



Congregazione della Passione di Gesù Cristo

IL SUPERIORE GENERALE

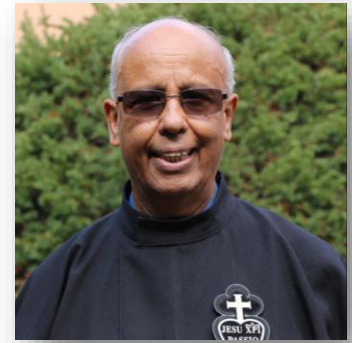
Piazza dei SS. Giovanni e Paolo, 13 - 00184 Roma - Italia
Tel. +39 06 772711; Fax: +39 067008454

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CONVOCAZIONE DEL CAPITOLO GENERALE

CIRCULAR LETTER OF CONVOCAZIONE OF THE 48TH GENERAL CHAPTER

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



Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.

After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

"Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

~ Matthew 14:22-33



REFLECTION

Jesus *made* the disciples get into the boat and go on to the other side. He *forced* or *compelled* them to go. They were not given a choice. They were compelled to take a journey **together** in obedience and trust of Jesus' order, but without his physical presence with them. The journey was to an undisclosed destination and unknown situation on "*the other side*". However, along the journey the disciples encounter severe difficulties which leave them overtaken and paralyzed by fear. Trust is lost and fear takes hold of them, until they encounter the familiar presence of Jesus, their source of hope and life.

Since the last General Chapter in 2018, our Congregation has been on a journey of "*Renewing our Mission*". It has been a journey marred by various difficulties which disrupted our plans and projects in the different parts of the Congregation. We can think of the global pandemic and its effects on the Congregation's jubilee celebrations; the war in Ukraine; the military coup in Myanmar; the violence and social disorder in Haiti; the political instabilities in Africa; the religious policies in China and Vietnam; the migration of refugees and asylum seekers through Europe, South and North America. We all know the different ways in which these 'storms' along our journey, including in our



personal and community lives, have affected us. Yet, in these signs of our times and history, the Lord commissions and compels us to take the journey, to "*go on to the other side.*"

How have we walked this journey? What has been our response to the 'storms' encountered along the way? Have we arrived on "*the other side*"? Will we ever reach there? What is our hope? Perhaps, arriving on the other side is not as important as the decision to accept the command of Christ to go, i.e., to let go of our comforts, to fold up the tents we have built, to make oneself available for the mission.

I would like to reflect and hopefully shed some light on our experience and the response asked of us by looking at the action and response of Peter in the Gospel story (Mt. 14: 22-33) when fear had taken hold of everyone in the boat and it seemed all hope was lost.

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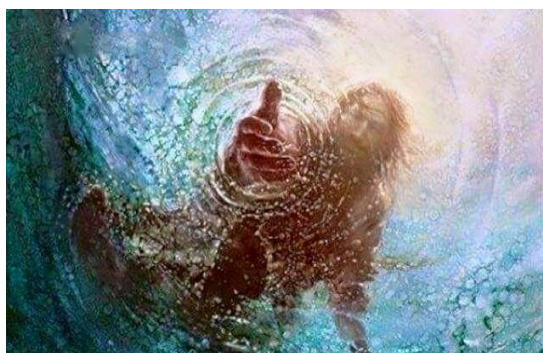
This attracted him so much that it seems he wanted it for himself. And Jesus was only too willing to offer it to him. “Come!” says Jesus.



But to reach Jesus, Peter had to step into the water – a crucial, but dangerous and risky step.

In order to take that step into the water, Peter had to step out of the boat where there was safety, company and security. He had to give up, let go of the boat and the security it provided. There was no other way for him to step into the water. It took courage and a lot of faith in Jesus for Peter to dare step out of the boat into the water. Without these, it would not have been possible.

So, Peter’s step into the water was actually two steps: *out of the boat* and *into the water*. The boat offered safety, familiarity, company; it gave Peter security, but it was human-made security. The water, on the other hand, presented



danger and risk, but it also offered security which was provided by the word of Christ: “Come!”. So, when Peter took the risk and stepped into the water, he actually gave-up the human security and placed his security in the word of Christ. And that is the faith required which enabled Peter to do the unthinkable, i.e., walk on the water. “But as soon as he felt

the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink.” So long as Peter had his eyes fixed on Jesus, he had solid ground under his feet. But as soon as he disengaged them from Jesus, that firm ground turned into a watery grave.

Peter’s actions teach us not to be afraid to take risks in faith, but to accept and trust in the word of Christ “to go”, “to come”, and to fight fear and distrust by not losing sight of, but by keeping one’s eyes fixed on Christ.

As Passionists, we want to continue walking together along the missionary journey we have begun to “*the other side*” despite the difficulties encountered, without becoming stagnant and comfortably settled by building tents. We are called to confront our fears by taking risks in faith with our eyes fixed on Christ Crucified who is the source of our life and mission, in whom we find the power of God’s Love and the mystery of Divine Wisdom.





CONVOCAZIONE OF THE 48TH GENERAL CHAPTER

With this reflection and by means of this Circular Letter, I hereby convoke on this 7th day of October 2023 the 48th General Chapter of our Congregation which will take place at the Retreat of Sts. John and Paul in Rome from 7th – 26th October 2024. Please note, however, that a mandatory 3-days Pre-Chapter will be conducted from 4th – 6th October 2024 before the formal opening of the General Chapter. I, therefore, ask all the Capitulars and participants of the Chapter to arrive in Rome by 3rd October and depart from Rome after 26th October 2024.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER

Membership of the General Chapter is defined according to Const. 129¹; Const. 130; Const. 159¹; and General Regulations 77¹.

The ex-officio members in accordance with Const. 129 are:

- the Superior General, who will also preside at the Chapter.
- the previous Superiors General.
- the General Consultors.
- the Procurator General.
- the Secretary General.
- the Secretary General for Solidarity and the Missions².
- the General Econome.
- the Provincial Superiors, Vice Provincial Superiors, and Superiors of the General Vicariates.
- the Presidents of the Configurations who are not major superiors³.

The delegates are elected as follows:

In accordance with Reg. 77: Each Configuration shall be entitled to one participant/delegate in the General Chapter for every 25 religious. After excluding the ex-officio participants, a sufficient number of delegates shall be elected in order to reach the above-stated quota. As far as possible, one delegate shall be a Brother. Those deprived of active and passive voice are not eligible to be considered.

The number of eligible religious in a Configuration must be determined at least one year before the celebration of the General Chapter, i.e. as at 7th October 2023.

According to official data in the hands of the General Curia, there are 1699 religious with active and passive voice as of 7 October 2023.

¹ As modified by the 2018 General Chapter.

² Position held by a General Consultor.

³ Currently 3 presidents of Configurations are not major superiors: CCH, CJC & PASPAC.

The 48th General Chapter 2024 will therefore be composed of 80 members, of whom 36 ex-officio and 44 delegates, distributed as follows:

- ✓ **Gen. Curia + former Sup. Gen.: 12 members**, all ex officio.
- ✓ **CCH: 5 ex officio and 1 delegate to be elected**
(of which, if possible, one brother).
- ✓ **CJC: 6 ex officio and 6 delegates to be elected**
(of which, if possible, one brother).
- ✓ **CPA: 4 ex officio and 4 delegates to be elected**
(of which, if possible, one brother).
- ✓ **MAPRAES: 1 ex officio and 13 delegates to be elected**
(of which, if possible, one brother).
- ✓ **PASPAC: 7 ex officio and 10 delegates to be elected**
(of which, if possible, one brother).
- ✓ **SCOR: 1 ex officio and 10 delegates to be elected**
(of which, if possible, one brother).

In accordance with Const. 159: The Executive Council of each Configuration shall establish the means of electing the delegates and their substitutes for the General Chapter. These norms must be presented for approval by the Superior General with the consent of his Council.

I ask the Executive Council of all the Configurations⁴ to please present to the Superior General their respective norms and procedures of the Configuration for the election of delegates to the General Chapter.

THE PREPARATORY COMMISSION FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER

This Commission is composed of six religious representing each Configuration. Each Configuration President was asked to propose three names to the General Council, from which the following were appointed:

- Fr. Elie Muakasa Ngumba (CPA) – President
- Fr. Gregor Lenzen (CCH)
- Fr. Clemente Barrón (CJC)
- Fr. Alessandro Cancelli (MAPRAES)
- Fr. Yoseph Pedhu (PASPAC)
- Fr. Tarcisio Hernando Gaitán Briceño (SCOR)

Two General Consultants: Fr. Eddy Alejandro Vásquez López and Fr. Gwen Barde will act as liaison and secretaries of the Commission.

⁴ Except MAPRAES who already have approved norms.



The Superior General CP

The Preparation Commission will soon be in communication with all the religious and lay members of the Passionist family in a process of consultation and listening toward discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit for our Congregation and establishing the agenda for the General Chapter. In a spirit of ‘synodality’, everyone is encouraged, both personally and at the local levels, to engage and contribute in this preparation phase through respectful listening, honest dialogue, and prayerful discernment for the sake of the common good of our Congregation.

THE FACILITATORS OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER

After much consultation and on the high recommendation from others, the General Council have engaged the professional services of Fr. Yago Abeledo (Missionary of Africa) who works with the team of consultants at Faith & Praxis Centre for Global Leadership, and co-facilitator José Villoslada, a layman and professional coach as facilitators. Together, they will accompany the Preparatory Commission and the General Council as consultants/facilitators during the preparation phase and inclusive of the General Chapter.

The methodology used will follow the “SEE-JUDGE-ACT-EVALUATION-CELEBRATION” model supported by the “BUTTERFLY FRAMEWORK” which will allow us to deepen and expand our awareness in welcoming the Holy Spirit.

From 13-15 September 2023, Yago and José facilitated the meeting of the Extended General Council and General Chapter Preparatory Commission during which we were able to surface some concerns and issues that would contribute towards the agenda of the General Chapter. We were also led to decide on the theme of the 48th General Chapter.

We are grateful to Yago and José for accepting to guide the process of our General Chapter and wish them every blessing in their service and in the sharing of their skills with us.



THE THEME AND LOGO OF THE 48TH GENERAL CHAPTER

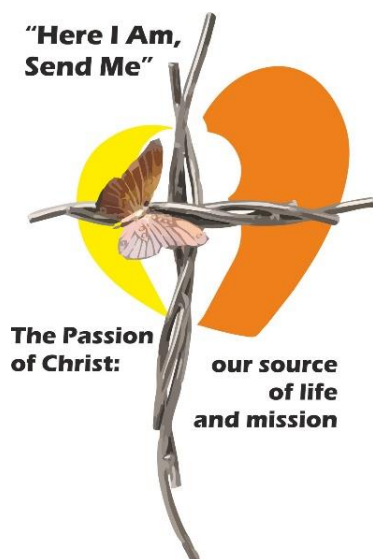
At the September meeting and working together of the Extended General Council and the General Chapter Preparatory Commission, and with the guidance of our consultants, the following emerged as the theme for the 48th General Chapter:

“Here I Am, Send Me”

The Passion of Christ: Our Source of Life and Mission

We were hoping for a dynamic theme that would be missionary in nature, but closely connected to our Passionist charism and identity. It was felt that the Congregation was in need of an injection to ‘shock’ us out of our lethargy and inspire us with a new enthusiasm to fan the ashes into fire, to stand ready and available to “go to the other side” [the margins, the peripheries, the places where no one wants to go], to leave behind our tents and comfort zones, and to take the risks necessary along the journey always with our awareness plugged to the Cross and Passion of Christ which, for us Passionists, is the wellspring and source of Divine Love and Wisdom. Are we, am I, truly ready to listen to the Spirit and respond: ***“Here I Am, Send Me”***?

Meanwhile, inspired by the Spirit and using his gifts, Fr. Juan Manuel Benito (SCOR Provincial) created the Chapter logo following the theme and other insights heard during the meeting. I present it here together with Juan Manuel’s explanation of the various symbols.



THE CROSS is intertwined and made of a cold and lifeless material. It can evoke our reality full of interrelationships (interculturality), which can form a very consistent but cold, lifeless structure. The Cross of Jesus, our mission has a great consistency and potential but does not transmit life, colour or light.

THE BUTTERFLY is a subtle sign of resurrection, of new life emerging, softly, noiselessly, generating hope. (The butterfly is the result of a process of transformation, a precious metaphor of nature on resurrection - *Laudato Si'* - It could also evoke the "ruah" that swarmed in Creation.

The HEART evokes the heartbeat that provokes the passion of Jesus, in colours of light and warmth. They are the expression of a new dawn, of a hopeful horizon.

THE SILHOUETTE (OUTLINE) OF THE PASSIONIST SIGN is the window open to the world, the path to be undertaken, the MISSION to be carried out from the small signs of life in our communities.

The slogan is quite clear, it calls us to be the protagonists, each one of us Passionists, of a new sending out, from the Passion of Christ, source of life and of our reason for being in the world (mission).



CONCLUSION

In these next months there will be much to be done in preparation for our General Chapter which is only 12 months away. The Preparatory Commission will be particularly busy with meetings, the preparation of materials to be disbursed, collected, and collated. I thank the members of the Commission sincerely for accepting this service in addition to their usual ministries. The appointment of other working Commissions and organization of tasks is still pending. I ask for your full cooperation and participation in the work ahead which we want to be taken up **together**.

Above all, let us pray for open minds and hearts, so that we may be enlightened by God's grace to listen to what is being asked of our Congregation in these times. Let us ask for the boldness and courage to take the journey which God has in mind for us with hope and *"go to the other side"*, trusting in the power of God's tender love and wisdom emanating from the mystery of Christ's Passion.

May the blessings and prayers of Our Lady of Holy Hope and St. Paul of the Cross accompany us on this journey we have begun.

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

Retreat of Sts. John and Paul, Rome

7th October 2023

Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary



Fr. Joachim Rego, C.P.
Superior General