

**MESSAGE OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL
ON THE FEAST OF ST PAUL OF THE CROSS
19 October 2018**



Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends in the Passionist Family,

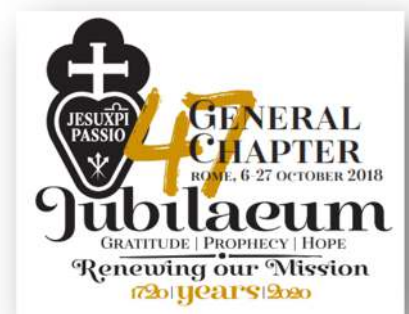
Greetings to you all in the name of my brother-Passionists from all parts of the Congregation gathered here in Rome for the 47th General Chapter which



has been in session since the 6th October. Of course, it is always special being here in Sts. John and Paul, our General House where our Founder lived the last two years of his long life, where he died and where his mortal remains lie today. From this sacred place I wish you all a happy and blessed feast day!

I take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for your support and prayer for our beloved Congregation and its mission which we are reflecting upon in these days. Thanks, too, for your messages of support and prayers for me as I am called again by God and by my brothers, through election, to lead the Congregation in these challenging times for the next six years.

In this message, I would like to share with you some reflections from my report to our General Chapter which, I hope, will give some inspiration for your reflection and prayer as you celebrate the feast of St Paul of the Cross.



The theme chosen for this 47th General Chapter is: **Renewing our Mission: Gratitude, Prophecy, Hope**. This theme is one that we want to keep before our focus, not only during this Chapter, but also in light of the third centenary of the foundation of our Congregation in 2020 which has been launched during the General Chapter.

It is time for us to **focus on the charismatic testimony of our mission** – the reason for our existence as a Congregation. As a support to this direction, we are living in a time of the Church’s history, especially under Pope Francis’ leadership, when a strong emphasis on **evangelisation and mission** is encouraged: *proclaiming the joy of the Gospel to the poor and going out on mission to the peripheries and margins*.

We must remember that as a Congregation we exist in the Church, not just for our own edification, or our glorification, or for our profit, but for a very specific and meaningful purpose. As is stated clearly in our Constitutions:

“...THE CHURCH WITH HER SUPREME AUTHORITY APPROVED OUR CONGREGATION AND ITS RULE, AND ENTRUSTED US WITH A MISSION: **TO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF THE PASSION BY OUR LIFE AND APOSTOLATE.**” (CONST. 2)

Our mission is integrally connected with **our life** in community. Our **community life** and our **mission** cannot be separated; they are two sides of the one coin. Our life is our mission (by witness), and our mission is our life (by action). Together, they both shape us and give us our identity and authenticity as Passionists. **Who we are** and **what we do** are interconnected and interrelated. *“Our involvement in the apostolate flows directly from our life in community.”* (Const. 67)

When we speak about **“Renewing our Mission”**, it is primarily about **“renewing ourselves”**. Our mission flows from ‘who we are’, and so we must be constantly open to **self-renewal** – which is our response and openness to what God is doing in us for the coming of God’s kingdom. It is the **ongoing call to conversion and repentance** in the mission of the kingdom of God. The renewal of the mission is a natural consequence of the renewal of the missionaries.



‘Who we are’ (our being/life) and ‘what we do’ (our doing/mission) are interrelated; they are two sides of the one coin and cannot be separated. Each flow from and influences the other. We are not called to be **‘working for**

God', but rather we are to **'do God's work'** – a subtle but important distinction made by Fr Thomas Green SJ in his book: *Darkness in the Marketplace*.

We are living in challenging times, both in the world and in the church. As people who are Spirit-led, we must listen to, read and discern the signs of the



times calmly and boldly and not become paralysed or disillusioned by the challenges we face. New times require new responses: “new wine in new wineskins” (Mk. 2:18-22). The Congregation cannot live its life and mission ‘frozen’ in the 18th century! If it does, then it is doomed to staleness and irrelevancy. The gift of the charism remains the life-giving force of the Spirit – **but for today, for new times.**

The key, however, is that the journey must be traversed **together** with trust in God who leads and feeds us in our struggle and discernment. Let us not be afraid! The mission belongs to God – the crucified God who understands our joys and sorrows, our disappointments and struggles, and draws close to us in solidarity.

May St Paul of the Cross intercede for us in the ongoing call to **renewal**, both in our lives and in our mission. **“Renewal”** is an ongoing call of the Gospel for us **to choose life** each day in the midst of so much influence which is death-dealing and destructive. Let us examine and listen to all that is happening in our lives, hear the call and promptings of the Spirit, and respond by abandoning in trust to God: “let what you have said be done to me” (Lk. 1:38).

Please join your brothers in the General Chapter (which concludes on 27th October) praying with the hope that we will all respond to the call to a **renewal of our life**, the process through which we will encounter again and deepen our relationship with Jesus Crucified - the source for **renewing our mission**. Thus, we pray:

Let our Chapter be a motivation for permanent personal conversion and for a creative rethinking of our life and our work. Renew the Passionist mission and make of us the new wine of a new Church. Amen. (Prayer for the 47th General Chapter)

“May the Passion of Jesus be always in our hearts.”

~ Fr Joachim Rego, CP
Superior General

