

# INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS

## for the XII General Chapter

*“Seeing the crowds, he felt Compassion on them and said: Rogate”  
The charismatic identity in today’s challenges*

### INTRODUCTION

**1** – The theme chosen for the XII General Chapter of the Congregation, “*Seeing the crowds, he felt Compassion on them and said: Rogate*” – The charismatic identity in today’s challenges”, wants to be in continuity with the theme of the preceding General Chapter, “*The Rogationist Rule of Life – expression of consecration, guarantee of charismatic identity, support of fraternal communion, project of mission*”, for a further deepening and timely verification.

#### **Reasons and criteria of a choice**

**2** - As indicated in Article 147 of the Norms, on April 12, 2013, the Superior General has consulted the Confreres about the definition of the particular theme of the next General Chapter, which will be held in July 2016. After hearing the Communities and Confreres regarding the choice of the particular theme, the Superiors of the Circumscriptions sent their suggestions to the General Government. During the Conference of Major Superiors on September 2013 the contributions received from the Circumscriptions were discussed and analyzed. More precise indications for the definition of the particular topic were shared so as to reach the final synthesis within the General Council.

Through a letter dated November 7, 2013 (Prot. N. 260/13), the Superior General communicated to the Congregation about the particular theme chosen for the next General Chapter : “*Seeing the crowds, he felt compassion on them and said: Rogate. The charismatic identity in today’s challenges*”.

**3** - The suggestions received from the Circumscriptions justify the choice of the theme of the General Chapter 2016. The basic question that emerged is on the charismatic identity, that is, being Rogationist in the current anthropological and ecclesiological contexts that challenge us. To rediscover the charismatic identity starting from the evangelical passages using the dynamism of *seeing - feeling compassion - Rogate*, opens new horizons towards a meaningful charismatic apostolate that is responsive to the needs of our times.

**4** - The charismatic identity requires consideration of the socio-cultural environment in which the Congregation is inserted, with the arising challenges and expectations, in order to interpret and accompany, to give answers that faithfully embody our charism in line with our relevance and prophecy.

**5** - The suggestions received for the identification of the particular theme highlight also the need to revive our charismatic identity through proximity with the poor, the sobriety of our lives and the joyful witness of fraternal life in Community.

## **Method**

**6** - Departing from the Gospel passages of *Matthew* (9:36-38) and *Luke* (10:2) the text is organized according to the scheme of

- ✓ *seeing*: the challenges of today;
- ✓ *interpreting*: the charism of the Rogate as the way of life;
- ✓ *acting*: the charismatic identity as response to the challenges of today.

The Document puts at the center the Gospel passages of the Rogate in order to emphasize the primacy of the Word of God in the interpretation of the Rogationist charismatic identity and in the reading of the challenges that emerge from today's different social and ecclesial contexts. Jesus met the weary and abandoned crowds, he had compassion on them and indicated the Rogate. We Rogationists are called to take care of the people we meet with the same compassion of Jesus.

## **Realization**

**7** – The drafting of the Document had two main phases. First, that of the *Lineamenta*, with the participation of the Confreres from the various Circumscriptions, who were convoked by the Superior General and gathered in a preparatory meeting to establish the timetable and accomplishment program of the tasks to be done. The commission decided to send a questionnaire to all Communities in the various Circumscriptions, in order to gather reactions, suggestions and proposals on the designated theme of the next General Chapter. The responses received have provided a valuable basis for the work of the commission, particularly in the formulation and elaboration of orientations and operational choices. The text of the *Lineamenta* worked out by the commission was submitted to the General Government, translated into the various languages of the Congregation and sent to all Circumscriptions with the request to read and integrate with their assessments and suggestions. The second phase has involved again the confreres of the various Circumscriptions for the drafting of the *Instrumentum laboris*. After the election of representatives to the General Chapter, the Superior General has appointed and convened the Pre-Capitular Commission in Rome to re-elaborate the *Lineamenta*, considering the comments and suggestions received from the different Circumscriptions and Communities, thus producing this present *Instrumentum Laboris*.

## **Finality**

**8** – The *Instrumentum Laboris* is now being sent to the Capitulars five months before the opening of the General Chapter for the appropriate observations and integrations that should be sent to the Commission two months before the Chapter. The text, which has gone through several passages from the Circumscriptions and Communities, in a synodal manner, would turn out to be an expression of all the Confreres and in fact constitutes an essential basis for the works and deliberations of the XII General Chapter.

## **PART I: TODAY'S CHALLENGES**

*“Seeing the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd.” (Mt 9, 36).*

*We start our journey by placing our lives and our path “under” the guidance of the Word of God. It enlightens our hearts, as it happened in the life of St. Hannibal, thus enabling us even today to discern the “signs of the times” and to correspond to the will of the Lord. Welcoming the “primacy” of the Word, we fix our gaze on the face of Jesus the Word made flesh, who entrusts again today to the Church the prayer of the Rogate. The Word implies silence and listening, acceptance and interiorization, dialogue and confrontation, obedience and service in charity, co-responsibility and mission. The biblical and evangelical origin of the charism of the Rogate requires from us today the wisdom and the courage to question our history and know how to interpret it in the light of the Word of salvation and of mercy, which the Father has entrusted to us in the Son through the Holy Spirit.*

### **ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES**

**9** - Thanks to the charism of the Rogate, the reason of our being in the Church, we Rogationists are committed today to reflect on the great contemporary challenges, which **interrogate** the meaning of life and, more generally, the great questions of humanity. Among others, the following seem to challenge more directly today our charismatic identity, either in the anthropological and cultural contexts as well as in that of the Church and of the Congregation.

#### **The anthropological question**

**10** - In our day-to-day life experience we are confronted with a vision of the human being that is far from that vocational anthropology that characterizes the charism of the Rogate. In a culture wherein the segmentation and fragmentation of every aspect of the human life prevails, an anthropology that is founded on the vocation of the person stands out as a true counter-culture, a feasible way for the construction of the integral person.

**11** - Today's anthropological and social crisis affects especially the family, making it vulnerable in its essential values of unity, fidelity, indissolubility and fecundity. The globalized world is increasingly pervaded by a “weak mentality” that results in a wrong concept of freedom, an exaggerated individualism and a strong privatization of existence; the trivialization of sexuality, fear of making definitive commitments, insufficient or even the lack of adequate social and political supports to the family.

In a general climate of eclipse of Christian values and of experience of faith, the family as a “domestic church” seems to be weakened even in its mission of Christian education of children and of being the place where vocation is born and develops.

We too are facing today the challenge that is common to the whole Church: to support the identity, vocation and mission of the Christian family in the modern world, ensuring an adequate and appropriate pastoral care to couples.

**12** - In various parts of the world we live side by side with men and women of today, who are often “lost wayfarers” in the modern labyrinths of life. These are persons who, oftentimes unconsciously and tacitly, desire to see a horizon of meaning in front of them, and ask to discover themselves, their role in the life of the society. In this regard, we need to re-think in a new and effective way the issue of education which is the qualifying component of our apostolic mission.

**13** - A question of humanization – at times shouted out and sometimes subdued – arises in a world that is constantly threatened by the loss of meaning and value of things, persons, relationships; it is almost an invocation of care and custody of what is human, which is continuously exposed to inhumanity. Following the word of Pope Francis: “we have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us more human”<sup>1</sup>, we Rogationists are attentive in perceiving and accepting the uniqueness and inalienable dignity of each person, particularly of those who are overlooked by the society.

### **The geographical and existential peripheries**

**14** - Saint Hannibal May Di Francia said to Zancone: “*I’ll come to see you*”, and he moved out from his home to go to a degrading and dangerous slums. Whenever we Rogationists propose to “start again from Avignone”, we intend to imitate the gesture of our Holy Founder, who in this way becomes a exemplar paradigm of a Congregation that is willing to go to the modern peripheries - the “Avignone” of today, from where arises the cry of the poor.

**15** - Faced with the global economic crisis we are invited to reflect on the structures of global inequity that concerns the Nations.<sup>2</sup>

In particular, the economic crisis leads the Congregation to reconsider itself not only in examining its overall lifestyle, but also - more directly - in prudently reconsidering its Works, its resources to move ahead or to undertake new ones.

In the face of difficulties, at times, in order to continue doing good for the benefit of so many poor people, we put great trust in the Providence of God. Aware that the Rogate itself is “a charism for crisis”, following the example of our Holy Founder, we Rogationists are invited to remain steadfast in our generosity to share what we have, even in the midst of a critical situation.

### **Old and new poverty**

**16** - Particularly today we face a unique challenge in front of different forms of poverty, specially the challenge of the relationship characterized by sharing and love; the challenge of being a neighbor to the poor not only through material help, but by a participative proximity, making the other feel a sense of human warmth and assuming the solitude of his soul. This is a “relational poverty”, of moral, spiritual, cultural nature, new forms of poverty that call for new answers, different from those traditionally offered by religious Institutes, which often have behind them a great history of charitable “works” and “assistance”.

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<sup>1</sup> FRANCIS, Ap. Exhort. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 264.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, Enc. Letter *Laudato si’*, 48-52.

## **ECCLESIAL CHALLENGES**

### **The New Humanism in Jesus Christ**

**17** - When the person discovers life as a gift from a loving and provident Father, it gives birth to surprise and wonder, to the commitment in realizing the plan of God, to gratitude for the communion of so many brothers and sisters in humanity, as well as to the willingness to share to others the gift received. We are called to announce and give witness to this “gospel” of liberty and gratuity, in accompanying and supporting people in the consciousness of being important and precious in the eyes of God, called to live a life worthy of the children of God in Jesus Christ.

**18** – In a journey that involves the whole Church, we Rogationists find ourselves reflecting on how the good life of the Gospel can be a real proposal of meaning to the world today, echoing the announcement of the Second Vatican Council: “Whoever follows Christ, the perfect man, becomes himself more of a man”.<sup>3</sup> In this way we commit ourselves to recall, in the changed cultural contexts, the evangelical icon of Christ who encounters and saves the misery and desolation of the abandoned crowds, and who commands the prayer of the Rogate.

### **The new evangelization**

**19** - We live in a historical period of deep and radical changes, which certainly do not spare the world of faith and religion. The societies of ancient Christian tradition are besieged by the process of secularization. The “rejection of the transcendent” is accompanied by a growing deterioration of ethics and a steady increase in relativism, which lead to a general disorientation.<sup>4</sup> In many baptized there is now a widespread indifference to religious practice and sacramental life, and the Christian communities experience a marked decrease in the number of vocations of “special” consecration.

Almost everywhere “the Catholic faith is nowadays being challenged by the proliferation of new religious movements, some of which tend to fundamentalism”.<sup>5</sup>

In several countries the attacks on religious freedom are increasing and forms of new persecution against Christians are increasingly serious and alarming.<sup>6</sup>

**20** - The growing phenomenon of migration puts together people of different cultures and religions, giving rise to a context of religious pluralism, which in many traditionally Catholic countries imposes itself as a “new era”.

The way to be taken in order to meet the challenge of religious and cultural pluralism is that of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. “An attitude of openness in truth and love must prevail in dialogue with believers of non-Christian religions, despite the various obstacles and difficulties, particularly the fundamentalist tendency on both sides. This interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and therefore it is a duty for Christians, as for other religious communities”.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> ECUM. COUNCIL VAT. II, Past. Const. *Gaudium et Spes*, 41.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, Ap. Exhort. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 64.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 250. The dynamics of interreligious dialogue are specified in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* n. 251.

**21** - The “New Evangelization” is understood today in its overall sense of the proclamation of the Gospel as the Word of God and the announcement of the “Gospel of charity”, i.e., the integral human promotion of the person. As Rogationists we make our own this vision of ecclesial pastoral care, and with it we re-read the charism of the Rogate in today’s history, showing the truth that accompanying a person towards the discovery of his vocation actually signifies promoting him towards his human integrity. And, on the other hand, showing how to be workers of human promotion means in reality to do the work of “evangelization”, to announce the “good news”, that is, to make that person become aware of his highest and divine vocation. In this sense, the charism of the Rogate is called today to play its role in the great task of humanizing the world.

**22** – The vocation of the person is one of the “theological places” along which today, in a preferential way, the Church channels the proclamation of the Gospel for the “new evangelization”. It is because the integral vocation of the whole person – within which we can possibly situate the subject of vocations to specific consecration – turns out to be a parameter that is very much in consonance with contemporary culture. Moreover, the vocation is a significant “figure” of the theological revelation of Jesus Christ: his being the first one “called” by the Father. In various aspects of our lives we are confronted and we relate with this acquired theological and ecclesial sensitivity, which has led to the discovery and promotion of the vocation and of all vocations in the Church.

### **The “Gospel of Vocation” for the young**

**23** - In our daily apostolic mission with young people, we experience in many ways how the living Word of God even today is able to speak in a strong and persuasive manner to the heart of the young generation. To announce to the young the “Gospel of vocation”<sup>8</sup> means to affirm that the young people can see more clearly within themselves, orient themselves in the choice of life, and walk with generous steps along the roads of the Lord. We Rogationists are called to proclaim this “Gospel of vocation” above all through a witness of a credible and enthusiastic life.

### **Valuing the Laity**

**24** - In all contexts of life of our Congregation the vocation of the laity in reference to the charism of the Rogate is gaining more importance. The vocation of the “Lay of the Rogate” enjoys a growing recognition and value, and asks to be explored in all its spiritual and apostolic potentialities. With our accompaniment in this task, the Lay of the Rogate themselves will be personally committed to deepen and realize their specific vocation which is born from the charism.

## **CHALLENGES OF ROGATIONIST LIFE**

**25** – As Rogationists we face a triple challenge that comes in various forms. We are put to test, in our life of consecration, on how to make our presence a witness to the Gospel. In fraternal life in community we are challenged to find motivations for joy and celebration, and on how to offer mercy and prophecy in our commitment to discipleship and mission. Therefore, among the challenges that we Rogationists are facing today, those that need an urgent solution are the re-

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. PONTIFICAL WORKS FOR ECCLESIASTICAL VOCATIONS, *New vocations for a New Europe*, Final Document of the Congress on Vocations to the Priesthood and Consecrated life in Europe, Rome, May 5-10, 1997, n. 31.

appropriation of the reasons for our choice of life, of living in community and of our specific apostolate.

### **Life of consecration: evangelical and vocational witness**

**26** - Today, more than ever, we are deeply convinced of our duty to give witness of a life of consecration modeled according to the charism of the Rogate, the distinctive character of our self-offering that gives particular meaning to what we are and do. Only our conviction of the call to be and to live as Rogationists can make it clear to others the true value of the Rogationist consecrated life. In this way, the people that we encounter can recognize and properly appreciate our own vocation to pray so that the harvest of the Lord would never be lacking of good workers, and, driven by the strength of our testimony, they themselves would feel motivated to be like us.

**27** - We feel the urgency to deepen our knowledge of the Founder and his spirituality through careful and constant study of his writings and of the Rogationist literature, knowing that the entire life and apostolic activities of St. Hannibal, inspired by the Rogate, are for us a unique “way of holiness”.

**28** - We are called to acquire a deeper awareness of being bearers of God's compassion, as the true source of our continuous call to express the same concern for others, especially towards the least of the society. In this way, we constantly remember our origin in Jesus' compassion for the weary and abandoned crowds; we make our own the same sentiments of that divine heart (cf. Phil 2,5); we open our hearts to the miserable crowds of our times, staying in the midst of them as “wounded healers”, while being aware that we ourselves are the first who need the compassion of the Heart of Jesus.

**29** - Living radically the evangelical vow of poverty, we give a “counter-culture” witness in front of the temptation of rampant consumerism, an obstacle in incarnating the demands of our consecration before the people whom we serve in the peripheries afflicted by countless forms of poverty.

**30** - Various initiatives of permanent formation: reflections and studies, professional formation, meetings and conferences, formative experiences and others, are important for us in order to remain anchored to the fundamental values of consecrated life and of the charism, in the forms which they are expressed with creativity in different geographical and cultural areas. These are the dynamisms that contribute to deepen the understanding of our charismatic identity today.

### **Fraternal life in community: joy and celebration**

**31** - The first persons to whom we Rogationists give witness are the Confreres with whom we live in the same community and share the same consecration and mission. So our first commitment in living the fraternal life in community is to rediscover the reasons to express in our ordinary daily life the joy and celebration of being and living together.

**32** - The primary challenge lies in making our communities as schools of prayer, dialogue and encounter, where we can live with trust, respect, support and concern for one another, opposing various forms of distrust, criticism and indifference that are a temptation against the beauty of fraternal life in community. Rediscovering ourselves every day as “brothers” in Christ is a decisive factor for the establishment of our Rogationist identity and the sense of belonging to a Congregation

that is ever more perceived as a “family” and “home”, our own home, the room of our own heart and of what we hold so dear.

**33** - Valuing this joyful aspect of the Rogationist community life can be a factor for a credible witnessing and for attracting the young people who are striving to make, out of their life, “something beautiful for God”.

**34** - Many Rogationist communities are living today between the increased number of urgent ecclesial and social needs and the insufficiency of religious personnel. The experience of a Community with an inadequate number of religious in front of a huge apostolic task becomes a further reminder of the need to pray and to work in order to obtain vocations, for the good of the universal Church and of our Congregation.

**35** - The pastoral and social work is a fruit of an apostolic readiness nourished by prayer. However in a secularized context there is the risk that the apostolic activity could be reduced to a mere “job” or to any kind of profession. The temptation of “professionalism” – which is different from the professionalism that is now required from any religious in his field of work – and of careerism, can be an obstacle to fraternal life in community.

In this context the service of authority is called upon to harmonize the efforts of individual religious with the apostolic plan of the Community and of the Circumscription.

**36** – For us Rogationists the joy and celebration primarily refer to the interior and profound happiness of belonging to a common history, a history that generations of Rogationists have written and are writing together, a history marked by the charism of the Rogate, a history redeemed and saved by Christ who commands the “good news” of the Rogate.

### **Discipleship and mission: compassion and prophecy**

**37** – In the different parts of the world where we are present, we are called to read and interpret the reality by living and working in the peripheries with the last, by being poor with the poor. In this way our Rogationist consecration and mission can become a prophecy, following the example of St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia, “prophet” of the Rogate for the poor and with the poor. “Opening the doors” of our houses to the poor does not only mean going out to meet them, but for us it also means allowing the poor to enter and become part of our life.

**38** – In the various fields of our charismatic mission: education and formation to the work of social solidarity, animation and promotion of vocations, commitment to pray and to spread the prayer for vocations, in collaboration with the Family of the Rogate in the local Churches, we help in creating a renewed “culture of Vocation and of vocations”.

**39** – In striving to live fully the apostolic potentiality of the charism of the Rogate, oftentimes we run the risk of neglecting the spiritual dimension and community life itself. Our collaboration with the laity, and our presence among the people of God, especially in the world of the young people, should help us to seek and live a more intense evangelical life so as to bear witness to the beauty of a new life in Christ and the joy of fraternal life in community.

**40** – The contemplation and continuous prayer are meaningful expressions of the richness of the charism of the Rogate and they should be lived in harmonious balance with the other essential



elements of our charism, that is, the spread of the spirit of prayer for good workers and the embodiment of that prayer, which makes ourselves the first good workers in the Lord's harvest. The Rogationist communities that intend to propose a stable experience of contemplation and continuous prayer represent a challenge to be considered carefully as an unprecedented expression of the charism of the Rogate today.

**41** – The challenge of identifying in our time the appropriate means for the inculturation of the charism of the Rogate turns out to be one of the most urgent. There is an increasing number and type of different apostolic needs of the Church and of the society that require careful consideration. Particularly today our Rogationist charismatic identity is being challenged by our work with young people, family, migrants, ethnic minorities and others.

## **PART II: THE CHARISM OF THE ROGATE AS A WAY OF LIFE**

*“Then he said to his disciples: The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest!” (Mt 9: 37-38).*

*Three aspects characterize the peculiarity of the “prayer of the Rogate” entrusted by Jesus to his disciples: 1. compassionate mercy (visceral) of God who knows and meets the “weary and helpless crowds, like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt 9:36); 2. Obedience to the will of the Father in taking care of humanity that suffers, combining prayer and charity; 3. The transition from the “vocation” to the “mission” of the Twelve, called by name and sent as apostles of the Kingdom to “drive out the evil spirits, to cure every disease and illness” (cf. Mt 10:1-4). Being “Rogationists”, in continuity with the charismatic experience of St. Hannibal, means to embody and to actualize these three dimensions that show the intimate relationship of the Rogate with the Mercy of God: compassion, prayer, mission.*

### **BIBLICAL ELEMENTS AS BASIS OF THE CHARISMATIC IDENTITY**

#### **The overall biblical context**

**42** – The overall context of the Gospel narratives on the Rogate (Mt 9:35-38; Lk 10:2-3), offers some key elements as basis of the charismatic identity. From these texts we can identify a reference to two complementary dynamics in which those who wish to put into practice this fragment of the Gospel can find themselves. On the one hand we have the dynamics of *absence* and *scarcity*; the common element is given by the broad reading of the two contexts in which the Gospel of the Rogate is developed in *Matthew* and in *Luke*: lack of shepherd and wounded flock (Mt 9:36); “like lambs among wolves” (Lk 1:3). On the other side we have the dynamics of *presence* and *providence*; the common element is given by the two commands with which Jesus recalls God’s concern for his children: “Pray the Lord of the harvest” (Mt and Lk); “Go! Behold, I am sending you” (Lk).

#### **Absence and scarcity: the promise of a Shepherd**

**43** – The Old Testament background underlying the broad context of Mt 9:36 and Lk 10:2 consists of the prophetic oracles about the conduct of the shepherds towards the flock and the care of the Lord in shepherding his flock by himself and in providing pastors. Various texts are related to this theme (Nm 27:17; 2Ch 18:16 and Judith 11:19) and some specific oracles as in Jer 23:1-6 (parallel with Ez 34) and the “Booklet of shepherds” in Zech 11:4 -17 and 13:7-9. But one particularly evocative text remains that in Ez 34 in which the prophet speaks an oracle against evil shepherds who have no care for the flock and the promise of a Shepherd who feeds the flock.

**44** – The fulfillment of the prophecy on the shepherd of Israel who is moved to compassion for his people finds an allusion in the words of Matthew: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. [...] For my yoke is easy and my burden light” (*Mt* 11:28-30).

In curing “every disease and every illness” and feeling compassion for the crowds, Jesus is fulfilling the task announced by the Lord himself in the prophecy of *Ez* 34:11: “For thus says the Lord God: Behold I myself will look after my sheep, and will care for them”. The overall context of the Gospel wants to show the fulfillment of the promises of restoration through a new metaphor: that of the harvest of the Lord, who manifests his power and providence as the Lord of the harvest.

### **Presence and providence: healed flock and guardian shepherd**

**45** – Jesus is the Good Shepherd who reminds his disciples that the harvest has a Lord and a caretaker who provides the workers. The guarantee of this providence of God lies in the compassionate gaze with which He looked at the condition of degradation and neglect of his people and in Jesus finally and concretely provide them: “Seeing the crowds, he felt compassion to them”.

**46** - After having taught the *Our Father* and accepted the prayer of the poor and the suffering, Jesus asks the collaboration of prayer to his disciples. In this thematic progression some are drawn to the person of Christ and ask to follow him (cf. *Mt* 8: 19-22), while Jesus, after having preached and cured, “sees the crowds” in a situation of profound discomfort and feels compassion for their helpless condition (*Mt* 9:36). From this compassion springs the extraordinary emphasis of the *Rogate*, that is, on the priority of the “prayer” that precedes the apostolic investiture (*Mt* 10:1-4) and the subsequent mission of the proclamation of the Kingdom (*Mt* 10:5-10). It is most evident in the Gospel of Luke where the *logion* of *Rogate* (*Lk* 10: 1-2) is closely connected with the indications given to the disciples (*Lk* 10:3-12). In the perspective of Luke, the emphasis is on the urgency of universal evangelization entrusted to the seventy-two disciples, appointed by the Lord, who are also charged with the transmission of the *Rogate*.

**47** – Some prophetic texts (*Hos* 6:11 but also *Jl* 4:18 and *Am* 9:13-15) describe the harvest as a time of unimaginable blessing, of restoration and salvation: “For you also Judah, a harvest has been appointed, when I will restore my people from captivity” (*Hos* 6:11). In his passage the evangelist Matthew is not only announcing a harvest ready to be reaped, but also an abundant harvest that God has prepared primarily as providence. Jesus is announcing a harvest of blessing prepared by the Father, from whom we must ask for the gift of the workers who would bring the fruits of this Messianic time to the tired and abandoned crowds.

The dual command “Pray!” and “Go!” represents the mission entrusted to the good workers, to gather the scattered and wounded flock towards the abundant and peaceful pastures that the provident and compassionate Lord has prepared.

### **Mercy, source of the Rogate**

**48** – The promise of a good shepherd in the Old Testament, especially in the prophetic literature, has as its proper context the experience of failure, on the part of those who have been entrusted with the care for the people of God. There was a lack of pastors who are capable of bringing the people to an encounter with God. This scarcity, however, has become a providential moment for the revelation of the mercy and faithfulness of God. God himself will provide for his flock; he will raise up good shepherds who would take care of them (cf. *Jer* 23: 3-4). So, what was been prefigured has

found its fulfillment in the compassionate look of Jesus to the crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd (*Mt 9: 36*). From this heart full of mercy springs the command of the Rogate.

## **THE GIFT OF THE ROGATE**

### **The evangelical passages in St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia**

**49** – These biblical elements on which the charismatic inspiration is founded, are recalled, almost naturally, and find a concrete application in the testimony of the life and in the Writings of St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia. Some exemplary suggestions help us to grasp the harmony and continuity between the scriptural roots and the charismatic sprouts.

In a prayer “To obtain priests according to the Heart of Jesus” (Messina 1906), the Founder pleads the “Lord of the mystical harvest” to look upon his children with “the eyes of mercy” and applies the theme of blessing to his words: “Oh, have mercy on us, you who make the barren dwell in your home, *matrem filiorum laetantem* [*Ps 112:9*], please, give us children of blessing, chosen priests according to your Heart”.<sup>9</sup>

The theme of the harvest as “mystical” is illustrative of a reading that is positive and full of hope, which abounds especially in some passages of the “*Hymns of the July First*”. In this text of remarkable spiritual inspiration, Father Hannibal commemorates and celebrates the wonders of the presence of the Sacramental Jesus in the “place of the Poor”: the Avignone Quarter.

### **Inspiration of the Rogate and meeting with Zancone, icon of the charism**

**50** – In the life of Saint Hannibal there are several encounters and experiences that manifest his personality. However, two of these mark his life; they immediately delineate his figure, spirituality, mission and charism in the Church: “the inspiration of the Rogate” at his young age, and the meeting with Zancone, when Hannibal was still a deacon. These are two decisive moments in order to understand his life and, above all, his charism in the Church. We could say that they are two *icons* of the charism of Hannibal Di Francia. Recalling and narrating them serves to keep alive the gift of the Rogate, which we have also received, through Father Hannibal. They are the paradigm of the existence of all the different components of the Family of the Rogate, points of reference for the comprehension and reinterpretation of Rogationist charism in the present and in the future.

### **The inspiration of the Rogate**

**51** – The young Hannibal understands the necessity of “good workers” for the benefit of the Church and of society and of the unceasing prayer to the Lord of the harvest in order to obtain them, long before he read the Gospel passages that contain the Jesus’ teaching on this regard (*Mt 9:38; Lk 10:2*). It is a real and unique experience of the Spirit that marks him interiorly and influences his spiritual and apostolic journey. Later on, he speaks about it, expressing himself in third person: “A young man, at the beginning of his spiritual life, and when he still knew nothing of the divine words of Our Lord Jesus Christ recorded in the Gospel: *Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest*, had in mind this predominant thought, that in order to do greater good in the Church, in order to save many souls, to extend the kingdom of God on earth, there is no surer means than the increase of chosen ministers of God, of holy and apostolic men, according to the

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. DI FRANCIA A. M., *Scritti*, vol. I, *Preghiere al Signore*, Editrice Rogate, Roma 2007, p. 406.

Heart of Jesus and therefore the most excellent and fruitful prayer to be preferred would be to ask continually the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus to send on earth holy men and chosen priests, as in the time of St. Dominic and of St. Francis, as in the days of St. Ignatius and the like. This idea seemed for him very clear and indisputable. Later on, the said the young man was filled with surprise to read in the Gospel those divine words: “*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few: pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest*”.<sup>10</sup>

**52** – This experience is only the first stage, the first step of a long spiritual journey that will gradually bring the young Hannibal to a growing comprehension of the prayer of the Rogate. The icon of the inspiration of the Rogate expresses in germ the first characteristic elements of the charism of St. Hannibal Maria Di Francia and his project of evangelization: importance of the priestly ministry, witness of holiness, apostolic zeal, conformation to Christ and primacy of prayer in the pastoral care of vocations.

### **The meeting with Zancone**

**53** – The second crucial experience in order to understand the life and the charism of Hannibal Mary Di Francia is undoubtedly his meeting with Francis Zancone.<sup>11</sup> In his dialogue with him Father Hannibal perceives the Lord's call. The path of evangelization is shown to him by a poor and blind man. Avignone, the most infamous area of Messina, becomes the place where Hannibal lives his priesthood together with and for the poor and where he proclaims the Gospel of the Rogate. The poor made him remember in a visible way the necessity of prayer for good workers commanded by Jesus; the words of Jesus ignite in him ever more strongly the desire of social and spiritual redemption of the poor. On these two lines the life of Father Hannibal will walk until the end, and it is the same path traced for his disciples.

### **Prayer for vocations and charity: the two faces of the Rogationist charism**

**54** – The two icons, *the inspiration of Rogate* and *the meeting with Zancone*, when read carefully and in a unified way, are like two sides of the same coin, two faces of the Rogationist charism: prayer for vocations and charity. They are not juxtaposed and separated but in a reciprocal relationship, as Father Hannibal lived them. A sort of osmosis between *Rogate*, praying for good workers, and love for the poor, has been forming in his pastoral ministry and in his thought.<sup>12</sup> The intuition of the *Rogate* leads him to the road of the poor and the encounter with the poor helps him to understand ever more clearly the value of that *intuition*. This is what emerges from his life and his thought: “What are these few orphans who are saved and these few poor who are evangelized, - he writes - in front of millions who are lost and are lying like sheep without a shepherd! I was looking for an answer and I found it broad and immense, in those adorable words of Jesus Christ: “*Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.*” Then it seemed that I have found the secret of all good works and of the salvation of souls”.<sup>13</sup>

The experience of Father Hannibal tells us that there is a vital circle between the prayer for vocations and service to the “little ones” and the “poor”. There can be no authentic prayer for

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. DI FRANCIA A. M., *Scritti*, vol. 2, p. 143. Cf. T. TUSINO, *Memorie biografiche*, Parte I, Roma 1955, p. 118.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. VITALE F., *Il Canonico Annibale Maria Di Francia nella vita e nelle opere*, Messina 1939, p. 738.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. CONGREGATIO PRO CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Positio super virtutibus*, vol. I, *Relazione di P. Valentino G. Macca*, Roma 1988, pp. 10-11.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. DI FRANCIA A. M., *Preziose Adesioni. Prefazione*, Tipografia del Sacro Cuore, Messina 1901, pp. 4-5, in *Scritti*, Vol. 61, p. 208.

vocations without a true love for the poor, neither there could be a fruitful pastoral care for vocations without the care of the poor. This is the originality and the secret of the Rogationist charism, commonly expressed with only one word: “Rogate”.

**55** – The efficacy of prayer for vocations is not possible without the compassion and service to the little ones and the poor. Fasting is pleasing to God and prayer is answered when we know how “to share the bread with the hungry, to welcome the homeless poor, to clothe the naked” (*Is* 58: 7). The text of the prophet Isaiah, which is reported and commented on in the writings of St. Hannibal<sup>14</sup>, concludes: “Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: “Here I am!” (*Is* 58: 9). The commitment of love for the little ones and the poor is also the basis of the “miraculous secret” of the devotion of the bread of St. Anthony: if you want to obtain grace, give to the orphans and the poor.<sup>15</sup> Thus, in order to obtain workers from the Lord of the harvest, to have real confidence that “the Lord will answer our prayer, we must share our bread with the poor”.<sup>16</sup>

### **From the charism of the Rogate, the Identity**

**56** – The consecrated life is an ecclesial representation of the mystery of Christ. However, each religious family embodies this mystery departing from a particular moment in the life of Christ and his ministry.

For the religious families of Father Hannibal, the Daughters of Divine Zeal and the Rogationists, it is to live and proclaim the whole mystery of Christ starting from that moment when he feels compassion for the weary and abandoned crowds, proclaims the Gospel, cures their infirmities and commands the prayer for laborers of the harvest (cf. *Mt* 9:35-38; *Lk* 10:2). Our holy Founder has summarized with all his entire existence this particular mystery of Christ's life in a single word: “Rogate”; the evangelical word that has fascinated him even before reading it in the Gospel and that has guided his spiritual journey and his apostolic life.

In the charism of the Rogate the two icons that have marked the life of our Founder: *the inspiration of Rogate and the meeting with Zancone* are joined together and refer to each other.

**57** – The “Rogate” is our identity in the Church, the synthesis and the measure of our spiritual life and of our apostolate. We live “for” this word: because of it and in view of it. This word is Christ. He is the one who has said this word and has given it to the Church, his bride. In the Church, he wanted to entrust it to us in a particular way: he called us to consecrate ourselves to him with a “special vow”, the vow of the “Rogate”, so that this word would be known, accepted and lived by all.

### **Following the Christ of the Rogate**

**58** – With the vows we are called to “conform” our lives to the life that Christ has embraced when he came to dwell among us. With the classic vows of consecrated life we want to follow Christ, *chaste, poor and obedient* to the will of the Father. With the vow of Rogate we want to “conform” our life to the “Christ of the Rogate”, to Jesus who commands the prayer for the workers of the harvest and he himself, as a true laborer of the harvest, feels compassion for the people and cares

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. DI FRANCIA A.M., *Del soccorso ed evangelizzazione dei poveri*, in *Scritti*, Vol. 6, *Regolamenti (1914-1927)*, Editrice Rogate, Roma 2010, pp. 760 ss.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. DI FRANCIA A.M., *Il Segreto Miracoloso ovvero il Pane di S. Antonio di Padova a vantaggio degli Orfanotrofi Antoniani*, in *Scritti*, vol. 51, pp. 125 ss.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. ZAMPERINI A., *Pregiera e poveri nell'esperienza di Annibale Maria Di Francia*, in AA.VV., *Pregiera e poveri nella pastorale vocazionale rogazionista*, Ed. Rogate, Roma 1994, pp. 99-100.

for their needs, announcing the Gospel of the Kingdom and curing their infirmities (cfr. *Mt* 9: 35-38). In fact, the content of our Fourth vow, as explicitly wanted by the Founder and faithfully described and handed down through our Constitutions, is expressed in three points: *praying daily to obtain “good laborers”, propagating in the Church this prayer, being “good laborers” among the “little ones” and the “poor”*.<sup>17</sup>

Fr. Hannibal writes: “I will often consider the opportunity of this holy mission, and the the vow of obedience to this Divine Command to which we are called in this Pious Institute [...] I will dedicate all my days and all my actions to this unceasing prayer, [...] and I will have a great solicitude and zeal, according to the norms of our Constitutions, so that this divine mandate of Our Lord Jesus Christ, so little appreciated until now, would be known and performed everywhere [...]. I will be ready, with the Lord’s help, to make any sacrifice, even by giving my blood and my life, so that this *Rogation* would become universal”.<sup>18</sup> For the “Rogate” we must be willing to give our life, even to the point of martyrdom, if necessary, as the supreme witness of the love that binds us indissolubly to Christ, to the Church, to the poor. The Fourth vow, in fact, commits us to follow not just a word but a person, the person of Christ, of Christ that we boldly call *of the Rogate* to specify the particular mystery and ministry of his life that we want to live in the Church. The Christ of the Rogate, in its simple and immediate sense, is the biblical icon par excellence of the Rogationist charismatic identity.

### **The charism of the Rogate in the history of the Congregation and the process of inculturation**

**59** – The Congregation of the Rogationists is born with its Founder Saint Hannibal Mary Di Francia in Messina (Italy) in 1897 and expanded both in Italy and abroad, especially after the Second World War, starting in 1946. In 1950 the first foundations in Brazil; in 1970 the presence in Spain; in 1976 in the Philippines; in 1978 in Rwanda and in the USA; in 1979 in Argentina; in 1987 in India; in 1991 begins the presence in Poland and in 1992 in Albania. The Congregation is present in Camerun in 2000, in Korea in 2003, the same year when it opens in Papua New Guinea and Vietnam; in 2004 in Mexico; in Paraguay in 2005, the same year when it opens in Indonesia. In recent years a presence in Iraq began, through very precarious, and lastly in Colombia and in Angola. This essential exposition of the geographic expansion of the Congregation, introduces the subject of the inculturation of the charism of the Rogate.

**60** – In every Rogationist there is the growing awareness that the flowering of the Congregation in geographical and cultural areas different from where it was born, represents a providential event that sees the gift/charism of the Rogate increasingly becoming universal at the service of the whole Church and for the benefit of the whole world. This “expansion” of the Rogate is the fulfillment of the great desire of St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia who said to be ready himself to make any sacrifice, so that this prayer would become universal.<sup>19</sup>

**61** – In whatever culture and continent we belong, as Rogationists we are invited to ask ourselves if the Rogate really finds its new expression, with an original inculturation that is proper of the culture in which it has found new announcement and new “incarnation”. It is important to be aware that every authentic inculturation of the charism of the Rogate is a real enrichment of the charism itself,

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Costituzioni*, art. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. DI FRANCIA A. M., *Dichiarazioni e Promesse, XXI Dichiarazione*, in: *Scritti*, Vol. V, *Regolamenti (1883-1913)*, Editrice Rogate, Roma 2009, pp. 604-606.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 606

an unfolding of the gift of the Spirit that reveals its inexhaustible richness, a new manifestation of the benevolent face of God who always surprises.

**62** – In this work of inculturation of the charism, we must be guided by a wise audacity and evangelical courage<sup>20</sup> to be capable of all the charismatic creativity that every true inculturation of Rogate requires; freedom to discover, in the logic of the Incarnation, which new forms and unedited expressions the Rogate is called to “assume” in order to be a real gift of salvation for the local Church and the Society.

**63** – The Rogationist is animated by the knowledge that any genuine process of inculturation of the charism of the Rogate has the happy outcome of acquiring a “contextualized cultural dimension of the Rogate”, that while it enriches the Church, at the same time, it also enriches the charism with a new understanding, a new expression, a new incarnated visibility.

## **THE RULE OF LIFE: LIVING TRADITION OF THE CHARISMATIC IDENTITY**

### **Rule of Life**

**64** – The XI General Chapter has completed a long process of revision of our legislation, which was initiated towards the conclusion and by the will of the Second Vatican Council. It has moved from the updating-adaptation phase (1968) to the re-reading-interpretation of the charism (1980). Later, there was the need for a general revision of the *Constitutions* and *Norms* that should have two characteristics: a greater spiritual and charismatic enrichment and a re-elaboration with the participation of all Rogationist religious who could better express the inculturation of the charism (2004). This work was carried out over an entire six-year period (2004-2010) and concluded by the assembly of the XI General Chapter (2010), which sealed the happy intuition of the new general title of the *Constitutions* and *Norms* as *Rule of Life* and welcomed the proposal to include at the end of the *Constitutions* the classical writing of the Founder, *Declarations and Promises*, the text written as the proper *Rule of Life* with the constitutive elements of the Rogationist charismatic identity.

**65** – The XI General Chapter, with the expression *Rule of Life*, has intended to design a set of legislation that “inspires” and “regulates” our Rogationist life, that is, the *Constitutions* and *Norms*. It is not only intended to collect our two fundamental legislative texts under one name, neither simply to adapt them – in fact, they keep the values of their legislative distinction and difference – but rather to emphasize the practical and existential character. The *Rule of Life*, therefore, is the definition of the legislative instrument that wants to represent the translation of the Gospel in the spirit of a specific charism and to trace a particular path of “*Sequela Christi*”, i.e., of holiness, in the Church. The general and capitular revision of our regulations has been motivated by a threefold necessity: to reaffirm its value as a *rule of life*; to better focus on its charismatic spiritual elements; to call the attention, responsibility and collaboration of all Congregants in valuing the legislation as a basic text in order to understand, live and transmit the charismatic identity.

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, Ap. Exhort. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 33.



## **Living tradition of the charismatic identity**

**66** – The *Rule of Life*, precisely because it is something that concerns the life, remains the main written source where the charismatic identity is expressed, continuously interpreted and adapted to the times and different cultures. Thus it becomes the living instrument of the expression, interpretation and transmission of the charismatic identity. It expresses with fidelity and creativity the gift of the charism, reads it in the light of the times and cultures, and transmits it to the future generations of Rogationists.

### **PART III: THE CHARISMATIC IDENTITY AS RESPONSE TO TODAY'S CHALLENGES**

*He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few!  
Pray therefore the Master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest!  
Go on your way; behold, I am sending you" (Lk 10:2-3)*

*The spiritual dynamism of the prayer of the Rogate takes a programmatic and missionary meaning, which is more accentuated in Luke's version (Lk 10:1-3). The evangelist Luke includes the giving of the Rogate in the context of the "great journey" of Jesus, presenting the mission of the disciples as a first "harvest", which anticipates the fulfillment of the Messianic Kingdom. From the compassion for the crowds (Mt 9:35-38), to the mission to the crowds (pray/go), the given task is accomplished in the prayer for good workers united with the dynamism of the proclamation of the Gospel, that is, to "go forth toward others" to reach all, especially the poor and suffering.*

#### **Rogationists: a gift for the life of the world**

**67** – Each Rogationist is animated by a deep awareness that to incarnate in his own life and to give to others the charism of the Rogate that he received as a gift is a grace with which the Lord makes his kingdom on earth grow today. The Rogate is an effective means indicated by Jesus for the salvation of men and women of today, a gift of grace to respond to the existential and ecclesial challenges of our time.

**68** – The Constitutions of the Rogationists – inspired by the words of the Founder: "The Rogate contains the secret of all good works and of the salvation of all souls" - forcefully reminds us that "we are called to proclaim the importance of the divine command for the life of the Church".<sup>21</sup>

#### **Rogationists, for a "rogationist style of life"**

**69** – Thanks to our charism of the Rogate, we are called today to reflect and respond to the present challenges, for the growth of what is human and for a real service to the persons and to the society. We respond to this vocation on the basis of our charismatic identity and spiritual physiognomy. In this way we outline a "Rogationist style" of being in the Church and in the world, a way of living and understanding life as a continuous existential, spiritual and cultural understanding of the Rogate.

**70** – We Rogationists – individually, in the Communities and Circumscriptions, and as a Religious Institute in the Church – are committed to building up a "world view" that is able to put together all the elements that define our Rogationist life: consecration, community life, spirituality, apostolic

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<sup>21</sup> *Constitutions*, art. 65

ministry. On the basis of this holistic view of being Rogationists, some following traits are outlined, which define a personal and community identity of the Rogationist today, in order to face and respond to the challenges of the Church, culture and contemporary society.

## **CHARISM OF THE ROGATE AND REFLECTION ON MAN: THE PERSON AS VOCATION**

### **Adorers and missionary Apostles**

**71** – In a well integrated spiritual identity, we live with the awareness of being persons qualified “in the image of adorers and implorers for the highest and most beautiful mission, to obtain and prepare vocations for the Kingdom of Christ”.<sup>22</sup> We see ourselves as persons who are called to be disciples of Jesus who walked the roads of Palestine, met the weary and exhausted crowds, and cured them with infinite compassion. Therefore, we are called to be apostles and missionaries of Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd. While he asks in prayer to the Lord of the harvest this kind of evangelists and missionaries, each Rogationist declares his own readiness to put himself at the service of the Lord's harvest.

### **Cultivator of every life as vocation**

**72** – As Rogationists, by virtue of the charism of the Rogate, we are called to work in order to promote in today's culture and society a vocational anthropology that is able to give unity to the person, a vision in which every human being is called to realize himself according to an accomplished and meaningful project. In a culture marked by fragmentation and breakdown of all aspects of life, the proposal of a vocational anthropology becomes the vehicle of a well identified construction of the person, to form men and women of the new times.

### **“Servants” of every person's vocation**

**73** – With the gift of the charism of the Rogate, the Rogationist is a “servant” of every person's vocation, a discreet interpreter of God's plan for the people loved and called by Him, a collaborator of the divine grace in helping people discover, in Jesus Christ, their highest calling.<sup>23</sup> Hence, in obeying to the command of the Rogate, we become collaborators of the Lord Jesus, and live in the Church “a vocation for other vocations”.

## **CHARISM OF THE ROGATE AND INTEGRAL PROMOTION OF THE HUMAN PERSON**

### **Helpful companions in the journey**

**74** – The different forms of old and new poverty today constitute, for our Congregation, new charismatic and apostolic opportunities: in the care, integral development and full realization of the person according to a project of life as vocation, we recognize the pivotal axis of our mission in the Church. We are called to be “travelers” beside those persons who have lost every meaning and direction in the journey of life; to walk with them along the way, and let them feel that they are not alone in the adventure of life.

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<sup>22</sup> PAUL VI, *Message to the Rogationists*, Castelgandolfo, September 14, 1968.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. ECUM. COUNCIL VAT. II, Cost. past. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

## **Evangelizers, evangelized by the poor**

**75** – In fidelity to our charism and following the admirable example of the Holy Founder, we are called to stay at the side of the poor and with the poor, to live as poor, to understand fully and concretely the Rogate, which was first entrusted to the poor.

**76** – Each Rogationist and every religious Community should become instruments of God for the human and social promotion of the poor. This requires docility and attention in listening to the voice and the cry of the poor, without forgetting that when the poor are evangelized by us, we ourselves are also evangelized by them: “We are called to discover Christ in them, to give them our voice for their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen, to understand and to accept the hidden wisdom which God wants to communicate to us through them”.<sup>24</sup>

## **Merciful shepherds**

**77** – In Jesus “Everything speaks of mercy. Nothing is devoid of compassion. Jesus, seeing the crowds of people who followed him, realized that they were tired and exhausted, lost and without a guide, and he felt deep compassion for them (cf. *Mt* 9:36). On the basis of this compassionate love he healed the sick who were presented to him (cf. *Mt* 14:14), and with just a few loaves of bread and fish he satisfied the enormous crowd (cf. *Mt* 15:37). What moved Jesus in all of these situations was nothing other than mercy, with which he read the hearts of those he encountered and responded to their deepest need”.<sup>25</sup> With the spiritual strength of our charism, we are called to be “merciful”, i.e., called to “to take to heart the poor” and their various material and spiritual miseries, as we are reminded also by our Rule of life.<sup>26</sup> In making as our own the mercy and tenderness of Jesus Christ, as well as the shining example of our holy Founder, we Rogationists are committed to take care of the fragility, in its various forms.

## **Prophets of Charity**

**78** – We are called to express the prophetic dimension of our being disciples and missionaries, to look with courage and boldness to the “not yet” of our ministry of social charity and solidarity. Called to exercise that creative fantasy which, following the example of St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia, knows how to anticipate the needs and be the first to reach out, where no one has yet arrived. To be “prophets”, i.e., to be able to read the reality of the world with “divine look”, we have the evangelical word of the Rogate. We need to constantly ask this word of the Gospel in order to see - in every different time and life situation – what it has to say prophetically to us and what it has to say prophetically to the world today.

**79** – Hence, we are called to a continuous practice of prayer and of reflection on our charismatic identity so that it could truly be according to the Gospel, and that it could respond in a prophetic way to the urgent needs which arise from harvests of today. In this tension of creative fidelity to our charismatic identity, each Rogationist becomes a sign of the presence of God’s kingdom on earth: “We need to become aware of the world we live in, accept and welcome it because it is in this

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<sup>24</sup> FRANCIS, Ap. Exhort. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 198.

<sup>25</sup> FRANCIS, Bull of indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of mercy *Misericordiae Vultus*, Rome 11 april 2015, 8.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. XI GENERAL CHAPTER (2010), *The Rogationist Rule of Life – Expression of consecration, guarantee of charismatic identity, support of fraternal communion, project of the mission*, Rome 2010, n. 33.

world wherein we are called to give our witnessing. For this we must look ahead to the future, without allowing ourselves to be blocked by everyday problems. Having a vision is an indispensable condition to advance dynamically towards the future and to promote the necessary changes. We are called to make a prophetic reading of the reality”.<sup>27</sup>

## **CHARISM OF THE ROGATE AND JOURNEY OF THE CHURCH**

### **Tracing a new way of sanctity in the Church**

**80** – In the footsteps of St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia, we Rogationists, with our consecrated life and our apostolic ministry, are invited to show a new and original way of holiness for all the faithful. It consists in a deep spiritual experience in which praying for laborers for the harvest and the human and integral promotion the person find their space in a harmonious way.

### **Collaborators for the New Evangelization**

**81** – The Rogationists sees the New Evangelization as a proclamation of the “Good News of the Rogate”, a proclamation of liberation and redemption for each person. To the challenge of the New Evangelization, the Rogate can lend a unique perspective of reading for a renewed insertion of the Gospel in today's world: “Follow the example of Father Hannibal and joyfully continue his mission, which is still valid today, even if the social conditions in which we live have changed. In particular, spread ever more the spirit of prayer and concern for all vocations in the Church; be diligent workers for the coming of the Kingdom of God, dedicating with every energy to evangelization and human promotion”.<sup>28</sup> These words of the Pope capture the whole aspect of the “contemporaneity” that should be assumed by the charismatic presence and apostolic work of the Rogationists.

### **With the young, ministers of their vocation**

**82** – In our apostolate in favor of the young people, either in the education or in the animation, we are called to serve God's plan on them; to be ministers of the eternal vocational dialogue: “Master where do you live?” – “Come and see” (*Jn* 1:38-39). While promoting the vocational dialogue of the young generations, we are also committed in making them responsible in announcing the “Gospel of Vocation” to their peers: in fact, the witness of their young lives shows that the demanding word of the Gospel can truly speak to young people, deeply motivate them and, within a project of commitment and service, be a fulfilling experience of happiness.

### **Promoters of the Rogationist Laity**

**83** – We promote with enthusiasm the Laity of the Family of the Rogate, with the awareness that it is the Holy Spirit who calls them today in order to reveal to the Church the original and innovative potentiality of the charism. This means to value a charismatic richness of the Rogate, which is

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<sup>27</sup> MEZZARI A.A., *Missionary Disciples of Christ in the Rogate, according to the Rule of Life. Lines of Action of the General Government 2010-2016*, n. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Benedict XVI, *Message to the Delegates for the XI General Chapter of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus*, 5 July 2010.

entrusted to the Laity, a richness that still remains to be discovered in the Church, and to make it fruitful for the whole world. It is our duty to promote the Laity of the Rogate in front of the great challenges that we face as a Congregation: the new frontiers of evangelization, the area of education, the role and mission of the family, new forms of social exclusion.

## **ORIENTATIONS AND OPERATIVE CHOICES**

### **PART I: TODAY'S CHALLENGES**

**1** - Taking into account the cultural sensibilities and the social and ecclesial context where they operate, our Rogationist Communities are now called to live and bear witness to our charismatic identity through:

a) the commitment to a renewed “culture of vocation”, to read the reality from the perspective of vocational anthropology that is centered on the absolute value of every person and of his vocation;

b) the attention and pastoral care for families who live the spirituality of marriage in the light of the charism of the Rogate. To this end we are committed to support the family in its dual mission to live within itself the “Gospel of vocation” and then to proclaim it to other families, thus creating a cultural environment that is conducive to the acceptance of life as a vocation, and promoting, primarily in their children, the growth of the “sacred vocation that would eventually be discovered in them”; <sup>29</sup>

c) the commitment to make our community a the place of vocational discernment for young people through fraternal welcome, sharing of prayer for “good workers” and apostolate among the poor;

d) the integration into the vocation ministry of the local Church with the specific charism of the Rogate, namely the primacy of prayer and service to the needy;

e) the constant effort to assure personal and community fidelity to the vow of poverty, seeking a sober lifestyle in order to be closer to the life and needs of the poor, through new forms of sharing of their spiritual and material goods with the poor;

f) the choice to live with, in defense and support of the poor and to address new forms of poverty, making our houses a place of welcome and of evangelization, and taking courageous apostolic choices in favor of those in the “peripheries” of human life;

g) the commitment to live the joy of the Gospel, giving testimony of fraternal life in community, harmonizing apostolic commitments, moments of common life and personal needs.

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. ECUM . COUNCIL VAT. II, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11.

## **PART II: THE CHARISM OF THE ROGATE AS A WAY OF LIFE**

**2** - The charism should be always lived, deepened, reinterpreted and expressed according to the needs of the different places and geographic areas where our communities are present. Therefore, it is necessary to organize, at the level of communities and Circumscriptions, moments of study, reflection and sharing about the charism, spirituality and mission. On this regard, in the context of the Circumscriptions, the Rogate Centers have an important role to spread in the Church the knowledge of the holy Founder, the spirituality of the charism and the animation of the life and apostolate of the Congregation. The Circumscriptions should therefore establish specific moments of experience and study on the charism, such as:

a) deepening of the Word of God and of the theological and spiritual study of Rogationist literature (Writings of the Founder, the Rule of Life, Chapter Documents, Circular Letters, monographic studies of confreres, etc.). In this regard there is a need and we ask the publication of a critical edition of the writings of the Founder;

b) the use of adequate modern instruments (interactive exhibits, short films, websites, films, etc.) for the presentation of the life of the Founder, and of his charism, and in order to support and qualify the specific apostolate of the Congregation;

c) the attention to the permanent formation of the religious through the organization or participation in conferences and seminars aimed at the acquisition of specific professional skills in carrying out the charismatic apostolate;

d) raising the awareness among the religious students so that they choose the specializations study in academic disciplines that best illustrate our charismatic mission;

e) constant attention in monitoring social needs where we can best express our mission;

f) the importance of our publications for the spread of the charism in the Church. Regarding vocational magazines of different Circumscriptions, we must be willing to invest by assigning qualified personnel and by the economic support to this initiatives.

**3** – The XI General Chapter has completed a long process of revision of our legislation, *Constitutions* and *Norms*, giving it a new general title: *Rule of Life*. The texts, which are rich in biblical and charismatic references, are a synthesis of our spiritual tradition and contain the essential elements of our charismatic identity. Therefore, they should be carefully read, studied, gradually assimilated and translated into attitudes of life and apostolic commitments through:

a) periodic community evaluation and revision of life in particular occasions such as the monthly recollection and spiritual retreat during intense periods of the liturgical year;

b) conferences or seminars during the year as qualified moments of permanent formation.

**4** – The inculturation of the charism is a process that accompanies our presence in different geographical areas. Such process should be stimulated and promoted through:

a) special attention to the formation of formators, even through participation to related academic courses;

b) the formation and preparation of confreres who are called to live in cultural contexts other than those of their country of origin;

c) the inclusion in each stage of formative program the knowledge about the geographical realities that make up the Circumscription, encouraging the exchange of religious in the stage of studies as well as the interchange of Confreres between different Circumscriptions;

d) research and deepening of local cultural categories so as to enable to translate and convey adequately the Rogationist charism;

e) active participation in the activities of local Centers for vocational ministry.

### **PART III: THE CHARISMATIC IDENTITY AS A RESPONSE TO TODAY’S CHALLENGES**

**5** - The knowledge about the charism is a task that is accomplished through constant study and application. To promote the deepening and the effective transmission of the charism today we must cultivate the various fields of studies: philosophy, theology, literature, art, technology, journalism, cinematography, and all that is deemed scientifically necessary for communication in the world today. We need to promote in the Congregation the commitment to careful and systematic study by:

a) identifying, in each Circumscription, those religious who are willing and able to undertake appropriate university studies for the deeper reflection and the transmission of the charism of the Rogate and finding the possibility of insertion in the Institutes of Study and in the theological Faculties for academic courses on the charism and spirituality of the Rogate, and issues related to them;

b) supporting initiatives of the local Churches for the institution of Centers for vocational orientation, and promoting schools of prayer and courses on catechetics and vocational discernment;

c) encouraging and supporting publications of essays and articles on Rogationist charism; making of artistic works of the symbols of our tradition and spirituality; operating in both traditional and new means of social media, for the promotion of specific programs on the various dimensions of the charism of the Rogate: prayer, pastoral care of vocations, the promotion of the little ones and the poor.

**6** - The diffusion of the prayer for vocations is the duty and commitment of every Rogationist religious, of every Community and Circumscription of the Congregation. Therefore:



a) every community should be a place where we learn to pray for vocations, inviting the lay people who are involved in various capacities and levels in our charismatic apostolate to share significant moments of prayer and specific celebrations;

b) each Circumscription, also through the Rogate Centers, should organize Conferences for the knowledge and dissemination of the prayer for “good workers”, vocational celebrations and opportune moments of prayer for vocations;

c) care should be given to the Rogationists Associations and lay groups, especially the Union of Prayer for Vocations and Priestly Union of Prayer for Vocations, which are privileged instruments for the diffusion of the prayer for vocations in the Church.

d) To promote the Rogationist laity, each Circumscription should draw up a project for the laity specifying their lay Rogationist identity and mission in the Church and in the world, to face the challenges with which they are involved together with the Congregation of the Rogationists.

**7** - The way of expressing solidarity with the poor and needy varies according to the different geographical and cultural areas. It is essential to maintain everywhere our presence with the poor in a form of moral support and to break their existential loneliness. Attention should be given to promote new expressions of promotion and evangelization of the poor, as a result of the creativity of evangelical charity and in sensitivity to the real needs of the territory. Forms of solidarity, which have been proven successful and still considered valid should be enhanced in various Circumscriptions.

**8** - To go forth to the existential and geographical peripheries is an evangelical indication, which belongs to the mission of the Church and characterizes the apostolate of consecrated persons. It is part of our charismatic origins and our tradition. The “Avignone” is the paradigm of the Rogationist charism and mission. Prompted by the words of Pope Francis, today we are particularly encouraged to:

a) open the doors of our communities to welcome the poor and at the same time be co-travelers with them, sharing particular situations of material and spiritual poverty;

b) educate young religious in formation to love and care for the poor, offering them temporary specific experiences both within our structures as well as in other specialized centers;

c) allow ourselves to be guided by the poor in the selection of sites for new foundations, and to go where they most abound;

d) create places with adequate facilities for the reception, assistance and evangelization of the poor.

**9** – We need to verify at the levels of the Congregational, Circumscription and local Community if our life and our apostolic activities express well enough today the compassion of the Heart of Jesus for the weary and helpless crowds, with the same intensity and passion that characterized the life and activity of our Holy Founder.