

NEWS FROM THE GENERAL COUNCIL

ROME, 27 JANUARY – 5 FEBRUARY 2020



THE GENERAL COUNCIL MET IN ROME FROM 27 JANUARY TO 5 FEBRUARY 2020.

As usual, in addition to the reports of the various visits made by the Superior General and the Consultors in the previous period, some specific themes relating to the life of the Congregation in the world were also discussed and some decisions were taken for the near future.

1. THE JUBILEE OF THE THIRD CENTENARY.

A considerable part of this General Council Meeting was devoted to taking stock of the situation on the path of preparation for the Passionist Jubilee of 300 years of foundation. The General Council first met with the Jubilee Commission and then with Fr. Fernando Taccone, who is in charge of organizing the International Theological Congress planned for the autumn of 2021, together with the Cathedra Gloria Crucis.

Here are the main innovations decided in this consultation.

A) MEETING OF YOUNG PASSIONISTS (AUGUST 2021)

An important decision taken in this consultation was to change the calendar of events scheduled for 2021, separating the meeting of young Passionists (henceforth scheduled for August 9-18, 2021) from the celebration of the Theological Congress, which remains scheduled for September 21-24, 2021.

This change of calendar is justified by the desire to offer a more specific programme for the gathering of young Passionists, while at the same time offering the possibility of welcoming a larger number of participants. In fact, in the month of August, the Retreat

House will be completely available to our confreres, in addition to the usual rooms available in the monastery of Saints John and Paul.

In this way, it will also be possible to contain costs, which would inevitably have increased if we had to rent external facilities for the accommodation of participants.

Further details on this initiative (addressees, activities and costs) will be provided by the Commission in due course by means of a communication.

B) CATECHESIS DURING THE JUBILEE (MAY 2020-DECEMBER 2021)

The Jubilee Commission has planned to carry out a series of catechesis which will be sent by e-mail to offer material for personal, community and Passionist family reflection. These are simple, short reflective articles to help deepen the meaning of our "being Passionists".

For each theme there will be a picture, a short reflection, a biblical text and some questions for dialogue and sharing.

Catechesis are divided into thematic blocks: St. Paul of the Cross and the Congregation, Passionist identity, religious profession, Passionist holiness, Passionist feasts and feminine spirituality.

C) OTHER POINTS STILL UNDER STUDY

The Commission also presented other proposals relating to the celebration of the Jubilee which still need further study. As for the Generalate and the Basilica of Saints John and Paul, which will obviously be the focus of attention of many pilgrimages and events, the realization of an exhibition near the Founder's room is being studied, as well as the realization of a thematic itinerary, with panels and images, which will guide pilgrims to the Founder's chapel. The realization of a

"*pilgrim's vademecum*" is being studied and the final details of the liturgical celebration for the opening of the Jubilee are being finalized.

The General Council and the Commission also consider it important to link the 300th Anniversary with the themes of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, involving, as far as possible, NGOs linked to our Institute and Passionists International.

This proposal is still under study.

D) INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL CONGRESS (21-24 SEPTEMBER 2021)

The Theological Congress with the title **The Wisdom of the Cross in a Plural World** will be divided into four themes: *The Wisdom of the Cross and the Challenges of Culture*; *The Wisdom of the Cross in the Promotion of Humanism and Interreligious Dialogue*; *The Wisdom of the Cross in the New Scenarios of Evangelization*; *The Wisdom of the Cross in the Charism of Paul of the Cross for the Present and Future of the World*.

The speakers are being contacted, and the various religious and academics involved will be requested to send their theological contributions for reflection on the various themes.

In the course of the General Council meeting some details were defined, but many things are still being studied and refined, especially with regard to the logistical aspects and the activities of cultural animation that will take place during the Congress itself. A financing and sponsorship plan is also being studied in order to keep the costs of implementation within the budget already established for the Jubilee and presented at the last General Chapter.

2. CANONICAL VISITS AND MEETINGS

In recent months both the Superior General and several Consultors have been engaged in making visits to different entities of our Congregation.

During this Consulta, Fr. Mirek Lesiecki presented the report of the canonical visitation made to the SPE Province (Netherlands) which will celebrate its Provincial Chapter from April 19-22, 2020; and a visit to the community of Highgate (London).

During the month of January, the Superior General visited some communities of the THOM Vice Province (India) and participated in the inauguration of the new Ashram in Kochi. For Fr. Joachim it was a journey full of many memories, having played an active role in the foundation of this Vice Province as one of the first Novice Masters of India.

The new monastery in Kochi has been built with the help of the Solidarity Fund. Besides being the foundation place of the Vice Province, it is also the place where the three-year Aspirancy program is developed (at the moment there are 15 young aspirants).

In addition, Fr. Joachim also visited the mission in Randham, in the state of Tamil Nadu, opened in 1996. In this mission our Vice Province has done wonderful work in assisting the very poor population with microcredit projects open to both Christian and Hindu families. With the help of the Solidarity Fund we are collaborating in the construction of a new chapel there.

The THOM Vice Province has taken the commitment of formation very seriously and has implemented a good programme. It currently consists of 53 religious in 6 communities.

3. PROMOTION OF JPIC INSIDE THE CONGREGATION

For some time now the General Council has been trying to rethink the way in which the General Curia's activity is structured. In particular, it has emerged from various parts of the Congregation that there is an invitation to regain greater attention to formation and awareness for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, as well as to stimulate concrete actions within the Congregation in these areas. In the past there was a specific role of animation, entrusted to the Secretary of Missions and Solidarity. Now we are trying to find new paths, more effective in promoting such animation. Among the various models proposed, the possibility of a decentralization of animation activity with respect to the General See in Rome is being verified.

4. RENEWING OUR MISSION (IN VIEW OF THE SYNOD)

It is hoped that all the entities in the Congregation have already been responding to the "Call to Action" document arising from the 47th General Chapter. The accompanying letter of the document indicated 5 actions to be taken:

1. Read and discuss together the document in the community. This cannot be once-only; there needs to be regular, planned community meetings to dialogue, share, take concrete actions and evaluate. *[This will need an active and planned animation from the Local Superior.]*
2. Discern together the most appropriate and effective lines of action which will promote the renewal of the mission in your community, region, Province and Configuration.
3. Gather the ideas and proposals which emerge from the various meetings and prepare a report to share with the Provincial/Vice Provincial Council and with the Configuration President. *[This will need an active and planned animation from the Province, Vice Province and Configuration leaders.]*
4. The Provincials, Vice Provincials and Configuration Presidents will prepare an integrated document from the reports received to be sent to the General Secretariat in Rome **by 31 October 2020**.
5. The General Council will prepare a unitary document as a Plan for the renewal of the Congregation which will be presented to the consideration of the General Synod in **October 2021**.

In the last Council meeting, we had already started talking about how to achieve the fifth point. The General Council plans to appoint a Commission dedicated to "Renewing our Mission" by July 2020. This Commission will gather the results from the Provinces and, in November, will proceed to draw up a summary document to be presented to the General Council. This document will be the basis for the elaboration of a strategic plan of evangelization and for studying the different structural models that might favour the renewal of our Passionist mission. The result of this work will be presented to the General Synod in October 2021.

5. OTHER MATTERS

As usual, the General Council met with the Procurator General, Fr. Alessandro Foppoli, for the presentation of the juridical cases; the General Treasurer, Fr. Antonio Siciliano, for the presentation and discussion on the finance and economy of the Congregation (on this occasion, Fr. Antonio was formally appointed as the new Legal Representative of the General House); the Secretary for Solidarity and Missions, Fr. Paolo Aureli, for the presentation, study and recommendation of some solidarity projects (help was given for the construction of a new religious house for our missionaries in China).

The General Council also studied some communications and requests coming both from the Provinces (EXALT, MAPRAES and the Ex-GABR) and from individual religious. The Council also had a long and fruitful dialogue with the Vice Provincial of SALV (Congo), Fr. Vital Otshudialokoka, on its financial constraints and the stresses due to the current situation of the country.

Finally, the dates for canonical visits were considered, which, especially in view of the many Chapters and Congresses of the two-year period 2020-2021, have been delegated by Father General to the various General Consultors.

In 2020, only 3 Provincial Chapters and 1 Vice Provincial Congress will be celebrated: SPE (Holland - North Germany); VULN (South Germany (Bavaria) - Austria); REG (Mexico - Dominican Republic); PATR (Ireland - Scotland).

However, in 2021, there will be celebrated 5 Vice Provincial Congresses (CARLW - Kenya; GEMM - Tanzania; SALV - Rep. Dem. Congo; THOM - India; MATAF - Zambia, Botswana, South Africa) and 3 Provincial Chapters (PASS - Philippines; SCOR - Spain, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Venezuela; GETH - Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay).

In view of the number of communities to visit and religious people to meet, canonical visits should be planned in good time, before the end of 2020.

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Secretary General