

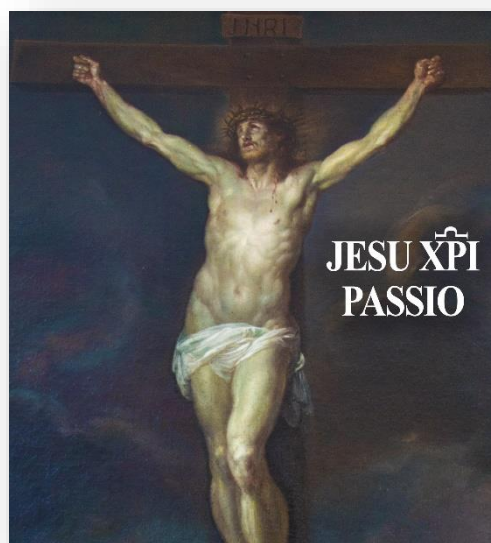


SUPERIOR GENERAL'S EASTER MESSAGE 2016

Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends in the Passionist Family,

Having traversed the Lenten journey, responding joyfully to the grace and gift of conversion which our merciful God has been offering us, we now arrive at that point of “journeying with Jesus” in this Holy Week, as we commemorate those final hours of the passion, death and resurrection of the historical Jesus. This will be a week when we participate in some intense liturgical celebrations which will hopefully inspire us not only to admire, but also to imitate the way, example and response of Jesus as he suffers and dies on the cross.

We cannot forget that, as Passionists, we are to “*keep alive the memory of the Passion of Jesus as a work of God’s love and mercy*”. We are reminded of what this means for us whenever we celebrate the Eucharist (= the Memoria Passionis) from which we are sent by the Crucified and Risen Lord to “*Do this in **memory** of me*”. However the ‘memory’ is not just a mere ‘remembrance’. The Passion of Jesus is not just a historical event to be admired and remembered; rather, it is a dynamic act of love which continues to unfold in our times today and for all time... “*the Passion of Christ and the passion of humanity*”; “*the Crucified Jesus and the crucified of the world today*”.



“We are aware that the Passion of Christ continues in this world until He comes in glory; therefore, we share in the joys and sorrows of our contemporaries as we journey through life toward our Father.” (Constitutions #3)

Recent world events stemming from the ongoing conflicts, injustices and sufferings, both locally and globally, point to the fact that the “passion (suffering) of humanity/creation and the crucified of today” continues to flourish, revealing to us the faces of real people: men, women and children crying out in their fear and hopelessness for comfort and relief. In this light, I challenge us all to ask ourselves:

- How, for me, does this reality connect the Passion of Jesus and the passion of humanity/creation?
- What dispositions will I need to adopt in my “journeying with Jesus” this Holy Week for a **personal renewal** to be effective, so that I may be an agent of change for good in the lives of others and in the world?
- What does my heart sense? Compassion? Empathy? Mercy?
- How can I respond? Prayer? Respectful and dignified relationships? Acts of charity? Solidarity? Dialogue?
- Can I identify the signs of destruction, the seeds of death (which are not life-giving) that are around me and in the midst of the situations in which I live – in my family, community, church, workplace, environment? What response can we make?



The greatest danger to our vocation as Passionists is that we lose heart and hope, as a consequence of which we can become paralysed (indifferent?), choosing the maintenance of our presences at the expense of effective and Spirit-led mission. In other words, we can sometimes so easily get ‘caught-up’ in the comfortable daily routine that, in our prayer and ministry, we become **de-sensitized** and **indifferent** to the real issues unfolding on our doorsteps: injustice, disrespect for life, racism, prejudice, discrimination, corruption, migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, religious intolerance.

Are these some of the “signs of the times” – invitation of the Spirit? How will we draw meaning from the Passion of Jesus (our charism) to witness, to address, and to offer both basic human assistance and a spirituality of hope and life to these situations in our local reality?

“We wish to share in the distress of all, especially those who are poor and neglected; we seek to offer them comfort and to relieve the burden of their sorrow.” (Constitutions #3)

Pope Francis continually refers to the “**globalization of indifference**” as a key for reflection on what he perceives as a root problem. He keeps challenging us, both personally and communally, to check our awareness and orientation. He invites us to open our hearts to God and to overcome a “globalization of indifference” that is threatening to spread a feeling of distress and powerlessness and causing individuals and communities to withdraw into

themselves, closing “the door through which God comes into the world and the world comes to him”. He reminds us that as Christian communities, we are required to be “islands of mercy in a world dominated by the globalization of indifference.” May we create our Passionist religious communities to be “beacons of hope”!

I would like to quote an extensive excerpt from the message of Pope Francis for the World Day of Peace this year (1 January 2016) in which he reflects on overcoming indifference. It is my hope that these thoughts may be used, not only for personal reflection, but also as a resource for discussion, sharing and dialogue amongst the communities of the Passionist Family.

“The first kind of indifference in human society is indifference to God, which then leads to indifference to one’s neighbour and to the environment.

Indifference to our neighbour shows itself in different ways. Some people are well-informed; they listen to the radio, read the newspapers or watch television, but they do so mechanically and without engagement. They are vaguely aware of the tragedies afflicting humanity, but they have no sense of involvement or compassion. Theirs is the attitude of those who know, but keep their gaze, their thoughts and their actions focused on themselves. Sadly, it must be said that today’s information explosion does not of itself lead to an increased concern for other people’s problems, which demands openness and a sense of solidarity. Indeed, the information glut can numb people’s sensibilities and to some degree downplay the gravity of the problems. There are those who “simply content themselves with blaming the poor and the poor countries themselves for their troubles; indulging in unwarranted generalizations, they claim that the solution is an ‘education’ that would tranquilize them, making them tame and harmless. All this becomes even more exasperating for the marginalized in the light of the widespread and deeply rooted corruption found in many countries – in their governments, businesses and institutions – whatever the political ideology of their leaders.

In other cases, indifference shows itself in lack of concern for what is happening around us, especially if it does not touch us directly. Some people prefer not to ask questions or seek answers; they lead lives of comfort, deaf to the cry of those who suffer. Almost imperceptibly, we grow incapable of feeling compassion for others and for their problems; we have no interest in caring for them, as if their troubles were their own responsibility, and none of our business.” (Pope Francis)



In extending to you my greetings and wishes for a fruitful Holy Week, I assure you of my fraternal thoughts and prayer for the feast of Easter. May the fruits of this Easter be for us a renewed Passionist life, filled with hope and zeal for mission, rooted in the Cross and Passion of Jesus: *“the power and wisdom of God” (1Cor.1:24).*

**Lord, the resurrection of Your Son
has given us new life and renewed hope.
Help us to live as new people
in pursuit of the Christian ideal.
Grant us wisdom to know what we must do,
the will to want to do it,
the courage to undertake it,
the perseverance to continue to do it,
and the strength to complete it.**

Fraternally,

Fr Joachim Rego, C.P.
Superior General

