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Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality

THE PASSIONIST COMMUNITY IN THE TEACHING OF ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS

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Statement of purpose

The booklets in this series are simply one effort to implement a decree of the 1978 Passionist General Chapter concerning the promotion of a better knowledge of the history and spirituality of the Congregation. In the two hundred and more years since the foundation of the Congregation, English-speaking Passionists have suffered from uneasy access to historical sources and few translations of works that were based on them. Additional books or articles of reflection on our patrimony were also often left in their original languages. There was a felt need for a greater: sharing of such resources in history and spirituality.

The purpose of this series of booklets is to provide information, insight, and a sense of collaboration in a religious adventure. It is not meant simply to reprint or invent more archive material. Besides, there is too much of the dynamism of the Spirit of God in the life of St. Paul of the Cross, the history of the Congregation, and our past and present shadings of spirituality, ever to be fully caught in words or booklets. We are dealing with the response of people like ourselves to God's love and to the call of holiness as revealed to us in Jesus crucified and risen.

The hope then is not backward looking, but toward the future: through a better understanding of our past and present, to give a better life to others.

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Abbreviations

Notes

1. Theological foundation of the Passionist Community

Drawn to a life of solitude and penance, totally centered on God who had so captivated him at his conversion, Paul then felt the call to establish a community. This further inspiration “to gather companions together to promote the holy fear of God in souls” paved the way for the decisive enlightenment he was to receive in the summer of 1720.

It was then that he realized that he was being called to found a new religious community in the Church, a realization conveyed to him through the image of the black tunic, and the ‘sign’ bearing the name of Jesus and the inscription of his Passion. “Following these visions of the holy habit with the sacred sign, God intensified within me this resolve to gather companions, and, with the permission of Holy Mother Church, to establish a Congregation” (1).

Thus a new community was born into the Church, with a share in its mission. It would labor for peoples’ conversion by keeping ever before their eyes the love which Jesus showed for them in his Passion, encouraging them to meditate upon it often.

In a profound experience of God during his forty-day retreat, Paul gained a clearer understanding of the unique purpose of this new community, and of the specific role it was called to play within the apostolic mission of the Church. Grasping, with keen insight, that God’s way of offering his love to men was through His Word made man and nailed to a cross, he grieved over the loss of so many people who would never enjoy the salvation won for them by the Passion of Jesus. He therefore begs God, “with fervent ardor,” to hasten the founding of the Congregation in the Church, and to furnish it with suitable men who will promote “His greater glory and the good of their neighbor” (2).

Paul is, moreover, emphatic that God infused “into my soul the form of the Holy Rule to be observed” by the new community. The “form of the Rule” is the discourse of Jesus to his apostles before sending them out on their mission (3). Hence, a further theological basis for the Passionist Community can be found in the life, teaching, and conduct of the apostles.

Paul, in fact, states that the life of the Passionist Community “is not unlike that of the apostles; even more, it is totally conformed to these, and the apostles’ conduct is the norm for the Constitutions which endeavor to form a man totally God-centered, totally apostolic, a man of prayer, detached from the world, from things, from himself, so that he may, in all truth, be called a disciple of Jesus Christ, and may beget many sons for heaven” (4).

Thus, when quoting Scripture with regard to community life, Paul favors those texts from the Acts of the Apostles which refer to the community in Jerusalem: “The group of believers was one in mind and heart...” (Acts 4:32-35), recalling that the apostles and their companions “all joined in continuous prayer”(Acts 1:14). He also cites passages from the letters of the apostles where the family virtues to be practiced within the Christian community are listed: humility, kindness, compassion, simplicity, eagerness to be at the service of one another, and patience.

Thus would the religious, like the apostles, be able to live in “purity of spirit, profound humility of heart, and in an ever more perfect and ardent charity which makes many hearts one, united as they are in God’s holy love, becoming gentle and of one mind, living in harmony and peace” (5).

Based on the distinctive inspiration granted to Paul of the Cross, and on the manner of life lived by the apostles, the Passionist Community gathers around the Cross, united in heart and mind, putting into practice in its own life Jesus' love for others. It teaches others to do the same, leading them to reconciliation, with God and one another.

The distinctively Passionist manner in which these texts are used, and the emphasis placed upon the Passion of Jesus, have influenced the way in which poverty and penance are expressed within the Passionist Community, and given a specific character to its spirituality, its prayer-life, the regulation of its apostolic activities, and its way of determining how it can best help the local Church.

While conferring a measure of stability on the Passionist Community, this imposes limits and responsibilities too. The Community cannot be set up in just any way, nor can it undertake just any kind of work. Everything it does must be done in obedience to God's will, and this is expressed through the Rule approved by the Church. This approval of the Rule is the Church's guarantee that the foundation of this Community is divinely sanctioned, and thus it confers upon the Congregation a share in its own mission.

2. SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE PASSIONIST COMMUNITY

2.1 Different Categories, but One Brotherhood

From the point of view of its social structures, the Passionist Community is a union of brothers, sharing a common life which is adapted to local social and cultural conditions.

The equality of all the members derives from the fact that all alike have been redeemed and reconciled by the self-same "Crucified Love." All alike share the same rights and responsibilities in cultivating this love and fostering its remembrance among people. This equality is stressed in the text of the Rule by the use of the word 'brothers,' referring equally to those who are priests and those who are not.

Priestly ordination, however, entails a distinction of fact within the community. There are two categories of religious, sharing the self-same vocation, but distinguished by their training and by the ministry they exercise in the Church.

Paul had to take this into account, and while he kept distinctions to a minimum, he still had to introduce them. Some of these distinctions, as we shall see, were due to existing law governing religious institutes. Others derived from customs that somehow came to be incorporated into the Passionist Community, though whether this can be ascribed directly to the Founder, or to those who assisted him in the foundation, we cannot be sure.

What is clear, however, is the underlying governing principle: There are to be no distinctions, except where this is required by virtue of priesthood, or by the nature of the work to which an individual may be temporarily assigned.

This equality was further emphasized by the practice of substituting the name of a Christian mystery or saint for one's family name. This eliminated any claim to distinction on the grounds

of family or background (6). All alike were sons of the Congregation now, their brotherhood deriving from their common experience of God's mercy.

This equality found visible expression in the fact that all wore an identical habit — at least, until 1746, from which date only the clerics wore the Sign on the mantle (7). It received further emphasis in 1741 when, contrary to the 1736 version of the Rule, it was established that clerics and lay-brothers should share a common recreation, “the better to maintain holy unity and brotherly love” (8) — an oblique reference to the life of the apostles as the norm for community life. This brotherly spirit of sharing together, even when relaxing, has fostered that homely, uncomplicated atmosphere which has been a characteristic of Passionist Community life, in spite of some problems which have arisen from time to time.

Paul and his successors further encouraged this family spirit by opposing the use of titles of honor. They were particularly opposed to privileges attached to any position or title: e.g. Former-General, Former-Peace, Former-Lecturer, etc. Such practices were not uncommon in many institutes in Paul's time. They provoked jealousy within communities by introducing distinctions and privileges, and encouraged religious to cultivate influential people outside the community who were in a position to obtain these distinctions for them (9).

To safeguard this family spirit, where one standard prevailed for all, special care was to be taken to avoid preferential treatment in such things as food, clothing, and medical care. Paul clings to his vision of a community whose lifestyle would reflect that of the apostles and of the first Christian community where “everything was shared according to the need of each,” and where “nobody called anything his own.”

Drawing on the best that religious tradition has to offer, Paul is resolute in this, insisting that the religious be cared for, clothed, and fed with impartial charity, with no distinctions being made between clerics and lay-brothers, Superiors or subjects. There are to be no distinctions made in the refectory for Superiors, and the meals are to be prepared and served “with complete equality for all, with nobody receiving special treatment. There are to be no exceptions to this”(10).

The same considerations govern the care of the sick brethren who are cared for “with utmost charity, and provided with every possible remedy.” Let the Rector “give the lead in radiating charity toward the sick, visiting them often, comforting them, and rendering them every possible assistance” (11).

He must see to it that they are provided with “nourishing soups; and with medication according to their need, taking care to show equal charity to both priests and lay-brothers” (12).

Remembrance of the deceased brethren should demonstrate the same equality. Funerals and suffrages are to be the same “for priests, clerics, and lay-brothers, without any distinction at all, so that equal charity may shine forth for all” (13).

Determined to avoid even the hint of privilege, Paul always insisted on cleaning his own room, and he required every religious to do the same, irrespective of his age or position (14).

One distinction, whose reason is unclear, concerns the frequency of weekly Communions for clerics and lay-brothers. Until 1746, the lay-brothers were allowed to receive communion on all feast days, and three times a week during Lent and Advent. In 1746 a further limit was imposed

whereby they could receive Communion on all feasts, excluding octaves, and three times a week during Advent and Lent, unless the Spiritual Director decreed otherwise. There was no fixed rule for clerics until 1746, when it was decreed that they could Communicate three times a week, and on all feasts, excluding octaves (15).

Another significant distinction was the exclusion of lay-brothers from local and provincial chapters, for both juridical and educational reasons. In 1746, the common right of both clerics and lay-brothers to take part in house meetings, which was already the Custom, was explicitly inserted into the Rule. However, from 1775 onwards, both the lay-brothers and those clerics who had not yet received sub-diaconate were required to leave the Chapter of Faults when discussion on the state of the community was about to take place (16).

2.2 Brothers United Around the Superior “Who Acts in God’s Name”

The organization of the community revolves around the Superior. He governs it in the name of God who has called it together. All the religious regard him as “chosen by God to direct them and guide them in the way of perfection... Let them reverently listen to what he has to say, and obey him promptly as one who acts in God’s name.”

The members of the community can be sure they are following God’s will only when, in a spirit of faith, they accept the authority of the Superior as manifesting God’s will for them (17). At the same time, all should recognize, in a spirit of faith, that they are brothers and servants of one another in Christ Crucified who has called them to Himself.

For this reason, the Superior should regard our Blessed Mother as the true Superior of the community, and he should “regard himself as everybody’s servant rather than as their master.” Let him strive “to combine a Father’s heart with a Mother’s tender love,” thus manifesting at once the bountiful love of our heavenly Father, and the motherly presence and care of Mary most holy. Let him be “gentle with everybody, approachable and kindly, taking upon his own shoulders the limitations of those placed under his authority,” and let him give his directions “gently and not harshly” (18). It is his task to ensure that a brotherly spirit remains within the community, reminding them at the close of each day to love God and to love one another as Christ Crucified loves them (19).

2.3 Brothers United in Carrying out God’s Will, Manifested in the Rule Approved by the Church

In the Rule approved by the Church, the community recognizes that our Holy Founder was inspired by God in determining the “form” of life it should follow.

It acknowledges that it will be a vital, thriving community to the extent that it is an “observant” one, embracing the will of God as indicated by the Church through the Rule. The Superior and the religious recognize that their lives must conform to this model which they themselves don’t determine, but which they embrace by accepting God’s call to the Passionist Congregation.

The standard by which they must “model” or “form” themselves is Jesus Crucified, and the Rule furnishes the best means of accomplishing this. Brotherly unity will exist in the community to the extent to which each individual is united with and conformed to Christ Crucified. This unity takes place only in the measure in which the community puts into practice the lifestyle laid down in the Rule. This is the meaning of the term “observant.”

The community is just (in the Biblical sense of the word) in God's sight, only if it is "observant," since it has promised to keep alive the memory of Jesus' Passion by its life of brotherhood, a life which is poor, humble, and apostolic as described in the Rule.

Likewise, only an "observant" community fulfills its obligations to its own members. On entering the Congregation, they undertook to live conscientiously in accordance with the Rule, heeding Paul's prompting that "the external observance of the Rule must always spring from the heart" (20).

Only when the community is "observant" of the Rule, approved and given by the Church, does it fulfill its obligations to God's people, who have the right to expect that it live in accordance with the Rule which distinguishes it from any other congregation.

To quote only one of the many relevant texts of our Holy Founder: "I beg you to be most exact in observing the smallest detail of the Rule. Through the approval of the Vicar of Christ contained in our Apostolic Brief, God has given the Rule as a means of holiness for those who keep it exactly. If you are faithful to this, those words of Scripture will be realized in you, 'God will take delight in his servants,' because Jesus Himself will take delight in you, and the Congregation will be esteemed by men. If you are not faithful to this, the Congregation will become an object of scorn, to our infinite loss..." (21).

All the religious should willingly assume this "form that the Rule takes," thus letting themselves be shaped or "formed" in the etymological sense of the words. This they should do unhesitatingly, superiors included, freely accepting this as a positive help towards reproducing in themselves dispositions like those with which Jesus embraced the "form" of his Father's will, his only rule of life. Modeling themselves thus on the Rule, their attitude is positive and dynamic, as they gradually come to share more and more in the true freedom of Jesus.

This point must be stressed and clearly understood if we are to appreciate why our Holy Founder saw this aim of the Rule as the criterion for every facet of community life; providing the basis for the Superior's function within the Community as he guides and inspires it.

Hence, too, our Holy Founder's stress on obedience as the best way of imitating Christ who accepted Crucifixion in obedient love. The religious freely accepted an external restriction of their self-expression by opting for a way of life that could better lead them to the freedom of God's children.

For such religious, Paul's words contain both prophecy and promise: "There is no peace for the heart which follows its own whims. Blessed are they who are guided by holy obedience in all things, in imitation of Jesus Christ who was perfectly obedient even to death, death on a Cross. Everything they do will be done with great perfection. They will receive their reward. They will speak of victory" (22). Overcoming their self-love, self-importance, and desire for their personal comfort, they become capable of "appreciating what the service of God means" (28). For Paul, the service of God means accepting his will as shown through the Rule, through the voice of authority, and through the circumstances of life. In this way the religious are enabled to live "in sincere and perfect love, which unites your hearts so closely that finally you have only one heart and one will in God" (24).

These principles, aimed at a union of everybody's will in that of God, ensure that no one dominates anybody else, indulges his own whims at the expense of the community, or imposes his own ideas on others. All strive together to be obedient to God's will — the only reasons they have come together as a community. Thus all share a community of life in genuine love.

3. THE EXTERNAL SURROUNDINGS OF PASSIONIST COMMUNITY: LOCATION AND BUILDINGS

3.1 Solitude, Silence and Poverty Create the Atmosphere in Which God Becomes All in All

It is to facilitate his encounter with God, so that he may give clear and effective witness to Him, that each of the religious is called into this faith-community. Hence, the community must be structured in a way that allows this to happen.

Removed from the affairs of men, from worldly preoccupations and comforts, the external surroundings foster attention to the presence of God, the one and only Love on whom the religious center their lives, the only treasure they seek. This must be the guideline in considering what is required in the externals of the 'retreat' since the house exists to serve the Passionist Community.

Placing the houses in solitude is prompted by Jesus' practice of taking his disciples apart to a lonely place in order to teach them and to foster their personal relationship with him. Thus they could speak of him from their own personal knowledge of him.

Solitude, when embraced in response to Jesus' call to share his life and mission, also provides the opportunity for better self-knowledge and self-evaluation. It fosters, too, a fraternal bond, based on the friendship which Jesus forges with each individual.

But for solitude to foster this encounter with God and with one's brothers, it must be wed to poverty so that the house, while clean and orderly, must express simplicity and poverty. It should provide an adequate but basic shelter in which nothing distracts one from God or from one's brothers to whom one is called to announce the words of salvation.

"Everything breathes poverty and holy recollection." Thus, at the feet of Jesus Crucified, the religious are fired "with the holy love of God, ready and eager then to go out and sow the most holy seed of God's words, zealously promoting in the hearts of the faithful a devoted remembrance of the Passion and Death of Jesus our sovereign Good" (25).

While genuine poverty must be everywhere evident, the guiding principle in the building of the Retreat must be to foster a face-to-face encounter with God. Hence, sufficient room must be provided for the number of religious in the house, allowing orderliness, silence and a peaceful atmosphere in which they may give their attention to God, even if this means that, externally, the house appears to be more than one would expect a poor house to be.

Each religious is to have his own room, even if this appears to be contrary to poverty, considering the socio-economic conditions of time and place. Paul particularly wanted each of the religious to experience solitude in his own room and not just outside the Retreat, so that he could foster that intimate, personal betrothal to Jesus, his only love, undistracted even by his

brothers in religion. His cell becomes his desert, containing only the bare essentials, creating the space where he and his Spouse nurture their love.

His cell will be small, unpainted, containing “only one paper picture and a cross, a table and a chair that are both small and poor, and a small straw-filled mattress about a palm’s height from the floor”(26). Writing materials and books may be taken from the community library, but the Superior’s permission is required each time. Food and drink are not to be taken to the room, lest one be tempted to gluttony. The cell “should be conspicuous for its cleanliness” and tidiness. This is a mark of respect for God’s presence, for oneself, and for one’s brothers who share the house.

Paul insisted that the religious should use that personal space to maintain a one-to-one relationship with the divine person of Jesus: “When they are alone there, let them take care to dismiss from their minds anything that is not God or of God.” The religious should live in the presence of God, listening to him and conversing with him. So Paul recommends that when he is alone he keep the Crucifix before his eyes, lovingly and often kissing the sacred wounds, hearing therein God addressing him in accents of love. Let him kneel before the Crucified and confess his faults twice daily at his examination of conscience. Let him seek peace of mind there when he is troubled, and, before leaving his cell, let him ask permission of the Crucified, weighing carefully with Christ and his Blessed Mother whether it be really necessary to go out (27).

Although the grounds around the Retreat might seem inconsistent with a radical poverty, they provided surroundings which Paul considered necessary for Passionists. They provided physical solitude, and a respite from the encroachment of outsiders, and fostered an atmosphere of peace, allowing the religious to relax both physically and spiritually. The greenery, fresh air and open spaces were conducive to the contemplation of God as creator, the one who holds the universe in his hands, redeemer of his people.

To foster this encounter with God, spiritual reading and even some study were allowed outside, in the woods, in nature’s simple surroundings. For a half hour every morning and afternoon, all the religious would leave their cells and take a walk in the fresh air, in silence, for refreshment and mental relaxation, or, as Paul put it, “to clear the head as an aid to interior recollection.”

The appreciation “of field and flower, of sun and sky, showing forth the majesty and beauty of God” aided union with Him in these moments. If the religious met anyone during this time, “greetings were exchanged as courtesy demands,” but conversation was avoided so as not to disturb converse with God (28).

The interior silence, in which the religious commune with God, must be reflected in the external silence of the house and grounds. This is not to be disturbed by outsiders, who are therefore not permitted within the enclosure. The Church is not to be a center for celebrating popular feasts, but it is to be kept open for anybody who comes there seeking God through the Sacraments, prayer, or spiritual direction.

People who come “to savor the sweetness of blessed solitude at the feet of the Crucified” are required to observe the silence. These and anybody else, who may, for some unusual reason, be permitted within the house “should be tactfully requested to speak softly and to walk about quietly so as not to disturb the peace, quiet, and recollection of the religious.” Let the religious

treat with them “in a kindly manner, with gentleness and reserve” as they help them to share the experience of grace which is to be found there, encouraging them to enter into the mystery of the Passion and to unite with the community in prayer (29).

The religious will be at pains to preserve this silence by avoiding both speech and noise. Thus Paul writes: “Let them not walk quickly through the house, treading heavily and creating a disturbance, thus breaking the silence and making recollection impossible.” Nor are they to spread news and gossip from outside the house (30).

Such an atmosphere could entail some risk of fostering nervous tension, leading to isolation and withdrawal. Realizing this, Paul insisted on a careful screening of anybody who requested admission to the Passionist Community. Introverted personalities, those disposed to melancholia, people who were unsociable or excessively concerned about their health, were to be refused admission. Postulants were specifically questioned as to their “readiness to remain in solitude, two, three, or more miles out in the countryside, without going out unless charity or obedience required it.” They were also questioned as to their ability to keep the silence, apart from community recreation (31).

Paul built some safeguards into the community structures to preserve psychological balance, e.g. daily solitary walk, community recreation, and the celebration of feasts which provided a break from the normal daily routine.

It was, however, the living faith of the community members that he regarded as the greatest safeguard against imbalance. It was this, more than anything else, that would assist them in the continual sublimation of their emotions, centering them on the divine-human person of Jesus. There was no more effective means to this than seeing the serenity and contentment of the other men, experiencing courtesy and openness from the Superior and the brethren, with each one taking care to avoid anything which might annoy or inconvenience anybody else (32).

Paul counseled that their conversation should “be cheerful; that they be open with one another, courteous and thoughtful in the Lord.” The Superior will take no less care, being “gentle with everybody, approachable and kindly, taking upon his own shoulders the limitations of those placed under his authority. Let him not give his directions harshly, but gently.” When the religious came to his room he should receive them “courteously, never showing annoyance, but listening to them patiently, as if he had nothing else to do” (33).

The same courteous attention was to be shown to one another when they met in the corridor, greeting each other with a bow of the head or by raising their birettas. This was a mark of esteem and reverence, acknowledging both the person himself and Christ present within him (34). Mutual respect was safeguarded by such courtesies. Paul showed particular concern about this, regarding it as a means of avoiding strained relations among the brethren, or between them and the Superior (35), thus preserving peace and emotional harmony.

Psychological relief was also provided by feast days, as noted. These afforded a physical and mental break from the normal daily routine. At the same time they provided a stimulus to faith and reinforced one’s hope for heaven by focusing one’s prayer more deeply on the Christian mystery being celebrated (36). A little more recreation was allowed on these days, and fasting and penance were relaxed (37).

Paul advised Father Fulgentius, Superior and Master of Novices, to take particular care about the community's food. There should be enough to go round, it should be well prepared, and, within the limits of poverty and quantity prescribed by Rule, the religious should have enough to eat.

In fact, said Paul, insufficient food causes "great temptations, manifested in loss of enthusiasm, depression, heaviness of spirit, etc., a great lassitude which often causes a loss of spiritual drive." So Paul urged him to emphasize feast days in some small way, using the faculty given the Superior in the Rule of providing something extra at table, especially on feast days. He observed: "Seeing such kindly and holy discretion used to highlight the feasts, especially the solemn ones, is a boost to the spirit too. We haven't all reached the heights of perfection yet. We need to assist poor human nature in the best way we can" (38).

This passage throws light on the psychological insight of those religious, showing the care they took to avoid nervous tension.

Paul underlines his own experience in this regard: "Your Reverence will appreciate how little things can weigh heavily on people. For this reason, as far as I am aware, I have never omitted conferences with the religious. This experience has convinced me that when the brethren as a whole don't have the food that the Rule allows, with discretion and according to need, they face great temptations of lassitude, depression, heaviness of spirit, etc. Virtue may prevent them saying anything about it, even to the local Superior, for fear of making a nuisance of themselves, but it is a great burden, often causing lack of spiritual drive. My own experience has taught me this in my dotage, etc." (39). Paul was so insistent on this because he was conscious that "our holy Rule provides only the basic bodily necessities."

For the same reasons, two or three special full days of recreation came to be introduced; with permission to eat outside the refectory, in the garden or in the woods, as a break from the normal routine (40).

When such human measures were prudently used by balanced spiritual people, they proved beneficial both physically and spiritually. They made the religious feel appreciated, and helped them direct and control their feelings in a healthy way.

3.2 the Community and the Sick Religious

Reference has already been made to the way in which all the sick brethren were to be treated alike, without any distinction between Superiors, clerics, and lay-brothers.

Here we are concerned about making the sick person feel that he is still part of the community, giving him support so that he doesn't become depressed or left on the spiritual fringe, and helping him confront the loneliness of physical death by leading him to a deeper communion with the saving death and resurrection of Jesus.

When somebody is ill, both he and the community suffer, each in their own way. It is, therefore, the occasion for both to demonstrate fidelity to their Passionist vocation by a living participation in the Passion of Jesus. The Rule urges all the religious, and especially the Superior, to show "great concern for the sick brethren, assisting them with utmost charity, and providing them with every possible remedy, especially the spiritual ones" (41).

For their own part, the sick brethren should endeavor to show the strength of their faith, regarding their sufferings “as the will of God, in which they acquiesce; ready to accept life or death as He wills.” Let them not imagine their sufferings to be greater than they really are: Let the infirmarian assist them to embrace God’s will, comforting them, helping them to spiritualize their sufferings, and reading to them now and again from some spiritual book (42).

This concern becomes more evident as the illness progresses, with the whole community redoubling its efforts to rally in support around their sick brother, praying that he may soon lovingly gaze on the face of God Whom he has sought within the community (43).

This concern for the spiritual growth of the sick person through his sufferings should in no way lessen concern for his bodily needs. As has already been noted, Paul considered that no stone should be left unturned in assisting the sick religious to full recovery, even pawning the sacred vessels if necessary.

For the comfort and well-being of the sick, every Retreat should have rooms set aside, suitably arranged and open to the sun. Flowers or fragrant plants, as well as a mattress and sheets were permitted here (44).

The infirmarian should have the loving disposition of “a mother or a saint.” Seeing Jesus in the sick person, he will forgo “any spiritual exercise or observance when the sick person’s need requires it.” He will put up with the sick person’s complaints, attributing these to “the stress of his illness rather than to ill-will.” Therefore, he will avoid using “a supercilious or curt tone of voice, nor will he show annoyance, so as not to add to the sick person’s discomfort.” Let him carry out the doctor’s instructions exactly (45).

Paul had undergone his apprenticeship in care for the sick both within his own family and in the hospital of San Gallicano. This experience had left him with a competence and finesse which inspired confidence in the religious — a legacy he left to the Passionist Community. He would speak of this kinship with the sick in his last circular letter, written from his death bed in 1775: “In keeping with the instruction of the Prince of the Apostles, so that holy charity may shine before all else in the Congregation, especially towards the sick, we direct that they be given every loving attention, within the limits of the poverty we profess.” He also allowed them to be sent to Sts. John and Paul’s if they were in need of specialist treatment (46).

This brotherly concern was a safeguard against the loneliness often suffered by sick or aged brethren, although it was not always sufficient to prevent the sense of isolation experienced by those suffering from contagious diseases like Tuberculosis. These latter were sent to Retreats where the air was considered more beneficial, though they still had to be kept in isolation from the rest of the community.

Some found this a great burden, as one religious, who subsequently made a complete recovery, relates. This young man was sent from Vetralla to the Retreat in Tuscany because of its milder winter climate. Apart from the distress he was experiencing at seeing his life slipping away, he found it very depressing to be kept at a distance through fear of contagion. “You can well imagine,” he says, “how much I suffered, not just from the illness, but from the distress I

felt when the other religious avoided me for fear of contracting my illness. Anything I used was kept separate” (47).

Nevertheless, Paul and the community were obliged to take these precautions to protect the others from disease (48). This infectious disease would be rife in the Congregation until about 1920, often causing acute distress because of the physical isolation it entailed.

As his illness progressed, the sick person was attended to with even greater care. Anointing of the Sick and Viaticum were solemnly administered, with the sick religious renewing his faith before the whole community prior to receiving the Eucharist.

In order that they might die, like Jesus, in complete poverty, Paul recommended that the religious dispose of everything they kept in their cells. As his brother, John Baptist, lay dying, with the community praying around his bed, our Holy Founder intoned the *Salve Regina*. This became a practice in the Congregation, though it was not always kept up.

One practice, however, that does seem to have been kept up was a meditative reading of the Passion of Jesus from St. John’s Gospel. This practice, echoing the reading of the same passage at Profession, was a reminder that the religious had professed mystical death together with his vows, symbolized by the black pall placed over him as he prostrated at Profession (49).

After death, the body was laid out in the Church on boards placed on the ground. The head, supported by a brick, was sprinkled with ashes as a sign of penance and conversion, the hands clasping the Crucifix which the religious had received at his Profession. The community gathered for the rites of burial according to holy Mother Church, while all the communities offered suffrages as specified in the Rule.

Paul urged all the religious to “willingly contribute such other works of piety as they may be able to perform, and such indulgences as they may be able to communicate to the deceased brethren, esteeming it as certain that, with God’s permission, we shall obtain from others, after our death, what we, while living, afford to our brethren” (50). Each month, the community here an earth would gather in union with their brothers in heaven, celebrating Mass and Office of the Dead for them.

The family support thus shown at these critical moments in their lives had a significant binding effect on the Community. It gave them a sense of security to see that their basic physical and psychological needs were thus being met. It reassured them, too, to see themselves supported in so many ways in their search for peace and union with God, in loving response to whom they had entered this Community and found themselves cherished as brothers.

4. THE COMMUNITY AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

Paul wanted his community to be exempt from the jurisdiction of the local Ordinary. He stressed, thus, his desire to be of service to the universal Church, and to avoid Episcopal interference in the internal affairs of the Congregation, fearing that this might lead to his religious having to assume apostolic tasks that were not within the scope of his intention in founding the Congregation.

Thus it was that, right from the beginning, he looked to the Pope when he set about establishing his community. Complete exemption was not obtained until 1769 with the Bull of Pope Clement XIV. Until 1746 he had to accept that the community was “in all things, and in every way, immediately subject to the Bishop in whose Diocese” the house was founded. In that year he obtained exemption only for those communities having at least twelve professed religious (51).

Nevertheless, it was recognized that the life of the local Church revolved around the Bishop. His permission was necessary, not only to enter the Diocese, but also to engage in the apostolate enjoined by the Rule. The Congregation was dependent on him for the ordination of clerics, and for obtaining material support from the people (52). He was to be accorded due honor, reverence, and obedience in those matters subject to his authority.

At the same time, however, care was to be taken to safeguard the rights given to the Congregation by the Apostolic See, the right of exemption, and the right to refuse any ministry not consistent with the Rule approved by the Holy See (53).

The religious were to maintain friendly relations with the Bishop, calling on him when they passed through his place of residence, show due gratitude to him, and making every effort to assist him in his pastoral work, within the limits of the Rule (54).

The local clergy were held in high regard. Respect was shown for their rights and pastoral responsibilities, with the religious doing their part to foster good relations and mutual respect between clergy and people (55).

The community brought the Gospel to the local Church first of all by the example it gave in living its religious life in faithful “observance” of the Rule approved by the Church. This was a service to the Church which Paul described as “being the sweet aroma of Jesus Christ.”

He urged that, “The regular observance be safeguarded and preserved in all the Retreats, for the greater zeal and holiness of the religious living there. Thus the holiness of Jesus Christ will be evident in everything they do. The holiness of their lives will inspire the people to praise the most holy name of the Lord, and to lead better lives themselves by attending to Christian perfection. Through God’s grace, this will more easily happen when our religious give them the encouragement and support of their own example, being very modest in their conduct, combining deep humility with charity in all they do, showing profound detachment from all created things and from superfluous dealings with seculars, loving solitude and silence” (56).

In another letter he writes: “Let the holiness of Jesus Christ Himself shine forth in you, in your demeanor, your deportment, and in all you do, so that merely seeing the sons of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ will lead people to praise the Divine Majesty, and poor sinners will be converted at the mere sight of you” (57).

With the sound of the bell, even during the night, calling the community to prayer in the name of all God’s people, folk in the surrounding countryside were made aware that the community was fulfilling its commitment to bless and praise God. Its peal was an invitation to them to unite with the community in prayer.

Those who came to the Church for Confession and Communion or for spiritual direction were welcomed. They were to be attended to promptly and not inconvenienced by having to wait. If there were a number of them, a roster was to be drawn up, so that the religious who heard their confessions could still take part in the main community observances (58). The community also welcomed people who wanted to spend a few days in prayer, and rooms were provided for this purpose in every Retreat (59).

On feast days the Superior could send one of the religious out into the neighboring district “to preach, give meditations, or to help with confessions” (60), but he had to return in the evening.

The community served the Diocese by its apostolate of preaching missions, giving retreats to clergy, religious and seminarians, and by giving courses of instruction to the people in preparation for Easter. Always, meditation on the Passion was fostered. Wherever possible, prayer groups were formed, encouraging group meditation or adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. In addition many people came to the Retreat for general or Easter confessions, some of them traveling long distances.

A service both social and spiritual was provided in the help given to the numerous beggars who wandered the countryside in those times. No one was ever turned away empty-handed, especially in times of shortage. In addition to relieving human suffering, this strengthened the bonds between community and people.

Instruction of people, and the formation of their consciences through confession and spiritual direction, made a significant contribution to social good order. People were thus committed to greater justice in their dealings with one another, to overcome bitterness and feuding, and to be more loyal and faithful in their family and social life.

The Community was thus involved in the local Church and the local community. As a rule, the community’s presence in any particular place was in response to a request by the Bishop, clergy, and people, whose responsibility it then was to prepare, as best they could, the house and whatever else was needed for the foundation. The strength of this bond was demonstrated during the opposition of the Mendicant Orders to the Congregation in the years 1748-50, and during the French invasion of Italy at the end of the eighteenth century.

The Community lived up to the expectations of clergy and people, making, as far as humanly possible, a significant contribution to their lives.

5. MEANS OF CREATING AND DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY SPIRIT

5.1 A Clear Understanding of What it Means to Be a Passionist; Freely Sharing in the Experience of Jesus Crucified

It has already been noted that Paul insisted on a careful screening of Postulants. Introverted, unsociable, or uncouth persons were not to be accepted. Before admittance, a candidate had to show some promise that he was capable of persevering and of making a positive contribution to community life.

In addition to these natural predispositions, however, Paul insisted that the postulant understand very clearly what being a Passionist entailed. Even before commencing the Novitiate, he must clearly understand that he would have to share the experience of Jesus Crucified, not just in theory, but in practice.

Hence, Paul urged him “to consider carefully if he is really prepared to suffer many things, to be despised, mocked, to endure calumnies and the like, for the love of Jesus Christ” (61). Before officially commencing his Novitiate, he was required to live with the Community, and the Superior was to test whether he was “truly humble and patient, by publicly reproofing him in the refectory, making him eat off the floor sometimes, and by other mortifications.. so that it can be seen whether he really is willing to be despised, to die to himself, to the world, and to his sinful inclinations, in order to live only for God, in God and through God, hiding his life in Jesus Christ, who for our sake and for our example, willingly chose to become the reproach of men” (62).

The religious had to realize that the way to Gospel joy was through the Cross, that reconciliation and brotherly unity were the fruit of self-giving love, like that of Jesus Crucified (63). Only thus did one acquire inner freedom, liberating one from over-dependence on the approval of others, from being unsettled if one wasn’t constantly affirmed and taken into consideration.

In fact, to the extent to which a person kept himself aloof from others, or felt hurt when he was criticized or misunderstood, to that extent he was not free. He was, therefore, incapable of real self-giving love, of living in constant harmony with others, putting up with all the inconveniences involved in living together.

There was no greater threat to loving harmony within the community than a self-centered search for attention and approval, possessiveness, or an attitude of superiority.

Paul expressed this in his Account describing the Congregation: “Each one vies with the other to grow more and more perfect, to humble oneself ever more and to be subject to the other, removing everything which might impede a perfect fraternal charity which the religious do by practicing love. While everyone wills what all are willing, and everyone wills what each one wants, it seems to be a paradise on earth because of the peace, the harmony, the tranquility, the union very like that in which the early Christians lived — whose fervor we intend to see renewed in this infant Congregation” (64).

Prayer and the guidance of the Superior and the Spiritual Director were essential for these attitudes to remain real and life giving.

5.2 Prayer Is the Guarantee of One’s Sincerity, the Bond of Union with Jesus Crucified, and the Source of Strength to Live in Harmony with One’s Brethren

At issue here is not prayer in itself, nor the community *qua* praying community, but rather prayer as it affects stability and balance in community life from both the psychological and spiritual point of view.

The union that exists within the community is a unity in Christ, who calls the individual members to union with Himself and with each other for his sake. It is only through Jesus and for

his sake, therefore, that it can be achieved. It is expressed in the attitude of kindness, compassion, trust, and self-giving that each one takes towards the other, and which is put into practice in what one does. Such purity of intention and depth of faith is impossible without prayer.

For this reason, it was Paul's desire that the Passionist Community should devote itself to prayer or meditation for about three hours each day. This was in addition to Liturgical Prayer, comprising the Day and Night Office and celebration of the Eucharist. In their prayer the religious learned "conformity to Jesus, living ever in him and by his holy spirit" (65). Prayer was to bear fruit in "ardent love for God and neighbor" (66).

The proof of one's conformity to Jesus and one's union with him through prayer is to be seen in the ability to control one's passions, in the exercise of patience and compassion, in one's availability to others, especially those in the community, and in the willingness to give way to everyone else in those things which are not contrary to the Rule. In this way, the spirit of Jesus, communicated in prayer and through the Eucharist, guides the brethren in their relationships with one another, making harmony and unity possible, in spite of the differences in their personalities.

5.3 The Role of the Superior in Fostering Unity Within the Community

In Paul's mind, the Superior's function was not merely organizational. His primary duty to the religious was to keep before their eyes the purpose of their living together as a community in the name of Jesus Crucified.

Hence, every evening, after making the necessary arrangements for the following day "in the interests of good organization in the house," the Superior should take care to encourage "them all to love God above all things, to love one another in holy charity, and to observe the holy Rule" (67).

This reminder was given at the closing of each day, foreshadowing the ending of this mortal life. To reinforce this message, and to help the religious implement it, the Superior should, at least twice a week, either personally or through a delegate, speak to them about the obligations of the life they have embraced, the virtues they should practice, and fidelity to the Rule as the expression of God's will for them. This should be a "rather brief" instruction, carefully and very prayerful prepared, and delivered in a composed and persuasive manner, so that those listening may not be discouraged but inspired "with love which will lead them to form resolutions which are ever more generous and enduring" (68).

All the brethren thus being reminded of the purpose of their living together in community; this was then applied at the individual level by means of the private conference: "Let him be ready to listen to them whenever they come to his room, receiving them courteously and listening to what they have to say in a relaxed manner, as if he had nothing else to do for the whole day. Let him never indicate annoyance or impatience at these visits, no matter how often they may occur" (69).

As well as giving support to the religious, this conference provided the opportunity to help him clarify the motives behind his behavior and to achieve harmony in his relationships with others.

The Superior, in addition to seeking the light of the Holy Spirit through prayer (70), was to make every effort to take the individual personalities of the religious into account, the better to help them maintain their psychological balance and spiritual commitment (71).

Paul sedulously urged the religious not to let tensions or frustrations build up, but to be trusting enough to be open with the Superior, making known to him their “troubles, temptations, feelings, and upsets,” taking it as certain that God “will give them the grace to come away strengthened and comforted” (72).

If the religious are well-adjusted psychologically, with insight into their own behavior and motivations, this should lead them to be straightforward in their dealings with one another, living faithfully in accordance with the Rule they embraced on their entry into the community.

The Superior should also see to it that no member is unjust in the way he treats the others, acting as the fancy takes him. Any irregularity is to be dealt with as soon as it arises (73). Thus, through the Superior, mutual up building and harmony within the community are further strengthened.

5.4 The Role of the Counselor or Spiritual Director in Fostering Unity Within the Community

Next to the Superior, the person who contributes most to harmony within the Community is the Spiritual Director. The Rule provides the Spiritual Director so that the religious may have someone else to confide in besides the Superior (74), but in the Regulations Paul sees him as being almost on a par with the Superior.

He writes: “The good of the Retreat, the peace of mind of the religious, and the full observance of the Rule depend, in great part, on him” (75).

It may have been Paul’s experience that the Superior’s many preoccupations, or his thankless task of correcting people, meant that he was not always the one best suited to help them achieve peace of heart by acting as their spiritual director.

To give this task the conscientious attention it demanded, the Spiritual Director should study theology and the science of spiritual direction, and pray often for those who confide in him and seek his advice. He should cheerfully and courteously receive whoever comes to him for assistance, begging the light of the Holy Spirit in order to be able to give advice that is “fair, sufficient, truthful, and appropriate.”

It was Paul’s hope that this conference, conducted with trust and in a spirit of faith, would assist the religious to remain “in great peace, so that he may more courageously and zealously give himself to the practice of virtue.”

Be it noted that Paul wanted courageous men for this task, men who were hope-filled, well motivated themselves, and balanced in their approach. To the Spiritual Director he says: “Give everybody heart and courage. Help them to open wide their hearts, and above all, inspire them with great hope and confidence in God. It is through lack of this, and through the discouragement they experience because of their numerous failures, that they stop short and make no further progress in perfection.”

For their part, the religious are to take advantage of this opportunity. Hence, they should approach the Spiritual Director every week, or every two weeks at the most. Whenever they feel unsettled or disturbed, let them go and speak to him immediately, to seek assistance and regain their peace, because “without interior peace one achieves little or nothing, or else only at great cost.”

The help he thus receives from the Spiritual Director should inspire the religious to entrust himself with renewed confidence to Him who is the only reason for living in Community. Hence, at the end of the conference, after having prayed with the Spiritual Director, the religious gives thanks before the Blessed Sacrament and there offers himself with renewed resolve and love (76).

5.5 The Chapter of Faults, or Community Review of Life

Every Friday the Community gathered at the foot of the Cross for a review of life in order to evaluate its response to Christ Crucified. In a spirit of reparation for the injustice involved in not being faithful to one’s commitment, each religious was required to disclose his own shortcomings “with a firm purpose of amendment, and with the determination to carry out” whatever should be required of him by the Superior, hearing, in his words, the voice of Jesus addressing him (77).

After this the Superior, together with the priests (originally the senior brothers were included), conducts an examination on the state of the Community “so that it may progress with ever greater perfection.”

The Chapter contributed to harmony within the Community, and strengthened the bonds of union among the brethren, not merely through the confession of faults and the penances which followed, but particularly by rekindling their faith and heightening their awareness of the unique and profound purpose behind their vocation.

Besides this Community review of life, all the religious were to make a daily examination of conscience “with a true and firm purpose of amendment.” Paul advised them to kneel down in faith before the Crucifix and to confess their shortcomings with sorrow and with firm resolve as “if God were summoning them there and then to appear before Him in judgment” (78).

5.6 The House Chapter as an Advisory Body to the Superior

The above practices provided motivation for the religious and helped him maintain his psychological and spiritual balance. The House Chapter, on the other hand, encourages him to take an involved interest in the material well-being and organization of the Community.

The matters treated in the House Chapter were limited in scope, but were matters which significantly affected the internal life of the community and the surroundings in which it lived. The Chapter was convoked to decide on the admission of a candidate to the Novitiate or to Profession, to decide on the manner of dealing with a member who was not living in conformity with his vows, to make decisions about renovations to the building, or about extraordinary expenditure.

The Superior's talk to the religious after the Chapter of Faults may have had more bearing on ordinary day-to-day life in the Community, but the House Chapter encouraged the religious to be concerned for the common good, taught them to accept the majority decisions of the Community, even when these went contrary to their own preferences, and gave them a better appreciation of other peoples' points of view.

5.7 Circular Letters and Pastoral Visits by Major Superiors

Circular letters provided a way in which the Major Superior could keep in touch with the individual communities, thereby strengthening the ties that bound them to the whole Congregation.

They were issued especially on the occasion of Feasts which has some particular significance for the spirituality of the Congregation, e.g., Christmas, which called to mind the Mystical Birth so dear to the founder, or Pentecost, which recalled the unity of the apostolic community whose members were so afire with the Holy Spirit, reminding them that they, too, must be submissive before this Teacher of Prayer, if they were to grow in their appreciation of God's love shown in the Passion of Jesus, and proclaim it worthily (79). At other times a circular letter would be sent urging the religious to prepare for a Chapter at which elections were to be held.

Pastoral visits or Canonical Visitations were another way of revitalizing the spirit of the religious. Paul would often conduct a Retreat, either before or during Visitation, to encourage the religious to relax and shed their tensions, thus enabling them to concentrate better on deepening the faith-motives which had led them to embrace Passionist life. This practice was followed by some of his successors and some Provincials. The religious looked to Visitation to provide them with greater peace of heart, a growth in the fervor of their charity, strengthening the bonds of unity among them, and equipping them better for the apostolic ministry proper to the Congregation.

A religious relates: "His visits to the Retreats were always very joyful occasions. He seemed to be there to cheer the religious up. This left them more disposed to accept advice, reprimands and appropriate directions. What the religious appreciated more than anything else was the fact that on those visits, as well as on other occasions, he let it be known that he was available for conferences with anybody who wanted help in their spiritual life" (80).

On his visits he liked to acquaint himself with everything that was going on, regarding nothing as unimportant which, directly or indirectly, involved the service of God, the real benefit of individuals, or the service of God's people.

Nor was he content simply to know what was happening. Everything had to be carefully weighed to see if it corresponded with the Rule, expressing as it did God's will for the community and the way it was to meet the expectations of the Church.

This same discernment characterized the advice he gave to individuals, as well as the decrees aimed at preventing or remedying irregularities. Before issuing these decrees, it was Paul's custom to read them first to the local Superior, in order to hear his opinion, explain them to him, and thus help him put them into practice.

5.8 An Adequate-sized Community

An adequate number of religious was necessary for the community to maintain its vitality throughout the year, to meet the demands of community life without stress, to maintain its prayer-life, to provide for people who came to receive the sacraments or to make a retreat, and to be able to send religious out to preach. The whole movement for the reform of Religious Life, as Paul encountered it, was pressing for adequately-sized communities, because the experience of small communities had been negative.

Paul favored a community of twelve to twenty religious; not less than twelve, to safeguard exemption from the jurisdiction of the Ordinary, and, as a rule, not more than twenty to avoid other problems. The Congregation has followed this tradition (81). This ensured that when the religious came home from preaching, they found a thriving, fraternal, and intensely spiritual atmosphere in which they felt at home and involved in the rhythm of community life:

Paul placed such value on having a thriving and intensely prayerful community, that to attain it he was even prepared to sacrifice the formal study of the students, spreading them around the houses to boost the communities, and to ensure that there were religious available for outside apostolates (82).

The history of the Congregation shows that when the practices listed here have been disregarded, the community has not functioned well in its community life or in its apostolate. This has sometimes been the case in periods of rapid expansion, when inadequately-sized communities have been established, led by Superiors either lacking in experience, or otherwise ill-equipped through lack of psychological balance, insufficient dedication to the spiritual life, or poor understanding of the requirements of Passionist life. Such men have been incapable of giving the brethren proper guidance, or of helping them evaluate their lives or the apostolates they have undertaken (83).

6. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PASSIONIST COMMUNITY

6.1 All Things Considered, Much Has Been Achieved

When trying to assess the community's performance in the time of our Holy Founder, the complicated social conditions of the times must be taken into account.

The clergy and people were, on the whole, favorably disposed towards religious life, but the concentration of so many communities and religious was the cause of some friction for both pastoral and economic reasons.

Current trends of thought, such as the Enlightenment and Jansenism, decried religious life, and the campaign against the Jesuits, culminating in their suppression, is a measure of the suspicion in which religious life was held by those in positions of power and so-called progressive thinkers.

Thus, in order to make its presence felt and to justify its existence, the new Congregation had to earn the esteem of Bishops, clergy, and people, winning acceptance within the local Church and community by the persuasive example of the life it lived.

That esteem was, in fact, forthcoming from the Pope, Bishops, and people. The community's ability to maintain and deepen this esteem, in spite of opposition from the Mendicant Orders and the shortcomings of some of its own religious, is shown by the juridical recognition it gained, its

expanding apostolate, and its growth in numbers. Bishops and people were able to see, in the Passionist Community, a lived experience of God and the witness of Gospel values.

It should be remembered, too, that the religious who were involved in those first foundations had to make tremendous sacrifices. With the exception of St. Joseph's and Sts. John and Paul's Retreats, for some years the religious in all the other retreats either lacked the basic necessities, or had to put up with inadequate food and protection from the cold. Until 1769, they also had to contend with the insecurity of not being recognized as a stable moral body within the Church, even though the Rule had been approved. In addition, they lacked experience in organization, social relations, and direction of their own community life, etc.

Taking all these factors into account, it must be said that, on the whole, the Passionist Community did remarkably well. It produced men who were balanced both humanly and spiritually, who were healthy and able to face up to difficult situations successfully, and who were accomplished in the way they carried out the distinctive apostolate of the Congregation.

Paul himself makes reference to this. He wrote to Bishop Struzieri in 1769: "Thanks be to God, the affairs of the Congregation are still going on well. The observance is being kept up in all the Retreats. Peace and charity reign. One has to put up with some little difficulties, but Divine Love burns away the hurts" (84).

In 1748, he describes how delighted he is at finding in the Presentation Retreat "a house full of living angels. Often just seeing them brings tears to my eyes, and makes me feel ashamed of my own half-hearted efforts" (85). On another occasion he writes: "Everywhere the observance is flourishing. Night and day the religious sing God's praises." "The servants of God in this Retreat are truly living saintly lives" (86).

The dedication of the Passionist Community in its religious life and the salutary influence it had on the local Church are also attested to by the submissions of Bishops supporting the application for solemn vows in 1759-60 (87).

6.2 Some Weaknesses of the Passionist Community

Not everybody was able to meet the demands of such a strict penitential life with the same equanimity, compounded as it was by the difficulties inherent in the process of founding the Congregation. There was some discontent expressed, particularly in the period 1753 to 1760.

In fact, in 1758, Paul brought the General Chapter forward by thirteen months. He was anxious to be relieved of office, but he was particularly concerned about certain "very urgent matters." These matters concerned the indiscreet behavior of some of the religious at Terracina and San Sosio, which had resulted in gossip and malicious talk.

A spirit of discontent was circulating among the religious because of the extreme strictness of the life. The imprudent and inconsiderate behavior of some of the local Superiors made this all the harder to bear. This discontent culminated in the departure of fourteen religious during this period, eight of them priests.

The decrees of Chapters and Visitations, many of them excessively detailed, were not always well received. Paul and his associates intended these as a means of avoiding irregularities, and of ensuring fervor and order within the community. However, in the words of one writer: "Such

strict and detailed legislation would have seemed quite out of place to anybody who was jealous of his own freedom; and not much given to exercising self-discipline” (88).

This system of rigid organization, where everything was laid down and defined, ran the risk of destroying initiative. It could also be dangerous in the hands of Superiors who were unable or unwilling to exercise that balanced approach, on both the human and spiritual levels, which Paul expected from them.

To obviate the risk of unsuitable men becoming Superiors, it was decreed in 1775 that Superiors should be commissioned for a period of one year and confirmed in office only after a searching annual assessment of their performance (89).

One might also see a weakness in the fact that heroic faith and commitment were needed to meet all the demands of community living and still keep one’s psychological and spiritual balance. Any failure to concentrate one’s affective life in Christ, or any uncertainty in one’s motivation, would start the process of unsettlement, creating misgivings about the worth of living this kind of life.

The solitude and the strict poverty, too, which were seen as basic to living an ‘apostolic life’, were the cause of some tension in the effort to strike a balance between life in community, on the one hand, and going out to preach on the other; between keeping up one’s study and having the necessary means to do so. This was particularly the case when the Congregation began to expand and social conditions began to change.

Let us conclude this incomplete survey of the Passionist Community in the spirituality of our Founder by looking at a section of a circular letter he sent out for the feast of Pentecost. It will help us appreciate better how much Paul wanted the Passionist Community to be led continually by the Holy Spirit in its effort to live the ‘apostolic life’ which the Rule envisions.

Only the light and strength of the Holy Spirit could ensure that the rigid structures did not smother spontaneity of spirit or personal initiative; only the light and strength of the Spirit could ensure that the minds and hearts of the religious remained open to the Church’s mission, as the arms of Christ Crucified were held open to embrace all mankind.

Paul wrote, “Dearly beloved, gathered together as one, I beg you to be united in spirit with all your brothers in the other Retreats. Do this with real faith, hope and charity, in imitation of the holy apostles who united together to keep this novena.

How dear to me is this Congregation, which binds so many hearts together in love and makes of them one single heart in Jesus Christ! How blessed this love, so enriched by obedience, humility, endurance, silence, and gentleness.

My dear Brothers, united in faith and love, let us together beg the Spirit who is our Advocate and Comforter to come and fill us with his presence, filling both the interior dwelling of our soul and our poor Congregation in its entirety.

Let us cry out to this Father of the poor, this Source of all grace, this Light of our hearts, to give us the true spirit of our Institute, a true apostolic spirit, rich in every virtue. Let us beg him

to so inflame us with love that we may enkindle this divine fire in the heart of our neighbor, through the preaching of the Sacred Passion of our Crucified Love.

Entreat the Most High to give increase to our poor Congregation, to send us holy men, who will go out as heralds inspired by the Holy Spirit to proclaim all that Jesus has done and suffered for love of men, so many of whom are completely unmindful of his Passion, a thing to be greatly lamented, and the cause of so many sins in the world” (90).

Abbreviations

Let.	“Letters of St. Paul of the Cross,” with notes by Father Amedeo: Rome, 1924, Vols. I-IV, Vol. V, Rome 1977, edited by Father Cristoforo.
Rules and Const.	“Rules and Constitutions C.P.” Critical edition of the text, edited by Fabiano Giorgini, C.P., Rome, 1958.
Decrees and Rec.	“Decrees and Recommendations of Passionist General Chapters,” edited by F. Giorgini, C.P. Rome, 1960.
Customs.	“Customs C.P.” Critical edition of the text, Frs. Dominic, Seraphim, Bernard. Edited by F. Giorgini, C.P. Rome, 1958.
St. Paul of the Cross, “Guide”	St. Paul of the Cross, “Guide for Spiritual Renewal in Passionist Life. Regulations, 1755.” Rome, 1980.
St. Paul of the Cross,	St. Paul of the Cross, “The Congregation of the

The Congregation

Passion of Jesus: What it is and what it expects.” Rome, 1978.

Processes.

“The processes for the Beatification and Canonization of St. Paul of the Cross”: Edited by Father Gaetano dell’Addolorata, C.P. Rome, 1969-1979, Vols. I-IV.

Notes

1. Let. IV, 217-220.
2. Let. I, 6-8. Cf. Giorgini, F., “Promoting a grateful memory of the Passion of Jesus and fostering devotion to the Passion,” Rome 1980.
3. Cf. Giorgini, F., “St. Paul of the Cross: His charism as Founder of the Congregation,” No. 5. Study not yet published.
4. St. Paul of the Cross, “The Congregation,” Account of 1747, No. 3 and No. 14.
5. Let. IV, 257. See especially the circular letter of March 12, 1753, in which he gathers together almost all the scriptural references to community living and quotes them as expressing apostolic teaching, cf. Let. IV, 244-249; 262; 268; 285.
6. Relinquishing one’s surname was a tradition in religious life, going back to monastic times. For the Fatebenefratelli, cf. Holstenius, “Codex Regularum,” Vol. 6, p. 165.
7. Rules and Const., 12/II-III/30-36. The General Chapter of 1747 decreed that the collar on the lay-brothers’ mantle should be lower than that of the clerics. This curious norm was abolished in 1769: “Decrees and Rec.” decree No. 1; 125,8. Note that in other institutes of the time, lay-brothers and clerics wore different habits.
8. Rules and Const., 102/I-II/18-34. In other Institutes, the lay-brothers recreated separately from the clerics and priests. Paul’s attitude had been influenced by his great respect for the priesthood. He feared that familiarity in recreation might lead to a lessening of respect for the

- priesthood. This concern can be seen in the Rule: Let the brothers “show great respect for the priests as ministers of God,” Rules and Const., p.164, No.128.
9. Respecting our Holy Founder’s concern about this, his successor, Father Giambattista Garresio, asked the Chapter of 1784 to revoke a decree of the General Chapter of 1778, which placed the Former General immediately after the General currently in office. This privilege was duly revoked, and then re-introduced in 1890: cf. “Decrees and Rec.” decree 166, 181; 501. The General Chapter of 1758 established what titles of address were to be used in correspondence and conversation, keeping to the minimum required by current convention: cf. “Decrees and Rec.” decrees 96-97.
 10. Visitation, Ceccano 1767, decree No. 11. In the Regulations 1755, No. 264, he said: “In the matter of food, there is to be no special treatment. It is to be prepared and served without any distinctions.”
 11. Rules and Const., 138/I/56-61; 140/II/10-15.
 12. Visitation, Ceccano 1767, decree No. 7. In a General Chapter he urged the Superiors to take care of the sick brethren “adding that, even if the Retreats were in such straits that they could not provide the necessary care, they should not worry about cutting expenses, but even pawn or sell the sacred vessels if necessary,” Processes 1, 571.
 13. Rules and Const., p. 171, No. 238.
 14. Strambi, “Life,” 482: Cf. “Customs,” pp. 130, 50-55.
 15. Rules and Const., 74/I-V/49-61; 78/III-V/2-5. Note that the Rules of some Institutes of the time restricted Communion more. The Fatebenefratelli, for example, both Novices and Professed, received Communion on Sundays and first-class feasts: Holstenius, “Codex Regularum,” Vol. 6, p. 295. The Trinitarians, on Sundays and Thursdays (ibid., p. 158); Blessed Pietro da Pisa’s Hermits of St. Jerome were urged to receive Communion at least on Sundays and some solemnities (ibid., p. 95). Members of the Congregation of Mount Olivet were urged to do so at least once a month, but all were to Communicate on the Sundays of Advent and Lent (ibid., Vol. 5, p. 85). Paul, appreciating the importance of the Eucharist in Passionist life, was inclined to a greater frequency in the reception of Communion. Did he, perhaps, introduce that distinction because he thought the clerics, preparing to be ministers of the Eucharist, would thus develop a greater reverence for the Eucharist, and so prepare more zealously for their ministry?
 16. Rules and Const., 34/III/42-44; 126/III-V/60-62. “Decrees and Rec.” decree No. 9. Taking the social and cultural customs of the times into account, this distinction had no negative undertones if a real fraternal atmosphere existed in the Community.
 17. Rules and Const., 120/I-III/11-25.
 18. St. Paul of the Cross, “Guide,” Nos. 154, 155, 157-159.
 19. Rules and Const., 106/II-III/40-52.
 20. Let. IV, 253.
 21. Let. IV, 268.
 22. Rules and Const., 40/I/13-15, 28-30.
 28. Let. IV, 261. Paul hoped that this would dispose the Religious to peace of heart and a greater apostolic spirit, because the prayers of the obedient were very dear to Christ.
 24. Let. IV, 260.
 25. Rules and Const., 6/I/51-52; 8/II/1-19.
 28. Rules and Const., 6/I/36ff. The requirement that the rooms be so bare was relaxed a little in 1746 - a concession which remained. There were allowed “a few paper holy pictures, and two or three straw chairs” besides the straw bed and little table. The religious were also allowed to retain a few necessary books, as well as ink and writing paper, ibid. 52/III/6ff.

27. St. Paul of the Cross; "Guide," Nos. 41, 43, 45, 47, 50, 61.
28. Ibid. Nos. 72-79; Rules and Const., 78/I-IV/47ff; 71/V/37-44; cf. also Let. IV, 241, No. 15.
29. St. Paul of the Cross, "Guide," Nos. 139-143; St. Paul of the Cross, "The Congregation," Account of 1747, No.10: "Silence, which is the soul of a well-ordered community, and which creates recollection, is so greatly loved by the Religious, that between morning and evening, after the meals, there is no more than one hour and a half of recreation. During this time they are careful to talk about useful and holy things; ...if it is necessary to speak, they may do so only in a low and subdued voice in the places of work." Cf. also No. 26; *ibid.*, Account of 1768, Nos. 10, 27. Rules and Const., 100/I/19-53: "How necessary is silence in a religious house, especially for those who want to converse with God in prayer."
30. St. Paul of the Cross, "Guide," Nos. 316, 322; Let. IV, 240, No. 12.
31. Let. IV, 234-236. Note Paul's insistence on refusing admission to candidates who were not of "cheerful spirit," because "if he is melancholic, he is not meant for this life," *ibid.*, p: 236, No. 7; elsewhere he says: "Take care that they are of exemplary conduct, with a healthy outlook, unassuming, at peace, and not melancholic, because, I tell you, such persons never, ever persevere," Let. II, 253.
32. St. Paul of the Cross, "Guide," No. 12: Be careful, when coughing or spitting, not to be offensive to others; No.18: When putting out the lamps, take care that they don't smoke and make the religious feel ill; No. 42: The hands should be washed every day; the hair groomed, and the habit brushed, to give a pleasing appearance; No. 247: The cook should wash his hands often "for hygiene's sake, and to remove the kitchen odors"; No. 86: In the refectory one should eat with composure and consideration. Paul guarantees that the postulants "will find real peace of heart, and, as soon as they arrive, they will be able to see this peace on the faces of the other young religious. They will see how kindly the Superiors treat them, how gently they give corrections, and the mutual affection among all the religious, united as in one single heart in Jesus Christ," Let. LV, 237.
33. St. Paul of the Cross, "Guide," Nos. 103; 157, 177. "Processes" IV, 54-56, "Unseemly or sharp words, showing lack of respect for the one being corrected" were not to be used.
34. Paul not only encouraged the practice of greeting one another, but was often the one to make the first move, "Processes" I, 285.
35. One of the places where peoples' feelings could be hurt was in recreation. For this reason, at the beginning of recreation, a prayer was said to the Guardian Angels, asking them to help the religious speak "always of God, and of things that are useful and edifying, things that will nourish their fervor, and not hinder them growing, as they should in the holy fear of God" (102); they should not scoff or complain (106): they should avoid any gesture which could be "in any way insulting to others" (111); if anyone says anything offensive about someone else, let no one make any reference to it (312); if the Superior has occasion to point out to anyone a fault which he has learned about from another member of the community, let him not make it known how he found out, so as not to cause ill-feeling (162). Every so often, the 'Presence of God' was recalled during recreation. All would then interrupt their conversation in order to recollect themselves. If they had been engaged in unseemly or uncharitable talk, they were to break off the conversation (105), St. Paul of the Cross, "Guide," Nos. referred to above. Cf. also "Processes" I, 260. Rules and Const., 102/II/14-20.
36. Rules and Const., 166/III/34-35. Apart from acts of common observance, they could spend the morning "in spiritual exercises or spiritual reading, according to each one's devotion."
37. Rules and Const., 62/I-V/1ff; 104/I-V/7-51. As a rule, the extra afternoon recreation on feast days and Thursdays was spent walking in the garden or outside the grounds with the Superior, but without visiting the homes of seculars in the neighborhood. Paul gave

- directions to this effect at St. Eutizio's in 1750: Visitation decree No. 5; and at St. Sosio's in 1751: Visitation decree No. 5.
38. Let. II, 120.
 39. Ibid. The food was to be carefully and hygienically prepared, and in sufficient quantity; cf. St. Paul of the Cross, "Guide," Nos. 252, 254-256, 264-265. Ibid. No. 178, Paul advised the Superior: "Be a lover of Poverty, but make sure that no one lacks what he needs, and that the Retreat is adequately stocked with supplies and linen. See that the religious are supplied with habit, sandals, and so on, as the Rule provides."
 40. "Customs," p. 14. At the same time, however, care was taken not to become so absorbed in eating that one was distracted from God and from savoring his holy word. For this reason, there was reading in the refectory, so that the spirit was nourished as well as the body: Rules and Const., p.167, Nos. 175, 177: "In the refectory, let them be restrained, taking their food silently in God's presence; as Scripture puts it, 'Let the just take their fill in the sight of God.' Let them eat without haste and with eyes downcast, as religious restraint dictates, paying devoted attention to the spiritual reading... thus nourishing body and spirit at the same time." Cf. also, St. Paul of the Cross, "Guide," Nos. 81-85.
 41. Rules and Const., 138/I-III/56-63.
 42. St. Paul of the Cross, "Guide," Nos. 300, 324.
 43. Rules and Const., 140/I-III/28-43.
 44. Ibid., 140-141/I-V/6ff.
 45. St. Paul of the Cross, "Guide," Nos. 295-303.
 46. "Decrees and Rec." decree No. 140; Let. IV, 290, No. 1.
 47. PAR 2173rv.
 48. Let. II, 100. Referring to Confrater Bonaventure, who had contracted Tuberculosis, Paul says to Father Fulgentius; "I fully agree that he should be kept separate from the others, and that he should not use anything they are using... in the refectory, put him near one of the older brethren. Keep him away from the young ones in choir, too; his breath is infected; in short, do everything you can, and then leave it in God's hands. Don't get scrupulous about it, you have done what you can... meanwhile, take care that the young ones are not endangered, and keep him as far from them as you can in the community observances."
 49. "Processes" I, 539: During visitation at St. Sosio's, Paul found Father Joseph of the Infant Jesus seriously ill. Seeing that his death was very near, Paul urged him to resign himself, and to dispose of anything he had. A few days later, Paul, who had gone on to Ceccano, was informed that Father Joseph had died "while the Passion was being read, at the words: 'Jesus gave up his spirit.'" Paul enquired whether he had disposed of everything before his death. On hearing that he had, Paul expressed satisfaction, because thus he was united "more speedily with Jesus Crucified." Silvestrelli, B., "Memories of the first companions," 2nd edition, p. 59, 230. "Customs," p. 29, note (a).
 50. Rules and Const., 142/III/4-32.
 51. Rules and Const., 4/I-III/16-38.
 52. Ibid., 4/I-III/38-52; 95/V/35-54; 6/I-III/7-18; 48/I-III/34-59.
 53. Let. III, 417-420; cf. Naselli, C., "Solitude and the desert," pp. 34-35, concerning problems with Cardinal Duca di York, Bishop of Frascati. Let. V, 135 to the Bishop of Ferentino: Lenten preaching is not allowed, being prohibited by Rule.
 54. In this respect, it is helpful to consult his correspondence with some of the Bishops: Let. V, 56-141; Let. II, 333-351; 653-702, etc. When Paul was passing through Frascati, during his last visit to the Retreats in the south of Lazio, he wanted to pay a courtesy call on the Cardinal Bishop there because there had been some problems about the work the religious

- were to engage in. “Processes” IV, 206. On another occasion he took pains to thank the Bishop of Ferentino for visiting the Passionists, Let: V, 99.
55. Respect for the rights of the clergy meant not taking Viaticum to the sick; not having funerals in the Church attached to the Retreat; refusing requests for burial in the community Church; not celebrating feasts in a way that would draw people away from their parishes. Respect for these norms laid behind some of Paul’s visitation decrees, e.g. decree No. 9, St. Eutizio’s, 1759; decree No. 3, St. Sosio’s, 1767; no one is to be buried in the Passionist Church “even if he was an outstanding benefactor.” The same was decreed at Ceccano, 1767, part 1, decree No. 3.
 56. Let. IV, 238.
 57. Let. IV, 285. See also the letter to the Community at Terracina, urging them to preach a “fine mission” by their good example to the many people who came to the neighborhood during the hunting season, Let. IV, 294.
 58. Rules and Const., 134/1/17f. St. Paul of the Cross; “Guide,” No. 210: “When they are summoned, let them go willingly, and not grudgingly because they have to; this attitude hinders grace.” Visitation, Ceccano, 1767, decree No. 8: Confessions were to cease when Sext was begun. The same was decreed at St. Sosio’s. At St. Eutizia’s, Paul reminded them that the Confessional was to be used when giving spiritual direction to women: Visitation, 1752, decree No. 7. Paul counseled great caution in undertaking the regular direction of women: Let. I. 613; II, 321. St. Paul of the Cross, “Guide,” No. 231. “Nearly all the shepherds, charcoal burners, and other poor workers from the whole mountain region and surrounding countryside” came to St. Angelo’s at Vetralla, especially during Holy Week, Let. III, 785. See also “Processes” IV, 164: Don’t keep the penitent waiting: “Who knows whether he has the time to wait?”
 59. Paul would have liked to have built a house adjoining every Retreat, for the benefit of Retreatants: Rules and Const., 4/II/52-57; Let. I, 377-378; Let. III, 419; Let. II, 346. The poor circumstances in which the houses were founded made this impossible, so this provision was removed when the Rule was revised in 1755. The practice was kept of having some rooms set aside, to take single Retreatants, or groups of five or six, for a maximum stay of ten to fifteen days, Let. III, 419; Let. V, 112. St. Paul of the Cross, “The Congregation,” Account of 1747, No. 26.
 60. St. Paul of the Cross, “The Congregation,” Account of 1747, No. 25. Rules and Const., 132/I-III/40ff.: He specified, “teaching Christian doctrine, and other pious works in keeping with our Constitutions...particularly a fervent and zealous promotion of devotion to the Passion of Jesus.”
 61. Rules and Const., 10/I/24ff.
 62. Ibid., 18/II/3-21. Formation should assist the novice to a clearer understanding and conviction about this, so that he becomes accustomed to “mastering his dislikes, and mortifying his sinful inclinations,” “imitating the virtues of Jesus Christ, his Divine model, and living by his Holy Spirit,” Rules and Const., p. 160, Nos. 35-36.
 63. Rules and Const., 20/I/45-50: Let the religious express “their joy” to the postulant, “encouraging him to carry his cross with Jesus.” Before clothing him in the habit, the Superior “will give a homily, encouraging him to carry his cross, and pointing out the great joy to be found in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,” Ibid., 20/I/9-13. He reminded the religious to “often make the sacrifice of your will to God, and you will experience the contentment that comes from this. The more obedient you are, the more you will be at peace, and the less you will worry about having this particular job or that one, because you will be wed to obedience, which you will love in Jesus,” Let. IV, 260-261.

64. St. Paul of the Cross, "The Congregation," Account of 1747, No. 14.
65. Rules and Const., 165, Nos. 129-132.
66. Let. I, 253. Paul tells a correspondent that prayer should teach her how to control her temper, to be patient and docile with everybody, to be charitable "to all the sisters without distinction, subject to everybody and at peace with them." Prayer which does not produce this fruit "would be a sham." Let. II, 455; see also Let. II, 513, 823.
67. Rules and Const., 144/I/10-24. In 1748 he says: "Strongly urge the brethren to love God above all things, to count the world as nothing, to remember the ends of the Congregation, and to maintain mutual charity," Ibid., 106/III/45-51.
68. Rules and Const., 24/III/60ff; 124/III/27-39. St. Paul of the Cross, "Guide," Nos. 115-121.
69. St. Paul of the Cross, "Guide," No. 177.
70. Rules and Const., 124/I/45-50: "If he is a man of prayer, he will never lack the heavenly insight that will enable him to lead the brethren on the way of perfection. May God grant this to all of us. Amen."
71. St. Paul of the Cross, "Guide," No. 160: "Take the personalities of the religious into account when dealing with them; treat the quick-tempered and the hot-blooded gently so that you will win their obedience rather than alienate them; if they are meek and humble, be somewhat stern and strict now and then, to foster these precious qualities; be very gentle if they are timid or melancholy, and give them the encouragement they need to persevere in the way of the Lord."
72. Rules and Const., 122/I/3-10.
73. Rules and Const., 124/I/1-15: The Superior must see to it that everyone observes the Rule, correcting any failures gently and prudently. This thankless task makes a positive contribution to fraternal unity and to the psychological health of the religious; it helps reduce frustration by ensuring they are not at the mercy of those who would like to hold the whip-hand and do as they wish.
74. Rules and Const., 122/I/32-37.
75. St. Paul of the Cross, "Guide," No.188.
76. Ibid., Nos. 129-137, 188-193.
77. Rules and Const., 126/I-V/36ff. St. Paul of the Cross, "Guide," Nos. 126-127.
78. Rules and Const., 26/III/9-12; 78/III/51-52. St. Paul of the Cross, "Guide," Nos. 57-64.
79. Let. IV, general and analytical index.
80. "Processes" IV, 373-374.
81. "Customs," p. 164, No. 4.
82. Cf. Naselli, C., "Solitude and the desert," pp. 31-34. Giorgini, F., "The Education of clerics in the Congregation of the Passion," St. Gabriel 1958, pp. 97-108.
83. Cf. "Decrees and Rec." pp. 147-151: report of Father Pietro Paolo.
84. Let. V, 208. To one of the Rectors Paul said: "In the Retreat, do all you can to ensure ever greater sincerity and fervor in the way the religious keep the observance, and be quite at peace about them before God. See that they are at peace, without scruples, truly humble, joyful in the Lord, at peace with each other, united in charity, and of one heart," Let. II, 773. Likewise, Father Francescantonio Appiani, on the 24th Nov. 1759, encouraged a newly appointed Rector not to be fearful about his lack of experience, but to trust in God and seek advice from the out going Superior, Father Domenico Bartolotti. He advised: "We must all help, like this, to keep the poor little vessel of the Congregation afloat; otherwise, how would we survive?" in "Lives of some Passionist Priests," f. 67, (AG, B I-III/6).
85. Let. V, 78. Speaking of the Community at Terracina who were suffering, without complaint, a shortage of food and clothing, he said: "We are happy to share the poverty of Jesus Christ,

but I feel ashamed of my own half-hearted efforts when I see these Servants of His so full of fervor, so faithful to the observance, so joyful in the Lord, in spite of the discomforts they are suffering,” Let. V, 133.

86. Let. I, 475, 526. For other references cf. Let. IV, analytical index: “Congregation of the Passionists.” On 6/4/1764, Father John Baptist Danei wrote to another Passionist: “You say that in Terracina the brethren are greatly respected, and that people say when they see them, ‘Here come the holy Fathers’; but I say, what does the esteem of men matter, little or nothing...” Giamraria Cioni, “Life of Father John Baptist,” Rome 1934, p. 199.
87. Cf. Zoffoli, E., “St. Paul,” vol. I, pp. 1097-1099 for some quotes from these documents. The Bishops affirmed that the religious were “beloved of God, the whole Congregation, and the people,” as Paul wrote in the introduction to the Regulations in 1755.
88. Zoffoli, E., “St. Paul,” vol. I, 1122-1124: There was “a multiplicity of norms, providing a detailed ordering of the life of the religious, whether he was at home or away, alone or with his brethren or outsiders, on a journey or on the missions.” Some of the religious felt that “to ensure strict discipline of the will, there was no need to destroy initiative, so that people had to be spoon fed all the time, even in the simplest of tasks and the most ordinary, everyday matters...” Perhaps there is some hint of this problem in a letter Father John Baptist Danei wrote to another Passionist on 9th Feb. 1763: “In reply to your letter I say that we should beg God, in His goodness, to keep the Congregation free of restless people, the troublemakers, the spiteful, the dissemblers, the proud, the unbelieving, and everyone likely to cause upset and scandal, including the inept and delicate ones who cannot stand up to the observance”, Giammaria Cioni, “Life of Father John Baptist,” p. 166. A letter of Father Mark Aurelius Pastoreili, 16/2/1760, also points up some weaknesses: “I don’t know why the good Rector is making such a fuss. If he was as obedient and submissive to his Superiors as he expects his own subjects to be, he wouldn’t have anything to complain about. He would simply obey, and everything would be alright. He plays a game of wits, and others follow suit. It is getting so that a Major Superior can no longer move a lay-brother from one house to another as he sees fit, without upsetting the Rector and turning the whole community upside down. Dear God, what are we coming to! It has always been like this! As far as going out is concerned, he is either doing it unnecessarily, which he shouldn’t, or else he has a good reason, in which case, why shouldn’t he? Why all the fuss! God give us strength in all these trials! With regard to that person you mention, urge him to be obedient and not to be stubborn. He can do it if he wants to. Otherwise he is just making a mockery of the habit.” AG, B I-I 5-3.
89. “Decrees and Rec.” Decrees Nos. 72, 106.
90. Let. IV, 228.