



FEAST OF ST PAUL OF THE CROSS

MESSAGE OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL, FR. JOACHIM REGO, C.P.

Rome, October 19, 2020

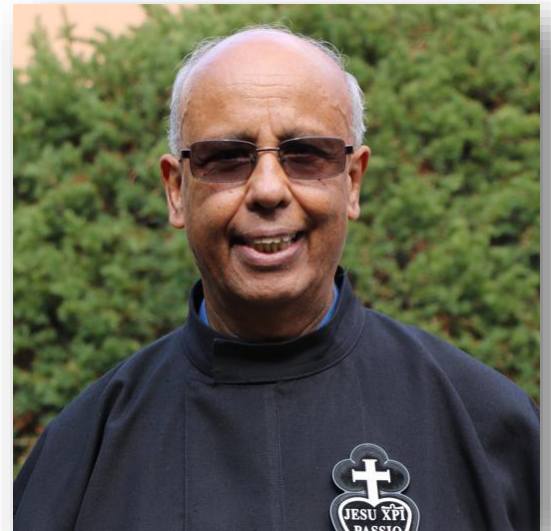
*“The world lives unmindful
of the sufferings of Jesus which are
the miracle of miracles of the love of God.
We must arouse the world from its slumber.”*

Paolo Della Croce

Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends in the Passionist Family,

Firstly, I thank God and I thank you all for your kind prayers for me during my recent Thyroidectomy (surgical removal of the thyroid) which proved successful. However, soon after being discharged from hospital, I suffered some unforeseen post-surgery complications (related to medications) which prolonged my rehabilitation and full recovery until now. During this time, I felt very much supported by and depended upon your prayers, and I assure you that your intentions and ‘crosses’ were also very much assumed by me in my thoughts and prayers for you. THANK YOU!

I take the opportunity of this feast of our Holy Founder: St. Paul of the Cross, to send you my greetings and message as we rejoice and give glory to God within the Passionist Family in the church.



Today we celebrate the 245th year since the birth of St. Paul of the Cross into Eternal Life and we are looking ahead only 33 days before we commemorate the 300th anniversary of the actual foundation by St. Paul of the Cross of the Passionist Congregation (22 November 1720 - 2020) for which he worked with so much determination and perseverance.

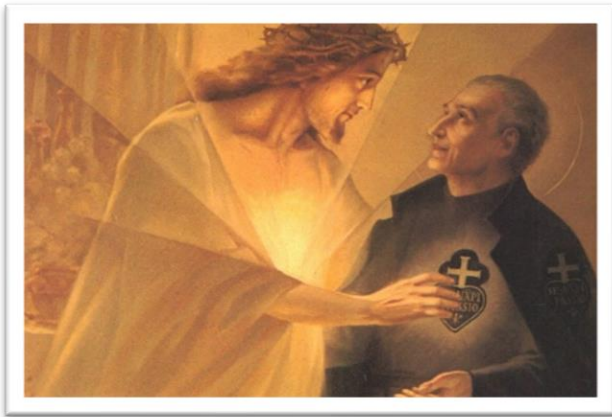
We know that St. Paul of the Cross lived to see his dream come true - not only in founding, but also in receiving the full approval from the Church for both the male Congregation of the Passion and, some years later, the foundation of the female cloistered Contemplative Nuns.



As we celebrate the feast this year and stand on the cusp of history eager to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the Congregation's foundation (proclaimed as a Jubilee Year by Pope Francis), perhaps we can delve into the mind of St. Paul of the Cross to further understand why he spent so much of his life to so doggedly pursue his dream to found and fully establish these two formally approved and canonically recognized Congregations in the Church. What drove him and why did he feel such a need for this?

When we look at the life story and faith experiences of St. Paul of the Cross, we can see clearly that, firstly, this desire was inspired by God. It is evident

that after his 'conversion', Paul became passionately overtaken by his deep contemplation of the Crucified Jesus; like St. Paul the Apostle he wanted *to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified (1Cor. 2:1-2)*. It was in the mystery of the Passion of Jesus that Paul of the Cross discovered the transforming effects and graces for his own life, and also saw the fruits of conversion borne in the lives of those who opened themselves



humbly to be embraced by the love and compassion of God as they meditated on the Passion of Jesus.

This drive to found a Congregation was further nourished and encouraged by the 'inner lights' he received from Jesus' Sorrowful Mother "*to found a Congregation whose members*" would keep alive the memory of the Passion of Jesus as apostolic companions.

It seems to me that Paul of the Cross' determination in founding a Congregation consisted in assuring that *"the pearl of great price" – the memoria passionis* – he found in the Passion of Jesus was not to be hidden, buried or kept for himself, but rather it was a gem worthy of gathering companions who would generously spend their lives to cherish, savour and share its fount and wisdom with others in time and in history.

In meditating on the Passion of Jesus, Paul knew and felt God's love for him – a transforming love which brought about renewal and real change in his life. It was this experience and message that he wanted also to transmit to others. He believed that this was the greatest free gift from God to the universe. Therefore, he ardently desired to establish a structured and committed community that would keep alive and promote through its mission this sacred memory.

"CHRIST CRUCIFIED is a work of love.

The miracle of miracles of love.

The most stupendous work of the love of God.

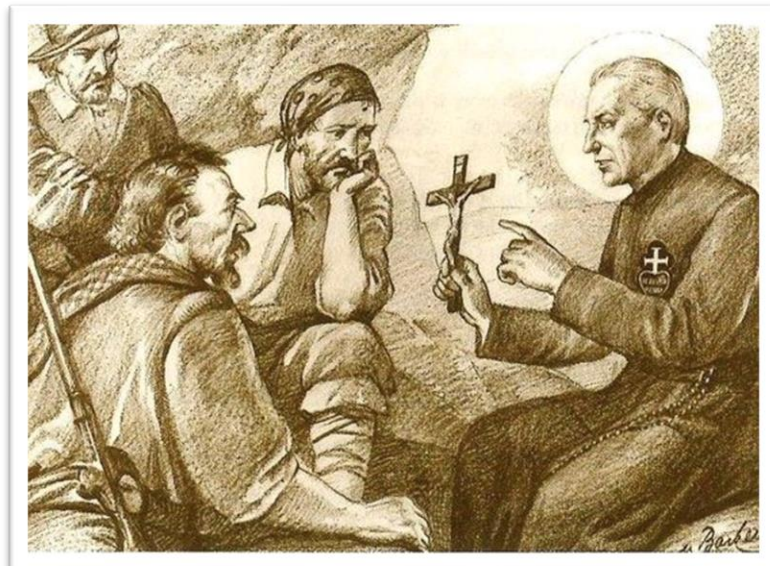
The bottomless sea of the love of God,

where virtues are found,

where one can lose oneself in love and sorrow.

A sea and a fire or a sea of fire.

***The most beneficial means of abandoning sin
and growing in virtue, and so in holiness."***



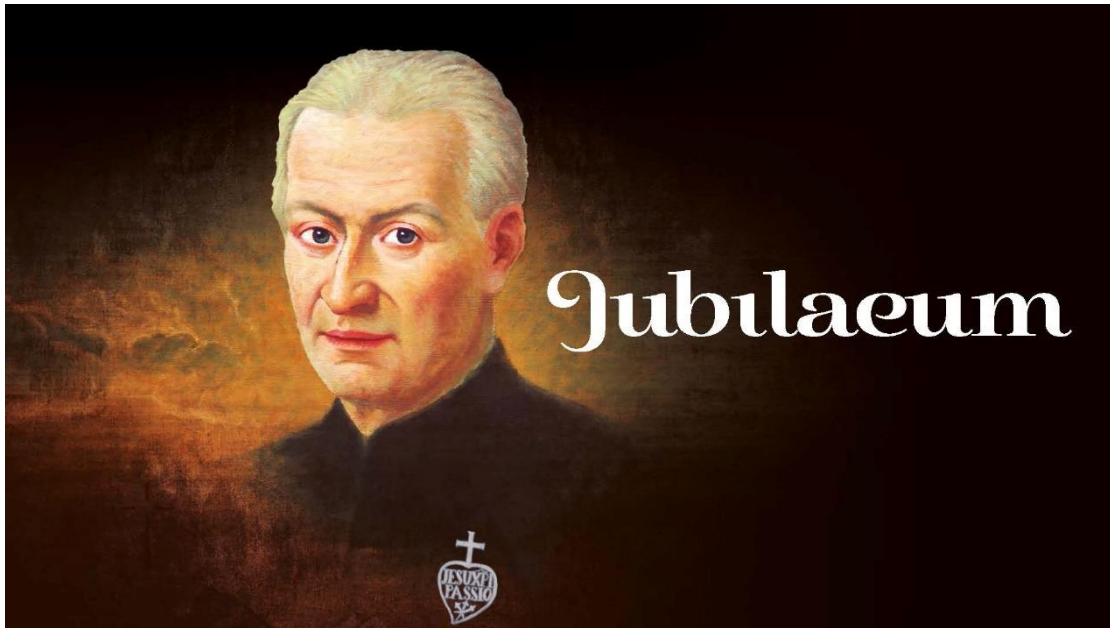
On this feast day, we believe that St. Paul of the Cross rejoices in God's presence as he continues to see his founding vision being blessed by God despite 300 years of epoch changes, reinterpretations, suppressions, and re-envisioning in our attempts and struggles to speak the language and meet the needs of the changing times.

As we prepare imminently to mark the 'Jubilee' of foundation, we have decided to live this journey together in listening to the Holy Spirit's call to *Renew Our Mission* in light of the signs of our times and in the awareness that any 'renewal' must begin with 'my personal renewal (conversion)' in Christ...and Him crucified.

Our Jubilee is an opportunity for us to pray for and open to the gift of personal and communal conversion in the process of renewal. It is a 'faith event' celebrated not with bands, balloons and fireworks, but with grateful remembrance, prayerful reflection, and hopeful listening (discernment): *gratitude, prophecy, hope*.



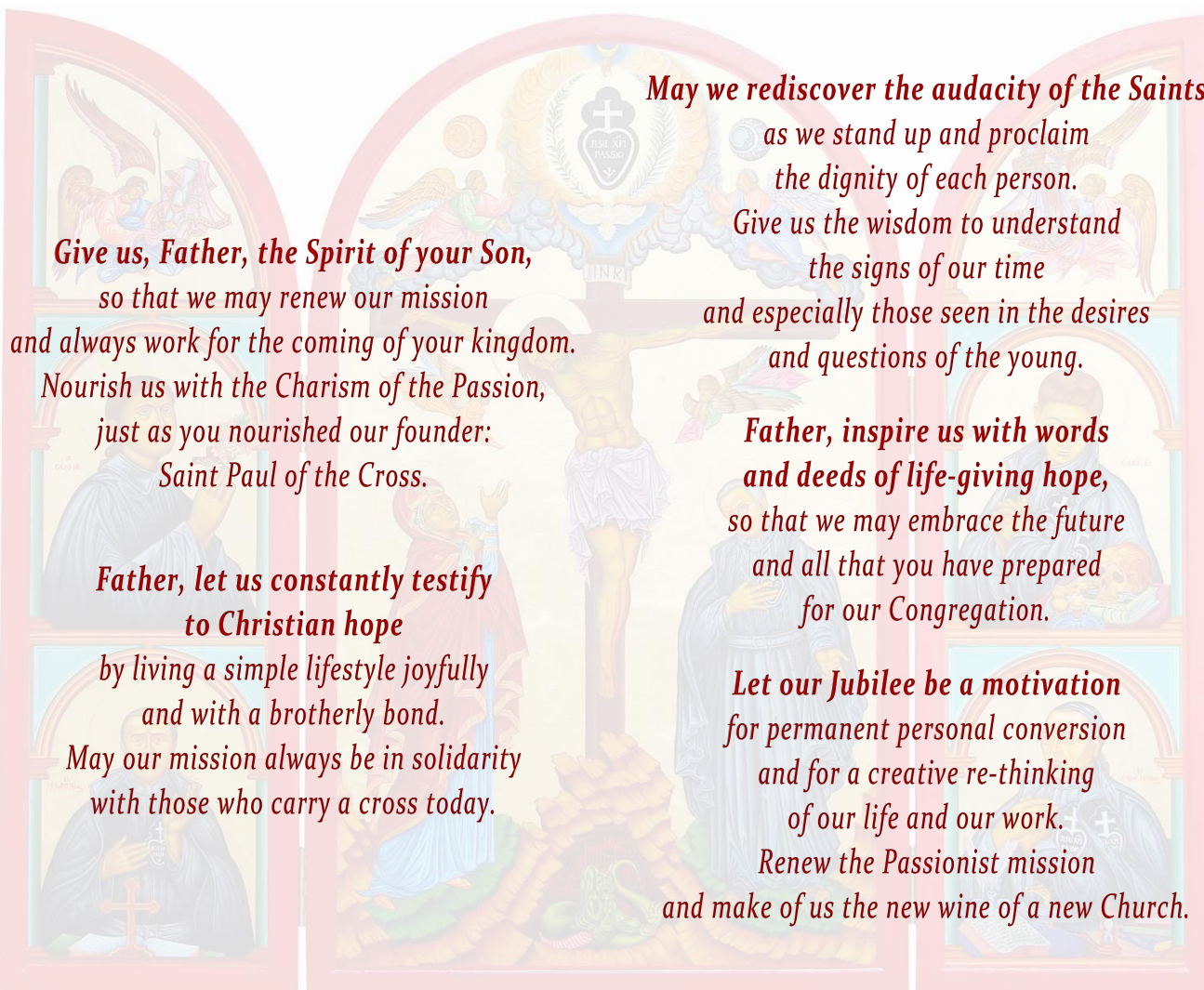
As I thank you for all you have been preparing and doing in celebration of our Jubilee, I take this opportunity on your behalf to also sincerely thank the members of the Jubilee Commission for their enormous steady hard work with their creative proposals, formation material, resources, and organization of the journey of the Jubilee Icon around the parts of the Congregation.



I wish you every blessing as you commemorate and celebrate in your local place the 300th anniversary of the foundation of the Passionist Congregation on 22nd November 2020. May it be a source of healing and new life for each one of you and for all those who will participate in entering humbly through the Holy Door of the Passion of Jesus: *“the way to Paradise”*.

Here in Rome, the official opening of the Holy Door, followed by the inaugural celebration of the Jubilee Year Eucharist, will take place at the Basilica of Saints John and Paul and will be presided by Cardinal Pietro Parolin (Vatican Secretary of State). *[Information of the live-stream of this event will be communicated to the Passionist Family later.]*

I encourage us all to sincerely accompany our commemoration and celebrations with the Jubilee Prayer:



Give us, Father, the Spirit of your Son,
so that we may renew our mission
and always work for the coming of your kingdom.
Nourish us with the Charism of the Passion,
just as you nourished our founder:
Saint Paul of the Cross.

**Father, let us constantly testify
to Christian hope**
by living a simple lifestyle joyfully
and with a brotherly bond.
May our mission always be in solidarity
with those who carry a cross today.

May we rediscover the audacity of the Saints
as we stand up and proclaim
the dignity of each person.
Give us the wisdom to understand
the signs of our time
and especially those seen in the desires
and questions of the young.

**Father, inspire us with words
and deeds of life-giving hope,**
so that we may embrace the future
and all that you have prepared
for our Congregation.

Let our Jubilee be a motivation
for permanent personal conversion
and for a creative re-thinking
of our life and our work.
Renew the Passionist mission
and make of us the new wine of a new Church.

Blessings and best wishes for a happy feast day!


~ Fr. Joachim Rego, C.P.
Superior General