

News from Rome 6

Final days



On Thursday morning the Moderator admitted that many of us were tired, but there remained important work to do. This graphic was displayed and we were invited to comment on what we saw. Not surprisingly, some said, “a half empty glass” or “a half full glass”. One added that the glass was full (half of it with air), but only half full of water!



The Moderator (Yago) went on to ask what attitude we personally needed to take up to make the most of the task we faced. He added another (clever) image that showed various nuances within our attitudes that could affect how we view the task and orient our energy to tackle it.

We then shared at our language group table, how we felt, which of these descriptions fitted us and how we plan to put aside the attitudes that would prevent us contributing to this important phase. That discussion created a lot of energy, and we should have more of that instead of large group (78) conversations.

We were sent off on our own for 90 minutes to examine the work of the drafting Committee who have done good work condensing 24 proposals to 16, although there is an inconsistent style because different individuals worked on different proposals. Following a number of suggested improvements it was agreed that the work now be given to a redaction group because we are not able to have precise wording in one, let alone three languages, in a gathering of this size.



After a morning tea break we resumed in the Chapter hall. It was a surprise to me that instead of dealing with these issues we had just reflected on, we turned instead to hear about four proposals that had been prepared by a drafting Committee on Configurations. These took a long time (the whole of the remainder of the morning).



We resumed at 3.30pm and took up the proposals we had considered privately early this morning. The process was also very slow, so that at 5.15pm, the General asked for a vote on our willingness to resume work after dinner from 9.00pm-10.00pm. Out of 77 votes there were three abstentions and the vote to return succeeded by one vote.

So, we completed voting on 20 proposals today. The content came under four of the five categories we prioritised two weeks ago (Passionist Laity having emerged as a priority. All proposals received 90-100% support. The area of Leadership lost some of its ranking because of a Spanish 'complaint', that they have no such word in Spanish. Of course the reverse complaint is our discomfort with the word 'Superior'. So, while there were proposals related to leadership the five main areas became

Laity within the Passionist Family

(highlighting collaboration/partnership);

Inner Life including charism and community;

Belonging Passionist laity, sharing our charism, formation matters, mission community and leadership;

New Ministries including the digital world, reaching the geographical and existential peripheries, related to community and community life.

Configurations recognising flexibility and adjustment is needed



The main thrust of the proposals was based around the belief that we keep mission and community at the centre of our Passionist identity and that Passionist laity are critical partners in our life and mission. There is an need for life-long learning and formation is needed for every aspect of our life.



On Friday morning the bus left Sts John and Paul's at 7.15am for Vatican city for the 9.30am visit with Pope Francis. I did not go.



Chris reported that because the European Commission President had met just before the Passionists they saw the Swiss Guard in full presentation mode.



Pope Francis spoke to the group and addressed himself to all Passionists. He strongly urged that we continue to bring the hope of God's love to a suffering world'. The text of his talk is below.



"A mission that aims to reach as many people as possible is desirable, indeed necessary, because everyone, no one excluded, is in dire need of the light of the Gospel. Without renouncing the usual methods of pastoral action, I wish you to also identify new paths and create new opportunities to facilitate the encounter between people and the encounter with the Lord, who abandons no one, but "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4).

It is therefore necessary to go out into the streets, squares and alleyways of the world, so as not to become inflexible and musty, and as a test of one's own joyful and fruitful faith. However, to go out in this way can only be effective if it springs from the fullness of the love of God and of humanity, lived in the contemplative life, in the fraternal relations of the community and in mutual support – contemplative life and relations with the community. Do not leave the contemplative life: you have a rich tradition of contemplative life – so as to walk together, experiencing the Lord's presence in your midst.

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

To create events of evangelization, presenting the sublime beauty of the Person of Christ together with the face of an attractive, welcoming and engaging Church, therefore requires a constant rootedness in prayer and in the Word of God. This rootedness in prayer is an important part of your tradition: withdrawing for prayer and contemplation, sometimes for a few months or sometimes every day or part of the day. Be faithful to your task of keeping



alive the precious charism of Saint Paul of the Cross. Evangelization, based on good self-witness, on kèrigma, on homilies, proclaims the love of God given in the Son for human salvation. Your Founder grasped all this in its root, and enraptured by this mystery, guided by the Spirit, found himself immersed in a spiritual experience that made him one of the most famous mystics of his time.

His most original insight was that the death of Jesus on the Cross is the supreme manifestation of God's love. It is the miracle of miracles of divine love, the doorway to enter in the intimacy of prayer and of the union with him, the school for learning all the virtues, the energy that makes it possible to bear any pain. At the same time, your Founder was tormented by the perception that humanity is not fully aware of this love. "God's love is not known, it is not appreciated", he exclaimed. From this inner experience arose the determination to gather companions who were immersed in the contemplation of that love and were ready to proclaim it. With the joy and strength of this charismatic belonging, Passionists also know how to proclaim the presence of the Crucified and Risen in the suffering of our day.

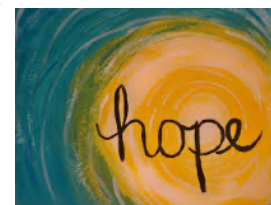
WASTE OF
HUMANITY



JOSEPH CARROLL

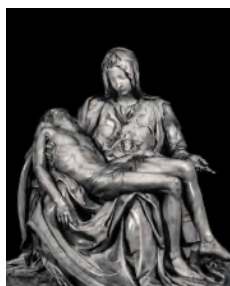
We know its vastness and devastation in poverty, in wars, in the laments of creation, in the perverse dynamics that produce divisions between people, and the rejection of the weak. Let everything possible be done to prevent the pain of our brothers from remaining meaningless and resulting in a waste of humanity and despair. In the throes of this pain Christ passed, suffering and crucified, living every wound in love and offering meaning to pain offered out of love.

Your Chapter took place at the same time as the convocation of the Synod of Bishops on synodality and not far from the opening of the Jubilee, which has among its main themes, that of hope. The virtue of hope has a special relationship with the charism of the Passionists. Indeed, its theological reason is the death and resurrection of Christ. The blood and water that flow



from his heart tells us that beyond death, life continues, love is poured out on humanity in the gift of the Spirit, communicating itself with a power that no-one can eliminate. If nothing can stifle in the human being the capacity to love, then nothing is lost, everything rediscovers meaning and value, everything is saved. Hope is grounded in this certainty of faith.

Be drawn also by the solicitude of the Virgin Mary who, at the dawn of her special mission in the Father's plan for salvation, set out in haste towards the mountain,



where she gave herself in helping her elderly relative. Declaring herself a servant of the Lord, she placed herself at the service of her neighbour and was proclaimed Mother of the Lord by her cousin Elizabeth. Following the example and through the intercession of the Virgin Mary – who, on Calvary, before her dying Son, lives "the deepest 'kenosis' of faith in human history" (Saint

John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater*, 18) – the Passionists live their consecration and mission, aware of the urgency of spreading the message of salvation. It is not the haste of the clock, *krónos*, but that of grace, *kairós*, of the love that runs to reach its goal, like the wave of the sea that hastens to touch the shore.

A love that is expressed with the word that is the echo of the Word of truth, with the gesture of lifting up the poor and needy, or with the simple silence of staying close to those who suffer. May God bless each one of you, your Congregation and your mission!”



During the afternoon session we returned to voting on proposals. “If you agree, green card” is a mantra we’ve heard many time, and sometimes followed by, “if you don’t agree, red card, if you abstain, white card”. These happen to be the colours of the Italian flag! The proposals only needed minor adjustment to be favourably accepted for a

canonical vote, thanks to a lot of editing work done ‘out of hours’, by some selected Chapter members. Two ‘general’ letters to Passionist laity and in relation to world peace were accepted with some editorial corrections to be made.



The letter to the Passionist Laity needs adjustment but it is likely to include sentences like this:

“It fills us with joy to live out our Passionist charism, and we're so grateful to have you alongside us on this journey”.

“Your friendship, support, and shared spirit are a constant source of inspiration. We feel a deep connection with you, united by the

precious gift of baptism – the gift of keeping alive the memory of Jesus' Passion, God's greatest and most beautiful act of love”.

“The numerous stories and points of connection you shared with us on the Zoom video stream during the Chapter, the Chapter Hall with energy and enthusiasm”.

“We believe in expanding the shared development of our mission, working together as co-responsible partners”.

After dinner there were some impromptu cultural performances by various groups, with the Italians, Spanish, Brazilians, Filipinos and Africans all singing with gusto and with audience participation. We four were joined by Tue and we sang a verse and two choruses of ‘I am You are Australian’, and we got some participation for the chorus. Tue also joined with the Indonesian and Filipinos for a performance. The room in



which we gathered ' the Sala dei Papa' or 'Room of the Popes' displays the Popes who were influential in Paul of the Cross' time or who assisted the Passionists in the years afterwards. The room was decorated by the new General Giuseppe, with around 40 national flags which was very nice.



The Italians (and cjm at the far right) (using phones for the lyrics)



The Africans



The last morning

The final two-hour session included 30 minutes of contemplative prayer which our table prepared, followed by 20 minutes of listening to Denis Travers reflectively read some summary points from a document he has been writing about the experience of the Chapter. After this, an opportunity for evaluation of the experience was carried out at tables, following ten minutes of personal reflection. Overall it has



been a very positive experience of solidarity, of active listening, of respect and warm brotherhood. The difficulty of communicating with those of a different language was repeated by many as a frustration, as was the process over the last week, where we were at times rushed, went overtime and louder and fewer voices prevailed. It was recognised that there is a lot of (positive) work to be done back home and a lot has been learned from this experience. There is a need to explain how our Configurations began and why, as well as explaining the structure, given there are two models.

Following this session there were brief thanks to many people, including Joachim



and the recent General Council who were responsible for the planning, Massimo, the Secretary who did an amazing and demanding job every day, and Marco who designed the IT programme, Synago which worked so well, and made it very close to paperless, despite the fact that more than two hundred documents were generated in three languages. The facilitators

Yago and Jose were thanked too briefly, but we were short of time. After this session a group photograph was taken. You will do well to spot anyone you know.



The Chapter experience ended with Mass in the basilica and a special lunch at which the Passionist sisters were present. It is a sad reality that as many leave Rome tomorrow, for so many diverse places, we will never meet many of them again.

A different matter



I commented two weeks ago that Erick had a great performance in the Melbourne Marathon. He has since been advised that he ran the fastest time for his age category (2 hours 21 minutes and 5 seconds) and has been awarded a medal for that achievement.

From all of us associated with Holy Cross and on behalf of those who support Erick's athletic career, a big thanks. We might have to add another award for his associate editorial work for the newsletter.

The Passion Play



After hosting the Melbourne Easter Passion Play at Holy Cross for several years, and experiencing the frustration of the play being cancelled for three years because of COVID, the organisers have found another venue in the north west of Melbourne, so the Passion Play will be relocated to Catholic Regional College Sydenham from 2025.

The manager, Gino Gammaldi researched alternatives, and found this venue most suitable. There is a railway station directly across from the school. Gino is hoping the play can



involve and reach youth, which is a great idea, and there is more likely to be a much higher church participation catchment in the area than in Doncaster-Templestowe. The Passion Play was the brainchild of Pat LaManna RIP who ensured it would be financed into the future. It was first held in 1997. Pat would be so grateful and so impressed with Gino's dedication. We wish Gino and the team well, and I have reassured Gino, that Holy Cross is still here if he wants to make a return.

Daylight Saving started on Sunday 27th October so we are 10 hours behind Melbourne.

Brian