

FEAST OF ST PAUL OF THE CROSS 2014

Superior General's Message



Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends in the Passionist Family,

Fraternal greetings and blessings of peace on this feast of our Holy Founder, St Paul of the Cross!

On this feast day, I feel led to reflect on the theme underlying the inspired experience of Paul of the Cross when he 'saw' Mary not "with bodily eyes, although he had been aware of her and understood that she was present", dressed in what was to be the Passionist habit. A close friend, Rosa Calabrese shares with us how Paul himself described this experience:

"One day he [Paul of the Cross] confided to me...: "I saw the most holy Virgin dressed in black with the sign on her breast, which is the one in fact that I wore myself and had my religious wear, and with love beyond that of a mother, she said to me: My son, do you see how I am dressed in mourning? This is for the most sorrowful Passion of Jesus, my beloved Son. You are to dress like this and to found a Congregation whose members will dress in this way and will mourn constantly for the Passion and death of my dear Son."



In a fragment of the Rule of 1720, Paul himself writes: "You must know, dearly beloved, 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."

I feel interested to reflect on this theme of '**mourning**' because I feel it has implications for us in our witness and mission. My concern is not so much to dwell on the religious habit itself, or the colour (black or white) which can vary according to its meaning in different cultures.

In the founding experience, Paul was asked to found a Congregation whose members will **mourn** constantly for the Passion and Death of Jesus. To 'mourn' is a memoria: to remember again, to make present and feel the loss of someone or something, to experience deep grief. There are many people and situations in life which we mourn due to, for example, the death or departure of someone close to us; the loss of a job or ministry; the transfer to a new community; the sale of the family home; the victims of tragedy and disaster etc.

As Passionists we are to mourn for the Passion and Death of Jesus, not only in that once-for-all historical moment on Calvary, but to feel deep grief in the continuing Passion and Death (Memoria Passionis) in our times and history of today: wars and fighting, racism and hatred, exploitation of human and natural resources, abuse of power and people, rejection and abandonment, poverty and injustice. We do not have to look far to know the reality of these situations in our global world and in our individual societies and environment. It is all around us.



So how do we Passionists mourn for these people and situations – both near and far? Do we believe that our mourning will support and give hope and comfort to people? Are we mindful of the face of the Suffering Christ in those people and situations that are suffering? Are we prepared to mourn with hope, while submitting to God to act with power in our powerlessness?



As we celebrate the feast of St Paul of the Cross, let us join him in standing at the foot of the Cross of Jesus, together with Mary the Mother of Jesus who gives us the mission to mourn the Passion and Death of Jesus yesterday and today. Let our grief move us to act with compassion in all situations and to stand in solidarity with the 'crucified of today' simply supporting with a quiet presence which gives comfort.

As Jesus said: "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted." (Mt.5:4)

WE ARE AWARE THAT THE PASSION OF CHRIST CONTINUES IN THIS WORLD UNTIL HE COMES IN GLORY;

THEREFORE, WE SHARE IN THE JOYS AND SORROWS OF OUR CONTEMPORARIES

AS WE JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE TOWARD OUR FATHER.

WE WISH TO SHARE IN THE DISTRESS OF ALL,

ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ARE POOR AND NEGLECTED;

WE SEEK TO OFFER THEM COMFORT AND TO RELIEVE THE BURDEN OF THEIR SORROW.

~ CONST. #3

Through the intercession of St Paul of the Cross, and the support of Our Lady of Sorrows, may you know God's love and comfort; and may the Passion of Jesus be always in our hearts.

Faternally,



FR. JOACHIM REGO, C.P.

Superior General

