

**A REVISION OF**

**THE GENERAL PROGRAM OF FORMATION**

**DISCUSSION DRAFT (2)**

# A REVISED GENERAL PROGRAM OF FORMATION

## INTRODUCTION

### Formation is a life-long and life-transforming journey

1. Formation is the term we use for the guided journey into the mystery of God undertaken by everyone who aspires to the fullness of life in the Congregation of the Passion. Passionist formation is a life-long process of personal growth and daily conversion to Christ Crucified and his Gospel. Moved by the Spirit, each one sets out along the path taken by Jesus as he headed for Jerusalem. It is a journey into the fullness of life that also implies the experience of dying to all that prevents us from giving our whole life to God. It is a journey into the fullness of the light that passes through the regions of darkness and struggle. Christ draws each one to closer union with himself just as he promised, “And when I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all to myself” (John 12, 32). The goal of formation is for every Passionist to be conformed to Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, such that he acquires the same mind, heart and feelings as Jesus (Phil. 2, 5) who freely offered his life to the Father for the salvation of the whole world.

### Initial Formation

2. Initial formation is the first and foundational phase of formation in the Passionist life for both brothers and clerics. It is the set of educative programs and processes we offer those who feel called by God to join the Congregation of the Passion. The *General Program of Formation*<sup>1</sup> dealt with the initial formation of those called to the Passionist Congregation. It was prepared prior to the General Chapter 1982 and after a trial period of four years, and with some modifications, it was finally approved by the Superior General in 1986. Since then, it has been an invaluable guide in the preparation of formation programs and policies by the provinces and other entities in the Congregation.
3. Since 1986 there has been a huge expansion of the Congregation in the former mission territories with large numbers of vocations. During that time also, the Church issued many new statements on matters dealing with formation. It is now time to revise the *General Program of Formation* in the light of our experience and the new challenges and opportunities of today. We are also guided by *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation* (GPV), the new *Ratio Fundamentalis* issued by the Congregation for the Clergy in 2016.<sup>2</sup>
4. This *Revised General Program of Formation* does not pretend to present the full and comprehensive program of formation needed for Passionist life today, nor does it treat all that the Church requires in the formation for the priesthood.<sup>3</sup> While it underlines the

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<sup>1</sup> General Program of Formation, Rome, 21 November 1986.

<sup>2</sup> Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, (GPV) Vatican City, 8 December 2016.

<sup>3</sup> A full and comprehensive account of priestly formation is given in GPV

importance of human formation it does not give an exhaustive account of all that this entails. That would require a separate and more detailed treatment. The focus of this document is the centrality of the Passionist charism in the formation of prospective Passionists.

5. The period of initial formation is a time of great blessing and challenge. Suitable personnel have to be chosen and trained as formators, supportive formation communities have to be constituted, formation houses have to be prepared and adequately equipped in places convenient to the centres of learning such as the university or theology faculty. All of this requires great attention and planning.
6. Formation is also very costly. Many entities of the Congregation struggle to fund a 7 or 8 year program of initial formation for big numbers of candidates. The burden of seeking the necessary financial assistance from other entities in the Congregation or charitable agencies is both time-consuming and stressful. To address this ongoing challenge, a new comprehensive plan for the funding of formation in the Congregation into the future is needed.

### **The Wider Context of Formation**

7. It is important to situate these reflections on formation for Passionist religious life within the wider context of the Church and the world today.

We live in a world that is increasingly shaped by the great advances in science and technology. Looking at transport and communication alone, we see that all parts of the world are now in touch with all other parts. There are very few if any isolated and remote regions out of range of the modern means of communication. And with communication comes other elements of a modern worldview. So while it remains obvious that great cultural diversity and particularity remains a feature of our world there is also an increasing convergence around the need for and appreciation of all that modern science and technology provides. Access to technology implies participation in the commercial world of modern market capitalism. The whole world is united in this ever expanding and deepening network of communication and commerce.

8. It can be argued that as more time and attention are devoted to these spheres of activity there is less time and attention for other traditional spheres of life such as family and religious practice. As a result, the fabric of life in the family and in society is changing. Something new is emerging and the full impact of these changes is not yet fully evident. The process of modernization in the West has led to a greater secularization and a radical change in religious observance. Today there is greater respect for the individual person and human freedom. Coercion or imposition is regarded as a violation of a person's dignity and freedom. Modern democracies are built around a respect for human rights. It may be that other parts of the world will follow this trend.
9. In the affluent West, there are increasing economic and social problems arising from globalization and immigration. There has been a sharp rise in populism and nationalist sentiment. This seems to be the result of the economic hardship experienced by many

people after the economic crisis of 2008 as well as the sharp increase in the number of migrants from war torn countries in the Middle East and from the poor developing countries of the south seeking refuge and a better life in rich countries. The secular values of democracy, freedom, equality, respect for human rights, care for the poor and the suffering, which have been taken for granted for so long, are now under strain and sometimes under direct attack in these countries. These are a secular version of deeply Christian values. Unfortunately, disappointment, fear and anger are leading to increased levels of xenophobia, racism, intolerance and even hatred of those who are different. The climate of openness and welcome that had marked many western countries since the Second World War is giving way to hostility and rejection. The Church has a role in promoting understanding and compassion and resisting the slide towards prejudice and intolerance.

10. The Catholic Church has responded to the challenges of the modern world by returning to the sources of the faith and discovering important aspects of the Gospel that were neglected in the recent past. The Catholic Church now recognises that promoting and defending the dignity of every human person as well as human rights is an integral part of preaching the Gospel. The message of salvation is addressed to the whole person and every person. The mission of the Church is not restricted to “saving souls” but extends to the care of every dimension of human life and of the whole world as the arena of human life. In recent years, the Church has been particularly engaged in efforts to promote peace in the world between nations and peoples. To this end the Church works tirelessly to overcome every kind of injustice which in turn breeds conflict, violence, suffering and war. In all of this, the Church seeks out collaborators and partners in other Christian communities, other religions and among people of no religion. The Church is also keenly aware of those aspects of the modern world that threaten human life and dignity and continues to call for a deeper understanding of the human person as a child of God with a destiny beyond this world. The preaching of the Gospel, the worship of God and the celebration of the sacraments have the widest possible scope in touching and transforming the lives of all people.
11. Passionist religious life finds its place in this new context of Church and world. We make our own the new vision of the Church and her mission to bring the Good News to all people for the renewal and transformation of the whole world. At the heart of the Gospel message is the story of Jesus who suffered and gave his life for love of us and rose again to give us new life. In the passion of Jesus, God chose to identify with suffering human beings. The mission of the Passionists is to stand by Jesus in his suffering. In Jesus name, we bring his Good News to the multitudes of suffering people of our time. The great challenge facing us is to find the most effective ways and means of doing this. We will continue to preach the Gospel to those believers who gather for worship or who come to us. More than ever we will go out to those who do not know Jesus or who have moved away from the Church.

## Passionists are Trustworthy and Safe

12. In our life and ministry, the wellbeing and safety of others is a primary concern. Our entire formation program – initial and ongoing - is imbued with the values contained in the Congregation’s norms on ***Safeguarding Minors and Professional Standards in Ministry***.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis is on forming religious who are mature, trustworthy and safe. We also want to insure that our communities are places of fraternal love where our religious and those who visit us experience the warmth and hospitality of Christ. Passionist communities will then be a true home for the brethren and safe from abusive behavior and speech of every kind. A fraternal and caring environment in the community helps us to be caring and sensitive towards others and prepares us to minister to vulnerable people in a manner that is safe. This kind of formation will require a greater investment in the training of formation personnel and attention to the pastoral supervision and support of the formators. It also requires that we educate and train all our members in the new values, attitudes and behaviors implied by these new policies. This is a first priority in Extraordinary Ongoing Formation <sup>5</sup>with implications for every day living.

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<sup>4</sup> The 47<sup>th</sup> General Chapter decree on *Guidelines for Ministry with Minors etc.*”.

<sup>5</sup> See Part Three of this document, Amedeo Cencini, “Ongoing Formation”,

# PART ONE

## FUNDAMENTALS

### An Integrated Formation

13. Since the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*<sup>6</sup>, the Church has insisted on the need for an integrated formation that respects the depth and mystery of each person and gives due weight to the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral dimensions of formation. That approach was reiterated at the Synod of Bishops dedicated to the consecrated life in 1994 and expressed in *Vita Consecrata*, “Formation should involve the whole person, in every aspect of the personality, in behavior and intentions. Precisely because it aims at the transformation of the whole person, it is clear that the commitment to formation never ends.”<sup>7</sup>
14. There are different ways of describing an integrated formation but all of them emphasize the fundamental Catholic principle enunciated by St. Thomas that grace builds on nature. The separation of nature and grace, body and spirit, reason and feelings is always a denial of the incarnation and therefore deeply unchristian. A strong spiritual life of prayer and devotion is essential but not sufficient. The Church insists on formation that touches the human, intellectual, spiritual, community and pastoral dimensions of life. Self-knowledge and psychological maturity are the fertile ground that can welcome the transforming Word and bear fruit in a happy and abundant life as a religious and priest. There is no conflict between the need for a deep and realistic knowledge of self and knowledge of God. This is the approach we have adopted in this revised program.
15. The *Revised General Program* focuses on “formation in the charism”. Formation in the charism informs all the other dimensions of formation indicated above and has implications for all of them. However, this *Revised General Program of Formation* does not pretend to present the full and comprehensive program of formation needed for Passionist life today nor does it treat all that the Church requires in the formation for the priesthood.<sup>8</sup> While it underlines the importance of human formation it does not give an exhaustive account of what this entails. This would require a separate and more detailed treatment. The focus of this document is the centrality of the Passionist charism in the formation of prospective Passionist religious both clerical and lay.
16. Today the Passionist charism is lived by men and women religious, as well as lay men and women. Lay Passionists bring a whole new breadth of experience and insight into the charism that greatly enriches the whole Passionist family. An integrated formation calls for some moments of intense formation together. This will also help to develop a

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<sup>6</sup> John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Roma, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, Roma 1995, no. 64

<sup>8</sup> See GPV

deeper appreciation of the indispensable contribution of the lay faithful to the life and mission of the Church and to foster the desire for closer collaboration.

17. Religious have been in the vanguard of work for peace and justice throughout the world. Now there is the mounting challenge to the planet as a result of indiscriminate exploitation. The formation of new religious will be informed by the Social Teaching of the Church<sup>9</sup> and the urgent call for a new harmonious way of relating to the earth.

### **The Passionist Charism is the Core of Passionist Formation**

18. We seek the unity of Passionist formation in the charism. The Passionist charism is the principle of integration of the many aspects of initial formation. It is the charism that informs all the dimensions and stages of formation and cannot be isolated as merely one dimension among the others.

The *Revised General Program* focuses on “formation in the Passionist charism” in the initial formation of all candidates, both clerics and brothers, who are called to live the same charism and way of life. Within the same charism, some are called to serve the Church as priests and others as religious brothers. The difference in their formation concerns the preparation for their different ministerial roles and not the essence of their Passionist life.

19. God blesses his Church with a variety of gifts or charisms.<sup>10</sup> The Passionist charism is a gift of God for the good of the Church. It is given to the members of the Passionist family to keep alive the ***memoria passionis*** as a source of healing and salvation for suffering people and a broken world.
20. The *Constitutions* (1984) tell us that the Passionist charism has its roots in the experience and teaching of St. Paul of the Cross who was guided by God to found our Congregation. Paul saw that in the Passion of Jesus the great ocean of God’s love meets the great ocean of human suffering for our healing and salvation. In the light of recent theological insights, the Congregation today understands the Passion to embrace the suffering and death of Jesus and the sufferings of all those in whom the passion of Jesus continues throughout history (Const. nos. 3, 65). At every stage of initial formation and throughout our religious life, Passionists are committed to grow in their understanding of the meaning and value of the Passion in the light of the best biblical, patristic and theological scholarship (Const. nos. 6, 78).

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<sup>9</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Roma 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 130

21. Paul of the Cross experienced a call to live *the memory of the Passion of Jesus* and to keep it alive in the Church as a remedy for the many ills affecting people. For Paul, **memory** is a deep heart-knowledge that can change a person's life. By the gift of God, our hearts are stamped and sealed with the memory of the Passion. With the Passion of Jesus in our hearts, our whole life and ministry are infused and informed by the self-emptying love of Jesus. Paul also wanted us to teach the people to meditate in order to have the same abiding memory of the Passion in their hearts to guide and strengthen them.

22. In the bible, **memoria** means more than merely recalling the events of the past but is also a profound way of reliving those saving events. The term **memoria** captures the deep biblical associations of the annual commemoration of the Passover, the memorial of the last supper, the memory of Jesus' act of humble service in washing the disciples feet, and above all the memory of Jesus the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep.

The term **passionis** refers to the terrible suffering of Jesus's final hours but also the sufferings he endured throughout his life as he pursued the Father's will to preach the Good News and establish the Kingdom of God in the face of violent opposition.

23. The **memoria passionis** implies a commitment to unite ourselves with Jesus and his mission. It includes a Passionist way of contemplating Jesus by abiding in the memory of his passion and death and allowing it to shape and inform our entire life and mission. The mission of the Passionist is to keep alive in the Church and in the hearts of all the faithful the loving memory of Jesus who loved his own to the end (John 13, 1), and gave his life willingly for the salvation of the world (John 10, 18).

24. Passionist life is a way of being and acting that is inspired and shaped by the **memoria passionis**. This charismatic way of life is for the good of the Church on her journey through history to the Father. It is a living and dynamic reality that manifests its many facets and dimensions in the different circumstances and situations in which it is lived. The Passion of Jesus continues today in the poor and suffering people of the world. Our commitment to Jesus Crucified is at the same time a commitment to stand with those who are "crucified" today.

25. During the years of initial formation, we help our young people to find in the **memoria passionis** the resources to help them grow in their relationship with Christ and to respond to the major challenges of the world today, especially the search for God in the

secularized countries of the developed world and the search for lasting peace and justice in the many countries of the developing world.<sup>11</sup> We draw on the power and wisdom of God made available in the Cross of Jesus as we work to establish God's Kingdom on earth in the face of all the forces ranged against it.

26. It is not possible to isolate the charism as if it were only one dimension of Passionist life. As our *Constitutions* (no. 6) clearly indicate, the entire Passionist life is a living out of our special vow to keep alive the memory of the passion of Christ. It is the Passionist vow that informs the three traditional vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. In other words, our whole life is imbued with the light and energy of the charism. Our entire life is transformed by our consecration to the Passion of Jesus. The charism is not some definable element of our life. It is rather the inner spring and inspiration of an entire way of life. It finds its way into our thinking, feeling, choosing and acting. All that we are is pervaded by the charism of the passion and is an expression of it.
27. The Passionist charism is a gift of the Spirit that penetrates and transforms the entire life of every Passionist. It is by participating in the life of the Passionist community, by contemplating the Passion of Jesus in the scriptures and celebrating it in the liturgy that the charism is ignited in the heart of each one. The experience of human suffering and the desire to respond to people in need brings the charism to practical expression in a life of love and service. It is for this reason we say that the charism is more caught than taught.
28. The charism has profound implications for the formation of our candidates. The entire process of Passionist formation aims at the gradual transformation of the person so that he becomes more and more united to Christ crucified, acquiring the same mind and heart, desires and attitudes that were in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2, 5). Just as Jesus emptied himself of all care for privileges and status and became a mere servant, so the candidate for Passionist life commits himself to a radical process of self-emptying and self-giving in service of others. This does not happen automatically or simply because one wants it to happen. It is a long and difficult journey that takes time, effort, and help from skilled and competent formators and others.

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<sup>11</sup> See *Passionists before the Challenges of the World*, General Chapter 1988

## Passionist Contemplation

29. Formation requires that one develop a deep life of prayer. The Passionist community gathers every day to pray the divine office and to celebrate the Eucharist. Praying together in community can be a real school of prayer. The young people in formation will be helped to appreciate the richness and beauty of the liturgy and learn to celebrate it with dignity and reverence.
30. St. Paul of the Cross was a mystic and wanted his band of missionaries to be contemplative apostles. He spoke frequently about the importance of meditation on the passion of Jesus and wanted the Passionists to teach others how to meditate. Meditation is the prayerful activity of the mind in which we ponder, question, struggle to understand and appreciate the wonders and mysteries of God. It gives us new insights, helps to transform us and shapes the way we think and act. It is a wonderful preparation for the prayerful response of praise and adoration. When we give time to serious reading, reflection and meditation on the Passion it is natural that we will be drawn to prayer and contemplation. During their time of formation, all our candidates will be taught how to meditate on the passion as a preparation and school for prayer and contemplation.
31. The contemplative is one who prays and who lives on the earth in a contemplative way. Christian contemplation is not just one more form of study or reflection. It is not simply one kind of act or set of acts in a person's life. The contemplative life is a transformed way of being. It is a person's stance towards the whole of life that flows from a life-transforming relationship with Jesus. To be contemplative is *to-be-in-the-world* in a special way. The contemplative sees with a contemplative eye, reflects with a contemplative mind, and loves with a contemplative heart. The contemplative eye sees all things in God and God in all things. To be contemplative is to be with people and the whole of reality in a new way because we have been touched and transformed by Jesus who loved us to the end (John 13, 1).
32. For the Passionist, contemplation is our way of abiding with Jesus in his Passion. When the human heart has been touched by the memory of Jesus's Passion, a fire is lit within that fills us with warmth and light. By this fire we live and move and breathe. The Passionist contemplative is one who sees the whole of reality with the eyes of the Crucified Lord and responds with his merciful heart. Wherever we go and whatever we do, everything is inflamed and imbued with the contemplative fire ignited in us by the Passion of Jesus. Our love of Jesus Crucified sends us out to teach others about Jesus's passion and to help them experience his great love in prayer.

33. Passionist contemplation gives us the *passion-sensibility* to notice those who share the passion of Jesus today. We are drawn above all to the poor and the suffering who call for our love and attention. The Passionist contemplative sees in one glance the Passion of Jesus on Calvary and the passion of his brothers and sisters in the world today. Jesus the crucified Lord is joined today by the many crucified of our time. These are the victims of human indifference and cruelty. Jesus continues to suffer in the hungry and the thirsty, the naked and despised, the prisoners and the handicapped, the old and the forgotten “as long as you did it to one of the least you did it to me” (Matt. 25). The Passionist looks to the Passion of Jesus to find the remedy for the evils in our world in order to respond in the most effective way possible.
34. The Passionist also feels the pain of a crucified planet that has been ravaged and exploited because of human greed and avarice. This is the same world that God loved so much that he sent His only Son to save it and set it free. We pray for the planet and for ourselves that we can contribute to a greater appreciation of our dependence on a healthy planet and a greater commitment of all people to care for the planet.
35. Spiritual direction is a privileged means for the integral growth of the person. From the beginning of the formation process, candidates are encouraged to see their spiritual director regularly. A number of suitable people may be designated as spiritual directors. Candidates should have the freedom to choose from among these or some other with the knowledge and consent of the formator. Provision should be made for the candidates to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation regularly. The spiritual director can also be the regular confessor.

## **The Formation Community**

36. St. Paul of the Cross gathered companions to live in community and to go from there to preach the Gospel of the Passion. Formation in the community, by the community, and for the community is an essential part of Passionist formation. Like uncut diamonds<sup>12</sup>, the new members of the community are formed and shaped by their relationships with their peers and elders until they are polished and shine for the glory of God. It is in the daily interaction with his peers and elders that the new arrival learns about himself, discovers his strengths and weaknesses. He learns to be patient and forgiving, compassionate and understanding with community members.

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<sup>12</sup> See GPV Introduction

37. Passionist formation is the gradual acquisition of the virtues necessary for a full and healthy human and religious life e.g. humility, self-discipline, chastity, poverty, obedience. The virtues are the positive and stable dispositions to act in a way that is both free and informed by reason. The example and teaching of St. Paul of the Cross, as well as the other Passionist saints, direct us to the deepest sources of the charism and help us to acquire the virtues needed for our life. Life in community with one's peers and elders is a school of charity and the other virtues needed for a healthy and wholesome Passionist life. United by a common desire to follow Jesus and to share his mission, the formation community is a place where each one learns to value the presence of the other members and to share one's gifts for the benefit of all.

### **A Formation that is Mission Oriented**

38. The Church is missionary by nature, "As the Father sent me so I am sending you" (John 20, 21). The Congregation of the Passion has been given a part in the mission of the Church (Const. 62). We are to proclaim the Gospel of the Passion to the people of our time. St. Paul of the Cross was moved by a profound desire to respond to the evils afflicting the people of his time. He was convinced that the Passion of Jesus was the most effective remedy for every evil. We continue to announce the Gospel of the Passion to the people as a source of healing, forgiveness and salvation. As a mission-oriented Congregation, our formation is for mission. To fulfill this mission, the Passionist is to be familiar with the Passion through daily meditation and prayer, as well as the assiduous study of the mystery of the passion in the scriptures, theology, the liturgy and the history of Christian spirituality. An important part of formation is to prepare Passionists for participation and collaboration with others in mission. This is not primarily an intellectual exercise and must be carried out "in the field". Here the person will learn some skills in working pastorally with people and caring for those in need. He will also show his gifts as well as his limitations. This will be an important help to his development as a Passionist apostle.

39. A particularly helpful form of practical formation is a period of immersion in a situation of poverty and social deprivation. Exposure to the real suffering of people who are struggling with material poverty and hardship can have a strong impact on the formation of the person. To be really fruitful, the immersion experience should be for a prolonged period of several months or more. This period of immersion will include a strong element of guided reflection and prayer to help make it a real learning and life-changing experience. Pope Francis has spoken about pastors having "the smell of the sheep", indicating their closeness to the people. Formation with "dirty hands" is the kind of formation that is not divorced from real life and includes a strong dimension of outreach and service of people. By service is meant something different than the traditional pastoral work. Service means working with our hands, cooking meals,

washing dishes, cleaning floors, digging ditches, building houses.<sup>13</sup> Many young people today participate in volunteer programs to help in mission countries, to feed the hungry, to teach poor children, to nurse the dying etc. It is this experience of engagement with people that will give our candidates the essential context or background to their formation. At least some part of formation could be devoted to this kind of practical “dirty hands” service of others. This is different from the usual pastoral year that precedes ordination.

40. All pastoral and other work experiences will be guided and supervised by experienced and prudent religious or lay people. These should help to choose suitable pastoral locations and tasks and where necessary provide the candidates with the required training. They should be present with the candidates, at least occasionally, so they are able to advise and support them appropriately.
41. Formation for Passionist mission also means preparation and training to proclaim the Word of the Cross in the most effective way possible so as to touch the lives of all who are in need. The traditional means of communicating the Word of the Cross in Church assemblies and through the printed media no longer reach a huge proportion of people, particularly the young. Part of our response must be a specialized formation in all areas related to communication. This is more urgent today than ever before given the predominance of the electronic and digital media. Every society is changing at an accelerating pace with ever new pressures on people. There are new challenges in articulating and sharing the faith in a credible and attractive manner. The growth of indifference and hostility to faith and religion in many societies makes it imperative to find effective ways of responding. Evangelization today includes a deep concern for the poor and for the future of the planet. For these reasons, more of our young people are to be encouraged to study secular sciences like sociology, psychology, economics, ecology, politics as essential to a fuller understanding of our world and the trends that are shaping the future.
42. Fr. Thomas Berry C.P. (1914-2009) was a beloved brother and a prophet of the modern world. He was a forerunner of the modern ecological movement and campaigned for the protection of the earth and its many species long before it was popular to do so. Passionist formation should make us keenly aware of the great challenges and dangers that arise from the destruction of the eco-system on which all life depends. Our Passion for Life must include a passion for the earth and a commitment to work for a new relationship between humanity and the planet.<sup>14</sup>
43. We should keep a vigilant eye on the academic resources of the Congregation so that we have a sufficient number of qualified people in the different branches of ecclesiastical and secular sciences to maintain a healthy level of intellectual and cultural

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<sup>13</sup> See USG/UISG, *Guide Us in Your Justice: A formation itinerary for a prophetic Religious Life*, no. 40

<sup>14</sup> See Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, Roma, 2015

life in the Congregation. In recent years the majority of post-graduate students have been in spirituality and canon law. The life and mission of the Congregation will benefit from the contributions of biblical scholars, systematic theologians, philosophers as well as people qualified in the secular sciences. Other important areas of specialization are administration and the acquisition of additional skills regarding the maintenance of the goods of the community.

### **The Charism in Many Cultures**

44. The new context of formation today is one that is aware of the international nature of the Congregation and the presence of the charism in a multitude of cultures. It is our great joy and privilege to see the charism taking root in the great variety of cultural soils in the five continents. It is a challenge and opportunity to enrich the entire Congregation with the energy and enthusiasm of those who come to us from the multiplicity of diverse languages and cultures. The vision of Paul of the Cross is finding is being welcomed by new generations of Passionists in the five continents who are able to understand and express the charism in new ways.
45. The entire process of formation is informed by a deep appreciation of the importance of the local culture in shaping and giving direction to a person's whole existence. Those who join us are not expected to abandon their cultural identity and adopt a way of life that is completely foreign. We want Passionist life to take root in the local cultures and to have the "smell" of the culture, to use Pope Francis ingenious phrase. From the point of view of Passionist formation, it is essential that we help our candidates to experience the Passion of Jesus and the whole Gospel through the lens of their cultural sensibilities. The style of community life as well as forms of prayer will reflect this in a particular way. Our relationship with people outside the community will also respect cultural values. All of this builds on their natural gifts and strengthens them in their cultural and Passionist identity. The whole Congregation will be enriched by the creative meeting of the many cultures of the world with the Passionist charism.
46. It is our responsibility to introduce the new generations to the person of the founder and help them to understand and appreciate his insights into the mystery of Christ's passion. By studying the history of the Congregation they will learn how different generations of Passionist in different contexts lived the charism. They may well find in Paul of the Cross things not seen before because they are asking new questions and receiving new insights. They have come to know Jesus and understand his Passion in the light of their history and cultural experience. Their struggles and sufferings in coming to a difficult birth within the Congregation gives them a unique and fresh perspective on what it is to be a Passionist. Theirs is a privileged experience of being Passionist today. Their perspectives and their approaches are different and will be different because their context, their interests, their questions, their needs are so different from those of the earlier generations. They open up the mystery of Christ and make available to us new ways of seeing and understanding the Cross and Passion of Jesus. They are open to inspiration and innovation that remind us of the original founding inspirations of Paul. They can teach us all new things and we can all listen and learn.

47. The *General Program of Formation* (1986) already speaks of the advantages derived from participating in regional or international centers of Passionist formation (no. 26). Society today is increasingly multi-cultural. So too is the Congregation of the Passion. An integrated formation will include an exposure to the multicultural nature of the Congregation today. The aim will be to enrich the person and to broaden his appreciation of the different ways in which Passionist life is lived. On a broader level, it will help him to be more open to differences and tolerant of other ways of thinking and living. This is essential in the world today. It should be possible to plan at least one stage of formation for all those in formation in a culture other than their own and with young people from other cultures. This will require some reorganization of present structures but the long-term benefits will outweigh the initial difficulties.
48. In every continent, societies are becoming increasingly multi-cultural and multi-religious. This offers us new challenges and opportunities. In Asia, in particular, our religious are living and working side by side with people of other religions, especially Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. A knowledge and appreciation of non-Christian religions is a great help in promoting respectful dialogue and helping us to share with others the joy of the Gospel.<sup>15</sup>

## The Ministry of the Formator

*Know yourself because you teach who you are*

49. The principal agent of formation is the Holy Spirit who has been poured into our hearts (Rom 5, 5). It is the work of the Spirit to fill each one with the life and energy of Christ. After that, the person called by God is the principal subject who responds to the invitations and movements of the Spirit in his life. The formator is a collaborator with both the Spirit and those he is accompanying. He tries to be in tune with the promptings of the Spirit in the young person urging him to trust, to be open and to respond. He will also have a compassionate heart for his struggles, doubts, and questions as he tries to respond with generosity. At all times he brings those in his care to the Lord in prayer.
50. The Congregation needs good formators to welcome and accompany those who are sent to us by God. It is the Spirit alone who can “conform” us to Christ Crucified. Our contribution is to cooperate by being attentive to the promptings of the Spirit, being generous and available in our response and in identifying and overcoming the obstacles to the action of the Spirit. The Spirit wants each one to be like Christ and promotes us towards the likeness of Christ. In formation, this happens especially through our sharing in the life of the community, in our interpersonal relationships, and especially in the formative relationship with the formator. All of this is supported and nourished by the daily celebration of the liturgy, the prayerful reading of the scriptures, and the desire to respond to the needs of the poor and suffering.

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<sup>15</sup> GPV, no. 121

The ministry of formation is both important and delicate.<sup>16</sup> The formator is the one who makes the Congregation known, who embodies its spirit and helps newcomers to know and love their new home and family. This is not an easy ministry and it calls for great skill and care. The formator does not work alone but is helped by the active involvement of the members of the formation community as well as other skilled collaborators.

51. The role of the formator at each stage is of paramount importance. It requires that he be a man of deep humanity. The formator is a companion and guide to young people who are searching. He is mostly an understanding listener. He is a trusted member of the community who embodies the charism and missionary spirit of the Congregation. He is at home with himself because he knows and accepts his strengths and weaknesses. He has the openness and flexibility to work with young people who are just coming to know the community. He is patient and tolerant of their questions, criticisms, dreams and idealism. He has skills in understanding human personality and the dynamics of human growth. He is also able to recognize the signs of physical, emotional and spiritual stress and fragility, and can respond appropriately.
52. The formator helps to integrate the new members into the community and to create a spirit of mutual acceptance and collaboration among the members. Because he knows each member<sup>17</sup> of the formation community, he is able to create an environment where each one feels at home and is free to share openly with the other members. In his sharing with the newly arrived, he will model trust, openness and confidentiality. These are essential qualities in all relationships and facilitate a level of sharing in the community that is both challenging and enriching. In this way the community becomes a privileged place of growth.
53. An important role of the formator is to encourage the candidate to become aware of what is happening within, to clarify the range of the values he believes in, and to act accordingly. For this help to be effective, the candidate needs to have a conscious desire to learn and be free to seek help. When faced with a person who unknowingly is hiding his true self behind defensive walls, the formator tries to help him patiently and gradually to become more aware of what is going on within himself, the possible influence of unconscious factors and to grow in inner freedom.
54. It is essential that those asked to take on the challenging ministry of formation be given the opportunity to prepare by means of specialized courses in spirituality and the human sciences. There are many good courses for formators in different parts of the world. To be a good formator today, more is needed than being a good religious with good will. Serious specialist academic, human and spiritual preparation is essential. Otherwise, we run the risk of being judged as being negligent and irresponsible in our approach to the formation of future Passionists.
55. The most important quality or skill of the formator is a realistic knowledge and acceptance of himself. This means being aware of his gifts and strengths as well as of his

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<sup>16</sup> See the discussion of Accompaniment in *The Gift of Priestly Vocation*, 2016, nos. 44-49

<sup>17</sup> It is important that he knows something about the variety of personality types

limitations and weaknesses. The formator knows that he too is on the road of human and spiritual development. It is from this awareness of a common humanity and a shared spiritual journey that a wholesome and formative relationship between formator and those in his care is possible.

56. It is God who calls those he wishes to follow Christ Crucified in the Congregation of the Passion. The Holy Spirit working in the person guides and directs the journey. The formator and the entire formation community have their indispensable contribution. However, each it is the person called who is primarily responsible to God and for his formation. Each one has to choose to engage fully with the formation process in all its dimensions and stages. It is to the degree that one participates fully and freely in the ways of formation that one shows an aptitude and affinity for Passionist life.

## PART TWO

### THE CHARISM OF THE PASSION IN THE STAGES OF INITIAL FORMATION

57. Formation is a gradual and lifelong process of learning and growing as a human person, a Christian and a consecrated religious. This document focuses on initial formation, which is the beginning of that lifelong process, and a particularly privileged time in a person's life. Formation takes time and it requires experience, as well as lots of disappointment and pain, before a person is ready to offer himself freely and knowingly to God.
58. The classical tripartite division of the spiritual life into purgative, illuminative and unitive ways also recognizes the gradual nature of growth in the spiritual life. Passionist formation is a process of human and spiritual growth that follows a similar path from initiation to ever fuller identification with Jesus crucified. The initial formation process offers the conditions in which this growth and maturing can take place with the assistance of prayer and the sacraments, the support of the community and the guidance of trained companions and skilled guides.
59. The charism is the guiding light of the entire program of formation from beginning to end. The gradual introduction to the Passionist charism in the different stages of initial formation is an attempt to respect the natural rhythm of human growth and development that is the framework of the formation process. The main idea is that the charism in its entirety will be presented and celebrated in all stages of formation. However, at each stage one aspect of the charism may be highlighted and given greater emphasis.
60. St. Paul of the Cross did not propose a fully articulated pedagogical method such as that of St. Ignatius Loyola. He did not identify stages or steps on the spiritual journey. Paul was attentive to the variety of human and spiritual experiences and there is much in his writings and teachings that can be drawn on for the formation of our young men. When we look at what he said, in the light of today's understanding of the nature of human growth and development, we find that the insights of Paul can be recognized in the three phases of the initial formation process outlined below.
61. The charism cannot be divided into unrelated fragments. It is a gift of the Spirit working in the life of a young man transforming him into the image of Christ crucified. The following 3 stage approach to the charism is somewhat artificial but it is proposed as a method of introducing young men to the charism in a gradual way that follows the inner logic and psychology of the formation process.

## The Selection of Candidates for Passionist Life<sup>18</sup>

62. It is important to recognize that today there are many new ways for men and women to dedicate themselves to God in the Church. New lay movements have emerged offering new possibilities to grow in faith and serve the people of God. There are also the many new ministries in the Church ranging from liturgical ministries of reader, Eucharistic minister, catechist, the music ministry to the various kinds of social engagement in the local church or abroad. A large number of young Christians give years of their life to work on the missions or with NGOs to help the poor, to care for the sick and disabled etc. The Religious Life is a special vocation in the Church and only a few are called to it. The international conference on Consecrated Life held in Rome to mark the Year of Consecrated Life (2015) insisted that religious life has a missionary thrust. It is not a refuge from the world nor is it a last resort when other options have failed. Great care must be taken in the discernment of the vocation to the religious life. The candidate must be given sufficient time to know the Congregation and his real desires regarding his future. An adequate period of serious accompaniment, including visits to the community, seminars and other helpful meetings, is advised. Many feel called but only some have a genuine vocation to this special way of life.
63. It is clear that the new situation we find ourselves in necessitates a clear and rigorous selection process for admission into the religious community and skilled accompaniment during the years of initial formation. We are more aware than ever of the serious duty of really knowing candidates who come to us and giving them profound formation by clarifying their motivations, their family story, and their faith journey.
64. Human life in general has become more stressful and many people are suffering from serious physical and mental sickness as a result. Religious life is not exempt from these trends. In discerning the suitability of candidates applying to join us, we need to be fully aware of the stresses and pressures they will inevitably experience in the religious life. Candidates today will need to have a sturdy sense of self and a well developed capacity to change and adapt to a variety of situations and challenges.
65. The need for sound formation for a healthy religious life cannot be taken for granted. There are many factors which contribute to the particular difficulties of formation today. Many young people grow up in a world where there is little or no faith education or sacramental practice as was the custom in Catholic countries until recently. Some of those who seek to join us are older adults who have spent some years working<sup>19</sup>. In such a case it will be necessary to know his story, family life, work experience, Church involvement, relationships etc. Questions about sexual orientation and sexual experiences should be raised honestly and openly. Ideally, he will have participated in the life of his local Church and will have lived a reputable Christian life. He will not be engaged, married or in a permanent relationship. He will have lived a celibate life in the period immediately prior to seeking entry to the community.

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<sup>18</sup> See Preparatory Document for the 15<sup>th</sup> General Synod, *Youth Faith and Vocational Discernment*

<sup>19</sup> See GPV, no. 24

66. Sometimes the lack of vocations has led too readily to the admission of candidates with personal problems that turn out to be quite serious. This reveals a lack of the proper care and attention that the Church has always sought to ascertain at the time of profession and the conferring of the sacrament of Holy Orders. We also need to be aware of the special challenges that arise with older candidates whose personality and way of life may be already fixed and even rigid. We cannot be tempted to lower the quality of the selection process or to skimp on the time and effort needed to provide a thorough and personalized formation.

### **Basic Entrance Requirements**

67. At its simplest, the main requirement of those seeking to join us is that the candidate has been called by God and has the capacity for our life. This means that the applicant will be a person of faith with a developed relationship with God. He will have the emotional maturity and intellectual ability needed for our life and mission. He will have the human qualities necessary for community life, for collaboration with others in mission, have a capacity for empathy and compassion, be a caring person, have the ability for studies, be able and willing for sacrifice, be ready to work. Some helpful ways of ascertaining his suitability can be used during the probation period. A psychological assessment administered by a trained psychologist is advisable.<sup>20</sup> This allows the character and personality of the candidate to be known better and it enables formation to be adapted more fittingly to the needs of the individual. Cultural realities and differences must be taken into account in applying such testing. It is important to stress that the formation process can help a person to grow but it does not usually change his basic psychological make-up.

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<sup>20</sup> See GPV, nos. 147; 191-196

## A THREE STAGE FORMATION JOURNEY

### Stage I The Pre-Novitiate

*To know, accept and love myself as God loves me*

68. This first stage of formation is sometimes comprised of two periods, a propaedeutic or introductory period<sup>21</sup> and the period of philosophical or other studies. This first stage of formation will help the candidate to acquire a fuller knowledge and appreciation of the Catholic faith and the nature and history of the Congregation. He will be introduced to the person and the spiritual teaching of the founder and other Passionist saints. The particular focus of this stage is to help the person to grow in human, emotional, and psycho-sexual maturity. He will be helped to clarify his motivations and to grow in faith. It is hoped that at the end of this stage he will have sufficient freedom to choose to enter the novitiate and prepare for profession.<sup>22</sup>

### Discovering Himself

69. It is during this first stage that the basic foundation of formation are laid. Particular attention will be given to the human formation of each candidate. By human is meant much more than psychology. It touches the social, cultural, intellectual and moral dimension of a person's life. We are experiencing what might be called an anthropological revolution which marks a significant change in the way we understand how human beings learn, choose, change and develop. There has been a shift from depending on external sources and motivations for personal change to the centrality of the self-awareness of the human subject. Even where external sources are accepted and respected these have to be authenticated by the human subject. This is not just a passing phase but represents a significant evolution in what it means to be human and how growth takes place. Once the human person has discovered his interiority there is no going back to an earlier view of the human being.

70. The human person is a self-conscious subject and is defined by an inner dynamism or drive towards self-transcendence. Self-transcendence is a way of characterizing the dynamic process by which every human person expands and moves beyond what he already is and becomes something more. He responds to the natural drive towards greater knowledge of truth and love of the good. By self-transcendence he realizes his human potential and grows into a mature and responsible person. This is the same general trajectory of the formation process. The additional factor in the case of religious formation is the action of the Holy Spirit in the person's life. It is because of some significant intervention of the Spirit that the person chooses to give a new direction to his life and embarks on the great adventure that is formation for the religious life and priesthood.

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<sup>21</sup> GPV no. 59 says this is now an indispensable phase of formation

<sup>22</sup> See Constitutions 1984, no. 88

71. In this important first stage of formation, the long and difficult process of self-discovery continues more earnestly in which the candidate is helped to know himself better, with his many gifts and limitations. The most difficult part of this process may be to acknowledge and accept his weaknesses, inadequacies and sinfulness. In community he will experience the challenge to continue growing with the support of brothers on the same journey (Const. 80).
72. The goal of this stage is for the postulant to experience that he is loved and accepted by God. The great discovery of this foundational stage of formation can be stated as follows, “*In the Passion of Jesus, I have discovered that God is accepting and loving me as I am, here and now.*” If the postulant can be helped to experience this unmerited, freely given love of God, he will have the courage to face and accept himself. He can be set free from fear, self-doubt, self-rejection and in joy accept himself, since God has accepted and loved him first (1 John 4, 10). He will come to know and accept his real self. During this first stage the experience of the charism will be a powerful aid in helping him to grow and mature.
73. The growth and development of the Passionist charism and spirit in the life of the candidate accompanies the slow process of self-discovery, self-acceptance and self-denial. Before there can be a real giving of oneself there is first the need to know oneself and to accept oneself. This is often a “crucifying” experience. Self-discovery means seeing myself clearly, with my talents and gifts as well as my weaknesses and defects. It is always difficult to come to real self-knowledge either because of an unhealthy self-rejection or because of an exaggerated estimation of oneself and an inability to admit faults and limitations.
74. Self-discovery is essential but not sufficient for personal growth. Another important dimension is self-acceptance and self-love. To accept oneself as a limited and sinful person is not easy. Many people hide from the truth about themselves by fabricating an outer appearance, projecting a self-image that is false. The real self remains hidden because it is not liked or accepted. Shame and guilt as well as self-loathing contribute to this game of “hide and pretend”. This is not something unusual or pathological. Most young people struggle with issues of self-acceptance and self-rejection. During the early years of formation, these issues need to be addressed so that the candidate is helped to be at peace with himself and ready to make a free and informed commitment of himself to Christ.
75. Self-knowledge also touches the delicate and complex area of motivation. Why am I here? Why do I want to be a Passionist? It is never easy to be completely certain about the true motivation for one’s actions and decisions. There are often many contributing factors, reasons and causes at work. Why do I want to be a Passionist? I can answer by sincerely saying that I want to love God or I want to serve God’s people. I want to be a saint or I want to be happy. These positive and reasonable motives can be true, sincere

and honest. But there may also be other motives that are conscious but not so positive and therefore unrecognized. Formation at this stage aims at clarifying and purifying motivation.

76. It is possible to be influenced by powerful unconscious motives. It is our actions and reactions to the events of daily life that give some hints of the presence of these true motives. It often takes a trained and attentive formator to detect traces of these hidden motives over a long period of time. It is important to discover the conflict between the expressed and the hidden motives because it helps us to know the needs and desires of the person that are in conflict and may even be incompatible with his stated goal to be a Passionist. This is part of the slow but necessary process of growing in self-knowledge. It is an essential part of the asceticism of formation for Passionist life.
77. In the early stages of formation, a lot of time and resources are devoted to helping candidates to move out of the darkness of ignorance and self-delusion to greater realism and truth about themselves. Life in community with peers and elders is an important context in which this kind of self-discovery takes place. Community life is also an important laboratory for learning about ones needs, likes and dislikes. It is here that one learns how to forget self in order to serve others. Friction and misunderstanding in community can also teach us how to forgive and seek pardon from others. These early years give the first indications of the person's capacity for tolerance, patience, forgiveness and an appreciation of differences so necessary for community life and service of others.
78. This first stage of formation corresponds in a general way to the purgative way, the first stage in the classical triple division of the spiritual journey. The purgative way is a time of difficult self-discovery and turning away from self and towards God. A rich spirituality based on the charism can provide the light, the support, the energy for engaging on this difficult part of the journey. First of all, it is because God loved each one so much that he sent his Son to save us. Jesus freely laid down his life for his friends, and I am one of those friends. He knows me and loves me despite my unworthiness. As the scriptures say, "while I was still a sinner he gave his life for me" (Rom. 5, 8). It is the knowledge of Jesus's great love for me a sinner that can help me to accept myself as I am. It is this love that can heal, forgive and change me just as it healed and changed Zacchaeus and many others. Jesus's humble self-emptying fills each one with real joy because "he loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2, 21). This rich Passionist spirituality gives us the confidence and strength we need to face and accept the difficult truth about ourselves.

### **Psycho-Sexual Maturity and the Virtue of Chastity**

79. *The General Program* (1986) states, "it is assumed that the candidates have successfully passed through the appropriate stages of psycho-sexual development and have achieved the desired integration in sufficient degree" (46). This can no longer be simply assumed.

The Church has been shaken to its foundations by the revelations of the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults by priests and religious in many parts of the world.<sup>23</sup> Serious questions have been raised about the kind of formation and supervision these offenders received in the past. It is often insinuated wrongly that celibacy of its nature leads to serious problems of a sexual nature. The formation of future priests and religious must take all of this into account. Many difficulties and problems regarding personnel are also related to these important areas. The ongoing care of our religious requires that we address these matters in an open, mature, and thorough way.

80. In the light of the revelations of sexual misconduct by religious and priests, the areas of human sexuality, healthy psychological adjustment, and emotional maturity will need to receive greater attention than before. A more explicit and detailed education in the role and importance of psychosexual and emotional maturity will be given with input from experts in the field. This will help each of us to be more open about sexuality and its place in the life of religious men. It will enable us to look at human relationships and the natural human needs for intimacy, friendship and more. It will name and explore the variety and range of challenges to living a chaste and celibate life today. Issues around sexual orientation and sexual experience will be considered in depth.<sup>24</sup> The aim is to help the person to integrate his sexuality into a wholesome and healthy religious life.
81. This area will include an exploration of all matters dealing with our relationships with co-workers, those we meet in pastoral situations, and our relationship with friends etc. We will need to explore “boundaries” and what is appropriate in our relationships with others, the kinds of ambiguous situations that ought to be avoided, and the concerns of lay people about certain types of behavior, speech, and attitudes. There is also the issue of the misuse of power in our relationships that can lead to bullying and the denial of rights. Formators are to model the appropriate use of power as a means of service. If candidates are afraid of the formator, as has often been the case, they may comply externally but never learn to express their true needs in genuine dialogue.
82. Formation of the human person is also concerned with the kind of adaptation and change within the person that is necessary in order to be with others in ministry. We are invited to be with people in moments of great vulnerability, in times of struggle and pain, in situations requiring great sensitivity and care on our part. For this, human and emotional maturity is needed. The inner world of the person is a potential source of powerful needs and emotions that can lead to inappropriate acting out with tragic and painful consequences for minister and people. We are therefore concerned for the psychological health and fitness of our religious.
83. The pre-novitiate is a time of preparation and of learning to be generous in self-giving in the spirit of the vows. The focus on human and psycho-sexual maturity places the virtue

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<sup>23</sup> See GPV no. 202 on the protection of minors

<sup>24</sup> GPV addresses the issue of persons with “homosexual tendencies” nos. 199-201

of chastity at the centre of this stage. Growing in self-knowledge means knowing oneself as a sexual person and learning to offer the gift and energy of his sexuality to God. The candidate learns that vowed chastity is a way of loving like Christ who gave his life for all.

### **The Charism of the Passion in Stage I**

84. The Charism of the Passion gives us access to the whole mystery of Christ by passing through the door of His Passion. The postulant grows in his relationship with Christ and his desire to follow him unconditionally. He is introduced to the Charism by focusing on the Passion as the supreme expression of God's love (Const. 1). It is important that this be an experiential learning and not merely a theoretical or academic study of historical sources.
85. The charism can play a significant and powerful role in the human and spiritual development of the person. In his prayer before the Cross, the young man can grow in his awareness of God's love of him and discover the inner meaning of the Passion as the expression of God's unconditional love and acceptance, "Christ died for me."
86. In the mind of St. Paul of the Cross, the Passion of Christ is "the greatest and most overwhelming work of God's love" (Const. 1). St Paul of the Cross spoke of the "ocean of the divine love of God, from which proceeds this sea of the most holy Passion of Jesus Christ, which are two seas flowing into one"<sup>25</sup>.
87. In the Passion we discover the love that saves us because we are sinners. This love is not earned, it does not depend on our merits, it is not a reward for our goodness. God's love is freely and generously offered to us where we are and because we are needy sinners. In the Passion, God is accepting and loving me as I am here and now. If the young man can be helped to experience this unmerited, freely given love of God, he will have the courage to face and accept himself. He can be set free from fear, self-doubt, self-rejection and in joy accept himself since God has accepted and loved him first.
88. The best in modern psychology teaches us that in order to have the ability to love, one must first have been loved. Otherwise one remains trapped in the defense mechanisms we erect because of fear and insecurity. The experience of being loved by the Father precedes and conditions the ability to be a generous giver. It can liberate a person and open up a new capacity to surrender to the Father in loving obedience. This approach to the Passion as the outpouring of God's superabundant love is a powerful entry into the charism for postulants. It is not a mere theory about the charism or an abstract idea but it can be a powerful personal experience of God's immense love.

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*Lettere ai laici* (a cura di M. Anselmi), Roma 2002, 279 (A L. Burlini, 04-07-1748).

89. It is primarily through his encounter with God in the scriptures and in prayer that the postulant will experience God's love for him. God has taken the initiative to set us free from all that can harm us by sending his Son who gave his life for us. This is a work of divine mercy and kindness that God lovingly undertakes because this is who God is (1 John 4, 16). The goal of this stage of formation is that the postulant is able to say "I have come to know that God loves me" (1 John 4, 16), and that greater love than this is not possible (John 15, 12). As a result, he is able to accept and love himself and others.
90. The love of God shown in the passion of Jesus is a love beyond words. St. Paul of the Cross cannot find the words to express the wonders of God's love. "I would love to tell you great things, but he who does not love cannot speak of love: this is a language only love can teach. Listen to the Divine Lover and allow him to teach you. I would love to be aflame with love. Ah! but I don't know how to speak. I want that about which I cannot speak. Oh my great God, You teach me what I must say! I would love to be entirely aflame with love. More than this, I want to sing in that furnace of love and magnify the great mercies that Uncreated Love has shown you" (Lettere I, 296, 315).

### **The Postulant<sup>26</sup> is a man of prayer**

91. The Passionist is a man of prayer and in prayer he comes to know God's love for him. The formation community is a school of prayer (Const. 80) in which the postulant learns to be a man of prayer. He will be introduced to the celebration the liturgy of the hours, the sacraments, daily Eucharist, Marian and other devotions. He will be given an opportunity to participate in different forms of praying together - before the Blessed Sacrament, before the Crucifix, Stations of the Cross and be encouraged to assist his personal prayer through *Lectio Divina*, Centering Prayer, Taize chants, the Jesus prayer, mantras and local forms of prayer etc. The postulant is helped and guided to spend 30 minutes each day in quiet meditation or mental prayer.
92. Beginning in this first stage of formation, the candidate will experience the practice of spiritual direction and pastoral supervision. These are distinct roles from that of the formator. Each candidate should be engaged with a spiritual director who will help him with his relationship with Christ and with integrating the different dimensions of formation. The candidate will see the spiritual director monthly if this is at all possible.

### **The Postulant is a man of action**

93. The Passionist is an «apostle» sent into the world with Good News for the poor (Const. 1, 63). Even as a young hermit, Paul Danei engaged in the apostolate with other young people, teaching them and praying with them. The postulant will have some experience of serving people, especially the poor and the suffering.
94. At this stage, the postulant is not engaged in clerical ministry. This is an ideal time for an experience of insertion in the reality of poverty and human suffering. He can find suitable work with the poor and those who are suffering. Such work could include distributing

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<sup>26</sup> "Postulant" is being used as a convenient generic term for candidates in the pre-novitiate stage.

food and clothing to the homeless, visiting the house-bound, the sick or the elderly, working with handicapped children etc. These activities will be carried out under the supervision and accompaniment of an approved religious or lay person, and the candidate must have the necessary police clearance to engage in these activities.

### **The Postulant is a man of Study**

95. This is also the stage at which he may begin the serious academic studies required for life and ministry in the Church today. In so far as is possible, our students will attend the secular university for philosophy or some other secular studies<sup>27</sup>. The perennial questions of reason and faith and especially the relationship between faith and modern science are of great importance. Our young men should also be aware of the new understanding of the universe and of humanity deriving from the New Cosmology<sup>28</sup>. In the university they will mix with their peers and grow in their appreciation of the challenges being faced today by young people as well as the cultural and intellectual trends that are shaping society. It is noteworthy that most young people studying at university today must also work to earn money for their tuition, lodging and pocket. This is a very demanding combination but is also an important way of learning the real demands of life today. It may be something for us to consider as we think of Passionist formation into the future.

### **Evaluation**

96. The first stage of initial formation includes, on the one hand, the community that welcomes the candidate and on the other hand the candidate who desires to enter more deeply into the Passion of Jesus and to move away gradually from his former life. It is a time of discernment and preparation for novitiate. At the end of this first stage, a serious evaluation is done by the community, together with the postulant to assess his human and spiritual readiness for the novitiate. Others who know the candidates can be invited to participate in this evaluation. These may include teachers and lay people who have been in contact with the candidates during this stage of their formation.

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<sup>27</sup> The Gift of Priestly Vocation, 2016, no. 22

<sup>28</sup> See Tom Berry C.P. (with Brian Swimme), *The Universe Story*, 1992.

## Appendix to Stage I

Here we suggest some of the strong biblical themes that will nourish him and help him to grow through this stage of formation. No one has seen the Father except Jesus who reveals Him to us (1 John, 1,18); God loved the world so much (John 3, 16); The Father is not absent but is in and with Jesus even on the cross (2 Cor. 5,19); To see Jesus on the Cross is to see the Father loving us (John 14,9);

God Loved Us First: John 3,16 God loved the world so much . . .; Luke 15,11 ff. The Prodigal son; John 15,16 “You did not choose me . . .”; I John 4, 7-16,19 “God loved us first”; Rom. 5,8 “While we were still sinners . . .”; 1 Cor 1, 26ff “Consider your own call . . .not many of you were wise . . .”; Col. 2,13-14 “And when you were dead . . .”

In the Old Testament, we see God’s prior choice of a weak and insignificant tribe (Dt. 7). This theme is repeated and re-echoed by the prophets.

From the Constitutions: The Constitutions repeatedly remind us that the Passion is all about God’s love. This is a distinctive evangelical intuition of the Passionist. The Passion of Jesus is “the greatest and most overwhelming work of God’s love” which is the rock on which we can build our vocation (Const. 1). See also Const. 5, 10, 26, 33.

Const. 5 Christ reveals God’s love for all people; Const. 10 Christ loved us by becoming poor for our sakes; Const. 26 The Christian community is founded on the love of Christ who, by his Cross, tore down the walls of separation; Const. 33 - Christ loved everyone without exception.

## Stage II The Novitiate

### *Poverty, Prayer, Penance, Solitude*

97. The novitiate is a year of retreat, solitude and separation in order to help the novice to focus on the one thing necessary (Luke 10, 42). He will live the poverty, solitude and penance recommended by Paul of the Cross. It is a time of intense preparation for the total gift of self to God in union with Jesus Crucified in profession. He will grow in his willingness to be totally emptied of self until there is nothing left but the action of Jesus handing himself over to the Father in obedience, “Into your hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 24,46). This stage corresponds roughly to the illuminative way, the second stage in the classical three part division of the spiritual life. It is a time when the novice’s personal relationship with Jesus reaches a new depth and intensity.

## The Paschal Dynamic of the Passionist Vocation

98. Christian life begins with baptism in which the person is sacramentally united with Christ in his death and resurrection. St. Paul teaches us that every Christian participates in the death of Jesus in order to share in his Resurrection (Rom 6, 4-5). In response to God’s call, we want to die to the old life of unbelief and sin so that the new life with Christ can begin. This new life is our sharing in the life of the Risen Christ. The sacramental dying to the old way of being and rising to the new way is the dynamic movement of the entire Christian life from beginning to end. It shapes every moment and every aspect of the Christian’s life. There is a continual dying to all that is sinful, negative, and of death and a rising to faith, hope, charity, service and new life. The Christian adventure is a life-long transition from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from falsehood to truth, from the old to the new.

99. The Passionist life is one form of the Christian life in which this mysterious but powerful baptismal dynamic is lived with greater consciousness and intensity. The Passionist is first of all a baptized Christian who lives his baptismal union with Christ in a conscious and deliberate manner. He freely chooses to shape his entire life into a visible manifestation of his baptismal union with Jesus Crucified and Risen. He wants to dedicate himself to this project and to share this commitment with others in a particular form of community life and apostolic service that is a visible expression of and witness to this commitment.

100. The novitiate is the year when the baptismal and paschal dynamic take on a new meaning and depth in the novice’s life (Rom. 6, 3-11). He learns what it means to be totally united with Jesus in his identification with the Father’s will (Mark 14, 36). He accompanies Jesus on the road to Jerusalem (Mark 10, 32), and wants to pass over with Jesus (John 13, 1) from the old life to the new, until he is filled with the very fullness of God (Eph. 3, 19).

101. The whole Christian life is a form of self-emptying. Just as there is a *kenosis* of Christ as expressed in Phil 2, 1-11, there is also a *kenosis* of the Christian expressed in

Mt 25, 25-40 and other biblical texts. It flows from a deep desire to be emptied of all self-concern and self-preoccupation. In other words, the disciple of Jesus wants to die to himself in order to reach out to others in love and service. In all of this, Jesus in his Passion shows us the Way.

102. The novice is preparing for first profession as a Passionist religious. Through his religious consecration, the Passionist vows to live his baptismal union with Christ in an exclusive and deliberate manner. The novice hopes to profess the three traditional vows of evangelical chastity, evangelical poverty and evangelical obedience as concrete embodiments of his first and fundamental vow to be conformed to Jesus in His saving passion and death (Const. 5). Each of the three traditional vows expresses one particular dimension of his total and whole-hearted self-giving to the Father and for the sake of his “friends”. By living as a chaste, poor and obedient Passionist, he desires to be completely one with Jesus who emptied himself of everything in obedience to the Father and who “loved his own to the end” (John 13, 1).
103. Just as Stage I was pervaded by the love of the Father, so this Stage is filled with the love of Jesus the Son who “emptied Himself” (Phil. 2, 7) and gave himself for us (Gal 2, 21). The focus is on Jesus’s love of the Father, of his close friends, of the poor and the suffering, and of each one of us. Greater love is not possible (John 15, 13).

## **The Charism of the Passion in Stage II**

104. The attention of the novice is directed towards the self-emptying and poverty of Christ in the Passion. During this year, the novice will be helped to experience the charism as sharing in Jesus’ self-emptying (Philip. 2, 8) and accepting the Father’s will (Mark 14,36). He will explore the scriptures and see how “it was fitting for the messiah to suffer and so enter his glory” (Luke 24, 26). In many places the Old Testament looks forward to the coming of the messiah and Isaiah in particular points forward to the Servant of God who will suffer for the people (Isaiah 54).
105. The passion of Jesus is not confined to the last few days of his life. The whole Gospel is pervaded with his “passion” for the Father, and his “passion” for people. From the baptism in the Jordan, beginning with the temptations in the desert, the Passion of Jesus begins. He is in mortal combat with the “principalities and powers” that are ranged against him, plotting and scheming his downfall. His mission is to overthrow these powers and establish a new Kingdom. He will be opposed and threatened all along the road to Jerusalem, until finally they kill him.
106. The whole of the New Testament resounds with the message of Jesus’ self-emptying love. It is significant that St. Paul of the Cross chose to have the Passion according to John read at the profession ceremony. Bible scholars tell us that John’s passion is different in significant ways to the account of the passion in the synoptic Gospels. In John the passion represents the hour for which Jesus longed. It is the moment when he accomplished the Father’s will and fulfills his mission to save the world. It is when he is raised up on the cross that Jesus draws the whole world to himself. The

novitiate is the ideal time to study St. John's Gospel and discover why Paul had a particular love for it.

107. The Passionist is a man of the passion. He shares Jesus's passion for his Father and for God's people. The novice discovers that the Charism of the Passion gives him insight into the whole mystery of Christ. In the light of Jesus Passion, he grows in appreciation of the mystery of the Incarnation, of Jesus mission, his preaching of the Kingdom of God, the healings and exorcisms, his befriending of the outcasts and despised, and finally the Paschal Mystery of his dying and rising. The charism of the passion helps us to see the mystery of God and the mystery of Christ in a new light.
108. The entire Constitutions (1984) is a contemporary expression of the charism that informs every aspect of Passionist life "We seek the unity of our lives and our apostolate in the Passion of Jesus" (5). The novices will study carefully the Constitutions so that they can identify the authentic expression of the charism for today. The Constitutions are in continuity with the Rule of St. Paul of the Cross and informed by the best in recent theological, biblical and spiritual theology.

### Passionist Poverty

109. The first name Paul gave his little community was "the poor of Jesus" to indicate the centrality of evangelical poverty in our life. Poverty is the stripping away of everything that is not Christ so that in the end "it is only Christ who is living in me" (Gal. 2, 20). The Passionist is called to unite himself to the one who "emptied himself taking the form of a servant". The novice is helped to say with the apostle Paul, "I am willing to accept the loss of everything in order to have Christ" (Phil 3, 8). He hears and accepts the invitation of Jesus "If anyone wants to follow me let him deny himself take up his cross" (Mark 8, 34 ff.).
110. St. Paul of the Cross spoke movingly and profoundly about our radical poverty or "nothingness". The Passionist comes to recognize that he "*is nothing in the All.*" By the grace of God, we can discover and accept our "nothingness" so as to be filled by God who is All. This is not simply a negative experience but rather the way of coming to the fullness of life shown to us by Jesus. Poverty is the banner under which the Congregation will flourish, he said (Const. 14). The greatest poverty is the knowledge of our Nothingness. "Wholly humbled and focusing on your nothingness, on your powerlessness, your emptiness, and knowing nothing, but with high and filial confidence in the Lord, you will lose all in the abyss of the infinite love of God, who is completely the fire of love. ..." <sup>29</sup>
111. The novice is preparing to live the vowed life. The vow of poverty is central to this stage. It is the poverty of Jesus who emptied himself. Poverty has a personal, community, and apostolic dimension. The vow of poverty also makes us more conscious

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<sup>29</sup> *Lettere ai laici* (curata da M. Anselmi, pp. 301-302).

of the earth and how precious is God's creation. A passion for the earth is a necessary part of our passion for God and his people. Respect for the earth and the material world will encourage a new freedom from the need to accumulate things and a careful use of God's creation. The novice will appreciate the need to learn more about the challenges to the eco-system coming from the greed and exploitation of some.

### **The Passionist novice is a man of prayer**

112. The novitiate community is a privileged school of prayer. The following of Christ Crucified in personal prayer is our way to discover the true God (Const. 49). The Passionist gives at least one hour each day to "mental prayer" (Const. 51). The novices will normally give more than one hour to personal prayer each day. They will prepare for this by meditative reading of the scriptures, especially the Gospels, reading the writings of the founder and other teachers of prayer. In this way it is hoped that the novice will become a prayerful person and a true friend of Jesus crucified.
113. During this special time the novices are helped to open their hearts to the possibility of a mystical experience of union with Jesus in his Passion. This will be the foundation of a life of love and service of God and neighbor. The highpoint of the founder's spirituality is the mystical reciprocity that he sees between the soul and God. He writes to Lucia Burlini, "Let that Immense Good repose in your spirit. This is a mutual repose: God in you and you in God. Oh, sweet work! Oh, divine work. God feeds himself, I will say that, for I do not have words. God feeds himself on your spirit and your spirit feeds itself on that Spirit of God. *My food is Christ and I am his....* God reposes in you. God penetrates you completely and you are completely in God, all transformed in his love."<sup>30</sup> This is also the goal of Passionist life.

### **The Passionist novice is a Man of Action**

114. Even in this time of «retreat from the world», the novice will have some limited form of apostolate. Prayer leads to service of the neighbor, and the novices will reach out to serve people in need. Action for others nourishes prayer. The novices will bring to their prayer the needs of those they meet in the apostolate.

### **Evaluation**

115. Before being admitted to first profession, there will be an evaluation of each novice to determine his readiness for profession. This will include a self-evaluation of the novice, as well as the valuation of the novice director and the whole community. This should be a helpful experience of personal growth for the novice.

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<sup>30</sup> L II (A L. Burlini, 25-5-1751). LA 293-294.

## Appendix to Stage II

Some key scripture passages to be pondered: St. John's Gospel, especially the Passion narrative, John 18 ff.; Phil 2, 5 ff. "Have that mind in you that was in Christ Jesus . . ." ; Rom 6, 3 ff. "all of us have been baptized into his death " ; Gal. 6, 14 «I glory in the cross of Our Lord . . .»

From the Constitutions, "We participate in the Passion . . . and keep alive the memory of the Passion" (6); Baptism is the foundation of our religious consecration (7); Christ freely accepted the role of servant, and was "obedient unto death" (20); In community, he will regard the others better than himself (27); "We Passionists make the Paschal Mystery the center of our lives" (65); The purpose of the novitiate (89).

## Stage III Post-Novitiate

*Share the Word of the Cross with the whole world*

116. The post-novitiate is a time of consolidation when the new Passionist experiences a growing desire to share in the mission of Jesus. He wants to continue growing into the likeness of Jesus, having His mind and heart (Philip. 2, 5). He feels compelled to share this new life with others (2 Cor. 5, 14). In the religious community and with his fellow students, in the apostolate and with the people of God, he will share the love of God that has filled his heart (Rom. 5, 5). His new missionary thrust will be nourished on a deep prayer life and strong community bonds.
117. The spiritual dynamic of this time is still the paschal movement of dying to selfishness in order to live more fully the new life of the Risen Christ (Const. 64). The focus of the newly professed religious shifts to the strong desire to give his life for others, just as Jesus did. This will be expressed first of all in his love and service of his brothers in community. It is also a time of greater outreach and service of God's people, and especially of those most in need.

## The Charism of the Passion in Stage III

*"As I have loved you . . ." (John 15, 12).*

118. The charism is an inspiration for Passionist ministry. Jesus crucified gave his life willingly for the good of others. On the Cross, he showed the depth and extent of his self-sacrificing love. He willingly laid down his life for his friends (John 15, 12-13). The Passion of Jesus is the inevitable outcome of his commitment to the poor and suffering, his willingness to forgive sinners and his healing of the sick. The Passion is the inspiration of all our apostolic work and ministry. Like Paul the Apostle, the Passionist is moved to share with others his own personal experience of God's great love and compassion (2 Cor. 1, 4).

## Charismatic Mission

119. St. Paul of the Cross was an indefatigable apostle and missionary who shared the zeal of the great Apostle who said, "We preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1, 23). His purpose in founding the congregation was to go to the people with the message of the Cross (Const. 1, 50). He was deeply moved by the many ills affecting the people of his time and believed that the passion of Jesus was the most effective remedy. He saw the name of Jesus written on the foreheads of the poor and responded to them as if to Jesus. In this he was living the message of Jesus, "as long as you did it to one of the least of these you did to me" (Matt 25). Our message is the Word of the Cross, the Gospel of love, "God so loved the world that He gave up His Son for us" (John 3,16).
120. This is the time when the young professed turn to the Spirit to fill them with the energy and enthusiasm to go to the whole world with the Gospel of the Passion "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the good news" (Mark 15, 16). In order to share in the

mission of Jesus to establish the Kingdom of God, they will have a particular care for those most in need of mercy and compassion. They will learn from Jesus who was gentle and tender with those in need. It is with the energy and fire of the Spirit that they go to the people with Good News that fills their lives with love and peace, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He sent me to bring Good News to the poor” (Luke 4, 18).

121. In today’s context, it is easy to identify at least three groups of people young Passionists will go to with the Gospel of the Passion - those who already believe and want to grow in faith and love, those who have fallen away from the Church or have lost their faith, and those who do not know Christ. The way of sharing the Gospel with each of these groups will be different and will require skill and sensitivity. A good knowledge of the context in which people live, with their concerns and preoccupations, is a necessary preparation for their ministry.
122. The new communication technologies and the ever expanding digital world offer great possibilities for personal development and for evangelization. Those in formation should learn how to use these new technologies in a competent and appropriate way in service of our mission.

### **Learning from the Founder**

123. In the post-novitiate stage of formation, the new Passionist will continue to grow in his knowledge of the founder and learn from him to seek above all else to know and do the will of God, especially in his outreach to others. “(T)he highest perfection is to feed, in a pure spirit of faith and love, on the Divine Will. Oh! Sweet Jesus! What a great thing you taught with words and deeds of eternal life! Recall what the lovable Savior said to his beloved disciples: it was his food to do the Will of his Eternal Father”. (*Ibid.*, 491 , to Suor C. Bresciani, 18-12-1743).
124. Jesus was sent by the Father and came among us in obedience to the Father. Everything he taught, and everything he did was because of what he learned from the Father. His food and drink, his whole life and mission was to do the Father’s will, “Not my will but yours be done” (Mark 14, 36). This is the focus of formation in the post-novitiate stage.
125. Obedience to the Divine Will was at the centre of Paul’s spirituality. Evangelical obedience is lived in community with our brothers. It is together with them that the young Passionist will discern God’s will for him. Jesus fulfills his mission by embracing his Passion as an expression of his total commitment to the Father’s will, “Thy will be done!” The Passionist commitment to centre his life on the Passion of Jesus and to preach the Gospel of the Passion is motivated by his desire to be like Jesus who wanted in all things to do the Holy Will of God.

## **The New Passionist is a Man of Prayer**

126. The formation community is a school of prayer (Const. 80). The young Passionist will continue to grow in his life of prayer. He is helped to find a suitable time and place for his daily meditation. Regular days of recollection and retreats will nourish his spiritual life. He will learn to be a teacher of prayer and especially of meditation on the Passion (Const. 66)

## **The New Passionist is a Man of Action**

*“The love of Christ compels me to speak . . .” (2 Cor. 5, 14)*

127. As we have seen, during this stage the apostolate takes on greater importance. The young professed combines his studies with apostolic activities. He will receive the ministries of lector and acolyte and can exercise these in the community and in the public church. He can teach others to contemplate the passion in prayer groups and bible study groups, especially young people. Ministry among the poorest people is to be preferred, especially immigrants, minorities and those most neglected. The young professed will be given serious preparation to preach the Word of the Cross. As deacons, they will preach and officiate at some church services.

## **The New Passionist is a Man of Learning**

128. Our consecration to the Passion binds us to a serious study of the Passion in all its dimensions. We are to lead others to a deeper understanding of the Passion (Const. 6). Especially during the years of formal study, young Passionists are to be instructed in the full range of the mystery of Christ’s Passion (Const. 78. 86). It is our mission to keep alive the memory of the Passion of Jesus and its meaning and relevance for people’s lives. This will require serious study and research, not only of the Passion, but of the world today, and especially of the local culture. The study of the passion does not end with initial formation. It is a lifelong vocation that will continue to enrich the Passionist religious as well as those to whom he is sent on mission.

## **Evaluation**

129. Before being admitted to final profession and again before receiving orders, the candidates will engage in a serious discernment to determine if this is God’s will for them and if they have the necessary qualities and gifts for this life. The entire formation community should be involved in this process together with teachers where they are studying and lay people who know them.

## PART THREE

### Permanent Formation<sup>31</sup>

130. This document is concerned primarily with the first phase of formation or initial formation. It does not attempt to offer a comprehensive program of life-long ongoing formation for our religious. In the near future, a document on ongoing formation will be prepared.
131. Passionist formation does not end with final vows and ordination. It is a lifelong process of being conformed ever more fully to Christ crucified and risen. Human and spiritual growth never come to an end. Opportunities should be offered to all our religious at appropriate intervals for further study, ongoing spiritual direction, and acquiring the new skills necessary for ministry. The Congregation will make every effort to rekindle the flame of enthusiasm in all our religious so they are ready and willing to renew their commitment to the Lord and his people at every stage of life.
132. The ongoing formation of all our religious is a duty and a necessity. The Congregation of the Passion has been entrusted by the Church with the great responsibility to announce the Gospel of the Passion and to minister to God's suffering people. We want to fulfill this mission with dedication and competence. This requires a willingness on the part of each one to learn continually, to review one's life and ministry and adapt where necessary, and to acquire the new knowledge and skills needed to respond creatively to the ever changing challenges in the world and the Church.
133. The years immediately after ordination can be particularly challenging for the newly ordained. He has moved from the house of formation and the community life with his peers into the apostolic community with older confreres. It is often a great joy to share life with experienced and helpful elders. They have so much to offer from their experience of life and ministry. However, there can also be times of painful misunderstanding and even conflict. It is sometimes difficult to respond to the needs of God's people and this can lead to frustration and even disillusionment. The young religious and priests need the support and care of their elders and especially the superior of the community. Special moments of rest and reflection should be organized when the newly ordained can meet and share for mutual support.
134. In recent years a large proportion of those ordained have either left the Congregation or experienced a personal crisis in their first five years as priests. This has occurred in other religious communities and dioceses also. Some young priests were appointed to ministries in isolated places and did not have adequate support systems.

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<sup>31</sup> See GPV nos. 80-88

Some became totally involved in ministry and lost focus on their community and or their prayer life. Some who had conformed externally during their years of formation now emerged from hiding like submarines with a totally different mentality. Some did not continue or did not develop the practice of spiritual direction or pastoral supervision. It is critical that Province leaders address this reality and determine to provide the special support and assistance needed in the early years after completing initial formation.

135. Formation is about growing in our love of the Lord and our commitment to God's people in ministry. Every day the Lord renews his invitation to us to follow him with all our being. Every day we learn more about ourselves in prayer, in community with others and in our ministry with God's people. We desire to be ever more generous in our response to the Lord and his people. Experience shows new ways in which we resist the promptings of the Spirit. Growth continues until the end of life and by means of ongoing formation we seek to provide the helps that are available to nourish and strengthen the human, spiritual and vocational life of every Passionist.

136. It is the Lord who calls and prepares his servants as ministers in his Church. St. Paul of the Cross insisted that the Congregation is a work of God and that everything depends on God's initiative. We continue to believe this and trust in God to send us new members and to oversee their training and formation, "If the Lord does not build the house all our work is in vain" (Ps. 127, 1).

137. There is no perfect program of formation and we cannot make perfect religious. In these pages we offer the outline of a way of accompanying those whom God sends to us so they can hear more clearly and answer more fully the call of the Lord to follow him as Passionist religious. We pray that our efforts will be pleasing to the Lord and that he will take the little we can offer and transform it into something beautiful for the praise of God and the good of His people.

### **Appendix to Part Three**

Fr. Amedeo Cencini addressed the 47<sup>th</sup> General Chapter on the importance of formation and insisted that formation never ends and is a life long process of daily conversion and growing conformity to Christ. There is never a time when we can say formation is complete.

Formation understood as conformity to Christ can also be expressed as learning to have the sentiments of Christ who gave his life for us (Phil. 2, 5). This implies that formation touches and transforms us in the depths of our person, in our feelings, emotions, desires and passions. If formation does not enter into the depths of our human sensibility it will leave us largely unchanged.

Formation is first and foremost the action of God. If we are to take on the form of Christ it is only the Father who can shape that form in us. The Father, through the action of the Spirit forms within each one the image of his son. This lifelong process of formation happens largely through the ordinary experiences of every day. The Father uses every means to help us. We simply need to have the openness and trust to notice and to learn. Ordinary formation throughout life is the ability to learn from daily experience.

On our part, we seek to be open to learning from our experience of life. We start from the idea that what is most important is the creation in the person of 'an intelligent willingness to let oneself be formed by life for a lifetime, or *docibilitas*. *Docibilitas* is the freedom of the person who has learned to let himself be formed by life for life, or who has learned to learn from all the circumstances of life, from every situation, from every relationship, with any person, saint or sinner, in every age and existential season, in failure and in success, when everything goes well, when someone accuses and attacks, even slanders, in health and illness, in youth and in old age ..., because he knows that behind every circumstance or person or event of life is the hand of the Father who ... is dying of the desire to see in us the face of his Son.

Ongoing Formation can be divided into two unequal dimensions, Extraordinary and Ordinary. Ongoing Formation is extraordinary, if it is interpreted as particular interventions, as refresher courses, periods of study and reflection on topics of particular importance, three-days, weeks of meetings, pilgrimages, monthly retreats, spiritual exercises, semesters or sabbatical breaks etc, and anything else that can periodically serve to sustain and animate the spiritual, intellectual, pastoral, charismatic life of the people in question. This is often taken to be the totality of Ongoing Formation.

We are becoming increasingly aware that the real Ongoing Formation is the formation that takes place every day, in every moment and in every event. If the Father is at all times shaping us in the image of the Son then Ongoing Formation is an everyday "ordinary" reality. It is realized in ordinary situations and everyday. It passes through the mediations of normal life, from our brothers in community to the people we serve in the ministry. It does not need exceptional contexts, but takes place where one lives one's everyday life. Of course you can also avail of extraordinary circumstances, such as those listed above, but here is the heart of it. It is daily living that manifests its effectiveness and gives life to that new being that grows according to the heart, mind and sensitivity of the Son.

We have to acknowledge the great importance of the role of the community in ongoing formation, recognizing in it the normal place of the formative journey, where each member is reached by the grace of the Father who forms us through privileged mediation, that of brothers not chosen by me and who have not chosen me, and who live with me. Each of them is the way along which the Father comes to me and I come to the Father. We note well: each of my brothers (who become brothers only when I recognize this mediating function in them), not just some of them (or the best and saints). This implies, on the part of the individual, an assumption of

responsibility towards each of them and creates a strong bond: everyone is responsible for the path of holiness of the other.

Here is a list of areas of importance for ongoing formation and a brief description of each area.

### **1. Intimacy and Integrity.**

By this I mean the tension between on the one hand the natural human need for love and affection, the desire for intimacy with another person and on the other the desire to live one's religious consecration with fidelity, joy and fruitfulness. The need for intimacy is felt with greater intensity and urgency today.

### **2. Community Life**

Life in community is often experienced as little more than sharing a lodging house with others. The challenge is to have deeper and more enriching levels of communication, dialogue, participation, shared responsibility, shared prayer and adult accountability. To create an adult environment of belonging and sharing requires lots of time, patience and skill. It is important to understand community as a value to be realized and not as a given. If community life is experienced as a burden and something negative, the challenge is for the members to work together to create a healthy and supportive community. This is not a waste of time or mere self-indulgence. It is not something superfluous but is essential for our life as Passionists. A rich community life is part of our witness and gift to the Church.

### **3. Developing a Spirituality for the Different Stages of Life**

The different stages of life might include (i) young adulthood, (ii) middle age and (iii) old age. Each stage has its particular challenges and blessings.

Greater attention should be given to the later stage of life when our religious are growing old and getting sick. This is the reality for a big number of our religious. The particular challenges, crosses of these realities are difficult to face and to deal with. At the same time, this can be the most fruitful time in a person's life. It is a time of letting go, of handing over. It is an important stage in the process of the slow dying to self that we signed up for in baptism and religious profession. At this time it is not voluntary but something imposed on us by nature. This is the time we can freely accept the gradual and inevitable diminishment as ways of surrendering ourselves into God's hands. Our ageing can be a time of abundant blessings for us and for those who know us.

### **4. Professional Standards<sup>32</sup> etc.**

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<sup>32</sup> See the decree of the 47<sup>th</sup> General Chapter on *Guidelines for Ministry with children* etc.

Religious and priests are in daily contact with all kinds of people – male and female, young and old, healthy and sick. There are ways of being with people in a pastoral situation that are healthy, wholesome, proper and “professional”. There are also ways of being with people that are unhealthy, improper, inappropriate and “unprofessional”. We all need to be educated in the ways of relating to people in a responsible and appropriate manner. Responsibility also implies accountability. This must become our normal way of approaching ministry and pastoral activity.

#### **5. Growing in Understanding and Appreciation of Other Religions**

Our societies are becoming more diverse and we are meeting more people of different religions and beliefs. The quality of our presence and response to this new situation will be enhanced by a greater understanding and appreciation of the major world religions.

#### **6. A deeper understanding and appreciation of our founder and our sources**

As a way of nourishing their life and ministry, our religious will want to continue to deepen their understanding of the founder and his writings as well as the lives of other great Passionists.

#### **7. Explore the Mystery of the Passion**

Our life is focused on the great mystery of the Passion which inspires and motivates who we are and what we do. Every year there are new publications and studies of the Passion which can enrich our lives. Today there is a great desire to relate the Passion of Jesus to the experience of suffering that afflicts so many people, believers and non believers alike.

#### **8. Ongoing Training in the New Media**

People keep in touch by means of the social media. There they also find information and news. There are so many other ways of communicating by means of the internet. As communicators of the Word, we want to have well trained and competent communicators present with our message in all these and other forms of media.

***St. Paul of the Cross, Pray for us.***