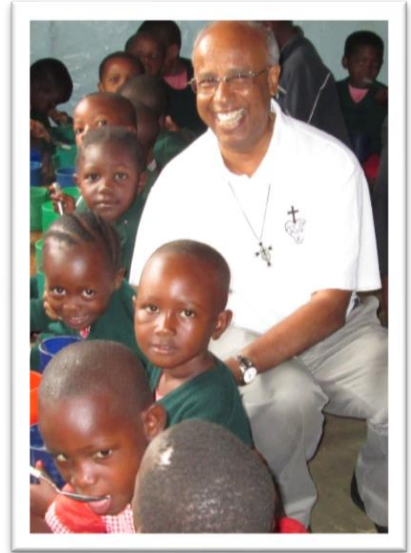




SUPERIOR GENERAL'S ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2019

**Dear Brothers, Sisters and
Friends in the Passionist Family,**

All of a sudden, in the busyness of our lives, this spiritual season of ADVENT is upon us once again. But we accept it as a grace because It is proposed to us as a time of anticipation and expectancy. It offers us the opportunity to reflect on how we are doing in our following of Jesus and in promoting the kingdom values he invites us to adopt as a way of being and living, especially as we prepare to commemorate the great mystery of the Incarnation: God showing such a depth of love for all of creation, that God embraces all that is natural and human in the birth and person of Jesus the Christ. Even if we are lagging behind and been caught off-guard by this sudden Advent, the very **desire** in our hearts to consider this grace is the prompting of the Spirit to take some time to listen and consider the call of Christ once again to “*follow me*” and not fall into discouragement, but live with hope. Yes, “*today (right now) a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord*” (Lk. 2:11). He is “*Immanuel – a name which means God-is-with-us*” (Mt. 1:23).



Recently I attended the Union of Superiors General conference held here in Rome which was attended by almost 150 leaders of male religious orders and congregations. We also had the opportunity to meet and dialogue with Pope Francis. At the end of the final Mass of the conference, the leaders were invited to sign the **Pact of the Catacombs for the Common Home – For a Church with an Amazonian face, poor and servant, prophetic and Samaritan**. This was a Pact signed on 20 October 2019 in the Roman Catacombs of Santa Domitilla by 40 Bishops attending the Amazon Synod about how they wanted to lead their particular churches in the Amazon region. These Bishops were inspired by the style of a similar Catacombs

Superior General's Advent and Christmas 2019 Message

Pact (**The Pact for a Servant and Poor Church**) signed by Bishops attending the Second Vatican Council in 1965.

As the leader of our Congregation, I chose to accept the invitation to sign the Pact on behalf of the Passionist Family because I feel it challenges us toward personal and communal renewal, and it proposes kingdom values and practical strategies by which we can respond and give authentic witness to the issues of our times.

As a program for our Advent preparation (and beyond), I offer and encourage you to engage in prayerfully reflecting on the 15 points contained in the Pact - both personally and with those in your ministries - with the aim of forming your Passionist heart and proposing prophetic actions by which we give witness personally and in our various communities. Of course, this is a response to listening and discerning the action of the Holy Spirit.

Following is the Pact to which we aim and desire to make a commitment....

Before the Holy Trinity of our particular Churches the Churches of Latin America and the Caribbean, and those who stand in solidarity with us in Africa, Asia, Oceania, Europe and on the continent of North America, and at the feet of the apostles Peter and Paul and the multitude of martyrs of Rome, Latin America and, especially, of our Amazon, and in deep communion with the successor of Peter, we invoke the Holy Spirit and we commit ourselves, personally and communally, to the following:

- 1. To assume, in the face of extreme global warming and the depletion of natural resources, the commitment, in our territories and with our attitudes, to defend the Amazon jungle. From it come the gifts of water for much of the South American territory, the contribution to the carbon cycle, and the regulation of the global climate, an incalculable biodiversity and a rich socio-diversity for humanity and the entire earth.*
- 2. To recognize that we are not the owners of Mother Earth, but rather the sons and daughters, formed from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2: 7-8), guests and pilgrims (1 Pet. 1: 17b and 1*

Superior General's Advent and Christmas 2019 Message

Pet. 2:11), called to be its jealous caregivers and caretakers (Gen. 1: 26). For this we commit ourselves to an integral ecology in which all is interconnected, the human race and all creation, because all beings are sons and daughters of the earth and over them the Spirit of God moves. (Gen. 1:2).

- 3.** *To welcome and renew every day the covenant of God with everything created: "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, domestic and wild animals of the earth, as many as came out of the ark (Gen. 9:9-10 and Gen. 9:12-17).*
- 4.** *To renew in our churches the preferential option for the poor, especially for native peoples, and, together with them to guarantee their right to be protagonists in society and in the Church. To help them preserve their lands, cultures, languages, stories, identities and spiritualities. To grow in the awareness that they must be respected, locally and globally and, consequently, to encourage, by all means within our reach, that they be welcomed on an equal footing in the world concert of peoples and cultures.*
- 5.** *To abandon, consequently, in our parishes, dioceses, and groups all types of colonist mentality and posture, welcoming and valuing cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity in a respectful dialogue with all spiritual traditions.*
- 6.** *To denounce all forms of violence and aggression toward the autonomy and rights of native peoples, their identity, their territories, and their ways of life.*
- 7.** *To announce the liberating novelty of the Gospel of Jesus in welcoming the other and the one who is different, as happened with Peter in the house of Cornelius: "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation; but God has shown me that I should not call any man profane or unclean." (Acts 10:28).*

Superior General's Advent and Christmas 2019 Message

- 8.** *To walk ecumenically with other Christian communities in the inculturation and liberating proclamation of the Gospel with other religions and people of good will, in solidarity with original peoples, with the poor and the small, in defense of their rights and the preservation of our Common Home.*
- 9.** *To establish in our particular Churches a synodal lifestyle where representatives of original peoples, missionaries, lay people, because of their baptism and in communion with their pastors, have voice and vote in the diocesan assemblies, in pastoral and parish councils and, ultimately, everything that concerns the governance of the communities.*
- 10.** *To engage in the urgent recognition of the ecclesial ministries that already exist in the communities, exercised by pastoral agents, indigenous catechists, ministers of the Word, valuing in particular their care in the presence of the most vulnerable and excluded.*
- 11.** *To make effective in the communities entrusted to us, going from pastoral visits to pastoral presence, ensuring that the right to the Table of the Word and the Table of the Eucharist are effective in all communities.*
- 12.** *To recognize the services and real diakonia of a great number of women who today direct communities in the Amazon and seek to consolidate them with an adequate ministry of women leaders of the community.*
- 13.** *To seek new paths of pastoral action in the cities where we operate, with the prominence of the laity, with attention to the peripheries and migrants, workers and the unemployed, students, educators, researchers and the world of culture and communication.*
- 14.** *To assume before the avalanche of consumerism a happily sober lifestyle, simple and in solidarity with those who have little or nothing; to reduce the production of garbage and the use of plastics, favoring the production and commercialization of*

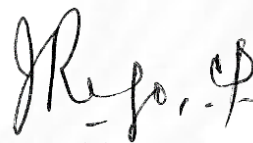
Superior General's Advent and Christmas 2019 Message

agro-ecological products, and using public transport whenever possible.

- 15.** *To place ourselves on the side of those who are persecuted for their prophetic service of denouncing and repaying injustices, of defending the earth and the rights of the poor, of welcoming and supporting migrants and refugees. Cultivate true friendships with the poor, visit the simplest people and the sick, exercise the ministry of listening, comfort and support that bring encouragement and renew hope.*

May the values of this Pact strengthen us in our identity and mission as Passionist Apostles today and assist us in our call to **Renew our Mission** as we commemorate 300 years with *gratitude* for fidelity to the charism; seek the wisdom of the Cross to live *prophetically* in our times; and trust with full confidence in God's love to walk towards God's future with *hope*.

**I wish you every blessing
as you prepare to receive Christ
in a renewed way at this Christmas time.**



~ Fr. Joachim Rego, C.P.
Superior General