HOMILY. Fr. Shajan Pazhayil (20 September 2023)

Today we commemorate Andrew Kim and Paul Chong and 103 martyrs of Korea from the 19th century: Elderly, teenagers and children, men and women, married and single, missionary bishops and priests. They proclaimed Jesus as the only Saviour, in word and deed, in the midst of all difficulties and hardships, even by shedding their blood. They are models for our religious consecration and convictions in today's world. As religious, we are called to be witnesses in this life, living and following strictly the ideals of the Gospel wherever we are. As you know, religious consecration is considered as white martyrdom. The memory of the Korean martyrs provokes each one of us to live our consecration to the full and to be witnesses of Christ in our life of white martyrdom.

As the Pope reminded us, quoting the invitation of Pope Paul VI, who called the Rogationists "adorers and implorers" for the highest and most beautiful mission, to merit and prepare vocations for the Kingdom of God. These words, which mark our identity, are precious in our search for the elements of "unity, sharing and coordination" in our journey as one Congregation. The Pope's invitation to us, Rogationists, to be God's specialists, experts in prayer and charity, urges us to be alive in our Rogationist mission. The animation of these fundamental elements of our identity and the witness of our life attracts many young people to our Congregation and we find in our circumscriptions the solution to many of our urgent problems.

As we gather for the meeting of the various circumscriptions, let us be grateful to the Lord, as the Responsorial Psalm reminds us: "Great are the works of the Lord. It is true that in the midst of so many challenges that each of us faces, seeing the spread of Rogate and its various expressions in different parts of the world, we must say with the Psalmist: "majestic and glorious is his work"... and "great are the works of the Lord". Let us see in our growth and development, in our struggles and difficulties, in our new ways and means, the expressions of the charism in different geographical areas and cultures... with grateful hearts let us say "great are the works of the Lord". The Charism of Rogate unites us, inspires us to share and motivates us to live in harmony.

The Gospel of today invites us to be free from all kinds of subjective interpretations of reality. The religious leaders of that time rejected John the Baptist and Jesus, both the forerunner of the Messiah and the Messiah himself, because they misinterpreted the events and persons, subjectively observing only their appearances and not truly recognising the reality. Jesus makes a clear observation in the given situation when he says: "With whom shall I compare this generation? Accepting John the Baptist and Jesus our Saviour as they are (the objective reality) leads to the true recognition and understanding of the mystery of salvation.

Let the Word of God enlighten each one of us (who are part of different circumscriptions) and to be freed from all kinds of apparent interpretations and to recognise each other "as they are" will produce the "miracle of accepting each other" during this meeting of the circumscriptions of our Congregation, so that we can "walk together" as one family "in unity, in sharing and in coordination".