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Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality

THE SPIRITUALITY OF ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS

AND OUR PASSIONIST SPIRITUALITY AS SYMBOLIZED IN THE FOURTH VOW

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Rome 1982
Passionist General Curia
Piazza SS. Giovanni e Paolo13

These lectures were originally delivered
during the Institute of Passionist History and Spirituality
held at Rome from May 24 to June 26, 1981.

Cum permissu:
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These lectures were translated from the Italian
by the editor of the English language series, Norbert M. Dorsey, C.P.

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**THE SPIRITUALITY OF ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS
AND OUR PASSIONIST SPIRITUALITY
AS SYMBOLIZED IN THE FOURTH VOW**

Introduction

My lectures form a part of your research and studies on the very bases of our life: the scriptural fonts, theology and history. I will keep within that framework. But since I see from the program that you have already touched upon some of these topics, this is what I will endeavor to do on my part – not only to present some elements of the history of spirituality for that time, but also to attempt a translation of our spirituality for the contemporary mentality.

I. THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE PASSION IN THE ITALY OF THE 1700's

What Place Should Be Given to St. Paul of the Cross in the 1700's?

Our holy Founder expresses his mind quite well in the brief “Notices” that were sent to friends so that they might become acquainted with his recently founded Congregation:

“The great Father of Mercies has been pleased to raise up a new Order or Institute in His holy Church at this pitiable and distressing time when we now see openly at work every kind of iniquity, with harm also to our holy faith which is keenly affected in many parts of Christianity. The world is sliding into a profound forgetfulness of the most bitter sufferings endured out of love by Jesus Christ our true Good, while the memory of His most holy Passion is practically extinct in the faithful.

“For that reason this new Congregation aims to root out both disorders and endeavors to remove vice, to foster virtue, and to set souls again on the way of perfection to heaven, by promoting devotion to the Passion which is the most efficacious means for obtaining every good”(1).

It seemed to Paul of the Cross, therefore, that the memory of the Passion of Christ was little cultivated in his time. Was that really so? I think it appropriate to offer at least some comments on that question, taking them from the history of spirituality. For the results of even a superficial research seem to indicate that devotion to the Passion was actually thriving in Italy in the 1700's.

We are therefore faced with the problem of going more deeply into the mind of our Saint, taking account of the fact that his charism was already well formed by 1721. From then on he would continue to express himself in phrases similar to those already cited for the rest of his life, that is, up until the last quarter of the century.

Not wanting to deny his assertions, it should rather be said that Paul saw not so much the Passion in general as *forgotten by his contemporaries*, but the Passion *inasmuch as* – according to his charism – it becomes the real *keystone* of the whole faith. In other words, Paul understood that the devotional style with which the Passion was remembered in his day was no longer adequate. There was need for a style demanded by new times. And the times, we should remember, were those of the Enlightenment which, for the most part, determined our own western culture.

Quietist Distrust Concerning the Passion of Jesus.

The Quietist phenomenon actually developed in the second half of the 1600's and then was demolished with the Papal condemnation of 1687. However, in one way or another, the after-effects continued even into the following century. St. Paul realized that this current of spirituality, even though recalling the Passion of Christ, did not do it rightly. Rather, it led one very much off course.

Today we realize that in Quietism we are dealing with a false mysticism. Starting off with the valid principle that, from a supernatural point of view, it is always God Who takes the initiative with His grace, it drew the false conclusion that therefore man's best attitude was one of complete passivity, even psychologically.

Consequently, the Quietists believed that methodical meditation should be put aside because it was too "active." Here they included even meditation on the Passion, absolutely judging it as an obstacle to true contemplation.

Malaval, for example, categorically held as a thesis that, for the Jews, the Humanity of Jesus was an impediment in accepting the Divinity. The followers of Molinos, who was the major exponent of Quietism, declared: "In a kind of prayer of quiet, they arrive at a point where they find themselves impeded from union with God because of the image and remembrance of Jesus Crucified" (2).

But there was even worse. Although the Quietists did accept the death of Jesus on the cross as a contemplative model, a completely erroneous interpretation was given to it. That "mystical death," having attained the height of passivity, should even include disinterestedness in one's own eternal salvation! The soul "breathes with Christ on the cross, saying: 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' In this involuntary impression of despair, it makes the absolute sacrifice of its own self-interest concerning eternity"(3).

There was another aspect of false mysticism. Under the pretext of pure love, one reached a moral irresponsibility that covered over every kind of collapse.

The 1700's had begun with a tremendous suspicion towards mysticism, so much so that St. Alphonsus Liguori preferred to exclude that horizon from his pastoral work and to limit himself to guarding carefully against the verified deviations. I have already referred to the worthwhile elements of an otherwise aberrant Quietism which were evident throughout the 1700's, and even our holy Founder was indirectly involved in them (4).

Suffice it to say at this point that Quietism corrodes both catholic spirituality and the very faith itself. It is a tremendous error to eliminate the contemplative mediation of Jesus; one ends up with all kinds of spiritual vagrancy. Yet the temptation remains even in our day, especially in relation to certain mystical systems originating in the Far East. The faith becomes distorted in a way similar to that of certain Protestants when they would make of the historical Jesus a type of despairing person. Then it becomes impossible to have a true «memory» of His Passion, or else the significance changes somewhat as happened with Bultman and Barth who see in the Cross only the absolute "No" of God to man!

Devotional Meditation on the Passion in the 1700's.

Notwithstanding Quietism (which actually touched somewhat restricted areas), “the 1700's did not at all see any slowing down in the numerical and *qualitative increase* of books which taught or facilitated meditation on the Passion of Jesus with meaningful reflections. A clear example of this is the famous work by the Capuchin, Gaetano da Bergamo. He presented a method of meditating on the Passion of the Lord that is truly impressive, programming a reflection for every day of the year. This valuable manual has had great success even up to our time. If, on the other hand, one is searching for a still larger work suitable for more diverse occasions, there are the volumes of Fr. Giacomo Giuseppe Duguet entitled ‘Traite e la Croix de Notre Seigneur Jesus Christ’. These appeared in the same year (1733) when Fr. Gaetano's manual was being printed in Bergamo” (5).

It would be easy to add many other examples. Let us limit ourselves to the most illustrious author, St. Alphonsus Liguori, He repeatedly wrote books containing meditations on the Passion: “The Love of Souls, or Reflections and Affections on the Passion of Christ” (1761); “Considerations and Affections on the Passion of Jesus Christ, presented simply as described by the Evangelists” (1780); and, “Reflections on the Passion of Jesus Christ” (1773). In his “Way of Salvation” (1786), fifteen meditations on the Passion were included for the last days of Lent. And two pamphlets of 1773 treated of “The Power of the Passion of Jesus Christ to inflame hearts with divine love” and “Reflections of a Soul Loving God at the Feet of Jesus Crucified” (6).

St. Alphonsus strongly inserted devotion to the Passion in his Institute, and the Redemptorists were entrusted with the duty of spreading it. “The principle obligation of the preacher in a mission is to have the people understand the love which Jesus Christ brought us in His life and especially in His Passion. In a letter on the manner of preaching he summed up his ideal... and had it put into practice with exactness: ‘In our missions, and especially during the last three days, we only preach on the Passion of the Redeemer so that souls will be left truly committed to Jesus Christ’ (7).

The most genuine Franciscan tradition, of course, always notes St. Leonard of Port Maurice (+1761), most famous for the enormous impulse he gave to the pious practice of the Way of the Cross. “He personally erected a good 572 sets of Stations and we owe it to him that, from the eighteenth century onwards, the devotion of the Way of the Cross became universally taken to heart and practiced by Christian people” (8). Right now we do not have the time to consider more profoundly this great man who considered devotion to the Passion “the queen of all devotions, of which it is the oldest, the most devout, holy, and outstanding... a staircase on which souls ascend to delight their hearts in God in heaven, while on it the same God comes to benefit them on earth” (9).

Mysticism of the Passion in St. Veronica Giuliani.

If the Passion was widely preached to the people, there were also cases of valid, illustrious mystical experiences centered on that same mystery in the monasteries of the 1700's. We will limit ourselves to recall St. Veronica Giuliani (+1727). Her mystical journey (obviously known

by our holy Founder) culminates in the very years in which the Passionist Congregation came into being.

The “Diary” of St. Veronica Giuliani is a faithful mirror of the intense spiritual life she led during her last 34 years, and its 22,000 pages constitute a true and proper treasury of spiritual doctrine. It also has considerable literary merit. The Diary might be termed the poem of the Passion in the Italian 1700’s due to its witness to a progressive emptying of oneself in the sufferings of Christ, even to the point of bearing visible signs in body and soul. There is an intense *apostolic motive*, missionary and ecumenical, in that desire to suffer without a moment’s respite, and it lies in the yearning to expiate the infidelities and betrayals of a Love that is unreciprocated... For Giuliani, *mysticism and mission* substantially form only one reality, with emphases that find their point of departure in the Passion of Christ and pour forth in sad and beautiful expressions. What animates the Mystic of the Citta di Castello is an intense sacrificial zeal that her union with the Man of Sorrows might render the redemption more effective and fruitful” (10).

Studies on this great saint are still only in the early stages. But for the purposes of our work, it is worth emphasizing that she was totally immersed in the seventeenth century “baroque” spiritual style. “Mystical phenomenology is enriched with new states and their description. It recognizes the visual and imaginative forms with which the various realities of faith seem to be closely connected. Under that aspect, this century really concludes an entire epoch of catholic spirituality, one that had begun in the late Middle Ages” (11).

St. Veronica is different from our holy Founder in another way. In fact, she seems to represent in Italy something similar to what St. Margaret Mary Alacoque was in France. Indeed, “even in Italy the paths of mysticism seemed to take on different colorings with a ‘mystic of reparation’ (St. Veronica Giuliani) and a ‘mystic of conformity to the suffering Christ’ (St. Paul of the Cross), but without enabling one to trace, obviously, very rigid or precise distinctions” (12}. The historian Fr. Penco, who put it that way, is right on target. And we hold that the theme of reparation, while predominant until very recently, is not only distinct, but historically more limited.

Jansenistic Tendencies and the Spirituality of the Passion.

We still have to reflect on another important component of the spiritual history of the 1700’s: Jansenism. That, too, really had its maximum virulence in the preceding century. Yet, especially in Italy, it also greatly influenced the 1700’s.

Jansenism, like Lutheranism, took its inspiration from a kind of Augustinianism and wanted to combat the “new Pelagianism,” an advancing rationalism. One cannot deny a certain nobility in that phenomenal reformer who, nonetheless, certainly did not show any interpretation of evangelical mercy in all of his rigorism. Especially in Italy, his moralistic individualism contributed to the progress of regimens that were born of Illuminism. Their purpose was to close traditional faith into the private sphere and to deny the independence of ecclesiastical authority.

Apropos of our theme, it might be interesting to note that there was in Jansenism a “desire to raise the tone of the devotional practices among the people, not only rejecting formats where Marian piety had gone astray but also harshly criticizing devotions to the Sacred Heart and of the

Way of the Cross” (13). Apart from certain intemperances in which there were some anti-Jesuit politics, this period was clearly the turning point with regard to medieval piety.

A particular exponent of this newer type of Christianity was Ludovico Antonio Muratori (+1760), the most learned man of the century and an excellent priest. As a noted historian, he had succeeded in critically collating all the progressive elements of different eras and institutions insofar as they generated civilized evolution. He thus opened a path of inquiry that we might wish had been more appreciated by the church of his time.

In the field of spirituality, Muratori is remembered for his work, “Della regolata devozione dei cristiani” (On the Regulated Devotion of Christians). It is based on the need “to distinguish those pious acts which are of substance, from those which are simply trifles and sometimes just give the appearance of devotion.” Simplicity and sincerity are the marks of a true devotion. In order to “regulate” this, Muratori started above all else with meditation. For him “the primary task consists in meditating on the ineffable attributes of God, the life of Christ, and especially on the Passion. It is only then that you unite yourself with God; only then do you more vigorously implant or strengthen the principles and duties of faith in the hearts of the faithful. He who does not have an awakened mind, who does not know how to reflect, is not accustomed to holding even a thread of reasoning around whatever is proposed to him and will soon find himself dry, distracted, and cold” (14).

In these propositions, we seem to have a marked similarity with those of our holy Founder. He certainly showed himself as aware of the absolute necessity of returning to the essential of the faith, of recovering the Thomistic sense of devotion as “a resolute will ready to do all that God wants,” and of keeping at a distance those “wee devotions” which were too superficial. Like Muratori, Paul reacted against the excesses of a baroque style of piety and the propensity for the extraordinary (visions, locutions, etc.) (15).

However, there is still a profound difference. While the progressive theorists of the spirituality of the 1700’s were an elite group rather far removed from popular sentiment, Paul of the Cross, on the other hand, was an intuitive. He went forward, not on the strength of his personal culture, but by his divine enlightenment and remained fully immersed in the people for the rest of his life. Consequently, he realized the need to facilitate and assure their ascent to God, by helping the older piety to evolve without freezing it between impossible idealism.

II. THE FORMATION OF THE NUCLEUS OF THE SPIRITUALITY OF ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS

Critical Moments and a Determining “Qualitative Leap”.

It is not my task to present the life of St. Paul of the Cross. That has already been done during the past few days and, besides, you who are following this lecture know his life well. But I feel it indispensable that I describe the formation of the nucleus of his spirituality in its historical development, and particularly that series of decisive moments which culminated in the year 1721.

It would surely be very interesting to submit to a critical review the whole series of events, before and after that date. However, I will not delay on that now. The reason is because I only hope to bring out clearly - as I have done in previous studies given on other occasions – the fact that at a certain point there is a real and proper “qualitative leap,” marked by “intellectual visions” which pertain to the very *raison d’être* of the Congregation and which give us the point of reference for an understanding of its charism even today.

From the time of his “conversion,” Paul had already been guided by God to this highest form of knowing. “During the time he gave to prayer, the Lord infused into his mind such lights on the truths of faith that it would take a room full of books to explain what he understood and comprehended about those truths” (16). He understood and comprehended; such is the specific characteristic of intellectual visions, having nothing of “phenomenon” about them. “Everything created seemed to disappear and faith seemed to have changed into evidence... And it seemed to him that, beyond the beatific vision, nothing more could be had in this life” (17).

The saint is fully aware of all this. He describes, for example, “the scourge suspended in the air, composed of seven thongs at the end of which was written the word “Love”. But he precisely says: “I did not see a bodily form... that, no; but I saw it in God. That is, the spirit knows that it is God because He makes it understand through the interior movements of the heart and infused knowledge in the mind. Yet this happens in such a sublime way that it is very hard to explain, because the soul responds to what He intends and what cannot be described in speech or writing” (18).

This mystic preparation lasted several years, since the “conversion” is dated about 1713-14. But only during the last two and a half years, that is, from about 1717 on, does Paul begin to perceive distinct calls.

At first he thinks that he is being called by God to become a hermit. At that time there were many of them, living a life of prayer and penance and especially occupied with the custody of isolated sanctuaries. But apart from family difficulties, he confesses that he did not know what God wanted of him. He did not feel obliged simply to become an addition to the number of ordinary hermits already in existence.

At another time he is inspired “to gather companions who would live together in unity to promote the holy fear of God in souls.” But even in this, he admits to not having given the project any serious consideration. It was too generic a reason to gather companions; he could just as well have entered an already existing Order! And later on Paul would affirm that there would have been no point in initiating a new Institute to imitate the purpose of an already existing one.

The decisive “qualitative leap” comes about with the vision (or rather, visions) of the summer of 1720. He sees himself attired in a black tunic, with a white cross and the name of Jesus on his breast. The Blessed Mother makes him understand that this means he must found a Congregation that “would mourn” for the Passion and Death of Jesus.

That event was like a powerful catalyst. In a few months, Paul – who at first seemed to lack any decisive drive – will be clothed as a hermit, write his Rule, and straightaway dare to go to

Rome to have it approved by the Pope. In one stroke a synthesis is made between solitude and the apostolate. Suddenly there appears a sufficient and impelling motive to begin the new work.

The “intellectual” aspect of the visions is firmly established by the saint. “When the holy tunic was offered to me, I did not see any bodily form, so to say, the figure of a man. When I said I saw it in the hands of God, I never ‘saw’ anything. But the soul receives from God a very profound understanding, lost in the Immense.” Many years later he still said clearly that “he understood and comprehended the presence of Mary most holy, but he did not see her with bodily eyes.”

I am totally convinced that this type of a thunderbolt is rather different from an already detailed “plan”. It was filled-out and reflected upon more deeply from the summer of 1720 to about September of 1721. And even today it is necessary to study the details when it comes to explaining it doctrinally and the way in which the Congregation and its apostolate came to be structured.

Paul explicitly admits “to having received the inspiration of the sacred Sign and of the holy tunic more than once; and that in the first vision he saw the most holy Name of Jesus and the ‘Christi Passio’ was received in other subsequent illuminations” (19). I will quickly explain how I understand this perfecting phase.

To elaborate a bit for our present needs, let us remember that in intellectual visions there is first a perception of truth granted by God, and then the expression of it in words or images. As St. Thomas Aquinas writes: “In the kind of prophecy that is said to happen only by intellectual vision, the fullness of the prophetic revelation is perceived by the intellect; and subsequently, at the arbitrary will of the one who understands it, suitable images are formed in the imagination by the very nature of our intelligence” (20).

I think that we have to apply to hagiography something analogous to what is done in the science of biblical theology concerning the visions of the sacred authors. They are richer in themselves than the particular expressions used to reveal them. For that reason history, far from exhausting them, is always open to a better understanding of their meaning and to appreciate the consequences.

The Three Phases of the Formation of the Passionist Charism.

In order to understand our fourth vow thoroughly, I believe that we have to follow St. Paul of the Cross during the period of its full conception. That period, in my opinion, is marked by three phases: the draft of the primitive Rule; the conclusion of the penitential Lenten season in the cell at St. Carlo in Castellazzo; and the result of the apparently unsuccessful trip to Rome in 1721.

A. The “infused form” of the Rule.

In the decisive visions regarding the foundation of his institute, our holy Founder included the one regarding the Rule: “My God has infused into my spirit the form of the holy Rule to be observed by the Poor of Jesus and by me, his least and unworthy servant...”.

Again, here, we are treating with a very profound and inclusive perfection of a charismatic type. I believe that when Paul spoke about “form,” he was not thinking about the detailed articulation of the Rule. Rather, he was referring to its “spirit,” that is, the “form” which – according to Aristotelian categories – identifies and gives life to matter.

In fact, in my opinion, Paul appreciated very well both the extraordinariness of the gift and the prudence needed to incarnate it concretely. This could mean nothing less than the monastic and apostolic structure of the new Institute. Within a few days the Rule is drafted (“I began to write this holy Rule in the year 1720 on the 2nd of December and completed it on the 7th of the same month”) and the saint notes: “Let it be known that when I was writing, I wrote as quickly as if someone were dictating to me.” Yet he does not boast that the writing was literally, inspired, but rather “in all this, I submit to the *judgement of my superiors*.” He will continue to do the same all through his life in the subsequent and significant modifications that the Rule was to undergo.

Unfortunately, we no longer have the integral text of that Rule because, as is well known (21), the saint himself had it destroyed. Certainly he did this out of humility, but I think he also did it because he later on considered that text as simply a *rough draft*. In talking about it with his infirmarian Brother Bartholomew, he said “that those rules were too austere to be practicable” (22). It should be said therefore that those religious were aptly inspired when, before giving them to Paul to be destroyed, they only made copies of the prologue and conclusion of the Rules, but not of the contents.

The *fourth vow was not as yet* included in that Rule. This can be deduced from the fact that otherwise his religious would have copied that section. But instead, in order to pass on the testimony about the charism of the Passion, they had to find it in the chapter on “The Discipline.” There, even though only casually mentioned, we find that which we have at heart. “Dearly beloved, you must know that the *main object* in wearing black (according to the special inspiration that God gave me) is to be clothed in mourning for the Passion and Death of Jesus. For this purpose *let us never forget* to have always with us a constant and sorrowful remembrance of him. And so let each of the Poor of Jesus take care *to instill in others* meditation on the suffering of our Jesus” (23).

Fr. Giorgini also judges that the fourth vow was missing in the primitive Rule (24). However, the essentials were present – both that of preserving a perpetual memorial in the hearts of the religious, and the obligation of spreading it among the faithful. Yet it must be said, in reference to its centrality and exceptional importance, that the exact formula is missing.

B. The conclusion of the forty-day retreat.

Immediately after Paul received the habit, he retired to the small cell adjoining the sacristy of the Church of St. Carlo in Castellazzo and remained there for forty days. We do not know if the duration of his stay was prearranged, nor do his biographers have much to say about it. I personally feel that after the *new “baptism”* which was the beginning of his religious life, Paul thought as Jesus had, namely, to prepare himself in the desert for his public life. Later, Paul will link together the 21st of November and one of his most important “visions” (the mystical marriage), almost analogous to the theophany at the baptism of Jesus. But the conclusion of this forty day period definitely resembles in a striking way the Lenten fast of Jesus, when He finally

gave in to hunger and went forth from there to victorious battle with Satan or, as the theologians would say today, His messianic mission was definitively clarified and already marked intrinsically with the cross (26).

It is worthwhile to reread reflectively the notes that Paul wrote in his diary on the 1st of January 1721. In them he speaks of his hunger, of the experience of God's goodness, of his extraordinary union with God in the humanity of Christ, and of the motive of faith through which this union is so exceptional and surpassing. It is the culminating point of his forty-day experience, and perhaps the sign of the culminating point of all Christian spirituality. It is thus the individualization of "his own" *spiritual center*, with a "central" message for every Christian that is destined to emerge precisely because of that very singular experience.

In fact, if we read again what Paul wrote in the preceding days, we note that he was experiencing, as it were, *two types of union* with the Passion of Jesus. Each was very precious but, in some way, *interlocutory*, and was therefore destined to be surpassed by something more perfect.

The two types are those of purification and of conformity. Paul singles them out right on the first day, when he writes about his sufferings: "God makes me understand that these temptations purify the soul. I know that, by the mercy of our dear God, I desire to know nothing else nor to taste any consolation. My sole desire is to be crucified with Jesus" (26).

He returns again to the theme of purification: "I know I understand that this kind of prayer of suffering is a great gift which God grants to the soul to make it a spotless robe of purity" (27). "I would like to make everyone understand the great grace that God, in his mercy, bestows when he sends suffering, especially suffering devoid of consolation. Then indeed the soul is purified like gold in the furnace; without knowing it, it becomes radiant and is set free to take flight to its Good, that is, to the blessed transformation" (28). When having to struggle against temptations, "that is more profitable for the soul for, as a result of what it suffers and endures in the struggle, it is purified like the rock which before the storm may have been covered with debris but after the storm is cleansed because the waves have washed it clean" (29).

But the transition from that perspective is clear. "The profit which the soul gains from this can never be overestimated, but it does not seek this, for love seeks not its own advantage but only the glory of the Sovereign Good" (30). All that matters is to gather within oneself the sufferings of Jesus and to participate in them. But the saint also realizes that even in this there is something untranslatable. "I had a keen infused knowledge of the sufferings of my Jesus, and I felt so ardent a desire to be perfectly united with him that I wished to feel his sufferings and to be on the cross with him. These wonders cannot be explained through bodily comparisons because God makes them understood deep down in the soul with movements so spiritual that they cannot be explained, yet they are understood in a second" (31).

The passing beyond the second type of union is also delineated. It is not a suffering for its own sake. The *Passion is not an absolute; the absolute is union with God*. "The soul no longer remembers that it suffers. I understand that this is a great and fruitful way of suffering, most pleasing to God, because the soul thereby becomes indifferent to such an extent that it *no longer thinks of sorrow or joy but solely of remaining conformed to the holy Will of its beloved Spouse*,

Jesus. It desires above all else to be crucified with him because in this it is more conformable to its beloved God, who during his whole life did nothing but suffer” (32).

The true Passion of Christ is, therefore, the total *conformity to the Will of the Father*. Identification with Christ in this comprises the highest possible “transition” to the Father. Thus toward the end, on the 1st of January, it is not a question of making an absolute of suffering (“... scruples I had felt with regard to a vow I had made to deprive the body of all unnecessary pleasures... When I am hungry I feel pleasure in eating even a piece of dry bread”), but, on the contrary, of experiencing the goodness of God (“... I heard an intruder voice say gently: but this is necessary”). This is the “real” Jesus, in whom appears the benignity and *humanity of God* our Savior (cf. Tit. 8:4). And therefore Paul says: “I also had knowledge of the soul united in a bond of love to the sacred Humanity and at the same time dissolved and raised to the deep and conscious, felt knowledge of the Divinity. For since Jesus is both God and Man, the soul cannot be united in love to the Sacred Humanity without being at the same time dissolved and brought to a deep and conscious, felt knowledge of the Divinity” (33).

This, too, is intellectual vision. “This wondrous and exalted marvel cannot possibly be set down or explained, even by one who has experienced it. It is impossible because the soul understands that God wills these gentle experiences and exceedingly high marvels because he who is infinite helps the soul to understand these things – but to describe them afterwards is utterly impossible.” Here we are at the center of faith, at the center of spiritual experience, the apex of simplicity, and the apex of life itself: “the soul is in its infinite Good.” On this point I remain persuaded that Paul understood that he should and could bring others to enter, as he did, *through the “doorway” of the Passion* – understood as conformity to the most benign Will of the Father - into the mystery of the Divinity.

The transition seems clear. In the beginning of his diary Paul wrote: “The soul embraces sufferings because it knows that this is God’s Will and that these are the joys of Jesus. I remember to say with St. Teresa: ‘To suffer or die’” (34). But later on he would boldly write: “I believe that the cross of the sweet Jesus will put deeper roots into your hearts and that you will sing aloud: To suffer and not to die; or, either to suffer or to die; or better still, *neither to suffer nor die*; but only the complete transformation into the Divine Will” (35).

C. Rome 1791: Failure or Fulfillment?

In the depths of his soul Paul of the Cross was imbued with a very profound insight: union with God is above all else everything that happens through the Divine Will of *good pleasure*, that is, in what one discerns through those happenings - everything, favorable or not, and especially when there are crosses. *God cannot will anything but the best!* In other words, if one is united with God, the interpretation of events cannot be anything but positive. The saint never doubts: “St. Paul says, for those who love God all things are useful, be they flourishing or thwarted, bitter or sweet, small or big, all, I repeat, redound to the good of the soul” (36).

That insight must have been especially present in the mystic conscience of Paul when he went to Rome with the unbounded confidence of a charismatic to have his Rule approved by the Pope, only to be shamefully turned away even before he has crossed the threshold of the Papal palace. Was this a failure or a fulfillment? The saint does not waver in his certainty; he interprets the

event as a favorable cross. Before the Madonna “Salus Populi Romani” in the basilica of St. Mary Major, he understands that perhaps the “no” given to him that day is simply a bit of advice to “complete” the work undertaken. “I was inspired to think that the time for the approval of the Rule had not yet come” (37). Then and there he pronounced his vow to promote devotion to the Passion of Jesus in the hearts of the faithful and to busy himself in gathering companions for that purpose (38).

This first vow is a singular one. In one way it is something less than that which it will become later. You could say that it was simply a *personal vow*. In fact, it seems that Paul introduced it into the text of the Rule only towards the year 1730, when he was preparing the new edition to be presented to the Holy See (39). But in another way it is a vow *to found the Congregation*, namely, the repeated insight that this is the main reason for the existence of the Institute itself. In this sense, it is the germ from which our whole history has sprung and thus it becomes all one with the great visions of the year before.

Whatever will follow is only the practical translation of the fundamental insight. It is, so to speak, its “*inculturation*” in the proper categories of its time.

A dynamic synthesis is beautifully expressed at the beginning of the rules: To unite oneself to God through prayer, and to set others on the same path to union by meditation on the Passion. Consequently, the specific duty of the Passionist lies not only in contemplation so that they may bring its fruits to others, but in contemplation and *then leading others* to the same rich contemplation of the Passion. Now we will go on to study how to get at the kernel of this basic dynamic in an updated way, understand it, and consider all the possible applications.

III. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FOURTH VOW AND THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CONGREGATION

The Historic Juridical Import of the Fourth Vow.

Father Fabiano Giorgini rightly points out that the fourth vow was probably placed in the text of the Rules after St. Paul of the Cross - on the basis of the experiences of other Institutes - thought that it would better characterize his Congregation (40). Naturally, this meant that from then on the juridical significance of the vow should be clearly defined, since it would assume a precise moral obligation. Therefore Paul determined that, to the ordinary three, the Passionists “add a fourth vow to promote the memory of the most holy Passion of Jesus Christ in the hearts of the faithful; this vow is expressed in the Rule in a way and form so as to remove all scruple and anxiety” (41).

I am persuaded that the need to determine the juridical meaning of the vow produced the result of a formal minimizing, even though the fact of its existence will always remain as an incontestable witness to the exact spirit of the Congregation.

A clear indication of this comes through in the first editions of the Rule, where the fourth vow is mentioned:

a) In the *text of 1736*, even presupposing that all the religious pronounced the fourth vow, no word is mentioned as to how the lay brothers were to fulfill it; as regards the “priests who have no ability for preaching, it is sufficient that they promote this devotion in the confessional as was mentioned previously, and in the conferences that they may give” (42).

b) In the *text of 1741*, thought is given to the brothers and to those priests who are not able to hear confessions and it is stated that “it is enough that, besides the common prayer, they daily make a half-hour of meditation on some mystery of the Passion of Jesus Christ, imploring His Divine Majesty that He spread this holy devotion throughout the whole world and that He grant fervent zeal to those who promote it” (43).

c) Finally the *text of 1746* limits itself to saying that, for those who do not preach, it is sufficient that “for the fulfillment of the vow they recite each day with great devotion five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys in honor of the holy Passion of Jesus Christ...” (44).

Implicitly it seems, therefore, that in the beginning all religious who had pronounced the fourth vow felt tranquil about it, even when they did not preach. The whole spiritual life and prayer were, in fact, a continual memorial of the Passion. But since the fourth vow was formally pronounced as a directly apostolic one, there was a felt need to substitute a specific ordinance as its “*active*” fulfillment for those who did not preach. Instinctively, another period of time for meditation on the Passion was added because, in effect, the missionary priest did nothing more than “meditate aloud with the people on the Passion of Christ” (46). Quite soon, however, either because the addition of another half-hour of meditation was too much (in 1748, the time of prayer was definitely shortened) (48), or, because scrupulous consciences were not at ease with this ordinance, brief vocal prayers were substituted instead. And that has been the situation to this day.

In a parallel way, the *missionary* fulfillment of the fourth vow was understood in a more *formal* way, that is, as simple preaching on the theme of the Passion during missions and retreats. And it has to be admitted that the consciousness of this obligation was not always too lively since, throughout our long history, General Chapters have repeatedly returned to the discussion of this obligation (47).

I therefore hold that the fourth vow, in its formal and historic expression, does not bespeak all the breath which the living memory of the Passion should have in the life and action of a Passionist. This can be easily shown from writings of our saintly Father which offer a solid basis for the actual living of our charism. Such a demonstration is necessary in order to understand why major importance was given to the vow of the Passion in the decisions of the General Chapter of 1988-70. With that, one can better consider the adaptations possible in the modern life of the Congregation.

The Personal Living Memory of the Passion.

“The obligation of the religious to live the memory of the Passion of Jesus in their personal and community life is, as presupposed by the vow, something *pre-existent*” (48). This obligation does not derive from the vow, but from the very vocation itself of a Passionist. Rather, and put

more precisely, it is from this obligation that zeal is then awakened and strengthened by the vow, in order that it may become part of the personal spiritual experience of all the brethren.

In the oldest Rule that we still have (that of 1736), nothing is said of the personal memory of the Passion in the basic first chapter. Or better, there is no specific mention made of it. This can be attributed to clumsy editorial compilation.

The Founder, in fact, says that the religious should strive for a holy union with God through *prayer*, and then also to lead others to the same. How should this be done? By meditating aloud with them on the Passion! It is presumed, therefore, that it is this same meditation that will first lead the religious to union with God!

Explicitly however, in the chapter regarding the *habit*, our saintly Father makes the point that “the going about clothed in black means that the brethren of this least Congregation should be in perpetual mourning in memory of the holy Passion and Death of Jesus Christ” (49). This exhortation returns again in the chapter on *prayer*. Specifically, in the same chapter of the 1736 Rule, the daily meditation of the Passion is mentioned. The religious are personally exhorted to be faithful to its practice and to have a duty to teach it to others! (50).

In all of this, there is a remembrance of the vision that determined the foundation of the Congregation. Nothing better than the habit itself can indicate how “*habitual*” *must be the thought* of the Passion in the religious. And surely – apart from practical reasons (51) – the fact of not removing the habit even when going to sleep served to indicate how lasting and pervading for the individual person was the spiritual “perpetual mourning” in memory of the Passion.

St. Paul of the Cross does not think of it as a “devotion” added to the ordinary religious life, but as a life-style which in all its component parts resounds with the “attention” of faith and of love for the mystery of the Passion. It is important to grasp this as regards the personal life of the religious, because, even in this way of understanding our charism, the fourth vow may have impoverished the concept of “devotion”. Father Anthony M. Artola has aptly demonstrated in his recent studies that the juridical-moral preoccupation of the revisors of the Rule ended up by making the word “devotion” prevail over that of “memory,” which better echoes the original inspiration (52).

The ambiguity and the misunderstanding are perhaps greater for us than for those who lived at the time of St. Paul of the Cross. Then, the word “devotion” had less risk of being identified with a simple “pious practice,” performed perhaps in a very superficial way and using pre-established formulas. The great St. Francis De Sales - who can be considered the Doctor of true devotion and who had great influence upon St. Paul of the Cross – said that “devotion” is nothing less than the love of God “when it attains such a degree of perfection, that not only does it induce us to work better, but it makes us work diligently, assiduously and with promptness” (*Intro. to the Devout Life*, Ch. 1).

Later on we shall explain how this perpetual memory (or devotion) of the Passion can be thought out. But we can see already that, for St. Paul of the Cross, the key to this interpretation is always and only the love of God. *The Passion is the only door* for entering into the immensity of Divine Love.

The Apostolate as Finalized in the Gospel of the Passion.

We also ought to say something about the importance of the fourth vow in the Passionist apostolate. From the *juridical* aspect, it may seem that there is simply an obligation to “additional” preaching. But from its *essential* meaning we gather that this is the very *reason for the existence* of the Congregation. In other words, in the first case “promoting devotion to the Passion” is a means of achieving the finality of the Passionist apostolate; in the second case it is the finality itself.

There are authoritative expressions of our holy Father to backup the first sense. “The most efficacious means for the conversion of sinners and for the sanctification of souls is the frequent memory of the Passion... This poor Congregation has the obligation of forming workers... who, with the powerful weapon of the Passion, will instill virtue into the hearts of the faithful and do away with vice...” (53). These expressions coincide with what the Founder wrote in the preface to the Rules of 1720: “The purpose God gave me for this Congregation was... to have zeal for His holy honor, to promote a holy fear of God in souls in order to do away with sin, and, finally, to be indefatigable in holy works of charity so that our dear God *will be loved*, feared, served and praised *by all...*” (54).

And there are also phrases of St. Paul regarding the second meaning. “This growing Institute has as its primary end the promotion of the devout memory of the Holy Passion of Jesus in the hearts of the faithful both during the Missions and in other pious exercises...” (55). First he spoke of “means,” then “weapon,” and now “primary end.”

The interpretation of these various aspects should be discerned prudently. *Historically*, the preaching of the Passion served as a means of “moving” the hearers, and even more it served to “reanimate” them. Seriously touched by the preaching of the eternal truths they go on to find their full hope in the mercy of God. The devotion-meditation on the Passion had the same objectives, and further developed a series of “methods” by which christian virtues were cultivated according to the model of Jesus Crucified.

A long spiritual tradition has always recognized the recalling of the Passion as an important part of the so-called “*purgative*” and “*illuminative*” ways. In that context our Congregation, among many other options, would have taken on itself the commitment of choosing precisely that one, and of somehow making it the primary and unique way of achieving the whole scope of conversion and spiritual progress. We could further speak of the “*unitive way*,” whether from the viewpoint of pure love or contemplation; but the subject matter would not change much.

I believe that such an interpretation is an over-simplification, and that St. Paul of the Cross had a much more profound idea of our charism. He maintains that the memory of the Passion should be sought for itself. Even though it is a means and a weapon, in the sense mentioned above, it is also an “end” and is identified with the Good News itself of Jesus, with its unique and true holiness. The expressions of the holy Founder do not always clarify this position, but perhaps today we are in a better position to understand it either through the study of his fundamental mystical experience or by taking into account recent theological developments.

Putting aside his phraseology, especially as regards the method of the apostolate, there is his firm conviction *that the Passion is the “only” means of conversion and sanctity*. This is not only

or not so much because of the psychological factor involved (the emotion and trust that a preacher awakens) but also for basically *dogmatic* reasons – the Passion reveals the salvific loving will of the Father, and the sure way of “transition” to Him.

In this sense, the Passionist of today vows to work for the salvation of his brothers and sisters in a *Christological and theological manner*. Unfortunately there has been and there still is, in fact, a way of presenting Christianity in a heavily *moralistic and theistic* sense. Practically, this identifies christian life with ethics, partly based upon borrowed stoic presuppositions and partly anchored to positive ecclesiastical and even civil laws. Furthermore, Christianity is considered to be a religion which is based primarily on a rational way of attaining to God (more or less on cosmological bases) and then adding, almost as a gratuitous and undemonstrated revelation, a series of dogmas. The Passionist, however, must consider that for man, “the image of God,” *salvation means “to imitate God.”* And the good news is knowing that we do not have to invent a way of imitating God– whoever “imitates the Crucified God” will be saved.

At this point it is useless to speak of means or end, Even according to Scholasticism, if the means is only one, in practice it becomes one with the end. On the basis of the fundamental perception of Paul of the Cross, “since Jesus is God and Man,” one cannot and should not preach God, if not the God Crucified; one cannot and should not speak about “the redeemed man” if not as one who carries in his “depths,” as his own profound *identity, the Crucified God* of whom he is the image. It is precisely on this aspect that we must now elaborate, in order to touch on some final conclusions about our spirituality, our charism, and the grave obligation that we have in the Church, towards the Church and towards humanity.

IV. An Anthropology and Theology of the Passion

The Crucified One as the Divine “Model” of Man.

Please do not be alarmed by the words used in the main title of this section. I simply want to initiate a brief explanation as to how the perpetual remembrance of the Passion helps us to discover man’s profound identity and to form a particular idea of God (far removed from theistic theories).

For the first part of this theme we have had a very important resource for many years in the reflections that St. Paul of the Cross made and shared in the “*Mystical Death and Divine Nativity*.” I returned to it last year at the Congress held precisely on that subject at Zaragoza. In fact the discovery of the original text of the small treatise on the mystical death reawakened interest on this topic and showed how beneficial it could be if analyzed on the basis of our modern culture.

Suffice it to say that from the variations in the writing and from the whole thought of St. Paul of the Cross, it is clear that he intended to speak not only to *religious*, and primarily the Passionists, but also to the *ordinary faithful*. Therefore this explanation will serve to lay the bases for proceeding in line with our previous premise: the religious will make this a personal experience, and then they will also strive to promote it among others.

In my 1980 lecture I tried to demonstrate that existential and dynamic reality, designated as the mystical death and divine nativity in St. Paul of the Cross, is a “transition” which must be understood at different levels.

At the metaphysical and essential level it is the transition of man to the *ultimate and beatific truth* of his very essence. Perhaps one can also say that it is the transition from alienation to a person’s absolute identity.

At the level of faith, it is the “*mystifying*” choice by which one disappears and reappears in Christ Crucified, and thus finds his absolute identity in Christ’s Passion.

If the first two levels might be considered “objective” in nature, there is a third one that is “subjective.” At an experiential level it is the *reflective perception*, at different degrees, of the act of “working, suffering and being silent.”

A complete demonstration of these affirmations would take too long. I shall limit myself to a few citations.

Speaking from a *metaphysical standpoint*, it is well known that St. Paul of the Cross had great empathy with the German medieval mystic John Tauler. That writer was the heir to a long spiritual tradition and he himself, together with the Flemish Rhine School of the 1300’s, was the precursor of other illustrious mystics. These spiritual people were not content to operate on a moralistic, emotional and cultural level. They wanted to arrive at the absolute truth of man in his very “*being point*.” They realized, however, that this point could not be reached by experience, but they believed that it could, in an almost indescribable way, be reached by the process of “transition.” Whoever is there has already reached, in some way, his ultimate beatific end.

Aside from the intricate terminology, what do we find? Man knows that his ultimate *identity is found in God*. He wants to find the origin of himself, as projected in the plan which God had for him from all eternity. And when he willingly accepts himself exactly as God from all eternity intended him to be, he is perfect, reconciled and happy. This is the thought which St. Paul of the Cross continuously repeats in a thousand ways.

But we cannot stop at this metaphysical level. I can blindly abandon myself to the plan which God has established for me from all eternity, but in reality I shall not feel reconciled and happy unless I know “what” in fact that plan is. And for this reason, *without faith*, the metaphysical level remains ambiguous and incomplete; rather it can give rise to a thousand and one arbitrary solutions. Not without reason did a group of highly suspect “enlightened” souls, known as the Quietists, descend from the spiritual lineage of Tauler. This happened shortly before St. Paul’s time.

At the level of faith, in fact, there is only *one Divine plan* for man: Jesus Christ Crucified. “Those whom God the Father predestined to be in conformity with the glory of His Divine Son, are predestined to conform first to Him in poverty and in the cross.... Take courage in this reasoning, based on the words of St. Paul, that those predestined to glory are predestined first to conformity with Christ on the Cross...” (68). There can be no other anthropology but the anthropology of the Cross.

The *experiential level* will, therefore, consist in our becoming conscious of that ultimate truth. I believe that the Passionist theme of “perpetual remembrance” comes to development along that line. The studies of Father Anthony Artola have recalled the biblical dimensions of “memorial.” In spiritual theology it is important to note the Augustinian viewpoint as well. In that school the memory is a sort of *self-consciousness* that in itself forms our fundamental identity. It is the absolute idealization of ourselves that we try in one way or another to achieve throughout our lives in order to say that we are “fulfilled” people, even though we realize that this is only an approximation because in the final analysis that ideal is transcendent, utopian, “hidden in God.”

The interiorization which Paul of the Cross recommends unceasingly is exactly that profound self-consciousness, based more on faith than on psychological factors. The *plan of the Cross* is inscribed in the very nature of every man. The more he recognizes that, the more he will find himself. The more he recognizes it, the more he sees himself as the image of God. The more he recognizes it, the better he will be able to know that the true God, whose plan he realizes, is the Crucified God. But while the cross spreads its horizon so as to become identified with the life itself of God and of man, it does not have anything negative about it; it is absolute glory and absolute happiness.

Naturally, the “mystic death” that brings us to this marvelous transition is then concretely identified by the Saint in all that permits us to die to ourselves and to die to the world. The “beatitude” of the cross is verified in thousands of ways and it is necessary to recognize it as such, without trying to analyze its contingent causes. “*Sino medio!*” As Christ before Pilate, the disciple knows that no one could have power over him if it were not given “from above.”

The Crucified One as the Greatest “Revelation” of God.

According to St. Paul of the Cross, at this point there are no more screens or partitions. “*A God crucified for me!*” That is the supreme revelation of God which Paul constantly proclaimed. It had become for him a divine and enrapturing experience.

Apparently, the logic behind this revelation proceeds along two parallel lines:

- Jesus Crucified is the Good Shepherd Who leads those who follow him to the place where He dwells, that is, into the bosom of the Father;
- There, God is discovered as He Who can only will the best, since loving above all else His only Son He gave Him to the world as the universal principle of the divine affiliation of the redeemed.

“Oh, blessed that soul who is crucified with Jesus Christ without knowing it and without seeing, because he is thus deprived of all felt consolation! How fortunate is that soul who, deprived of all internal and external pleasure and nourished by the divine will, bows his head and says with Jesus: Father, into your hands I commend my spirit, and dies mystically to all that is not God, in order to live a divine life in God, in the bosom of the celestial Father, clothed in Jesus Christ Crucified, that is, united to his sufferings, which the loving soul makes his own, through the union of love with the highest Good” (57).

“The soul that lives a deified life in God: ‘I no longer live, but Christ lives in me’” (58), says St. Paul of the Cross, linking his thoughts to the principles of faith. The deified life is, therefore,

the crucified life? It might be put that way, and today we can better understand that through the cross we really learn that a “*kenosis*,” that is, the loving emptying of oneself, is the characteristic of the God and Father of Jesus Christ, revealed in the incarnation of His Son and adopted by those who follow Him.

The perfect mystical death is accomplished by the “holocaust of the pure spirit” (a subtitle of the famous little treatise). The soul, which for a long time has become used to reposing with Jesus in the Father’s approval, feels itself to be thoroughly imbued with the love which flows from the Father to the Incarnate Word, lifting him towards the Cross. Forgetting all other considerations, the person understands that God wants to be glorified by him just as He is glorified by the Son whom He loved above all the universe, sending Him into the world in order to give Himself for all. The soul is reborn, like Jesus, in the bosom of the Father, as it were invested with a sublime mission, the extension of the merciful incarnation.

“In that divine solitude which is within you, in essence and in your inner most soul, you are *reborn in the Divine Word* to a new life of love. God reposes in you; God penetrates the whole of you, and you are totally in God, fully transformed into his love... Ah, but my mind gets lost and the phrases are lacking!” (59). Writing thus our holy Father confesses once again that the reality is greater than he can describe. Today, in a mighty reawakening of the theology of the Cross, scholars understand that in the Cross the *divine life* of Jesus is experimentally revealed to us: from eternity and in eternity it consists in seeking the Father’s glory and not our own. This type of “eternal kenosis” is at the same time a reality reflected in the *divine life of the Father* in so far as he is a “Father.” It consists not in keeping this life to himself, but in giving it totally to the Son!

To speak of a God who “suffers” may sound senseless, and certain recent theological advances, all in this line of the theology of the Cross, may not sound so convincing. But to speak of a “kenotic” God, discovering in this dynamism of love a basis for understanding both the trinitarian divinity and that of man, can be done very well. And, moreover, it is quite clearly what Vatican Council II seems to say:

“The Lord Jesus, when He prayed to the Father ‘that all may be one... as we are one,’ opened up vistas closed to human reason. For He implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and in the union of God’s sons in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself” (60).

At this point the Council, in a reference note, sends us back to a key saying of the Gospel in which is summed up the wisdom of the Cross:

“Whoever seeks to save his own life will lose it; he instead who loses it shall save it” (Lk 17, 85).

The Memory of the Cross Gives Birth to the New Man.

The fundamental perception of St. Paul of the Cross is that of the immense benefits which man can reap from the memory of the Passion. He personally experienced the “deifying” transformation which is possible for whoever enters through that “door” and he was assured by

God that that transition is open to everyone who may be given the means to accomplish it. The basic motto for his life's work could be: to contemplate and to lead others to contemplation.

According to St. Paul of the Cross, the transformation in the Passion leads to the *birth of a new man*, in God. The cultural context into which he immersed his perceptions received them in a rather limited manner, moralistically, ascetically and devotionally. We, on the other hand, can avail ourselves of modern theological and pastoral progress in order to propose the Gospel of the Cross in a way which is faithful to his spirit and adapted to our times.

The Passionist proves to be the new man who glories in the Cross. Wisely enough, our saintly Founder summed up this "*passport*" in the practice of *poverty*, so much so that in the beginning he wanted to call his sons "The Poor of Jesus." The cross, even before being thought of as suffering, is a renunciation, a refusal to cling jealously to one's own goods, and, even more, it is a refusal of power. It must be made "manifest to the people that the religious of the Passion do not seek their money, but only their eternal salvation," says the Saint, echoing the words of the Apostle (61).

The word of the cross is not only remembered, but is lived sincerely: "*nulla sapere, nulla avere, nulla potere*" (to be as one unlearned, poor, powerless). This poverty is expressed above all by discarding the magnificent, rich and powerful means of the apostolate and by utilizing instead the poorest and most sublime means of all: *humanity*, that is, benignity, sacrificing love and solidarity. We preach the Cross when, *with this unifying force*, we form "*poor*" *Christian communities*, namely, those which are not founded on earthly or celestial security, but only upon the wisdom of the cross, upon the willingness to exist for others.

Our apostolate is a "living memory" of the Passion if it continuously keeps the *faithful in a state of "transition to Father,"* as it should always do in communities which are aware of the meaning of the Eucharist as a constitutive element of the Church. We must, therefore, give special emphasis to the conciliar ecclesiology of a "pilgrim" Church, which underlines its missionary function of the salvation of the world and anticipation of the Kingdom, more than the tranquil rhythm of sacred functions. "We journey toward the consummation of human history, one which fully accords with the counsel of God's love: 'To *reestablish* all things in Christ, both those in the heavens and those on the earth'" (62).

We preach the Cross when we caution Christians and the Church of the "constant *reform* of which it has need because of its human and earthly constitution," as that they will not grow complacent in themselves but, rather, put themselves at the service of the values of the Kingdom. There is an "active" living memorial of the Cross when, according to God's teaching, one assumes the burden of others. The Church of the Cross is humble, but full of courage; and free, like Jesus, from every inferiority complex and dependence on any kind of power: earthly, political, economic or cultural. The Church of the Cross is the community which, humble but strong, struggles for those who are the least of the world. It does not slacken, having experienced the fact that, while the world exists, "the prince of this world" still has a powerful dominion over it. It mystically dies twice, giving its own life disinterestedly and receiving in exchange contempt and alienation in the same measure as its fidelity.

If the Passionists live a genuine experience of the “wisdom of the Cross,” that is, of a God Who is near and liberating, the faithful can attain their real strength: a love which knows how to risk and is disposed to accept whatever sufferings and trials may occur, as long as they can remain faithful to the truth and be of encouragement to their weaker brethren. The power of the Passion conquers!, as Paul VI reminded the faithful of Bogota in 1988: “Christ loved us and sacrificed Himself for us. *Dilexit et tradidit semetipsum!* We must imitate Him. This is the Cross! We must love even to the sacrificing of our lives, if we want to build up a new society that can be identified as truly Christian and truly human” (68).

NOTES

1. "Notizie 1747" in S. Paolo della Croce: *LA CONGREGAZIONE DELLA PASSIONE DI GESU - COS'E E COSA VUOLE*, a cura di F. Giorgini, Roma 1978, p. 7. Cf., English translation, "Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality," Vol. I, trans. S. Rouse, 1-2, Rome 1981.
2. Cf. F. Di Bernardo, *La "meditatio vitae et passionis Domini" nella spiritualita cristiana*, "Ricerche di storia e spiritualita passionista" 18, Roma 1980, 68.
3. Cit. in C. Broveto, *INTRODUZIONE ALLA SPIRITUALITA DI S. PAOLO DELLA CROCE*, Ed. Eco, 1955, p. 39. Cf. English translation, S. Rouse & S. Wood, "Introduction to the Spirituality of St. Paul of the Cross: Mystical Death and Divine Nativity," Passionist Nuns, Owensboro KY, 1976, p.166, n. 78.
4. *Ib.*, ch. II, 2, "Il Processo di Valentano, p. 32. English translation, as above, pp. 28-9.
5. F. Di Bernardo, *op. cit.*, p. 70.
6. Cf. G. Lieven, "Alphonse de Liguori," in *DICTIONNAIRE DE SPIRITUALITE*, I, 366.
7. G. Velocci, "La croce in S. Alfonso de Liguori," in *LA SAPIENZA DELLA CROCE OGGI*, ed. Elle di ci, Torino 1976, Vol. II, p. 354.
8. S. Gori, "Il mistero della croce nell'apostolato di S. Leonardo da Porto Maurizio," in *LA SAPIENZA DELLA CROCE OGGI*, ed. Elle di ci, Torino 1976, Vol. II, p. 278.
9. *Ib.*, p. 279.
10. G. Penco, *STORIA DELLA CHIESA IN ITALIA*, Milano 1978, Vol. II, p. 181.
11. *Ib.*, p. 177.
12. *Ib.*, p. 177.
13. *Ib.*, p. 199.
14. Cit. in M. Petrocchi, *STORIA DELLA SPIRITUALITA ITALIANA*, Roma 1979, Vol. III, p. 41.
15. G. Penco, *op. cit.*, p. 198; P. Zovatto, "Muratori, Louis-Antoine," in *DICTIONNAIRE DE SPIRITUALITE*, Vol. 10, 1844-47.
16. Cit. in C. Broveto, "Le visioni 'intellettuali' di S. Paolo della Croce. Loro importanza per un'ermeneutica aggiornata," *MISTICA E MISTICISMO OGGI*, CIPI, Roma 1979, p. 446.
17. *Ib.*, p. 447.
18. *Ib.*, p. 447-8.
19. *Ib.*, p. 449.
20. *Ib.*, m p. 445.
21. Cf. *LETTERE DI S. PAOLO DELLA CROCE*, Roma 1924, Vol. 4, p. 221, Note.
22. Cf. *I PROCESSI DI BEATIFICAZIONE E CANONIZZAZIONE DI S. PAOLO DELLA CROCE*, ed. P. Gaetano dell' Addolorata, Roma 1979, Vol. IV, p. 315.
23. *LETTERE*, Vol. IV, p. 220-21.
24. Cf. F. Giorgini, *PROMUOVERE LA GRATA MEMORIA E IL CULTO DELLA PASSIONE DI GESU. RAGIONE DI ESSERE DELLA CONGREGAZIONE PASSIONISTA*; Ricerche di storia e spiritualita passionista = 15, Roma 1980, pp. 24-26.
25. Cf., e.g., C. Schuetz, "I misteri della vita pubblica e dell'attivita di Gesu," in *MYSTERIUM SALUTIS*, Vol. 8, Brescia 1971, pp. 102-20.
26. St. Paul of the Cross, *DIARIO SPIRITUALE*, ed. E. Zoffoli, Roma 1964, p. 53. N.B. In these Notes 28-34, instead of to the Italian edition, the references will be made to the English translation, *WORDS FROM THE HEART: A Selection from the Personal Letters of St. Paul of*

- the Cross*, ed. E. Burke, R. Mercurio, S. Rouse, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin 1978. Ad hoc, p. 17.
27. *WORDS*, p. 24.
 28. *Ib.*, p. 28.
 29. *Ib.*, p. 29.
 30. *Ib.*, p. 27.
 31. *Ib.*, pp. 22-23.
 32. *Ib.*, p. 28.
 33. *Ib.*, p. 33.
 34. *Ib.*, p. 22.
 35. *LETTERE*, Vol. II, p. 440.
 36. *Ib.*, Vol. III, p. 592, cit. Rm. 8:28.
 37. *I PROCESSI*, Vol. VI, p. 316.
 38. F. Giorgini, op. cit., p. 25.
 39. *Ib.*, p. 26.
 40. *Ib.*, Pp. 25 & seq.
 41. "Notitiae 1747," ed. cit. = 3.
 42. *REGULAE ET CONSTITUTIONES CONGR. SSMAE. CRUCIS ET PASSIONIS D. N. J. C.*
Editio critica a cura di F. Giorgini, Roma 1958, p. 58.
 43. *Ib.*, p. 58.
 44. *Ib.*, p. 163.
 45. *Ib.*, p. 56.
 46. In the summer the prayer after Matins was reduced from one hour to a half; in the wintertime, that after Prime was also abbreviated from one hour to a half; the half hour during the last Mass was done away with. Cf., *ib.*, pp. 70-72.
 47. Cf. C. Brovotto, *STRUTTURA APOSTOLICA DELLA CONGREGAZIONE DEI PASSIONISTI*; "Ricerche di storia e spiritualita passionista" = 6, Roma 1978, pp. 20 & seq.
 48. F. Giorgini, *PROMUOVERE LA GRATA MEMORIA E IL CULTO DELLA PASSIONE DI GESU. RAGIONE DI ESSERE DELLA CONGREGAZIONE PASSIONISTA*; "Ricerche di storia e spiritualita. passionista" = 15, Roma 1980, p. 27.
 49. Cf. *WORDS*, p.14.
 50. Cf. *REGULAE*, p. 78.
 51. The practical reason was certainly the lack of special night clothes and the rustic form of the beds. In the "Notizia 1747" another practical and religious reason is given: "They sleep with their habit on so as to be always ready for the praise of God, especially at night" (Ed. cit., = 19).
 52. Cf. A. M. Artola, *LA PRESENZA DELLA PASSIONE DI GESU NELLA STRUTTURA E NELL' APOSTOLATO DELLA CONGREGAZIONE PASSIONISTA*; "Ricerche di storia e spiritualita passionista" = 3, Roma 1980, pp. 14 & seq.
 53. "Notizie 1768," Ed. cit., = 1.
 54. *LETTERE*, Vol. IV, p. 220.
 55. Cit. in F. Giorgini, *PROMUOVERE*, p. 27.
 56. *LETTERE*, Vol. II, p. 555.
 57. *Ib.*, Vol. III, p. 17.
 58. *Ib.*, Vol. III, p. 756.
 59. *Ib.*, Vol. II, p. 721.
 60. *GAUDIUM ET SPES*, = 24.

61. "Notizie 1768, Ed. cit., = 7.
62. *GAUDIUM ET SPES*, = 45.
63. *MEDELLIN DOCUMENT*, Bogota 1968, II.