# **Passionist Think Tank/Steering Committee: Formation Alumni**

# **May 16, 2016**

# Park Ridge, IL

# The Passionists of Holy Cross Province convened a gathering of five Passionist Alumni (Fr. John Schork, C.P., Jack Dermody, Craig Franklin, Paul Schulte and Gus Wilhelmy) and support staff from the Province (Angela Kwasinski, Phil Jackson, Mary Bannon and Claire Smith), to discuss the possible initiation of a Formation Alumni Association.

# **The “Why” for currently active Passionist Priests and Brothers?**

# Many vowed Passionist Priests and Brothers treasure all those who have affected their lives and shared their formation. Re-establishing connections with those who did not remain with the Province allows them to celebrate the past and continue to affect one another’s lives in the future.

# In Louisville the involvement of lay members who experienced Passionist Formation has had a significant influence on the vowed members of Sacred Heart Community. There must be other opportunities to enhance those relationships around the Province!

# Many Passionist Alumni carry the Passionist Charism in their minds and hearts making the shared connection all the more meaningful and potentially productive on many levels.

# The excitement among many lay alumni was palpable during the “**Love That Compels**” fund raising program. Harnessing that excitement and “electricity”, however that is done, seems to make sense.

# **The Lay Alumni “Why”?**

# The past bond of education and “a complete shared life experience” at the time makes connections now so easy. It is as if “we never left each other” when we gather. There is enormous energy and, simply put, it is fun to engage an “army of amazing people.”

Many “miss” the Passionists, and facilitating a reconnection fills that gap.

1. To many it is extremely important to maintain contact.  As a former Passionists/students we were exposed to different cultures, disciplines and practices (mostly good, some not so good) that have shaped us into the people we are today.  In a special way our time spent at the Prep is part of our "roots.*”*
2. Some feel they “owe” the Passionists for their academic, spiritual and social development and want to give back and share further based on their life experiences.
3. Some need and have made reconciliation with the Province and its leadership, making a deeper association possible now as opposed to the conflicted past.

# Others want to “help” the Province and/or its mission by bringing together their diverse talents, including professional, personal and financial resources, but have never had a channel in which to realize that potential. This organization could facilitate that.

# Many relationships exist “out there” in person, on social media, and by shared geographic locations. By bringing these connections together, we can share in them more fully to enhance the relationships, not to replace them.

# The different dimensions of Passionist association: Prep Only Experience at Warrenton or Normandy (POE); College and Theology Experience (CTE); Ordained Passionist Priests and Brothers in final vows who left (VRL); and Vowed Passionist priests and brothers (PPB). Uniting the eras of Passionist Formation allows alumni to know and appreciate people with a shared charism but very different Passionist experiences. Many – regardless of past relationships – want a way to share the charism together.

# **The “What” of the Proposed Organization?**

# It must be mutually beneficial to vowed Passionist Priests and Brothers and lay members alike, with an opportunity to share and spread the charism of Paul of the Cross.

# It must respect, embrace and welcome diversity of personalities, life experiences / lifestyles, expertise, religious and spiritual traditions and other gifts that each person brings to the group.

1. It must invite participation and embrace the talents and resources of significant others.
2. It must celebrate community in that context of diversity.
3. It must be organizationally meaningful and sustainable (structurally, financially, and programmatically).
4. It must operate under a viable strategic plan (think and act) and “fast action” (act and think) that together must coexist on the journey forward.

**The next steps?**

# Post questions from the event so others have an opportunity to respond. (Done)

1. Invite the Steering Committee to structure an “Alumni Circle of Service Team”.  An Ideology of the Alumni Circle of Service Team should include:  
    Alumni empowerment  
    Consensus opinion  
    Grass roots approach and structure  
    Supportive but not intrusive involvement of the Province, and its Communication and Development Offices  
    Spiritual collaboration  
    Direction based on talent, vision and time
2. Publish newly developed Circle of Service model on social media sites subscribed to by alumni.

# Invite Steering Committee, support staff and Alumni Circle of Service Team to a “Vision/ Discernment Day” in order to: Identify an additional 20 to 25 people that reflect the diversity of the eras of Passionist Formation. Look for a variety of personality types (if possible) lay and vowed. Ask for contributed time and expense but provide support to whoever does not have the resources but does have the interest and is selected to participate. Purpose is to create the mission, vision and identify service team volunteers for topic-based small Service Teams (i.e Reunions, Communications, Spirit, etc. )

Begin creating an action plan made up of small but basic and critical steps that will guarantee a sustainable foundation. This may take a year or two.

1. Possible candidates for the Alumni Circle of Service Team include:  
    Two representatives of the Prep Only Experience (POE) =   
    Craig Franklin and Jack Dermody  
    Two representative of the College/Theology Experience (CTE) =   
    Paul Schulte and Steve George?  
    Two representatives of the vowed priest and religious who left (VRL) = Gus Wilhelmy, Paul Wadell, and Pat Hanson? (Bro.)  
    Two representatives of current vowed Passionists (PPB):    
    Fr. John Schork and Fr. Phil Paxton?  
    Ray Alonzo, Mike Schweitzer, Don Noltemeyer, Carl DeLage, and Carl Middleton.

**What shall we call the Organization?**

1. The term “Passionist Alumni” denotes many problematic themes: only graduates, fund raising, non-spouse/significant other sensitive. “Passionist Family” is used by the General Superior and others to denote the full range of engagement by parishioners, Passionist Partners, retreatants, benefactors, and many others. We should not limit the broad understanding of those words. “Prepsters” is much too limiting. “Friends For Life” is used by a particular group.

# How about: … Passionist Divine Particles ☺ Just kidding. Or … Passionist Formation Nation☺ Just kidding again. Or … Passionist Array Circle Diaspora Gathering Press Sphere Society Friends Pioneers etc…….. Everyone admitted that what we call this initiative will be important. However, we might not discover it until we more fully engage the who, what and why of the effort.

# **Facts of Interest**

# Approximately 500 men have been touched by Passionist Formation.

# The Passionist Development Office has 330 names. Some systematic process needs to take place to build the list accurately (e.g. Passionist records, Steve George, identification by other individuals). And, we need to

# Eliminate all references to fund raising (e.g. current donor numbers for those who have made donations to the Passionists)

# Identify on spreadsheet the “type” of formation experienced. (See above)

# About 60 people responded on the website, out of 110 email invitations. (Good response).

# There are 200 working emails. Effort must be made to build that to 100 percent coverage. It provides the only effective way to communicate on a regular basis.

