



# Passionist Prayer and Spirituality: A Brief Introduction

At the heart of Passionist spirituality is contemplation of the Passion – the suffering and the Cross - of Jesus Christ. It is vital to understand this correctly. St Paul of the Cross called the Passion the most overwhelming example of the love of God - it is this overwhelming love which we contemplate. Our spirituality is simple but very, very deep. St Paul of the Cross compared it to a bottomless ocean and said that “the Passion will teach you everything.”

## Our Love for the Crucified

By contemplating the Passion we draw close to the self-emptying love of Christ. This in turn helps us to love God and neighbour, to turn to the crucified ones of our world and to respond to them with a love which comes from Christ within us. Passionist spirituality should always have an outcome in our relationship with others, especially those who are suffering in any way. In this way we can then go out and witness to and preach the Good News.

## Contemplation and Meditation

How do we contemplate the Passion? There is no set formula - different things will help different people. Some find it helpful to meditate on the Stations of the Cross, or the Sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary for example. Thoughtful reflection on a crucifix, a painting or an icon is helpful. Of course the Passion in the Scriptures and in the Eucharist is always central.

## Silence, Solitude, Fasting

Silence and solitude have traditionally been key aspects of Passionist spirituality - making time to be alone with God. Fasting on Fridays is an ancient Christian tradition, and is one way of especially remembering the Passion on the days associated with Good Friday. A pause for a moment of prayer at 3pm is another way.

## Meditating on the Gospels

A good way of prayer is to use the Passion narratives of the Gospels, for example the last three chapters of Luke's Gospel. Set aside some quite time, introduce your prayer by asking the help of the Holy Spirit, then read a few verses. Remain in silence with these verses, letting them speak to the depths of your heart. The next day, move on to the next few verses, or if you want to go deeper into the text, repeat the same verses for a few days. As you consider what the verses are saying, always read them through the lens of the love of God.

## Connecting with Daily Life

In these ways we can connect our prayer, our contemplation and meditation, with our daily lives, and see the ongoing Love of God and Passion of Christ in the lives and sufferings of ourselves and others, as well as local and world events.