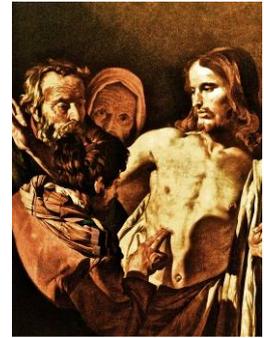




CONGREGAZIONE DELLA PASSIONE DI GESÙ CRISTO  
P.ZA SS. GIOVANNI E PAOLO, 13  
00184 ROMA – ITALIA  
Tel. 06 772711; fax 06 7008454  
*Al Superiore Generale*



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## Happy Easter! 2012

**Dear Brethren of the Congregation and all religious and lay members of our Passionist Family,**

Greetings to you all in the name of Jesus, whom we have contemplated in last Sunday's Palm Sunday liturgy as he returned once again to Jerusalem seated on a colt and surrounded by a large crowd holding branches as they sang Hosanna to God: *"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."* (Jn 12:13).

We are told in the Gospel that the crowd didn't really understand what this was all about, but that they did following the Resurrection. This was certainly a festive reception which served to reinforce the Pharisees' decision to seek Jesus' death: *"Look, the whole world has gone after him!"* (Jn 12:19).

Just as with the disciples, we too remain flummoxed with this triumphal entry, which seems so totally out of place and utterly incomprehensible, and which sets off the week we call "Holy," one of enormous suffering for Jesus and which will only end with his death on a cross. Jesus himself will give us the key to understanding what is about to follow: *"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat, but if it dies it produces much fruit. (Jn 12: 23-24).* Jesus, however, true man that he is, fears death: *"I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? Father, save me from this hour? But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!"* (Jn 12:27)

He knows that his death will give glory to his Father. His Incarnation will come to full fruition when he takes upon himself the sins of all his fellow human beings and accepts his own death as a consequence. It is perhaps a little difficult for us to grasp the notion that death can give glory to God who is life.

*"The hour has come"* says Jesus to Phillip, Andrew and those Greeks who had asked them to lead them to see Jesus. He accepts to become that grain of wheat which must die if it is to bear fruit for the good of all humanity and for all of creation. Jesus has been sent by his Father as Teacher and Sacrificial Lamb who must be sacrificed for our salvation. That which happens during Holy Week is God's school above all schools, the supreme Magisterium of the Trinity leading us to understand God, his presence in the world and what he himself is seeking from us.

In the course of his Good Friday trial, one of Jesus' replies to Pontius Pilate will make the issue of his Incarnation and Passion even clearer: *"For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth."* (Jn 18:37)

Jesus has to testify to the truth and bring about the salvation of humanity and a reordering of the cosmos as his Father wills it: *"...the work you have given me to do."*

Dying on the Cross bears supreme witness to the truth of God who is himself Love, and in doing so Jesus glorifies him. Christ hanging on the Cross is truly the message of God's love, is the tablet of the Law, not carved in stone by Moses on Mount Sinai but rather carved in flesh: *"This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."* (Jn 15: 12-13).

As Jesus hangs upon the Cross taking upon himself the sins of the world and becoming a "servant," he empties himself of every power, delivering himself up to the men who have rejected him, condemned him to death and then gone on to mock him as he hangs there in agony, dying in the presence of his Mother. Not only was he at that moment abandoned by his disciples and his people, he also accepted to be forsaken by his Father as he lets out with a cry and the prayer of a Son: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* (Mt 27:46).

Next he forgets about himself as he sheds his blood on the Cross as darkness at 3 in the afternoon covers the land. Love is the glory and the truth of the Father and Jesus, ever the "teacher" notwithstanding his terri-

ble plight, intercedes for those who are overseeing his atrocious death: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" (Lk 23:34); "*Today you will be with me in Paradise*" (Lk 23:43) he'll say to one of the malefactors crucified with him; "*Woman, behold your son,*" (Jn 19:26) he'll say to Mary his mother, indicating John. Then, in a loud voice, Jesus trustingly gave up his spirit to his Father: "*It is finished.*"

Then, three days later as he had predicted, he resurrected and, appearing to his apostles in Jerusalem and Galilee on the shore of lake Gennesaret, he confirmed them in their faith and ministry and sent them out as missionaries to the whole world.

We too are part of that mandate and that mission. Our faith is rooted in Jesus, in his death and Resurrection: Our faith would indeed be in vain, St. Paul teaches us, were Christ not to have resurrected. But Christ, our Pasch, is truly resurrected!

We believe this without any need to put our finger in the wounds produced by the nails in his hands nor put our hand to the wound in his side as St. Thomas had said; we just want to adore him without any need to clasp him as Mary Magdalene wanted to do outside the sepulcher the morning of the Resurrection: hers was a faith of pure love.

St. Paul of the Cross himself, our holy founder, several times invited the recipient of his letters to live with a faith of pure love.

So Easter is a moment we should not pass up to be in total solidarity with Jesus on the Cross. We too want to be the glory of the Father, we wish to witness to his truth which is love, both through our own personal choices as well as those of our communities and the Congregation as a whole. Likewise the lay members of our Passionist Family can bear witness through their own personal, family and work choices.

We are convinced that the truth of God given to us through Sacred Scripture and the prophets, and which found in Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, its maximum expression, is also seeded throughout the history of the world. It's up to us to deepen our knowledge and learn to read it in the signs of the times. God *is real*, he is present in our midst and he continues to talk to us!

A fraternal remembrance and esteem to our Passionist Bishops in their particular pastoral ministry.

I wish to all the communities and to the entire Congregation a Happy Easter; may you have the grace to recognize the presence of God in your midst as you listen to his Word. Solitude and silence, a critical distance from the world, and prayer, as we are reminded in our Constitutions, will help us to recognize, listen to and contemplate his Word and his presence.

My warmest thoughts and best wishes to our religious, to our Passionist nuns and sisters and lay friends and partners of the Passionist Family who are sick, as well as to those who may be torn by doubt or are afflicted with depression. The empty tomb of the Resurrected Christ is inviting us to a greater trust and faith.

A glorious greeting to our younger members who are the hope of the Congregation: Christ has resurrected and we too have resurrected with him! Alleluia! Keep looking ahead as you persevere in your vocation. You may be surprised to experience how Jesus will talk with you as you walk the road of your formation, yet you'll only come to recognize him, as did the disciples of Emmaus as the evening closes in, through the breaking of the bread.

Happy Easter to all in the name of the General Council and the religious of the community of Sts. John and Paul. May the Risen Jesus enlighten our days!

(Very Rev.) Ottaviano D'Egidio, C.P.  
Superior General

Retreat of Saints John and Paul.  
Rome, April 1, 2012  
Palm Sunday.