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Il Superiore Generale

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EASTER MESSAGE AND GREETINGS 2013

My dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends in the Passionist Family,

We are living in a moment of history when, for the first time in our living memory, a reigning Pope has taken the extraordinary, but courageous and humble step to retire gracefully from his office. This act has received mixed reception from around the globe and has been for some a cause for confusion and fear. Change???

However, Pope Benedict informed us that his decision was made after an honest reflection and prayerful consideration for the well-being and effective leadership of the Church. For me, this act was **a faith-response** and powerfully throws aside any sense of clinging to human power and control; it acknowledges that the mission of leadership of the Church belongs to God who is ultimately in control and who will provide leaders to care for His People.

It is said that Pope Benedict XVI's decision to retire at this particular time is cleverly crafted to fit in with the liturgical movement which the Church is journeying. His announcement to step down at the beginning of Lent ties in with a challenge to prepare for **a new time** in the Church, with our response to the Lenten call to **Conversion** – ***“with mind and heart renewed”***. It is also hoped that the new Pope will begin his Petrine ministry of leadership, renewed in his commitment to lead God's People in following Jesus, through his saving Passion in Holy Week, to the new life of Resurrection in Easter.

As Passionists, we are ‘a part of’, and not ‘apart from’, the Church for whom, and through whom, we exist to cooperate in the mission of building the kingdom of God. So, like all concerned members of the Church, we, too, are joining in prayer while waiting eagerly for the choice of our new Holy Father to whom we will pledge our support and obedience, as did our Founder, St Paul of the Cross.

I hope that this Lent has been a profitable time for you as you responded to the call to *“turn away from sin and believe the Gospel”*. No doubt there has been much struggle as each one of us “went into the desert” like Jesus to face our battles. Perhaps we may have won some, but also lost some! Nevertheless, let us acknowledge our desire to be renewed in mind and heart which is a continual need; and let us never forget, or lose heart, that the grace of conversion is a continual offering by our loving and merciful God... *“If you only knew what God is offering...he would give you living water”* (Jn. 4:10).

As you prepare personally, communally and in ministry to celebrate the events of Holy Week and Easter which is so close to our hearts as Passionists and the spirituality which we live, I pray that you will be ever more strengthened in your vocation to deepen our charism and its mission: *to keep alive and promote the memory of the Passion of Jesus*, so that you may experience truly *the life of Jesus* in his Resurrection and *the love of God* in the Paschal Mystery.

May the Passion of Jesus be always in your hearts and may the New Life of Christ be your Light and Hope. A happy and blessed Easter to you!

(Most Rev) Joachim Rego CP
Superior General