



CONGREGATION OF THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

47th GENERAL CHAPTER

Rome, 6-27 October 2018

Report of the Historical Commission

First, I would like to note that what is reported herein is a collaborative effort of the members of the Historical Commission-- myself, Fr. Alessandro Ciciliani (MAPRAES) President, and Frs. Robert Carbonneau (PAUL), Andrés San Martín (SCOR) and Pablo Gonzalo (SCOR). The new Historical Commission was established by a letter of appointment of the Superior General, Fr. Joachim Rego, on 01 October 2014. Prior to this, after fifty years of the existence of the first Historical Commission (1958-2008), there were six years institutional hiatus during which only Fr. Fernando Piélagos (SCOR), worked at the Generalate in this historical area.

This extensive void certainly did not favor the resumption of activity, which officially started with the first meeting of the new historical Commission from 19 to 20 December 2014. However, since I was completing work on my PhD (May 2015) it was only since July 2015 that work resumed with the renovation and refurbishment of the Commission headquarters (the Office and library). The final meeting of the Commission of this mandate will take place during 01-02 October 2018 in close proximity to the commencement of the General Chapter.

In this period, in various ways, the Historical Commission has worked to provide the greatest possible number of our religious with fundamental and indispensable materials for growth in a sense of belonging and for acquiring greater clarity of Passionist identity.

Below I will report on the areas of research and study in which we labored during this period.

Office and Library of the Commission

As a practical consequence of the first meeting in December 2014, it was decided to establish an office for the Historical Commission in the Generalate. Since there was already a storeroom-library where numerous books from the previous Commission were stored, it was decided to make use of that space and the adjoining areas as an Office.

During this time, we worked to create a specialized library in an historical context – from civil history to Church history and the history of our Congregation. We believe that this library is important not only for the Commission but for the whole community, for graduate students and for those who are visiting the

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Generalate. We are also working on creating a network of by which the St. John and Paul community library, the General Archives and the Stauros Library are digitally connected.

The [“green book”] series of Passionist History and Spirituality

During our initial meetings, it was proposed to publish two booklets per year in this series. The objective was achieved. In 2015 we published two books – the first by Fernando Piélagos (SCOR) and Tito Zecca (MAPRAES), "The Passionists and World War I (1914-1918)", and the second, edited by Tito Zecca, "The mystery and the patronage of Mary Presented in the Temple in Passionist Spirituality" (Second Edition). In 2016 we published a work by Lorenzo Mazzoccante (MAPRAES), "Spiritual direction of Saint Paul of the Cross and Tommaso Fossi in the context of the Family" and a work by Robert Carbonneau (PAUL) "Passionists and Lay Catholics in the United States, St. Paul of the Cross Province -- an alternative narrative history 1852-1970's".

In 2017, we published a work by Maurizio Buioni, "Memoria Passionis-- the revealed-radiating apex of Agape" and by Alessandro Ciciliani (MAPRAES), "The Passionist Congregation, the Church and the Canonization of the Founder". Finally, this year we published three other “green books”, two in Italian and one in English. The latter covered the activities of the members of the historical Commission during the course for formation personnel in October 2016, while those in Italian were two works by Sr. Antonella Medoro (a Sister of St. Paul of the Cross) for her Licentiate degree entitled, "St Paul of the Cross – Educational references to him as an educator". The third work was by Giovanni Benenati (MAPRAES) entitled, “The foundation and the early years of the activity of the Passionist Congregation in Sicily (1916-1938)”.

Articles for the PIB [Passionist International Bulletin]

As soon as the new Historical Commission was established we sought to inform the religious of the Congregation about what was being programmed. The first communication was via an article in our PIB (2015/1). This was followed by a series of other articles for a total of seven, usually written for events, anniversaries or historical topics covered during the year.

A Condensed Version of our History

For the occasion of the third centenary of the birth of the Congregation (1720-2020), the Historical Commission plans to publish a condensed volume that summarizes the history of our Institute. As a point of reference, we took the volumes already published, and gave several religious the responsibility of reworking and summarizing the various chronological sections in order to obtain a single volume that is concise, easily readable, but at the same time, historically accurate. Volume I (1720-1775) was assigned to Pablo Gonzalo (SCOR); Volume II/1 (1775-1796) to Robert Carbonneau (PAUL); volume II/2 (1796-1839) to Luca

Fracasso (MAPRAES) and volume III (1839-1863) to Fernando Piélagos (SCOR). Volume IV (1863-1925) yet to be published was assigned to Tito Paolo Zecca (MAPRAES) (he has already submitted the final draft of his work.) Volume V (1925-1964) that is still be elaborated is assigned to Alessandro Ciciliani (MAPRAES).

Translations

From the start, we tried to be conscious of the international implications of our work and therefore we sought various ways to translate the historical works [of the Congregation] in languages other than Italian. Until now, we were able to have translated some booklets of the series in Passionist History and Spirituality in Indonesian and one in Polish. In 2017 translation was begun on basic resources concerning St. Paul of the Cross from Italian into Spanish – the volumes of letters published by Amedeo Casetti, the biography edited by Saint Vincent Strambi and the Annals of Giammaria Cioni. As with other sectors and activities, so too this work on our history suffers due to the lack of available translators.

The lecture series on the History of the Congregation

During this period (2014-2018) all the members of the historical Commission have given lectures to novices and students of their respective provinces. Robert Carbonneau taught a history course in China and in other parts of the world. Then, in October 2017, the entire Commission offered a course on the History of the Congregation to novices at the Retreat of Daimiel (Spain).

The Logo of the Commission

Beginning in 2017, publications in the [green book] series of Research in History and Spirituality bear the Historical Commission logo, consisting of a stylized Passionist Sign, a parchment and a quill-feather pen.

The Site of the Commission

In order to promote greater awareness and to publicize the initiatives of the Historical Commission a link was created on the site of the Congregation [www.passiochristi.org]. Here there are various news items concerning the activities of the members of the Commission and news items following each annual meeting.

Portraits of our Religious

We suggested to the Superior General and his Council that additional portraits be prepared of our religious who have made a significant contribution to the History of the Congregation.

Conclusion

I would like to allude to what was already said in my report at the General Synod in October 2015. Again, we would like to exhort the Major Superiors of the Provinces, Vice-provinces and Vicariates to invite our young religious to consider studying Church history during post-graduate studies. Additionally, since as Passionists we have a great heritage, our archives and libraries need to be preserved and made available for historical research or simply for on-going formation. Furthermore, it would be good if some of our religious attended specialized courses in archival and library science, in Rome or elsewhere, thus acquiring appropriate knowledge and tools to make our archives and our libraries places that are available to our religious who wish to grow culturally and to better prepare themselves for apostolic activity. In this regard, I can report that in the last three years there has been a fruitful collaboration with the Commission for the improvement and development of our General Archives.

The Historical Commission should increasingly strive to reach the peripheries of our Congregation in order to convey to younger generations the roots of their vocation and deepen their sense of belonging to the Institute. As I said, many things have been accomplished; however, due to the commitments of the members of the Commission and the reality of formation on a local level, it was difficult to accomplish all that was initially envisioned.

There were difficulties coordinating activities and communication among the members of the Historical Commission. The various languages are an on-going challenge to the work of the Commission. As a Historical Commission, we believe that we should continue with the present planned programs, trying to improve this service that we have tried to offer to the Congregation.

May St. Paul of the Cross, our Father and Founder, guide and enlighten us in discerning the will of God.

Rome, 18 July 2018

Memorial of St. Paul of the Cross

- Fr. Alessandro Ciciliani
President of the Historical Commission

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