

**Congregazione dei Rogazionisti**

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**YEAR OF FAITH** 2012  
2013

## ***Journeying in the Year of Faith***

*“The Church as a whole  
and all her Pastors, like Christ,  
must set out to lead people out of the desert,  
towards the place of life,  
towards friendship with the Son of God,  
towards the One who gives us life,  
and life in abundance.” (PF 2).*

Dearest,

with these words, the Holy Father Benedict XVI opens the apostolic letter, *motu proprio*, *Porta Fidei*, with which on October 11, 2011, he announced the Year of Faith, that will begin this coming October 11, 2012, on the fiftieth anniversary of Vatican Council II, and will end on November 24, 2013, Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King.

The Pope - as noted – recalls the exhortation he addressed to the Church in his homily at the Mass for the beginning of his pontificate.

He renews this call, in this solemn event of the beginning of the Year of Faith, noting that the date also recalls the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, promulgated by Blessed Pope John Paul II, with a “view to illustrating for all the faithful the power and beauty of the faith”.

We are called to rediscover the strength and beauty of faith. We are told, in fact, that the grace of the Council, its fruits, and among them the Catechism of the Catholic Church, tend to lead us to the rediscovery of faith, its evangelization or new evangelization in the consciousness “of the grave difficulties of the time, especially with regard to the profession of the true faith and its correct interpretation” (n. 5).

The Holy Father's initiative to give the Church the Year of Faith is founded on these premises.

He notes that it is not a novelty, because Paul VI proclaimed a Year of the Faith in 1967, to commemorate the nineteenth centenary of the supreme act of witness of the martyrdom of the Apostles Peter and Paul, calling the Church to "an authentic and sincere profession of the same faith", as proof that "the essential content that for centuries has formed the heritage of all believers needs to be confirmed, understood and explored ever anew, so as to bear consistent witness in historical circumstances very different from those of the past" (n. 4).

The Pope also recalls the testimony of John Paul II, reminding us that the Council is "the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century", and that the conciliar documents "have lost nothing of their value or brilliance". Hence the invitation to all to read and accept them guided by correct interpretation, so that they can increasingly become a great force for the needed renewal of the Church.

Precisely from the conciliar document *Lumen gentium* Benedict XVI takes his cue to remind us that the Church, "clasping sinners to its bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal".

"The *Year of Faith*, - the Pope tells us - from this perspective, is a summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Saviour of the world." (n. 6).

The fundamental content of our faith is the manifestation of the love of the Father, in Christ, given to us through his Spirit, who died and rose for our sake, who calls us to rise with Him and in Him, and "to walk in newness of life". "Through faith, this new life shapes the whole of human existence according to the radical new reality of the resurrection. To the extent that he freely cooperates, man's thoughts and affections, mentality and conduct are slowly purified and transformed, on a journey that is never completely finished in this life. Faith working through love becomes a new criterion of understanding and action that changes the whole of man's life" (n. 6).

Through faith we enter into the love of Christ that impels us to move forward with enthusiasm (2 Cor 5:14), to set out to witness and evangelize.

"Through his love, Jesus Christ attracts to himself the people of every generation: in every age he convokes the Church, entrusting her with the proclamation of the Gospel by a mandate that is ever new. Today too, there is a need for stronger ecclesial commitment to new evangelization in order to rediscover the joy of believing and the enthusiasm for communicating the faith. In rediscovering his love day by day, the missionary commitment of believers attains force and vigor that can never fade away. Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy. It makes us fruitful, because it expands our hearts in hope and enables us to bear life-giving witness: indeed, it opens the hearts and minds of those who listen to respond to the Lord's invitation to adhere to his word and become his disciples." (n. 7).

*Journeying in the Year of Faith.* The input is given to us by the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops convened by the Pope for October 7, on the theme of *The new evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith.* The



Holy Father and the bishops with him invite us to rediscover our faith, letting ourselves be enlightened by the documents of the Magisterium, to study, to bear witness and to confess it publicly. It is a call to the whole Church, starting from the consecrated persons.

“Religious communities as well as parish communities, and all ecclesial bodies old and new, are to find a way, during this Year, to make a public profession of the *Credo*” (n. 8).

The Apostolic Letter, therefore, reminds us of the need to profess our faith in its fullness and invites us to look to the early Christians who, having received the “symbol” in baptism, they were attentive to learn it from memory, store it with love and faithfulness, to “watch over it with the heart”.

Our faith, then, has a significant place of manifestation in the liturgy and especially in the Eucharist. But the Pope calls us to go beyond: “To rediscover the content of the faith that is professed, celebrated, lived and prayed, and to reflect on the act of faith, is a task that every believer must make his own, especially in the course of this *Year*” (n. 9).

Faith is a gift, the greatest gift of the love of the Lord, after that of life. It comes from the heart of God and seeks the adherence of man, the love of man.

The Holy Father reminds us, therefore, of the words of Paul to the Romans: “With the heart ... one believes ... and with the mouth confesses his faith” (Rm 10,10). And, therefore, he admonishes: “Faith is choosing to stand with the Lord so as to live with him” (n. 10).

At the basis of our life as believers lies this free fundamental option. With it, the particular contents of the Christian faith which we profess in their richness, coexist in an effective unity.

Therefore, if we freely choose to accept the gift of the Lord, responsibly, but with the gift of the Spirit, we are called to give witness to our faith in the society.

“The Church on the day of Pentecost demonstrates with utter clarity this public dimension of believing and proclaiming one’s faith fearlessly to every person. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit that makes us fit for mission and strengthens our witness, making it frank and courageous” (n. 10).

The testimony of faith is the first and most important means to evangelize and promote it. The Holy Father, however, reminds that the Church’s mission has been supported and driven by the faith that has initially animated the apostles, and then the disciples, the martyrs and a great host of consecrated people:

“By faith, men and women have consecrated their lives to Christ, leaving all things behind so as to live obedience, poverty and chastity with Gospel simplicity, concrete signs of waiting for the Lord who comes without delay” (n. 13).

This commitment of the religious to the evangelization is highlighted most especially in the *Instrumentum laboris* of the Synod with a wise look of synthesis:

“In the transmission of the faith and the proclamation of the Gospel, they speak of the important contributions of the great religious orders and the many forms of consecrated life especially the mendicant orders and apostolic and secular institutes in their continuing prophetic and evangelizing charisms, despite



internal difficulties and moments of renewal in their way of life. From the vantage point of faith, their presence, even if hidden from sight, is seen as a source of many spiritual blessings in the missionary mandate which the Church is presently called to fulfill". (...) It is also hoped that "the consecrated life will continue to make an essential contribution to the new evangelization, especially in education, healthcare and pastoral activity, primarily among the poor and those most in need of spiritual and material assistance" (n. 114).

The final part of the *Instrumentum laboris* that focuses on the "centrality of vocations" is of particular importance to the consecrated life, and for us who live the charism of the Rogate:

"The next synodal assembly is expected to clearly state the centrality of the question of a personal vocational calling in the Church today and the hope that the treatment of the topic of the new evangelization will lead to a greater consciousness among all the baptized of their missionary and evangelizing responsibility. If witnesses are to be credible in the various sectors of the new evangelization, they must know how to speak in terms which are understandable today and, in this way, proclaim within these sectors, the reasons for the hope which gives them life. (...) More specifically, the Synod Assembly should give particular attention to the priestly ministry and the consecrated life in the hope that one of the fruits of the Synod in the Church might be new vocations to the priesthood and a renewal of her commitment to a clear and decisive pastoral for vocations" (n. 159).

In fact, it is known that "one of the most obvious signs of weakening in the Christian experience might be the decline in vocations, which concerns both the decreasing number of vocations of special consecration in the ministerial priesthood and consecrated life and the abandonment by some of their vocations. The same is true in the widespread unfaithfulness of those who make a particular commitment in life, for example, marriage" (n.160).

It will be crucial "to discuss this matter, which is closely related to the new evangelization, not so much to confirm that the crisis exists and not only to re-enforce pastoral programmes on behalf of vocations, which has already been done, but rather, in a deeper sense, to foster a mentality in which life itself is looked upon as a vocation" (n. 160).

The Year of Faith, therefore, in a particular way challenges us Rogationists and, all of us, sons and daughters of Father Hannibal. The charism of the Rogate, which comes from the compassion of the heart of Christ to the weary and scattered crowds, like sheep without a shepherd, today more than ever, listening to the Church, calls us to spread the Gospel of vocation.

Father Hannibal reminds us that every believer has a vocation and that by listening and following he becomes a witness, herald and apostle. Much more, all this commits us as consecrated persons.

Our Rule of Life calls us to discipleship and evangelization:

"The following of Christ, as proposed in the Gospel, is our supreme rule of life. Fascinated by the Divine Master, we have left everything for His sake (cf. Mt 4, 18-22; 19, 21.27; Lk 5,11) and we preferred Him to everything in order to participate fully in his Paschal mystery. In the spiritual life, in a path of increasing



faithfulness, we are configured to Christ on the model of the Apostles, living in full communion of love and service in the Church” (Cost. 10).

We follow Jesus, attracted by his love and infected by his compassion for the evangelization and salvation of souls:

“Marked by the seal (cf. Rv 7: 3-4) of the words of Jesus who said: The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go ... (Lk 10, 2ff.), we are called to proclaim the importance of the divine command for the life of the Church and the salvation of mankind. The full acceptance of the teachings of Jesus compels us not only to raise supplication and sighs to the Almighty so that the Holy Church and the whole world would be filled with good evangelical workers, but also not to spare ourselves nothing so that we too would be evangelical workers in the harvest of the Lord”(Const. 65). In our specific apostolate “we strive to spread the prayer for the workers of the harvest as an effective instrument of evangelization and vocational discernment” (Cost. n. 68).

Our apostolate will be always illuminated by the mission that was entrusted to us by the holy Founder, faithfully transmitted in our Rule of Life, “... to be good workers in the Church, committing ourselves in works of charity, education and sanctification of children and young people , especially the poor and abandoned, in the evangelization, human promotion and assistance of the poor” Cost. n. 3).

To this commitment to witness and evangelization the Holy Father has recently called us in his message addressed to the XI General Chapter:

“Your Congregation boasts a long history, written by courageous witnesses of Christ and of his Gospel. Today you are called to walk on this path with renewed zeal, to impel yourselves, with prophetic freedom and wise discernment on hazardous apostolic roads and missionary frontiers, fostering close collaboration with the Bishops and with the other members of the Ecclesial Community. The vast horizons of evangelization and the urgent need to witness to the Gospel Message to all, without distinction, constitute the field of your apostolate. A great many people are still waiting to know Jesus, the one Redeemer of man, and many situations of injustice and moral and material hardship are calling believers into question.

“Such an urgent mission demands ceaseless personal and community conversion. Only hearts that are fully open to the action of Grace are able to interpret the signs of the times and understand the cries of humanity in need of hope and peace”.

In the closing pages of the Apostolic Letter *The Door of Faith* Benedict XVI refers to these signs of the times and to the appeal that comes to us from the humanity in need of hope and peace:

“Faith is now being subjected to a series of questions arising from a changed mentality which, especially today, limits the field of rational certainties to that of scientific and technological discoveries. Nevertheless, the Church has never been afraid of demonstrating that there cannot be any conflict between faith and genuine science, because both, albeit via different routes, tend towards the truth” (n. 12).



The Year of Faith, then, wants to be a boost so that the whole Church could set out on the path to respond to this appeal.

As we can see, reading the apostolic letter, we find many ideas that encourage us to enter with enthusiasm of neophytes in this *Year of Faith*, and at the same time we discover the guidelines to walk on the path of rediscovery of faith, sincere conversion and effective testimony.

The Holy Father, nevertheless, in the desire that this year of grace would bring abundant fruits of renewal, in the same letter he invited the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith "to draw up a *Note*, providing the Church and individual believers with some guidelines on how to live this *Year of Faith* in the most effective and appropriate ways, at the service of belief and evangelization" (n. 12).

The said Department in its "Note with pastoral recommendations for the Year of Faith," offered to the whole Church many valuable suggestions.

The *Year of Faith* draws our attention to the Synod, with which it opens. We are invited to rediscover the pilgrimage, which always wants to be the journey of faith, and to look in particular to Mary, the figure of the Church who "in herself summarizes and radiates the principal truths of the faith" (LG 65). We are invited to experience the World Youth Day and to participate in symposia, congresses and meetings that promote the knowledge of the faith and its testimony. In particular, we are urged to deepen the conciliar documents and the Catechism of the Church. The *Year of Faith* calls us to "a renewed commitment to effective and cordial adherence to the teaching of the Successor of Peter". We know that all this, for us sons and daughters of Father Hannibal, is of particular importance. In this ecclesial breath at the end of the *Year*, we are invited to "solemnly renew the profession of faith".

The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, then continues to give valuable insights and suggestions to the level of Episcopal Conferences, at the diocesan level and at the level of parishes, communities, associations and movements.

As for the local Churches, the *Note* suggests, among other things, appropriate celebrations of faith, a day of the Catechism of the Church, organization of special moments of catechesis, permanent formation on the Council documents and the Catechism, appropriate initiatives in the intensive seasons of Advent and Lent, academic and cultural awareness, particular attention to young people and to the Catholic schools.

Particularly for us religious, it says: "During this time, members of Institutes of Consecrated Life and of Societies of Apostolic Life are asked to work towards the new evangelization with a renewed union to the Lord Jesus, each according to their proper charism, in fidelity to the Holy Father and to sound doctrine".

Dearest Confreres, I urge all of you to reflect communally and personally on the two documents I have tried to present to you in a short summary, so that we can all make our journey in the Year of Faith, to welcome the recommendations that we are given and, in that spirit, following the style of our Holy Founder that in order to revive the faith he was always able to find or rediscover new "spiritual industries", we likewise according to the opportunities that we have, at the level of Circumscriptions and of Community, let us take those initiatives that lead us to rekindle and witness our faith.

“Every initiative for the *Year of Faith* should be designed to aid in the joyous rediscovery of the faith and its renewed transmission”.

I would like to remind that for us Rogationists, Daughters of Divine Zeal, Rogationist Missionaries and Laity of the Family of the Rogate, the next year will acquire a special importance for it marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

We know that it ideally constitutes the culmination of that animation that our holy Founder has started from the Church of Messina and then, gradually, expanded in the universal Church. We can consider it as the point of arrival, since the necessity and urgency of prayer for vocations is promoted regularly by the Supreme Pontiff with this Day, but since the problem of vocations is still felt today, it remains the point of a renewed departure, especially for all of us who received the mission of Rogate.

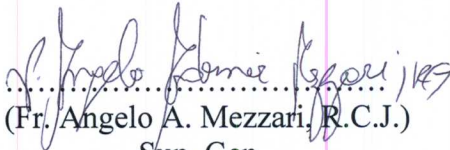
In this year, besides, we are committed to promoting the figure of our Founder as “Patron of Vocations”, in the consciousness that this recognition will lead to a better knowledge of his way of holiness and his passion for the Rogate and, in turn, may enhance the spread of prayer for vocations.

All of us, in the context in which we live and work, we will carry this initiative, knowing that, at any rate, it promotes the spread of the devotion of our founder, Saint Hannibal Mary Di Francia, and in this Year of Faith, according to the invitation that the Holy Father addresses to us, it evangelizes the Rogate.

I wish to close my letter with the words of the Holy Father: “We entrust this time of grace to the Mother of God, proclaimed «blessed because she believed»”(Lk 1:45).

With this hope, I greet you with affection in the Divine Superiors,

Rome, 21 September 2012  
Feast of St. Matthew, Evangelist

  
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(Fr. Angelo A. Mezzari, R.C.J.)  
Sup. Gen.