

From the Foot of the Cross



The Passionist Nuns of Saint Joseph Monastery in the Diocese of Owensboro KY

Lent 2015

Clothed in Passion-Wisdom

Vestition of Sister Lucia Marie of the Mystical Body of Christ

On February 13, the Passionist feast of the Solemn Commemoration of the Passion, Elizabeth Johnson from Lakeland, Florida, was clothed in our Passionist habit and received her new religious name. To have a white-veiled novice in our monastery is a great joy and a sign of hope for the future of our monastic community. Please continue to keep her in prayer as she begins her two-year novitiate training to prepare for her consecration to God by the five Passionist vows. As the Church calls everyone to renew their appreciation for the vocation of the Consecrated Life, Sister Lucia Marie has written the following article sharing with us about the great sacramental value of the religious habit.



*A*s we continue to share our reflections during this “Year of Consecrated Life,” we turn to consider one of the most visible signs of our consecration: the religious habit. We will look at some of the reasons for consecrated religious to wear the habit and, more specifically, what our habit means to us as Passionists.

In the Vatican II document on consecrated life, *Perfectae Caritatis*, we read that “since they are signs of a consecrated life, religious habits should be simple and modest, at once poor and becoming” (PC #17). This brief statement highlights some major reasons to wear the habit: it is part of our simplicity of life, it reflects our life of poverty and chastity, and it is a valuable sign for the Church, the religious community, and the consecrated individual.

Let us begin with the simplicity of the habit. When a consecrated person wears the religious habit, they lay aside secular attire in favor of a simpler style of dress. Rather than agonizing over what to wear each day, we know precisely how to clothe ourselves and are freed to focus on the more lasting concern of adorning our souls with virtue. The external simplicity of dress fosters an internal simplicity, a turning from worldly matters to focus ever more single-heartedly on the matters of the Lord.

Related to this simplicity of the habit is its expression of religious poverty. The religious habit is simply constructed and the same for each religious within a community, so there is no need for a large and varied wardrobe, which might otherwise amount to a considerable expense. Yet the poverty expressed by the habit is not merely a practical, external matter. It reflects a poverty of spirit, a willingness to give up my own preferences of style or color, in favor of a sharing with the community in a visible sign of commitment to Christ.

Notice, too, that the Church tells us the habit should be modest and becoming, not only poor and simple. By its modest design, the religious habit witnesses to a commitment to chastity, to reserve our entire person, body and soul, for the Lord. At the same time, it is fitting that the habit is becoming, thereby expressing and cherishing an

authentic femininity which is so necessary in our contemporary culture.

Now, let us consider the sign value of the religious habit. The habit is a sacramental, which means it signifies a spiritual reality in a visible manner, and exists to help “prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it” (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1670). What “spiritual reality” does the habit signify? It makes visible to us the reality of the individual’s consecration to God, their vowed dedication to follow Jesus Christ with an undivided heart. This consecration itself is also a sign, reminding the world of God, His love for humanity, and the eternal life He has offered us through His Son. By bringing these ideas to the minds of those who see the religious habit, the sacramental aspect of the habit is at work; as we remember these realities, we are opened to the action of grace.

The sacramental value of the habit is not only for those who see it, however. For us as cloistered nuns who are not often visible signs beyond the walls of our monastery, wearing the habit still serves to remind our sisters in community of our shared ideals. Our sharing of

the religious habit is a very real occasion of bonding and camaraderie as we seek to serve the Lord together within this house of prayer. And to the individual wearer of the habit, it is also an occasion of grace, as it reminds her of who she is called to be for Christ and for His Church.

Finally, what does our community’s habit signify about our vocations as Passionist nuns? Like the habits of all consecrated religious, it certainly represents our poverty, chastity, simplicity of life, and our prophetic witness to God and the heavenly homeland we strive towards. Yet



our habit also displays our uniquely Passionist vow to promote dedication to and grateful remembrance of Christ’s Passion. When our Blessed Mother revealed the form of the habit to our holy founder, St. Paul of the Cross, through several visions, she emphasized that the Passionist religious were to be clothed in black. This stands as a sign of our life of perpetual mourning and grateful remembrance of Christ’s Passion and death, that most exquisite testament of His love for humanity. Similarly, the Passion Sign is a reminder of Jesus’ sacrifice for us, which ought to be continually in the hearts of all Christians even as it is visible upon our habit. As our habits reflect the interior reality we seek to live by our consecration, they also serve to remind those we encounter of the everlasting

In addition to receiving the holy habit today, Elizabeth will receive a new name—Lucia Marie of the Mystical Body of Christ. Her patroness will be Our Lady of Light, and her feast day, May 13th, the feast of Our Lady of Fatima. The name “Lucia” comes from the Latin word for light, and the name “Fatima” comes from an Arabic word which means “a high place from which a beacon of light shines, illuminating the darkness surrounding it.”

We need always to be able to pray at a much deeper level that we may fulfill our mission in the Church. We need Our Lady of Light to share with us the prayer that fills her Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart. For us, the name Fatima can have a special Passionist meaning—i.e., the “high place” of Calvary, from which a luminous Passion wisdom shines out. It is here on this “high place” of Calvary, that the Mother of our Congregation teaches us how to pray, how to be open to the light of the wisdom of the cross, how to make our own the mysteries of her Son, and how to be Our Lord’s helpmate in the work of human redemption.

Excerpt from Mother Catherine Marie’s exhortation at the vestition.



love with which God has loved us, even unto sending His only Son to die for our sins, that we might enjoy eternal life with Him.

To learn more about the Passionist Habit, or about the Year of Consecrated Life, check out our website at www.passionistnuns.org. For more photos of the vestition ceremony visit our blog www.passionistnunsblog.com.



Deo Gratias - Another Postulant!

Meet our newest postulant Christie Anna. She hails from Cincinnati, Ohio and entered the monastery on December 12, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. She graduated from University of Dayton and is fluent in Italian. Among her other duties she is translating documents of our Passionist Italian heritage.

WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO OUR LIFE?

The unique charism of the Passionist Nuns of devotion to and continual remembrance of the Passion of Jesus attracted me to them, above all other religious orders. For me, the Passion of Jesus has always manifested two essential traits of God: His love and His mercy. These two traits above all else drew me to the Heart of Jesus and made me realize that He has an immense love and thirst for all souls, for every one of us. Yet, it deeply saddens Him that so many reject or do not even acknowledge His love. I felt a great desire to console the Hearts of Jesus and Mary and at the same time to be a vessel that God could use to bring His immense love to suffering humanity so that they could know the same love and hope that I have felt. The life of prayer, penance, and reparation here at the monastery was very attractive to me in light of these desires which God put into my heart. Ultimately, here in this community I found an echo of what had already been my own spirituality.

...continued below



Christie Anna, Sr. Lucia Marie, Sr. Mary Veronica (novice directress) and Nora stand beside the relic of the True Cross on Sr. Lucia Marie's vestition day.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO CONTINUE DISCERNING A CALL TO BE A PASSIONIST NUN?

I can say that before coming here, I always had a restless feeling. I saw so much suffering in the world, which is truly a continuance of Christ's Passion in our own day, and I felt helpless to do anything about it. In all humility, I would say that I have never felt more capable of helping others in their needs than I do here, in a life where I can continually offer myself to God in intercession and reparation for the world. Of course, ultimately God's grace is what makes all of these sacrifices effective. But when we are truly doing God's will and following His call, whether that means we are out in the world or in the cloister (God's call is unique for all of us), that's when we can do the most good for the world and reach the deepest union with God. Personally, God has given me the conviction that I am right where He wants me at this time, and I will continue to listen attentively for His voice.

Aims of the Year of Consecrated Life

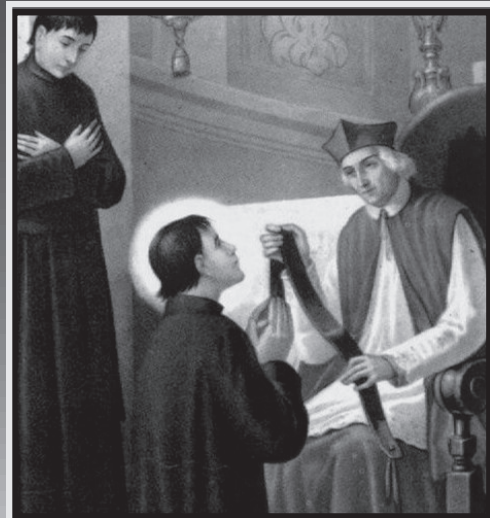
“You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things.”

- Pope Francis' Message for the Year of Consecrated Life

Remembering the Past with Gratitude

Recounting our history is essential for preserving our identity, for strengthening our unity as a family and our common sense of belonging.[...]it calls for following in the footsteps of past generations in order to grasp the high ideals, the vision and values which inspired them, beginning with the founders and the first communities.

Pope Francis' Message #1



Our holy founder, St. Paul of the Cross, was in his 20's when he laid aside his secular clothing and knelt before his bishop to be vested in a simple black habit. As he removed his secular attire, Paul was laying aside everything it stood for—his former way of life in the world—in order to devote himself entirely to God and to the following of Jesus Christ crucified.

To human eyes, the simple ceremony in a bishop's residence seemed to be that of just another penitent devoting his life to God. But to Paul Daneo, being vested in the black habit had a much deeper meaning, a meaning he explained a few weeks later when writing the primitive rule. **“Dearly beloved”, he wrote, “you must know that the main object in wearing black, according to the special inspiration God gave me, is to be clothed in mourning for the Passion and Death of Jesus. For this purpose let us never forget to have always with us a constant and sorrowful remembrance of Him.”**

Paul's first biographer, St. Vincent Strambi, writing only 11 years after Paul's death, sheds further light on the meaning of Paul's vestition. He said that when Paul put on the black habit, he was truly putting on Christ Crucified. For nearly three centuries now, generation after generation of Paul's spiritual sons and daughters have each in turn knelt before their superiors, humbly asking to be clothed in our Passionist habit.

Living the Present with Passion

So, be men and women of communion! Have the courage to be present in the midst of conflict and tension, as a credible sign of the presence of the Spirit who inspires in human hearts a passion for all to be one. Live the mysticism of encounter, which entails the ability to hear, to listen to other people; the ability to seek together ways and means. Live in the light of the living relationship of the three divine Persons, the model for all interpersonal relationships.

Pope Francis' Message #2





Embracing the Future with Hope

I would especially like to say a word to those of you who are young. You are the present, since you are already taking active part in the lives of your Institutes, offering all the freshness and generosity of your "yes". At the same time you are the future, for soon you will be called to take on the roles of leadership in the life, formation, service and mission of your communities.

Pope Francis' Message #3

Our Sisters in formation live a structured life of prayer, study, work and recreation. Their studies focus on classes in human and spiritual development so that they can one day be the leaders of our community. As long as young women continue to answer the call to Passionist life, there will be nuns here praying for you and your intentions.

Do you know a young woman discerning a religious vocation? Please tell her about the Passionist Nuns. Sister John Mary would be happy to send her information about our life and be in touch by email or phone. We have opportunities for visits, vocation retreats and live-ins. This spring we look forward to young women visiting from Indiana University and Bellarmine University. We also hope to have a young graduate from Nicholls State University in Louisiana come for a two-week visit this summer. Most women get in touch with us by filling out the contact sheet on our blog or website.

Please continue to pray that many holy and healthy young women answer the call to be a Passionist Nun!

VOCATION RETREATS IN 2015

June 20-21 and October 24-25

Info at www.passionistnunsblog.com

A SAINT OF THE PASSIONIST COMMUNITY

SAINT VINCENT STRAMBI, Passionist Bishop, was born in 1745. He was already a priest when he joined the Passionists after attending a retreat given by St. Paul of the Cross. After serving as theology professor and in roles of leadership in the Passionists, he was appointed bishop in 1801 but was exiled when he refused to take an oath of alliance to Napoleon. Returning to his diocese after Napoleon's downfall, the saint strove for the spiritual renewal of his priests, religious and laity. On resigning his bishopric, he became an adviser to Pope Leo XII in Rome. After offering his life to God in place of the seriously ill Pontiff, Vincent died on January 1, 1824 and was canonized in 1950. His feast day is September 25.

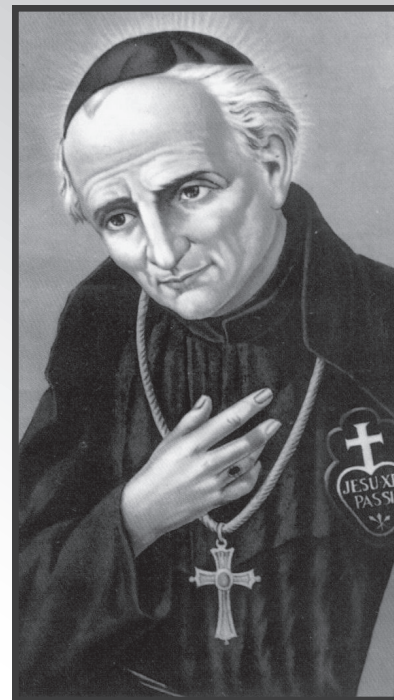
"Jesus frequently went to the Mount of Olives and spent whole nights there in prayer. His prayer ascended to the throne of His Heavenly Father like the fragrance of incense and myrrh.

"Having before us Christ's own example, we should be ashamed not to be able to find time to converse with God. We cannot be faithful disciples, good Christians, unless we are generously dedicated to prayer. The Lord Himself taught us this, and in the garden repeated His teaching, when He said to His disciples: 'Stay here, while I go over there and pray.' And, 'Pray, that you may not succumb to the test.'

"Jesus, addressing His Father in the darkness and solitude of the night, said, 'O my Father, if it is possible, let this chalice pass me by; my Father, all things are possible to you; if you will, take this bitter cup from me.'

"Sons and daughters of the Father and of this Jesus who suffered so much for you, study the way He prays. Humbly tell God about your difficulties, but do not be upset by them. Leave yourselves to God who loves you tenderly and sincerely wills your good. He knows how to accomplish all that is for your good, and has infinite power to do so. Therefore, stay close to God and rest in Him. Apart from Him you will never have peace."

~The Treasures We Have in Jesus Christ, by St. Vincent Mary Strambi, Passionist Bishop



Make a Retreat Near a Praying Community

The Year of Consecrated Life is not only a time of learning about religious life but also a time to spend with Consecrated men and women in prayer. We want to invite you to make a solitude or group retreat in our guest house. Many people, longing for a spiritual get-away, come for solitude and prayer with the option of joining us for Holy Mass and Liturgy of the Hours. See our website passionistnuns.org or call (270) 302-8023.



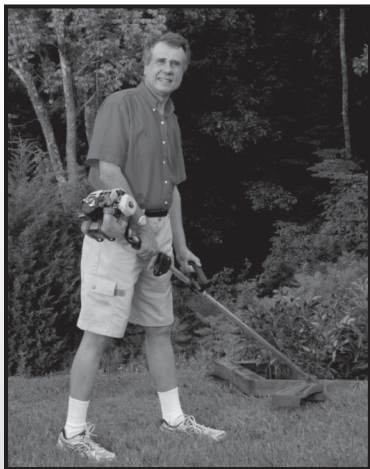
Fr. Eugene Batungbacal, CSSR, (at left) was here on retreat during the feast of his favorite Passionist saint - Blessed Eugene Bosilkov.

Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi enjoyed a day of recollection here last fall.

Two seminarians of our Owensboro Diocese, **Alex French** and **Jamie Dennis**, made a directed retreat in January.



SAINT JOSEPH'S HELPERS



We give thanks to God for the innumerable ways he provides for us through people like you! May God reward all our financial donors, volunteers and staff. We couldn't do this without you!

Jim Toth, brother-in-law of our chaplain, Fr. Ray Clark, began helping out with yard work on Saturday mornings last summer.



Meet our monastery/guest house staff!
Debbie Ward, Paula Casto, Steve Mills and Maria Gayhart.



With Mother Catherine Marie supervising, **Mike Roby** and **Dwayne Roby** help cleanup our overflowing basement!



Barry Aud has cleared our driveway and parking lot after big snows the past two years.

A Loving Remembrance of Our Deceased

MARGUERITE SAUER



Our Sr. Mary Elizabeth lost her last sibling on February 14, 2015, when Our Lord came for Marguerite Emma Sauer, 90. Marguerite is survived by her son Frank I. Mattingly (Linda), and a daughter, Margaret Thompson (Jimmy); 10 grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren, and our Sr. Mary Elizabeth, together with numerous nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her oldest son, John Mattingly (Barbara) who died in 2011.

Because Marguerite and the rest of Sr. Mary Elizabeth's siblings were in high school, dating and getting married before she even started school, her memories of them are sparse. However, she does remember Marguerite as a generous and hard worker, with a happy disposition. She was an excellent cook and had a talent for decorating the home at Christmas.

One incident that stands out among Sr. Mary Elizabeth's treasured memories was the day Marguerite had baked and decorated a beautiful cake for a "cake walk" game at school. "Betty" (Sr. Mary Elizabeth) was beside herself with joy as she picked up the cake and began to dance around with it—an accident waiting to happen. All of a sudden, the cake slipped from the child's hands and splashed to the floor. Amid tears and laughter, Marguerite immediately set to work and baked another cake, saving the day for her little sister.

We would like to thank our chaplain, Fr. Ray Clark, for the spiritual care he so generously offered Marguerite for several years, assisting her particularly in her last days. We are also grateful to Marguerite's daughter, Margaret Thompson, to Kathy Blandford and to Dora Thompson for their visits and concern for Marguerite during her declining years. May her soul find joy and eternal rest in the Merciful Heart of her Savior!

ELMER SCHEPERS

On November 26, 2014, another beloved member of our Passionist Oblate community, Elmer Leo Schepers, 80, was called home to God after a long illness. Survivors include his wife of 59 years, Mary Marcella Howard Schepers, seven children, 22 grandchildren, one great-grandchild, two brothers and many nieces and nephews. Elmer's heart would have been gladdened to see so many of his grandchildren participating in the funeral Mass as lector, server, music ministers, cantor, gift bearers, extraordinary minister of the Eucharist, and pall bearers.



Elmer and his wife Marcella both joined the Passionist Oblates as the Oblate family was originally being formed and founded in 1997. From that point on, they remained active and devoted participants until illness prevented their attendance at the monthly meetings. Besides sharing in many other endeavors with the Oblates, Elmer was involved in several important building projects at the monastery, including the construction of our Passionist Inspiration shop, the chapel in the lower level of the retreat house, and a large garage for our lawnmowers. Elmer and Marcella also generously mowed our abundant lawns and trimmed our bushes for several years, and Marcella was the first manager of the gift shop.

Interested in all things "Passionist", Elmer authored a book about St. Paul of the Cross and another about St. Vincent Strambi. Both can be read as e-books on our website www.passionistnuns.org

At the end, after "fighting a good fight" in his efforts to cope with his life-threatening illness, Elmer surrendered himself to God, making his own the prayer of Jesus: "Father, not my will but yours be done." Throughout his illness, he had been offering his sufferings in union with the Passion of Jesus for the salvation of souls. Minutes before Our Lord came to take him home, his daughter Theresa Alloy was whispering prayers into his ear, while Elmer tried to move his lips in prayer. Surrounding his bed as he gave up his soul to God, his large family sang all the verses of "Amazing Grace." May he now reap the fruits of his faithful Catholic life and his fidelity to his wife and family!

FROM THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

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HOLY WEEK

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Palm Sunday: 8 a.m.

Monday - Wednesday Mass: 8 a.m.

Holy Thursday Evening Mass: 7 p.m.

Good Friday: 3 p.m.

**Holy Saturday
Mass of Easter Vigil: 7:45 p.m.**

**Easter Sunday
Mass of the Resurrection: 10 a.m.**

Dear Family and Friends,

With this issue of "From the Foot of the Cross" we send you our prayerful best wishes for an abundance of the graces of Lent, Holy Week and Eastertide. We particularly hope you can participate in all the liturgies of the "holiest week of the Church year." There we learn again and again that Our Lord's sacrifice on the cross

"is so decisive for the salvation of the human race, that [he] offered it and returned to the Father only *after he had left us a means of sharing in it* as if we had been present there. Each member of the faithful can thus take part in it and inexhaustibly gain its fruits."

(St. John Paul II)

We pray for your needs and intentions, and ask your prayers for ourselves, that this time of Lenten/Easter renewal may change our lives and make them in a certain way, completely "Eucharistic", a life of generous self-giving in union with Jesus.

Thank you so very much for all the ways you assist our community to continue our Passionist contemplative life, and please keep up those prayers for healthy and holy new members!

Mother Catherine Marie and the Passionist Nuns

Please remember us in your Will and help continue our Contemplative Passionist Mission