

NEWS FROM THE GENERAL COUNCIL

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2019



The General Council held its final meeting for the year 2019 on 25, 26, 30 November and 2, 3, 4 December 2019 in Rome.

REPORTS

Fr. Gwen Barde (PASPAC General Consultor) reported on the **PASPAC Assembly** which took place in Seoul, South Korea from 8-11 October 2019. The Assembly made the following decisions:

1. *As a Configuration, we commit to continuing our support for our Mission in Myanmar. We will do this in terms of finances, personnel, formation and JPIC solidarity.*
2. *We commit to supporting the three (3) already existing missions: financially, formation, personnel, JPIC (China, Vietnam & PNG).*
3. *We will continue to support the Passionist presence in Japan. This time the Vice-Province is asking personnel to cater to dynamic Catholic immigrants from Vietnam, India, and the Philippines.*
4. *We will build up the configurational identity among the younger generation of Passionists, in order to build a configurational way of thinking amongst the young religious. Some examples of what this might look like include:*
 - *International House of Formation.*
 - *Immersion experiences.*
 - *Jubilee pilgrimage.*
 - *Passionist Institute.*

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5. *We will continue to build up our Passionist lay associates, ensuring that we encourage a sense of configurational thinking amongst them, too. This will be through networking and events, etc. (Lay delegates will be invited to the next PASPAC assemblies).*
6. *We gather a group of younger Passionists to be held before November 2020. This gathering would explore and suggest possibilities for Passionist Preaching Ministry & Evangelisation - via digital & social media platforms - and that this group then report to the PASPAC Executive on possible initiatives that could be developed by the Configuration. (In Singapore).*
7. *The PASPAC Formation Commission will continue to develop and monitor a policy for students regarding common addictions (alcohol, drugs, pornography, smoking).
The policy will respect the differences in cultures and entities, but state expectations and responsibilities clearly, as well as the reason for them - e.g. smoking is expensive and damages health which will provide serious financial costs in the future.*
8. *PASPAC recommends a policy regarding homosexual candidates.
Each entity has the right to have its own policy regarding homosexual candidates.
A PASPAC policy is important so that members transferring or living and working in other entities can have clear expectations about the general policy of the Configuration.*
9. *Develop a plan for financial equity across the Configuration.*
10. *Set the budget for Myanmar and for programs. To be finalized on May 2020 during the Leaders' Meeting.*

During the Assembly Fr. Tom McDonough (SPIR) was elected as President; Fr. Antony Arackal (THOM) was elected as Vice President; Fr. Jiffin Sebastian was elected as Executive Secretary.

Fr. Gwen also reported on the situation of the **mission in Myanmar** (Diocese of Pathein) which has passed its exploratory stage and is now considered an effective PASPAC mission. While this mission is juridically under the Superior General, it is being strongly supported by PASPAC. The two pioneering religious: Fr. Paul Hata (MAIAP) and Fr. Sony Marsilin (THOM) are well received by the Bishop and priests of the diocese and admired for their witness and ministries of preaching and teaching. A third member is being sought to strengthen the community life and availability for further support in preaching retreats to clergy/religious and assist with English language teaching, particularly to seminarians. While the diocese is rich with priests, the Bishop is keen to welcome the Passionists as the only international religious congregation with its unique charism. Local young men are already interested in exploring our lifestyle.



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Fr. Mirek Lesiecki (CCH General Consultor) reported on the developing collaboration between the IOS, SPE and PATR Provinces. At a recent meeting of the three Provincial Councils held recently, the following statement emerged:

GROWING TOGETHER IN NORTH EUROPE

IOS-SPE-PATR

Statement from the Meeting of the Provincial Councils

St Joseph's, Highgate – 12th-14th November 2019

The Provincial Councils of the Provinces of St Joseph, Holy Hope and St Patrick, meeting together in St Joseph's Retreat Highgate, along with the General Consultor responsible for the Configuration, reached the following agreement:

In the light of the reality of our declining numbers in our region and the concern for the governance of our provinces in the near future we felt the urgency to come together.

In our meeting we agreed to work together to achieve a greater and more effective solidarity between our three provinces, and also within the wider Charles Houben Configuration and with the Congregation as a whole.

We will engage in a process of discernment of how best to collaborate with each other in future, exploring together the renewal of our Passionist Mission, Community Life and Formation as proposed to us in 'A Call to Action' of the recent General Chapter.

As a first tentative step, we will examine in depth the current issues and realities of our provinces and explore the opportunities and challenges of mission and ministry and vision for the future. Subsequently, we will seek to determine the institutional structure that will best serve our life and mission and sustain the Congregation in these countries in the future.

Steps for continuing dialogue and working together are planned.

Fr. Mirek reported on his visit to **St. Joseph's, Highgate (London)** during which the community thanked and farewelled Fr. Pat Fitzgerald (PATR) who served as Parish Priest for the past 11 years. Fr. George Koloth (THOM) has been appointed and installed as the new Parish Priest. A religious from Kenya has been appointed as assistant priest in the parish and is preparing his documents for entry into the UK.

As the representative of the Superior General on the Board of **Passionists International (PI)**, Fr. Mirek reported on the swift manner in which Fr. John Kathoka Muthengi (CARLW) is settling into his new role as Executive Director of PI in New York.

Fr. Juan Ignacio Villar (SCOR General Consultor) reported on his visit to **Chile, Bolivia and several communities in Spain**, particularly connecting his visit with the occasion of the journey of the Jubilee Icon and Relic of the Founder. He gave us a good verbal and pictorial appreciation with which our brothers prepared for the liturgical reception and promotion of these items among the people whom they serve.

WORK IN PROGRESS

The General Council continued its dialogue and sharing concerning a **Congregational Strategic Plan for Evangelization** in connection with the Secretariat of Missions and Solidarity, JPIC, Passionists International, the Passionist Laity and Youth Commission – integrated in a Strategic Communication Plan.

From the dialogue thus far, Fr. Joachim tasked Fr. Juan Ignacio with writing up a proposed vision and plan which is presented below:

TOWARDS RENEWING OUR MISSION

From the "CALL TO ACTION",
to the creation of a Evangelization Strategic Plan for the Congregation.

The General Council, in listening to the 47th General Chapter, chose to reflect on the theme: **Renewing our mission**: gratitude, prophecy and hope, in the light of the provocative and dynamic force of Memoria Passionis. The objective of the Chapter was to promote reflection and a response to the call for renewal in our mission, to the whole Congregation and to the Passionist Family, with the awareness that "**what we do**" is closely related to "**who we are**".

The Superior General and his Council sent a letter (February 2019) accompanying the document emanating from General Chapter 47, entitled "**CALL TO ACTION**", with some keys for their work and which form part of a process: **Read and dialogue** the document..., **discern together** the lines of action..., **collect** the ideas and proposals..., **prepare** a document by those in charge and **draw up** by the General Council a unitary document to present to the 2021 Synod.

The religious were encouraged to be bold and passionate in their contributions with the aim of analysing our mission today, with the intention and desire to renew in order to be meaningful in the future.

The General Council **WANTS** that the responses of all be the sum of the concerns and dreams of the religious around our mission, to **DEFINE HOW TO BE EVANGELIZERS TODAY AND WHAT WAY TO CARRY OUT THIS TASK**. In order to achieve this goal, we have proposed three moments:

1. July 2020:

NAME A COMMISSION, called "RENEW THE MISSION". The members of this commission will be **several religious** from different latitudes of the world and from different pastoral fields of the Congregation:

- OF THE WORLD OF THE PARISH AND FAMILIES,
- FROM THE UNIVERSE OF THE AD GENT MISSION AND THE POPULAR MISSIONS,
- FROM THE PLANET OF SCHOOLS AND YOUNG PEOPLE,
- OF THE CULTURE OF JPIC AND SPIRITUALITY,
- IN THE AREA OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION MEDIA ...

Together with the General Consultor of Reference, they will receive and unify the documents received from the Provinces.

2. November 2020:

TO ELABORATE A DOCUMENT/PLAN to renew the mission and to suggest proposals in order to define the way of being new evangelizers today.

3. October 2021:

TO PRESENT TO THE GENERAL SYNOD, what we could call *THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF EVANGELIZATION*, to be discussed and to point out different models of **CONGREGATIONAL STRUCTURE** that will serve the Superior General and his Council to concretize the organization chart that projects the **RENEWAL OF THE PASSIONIST MISSION**.

Meanwhile, as part of the objective of the General Chapter to “Renew our Mission” and of the global theme of Evangelization, the Council looked at **Passionist educational centres (schools & colleges)** as important priority platforms for evangelization. Preliminary investigation shows that there are at least 25 schools/colleges with approximately 18,000 students in the Congregation.

JURIDICAL AND CANONICAL MATTERS

The newly appointed General Procurator, Fr. Alessandro Foppoli (MAPRAES) presented the following and other canonical matters for the decision of the General Council:

1. Following the request of the MAPRAES Provincial and his Council, the General Council voted to elevate the house in Alghero (Sardinia) to the status of “Domus Erecta”.
2. The Superior General and Council reviewed and approved the contract/agreement between the Diocese of Guarabira (PB) and the EXALT Province for the acceptance of the Parish of Nossa Senhora da Piedade in Arara (PB), Brazil.

SOLIDARITY FUND DISBURSEMENTS

Grants from the **Solidarity Fund** were approved for the following projects after having heard the recommendation of Fr. Paolo Aureli, the Secretary for Missions and Solidarity:

1. Construction of a church in Randham, India.
2. Passionist Sisters Orphanage in Molo, Kenya.
3. Construction of a chapel in Yurimaguas, Peru.
4. Construction of multifunctional Pastoral Centre in Barquisimeto, Venezuela.

MEETING WITH GENERAL ECONOME

The General Council welcomed and met for the first time with the newly appointed General Econome, Fr. Antonio Siciliano (MAPRAES) who expressed his readiness to serve the Congregation in this role. He was assisted in presenting the financial report by the outgoing General Econome, Fr. Vincenzo Carletti. The Superior General and Council expressed their immense gratitude for the meticulous stewardship and service of Vincenzo on behalf of the Congregation over the past 6 years. We wish him every blessing for his health and future.

MEETING OF YOUNG PASSIONIST RELIGIOUS

The General Council began some initial discussions on the possibility of organizing a gathering of young Passionist religious at the time of the International Theological Congress which is planned for 21-24 September 2021. The Jubilee Commission will take up this issue for further discussion at their February meeting, especially to find ways of overcoming the challenges of accommodation at that time. More information will be communicated at a later date.

REPORT FROM THE JUBILEE COMMISSION

Following their meeting in September, the Jubilee Commission presented a report to the General Council. Fr. Einstein Thyparampil (THOM) was welcomed as a new member of the Commission.

The Commission is seeking the appointment of a Jubilee Secretary (based in Rome for the period of the Jubilee Year) to coordinate the work and events of the Jubilee. His tasks would include: to facilitate the work of the Commission; to animate and promote the activities at the local/regional level; to be a reference point for information on the Jubilee activities; to exchange material between the entities; to take care of the website; to organise the database in collaboration with the expert, David Isac; to animate and stimulate the local Jubilee coordinators through the sending of information, catechesis, news, promotions etc. which can also be included on the website; to coordinate the material meetings; to assist with organising pilgrimages and welcoming of pilgrims. This is seen as a full-time task. While some names were proposed, the Commission will refine these at their next meeting. Various materials are already being prepared: guides, biographies, exhibition, posters, marketing, pilgrim kit etc. The Jubilee website should be ready at the beginning of the new year. There was some discussion on the budget for the Jubilee which needs further refining and presentation to the General Econome. The International Theological Congress to be held on 21-24 September 2021 with the theme: *The Wisdom of the Cross in a Plural World* is the main event in Rome and is being coordinated by Fr. Fernando Taccone and members of *Cathedra Gloria Crucis*. It is hoped that Fr. Taccone can brief the General Council about the Congress plans and progress at the next Council meeting.

COMMUNICATION PLAN

The General Council met with and decided to hire Mr. Juan Della Torre as a consultant to assist us with the development of a **Communication Plan for the Congregation**. During this meeting the following proposal was presented by Juan for the Communication Plan:

It is teamwork. We want to try to organize what is the message that the Passionists want to transmit and try to develop it as best as possible, taking into account the limitations of any project of people and economic.

The first part of the process is a listening part in which the consultants will talk to you. We have already started this process.

The second aspect to consider is that it is a living work, always in development. It is not a fixed plan, but a living document that adapts to reality.

In the communication plan we want to make a diagnosis, who we are, where we are and what we do. We have to identify the objectives: one general and two secondaries. Then we are going to draw the tactical line. What is the message, how are we going to incarnate it, who is our audience, who are we talking to? There is always one last chapter: evaluation.

We are talking about a General Communication Plan of the Congregation. We want to look more broadly to develop a Communication Plan and within that Plan we will have to integrate the Jubilee. The idea is to Renew our mission.

The budget covers the three months of work. When a project has to be done, maybe suppliers have to be managed. Management time with suppliers is charged separately.

During this time, they will meet with those who are working with the media: BIP, communication office, general secretariat... and with some of the members of the Council.

The next step is the approval of the project. He will send the model contract and come back with a work schedule to validate.

A Communication Plan may consist of some chapters: What is the Good Cause. Communication Objectives. About the product. Diagnosis. Business plan. Target audience. Communication channels. The message itself. The unique message. Calendar of actions. Measures of success linked to the objectives. Work team. Appendices..

In Appendices we find generic press releases, argumentation, how to answer uncomfortable questions, creative campaigns, brand manual.

In the summary we talk about the four "P's" of marketing: product, price, place and promotion. There are those who adapt it to good causes.

Objectives three: one main and two secondaries.

About the product: what it is, what it is for, how it works, how it can be applied..

In the diagnosis: strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Market analysis, relevant places, movements, communities, we analyse the institution.

The business plan.

In communication channels: press conferences, meeting points, media relations, web, networks, banners, search engine optimization, fairs and events...

The measure of success: various forms of measures...

Organizing team and organizers, people working on the plan...

It's a joint effort.

- The first month is a time of learning on our part.

- The second month we process the information.

- The third month we build together in dialogue.

When it is finished, the Plan is the result of a teamwork.

More information regarding this issue will emerge in due time.

NEW COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT

Meanwhile, the communication equipment and aids in the Consulta Room is being improved with the decision to purchase an interactive monitor connected electronically to a movable trolley for the price of 3,600.00 Euros.

JPIC

The General Council discussed the importance of JPIC, in relation to the Evangelization Plan and its connection with Passionists International.

Father Mirek has been appointed as the Consultor for Reference for JPIC matters.

It was pointed out the need to appoint a religious in charge of encouraging and motivating JPIC in the Congregation. This religious could be one of those who will be part of the Commission "Renew the Mission", which we indicated earlier. Several names were suggested. Mirek will contact them to choose one later.

LIBRARY

Fr. Mario Collu (librarian of SS. Giovanni e Paolo) presented a report to the General Council explaining the following works which have been carried out this year: renovation and standardisation of electricity, video surveillance, heating, cleaning of books, electronic acquisition of bibliographic records.

Some planned works and budget presented for the next year include:

- A) Budget for repair and renewal of windows: 28.240,00 (VAT excluded).
- B) Budget for the painting of the consultation room: 8.400,00 (VAT excluded).
- C) Budget of subscriptions and related: 6.533,37.

There are other initiatives, necessary for the operation of the library: security cabinets (funding has been requested from the Italian Bishops Conference C.E.I., but have not yet responded), acquisition of a second batch of bibliographic records.

The Council approved the budget for the windows and the subscriptions.

UPDATE ON THE FORMATORS WORKSHOP

Fr. Rafael Vivanco (Consultor of Reference for Formation) presented some pieces of information on the event.

The organizing committee consisting of Fr. Ademir Guedes (GETH), Fr. Orven Gonzaga (PASS), Fr. O'Brien Chanda (MATAF), Fr. Martin Coffey (Formation Secretary) and Fr. Rafael Vivanco met together. Fr. Larry Duffy, *SM* was invited to the meeting as a consultant.

The aim of the meeting was to plan, organize and execute the three-week Meeting-Workshop for formators, from November 1 to 21, 2020.

There are several objectives:

- To formulate and favour the formation of our formators- formandi.
- To foster an atmosphere of fraternity, exchange and enrichment.
- To foster an atmosphere of shared faith based on prayer and Passionist identity.
- in a spirit of celebration and thanksgiving for the three hundred years.

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First week: welcome, interventions, talks, films, dynamics... that provoke personal reflection and the encounter of each one with oneself and the desire to share with others. It would help participants identify their needs, challenges and the areas in which they need to work. It would be centred on the person of the formator.

The second and third week would address the needs and issues identified in the first week as participants would be involved in the planning of the two weeks.

A variety of elements and activities are foreseen: pilgrimages, desert days, recreation, liturgy, prayer, life?

It is suggested that Fr. Joachim offer a contribution from his experience as a missionary and formator. There will also be a contribution on the humanity of Jesus: Jesus as formator of his disciples and apostles and another one on St. Paul of the Cross: his human and formative dimension.

Some tasks were distributed, and a subsequent meeting is going to be held in the first week of March. The Commission will guide the dynamics. A fundamental text to take into account is the *Ratio Fundamentalis Sacerdotalis* of the Vatican Congregation for the Clergy.

BELGIUM

Fr. Joachim invited Fr. Frans Damen (Delegate of the Superior General in Belgium) to update the General Council on the situation of the religious and properties in Belgium and to be part of the dialogue in consideration of the future mission in Belgium.

All the religious, except those in aged/nursing homes, will be resident in the house in Kortrijk by the end of this year. This is so that the men can be assured of better care. Wezembeek-Oppem's house will be empty and its future is yet to be determined. We must continue studying the best possibilities for the future of the mission of the Congregation in Belgium. We need to be advised by property/finance consultants to decide on our property. We will continue to reflect in order to make the appropriate decisions.

Fr. Mirek (Consultor for the region) and Fr. Frans will work together and keep the Council informed as new possibilities emerge.

CHAPTERS 2021

Dates proposed by the following Provinces for Chapters in 2021 were confirmed:

- IOS Provincial Chapter: 26-30 April 2021
- GETH Provincial Chapter: 12-16 July 2021

Fr. Rafael Blasco Bordejé, C.P.
Secretary General