross and all of our discourse.
“Ineffable is His name.” “The new God is far beyond master and slave, far beyond a despotic affirmation or a humble negation. In order to avoid sectarian dogmatism, one ought not to correct one excess by another defect. The final meaning of the text leaves us no other option than to give preference to the language of ‘serving’.

The “meontology” which the cross inaugurates and which the servant radicalizes has as its finality not so much to show us new attributes of God, but to make us remain in his nothing which gives rise to selfless commitment and service. The logic of the Cross would be incomplete if it were limited to a syntax of the Pauline trio—logos, foolishness, weakness, or to a study of the semantics of the divine names. “It should lead to a ‘pragmatic scheme’ which clarifies what is our action.”

The Christological revelation of the “enigmatic Self” who identifies himself with those who are not. (Mt.25,31-46)

Referring to the text of Mt.25, 31-46, Fr. Breton affirms: “I believe that Christian theology, in the light of the theologia crucis, must take up the question of the Final Judgment... I believe that the “I” of the Final Judgment is for me, in the light of the Cross, the fundamental object of a new theology, if it is in fact to have a fundamental object.” “This reciprocity, which joins Christ with the poor person, changes our ‘image of God, of mankind, and of history’. It is impossible not to find in the essence of the Final Judgment the well-recognized themes underlying a ‘theology of the Cross’: foolishness and weakness of God proclaimed in the message of the Crucified One, kenosis or impoverishment of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1 and Phil. 2).

The nature of the periscope is very peculiar: “The Final Judgment, in the scene which Matthew lays out, is one way of conceiving the whole of this world and of history.” Secondly, what this judgment entails shows itself to be rather surprising. What is essential is not found in religiosity, or in great achievements of culture, but, rather, in those things that make up daily living: eating, drinking, dressing. Thirdly, the account of Matthew brings us to an unheard “revelation”: the surprising conjoining of the anonymous multitude of the dispossessed and an enigmatic “I”, who is the Son of Man. This kenosis, which we see in the hymn of Philippians 2, is one of the key words for an interpretation of Christ, of God, and of the world. The “I-Christ” crucified is absolutely the same “I-Christ” who recognizes the kenosis in humanity’s weakness and suffering.

By means of this identification, Christ is becoming, moving, on an exodus. The “I-Christ” of Mt. 25 is realized from two fronts: a divine principle on the one hand, and with a suffering humanity on the other. This identity draws from the excess of Nothingness because it is Absolute. Equally, it
draws from the desperation and from the nothingness of all who are marginalized. The act of faith in the service toward the poor does not stop being “transcendence in immanence”. This is why “liberation from suffering enters into our world, through the active presence of Christ in the historical coming of the very self-same being of God.”

As a conclusion to this initial survey, one can state: The “logos staurós” built on the Pauline kerygma and a Matthean reference is the content of the “Memoria Passionis”: A memory of the Cross and of the One Crucified as a focus for the giving of God in foolishness and weakness; a memory of the loving kenosis which gives rise to agape and service as ways of being; recognition and commitment which are called forth by the paradoxical presence of the “I-Christ” in history’s disinherit masses.

II. “Concepts” used by Fr. Breton which help us to grasp the nature of the category Memoria Passionis, understood as “context” [‘ámbito’].

The Christian creed and its living, as presented by Fr. Breton, is profoundly dynamic. It is a “new way of being”; a new canon; a new configuration of “mentis et cordis”. The concepts, or dynamisms, which I list, might be called structures of human reality, the dynamic elements of the human spirit, which are impregnated by the being and activity of God “on the Cross and in the One Crucified”. Some of these which help understand the category Memoria Passionis as ‘ámbito’ are: the concept of ‘place’, ‘remaining’, perceiving mode, me-ontological distance. To these are added the activities of the human spirit, in analogy with the ‘actions of the Word’ which we find in the Johannine works.

Perspectives, in the manner of a conclusion

In a large part of contemporary theology, “Memoria Passionis” is the memory of the sorrow experienced in the face of God, a praxis for the building up of a world from the perspective of the victims, so that the future reflects the memory of its past sorrows and its unrealized hopes, as well as the necessity of a “new way of talking about God” which is not alien to human suffering, but is rather an expression of the cry of its victims, having as a privileged place the “cry of the earth” whose clamor rises from the cries of the Holy Book.

These perspectives are enriched by impregnating the category of “Memoria Passionis”, not only to be lived as the Passionist identity, but as a category, the “theological locus” in a broad sense, from which to grasp the Mystery of God who is revealed and who gives himself up in the Pascal Mystery.

The kerygma of the Cross, the staurológico-revelation of God, as Fr. Breton has studied and shown it, has these three introductory dimensions: revelation of God in ‘foolishness and weakness’; paradoxical kenosis as an expression of self-giving and something new but irreducible to discourse or announcement; the enigmatic presence in mystery of identification of Jesus Christ in the historical reality, where he acquires the face of the face-less, who are such because of injustice.

“Memoria Passionis” ought to be presented from the “Logos of the Cross”, from faith in as much as it refers to the Crucified One and to his kenosis, from the “meontological” dimension which the Crucified One reveals and from the radical connection of God’s revelation to the unfathomable mystery of his agape in the “Nothingness by excess” which is his nature, and which is beyond every quality of pre-eminence or negation. This category, fruit of a staurológico faith, will safeguard in it that undeniable moment of exodus which belongs to it and the identification with persons in need, resulting in a creative moment in which the being of God appears in the history of humankind. It is the fruit of Christian faith, and at the same time, a “space” where Christian faith can be made fruitful. Furthermore, this category will allow us to confront today’s exigencies from the “single and specific core” of Christian faith [“desde la ‘unidad mínima específica de la fe cristiana’”]: A reflection on the Absolute One, on monotheism, on Christian identity and uniqueness, and in that sense on the “interreligious space”, as Fr. Breton has done in some of his more recent works, and including the adequate contextualization the relationships which have sometimes strained Christian reflection in the expressions “faith and work” and “faith and religion”.
Published by the “Eco” Press at San Gabriele dell’Addolorata, this work, the fruit of the early years of the teaching of Breton in Roman universities, it is one of the most important of his early works. It anticipates what would be the theme of the theology of the cross in Catholic theology, and which would be developed in the years following Vatican Council II.

Above all, the work contains innovative aspects. Situating itself between philosophy and Christian revelation, it breaks down a certain artificial boundary between the respective fields, which were widely discussed during those times; it is sufficient to consider Blondel and De Lubac. It is believed that there could be a relationship between philosophy and theology with regard to the concepts used in the study of the essence of God or of the Trinity and the Incarnation, but not about that which, since the time of the Areopagus, was considered scandalous thought, the cross. The Passion of Christ—says Breton—is not a philosophy and it cannot be rationalized, but it gives philosophy food for thought. Analyzing the profound reflections of Hegel, of Nietzsche, of Blondel of Simone Weil, of Alain and re-situating them in the Biblical and Greek (Plato, the tragedies) sources of western thought, Breton shows the extraordinary importance of the suffering of humanity and on the prospective of the cross. The study that Breton does of Hegel goes beyond even that which the lay schools had developed on this philosopher, revealing that it deals with a true philosophy of the cross, which however doesn’t capture the essence of Christian revelation and therefore cannot be called theologia crucis.

Under the title Gradus Passionis, connected with a widespread devotion among the Passionists, Breton then ascends the stairway of the various philosophical interpretations of the cross. The central point is the concept that the cross touches the same definitiveness of Divinity. Here too, Breton anticipates a topic that was highlighted by several Fathers of the Church, then forgotten, and which would be successively disseminated in theology with presentations, at times superficially, of the suffering of God as God, connected with the topic of the mutability or immutability of God. He expresses the very profound difficulty implicit in Christian revelation with the question that I used as a subtitle for this conference: In its essence, would not being as being be consubstantial with the cross? The theological reasonableness of this question is associated with the presentation that Breton offers on agape as constitutive of God according to the New Testament and as the objective coincidence between agape and the cross. It is important to observe that Breton does not limit himself to proposing an identity between the eternal Word of God and the cross—a topic significantly present in current theology—but between being as such, being that is the foundation of philosophy, the to on e on, that from Aristotle up to Heidegger is the main theme of western philosophy.

The final section of the work of Breton presents a philosopher that looks upon the cross, an agnostic that mediates on the cross. Above all, we return to several themes of Alain and of Simone Weil: the cross attracts, it is not sufficient to reveal the cross. The conference concludes by again focusing on a study on Breton done by his friend Henri Duméry. This reveals that the thought of Breton has drawn on various sources, from those of Thomism, phenomenology, idealism, and even Marxism. Breton dialogue with Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and Marxists: at the root of everything there was always what Duméry calls le passioniste, the Passionist quality of Breton. He is an external witness, very important for us Passionists. In the mysticism of the Passion—says Duméry—Breton discovers a richness that is able to nourish all the philosophies of the world.
**The Memory of the Messianic Passion from the Perspective of the Spirituality and Research of Stanislas Breton**

*Fr. Max Anselmi, C.P.*

**The sources for understanding the thought of Breton on the Passion**

Whoever wishes to understand the passiological thought of Breton in its central elements, cannot limit himself to only one of his works, because it would not be sufficient; rather, one needs to consider at least the principal publications that substantially correspond to the various decisive moments of his life and the history of his thought and that can also be considered representative of the others.

Up until the mid 1990’s, scholars refer to two works: “La passione di Cristo e le filosofie” of 1954 (cf. trad. it. Ed. Stauros, Pescara 1982) and “Il verbo e la croce” of 1981 (cf. trad.it. Ed. Stauros, Pescara 1983). However what is not cited is the volume that deals with the doctrinal thought of St. Paul of the Cross: “La mistica della passione. Studio sulla dottrina spirituale di S. Paolo della Croce” of 1962 (trad. it. Ed. Stauros, Pescara 1986) and which, together with two others, form a trilogy by the same author (Cf. Stanislas Breton, Vers une théologie de la Croix, San Gabriele (TE) 1981, p. 7. Cf. also: Claude Royon, *Dieu, l’homme et la croix. Stanislas Breton et Erhard Jungel*, Paris 1998, p. 15). The scant acquaintance with the volume may be attributed to its title, making one think that “The mysticism of the Passion” may be a research of pure and simple spirituality, while in reality, it is truly a unique work that expresses the philosophical thought of Breton regarding the cross. There is no doubt about the fact that “La mistica della passione” may be and remains a kind of general proof of the application of philosophy or of a type of passiological philosophy. Whoever wishes to understand the philosophical thought of Breton concerning the cross cannot bypass “The mysticism of the Passion”, because, amidst its passiological texts, it is, even today, one of the principal ones and remains even now, one of the most essential.

**Modernity and “passion-ism”**

Given the insistence and the importance accorded by Breton to the passiological element for making possible thought that is demanding and critical and contemporaneously current in comparison with the world and modern times, his efforts become classified as “passionism” (Cf. Claude Royon, *Dieu, l’homme et la croix. Stanislas Breton et Erhard Jungel*, p. 32.) For this reason, in order to characterize his thought on the passion, scholars have preferred to focus their attention in this endeavor by referring back to Breton and have moved almost exclusively to recent publications and the constant and prevailing references that are concentrated in the following works: “Unicité et Monothéisme” (1981), “De Rome à Paris. Itinéraire philosophique” (1992), “Philosophie et mystique” (1996) Cf. Stanislas Breton, *Philosophie et mystique. Existence et surexistence*, Edidions Jérôme Millon, Grenoble 1996, pp. 187) and, finally, “L’avenir du christianisme” (1999), that seem to constitute the organic, summarized and complete re-elaboration of the other three works just mentioned.

**The history of his philosophical and cultural endeavors**

During 1971, Breton produced a substantial number of articles both published and unpublished, entitled: “Foi et raison logique,” where he takes various viewpoints on the rational demands of faith that is aware of its own specificity. In this collection, perhaps necessitated by external factors, saying that he had to do it “under pain of life or death”, he presents us with a “small history” of his thought (cf. Postface, in: *Foi et raison logique*, p. 267-280). The summary is important because we learn, in a single image, the various connections among his diverse research topics, beginning with his thesis: “L’esne in et l’esne ad dans la métaphysique de la relation”, up to the development of Hussite phenomenology, later abandoned, because it did not further the argument; however the others that are mentioned, the project of the philosophic “quasi-trilogy”, whose initial study should take into consideration thought in keeping with his principles; secondly, thought with regard to the world and, finally, thirdly, the thought that takes into account power and also weakness. The first of these three fundamental operations of thought was confronted by Breton in “Du Principe” of 1971, the second in the work, “‘Etre, monde, imagin-
In this "brief history" of his thought, Breton explains how to understand the relationship between theology and philosophy and to elucidate the value that the mystery of the cross, understood as the orderly and organic entity of the three functions of thought, has for philosophy and theology.

The study of the cross in various thematic and linguistic concepts

Now we want to devote our attention to the central points of Breton on the notion of the cross. Among the various options we choose the following groups or central points of thought by characterizing them by means of some key concepts: Memoria Passionis; Sharing in the naked suffering; "Meontology" and the future of Christianity; Christic life; Passion-ism; Thought and practice in the light of the cross.

The topic of the future of Christianity deserves attention because it is closely connected to passion-ism and it constitutes the primary and principal concern of Breton.

After the presentation of these more significant theoretical or speculative essentials and innovations on the study of the cross, we will focus attention on its precise and relevant practice: this matter will constitute the nucleus of its central characteristics and will draw it to conclusion. (For all these points please consult the conference which will be printed in the "Acts of the Seminar").

Me-ontology and "Christic" Life

The word "me-ontology" seeks to rediscover and restate that which Paul the Apostle affirmed with respect to the cross of Jesus the Messiah in the first letter to the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 1: 28): "God chose (...) that which is nothing to reduce to nothing those that are something.

In Greek "that which is nothing" is expressed as "τὰ μη ς ντάξατε". Thus, "me-onto-logy" means the science of "non-being," of "that which is not," of the "nothing."

Me-ontology is a discovery of the revelation of God, not through learning, as preferred by the Greeks, and not even through power, dear to the Hebrews, and not even through the synthesis of these two means, but in the "beyond" learning and power that is exactly the space of "nothing" in all of this. The theology of the cross in terms of the "non-being" is a relational theology, and the relationship doesn’t add anything to the being to which it relates, nor does it impact upon it. We recall the thesis of Breton on metaphysics, according to which relationship is of most value is the way of the cross.

The "emptiness" (kenosis) is not so much understood in relationship to things, seen in their limitations, but in reference to the cross itself. In this case the "emptiness" of the cross is none other than the "space of liberty," the taking of a critical stance.

In summary, me-ontology is, in a certain sense, the way of mercy because thorough it one seeks to believe in the presence of God, in that I-Christ (cf.Mt.25:31-46), hidden in every person, but immolated, annihilated, made to be almost "nothing", in order to enable us to exist, to make possible our creative response of love, our donation... The practice of me-ontology is the place where we take seriously what happened to the Messiah on the cross in relationship to God and to humanity, who became "nothing" to make us "capable of being". And this is the way we should be in relationship to others: make ourselves capable of "being" for others. From this point of view the judgment of the cross corresponds to the final judgment.

Death and Resurrection

"Me-ontology" reveals the kenosis of the cross, while the "Christic life" reveals the messianic resurrection, and even more that which accompanied the resurrection, i.e. the universal salvation.

The passiological discourse of Breton, a point around which everything is focused on the future of Christianity in the world, is the search for space that makes inter-religious dialog possible. The space cannot be other than the kenosis of the cross, that is a "nothing" space, where on a different level, beyond power and wisdom, it will be possible to know God and to be able to experience him in the other who is my neighbor.

Speculative and practical thought on the cross

Breton’s thinking on the cross is substantially, from the speculative point of view, in the "Christic life", the definitive word: it constitutes the substance of spirituality.

However, in order to completely present his thinking it is necessary to remember, apart from other developments, even in the practical realm, that which for him is of no less importance than the speculative.

Breton fully agrees with the words of his great friend, Fr. Giovanni Antonioli (+1992), with whom he shared many mountain climbs: "The paths that we tread help us to put a bit of heaven under our feet." (Cf. Franco Frassine, Don Giovanni Antonioli. I discorsi della montagna. Una biografia tra testimonianze e ricordi, pp. 204-206.)
“Nothingness”: The Principal Attribute

Fr. Pablo Lorenzo, C.P.

Up to this point we must underline the exceptional importance of this very necessary connection between “nothingness” in which the Most High is hidden and the “nothingness” which reveals him down here. (S. Breton, “La Mystique de la Passion du Christ”)

Man annihilated, hung on the Cross, spoken in the Beginning, spoken by God.

He, in reality, either is the suggestion of the Beginning or he is the image of God. Thus we find him amidst Philosophy and Theology, amidst metaphysical thought and the thought of believers, in “Du Principe” (1971) e “La Mystique de la Passion du Christ” (1962), two works of Breton of appreciable intellectual depth.

The Beginning of everything can be considered either ontologically or me-ontologically: either as being or non-being. Either as being something that proceeds from it or as being “nothing” that proceeds from it. Therefore, it can be considered either as a means of causality, participation and analogy or by means of a radical negation, i.e. according to an undefined relationship originating from usual categories of worldly thought and human language.

If one considers it to be the Supreme Being, it becomes the Eminent-Beginning, the culminating point of the hierarchy of beings, consisting of all the rich, ontological perfections that we call exclusively his and which, however, are nothing other than our matters and our projections.

It would be truer to its nature if it is thought of as not having a nature. This is “nothingness”. Nothing of that which proceeds from it. It is nothing uncreated. Indetermination par excellence.

Things exist not only with regard to what proceeds from the Beginning but with regard to what returns to it. The ascent toward the Beginning consists of the difficult ascent of overcoming every determination and every form of this world. The soul exists for the Beginning. In fact, it does not
have a determined nature. It is “nothing” that it can become. It can become anything and it can transcend anything it becomes. And it is precisely in transcending every thing that it arrives at its End, which is the Beginning.

The Crucified One, in his “non-entity”, precisely seems to indicate this: the Nothing that is the Beginning. In its particularity and determination, however, it seems to also indicate the necessity – theologically problematic – of its overcoming. In fact, he too is, above all, a particular form, on account of which we ask ourselves, precisely, if it isn’t transcended, surpassed.

In any case, no less problematic would be the identification of the Beginning – essentially rational, metaphysical – with God – essentially revealed, biblical. If Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One, is to be associated with the Beginning then he could not be, in the likeness of the consubstantial Image (Col. 1:15, Heb. 1:3) and Primordial Sacrament, the fulfilled and defined historical Revelation of God which Christians believe him to be. If instead he is to be fully revealed as the Triune God – not as from the outside but from the inside, he himself being one of the Three; therefore, not as a simple man who is to point to God from below but as God himself who from above wishes to positively allow man to know that He is (became) – then from the Beginning He could not be the “image”, the only possible manifestation of himself, that the Beginning recognizes as his own, given that the Beginning does not have and isn’t any nature and therefore can never be “seen” or recognized as “revealed” in something analogous to that from which it is derived. Any reflection whatsoever says nothing more about its nature except a nature that another would talk about, elevated or less elevated, that is imagined within the interior of the ontological scale of beings or the me-ontological scale of non-beings.

The Beginning, being neither the Being nor the creator of the being, is not, consequently, capable of participation nor conceivable nor decipherable in analogical terms. Completely lacking of a nature that one would want to attribute to him, he does not have a personal face, he does not conclusively project within the world and he does not contain in him-
We sing a canticle of praise to God who continually makes all things new and who today permits us to celebrate another Passover of the Lord. A mystery of love, of communion, of sacrifice and of profound unity he allows us to share with Him, through Him, and in Him, his own death and resurrection. It is the foretaste of the eternal Easter! God receives us as sacrifice and pleasing fragrance. Also, to Him be praise, glory and thanksgiving for the gift of Fr. Stanislas Breton to the Congregation, to the Church and to the world and for his presence in our midst during these two days of the Seminar and for his 91 years of life and 75 years of Passionist Religious Profession.

In a conference that he gave a number of years ago, Fr. Breton wrote that: “at the root of so many vocation crises the fact remains that something stopped singing or nothing ever sang. Religious life must be dreamed, before it can truly be lived.” And Fr. Breton has been faithful to that dream and he has sung from his soul, his “magnificat” at the top of his voice as he did as a child, when he sang the ‘Requiem’ in his parish church of Gironde. But he is not embarrassed by this because he knows that “you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you that you may bear much fruit” (Jn.15:16). A vocation is as fragile and decisive as a question mark and it requires vigilant care and perseverance.

In the first reading from Isaiah we read: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, To announce a year of favor from the Lord…” (Is.61:1) Jesus, in the Gospel of Luke applies this same verse of Isaiah to himself: “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Lk. 4:21)

Jesus, consecrated and sent by the Father, will bring the joyful news to the poor by assuming their poverty; he will bind up the wounds of their hearts by his own wounds and with his own heart, pierced by the soldier’s lance (“They will look upon him whom they have thrust through”) Jn. 19:37; he will proclaim liberty for those in slavery and freedom for prisoners, by being imprisoned with nails on the cross, the cry of the slaves; he proclaimed a year of mercy from the Lord with his extreme solitude on Calvary: “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? and by the sarcasm of those who wanted him killed: “come down and we will believe”, far from any mercy!

He took our faults upon himself, he carried our sins, thousands of sins pierced his heart. He took our place in condemnation, “He became one of us” and his death has given us life. And this is the greatest mystery of the love of God and of his mercy, “the miracle of miracles of love”, as St. Paul of the Cross refers to the Passion of Jesus. Even on the cross Jesus is not enclosed within his suffering, nor distant in his pain. Even in that moment he forgets about himself and he opens himself to hope and certainty: “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Lk. 23:43). In the folly of love he believes that his death is a plan for life.
St. Paul of the Cross understood that the only remedy for the evil of the world was the Passion of Jesus in its completeness and he associates the Passion of the Son with that of the Mother in a single Passion. In fact he compares the suffering of Mary with the sea, saying that “in the Passion of Jesus there were two seas of love, one of the son and the other of the mother.”

It is a suffering that is so distinct one from the other that it cannot be identified, nor can the two become one, even so intimately bound that there is no discernable distance between them. Death of the heart without the shedding of blood, that of the Mother and the death by the shedding of blood, that is entered by the “narrow gate” just opened by the nails, by the scourging and by the head surrounded by a crown of thorns, that of the Son. Pensive and strong, she stood beneath the cross, her face, barely pallid, while Jerusalem pierced her heart. And now, they are even wounded by the same pain that they share with each other and with every living thing in absolute nakedness and poverty.

For them, we are the “pearl of great price” and the “treasure hidden in the field” of the gospel parable (Mt. 13: 44-45) for which one must sell everything—reputation, suffering and even life—in order to acquire it. And now the judgment of Matthew 25: 31-41, that was just proclaimed, can be understood and identified: “every time that you did this for one of these least of my brothers you did it to me.” (Mt.25:40) Fr. Breton says that “it is a way of being, that is, of bearing one’s own body, which for lack of something better can be called staurological. This supplementary body that Christ assumes in his faithful is precisely a crucified body for which the cross remains the exemplar.” It is right to underline the exemplary nature of Christ who takes the initiative to tell us about what should be the law of love to the point that one can and one must love.

Giving up his spirit, Jesus breathes upon us the wind whose origin and whose finality is unknown (Jn. 3:8). We must hear that wind in absolute silence in order to feel the breeze as did Elijah at the mouth of the cave on Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:9 ff). God reveals himself in Christ who died crucified. And his is a revelation of love and fatherhood. He knows that by imitation of the Son, the cross has pardoned us of every thing and every system and it is as if we live in a continual exodus of life, without end. But we trust in his mercy, which is like a fountain at the foot of the cross. It takes into account our negativity that doesn’t disappear, as the wounds of the Crucified One didn’t disappear after the resurrection.

I conclude with a memory of Breton taken from his conference, “La croce del non essere” (the cross of non-being) given at the Spienza della Croce Congress:

“This is how I read from the height of the cross, without apologetic illusions of immanence, the dispersed fragments of our pulverized world. I read them as a diaspora that the cross must reunite.

It has been three years now since, in the immensity of Australia, in the almost total desert, alone, I celebrated my first Mass for the world. In the magnificent southern sky, the constellation called the “southern cross” brilliantly shined as in no other place of the constellation: the cosmic cross of my holy Mass.

After the consecration I asked myself: What does this sign in the sky, sign and source of contradiction, say to me and to the world?

I then remembered the ancient legend according to which the first born of every generation is a question mark.

Then I asked myself: Is the cross of my love and of my faith, perhaps this question mark, inserted for ever in the fiber of the universe?”
TRIBUTE TO JOHN PAUL II
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 25TH
ANNIVERSARY OF HIS PONTIFICATE

Fr. Fabiano Giorgini, C.P.

On the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II we recall some of the more significant aspects of his benevolent relationship with the Passionist Congregation so that we may gratefully commit ourselves to put into practice the teaching which he gave us and to faithfully collaborate in his apostolic ministry.

His encounters with the Passionists took place during several papal audiences of groups of religious in particular circumstances such as General Chapters, the Itinerant Missionary Congresses of 1981 and “The Wisdom of the Cross Today”, in 1984; visits to the Shrine of St. Maria Goretti in Nettuno, in September of 1979 and to the Shrine of St. Gabriel at Gran Sasso in 1985 and the Monastery-Shrine of St. Gemma in Lucca on 23 September 1989 and the Shrine of the Madonna della Civitá, Itri, in 1990. In addition to these planned visits he also added a brief, surprise visit to the mother house of the Institute: the retreat of the Presentation on Monte Argentario on the evening of 12 December 2000 as a “jubilee pilgrim in the footsteps of St. Paul of the Cross”, as he amiably said to the religious.

Special gifts to the Congregation were the canonization of St. Inocenio Canoura Arnau, on 21 November 1999, and also the eight beatifications, and the fourteen declarations of heroic virtue of 10 Passionists, of the co-foundress of the Passionist nuns, Maria Crocifissa Costantini, 17/12/1982; of the foundress of the Mexican Passionist Sisters, Dolores Medina Zepeda, 03/07/1998; of the Passionist Sister, Antonietta Farani, 13/06/1993; of the laywoman and virgin, Lucia Burlini, associated with Passionist spirituality, 23/10/1987; and of an Ursuline Sister, Lucia Mangano, 01/07/1994, whose spiritual director was a Passionist.

The beatifications and the declarations of heroic virtue of these servants of God have filled the members of the Passionist family with joy and have exalted before the entire Church the spirituality and fidelity to the charism of these religious whom the Pope proposes as models to assist men and women Passionists of today to walk along the same path of sanctity.

The Pope has demonstrated great benevolence and faith in the Congregation by calling 13 religious to cooperate in the episcopal hierarchy. On 13 November 1996 he named Bishop Nesti, already archbishop of Camerino since 1993, Secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. In 1996 he assigned Fr. Ciro Benedettini to the Press Office of the Holy See in the capacity of Vice-director, which position he held for one year as “assistant to the Director”, while Fr. Diego Di Odoardo continues his service at the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, presently in the capacity of Department Head. Fr. Antonio Calabrese continues his service at the Secretariat of State. In 1979 the Holy Father designated the then Superior General, Paul M. Boyle, Consulor for the Congregation of Propaganda Fide by a letter which reads: “this pontifical appointment is obviously a sign of honor toward your beloved Congregation whose members, by their consecrated life of prayer and apostolate, do so much for the missions...”

In 1982 the Pope wished to honor the Congregation naming five Passionists as consuls of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

In homilies or messages on the occasions of beatifications or of the reading of decrees of heroic virtue, the Pope drew attention to various aspects of Passionist spirituality. Following the beatification of Bl. Isidore he highlighted the urgency for the Passionists to embrace “the universal Christian witness of the Blessed: to make the Cross be the “salt of the earth”: that which truly “gives flavor” to this life and which orientates all events toward the definitive goal of heaven.”

But it is in the speeches or in the letters sent to the Chapters that he shows greater attention to the charism of the memory of the Passion of Jesus and vigorously calls the religious to the responsibility that they have to preserve, develop and make to bear fruit in today’s world this spirituality by their community and apostolic life: “The Holy Father prays that by means of the Paschal mystery, the beloved Passionist Congregation be sustained in its joyful...”
fidelity to Jesus Christ and to His redeeming mission.9"

In 1981 he reminded the participants of the first congress on the “Missions for the 80’s” of their task of continuing this means of evangelization, however making a special effort to sincerely understand the spiritual reality of those to whom they are ministering in order to enlighten their minds in a secure and comprehensible way and to paternally encourage the listeners to turn to God, trust in his love and live lives reconciled to one another.10

To the capitulars of 1988 he recalled the “relatively high number of men of outstanding stature who, faithful to the example of the Founder enjoy and have reached the honors of the altar”. He exhorted them not to lose their “personality as contemplatives and apostles of the Crucified.”11 To the participants of the Congress, “The Wisdom of the Cross for Today”, in 1984, he manifested his appreciation for the effort that the Congregation is making to reflect on the topic of “the only true salvation that comes from Christ”, but he exhorted them to live ascetically “as a fundamental obligation of expiation directed toward redeeming” as is required by “a Justice that is transformed in Mercy.”12

The Pope wished to honor by means of a letter the third centenary of the birth of St. Paul of the Cross, in which “he centered all of his life and his apostolate” on the Passion of Jesus, “making it from the beginning a mystical experience and then announcing it to others by means of preaching as well as by spiritual direction.” He exhorted the religious to remain faithful to the charism of Paul, recognized by the Church, “whether in spiritual research, personal and communitarian, and in the apostolate specifically directed toward people.” But he reminded them: “this presupposes profound listening to God, a task that St. Paul of the Cross, in his spiritual testament, makes every effort to safeguard and to care for by means of poverty, solitude and prayer. It is precisely by listening to God that listening to others is possible, their sufferings, and their hunger for God and for justice.”13

The Pope, while bishop in Poland spoke to the Passionists about their Founder, St. Paul of the Cross, and in that homily he said, among other things: “In St. Paul of the Cross contemplation of the Passion does not consist in becoming engrossed in its object, but in subjective participation in it. In his experience St. Paul participated in the reality of Gethsemane and Calvary. This was for him the participation in the Passion. It was merely passion for the Divine Patient. Moreover, the soul of our Saint was opened to a mysterious force – potential obedientialis – to the divine action and he received in himself a special likeness to God for which, out of love, he ‘gave himself’. To give of oneself, this is the most important element of the spirituality of St. Paul, in his contemplation as well as in his preaching.”14
He encouraged the Congregation to work at promoting spirituality among the laity. In 1994 he blessed the “torch of hope” that remained lighted during the days of the Tendopoli, 23-27 August 1994, at St. Gabriel’s. In 2001 he sent another letter to the same youth of the Tendopoli encouraging them to be the leaven of Christian life in their context. In the message to the General Chapter of 2000 he stated that sharing the Passionist charism with the laity is “a sign of ecclesial life that encourages acceptance and development”, but he recalled the responsibility of the Passionists to be “capable guides in order to form them in an authentic Passionist spirituality.”

In the same message he asked the Passionists “to continue to be teachers of prayer and special witnesses to Christ Crucified” and he invited them to draw on the “energy of the Eucharist so that all life becomes a memorial and a following of the Crucified”. He encouraged them to draw strength “from the mystery of the Cross in order to generously cultivate the passion for life, above all by means of dialog and sharing.” And he affirmed that “the Crucified one has loved us ‘to the end’ (Jn.13:1), beyond the measure and the possibilities of human love. This then is the spring from which the Passionist, in a special way, should draw his own spirituality: to love where it is most difficult to love; to love where there is a need for love. Our present day society offers infinite scope for this special apostolate.”

The Superior General, in a telegram of 16/10/2003, expressed to the Pope “joyful gratitude for your extraordinary and constant pastoral ministry which is a source of inspiration and peace for all humanity.” The Secretary of State on 06/11/2003, expressed the gratitude of the Pope who exhorted us “to contemplate with Mary the face of Christ, in order to remain in Him and to bear copious fruit of fraternal communion and joyful hope; he invokes heavenly favors and willingly sends to You and to your religious the Apostolic Blessing that you implore, a pledge of spiritual fervor on the way of evangelical perfection.”

1 Magazine “Il Crocifisso” 81, 2001, p. 4-6.
5 PIB 1996, 6.
6 PIB, 1979, 23.
8 PIB, 1985, 6.
9 PIB, 1979, 13.
12 PIB, 1984, 190-194.
15 PIB, 1994, 90.
16 44th General Chapter: the Passion of Jesus Christ, the Passion for life, Itaci 2000, p.5.
From the 4th to the 8th of November, 2003, the full General Council was at Sts. John and Paul for the General Council Meeting. The primary item of the agenda was the preparation for the 11th General Synod of the Congregation which will be held in Mexico from the 19th to the 29th of September, 2004. The Council agenda also included an overview of life in the Congregation and a number of particular issues.

The Superior General announced that the Holy Father had named Fr. Afonso Fiorese as coadjutor bishop of the diocese of Luziânia, Brasile. Fr. Afonso was born in 1942 at Rio Branco do Sul, PA, Brazil. At the time of his appointment on November 5, he was First Consultor of his Province (CALV), and pastor at Porto das Caixas. The General Council was quite pleased with this appointment.

Fr. General gave a report on the Assembly of the Asia/Pacific Regional Conference (PASPAC). The Assembly was held at Madang, Papua New Guinea, from September 28 to October 3, 2003. Fr. General was the president of the Assembly. Forty religious from the Conference Provinces, Vice-Provinces, and Vicariates shared their reflections on the theme “Passionists Proclaim the Word of the Cross: Formation for Solidarity in the Service of Justice”. It was a beautiful and lively experience of fraternity among the religious of the diverse nations which make up this young and promising area of the Congregation.

The General and Council reviewed the “Seminar on the Memoria Crucis in Honor of the 90th Birthday of Fr. Stanislas Breton”. They judged the seminar, held at the Lateran University on the 29th and 30th of October, a great and joyful learning experience, and an experience of the fraternity in the Passionist Family. The Council expresses its gratitude to the organizing committee, the presenters, the translators, and to the community of Sts. John and Paul for its generous hospitality to visitors and guests.

A short report was given on the recent Fraternal Visit to the communities of Holy Spirit Province in view of their Provincial Chapter, held at the beginning of October. The Provincial Chapter, with Fr. General as president, dealt with the issues of restructuring, in accord with the plan approved by the previous Provincial Chapter, four years ago. Fr. General underscored the tranquility, the fraternity, and the pastoral endeavors of the Province.

Fr. Luis Alberto Cano, First Consultor, reported on his visits to the four monasteries of Passionist Nuns in Spain. In response to the suggestion of the Congregation for Religious, they are moving toward greater collaboration in view of an eventual federation. He also reported on the formation program for novices of the Iberian Conference of Passionists (CII). There are seven novices presently in this interprovincial novitiate.

Fr. Luigi Vaninetti reported on several items. First, the national novitiate at Monte Argentario. There are twelve novices, eight from Italy, two from Indonesia (CFIXI), and two from France (MICI). He continued with the Interprovincial Theologate (STIP), where thirteen students from four provinces are studying. He spoke of the specific orientation of the new “Cathedra” dedicated to study of the “Gloria Crucis” just begun at the Lateran University. He mentioned the need for additional personnel to serve in the Mission in Bulgaria. And finally, on the subject of “restructuring,” which will be studied by the Italian Conference of Passionists (CIPI) at their next annual Assembly.

Fr. Vital Otshudialokoka reported on his visit to “Kisima” (International Theologate for Passionists in Africa, in Nairobi) at the start of this new school year. This was followed by a visit to the Passionist Communities in that part of the Democratic Republic of Congo where hostilities are still being carried on (Lodja and Ototo). He spoke of the recent damage done, from which they are still recovering. He described the work to be done by the new Congo Commission, which is to prepare the way for the designation as a Vice-Province in 2004. He concluded by reviewing his presentation at the PASPAC Assembly in regard to restructuring, which is an area of responsibility given him by the General Council.

Among other things, Fr. Augusto Canali presented the program for the General Assembly of the Conference of Latin American Passionists (CLAP). This General Assembly will take place next July. He also reported on other responsibilities which he has in Latin America.

Fr. Robert Joerger reported on the meeting of the Northern European Conference, which dealt with restructuring in preparation for the next General Synod. He spoke of various options which reflect the very different situations in the various Conferences. For example, in the Northern European Conference there are
many nations, different cultures, and various languages. In the Conference of the United States provinces, it is one nation, with a common language, which makes for a greater facility for getting to know one another. He also reported on his pastoral visit to the province of Mother of Holy Hope (SPE, Holland and Germany) in preparation for their provincial chapter. Special mention was made of the situations of the older religious, and the younger ones (there are three young priests there).

Fr. Jefferies Foale reported on the Solidarity Commission. Following the election of Fr. Antonio Curto as Provincial, personnel should be added who can work within their own Conferences to encourage collaboration in Solidarity. He also spoke of the work of Fr. Kevin Dance at the United Nations. He gave special attention to a future mission in Vietnam by presenting the ample documentation which he provided the PAS-PAC Regional Conference. He provided a possible time-line, to be accorded with the Superior General, for the undertaking of this mission.

The new General Econome, Fr. Battista Ramponi, was invited to speak with the Council. He reviewed the budget to date, and the status of the different funds under the direction of the General Econome. He also outlined the steps for the division of the financial accounts between the General Administration and those of the Community of Sts. John and Paul. This had been requested by the last General Chapter. This new bookkeeping structure will begin to be employed on November 1, 2003.

The greater part of the Consulta was dedicated to the organization of the coming Synod, in Mexico, on the topic of restructuring. The Moderator was selected, a Marist Brother, who is the Vicar General of his Institute, who is actually engaged in restructuring issues of his Institute. The Council selected a General Secretary for the Synod, and entered into discussion regarding other duties (secretariat staff, translators, news reports, liturgical committee, etc.). All of this groundwork will be treated in a meeting with the Moderator, to be held at the beginning of December. At that time means will be explored to involve the Regional Conferences, the Provinces and Vicariates in questions which are of great importance for all, and for this time.

Among the many particular cases, special mention is made of two appointments. That of Fr. Christopher Gibson of the Province of the Holy Cross (CRUC) as Secretary General of our Missions, following the election of Fr. Antonio Curto as provincial of his Province of the Side of Christ (LAT); and the confirmation of Fr. Kevin Dance as Passionist Representative to the United Nations, to the end of 2006.

**Vatican names new Passionist Bishop for Brazil**

On November 5, 2003, His Holiness, John Paul II, named Passionist Father Afonso Fioreze, Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of Luziânia, GO, of the Archdiocese of Brasilia. Afonso Fioreze is a member of the CALV Province and until his nomination he was First Provincial Consultor, Pastor of the Parish of Nossa Senhora da Conceição and Rector of the Shrine of Jesus Crucificado of Porto das Caixas, Itaborai, RJ, in the archdiocese of Niterói.

Bishop Fioreze was born in 1942 and entered the Passionist novitiate in 1963 in Colombo, PR. He professed first vows in 1964 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1970. Among the various ministries that he exercised in his province are those of parochial vicar, pastor, superior, provincial consultor, provincial econome, and provincial (1986-1993).

**New Secretary General of the Missions**

The BIP greets and welcomes to the Generalate, Fr. Christopher Gibson (CRUC) who was appointed as new Secretary General of the Missions. Fr. Gibson was born in Argentina in 1948, professed vows in the Province of the Immaculate Conception (CONC) on 27 Feb. 1968 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1975. He subsequently joined the Holy Cross Province (CRUC) in the USA. It can be noted that Fr. Christopher, in addition to ministering in Argentina and the United States, has also worked in the missions in India as well as participating in Passionist life in Uruguay and Tanzania. He resided in the community of Citrus Heights, California, where he was involved in various ministries.

Fr. Antonio Curto, recently elected Provincial of Sacro Costato (LAT) Province in Italy, concludes his service as Secretary of the Missions at the end of the current year. He has held this office for more than ten years. We are most grateful to him for his outstanding work. Fr. Christopher begins his new ministry on Jan 1, 2004.
The 25th Provincial Chapter of Holy Spirit Province was held in Melbourne, Australia, on Sunday 19 to Saturday 25 October 2003. The Provincial, Fr Denis Travers, was re-elected. The council members in order are, Kevin Hennessy, Christopher Monaghan, Brian Traynor, and Ramon Sanchez. One participant said, “It was a most blessed time of renewal, prayer and fraternity, solidarity and trust. It was an experience of our deep unity and our mutual interdependence. Together we have determined the way forward over these next four years and as the Chapter decrees and records show it is a most challenging and exciting course!”

The Chapter was organized around ten strategic directions: 1) Community Life and the Living Memory of the Passion. 2) Formation at the centre of our Life and Mission. 3) Lay Passionists. 4) Equitable Distribution of Resources within the Province. 5) Consolidating a Viable Financial Base. 6) Youth and Young Adult Ministries. 7) Caring for Senior, Frail and Infirm Members. 8) Involvement in Papua New Guinea. 9) Involvement in the Asia Pacific Region. 10) JPIC Awareness.

Brother Marcelino Díez (FAM) returns to the “Father’s House”

During the past year the community of the Generalate has experienced the loss of two of its Spanish brothers who served it for many years. First, Brother Javier Aldaya, following a long, painful illness, died on April 25th. At the same time, Brother Marcelino had become ill and five months later, on Sunday, 28 September, he died in the nearby Hospital of San Giovanni, where he had been brought three days prior in a comatose state. The rapid development of his illness was surprising since it appeared that, despite the gravity of the diagnosis, he was recuperating well. His funeral was celebrated in the Basilica of Sts. John and Paul and Fr. Luis Alberto Cano, First Consulor, was the principal concelebrant. The homily was preached by the provincial of Sagrada Familia Province (FAM), Fr. Fernando Rabanal.

Brother Marcelino was a native of the city of Villanueva de la Peña, Palencia (Spain). He was born in 1926, and was a Passionist since 1944. He was a member of the Generalate Community on two occasions, totally 29 years. During that time he assumed various ministries: the kitchen, the cantina and receptionist/telephone operator, in addition to other ministries. With so many religious to attend to in the Generalate Community, we recall his loquaciousness, his interest in keeping himself and others informed about events in the community and his philatelic hobby, the latter of which he actively pursued even in his final days.

May this good Brother rest in peace and with his prayers may he welcome us one day at the door of the “Father’s House”!

S.T.D. Awarded to Fr. Jerome Vereb, C.P.

In record-breaking temperatures on July 1st, 2003, at the Angelicum Pontifical University, Jerome Vereb was awarded the S.T.D., Maximum Cum Laude, an almost unheard of distinction for Rome. The title of his thesis was: “The Ecumenical Endeavor of Cardinal Bea”. The defense was attended by about sixty persons and was filmed by NBC Television as part of a film documentary on the Vatican to be aired later this year. The thesis defense was also widely reported by the German press.

Present were Cardinals Mejía, Silvestrini and Cacciavillan as well as Archbishop Renato Martino of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace. Important guests also included the Ambassadors to the Holy See from Israel, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States.

Calling Jerome’s research “innovative”, the judgment of the Board was: “Fr. Vereb’s work is outstanding and a landmark in the on-going ecumenical debate. It is thoroughly researched and original in its conclusions and shows breadth of vision, profound reflection and insight.”
Meeting of the North European Conference of Passionists

The General Assembly of the North European Conference of Passionists took place from 24-26 September 2003 in Munich, Germany. It was attended by the General Consultor, Fr. Robert Joerger and the provincials of the Conference. The discussion centered around the topic of “Restructuring” at the province level and at the conference level, particularly in light of the upcoming General Synod of 2004 which will study this topic.

Toward a reorganization of the Passionists in Brazil

During last Oct. 28-29 a meeting of Passionist Major Superiors of Brazil took place in Colombo, Paraná. The scope of the meeting was to study various aspects common to Passionist life in that country. Those attending the meeting were Frs. Norberto Donizetti, Provincial of Calvario Province; Giovanni Cipriani, Regional Superior of the Vicariate of Nuestra Señora de la Victoria (DOL Province); Celio Amaro, Regional Superior of the Vicariate of Cristo Libertador (SPE Province); Pedro Bacchiocchi, Regional Superior of the Vicariate of Bl. Dominic (PRAES Province) and Mario Capadiferro, representative of the Vicariate of Bl. Isidore (LAT Province).

The agenda basically was composed of two points: first, a study of a possible reorganization of the Passionists in Brazil. Subsequent to an analysis of the other data gathered from prior research, it was decided to form a commission composed of a religious from each group (the province and the four vicariates) to coordinate, promote and encourage reflection on this topic in the respective regions. This commission will prepare a report for the next meeting of these superiors in February, 2004. The second point was that of an evaluation of the novitiate of the Province, in which there are also novices from the vicariates. In this regard, there was discussion about a more experiential kind of novitiate, with greater emphasis on the Charism, Spirituality and specific mission of the Passionists.

PASPAC Assembly

The Passionists of the Asia-Pacific region held their biennial Assembly in Papua New Guinea (PNG) from 28 September to 5 October 2003. The meeting was attended by Fr. General and the Consultors Frs. Jefferies Foale and Vital Otshuadialokoka. It was a most fruitful gathering on many levels. The reflections and sharing on the theme: “The Passionists Proclaim the Word of the Cross: Formation for Solidarity in the service of Justice” was very challenging and encouraging; the fraternity and prayer was rich and meaningful; and the day celebrated with the local people was uplifting and overwhelming… in truly generous PNG style! There were 40 participants, men from the seven jurisdictions of PASPAC, made up of many nationalities, and PNG’s own Sister Martin Joseph Taylor CP.

Brother Theo van den Broek OFM of the Catholic Justice and Peace Office in Jayapura, in the Indonesian Province of Papua, shared on the courageous work he does in defence of the helpless indigenous peoples and gave encouragement and guidance to all who face injustices inflicted on the poor in the places where they are.

The facilitator was Fr Kevin Dance CP – the Passionist representative at the UN. All the groups were able to mix well, despite some difficulties with the language barrier, and take their turn in leading the assembly for liturgy and prayer, which was very meaningful. Lacking resources to fund the Assembly, the Vicariate of PNG was most energetic and creative in raising funds from a variety of sources to cover all expenses.
50th Anniversary of Passionist Presence in Japan

This past September the religious of the Vice-Province of the Japanese Martyrs (MAIAP), together with the religious of Holy Cross Province (CRUC) celebrated 50 years of Passionist presence in that country.

Nearly 50 years ago American Passionists embarked on a momentous journey to Japan. This grand project of Holy Cross Province, to establish the Congregation in that far away land, took almost four years to plan. Frs. Matthew Vetter and Carl Schmitz were chosen as the pioneers. Neither had volunteered for the assignment nor had they expected to be sent. Yet on February 25, 1953, they set sail.

The first Passionist establishment was located about 15 miles north of Osaka. The local bishop heartily welcomed them for he was particularly anxious that they establish a lay retreat house in connection with the monastery. Though the Christians were few in number, they were fervent and retreats strongly appealed to them. It would be the first lay Catholic retreat house in the country.

Today the mission has grown considerably in both size and in the number of people its ministry is able to touch. There are two retreat houses at Fukuoka and Mefu, two parishes at Ikeda and Nissei Chuo and a religious center in Tokyo. In August of 1999, during the PASPAC Conference, the vicariate was raised to a Vice Province.
The Vicariate of the Congo ready to become a Vice-Province

The Vicariate of Christ the Savior (GABR Province) of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are in the midst of important developments in Passionist life in that country: shortly it will be elevated to a Vice-province. In order to arrive at this point, the Vicariate as well as the Belgian province are working at achieving a certain economic, formation and apostolic stability prior to establishing autonomy. In the magazine “Le Lien”, a publication of the Vicariate, the religious were informed about the nomination of an internal commission to prepare for the transition.

Currently the Vicariate, which forms part of the Province of GABR of Belgium, consists of seven communities, dispersed among three dioceses of the country. The Vicariate has been notably affected by the civil war that has been plaguing the country for more than five years. Today more than 50 Passionist religious minister in the Congo. The next issue of the PIB will offer a detailed report by Fr. Vital Otshudialokoka, General Consultor, on the life and apostolate of our brothers located there.

Stauros Italia: The Spirituality of Art in the 21st Century

From October 4th to November 11th, the Stauros Museum of Sacred Contemporary Art at the Shrine of St. Gabriel, Gran Sasso, hosted an exhibition entitled: La Spiritualità dell’Arte nel XXI Secolo - Linguaggi a Confronto (“The Spirituality of Art in the 21st Century: Languages that challenge”). The contributors were artists who, over the years, dedicated their work to the improvement of humanity and society at large. The central message of the exhibition was that of focusing on the “confronto” (challenge) among artists of various generations who work with various means of communication and who have in common respect for time and who labor in rigorous silence both aspects which enable their complete artistic freedom. The catalog of the exhibition perhaps sums up best the reality that the artists tried to convey by their work: “We live in a very complex historic moment with all aspects of human values. An overwhelming confusion, an entanglement of materialistic feelings that point out only one road with only one concept: the way of the profit and power... It is time that forces us to discover our true identity... but to respect time, the only true patrimony that belongs solely and totally to man, we need silence— there it is too much noise in this world.”

Conclusion of the 75th anniversary of the Passionists in Venezuela

In the last issue of the PIB we noted the celebration of 75 years of Passionist presence in Venezuela. Now we report that during the month of November the conclusion of the jubilee year of the Vicariate of Our Lady of Coromoto took place in Caracas, which included the presence of Fr. General and Fr. Fernando Rabanal, Provincial of Sagrada Familia Province of Spain. On Sunday, 23 November, the religious of the Vicariate, together with numerous laity, gathered for a con-celebrated Mass at which the principal concelebrant was Fr. Ottaviano. Additionally, Fr. General used the occasion to make a fraternal visitation of the communities of the Vicariate.

Fr. Jack Douglas, rector, incenses the commemorative monument

Community of Jamaica, New York dedicates Monuments

On Mission Sunday, October 19, which coincided with the Feast Day of St. Paul of the Cross, Fr. Jack Douglas, Rector, and the religious of the Monastery of Jamaica, New York, dedicated two new Memorial stones in the nearby monastery cemetery. The Memorials commemorate those Passionist Missionaries of St. Paul of the Cross province who died and are buried in the Philippine Islands and in Jamaica, West Indies.

It is an attempt on the part of PAUL Province to prayerfully remember these religious whose graves they are not able to visit because of the geographical distance. These memorials also offer the living relatives of the deceased religious an opportunity to re-associate with the Passionist community when they visit this site.
Formation Conference of the Passionist Family of CII (Spain)

The Passionist Family of Spain and Portugal, men and women religious and laity, are continuing to grow as a family, in number and in depth of commitment. This organization continues to emphasize the importance of the topic of formation, especially in the context of church membership, as well as the missionary spirit and the charismatic dimension of St. Paul of the Cross.

As was mentioned in the previous issue of the PIB, on Nov. 14 -16, 70 members of the Passionist Family, from various regions of Spain and Portugal, held their annual meeting in Angosto (Álava), under the guidance and patronage of Our Lady of Angosto, patroness of the region. Fr. Francisco Mier, a Passionist of the Sagrada Familia (FAM) Province, using texts and characters of the New Testament and the Passion narratives, gave some very enlightening and challenging talks.

The next meeting and social gathering, again within the Iberian region, will take place in Alcalá de Henares, in April 2004. During the year additional formation meetings will take place within the various regions.

The Beginning of the Lay Passionist Movement in Germany

At the initiative of Fr. Gregor Lenzen, Vice Provincial of the Vice-Province of VULN and together with several lay people who were interested in the traditional Confraternity of the Passion, the Passionist Family Movement of Germany was begun. In Munich, Germany, on 18 Oct. 2002, in the context of a con-celebrated Mass, that was followed by a conference and the displaying of the document of Father General, the Lay Passionist Movement was inaugurated. Fr. Gregor summarized the purpose of this movement: “to promote the “memoria passionis” in personal life, family and society. [And he added] All Christians who desire to orientate their lives toward the spirituality of the Passion may join this movement. We meet once a month in the monastery of the Passionists of Munich to pray and reflect upon the topic of Passionist Spirituality.” In the photograph is a scene from the celebration. The document that marked the foundation of the movement was placed at the feet of Jesus Crucified, together with a picture of St. Paul of the Cross.

The founding group of the Lay Passionist Movement in Germany

Anniversaries of the Congregation of the “Hijas de la Pasión” (Daughters of the Passion)

This year the Passionist Sisters, founded in Mexico (Hijas de la Pasión de Jesucristo y de María Dolorosa) simultaneously celebrate two anniversaries: first, 50 years since their pontifical approbation as an Institute. Hence, on 22 Nov., in the Sanctuary of the Passion in Mexico, they celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving. Secondly, this year marks the beginning of the centenary year of the death of their co-founder, Fr. Diego Alberici, C.P., who died on July 23, 1904 in the city of Cholula, Puebla. The Daughters of the Passion currently number approximately 300 religious, living in 50 communities in 12 countries of America, Europe and Africa. Their arrival in the latter of these countries occurred two years ago, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. There, a small community is taking the initial steps in establishing the foundation and are already reaping the first fruits of their labors: 3 postulants and numerous aspirants. Congratulations, Sisters!
**Symposium in honor of St. Gemma Galgani**

On November 25, 2003 at the Pontifical Institute of Spirituality, the “Teresianum” of Rome, a symposium took place in honor of St. Gemma Galgani to mark the first centenary of her death. The event was entitled: “A theology lived by redemption”. There were a series of six presenters; among them were two Passionists, Fr. Tito Zecca, professor at the Lateran University and Sister Giovanna Costantino, General Consultor of the Sisters of St. Gemma. Fr. Tito addressed the topic of “The Spirituality of the Passionists and St. Gemma Galgani” and Sister Giovanna spoke about “Gemma and the Giannini Family”. The opening address was given by Fr. Luigi Vaninetti, C.P., General Consultor.

**Ordinations and Professions**

Congratulations to these Passionist religious who recently have taken additional steps in their following of Christ Crucified:

**Ordained to the PRIESTHOOD:** Orlando Chávarro, of Colombia (Vice-Province FID), on 13 September; Jorge Reyes, of the Vicariate of Nuestra Señora del Carmen in Chile (Province SANG), on 20 September; Jacob Kuman Kumai Dibole of the Vicariate Verbum Crucis, of Papua New Guinea (Province SPIR), 8 November; and Massimo Granieri, of Italy (Province LAT), 22 November.

**Ordained to the DIACONATE:** Rogério de Lima Mendes, of Brazil (Province CALV), on 5 October; Tonino Fiorelli, of the Italian DOL Province, on 25 October, and Lee Havey of the American, PAUL Province, on 30 November.

Also, the following religious professed **PERPETUAL VOWS:** Gerardo Méndez Alfonso in Spain (Province FAM), on 21 September; Frans Lukas Temme in Germany (Vice-Province VULN), on 28 September; Erasmo Sebastiano en Italy (Province DOL), also on 28 September; Carlos Armando Hernández and Helber Alexander Pinilla in Colombia (Vice-Province FID), on 18 October, Gianluca Zanni in Italy (Dol Province), on the same day; and José Santos Duarte in El Salvador (Vicariate CHRIC, Province FAM).

Finally, on Monte Argentario, 18 September, these religious professed **FIRST VOWS:** Alessandro Ciliani (PIET), Benedetto Manco (DOL) and Pasquale Gravante (DOL).

To these religious we offer our sincerest best wishes and may they grow deeper in fidelity to the Lord and to their Passionist vocation!
### Notitiae Obitus

Usque ad diem 26 novembris 2003, acceptae

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<td>P. Norbert Hayne</td>
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<td>28 septembris 2003</td>
<td>Fra. Marcelino Díez de la Hera</td>
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<td>P. James McHugh</td>
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<td>P. Lino (Tomás) Múzquiz Beraza</td>
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<td>P. Eugene Kennan</td>
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<td>P. Bonaventura Rinaldi</td>
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<td>P. Leo Patrick Brady</td>
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### MONIALES ET SORORES

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<td>1 aprilis 2003</td>
<td>Sr. Maria Leonia Mattiazzo</td>
<td>Inst. S.P. S. Pauli a Croce (Sigma)</td>
<td>1913</td>
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<td>Sr. Marie Louise Murphy</td>
<td>Inst. Crucis et Passionis (Anglia)</td>
<td>1909</td>
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Pontificium Athenaeum Facultas Scientiarum Bibliarum et

Leonardo, G., L’ESERCIZIO DELLA CORRESPONSABILITA’ NELLA NUOVA PARROCCHIA.
May the child Jesus who comes into this world fill the void of our hearts with the radiance of his light. Merry Christmas and happy New Year to the entire Passionist Family!