Presentation

We are accustomed to receive the Chapter Document after each General Chapter and we are tempted to accept it just as another document to be added to those already existing. We heard critical voices of this practice, almost an invitation of not providing any document in the Chapter or, otherwise, to limit ourselves in giving to the Congregation just a series of concrete indications.

We ask ourselves: what for and what is a Chapter Document?

The Chapter Document is not, as one might think, the document produced by the Chapter and handed over to the Congregation, but it is the document “of the Congregation”. It is the final synthesis of a three-year reflection done by the Congregation. This reflection is continued during the General Chapter through further analysis, study, discussion and discernment shared by the Chapter members. Therefore, it is an expression of the Congregation and, by its nature, it must become its instrument of life and apostolate.

We could compare the Chapter Document, by analogy and in miniature, to what happens in the annual planning of a religious Community. We sit around a table, we confront and reflect together on the lights and shadows, and then we trace a path to accomplish together for the coming year.

The Document of the XII General Chapter is our reference point, our guide for the next six years.

Why should it be considered a doctrinal, pastoral and charismatic “document”, and not just a list of guidelines and resolutions?

It was the choice of the Chapter; and even before that, during the process of preparation, it was the choice of the Congregation. If we feel the need to have new inputs for updating and renewal of our life and our apostolate, we do not simply accept ready-made indications and orientations. We have to own and implement them, after having espoused their doctrinal and pastoral motivations.

The Chapter Document calls us to reflect on “our charismatic identity in today’s challenges”. It is not intended to illustrate to us our “charismatic identity”, for it has already been clearly defined in the preceding Chapters and codified in our Rule of Life, which is approved by the Holy See.

The document invites us to live our “identity” in today’s reality. It wants to tell us that, if in the past decades, the life and apostolate of the Community responded to the challenges of that time in faithfulness to our charismatic identity, today we live and work in a totally new existential reality that we cannot simply ignore.

We are called to verify if our choices at all levels, big and small, personal and communitarian, allow us to live our charismatic identity in today’s reality, where we are immersed with its problems and challenges, as we are trying to recognize the signs of the times.

In the message that we have received from the Holy Father, we have been reminded that our time more than ever needs good workers to build up the Kingdom of God on earth and therefore, the “ROGATE” is always alive and relevant, and every Rogationist religious becomes an effective sign of the Holy Spirit who, through the evangelical command, continues to call and to send holy apostles for the edification of the Church.

This theme is indicated to us by title of the Chapter Document, which is introduced by a synthesis of the particularly important charismatic *pericope*: “Seeing the Crowds, he felt Compassion for them and said, ‘Rogate.’”

With these words we are given the key solution to face the difficult task of immersing our charismatic identity in today’s challenges. We are shown the way and the means to use in order to revive our identity and to renew and update our life and our charismatic apostolate. Let us closely consider this verse.

*Seeing the Crowds.* It is an invitation to be inserted Communities, as we are often reminded by Pope Francis. We can not respond “from a distance” to the challenges of today, to the cry of the poor. If the orphans and the poor are the beloved of the Lord, as our Holy Founder taught and witnessed to us, we need to grow in our awareness that the closer we get to them, the more we are united to the Lord.

*He felt Compassion for them*. This closeness leads us to real compassion. The concreteness of appropriate choices in our apostolate will depend from situation to situation, according to the different social contexts in which we work, but at the base of our real commitment must be our knowledge, nearness, affection and compassion towards the orphans and the poor, men and women, young and old.

*And he said, “Rogate.”* Our mission is “to say the Rogate”, to say it with our life and words. We need to rediscover the greatness and beauty of the treasure that has been entrusted to us with the charism of the “intelligence and zeal of Rogate”. It is the prayer of the poor, the prayer with the poor, and the prayer for the poor. We will become men of “charity of the Rogate” when we have learned to be men of “prayer of the Rogate”. We will know the compassion of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, then our gaze and hands will turn towards the little ones and the poor.

This is the message that the XII General Chapter has entrusted to us. At the same time, we are given some **Orientations** or guidelines on which path to take, to help us translate this message into concrete daily choices.

It indicates to us where to direct particularly our attention so that we could be helped in our journey of rediscovering our charismatic identity and thus becoming an effective response to the needs and challenges of our time.

We are invited to rediscover the brotherhood in our Communities, that we want to be simple, warmhearted and compassionate. We need to take care of the cultural dimension, especially in its charismatic aspect, in order to become heralds and witnesses of the Rogate. We are exhorted to have our Rule of Life as the point of reference, and to become more and more men of prayer in order to form the laity who are adhering to the charism, and to make our Communities as houses of prayer.

The Chapter Document, besides these and other precious Orientations, gives us also a series of **Operative Proposals**, i.e., concrete suggestions, to translate these Orientations in our lives. Here, we find a wealth of indications, which are entrusted to our discernment and our good will to renew our identity and respond to the challenges of today.

The Chapter Document then closes with some **Deliberations**, concerning the Structure and the Government of the Congregation. These are some new articles or modifications of articles of the Norms, based on the needs which emerged in the previous six years.

Dearest confreres, in my first letter of greeting I reminded that the General Chapter has elaborated a precious document that would help us do a successful personal and community revision. I wish to underline the importance of “communal” reception of the Chapter Document. For us religious, fraternal life is a fundamental value in order to walk along the way that the Lord has shown us. To take hold of this document periodically as a means of community revision will surely be of great benefit for our personal life and for our apostolate.

Our future depends on how we rediscover and live with joy our being “brothers” who belong to the same “family” with a historical, charismatic and apostolic identity. In fact, the Chapter Document thus says,

“Through fraternal life in community we express the joy and celebration of living together, which refers primarily to the interior and profound happiness of belonging to a common history, marked by the charism of the Rogate. We are therefore called to build communities that are schools of prayer, places of encounter and dialogue; where we live with trust, respect, mutual support and attention. Rediscovering ourselves every day as ‘brothers’ in Christ is a decisive factor for the establishment of our identity and sense of belonging to a Congregation that we consider as our ‘family’.” (n. 28)

This is my most fervent hope, which I entrust to the blessing of our Divine Superior through the intercession of St. Hannibal Mary, while I present to you the Document of the XII General Chapter.

Fr. Bruno Rampazzo, R.C.J.

Superior General