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Message of the Holy Father to the Superior General of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ (Passionists) on the occasion of the third centenary jubilee celebrations

The following is the message sent by the Holy Father Francis to the Reverend Fr. Joachim Rego, C.P., superior general of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ (Passionists), on the occasion of the third centenary jubilee celebrations (22 November 2020 to 1 January 2022), on the theme Renewing our mission: gratitude, prophecy, hope:

Message of the Holy Father

To Most Reverend Father Joachim REGO, CP

Superior General

Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ (Passionists)

The Jubilee celebrations for the third centenary of your Congregation offer me the opportunity to spiritually join in your joy at the gift of the vocation to live and proclaim the memory of Christ's Passion, making the Paschal Mystery the centre of your life (cf. *Constitutions* 64). Your charism, like every charism of consecrated life, is an expression of the saving love that springs from the Trinitarian mystery, is revealed in the love of the Crucified One (cf. Ap. Exhort. *Vita Consecrata* 17-19. 23), envelopes a person chosen by providence and extends into a given community, to be implanted in the Church in response to specific historical needs. For a charism to endure over time, it is necessary to adapt it to new needs, keeping alive the creative power of its beginnings.

This significant centennial anniversary represents a providential opportunity to move towards new apostolic goals, without giving in to the temptation to «leave things as they are» (Ap. Exhort. *Evangelii gaudium*, 25). Contact with the Word of God in prayer and reading the signs of the times in daily events will enable you to perceive the creative presence of the Spirit whose outpouring over time, points out the answers to humanity's expectations. No one can escape the fact that today we live in a world where nothing is the same as before.

Humanity is in a spiral of changes that call into question not only the value of the cultural currents that have enriched it so far, but also the intimate constitution of its being. Nature and the cosmos, subject to pain and decay due to human manipulation (cf. *Rm* 8:20), take on worrying degenerative traits. You too are asked to identify new lifestyles and new forms of language in order to proclaim the love of the Crucified One, thus giving witness to the heart of your identity.

In this regard, I understand that your recent Chapter reflections have led you to commit yourselves to renewing your mission, focusing on three elements — gratitude, prophecy, and hope. Gratitude is the experience of remembering the past within the context of the *Magnificat* and walking toward the future with a Eucharistic attitude. Your gratitude is the result of the *memoria passionis*. Those who are immersed in contemplation and engaged in the proclamation of the love that was given to us from the cross, perpetuate this historical reality, and life is fulfilled and happy. Prophecy is thinking and speaking in the Spirit. This is possible for those who experience prayer as the life breath of their soul and can grasp the movements of the Spirit in the depths of their hearts and in all of creation. Then the word that is proclaimed is always adapted to the needs of the present moment. May the *memoria passionis* make you prophets of the love of the Crucified One in a world that is losing its sense of love. Hope is the ability to see in the seed that dies the sprout of wheat, which yields thirty, sixty, one hundred fold. It is a question of perceiving that in your religious and parish communities, which are increasingly diminishing, the on-going generating action of the Spirit which assures us that the mercy of the Father will not be lacking. Hope means rejoicing in what exists, instead of complaining about what is missing. In any case, do not allow yourselves to «be robbed of the joy of evangelization» (Ap. Exhort. *Evangelii gaudium*, 83).

I hope that the members of your Institute will feel «branded» (*ibid.*, 273) by the mission rooted in the *memoria passionis*. Your Founder, Saint Paul of the Cross, calls the Passion of Jesus «the greatest and most overwhelming work of God's love» (*Letters II*, 499). He felt consumed by that love and wanted to set the world on fire with his personal missionary activity and that of his companions. It is very important to remember that «Mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people. When we stand before Jesus crucified, we see the depth of his love which exalts and sustains us, but at the same time, unless we are blind, we begin to realise that Jesus' gaze, burning with love, expands to embrace all his people. We realise once more that he wants to make use of us to draw closer to his beloved people. He takes us from the midst of his people, and he sends us to his people; without this sense of belonging we cannot understand our deepest identity» (Ap. Exhort. *Evangelii gaudium*, 268).

As our Master and Saviour, Jesus is risen and no longer dies in his body – which mystically is the Church; but mysteriously he is also in every human being, to whom he is joined in a unique way in the incarnation, (cf. Past. Const. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22) – that he suffers and dies again. Do not tire of accentuating your commitment to the needs of humanity. This missionary calling is directed above all towards the crucified of our age – the poor, the weak, the oppressed and those discarded by many forms of injustice. The implementation of this task will require a sincere effort of inner renewal on your part, which derives from your personal relationship with the Crucified-Risen One. Only those crucified by love, as Jesus was on the cross, are able to help the crucified of history with effective words and actions. In fact, it is not possible to convince others of God's love only through a verbal and informative proclamation. Concrete gestures are needed to make us experience this love in our own love that is offered by sharing the situations of the crucified, even totally spending one's life, while remaining aware that between the proclamation and its acceptance in faith there is the action of the Holy Spirit.

The Mother of the Crucified-Risen One, a figure of the Church, a Virgin who listens, prays, offers, and generates life, is the permanent memory of Jesus, especially of his Passion. I entrust you to her and, invoking the intercession of your Founder, Saint Paul of the Cross, and of the Passionist Saints and Blesseds, I wholeheartedly impart the Apostolic Blessing upon the entire Passionist family and on all those who will participate in the various celebrations of your solemn Jubilee.

Rome, St. John Lateran, 15 October 2020.

