

**Congregazione dei Rogazionisti**

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Rome, November 25, 2023

Prot. no. 318/2023

Subject: The Servant of God Fr. Giuseppe Marrazzo Venerable

To the Most Rev. Superiors  
of the Rogationist Circumscriptions  
Cc The Daughters of Divine Zeal  
The Family of the Rogate  
THEIR OFFICES

On Wednesday, November 8, 2023, Pope Francis authorized the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints to promulgate the Decree for the practice of the heroic virtues of our confrere Servant of God, Fr. Giuseppe Marrazzo, who was born in San Vito dei Normanni on May 5, 1917, and died in Messina on November 30, 1992.

Except for two very short periods, first in Padua and then in Zagarolo (RM), he spent his life in the community of Messina - Mother House, exercising his priestly ministry in the Shrine of St. Anthony with the responsibility of assistant to the Antonian Paggetti and Catholic Action. He was particularly distinguished for his depth and commitment in the confessional and in spiritual direction. In 1953 he also became assistant to the Pious Union of the Evangelical Rogation, ordinary confessor to the Sisters of Christ the King, ecclesiastical assistant to the Anthonian Youth Association, confessor to orphans, and confessor and spiritual father to young Rogationists in formation. He was also a good preacher.

With the Decree on the Heroic Virtues, the Supreme Pontiff, after hearing the opinions of theologians, cardinals and bishops, recognizes that Father Joseph followed Jesus in a heroic way in the exercise of the theological and cardinal virtues and in the practice of the evangelical counsels and humility. This recognition confers on the Servant of God the title of Venerable.

The Venerable is not yet canonized. Thus, he can be proposed as a model, but without any form of public worship, and continuously praying to God to glorify him through a miracle attributed to his intercession.

### **The witness of the faithful**

With the declaration of the heroicity of virtues, the Holy Father verified and confirmed the testimonies given during the diocesan investigation that began on July 20, 2006, and ended on May 9, 2015. The collection of testimonies makes it possible to reconstruct in a broad and serene way the daily life of the Servant of God, from which the Sequela Christi clearly emerges. I would like to quote some of them by way of example.

"His holiness was the voice of the people. In the faithful there was already the certainty of his way of holiness, practiced in his daily apostolate; his heroism lay in the humility and perseverance of his style, in the continuous giving of himself through service to all".

A lady who belonged to the Zelatrici del Rogate group testifies: "Father Marrazzo was heroic in everyday life. He wanted to be what he was before the Lord. He was a 'saint' in everyday life". Another witness affirms that in difficult times the Servant of God "always behaved heroically, giving

himself out of love, even when there was no love in others, creating communion, seeing in others 'the forsaken Jesus', not a person to be criticized".

"The strength of the Servant of God was heroic because, in his eyes, 'only Jesus was his strength', 'always before the Lord'". "He was shy to reveal himself," testifies one of his penitents, "he did not show off, but he was a rock of presence, of encouragement, even when he knew how to suffer."

### **The opinion of the theologians**

With the decree of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints on the legal validity of the diocesan investigation, the Roman phase began on September 14, 2016. After the Positio had been written and presented without any particular problems, it was submitted to the examination of the nine Theological Consultors, who on June 23, 2020, declared unanimously (9/9), by secret ballot, that the Servant of God Fr. Giuseppe Marrazzo had exercised to a heroic degree the theological and moral virtues, as well as the evangelical counsels, with the hope that the Servant of God Giuseppe Marrazzo could soon, if it pleases the Holy Father, achieve the desired beatification. I think it is appropriate to re-read some of the reasons for the positive vote.

First of all, "the extraordinary and heroic nature of his life lies precisely in this: he was a man of prayer, he worked a lot on himself; he lived the fertility of daily life with punctuality and continuity, as a 'theological' place where he could meet God and his brothers and sisters".

"After reading the documents on the life and work of the Servant of God Giuseppe Marrazzo," writes another theologian, "I have come to the conviction that this is a person who lived the theological and all the other virtues in a heroic way. His witness is of great value, especially for our time. The words of a confrere are, in my opinion, a beautiful summary of the life of the Servant of God: "I see heroism in continuity and in daily life. Not in explosive forms, but in reserve, without making a fuss." Notice how the "timeliness of his witness" is emphasized, which we will return to later.

"What strikes me about the Servant of God," the Censor theologian continues, "is that he was there for others, especially those who had material, spiritual or psychological difficulties. Also heroic is the humility of the Servant of God, who wanted to make himself smaller and smaller so that God could grow more and more in him and in others. His love for poverty was like a red thread in his life that enlightened him and enlightened others. He received much because people knew that through him these goods would reach the most needy".

Another theologian says: "Father Giuseppe Marrazzo was a Rogationist, strong in the faith, a lover of his own charism, generous in the apostolate. From the documentation emerges the profile of a humble priest, dedicated to spiritual accompaniment, and attentive to the suffering. Possible reliefs do not obscure his luminous witness. The intuition of priestly motherhood is not a theological difficulty but can reveal a profoundly Marian and ecclesial charism".

He never tired of exercising the ministry, especially the ministry of reconciliation, "he was a shepherd in the image of the Good Shepherd", an authentic Rogationist who, in his surroundings, became a humble and faithful worker who, in imitation of St. Hannibal Mary of Francia, tirelessly prayed to the Lord for the salvation of souls and the gift of "good workers".

### **Ordinary General Assembly of Cardinals and Bishops**

On March 5, 2021, Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, following the meeting of Cardinals and Bishops who expressed their positive opinion on the heroicity of the virtues of our Servant of God, asked the Postulator for "a theological contribution on

the theme of priestly motherhood, which is at the heart of the spirituality of the Servant of God... an important aspect and of ecclesial relevance."

On October 1, 2023, the Postulation presented the complementary study. The Ordinary Congress of the Dicastery, on October 23, having taken note of the documents presented, concluded that they were in accordance with the proposal of the Ordinary Session. On November 8, Pope Francis authorized the Dicastery to sign the Decree of Venerability.

### **The fulcrum of his spirituality**

It is not difficult to identify the fulcrum around which Father Giuseppe Marrazzo's life revolved in its various dimensions: he himself often affirmed it with great consistency and without a shadow of a doubt. He knew what the meaning of existence was, and he pursued it by asking for help.

When he found himself in Carovigno on November 10, 1981, he was asked: "What is the word that is most often repeated and lived in your life? - and he answered immediately: "To be with Jesus - to live Jesus - "Mihi vivere Christus est" (Phil. 1:21)... - to live for Jesus - to be Jesus for souls - to be with Mother (priestly)".

The next day he wrote this prayer: "Jesus, I ask Your forgiveness for all my faults. You created me to love You: I have done so, but with such laziness, indolence; when I see the liveliness of Your love, oh! how I should have been mad with love for You.

O Mary, teach me to live for this one purpose: To love Jesus, to make Him loved. My life must serve only this, always this, in everything this: - Mihi vivere Christus est (sic) (Phil 1:21) - Omnia arbitror ut stercora ut Christum lucrifaciam (Phil 3:8) - "Quis separabit me a caritate Christi?" (Rom 8:39). "Whether you eat or drink, do everything for Jesus' sake" (1 Cor 10:31). "Let those who do not love Jesus be anathema" (1 Cor 16:22). And you, my Mother, help me to live only for this. We live only for this - I am in Your Heart. You are in my heart; we are one heart".

Here we find the secret of the apostolic activity of our Venerable, the itinerary of his holiness, assisted by his priestly mother, who was also committed with her Son to reach the stature of Christ. It was a project that began in 1949 and was also developed according to the example of the "Founder who chose Jesus", for which he exhorted the faithful to fall in love with Jesus. There are countless testimonies of this. Tilde Sagone - his priestly mother - testifies: "He was always driven by the glory of God above all, he would say: 'Fall in love with Jesus'. "I would confide in him about everything," recalls another penitent, "and he would try to cushion the various problems and advise me to put Jesus first. He would tell me to make myself holy and to fall more and more in love with Jesus. And again, "He was in love with Jesus, he would tell us: 'You have to fall in love with Jesus. Faith and the Word of God were his life. In this regard, one of his confreres says: "I believe that his life was lived in communicating his love for the Lord to others, as a mad lover of Him, without a timetable, giving himself to others. He acted only for the glory of God and the good of souls. Sometimes I thought he was a simpleton, almost 'ignorant', but later I discovered that he wrote a lot and was able to grasp the essence of a person's life and daily events.

It was from this genuine falling in love with Jesus that charity and works developed. The faithful understood that "the love he had for God he transferred to his neighbor.

### **Relevance of the Message**

At this point, it is appropriate to ask what is the relevance and importance of Fr. Joseph Marrazzo's example and message for the Church and society today? The Positio in the introductory part devotes an entire paragraph to answering this question. It is appropriate to read it in its entirety.

"In an age that focuses on image, appearance, and noise, the life and work of the Servant of God is a break and an example because it is based on silence, discretion, and humility.

In fact, Father Marrazzo's life was centered on Christ, whom he encountered and adored from the early hours of the morning in the Eucharist, and whom he sought, recognized, loved and served daily, especially in the poor, the sick, the prisoners and his confreres. He committed himself to conforming himself to Christ so that he could be a sign of his presence and an instrument of mercy, especially to sinners who would find Jesus in him. As a confirmation of this daily commitment, many of the faithful testified that they met Jesus when they confessed to the Father.

The Servant of God was deeply in love with the real presence of the Lord and, with evangelical simplicity, saw in the confessional the tabernacle of mercy in which the forgiving Lord is present. The Sacrament of Penance was the crossroads that enabled him to carry out a well-rounded apostolate.

Up to this point it could be a "common" meaning in the saints, but the Servant of God added a very timely insight, which can be summarized by an expression of his: "I feel the need for women to do much, much, much more in the Church, while they are allowed very little, but times are changing. O Jesus, send mothers, holy mothers, to your priests, to your Church". In other words, for Father Joseph, priestly motherhood is rooted in the nature of woman, created to give life, and is modeled on Mary, the woman who, at the foot of the Cross, became the mother of the disciple. For the Servant of God, the priestly mother, like Mary, must look only to Christ and see the priest in Christ. In any case, Father Marrazzo cautioned that any woman can be a priestly mother, but not all mothers of priests are priestly mothers.

This insight linked him closely to the Rogationist charism, but he also saw it as very much in tune with the ministry of confession. Indeed, for him, to forgive was to exercise the hand of God who is Father and Mother. He was aware that he felt the same joy as God: "Perhaps you have not felt the joy of forgiveness as I have felt it in the face of misguided but penitent souls. I empathized with the joy that Jesus felt". For this reason, his beatification could have a special relevance and meaning for the Church and society today, not only for Messina.

Among the most significant aspects of Fr. Marrazzo's message is a very timely insight closely related to the Rogationist charism: the role of women in the Church and especially in relation to the mission of the priest. It is not by chance that Cardinal Semeraro, when presenting the dossier on Father Marrazzo to the Pope, included the speech given by His Holiness during the 18th General Congregation of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the dimension of women and their importance in the Church.

On this subject, we cannot attribute to Fr. Marrazzo our fantasies by presenting them as his own. Priestly motherhood - which is the charism of Tilde Sagone, whose father, brother, and son he was, recognizing in her a mother, sister, and daughter, in accordance with the experience of several saints and in conformity with the Magisterium - is an authentic and demanding way of holiness.

To a priestly mother who asked, "Father Joseph, how can I help you?" He replied, "If you want to help me, love Jesus because I am in Jesus": we are in the *mihi vivere Christus*, the fulcrum of his life and the key to understanding his own existence and that of others.

## **Conclusion**

What can we say in conclusion? First of all, we give thanks to the Lord who has given this confrere to the Church and to us. Every gift is a sign of hope and must be so, especially in this particular time, with the difficulties we are all experiencing and seeing. Fidelity to the charism is not measured by propaganda, by publicity, but has an irreplaceable foundation: love for Christ. The effectiveness of our mission depends on this. Father Marrazzo was a sign of Christ, the Good

Shepherd, meek and humble of heart, because he met him daily at Mass, contemplated him in Adoration, sought him out, met him, and served him among the poor, the imprisoned, the sick, empathizing with their feelings, especially in the "tabernacle of the confessional".

What can we do? Get to know him and make him known, as indicated in n. 101 of the 13th General Chapter and in the planning of the General Government 2022-2028 (p. 31). Know him by reading his biography, Positio, and especially Relatio et Vota, in which theologians evaluate the life of the Servant of God.

Make him known to the faithful in our parishes and, as far as possible, to the alumni, their relatives, collaborators, etc.

Not only in Italy. It is worth mentioning that the miracles for the Founder's beatification and canonization took place in Brazil and the Philippines.

To make him known through the means at our disposal, first of all through the magazines that we send to our benefactors, publishing the picture with the prayer for graces. There are hundreds of thousands of people in this circle.

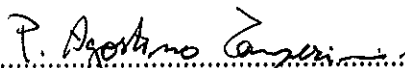
The Church has given its judgment on the venerability of Fr. Giuseppe Marrazzo, proposing him first of all as a model for us. Now we are waiting for a sign from heaven, a miracle so that he can be counted among the blessed. The miracle will not be obtained by conventions and conferences, necessary though they are, but by praying and exhorting the faithful to pray to the Lord so that through the intercession of Venerable Father Marrazzo He may grant the desired graces. I am sure that in all our communities we pray daily for this intention according to the prescriptions of our prayer book.

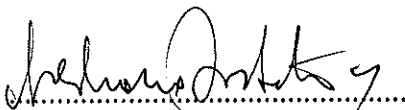
It is important that the image of the Venerable be displayed in parishes, churches, public, and semi-public oratories (not in the presbyterium), avoiding any sign of public worship.

The Postulation is available for any form of collaboration as far as possible.

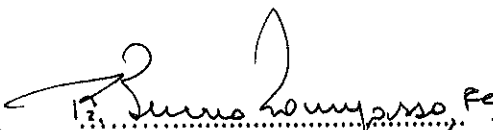
We renew our thanks to the Lord for the gift of the Servant of God, Venerable Father Giuseppe Marrazzo, who, together with Venerable Mother Maria Nazarena Majone, testifies to us that the Congregation of the Rogationists and that of the Daughters of Divine Zeal can be a path of holiness.

I greet you with affection in the Lord.

  
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(Fr. Agostino Zamperini, R.C.J.)  
General Postulator

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



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