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Venerable Mother Dolores Medina Zepeda

Foundress of the Daughters of the Passion of Jesus Christ and the Sorrowful Virgin Mary.

Sr. Aureliana Aguirre



Jubilaecum

I am Dolores Medina Zepeda. Although I have been in heaven for 95 years, together with God, today I want to communicate with my beloved Passionist Family. After greeting you, the first thing I want to say is that I feel somewhat uncomfortable talking about myself other than to praise the Lord for the wonders He has performed in my humble life. I am one of many women who have more life experiences than words to share.

I was born in Mexico City on 3 April 1860, the daughter of Miguel Medina Centellas and Guadalupe Zepeda Quintana. Because they were fervent Catholics, my parents had me baptized on 7 April. We were a large family, where my love for God and my commitment to my Mexican people, who at that time lived in a kind of "cyclone" of a fierce socio-political struggles, were cultivated.

My youth. As a young woman together with a group of friends in the parish, I gave religious instruction

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and sang in the parish choir in the chapel of “Cristo de la Expiración”. My father bought a ranch in San Miguel Tepotzotlán and when he went there with his workers, I accompanied him and prepared the laborers to receive the sacraments. There I discovered many opportunities to exercise my apostolic zeal. The time spent there was like a mission for all the families who lived and worked there.

I pursued a degree in primary education. I felt God’s call to consecrate myself in religious life and I thought I would enter the Daughters of Charity; however, they were expelled from Mexico. At the end of 1888 I providentially met Fr. Diego Alberici Lubrani, an Italian Passionist religious. Several years before, the Passionists assumed responsibility for the parish of San Diego, in Tacubaya. God made me understand that it was Fr. Diego who should accompany me in the discernment of my vocation, and he guided me to the lay sodality of the Daughters of Mary, where I met other fervent, apostolic young women.

I contemplated Jesus Crucified and experienced his call to be and to promote the Memory of the Passion, but I did not know how to concretize the inspiration. I discovered that there were many young women in the Tacubaya area who spent their time on the streets, without formal education and in danger of living licentiously. I felt that Jesus was also crucified in them and that He was asking me to do something; however, I could not think of any logical response. When I consulted with Fr. Diego, he assured me that helping the crucified was not

something foolish and we began to work together. On 31 July 1892, three friends joined me in a house in Tacubaya, to start a Sunday school. There we would instruct numerous young women, especially on a spiritual level. Fr. Diego Alberici blessed the house and predicted that that experience that began as a mustard seed, would be transformed into a tree that would house the birds of heaven. Initially we organized classes with the girls on Sundays, then we added an additional day of the week and the following year it became a school for girls who could afford to pay and poor girls who were residents.

Eventually other young women joined us, and it became clear that God wanted us to be a Passionist religious congregation. Fr. Diego gave us formation lessons every day, and he himself wrote the Constitutions of our nascent congregation. On 2 February 1896 we started our novitiate with 9 Sisters. Throughout year we received formation and at the same time we worked in the school. Thus the year passed quickly and on 2 February 1897 we professed the first 9 Daughters of the Passion of Jesus Christ and the Sorrowful Virgin Mary.

Fr. Diego awakened in us a desire to know more and more about Jesus, to follow Him, and to identify with Him. Our spirituality is Christological, and this zeal for Christ and his work was transmitted to us. Our deep longing was for union with Christ Crucified, and for helping everyone to know and love Him as a Friend. Our great zeal was for the love of Jesus Christ, the love of his Church and zeal for the salvation of souls.

Our Congregation continued to take steps and take root. Years later (1902) the Superior General, Fr. Bernard Silvestrelli, reassigned Fr. Diego to Italy and he obeyed promptly, despite the pain of leaving the country where he had been continuously on a mission assignment for 22 years and also leaving the Congregation that he had guided in its foundation. His example of heroic obedience was a source of grace for growth in our Passionist spirituality. From then on I learned to say-- *“The will of God is my life and I only want to do this loving will.”*

It was time to get up and walk, to move forward, step by step, to collaborate in creating a new society where fraternity could be a reality and bonds of harmony, kindness and friendship were created. Moving onward so that injustice would cease and there would be respect for each person, especially girls and women, and we could see one another as our brothers and sisters.

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In 1908 the Archbishop of Mexico ordered that we conduct a General Chapter. At this Chapter another Sister was elected as Superior General and I was named Vicar general. Subsequently in 1916, when a religious persecution arose in Mexico, I was able to go with a small group of sisters to Cuba, in order to safeguard the foundation. I was very happy in Cuba, searching for ways to deepen our spirituality and the apostolate. However, I had to return to Mexico for the next General Chapter, at which I was again elected to serve as Superior General.

As time passed I became increasingly convinced that the work of our Congregation was and is of the Spirit, and that is why... I said to my daughters-- *"On Calvary the Congregation of the Passion was born: humble, insignificant, weak and poor-- very poor: The Daughters of the Passion! Yes-- a thousand times yes! We Passionists were born from the last breath of Jesus on the Cross."*

I admit that I had to suffer greatly, inside and outside the Congregation. So when God called me to himself, to the fullness of the Kingdom, on 16 December 1925, I happily departed this earthly life, entrusting into the hands of the Father the work that I had received from Him and that I loved so much.

Remembering our origins evokes in us not a passive admiration, but an *"active"* awareness, that is, moving forward along the path that our Founders have pointed out with their lives and their writings. It is a path of conversion and of holiness stemming from friendship with the Crucified Lord, from prayer and selfless concern for others.

Among her many qualities, I would highlight Mother Dolores' living faith, strength, and creativity. Thus she was able to open new paths, stating— *"To do what God wants- this is what is essential and that which alone engenders peace."*

Our Congregation has continued to grow, overcoming difficulties, shouldering the Cross with a beautiful missionary spirit. Today we are present in 14 countries, in 48 communities, making our motto a reality-- From the Crucified One we walk with the crucified of today, in favor of Life.

Other apostolates have been added to the original apostolic ministry of education-- missionary evangelization, parish ministry, residences, retreat houses, collaboration in seminaries, and work with migrants.

We celebrate the III Centenary of the great Passionist Family and, within it, we, the Daughters of the Passion of Jesus Christ and of the Sorrowful Virgin Mary, celebrate 125 years of our foundation. We feel happy to contribute our BEING, our simplicity, humility, and charity which, according to our Constitutions, should be our characteristics. With this simplicity we believe that we express the richness of the Family-Tree, as the Argentinian priest-poet Hugo Mújica wrote:

*"At the top, towards the light,
the branches are separated,
in the depths,
in the dark earth,
the roots are found,
thirst interweaves them."*

Our life and our history are interwoven with the Passionist Family. That is why we ask ourselves: Are we creative, enthusiastic, like our Founders, who gave life to new expressions of the rich Passionist charism? How can we increase our missionary, contemplative dynamism? Do we live the charism in new realities, responding to the cries of our people?

