



"The Resurrection" – Pencil drawing by Tito Amodei cp

Easter greetings. 2008

To my dear brothers in the Congregation and to all our brothers and sisters of the Passionist Family

We've had a veritable rainbow of liturgical feasts from Christmas last to a very early Easter at the start of spring. In this narrow time-frame we've been better than ever able to appreciate the relationship between the Incarnation event (the birth of Jesus) and his life's conclusion as he offers himself on the Cross. This conclusion was Jesus' supreme act of love toward his Father and for us.

This final salvation event of our Lord's life on earth, his death on the Cross and burial in a tomb, far from being a definitive conclusion, represents an end and a new beginning. In Jesus are stitched together the Old and the New Testament: his life, his death and the new life; his crucifixion and death and his now being the Resurrected Crucified One: *"You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified."* (Mk 16:6) Salvation history with the Pasch becomes the history of love within the very life of the holy Trinity. The Incarnation of Jesus is born of the desire for love and salvation within the Trinity and the work of the holy Spirit, as the angel reassured Mary at the Annunciation, *"The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God."* (Lk 1:35) With her response, *"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, may it be done to me according to your word,"* begins the gestation of the Son of God within the most pure womb of Mary who, thanks to her, will become the Son of Man.

One therefore understands the devotion and love which St. Paul of the Cross had for the Child Jesus asleep on the Cross. The Passion of Jesus begins in Mary his mother's womb when, in the act of conception, even though ever remaining the Son of God he assumes our human nature and pain. Christmas and Easter are thirty three years apart, yet they are close together in the Mystery: He *"will be called holy, the Son of God"* says the angel at the Annunciation; the centurion will beat his breast together with the people under the cross on seeing what had happened, and will confess, *"This man was innocent beyond doubt."* (Lk 23:47)

Jesus wants his disciples to understand what is about to happen during the last week of his Passion and the Pasch, since they must later pass this on to the Church and to us. In the intimacy of the cenacle he will be "the Master" and he'll open their hearts: *"I have eagerly desired to*

eat this Passover with you before I suffer." (Lk 22:15) The old rite of the people of Israel's Passover on the eve of their liberation from slavery in Egypt when, standing, they ate the roasted lamb with bitter herbs, from a ritual memorial will give way to reality with Jesus' immolation on the Cross. Priest and victim, the immaculate Lamb who offers himself to his Father, will become food and drink at the Last Supper Eucharist, and this is a Mystery which the Church sustains and re-lives as a memorial and which is so proper to our Passionist vocation.

Let us quietly contemplate this wonder: a new life is born on Mount Calvary just as the old world with its sin die away. Death and life coincide and life is born from death itself; here's the grain of wheat mentioned by Jesus in the Gospel which, dying, produces much fruit. This is the Resurrection! The stone covering the entrance to the tomb has been moved., the tomb is empty and glowing with message of life.

I want to invite you to share in the light of the Paschal Mystery, to live the experience of our Congregation and our ongoing process of restructuring with the prospect of a renewed vitality. Some parts of us and of our Provinces, Vice-Provinces and Vicariates will die, but this will be the dawn of a new day. We have to believe in ourselves. Easter invites us to a spirit of hope in the certainty of the Resurrection: *"The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!"* (Lk 24:34)

I wish you all a HAPPY EASTER, even as I encourage you to have faith in those very same words which the resurrected Jesus spoke as he appeared to his gathered disciples, *"Peace be with you. Why are you troubled? Why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet..."* (Lk 24:36-39) Jesus shows himself to them and bids them look at him, at the wounds of the nails in his hands and feet, and this is an invitation to a typically Passionist contemplation which applies also to us.

EASTER GREETINGS to all my fellow Religious of the Congregation, and most especially to our sick and infirm, those advanced in years and those who for one or another reason are going through moments of suffering; fond greetings to my General Consultors and those who collaborate in various ways in the general government; greetings to our Passionist Bishops, the Passionist Nuns and the many Sisters of the various Congregations which find their inspiration in, and share with us, the same charism of the Passion. Greetings also to the Religious and Lay members of our Passionist Family and all those who, through their valuable work collaborate in the life of our communities. Finally, yet perhaps foremost in my heart, greetings to those young people of our Passionist realities, be these Congregations, dioceses or families: I pray for their maturing and capacity to make the wisest judgments for their future lives: may they turn their gaze toward the Crucified One, that they may better understand the power of that love which he bestows upon us.

PEACE TO ALL! May the joy of the Resurrected Christ be in our hearts!

Fraternally,

Rome, at Saints John & Paul

(Most Rev.) Ottaviano D'Egidio

20th March, 2008 – Holy Thursday.

Superior General, C.P.