



PAUL OF THE CROSS AND THE PASSIONISTS

18TH CENTURY:

THE TIMES AND PLACES; PERSONALITIES AND EVENTS.

History is built up on two fundamental coordinates: Space (the place) and Time.

Where did the history of St. Paul of the Cross and the founding of the Congregation initially take place? On the Apennine or Italian peninsula, which today is called Italy.

When, or at what time? Throughout the 18th century, although the infancy of Paul Francis Daneo took place in the last decade of the 17th century.

The 18th century, or as referred to in Italian, the “settecento,” continues a long, historical-cultural tradition. This time period occurs in the political era between the “ancien régime” and what we call the contemporary age, or the contemporary world. This historical era begins to develop an authentic sense of universality; or, in other words, a series of processes having global characteristics, what we call today universalization or globalization.

We note great changes which affect old Europe and the new countries or nations, and the continents which forcefully make their entry into the Universal History, even taking on protagonistic roles.

The 18th Century (1700-1800) is an era in transition, and in crisis, which affects politics, society, economics, culture, thought and religion. These forces make of the New Contemporary Era an Age of Transformations and great movements; the effect is such that we can distinguish a “before” and “after” to this century which is completely engaged in great processes, movements and revolutions.

Paul Francis Daneo (Danei family) is born in the city of Ovada, near Genoa, within the triangle formed by Genoa, Turin, and Milan, in the northwest of present Italy, and not far from the border with France. The father and mother of the future St. Paul of the Cross are Lucas Daneo and Ana Maria Massari. They also have ties to the city of Castellazzo.

The Italian territory where the Danei Family lived, and where the Passionist Congregation would be born, has a political configuration quite different from present-day Italy. Italy is part of a Europe which has been formed by the Renaissance (15th and 16th centuries), and Baroque (17th and 18th centuries) eras; it is made up of eight principal states: the Papal States, Venice, Genoa, Tuscany, Naples, the Kingdom of the two Sicilies, Milan and Parma, as well as various duchies and feudal lands.



Europe continued to be dominated by two great monarchical families. The first is the Austrian or Hapsburg family, which, during the 16th and 17th centuries, ruled over the Germanic Holy Roman Empire, the Spanish Kingdoms with their territories across the sea and in the Philippines, and to which were united the Portuguese territories in Africa and Asia.

The Bourbon dynasty had governed in France, and when the King of Spain, Carlos II (the “Hexed” or “Bewitched”) died, he bequeathed all of his territories to the future Phillip V of Spain, who becomes the first Spanish monarch of the Bourbon Family.

The entrance of the Bourbons into Spain leads to an extended struggle known as “the War of Spanish Succession,” from 1700 to 1714. It matched in opposition the pretender and future Bourbon king, Phillip V, and the descendants of the Austrian genealogical line. Throughout the 18th century, there were various wars which spread over much of the European territory, engaging in opposition many of its rulers.

From 1717 to 1720, Austria and France were united against Spain, and the competing armies reveal the European scale of this confrontation.

At the middle of the 18th century, the war of the Polish Succession (1733-1738) had its effects on the territory around Monte Argentario, which is so tied to the birth of the Passionist Congregation and where St. Paul of the Cross was pastorally engaged by reaching out to both sides of the conflict. This war was concluded with the transfer of the “State of the *Presidi*” from Austria (which had ruled it since 1714) to the Spanish who united it with the Kingdom of Naples. In 1733, the Bourbons in France and the Bourbons in Spain sign the First “Family Compact (*Pacte de Famille*).” We should remember that Paul of the Cross was settled on Monte Argentario in 1737.

From 1740 to 1748 we see unfold the Austrian War of Succession, with an expansive movement of troops and armies in the center of Italy. This is the last war which our Founder lived through. In Naples, the ruling king is the future Carlos III of Spain (Carlos VII of the two Sicilies, 1734 -- 1759).

The governmental system of the second half of the 18th century is known as “Enlightened Despotism,” and its motto could be summed up with the phrase “All for the people, but without the people.” It is an absolute power, and everything related to governance is directly related to an ideology likened to the Enlightenment; or, in other words, an adaptation of philosophical ideas of thinkers and ideologues of the time to political practice. Among the monarchs who were exemplars of this system the following stand out: Louis XV of France, Carlos III of Spain, Catherine II of Prussia, and Joseph II of Austria. This type of absolutist government is marked by a paternalism and control in the face of the ideas proposed by the Encyclopedists, who considered necessary the intervention and protagonist role of the peoples in political matters. These political



ideals in favor of intervention by the people are what lead to the various revolutions of the era, and make the bourgeoisie the dominant social group.

The names by which the 18th century is most known are: the century of lights; the century of reason; or the century of the enlightenment. In one way or another it represents the opposition of reason to faith, and faith opposed to reason; science challenging faith. It is the study of the sciences, and of scientific analysis, which has its proper methodology which produces knowledge beyond that given by religion. We cannot forget that this process of confrontation between faith and reason was one of the bases of Enlightenment Thought. However, in the Mediterranean territories and kingdoms, that opposition is not quite as precise; on the contrary, many of the scientific advances came about within Catholic scientific circles.

The French Encyclopedia was the ideological foundation for this age. It is the authentic achievement of this moment which signals the transition from the Modern Age to the Contemporary Age. The responsibility for the Encyclopedia was in the hands of Diderot and D'Alembert; many others took part, such as Voltaire and Rousseau. This enormous dictionary organized the thought of this important historical moment, and of its subsequent influence.

Neither should we forget the innovations which the scientific world produced. Science and scientific undertakings produced significant advances. Scientific expeditions brought home specimens of great interest; the botanical gardens of the time, some notable examples continue in the present, also shared in these discoveries. We can highlight within the cultural arts many notable works: paintings, sculptures and architecture which draw their primary themes from science.

A broad series of political, social, economic, cultural events, as well as some armed conflicts, both national and international in scope, brought about what we call "Revolutions."

In chronological order, the first of the revolutions was that of the thirteen colonies' seeking independence; which we recognize today as the United States of America.

On December 16, 1773, in Boston, there is a mutiny against the taxation of tea; with this event begins the independence movement of those thirteen colonies under the British Empire. Those thirteen colonies were located along the eastern coast of the present United States, from north to south.

On July 4th, 1776, with George Washington at the helm, a Declaration of Independence is issued, and the independence movement advances until culminating in the Peace of Versailles (Paris 1783).



The configuration of the present-day United States is a long process lasting throughout the 19th century.

The Spanish Crown sells (February 22, 1821) what is today the State of Florida, which gives the United States the beautiful peninsula where the oldest city of the United States is found, St. Augustine (founded September 8, 1565).

If you draw a diagonal line from Florida to the northwest Pacific Coast (the state of Oregon), you will divide today's United States into two halves. The southern part, which borders the Mexican republic, was part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. Along the Pacific Coast there were missions organized under the missionary leadership of various Religious Orders. It was a significant, enormous, territory, which became part of the United States through the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (1848).

Starting with 1810, independence movements had begun in territories which were under the Spanish Crown. Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla and José María Morelos began insurgent movements in Latin America. José de San Martín works for independence, building on his military mandate over Argentina and Chile, and extending throughout South America; the generals Sucre and Bolivar take part.

Some of the independence movements will continue on throughout the 19th century, as is the case with Cuba, and in southeast Asia, the Philippines (1898). The evangelization of the Philippines under Spain explains the prevalence of Catholicism.

Many evangelization efforts were interrupted in Asia (e.g., China), while it was the Anglicans who began the evangelization of Australia.

These revolutions were just beginning when the life of Paul of the Cross was drawing to an end. St. Paul had accomplished an enormous task, he had carried a heavy cross, but on the horizon was a hostile and difficult environment.

The Congregation began to progress under its first General Superiors after the Founder. Passionists had practically not left Italy, and therefore, they were very much affected by the events at the start of the 19th century. Nevertheless, a positive assessment of history shows that there was an interior strengthening of the Congregation, which helped to intensify Passionist spirituality. We can say that the Congregation embraced its particular life-style and ministry of preaching.

In Europe, the most well-known revolution was that of France. It began on July 14, 1789, with the fall of the Bastille. Thereafter, the King of France, Louis XVI, is executed (January 21, 1793); shortly later, his wife, Marie Antoinette.



The bourgeoisie, or third estate, becomes a true catalyst of change; the bourgeoisie take power over the aristocracy, the clergy, and the “high clergy” in particular.

The French Revolution is followed by the era of Napoleon Bonaparte. In a certain way, the Bonaparte Period represented, in some ways, a political and social regression in relation to the numerous reforms brought about during the revolution in France; however, the mandate under Napoleon consolidated what was achieved in the revolutionary era, and the achievements of the revolutionary and Napoleonic periods spread throughout Europe. France's outward orientation toward America and the rest of Europe, principally directed to ideologies, continues from the end of the 18th century, until the 20th century, even reaching as far as the middle of the 20th century.

The legal and educational reforms, as well as the spread of wars throughout the European continent served to consolidate the processes begun with the French Revolution. We should not forget events like the suppression of religious institutes in those areas of Italy under French dominion. A clear example is the suppression of our Congregation from 1810 to 1814.

Since Paul of the Cross had founded the Congregation in Italy, only a small group had left for a mission in Bulgaria. In 1796, the Napoleonic troops invaded the Italian territories and the Papal States. That same year, Fr. Vincent Mary Strambi preached the spiritual exercises for the Roman Curia.

Clerics were obliged to swear fidelity to the Emperor Napoleon; and in 1810, the communities of religious were suppressed, and with that, the retreats of the Congregation were closed. Only the Generalate was kept open with a small degree of activity. Fr. Thomas Albesano was the Superior General at this difficult time, and the greater part of the religious were dispersed, or retired with their families. In 1814, the Congregation is restored.

The life of the Congregation was exposed to many risks by taking so long a time to expand into other countries.

The second half of the 18th century brought the Industrial Revolution (First Industrial Revolution), which brought forth a series of economic, technological and social processes. The Industrial Revolution began in Great Britain, starting with the textile industry and the use of steam power as its motive force. The steam engine of James Watt moves into railroading, and later, aboard ships which will allow moving goods at a much more rapid pace. We can say that this kind of technological progress culminates in the last years of the 19th century with the invention of the internal combustion engine, which together with electric power, makes possible unimaginable progress to the future.



In order to appreciate the background of faith and religiosity in distinct Italian territories from the 18th century until the beginnings of the unification of Italy, we should examine the demographics of nearly 13 and a half million inhabitants.

The statistics totaling the number of priests, clerics, consecrated persons, and active laity equals one hundred twenty-six thousand persons. The Church evidenced the influence of the Council of Trent, which after two centuries of Tridentine spirituality continued under its influence apart from a few devotions which gained favor and offered a new spirituality.

In the cities, the formation of the clergy and pastoral work was adequate; however, the same may not be said of the rural, farming areas.

Eight Popes stood at the helm of the Church during the life of our Founder. The most influential for the life of the nascent Congregation and in the life of St. Paul of the Cross and his brother, John Baptist, were Benedict XIV, Clement XIV and Pious VI. At a time of world change, a Congregation was born to undertake changing the world by the Passion of Christ

The bibliography which we have used for this narration consists basically of two biographies of Saint Paul of the Cross:

The monumental biography written by Fr. Enrico Zoffoli and a readable, accurate biography written by Fr. Fernando Piélagos and published by the Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos.

In addition, the First Volume of the History of the Congregation, written by Fr. Fabiano Giorgini, which corresponds with the founding years of the Passionist Congregation.

Also, the introduction to Volume I of the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross, the last edition, which was also written by Fr. Fabiano Giorgini.

To these texts should be added some of the university textbooks covering contemporary history or the history of the 18th and 19th centuries.