
❖ The Passionist Heritage Newsletter ❖

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Summer 2007

Reflections on Chongqing, China

By Father Rob Carbonneau, C.P.

Many of you know that on August 23, 2007, I will be going to Chongqing, China to teach from September 2007-July 2008. I have been thinking of doing this for many years. The Passionist leadership of St. Paul of the Cross Province and the Passionist community in Baltimore, Maryland and, most important, my family and friends agree that the time is right to fulfill this longtime dream.

After describing my first impression of Chongqing, China in 1993, the second part of this essay explains where and what I will teach in China. The third part tells of two Passionists who lived in Chongqing during the 1940s. The fourth part summarizes basic information on the Catholic Church in Chongqing. The last section explains the ongoing operations of the Passionist Historical Archives while I am away and how you can support me while I am in China. —*the editor*

From the Yangzi River into the past

I felt I was in a Chinese movie. In October 1993 I disembarked from my Yangzi River cruise ship to walk up the serpentine steps of the Chongqing, Sichuan city docks. Some wanted my small entourage and me to buy food, others wanted to carry our luggage. Still others just wanted us to alleviate their poverty and give them money. Speaking back to them in basic Chinese, I respectfully but forcefully declined all the offers.

The Yangzi River cruise had taken three days from Wuhan, Hubei province to Chongqing. By the time it ended I felt Chinese history had come alive. The boat ride showed me terrain as majestic as a Chinese painting where it always seems that mountains are closer to the heavens than the people who farmed the steep river mountains or continued to fish in the wake of the large cruise ship. Also, the opportunity to see the Three
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Learning to Build Bridges of Understanding: A Reflection on Passionist History

By Rebecca Andrews

Editor's Introduction:

The phone rang in the archives. The caller told me that her daughter wished to do volunteer work in the archives. After some thought I called her back and suggested that the young woman identify the table of contents for *The Passionist*. Sometime later all three of us met. I told the young woman that detail was important. I also suggested that she approach the task with a sense of intellectual curiosity. To my surprise the project captivated her interest. The following reflective article written by the young woman has reminded me that high school and college age students have an astute eye for the historical, specifically, in this case, the Passionist past. Looking back, I am reminded that I too first learned about the richness of Passionist history when I was in college. Perhaps all of us may find creative ways to have young scholars use our historical archives. Her compilation available on the Passionist Historical Archives website has generated several requests over the past year. Oh yes, I am pleased the volunteer project was a success. The woman who called was my sister, Beth. The writer of this article is my niece, Rebecca. —*the editor*

Old books, magazines, and texts in general have always captivated me. I enjoy flipping through the delicate pages of a seemingly ancient text, feeling the years weigh down the paper. So when I was offered the opportunity to create a table of contents for *The Passionist*, I didn't hesitate to accept. The bi-monthly magazine included 13 volumes, ranging from the years 1948 to 1962. The job was to take the original publications and copy the title of each article, its author and its page numbers into a comprehensive list that would make these magazines more accessible. Each
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issue took approximately two hours to index, which meant that on any given Saturday, I could sit down with my laptop and finish two or three of them.

At first, I did the work with diligence but with little consideration for the information I was dealing with. I read and I transferred, but I did not digest the material. However, one Saturday, I read a headline that dealt with China. I was a little bit familiar with the Passionist community in China and, my interest piqued, I started to read the article. Ten minutes later, I realized that I had forgotten to document the last 30 pages. The history and the stories of a few Chinese missionaries had sucked me in, holding my attention with their devotion and sacrifice. Long after the China article had concluded, I had continued to read. From that point on, I was gaining something from these articles instead of treating them as meaningless phrases to copy and type.

As I paid more attention, I started to appreciate the extent of the impact of the Passionist community. I continually found myself stopping to read the diary of a missionary in Africa or the latest news (in 1950) about a flood in a Connecticut church. I had never realized the number of varied cultures and geographic regions under Passionist influence at that time.

After reading and documenting many of the articles, I found the Passionist history I was gleaning began to apply itself to my everyday life. One weekend, I went to meet my grandmother and some of her friends near Social Circle, a town recognized for its old age in Georgia. After eating lunch, we ventured towards a small and very old house to tour inside. In one of the rooms, as the tour guide presented us with the most interesting aspects of the house, I saw a door that looked familiar. As I looked closer, I realized that the design of the door had been explained in one of the early issues of *The Passionist*. The door's design was in the shape of a cross and I proceeded to tell my grandmother and her friends the meaning of the door and why it was important. Its symbolism would have remained unknown to me if I had not happened to read that article. These primary sources that had existed for so many years were still relevant for me today.

Even as I went through Europe during the summer of 2006 with 40 of my high school classmates, I found myself recognizing the names of many of the places I visited. It took me a while to understand why I felt that I had connections to many small towns in the middle of Europe, but I soon realized I owed most of my

heightened interest to *The Passionist*. The magazine had expanded my knowledge and had made the history applicable to my young twenty first century high school life.

One of the most interesting aspects of *The Passionist* for me was the amount of seemingly up-to-date information that appeared in the news section. As a high school student accustomed to the advantages and the convenience of technology, I started to think about how difficult it must have been to become such a widespread organization without the help of computers or high-speed Internet. As I finished one volume and moved on to the next year, the section of the table of contents that detailed the "Passionist News" grew larger and larger. It separated into multiple sub-sections and finally added an entirely new "Around the World C.P." section to encompass the growing overseas community. The one or two-page table of contents that I had started out creating grew into four and sometime five pages, many of them with endless lists of provinces and retreats that had occurred just in those past two months, ranging in location from Des Moines, Iowa to Japan. The phrase "the Passionist Community" no longer had an empty meaning. The community of priests, sisters, and lay people had multiple extensions all over the world that wired back into the big Passionist network.

As I continued to skim the news section, it became apparent that the Passionist community focused on even the smallest parts of their continually changing and expanding provinces. Although many articles mentioned and talked about the larger events occurring in the general provinces, new churches and successful retreats in relatively small regions often were the most common subjects. The pictures that accompany the news clippings show everything from construction of a children's school to multiple priests congregating to celebrate a dedication ceremony. Nothing was too small to be mentioned as newsworthy, and the growth throughout the communities is communicated not only in the bigger stories, but also through these smaller events.

Besides learning a little bit about the Passionists of the time period, volunteering to create this table of contents gave me some insight into what I might want to do in my future. I realized that not only do I enjoy handling the old documents, but the actual information in the text interests me as well. Perhaps a job as a historian is in my future as I head off to college at the University of Georgia. The experience has changed the way I read and changed the way I think about history.

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Gorges Dam of the Yangzi River, which was under construction, made me conscious that I was also a witness to China of the future.

At the top of the many steps, my group of fellow United States archivists was met by officials from the local Chinese government archives. Both delegations were part of the People to People Program for cross-cultural exchange and understanding. Within an hour all of us were sitting over a cauldron of bubbling hot oil in which simmered fish, hot peppers, meats and vegetables complete with noodles or rice. Tea, beer or soda quenched our thirst and cooled our mouths as we ate the spicy Sichuanese cuisine. As I sat there sweating, I felt that the moment was similar to a scene from the movie *The Sand Pebbles* or a Pearl Buck novel. Chongqing was polluted and crowded, but it had a lot of character and energy. Though I only spent two days there, I got a glimpse into its history by way of a meeting with the local Chinese archivists. It did not take much for me to imagine the area as home to the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek, when it was known as Chungking.

Chongqing classroom

I will teach at Sichuan International Studies University (SISU) in Chongqing. I got the position by sending my resume to the AITECE Teachers Program. AITECE (Association for International Teaching Educational and Curriculum Exchange) is an association for placing Catholic teachers in Chinese universities. AITECE made contact with SISU. (The SISU English language website is www.en.sisu.edu.cn).

SISU has asked me to teach 14 hours of classes. I will teach in English. The courses will be about American history, language, culture or literature. This might mean teaching topics such as multi-culture communication, international relationships or American culture and literature, which are connected with history. While the Chinese students will know English, it is my job to improve their language skills. I expect the teaching to be demanding. I know I must be flexible as the exact details of what I will teach won't be finalized until I arrive in Chongqing in early September. SISU will pay me a basic salary and provide me with an apartment. There will be an option if all goes well to teach a second year.

As many of you know, increased luggage restrictions prevent me from bringing books on American history and culture. While I might have some of these materials sent later, I am hoping to make use of a collection of

some 1,000 historical pamphlets that I have collected from famous American historic sites such as national parks, museums, or historic homes. Several years ago I started collecting these brochures as I thought they might be perfect for classroom use if I was presented with the opportunity to teach. Specifically, I hope that the students assigned to my class will have fun thinking of themselves as tour guides through the United States. I hope they will be able to read and actually use their English skills to explain the important points from any historic brochure. From there, my hope is that, in time, they will have developed suitable language skills in English to provide a summary sweep of how that particular brochure might be situated in the timeline of United States history. With some adaptation, I hope the same approach will succeed in my teaching of American literature. Again, time and patience will tell.

Passionists and Chongqing

In addition to having actually visited Chongqing in 1993, time has allowed me to learn some other links to the city. First, I knew Passionists had been there in 1927 when they evacuated Hunan province for safety. During that trip, Sister Clarissa Statmiller, a Sister of St. Joseph of Baden, Pennsylvania, died from disease and was buried at the graveyard of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Chongqing. Perhaps I might visit her grave.

Second, after years of studying the Passionists in Hunan, the past years of historical research had led me to gain an interest in Chongqing in the 1940s. Only recently had I learned that Passionist Fathers Cormac Shanahan and Caspar Caulfield lived and worked there during the 1940s.



Father Cormac Shanahan, C.P.

Father Shanahan began working in Chongqing in 1941. Part of his ministry there was to write for *Sign* magazine. After all, the Passionists began publishing this United States Catholic monthly in 1921 in part to promote their China mission effort. Eventually, Shanahan began to write for the Chongqing-based *China Correspondent*. Published only from December 1943 to September 1944, the magazine came to life when the decision was made to transform

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the French Catholic weekly *Le Correspondent Chinois* into an English Catholic monthly. Its audience was United States servicemen in China, particularly lonely Catholic GI's. To "know China better" was the editorial aim of the *China Correspondent*. As a result of this relationship, Shanahan was a member of the Yan'an Press Party sent to visit Mao Zedong in the summer of the 1944.

Later, Father Caulfield came on the scene in Chongqing to work at the *China Correspondent*. Having known Caulfield during the last years of his life when he worked in the Passionist Historical Archives, I only wish now that I had taken the opportunity to learn about the Chongqing of this era. Yet, even more crucial is the reminder to me of the serious



Father Caspar Caulfield, C.P.

obligation of older people to teach the next generation about how they were participants in history. Caulfield was often reserved unless he was directly asked to share information on his China experience, and even then it could sometimes be a struggle. Nevertheless, I am encouraged to know I will walk the streets where both he and Father Shanahan had walked in the 1940s.

Catholics in Chongqing

In 2005 the population of the urban area of Chongqing proper was 4.1 million. According to the 2004 *Guide to the Catholic Church in China*, the Chongqing Municipality is home to some 39 Catholic churches, 16 priests, 7 sisters and 120,000 Catholics. As a foreign guest, if time permits, I hope to be able to visit these churches and uphold and respect the government regulations on foreign religious expression.

Since my first visit to China in 1989, it is important to say that I have had generally good experiences when I have met Catholics throughout the country. Over the years they have shared with me their strong faith. Quite frequently they would recall how priests, sisters and lay people from the United States or Europe touched their lives.

The Passionist Archives and supporting me in China

While I am away, the Passionist Historical Archives will be in the able hands of Ms. Anita Lewis and Mr. Sean Peragine. To the best of their ability they will answer any archival requests. The three of us anticipate developing an efficient way to share information.

At the same time, I hope that people will pray for my success as a teacher in China. You will always be able to contact me at robcarb@cpprov.org. After my arrival in China I hope to have available for you a China contact email if you wish to write to me. Be advised that there might be certain guidelines to follow since I am an invited guest in China.

You can also help me witness as a Passionist in China by making a donation. There are two options for this. You can make a check payable to Robert Carbonneau. Write "China" in the bottom notation box. Your donations will be put aside and will assist me in paying for the needed medical shots, assorted costs associated in preparing to go to China, any necessary travel in China that might arise, and, perhaps more important, pay for teaching materials to be shipped to me once I know my specific needs.

Another option is to write a check payable to the Father Marcellus White Trust. The family and relatives of Father Marcellus White began the Trust in 2003 to honor his memory. A Passionist missionary to China during the 1940s and 1950s, he loved and was loved by the Chinese people. Money from the Trust keeps this friendship with the Chinese people alive today. Know that the monies used from this fund are for important educational purposes. Specifically, when I am in Chongqing, money from the Marcellus White Trust will allow me to get a tutor so as to improve my ability to speak, read and write Chinese, and conduct historical research about the Passionists in China during the twentieth century.

As I write these thoughts, I am in the final stages of preparation. I am thankful to all those who have taught me so much about the many aspects of Passionist history, especially as it relates to China. I will travel with this wisdom and look forward to sharing what I learn with you while I am there.

Readers can send donations to Fr. Rob at:

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Archives

Notes

- On April 19, 2007, Father Rob visited the archives of the Passionist Nuns, Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania; examined Passionist sources in the archives of the diocese of Scranton; had a meeting and conversation with John Dziak of the Greater Pittston Historical Society of Pennsylvania on the topic of the Pittston walkers to the St. Ann's Novena.
- On April 20, 2007, Father Rob presented a paper on Passionist sources in Scranton at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, Scranton, Pennsylvania.
- In May Father Rob and Father John O'Brien, C.P. traveled to St. Paul of the Cross Parish, Atlanta, Georgia. There they spent several days on-site examining the personal library and papers of Father Joseph A. Fahy, C.P., who died on January 22, 2007.
- During the past year Passionist Fathers Malcolm Cornwall, Timothy Fitzgerald, Donald Ware and Paul Zilonka have generously given a large portion of their published articles, preaching material and personal papers and memorabilia to the archives for processing.
- On May 18 Father Rob preached the homily at the Mass of Christian Burial for Mr. L. Denis de Cazotte at St. Paul of the Cross Monastery, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He died in Pittsburgh after a long illness. He was the great grandson of noted Passionist Father Fidelis Kent Stone.
- Father Rob will have an article published in the 75th birthday festschrift to honor Father Jeroom Heyndrickx, CICM. It will be presented in early September during the proceedings of the Ninth Symposium of the Verbiest Institute, Leuven, Belgium. The title of the published article is "Journalist and Priest: Father Cormac Shanahan, C.P. and the 1944 Press Party to Yan'an, China, His Experience with Communist Leaders and Ministry to Yan'an Catholics."
- Father Rob attended the summer meeting of the Friends of Maryland's Olmsted Parks & Landscapes, Inc., Baltimore, Maryland.
- Earlier this year Father Rob wrote *Healing the Contemporary Five Wounds of St. Joseph's Monastery Parish, Irvington, Maryland: A Parish in the Passionist Tradition*. A copy of this booklet was received by the Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland as well as the Enoch Pratt Library, Maryland Room, Baltimore, Maryland.
- Passionist Father Theodore Foley has been declared a "servant of God." It is a first step towards an inquiry into the possibility of his canonization in the Catholic Church. In conjunction with this, the Passionists seek anyone with memories or documents related to his life, ministry and holiness. You can learn more about him by reading the presentation by Father Rob given at the October 2006 symposium in Jamaica, New York. www.cpprovince.org/archives/biographical/foley-symposium.php
- On July 18 Father Rob interviewed Ms. Loretta Diehl in Pittsburgh on her personal recollections of Father Theodore Foley.
- On July 8 Father Rob was the celebrant for The Sunday Mass. It is a T.V. show broadcast each week under the auspices the Passionist Communications based in Pelham, New York.
- On July 18 Father Rob went to Pittsburgh to give an historical perspective on Passionist history as part of the orientation for the Passionist Volunteers International and the Passionist Domestic Volunteers, 2007-2008. The former group has members that are going to Jamaica, West Indies and Honduras while the latter group has members assigned to Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, New York.
- On July 19 Father Rob interviewed Mr. Rusty Wilcox. In charge of maintenance in Pittsburgh, he told how someone called the monastery to report that they had found the original monastery tombstones of deceased Passionists. The artifacts had been moved from a landfill site to his home.
- During July Fr. Rob transferred the original late 19th and early 20th century Pittsburgh archival documents to The Passionist Historical Archives for safety and preservation.



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It is the intention of the Commission to present material that will be both interesting and informative. We want to make better known the story of our Congregation and especially of our own Province; the Passionists, lay people and benefactors who made it, the immense labors they undertook in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ's Passion, and their successes and failures. We also want to look at the present situation of the Province through the eyes of Faith to try to ascertain what lessons, if any, history may be able to teach us as we try to understand our present moment and the future.

We hope to make this an **international** newsletter and so we welcome contributions from our readers of **any** Province. If you have any interesting stories or reflections or even questions that you are willing to share with us, we beg you to do so.

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