



**ONLINE LAUNCH OF PASSIONIST LAUDATO SI' PROGRAM
PASSION OF THE EARTH – WISDOM OF THE CROSS
24 May 2021**

I am pleased to be joining you in launching *Passion of the Earth – Wisdom of the Cross* which is a six-session program of formation and action for the Passionist Family, to engage with Pope Francis' landmark encyclical: **Laudato Si'** which has as its subtitle: **On Care for Our Common Home**.

The seed of this program was planted two years ago when I was attending the Provincial Chapter of Holy Cross Province (USA) in Sierra Madre. During a break in sessions, in conversation with Father Joe Mitchell who runs the Passionist Earth and Spirit Center in Louisville, I asked if he would assist our Congregation by preparing some simple leaflets to help us understand and engage with the spirituality and principles of the document, **Laudato Si'**. Being a Passionist, I felt that Fr Joe would be the one best placed to help us implement our 2018 General Chapter recommendation on *Safeguarding Creation* which stated:

In the light of the concern for the environmental crisis of our time and inspired by the Encyclical "Laudato Si'" by Pope Francis, the General Chapter recommends that all the entities of the Congregation evaluate how best to respond to this concern, and commit themselves to assuming concrete action steps in this respect.

Of course, Joe was ready to collaborate in developing this project and, together with his partners in the Passionist Solidarity Network, and in dialogue with the General Council, they set to the task. The Congregation owes a debt of gratitude to the members of the Passionist Solidarity Network who spent many hours in research, reflection and creative writing to produce *Passion of the Earth – Wisdom of the Cross* as a series of study, reflection, and sharing sessions for the members of the Passionist Family to engage with **Laudato Si'**, in the light of our Passionist charism and spirituality.

Laudato Si' addresses issues concerning Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC): listening to and acting on behalf of *"the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor"* - which speaks to the heart of our charism: *"to keep alive the memory of the Passion"* (*memoria passionis*). **Laudato Si'** is a formation program in *"integral ecology"* aimed at orienting our human, Christian and Passionist lives and consciousness toward the goal of *"ecological conversion"*. Other than being an important social teaching document of the Church, **Laudato Si'** has had a great impact, not only in the religious sphere, but also in the secular world. It is clearly Spirit-inspired to address the *"signs of the times"*.

As the Passionist Family, we are commemorating the 300th anniversary of the foundation of our Congregation in this Jubilee Year consciously striving to live the theme which continued from our last General Chapter: **Renewing our Mission – Gratitude, Prophecy, Hope**. We have been further reminded that, integral to *renewing our mission* is *renewing ourselves*. They are two sides of the one coin. However, this process of renewal is not something **we do**, but is the fruit of our contemplative stance before God. It is in this stance of prayerful listening and discernment that our minds and hearts attune to the promptings of the Holy Spirit who renews the fire within us *"to keep alive the memory of the Passion"* in light of our present times and history. I believe that **Laudato Si'** has the necessary ingredients within its teaching to assist in the renewal of ourselves and of our mission.

And so, I not only invite, but I call on all the members of the Passionist Family to commit to engage with **Laudato Si'** by your participation in the program **Passion of the Earth – Wisdom of the Cross** which we are launching today. This is a year-long program of formation and action for the whole Passionist Family of vowed members (women and men religious), and lay members, who are a significant force in the Church and in the world. **Acting together**, we can be a much-needed witness and powerful influence in bringing about a conscious change in mentality and lifestyle where Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation become lived values. As Pope Francis said: *"We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affects us all."*

The participation of the Congregation's leadership in this launching today, represented by the General Council, Provincials, Vice Provincials and Configuration Presidents is significant. It speaks of our responsibility to ensure that this program is structured and promoted at the different levels of our respective entities, to encourage the participation of all members, and to give accountability by sending reports of issues and actions to the General Secretariat.

And now, on behalf of the General Council, and with the continuing collaboration of Passionist Solidarity Network, I present and launch the program **Passion of the Earth – Wisdom of the Cross** for the Passionist Family and I entrust this project to the support and prayers of our Holy Founder, St Paul of the Cross in this Jubilee Year of the Congregation.

"May the Passion of Jesus be always in our hearts."

~ Fr Joachim Rego, CP
Superior General