



MAY 2020

Congregation of the Nuns of the Passion of Jesus Christ

## The Passion as Charism, the Holy Spirit's inspiration in the Church on behalf of all Humanity



May the Holy Spirit to take possession of our hearts and lives, all our communities and our entire Passionist Congregation.

**1720** - This year is a milestone in the history of the Passionist Congregation. Inspired to undertake a new way of life, Paul of the Cross wrote its Rule of life. The year 2020 is the third centenary of this beginning.

**1771** - This year is also a historically significant event. After years of dreams, planning and false starts, the first Monastery of the Passionist Nuns, the contemplative, women's' branch of the Passionist Congregation, is opened in Corneto-Tarquinoa. The 250th anniversary of that date will be remembered on May 3, 2021.

In writing his preface to the first text of the Rule, Paul of the Cross speaks of different inspirations and visions which God revealed to him in order to clarify his particular vocation. He felt the desire to withdraw into solitude; he welcomed "these aspirations my dear God gave me with a gentle openness of heart." He felt the desire to "gather companions, who together would promote the holy fear of God in souls." Then came the first vision: "I saw a vision of myself dressed in black, down to the ground, with a white cross on my chest, and under the cross, I had written the Most Holy Name of

Jesus in white letters. Shortly thereafter, I had a vision of being offered the holy tunic with the most holy name of Jesus and the all-white cross, which I embraced with heartfelt joy. After these visions of the holy tunic with the most holy Sign, God gave me a stronger desire and urge to gather companions; and with the permission of Holy Mother Church to found a Congregation to be named: The Poor of Jesus. After that, still through the power of the Spirit, my God infused the form which the Holy Rule would take into my heart and which I must obediently put in writing under the grace of the Holy Spirit." Paul concludes the Rule by saying: "I wrote as quickly as one might with a teacher dictating the text." (325; Preface to the first text of the rule - Letters to Passionists; ed.'98 [trans. from original])

From this account, written by our Founder, we can deduce that the Holy Spirit was the main architect of the new Charism that Paul was destined to embody in himself and to propagate through the Passionist Congregation. We can also derive the importance of the Holy Spirit from the great importance which he attaches to the solemnity of Pentecost, and from the long letter he addressed to his sons in 1750, asking them to celebrate with a holy respect "...the sweet and most joyful solemnity of the Holy Spirit, for which everyone should prepare to receive the Spirit worthily in the interior dwelling of his soul; the Holy Spirit, our sovereign guest and our Lord and God." As the fruit of the coming of the Paraclete, he expects a growth in mutual charity: "...this peace, which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, will make you grow in charity with each other, by making your hearts one in Jesus Christ....Lastly, we ask you to celebrate the approaching most holy Novena by being together as one....In this union of faith and charity, my beloved, let us all together invoke the Paraclete Spirit, the consoling Spirit, who comes to fill the interior dwelling of our souls, and of our poor Congregation." (330 Letter for Pentecost - Letters to Passionists ed '98 [trans. from original])

The Holy Spirit had shown Paul the path to follow, and what shape to give to the new Institute that he was inspired to begin. Paul maintained his docility to the Spirit in order to proceed confidently in step with the will of God.

Paul also recommended this docility to those persons that received spiritual direction from him. "Above all, let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit," he wrote in 1741 to Maria Crocifissa Costantini, the future first Superior of the Passionist Nuns. And again, in 1766: "I have deep faith in God that on the next occasion of the solemnity of Pentecost, God will infuse the gifts of the Holy Spirit on you with greater bountifulness; and therefore you should be prepared through an authentic inner solitude, adoring God in spirit and in truth, without wishing for anything other than his holy love, and his greater glory in all that you do. Thus, you will be truly disposed to receive the Holy Spirit." (Lett. II ed. 1924 [trans. from original])

In 1748, Paul advised Lucia Burlini thus: "I ask you, knowing what I do, that you obey the sweet inner callings of the Holy Spirit: Jesus wants a high degree of detachment from all created things from you; a truly mystical death to everything that is not God, a complete spiritual openness and detachment; so that you may put on the purest faith and holy love of Jesus Christ. (48. Letters to Laity, ed. 2000 [trans. from original])

In 1769, Paul wrote to Father Tommaso Fossi: "Always bring to prayer with you some mystery of the Most Holy Life and Passion of Jesus Christ, and if then, the Holy Spirit leads you into the deepest recollection, follow the aura of the Holy Spirit, but always attuned to the Most Holy Passion. (285 - Letters to Passionists, ed '98 [trans. from original]) Here we are at the heart of the charism that Paul received. and which he lived every day in the Spirit. Each Passionist keeps the life and the Passion of Jesus at the center of his and her daily prayer. Then, in obedience to the Holy Spirit, may be lead into a deeper recollection in God. But even in this state, the person at prayer remains united to the Lord through the Passion.

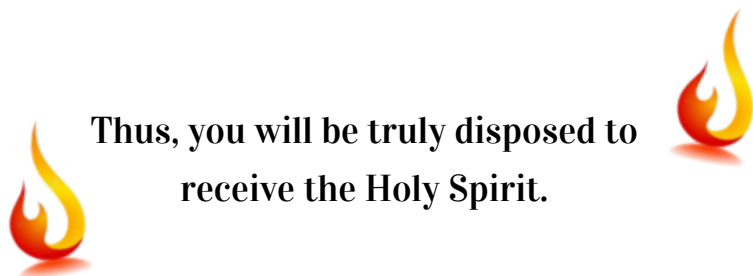


In fact, Paul even suggests that one never lose sight of the Passion, notwithstanding the depth of the gift of recollection. Christ, through his Passion, has realized the greatest and most stupendous work of divine love through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which led him throughout his earthly life and, in particular, toward "his Hour." So also, this divine Spirit brings us, Jesus' disciples, to the mystery of the Passion and bestows on us the features of the crucified and risen Jesus. The same Spirit unites us to the offering of the Lord, who makes himself alive and present in the Eucharist, a memorial of the Passion. In union with Christ's sacrifice we collaborate in his work of universal salvation, we draw our brothers and sisters of the whole world to him.

In the Spirit, we share in the love of Jesus and become one body and one spirit with him, i.e., the Church, and we live in the space and time of grace and holiness, gifts from God.

This was the understanding of Ven. Mother M. Maddalena Marcucci, who founded several communities of Passionist Nuns in Spain. She writes: "The secret of holiness is love. Whoever has discovered this treasure can willingly do more than was possible with all the other means she had before. Let her thank the Holy Spirit, the spirit of love, to whom it is reserved to make souls understand the secrets of love." (M. Maddalena Marcucci cp. - Holiness is love, 4 [trans. from Italian])

Following on the initiatives of Paul of the Cross as founder, generations and generations have followed one another into his Institute; fervent missionaries and generous contemplative nuns. The years and the centuries have grown into this 3rd millennium.



**Thus, you will be truly disposed to  
receive the Holy Spirit.**

The Charism has been expanded, deepened, and acquired new shades of meaning, but it has also always remained the same. It has been the same Spirit which gives it life in us, and the same Founder who shows us how to share it. The charism of the Passion was born as a contemplation of the Cross of Jesus, a way of establishing union with God and solidarity with our brothers and sisters, especially those whose suffering is the greatest. Paul first handed it over to his sons, the Passionist missionaries. He taught them to dip into the springs of prayer and solitude to find the energy that could bring people to conversion. At the end of his life, he passed that Charism on to his daughters, the Passionist Nuns, for whom this contemplation is also a means of exercising their apostolate.

The Church, Mother and Teacher, in recent years through Pope Francis, has renewed her appreciation and grateful recognition "for the unique form of sequela Christi practised by nuns of contemplative life; for many, it is an entirely contemplative life, a priceless and indispensable gift which the Holy Spirit continues to raise up in the Church." (VDQ, 8) To encourage this particular lifestyle choice, he outlines it as follows:



**"Your wholly contemplative life calls for 'time and the ability to be silent and listen' to God and the plea of humanity. Moved by the love each one of you has for the Lord, let your bodily tongue fall silent and allow that of the Spirit to speak." (VDQ, 33)**



This is where the Daughters of the Passion feel particularly stimulated to embody their specific Charism. They live in a silence and solitude which allows them to listen to the voice of the Bridegroom who says how much he loves us and how much he suffered for us; and at the same time to listen to the men and women of our time. Our silence is not a simple absence of worldly words and noises, but it is the ideal environment for listening to the Word of God, which resounds daily in the Liturgy, in the Eucharist and in the quiet secret of one's heart. For us, Passionist Nuns, it is, above all, the Word of the Cross which touches us, challenges us, and makes us see how much and in what way Jesus loves us. The apostle Paul says: "The word of the cross is in fact foolishness for those who are lost, but for those who are saved, that is, for us, it is the power of God." (1 Cor 1:18) It is from the Crucifix that the love and salvation which embrace the whole world are released. We do nothing more than collect this love and salvation with our hands and pour them onto each and every person. Our brothers and sisters of the human family all have their problems, their hurts, their dreams and their hopes. We act as a bridge; we put them in contact with the One who alone can satisfy their hunger for happiness and redemption, the risen Christ.

Two and a half centuries later, this mission is not over, but is being renewed every day. This is why the Church erected the Congregation of Nuns of the Passion of Jesus Christ on June 29, 2018. "The Congregation is established to advance the growth and life of the sui juris monasteries, who are its members, according the Gospels, the Rule of St. Paul of the Cross, its own Constitutions, and its General Statutes, so as to contribute to the growth of the Body of Christ." (General Statutes, 2) "Rooted in the Gospel, the supreme law of Christian life, the Rule and Constitutions incarnate the monastic inspiration and specific spirituality which is lived under the action of the Holy Spirit in a creative fidelity in response to the constantly evolving times." (General Statutes, 3) "The Congregation's duty is to encourage: a. mutual awareness and charity, in order to foster fraternal assistance and effective collaboration of the monasteries among themselves and toward the Congregation." (Statutes, 35a) Thus, the adhesion to the mystery of the Cross, forged by this communion, will be for us nuns, all the more thorough; and the prayerful support which we can offer to humanity will be all the more effective.

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Send a one or two page essay on "What I love about our passionist charism" or "Our passionist spirit" in general, or a meditation on the Passion of Jesus or the Sorrows of Mary to share! [secretary.nunsep@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.nunsep@gmail.com)