



An interview with Fr. Cassian Yuhaus, C.P.,
author of the book *Compelled to Speak*; November 12, 2011.

Fr. Cassian lives at St. Ann's Monastery and Shrine in Scranton PA.

He was professed a Passionist on August 15, 1934;
and ordained a priest on February 27, 1951.

He has authored numerous books and studies.
He is interviewed by Fr. Arthur Carrillo, C.P..

Fr. Arthur: In an inviting and prescient dust cover, your book is introduced to the reader as “a study in charism”, and a book in which “the laity will find new insight into the meaning of modern religious life.” You seem to foretell the evolution of the “Lay Associate” or “Lay Partner” as a vital element for religious life in the United States. Would you see this development as rooted in the history of the Passionist Congregation?

Fr. Cassian: I think the Passionist's bond with the laity over the centuries has been the desire of the congregation to have our religious communities open to the laity. Superior General Antonio Testa (our “second founder”) emphasized more and more “call upon the laity,” “invite the laity.” If we had been faithful to that over the years, we would be a better congregation today.

Fr. Arthur: In order to have the laity organically integrated in the life of the community, there should be a basis in the “charism” or “spirit” of the Congregation; such a bond would make the relationship an investment in the spirit and ministry of the Congregation for all parties. What element of the Passionist Charism would you say can authentically unite the community with the laity?

Fr. Cassian: One such element in the Passionist Charism that was not completely responded to, but which does serve that purpose, is the desire expressed over the years that each of our houses would be a school of prayer. People would be invited not only to pray with us at the same time and place, but they would become with us “one voice before God.” We want them to become “Champions of the Cross” through prayer, through learning how to pray. Imagine each monastery a school of prayer. We never completely fulfilled that.

Fr. Arthur: Because your book is a history of the Passionists in the United States, can you single out some historical moment when the part played in Passionist history by the laity was absolutely pivotal?

Fr. Cassian: The prominence of the laity was certainly an essential component of the moment we established the first national retreat league, and built the first free-standing retreat house in the United States. We appealed to the laity, “we want to work with you.” Our pledge was written in stone for the laity; it is the St. Paul of the Cross Retreat House in Pittsburgh.

Fr. Arthur: What about the less “concrete” part of the Passionist history in the United States. What do you think St Paul of the Cross sees in the Passionists today that he would recognize as a vital element of his Charism?

Fr. Cassian: St. Paul of the Cross would be excited to see the Passionists taking such a strong stand for life issues today; but also for declaring that Jesus continues his suffering today in the people. Passionists today should and do move to the side of sick persons, persons who are suffering and dying. Passionists pursue the conservation of the world's goods, they proclaim justice and defend the defenseless.

Fr. Arthur: Your book was published in 1967, with hindsight, what would you have done differently?

Fr. Cassian: I would have given much more emphasis to the establishment of the Passionists in Nevada and California. We had such great opportunities. We lost them because of our unwillingness to undertake the risks. The church in the frontier was open to us, but we were too cautious, too afraid, too unwilling to take the risk. What we were unwilling to do in the West, the Passionists found the will to do in Mexico. We, in the United States, forfeited a great opportunity of the community.

Fr. Arthur: I appreciate your taking the time to introduce the “Internet version” of your history to our twenty-first century friends of the Passionists. In conclusion, what message would you leave for our lay members of the Passionist Family?

Fr. Cassian: I would invite them to respond to our invitation to become a very close collaborator, to ask for membership in our Province as an Associate (a formal level of association in St. Paul of the Cross Province). We want to bring the laity to work as closely as possible with us. We want to provide the means for their developing a Passionist spirit. The Blessed John Paul II had a prophetic vision and shared it with the church in his exhortation *Consecrated Life*. He invites the laity to work with consecrated life. He says he sees a new spring for consecrated life in the new associations of “co-workers,” “collaborators” and “associates.”

Fr. Arthur: Thank you, Fr. Cassian, for sharing your reflections with our readers, and for the gift itself of your significant work in writing *Compelled to Speak*.