



To Rev. Father **Joachim REGO**, C.P.

Superior General

of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ

I extend a cordial greeting to the participants in the International Theological Congress, which will take place at the Pontifical Lateran University from 21 to 24 September 2021, on the theme “The Wisdom of the Cross in a Pluralistic World”. This event is part of the Jubilee Celebrations for the Third Centenary of the foundation of the Passionist Congregation and aims to further study the current situation of the Cross within the framework of multiple contemporary contexts. In this sense, it corresponds to the desire of Saint Paul of the Cross to ensure that the Paschal Mystery, the centre of the Christian faith and the charism of the Passionist religious family, is proclaimed and disseminated in response to divine Charity, and that it addresses the expectations and hopes of the world.

The Apostle Paul speaks of the breadth, length, height, and depth of Christ's love (cf. *Eph* 3:18). Contemplating the Crucified One, we see every human dimension embraced by God's mercy. His kenotic and compassionate love touches, through the Cross, the four cardinal points and reaches the extremes of our human condition, joining in a mysterious way the vertical relationship with God and the horizontal relationship with humanity, in a fraternal union that the death of Jesus has definitively made universal.

The immense saving power unleashed by the weakness of the Cross reveals to theology the importance of an approach that knows how to combine the loftiness of reason with the humility of the heart. Before the Crucified One, theology is also invited to address the most fragile and concrete conditions of men and women and to set aside polemical methods and agendas, joyfully sharing the labor of study, and confidently seeking the precious seeds that the Word scatters amidst the jagged and sometimes contradictory plurality of cultures.

The Cross of the Lord, a source of salvation for people of every place and every time, is therefore vibrant and effective also and above all at a crossroads, such as the contemporary one, characterized by rapid and complex changes. Very appropriately, therefore, the Theological Congress aims to study the *Sapientia Crucis* in various contexts – such as the challenges of cultures, the promotion of humanism and interreligious dialogue, and the new scenarios of Evangelization – associating scientific reflection with a series of illustrations that attest to its beneficial impact in different areas.

Therefore, it is my hope that by promoting fruitful theological, cultural, and pastoral interactions, this initiative will contribute to a renewed understanding of contemporary challenges in light of the Wisdom of the Cross, in order to foster evangelization faithful to God's design and attentive to humanity. While offering my cordial best wishes for these days of study, I invoke the protection of the Holy Virgin and Saint Paul of the Cross, and I cordially impart to the speakers, organizers and those who take part in this important gathering the Apostolic Blessing, and I ask everyone to continue to pray for me.

Rome, St. John Lateran, 1 July 2021

Francis