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Audience with participants in the General Chapter of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ (Passionists)

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father received in audience the participants in the 48th General Chapter of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ (Passionists).

The following is the address delivered by the Pope to those present during the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers, welcome, good morning!

I greet the Superior General and all of you – Passionists or impassioned.

I am pleased to meet you at this time, as you are about to conclude your General Chapter, which questioned how to respond appropriately to our tumultuous time – all times have been tumultuous – and how to respond to the initiative of God, who always calls us to cooperate in his plan of salvation. Was it an elective Chapter? And were you elected? Who was before you? Have you been freed? Good, well done...

You did so by reflecting in a particular way on the words addressed by God to the prophet Isaiah: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (*Is* 6:8), and meditating on Jesus’ invitation before the expectations of the Kingdom: “pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (*Lk* 10:2). And how many novices do you have? [“150”]. And where are they from? [“All over the world, especially Asia”]. From Europe too? [“Europe too”]. The old Europe... [They repeat: “The old Europe”].

To the prophet Isaiah’s question, to start over as proclaimers of the Crucified and Risen, with lips purified with the fire of love, which is drawn from the contemplation of the mystery, it is necessary to answer again, “Here am I! send me” (*Is* 6:8). This will renew missionary energies also in view of the imminent Jubilee.

A mission that aims to reach as many people as possible is desirable, indeed necessary, because everyone, no one excluded, is in dire need of the light of the Gospel. Without renouncing the usual methods of pastoral action, I wish you to also identify new paths and create new opportunities to facilitate the encounter between people and the encounter with the Lord, who abandons no one, but “who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4).

It is therefore necessary to go out into the streets, squares and alleyways of the world, so as not to become inflexible and musty, and as a test of one’s own joyful and fruitful faith. However, to go out in this way can only be effective if it springs from the fullness of the love of God and of humanity, lived in the contemplative life, in the fraternal relations of the community and in mutual support – contemplative life and relations with the community. Do not leave the contemplative life: you have a rich tradition of contemplative life – so as to walk together, experiencing the Lord’s presence in your midst.

To create events of evangelization, presenting the sublime beauty of the Person of Christ together with the face of an attractive, welcoming and engaging Church, therefore requires a constant rootedness in prayer and in the Word of God. This rootedness in prayer is an important part of your tradition: withdrawing for prayer and contemplation, sometimes for a few months or sometimes every day or part of the day.

Be faithful to your task of keeping alive the precious charism of Saint Paul of the Cross. Evangelization, based on good self-witness, on *kèrigma*, on homilies, proclaims the love of God given in the Son for human salvation. Your Founder grasped all this in its root, and enraptured by this mystery, guided by the Spirit, found himself immersed in a spiritual experience that made him one of the most famous mystics of his time.

His most original insight was that the death of Jesus on the Cross is the supreme manifestation of God’s love. It is the miracle of miracles of divine love, the doorway to enter in the intimacy of prayer and of the union with him, the school for learning all the virtues, the energy that makes it possible to bear any pain. At the same time, your Founder was tormented by the perception that humanity is not fully aware of this love. “God’s love is not known, it is not appreciated”, he exclaimed.

From this inner experience arose the determination to gather companions who were immersed in the contemplation of that love and were ready to proclaim it.

With the joy and strength of this charismatic belonging, Passionists also know how to proclaim the presence of the Crucified and Risen in the suffering of our day. We know its vastness and devastation in poverty, in wars, in the laments of creation, in the perverse dynamics that produce divisions between people, and the rejection of the weak. Let everything possible be done to prevent the pain of our brothers from remaining meaningless and resulting in a waste of humanity and despair. In the throes of this pain Christ passed, suffering and crucified, living every wound in love and offering meaning to pain offered out of love.

Your Chapter took place at the same time as the convocation of the Synod of Bishops on synodality and not far from the opening of the Jubilee, which has among its main themes, that of *hope*.

The virtue of hope has a special relationship with the charism of the Passionists. Indeed, its theological reason is the death and resurrection of Christ. The blood and water that flow from his heart tells us that beyond death, life continues, love is poured out on humanity in the gift of the Spirit, communicating itself with a power that no-one can eliminate. If nothing can stifle in the human being the capacity to love, then nothing is lost, everything rediscovers meaning and value, everything is saved. Hope is grounded in this certainty of faith.

Be drawn also by the solicitude of the Virgin Mary who, at the dawn of her special mission in the Father’s plan for salvation, set out in haste towards the mountain, where she gave herself in helping her elderly relative. Declaring herself a servant of the Lord, she placed herself at the service of her neighbour and was proclaimed Mother of the Lord by her cousin Elizabeth.

Following the example and through the intercession of the Virgin Mary – who, on Calvary, before her dying Son, lives “the deepest ‘kenosis’ of faith in human history” (Saint John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater*, 18) – the Passionists live their consecration and mission, aware of the urgency of spreading the message of salvation. It is not the haste of the clock, *krónos*, but that of grace, *kairós*, of the love that runs to reach its goal, like the wave of the sea that hastens to touch the shore.

A love that is expressed with the word that is the echo of the Word of truth, with the gesture of lifting up the poor and needy, or with the simple silence of staying close to those who suffer.

May God bless each one of you, your Congregation and your mission!
