

PASSIONISTS

St. Paul of the Cross Province



One Year After Ordination

By Fr. Cristian Martinez Montalvo, C.P.



One year ago, I stood at the altar and said, “Lord, you know that I love you.” These were the same words spoken by Simon Peter when Jesus asked him, “Do you love me?”—the Gospel proclaimed at my ordination (Jn 21:15–19). At the end of that Mass, with a heart full of gratitude and awe, I echoed Peter’s response, offering it as both promise and prayer.

I entered the Passionist seminary at 17, wanting to share the love God had poured into my life—through my family, my friends, and so many experiences that shaped me. In my twelve years of formation, like Peter, I had moments of fear that made me question, even want to run. But Christ, from the Cross, never stopped loving me. He never stopped calling. And so, aware of my

own fragility, I said then—and I say now—“Lord, you know that I love you.”

Looking back, I’m deeply grateful for those twelve years. They gave me grounding, tools, and a community that helped me recognize Christ Crucified in the lives of others. But the truth is, nothing truly prepares you for the priesthood. The real formation begins when you’re sent—when you’re invited into people’s lives at their most vulnerable, sacred, and human moments.

Humbled By Grace



I’ll never forget hearing confessions during the Novena to St. Ann in Scranton. They came one after another. I felt overwhelmed. Who was I to speak those words of absolution? I felt small—like nothing before God—and somehow, that felt exactly right. I left the

confessional humbled, not just by the trust of those who came, but by the mercy of God working through my hands.



Fragile Beginnings

One of the most unforgettable moments was my first emergency baptism at the hospital. I walked down the NICU hallway and saw a mother seated quietly at the end, holding her tiny newborn. She asked for confession. Then, with trembling words, I baptized her child. I left overwhelmed—not just by the emotion of the moment, but by the sheer gift of being there. Every few months, the parents still send me a photo or a note. It always brings me back to that hallway—and to the God who meets us in life’s most fragile beginnings.



The Power of Presence

Then there was the first time I was called to give the anointing, only to realize I had come too late. The person had just passed. I couldn’t offer the sacrament. But the family looked at me and said, “Father, please, stay and pray with us.” So I did. We stood together in silence and prayer. Once again, I saw how powerful it is simply to be present.

There was another moment, right after several Sunday Masses, when I went to visit a parishioner in the hospital. I was exhausted and unsure of what I would say. I prayed. I anointed. I spoke quietly with the spouse. Hours later, I learned the person had passed peacefully. Even in our weariness, God finds a way to work through us.

A Year of Grace

In just one year, I’ve baptized children, witnessed weddings, preached the Gospel, walked with families in mourning, and celebrated the Eucharist more times than I can count. Each encounter has reminded me of the grace of the sacraments—and of how deeply people hunger for them. These moments have become places where God meets me, teaches me, and humbles me.

I’ve never been more convinced that God is still speaking, still healing, still calling.



And so I keep returning to the words that shaped the day of my ordination, and now shape every day of my priesthood:

“Lord, you know that I love you.”

Passionist Students Reflect on Their Ministry in Puerto Rico

From Haiti to Puerto Rico: A Mission of the Heart

By Daniel Cadet, C.P.

It's been almost six months since I started living in Puerto Rico. I've been immersed in both pastoral and academic experiences while studying theology at the Pontifical Catholic University—La Católica—in Ponce.

At first, I was scared. It was a new culture, and I was joining two different religious communities. But I had faith, and I had already traveled to Haiti, Mexico, and the United States. Those experiences helped me arrive with both confidence and openness.

Living the Passionist Charism

Each day, I depend on the Passionist charism. It renews my spirit and helps me live out Christ's compassion, prayer, and closeness.

At the university, I discovered a warm and welcoming community full of cultural diversity. I had the joy of representing my country among



Bishop Neil Tiedemann, CP, presided over the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist. He stands next to Bishop Luis Miranda, the Bishop of the Fajardo Diocese. Daniel Cadet, CP, is second from the left.

students of many nationalities. I also participated in campus ministry and attended daily Mass with the Dominican sisters.

A Week with the Capuchins

Each week, from Sunday evening to Thursday afternoon, I live with the Capuchin friars. Their simplicity, humility, and life of prayer are deeply inspiring. They've touched my heart and strengthened my passion for religious life. Their way of living reminds me of the beauty of consecrated life in its most fraternal form.

Parish and Community Life

Our local Passionist community of five brothers is vibrant and deeply committed. Their spirit of service constantly inspires me—they're always putting others before themselves.

My involvement in the parish has been a joy. The parishioners welcomed us warmly, and their spirit



After a catechetical staff meeting at Santa Gema parish, we celebrated the anniversary of our Passionist brother, Jonathan Ramos, with a cake.

of solidarity has been moving. One highlight was a Lenten workshop led by our brother Jonathan Ramos, where we made handmade bread together. That afternoon was a beautiful moment of communion and sharing. I felt completely at home, as if I had belonged there for years.



Sr. Dina shares with Puerto Rican catechism children about her mission in Haiti, teaching them prayers in Haitian Creole and Gospel values.

Education and Culture

On Fridays, I visit the Santa Gema School, where I've met some wonderful teachers and students. They welcomed me with open arms, and I gained a deeper appreciation of the local culture and the strong sense of community that blends faith with education.

Another special moment came when I accompanied an AMICO sister who works in Haiti. Each year, she leads a cultural activity with young people. This time, we shared laughter and joy as they learned a few words in Creole, building bonds in a spirit of fraternity.

Founded by **St. Paul of the Cross**, the Passionists are a global congregation called to prayer, compassion, and the memory of Christ's Passion. Discover our worldwide mission at **passiochristi.org**.



A Living Faith

The way people here celebrate their faith has moved me deeply. At Mass, the music and prayers left a lasting impression. The celebration of Holy Week was especially powerful—joyful, prayerful, and rooted in popular devotion. I saw people living their faith authentically, even in the midst of difficulty.

***“This mission is worth living—
and it fills me with joy.”***

This experience is shaping me. I'm learning to adapt, to build relationships, to be flexible, and to remain faithful to my mission. This mission is worth living—and it fills me with joy.



Pilgrimage to the Diocese of Fajardo, Puerto Rico—a personal moment of prayer and connection with God in the Easter season.

We are aware that the Passion of Christ continues in this world until He comes in glory; therefore, we share in the joys and sorrows of our contemporaries as we journey through life toward our Father.
— Passionist Rule and Constitutions, #3

A Vocation Shaped by Mission at St. Gemma

By Samuel Joseph, C.P.

When I learned I would be serving in Puerto Rico, I was anxious. I questioned whether I was the right person for this ministry, especially with young people. I felt clumsy and uncertain. But one Gospel passage came to mind—the Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14–30). It reminded me that my responsibility is to use what I’ve been given, even with my limitations. I trusted that God would make St. Gemma a place of growth—for the community and for me.

This experience enriched me in unexpected ways. It deepened me both spiritually and humanly, and it allowed me to help foster growth in others through presence, service, and shared encounters.



Sharing the Passionist spirit with young hearts

Discovering a Gift for Teaching

One of the most surprising gifts I discovered was a capacity for teaching. I guided youth preparing for Confirmation and worked with the parish school’s religious formation team. At first, I doubted I had what it took, but through God’s grace—and a lot of learning—I found that I could both teach and be taught.



The young people became my teachers too. They taught me to listen, to adapt, and to love. Their faith strengthened mine, and I was reminded that God doesn’t choose the most capable—he enables those he chooses. Through mission, one becomes a missionary.

Bringing the Eucharist to the Sick

Accompanying the extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist was a deeply moving part of this mission. Visiting the sick and elderly, I witnessed firsthand the tender mercy of God. These simple, quiet visits were filled with dignity and grace—moments of sacred encounter with those who are often unseen.

Serving Christ Through the Poor

I also had the opportunity to work with The Happy Givers Foundation, delivering meals to elderly people in difficult living situations. But we didn’t just offer food—we offered presence, smiles, and sincere attention. In these moments, I began to understand our Passionist charism in new ways. The Passion is not only something remembered—it’s something lived today, especially in the faces of those who suffer.

A Word That Transforms Me

Preaching the Word was another area where I grew. Preparing homilies week after week pushed me beyond my comfort zone. But over time, I found a

new confidence in speaking the Word of God. I came to recognize how God speaks through Scripture, through others, and even through my own voice. This was a school of the Word, and it nourished me.

I participated in various parish activities and began to understand what it means to be a man of communion, someone who helps build up a living, breathing community of faith.



Sharing a joyful moment with a parishioner of St. Gemma Parish during a family pastoral activity

Living and working alongside my Passionist brothers gave me a deeper understanding of evangelical fraternity. We shared prayer, meals, joys, and even silences. It wasn't always easy. But it was real. And in that reality, I learned to welcome my brothers as they are—and to be welcomed in return. That mutual self-giving has shaped me.

As a man of great prayer, St. Paul of the Cross wished his followers to pray without ceasing and desired our communities to become real schools of prayer, leading to a deep experience of God.
— Passionist Rule and Constitutions, #37



With Haitian priests during a visit in Puerto Rico

This experience also helped me grow into our Passionist identity. I had the chance to support my brothers in their pastoral projects and to root our presence at St. Gemma in the charism of St. Paul of the Cross. Our founder saw the Passion as the greatest sign of God's love. I've come to see that love more clearly—in the sick, the poor, the young, and the ordinary moments of parish life.

The Passion: Sign of God's Love

This mission helped me deepen my understanding of our charism: to keep alive the memory of our Lord's Passion. St. Paul of the Cross recognized the Passion as God's love made visible and sought to form a community of witnesses through prayer, words, and compassion for those who suffer.

Visiting the sick, serving the poor, teaching, and preaching all embodied this charism for me. The Passion is not just a past event—it's a living mystery, present in the world's sorrows and Christ's comfort.

*At the heart of our prayer is the **Crucified Christ**. Prayerful contemplation on Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection enables us to bring the fruit of that contemplation to those who are **Christ Crucified** in today's world by standing in solidarity with those who suffer.*

Synodal Immersion Experience in Rome

By Jonathan Ramos, C.P.

From October 12–19, I had the privilege of participating in a Synodal Immersion Experience in Rome—a journey that blended pilgrimage, study, and deep reflection. This took place during the second session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican.

Alongside seven other students from Catholic Theological Union (CTU), I joined more than 150 members of the Catholic Education Network to Encounter Rome and Synodality (CENTERS) to learn and practice the spirit of synodality in a tangible way—keeping alive the memory of the Passion.



CTU students gathered at St. Peter's Square for the beginning of a Synodal Immersion Course during the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

Learning Through Encounter

As part of CENTERS, we participated in two “synodal teach-ins” designed to deepen young adults' commitment to synodality through communion, participation, and mission.



CTU students at a synodal engagement with delegates in the Jesuit General Curia

On Monday, October 14, we prepared for upcoming meetings with Synod members. That evening, I had the honor of representing CTU at a special dinner with Synod delegates. I sat next to Fr. Ivan Montelongo from the Diocese of El Paso, Texas, and we had a rich conversation about the synodal process, the engagement of laypeople, and how their voices are received—especially by older bishops. It was a meaningful exchange that allowed us to share our hopes for the Church's future.

A Global Church in Communion

On Wednesday, October 16, our CENTERS group attended the general papal audience. It was an inspiring moment of communion as we met pilgrims from around the world and shared our journey as students deeply engaged in the synodal process.

We also took part in class sessions as a CTU group, reflecting on the role of lay participation, the implications of the Synod, and how “conversation in the Spirit” can shape our ministries and communities.



Br. Jonathan, CP, and Fr. Ivan Montelongo, U.S. delegate for the Synod from El Paso, TX, in Paul VI Audience Hall

Dialogue at the Heart of the Church

The experience culminated on Friday, October 18, with a gathering at Paul VI Hall. There, we engaged in a dialogue with Synod leaders, including Cardinal Mario Grech, General Secretary of the Synod. This moment of encounter affirmed the Church's commitment to listening and discernment, and it highlighted the vital role of young adults in shaping the Church's synodal journey.

Throughout the week, I witnessed the many ways young adults are responding to the call of synodality. There is a genuine movement of participation—a response to the Church's call to listen, accompany, and serve those who are often marginalized in today's world.



A Passionist Perspective

This experience gave me a chance to pray for and practice synodality in new and profound ways. It fostered in me a deeper sense of co-responsibility in the Church's mission.

As a Passionist, I return more committed to promoting synodal ways in our community and apostolic life. True synodality calls us to active listening, collaborative action, and openness to the Holy Spirit's guidance. Through these practices, we can truly walk together as a Church that listens, discerns, and responds with love—keeping alive the memory of the Passion.

Be Part of the Passionist Mission

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