

Circular Letter #6:

October 19, 2019
6th Circular Letter

Dear Mothers and Sisters,

Living here in Italy, it is not hard to be continually aware of the life experiences and contemplative graces of our holy founder. Traveling along the highways, one frequently sees signposts for so many of the towns in which he preached missions and retreats, or places where his directees lived. A certain amazement floods the soul to realize that a two, three or four hour journey by car on a modern highway would have taken St. Paul of the Cross days or even weeks on muddy roads, and that, often in the brutal heat of summer, or in the frigid cold of winter. How great was his zeal to carry out the unique mission to which the Father had called him! And how profound and intense was his lifelong gift of self to make Passionist life possible for all of us, his spiritual daughters and sons!

On September 15th of this year, three of us Passionists (P. Antonio Munduate, S. Gertrude Poggio and myself) were given a special sharing in Paul's profound Marian experience as a young man, that took place in the "Madonna Chapel" of the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome. There, high above the altar in the Borghese chapel, is encased the icon "Salus Populi Romani." It was there in September of 1721 that Paul took refuge after his deeply disappointing effort to seek the Pope's approval for his newly written Rule. There in that chapel, our holy founder poured out his heart in prayer to the Mother of God.

We all know very well how this loving Mother of the Crucified and Risen One was listening and how she responded. There before the great Marian icon, Paul was inspired to dedicate himself by vow to promote devotion to the Passion of her Divine Son. It is possible to see that chapel as the "womb" of the Congregation. In a sense, we can all say: "I was born from there." The graces given to our holy founder through the intercession of Mary were meant to be shared, preserved and developed by his spiritual family down through the centuries.

So it was that on the feast of Our Mother of Sorrows (not celebrated liturgically this year), we three Passionists went with Paul in spirit, to offer a consecration prayer of our newly founded Monastic Congregation. (I am attaching a copy of the prayer.)

Much to our disappointment, the Madonna Chapel was closed! And so, Sr. Gertrude and I worked our way up to the heavy iron grating, leaned against it and silently prayed the Consecration, while we begged Our Blessed Mother to allow us to enter.

In the meantime, Padre Antonio spotted a priest who was on his way to offer Mass in that chapel. After telling the priest how important this chapel is to Passionists, and explaining that we had hoped to offer a prayer of consecration before Mary's icon, etc., the kind priest told us to follow him. He took us through a door opened by his key, and then through a couple of winding corridors

to the sacristy, and then he gave us just a few minutes to *have the chapel all to ourselves so we could offer the prayer!*

Together, side by side before the altar as we prayed the Consecration prayer, the three of us had all of you very much in our hearts and minds, and we also included all the members of the male branch of our Congregation, knowing that on this same day in our monasteries throughout the world the Passionist Nuns were making a similar Consecration of our new Congregation.

Mary's presence and the sense of her maternal intercession was powerful, and to us this seemed a sign of her special love, care and concern for the Passionist family in these challenging times. We left the chapel with joyful and grateful hearts, feeling that we had just experienced "a small miracle" of our Mother's heavenly love.

Then we got in a car and traveled to the Monastery of the Presentation in Tarquinia, where Mother Rosaria and her wonderful community greeted us with a warm welcome and a delicious festive meal.

The purpose of our visit was to allow Mother Rosaria to show us the rooms she recommends for the Mother President and the offices of our Monastic Congregation. Some of these rooms were not shown to us during the quick pilgrimage the Chapter Members made to Tarquinia in January. I was quite surprised to see many of the rooms, and this confirmed my decision to establish the legal seat of the Congregation there, in the monastery built by St. Paul of the Cross, and in which Ven. Mother Mary Crucified and so many holy Passionist Nuns have lived our Passionist contemplative life.

Dear Mothers and Sisters, I send you this little "chronicle" (a page from the history of the spiritual family of St. Paul of the Cross) as a greeting and encouragement as we celebrate the life, charism and holiness of our holy founder. Our infant Monastic Congregation has been consecrated to our Mother and Queen, and she is close to us all. May we all trust more completely in her intercession before God as we follow her Son in our personal and communal experience of the Paschal Mystery!

I close with this private devotional prayer our holy founder recited in the morning and evening before an image of Our Mother of Sorrows:

*Immaculate Virgin, Queen of Martyrs,
through the sorrows you endured at the death of your divine Son,
give us your maternal blessing.*

Mother Catherine Marie Schumann CP

Mother Catherine Marie, C.P.
Mother President

P.S. Please pray for us as we visit the monasteries in Spain – Oct. 30 through Nov. 15. Thanks so very much for the support of your prayers!

**Consecration of Our Monastic Congregation
to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary:**

(This was sent along with Circular Letter #6)

*Consecration of our Monastic Congregation
to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary*

Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Paschal Mystery and Mother of the Passionist Congregation, you inspired our holy founder, St. Paul of the Cross to found the male and female branches of the Passionist Congregation.

Here in this chapel and before this miraculous icon, you inspired St. Paul to make the vow to promote devotion to the Passion of your Son. You were his faithful companion and protector as he struggled to found the institute devoted to the love of your Crucified Son, showing your heavenly intercession in many remarkable ways.

We come before you today to consecrate to your Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart our new Monastic Congregation. Open wide your maternal Heart and embrace each Nun, each monastery and all those your Son is calling to Passionist life. Take over, loving Mother, the difficult situations in which we find ourselves. Guide us by the light of the Holy Spirit to do all that the Father desires. Renew in us the spirit of contemplative prayer. Enkindle again a great fire of love for your Crucified and Risen Son and a desire to help others to know and love Him in His Paschal Mystery!

Make us open, free and docile to the Church. Drive away the common foe. Obtain for us a great release of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. O Mary! Place in our minds and on our lips the thoughts and words that would bring the greatest glory to God.

Share your own love with us, dear Mother, that we may know how to love, comfort and uplift one another in a spirit of the joy and hope ever flowing from the death of Your Son. You are the true superior of each monastery, and the true Mother President of our Congregation. Spread the warm mantle of your concern and protection over all of us. Keep your right hand raised in blessing over us, and your left hand resting on our shoulders so that like trusting children, we may allow you to guide us in everything, for the greatest possible glory to our Triune God and to our beloved Paschal Bridegroom!

Place these petitions in the Heart of Your Son and grant that we may receive an outpouring of all these graces through Christ our Lord. Amen!