



Historical Reflections on Passionist prayer, community and ministry

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Rob Carbonneau, C.P.

Passionist International Historical Commission

Part One: New Perspectives

“We live in very threatening times, and I am convinced that worse are coming. What will happen to our congregation?”¹ What is your reaction to this opening sentence of my presentation? It was written by Superior General Bernard Silvestrelli in 1906. Let me ask another question: As we live out our life of prayer, community and ministry, do these words sum up the way we understand our contemporary challenges before our Passionist Congregation in 2016? How would you answer this question: Are you optimistic or pessimistic for our Passionist future?

Another point to reflect upon: In 1956 the Commission to adapt the Passionist Constitutions completed its study. As Passionists faced changes in society and the Church we knew quite well that we had to make changes in our Passionist rule of life. However, when I compared the 1937 Rules and Regulations to the 1956 Rule of Life I was very surprised. Very few changes were advised for our common life of prayer and community. Looking back, I think we have to conclude that the decided changes were almost all cosmetic.

As we know, it was not until the Extraordinary General Chapter in 1968 to 1970 did the Passionist Rules and Constitution shift in emphasis. Delegates decided our common life was to be based more on the spiritual rather than legalistic principles of the Passionist charism. History shows we were in traditional and progressive camps.

How you, I, or any vowed Passionist responds to historical insights can help us open up a discussion about our vowed commitment to prayer, community and ministry. These are the three areas I have been asked to address at this meeting of the Passionist International Formation. Thank you for this opportunity. Honestly, I do find this assignment intimidating and humbling. At the same time, I ask you to share with my excitement for this topic. Precisely, in what ways does this past perspective on Passionist prayer, community and ministry make us wise and fearless Passionists for the future.

Using my skills developed as a professionally trained historian I decided to ask a basic question: Since we Passionists proclaim an awareness of the Passion of Jesus Christ Crucified, I began to wonder: how did our congregation survive events leading up to World War II (1939-1945) and its immediate aftermath?² Admittedly, this model of interpretation is probably not what

¹ Fabiano Giorgini, C.P. *Bernard Mary Silvestrelli, Passionist*. Translated by Patrick Rogers, C.P. (Rome: Passionist 1990), p. 116.

² My research presumes a theological narrative. As a result of my doctorate in American and East Asian history, my focus instead has been to understand Passionists as twentieth century social and political actors. Especially in China this had led me to evaluate Passionists in relation



you had expected. However, by framing my research within this lens, I hope we gain a unique perspective on Passionist history.

Specifically, I want to share my research with you by providing examples of how Passionist members living through these decades were faced with and made radical choices on how best to fulfill their commitments to Passionist prayer, community and ministry. What lessons can we learn from this? Might it help us find the perspective and courage needed to face our contemporary life and future as Passionists?

This is not my attempt to rewrite Passionist history. Everyone present at this meeting has their own personal and valid Passionist historical and vocation story. Instead I suggest the following examples allow us to gain more respect for our immediate Passionist ancestors. So, as we listen let us think how these men who came before us actually lived out their commitments to prayer, community and ministry. In my presentation I have tried to stay away from hagiography. Instead, I ask you to consider the special way that culture, social and political realities in the public sphere forced Passionists of the mid-twentieth century to live out these vowed values. Let us keep in mind a simple fact. Like Passionists of the past, many of us continue to live our lives of prayer, community and ministry in monasteries or as a public proclamation of our charism in service to the local church and society.

The insight applied to the content for this talk comes from my own thirty plus years of study and scholarship on Passionist history. I relied heavily on the Passionist publication: *The Passionist*. Published by Holy Cross Province (USA), My study is limited from 1943-1956.

Most of us Passionists are familiar with the immediately following historical narrative. Until the mid-twentieth century, Passionist prayer, community and ministry was based upon a general rule of life and regulations that had remained constant since the days of St. Paul of the Cross. Common prayer based on a horarium and devotional life continues to serve as our foundation. They have remained unquestionable values as the Passionists expanded to prayer and ministry sites. From this, new provinces were born. Membership increased from the mid-1700s into the early 1900s. Community life throughout all the provinces was based on a norm which required permissions from local superiors. Clerics, students, and Brothers knew this all too well. For better or worse, this was the internal experience which Passionist religious lived behind the monastery walls. The general public had a most definite impression of us as well. True Passionist life was rooted in prayer, penance and solitude. Community life was austere and sacrificial. The 1911 *Catholic Encyclopedia* published in the United States wrote the following: Passionists at that time were known for their desire in seeking “the sanctification of its members and the maintenance of the spirit of the in their community life” by way of “practising the austerities and mortifications proscribed by Rule and familiar only to themselves.” Alongside this, preaching advocated a distinct message which concentrated on a mission to promote greater understanding to the passion of Jesus Christ. Consensus was that this Passionist spiritual world would never change. But we all know this was incorrect. It did change.

to the ongoing chaos and suffering of Chinese society, relationship to the Vatican and as American citizens.



Between 1900 and 1955³ the soul of world humanity was shaken by war. I dare say that this had an immediate impact on Passionist prayer community and ministry. I hope you will agree with me how interesting this is to reflect upon.

Passionist Military Chaplains: New Ministry in Response to Suffering

As a sign of patriotism and witness to suffering, ministry was reshaped when Passionists of different nationalities took leave of their monasteries to serve as military chaplains. Writing from undisclosed ministry site on September 20, 1943, Kenny Lynch (Holy Cross USA) wrote: “The faith and devotion of the men were a real tonic to a priestly heart. There is always a big gathering for night-prayers and Morning Mass was well attended. This is a long call from Monastery life but once a man is into it he is satisfied nowhere else until the lights go on again all over the world. Meanwhile we keep trying to light the love of Christ in the hearts of men.” In 1943, Passionist identities were strengthened as when a Passionist military chaplain visited confreres in Peru. Later he came across an image of St. Gabriel in Panama. In 1944, St. Paul of Cross Province USA had forty-nine priests serving as military chaplains.⁴ Edwin Ronan (Holy Cross USA) deserves special mention. During World War II, he was key in establishing the military chaplain program in the Philippines.

Ministering as chaplains in the U.S., one Passionist met German prisoner of war priests who had known the Passionists in Munich, Germany. Austrian Catholic parishioners who had been relocated as war prisoners to the U.S. were surprised to meet their former American Passionist who ministered to them as the local chaplain. In 1944, Apostolic Delegate to India Passionist Leo Kierkels visited over one hundred interned Italian missionaries and prisoners of war in India.

Examples of Passionists who died while serving as military chaplains are Valerian DiBernardini (Pieta) in 1940 in Albania and Owen Monaghan (Holy Cross USA) in 1945 in the Philippines.

Passionists encouraged one another preach the Gospel as war chaplains. They took great pride in the fact that founder Paul of the Cross is said to have saved Orbetello from Spanish bombardment in 1735.⁵

War redefines prayer, community and ministry.

After the World War II, we might consider how many military chaplains returned to their monasteries suffering from post-traumatic stress of ministry. These men who had become self-asserted and independent in ministry had to renegotiate. Once again many were confined to a regimen of community life and the rituals of the Passionist horarium. Now looking back, did their war experience make them more vulnerable to alcoholism and mental stress? Over the years, if this is true? did these men teach us compassion or test our patience? Did some of us become numb

³ World War I (1914-1918); World War II (1939-1945 in Europe; 1941-1945 in US) and the Anti-Japanese War in China (1937-1945) and the Korean War (1950-1953).

⁴ *Passionist Bulletin* May 5 1944, Number 6, p. 27.

⁵ We reconciled this with our Passionist identity by calling to mind founder Paul of the Cross. Paul of Cross searching for wounded on plains of Presidii was held up as an example to American Catholic military chaplains, hospital chaplains. Overall the year of 1735 is a foundation of ministry identity. Austrians in control of Monte Argentario when Paul and John Baptist Daneo sought to take up residence there in 1733. In 1735 is said to have saved Orbetello from Spanish bombardment. Suggested that allegiance and experience of warring states at this time offers reason while military terms are prevalent in writings of Paul Daneo. “Veteran of 1735,” *Passionist Bulletin*, May 5 1944, Number 6, pp. 2-9.



to their stories? Did some of us gain greater wisdom and insight into the meaning of the Cross? What wisdom of Paul of the Cross must we learn from these men?

Of course, in Europe there had been practical consequences as a result of the war. Decisive juridical action was required for the survival of the Congregation. On December 14, 1943 the Passionist Superior General gave permission to postpone all provincial chapters due to war as decreed by Sacred Congregation of Religious.⁶

Throughout Europe, Passionist monasteries were sometimes in the line of battle. In Holland, some five hundred German war prisoners resided on the Mook Monastery property. At the same time, Bertrand Damen worked with the underground resistance against the Germans. Thus, he was decorated by American Ambassador in Amsterdam with the Medal of Freedom. At St. Joseph's Ave Hoche in Paris, still existent parish bulletins reveal how Passionists ministered to German Catholic officers during the occupation.

Outside Rome in 1940, "The retreating Germans mined and destroyed the Monastery at S. Arcangelo di Romagna." During the war, Passionist Bishop John Baptist Peruzzo, turned his residence into "a hospital for the war stricken." The community of ninety at Sts. John and Paul increased by about thirty in the spring of 1944 when refugee Passionists arrived. Community life was then truly put to the test as all had to deal with the "food shortage in Rome."⁷

Diverse World War II prison narratives and the creation of a common alternative Passionist international community experience.

More attention needs to be given to the way war reshaped the experience and identity of prayer, community and ministry among our Passionist religious who suffered in prison. First, we must be careful to distinguish between the different kinds of imprisonment experienced by Passionists. Studying in Peking, China, Passionists were sent by the Japanese into forced the internment camp in Weihsien, Shandong province in 1943. Internment proved to be a kind of forced community life whereby a small number of Passionist conferees were detained with other Allied Catholic religious and Sisters and civilians. Ultimately, this proved to be a decisive event because it had the unexpected result of breaking down long-standing mutual biases between Protestants and Catholics.

This kind of internment was less severe than the European concentration camps. Passionist student Andre-Marie (France) was transported to the Buchenwald camp⁸. I personally recall Stanislaus Breton (France) telling me how suffered similar humiliations at a prison camp. When finally liberated, the only food Breton could first digest was cut grass. Unique as well was the experience of Viktor Koch (CRUC-USA) in Schwarzenfeld, Germany. Rules of German citizenship allowed him to remain under house arrest in the monastery chapel throughout the war. Local town people brought him food. Koch, an American himself, became a living witness of the cross when he stepped forward to save the town from American military who, in the fog, of war-

⁶ *Passionist Bulletin*, May 5 1944, Number 6, p. 25.

⁷ *Passionist Bulletin* September 15, 1944, Number 8 p. 25.

⁸ *The Passionist*, Vol 1 May 21, 1948. Number 3, p. 253.



planned to violently pacify the town civilians. After the war the town square was named to honor Viktor Koch. This is truly a sign of Passionist ministry and inculturation.⁹

Nation/state imposed sufferings

The following examples are what I define as nation/state-imposed sufferings. Different from war, by necessity, Passionists in these situations were required to redefine their province wide expression of prayer, community and ministry. For example, (Pieta Province Italy) had been erected in 1851, However due to “adverse times and the dispersion of all religious, the Province was practically extinct in 1860. Established in 1854, Passionists of (St. Michael the Archangel France) came to face “adverse political conditions.” As a result, the province was “completely obliterated” in 1881. The General Curia restored it as a province in 1893. However, this did not bring about security. For example, when Father Columban (Ireland Province of St. Patrick) died in 1948, his obituary recalled his life of sufferings. In 1902, he had been expelled from St. Joseph’s Church at Ave Hoche in Paris as result of the French anti-clerical movement.

Admittedly, I have yet to appreciate fully how the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) impacted the life of Passionists especially since they were among the martyrs at Turon (1934) and Damiel (1936)¹⁰. With respect, I acknowledge these historic events are sensitive. Just as powerful is our recalling our Passionist legacy in Palestine. In 1948 Father John Salah was killed by a sniper’s bullet.¹¹

In 1951 Spanish Passionists in Mexico had to face important decisions. “Some of them have orders from the government to leave the country, their crime being the exercise of their sacerdotal ministry. At this time things are still unsettled. Some of the Fathers who left Spain several months ago have not been able to enter Mexico, and are at present in Cuba, awaiting the day that will see them obtain the required and much desired permission.”

Recall as well how our Passionist religious life was challenged after the overthrow of President Juan Perón in Argentina. “Due to the religious persecution which began on November 10, 1954 our missionary work was seriously impaired. Both city and country missions were practically brought to a standstill. The attitude of provincial and local authorities changed so as to make any exterior religious manifestation almost impossible. Preaching in our churches became dangerous.”

So how do we wish to understand and interpret the post-war World War II Passionist re-emergence in the face of such suffering? What impact does this still have on our contemporary Passionist understanding of prayer, community and ministry? How might it have shaped our present international identity?

⁹ Independent scholar Katherine Koch has done excellent work on this history.

<http://www.viktorkoch.com/>.

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martyrs_of_Turon;

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martyrs_of_Daimiel

¹¹ Photo of Fr. John Salah, C.P. killed on May 18, 1948 by sniper bullet near Bethany. *The Passionist*, Vol 2 May-June 1949 Number 3, p. 296; 1903-St. Martha’s Retreat-1953 Palestine” *The Passionist*, Vol 6 November 1953 Number 6, pp. 436-444.



Passionist Survival After World War II

Beginning September 1945 publication of news from other provinces in the *Passionist Bulletin* accentuated our common international Passionist identity. The Belgian province survived the war “quite well.” Northern Italy (Pure Heart of Mary) “suffered no war casualties, neither were any of the Retreats in that section damaged.” Naples Province took some time to recover.¹²

After his experience as a military chaplain Fabian Flynn (CRUC-USA) emerged as a representative of the international apostolate. He was a chaplain at the Nuremberg War Trials and a leader in post-war refugee work in Europe.¹³ Years later, an unrelated yet similar ministry came to life when Luis Dolan (Argentina) directed the Temple of Understanding as an early NGO at the United Nations. This new vision of ministry established the ground rules for our modern Passionist NGO presence.

Passionist prayer, community and ministry under Communism faced special challenges. After the war, early rumors were that there were no Passionists living in Poland and all property destroyed. However, it was found that Sts James and Ana. Przasnysz, Poland was still functioning. Later it was sadly learned that eight Passionist religious were killed in concentration camp of Dzialdowo and another at Dachau. During the war, other Polish priests had “appeared as laborers or clerks in stores. Poland during the German occupation lived in the catacombs in great part.” In 1948, however, *The Passionist* published a group photos of Polish students. News was that potential seminary applicants had to be turned down because as it appeared that there was not enough room to develop a formation program. Everyone rejoiced with the news of a profession ceremony in Poland in 1949. Surprisingly, under “Red domain,” Poland in 1950 and 1951 was able to “grow slowly, even though under the most adverse conditions” as it received thirteen novices.

In 1948 Bulgaria, conditions under the Communists were deteriorating. In 1949 Bishop Eugene Bossilkov met with Pius XII,¹⁴ yet the oppression continued and Passionist missionaries were expelled. On October 5, 1952 Italian Catholic Action Men paid tribute to Bossilkov by publishing his photo on a poster. In 1953 it was not known if Bossilkov was dead or alive. He had been killed in 1952 - a witness to suffering.¹⁵

After the Communists took control of China in 1949, Bishop Cuthbert O’Gara, Marcellus White and Justin Garvey (CRUC USA) endured solitary confinement. Even today they are powerful witnesses. Each survived this tragedy by taking great care to apply their learned principles of Passionist religious formation of prayer to survive these adverse circumstances. Solitude took on a new meaning. Forever in my mind is the following story told me by Marcellus White: “Always told that if I pray to God he would take care of me, in prison I became truly free because I made a decision to live that way. The result was that God did take care of me.”

¹² *The Passionist*, Vol 1 July 9, 1948. Number 4, pp.240-241.

¹³ Sean Brennan, “From Harvard to Nuremberg: Father Fabian Flynn’s Service as Catholic Chaplain to the 26th Infantry Regiment, 1942–1946,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 33, Number 1, (Winter 2015): 1-24.

¹⁴ *The Passionist*, Vol 2 January 1949 Number 1, p. 78.

¹⁵ Fr. Sophronius, C.P. Vol 7 May 1954 Number 3., 238-243.



Each Passionist responds uniquely to personal suffering. Bishop O’Gara became a staunch anti-Communist, White and Garvey championed reconciliation with China. Grace provided them to discern the difference between a Chinese government of persecution was not equal the life of the of the Chinese people they had come to love in Hunan. In my opinion, without the vision of White and Garvey, we Passionists would not be in China today. ¹⁶

Under oppressive regimes, a new understanding of Passionist prayer, community and ministry arose. In retrospect we might say the above examples served as a foundation for our awareness to apply Gospel and Paulacrucian witness to seek justice and peace. When we look back at this whole period, I suggest we rethink and reinterpret how the shaping of Passionist prayer, community and ministry can be applied to our contemporary world reality. International suffering is truly apparent and we will respond.

Passionists in Post-War Rome: Stewardship and International Formation

In the post-World War II era, Sts. John and Paul and the Generalate in Rome made a conscious decision to create an international house of formation for priests in graduate studies and spend money for architectural restoration. In 1949, central heating was installed in Sts. John and Paul and the Basilica was restored. ¹⁷ Naming the members of the community photo taken on June 24, 1949 symbolizes that a post-war revival of our religious community was underway. We were stronger both as individuals and international representatives of our provinces. ¹⁸When we ride the Sts. John and Paul elevator, let us always take a moment and look at the historic plaque. It states that it was paid for by American benefactor Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York. I cite this because it represents the importance of stewardship. It also is a fact that modernizing a building did not go against the vow of poverty. ¹⁹

In 1950 the Sts. John and Paul community has 107 members. 39 Fathers, 33 University Students, 19 internal students and 16 Brothers. ²⁰ Passionists in 1950 numbered 18 provinces and one Vice-Province of Poland. Priests 3360; Students 524; Brothers 510. Total in vows 3,394. Total

¹⁶ Details of Chinese oppression is in Robert E. Carbonneau, C.P. “ ‘The Velvet Glove Is Wearing Thinner and Thinner with the Mailed Fist Much in Evidence’ . American Catholic Missionaries Witness Liberation in West Hunan, 1949 to 1950.” Ferdinand Verbiest Institute. (eds.). *The History of the Catholic Church in China: From its beginning to the Scheut Fathers and 20th century. Unveiling some less known sources, sounds and pictures.* Leuven Chinese Studies XXIX. (Ferdinand Verbiest Institute, Leuven, Belgium, 2015): 393-418.; O’Gara’s anti-Communism is in Robert E. Carbonneau, C.P. “‘It Can Happen Here’: Bishop Cuthbert O’Gara, CP and the Gospel of Anticommunism in Cold War America” *Mission Studies* XV No 2 (1998) 2-30.

¹⁷ *The Passionist*, Vol 2 March-April 1949 Number 2 p. 171-172.

¹⁸ *The Passionist*, Vol 2 July – September 1949 Number 4-5, p. 382.

¹⁹ *The Passionist*, Vol 3 January 1950 Number 1, p. 52-54

²⁰ *The Passionist*, Vol 3 March 1950 Number 2, p. 147; Statistics in 1952-1953 in *The Passionist*, Vol 6 March 25, 1953 Number 1, pp. 54-55. 1953-1954 statistics shows 32 students; *The Passionist*, Vol 7 January 1954 Number 1, 49, 52; Statistics of January 1, 1955 show professed members 3,620, an increase of 93 over 1954. See *The Passionist*, Vol 8 November-December 1955 Number 8, 650-651; Students in 1952-1953 at John and Paul photo *The Passionist*, Vol 6 September 1953 Number 4, p. 341.



number of novices was 198; Prep Students 1543. Retreats numbered 176, Missions 1884, Public Exercises 4008 and Private Exercises were 1960. Names of Provinces Presentation (Italy); Sorrowful Mother (Italy); Pieta (Italy); St. Joseph (England); St. Paul of Cross (USA) St. Michael (France); Sacred Heart (Spain); Heart of Mary (Italy) Immaculate Conception (Argentina); Side of Christ (Italy); Holy Family (Spain); Holy Cross (USA); St. Gabriel (Belgium); Holy Spirit (Australia); Precious Blood (Spain) Holy Hope (Holland); Calvary (Brazil); Five Wounds (Germany).²¹

Overall published photos in the post-World War II era downplay the importance of the individual Passionist. Instead, attention turned toward showing group photos of religious communities. Almost every province shows them in full habit in front of monasteries. Such attention, when combined with statistics on membership, symbolize the strength of the Passionist tradition and recovery. What we were proclaiming to each other was that fact that long-standing Paulacrucian appreciation of prayer, community and ministry had not been destroyed. On the contrary, at this time, our historic monastic structures had value.

In contrast to the sufferings of war we must admit the 1950s was an exciting time to be a Passionist. The ability of our predecessors to embrace and renew a common life of prayer community and ministry cannot be underestimated.

New Opportunities for Passionist Ministry and Expression of Charism

In 2016 we are still reaping the graces of this legacy as seen in the decision of many provinces to hold Missionary Congresses. Different than juridical provincial meetings, such gatherings called vowed members together to organize. Agendas stressed the spiritual life, religious formation and education and pastoral ministry. Might this also reveal beginnings of a collaborative consensus model for how we were to take greater responsibility for our Passionist life? In 1945, The First Missionary Congress of Holy Cross Province (USA) was held. Debate centered on publicity and promotion of Passionist preaching parish missions and retreats. Encouragement was given that young priests learn Spanish for ministry in southwest U.S. Another point of discussion was on proper liturgical attire.²²

²¹ *The Passionist*, Vol 4 December 1951 Number 4, pp. 290-291; January 1, 1953 statistics are in *The Passionist*, Vol 7 January 1954 Number 1., p. 90; 1954 statistics in *The Passionist*, Vol 8 January 1955 Number 1., pp. 31-32.

²² “Acts of the First Missionary Congress of Holy Cross Province. July 31, 1945 to August 2, 1945,” *Passionist Bulletin* October 28, 1945, Number 15, pp. 2-25; Additional proceedings expressed concern that China was getting too much attention in ‘The Mexican Mission Work’ written by Written by Father Edwin Guido, C.P.: “We willingly and glad spend good American cash to send our priests to China for the conversion of pagans, why do we not do as much for the preservation of the faith of the Mexicans? *Passionist Bulletin* October 28, 1945, Number 15, pp. 27-29. In ‘Non-Catholic Missions’. Fr. Pascal, C.P. advocates ministry adaptation as needed but still upholding the value of Passionist related rituals. Use King James version of the Bible. ‘On Outdoor Preaching’ was written by Fr. Cornelius; “Our Negro Missions” was written by Fr. Michael; “Vocational Work” was written by Fr. Henry; “Youth Work,” was written by Fr. Howard; “Preaching the Sign” was written by Fr. Terence, C.P.; “Some chaplaincy activity in the Archdiocese of Detroit” was written by Fr. Fabian. All in *Passionist Bulletin* October 28, 1945, Number 15, pp. 27-48.



In 1948, a lector's conference was held by South Italy (A Latere Christi Province). Because: "Changed conditions in consequence of the war and other problems made the idea of a Missionary Congress something very desirable to the minds of the missionaries". Belgium held their meeting in 1949.²³ Preachers of North Italy (Immaculate Heart Province) met in 1953. The Third Congress of Passionist Spirituality was convened in Pieta Province, Italy in 1955. Topics were: Essentials and Accidentals of a Mission; The Passionist Spirit in our Apostolate; Intellectual Preparation of the Missionary; Outside Contacts of the Missionary; The Eternal Truths of the Passion; Catechetical Instruction in a Modern Mission; Mission in the City, Mission in the Country; Subsidiary Works in a Mission; The Confraternity of the Passion; Our Periodicals; Recruitment of Vocations; The Mission of Tanganyika²⁴

The end of the World War II necessitated the creation of the Secretariate of the Missions where, eventually, after being expelled from China in the 1950s, Caspar Caulfield (CRUC-US) became a fixture. Overall, attention to the missions increased. Naples province sent men to Africa and Brazil. Fr. Hermenegild was the first African member of Passionist Congregation was ordained on March 25, 1952. Northern Italy (Immaculate of Mary province) had interest in Mexico City, Mexico where they erected a preparatory seminary there. The same Italian province went to Tanganyika, Africa in 1933. In 1951 it was raised to Vicariate Apostolic. In 1953 the first Chilean Passionist was ordained. Growth continued in Congo and Borneo

Access to airline travel facilitated a culture of hospitality to emerge. For example, in 1949, Spanish Fathers on their way to Central America, made a stopover at the Passionist monastery in Jamaica, New York City.²⁵

Passionists continued to explore radio ministry. In Ireland, in 1948, the Passionist editor of *The Cross* initiated regular retreat on radio for the sick for Easter and Christmas. This laid the groundwork for television ministry and social media of today.

Passionists have always had a special reverence for religious habit. Yet it we might remember that when Dominic Barberi went on his first visit to England from Ere, Belgium to England in 1840, he opted instead to wear "strange secular clothes." Assigned there in 1841, there were times when his wearing the religious habit meant that stone and mud was thrown at him.²⁶ Recall as well a major debate ensued among Passionists in China on wearing the religious habit in public. Religious garb was also an issue in Mexico. Understanding the Passionist religious habit is an important point to reference in any debate on inculturation.

Publication of Passionist prayer manuals and feast day propers attest to the unwavering Passionist attention and value given to personal and common prayer. This was also the era of Marian devotion among Passionists. Widespread became numerous Marian customs. For example,

²³ The province looked at preaching opportunities and regulations: *The Passionist*, Vol 2 March-April 1949 Number 2, pp. 180-181.

²⁴ Held June 16 to 20, 1953. In *The Passionist*, Vol 6 November 1953 Number 6, p. 479. The Pieta Mission Congress was September 1955: *The Passionist* Vol 8 November-December 1955 Number 8, pp. 631-632.

²⁵ *The Passionist*, Vol 2 July – September 1949 Number 4-5, 396-398.

²⁶ Barberi to Ireland: *Passionist Bulletin* May 5, 1945, Number 12, p. 4; Stoned: *Passionist Bulletin* July 9, 1945, Number 13, p. 3.



a whole generation of Passionists used the word “Ave” when answering the knock at their monastery door.

The post-war era also led to a revival of the Passionist intellectual apostolate. Increasingly, Passionists required credentials if they were assigned to teach in the internal monastic seminary system. In the post-conciliar era, attention to the intellectual life continued to be redefined. Likewise, in these first decades of the twentieth century Passionist seminary publications such as *Gabriel* (Pieta Province), *Staurosophia* (Mother of Hope Province) and the *Apostolic Sign* (CRUC-USA) allowed theology seminarians to express their individual and collective voices. Ongoing attention was given as to how to fund seminary education. In 1949 the Superior General decreed “that any profit from aforementioned periodicals, after having subtracted the necessary and accessory expenses, may not be used for the benefit of the Retreat but must be entirely and exclusively be given to the Preparatory Seminary of the Province.” The Thirty-First General Chapter stated monies from religious articles be designated to seminary education.²⁷

Monastic life of the 1950s nurtured the minds of Fabiano Giorgini, (Italy) and Barnabas Ahern (Holy Cross-USA).²⁸ In 2105, the philosophical thought of Stanislaus Breton (France) was presented at a 2015 Boston College USA symposium.²⁹ While contemporaries debate iconoclastic thinker Thomas Berry (CRUC-USA) most haunting is his 1956 statement on prayer and intellectual life: “A first lesson for us to learn is that prayer for China is no substitute for study, as study is no substitute for prayer. Each should be joined together.”³⁰ Moving into the future what ministry and spiritual value might we continue to assign to the Passionist intellectual life?

Devotions Outside the Monastery

Confraternity of the Passion begun in 1898. It proved to be an essential feature of Argentine devotions in 1949 and also took root in Spain (Precious Blood Province). An offshoot of the Confraternity of the Passion was the Volunteers of the Cross in North Italy (Immaculate Heart Province).

Passionist pilgrimage sites are well known. In 1949, *L'Eco*, the official publication of the St. Gabriel Shrine of San Grasso, Italy described cures.³¹ In the United States, Scranton, Pennsylvania continues to be home to the St. Ann Novena in July.³² On Good Friday on Mt. Adams in Cincinnati, Ohio, Passionists were longtime promoters of devotion to the Passion of Jesus by welcoming those who climbed the steps to Immaculata Church. Devotees continue to be attracted to Passionist Saints such as Charles Houben of Mount Argus, Ireland.³³

²⁷ *The Passionist*, Vol 2 July – September 1949 Number 4-5, pp. 380-381

²⁸ Robert E. Carbonneau, C.P. “Father Barnabas Mary Ahern, C.P., Religious Life and Biblical Scholarship” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 22 (Winter 2004): 93-112.

²⁹ https://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/theology/events/2015/breton_symposium_2015.html

³⁰ Thomas Berry, C.P., “Our Need of Orientalists,” *Worldmission* 7, no. 3 (Fall 1956): 301-314, passim.

³¹ *The Passionist*, Vol 2 July – September 1949 Number 4-5, p. 383.

³² Robert E. Carbonneau, C.P. “Coal Mines, St. Ann’s Novena and Passionist Spirituality in Scranton, Pennsylvania, 1902-2002” *American Catholic Studies* 115 (Summer 2004): 23-44.

³³ <http://www.haroldscross.org/tours-mount-argus/>



Passionist Vocations

My research shows that we have always said the we have not had enough Passionist vocations.³⁴ Due to lack of vocations in Argentina the “Vocation Movements” was organized in 1953. Every province distributed vocation pamphlets which stressed how Passionist throughout the world in any culture fulfilled their vows based on a common life of seen in prayer, community and ministry.³⁵ Fortunately, in the 1950s, the long-standing prejudices that once existed between Passionist brothers and clerics began to disappear. Nonetheless, two examples help us understand this history. Brother Anthony Chelstowska of the Annunciation (Vice Province of Poland) was born in 1910. After hearing a Passionist retreat in 1928, he applied to the Passionists. He was refused to study for priesthood because of his older age and lack of studies. Eventually becoming a brother and assigned to the Preparatory Seminary at Przasnysz. Sent to Rome in 1936 to be a tailor and infirmarian, the Roman climate did not agree with him. In 1939 he returned home to Poland and “was overtaken by the vicissitudes of the War and died sometime in July 1941.”³⁶ The incidents pertaining to his vocation story remind us of the personal commitment of all of us.

Through his life and ministry, Brother Simon West (CRUC-USA) addressed the clericalism inherent in the religious culture of the time. His steadfast efforts resulted in better food preparation in U.S. monasteries.³⁷ Brother Damian Carroll (CRUC-USA) followed in his footsteps by taking a lead in creating National Association of Religious Brothers (NARB) which published the *Brothers Newsletter*. The diverse ministry provided by Passionist brothers deserves greater attention.

Sadly, Passionists were not immune to prejudice or racism. It has been said to play decision as to why Chinese seminarian Noah Peng opted not to be a Passionist in the late 1940s.³⁸

Given the history of Passionist vocations we might address our situation less about the needs we have. Rather, let us encourage men we meet to proclaim how they will share with us the process of naming sufferings so as to proclaim the resurrection. Understanding expression of prayer, community and ministry in provinces and internationally will most certainly continue.

³⁴ “Let Us Pray for Vocations,”

<http://www.cprovince.org/archives/heritage/winter2002/winter02-2-3.php>.

³⁵ *Passionist Bulletin* November 21, 1944, Number 9, pp. 41-42.

³⁶ *The Passionist*, Vol 3 January 1950 Number 1, pp. 44-45.

³⁷ Br. Mary Simon [West] C.P., “Health and Our Holy Founder and the Passionist Diet” Vol 3 December 1950 Number 5, pp. 392-398; Vol 4 January 1951 Number 1, pp. 15-18, 67-69; Vol 4 June 1951 Number 2, pp. 116-121; Vol 4 September 1951 Number 3, pp. 169-173, 243-247. All in *The Passionist*. This raises larger question of diet in community life and overall nutrition and cultural implication of food as congregation grows. Economy of poverty and health and relationship of Passionist facilities with health codes in local cultures. West, even addressed health needs for Passionists who might be diabetics or have an ulcer.

³⁸ Noah Peng accepted as a Passionist novice after a year of theology at St. Mary’s Seminary, Baltimore, Maryland, USA. *Passionist Bulletin* July 9, 1944 No. 7. P 36.



Part Two: Conclusion and application:

Previous observations in Part One have been offered to deepen our respect for how we Passionists have kept before us and lived out prayer, community ministry. I have tried to keep them balanced in order to promote good discussion and lead to practical ways to enhance our vowed life and mission and long-standing Passionist tradition.

Let us now shift our attention. What does this past understanding offer us Passionists of today? Appreciation of our Passionist Rules and Regulations and Chapter Document has been essential since our founding. We cannot dismiss this. History teaches also teaches us we must be ready to face the new cultural and social realities which will continue to stretch and redefine us.

The longer our history, the more we have to accept our international character as Passionists. History shows that while we are proud and value our home provinces we are not limited by those provinces. It has been our embracing of this international character that we have been able to survive state-controlled challenges and a living expression of the Passion of Jesus expressed by global war. While this has not been easy. We also have to admit that there is truth to this.

Passionist life became trans-cultural in the twentieth century. Our sense of community and purpose of ministry with each other has only benefited from our ability to speak and learn more than our own native-born language. Moving into the future let us continue to take the full advantage of this situation. Let us insure our mental health and spiritual health. We have greater resources to address culture shock, diverse dietary needs and provide for adequate leisure and health care.

To fulfill our life of prayer, community and ministry in the twentieth century, every province became more aware of responsible stewardship. Attention to this proved essential in our ability to survive the World Wide Depression of the 1930s and the 1940s terror of war. I have presented evidence to show the heroic way our vowed members kept alive prayer, community and ministry in and beyond the monastery cloister over these past critical years. In times of trouble we came to value the physical space and safety of our monasteries. Our decision and ability to rebuild, renovate and expand in the post-World War II era is a tangible reminder we did not see ourselves as refugees. At the same time, the intimacy of this monastic life based on common prayer and community probably also opened our eyes us to see our common wounds.

Let us continue to ask ourselves: what graces have we learned from those who have lived with us and suffered post-traumatic stress or life threatening illnesses? Vowed Passionists of today have a longer life span than they did fifty years ago. As a result, we have come to know our burdens quite well. But do we view them as heavy or light? If needed, how do we envision healing? Furthermore, I suggest regular post-war publication of group photos of Passionist in our religious habits became a signal of hope. As much as possible every province recommitted to religious formation of candidates. Over time, we have also progressed to recognize that our common vowed identity as Passionists of prayer, community and ministry is sacred when we recognized the self-worth and talent inherent in each individual. Mirroring the past, some will live this out in both small and large religious communities and as individuals. A process of fair accountability and leadership must always exist. We can never underestimate the importance of local superiors, provincials and the General Curia in leadership together.



From another perspective, we must not underestimate drawing upon and developing our common intellectual life in the context of our common prayer life will allow us of service our Passionist traditions as well as church and society.

I would suggest that it is absolutely essential for we Passionists to continually develop resources to professionally preserve our history. Such documentation keeps us honest and inspires us. Scholars' ability to access, learn from and contribute to our critical historical understanding only can only is a true testament to Passionist legacy and future.

Looking back, I suggest we have experienced a revolution in our expression of the Passionist ministry. Our tradition of preaching the message of the cross still makes sense to people in the church pews across many different cultures and languages. As we took risk to expand, attention shifted anew to Africa, the Spanish-speaking world of the Americas and Asia. Retreat houses were built. We turned our attention to radio and print. To sustain our prayer life and common life we came to accept the access to cars, airplanes and public transport. Moreover, we began to admire and debate Passionists who represented us in the international arena and diverse religious traditions.

Critics of my reflection would be correct to note that there has been little mention of the laity. Standard Passionist narratives prior to the Vatican II era (1962-1965) were often silent on this topic. It serves as a blunt reminder of how we perceived ourselves. The contribution of laity to Passionist life of prayer, community and ministry became more inclusive in the last decades of the twentieth century. While an interactive process between Passionists and laity across different cultures is not always easy, most of us know Passionist tradition makes more sense when we build spiritual bridges of such cooperation based on professionalism and accountability.

Allow me to offer some general reflection questions. 1) What aspect of the life and spirit of St. Paul of the Cross do you think is attractive to the people of the culture where you live and minister? 2) What is the legacy of prayer, community and ministry that you have learned from your province? 3) What is a concrete specific way that the international character of Passionist prayer, community and ministry enriches you 4) Who is a Passionist of history that inspires you and why?

Perhaps it is best to end here. Perhaps in the future I will research this Passionist history beyond 1956. Overall, I have tried to accomplish the following objective: As we encourage Catholics to pray and know stories of the Scripture and tenets of our faith and tradition, let us in this same spirit always think and teach historical examples from our past. Let us hold these and other stories with respect. If we forgot Passionists of the past. Passionist of the future may very well forget us. All of us share the responsibility to prevent Passionist historical amnesia.

Finally, recall again the words of Superior General Bernard Silvestrelli in 1906: "We live in very threatening times, and I am convinced that worse are coming. What will happen to our congregation?"³⁹ If he or St. Paul of the Cross were here, I hope they would tell us how proud they have been that we Passionists did not let go of prayer, community and ministry during the twentieth century. Instead, we adapted. Paulacrucian values remained central to our local and international heartbeat. Passionists of today continue faithfully seek to live lives of prayer,

³⁹ Fabiano Giorgini, C.P. *Bernard Mary Silvestrelli, Passionist*. Translated by Patrick Rogers, C.P. (Rome: Passionist 1990), p. 116.



community and ministry. Let us continue to gain honest wisdom from our history. I believe it can only assist as they we work together to make decisions about our Passionist future.