

Opening of the Formation for Rogationist Formators 2019
January 5, 2019 – Sanctuary of Mary, Queen of Hearts (Rome)

HOMILY/ REFLECTION by Fr. Jose Maria Ezpeleta RCJ

As we start our journey of formation for Rogationist formators, we come to this sanctuary which is dear to our holy Founder, St. Hannibal Mary. It is where St. Hannibal consecrated himself to Mary on May 13, 1906. On December 8 of the same year, in Messina, all the Daughters of Divine Zeal and the Rogationists, with all the orphan boys and orphan girls, consecrated themselves to our Lady in the same spirit. From then on, he has passed on to his spiritual children this special Marian devotion, that year after year, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, we renew our consecration to her as her slaves. We come here with the same sentiments and devotion of St. Hannibal, and ask Mary, Queen of Hearts, to form our hearts.

The ministry of formation is often called the art of forming the heart. We know by experience how difficult and demanding the work of forming the heart is. It is for this reason that we look at Jesus as our model and guide, in the formation of our hearts and the hearts of the formands entrusted to us. Jesus tells us to learn from him who is meek and humble of heart.

Today's readings teach us this formation of the heart. John in the first reading, speaks of not closing one's heart to one's brothers, but opening it to love because that is the means for God to dwell in us. We do not love only by words, but by deeds and by truth. And if ever our hearts are hardened and fail to love, the heart of God is greater than our iniquities. God's heart is full of compassion. God wants to form our hearts according to the heart of his Son.

In the Gospel, Jesus calls his first disciples. In that call to follow him, he always appeals to the heart. He sees the heart. He knows the heart. He forms the heart. In

the incredulity of Nathaniel who is persuaded by his bias against Nazareth, Philip gives a wise advice: “Come and see.” Those are the same words of Jesus to Andrew and John: “Come and see.” Those are the same advice to us: “Come and see.” And that is our work of forming our young – to tell them to “come and see” Jesus. In order to do that, both formators and formands, we need to see with our hearts, not only with our eyes or with our reason. We need to come to Jesus, to encounter him, to follow him, in order for us to be able to see him. Jesus molded hearts of his followers in the journey of discipleship. We as formators, recognize that Jesus is THE PRIMARY FORMATOR of the formands in their initial formation, but also of us formators in our permanent formation. Let us allow him to form our hearts, and in so doing, we will become his effective instruments in forming the hearts of our formands. In this sanctuary of Mary, Queen of Hearts, we ask her to accompany us in our journey of personal conversion and commitment in following Jesus Christ, the King of Hearts.