

Circular Letter #5:

September 2019

Very dear Mothers and Nuns of our Monastic Congregation,

With the approach of our “double” Passionist feasts of the Triumph of the Cross and Our Mother of Sorrows, I want to send each of you individually my heartfelt greetings for a profound deepening of the prayerful union with Christ in His mysteries that flows from our magnificent Passionist charism. Herein lies the joy and the profound contentment of our souls. Herein lies also our greatest gift to the Church.

Although we cannot liturgically celebrate the feast of Our Mother of Sorrows this year, we can keep it in our hearts. And on September 8th, we will begin the great Septenary to prepare for her feast.

Since our Holy Founder, St. Paul of the Cross, gave us the Sorrowful Mother as the true superioress of each Passionist monastery (primitive Rule #56), let us also designate her as the true Mother President of our new Monastic Congregation. And let us always look to her to guide us along the path of the Father’s will in all that pertains to the growth and development that God has in mind for us.

In light of this, may I suggest to each community that on September 15, you will make ***a communal entrustment not only of your monastic community but also of our new Monastic Congregation to her Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart?*** How you do this, I leave to the fervor and creativity of each community.

Some Updates:

• Best Way to Contact the Mother President:

In early August, during my 8-day retreat, I fully recognized that the amount of work I was attempting to do alone was impossible and would be to the detriment of my physical and spiritual good. Therefore, Sr. Daniela who has been studying English at Whitesville, will come in January to help me. And in order that I may better serve you and not neglect your needs, (and also preserve my own contemplative life), I have set up ***another email address for you to use when sending me questions, concerns and especially confidential information about the more serious matters you are dealing with.*** Here it is: mpresident@passionistnuns.org

It is very understandable that in these first years of organizing how our Monastic Congregation works, there would be more emails that need to be sent. If you sent me an email but have not received an answer, please know that it has been impossible for me to stay abreast of the hundreds of emails that have come into my computer since my election. For your more urgent matters, please put in the email Subject line “Urgent,” and I will do my very best to answer immediately. When sending feastday greetings, invitations and announcements about your community, etc., please continue to use scatherinem@passionistnuns.org Thank you very much! Hopefully, in this way, your more important and urgent matters will not get lost on my computer!

• Work in the United States:

After presiding in early June at the elective chapter of the Whitesville monastery, I spent the rest of the month of June both preparing for and then doing follow-up work after the meeting of ***the General Council (June 16-21)***. We covered so many topics and issues that I am still not finished with all the follow-up work, but I thank God and my Council members for the wonderful spirit of collaboration everyone showed.

I visited the Ellisville, Missouri monastery the first week of July and had planned to visit the Clarks Summit monastery during the third week of July. However, after phone conversations with all the superiors of our US monasteries, ***I decided to convene a meeting of the superiors at Clarks Summit during the third week.*** After consulting my Council, I hired a professional facilitator to lead us through the dialog. Naturally, the meetings were difficult for all, but the inner hearts of the superiors were truly already given

over to God's will. In spite of the agony we face when some monasteries have lost true autonomy as now defined in Cor Orans, the US superiors collaborated in drawing up the paper I am sending as an attachment to this letter. It is entitled: MEETING SUMMARY. Perhaps this combined statement can be a working model for monasteries in other parts of the world. ***I am profoundly grateful to the US superiors for their good will as they agonized through this process which is far from over.*** I entrust this work to the fervent prayers and sacrifices of all the Passionist Nuns.

• Work in Italy, etc.

After my September 2nd return to Lucca, I will be working from September 5—17 with Sr. Gertrude. We are moving forward with the process to have our Monastic Congregation recognized as a civil entity, so that we can open the Monastic Congregation Fund. ***Through the fraternal kindness of Fr. Luigi Vaninetti, provincial of MAPRAES, Fr. Piero Berti, cp has been appointed for two years as the legal representative of our Monastic Congregation.***

After consulting my Council and engaging in much prayer and dialog, ***I have decided to establish the legal seat of the Congregation at our Tarquinia monastery***, where as you recall, Mother Rosaria had set apart some rooms on the third floor. Besides the office of the President, we need an office for the General Secretary, Sr. Daniela. We also need a room for the General Archives and a few other rooms. It will take time properly to equip these rooms with what is needed (file cabinets, tables, a copier, a paper cutter and so forth).

• Other Information:

- 1) The two remaining religious of the monastery of São Luis des Montes Belos in Brazil, a daughter-house of São Carlos, have been called back to their founding monastery, and thus São Luis has been closed. On behalf of the Monastic Congregation, I would like to thank all the Nuns who devoted much effort and sacrifice throughout many years in order to keep this foundation in existence, without, however, seeing the fruit of their labor and suffering. In a spirit of communion, let us all pray for them in a special way as they reintegrate into their home communities. (Please remove from your database the following address: msantaesperanca2@yahoo.com.br).
- 2) Sr. Daniela has been receiving your suggestions for ways in which our Monastic Congregation can fittingly celebrate the 300th anniversary of the foundation of the male branch of the Passionists in 2020, as well as the 250th anniversary of the 1771 foundation of the Passionist Nuns in 2021. I will also consult Fr. Joachim Rego regarding suggestions he may have to include the Nuns. More details will be coming.
- 3) I ask your supportive prayers for the 8 founding Nuns of the new monastery of Borneo who will be gathering in Malang on October 15th, to begin their time of prayerful preparation. The goal of this time is to live together as a community under their new superior, as they form both spiritual and friendship bonds that will help them devote themselves generously to the Borneo foundation. Please keep them in prayer, as well as the superiors and communities who in a spirit of collaboration have sacrificed one or more of their members for the sake of this new foundation. May God who is never outdone in generosity bless and reward each one abundantly and send new vocations to supply!

• Conclusion:

In closing, I leave you with the precious words of our holy founder: ***"The feast of the cross is celebrated at every moment in the interior temple of true lovers of the Crucified."*** As brides of the Crucified, let us celebrate this living liturgy in a spirit of faith, trust and thanksgiving, desiring that in our very brief life on earth we will give God the greatest possible glory, and also bring the greatest possible number of souls to know, love and serve our Divine Crucified Bridegroom.

In our Congregation we have before us the inspiring example of so many Passionist saints, blessed, venerables and servants of God who can spur us on in the pursuit of the perfect charity to which we are

called. When we all meet in the profound spiritual communion of heaven, we will marvel to see in the blazing light of the sweet and wise Divine Providence how in the life of each Passionist, the Holy Spirit was writing a unique chapter of the Gospel of the Passion for the glory of God and the salvation of the world.

So let us not be afraid to “celebrate” our own individual and communal feast of the cross as we walk hand in hand with Our Mother of Sorrows along the hard and narrow path that leads to life. Recently I read that when Jesus said, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate,” the Greek word for “strive” is “agonizesthe,” from which we have the word “agony.” So, a literal translation of this passage would read, “Agonize to enter the narrow gate.” ***It sheds light on why the commitment to proceed to the future by entering through the gate of the Church’s new laws governing cloistered monasteries is so agonizing. We must cling to the virtue of hope that indeed these travails are the birth pangs of new life both for the Passionist Nuns and also for our brothers in the Passionist Congregation.*** (I hope and pray that as this is translated into Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, the meaning will not be lost.)

Dear Mothers and Sisters, I beg your prayers that I may continue to serve you as the Father desires, and that the General Council and I will have all the light and grace necessary to fulfill the plan of God for our Monastic Congregation. Thank you so very much!

In Mary’s Heart and in the Heart of her crucified and risen Son, I ask God’s blessing upon you,

Mother Catherine Marie Schumann C.P.

Mother President