

**Congregazione dei Rogazionisti**

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*Greetings of a Holy Christmas  
and serene 2014*

*«THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL  
fills the hearts and lives  
of all who encounter Jesus.  
Those who accept his offer of salvation  
are set free from sin,  
sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness.  
With Christ joy is constantly  
born anew».  
(Esortazione Apostolica EG 1)*

To the Rogationists  
and to the Family of the Rogate

Dearest,

My Christmas greetings that I wish to extend to you this year is meant to be a simple and friendly echo, of the renewed proclamation of the Gospel, which we receive on many occasions and in different forms from the Holy Father Francis.

With this in mind, at the beginning of this intense Season of Advent, we welcome together with filial love, the Apostolic Exhortation "The Joy of the Gospel", that the Pope has given to us at the conclusion of the Year of Faith.

The whole Church and the entire world looks up to the Supreme Pontiff and to his strong and evangelical witness.

We are particularly amazed in seeing that, even in the face of serious difficulties and great challenges of the Church, he guides us with habitual serenity and sends us a message with confident hope.

Pope Francis invites us to return to the Gospel which is the source of joy.

He urges us to look at the coming feast of Christmas and assures us: "With Jesus Christ joy is constantly born anew." His words are an expression of the great faith that moves him, despite different hardships and many problems, faith that is manifested in his words and in his smile.

Let us thank the Lord for giving us Pope Francis, let us pray for him and let us be guided by his example and his teaching.

Faith is our identity as Christians and it is also the foundation of our religious consecration.

The existential need, to “recover the character of light that is proper of faith ...” (LF, 3) concerns each of us, who are men and women of our time.

We are called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, but Jesus warned us to be vigilant so that our light would not be lost in the darkness and our salt would not lose its flavor.

Thus, Pope Francis testifies, with gestures and words, to the love of God the Father who lowered himself towards us, who extends his arms to receive us, who awaits for us and who goes out to search for us.

God our Father, who created us in His image and loves us as his children, is calling us all, without distinction of race, culture or religion, to enter into his eternal and universal kingdom. It's up to us, believers, to witness to this love of God and announce it to the brothers and sisters who are ignoring it.

The Pope invites us to take this message out of our churches, and with a simple language that is accessible to all, bring it especially with our behavior as true believers.

Our God is love that forgives, merciful love. He “never gets tired of forgiving. We are the ones who sometimes get tired of asking for his mercy”.<sup>1</sup>

Pope Francis reminds us of this teaching, which opens to trust, which exhorts to return to the Father's house, even when we are suffering and even through suffering, because “the tears are at times the eyeglasses that makes us see Jesus in our lives. There comes a time in our lives when only tears can prepare us to see Jesus”.<sup>2</sup>

God loves us tenderly like a father with his children. The Pope assures us: “It may sound like heresy but it is the greatest truth: more difficult than to love God is to let ourselves be loved by him! This is the way to return to him much love: open our heart and let love. Let him come close to us, and feel him close. Let his tenderness caress us”.<sup>3</sup>

These words of the Pope are particularly appropriate to the liturgical season of Christmas, which invites us to contemplate, to adore and to love the Child Jesus, who comes to meet each one of us in a tender embrace. Let us be guided by the shining example of our holy Founder.

As Fr. Tusino testifies: “We need to see him (Fr. Hannibal) when he took the baby Jesus in a procession throughout the entire house on February 2<sup>nd</sup> at the conclusion of the Christmas holidays. Between a prayer and another, between one verse and another, he bursts out shouts of enthusiasm and love: Long live the Baby Jesus, Long live the Incarnate Word of the Father, Long live the Son of the Immaculate Mother, Long live the delight of our hearts, Long live the Lover of our souls... Then the litany is prolonged from time to time, and everyone repeats it with shouts and clapping of their hands”.<sup>4</sup>

Pope Francis links this announcement of the tender and merciful love of God to another totally consequential message: the love and closeness that each of us is called to have especially towards the poor and the sick. Even in this case, the words and deeds of the Holy Father are in perfect harmony.

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<sup>1</sup> The joy of the Gospel, n. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Morning homily, Editrice Vaticana, (2013), p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Homilies, l.c., p. 2017.

<sup>4</sup> TUSINO T., The Father's Soul – Testimonies, (1973), p. 248.



Let us welcome this invitation with great openness of mind and heart, knowing that it belongs to us particularly because the charism that was entrusted to us, the Rogate, was born for the poor and amidst the poor. The poor, therefore, is our way to keep alive the gift of the Rogate, as Pope Francis says in the Apostolic Exhortation “The Joy of the Gospel”, witnessing to the poor condition of the family of Nazareth:

“In the heart of God there is a special place for the poor, because He Himself “became poor” (2 Cor 8:9). The whole journey of our redemption is marked by the poor. This salvation has come to us through the “yes” of a humble girl from a small remote village on the outskirts of a great empire. The Savior was born in a manger, among the animals, as was the case for the children of the poor; He was presented at the Temple with two birds, the offering of those who could not afford a lamb (cf. Lk 2:24; Lev 5:7); He grew up in a house of simple workers and worked with his hands to earn their bread...”<sup>5</sup>

We too, are called to discover Christ in the poor, “to lend our voice to them in their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen, to understand and to accept the mysterious wisdom that God wants to communicate through them”.<sup>6</sup>

Dearest Confreres, together we have walked till halfway of the six-year journey and, as required by our norms, we have started the process of preparing for the next General Chapter. Let us participate, in this important event of our Religious Family in the manner prescribed by our norms.

Next year we will also celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the canonization of our Founder, St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia.

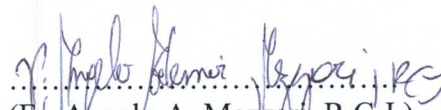
We need, first of all, to bless and thank the Lord for having given us and the Church this great saint.

In the initiative that we have taken so that he could be proclaimed Patron of Vocations we found out that those who knew him are fascinated by his person, by his virtues and his holiness. At the same time we become more awareness of the need to make our Founder more widely known throughout the Church. It will be our commitment to promote his knowledge and his cult, especially in places where we are present.

We feel the duty to do so knowing that his person conveys most clearly the charism of the Rogate, which characterized his whole life.

Let us live this Advent waiting and dedicating ourselves to prepare a renewed heart for Jesus who comes to meet us. Let us ask the Immaculate Virgin, especially on her feastday, that we may obtain this gift.

With this wish and with gratitude in my heart for each of you, for your dedication and ministry, I greet you with affection in the Lord.

  
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(Fr. Angelo A. Mezzari, R.C.J.)  
Superior General

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<sup>5</sup> EG, 197.

<sup>6</sup> EG, 198.