



Superior General's Christmas Message 2022

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

As we celebrate the feast of the Birth of Jesus, Prince of Peace, this Christmas, I am particularly conscious of the rising levels of violence in our world which threaten our security, freedom and sense of peace. Violence of all kinds, local and global have deeply affected our peace during this past year. While we may be satisfied with seeing peace as the absence of war, and fighting, and conflicts, true peace is 'shalom' which is a Hebrew word conveying the sense of peace as tranquillity, wellbeing, welfare, harmony and wholeness. This is the peace which Jesus lived, sought and wished for himself and others.

Peace is a dream and desire of many, but equally for many it remains only a dream and seems to be so far-fetched. Every day, instead, our media report news about acts of violence from around the world and from our particular societies – news of wars, terrorist attacks, shootings, hate crimes, armed hold-ups, unprovoked bashings etc. Violent movies, games and entertainment brainwash us, especially the young, into thinking of violence as a normal way of life. We know of the rise in domestic violence and abuse (physical, psychological, verbal and sexual) against adults and children in our society which is of particular concern. In addition, across the globe, there is so much violence against “our common home”, so much so that Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* pleads for us to become non-violent

in our thoughts, words and deeds. Not to mention the violence we all commit with our everyday words and language, our attitudes, and even our silence.

The story of the acts of Cain and Abel in the Book of Genesis introduces us to the birth of violence committed in and by the human family. But this is not what God intended from the beginning, nor how we are meant to live. Our hearts are created with the desire for peace, not violence towards which our flesh is tempted, often flamed by jealousy, competition, one-upmanship, greed, control and power. This is very familiar to us all.

In light of this, I was very pleased to see that at the recent Provincial Chapter of the MACOR Province comprising South Korea and China, a proposal was introduced by a young Korean Passionist religious suggesting for the Province to adopt and the members to be trained in Non-violent Communication - a program which can help us to discover the depths of our own compassion through emphasis on deep listening to ourselves and to others. The fact that this suggestion and proposal was firstly, introduced, and secondly, adopted by the Province, spoke of the obvious felt need amongst the members to grow towards healthier relationships and harmonious community life. Imagine what a difference it would make in our world if all communities, families, institutions and organizations were to recognize the need for practicing non-violent communication and live more peacefully by developing healthy relationships based on deep respectful listening and responding with compassion. As always, this seems a tall order, but it can and must begin with ME. I need to reflect on the manner of my communication in thought, word and deed, and see how it affects all other beings and created things. I also need to reflect on how I respond toward any form of violent communication by others. The 'flesh' naturally channels us to react with retaliation and revenge ("an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"), whereas the heart and spirit encourages us to act with empathy and compassion – the principle upon which non-violence is founded.




Christmas, which celebrates the mystery of the Incarnation (God becoming human in the life of Jesus of Nazareth), reminds us that God (in Jesus) who was born into a violent world environment and who experienced violence in all its forms throughout his life, chose not to react and retaliate with violence and revenge. Instead, he chose to communicate non-violently and respond with love and compassion. Throughout his life, Jesus lived non-violent communication by listening to his heart which was moved with compassion (pity). This gave birth to a peace from the depth of his being which he, in turn, offered as a gift to others.

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.
I do not give to you as the world gives. ~ [John 14:27](#)*

All of us and our world is in dire need of true peace and less violence. Christmas is an opportunity and an invitation for our renewal which moves us to consciously choose to shun away from any acts of violence and choose rather to humbly respond with Christ's gift of peace, moved with hearts filled with compassion.

Let us open ourselves to accept joyfully this Christmas the gift of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

**Wishing you a blessed Christmas
and a New Year of Shalom.**


Fr. Joachim Rego, C.P.
Superior General