

Congregation
of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus

“Stir into flame the gift of God”
(2 Tim 1:6)

Religious Vows in the Life of the Rogationists

Letter from the Superior General
Fr. Bruno Rampazzo, RCJ

Rome, 2026

Introduction

Dear Confreres,

It is with hearts full of gratitude to the Lord that we have begun the centenary celebrations of the passing into heaven (*transitus*) of our Founder, Saint Hannibal Mary Di Francia.

This anniversary provides an important opportunity to stir into flame the gift of God (cf. 2 Tim 1:6) entrusted to us, keeping our eyes fixed on Christ, who has called us to follow him and share in his life. Cherishing what Father Hannibal expressed in the Fifth Declaration, we recognize that the essence of Religious Life consists in Poverty, Obedience, and Chastity.

During our Congregation's recent General Chapters, it has been noted several times that too little attention is given to the gift of these Vows. Modeled on the life of Christ, these evangelical counsels are given to us to shape and inspire our Rogationist consecrated life.

Now, as we approach August 6—the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord and the first centenary of the canonical approval of the Rogationists and the Daughters of Divine Zeal (1926–2026)—and echoing the sentiments of our confreres, I wish to share with you a brief reflection on the Religious Vows, which Saint Hannibal rightfully called "most precious pearls and special graces."

1.

AT THE ROOT OF THE QUEST FOR SPIRITUALITY

A Renewed Need for Spirituality

In recent years, a renewed need for spirituality has been felt on many fronts. This yearning arises not only from religious circles, ecclesial institutions, and local communities, but emerges above all within the secular world. It flows from the hearts of countless individuals seeking authentic answers to global challenges—increasingly marked by injustice, discrimination, gender-based violence, and marginalization. The stakes are high. From East to West, from the Global South to the North, there is an urgent desire to discern the meaning of life within the horizon of the "Wholly Other."

Reflecting on the need to implement the "new evangelization," Pope Leo XIV points out how a "strong demand for spirituality" is emerging today, especially among young people. The new generation holds no bias against the Gospel; on the contrary, when they rediscover it, many desire to know it more deeply, perceiving that within it lies the secret to true happiness. In his recent encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, Pope

Leo invites us to reflect on the consequences of the "technocratic paradigm" and the role of "digital power," which must be guided through the lens of humanization and respect for the dignity and freedom of every human person. It is within this framework that we align ourselves to heed Pope Leo's call for necessary spiritual discernment.¹

Starting Afresh from Our Charismatic Identity

For us, spiritual discernment requires a deeper engagement with the charismatic identity that is essential to being disciples of Jesus along the path mapped out by Saint Hannibal Mary Di Francia. As we prepare to celebrate the centenary of Saint Hannibal's death (1927–2027), we embrace the call to engage in authentic discernment in light of the fruitful history of the "Family of the *Rogate*".²

Spiritual discernment means giving new relevance to the generative value of the Charism of the *Rogate* amid the changes of our present time, learning to perceive the signs of God's Divine Providence woven into history and, in a special way, into our religious family.³ We are convinced that the fruitfulness of baptismal life and the spiritual journey of the Family of the *Rogate* rest on a deeper conviction and a more dedicated commitment to our charismatic identity and its ongoing incarnation within the ecclesial and social fabric of the People of God.

The Gift of Religious Vows

Bearing in mind the need for spiritual discernment and the resulting call to renew consecrated life,⁴ we wish to focus our attention on the gift of the religious vows.⁵ These vows mark our shared commitment to holiness in the spirit of the Gospel—a way of life internalized and lived out in an extraordinary manner by our Founder, as well as by the men and women who have generously responded to the Rogationist charism since the origins of our religious family.

We are convinced of the need to deepen our understanding of the value and quality of the religious vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience,⁶ alongside our fourth vow: the prayer of the *Rogate*. This qualitative deepening must be contextualized

¹ Cf. Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, Vatican City 2026, nos. 92-93.

² Cf. B. Rampazzo, *Toward the Jubilee in Prayer with Father Hannibal*. Circular Letter from Fr. Bruno Rampazzo to the Family of the *Rogate*, Rome 2024.

³ Cf. Congregation of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus, *Constitutions*, Rome 2010, art. 9.

⁴ 4 Cf. A. Pigna, "Vita consacrata," in *Dizionario di Pastorale Vocazionale*, ed. Centro Internazionale Vocazionale Rogate (Rome: Editrice Rogate, 2002), 1269–1283.

⁵ 5 Cf. A. Pigna, "Voto," in *Dizionario enciclopedico di Spiritualità*, ed. E. Ancilli, vol. III (Rome: Città Nuova, 1995), 2689–2693; S. Majorano, "Voti," in *Nuovo Dizionario di Teologia Morale*, ed. F. Compagnoni, G. Piana, and S. Privitera (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 1990), 1520–1526. For a biblical study, cf. R. Cavedo, "Voto," in *Dizionario Biblico della Vocazione*, ed. G. De Virgilio (Rome: Centro Internazionale Vocazionale Rogate, 2007), 1009–1011.

⁶ Cf. G. Firszt, "Povertà, obbedienza, castità sulla formazione alla classica triade dei consigli evangelici ai tempi d'oggi," in *Itinera Spirituality* 1 (2008): 113–134.

within our journey toward the 2027 Jubilee of St. Hannibal's *Transitus*. It urges us to ever more fully embody the evangelical style of consecrated life, strengthening it so that it may continue to serve as a credible witness to the joy of being united with the Father, in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

The Living Memory of Vows in Consecrated Life

It is important to remember that "religious vows are a solemn and perpetual commitment to live the evangelical counsels in an integrated manner; they are the creature's response to God's call to a life specifically devoted to the full imitation of Christ".⁷ By embracing the practice of the evangelical counsels, each of us has committed to living the vows of consecrated life with an undivided heart within a concrete religious community, remaining open to ecclesial communion through a spirit of familial fraternity and mutual service.

As the Apostle Paul reminds Timothy, we too feel called by the invitation to *stir into flame the gift of God* that we have received (2 Tim 1:6) and to make it bear fruit for the good of the Church and the Family of the Rogate. The memory of this received gift must become increasingly vital, concrete, and dynamic. Building upon our ongoing, daily commitment, we deepen our appreciation for the free choice to welcome and embody the evangelical counsels⁸ along the path traced out by Saint Hannibal.

2.

THE RELIGIOUS VOWS IN THE FOLLOWING OF JESUS CHRIST:

Fixing Our Gaze on Jesus

It is fundamental to ground our reflection on the nature of vows in consecrated life by fixing our gaze on the person of Jesus Christ. It is Him whom we intend to follow, and in Him we wish to confirm the vocation to which we have been called. The interior journey of conforming ourselves to the person of Jesus requires continuous inner commitment. Such dedication is all the more necessary for those of us who live the Charism of the *Rogate* and pledge to pray to the Heavenly Father "to send out laborers for his harvest" (Mt 9:37).

Precisely because our identity as baptized and consecrated persons is vitally rooted in following Jesus, He remains our model—authentically human and essentially divine. Throughout the Gospel accounts and the testimony of the New

⁷ Pigna, "Voto," 2690–2691.

⁸ Cf. A. Lattuada, "Consigli evangelici," in *Nuovo Dizionario di Teologia Morale*, 137–145; A. Pigna, "Consigli," in *Dizionario enciclopedico di Spiritualità*, vol. I, 610–614.

Testament, Jesus of Nazareth is designated by various Christological titles.⁹ Our attention focuses on four specific designations that correspond to our four vows: a) Jesus as "Bridegroom," the model of chastity; b) Jesus as "Poor," the model of simplicity and essentiality; c) Jesus as "Obedient," the model of complete conformity to the Father's will; d) Jesus as "Master" of the prayer of the *Rogate*.

First Vow: Jesus as "Bridegroom," Model of Chastity

Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God (Rom 12:1). Within the logic of total self-giving, we are called to live chastity in response to the Lord's call. Virginity for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven serves as a precious sign pointing to the primacy of spousal communion with God. It is a fruitful witness to the "future life," made present in our history today. The gift of "chastity" for the Kingdom of Heaven is deeply rooted in Christian tradition and the practice of consecrated life.¹⁰ From a biblical perspective, chastity¹¹ encompasses the entire human person, centered in the affective and volitional dimension of the "heart."

Biblical Insight

In biblical revelation, the term *heart* (Hebrew: *lēb*; Greek: *kardia*) is tied to various images indicating the innermost conscience of the human person—the deepest seat of one's mysterious identity where one grasps their purpose and truth. The heart does not directly mean love, but rather the center of the person, which in Christ is entirely love. Closely bound to the category of the heart is the theme of "spousal love," symbolized by the relationship between bridegroom and bride and through the symbols that weave an intimate bond of love. The spousal image is used in both anthropological and theological perspectives, especially to express fidelity to the Covenant.

The faithful love of *Yhwh* is the love of a "bridegroom" for his "bride." Indeed, God Himself is defined as a "bridegroom" (cf. Is 54:5) to express symbolically His love for every creature, and in a special way for His chosen people. Beyond the poignant narrative of the *Song of Songs*—dedicated to the epic of love as a theological symbol of the relationship between *Yhwh* and His people—the spousal image appears across other vital scriptural contexts, particularly within the prophetic books. The most striking example is the prophet Hosea and his marital experience (cf. Hos 1–3), which reveals a deep spousal symbolism applied to the prophetic judgment of the people's infidelity to God's Covenant. The prophet's painful love story reveals God's plan of

⁹ For a deeper vocational study on this topic, cf. R. Fabris, "Gesù Cristo," in *Dizionario Biblico della Vocazione*, 359–365.

¹⁰ Cf. A. Marchetti – M. Caprioli, "Castità," in *Dizionario enciclopedico di Spiritualità*, vol. I, 467–474; S. Majorano, "Verginità consacrata," in *Nuovo Dizionario di Teologia Morale*, 1427–1435; R. Cantalamessa, *Verginità* (Milan: Ancora, 2014). For the Rogationist context, cf. Congregation of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus, *Constitutions*, arts. 31–36.

¹¹ Cf. D. Marzotto, "Castità-verginità," in *Dizionario Biblico della Vocazione*, 106–117.

salvation, culminating in a redeeming love that rescues His people from unfaithfulness: *I will heal their defection, I will love them freely; for my wrath is turned away from them* (Hos 14:4). Spousal symbolism linked to the theme of the heart is similarly present in Jeremiah (Jer 31:31–34) and Ezekiel (Ez 36:24–28). In continuity with the Old Testament spousal motif, the nuptial metaphor is applied to New Testament Christological and ecclesiological reflection. The pairing of "bridegroom/bride" (Hebrew: *kallāh*; Greek: *nymphē* / *nymphios*) appears in the New Testament almost exclusively in a figurative sense. In the Synoptic Gospels, we find this nuptial usage in Matthew 9:15 (and parallels: Mk 2:19–20; Lk 5:33–35), where Jesus Himself uses the term "bridegroom," illustrating His saving entry into human history as a wedding feast. Furthermore, the spousal dimension is highlighted in the eschatological parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25:1–13), confirming how the value of virginity projects toward the eternal mystery of God, the fullness of love.

Spiritual Application

Living the state of virginity with a chaste heart means following Jesus Christ as "Bridegroom," allowing ourselves to be guided by His inner sentiments, and letting our lives reflect the dynamics of a free heart capable of opening itself to all. In this way of life, we are called to witness to the joy of self-giving in our relationships with God and with our neighbor.

Those who follow Christ the Bridegroom love with their whole being and choose to serve others with an undivided heart. This existential disposition reaffirms the importance of *renouncing marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven* (Mt 19:12) and highlights the beauty of chastity—understood not as mere renunciation, but as a precious spiritual offering.

The Father Speaks

"As for Holy Chastity, I recognize that Our Lord Jesus Christ brought this precious virtue to earth to be given as a dowry to His chosen ministers and to the fortunate souls He mercifully calls to the most intimate union of love through the religious life...

"I recognize that this virtue or vow is among the most sacred duties of priests and religious. Voluntary failure to observe this holy virtue or vow, even venially, is the beginning of a disastrous decline in all other virtues. It clouds the intellect, weakens spiritual strength, and gives the devil greater boldness to intensify his temptations. It is a step toward the total ruin of the soul. Therefore, if I am not chaste in soul and body, mind and heart, then I will not be humble, obedient, truthful, observant; I will not be a religious or Christian...

"I promise to contemplate the excellence and importance of Chastity. I will fervently implore daily the help of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Most Holy

Immaculate Virgin, the Angels, the Saints, and my holy Guardian Angel to diligently keep me completely untainted by the slightest stain against Holy Chastity... I affirm, declare, and promise that I will strive with all my strength and until my last breath to cultivate internal and external Chastity.

“To safeguard Holy Chastity, I will love mortification, both of self-love and of the senses” (Fifth Declaration, *Declarations and Promises*).

Second Vow: Jesus as "Poor," Model of Simplicity

When presenting the spiritual value of the relief collection for the church in Jerusalem, the Apostle Paul addresses the Corinthians with these words: *For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sake he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich* (2 Cor 8:9). As such, poverty outlines the dramatic condition of being deprived of necessary goods at the personal, family, and community levels. We are familiar with various forms of poverty: from economic hardship to social marginalization, and from the loss of family and emotional relationships to situations of illness, loneliness, and old age. The second vow that we are called to live in following Christ expresses itself in the choice to become poor for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Biblical Insight

From a biblical perspective, the theme of the poor and their aid is extensively documented in both the Old and New Testaments.¹² Across narrative and legal passages alike, Scripture affirms that God protects the poor and defends the weak (cf. Dt 15:1–15; Isa 29:19). The patriarchal narratives (Jacob, Joseph), the Exodus event, and subsequent milestones in Israel's history bear witness to *Yhwh* 's constant favor toward the lowly.

The chosen community is called to live out the same supportive, self-giving love of God.

The attitudes required toward the needy, as attested in Mosaic law, are in line with this (cf. Dt 24:10–15). In the Book of Proverbs, the believer is commanded to defend the destitute (cf. Prov 22:22–23). Alongside the Sabbatical year—governed by provisions ensuring solidarity with the poor (cf. Ex 23:10–12; Lev 25:6–7)—and the Jubilee year (cf. Lev 25:8–55), scriptural law highlights norms on hospitality and commands protecting fundamental rights: the right to subsistence (cf. Lev 19:9–10; 23:22), respect (cf. Ex 22:20–23; 23:9), and kindness (cf. Dt 10:19). Likewise, the foreigner (Hebrew: *gēr*; Greek: *xenos*) in an economically vulnerable position must be welcomed and assisted, just like the widows and orphans of Israel.

¹² Cf. L. Vari, "Povero," in *Dizionario Biblico della Vocazione*, 715–723; R. Cantalamessa, *Povertà* (Milan: Ancora, 2012). For the Family of the Rogate, cf. Congregation of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus, *Constitutions*, arts. 31–36.

The prayers of Israel teach us to see the presence of God within the poor and their suffering. Building on this tradition, Jesus reveals God's preferential love for the little ones and the suffering. They embody and witness to the Beatitude (cf. Lk 6:20), and in them we are called to recognize and serve Jesus Himself (cf. Mt 25:40). Jesus of Nazareth chose to live among the people in simplicity and essentiality. His teaching warns against the selfish use of wealth and material goods. To those who desire to follow Him on the path of mission, Jesus confides that He has nowhere to *rest His head* (cf. Lk 9:57–62).

Those called to discipleship leave their security behind (cf. Lk 5:11) to choose a "poor" existence shared with the Master. In this way, the condition of poverty must spur believers to fruitful commitment in service to the community. Poverty freely chosen for the Kingdom of Heaven must not yield to victimhood or passivity; rather, it implies trust in Divine Providence, lived in a spirit of prayer, gratitude, and sharing with those who lack the necessities of life.¹³ *It is more blessed to give than to receive* (Acts 20:35).

Thus, the early Church—in its poverty—became an increasingly visible sign of inclusion, sharing, and hope among the people (cf. Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–35). Its simple existence, founded on the imitation of Christ's poverty, transformed into a dynamic witness to the Gospel, marked by an inclusive outreach and a spirit of service (cf. Jas 2:1–13). Throughout Paul's letters, the excellence of evangelical poverty is repeatedly emphasized, alongside warnings to the rich not to be proud, but to do good, to be rich in good works, and to be generous and ready to share (cf. 1 Tim 6:18–19).

Spiritual Application

Following Christ in the consecrated life means learning to cultivate a "poor" heart—detached from material goods, open to sharing, and devoted to fraternity. The tradition of welcoming others, especially those in need, is well established within Rogationist communities.

The path of the poor is the very road Saint Hannibal chose, following the example of Jesus. The poverty experienced in the early days of our saint of Messina—especially through his ministry to children and vulnerable people—was continually met with answers from Divine Providence that exceeded all expectations.

Living the vow of poverty for the Kingdom of Heaven means adopting the very lifestyle of Christ: surrendering oneself to the Father's Providence and reaffirming a preferential option for the poor, fully aware that the works we carry out are not for financial profit but are instruments of service for the Gospel.

¹³ 13 Cf. P. Coda, "Povertà," in *Dizionario enciclopedico di Spiritualità*, vol. III, 1979–1989; L. De Candido, "Povero," in *Nuovo Dizionario di spiritualità*, ed. S. De Fiores and T. Goffi (Cinisello Balsamo: Paoline, 1985), 1241–1259. For the Rogationist context, cf. Congregation of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus, *Constitutions*, arts. 37–43.

The Father Speaks

“Regarding Holy Poverty, I recognize it as a precious pearl and the solid foundation not only of my vocation but also of the existence of the entire Institute. By consecrating myself to this Institute, I intend to consecrate myself with great fervor of love to Evangelical Poverty. I contemplate it in the adorable person of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Most Blessed Virgin, and as practiced with holy enthusiasm by the Saints. I will regard it as a source of priceless treasures from heaven. I firmly believe that as long as the Institute remains evangelically poor and takes pride in Holy Poverty, it will progress day by day and remain steadfast and unshakable. However, if the Institute slackens in its love for and practice of Holy Poverty, it will fall into ruin and dissolution... Therefore, I will be very careful not to fall into neglect of Holy Poverty... With the help of the Lord and my own good will, I promise, in theory, to lean toward the strictest interpretation of Evangelical Poverty in case of controversy, discussion, or interpretation of the Rule. In *practice*, I promise to embrace Holy Poverty in all aspects... I promise to love Holy Poverty in all its hardships for the sake of the Lord Jesus, who was poor and endured suffering. Therefore, I will accept it if I lack something that I cannot have, and I will bear that deprivation in peace. On the contrary, I will rejoice if I am given a humble room, humble clothing, humble bed, humble food, and every other humble thing... I will always pray to the Lord to grant me the spirit of Holy Poverty” (Fifth Declaration, *Declarations and Promises*).

Third Vow: Jesus as "Obedient,"

Model of Complete Conformity to the Father's Will

The gift of "obedience" for the Kingdom of Heaven¹⁴ is to be considered one of the highest forms of freedom, unity, and ecclesial communion, following the example of Jesus Christ. Exercising the vow of obedience involves at least three elements: the capacity to listen, respect in dialogue, and a willingness to collaborate. It is clear that obedience—when lived in its active and collaborative dimension—requires a high degree of human and spiritual maturity.

Biblical Insight

In the biblical tradition, obedience is presented across numerous narrative contexts that carry a deep symbolic and exemplary value.¹⁵ The foundation of obedience is rooted in recognizing the sovereign power of God the Creator, realized through faith. We must look back to the creative act itself—by which God manifests His dominion over the world and history (cf. Jer 27:5)—to grasp the vision that every creature is called to obey the Lord (cf. Jdt 16:14) in a spirit of trust and gratitude (cf.

¹⁴ T. Goffi, "Obbedienza," in *Dizionario enciclopedico di Spiritualità*, vol. II, 1739–1743; R. Cantalamessa, *Obbedienza* (Milan: Ancora, 2014). For the Rogationist context, cf. Congregation of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus, *Constitutions*, arts. 44–47.

¹⁵ Cf. P. L. Ferrari, "Obbedienza – volontà di Dio," in *Dizionario Biblico della Vocazione*, 616–623.

Ps 119:73). In a special way, human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, are invited into a unique relationship that pairs the grandeur of the Creator with the obedient response of the creature.

From the Genesis narratives onward, human disobedience to the divine command stands in stark contrast to obedience (cf. Gen 3:1–24). The exercise of human freedom is inextricably linked to our response to the Creator. Disobedience ("original sin") brought dramatic consequences for the human condition. Salvation history, therefore, unfolds through the exercise of the virtue of obedience.

Abraham stands out in this light as the exemplar of the believer whose faith expresses itself above all in obediently following God (cf. Gen 12–25). In Abraham's footsteps walks a great cloud of believers who, throughout biblical history, made obedient listening to the Lord their reason for living. The obedience *Yhwh* requested of the covenant people took shape in welcoming and observing the Law (*Torah*). Faith and obedience characterize the women and men of the Bible, especially those who fought for justice against the logic of violence and injustice. Standing out among them is the "suffering servant of *Yhwh*," who listens to God's word, lives in righteousness, and offers his life as a ransom for his people (cf. Isa 50; 52–53). The wise person is one who listens to the word of the Lord and obeys His precepts (cf. Prov 19:27–28).

Similarly, during His mission, Jesus invites the people to hear His preaching, which is like seed sown on good soil to bear fruit (cf. Mk 4:1–9). Like one who builds a house on rock, the person who hears and welcomes the words of the Lord remains steadfast in times of crisis; the disobedient, on the other hand, cannot stand when trials and difficulties arrive (cf. Mt 7:24–27). The supreme model of obedience to God is Jesus Christ Himself, who chose to become incarnate in the world and, as a "servant", accepted death on a cross (cf. Phil 2:6–8). His vicarious obedience was accepted by the Father, who raised Him up and bestowed upon Him the name "Lord," exalting Him at His side in glory (cf. Phil 2:9–11).

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews underscores Christ's example, who obeyed the Father's will in all things by offering Himself for humanity's salvation: *Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered* (Heb 5:8). In the early Christian communities, obedience was lived within a household context (*domus ecclesia*), marked by shared ministry, service, and a willingness to learn (*docibilitas*) as consciences matured. Every believer practices obedience to God in Christ while recognizing the authority and dignity proper to their brothers and sisters.

The Apostle Paul highlights the theological importance of the "obedience of faith"—understood as a journey of listening, welcoming the Gospel, and internalizing it. Living obedience means adhering to Jesus Christ and His Gospel, handed down through apostolic teaching (cf. Acts 6:7; Rom 6:17; 10:16; 2 Thess 1:8; Heb 5:9). Believers actively live out obedience to God and the Church by accepting the gift of truth (Gal 5:7; 1 Pet 1:22) and safeguarding its richness.

Adherence to the faith translates into a moral commitment that involves mutual dialogue and respect, alongside a recognition of legitimate authority. Obedience is commended within family life (Col 3:20; Eph 6:1–3), between spouses (cf. Eph 5:22; Col 3:18), and in ecclesial ministry (cf. Phil 2:12; Heb 13:17). It extends into the social sphere (Rom 13:1–7), where it ought to foster a culture of reconciliation and honor the dignity of every person.

Spiritual Application

Living the vow of obedience means keeping our hearts ready to welcome and collaborate with those who serve in the Church through the authority conferred upon them by the Lord. In this sense, obedience represents a foundational dimension of the consecrated person's spirituality — one who is called to grow in freedom and shared responsibility.

Recognizing in our superiors an expression of God's fatherhood, we listen to His word and follow the example of Christ, who became obedient unto death, even death on a cross (Phil 2:8). The true efficacy of obedience is demonstrated in its capacity to generate and build up—rather than destroy—ecclesial relationships, especially when facing difficult situations or crises of authority.

The Father Speaks

“As for Holy Obedience, I declare that I recognize that this virtue forms the life and existence of every religious Institute. Just as the entire natural order exists only because the elements obey the laws established by Divine Will [since all creation would dissolve in an instant if they disobeyed those laws], so I acknowledge that without perfect and faithful Obedience, a religious House could not exist because it would lack the natural and supernatural means for its existence. I firmly hold that Holy Obedience is a virtue that leads to perfect sanctification and union with God because by obeying Superiors and the rules, one perfectly fulfills the Will of the Most High.

“I recognize that holy religious Obedience is the surest, safest, and shortest way to attain great perfection. A religious House in which everyone obeys religiously is a Kingdom of God on earth. I recognize that humble obedience is the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ, who promised always to do his Father's Will (cf. Jn 4:34; 14:31) and made himself obedient unto death on the cross (cf. Phil 2:8). The obedient soul, following this path, is transformed into Jesus Christ... I will strive with all my strength to obey my Superiors and our Rules and Constitutions in all things, even if it means going against my own desires...

“I promise that my obedience will be motivated by supernatural reasons, that is, to see the person of Jesus Christ Himself in the person of my Superiors. I will obey

out of love for God to please the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, to sanctify and save myself, and to set a good example for others...

“I will pray every day to the Adorable Heart of Jesus to make me perfectly Obedient” (Fifth Declaration, *Declarations and Promises*).

Fourth Vow: Jesus as the “Master” of the *Rogate* Prayer

The gift of the “*Rogate* prayer”¹⁶ forms the defining value of the Rogationist identity and its ecclesial mission. It sums up and embodies the dynamism of praying for vocations alongside acts of charity, serving the “great harvest” by sending out good laborers. Jesus’ unique command to his disciples in Matthew 9:37–38 and Luke 10:2 was so central to St. Hannibal that it became the “beating heart” of the testimony that the entire Rogationist family continues to give in the Church and the world. The charism bestowed upon the founder finds expression in fulfilling the fourth vow,¹⁷ “by which we commit to directing and offering our lives—and all the works that comprise the spiritual and apostolic heritage of the Institute—to the Lord of the harvest”.¹⁸

Biblical Insight

The command of the *Rogate* appears in the context of Christ’s apostolic ministry as recorded in both the Matthean and Lukan Gospel traditions.¹⁹ We can highlight the most significant aspects of the Gospel message of the *Rogate*.

First, we must consider the context in which Jesus’s invitation to pray appears. In Matthew 9:37–38, the apostolic activity of Christ is presented as he *went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness* (Mt 9:35; cf. Mt 4:23).

The apostolic passion described in this Matthean summary is linked to the “loving compassion” (*esplagchnisthe*) that Jesus feels upon seeing the crowds “troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt 9:36). The echo of Old Testament tradition is clear: the fulfillment of the messianic promise is realized through God’s fatherly and motherly love for his people, similar to the image of the shepherd who cares for his flock and leads it to green pastures (cf. Ps 23:2–3). The disciples must not forget that the flock is threatened by the presence of wolves and hirelings (cf. Mt 10:16). God does not abandon his people (cf. Ps 37:28; 2 Mc 6:16), but he requires the involvement of the community of disciples both in prayer (9:38) and in the subsequent election and apostolic mission (Mt 10:1–5a). The invitation of Jesus

¹⁶ Cf. Congregation of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus, *The Rogationist Rule of Life: An Expression of Consecration, Guarantee of Charismatic Identity, Support of Fraternal Communion, and Plan for Mission*, Document of the 11th General Chapter (Rome, 2010); Id., *Seeing the Crowds, He Felt Compassion for Them and Said: Rogate. Our Charismatic Identity Amid Today’s Challenges*, Document of the 12th General Chapter (Rome, 2016).

¹⁷ Cf. Congregation of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus, *Constitutions*, arts. 28, 48–49.

¹⁸ Ibid., no. 49.

¹⁹ Cf. G. De Virgilio, “Rogate,” in *Dizionario Biblico della Vocazione*, 804–820.

of Nazareth lies at the heart of the dynamics of the messianic kingdom, bringing to fulfillment the promises and prayers attested since the Old Testament. The Exodus, the preaching, the miracle-working ministry of Christ, and his compassionate love for humanity culminate in the vocational prayer of the *Rogate*. This is followed by the choosing of the Apostles and their initial sending out into the towns to evangelize (cf. the missionary instructions in Mt 10:5–42).

This vocational invocation must be understood as a driving force, a spiritual mediation, and a missionary strength recommended by Jesus to the Twelve and developed in the life of the post-Easter community. The Lord's "saying" (*logion*) in Matthew 9:38 uses the vivid agricultural metaphor of the harvest and the laborers to express the temporal and spatial tension between the abundance of the ripe harvest—which demands to be reaped immediately, without delay or loss—and the scarcity of laborers.

The invitation to "pray the Lord of the harvest" to send out laborers into "his" harvest reveals Christ's desire to involve the disciples in his own mission: in a sense, the miracle is in our hands, to the extent that we are willing to offer what God desires for his work of salvation. Going, teaching, preaching, and healing culminate in and are summarized by the act of "praying the Lord of the harvest." Before choosing the Twelve and empowering them to perform signs (Mt 10:1), the Son asks the disciples first and foremost to "pray the Lord of the harvest."

The imperative to pray to God, to whom the harvest belongs, highlights the Trinitarian and Christological dimension of the Kingdom's fulfillment, in which believers are called to participate. The *Rogate* prayer is closely linked to the "mystery of the Kingdom," just as the prayer of the "Our Father" illuminates the believers' new relationship with God as "Father" (cf. Mt 6:5–15).

Similar themes are found in the Lucan parallel, which projects the request into the missionary dimension of the disciples sent to announce the imminence of the kingdom (cf. Lk 10:2–3). Within the economy of Gospel revelation, the *Rogate* prayer assumes primary importance: it is a sign of recognition and confirmation that the entire plan of salvation springs from God's free and supreme will, summarizing the calling and task of believers throughout history. Ultimately, a vocation is in its essence the fruit of an ineffable divine initiative into which the co-responsibility of the believer is woven—a believer called to "implore" the gift of missionaries and share a passion for humanity's fate.

The coming of Christ represents the "fulfillment of the messianic time" of which the *Rogate* is an expression. The abundant harvest of the world is ripe (cf. Jn 4:32–38; Rev 14:15), the time of waiting is fulfilled, and this vocational invocation must mark the ongoing spiritual life of every believer who, "in Christ," becomes an active participant in the Kingdom by living out their own unique and specific vocation and mission.

Spiritual Application

Fulfilling the fourth vow—by which we commit to living fully Christ’s compassion for the crowds and to “pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest”—means entering into full communion with the Heart of Christ. Just as St. Hannibal lived, so too do we follow his example, gratefully receiving the Rogationist charism. The vow allows us to enter into the Trinitarian circularity that enables us to share in the vocational dynamism expressed by the Lord Jesus throughout his mission. We are conscious of the spiritual richness of the *Rogate*, in which we can identify six key dimensions:

a) Trinitarian dimension: We are called to cooperate in the mystery of the Kingdom through the sending of “good laborers”;

b) Christological dimension: Characterizes our faith in the fulfillment of the messianic time;

c) Soteriological dimension: Expressed in the invitation to welcome the Kingdom and live out compassion for salvation;

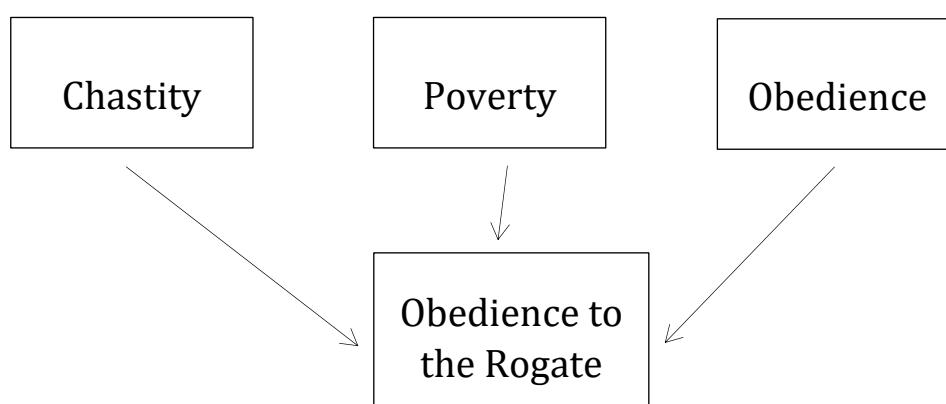
d) Ecclesiological dimension: Allows us to recognize in the *Rogate* the “prayer of the Church” for the world;

e) Anthropological dimension: Places us alongside every person, especially those enduring suffering and trials;

f) Eschatological dimension: Projects the vocational invocation toward the end of time, opening it unto the horizon of eternal beatitude.

Living the *Rogate* daily means sharing in the mystery of God and humanity, of the past and the future—uniting contemplation with the active service of offering ourselves to the Lord.

We can outline the gift of the four vows in the following summary chart:



The Father Speaks

"I declare that I have felt a special calling to this Pious Institute. I chose it not only because it is dedicated to the beautiful works of charity – both spiritual and temporal - namely: saving abandoned orphans, and the evangelization and aid of the poor and destitute. I chose it not only because of my special right intentions, but also because it is perhaps the only Institute in the Holy Church dedicated to the sublime mission revealed in the divine words of the Gospel: *Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam*. Thus, the Institute imposes the vow of obedience to this Command of the Divine Zeal of the Heart of Jesus, that is, by daily prayer to obtain good laborers for the Holy Church, by the untiring and active propagation of this prayer throughout the world under the title of the *Evangelical Rogation of the Heart of Jesus*.

"Therefore, I declare that I recognize that from faithful obedience to this Divine Command and from the universal propagation of this *Evangelical Rogation*, immense benefits may flow to the whole Church and to all peoples. Besides, it may also draw the merciful gaze of His Divine Majesty towards this humble Institute, provided that each of its members, whether long-standing or new, strives with greater goodwill and with the help of the Divine Grace to correspond to this special vocation (Second Declaration, *Declarations and Promises*).

Conclusion

The entrustment of the *Rogate* to us and the practice of the four vows allows us to appreciate our unique participation in the spread of the Kingdom. Although God is the origin of salvation and the source of every vocation, he wills every person to share responsibility for choosing and sending "good laborers" into his harvest.

We are witnesses to this heavenly grace and feel accountable for a mandate that is realized through our "Yes" to God's gift. Evangelization, like service to the poor, enables us to live out our vocation and mission ever more fully.

With the Virgin Mary—Mother of the *Rogate*—as our model, we journey toward the Jubilee Year of St. Hannibal's *Transitus* with the joy and hope she expressed in the *Magnificat*. As Pope Leo concludes in his first encyclical:

"The Blessed Virgin Mary not only teaches us to recognize God's invisible work, but also directs our gaze to "the points at which humanity is broken and the world becomes distorted: the contrast between the humble and the powerful, the poor and the rich, the satiated and the hungry," teaching us "to look at the world from a lower position: through the eyes of those who suffer rather than the mighty; to view history through the eyes of the little ones, rather than through the perspective of the powerful; to interpret the events of history from the viewpoint of the widow, the orphan, the stranger, the wounded child, the exile and the fugitive." The Blessed Virgin thus becomes "poet and prophetess of Redemption," because on her lips is proclaimed, "the strongest and most innovative hymn ever articulated, the *Magnificat*;

it is she who reveals the transformative vision of the Christian economy, the historical and social result that still draws its origin and strength from Christianity.”²⁰

Rome, August 6, 2026
Centennial Anniversary
of the Canonical Approval of the Congregation (Messina 1926)

Fr. Bruno Rampazzo, R.C.J.
Superior General

²⁰ Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas*, no. 244.