

## SUPERIOR GENERAL'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2020

My dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends in the Passionist Family,

It's been quite a year, hasn't it? And I am not referring to the great preparations we all made and the wonderful opening celebrations of our Congregation's Jubilee Year. No! Rather, what I am referring to is probably nothing like anything most of us have experienced in our lifetime: something so terribly significant and frightfully impacting on our lives that it will surely be recorded in the textbooks of history for future ages. We have become used to speaking about "The Pandemic": a Corona virus named "COVID-19" that brought the world to a standstill, wreaking havoc in the physical, mental, social and economic lives of people, causing immense trauma and claiming some millions of lives in death.

The Covid-19 has gripped and paralyzed our lives for most of this year, causing us to live as best as possible in a prevention-survival mode, with hope for that vaccine which we believed would be our savior. Then, in the days before Christmas 2020, almost as a Christmas gift, vaccines have been approved and rolled out, and as though in another Advent mode, everyone is waiting in hope to be saved from COVID-19. Yes, we surely are grateful and thank God and the scientists and researchers for this gift! But is this the 'savior' we have been waiting for?

For the past weeks in the liturgical season of Advent, we have been preparing ourselves by doing some personal 'house cleaning' in order to create some extra space for welcoming into our lives JESUS CHRIST – our true HOPE! He is the true SAVIOR of the world. He is the true GIFT, the PROMISE of LIFE ETERNAL – through God, with God and in God. The spiritual experience of our "**waiting in hope**" during the time of Advent, and our eager expectation for the presence of someone special, is now celebrated with joy and relief as we commemorate the birth of Jesus on this Christmas day: the coming of **Immanuel – God-with-us (Mt. 1:23)**. We remember that He, too, has lived this pandemic and accompanied us during this crisis.

Let us find comfort and joy, strength and peace, promise and hope in the message announced by the angels in Bethlehem and renewed once again in us: "**Today...a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.**" (Lk. 2:11). This Savior lives the human experience and walks the human journey with us, showing us by example a pathway to follow – not a pathway proposed by the values of this world which is dominated by power, competition and oppression; but a pathway in accordance with the values of God's kingdom found in self-emptying, solidarity and vulnerable love.

May the commemoration of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of our Passionist Congregation which we are celebrating as a Jubilee Year with the theme: **Renewing our**

**Mission – Gratitude, Prophecy, Hope** empower us to recommit ourselves to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and, by imitating his example, bring him to birth into a world seeking to be saved.

Perhaps the following can be our prayer and commitment to be renewed. It was composed by a Malaysian priest, paraphrased from the popular Prayer of St. Francis....

**Lord, make me a channel to share Jesus this Christmas  
If I have taken others for granted, let me express appreciation  
If I have unforgiveness towards another, let me reconcile  
If I have been harsh in my words and actions, let me show kindness.**

**Make me a channel to share Jesus this Christmas  
If I have judged others, let me show compassion and understanding  
If I have gossiped, let me now encourage  
If I have not cared about others, let me make space.**

**O Jesus grant that I may never forget  
That you came to live amongst us so that I may see  
That you came to love us so that I may feel  
That you came to hold us so that I may be loved.**

Respecting the measures imposed by the health and government authorities for the common good, and with a spirit of sacrifice and care for others:

***Have a blessed Christmas with your community, family and friends.***

***Be attentive to those who may need some assistance,***

***and best wishes for a hope-filled New Year.***

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