

Congregazione dei Rogazionisti

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*“Now there were shepherds
in that region living in the fields and
keeping the night watch over their flock.
The angel of the Lord appeared to them and
the glory of the Lord shone around them,
and they were struck with great fear.
The angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid;
for behold, I proclaim to you good news
of great joy that will be for all the people.
For today in the city of David
a savior has been born for you
who is Messiah and Lord.
And this will be a sign for you: you will find
an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes
and lying in a manger.”*

Lk 2: 8-12.

Greetings of a Holy Christmas and happy New Year

To the Rogationists
To the Family of the Rogate

Dearests,

This year's Advent, which prepares us for Christmas, comes to us in a particular moment of sadness for the unhappy death on the roads of Angola of our dear young missionary confrere, Fr. Roy Moothedath.

This tragic accident gives us a glimpse on Fr. Roy. As narrated by the Bishop of Dundo, Msgr. Stanislau, to the Provincial Superior of St. Luke Province, Fr. Juarez Destro, on the day before his death, he made a beautiful reflection exactly on the Resurrection during his homily at a Sunday Mass, and he had confided to some people that the best days of his life as a religious were spent there, in the mission in Angola.

The crib, with its lights and Christmas melodies, leads us to discover the mystery that is hidden in it: the immense love of God, who makes himself small and poor, to meet our smallness and poverty and to bring his salvation.

Joseph, Mary and the Child that she was carrying in her womb were not accepted in the village of Bethlehem, and they found refuge in a shed.

The Birth of Jesus reveals to us a great mystery of human existence: there in the marginalization, poverty and humility of that shanty, God and men that He loves meet. A passage of Pope Francis' homily during the Mass celebrated last November 13 in the Vatican basilica could lead us to a deeper understanding of this event:

“(The Word of God) questions us today about the meaning of our lives. Using an image, we could say that these readings serve as a “strainer” through which our life can be poured: they remind us that almost everything in this world is passing away, like running water. But there are treasured realities that remain, like a precious stone in a strainer. What

endures, what has value in life, what riches do not disappear? Surely these two: *the Lord and our neighbor*. These two riches do not disappear! These are the greatest goods; these are to be loved. Everything else – the heavens, the earth, all that is most beautiful, even this Basilica – will pass away; but we must never exclude *God and others* from our lives”.

The Lord and our neighbor: these have been the greatest goods of our Founder. The publication “God and Neighbor” with which Father Hannibal began a long dialogue with friends and benefactors of the Pious Work, and has spread the charism, expresses in a nutshell our charismatic identity, which we live in a particular way in the mystery of the birth of Jesus, the Son of God who became himself a neighbor to man.

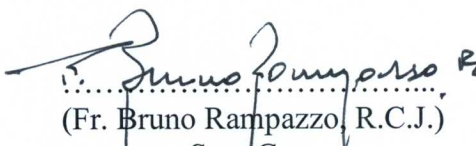
The Baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph in the stable of Bethlehem speak to us of humility and love, virtues that are translated in giving and serving. The light of the star and the song of the angels lead us to contemplate this family who lives in extreme poverty, and became the model of every Christian family and every community.

Dearests, we need first of all to rekindle the love of the Lord. This love is the origin of our vocation in the Family of the Rogate. This love has called each of us, and in this love we have generously responded. To rekindle that love means to rediscover the joy of staying each day before the Blessed Sacrament, listening, talking, or simply looking at Him.

A meaningful reminder comes from Pope Francis who said that in heaven we will find “God and others”. We have always known that, but he underlined that Paradise for us is the enjoyment of the presence of God and neighbor. This means that we have to walk towards this goal with one hand clinging to God and the other to the brothers and sisters. Therefore, it is necessary that our Communities, as domestic families, should be characterized by fraternity. We must strive so that the different moments of our community meetings, as provided by the Rule of Life, may be lived in communion and fraternal dialogue, seeking for that what unites us and overcoming what could divide us, welcoming each other in truth and charity, in harmony of our vocation and mission.

This is the most sincere greeting that I wish all of you. May Mary, Joseph and the Child Jesus obtain for us this grace, through the intercession of our Heavenly Patrons and of the Holy Founder.

In union of prayer, I greet you with affection in the Lord. Merry Christmas!


(Fr. Bruno Rampazzo, R.C.J.)
Sup. Gen.