



Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center

The Passionists of Holy Cross Province
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Dear Friends,

As we continue to positively respond to and recuperate from the devastating experience of the Eaton wildfire, with much love and gratitude, I would like to bring another update to all those friends of Mater Dolorosa. From the confusion, and uncertainty stage, we are now walking the path of clarity, resilience, strength, support, optimism, and faith—a **journey with hope under the shadow of the Cross**.

On Thursday, January 9, some of us visited Mater Dolorosa. It was an evacuation area with restricted and limited entry. There was still active smoke and fire in a few areas of the property. Fire trucks and firefighters were working hard to put them out. They look exhausted but were working hard to extinguish the fire completely. We can't thank them enough! As we passed the front driveway, we could see a few of our dear deer on the grass, which was still green on both sides of the retreat center chapel. It was a sign of hope and encouragement for all of us. We used protective glasses and masks as we removed office items and files to a safer place. **We will start with professional clean-up once it is safe.** We will have more clarity about when we can return in a couple of weeks.



On Friday, January 10, we returned to continue and were interviewed by local news media. The burnt-down apartments, garage, and hermitage debris were still smoldering and smoky, and fire crew members worked to put them out. Several city fire crew members inspected the building and its surroundings. As I learned from them, **it was their timely intervention to hose down the fire in the building before it could go further, resulting in less fire damage and more water damage in the affected areas (office rooms and De Loor Hall).** We are so grateful to them. A couple of us stayed a few hours to empty the items in the refrigerators in the building.

On Saturday, January 11, there were more restrictions on entering except for collecting clothes and medicine from the residence. Upon entering the premises, we could see fire personnel and the Navajo fire response continuing their work. We brought to their attention a few hot spots. We were so relieved to see the electrical company had started their restoration, but they said, **“It would take a while” before the power would be back on.** I visited our Sierra Madre police station and City manager's office for inquiries and to thank them for their diligent response.



Recalling what just happened in the fire, it is as if **God threw His arms around the main building of our Retreat Center, preventing significant fire damage.** Several areas of gardens and grounds have been burned, but the statues, and Stations of the Cross are intact but need cleaning. Our famous Morton Bay fig tree, under which the first Passionist retreat began in 1926, stands proud and untouched. The Gethsemane prayer garden looks fine- Jesus is still praying while the disciples are still asleep! As of Sunday, January 12, Sierra Madre City has lifted evacuation orders, but **we are patiently waiting for utilities and clean up before anyone can return safely.**

I attended Sunday Mass at St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church, close to our hotel. The homilist reminded us that the Christmas message from the angels still resonated: **“Do not be afraid, a Savior is born for us, Emmanuel, God with us.”** Yes, with that confidence, we are continuing to move forward. *“When God is for us, who can be against?”* I am so amazed by the Mater Dolorosa staff

and Board of Directors dedication, proficient teamwork, and support. Mater Dolorosa is blessed to have them. We regularly meet, analyzing, reviewing, executing, and **taking one step at a time and one day at a time.**

We stand in solidarity with all those affected and will offer assistance and support when our facilities are functional. We are all wounded healers after the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are showered with prayers and offers of support. We gratefully and gladly welcome your continued support as we take further steps. **Your support is vital as we recover from the Eaton Fire.** We hope you will make a general donation to be used where it is needed most; this will not only help us clean, repair, maintain staff and cover lost revenue from our closure, but also ensure our ministries thrive when we reopen. Thank you for your generosity.

We greatly appreciate your **[donations here.](#)**

May the Passion of Christ be always in our hearts!



Fr. Febin Barose, C.P., Ed.D.
Retreat Center Director and Director of Ministry

**Additional Pictures: [Facebook](#) or [MDPRC Website](#)
January 8, 2025 – Initial Retreat Center Update [Online](#)**

Picture credits: Ricardo Solda, Marta Salgado-Niño, Janet Selinske, and Fr. Febin Barose, C.P.