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Dear Brothers,

From the Retreat of Daimiel, where the remains and the memory of the 26 Passionist Beati, who died as martyrs, witnessed to the faith and faithful to Religious Consecration, are venerated, I am convoking the XII General Synod of the Congregation according to the norms of the Constitutions #144, #145 and #146.

As was previously stated at the Synod that was celebrated in Korea, the upcoming Synod will be celebrated in our Retreat House of Cuernavaca, Mexico, September 19-29, 2004.

The participants should arrive in Mexico City on the 17th and 18th of September and then proceed to the Retreat House in Cuernavaca. The Synod will begin on the afternoon of the 19th and will conclude during the morning of the 29th of September, the feast of the archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. Then, the afternoon of that same day and during the following day, you may begin your return trip.

According to the Constitutions, #147, the members of the Synod are those who participate ex-officio at the General Chapter and their alternates. Since the Synod is taking place in Mexico, the General Council felt it opportune to also invite to the Synod the regional Vicar of the Vicariate of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico (GUAD-FAM) and a representative of each of the four areas of the Passionist Conference of Latin America (COPAL). Furthermore, Fr. Wilfred Mzee Wayu (GEM-CORM), of Tanzania, was invited as a representative of Africa. Also, Fr. Elie Muakasa, the regional Vicar of the Vicariate of the Holy Savior (SALVGABR) of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will participate, even though the formal elevation to the new “status” will take place next November 19th, the feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica. Fr. Kevin Dance will report on his work: the inventions and steps taken, and the situation with reference to the constitution and full recognition of our presence at the UN. All of the participants will have active voice.

Number 144 of the Constitutions states: “It [the General Synod] will examine the programs proposed by the General Chapter and evaluate their implementation. Furthermore, it will suggest initiatives to keep the Congregation continually up to date; it will propose means of settling problems in a spirit of brotherly harmony, and will call the attention of the various Provinces to their duties towards one another.”

In addition to studying the programming of the General Chapter and approving the Budget and the plan for financing the Generalate (cfr. Decree #5 of the 43rd General Chapter, reconfirmed at the last General Chapter), the Synod will also study the topic of the Restructuring of the Congregation as indicated by the Provincial Councils and Vice-Provincial Councils of the Congregation at the conclusion of the last General Synod of 2002 in the Republic of Korea, in the Province of the Korean Martyrs, at our retreat house in Kwangju.

I also recall what is stated in number 146 of the Constitutions: “The members of the Synod...are free to put forward other topics for discussion.” Therefore it is necessary that whoever wishes to present other proposals or topics for discussion send them to the Secretary General as soon as possible, but no later than next June 30th, so that they may be inserted into the final Agenda of the Synod.

Since this is the Synod that immediately precedes the General Chapter it will also be its task to approve those who will participate in the 2006 Chapter itself (GR 77), the date, the site of the celebration, the theme and other pertinent items.

The topic of the Restructuring of the Congregation will be addressed during the first four days of the Synod and will require from us our utmost attention so that it may decisively influence the effectiveness of our life and our apostolate and to some degree, also the life of the Congregation itself. Restructuring is for new vitality and for the Mission. Although in various ways, it is a topic that urgently avertes to in the various sectors of the Congregation. The diminishment of the number of religious and vocations in the Provinces of the western world and the development of the Congregation in Asia, Oceania, Africa and also in parts of Latin America and the changing situations of the world due to the phenomenon of globalization, historically calls us to directly address it. It is also one of the tasks assigned to us by the last General Chapter.
In fact, the renewal that was born at the II Vatican Council has modified much of religious life both at the personal level as well as that of community life, but practically left untouched the structures of the Congregations as well as the Provinces, the Vicariates, and the exterior elements that are very closely tied to geographical and cultural areas of competence. In a world that is ever more globalized and intercultural, with immigration patterns from South to North and from East to West, we are still tied to structures that were formed at the beginning of the last century.

During the last ten years the face of society and of the Church has profoundly changed along with that of Religious Life. The western world is ever more multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-religious.

The last General Chapter has prophetically addressed the topic of globalization. The Chapter Document in No.4.6 states: “'Solidarity’ is the word chosen to describe a new way of being together as Passionists in the mission for the life of the world. New realities call for new responses in faith…solidarity calls us to a profound conversion of mind and heart. We grow in awareness that life is a gift to be shared.” (CD#4.6)

The time is well at hand to create “a new way of being together”, of “new realities [that] call for new responses” not only at the level in communities and Provinces, but in the entire Congregation.

Restructuring is for revitalization; restructuring occurs in order to allow for a greater flow of life from one part of the Congregation to another. The current structures of Provinces and Vicariates, if they are lived in the strict, juridical, narrow sense are impediments, often decisive, to the growth and maturation of the Congregation. They retard if not impede the exchange of culture, of potential, of life and of goods from one part of the Congregation to another. Jesus on the Cross was not about self-preservation. He placed himself in a posture of complete “vulnerability” so as to give life, the “grain of wheat” (Jn.12:23) which by dying gave life to the world. His death was his plan of life for us! Yes! It is time to open ourselves to the gift of life so that all of the Congregation may have the possibility of new life. It is in giving that we preserve ourselves. In preserving and refusing to be open the preservation and living are eluded and the future horizon is closed: “Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.” (Mk. 8:35)

It is time to think more as a Congregation rather than a Province, recovering the evangelical freshness and the capacity for dialog among all the parts of the Congregation with exchanges of gifts among the various cultures and nations. Where there is authentic and sincere communication, true communion becomes a reality. It is necessary to enter into the “culture of the other” in order to understand his ideas, share his feelings, dream his dreams. One of these dreams is that the Congregation become as if it were one, single Province and as such lives and is sent to all the ethnic groups of the world to announce the “good news”. Jesus wants us to be multi-cultural and multi-ethnic: “Go and teach all nations.” (Mt. 28:19)

It is time of the exodus and therefore, from death to resurrection; but we have to get to the other shore if we want the Congregation to live. We should not fear the headwind or the weariness of rowing or the ghosts who will try to intimidate us because Jesus reassures us: “Courage! It’s me! Don’t be afraid.” (Mk.6:50)

At the present moment, as we stand before the complexity of the situations and of change for the purpose of restructuring, the questions seem to be more numerous than the solutions. It will be necessary to go beyond the crisis of imperfection, of the temporary, of uncertainties and possible solutions that involve all the religious and all of the Passionist family. What is important is to adequately focus on the vital questions.
But beyond asking ourselves why restructuring is necessary and in order to arrive at the conviction that the time is at hand to do this, we must to ask ourselves and discern what kind of restructuring is necessary today to revitalize the Congregation and to therefore make it fit for Mission. What sort of Congregation do we want for the world of today with its secularization, its violence, terrorism, its aggressiveness on the global and family levels, which even touches the small things of everyday life? Doesn’t so much of this originate in the oblivion of the Passion of Jesus, the rejection of the great human and Christian “values” and the incapacity to love and to be reconciled?

What kind of a Congregation would St. Paul of the Cross found today to address the evils of our time and for the vitality of the Congregation itself? And on our part: What type of Congregation can we imagine for today; for ten years from now? What kind of community life? Which mission? Which future and how to achieve it and with what structures? We have to avoid pre-fabricated answers and previously invented solutions for restructuring. The directives for the kind of restructuring needed must originate in discernment that is carried out through a process that involves the entire Congregation. Therefore, we ask ourselves how we can involve the Conferences, the Provinces, the Vice-Provinces, the Vicariates, the Communities, the Religious and even the Passionist Family. What are the criteria for this discernment? Which is the road and the phases of the Process at the levels of the General Council, the Conferences and the Provincial Councils? It will be necessary to form “reflection groups”; order “viability” studies; and seek consensus for concrete actions for restructuring. Studying this research and these reflections in depth, as well as others means will help us to discern a road that will become an instrument for new vitality, strength and effectiveness in the Congregation.

We will be assisted in this process that we initiate at the Synod by Luis García Sobrado, the Vicar General of the Marist Brothers. He will guide us as a moderator for the predetermined four days during which we will take up the topic of Restructuring. His Congregation has already carried out a process of restructuring, although not entirely completed, which lasted about eight years, and therefore he will share with us his experience and the experiences of other congregations.

My dear brothers, this is a very important period in which we are living and we are called to celebrate the upcoming Synod with awareness and faith, a Synod that, without exaggeration, I would define as “historic”. It is necessary to encounter it without prejudices and with an open mind; with great internal freedom and with courage and faith that it is the Holy Spirit who guides us. It is for the Reign of God, for his Mission that we undertake Restructuring.

We should also be convinced that the efficacy of Restructuring will be directly proportional to our capacity to “restructure” ourselves and our spiritual lives by placing God and his Word at the center of our life.

I send you fraternal greetings on behalf of our General Council and the Communities of our Retreat of Daimiel, where we have been for approximately one week for a meeting of the Iberian Conference (CII), for the Consulta and for a meeting with Luis García Sobrado, to prepare for the Synod.

The presence of the remains of the 26 martyrs in the crypt, although small, creates in its simplicity the atmosphere and the idea of a catacomb. The small urns, one after the other like a rosary invite one to reflect on the paschal mystery and on another great value of our Congregation – community life. Here the martyrs lived the highest expression of Passionist community life in their common martyrdom, intermingling their blood, in unique witness, although they were 26, and living out what they celebrated every day in the mystery of the Eucharist: they finally became “one body and one spirit” – the Mystery of love.

Reading their names we note with some surprise that all of the essential components of our reality are present almost as if signifying, in this martyrdom, the representation of the entire Congregation and the possibility for holiness within every vocation: the Provincial Superior, Blessed Niceforo, the Rector, the Vicar, the Director of students, a professor, two priests, four Brothers and the 15 students, who appear as the heart of the group of the martyrs.

I remind you of what are referred to as the words of encouragement: the Testament of the Passionist martyrs of Daimiel that the Provincial Superior, Fr. Niceforo directed to the community that had gathered in the church when they had heard the knocking on the door and the shouting of the murderers who had come to arrest them and execute them: “My sons, this is our Gethsemane. Our nature, in its weakness, becomes weak and is afraid; but Christ is with us. I will give you that which is the strength of the weak. Jesus was comforted by an angel and we are comforted and sustained by Jesus Christ himself. Within a few moments we will be with Christ. Citizens of Calvary, have courage! We will die for Christ! It is my duty to encourage you and I myself am encouraged by your example.”

Daimiel, 19 May 2004
I continue to hold a particular responsibility for this sector as Consultor. I am assisted by the solidarity Commission, (full name, Commission for Solidarity and Justice and Peace and the Integrity of Creation), which has been meeting twice a year to give advice to the General and Council. Currently the members are, Christopher Gibson (Secretary for Missions), Antonio Curto, (LAT), Jesus Maria Aristín Seco (CORI), Kevin Dance (SPIR), John Sherrington (IOS), and Stephen Dunn (PAUL).

The solidarity Fund
Before the Synod of 2002 Father Ottaviano announced to the Congregation the formation of the Solidarity Fund. This fund, is intended for the needs of the Congregation. While there have been a number of very generous donations to the fund, the response has generally been rather slow. A small number of disbursements have been made from the fund. It is the intention of the Superior General, advised by the Commission and his Council, to conserve part of the income so to allow the fund to grow to a significant capital amount which can be more effective in the longer term.

Promotion of JPIC in Rome
As Consultor I have continued my efforts in my spare time to fulfil the role recommended by the general Chapter of Promotor of JPIC. I worked in various ways to promote JPIC within the Congregation, communicating with our members in various ways, including the PIB. I have promoted JPIC issues in conversation with our members. I have collaborated with other religious institutes in Rome on various projects, notably a publication regarding water.

Establishing our presence at the UN
We have made good progress in fulfilling the Chapter recommendation that the Congregation speak for Justice and Peace and the Environment at the UN. Fr Kevin Dance was there already on an informal basis before the last Synod. Since then Fr Ottaviano wrote to Mr Paul Hoeffel, Head of the UN Department of Public Information, requesting Associative Status with the United Nations Department of Public Information for the Congregation of the Passion. Kevin submitted this request together with all relevant documentation in the middle of last year, and on Dec 17 the Congregation was given that status. I should express appreciation to Umberto Palmerini for some remarkable legal work and to Battista Ramponi for financial documentation that went into the very large amount of documentation assembled by Kevin to accompany the application. Visitors to New York have been issued Passionist passes to enter the UN Building with Kevin and attend meetings there.

Our future at the UN
However, to participate more effectively in the councils of the UN an organization needs to have General Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). We are on the way to that level, but we are not working alone. At Easter time this year a new organization came into being, called Passionists International (PI). Passionists International is a not-for-profit corporation registered in the State of New Jersey. Membership in PI is open to religious institutes within the Passionist Family and to lay movements of the Passionist Family. Current participants are the Congregation of the Passion and the Sisters of the Cross and Passion. We hope to extend that list soon. The President of PI is Robert Joerger. In the future Kevin Dance, our Representative at the UN, will become the representative of PI.

Speaking for Justice at the United Nations
Kevin Dance has shown extraordinary energy and creativity in his work at the UN and is already well known for his effective support to various groups representing the needs and hopes of the oppressed, such as aboriginal groups, to give just one example. However the matter of greatest concern both to him and to us is to create an effective network among Passionists who are engaged in the struggle for JPIC at the grass
roots. In this way Passionists who proclaim the gospel in struggling against every form of injustice are beginning to share their experiences and to join forces for good.

**Conclusion**

Recent generations of missionaries *ad gentes* have poured their lives and the offerings of countless faithful into the task of human development, even as they preached the gospel. Since the 1970 Synod of Bishops the Church has articulated with increasing clarity the necessity of working not only for development, but also for justice. Paul VI, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, said, “The Church, as the bishops repeated¹, has the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings, many of whom are her own children— the duty of assisting the birth of this liberation, of giving witness to it, of ensuring that it is complete. This is not foreign to evangelization.” John Paul II might be called the Pope of evangelization, and at the same time he has recognized the need for justice. Few Popes have advocated more steadfastly for justice. And he has cried out for peace, a peace based on truth, justice, love and freedom². And the duty is incumbent on us all. In his General Audience Address on Jan 17, 2001, the Pope spoke of Avoiding Ecological Catastrophe, and he said³, “It is necessary, therefore, to stimulate and sustain the “ecological conversion,” which over these last decades has made humanity more sensitive when facing the catastrophe toward which it was moving.”

Many Passionists work unsung in the cause of justice for the poor in many parts of the world, for peace and for the environment. It is time to recognize them, to offer them greater support and to bring their voices to bear on the councils of the nations. This is why we are in New York.

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Father Kevin Dance  
(With assistance from Sister Mary Ann Strain and hopefully others, religious and lay)

¹ (1971 Synod)  
² See his message for the world day of peace 2004, where he quotes this axiom from Pope John XXIII.  
³ General Audience Address: Avoiding Ecological Catastrophe, No. 4.
1. The celebrations of the six chapters of the Italian Provinces were occasions to assess the quality of our life and to discern formative and operative priorities to be undertaken. Thus the Chapters produced Chapter Planning documents for the next four-year period. Beginning with these planning statements I would like to draw attention to the formation challenge that emerged as the underlying reality for the renewal and reorganization of religious life “in a world that is changing.” “In this phase of transition it is difficult to predict the future: What will be the characteristics of tomorrow’s religious life? What models should be embraced tomorrow and who should form the new generations of religious?”

Formation, therefore, on all levels and phases (initial, on-going, inter-congregational) must address the current problems created by this situation of change for which the traditional presuppositions do not seem to be adequate. To the long-standing elements such as progressive and acculturated human formation, formational discernment, personalized spiritual accompaniment, welcoming and challenging community life, adequate professional training in light of apostolic ministry, are added new elements such as a longer and more intensive period of initial formation, a clear orientation toward decisiveness and an international and intercultural experience. Beyond the formation issue, renewal and institutional reorganization must always be addressed, i.e. restructuring.

While being conscious of the vast issue and the implications associated with formation, the decisions of the CIPI Chapters emphasized the importance of On-going Formation (OF). If On-going Formation consists of “a path of gradual identification with the attitude of Christ towards the Father” (Vita Consacrata 65) then it becomes connected with the rhythm of daily life, to the ever present challenges of evangelization and to the dynamic nature of human beings. Obviously a process such as this cannot last an entire lifetime or penetrate every aspect of a person’s life. “On-going formation is about offering an on-going process of growth and human, cultural and spiritual maturity on the personal and community levels.” (CFIXI) And again, “we recognize that Formation is a priority, while being different at every age level.” (LAT). Without this understanding we cannot bring about any process of cultural and religious conversion. We obstruct the reading of the signs of God and, unconsciously, we impede offering a significant glimpse of our religious life to the young who feel attracted to religious life.

“It [on-going formation] is enhanced by several presuppositions: — the definition of several precise times and spaces, without leaving this process to the sensibility and the choices of individuals; — the proposal of a plan that would be common to all the religious and all the communities while affording each the opportunity to personalize it in order to create a shared vision and a common witness to the most important realities of the Passionist life; — the courage to confront the challenges of our time: globalization that makes it difficult to live with diversity and destructuring that leads to continual redefinition of institutions and models of formation.” (CORM)

2. How is it possible to express formation as a priority as well as to express an awareness of the unity and continuity between On-going Formation and Initial formation in the decisions reached by the Chapters? I would like to highlight several responses.

- The attempt to redefine Provincial Government by means of redefining the areas of responsibility of the consultors. A change such as this, already in practice in three Provinces, particularly concerns the sector of Formation, situated within the widest sense of the essence of On-going Formation. The Consultor for Formation: is responsible for the instruments used in on-going formation and the context of initial formation; coordinates formation meetings of various types as well as provincial and inter-provincial activities; collaborates with the Consultor for ministry in promoting vocation awareness. In the new configuration, collaboration becomes central in building a style of sharing and interconnectedness with the other sectors.

FORMATION IN THE CIPI REGION SUBSEQUENT TO CHAPTER PLANNING DECISIONS

Fr. Luigi Vaninetti, C.P.
The decision to institute formation courses for various groups of people and areas of ministry so that all of us are part of this renewal process of apostolic and professional re-qualification: “To elaborate psychological and cultural programs for groups of people (superiors, formation personnel, economes, pastoral ministers, religious Brothers, etc.) that are available to our religious of other Passionist provinces.” (CORM, CFIXI)

Insistence on the necessity of formation communities. The objective is to review the composition of the formation communities so that they are composed of religious who know how to take part in the task of formation, work as part of a team and try new models of fraternity. “It is necessary to predispose formation communities so that they are capable of explicating the Charism as a vocation possibility and a formative program, with the goal of achieving a human, psychological and vocational presence and a specific Passionist formation.” (CORM) “The Provincial and his Council will provide for two formation communities...” (LAT).

Youth vocation ministry and reception of candidates. “The new provincial Curia will endeavor to establish Youth and Vocation Ministry as the preference for youth ministry for the Province...” (PRAES)

Many provinces have decided to form a team for youth and vocation ministry: “a team for youth and vocation ministry will be established to increase our presence in the various areas of our apostolate...in particular a Youth and vocation Center shall be established.”(PIET) “Following the recommendation of his Council, the Provincial will establish a formation team under the guidance of the Vocation-Formation Consultant who will be responsible for devising a program that would involve all the religious...”(DOL).

One province in particular entrusted this task to several of the communities: “It is necessary to establish incisive and significant communities in the various regions that are capable of understanding the reality of the young, so as to offer new ways of welcoming as well as a path for growing in the faith, so as to bring about consciousness raising among the young in the area of vocations.” (CORM)

3. What areas most need improvement in the sphere of Formation?

The formation of formation personnel. There was a felt need to prepare formation personnel who would be capable of being “relational guides” who would develop particular “skills” not only on the level of abilities or knowledge, but above all in the area of pedagogical sensibility, i.e. a capacity for listening and for understanding the complex field of phenomena that become activated in the educational process, both on the individual as well as on the group levels. “To enable the Formation personnel to participate in formal courses that address the areas of human, psychological and spiritual development, with particular emphasis on the reality of the youth.” (CORM). “Several religious be designated to assume responsibility for the animation and orientation of the formation realities. These religious would not have any other responsibilities and they would be different from those of the consultor for formation; however they would work in collaboration with him. The Curia would give these religious the opportunity to adequately prepare themselves for this ministry.” (PRAES).

Accompanying the young religious. It is indisputable that every formation and vocation program originates from within a context and within an institutional organism and organizational initiative. This entails establishing formation as interplay of contextual and meaningful relationships and not merely as the carrying out of functional roles. In this area it is understood that “the Provincial and his Council program and carry out formation meetings designed for the young religious in order to sustain them in their initial and on-going formation.” (LAT) “The newly-ordained priests should be gradually incorporated into the apostolate and should continue their formation development under the guidance of someone assigned to them for this purpose, according the directives of CIPI” (PRAES).

“To accompany and direct the young religious.”(CORM) “To enable a better incorpora-
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The Congregation informs the young religious...they should be helped to: — live fully community life; — embark on their first experiences of apostolate; — follow a precise program of preparation toward perpetual profession and/or ordination; — discover what ministry they could best undertake in the Province.” (PIET).

In this area it is important to coordinate several elements, highlighted by the young religious themselves, which are principally grouped in three sectors: the community in which the young are placed; the person of a mentor; specified meetings for the young religious.

I want to conclude with a reflection and a “dream”. While visiting the Conference of North Europe on the occasion of the meeting of the General Council with NEPC during July 2003, the horizons of the urgency and necessity of the Restructuring of the Congregation were further expanded. We cannot proceed with the old structural and vocation models: (cfr. PIB/2), Fr. General: “The next Synod of the Congregation that will be held in Mexico in 2004, will have as its theme the restructuring of the Congregation... In a world that is always more globalized and intercultural, with immigration from the South to the North and from the East to the West we are still tied to rigid and obsolete structures that were instituted at the beginning of the last century.”

To revitalize means to prioritize and reduce or change structures and existing life forms. This urges us to take a new look at Europe mindful, above all, of the next generations. In fact, how can we begin a reorganization of life and structures if we do not begin with initial formation?

Why not consider a European or International Novitiate? Presently there are four novitiates in Europe.

The establishing of a European novitiate implies the search for a single formation, research that would involve a sharing of theories and establishing a structure of common life. Furthermore, key to any discussion of reorganization in the European region, is the knowledge of foreign languages. The linguistic differences are the sometimes insurmountable barriers for communication and reciprocal communication. For the new generations this remains a challenge to be met.

As of now, the study of foreign languages should become a formation priority and a plan should be put into place so that every candidate, by the end of the initial formation process, should know the other two official languages of the Congregation in addition to his own native language.

CHANGE:
LIFE OR DEATH?

Fr. Robert Joerger, C.P.

I spend a lot of time in airports. Often when someone asks whether I live in Rome or New York, I answer, “Neither. I live at the Air France Terminal”. And so it was last week at Paris’ Charles De Gaulle Airport. The annual meeting of the North Europe Conference of Passionists had just concluded in Verdelais, France and I was scanning the magazine racks looking for something to read before boarding.

“Time International” caught my eye with its cover heralding Europe’s Greatest Treks, Quests and Pilgrimages. The journalist, a man by the name of Jeff Chu, queried, “Where have all the pilgrims gone”? His response: “The fashionable answer is to say that faith in Europe is nearly extinct. Some theologians call the Continent ‘post-Christian.’ But the truth is that neither faith nor pilgrimage is dead in Europe”.

I had heard it was replaced by all the usual suspects of secularism, humanism, and consumerism, along with that ubiquitous American export “McDonald’s” whose golden arches replaced church steeples in calling the faithful to “take and eat.”

I recalled what a brother Passionist said to me after learning I would be the Consultor for North Europe: “Oh, you’re the Congregational hospice director. Most of your Provinces are dying”. Well,
maybe yes, maybe no. Is change a death or is it life? Hopefully both. My experience of hospice workers as a priest and in accompanying my own father through the stages of terminal cancer, is that they encourage a soul-full reflection on what has been life-giving, so that a full life can be lived until it comes to an end.

There have been four Chapters in the North Europe Conference in the last three months. Clearly the dignified care of the elder Passionists was a common concern. And so it should be. These were the men who brought the Congregation forward through times of war and poverty, preaching in its midst the love of a Crucified Christ. Their influence in such places as Africa, Indonesia and Brazil were seeds planted for a new growth in the Congregation. While the death of beloved brothers and the closure of some foundations are not strangers to these Northern Provinces, the spiritual search continues among those who have come for many years and those coming with new faces and new needs.

What of those current-day pilgrims trekking through Europe? What are they searching for? Probably what most of us search for - a place of welcome and safety; a meaningful life; an experience of community; a sense of mystery and a life of faith that moves us beyond ourselves.

So there we were at Notre Dame de Verdelais, nestled within vineyards growing ripe with promise. We congratulated the four recently elected Provincials - Guy Sionneau (MICH), Leo Bos (SPE), Gregor Lenzen (VULN) and Martin Coffey (PATR) and expressed our gratitude to Frank Keevins (PATR) who was completing ten years of service as Conference secretary.

We had two major agenda items: Solidarity and Re-structuring. Kevin Dance came to speak to us of his work at the United Nations. He used the story of the Syrophoenician woman in Mark’s Gospel, the “outsider” barging in and demanding something for her child. There are so many knocking for justice and mercy; so many issues a community committed to the Crucified could advocate for: the trafficking of women and children for sex; the economic effects of globalization and Third World debt; the scourge of AIDS; the plight of refugees and asylum seekers; the torture of political prisoners and the need for reconciliation. Kevin defined Solidarity as “a way of being together in mission”.

I remembered that in 1994 a major study was commissioned on religious life in the United States. It concluded that religious congregations had a “ten year window” in which to identify and respond to an unmet human need or face a probable extinction because their mission had been completed. Here we are, ten years later. And the world in which we live as a committed community within the Church has an array of new needs, not the least of which is the spiritual hunger of fellow pilgrims.

A tour through the Provinces of North Europe would indicate that efforts to respond to these needs are already taking shape. One can think of Minsteracres in the north of England and the decision of Saint Joseph’s Province to invite a wide discussion of how best to use this facility for the needs of the marginalized. Or the collaborative venture of Passionist men and women in Glasgow on behalf of refugees. Or the houses of prayer formed in the south of France for those seeking a spiritual haven. Or the mission to prisoners in Poland, in England, in Belfast. Or the retreat in Haastrecht for those who need healing but cannot find a home within the structures of the Church... to name but only a few.

All of these will require a certain amount of re-structuring, perhaps even closing some ministries in order to open others. Not because of death but because of the promise of life. It was a unanimous consensus at our meeting in Verdelais that re-structuring, like solidarity, only made sense in the light of a renewed mission. To that end we all hoped that the young Passionists of Europe, with the encouragement of General and Provincial leadership, would meet to explore new ways of being together, renewing structures for a future mission in a Continent where apparently neither faith nor pilgrimage is dead.
The on-going effort of various sectors of the Congregation toward formation in charism, mission, history and spirituality has notably continued in the years following the celebration of the Special General Chapter (1968-1970). This movement to return to the roots of the Congregation was further promoted by the vocation effort for a better and more in-depth understanding of our own identity. It was also stemmed from a need on a personal and community level to try to program and improve formation in order to add greater depth and commitment to one’s personal life as well as one’s vocation. In addition to the Chapters and the General Curias we wish to commend those religious, communities and provinces who are dedicated to the dissemination, within and beyond the Institute, of the spirituality of the Passion.

We begin by citing one particularly significant event in the Congregation: the commemoration of the Superior General, Fr. Antonio Testa, on the occasion of the centenary of his death (1862-1962) that took place on Dec. 02 1962 in the presence of several Passionist bishops, of the General Curia and of the community of Sts. John and Paul. The conferences of the three presenters were focused on the life, virtues, characteristics and foundations in Italy, on the universal concept of the Congregation and on the formation of native vocations and also on the concept of the exercise of authority. On June 26 1963, the translation of his remains took place to a location in a niche that was prepared in the octagonal chapel of Sts. John and Paul. On 14 Sept. 1963, Fr. Malcolm Lavelle, Superior General, addressed a circular letter to the Congregation concerning the personality of Fr. Antonio Testa and his influence on the development of the Congregation.

The International Congresses organized by the Conference of the Italian Provincials (CIPI) made great contributions to the study and knowledge of the spirituality of the Congregation, both internally and externally, with the publication of various works. The first conference (13-18 Oct. 1975) entitled, “La Sapienza della croce oggi” (The Wisdom of the Cross today) was convened to commemorate the centenary of the death of St. Paul of the Cross; the second (06 Jan. 1984) was proposed during the celebration of the Holy Year of Redemption, centering on the theme: “Christian salvation and culture today”; the third (09 Jan. 1995) developed the theme: “The Cross of Christ: our only hope.” A national study convocation took place on 07 Feb. 1981 and concentrated on the theme of “Popular missions for the 80’s”, which further encouraged additional research on the charism and the specific Passionist activity with regard to other institutes.

In conjunction with this activity and having a notable influence in the Congregation, above all in Italy, were the Seminars of Passionist Spirituality, promoted by the provincial of the PIET Province. The first four (1953-1956) took place at the shrine of Madonna della Stella (PG) and the other seven (1957-1965) at the Shrine of St. Gabriel (TE). Key topics were chosen for the spirituality of the Congregation and the formation of our students who were present for the seminars. Among these topics were: “The Virgin Mary in Passionist Spirituality” (1956); “The contemplative life and prayer in the Congregation of the Passion” (1955-56); “Liturgy and the Congregation” (1957-58); “Sacred Study and the contemplative life” (1959); “St. Gabriel and his spirituality” (1962); “The holy life and work of Bl. Dominic of the Mother of God” (1965).

The best theologians and historians of the Congregation made presentations according to their field of expertise and several of the seminars published the acts. Another initiative on the Italian national level, and not only for the members of the Passionist family, was the publication of the Magazine of spirituality of the Passion entitled, “Fonti Vive” which began publication in 1955 and for many years was edited by the eminent Fr. Costante Brovetto, composed of articles “on a highly popular theological, biblical, liturgical and mystical level.” Following a period of termination, it was succeeded by another publication entitled, “La Sapienza della Croce”. In 1976 CIPI erected the “Chair of the Theology of the Cross” in the Pontificio Ateneo Antonianum. In 2002 it was transferred to the Pontifical Lateran University with the title of “Cattedra Gloria Crucis”. On their part various groups of Passionist students assembled on
various occasions to further develop their Passionist vocation. Thus, in 1980 it studied the topic of “Passionist community”.

In 1976 the students of the Interprovincial Iberian Conference began annual meetings of one week in duration that has continued in existence to the present day. Their purpose is to further the Passionist Formation of the young in particular with regard to the history and spirituality of the Congregation and the theology of the Passion. As a preparation and conclusion of every meeting, there still exists the publication entitled, “La Cruz, una búsqueda”. The three Spanish provinces have promoted various courses for the celebration of the centenary of the Passionist presence in Spain and they united with Portugal to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the foundation in that country with an international course on the theology of the Cross.

At the initiative of the General Curia and the historical commission in the summer of 1978 a course took place in Rome in Passionist Spirituality with the participation of 35 Passionists from seven nations together with five Passionist Sisters. Another course in Passionist History and Spirituality took place in 1980. In 1983 three courses were offered, two in Italian and one in Spanish and one in English, with 170 religious participating.

Hundreds of religious and postulants participated in the courses of spirituality and history that took place in the Vicariates of Venezuela, Colombia and Peru. During 7-23 July 1980, approximately 200 men and women Passionist religious participated in the course entitled, “Theology and Spirituality of the Passionist Charism” that took place in Mexico. In 1980 there was also a course in Passionist formation for the religious of Argentina and Brazil. Additionally, in the Vicariate of the Caribbean, in 1994, a similar course in Passionist formation took place. With regard to the two North American provinces, they organized an annual course in Passionist formation by forming an Institute of Passionist Life and Apostolate. In many other parts of the Congregation similar courses of formation in Passionist life have been organized.

All of this activity of formation has been possible thanks to the efforts of all sectors of the Institute: the superiors and the participants. The greatest effort and the most demanding work was done by the members of the Historical Commissions who, according to their expertise and their linguistic knowledge, participated in most of the courses.

English Translation of another volume of the History of the Passionists

At the beginning of July, the English translation of the 2nd part of Volume II of the History of the Passionists, by Fr. Fabiano Giorgini, subtitled “Supression, Restoration and Expansion of the Congregation between the years 1796 and 1839” was published in Rome. The translation was done by Fr. Dominic Papa (PAUL).

The publication of this volume completes the English language translation of the works about the History of the Passionists that have been published up to the present time: Volume I of this work, also by Fr. Fabiano Giorgini, published in 1987 and the 1st part of Volume II, by Fr. Carmelo Naselli, published in 1988. These two volumes were also translated into English by Fr. Dominic.

Thus, this work is now available in the three official languages of the Congregation. The original Italian test was published in the year 2000 and the Spanish translation was done in 2002 by Fr. Fernando Piélagos (FAM).
The Curia Informs

GENERAL CONSULTA:
18-22 MAY AND 19-20 JUNE

Fr. Umberto Palmerini, C.P.

Synod on Restructuring
Recently the General Council had two main meetings, one in our retreat of the Martyrs of Daimiel, Spain, 18-22 May, at which the entire General Council was present, and the other in Rome, 19-20 June, at which were present the Superior General and four Consultors. The main topic of both meetings was the preparation for the XII General Synod which will take place in Cuernavaca, Mexico next 19-20 September. The facilitator, Brother Luis García Sobrado, Vicar General of the Marist Brothers, was invited to both meetings and was present in Daimiel on 22 May and in Rome on 19 June.

Prior to the consulta, on 17 May, the meeting of the Regional Iberian Conference took place, addressing the theme of Re-structuring. In addition to the General Council, the provincial Curias of CORI, FAM, SANG and FAT were also present. The Superior General of the Sisters Servants of the Passion and the Provincial Superior of the Passionist Sisters of Signa also participated. Together with the Superior of the Mexican Passionist Sisters they comprise the Iberian Conference, whose president is the General Consultant, Fr. Luis Alberto Cano. It was a meeting, including the liturgies, that was well prepared and executed. The social gatherings with the community of Daimiel were marked by a sense of fraternity.

The discussion on Re-structuring was resumed at the end of the General Consulta (18-22 May) and on the 21st the facilitator, Bro. Luis García Sobrado was also present. The schema of the work agenda was presented along with the objectives of the Synod, the effort needed by all in the process of Re-structuring, the list of criteria to put the process in motion and a common agreement about the steps and phases that need to be taken to accomplish the objectives. This process was delineated with greater specificity at the meeting with the facilitator on 19 June, in Rome at which the provisional agenda of the Synod was studied and was completed in addition to other points that the Synod itself would address (financial report, preparation for the General Chapter of 2006, etc.). Also presented were new norms for participation at General Chapters and General Synods, norms that were prepared by the special commission and which will be studied at the General Synod.

Fr. Battista Ramponi was also present on May 21 and June 19 to give input about the financial concerns for the General Synod.

The General Council of 18-22 May
During this Consulta, in addition to the topic of Restructuring, the following items were also treated: Information and communications on the part of the Superior General; the activity of the Consultors in their respective areas of competence; specific cases and various other subjects.

The Superior General reported on his fraternal visits to MICH, SPE, VULN, Panama, Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. The MICH Province is composed of three communities with a limited number of religious. There is a good rapport with the Passionist community of Paris of the PATR province. The SPE province has two communities consisting of religious who are involved in parish ministry. There is a spirit of serenity and dedication in both the community and spiritual areas. The VULN Vice-province is characterized by certain traditional elements, including exterior dimensions of our original traditions. The Superior General presided at the Chapters/Congress of MICH, SPE and VULN at which the General Consultant, Fr. Robert Joerger, also participated. They were pleased with the work atmosphere and the final results. Fr. General also briefly
referred to his visit to the communities of Panama (FAM prov.), Cuba, in the cities of Havana and Cruces, (FAM prov.) and to Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic (CORI prov.).

The Consultor, Fr. Vital Otshudialokoka addressed four topics: the meeting of the Board of Directors following the assignment of Kisima to the CORM Province; the report of the Conference of the Passionists of Africa (CPA); information regarding the preparation of the elevation of the SALV vicariate (Congo) to a Vice-province; the report on the MATAF Vicariate (Botswana and South Africa) of the PATR province. He gave a detailed report on each of these points, highlighting in particular the preparation of the elevation of the SALV Vicariate to a Vice-province and the recommendations for the development of the MATAF Vicariate.

The Consultor, Fr. Luis Alberto Cano, referred to the canonical visit that he did on behalf of the Superior General to the CFIXI Province of Sicily and of the visit to the western sector of Latin America, bordering the Pacific Ocean: Panama, Ecuador, Peru and Chile that are the responsibility of the three Spanish provinces of FAM, CORI and SANG and also the FID Vice-province of Colombia. He reported on the composition of each community, the number of religious, the principal ministries, and the vocation and formation programs.

Fr. Luigi Vaninetti gave brief reports on various topics: the annual Assembly of CIPI (16-18 Feb.) that addressed the topic of re-structuring; the study Seminar on St. Gemma Galgani on the occasion of the centenary of her death (19-21 Feb.) during which there were interesting presentations on mystical theology, including the psychological dimensions; the DOL Provincial Assembly (3-5 March) during which they sought to affirm the choices and directions that the Province is taking as was presented at the Provincial Chapter; the Italian national novitiate of Mt. Argentario; the meeting of formation personnel on Monte Argentario (15-17 April) that addressed the topic of the period following postulancy; the PIET Provincial Assembly (3-8 May) in which, among other points, a thorough report was given about the Province and its efforts to resolve the grave economic situation. The Consultor presented the report on his canonical visitations to the community of Sts. John and Paul (8-19 March), highlighting the serenity of the community and the areas that need improvement.

Fr. Augusto Canali, after participating in the priestly ordination of our young religious in Goiânia (LIBER Vicariate) and the episcopal ordination of Fr. Afonso Fioreze, C.P. (CALV Province), took part in the assembly of the Passionist Family of Brazil and the meeting of the coordinating team of CLAP and ERPAL in Brazil. Then he continued on to Bolivia for his canonical visitation which took place from 13-25 April, as well as attending the Assembly of the EXAL Vicariate of the SANG Province, outlining the reality of the very critical socio-economic situation. After Bolivia he went to Venezuela for the canonical visitation of the COROM Vicariate (FAM Province). This country is undergoing a socio-political crisis that is unprecedented in its history.

Fr. Jefferies Foale reported on his meeting with the Major Superiors that took place in Singapore from 22 to 24 June when the topic of Restructuring was discussed. He referred to the Congress of the VERB Vicariate (Papua New Guinea) of the SPIR Province. From Papua New Guinea the consultor went to Indonesia for a fraternal visit of approximately one month. Finally, Fr. Jefferies spoke briefly about the meeting of the Solidarity Commission that took place in Laurignano (LAT Province). The meeting addressed the topic of “Passionists International” (WEB page, logo, etc.) Among the suggestions of the Commission was the recommendation to collect and distribute material on JPIC, to remind the Provincials about the Solidarity Fund, to make a presentation on JPIC and Solidarity at the General Synod and to seek ways of continuing to inform the Congregation of these topics.

Fr. Robert Joerg completed the reports given to the Superior General by speaking about the Chapters that were celebrated by the MICH, SPE and VULN provinces. Referring to his canonical visitation to the PATR Province he outlined the restructuring process that was taking place especially in the retreat of Mount Argus and the pastoral ministry in the very popular Shrine of Blessed Charles Houben.
The Inter-provincial Iberian Conference (CII) cannot be understood without considering its presence in Latin America, including the Province of Sagrada Familia (FAM), with its present provincial headquarters in Zaragoza, Spain, that began in Latin America. The mission of evangelization of these provinces has always been directed toward Latin America and up to the present time, 50% of the religious of these Spanish provinces are located in that Continent. Many of the retreats in Spain originated as houses of formation, with the goal of attending to that which in other time periods was significant, i.e. the large number of vocations, many of which were destined for the Americas.

At the present time, except for the Vice-province of Colombia (FID), already autonomous, and the Vicariate of Peru (RES-CORI), which is moving toward autonomy, the other Passionist foundations in Latin America are dependent on the Provinces of the Iberian Peninsula, since there are still few native religious. Furthermore, many of the countries where the CII provinces are present have a very small number of religious: México, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, Venezuela, Ecuador, Chile and Bolivia.

(The young province of Fatima (FAT) in Portugal is beginning its missionary efforts in Angola, without any difficulties.)

I believe that CII has two great challenges:

1. To Strengthen the Passionist presence in the Peninsula. Certainly this strengthening will not be in terms of numbers, rather trying, where possible, to live consecrated life and apostolic ministry with joy, open to new initiatives in the provincial as well as the inter-provincial arenas.

2. Directly reinforce (despite limitations) vocation and formation ministry in Latin America (and Angola) since there are vocations. It is a matter of our responsibility to reinforce the Congregation where it is currently present.

As of the present moment, the religious climate has not been very favorable toward an exchange of native religious of Latin America with those of the Iberian Peninsula, for obvious reasons: it would seem to be unjust, bearing in mind the social reality and the need of the Church in Latin America. Never-the-less, at the present time the social reality of Europe and of the Iberian Peninsula is changing. The migratory influx of Latin Americans to Spain is significant. One wonders if, to the degree that native vocations strengthen the Passionist presence in Latin America, the Passionist presence in the Peninsula might also be strengthened by vocations from Latin America, offering the Latin Americans in Europe the possibility of pastoral and vocation ministry.

Within the process in which we are all currently involved and without enclosing oneself within the reality of the Inter-provincial Conference we have to keep in mind the decisions made during the joint meeting that took place between CII and the General Council in Daimiel:

To study and evaluate the functionality of the Vicariates in Latin America in light of the greatly reduced number of native religious.

To continue studying the possibility of opening inter-provincial communities directed toward the future, with their dreams and plans for a new way of being and living Consecrated Life, despite the inherent challenges, and of redesigning present foundations which, due to the small number of religious, cannot be sustained.

The difficult road of communications in the Congregation

The reality of our Congregation, extended throughout the world, with great cultural and linguistic diversity and with an ever smaller number of religious, creates significant, practical problems in order to achieve acceptable levels of internal communications.

Much is being done to accomplish this goal and, as is known, we aim at exchanging news items that arrive at the office of Communications of the General Curia, and then sharing them by means of the NEWS NOTES via email, or by the newly formatted PIB and the web site “Passiochristi.org”. All of this, unfortunately, it is marked by the limitations of only being able to offer it in the three official languages of the Congregation – Italian, Spanish and English—as well as functional and financial considerations.

At the same time, for personal reasons, we are struggling with achieving the goal of timely publication as we attempt to regroup the team of religious that work in this area.

Another difficulty has been the scarcity of information that is being sent to Rome. We began this new initiative asking that the Provinces, Vice-provinces and Vicariates entrust a person with the responsibility of this task, as a link with this office; however, the cooperation in this regard has been minimal.

I understand that every area of the Congregation is immersed in its own reality and there is little space remaining to think about the greater reality of the Congregation; although later we all want to receive information about the other provinces although we are not willing to offer any material that might be shared. It will be necessary to make greater efforts to share the dreams that we hope will become reality in this matter in order to revitalize our Passionist Life and be able to encourage one another.
Once 200 men and women were challenged to respond to this moral dilemma:
On a very stormy night you are driving in a vehicle which only had room for one extra passenger. You pass by a bus stop where you see three people waiting: An old lady who is on the verge of dying, an old friend who once saved your life, and the ideal woman or man of your dreams.

Which one would you take in your car given the fact that you can only take one passenger? You could take the old lady as she urgently needs to get to a hospital, or you could take the friend as you owe him for saving your life, but would there ever be another opportunity to find the woman or man of your dreams? Faced with this apparently impossible dilemma to solve, one of the 200 finally comes up with an interesting alternative. He said: “I would give the keys of my car to my friend and ask him to take the old lady to the hospital, while I would wait for the bus with the woman of my dreams.”

Often in life we are faced with dilemmas that seem to have no solution, but thinking things out well could lead to a solution. Today, also in the life of our Congregation we are faced with different dilemmas: for many it may be a vocational dilemma: no vocations are forthcoming; for others it may be coming to terms with self reliance especially when it comes to the financial situation in geographical regions of the world where material resources are hard to come by. As I have been visiting our Passionist presence in Kenya, I have seen how the vicariates are seriously paving the way towards self reliance. Part of the solution, though not the entire solution, seems to be developing - be it the “chamba” (farm) in Molo or the creation of retreat centers in Nairobi or Karungu. Tanzania is also finding ways among other things through its “chamba” in Tanga. Every sector in the Congregation that is struggling will have to find its own solution. And it is vital to start now. Those who wait until the future will more than likely find some rude surprises. No longer are the funds going to be pouring in from the more wealthy “west”, since most of our generous donors are aging and going to their eternal rest, including our religious who have been the bridge for this vital financial flow up to the present. Simultaneously, the churches in developing countries are growing. A sign of the times that this is already happening is that it becomes harder each day to find Mass stipends to send to our missionaries who are most in need.

Traditional organizations are not able to help diverse projects as they used to since the funds have also become less available. So, yes, new ways must be found. Maybe with careful planning and where all parties are to benefit, an exchange of resources, both human and financial may be in place. Some foreign missionaries could minister for a period in another geographical area where he would not only be an asset to the Passionists in that locality, but also be able to get some needed funds of a stronger currency back to his geographical area of origin. More of a challenge faces our younger missions like our brothers in China or our Passionists in Meteoro, Mozambique. Missions like these need a special support from their fellow Passionists. I am actually writing this from (Mozambique). A lot of sharing is going on and good ideas emerging. Lamenting our dilemmas will get us nowhere. On the contrary, I believe that all this is a blessing in disguise, as we face the challenge of Passionist life with maturity in a very different world from that of our Passionist elders. I hope to be able to do something useful along these lines together with other objectives on the mission internet page which is being set up at http://www.cpmissioni.org. Please be patient with its development as it takes a lot of time to be designed.
The Passionists came to Holy Cross, Belfast in 1869 and have since then cared for Holy Cross Parish. The Passionist Monastery lies at the heart of the parish.

On July 27, 2001 I arrived in Ardoyne, Belfast after seven happy years at Ss. Giovanni e Paolo, Roma. Nothing could have prepared me for what has happened since in this troubled area of North Belfast.

What happened in Ardoyne, Belfast, in 2001 is a unique event. For the first time in the history of the ‘Troubles’ in Ireland, girls aged 4 to 11 years of age were prevented from going to their school with parents. On June 19th 2001 a dispute with Protestant Loyalists over the putting up of flags for the ‘Marching Season’ erupted. For the rest of June 2001 the children could not access their school.

I was elected Chair of the Board of Governors of the Holy Cross Girls’ Primary School on 6 August 2001. It is the statutory duty of the Board of Governors of a school to ensure the education, health and safety of the children according to parents’ wishes. All through August 2001 I met with the parents to hear their wishes. I met with the R.U.C. (Police) at the highest level to hear their assessment of the situation. This I relayed to the parents and brought back their reaction to the Police.

By September 3rd 2001 I was satisfied that it was reasonable to go to school along Ardoyne Road. This short road that many have seen in person or on T.V. is the only direct access to the school. Mothers of these little girls had, since 1969, used this route.

The world saw what happened on September 3rd. It was a complete disaster as the protestors spat, abused, threw stick, stones, bottles at the children and parents. The parents had asked me to accompany them as a form of protection or ‘insurance’. Along with Fr. Gary Donegan, C.P., Assistant at Holy Cross, we set off on what was to be the first of many walks along Ardoyne Road.

What happened that day was without precedent. There were no rules and no previous experience. People have commented on what I said, what I did, what I suggested. Let me say that I was struggling and searching. Only by the grace of God and the sheer goodness of the Ardoyne community we didn’t carry home a dead child. I say this not to be dramatic, but to let you know how raw it was. It was horrible.

There was:

- A bomb thrown at the children on September 5th.
- One day we were told there was a sniper on Ardoyne Road and that if we went to the school someone would be shot.
- Balloons filled with urine thrown over the children and parents.
- Dog excrement wrapped in paper thrown at the children and parents.
- Fireworks were thrown into the group walking to the school.
- Protestors wearing grotesque masks that scared the children.
- Explicit and disgusting pornographic pictures held out for the children to see.

When I arrived in Belfast I could see that the situation was serious. I have two guiding principles as far as education is concerned:

Every child irrespective of class, colour, creed or political affiliation has a basic right to education.

It is the right of a parent/guardian to choose where and how their child will go to school.
• Placards denouncing me as a paedophile priest.
• Daily taunting and jeering.
• Shrii whistles blown and horns incessantly sounded as we walked past the protest.

And in the midst of such hatred 225 incredibly brave and loving little girls. Once great counterbalance to the inhumanity of the protest came at Christmas 2001 when people in America sent 25,000 Christmas cards to Holy Cross Girls’ School. Every envelope had a girl’s name on it. The delight was obvious on the faces of the children as they opened these unexpected greetings of love and affection.

The children should never have seen such abuse and expressions of hatred. Within a few weeks of September 3, there were 120 children in counselling due to the trauma they were experiencing. My own belief on September 3 was that the protest could not last more than a few hours. I was naïve enough to believe that effective policing and political action would see to it that the children did not have to face the same abuse on their way home from school that day. That it could last three days or three weeks was beyond my wildest expectations. That it lasted three months was an obscenity. Recently a Judicial Review in Belfast High Court upheld the actions of politicians and police as been in order. So much for justice.

Politicians from Westminster of all political parties were present on Ardoyne Road. Representatives of the Irish Government were in daily contact. President of Ireland, Mary McAleese (baptised in Holy Cross) and her husband Dr. Martin McAleese could not have been more supportive and concerned. There were others.

That is all I did. I did nothing exceptional. I did nothing spectacular. I did what anyone with a spark of humanity in them would do. I have lost count of the death threats I have received. One I remember well. On Friday, January 10th 2003 the Police visited me at midnight to say that they had intelligence saying that I would be killed by Monday, January 14th. They spent over an hour trying to convince me to leave Belfast for my own safety. It would have taken more than this to remove me voluntarily from Ardoyne.

The children were the only focus for me. This was not an ego trip for me. Where the life and safety of children are concerned my own reputation, status or safety were not on the agenda. Those children taught me what the Kingdom is like.

Now the school goes ahead in a wonderful way because of such a wonderful and dedicated staff. The protest will not return, I hope. Still the faces and smiles, the tears and the laughter of ‘my’ 225 children both haunt me and inspire me. In their name I will stand by them for as long as my Passionist Superior and Local Bishop allow me to remain at Holy Cross.

The Passionists of Holy Cross are not politicians or civic administrators. But we are called by those children to leave some monument in memory of their heroism and lack of bitterness under the most awful provocation. We have begun. Holy Cross Church, built in 1902, has been totally restored. The children of Holy Cross were baptised there, make their First Communion there, receive Confirmation there and may come there to be married in the future.

The original Holy Cross Girls’ and Boys’ Schools stand derelict in Holy Cross Monastery grounds. Until they were attacked and burned in the ‘Troubles’ they were the Family Centre for Holy Cross Parish. Now they lie in ruins. At this moment they are coming back to life. They are being cleaned out, plans are being drawn, and an economic appraisal and business plan are being prepared. Into this place I want to create a space where Nationalist and Loyalist, Protestor and Protested against, Catholic, Protestant or no religious can find:

Hope
Safety to meet the traditional enemy
A place of healing and reconciliation
It won’t be a chapel but it will be holy ground.

Pray for us please.
More than two and a half years ago, at the invitation of the General Curia and following the directives of the last General Chapter, in the retreat of St. Joseph on Monte Argentario, the first Novitiate of the Congregation, an experience of life was begun that would be open to all of the Passionist Family – men and women Passionist religious and laity. This experience forms part of the so-called Center Forum, a process of life, reflection and study that the General Chapter established for the entire Congregation.

To initiate this process our former Superior General, Fr. José Agustín Orbegozo was chosen and invited to the solitude, silence and simplicity of the “Mountain” to take the first steps in this venture. He encountered many difficulties of a practical nature that he has been resolving with this Basque character and his zeal for creating a lifestyle according to the ideals of the Congregation.

Based on these premises, one of the editors of the BPI, Fr. Luis Enrique Bernal, went to Mt. Argentario to interview Fr. José about his experiences of these recent years amidst the life and the uniring work of the small community that is found there today. Below is the result of this dialogue.

José Agustín, after so many years of service in the administration of your Province and the Congregation, why did you choose to come to St. Joseph’s? Why are you here?

~ First I want to clarify that I did not “choose” to come to Argentario. It was the Superior General, Fr. Ottaviano D’Egidio, who proposed the idea to me of coming to Argentario to inaugurate this experience of the Center Forum. I remember exactly the day when Fr. Ottaviano called me in our retreat of Irún, inviting me to this adventure. It was during my sabbatical year and at the moment that I was packing to go for two months to our house in Bethany. The invitation of the Superior General took me by surprise since I already had plans for my future, according to our agreement.

The proposal of Ottaviano had a double meaning. On one hand, he proposed to me the idea of being the coordinator of the Center Forum, according to the directives of the General Chapter. On the other hand, he invited me to move to Argentario to try to change the retreat of St. Joseph into a resource and reference center for the Center Forum. At that time I did not understand the scope of the project because the General Chapter had proposed nothing more than a simple suggestion to the General Curia. It may also be that even now I really don’t clearly understand what the Center Forum is all about and how the retreat of St. Joseph can serve in this regard. Perhaps the best that I can say is that the project of the Center Forum is a dream of the Passionist Family that requires the collaboration of all of its members in order for it to become a reality. I am merely at the starting point that was indicated by the General Chapter. If this beginning goes well, so will the destiny of the Center Forum and the experience of St. Joseph’s retreat.

José, I notice that there is also a small group of people here with you, one lay woman and two male religious. What is the objective of the common life as it is live in this house?

~That is a very interesting question that you are asking, but I can only give a very theoretical answer. However at this point in my life I am not satisfied with theorizing about what you referred to as “the common life.” During these past two years many men and women, religious and laity, have come through this house. Most of these have come for only a specified period of time and have not been stable members of the community. Fr. Juan Arellano, a Mexican, spent a year with us. Fr. Nazario Plaza, a Filipino, came for one year and, if his superiors don’t change their mind, he will return to his country following this year. But there is good news and that is that Fr. Andrea Damiani, a young religious of Presentation Province, has just joined our community as a permanent member.

I understand, however, that your question is directed toward another point. You are not asking about numbers, but about the objectives of our community life. If I spoke about numbers it is only to point out the importance of the life itself. And the numbers certainly are one of the elements that influence the common life.

The purpose of the common life here and in every other area of the world is to make the Trinitarian community something that is historically transparent, i.e. the concrete practice of Trinitarian love in the everyday reality. The everyday reality of St. Joseph’s possesses a particular connotation, given that the dream of the common life embraces all Passionist Family: men and women religious and laity. It deals with living and witnessing in common that which characterizes all of the members of the Passionist Family: the “Memoria Passionis.” This is the source from which the Passionist Family is born and grows and that we want to situate ourselves in order to proclaim together the love of the Father that is revealed in his Crucified Son.

I speak about living and witnessing in common to that which characterizes us as a Passionist Family. The theology of recent years has made it clear that “our” charism is a gift of the Spirit. In fact, from the very beginning of this experience, numerous “Passionist” and “non-Passionist” groups have come to Monte Argentario to drink from these fountains of the Spirit that spring from the still beating heart of Paul of the Cross.

After three years of this experience, has your opinion changed in comparison with what it was at the
Every beginning is a kind of daydream. I had dreamed of many things before arriving here. My first contact with the physical reality of this house and its surroundings forced me to leave the dreams and the big plans for some other time. The same thing happened to me with the reality of being in between communities. I dreamt that we would be numerous... but I found myself alone. Then several men and women religious and laity joined the community. But at the end of the period predetermined by the superiors or by circumstances, they left. At this moment we are four, three religious and one oblate. How many will we be tomorrow?

Personally I have changed my opinion about this experience of Monte Argentario and I have to say that I continue the search that I referred to previously. I have no pre-established opinion or one that is determined by any authority. The very Commission of the Center Forum has often reflected on the significance of Argentario as a point of reference for the Center Forum. If you have read the Acts of the meetings of the Commission you will realize that at the beginning it was thought that Argentario was itself the Center Forum consisting of an ideal community of trained individuals who would respond to the various needs of the Passionist Family. Then they arrived at the conclusion that St. Joseph’s is not the Center Forum. Rather it is a point of reference and support in itself, a simple point of reference and support. The Center Forum is the Commission with all its members named by the Superior General. I want to strongly emphasize this point because there are many people who think that St. Joseph’s and only St. Joseph’s is the Center Forum and consequently, uniquely responsible for all that refers to the Center Forum...

Speaking about your personal experience... Do you believe that this experience here has enriched your Christian and religious life?

I don’t believe that this experience of my life is an “extra” experience that has to be evaluated with special instruments. Life fully lived is always an enriching and transforming experience. I did not come to Argentario as a hero or as a prophet who wanted to radically transform his life or the lives of others. I came to continue living out my own religious profession with great conviction and hope and to be willing to offer others my hope and a sense of belonging to the Passionist Family. Obviously, this is not about just any place and Argentario isn’t just any mountain for a son of St. Paul of the Cross. This place touches the roots of our identity and one cannot come here without being affected by a sense of one’s origins. In this respect, there is no doubt that my Christian and religious life has been impacted by the presence of the God of our Fathers.

One important aspect of this transforming experience of my life has been the common life that I have shared with the religious and laity. This surely has been most significant on a practical level. Now I know what John Paul II wrote in Vita Consacrata is true, i.e. that the laity can be of help to us in interpreting and living our charism in the world today. But I also know it is true that we religious have great difficulty sharing our life with laymen and women and with women religious. We feel that we need to be the “teachers”, those “in charge”, those who are served... This experience of the common life is becoming for me like a novitiate that is preparing me for the definitive entry into the Passionist Family.

Then, if you were to invite other members of the Passionist Family to share life at St. Joseph’s, what would you tell them?

I want to be clear that I cannot invite anyone to share life at St. Joseph’s. The suggestion came from the General Chapter and the invitation must originate from the natural sources of every religious decision. In any case, the most important element is the personal call to this new vocation project. Whoever feels himself to be called will discover the road that leads to Argentario and will set up his tent among ours. Naturally I believe in human interventions which our good God knows how to use very well. From this perspective, the only thing that I would say to anyone who wants to come to Argentario is to come “without anything for the journey: neither staff, nor traveling bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have a spare tunic.” (Lk. 9:3) Ideas won’t be lacking, nor programs, concepts or pre-established projects... What is needed is a free spirit to break with whatever impedes us from walking as a charismatic Family; what is needed are clear eyes to be able to discern the signs of the times and its places; what is needed is a humble heart to hear the Word of God and put it in practice; what is needed is a sense of belonging to the Passionist Family... Argentario is a meeting place with the God of our Fathers who calls, invites and sends...

Along this same line: What is the message that the community of St. Joseph’s wants to give to the Congregation and to the Passionist Family?

The community of St. Joseph’s has no pretensions about offering a special message to the Congregation or to the Passionist Family. The community of St. Joseph’s does...
not view itself as “special” or “better” than other communities that are working in the area of renewal that the Passionist Family has undertaken during recent years. Honestly, it understands itself simply as a community of believers that are in an on-going search for its own Passionist identity and in search of ways that make this identity credible and genuine. It may be that as different from the majority of our communities this one is marked by openness to the entire Passionist Family. But this does not exclude the fact that there are other initiatives in the Congregation in which life and apostolate together with men and women religious and laity is accepted.

Therefore I believe that the characteristic dimension of this community is defined as its relationship to the Center Forum and to the process of experiential formation of the Memoria Passionis. This is what the Center Forum wants to offer to the Passionist Family as a means of renovation of its life and its apostolates. Accordingly, the particular message of this community would be the call to all the members of the Passionist Family to submit itself to the process of formation-conversion according to the Memoria Passionis that has the capacity to change our lives and our institutions. And the offering of the community would be its willingness to work in this way with individual members as well as with different groups of the Passionist Family.

José, do you think that the members of the Congregation and the Passionist Family understand what this experience is trying to achieve with regard to the fundamental movement of the so-called “Center Forum”?

This question focuses all of the contradictions that the Center Forum has embodied since it inception as a suggestion of the General Chapter up until its present initiative that was developed in the various experiences of the Passionist Family. The General Chapter perceived a situation that was emerging in the Passionist Family and it expressed its desire to confront it. But it never arrived at the point of programming any specific action that would respond to the perceived situation. It left to the Superior General and his Council the task of preparing a concrete strategy.

The Superior General and his Council named a commission to study the means of putting into practice the suggestion of the General Chapter. The Commission met annually and tried to understand what the General Chapter recommended and to search for ways of making it a reality.

At this point, we have to be honest enough to say that a number of times the Commission changed its idea about the Center Forum and its implications in the life of the Passionist Family. Initially it was believed that the Center Forum would offer material for reflection on the various dimensions of the Passionist Family. Then, it realized that there are other commissions that are addressing this topic. Finally, it arrived at the conclusion that the Passionist Family required a process of formation-conversion according to the Memoria Passionis. It would entail an experiential or learning process… Consequently the commission dedicated itself to reflecting about the pedagogical schema that might help the Passionist Family to enter into that experiential process that is the Memoria Passionis. Everyone is familiar with the four steps in this process that were prepared by the Commission, since they were presented at the Synod of Korea and were then published with the various documents of the Synod. They will have had an initial experience of this process in Cuernavaca, Mexico with the participation of numerous laity and some of the religious of the province of Cristo Rey and the members of the commission of the Center Forum. The second experience will take place here at St. Joseph’s next October with the participation of laymen and women and men and women religious. It is the desire of the commission that these experiences be repeated in the various sectors of the Passionist Family. Or even better, that the entire Passionist Family enter into this process that seeks the conversion of the communities and individuals according to the Memoria Passionis.

If one really wants to understand the specific nature or mission of this small community of St. Joseph’s it must be situated within the general context of the Center Forum. As I stated at the beginning of this interview, St. Joseph’s is not the Center Forum, rather it is a point of reference for it. The Center Forum is much more that St. Joseph’s because it involves all of the Passionist Family in search of new ways of living and expressing its specific charism. St. Joseph’s simply wants to be a place in which the formative experience of the Memoria Passionis is at the center of its life; it wants to be a place that offers that possibility to the entire Passionist Family.

Finally, in your opinion, what is the future of this experience of life of the Passionist Family?

I don’t know what the future holds in store for this experience, nor does it greatly concern me personally. At another point in this interview I confessed to being a “Passionist believer”. For a believer, the future is always charged with hope because it is filled with the promise of God and with his continuous presence. I am not the creator of this experience of Argentario, nor am I the guarantor of its future. He who began the experience will tend to its future. What is clear is that the fidelity of the Passionist Family to its origins will have an important role to play in the future of this experience. In any case, the important thing is not that this unique experience of Argentario endure, but that the experience of conversion to the Memoria Passionis endure in all the Passionist Family.

In the meantime, I continue to believe that Monte Argentario will always be a point of reference and a call to every Passionist believer who wants to live in fidelity to his origins: “If I forget you Jerusalem, may my right hand wither! May my tongue cleave to my palate if I do not keep you in mind, if I do not count Jerusalem the greatest of my joys.” (Ps. 137:5-6)
Meeting of CIPI Formation Personnel

From 13-16 April 2004, Italian formation personnel met at the Retreat of the Presentation on Monte Argentario for its annual study session on the formation programs in the Italian provinces. They especially studied the formation program for postulants that serves to offer the young religious a gradual introduction to the Passionist charism, as well as to offer them spiritual direction directed toward the Passionist charism and welcome them into a Passionist community that will receive them in a context of complete collaboration with the formation personnel.

Important honor for Fr. Fulgenzio Cortesi

On March 19, 2004, the city of Guarapuava (Paraná-Brazil) recognized Fr. Fulgenzio Cortese as “Man of the Year 2003” for having assisted 850 poor children of the city in their studies for eight years, by financing the Center, “Oasis of peace and hope”. Every day this center assists hundreds of poor families by distributing approximately three tons of cooked food. He also received an award from the parish of Santa Cruz of the LAT Passionist Province, where the Center is located.

On 2 June, the President of the Italian Republic conferred on Fr. Fulgenzio the title of: “Commendatore dell’Ordine della Stella della Solidarietà Italiana”, a prestigious honor that the Italian government confers on persons who have distinguished themselves for their work for those most in need.

Seminar on the Sacrament of Reconciliation

The annual national seminar on the Sacrament of Reconciliation entitled, “Rediscovering the face of Christ in the sacrament of penitence”, took place at the Shrine of St. Gabriel. The various presenters touched on various topics of the theological, moral and pastoral dimensions of the sacrament with special attention given to “new” sins of modern society and how to exercise the ministry of reconciliation in a context where a sense of sin is more and more lacking.

The Vicariates of Latin America at the Synod

Mindful of the fact that the upcoming General Synod will take place in Latin America (Cuernavaca, Mexico, from 19-29 Sept. 2004) the General Curia decided to invite some Regional Vicars to participate in the Synod. Thus, Regional Vicars were elected to represent each of the four regions of the Latin American Conference.

For Region A (Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean) Fr. Heriberto Pérez Raimundo, (FAM) the Major Superior of the Central American Vicariate was elected; Region B, comprising Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, Fr. Juan María Santamaría Sáez, (CORI) the Regional Vicar of Peru; Region C, Fr. Samuel Riveros, (SANG) the Regional Vicar of Chile, representing Region C (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay y Uruguay); and finally, representing Region D (Brazil) the Major Superior of the Vicariate of Christ the Liberator, (SPE-LIBER) will be Fr. Célio Amaro.

Fr. Ramón Pérez Franco, (FAM) the Vicar of the Vicariate of our Lady of Guadalupe (Mexico) was previously chosen to attend since the Synod is taking place within his Vicariate. Consequently, nine of the Regional Superiors of Latin America will take part in the Synod. In addition to those Regional Vicars cited above, the Provincials of Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and the Vice-Provincial of Colombia will also be members of the Synod by right.
The 5th On-going Passionist Formation Meeting of the Inter-provincial Iberian Conference took place in Las Prensas, Santander, Spain from June 27 to July 3. The theme of, "Memoria Passionis: Theology and Proclamation" was addressed by Frs. José Luis Quintero (SANG) and Francisco de Mier (FAM).

Approximately 50 men and women Passionist religious from Spain and Portugal participated. Briefly some of the topics that were addressed were: The category of "Memoria Passionis" within the context of contemporary theology; the historical-biblical context of the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and several models for presenting the salvation offered in the Paschal Mystery.

Meeting of the General Curia with CII

Last May 17, in the Shrine of the Martyrs of Daimiel in Spain, the General Curia met with the major superiors of the Inter-provincial Iberian Conference. The entire Curia was present as well as the four Provinces of the Iberian Peninsula, in addition to the Mother General of the Sisters Servants of the Passion and the Provincial of the Passionist Sisters of St. Paul of the Cross. The meeting was chaired by Fr. Luis Alberto Cano, First General Consultor.

The dialogue was characterized by openness and a fraternal spirit. The provincials presented detailed information about the situation of their provinces, with their strengths and weaknesses, and the general consultors reported about their respective areas of responsibility. Finally, the key point of Re-structuring was discussed, all of the participants offering their reflections. This dialogue can be summarized by the two recommendations that the members of CII made to the General Council: a) The General Curia has to own the topic and animate, orientate and motivate the Congregation; and b) allow the Provincial Curia to reflect and study this topic. The conclusions will be discussed at the General Synod.

The General Curia will continue this type of meeting in the different Regional Conferences of the Congregation, according to the invitation of the General Chapter. The Regional Conferences of North Europe, the United States and the Iberian Peninsula have already met with the General Council. Following the Synod the Conference of Latin America will be the site for the next meeting.

FAM - Spain. New organ for the Shrine of St. Gemma in Barcelona

A work of great proportions has been completed in the new organ at the Shrine of St. Gemma in the city of Barcelona, in the Province of Sagrada Familia (FAM). It was blessed and inaugurated last January 10 during the centenary year of the death of the Saint. In planning for many years, this dream became a reality due to the generosity of many devotees of Saint Gemma. The new, magnificent instrument of the Shrine, which greatly enhances the liturgies, is composed of 3,165 pipes, 165 of wood, and has mechanical transmission of notes and electronic transmission of registers, with 7,104 memory units controlled by computer. Physically it is an organ of 8.60 meters in height, 9 meters in width and 2.50 meters in depth, designed exclusively for the space that it occupies. It has three manuals of 56 keys each and pedal keyboard of 30 units. Additionally there is a second movable wire-less console that is located in the body of the church from which the organ can be played with the same capacity as from the master console. It is the first organ of this type in Spain. It is the master work of the builder Federico Acitores, and the second in importance in the city after that of the Cathedral.

The new organ was inaugurated during January and February with a special program of concerts in the Shrine with the participation of many personalities from the art and cultural world of Cataluna, in addition to political and religious dignitaries of the city.
New Provincial Residence (SPIR)

During the month of May the Provincial Superior, Fr. Denis Travers and the members of Presentation Community and St. Brigid’s Parish moved to a new residence. The move from the monastery is a significant moment in the history of the province. The religious of SPIR province have lived in the monastery for almost 100 years. In a pastoral letter to the parishioners of Marrickville, Fr. Tom McDonough wrote: “This will mark the end of an era. The Passionists bought the original Shrubland Estate in June, 1915 and we have lived there ever since. If the walls could talk and tell the stories of so many Passionists—the many who have served on the Parish staff, the countless others who have served us through their silent lives and prayer.”

Paspac Regional Meeting

On 21-24 June the Major Superiors of the Asian and Pacific Regions (Paspac) met in Singapore. The meeting discussed restructuring, working from a paper prepared by Fr. Denis Travers, the Australian Provincial. There was lively discussion on many aspects of restructuring. This is a region of vastly greater cultural diversity than any other, and for this reason and well as because of the great distances there appears to be no interest in combining jurisdictions. Instead, Paspac is interested in development of the region as a whole. Great effort has already gone into this process and there are good results. The following statement was discussed.

“Restructuring in the PASPAC Region: Our vision is to enhance the vitality and viability of our mission and our apostolic communities in our Region to promote the Passionist charism in our own cultures and to bring our cultural values into dialogue with our Christian way of life. For us restructuring means the vision and attitudes we adopt to support and assist each other in our mission(s). We intend do this by cooperation whenever we can and doing some things in common when possible. We intend to do this under five main areas: Formation, Charism, Cooperation, Relating to the wider Congregation, Communicate and Support one another.”

Interprovincial Theologate of Kisima

Fr. General has entrusted the organization and the administration of the Theologate of Nairobi (Kenya) to the CORM Province for the period of the next two years. By this decision to make one Major Superior directly responsible for the center of theology for a specified time period and based on a system of alternating administrators, it is hoped that there will be greater uniformity in the formation of the young religious of the four African Passionist Vicariates.
GABR - 75 Years of the Publication “Het Teken”
In 2003 the religious of the GABR province celebrated the Jubilee of the publication, “Het Teken” (The Sign), a religious publication of the Belgian Passionist province since 1928. “Het Teken” is one of the few illustrated religious periodicals published by religious communities in Flanders that have been granted such a long life. From mid-June to July 26th an exhibition was held in the Catholic Documentation and Research Center at Louvain. It was organized by the staff of the center under the supervision of the present editor, Father Ernest Henau, C.P. In an address at the opening session, Fr. Ernest highlighted the significance of religious magazines. He commented on the influence they had in pre-conciliar times and the difficult task that is theirs in our secularized society. As part of the celebration there was an exhibition paying tribute to the founder, Fr. Valentine Elshocht, provincial superior of the province in 1928. It also honored the whole series of editors, contributors and cooperators of the review during its long history.

PATR - Provincial Chapter
The 26th Provincial Chapter of St Patrick’s Province (PATR) was held in Drumalis Conference Centre, Larne, Co Antrim, from Monday 14th June to Thursday 17th June 2004. At the Chapter in 2000 the provincial council were mandated to evaluate all the houses and ministries and propose a way forward that reflected the reality in the Province. In November 2003, after a long process of consultation and discussion throughout the Province, the council published the Province Plan - “A Future for St Patrick’s Province.” The options outlined in the Plan represented the direction that would need to be adopted in moving into the future. The 2004 chapter gave us the opportunity to discuss further, to refine and to adopt a future for the Province.

The chapter agreed with a proposal that was presented to elect a Provincial and two consultors (four consultors had been elected at the last chapter). Martin Coffey was re-elected Provincial; the two new consultors are Kenneth Brady (1st Consultant) and Paul Francis Spencer.
**Passionist Life - News from the Conferences**

**SPE - Provincial Chapter**

The SPE (Holland/Germany) Provincial Chapter took place 2-5 April 2004. The following religious were elected: Fr. Leo Bos (Provincial); Fr. Gerd Blick (First Consultor) and Fr. Martin De Korte (Second Consultor).

The theme of the Chapter was: ‘the religious art of living’. They describe their situation as: ‘between vitality and fragility’.

They finished the process of the transfer of 11 religious to Assisted Care and nursing facilities. It was an emotional process for all concerned. But now, it is felt that they are in a good place, together with other religious.

For the next years the province will continue their projects of reflection and shared faith in Haastrecht and Marienmunster, inviting people from outside, to meet with them in order to discuss themes of faith and life. These projects were successful in past years.

They also agreed to give more attention to the shrine of Blessed Father Karel (Charles) Houben in Munstergeleen, his birthplace. They will investigate the possibilities of the chapel and the place, so as to create a greater atmosphere of prayer and reflection.

The province will continue in solidarity with the Brazilian Vicariate Christo Libertador and the Indonesian Vice Province. Through their missionaries, they hope to continue to build good relationships in these areas.

During the upcoming years, they will seek ways to deepen the ‘religious art of living’, in the current situation of the church and the society of their countries.

**VULN - Vice-Provincial Congress**

On 14 May 2004, the VULN (Austria – Germany) Vice-provincial Chapter elected these religious to their Curia: Fr. Gregor Lenzen (Vice-Provincial); Fr. Klaus Holzer (First Consultor) and Fr. Hubert Dybala (Second Consultor). The main topics discussed during the chapter were in the areas of economics, community life and the apostolate. The theme of reconciliation in human relations also played a great role, as well as the care for the elderly. In regard to apostolate it was recommended that we form a team for popular missions and to concentrate on building up a spiritual center for evangelization in the house at Munich. Also the younger members of the vice-province were invited to express their opinions and visions. The Congress decided to reflect on these topics during future provincial assemblies.

**A Passionist Vision for Toronto, Canada**

Fr. Stephen Dunn, C.P. (PAUL) and the Passionists of Canada are only a few months away from the construction of an exciting new church. The unique design will help the parishioners of St. Gabriel’s Passionist Parish to acquire a cosmological appreciation for the sun. The entire south wall will be constructed of glass and will capture the sun’s rays and integrate its energy into the church’s heating and cooling. The closeness the congregation will feel towards the sacred rites at the altar, visually and spiritually, will gently extend to nearly an acre of garden, celebrating the creativity of the sun and earth. Everything about the church, from the “living wall” to the green roof moderating the sun’s rays and recycling rain water, will keep the parish in contact with the sacredness of the Earth. Our Passionist Spirituality will be in harmony with what Fr. Thomas Berry, C.P. (PAUL) calls “The Passion of the Earth”. The liturgical life will celebrate God’s Glory revealed in the beauty of the Earth.

**PAUL - The death of Fr. Raphael Amrhein**

Fr. Raphael Amrhein was killed on May 17, 2004 in a traffic accident en route to the PAUL Provincial Assembly. He was a noted preacher, spiritual director and retreat master. He was active in numerous Passionist commissions and boards and served as a delegate to both Provincial and General Chapters. Fr. Raphael came from a long line of distinguished Passionists: a great uncle, Fr. Joseph Amrhein, served as a Consultor to the Superior General in Rome; Fr. Leonard Amrhein, first served in China until the Passionists were expelled by the Communists, and then for the rest of his life in the Philippines; his Aunt was a Passionist nun in Pittsburgh; and his sister, Mary is a Passionist nun in Japan. His older brother, Fr. Quentin, C.P. resides in the Passionist community of West Hartford, CT. The following is an excerpt from the homily that was preached at his funeral: “The great mystery of God’s love for us shown eloquently on the Cross, is even more dramatic in his Resurrection, his glorious Ascension, and his breathing forth the Spirit as he promised. This is why Raphael professed his vows for, lived his Passionist life for, and shared that unique friendship of his with the Lord, with all of us and with countless others by his presence, his friendship, his preaching and his listening.”

**North American Conference**

**IPC**
LAITY - CII
XIII Meeting of the Passionist Family

As was reported in past issues, with the ambitious theme of “The Passionists, Patrimony of Humanity”, the XIII Annual Meeting of the Passionist Family of the Iberian Peninsula took place last April 24 in Alcalá de Henares, Spain. It included the laity and men and women Passionist religious of the three Spanish provinces (CORI, FAM and SANG) and the Portuguese province of FAT. Following a program prepared months in advance by a coordinating commission, more than 500 members of the Passionist Family met in the Colegio San Gabriel of the SANG Province. The theme that was chosen guided the meeting and the reflections. Thus they arrived at various conclusions, among which were: the Passionist Family become more precisely aware of its vocation and responsibility in the world; that it become aware of the mission that it has and that it go beyond merely temporal needs of people, so that its service to mankind would be more expansive. Finally, all areas of the world are possible candidates for its mission because in all these areas the Passionists can accompany those who suffer, are sad, weak and lacking in hope in the search for the infinite love of God.

The Passionist Sisters of Signa in Colombia: 25 years of loving dedication

On 21 June 1979 the Passionist Sisters of St. Paul of the Cross arrived in Colombia, in the archdiocese of Medellin, the second largest city in the country. This foundation has truly been blessed by Providence in both the areas of vocations and the apostolate. They began in a poor and marginalized barrio of this city and have expanded to Bogotá, the capital, and also to the city of Pereira. Subsequently, they have also made foundations in Panama and Ecuador. Currently they compose the Vice-province of “Maria Maddalena Frescobaldi”, consisting of nine communities that minister in formal and informal education, evangelization and catechesis, youth ministry and care of the sick. The Passionists have collaborated with them in these three countries. Last 21 June, on the occasion of the celebration of the first 25 years of their foundation, a large number of the original founders gathered once again in Medellin, accompanied by priests, religious and laity who accompanied them during this process of growth and maturity, in order to give thanks to God and to encourage them in their ministry.

It was also an opportunity to affirm their evangelical commitment in Latin America and in this country that has suffered so greatly: “As we complete 25 years of our presence along the roads of Colombia, Panama and Ecuador, we thank the loving presence of the God of life and the redeeming power of Jesus Crucified in the midst of a people that cries out for freedom. The reality challenges us: the great poverty, the displaced, the situation of the children of immigrants, the generation of children and young people who have grown up amidst violence and war... All of this touches us deeply and animates us to continue looking for solutions to these challenges, answers that can only originate in the loving plan of the Father for humanity. The 'today' and 'here' call for “Women who Remember”, bearers of Hope and givers of Life.

Congratulations to our Sisters, ad multos annos!
We list these notices regarding First and Perpetual Professions as well as diaconate and priestly ordinations that were sent to us during this recent period. We remind you that it is impossible for the PIB to publish this information if it is not sent to us in a timely fashion.

**FIRST PROFESSION**
At the conclusion of their novitiate 21 of our religious made their First Profession of Vows: on 3 Jan., the birthday of St. Paul of the Cross, the following professed vows: **Edgar Melendres García and Ever Jony Torres Llano**, Peruvians of the Vicariate of the Resurrection (COR) and on 7 Feb., **Francisco César Ferreira**, Brazilian (VICT/DOL). On 3 May, the following Filipinos professed vows: **Dexter Imperial, Christopher Akian, Mark Reggan Tobías, Carvyn Ondap and Stanley Baldon** (PASS). Also on 17 May, **Giltus Mathias, Francis Xavier Chennamally and Wilson Victor**, THOM Vicariate of India, CRUC Province, professed vows. On 19 June, in the FID Vice-province, Colombia, the following religious celebrated their profession of vows: **Alexander Parra, William Algarra, Iván Lizcano, Jairo Sterling Rivera and Gustavo Alonso Zapata**. And on 16 July in Itololo, **Alex Kessy and David Thomas Shayo** of Tanzania, CORM/GEMM and **Robert Ochieng Odongo and Nicholas Odhiambo Ochieng**, of Kenya, CORM/CARLW also professed vows. And finally, on 17 July, **Salvador Ramírez Velásquez**, Mexican, REG Province professed first vows.

**PERPETUAL PROFESSION**
During this period nine religious professed Perpetual Vows in the Congregation. They are: **Edwin Maria Jenish and Bruno Roberto D’Souza**, India, THOM/CRUC Vicariate, on 17 March; **Leonildo Pedro Dos Santos** of the Brazilian CALV province, on the 28th of March; **Marcello Cortese and Aldo Pangallo**, of PRAES Province, Italy, on 18 April; **Stefan Neugebauer**, of the VULN Vice-province, Germany, on 23 April; **Eraldo Furtado de Oliveira**, Brazil, VICT/DOL Vicariate, on 2 May; **Gabriele Violante**, PIET Province in Italy, professed on 3 July; and **Brother. Ludoviki Emanueli Saidi**, of GEMM/CORM Vicariate, Tanzania, on 9 July.

**DIACONATE ORDINATIONS**
We congratulate these two religious: **Juan Carlos Prieto Torres**, SANG Province, Spain, was ordained a deacon on 1 May; and on the same day in Germany, VULN Province, **Stefan Neugebauer** was also ordained to the diaconate; **Eraldo Furtado de Oliveira**, of DOL/VICT Vicariate, Brazil, received the diaconate on 29 May. On 17 July, **Everaldo Galheira y João de Sousa Cabral Júnior**, Brazilians of CALV Province also were ordained deacons.

**PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS**
Finally we received notice that there were 10 priestly ordinations in the Congregation: the first were **Antony Varghese Arackal** and **Bernard Benson Valiyaveettil**, THOM/CRUC, India, on 13 and 15 April, respectively. **Gianvito Sernia**, PRAES Province, on 24 April and on 28 May **Antonio Rodríguez López**, Spain, was ordained to the priesthood, FAM/CHRIC Vicariate, and on 29 May **Francesco Galizzi**, CORM Province, Italy; in June **Charles Lee Havey**, PAUL, the United States, on 6 June; **Gianluca Zanni**, in Italy, DOL Province, on 12 June, and **Pedro Luis Fuentes Valencia**, Bolivian of EXAL/SANG Vicariate, on 19 June; also **Juan Martínez Martínez**, Mexican of REG Province, on 10 July and, lastly, **Erasmio Sebastián**, Italian, DOL Province, was ordained on 10 July.

To all of these, our brothers, we send the prayers and best wishes of the entire Congregation. Congratulations!
<table>
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<tr>
<th>DIE</th>
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**MONIALES ET SORORES**

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