



CONGREGATION OF THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

## 47<sup>th</sup> GENERAL CHAPTER

Rome, 6-27 October 2018

# Report of the GENERAL ARCHIVIST

## History of the General Archives

The General Archives of the Passionist Congregation, located in the complex of the Retreat of Sts. John and Paul in Rome, contains all materials pertaining to the central government [of the Congregation]. Unfortunately, after painstaking archival work, documentation from the first half of the 18th century into the third quarter of the 20th century appears to be incomplete.

## Description of the “Early Collection”

The Archives was initially organized between 1827-1830 and the entire "early" collection was divided into two major sections: *the Founder*<sup>1</sup> and *early documents*. It was reorganized during the successive years and was restructured according to other criteria. The result was greater confusion, i.e. when documents were relocated to current locations, they were redistributed into other locations.

In addition to what has been stated thus far, the problem is that the current file folders that preserve valuable documents are still identified by markings used in a former archival system that no longer corresponds neither to the previous physical location (see descriptive lists manuscripts), nor to the current written paper inventory (at the moment incomplete). These file folders also need to be replaced with better quality ones that comply with the regulations generally used for long-term preservation.

It is urgent that the section of the early documents (religious foundations and retreats, controversies, conflicts and the Rules) before being made available for consultation, need to be preserved by dusting, organizing and also reordering and assembling using proper identification and research tools.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to financial assistance from the Italian Episcopal Conference, the following are available in digital form: The Origins (561 documents), the Processes (684 documents) and the Letters of the Founder. Of these, few are original documents and many are “exact copies”.

## Reordering of the “Modern” Archives

From an initial archival survey made in October 2015, when I was appointed General Archivist, it appears that the Archive has only partial descriptive lists of consistency (manuscripts) and of the topography of the Archive itself. In the Archives, there is no inventory instrument; all sections are devoid of any reference instruments.

Having submitted the case to some colleagues who are professionals in this field and using their recommendations, steps were taken to establish a plan of action aimed at enhancing the entire documentary patrimony that exists in the complex of Sts. John and Paul. The project, approved by the Superior General and his Council, was to safeguard the Archives, reordering the spaces and inventorying the material.

The Archives, improperly defined as "modern", which preserves the General Government legal structure (Chapters, Superiors General, members of the Curia, the Holy See, and the Passionist family) was in general disarray. After repositioning and reordering the entire space with new shelving, primarily recycled from the monastery, consisting of 25 metal containers (64 meters), the General Archives now measures 400 linear metres [approximately 1300 square feet].

The structure was increased from 223.44 to 392.04 square meters. The new rooms have been restored and air-conditioned. New fire extinguishers and dehumidifiers were purchased.

## The Index and Cataloging Systems

Central to any archive, especially for the current Archive, in the stage of reorganization, is that the same juridical structure be used concerning the life and activity of the General Curia. The index system of the CP General Archives was created by following the procedure above.

Today, the introduction of any single document is done by assigning a sequence number to each document and recording it in an inventory register, while cataloging is done through the use of the software program *Shades Ecclesia*<sup>2</sup>. Only later, will researchers be able to access this data, on specific request, through a filter and a password.

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<sup>2</sup> The *Shades Software* program was purchased by the Congregation. It was created precisely for ecclesiastical archivists, with a capacity of inscribing in its data base over 4 million items with the possibility of expanding it to 18 million records.

## Creation of other Collections

In the General Archives, there are various Collections that have been created:

### -- Retreats

This Collection was generated from the extensive collection of the members of the Historical Commission. We hope to add the original archives of the suppressed retreats.

### -- Secretary of the Missions/Solidarity

During the phase of transition of Secretaries for the Missions and Solidarity, from Fr. Jesús María Aristín to Fr. Paulo Aureli, the Collection that was dormant during the 1980's has been completed and unified.

### -- The Historical Commission

This Collection was created from the compilations of the first three members of the Commission. This substantial collection is of great value to researchers.

### -- The Passionist Nuns

We also unified all the archival material from various sources, including the Generalate, concerning the CP nuns. This material has helped to augment material in this sector.

### -- The Postulation

The entire collection of the entire processes of beatification and canonization of all our Saints and Beati have been added to the General Archives. Presently this collection is being inventoried.<sup>3</sup>

### -- The "Passionist" Library

The General Archives contains specific library materials, i.e. the library of Passionist authors. This Collection, in process of being inventoried, was begun with the help of two apprentices from Spain through the ARGO project. Until now, of the 9,500 volumes that were verified, 254 titles are missing. Soon, this Collection will be available online.

During these past three years, the patrimony of the library has increased not only with the arrival of Passionist magazines and newsletters, but also with the addition of 95 new publications of the Religious. Using the *Shades* software, we added several hundred additional books that were published in past years but were not cataloged using the old software.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2016, with the assistance of the MAPRAES Province and the PIET region, we digitalized the major part of the documentation of the "St. Vincent Mary Strambi Collection" totaling 12,982 images.

### -- The Stauros Library

The General Archives has been entrusted with “safeguarding” the *Stauros* library that was located in Belgium since 1938 and then transferred to Sts. John and Paul in 2011. Unfortunately, during the reordering of the volumes, it appears that of the 14,612 titles cataloged, 272 texts are missing.

### -- Photographs

Unfortunately, at present we cannot determine the extent of our photographic material because it has not yet been inventoried. We are confident that the General Archives has about 2,500 negatives on glass plates, belonging to the former Museum of Saint Paul of the Cross and currently stored in sealed containers. Having considered the material of great historic value, thanks to the contribution from the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI), these items were cleaned and digitized. However, it is estimated that over 90% of these plates that once belonged to the Museum are still missing and dispersed in various retreats.

Soon, we hope to begin cataloging and digitizing all of the photographs in the General Archives. It is the next project we intend to submit to the CEI for funding.

## The Consultation Room

### Visitors to the General Archives

Subsequent to the approval of the new Regulations, the preparation of a Consultation Room and our registration at the Registry Office of Ecclesiastical and Cultural Institutes, the General Archives is now open regularly, by request, to researchers. Requests are processed in the appropriate sector of the Congregation web site [www.passiochristi.org](http://www.passiochristi.org).

The General Archives attracts more and more non-Passionist scholars, the majority of which are laity.

	Externs	CP Religious	Students at Sts. John and Paul	Curia	Passionis Library	On-line requests
2016	26	34	12	25	5	118
2017	71	45	37	47	3	134
2018	35	14	30	35	10	77

## For optimal management of the General Archives

Unfortunately, the Archives were never a priority for the Congregation. A distressing historical issue was the decentralization of the archives of the Passionist provinces. Nearly 60% of the requests for consultations regard material that is unavailable!

An archive is not managed with a “click” sitting in front of a computer! It would be appropriate to:

**1) Name a commission of professional archivists** to study the safeguarding, preservation and development of the General Archives of the Institute;

**2) Approve, as soon as possible, regulations for the management of current archival material** that is present in the various offices and departments of the Generalate. Due to the lack of clear rules and an effective index system, no documents produced and received by the General Curia (original paper documents, publications, etc.) to date has been brought to the Archives, in a systematic and thorough fashion. This would ensure their preservation and historical memory. Not to mention the digital age! Additionally, we need to address the issue of new digital systems for archiving materials of this nature;

**3) Resume the ancient practice of sending** material produced in the new entities of the Congregation, both digital and paper versions, to the General Archives. Additionally, the responsibility continues to send to the General Archives two copies of every book published by Passionist authors;

**4) Organize training and refresher courses** and meetings to better prepare new Provincial/Vice-Provincial secretaries, chroniclers and archivists;

**5) Provide the financial means** needed to preserve, cherish and develop the entire project of the living memory of the Congregation.

It is my desire to continue to work as competently and professionally as possible in this area. Additionally, I hope that there will be more interest, trust, competence and collaboration for this work.

During the days of the General Chapter, I will be available to welcome any Chapter member who may wish to visit the General Archives.

Rome, 21 July 2018

- Dr. Eunice dos Santos  
General Archivist

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