



*Il Superiore Generale
dei Passionisti*



**Letter to the
Congregation of the Passionist Nuns
on the occasion of
the 250th anniversary of foundation**

Dear Mother Catherine Marie, Mothers and Sisters,
May the Passion of Jesus be always in our hearts!

During this our Passionist Jubilee Year celebrating the 300th anniversary of the founding of our Congregation of the Passion, we have the additional joy of commemorating with you, on 3 May 2021, the 250th Anniversary of the founding of your Congregation of the Passionist Nuns by our common Father and Founder, St. Paul of the Cross. We also acknowledge the part played by Mother Maria Crocifissa (Faustina Gertrude Costantini) as “cooperatrix” in the foundation of the Passionist Nuns.

We, in the Passionist family, express our warmest congratulations and join with you in giving thanks to God for the blessings which have sustained you in your fidelity and contemplative witness of His love and compassion for the world. In addition, we, your brothers, express our gratitude on this auspicious occasion for your constant prayer in support of our life and apostolic mission to “*keep alive the memory of the Passion of Jesus*” as the tangible act of God’s life and love for the world.

By 1736, St. Paul of the Cross already had a strong desire to found a community of cloistered Nuns dedicated to the loving memory of the Passion of Jesus. In the vision of St. Paul of the Cross, “*the Passionist Nuns...are to strive for perfection in God’s love by living in His Divine Presence*”

and by preserving indelibly written in their hearts the most holy Life, Passion, and Death of the loving Jesus who was sacrificed on Calvary for the world's redemption."

In the spirituality of the Rule that Paul wrote for the nuns between 1767 and 1770, he followed the Rule of the Passionists already approved by the Pope in the way of living the vows, prayer, austerity, and the commitment to remember the saving love of God revealed and communicated by the Passion of Jesus. Paul's "dream" to found a female branch of cloistered women religious would become a reality on 3 May 1771... *In silence and prayer, they were to resemble in all ways "the Suffering Jesus and Mary, the Sorrowful Mother" (Rule and Const. Chap. I), and by their lives of prayer, seclusion, solitude and penance, they were to soothe the wounds of Christ crucified, and additionally, the wounds of the many crucified people of yesterday and today.*

In his second letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul the Apostle reminds us: *"Whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold new things have come."* (2 Cor. 5:14-17). This call for reform, renewal and change is always true for our Congregations and for our individual religious if we are to remain alive "in Christ" and relevant to the "signs of the times". It was in this spirit that we rejoiced with you on that historic day on 29 June 2018, when the Decree of the Erection of the **Congregation of the Nuns of the Passion of Jesus Christ** was signed, establishing a new juridical structure of communion. This change is a sign of life and renewal. As stated in the Decree of Erection:

The change is extremely important and represents a "historic" step for the Passionist contemplative Institute. The new structure aims at and is committed to building the future of contemplative Passionist life within the context of the history of humanity. It does not change the nature of contemplative Passionist life; in fact, it is established by the Church "to promote growth and life of the sui iuris Monasteries".

...it is hoped that this new structure of life and communion will contribute to promoting the richness of the Passionist charism,

while supporting a genuine contemplative spirit of the cloister according to the intuition and the will of St. Paul of the Cross.

Clearly this newness specifies, on the canonical level, the unity of the Institute of the Passionists and the autonomy of the two Congregations, male and female. It reiterates the unity of the contemplative-missionary charism, lived in different forms by the two Congregations, and reaffirms their interdependence and spiritual connection. The common charism shared in contemplation and in ministry is always the Memory of the Passion and Death of Jesus - the seed of resurrection and new life (Jn.12:24).

In the Apostolic Constitution *Vultum Dei*, (No.6), Pope Francis asks:

Dear contemplative sisters, without you what would the Church be like, or those living on the fringes of humanity and ministering in the outposts of evangelisation? The Church greatly esteems your life of complete self-giving. The Church counts on your prayers and on your self-sacrifice to bring today's men and women to the good news of the Gospel. The Church needs you!

We, your Passionist brothers, indeed the Passionist family, echo these words of Pope Francis and ask: 'What would the Congregation of the Passion be without you, our contemplative sisters? Without the witness of your life of sacrifice and your constant prayers for us and for the world?' Together with all the Church, we express our gratitude to all of you for walking together with us the Via Dolorosa, the Way of Sorrows, the path of love that brings us to Calvary - the culmination of our salvation - and to the glory of the Resurrection. Let us together proclaim to the world by our life and witness, in the words of our holy Founder, that the Passion of Jesus is "*the greatest and most overwhelming work of God's love*".

As you commemorate the 250th anniversary of your foundation and celebrate the 'fruits' of God's blessings over these years, we pray that Mary: Our Lady of Sorrows, Mother and Patroness of the Passionist

Congregations; our common Founder: St. Paul of the Cross; and your co-founder: Venerable Mother Maria Crocifissa Costantini, bless and accompany you with every spiritual gift.

I conclude with the prayer of St. Paul of the Cross that he expressed in the final letter he wrote to Mother Crocifissa on 22 April 1775:

*“I pray God for all of you
so that all may become saints [and]
I enclose you in the pure Heart
of Jesus Crucified”.*

With our congratulations and fraternal greetings in the Passion of Christ,

Retreat of SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Rome
3 May 2021



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