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Fr. Theodore Foley, C.P.



THE PASSIONISTS

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Editor's Corner

BRIDGES AND DOORS

We take for granted bridges and doors—simple things. Yet, as this issue of *Compassion* may indicate, they describe human qualities and situations so well.

Our first story is about a Passionist priest, Father Theodore Foley, a “bridge person.” As its General Consultor and Superior General, he helped the Passionist community worldwide and many others through the turbulent 1960s and 70s. Quiet and unassuming, he was not someone who made his authority felt, yet his balance and unfailing kindness kept the members of his community going in difficult times.

Since his death in 1974, many think of him as a saint.

Father John Nyaaga, a Passionist from Kenya, usually begins the story of his involvement with HIV/AIDS at a door, where someone comes to ask his help. “How must I respond?” he asks. “They call me Father.”

During his lifetime, especially in his last years, Father Victor Donovan urged visitors to put up a “Door Cross” at their door, adapting the Jewish tradition of the mezuzah, a scroll which Jews put on their doors to remind them to live God’s law going out and coming in.

The doors of our lives open to wider worlds than ever today, as we face continued violence in the Middle East and multiple problems in the family of nations. Facing life through the Cross of Jesus can guide our response.

Victor Hoagland, C.P.

Father Theodore Foley (1913-1974)

Bridge over Troubled Waters

By Victor Hoagland, C.P.

From May 7 to 13, 2006, members of the North American Passionist Province of St. Paul of the Cross and affiliate members met in a provincial chapter to elect leaders and plan for the future. Among its resolutions the chapter endorsed a proposal requesting that Father Theodore Foley, a member of St. Paul of the Cross province and former superior general of the community, be considered as a candidate for canonization. Father Ottaviano D'Egidio, the present superior general of the Passionists in Rome, where the process would have to begin, warmly endorsed the proposal.

Why present Theodore Foley as a candidate for canonization 32 years after his death? One reason is that sometimes only with the passage of time does the greatness of a person and his contribution become apparent. Appreciation for him has steadily grown over time, for he exemplifies the kind of spirituality today's church and today's Passionists need to face an uncertain future.

What kind of spirituality does Fr. Theodore exemplify? He was a bridge person in the difficult transitional times that came with the Second Vatican Council who sustained the Passionist Community and many others in the church. Bridges over turbulent rivers or impassible chasms get little attention, but without them no one crosses over. Today, the church realizes more and more its need for the quiet, steady, loyal holiness that Theodore Foley exemplified to make its pilgrim way. Rooted firmly in the past, he reached out to the future with heroic Christian hope.



Fr. Theodore with mother and father.

Born and raised in the Springfield, Massachusetts, of a devout Irish-Catholic family, Daniel Foley was the first child of Michael and Ellen Bible Foley. Three years after he was born, the couple welcomed another child—a daughter, Marie. Likeable and popular, he grew up in the friendly, settled North End neighborhood of Springfield, then a thriving industrial city in America’s northeast. He went to Sacred Heart parochial school there and was nourished by the rich devotional life and ordered piety that emanated from Sacred Heart Church.

Contacts with Passionist priests who gave a mission at Sacred Heart and weekend retreats at the recently built Passionist Retreat House in West Springfield fostered a desire in young Daniel to serve the church as a priest. He entered the Passionists in 1927 at the age of 14.



Boys' Retreat, Passionist Monastery, West Springfield, 1926. Daniel Foley is in the center of the second row.

The Passionists, then 75 years in America after their foundation from Italy, were growing along with the immigrant nation and between 1900 and 1930 the community became a strong force in the American church. Young recruits, sons of Irish, German, Polish, Slovak and Italian immigrants, came to the community from parishes where Passionist missionaries had preached.

Along with the witness of their preaching, the Passionists were a community known for their saints. Their founder, St. Paul of the Cross, was canonized in 1867. The young Passionist student, St. Gabriel, was canonized in 1920, and Catholics of the youthful nation were strongly attracted to the young saint.

In this same era, in 1921, the American Passionists made a dramatic move beyond their own country by sending missionaries into the troubled mountainous province of Hunan in China. Within a decade, 30 Passionists were relating their adventures to their American countrymen through "The Sign" Magazine, begun in conjunction with the missionary venture to China.

Taking the religious name Theodore at his religious profession on August 15, 1933 the young Springfield native found genuine happiness in his years of Passionist formation. He welcomed the regime of prayer, study and simple human activities that came with the disciplined Passionist life-style; it appealed to his natural love of order and balance. He seemed made for such a life.

Certainly, his classmates, teachers and superiors in those days thought he was. A classmate, Fr. Nicholas Gill, recalls that Theodore "instantly stood out as a gracious, cheerful, friendly person willing to help you in any way. His obedience was as perfect as any religious I've seen in my years in the order. But he did things in such a quiet way that you could miss it if you didn't see him day in and day out. We all had the greatest respect and love for him."

Ordained as a priest in 1940, Fr. Theodore was sent to Catholic University of America by his superiors who recognized his intelligence and his spiritual giftedness. Obtaining a doctorate in theology, Theodore spent eight years as a beloved teacher of Passionist seminarians.

Fr. Flavian Dougherty, later provincial superior of the eastern province of the Passionists, recalled:

“How will any of us who were privileged to be his students forget the picture of that pudgy face before us; the blackboard as backdrop, completely full with the outline of the matter to be treated; his habit a bit chalky from his early morning labors; his ever-present smile; his indefatigable patience with each and every one; his absolute security in that role, so that no over-bright, aggressive student or any under-developed, hopeless case could threaten or disturb him.”

Students of Fr. Theodore saw him as teacher more than a scholar, whose purpose was not to lead them into a dry intellectual world or impress them with his own learning but to bring them to God, the source of truth.

His was a theology of “genuflecting and adoring,” a theology for deepening faith and strengthening union with God, a contemplative style of theologizing, which was congenial to his own mind and personality. He himself preferred resting and delighting in truth rather than searching and questioning what still was unresolved. His mind, rather than inquiring and far ranging, was simple and intense.

Committed to the solid tradition of St. Thomas and to the Neo-Scholastic theology current in his time, Fr. Theodore was challenged by

the theological upheaval that came with Vatican II, when theological positions he firmly held were questioned or reinterpreted. His own personality and theological style led him to approach new ideas slowly.

Universally admired by members of his province, Theodore was a teacher, spiritual director, and then superior of the large Passionist community of St. Paul of the Cross, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



Attending Vatican Council with Bishop Quentin Olwell, C.P.



Welcomed to
the Philippines.

In 1958, he was elected General Consultor of the worldwide Passionist community with headquarters in Rome. In 1964, he was elected Superior General of the Passionists, a position he held till his death in 1974.

The last period of his life as leader of his congregation was the most demanding of all for him. For one thing, he had never been outside the northeastern part of the United States, and the Passionists were growing as a worldwide community. Numbering 3,500 members when he arrived in Rome in 1958, the community had spread recently to Japan, New Guinea, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and the Philippines. A surge of vocations in Communist-dominated Poland brought about a new province there.

During Fr. Theodore's term as Consultor the congregation spread to New Zealand and South Africa, to Ecuador and El Salvador, Paraguay and South Korea. Later, as Superior General, he would see the Passionists enter Panama and Honduras, Switzerland and Kenya.

The majority of its members were in Europe and America, but the Passionists were now growing rapidly in Asia, Africa and South America. In 1968 the community reached its peak membership of 4,152 religious.

Much of Theodore's time was spent visiting far-away houses and members, presiding at provincial chapters, settling questions and difficulties that arose among the religious, and representing the interests of the congregation in Rome. The task required long hours of travel, correspondence and patient listening, which engaged him for 16 years.

These years would not be ordinary years. He arrived in Rome when the community was dealing with the aftermath of World War II, and guided it through the 1960s and 70s, when the western world experienced turbulence and social unrest. After the relatively complacent 1950s, a decade of youth protests, political confrontations, assassinations, anti-establishment and anti-war demonstrations shook the West. Violence erupted in the large cities of America and elsewhere. A mood of uncertainty increased in the 1960s; traditional values came into question, and church membership, pollsters reported, was declining rapidly in western society.

For many, the Second Vatican Council, called by Pope John XXIII, raised the promise of new energy and hope. But as Cardinal Newman observed after studying the early councils of the church, "It is rare for a council not to be followed by great confusion,"



A world of surprises!

Few expected the Cardinal's insight to be borne out so dramatically after Vatican II. The Council shifted the church's approach to authority, prayer, ministry, and the relationship of Christians to the world. As it closed, bishops and religious superiors had the difficult task of implementing its programs in their own dioceses and religious communities.

Much of Fr. Theodore's work as general superior of the Passionists after 1965 was to implement Vatican II in his worldwide community. Through general and provincial chapters, he led his religious in the delicate and painstaking process of "aggiornamento."

From country to country, he found his own community increasingly divided by the dramatic changes of the 1960s and the challenges of Vatican II.

Like Catholics everywhere, Passionists saw the Council in different ways. Some called for radical restructuring; others looked for a revival

of traditional ways. The debates and questioning that marked the sessions of Vatican II took on new intensity as they were continued in local chapters and community meetings of Passionists all over the world.

Fr. Theodore was called on constantly by one religious or another, by one province or another, to interpret, legislate, correct, explain, or intervene as superior general. He was pulled from above as well as below as various Roman congregations grappled to settle these same questions and implement Vatican II's general teachings on religious life in the years immediately following the council.

"These are days when we are asked to do many things all at once by the different Roman congregations and I wish I could project myself into time about ten years, and be able to look back on all these simultaneous projects as a fact accomplished. However, I suppose that this is part of God's purification in our lives and we have to accept it and do our best for the future of the congregation and the future of the church," he wrote to Fr. James Patrick White, then provincial of the western province of American Passionists.

For someone of his measured peaceful temperament, who preferred a quiet peaceful pace, who avoided confrontation and questioning, who loved the past and found contentment in the religious life he had led, the changes that followed Vatican II had to be difficult.

Yet, "he was convinced that change was necessary," says Fr. Paul Boyle, later superior general of the Passionists, "and much of his time was spent reassuring those who found change difficult, and in moderating the excesses of people who wanted radical change to take place."

"Try to stay calm and not be upset by what is going on around the world," he wrote in a typical letter to a religious disturbed by the times. "It's a time of great upheaval and discussion and the failure at times to arrive at any concrete solution is very disheartening. However, we have to pass through this."

He himself suffered from the times. "He suffered very much in the time after the Council, even though he never showed it, because he feared for the unity of the congregation," writes Padre Pancrazio Scanzano, then provincial of an Italian province. "And when the special general chapter (1970) and the first synod of the congregation (1972) and especially our international congress at Brussels (1973) resulted in the understanding he had suffered for and desired so much, he rejoiced with joyful recognition to our Holy Founder and with esteem for all his brethren."

The times needed a bridge person, and that was what he was. He was not a visionary clearly envisioning the future and articulating the way to it. His great gift was his steady hope nourished in prayer and faith in God. Like the popes who presided during Vatican II, he chose to remain in the background, but at the same time he was a symbol of unity for his brethren. A bridge person, he had respect for all, and his quiet, sure presence, his nonpartisan, uncontrolling manner helped the Passionists, and through them, the parts of the church they serve, to journey in difficult times.

Fr. Flavian Dougherty, the Passionist Provincial of Theodore's native province, expressed his spirit well at the time of his death:



“When systems are changing and unprecedented events are taking place, then it is necessary to have a man so strong that he can be a peacemaker, so secure that he can be confronted with the most troublesome events and people and yet be gentle, so trusting that he can be non-directive and still effect change. Above all, so prayerful that he can use the power of God instead of his own.” †

“Ingima?” “How are you?”

By Victor Hoagland, C.P.

“Ingima?” “How are you?” Father John Nyaaga says in his native Luo language as he opens the door of the Passionist residence in the village of Tonga near Lake Victoria, Kenya, in Africa.

“Angima!” “I am fine!” comes the answer. Often enough, today the one at his door may not be fine at all.

HIV/AIDS, which has reached pandemic proportions through the African continent today, has likely touched the person knocking at the priest’s door. The scourge that began its dreadful march through the continent in 1982 now causes about 12 deaths a month, mostly men, in the area served by the four parishes staffed by eight African Passionists.



Fr. John Nyaaga, C.P.

Arriving in Tonga in 1998, Father John, whose father was a catechist, fully expected to spend his ministry catechizing and building up the church through the celebration of the sacraments. Now, it's the sacrament of the anointing of the sick he finds himself celebrating regularly, as he tends to those caught in the web of a disease that is decimating Africa's population.

To begin with, the priest drives a four-wheel Toyota truck, the only means of transportation for most of his neighbors scattered throughout the countryside or in small villages. The visitor at his door often needs a ride to a clinic for a sick family member or friend and they turn to the priest, whose truck becomes their ambulance. "It's also their hearse," the priest says, "when they want to bring a loved one home for burial. These days I find myself driving for hours."



His efforts don't end there, either. "Every other knock at our door is that of an orphan looking for food, school fees or other necessary items for life. They tell me that since they have lost their father, the one who provided for them, now I'm their father. So what can I say? They're right; isn't that what I say I am? --- their father?"

Besides aiding those who suffer from the disease as well they can, the Passionists of Kenya are helping the large numbers of widows and orphans in their region—more than 1,000 of them

Kenyan fishing boats.

in their four parishes—and planning ways to empower them to become as self-sufficient as possible. Instead of orphanages for the children, they are trying to settle children in the homes of relatives and friends when they can, to ensure that they be raised in a healthy family situation and learn a trade.



They encourage the many widows to undertake small businesses. “We are near the lake region that’s rich in fish,” Father John says, “and so we advise the women to buy some fish from the fishermen and sell it in the marketplace, to bring vegetables, onions, tomatoes, maize, beans and rice, to offer for sale. Just a small beginning is all we ask. Then, as they learn how to earn something for themselves, we urge them to help someone else learn too.”

Poverty caused by HIV/AIDS has led many impoverished African women into prostitution, which only aggravates the situation throughout the continent.

The community offers what resources it can. For the future, the Passionists in Kenya are looking for ways to establish a system of micro-banking to make some loans available to those in need to get on their feet and become independent. Recently, Fr. John spent some months at Bonaventure House in Chicago, studying American methods for dealing with people with HIV/AIDS and managing the disease. He also met with government and non-governmental agencies involved in alleviating the pandemic. His hope is that drugs available in first-world countries become more available to the millions of Africans afflicted with the disease and that the funds provided do not get swallowed up in excessive government bureaucracy.

“As Passionists, we have to meet people where they are,” he says, “we are members of a religious congregation that sees the suffering face of Christ up close in the poor, the needy and the marginalized of our time. We preach a gospel of hope and that means helping people in their human needs. In my native language, when we say “Ingima?” “How are you?” we see a brother or sister there before us. We must open our door of our hearts to them.” †

Our Muslim Sisters and Brothers: Some Thoughts and Hopes

By Joseph A. Gannon

Can Muslims, Christians and Jews live in peace? Today we wonder if it's possible, but a look at the past and a story from the present may give us hope.

In his "*Medieval Essay*" Christopher Dawson points to a period around 1000 AD when Muslim, Christians and Jews lived in a relationship that produced a flowering of civilization.

"The cosmopolitan character of the Mediterranean culture is to be seen at its best in the intellectual cooperation among Muslim, Jewish and Christian scholars which bore fruit during this period in a great flowering of Arabic science and philosophy. This was essentially an international movement which extended from central Asia to Spain and North Africa. Although nominally Arabic, it was based on the tradition of the Greek culture transmitted by Syriac scholars and developed as a common activity of Muslims, Christians and Jews.



Crusaders and Muslims in battle.

It was the era of Muslim scholars like Avicenna, in scholasticism; Alhazen in science, Jewish scholars like Avencebrol in scholasticism and poetry --- all of whom wrote in Arabic though not all were Arabs. Avicenna was Persian, Avencebrol was Spanish and Alhazen came from Egypt. Later, the Jewish scholar Maimonides (1135-1204) provided foundations for Thomism.”

According to Dawson, Islam was the leader in this international age when philosophy and science flourished.

The Muslim tradition, history teaches, should not be typed as essentially warlike or intolerant, just as the Jewish or Christian traditions cannot be labelled in those terms.

According to James Turner Johnson, in his article “Jihad and Just War” in the magazine *First Things*, the authentic concept of Jihad, invoked by terrorists today to justify violence, refers to the believer’s inner spiritual struggle to be righteous in relationship with others, not a call to war and violence. “The classical Islamic conception of jihad in the sense of warfare comes, not from the Qur’an directly (where the term is used in reference to the believer’s inner struggle for righteousness), but from the jurists of the early Abbasid period (late 8th and 9th centuries...”

When we look at history and authentic Islamic spirituality, it challenges some of today’s inter-cultural antagonisms. We see a religious tradition that is creative, that calls for loving God, and loving our neighbour as we love ourselves— captured in the phrase “God is Love.”



Statue of Moses Maimonides, Cordoba, Spain

Certainly, history with its wars and crusades, influences our attitudes today. But we must emphasize the positive and remember the good that has been accomplished.

We have examples from today to give us hope. One is the story of the Trappist monks from the Monastery of Notre Dame de l'Atlas in Tibhirine, Algeria, a story told in John Kiser's book *The Monks of Tibhirine. Faith, Love and Terror in Algeria* (New York 2002)

In March 1996, members of one of Algeria's most active Islamic groups, who were demanding a release of prisoners by the French government, kidnapped seven Trappist monks. Negotiations failed and the monks were killed in May, causing an outcry and a considerable loss of support from even the kidnappers' backers.

At the June 2nd funeral in a packed Basilica were the last two elderly survivors of the Trappist community, the Pope's representative, the entire diplomatic corps and ordinary Algerians who filled the Basilica to capacity.

At the graveside the next Tuesday were neighbours from the area, the Sufis from Media and beyond, local imams and mayors who had come to say goodbye. The two old monks who were survivors had often attended the funerals of the villagers. It was now their turn to be consoled. The next day the women came to mourn.

In his account of the tragedy, Kiser cites an anonymous University of Algiers professor as saying, "One day, those seven monks will be considered saints by Moslems, Christians and Jews."

As Abdurrahman Wahid wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* (12/30/05), to counter fundamentalists' strategies, "the combined weight of the vast majority of peace-loving Muslims and the non-Muslim world (must come to) bear in a coordinated global campaign whose goal is to resolve the crisis of misunderstanding that threatens to engulf the entire world...(whose) goal must be to illuminate the hearts and minds of humanity and offer a compelling alternate vision of Islam."

More than ever, we need to live in the spirit captured in the opening line of St.Francis' famous prayer. "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace." ✚

Joseph A. Gannon writes from Levittown, New York.

The Mark on the Door

By Victor J. Donovan, C.P.

It is commonly believed that beggars, seeking food from door to door, have a system of leaving an identification mark upon a home where they have once found people sympathetic to their requests. This mark serves to inform their fellow travelers where they too may expect to find satisfaction for themselves.

God seems to have had a similar plan in mind when he commanded the Jewish people to mark the outside doorposts of their homes with the sacred sign of the Mezuzah (a Hebrew word for 'doorpost'). This is a metal tube affixed for all to see at the right side of the entrance into most Jewish homes. Rolled up inside this narrow metal container is a scroll with the words of the Book of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21 written upon it. By these words, the Jews bind themselves to God's law while God, on his part, guarantees his constant blessing upon their daily lives.

God's blessing is described under the figure of sending "the early rain and the late rain that you may have your grain, wine and oil to gather in...Thus you may eat your fill" (Deut.11:14). The pious Jew affectionately raises his hand to touch this sacred symbol with his forefinger as he enters and leaves his home. He next kisses that finger in public demonstration of his love for God's holy Word, like a priest kissing the Gospel at Mass.



This mark of the Mezuzah is God's way of teaching men that "Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God" (Deut.8:3; Matt.4:4). To men hungering for the food of the soul as well as for the food of the body, this comes as a saving reminder in the world today.



The Mezuzah properly belongs to Jewish homes; yet, Catholics should not be left without an equivalent sign for the sake of the stranger in the street and for their own spiritual welfare. For we have seen our Lord changing the waters of "the early and the late rain" of the Mezuzah into "the wine of the marriage feast at Cana" and then into his precious blood at the Last Supper. We know that God has given us a more sacred sign with which to mark our lives and our homes in the symbol of the Cross.

Christ's blood shed at his circumcision was the "early rain" that fell upon souls parched by the drought of sin. By his agony in the garden and his scourging at the pillar, God willed to soak the soil of human souls further in the effusion of his most precious blood. "The late rain" fell in the last hour of our Lord upon the Cross. Thanks to the soldier who opened the Savior's side with a lance, we have been shown that not one single drop of that blood was held back from us. God has fulfilled his promise to us with a divine prodigality.

The rains of the Mezuzah were promised to the Jews in order that they might have an abundance of grain, wine and oil. Pentecost was the Jewish feast of the harvest. But our Lord wished to raise our minds to a higher and greater harvest ---namely, the ingathering of souls into the kingdom of his Father. Hence, Christ chose Pentecost, the Jewish feast of the harvest, in which to send his laborers into "the fields white for the harvest" of his precious blood. The apostles gathered an overflowing abundance of spiritual fruit in human souls. The Scriptures tell us "And there were added that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). What a sublime fulfillment of the promises made to us in the Jewish Mezuzah!

This is the spiritual manner by which we should come to understand the meaning of that little mysterious metal plate attached to the homes of our Jewish neighbors. Furthermore, it should prompt us to think of a similar sacramental of our own. For what the Mezuzah is to the Jew, the Cross is to us. It is the divine guarantee of God's mercy and protection upon us in return for our love and loyalty to his holy will.

Fittingly, therefore, we can apply the words of St. Paul to ourselves: "And you, when you were dead by reason of your sins and uncircumcision of your flesh, he brought to life along with him, forgiving you all your sins, canceling the decree against us which was hostile to us. Indeed, he has taken it completely away, *nailing it to the Cross*" (Col.2:13,14).

Christ had men nail that decree to his Cross. For what no ordinary Jew could do (namely, fulfill God's will of the Mezuzah perfectly unto death), the perfect Jew from Nazareth, Jesus, King of the Jews, has done by his life, death and resurrection.

The decree was placed there for all humans to read. "For it was written in Hebrew, in Greek and in Latin" (John 19:20). Being true God and true man, Jesus had said, "Behold, I come—in the head of the book it is written of me—to do your will, O God" (Heb.10:7). By his death on the Cross, Jesus had brought the sacred covenant contained within the Mezuzah to its perfect fulfillment.



THE DOOR CROSS

Melvin Wathen, an associate of the Passionist Nuns from Whitesville, Kentucky, is a native carver who makes door crosses from the cedar trees from the nuns' lands. The reddish cedar wood, with its mixture of light and dark colors, is a powerful symbol of resurrection shining through the darkest moments when lived with Jesus.

Even when not seen, the delicate scent makes the presence of the wood felt.

*By your Holy Cross
be with me, Lord,
going and coming,
today.*

*Bless with your love,
all that I see,
everything I do
and say.*

When he bowed his head after saying "It is finished," he had given his divine assurance, once and forever, that our claims to God's mercy would never be rescinded. As a result, the world today stands bathed in the showers of God's grace foretold by "the early rain and the late rain" of the Jewish Mezuzah.

Our Jewish neighbors boldly proclaim to the world their undying love and devotion to God for the natural blessings promised to their fathers. Surely, we Catholics should show no less a love and devotion to the same "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing on high in Christ" (Eph.1:3). In the same position where the Jew places his most sacred symbol, we too should place our Cross. The little metal form of the Cross may be only as small as the three- or four-inch Mezuzah. But it contains the whole abridgement of our entire life in Christ Jesus.

Our Cross is described as our only hope: *spes unica!* Let it therefore be shown as a mark upon the doorposts of our homes, as is the Jewish symbol on theirs. There it will be the first sight we see as we enter, and the last to be seen when we leave.

The Cross need only be three or four inches in size. But when the divine beggar of souls, our Lord Jesus Christ, comes our way at the end of our life, it will be comforting to hear him say, "Everyone, therefore, who acknowledges me before humans, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven" (Matt.10:32). He will see the mark of the Cross, the Mezuzah of our Catholic homes, placed in the same position upon the homes of "those who have received him." †

(Fr. Vincent J. Donovan, C.P. (1908-2004) spent his years working to improve Jewish-Christian relations. He actively promoted the cause of Auschwitz martyr Edith Stein and lived to see the success of his efforts when she was canonized as St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross in October, 1998.)

(Reprinted with permission from Worship Vol. XXXI No.6 May-June 1957)

Passionists at the United Nations

By Kevin Dance, C.P.

Passionists International, representing Passionists throughout the world, is working on three issues at the UN:

1. The cry of Indigenous Peoples for justice and their place in the sun;
2. Migration;
3. the HIV and AIDS Pandemic

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE WORLD MEET IN NEW YORK

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at the UN met for two weeks in May, 2006, to deal with the plight of indigenous women and men in more than 70 countries. The Forum was established to make known their concerns and bring recommendations to the UN so that they might find justice.

Hope, and a sense that 'together we are strong' were obvious as they met to demand that their values and vision be heard by their governments if the Millennium Development Goals are to be met for all people

- They are among the poorest and the most marginal in the world.
- Compared to other groups their health is poorer, their lives shorter, more of their children die before their fifth birthday and too many mothers die bringing new life into the community.
- Their traditional way of life and culture are threatened by corporations and governments grabbing their lands and resources.
- Their human rights are regularly violated.
- Their traditional knowledge is taken and patented for gain by pharmaceutical and drug companies.
- They often find their world view, built on respect for the Spirit and community, threatened by the dominant world view of consumerism and individualism.

To learn more visit <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii>.

HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON HIV/AIDS

May 31 – June 2 saw a gathering of government ministers, NGOs, religious groups, etc. to review the progress made by governments in the commitments they made in 2001 to deal with the terrible scourge of HIV/AIDS that not only takes peoples lives, but destroys families, communities, economies and whole countries.

Every day, 8,000 people around the world die of AIDS.

This global crisis needs global planning and solutions. Each of us and every government must be willing to work together to deal with this crisis facing the world.

To learn more about the meeting go to <http://www.un.org/ga/aidsmeeting2006>

Many Passionist Sisters and Brothers are working with the victims of this pandemic in many countries.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

In September, 2006, the General Assembly will have a dialogue on the topic of International Migration and Development. Heads of State or Ministers of Immigration and Development will participate.



On July 12 a day of consultation was held between Civil Society (NGOs, unions, the private sector, etc.) and the Member States of the UN. The President of the General Assembly, Mr. Jan Eliasson of Sweden, chaired the meeting where ideas were gathered to present to the September dialogue. Migration is one of the burning issues of the day.

Passionists International has taken the lead in bringing together a working group of religious communities to insert into the debate aspects of human dignity and human rights, and to approach development as an issue that is not merely economic, but is people centered.

We are asking our members round the world who work with people affected by migration to send us stories about the human face and the impact of migration on family and community life, trafficking in persons, to Kevin Dance in New York at kvndance@yahoo.com.au so that this information can become part of the discussion. Recently, President Jacques Chirac of France, speaking on migration, said “The solution lies first through development.” He called for innovative financing and other support for countries in Africa to tackle migration at its origins. Approaching migration as a border or sovereignty issue alone will not resolve the need of millions of people who leave their homes to search for a better life and to send money home to support their families. An integral approach is vital to address the question of



why people must leave home in the first place. Again we come to the gross imbalances between the rich north and the impoverished south. ✚

To learn more about Passionists International at the United Nations go to:

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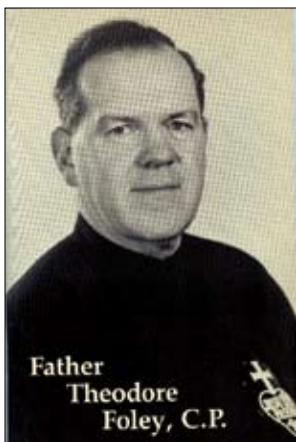
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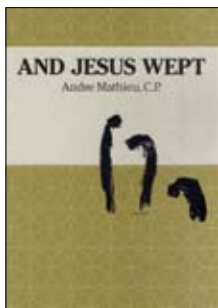


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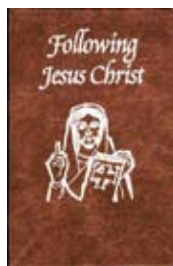
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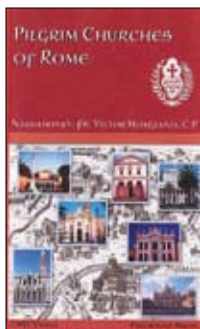
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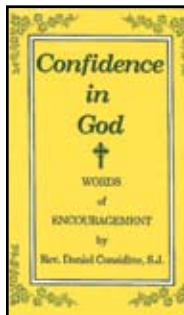
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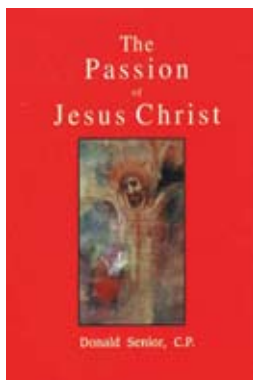
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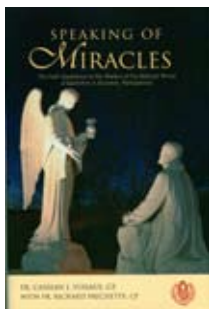
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