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**Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality**

**THE ROLE OF SYMBOL  
IN PASSIONIST SPIRITUALITY**

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## INTRODUCTION

This short study is an examination of the role of symbol in the spirituality given to the Passionists by their founder, St Paul of the Cross. It does not pretend to be an exhaustive treatment of symbolism as found in his writings. A study embracing the whole corpus of about two thousand letters would be necessary for a full account of Paul's use of symbol. However, that would be far beyond the scope of a dissertation such as this.

Our precise aim, as we have said, is to look at the place of symbol in the spirituality Paul gave to his Congregation. In our opinion, the two primary sources for this spirituality are the Preface Paul wrote for the Rule of the Congregation and the Rule itself. These two documents were written by Paul with the intention of giving shape to the spiritual life of his community. Thus they provide the basis for our enquiry; we shall refer to Paul's other writings only as a means of clarifying what is contained in these two basic texts (1).

Our study will begin with an examination of the symbols Paul uses in his Preface, in the light of which we shall go on to look at the symbolism of the Rule itself, concluding with a brief reference to an earlier writer who, we believe, had a significant influence on Paul's awareness of symbol. From this will emerge an acquaintance with the symbols of the Congregation and an understanding of their role in its spirituality.

This text was presented as a licentiate dissertation in the Institute of Spirituality of the Pontifical Gregorian University in 1989. In the original text, quotations from St Paul of the Cross and other writers were given in the original languages. The demands of parish life have kept me from producing an all-English text until now. I hope it will still be of some interest as another way of entering into the writings of our founder, a way which opens up new possibilities for a deeper reading of the classic texts of our Congregation.

I wish to express my gratitude to Fr. Charles Andre Bernard, S.J., Dean of the Institute of Spirituality, who directed this work, and also to Dr. Maria Giovanna Muzj, whose guidance in the field of iconography was of immense help, particularly in the first part of this study.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### SYMBOLS OF A COMMUNITY

Of all the writings of St Paul of the Cross, the little text known as the *Preface to the Rule* has received perhaps the least attention from scholars. The document, which takes up only five pages in the standard edition of the letters of Paul of the Cross (2), is an account of the events leading up to Paul's receiving the black habit of a penitent from Bishop Francesco Arborio di Gattinara of Alessandria and beginning his new way of life with a retreat of forty days in the church of Saints Charles and Anne at Castellazzo in November 1720. In the text, Paul describes a series of experiences which began two years after his "conversion to a life of penance" (3) and which came together in the inspiration to found a new religious Congregation called the Poor of Jesus.

During his retreat at Castellazzo, as well as keeping a spiritual journal or diary (4), Paul wrote the Rule of his new community, of which he was at that time the only member. Rare is the religious community whose rule preceded its members, but such is the case for the Congregation of the Passion, as the Poor of Jesus are known today. Paul was later to destroy the text of that first Rule, but even in later texts it is possible to see the influence of those formative experiences he describes in the *Preface to the Rule*.

The experiences in question were of different kinds: experiences of nature, visions, and what Paul calls "lights" and "inspirations". With the same clarity of expression which we find in the Spiritual Diary, he explains how and when these took place. When we examine his description of the various experiences, we notice that an element common to all of them is that of symbol, and we realize that in the process which shaped him as the founder of a new community, Paul was being formed through experiencing symbols.

In order to come to a deeper understanding of Paul's experience as recounted by himself, we shall in this chapter examine those sections of the *Preface to the Rule* in which he speaks of the events leading up to his writing the rule of the Poor of Jesus, taking from the text the four sets of symbols which are the key to a fuller understanding. We shall then look at each of these, in order to see some of the various interpretations they can be given and, by referring to his other writings, to discover the way in which they are interpreted by Paul of the Cross.

#### 1.1 The Mountain and the Cave

About two years after the good God had converted me to a life of penance, I, Paul Francis, poorest of men, a great sinner and least servant of the Poor of Jesus, was going westwards along the Riviera of Genoa when, on a hill above Sestri, I saw a small church dedicated to Our Lady of Gazzo. As soon as I saw it, my heart longed for that place of solitude, but this longing could never be satisfied - though I carried it always with me - because I was occupied by the work I was doing as a matter of charity to help my relatives.

After this (I do not remember for certain either the day or the month) I remained as I was for some time but with a growing inspiration to withdraw into solitude. This inspiration, accompanied by great tenderness of heart, was given me by the good God.... I had an even greater inclination not simply to retire to the little chapel mentioned above; it would be

enough for me to withdraw into solitude either there or anywhere else. This I would do in response to God's loving invitation, for in his infinite goodness he was calling me to leave the world. However, as I was unable to follow this inspiration because my help was needed at home, that is by father, mother and brothers, I always kept this vocation hidden in my heart, except that I confided it to my spiritual director.

I did not know what God wanted of me, so for this reason I did not think of anything further, but I tried to free myself from household matters so as to withdraw from them later on. But the Supreme Good, who wanted something more from this poor wretch, never allowed me to disengage myself at that time, for whenever I was about to be free of everything new difficulties arose. But my wish grew stronger all the time (5).

In these opening words of the *Preface to the Rule*, Paul describes the first of the experiences which led to the founding of the Passionists. The inspiration which would draw him to institute a new religious community began not with the reading of the Gospel or the lives of the saints, as was the case for St Anthony the Great or St Ignatius Loyola, nor with his being struck by the needs of the people of his time, as was St Dominic or St Joseph Cottolengo; it began with something as simple and natural as his looking at a little church on a mountaintop as he was travelling along the coast one day.

Paul says that when he looked at the church on the mountain, his heart was moved by a desire for that place of solitude. From his later statement that he wanted to withdraw not necessarily to that particular church but to any place of solitude, it is clear that the mountain and the church, which at that time was no more than the chapel attached to a little hermitage (6), were of symbolic value for Paul and that what happened to him that day was an experience of symbol.

### 1.1.1 The Mountain

The mountain is one of the richest and most powerful of man's religious symbols: it is both a high place, symbol of transcendence, and a centre, symbol of manifestation (7), inviting him to ascend through purification and to abide in the place of God's self-revelation. This double aspect, expressed by Paul of the Cross in his desire to "withdraw into solitude" and to follow "God's loving invitation", is explained thus by Richard of St Victor: "The ascent of the mountain is related to knowledge of self; what happens on top of the mountain leads to knowledge of God" (8).

The mountain is the meeting-place of heaven and earth (9). Its summit is the holy place to which God descends to meet man, and towards which man ascends to encounter God (10). The mountain is the symbol of reunion, "the first and most sacred of sanctuaries, the archetype of all Temples" (11); it symbolizes the transcendent, the inaccessible, the superhuman (12).

The reality of the transcendence of God was keenly felt by Paul of the Cross. This can be seen from the language he uses when he speaks of God, language which emphasizes the omnipotence and complete otherness of God. One of the names for God he uses most frequently is "His Divine Majesty"; other names include "the Most High", "the Sovereign Good", "the Great Giver of all that is good", "the Divine Goodness", "the Eternal Divine Father" (13).

Paul's encounter with the mountain was to be repeated eight months after writing the *Preface to the Rule* when, on his first journey to Rome, the ship on which he was travelling was becalmed off Monte Argentario:

On the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady the boat stopped near Monte Argentaro; I did not disembark, but I ate some wild figs which the sailors had gathered on the land. However, standing on the boat, I fixed my eyes on the rocks and crags on the southern side of the mountain, and thought of withdrawing to one of those caves, and surely ending my days there (14).

He was in fact to settle on Monte Argentario, living initially in a hermitage and later building there the first Retreat of his Congregation, which he saw as the fulfillment of the inspiration he had received at Sestri (15). Later, as his community grew, Paul chose sites for new Retreats in places which evoked the spirit of Monte Argentario, his beloved "mountain of myrrh" (16), referred to by him as "that Sacred Solitude" (17). Just as the sacred mountain is the archetype of all sanctuaries or temples, so, for Paul, Monte Argentario became the archetype of all his Retreats, as can be seen even from the place-names: Monte Fogliano, near Vetralla; Monte Sant Angelo, near Terracina; Monte Cavo, near Frascati. Almost all the monasteries founded by Paul of the Cross were built on mountains. Indeed, even at Rome, when offered Sant Andrea al Quirinale by Pope Clement XIV, Paul asked instead to have SS. Giovanni e Paolo on Monte Celio, "which would be more consistent for our Institute as it is more solitary" (18).

The holy mountain is, in Chevalier's phrase, "a centre of isolation and meditation" (19). It is the mountain of the temptation, where Jesus prayed and fasted, the mountain to which, after preaching to the crowds, he withdrew in order to pray (20); it is the "lonely place" to which he invited his disciples to come in order to rest for a while (21).

For Paul of the Cross, the symbol of the mountain is interpreted in relation to these moments in the life of Christ, as we see from a letter to Henry Stuart, Cardinal Duke of York:

In accordance with the lights which His Divine Majesty was pleased to give me, our Congregation is founded totally on prayer and fasting and true solitude, following the sacred counsels of our divine Saviour, who wished his apostles to withdraw into solitude after their sacred missions: come apart and rest awhile in solitude; and His Divine Majesty himself gave an example of this, since after his admirable divine preaching he withdrew to the Mountain to pray alone (22).

The ascent of the holy mountain is a participation in the Passion of Jesus, a passage from Gethsemane to Calvary, the centre-of-the-world (23) and holy mountain par excellence (24).

This movement of ascending the mountain, centre of isolation and deep prayer, represents the ascent towards God which takes place in the contemplative life. A parallel image is that of the ladder:

Jacob saw a ladder, etc., and the angels ascending and descending, a figure of the contemplative soul which ascends to God by contemplation and descends in recognizing its own horrible nothingness: ascensiones in corde suo disposuit (25).

The person who climbs the mountain moves onto another level and, indeed, into another world. According to Eliade, “Every ascent is a change of level, a passing into the beyond, a going beyond space and the human condition” (26). The mountain itself is a place of passage, “a threshold where a change of level, a leap into an Other World, becomes possible” (27).

### 1.1.2 The Cave

The aspect of “place of passage” - place of manifestation and transformation - becomes even stronger in relation to the cave in the mountain. The cave, like the secret chamber, the enclosed room, the tomb, is a place of revelation and of passage (28). It is the place to which a person withdraws to encounter God: the cleft in the rock, where Moses was placed by Yahweh (29); the cavern at the entrance to which Elijah stood, listening to the sound of the gentle breeze (30); the cloud which covered the disciples at the Transfiguration (31).

The caves on Monte Argentario, which had attracted Paul of the Cross on first seeing the mountain (32), came to be represented by the cells of the Retreat, each cell being a place of isolation and withdrawal where the religious could be alone with God as in a hermitage (33). Here he would participate not only in the Passion and Death of Jesus, but also in his burial (34). The cell, like the cave, is a tomb (35), a place of death and burial: “For the one who sinks down into himself, it is as if he is buried in the ground; he is like a dead person who has returned to the maternal soil” (36).

However, as well as being a place of death, the tomb is also a place of transformation and new life. According to Leclerc:

A place of struggle and death, the cave is also a place of resurrection. Its darkness, to which the eyes gradually become accustomed, is like the dawn which opens up an inner, hidden world. The cave is the place of great initiations and gestations. It opens man to the mystery of himself (37).

The cave, like the secret chamber, symbolizes “the place of death of the old man and the birthplace of the new man” (38). It is a place of death, certainly, but of a death which leads to a new form of life: “Dead, buried from everyone’s eyes, so that God can make you a great saint, but with the hidden holiness of the Cross” (39).

The cave on the mountain and the Retreat with its cells were linked for Paul to the experience he had on seeing the little church on the hill above Sestri when, in his own words, “on seeing it, my heart longed for that place of solitude” (40). It symbolized for him that centre into which he felt himself drawn: the centre of his own being, which he would call the “sacred desert of the spirit” (41) or “the sacred desert within” (42). This desert is the “deep and sacred solitude” (43) in which the person can hide himself (44).

Like the cave, the interior desert is a maternal symbol (45); it is “the holy solitude... in which the soul must remain alone in the bosom of the divine Father in a sacred silence of faith and love” (46), the “deepest inner solitude” (47) in which the rebirth of the Divine Word takes place (48).

The one who remains in the interior desert rests in sinu Patris (49), in sinu Dei (50). The “divine bosom of the heavenly Father” (51) then becomes for him a place of communion, the place of prayer (52), as his life is centered on God (53).

Our centre, our resting-place is God; our place of prayer is God. The psalms and all other prayers, above all the Lord’s prayer, are to be recited in God, in Spiritu Dei (54).

For Paul of the Cross, then, the mountain is the place of encounter with God. The solitary place or the cave, represented by the Retreat and the cell, is the interior desert into which one withdraws in order to rest in the heart of God, “in that divine bosom which is a consuming fire” (55). It is in this context that we can understand the prophetic vision referred to by Paul in a letter to the Congregation’s first novice master, Fr Fulgentius of Jesus:

The very high mountain which God showed you (about two years ago, I think) on the summit of which was a very big furnace with a fire so great that it lit up and heated the whole world, was meant by him to represent the Congregation of his Passion, etc.; and before knowing me, in fact years before, you already had inspirations which I believe to be prophetic, because I myself have seen them partly come true, and the rest will come true because Verbum Dei permanet in aeternum (56).

Like the mountain and the cave, fire can symbolize purification and enlightenments (57), but it is also a symbol of power and love (58). For Paul it is the “fire of divine charity” (59), the “fire of holy love” (60) which burns up our imperfections, bringing about divine rebirth (61). This fire which first burned in the cave at Bethlehem (62) is now seen on the peak of the mountain (63); it burns in the interior temple of the one who worships God on the true mountain, that is “in spirit and in truth” (64):

If you place the sweet bouquet of the sufferings of Jesus on the altar of your heart, the fire of holy love will always be burning there: Ignis in Altari meo semper ardebit (65).

## 1.2 Black and White

At the same time I had the idea of wearing a poor black tunic of coarse cloth called *arbagio*, the ordinary wool fabric found in these parts, of going barefoot, of living in very deep poverty - in short, by God’s grace, leading a penitential life. This never again left my heart.... Then this last summer (I do not remember the day or the month because I did not write it down but I do know it was the grain harvest time) on a certain weekday in the Capuchin church in Castellazzo, I received communion with a deep sense of my unworthiness. I remember that I was deeply recollected and then I left to go home. Walking along the street I was as recollected as if I were at prayer. When I came to a street corner to turn towards home, I was raised up in God in the deepest recollection, with complete forgetfulness of all else and with great interior peace. At that moment I saw myself clothed in a long black garment with a white cross on my breast, and below the cross the holy name of Jesus was written in white letters. At that instant I heard these very words spoken to me: “This signifies how pure and spotless that heart should be which must bear the holy name of Jesus graven upon it.” On seeing and hearing this I began to weep and then it stopped. Shortly afterwards I saw in spirit the tunic presented to me with the holy name of Jesus and the cross all in white, but the tunic was black. I pressed it joyfully to my heart (66).



In this quotation from the *Preface to the Rule*, Paul of the Cross speaks of the inspiration he received about wearing a black tunic and of the visions he received in the summer of 1720 in which the tunic was shown to him. Once again there is a very clear affective content in his description. When he speaks of the “inspirations” which came to him, he says “This never again left my heart”. Later, on receiving the first vision and hearing the words which were spoken to him, “on seeing and hearing this, I began to weep”. In the second vision of the tunic, his reaction is one of positive acceptance: “I pressed it joyfully to my heart”. Here, in what are usually referred to as “intellectual visions” (67), we find also a strong affective dimension and a highly symbolic content (68).

In our reading of the text we shall consider first the symbolism of colors, in particular black and white, and then the symbolic meaning of the habit.

That Paul was acquainted with the symbolism of colors is clear from a letter written by him to a religious who had been appointed to the office of sacristan. Here, he gives an interpretation of the liturgical colors which is aimed at encouraging his reader to be constant in prayer and the practice of the virtues:

In the whiteness of the vestments, linen and other things, you can reflect on the innocence of Jesus Christ or the purity with which the vestments are to be treated, cared for and made use of. The color green, the hope with which we should raise ourselves up with great confidence in God and his immense goodness, so as to obtain all the graces, help and strength we need to live holy lives and win the victory, fighting courageously against all the snares, temptations and allurements of the devil, the world and the flesh. The color red, the charity with which we should be burning within, and which should be shown externally by our love for God and our neighbor. Violet, the humility with which we should live and advance towards God, and above all the mortification with which we should always live, mortifying our passions and evil inclinations with discretion and counsel. Finally, the color black signifies the mourning and affliction of life, seeing ourselves in the midst of so many dangers and far from heaven, which is our true home, and from always loving and rejoicing in the Supreme Good (69).

Symbolic interpretations of color are found already in the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius. In *The Celestial Hierarchy* he speaks of the colors of the precious stones (Rev 4:3; 21:19-21) and the horses (Zec 6:2; cf. Rev 6: 1-8) spoken of in the Book of Revelation and the Prophet Zechariah. “With regard to the multicolored stones,” he says, “these must be taken to work symbolically as follows: white for light, red for fire, yellow for gold, green for youthful vitality”(70). He explains the colors of the four horses as follows:

Their whiteness is the gleam of their kinship with the light of God, their blue color is the sign of hiddenness, the red is the power and sweep of fire; the piebald is the alliance of opposite extremes, and the capacity to move from one to the other, that adaptability of superior to inferior and of inferior to superior which comes of return and providence (71).

We begin to see that the different colors can receive a variety of symbolic interpretations. Commenting on the two texts from Dionysius, Sendler says: “These two quotations show that the symbolism of colors is not always the same. It is different again in the prophecies of Zachariah and those of the *Apocalypse* (Za 1,8; 4, 2-3, Ap 6, 3-7)” (72).

In spite of the rich variety of interpretations possible, we note a certain constancy in regard to the symbolism of colors, flowing from the inherent qualities of the colors themselves and our natural reaction to them. Red and blue, for example, have certain intrinsic qualities: “Blue is always cold, and red is always warm.... As red is associated with blood, so is blue with the nervous system” (73). Green, “the color of the vegetable kingdom”, is expressive of “fruitfulness and contentment, tranquility and hope”, while gold, the color of the sun, “suggests the highest sublimation of matter by the power of light” (74) According to Sendler, the Greeks distinguished two main lines or directions in the interpretation of colors:

... in the one [direction], white, red, green, blue express life, purity, peace and goodness; in the other, black, grey, brown and pale yellow express death, a threat, a stain (75).

Returning to the text of the *Preface to the Rule*, we recall that Paul’s inspiration to wear a “poor black tunic” was confirmed as he returned from Mass one morning when, he tells us, “I saw myself clothed in a long black garment with a white cross on my breast, and below the cross the holy name of Jesus was written in white letters”(76). We must now consider how the colors black and white can be understood symbolically and what particular interpretation they are given by Paul.

### 1.2.1 Black

Black is the complete absence of light (76): “counter-color of all color, it is associated with primordial darkness, the in differentiated origin of things” (78). Black is the color of the night; it is the expression of a state of absolute passivity, “the state of complete and unvarying death, which lies between those two lighter nights on either side of it, where night changes to day and day to night. Black is therefore the color of mourning” (79). In the field of psychological analysis and in the interpretation of dreams, black is seen as evoking “chaos, nothingness, the night sky, the terrestrial darkness of night, evil anguish, sadness, unconsciousness and Death”(80).

Such, then, is the negative symbolism of the color black, but there is also a positive side to its interpretation. The interior of the cave, place of transformation and new life, is black, as is the fertile soil in which the grain of wheat must die so as to bear fruit (81); this is the blackness of “the earth which contains the tombs of the dead, becoming thus their resting-place and preparing their rebirth”(82). Here, black is seen as a symbol of conversion, linked with the promise of a renewal of life, just as the night contains the promise of the dawn and the winter that of the spring (83). Black is the color of those who await the One who will come “to enlighten those in darkness and in the shadow of death” (Lk 1:79): black is used for the clothing of monks who wear the ‘great schima’, the symbol of the highest degree of asceticism, by which they are already dead to this world (84).

For Paul of the Cross, black is primarily a symbol of death; the one who wears black does so as a sign that he has died to sin, and also as a reminder of the death of Jesus, on which his own dying life is modeled (85). In the fragment of the first Rule, written at Castellazzo in 1720, we read:

And furthermore, dearly beloved, you must know that the main object in wearing black (according to the special inspiration that God gave me) is to be clothed in mourning for the

Passion and Death of Jesus. For this purpose let us never forget to have always with us a constant and sorrowful remembrance of him. And so let each of the Poor of Jesus take care to instill in others meditation on the suffering of our dear Jesus (86).

The one who wears the black tunic is clothed in the death of Jesus; the tunic is the outward sign of his constant remembrance of the Passion of Christ, a sign intended both for himself and for others. It also signifies the dying to oneself which is necessary in order to share the life of God, a dying which must take place every day: For true servants and friends of God, life means dying every day: “we die every day”, “you have died and your true life is hidden with Christ in God” (87).

### 1.2.2 White

Paul tells us that in the visions he received, the tunic was black but the cross and the name of Jesus were white. While black is the complete absence of light, white - a color devoid of any coloring - seems close to light itself (88). In ancient times, white was a color associated with death, but with death which leads to life: “In all symbolic thought, death precedes life, birth being a rebirth. From this fact white is the primitive color of death and mourning” (89). White is the color of revelation, of grace and of transfiguration, “the color of the theophany, the vestige of which will remain around the head of all those who have known God, in the form of a halo of light which is indeed the sum of all colors” (90). It is the color of the innocent, those without stain, and of those who have turned away from sin and embraced a new way of life; the whiteness of the baptismal robe testifies to this. As Sendler says, “white is the color of those who are penetrated with the light of God”(91).

We find an interpretation of the white color of the cross and the name of Jesus in the words heard by Paul: “This signifies how pure and spotless that heart should be which must bear the holy name of Jesus graven upon it” (92). Just as the black signifies conversion of heart through renunciation and death to self in union with Jesus Crucified, so the white is for Paul a symbol of that purity of heart which is brought about by our sharing in the Risen Life of Jesus.

The white and black of the habit are symbols of life and death: the life and death of the one who wears it, and also the life and death of Jesus. The one who wears the habit is clothed in mourning in memory of the Passion and death of Jesus (93); but his wearing of the habit also symbolizes his own participation in the Paschal Mystery and his desire to know Christ “and the power of his resurrection, and to share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (94).

For Paul, to wear the habit of the Passion was to be clothed in Jesus Crucified and Risen (95). In a letter written to Mother Maria Crocifissa of Jesus, who was to become the superior of the first community of contemplative Passionist Nuns, he gives advice on how she should prepare herself for reception of the Passionist habit:

Be truly at home in the interior of your spirit, and remain enclosed in that sacred desert, as that sacred solitude is rich in all that is good. In this divine solitude, with the doors well closed to all created things, clothed completely in Jesus Christ, allow yourself to be lost and to sink down into the Immense Divinity, and there, in a sacred silence of faith and holy love, contemplate the Supreme Good and allow yourself to be burned up in the fire of Divine Love (96).

We see here the very clear relationship between the symbolism of the habit and the symbolism of the mountain, the cave and the fire. Both sets of symbols speak of the movement of death and rebirth which is a sharing in the mystery of Christ's Passion and resurrection, a movement which realizes the words of Paul the Apostle, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20), words used by Paul of the Cross in the conclusion of the letter to Mother Maria Crocifissa:

I do not, nor shall I, neglect to include you in my poor, cold prayers, above all in these days and in a special way on the Solemnity of the Nativity, that his Divine Majesty will bring you to be reborn in the Divine Word-made-flesh to a new life that is both deified and deiform, in order that it will be no longer you who live, but Christ who lives in you (97).

### 1.3 The Heart and the Cross

The two symbols which form the outline of the Passionist Sign are the heart and the cross. When we read Paul's account of the experiences which led to the founding of his new community, we notice that in the visions of the habit, he does not speak of having seen a heart but only a cross and the name of Jesus (98). However, the words he heard refer us immediately to the symbolism of the heart: "This signifies how pure and spotless that heart should be which must bear the holy name of Jesus graven upon it" (99).

#### 1.3.1 The Heart

The heart symbolizes the centre of the person (100) and can be understood as the seat of the emotions, or of intelligence and intuition (101). In the Bible, it represents the inner man and his affective life; it is the place of understanding and wisdom, of memory and imagination: "The heart has a central role in the spiritual life: it thinks, it decides, it makes plans, it acknowledges its responsibilities" (102).

Symbol of love, sacred and profane (103), the heart is, for the Chinese, the cave in which there shines "the light of the spirit, of intellectual intuition, of revelation" (104). For Angelus Silesius, it is the temple, the altar of God (105), while in the *Treatise on Mystical Death* it is the locked room, the bridal chamber: "I want [my heart] to be a room for Jesus ... giving the key to him alone, so that he can be the sole owner, living there as he pleases and hiding away in it whatever he wishes" (106).

For Paul of the Cross, the heart is the centre of affectivity. We have already seen how the inspiration to withdraw into solitude was accompanied by "great tenderness of heart" (107). In his letters of spiritual direction he speaks of the heart when giving instruction on how to pray:

Sometimes you can remember with love and sorrow (the sufferings of Jesus), speaking sweetly of them with the Saviour: Oh, dear Jesus! I see how bruised your face is, swollen, covered in spittle! ... Ah, dear pains! Ah, dear wounds! I wish to hold you always to my heart (108).

Many of Paul's letters are also prefixed with references to the heart: "May our dearest Jesus live always in our hearts"; "Long live Jesus, our true Good and the Joy of our hearts"; "May

Jesus, who is a fire of love, inflame our hearts”; “May the most pure love of Jesus be always in our hearts”; “May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ be ever in our hearts” (109).

As seat of the affections and the memory, the heart is the locus of that remembrance of the sufferings of Jesus which the Passionist community is to promote; thus, when Paul speaks of promoting the memory of the Passion, he does so in terms of the heart and affectivity. In his circular letter written for the Pentecost Novena in 1750 we read:

The holy apostles celebrated the Novena congregati in unum. O holy Congregation of love, which brings together and unites hearts into one heart in Jesus Christ! ...In this union of faith and love, let us together, dear brothers, call on the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the consoling Spirit to come and fill the interior home of our soul and all our poor Congregation. Let us cry out to this Father of the poor, to this Giver of graces, to this Light of hearts, that he will give us the true spirit of our Institute, which is the true Apostolic spirit, rich in every virtue; let us ask him to open the vein of the living waters of his grace, that we may all drink from them in abundance, that burning with love, aflame with charity, we may light this divine fire in the hearts of our poor neighbors by the preaching of the most holy pains of our Crucified Love” (110).

The memory of the Passion seeks to light the fire of divine love in the hearts of those who are touched by it, and so it is the most effective means for overcoming evil (111). The symbol of the heart reminds the one who wears it that he himself must strive after purity of heart in order to proclaim the Word of the Cross.

### 1.3.2 The Cross

With the center, the circle and the square, the cross is one of the four fundamental symbols (112). A symbol of ascension, a ladder by which men climb to God (113), the cross makes explicit the mystery of the centre: “It is diffusion, emanation, but also gathering, recapitulation. It is the most all-encompassing of symbols” (114). According to Champeaux-Sterckx, it is “perhaps the most universal of symbols; all civilizations have made it their own” (115).

For Christians, the different aspects of the cross can all be interpreted symbolically:

Its four branches symbolize the four elements which have tainted human nature, all of humanity drawn to Christ from the four corners of the world, the virtues of the human soul; the foot of the cross planted in the earth signifies faith which is deeply rooted, the upper part of the cross indicates hope which rises towards heaven; the width of the cross is charity which stretches out to enemies; the length of the cross speaks of final perseverance (116).

The cross is the symbol of Christ’s victory over sin and death; it is the tree of man’s defeat which became the tree of victory (117), the tree of life which stands in the centre of the holy city of Jerusalem, whose leaves will bring salvation to all peoples (118). Saint Bonaventure says, “The Cross is a tree of beauty; consecrated by the blood of Christ, it is filled with every fruit” (119).

Paul of the Cross speaks of the cross as the “sacrosanct tree of life” (120) which gives forth sweet balsam (121), and whose fruit appears bitter to the palate of the senses but is very sweet to the palate of the spirit (122). The cross is the “great letter of life (123), the “standard of the true

servants of God” (124). Paul advises his readers to become holy with the “hidden holiness of the Cross” (125); he wishes to show them the link between the Cross of Jesus and that cross which is their own sufferings: “The Cross is always good, and also holy, and whoever knows the great treasure there is in suffering, desires nothing but pains” (126). For Paul, the follower of Jesus is one who loves the Cross; this love transforms suffering into joy:

Whoever loves Jesus seeks nothing but suffering. I am consoled that you are one of those most fortunate souls who go along the way of Calvary, following our dear Redeemer. Happy are you if you follow this most precious road; one day you will sing, in company with the other lovers of the holy Cross: Your crosses, dear God, are the joys of my heart. How beautiful it is to suffer with Jesus (127)!

The symbol of a heart surmounted by a cross expresses Paul’s profound intuition concerning the relationship between love and suffering. He sees the Passion as “the greatest and most overwhelming work of God’s love” (128) and his own suffering as an opportunity to express his love for Jesus; in the *Spiritual Diary* we read: “At that very moment, so great was my joy and my desire to suffer that the cold, the snow and ice, seemed sweet to me and I longed for them with great fervour, saying to my beloved Jesus: Your pains, dear God, are pledges of your love” (129): This intuition was earlier expressed by means of a vision which Paul describes in the *Preface to the Rule*:

When I was at prayer I saw a scourge in God’s hands, and this scourge had lashes like a discipline and on them was written the word: LOVE. In that moment God gave me a profound understanding that he wished to scourge me but with love. My soul ran quickly to embrace the scourge and to kiss it in spirit. Actually when God in his infinite goodness had let me see this, special troubles befell me shortly afterwards, and I knew for certain that they were coming because God had given me an infused understanding of them (130).

The heart and the cross speak also of that sorrowful and loving remembrance of the Passion which Paul experienced (131), and to which he wished others to come, counseling them to carry “always impressed on [their] heart, like a seal of love, the memory of the pains of the Saviour” (132). The Sign of the Passion represented Paul’s desire that “the most holy Cross of Jesus be always planted in the centre of our heart” (133), while the wearing of the sign on the habit symbolized for him an inner reality (134), a reality for which one could dispose oneself but which would always remain the gift of the one he called Crucified Love (135):

I believe that the Cross of our dear Jesus will plunge deeper roots into your heart and that you will sing: To suffer and not to die, or even: Either to suffer or to die, or better still: Neither to suffer nor to die, but simply to be totally transformed according to the Divine Will. Love is a unitive virtue; it makes its own the sufferings of the One loved. If you feel completely penetrated, interiorly and exteriorly, by the sufferings of the Spouse, then have a celebration; but I can tell you that this celebration takes place in the furnace of Divine Love, since the fire which penetrates to the marrow of the bones transforms the lover into the beloved, and at a deep level the love mixes with the sorrow and the sorrow with the love, so that there comes about a mixture of love and sorrow, where they are so united that one can no longer distinguish the love from the sorrow nor the sorrow from the love. In this way the loving soul rejoices in its sorrow and celebrates its sorrowing love (136).

## 1.4 The Poor of Jesus

The final element for consideration in our reading of the *Preface to the Rule* is the name which Paul gives to his new community: the Poor of Jesus. We have already seen how at the beginning of the text, Paul says that after receiving the inspiration to withdraw into solitude, he had the idea of wearing a poor, black habit, going barefoot and living “in very deep poverty” (137). The habit was to be of arbagio; a rough type of wool worn by poor people; wearing such cloth and going barefoot were expressions of a desire for a life of poverty and penance. This idea was followed by “another inspiration to gather companions who would live together in unity to promote the fear of God in souls” (138). Paul tells us how, after the visions we have referred to in the preceding sections, these two ideas came together:

After these visions of the tunic and the sign, God gave me a stronger compelling desire to gather companions and with the approval of holy Mother Church to found a Congregation called: ‘The Poor of Jesus’. After this God infused into my soul in a lasting manner the form of the holy Rule to be observed by the Poor of Jesus and by me his least and lowest servant. Under obedience and by the grace of the Holy Spirit I shall proceed to write this Rule. Let it be known that the intention God gave me with regard to this Congregation was none other than this: in the first place, to observe God’s law perfectly together with the perfect observance of his evangelical counsels, especially by total detachment from all created things with the perfect practice of holy poverty, so essential for the observance of the other counsels and for maintaining fervour at prayer; in the second place to have zeal for God’s glory, to promote the fear of God in souls by working for the destruction of sin, in a word, to be indefatigable in works of charity that our beloved God may be loved, feared, served and praised by all for ever and ever. Amen (139).

Throughout his life Paul insisted that his community should live in strictest poverty (140), seeing this as a means for observing the other evangelical counsels and persevering in prayer and also as one of the necessary requirements for effective apostolic ministry (141). However, he did not reduce poverty simply to a tool for apostolic service. For Paul, the life of the “Poor of Jesus” is, first and foremost, a participation in the poverty of Jesus (142) who “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (143). This act of “self-emptying” (spogliamento) of Jesus is the model for discipleship (144), and the one who is a true “poor [man] of Jesus” follows his example:

Our dear Jesus allowed himself to be clothed or stripped by his executioners just as they wished; first they would bind him, then unbind him, then throw him here, then throw him there, and the most pleasing Divine Lamb surrendered himself to all this.... Seek, therefore, to surrender yourself into the hands of everyone like a meek lamb (145).

The self-emptying of Jesus is seen by Paul as an image of that true interior poverty which seeks God alone (146). In our prayer we are to detach ourselves completely from any desire for the gifts or consolations of God, allowing all our desires to be absorbed in the Divine Will. We are to be content with our poverty, rejoicing only in the infinite richness of God.

In a little text entitled “Divine Monastery”, and written for Agnes Grazi, we find Paul’s instructions for a “perfect stripping of self (spogliamento) so as to be clothed in Jesus Christ”:

1. Let yourself be stripped of all lights, all knowledge, understanding, interior and exterior consolations, of all affections and desires.
2. In this stripping, or deep poverty of spirit, let yourself lose everything, and become immersed and absorbed in the Divine Will, without seeking your own enjoyment, at least in the inferior part of the soul.
3. In this poverty, make acts of acceptance of God's richness, being content to be the poorest person in the world, both externally and interiorly.
4. Through this acceptance, desire no other state of prayer, or of anything else, until the end of your life except that in which you find yourself at the present moment.
5. Examine yourself on this poverty, rich in all that is good, to see if you are faithful in not complaining to yourself or to others, except during spiritual direction.
6. Repeat the acts of acceptance very often (147).

This stripping of self in order to be clothed in Christ (148) takes place in the interior desert; there it is that in nakedness of spirit and in silence we become true worshipers of God, in spirit and in truth (149). The true "poor [man] of Jesus" is clothed in the sufferings of Christ and has allowed himself to be stripped of all desire for created things, realizing that spogliamento is an experience of suffering and death (150), and is a necessary experience if we are to enter into the mystery of the Passion and enjoy that loving and sorrowful remembrance of Christ's sufferings, of which Paul speaks:

Oh, happy are those souls who are stripped of everything so as to be clothed only in Jesus!  
Oh, blessed are those souls, who are all wounded with the sufferings of the Saviour, and who carry them in the bosom of their soul, perfumed with loving and sorrowful remembrance (151).

The name of the new community, coming at the end of the series of inspirations, can be seen as a symbol of identity (152). The members of the community are to be known as the "Poor of Jesus": the image of poverty brings together the various strands of Paul's founding experience, as we have seen above, while the invocation of the name of Jesus (153) leads us into the saving mystery of the Cross. For Paul the unifying thread in these experiences was his desire to enter into this mystery of the sufferings of his "God-Made-Man"(154), as we read on the first page of his *Spiritual Diary*: "I know that, by the mercy of our dear God, I desire to know nothing else nor to taste any consolation; my sole desire is to be crucified with Jesus" (155).

Paul's desire to be "crucified with Jesus" is intimately linked with the founding of the new community (156). While he himself would later affirm that it was God who had brought the Congregation into existence, always refusing to accept for himself the title of Founder (157), on reading the *Preface to the Rule* we can see clearly that his life-experience shaped the Congregation's identity.

Paul of the Cross founded his community after a series of symbolic experiences, which resulted in his receiving what he called "the form of the holy Rule" (158). By examining the text of the Rule in the light of our understanding of the *Preface to the Rule*, we shall now go on to see how Paul used the symbols he himself had experienced in order to shape his community's life and spirituality.



## CHAPTER TWO COMMUNICATION THROUGH SYMBOLS

Ideally, we would now proceed to an examination of the Rule of the Poor of Jesus written by Paul of the Cross at Castellazzo in 1720. Unfortunately, that is not possible because, as we have already said, the original text of that first Rule, written in his own hand, was destroyed by Paul himself before he died. It had been sent to Monte Argentario from Alessandria at the request of Fr. Fulgentius of Jesus (159). However, Paul took the text and burned it, saying “that he would never have had peace of conscience, had he known that there was something to his own praise in the Congregation” (160). Before he was able to do so, Fr John of the Heart of Mary secretly copied the Preface (which we have looked at in Chapter One) and two paragraphs of the Rule itself. These two paragraphs (161) are all that remains of the first Rule written by Paul.

### 2.1 Symbol in the Rule

The earliest complete text of the Rule available to us is the so-called “Altieri” text of 1736; (162) it is to this text that we will refer.

#### 2.1.1 The Retreat

After a short introduction on the Purpose of the Institute and to whom its houses are subject (163), the first section of the Rule opens with a chapter entitled “Where the Houses, or Retreats of Penance, are to be founded” (164). In this section we read that the houses, or “Retreats of Penance”, are to be founded in solitude; the church is to be of moderate size, the cells of the Retreat are to be no more than nine palms long by seven palms wide, and the corridors are to be no wider than is necessary for two people to pass each other “...in order that everything will breathe poverty and holy recollection” (165). The Rule gives the following explanation of why the houses are to be founded in solitude:

The Houses will be founded in solitude, as has been said, so that the servants of God, after working at the apostolate for the salvation of their neighbors, can withdraw into solitude to recollect their spirit in prayer and fasting, and in this way become ever more inflamed with the holy love of Jesus Christ, and become more prepared to go out again with greater fervour to scatter the holy seed of the word of God, promoting by this in the hearts of the faithful the devout memory of the most holy Passion and Death of Jesus our true Good (166).

In this text we see again the triple symbolism of the mountain, the cave and the fire: the houses are founded in that solitude which is a place of prayer and fasting; they are centers into which the religious withdraw to recollect their spirit; in these centers of recollection they become inflamed with love (167). Added to this is the movement of “going out”, which is further developed in the chapter entitled “How the brothers are to act in going out from Solitude” (168). We have now a double movement of “withdrawing” and “going out”, reconciling Paul’s longing for solitude with the inspiration to “gather companions who would live together in unity to promote the fear of God in souls” (169).

The Rule goes on to deal with “What is to be observed and practiced by anyone wishing to enter the Congregation” (170). The servant of God who desires to enter the Retreat of Penance

must discern the truth of his calling not only by prayer, fasting and reception of the sacraments, but also by withdrawing from the “business of this world” and seeking the advice of his confessor and other servants of Jesus Christ, as Paul himself had done (171); according to the Rule, “he ought to consider well if he is firmly resolved to suffer much, to be despised and mocked, to suffer calumnies and other things for the love of Jesus Christ” (172).

Here we see again the linking of suffering with the love of Jesus Christ, which was expressed by the vision of the scourge and the symbolism of the cross and the heart. Later, when speaking of the vestition ceremony, the Rule will say that before clothing the candidate in the tunic, the Superior “shall preach a devout sermon, encouraging him to suffer, making him see how precious are the joys of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ” (173); at the end of the ceremony, after giving the sign of peace, the Superior and the other brothers “should share their joy with the new brother, encouraging him to carry his Cross too with our dear Jesus” (174).

### 2.1.2 The Habit

After treating of the one who desires to enter the Congregation, the Rule has a chapter on “How the brothers of this Congregation are to dress” (175), followed by five chapters on the novitiate. For our purposes, these six chapters can be taken together as one section and related to the habit of the Congregation.

The Rule states that the tunic is to be “black, rough cloth, ordinary wool”, as is also the mantle which the brothers are to wear “for greater modesty and convenience” (176). We are reminded that “dressing in black signifies that the brothers of this least Congregation are to be in perpetual mourning for the most holy Passion and death of Jesus Christ” (177). Speaking of the Sign, the Rule says:

On the breast of the tunic, that is, on the left side, there will be a little white cross with the name of Jesus in white letters, and the same cross also on the mantle....” (178).

As before, we notice that there is no precise statement about the words Christi Passio nor about the heart, although there is an implicit reference to the heart in the statement that the Sign is to be worn “on the breast of the tunic, that is, on the left side” (179).

At the ceremony of vestition, the Superior “will divest [the one who is to be clothed] of his secular dress and clothe him in the habit of the Congregation (180). After giving the habit, the Superior places a cross on the candidate’s shoulder and a crown of thorns on his head, saying as he puts the cross in place, “Receive, dearest brother, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; deny yourself, so that you may share with him in eternal life. Remember frequently that you are clothed in the memory of the Passion and Death of Christ the Lord”; as he places the crown of thorns on the head of the candidate, he says, “Receive, dearest brother, the crown of thorns of Christ the Lord; humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and be subject to every creature for the sake of God” (181). The novice is to realize that this act of spogliamento is an invitation to share in the humility and obedience of Christ, and that the clothing in the black tunic symbolizes his being clothed in the memory of the Passion and death of Christ. He will receive the Sign at the profession ceremony (182), during which the rite of giving the cross and crown of thorns will be repeated and the Passion narrative will be read from the Gospel, after which he will pronounce his vows (183).

### 2.1.3 Poverty, Prayer and the Passion

The next six chapters deal with the vows: obedience, poverty, chastity and a fourth vow “to promote in the hearts of the faithful the devotion to the most holy Passion and Death of Jesus Christ” (184). Of these six chapters, three are concerned with poverty which, we recall, was described in the preface to the Rule as being “so essential for the observance of the other counsels and for maintaining fervour at prayer” (185). The Rule states that poverty “should be the standard of this least Congregation” (186) and counsels the religious to live “like true imitators, and poor men [poverelli] of Jesus Christ” (187). It emphasizes that poverty implies living in detachment from created things and enduring discomfort; living in this way, one imitates Jesus Crucified and is transformed in God’s love (188): “Blessed is the one who willingly strips himself of everything; God will transform him in his most holy love” (189).

The Rule goes on to devote seven chapters to fasting and prayer (190); the necessity of fasting for the members of the Congregation is explained as follows:

The spirit of this least Congregation is to observe in the best way, after the Law of God, the holy Evangelical Counsels, and to observe them with perfection it is necessary to be men of great prayer; now, how can we be men of great prayer, without abstinence? Bona est oratio cum jejunio, the archangel said to Tobias, and Jesus who is our way, our truth and our life, said: Hoc genus demoniorum non ejicitur nisi in oratione, et jejunio (191).

Prayer is normally to be centered on the mysteries of the life, Passion and death of Jesus Christ “because this is where holiness is learned, and if the soul is faithful in corresponding with God’s gifts, he will quickly become all aflame with holy love” (192). The prayer of the brothers, as much as their poverty is to be a participation in the self-emptying (spogliamento) of Jesus in his Passion. This is vividly expressed by the gesture they make each time they pray the Divine Office:

Before beginning [matins] (with the permission of holy Mother Church), all will prostrate themselves on the ground and say with great fear and reverence: ‘At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bend in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father’. And they will do the same before beginning the other parts of the Divine Office (193).

Our reading of the Rule concludes with the chapter on the “Way of preaching the Word of God” (194): the brothers are to instruct the people in the principle Mysteries of the faith and in prayer; they are to promote devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ, to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Sorrows of Mary. In their preaching they are not to use so lofty or elegant a style as to become obscure, “but are to break the bread of the Word of God in a way that is clear and devoted, so as to be more effective in penetrating hearts, and promoting the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls”(195).

It can be seen from this brief examination of the first part of the Rule (196) that the symbols we looked at in the *Preface to the Rule* are also to be found in the Rule itself: the mountain, the cave and the fire; the habit, reminding us of death and life, and the Sign, symbol of love and suffering. Although the name “Poor of Jesus” is no longer used, the symbolism of spogliamento linked with the name of Jesus is present in the teaching on poverty and prayer. Indeed, not only

do the same symbols occur in both documents but, as can be seen from our examination of the texts, they occur in the same sequence. In other words, the *Preface to the Rule* sets the content and the structure of the Rule which is to follow it, a content and structure determined by the sequence of experiences which led Paul of the Cross to found the Congregation: the desire to withdraw into solitude, together with the attempt to distance himself from worldly affairs; the visions of the habit; the desire to gather companions and found a Congregation called “The Poor of Jesus” (197).

We can now understand the relationship between the two documents and the purpose of each. The *Preface to the Rule* is Paul’s account of the experiences which led to the founding of the “Poor of Jesus”, all of which were experiences of symbol; the Rule is his attempt to communicate that experience to his companions by means of the same symbols. The first document, then, is a description of an experience, while the second is the communication of that experience; and symbol is the medium of both the original experience and its communication.

## 2.2 Origin of Paul’s Symbolism of the Habit

The symbolic structure communicated by Paul in the Rule represents his own synthesis, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, of a number of different elements. We have already seen how the desire for solitude had its immediate origin in his seeing the little church at Sestri; his contact with the Capuchins at Castellazzo would have exposed him to the symbolism of poverty, as would the culture of the time (198); but what are the sources of the symbolism of the habit? It is our belief that at least some of the elements found in the visions of the habit, and also their subsequent interpretation, can be uncovered in the pages of a book with which Paul was very familiar even before he wrote the Rule of the Poor of Jesus: the *Treatise on the Love of God* of St Francis de Sales (199).

### 2.2.1 Sources of Paul’s interpretation

In the *Treatise*, Francis de Sales tells us that love is the principle and origin of all the passions; “that is why it is love which is first to enter the heart, and because it penetrates and pierces right to the fine depths of the will where its seat lies, we say that it wounds the heart” (200). His teaching on how love wounds the heart is of great importance for our understanding of Paul of the Cross’s foundational visions. In the *Treatise* we read:

Nothing wounds a loving heart as much as seeing another heart wounded with love for it.... When the soul sees his God wounded with love for him, he suddenly receives a reciprocal wound.... When we see the Saviour of our souls wounded with love for us, “even unto death, death on the cross”, how can we not be wounded for him! but wounded with a wound which is as sorrowfully loving as his has been lovingly sorrowful; we can never love him as much as his love and his death require (201).

The wound of love which is ours when we look at Jesus on the Cross brings with it the experience of a loving sorrow and a sorrowing love, leading us to desire to enter more deeply into the mystery of his Passion and death:

Let us look on him, Theotimus, the divine Redeemer, stretched out on the Cross, as if on his funeral pyre, where he dies of love for us, but of a love more sorrowful than death itself, or

of a death more loving than love itself: let us cast ourselves beside him in spirit, beside him who, for love of us, was quite willing to die (202).

For Francis de Sales, the supreme effect of this love for Jesus is the death of the lover. All the Martyrs died for the love of God; Saints Stanislaus and Thomas of Canterbury are examples of those who were slain for their love of God (203). But there are also those who, without shedding their blood, gave themselves so completely to God that they died of love:

How happy is this death! How sweet is this loving arrow which, wounding us with the incurable wound of holy love, leaves us languishing and sick with such severe palpitations of the heart that in the end we die of it (204).

The supreme example of one who died for love of Jesus is Mary, who gathered in her spirit “through a living and continual memory, all the most loveable mysteries of the life and death of her Son”:

Finally the sacred fire of divine love consumed her totally, a holocaust of sweetness, to such an extent that she died of this, her soul enraptured and transported to the loving arms of her Son. Oh, death lovingly life-giving; oh, life-giving mortal love (205)!

We see here in these words of Francis de Sales the roots of Paul of the Cross’s teaching on Mystical Death. The death of love undergone by Mary, who carried always in her spirit the memory of the Passion, signifies the fullness of affective love (206). For Paul, this death of love, symbolized by the Habit of the Passion, is the fruit of that Memoria Passionis which he calls loving and sorrowful contemplation.

### 2.2.2 Sources of Paul’s Imagery

In the *Treatise on the Love of God*, then, we find the basis for Paul’s interpretation of the visions of the Habit; but it is possible that the form the visions took was also influenced by his reading of the *Treatise*. In a chapter entitled “Gratifying and sympathetic love for the Passion of our Lord” (207), after speaking of the loving sorrow and sorrowing love experienced by the one who sees Jesus in Gethsemane, Francis de Sales writes:

And if I wear mourning for the Passion and Death of my King, all darkened and black with grief, I do not cease to experience incomparable sweetness in gazing on the excess of love he shows in the midst of labour and suffering (208).

There is a parallel here with the statement in the fragment of Paul’s first Rule that the reason for wearing black “is to be clothed in mourning in memory of the Passion and Death of Jesus” (209).

We can also find in the *Treatise* a possible parallel for the Sign of the Passion in the chapter entitled: “Marvelous story of the death of a gentleman who died of love on the Mount of Olives” (210). The man, “a most illustrious and virtuous knight” (211), made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land where he visited in turn the different places associated with the life, Passion and death of Christ, finally arriving at the place of the Ascension, Mount Olivet. There, He began to draw to himself all the strength of his affections, as an archer draws back the bowstring when he wishes

to shoot his arrow; then, drawing himself up, with his eyes and hands towards heaven, he said, "Oh Jesus, my dear Jesus, I no longer know where to seek you and follow you on earth; Jesus, my love, grant that this heart may follow you and go to you above." And with these ardent words, he let fly his soul to Heaven, as an arrow which, like a divine archer, he shot straight at the heart of God (212).

His companions, on seeing him fall down at their feet, sent for a doctor who, on arriving at the scene, pronounced him to be dead. The doctor then enquired what kind of man he had been and, on being told that he was very devout and ardent in the love of God, said that the cause of death was that his heart had broken with excess of fervour and love:

So as to make a surer judgment, he wished to open him up; when he did so, he found that the heart was broken open, with this word graven within: 'Jesus, my love' (213)!

To say that Paul of the Cross was influenced by his reading of the *Treatise on the Love of God* is not to take away from the originality of his experience. Nor is it to deny that the inspirations he received were from God, as Paul himself always affirmed. Rather, it is to say that Paul, who sought to communicate an experience to others by creating a symbolic structure or environment, did so because it was through symbols that the foundational experience had been communicated to him. These symbols were encountered by him in material or natural objects, through his reading, and through contact with his social and cultural milieu. Paul's originality lies not in the symbols themselves, which are universal, but in the particular way in which he was moved by them, that is, the experience which they communicated to him, and in the structure or environment he created with them in order to communicate his experience to others.

## CONCLUSION

From our reading of the *Preface to the Rule* and the Rule itself, the two basic texts for this study, we see that symbol has a central role in the spirituality given by Paul of the Cross to his Congregation. In his own life, symbol held a privileged place, as it was the medium through which the founding inspirations were communicated to him, and it was in terms of symbol that he responded to these inspirations. The different symbols which we have seen in the two texts brought him into contact with a level of understanding which was beyond the conceptual level, moving him deeply and prompting him to act.

We can say from our reading of the texts that the role played by symbol in Paul's life was, at that stage, both a formative and a unifying one. The effect of the symbols on him was formative in that they shaped his vision in a lasting way; the experience was a unifying one, at the end of which Paul understood the various inspirations as related to one unified "form of life" rather than as a number of disjointed concepts, as they were perhaps later understood.

The series of symbols we have examined also represent different stages of Paul's spiritual journey during these years. It is the author's belief that Paul's later teaching on prayer follows the basic lines of the itinerary contained in the *Preface to the Rule*, and that it would be possible to reconstruct his spiritual doctrine on the basis of the symbolic structure we find in the Preface. This would give us a treatment of the spirituality of Paul of the Cross which had as its starting point his own experience, and in which not only the content but also the form given to it would flow from his teaching.

The symbols of the community are to be understood in relation to Paul's statement in the *Preface* that at the end of the series of symbolic experiences, "God infused into my soul in a lasting manner the form of the holy Rule to be observed by the Poor of Jesus and by me, his least and lowest servant"(214). The "form of the holy Rule" can be seen as referring to the symbolic structure, based on Paul's personal experience, which, in spite of the various revisions of the Rule, always remained intact. Hence Paul could affirm, even when numerous changes had been made, that "nothing essential has been touched" (215).

What, then, is the role of these symbols in the spirituality of the Passionists? As for Paul, so also for his community, the symbols are to communicate a deeper reality; they are to bring about in the life of each member of the community an experience analogous to that of the founder. Their role in the life both of the community and of the individual is to be a formative and a unifying one, as was the case in the life of the founder. Paul intended that the symbols, as expressed in the Rule, would create a setting in which the form of life given to him would penetrate the hearts of his companions and lead them along a path similar to his own. For the Passionists, the role of the symbols of the Congregation is related to both structure and itinerary: they are to set up an external environment and lead to an inner experience.

## ENDNOTES

1. In the course of this study, reference will be made to the Treatise on Mystical Death. There is a diversity of opinion over whether or not the Treatise was written by Paul of the Cross. It is sufficient for our purposes to see it as a text which was definitely recommended to others by Paul, and therefore in harmony with his views, whether actually written by him or not.
2. *Lettere di San Paolo della Croce* (Volumes I-IV), a cura del P. Amedeo della Madre del Buon Pastore, Roma, Istituto Pio IX, 1924; *ibid* (Volume V), a cura di Cristoforo Chiari, Roma, Curia Generalizia PP. Passionisti, 1977. The text of the *Preface to the Rule* is found in volume IV, pages 217-221. (Quotations from the *Lettere di San Paolo della Croce* will be cited as *Lettere*, followed by the number of the volume and the page number). An English translation of the *Preface to the Rule* is to be found in Mercurio, Roger & Rouse, Silvan (Eds.), *Words from the Heart - A Selection from the Personal Letters of St Paul of the Cross*, Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1976 (hereinafter referred to as *Words from the Heart*), pp. 11-15.
3. *Words from the Heart*, p.11.
4. S. Paolo della Croce, *Diario Spirituale*, testo critico a cura del P. Enrico Zoffoli, Roma, PP. Passionisti, 1964. English translation in *Words from the Heart*, pp.17-33.
5. *Words from the Heart*, p.11 f.
6. Zoffoli, *San Paolo della Croce*, Roma, Curia Generalizia PP. Passionisti, 1963, vol. I, p.138.
7. Jean Chevalier & Alain Gheerbrant, *Dictionnaire des Symboles*, Laffont, Paris, 1982, p. 645.
8. *ibid.*, p. 646.
9. Mircea Eliade, *Traite d'histoire des religions*, Paris, 1949, nouvelle edition 1964, quoted by Chevalier, *ibid.*, p. 189.
10. cf. Gerard de Champeaux & Sebastien Sterckx, *Le Monde des Symboles*, Zodiaque, 1980 (3e edition), p.165.
11. *ibid.*
12. *ibid*, p.176.
13. The title "his Divine Majesty" occurs most frequently; for the others, see *Lettere* II, 658; II, 214; III, 526; IV, 163; IV, 109. In the *Treatise on Mystical Death*, the reader is counseled to develop an awareness of God's transcendence: "I will foster a very exalted idea of God as Master of all, Immense Love, Inexorable Judge, Goodness without end" (St Paul of the Cross, *Mystical Death*, or *Holocaust of the a Pure Spirit of a Religious Soul*, translated by Silvan Rouse, Owensboro, Passionist Nuns, n. d., p. 8. This translation will hereinafter be cited as *Mystical Death*).
14. Conversation of St Paul with Cardinal Pallotta, recalled by Brother Bartholemew of St. Aloysius in his testimony at the Canonization Process (*I Processi di Beatificazione e Canonizzazione di S. Paolo della Croce*, a cura del P. Gaetano dell' Addolorata (4 volumes), Roma, Postulazione Generale dei PP. Passionisti, 1969, vol.4, p.315f). Father John Mary of St. Ignatius says that on the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady, 1721, the ship arrived at Monte Argentario and "it happened that the sea calmed to such an extent that the boat could not go on; the sailors landed on the beach, got down from the boat, and began to gather wild figs, while the Servant of God contemplated the mountain, and the caves on it, longing to withdraw there to do penance" (*ibid*, vol.1, p.45).



15. Father John Mary says, “He also told me that the mountain and the church above Sestri were like a figure, and that by them the Lord meant Monte Argentaro, to which in fact he later did withdraw” (*ibid.*, vol. I, p.40).
16. *Lettere* I, 414; II, 280; cf. Sg 4:6.
17. *Lettere* I, 30.
18. *Lettere* IV, 205.
19. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p.649.
20. Mk 6:46; Mt 14:23.
21. Mk 6:31.
22. *Lettere* III, 417f .
23. On the holy mountain as centre-of-the-world, see Champeaux-Sterckx, *op. cit.*, p.164ff.
24. In the *Treatise on Mystical Death*, we read: “I will try with all my strength to follow the footsteps of my Jesus. If I am afflicted, abandoned, desolate, I will keep him company in the Garden....If I am depressed and afflicted in the agonies of suffering, I will keep Him company faithfully on the Mount, and in a generous spirit I will keep Him company on the Cross, with the lance in my heart” (*Mystical Death*, p. 9).
25. *Lettere* II, 811. The scripture quotations are from Gen 28;12 and Ps 83 (84):6b.
26. Mircea Eliade, *Traite d’Histoire des religions*, Payot, Paris, 1949, p. 96, quoted by Champeaux-Sterckx, *op. cit.*, p.161.
27. Champeaux-Sterckx, *op. cit.*, p.167.
28. cf. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 203f.
29. Ex 33:22.
30. 1 Kg 19:12f.
31. Lk 9:34.
32. see page 5.
33. From his letters we see that Paul was insistent that every religious should have his own cell: “The rules say that every religious is to have his own cell so as to be able to attend to his spiritual exercises, and to silence and recollection. These are essential points of the rule” (*Lettere* II, 561).
34. “When a new wing was being built in the same retreat (of Sant’ Angelo [at Vetralla]), it seemed to me that the rooms were being made too narrow, so I pointed this out to Father Paul. He replied that the cell of the religious should be like a tomb, as St Bernard used to say, because the religious should be dead to all created things” (Testimony of Rev. Philip Pieri, *Processi*, vol. III, p.108f).
35. According to Jung, “the cave corresponds to the tomb” (Carl G. Jung, “Metamorphoses de l’Ame et ses symboles”, *Psychologie et Religion*, Paris, 1958, p.562, quoted by Eloi Leclerc, *Le cantique des creatures*, Desclee de Brouwer, Paris, 1988, p.152).
36. C.G. Jung, *op. cit.*, p.501, quoted by E. Leclerc, *op. cit.*, p.152.
37. *ibid.*
38. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 204.
39. *Lettere*, III, 610.
40. *Words from the Heart*, p.11.
41. *Lettere*, II, 38.
42. *ibid.*, III,745.
43. *ibid.*, II, 472.
44. cf. *ibid.*, II, 35.

45. According to Bachelard, "To live in the cave is to participate in the life of the earth, in the very womb of Mother Earth" (Gustave Bachelard, *La Terre et les Reveries du repos*, Paris, 1948, quoted by Leclerc, *op. cit.*, p.151).
46. *Lettere*, III, 610.
47. *ibid.*, II, 310.
48. "This sacred mystical nativity is celebrated every day in the deepest inner solitude, and in this holy desert, in high abstraction and detachment from all created things, in perfect nudity and poverty of spirit and in a holy silence of faith and love, the human soul is reborn in the Divine humanized Word to a new life which is all holy and deiform" (*ibid.*, II, 310).
49. *ibid.*, II, 820; IV, 24.
50. *ibid.*, I, 718; I, 753; II, 764.
51. *ibid.*, III, 297.
52. "All your repose is to be in God....and remaining always *in sinu Dei*, you will be reborn always to a new life of love in the Divine Word Jesus Christ. Say the psalms in choir in true interior solitude, reciting them *in Spiritu Dei*, etc. St John the Evangelist, in that great vision he had of Paradise, saw that in that sovereign city there was no temple, and he adds that God is the temple of that great city of peace. Oh, how sweet it is to pray either vocally or mentally in this divine temple which is God himself!" (*ibid.*, II, 522).
53. "The more often you become centered in God in the deepest interior solitude, the more frequently you will celebrate the mystical Divine Nativity in the interior temple and you will be reborn every moment to a life more deified, deiform and holy, *et fiet in te Divina Nativitas*" (*ibid.*, III, 348).
54. *ibid.*, II, 472.
55. *Ibid.*, II, 762.
56. *Ibid.*, II, 101.
57. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 437.
58. "Fire ... expresses the ardent power of life, in all its forms, from great spiritual activity to the most archaic and savage passion" (Leclerc, *op. cit.*, p.128).
59. *Lettre*, II, 487; IV, 47.
60. *ibid.*, IV, 51.
61. "Totally humbled and centered in your nothingness, in your being able to do nothing, having nothing, knowing nothing, but with deep, childlike confidence in the Lord, you must lose everything in the abyss of the infinite charity of God, who is a fire of love; our God is a consuming fire ...; and there, in that immense fire, let all that is imperfect in you be burned away, and let yourself be reborn to a new deified life, a life which is all love, an all-holy life, and you will experience this Divine Nativity in the Divine Word Christ our Lord" (*ibid.*, II, 724).
62. "Oh! what a great fire burns in the stable at Bethlehem" (*ibid.*, II, 130).
63. Paul applies the image of fire to his own community when speaking of the possibility of making a foundation at *S. Tommaso in formis* in Rome: "God wishes to light a great fire in Rome" (*ibid.*, II, 126); "The building will be ready soon, God willing; the ways are opening up: the fire will be lit by our dear Jesus, but what a great fire of holy love will it be .... I wish to bathe in that bath of fire which the great God is preparing for our poor neighbors with this foundation" (*ibid.*, II, 128).
64. Jn 4:23. Paul writes to Fr Thomas (Fossi) of Jesus and Mary: "True worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth; take good note of all this, since in these words of Jesus Christ are contained all that is perfect with regard to prayer" (*Lettere*, I, 795f). In another

- letter, to Signora Teresa Palozzi, he says: “Become accustomed to doing meditation in the interior church of your soul. It is of the faith that our soul is the temple of the living God; it is of the faith that God lives in us. Well then, enter into yourself and there adore the Most High in spirit and in truth....” (*ibid.*, III, 359).
65. *ibid.*, II, 258.
  66. *Words from the Heart*, pp.11 f.
  67. cf. Costante Brovetto, “Le visioni intellettuali” di S. Paolo della Croce’, *Mistica e Misticismo Oggi*, Roma CIPI, 1979, pp.440-455.
  68. Paul himself explains the nature of these visions as follows: “Whoever reads this should understand that, in seeing the tunic presented to me, I did not see any bodily form as if it were a man; no - but I saw it in God! The soul knows that it is God because he makes it understand this through interior movements of the heart and infused knowledge in the mind, but in so sublime a fashion that it is very hard to explain; the soul reacts as God intends but cannot describe it either by spoken or written word” (*Words from the Heart*, p.12).
  69. *Lettere*, IV, p.148f.
  70. *The Celestial Hierarchy* 15,7, in Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, London, SPCK (Classics of Western Spirituality), 1987, p.188.
  71. *ibid.*, p.189.
  72. Egon Sendler, *L’Icône, image de l’invisible*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1981, p.144.
  73. Johannes Itten, *The Art of Color*, New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1973.
  74. *ibid.*, p.132.
  75. Sendler, *op. cit.*, p.143.
  76. *Words from the Heart*, p.12.
  77. Sendler, *op. cit.*, p.151.
  78. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 671.
  79. *ibid.*, p.671. Kandinsky says: “Black resonates within, like a mere nothing without possibilities, like a dead thing after the death of the sun, like an eternal silence, without a future, without even the hope of a future” (Vassili Kandinsky, *Du spirituel dans l’art*, Paris, 1954, quoted by Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p.671).
  80. *ibid.*, p. 673.
  81. Jn 12:24.
  82. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p.673.
  83. *ibid.*
  84. Sendler, *op. cit.*, p.151.
  85. In a letter to Thomas Fossi, Paul writes: “Your present conduct consists in living a dying life; how pleasing that is to the Lord!” (*Lettere*, I, 685).
  86. *Words from the Heart*, p.14.
  87. *Lettere*, I, 787. The scripture quotations are from 1 Cor 15:31 and Col 3:3.
  88. Sendler, *op. cit.*, p.145.
  89. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p.125.
  90. *ibid.*, p.127.
  91. Sendler, *op. cit.*, p.146.
  92. *Words from the Heart*, p.12.
  93. *ibid.*, p.14.
  94. Phil 3:10.
  95. “According to the etymology of the Greek word, the expression “to be clothed” signifies to enter, to immerse oneself in. Consequently, the meaning of the expression “to clothe

- oneself in Christ” immediately refers us to the notion of interiority” (Charles Andre Bernard, *La Theologie Symbolique*, Paris, Tequi, 1978, p.214).
96. *Lettere* II, 321f .
  97. *ibid.*, II, 322. Commenting on this text of Paul of the Cross, Martin Bialas says: “In his formulation, the verb rinascere (to be reborn) has the meaning to rise, to resurrect, since it is directly related to life. The effect and the goal of this “being born again in the Divine Word” consists in receiving a share in the life and power of the crucified and resurrected Lord so that finally what will be obtained is a kind of symbiosis” (Martin Bialas, *The Mysticism of the Passion in St. Paul of the Cross*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1990, p.313).
  98. It is interesting that while witnesses at the Canonization Processes seemed to feel the need to explain the absence of the words Christi Passio, they did not seem concerned over the lack of an explicit statement about Paul’s having seen a heart-symbol: “While reading this text in my presence (the *Preface to the Rule*), in which he speaks of the light received concerning the sign and the tunic, he told me that he had received it several times, and that in the first vision he saw the most holy name of Jesus, and that he received Christi Passio in other, subsequent lights” (Testimony of Fr John Mary of St Ignatius, *Processi*, vol.1, p.40).
  99. *Words from the Heart*, p.12. In a letter written to his former spiritual director, Canon Paul Cerruti of Alessandria, to inform him of the approval of the Rule by Papal Rescript in 1741, Paul speaks of the Sign: “on the tunic and the mantle, on the left side of the breast, we wear the admirable, most holy Sign of the Passion, consisting of a white cross planted in a heart, on which is Written in white letters the dear name of Jesus, with the title of the most sacred Passion, in accordance with that light so clear which, as you well know, I had about twenty- three years ago, and which was also expressed to me by the Supreme Good by the aforementioned title; this title is written entirely in white letters, (Jesu Christi Passio), which moves greatly to devotion” (*Lettere*, II, 272f.).
  100. Bernard, *op. cit.*, p.225.
  101. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p.263.
  102. *ibid.*, p.265.
  103. *ibid.*, a.266.
  104. *ibid.*, p.264.
  105. *Ibid.*, p 264.
  106. *Lettere* V, 12f .
  107. *Words from the Heart*, p.11.
  108. *Lettere*, I, 108.
  109. *ibid.*, I, 106; I, 120; I, 157; I, 187; I, 497.
  110. *ibid.*, IV, 228; cf. letter written by Paul in 1773 to Pope Clement XIV: “Divine Providence has made use of the Sovereign Clemency and zeal of your Holiness to plant in the field of the Gospel... our poor Congregation of the most holy Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that it may inflame the hearts of the faithful with the fervent and continual memory of the same most holy Passion of our divine Redeemer” (*ibid.*, IV, 204).
  111. “The most efficacious means for the conversion of sinners and for the sanctification of souls is the frequent remembrance of the Passion of Jesus Christ, from the forgetfulness of which proceed deplorable evils and disorders. Therefore our most merciful God in His infinite Goodness granted strong and gentle inspirations to establish this poor Congregation in Holy Church. Its purpose is to form zealous workers filled with the Spirit, that they might be fit instruments used by the Almighty Hand of God to sow virtue and

root out vice in the people with the most potent weapon of the aforementioned Passion, whose very loving attraction even the hardest heart cannot resist “ (Paul of the Cross, *The Congregation of the Passion of Jesus - What it is and what it wants to do (Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality, I)*, Rome, Passionist General Curia, 1982, p.16).

112. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p.318.
113. *ibid.*, p.319.
114. Champeaux-Sterckx, *op. cit.*, p.365.
115. *ibid.*
116. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 319.
117. Preface of the Triumph of the Cross, *Roman Missal*, p.449.
118. Antiphon from First Vespers of the Exaltation of the Cross, *The Divine Office*, vol. III, p.246; cf. Ez 47:12; Rev 22:2.
119. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p.323.
120. *Lettere* III, 17.
121. *ibid.* II 279.
122. *ibid.*, I, 520.
123. *ibid.*, I, 476.
124. *ibid.*, I, 546.
125. *Lettere* I, 601; cf. I, 685; II, 24; II, 826.
126. *ibid.*, I, 24.
127. *ibid.*, I, 24. In the *Spiritual Diary* we read, “I told my Jesus that his crosses are the joys of my heart” (*Words from the Heart*, p.19).
128. *Lettere* II, 499.
129. *Words from the Heart*, p.19.
130. *Words from the Heart*, p.13. For Paul the vision does not form part of the series of experiences leading to the founding of the Congregation; he says he tells of it in order to explain how such visions take place. However, in this vision, which he says he had “several times”, we can clearly see a teaching on the relationship between love and suffering.
131. “At holy Communion I was particularly recollected, especially in a sorrowful and loving remembrance of the sufferings of my Jesus. This high favour which the good God grants me at such a time I know not how to explain because I cannot. You must know that, in recalling the sufferings of my dear Jesus, sometimes when I have only recalled one or two I have to stop because the soul can say no more and feels that it is melting away. It remains thus languishing with the greatest sweetness mingled with tears, with the sufferings of the Spouse infused into it; or to explain it more clearly, it is immersed in the Heart and in the sorrows of its beloved Spouse, Jesus. Sometimes it understands them all, and remains thus in God in this loving and sorrowful contemplation. It is very difficult to explain; it always seems to me to be something new” (*Words from the Heart*, p.23f.).
132. *Lettere*, I, 549. Paul’s teaching on this loving and sorrowful remembrance is found in a letter to Fr John Mary of St Ignatius: “Regarding the point you do not understand, i.e. making the pains of Jesus your own through love, his Divine Majesty will make you understand it when it pleases him to do so. This is a work which is completely divine; and the soul which is totally immersed in pure love, without images in pure and naked faith (when it pleases the Supreme Good), in a moment finds itself also immersed in the sea of the pains of the Saviour, and in a glance of faith understands everything, without understanding, because the Passion of Jesus is totally a work of love, and while the soul remains completely lost in God who is charity, who is all love, there comes about a

- mixture of love and sorrow, because the spirit is totally penetrated by this and stays all immersed in a sorrowing love and a loving sorrow: it is the work of God” (*ibid.*, III, 149).
133. *ibid.*, I, 67,
  134. In a letter to Abate Conte Garagni, one of the delegates for the examination of the Rule in 1741, he writes, “I commend myself to your great kindness for the holy sign of salvation, that we might have the good fortune of wearing it externally, and more so in our hearts to the confusion of the powers of evil” (*ibid.*, II, 215). It was only with the approval of the Rule by Benedict XIV, subsequent to this examination, that Paul and his companions were allowed to wear the Sign for the first time.
  135. *ibid.*, II, 364.
  136. *ibid.*, II, 440.
  137. *Words from the Heart*, p.11.
  138. *ibid.*, p.12.
  139. *ibid.*, p.13f.
  140. As late as 1769, just six years before his death, when the Congregation was to be solemnly approved by Pope Clement XIV, he wrote to Monsignor Garampi, who was involved in the writing of the Bull of approval: “I ask you to request the Cardinal, on my behalf, to remove the paragraph concerning the privilege of receiving donations, bequests or inheritances of stable goods which could later be sold, as this privilege is contrary to the holy Rules, which prohibit the accepting of an inheritance of stable goods, and it could obscure the strict poverty on which this Congregation has been erected and made stable” (*Lettere*, III, 729).
  141. cf. *Breve Notizia*, in *Regulae et Consitutiones CP.*, Romae, 1958, p.171f; this work will hereafter be cited as *Reg. et Const*
  142. On the symbolic meaning of poverty, see Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p.735.
  143. Phil 2:7. In the fragment of the first Rule, Paul speaks of the “God-Made-Man” who “suffered so much for me that he gave up his life by dying on the hard wood of the cross” (*Words from the Heart*, p.14), while in a letter to his brother Joseph, he encourages him to accept the difficulties of life “for love of the Passion and Death of that Sovereign Lord who for love of us wished to become so poor and die naked on a Cross” (*Lettere* II, 553).
  144. “Ah! when will we imitate perfectly our dear Saviour who emptied himself, when will we be so humble that we glory in being despised by men, rejected by the people” (*ibid.*, I, 68). The scripture quotations are from Phil 2:7 and Ps 22 (21):6.
  145. *Ibid.*, I, 159.
  146. In a letter to Sister Anna Maria Orsini he writes: “Seek only God, his pure and holy love, his greater glory, and when God favours you in prayer, take great account of it, and receive the graces with humility of heart and true gratitude, but quickly strip yourself of everything, place those gifts in the fire of holy love, and with them, incense the Most High who gave them to you, remaining in true poverty, nudity and interior annihilation” (*ibid.*, V, 164; cf. I, 165; I, 180; III, 464).
  147. *ibid.*, I, 189.
  148. He writes to Sister Mary Clare of St Philip: “Oh! How pleasing to God is the sacrifice which consists in that stripping of self and nakedness I mentioned! Then the Spouse clothes his beloved bride in new garments, and these garments are so richly embroidered that neither the intellect can understand it nor the tongue speak of it” (*ibid.*, V, 171).
  149. “Remain solitary in the interior desert, in the inner depths in a pure spirit of faith and love in true abstraction and interior nakedness, stripped of happiness in poverty of spirit. Oh, what a sure way this is! Oh, how rich! ...Remain clothed in the sufferings of Jesus. When

- in the sacred interior desert, the beloved Good wishes that you remain in silence, do so, and adore him in spirit and in truth” (*ibid.*, I, 587).
150. In the *Treatise on Mystical Death* we read: “I will despise myself and rejoice in being despised by others, and placed after everyone. The one who is dead is the real poor [man] of Jesus; he is not interested in honors and contempt, and still I will show neither desire nor inclination for anything, so as not to have any enjoyment. In short, I will aim at being very poor, being deprived of what I have, because it is not mine, and to make myself ever poorer so as to become like the poor Jesus. May I die poor on the Cross like you!” (*Lettere* V, 13f.)
  151. *Ibid.*, I, 141.
  152. cf. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 676.
  153. The *Preface to the Rule* is prefixed with the words “blessed be the name of Jesus”, as is the fragment of the first Rule. (See *Words from the Heart*, pp.11, 14.)
  154. *Words from the Heart*, p.14.
  155. *Words from the Heart*, p.17.
  156. On 6 October 1720, the day before he completed the writing of the Rule, he wrote: “I was especially fervent in praying God that he would hasten to found this Congregation in holy Church, and for sinners. I had a keen infused knowledge of the sufferings of my Jesus, and I felt so ardent a desire to be perfectly united with him that I wished really to feel his sufferings and to be on the cross with him” (*Words from the Heart*, p. 22).
  157. On Paul’s consciousness of himself as founder, see Fabiano Giorgini, *History of the Passionists*, volume I, Isola del Gran Sasso, Edizioni ECO, 1987, pp.75-84.
  158. *Words from the Heart*, p.13.
  159. Giorgini, *op. cit.*, p.507.
  160. Footnote made by Fr. John Mary of St Ignatius to the *Preface to the Rule*, *Lettere*, IV, 221f.; cf. *Processi*, I, p.35.
  161. *Words from the Heart*, p.14.
  162. *Reg. et Const.*, pp. 2-146.
  163. *Ibid.*, pp.2--4.
  164. This is in fact the third chapter of the Rule, but it could be called the opening of the Rule’s first section, as it seems probable that the first two chapters were not in the original text: most of their content has a juridic value, which would not have been Paul’s concern in 1720; in addition, the part of Chapter I which speaks of the Passion seems to repeat what is contained in Chapters XVIII, XXIII and XXVI.
  165. *ibid.*, p. 6.
  166. *ibid.*, p.8.
  167. The symbolism of fire recurs in Chapters XXIII and XXIV.
  168. Chapter V, *Reg. et Const.*, p.10.
  169. *Words from the Heart*, p. 12.
  170. Chapter VI, *Reg. et Const.*, p.10.
  171. cf. *Words from the Heart*, p.11.
  172. *Reg. et Const.*, p.10.
  173. *ibid.*, p.20.
  174. *ibid.*
  175. Chapter VII, *ibid.*, pp. 12-14.
  176. *ibid.*, p.12.
  177. *ibid.*
  178. *ibid.*

179. The description of the Sign is made in more precise language in the next redaction of the Rule, that of 1741: “On the breast, that is, on the left side of the tunic, and mantle they will wear the most holy Name of Jesus with the title of his most holy Passion, graven upon a little heart in white letters, above which there will also be a little white cross” (*ibid.*).
180. *ibid.*, p.20. The Italian word translated here by “will divest” is “spogliera”.
181. *ibid.*,
182. *ibid.*, p.30.
183. *ibid.*, p.36. This repetition of the giving of the cross and crown of thorns, and the lack of detail in the description of the profession rite, by comparison with the rite of vestition, would support a hypothesis that in the earlier text of the Rule, there was only one ceremony of receiving the habit as a sign of admittance into the community, which would have been later divided into two ceremonies for juridic reasons.
184. *ibid.*, p.56. It is unlikely that the first Rule contained a chapter on this fourth vow, as the vow had its origin in the one made by Paul in St Mary Major during his first visit to Rome in September 1721 (cf. Zoffoli, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp.234-239). Paul had gone to Rome hoping to receive from the Pope the approval of the Rule and permission to gather companions (*Lettere*, I, 22). His vow “to promote in the hearts of the faithful the devotion to the most sacred Passion of the Redeemer, and also to work to gather companions for this purpose” (Testimony of Fr John Mary of St Ignatius, *Processi*, vol. I, p.160) [the emphasis has been added by the present writer] was an affirmation of his own convictions in the face of the failure of his mission.
185. *Words from the Heart*, p. 14f.
186. Chapter XIV, *Reg. et Const.*, p.42.
187. Chapter XV, *ibid.*, p.52.
188. “O happy the soul who will faithfully practice the love of holy poverty, and detachment from all created things, because God will transform him in his most holy love. Holy poverty would not truly be poverty if it were not uncomfortable; therefore, none of the brothers of this Congregation should seek comfort, but should follow Jesus Christ who had nowhere to lay his most sacred head, and who died naked on the hard tree of the cross” (*ibid.*, pp. 52-54). We recall that in the *Preface to the Rule*, Paul said that the intention God gave him for the Congregation was to live in “total detachment from all created things” (*Words from the Heart*, p.13).
189. *Reg. Et Const.*, p. 44.
190. Chapters XIX-XXV, *ibid.*, pp. 60-78; I include here chapter XXV which, although entitled ‘Study-time’, deals with spiritual reading and the solitary walk.
191. *ibid.*, p. 66; the scripture quotations are from Tob 12:8 and Mt 17:20.
192. *Reg. et Const.*, p.76.
192. *ibid.*, p. 68.
194. Chapter XXVI, *ibid.*, p. 84.
195. *ibid.*, p. 86; We recall that the conclusion to the *Preface to the Rule* states that one of the aims of the Congregation is “to have zeal for God’s glory, to promote the fear of God in souls by working for the destruction of sin, in a word, to be indefatigable in works of charity that our beloved God may be loved, feared, served and praised by all...” (*Words from the Heart*, p. 74).
196. Chapters I-XXVI; the “Altieri” text has a total of forty chapters.
197. The first part of the Rule, which we have taken as the basis for our study, can be divided into three main sections, corresponding to the three experiences of symbol in the *Preface to the Rule*, which represent the three stages in Paul’s awareness of his vocation to found



the Congregation. These are: a first section on where and how the Retreat is to be built (which concludes by speaking of the one who feels drawn to live there); a second section in which the habit is described and the ceremony of being clothed in it is explained; a final section dealing with poverty, prayer and fasting, and the promotion of a reverent love for God by means of the Passion of Christ. From the fact that the structure and content of the first part of the “Altieri” text comes from the *Preface to the Rule*, we can infer that the structure and content of the first Rule written at Castellazzo in 1720 were substantially the same.

198. On cultural influences on Paul’s vision of poverty, see Fabiano Giorgini, *Evangelical Poverty in the Passionist Congregation (Studies an Passionist History and Spirituality 24)*, Rome, Passionist Generalate, 1984.
199. Various witnesses speak of Paul’s acquaintance with this book (cf. Zoffoli, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 124f). Of particular interest is the statement by Francesco Antonio Capriata, a Capuchin from Castellazzo, who as a young man had been instructed by Paul: “I received (from Paul) instructions on mental prayer regarding the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways, in which I remember he used a great deal, as he did in everything, the doctrine of St Francis de Sales, of which he had a wonderful grasp” (*Processi*, vol. II, p.50).
200. *Traite de l’Amour de Dieu*, livre VI, chapitre XIII, in *Oeuvres de saint Francois de Sales*, Annecy, 1894, t. IV, p.347. In quoting the *Traite*, we will give the book and chapter numbers, followed by the volume and page numbers from the Annecy edition.
201. *ibid.*, VI, XIV, t. IV, p.352. The scripture quotation is from Phil 2:8.
202. *ibid.*, VII, VIII, t. V, p.35 We recall that in the *Spiritual Diary*, Paul of the Cross writes on 6 December: “I had a keen infused knowledge of the sufferings of my Jesus, and I felt so ardent a desire to be perfectly united with him that I wished really to feel his sufferings and to be on the cross with him” (*Words from the Heart*, p.22) .
203. In the *Spiritual Diary* Paul expresses several times his desire for martyrdom and, on the feast of-St Thomas of Canterbury (29 December), having prayed for the conversion of England, he writes: “The desire to die as a martyr, especially for the Blessed Sacrament, in some place where people do not believe, does not leave me” (*Words from the Heart*, p.32).
204. *Traite.*, VII, X, t. V, p.41.
205. *ibid.*, VII, XIII, t. V, p.52.
206. cf. *ibid.*, VII, IX, t. V, p.36.
207. *ibid.*, V, V, t. IV, p. 272ff.
208. *ibid.*, p. 273.
209. *Lettere*, IV, 220; cf: translation in *Words from the Heart*, p.14, where the word “memory”, is in fact omitted.
210. *Traite*, VII, XII, t. V, p. 45ff.
211. *ibid.*
212. *ibid.*, p. 47f.
213. *ibid.*, p.48. We recall that in the first vision of the Habit, the words heard by Paul referred to the heart on which was “graven” the holy name of Jesus.
214. *Words from the Heart*, p.13.
215. To Fr. Fulgentius of Jesus in 1746 (*ibid.*, II, 71); for similar statements, cf. *ibid.*, I, 92; II, 220; II, 270; V, 12.

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