

Community Life

...as reflected in Passionist Documents

edition of Jan. 11, 2019

with selections from The Passionist Constitutions
 The Passionist Regulations
 The Superior General's Report to the 2018 General Chapter
 The Provincial's (Moons) Letter/Visit to the Province of Spring 2016
 Citations from the "Handbook for Local Superiors" of the A.L.S.
 Selection on Community Life from the Province 2007 Strategic Plan
 The Superior General's Letter of Feb. 2015
 The Provincial's (Moons) Report to the 2019 Provincial Chapter

Passionist Constitutions (1984 edition):



CHAPTER II COMMUNITY LIFE

25. Our Passionist vocation is a call to live the fullness of Christian love in an evangelical community.

We bear witness to our fidelity to Christ through the charity that makes us all one in mind and heart. "By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples."³⁴

On his death-bed Saint Paul of the Cross urged us his followers to remember this saying of our Savior above everything else.³⁵

26. The Christian community is founded on the love of Christ, who by His Cross, "tore down the wall of separation" and made all one people.³⁶

Since we are united in Christ, each one of us acknowledges with respect the dignity and equality of every other member, whom we accept as a unique individual.

Considering others better than ourselves,³⁷ we intend to help each of our brethren to develop his individual personality and talents. We are aware that the Holy Spirit makes use of the brethren to manifest Himself, and distributes His gifts among them as He sees fit, working in all of them.³⁸ For this activity of the Holy Spirit, we give thanks with gladness.

27. Community life flourishes when its members are careful to maintain and foster fraternal personal relationships.

We therefore need to come together on a regular basis to discuss matters affecting our life in common. Through our exchange of views and ideas in such meetings, we can come to see more clearly what it is that God wants of us.

In the same atmosphere of sharing, we ought to examine both our community living and our own daily lives taking as our standard the Gospel, our Constitutions, and the signs of the times. By this means, we shall be able to help, encourage, and forgive each other.

Through these discussions, we can come to discover those forms and practices of community living that will help us best to reach the goal of our religious lives. Each of us must consider it his duty to take part in these discussions, and to accept the decisions that result and are confirmed by Superiors.

28. In our daily dealings with others, each must be treated as a brother in Christ, to whom thoughtful consideration is shown.³⁹

Mutual esteem will encourage us to seek the companionship of our brethren, so that true and lasting friendships may be fostered.

Respectful consideration for our fellow religious will lead us to observe the Constitutions, to be well-mannered in speech and behavior, to respect the times and places of religious silence, and to seek forms of recreation helpful to the spirit of religious life.

Life in community will then be characterized by joy and peace.

29. All our communities are to show a special concern for the sick brethren,⁴⁰ who share in the Passion of Christ at a deeper and more personal level. Our love for them must be shown by our understanding, attentiveness, and providing them with every possible care.

30. The community must show the same care for the aging,⁴¹ whose religious lives at this time must be made rewarding and fruitful. Their special needs should be provided for, and less burdensome works of the ministry made available to them. It should be remembered that the experience and wisdom they have gained from years of community living offer encouragement to their brethren, especially the young.⁴²

31. We shall always remember our deceased brethren with love and thankfulness. The acts of suffrage on their behalf that have been decided by General or Provincial Authority will be faithfully and lovingly observed.

32. Each local Community must strive to strengthen the bonds that unite it to the Congregation.

The whole Congregation is enriched by the lawful differences in lifestyle demanded by different cultures and apostolates. The fundamental character of our Passionist vocation however, must always be observed. Wider unity will be encouraged by frequent communication with other communities in the Province, and with the brethren living in other places.

Such an experience of greater unity will lead to all becoming more aware of the burdens and problems both of their own Province and of the Congregation in general.

Accordingly, by being better informed, we shall be more ready to supply personnel, material aid, and other forms of practical help for those areas of the Congregation where such needs exist. General and Provincial regulations, however, must always be observed.

33. Christ loved everyone without exception. He prayed for all,⁴³ and laid down His life in sacrifice for all.⁴⁴ This universal love should be the very breath of our community life. All our local communities are essentially related to the wider communities of the Church, which exists in this world, living and acting in it.⁴⁵ Our communities share in varying degrees in the life, aims, and problems of these other groups.

34. Each community forms part of the local Church where it is situated. We must therefore understand the problems of the local Church, cooperating on a practical level with the local Ordinary and those who are working for the People of God.

Zeal for the apostolate will lead the community to give a hearty welcome to those who may wish to share its life for a time.

With this in view, our houses should be made available to such guests, always preserving what makes for good order, in accordance with the directives of Provincial Authority.

The Major Superiors will designate those parts of the religious house that are subject to enclosure. This always includes the rooms of the religious and the adjoining corridors.

35. We form a part of human society, and cannot distance ourselves from the people among whom we live. Each community therefore must consider whether it is relating in a Christian manner to the wider community of the area.

In deciding the times for its various religious exercises, the community should take local practices into consideration, so that religious may be available for the service of the people.

To be the leaven and the salt of the earth, as our Savior requires,⁴⁶ the community must preserve its own Passionist identity.

36. The parents of our religious are the community's greatest benefactors. They should be treated with honor

and warm-hearted consideration, and visited as circumstances permit and the rules of the Congregation allow. The same thoughtful courtesy should be extended in due measure to other relatives, friends, and benefactors.

CHAPTER IV APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY

Community Dimension of our Apostolate

67. Our involvement in the apostolate flows directly from our life in community. Since we have been called to serve the Church in and through community, we should have special concern for those forms of the apostolate that are enriched by, and in turn nourish, community life.

Our apostolic commitments must therefore allow us to belong to a community, and to be involved in its external ministry. This provides mutual fraternal support and contributes to effective pastoral activity.

68. The apostolic aims and initiatives of the Congregation must be pursued by all, according to the diverse talents with which God has enriched its members.⁸⁹ We have to be generous in recognizing the gifts of every member of the community, and esteem and encourage the apostolic service undertaken for the Church and for the benefit of others.

All the religious should be given suitable opportunities to make use of their various gifts in the many different apostolic works that the Congregation carries out for the welfare of the Church.

69. Conscious of being part of the wider world-community, we recognize the need to collaborate responsibly with people of good will everywhere in pursuing all that is true, noble and just,⁹⁰ bearing in mind the present needs of the Church and the world, our special mission in the Church, and the particular gifts of our religious.

Passionist Regulations (1984 edition):

Chapter II

The Requirements for Community Life

8. The responsibility for creating a satisfactory community life rests primarily upon the local community itself. Keeping alive and guiding this responsibility, as well as preserving the common life, is the duty of the local superior. He must also lead his brethren in solving the problems that inevitably arise from the many and complex elements of community living.

The pattern of community living requires consideration of the qualities of individual members, their apostolic commitments, the directives of authority, and the circumstances of local culture.

9. To hear the voice of God in our lives necessarily demands an internal as well as an external silence. Accordingly times and places of silence in our houses are indispensable. Only thus will be fostered that atmosphere of peaceful recollection in which our religious can pray, study, and work.

10. The quality of community life will improve when religious try to solve the problems that arise when brethren live in common. Such difficulties come from the many and various views held, from the balance to be maintained between the needs of the individual and those of the community, and from the rapid rate of change in social and cultural matters, making certain forms of community life extremely difficult. Each Province will therefore seek to solve these problems.

11. All the religious of the community should be glad to receive visits from our brethren. Such visitors should be given a brotherly welcome, and as far as possible their wants and needs attended to.

12. All guests should be shown a genuine hospitality, marked by respect, simple and sincere charity, and attentive consideration. Each religious should deem it a privilege to show hospitality personally, and make himself available; this is not a duty exclusive to the Superior or to one particular member of the community. The religious who receive or look after guests represent the entire community.

13. Some persons may wish to share our life for a certain length of time or to live in our communities. Provincial Authority will provide guidelines to help our religious in this matter.

14. The community should carefully consider to what extent its facilities can be made available to those who may need them. The Passionist identity and the particular character of the house, however, must always be safeguarded, and the norms followed that have been established by Provincial Authority.

15. Our desire to be open to people must be counterbalanced with our concern for that privacy necessary for good order and for maintaining the contemplative aspect of our Passionist life. Only the Superior, whether Major or local, can dispense enclosure for just and reasonable motives in each individual case. Superiors should be watchful to safeguard the privacy of our religious in all the houses of the Congregation.

Masses and Suffrages.... (various responsibilities listed)

Chapter III

Our Community at Prayer

22. The community celebration of Mass should be given special attentions, for it is the very center of community life, and should be observed it at all possible every day.

Unless prevented by pastoral duties or other lawful reasons, therefore, all members of the community should take part in this Mass in order to foster and strengthen brotherly unity.

23. In conformity with the directives of Provincial Authority, the local Superior with the consent of the local Chapter: (a) will arrange for the celebration in common of the Liturgy of the Hours, taking into account community circumstances and local conditions. As far as possible, this celebration should be especially solemn on feast-days of the Church and Congregation; (b) will establish the most suitable times and ways of expressing together adoration of the Eucharistic presence of Christ, the memory of Jesus in the mystery of his Passion, and devotion to Mary, the Virgin Mother of God; (c) will provide opportune means for all the religious, either individually or communally, to devote sufficient time to spiritual reading (*lectio divina*).

24. In the daily horarium of every community a time for meditation should be assigned. Provincial Authority may decide whether the community should make meditation in common.

25. During the course of the year, each Province will provide periods of spiritual renewal for all its religious so that their consecration to God may be renewed and strengthened.

Particularly recommended, moreover, are annual retreats, monthly days of recollection, community days, and sessions of sharing, as well as other practices that would help to develop religious and Passionist life.

26. A house in which the contemplative aspect of our Passionist life is fostered with greater intensity has great value for the whole Congregation. Such a house or houses may be established by a Province or group of Provinces, and should be effectively incorporated with the other communities of the Province. The sphere of apostolic activity in such houses should be clearly defined.

27. The Superior should exercise a pastoral ministry towards the members of his own community. He does this in several ways, among them preaching, preparation of liturgical feasts, commentaries on the Sacred Scriptures, and celebration of votive Masses and Offices, particularly of the Passion.

General Superior's Report to 2018 General Chapter (September 2018):

4. Community Life

This is an area of our life that continues to pose many challenges. Partly the difficulty lies in our understanding (or mis-understanding) of the nature and purpose of the community dimension of religious life from which flows our expectations of community life.

Our Constitutions #25 states that: *"Our Passionist vocation is a call to live the fullness of Christian love in an evangelical community."* It is clear that our community life is our first apostolate and must be inspired by, give witness to and reflect the values of the Gospel. However, in many instances, this is far from the reality. In fact, often our community life is about bodies in a dwelling and we fail to give sufficient attention to the purpose and meaning of our living together.

Our Constitutions reminds us that: *"Saint Paul of the Cross gathered companions to live together and to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to all."* We do not live under the same roof as lone individuals in order to do our own thing, or to promote our own ideas, or to follow our own dreams. Rather, we are to **live together** with all that entails. This involves building and cultivating sincere fraternal relationships with the others, including those with different opinions and who see things differently to me. Living together and growing in relationships demand sacrifice, tolerance, patience, understanding, forgiveness and reconciliation. And then, we are to **proclaim the Gospel of Christ** which is about developing our relationship with God (Christ), demanding prayer, reflection, spiritual reading, study, and ministries in service to others.

There are many houses in which the religious rarely meet to discuss and make plans about our life and mission in that place. Why are we here? What are we doing? Are we responding charismatically and in a relevant manner to the real needs of the area where we are in mission? Or do we just keep on doing what we always have done? (*Note the inter-relationship between our community life and mission.*) We need to be reminded that: *"the Local Community has the freedom it needs to develop its life and mission in its own area in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity."* (Const. 121)

What is the witness-value of a life in common? What is it that we are witnessing to? Why a common life in any case? Can I be a Passionist and live alone? These are questions which we must tackle together. In fact, there are some Passionists living alone who perhaps offer a more genuine witness of the Gospel values and the evangelical counsels. So, why call them back into a community where there is a contrary witness and where they find no nourishment? I am not proposing the solitary life for Passionists, but merely challenging us about our community life. As we know, this is often the case also for young men in formation who move out from the structured community/fraternal life of the formation house to another house where everything they were instructed to be important values are de-constructed, leaving them confused, disillusioned and question the meaning of their vocation.

There is no doubt today that we come from the experience of a world where we are influenced by and tempted towards individualism and self-seeking tendencies. This is contrary to our chosen vocation and it

places great challenges on our profession to live by the evangelical counsels: poverty, chastity and obedience – the essence of which is about considering others, self-giving, sacrifice, simplicity of lifestyle, sharing, availability for service, hospitality and the call to inclusive love. Naturally, these values do not cater for our comfort and ease, but they do draw and allow us to live by our consecration and give witness to the Cross and Passion of Jesus. In this way the vows are not just juridical requirements which is measured by whether we keep them or break them. Rather, the vows are **evangelical counsels (Gospel imperatives)** which lays before us a pathway that makes us **free to love**.

Naturally, community life does not exist without persons – wherein lies great challenges. There are difficulties we face of living with individuals who are different to me and with whom I did not choose to live. This is further compounded today in our Congregation by the challenge of diversity and the fear of difference as a result of our ‘internationality’: multi-ethnic and multi-cultural living. We must make efforts here to understand, accept and tolerate others and guard against judgements, prejudice and distancing. Rather than find ways to opt-out or not get involved, it is important to work through these challenges, strive for unity, and recognise the possibilities for richness and blessings because of diversity.

Other challenges in community life which we find difficult to address and so choose to live with are: personal conflicts and past unreconciled hurts among one another. This is very real in many communities, but which are not addressed, either because we find it too confrontational or we don’t know how to tackle the issues. Meanwhile, these conflictive areas have a toxic effect on the life of the community and creates a distance, rather than a **communion of persons**. When these difficulties are not faced, instead of giving witness of a Christian community, a contrary witness is generated creating an environment that is painful, joyless and hypocritical – even leading some members to either become sarcastic and negative, or opting out altogether, i.e. leaving or requesting excommunication. Conflict-resolution and working for reconciliation is a real challenge and need in many parts of the Congregation, but in fact with the least attention and time devoted to it. It is easier to pretend “all is fine” and continue living in destructive environments than work for reconciliation, renewal and change.

It is worth listening to this advice from Pope Francis about the fraternal life in community:

“This must be nurtured through prayer in the community, prayerful reading of the Word, active participation in the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, fraternal dialogue and sincere communication between all members, fraternal correction, mercy towards the brother or sister who sins, and the sharing of responsibilities. All this must be accompanied by an eloquent and joyful witness of simple life alongside the poor and by a mission that favours the existential peripheries. The renewal of fraternal life is essential for the result of vocational pastoral care, being able to say “Come and you will see” (cf. John, 1:39), and for the perseverance of brothers and sisters, both young and less young. Because, when a brother or a sister does not find support for consecrated life within the community, he or she will seek it elsewhere, with all that this entails.”

I would like to emphasise here two points from our Constitutions which I believe needs greater reflection and action:

a) *“The Local Community is the living cell on which depends the vitality of the entire Congregation.”* (Const. 119) This is an awesome responsibility which every local community needs to consider and assume.

The responsibility pertains to each and every member of the community: *“Each individual member has the right and duty to take part in all the steps involved in making decisions; his role should never be one of merely passive acquiescence.”*

b) The critical role and figure of the (Local) Superior who is to be: encouraging, inviting the involvement and contribution of the members, listening, servant, guide, respectful of every member, kind and considerate, gentle, firm, consistent, pastor, animator (cf. Const. 119, 120). This role needs serious attention and formation – especially in the newer and younger parts of the Congregation. It is important that Superiors not view their role as managers of a company but work to create a sense of brotherhood and fraternity in community united in a common life and mission. As Pope Francis said: *“The fraternal community has enormous power to call people together. The illnesses of the community, on the other hand, have power that destroys.”*

I propose that this Chapter consider the issues of **Community Life** and the **Service of Authority** as priorities to address.

Provincial Superior's Letter / Visit to the Province (Spring 2016):



REFLECTING UPON OUR PASSIONIST COMMUNITY LIFE

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE LARGER CHURCH

Goals:

- To balance the prophetic role of our Passionist life with fidelity to the pastoral needs of the Church.
- To celebrate Eucharist in a fashion consistent with the liturgical pastoral practices.
- To ensure that our teaching and preaching is reflective of the pastoral needs of the People of God.

Questions for evaluation:

1. How do our ministries help to build up the mission of the larger Church while remaining faithful to the demands of our Passionist charism?
2. In what ways are our witness and manner of living “prophetic” in the world?
 - a. In what positive and meaningful ways does our manner of living differ from the rest of the world's ways?
 - b. What would an outsider find inspiring about our ministries or manner of living?



- c. What aspects of our Passionist life are truly and visibly radical in their attempts to live the Gospels?
3. Does our initial and ongoing formation include reading and reflection on the Church's documents on the role of religious life in the Church?
4. Do our communications with our publics make explicit how our Passionist community and our ministries relate to the mission and identity of the larger Church and its pastoral needs?
5. Are members of our community engaged in ministries or pastoral practices that are consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and needs of His People?

Action:

- Name two or three easily implemented initiatives to make our communications with people outside more explicit about how our Passionist community relates to the larger mission and identity of the larger Church.
- Name two or three initiatives that would make more explicit to ourselves and others how our particular Passionist life is vital to the life of the Church in our current times.
- Name one or two initiatives our community might adopt to make our witness as Passionist men truly and visibly prophetic in the life of the Church in our times.

CHARISM

Goals:



- To have a clearly articulated and shared sense of our Passionist charism.
- To live and witness to the charism in practices that distinguish the community from other forms of religious life and other vocations in the Church.
- To ensure an effective and inspirational formation into the charism as part of initial and ongoing formation.
- To refer continuously to the charism in the community's discernment of ministries, lifestyle, and spiritual / religious life.

Questions for evaluation:

1. What is the charism of our Passionist Congregation?
 - a. Is there a shared vision of our charism within our Congregation?
 - b. Would every community member be able to answer the following question in the same way:
What is the particular charism of our Passionist Congregation?
2. Is this charism reflected in the community life of our members in Holy Cross Province?
 - a. How is this charism incorporated in our everyday life of the Province? In other words, what are the concrete ways we live out our charism?
 - b. In what ways is our current manner of Passionist life particularly faithful to our charism?
 - c. Name some additional specific ways our community might more closely live out our charism in an everyday manner of living.
3. How effective are we in teaching this charism to new members?
 - a. What are the specific means of communicating our charism to new members?
 - b. Who specifically is in charge of passing down this charism to new members?
4. How effective are we in continuing to form professed members in our particular charism?
 - a. How do the professed members continue to study the charism as a form of religious renewal?
 - b. Whose responsibility is it to ensure the ongoing formation of members in the charism? How can it be done more effectively?
 - c. Is the question of our community's charism regularly considered when discussing important community decisions (i.e., regarding ministries, lifestyle, buying and selling of assets, involvement in the local civic community, etc.)?

5. How clearly and accurately is our charism represented and communicated in our vocation materials?
 - a. Would the majority of our members agree with the way our charism is communicated in our vocation materials? Why, or why not?
 - b. Is it clear in our materials and social media what contributions a young person can make to the Church by being a member of our community that he cannot make in any other form of religious life or vocation in the Church?
6. How does our Passionist charism continue to be relevant to the needs of the Church in current times?
 - a. Do our ministries serve the current needs of the Church and have a foundation in our charism?

Action:

- Name two or three easily implemented initiatives to more effectively live out our charism.
- Name two or three initiatives that would require more effort or adjustment to more closely live out the Passionist charism of our community.
- Name two bold or prophetic steps the community might take to more radically live out the Passionist charism of the Congregation.



COMMUNITY

Goals:

- To focus on the priority of communal living as evident in prayer, meals, recreation, dialogues, shared community responsibilities, and living situations.
- To provide avenues for support, inspiration, encouragement, and accountability from other members.
- To encourage regular attendance at community prayer, meals, community meetings, etc.
- To encourage the availability and accessibility of superior to the members.

Questions for evaluation:

1. To encourage the presence and participation of community members, does each community have an annual community calendar that includes the schedule for common prayer, meals, and community exercises, as well as the celebration of proper religious feasts and civic holidays?
2. How do we best encourage members to be present for:
 - a. Common prayer?
 - b. Common meals?
 - c. Community meetings and other gatherings?
 - d. Community retreats?
3. Is there age and/or cultural diversity in most of our Passionist houses?
4. How do we best balance ministry obligations with community life?
5. What are the structures of personal support in our community (e.g., common recreation and prayer, regular community meetings, ongoing formation programs, clearly established systems of expressing grievance, clear channels of communication, province gatherings etc.)?
 - a. Are these effective in building up individuals within the life of the



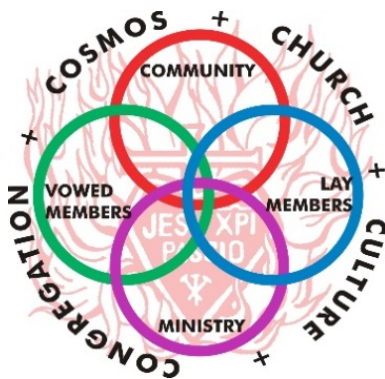
- community?
- b. Are these effective for the general good health of the community?
 - c. Do any of our current systems of support need adjustment? Are there other systems of support that would be helpful?
6. Do we encourage one another's overall health and wellness? Do members regularly benefit by a "Wellness Review"?
 7. Are there clear systems for accountability in our community?
 - a. How do we encourage members to attend prayer, meals, and other community exercises?
 - b. Who is responsible for addressing an individual whose behaviors are inappropriate or harmful to community life?
 - c. Are these systems of accountability and support effective?
 8. Do we have many members living on the margins of the community (i.e., not participating in the daily life of the community, or living outside of the community structures)? How do we consciously welcome them?
 9. How are the superiors of the community present and accessible to the members of the community?
 10. How is authority exercised in local community, especially when it has fewer members?

Action:

- Name two or three easily implemented initiatives to strengthen the common life of our Province.
- Name two or three initiatives that would require more effort or adjustment to strengthen the common life of our Province.
- Name two bold or prophetic steps the community might take to strengthen the common life of our Province.

SPIRITUAL LIFE & PRAYER

Goals:



- To emphasize the priority placed on the spiritual and prayer life of the community and the individual.
- To encourage and support individual prayer and a healthy relationship to Jesus Crucified.
- To celebrate a style of liturgy within the community that is both reflective of the Church's pastoral practice and is consistent with the Passionist charism of the Congregation.
- To demonstrate an ongoing commitment to the theological and spiritual development of members.
- To deepen the witness of prayer and devotion by all members of the community.

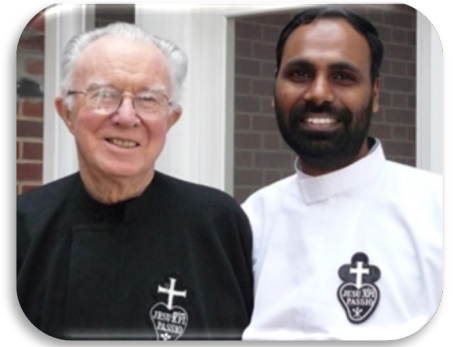
Questions for evaluation:

1. Do we have established and reasonable times for prayer in common (Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharist)?
2. Do we have ways to encourage community expectations regarding attendance at prayer?
3. Is our approach to our prayer life balanced over other ministerial obligations and/or social opportunities?
 - a. Is there the opportunity for shared prayer or openness to a creative experience in the prayer life of the community, including devotional prayer?
 - b. Does the community schedule include or allow set times for private prayer?
4. Do we allot adequate resources for the inspiration and growth of the liturgical life of the community?

- a. Do we devote adequate resources to enhance the liturgy with quality preparation and music?
 - b. Is there creative consideration of texts, translations, and music selected for the liturgy?
5. How are Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick incorporated into the common life of our community (e.g., Penance services, Anointing services, etc.)?
6. How do we cultivate an atmosphere of quiet and recollection within the community?
7. Are adequate resources and encouragement provided for the continuing theological and spiritual education and development of members?
 - a. Do community members generally avail themselves to spiritual direction?
 - b. Does the community provide an annual retreat?
 - c. Are opportunities available for continued theological education?
 - d. Do we provide or attend occasional spiritual conferences?
8. Do we have opportunities for shared theological reflection on the religious and Church life within our community?

Action:

- Name two or three easily implemented initiatives to strengthen the prayer and spiritual life of our Province.
- Name two or three initiatives that would encourage more effort or adjustment to strengthen the spiritual life of our Passionist communities.
- Name two bold or prophetic steps the community might take to strengthen the spiritual or prayer life of our Passionist communities.



MINISTRY

Goals:

- To promote an appropriate balance of ministry in the life of the Passionist Community.
- To strive for a set of ministries that is appropriate for the size, age, and resources of the community.
- To support ministries that contribute to the mission of the Church and are both prophetic and consistent with our Passionist charism.
- To promote communal ministries that allow members to minister together.
- To creatively promote ministries sponsored by the community.

Questions for Evaluation:

1. Do our ministries or apostolates serve the mission of the Church while remaining faithful to our Passionist charism?
2. Do our ministries allow members to be present for liturgy and community activities?
3. Are the current number and type of ministries of our community appropriate for the current size and age of our community? Will the number and type of our ministries continue to be appropriate for the size and age of our community in the next 10 or 20 years?
4. How do we encourage community members actively engaged in ministries to participate in community exercises (i.e., meals, prayer, meetings and celebrations)?
5. Do we encourage our members to minister together? Do our ministries allow community members to minister together?

Action:

- Name two or three easily implemented initiatives to strengthen the value and place of ministry in the life of our Province.
- Name two or three initiatives that would encourage more effort or adjustment to strengthen the value and place of ministry in the life of our Province.



- Name two bold or prophetic steps the community might take to strengthen the value and place of ministry in the life of our Province.

PREPARATION FOR CELIBATE CHASTITY

Goals:

- To establish a strong formation in celibate chastity, including human sexuality and emotional maturity.
- To teach the theology of celibacy and chastity to all members, especially those in formation.
- To assist men in formation in understanding and evaluating their motives for choosing a life of celibate chastity.
- To help build skills for effective, healthy, and life-giving celibate living'
- To foster perseverance and growth in consecrated chastity.

Questions for evaluation:

1. What is our program for initial formation in celibate chastity?
2. What is our program for ongoing formation in the area of celibate chastity?
3. Do members who are finally professed within the past 10 years have adequate support for dealing with loneliness and challenges to celibate chastity?
 - a. Are they continuing in spiritual direction?
 - b. Do they have regular contact with superiors and other members of the community close to their age?

Action:

- Name two or three easily implemented initiatives to strengthen our initial and ongoing formation for chaste celibacy in the Province.
- Name two or three initiatives that would require more effort or adjustment to strengthen our initial and ongoing formation for chaste celibacy in the Province.
- Name two bold or prophetic steps the community might take to strengthen our initial and ongoing formation for chaste celibacy in the Province.



PRACTICALITIES

Goals:

- To be good stewards of our resources
- To live the spirit and directives of our Constitutions and Regulations
- To foster communication among ourselves and with our publics

Questions for evaluation:

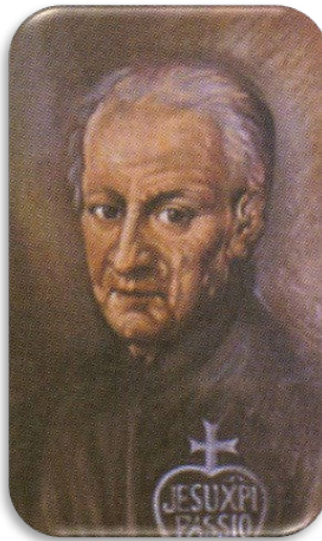
1. A community calendar of events?
2. The use of the covenant process?
3. Job descriptions for community leadership, employees; an updated Employee Handbook?
4. Stewardship of community resources (finances, facilities, personnel, reputation)? Regular reports provided to the community?
5. Maintain the various community record books?



6. Regular review of Province policies:
 - a. Regarding sexual misconduct / Code of Conduct with Minors
 - b. Health Care Plan
 - c. Driver's Policy
 - d. Digital Media Policy
7. Fostering relationships to the local Church, laity, civic community?
8. Fostering communication within the community, and with outside entities?

Action:

- Name two or three easily implemented initiatives to address these practical issues in our local communities.
- Name two or three initiatives that would require more effort or adjustment to address these practical issues of local community life.
- Name two bold or prophetic steps the community might take to address these practical issues of local community life.



From the "Handbook for Local Superiors" of the A.L.S. (May 2014 edition):

**Selections from our Passionist "Constitutions" & "Regulations":
The Local Superior**

1. The Superior is brother to all. In their dealings with him, the religious are to be open and spontaneous, recognizing that the Lord has given him a duty of special responsibility which they are to accept in a spirit of faith. As guide to form his community at all times, the Superior seeks and listens to their views in a frank exchange marked by respect and charity, remembering that all together we are striving to ascertain and fulfill what the Father wants of us.

The Superior always has the responsibility of making the final decision, in conformity with our "Constitutions" and for the common and individual good.

In exercising the authority belonging to his office, he animates and guides the community in an atmosphere of mutual confidence and collaboration. (Const., #23)

2. Community life flourishes when its members are careful to maintain and foster fraternal personal relationships.

We therefore need to come together on a regular basis to discuss matters affecting our life in common. Through our exchange of views and ideas in such meetings, we can come to see more clearly what it is that God wants of us.

In the same atmosphere of sharing, we ought to examine both our community living and our own daily lives, taking as our standard the Gospel, our Constitutions, and the signs of the times. By this means, we shall be able to help, encourage, and forgive each other.

Through these discussions, we can come to discover those forms and practices of community living that will help us best to reach the goal of our religious lives. Each of us must consider it his duty to take part in these discussions, and to accept the decisions that result and are confirmed by Superiors. (Const., #27)

3. A local Community consists of at least three religious who live under the authority of a Superior in a religious house established according to the norms of common and particular law. (Const., #103d)

4. Permission to preach to the religious in our churches or oratories is required from the Major or local Superior. (Const., #117)

5. The local Community is the living cell on which depends the vitality of the entire Congregation. Here each Passionist lives in a group united in brotherhood, each aware of his human dignity as a son of God, and each ready to respond to the lawful demands of co-responsibility. Each individual member has the right and duty to take part in all the steps involved in making decisions; his role should never be one of merely passive acquiescence.

The Superior must give the kind of leadership that will encourage his brethren to bring an active and responsible obedience to the offices they shoulder and the activities they undertake. Therefore, a Superior should listen willingly to the religious and encourage them to make a personal contribution to the welfare of the community and of the Church. Not to be weakened, however, is the Superior's authority to decide what must be done and to require the doing of it. (Const., #119)

6. The religious who has been designated as Superior is not thereby set above or apart from his community. He is one with his brethren. He has to realize that on the Superior depends to a large extent the well-being of the local Community, among whom he ought to see himself as one who serves. He therefore exercises his authority in a spirit of service for the brethren and manifests thereby the charity with which God loves them.

The Superior must guide and direct his brethren with genuine respect for their human personality, so that each may feel he is regarded with kindly consideration. He should unite gentleness with firmness and consistency.

In his service to the brethren, he has to be both pastor and animator. As pastor, he must always take pains to gather together God's family in one living brotherhood, and to lead them through Christ and in the Holy Spirit towards our Father in heaven. As animator, he must foster those projects and courses of action that will bring his brethren to become an even closer community of life, prayer, and apostolate. (Const., #120)

2007 Holy Cross Province "Strategic Plan"

Chapter 2: Report of the Committee on Community Life

Introduction

Background Documentation Regarding "Community Life"

Passionist Constitutions:

Paragraph 1: "St. Paul of the Cross gathered companions to live together and to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to all."
...companions...to live together...to proclaim the Gospel...

Paragraph 25: "Our Passionist vocation is a call to live the fullness of Christian love in an evangelical community."
...a call...fullness of Christian love...evangelical...

Paragraph 119: "The local Community is the living cell on which depends the vitality of the entire Congregation. Here each Passionist lives in a group united in brotherhood, each aware of his human dignity as a son of God, and each ready to respond to the lawful demands of co-responsibility."
...living cell...vitality...united...dignity...co-responsibility

1999 Holy Cross Province Provincial Chapter Document:

"New Directions"

The fire of the Spirit challenges us, members and leaders, for the next four years:

- To reflect upon and deepen the relationship between lay and vowed membership;
- To call people of all cultures to Passionist life with renewed efforts toward vowed membership;
- To reflect upon the meaning of vowed life as Passionists;
- To intensify efforts at deepening the quality of relational life among the vowed members of local communities;
- To develop leadership that energizes our Passionist presence in the world;
- To explore more effective ways of collaborating in ministry with lay persons;
- To maintain and create forms of ministry responsive to the crucified of today."

Strategic Planning "Mandate" (June 27, 2005):

"Community Life. This Committee will review and recommend aspects of Passionist life that are related to the vowed community, such as forms and vitality of life in community, spirituality, initial and ongoing formation, vocation ministry, residential facilities and relationships with senior members, Passionist Partners, neighboring communities and those we serve."

Current Reality of Our Community

Holy Cross Province (stateside) is made up of eleven diverse communities of vowed members --- Chicago (Harlem: Immaculate Conception and Daneo Hall, St. Vincent Strambi), Detroit, Louisville, Birmingham, Orlando, Houston, San Antonio, Sierra Madre, Citrus Heights --- each with an adjunct community of non-vowed / lay members (i.e., CPP, benefactors, employees, friends). Each community has its distinctive style of prayer, study, fraternity and dialogue. Four communities are at or near Retreat Centers, three communities are at or near four parishes --- all have varying degrees of relationship with the local communities. All communities are diverse in their ministries, involving themselves in the local Church and civic communities, as well as the larger Church. A very small number of our members are formally assigned to Chicago's Daneo Hall for assisted living care. Most of our members are actively involved in administration (internal), chaplaincies, education, formation (internal), itinerant preaching, Retreat Center ministry, and Parish ministry. Some eight vowed members are on special assignment outside of local communities.

There is a keen awareness of the aging within our vowed membership, the diminishment of vowed personnel, the aging of our facilities --- and resulting concern about its impact upon our future. Some vowed members are "resigned" to these facts and see them as portending the inevitable death of the Province. Some express "fear" about the future and wonder whether we are really dying as a Congregation. The majority are positive in varying ways, and hold that our death is a secondary question, that the more important question is the quality of Passionist life we are living in the present. These combined realities emphasize the fact that

financial income for vowed Province membership is diminishing rapidly, and the costs of living and maintaining our facilities are increasing. Looming over all this is the awareness of the clergy sexual abuse law cases and their current and potential impact on Province life and finances.

Two realities give us hope as well as challenge. First, after a long period of drought, we are blessed with the reality of new members joining our communities and ministries, and the promise that this growth will continue. This has likewise fostered a stirring of interest and involvement in recruiting and initial formation, with three formation communities (Citrus Heights, Houston, St. Vincent Strambi). The second reality is the growing number of covenanted and non-covenanted lay members joining us for our mission -- both a source of encouragement and apprehension for some vowed members. The question being asked -- by vowed and lay, covenanted and non-covenanted members -- is how the lay members and vowed members enter into the lives of one another. Building upon our rich Passionist heritage, with deep faith and trust, and openness of heart and manner, we continue to meet the challenges and brace for the occasional storm.

Factors Driving Change: What Needs to Change and Why?

Holy Cross Province is aware of its diversity in age, experience, ideologies, spirituality, cultural backgrounds, gifts and talents. It is imperative that we encourage theological and spiritual diversity as we embrace our mission in the Church. Our prayer life and faith sharing need to be encouraged, along with the development of a creation-centered prayer style. The Province must continue to embrace such challenges as the developing relationships and forms of collaboration with the laity, and the incorporation of the multi-cultural and multi-ideological traditions represented in our extended Passionist family. Likewise, the broader challenges of the world-wide movements of globalization, immigration, and reconciliation cry out to us for both our attention and involvement, in our community life as well as in our ministries.

Some in our midst are discerning the gift of God represented in the younger ethnically diverse candidates and laity being drawn to the Passionist charism. With an average age over seventy (70) we need creative activities to help form us in faith-filled, renewed, and realistic attitudes toward aging, retirement, and death -- as it leads to Life. Because of aging and rather pronounced diminishment of vowed personnel, a number of communities are quickly moving from being financially self-supporting to being subsidized. The cumulative effect of this aging and diminishment on Province life (personnel, finances, property management, investments, etc.) needs to be factored into all our planning. Province financial stability is necessary so that we can both meet the needs of our membership and carry forth our mission faithfully and responsibly.

Holy Cross Province has to answer the complex question of whether or not we can support ten separate communities. This raises the viability question for each community from the perspectives of

- 1) Passionist Charism
- 2) Passionist Mission
- 3) Quality of Life: prayer, dialogue, mutual support, public witness, hospitality
- 4) Vowed and lay personnel
- 5) Relation to the local religious and civic environment
- 6) Fiscal responsibility, stewardship
- 7) Leadership
- 8) Social Justice

A formal professional study of our facilities was conducted in early 2006, and the data that surfaced will provide better criteria for evaluating each facility and the state of the Province at large. Alternate uses for all our facilities need to be explored [e.g., (a) Chicago-Harlem as a small retreat & conference center, rental of space to other religious communities, office space, spiritual bed & breakfast, Province Development Office; (b) Louisville as a small retreat & conference center, rental of space to other religious communities, office space, spiritual bed & breakfast; (c) Detroit as an adjunct facility for Retreat Center use].

Province Vocation Ministry continues to be challenging for those formally involved. The time commitment demanded from these already busy Province members, the lack of immediate tangible results (i.e. numbers), and the loss of a popular "culture of vocations" among Church-goers tend to make their task seem

overwhelming. These discouraging factors, however, present all the Province members with the obligation and the opportunity not only to affirm the work of the Province Vocation Office and the Province Vocation Advisory Council (PVAC), but also to join with it. These factors call the membership to involve themselves with PVAC and its task force in its efforts to formulate a new strategic plan for vocation ministry. The members must seize the opportunity to become actively involved in setting goals, objectives, and action plans to do effective vocational ministry. As a help to the Province Vocation Office and PVAC, we recommend an evaluation of our vocation plans and program by an outside professional resource.

We need to provide leadership training for local community and Provincial life. The current diversity of membership and locales in Holy Cross Province demands it. We need to encourage younger members of the Province to cultivate their talents and accept leadership roles in the community.

Desired Future: A Diverse and Energetic Community

Basic to our future is creative fidelity to our Passionist Charism, our Mission in the Church and World within the context of a life of high quality (prayer, dialogue, mutual support, public witness, hospitality, leadership, social justice). Financial stability and responsible stewardship are critical for members to live a life of high quality --- a focused, fruitful, and fulfilling life of shared faith, prayer and ministry.

A constant and consistent surfacing of good quality vocational candidates from varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds is vital to the community. The vowed and lay members of the Province will develop a variety of defined and compatible life models between them. Within the Province all members, lay and vowed, will foster an appreciation of ethnic and theological diversity, the Province itself becoming a comfortable creative zone for diverse ethnic and cultural exchange. The entire membership, both vowed and lay, will foster and encourage the preparation and training for leadership such a future community demands. They will draw special attention to the leadership of younger vowed members.

The recommendations of the Committee on Community Life, found in Chapter 6, are focused on the actions we should take to ensure quality of community life in appropriate facilities, and to ensure the ongoing vitality of our vocation efforts.

Quality of Vowed Community Life

We assert that the Community Life of the vowed members is fundamental to the life of the Province. The **quality of our life** is critical for us to continue and flourish. Marks of the “quality of our community life” include:

- fidelity to the Charism
- leadership
- mutual presence, respect and support for each other
- dynamic prayer life
- faith-sharing
- compassion
- healthy human development and spiritual growth
- a contemplative stance towards thought, society, and creation
- public witness
- hospitality

The quality of our life is also one of simplicity and frugality, with a common responsibility for the goods of the world. This is the legacy given us by our Founder, St. Paul of the Cross.

Therefore, we recommend that:

- The communities enhance the quality of their life by our Rules and Constitutions, the Covenant process, and by the use of experts in various aspects of community life.
- Province leadership provide training for future local leaders, as well as training and support for present local leaders.

- The Province conduct a “Cultural Audit” to integrate present and future ethnic and theological diversity, as well as to identify our relationship to our mainstream culture (produced by the Center for the Study of Religious Life)
- The Province sponsor an ongoing educational program on the reality of “aging”, “retirement”, and “a Spirituality of Retirement”
- The Province should hold an Assembly of the vowed members to discuss critical issues regarding vowed life

Superior General's Letter of Feb. 2015

CIRCULAR LETTER ON COMMUNITY LIFE

~ Some Thoughts and Reflections ~

DEAR BROTHERS,

Greetings to you in this graced time of Lent, especially as we are also celebrating with gratitude, attentiveness and hope the Year of Consecrated Life. May this time be fruitful in deepening our relationship with Jesus Crucified, rejoicing with our brothers in community, and in living solidarity with the 'crucified' people of today.

INTRODUCTION

In this letter I wish to cast some random thoughts on the subject of community life. This is also in response to the proposal from the last General Chapter which asked that the Superior General would undertake a specific pastoral action (catechesis) on the communitarian dimension of our life. I aim to share some reflections on community life from selected authors, but especially from Pope Francis – which I encourage you to use for your personal reflection, but also urge you to share as brothers in community.

There is never a time when the subject of community life is not an issue to talk about. We have done, and continue to do, a lot of talking, sharing and discussing about community life; there is also a vast amount of material written on this subject. I ask myself: *"What more can I say? Is there anything new that I can add?"* Perhaps a place to begin is the lived experience, because it is in the lived experience, more than anywhere else, where we can identify both the fruitful and evangelical community life, and also the challenges and sufferings encountered in community.

The fraternal community has enormous power to call people together. The illnesses of the community, on the other hand, have power that destroys.

~ Pope Francis

COMMUNITY LIFE: Thoughts & Reflections

I believe that much of the cry to hear more about this area of community life is in relation to the human-relational dimension, and not so much about the theological-spiritual dimension of which we can find lots of material, more especially some clear, beautiful and challenging thoughts expressed in our Rule and Constitutions.

From my own experience in living the common life, and from my visits to the communities and listening to the brothers' experience of the fraternal life, I sense a yearning for companionship,

acceptance, respect, harmony and working together on the one hand; but I also see and hear about loneliness, isolation, individualism, independence and excessive privacy on the other.

Sometimes it is easier to hear the cries of poor people who are far away than it is to hear the cries of our brothers and sisters in our own community. There is nothing very splendid in responding to the cry of the person who is with us day after day and who gets on our nerves. Perhaps too we can only respond to the cries of others when we have recognized and accepted the cry of our own pain.

~ Jean Vanier, *Community And Growth*

In some instances, our communities are compared to 'boarding houses' – bodies living, praying, eating together, going out to work and returning to sleep. There is no communion! In fact some religious have re-defined "common life" in such a way that it may be understood to include religious who live alone for the sake of their ministry but come together regularly for mutual support. They claim to find more sincere communion with their brothers and sisters in this way. Is it a case of "absence makes the heart grow fonder?"

Pope Francis emphasises the 'spirituality of communion' as "a way of being" for religious and to be lived in community life:

Communion is lived first and foremost within the respective communities of each Institute. To this end, I would ask you to think about my frequent comments about criticism, gossip, envy, jealousy, hostility as ways of acting which have no place in our houses. This being the case, the path of charity open before us is almost infinite, since it entails mutual acceptance and concern, practicing a communion of goods both material and spiritual, fraternal correction and respect for those who are weak ... it is the "mystique of living together" which makes our life "a sacred pilgrimage". We need to ask ourselves about the way we relate to persons from different cultures, as our communities become increasingly international. How can we enable each member to say freely what he or she thinks, to be accepted with his or her particular gifts, and to become fully co-responsible?

In an address at a symposium on Apostolic Religious Life, Sr Sara Butler of the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity said:

Common life is prescribed not simply for reasons of convenience and economy, nor even for mutual support in ministry, but because it manifests our communion in Christ. By our consecration, we share the same traditions, spirituality, apostolic purpose, resources, and constitutions. Our sisterly or brotherly communion announces that persons who love God are able to love and sustain each other, accept one another's gifts and limitations, share joys and sorrows – despite differences in age, race, language, nationality, culture, temperament, and ministerial competence. Because the asceticism of community life demands love, forgiveness, patience, and mutual self-giving, it contributes to growth in holiness.

Vowed life, in fact, has serious consequences chiefly for those who live together. In an age of exaggerated individualism, community life is truly a prophetic sign. By living together, even at great cost, religious are able to bear striking witness to the Trinitarian mystery of self-emptying love.

We must not underestimate the witness value of our community life. Religious are asked to be witnesses of the humanising power of the Gospel through a life of brotherhood. Especially when divisions, breakdowns, conflicts, discrimination, prejudice, exclusion and individualism are such a reality of society and the world today, religious persons living in community together with those whom we did not choose, can be a witness to the values of unity, difference, harmony, acceptance, inclusion and cooperation for a common purpose. We bear witness to *"the Christian community founded on the love of Christ, who by His Cross, 'tore down the wall of separation' and made all one people."* (Const. #26)

Pope Francis encourages us:

In these days when fragmentation justifies widespread sterile individualism and when the weakness of relationships breaks up and ruins the care of the human person, we are invited to humanize community relationships, to encourage communion of heart and spirit in the Gospel sense, because "there is a communion of life among all those who belong to Christ. It is a communion that is born of faith" that makes "the Church, in her most profound truth, communion with God, intimacy with God, a communion of love with Christ and with the Father in the Holy Spirit, which extends to brotherly communion".

As it is our vocation and call *"to live the fullness of Christian love in an evangelical community"* (Const. #25), we reflect on the invitation of Pope Francis that this be characterised by 'joy' which is confirmed in the experience of community life:

Since we are witnesses of a communion beyond our vision and our limits, we are called to wear God's smile. Community is the first and most believable gospel that we can preach. We are asked to humanise our community. "Build friendship between yourselves, family life, love among you. May the monastery not be a Purgatory but a family. There are and there will be problems but like in a family, with love, search for a solution with love; do not destroy this to resolve that; do not enter competitions. Build community life, because in the life of a community it is this way, like a family, and it is the very Holy Spirit who is in the middle of the community. [...] And community life always with a big heart. Let things go, do not brag, be patient with everything, smile from the heart. And a sign of this is joy".

One of the sad facts of our community life is to find brothers who have lived, and continue to live with past hurts and unresolved conflicts experienced with their fellow brothers. Sometimes their life is rooted in bitterness and while they may celebrate the sacraments and preach reconciliation to others, yet they cannot bring themselves to forgive the brother they are living with in the community of the

house or the Province. This can have an overall negative and heavy atmosphere for everyone and does stifle joy and good communication. It also encourages people to make rash negative judgements and engage in unhelpful conversations filled with cynicism and sarcasm. Superiors, both Local and Major, must be attentive to this and confront particular situations with respect and charity.

Pope Francis says:

...you are challenged to become "experts" in divine mercy precisely through your life in community. From experience I know that community life is not always easy, but it is a providential training ground for the heart. It is unrealistic not to expect conflicts; misunderstandings will arise and they must be faced. Despite such difficulties, it is in community life that we are called to grow in mercy, forbearance and perfect charity.

He further urges:

Pray, pray for all the members of the community, but pray especially for those with whom I have problems or for those to whom I don't wish well, because to not wish a person well sometimes is a natural thing, instinctive, but pray: and the Lord will do the rest.

Speaking of the community as a place of healing and growth, Jean Vanier writes:

The wound in all of us, and which we are all trying to flee, can become the place of meeting with God and with brothers and sisters; it can become the place of ecstasy and of the eternal wedding feast. The loneliness and feelings of inferiority which we are running away from become the place of liberation and salvation.

There is always warfare in our hearts; there is always a struggle between pride and humility, hatred and love, forgiveness and the refusal to forgive, truth and the concealment of truth, openness and closedness. Each one of us is walking in that passage towards liberation, growing on the journey towards wholeness and healing.

. . . We must not fear this vulnerable heart, with its closeness to sexuality and its capacity to hate and be jealous. We must not run from it into power and knowledge, seeking self-glory and independence. Instead, we must let God take his place there, purify it and enlighten it. As the stone is gradually removed from our inner tomb and the dirt is revealed, we discover that we are loved and forgiven; then under the power of love and of the Spirit, the tomb becomes a womb. A miracle seems to happen.

~ Jean Vanier, Community And Growth

Finally, we need to make greater efforts in community life to truly get-to-know one another. In order for this to happen, we must be prepared to give time to the other, to listen to their story with respect, and to hear their experiences in life which have been both life-giving and also those which have left scars that need continued healing through our fraternal care, acceptance, understanding and tenderness.

Brotherhood is a delicate thing...This is how we should treat brothers: with Eucharistic tenderness. We need to caress conflicts...Tenderness does us good. Eucharistic tenderness does not mask conflict but rather helps us to confront it like people.

~ Pope Francis

CONCLUSION

What I have shared in this letter is basically some random thoughts about community life, backed up by some helpful reflections from various authors to encourage, inspire and assist us in growing in brotherhood and giving joyful witness of Christian love in evangelical communities.

I am certainly no more an expert in community life than any one of you and I am very aware of the limitations of what is presented through this letter. However I am offering you these thoughts and reflections on particular aspects of community life, strongly urging every community through the responsibility of the Local Superior (with the encouragement of the Major Superior) to make time during this Lenten season to share about this area of our life, in relation to greater genuineness and growth of your particular community.

As we each reflect on our personal and communal desires to encounter Jesus in a deeper way this Lent, and as we respond genuinely to the grace of conversion gifted us by our merciful Father, let us walk this journey without fear, but with great trust and confidence strengthened by the compassion of our brothers and the tenderness of our God.



FR. JOACHIM REGO, C.P.
Superior General

SS. Giovanni e Paolo, Rome
Ash Wednesday
18 February 2015

Provincial's Report to the June 2019 Provincial Chapter

2) THE CHANGES AND CHALLENGES WE HAVE SEEN: Vowed Community Life:

The challenges of community life will always be with us. As no individual is ever perfect, so no community is ever ideal. When we look at vowed community life, numbers are fewer in almost all communities, but in many cases the

demands have remained the same. Many of the vowed have more than one responsibility, some three or more. This makes for a much more challenging community living condition.

We have seven vowed communities. Can we find seven local superiors...when some of our present superiors are in their 80's or will soon be? Should we close a community, or can we envision a new local Passionist presence with both vowed and lay members? What criterion do we have for closing a Passionist community presence or ministry ... or possibly envisioning a new community presence or ministry?

As the current communities of vowed members age and decrease in membership, three communities will have financial challenges and will likely depend on the Province to help cover their annual operating deficits, much less their capital repairs. Their meager reserve accounts will have run out. Can the Province ask other communities to "twin" with another community, helping them by sharing their reserve funds? Currently, four local communities are "blessed" by their association with a retreat center as ministry stipends and lease agreements often make significant financial contributions to community life.

Also, our vowed community life has been enriched and challenged by vowed Passionists from other areas of the Congregation. We have seven Passionists "on loan" to Holy Cross Province, ministering in key Province positions. We are deeply grateful to them and to their provinces / regions for allowing them to minister with us. No doubt, there are also challenges in ministering in a different culture. I know from my nine-year ministry in India that the challenge of inculturation and ministry in a new culture can be difficult. To let go of the ways we do things in our home country, from what we eat, from how we pray and minister – that was most difficult for me. Culture is part of our identity, allowing us to feel at home. Thus, the challenge to serve in another culture as these seven Passionists have done is a learning experience requiring patience, sacrifice and openness for everyone. We are most grateful to the men that serve in our Province and the sacrifices they have made to serve God's people. This is truly a "grace" of membership in an international congregation like ours.

4) COMMUNITY LIFE:

Vowed and Laity: is an experience of community life possible?

Questions arise: Where can the lives of the vowed and laity meet to bring forth a new concept of a community that offers a new sense of life, one where there is a certain level of interacting and praying together? As lay and vowed collaborate in ministry, how can we journey together to enrich our interconnected spiritual lives so that Passionist Community life remains a constitutive element of our Charism and ministry? Though our Passionist Mission is our first priority, our community life is both integral and a constitutive element of the effectiveness of our mission.

Community life entails celebrations of Passionist feasts and milestones, shared liturgical prayer and other spiritual exercises, coming together often for meals and the details of common life, and healthy relationships that inspire and challenge each other to be faithful to our Passionist Charism. These aspects of community life can regularly be shared by the lay and vowed members of the Passionist Family.

For both the vowed and lay there is an ongoing need for formation in our Passionist Charism. The *Province Office of Mission Effectiveness* (OME) will continue to focus on the increasing need for depth in personal understanding and growth in our Passionist Charism, for both the lay and the vowed.

Vowed Passionists in Community:

Our General Superior, Fr. Joachim Rego, C.P., has repeatedly reached out to the Congregation with thoughtful encouragements and challenges regarding community life. A few years ago during provincial visitation, I reviewed two of his letters to all members of the Congregation: one on community life and the other on personal finance. Both remain timely and important.

Leadership continues to be an important issue, both now and in the future, and at both the provincial and local levels. At the provincial level we have the challenge of many different positions / responsibilities for which qualified members are needed. At local level we need local superiors who will actively engage the community in forming a healthy and prayerful life style, healthy interpersonal relationships and the ability to see community in light of increasing collaboration with the laity.

One of the issues that arose at the recent General Chapter is at what point does a Province cease to be a Province and become a Vice-Province, or even a Vicariate or a mission? It may come down to membership numbers, but also it may be that the province no longer has qualified members for leadership positions, or individuals for specific responsibilities like novice master, formation director, vocation director, etc. Such challenges are being faced in other parts of the Congregation.

Our community life is to be a shared presence in prayer, administration and celebration. As we become smaller in number and remain quite busy, the need becomes stronger for a common commitment to a community calendar with

a long-range schedule of events regarding Passionist religious and civic celebrations, community meetings, shared responsibilities, etc.

As we age as vowed members, both young and old, we are encouraged to be ever more attentive to our health and well-being. *The Province Health and Aging Advisory Board* (PHAAB) has been instrumental and supportive as the Province experiences aging, especially for our senior religious. The members of PHAAB are helping us see what is possible for those that are older, in order to live safely and “age in place” in the communities in which they currently live. They are also trying to reach out to those who are relatively younger to maintain a healthier life. We are deeply grateful to PHAAB for their interest, expertise and practical advice.

Local community finances will continue to be a significant concern for the Province, due to fewer religious engaged in full time ministry, more of our men serving part-time in ministry or being completely retired. The Province has been blessed with very generous benefactors and a positive return on our investment portfolio. However, both of these income sources cannot be taken for granted...they are true blessings that God has provided for us at this time.

Community life will be less than ideal. The quality of community life cannot be legislated through enactments or recommendations or covenants; it is lived at the local level by human beings. Important will be leadership and the individual member’s capacity for tolerance and the ability to see, affirm and celebrate the good in others. Local leadership is important, but the individual member’s efforts to cultivate community are fundamental to the vitality of the community. Everyone must do their part. We each are to use the special grace of our Passionist vocation to see what God sees in our brother in community, and thus respond as God would have us respond. As mentioned above, an individual’s commitment to an agreed upon community calendar can be a strong element of our life together, including those times where laity could be invited to participate in special aspects of community life. Such collaboration takes planning and commitment, prioritizing such community events rather than personal outside commitments.

Caring for our Religious:

Both Sacred Heart Passionist Community in Louisville and PHAAB continue to play a major role in the care of our religious. As vowed members continue to age, we are encouraged to be informed and proactive regarding our health and the opportunities available to optimize our health. With the encouragement and efforts of PHAAB, we are grateful for the “Welcome”/Senior Care Booklet recently published on life at Sacred Heart, the *Province Health Care Plan*, the *Wellness Review* and the other professional resources now available to Province membership.

The question facing those with physical or mental challenges is “How can my local community help me be safe and have the time and talent to attend to my changing needs?” My suggestion: ask them. There are also opportunities to “age in place” - staying in our local communities - but with some necessary adjustments. Which adjustments? I again would suggest asking the local community members or superior.

We want the best care for our senior religious and those needing assistance, no matter where they are assigned. However, we must be realistic and honest on the part of the individual member and the on the part of the community. When is it time to decide to move to Sacred Heart Community for an individual to receive the care he needs, where his needs are too much for the local community to care for? This is no small matter, for the safety of the member himself, or his community.

Again, we thank the members of PHAAB and the excellent support they are to all of us religious, young and old alike. We particularly want to thank the local superior at Sacred Heart, John Monzyk, C.P., and Director of Assisted Living Kurt Wernert, C.P., and the entire staff at Sacred Heart for their excellent leadership in the care they provide our members.

6) THE CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT PROVINCIAL AND COUNCIL:

b) The Provincial Council will likely be called upon to help develop an integrated Passionist community life / presence with laity who is very active in our ministry. Dialogue, prayer, common celebrations and ongoing formation will be critical. This likely means guiding the transition from a traditional vowed community presence to a more fluid presence with laity in our current seven Passionist communities.

c) When evaluating our different communities and ministries, can we continue all seven of our communities and all of our ministries? What is the criterion for continuing our presence in a place or ministry? How is laity included in this decision making or how can they allow us to continue our presence / ministry in a certain place or even start one?