

Passionist Nuns Celebrate 100 Years in North America

Five weary and sea sick nuns began a new chapter in the Passionist history as they set foot in the North America on April 27, 1910. Their mission was to found the first monastery of Passionist Nuns in the U.S., in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. These “Spouses of the Crucified” would never again visit the monastery from which they came, the monastery founded by St. Paul of the Cross himself in what is now Tarquinia, Italy. The challenge before them was great, but the will of God was clear, and like Mary, the Mother of Jesus, they gave their total “fiat” to what God was asking of them.

Over the next century, eight other monasteries of Passionist Nuns branched forth from the tree of the cross planted by the founding group in Pittsburgh: Scranton, Pennsylvania (now in Clarks Summit); Owensboro (now in Whitesville) Kentucky;



Erlanger, Kentucky; Ellisville, Missouri; Japan, England, Philippines and Korea.

Representatives of six of these daughter and granddaughter houses accepted the gracious invitation of Mother Joyce of Pittsburgh to attend the centennial Mass on July 11. Most Rev. David A. Zubik, Bishop of Pittsburgh, and the retired auxiliary

bishop, Most Rev. William J. Winter, were joined by diocesan and religious priests, including many Passionists, in a glorious celebration. This culmination of 100 years of holy Masses was simultaneously the beginning of the next 100 years in which the Passionist Nuns would participate deeply in the Sacrifice of the Cross perpetuated down the ages through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The next day the Queen of the Passionist Congregation was honored by having the votive Office and Mass of Our Mother of Sorrows. Holy Mass began with a tremendous surprise, as the celebrant presented to the nuns the mission crucifix used in 1738 by their Holy Founder, St. Paul of the Cross, during his first retreat to Mother Mary Crucified’s Benedictine community, 33 years before she became the co-foundress of the Passionist Nuns. After receiving the apostolic blessing, each nun came forward and venerated this most precious relic loaned to them by the nuns in Tarquinia, Italy, the motherhouse of all Passionist Nuns’ monasteries.

Later Rev. Jerome Vereb, C.P., spoke to the group by taking the nuns, with Our Lady, into a deeper appreciation of their Passionist charism. He challenged them to embrace generously their lives of silence, solitude, communal and contemplative prayer, spiritual reading



and self-forgetfulness, so that they, like Our Lady of Sorrows, may bring people to the sacred side of Christ, to encounter love.

A high point during the stay was the visit paid to the Church and Monastery of St. Paul of the Cross where the nuns were warmly welcomed by the Rector, Rev. Gerald Laba, C.P., and the community. St. Paul’s Monastery, founded in Pittsburgh in 1852, was the first monastery of Passionist men in the New World. The Passionist men of the Eastern Province were instrumental in bringing the Passionist Nuns to Pittsburgh in 1910. For these 100 years the Passionists have supported the Nuns both spiritually and temporally.

The centennial celebration was a very joyous and spiritual occasion steeped in gratitude for 100 years of hidden Passionist life in North America. The nuns returned to their monasteries exulting in their existence hidden in the Heart of the Church, encouraged to keep their eyes fixed on their Divine Spouse in the moment of His greatest act of love, ceaselessly bringing souls to this unquenchable font of mercy!