

**SUPERIOR GENERAL'S ADVENT-CHRISTMAS
MESSAGE
TO THE PASSIONIST FAMILY 2012**



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

We have just begun a new year in our faith life and are living the journey of Advent in preparation for the feast of Christmas. This is a significant time to be lived with great seriousness, as it helps us once again to renew ourselves and prepare 'room' in our lives for welcoming the Saviour of the world: Emmanuel = GOD-WITH-US. Often, in this time of Advent, we will be calling out: "*O come, O come, Emmanuel!*" – as we wait in joyful hope.

How easy it is in our world today to lose focus, with the commercialization of this sacred time! As Christians – those who love Jesus and choose to follow his way – we are not immune to, but can so easily be seduced by, this commercialization. Yes, Christmas is an occasion and a significant event to celebrate; but what is it that we are celebrating and rejoicing in?

Advent allows us the time, supported by the Scriptures and the liturgy, to reflect on this question and to re-focus. Like Mary who "*treasured these things and pondered them in her heart*" (Lk.2:19), we are called to adopt a contemplative stance – wondering and seeing deeper into the things that are happening in our world and in our lives, and pondering it's meaning in light of the Christ: our Saviour, God-with-us, the Light of the world. Of course, this contemplative stance will no doubt also challenge us to a personal and communal conversion, which is a continual call to a genuine living of the values of God's kingdom.

For us, Passionists, the Christmas event is reflected upon from a specific standpoint. Like Mary and Joseph, we gaze upon the Christ-Child, wondering and with perhaps the same question in our minds as that of the parents of John the Baptist: "*What will this Child turn out to be?*" (Lk.1:66).

I am brought to recall the image which St Paul of the Cross treasured – the Infant Christ lying not on a manger of straw (as is often depicted), but on a cross. We know that this Child will grow up, and be supported by his parents, to assume his mission in this world as our Saviour, but only through the way of the Cross, i.e. his Passion, Death and Resurrection – the Paschal Mystery. For us, Passionists, as is intrinsic in the seed of nature, this mystery is a journey of hope and life...and Emmanuel, our God-with-us has traversed it.

We will all be engaged busily in these weeks before Christmas preparing to make our celebration meaningful and successful in our parishes, communities and families, as we must. However, let us be encouraged to adopt a contemplative stance, the stance of the true disciple. From this platform, we are certain to be enriched both in our personal, spiritual, and pastoral lives.

As we journey together in this time of Advent, let us do so with the attitude of "waiting in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ", who is the human face of God: Emmanuel = GOD-WITH-US. This is the greatest gift that we will receive and give at Christmas.

I thank you all for the witness you give as Passionists in your life and ministry as you prepare to welcome Christ and give him 'room' in your lives. May Christ reign in your hearts and may you know his Peace.

I send you my sincere greetings and wish each one of you a blessed and peace-filled Christmas. I beg your prayer for me and the General Council as we begin our ministry of leadership in the Congregation.

Fraternally,

(Most Rev) Joachim Rego, CP
Superior General