



RULE OF LIFE

CONFRATERNITY OF THE PASSION

PROVISIONAL RULE OF LIFE

(With Ecclesiastical Approval)

October, 1973

INTRODUCTION

Saint Paul of the Cross is the founder of the Passionist Congregation and the Passionist Nuns. Desiring to include as many of the people of God in the life, spirit and mission of the Passionist Family, he originated and founded the CONFRATERNITY OF THE PASSION, a society of men and women in the world dedicated in a special way to contemplating the Passion of Jesus Christ in sharing in the full life of the Passionist Religious.

Passionist Religious have a Rule of Life handed down to them by Saint Paul of the Cross. In 1755, when the first Confraternity was formed, it received from St. Paul of the Cross himself its Rule. Unfortunately, the original Rule has been lost. Presented in this booklet are some of the key ideas of the Passionist Rule, adapted as a Way of Life for the CONFRATERNITY MEMBERS.

A Way of Life is a guide, an aide. It points to the road that leads to true Christian Life. **This** Way of Life points to the road to true Christian Life in the Passionist spirit. For the CONFRATERNITY MEMBER, for you, the signposts along this road are four.

The CONFRATERNITY MEMBER is a person who:

LISTENS TO LIFE
LOVES LIFE
HEALS LIFE
SHARES LIFE



CHAPTER ONE

The Passionist LISTENS TO LIFE

“IN PRAYER, WE RESPOND TO THE LOVING INITIATIVE OF THE FATHER. LED BY THE SPIRIT, WE UNITE OURSELVES WITH THE PERSON OF CHRIST, ESPECIALLY IN THE MYSTERY OF HIS PASSION. WE CONTEMPLATE THIS MYSTERY IN PERSONAL REFLECTION WHICH LEADS US TO AN EVER-GROWING LOVE. WE SHARE IT IN THE EVENTS OF THE WORLD IN WHICH WE ARE INVOLVED BY OUR LIFE AND WORK.”

.....Passionist Rule, Chapter 3. Paragraph 41

In Sacred Scripture, Jesus asks, “Pray always.” (Luke 18:1) What does this mean? How can you as a CONFRATERNITY MEMBER, in the midst of your daily activities, “Pray Always?”

Prayer does not simply mean the recitation of prayers or worded expressions. It is true that this is praying, but there is **more** to prayer. Prayer means LISTENING TO LIFE. It is the letting in of the Presence of Jesus, and allowing the heart to respond to Him. In this response, union with Jesus is achieved and the energy to live for Him is received. By LISTENING TO LIFE in the Presence of Jesus, and then responding to it, the Power of Jesus’ love reaches your heart and unites and inflames it with life.

LISTENING TO LIFE is being aware of and responding to all created things; it is being aware of and responding to people. St. Paul of the cross, our Holy Founder, is a good example of the one who LISTENED TO LIFE and responded to it. Once, while walking in the monastery garden, the flowers spoke so loudly to him of the Beauty of God that he struck them with his cane and cried out, “Be silent.” On another occasion, Saint Paul was so moved by the sight of one of our sick students for whom the monastery could not afford medical care, that he ordered, “Sell the vessels on the altar if necessary.” He LISTENED TO LIFE, allowed his heart to respond; he prayed always.

Meditation, or silent prayer, is another means of LISTENING TO LIFE. Set aside some time to lengthen your gaze on the mysteries of life, such as suffering, joy, frustration, success. Ponder these mysteries in the Presence of Jesus. Ponder them as He experienced them in His Life, Death and Resurrection. Ponder them in your own life, in the lives of others. Gently listen in union with Jesus, and find yourself expressing the appropriate response.

You can LISTEN TO LIFE by reading from Sacred Scripture or from a spiritual book. Try to read slowly, taking the time to stop, to linger on the meaning, to LISTEN to the lesson being taught; respond to what you hear.

Reciting prayers is another way of LISTENING TO LIFE. Very often, these formal, written prayers may capture exactly what your heart would like to say at a given moment.

LIFE CAN BE LISTENED TO in vocal prayers such as the Rosary. Here, it is not necessary to concentrate on the words of the Our Father or Hail Mary; you know these prayers well, and they come to you automatically. Rather, let these prayers talk to you much the same as music does; become aware of Jesus and LISTEN and respond to Him in His mysteries.

Praying in groups can add force to your personal prayer. The combined faith and love of the group adds another dimension to the response; the combined faith and love of the group can increase your power to LISTEN TO and respond to Jesus.

The Liturgy is the greatest form of expression prayer can take. Here Jesus speaks to us in His Sacred Word; LISTEN TO HIM. Here Jesus gives Himself again to make you one with Him and with others; RESPOND to His giving.

LISTENING TO LIFE will bring you to a LOVE OF LIFE. Your LOVE OF LIFE will bring you to HEAL LIFE when it is injured; TO SHARE LIFE with those less fortunate.

Jesus invites you to “PRAY ALWAYS”.



CHAPTER TWO

The Passionist LOVES LIFE

“BY VIRTUE OF THEIR SPECIFIC MISSION IN THE CHURCH, PASSIONISTS SHOULD TAKE AS THEIR OWN THE WORDS OF ST. PAUL: ‘WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED’ (1 Cor. 1:23) OF WHOM WE PROFESS: HE IS RISEN. JOY IN CHRIST’S RESURRECTION NECESSARILY INVOLVES ACCEPTANCE OF THE CENTRAL PLACE OF THE CROSS IN THE LIFE OF JESUS. IF, THEREFORE, PEOPLE ARE TO SHARE IN THE RISEN LIFE OF CHRIST THEY MUST ALSO

SHARE IN HIS DEATH BY DYING TO SIN AND SELFISHNESS: 'CHRIST ALSO SUFFERED FOR YOU, LEAVING YOU AN EXAMPLE THAT YOU SHOULD FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS.' (1 Peter 2:21)

.....Passionist Rule, Chapter 4, Paragraph 69

As mentioned in the previous chapter, prayer is listening to life in union with Jesus. The spirit and life of the Passionist Community lies in the prayerful contemplation of the Paschal Mystery, that is, the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

All life is a gift from God. Life is to be accepted as it is found, with all its successes, all its failures. Nothing that happens is a mistake, for all life comes from God. The ability to accept and LOVE LIFE as God wills it, to rejoice in its comforts and successes, and to bear lovingly with its crosses and failures comes through the prayerful contemplation of Christ's life and death. In prayer, it will become evident that you have been called to relive in your own life not only Christ's joy and love of His Father, but also His weariness, pain and seeming failure. All have been called to follow Him in all things, but YOU as a Passionist have been called in a special way to walk in His Passion.

Each day brings a different situation; hardship or joy, failure or success. Most important is not the situation in which you find yourself, but your approach to the situation. As a person imbued with the Passionist spirit of life, offer to God in union with Christ Crucified the activities of each day and strive to be aware of Christ's Presence in all circumstances, secure in the knowledge of Christ's support.

Joyfully accept from God the gift of life and the talents you have received. Use your talents to the best of your ability and rejoice in your successes, humbly praising God for all He has given to you.

Often in the mysterious Providence of God, we must fail before we succeed. Christ sometimes accomplished His greatest deeds when from all human standards, He seemed to have failed. If you fail, gracefully accept your failure. Realize that failure too is a part of life, a part of the gift of life from God. In union with the Suffering Christ, reconcile all things in Him.

The gift of life has been given to everyone and yet not everyone LOVES LIFE. Disappointment, poor health, material poverty and spiritual poverty often turn people the other way. They are bitter and resentful; they do not LOVE LIFE. At any moment you too may be tempted to give up. Feelings of despair, of having been betrayed by life may be very strong. You can be weighed down by your mistakes and failures. In these moments, a Passionist will turn to Christ and listen to Him in prayer. As Christ had to suffer and die in order to be raised in glory, we are being asked to do the same thing every day. Only His voice can convince our hearts that sorrow will be turned into joy, failure into success. One who has learned to live with his or her mistakes and failures is the one who truly LOVES LIFE, all life. When the healing power of Christ has touched your life, you will be compelled to use this power to heal others.

“Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened and I will give you rest.”
(Mt. 11:28)



CHAPTER THREE

The Passionist HEALS LIFE

“WE SHARE IN THE JOYS AND STRUGGLES OF MANKIND IN ITS JOURNEY TOWARD GOD. BECAUSE WE ARE AWARE THAT THE PASSION OF CHRIST CONTINUES IN THIS WORLD UNTIL HE COMES IN GLORY, WE DESIRE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DISTRESS OF PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE NEGLECTED AND THE POOR, TO OFFER THEM COMFORT AND TO RELIEVE THE BURDENS OF THEIR SORROW. WE SEEK TO OVERCOME THE CAUSES OF HUMAN SUFFERING BY THE POWER OF THE CROSS, THE WISDOM OF GOD. THE GOAL OF OUR INVOLVEMENT IS THAT ALL PEOPLE MAY SHARE IN HIS SUFFERING AND BECOME LIKE HIM IN HIS DEATH THAT ALL MAY ATTAIN TO THE GLORY OF HIS RESURRECTION.”

.....Passionist Rule, Chapter 1, Paragraph 3

As a member of the Confraternity of the Passion, as a person who loves life, you are challenged to look into the eyes of men and women who run away from life confused and wounded. You are asked to HEAL the wounds; ease the confusion. You are asked to make their lives lovable.

So many people feel that they are worthless; others are social outcasts; some have been injured and are bitter and filled with hate; others are lonely. Very often gossip cuts and bruises; jealousy runs rampant. Our young brothers and sisters are growing up in a fearful period in history when the legitimacy of every person and the integrity of every institution are questioned. There is no control; they are enslaved to their peers and they are confused. All these people, the young and the old, the rich and the poor, all are crying

out for HEALING. They are sick in spirit. How can you HEAL them; how can you help them to love life? Christ is the way.

When Christ was physically present on this earth, He HEALED many persons from illnesses of the body. But He HEALED many more from illnesses of the spirit. Christ HEALED them, not by long sermons on sin, not by strong corrections. Rather, He helped people to change by His very attitude towards them. He accepted them, was present to them and was willing to suffer for them.

In your daily activities, at work, at home, at school wherever, strive to accept ALL your brothers and sisters as they are. Their faults and failings may be very evident, but keep in mind that you too have faults and failings, which may, thanks be to God, not be so evident. Rejection of these people only hastens their journey into the arms despair and hate; gentle acceptance can bring them into the happiness of Christian peace and life. Take the time to stop, to talk, to BE with these people. Their only hope for a cure from their sickness in spirit is friendship, acceptance and understanding; YOU can be their medicine.

HEALING is often a long and slow process and requires great patience and perseverance. The effort to understand and communicate with others can be painful. There are times that, like Christ, you may even be rejected by those you try to HEAL. In union with him, be willing to give to the very end realizing that your rewards may be few and your disappointments many. Your only concern must be to convince others that they are worthy of your love and respect because Christ suffered and died on the Cross for them as well as for you.

When you have restored the self-esteem of others, when you have turned their bitterness into love and their despair into hope, you will have given them the greatest gift you have to offer. Through the HEALING power of Christ in you, you will have HEALED their wounds, eased their confusion, and made their lives lovable.



CHAPTER FOUR

The Passionist SHARES LIFE

“IN A WORLD WHERE THE UNJUST DISTRIBUTION OF GOODS IS A CHIEF SOURCE OF DIVISION, HATRED AND SUFFERING WE WISH OUR POVERTY TO BE A WITNESS TO THE TRUE VALUE OF THE GOODS OF THIS WORLD. AS FAR AS POSSIBLE WE INTEND TO USE OUR POSSESSIONS FOR THE RELIEF OF SUFFERING AND THE INCREASE OF JUSTICE AND PEACE AMONG PEOPLE.”

.....Passionist Rule, Chapter 1, Paragraph 12

Through prayer and meditation on the sufferings of Jesus Christ, you will come to understand the personal love of Jesus Crucified for all people. You will come to understand that the love of Christ has given meaning to life. Love the gift of life, heal the gift of life and live in such a way as to witness to this love of life through SHARING with others freely; gratuitously. Endeavor to SHARE your love of life through Christ Crucified. Similarly, try to be aware of your own needs and always be willing to accept the love of Christ Crucified as manifested through the help of others. Confraternity members, Passionist's SHARE; they give; they receive.

Material goods are not to be shunned as evil or vile. Rather, praise God for the blessings that have been bestowed upon you. Yet, at the same time, strive not to be attached to temporal goods. As the need presents itself, try, to the best of your ability and within reason, to be willing to SHARE what you have with those members of the community who are in need. Following the admonition of the Bishops at Vatican II, as far as is reasonably possible, become involved in various programs and drives that fight to better social and economic development in the local community, the state, the country and the world. As one who loves life, be willing to SHARE the good things of life with the less fortunate as a sign of love for your brothers and sisters in Christ Crucified.

Try to develop a sensitivity to the needs of others. This will not always be another's need for material goods, but rather a need for the less tangible things of life. Often the greatest thing we have to SHARE with others is our time. To heal the lonely, the troubled, the sick demands that we freely give of our time; time that we would prefer to spend on other things.

You should consciously strive to develop an attitude toward SHARING based on and motivated by your love for Christ Crucified and the realization of the brotherhood of mankind in Christ. Your attitude should be one that seeks to relieve unjust suffering in the world of Christ's Body.

SHARING one's goods or one's time should be done without seeking return. Yet, be aware that to SHARE means to receive as well as to give. It means being open to helping others and to being helped by others. SHARING is giving and receiving. You SHARE

because you love the gift of life enough to make otherwise drab, unpleasant lives loveable and at the same time remain aware of your own needs and be open to the SHARING offered by others.

Christ on the Cross, totally abandoned and stripped of everything, is a perfect example of one who has SHARED all things. His time, His few possessions and ultimately His life were SHARED, freely given to mankind in total love. As a person dedicated to and meditating on the love of Christ Crucified for you and all men, freely and gratuitously SHARE with others what you have gained materially or otherwise from the sacrifices of Jesus Christ, and be open to receiving from others what they have gained from those same sacrifices of the same Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

MAY THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST
BE EVER IN YOUR HEARTS!

