



Passionists

Third Centenary Jubilee

1720 - 2020

Renewing our Mission
Gratitude – Prophecy – Hope

Dear Friends in the Passionist family,

Three hundred years ago this month St Paul of the Cross, a young layman at the time, had a profound, and at times harrowing, spiritual experience during a lone forty-day retreat which he undertook at the suggestion of his bishop who had just clothed him in a penitential habit. Eventually his deep spiritual encounter in a small church room in Castellazzo in Northern Italy bore fruit as the founding inspiration of our Passionist religious order.

Paul's struggle during his retreat wasn't about believing in the saving power of the Cross – as might be the issue for many people today. It was the struggle with experiencing the Cross in the depths of his heart. The Cross claimed him – he became Paul *of the Cross*. He came to live the Passion of Jesus as his own, alongside Mary and the beloved disciple and the women on Calvary.

What Paul saw on Calvary, with luminous clarity, was love. An immense Divine Love was at work: Jesus giving everything - for his own people, for us, for his Father. It was Love that transformed the horror and absurdity of the crucifixion into the *Passion*. Love transforms us too and our world. Pope Francis, in his recent encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, dares to call for love even in social and political affairs. The Divine Love inspires love, even in inhospitable places.

This year the Church grants the Passionists the privileges of a Holy Year of Jubilee to celebrate our foundational event. It will be celebrated in all Passionist churches around the world, and through events such as retreats or missions or pastoral or social projects.

We invite you to share in this joyous occasion. We are all part of one world-wide Passionist family. In this Jubilee each of us draws benefit from Paul's unique spiritual gift, his charism of loving regard for Jesus Crucified, and solidarity with those experiencing the Cross in their own lives today. The Passion of Jesus – the Paschal Mystery - is the heart of all our Christian lives, as we live out our baptism, plunging us into the death of Jesus that we may rise to new life in him.

Fr. James Sweeney, cp
Provincial

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