

**Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ**

# **XIII GENERAL SYNOD**

Cuernavaca, Mexico

September 2008



## ***DOCUMENTS AND CHRONICLES***

**1**

*General Secretariat, Rome – December 2008*



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# **Letter of the Superior General presenting the 2008 General Synod documents**

**My dear Passionist brothers and my brothers and sisters of our extended Passionist Family,**

It is with much joy that I am presenting you with these two booklets wherein you will find all the documentation relative to the work of the 13th General Synod of the Congregation celebrated between the 6th and 17th Sep-tember at our Passionist Spirituality Center in Cuernavaca, Mexico. This Synod was a continuation of the Restructuring journey which we initially set out upon at the General Chapter of 2000, and which was brought into sharper focus at the General Synod of 2004, where it was recognized as a true call to renewal from God. It's purpose was to infuse new energy into the life and mis-sion of the Congregation. The General Chapter of October 2006 in Rome ex-aminated the progress as it stood then and mandated the road we should follow in the course of the next six years in its Central Declaration, which was sup-ported by the ten priorities,.

The 45th General Chapter committed the Congregation to enthusiastically forge ahead with the Restructuring Process begun at the 2004 General Synod, a process that will continue at least until the next General Chapter in 2012. This commitment is meant to promote the life and vitality of the Congregation as we strive to respond in a more efficacious manner to the Gospel mandate and our Passionist vocation, that is, to proclaim the message of the Cross to to-day's world. Faithful to the working of the Spirit, a new manner of reflecting upon our life and integrating among ourselves has been shown us, as has the possibility of creating anew the structures and institutions to serve our charism.

The General Synod of 2008, in compliance with the mandate of the aforementioned General Chapter, carried on the process of Restructuring. These were grace-filled days highlighted by our Lord's Pasch. The daily Eucharist we celebrated together, the liturgy and the singing, our continued dialog and the sincere search for God' Will for our life and mission in today's and tomor-row's world, were all part of our discernment process which produced the guidelines, orientations and recommendations for the General Council, to as-sist them in making decisions on Restructuring. The Program, the process and the conclusions by the Synod and the General Council have been printed in the two booklets as the Documentation of the Synod of 2008. The two booklets are:

- 1) Documents and chronicles.
- 2) Reports, lectures and homilies.

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I am asking you to read these two booklets thoroughly, study them care-fully and reflect upon them both personally and in community settings, on the Province, Vice Province or Vicariate level. Prayer will likewise facilitate a bet-ter grasp of the challenges and objectives placed before us by the Synod for these next few years. Each one of us is called upon to take part in the research, reflection and the experimentation phase of the Restructuring Process.

As well as the above brief introduction, the first booklet contains: 1) the Synod Decisions; 2) the New Configurations with the Provinces, Vice Provinces, Vicariates and Missions which comprise them; 3) the three documents on Solidarity in Formation, Personnel and Finances; 4) Recommendations of the Synod for the General Council; 5) criteria which should guide the restruc-turing of the Congregation; 6) the daily chronicle of the Synod and, 7) the Su-perior General's Letter after the Synod.

Everything contained in this first booklet is of foundational importance and should be closely studied, as it will be the fount and guide for the work of each major Superior within his Configuration as well as between the various Con-figurations, and will likewise provide the working guidelines for the General Council itself.

The second booklet contains other documents which are also of major im-portance for all that transpired at the Synod and for the discernment process which was carried out. This booklet is composed of Reports, Lectures, Studies and Homilies. In order to facilitate their identification I shall specify them as fol-lows: 1) Letter of Convocation to the Synod; 2) Superior General's report to the Synod; 3) report of the General Secretary for Solidarity and Mission; 4) re-port of our Passionist International representative at the United Nations; 5) Sis-ter Christine Anderson's report with her analysis of the responses to the tem-plates by the Provinces, Vice Provinces and Vicariates of the Congregation; 6) Steve Ros-setti's lecture; 7) Fr. Octavio Mondragón's lecture; 8) Fr. Donald Senior's retreat conferences and 9) Homilies.

Allow me to express my hope that you will receive the Synod Documenta-tion and all of its contents contained therein with an open mind and good heart, free of any mental blocks or prejudices. May the coming Christmas festivities open up to us the newness of life and the presence of God in our midst, re-minding us that it was only the shepherds with their simple interior attitudes who were able to understand the "sign" of the Child lying in a manger as the arrival of the Messiah, the Immanuel, God in our midst. The learned in Jerusalem and all those who considered themselves experts on everything to do with God, hard-ened in their hearts with their presumption that God was supposed to fit into their

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projects and parameters rather than that they were the ones who should change and be converted, failed to recognize him: “He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God.” (Jn 1: 11-12)

Before concluding this brief presentation I would like to suggest to those who did not take part in the Synod, a method of approach to the documents contained in the first booklet. It might be good, in order to enter into the proper context so as to better grasp the documents, were they to start off by reading the post-Synod Letter and the Chronicles of the Synod, even though these follow after the documents in the booklet.

My dear brothers and all of you of our Passionist Family, let us welcome the Lord and his Word and let us receive all that is expressed in the Synod documents as the “seed sown in the good ground” of which Jesus speaks in his parable of the sower: “But those sown on rich soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.” (Mk 4:20)

If we accept and take ownership of the indications, guidelines, recommendations and decisions of the Synod in simplicity of faith, we’ll realize that this is what the Lord is impressing upon the Congregation through the instruments of discernment in use amongst ourselves and in the Church.

Let’s set aside all our fears as we cross to the opposite shore, for its Jesus who wants this and who reassures us: “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid!” (Mt 14:27)

Fr. Ottaviano D’Egidio, C.P.  
Superior General

Retreat of Saints John and Paul.  
December 8, 2008  
Feast of the Immaculate Conception



# **The Decisions of the 13th General Synod**

*There were 43 voting members present for this session of the Synod.*

- 1) **The Synod Approves the Configurations:**  
Vote: 43, Unanimous
- 2) **The Synod Approves Solidarity in the areas of Personnel, Finance and Formation**  
Vote: In favor: 42, Opposed: 0; Abstain: 1
- 3) **The Synod Approves that the Coordinators will continue work in the new Configurations**  
Vote: 43, Unanimous
- 4) **The Synod Approves the Number and Names of the Configurations**  
Vote: In favor: 42, Opposed: 1; Abstain: 0
- 5) **The Conferences are suspended until the General Chapter of 2012.**  
Vote: In favor: 42, Opposed: 0; Abstain: 1
- 6) **All juridical structures are the same. There will be an experimental period.**  
Vote: In favor: 40, Opposed: 1; Abstain: 2
- 7) **Every new configuration will have a general Consultor as liaison.**  
Vote: In favor: 33, Opposed: 6; Abstain: 4
- 8) **Recommendations regarding structures for Solidarity (Understood that they must be edited and a synthesis made).**  
Vote: In favor: 42, Opposed: 0; Abstain: 1



# The New Configurations

**The six territorial configurations** that emerged during the Synod's discernment process and were approved are as follows:

**1) *The Configuration of JESUS CRUCIFIED*** is composed of the Presentation Province (PRAES), in Italy and its Vicariate of Bahia in Brazil (PRAES-DOMIN); the Addolorata Province (DOL) in Italy and its Vicariate of Espírito Santo and Minas Gerais in Brazil (DOL-VICT); the Province of St. Paul of the Cross (PAUL) in the USA, Canada and Jamaica; the Holy Cross Province (CRUC) in the USA; the Calvary Province (CALV) in Brazil and its mission in Mozambique; the Province of the Immaculate Conception (CONC) in Argentina and Uruguay; the Province of Christ the King (REG) in Mexico; the Province of our Lady of Fatima (FAT) in Portugal, with its mission in Angola; and the Vicariates of Puerto Rico (CORI-PAC) and Goiás in Brazil (SPE-LIBER).

*As of December 31, 2007, this new Configuration was composed of 625 religious, of whom 585 had Perpetual Vows, 34 had Temporary Vows and there were 6 novices.*

**2) *The Configuration of THE SACRED HEART***, is composed of the FID Vice-Province in Colombia; the three Spanish Provinces: CORI, FAM and SANG and their missions in Latin America: Peru (CORI-RES); Dominican Republic (CORI-PAC); Venezuela, Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador and Cuba (FAM); Panama and Ecuador (SANG); Chile (SANG-CARM); and Bolivia (SANG-EXAL).

*As of 31 December 2007 the new Configuration had 446 religious, of whom 377 had Perpetual Vows, 54 had Temporary Vows and there were 15 novices.*

**3- *The Configuration of EUGENE BOSSILKOV*** is composed of the Italian provinces of PIET, and its mission in Bulgaria, CORM, LAT and CFIXI; the ASSUM Province (Poland, Ukraine, the Czech Republic); the MICH Province of France, and the VULN Vice-Province (Germany and Austria).

*As of 31 December 2007 there were 424 religious in this area, of whom 388 had Perpetual Vows, 33 had Temporary Vows and there were 3 novices.*

**4- *The PASPAC Configuration*** comprises the SPIR Province (Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea); the MACOR Province (Korea) and the mission in China; the PASS Province (the Philippines); the REPAC Province (Indonesia); the MAIAP Vice-Province (Japan); the THOM Vicariate (India); and the Mission in Vietnam.

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*As of 31 December 2007 there were 369 religious in this new Configuration, of whom 281 had Perpetual Vows, 73 had Temporary Vows and there were 15 novices.*

**5- The Passionist Configuration of AFRICA** is composed of the SALV Vice-Province of Congo and its mission in Belgium; the Kenya Vicariate (CORM-CARLW); the Vicariate of Tanzania (CORM-GEMM); and the Vicariate of Botswana and South Africa (PATR-MATAF).

*As of 31 December 2007 this new Configuration had 141 religious, of which 109 had Perpetual Vows, 29 had Temporary Vows and there were 3 novices.*

**6- The Passionist Configuration of NORTH EUROPE** includes these Provinces: GABR in Belgium, IOS in England, PATR in Ireland, Scotland and France and SPE in Holland and Germany.

*As of 31 December 2007 this new Configuration had 174 religious, of whom 174 had Perpetual Vows.*

*N.B.*

As of the moment, there has been no decision concerning the designation of the Vicariate of Blessed Isidore (LAT-ISID) in Brazil (6 religious) and the IOS mission in Sweden (3 religious).

# **Documentation in support for: Structures for Solidarity in Formation**

## **a) Rationale:**

Challenged by a new vision of our congregation and by the call and needs of a globalize world today, we must offer a formation that enables candidates - and indeed our professed members - to enter into new ways of being Passion-ist. In keeping with the process of Restructuring, and respecting what is al-ready clear in our Constitutions, there needs to be new structures for formation across the Congregation. Formation – initial and ongoing - is crucial for the fu-ture development of the Congregation and we need a strong solidarity around this issue. In the area of formation we seek a consistency and equality of basic goals and opportunity for all Passionists – clerical candidates, brother candi-dates and professed members. We desire an integral formation that addresses theological, personal and spiritual dimensions as well as fostering one’s inner (emotional) life.

We seek a specific ‘Passionist’ formation for all so that we can move forward as a Congregation. Within the formation process we need to stress our commitment to JPIC and ensure that our formation process has a clear focus on and exposure to, the Crucified and crucified ones. We need to foster in our members the realization that they are ‘global citizens’ and prepare them to face the demands of our globalize societies. We must also be mindful that in the fu-ture there will be new forms and styles of Passionist life and ministries and so formation must respect those new possibilities.

There needs to be a plan and process for the formation personnel themselves. This plan would need to promote further postgraduate (university) study in various areas of specialization.

At the level of the Congregation’s formation policy there should be a clear statement of what the basic or essential points for the formation of Passionists.

Many entities around the Congregation experience a lack of personnel and resources for this ministry and we see a need to assist each other.

## **b) Challenges**

*New structures to achieve solidarity in formation would challenge us:*

- To articulate a shared vision.
- To a greater flexibility and mobility of members.
- To accept the presence of members from various cultures.
- To be open to the language and experience of the young candidates and to bridge any divides between the experience of older members and newer younger candidates and religious.
- To a greater openness to receive something that is new.

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- To work within cross cultural and different language settings.
- To greater levels of communication across our separate entities.
- To respect the particular culture from which a candidate comes to us, but to balance this with the need to help him adopt a ‘global’ mentality.
- To achieve a level of Passionist formation for formators so that there could be a more unified approach concerning essential values.
- To restore to the role of the local Superior a ‘formation’ aspect in the context of his ministry in the local community.

#### *Additional challenges to consider in the creation of new structures:*

- Formation could occur in theological and/or social contexts outside of our self-contained Passionist settings.
- Established communities would need to accept new members formed in ways that might be unfamiliar or new to them.
- International collaboration needs to be balanced with local, national requirements to obtain a degree or recognized professional qualification.
- ‘Bureaucratic’ and ‘governmental’ boundaries often prevent the ease of movement and/or of residence, of persons from one national jurisdiction to another.
- We would need to engage with and make use of the new interactive technology and communication systems possible today.
- We would need to renew our efforts in vocational animation especially in areas where there may have been few vocations. It may necessitate our working together within regions and in new teams to promote vocations.
- We would need to integrate and collaborate in the area of vocational ministry in our provincial and congregational planning.
- We would need to clarify the criteria for the selection of candidates.
- We would need to work to create formation communities not just a formation group within a larger community.
- We would need to confront the resistance or negative attitude that some religious seem to have towards formation.
- We would need to maintain the diversities of the Congregation while attempting a more unified formation perspective.
- Smaller units within the congregation may have to entrust their candidates to formation communities of other entities.
- We would need to make a higher priority of the study of additional languages.
- Each member of a community would have to accept that he is a ‘model’ of our life for new candidates and for the religious in community.

**c) Risks**

- Leadership would lose some immediacy of control of formation.
- Differences in theology, life style and understandings of Passionist life could be over influential and could work against the potential of the project.
- It could lead to discrimination against those with simpler educational or language skills and standards, creating a certain “elitism”.
- In order to participate in this area of Congregational solidarity in formation, it may mean that other works of that province may not be provided for.
- Some religious will be critical of the formation program.

**d) Let go of...**

- An excessive mentality of ‘keeping things at a province level’.
- The fear that we would need to make more financial contributions.
- The fear of losing some personnel.
- Some other ministries that are keeping us from having more religious in formation.
- Some ‘favored’ or ‘personal’ ministries.
- Some of our prejudices against some cultures or people.
- The notion that formation should be separate – just formators and students – rather than accepting that formation takes place in a wider community setting.
- Some of the criticism and mistrust that can sometimes be expressed towards a younger or new generations.

### e) Texts

#### • **Bible**

- 1) NEW WINE NEW WINESKINS: Mk.2:22 *“No one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins are ruined. Rather, new wine is poured into fresh wineskins.”*
- 2) THE FIELD IS THE WORLD: Mt.13:38 *“The field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one...”*
- 3) THE HARVEST IS BOUNTIFUL: Mt.9:37-38 *“The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.”*
- 4) I HAND OVER TO YOU WHAT I MYSELF RECEIVED: 1Cor.11:23 *“For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you...”*
- 5) JESUS OFTEN APPEARS IN A FORMATION ROLE TOWARDS HIS DISCIPLES.  
Mt.5:1-2 *“When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying...”*  
Mt.10:5 *“Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus...”*  
Mt.13:36 *“Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house. His disciples approached him and said, ‘Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.’”*
- 6) ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE PASSION: Mt 16:21; 17:32; 20:17.
- 7) THE DISCIPLES OF EMMAUS: Lk. 24:27
- 8) THE TEACHING ON PRAYER: Lk. 11:1

#### • **Constitutions**#77 & #80

- 1) *Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ, GENERAL PROGRAM FOR FORMATION, Rome, 1989.*
- 2) The XI General Synod of 2002, **FORMATION: Reports and Conferences**, pp. 1-108, Gwangju, Korea.

## **Documentation in support for: Structures of Solidarity in Personnel**

### **a) Rationale/Motivation**

- Before all else, commitment to the mission of the Congregation must be the basis of the Solidarity. Each religious brings himself as a unique gift to the Congregation. The Congregation is at its best when we share ourselves.
- Exchange of personnel will overcome exclusivity, self-sufficiency and a “ghetto” mentality as regards our Provinces.
- Exchange of personnel must involve a sharing of cultures and spirituality. In concrete situations this will help to strengthen our resources for Formation and Leadership especially in some of the newer parts of the Congregation.
- This exchange can also help to address the issues of some entities which are either too small and/or paralyzed and not open to new growth.
- In a deeply divided world, exchange will also help us to give witness that unity in diversity is possible.

### **b) Challenges**

- Respond to the call of our Mission (Jonah)
- Answer the call to conversion. (Metanoia)
- Answer the call to remain “on the move”, avoiding the weakness of settling down in one place.
- To confront the diversity of languages which characterizes our reality, and to dedicate ourselves to learning them.
- To learn how to work in genuine partnership with the laity.
- To identify those areas of the Congregation where there is the greatest need for collaboration.
- To overcome the bureaucratic barriers of some nations that impedes the interchange of personnel.
- To develop structures to enable us to do the necessary analysis and research to make wise choices in this area.
- Discern how to best use the talents of our religious, bearing in mind their personalities, qualities and their personal limitations, in order to undertake what is required by this aspect of Solidarity.
- To open our boundaries, especially of those entities which are either too small and/or paralyzed and not open to new growth

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### c) Risks

- That we paralyze ourselves in this process of solidarity by over exaggerating what might go wrong.
- Some religious may not accept this as being good for the Congregation.
- We may form our young religious to work in one cultural context when they will be expected to live and minister in different cultural contexts.
- That the motivation for seeking exchange is to escape from one's own context rather than being willing to experience the "exodus".
- Possible conflicts between different mentalities.
- We may fear the loss of the excessive autonomy we have enjoyed as Provinces.
- We may experience identity confusion due to the introduction of different cultural attitudes and life-styles.

### d) Let go

- An attitude of triumphalism in the present Entities.
- The belief that some of us are the "real Passionists" and the sense of superiority that goes with that.
- Fear of making mistakes.
- Prejudice and mistrust.
- The need to have all the answers regarding the process of Restructuring before the process itself is concluded.
- Some of our limitations that come from unique cultural characteristics.

### e) Texts

#### • *Bible*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1) Genesis 12: 1-4<br>The call of Abraham    | 5) Mt. 28: 16-20<br>Go to the nations            |
| 2) Mk. 10: 17-30<br>The rich young man       | 6) Mt. 25: 14-30<br>The talents                  |
| 3) Mt. 13:44<br>The treasure in the field    | 7) Lk. 5:1-11<br>Cast out into the deep          |
| 4) Mt. 14: 22-36<br>Jesus walks on the water | 8) Lk. 9: 10-17<br>Jesus feeds the multitude     |
|  | 9) Lk 22: 14-20<br>This is my body given for you |
|  | 10) Acts 16: 9 (go to Macedonia)                 |

#### • *Constitutions*

- |      |       |       |        |
|------|-------|-------|--------|
| 1. 3 | 3. 6  | 5. 69 | 7. 72  |
| 2. 5 | 4. 32 | 6. 70 | 8. 142 |

## **Documentation in support for: Structures for Solidarity in Finances**

### **a) Rationale:**

- To ensure the ability of the Congregation to economically sustain those areas that are growing, but are not yet capable of financial autonomy.
- To achieve a more equitable distribution of the goods of the Congregation; currently there are some areas that are poor and needy while others are wealthy and comfortable.
- For a greater sense of justice and charity toward those who are needy. Charity should promote justice.
- To begin to live among ourselves, what we preach to others.

### **b) Challenges:**

- Overcoming mistrust on economic issues.
- Transparency in the administration of resources.
- Promote equality and fraternity in the Congregation through the sharing of material goods.
- More equitable distribution of material goods in order to promote the development of the Congregation itself.
- Change the mentality of thinking only on a Provincial level, to thinking on a Congregational level.
- Those who give should not give with a sense of superiority and those who receive must receive with a sense of responsibility and with a commitment to transparency when using the funds.
- Achieve financial self-sufficiency across the entire Congregation.

### **c) Risks:**

- Insufficient professional knowledge for managing assets.
- That the sharing of goods may create a sense of dependency and consequently hinder financial autonomy.
- Not knowing how to correctly use financial resources.
- That the sharing of goods generates a fear of insecurity that there will not be enough to satisfy our own needs.
- Not declaring one's true economic situation in order to limit sharing.
- That sharing will enable some to have a lifestyle that is superior to the social context of poverty in which they are living.

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### d) Let go of:

- Free ourselves definitively of useless structures.
- Dividing ourselves into too many communities in order to maintain useless structures.
- "What does not help me, weighs me down."
- Certain lifestyles that scandalize the poor.
- Review the current level of financial autonomy of the provinces, so that the needs of the whole Congregation can be served more adequately.
- Make an inventory of existing properties and ministries. Leave those that are not in keeping with the life and mission of the Congregation in order to address the new demands of solidarity.
- A mentality that is excessively 'provincial'

### e) Texts:

- *Biblical Texts*

- 1) Mt. 25:31-46 *"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me..."*
- 2) Acts 2:45 *"...according to each one's need."*
- 3) Mt. 14:16 *"You give them something to eat..."*.
- 4) Lk. 16:19-31 The Rich Man and poor Lazarus
- 5) Lk. 10:29-37 The Good Samaritan
- 6) Mt. 15:21-28 The Canaanite Woman
- 7) The letter of James

- *Passionist Texts*

- 1) Constitutions N. 10-15; 21 and 176.
- 2) The 44th General Chapter, Itaici, Brazil, 2000, No. 4, 6.
- 3) The 45th General Chapter, Rome, 2006, Booklet I, Priority 5, pp. 13-14.

# **Recommendations regarding Structures for Solidarity**

## **Solidarity in Formation**

- 1.** A new Congregational structure for solidarity in formation will be established for the entire Congregation.
- 2.** This new structure will incorporate the following elements:
  - a) New teams of Passionist Formators will work across the Congregation and/or within the new Configurations to offer formational opportunities for the young religious and professed members in various formation houses or settings. These teams will be at the service of the entire Congregation and will be constituted after careful discernment. They will be adequately prepared and multi-lingual if possible. They will be formed as a ‘Congregational team’ by General authority after dialogue and discerning needs within and across the new Configurations, and by virtue of collaboration and exchange of personnel across the Provinces of the Congregation.
  - b) Across the Congregation or within the new Configurations, where bureaucratic and Visa concerns do not overly limit our mobility, ‘international’ formation centers will be established. Here the formation community, the student body and the formators themselves will comprise a community of persons from various cultures.
  - c) To ensure the stability and effectiveness of the formation offered by these teams or centers, there will be regular meetings of formators for purposes of communication and for their own formation. Materials will also be provided by internet.
  - d) We need to offer specific Passionist formation for the formators themselves. To achieve this one centre or various centers around the Congregation, each with its own area of specialization will be designated. In such centre(s) we will promote further ‘specialization’ of Passionist formators.
  - e) The present congregational policy for formation will be reviewed. A new Congregational policy for ‘Solidarity in Formation’ will be established and implemented as part of the Restructuring process. This policy will underpin this new formation structure. It will be regularly revised and updated.

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- f) This Congregational policy will integrate the formation of the formators, initial formation and ongoing formation.
- g) Our formation policy will also address the needs of those members who require some more specific professional assistance and formation. This will enable them to address psychological needs and various conditions that make ministry difficult. Our policy will be attentive to the particular areas of post-ordination formation for the clerics and post final profession formation for the Brothers, as well as the formation needs of the local Communities.

### **Final Note**

In reference to other suggestions and ideas that were received from groups during the Synod, they were studied and substantially incorporated into these recommendations. Other ideas received are presently being studied by the General Council.

### **Recommendations regarding Structures for Solidarity in Personnel**

The General Council will establish a commission for solidarity in the area of personnel. It will work in collaboration with the General Council to discern, plan and provide for the needs of the Congregation in the area of solidarity in the area of “human resources”.

### **Recommendations regarding Structures for Solidarity in Finance**

1. A new congregational structure for solidarity in finances will be established for the entire Congregation.
2. The new structure will incorporate the following elements:
  - a. All Provinces, Vice Provinces and Vicariates will contribute to the Solidarity Fund.
  - b. The General Council will establish a new commission – the Finance Commission. The Finance Commission will be advisory to the General Council and the General Econome.
  - c. The principal tasks of this Commission will be:
    - i) To determine those areas of the Congregation most in need of financial support. This commission makes recommendations to the General Council concerning how to make Solidarity effective throughout the Congregation.

***Recommendations regarding structures for Solidarity.***

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- ii) The Commission will also investigate and recommend the most effective and equitable formula for contributions from the Provinces, Vice-Provinces and Vicariates to the Solidarity Fund.
- iii) Apart from voluntary contributions, all Provinces will normally contribute a percentage (at least 7%) from the sale of any property, to the Solidarity Fund. The means of implementing this practice will be studied and recommendations will be made to the General Council, by the Finance Commission.
- iv) An additional task of the Finance Commission will be to suggest effective strategies for assuring the good administration and use of the goods of the entire Congregation.



## **The Criteria for Restructuring**

- That this new structure serves the Charism and Mission of the Congregation and enables a more vital community and apostolic life.
- That this new structure respects our international nature:
  - By promoting dialogue and exchange of life between the older and newer parts of the Congregation.
  - By respecting the different cultures, languages and contexts in the various parts of the Congregation.
  - By promoting communication, the learning of languages and a sense of belonging within the Congregation.
- That this new structure supports:
  - Engagement with young people, vocational promotion, and enables formation for the whole Passionist family.
  - The numerous elderly religious of the Congregation.
- That this new structure expresses the option for the poor, our presence and mission and our concern for JPIC.
- That this new structure promotes solidarity of personnel, formation and finance.
- That this new structure respects the legal responsibilities, civil and canonical, in the various parts of the Congregation.



# **CHRONICLES**

## **Synod Prelude**

6 September 2008

P. Gabriele Cingolani, cp (PIET)

Today formed part of the Synod and at the same time it was a pre-Synod day. The program called for a formation workshop for the members of the Assembly.

The votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin was celebrated this morning by Fr. Luigi Vaninetti, General Consultor at 7:00 AM. Reflecting on the readings of the day (Sat. XXII, II) he stated that: “Our formation consists of a long, progressive process in us of the new man, of a human heart that is capable of assuming the qualities of the divine, our heart beating in unison with the heart of God. All of this occurs in the context of today’s challenges that religious life is addressing and in the context of the process of Restructuring.”

At 8:45 AM after a test of the audio system including the simultaneous translation equipment, the first session took place in the Synod Hall. There was a conference by Fr. Stephen Rossetti entitled: “Finding hope in a time of atheism.”

Dr. Rossetti is a priest of the Syracuse, New York diocese and for sixteen years he has been director of the St. Luke’s Institute in Washington, D.C. – a center for priests and religious in difficulty.

The speaker observed the Christian hope is not the same as secular optimism. “Optimism means believing, in a secular way, that things will go well. We are optimistic when we receive many vocations, when our ministries are expanding and people praise our merits. Jesus did not end his ministry optimistically. One of his closest friends betrayed him. The others abandoned him. The people who he was sent to save crucified him. Christianity does not promise success. Jesus promised us the cross.”

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Analyzing the situation of today, Rossetti described in detail the impressive advance of atheism. It “is increasing in the richest nations. The Church, in this area, is always more ignorant and more persecuted. But even more dangerous are the increase in the millions of people who practice Christianity nominally or who claim that they believe in God, but who live a life where there is no trace of God. Even that is a form of atheism.”

We ask if it is right that we as Church assume all the blame for this situation. “I don’t believe that the recent increase in Atheism and the decline in vocations is fundamentally a sign of real weakness in we humans who guide the Church. Today’s situation is not an accusation against the Church, but an accusation against our society that doesn’t work. For us members of the Church it is time to move beyond our act of contrition that risks paralyzing us, and moving ahead in faith.”

The speaker demonstrated that Atheism, at its root, is a sign of desperation. “From a faith perspective, atheism is a colossal lack of hope. Despite its rich verbosity with which it presents itself, basically it is about desperation. The nursery for atheism is the land of desperation. Atheism and a lack of hope move at the same pace and the final proof is represented in the desperate conclusion of life. It is worth nothing that atheism quietly disseminates the idea that death is the end of everything. But this is absurdity. Every fiber of human awareness moves toward the eternal and the infinite.”

The conference then moved toward some stimulating questions that were posed to the superiors of the Congregation: “You too are immersed in problems. What do you see? Where is your hope? What is the Lord doing in your community at this moment? Where is the Holy Spirit leading you? You have to be good administrators and good managers of human resources and communities; but your everyday challenges are deeper and more significant, especially in this General Synod for Restructuring.”

Referring to point No.14 of the Encyclical, “Spe Salvi”, the speaker affirmed that the environment for hope is community. “People by themselves do not find hope. As a community, you will find hope to the degree that you are capable of suffering together; to the degree that you are able to honestly address truth, with all the weakness that is present in us and in our communities.”

Obviously the terrain of the community does not bear hope without the opening of its members to the love of God. “Spe Salvi” again affirms at No. 32: *“A first essential setting for learning hope is prayer.”* To feel personally love by God and as a community is the fundamental experience of hope.

The speaker concluded: “You are loved by God. You are a divine treasure. You have a unique gift that the world is desperately in need of. Therefore, you are people of hope.”

After a rest period the Synod members shared their impressions on this topic for 45 minutes, sharing in small groups.

After 50 minutes of “open microphone” there were questions and responses addressed to the speaker. Briefly these are some of the points that were addressed:

- At times it seems impossible that faith can be something meaningful in a world that is so disastrous; but there is always something that can be done.
- It seems that the analysis of the situation presents the situation as something worse than it seems; however then we realize that basically there is logic. It cannot be like this. New possibilities present themselves. We should be content.
- We should not be surprised if some leader or ex-leader loses hope. The pressure that is on superiors today is more than it has ever been. But if we live in the Spirit we will never be overwhelmed by the task or by the problems.
- In some situations it seems that Christian hope is not enough to overcome difficulties; whereas in other situations it is easy to fall into the temptation of secular optimism because things are going well.
- Whatever the situation, a charisma that aspires to the cross seems that it should express a particular ability to overcome difficulty and difficult periods.
- It is clear that the future of the world should essentially rely on hope.

During the last part of the morning session, Dr. Rossetti ended his presentation speaking about some situations that are particularly difficult for those who are superiors of communities. It dealt with various individuals with psychological dysfunction that includes pathology and therefore the need for appropriate therapy. He listed cases of individualism or isolation, depression, exhibitionism, food or alcohol dependence, lack of control in sexual behavior, manias of every kind. Among these illnesses he also mentioned kinds of treatment and ways to address the situation.

Fr. Clemente Barrón was the moderator for the afternoon session.

The Synod members returned to the aula at 3 PM for a session using panels, sharing and discussions in the context of small groups. Denis Travers moderated the internal dynamic of the afternoon.

They began with a conversation between two provincials that were recently elected, who communicated to the assembly their experiences of initial impact

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and adaptation. Joachim Rego (SPIR) and Enzo Del Brocco (DOL) communicated to the assembly their responses to the following questions:

- § What was the most meaningful thing that you heard in this morning's conference?
- § After the first period of your term, what kind of leadership did you understand that you needed to offer to your province?
- § What kind of assistance and what kind of resources do you need in order to offer the communities what they are expecting of you?
- § What are the greatest challenges that you have had to confront during this first period of your mandate?

During the dialog that lasted 5 minutes in small groups, the Synod members shared what most impressed them during the panel presentation.

Then there was a second panel offered by two provincials who had completed their term as provincial. Fr. Michael Higgins (CRUC) and Fr. Luis Alberto Cano (FAM) responded to the following questions:

- Looking back, in light of what you heard this morning, what do you think about your experience of leadership?
- What were the most important things that you learned during your time as Provincial?
- In the ordinary exercise of your ministry, what were the most demanding realities that you had to address?
- What were the principal challenges that you had to address during your time of leadership?

For 40 minutes the Synod members exchanged ideas and discussed what they heard during the panel discussion. In both cases the moderator recommended that while the panelists spoke each individual think about how they would respond to the same question.

The afternoon session concluded in the context of prayer, that also included further instructions, guided silent time, songs and a final blessing. The order was as follows:

- ✓ Song, prayer, reading from Lk. 4:16-19.
- ✓ Sharing in small groups about the personal reflection about the above questions.
- ✓ Concluding talk of Dr. Rossetti who reassured: "You are a living community, a people of hope."
- ✓ Passionist song: "May the Passion of Jesus Christ be always in our hearts."

- ✓ Presentation of small crosses that those present used to bless one another as a symbolic renewal of the leadership mandate.
- ✓ Final blessing and dismissal.

The atmosphere of the Synod is already very charged. The Passionists, gathered from all parts of the world, are already unified and clearly happy to be together. For some it is the first time that they are present for this kind of meeting; however the vast majority have already known each other for some time. The greeting that they offered each other as they arrived expressed their mutual joy as well as discovering the ways in which the passing of time has altered their physical appearances.

The Passionist Spiritual Center of Cuernavaca, of the Mexican province of Cristo Rey (Christ the King), welcomed the Synod members with fraternal warmth and the comfortable setting of the retreat house. The geographical location is spectacular, the environment rich in flowers and vegetation and the climate is pleasant. The organization is very thorough and punctual, marked by a flexibility that is different from that of a secular business meeting; rather it is designed to accommodate religious leaders who are gathered to discern the Spirit. Nothing is lacking, and yet nothing is wasted. The availability of what is necessary does not give way to the superfluous.

We began and we are ready to begin. We have crossed the threshold as in eschatology and as in Restructuring.

## 07 SEPTEMBER

The first official session of the Synod lasted only ½ hour.

Between 11:00 – 11:30 AM some of the formalities of the Synod were addressed, under the direction of Fr. Denis Travers.

The Superior General, Fr. Ottaviano D'Egidio, greeted the Synod members and through them all of the religious, women religious and laity of the Passionist Family located in 58 nations. In particular he mentioned India that is currently experiencing a period of suffering, and also Brazil that today is celebrating its national independence. The official address of the Superior General will take place on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

Fr. Francisco Valadéz, REG Provincial Superior, greeted those present on behalf of the Mexican Passionist Family. He stated that this occasion of the XIII General Synod here in Cuernavaca was truly an historic event for the Province and, at the same time, a true challenge to their organizational skills.

The moderator proposed to the Synod members that were present some decisions and proposals of the General Curia for their approval:

- To extend the power to vote to the three Synod members who were present by invitation: Norberto Donizetti, COPAL Coordinator; Michael Ogwen, CPA Regional Coordinator; and Carlos San Martín, FAM delegate.
- Their approval of the individuals designated as staff members of the secretariat, of the communications commission and the liturgical commission, as well as Sister Christine Anderson, the facilitator/moderator.
- The CCC will be composed of the General Curia, the Regional Coordinators, the moderator and the secretary of the Synod. They will meet when pertinent decisions have to be made.

The parameters that were proposed for approval were the daily timetable, the general outline for the daily work, the organization of the liturgies with the respective principal celebrants and the leaders of prayer.

All the topics proposed were unanimously accepted by a show of hands.

The main event of the day was the Eucharist that was celebrated at 12 noon in the outdoor patio area of the Center. The Synod members celebrated the Sunday Mass of the Spirituality Center at which Fr. José Luis García, director, presided and Fr. Francisco Valadéz organized the celebration. A large group of laity were present that usually attend this Sunday Mass. Their songs that were sung before, during and after the Mass, added a festive atmosphere, despite the incessant rain that fell throughout the day. Due to the inclement weather the afternoon

prayer service that preceded the opening session was held indoors, instead of outdoors as originally planned.

The afternoon session began at 4:00 PM. The official atmosphere of the event was immediately evident in the garb of the Synod members, most of them wearing the Passionist Habit. Denis Travers continued to moderate.

To initiate the session Fr. Alfonso Iberri, of the hosting province, offered a brief presentation about Cuernavaca, “the City of Eternal Springtime”, thanks to its year-round median temperature of 23o C.

At this point, the liturgical commission for the prayer of the Synod introduced a Para-liturgy based on baptism as the source of new life that must grow. In the center of the aula there was a bubbling fountain alluding to this theme. The prayers and other symbols were all centered on the theme by the refrain to a song that was sung in various languages: “Water of life, holy reminder, unite and renew the body of Christ.”

Fr. Ottaviano again addressed the assembly and summarized the steps that have been taken thus far in order to focus on present realities and those of the future. He clarified that the sense of these first days is concerned with preparing the Synod, creating an environment, distancing us from our ordinary concerns in order to gradually concentrate on the tasks that are at hand. Yesterday Fr. Stephen Rossetti guided us, and today Fr. Octavio Mondragón did the same. Tomorrow will be a retreat day preached by Fr. Donald Senior. These are enlightening days that will prepare us as well as possible.

Fr. Octavio Mondragón began his presentation. He is a speaker who is always very appreciated during these vital moments of the Congregation. His contribution, entitled *RESTRUCTURING: A PROPHECY; A NEED*, occupied the remainder of the day’s session.

Octavio explained that he intended to present his topic in different languages: musical-artistic; biblical-theological and religious-iconographic.

For the first aspect he invited us to listen to a musical piece entitled “La Bergamasca” of Antonio Piccinini from the 16<sup>th</sup> century – in three different versions, i.e. the original version and two others that re-worked the same four centuries afterward, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the group “Il Giardino Armonico” and by the composer Ottorino Respighi. The presentation demonstrated how based on the original theme, new motives and harmonies developed with inexhaustible creativity, without the original disappearing or the new being suppressed.

The biblical-theological language was used by the speaker in the text of his conference and it had five, main points:

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**Compassion:** an attitude inspired by the Spirit, which needs to be kept from being extinguished, as St. Paul warns in 1Thess.5:16.

**The “Passionis Memoria”:** is a term that he prefers. “There cannot be a real and concrete process of Restructuring in the Congregation without a concrete and specific decision to nullify or remove from us those forms of life that instead of being “memoria” are rather sources of forgetfulness.”

**Prophecy:** is a consequence of the memory of the Passion. From the beginning of the Church it was clear that “prophetic activity is an act of the Spirit in the midst of the Christian community.” “One cannot attempt to revitalize the charismatic dimension if prophecy is not present”. “The Memoria Passionis is the source of Christian prophecy; therefore it is also prophecy that structures Passionist life before and in the midst of the world.”

**The passion for God:** is a fruit of Christian discernment and criteria for every choice of personal and community life. “Restructuring cannot be reduced to remodeling the house where we live; rather it involves reformulating the ultimate reasons for living and defining the world in an alternative way. It is not only concerns the world where we live, but the world that lives within us.”

**The memorial of the Lord’s Supper:** Our existence must become “active memory of the Lord’s Supper, where the mystical body of the Messiah is constituted, an alternative society and story.”

Octavio concluded affirming: “We are a challenging memory of a new event that extends throughout all of history.” Thus we address and are challenged by history. We must be a living memory of this reality, an expression of the infinite desire of God, which is God himself.

The religious-iconographic aspect was briefly illustrated by Lilian Espinosa, who has been a speaker for other Passionist meetings. She stated that communication with God is achieved not only through words, but also through images. Obviously we cannot represent divinity, but we can depict Jesus, Our Lady and the saints and some aspects of the religious mysteries. At the moment that they are depicted we enter into a type of communication with them. The religiosity of the Orientals shows that preparing oneself and dedicating oneself to iconography is always a spiritual experience.

With these reflections, the Synod members thoughtfully left the aula, anticipating the demanding days ahead of them.

## 08 SEPTEMBER

Conscious that the Christian life is a journey and mission is the essential presupposition for achieving any plan of Restructuring, Fr. Donald Senior began his retreat conference. .

Donald Senior, CP (CRUC), the president of Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, illustrated this stated thesis with Biblical texts and he described it as incarnated in the experience of St. Paul the Apostle, with whom our Founder shares his name and his spirit.

This is the theme of the retreat day that our illustrious confrere preached today, the feast of the Nativity of Mary of Nazareth, for the participants of the XIII General Synod of the Congregation.

**The first meditation** presented Biblical revelation as an epic experience of faith.

*The starting point*, as the book of Genesis demonstrates in the account of creation, is the affirmation that God is the source of life because He is capable of drawing life out of chaos.

*The Exodus episode* recounts the passage from slavery to freedom. God who intervenes is opposed to oppression and appears to the people as He who will always take the part of those who are denied the fullness of life.

*The experience of the desert* is the period of the constitution and the maturation of the people. It is like the period of adolescence in human development. Liberty is not about traveling without a goal, but it is purified and finalized. The community is born with a name and an identity. The God who allows himself to be known is not manageable. He is majestic, all powerful, very demanding.

*The possession of the Promised Land* represents the maximum of realization of adulthood. It is the time of conquests, of the establishment of the monarchy, of structural development that reaches its height in the construction of kingdom and the temple. However, little by little the fervor of their faith wanes. The prophetic vigor appears, but to no avail. The people trust in their own power and they feel that God is unnecessary. Power dominates the weak. Discrimination develops between the rich and the poor. God is still omnipotent, provident, just, but always more ignored.

*The experience of the Exile* is seen as a consequence of this gradual detachment from God, source and sustainer of life. It is the loss of everything that they

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had conquered and possessed. God seemed to be hidden, absent, near only to those who suffer. The theology of the “remnant” of Israel is born.

*The return from Babylon* is another sign of gratuitous intervention of God. The people are powerless and drastically reduced in number. They are not capable of freeing themselves. It will be only at the initiative of the pagan emperor. In the journey of faith, God is rediscovered as the creator of the future, capable of reproducing life from sterility and who makes us overcome the fear of death. He is the God of hope. Israel once again understands that life comes only from God.

In this Biblical context, each of us can see how our own experience is inserted. So, too, is the experience of the Church, of nations, of groups, and of the Passionist Congregation.

Current exegetical study reveals that Jesus had a strong sense of wanting to rebuild dispersed peoples. He began with the nucleus of the Twelve whom he wanted at all costs to be one with Him so that to the very end they would trust in the God of Life. The disciples would have to follow him without fear of difficulties, of rejection and death, because God would always take the part of the living. The resurrection would be the final confirmation of this. The God, who was capable of bringing life out of nothing and out of the primeval chaos, would also always defend life in human relationships, and create new life from the death of the crucified Son.

The conclusion is that we have to emerge ourselves in the flow of life, without fear of death, because God is always the source of life.

“Life is a journey” is not only a slogan of the Japanese Nissan company, but an affirmation of the profound meaning of human existence. It is not a journey without a goal and without a scope, but one of constant searching for communion with the God of life.

In the **second meditation**, Donald Senior presented the topic of mission as another existential dynamic for achieving the plan of Restructuring in the Church. It does not merely concern mission as a task of the Church, but of the experience of mission that transforms people making them into the body of the Church.

He again addressed the topic using Biblical references, this time from the New Testament, an area in which Senior is one of best scholars in the United States.

In his first “excursus” the speaker demonstrated that the mission to the Gentiles radically transformed the early Christian community. Up until approximately 80 AD, the Church was composed of Judeo-Christians, but it then became Greco-Roman and finally a universal Church that has lasted until the present day.

In his second “excursus”, referring to the Gospel of Matthew, he analyzed the cases in which Jesus himself, meeting several pagans, was transformed in the way in which he understood how he was to fulfill his mission. Matthew is the most Jewish of the evangelists. He is writing for a Judeo-Christian community that continued to be overwhelmed by Christian converts from paganism.

In this light, Donald Senior examined some events surrounding the birth of Jesus, such as the presence of certain women in his genealogy (Mt. 1:2-25); the Magi (2:1-12) and the Holy Family in exodus (2:13-23). He also cited the miracles of the centurion of Cafarnaum (8:5-13) and the Canaanite woman (15:21-28).

The third “excursus” was dedicated to the surprises of the Holy Spirit in the gospel of Luke and in the Acts of the Apostles: the Church discovers its future. The two works are permeated by the active presence of the Spirit.

Fr. Donald then examined the conflict of interest that occurred in the encounters that took place in the synagogue of Nazareth (Lk. 4, 16-30) and in the passages of Acts relative to Pentecost (2:1-13), the encounter of Philip the deacon with the Ethiopian eunuch on the Gaza road (8:26-40), the meeting of Peter and the centurion Cornelius at Caesarea Maritima and the relative explanation at Jerusalem (10:1-11:18), the disturbances at Antioch (11:19-30), the journey of Paul to Rome (16:6-15) and the open proclamation that he was the Christ in the imperial capital (28:30).

It is together that the Spirit of the Father and the Son engender life in the Church and guide its mission in history. “The field is the world” (Mt. 13:38). They were no longer Jews, nor Greeks nor Romans; nor is there only the Church or our Congregation...but the world.

The afternoon program included the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel from 3:00 – 4:00 PM. The Synod members were invited to the exposition, after which they returned to the Aula.

The **third meditation** had for its title: *“Paul our Brother: Biblical Wisdom for Passionist Missionaries”*.

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Donald Senior began by recalling that we are in the midst of the Jubilee Year honoring the memory of St. Paul the Apostle. He felt that it would be good to prepare for the Synod a reflection based on the life and theology of the first great missionary of the Church, as further Biblical inspiration in preparation for the work of Restructuring. “As Passionists we venerate another Paul,” he observed, “our Founder, Paul Danei. I believe that there is a great similarity between these two great saints, both totally dedicated to the memory of the Passion.”

The experience of the apostle went through various phases of transformation and restructuring. Beginning with his dual cultural origin – Hebrew and Roman – of which he was proud, to his conversion and total dedication to the Crucified and Risen One. He went from being a quiet contemplative of the desert, where he had retired following his encounter with Christ, to experiencing innumerable tribulations for the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles. “From the first moment of his conversion, Paul was convinced that the Gospel had a vital power for all humanity.”

By means of a subtitle for this reflection, “Paul, the Passionist”, Senior presented Paul the Apostle in this light with brilliant originality. *“As Passionists we need to note in particular that the very heart of Paul’s theology and his spirituality was his contemplation of the passion of Jesus. For Paul the dying and rising of Jesus Christ was the reality that explained all reality, which revealed the true face of God. In the light of the Passion, of the Paschal mystery, Paul rethought and rediscovered the heart of his Jewish tradition. The God of Abraham was also the God of the Nations. The God of Jesus Crucified was revealed not in the trappings of power and splendor but in the marvel of what humans counted as weakness: a life poured out for others... (1 Cor 1:22-25).*

*From this center Paul would contemplate everything: the heart of Christian life was love, as it was the unconditional love that animated the Crucified Christ; the experience of limitation and weakness, as Paul himself experienced in his own mortal body, would find meaning in the crucified body of Jesus who gave himself for us; the body of Christ that was the church would give greatest honor to its most weak and least honorable member because God had revealed himself to the world through a Crucified Messiah and thus the Body of Christ was a crucified body in which the wounds were still visible; and the apostolic sufferings and wrenching heartache Paul experienced in the course of his ministry or his communities experienced in their struggles and suffering were not in vain because the cross of Jesus had forever affirmed that through God’s grace from death comes abundant life. And on we could go... Paul of Tarsus whose life was seized by the memory of the passion is truly our brother as Passionists.”*

In other points of the meditation, Donald Senior demonstrated that Paul, although seeming to be a solitary person that was aloof and inaccessible, knew how to surround himself with numerous collaborators with whom he shared the burden of his ministry. Finally he reflected on Paul's unflagging hope that made him capable of bearing the most unthinkable sufferings, through which the Risen Lord associated him to his Passion.

In thanking the speaker at the end of this session, Fr. Clemente Barrón rightly pointed out that he not only enlightened our minds, but he also touched our hearts. It seemed that our hearts, too, burned within us while he explained the Scriptures to us.

The day ended with the celebration of the Eucharist on the memorial of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at which Senior presided and also preached the homily.

The phase of preparation for the Synod is now ended. Tomorrow is another day when we will begin the real work. The spiritual preparation could not have been better.

## 9 SEPTEMBER

**“TAKE COURAGE, IT IS I, DO NOT BE AFRAID.”** is the title of the report that the Superior General, Fr. Ottaviano D’Egidio presented to the Synod Assembly at the beginning of today’s session.

With a brief comment on the apparition of Jesus to the disciples who were frightened during the storm on the lake (Mt. 14:22-23) he offered the biblical explanation of this title. Then he gave a summary of the process up to now of Restructuring.

The origin of the process was already established in the General Chapter of 2000, in whose documents we read: *“The capitulars noted the need for an organizational renewal of structures in the Congregation.”* (CD2000, #4.7).

The first definitive step in this process took place at the Synod of 2004 that “...acknowledged Restructuring as a call from God to conversion for a new creative fidelity to community life, to prayer, to mission and to concrete solidarity with the Congregation and toward the poor.”

Commenting on that event, Fr. Ottaviano added: “It is time that we think more as a Congregation than as a Province. It is time to go beyond specific geographical and cultural boundaries in order to rediscover an evangelical freshness and the capacity to dialog with all parts of the Congregation...” And especially with the young in mind, he continued: “The youth, lacking any great prospective or dreams that impact upon community and apostolic life that is weak and listless and, at times, not present, quickly lose enthusiasm and soon leave the Congregation. These are concerns and painful wounds of various Provinces.”

Later in his report he insisted: “Conversion is here, in accepting these new endeavors, discussing with an open mind and heart our own certainties and habitual ways of thinking and living that are engrained in us over years of religious life and in our past.”

The definitive step in the process took place in the General Chapter of 2006. At this Chapter Restructuring was mandated, empowered and set into motion with the said decree. Guiding principles were established together with criteria and phases of development until the Chapter of 2012.

The first phase began in 2006 and is concluding with the present Synod of 2008. In the meantime ample dialog has taken place on the level of the Congregation by means of the said questionnaire, whose responses were recorded in over 350 pages. From these responses various elements emerged for further consideration: “there is still too much focusing on our own Province; one of the main concerns is youth and vocation ministry; there is a desire to give greater attention and energy to initial and ongoing formation; there is a need to share financial goods seeking greater balance and equality in their distribution; improve communications; be

aware of international dimensions; empower the vitality of the charism; care for community life and fraternal relationships; review and discern the distribution of presence within a territory; clarify and motivate the mission; overcome individualism on the part of various Entities in favor of greater cooperation; develop a spirituality for the elderly; bring an end to the process of secularization that is growing in the Congregation; the need to work more with the laity.”

Coordinators were designated on a regional level, and in their meetings they have already spoken about “some questions and doubts concerning the internal matters of the Conferences: some spoke about the amalgamation of Provinces; others about clarifying the difference between Restructuring and reorganization. Restructuring is a form, a mode of being that involves the entire Congregation: reorganization is the consequence of Restructuring, how it operates in the various dimensions of life and mission; reorganization is part of Restructuring and is a result of the same. In order to do this work well it is necessary to clearly understand this difference.”

The primary task of this Synod consists now of discerning and identifying points of agreement about a possible “new configuration” of the Congregation, and dialoging about the “viability of the new entities.”

Arriving at the conclusion, Fr. Ottaviano stated that “we may be called to choose between the priorities of a Province and the priorities of the Congregation... We are united at a point in the journey where there is no longer any discussion about “Restructuring or not”; there is only what kind of Restructuring? Which model of Congregation should we use for a Passionist presence in today’s world that is more effective and enables a greater sense of solidarity among the various parts and cultures of the Congregation itself? ... We are aware that the need for collaboration is no longer only dependant on good will, but also on institutional decisions.”

In the second part of the report, Fr. General provided information about some situations in the Congregation and he recalled several of our illustrious religious who recently left us to form part of the heavenly community. (*The complete text of the report can be found on the website of the Congregation.*)

Returning to the Aula following a break, the Synod members found their places rearranged in such a way that they could have small group discussion. The official moderator of the Synod, Sister Christine Anderson, began at this moment her role of facilitator of the work, observing that after three and a half days of listening, perhaps someone wants to say something. Therefore she invited the groups to dialog using the following questions:

- *In light of what you heard these days, especially the Report of the General, what do you want from the Synod?*
- *What are your concerns and fears about this Synod?*

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As usual, the groups chose a moderator and a secretary, who would report about the discussion.

These are some of the main fears and concerns that were stated in the small groups and shared with the larger assembly:

#### **CONCERNS:**

- § Clarify what is meant by Restructuring
- § Use common language
- § Evaluate pluralism and reconcile unity and diversity
- § Have a sense of belonging and universality
- § Belonging to an international Congregation means much more than living in different countries and sharing resources
- § Be clear about the process and the objectives to be attained
- § Listen to the voice of the poor
- § Understand Restructuring as service to mission
- § Redefine charism and give priority to mission
- § Specify what level of our life we are dealing with; leave the Synod with concrete decisions
- § Dialog about administrative aspects
- § Establish a new way of being together as conferences; unburden us from outdated structures
- § Give importance to formation

#### **FEARS:**

- § That Restructuring is understood in a juridical and geographic sense
- § We don't have a common idea about Restructuring
- § We don't know how to respond to the challenges
- § We are still on a theoretical level
- § We are not capable of allowing ourselves to be converted
- § We are dividing the Congregation more than uniting it
- § Confusion, fragmentation, without change -- we cannot offer anything to the Congregation
- § Hasty decisions that don't allow us to move ahead, but to regress
- § Sacrifice culture and identity
- § Not knowing how to move from the reflective phase to the operative phase
- § The present structures are keeping us from adequate education toward collaboration
- § We do not have clear criteria
- § See the process more in a sense of tourism rather than charismatic

- § That one or more cultures dominate over the others
- § That we value solidarity as an option whereas it is a requisite

At the end of listening to the different lists, the moderator asked: *How can you help one another with the task at hand?* You are the group who will guide the movement of Restructuring.

With some reticence some responses emerged. We need to:

- § Have an open heart and reciprocal trust
- § Full time involvement
- § Proceed as a Congregation and not as local entities
- § Avoid prejudices

In light of the obvious difficulty in understanding the question and talking about it, the moderator emphatically stated that it is already obvious that changes don't derive from great statements or from some solemn declaration, but from new relationships. The next step will consist of dialoging among the Synod members from their experience. From the work done in groups it seems that you might be talking about Restructuring as something apart from yourselves, as if this should be happening by someone else's work. You should be able to talk to each other about what you have experienced in your provinces when you tried to talk about Restructuring and you tried to do something. What were the reactions of your fellow religious and what were yours.

About these debates and with a certain uneasiness of the assembly, the next session was concluded, guided by Clemente Barrón.

The afternoon session, guided by Luigi Vaninetti, was begun with several questions about the report of the Superior General.

After ten minutes of dialog in groups, several Synod members expressed questions about various arguments. Clarification was given about the community of Highgate (IOS), which is under the jurisdiction of the Superior General, and that of Lourdes, opened by the MICH province.

Responding to the complaint that there were no clear, concrete directions about the role of the present Synod, the General responded that they tried to avoid this so that no one would say that everything had been decided beforehand.

Additional interventions expressed the desire for more information about the expectations of the young religious, given that they seem more enthusiastic for Restructuring. These will appear in the next BIP.

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There is still some uncertainty about the international concept, so too about who and what should be relinquished and what should we maintain and for whom should we maintain it.

The moderator took over again, and she asked that the small groups dialog with the following questions:

*In the process up to this point...*

§ *What has sustained you?*

§ *What has concerned you?*

§ *What concrete problems have you encountered?*

During this exchange she did not ask for any report from the assembly because she did not want to halt the spontaneity, however if someone felt that he had a point that would be of common interest, he could share it. These are some of the points made during this session:

§ There are some things that hinder the process to the point of blocking it.

§ We spend a lot of energy maintaining the status quo, and then we have little energy remaining to create something new.

§ The problem concerns what sense is there today in maintaining boundaries; and the concept of being international.

§ It is evident that among us there are cultural sensibilities, as well as social and pastoral differences. The same words, such as mission or community, are lived very differently. Restructuring cannot eliminate the borders, but we take into account the local realities. It is there that we must unite and restructure ourselves, without competition or imposition.

In light of the fact that uncertainties about the meaning of Restructuring continue to be present, the General offered a further contribution to shed more light on the topic. To understand the concept and the process of Restructuring it would be good to begin from the difficulties and the potentialities.

Every entity has its difficulties with its mission – community life, apostolate, vocations and formation, finances and solidarity. At the same time each individual has potential or strong points. Restructuring will consist of coming together, on various local levels, to share potential talents in order to resolve the difficulties.

They were again invited to share in small groups about this reflection, and the Synod members seemed to be in agreement about the concept. Another intervention suggested going ahead courageously, even with small steps. When we realize that something is attainable, why don't we do it? There was a suggestion

that on a conference level a chart be prepared of the difficulties and the strengths in order to facilitate the process.

The moderator concluded this phase of dialog saying that what she had heard today is common to all religious congregations. Restructuring is a very emotional topic. Just to talk about it, many religious have never gone beyond their boundaries; would think that they had been transferred to some other part of the world. Others believe that after profession they belong to a world without boundaries. Restructuring is not about any of this; rather it is about remaining where you are. It is a dynamic reality that may require movement; if so we will be prepared to live it.

Up until today's first session the moderator had assured the assembly that all the hesitations and fears that were expressed will be studied further in the work of the Synod.

From today onward, the work of the assembly will have two facilitators. The moderator will guide the procedural aspect. The facilitator will guide the dynamic concerning the topic of the Synod, Restructuring.

There was morning and there was evening, the first day in the life of Synod. Now the rain is falling incessantly, like the sound of music.

## 10 SEPTEMBER

The Regional Coordinators have played a key role in the process of Restructuring up to this point. There are seven, according to the respective geographic areas and the respective Conferences in which the Congregation is organized. They are: Leone Masnata for CIPI (Italy), Eulogio Cordero Martínez for CII (Iberian Peninsula), Nicholas Postlethwaite for NEPC (North Europe), Norberto Donizetti for COPAL (Latin America and the Caribbean), Joseph Jones for IPCM (North America, except Mexico and the Caribbean), Joachim Rego for PASPAC (Asia and Pacific) and Michael Ogweno for Africa.

As had occurred yesterday, when the Synod dialoged with the Provincials, so too today in the first part of this morning's session there was conversation with the Coordinators.

Seated in a row in front of the Assembly, each explained how they did their coordinating work, the difficulties they encountered and their experiences.

All spoke of how hard they worked because the template-questionnaire that was sent to all by the General Curia involved the Congregation in all the communities, and all reported that they were successful, arranging meetings, assemblies and visits for this purpose.

Some had a sense of frustration at not being able to obtain more information, or due to confusion because the role of coordinator was not clear; it is only for organizing, without any possibility for taking initiative and having to take direction from the General Curia. Others undertook many initiatives, such as elaborating on the supplied questionnaire or convoking extraordinary assemblies where they arrived at consensus on issues via vote.

In the younger conferences the young had moments of great enthusiasm in light of the prospective of restructuring. In others there was only generic acceptance of the topic, together with some resistance.

Some delegates simply reported their experience, while others theorized to a great extent, offering valuable points for further reflection.

The Moderator asked the Synod members to share their reactions in groups which were arranged in the Aula, before asking questions of the Coordinators, as individuals or as a group.

Some of the topics that arose:

- § The Africa conference is still waiting for varied and substantial input from the rest of the Congregation. The intention in that area is at the moment not to unite into a single entity, but just the opposite. They want to expand, while not excluding future unification.
- § It seems clear that in the geographically proximate countries (CII, CIPI, NEPC) the process of Restructuring is easier, while in those that are dis-

persed there are major difficulties. The principal problem is still not geographic, but one of identity. There is a need for agreement about how much we are able to unite because it is more difficult to be united when separated by geographic distances.

- § They returned to the argument that Restructuring should not be understood merely as a response to aging or a medicine to delay death; rather it should be understood as a choice for life in order to respond to the challenges of this time.
- § The experiences of some other institutes that are ahead in the process (eg. the Redemptorists) have shown that it is possible to restructure while respecting identity and the time that each needs. It was verified that the elderly religious feel happy about the prospect of belonging to a larger group, and young religious have confirmed their enthusiasm in moving together toward a new future.

In the second morning session, Sister Christine, who is not only the Moderator for our Synod, but has also guided the process for some time together with the General Curia and the Coordinators, read the evaluation which she prepared on the template/questionnaire. The report was made according to certain principles and scientific criteria of “organizational analysis” of institutions. She made six points:

I. *The convictions that emerged:*

- § vibrant sense of inclusion and belonging;
- § Value of the charism as it is lived and as was reaffirmed by the General Chapters.
- § life-giving capacity for organization;
- § willingness to participate in the process of Restructuring;
- § need for collaboration, especially in formation and finances;
- § ability to think as a group, not only as a few individuals;
- § The value of discernment, even in the midst of confusion about meaning.

II. *Relationship between the responses to the questionnaire and the present Synod.*

III. *Analysis of the organization.* It demonstrates a precise clarity about mission, even if it is expressed in different cultures and contexts.

IV. *Analysis of roles.* The role of authority is in crisis everywhere. Various religious seem to have lost a sense of belonging.

V. *Analysis of the decision making process.*

VI. *Cultural and contextual analysis.*

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Then there were 30 minutes of exchange of ideas in groups about the report. There were questions for clarification and comprehension directed to the Moderator that continued into the first half-hour of the afternoon session. These centered on the following topics:

- § Explanations about concepts of subsidiarity, interconnection, solidarity;
- § The situation of those who have lost a sense of belonging that has been caused by a change from the old to the new formation. In the past they taught us how to pray, to live together, about obedience, etc. But are not aware that with profession one becomes responsible for the mission of the Congregation as is the general or a provincial.
- § The crisis of authority is common today in every area of society. People are under pressure to the point that every intervention by authority seems to be an intrusion. This topic will return during the course of the Synod.
- § Mission is the factor that unites, motivates and clarifies who we are for ourselves and for others. We are hesitant about saying who we are, but we willingly talk about what we do. Therefore, the mission gives us the vocabulary to define who we are.
- § The topic of unity in mission intersects with that of plurality of models. Even amidst diversity there need to be elements that unite us. Following Vatican II we went from rigid hierarchy to the swamps. Now we are trying to emerge by giving ourselves new structures. Some of these should be in common; otherwise there will no longer be a single Congregation.

Sister Christine stated that she sensed in the group a strong need to hold on to something concrete, but at the same time a great need to understand clearly what is happening. Both situations will be addressed.

At this point we are already in place for the afternoon session and the dynamic of the work is directed toward a certain point.

The facilitator, who today is also the conference presenter, asked at this point that the Synod participants spend one hour in discernment in a context of silence and prayer. After so much discussion and listening, this is the moment to be quiet in order to make space for our relationship with God. She clarified that discernment involved four elements:

1. Discernment is about opening a path on which God wants to lead us. Therefore, it is about seeking God.
2. God is not absent, but is present in concrete experiences of life and history, personal and communal.

3. There is a need to understand what we need to be liberated from in order to be free to bring about Restructuring. “Freedom from” in order to be “free for”. At this point we need to single out the prejudices and the obstacles that we find within ourselves and present them to God in prayer so that we will be free from them.

4. Regarding the progress along the road that has been travelled up to this point, we need to see what has increased our faith, hope and charity and what, on the contrary, has disturbed or discouraged us, distancing us from God instead of trusting in him.

This phase has to take place alone, in freedom, without speaking with anyone else, in order to enter into contact with God in the intimate places within us. At the end we need to ask ourselves: What are two things that, if the Synod was to undertake them, I would leave satisfied? And make note of them, but only after completing the entire process. Don't leave here at this moment thinking: I know what the two things are.

The scope of this dynamic is to securely identify what the Synod needs to accomplish. Therefore in the second part of the afternoon session the work continued in interaction between the groups and the facilitator.

First, in 30 minutes of dialog in groups, each stated the two points that the Synod needs to address, and every group, composed of eight religious, reduced the points to only five, and wrote them on a separate sheet of paper.

Then Sister Christine collected them one by one from the eight groups and she hung them on the wall; lining them up according to similarity of topics.

The summary of the topics of discernment were then collected in four main areas:

### **The field is the world**

- § Our mission
- § Option for mission – new projects
- § More structural efficiency for mission
- § International unity in the Congregation
- § Contemplative dimension
- § Option for community life – memory of the Passion today
- § The common life – fraternity and prayer
- § Sense of belonging in the Congregation

### **Solidarity within and beyond the Congregation**

- § International dimension
- § Solidarity in terms of resources

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- § Solidarity in community
- § Option for the poor, for the crucified of today, JPIC
- § Collaboration with the laity in areas of formation and mission

### **Restructuring**

- § Clarify the concept of Restructuring
- § Restructuring while respecting culture
- § The crucified at the center of mission and in the process of Restructuring
- § New configuration that is flexible and in solidarity
- § Guide lines for the steps of the process

### **Option for Formation**

- § Unity and inculturation of formation personnel
- § Government
- § Coordination on the general level of vocation and youth ministry.

This ended the day's work. Sister Christine asked the Synod members to keep it in their heart and mind. Tomorrow morning they will return to studying the summary. If in the meantime someone has another idea or dream or nightmare he can voice them again.

She concluded observing that in her opinion those points which seem to have surfaced repeatedly in the Synod dialog up to now are the need for clarity and the reference to values. These are positive points that will be respected and addressed.

In the morning the moderator was Luis Alberto Cano and in the afternoon Denis Travers.

## 11 SEPTEMBER

The Synod is making significant progress in understanding its task.

During this morning's session Sister Christine asked the assembly to again review the summary that was elaborated yesterday in order to verify if they agreed with it.

They added two additional points:

- ✓ The Crucified One and not only the crucified of today should be at the center of Restructuring.
- ✓ Re. the matter of coordination on a general level: this is needed not only for youth ministry, but also for formation.

Following a brief summary, the facilitator made some further comments concerning the response to the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire on Restructuring that were presented yesterday.

She talked about the meaning of culture and the context that might influence various positions, and she listed some key points that were suggested by the responses. Among these were:

- If one accepts the idea that Passionists cannot do everything, then focus on several apostolic priorities.
- Seek more simplified government structures
- Sustain those areas of the Congregation that are developing
- Means of communication should be improved and better utilized
- Make available to everyone, superiors and others, access to the resources necessary to better develop their mission, according to apostolic priorities.

When this topic was completed, the Synod members were encouraged to take another dynamic step. They were asked to see if, in 20 minutes of dialog in small groups, they could come to some agreement about the following statement:

**The objective of the Synod is to create structures for education and formation in solidarity with each other in order to have a sense of unity in the same mission.**

In light of the difficulty in understanding the question, she explained that mission is not an apostolate or the ministries that we do; rather it is who we are, from which comes from what we do. The mission is what unifies us as a group, motivates activities and clarifies our identity.

Every individual, community and province has its limits and boundaries; individuals can do different ministries, but the mission is the same and it is what

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identifies us as Passionists. We can say about mission what the French say about love: it is looking together in the same direction.

At the center of all of this is the charism about which there can be no discussion. But the charism is alive and dynamic, and must be preserved as it is. In order for this to happen three essential and connected elements are needed: the guides and the members (leadership and membership); structures and resources and finances.

Following these explanations, illustrated with images on sheets of newsprint, the small groups formed to address these points and then they responded in the assembly to the question: *Do you agree that the objective of the Synod be expressed in the statement presented above?*

In the responses there was general consensus, although there were still questions about how (to do this) and about the concept of solidarity itself.

Several interventions continued to provide reflections on the question.

- § the concern again arose about safeguarding our contemplative dimension. In a world that is ever more void of meaning and a sense of separation from God, our mission has to include the proclamation of the living God.
- § from another perspective, the concern was again voiced that the objective of the Synod should be the Passionist interpretation of the demands of justice and peace and integrity of creation (JPIC).
- § Solidarity implies things to be eliminated and things to be added. Among these is language -- we can no longer speak about provinces, vicariates and various entities dependent on these. Among the latter, are resources to be gathered and redistributed, which may cause further separation between who gives and who receives.
- § The charism is fulfilled and manifested in the mission. Our mission is to announce the Crucified One as a response to today's world. But the context may favor personal choices that are open to question. There is a need to recover our prophetic, charismatic and mystical spirit, as well as community life and prayer that give value to ministry.

The second part of the morning session was dedicated to the topic of solidarity within the Congregation.

It began with dialog in small, language groups. For 15 minutes the Synod members had to name those situations where they felt it was necessary to restructure for love of solidarity. Each group could propose two or three, also indicating how to apply the various steps of Restructuring in this context.

From the reports of the assembly, the six groups converged on the same topics, choosing three central topics: personnel, formation and financial resources. Re. how to apply these, there were various suggestions.

In light of the surprising unanimity, like Pentecost, they were asked to freely state:

*What delights you, or fascinates you about this response?*

The responses demonstrate:

- Ü That there is almost unanimous agreement about an international sense of structure
- Ü That there is open discussion about finances, considering that until now this was taboo. Now we begin to break bread, especially in favor of formation
- Ü That we are grasping the radical aspect of our life;
- Ü That there is a level of reciprocal trust. We are united although speaking different languages. There is a sense of solidarity among us.
- Ü That there is a sense of belonging to the same family
- Ü That there is a willingness to move on.

The facilitator then asked:

*What is a cause of concern for you?*

- Ø That there will be challenges to be addressed. Our lifestyle will be a topic of discussion and this may cause distress.
- Ø the difficulty of unity in formation: different theological and ecclesial points of view;
- Ø The new relationship that will develop between who gives and who receives. Often there are complaints about the use of the goods of which others are deprived.

With these thoughts the morning session ended, moderated by Clemente Barrón.

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The afternoon session that was moderated by Luigi Vaninetti, was dedicated entirely to work in small groups.

The facilitator sub-divided the participants into three groups of 16 individuals, according to the three topics chosen for Restructuring: **Personnel – Formation – Finances**

Each group chose a moderator and secretary and they used a computer to elaborate a document of not more than two pages to be submitted to the secretariat by 7:00 PM.

The work was to be done using the following guidelines:

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- Write the fundamental reason or motivation why the topic is important for your community.
- What kind of challenge does this pose to the Congregation in this phase of the process?
- Which risks should we take?
- What needs to cease in the Congregation so that this can happen?
- What Biblical passage or text of a Passionist document will help you in accomplishing this project?
- Suggest the concrete structure that will make the plan possible to achieve.

Tomorrow morning the assembly will examine the texts that were prepared by the groups.

## **12 SEPTEMBER**

Making difficult things easy is a real challenge! The topic of the Synod is difficult and therefore the work of the facilitator is arduous. However, Sister Christine is courageously and energetically guiding and urging the Synod members onward toward those objectives that are before them. Her style is not talking from the podium or seated at the moderator's desk; rather, with portable microphone in hand, she moves about in the midst of the assembly to insure that they are hard at work. She encourages interaction within the assembly by promoting dialog with a glance, so that they don't go off the topic.

The morning work, guided by Fr. Luis Alberto Cano, further developed the topics that the groups studied yesterday afternoon concerning Restructuring in the areas of personnel, formation and finances.

The dynamic consisted of:

- Reports from each of the three small groups that were composed yesterday;
- Discussion of each report in the usual Synod working groups;
- Conversation in the aula on each topic;
- Consignment in writing of any new points that they wanted to be considered for further study, placing them in the appropriate receptacle.

The plan for these texts is that they will be re-worked by the original groups that composed them, keeping in mind the discussion that will take place tomorrow (Sunday), and then reviewed by the CCC and re-proposed in the aula for verification and final approval. The group reports, translated into the respective languages, were previously given to each Synod member. Since the documents are still being processed, we will not report on the content until they are finalized. The reports and the discussion concerning the same will follow these guidelines:

- Reasons why specific Restructuring is needed;
- Challenges to be addressed;
- Risks to be taken
- Things to be abandoned
- Biblical and Passionist texts that justify, require and sustain the process of Restructuring;
- Concrete structures that need to be in place within the near future-- short-term, mid-term and long-term.

Sister Christine warned that we need to address the problems of the Congregation, and not personal or provincial problems. Based on this exchange the following key points emerged.

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#### ***Re personnel:***

- The areas in need of personnel are not only those that were recently established, but also those that are older.
- The exchange of personnel should not only occur out of need, but also as a source of spiritual and cultural enrichment.
- The involvement of the laity should be better organized.

For eventual new structures in this area, the topic will be further studied within the context of formation when the two texts are finalized.

In the meantime, the facilitator encouraged further study about whether it would be possible to make the current boundaries less rigid, because up until now, everything depended on the will of the provincials and by sporadic availability of individuals. No one should feel that he is isolated. We need to open our arms beyond our boundaries. Strong convictions are needed about structures in order to produce effective decisions.

#### **Re formation:**

- ✓ When establishing unified formation centers keep in mind the location chosen. The geographic location influences the formation of the individual; it is also a theological site.
- ✓ The contents of our formation are indicated in the Constitutions. It seems as if these never existed and that everything needs to be re-done.
- ✓ Some of the work of the small groups and the dialog that has occurred seems to want to be focusing on a new plan of formation, instead of concentrating on the needed new structures.
- ✓ Initial and on-going formation are terms that are at the point of extinction, and therefore should no longer be used.
- ✓ In the area of challenges, attention was given to the cultural divide that exists between the cultures of the young and those of adults, the influence of new forms of technology and communication in forming personality and the study of foreign languages as part of the structure of formation.
- ✓ Concerning prejudices: it was recommended to stop thinking that Rome is the best place in the world, while on the contrary, it was also suggested we stop thinking it is the worst place.

The facilitator observed that according to the interventions it appears clear that there is confusion between politics and structure. Politics are a way of thinking about formation; it is its content. Structures are the ways and means.

### ***Concerning finances***

- Ø As in the case of personnel, so too in the area of finances, the areas in need may be not only those that are growing, but also those in decline.
- Ø There is a need to clarify those structures that are no longer useful, and establish criteria to decide which should be abandoned. For example, according to the Constitutions, No. 67, those structures that do not favor community life should be eliminated.
- Ø The obligation of preparing a financial report doesn't only apply to those who are receiving financial assistance, but also to those who are offering it.
- Ø Explain better the concept of self-sufficiency because it doesn't necessarily imply complete independence.
- Ø Keep in mind that poverty implies trust in providence, and that the main source of our financial support is the work of the religious.

Concerning the topic of finances, the dialog also made an initial attempt to address the aspect of structures. The exchange of ideas centered on the concept of a “common fund” that should distribute resources according to need.

Regarding the topic of funds there are two on a general level: for formation and for solidarity. The prevalent idea seems to be that there is no need to create others, but to increase those that already exist. Collecting contributions should not be something voluntary but structural, with precise percentages and different sources. Concerning the distribution of the same, a commission is needed to study the financial situation and the needs of the various entities of the Congregation, and permanently provide for necessary income and expenditures.

Between yesterday and this morning the theme of the Synod has been taking form. The limitations of Restructuring have been named and based on this information a more precise approach has surfaced.

With these points, the two parts of the morning session ended. The afternoon work will lead the Synod members from these concerns and to focus their attention on the reports of the General Econome, Fr. Battista Ramponi, the report of the Secretary General for Solidarity and Mission, Fr. Jesús María Aristín and the Passionist Non-governmental (NGO) representative at the UN, Fr. Kevin Dance (SPIR). Fr. Denis Travers will serve as moderator.

Fr. Battista presented the financial report of the General Econome for the two year period 2006-2008 and the proposed budget for 2009-2010, illustrating the income and expenditures with spreadsheets. In addition, in response to the General Chapter of 2006 mandate, he informed the Synod members about four

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projects and the corresponding budgets for the restructuring of the central heating system of the Generalate.

Then Fr. Jesús María Aristín fervently described the activities and objectives of the Office for Solidarity and Mission, which includes the new secretariat for justice and peace and the integrity of creation (JPIC) and the former secretariat of the missions. He explained what JPIC is and his role in this process of Restructuring.

He stated that justice, peace and the integrity of creation are “the theological place where we deal with the future of religious life.” This concerns elements that are “essential for life according to the Gospel. It deals with elements that are “essential for living religious life according to the Gospel. They are not optional; rather they are a way of life.” In his opinion JPIC “presupposes a call to configure our all lives and Passionist Mission; it is a constitutive element of the Passionist mission. It is a way of being, and not only a ministry.”

Fr. Kevin Dance referred to his endeavors at the UN. In his office, called “Passionists International”, there is also Sr. Maryanne Strain, CP who collaborates with him in this ministry. The office seeks to be influential and it participates in various commissions for human development, for the financing of this development in order to address social problems such as AIDS and the status of women and young girls in society. Analogous to this work is their participation in the permanent forum on indigenous peoples, the work group on Israel and Palestine, and the tri-party forum on inter-religious collaboration for peace. Obviously, all of these activities are non-governmental in nature.

According to Fr. Kevin there is continuous interest at the UN concerning Passionist International. There is an increase in requests for visits, conferences and presentations. The talk of Pope Benedict XVI at the UN last 18 April, confirms the validity of our presence there.

Because of a lack of time it was not possible to have any dialog about the presentations that were made during the afternoon session.

The day had a pleasant Mexican, cultural-artistic epilogue with two musical presentations that were appreciated and enjoyed by all. During the celebration of the Eucharist that was celebrated at the end of the day and presided by REG Provincial Fr. Francisco Valadéz, the music was provided by a group of approximately ten “Mariachi” musicians and singers. The men, dressed in typical Mariachi attire, played brass and string instruments and added their powerful voices to

Mass. In addition to the liturgical texts, they sang songs of a popular religious nature that was typically...Mariachi.

The same group entertained the Synod members during a festive dinner in the outdoor patio of the house instead of in the usual refectory. After dinner, the outstanding organizers of the hosting REG province offered the Synod members a concert by the “Niños Cantantes de Morelos”. The group, composed of approximately fifty children’s voices, performed thirteen pieces of composers representing various cultures, among which was a short piece entitled, *“Là sui monti dell’est”* from the opera “Turandot” by Puccini. Among the other pieces was a delightful “Ave Maria” by the Hungarian composer, Peter Wolf.

Among the notes of the secretary there was also an announcement in the aula of the deaths of two of our religious: Fr. Victorino Sevilla (FAM), who passed away in the Mexican community of Toluca and Fr. Giovanni Costantini (PIET) who many Synod members may remember having met as sacristan at the Shrine of St. Gabriel.

We have much food for thought as we close this full day of the General Synod.

## 13 SEPTEMBER

Today the Synod participants visited Our Lady of Guadalupe, “la Morenita”, at her Basilica-Shrine on the outskirts of Mexico City, approximately 100 kilometers from Cuernavaca.

As part of the schedule for the Synod, this pilgrimage was joyfully anticipated by all and it came at the right moment in the work program. After days of intense study and difficult dialog due to the content of the material as well as the diversity of languages and culture, a day such as this was most welcome. Above all, it was good to go and place at the feet of Our Lady the challenges of this Synod and the concerns of the Congregation.

The Superior General focused the scope of the pilgrimage in the homily that he preached during the Mass at which he presided in the majestic basilica: *“We have come to this holy place to ask her protection for the Synod and for the entire Passionist Congregation and for its mission in the world. We entrust to her, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the religious who live and work in 58 countries; so too, we entrust to her all that is the responsibility of our Major Superiors. We invoke her that she may help us to accomplish what her Son Jesus asks of us in the process of Restructuring.”*

Drawing on the Scripture reading for the day (1Cor.10, 14-22 and Lk.6:43-49), Fr. Ottaviano underlined the demands of creating unity and putting the word of God in practice.

The one Bread that we eat unites us in a single body. *“The Eucharist is the sign of and the reason for our unity and we should work toward this unity with all our strength.”* In order to achieve this unity, he said: *“may we be freed us from ourselves, from our selfishness and fears so that the Holy Spirit can work in us and we will be capable of fulfilling the prophecy of unity and sharing, as did the primitive Christian communities. They were of one heart and one mind and ‘they held everything in common’. (Acts 4:32) and this caused everyone who observed them to exclaim: ‘see how they love one another!’ They were a sign and their choices became the message. Dear brothers, let us fulfill the prophecy that is in us, let us celebrate the Passover of solidarity!”*

Then He drew this lesson from the gospel passage: *“Why do you call me, Lord, Lord, but do not do what I command?”*(Lk.6:45) Fr. Ottaviano commented: *“Each of us in the depth of his heart and all of us as a Synod should ask ourselves and ascertain if this question is directed toward us.”* And he concluded: *“May Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, “la Morenita” grant us the simple heart of “Juanito, Juanito Dieguito” so that we may hear the Word of God and put it into practice.”*

Departing from our Spiritual Center at 8:30 AM in two busses, the pilgrims arrived at the Shrine for the Mass that was scheduled for 11:00 AM. The directors of the Shrine programmed two hours for the liturgical celebration of the Passionists.

During the entrance rite the concelebrants processed past the original image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. At the beginning of the Mass the faithful that filled the basilica were told about the Passionists who were present and their countries of origin. At the conclusion of the Mass the choir sang a Passionist song and, to the applause of the assembly, the concelebrants exited the church.

Following the celebration, the Synod members had a brief opportunity to visit the area surrounding the Basilica, admiring the present as well as the original shrine-churches.

Like the other pilgrims, the Synod members also made purchases from the various shops selling religious articles. They once again boarded the busses for a brief tour of the center of the capital City of Mexico.

Toward 2:30 they visited the school of the Mexican Passionist Sisters, the Daughters of the Passion. The Sisters warmly welcomed the Synod members with lunch and an explanation of their ministries.

The final part of the day was spent at the “Instituto Francesco Possenti” where the group arrived toward 6:00 PM. This school consists of three divisions: primary, secondary and college-preparatory. It is attended by nearly a thousand students and is administered by our religious of the REG Province.

The staff and students offered the Synod members entertainment in the form of a Mexican Fiesta. The traditional Mexican dances and songs that were chosen were representative of the festive climate of Mexican Independence Day that would be celebrated within two days. As they arrived each guest was presented with a typical “sombrero” (hat). Then, by means of a raffle, they were offered other more elegant Mexican “sombros” and other typical gifts. The fiesta concluded with a fireworks display that included a large Passionist Sign.

They departed for Cuernavaca at approximately 9:00 PM and returned to the Center by 10:30 PM.

## **14 SEPTEMBER**

Although a great feast day for the Passionist Congregation, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was a work-day for the Synod. Due to the celebration of the Eucharist at 9:00 AM the first morning session was cancelled, but the remainder of the day proceeded as scheduled.

Among the announcements of the Secretariat was the death of Fr. Pio De Sanctis (PIET-REPAC).

As Fr. Clemente Barrón introduced the work of the day he asked for a round of applause for the religious of the REG Province in gratitude for the wonderful day that they organized yesterday (Sunday) in Guadalupe and Mexico City.

The facilitator, Sister Christine, then took over. She presented a brief summary of the progress of the Synod and announced that this morning would be dedicated to the criteria for Restructuring. She recalled that in order to be pleased with the outcome of a task it is necessary to stay focused on what you are doing.

The criteria had already been formulated in previous meetings of the General Curia with the seven Regional Coordinators. They were reported on p. 9 of the Report of the Superior General to the General Synod. They are as follows.

Every new structure should:

1- Serve the charism and the mission of the Congregation and enable a more vital community life.

2- Respect our international nature: promoting dialog and an exchange of life between the historical and those newer sectors of the Congregation; respect differences of culture and context that are present in the Congregation; promote communication and a sense of belonging to the Congregation.

3- Be effective in the areas of ministry to the young and vocation promotion, and that it permit the development of formation for the entire Passionist Family.

4- Express the option for the poor, together with our commitment to JPIC.

5- Promote and achieve solidarity of personnel and finances.

6- Respect the requirements of civil and canonical legislation.

For the next 20 minutes the small groups were invited to discuss and ascertain if these criteria were sufficient and if there was need to add or change anything.

In the discussion with the large group that followed there was general agreement that included the following observations:

- Don't make a listing with progressive numbers so as to give the impression of prioritizing, because all of the criteria are necessary for all structures.
- They favor a better quality of life, not only communal but also apostolic.

- Maintain equilibrium between international aspects and inculturation.
- In our entities, distinguish between old and new since all of them have value.
- Keep in mind the increase in the number of elderly in certain regions.
- Solidarity should affect each of the three areas that were highlighted in this Synod: personnel, formation and finances.
- The work of JPIC is very explicit, but not that of the missions.
- The insistence on the option for the poor is clear, however what can be said about the economically wealthy world that has lost a sense of God? Re. this point there was a comment about changing the language of the Congregation concerning this topic. In the General Chapters of 1988 and 2004 the capitulars spoke about “the crucified of today” and about “silence or absence of God” in today’s world. Since then however, the second aspect of the issue has disappeared.
- It seems that there is an absence of criteria for eventual new forms of government, for the development of the presence of the laity and for some kind of theological foundation.

At the end of the dialog Sister Christine asked the regional coordinators to try to review the formulation of the criteria according to the observations that were just presented in the aula.

For the next step, the facilitator called their attention to the large sheets of paper that were placed on the table of each group. She explained that they were to be used to visually depict the Congregation as it might be envisioned within 5-6 years. She invited the Synod members to be creative and illustrate how they imagine or wish the Congregation to be in the future. This task continued until the end of the morning session.

In the afternoon session, introduced by Fr. Luis Alberto Cano, each group described the design that they had chosen to express a possible restructured future of the Congregation.

Of the six groups in the Synod aula, one foresaw five new entities, another: eight, three others envisioned seven new entities, and one group returned an empty sheet because they felt there was no reason to design any future entities.

Then there was dialog for clarification and offering additional points about each of the new proposals.

Then the facilitator proposed that they consider a new type of reconfiguration through a spontaneous change of seating in the aula. She asked each member of the Synod, except the General Curia and the staff, to sit next to others with

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whom they felt comfortable living and working. At the beginning, each group stood up in order to better reorganize the space.

Six or seven groups emerged that were more heterogeneous. The groups of Africa and North Europe were the smallest.

During the dialog that followed, which lasted longer than the time that was scheduled, all the Synod members were invited to express their reasons for their choice of location.

This was a concrete expression of the Restructuring that is being discussed during these days.

## 15 SEPTEMBER

Yesterday, in order to immediately experience the new configurations of the Congregation, the Synod members theorized and devised a draft that was visualized in the Synod Aula. This was the work to which the facilitator invited the members of the Synod during this morning's session.

Last evening, following the request to spontaneously decide on an entity in which they felt comfortable working, the Synod members divided themselves into six groups. Sister Christine asked them to return to these groups today for the entire morning and to reflect on the following question: *If these were the new configurations of the Congregation, what could we do together... immediately/ within two years/ in the distant future... especially regarding the three sectors of solidarity: personnel, formation and finances.*

In the exchange of ideas that would take place they were not to feel limited because of the unavailability of personnel; rather reflect a sense of the province or the area that they represent. The result was reported in the aula. The General and his Consultors could freely circulate among the groups.

The six groups that spontaneously formed were composed as follows:

- One with **eleven** components: USA, Brazil, Portugal, Italy, Argentina, Uruguay, Puerto Rico and Mexico; also represented were: Canada, Jamaica W.I., Angola and Mozambique.
- One with **seven** components: with Spanish origins: Spain, representing also Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Panama, El Salvador, Cuba, Guatemala, Honduras, the Dominican Republic and part of Mexico.
- One with **six** components: Australia, Korea, Japan, the Philippines, India, Indonesia, also representing Vietnam and China.
- One with **ten** components from: Italy, France, Germany and Poland.
- One with **three** components from Africa and Italy.
- One with **four** components from North Europe.

Denis Travers chaired the afternoon session asking the secretaries of the new groupings to report on their discussions that took place during the morning.

The group of eleven components (North, Central and South America, etc.) represented an area where four languages are spoken and there are 592 religious, 103 communities and 89 young religious in formation.

*At the moment* they are considering concentrating on catechesis about the decisions of the Synod and an analysis of the reality. During this year there will be an additional three meetings of the region, and in March 2009 there will be extended meetings to verify reports and study those projects that can be shared.

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*Within two years*, they will arrive at the Synod with clear structures, with decisive collaborative measures in the area of formation and with at least two or three common projects that are indicative of solidarity.

*In the distant future* they will be diminished numerically, however the interaction will allow for new life. The linguistic barriers will no longer exist.

The group of **four** components (North Europe) spent the time in fraternal conversation about the situation of their respective provinces and has decided that by December there will be a meeting of the Provincial councils. At this meeting they will reflect on their own history and their present situation in order to plan for the future.

They did not decide on any short term or long range plans in order to not prejudice the choices that would be made during the projected meeting.

The group of **seven** (Spain and Latin America) represent 400 religious with the advantage of a common language: Spanish. In this area there is a great sense of vitality in the areas of formation, finances and personnel. Everything that the Synod has spoken about is present there. There are 13 novices, 60 theology students, many aspirants and students in Philosophy, two novitiates and four centers for Theology students.

The group did not concentrate on the time periods for the steps of Restructuring; rather they underlined the unity and solidarity that exists, which has kept them united.

For the future, they foresee solid formation communities, well prepared, and active guidance of the young religious at the beginning of their ministry. The group wanted to increase its dedication to the ministry of the Word. The four provinces of this area are already financially independent; however adopting the new principles of solidarity they can become even more efficient.

The group of **six** components (PASPAC) represents 345 religious.

*In the immediate future* they envision that they must concentrate on a change of mind-set and grow in the reality of solidarity. In this area there already exist many types of collaboration. The religious of these parts that work in Sweden, Vietnam, China and other areas are there on an exchange basis. They are in the process of establishing a house for the study of the English language in the Philippines and a novitiate in Australia for candidates from Vietnam and from China.

*Within two years* they hope that the already existing solidarity will increase.

*In the distant future* they envision an international formation center with religious who are appropriately prepared in this area, and other religious who are prepared in the other religions of Asia and in other areas of non-religious studies.

English has to be the language of this area.

The group of the **ten** components (Central – South Europe) represents 400 religious in the seven current provinces.

*In the near future* they will dedicate themselves to making the religious aware of new realities, including convoking assemblies for exchanging information and decision-making.

*Within two years* they will promote meetings in the various parts of the area in order to focus on cooperation in the area of solidarity that was indicated by this Synod and make preparations for the future. The new configuration will continue to develop in organization. Lourdes could possibly become a center for youth ministry. Information should be continually shared, including on a possible web-site.

*After the first two-year period* they will work at continuing to continue the process.

Some questions arose in the group: When can they begin to function in these new configurations? What will be the role of the present regional conferences? It seems that they should be annulled or at least suspended, otherwise there may be interference.

The group of **three** (Africa) related that in this continent the Passionists are already experiencing various levels of unity. In the area of formation there is a common novitiate, and Philosophy and Theology centers, whereas the initial stages of formation occur within the country of origin. There are bi-annual meetings of formation personnel, and cultural meetings for superiors and students of Theology. These common endeavors could be consolidated.

*Within two years* they plan on developing collaboration according to the guidelines that will be presented by the Synod: promote the study of languages; develop common apostolic projects; provide training for formation personnel; establish modes of collaborating with the laity; collaborate with the JPIC secretariat. They also proposed building a novitiate in Nairobi and developing a fund for initial formation, including the assistance of international missionary organizations and the Congregation.

*In the distant future* there is great hope for self-sufficiency, with the possibility of expansion in Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi and Nigeria where we have candidates, but no Passionist presence. They also hope to develop a center of evangelization in Karungu.

When the reports were finished, the General underlined that the enthusiasm that was present at the General Chapter was truly present at this Synod. He noted

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that provincial assemblies were always possible; however it would be wise not to hope for much consensus.

The Synod has more weight than an assembly, and the process must be gradual. Prior to concluding, the Synod must make some decisions concerning the role of the conferences and the regional coordinators.

The facilitator asked if there were any comments about what they had just heard.

Some responses:

- § Enthusiasm and fear. We alternate between feeling that everything should change and that nothing should change. The new configurations run the risk of once again being enclosed within themselves.
- § There are no new structures, just changes of name.
- § One of the reasons for Restructuring is to revitalize those areas that need it. This aspect should be developed.
- § It seems that there was only one dynamic. Instead new horizons of dialog and awareness have opened up. We are aware that there are unknown realities; we have shared about new uncertainties, feelings and concerns. Truly there is a new sense of vitality.
- § Something is logically missing. For example, regions such as Africa and North Europe are becoming more Muslim; there seems to be no interest for us in Russia.

At this point Sister Christine asked:

*What do you need from the General Curia?*

- Ø Great courage, considering that they promoted the movement and they must encourage it;
- Ø support and encouragement, through an inspirational presence including visits to the communities and extensive communication;
- Ø A sense of responsibility. Given that the Synod is only consultative, it is the General Council that must present this new orientation to the Congregation and guide it.
- Ø The question arose whether the General Council will further discern about these choices that were made spontaneously. Will they be approved? Will they be adapted? For example, there was a movement that the areas talk to one another in order to allow for greater vitality. Instead, which group has remained enclosed within Europe, and doesn't seek vitality?

Sister Christine proposed a final question:

*What do you need reciprocally from the other provincials?*

- To know whether we are still provincials or not.
- On-going communication.
- Trustfully listening, in order to understand the different realities and proceed together, without prejudices or exclusions.
- Be informed in order to offer this new service.

Some were of the impression that nothing will change, while others believe that great changes are in process. It is clear that there is a new kind of conversation taking place.

The main point still remains Restructuring, which is not the new configurations, but solidarity about the new modes that were cited during the Synod and which are waiting to be approved as guidelines for future endeavors.

## 16 SEPTEMBER

Today is the penultimate day of the Synod. Although we should have been able to see the light at the end of the tunnel, several times it seemed that we were still in the dark. The morning moderator was Fr. Clemente Barrón. The work began with some announcements from the Superior General, in consensus with his Council, regarding some questions that emerged from yesterday's proceedings.

- The regional conferences are suspended until the next General Chapter, at which time a new decision will be made about them.
- The Provinces, Vice-Provinces and Vicariates will remain intact with their respective associations, areas of dependency and support. Fr. Ottaviano gave an example: the old road is still able to sustain traffic, but next to it a new road is being built that will make communication more efficient and faster. We need to remember that Restructuring is not only about new configurations, but also about solidarity on a universal level. The two aspects are indispensable.
- A general Consultor will be assigned to the responsibility of the process of Restructuring.
- If assemblies are convoked for this process, they should only seek opinions and not make decisions. You are also asked to inform the General Curia if they are to be present.

Then there was ½ hour of discussion during which uncertainties and perplexities arose about this present phase.

It seemed hasty to dismiss what was accomplished yesterday. For some provinces there were serious consequences: how to sustain the entities that are dependant on them, but which will not be so in the future, and at the same time be involved in other areas that are just as much in need of assistance.

Fr. Ottaviano responded that the new configurations were not operative but only experimental, therefore legal ties should not be established. In the meantime the weaker entities must survive; therefore they will continue to be sustained as per usual.

There was unrest in the discussion that followed in the aula that centered on the topic of how the ties with the old structures may impede the development of projects with the new configuration under experimentation.

Another concern derived from the fact of suspending realities that are presently working well (such as CIPI, CII, COPAL) in order to embark on uncertain realities.

Again the General tried to calm the assembly observing that suspension does not mean elimination of what works well. It is only about repressing those juridi-

cal ties that may impede the development and increase the same positive elements. There were other interventions about confusion concerning terminology. For someone it seemed that the concept of Restructuring had disappeared in favor of configuration.

The facilitator intervened to clarify the distinction between structures and organization. The Synod is trying to achieve solidarity in the three areas that were chosen, which doesn't coincide with Restructuring, but is its core. The configurations are not yet restructuring because this will happen over time; it cannot be the objective of the Synod. This refers to the new entities that were established which are only a step in the process.

Sister Christine felt that some confusion may be clarified by additional discussion in the groups. She asked that during this session other aspects of the new configurations be specified. In particular:

- What name will be given to the new configurations;
- Choose a new coordinator, or more than one if necessary and describe his role;
- Verify if this step is in harmony with the criteria on Restructuring that were previously stated.

When they returned to the assembly, the following choices were reported concerning the name of their configuration and the relative coordinator(s):

**NORTH EUROPEAN SECTOR OF PASSIONISTS (NESP):** provinces: SPE, JOS, GABR, PATR. Coordinator: Fr. Nicholas Postlethwaite.

**PASSIONISTS OF AFRICA (PA):** vicariates: CARLW, GEMM, MATAF, SALV. Coordinator: Fr. Michael Ogwenyo.

**PASSIONIST ASIAN PACIFIC CONFIGURATION (PASPAC):** Australia, the Philippines, Korea, China, India, Japan, Indonesia. Coordinator: Fr. Joachim Rego.

**CONFIGURATION EUGENE BOSSILKOV (CEB),** provinces: ASSUM, MICH, VULN, PIET, CORM, LAT, CFIKI, plus BULGARIA. Coordinator: Fr. Leone Masnata.

**UNION of the SACRED HEART OF JESUS,** provinces: CORI, SANG, FAM, FID, which include Spain, Peru, Dominican Republic, Chile, Bolivia, Panama, Ecuador, Venezuela, Cuba, El Salvador, Mexico (part), Honduras, Colombia. Coordinator: Fr. Antonio Munduate.

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**PASSIONIST CONFEDERACION of JESUS CRUCIFIED**, provinces and vicariates: CALV, CONC, CRUC, DOL, FAT, PAUL, PRES, REG, VICT, PAC, which include: Argentina, Uruguay, USA, Jamaica, Canada, Haiti, Mexico (part), Puerto Rico, Brazil, Portugal, Angola, Italy (parts). Coordinators: Frs. Joseph Jones and Norberto Donizetti.

This new configuration will also name an executive secretary at a meeting that is set for 20-24 April, 2009 at North Palm Beach, Florida (USA).

All believe that the new choices agree with the criteria for Restructuring, although the Bossilkov group feels that not all agree about the terminology being used.

The role of the coordinators should be:

- § Liaison between them and the general government
- § Coordination, encouragement, organizing meetings
- § Guarantee communication and attend to juridical aspects;
- § Oversee especially works of solidarity in the three areas of personnel, formation and finances.

During the remainder of the morning session the facilitator presented two informative topics concerning the ministry of authority today.

In the first she illustrated four models of organization that until now are in use in society and in the Church. They are the hierarchical model (until Vatican II); the swamp model (1960-1980); the wheel model (the 1980's onward); the integrated model, elaborated by Anderson herself.

Each of these models has its own limits, values, powers, membership, duties and influences.

In the second topic Sister Christine explained the dynamic of authority and power in religious Congregations.

During the afternoon session, with Luigi Vaninetti as moderator, there was great tribulation. In every meeting of this type, moments like these are to be expected.

The schedule called for the approval of the three documents that were worked on previously, amended according to the indications from the large group in the aula and reviewed by the CCC without the presence of the coordinators. They dealt with texts about solidarity in personnel, formation and finances.

After several minutes for silent reading, that should have preceded voting, a series of questions and areas of concern were raised that threw the aula into confusion for approximately one hour. All agreed about the importance of the three areas of solidarity, but no one agreed that the texts as they are now stand, are

ready for voting. There are discrepancies in the translations. Elements that were thought to be important are not present. All want affirmations that are clearer and more concrete. In an attempt to establish some sense of balance in the process, the facilitator proposed alternative solutions and then sought the approval of the Synod members.

- Û Consider the three documents as recommendations to the General Curia, that will serve to facilitate the next series of steps;
- Û Highlight in the texts those points that concern the structures and rework them into a Synod document to be approved tomorrow and brought to the communities as the fruit of the Synod;
- Û Consign the documents to the General Curia as above, but work on a new, short document as fruit of the Synod.

By means of this third version the aula appeared to be pacified and the impasse was resolved.

In the final part of the session the aula unanimously approved the proposed budget of the General Econome for 2009-2010 and the proposal of the General Econome concerning the renovation work on the Generalate building. Re. this second proposal, the General does not need to seek the consensus of the Synod for the projects for which he does intend to seek a contribution from the provinces. This also applies to the renovation projects of the central heating system, which the Econome detailed in his previous report.

Truly we were able to see the stars once again, even if the evening ended with another rainstorm.

## **17 SEPTEMBER 2008**

During the final day of the Synod, the work moved quickly from informative to canonical announcements. The morning session was moderated by Fr. Luis Alberto Cano and the afternoon session by Fr. Denis Travers.

The session began with a presentation by the Secretary General, Fr. Ramiro Ruiz, who asked the provincials to send reports and other information as punctually as possible to the General Curia.

Then there was a presentation by Fr. Floriano De Fabiis, Procurator General, concerning the status of the several matters between our Congregation and the Holy See. In particular he reported that he had requested and had obtained an authentic interpretation concerning the manner of computing the seniority in Congregation of a religious who had previously been a member of another institute. The decision was that, concerning the computation of anniversaries, the date of First Profession in the institute of origin should be the reference date. In fact, in cases of religious who transfer from one institute to another, canon law does not require a new profession of vows.

This was followed by an announcement concerning what had taken place during a previous meeting of the coordinators of the new Configurations of the Congregation, namely:

- All are willing to serve in this capacity; however there are concerns and anxiety. While these are easily resolved on a local level, there seem to be major issues concerning the relationship with the General Curia - not of an intentional nature, but rather structural. Clearer communication and on-going dialog is needed in order to determine what future steps should be taken. It was suggested that a job description be elaborated.
- The need for better communication should be resolved in meetings between the coordinators and the General Curia.
- If a General Consultor is to be in liaison with each new Configuration, then it would be good to return to a Curia composed of six consultors.
- The coordinators should have greater active authority. It is not enough to only encourage and report; they need to sense that they have the backing of the General Curia.
- It seems impossible for the General Curia to also guide the new complex process that is beginning. Perhaps it would be good to establish a "standing committee" between the Curia and the Coordinators.
- The problem is not one of agreement, but of communication. Some coordinators have felt isolated and excluded in this process. Although they have always informed and involved the General Curia, there have not

always been precise instructions, and now it seems that the work that was done did not achieve its purpose.

At this point the moderator intervened for the final time stating that today every organization has its coordinators. In our case, these religious should:

- Coordinate meetings and communication;
- Be the link between the various areas and the center;
- Send reports following every meeting, even if the General Curia was present;
- Prepare a summary report for the next Synod;
- Promote evaluations and involvement on the local level;
- Request meetings with the General Curia.

Succinctly, the Coordinator should coordinate. Without clear ideas, it will be difficult to fulfill a role that will increasingly become more difficult. Sister Christine concluded by observing that up to the present moment, the Coordinators have done an excellent job. Perhaps at this moment they are exaggerating the difficulties.

The General affirmed that things are going well. If there are obstacles, as there always are, they are not insurmountable.

After a break, Fr. Denis reported on the World Youth Day in Sydney, Australia last July, during which there was also a meeting of the Young Passionist Religious. On this topic, Denis moderated a panel discussion with three of these young Passionists who participated in this gathering and who were present here at the Synod participating on various levels: Frs. Ramiro Ruiz, Marco Pasquali and Paul Matsumoto.

Guided by specific questions, they spoke about their experiences and the more significant aspects of the same, and they shared about a vision for the future that they had perceived during the various phases of the meeting.

At 11:30 AM a nine-page packet entitled DECISIONS OF THE 2008 SYNOD was distributed. It contained the final formulation of what was discussed and produced by the Synod concerning the structures for solidarity in the areas of personnel, formation and finances. As was previously decided, the text as such was not submitted for voting; rather it was entirely consigned to the General Curia as a working document for the future consideration.

However an explanatory page consisting of eight-points was presented and voted upon following clarification of some specific points.

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- 1.** *The Synod approves the new Configurations as part of the process of Restructuring.*

Vote: All in favor.

- 2.** *The new Configurations are experimental and will be developed in dialog with the General Council in light of the guidelines and instructions until the next Synod:*

*STRUCTURES FOR SOLIDARITY IN FORMATION  
STRUCTURES FOR SOLIDARITY IN PERSONNEL  
STRUCTURES FOR SOLIDARITY IN FINANCES.*

During the discussion it was mentioned that the term "structures" seems too strong and binding. It was suggested to substitute it with "guidelines" or "recommendations" about the structures or about the setting or the sector. Given that "structures" is too strong and "recommendations" too weak there continued to be confusion about the terminology. The moderator addressed the issue proposing that the vote be taken on the spirit and not on the terms of the number.

Vote: All in favor.

- 3.** *The Coordinators will continue their work within the new Configurations.*

Vote: All in favor.

- 4.** *The Configurations will have the following names:*

- The Passionist Confederation of Jesus Crucified.*
- The Union of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*
- The Eugene Bossilkov Configuration*
- PASPAC*
- The Passionists of Africa*
- The Passionist Sector of North Europe.*

The proposal was made that all the titles contain the adjective "Passionist" or an analogous term; there was no reaction.

Vote: Disagree -1; All others in favor.

- 5.** *The Regional Conferences (RG 94-96) will be suspended until the General Chapter of 2012.*

Vote: Abstain-1. All others in favor.

- 6.** *The provinces, vice-provinces and vicariates will continue with their own agenda until the next General Chapter of 2012.*

Vote: Disagree -1. Abstain-1. All others in favor.

**7. *Each configuration will have a General Consultor (or two) as a contact person.***

During the ensuing discussion the suggestion was made to suppress this number, since it seems logical that the process of Restructuring will take place in dialog with the central government. The Superior General believes that it should be maintained, since the issue of reference persons is functional and not juridical. This contact person should not be viewed as someone who is "bound" to the Coordinator. If previously a desire was expressed for greater communication with the General Curia, why now eliminate this contact that is designed to do precisely this? It is important that someone in the General Curia is very familiar with a particular area.

Vote: Disagree-6. Abstain-4. All others in favor.

**8. *The Guide lines and directions for the new Configurations and for the General Council until the General Synod of 2010*** are stated in the following pages of the document and will be published in the complete acts of this Synod.

Vote: Abstain - 1. All others in favor.

The afternoon session opened with closing words from Sister Christine Anderson as she prepared to leave Cuernavaca. "Facilitating your work has been both a privilege and a challenge for me", she stated in her parting words. She expressed her appreciation for the earnestness with which everyone worked in the various areas of responsibility.

In addition to her professional demeanor, the General underlined that her sensitivity enabled her to enter into the very heart of our charism and that she was able to intuit the essence of every aspect of the work. The enthusiastic applause that greeted her as she left the Synod Hall was indicative of the esteem and gratitude of the Synod members for her service, which will also be of further assistance.

Then Fr. Battista Ramponi informed the participants about the expenses that were incurred for this Synod.

Then the groups were asked to dialog for 15 minutes about where the next Synod of 2010 would take place. The decision would then be made by the General Curia about the place and the date which would then be communicated to all.

The location most favored was Spain (3 groups); followed by India (2 groups); Rome as the most comfortable and affordable (2 groups); Africa, Poland and Sierra Madre, California (1).

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Finally the Synod members were invited to express on a personal level their opinion about this Synod experience. After several moments of silence, about ten religious spoke about their impressions and feelings.

- Ø Hope, joy, passion.
- Ø Satisfaction for having been able to express how they felt and what they wanted.
- Ø Peace and tranquility. There are still many questions, but also great hope.
- Ø Disorientation at the beginning, but joy at the end. We did our best for the good of the Congregation.
- Ø It was exciting to be part of a Congregation like this at this point in time. It is like being immersed in the flow of life.
- Ø A large step was taken. Now the General Curia has a great responsibility. The facilitator was strong and wise. To keep focused with seventy men is not easy.
- Ø Great sense of gratitude to the General Curia for their work and to the REG Province for their proficient organization.
- Ø The effort that the older areas of the Congregation are making to continue to live is admirable. Perhaps we need to pay more attention to the things that were not said.
- Ø It may seem paradoxical to create new structures as if we were playing. But maybe it was the only way to move into the unknown. In play we break the molds and create something that is new. We don't know where we are going, but it is a challenging step.
- Ø It was a Synod that was filled with hope, perhaps the best that taken place up to this point in time. There was great passion for life and for one another.

The intervention of the Superior General concluded the session. In the sharing that took place he said he could discern the movement of the Spirit. All had various and profound reactions. All of this is part of life. Even during the most difficult moments there was a great sense of enthusiasm. Thanks be to God for the harmony that characterized these days. He repeated that the task is not so much about redoing structures as it is about renewing life, especially fundamental Passionist values: prayer, the apostolate, the poor, the crucified. Restructuring is not only a technical endeavor, but it goes to the very heart of the charism.

He concluded with the customary words of thanks to all those who contributed to the successful outcome of the Synod in so many different ways.

The closing event was the concelebrated Eucharist at which Fr. General presided immediately following the final working session.

In his homily, Fr. Ottaviano highlighted the needed to allow ourselves to be guided by the Spirit in the future that we are envisioning.

*"Let us allow ourselves to once again be led by Him; let us dispose ourselves to His inspirations. It is He and no other who guides us and comforts us especially during the next several years of the road before us and beyond. The work that was done during these days... may give the impression that we are seeking more efficient structures, as if it was a worldly organization that we were trying to make "work better". We could easily fall into this trap if the breath of God was not within us. The goal of this process is to revitalize the Congregation."*

The Superior General concluded the homily declaring that the *"XIII General Synod of the Congregation was **closed**"*

And on this note I, too, conclude my humble service as secretary.



# **Letter of the Superior General subsequent to the 2008 General Synod**

## **GREETING**

My dear brothers of the Congregation and sisters and brothers of the Passionist Family,

*“Were not our hearts burning (within us) while he spoke to us on the way...’ So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them...Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them...”* (cfr. Lk. 24:32-35)

It is in this context of the experience of the disciples of Emmaus that I would like to recount and explain what took place during the General Synod of the Congregation that was celebrated in our retreat house of Cuernavaca, Mexico, from 6 to 17 September 2008, and dealt with the topic of Restructuring.

The two surprises that the disciples of Emmaus experienced – that of not having recognized Jesus as he spoke to them along the road and the surprise of then recognizing him in the breaking of the bread – were similar to what was revealed to us during the Synod.

I want to recount for you, my brothers and sisters of the Congregation and of the Passionist Family that are gathered in the Cenacle of the world, even if we live and work in 58 countries, like “the eleven and those with them”, something about the feelings, the bewilderment, the doubts, the process of discernment and the recognition of the presence of the Lord in our midst. Yes, there were some anxious moments; however, we experienced something similar to what occurred in the continuation of the Luke’s account:

*“Jesus stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’... But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Then he said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts?’”* (Lk. 24:36-38)

## **INTRODUCTION**

The days that we spent during the Synod in Cuernavaca, from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of September 2008, were marked by a spirit of fraternity and prayer. The

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communal celebration of the Eucharist and the liturgies were characterized by cultural expressions that reflected the various continents and countries in which we live. The aim of the Synod was to discern together how new life and energy could be generated for the mission of the Congregation in light of the Chapter Mandate. We wanted to discover what kind of Restructuring is needed in order to revitalize the Congregation as whole, as single entities and as a family that is united by the same vocation and charism. We knew from the very beginning that it would be one of the most important and historical meetings of the Congregation.

“Restructuring: a prophecy and a necessity” – was the title of the introductory talk of **Fr. Octavio Mondragón, CP (REG)**. He reminded us that “the Restructuring of the Congregation radically belongs to another category greater than Christian life, that we normally call eschatological tension... the action of the Spirit in Christian communities of followers of Jesus and in the context of all peoples and religions, consists in irreversibly remaining on the road of the Resurrection, the fullness of life. Consequently, the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of Life. By the action of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of Jesus the new creation has begun, the new birth of all the living... The experience of the Spirit or the practice of prophecy, or discernment... are vital necessities in the dynamism of the new creation. There is a theological formulation that expresses this vital need in the Church: ‘Ecclesia semper reformanda.’ We can apply it by analogy to the Congregation and the life of our communities and institutions by affirming this vital need: the life of the Congregation consists of an on-going dynamism, in and by the Spirit; that consists of assuming and expressing new forms of existence in light of the changes and challenges of common history.” However Fr. Octavio reminded us “there is no possibility for any kind of Restructuring, remodeling or re-founding of our religious life without a particular experience of compassion, i.e. without complete willingness to assume in the midst of the Congregation the recreating act of the Spirit... Restructuring is saying to ourselves and allowing us to speak to others constitutive truths that purify our lives of all deceit or false illusions. It is a process of historical and theological sincerity because there is no way of being the Memory of the living God unless it begins from that Compassion in which He reveals himself as present and active...

The Memoria Passionis is the source of our Christian prophecy and, as such, is also the prophecy that structures Passionist life before and in the midst of the world. Clearly, Passionist life, from the perspective of prophecy, is challenged by two dynamics: The Memoria Passionis and the challenge of the present reality. A reform of the Congregation that doesn’t look beyond its limits with the goal of confronting the world is not worthy of its name... (Because) the subject of the

Cross is a unique declaration; it is a creative event because it creates a new horizon, a new way of being in the world.”

**Fr. Donald Senior, CP (CRUC)** in his retreat conferences invited us as Passionists to reflect on St. Paul the Apostle on the occasion of the 2000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, and to view the challenge of Restructuring in the light of his life and his theology. “Both personally and in the wider social and religious world of his day, Paul witnessed an old world die and a new one born... I think we Passionists who are also struggling with profound change and, for you as leaders of the Congregation with the challenging of bringing the Passionist communities around the world to consider change, can well turn to the example of Paul as an example and inspiration for the work ahead. Perhaps more than any other figure in the early Church Paul embodied profound conversion and transformation for the sake of the gospel—both on a personal level and within the religious tradition to which he was passionately committed... There is something else we can learn from our brother Paul as we reflect on our own lives and the life of our community as whole. Paul channeled all of his life force into the fulfillment of his God given mission. As Passionists we need to note in particular that the very heart of Paul’s theology and his spirituality was his contemplation of the passion of Jesus. For Paul the dying and rising of Jesus Christ was the reality that explained all reality, which revealed the true face of God... From this center Paul would contemplate everything. For him, the heart of Christian life was love, as it was the unconditional love that animated the Crucified Christ. The experience of limitation and weakness, as Paul himself experienced in his own mortal body, would find meaning in the crucified body of Jesus who gave himself for us... Paul of Tarsus whose life was seized by the memory of the passion is truly our brother as Passionists (and we can from him something about apostolic leadership): Jesus, God’s Suffering Servant who gave his life that others might live, was the ultimate sign of how authentic authority was exercised. However, although Paul lived at a time when his vision of the Church was not yet finally defined, he never let go of his foundational experience of faith: ‘Can anything separate us from the love of God?’

Paul, on the other hand, transmitted to that church a relentless spirit of mission and a passion for bold ideas, the apostle of dramatic change and God’s new possibilities...

As we as a Passionist community contemplate great change, the restructuring of our vision and our way of life, as we strive to hand on to a new generation of Passionists the living heritage of our great and fragile religious community, in a time tinged with apocalyptic hues, we might do well to remember Paul: passionate disciple of the Crucified Jesus and theologian of experience; confident in his

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apostolic call and identity but non-possessive and holding that treasure with others; a man whose restless, bold dreams brought him suffering but whose hope, rooted in faith, never dimmed.”

This is truly an incredible time, an auspicious time for anyone who seeks to live life profoundly, as did Paul, rooted in his own time and culture. The Restructuring of the Congregation is rooted in the hope of discovering this kind of immersion experience for renewed vitality.

### **EVENT AND MEMORY**

The various events and days of the Synod were lived in an ambience of collaboration and mutual respect both in small work groups and in sessions of the general assembly. In my Report to the Synod I stated: “Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!”(Mt. 14:27) Among other points, I invited those present to live the Synod as a time of grace and not just another organizational meeting. I briefly summarized the work that took place prior to the Synod itself and the steps that have already been taken in the process of Restructuring. That is, from the initial planting of the seed in the General Chapter of 2000 to the actual initiation of the process during the Synod of 2004 at which time it was recognized as a call from God to conversion to a new creative fidelity for community life, mission and solidarity within the Congregation and as an option for the poor.

The Congregation was placed in a state of dialog and discernment using three key words: Charism, Presence and Mission which were understood in a prophetic and creative context.

The General Chapter of 2006 by means of the Principal Decree which is the heart and the key to the Chapter itself, urged us to dedicate ourselves to the process of Restructuring “enthusiastically” – in other words, to be alive and active. The General Chapter acknowledged and confirmed through discernment that the process of Restructuring was a call from God to a new way of “reflecting”, of “interacting with each other” and to accept the possibility of “creating” new structures that are at the service of the charism. Furthermore, in order to make the process of Restructuring more effective and to assist it to move forward, the Chapter chose seven Coordinators, one for each of the Regional Conferences of the Congregation. One of the specific fruits of the collaboration and dialog between the General Council and the Coordinators was that of preparing a questionnaire for collecting information which was called a “Template” for the planning process. The goal of this instrument was to study the reality of the Congregation today: with regard to its composition, strengths and weaknesses, apostolate, presence in a particular area, financial status and perspectives for the future.

I want to stress how well the territorial entities – Provinces, Vice-Provinces and Vicariates working individually and within their Conferences – completed this great task with the assistance of the Coordinators and in dialog with the General Council. Everyone returned the template for planning, completed with the requested information. From reading and analyzing the responses to the templates it was possible to understand the Congregation's needs and the direction it has to go in order to move beyond its limits and wants and so be able to grow and share the present positive aspects. Therefore it was necessary to “explore”, “analyze” and “clarify” the reality of the Congregation that emerged from the Template responses in order to better understand its current reality vis a vis the process of Restructuring.

For the purpose of studying and analyzing this material, we sought the assistance of the “Craighead Institute”, specifically Sister Christine Anderson, FCJ and Dr. Jim Urquhart. Sister Christine also served as moderator for the Synod in Mexico. With her vast experience and professional expertise she helped us move from an analysis of the responses to the templates, to consideration of various options, and eventually to the decisions that were made.

## **CRITERIA**

The conclusions and the decisions of the Synod were also the result of the Criteria that were developed in a preceding meeting of the General Council and the seven Coordinators. Following a period of dialog and discernment these criteria were accepted by the Synod and they enabled us to choose new structures that better express our Charism, our Presence and our Mission for the world of today and tomorrow. The following criteria were often stressed: our international nature; the exchange of life among the older parts and the younger parts of the Congregation; attention to the elderly religious; and the option for the poor.

## **SOLIDARITY**

The decision to create new structures derived from the need to respond the new challenges that the Congregation is facing and which were revealed in the analysis of the Template responses that was presented by Sr. Christine. The key word for this discernment was “Solidarity”. Solidarity will be operative in the three areas that were designated as priorities for new vitality in the Congregation: Solidarity in the area of Formation, Solidarity in the area of Personnel, and Solidarity in the area of Finances. We can no longer consider these three areas of solidarity as merely voluntary choices for “ad hoc” generosity or the occasional decision of a Chapter or a Provincial Council. Indeed, after discernment, we

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thought to give them a structural form. There is no doubt that in order for these new models of Solidarity to work, they need to be studied and tried. There was, however, a new awareness that the various parts of the Congregation are responsible for each other.

#### **NEW CONFIGURATION**

Structural changes were also necessary in the form of Territorial Configurations. The six territorial configurations that emerged during the Synod's discernment process and were approved are as follows:

1—**The Configuration of Jesus Crucified** is composed of the Presentation Province (PRAES), in Italy and its Vicariate of Bahia in Brazil (PRAES-DOMIN); the Addolorata Province (DOL) in Italy and its Vicariate of Espiritu Santo and Minas Gerais in Brazil (DOL-VICT); the Province of St. Paul of the Cross (PAUL) in the USA, Canada and Jamaica; the Holy Cross Province (CRUC) in the USA; the Calvary Province (CALV) in Brazil and its mission in Mozambique; the Province of the Immaculate Conception (CONC) in Argentina and Uruguay; the Province of Christ the King (REG) in Mexico; the Province of our Lady of Fatima (FAT) in Portugal, with its mission in Angola; and the Vicariates of Puerto Rico (CORI-PAC), and Goiás in Brazil (SPE-LIBER). *As of December 31, 2007, this new Configuration was composed of 625 religious, of whom 585 had Perpetual Vows, 34 had Temporary Vows and there were 6 novices.*

2—**The Configuration of the Sacred Heart**, is composed of the FID Vice-Province in Colombia; the three Spanish Provinces: CORI, FAM and SANG and their missions in Latin America; Peru (CORI-RES); Dominican Republic (CORI-PAC); Venezuela, Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador and Cuba (FAM); Panama and Ecuador (SANG); Chile (SANG-CARM); and Bolivia (SANG-EXAL). *As of 31 December 2007 the new Configuration had 446 religious, of whom 377 had Perpetual Vows, 54 had Temporary Vows and there were 15 novices.*

3—**The Configuration of Eugene Bossilkov** is composed of the Italian provinces of PIET, and its mission in Bulgaria, CORM, LAT and CFIXI; the ASSUM Province (Poland, Ukraine, the Czech Republic); the MICH Province of France, and the VULN Vice-Province (Germany and Austria). *As of 31 December 2007 there were 424 religious in this area, of whom 388 had Perpetual Vows, 33 had Temporary Vows and there were 3 novices.*

4—**The PASPAC Configuration** comprises the SPIR Province (Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea); the MACOR Province (Korea) and the mission in China; the PASS Province (the Philippines); the REPAC Province (Indonesia); the MAIAP Vice-Province (Japan); the THOM Vicariate (India); and the Mission in Vietnam. *As of 31 December 2007 there were 369 religious in this new Configuration, of whom 281 had Perpetual Vows, 73 had Temporary Vows and there were 15 novices.*

5—**The Passionist Configuration of Africa** is composed of the SALV Vice-Province of Congo; the Kenya Vicariate (CORM-CARLW); the Vicariate of Tanzania (CORM-GEMM); and the Vicariate of Botswana and South Africa (PATR-MATAF). *As of 31 December 2007 this new Configuration had 141 religious, of which 109 had Perpetual Vows, 29 had Temporary Vows and there were 3 novices.*

6—**The Passionist Configuration of North Europe** includes these Provinces: GABR in Belgium, IOS in England, PATR in Ireland and SPE in Holland and Germany. *As of 31 December 2007 this new Configuration had 174 religious, of whom 174 had Perpetual Vows.*

N.B.

As of the moment, there has been no decision concerning the designation of the Vicariate of Blessed Isidore (LAT-ISID) in Brazil (6 religious) and the IOS mission in Sweden (3 religious).

## **EXPERIMENTATION**

The Synod approved the new Configurations as part of the process of Restructuring of the Congregation. These are experimental and, in dialog with the General Council, their “viability” will be ascertained until the next General Synod of 2010. In dialog with the Configurations themselves, we will evaluate if any of them, due to the large areas that they encompass, while remaining a single Configuration, could be divided into two zones in order to make matters more manageable. The Coordinators, named by the new Configurations, will continue with their work of coordination within each new Configuration and serving as contact persons with the General Council for the process of Restructuring. Each Configuration will have at least one General Consultor as a reference person.

Furthermore, the Synod decided to suspend the seven Regional Conferences into which the Congregation was divided (Regulations Nos. 94, 95, 96) until the General Chapter of 2012; whereas the Provinces, Vice-Provinces and Vicariates will continue as usual until the next General Chapter. Each territorial entity will

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test the viability of the Configuration to which they belong. They can also collaborate among themselves to continue the positive projects already in progress or begin new ones.

### **EVALUATION**

The guide lines and the directives that will guide this experimental time period are, among others, those that were approved for the three areas of Solidarity: 1) Structures for solidarity in formation; 2) Structures for solidarity in personnel; 3) Structures for solidarity in finances. The evaluation of these decisions, the difficulties that were encountered and the accomplishments achieved will be shared at the next Synod of 2010 where, by means of appropriate discernment, we will see if modifications or corrective measures are needed for this program in process.

Therefore, in accord with what Jesus said: “*New wine in new wineskins*” (Mk.2:22), during the next two years we will continue to work on this change of mentality, and spiritually to assume a more profound attitude of conversion which will help us to bring about “*a new way of being together as Passionists in the mission for the life of the world*” and make us “*grow in awareness that life is a gift to be shared.*” (2000 General Chapter Document, 4.6)

We are called to take a qualitative leap of seeing and living our Passionist life, more on a Congregational level than on a Provincial level, moving beyond our own cultural and geographic boundaries and rediscovering the evangelical creativity of the early Church that was able to scale the walls of Jerusalem and go beyond the confines of the Israelite people as the only ones destined for their mission.

St. Paul the Apostle is a good example of going “beyond” geographical and cultural confines when he came to understand that Jesus was inviting all of us to be part of the mission: “*Go and teach all nations.*” (Mt. 28:19) – a mission that was multi-cultural and multi-ethnic. The Congregation should live out its international dimension by being capable of dialog with all its parts and live out its missionary dimension by an exchange of gifts between different countries and cultures. Today the process of Restructuring is calling us to this kind of conversion by inviting us to live solidarity in its widest sense and in a spirit of new birth and relationship.

## **TIMETABLE**

The program for determining the “feasibility” of the new Configurations will not end at the Synod of 2010 even if it will be an important phase for the Congregation. In fact, at that time we will confirm or modify the process by addressing possible problems that may arise from the experimentation process and we will also study a model of Government for the new Configurations and the General Government, still recognizing the Synod as a transitional step. The final two years of the process, 2010-2012, will bring us to the General Chapter where we anticipate that the new Configurations will be further defined with the possibility of new juridical entities being created within them. The model of government that will be used for the entities and the General Council will also be approved.

This is the timetable that has been planned for the next four years. Each of us is responsible and is called to collaborate with this process according to our abilities and with our prayers. We are called to live out this time of grace and life with enthusiasm and involvement. May Jesus walk with us on the road to the Emmaus of Restructuring of the Congregation, and open our minds and hearts so that we will understand and to do the will of the Father in regard to the renewal of the life of the Congregation, and so fulfill our one mission.

## **WORDS OF GRATITUDE AND CONCLUSION**

I wish to sincerely thank the Province of Christ the King (REG) of Mexico who welcomed us and who, together with all of its religious, was available to serve our needs -- especially its Provincial Superior, Fr. Francisco Valadéz, CP, his Council, the Passionist Family and all those who helped with the preparations of the Synod that was very successful and also for the comfortable setting in which it took place. I hope I am not overlooking anyone! God bless all of you!

The Acts of the Synod will express additional greetings and offer more specific and extensive words of gratitude.

I also wish to acknowledge and thank the General Consultors for their work for the Synod and for their effective help in the ministry of responsibility for the Congregation and for the suggestions that they offered during the preparation of this document.

Let us place this Synod and all that has already taken place and all that will transpire and develop from it under the protection of Mary who we venerated in Mexico, including a concelebrated Mass at her Shrine, Our Lady of Guadalupe, affectionately referred to as “La Morenita”. May she grant us simplicity of heart and the courage to act on the decisions that were made.

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Before concluding I want to remind you that next year 2009, we will mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the approbation of our Constitutions that occurred on 2 March 1984, the feast of the Solemn Commemoration of the Passion. Therefore the year 2009 can be an opportunity for we religious to “re-read” the Constitutions in our communities and with the Passionist Family and to organize study days, seminars and symposia to grow in appreciation for its content that is characterized by prophetic insight into our charism and genuine human and religious understanding.

May St. Paul of the Cross, our Father, whose feast we are about to celebrate, bless us and guide us.

Rome – Retreat of Sts. John and Paul  
10 October 2008

Fr. Ottaviano D'Egidio, CP  
Superior General

First day of the Novena to St. Paul of the Cross











