

**Congregation of  
the Passion of Jesus Christ**

**RENEWING  
PASSIONIST MISSION**

*A Call to "Walk Together"*



**POST-SYNOD DIRECTIONS  
FOR A PASSIONIST MISSION PLAN**

General Secretariate – Rome 2023



# Renewing Passionist Mission

## *A Call to “Walk Together”*

[Post-Synod Directions for a Passionist Mission Plan]

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# Renewing Passionist Mission

## *A Call to “Walk Together”*

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*Post-Synod Directions for a Passionist Mission Plan*

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### INTRODUCTION

The Passion of Christ urges us!<sup>1</sup> This is the grateful, prophetic, and hopeful call to action announced by the 2018 Passionist General Chapter. Three hundred years ago, St. Paul of the Cross, responded to the same call to action by preaching Christ Crucified. Paul of the Cross then gathered companions around the *Memoria Passionis*, which is the very root of our Passionist identity, that is, as missionaries of the Cross. Celebrating the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our founder’s response, we embarked on renewing Passionist mission. Pope Francis, in his address on the third centenary of our congregation, beautifully outlines the flow of our renewal:

I understand that your recent Chapter reflections have led you to commit yourselves to renewing your mission, focusing on three elements — gratitude, prophecy, and hope. Gratitude is the experience of remembering the past within the context of the *Magnificat* and walking toward the future with a Eucharistic attitude. Your gratitude is the result of the *memoria passionis*. Those who are immersed in contemplation and engaged in the proclamation of the love that was given to us from the cross, perpetuate this historical reality, and life is fulfilled and happy. Prophecy is thinking and speaking in the Spirit. This is possible for those who experience prayer as the life breath of their soul and can grasp the movements of the Spirit in the depths of their

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<sup>1</sup> See *A Call to Action—Reflections and Orientations from the 47<sup>th</sup> General Chapter*, Rome: General Secretariat, 2019, p. 5.



hearts and in all of creation. Then the word that is proclaimed is always adapted to the needs of the present moment. May the *memoria passionis* make you prophets of the love of the Crucified One in a world that is losing its sense of love. Hope is the ability to see in the seed that dies the sprout of wheat, which yields thirty, sixty, one hundred-fold. It is a question of perceiving that in your religious and parish communities, which are increasingly diminishing, the on-going generating action of the Spirit which assures us that the mercy of the Father will not be lacking. Hope means rejoicing in what exists, instead of complaining about what is missing. In any case, do not allow yourselves to «be robbed of the joy of evangelization» (*Evangelii gaudium*, 83).<sup>2</sup>

Our Holy Father highlights our contemplative and active response to the *Memoria Passionis* as given to our Passionist brothers in the past, then as we live it according to the needs of our present time, and as we sail forward with what are left for us to sow and re-grow.

### **Where we are in our renewal process**

This document evolved from our interactions during the 47<sup>th</sup> General Chapter in 2018, which facilitated a re-examination of our charismatic testimony as Passionists, with the theme ‘Renewing our Mission: Gratitude, Prophecy, Hope’. “Our life is our mission (by witness), our mission is our life (by action).”<sup>3</sup> The General Chapter reckoned that an examination of our lives is vital for our apostolic lives. Three areas were deemed urgent for re-examination and renewal: Community Life, Formation, and the Configurations. These three areas were framed by the Chapter in relation to the goal of Mission and on the foundations of the *Memoria Passionis*. The *Call to Action* document brought the reflections of the General Chapter

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<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, *Extract from Pope Francis’s Message to the Passionists for the Third Centenary of our Congregation*, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Joachim Rego, CP, *Report of the Superior General to the 47<sup>th</sup> General Chapter*, Rome: October 2018, p. 3.



down to local entities and communities. The local entities and communities responded with suggestions and strategies for strengthening the three priority areas and our mission outreach and immersion in the *Memoria Passionis*.

During the General Synod of 2022, we examined the strategies presented by the local entities and communities, principally regarding the three priority areas. They were processed with a view of directing our lives to mission or living the Passion of Christ with our brothers and sisters in our apostolates. This direction was driven by Pope Francis’ call for a synodal path. Our Father General, Joachim Rego, steers us to the same path highlighting the various “challenges giving birth to a new reality of interdependence consisting of solidarity and communion as a new way of being and knowing that we are sent forth.”<sup>4</sup> Hence, renewing our Passionist Mission becomes *a call to walk together*.

This document stands as an account of the interactions and reflections of the 2022 Passionist General Synod and serves as a step along the way in our ongoing process of renewing Passionist Mission. Driven by the path of synodality, this account comes in three parts. The First Part presents the *Memoria Passionis* as our access to the path of walking together with our brothers and sisters in mission. The Second Part relays suggestions and strategies for renewing our lives—in community life, formation, and Configurations—as channels of synodal mission. The Third Part suggests a way forward in establishing the basic directions for Passionist mission in the Church and world today.

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<sup>4</sup> Joachim Rego, CP, *Report of the Superior General to the 16th General Synod*, Rome: General Synod Chronicles (11 September 2022).



## I. THE MEMORIA PASSIONIS AS ENTERING INTO SYNODAL MISSION

### **The heart of Passionist Synodality**

An authentic *synodos* calls for shared access—or *syneisodos*. The first step in walking together is to open our lives to each other and to others. *Eisodos* is the biblical description for “entrance” or “having access.” *Therefore, brothers, since through the blood of Jesus we have confidence of entrance into the sanctuary* (Hebrews 10:19). In 2 Peter, we have the same promise: *For, in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you...* (2Peter 1:11)

The first challenge for synodality is how far we can share in this access (syneisodality) which is made available to us in Christ who gave his life as our ultimate access to God. St. Paul of the Cross embraced the Memory of Christ’s Passion as the opening through which everyone gets a share of God’s overwhelming love. Hence, the *Memoria Passionis* is the heart that pumps and prompts our walking together.

### **The Charismatic Witness of our Mission**

Our 2018 General Chapter’s *Call to Action* (part 5) expounds the foundational role of our Passionist charism. At the Synod we were able to see it as opening universal access to our life and Mission.

“The Charism as the Holy Spirit’s gift opens us to the grace of God in contemplation, prayer, and silence. We are enabled to understand more deeply the fullness of the love of God, so that our life can be re-inspired, and we may offer ourselves totally to the Crucified.

We embrace the Crucified more confidently from the perspective of our personal limitations and sufferings, sharing in the suffering endured today by the Church, sharing with suffering humanity, and the suffering earth. The Charism nourishes and renews our Commu-





nity, and it challenges us to respond to all human suffering from the heart of the Paschal mystery. In our life in Community we seek a deeper insight into the meaning of God's love to share with others.

The *Memoria Passionis* expresses the very essence of who we are. It inspires our response and adaptation to changing times and calls us to conversion in our own lives and to bring about the necessary transformation of the structures of our Congregation.”<sup>5</sup>

The *Call to Action* section on Charism ends on a yearning note, with overtones of synodality: “Our Dream for the Congregation ...We want to continue in the footsteps of our Founder St Paul of the Cross, who first received the Charism of the *Memoria Passionis*...The Charism continues to nourish each one of us, and all the members of the Passionist Family when we ‘remain always close to Christ Crucified and his suffering people’ (Message of Pope Francis to the Chapter)”<sup>6</sup>

## II. RENEWING OUR LIVES AND STRUCTURES FOR SYNODAL MISSION

As pointed out by the *Call to Action*, the *Memoria Passionis* calls us to examine and renew our lives as we proclaim Christ Crucified to the crucified of today. An important realization that arose from the 2022 General Synod is that, while we the evangelizers have many resilient witnesses among us and creative apostolic initiatives, we are also broken, vulnerable, and in need of healing.

Our structures call for review and updating to effect healthier and safer engagement with our broken and vulnerable brothers and sis-

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<sup>5</sup> See *A Call to Action—Reflections and Orientations from the 47th General Chapter*, Rome: General Secretariat, 2019, pp. 19-20.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.



ters. The participants of the 2022 General Synod reflected and deliberated on various ‘strategies’ to strengthen our foundations for mission—community life, formation, and configurations.

### A. COMMUNITY LIFE

The passion and death of Jesus “are ever-present realities to people in the world today, ‘crucified’ as they are by injustice, by lack of a deep respect for human life, and by a hungry yearning for peace, truth, and the fullness of human existence” (*Constitutions*, 65). This causes us to seriously examine our reasons for existing in any locality and country. We share our fraternal communion with our suffering brothers and sisters and accompany them in stamping out the social ills that befall them. The 2022 General Synod proposes the following priority directions as vital for strengthening missionary community life.

**Passionist Quality of Communal Apostolic Life.** Community life is both a mission in itself (by its witness and communion) and as base for our ministries. It is important to find the balance of how our community life makes ministry possible and how our ministries enhance our community life. In carrying out various apostolic activities it is important that the Passionist Charism of *Memoria Passionis* be qualitatively made visible in all that we do.

**New Passionist Presence In “Our Peripheries.”** Being evangelized by the poor is crucial in our mission in communion. Each Province and Vice-Province is encouraged to launch a study of the way to open one Passionist apostolic community inserted in the urban and existential peripheries. For consideration are current realities like migration, armed conflicts, religious diversity, disease epidemics, environmental threats and catastrophe, suicide and mental health, family and community crises, and more. The Province or Vice-Province should provide means for skills needed by members living in these areas.



**Days of fraternity.** The stability and health of our Passionist communities generates health for our ministries. Set a weekly day dedicated to strengthening fraternity living. Agree on a special time of listening, dialogue, entertainment, or trip. Invite an outsider-resource to give inputs on any matter the community would like to talk about—be it affairs of the Church, socio-political issues, etc. Make it possible to also enjoin the Passionist laity or some people close to the community.

**Leadership.** Provincial and Vice-Provincial Councils facilitate the formation, guidance, and other related matters for those who have the responsibility of leadership in the local community. Discern properly the appointment of a local superior who should be more of a fraternal steward than an assets-and-projects manager. Emphasize the evangelical roots of authority. “Every community has a mission of its own to accomplish. Persons in authority thus serve a community which must accomplish a specific mission, received and defined by the institute and by its charism...Authority is, evangelically, always service.”<sup>7</sup>

**Internationality and Inter-Generationality.** Accustom local communities to be open to international membership. Every community serves as open home to members of the whole congregation. Fraternally confront the issues and occurrences of racism and other cultural double-standards. Devise mechanisms that offset the gaps and conflicts between the young and senior members. Give orientation to young members on gerontological issues—ageing struggles over hierarchical structures, mental issues like dementia, senility, and keeping up with the community’s operative pace. Guide the senior members on young members’ dynamics like performance-and-affirmation focus, looking-for-someone-to-look-up-to consciousness, vogue mentality, and

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<sup>7</sup> *Fraternal Life in Community*, No.49, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (1994).



push-button culture. Provide apt representation for young members during assemblies and administrative caucuses.

**Communal Accountability and Subsidiarity.** Design dynamics wherein community finance is a concern for every member, but with brotherly approaches on encouraging transparency and reminding of evangelical poverty. Empower communities to self-sustain, strive for a balanced budget by identifying opportunities to generate new income, and reduce the expenses in the community.

Other actions raised by members of the Synod concern community commitment of solidarity with the poor, number of religious in a community, confronting departures of members, role of digital media in community, and common community projects.

## **B. FORMATION**

The General Commission on Formation has produced a renewed plan of formation. It is a considerable resource for values we need to inculcate in our provincial and configurational programs. It is comprehensive and valuable for the whole congregation, especially for initial formation. The items presented in this section are urgent considerations. We emphasize that formation is vigilance for life, which should begin from aspirancy up to the most senior stage of life.

**Competence of Formation Personnel.** Our Formation Personnel are the backbones of our congregation. Preparation and experience are necessary for those assigned in accompanying our formands to shape their vigilance for life. A formator first undergoes in-depth self-formation with proper assessment in terms of maturity and readiness to handle students. It is also helpful that he spends months at a *missio ad gentes* or a meaningful Christian pastoral setting. Support and accompaniment—like psychological help and spiritual processing—are also very crucial for formators. Provinces and Vice-Provinces see to it that formation ministry is a community



or team. The team regularly meets to assess the development of their engagement with students.

**Professional Standards.** Safeguarding and Professional standards are paths to be assimilated in forming our candidates. It serves not only as assessment of their suitability but as an accompaniment to an adequate knowledge of oneself, as an opportunity to develop human and spiritual growth. In this horizon of integral formation of the person, with particular reference to the human dimension, the candidate is formed in the journey of human maturity to assume prudent, healthy and balanced behavior. Formation houses help the young religious confront and responsibly address the scandals and boundary violations in ministries. Promote a safe environment in our formation communities to help the candidates have a healthy sense of themselves, and to develop healthy and balanced relationships.

Safeguarding and Professional standards are also increasingly important for ongoing formation. Professed and ordained Passionists need to avail of professional help for continued human processing and efficiency in ministry.

Relational boundaries can be matters of culture, but every religious has to be aware that deciding what is “appropriate” and “healthy” are non-debatable when children and vulnerable adult are harmed and exposed to abuse. Hence, safeguarding and professional standards includes reading the vulnerability of people under our care. Our communities and formation houses have to make this our ordinary mission.

**Support for Newly Professed and Ordained.** Experience has indicated that the departures after perpetual profession in the first 10 years have been due to lack of accompaniment. Young religious are not in a stage or reality where one can say formation is finished. After profession and ordination, not everyone is able to quickly adjust with the demand of ministries let alone the difficulty of attention by fellow members of the community. We expect our newly professed and ordained to be mature, but they still need to be accompanied.



It is encouraged that Provinces and Vice-Provinces create a program of targeted support for Brothers professing final vows, and for those recently ordained, for at least the first five years.

### **Local House as Base of Vocation Promotion and Formation.**

An applicant pursues “our” life-in-community, not just as an institution or a particular profession. Re-vitalize every local house or community as base and catalyst for vocation attracting aspirants into how they want to experience our life—either as guest resident, ministry volunteer, skilled resource for community upkeep, or as candidate for formal entry into our professed life. Everyone in the local house is a vocation promoter inasmuch as every community life is the basic promotion and formation of our Passionist life.

**JPIC as Part of Formation.** At the very beginning of formation, students have to embrace our charism in the language of justice, peace, and integrity of creation. The students engage with social realities, especially in the margins, so that they can understand and embrace the sufferings of the world.

Other actions endorsed are: internet-based learning for all interested in the congregation, additional professional studies and leadership training, four-week annual study in Rome, and communities dedicated to vocation ministry.

## **C. SOLIDARITY IN CONFIGURATIONS**

The Configurations are structures built to be paths for solidarity. Every Configuration has its own manner of operations and can easily be adjusted according to new situations and needs. The General Synod raises the Configurations as portals for solidarity—not only for one country with another country but also for one configuration with another configuration. Our capacity to commit to this solidarity depends on our capacity to welcome people—our brother Passionists or lay partners—and to work with others. Hence, the Configurations are important paths for synodal mission.



**Assessing Level of Solidarity.** Verify the level of solidarity gained by the Configurations taking up the initial objective of the Restructuring, which aimed at the exchange / solidarity between the various realities of the Congregation. Let each Configuration clarify its walking level and the next steps to take.

**Configuration Mentality.** The General Council will initiate orientation or catechesis on the new operational direction of entities, that is, by way of Configurations. Recognize that we do not belong solely to a Province, but also to a Configuration and a Congregation. Initiate dialogue for the acknowledgment of the presence of Passionists belonging to another Provinces but whose community and ministry is situated in another country, which is a jurisdiction of another Province or Configuration. Revitalizing configurations presupposes living intersubjectively or interculturally within the Congregation. Develop a consciousness seeing my ministry taking place in other Entities, or me as part of an international community.

**International Houses of Formation.** Establish a Configurational House of Formation to already orient our students on the Configurational set-up of our Congregation. Accordingly, some religious will be trained to serve as international formators taking into serious account the different cultural background of every candidate. Determining the common language to be spoken in an international formation house is very important, but candidates should also be encouraged to make use of his native facilities like language and custom to help him appropriate our Passionist life.

**Extended General Council.** Strengthen the role of the Extended General Council in the sense of developing the role of leadership of the Congregation. Give each Configuration a special task or challenge to do a section of the life of the Congregation to be attentive to. The Extended General Council should define a task / step to be taken to implement solidarity within and outside each Configuration, and



then accompany its implementation. The Extended General Council should also study the possibility of entrusting each Configuration a particular attention or a sector of our apostolic dimension, according to the history, the socio-political context and the suggestions of the members of the Configurations. It may be useful to ask the question: what is the most significant and specific spiritual and apostolic experience that our Configuration brings to the Congregation?

**Exploring Common Interest.** Create a program for advancing pastoral skills, spiritual development, or other skills in which other communities of the Configuration would take part in order to build the bridges of common interests among us.

Other Configurational directions endorsed are: clarifying the role of Configuration President, twinning of Provinces, cross-formation, international mission teams, and financial equity.

### III. DIRECTIONS FOR PASSIONIST MISSION IN THE CHURCH AND WORLD TODAY

In his report to the 2022 General Synod, our Superior General highlighted our missionary identity as Passionists.

“The Church has entrusted us, Passionists, with a mission: to preach the Gospel of the Passion by our life and apostolate, remaining faithful to the patrimony and evangelical spirit of our Founder” (Const. 2). Specifically, as Passionists, we are to find inspiration in the experience and response of Jesus in his Passion and discover there the saving power of God’s mercy and love which, in turn, empowers us to bring healing and hope to all areas and circumstances we encounter in our lives and ministries.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Joachim Rego, CP, *Report of the Superior General to the 16<sup>th</sup> General Synod*, Rome: General Synod Chronicles (11 September 2022).





Our Congregation has long embarked on a renewal of mission. The 2012 General Chapter already laid out “Aspects of International Mission.” The 2018 General Chapter called for a “Plan for the Renewal of our Passionist Mission”. Three foundational features of Passionist mission were identified: 1) the close connection between our Mission and our Community Life; 2) the integral connection between our Mission and our Charism; 3) the need for continual discernment of our Mission in the light of the Signs of our Times and the Gospel of the Passion.<sup>9</sup>

Up to the 2022 General Synod, we focused on strategizing for our lives and structures, which are necessary for our mission to be efficient (i.e., points 1 and 2 above). By attending to the third item, we will be enabled to move forward in effective Mission as a Congregation. With this in mind we now hope to work on an apostolic plan, to give guidance to the configurations, provinces/vice-provinces and communities. This will be able to build on the intuitions and orientations in Part 1 of *Call to Action*, ‘Passionist Mission in the Church and World Today’. The eventual Plan can provide the signposts for the Synodal Path we will follow together as a Congregation over the next coming years.

Invoking syneisodality and synodality, we call for the involvement of the whole Congregation and the Passionist Family in identifying basic directions for mission. We take inspiration from the lecture of Maria Campatelli during the 2022 General Synod. She used the “icon” as model for synodal discernment, in which the figure in the icon is the one gazing at the viewer. At this, we ask: *How does our Crucified Christ look at us today? How do we enter into his gaze? How do the crucified ones of today look at us and our Passionist lives? How do we enter into the gaze and life of our suffering brothers and*

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<sup>9</sup> See *A Call to Action—Reflections and Orientations from the 47th General Chapter*, Rome: General Secretariat, 2019, p.9.



sisters? Furthermore, Maria Campatelli spoke of synodality in terms of synergy and beauty:

“More than a closed and self-sufficient individual, we are a gift that we offer in gratitude and joy, thus expressing the beauty that precedes us, the personal being of God in us. We participate in this Trinitarian act, recreating ourselves in communion. Contemplating this wound that springs from love, we are reborn to the life that God is and gives us. From this ecstasy is born the communal encounter that places us before the concept of a synod not as a strategy but as God’s being in us and us in him.”<sup>10</sup>

*May the passion of Christ be ever in our hearts.*

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<sup>10</sup> Maria Campatelli, *The Spirituality of the Synodal Way*, Presented at the 16<sup>th</sup> General Synod, Rome: General Synod Chronicles, 14 September 2022.