



Rekindle the Fire within Us

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*Il Superiore Generale*

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## MESSAGE AND GREETINGS TO THE PASSIONIST FAMILY ON THE FEAST OF ST PAUL OF THE CROSS 2016

Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends in the Passionist Family,

Greetings to you through the grace given us in the Passion of Jesus!

As we prepare to celebrate the feast of our Holy Founder: St Paul of the Cross on 19 October 2016, there is an important gathering of our 'Formators' taking place here in our General House in Rome. Nearly 30 professed Passionists from around the Congregation who are engaged in the ministry of religious life formation are participating in a 3-weeks Formators' Course organised and designed by the Congregation's Office for Formation. So, I choose to centre this message around the topic of the importance of continual and ongoing formation in our Passionist life.

No doubt the formators participating in this Course will benefit with receiving much valuable material for their knowledge and for use in their work. However, I expressed my hope that the focus of this Course will not be primarily about information or finding methods and formulas for 'doing' formation, but rather on the **formation of the formator**, i.e. **listening** and **responding** to the Word of God (Jesus) and allowing that Word to effect **conversion (renewal)**...a turning to Jesus and to the kingdom of God. It is necessary that the formator be more **in tune** with one's true self, and **attuned** to the mind of the Holy Spirit: the true formator.

In expressing my hope to those tasked directly with "formation work", I also remind **all of us** (religious and laity of the Passionist Family) that each one of us has a responsibility to promote genuine witness of our life and mission to those who feel drawn to the Passionist Charism.

Our Constitutions #79 states:

*Each of us is responsible for the vitality and continued growth of the Congregation. The most persuasive invitation to young people to come and share our Passionist life is given when they find us faithful to the charism of Saint Paul of the Cross. They should see us as employed in a life of meaningful service, which is characterised by joyfulness of spirit, and sustained by the wholehearted support of a community of brothers.*

Our formation must be concerned with giving attention to the growth of the total person: physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual and sexual...beginning with me. It is about **becoming whole, becoming more human.**

In celebrating the feast of St Paul of the Cross this year, as we reflect on his vision in the context of the history and world-situation of the times today, I propose that we make use of the aids available at our disposition to '**rekindle the fire**' of our Passionist vocation. Let us claim once again the joy and enthusiasm of that original and first fervour which we experienced when we committed ourselves

(whether by religious profession or promises), filled with hope to journey with Christ. May we be strengthened further in our conviction to accept JESUS – Crucified and Risen – as the centre and foundation of our life and actions.

It happens that as we go through life from day to day, the living of our Passionist vocation and the exercising of our mission can become somewhat mundane and monotonous. We come under the influence of so much with which we are seduced by our world and society that we can sometimes lose sight of the core values of our life: prayer, silence, solitude, sacrifice, concern for the poor, the search for justice, the promotion of peace and reconciliation, and the *raison d'être* of our Congregation: which is **the proclamation of the God of love and mercy seen in the Passion of Jesus.**

The challenge to **'rekindle the fire'** is particularly applicable today to those of us, Passionists, who are called to Religious Life. The once blazing fire within can be reduced to some smouldering pieces of wood and coals covered with ashes. But the hot ashes still have life...the fire has not died. With a few more bits of wood, a few puffs of air, and the fire can be once again fanned into flame. If we allow the fire to die, however, this is what dampens our heart, becomes heavy on our mind, wearies our body, and finally kills our soul!

May I encourage us to make time in our daily lives to treasure the gift of our Passionist vocation: by the preserving of spiritual energy; by refusing to allow ourselves to grow cold; and by a renewal to carry religious and Passionist life into the future for those who will come after us.

Our responsibility now is to refuse to let the coals die out. Someone said: *"What I am NOW, religious life will be now. What I am NOW, religious life WILL BE in the future."* It is a sobering thought!

Passionist Religious Life will not die in the future unless it is already dead in Passionist religious now. Each of us is a carrier of the flame to those who will follow us. It is up to each one of us to maintain the hot ashes and to fan them into fire. When young people in formation, new members, and people searching for meaning and hope seek for spiritual fire among us, they must not find out that the ashes have gone cold.

Through the intercession of St Paul of the Cross, may you be 'a living memory' of the Passion of Jesus, reflecting God's love and mercy by your thoughts, words and actions in your communities, families, neighborhoods and workplaces.

***"In this Jubilee Year of Mercy, our free embracing of the powerlessness of Jesus can be made into the most powerful vehicle of God's love. While politicians shout at each other, terrorists proclaim their message by killing women and children, and celebrities manifest their exalted status of fame and fortune through mindless chit-chat, and pictures on social media, Christians (Passionists) can, in their actions and attitudes of mercy, exercise the ultimate power upon persons and hopeless situations: the power to resurrect, to bring life where there is death."***

***~ Fr James Gibson: The Power and Powerlessness of Mercy***

**HAPPY FEAST DAY!!!**

~ Fr Joachim Rego CP  
Superior General  
19 October 2016