



**2nd CENTENARY OF THE RESTORATION
OF THE CONGREGATION**

1814-2014



Letter of the Superior General on the 2nd CENTENARY OF THE RESTORATION OF THE CONGREGATION: 1814 - 2014

Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends in
the Passionist Family,

On my daily walks here in Rome, which I am required to do following my surgery, I often 'drop-in' to visit churches and basilicas of which there is no shortage. And I am often in awe at the beauty of the art and architecture of these structures, many of which were constructed centuries ago. They were built as "Temples to the glory of God". Sitting in these 'Temples', one cannot but be lifted up in praise to God's glory, and sense the sacredness and immanent presence of the Divine.

As I enjoy the beauty and peaceful surroundings of these churches today, it is hard to believe that there

were times in our history when these buildings, including many monasteries and convents, were desecrated and destroyed by anti-religious and anti-church forces – not to mention the persecution of its believers. Such was the situation in the Papal States known as "the complete suppression" by Napoleon on 3 May 1810 leading to the confiscation of all church properties, and the disbanding and displacement of all religious and clergy to their places of origin in the hope that this would bring about the extinction of the church and religious life. According to our late historian Fr Fabiano Giorgini CP:

"As an absolute arbiter, Napoleon did not accept anyone escaping his control and, perhaps, feared ... that religious would foment the maxims of Rome in the people, that is,

fidelity to the Church's doctrine and to the directives of the Pope."

Napoleon was also interested in taking over "the goods of religious in order to pay for the great economic debt caused by the war, lodging soldiers, the increase of bureaucrats and for completing public works."

At the time of the suppression, our Congregation had been in existence for 90 years and was present in 17 communities – all in Italy. This, in fact, meant that the whole Passionist Congregation was suppressed. Our Passionist Nuns were in existence for 39 years and were present in only one monastery in Corneto (Tarquinia). This situation of survival under the conditions of suppression lasted for four years, until 1814.

I write this letter (accompanied with the attached brief history written by Fr Fernando Piélagos CP) to bring to our awareness that on the 27th June 2014 our Congregation commemorates the second centenary (200 years) of its restoration.

Following Napoleon's authorization for the return of Pope Pius VII to Rome from France, the religious orders were quickly restored - one of the first to attract the Pope's attention being the Congregation of the Passion, although it was the smallest of all. They were the first to resume the religious habit and community life in our Retreat of Sts John and Paul. Upon receiving their reinstatement on 27 June 1814, Fr Giorgini comments that the Passionists *"decided not to reopen all the possible monasteries, in order not to have imaginary communities which would have weakened prayer and apostolic life."* This decision was realistic and made eminent sense. We can imagine that after 4 years of displacement from the religious house and the discipline of the religious life, not all the religious would have returned to the monastery. The numbers would have depleted. Some, of course, would have died in that time, while others would have left the Congregation choosing other paths of life.

This event, marking the second centenary of the restoration of the Congregation, is a moment deserving our reflection in order that we might

see and appreciate the guiding and protecting hand of God. It is a part of the history of our salvation! When we reflect back on the history of this time, we see the enormous difficulties and hardships endured by our religious, but we also see their trust in God, and their fidelity to the life and mission of God.

Two hundred years later - since the time of the restoration (1814-2014), as we look back at our Congregation's story, we cannot but be grateful for the bountiful blessings of God. In His mercy, God raised up Passionist prophets and saints who, with the courage of their conviction in the Charism, would proclaim the message of God's love seen in the Passion of Jesus to peoples and cultures, outside Italy, in nearly 60 nations of the world.

The second centenary of the restoration of the Congregation is a story of HOPE – founded in the heart of God. Even today, as the Congregation in various parts of the world continues to face hardships and difficulties, prejudice and persecution, we must rely on the strength and power which comes from the Spirit of Jesus; we must continue on the path of fidelity and authenticity, holding firm to the hope founded in our God.

I conclude with the following excerpts from the Acts of the Apostles which details the situation of persecution experienced by the Apostles in the early Christian community. May this inspire and

strengthen us, Passionists today, to move forward with hope, for nothing can suppress the Spirit of God!

"...they arrested the apostles and had them put in prison. But at night the angel of the Lord opened the prison gates and said: 'Go and take up position in the Temple, and tell the people all about this new Life.' They did as they were told; they went into the Temple at dawn and began to preach." (Acts 5:18ff)

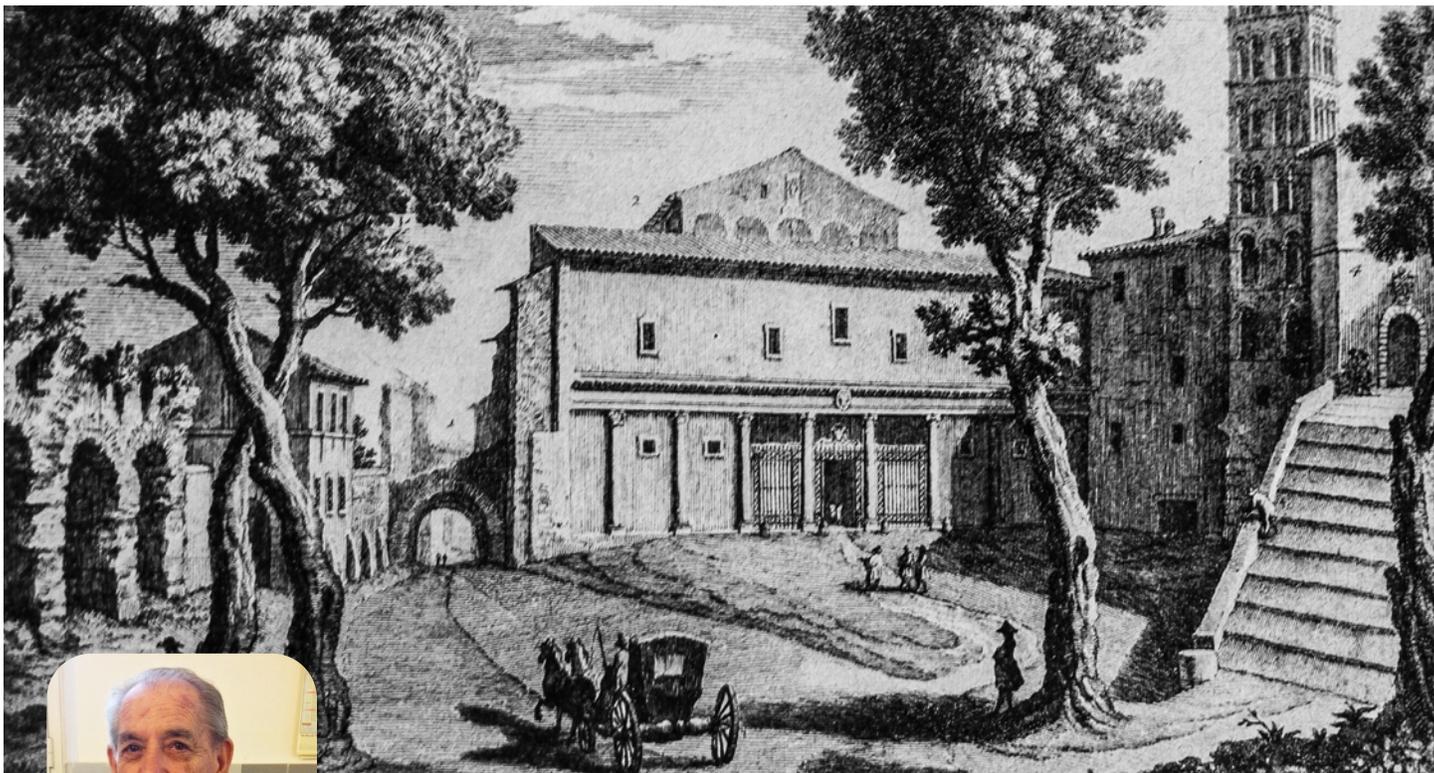
"...Peter and the apostles said: 'Obedience to God comes before obedience to men; it was the God of our ancestors who raised up Jesus...to be leader and Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins through him...We are witnesses to this, we and the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.'" (Acts 5:29ff)

Gamaliel's intervention to the Sanhedrin: "...I suggest that you leave these men alone and let them go. If this enterprise, this movement of theirs, is of human origin it will break up of its own accord; but if it does in fact come from God you will be unable to destroy them. Take care not to find yourselves fighting against God." (Acts 5:38ff)

J. Rego, C.P.

Fr Joachim Rego CP
Superior General
Feast of SS. John & Paul, 26 June 2014





Sts. John and Paul Basilica (1773) before the suppression of the Congregation.

By Fr. Fernando Piélagos, C.P.

Rome, May 6, 2014

This June 26 will mark the *second centenary of the Congregation's being re-established*. Years ending in "14" have been of significant note in our history, and it would not be good to overlook our patrimony in that regard. The following data are not the re-telling of history, but rather can help our reflection, and in particular, help us to be grateful to God for His bountiful assistance. As an introduction, let us begin with a summary of the preceding century, 1714-1814.

From 1714 to 1814

The chronology of this stage in the life of St. Paul of the Cross is not definitively clear; however, we can be guided by the testimony of Fr. John Mary of St. Ignatius (Cioni). He was our Founder's confessor and secretary. He provided a record of many confidences. In his deposition as a witness in the Process for Canonization in Vetralla,¹ after speaking of the studies undertaken by the youthful Paul, he says:

At about the age of nineteen, although he had lived an exemplary and edifying life, one day he heard an informal sermon of his pastor which left him feeling so moved with compunction,

that he decided to strive for a holy and perfect life....

In the notes to this text, written by Fr. Cajetan, we read: *We find ourselves, toward the middle of 1713. At that time, the Danei Family was living in the environs of Genoa, probably at Campo Ligure. There, on the 4th of February, 1710, Anthony had been born. St. Paul (of the Cross) calls that time of his life the time of his conversion to penance.*²

The Congregation had not yet been born; nevertheless, its future founder was already living in a climate of spiritual fervor and was attentive to the

problems facing the Church. In March, 1715, the war between France and Austria had come to a close with the Treaty of Rastadt; but the Turks immediately signaled their intention of dominating Europe. In response, the European nations most under threat, like Venice, allied themselves to protect their Christian values. Pope Clement XI wanted to make common cause of these efforts by putting them under the spirit of a Crusade; to this end, on May 31, 1715, he published the brief *Ubi primum*. As we know, these preparations for war would have later effect in the life of Paul Danei, who wanted to join the Christian defense with his own inscription.



These episodes are well-known, and this is not the time to detail the chronology of his later life; it is sufficient that we remember that here start 60 years of an intense spirituality, during which the Congregation will be born. At the time of his death, he stated that he was confident he was leaving the Congregation *well-established in the Church*. Following his death in 1775, the crisis of the French revolution is unleashed in 1789, and in 1796, the Napoleonic troops invade Italy and the Papal States. The legacy of St. Paul of the Cross was subjected to the ups and downs of the hostility toward the Church. In that difficult situation, the humble Congregation worked with Pope Pius VI in pastoral attention to the city of Rome. In 1796, Fr. Vincent Mary Strambi led the spiritual exercises for the Roman Curia, and preached in the open at Piazza Colonna in order to calm the people who were worked-up over the outrages committed by the French army. In 1801, Fr. Vincent Mary Strambi was named bishop of Macerata and Tolentino. In spite of the circumstances, a young Lorenzo Salvi chose the Congregation of the Passion in which to consecrate himself to God. He was professed on November 20, 1802 at Monte Argentario, and was ordained a priest on December 29, 1805.

Pius VI died in 1800, and he was succeeded by Pius VII, elected on March 14, 1801. Pope Pius VII experienced

many difficulties in governing the Church because of the presence of the Napoleonic troops. In the summer of 1809, he was taken to Navona, and later to Fontainebleau, in France as a prisoner of Napoleon. On May 3, 1810, all of the religious corporations were suppressed, the one founded by Fr. Paul Danei was swept up in the storm. In May of 1809, shortly before the Pope's departure for France, the Congregation had celebrated its 12th General Chapter. At this Chapter, Fr. Thomas Albesano of the Incarnate Wisdom (1752-1829) was elected head of the Congregation. As a result of the suppression, he had to seek refuge in his home town of Camerana, Alba, in the Province of Cuneo. The religious were scattered and lived as they could. Among the religious was the recently ordained future General, Fr. Anthony of St. James (Testa), who earned a living in Naples, teaching. Bishop Strambi was exiled for his refusal to swear fidelity to the emperor. Other religious were confined in prisons at Corsica. The soul of the Congregation, its apostolate of mission preaching, was suspended. The sixteen retreats of that time remained closed. Only at the Generalate was some presence maintained. Fr. Salvi, who also refused the oath of fidelity,



St. Paul of the Cross. Founder of the Passionist Congregation

found his refuge at Pievitorina, with a few other of the religious. There is no need to stretch this out; this time frame has received special attention from Fr. Carmelo Nasselli in *La soppressione napoleónica delle corporazioni religiose. Il caso dei passionisti in Italia 1808-1814* [*The Napoleonic Suppression of the Religious Corporations. The Case of the Passionists in Italy 1808-1814*], P. U. Gregoriana, Roma, 1970, and in other works, such as "*Il Beato Lorenzo Salvi, apostolo di Gesù Bambino*" [*Blessed Lorenzo Salvi, Apostle of the Child Jesus*] (1989), which are not being cited here because this is no historical treatment, but rather, is a familiar recollection.

From 1814 to 1914

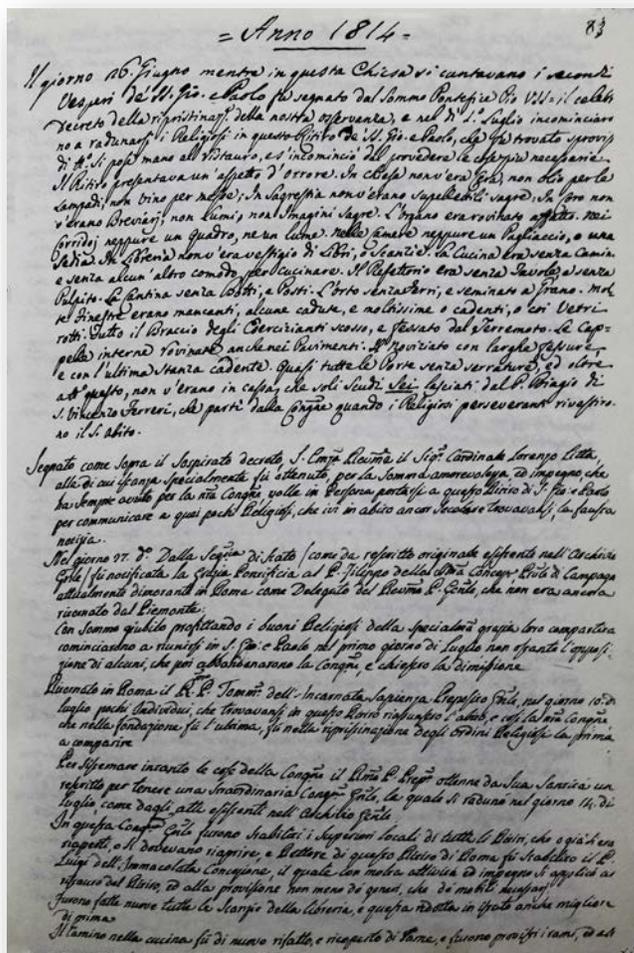
In January of 1814, Napoleon authorized Pius VII to return to the Papal States.³ He returned to Rome on May 24, and began the work of *reorganizing the Pontifical government, and especially of restoring the spiritual and moral condition of the Church*. He paid special attention to the restoration of the religious corporations because their lives and their apostolates would set an example for others and be the dynamic force that would promote the restoration of the Church. He would

write shortly thereafter in the Bull re-establishing the Company of Jesus: *The service of all the churches...imposes on us the duty of recourse to all of the possible means to remedy the spiritual needs of the Catholic world.*⁴

On June 4, 1814, he created a Congregation for Reforms. It was composed of various cardinals, among whom was Cardinal Sala, who promptly presented the Pope a plan for the reform of diverse aspects of the Papal State, especially in regard to the lives of the Religious.⁵

One of the essential elements for the re-establishing of any religious institute would be *the degree of fidelity to its constitutions* as they were lived prior to the suppression; keeping in mind that the information would not be proffered by the religious institutions which were the interested parties, but by the bishops who would report on the community life, poverty, apostolate and reputation of each religious house present in their dioceses.

Limiting ourselves to our



The Platea dated 1814 which had the written accounts of the restoration.

Institute, Cardinal Litta, of Milan, a friend of Bishop Strambi and a great admirer of the Passionists (he is buried in the basilica of S.s. John and Paul), reported to Pius VII, when he was passing through Milan, that the community life and dedication to the apostolate of our religious were exceptionally high. Fr. Filippo Antonaroli (1757+1830) was one of the last who had professed during the lifetime of St. Paul of the Cross. The General Consultors had died in the meantime, and Fr. Albesano charged Fr. Antonaroli to act in his place until he could come to Rome. On his return, he contacted the religious who had been able to remain in the city of Rome, and in some few religious houses in the south. He verified that there was a general desire to return to the common life in the religious house. He was received by Pius VII on the 28th of May;

he reported on the state of the Congregation and the desire to return to the retreats. On June 26, the feast of the Martyrs, John and Paul, Cardinal Litta presented the Pope a request to restore the Passionists. On the next day, Cardinal Pacca, pro-secretary, signed the rescript of restoration, in which he affirms:

The exemplary life which the brothers of the Passionist Congregation always maintained before the fatal change of in affairs, their praiseworthy conduct during the recent calamities, and the spiritual benefits which the faith has received from the very zealous workers in the vineyard of the Lord, are all engraved in the memory of His Holiness. The Pope, always concerned for the good of the faith and of the Church, has judged it opportune to give this

Institute a sign of his pontifical benevolence. Therefore, he makes it the first Institute whose religious shall reunited in their retreats, return to the use of the habit, and live according to the Rule of their venerable Founder, with the certainty that they will continue to contribute through their exemplary conduct and through their constant zeal for the edification and well-being of souls. Let there be sent, therefore, to the Father Provincial of the Passionists, who is acting for the Superior General, a notice of the Pontifical authorization restoring his office. To Fr. Phillip of the Immaculate Conception, Provincial of the Passionists.⁶

With regard to the priority given to the Passionists, the "platea" at Vetralla notes: *The Holy Father prohibited everyone, with a strict decree, from returning to gather in their respective religious houses, or to use the religious habit, without his approval and blessing...*

The privilege, filled all with admiration and gave a truly holy envy to the individuals of other institutions and congregations which recognized that they were being delayed and obliged to await an opportune moment.⁷ In fact, the first institution, before the Passionists, to be recognized was the Company of Jesus. However the official recognition was delayed because, having been suppressed by a solemn document, the Bull "*Dominus ac Redemptor*", another document of the same status was required by the courts of Europe for their restoration. This required extra time for preparation, translation to Latin, etc. It did not appear until the 7th of August, the octave of the memorial of St. Ignatius Loyola.⁸

The "platea" of the General House says that *on the first of July, our religious returned to reunited in this retreat which they found devoid of anything. The restoration began with the provision of the essentials. The condition of the house would give one horror: no wax in the church, no oil for the lamps, no wine for Masses; there were no vestments or religious objects in the*



sacristy; the breviaries are missing from the choir, as well as lights and images. The organ had completely fallen apart. In the corridors there no pictures and no light. In the cells, neither mattress nor chairs. In the library there was no sign of books nor were there any bookcases. The chimney was gone from the kitchen....In the refectory, there were no tables, nor a pulpit; there were no casks nor kitchen utensils in the storeroom. In the garden, the garden tools had disappeared, grain had been planted. Many windows were missing....The section used for retreatants had was gone, as though destroyed by an earthquake. The interior chapels were in ruins, even the floors. The wing used as a novitiate had large cracks, and the last cell had collapsed. Almost all of the doors lacks latches. And if that were not enough, there was no money in the house except for six "escudos" which Fr.

"Therefore, he makes it the first Institute whose religious shall be reunited in their retreats, return to the use of the habit, and live according to the Rule of their venerable Founder"

Rescript of Restoration, May 28, 1814

Blaise of St. Vincent Ferrer, left behind when he abandoned the Congregation after the religious returned to the use of the habit.⁹

The "platea" at Vetralla, in which we find copied the text of this rescript, records that the religious returned during the first days of August to the Provincial House of the PRAES province, and first thing they did was to hand over to the Provincial what

monies they carried, they changed from secular clothes into their religious habits; and then the Provincial assigned them to the diverse retreats. Carlo Pieri, benefactor, handed over the retreat, which he had purchased from the French, to the community.¹⁰

In the book recording the Chapters of the St. Joseph Novitiate, an entry for 1815 recalls that in September of 1814, the novitiate was re-opened, the first local Chapter for admission to the novitiate was held on February 15, 1815.

The Congregation resumed its life with ten retreats, five in each of the two provinces. The following were abandoned: Giano in Spoleto, San Ubaldo in Gubbio, Pievetorina and Arezzo; and Terracina, founded by St. Paul of the Cross, and in which it would have been impossible to live for fear of the bandits on the highway.¹¹

In the Necrology which was kept by Fr. Eustace of the Holy Family (1747-1869), when speaking of those who died in the years 1810-1814, he notes that they died outside of the retreat because they were obligated to abandon their religious houses, and they sought refuge wherever they could, and many died in those circumstances (20 nov. 1810, p. 94).

An annotation which appears insignificant, but which is actually in praise of these deceased, says: "they died outside of the retreat, but they carried the congregation inside themselves." During the suppression, the Congregation lost 86 members: 21 to death, 65 left the Congregation.

The restoration was accomplished although some few



Bust of Bishop Lorenzo Cardinal Litta in the Basilica of Sts. John and Paul. He highly endorsed to Pius VII the restoration of the Congregation.



Pope Pius VII issued the restoration of the Passionist Congregation.

resisted returning to the common life, to poverty and obedience. However, the Lord was present in the difficult task by sending vocations which would become significant to leadership and formation in the Congregation. A small sample: 1) *Dominic Barberi*, whom everyone knows, professed vows in November of 1815; 2) *Anthony Testa* (1787-1862) returned immediately upon the word of the General; 3) *Bernard Carsidoni* (1797-1836) professed vows in 1816; and was an exceptional master of novices in those first years; 4) *Ignatius Carsidoni* (1801-1844), his blood-brother, professed vows in 1819; taught as a lector for more than ten years; mastered seven European languages and biblical Hebrew; published a course in Elocution which was widely used in the Congregation; and especially of note, published the book, "The School of the Patient Jesus", of which many translations and countless editions were circulated; 5) *Angel Parisi* (1800-1863), professed vows in 1818; was bishop in Bulgaria...

Of great urgency was restoring

the *ministry of popular missions*. The religious who were able began intensive mission campaigns. With Blessed Salvi as an example: *On the 15th of January in 1815, he began his first missionary campaign, starting with a series of consecutive missions in Mompeo, in the area of Sabina; followed by missions in Castel San Pietro, Casaprotta, Poggio Mirteto and Fara Sabina, which took place over two consecutive months; he returned to Rome on Monday of Holy Week.*

A matter which had remained pending during the suppression was the *Cause for the Canonization of Fr. Paul of the Cross*. The volumes of the Process had been taken to Paris as part of the looting of the Pontifical Archives by Napoleon. Nevertheless, in spite of its significant poverty, the Congregation took this work up

again: on February 18, 1821, recognition was given to his heroic virtue, leading to his beatification in 1853, and to his canonization in 1867. A moment of joy, glory and splendor was the *blessing of the chapel*, which was built in his honor, in April of 1880.

The history of the Institute from 1814 to 1914 is better known. There are already three volumes published up to the year 1862; the fourth volume, 1863-1925, is moving forward. This is not the time to dwell on that period; a few comments will suffice. While in Vienna the Congress was meeting which would be known by that name, and which would divide up Europe, the humble Congregation of the Passion was recovering from the dramatic events that affected its structures, and little by little was adding to the

members in the communities while it took up anew its zeal for the apostolate. While at the restoration Chapter of 1815 it had only 174 religious, a hundred years later, at the Chapter of 1914, it would have 1,806 members. While in 1815 there were only the two provinces created by the Founder (PRAES and DOL), in 1914 there would be thirteen (the two cited, plus PIET, IOS, MICH, PAUL, CORI, CORM, CONC, LAT, FAM, CRUC, GABR). While in 1814 the Congregation was only on the Italian peninsula and in Bulgaria, in 1841 Blessed Dominic would begin the ecumenical expansion through Belgium, France and England. Other nations are added, so that in 1914 the Congregation is also present in Ireland, United States, Spain, Holland, Israel, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Cuba, Brazil and Peru.

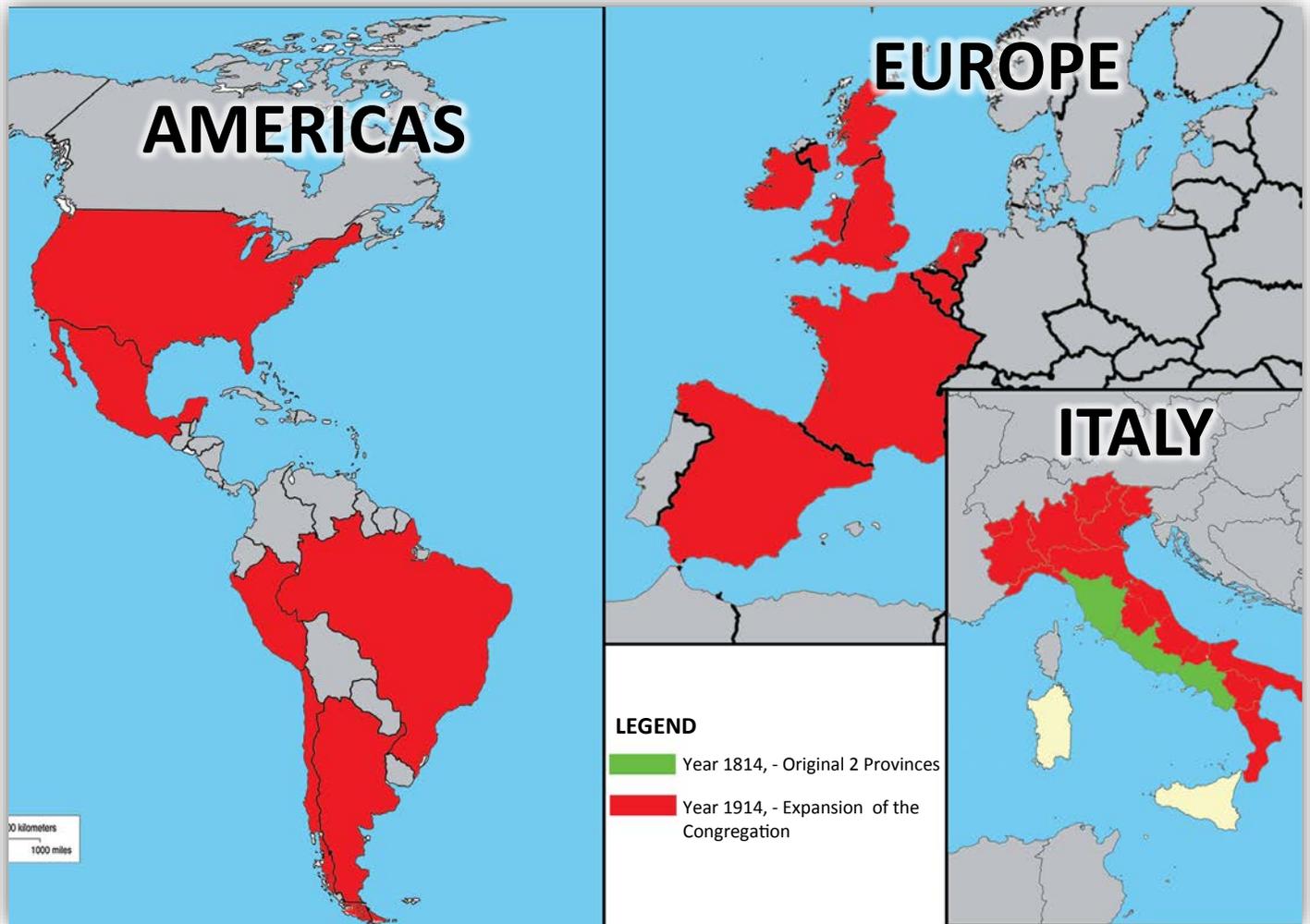
In the sphere of government, from 1815 to 1914 there were ten *Superiors General*. Of these, two held office for practically half of that period: Fr. Testa (1839-1862) and Fr. Bernard Mary Silvestrelli (1878-1888 and 1893-1907).

Regarding women's Passionist Spirituality, in the year 1814 there was only the monastery of Tarquinia; a century later there were Passionist Nuns



St. Vincent Strambi was exiled for his refusal to swear fidelity to Napoleon. He returned later to his diocese in 1814.





Expansion of the Passionist Congregation from 1814- 1914.

in Mamers, 1872, Tielt, 1904, Lucca, 1905, Pittsburgh, 1910, and México, 1913. This latter monastery did not survive the persecution of the Church. In addition, three women's institutes had come into being: *Hijas de S. Pablo de la Cruz* [Daughters of St. Paul of the Cross], Signa; *Hermanas de la Pasión y Cruz* [Sisters of the Cross and Passion], Bolton, England; and *Hijas de la Pasión* [Daughters of the Passion] in México. In these three cases, there was collaboration with a male Passionist in the foundations (Frs. Luigi Bonauguri, Gaudentius Rossi and Diego Alberici, respectively).

In 1814, the Congregation had none of its sons raised to the altar. In 1914 St. Paul of the Cross and Blessed Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows were venerated; there was a series of numerous causes underway, and at that time there was a lot of activity around

the cause of the young Gemma Galgani....

The Congregation had endured strong storms: *the suppression of congregations*, in Italy since 1866, with the temporary disappearance of the PIET province; and in France during the last quarter of the 19th century, which brought the religious to seek refuge in Bethany, Israel. In 1914, the revolution was beginning in Mexico, which would create not a few disruptions to the Passionists. Nevertheless, the Congregation came out ahead, in the biblical sense: *We went through fire and through water, Yet You brought us out into a place of abundance.* (PS 65, 12).



Fr. Thomas Albesano, C.P.- Superior General at the time of Suppression and Restoration of the Congregation.



Sts. John and Paul Basilica in the present day.

From 1914 to 2014

The Congregation begins a new period. Since it is more recent history and the greater part of its data are accessible to most, we will limit ourselves to citing some data in order to thank God for His help.

In May, 1914, there was a *new Superior General, Fr. Silvio di Vezza* (1849-1929), an Italian, who had to exit to France in 1870 because of the suppression of the communities, and to elude the obligatory military service. He was able to celebrate the *Second Centenary of the Congregation in 1920*; he supported the publishing of the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross, in four volumes (1924); he created the *Bollettino della Congregazione [Bulletin of the Congregation]* in 1920 (the *Acta Congregationis* since 1930). He was the first General who went around the world, by steamship over nine months, and who visited all of the houses except the mission in Peru; he kept a detailed

diary of the trip, in which are reflected the strengths and tensions of the communities as he went along. He introduced the submission to the General Curia of the *Ratio Annua [Annual Report]*, which has made possible, since 1920, having first hand data regarding the number of religious and the apostolic works (Missions, Spiritual Exercises and other ministries). In 1918, Benedict XV established, at the Scala Sancta, the Arch-confraternity of the Passion, from which have come the other confraternities established in the Congregation.

Wars and revolutions created serious problems: in 1914 the world war began which brought much trouble to the Congregation. More than 200 religious were mobilized; the apostolate diminished; it was difficult to keep the regular observance as well as continuity in studies. In 1914 the *revolution* of Carranza against the religious began in Mexico; it was followed by the bloody *persecution* of Plutarco Elias Calles. Holy

Family Province was greatly impeded both as a presence and as an apostolate in Mexico. In 1929, three North American missionaries were assassinated in China. In 1934 and between 1936 and 1939, there was a strong religious repression in Spain. Among its *victims* were St. Inocencio Canoura (1934), and Blessed Niceforo with 25 Companions (1936). Between 1939 and 1945, the Second World War caused much disruption to the religious because of the militarization and because of the difficulties with communication between the General Curia and the Provinces. Consider the destruction of the mission in China, especially of the death of Blessed Bossilkov in 1952, and the deaths of the two Belgian missionaries in Congo (1963).¹⁴

In 1920 the Congregation celebrated the canonization of Blessed Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother, and the commemoration of the Second Centenary of the Congregation (1720-



1920). Other elevations to the altar have filled the years of the 20th century: Gemma Galgani in 1933 and 1940; Strambi, 1925 and 1950; Maria Goretti, 1947 and 1950; Dominic Barberi, Silvestrelli, Houben, Campidelli, De Loor, Salvi, Niceforo and Companions, Inocencio, Grimoaldo...

As a collaborator with the Church in the area of *mission "ad gentes,"* the Congregation has taken responsibility for different mission areas, besides continuing in Bulgaria: Yurimaguas and Moyobamba in Peru; China; Tanzania; Congo; Bechuanaland; Corocoro in Bolivia; District of Columbia, Georgia and Alabama in the United States; Marbel in the Philippines, Papua New Guinea; Indonesia; Honduras; Kenya; Angola; Mozambique and Sweden.

Following the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law, it was necessary to revise the Rules and adjust them to the new norms of the Code, a task completed in the period of 1920-1930. After the 36th General Chapter, 1952, a new revision of the Rules was completed, and received the approbation of St. John XXIII in 1959. As an outcome of Vatican II, at which were present and contributing several Passionist *bishops* and theologians, religious institutes were tasked with their revision, in keeping with "*sentire cum Ecclesia*". The extraordinary General Chapter, 1968 – 1970, prepared the *Chapter Document* which was approved by the Chapters of 1976 and 1982. It was later approved by the Holy See, in 1984.

In 1914, the Congregation had no *university graduates* (with the exception of some who entered the Congregation with a graduate degree). Since 1925, there have been more than a hundred who have received license degrees [master's degrees] or doctorates. A significant influence on studies and on spirituality was the *Letter on the Study of the Passion* by Fr. Leo Kierkels, February 25, 1930.¹⁵ By exception, we remember Fr. Barnabas Ahern, who was named to the International Theological Commission by Paul VI in 1969, and Fr. Stanislas Breton. In 1914, the Congregation had only its first five *periodical magazines* (*Stella del*

"The 1,725 professed members in 1914 grew to the historical maximum of 4,131 in the year 1967."

(ACP, XXIV, 157)

Mare, The Cross, L'Eco di S. Gabriele, Golgotha and La Gruta de Lourdes), however, it would eventually reach a total of 38.¹⁶

As has been said, in 1914 there were only five *Monasteries of cloistered Passionist Nuns*; at the end of the century there would be 40 in 15 countries: Italy, 12; U.S.A., 5; Spain, Brazil and France, 4 in each country; Belgium, 2; and one in each of the following countries: England, Korea, Japan, Colombia, Philippines, Mexico, Indonesia, Argentina and Holland. There is no intention to list the expansion of the other Passionist institutes which, although autonomous, have not desisted in remaining conscious of their spiritual connection with St. Paul of the Cross and his Congregation. Because of their immediate relationship with the General House of the Congregation, it should be remembered that beginning in 1964, the Daughters of the Passion have collaborated in providing necessary services to the Generalate for 50 years.

Up to 1814, only three Passionists had been raised to the *episcopal dignity* (Struzziere, Strambi and, in Bulgaria, Ferreri). Between 1814 and 1914, there were 13 made bishops. Since 1914, 39 were made bishops, not only in mission territories, but also in residential sees.

A point to think about, which cannot be ignored, is about the *vocational growth* and its rapid *decline*. The 1,725 professed members in 1914 grew to the historical maximum of 4,131 in the year 1967 (ACP, XXIV, 157). Since then, in less than half a century,

the number of religious has fallen decidedly: by decades, in 1977, decline to 3,089; (- 1,042); in 1987, decline to 2,669 (- 1,420); in 1997, decline to 2,383 (- 286); in 2007, decline to 2,160 (- 223); in December of 2013, decline to 2,006 (- 154). When it comes to statistics, everyone reads what he wants into them, and this is not the best time to introduce controversies or recriminations. The point of this letter is to invite all to give thanks to God, and although we regret that many of our brothers have left our journey, we must recognize with admiration the more than 12,000 who, having shared dreams and labors, have died in the Congregation; we enthusiastically remember them because we feel blessed for our great gift of a Passionist vocation.

Notes:

1. Publicados en 1976 por el P. Gaetano Raponi, vol. I, p. 32.
2. Lett IV, 217
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