



Congregazione dei Rogazionisti

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Subject: United with the Confreres who have returned to the Father's House

To Most Rev. Superior
 of the Rogationist Circumscriptions
and the Rogationist Communities
 THEIR RESIDENCES

Dearest Confreres,

In my Easter greetings sent to you in March, distressed for the recent death of several Confreres, especially in the Province of St. Hannibal, I wrote to you:

"In our Religious Family, particularly in Italy, at the beginning of this year, we have been tried by the demise of several of our Confreres. Even this painful experience, which reminds us that we are in a journey toward eternal life, we must live it in faith and thank the Lord for the example that our Confreres have left us, and accompany them with the prayer of suffrage".

Over the succeeding months, we have all been strongly tested by the Coronavirus pandemic, and we still are, while trusting in the protection of the Divine Superiors and persevering in prayer for many who have died and for the many sufferings of countless brothers and sisters throughout the world.

From this great trial, we are moved to reflect on the precariousness of our human condition and, at the same time, to strengthen our faith in the mercy of the Lord, who looks down on us from Heaven where a place has been prepared for each of us.

The profound sense of belonging to our Religious Family naturally induces us to perceive communion with our Confreres who preceded us on our return to the *Father's House*, as we usually say.

The activities planned this year by the Saint Luke Province for the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the first Rogationist missionaries in Brazil or the initiatives that have been organized in the Philippines or in Italy in memory of Fr. Cesare Bettoni, or for Fr. Antonio Barbangelo by his former students in San Demetrio, are a testimony of this.

I believe that knowledge of and grateful acknowledgment of the Confreres who have preceded us is an aspect that we should always keep alive and take care of in a particular way.

By their example, work, sacrifice, and great love for the Congregation and for the Church, obviously some more than others, they have laid the foundations for the growth of our Congregation. The stories of each of them, some known while others less known, are incentives to broaden the horizon of knowledge of our Religious Family and to feel it more and more as our home, as part of ourselves.

We can say that, universally, the memory of "ancestors" is a sacred need that projects us towards a future because the past builds on the present.

At a time when we are moved by the desire to know better the history of our origins and the journey made by our Congregation, now for about a century and a half, we meet a host of protagonist Confreres, each according to the gifts received, who belong to our history, which, although marked by weaknesses and miseries, is still a sacred history.

In particular, I would like this year to commemorate the following confreres who celebrate the centenary of their birth:

P. Michele Lamacchia, March 21, 1920

P. Michele Ferlisi, April 30, 1920

P. Antonio Barbangelo, June 10, 1920

P. Michele Amato, August 07, 1920

P. Gaetano Ciranni, September 24, 1920

P. Vincenzo Santarella, October 20, 1920

P. Giuseppe Leo, December 21, 1920

It is not a matter of "idealizing" their earthly existence but of becoming aware that their person and their history belong to us.

It may be inappropriate to exemplify merits and virtues, but it is not difficult, dwelling on their names and faces, to recall to mind, in different cases, either the apostolic zeal or joviality or missionary vocation or mildness or fixation for the Rogate or the erudition of wisdom or the spirit of service and industriousness. Each one of us preserves precious personal memories of some Confreres who have passed to the other life; it is good that we perceive the richness of shared memory.

The Norms finds it consonance in line with what we are considering: "For the bonds of communion that have bound us in life, we usually wait for the final resurrection resting together in common chapels of the cemetery" (art. 52).

To consider well, under the gaze of our holy Founder, the link with the Confreres who have preceded us, it should not be lived limited to the dimension of past history, although considered as a witness that can enlighten the present.


Father Hannibal, illumined by his great faith, was aware that life for believers is, fundamentally, the life of grace, which is given to us in Baptism. He was convinced that, as children of God, we can and must overcome the distances of time and space, and find ourselves in a co-existence, spiritual but at the same time real, that allows us to conduct our existence truly together.

This may seem excessive, but we have a clear written testimony left to us by Father Hannibal. He, who by his nature was particularly orderly, to the point of laying out a multitude of regulations, in 1913, in several successive drafts he left us the regulation of "The Unique heavenly-bound wayfaring Rogationist Congregation of the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus." In it, he specified: "The highest purpose of this *Unique Rogationist Congregation of the Heart of Jesus* is to obey ever more perfectly and with great Zeal that Command of the Divine Zeal of the Heart of Jesus."¹

In fact, the Rogate was close to Father Hannibal's heart, like a fixation, but at the same time, he wanted to teach us to get used to keeping our sight to Heaven while we struggle on earth.

We are entrusted with the task of looking at the Confreres who have preceded us as people who have returned to the Father's House and who form with us a single Congregation.

In sharing this exhortation, I greet you with affection in the Lord.


(Fr. Fortunato Siciliano, R.C.J.)
General Secretary




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

¹ DI FRANCIA A., *Scritti, Regolamenti*, Vol. V, p. 835.